Cyndi's Genealogy Home Page Construction Kit

[The outline below was first written in 1997 and was updated periodically over the next ten or more years. It appeared as a web page on the original version of Cyndi's List. In response to popular demand, it is now available in this PDF text format. *Cyndi's Genealogy Home Page Construction Kit* was the original outline and the basis for the 2004 book by Cyndi Howells: *Planting Your Family Tree Online : How to Create Your Own Family History Website*. The links that previously appeared on the construction kit web page are now located in sub-categories under the following category: *Cyndi's List - Genealogy Web Site Creation,* http://www.CyndisList.com/genealogy-website/. Links to each of those sub-categories are provided in the various sections below.]

Tips, hints, links and more to help you create your personal genealogy home page!

IMPORTANT: Please take time to review the following and share them with your friends:
Guidelines For Publishing Web Pages On The Internet
Recommended by the National Genealogical Society, May 2000.

Introduction

This page was designed to be a quick start guide to creating & designing a genealogy web page of your own. In creating this page I have tried to answer all of the questions that I have been asked over the last few years. There are a variety of options available and I will briefly outline a few of them below. Creating a web page of your own isn't as hard as you might think it is. Go ahead and give it a try - it is a lot of fun and a great experience. You have nothing to lose and several long-lost ancestors to gain!

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1. Find Space on a Web Server to Store Your Web Pages

Your Internet Service Provider

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Many Internet service providers offer you space on their server to put up your own web page as part of your monthly fee to connect directly to the Internet. Check the information regarding your account to find out if your ISP offers you space for a web page. Also check to see if they have any help files or guidelines available to help you get started. Some ISPs also create & design web pages for their customers for a fee.

Your Genealogy Software Manufacturer

Recent versions of many popular genealogy software programs now include the ability to generate HTML web pages from your genealogy database file. In addition, at least one genealogy software company also offers you server space for a basic web site as part of your software purchase.

Free Web Pages

There are several services that offer you free web pages. Some give you the ability to create and maintain the web pages, while others merely give you the storage space. In exchange for the free web pages you may be required to display advertising banners and graphics on your site.

Links are available here:
- Cyndi's List» Genealogy Web Site Creation » Web Hosting » Free Hosting
  http://www. CyndisList.com/genealogy-website/hosting/free/

Fee-Based Web Page Hosting Services

The following services have been recommended to me by visitors to this site. If you have any questions or concerns, please see my Disclaimers page.

Links are available here:
- Cyndi's List» Genealogy Web Site Creation » Web Hosting » Fee-Based Hosting
  http://www. CyndisList.com/genealogy-website/hosting/fee-based/

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2. Plan the Layout, Format and Content for Your Web Site

Layout

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- The front page, many times referred to as the "home page" on a web site is the main entrance to your web site:
    - It should be eye-catching and have a clearly defined title and description of what can be found on the web site.
    - Be sure to have links on this page which lead to all the other pages on your web site. You don't want to have any "hidden" pages which are only found by visiting other pages buried somewhere on the site.
    - Think of the front page as a place to combine several things that you would find in a book: the cover and title page, the index, the information about the author, date written and any other pertinent information that visitors need to know in order to have a clear idea of what they are looking at.
- Supporting pages for the front page, which have a common theme and a format and style which coordinate with the front page and follow a logical path in the layout.
- Split your web site up into a few separate pages, rather than putting everything on one long page. As your web site grows, the single page would continue to become slower and slower to load in web browsers as people visit your site. Plan ahead and create a set of smaller pages that will accommodate the growth of your web site as time goes on.
- Include graphics which fit together and display a theme or a common color scheme. Use the minimum number of graphics possible and re-use the same graphic over and over again whenever you can. See the *Tools For Enhancing Your Web Pages* section below.

Format

Base the format for your web site on the following guidelines to ensure a quality, user-friendly genealogy site:

- Guidelines for Publishing Web Pages on the Internet
  Recommended by the National Genealogical Society, May 2000.

Some important things that you should consider when creating your home page:

- Keep in mind that not everyone on the Internet has the same computer hardware and software that you do. Some people have earlier versions of software, slower modems, less memory and slower or older CPUs. If you exclude certain users from your site what is the likelihood that they will be back? Or that they will recommend your site to others? Since the object in putting up your genealogy page is to attract visitors & make connections, you want to be sure that these people can visit your site and be just as successful and satisfied as everyone else. Therefore you may want to avoid new technologies, new software applications, and current fads such as:

- o Frames.
- o Animated graphics.
- o Java applications.
- o Extremely large graphics.
- o HTML code which isn't supported by all browser types.
- Design your web pages with ALL types of browsers, versions of browsers & monitor resolutions in mind. See the Web Design Group home page at: http://www.htmlhelp.com/ . I really like this site because I've found it EXTREMELY useful and I agree whole-heartedly with their philosophy: "The Web Design Group was founded to promote the creation of non-browser specific, non-resolution specific, creative and informative sites that are accessible to all users worldwide. Such sites need not be boring and non-graphical!"
- If you really, really want to use java, frames, heavy graphics, etc., you should give your visitors a choice. Make several versions of your pages: text-only or "text-only friendly" pages; no-frames version; Java-free version; etc. Make a main entrance page to your site and explain that there are choices for the user with the appropriate links labeled below. This makes the site as user-friendly as possible.
- If you do find that the site works its absolute best in a certain monitor resolution, under a certain version of browser or adheres to a specific version of the HTML programming language be sure to note such on the pages at the beginning so that users can have a chance to adjust things if necessary. I've seen small lines of text at the top of a page which say something like this: "This site best viewed with Netscape 2.0 or higher, Microsoft IE 2.0 or higher and in 800x600 monitor resolution".
- In order to comply with some of these issues, use some of the online HTML validators & other reference tools designed to help your site be as diversified as possible. See below.
- Keep graphics, especially animated graphics, to a minimum. Try to find graphics that you can use repetitively throughout your site in order to save system resources and load time in user's web browsers.

Content

There are several different ways you might publish your own personal genealogical research information on a web site. You could choose to publish something as simple as a list of surnames that you are researching. Or you might create something complex and include your entire genealogy family file online. Following are a few ideas to get you started, but you should let your imagination be your guide.

- Genealogy Software That Generates Web Pages
  http://www. CyndisList.com/genealogy-website/software/
- GEDCOM to Web Page Conversion
  http://www. CyndisList.com/genealogy-website/gedcom-to-web-page-conversion/
  Your genealogy computer software program should offer you the option to

convert your database file into a file in the GEDCOM format. This is a universal standard which allows easy trading of files between differing systems and software programs. Convert your file to GEDCOM, then use one of the following programs to convert the GEDCOM into HTML web pages for your site.

- Privacy Issues
  http://www. CyndisList.com/genealogy-website/privacy/
  Thinking of putting a genealogy web site online? Do you post family information on mailing lists or newsgroups? Are you considering publishing your family history research? Please remember your family members and their right to privacy before you publish any personal information or place it online. Use some of the software utilities here to remove any information about living individuals from your GEDCOM file before generating reports and web pages. Read the articles for advice and current opinions on this topic.

- Miscellaneous
  - o Free HTML Pedigree Chart & Family Group Sheet - from Elaine Johnson
    This site has a wonderful HTML pedigree chart and family group sheet, designed by Elaine Johnson. She is generously offering the HTML code for users to copy & paste to use on their own web sites.
  - o Include something special on your web pages to encourage return or repeat visitors to your site:
    - It is a wonderful idea to include useful articles, hints, tips & guides about doing genealogical research.
    - Include extractions from records that you have used in your own research (before putting them on the web, be sure they no longer fall under copyright protection).
    - Find a way to give something back to the genealogical community by making a portion of your web site into something that is useful to ALL genealogists, not just to you & your personal research. By doing so you will be able to attract more visitors to your site which in turn means that you have that many more opportunities to find someone with common research interests or family lines and make the connections that you are hoping for. If everyone who put up a web page for genealogy also put up a small portion of the census for a certain area & a certain year, its easy to imagine how quickly we could have entire sets of census records online!
  - o Make sure that all the content on your web pages is freely owned by you. If you have obtained information or other media from another source, make sure that you have permission to use this material before you publish it on your web pages. If this information or media is protected by a copyright, you CANNOT publish it on your web pages without the permission of the copyright owner. For more details see the information on copyright located on *Cyndi's List*.
  - o Include scanned photographs and source documents for your research.

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3. Create the Web Pages: HTML Editors and Tutorials

There are several options for how you can go about creating your web pages:

- Hire someone else to create the pages for you.
- Use a pre-packaged software program to generate your pages.
- Use an online page generator.
- Learn to program with HTML and write the code yourself.

Professional Web Page Designers

Your ISP may offer web page creation as a paid service. There are also many people online who will create web pages for a fee. Check them out and compare the fees & services to find someone who best suits your needs. If you have any questions or concerns, please see my Disclaimers page.

Links are available here:
- Cyndi's List» Genealogy Web Site Creation » Professional Web Page Designers
  http://www. CyndisList.com/genealogy-website/professionals/

HTML Editors - Shareware / Software Programs

There are several software packages on the market that help you create your own web pages. You can find many commercial packages in any computer software store or discount warehouse club. There are also many shareware programs available to be downloaded online.

Links are available here:
- Cyndi's List» Genealogy Web Site Creation » HTML Editors - Shareware / Software Programs
  http://www. CyndisList.com/genealogy-website/html-editors/

Online Web Page Generators

- Webspawner - Create your own FREE WebPage now!

Writing HTML the Old-Fashioned Way - By Hand

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If you feel adventurous you can create the HTML code for your web pages yourself by writing the code using a basic text editor, such as Notepad, WordPad, Word for Windows, NoteTab Pro, or any other word processing program. You can create the document and save it as a "Text Only" or "ASCII" document with a .htm file extension. There are several online tutorials available to help teach you how to program using HTML.

Links are available here:
- Cyndi's List» Genealogy Web Site Creation » Writing HTML the Old-Fashioned Way - By Hand
  http://www. CyndisList.com/genealogy-website/writing-html/

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4. Tools for Enhancing Your Web Pages

- CGI & Perl
  http://www. CyndisList.com/genealogy-website/tools/cgi-and-perl/
- Colors: Codes, Charts, Samples & More
  http://www. CyndisList.com/genealogy-website/tools/colors/
- Counters
  http://www. CyndisList.com/genealogy-website/tools/counters/
- Genealogy & History Graphics
  http://www. CyndisList.com/genealogy-website/tools/genealogy-and-history-graphics/
- General Graphics
  http://www. CyndisList.com/genealogy-website/tools/general-graphics/
- Graphics Software & Tutorials
  http://www. CyndisList.com/genealogy-website/tools/graphics-software-and-tutorials/
- Guestbooks
  http://www. CyndisList.com/genealogy-website/tools/guestbooks/
- JavaScript
  http://www. CyndisList.com/genealogy-website/tools/javascript/
- Miscellaneous Web Development Starting Places
  http://www. CyndisList.com/genealogy-website/tools/miscellaneous-web-development-starting-places/
- Search Engines for Your Site
  http://www. CyndisList.com/genealogy-website/tools/search-engines-for-your-site/
- Sounds
  http://www. CyndisList.com/genealogy-website/tools/sounds/

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5. Proofread, Inspect and Validate the Text and HTML Code on the Pages for Accuracy and Usability

- Check all text for spelling, punctuation and other typographical errors. If you are using a text editor with a spell-checker, be sure to use it.
- You should also keep in mind all the various browsers that are in use and make sure that your web pages appear as you intend them to in each browser. You may want to have copies of each browser program so that you can test them yourself. You can also ask a friend to test your pages for you if they have a different browser or different version than you do.
- Use an online HTML Validator program to check the accuracy of your HTML code. These programs will tell you if you've left off a bit of code or if you have forgotten to close an open HTML tag.

Links are available here:
- HTML Validators & Linkcheckers
  http://www. CyndisList.com/genealogy-website/proofread-inspect-and-validate/html-validators-and-linkcheckers/
- Web Browsers To Test
  http://www. CyndisList.com/genealogy-website/proofread-inspect-and-validate/web-browsers-to-test/

6. Uploading Files to the Web Server

Follow the instructions given to you by your Internet Service Provider in order to upload your completed pages to their server. You may use an FTP (file transfer protocol) utility to do this. Your ISP might provide you with an FTP utility or you can download one from any of these sites.

Links are available here:
- Cyndi's List» Genealogy Web Site Creation » Uploading Files to the Web Server
  http://www. CyndisList.com/genealogy-website/uploading/

7. Check All Pages for Accessibility

Before you announce that your web pages are online, you should be sure to check them all first for accessibility, consistency and layout.

- Visit each individual page to be sure the URL is working and that you have uploaded the pages to the correct directory on the server.

- Check each link on each page to be sure they are working correctly while "live" online. This includes internal navigational links between your various pages, as well as links to other web sites.
- If you are using clickable graphics and image maps, check each one to make sure that they behave as expected and take you to the appropriate place.
- As you navigate through your site testing everything, ask yourself:
  - Does everything seem to be laid out logically?
  - Can I move around each page & between the individual pages easily?
  - If I were a first-time visitor would I be able to determine the purpose of the page?
  - Does the text & graphic content of the page flow smoothly?
  - Do all the colors and graphics blend well in order to make viewing the page a pleasant experience?
  - Am I conveying my intent clearly?

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8. Advertise Your New Web Site

Links are available here:
- Genealogy Mailing Lists & Newsgroups
  http://www. CyndisList.com/genealogy-website/advertise/genealogy-mailing-lists-and-newsgroups/
- Genealogy Surname/GEDCOM Database Registration Sites
  http://www. CyndisList.com/genealogy-website/advertise/genealogy-surname-gedcom-database-registration-sites/
- Genealogy Web Indexes & Search Engines
  http://www. CyndisList.com/genealogy-website/advertise/genealogy-web-indexes-and-search-engines/
- Search Engines & Online Announcement Web Services
  http://www. CyndisList.com/genealogy-website/advertise/search-engines-and-online-announcement-web-services/

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9. Common Web Site Problems That I See Every Day

Follow these guidelines to avoid some of the problems described below:

- Guidelines for Publishing Web Pages on the Internet
  Recommended by the National Genealogical Society, May 2000.

Web Site Title Follies

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My analogy -- a web site is like a book. A book has ONE title, displayed on the cover of the book and on the spine of the book. The cover of a web site "book" is in the body of the home page. The spine of a web site "book" is the TITLE tag that displays in the bar at the top of the web browser window.

Search engines, favorites and bookmarks all use the HTML <title> tag that appears in the bar at the top of the browser window. All favorites, bookmarks and search engine hits will display what is found in that tag. If you neglect this tag or insert anything other than the real title of your web site, you run the risk of losing return visitors and creating poor search engine index rankings for your site.

Most web sites that I visit have several inconsistencies when it comes to the title. The worst case scenario has been with web sites that have no title showing at all. Some webmasters have one title showing in the Title bar, a different title showing in the body of the page, and an altogether different title submitted with a request for a new link. With three different titles flying around, how is a visitor to know which title is *the* correct title for the site? How will a search engine or link list index such a site? How should a genealogical researcher cite that web site as a source for their research?

Dos and Don'ts:

- Give your web site ONE title.
- Make the title a logical choice. Don't name your site "My Genealogy."
- Put that one, exact title in the HTML <title> tag, in the body of the home page, and in a common footer at the bottom of each web page on the site.

Background Graphics

Background graphics can add character, color and flair to your web site. However, we don't need that on a genealogy research site if it will only distract the visitor and prohibit positive use of the web site. I have seen background graphics in every color and pattern. Some have made it impossible to read the text on the site. Others have made me feel a bit motion-sick, especially while scrolling. Some of the worst have been dark plaid patterns and backgrounds that are animated, with pictures dancing around behind the text.

Backgrounds that have borders will tile repeatedly in the browser window, which means the border will repeat itself when viewed on a monitor at a high resolution, thus interfere with reading the text.

Dos and Don'ts:

- Use a light colored background, with a dark colored font for your text. This is easiest to read and ensures that a visitor won't have any problems printing copies of the page.

- If using a texture, be sure to use a very subtle design that doesn't interfere with the display of the text.
- When using a background with a distinct border that runs down the side of the web browser window, make sure that the graphic is at least 1600 pixels wide to accomodate users with large monitors and high screen resolution. Why not make them 2000 pixels just to be safe?.

Contact Information

It is safe to assume that we all publish our genealogical research online because we want to make contact with other family members and people who are researching the same things that we are researching. If so, it should be logical to make it easy for people to contact us. However, I can't tell you how many times I have seen web sites that don't identify the owner or supply an e-mail address or other means of contacting them.

In some cases, webmasters don't include their name or their "real" name on their web site because they wish to retain a bit of anonymity. This line of reasoning baffles me. Anyone who wishes to be a genealogist and also wishes to be anonymous has most likely chosen the wrong hobby. Genealogy is about contacting people and making yourself known to others. If you don't tell the visitor who you are, or if you only make yourself known as "FluffyHead@isp.com/" you run the risk of not being taken seriously.

Sometimes we find contact information for the webmaster only on the front page for the site. Keep in mind that people don't always come through the "front door" on your web site. Links, bookmarks and search engines may lead visitors to your web site through a back door. Therefore, your contact information should appear on *every* page on your web site.

Dos and Don'ts:

- Give your full name. Give your real name.
- At the very least, include your e-mail address.
- At the most (preferable), include a physical mailing address. If privacy is an issue, retain a post office box for genealogical correspondence.
- Remember to keep your contact information current. If you move or change your e-mail address, don't forget to update your web pages.
- Create a common footer for the bottom of every page on your web site. Include your contact information in that footer.

Purpose or Mission Statement

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The owner of a web site has a clear idea as to the purpose for their site. They have a goal and they know what they want to accomplish by publishing the site. It is the owner's responsibility to convey those ideas to their visitors. It may not always be clear to the reader, so you should include a mission statement and define the purpose of the site.

In most cases, the purpose of a site will be very straightforward. A personal genealogy site will be online to aid the researcher in furthering their efforts and expanding their personal database. However, I have been to sites that have had content that wasn't explained. I have seen what appear to be military rosters, cemetery lists, ship passenger lists, etc., with no explanation as to what the list is for, where it came from or why it is being published on the site.

Dos and Don'ts:

- Create a brief statement of purpose for your web site.
- Place the mission statement at the top of the home page for the site, just under the title.
- Use that mission statement as your "official" description for the web site and include it in all advertisements for your site (on mailing lists, web sites and search engines).
- Don't assume that visitors to your site will just be able to figure it all out on their own.
- Cite sources for all research material you include on your site.
- If individual web pages on your site have different purposes, give each section or web page its own mission statement.

Things That Make My Browser Crash

If you have taken the time to create a web site, you must have a desire to have people view your work. You should do what you can to be fair and include all possible visitors to your site. Don't include anything on your site that will hinder a visitor or keep some people from being able to access your site. This means that the latest and greatest whiz-bang features for web pages may not work for everyone.

You should always work toward the most common denominator in your web site design. Keep in mind that not all people have the same hardware or software or Internet connection speeds. Wouldn't you hate to chase away a long-lost cousin who attempts to visit your web site, merely because their computer isn't as fancy as yours?

Dos and Don'ts:

- Keep your web page design as simple as possible.
- Don't use specialty software plug-ins that visitors are required to download before they can use your web site.

- Don't use Java on your site.
- Don't use any scripts or features that are memory hogs. It doesn't take much to crash a web browser.
- Do not use animated graphics. Dancing bunnies and flying monkeys have no place on a genealogy research site.
- Test your web site under multiple web browsers, on multiple platforms (Windows, Macintosh, Unix) and using multiple versions of software.
- Ask friends to test your web site using their computers, especially if they have something very different than your own.

Colors that Blind or Hypnotize

I have visited web pages that I could not read because the hot pink fluorescent text was too bright for my old eyeballs. For all I know I was hypnotized by the color and made to believe that sitting in this computer chair for hours upon end was a *normal* thing to do. That certainly would explain a lot, wouldn't it?

Another problem I often encounter is when color choices clash so that the text color competes with the background color for dominance. When choosing your colors, remember that the text should stand out and be easy to read and print.

Dos and Don'ts:

- Use only dark colored text on a light background.
- Do not use neon or glowing colors.
- Be sure to stay within the 216 color safe palette (see the Colors section in the Tools For Enhancing Your Web Pages above).

Frames Are Evil

Frames are a design feature that allow you to separate the display for your webpages into several windows that all fit side-by-side within the web browser. Frames can be spiffy, if done well, and frames can serve a functional purpose. The problem is that most people don't do frames well and often don't use them because they serve a functional purpose. As with many technical gizmos on a web site, people create frames on their web sites simply because they *can*, not because they *should*.

The problems we run into with frames stem from the difficulty we have in getting a framed page to behave in the same manner as a non-framed page. Unless the visitor to a web site is a webmaster or has a good understanding of web browsers, they have problems when it comes to bookmarking a framed page, printing the content within a framed page or properly citing a source within a framed page. Each of these problems

make researching online a less desirable activity and add a layer of difficulty that doesn't need to be there.

A webmaster that does a poor job when designing a site with frames can add more confusion when it comes to linking to outside web pages. If not done properly, the external web pages end up being displayed within the frames on the current web site. This often leads a visitor to believe that the content they are viewing is located on the original site. It isn't always easy for them to discern between the previous site and the current page.

Dos and Don'ts:

- Do not use frames on your genealogy web site.
- If you insist on using frames, be sure to insert a target attribute into links that point to external web sites. This ensures that a new browser window will open to display the next web site. For example, the HTML code for a link to *Cyndi's List* would appear like this: Cyndi's List
- If you insist on using frames, please give your visitors another option. Create another set of plain text web pages, without frames and any other fancy doo-dads that might hinder their visit.
- If your site isn't using frames, and you don't want visitors to view your site within someone else's frames, you can include the follow link on your page to help them "break out of frames" and view your site within a new browser window: Click here to break out of frames

Grammar, Spelling & Punctuation

Do you want to be taken seriously as a genealogical researcher? I assume the purpose in publishing your genealogy web site is to further your research efforts and make contact with others who are researching the same things. If so, please put your best foot forward and use proper grammar, spelling and punctuation. In creating a web page/site, you are now an author and a publisher. Therefore, take care in how you present your work.

Dos and Don'ts:

- Always spell the word "genealogy" correctly.
  See *The Correct Spelling of the Word GENEALOGY*.
- Use a spell-checker for all text on your site.
- Keep a dictionary close by for quick reference.
- Copy and paste your text into a fully equipped word processor document and have that program check the spelling and grammar for you before you insert the text into the web page.

- Put as much care into your web "book" as you would into a published book, printed on paper.

Location, Location, Location

Do you know how many counties there are in the United States by the name of "Washington?" There have been many times that I have seen web pages for sites titled such as "Washington County Public Library" or "Washington County Genealogy Society," only to find that the site contained absolutely no mention of which state that particular Washington County was in. This hasn't only been a problem with sites in the United States. How many different cities are there in the world by the name of "London?"

One of the worst examples I can recall, was for a cemetery transcription on a web site. There was no title for the page and no name given for the cemetery. All that was included was a set of instructions on how to drive to the cemetery. "Take Route 1 and turn left after 2 miles. The cemetery is on the right behind the church." In setting up a link to this site, I had no idea how to title the link. I wrote to the webmaster and asked for more details. They never replied. I have to wonder why they bothered to go to all that work to transcribe the cemetery and publish the data online, only to have the data be virtually worthless to the web site visitor.

It is a webmaster's responsibility to communicate clearly with the visitor. Always give a complete title for the site and a complete address, including all pertinent information about a location. Always identify the complete name, address and location for libraries, societies, cemeteries and similar topics that you might make mention of on your site.

Dos and Don'ts:

- Do not assume that your visitor will know where you live or where your cemetery/library/society is located.
- Do not abbreviate place names.
- It is better to repeat information on your site, than to assume someone will understand your intent.

It Really Isn't Music to My Ears

Multimedia is the wonder of the Internet. Through our computers and a web browser we can view pictures, watch video clips and listen to sound files and music. However, just because we *can* do these things, doesn't mean we should be forced to do any of them as we visit web sites. Often, enthusiastic new webmasters want to include a bit of background music on their web site. All too often, they don't include any way for visitors to turn off that music. This means that a visitor has to listen to the music during their entire visit to the site, whether they want to or not.

You, the webmaster, might love your choice in songs. You might find musical web pages enjoyable. You might think that it adds a wonderfully personal touch to your web site. Not everyone who will visit your site will agree with you. Many people who visit a Civil War web site at midnight will do just about anything to find a way to turn off that rendition of "Dixie" as it blasts from their computer speakers, waking the rest of the family...

Dos and Don'ts:

- Don't include any background music on your web site.
- If you want to include music or audio clips on your site, give your visitor an easy method to use to turn off the music.
- Better yet, give your visitor a choice and let it be their option to turn on the music or to listen to the audio clip.

Broken Links

Broken links are one of the more irritating aspects of surfing the Internet. There is nothing worse than finding a tempting link on a web page only to learn that it doesn't work and leads to a dead end. There are two parties responsible for making sure that links don't break (or stay broken): the owner of the web site that has the link and the owner of the web site to which the link points.

Broken links to external web sites are bad enough. But having broken links to pages within your own web site is really sad. Webmasters need to test every link to be sure that they each work and point to what they intended. This is especially crucial for navigational links that aid a visitor in getting around the web site.

Statistics have shown that visitors will leave a web site (and most likely not return any time soon) if they encounter broken link after broken link after broken link. Webmasters need to re-check links on a regular basis to make sure that they are in working order. Often, as a new web page is created, a webmaster will set up links, upload the page and then let it sit without ever looking at the page again.

Dos and Don'ts:

- Test all links on your site as soon as you create the web pages.
- Check links across your web site on a regular basis (monthly, bi-monthly, etc.) to be sure they continue to be in working order.
  (see the HTML Validators & Linkcheckers links in the Proofread, Inspect & Validate section above).
- As you delete web pages or change the file names on your web pages, be sure to report these changes to other webmasters who have links to your site.

Cyndi's Genealogy Home Page Construction Kit

- As you delete web pages or change the file names on your web pages, be sure to announce the changes on appropriate mailing lists and in e-mail to friends and fellow researchers so that everyone can update their bookmarks and favorites.
- As you delete web pages or change the file names on your web pages, be sure to re-submit your site to search engines to be spidered again in order to update the search engine's index files.
- If you restructure and reorganize the files on your web site (add directories or change directory/file names), remember to re-check your own internal, navigational links.
- If you move your web site to a new address, if possible you should leave behind a web page with a forwarding address and a link to the new site.

More Online Resources for Web Design Dos and Don'ts

- How to Make an Annoying Web Page
- HTML Bad Style Page
- The Top Fifteen Mistakes of First Time Web Design
  By Holly M. Burns.
- Top Ten Mistakes in Web Design
- Web Pages That Suck -- Learn Good Web Design by Looking at Bad Design

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More resources can be found here:

Cyndi's List » Genealogy Web Site Creation

http://www.CyndisList.com/genealogy-website/