Chapter II

Conceptualization

Introduction

This chapter provides instruction, examples, and steps on how to begin the creative production process. Focus will be on user centered design, conceptualization, and creation of documents that define the scope of your personal Web portfolio project. Topics include understanding the user, brainstorming to determine audience, messages, and supporting images needed as well as development of scope documents for the Web portfolio. The scope documents are the concept statement, content list, and content outline. These documents help you, the author, to gather your thoughts and begin to record the ideas in hardcopy form. The ideas you put down on paper will go through
revision and possibly redefinition during the conceptualization process. Don’t worry, this is natural. This initial struggle with ideas is important to establishing solid content and design. Without conceptualization, communication is lost in the translation from the author to the media. This can be deadly in the case of the Web portfolio. Because the goal of the Web portfolio is to persuade, it is vital that all important messages are to the forefront. Without them, it is difficult to establish a personal credibility, identity, and communication channel with the user.

The most important rules in designing any interactive project are to design for the user and design for communication. The Web portfolio design process should focus on yielding a user-centered design. Providing a user-centered design means that the needs, expectations, requirements, and navigation abilities of the user are met indefinitely throughout the Web site experience (Lynch & Horton, 1999). We want the users’ needs to be met, but what are their needs? Users want to feel in control. They want to have an error free experience in which they can absorb the content and submerge themselves in the experience. The content drives the experience and the users’ curiosity to engage the Web portfolio, probing for more evidence and more identity. Navigation plays a major role in the value of the experience. If the experience is a negative one, the perceptions of the author will be negative also. This hypothesis is disturbing because it means that our Web portfolio has an