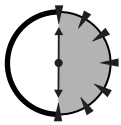


Planning Site Navigation

Session Checklist

-
- ✓ Planning site navigation
 - ✓ Manipulating navigation tools in Dreamweaver
 - ✓ Preparing a Navigation Bar
-



**30 Min.
To Go**

Nothing is more important to a site than the navigation. If your visitors cannot find the information they require on your site, the best writing, graphics, or dynamic content in the world will not do the job.

Dreamweaver 4 offers powerful aids to construct navigation elements, and this session covers many of these features. You'll also discover how to create navigation codes automatically with Dreamweaver's tools and then how to create a library item or template to automate their placement on the page.

But first, you should plan how your navigation will work. This is not a navigation or usability book, but I cannot write about creating navigation without first briefly explaining how navigation should be structured.

Finally, in this session, you will get a peek at the Food Info site, the second site you will build for this course. In fact, you will build one small menu that you will use in that site.

Planning Navigation

Establishing a plan for site navigation is both my favorite and least favorite portion of Web design. It is exciting, and it often feels like completing a complicated puzzle. On the other hand, you are making decisions that will be difficult to change later because the graphics involved in creating navigation will be fully integrated into the overall appearance of the site.

To start the process, you must know why your visitors will be coming to your site. The look and features of the site are more dependent on *who* is coming to your site, but the navigation is best designed around *why* they have visited your site.

I will pause here and give a very short overview of the site you will build for your second project. You'll build the site for a fictitious business, called Facts on Food. It is an internet-only business, geared to providing information about food. Prime customers include students, teachers, chefs, writers, and serious hobby chefs. It is primarily an information and research site.

Establishing the why for a site visit

The crucial information you need to learn from this exercise is why visitors will come to the Facts on Food Web site. They will come to find background information about the food they are working with or writing about. This information includes cultural reference, history, common uses for foods, and some recipes. The site also has links to other information and recipe sites.

What's important about the Facts on Food Web site from the visitor's perspective? Fast access to the information is most important. Although a few may care to wander through the site for entertainment, the majority of visits would be with a goal at hand. Visitors will already know what they are looking for when they hit the front page. Keep this in mind when you design the site.

When you have a site that is geared for return visits, which is the only way a site like this can succeed, you must let your visitors get to information almost instantly. This is not the place for artsy, hidden menus. The other important consideration is that this will be a large site. You must provide obvious clues to let visitors know where they are at all times.

Listing navigation areas

You must first determine the logical order and grouping for information. The Facts on Food site will be divided into food areas, because a food area is the most likely

starting point for a visit. For example, visitors will likely know whether they are looking for information on a meat or a spice before they arrive. This becomes the major navigation for the site, streamlining visitors into the correct category right away. However, visitors may want to know about both a meat and a dairy product. For this reason, make sure that visitors can get to another major area from any page.

Each food section of the site will have five divisions that will be offered from a secondary page within the major groups. Every page should also offer links with company information and a contact route, because it is impossible to tell where in the process this information may be needed. These topics will invite a visitor to contribute to the site, contact the site owners, or find out more about the company behind the site, which you will make available through another menu on every page. Table 17-1 lists these topics.

Table 17-1

Jump Menu Categories

Categories	Subcategories
* MEAT	History
* VEG PROTEIN	Cultural
* FRUIT/VEG	methods
* GRAINS	recipes
* DAIRY	resources
* SPICES	
CONTACT	
ABOUT US	
CONTRIBUTE	

* Will have subcategories

Finally, you want the returning visitor to be able to get anywhere on the site quickly. For this reason, you will provide a *jump* menu (a drop-down menu listing the entire site) and a search function. See Figure 17-1 for an early version of these areas.

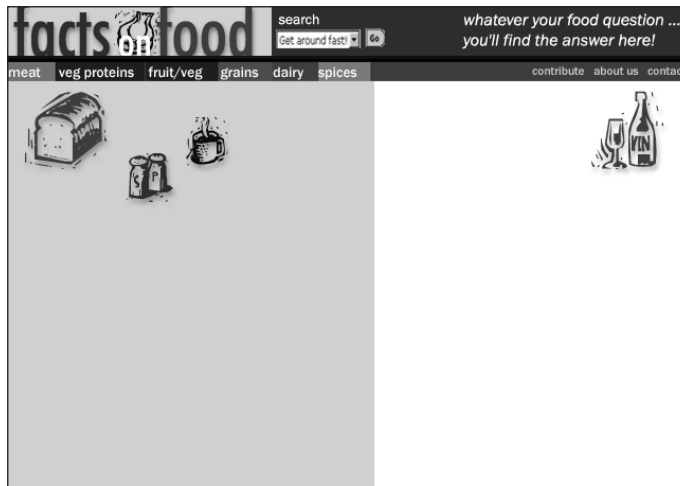


Figure 17-1

Early proof for new Food Info site, reflecting the menu setup as described in Table 17-1. The jump menu, as highlighted here, will provide quick navigation for the entire site from any page in the site.

It sounds logical and quite simple once it is all laid out. However, it takes a lot of planning to create an intuitive and useful navigation system. Even for this imaginary site, I mapped out a couple of different structures before I settled on one to use in this session.

Creating a site map

Dreamweaver has a site map creation feature (see Session 3), but unfortunately, that only works once you have your site built. However, it is still a good idea to create a site map before you start on your site.

A *site map* simply lays out the physical structure of your site. You can use a graphics program to do this, or a spreadsheet, even a plain piece of paper with a pencil. The important thing is to create a visual map of the site layout, which can help enormously in spotting errors or missed connections.

I am more comfortable in a graphics program than with pen in hand, so I create my maps on the computer. See Figure 17-2 for a rough site map created in a vector illustration program. This map is the basis for this Session's exercises. I draw your attention to the word *rough* because I do not spend hours making a site map a beautiful piece.

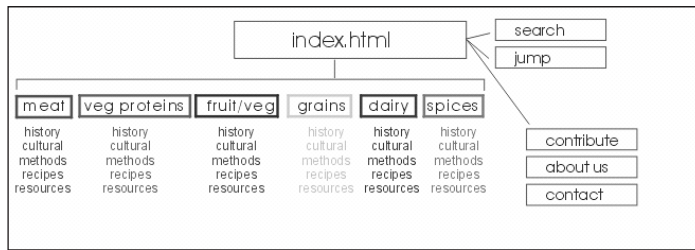


Figure 17-2

Site map created with a vector program, though a pencil and paper will work just as well

You will return to the navigation subject, once you have seen the various tools that Dreamweaver offers to create navigation areas. Most of you probably have at least the seed of an idea for a site. While you work along, watch for the perfect way to present the information you are looking to share with your visitors. You have many choices.

Manipulating Navigation Tools in Dreamweaver

You have already seen Dreamweaver's rollover navigation in Session 13, but much of the work you did on the rollover menus can be further controlled by creating a Navigation Bar. You will build one of the menus for the new site using this feature.

You can also create image maps quickly and easily. *Image maps*, which take a single graphic and make different parts of the image link to different places, were once very popular. Although mouseover navigation has replaced many image maps, the latter still have their place. You will learn about image maps in Session 26.

You will start with a jump menu. Dreamweaver makes creating these unglamorous, but most useful navigation aids, as easy as typing in your content. The method is easy to follow and will get you in shape to tackle the slightly more complicated navigation bars.

Creating jump menus in Dreamweaver

Jump menus do such a great job of offering tons of information in a very small space, that they remain indispensable for any serious information site.

They are also very easy to build. Dreamweaver has automated the process so well, that is it literally a fill in the blanks exercise. You will build one on a new page in our Resources directory of the Weekend site, using the information for the



**20 Min.
To Go**

new site as a practice run. Although you are only working with menus here, you are becoming more familiar with the JavaScript features in Dreamweaver.

To create a jump menu:

1. Create a new document and name it `jump.html` in the Resources directory of the Weekend site.
2. Select Insert ⇨ Form Objects ⇨ Jump Menu. The Insert Jump Menu window you see in Figure 17-3 will open. Through these steps, you will enter the items from the site map in this jump menu.

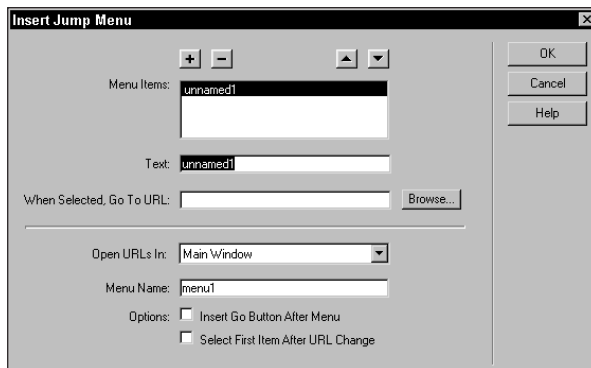


Figure 17-3
Initial Insert Jump Menu display

When the Insert Jump Menu window opens, the Menu Items area contains the item “unnamed1.” Note how this same title also appears in the Text field. The Menu Items area reflects the text that is typed in the Text field. If you were to click OK right now, you would have a jump menu with one listing — unnamed1. However, you are going to rename this entry in step three and then add more entries in subsequent steps. As more menu items are added, the list in the Menu Items section will grow. To edit any entry, select it from the Menu Items list and change the text in the Text field. You are now ready to enter the menu items.

3. Make sure that the original text is highlighted, and type **Get around fast** in the Text field. Click in any other field and the new text will replace “unnamed1” in the Menu List.

This entry is simply a message, not meant to be a link, so you will not add a URL link for this item.

4. Before you add other menu items, you need to set up the values for the menu as a whole. To name the menu, type **quick** in the Menu Name field near the bottom of the screen, replacing **menu1**.
5. You want the line “Get around fast” to appear in the closed jump menu at all times, so Click Select First Item After URL Change. This brings your menu display to the first item you enter every time the menu displays.
6. Now you will add the menu items. Since you will be listing all of your categories and their subcategories, you must consider how the areas can be defined. You will have a list of 39 items. If you type all entries in the same style, a user would never be able to distinguish the items at a glance.

So, you will use uppercase letters for the main categories, and spaces and bullets to define the subcategories.

Click the + to add an entry to your menu. “Unnamed1” appears again in both the Menu Items and Text fields.

7. Type **MEAT** in the Text field.
8. To state where the visitor will go by choosing this list item, enter **meat.html** in the When Selected, Go To URL field. Your listings should look exactly like the ones in Figure 17-4.



Meat.html does not exist yet. However, from working out the details for the site, as explained above, I know what the main category page names will be. At this time, we will only add URLs for the main categories, not the subcategories. We can finish the menu when we have our pages in place and can ensure that the right filenames will be in the menu.

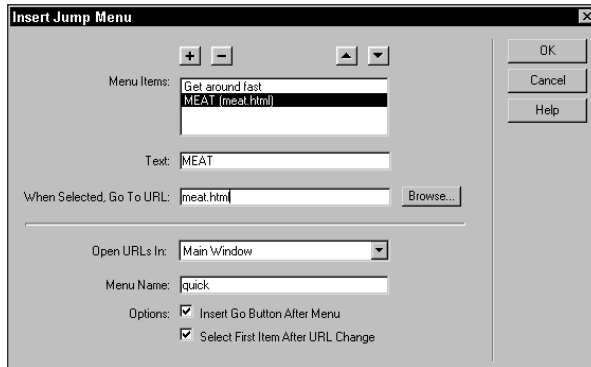


Figure 17-4

Insert Jump Menu window after the first two menu listings have been added.

The next steps create the entries for the Meat submenu items. You want them to be easily identified as sublistings so you will add an indent and a bullet. This is a little more work, but since this menu will appear on every page, it is well worth the investment to help visitors find their way quickly.



To include an indent, add an HTML space (). In fact, add two of them, because one space looks like an error, rather than an indent. To add a bullet, the HTML code is `•`.

1. Click the + again to add another listing. In the Text field, type ** •** two times. Type **•** to insert a bullet, and then type **history**. Your entry should read ** • history**, which will display as shown in Figure 17-5. You will add the URL in Step 3..
2. Repeat the previous step four times. In place of “history,” type **cultural**, **methods**, **recipes**, and **resources**, respectively.
3. Referring to Step 6 in the previous list, continue to build your menu by typing the remaining main menu items: **VEG PROTEIN** (vegprot.html), **FRUIT/VEG** (fruitveg.html), **GRAINS** (grains.html), **DAIRY** (dairy.html), **SPICES** (spices.html). Also include their subcategories:
 - history
 - cultural
 - methods
 - recipes
 - resources

4. Finally, add the last three main menu items: **CONTACT** (contact.html), **ABOUT US** (about.html) and **CONTRIBUTE** (contrib.html).
5. When you have entered all your listings, click OK to return to your document.
6. Preview your document in both browsers. Figure 17-5 shows the expanded menu in Internet Explorer.

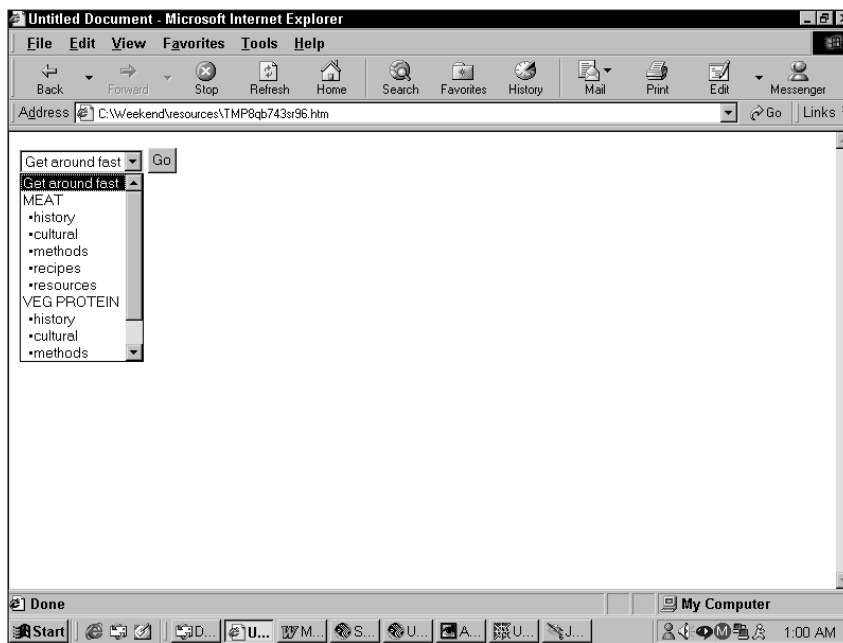


Figure 17-5

The jump menu previewed in a browser, where the HTML formatting of list items appears

The jump menu takes much more time to explain than it does to complete it. Once you have completed a few entries, “tedious” will probably be a more likely comment than “difficult.” If you get bored, peek at your code; typing all of it is a lot more tedious.

Before you leave this section, you should learn to edit a jump menu.



**10 Min.
To Go**

Creating a Navigation Bar

Dreamweaver provides a streamlined method for creating graphic menus like the one you create for your first site in this course. You use the Interactive Images menu to place individual rollover images to create the graphic navigation. This section will show you how to use Dreamweaver's Navigation Bar feature, which will allow you to enter all of your rollovers in one spot.

You will also further streamline the menu process by creating a library item from the finished Navigation Bar. The menu you will create with this exercise is perfect for this route because it will not change for most pages on the site. Once again, you will create this menu in a document in the Resources directory of the Weekend site.



You can only place one Navigation Bar on each page in Dreamweaver, even though two or more menus are often on the page. Create a Navigation Bar for the menu that best matches the options offered.

Preparing the graphics for a Navigation Bar

I am not going to cover how to create the actual graphics because that is well outside the scope of this book. I used Photoshop 6 to prepare the graphics for this site and have included the Rollover window from Image Ready to illustrate the three states of the graphics shown in Figure 17-7: Normal, Over, and Down.

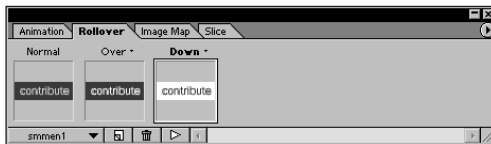


Figure 17-7

Rollover window from Adobe ImageReady showing three states of one menu item. You will use these graphics to build a Navigation Bar in Dreamweaver.



I use the rollover creation feature of Adobe Photoshop or Macromedia Fireworks to save my graphics, but I create my rollovers and navigation bars in Dreamweaver for more control and flexibility.

You will create a menu that contains three states. The Normal state is what you see when the menu is not in use. The Over state is what you see when the mouse is placed over the menu item. Finally, rather than removing the active link for this menu, you will use the Down state to create a third graphic that will indicate that the menu is active. In this case, choose the menu item background color to match the page color so that the active link will appear to be part of the page rather than part of the menu. You can use any graphic effect, but the Down state should give a clear indication to visitors that they are on the page represented by the menu item.



When you are building your own Navigation Bar, you will need all graphics prepared ahead of time. For this example, you can find the necessary graphics on the CD-ROM.

Preparing a Navigation Bar

There are several steps to preparing a Navigation Bar in Dreamweaver:

- Inserting the first menu item
- Inserting additional menu items
- Customizing Navigation Bars for each page

These steps are broken down in the following sections. Although the instructions appear to be very long, do not let this discourage you; they are all very logical, and you can complete them quickly.

Inserting the first menu item

With your graphics prepared, you can create a Navigation Bar that can be copied to many pages or placed in a Library item. To build the Navigation Bar, follow these steps:

1. Create a new folder in the Resources folder of the Weekend site. Type **navmen** as the name. You will be creating four pages that will cover all possible views for the Navigation Bar.



In the Session 17 folder on the CD-ROM, copy the Smmen folder to the Resources/Navmen folder on your Weekend site. This folder contains 9 files you will use to create your Navigation Bar.

2. Create a new document, and name it **main.html**.
Eventually, this menu will be placed on another site, so you will be doing no page formatting.

3. From the document you just created, `main.html`, select Insert ⇨ Interactive Images ⇨ Navigation Bar. The Insert Navigation Bar window opens.
This window should look a little familiar from the Jump Menu window you used in the previous exercise. The `unnamed1` listing appears in two fields. You will enter the information in the Element Name field, and that text will appear in the Nav Bar Elements listing. For this example, you have three menu items: `contribute`, `about` and `contact`. You have graphics to represent each, but you should use the same names that appear in the graphics to prevent confusion.
4. Type **contribute** in the Element Name field.
As soon as you leave that field, the name will appear in the Nav Bar Elements list. The lower fields will always be related to the selected item in this list. You must now tell Dreamweaver which graphics to use with this listing.
5. First, specify the Up Image, which will be seen when there is no action on this item. Click the folder next to the Up Image field. Locate the file `smmen1.gif` in the `art/smmen` folder.
6. Next, specify the image that will be seen when the mouse passes over this menu item. Click the folder next to the Over Image field. Select `smmenlover.gif`.
7. Finally, place the image that will be seen when the page that matches the menu item is active. Click the folder next to the Down Image field. Select `smmen1down.gif`.



Although you will not use it for this exercise, you have one more option. You can place an Over While Down state image that will display a different graphic when the mouse is passed over the link displaying the down position.

8. To specify the link for this set of images, enter **contribute.html** in the When Clicked, Go to URL field.
9. Activate Preload Images. This command will ask the visitor's browser to load the images into the cache so they will be available when needed.
10. Choose Insert Horizontally for this menu because the menu items are going to be side by side. If you were creating a menu like the one in the Weekend site, which was the first site we created, you would choose Insert Vertically. Uncheck the Use Tables option, as a table layout for this simple menu is unnecessary.

11. Your first menu listing is complete. But **do not** click OK yet. You'll pick up from here in the next exercise.

Inserting additional menu items

Including more menu items is mainly a repeat of inserting the first menu item, but you must first add a new listing.

1. Click the + button to create a new listing.
2. Repeat Steps 4–8 in the previous exercise for each new menu item. This exercise requires the following entries:

Second menu item

Name: about

Files: smmen2.gif, smmen2-over.gif, smmen2-down.gif

Third menu item

Name: contact

Files: smmen3.gif, smmen3-over.gif, smmen3-down.gif

3. When all three menu items have been completed and your window looks like Figure 17-8, click OK to complete.
4. Preview your menu in a browser. None of the links will work yet because you haven't added URLs.

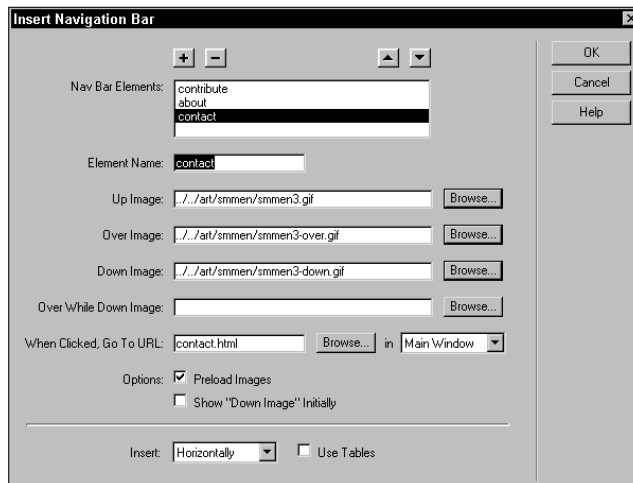


Figure 17-8
The final setup for creating your Navigation Bar

This forms the basis of the Navigation Bar feature’s capabilities. Once the links are added, you can place this menu on any page, and the rollovers and links will work. However, the Navigation Bar will look the same on every page, giving the visitor no idea which page is active.

You may have noticed when you previewed the menu that the “down” images are not showing yet.

Because you want to let your visitors know that they are on a page in that menu, you have to do a little adjusting on each page. So, you will create three more pages, one for each of the menu items. On each page, you will set the menu to display the active menu item with a white background.

Customizing Navigation Bars for each page

To make the Navigation Bar display a down image, you must create a slightly different bar for each page. This sounds complicated, but it involves only one checkbox. Follow these steps to customize Navigation Bars for each page:

1. Create a new file in the Resources/Navmen folder, and enter **contribute.html** as the name.
2. Copy the Navigation Bar from `main.html` and paste it into `contribute.html`. Simply select the images in the Navigation Bar, and Dreamweaver will pick up the JavaScript to paste it into your new page.
3. With `contribute.html` active, select Modify ⇨ Navigation Bar. Highlight **contribute** in the Nav Bar Elements field of the Modify Navigation Bar window.
4. Click Show “Down Image” Initially. Click OK. The first menu item, `contribute`, will now be in brown type on a white background. This is the file `smmen1-down.gif` showing or your Down Image from that menu item.
5. Save this file.
6. Create a new file in the Resources/Navmen folder, and enter **about.html** as the name. Repeat Steps 2–4, substituting `about.html` for `contribute.html` in the steps. Save.
7. Create a new file in the Resources/Navmen folder and enter **contact.html** as the name. Repeat Steps 2–4, substituting `contact.html` for `contribute.html` in the steps. Save.
8. Preview your menu. You should be able to click back and forth among the pages you have created, and the active page menu item should always display with a white background.

So now you have created a text menu, a rollover menu with each image placed separately, a jump menu, and finally, a Navigation Bar. You have built a strong toolbox of powerful methods to accomplish many different types of navigation. You will use these tools over and over as you design Web sites.



Done!

REVIEW

I am hoping you are now quite comfortable with Dreamweaver's automation. They certainly streamline the work flow and save many hours. You do need to keep a few very important things in mind though.

- The most important factor in creating a navigation system is "why" visitors have come to your site. You must know why they are there to build a navigation system that will serve their needs.
- Creating a site map to illustrate the site structure can save you many hours of work and make your site a more logical place to navigate.
- Jump menus offer navigation to your entire site in one small area. Dreamweaver makes creating a jump menu very fast and easy.
- To edit a jump menu, you must use Dreamweaver's Behaviors palette or edit through the Properties Inspector.
- When creating a Navigation Bar, you must have prepared all the graphics you wish to use. You can use graphics created in an automated slicing feature such as ImageReady or Fireworks to build your Navigation Bar.
- Enter all menu items in the Insert Navigation Bar window, at one time, to build your menu. You can edit the Navigation Bar at a later date by selecting Modify ⇨ Navigation Bar.
- Navigation Bars can be customized for each page.

QUIZ YOURSELF

1. Why is it important to create a site map before you start designing your site? (See "Planning Navigation.")
2. What is a Dreamweaver Jump Menu? (See "Creating jump menus in Dreamweaver.")

3. How can you quickly edit entries in a jump menu once it has been created? (See “Editing a jump menu.”)
4. A navigation bar is a handy way to create a menu. There is an important restriction with a Dreamweaver Navigation Bar though. What is it? (See “Creating a Navigation Bar.”)
5. What are the four states you can assign to entries on a navigation bar? See “Creating a Navigation Bar.”)
6. What is the command to edit your navigation bar? (See “Customizing Navigation Bars for each page.”)

