CHAPTER 21

Snow Leopard As a Web Server

Snow Leopard makes doing everything with the Web as easy as doing it on Mac OS X. We talked about surfing the Web with Safari in Chapter 10, publishing to the Web with MobileMe in Chapter 13, and generating content for the Web throughout the book. There’s one thing left to do: become a part of the Web itself by hosting a web server.

To some that might sound complicated, but it doesn’t have to be. Getting started is as easy as clicking a button. For the hardcore Net geeks, don’t be fooled by the Snow Leopard’s cuddly appearance. When you want to get fierce, there are fangs and claws to go around.

So, whether you’d like to host a home page for your neighborhood bridge club, build an intranet for your home or office, or develop and stage web applications for production and profit, keep reading. It’s time to get your web on.

Apache

Snow Leopard’s built-in web server traces its lineage to an undergraduate working at the National Center for Supercomputing Applications named Rob McCool. As part of the Mosaic web server project, McCool wrote a web server named NCSA HTTPd. The incongruous name, like the program itself, was named after the first web server, CERN HTTPd, developed by Sir Tim Berners-Lee on a NeXT cube.

Rob McCool, and his twin brother Mike (who joined the Mosaic team to port Mosaic to the Macintosh), graduated, leaving NCSA HTTPd orphaned. As many a young engineer discovers, software has a way of outliving its creator’s interest. People continued not only using the web server but also writing improvements that could be patched over the original code.

In 1996 this crazy quilt of code became known as the Apache web server, a nod both to the Native American people famed for their endurance and to its roots as a “patchy” web server. Apache has since become the world’s leading open source web server. Its current incarnation, Apache 2, stands ready to host your personal home page, as shown in Figure 21-1.
Figure 21-1. *The default personal home page in Safari*

To enable all this goodness, you need to turn on web sharing in the Sharing preference pane in System Preferences. Select the Web Sharing box, and you may imagine your computer shuddering slightly as Apache rumbles to life. Once the check box is tamed, the dialog helpfully explains where everything is, as shown in Figure 21-2.

Figure 21-2. *Activating web sharing from System Preferences*