

The two sites I evaluated are w3.org, the Web site for the World Wide Web Consortium, and ADL.gov, the Web site for the U.S. Government's Distributed Learning Initiative of which SCORM is a major component.

I really have a tough time relating my analysis of these Web sites to the book we are reading because it is one of the worst books I've ever read on Web site design. They spend a whole chapter on typography which on the Web is essentially useless since displaying fonts on Web pages is almost entirely dependent on the fonts available at the viewer's end. With the exception of text use in a bitmap image like the company logo the only real choice for fonts in a Web page is one of three classes: sans serif, serif, and mono-spaced. The chapter on color refers to subtractive color as non-digital and additive color as digital. If subtractive color like the CMYK color model is non-digital then somebody better warn Adobe or your local paint dealer who mixes paint using digital color tables. Chapter two on Web site layout has some valuable information in it so that will be my focus of my Web site examination in addition to some interjections of my own gained from designing Web sites during the last fifteen years.

The W3C.org site has improved tremendously over the years. Originally it was a text only Web site with very little aesthetic appeal and it presented so much information on its home page that it was hard to find what you were looking for. Over the course of the past few years it has had a complete makeover which does a much better job of applying some of the layout features discussed in Chapter 2 of the *Exploring Web Design* book. The w3.org home page has a much more professional look to it now because it has been given good balance and organization. A lot of this probably has to do with the advent of Cascading Style Sheets which gives Web designers a lot more flexibility than previously, even rivaling the capabilities that are enjoyed by graphic designers in the print media. Things like, the ability to more precisely position elements on a page, and more power when it comes to creating a consistent format, a harmonious look and feel if you will, throughout a Web site. Where the site has really improved is in its organization of information. It used to be a viewer had to scan through a long list of standards to find what they were looking for. Now those standards have been organized into categorical groupings and the supplemental content along with the W3C Groups have been placed under completely separate headers; headers which are easily found because they are properly contrasted with the other elements on the page. The global navigation remains consistent throughout the site, except when viewing pages that are archived or rarely used. The site also now utilizes visual navigational conventions like breadcrumbs, sign posting, an accent applied to the active link of the page you are viewing, easy to read hypertext links, and standardized icons. The W3C site has also added a lot of power to the way the site is organized by using a categorized sidebar which includes links to content related to what is on the page you are viewing. They have also made content much easier to find by employing the Google search engine for searching the content of their site. Another new feature is the ability for the viewer to change the way they view each page by selecting desktop, mobile or print. In summary, the site is still very text intensive, with few graphical elements, but it now has a much more professional look and feel and an incredible amount of new features that give its viewers a substantial amount of power when using the site.

Even though it too has shown improvement over the course of the last few years, the ADL.gov site, in contrast to the W3.org site, has much less of a professional look and feel to it. At first glance it looks too busy with all of the rounded corner boxes on the left-hand side of the page. This gives it a heavily left-side weighting to it. If their home page was a bar chart the tallest bars would be to the left descending to very small bars on the right. The *Sign In* link is unobtrusive in that it is small and almost hidden in the top left corner, which I'm guessing also makes it easily missed, although once you've used the site the placement becomes inconsequential. Where the W3.org site has very few graphical elements the ADL.gov site goes overboard with the graphical elements; to the point of using graphics just for the sake of having a graphic instead of text. As I said it is heavily weighted by graphics in the left-hand column which makes the appearance of the right-hand column seem very stark as it has no graphics and only hypertext links. Another problem with the large graphical rounded-corner boxes on the left side of the page is that they overshadow the categorical headers which are meant to organize the items in the left-hand column into two main categories. One of the biggest objections I have always had with the ADL.gov site is with its content. This site is the home to the government's SCORM standard yet it has very poor explanations of what SCORM is and how to use it, resorting to PowerPoint slides which appear to be lecture notes put together by a one-time presenter to make a conference presentation. Overall I would say that this site is functional, but could use lots of improvement.