



Web Elite executives Matt Mason, left, and Jacques Habra pose with some of the Web pages they have created.

NEWS PHOTO  
ROBERT CHASE

# DESIGNS ON THE FUTURE

## Web Elite beefs up local ties hoping to tap talent and add to its list of clients

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Jacques Habra wants to knock your socks off.

So does every other Web site designer in the cosmos. But Habra, a buttoned-down Gen-Xer who founded Web Elite as a University of Michigan student in 1994, maintains his firm's electronic bag of tricks is bigger than most.

To prove it, Habra pulls out these Web-bred bunnies:

■ **Visitistics**, Web Elite's proprietary software that logs information from each Web site visitor, then lets the site's owner easily calculate statistics based on data fields they specify. Categories range from the number of users who come to a site to the average time spent on each page.

■ **The Automated Modification Form**, or Auto Mod, which lets customers change the content of their Web sites — text, graphics and layout — while on the Web without having to write Web software code.

■ **Web Elite's work** — seen on sites for Trendway, ImageMasters,

### WEB ELITE

**What they do:** Design Web sites.

**Who they are:** Jacques Habra, Matt Mason and Josh Ginsberg, plus about 18 contract workers.

**What's new?** The firm recently moved their main office from Southfield to Ann Arbor.

**Web Elite handiwork:** In addition to their own Web site at <http://www.web-elite.com>, the firm has built sites for Trendway Corp., The Bruise Gallery, ImageMasters, McNaughton & Gunn Inc., Icon Title Inc. and others.

General Motors/United Auto Workers and others — features whiz-bang graphics and business tools like on-line ordering and automated price quotes.

Until a month or so ago, Web Elite had done most of its work from a main office in Southfield. (Its Ann Arbor office was in Habra's apartment.)

But Habra wanted to turn the firm's focus to Ann Arbor, tapping talent from the University of Michigan and developing ties to advertising and marketing agencies here

that could bulk up Web Elite's current list of about 35 clients.

So Web Elite's staff of three full-timers moved into new digs at 704 Airport Blvd. The firm also employs about 18 workers, including two salespeople, on a contract basis.

"They're the first firm I've run across locally that I've said, 'Hmmm, I might be interested in working with these guys,'" says John Williams, creative director at Peterson Williams & Bizer Inc., an Ann Arbor marketing firm.

Web Elite has a mature sense of

design, Williams says, one of only a handful of local firms that understand how to use the Web as an effective communications medium.

"If people can't find and understand the information, it might as well not be there," Williams says. Web Elite understands the importance of using only elements that enhance communication, he says.

Yet PWB — which also designs Web sites for clients like Software Services, Media Station and the University of Michigan Medical School — has no plans now to work with Web Elite, Williams says, although he notes that potential for collaboration exists.

Web Elite does work with other marketing firms, like The Hamilton Group in Troy and The Mac Group in Southfield. The firm also gets referrals from Michigan BizServe, an Ann Arbor firm that hosts Web sites.

Web Elite recently switched gears on another project, called the University Opportunity Network, an on-line resume service for university students.