Adventures on the World Wide Web
Care and Feeding of a Community Band Website
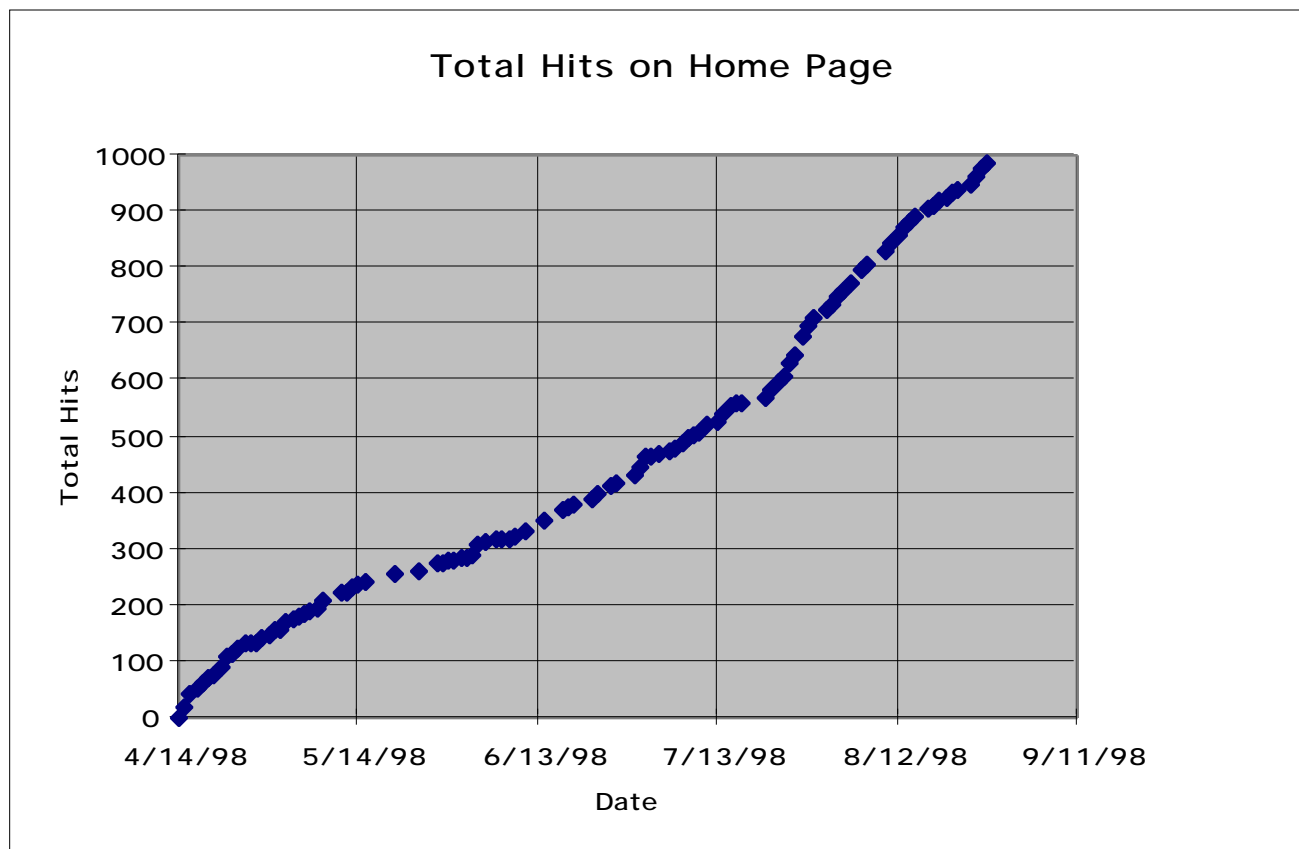
Presented at 1998 Community Band Weekend

August 2, 1998

http://www.ahcb.org/

Facts About the AHCB Website

- Address: www.ahcb.org
- Hosted (physically resides) on Geocities
- Went active on April 14, 1998
- About 1000 visits since we started
- Designed for use by band members and general public

Web Site Usage

Total Hits on Home Page

Steps We Followed

- Decide who should be involved in this project
- Determine the purpose/audience
- Brainstorm for what should be on the site (especially initially)
- Select the host for your site
- Decide if you want a domain name
- Determine the costs
- Establish policies
- Set up the site and test it
- Go "public"
- Maintain, update, and improve the site

Who should be involved?

- We took a committee approach
- Asked for volunteers from entire band
  - Resulted in four volunteers
- Decided on a charter for the committee
  - Research how and why to create a website
  - Establish costs (if any) and policies
  - Begin provisional construction of a website
- We are an ad hoc committee reporting to our band's Executive Committee

Purpose and Audience for the Website

- Probably the most important part of the whole process
- We got together and brainstormed
- Two great resources:
  - Community Music Mailing List Website
    - http://www.io.com/~rboerger/community.html
    - Has links to 272 community band/orchestra websites
    - We split them up and looked at them
  - Newhoo site
    - http://www.newhoo.com/Arts/Music/Styles/Classical/Concert_Bands_and_Wind_Ensembles/
    - Maintained by the same guy

Community Music Mailing List

Sometimes it's hard to remember that there are people all over the country - and indeed the planet - who do exactly what we do. There are literally hundreds and hundreds of organizations like ours where musicians make music for the joy of doing it. In this day, with the internet connecting people worldwide, you'd think there'd be a way for them to exchange information and ideas about music.

There is! The "Community-music" (or "C-M") mailing list was established in 1995 to allow musicians (and even directors) in community bands and orchestras to share their passion for music. Topics include everything from concert announcements to personnel issues to "can someone loan me a copy of the Alto Sax II part to Ticheli's Amazing Grace?" There's no cost to subscribe; additionally, the list manager (Ron Boerger of the Austin [TX] Symphonic Band) has a decidedly anti-'spam' viewpoint, meaning that messages on the list are almost always related to the topic at hand.

You can subscribe to the list by sending an e-mail containing the text:

    subscribe community-music
    end

to the address: majordomo@austx.tandem.com .. list traffic averages between 3 and 10 messages daily. If you'd like a single 'digest' each day there is traffic on the list, 'subscribe community-music-digest' instead.

Web resources for the list are located at:

    http://www.io.com/~rboerger/community.html

Anyone, not just list members, can take advantage of these.   Going to Seattle and want to find a group to rehearse with? C-M's 'contact list,' available from the web page above, can help you find one!

C-M is a friendly list, with 'flaming' severely discouraged. The net result is a supportive atmosphere where you don't have to worry about asking 'dumb' questions. There are about 600 people from the U.S., Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Great Britain, Germany, ... on the list now, and there's always room for more. Please join us!

Audience and Purpose for AHCB website

- (1) <u>Community - Potential Audience and New Members</u>
- (1) <u>Members of the **AHCB**</u>
  - It Appears a Significant Percentage of Our Membership is Online
  - Allows Timely Sharing of Information
    - **AHCB** has MANY Performances but No Strict Attendance Requirements
- (2) <u>Community - Potential Performance Sites</u>
  - Priority is Slightly Lower Because We Generally Have No Problem Scheduling Performances
- (3) <u>Other Community Bands</u>
  - Somewhat Intangible: Bands on the Web Share Information
  - Establishment of Ties with Other Bands?
- (3) <u>Other Civic Groups</u>

Can you guess what day we rehearse?

Visits per weekday
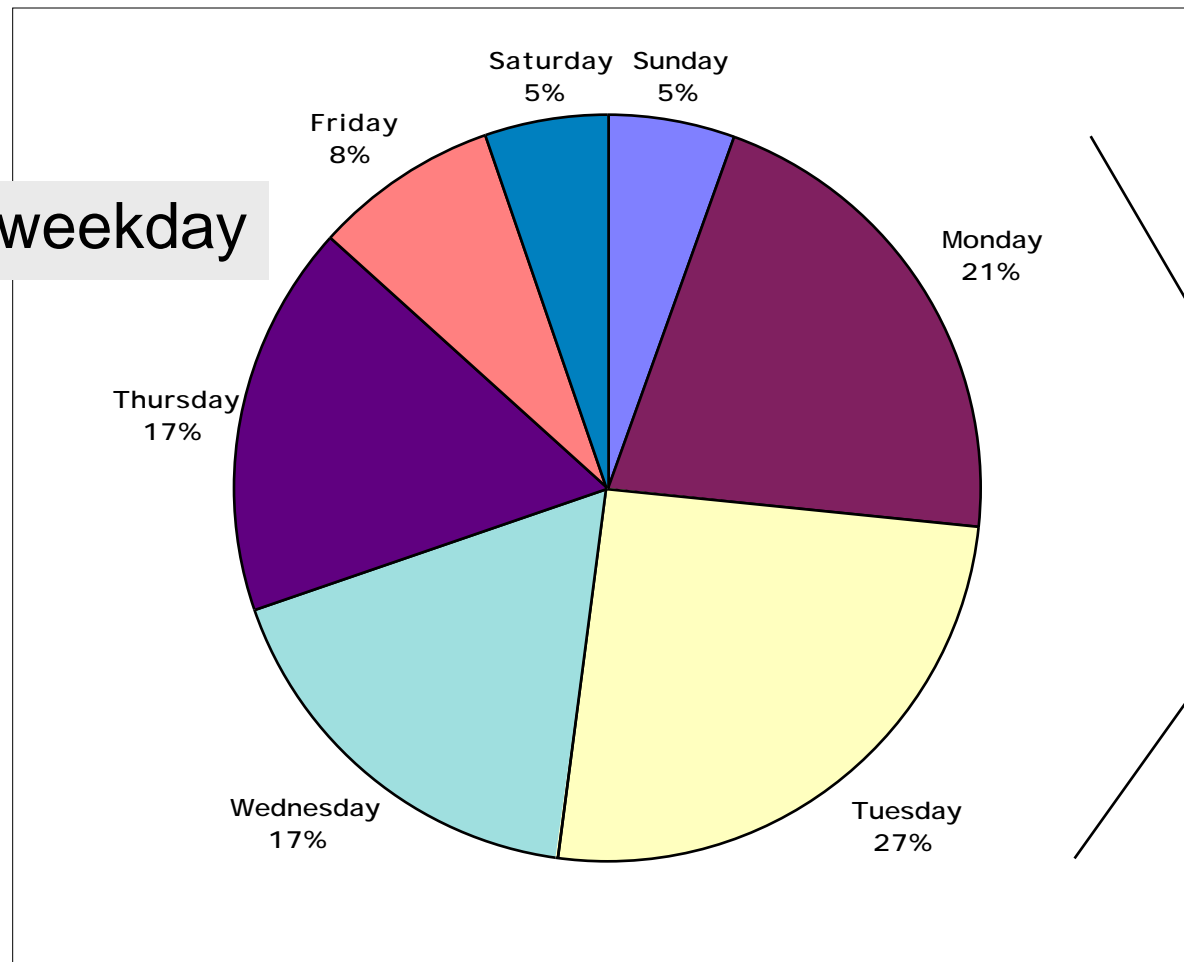
Saturday 5%
Sunday 5%
Friday 8%
Monday 21%
Thursday 17%
50% on Monday & Tuesday
Wednesday 17%
Tuesday 27%

Initial Items to Post on AHCB Website

- In Brainstorming for Ideas, We Established That These Are The Minimal Items To Put On-Site Before Going Public
  - "About the Band"
  - Contact Information (for Membership and Performances)
    - Includes Map/Directions to Harvest Ridge
  - Rehearsal and Public Concert Schedule (for Public)
  - Event Schedule (For Band)
  - "Late Breaking"/"What's New"

Potential Follow On Items

A Web Site Is Not Like A Book; It Is Published Continuously
A Web Site That Is Static Reflects A Dead Organization!!!

Ideas We Came Up With, Not In Any Particular Order or Probability

- About The Conductors
- Band History
- Band Mythology
- List of Current Repertoire
- A Version of *Band Notes*
- Band Roster (privacy issues to be addressed)
- Downloadable Gig Sheets
- "Full" Music Database
- A Spot for Conductor and Individual Section News
- Band Organization

- Links to Other Sites
  - Music Sites
  - St Louis Area Bands
  - St Louis General Interest Sites
- Donors
- List of Every place We've Played
- Soundbites (Issues: Performance Fees and Quality)
- "Ads" for Businesses That Have Helped Us Out (Possible Legalistic Issues)
- Sounds of Missouri info
- Statistics Counter

Finding a host for your website

- A "host" (or "server") is the place where your website physically resides
- Usually, you develop the site on your own computer, then "upload" to the host, where the world can view it
  - The host is connected to the internet 24 hours a day
- Four basic options

Host options

- 1) Do it yourself
  - You have a couple of spare computers, a continuous connection to the internet, and server software
  - Pros
    - Powers approaching that of a minor deity
    - You can do almost anything on your site
  - Cons
    - You probably do this for a living
    - If system crashes, you get to fix it
    - $$$$$$

Host options (cont)

- 2) A business or school computer system
  - May be a good choice if your "web person" is a student or on staff
  - Pros
    - Very likely to be free of cost
    - Probably have access to lots of features
  - Cons
    - What happens if "web person" graduates or leaves
    - Site administrator (who runs the server) may not be interested in your problems

Host options (cont)

- 3) A web-hosting service
  - Businesses that host websites
  - Pros
    - Wide range of costs/features
    - Generally have "user friendly" features
      - Like easy-to-install counters, etc
    - Easiest if you have to replace your "web person"
  - Cons
    - You have to pay, one way or the other
      - Actual dollars
      - Advertising on your site
    - May be limited in advanced features

Host options (cont)

- 4) Your Internet Service Provider (ISP)
  - This is the business/organization you dial up on your modem
    - Like AT&T, WIN, AOL, PrimaryNet. . .
  - Pros
    - Comes free with your account
  - Cons
    - Probably the fewest features available
    - Needs to be the ISP your "web person" uses

AHCB Website Host Selection

- We Looked for Reliable Low Cost (Read: Free) Solutions

- Our Choice Is GeoCities (www.geocities.com)

  - Provides Free Web Site Space In Exchange For:

    - A Window Which Pops Up With Occasional Advertising, and a Link Back to Geocities' Home Page

    - There is a Fee Option ($5 per month) which Eliminates Ads, Adds More Space, and Other Features

      - We exercised this (called GeoPlus) in July

  - Had Some Experience with GeoCities

    - Reliable

    - Ads Are In Good Taste and Window Can Be Closed During Download

    - Has A Growth Option

- Host Selection Can Be Changed Easily If You Register A "Domain Name" (Discussed Next)

Domain Name Registration

- A Domain Name Is A Registered Address That Stays With You Even If You Change Your Host
- Without A Domain Name, Our Name (Which Would Go On Business Cards, etc) Would Be Something Like:

  www.geocities.com/Heartland/Meadows/2743/

- With A Domain Name, Our Name Is:

  www.ahcb.org

  – ".org" Identifies Us As A Not-for-Profit

Domain Name Registration (Cont.)

- Why Register
  - You Get A Unique, Easy to Remember Name
  - If You Move, The Name Stays With You
    - Don't Have To Re-register with Yahoo!, etc.
    - Don't Need To Change Business Cards, etc
  - It Shows You're A "First Class Organization with a Commitment to Having a Web Presence".
- Why Not Register
  - It Is Not Free
  - Two Organizations To Pay:
    - A Service Which Keeps Computers Online to Maintain the Link to Your Actual Site (such as *NameSecure*).
    - The Organization that Registers Names (*InterNIC*)

AHCB Website Cost Summary

We started here   . . .   and later switched to here

Without GeoPlus Option (ads on our site)		With GeoPlus Option (No Ads)	
1998		1998	
InterNIC	$70	InterNIC	$70
NameServer	$50	NameServer	$50
		GeoPlus	$60
Total	$120	Total	$180
1999		1999	
InterNIC	$0	InterNIC	$0
NameServer	$25	NameServer	$25
		GeoPlus	$60
Total	$25	Total	$85
2000 & Later		2000 & Later	
InterNIC	$35	InterNIC	$35
NameServer	$25	NameServer	$25
		GeoPlus	$60
Total	$60	Total	$120

InterNIC: http://internic.net/
NameSecure: http://www.namesecure.com/

After Hours Community Band Web Site Committee

General Policies for AHCB Website

- The Site Should Reflect The Character of the Band
- Single Point-of-Contact for Everything Uploaded to the Site
- Goal of Weekly Updates, and Otherwise As Needed
- No "Private" or "Password Protected" Areas
- No "Under Construction" Signs!!!
  - Exists (Even If "Preliminary") or Doesn't Exist
- Minimize Download Times
- Maximize (Test For) Compatibility With Browsers and Platforms
- "Modular" Page Construction so "Non-Experts" Can Create/ Modify Pages

Protection of Privacy (AHCB approach)

- A Survey of Community Band Sites Shows They Almost Always List Full Names
  - Without permission?
- Is This A Good Idea?
  - Individuals In Our Band Have Expressed a Wide Variation of Privacy Needs
- AHCB Policy: Leave the Amount of Information Disclosed Up To The Individual
- Address Special Cases Where More Info Is Needed (Conductors, Performance Contact, Membership Contact, WebEntity,...)

How We Tested

- We held a couple of meetings to see if we liked how the design was looking
- We uploaded the site about 2 weeks before "going public" so the committee could test it.
- We tested with many operating systems and browser software
  - Mac OS, Windows 95, Unix
  - Netscape Navigator, Microsoft Internet Explorer, AOL, Lynx, Opera

- The testing step is very important!
  - Your pages will look different on different browsers.

Going Public

- We announced the site to the band two weeks before our spring concert
- Publicizing
  - Two "musts"
    - Get your site listed on the Community Music Mailing List Web Site
    - Announce your site on the Community Music Mailing List
  - Get listed on community sites
    - Example: St. Charles' WIN Calendar (http://www.win.org/calendar/)
  - Mention your site address at concerts
  - Put address on your printed material (press releases, programs, business cards...)
  - Register with search engines (Yahoo!, etc.)

Tools You *Need*

- Here's the sum total of what you *need* to construct a site
    - A computer
    - A connection to the internet
    - A host for your site
    - A web browser (like Netscape Navigator or Microsoft Explorer)
    - A simple text editor like Notepad or Wordpad (PC), or TeachText or SimpleText (Mac)

- That's it!

Two Types of Editors

- Special editors can make your life easier
- Text based editors
  - Like HotDog (PC) or BBEdit (Mac)
  - Can tune pages exactly the way you want
  - But expect you to pretty much know HTML
- WYSIWG Editors
  - Like Claris Home Page,Microsoft FrontPage, Adobe PageMill
  - Don't require as much knowledge of HTML
  - Not as flexible
  - Word - save as HTML, Publisher

What We Use

- Hardware
  - Apple Macintosh PowerBook 1400c/166
  - Modem card
- Editor software
  - BBEdit 4.5.2
    - A freeware version is available

What Did We Want To Do With Graphics?

- Make our site more interesting & memorable
- Reflect our band identity/image
- Not make our visitors wait long for image downloads
  - Use graphics judicously/effectively
- Provide info to audience & band through use of maps
- Button graphics used as aid in navigation

What Did We Use To Create Our Graphics?

- Tools
  - PC with Windows 95 & NT
  - Macintosh PowerPC 7100/66 with Mac OS 7.5.3
- Software Programs
  - Expression (by Fractal Design)
  - MacDraw II (by Claris Corp)
  - Canvas 3.5, Canvas 5.3 (Deneba Corp)
- Graphics Collections
  - Art Explosion and Web Explosion (by Nova Development)

How we did the main graphics

AHCB Logo

Developed a new stylized logo for AHCB's 10th anniversary

– Based on both original band logo and Big Ben tower in London

– Moon in background include to conotate "After Hours"

– Designed/Drawn on painting program "Expression" by Fractal Design (a vector-based program with a diverse choice of pen & brush styles)

– Exported finished logo to Canvas 5 via Illustrator filter

- Used Canvas 5 to create the GIF files for web site

– Page background (featuring clock tower logo from Expression)

- Rendered image into a Paint object which allows the application of special effects
- "Emboss" effect was used with brightness and contrast tweaked to make result suitable for website background

- Cropped & offset image to prepare it for translation to GIF format

Sheets & Maps

- Developed on MacDraw II
- Created GIFS by loading gig sheets/maps into Canvas3.5.3
- Then loaded Canvas 3.5 files into Canvas 5 for translation into GIFs

References We Like

General

- Poor Richard's Web Site - Peter Kent (Top Floor) $37.95
  - Lots in this book, especially has a lot of detail on how to find a host, register a domain name, etc.
- Creating Web Pages for Dummies
  - Basic understanding of what a web page does, intro to HTML, basic design concepts, in understandable language.

References We Like

HTML

- HTML for the World Wide Web (2nd or 3rd edition) - Elizabeth Castro (Peachpit Press) $17.95
  - Bill doesn't make any changes to our site without having this book nearby. Very well laid out, easy reference for finding what you want to do, then how to do it. Example based. Useful appendices.
- HTML - The Definitive Guide - Chuck Musciano and Bill Kennedy (O'Reilly & Associates) $32.95
  - A comprehensive source. Probably works better as a reference than a text.

References We Like

Web Design

- The Web Design WOW! Book - Jack Davis and Susan Merritt (Peachpit Press) $39.95
  - Shows examples of effective page and site design. Full color examples with explanations as to what makes them visually interesting and make people want to revisit your site. Has freeware/shareware/demoware CD.

- Web Sites That Suck - Vincent Flanders and Michael Willis (SYBEX) $39.99
  - Uses a contrary approach to show what *doesn't* work. A worthwhile goal - try NOT to get your site listed on www.webpagesthatsuck.com! Has CD.

- Guide to Web Content & Design - Roger C. Parker (MIS Press) $39.95
  - This is where we found the idea for our Events Calendar