

Creating www.stethelreda.org and more

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This file is located at www.stethelreda.org/docs/howto.pdf.

It contains three sections:

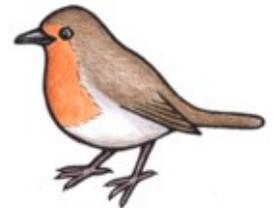
- 1. Overview - a quick intro
- 2. Resources - pieces used at St. Eth
- 3. Process - how the pieces were put together

enjoy... yow, bill

1. Overview

My name is Bill Krieger. I work at [St. Ethelreda School](http://St.EthelredaSchool) as webmaster and patron.

St. Eth is a small Catholic school located in Chicago, Illinois. Our excellent principal is Denise Spells. I found St. Eth through the [Big Shoulders Fund](http://BigShouldersFund). Big Shoulders is excellent too.



This document is a summary of the steps involved in setting up a web site, email and other internet services for St. Eth. I started working on this in August 2007 and now it's November. The URL for our web site is: www.stethelreda.org

Some stuff:

- **My intended audience:** someone looking to support the internet services (primarily email and a web site) of an elementary school or some other small organization
- **Disclaimer #1:** Lots of this stuff is time-sensitive. My "last modified" date is posted at the top.
- **Disclaimer #2:** There's no great magic in here, just a travelogue in setting up a web site and other things.

This is an informal document. Hence, the crappy English and the birds everywhere. The eagle is our mascot at St. Eth, so I have birds on the brain. And, this stuff gets a little dry after a while, so look at the birdies if you get bored. Ha!

If you have any questions, comment or better ways to do things, please email me at

wkrieger@stethelreda.org.

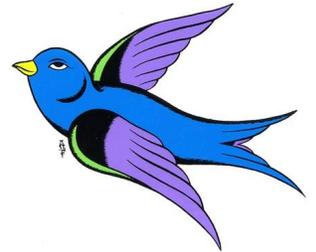
thanks... yow, bill

2. Resources

This section describes the various resources used at St. Eth.

2.1. Google Apps

Google Apps is the single most important internet service we use. At St. Eth, we use (or will eventually use) Google Apps for email, chat, groups, shared online documents, spreadsheets and presentations, and more. The cost for all this: \$0.00. Yeah, read on! Here's the URL, BTW: <https://www.google.com/a/edu>



Nearly everything about using Google Apps has been positive to this point. Here are the highlights (sort of in order of importance):

1. **Free** - It's free. Google asked for a non-profit form when I signed up. It took like an hour... super simple.
2. **Good service** - About that point above. It seemed to me that Google service was pretty good. Also, the help links on Google Apps were actually, um, helpful. Yes, it was quite shocking.
3. **Keep your domain name** - When initially setting things up, you can choose to keep your domain name with your email address. For example, I am at wkrieger@stethelreda.org, not wkrieger@gmail.com or some other variation. This is nice, especially for the teachers and our business cards and, well, everything. There is some magic. I had to get my ISP (Internet Service Provider) to change my MX records, so that all email went directly to Google's servers. Search Google Accounts help systems for "MX records". Your ISP should understand this too. BTW, this is not forwarding all emails, it's changing the MX records used in the internet to decide where email goes.
4. **Easy administration** - It was easy and wonderful to setup our user/email accounts. I grinned ear-to-ear when Google presented the option of reading in a text file of user names and stuff. I setup 20-something users and email addresses in no time.
5. **Gmail is nice** - You use the gmail interface for email. It's very nice. I'd say it is harder on novices than other services (Yahoo, hotmail, etc), but once you get used to it, it's money.
6. **Google Docs is nice too** - You get Google Docs. You're reading a Google Docs document right now. It's much more primitive than Word, but heck, so am I. I don't need all that crap. There are some really nice things about Google Docs:
 - Everything is stored online at Google, not on my PC.

- I can reference the document in a web page or email using a URL.
 - I can control who sees the document. Anyone can see this document. Other documents, I publish only to specific people.
 - I can share the document and multiple people can contribute to writing a document.
 - Finally, this is so obviously the future of computing, it's exciting to get on board.
 - My only negative is it's hard to share a Google doc with everyone. For that, I had to save it as a PDF.
7. **Lots of apps** - In fact, Google Apps comes with Excel-ish spreadsheets, PowerPoint-like presentations, chat/IM, bulleting boards (Google groups) and a ton more. We use Google Calendar for our school calendar online. Two common themes for nearly all Google apps: 1) simple, stripped-down functionality and 2) 21st century distributed computing... everything stays online, not your PC.
8. **Never down** - Google has some guarantee about their servers not going down. Whatever. I don't worry about Google's servers going down. The quality of the network, the hardware, the software and the service has been great.

Google Apps was a big step for our little school. It was worked brilliantly for us. I have a hard time imagining an option that is better for a small school or charitable organization or business for that matter.

2.2. Open Source Web Design

The Open Source Web Design site is an incredible utility. The URL is <http://www.oswd.org>. The basic design and structure of the St. Eth web site comes from OSWD. In particular, I used portions of two template: the "andreas07" by [Andreas Viklund](#) and the "lazydays" by [Pat Heard](#).

OSWD is a collection of 100's of CSS-based web design template. It's easy as:

1. You pick a template from their collection.
2. You download it.
3. You add your content (and maybe modify the design if you get sassy).



If you don't know CSS or HTML for that matter, then go grab a book. It's OK. I find myself googling some CSS tag I forgot and I often times end up here: <http://www.w3schools.com/css>. The W3 Schools web site seems is a nice reference site, and they frequently have small examples to peak at.

One note of caution. I happily published V1.0 of my site, and my school's old computers, old operating systems, old versions of browsers, and tiny screens promptly broke it. Sigh. Some of the CSS

formatting stuff doesn't translate to older technology. I had to scramble and with a minor tweak (converting the overall page formatting from CSS back to regular, old tables), I worked on all the old stuff, pretty well.

2.3. Kompozer

This is a weak point. I can't find a really good open source web page editor. My current favorite is called Kompozer. You can find it at: <http://www.kompozer.net>. Just FYI: Kompozer is a branch from an editor called Nvu, which I believe has died. I don't know; who can keep track.



Kompozer is fine, and it's free. It's very frustrating using it with CSS templates though. I find myself flipping over to the HTML view to apply CSS styles and stuff. And that's frustrating because, for some reason, Kompozer just messes up your HTML. Whatever.

I have actually gone in and prettied up the HTML for my pages and am using WordPad to add and change things. I know. Yuk! It's not as bad as it sounds, because my pages are fairly simple and orderly.

2.4. Flickr

I have a flickr account for St. Eth photos. Flickr is www.flickr.com. You can find St Eth at www.flickr.com/photos/stethelreda.

I'll give myself a little credit. I had one good idea: feature photos of kids/students in the web site. This softens up and personalizes the site. It also draws the interest of everyone at the school: students, parents, and faculty.

Flickr is really nice. It's free. I exceeded the limits of my free account, however, and finally had to pay some money for an advanced account or whatever. It was \$25 for the year for unlimited everything.



There are tons of these sites. I like flickr because:

- Their software is very intuitive. Uploads are easy to do and control.
- I use flickr sets to organize our school's photos. Each event (fund-raiser, first day of school, etc) is a set.
- I can post a link to any photo or set on our web page.

- The aesthetics of flickr are really nice. The "Slideshow" feature is especially eye-catching.
- People (parents, students, etc) can add their comments to the pictures. Not many people are doing this, but they're starting to.

The only downside of flickr is that it's not Google; it's Yahoo. So, I needed another account and login and password. I looked briefly at Google's Picasa, but it didn't seem as nicely formatted as flickr.

2.5. Purehost

This one might be a mistake, but only a tiny one. I selected www.purehost.com to host the St. Eth web site. Here are the pluses:



1. After I told them we were non-profit, the cost went down to \$60/year. The storage and bandwidth limits that come with that are more than sufficient for our needs.
2. The support I have gotten has been excellent. I used their chat support when I was re-directing email to Google Apps. That was *really* nice... no waiting on the phone. Purehost has never been down since I've used them.

3. They keep nice traffic stats at PureHost. I don't know if other ISP's have as nice a setup.

OK, so what's the problem? Well, I think that Google would have hosted our site. Google has something called their Page Creator and they do hosting, I just haven't looked into it because we're all setup with Purehost for a year. If I didn't have an ISP and I had some time, then I guess I'd check out what Google offers.

2.6. Paintshop Pro

I use Paint Shop Pro to edit images. It's one of the few pieces of software that cost any money, like \$50, a million years ago. Paint Shop Pro is now offered by [Corel](http://www.corel.com). There are a million of these programs around, of course. PhotoShop is the king. But that costs a lot more \$\$\$ than I spent.

I use PaintShop Pro primarily to edit photos that come out of my digital camera. It seems that so many of the shots come out under-exposed and really benefit from some simple tweaking. It's also nice to crop and resize to get exactly the kind of photo that I want.



2.7. Blogger

Once I figured out how things would really work with the web site, I switched the main page to a blog. I use Blogger, which is at www.blogger.com. Blogger is google now, BTW. There is some extra step to go from a gmail account to a full Google account. I don't remember the specifics, but I just used my email as a login and re-used my password and things worked out fine.



Anyway, once school started, it quickly became apparent that the front page of www.stethelreda.org was too static. We needed to have the latest, greatest stuff up front so people would notice it, and hopefully, return to the site, looking for new stuff.

So, I switched the main page to a blog. The tough part was my conviction that our "look and feel" wouldn't change because of the blog. That meant some pretty major surgery in Blogger land. I had to develop a blog template using the Blogger constructs within the context of my OSWD-inspired design template and color scheme. It took a lot of tweaking and trial-and-error. I had a test blog setup at a different URL for a week or so while I was playing. One night, I switched over to my real site and we were up and running.

I like how the blog is working out. My users (parents, students, and teachers) are starting to get used to interacting with the web site instead of just looking at it. I think this will be a real strength over time. And, my Blogger surgery was pretty successful and the blog entries look like the regular St. Eth web pages.

2.8. The rest

A couple minor notes on other resources used:

1. I use Filezilla for FTP stuff when I need it. It's free and it's at: www.filezilla-project.org.
2. We use Firefox as our browser throughout our school. Internet Explorer is there, but I encourage the teachers to use Firefox because it's better.
3. I hope to get some video, maybe of PE class or some school event, and upload it to youtube. We'll see.
4. I don't have a clipart site or CD. I usually just use google like "plastic flamingo clipart free", sort, download, and go.

I was kind of struck that I don't really have any good book recommendations. Doing something this basic, there is more than enough material on-line.



3. The Process

Here are your steps in getting your web site and email going.

- Step 1: Get your domain name... You can use www.register.com or your ISP or whatever.
- Step 2: Select an ISP... I'd investigate Google's hosting options. We use www.purehost.com.
- Step 3: Get Google Apps
- Step 4: Redirect your email... Your ISP should help you change your MX records to send your email directly to Google.
- Step 5: Setup your Google Apps accounts... This is a breeze; it sets up your email and all the other Google Apps.
- Step 6: Create your web site... use OSWD, Kompozer, flickr, Blogger, PaintShop Pro and whatever else you want.



St. Ethelreda Eagles!

Thanks for reading and if you have any questions or ideas you'd like to pass along, please email me at wkrieger@stethelreda.org.