



THE NEW YORKER'S A.J. Liebling once famously remarked that freedom of the press only belongs to the person who owns one. Today, the Internet has democratized publishing. From mainstream media websites with millions of readers to the humblest 'blogs' published for family and friends, electronic communication gives freedom of expression a new meaning. In recent years, many governments have made a commitment to 'publish' as much information as possible on the Internet, only to discover that technological complexity reduced that flood of information to a trickle. In his article, "Do-it-yourself Web-mastering," Geoff Martin

tells us how some agencies have learned to go with the flow.

In a democracy, of course, the most important message anyone can send is their vote, but as David Eadie reports, the digital revolution has not yet conquered the ballot box. Even though the run-up to this fall's American election has produced heated debates about the pros and cons of electronic voting, Eadie has discovered some common sense and practical solutions – right here in Canada.

Have you done much e-learning lately? If you haven't, you probably will because technology will soon be delivering custom-

ized instruction directly to students when and where they need it. Governments have long controlled education, but revolutionary change is on the way. Will the public sector learn fast enough to play a meaningful role?

Elsewhere in this IT section, professional engineer Roland Michaud looks at the challenges and the opportunities of energy management, as the public sector struggles with lower budgets, rising costs and higher expectations. How real are 'alternative' technologies?

Richard Bray

## Do-it-yourself Web-mastering

by Geoff Martin

### Your content when and where you want it

logically illiterate to add new content or modify existing material as easily as if they were using a standard word processing program.

One example of this new user-friendly approach is the website for D.E.A.L. (Drug Education Awareness For Life), an RCMP program that connects youths from across Canada. Designed by i4design ([i4design.ca](http://i4design.ca)), a Hull, Quebec-based multimedia firm, the D.E.A.L. site ([deal.org](http://deal.org)) has been split into smaller sub-sites for regions all over the country, each of which often has its own specific needs. The "localization engine" i4design developed for the project allows each region to maintain its own section of the site, without having to contend with a central approval process and the accompanying headaches.

Another site employing this grassroots mentality is the new website for the Canada Council for the Arts ([canadacouncil.ca](http://canadacouncil.ca)), which was created by Axionic ([axionic.com](http://axionic.com)), an Ottawa, Ontario-based digital media studio. Using Microsoft's Content Manager Server and Mondosoft's Mondo-

Search tools, Axionic has created a site that Council employees and outside contributors can easily change on the fly without needless red tape or handholding.

The concept of content management is "essentially a sandbox of tools that can be customized to a particular project," says Axionic vice-president Erik Hagborg. Keeping any site up-to-date is vital, and Hagborg reminds us that the benefits of content management are accessible to everyone. "No matter what the size of a project is and no matter what its budget is, there is an aspect of content management that can be used," he says. "We just go into the bag of tricks and come up with something appropriate." Once these solutions have been implemented, the days of filling out request forms and waiting days for changes to be made are over.

"It's as simple as logging in, making the changes, and saving it," Hagborg says. *mm*

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FOR GOVERNMENT stakeholders who wish to make simple changes to their websites without jumping through endless hoops, but who wouldn't recognize an XML tag if it sat in their lap, help is on the way.

The current reality is that not everyone knows the language of HTML and its offshoots, which leaves many unable to make even the most mundane changes to their websites without the help of an Internet gatekeeper. To complicate matters, these gatekeepers are often deluged with small but time-consuming requests coming from all angles, leaving them frustrated and distracted from more pressing matters.

Thankfully, a new generation of website is emerging that allows even the techno-