

Notts U3A Webmasters Group

5/9/11 Webmaster meeting:

Attendees: Steve Austin (Beeston), John Hollins (Nottm), David Ling (Mansfield), Keith Snowden (Worksop), Adrian Sumner (Retford) and Robert Watts (Sherwood).

(JH has added extra comments)

David suggested we start by talking about our own websites, so JH gave an outline of the [Nottm U3A](#) site ... I took it in 2006 over from two previous webmasters, and have done several makeovers on it since. I used Dreamweaver initially, and then switched over to using [Kompozer](#) (free software). The Home page is a blend of the old design plus that of U3A Site Builder ... I like having a large photo on the home page ... which I think David thought was a waste of space. :) I change the photo from time to time, and would like to include more U3A group photos in future. I made the banner using [Gimp](#) (free software), & have made several of these in different text colours to match the colour of the photo. There is a hit counter at the bottom of the page (free with [Statcounter](#)). You can set hitcounters up to record what you like.

Many of my Nottm U3A webpages are made up using tables (and tables within tables), such as the table of links on the home page to other pages on the website. This is now considered to be old-fashioned and not very good as far as modern web-browsers are concerned. I would like to redesign the site in due course using CSS ~ Cascading Style Sheets, as used by Peter for the Keyworth site, and a few of you for the Taghosting sites. The designer sets up a master webpage hidden from public view, which controls the appearance of all the viewable webpages, cascading down from the master plan. You can tweak say the size one of the text fonts on the master webpage, which then automatically corrects the font on every other site page. *By the way, the other pages on the Nottm site are PDF files ... lists of what the groups are doing for the next few months. I use Open Office to create these ... I find PDFs easier to create and edit than webpages. Members can also download them onto their own computers and/or print them off.*

Keith talked about the [Worksop U3A](#) site, which was built using U3A Site Builder. He showed us several pages of guidelines on how to use the site. Keith explained that he was very new to web design, having just taken over from the person who set it up, and that he was working with colleagues on other matters such as printing newsletters and other publicity material. He's planning to add more photos to the site, and to get more people involved in writing material for the site. Keith was having a curious problem of words changing order in one of his U3A Group's titles ... "Movement to Music" changes around to "Music to Movement" ... is this the work of a poltergeist or a prankster who has hacked into the site? :)

David talked about his [Mansfield U3A](#) site, which was developed by one of his friends who runs [Taghosting](#). He had previously tried U3A Site builder, but thought the design was too restrictive. The Mansfield U3A site has about 90 pages, and is based on CSS. You will see the same green banner and left-hand side panel of links on all the pages, which were put together by Taghosting. David designed the rest of the layout of each page, and he and his group leader colleagues wrote the content. He showed us one page for the group "[Chat and Stitch](#)", where he scanned into his computer what the group leader had written out on paper, which he then added to the site. He hopes the U3A's group leaders will get more directly involved with editing their pages on the site.

David uses [Dropbox](#) for online (cloud) storage of his webpage files, which he could edit away

from home if he so wished. His plan is to get group leaders to the same to their own individual pages. *I would like to see this in action, and how David uploads the edited files onto the internet from a remotely-situated computer. I note that there is a 2GB limit on free usage of Dropbox (greater usage costs £6.20 a month).*

David recommends we put a "Recent Events" page on our websites, illustrated with photos of trips, etc.. He keeps stats of all the pages visited on his website, and [this one](#) is the most viewed.

Both David and I are enthusiastic about using [Flickr](#) for displaying our photos. David uploads batches of photos onto his Flickr Pro site ... photos in their original sizes, using [Flickr Uploadr](#). He borrows camera memory cards from members and picks out the best photos to upload. When taking photos himself, he uses the "Burst" facility on his camera to take several shots of any one scene, so he can pick out the best photo to use (e.g. one with everyone's eyes open). Flickr allows people to look at the original size of each photo uploaded, and to arrange for online printing of this best quality photo (using Flickr's link-up with Snapfish). He pointed out that other online services such as Picasa compress the uploaded images down in size, and that Flickr was the only service that doesn't.

The Flickr site I set up for [Nottm U3A](#) is a free one, but it's now reaching the top of its free 200 photo limit. Also with a free Flickr site, you are restricted to having just 3 sets of photos. I recently set up an additional free site, for displaying a smaller batch of photos. To upgrade to a Pro account, go to Your Account > Upgrade to a Pro Account. This costs about £30 for a two year subscription, and about half that amount for a one year one. When paying by credit or debit card, let your bank / card company know beforehand that you're making a payment to the U3A, otherwise your account will be blocked.

David said he couldn't link an image on his website to an external website like Flickr ... he had no problem linking text to external sites. We could have a look at this in Kompozer in future.

Steve talked about his work in progress in setting up a website for Beeston U3A. At present this is tagged onto a Wordpress site he set up, called "[Bramcote Today](#)" I had a search for the "parent" heading: "Blogs", but couldn't find it on this site. It is password-protected ... which will be reason why I can't view it. Steve is thinking about removing the password protection

Wordpress allows people to keep online diaries / blogs of their daily activities and thoughts, in a similar way to Blogger. Blogger is free to use, but I think if you use Wordpress, you have to pay for web-hosting. One problem with creating a website using Wordpress or Blogger is to suppress the date-stamping of each entry you make, which Steve pointed out. I have done this in Blogger by clicking on the Edit button for my original entry / post, and then by adding more content to it.

A few postscripts

(i) David told me that FTP Commander, the free uploading tool that I use, doesn't work with Linux. It's for Windows machines only. David uses [FileZilla](#) instead.

(ii) David told me that the lines of text on my Nottm U3A site, break up when viewed in different computers to my own and with different web browsers. We will have a look at how to prevent this happening, possibly next time. I checked out my home page on [W3Validator](#), which found 44 (!) errors in my HTML coding ... I think all these are due to the fact that I'm not using CSS to build my site.

(iii) David also recommended we use Notepad as a go-between when copying and pasting info from emails onto our website pages. This helps avoid spacing problems between words, that might crop up.

(iv) If you are not using the latest versions of Microsoft Word, you might face problems being able to

read the new docx files that Word 2007 & 2011 use. One solution is to ask the sender to send it in an earlier version of Word, if you're using one. Another option is to download the compatibility package from Microsoft. Another is to open up the Word document in Open Office, which is what I do. David told me that this doesn't always work ~ he recommends using [Zamzar](#) ... there is nothing to download to use this, it's all done online.

The **NEXT MEETING** will be on Monday 7 **November** 2011, 2:00 – 4:00pm, at my house again, (by popular request).

If you have any comments or corrections you'd like to make, please would you email me and then I'll add them onto this PDF.

I'm thinking about publishing this PDF, and possibly Peter Edge's summary of the Brackenhurst meeting. Please would you let me know what you think about this?

A few options for you

- to attach them to a new webpage on the Notts U3A Network site.
- to attach them to the same on my Jwebdesigns site
- to set up a new website say on Angelfire or 110MB.com ... somewhere that will accept PDF file attachments
- perhaps to set up a Yahoo groups forum for our own private use.
(one of us would need to set it up and act as a moderator, and we would all need to look at it at least once a week, to answer or comment on any queries).

I would also like to hear from everyone about ideas for topics for the next meeting ... anything that you would like to talk about / ask about re current problems you're having. Please would you also let me know, if you will be able to attend the 7 November meeting?

Cheers,
John

0115 8451180