

AI-Assisted Website Design and Build

Darkeport Universe Hub

2 Website Variations | 6 Weeks | 76 Production Files | \$0/mo Infrastructure

The Scroll: darkeportuniversehub1.netlify.app | The Explorer: darkeportuniversehub2.netlify.app

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Executive Summary

This case study documents how a solo consultant used Claude (Anthropic) as a design and development partner to build, brand, and deploy two complete website variations for an independent tabletop RPG production -- from raw transcripts and scattered lore to fully deployed, searchable, branded companion sites -- in approximately six weeks, at 86-92% less cost than traditional web development.

The engagement went far beyond a standard website build. The same AI-assisted workflow processed 30 episode transcripts (~2,700 pages), consolidated 9 corpus documents into a Master Lore Bible, generated 139 pages of print-ready publication content, and delivered two fundamentally different navigation experiences sharing a common data layer -- enabling community A/B testing that would be economically infeasible under traditional methods.

Key Results

~6 wks Total Timeline	~\$10,700 Total Cost	86-92% Cost Reduction	75-87% Time Reduction
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- Two complete website variations designed, built, and deployed for community A/B testing
- 76 production files across two sites (38 files each: HTML, CSS, JS, 11 portraits, 14 maps, SEO assets)
- 30 episode transcripts (~2,700 pages) processed, classified, and enriched with verbatim quotes
- 86-episode guide with full-text search, 80+ lore entries, 74 journal entries, 11 character profiles
- Interactive world map of Camaranthus with 11 pulsing location pins
- 139-page print-ready World of Terra publication PDF
- Master Lore Bible v16 (100+ NPCs, 31 locations, 74 journals)
- Zero infrastructure cost: Netlify free tier + Cloudflare free tier
- Traditional equivalent: \$75,600 - \$130,000 over 27 - 48 weeks

1. The Challenge

Darkeport Productions runs an 86-episode tabletop RPG actual-play campaign with a dedicated fanbase, extensive world-building lore, and three story arcs spanning hundreds of hours of content. The production had no branded website. Fans relied on a community-maintained wiki and YouTube for reference. There was no centralized, searchable, visually designed companion experience.

The creator wanted to explore whether an interactive Universe Hub could serve both the community and his own production needs. But with an independent production budget, the traditional path of hiring a web agency to design and build even one website was out of reach. Two variations to test with the community was not even a consideration under traditional methods.

Specific Constraints

- **Budget:** Independent production budget. No room for agency-scale engagements.
- **Team:** Single consultant, no design team, no development team.
- **Timeline:** Weeks, not months.
- **Content Scale:** 86 episodes, 74 journals, 80+ lore entries, 31 locations, 11 character profiles. All had to be processed, cross-referenced, and published.
- **Raw Transcripts:** 30 episode transcripts (~2,700 pages) needed processing to enrich episode descriptions with verbatim quotes and story details.
- **Brand Fidelity:** The sites had to feel like Darkeport, not like a template. Brand colors, typography, tone, and the creator's narrative voice all had to carry through.
- **Two Variations:** Two fundamentally different navigation experiences needed to be built, deployed, and tested by the community simultaneously.

2. How We Did It -- The AI-Assisted Approach

AI tools (Claude by Anthropic) were used as a design and development partner throughout the entire engagement. The consultant provided creative direction, brand standards, and editorial judgment. AI handled code generation, content processing, document creation, and iteration at a pace that made dual-site delivery feasible.

Phase 1: Content Processing

30 episode transcripts were processed through an AI-assisted pipeline that extracted formal recaps, identified player journal entries, classified content into 7 categories, applied 150+ lore correction patterns, and produced enriched episode descriptions. What would have taken a content team weeks to do manually was completed in hours per batch.

Phase 2: Website Design and Development

Both websites were designed and built as single-page applications using vanilla HTML, CSS, and JavaScript. No frameworks. No dependencies. No build tools. The AI generated the complete codebase iteratively, with the consultant reviewing, directing revisions, and testing across devices.

The two variations share a common data layer (data.js) but have entirely different navigation structures:

- **The Scroll:** Top-nav, page-by-page flow. A guided journey through the world. The site leads the user. Designed for first-time discovery.
- **The Explorer:** Persistent sidebar navigation. Users always know where they are and can jump anywhere. Designed as a reference tool for returning fans.

Phase 3: Iterative Brand Refinement

The visual design went through multiple rounds of iteration within the same AI session. Brand colors were refined from the base Darkeport palette (Deep Navy, Gold, Ice Blue) into a full complementary system (Ember, Teal, Verdant, Amethyst) with precise hex values. Typography was migrated from system fonts to Playfair Display. Text contrast was tuned for readability against the dark backgrounds. Every change was applied across both site variations simultaneously.

Phase 4: Corpus and Publication Documents

Nine corpus documents were consolidated and versioned through v16, including the Master Lore Bible (100+ NPCs, 31 locations, 74 journals), Episode Summary volumes, GGR Series Bible, Classifier Rules, Style Guide, and Animation Guide. A 139-page World of Terra publication PDF was produced in print-ready layout from structured lore data.

Phase 5: Zero-Cost Deployment

Both sites were deployed as static files to Netlify (free tier) via drag-and-drop ZIP upload. Cloudflare (free tier) provides DNS management, CDN caching, SSL certificates, and DDoS protection. Password-protected Alpha access was configured for stakeholder review. Total monthly infrastructure cost: \$0.

3. Complete Deliverables Produced

Two Complete Websites (38 files each)

- Interactive world map of Camaranthus with 11 pulsing location pins
- 11 Fellowship character profiles with portraits
- 74 in-world journal entries including 3 creator-provided texts
- 80 lore entries across 9 categories with cross-references
- Episode guide for all 86 episodes (27 transcript-enriched)
- Full-text search across all content
- Responsive mobile design with hamburger navigation
- SEO with Open Graph tags, structured data, and sitemap

Supporting Corpus

- Master Lore Bible v16 (100+ NPCs, 31 locations, 74 journals)
- 2 Episode Summary documents covering all 86 episodes
- World of Terra publication PDF (139 pages, print-ready layout)
- GGR Series Bible v16 (animated series pitch deck)
- Classifier Rules, Style Guide, Animation Guide (all v16)
- Handoff documentation for future development continuity

Infrastructure

- Netlify hosting (2 separate Alpha environments)
- Cloudflare DNS, CDN, SSL, and DDoS protection
- Password-protected Alpha access for stakeholder review
- \$0/month total infrastructure cost

4. Efficiency Metrics

Time Saved

Activity	Traditional Timeline	AI-Assisted Timeline
Design (2 variations)	4 - 8 weeks	3 days
Frontend Development (2 sites)	8 - 14 weeks	2 weeks
Content Processing (30 transcripts)	6 - 10 weeks	4 days
Lore Consolidation (9 documents)	3 - 5 weeks	1 week
Brand / Color System	2 - 3 weeks	2 hours
Publication PDF (139 pages)	2 - 4 weeks	1 day
Testing and Deployment	2 - 4 weeks	2 days

Activity	Traditional Timeline	AI-Assisted Timeline
Total	27 - 48 weeks	~6 weeks

Estimated time reduction: 75 - 87%

Cost Comparison

Line Item	Traditional Cost	AI-Assisted Cost
AI-Augmented Consultant (~60 hrs @ \$175/hr)	N/A	\$10,500
2 Website Variations (design + dev)	\$45,000 - \$75,000	Included above
Content Processing (30 episodes)	\$12,000 - \$18,000	Included above
9 Corpus Documents + PDF	\$15,000 - \$25,000	Included above
AI Platform (Claude Max, ~2 months)	N/A	\$200
Infrastructure (Year 1)	\$3,600 - \$12,000	\$0 (Netlify + Cloudflare free)
Total	\$75,600 - \$130,000	~\$10,700

Estimated cost reduction: 86 - 92%

A single AI-augmented consultant at \$175/hour delivered the combined output of a web designer, frontend developer, content processor, brand strategist, and DevOps engineer. The only tooling cost was a Claude Max subscription (\$100/month). Infrastructure runs at \$0/month on Netlify and Cloudflare free tiers.

5. Technology Stack

Component	Tool	Cost
AI Platform	Claude Max (Anthropic)	\$100/mo
Frontend	Vanilla HTML / CSS / JavaScript (no frameworks)	No additional cost
Data Layer	JavaScript objects (flat-file, zero dependencies)	No additional cost
Typography	Playfair Display (Google Fonts)	Free
Hosting	Netlify (free tier, static site)	\$0
DNS / CDN / Security	Cloudflare (free tier)	\$0
Documents	docx-js (Word), ReportLab (PDF)	No additional cost
Transcript Processing	Python (regex classification, lore correction)	No additional cost

Architectural decision: the sites run as zero-dependency static files. No server, no database, no CMS, no build tools. This eliminates hosting costs, removes security surface, and enables deployment via file upload in under 60 seconds. The data layer (data.js) serves as both the content store and API in a single auditable file.

6. Broader Applicability

This approach applies to any independent creator, small production, or content-driven brand that needs a professional web presence without the budget or timeline for a traditional web agency engagement:

- Independent podcast and video productions building companion sites from back-catalog content
- Tabletop RPG publishers converting campaign content into searchable digital references
- Small studios creating branded fan experiences for serialized content
- Content creators who need A/B testing capability without enterprise budgets
- Any scenario where hundreds of hours of unstructured content must become a structured, browsable product

7. Lessons Learned

- **Two for the price of one (almost):** Building two sites from the same data layer cost roughly 15% more than building one. 80% of the code was reused. For community A/B testing, this is dramatically cheaper than any traditional approach.
- **AI amplifies, it does not replace:** AI does not replace creative direction. Every visual decision, every brand refinement, and every lore correction required human judgment. AI made it possible to act on those decisions in minutes instead of weeks.
- **Transcripts are the real content:** Verbatim player journal entries, GM philosophy, and table dynamics only exist in the raw transcripts. Processing them is the highest-ROI content activity for any actual-play production.
- **Free infrastructure is production-grade:** Netlify free tier and Cloudflare free tier together provide production-grade hosting with global CDN, SSL, and DDoS protection. There is no longer a financial barrier to a professional web presence.
- **Context is the AI advantage:** Extended AI sessions accumulate context that makes each subsequent task faster and more precise. The most productive work happened when the AI had the full corpus loaded. Handoff documentation is critical when context resets.
- **Ship two, decide once:** Community feedback on actual working prototypes is infinitely more valuable than feedback on mockups or wireframes. The AI-assisted approach made it economically viable to put two real products in front of real users.

8. Conclusion

This project demonstrates that AI augmentation can compress what traditionally takes months and tens of thousands of dollars into a six-week engagement at a fraction of the cost. But the deeper insight is not about speed or savings alone.

The AI-assisted approach did not just do the same work faster. It made work feasible that would not have been attempted. No independent production would commission two complete website variations for community testing. No solo consultant would propose processing 2,700 pages of transcripts, consolidating nine corpus documents, generating a 139-page publication PDF, and building two branded websites simultaneously. The economics simply do not work under traditional methods. AI changed the math.

The result: two production-quality companion sites that transform hundreds of hours of ephemeral live performance into a permanent, searchable, branded digital experience. The world of Darkeport now exists not just in recordings but in a form the community can explore, reference, and share.

The pipeline learns. The efficiency compounds. The creative output multiplies.

The Scroll: darkeportuniversehub1.netlify.app

The Explorer: darkeportuniversehub2.netlify.app

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