Chapter 1: Getting Started with Contribute CS4

Creating and posting a new Web site or a blog is an exciting new venture, and the real-time nature of the Web opens many doors for presenting content, marketing a product, or simply showcasing your ideas.

The integrity of your site depends largely on the quality, accuracy, and freshness of its content, and in many cases, that responsibility lies in the hands of more than one person. No matter how big or small the site, managing site content needs to be a task that's easy, intuitive, and doesn't require a team of technical geniuses to do it!

Contribute CS4 makes these tasks easy by providing an intuitive workspace from which one or more users can easily create, update, and publish content to a Web site or a blog. If you're already using Dreamweaver CS4 to design and publish Web pages, you'll find many cool options that make setup and site management in Contribute a snap. You can read more about building Web sites and content with Dreamweaver in Book IV.

Introducing Contribute

Contribute is best described as a full-featured content management system (often referred to as a *CMS*), giving you (and selected users) an intuitive workspace and toolset from which you can update a Web site or a blog without getting into the complex nuts and bolts behind it. Figure 1-1 shows the Contribute Start page when you open Contribute.
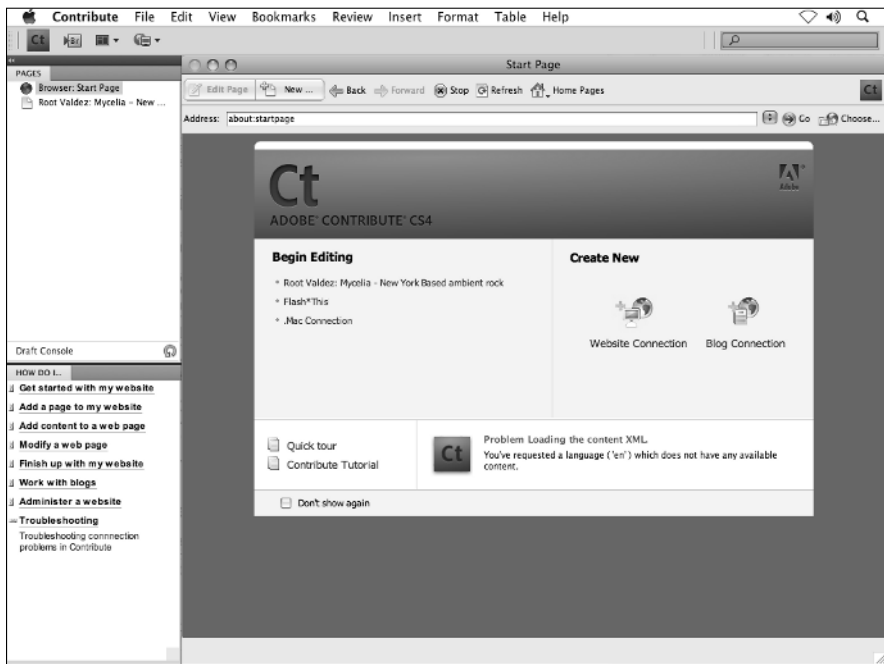
Figure 1-1:
The
Contribute
Start page.

Several content management systems are on the market, many of which are even Web based so that most tasks can be performed through a browser. Contribute offers many advantages over Web-based or third-party content management systems. Here's a look at some key reasons you may want to explore Contribute as a first choice for your site's CMS:

✦ **Ease of use:** Contribute is geared toward users of all experience levels, including experienced Web designers, writers, content publishers, project managers, and even administrative staff.

A simple yet powerful set of tools and features enables users of any level to build new pages, perform updates to existing pages, and publish content to the Web with little or no technical knowledge.

With little or no knowledge about creating or editing Web pages, you can easily add and format text, images, and multimedia as well as publish your work to the Web. In some cases, you may find adding content to a Contribute-enabled Web site is as easy as editing a word processing document!

✦ **Dreamweaver integration:** Sites built in Dreamweaver and managed in Contribute can utilize Dreamweaver-specific features, such as page templates and design notes. If a site utilizes Dreamweaver templates, Contribute makes them available to users so they can build new pages and expand their existing site.

✦ **Simplified Web page design and editing:** Beyond just a simple tweak or text edit, Contribute includes tools for creating more complex Web page layouts, adding images and media, and creating fancy text formatting. Contribute includes an all-in-one page editor and a browser window where you can edit, publish, and preview your work. You find many of the same tools that appear in Dreamweaver CS4, but further simplified for a nonintimidating workspace.

✦ **User management:** Contribute controls who can edit a Web site and how, by allowing you to add users to a project and to assign each user a specific role. A user's role determines what tasks he's allowed to perform and what files he has access to.

For instance, you can allow certain types of users to perform all tasks, such as creating and publishing content, while others can write or edit content without the ability to publish final drafts. This gives you lots of control over content flow and screening, especially when several people are working on a single site.

To access and edit a Contribute-enabled site, contributors are issued a *key,* which contains a predefined role for that user as well as the credentials needed to connect to and edit your Web site or blog. Other participants in your project must also have Contribute CS4 installed to receive and activate keys.
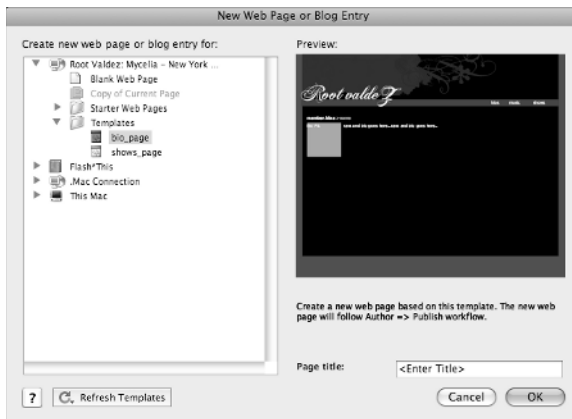
✦ **Rollback support:** Contribute enables you to revert to previous versions of your pages if necessary — a feature that can be quite handy when many people collaborate on a Web site.

Combining Dreamweaver and Contribute

If you've already used Book IV to get started with Dreamweaver CS4 or are already using Dreamweaver to build Web sites, you're off to a good start. Contribute can take advantage of many of the cool features of Dreamweaver sites, such as page templates.

Templates become available as starter pages (as shown in Figure 1-2) if and when you choose to add new pages to an existing Web site. You can easily build new pages from Dreamweaver templates, which we discuss in Chapter 4 of this minibook.

Figure 1-2:
You can easily build new pages from Dreamweaver templates.

In addition, you can enable an existing Dreamweaver site for Contribute use directly from its Manage Site panel.

Working with Blogs

Blogs (short for we*blogs*) are one of the most popular methods of communicating and sharing ideas, and are a tool for both the average Web user as well as media professionals. Chances are someone you know has a blog, as well as your favorite news reporter or celebrity. Blogs are most commonly provided as services (free or paid) by a number of online services.

If you maintain a blog, Contribute makes it easy to update and add content to your Blogger, WordPress, Roller, TypePad, or other hosted blog account. This gives you the ability to manage your blog within Contribute and take advantage of its extensive toolset, providing an alternative to editing your blog in a browser.

You can easily create or view existing blog posts (as shown in Figure 1-3), use the Contribute text editing tools to add and format text, images, and even add multimedia (such as videos and Flash movies) with ease. This is a great alternative to the sometimes limited and clunky Web-based tools that your blog provider may offer.

Figure 1-3:
You can create and manage your blog entries directly from Contribute.