

Net Scan

Web sites transform the Hub into surf city

Client swiping irks Net hosts

BY ANN HARRISON
SENIOR REPORTER

Business ethics on the Internet is still an embryonic concept. Sites which post Web pages for groups and organizations often snatch clients from another host site and luring them to their own.

Organizations can choose where they want their pages posted, but client swiping can prompt some bitter feelings among those who host large Web sites in competitive markets.

V.A. Shiva, president and CEO of Millennium Productions, says his company designed a site for the Boston Ballet on Millennium's arts site but the Ballet was lured away to Boston.com, a rival site run by the Boston Globe. Shiva contends that Boston.com is monopolizing area Web content. But a spokesperson from the Boston Ballet notes their site was completely redesigned before their move to Boston.com which they say simply gave them broader exposure.

According to Shiva, an actor's database developed by Millennium was directly lifted by Cybercast which never gave the company credit for the information.

"People have stolen a lot of stuff from us," complains Shiva who says the practice of appropriating Web content is widespread.

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Pick of the Week



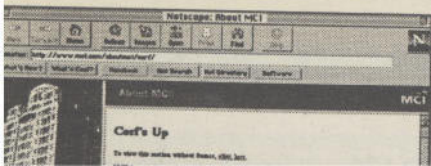
photo by Stuart Garfield

V.A. Shiva, president and CEO of Millennium Productions, in his office overlooking Harvard Square in Cambridge, home of Harvard-Square.com.

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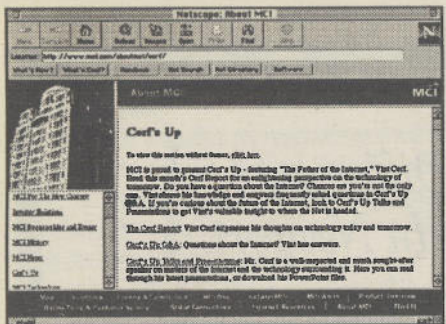
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Pick of the Week



www.mci.com/aboutmci/cerf/nfr/cerfProfile.shtml



Don't be dissuaded by the long URL. This site is a treasure trove of insight from Vint Cerf, the senior vice president of data architecture for MCI's Data and Information Services Division also known affectionately as "The Father of the Internet." The man who essentially invented the technical underpinnings of the network expounds here on the future of the Net and answers questions. You can even read the text of his latest speeches and presentations and discover his favorite Web sites. Bookmark it.



photo by Stuart Garfield

V.A. Shiva, president and CEO of Millennium Productions, in his office overlooking Harvard Square in Cambridge, home of Harvard-Square.com.

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In the international society of cyber space, a growing number of netizens are heading for regional Web sites where they can kick back and hang out with their neighbors.

Boston.com gave Boston-area Internet users a place to think globally and surf locally for information.

Harvard-Square.com has now refined this idea by digitizing the entire milieu of one little corner of Cambridge known for its creativity and irreverence.

The virtual version of Harvard Square was launched in September by Millennium Productions, Inc. and Lotus Development Corp. Built by Millennium, using Domino, an Internet applications server based on Lotus Notes, the site is receiving an average of 52,000 hits a day.

V.A. Shiva, president and CEO of

Millennium Productions, says his company developed the idea of a community Web site while developing the **www.arts-online** site that features 530 arts organizations. He notes that while many sites offer local business listings and and chat options, few give users a unique sense of place that shapes the style of the content.

"Our view of an on-line community is direct listings and forums, but it has to bring out the flavor of the local community," says Shiva. "None of the other sites have combined local businesses with the community, all have kept them separate."

Shiva says Millennium used Lotus Notes to construct the Harvard-Square.com site because he considers the software more reliable than other platforms. He says the site illustrates one of the first examples of embedding Notes into a Web environment. The Domino technology, says Shiva, gives participants secure, direct access to their pages on the site, allowing them to update their information and

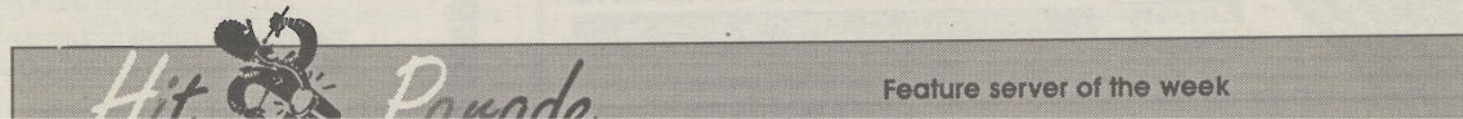
make the community self-sustaining. Millennium is also giving businesses on and off the site free e-mail accounts.

"Harvard-Square.com demonstrates the kind of cool interactive Web site companies can develop and host easily with Notes and Domino," says Jeff Papows, chief operating officer of Lotus Development Corp.

According to Shiva, the most popular parts of Harvard-Square.com include the main page, the Cross Walk forum and the restaurant listings. The top page of the site offers a description of Harvard Square's unique culture, with links to travel services, real estate offices, health care providers, shops and restaurants. There is also a kids' guide and performance schedules for clubs and movie theaters.

Wrapped around these on-line ads are links to the City of Cambridge and its local arts and political organizations. MIT and Harvard have links, as do local residents, street performers and other characters who give the Square its

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REGIONAL

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unique character.

In its ongoing fusion of art and technology, the site also features live shots from a video camera mounted outside Millennium's second floor offices. The camera points directly into "the pit" area in front of the Harvard Square T stop, which is a popular local hangout for teen-agers.

An interview on the Local Faces part of the site features two high school students who express their views on the increasing gentrification of the Square. A forum for those who frequent the pit was recently launched, using the Microsoft NT 4.0 format.

Unlike other community Web sites, Harvard-Square.com doesn't shy away from expressing political opinions. Both incumbent U.S. Sen. John Kerry and his challenger, Gov. William Weld have banner ads on the site. But their ads are accompanied by an image of a traffic sign that prohibits right hand turns, an acknowledgement of the politically liberal tone of Harvard Square activists.

"Harvard Square is a global village with a distinct feel," says Zoe Helene, art director for Millennium Productions. "It's our job to express the essence of this diverse community in Cyber space, uncensored with all its artistic, academic and radical elements intact."

The Millennium Web staff that creates the site has 19 full-time Web developers, including a former animator from Disney, a writer, a musician and other artists. According to Shiva, the Harvard-Square.com staff are always searching for ways to encourage members of the community to participate in their interac-

tive neighborhood. Participating businesses are encouraged to offer on-line coupons that can be redeemed for off-line purchases.

The site also features special events for Halloween and Thanksgiving, and recently sponsored a display of artwork by students at the Agassi School in Cambridge. Another area on the site allows visitors to nominate for the "dash award" their favorite locally sponsored Web site or those who have contributed to both the virtual and real Harvard Square community. The developers of Harvard-Square.com even put their URL on a billboard on Massachusetts Avenue recently, which

"Harvard Square is a global village with a distinct feel."

—Zoe Helene,
Millennium Productions

makes their site harder still to miss.

"If a community will be successful on-line, you have to have a critical mass of participants," says Shiva. "For us it's local community and local information with activism that is making it fun and entertaining."

Millennium productions makes its money on commercial Web site development and is not planning to reap a profit from Harvard-Square.com. Shiva said Millennium brought in revenues of about \$250,000 last year and predicts that this figure will soar to \$2.5 million this year from the sale of Internet services,

how-to books and interactive software. Cambridge-based Information Cybernetics Inc. purchased a majority interest in Millennium in January for an unspecified amount, and Shiva says Millennium will help Information Cybernetics market its various Internet technologies.

A number of Harvard-Square.com business clients still have little content on their links, aside from a name and phone number. But Shiva says the Harvard-Square.com site is now attracting national advertising, and AT&T has approached Millennium about forming a strategic partnership.

As the site gets larger, its creators are planning to add live video playback capability and an area for senior citizens. According to Shiva, Harvard-Square.com will eventually include an expanded virtual environment, where participants use an avatar to represent themselves on-line. A job search section is being planned, as is an area for real estate and personal ads. Visitors to the site will soon also be able to use intelligent software agents that send them e-mail messages if a topic that interests them is being discussed in one of the Harvard-Square.com forums.

Shiva says Harvard-Square.com has no intention of expanding its focus beyond the confines of Harvard Square's cultural scene. Instead, Millennium has plans to create a site for Shibuya, the Harvard Square of Tokyo, which will be completed by the end of November.

"It's refreshing for us because in some ways we are an interactive ad agency and Harvard-Square.com is a way for our creative team to express themselves," says Shiva. "We are doing a lot of experimenting with the medium because we think it's a new genre for artists, it's a way for us to be creative and explore things and present information."

SWIPING

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Adam Caper, president of Boston's Hubnet Communications Ltd., meanwhile, charges that Harvard-Square.com itself has done its share of displaying Web pages that it didn't develop. Caper contends that on-line menus developed by Hubnet for local restaurants appear within a frame on the restaurant's Harvard-Square.com page. Unlike a link, the URL of the Hubnet site is not displayed when the menu is viewed from inside a frame. Caper says he's especially galled because he declined to buy advertising on the site, and then was not notified when his material appeared there.

"I find it disappointing that someone who is participating in the creation of this new media would feel so little concern for legitimizing the media and be so cavalier about the important issue of copyright protection," says Caper. "It's one thing if people are giving appropriate attributions, it's another thing entirely if they just lift it."

Shiva counters that the Hubnet logo is prominently displayed on the on-line menus, which only drives traffic to the Hubnet site.

"I view that as competition; welcome to the real world," says Shiva.

Caper says just because everyone else is doing it doesn't make it right. Caper says he placed his logo on his pages when he realized they were appearing elsewhere, and contends that site developers should ask permission of the person who posts the original material, prior to displaying it on their site.

According to Caper, this same courtesy should be paid to Harvard-Square.com and all other Web developers who copyright the material they work so hard to create.

"There is a rising tide and our business will only survive and prosper if the wider community has faith in the practitioners," says Caper. "If you really have something of value, you don't need to do that stuff to survive."

VOLUNTEERS

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Analyst contends Wang's losses were expected