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Thomas A. Powell

Instructor, UCSD Computer Science Department and author of *Web Design: The Complete Reference*

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HTML: The Complete Reference

Third Edition

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About the Author...

Thomas A. Powell has been professionally involved in the Internet community for more than 10 years. His career began at UCLA's PICnet, followed by several years at CERFnet, one of the first Internet service providers in the country. In 1994, he founded the Internet consultancy that eventually became PINT, Inc. (www.pint.com), a well-known Web design and development firm headquartered in San Diego, California.

Beyond his various business interests, Powell is the author of numerous books on Web technology, including *Web Design: The Complete Reference*, *Web Site Engineering*, and *HTML Programmers Reference*. He has also written extensively on the subject for *Network World*, *IT World*, *NetGuide*, *Internet Week*, and *Interactive Age*.

Mr. Powell teaches Web publishing classes through the Information Technologies program at University of California San Diego, Extension and also is an instructor the UCSD Computer Science and Engineering Department. He holds a B.S. from UCLA and an M.S. in computer science from UCSD.

Osborne/McGraw-Hill
2600 Tenth Street
Berkeley, California 94710
U.S.A.

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HTML: The Complete Reference, Third Edition

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1234567890 DOC DOC 01987654321

ISBN 0-07-212951-4

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```
<input type="submit" value="Delete Order" name="Delete">
<input type="submit" value="Update Order" name="Update">
<input type="reset" value="Reset Form" name="ResetButton">
```

When the form is submitted, the value of the button is sent to the form-handling program, which will decide what to do with the submitted data based upon its contents. This use of a submit button hints at a more generalized form of button, which will be discussed in the next section.

Note

If you have two buttons next to each other, it is useful to separate the two with a non-breaking space (). Otherwise, the buttons probably will render too closely together. Another approach would be to use a small table around the buttons and provide some cell padding or a blank cell between the buttons.

Additional <input> Types

There are a few forms of the <input> element that have not been discussed. These form elements hint at the potential complexity of using forms. Some of these elements, particularly the file selection form element, are not supported in older browsers.

Hidden Text and Its Uses

The usefulness of this form control is not always obvious to the new user. By setting the **type** attribute of the <input> element to a value of **hidden**, it is possible to transmit default or previously specified text that is hidden from the user to the handling program. If there were many versions of the same form all over a Web site, the hidden text could be used to specify where the form came from, as shown here:

```
<input type="hidden" name="SubmittingFormName" value="Form1">
```

Because this field is not shown on the page, it is difficult but not impossible for the user to modify it. Thus, it must have its **value** attribute set. While this last example seems rather contrived, there actually is a very important use for hidden form controls.

Note

There are some problems with relying on hidden values too much. Consider that nefarious users might be able to determine the internal workings of your system or even falsify requests that include control information in the hidden fields. Not to alarm page designers, but do consider that to see hidden form fields all the user has to do is view the page source!

When filling in forms, there often is an issue of remembering information from one form to the next. Imagine a form in which the user fills in his or her personal information on one page and the ordering information on the next page. How will the

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