COMP 519 Web Programming

Here are the first things that you need to do to set up a directory for your HTML files, and ensure that other people can view them on a web browser.

Note: I strongly recommend that you become familiar with the Unix environment, including editing files, changing file permissions, moving files around, etc. Why? For at least two reasons: (1) A majority of servers are still operating on some version of Unix/Linux and (2) Learning this environment will allow you to remotely log into the university servers to edit your webpages (and your Java programs for other modules, for example). Thus you can work from the comfort of your own easy chair (and at night, during weekends, etc).

1. Log into the Unix system, either directly (using your name and password), using the Exceed program under Windows (which connects you to one of the Unix machines in the department through an X Server for Windows), or by using another program such as SSH (i.e. a program like PuTTY).

2. Load up a terminal screen, if there isn't one already. You might have to select "Applications" from the menu, then "System Tools", and finally "Terminal". This gives you a terminal much like the DOS command prompt in a Windows environment. Warning! Some commands in Unix are like those in a Windows/DOS command environment, but others aren't! Consult the Unix primer that I've provided for a barebones introduction to some Unix commands.

3. You'll now create a directory in which you'll store all your HTML files (and other files to come like style sheets, scripts, etc). The name of this directory is `public_html` and is the universal name for such a directory. To create this type `mkdir public_html` at the command line.

4. To ensure that others can read the contents, you need to set the permissions on the directory by typing `chmod a+rx public_html` to do this. Note that you will also need to set permissions for each HTML file, external stylesheet, separate JavaScript file, etc. that you create so that people can access them as well!

5. Then use the command `cd public_html` to change to this directory.

6. So far, so good? By default, when a browser is given the name of a website without a filename at the end, it looks for a file called `index.html` in the `public_html` directory.

   For example, if you type in the URL `http://www.csc.liv.ac.uk/` the browser automatically looks for a file called `index.html` in the `public_html` directory associated with that address and loads it if it exists. If no such file exists, then you end up with either the dreaded "404" (File not found) error, or a listing of the contents of the directory at that URL (it might depend upon the server and/or settings of the permissions on the files).

1

See the example that comes later on about this to access the contents of one of my directories for this course.

7. Given that the default behaviour is to look for an "index" file, you'll want to create one in your directory. We can use an editor like `vi` or `emacs` to do this. I've printed out some "primer" material on `vi` to get you started. I use `vi` myself, but you can use another editor if you want to do so. It's just that `vi` can be found on any Unix system in the world, and doesn't require a fancy (graphical) interface to use so can be used when you remotely log into the Computer Science Department.

8. You should now go about making one or two files to test out your abilities to use whatever editor you want to use. There are some examples in the second set of lecture notes which you can try out, and I will talk more about HTML syntax in the next lecture. Note that you can get the source code of the examples in the class notes by accessing the directory at

    `http://www.csc.liv.ac.uk/~martin/teaching/comp519/HTML/`

    where you'll get a listing of files in the directory. (I think, or hope, that they're all there.) Selecting any of the files will allow you to view the output in your browser, and then you can view the source code of that page.

    One file that you should create is a file called `index.html` as this will (eventually) be your home page for the work that you do in this course (and will have links to other pages that you create). The home page that you create for the first assignment should be stored in your `index.html` file (or at the very least, some link from your home page).