

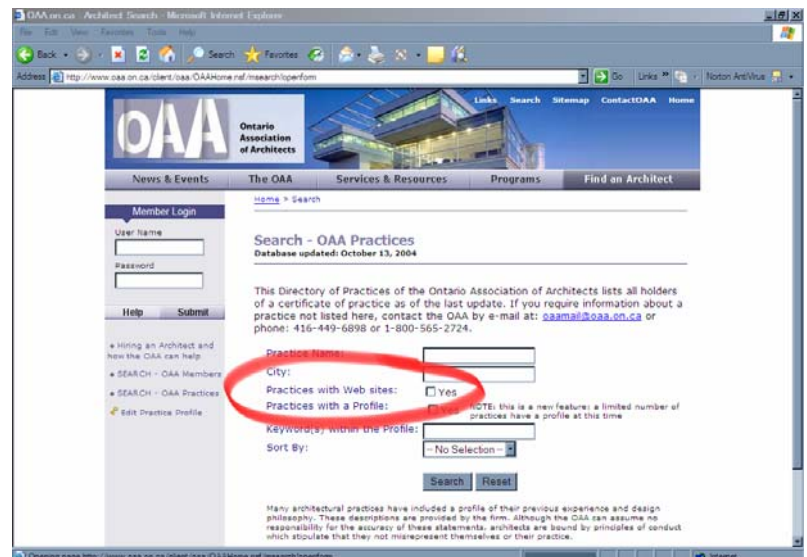
# THE ARCHITECT'S INTERNET

A Look at the Value of Personal Websites for Architects

At present, it is difficult to conceive of a world without the internet. Stop for a moment and think about the impact that the internet has had on the way our society functions as a whole. Perhaps of even more significance is the impact that the internet has had on our daily lives. The expansion of the internet now allows anyone at home with a computer and a modem to access a wealth of information gathered from all over the world. Besides being a vast resource of information, the internet also provides us with shopping, entertainment, forums for discussion or for meeting people, weather updates, and much more. Furthermore, e-mail has become a fundamental key for communication for everyone from business people to students of all ages. It is impossible to deny that the internet has worked its way firmly into modern culture. The question, then, is how to take advantage of the opportunities that this new tool offers.

For the aspiring architect, the internet provides opportunities for publicity, documentation and security. All of these things are tied directly to a personal web site. Developing a personal web site allows the architect to present him or herself to the world, and especially to the architectural community, in a very succinct and comprehensive manner. Websites can and should include such things as a resume, examples of portfolio work, and biographical information; in short, a website should directly characterize and be characterized by its author. An architect's webpage is an opportunity for potential clients and employers alike to discover and evaluate compatibility, skill and motivation in someone they haven't even met yet. For these reasons, you, as architects about to leave school behind and venture out into the world, should seriously consider developing and maintaining a personal website. Not only does a website provide you with a forum for documenting your own work, it allows potential employers to quickly and conveniently browse your portfolio online.

It is worth considering the idea of "convenience" here for a moment. Convenience is, in fact, the driving force that keeps the internet alive. People email messages to employees or friends because it's more convenient than making a dozen phone calls. People shop online because it's more convenient than fighting traffic and lineups in the city. People research online because it's



Even architectural search engines look for firms with websites.

<http://www.oaa.on.ca/client/oa/OAAHome.nsf/msearch/openform>

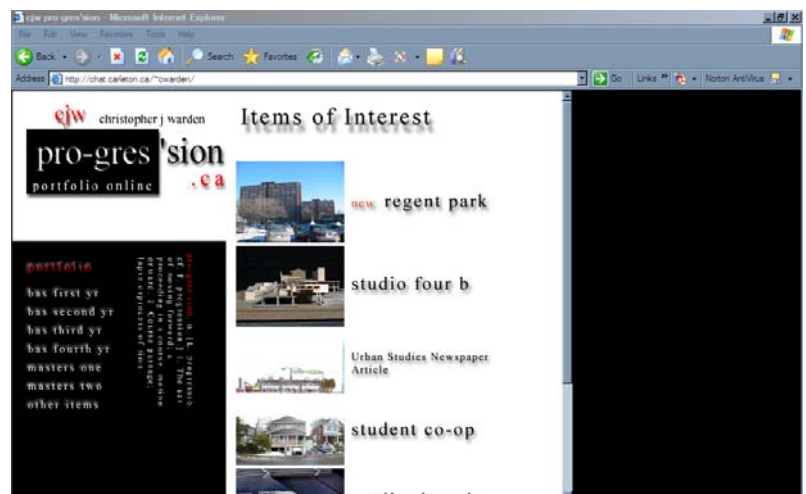
more convenient to access the catalogues of twenty different libraries online than it is to visit and sort through the stacks of one. Now think about how the convenience of the internet can work to your advantage when it comes to looking for a job in the architectural community. Instead of sending a resume and portfolio by mail, you can simply e-mail your URL directly to the principle of the firm. While a printed resume and portfolio may look and feel very nice in the principle's hands, the reality is that it often doesn't make it past the reception desk, and if by chance it does, it is easily misplaced in the massive paper whirlpool that is the desks of most architects. With a resume and portfolio online, the potential employer can click the URL and be looking at your work within seconds. Furthermore, the employer can go back and review it at anytime, without having to worry about misplacing it or forgetting it somewhere. You are therefore more likely to get that interview – and then you can show the fancy, printed version of your work in person!



Place pertinent information regarding copyrights and site viewing preferences on your welcome screen.

<http://chat.carleton.ca/~jboron/entrance.htm>

This convenience also applies when it comes to seeking out clients. Imagine yourself as a client in search of an architect. How will you decide which architects are worth calling? Many people will consult lists compiled online by such organizations as the OAA. While scrolling through these potentially long lists of names with contact information, which names will grab your attention? 99% or more of practicing architects don't enjoy the sort of celebrity of name that architects like Frank Gehry or Daniel Libeskind do. What will make an architect's name jump out at a client from a list of similarly unrecognizable names? Having a URL listed right beside a name makes it very easy for the client to find out what the architect is all about. With just a few mouse clicks, the client can access portfolios, photographs, profiles and CV's. With this kind of convenience, why would the client bother even looking into the other anonymous names on the list? It has already advanced to the point today where not having a URL next to your name in a list of architects is like not being on the list at all.

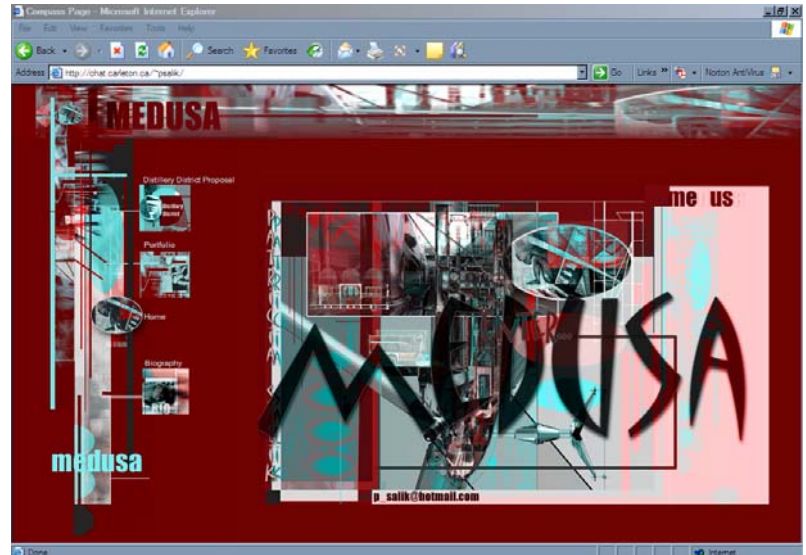


Clarity and ease of navigation are crucial to catching and holding the viewer's attention.

<http://chat.carleton.ca/~cwarden/>

Maintaining a personal website can also be a wonderful way for an architect to express his or her creative side. In addition to displaying existing and ongoing portfolio work, the website itself serves as an online representation of the architect's person. How you choose to present your web profile

will speak volumes about your character to those viewing the site. The construction of your personal website should be undertaken with the same degree of thought and consideration that you would put into an architectural design. When people look at your website, they will in essence be looking as much at the site itself as at the work it displays. Approach the design of your website the same way you would approach an architectural competition. What you want to achieve is clarity, organization, and relevance, but without neglecting appearance. After all, so much of the practice of architecture is based on graphics – why would an architect's website be any different? Furthermore, it is crucial that your website be able to grab the attention of the viewer in a very short amount of time. The average length of time that a person spends at any given website while browsing online is only seven seconds. That is a very short window of time in which to grab and maintain interest. Because of this, websites must strive to achieve clarity and visual impact simultaneously. If someone visits your website and cannot easily figure out how to navigate around the site, they will simply hit the back button on their browser and move on to the next site. It is important to seek a fine balance between functionality and appearance. This harkens back to the well known architectural debate concerning the relationship of form and function. Without form we are merely technicians, and without function we are merely artists. Architects should consider both.



A site's graphic impact speaks volumes about the character of the author.  
<http://chat.carleton.ca/~psalik/>

Perhaps the most interesting thing about a personal website is its seemingly contradictory essence. A personal website is both permanent and wonderfully temporal. As an archive, a personal website serves to collect and preserve your work throughout your lifetime. Furthermore, future generations will be able to access your life's work, which will have a stage of its own on which to perform beyond your own time. In seeming opposition to this is the infinitely mutable character of a personal website, which can be altered and transformed by the author at a whim. As you grow as an architect and as a person, your website can morph along with you. In this sense, the webpage can achieve significance in both the past and the present, as both a history of your work and a characterization of your present self.

For further observations on the value of developing a personal web site, visit

<http://www.dramatispersonae.org/DesignEconomics/PersonalWebSite.htm>