

# ***SCUM Book Review***

## **“Web Design In A Nutshell”**

**By Jennifer Niederest**

Review by Dan Bellack, SCUM

A funny thing happened to me on the way to this book review. As the librarian of SCUM (San Carlans Using Macintosh) it is my job to organize and manage the book review program. Recently, a well-intentioned member who had signed up to do a review on this book sent the following review:

“This book is well-designed for a professional web designer. It provides a concise, well-defined desk reference book able to give the user a quick place to help in his/her work.

For me it was a little too advanced to give me what I wanted. I did not have the basics to be able to understand most of the information.

I would recommend this for anyone who is advanced enough to use it.”

He went on to apologize for not doing a longer, more comprehensive review. I appreciated his candor and sympathized with his experience, but felt called upon to expand on his comments just a bit.

### **I Knew This Book**

Over a year ago, I had asked for (and received) “Web Design In A Nutshell” for Christmas. In addition to serving as webmaster for my personal site that I have operated for the past ten years ([www.adbull.com](http://www.adbull.com)), I had agreed to take on the task of redesigning the SCUM website (<http://homepage.mac.com/scum1/>.)

I quickly realized that in addition to putting together a website that I liked (as I had done with my own site) it was incumbent on me to serve the broader interests of our membership, as well as a group of potential members that might access the SCUM site for information. I also quickly realized knew that I needed help.

My initial reaction was similar to my reviewer’s first take. I found the book a little scary in its detail and sophistication. Since Santa had already dropped the thing in my lap, I threw caution to the wind and dug in.

## **What I Learned**

After reading about doing the preparation and planning to do a site I realized that I didn't really know all I needed to know about two important areas, designing for a variety of display options and choosing the right type faces and colors for SCUM's site.

I had to go no further than the table of contents to see that this book not only *covered* those two issues, it made them chapter headings.

Later on in my design process, I found that two other (to me) thorny problems—cascading style sheets and browser considerations—were also not only “my problems” but also chapter headings.

## **A Good Reference Source**

The lesson that I learned here was that not every book I buy (or ask Santa for) has to be one hundred percent understandable to me at the moment I begin reading it. I now find it comforting to know that if I ever have to face the daunting task of adding audio, video or Flash or Shockwave content to a site or do other hairy stuff, I have a knowledgeable resource right on my bookshelf to go to for answers to my problems.

The book is full of well-thought-through explanations, tables, and a helpful glossary, all of which can make you a little bit more of the expert you hope to become.

## **Add It To Your Library**

“Web Design In a Nutshell,” Second Edition, 2001, is from O'Reilly & Associates and carries a \$29.95 price tag. Your membership in our MUG group will give you a 20% discount or you can wait and hope that Santa is MUG member too.