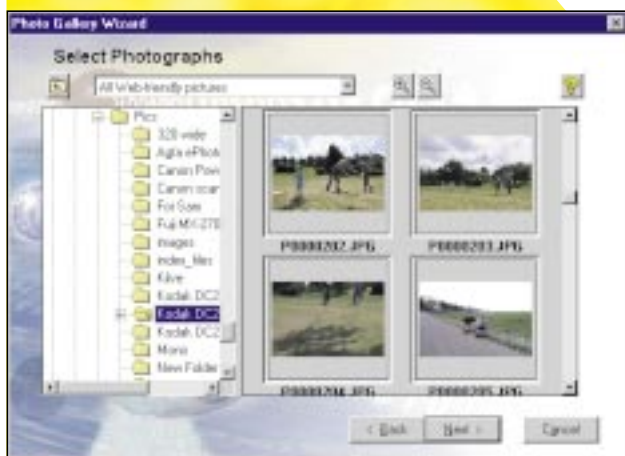




PC Plus

Want to create an on-line picture album? This wizard helps you create a thumbnail page linked to full-size images. There are beginner-friendly wizards elsewhere, too, and choosing our upload location and settings was a breeze.



web design

WEB PAGE CONSTRUCTION KIT 6.0

An easy to understand and comprehensive graphics program

Minimum requirements Pentium with 8MB RAM, Win95/98 or NT 4.0
Tested on Pentium III 450 with 128MB RAM, Win98

PRICE £30 EX VAT £26 SUPPLIER MediaGold PHONE 0207 221 3755 WWW www.mvd.com

There are 101 different ways of building a Web site, each one (we're told) better than the rest. You can export ready-made pages and sites from low-end DTP programs like PagePlus 6 and Publisher; you can pop out Web pages from Microsoft Word and other office applications; you can use Microsoft FrontPage, included with certain versions of Office; or you can go the full hog and buy a professional-level Web site authoring package like GoLive or DreamWeaver. So what's a bargain-priced beginner-friendly package like this got to offer in the face of all this choice?

Well, a decent and intuitive authoring environment for a start. Construction Kit 6.0 is actually based around WebExpress 4.0, which uses an Explorer-style hierarchical page management panel in conjunction with a WYSIWYG page editor which makes up the rest of the display.

WebExpress 3.0 was reviewed back in issue 140, and was criticised for its lack of support of the DIV tag and inline style sheets, but these issues have been fixed in the latest release. Also new is drag-and-drop text and graphics, a global spellchecker, improved table design tools and a photo gallery feature for creating thumbnail albums with links to full-size graphics.

Construction Kit also includes 5,000 Web graphics, a good-sized printed manual and an on-disk guide to creating good-looking Web pages. That's not bad at all given its £30 price tag, so can the program live up to this early promise?

The Web page design side is good. Hyperlinks, tables, framesets and graphics are all easy to set up and manage. This is still a Web page editor of the old school, though, and it doesn't exploit the full layout potential of DHTML and cascading style sheets. The printed manual stops well short of in-depth help on more advanced topics, and the Web-based getting started guide has a section on this that was still under construction when we visited.

The program does come with thousands of ready-to-use graphics but, rather than being provided as a searchable clip-art library, they're embedded in the HTML-based help system. The idea is that you simply cut and paste the graphics you want into your own Web pages.

This help system opens up automatically when you start WebExpress, and you navigate around it by Ctrl-clicking on the links. (You're in a Web authoring package, after all, where single-clicks simply select an object for editing.)

The site management tool proves something of a disappointment, too. Its hierarchical structure mirrors the placement of files on your hard disk, rather than the internal relationships of the pages in your Web site. Indeed, you won't find a graphical, flowchart-style site management tool so your large-scale site planning is going to have to be done on the back of an envelope. It can display pages, links and graphics, and you can test links to make sure they're not broken. Without visual connections between links, graphics and pages, though, it's by no means as useful as it could be.

Construction Kit has its good points too, though. It's mostly easy to grasp, and even novices will be creating useful sites in hours rather than days.

Imagemaps are one of the program's strong points, too. They're easy to set up, edit, and re-edit later on. There's also a novel 'Include' feature which enables you to embed one page in another. When you edit the 'source' page, all the pages it's included in are updated automatically. This lets

You don't get an awful lot of pre-designed Web site themes to choose from, but the quality's good. The site management panel looks like it's going to be useful, but proves a bit disappointing in practice.

you mirror the Navigation Bars and Shared Border functions in Microsoft FrontPage, for example.

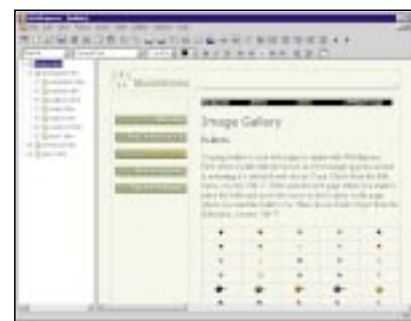
You also get a modest but good-looking set of Web page themes and templates, though it's disappointing that the bundled graphics are limited to backgrounds, bullets and buttons.

What you're left with is a pretty decent Web site authoring package with some significant weaknesses and gaps... but with a price tag that makes them easy to forgive. It can't match FrontPage, GoLive and others for high-end features and it can't match PagePlus or Publisher for instant Web page design tools. However, its price undercuts the lot of them.

Web Page Construction Kit 6.0 won't impress HTML professionals, but it's ideal for budget-conscious part-timers planning a Web site that consists of more than just a couple of pages. It handles all the basics with style and ease, and it's a good stepping stone between the simplistic tools in DTP applications and more complex concepts and functions in professional packages.

Rod Lawton

The Construction Kit Image Gallery consists of backgrounds, bullets and buttons embedded as inline graphics in the on-line help.



PC Plus

VERDICT

WEB PAGE CONSTRUCTION KIT 6.0

For Easy to understand, comprehensive help, design themes and graphics

Against Poor site management, limited clip-art

Range of features.....	6
Ease of use	8
Documentation	7
Performance.....	7
Value for money.....	8

7/10

