

# Engaging Technology:

*A Survey of Tools and Techniques  
that Help Church Musicians Work Smarter*

*A workshop presented at the 2013 Denver Conference of the*

ASSOCIATION OF  
ANGLICAN  
MUSICIANS

160 EMAIL INQUIRIES WERE SENT  
ASKING THE QUESTION:

*What is the most valuable  
tool, system, or practice in your use  
of non-musical technology?*

THE EDITED HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 105 EMAIL  
RESPONSES FOLLOW IN THIS DOCUMENT.

from one respondent:

*“It has been a really interesting year for me technology-wise. My new rector began in July of last year, and since then I have gone from having a rector whose idea of technology was a yellow legal pad and (his one gesture toward modernity) a mechanical pencil, to someone wanting a YouTube channel linked to a Facebook page, etc. My job title has now grown from ‘Parish Musician and Associate for Liturgy’ to ‘Associate to the Rector for Liturgy-Music-Communications.’ My guess is that a number of our membership find themselves in similar situations.”*

# Best Practices

## Back Up Your Data

Use multiple destinations to maximize:  
convenience of backup (online),  
speed of recovery (local),  
and safety of data (redundancy).

Examples of back-up services:

**CrashPlan**

**Mozy**

A review of 26 online backup services:

[http://pcsupport.about.com/od/maintenance/tp/online\\_backup\\_services.htm](http://pcsupport.about.com/od/maintenance/tp/online_backup_services.htm)

# Passwords

Use “strong” passwords

<https://www.microsoft.com/security/pc-security/password-checker.aspx>

Periodically change certain types of passwords

<http://lifehacker.com/5966214/how-often-should-i-change-my-passwords>

Do not use the same password for multiple purposes

Store your passwords in a protected spreadsheet or use an app or application to store passwords

Use specialty software to organize passwords

*pure-awesome and free:* <http://dashlane.com>

<http://lifehacker.com/5529133/five-best-password-managers>

**PDF** = *Portable Document Format*

## **Create PDFs When Sharing Files**

When sharing a document, share it as a PDF as opposed to sharing the source file (.doc, .xls, etc.)

- PDF documents look the same on all computers
- Others can open the PDF, whereas they might not have the software (and/or installed fonts) in order to view your source file correctly

# Document Sharing and Collaboration

Dropbox, iCloud, Google Drive (Google Docs), InSync (<https://www.insynchq.com/>), SkyDrive, etc.

- Data backup, previous versions, access to deleted files
  - Access from anywhere
- Real-time collaboration (chat and simultaneous editing) in Google Drive

Networked computers and/or networked drives

*“Scan all hymns, harmonizations, service music, anthems, chants, etc., as PDFs and put in Dropbox (or equivalent) so that they are accessible from anywhere and any device.”*

# General Organizational & Administrative Tools

- Sync contacts (and calendars) across all devices
- Evernote
  - Save text, photos, PDFs, etc.
  - All content is taggable and searchable
- Sticky Notes (built into Windows and Mac operating systems)
- Stickies (a better option in Windows by Zhorn Software)
- Getting Things Done (GTD) methodology by David Allen
  - Nozbe (web, Win/Mac desktop, and various devices, <http://nozbe.com>)
  - Todoist (web, Win/Mac desktop, and various devices, <http://todoist.com>)
  - Omnifocus (Mac, iPhone, iPad, <http://www.omnigroup.com/omnifocus>)
  - TeuxDeux (<https://teuxdeux.com/>)
  - Various other software/app solutions



- Searching files on your computer
  - Google Desktop
  - Windows/Mac built-in search
- FileMaker with FileMaker Go
  - an app that records chorister attendance and auto-calculates pay
  - an app for electronic RSCM cards
  - tracking donors, donations, and event participants
- Automated file/folder management
  - Hazel (for Mac)
  - Belvedere (for Windows)

- Service audio recording

*“Our Sunday morning services are recorded each week to a Mac using alarms in iCal that trigger scripts to initiate and end the recordings, then another automated script runs to turn the raw audio into mp3s, which are then moved into a shared Dropbox folder. A parishioner grabs those files from the comfort of his own home and edits them for our iTunes sermon podcast.”*

- “Pocket” plugin (formerly called “Read It Later,” <http://getpocket.com/>), which allows you to download content for later processing, syncing the content across multiple devices and making the content available offline; you can also email links to be added to your “pocket” for later reading

- Voice recognition software:

<http://www.nuance.com/for-individuals/by-product/dragon-for-pc/index.htm>

- Software/service on device to accept credit card payments at events (e.g., see <http://squareup.com/>)
- forScore app for viewing scores on an iPad (<http://www.forscoreapp.com>)
- GoodReader for viewing and manipulating PDFs on iPad/iPhone (<http://www.goodiware.com/goodreader.html>)

- ClickBook for printing in complex formats. From their website: ClickBook works much like a print driver; it intercepts pages going to laser or inkjet printers and automatically rotates, reduces and realigns pages into the correct order to create double-sided booklets and brochures. <http://www.bluesquirrel.com/products/clickbook/>
- Scanning and printing on a network: A networked copier, scanner, and printer (or a machine with the functionality of all three) is indispensable, allowing direct computer-to-copier printing and copier-to-computer scanning

*“I use a single Excel file (‘workbook’) with multiple tabs (‘worksheets’) to combine into one file what would otherwise require a multiplicity of files.”*

# Choral/Organ Library Organization

- **FileMaker**, optionally with FileMaker Go (iPhone, iPad)
- **Microsoft Access**
- **dBase** (old-school, but apparently new versions are available)
- Online database creation: <http://www.musiclibrarian.net/>  
request a demo user password via email: [webmaster@musiclibrarian.net](mailto:webmaster@musiclibrarian.net)

*“Nearly every choir or parish has a person who likes detail-type work and finds database construction and library cataloging satisfying—I strongly encourage that musicians seek out such people for these projects!”*

*“Around 1974, I moved to Little Rock, Arkansas, and contacted an organ teacher about lessons. I wasn’t all that well fixed for funding, and he had a job he needed done: the organization of the music library at his church. Of course, this was the pre-digital age, so a lot of what I did was typing and filing. We bartered for lessons and organization for several years.”*

That organ teacher was Charlie Rigsby!

# **Service Planning & Performance Histories**

- FileMaker
  - Excel
- Numbers (Mac only)

# Electronic Liturgical & Planning Resources

- The Lectionary Page (<http://lectionarypage.net/>)
- also, <http://lectionary.com/>
- Bill Wunsch Catalogue of Anthems and Motets (PDF available from AAM)
- St. James Music Press (<http://sjmp.com/>)
- Choral Public Domain Library (<http://cpdl.org>)
- International Music Score Library Project (<http://imslp.org>)
- The Mutopia Project (<http://www.mutopiaproject.org/>)
- [www.ritesong.org/song](http://www.ritesong.org/song) - searching is free!
- <http://oremus.org> for hymnals and Bible translations
- The Worship Well (<http://www.theworshipwell.org/>, not updated recently, but still a useful resource)
- Text Week (<http://textweek.com/>)
- Book of Common Prayer (<http://bcponline.org/>)
- Latin Vulgate (<http://latinvulgate.com/>)
- Blue Letter Bible (<http://www.blueletterbible.org/>)
- Reverse Lectionary ([http://satucket.com/lectionary/When\\_Will\\_It\\_Be\\_Read.htm](http://satucket.com/lectionary/When_Will_It_Be_Read.htm))
- Review other churches' online music lists for inspiration when planning music
- Use YouTube (or iTunes or Spotify) to review unfamiliar pieces before ordering a single copy for review

*“One of the most useful things for me has been an Excel Spreadsheet for tracking all music used in our services. I now have three-years’ worth of data. The columns are all the parts of the service, from prelude through Psalm, motets, Sanctus, hymns, etc., to postlude. Each row is a different service. This way, I can generate various reports: how many times a certain hymn has been sung, a list of all anthems we’ve sung, the list of settings of the Gloria we’ve used, etc. It’s handy for planning – to remind me what’s in our repertory, and to prompt ideas of what new things I want to introduce. Also, it’s linked (via a data merge that I don’t fully understand; a choir members set it up for me) to a document that I send each week to our leaflet producer, listing all the musical bits of the service. I enter the music into the master spreadsheet, then it automatically generates the weekly document that I can send her as a Word document.”*



# Service Bulletin Creation

- Microsoft Word
- Pages (Mac only)
- Adobe InDesign
- Adobe PageMaker
  - Adobe discontinued PageMaker in 2004; replaced by InDesign
- Microsoft Publisher
- WordPerfect
- The Right Stuff (Church Publishing, used to be software but is now online subscription service)

- Store bulletin-ready anthem inserts in Word document
- Use fonts from Saint Meinrad Archabbey in Microsoft Word (!?) to create engraved music for Proper chants  
see: <http://www.saintmeinrad.org/the-monastery/liturgical-music/downloads/>
- Microsoft PowerPoint to create media for paperless services (or Keynote, Mac only)
- Sibelius and Finale for engraving music
- PhotoScore Ultimate for scanning music for re-engraving through Sibelius (n.b.: the free version of PhotoScore is almost useless); SmartScore is the Finale-compatible scanning software (the free version is indeed of some use)

# Calendars

- Google Calendar
- For communicating schedules: church or music department calendar can be subscribed to by choir members or parishioners
- Keep & Share (<http://keepandshare.com>) - annual fee, non-profit discount

*“To keep track of planned chorister absences: every choir has a different calendar (and associated color) but all the calendars are combined onto one to make it easy to see who will be absent on any given day.”*

# Promotion & Communication

## Email

- **Constant Contact** (subscription, <http://www.constantcontact.com>)
- **MailChimp** (free, <http://www.mailchimp.com/>)
- **Vertical Response** (pay-as-you-go or subscription, <http://www.verticalresponse.com>)
- Once-a-week newsletter sent to choir members/parents that lists important upcoming events, anthems for Sunday, web links for listening to repertoire at home, and links to the online calendar
- Send (weekly) the order of music for rehearsal to choirs so they can put music in order and do other advance preparation
- Email lists (Gmail groups, or other methods) for each choir, with a reminder email sent each Friday to the choir that sings that Sunday, also reminding them about the call time and repertoire
- Mail Designer (Mac only) – generates attractive, colorful emails; integrates with the native Mac Mail application and with MailChimp online

- “pyramid” distribution by sending PDF advertisements to choir members via email (or Facebook) to in turn send to their own personal distribution lists

## **To send files that are too large for email**

- <http://emaiillargefile.com/>
- <http://yousendit.com/>
- Put large files in a Dropbox folder and then email a link to it

## **Pastoral care of choir members (often entangled with choir absences)**

*“A pastoral care database can be a useful tool for keeping church staff aware of pastoral concerns as well as coordinating clergy and staff attention to those concerns.”*

# Facebook

- Public pages

- Private groups

useful for an organization's non-public, internal communication, as well as socialization withing the organization

- Facebook Ads

*“When writing posts on a public page, keep posts friendly, interesting and fairly frequent, and tag people so they get a lot of views and end up in more people’s newsfeeds. Enlist your choirs help sharing announcements, Evites to concerts, photos, and videos.”*

- Patch (<http://www.patch.com/>) – a local electronic daily newsletter available in many towns/cities
- Send choir members links to information and media on a non-public church webpage (or other non-public site), e.g., service plans, audio recordings, PDFs of scores
- Twitter
- Postal mailed personalized letters (whose creation can be simplified through mail merge—e.g., connecting a database or spreadsheet with a word processor), to choir members a month before the start of the choir season, welcoming them to the new season

# Parish Website

- publish notes about music used in services in blog format, is sortable by author and topic among all the other staff/clergy blog posts; example: <http://www.stjames.org/>
- publish the list of hymns and other music for upcoming Sundays (hopefully a motivator for folks to show up to church), example: <http://www.historicchristchurch.org/music/upcoming-music/>
- teach the congregation new hymns ahead of Sunday morning by including YouTube video or audio links



## **Sharing recordings with choir members for study**

- YouTube (including many videos with a scrolling score and individual choral parts emphasized)
- iTunes
- Spotify
- SoundCloud
- Export part-emphasized MIDI performances from Sibelius or Finale for choir member study

## **Text Messaging**

- “Hardly anyone under 25 reads email.”
- “Text message groups might work better than email for younger choirs.”
- “Young moms don’t use email very much; texting is the best way.”
- an opposing opinion: “Every one of the choristers (including the oldest members) reads email now, so this is effective and inclusive.”
- Use “Mass Text Message” app for sending last-minute messages to a choir or other group of individuals,  
see: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/mass-text-message/id375186546?mt=8>
- Another mass-texting application: RainedOut <http://rainedout.com/>, useful for last-minute messages to an entire congregation

*“We create and upload videos of our events and performances to a YouTube channel. We have been able to drum up a lot of energy around organ and chorister programs with this. The videos show action, not just share information.”*

*“We create a choir roster spreadsheet in Google docs so that those who need the info quickly can access and make changes if necessary. Chorister parents are given the link to the spreadsheet so they can contact each other outside of choir.”*

- **HootSuite** (<https://hootsuite.com>) lets you write and schedule your social media posts far in advance, so you can do a month’s worth of posts at once and not have to remember to do it every day. Works with Facebook, WordPress, Twitter, etc.
- A choir-member-only website, for which choir members are given a username and password; the site offers scans of music (when copyright permission is granted), and audio recordings of anthems we are working on so music can be worked on between rehearsals. The website also contains rehearsal schedules and misc. other news.
- **Church Life:** a smart phone app that connects with an online church photo directory

*“My choir has its own Gmail account. A choir member enters all our events for the year into a Google Calendar. I’m synced with it, as are several choir members. This clever, tech-savvy choir member even puts the repertory for all services into the details field of each calendar entry. The choir Gmail account also has the choir roster under ‘Contacts.’ This way, any updates/changes can be entered in one place and then they’re synced to everyone instantly.”*

## **Utilities for Coordinating Meeting Times/Dates and Collecting Other Information**

- Doodle (<http://doodle.com>)
- Forms on Google Drive –integrates with Google spreadsheets and can analyze collected data to create reports and charts
- Meeting Wizard (<http://www.meetingwizard.com/>)
- Survey Monkey (<http://www.surveymonkey.com/>)

- Adobe Connect – web-conferencing via any device
- iPhone or iPad with Facetime (i.e., to communicate with remote carillonneur)
- BaseCamp project management utility  
see: <http://basecamp.com/one-page-project>
- LED Belt app – for last minute choir communication (!)

## **Online Sign-Ups**

- My Sign Up (<http://mysignup.com>)
- Sign Up Genius (<http://signupgenius.com>)

# Computers in the Choir Room

*“We have computers available for choristers  
(and optionally available for adults)  
to work independently on music theory.”*

Suggested software:

- Music Ace Maestro and other software  
see: <http://www.harmonicvision.com/>
- Alfred’s Essentials for Music Theory
- <http://musictheory.net> and other websites
- Musition and Aurelia software from Sibelius; online versions also available  
see: <http://www.sibelius.com/products/index.html>

## **Audio Processing** (recording/editing)

- Audacity (free from <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>)
- Roxio (<http://www.roxio.com/>)
- Sound Studio  
(Mac only, <http://sound-studio.en.softonic.com/mac>)

## **Online Tools for Website Creation**

- WordPress (<http://wordpress.com/>)
- Tumblr (<http://tumblr.com/>)
- Joomla (<http://www.joomla.org/>)
- Wix (<http://www.wix.com>)
- see: <http://lifehacker.com/5965141/how-to-find-the-perfect-way-to-build-your-web-site-for-coders-and-non+coders-alike>

## Fundraising for Projects

- IndieGoGo
- Kickstarter, etc.
- see: <http://mashable.com/2012/12/06/kickstarter-alternatives/>

## Accessing a Computer Remotely

- Log Me In (<http://www.logmein.com>)
- Go To My PC (<http://www.gotomypc.com>)

*“While the ability to use your work computer from any location holds the danger of never getting away from work, a little discipline is all it takes to prevent that. After being away for a day or two, or on vacation for a week, the ability to sort through emails from home the night before returning to the church makes a huge difference in the first day back in the office. I recommend it.”*

# Learning How to Use Apple Products Better

- Tidbits: <http://tidbits.com/>
- Take Control: <http://www.takecontrolbooks.com/>
- Your local Apple store

## Hold a Cyber Rehearsal

- Upload scans of scores to website
- Email links to audio/video tutorials and/or performances
- Make an audio recording of a virtual rehearsal (accompaniment plus director commentary)

## Musical Tools (off-topic!)

- Pitch pipe, tuner, and metronome applications/apps
- Record/playback on organ
- Hauptwerk.com virtual organ for off-site practice



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# *THANK YOU!*