

GIMP

There are some great content management systems out there. Commonly referred to as CMS, for you who are not in the know, this simply means that the website was built with the ability for the novice website owner to edit pages on their website any time they want. Not all websites are created this way.

If you are looking to have a website built in this way you will need to be prepared for a new responsibility and that is to update your own web pages. This means typing text, highlighting important text and formatting it to bold or italic. Of course you would like to update some photos on the website as well. This is the “gotcha”! We assume that you know how to handle digital images. Most people don’t.



Editing Your Own Pages

So you got this clipart image and you want to post it on your website. You find the upload file button and the file gets sent up to your website. That was easy.

Now you go to the page that you want to add the photo to and you look for the universal icon for “picture” to insert the image. A dialog box pops up with a mini gallery of images that you can choose. You find the photo that you just uploaded and you click on it to insert it into your page. Wow! It is really big. So you look for the resizing handles on either side of the image and you proceed to make the image smaller.

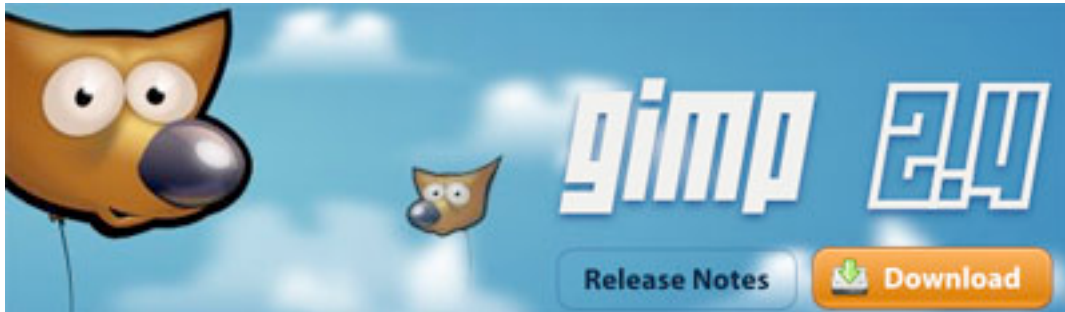
Stop!

It seems harmless to scale a photo down so that it fits nicely in your web page, but what you don’t know is that you have not changed the real size of the image. All you have done is changed the way it displays.

You may have seen this on some websites that have made this mistake. The web page loads slowly and you see the small postage stamp image take its sweet time revealing itself. It must be pretty large to take this long to download. But why? It looks so small! The display of the image was set small, but it still is a large image.

What to Do

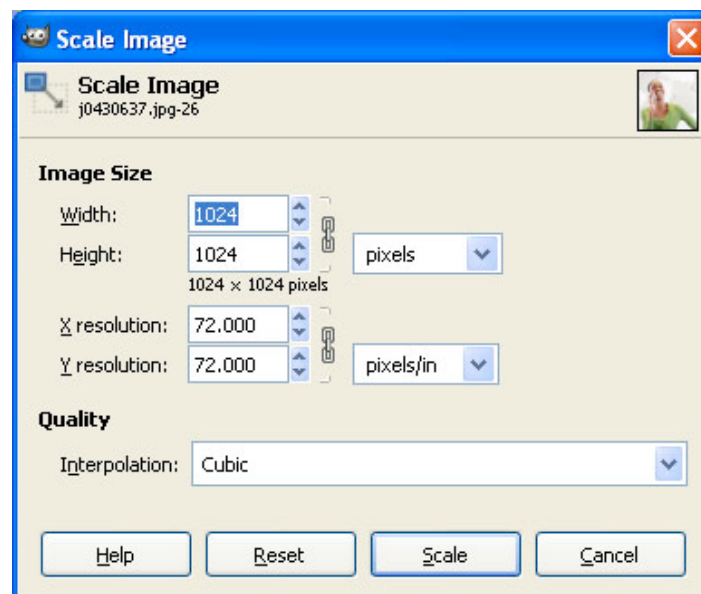
Many website owners do not own graphics software so if you are one of them you are not alone. I thought it might be handy to introduce to you a fairly powerful image editing software that you can download for FREE. Yah free. It is called [GIMP!](#)



Yes it is a funny name, but it stands for “GNU Image Manipulation Program”. Ok,... what is a GNU? It is short for **GNU’s not UNIX**, a UNIX-compatible software system developed by the Free Software Foundation (FSF). The philosophy behind GNU is to produce software that is non-proprietary. Anyone can download, modify and redistribute GNU software. Don’t worry, GIMP works in Windows too.

Scale Down Your Images Before Uploading

GIMP has a lot of features and tools similar to Photoshop. While being a powerful and somewhat complicated program, you can still do a simple scale down and save with ease. Start by loading up that big bad image. Then look for the “Image” top menu item and the dropdown menu will have the item “Scale Image”



As you can see the image that I have loaded is 1024px (pixels), That is too large for the web so I will adjust it down to only 200px. That is my target size and I arrived at that by doing a little pixel measuring. Then I just click “File” and “Save As” to save the image as a new file. You should always save as a new file in case you want to use the original again for something else.

What Size?

I find that 200px to 300px are good medium sizes for images on web pages. Smaller images like 100×100 appear as a “postage stamp” size and are good for head shots for a staff page. On this very newsletter I don’t make my images any larger than 400px.

If you have a CMS or a web page authoring program like Dreamweaver or FrontPage you can just pick a random image and then force the display size to what you like on the page. If you can read what the final numbers are then you can use that as your target image size when you are in GIMP.

Another technique is to create the canvas at the target size first and bring the image in as a layer. “Canvas” is a graphic term which is literally the white space you will be working with. In GIMP you would choose to create a New image versus loading one up. Then bring in your large photo with the option “Open as Layer“. This will appear strange at first as I am looking at a very large ear of this person’s head. That is because my canvas is very small compared to my large image that I just brought in. Now I just scale the layer in place and save a new file.

I use this technique because it keeps my target size consistent even if my imported photo is a different aspect. You can scale and move images on layers independent from the canvas. So in a way I am scaling and cropping my new image in one move.

Try GIMP

GIMP is powerful especially for being free. There is plenty of documentation if you want to dabble a little more. The [english manual](#) and some [tutorials](#) can easily be found on the web. Now you can touch up some of your photos and take the red eyes out or try some artsy filters on your photos to make them look like illustrations or paintings.

Warning! If you don’t have much patience for learning new software beware that some advanced maneuvers in GIMP will not be intuitive. However, I think it makes a great Swiss army knife for simple image editing.

Posted on July 26th, 2008 by Karl Knelson