

111107 Notts U3A Network Webmasters meeting

Present: David Ling (Mansfield), Steve Austin (Beeston), Robert Watts (Sherwood), Bob Rotheram (Arnold), Peter Edge (Keyworth) and myself, John Hollins (Nottingham).

Topics covered: possible venues & dates, website fonts suitable for viewing by Apple Mac computers, using WordPress, FAQ pages, & photo-editing.

Possible venues & dates: some members said they'd look into possibly hiring a room for our future meetings (it's not ideal to continue using JH's house). Using Nottingham U3A's suite of rooms on certain Mondays when we could use the IT equipment there, was discussed, but DL was not keen to travel the extra distance. BR said we could just meet up on the odd occasion, and between times we could use other (IT) ways of keeping in touch. We decided to meet up at JH's on Monday 5 December (2-4pm), when we'll discuss this again.

Website fonts suitable for viewing by Apple Mac computers.

DL reported that when he looked at the Mansfield website using his grandson's iPod, that his fonts looked terrible ... Arial Black and Arial Narrow fonts appeared as Times New Roman by default. He recommends that we use the standard Arial, Verdana or Trebuchet fonts, to accommodate those who use Apple computers.

Using Wordpress

We spent most of the time talking about Wordpress for website building, currently being used by SA & BR. BR gave us an excellent presentation on how to use WordPress, which he obtained via his web-hosting company, [GoDaddy](#). BR is in the process of building the new Arnold U3A website, using a fixed page width of 990px, and with 3 banner photos rotating on the home page. He likes the WordPress [Atahualpa theme](#), which has been widely used by others, and which is stable. (You can preview your webpage with other themes if you so wish). He showed us the Dashboard (the command centre for the site), and a huge array of options and settings he could choose, plus various extra features, which are available with WordPress ... diaries, calendars, tables, contact forms, members-only pages (password protected), widgets & space for members' comments. I was very imPRESSED. :)

The annual cost of the website including the domain name & web-hosting comes to £63.

I found these pages in the Help section of the GoDaddy site ...

<http://community.godaddy.com/help/5140/getting-started-with-wordpress/>

http://codex.wordpress.org/New_To_WordPress_-_Where_to_Start

SA uses a more basic version of WordPress for his Beeston U3A website. His only criticism of his version is the limited range of fonts he can use.

DL has a password-protected area on his Mansfield website, which is used for the Committee's Minutes only (which the Committee wishes to keep private).

PE built his [Keyworth](#) website from scratch using CCS style-sheets. He would like to improve the site in certain ways, but he would need professional help to do so. So, PE is interested in what WordPress has to offer. He reckons that anyone else who wishes to take over the present website from him, would find it difficult to do so, owing to its complexity.

Both DL and myself use a lot of **PDF files** instead of HTML pages on our websites. I use them mainly for groups' programmes, which change several times a year. I'm hoping to involve more people to do part/most of the work for me, in emailing me the programmes in whatever format they like (so I can copy and paste them onto Open Office documents & then transform them into PDF files in OO, to upload onto the internet). I find it generally easier to edit a text document in Microsoft Word / OO, than to edit it in Kompozer.

How about having a FAQ webpage on your site?

BR came up with this suggestion, as a way of helping members use the site better, (and so reducing the number of queries from members). I'm thinking that this could be extended to giving members some tips as regards IT matters.

Here are a few topics that could be covered:

For those with poor eyesight

How to change the size of the text on your screen

How to change the screen to look black with white text on it

How to change the appearance of your mouse pointer

(making it bigger, black and to stand out more (mouse trails)

For those with **problems reading or accessing PDF documents** ... (100% virus-free)

... use of the zoom tools, File > Save As (onto your own computer), printing option available, and downloading [Foxit Reader](#), if Adobe Reader is not working.

What's the best size for photos, to submit to the webmaster (& the newsletter editor)

We could ask members for feedback on any aspect of the website, and how it could be improved. Please could we come up with a few more suggestions, when we next meet?

On a separate matter, I think we should keep in mind that some members are red-green [colour blind](#)... one in 20 men and one in 200 women in the UK. So websites with a lot of red and green in them, will look very drab to those who are. If you had 100 men and 200 women in your U3A, then 6 of them are likely to be colour blind. Potential new members will be looking at your website also, not just your existing ones.

Photo-editing

We also talked a little about photo-editing. I'm a Gimp enthusiast, but am also starting to use Photoshop Elements 7. *Prior to both of these, I used Photoshop 7.* I also use Picasa for creating collages, its web albums and its organiser (for finding lost photos!). I have several Flickr accounts too, and occasionally use its facility whereby I can download smaller sizes of a previously uploaded photo (for use on my blogsites with Blogger). *Here's a link to my Nottingham U3A Computer Club [blogsite](#), where I've used Flickr photos for their extra sharpness.*

DL recommends a photo-resizer called [Advanced Jpeg Compressor](#). He pre-sets image sizes to 500 or 600px, to produce images for use on his website. This costs about £22 to buy (just one payment for this).

RW has a Linux-based operating system (instead of Windows) on his computer. This comes with software for image re-sizing and re-naming. SA likes using [Microsoft's Picture Manager](#).

Next time, I will show you some of the basics of using Gimp, and how to make a simple banner for your website, similar to the [Nottingham U3A](#) one, which you'll see at the top of the home page. The font is Trebuchet, and you will see that the text has a slight blue

colour gradient applied from the left to the right. I've also added a small amount of drop shadow to the text, to make it stand out on the page. The size of the white background it's on is 607 x 93 px. (One advantage of having your webpage pure white, is that you won't see any border for banners like this). The photo just below it is at my standard width of 640 px. There's more info about all this, plus links to introductory videos on my [JWeb Designs](#) website. *By the way, I like using grey text for the body text, as it's kinder for your eyes than using black text. DL likes using a yellow background for body text on his [website](#).*

So on the “agenda” for next time, I would suggest ...

1. giving time for others in our group to talk about their websites
2. looking at hiring a room(s) for our meetings near where you live
3. JH talking about some Gimp basics
4. more ideas for a FAQ webpage for our sites.

Next time will be Monday 5 December, so I hope to see you then.

Regards,
John