

# "Enough is Enough, and Enough is Too Much!"

Some of you may remember the old Saturday morning cartoons; Popeye was a special favorite of mine. In each episode, Popeye would accept the indignities that were being heaped upon him by the other characters until he could take no more. When his tolerance had been stretched to the breaking point, he would speak the immortal words, "Enough is enough, and enough is too much!" Then he would eat a can of spinach, which gave him the strength to leap into action, right all wrongs, and avenge his good name.

Although the phrasing was a little eccentric, I knew that, with his words, Popeye meant that it was time to stop waiting for other people to do the right thing; it was time to take matters into your own hands. Lately I've wondered whether there wasn't another meaning to be derived.

For better or worse, I've been browsing the World Wide Web lately. I've seen a few things of interest, and I've learned a few things, but, primarily, I've spent a lot of time looking around. These days it seems that everyone, from my local news station to my mother, has a web page. And half of the people I know are either Internet access providers or web page designers. On the one hand, I think that making information more *accessible* is what the computer age is all about. On the other hand, I think that making *information* more accessible is what the computer age is all about.

Allow me to explain. With home computers, local Internet access providers, and the World Wide Web, we have the technology to access information on just about any topic one could imagine. But when I look at what is actually out there, I see a lot of over-designed web pages, half of them "under construction" and most of them simply pointing to other

pages rather than providing useful information themselves.

It would be nice to have some mechanism to gauge how long it would take to access a particular page. Then you could decide ahead of time whether the page sounded interesting enough to warrant the time investment. But there's the catch. The page might *sound* extremely interesting but, once you access it, you might find that it is nothing more than a table of contents for a collection of other pages. Those pages might, similarly, point to still other pages and, when you finally get to some actual information, it might not have been what you were interested in at all.

Another idea would be to have some mechanism to measure the value of the page against the time investment involved in actually getting to the information. You might spend minutes to access a really interesting-sounding page only to find that it is an advertisement, a lot of images but no real content.

I feel sure that there is useful information out there, but there's also a lot of clutter to wade through. It is getting to the point where I'm ready to say:

"Enough is enough!" While hierarchies and outlines are useful for organizing information, the depth of the hierarchy should be in proportion to the usefulness of the information on the leaf nodes. We are all too busy to waste time wading through countless hierarchies of pages to find the one or two that actually have interesting information.

"And enough is too much!" Web pages don't have to be filled with graphics to be useful. While that picture may be worth a thousand words, it also takes a long time to download.

I think we all need a little more spinach in our diets.

*Maria Wadlow is a technical writer and user advocate for Transarc Corporation and is the founder of Pyxion Studios, a consulting company which specializes in interface design.*

*Visual Interaction Design is a Special Interest Area of SIGCHI focusing on the visual aspects of interaction in interface design. The goals of the Visual Interaction Design Special Interest Area are to act as a focal point for visual interaction design interest within SIGCHI, to advance visual interaction design as an integral component of HCI, and to integrate visual interaction design with the rest of SIGCHI.*

*To contribute information to this column, send email to [wadlow.chi@xerox.com](mailto:wadlow.chi@xerox.com) or write to Maria G. Wadlow, Transarc Corporation, The Gulf Tower, 707 Grant Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15219, U.S.A.*

*To subscribe to the Visual Interaction Design ListServ group, send email to [LISTSERV@VTVM1.CC.VT.EDU](mailto:LISTSERV@VTVM1.CC.VT.EDU) with the single line:*

*subscribe VISUAL-L <your full name>*

*in the body. To unsubscribe, send mail to the same address with the single line*

*signoff VISUAL-L*

*in the body. To communicate with members of the Visual Interaction Design community, send email to [VISUAL-L@VTVM1.CC.VT.EDU](mailto:VISUAL-L@VTVM1.CC.VT.EDU).*

