



Canadian Heritage Departmental Newsletter



Corey Timpson

Putting visual ideas to work

Meet Corey Timpson, CHIN Web designer

Corey Timpson sees things differently: that's his job.

As a web graphics designer with the Canadian Heritage Information Network (CHIN), his preoccupations revolve around the world of visual design – creative conceptualization and execution for web, multimedia and print publications.

“The way CHIN is structured, I work for a group called Systems and Access. My work is about development and design related to the Virtual Museum of Canada (VMC) and the CHIN Web site,” he explains. “We have a Marketing group as well that does a lot of print publications, so I assist them with feedback and ideas for their covers and layout.”

So how does a designer get started in the wild world of the Web these days, much less land such a cool job in government? The answer, not surprisingly, seems about equal parts hard work and talent, along with good timing and a bit of luck thrown in for good measure.

Before starting at Canadian Heritage 14 months ago, Mr. Timpson obtained a BA in Law and English, then went on to study graphic design and new media at Algonquin College. He finished his studies with a co-op placement at an Ottawa Web design firm, where he was invited to stay on full time. But it was not to last. The company's main source of supply dried up when the tech sector crashed in 2001, and Mr. Timpson found himself among thousands of other newly laid-off workers in the Capital region.

It took some planning and patience to land here. "I didn't want to apply for just anything," he recalls. "I had done a lot of work since graduating that really enhanced my portfolio, particularly in new media, so I took the time to put all that together." The creative attention to detail paid off when Mr. Timpson was eventually selected over the more than 300 applicants. "I feel so fortunate to be here."

So what's he up to at the moment? Mr. Timpson says things have been quieter regarding the [CHIN Web site](#), which offers museum professionals a variety of resources and courses on how to create and manage digital content. It is the needs of the [VMC](#), which provides Canadians with internet access to a growing range of our country's heritage collections, that have been consuming most of his energies of late. Currently, Mr. Timpson is working on [the Community Memories project](#).

"This is a huge project in which small museums (not exceeding two paid staff) collaborate with people in their community to digitize content about a particular topic," he says. "For example, there's one exhibit called *A Mother's War* out of a small museum in Newfoundland and all the digital content that's been prepared is made up of photos and letters that this mother kept from her two sons when they were fighting in WWII. She'd kept them all in this attic suitcase."



Mr. Timpson is busy designing the digital content into an online exhibit. All the technical and design requirements are worked out in advance, to ensure the widest possible access. “We usually develop a low, plain HTML version, and a rich graphics version that provides a more stimulating experience for people with access to higher bandwidth ... The great thing about it is that

users get to come and access these kinds of unique stories through the VMC.”

Another plus about his work is the opportunity to develop professionally. “In my last job they always had me working at my desk on the latest project that was due yesterday,” he says without a trace of regret. “Here – although recently it has been unbelievably busy – I am able to do research that makes my work better.”

Mr. Timpson’s recent research has been in the field of computer/human interaction. “That has probably really strengthened my web work – the understanding of human interaction issues. You can turn it into making something as simple as the navigation of a web site more intuitive for the user. The whole idea of exploring computer/human interaction from a visual design perspective is really interesting to me. I think there’s a lot of potential there.”

For those interested in exploring what’s hot in design, Mr. Timpson recommends these sites:

- www.rhizome.org (“I am a rhizome member and this is a great web site that explores, discusses and promotes digital/electronic art.”)

- www.designiskinky.net (“Another design news portal type site, a little edgier as far as subject matter but more contemporary as far as delivery media.”)

If you thought it couldn’t get much better, Mr. Timpson has nothing but praise for his colleagues at CHIN. “In what I do I work closely with my manager and a couple of other people

from the web development team, and we all have a great relationship. I feel so lucky to work with the people I get to work with.”

Inside and outside of work Mr. Timpson’s passion for comic books – especially Spider-Man – is well known to family, friends and colleagues. He also has a visual sideline. “I work for Dreamworks, the movie company, part-time,” he says. “I get to go to promotional and press screenings to ensure the theatre maintains the integrity of the experience – that there are no audio or video glitches. And I get paid for it.”

Just like the day job: not bad work if you can get it.