

Traveling Web Sites

BY JOHN KUZMICH JR.



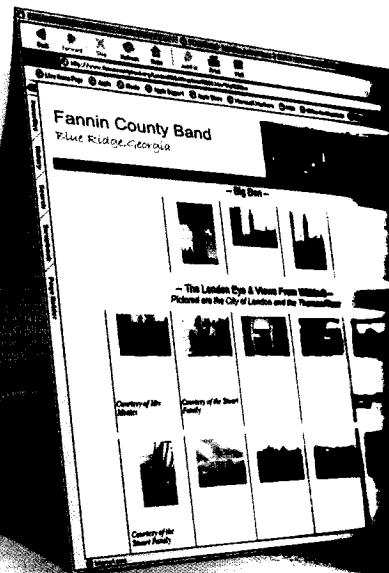
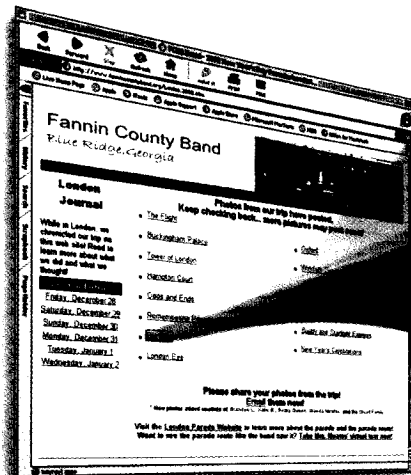
Dr. John Kuzmich Jr.'s technology column is a regular feature of SBO magazine. Dr. Kuzmich is a nationally known music educator with more than 30 years of teaching experience. He recently earned certification from TI:ME (Technology Institute for Music Educators) to be a national training instructor. His academic background also includes a Ph.D. in comprehensive musicianship. As a freelance author, Dr. Kuzmich has 250 articles and five textbooks published. As a clinician, he frequently participates in workshops throughout the United States and several foreign countries. For more information about Dr. Kuzmich, please visit his home page at www.kuzmich.com.

The next time you take a trip with your school music group for more than two days, consider posting the highlights of each day's activities on your Web site, with photos and quotes from students, teachers and chaperones. What a great way to connect with the parents, students and administration at home.

In SBO's March Internet Sitings column, I read about the Fannin County (Georgia) Band and its recent trip to London. I was impressed with how the band directors set up daily Web updates during their trip that instantly communicated every aspect of their travels with the folks back home. There were also journal entries for all six days in England plus "hot" links to pertinent Web sites about the trip. You can check it out for yourself at www.fannincountyband.org/London.2002.htm.

How difficult was it to do this Web posting while in England? It was surprisingly simple. The band director's daughter, a band alumna, was inspired to design a band Web site with its own domain name. Parents, friends and

administrators welcomed the daily Web postings and the chance to send messages to students via the band's Web site. You can find more information about this innovative endeavor on the SBO Web site at: www.sbo-magazine.com/sbomag/mar02/webspot.html. The single-most important ingredient is to find an interested person to handle the daily chores of posting to the Web while on a trip. It could be a parent chaperone, a member of the faculty traveling with the music group or even a student who is savvy about Web page construction.



Entry-Level Internet Diary Approach

Four heads are better than one, and in that spirit, Jeff Windsor from Denton, Texas, Rance Costa of Denver, Colo., my daughter, Reva, and myself have brain-stormed some interesting ideas for you to consider. Reva has had lots of experience working with online diaries in her undergraduate years at the University of North Texas. The online diary is simple and interactive. Friends, parents and administrators can communicate with a traveling group via a school site as well as receive daily updates about the trip. Reva recommends that you consider "LiveJournal" (www.livejournal.com) for traveling music groups.

What is "LiveJournal?" It is an interactive site where you can visit other journals and leave comments, and interact with people from around the world. Although it is free, Reva recommends that you consider a paid membership version because it oper-

ates on a faster Internet server. Also, the Web page can be embedded on your school Web site via a "hot" link so that everybody goes to your school Web site first. Traffic to your school Web site is an important plus in maximizing your exposure. If you use the paid membership version, you can embed a Web journal into a frame on your site and it is as easy to update as sending an e-mail, so it will work well for school music teachers who are new at this technology. First, it is recommended that you visit www.livejournal.com/developer and then learn more about how the embedding process at www.livejournal.com/developer/embedding.bml.

Another approach is to make a separate page at <http://diaryland.com>, host the images on your school server and link to it from your school site. It's free, and just as easy to update. The amount of HTML coding you choose to do is strictly up to you. Reva suggests that the easiest thing is to do a diaryland site, and give the URL to the parents and use the Web-log format.

There are also two other popular diary journal URLs available to investigate at www.blogger.com or <http://pitas.com>. Reva has created a simple site at <http://trip-demo.diaryland.com/>.

Fast and Effective Web Approach

Rance Costa is a professional Webmaster as well as an adjunct band director specializing in marching band show design. He recently set up a "traveling Web site" for the Dakota Ridge High School band program in Littleton, Colo., at: www.drhsmusic.org/pictures. Rance uses four applications to remotely post new information on this school Web site: 1) digital camera, 2) photo editing software, 3) file transfer protocol software, and 4) server side content management system. To better understand each of these applications, visit "Building Your Own Web Page" (January, 2000) at www.sbomagazine.com/technology.htm and "Building Your Own Web Page,

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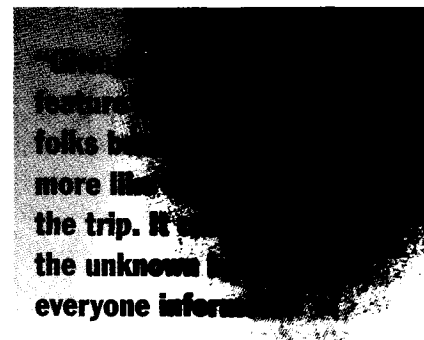
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Part II," (June, 2000) at www.sbomagazine.com/technology.html.

Costa uses an Olympus D-460 ZOOM digital camera. Although it is discontinued, the closest model available is the 510. He cautions that whenever traveling on tour it is important to be sure to use rechargeable batteries for your digital camera and have more than one set of batteries because digital cameras "eat up" batteries. Without a replacement set, you can miss valuable photos. Downloading software comes with the camera so Costa can connect the camera to a computer and download the pictures from his 32 MB memory card in the camera. To learn more about digital cameras, go to: www.olympusamerica.com/digital.

Once the photos are downloaded from the digital camera to his computer, he processes the images through Adobe Photoshop (www.adobe.com/photoshop), which is a professional-level image-editing software application that has a reduced educator price. For those who don't want such a professional-level product, consider using



PhotoDeluxe (www.adobe.com/products/photodeluxe/main.html). Regardless of which product you use, you will need to resize the photos and possibly edit the images to prepare them as low bandwidth images.

If you don't resize photos in an image editor, you will make your Web site very slow to the viewers. The reason that images come out so big from most cameras is because the camera creates them very large for the purpose of using them in print. Web site images can be of very low quality and still be effective to the human eye. A graphic image editing software application is an integral part of preparing

photos for better use on the Internet.

Uploading and downloading the photos and text to the Internet server will require an FTP software application. You'll need a username and password for your school Web site. Costa uses an FTP product called Cute FTP (www.cuteftp.com). When using Cute FTP, he selects which files on his computer to upload to the Internet server. Other leading freeware FTP client programs are WS_FTP by Ipswitch (www.ipswitch.com) for Windows and

Fetch by Fetchworks (<http://fetchsoftworks.com>) for Macintosh.

This is all done with either an HTML editor such as Netscape or a graphic Web page editor such as Microsoft's Front Page 2002 (www.microsoft.com/frontpage). Also consider Macromedia's Dreamweaver (www.macromedia.com/macromedia) or Adobe's GoLive! (www.adobe.com/golive). All of the preceding programs have built-in FTP programs to publish your Web sites.

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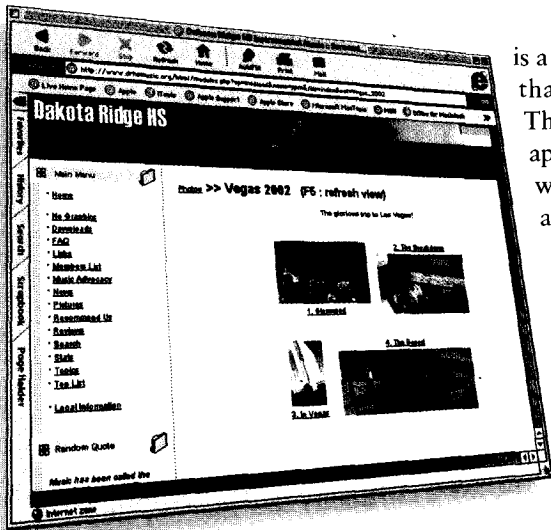
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Costa uses a server side template program called PostNuke for the Web site look that he desires. For more information, visit www.postnuke.com.

The Dakota Ridge High School Band Web site was created in about three hours with this server side content management system. Basically PostNuke is a shell for a Web site database that you lay a "theme" over to achieve your look (similar to Winamp skins). Postnuke is not a design tool; it

is a pre-programmed database system that you plug your content into. This product is an advanced level application; you'll need Web space with PHP-enabled and MySQL access.

Costa chose PostNuke to manage the Web site because "it took a very short amount of time to set up, considering its size, required little to no time coding, and has an unlimited amount of expansion possibilities. The Web site over time will contain quite an impressive amount of information."

Costa has some strong views toward graphical HTML editing programs. "None of the graphical HTML editing programs are worth anyone's time, not even the beginner ones, as far as I'm concerned. Those who get duped into using a graphical HTML editor are forever limited by not understanding the code. They will always create mediocre-looking Web sites that never truly satisfy their visions. They will never get any better.

I use a program called EditPlus (www.editplus.com) to edit my code. It is similar to the Windows program Notepad, but the advantage of this program is that it highlights various programming contexts and commands to make it easier to spot your typos and content to change," Rance adds.

Step-by-Step Approach: Denton Public Schools

Jeff Windsor is the K-12 music department Webmaster for the Denton, Texas, Independent School District. Previously, he was a successful high school band director for 13 years. One of his tasks is to maintain communication with the students, parents and administration at home while the band is away on trips.

Recently, Denton High School took a trip to San Antonio. You can go to the main URL for the posting of this trip at: <http://broncoband.dentonisd.org>.

Windsor says that being a Webmaster on staff is easy because the music teachers in the Denton

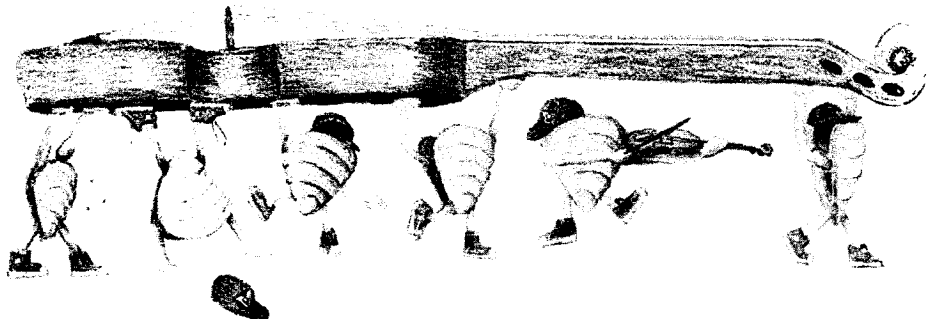
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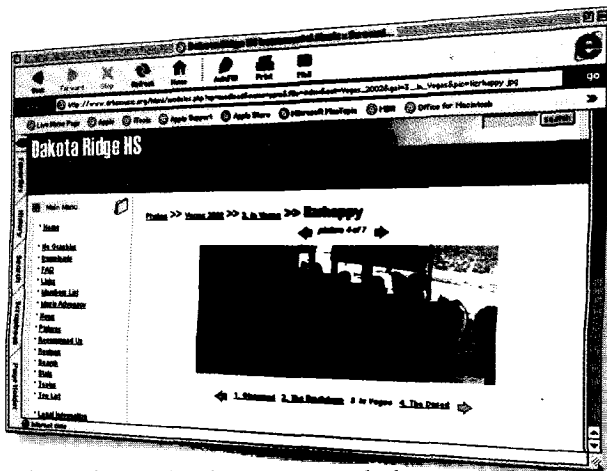
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Independent School District regularly connect with him. Directors can connect to the Internet using a toll-free number (provided by the district) and send e-mail messages and digital photographs (as e-mail attachments) to the district's Webmaster. These are added to custom Web pages created for the purpose of documenting the progress of the group as it travels. Updates are typically done each evening, and all the technical details are handled by the technology staff, freeing the band director to think about the students. Many times, a parent chaperone is given the task of sending the daily updates. For faster posting, such as when the band wins the outstanding band award, a phone call to the Webmaster allows quick posting to the Web. Because the Webmaster has full control over the content and design, this scenario is very flexible, but does require a certain level of commitment by all parties to work together. Fortunately for Denton, this is not a problem.

Windsor relates that creating a freely accessible solution for the technically-challenged director was more difficult to put together. He found a solution that just about anyone could master with a little practice. The star of this show is Yahoo.

It takes three things to make this work: connection, set-up, and moderating. The connection deals with accessing the Internet while on the trip. There are many services that allow you to use a laptop computer, dial a local phone number and connect to the Internet – AOL and Earthlink are two that come to mind. These services are moderately priced, and often there may be a parent chaperone who has one of these accounts and will be happy to allow it to be used on the trip.

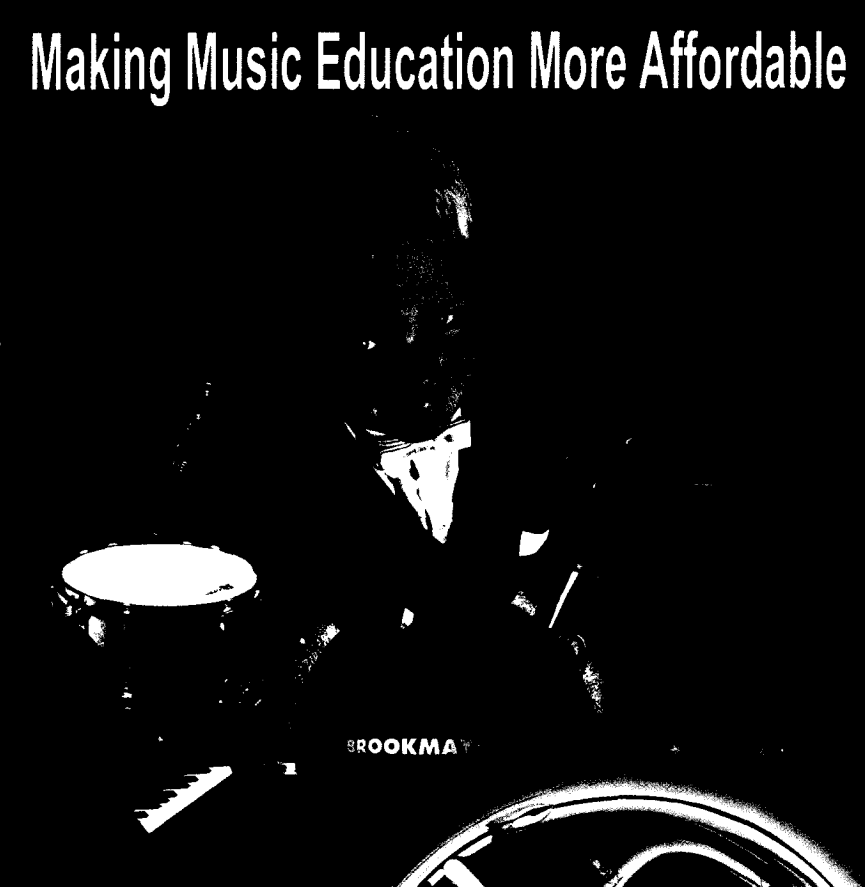
The set-up deals with creating a group (or club) at Yahoo (www.yahoo.com). The account is free, and must be done prior to leaving on the trip. My test account took about 30 minutes to get set up. For maximum effectiveness, you will want to get this all set up prior to leaving so that you can tell the community how to fol-

low the progress of the band via the Yahoo group.

Moderating is the third part of this scenario. It is highly recommended that you limit the ability to post to the site, and that all messages are moderated, meaning that the director (or his/her designee) approves all postings. This prevents inappropriate messages from tarnishing the site.


With this easy-to-use solution, the director can connect to the Internet each evening, post messages to the Yahoo group set-up, upload digital

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photos, and approve other messages from "interested parties."

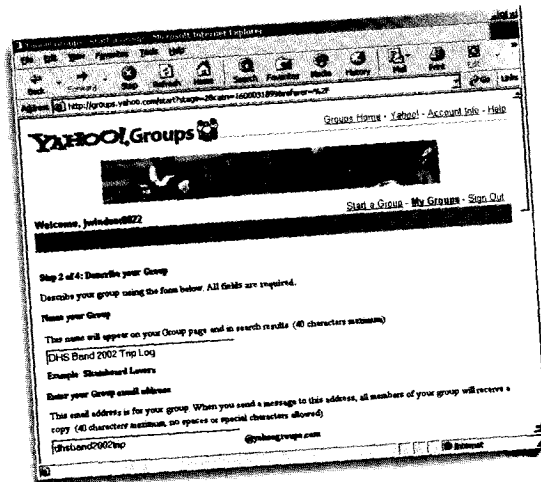
With a little help from some even moderately tech-savvy parents, elements of each scenario can be combined to create a bridge of communication. For example, in absence of the director-to-Webmaster connection, it could work just as well as a director-to-parent-back-home connection, with the parent using Yahoo to post the progress messages sent by the director. It may not have the polish of a custom Web page, but the basic idea is still the same. This even works for telephone update ideas. The 13 screen shots previously included show an easy Web-based set-up you could also try.

Giving a "daily journal" or diary feature online helps the folks back home to feel more like they are a part of the trip. It calms fears of the unknown by keeping everyone informed, and just knowing that there is a place you can go on the Web to see the latest announcements can be very reassuring for parents and administrators. Communication is always a good thing.

International E-mail/ Web Page Travel Tips

International traveling is exciting, and it helps to keep in touch with friends and business contacts via e-mail. But connecting with the U.S.A. has its own unique problems to overcome. Using Internet cafes in Europe is cheap if you are in a city for several days and have time to look for them, if they are there. But your address book, Web development software, FTP application and photo imaging/editing software may not be fully accessible unless you have them all on your notebook computer. There is a simple fix for doing e-mail (reading and sending letters with attached files) and remote Web uploading from your notebook and e-mail account while traveling abroad.

All you need is access to a telephone and your notebook with a



modem. To log onto the Internet you'll need the inexpensive telephone connectors for the countries you are visiting. Then you can plug your notebook into the connection, which goes into the telephone wall socket. Note that every country has its own proprietary telephone connectors. Teledapt has configured a U.S. telephone adapter that directly plugs into the country's proprietary telephone sockets and lets you dial your notebook from nearly any country's telephone socket to a local access phone number

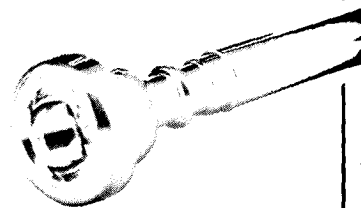
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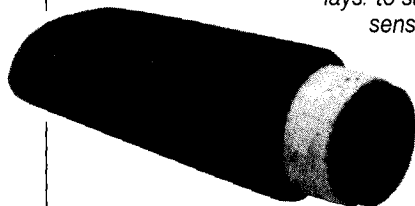
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for free. Simply use an Internet provider that has international local access phone service with local access phone numbers. For example, Earthlink (www.earthlink.net) has more than 40 pages of local access numbers for Italy alone. If you are in a country that doesn't have access to a phone in your room, Teleadapt also offers a cradle that connects your notebook's modem to a pay phone and you can dial the Internet service through your notebook's e-mail program at the price of a local phone call. Using your notebook's e-mail program is important because the mouse eliminates typing errors and you access complete e-mail addresses.

If you have a dual-line cellular phone from AT&T and are using international service, you can use your cellular phone, or you can have a telecommunication service connecting your notebook to the telephone. Then you can send e-mail while traveling in the car or out in the field. There is a steep price for

nient luxury. The per-minute charge will usually be \$1.99 in western Europe to \$2.99 or more in eastern Europe.

Though I have concentrated on remote connections to the Internet with traditional analog phone lines, be aware that satellite cellular phones are becoming more available in the cellular phone market with the ability to connect to the Internet from anywhere in the world. High bandwidth connections are also readily available with many hotels having an Ethernet built in to your room with either cable modem, DSL, T1 or larger services to carry you to the Internet in style. Wireless Internet connections are also becoming popular. And with a wireless network PCMCIA card in your notebook, it is also possible to easily connect to the Internet whenever in a building that has a wireless networking system operating. We truly live in a small world today, with fast Internet capabilities we can enjoy as we travel with our school music groups to new adventures.

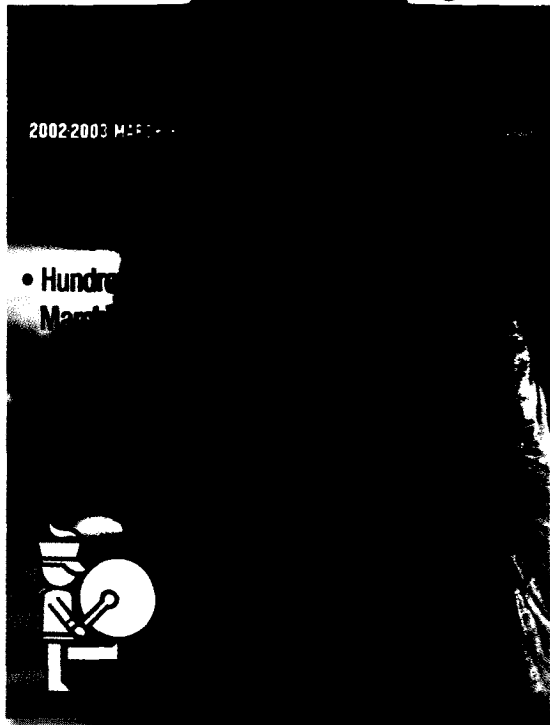
For more information about international telephone/computer travel, visit www.teleadapt.com. Teleadapt offers 24-hour technical support and offices around the world for more knowledgeable mobile phone/e-mail solutions whenever you travel abroad. With this information I was able to write articles last summer while in central and eastern Europe for 36 days. In the summer of 2003, I will be doing two months of workshops in Australia, New Zealand, Chile and Argentina using my notebook computer to connect on the Internet regularly. ♪

Reva Kuzmich, Rance Costa and Jeff Windsor contributed to this article.

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