Chapter 5

DYNA M I C W E B P AG E D E V E L O P M E N T

What we’ll cover in this chapter:

- How dynamic sites work
- The dynamic duo: Perl and PHP
- Server-Side Includes (SSI)
- Using the mail() function
- Adding other pages dynamically
Back in Chapter 3, you learned the basics of putting a web page together. In the example you created, everything on the page is there because you specifically coded it to be there. Nothing changes on the page until you change the code. If your site isn’t going to be updated very often, this might be all you need to know, and you can get on with mowing the lawn (or something exciting like that).

Now, imagine that you’re in charge of a large site with a lot of content that changes on a regular basis. Imagine having to code all of it by hand every time the client wanted some content updated. No thank-you, Sir. As well as boring, it’s also an inefficient way of working. You could be doing countless other things instead of all that coding. With just a bit more work, you can make things a lot easier, and even enable clients to update the site themselves.

While static web pages do have their place, dynamic pages are very much the way forward. In this chapter, we’ll look at some of the methods you can use to make your site dynamic with minimal work.

As this chapter will be more technical than in previous chapters, you’ll be using Terminal a bit more, so you might want to drag the Terminal icon to your Dock for easy opening. Terminal is located in /Applications/Utilities/Terminal as shown in Figure 5-1.

Choose your weapon

As with most popular things these days, there are a number of different ways you can add dynamic content to a web page. I’m not going to cover each one in serious detail here, just the basics. There’s a reason why some of the books on the shelves next to this one are over 1000 pages in size: The topics are very complex! Once you’ve tried out some of the technologies discussed in this chapter, it’s up to you to decide whether you want to know all there is to know about it and buy one of those gigantic tomes.