



*VW Bro. Trevor W. McKeown's thirty-five years in communications administration and thirty-eight in Freemasonry are put to good use in his many responsibilities for the Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon. Online since 1987,<sup>1</sup> he edited their Grand Lodge Masonic Bulletin for its last fifteen years, and his handiwork can be seen in their Grand Lodge website, freemasonry.bcy.ca—now in its twenty-third year. He has been curator of their library and archives for almost as long, and has served as Grand Historian since 2006.*

## **An historical outline of freemasons online**

*By Trevor W. McKeown*

*As a net is made up of a series of ties, so everything in this world is connected by a series of ties. If anyone thinks that the mesh of a net is an independent, isolated thing, he is mistaken. It is called a net because it is made up of a series of interconnected meshes, and each mesh has its place and responsibility in relation to other meshes.*

—Siddhārtha Gautama <sup>2</sup>

LESS AN HISTORY than a chronology, less a chronology than a few notes, this paper can be viewed as an early attempt to outline what in time may become a proper history. If there is a story to be told about freemasons involved in inventing what we now term the internet, it is not mine to tell. My story is about a few freemasons who used the internet during its early years. For many reasons these notes are restricted to English-speaking and regular Freemasonry

One theme that stands out is the frustrating lack of documentation for something that exists mainly as text files. In the headlong rush from punch cards and tape drives to 9 inch floppies, to 3 ½ inch floppies, to zip disks, compact disks, flash keys and ever-larger hard drives, many files have been not so much lost as left behind. The internet also creates certain challenges to the usual questions of historiography. In the main, I will be dealing with primary or secondary sources. Yet these sources are electronic and not hard documents. I quote from, and rely on, personal email messages, trusting in the stories they tell, often unable to corroborate the events. <sup>3</sup>

### **The internet**

The internet is far more than the World Wide Web. With the first bulletin board dating from 1978,<sup>4</sup> the internet, as a public forum, has been with us for thirty years. Before the internet there was ARPAnet, DARPA net, and other networks. But these do not really concern us, unless someone, while backing up an old tape-drive, unearths a text message perhaps inviting the recipient to a lodge meeting.<sup>5</sup> The earliest MUDs (Multi-User Dimension) appeared in 1977, running on various local systems, and, predominantly used by players of

adventure or ‘Dungeons and Dragons’ games. They also provided chat rooms. MUDs are mentioned here for two reasons. First, because MUDs introduced a generation to computer communications, and second, MUDs later evolved into a level of computer-based virtual communities such as *Second Life*, an aspect of the web addressed later in this paper.

Rather than describe the technology of the internet, a level of knowledge on the reader’s part will be assumed: computers were connected to other computers through telephone lines. The rest is detail.<sup>6</sup>

## Pioneers

Those freemasons working in the computer field during the 1960s and 1970s were, of course, among the first to hear about what Electronic Frontier Foundation founder John Perry Barlow later dubbed ‘cyberspace’. The term, e-m@son, originally ‘eMason’, wasn’t coined by Gordon Charlton until 1995, but freemasons, discussing and practicing Freemasonry, had been online for years. Only a few will be noted here.

Joining Freemasonry in 1979, at the age of twenty-one, Ron Blaisdell worked using ARPAnet in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and Gopher networks in the early 1990s.

Blaisdell’s first gopher site with hypertext markup language (html) support, going live in February 1993, was a masonic *Frequently Asked Questions* file (FAQ) developed by members of the CompuServe Masonry Forum. First uploaded in April 1994, his website rust.net/ronb/ may qualify as the first masonic website.<sup>7</sup> He registered hiram.net in 1995 and migrated his website but, like so many others, lost his domain when the site registrar Network Solutions initiated onerous registration fees in September 1995. Unlike so many others, he was able to reclaim his domain on 9 September 1998.<sup>8</sup> Creating the Michigan masonic mailing list in 1994<sup>9</sup>—currently with over 500 members—and uploading the Grand Lodge of Michigan’s first website in 1996, he currently hosts some 125 masonic websites.

Styling it the e-m@son webzine, Rick Kasperek, in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, created freemasonry.org in November 1995, calling it the *Great Light of the World Wide Web* or ‘GLoWWW’.<sup>10</sup> It was later administered by Blaisdell who assisted Kasperek in transferring the domain name to the Philalethes Society in 1997. He continues to administer the guest book, called the ‘Welcome Wall’—where visitors can add their names and comments—and update *E-M@son Links*. Migrated to hiram.net on 9 September 1998, and now found at links.hiram.net, *E-M@son Links* currently provides over 2,000 links to masonic sites.

In response to the growing presence of freemasons online, Rick Kasperek, author of ‘The Eminent Arrival of the Masonic Internet’,<sup>11</sup> and Ron Blaisdell also started the Operative Web Masons’ Guild (OWMG) in 1996. Intended as a resource for masonic webmasters, the Guild is currently represented at mastermason.com and owmg.org but is considered inactive.

Dr. Peter G. Trei came online in late 1978, registering his first proper account in early 1979 on one of the DEC-20s at Columbia University. Joining Freemasonry in 1988, within a year he had created the *Masonic Digest*, with Volume 1: Issue 1, released on 16 November 1989.<sup>12</sup>

A career member of the US Navy, David Allen Stites of El Cajon, California had used MilNet in its early days, but it was not until after he retired that he acquired his first dial-up internet account in January 1988. In 1991, he set up a section of the public File Transfer Protocol (FTP) server on his personal Internet Service Provider (ISP) to make selected masonic-related texts available under the auspices of the Southern California Research Lodge. His rôle in creating *MasNet* is detailed later.<sup>13</sup>

One of the first masonic leaders to recognize the potential for Freemasonry was Allen E. Roberts who wrote in 1983: ‘Computers are in! Everywhere we turn we’re finding them....

They aren't just for business any more.... Computer clubs are booming. Computer bulletin boards are located all over the country—and world. Has the time arrived for the freemasons of the country to begin linking their computers, through modems, all over the country? Is it time to consider a Masonic bulletin board? .... Or should Freemasonry ignore this tremendous technological breakthrough as it has so many others?' <sup>14</sup>

Gurnee K. Bridgman also recognized the internet's potential and said so in articles published in the November 1994 and May 1995 editions of *The Scottish Rite Journal*. Reflecting the thinking of many contemporaries, he wrote 'The new "electronic frontier" is the future of masonic communication.' <sup>15</sup>

Many names will be mentioned elsewhere in these notes. Many names will not be mentioned, due to either space constraints or the author's ignorance. Even in the early days the internet was a large place, and there were many 'communities' that were barely aware of each other. There is opportunity for much research.

## **Email**

Before anything else, there was email.<sup>16</sup> Although there were individual freemasons<sup>17</sup> who had access to email in the 1960s and 1970s, it was not until the introduction of the telephone modem in 1977, bulletin board software in 1978, and commercial email and Usenet (see below) in 1979, that masonic conversation truly became possible. The difference between a bulletin board and a mailing list is defined more by the software used than by the content, so the order of the following list is somewhat arbitrary.

## **Bulletin Board Systems (BBSs)**

Using direct telephone dial-up connexions, bulletin boards originally provided the facility to exchange electronic messages and later, with the exponential growth of hard drive storage capacity, the ability to upload—and more importantly, download—text and image files. Text files of a masonic nature also found their way onto many early non-masonic bulletin boards.<sup>18</sup>

### ***Hiram's Oasis***

Credited as the first masonic bulletin board,<sup>19</sup> Preston Burner's *Hiram's Oasis* is also styled the Mother Masonic Bulletin Board. The board was established on one of the Chicago Bulletin Board Systems (CBBS)<sup>20</sup> by Preston Burner, in Vienna, Virginia, on 11 November 1987 for Kena Temple Shrine in Merrifield, Virginia. Amidst the conversation, Burner encouraged his participants to upload educational papers, talks and articles. He had compiled 541 compressed directories of several thousand masonic text files and images—ranging from series of the *Short Talk Bulletin* to less than accurate expositions on the masonic significance of the US dollar bill—when they were migrated to the web by William J. Baumbach II on 8 September 1997. Currently there are over 9000 files available on the present home of *Hiram's Oasis*, [kena.org/hirams](http://kena.org/hirams).

The web made the BBS obsolete and within a year or two of moving the files, Burner turned off the bulletin board.<sup>21</sup> At the time considered one of the largest electronic collections of texts and images, Burner continued to provide masonic information and files for the *Hiram's Oasis* website up until his death on 10 May 2000.<sup>22</sup>

'Much of this material from Bro. Burner's BBS, *Hiram's Oasis*, found its way to Australia more cheaply than via trans-pacific telephone calls—on computer disks, by mail—and some was published by the South Australian Lodge of Research in its newsletter, *Gleanings*.' <sup>23</sup>

### ***Global Fraternal Network***

With the full support of the Grand Lodge of New York, the Global Fraternal Network (GFN) was established in 1994 by Richard A. Newman and Jean Rene van Geuns when they

developed ‘Virtual Internet Lodge No. 1’—a password-protected website—although a domain was not registered and uploaded until 1996.<sup>24</sup> Starting in 1993 with a bulletin board of about 58 participants, thirteen years later the GFN reported more than 17,000 members.<sup>25</sup> By November 2007 their newsletter announced ‘a special meeting to discuss the decline of the GFN,’ noting a diminishing interest on both the chat forum and the trestleboard.

### ***MasNet***

A loose, and ever changing, collection of bulletin boards, *MasNet* was created by David A. Stites in 1992. Through FidoNet, Stites had discovered a number of bulletin boards such as Preston Burner’s *Hiram’s Oasis* in Virginia and George Helmer’s *Magna Borealis Lux*, in Edmonton. Inspired by their example, late in December 1991 he and Bill Johnson, a Missouri freemason stationed in San Diego, created a set of masonic-related echos which Stites named *MasNet*. After consulting with the Grand Secretary of California, VW Bro. John L. Cooper III, and gaining sponsorship from the Southern California Research Lodge (SCRL), Stites created *Hiram’s Valley* BBS in July 1992. After first connecting with Bill Johnson’s bulletin board to test the system, in August 1992 *MasNet* became active with the addition of Dennis Littlefield’s *The Widow’s Son* BBS in Sunrise, Florida. By year’s end some ten bulletin board systems were connected.

Sometime around 1995 the hub was moved to W Bro. Max Shafer’s *The Ninth Arch* BBS in Millington, Tennessee, thus minimizing long distance telephone costs. Before *MasNet* was shut down in 1997 or 1998, it had spread across North America and included at least two bulletin boards in the United Kingdom.<sup>26</sup> *MasNet* was sometimes referred to as *MasNet!*, perhaps unconsciously lifting the bang from Ron Boutwell’s *FMNet!* (see below). The network ranged geographically from Allan Rice’s *The Rice Paddy*, in North Pole, Alaska (using a Macintosh SE), to *The Harmony Board* in Edinburgh, Scotland; from Roger Johnson’s *Hiram’s Middle Chamber* in Ontario to Doug Huskins’s *Grand Lodge of CA* BBS.<sup>27</sup> One extant list of sixteen masonic boards included twelve from across the US and four from Canada. Although invited, *Hiram’s Oasis* was never part of *MasNet*. At its highest traffic level, *MasNet* generated some 50 to 70 messages a day.

Every BBS has a story to tell—too many to include here. Ron Merk,<sup>28</sup> establishing the *Victoria Masonic Bulletin Board* on 1 June 1994 in Victoria, British Columbia, recalls 120 users on his BBS. In a PowerPoint presentation created in January 1995, Merk noted ‘BBSs are known as the lodges that never close.’ He stressed the value of email and bulletin boards but made no mention of the web.

At the time there were at least thirty-five boards linked to *MasNet*. Suffice to say that most, if not all, were labours of love requiring an outlay of personal funds for equipment and long distance telephone charges, as well as a considerable investment of time. The fun and excitement of participating in a free-ranging and open-ended discussion group is apparent in the text files that have survived.

Bulletin boards also provided both a means and a motivation to transcribe old masonic writings into text files. George Helmer<sup>29</sup> established *Magna Borealis Lux* in Edmonton Alberta in 1991, and proceeded to convert many documents to text, while David A. Stites’ FTP site benefited from texts posted on his *Hiram’s Valley* BBS. Many files later found their way to Preston Burner’s *Hiram’s Oasis*.

### **Mailing lists**

There are two types of mailing lists: the first is simply a list of recipients for newsletters, periodicals or advertising, either through the postal system or online. The second type allows members to post their own messages which are broadcast to all of the other mailing list

members. Examples of the first type, also styled ‘e-Zines’ would be Hugh Young’s *One more time, please*<sup>30</sup> and Gordon Charlton’s *Masonry Universal...*<sup>31</sup> There have been, and are, many mailing lists for freemasons, ranging from community or jurisdiction-based lists to lists for the masonic family as a whole, or individual groups such as DeMolay or Eastern Star.<sup>32</sup>

The earliest archived post about Freemasonry into a mailing list was not into a masonic list but into *New Age Digest*,<sup>33</sup> on 14 December 1984. The topic was “overt government persecution of Masonic, Wiccan, and other ‘occult’ groups in Europe.”

#### ***bit.listserv.freemasonry***

As a test run, Ron Boutwell<sup>34</sup> moderated a Bitnet feed<sup>35</sup> called *FMnet!* sometime in 1993.<sup>36</sup> He later reported an active participation of over 200 within the first two weeks and within six weeks the number had almost doubled. On 9 July 1994 Boutwell announced that the FidoNet<sup>37</sup> Freemasonry echo had been merged with *FMnet!*, added a Listserv function and had, by 12 May 1994, also added a Usenet newsgroup (see below). Commercial systems such as Delphi, Genie, CompuServe, and AOL<sup>38</sup> were also carrying *FMnet!* through their internet gateways. The awareness of the fact that freemasons could now send text messages to any other freemason on the planet who had a computer and telephone modem created an enthusiasm in early posts, with an expectation that this would usher in a new age of understanding, communication and education within international Freemasonry.<sup>39</sup> Unfortunately few text files from *FMnet!* have survived.<sup>40</sup> Shortly after alt.freemasonry’s launch as a Usenet newsgroup, Boutwell stopped supporting bit.listserv.freemasonry as a mail list and announced the creation of alt.masonic.members (see below).

#### ***CanMas***

The Canadian Masonic Mailing List dates from March 1997 when Dick James<sup>41</sup> posted a test message. He started with two others: James G. Bennie of Vancouver, British Columbia, and Ray Salmon in Swift Current, Saskatchewan. Radio announcer ‘Jim’ Bennie, more or less took over in May that year. Bennie still has a directory from that summer, listing fifty-plus subscribers. It grew to 700 at one point before the list grew quiet and was shut down sometime before 10 October 2006. Almost immediately revived as The Canada Mason List, *CanadaMasons*, by Dick James on 18 October 2006, this list grew to over 138 members in its first year but is currently little used other than to post texts gleaned from *British Masonic Miscellany*, or to promote the sale of masonic pins and effects. During the short period that *CanMas* was offline, there was a rumour that a Yahoo group had been created but nothing more was heard of this.

#### ***Cinosam***

Neil Neddermeyer<sup>42</sup> of Minnesota started *Cinosam* (*masonic* spelled backwards) in 1998 as a newsletter with ‘quips and bits’, with an original mailing list of some sixty brethren who signed up after he announced his intent at the 1998 Minnesota Grand Lodge Annual Communication. By 2006 he had expanded the contents to include masonic biographies, histories, quotes, stories, poems, and the like; and he had some 3000 subscribers—2100 from outside Minnesota. Creating cinosam.net on 1 September 2006, Neddermeyer continues to distribute a monthly newsletter but feels that web search engines may soon make this sort of newsletter obsolete.

#### ***Freemasonry-List (FML)***

When bit.listserv.freemasonry went offline shortly after 13 August 1994—mostly for technical reasons—it was revived by Henry Miller who hosted the list on a US Bureau of Land Management government system and then, on 6 December 1996, migrated to a server in New Mexico hosted by Fred M. Waid of Jornada Lodge No. 70, Mesilla, New Mexico.

Migrated six months later to a California server, the list was renamed freemasonry-list@masonic.org when Bill Hickey registered masonic.org on 12 July 1996. Further technical issues resulted in the list's migration to a University of Colorado list server where it currently processes posts from some 255 participants from around the world.<sup>43</sup>

#### ***Hiram's Worldwide Newsletter***

Grady Lee Honeycutt, of Pawleys Island, South Carolina, produced a hardcopy newsletter that in 1997 was also distributed to almost 5000 email recipients in 28 different countries. The current status of the *Hiram No. 7 Worldwide Newsletter Supplement* is unknown.<sup>44</sup>

#### ***Masonic Information Digest***

Carl E. Jones<sup>45</sup> has no record of when he started his mailing list—originally faxed to a telephone list—but believes it was in 1996 or 1997. It may have been about the same time his first website, itsgreattobeahellashrinemason.org, went offline, but records are unavailable for that as well. Registering itsgreattobeamason.org on 7 October 2003, by early spring 2007, it has become a rarely updated 'cobweb', one of those many forgotten webpages left behind once their creators' enthusiasm had subsided. His mailing list continued to be popular, and by mid 2007 was being sent to over 5000 subscribers—including current and past Grand Lodge officers—in fifty states and twenty-two countries.

#### ***One more time, please***

First distributed on 2 September 1996, Hugh Young continues to distribute a masonic e-Zine titled *One more time, please*, now to a mail list of over 1600. Volume I included 'The Story of Freemasonry' by W.G. Sibley, and 'The Mason's Confession', attributed to 1727 and transcribed from the *Scots Magazine* for March, 1755. Since then Young has continued to glean masonic texts that he believes should be brought to the attention of a wider audience.

#### ***OZ-Mason***

The OZ-Mason list was initiated in 1987 by Ross Slade and is still active with some hundred members.<sup>46</sup> The list's 'netiquette' (Internet etiquette) guidelines were adapted by David Beagley<sup>47</sup> from those he had earlier developed for the UK-Masons list. As a result of the interest in the OZ-Masons list, these two brethren, and others, organized an Australian E-Masons' Conference, held in Melbourne in July 1997. A one-day seminar, attendees discussed issues such as closed lists, tyling of websites, searching for information, and other technical issues. There are no extant records, and the number of early participants is unknown. The list is about communication between freemasons, not just masonic topics, so discussion ranges from esoterica to football. There was no negative reaction from Grand Lodge and over the years at least one Grand Master has participated.<sup>48</sup>

#### ***UK Mason list***

In May 1995 Gordon Charlton contacted Chris White of Lodge Boadicea No. 3147 UGLE, and together they formed ukmason-list later that year, a closed list primarily for the benefit of British freemasons. This list led to two initiatives, the e-mason pin and Internet Lodge No. 9659 UGLE. Still active at ukmason.org.uk, the list membership peaked with some 1100 members.<sup>49</sup>

### **e-Zines**

There have been at least two notable masonic electronic magazines: Peter G. Trei's *Masonic Digest* and Gordon Charlton's *Masonry Universal...* (ellipsis not optional). Kasperek's *eMasons' Webzine*, a 'World Wide Web based magazine focusing specifically on internet developments related to Freemasonry' was not technically an e-Zine but simply a

website using a magazine format. It could also be said that the distinction between an e-Zine and a mailing list is moot.

### ***Masonic Digest***

After announcing the *Digest* in a number of newsgroups, as well as mailing notices to Gene Spafford's and Rich Zellich's mailing-lists, Peter G. Trei<sup>50</sup> started the *Masonic Digest* on 16 November 1989 by mailing it to twenty-three addresses in the US, Canada, and Britain. It contained two posts as topics for discussion: the appropriateness of reciting the pledge of allegiance in American lodges, and the status of Prince Hall recognition. Topics ranged through the issues of the day but interest appears to have wound down in 1994. The last available issue archived is Volume 6 : Issue 3, from 23 March 1994.

### ***Masonry Universal...***

When Gordon Charlton suggested on freemasonry-list that the internet could be used to raise charitable funds, the idea was not well received: 'you can't mail-shot people asking for money,' being a typical reply. Noting that Peter G. Trei's *Masonic Digest* was no longer active, he created *Masonry Universal...* and in February 1995 posted the first issue to freemasonry-list. From there he gained his first fifty subscribers. With the help of website owners such as Gary Dryfoos<sup>51</sup> and Rick Kasperev, by its first anniversary, *Masonry Universal...* had over one thousand subscribers. Discontinued in February 1999, the run of forty-seven issues is archived at [internet.lodge.org.uk/library/universal.php](http://internet.lodge.org.uk/library/universal.php). While the contents make interesting reading, also noteworthy was the inclusion of ASCII art, an almost forgotten art form in which images are created with monospace letters.<sup>52</sup>

### ***electronicNCMason***

Perhaps the first official Grand Lodge e-Zine, an electronic version of the bimonthly *North Carolina Mason* was mailed out as a 'stripped-down, online version of the real thing.' The earliest archived edition, the January/February, 1995 (vol. cxx, no. 5) issue was numbered vol. 3 no. 1, suggesting that the first online version dated from 1993.<sup>53</sup>

## **Chat rooms and fora**

### ***The WELL***

Initially a dial-up BBS launched in 1985, The Whole Earth 'Lectronic Link (or The WELL) is one of the oldest virtual communities in continuous operation.<sup>54</sup> No artifacts of a masonic forum—if there was one—survive.<sup>55</sup>

### ***America Online (AOL)***

When the online service AOL 2.5 was launched with an embedded internet browser in 1995 Torrence Evans Ake<sup>56</sup> located eight other freemasons, amongst them Ted Fronefield in Alabama, Steve Rost in the Boston area, and Manny Blanco in California. Together, they opened a chatroom titled 'FreeMasonry' on Wednesday Nights at 8:00 pm Eastern USA.

### ***CompuServe***

Prompted by discussions started in the AOL chatrooms between Steve Lubetkin of West Jersey Lodge No 15, New Jersey and Scott Sherman, of Waltham-Triad Lodge, Massachusetts, on 1 October, 1992 Neil Shapiro,<sup>57</sup> later of Bethpage Lodge No. 975, New York, created the Masonry Forum in another online service, CompuServe. This forum, some two years later, became home to the Cornerstone Computer Chapter of the Philaethes Society, their first online chapter.<sup>58</sup>

The forum included active Grand Lodge officers and spurred otherwise inactive freemasons to renewed involvement. Amongst other masonic leaders, Grand Masters Rodney M. Larson (1994) and Ralph L. Hultquist (1987) of Minnesota, and J. Philip Berquist (1981)

of Massachusetts were active on CompuServe. Shapiro, head sysop and the first contract-holder for the Masonry Forum, later assigned the forum to Bill Wine.<sup>59</sup> Jacques Huyghebaert<sup>60</sup> was also an early member, and is reputed to have kept a back-up of most of the posts into the forum.<sup>61</sup> When Allen E. Roberts came to revise *Coil's Encyclopaedia*, he asked the forum for volunteers to read certain sections and to suggest changes. As a result Mike Segall<sup>62</sup> provided major changes to the section on French Freemasonry. It was not only the breadth of knowledge that impressed early participants. Edward L. King<sup>63</sup> recalls the emotional outpouring when the Forum experienced its first 'online death', a Prince Hall freemason from New York. Although perhaps only one other participant in the Forum had actually met him in the real-world, it was described as akin to the passing of a close neighbour.<sup>64</sup>

Forum sysops such as Bill White, Bob Brown, David Catten, Bob Corr, and Edward L. King all found a renewed interest in Freemasonry and went on to an active participation in their respective jurisdictions. Not only friendships and masonic careers were forged in the early CompuServe forum. Roger Kessinger, a recently retired Montana printer, responded to an interest in out-of-print masonic books by asking whether the members thought there would be a market in republishing some of these old masonic texts. Encouraged by the response, he now runs Kessinger Publishing with a catalogue of thousands of reprints of out-of-print and rare books.<sup>65</sup>

James Larry Holly, whose efforts in 1993 to ban freemasons from the Southern Baptist Conference bore so little fruit, also posted in the Masonic Forum, although as one-time sysop Edward L. King recalls, when Holly became too strident, his posts would be shunted into an electronic backwater where only he, and anyone who had been foolish enough to reply to him, could see his later posts. Holly apparently assumed that no one wanted to debate with him, not realizing they weren't seeing his posts. There was also a brief controversy in October 1996 when it was suggested that participation be restricted to members of regular Freemasonry, but nothing came of it.

### ***GEnie***

General Electric's GE*nie* Online Services operated from 1985 through 1999. Claiming 400,000 subscribers, 115,000 may have been a more accurate number. No complete list of RoundTables, as the discussion groups were styled, is available, and while there were Religion, Philosophy and New Age RoundTables, there is no record of any RoundTable with a masonic theme.<sup>66</sup>

### ***IRC (Internet Relay Chat)***

*Masonry Universal...* reported in December 1995, the creation of The Sunday Club, 'a weekly opportunity to chat real-time with masons from around the world about any and every topic under the masonic sun. The Sunday Club met every Sunday, at 2000 GMT, 1500 EST, and 1200 PST on the #Freemasons IRC channel. IRC<sup>67</sup> continues to be a popular online software but the history of the Freemasons channel is unknown.

### ***MSN***

The Microsoft Network debuted on 24 August 1995, to coincide with the release of the Windows 95 operating system. Seth Prokop,<sup>68</sup> author of 'Harnessing technology for Freemasonry' opened a meeting of Glen Iris Lodge No. 288, Melbourne, in the autumn of 1995 and then called off to allow the brethren to gather around a computer connected to their MSN forum, *Hiram's Sons*. What discussion took place in their live chat channel is not recorded. His promotion of the use of the internet bore little fruit and there is no record of the lodge creating a website, or maintaining the forum. Other masonic fora, *Emulation Masonic*



*Ritual* with 396 members and *Joppa Temple Grand Lodge* with 54 members continue to exist, while *Freemasonry World Chat* may only have existed in 2003 and 2004.

### **Prodigy**

Perhaps the first online service, Prodigy was launched regionally in 1988 in Atlanta, Hartford, and San Francisco. A nationwide launch followed on 6 September 1990. Exactly when James M. Keene of New York started the Prodigy Freemasonry Hobby Board is unclear, some members believing it predated the national launch. Participants recall a sense of community that was an important if not key aspect of this early internet experience. An early member of Prodigy, William B. Alter<sup>69</sup> still proudly displays his charter life membership certificate from 'Elektronik Research Lodge #1' presented in June of 1992, complete with Tom Dean's calligraphy. He also has retained most of the posted files. By November 1992 the forum secretary Tom Thornton recorded 308 members posting from Texas to Minnesota and from California to New Jersey. But in the summer of 1993, Prodigy began charging hourly rates for its message boards and by 1996 most members had left, some for GENie roundtables or the Philalethes mailing list, others for the newsgroups.

### **Yahoo groups**

With 2110 members, the Yahoo group Free-Mason is both the largest and most active of the 824 masonic themed groups found on the ISP Yahoo today.<sup>70</sup> At the other extreme are cobwebs such as Modernfreemasonry, created 24 May 2006 with eleven members. A total of three posts are archived, all within three days of the group's creation. Two of them were reposts of Jeff Peace's 'The truth about the "Antients" and the "Moderns"'. A microcosm of the web, Yahoo masonic groups range from closed lists for lodges and districts to public fora discussing lodge management or esoterica. One notable group, created by Josh Heller<sup>71</sup> on 8 May 2000, provided the inspiration for *The Temple That Never Sleeps*.<sup>72</sup> There are even three anti-masonic groups. One, claiming 534 members, has had a total of five posts archived, all in May 2000.

### **Usenet and the newsgroups**

Described as the world's largest online text-based conferencing system, Usenet, established in 1979, allowed the creation of newsgroups, or message boards, dedicated to any topic imaginable. The internet, especially Usenet, has long been described as anarchistic at best. The early days of the internet provided freemasons many opportunities to put their collective feet in their mouths. Freemasons, regardless of their knowledge or qualifications, weighed in on arguments, responding in ways that often provided anti-masons with further ammunition. The first great influx of newsgroup users began in 1993 when the internet service provider, America Online, offered Usenet access to its customers. It was at this time that many freemasons first became aware that anti-masonry was a contemporary issue and not just an historical footnote or fringe-group obsession. Creating one of the first masonic websites, Peter G. Trei posted the dynamically updated results of an automated search of Usenet for masonic references. Archived pages of [zipnet.net/users/trei/masonry.html](http://zipnet.net/users/trei/masonry.html) are now unfortunately blocked and Trei did not maintain his own archives. The earliest extant reference to Freemasonry on Usenet is found in a message regarding *The Book of Mormon*, posted to another newsgroup, net.religion, on 16 September 1983.

Usenet was always something of an internet secret with many people unable or unwilling to access the internet with anything other than the web browser software that came installed with their computers. The introduction of Google Groups in February 2001—with an archive of postings to Usenet dating back to 1981—eliminated the need for newsreading software, but the growth of web-based discussion fora such as the anonymously administered

thebluelodge.org<sup>73</sup> and Stephen A. Dafoe's lodgeroomuk.com/forum, and the ease of personal blogs, may sound the death-knell for Usenet. What will result from the June 2008 announcement by major ISPs Sprint, Time Warner and Verizon that they would no longer provide access to the alt.\* hierarchy of newsgroups, among others, remains to be seen.

There have been at least nineteen newsgroups dedicated to some aspect of Freemasonry<sup>74</sup> Only four need to be detailed here.

#### ***alt.freemasonry***

The formation of alt.freemasonry was controversial. Many brethren were satisfied with bulletin boards and mailing lists such as the *Masonic Digest*. Some simply didn't want to learn new computer skills, while others knew the anarchic free-for-all of the newsgroups and could foresee the danger to their safe, friendly online communities.<sup>75</sup> Believing freemasons needed to meet the real-world, the newsgroup alt.freemasonry was created by Christopher Kylin on 19 July 1994. The moderated newsgroup, bit.listserv.freemasonry was offline at this time because of 'equipment upgrading' and a number of regular participants were soon posting into alt.freemasonry.

It is unfortunate that so many of the early newsgroup posts were not archived.<sup>76</sup> While the only available records show Christopher Kylin sending a newgroup post to alt.config on 19 July 1994, both Ron Boutwell in Indiana (creator of alt.masonic.members on 25 September 1994), and Ron Blaisdell<sup>77</sup> have claimed to have sent creation posts for alt.freemasonry. Unfortunately the archives for news.admin and news.admin.announce have no record of these posts.

Early posts into alt.freemasonry by Peter G. Trei and others leave the impression that they understood Kylin had created the group. In reply to Christopher Kylin's 'Welcome to alt.freemasonry. (Who would've thought...?)' on 22 July 1994, Boutwell—then moderator of bit.listserv.freemasonry—replied: 'Chris, I truly wish you well on this venture. But I also (and speaking from experience) feel that the unmoderated nature of this group will be a problem. Brother Trei feels that it will be the [k]looks and anti-masonic whackos that are the problem. I feel that will be a problem of course but your other problem will be getting masons to participate.' The archives for alt.config also show that Boutwell later sent a remove group post on 3 November 1994 which was acknowledged by only a few internet Service Providers (ISPs) and did not seriously slow the propagation of the group. It may have been intended to stop the propagation of two groups with the same name.

From a non-technical or outsider's perspective, it could appear that Christopher Kylin and Ron Boutwell, and perhaps Ron Blaisdell, each posted the creation of the newsgroup at about the same time, but the how and when of the propagation through the many ISPs that picked up the newsfeed will never be known. Kylin through Wesleyan University<sup>78</sup> and Blaisdell through the umich.edu server were both posting into different parts of an internet still experiencing growing pains and connectivity issues.

Kylin's first post announced that while there were other net options for members to talk to each other in a moderated format, alt.freemasonry was 'for people with [SEP]an interest in the organization, but not [SEP]necessarily with an insider's approach.' 'It is expected that it can become a repository of FAQ's and other [SEP]information, and generally a useful resource for anyone with a question in [SEP]the field.'<sup>79</sup>

Peter G. Trei posted on 22 July 1994, expressing his serious reservations: 'Unmoderated Usenet discussions of controversial topics have [SEP]generally been failures.' Roger Ingersoll opined that he was more hopeful. Within days, discussions on Freemasonry in Russia and whether Catholics could be freemasons, and posts from Finland appeared. It took almost a

week for the topic of famous freemasons to turn up and by 24 July the topics of anti-masonry and such authors as Robert A. Morey,<sup>80</sup> John F. Ankerberg,<sup>81</sup> and Ed Decker<sup>82</sup> were discussed. There was also some extended discussion from people very interested in joining Freemasonry. The future for alt.freemasonry as a forum for reasoned discussion appeared promising. By October the bloom was off and the anti-masons, or at least the chronically argumentative, were circling. It took almost three years for the ‘noise to signal ratio’, as it was termed, to become unbearable. By 2008, other than the tenacious posting of the *Usenet Masonic FAQ* by Larry Holbrook, and the occasional plaintive query asking if there are any freemasons ‘lurking’, *i.e.* reading but not posting, the group was populated by promoters of assorted conspiracy theories and non-masonic sales schemes. From the archives it would appear that the newsgroup was most active in 2000 and 2001 with an anomalous flurry in 2004. It is curious that faqs.org records this author’s *Anti-Masonry FAQ* (v. 2.8.11) as the FAQ for alt.freemasonry.<sup>83</sup> Another unsolved mystery is the authorship of the newsgroup’s archive description: ‘Someone will build my basement for free? Cool.’

#### ***bit.listserv.freemasonry***

Ron Boutwell created bit.listserv.freemasonry as a Usenet newsgroup on 10 May 1994, announcing that the listserv would no longer be supported for technical reasons. As noted above, the mailing list was revived, but, quite independently. The newsgroup also continues to exist, albeit *sans* posts, masonic or otherwise.

#### ***alt.masonic.members***

Also created by Boutwell, on 25 September 1994, he described alt.masonic.members as a ‘Cyber-lodge for net-Masons and friends’.<sup>84</sup> First intended to be moderated, on 18 November 1994 he described it as ‘lightly moderated’. In October he announced ‘the end of the trolling’<sup>85</sup> but soon realized that there was no real way to control content in the newsgroup. Today it enjoys little more traffic than bit.listserv.freemasonry.

#### ***soc.org.freemasonry***

Scott, or Scotty, Fitzgerald, of Yorktown Lodge No. 1154, New York, posted the first request for discussion regarding the moderated group soc.org.freemasonry on 19 March 1997: ‘The newsgroup alt.freemasonry has degenerated into a flame pit. The presence of individuals bent on attacking our beliefs has been a great cause of concern for many masons wishing to carry on a meaningful discussion with those that wish to sincerely learn our beliefs.’<sup>86</sup> Although there were objections from such longtime newsgroup participants as Andrew Philip Fabbro, a vote of 171 to 56 led to the newsgroup’s creation on 10 July 1997, with four moderators and three arbitrators.<sup>87</sup> In early 2008, groups.google.ca reported 318 subscribers.

#### ***Usenet Masonry FAQ***

With the growing use of newsgroups came the need for a Frequently Asked Questions file (FAQ). Peter G. Trei had posted several introductory overviews of Freemasonry, including *So You Want to Join the Masons* in May 1994, but the defining characteristic of an FAQ is the question and answer format. Ron Boutwell—who had adopted Jim Tresner’s *Conscience and the Craft* as the FAQ for bit.listserv.freemasonry—suggested a masonic Usenet FAQ project and then-Entered Apprentice Andrew Philip Fabbro volunteered to coordinate. Working from texts gleaned from Roger Ingersoll’s masonic FTP archives, William N. Wine’s FMBITS.TXT (a file of short masonic articles posted to the CompuServe Masonic Forum around 1993), and input from several dozen other participants, Fabbro created a comprehensive file that, with minor amendments by Roger Ingersoll and others, is still regularly posted into alt.freemasonry.<sup>88</sup>

## **File Transfer Protocol (FTP) Sites**

FTP sites, generally hosted on university computers, were the first public-accessible repositories of text files and images.<sup>89</sup> In appearance, little more than lists of filenames, the early ftp sites of Gary L. Dryfoos, Roger M. Firestone,<sup>90</sup> Roger Ingersoll, and David A. Stites<sup>91</sup> provided many freemasons with their first access to masonic text files and images.

## **The World Wide Web**

Moving to the web was an easy decision for many. On the other hand, there was also some hesitancy on the part of brethren who had considerable emotional and technical investment in bulletin boards to consider the value of developing masonic websites.<sup>92</sup> By 2007 a keyword search on Google for 'Freemasonry' returned some 2.2 million websites.

The question of who created the first masonic website is made difficult by technical definitions and incomplete records. Douglas Huskins<sup>93</sup> registered freemason.org on 4 January 1994 for the Grand Lodge of California; Gary L. Dryfoos uploaded 'A page about Freemasonry' to web.mit.edu/dryfoo/Masonry in October 1994; and the Valley of Toledo claimed to have been 'on the web' since November 1994, although its domain toledoaaasr.com was not created until 26 September 1998. Early work by Peter G. Trei and Ron Blaisdell is noted above.

## **Regulating freemasons online**

### *Website policies*

Most jurisdictions eventually set some policies or guidelines for lodge websites. Some jurisdictions further dictated what could appear on individual freemasons' pages. While the perception outside England is that the UGLE took a heavy handed approach to its members' use of the internet, a review of its *Code of Practice* belies that notion. The perception is probably the result of an early assumption on the part of some UGLE members, and a presumption on the part of some current or past Grand Lodge officers to dictate without first consulting their Grand Secretary's office. Outlined in a six page 'Guidance for members' pdf file, the *Code* is in the main a collection of common sense guidelines. Recognizing that the internet is administratively and practically impossible to control, The Board of General Purposes settled for a request that 'to ensure accuracy and consistency on policy matters' the contents of masonic websites be submitted to the Grand Secretary for approval, to take the form of a small jpeg 'Charter Mark' to be placed on a website's top page. Absent from the guidelines is any mention of individuals' websites or penalties for non-compliance. Prior to its consecration Internet Lodge UGLE had gained an unofficial waiver in 1997 to send minutes and summonses by email. By 2003 the Grand Lodge Board of General Purposes recommended 'that it be given power to authorize on a permissive basis, the electronic submission of returns and forms' by any lodge, and by 2004 the Board was clearly in favour of lodge secretaries using mail correspondence.<sup>94</sup>

The guidelines discouraged the use of any password protected areas for fear that the 'perception is that we have something to hide' and that they would attract the attention of hackers. Posting of ritual, even behind a password, was prohibited.

Common sense included a prohibition on the uploading of copyright material, any details of candidates, or any form of commercial advertising. Regarding other parts of the internet, such as newsgroups, the guidelines noted that directing questions on protocol and similar matters to those participating in an internet forum was inappropriate for the obvious reason that the answers would often be wrong, but wisely omitted any penalty. The only restriction

on emailing lodge summonses was a requirement that each recipient had to have requested the mailing.<sup>95</sup>

Some jurisdictions were more concerned about privacy and security issues than others. The Grand Lodge of Alabama website, in early 2008, included a non-password protected page with the names, lodge affiliations and email addresses of almost 1500 members who had filled out a simple online form.

As lodges and Grand Lodges continued to utilize the internet for communicating internally, as well as with the non-masonic public, issues of privacy and security took on a greater importance. Some jurisdictions refused to post members' names, pictures and contact information while others would reveal all. In a potential breach of masonic protocol, some lodges posted their lodge notices where the public could find them. At the other extreme, the Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon website posted no names other than those of current and past Grand Masters, and the Grand Secretary. His email address is the only one listed other than the site's administrator.

The Grand Lodge of Alabama established a policy whereby all lodge websites must be approved by its Internet Committee, and maintain compliance with the *Constitutions*. Privacy was a concern, with a prohibition on the appearance of the names or contact information for any Grand Lodge officer, committee member or lecturer. Lodge members' names were only to appear with written permission. A two page *Criteria for Website Recognition* was modified from that used by the Grand Lodge of Georgia.

The Grand Lodge of Georgia adopted a policy requiring all lodge and district websites to register with its General Welfare Committee and adhere to a short list of common sense requirements including: content was to be 'accurate, current, and consistent with the highest standard'; there could be no commercial use; and no personal contact information was to be displayed without permission. The 'criteria and rules' specifically empowered the committee to direct that website not conforming to the rules be taken offline.

The Grand Lodge of Virginia also established an internet Committee in 2001 which wrote a Grand Lodge policy for subordinate lodge webpages as well as a set of guidelines to facilitate lodges in designing and building their websites. Like many such policies, it ruled that commercial advertising was not appropriate.<sup>96</sup> Virginia Masonic Law was also amended, labeling any criticism of current or past Grand Lodge or lodge officer unmasonic and open to masonic charges.

In West Virginia, a policy was adopted in 1999, charging the Grand Master with the responsibility to 'closely supervise the [Grand Lodge] website'.<sup>97</sup>

In New Zealand, Laurence Milton—who was later appointed Grand Secretary—instigated the creation of the Grand Lodge website in 1999 and, due to his Information Technology (IT) background, was given considerable free reign. An outside consultant prepared a report in November 2003 for the Grand Lodge, recommending enhancing the website; introducing moderated electronic discussion fora; increasing the use of electronic mail; and the introduction of email mailing lists. Describing the website as the Craft's 'shop window', recommendations were also made to have the website hosted on a server owned by Grand Lodge and all security precautions be considered.<sup>98</sup>

### **Conflict**

There has been the rare incident when a Grand Master or other officer exercised his prerogative to control websites authored by lodges or individuals. Notable was the reaction of two Grand Masters of Florida, MW Bros. Kazanaugh and Robert D. Trump to the cover story, 'The Masonic Manifesto', in the September issue of Tim Bryce's *Freemasonry for the Next*

*Generation.*<sup>99</sup> Bryce's website home page currently reports that by order of the Grand Master of Florida the site had been suspended, effective 2 December 2005. Styling himself 'A Foot Soldier for Freemasonry', Tim Bryce<sup>100</sup> continues to write masonic articles for publication outside his jurisdiction. More colourful was the reaction of some members of Halcyon Lodge No. 498, Cleveland, Ohio, when told to remove questionable material from their website and adhere to the *Constitutions* of the Grand Lodge of Ohio. Without notifying all the lodge members, a vote was taken to return their warrant. The details of this 'train wreck' as R. Theron Dunn<sup>101</sup> described it are, not the issue. The point is that once again the internet allowed the entire online world to watch, and comment.<sup>102</sup> There have been other incidents.

## Websites

Any snapshot of the web is outdated as soon as it is posted. Peter G. Trei created one list of 158 masonic links on 17 July 1996.<sup>103</sup> In an early 2008 review of that list, of the twenty-nine Grand Lodge links only the Grand Lodge of California has maintained the same link to the present. Of the other, now broken, links, eleven were maintained on personal user accounts while sixteen had been maintained as subdomains under their Internet Service Provider's domain. Of the fifty-nine individual lodge or concordant body sites listed, only two are extant while one, a personal site for the Grand Lodge of Washington, has been maintained simply to redirect browsers to their current website. Pages maintained by individual freemasons comprised a further forty-seven links. Only four were still live but in one case the individual had removed his masonic content and converted it to a personal blog. Only two of the balance of twenty-two links, ranging from anti-masonic sites to commercial ventures, were current.

The greater majority of links reported '404 Not Found', but a handful could not be found because the host server was no longer active, perhaps victims of the industry shake out of the late 1990s. Unfortunately two of the domains contained the name freemasonry but are now owned by non-masonic commercial interests.

## Freemasons

It is not possible to enumerate the many websites created by individual freemasons, nor to determine exactly whose was first. The first websites online were those uploaded by individual freemasons such as Dr. Gary L. Dryfoos in October 1994,<sup>104</sup> and Roger M. Firestone on 28 December 1994. Dryfoos' website is the oldest extant, although it is predated by both Peter G. Trei's Usenet feed and a web browser viewable FTP site created by Ron Blaisdell. Unfortunately, no back-ups or archives have survived of either Usenet feed or FTP site. The following list is only a sampling.

The website managed by Paul M. Bessel, Executive Secretary of the Masonic Leadership Center in Alexandria, Virginia,<sup>105</sup> is noteworthy, not for being first but for being accurate and timely. Sponsored by the Philalethes Society, the Masonic Leadership Center was founded in 1995. It's first website, hosted by geocities, displayed the original e-m@son pin design and a '2B1 ASK1' emblem. It was not until 9 February 1999 that *bessel.org* was created.<sup>106</sup> Collecting, editing and authoring files on Prince Hall recognition, masonic mailing lists, jurisprudence and a wide range of masonic education, in late 2007 Bessel reported over 5000 files on the website.

Edward L. King created *masonicinfo.com* on 10 July 1998 as a response to anti-mason Ken Mitchell's posts in the Usenet newsgroup *alt.freemasonry*. It has grown from a few pages to over three hundred as new anti-masons continued to enter the newsgroup, create websites or be otherwise active in anti-masonry.

Registering 2be1ask1.com on 27 March 1997 for the First Masonic District, Grand Lodge of New Jersey, Warren V. LeMay of Augusta, New Jersey used this website to develop and promote the e-m@son webring. With a team of at least a half dozen brethren, the ring at one time linked almost 2600 webpages in forty-nine countries, in English, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish.

In response to Yahoo's lack of interest in assisting the existing rings, LeMay arranged to transfer the ring software to an independent server, controlled by the e-m@son web ring. This could be accessed through squarework.com, a website he had registered on 18 November 1997. Although this site was last updated 7 January 2001, and there are no active sites in this ring, a websearch reveals over 11,000 webpages still contain a link to the e-m@son webring. Unrelated to LeMay's original e-m@son webring, webring.com currently links 174 masonic sites. Other masonic webring are hosted by WebRing Inc.: International Guild of Masons, Latin M@sonic Web Ring and Hiram's Inner Circle, among others.<sup>107</sup>

Registering mason-defender.net on 24 September 2003 and mason-defender.com on 9 September 2005 as a response to anti-masonic attacks in alt-freemasonry and other Usenet newsgroups, Bill McElligott also participated in the 2003 'cookout' of Freemasonry Watch (see below). Some websites simply took the bulletin board, mailing list concept onto the web. Bill McElligott later registered the domain lodgeroomuk.com on 11 November 2004. The forum started with about 250 members. The combined membership of *LodgeroomUK*, *LodgeroomUS*, and *Massoneria Tradizionale* is currently around 1200. McElligott has not been keeping records but he believes that he refers almost one potential candidate at day to a lodge or Grand Lodge.<sup>108</sup>

Real-world publishers quickly realized the value of posting electronic versions either on websites or through mailing lists. Inspired by what he found online, Andrew Boracci,<sup>109</sup> of Sag Harbor, New York, began publication of *American Mason Magazine* in 1996. On 22 February 2000 he registered americanmason.com and began uploading what he styled 'The world's first all electronic masonic magazine', its main feature being a calendar of historical events in which freemasons had played some rôle. Upon Boracci's death in 2004 his successor was less than complementary in describing the magazine's earlier content, but *Webtrends* had earlier reported a 2003 'readership' of 400,000, so the site was obviously popular.<sup>110</sup> A more damning criticism was Boracci's willingness to take texts from internet sources and reprint them, either without citation or without first gaining permission. In Boracci's defence, it must be said that the question of copyright and ownership of posts into public fora was a much discussed and controversial topic in the early days of the web.

Many websites were uploaded by well-meaning brethren without the resources or interest to sustain them. For example, Ken Hawn, in Jacksonville, Florida, created masonicfax.com sometime in the spring of 2002 but by 2005 had allowed the domain to expire, leaving yet another masonic URL parked as a 'link farm'.<sup>111</sup> Created by Stephen Dafoe on 22 February 2005, radiofreemason.com was off the air within a year and remains a cobweb.

Personal websites dedicated to Freemasonry have come in all quality of design and content. With six Grand Lodges warranting lodges in Thailand, it took one individual, Jim Smith, to create thaifreemason.com on 1 September 2005. While displaying clean design, an excellent modified square and compasses logo, and effective content, it unfortunately also displayed Google ads, mostly promoting inexpensive flights to Thailand. There were also attempts to create niche-market masonic sites. Naftali Appelbaum registered masonicmemorials.com on 2 June 2003, dedicated 'to preserving the memories of masons around the world' but, with only fifteen uploaded memorials by May 2006, it soon was offline. Replacing it was Michael Johnstone's masonicobituaries.com on 23 November 2007.

More successful was the Masonic Poets Society, a project started by Gerald S. Leighton<sup>112</sup> who later registered the domain [masonic-poets-society.com](http://masonic-poets-society.com) on 19 March 2004. The website continues to grow as a repository of contemporary and historical masonic poetry although Leighton's rôle is unclear. In a similar vein, J. R. Martin of South Carolina began uploading files to his personal webpage on 26 November 1998, and then created [masonicmusic.org](http://masonicmusic.org) on 10 November 2000. With a growing collection of text and sound files, lyrics and sheet music, the site was unfortunately marred by its dependence on low quality music files and low-resolution images.

Another of the many special-interest masonic groups to create an online presence, the Widow's Sons is an association of Master Masons who have come together to promote Freemasonry within the motorcycling community. They created their website, [widowssons.org](http://widowssons.org), on 29 March 2005. Equally colourful, Andrew Horn in California created [masonicink.com](http://masonicink.com) on 21 December 2005 to promote and display masonic themed tattoos.

## Lodges

Statistics are unavailable but anecdotal evidence suggests that more than half of the thirteen thousand North American lodges currently have some form of web presence, ranging from a page under their Grand Lodge's domain or their own website, to little more than a lodge secretary with email. With perhaps 7,000 lodge websites online, any practical survey is beyond the resources of these notes. Suffice that they range from the understated elegance of Orinda Lodge No. 704's [orindalodge.org](http://orindalodge.org),<sup>113</sup> to hodgepodge collections of animated images, unfortunate colour choices, unimplemented code, and typographically challenged text. While some jurisdiction attempted to regulate their lodges' web presence, others clearly did not.

## Grand Lodge websites

This will not be a comprehensive enumeration, only highlighting the need for individual jurisdictions to compile their own histories before memories fade and the principals join the great majority.

The Grand Lodge of California registered [freemason.org](http://freemason.org) on 4 January 1994,<sup>114</sup> perhaps making it the first official masonic website.

Alberta's decision to go online was made in 1997 by the then Grand Master, Hugh Young.<sup>115</sup> Although at least one senior Grand Lodge officer opposed the action, it was approved—circuitously—by the finance committee.

The Grand Lodge of Hawaii did not create their current website until 2005, but it quickly made up for lost time. In mid 2007 MW Bro. Oscar M. Jayme approved the website [raymond.wieckowicz.googlepages.com/home](http://raymond.wieckowicz.googlepages.com/home) and the blog [changestohmc.blogspot.com](http://changestohmc.blogspot.com), both administered by MW Bro. Raymond Wieckowicz Jr. Here can be found proposed and recent resolutions and open discussion on the issues facing Hawaiian Freemasonry.

Created on 21 November 1996 for the United Grand Lodge of England, [grand-lodge.org](http://grand-lodge.org) was originally a home page and a half dozen pages under construction. It was redirected to [www.grandlodge-england.org](http://www.grandlodge-england.org) on 17 May 2000 and [ugle.org.uk](http://ugle.org.uk) on 24 March 2000, and underwent a major redesign in January 2002. A history of the intervening five years will need to be written by someone privy to the deliberations of the website managers. Wisely, they chose to continue to register all three domains, blocking their use by others.

The experience of the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Michigan perhaps reflected that of many Prince Hall jurisdictions. Grand Lodge officers first allowed a non-mason to create a site that did not truly represent their jurisdiction. Soon realizing that both a professional look and accurate, timely information were key, a new website was created in 2000 by James Young<sup>116</sup> who had earlier created his own personal website on Freemasonry in



1995. Other Prince Hall jurisdictions had authorized members to create masonic subdomains on their personal websites, many of which, through lack of resources or interest, later became cobwebs. The Prince Hall Conference of Grand Masters Inc. created phacgm.org on 14 February 2003, but by 2006 had allowed it to expire.

Despite naysayers in his jurisdiction, RW Bro. Greg Smith of Ohio registered the domain freemason.com on 6 February 1996, gifting it to the Grand Lodge of Ohio. He continues to donate webhosting services, and has also recently registered freemason.tv.<sup>117</sup>

In Pennsylvania, the Grand Lodge developed AutoMasonry, ‘an electronic information superhighway for Freemasonry in Pennsylvania’ and established a ‘Friend to Friend’ bulletin board in early 1995. Late in 1996, Grand Master Edward O. Weisser reminded the brethren that nothing was to be posted on a masonic website without his permission, yet not wishing to discourage use of the internet, early in 1997 he encouraged brethren to become involved in the e-Mason Square Club of Pennsylvania. Inspired by their next Grand Master, MW Bro. James L. Ernette, on 15 February 1998 the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania Committee on Internet Services announced the creation of its website and an ambitious plan to create extensive interactive functionality. This jurisdiction is one of the few to have the foresight to secure the domains pagrandlodge.com, pagrandlodge.net and pagrandlodge.org.<sup>118</sup>

W Bro. Richard R. Barton created an unofficial website for the Grand Lodge of South Carolina in early 1996 which received a favourable review by the South Carolina Masonic Research Society but was ordered offline by MW Bro. Robert V. Pinkston in 1997. It was not until 2001 that another, now official, website was created.<sup>119</sup>

Although the Grand Master for Virginia for 1997-1998 had opposed a Grand Lodge web presence, other brethren had already blazed the trail. Granville Clayton ‘Jack’ Canard, Jr., of Alexandria, Virginia, registered aw22.com on 7 April 1997, creating what he called ‘The Virginia Masonic Information Net’. Bruce Van Buren, who had created vason.org on 29 January 2003 to provide a portal for Virginia masonic bodies, later advised the Grand Lodge Internet Committee on rebuilding their website in 2006. Online in 2001, the Grand Lodge website was completely redesigned in spring 2007.<sup>120</sup>

Unsurprisingly, anecdotal evidence suggests that those jurisdictions that utilized the internet the earliest had a single strong-willed member who was either Grand Lodge officer or who held the trust of senior Grand Lodge officers and was given considerable freedom. Neither age, nor length of membership appears to have been a factor, although early non-masonic use of either the internet or computer technology does.

## Blogs

Web logs or ‘blogs’ will receive little attention in these notes. The concept of a blog—an easily updated online diary arguably dates to the Usenet newsgroup mod.ber in 1983 but a more easily recognizable form evolved in 1994 and the term itself was not coined until 1999 when software and hosted blog tools were first released. Technology aside, the only real difference between a blog and a website is immediacy. Preoccupied with newsgroups, mailing lists and creating websites, online freemasons were slow to adopt blogs. Blogs are time-consuming, egocentric things. While there may be some four million masonic webpages on the web, one list of masonic blogs in early 2008 included only seventy.<sup>121</sup>

### *masonictao.blogspot.com*

Tom Accuosti of Connecticut created *The Tao of Masonry*, as a blog in 2006. Possibly due to his gentle humour and non-confrontational style, his blog has received no negative response from his Grand Lodge, and is now listed on his Grand Lodge website, included with another four that he recommended.<sup>122</sup> Most of the readers of his blog are from outside his

jurisdiction, and his anecdotally-based belief is that Connecticut freemasons are not using the internet to learn about or discuss Freemasonry.

***burningtaper.blogspot.com***

One of the higher profile blogs, *Burning Taper*, first posted on 1 October 2005. Receiving no visitors in his first month, by his own logs in mid 2007 he was receiving six hundred visitors a day, with the occasional jump to 1400 for a total of almost 120,000 first-time visitors. The author of *burningtaper.blogspot.com* prefers to post anonymously as ‘Widow’s Son’. Entering Freemasonry with high ideals, he was soon disillusioned when he found his attempts to follow both the spirit and letter of his Grand Lodge’s *Constitutions* and the ideals of Freemasonry were met with resistance. The details of his conflict with members of his lodge or Grand Lodge are just that, details. The relevant point is that, for good or ill, he went public. A relatively recently raised freemason, feeling betrayed by his lodge and Grand Lodge, with nowhere within Freemasonry to turn to for advise or redress, he took the only step he felt he could, and told his story to the world. It would beggar probabilities if his was a unique experience. But his experience was unique in that it occurred precisely at the moment when a means to tell the world came available. Casting his nets wide and proclaiming ‘This is not a Masonic blog. This is a blog by a Free Mason’,<sup>123</sup> he posted stories both masonic and non-masonic, both critical and supportive. His website gained its most visitors when he began writing critically about the Scottish Rite Southern Jurisdiction’s involvement in NASCAR in 2007, an issue that was receiving little other coverage at the time.

Of the other blogs, Chris Hodapp<sup>124</sup> and his *Freemasons for Dummies* blog and R. Theron Dunn’s *A Beacon of Masonic Light* are noteworthy both for their strong opinions and willingness to enter into debate.

Gregory Stewart,<sup>125</sup> who is interested in masonic esoterica, maintains masonic traveler.blogspot.com where he lists almost forty other blogs. Stewart’s blog is perhaps representative of the greater majority that are not actively promoting particular agendas or strong points of view but only wish to record a personal journey in Freemasonry, leavened with the occasional observation. The pseudonymous ‘Dean’ has maintained freemason.blogspot.com since 3 March 2006, opening with a lengthy list of masonic items available through the online auction, eBay, and continuing in a similar vein. He is one of some hundred members of Mike Martin’s *British Isles Masonic Webring*.<sup>126</sup>

## **Promoting the study of Freemasonry**

While many Grand Lodge, lodge, and freemason websites were little more than ‘vanity plates on the information superhighway’, with pictures and lists of officers, others recognized the educational potential. RW Bro. Bruno Virgilio Gazzo, in Genova, Italy, created Pietre-Stones Review of Freemasonry on 17 July 1996, moderated the yahoogroup list, *Pietre-Stones*, from 29 September 1998, and registered freemasons-freemasonry.com on 4 April 2003. Dedicated to promoting masonic education, his extensive collection of papers and articles by knowledgeable authors and scholars in English, Italian, French, and Portuguese attracted one million unique visitors in 2007.

The Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon may be unique in developing a website that was focused more on masonic education than on the workings of Grand Lodge.<sup>127</sup> An initiative of this author while serving on his Grand Lodge’s Community Relations Committee in 1995, at the time few Grand Lodge officers were online, or understood the internet. By early 2008 the website contained over 2800 pages of which less than a hundred were about the Grand Lodge and its committees.

Promoting it as ‘the World’s Greatest Internet Research Society’, Phoenixmasonry Research Society president and museum curator, David J. Lettelier, of Havana, Florida, registered phoenixmasonry.org on 8 June 1999. Lettelier is ‘Worshipful Master of Phoenix Lodge and a 32nd degree Scottish Rite Mason under the Jurisdiction of the International Masonic Order “Delphi”’ while the society’s secretary is Jerry E. Stotler, who served as Assistant Grand Secretary, for the Grand Lodge of Kansas in 1999. Meeting through the auction website eBay, since 11 August 1999 they have administered a virtual masonic museum and library with a collection of masonic text files and images of masonic objects.<sup>128</sup>

Sri Brahadeeswara Lodge No. 150 under the Grand Lodge of India created Brahadeeswara Lodge Research Circle in 2001 and registered masonicpaedia.org on 14 March 2002. Administered by RW Bro. R. Ratnaswami, the site has grown to almost 200 articles in the public section and an additional forty in a password-protected directory.

### ***The Philalethes Society***

The Philalethes Society saw its members in the forefront in using and promoting the use of the internet. Allen E. Roberts is mentioned several times in these notes while many early participants in the CompuServe Masonic Forum, also noted elsewhere, were either members of the Philalethes, or became members. The Philalethes mailing list was created on the CompuServe Masonic Forum although the exact date is unavailable. If a history of this mailing list is to be written it must come from a member, for as Nelson King, editor of the *Philalethes* magazine notes, ‘As it is a closed and private list we do not give out information about members or numbers.’<sup>129</sup>

### ***Quatuor Coronati Lodge No. 2076***

Quatuor Coronati Lodge did not rush to embrace, or even acknowledge, the internet. Registering its website on 20 September 2003 through the Correspondence Circle, the site incorporated unused frames, radio buttons, coloured text on a textured background, an animated image and an unfortunate java code-generated cursor effect. Slow to load, and with little content, the website experienced few changes in the following five years. Within the published *Proceedings* of the lodge there appeared to be equally little interest in the technology or potential of computers or the internet. There are barely a handful of mentions.

While the internet has forty-seven entries in Svend Aage Vedersø’s *Computer Correlated AQC-Index: Vol.1-109*, few of them are actually referencing papers published in *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum*. In vol. 87 (1974) a review of Alec Mellor’s *Les Mythes Maçonniques* by A.W. Barnett notes that Mellor—who coined a new word, *maçonnologie*, to designate scientific masonic research—suggests that the masonology of the future will involve the use of computers. There are a few references in 1990 and 1991 to the use of computers in cataloguing libraries, and passing reference is made in vol. 107 (1994) to the ‘Information Highway’ and ‘Global Internet’. One correspondent noted that ‘...many brethren in America and Canada [are] now online through the medium of “compuserve” and “internet”.’<sup>130</sup> The Manchester Association for Masonic Research, which in early 2008 still had no internet presence, did however receive on 27 May 1998 a talk by W Bro. Gordon Charlton entitled ‘The Internet, the Craft and the Future’.<sup>131</sup>

## **Domains lost**

In one respect, organized Freemasonry was slow to recognize the value of domain name registration. Many names such as *mason*, *masons*, *masonic*, *masonry*, *freemason*, *freemasons*, and *freemasonnic*—in the top-level domains: .com, .net and .org—were snapped up by entrepreneurs.<sup>132</sup> It is but good fortune that they were not snapped up by anti-masons.

As late as September 1995, when InterNIC Registration Services was still registering domains for free, URLs using *masonic* existed, but *freemasonry*, *masonry* and *freemason* were still available. While *freemason.org* and *freemason.com* were registered by Grand Lodges, *freemason.net* is, as I write, for sale. By the same token, while *freemasonry.org* is safe in the hands of the Philalethes Society, *freemasonry.com* is parked and *freemasonry.net* is owned by a UK IT Support and consultancy firm, Tubs & Co who have parked the site, ‘for Freemasons all around the world’.<sup>133</sup>

Phil Weston, in England, registered *freemasonic.net* on 14 November 2003, as a masonic community website titled ‘Onthesquare’. A members-only forum, the actual contents and popularity of the site are unknown. William Hickey of Boulder, Colorado registered *masonic.org* on 12 July 1996. Never actually utilized as a webpage, it simply functioned as a home for the Freemasonry-list mailing list.

Long Beach Lodge No. 327, California, registered *masonry.org* on 5 May 1997 and Sanford Lodge No. 62, Florida has a redirect from *freemasons.org*. On 6 February 1996 *freemason.com*, was registered by Gregory Smith, for the Grand Lodge of Ohio.

Freemasonry has not been so fortunate with others: unused, *mason.com* was registered by Chad Kissinger of Austin, Texas on 19 January 1995, and *masonry.com* was registered by Minneapolis building contractor, Timothy Holmlund on 27 June 2002. The London UK law firm Pinsent Masons registered *masons.com* on 6 September 1994. James Graham of Calgary, Alberta registered *freemasons.com* on 15 March 1996 as a password-protected portal to what was rumoured to have been an independent music promotion by Guild Media. Until 1998 the site featured an eyeball and winged pyramid image. Still owned by Graham, the URL is no longer active. Currently a parked domain, *freemasonic.com* was registered by Warren Weitzman, of Bethesda, Maryland, on 21 January 2003. BrainFood Media Network registered *masons.org* on 18 January 1996, displaying a square and compasses emblem from 1998 through 2000 and then going offline. Sometime before September 1995, the Masonic Temple Association of St. Louis registered the domain *masonic.com*. For reasons undetermined but perhaps related to the increase in registration fees by InterNIC, the domain was later lost to Lapel Pins and More, Inc. in Arizona.

The Grand Lodge of New Brunswick had a similar experience in the summer of 2009. Originally registered on 4 July 2001 by MW Bro. WC “Bill” Boone, the URL *glnb.ca* was lost on 26 August 2009 when he failed to meet a re-registration deadline. In an internet instant, it was sold to a Victoria, Australia vintner selling adult toys through a French language website registered by a Richmond, BC domain registrar and hosted by a Texas webserver.<sup>134</sup> Noteworthy is *grandlodge.com*, owned by *buydomains.com*. On 1 December 2006, it was for sale for \$22,000; by 18 February 2007 the price had almost doubled.<sup>135</sup>

Ed Deppe of Eden Prairie, Minnesota registered *mason.org* on 30 May 1995. Except for a short period in 2002 when Deppe uploaded a splash page headlined ‘Ed’s Home Page’, and another short period from December 2004 to February 2005 when the page displayed a notice for a Grand Lodge of Minnesota-sponsored trip to Scotland and a plea for a volunteer webmaster, the URL has only generated a configuration error. Recognizing one of the most common misspellings, Pomino Beach, Florida domain registrar, *moniker.com* registered and parked *freemasonry.com* on 9 March 2000 and *masonry.com* on 11 June 2001. This registrar also currently owns *bc-freemasonry.com*, which will be referred to later.

National top domains have rarely befallen the same fate, with national registrars generally requiring some proof of a real-world use of the name. In Canada, *freemasonry.ca* is currently blocked since several provincial Grand Lodges registered provincial domains such as *freemasonry.bc.ca*, *freemasonry.nf.ca* and *freemasonry.pe.ca*. It would require permission of

all organizations holding a provincial domain for any organization to register freemasonry.ca. But Ebenezer Thevasagayam, a notorious 'cyber squatter' from Toronto, Canada, registered freemason.ca on 1 July 2004.

The Grand Lodge of Russia registered freemasonry.ru, but freemasonry.us was registered on 24 April 2002 by a Mr George W. Mephis of Middletown NY who, like Thevasagayam, has currently parked it as a link farm.

Other names have also been lost. Affiliated with the International Guild of Masonic Webmasters was a portal website, gomasonry.com : 'Your gateway to worldwide masonic resources' with, at one time, 1558 links to masonic sites. The original owners, Michael R. Poll and the pseudonymous Martin Barbador, allowing the domain to expire, it was purchased on 20 February 2004 by this-domain-for-sale.com, who blocked access to its pages stored at archives.org, and listed it for sale on 25 September 2007 for \$30,088.<sup>136</sup>

### **Domain registration and the problems**

The early days of website development imposed a steep learning curve on those unfamiliar with a developing technology for which the ground rules were still evolving. There were those websites registered before fees were imposed where the owners found themselves unable to later prove ownership. Other situations also developed.

The Grand Lodge of British Columbia registered its first domain, bc-freemasonry.com, in 1995 through a local company owned by a freemason. He registered it in his own name, not through any hidden motive but because processing payment was simpler. Unfortunately his company was shortly thereafter absorbed by another company and both the domain for the email address he had used when registering the domain, and his real-world mailing address ceased to exist. This meant that two years later the registrar Network Solutions refused to acknowledge that he was who he claimed to be, and refused all attempts to transfer ownership to the Grand Lodge. They would accept payment though. Another two years passed and the Grand Lodge of British Columbia decided to let the domain registration expire, naively expecting to re-register the domain once Network Solutions had released it. Network Solutions' unwritten policy was to release domains at an unannounced time anywhere up to two months after they had expired. Unfortunately the Grand Lodge did not have the resources to work with this process, and several weeks later bc-freemasonry.com became a portal for gambling sites. Today it is parked through an ISP in Florida.

In a similar situation, the Grand Lodge of Alabama had registered alagl.org on 30 April 1997, but when their ISP closed, they were unable to transfer the domain and had to register a new domain.

The Grand Lodge of Minnesota had its own problems. Mentioned earlier, Ed Deppe of Eden Prairie, Minnesota registered mason.org on 30 May 1995. Earlier that month, on 5 May, he had also registered mn-mason.org. Involved in an early computer committee, the committee thought he was registering the domain on their behalf. In point, it appears that he expected to profit thereby. Not wishing to pay, the Grand Lodge of Minnesota registered mn-masons.org (note the plural) on 19 March 2003 and uploaded a site on 21 April 2003. When the Grand Lodge registered mn-masons.com on 1 October 2005, Deppe registered mn-mason.com on 31 December 2005. Deppe, an aeroplane pilot and one time local ISP owner, continues to be a life member of a lodge in Minnesota, and the Grand Lodge has chosen not to pursue this, either masonically or legally.<sup>137</sup>

## Concordant or appendant bodies

While the many bodies arrayed under the banner of the extended masonic family will likely have developed their own presence on the internet, they are not detailed in these notes. I will only mention two.

Working closely with the various bodies ranged under the York Rite banner, Dan Pushee developed the official information site for York Rite Masonry in North America. Pushee perhaps best represents those who promoted the additional degrees online.

Accessing the internet with an American Online (AOL) account in mid-1996, Pushee immediately saw the need to provide a unified appearance to the many parts of what in the US is styled the York Rite. As AOL provided its customers with the tools to create websites, he created York Rite Sites using the 'members.aol.com' system. Kevin Sample in Missouri initially registered yorkrite.org on 11 December 1997. The same year Dan had joined the Operative Web Mason Guild (OWMG) which was at that time attempting to create a comprehensive York Rite links page on mastermason.com. Convincing the OWMG to hand the project over to him, within two years he had not only developed a complete list but had created web pages for most of the national and state bodies, and had overwhelmed his storage capacity on the AOL host server. Registering yorkrite.com on 1 December 1999 as the front page, he then transferred all the AOL sites. In 2007 he obtained the right to www.yorkrite.org as his space on the webhost for www.yorkrite.com had reached its capacity. As of 14 January 2008 he owned and operated over 40% of the 564 York Rite sites listed on mastermason.com.<sup>138</sup>

The several jurisdictions of the Scottish Rite were not as quick to establish a web presence as many of their members had been. Pete Baker created the Toledo Ohio Scottish Rite website on 26 September 1998 based on his America Online account experience designing a personal masonic 'website' he recalls creating in 1991.<sup>139</sup> The Northern Jurisdiction created supremecouncil.org on 2 January 1998, the Southern Jurisdiction created srmason-sj.org on 14 August 1996<sup>140</sup> and the Scottish Rite of Canada created scottishritemasons-can.org on 18 August 1998. Their histories are still to be told, as are those of the many other members of the masonic family.

## Masonic critics

Call them masonic critics, anti-masons, conspiracy theorists, or 'researchers'; if they weren't online before freemasons, they were in a dead heat. The list of online anti-masons, conspiracy theorists and those who simply enjoyed baiting freemasons, is far too long and unimportant to include here. Edward L. King has compiled an extensive and representative list at masonicinfo.com.<sup>141</sup> The Grand Lodge of Indiana addressed the issue with eighteen articles, including the mirrored text of Art deHoyos and S. Brent Morris' *Is It True What They Say About Freemasonry?* but no other Grand Lodge focused as much attention on combating online anti-masonry as the Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon. Originally compiled in mid-1997, the *Anti-masonry FAQ* was created to provide historical context and citations to refutations of anti-masonic attacks in the Usenet newsgroup alt.freemasonry. Written by the Grand Lodge's webmaster, the author of these notes, it was felt too controversial to upload to the Grand Lodge's website until early 2000 but was simply posted periodically into the newsgroup. Starting from what was at first a single page in question and answer format, the FAQ soon grew to eight pages and required an additional 300 pages of footnoted resources.

### *Usenet*

The newsgroups—or open fora—found on Usenet, provided freemasons an opportunity to meet freemasons from around the world. It also introduced them to a range of people who firmly claimed to be freemasons even if mainstream Freemasonry labeled them irregular: perfectly pleasant, reasonable people who just happened to be Women Freemasons, Co-Masons, Grand Orient Masons or other *genus*. It also opened freemasons' eyes to the many varieties of Freemasonry worked under the banner of regularity. And it brought home to them the painful reality of hateful, malicious, agenda-ridden anti-masonry, in a way that many of them had never had to deal with before.

Even with the volume of anti-masonic postings, the top posters into alt.freemasonry and alt.masons.members were all freemasons, Gene Goldman,<sup>142</sup> James G. Bennie, Edward L. King, Manny Blanco, and Larry Holbrook leading the list.

A few names, or pseudonyms, of the more egregious anti-masons stand out and bear mentioning. Kevin McNeil-Smith, then known as 'Saint John the Sublime Reformer' and later 'Freemasonry Watch', appeared in the Usenet archives in March 1999 but was posting much earlier under numerous aliases, cutting and pasting from others' posts in an often transparent attempt to create strawmen for him to knock down. Kenneth Wayne Mitchell, with well over sixty names, may hold the record for the most aliases or 'sock puppets' as they're called online.

Duane Washum's testimony about leaving Vegas Lodge No. 32, Nevada, in 1988<sup>143</sup> arrived as a repost in the Usenet newsgroup alt.freemasonry in early 1996, but he doesn't appear to have posted himself, at least under his own name, until late 1997. He is not archived as posting again after March 1998 but left to form Ex-Masons for Jesus.<sup>144</sup> Larry Kunk, whose ephesians5-11.org claimed to prove that the 'god of Freemasonry is not the God of the Bible', also created emfj.org on 24 October 2002 as a home for Ex-Masons for Jesus.

The initial appearance of Nick Kaffes, or 'Kansan1225', on the alt.freemasonry usenet newsgroup (and apparently his first usenet posting) was on 6 February 1999, wherein he began his anti-masonic tirade. Over time his often incoherent posts were overshadowed by his obsession with fashion model, Heidi Klum and the archives show no posts with his name after July 2004.

With almost 4500 archived posts into alt.freemasonry, Mike Restivo, a masonic critic from Toronto, Ontario, was one of the newsgroup's more vocal participants. Perhaps arriving in the CompuServe Masons Forum in 1995, in August 1996, he announced 'I've written over half a megabyte of masonry-critical communications publicly in this section.' By December he was posting into alt.freemasonry with increasingly personal attacks on Freemasonry and freemasons. Using an anonymous remailer since July 2003, if he has posted since December 2006, it has not been under his own name.<sup>145</sup>

Restivo was responsible for one of the more entertaining incidents in alt.freemasonry when he—unfamiliar with webpage authoring—in early 2001 allowed visitors to his website to unwittingly enter a directory of adult themed texts. When, on 17 March 2001, Edward L. King posted this URL to alt.freemasonry as an example of Restivo's hypocrisy, Restivo responded by claiming that he had been laying a trap for freemasons. A review of posted messages clearly reveals Restivo's inability to sustain any sense of logic or coherence, as well as King's inability to contain his glee in destroying Restivo's arguments. The fact that King so obviously enjoyed, if not reveled, in dismantling the attempts at logic and rhetoric displayed by anti-masons was of some—rarely expressed—concern to other online freemasons. Although he was often quick to flame those he believed were trolling or

misrepresenting Freemasonry, there is no evidence that he ever accused anyone of being an anti-mason who did not ultimately prove himself to be so.<sup>146</sup> There is no way of knowing if a Restivo or an Acacia Press, or any of the others, might have become Freemasonry's friends if the online freemasons had been nicer to them.

Freemasons who encountered anti-masons online responded in a variety of ways. Some freemasons were unable to distance themselves emotionally, and the newsgroup archives record many a freemason who erupted in anger, irritation and frustration at the personal attacks and obtuse illogic. Richard White, Michael R. Poll, and Eugene Goldman, like the majority, responded with humour, hard facts and logic. Edward L. King, having learned well from dealing with similar posts in the CompuServe Forum, was quick to recognize the difference between honest questions and the trolling of an anti-mason. Unfortunately one anti-mason, Gregory V. Perry of Tampa Bay, Florida, took exception to being constantly ridiculed and, on 15 June 2004, filed a lawsuit against Edward L. King. The GoogleGroups archives for alt.freemasonry show that the filing did not appreciatively affect King's posting into the newsgroup, although he chose to absent himself from the fray from February 2005 until October 2006. The court action was dismissed on 25 July 2006 with an attached protective order prohibiting either party from discussing the terms of settlement.<sup>147</sup>

Ron Boutwell, with the intent of having some fun at the expense of one particularly vocal anti-mason, Gennady Kalmykov, forged a number of his newsgroup posts, with contents exactly opposite of what might be expected: apologizing for bad behavior, admitting stupidity, and the like. While Boutwell enjoyed his baiting, Kalmykov, who posted as 'Nukleus' or 'Librarian', remains as antisemitic and apparently hate-filled as ever.<sup>148</sup>

## **Websites**

The number of anti-masonic webpages is impossible to determine. In early 2008 a keyword search for 'freemasonry' plus 'new world order' returned over 100,000 pages, a search for 'freemasonry' plus 'satanic' returned almost as many and a search for 'masonic' plus 'Jesus' returned almost 300,000 pages. Assuming some of these pages were defensive pages or masonic sites, the total is still beyond enumeration or evaluation in an outline such as this.

### ***a-albionic.com***

Originally an FTP site, since 1991 James Daugherty's A-albionic (AA) Research<sup>149</sup> has collected a broad range of conspiracy theory related texts. Less interested in Freemasonry than British imperialism, his files provided ready ammunition for a new generation of anti-masons who were discovering Usenet<sup>150</sup>

### ***antimasonicinfo.com***

Remembering that Edward L. King had maintained masonicinfo.com since 10 July 1998, antimasonicinfo.com, created through an anonymous proxy on 15 February 2007, is only noted because of the parody value of the name. While anonymously administered, the design and content are noticeably similar to freemasonrywatch.org (see below).

### ***ephesians5-11.org***

The most virulent anti-masonic websites—as a rule—are Christian fundamentalist run. Like most anti-masons, they are as interested in fund raising as they are in exposing what they claim is the evil of Freemasonry.

Incorporated on 17 January 1997 in Fishers, Indiana, by Larry Kunk, as a 'counter-cult ministry which specializes in subversive religious organizations which deny being religions', ephesians5-11.org migrated from a personal webpage uploaded the previous year. Associated with former freemason Duane Washum and the Ex-Masons for Jesus, the site promotes the



standard refrain that if Freemasonry is not Christian, than it must be anti-Christian. Reflecting the name of Edward L. King's masonicifo.com, Kunk later created masonicinfo.org on 24 October 2002 but, to date, the only page viewable is under construction.

#### ***fish4masons.org***

Mike Gentry, claiming to be a former freemason from Lone Oak Texas, created the Order of Former Freemasons (OFF), an 'evangelical, discipleship crusade of Christian men'. Jimmy Crow registered fish4masons.org on 21 March 2002 to promote OFF. He registered this domain through his own webhosting company cornerstonehosting.com, a company that he had established the previous month. Both these names may be pseudonyms. They may be the same person.

#### ***freemasonrywatch.org***

A particularly tenacious anti-mason with a strong newsgroup and website presence was 'Freemasonry Watch', later identified as Kevin McNeil-Smith of British Columbia.<sup>151</sup> Freemasonry Watch, styling itself the 'leading Masonic Research Facility in the World' is noteworthy for two reasons. Although not the first anti-masonic website, it is probably the oldest extant non-religious anti-masonic website. It's author—noteworthy in his own right for having maintained his anonymity as long as he did—was a frequent poster into masonic related usenet newsgroups under an array of pseudonyms.

Claiming to have been online as freemasonrywatch.50megs.com since 24 June 2000, the earliest archived page is dated 15 August 2000. Sometime before 27 November 2001 the site domain expired, only to be bought by Stephen Dafoe<sup>152</sup> who had established M.A.S.O.N. (Masons Against Slanderous Offensive Nonsense) at fremasoninfo.ca on 5 June 2003. Dafoe used freemasonrywatch.50megs.com as a redirect for the next five years. Dafoe created *The Masonic Dictionary* at masonicdictionary.com on 16 May 2005, and continues to redirect traffic from freemasonrywatch.50megs.com. 'Watchy', as James G. Bennie dubbed him, moved his webpages through a number of webhosts and web fora before creating freemasonrywatch.org on 2 October 2003. Unrelated, and some time later, on 1 October 2005 William McElligott, in Essex GB, created freemasonrywatch.net, a webstore and portal redirecting to lodgeroominternational.com.

Within his wild accusations and *ad hominem* attacks, 'Watchy' displayed a persecution complex that was further fueled by a controversial event that became known as 'the cookout'.

R. Theron Dunn, discovered the *Freemasonry Watch* web forum soon after he became a freemason in 2001, and began posting corrections to what he then assumed were honest errors of ignorance. Immediately attacked in the forum and receiving what he believed to be spam, viruses, and other attempts to attack his computer from another forum participant, Dunn was amenable to Bill McElligott's suggestion that a group of freemasons should all post their favourite recipes into the forum at the same time. Over a twenty-four hour period in early September 2003, some twenty freemasons, and perhaps a few non-masons, posted almost 2000 recipes. The software used for the forum was not designed to handle the volume of traffic and—depending on who you talk to—the forum was either taken offline, or crashed. Watchy's webhost, freepress-freespeech.com, soon thereafter took the website offline. Dunn believed that his posting of the webhost owner's personal contact information on 17 September 2003 into a number of other fora was instrumental in having the site closed. It is more likely that Stephen Dafoe's filing of a usage policy violation for misuse of his and others' images and names was the cause. Opinions were divided on the ethics and effectiveness of the cookout. Dunn viewed what was in effect a spam bomb as a legitimate weapon against anti-masonry that led to the forum's closure and an end to attacks against him

and others such as Stephen Dafoe, Edward L. King, and others, questioned that legitimacy and pointed out that, although rarely posting into newsgroups, McNeil-Smith continues to maintain a website at freemasonrywatch.org with several hundred pages and a members-only forum—a website that will generally appear in the top page of a keyword search for Freemasonry on any of Google’s web search engine. He also has a blog: freemasonry-watch.blogspot.com where he continues to protest his harassment by freemasons.

## Online culture

### *E-mason pin*

The history of the E-mason lapel pin, or badge, is an example of masonic coöperation, cultural differences, and the vagaries of memory. The idea for the pin originated with Gordon Charleton<sup>153</sup> who felt that members of the UK-Mason list required a way to recognize each other when they met in the real-world. Of the four designs submitted, one of the two by Charles Arnold<sup>154</sup> was chosen. The original pin consisted of two overlapping globes; one celestial, one terrestrial, surmounted by a lightning bolt, to indicate communication. The celestial globe had seven stars in the form of a gamma indicating “G”, the Great Architect. A second version of the pin—reworked by Dick James to appeal to a North American market—replaced the gamma with a square and compasses encircled by seven stars.

Selling for £3, the pin also had the benefit of raising funds for the UGLE Grand Charity Fund—some £3000 before the formation of Internet Lodge No. 9659 UGLE, consecrated on 29 January 1998. At the following festive board an additional £3000 from pin sales were donated, £1000 each to the Grand Charity, the East Lancashire Benevolent Institution, and a non-masonic charity, The Aidis Trust.<sup>155</sup>

After the formation of Internet Lodge and the lump sum donations, profits from sales outside of England were donated to various local charities. Richard T. (Dick) James assumed responsibility for North American distribution, and David Beagley—who became involved through the UK-Mason mailing list for which he had drawn up the original netiquette guidelines—arranged Australia and regional sales from Bendigo, Victoria, near Melbourne. Over a two year period Beagley sold about a hundred pins, donating the profits to a New South Wales masonic youth charity and to the Victorian Masonic Aged Homes. The total number of pins is unknown, although the £6000 raised for charity in England implies some 2000 pins. James, who suffered both a hard drive crash and two strokes, has no idea of numbers.

Although the pin was not associated with Internet Lodge, because both Charleton and Arnold were founding members, it has often been identified as such. Those who bought the pin through James or Beagley though, were often unaware of the UK-Mason List or Internet Lodge connection, and simply thought of it as a pin representing that much larger community of online freemasons.

Sales were promoted through Issue 15 of Gordon’s *Masonry Universal...* in November 1995, as well as the UK-Mason list, and at one time the Philalethes website included a link for sales. Within three months the first batch of 500 pins had sold out.<sup>156</sup>

### *Acronyms*

For Your Information (FYI), By The Way (BTW), and Laugh Out Loud, (LOL) although often thought to have been introduced by AOL customers, first appeared on Internet Relay Chat (IRC). Another acronym, common to Usenet, was developed in 1983 by Eugene Miya of NASA: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ), usually referred to a text file explaining the intent and theme of a newsgroup. The only uniquely masonic acronym S&F (Sincerely and

Fraternally) may predate the newsgroups but the internet has greatly popularized its use. It can be found as early as 5 June 1994 in a bit.listserv.freemasonry post. While comparisons have often been made between the sense of fun, adventure and community found with early ham radio users, and those who first arrived on bulletin boards and newsgroups, there appears to have been no crossover of terminology or actual culture. It is noteworthy that a number of hams were early users of the internet: Peter G. Trei and other members of Wilder Lodge, Massachusetts,<sup>157</sup> Gurnee K. Bridgman,<sup>158</sup> and Tarence Evans Ake being only a few.<sup>159</sup>

## Community

Edward L. King perhaps represents many freemasons when he says, 'Being online was a real life-changer for me.' Many of the early participants in the Compuserve Masonry Forum were inactive in their lodges. The forum sparked an interest that encouraged many to start attending lodge again, to go to Philalethes Society meetings, and in many cases become Masters and Grand Lodge officers. John Belton echoed this observation : 'Actively doing something by using the media is likely to increase social participation. If being on the 'net counts then as freemasons we will possibly tend to be more active masons than those who are not.'<sup>160</sup>

The real-world meetings of members of the UK-Masons List (see below) was only one example. Organized by Nick Alexander, Lunchtimers was formed in London on 3 March 1995 by participants in the CompuServe Masonry Forum. By autumn the idea had spread to Boston, and soon at least ten other cities around the world joined what was unofficially styled the International Lunchtimers Network.<sup>161</sup>

## Internet lodges

It was not long until the idea was mooted for real-world lodges for internet users, or some form of online lodge. There was precedent. Radio Fraternity Lodge No. 8040 was consecrated at Freemasons' Hall, London, on 23 November 1965. The founding Master, John Clarricoats (Call Sign g6cl) had been full-time secretary of the Radio Society of Great Britain for thirty-two years until his retirement in 1963. Since the consecration, lodge members have maintained a weekly 'nine o'clock net' every Sunday morning at 9:00 am on the 80 metre band (3.757kHz).<sup>162</sup>

### *Internet Lodge No. 9659 UGLE*

Charles Arnold, John Belton, Gordon Charlton, Chris White, and other participants in the UK-Mason list would meet informally in the real-world. Reports vary, but Belton recalls that it was at a late-night discussion at Charleton's home in March 1996 that the idea of an Internet Lodge was first mooted. Less than two years later the lodge was consecrated on 29 January 1998. White registered lodge.org.uk sometime before August 1996—the actual creation date is not available—and then created internet/lodge.org.uk as a subdirectory.

An informal survey of the approximately one hundred members in the first year revealed an average age of 52: some 50% were in professions, 10% in management, and 20% in computer or internet related fields.

A common device to encourage inter-lodge visitation is the use of so-called traveling gavels, Bibles, trowels, lewises, and other such items. A traveling trowel was instituted by members of the CompuServe forum and, having traveled from Prague, Czechoslovakia *via* Brussels, Belgium, it was presented to Internet Lodge No. 9659 on 10 October 1998. A week later it was on its way to New Jersey. Its current location is unknown to the writer.

### ***Internet Lodge of Research, Alberta***

Building on an idea mooted by a discussion group of Calgary freemasons in 1993, late in 1998 Hugh Young, then Grand Master of Alberta, called the first organizational meeting for the formation of an Internet Lodge. Three meetings later, the lodge was instituted on 4 March 2000, with the domain internetlodge.ab.ca registered 3 October 2000, just in time for the lodge constitution on 17 November 2001. The guest speaker that evening was W Bro. John Belton, founding Senior Warden and Past Master of Internet Lodge No. 9659 UGLE.

### ***ireland2000.org***

Constituted in Dublin on 10 June 2000 to mark the millennium, Lodge Ireland 2000 meets physically four times a year in a different location around the jurisdiction, and ‘virtually’ every day, with monthly ‘chats’ in a secure chat room and discussion fora. The site was created 5 April 1999. Membership is open to any Master Mason who is in good standing in a Grand Lodge in fraternal communication with the Grand Lodge of Ireland, has a current email address and has access to the web. As well as access to the password-protected area of the website, members are entitled to wear Irish masonic regalia, including an enameled lapel jewel.

### **Helping the masonic webmaster**

Created with the intent to assist masonic webmasters in making better websites, the Operative Web Masons Guild was established in 1996 by Ron Blaisdell and Rick Kasperek.

Ronald Scissors created bucklesunlimited.com on 14 January 1998, selling masonic jewellery and effects and also gave web space for the Guild. Although Fred Broecker created owmg.org for the Guild on 28 February 1999, bucklesunlimited.com/owmg.htm continued to host Guild files. Technical issues and a change in executive resulted in the loss of much of the membership information in the summer of 2004. When J. R. Martin created owmguild.org on 10 January 2008 the domain owmg.org was then redirected. The value of much of the Guild’s resources was soon eroded by subsequent internet developments. An often unresponsive executive and the loss of its webring has left it without a clear rôle for the future.

Pieter Nootenboom<sup>163</sup> established the International Guild of Masonic Webm@sters in 1997 and registered chaumont.com on 16 October 1996. The Guild’s website, chaumont.com/IGofMW.html, has not been updated since June 1999. Illustrating many website design *faux pas* such as heavy borders, sound files, and coloured text, other than the image of an attractive animated golden square and compass with a blue G in the centre, the IGoMW appears to have contributed little to online Freemasonry. Briefly hosting the Grand Lodge of Philippines website, chaumont.com/freemasonry.html has been a cobweb since 1999.

### **The challenges**

Prior to the internet, freemasons took their knowledge of contemporary Freemasonry from their Grand Lodge, what books they could find and what travel they could enjoy. Inter-jurisdictional masonic communication proceeded through lodge secretaries by way of their respective Grand Secretaries. It was slow, and not always efficient or effective. With the introduction of bulletin boards and Usenet, suddenly individual freemasons could easily, immediately, discover for themselves that Freemasonry was not a monolithic whole, but came in many forms and ceremonies. Individual freemasons were online talking with each other well before official Freemasonry.

Masonry, or freemasons, have always had a problem with openness. For all of Freemasonry’s claims that it is not a secret society, in the main freemasons have never been

comfortable discussing their problems in public. The internet has made Freemasonry a much closer and much more public family. When Bro. Alex Harris was shouted down at the Grand Lodge of Alabama's Annual Communication in 1999, attempting to speak in favour of a motion to consider Prince Hall recognition, online freemasons around the world heard about it within days.<sup>164</sup>

Whether it was an Ontario District Deputy Grand Master arrested for soliciting an undercover policewoman, a Pennsylvania Shrine official prosecuted for misappropriating 1.2 million dollars ; the 2005 conviction of an Alabama Scottish Rite member for embezzlement of \$200,000 from the organization ; or the April 28, 2007 edict by MW Bro, Jim Willittes, Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Arizona, regarding El Zaribah Shrine, information about freemasons behaving badly—accurate or not—was posted where all freemasons could read about it.<sup>165</sup> As could non-masons, and anti-masons.

The internet allowed both the public and freemasons to discover how poorly informed many brethren were. Mark A. Tabbert,<sup>166</sup> in his 2006 Blue Friars Lecture called for one central repository of masonic facts and information: '...we do not necessarily need more websites, education committees or research lodges. We are, however, in desperate need of one unified place where honest researchers and professional scholars can start their journey....'<sup>167</sup> Tabbert called for a national programme to digitize Grand Lodge *Proceedings* from 1733 to the present, a database of lodge and Grand Lodge histories, a national database of deceased American freemasons and a unified catalogue of masonic libraries, archives, museums and artifacts. Highlighting how controversial this concept was, David M. Daugherty, Jr responded by erroneously announcing that the George Washington Masonic Memorial was calling for the control of all masonic information on the internet.<sup>168</sup>

It could be said that the internet took official Freemasonry by surprise. There was no time to strike committees and write policy papers before individual freemasons had begun uploading what they considered to be the truth about Freemasonry. Many of these myths and urban legends were later addressed on more carefully reasoned websites and in official pronouncements, but many of the errors remained on abandoned websites, or cobwebs.

It is not only content, but presentation that concerned many brethren. Countless lodges, and individual freemasons, had their own websites but they displayed no sense of graphic design, contained little or no useful information, and often played annoying, repetitive music files while displaying equally annoying animated images.

An even greater concern for official Freemasonry was proper masonic communication. With members, lodges and Grand Lodge officers able to easily communicate with members of other jurisdictions, Grand Lodges found themselves increasingly cast in the rôle of blocking that spirit of universal brotherhood so often professed. While some jurisdictions have unofficially turned a blind eye to something they don't have the resources to police, others have adopted strict rules that a growing number of members find overly restrictive. A recognizably growing challenge to Grand Lodge authority, a clear solution—if there is one—has yet to be proposed.

The North American Commission on Information for Recognition was organized in 1951 and came online on 22 April 2004 at [recognitioncommission.org](http://recognitioncommission.org). Acting as an information service for Grand Lodges, it may see its rôle growing as more freemasons turn to the internet.

### **Irregular Freemasonry**

Prince Hall Freemasonry's battle against irregular groups has given us another, clearer, name for this phenomenon: Bogus Freemasonry. While historically Prince Hall Freemasonry itself has been plagued by illegitimate pretenders, the internet has given a new forum for

many bogus groups to claim masonic authority, enabling anyone with the web design skills to proclaim a new Grand Lodge or declare himself a masonic authority.

### *Modern Rite of Memphis*

This group, and more importantly the response it provoked, exemplifies the inflated importance that is often ascribed to affairs of the internet. What, from this remove, appears to have been little more than a conflict between a small masonic study group without the humility to recognize that it was not treading new ground and Grand Masters without the wisdom to recognize the same,<sup>169</sup> became an online cause célèbre in 2005.

Jeffrey J. Peace<sup>170</sup> perhaps holds a unique place in the promotion of online bogus Freemasonry, being apparently unaware that although that was not what he thought he was doing, that was what he was saying. Creating [riteofmemphis.com](http://riteofmemphis.com) on 20 November 2000—and soon thereafter [riteofmemphis.org](http://riteofmemphis.org)—he announced ‘the Rite of Memphis is the fastest growing masonic organization in the United States. Perhaps this is due to its dynamic core of young, well educated professionals, with an average age of 35.’ Neither website lasted much past 2003.

At the time Peace knew nothing of the history or rituals of the Rite of Memphis and, after some research, discussion with perhaps a dozen other ‘researchers’, and several attempts to exemplify degrees, by 2001 he had decided that it wasn’t a viable system. But perhaps another set of degrees would do: the Rite of Rose Cross of Gold (RRCG) was then created, and [rrcg.org](http://rrcg.org) was registered on 9 September 2003. Curiously, at a point when Peace claimed the Modern Rite of Memphis was no more, it found itself labeled as ‘spurious, schismatic irregular, and therefore, masonically clandestine’ by several Grand Lodges.<sup>171</sup>

Peace believed that the seven degrees of the RRCG would appeal to younger freemasons. Attracting about a dozen members—and the subsequent wrath of regular Freemasonry—he may have been disingenuous when he claimed that it was intended to be more of a club than an order, that it was intended to reinforce the lodge, not supplant it; to be an intellectual movement, not an hierarchal organization. Little prepared to sympathize with or understand the complex web of esoteric societies that had preceded him in creating, reviving, and working many, many odd rituals, both pseudo-masonic and other, he once spoke with Ronald Cappello, Grand Master of the US branch of a little-known Martinist movement, Rose-Croix de l’Orient (Rose-Cross of the East) (RCO) who gave little, and wanted—but didn’t receive—Peace’s membership list, and copies of the rituals.

When the RCG failed to develop past a small discussion group, Peace then helped draft the United Grand Lodge of America’s declaration (see below), and designed their website—although he denied any actual involvement in the group. He estimated that by the end of 2006 the ‘confederation of sovereign lodges’ under the UGLA included some 375 members.<sup>172</sup>

He registered several domains: [tracingboard.com](http://tracingboard.com) on 20 November 2000; [rrcg.org](http://rrcg.org) on 9 September 2003; [sovereignsanctuary.com](http://sovereignsanctuary.com) on 17 July 2004; [uglofa.org](http://uglofa.org) on 29 December 2005, [grandlodgeusa.org](http://grandlodgeusa.org) on 18 April 2006—and perhaps others. He was unable to register [ugla.org](http://ugla.org), as the Uptown Gay and Lesbian Alliance was there first on 17 January 2002, and [ugla.com](http://ugla.com) had been held by a Scottish domain broker since 2000.

The website [tracingboard.com](http://tracingboard.com) was little more than the usual collection of masonic information—much gleaned from other website—until sometime in early 2004 when Peace announced that he would be closing the site. In May it was back. In September it was closed, later it was back; by early 2005 the home page read ‘Grand Lodge Accepted Free Mason Est. 1717’ with a redirect link to [rrcg.org](http://rrcg.org). By the summer it was back as ‘Freemasonry 101’ and by April 2007 it announced : ‘This site is not connected to or with any Grand Lodge or form

of Freemasonry.’ And later that year it began promoting ‘traditional cosmopolitan freemasonry’. What form of bogus Freemasonry is contained under all these names, and its short history, would make a fascinating study.<sup>173</sup> Its only importance here is as an example of the *ignis fatuus* that can be the internet.

While continuing to promote his own vision of Freemasonry, Peace holds strong opinions on mainstream Freemasonry, believing it ‘is a bane on society that at the highest levels is nothing more than organized crime.’<sup>174</sup>

#### ***United Grand Lodge of America***

It is claimed that on 5 August 2006, at the ‘Multi-State Council of Delegates at the United Grand Lodge of America Headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia’ the United Grand Lodge of America was formed, ‘after brothers in Georgia were “erased” from their blue lodges by the Grand Lodge of Georgia.’<sup>175</sup> Whether there was anyone present other than the three principals, S. Aaron Peavy, G. David Cooksey, and Brian P. Roper, is not at issue.<sup>176</sup> Whether Cooksey demitted from his Alabama lodge over incidents of ‘racism and character assassination’ is also not at issue. The point is that what might have remained a local non-issue became known to the online masonic community, and the public at large, through blogs such as [burningtaper.blogspot.com](http://burningtaper.blogspot.com) and the UGLA’s own website, [uglofa.org](http://uglofa.org), anonymously created by proxy on 29 December 2005.

It was also claimed that the UGLA was formed in Atlanta in December 2005, in response to an ‘edict banning freemasons from meeting to discuss ancient French Masonic rituals.’<sup>177</sup> The formation date is only of importance to the principals. The point made is that whatever value the immediacy of the internet creates, it is mitigated by inaccuracy.

Highlighting the challenge of tracking such groups, the United Grand Lodge of America registered [grandlodgeusa.org](http://grandlodgeusa.org) on 18 April 2006, but in November 2007 the name was changed to the Grand Orient of the United States of America and their website domain was redirected to [grandorientusa.org](http://grandorientusa.org). Almost a defining characteristic of these websites was the absence of real-world contact information, names, or meeting places.

#### ***The Regular Grand Lodge of England***

While the United Grand Lodge of England has expressed its belief that this group is composed of little more than a handful of members,<sup>178</sup> the Regular Grand Lodge of England—apparently self-created in January 2005, concurrent with the creation of [rgle.org.uk](http://rgle.org.uk)—has developed a much discussed online presence.

Is Rui Gabirro a pseudonym? Is he the Rui L. Gabirro who, on 14 December 2005, was expelled from Amity Lodge No. 8650 UGLE? Is Robert H. Lamar a pen name? Who is their website’s registrar, Mangovo Ngoyo?<sup>179</sup> Is there any connection with a short-lived secessionist regime in the Cabinda enclave of Angola? And what connection has Philippe Paul Alexandre Henry ever had with regular Freemasonry? If this was an history of Irregular Freemasonry, these are important questions that would need to be answered. In an history of freemasons online they simply highlight the fact that without the internet no one outside of their own circles would probably have ever heard of these people.

#### ***Regular Grand Lodge of All England at York***

First it was Rui Gabirro’s Regular Grand Lodge of England, then there was a schism and Chad Marshall created [grandlodgeofallengland.org](http://grandlodgeofallengland.org) on 18 January 2006. The real-world existence of these groups is beyond the scope of this paper but the United Grand Lodge of England does not believe the splinter group contains many more members than the two founders, John Gordon Graves and Peter J. Clatworthy. Whoever he may be, their anonymous webmaster uploaded an interesting, if agenda-driven, history of English Freemasonry, noting

every historical manifestation of a Grand Lodge on English soil, with the curious omission of the Regular Grand Lodge of England. Highlighting the disconnect between online and real-world Freemasonry, the records of the original York Grand Lodge exist and are in the custody of the present York Lodge No. 236, meeting in York.<sup>180</sup>

***The Most Worshipful United Grand Lodge of Ancient, Free & Accepted Masons of Democratic Republics***

An image of a document of incorporation posted on his website purports to show that David Martin Lindsey's Virginia organization was incorporated 21 November 1997, although grand-lodge.us was not created until 15 February 2004. Claiming to have been Worshipful Master of Atlantic Lodge No. 2, Norfolk, Virginia, in 1988-1989, and now styling himself Grand Master, he claims to have made some hundred masons 'on sight'. A statement from the Grand Lodge of Virginia reports that Lindsey has been suspended and his corporation is considered clandestine.<sup>181</sup>

***Alharam Lodge No. 1***

Another minor entry in this category is the Alharam Club, claiming affiliation with Alharam Lodge No. 1, 'a Blue Lodge or Craft Lodge of Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons operating under the Jurisdiction of the Right Worshipful Grand Lodge of Prince of Lebanon'. Created by Roula Moussa in Beirut on 29 June 2001, it appears to have no affiliation with regular Freemasonry and although now appearing to be a cobweb, it once contained banner ad festooned fora and extensive text files—many appropriated from other masonic websites. While not the only irregular Grand Lodge operating in, or through, Lebanon, Alharam may be the only one that sold memberships online.<sup>182</sup>

Although not the subject of these notes, it should be pointed out that there are many bodies, styling themselves as Freemasonry, that do have a real-world presence. For example, the George Washington Union of Freemasons of North America—presently claiming lodges in Chicago, San Francisco, Washington, Montreal, and Los Angeles—derives from a charter received 16 August 1977 from the Grand Orient de France. The internet has greatly raised their profile, as it has for others such as The Grand Orient of France in the United States of America, Le Droit Humain in the United States of America, Feminine Grand Lodge of Belgium in the United States of America, Grand Orient of Austria in the United States of America... the list goes on.

***The Grand Lodge of Freemasonry for Men and Women***

Creating grandlodge.org.uk on 25 October 2001, this androgynous order in Bedford, UK, traces its history to Le Droit Humain. The Order itself was created on 18 February 2001 and claims no association with Co-Masonry or Le Droit Humain. Claiming eight lodges, this body differs from many other online entities in that it has a real-world presence, and has posted actual meetings and photographs of gatherings. Last updated in July 2006, its calendars of events have not been updated since 2005.

***Ancient and Primitive Rite of Memphis-Misraïm***

Not to be confused with the short-lived Modern Rite of Memphis, the National Sovereign Sanctuary Ancient and Primitive Rite of Memphis-Misraïm for the United States and Jurisdictions has no association with Jeff Peace, nor with the Ordo Templi Orientis, nor with the Grand College of Rites of the United States of America that had claimed the Egyptian Rite of Memphis in 1931. While memphis-misraim.us was registered by Ron Blaisdell on 8 June 2002, and hosted by his Michigan-based company, he is not affiliated with this body, nor—contrary to some Usenet postings—is he their Grand Master.<sup>183</sup> Claiming a lineage from Cagliostro and Marconis de Nègre, through John Yarker and Theodore Reuss, this group is



currently headed by the same Ronald Cappello that Jeff Peace once sought advise from. Unnoticed by mainstream Freemasonry for much of the last century, the internet has given it a prominence perhaps far beyond its numbers. Like so many of the others, it gives no indication of a bricks-and-mortar existence.

### ***Halcyon Lodge***

The recent history of Halcyon Lodge, Cleveland, Ohio—constituted in 1877 and surrendering its warrant to the Grand Lodge of Ohio on 12 November, 2007—and the involvement of Jeff Peace—is also beyond the mandate of this paper. But with a website, halcyontemple.org, registered 20 August 2007 and the support of several blogs, some group continues as Halcyon Lodge, claiming to be warranted by the bogus Grand Orient of the United States of America.

### ***The Grand Lodge of Ancient, Accepted & Esoteric Freemasons***

Initially chartered by ‘the Grand Orient’ on 14 May 1928, in 1977 the name was changed to ‘International Sovereign and Independent Grand Lodge of Ancient, Accepted and Esoteric Freemasons’, when Acacia Lodge No. 1 was established. This Grand Lodge became a virtual lodge following the convocation of 17 November, 1992 and by early 2004 online initiations for Entered Apprentices were offered. It claimed descent from the Grand Lodge established in London in 1717 although admitting that its rituals are unique. This groups’ relationship with the Universal Gnostic Church of North Carolina is unclear but candidates were requested to send \$35 to their post office address.<sup>184</sup>

### ***And more...***

The Masonic High Council of The United States of America has a website and an impressive title, but precious else.

The ‘Regular Grand Lodge of Virginia, Ancient and Honourable Fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons according to the Constitutions of Ancient Craft Freemasonry’ was constituted 25 March 2006 then, curiously, requested and received a ‘Warrant of Constitution’ from the Regular Grand Lodge of England noted above. With a street address in Portsmouth, Virginia and claims to six lodges, it may be nothing more than the website regulargrandlodgevirginia.com. A topic for another study, it is noted here only because, again, without the internet few would have heard of it. The Regular Grand Lodge of England, has, on its website, a long and impressive list of other ‘Regular Grand Lodges’ each with a list of subordinate lodges and many with subsidiary webpages. What none of them record are meeting places, meeting times, names of officers or members, or any way of contacting them except by way of aliased email accounts. All is shadow.

While these many websites, and the organizations or individuals behind them, are an irritation, R. Theron Dunn perhaps summarized it best: ‘The grand lodges are watching these startups, not with fear or trembling, and certainly not with benign amusement. They do see it as a symptom of a problem that many *are* addressing.’<sup>185</sup>

The Knights of Freemasonry Universal, Inc. created by David M. Daugherty Jr. is neither irregular nor bogus but is simply a forum for masonic debate.<sup>186</sup> Binding its member to ‘the ideals expressed in Anderson’s *Constitutions of 1723*’, it also ‘does not make masons or hold masonic communion’. Controversially, Daugherty’s website endorsed the actions of Frank Haas in West Virginia and Halcyon Lodge in Ohio, noted elsewhere.

### **Critical freemasons**

The internet has also given a forum to any freemason who, justifiably or not, may have quarreled with his lodge or Grand Lodge. While some like those enumerated elsewhere

created their own groups, others wished to stay within regular Freemasonry but wanted to see change.

The recent history of the Grand Lodge of West Virginia—resolutions brought before Grand Lodge by MW Bro. Frank Haas (2005-2006), decisions made by MW Bro. Charles Frederick Coleman II (2006-2007), edicts issued by MW Bro. Charlie L. Montgomery (2007-2008)—and the conflicts contained therein—are only noteworthy insofar as issues that at one time would have been known only by the principals are now bandied about the internet where anyone and everyone can read about them.<sup>187</sup> Calling itself the masonic voice of reason in West Virginia, *masonic-crusade.com* was created by ‘I. M. Hiram’ on 16 September 2007, to present and explain Haas’ agenda.

Unrelated, the Knights of the North, authoring *Laudable Pursuit - A 21st Century Response to Dwight Smith*, responded to the challenge of the internet by using it to promote their ideas of masonic renewal. The many criticisms and suggestions contained in the paper are beyond the mandate of this paper to address, but one point was clear: ‘The internet is the fastest growing method by which new members contact our lodges. Every single lodge should have an up-to-date website. Visitors to Grand Lodge websites should be able to find a local lodge by county and city, and be able to follow a link to communicate with that lodge.’<sup>188</sup>

One of many online masonic reformers is Richard A. Graeter<sup>189</sup> who compiled a 60 page pdf document, uploaded to *reformfreemasonry.com* on 30 November 2007: *Reform Freemasonry! A Vision for the Future of Freemasonry*. Bringing little new to the discussion, he exemplifies an awareness that there was a discussion and that discussion was possible without destroying Freemasonry in the process.

### **Prince Hall Recognition**

Starting with the Grand Lodge of Connecticut’s recognition of Prince Hall Freemasonry in 1989<sup>190</sup> eight other American jurisdictions had followed suit before it became an internet *cause célèbre*. But it was arguably the internet that educated freemasons about an issue many of them never knew existed. Perhaps it was simply time, but the rôle of the internet in promoting the mutual recognition of Prince Hall affiliated jurisdictions in the late 1990s cannot be ignored. For example, Paul M. Bessel’s list of Prince Hall recognitions complete with historical maps was a valuable resource in providing up-to-date information.

### **Famous freemasons**

Freemasons’ fondness for listing their more notable members—best exemplified by William R. Denslow’s *10,000 Famous Freemasons* (1957-61), and echoed by John Hamill and Robert Gilbert’s *Freemasonry, A Celebration of the Craft* (1992)—found new life on the internet. And with these lists, came the errors. An early version of the Grand Lodge of British Columbia’s website on 22 February 1996 featured an extensive, and over-enthusiastic, list, crediting masonic membership to Louis Armstrong, Captain Cook, Sir Guy Carleton, Generals Wolfe and Montcalm, author Arthur Haley, and others. Further research corrected these errors—and spelling mistakes such as explorer ‘Richard E. Bird’ and department store founder ‘J. C. Penny’.<sup>191</sup> But the damage was done and to this day these same errors, taken from this or other sources, continue to be found on the websites of well-meaning brethren.

Another error had a wider impact outside Freemasonry. It is unclear where it was first posted online but its origin can most probably be laid at the door of former freemason, the Rev. James D. Shaw, who claimed that the Rev. Billy Graham was a 33° freemason.<sup>192</sup> Sometime in 1996 at least two masonic websites<sup>193</sup> included the Rev. Billy Graham on their list of famous freemasons.

Unfortunately these websites, like so many other cobwebs, remain, and their lists of famous freemasons continue to include non-masons Louis Armstrong, Antoine Joseph Sax, William Shakespeare, and Bob Hope; and misspell Canadian Prime Minister Sir John A Macdonald and department store founder James C. Penney.

On 13 June 1997 *The Cutting Edge*, David Bay's short-lived syndicated Christian radio programme, interviewed Pastor Steven Van Nattan<sup>194</sup> who pointed out that the Grand Lodge of Louisiana still listed Graham. The appearance of Graham's name on 'official' lists of freemasons had been a red flag to those evangelical Christians who were both anti-masonic and felt that the Rev. Graham wasn't Christian enough. But the removal of his name incited a further frenzy. Rather than accepting that some well-meaning freemasons had made an honest mistake, this was now viewed as proof positive that there was a cover-up.<sup>195</sup>

Too little, too late, and ignoring the denial issued by Graham's office, the website of Endtimes Ministries in Caboolture, Queensland, Australia [cth.com.au/corp/despatch/Graham3.htm](http://cth.com.au/corp/despatch/Graham3.htm) to this day maintains that Graham is a freemason.

### **Where the boys are...**

#### ***youtube.com***

On 15 February 2005, youtube.com added yet another outlet to promote or attack Freemasonry, providing an easy way to upload videos. The Grand Lodge of Massachusetts uploaded a promotional short on 14 September 2006, *Is there greatness in you?*, promoting their website askafreemason.org. There were few other positive depictions of Freemasonry and in the main youtube videos reflected an anti-masonic perspective with such titles as 'Freemason Satanic Ritual', 'Reptilian Shape Shifting: Freemason Grand Master' and 'Freemason Worship of Lucifer Exposed!'<sup>196</sup>

#### ***Virtual worlds***

One more aspect of the internet should be noted: virtual worlds—at bottom simply chatrooms with interactive, three dimensional graphics. Among the most popular virtual worlds are Second Life ([secondlife.com](http://secondlife.com), created on 29 April 2002), with 13 million accounts, There ([there.com](http://there.com), created in 2003), with some 750,000 members; and Whyville for children ([whyville.com](http://whyville.com), created 15 December 2000), with some three million members.

In early 2008 there were eight clearly defined masonic groups in Second Life with names such as Second Life Masonic Lodge – Blue Lodge, Second Light Masonic Lodge No. 1, Grand Lodge of Free Masons, S.L. or simply Freemasons. Membership varied with the smallest of only three and the largest, Freemasons, with thirty-two members. Although none of the groups claimed to be tyled lodges, most were made up of freemasons. 'Maklin Deckard the owner of Caledon Lodge No.1 F&AM also indicated on his notecard at the entrance to Caledon Lodge No. 1 that it would be a violation of his obligation as a freemason to hold a tyled session where masonic secrets were conveyed. In March, 2007 a La Droit Humain lodge was reportedly formed, and two of the masonic groups on Second Life had gone beyond the process of creating a group for social interaction to the virtual creation of masonic buildings.<sup>197</sup>

### **'To infinity... and beyond'<sup>198</sup>**

Official Freemasonry and its membership—or at least some part—have risen to the challenge of the internet. Many jurisdictions have found that a growing number of their candidates are coming from that group of young, educated, intelligent computer users who would possibly have never found their way to Freemasonry without the help of the web.<sup>199</sup>

These are but a few notes on the history of freemasons online. I trust it will encourage lodges, jurisdictions, and their members, to compile their own histories; perhaps filling in the many lacunæ I have encountered. I also trust that my notes will inspire an outpouring of corrections and amendments.

I don't believe it is my rôle to express speculations on the future of Freemasonry in light of the internet. Whether the use of books.google.com as a repository of masonic texts and Skype video links to hold global workshops and seminars are a passing fad or the wave of the future, I cannot say. While I cannot agree with much of what Josh Heller and Gerald Reilly have written in *The Temple That Never Sleeps*,<sup>200</sup> I will suggest it as a focus for a discussion that Freemasonry cannot ignore. In the words of Jim Tresner, 'Whether it is a blueprint for the future, or a copy of the enemy's battle plans, each will have to decide for himself.'<sup>201</sup>

## Appendix

Many jurisdictions will have had websites or email prior to the current dates listed. Unfortunately they have not shared that information with me.<sup>202</sup> The earlier URL may have been a subdirectory under a member's personal website, or the domain may have been lost or blocked for any number of reasons. Further research is required.

Grand Lodge	URL	first email	first website	current domain
Australia	freemasonry.org.au			1998.06/04
New South Wales	uglnsw.freemasonry.org.au			n/a *
New Zealand	freemasons.co.nz			1999/07/27
Queensland	uglq.org.au			2007/01/05
South Australia	freemasonrysaust.org.au			n/a *
Tasmania	freemasonrytasmania.org			2001/02/20
Victoria	freemasonsvic.net.au			n/a *
Western Australia	freemasonswa.org.au			n/a *
Canada	freemasonry.ca			blocked
Alberta	freemasons.ab.ca		1997/11/15	2000/10/20
British Columbia & Yukon	freemasonry.bcy.ca		1996/05/26	2001/07/25
Canada in Ontario	grandlodge.on.ca			2000/09/22
Manitoba	grandlodge.mb.ca			2000/12/08
Newfoundland	newcomm.net/masonic/			1996/02/18
New Brunswick	glnb.org		2000/06/02	2008/12/16
Nova Scotia	grandlodgens.org	1995/06	1998/08	1999/10/11
Ontario, PHA	freemasonry.org/phglont			2001/11/06 †
Prince Edward Island	freemasonry.pe.ca		2000/06/10	2004/06/08
Quebec	glquebec.org			2001/10/16
Saskatchewan	masons.sk.ca			2000/10/14
England	ugle.org.uk			2000/03/24
Ireland	irish-freemasons.org	1996		1998/12/15
India	masonindia.org			1999/11/04
Israel	freemasonry.org.il			2000/09/12
Japan	japan-freemasons.org			1999/07/25
Philippines	glphils.org			2000/10/31
Scotland	grandlodgescotland.com			1997/12/12
South Africa	grandlodge.co.za			2006/09/18
United States of America	freemasonry.us			parked
Alabama	alafreemasonry.org	1999	1997/04/30	2006/08/31
Alabama PHA	mwphglal.org			2003/06/07
Alaska	alaska-mason.org			1998/01/27
Arizona	azmasons.org			1998/10/27
Arizona PHA	azmwphgl.com		1998/12/22	2001/07/24
Arkansas	argrandlodge.org			2006/05/25

Bahamas PHA	geocities.com/bahama_web_master/			2000/05/04
California	freemason.org			1994/01/04
California & Hawaii PHA	mwphglcal.org/ph/		1997/06/07	2006/10/01
Colorado	coloradofreemasons.org		1997/04/30	2006/07/14
Colorado PHA	mwphglco.			2006/03/08
Connecticut	gl.ctfreemasons.net			2003/07/09
Connecticut PHA	mwphglct.com			2002/04/28
Delaware	masonsindelaware.org			2000/10/18
Delaware PHA	mwphglde.org		2001/03/02	2005/01/05
District of Columbia	dcgrandlodge.org	1996/11	2000	2001/08/31
District of Columbia PHA	mwphglde.com			2002/02/06
Florida	glflamason.org			1996/09/08
Florida PHA	mwuglflorida.org			2003/06/30
Georgia	glofga.org			1996/06/26
Georgia PHA	mwphglga.org		2001/04/10	2006/09/18
Hawaii	hawaiifreemason.org			2005/03/06
Hawaii, PHA	mwphglfhawaii.org		2001/05/01	2003/11/03
Idaho	idahoaf.am			2001/01/01
Illinois	ilmason.org			1998/08/24
Illinois PHA	mwphglil.com			2000/05/22
Indiana	indianafreemasons.com	glind.org		2005/04/08
Indiana, PHA	2004_phglin.org		1995/09/06	2001/09/06
Iowa	iowamasons.org			2004/11/24
Kansas	gl-ks.org			2001/05/17
Kentucky	grandlodgeofkentucky.org			2002/04/22
Louisiana	la-mason.com			1997/07/23
Louisiana, PHA	theplumbline.org (offline)			2003/06/26
Maine	mainemason.org			1997/12/06
Maryland	mdmasons.org			2003/02/05
Maryland, PHA	mwphglmd.org			2001/08/21
Massachusetts	massfreemasonry.org		1996/10/13	2003/02/24
Massachusetts, PHA	princehall.org			1996/12/12
Michigan	gl-mi.org		1996/11/08	1996/11/08
Michigan, PHA	miphgl.org			2000/01/24
Minnesota	mn-masons.org			2003/03/19
Mississippi	msgrandlodge.org			1999/03/05
Mississippi, Stringer	mwstringergl.			2005/05/17
Missouri	momason.org			1998/11/02
Missouri, PHA	mwphglfmo.com		2000/09/05	2007/03/09
Montana	grandlodgemontana.org	1995	1995	2001/08/14
Nebraska	nebraska-grand-lodge.org			1998/03/05
Nebraska, PHA	mwphglne.org			2002/07/25
Nevada	nvmasons.org			1999/01/05
Nevada, PHA	phanv.org		2000/06/11 a	2005/11/04
New Hampshire	nhgrandlodge.org			2003/09/12
New Jersey	njfreemasonry.org			1998/05/06
New Jersey, PHA	mwphglnj.org			2002/05/16
New Mexico	nmmasons.org			2002/09/24
New Mexico, PHA	mwphglnm.org			2000/11/29
New York	nymasons.org			1997/08/12
New York, PHA	mwphglny.org			2003/07/23
North Carolina	grandlodge-nc.org			1997/03/11
North Carolina, PHA	mwphglnc.com			2000/04/02
North Dakota	glnd.org			2005/04/08
Ohio	freemason.com			1996/02/06

Ohio, PHA	phaohio.org			2000/03/15
Oklahoma	gloklahoma.com			2001/08/21
Oklahoma, PHA	geocities.com/okj_mwphg			2003/10/23 †
Oregon	masonic-oregon.com			1999/07/15
Pennsylvania	pagrandlodge.org			1998/02/04
Pennsylvania PHA	princehall-pa.org			1997/10/02
Puerto Rico	masonspr.org			2006/02/03
Rhode Island	rimasons.org			2001/11/05
South Carolina	scgrandlodgeafm.org	1996		2001/04/30
South Carolina PHA	mwphglsc.org			2002/09/18
South Dakota	mastermason.com/southdakota		1997	
Tennessee	grandlodge-tn.org	1997	1998	2004/07/01
Texas	grandlodgeoftexas.org			2002/04/11
Texas PHA	mwphgltx.org			1999/01/08
Utah	utahgrandlodge.org			2004/01/28
Vermont	vtfreemasons.org			1997/04/07
Virginia	grandlodgeofvirginia.org			2001/01/31
Virginia PHA	mwphgl-va.org			1999/02/17
Washington	freemason-wa.org	1994		1999/04/15
Washington PHA	mwphglwa.org			2001/08/23
West Virginia	wvmasons.org			1998/12/03
West Virginia PHA	mwphgl-wv.us.tt			2004/05/18
Wisconsin	wisc-freemasonry.org			1999/01/08
Wyoming	wyomingmasons.com			2000/10/24

\* = information not available from national registrar website

† = earliest archived page at archive.org

- 1 The author first used MacTerminal and a 1200 baud Apple modem in the autumn of 1987, and signed on to his first email account on 4 February 1994. The first image file he downloaded from an FTP site, masonry.GIF, was discovered to be a close-up photograph of a mortared stone wall. The second file was a 1988 transcript of a complete three degree ritual worked in Australia. On 13 June 1994 he posted an Illuminati FAQ into the Usenet newsgroup alt.illuminati. Creating the Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon's website in 1995, today, at over 2800 pages, it is perhaps the internet's largest repository of factual responses to anti-masonry, and information on Freemasonry's appearance in fiction and popular culture.
- 2 Although quoted by Michael Hauben and Ronda Hauben (see next), and frequently ascribed online to 'Buddha', an actual citation to the *Tripitaka* is not available.
- 3 In the main a product of internet sources, this paper should itself be viewed as an artifact of the internet, with all the resultant incertitude of accuracy and credibility that such a perspective implies. Of all the many names found in this paper, the author can vouch for the real-world existence of only Morris, Belton, Merk, and Bennie; the rest are images and text, seen only on a computer monitor.
- 4 See : Michael Hauben, Ronda Hauben, *Netizens: On the History and Impact of Usenet and the Internet*, Wiley-IEEE Computer Society Press, 1997 ; Adam Gaffin , *EFF's (Extended) Guide to the Internet*, Electronic Frontier Foundation, Version 2.3, September 1994. Also see communication.ucsd.edu/bjones/ Usenet.Hist/index.html accessed 2008/02/02.
- 5 The term "Internet" was adopted in December 1974. Setting aside the first node on ARPAnet established at the University of California on 2 September 1969 as a project of the Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA), the public use of the internet can be dated from 16 February 1978 when the Chicago Bulletin Board Systems (CBBS) went online in Chicago, although a notable precursor to the public bulletin board system was *Community Memory*, started in 1972 in Berkeley, California, using hardwired terminals located in neighbourhoods. It was in 1979 that Columbus, Ohio-based Compu-Serve (later CompuServe) introduced email to its subscribers, and Usenet was created at Duke University. Another similar network was BITnet, a coöperative network founded in 1981 at the City University of New York and Yale University. Both BITnet and Usenet (User's Network) resembled bulletin board systems (BBS) in most respects, and are the precursor to the various web fora which are widely used today. One of a number of other applications allowing computer users

to participate in discussion channels was Internet Relay Chat (IRC), created by Jarkko Oikarinen in late August 1988 as a form of synchronous conferencing. See : Peter H. Salus, *Casting the Net, from ARPANET to Internet and beyond*. Reading, Mass. : Addison-Wesley Pub. Co., 1995. p. 55; Katie Hafner and Matthew Lyon, *Where Wizards Stay Up Late: The Origins of the Internet*, by, New York : Simon & Schuster, 1996. p. 50. Also see : bbsdocumentary.com accessed 2006/11/30 ; Andrew S. Tanenbaum, Upper Saddle River, NJ : *Computer Networks*. Prentice Hall, 1996. The first commercial domain under the Domain Name System (DNS) designed in November 1983, symbolics.com, was registered on 15 March 1985. The next month a flurry of universities registered educational domains on 24 April 1985. Prior to this, perhaps 250 computer servers identified themselves with a flat name such as dec-marlboro (source of the first internet spam message on 3 May 1978).

Although there had been earlier browsers—John Bottoms’ Silversmith, created in 1987; Lynx, developed at the University of Kansas in 1992 as a hypertext browser; and others—the web can be dated from September 1993 with the release of Mosaic Version 1.0. It wasn’t until the launch of Windows 95 and the web browser, Internet Explorer 1.0, on 24 August 1995 that the web became known to a wider audience of Windows users. The development of Tim Berners-Lee’s WorldWideWeb in 1990, the first webpage in late 1990 and other browsers such as Peter Wei’s Viola had little impact outside the academic community. The Internet Society has compiled much history of the internet at [isoc.org/internet/history](http://isoc.org/internet/history) accessed 2006/12/08.

- 6 A few technical notes: Telnet (TELEtype NETWORK), developed in 1969, is a network protocol allowing file transfer between computers; Kermit, developed at Columbia University in 1981, is a computer file transfer/management protocol and a set of communications software tools; Archie, written in 1990 and considered to be the first internet search engine, is a tool for indexing File Transfer Protocol (FTP) archives; Gopher, released by the University of Minnesota in 1991, is an improved form of Anonymous FTP. There are many others.
- 7 Email from Ron Blaisdell, 5 June 2007.
8. All registration dates, unless otherwise noted, are taken from [internic.net/whois.html](http://internic.net/whois.html), [uwhois.com](http://uwhois.com) or national registrars.
- 9 Like many mailing lists, it began by manually sending an email to multiple addresses; then as an email ‘drop box’ where an administrator kept a text file of email addresses ; then upgraded to Majordomo, a proprietary mailing list manager (MLM) developed in 1992 ; then to eGroups.com, an email list management web site originally started in January 1997—later acquired by YahooGroups in 1999.
- 10 First hosted on Rick Kasperek’s [gryffin.com](http://gryffin.com) some six months prior: [gryffin.com/80/glowww](http://gryffin.com/80/glowww) ; [gryffin.com/mu](http://gryffin.com/mu).
- 11 ‘...the dawn of this new technology has long since passed and we are in fact, behind the curve on applying it to our benefit.’ Rick Kasperek, “The Eminent Arrival of The Masonic Internet,” *Philalethes* magazine, December 1996. Bro. Kasperek is a member of Centennial Lodge No. 1448 in Midland Texas.
- 12 [skepticfiles.org/cp002/index.htm](http://skepticfiles.org/cp002/index.htm) accessed 2006/10/05.
- 13 US Navy Naval Tactical Data Systems Programmer, W Bro. David Allen Stites, Sr. (b. 1945/09/06) was initiated into San Diego Lodge No. 35, California, on 12 August 1988, and joined the Southern California Research Lodge (SCRL) early the following year. He served as Master of Lakeside Lodge No. 760, El Cajon, California, in 1998.
- 14 RW Bro. Allen E. Roberts (1917/10/1-1997/03/13), “Through Masonic Windows,” *Philalethes* magazine, 36.5 (October 1983), back cover. He is known to have posted into the CompuServe Masonic Forum at least as early as 8 December 1993. [goanchor.com/AllenE.Roberts.htm](http://goanchor.com/AllenE.Roberts.htm) accessed 2006/11/29.
- 15 “Masonic Cyberspace Phase 2,” *Scottish Rite Journal of Freemasonry*, Southern Jurisdiction, USA. vol. 104, no. 5 May 1995. Also see “Masonic Cyberspace,” *Scottish Rite Journal of Freemasonry*, Southern Jurisdiction, USA, November, 1994. Retired marketer W Bro. Gurnee K. Bridgman, a member of Poynette Lodge No. 173, Poynette, Wisconsin, and Sunrise Lodge No. 130, Fargo, North Dakota, is also a ham radio operator.
- 16 ‘Email was quickly extended to become network email, allowing users to pass messages between different computers by at least 1966 (it is possible the SAGE system had something similar some time before).’ ‘Ray Tomlinson initiated the use of the @ sign to separate the names of the user and their machine in 1971.’ [en.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org) accessed 2007/02/13. Tom Van Vleck interview by Peter Salus, *Matrix News*, University of West Virginia, 1998. [mids.org/mn](http://mids.org/mn). Also see : [multicians.org/thvv/mail-history.html](http://multicians.org/thvv/mail-history.html) accessed 2007/01/29.
- 17 Email from Michael Segall, To: [philalethes@yahoogroups.com](mailto:philalethes@yahoogroups.com) January 14, 2007. As an example, in 1966 Michael Segall worked on PROFS, the internal IBM network which preceded ARPAnet. In 1988 he purchased

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- his first personal computer, joined Compu-Serve, briefly assisted as a sysop (System Operator) for the Masonic Forum, and, by long-distance telephone calls, connected with Preston Burner's Hiram's Oasis BBS.
- 18 Non-mason Jason Scott, a computer historian (and proprietor of the textfiles.com history site), maintains a large archive of bulletin board artifacts including, under the category of "conspiracy", the text of a leaflet published by the Board of General Purposes of the United Grand Lodge of England in 1987, J. Edward Decker's *Freemasonry. Satan's Door to America?*, Rev. Harmon R. Taylor's *A Grand Chaplain Speaks Out*, excerpts from Ellic Howe's *Fringe Masonry In England*, and Manly P. Hall's *The Lost Keys Of Freemasonry*.
  - 19 Email from Joseph A. Everette, 4 February 2008. With ten year's computer experience, and administering seven local masonic bulletin boards at the time, RW Bro. Joseph A. Everette, initiated into J. Dewy Hawkins Lodge 331, Oakland Park, Florida in 1980, reports creating the Dayton, Ohio, Masonic BBS List in the autumn of 1982 with a Tandy HD1200 and a 300 baud modem. Unfortunately he has no files from his bulletin board as the 'media went bad.' A list of 513 Area Code BBSs dating to 1982 includes Everette's Antioch Shrine, Ohio Masonic BBS created in 1984 : [bbslist.textfiles.com/513/oldschool.html](http://bbslist.textfiles.com/513/oldschool.html) accessed 2007/11/25.
  - 20 Email from Ron Blaisdell, 5 June 2007. The Chicago Bulletin Board System utilized software that allows users to connect to the computer system on which the software was installed. By using a modem, anyone else who knew the phone number of these computers could connect to them, leave messages, and send and receive files. One of the larger collections of early Bulletin Board files is textfiles.com where, under the occult listing, are stored twenty-three files of a masonic theme.
  - 21 Originally run on a 386 clone with 280MB HD, using RBBS software. [kena.org/hirams/history.htm](http://kena.org/hirams/history.htm) accessed 2006/12/07.
  - 22 Retired carpenter, W Bro. Preston Eugene Burner (1927/02/23-2000/05/10) was raised 11 June 1952. Email from William J. Baumbach II, 1 December 2006 ; email from Ronald D. Merk, 13 December 2006. See [bessel.org/preston.htm](http://bessel.org/preston.htm) accessed 2007/10/09.
  - 23 Richard K. Thompson, *Harashim*. Williamstown, Victoria, Australia : Australian & New Zealand Masonic Research Council, Issue 15 July 2000. pp. 6- 9.
  - 24 RW Bro. Richard A. Newman of New Jersey and RW Bro. Jean Rene van Geuns of New York registered [masonic-network.com](http://masonic-network.com) on 26 June 1996. Newman was initiated in 1962 and van Geuns was initiated in 1974, both in New York. Both served as District Deputy Grand Masters of the Grand Lodge of New York in 1992-94.
  - 25 Editorial *GFN Cyber Mason* Volume 1, Number 5, July 2006. 'During the last 13 years, from 1993 until 2006, in excess of 17,000 Brethren have applied and registered as members. 1,500 Brethren have filled out their Masonic data on the Membership Roster. Of those 1,500 Members, about 500 are active.' Archived at [geocities.com/gfn\\_news](http://geocities.com/gfn_news) accessed 2007/11/21.
  - 26 Email from David A. Stites, 2 March 2008.
  - 27 Entering the computer field in the mid-1970s, Douglas Huskins was an assistant sysop on the CompuServe Freemasonry forum with Bill Wine. Established for the Grand Lodge of California by its Grand Secretary, VW Bro. John L. Cooper III, the BBS continues to be administered by Huskins. Email from Douglas Huskins, [doug@huskins.com](mailto:doug@huskins.com), 16 November 2018.
  - 28 W Bro. Ronald D. Merk (b. 1950/05/07) joined Vancouver & Quadra Lodge No. 2, Victoria, BC on 6 January 1993.
  - 29 W Bro. George Leonard Helmer (1955/01/01-2002/02/18) joined Norwood Lodge No 90, Edmonton, Alberta on 20 March 1990 and served as Master for 1996-1997. In testimony to his untiring zeal for scanning old masonic texts, he was named to the Masonic Brotherhood of the Blue-Forget-Me-Not. Helmer was named a Fellow of the Philalethes Society after a three year labour compiling text files of the first fifty years of The *Philalethes* magazine. He scanned the complete *The Builder* 1915 -1930, donating the collection to the Masonic Leadership Center, 'His last project, the status of which is still uncertain, was his scanning of "The Master Mason" which was published from 1924 to 1930. We hope that this information can be found, and preserved for the Craft.' From an anonymous eulogy to George L. Helmer delivered during an online Lodge of Sorrow organized by Betty Langenberg in the Netherlands, 16 March 2002, posted by RW Bro. Bruno V. Gazzo, Editor, *Pietre-Stones Review of Freemasonry*, [lnx.freemasons-freemasonry.com/phpBB2/viewtopic.php?p=601&](http://lnx.freemasons-freemasonry.com/phpBB2/viewtopic.php?p=601&) accessed 2006/11/02.
  - 30 Retired Calgary Police Inspector, MW Bro. Hugh Young (b. 1944/11/14) Grand Master of Alberta 1997-1998 and Charter Master of Internet Lodge of Research, Grand Lodge of Alberta, got online in 1992. See [linshaw.com/omtp/](http://linshaw.com/omtp/) accessed 2008/03/06.



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- 31 Email from Gordon Charleton, 23 November 2006, 28 January 2008. Charlton got online in November 1994: 'There were rumours amongst UK Masons online that their activities were disapproved of by the powers that be, and that in some unspecified way being on-line would be detrimental to one's masonic standing. I was unconvinced by these rumours, but it seemed prudent to ensure that my absence would be noticed. Publishing an eZine seemed a very positive way of doing that, and a way to give something back to the online community of freemasons.' Issues are archived at [internet.lodge.org.uk/library/universal.php](http://internet.lodge.org.uk/library/universal.php).
  - 32 Last updated in 1999, Wall/Spring Lake Lodge No. 73, New Jersey uploaded one list that included twelve such mailing lists. [members.tripod.com/~ws173/masmail.txt](http://members.tripod.com/~ws173/masmail.txt) accessed 2007/11/03. Currently at [besse.l.org/mascomp.htm](http://besse.l.org/mascomp.htm), Paul Bessel has compiled a list of 77 mailing lists ranging from state or rite specific lists to ones intended for general masonic topics. Others include Granville Canard's *Virginia Masonic Information Net*, created 7 April 1997.
  - 33 Unrelated to the Scottish Rite magazine. From: [mcvax!vu44!botter!klipper!biep@seismo.ARPA](mailto:mcvax!vu44!botter!klipper!biep@seismo.ARPA). Date: Fri, 14 Dec 84 10:11:47 -0100. Subject: European Masonic Groups. New Age Digest #4. Moderator: [Tim.Maroney@CMU-CS-K.ARPA](mailto:Tim.Maroney@CMU-CS-K.ARPA) (uucp: [seismo!cmu-cs-k!tim](mailto:seismo!cmu-cs-k!tim)). Sat Jan 12 17:52:08 EST 1985. [skepticfiles.org/mys4/newage4d.htm](http://skepticfiles.org/mys4/newage4d.htm) accessed 2006/12/06.
  - 34 Ron Boutwell of Prather Lodge No. 717, Indianapolis, Indiana, administered *FMnet!* on a FIDONet echo. The earliest archived post into [bit.listserv.freemasonry](http://bit.listserv.freemasonry) is dated 10 May 1994. List Manager, Bill Hickey recalls twenty-five to thirty participants.
  - 35 BITnet was a coöperative U.S. university network founded in 1981, differing from the internet in that it was a point-to-point 'store and forward' network: email text and files were transmitted in their entirety from one server to the next until reaching their destination. From this perspective, BITnet was more like Usenet. A "feed", sometimes called an "echo", referred to the transmission process.
  - 36 You can post to the newsgroup by joining 'bit.listserv.freemasonry'. You can join the mailing list by sending an email to our automated server at: "Listserv@Indy.Com". In the body of the message (first line) write: 'SUB FREEMASONRY VADER@MERYL.CSD.UU.SE'. Then send it. No subject statement is necessary. From: [ron.boutwell@indy.com](mailto:ron.boutwell@indy.com) (Ron Boutwell)
  - 37 FidoNet, a non-commercial bulletin board network using dial-up modems was launched in May 1984. See : [fidonet.org/genlinfo.html](http://fidonet.org/genlinfo.html) accessed 2006/12/12.
  - 38 Incorporated as Quantum Computer Services on 24 May 1985, the service's name was changed to America Online (AOL) in August 1988. In February 1991 the first DOS version of AOL was launched, a Windows version of AOL was launched in January 1993 and AOL 2.0 for Windows was launched in 1994, giving clients access to Usenet. [corp.aol.com/whoware/history.shtml](http://corp.aol.com/whoware/history.shtml) accessed 2006/10/02 ; [isp-planet.com/research/rankings/usa.html](http://isp-planet.com/research/rankings/usa.html) accessed 2006/12/12. See : Kara Swisher, *AOL.COM : how Steve Case beat Bill Gates, nailed the netheads, and made millions in the war for the Web*. New York : Times Business / Random House, 1998 ; David Stauffer, *It's a Wired Wired Wired Business the AOL Way*, CT : Capstone Publishing, Inc., 2000.
  - 39 Ron Boutwell post to [bit.listserv.freemasonry](http://bit.listserv.freemasonry), 9 July 1994 ; May 10 1994.
  - 40 Ron Boutwell post to [bit.listserv.freemasonry](http://bit.listserv.freemasonry), 11 July 1994 : The text of a pamphlet written by Jim Tresner entitled *Conscience and The Craft* was adopted as the Masonic FAQ file for the newsgroup [bit.listserv.freemasonry](http://bit.listserv.freemasonry), better known as FMnet!.
  - 41 Richard T. James (b. 1944) of Bedford, Nova Scotia, wrote : 'EMasonry brought me back to Lodge.' *E-Masonry And The Internet*, Andrew W. McLuckie, Prospect Lodge No. 578, Prospect Park, PA USA, 1996. [skirret.com/library/archive/papers/misc-e/e-masonryandtheinternet.html](http://skirret.com/library/archive/papers/misc-e/e-masonryandtheinternet.html) accessed 2006/09/16.
  - 42 Retired police detective, MW Bro. Neil Neddermeyer was raised into Wayzata Lodge No. 205 in 1967 and served as Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Minnesota for 2003-2004.
  - 43 Email from W. Bro. Bill Hickey, 15 December 2006 ; email from Ron Boutwell, 7 October 1994.
  - 44 [web.mit.edu/dryfoo/Masonry/Letters/letter9702b.html](http://web.mit.edu/dryfoo/Masonry/Letters/letter9702b.html) accessed 2007/03/26.
  - 45 Email from Carl E. Jones, 12 February 2007. W Bro. Carl E. Jones (b. 1956/11/02), a Past Master of Knox Corinthian Lodge No. 851, Dallas, Texas, was raised in Pulaski Heights Lodge, Little Rock, Arkansas on 1981/10/06.
  - 46 Maintained by bus driver, Ross Slade (b. 1959/12/16), a member of Lodge Kotara Hanbury No. 939 UGL NSW and ACT, Australia, the Australian Masonic Mailing List ceased to function 1 March 2007, becoming a Google group at [groups.google.com/group/oz-mason](http://groups.google.com/group/oz-mason).

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- 47 Email from David Beagley, 1 January 2007.
- 48 Email from Ross Slade, 1 March 2007.
- 49 Email from Chris White of Wokingham who had a CompuServe account in 1993, 26 November 2006.
- 50 W Bro. Peter G. Trei, Master of Wilder Lodge, Massachusetts in 1994, was raised in Courland-Centennial Lodge No. 763, New York in 1988. His early presence in Usenet newsgroups garnered him inclusion in one list of net.loon nominees: 'Monomaniac who greps most of Usenet for mentions of Freemasonry, and posts corrections if he feels the fraternity is being slighted. Sporadically publishes the Masonic Digest on a mailing list. Not too good at answering his email. At least he has a sense of humor....' [ctrl-c.liu.se/~ingvar/legends/lesser.html](http://ctrl-c.liu.se/~ingvar/legends/lesser.html) accessed 2006/11/20.
- 51 W Bro. Gary L. Dryfoos, while Master of Ocean Lodge, on 21 June 1989 posted into the Society for Creative Anachronism newsgroup alt.sca to correct some misunderstandings about Freemasonry.
- 52 The American Standard Code for Information Interchange (ASCII) dates from 1963. The simplest form of ASCII art, the 'smiley' was created by non-mason Scott E. Fahlman on 19 September 1982.
- 53 *THE electronic NORTH CAROLINA Mason*, Ric Carter, ed. Washington, NC. [grandlodge-nc.org/nc-mason/archives/1995/ENCM\\_3\\_1.TXT](http://grandlodge-nc.org/nc-mason/archives/1995/ENCM_3_1.TXT) accessed 2006/08/26.
- 54 Members of The WELL founded organizations such as the Electronic Frontier Foundation and Craig's List, and documented what was emerging in books like Howard Rheingold's *The Virtual Community*, John Seabrook's *Deeper*, and Katie Hafner's *The WELL*. [en.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org) accessed 2007/09/21. See : well.com.
- 55 '...the Well also had a group.' Email from Ron Blaisdell 5 June 2007. Cf. : King reports a WELL discussion moderator telling him that there was no masonic discussion in the WELL during the CompuServe Masonic Forum period.
- 56 W Bro. Torence Evans Ake, Arcadia Lodge No, 1138, Lansing, Illinois, signed onto AOL in 1989 with a Champion KXH-386 16mghz operating Geoworks at 1200 baud. He was suspended from his lodge for publicly discussing the issues of the fraternity on the internet in 2003 and, after masonic trial in March 2004, was reinstated.
- 57 Gregory Neil Shapiro, of Massachusetts, was a beta tester for the precursor of CompuServe, MicroNet, which had been marketed from 1979 to 1987. He created a masonic section in the New Age Forum in 1991.
- 58 Email from William N. Wine, 2007/06/03. The charter for the Cornerstone Computer Chapter of the Philalethes is currently held by Wine. Edward L. King is the secretary. Also see : William N. Wine, 'On line with Masonic'. *The New Canadian Freemason*. Winter 1994/95 vol. 6, issue 1. ed. Hylon L. Maizels.
- 59 Programmer analyst William N. Wine (b. August 7, 1949) was raised June 1971 into Diablo Valley Lodge No. 448 , California, serving as Master for 1978-1979 and 1986-1987.
- 60 RW Bro. Jacques Huyghebaert (b. 1945) was initiated in 1976 into Lodge Libreville, Central Africa and is a member of Lodge Bonnie Doon No. 611, (SC) and Leinster Lodge No. 115, (IC), both in Colombo, Sri Lanka. He is also a member of Internet Lodge No. 9659 UGLE and his writings on Freemasonry have appeared on many masonic websites.
- 61 Email from Edward L. King, 2008/02/09.
- 62 Mike Segall, a member of loge l'Étoile No. 1001 and Past Master of Lodge of Research John Scot Erigena No. 1000, both in Paris under the Grand Lodge of France, had written, under a pseudonym, an encyclopædia on Freemasonry in French a few years prior.
- 63 Edward L. King, Bangor Maine.
- 64 Email from Edward L. King [edking@masonicinfo.com](mailto:edking@masonicinfo.com), January 30, 2008.
- 65 Email from Edward L. King, 2009/02/05.
- 66 [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/GENie](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/GENie) accessed 2006/11/28 ; [freegroups.net/camsoc/ctt/pt-5-gen.html](http://freegroups.net/camsoc/ctt/pt-5-gen.html) accessed 2006/11/28. Cf.: Email from RW Bro. Steve Cohn of Garden City Lodge, Massachusetts, 17 March 2008 : 'As I recall, there was a masonic section of GENie' ; 29 March 2008 : 'when Prodigy started the restructuring of all of their BBSs, most of them died off due to lack of participation. Some of us migrated over to the GENie system.'
- 67 IRC, developed in 1988, was an outgrowth of BBS software, inspired by a chat system operating on BITnet.
- 68 The late W Bro Seth Prokop, was Master of Glen Iris Lodge No. 288, Melbourne, in 1995. *Transactions*, Volume 11 "Examining Masonry", 1997, Victorian Lodge of Research, Melbourne, Australia. Also see : *Masonry Universal...*, Issue 15, November 1995.
- 69 Paramedic, Bro. William Byron Alter (b. 1965/10/25) was raised into Albert Pike Lodge No. 1169, San Antonio, Texas, on 1 October 1991. Email from William B. Alter, 18 January 2007.

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- 70 'The traditional dial-up online service differed from the modern internet service provider in that they provided a large degree of content that was only accessible by those who subscribed to the online service, while ISP mostly serves to provide access to the internet and generally provides little if any exclusive content of its own.' wikipedia.org accessed 2007/08/13.
- 71 Bro. Josh Heller, co-author of *The Temple That Never Sleeps*, was raised into Chandler Lodge No. 227, Reading, PA on 27 October 1999.
- 72 Josh Heller and Gerald Reilly, *The Temple That Never Sleeps: Freemasonry and E-Masonry—Toward a New Paradigm*. Charlottesville, Va.: Cornerstone Book Publishing, 2006, pb, 142 pp. templeneversleeps.com.
- 73 Anonymously created on 2 April 2006, possibly by Dale W. Brown.
- 74 Individual Internet Service Providers (ISPs) will carry different lists of newsgroups but there were at least 62,000 groups. At least eighteen were establish for freemasons: alt.binaries.freemasonry; alt.freemasonry; alt.freemasonry.binaries; alt.freemasonry.handshakes; alt.masonic; alt.masonic.demolay; alt.masonic.members; bit.listserv.freemasonry; alt.masonic.youth; ind.masonic; ind.masonic.aasr; ind.masonic.york; masonic; masonic.freemasonry; org.freemasonry; soc.org.freemasonry; soc.org.freemasons; uky.org.freemasonry. A decade or more after they were established, only alt.freemasonry and soc.org.freemasonry sustain any real traffic.
- 75 Newsgroup posts : 'Also, the current consensus *seems* to be "there's already a mailing list, which is gated to a bit.listserv.\* group,' and also any such group should not be a second-level group but should go under alt.org.\*, and also I'm not really sure the original proposer has decided whether it should be moderated or not.' David DeLaney, 19 July 1994. '...from what I see on alt.config, I think the general consensus is that the Masonic Digest mailing list already serves the proposed purposes of the "alt.freemasonry" newsgroup, and it has the added advantage of being not terribly overloaded.' <sup>[1]</sup><sub>SEP</sub>Joe George 19 July 1994. Note that spelling and grammar in newsgroup postings was a sometime thing.
- 76 Web-based archiving of Usenet posts began in 1995 at Deja News. In 2001, this database was acquired by Google. Other archives were subsequently added but many pre-1995 posts are unavailable.
- 77 Ron Blaisdell, Past Master and endowed life member of Capital of Strict Observance Lodge No. 66, Lansing, Michigan, chaired the Grand Lodge of Michigan Computer Committee for 1995-2002, 2004 and 2005.
- 78 On 1 April 1988 Wesleyan University created wesleyan.edu and later that month was linked to NSFnet, the National Science Foundation network, through JVNcnet . See : ftp.funet.fi/pub/netinfo/NSFNET/imr/IMR88-01.TXT accessed 2008/02/02.
- 79 Joining Freemasonry when he was 26, Christopher Kylin was Worshipful Master of St. John's Lodge No 2, Middleton, Connecticut from 1997 to 2000. As a student at Wesleyan University, he recalls having some form of internet access as early as 1984. An unfortunate incident with then Grand Master MW Bro. Walter Kaechele on 3 February 2003 lead to his leaving the lodge and severing all connexion with Freemasonry. See 'Connecticut: Warrant Withdrawn from Lodge Opposing One-Day Classes' *Freemasonry Today*, Spring 2003 issue 24. Email from editor@theamericanminerva.com 29 January 2008. Newsgroup post from: ckylin@eagle.wesleyan.edu, 18 July 1994. Archived email from Boutwell to Kylin on 7 September 1994 in which Boutwell clearly understood that Kylin had already created the newsgroup: 'You said earlier that when you set up alt.freemasonry you had a friend send the command message. Obviously, since it was accepted the first time, your friend was operating from one of these sites higher up on the hierarchy than my site.' Note that there are no announcements or calls for discussion archived for news.announce.newsgroups, news.announce.newsgroups, news.groups, news.groups.proposals, news.admin, news.admin.announce.
- 80 Author of *The Truth About Masons*. Eugene Oregon.: Harvest House Publishers, 1993.
- 81 Author of *The Secret Teachings of the Masonic Lodge: A Christian Perspective*. Chicago : Moody Publishers, 1990.
- 82 Author of *What You Need To Know About Masons*. Eugene, Or. : Harvest House Pub.,1992, and founder of Saints Alive Ministry in Issaquah, Washington, also created saintsalive.com on 12 September 1996.
- 83 The FAQ archives at Ohio State was migrated to faqs.org sometime in early 2005. Other errors can be found in the current index. A search for the alt.illuminati FAQ will also return The Anti-Masonry FAQ although this author also periodically posts an alt.illuminati FAQ complete with all required headers.
- 84 Newsgroup post from Ron Boutwell, 25 September 1994.

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- 85 A piscatorial metaphor, ‘trolling’ originally referred to the practice of veteran participants in Usenet newsgroups to post messages that would incite a response from new users or ‘newbies’. It has become a synonym for flamebaiting; the posting of inflammatory remarks intended to provoke outrage.
- 86 [faqs.org/ftp/usenet/news.announce.newgroups/soc/soc.org.freemasonry](http://faqs.org/ftp/usenet/news.announce.newgroups/soc/soc.org.freemasonry) accessed 2008/01/24. Although *Masonry Universal...* reported ‘On 4th December the thread “RFD for Soc.org.freemasonry.moderated” was started in the news.groups newsgroup,’ the post is not in the available archives.
- 87 Email from James G. Bennie, 19 Nov 2006 ; post from Brussels StudentenGenootschap, 12 July 1997. Offline : [geocities.com/sofreemasonry](http://geocities.com/sofreemasonry) ; [hiramnet.org](http://hiramnet.org).
- 88 Created by Andrew Philip Fabbro, who maintained the Usenet Masonry FAQ through version 1.2. Charles A. Plater maintained it through version 1.4 and then gave it to Edward L. King. It has been further edited by Larry Holbrook who uploaded Version 1.6 in August 2006. Version 1.5b is archived at [masonicinfo.com/usenetfaq.htm](http://masonicinfo.com/usenetfaq.htm).
- 89 The File Transfer Protocol (FTP)—first published in 1971 and updated in 1985—allowed transfer of files between linked computers, but without knowing the actual name and location of a file there was no way of searching or browsing through multiple sites. In 1990 Archie, considered to be the first internet search engine, was introduced. It, and other search tools for the Gopher protocol such as Jughead and Veronica, allowed easy searches of many university systems. A search on the FTP emulator [archie.icm.edu.pl/archie-adv\\_eng.html](http://archie.icm.edu.pl/archie-adv_eng.html) on 12 December 2007 returned only twelve files for the search term ‘freemasonry’—eight were either broken links or ‘550 no such file’ while four returned various versions of the Anti-masonry FAQ.
- 90 IT manager Roger M. Firestone was raised into Ancient Landmark Lodge No. 5, St. Paul, Minnesota, and served as Master of Dawson Lodge No. 16, District of Columbia, in 1996. He uploaded many masonic files to [cacr.caltech.edu/~rfire](http://cacr.caltech.edu/~rfire) on 28 December 1994, a website that was taken offline in late 2000.
- 91 W Bro. Dave Sities, Master of Lakeside Lodge No. 760, El Cajon, California, in 1998, ran an early bulletin board, *Hiram’s Valley BBS*, and an FTP site, neither of which have been archived.
- 92 Email from Ron Merk, [rmerk@islandnet.com](mailto:rmerk@islandnet.com), 21 November 1995 responding to the Grand Lodge of British Columbia’s development of a website: ‘I find that the cost is just too high for the benefit.... I believe that the Computer Bulletin Board system is a much better way to go.... Best part is that the Network is “tyled” so to speak, so there are no anti-masonic flames etc.’
- 93 Created with an unrealized goal to have a home where all Grand Lodges would have a central location/domain name to host their documents and information. See fn. xxvii.
- 94 UGLE Board of General Purposes, December 2003 Report ; December 2004 Report.
- 95 *Electronic communication rules for the Craft*, document created by BS Morton, United Grand Lodge of England, IT Department : 2006/03/26. ‘Guidance for members of the Craft and Royal Arch on the use of the Internet and the World Wide Web for communicating and informing’, Incorporates extracts from the *Report of Board of General Purposes*, adopted 13 December 2000 and *Report of Board of General Purposes*, adopted 13 March 2002.
- 96 Email from Neil Marple, [DrNeil@cox.net](mailto:DrNeil@cox.net), 26 November 2006.
- 97 Correspondence from MW Br. Charles F. Coleman II, 24 November 2006 ; 1999 *Proceedings*, pp. 136-37; *Proceedings* 2000, p. 118.
- 98 Graeme Ruthven, *A Report and Recommendations for: The Improvement of Internal and External Communications for the Freemasons of New Zealand*, Freemasons of New Zealand, 2004/02/04.
- 99 ‘I am sure you are proud of your “Masonic Manifesto,” after review, I feel some of your comments about the Grand Lodge of Florida are abusive. I feel your comments are an affront to the Grand Lodge of Florida and its Officers. As the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Florida, I feel that you show a clear contempt for me as your Grand Master. As to your Website, I can find no record of your authority to publish information about the Grand Lodge of Florida, its Officers, Membership, Committees or Programs. Therefore, I order you to “cease and desist” all publications concerning the Grand Lodge of Florida, its Officers and Members.’ Posted correspondence from John F. Kazanaugh, Grand Master, 22 November 2005. ‘...in order to allow the Grand Lodge of Florida to be in compliance with the rules and regulations of other Grand Jurisdictions, and continue to maintain a good and friendly Fraternal relationship with said Jurisdictions, you are hereby ordered and directed to cease and desist the distribution of any and all materials, either printed or transmitted, to be used by members of any other Grand Jurisdictions unless prior permission has been obtained....’ Posted correspondence from Robert D. Trump, 30 December 2006. See: *Freemasonry for the Next Generation*. Vol. 2, Issue 5.

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- phmainstreet.com/flmason/cov0905.htm. Created on 23 August 1999, the site was last updated 2 December 2005.
- 100 Tim Bryce, raised in Florida in 1997, was Florida Bureau Chief for the *Masonic Globe*, editor of *The Florida Mason* and *Freemasonry for the Next Generation* e-Zines, and producer of the 'Masonic Update' podcast. His 'Freemasonry from the Edge' weekly column is included in the *Freemason Information* web site.
- 101 Computer administrator and publisher of the monthly masonic E-zine *The Lodgeroom International Magazine*, W Bro. Robert Theron Dunn Jr. (1 February 1957-13 May 2008) got online in 1993, and was raised on 3 November 2001 into Evergreen Lodge No. 259, Riverside, California when he was 45. Email from R. Theron Dunn, 1 February 2008.
- 102 See : lodgeroomuk.net/bb/viewtopic.php?id=2644 ; halcyontemple.org/pdf/member%20letter%20final.pdf accessed 2 December 2007.
- 103 ziplink.net/users/trei/masonurl.html 'attempts to be an exhaustive list of Internet Masonic resources,' accessed 2006/11/16.
- 104 W Bro. Gary L. Dryfoos was Master, Ocean Lodge, Winthrop, Massachusetts, in 1989.
- 105 W Bro Paul M. Bessel (b. 1949/01/24), author of *Masonic Questions and Answers* (2005) and *Out of the Shadows : The Emergence of Prince Hall Freemasonry in America* (2006) was Senior Grand Warden of the Grand Lodge of the District of Columbia in 2005.
- 106 See : geocities.com/capecanaverall/2903 ; bessel.org.
- 107 A webring is a collection of websites joined together through a common code allowing multiway linking. Originally embraced as a means to create communities of common interests, it was quickly recognized as a tool for commercial website promotion. Based on Denis Howe's EUROPa (Expanding Unidirectional Ring Of Pages) and Giraldo Hierro's central CGI (Common Gateway Interface) script, the web ring concept was developed by Sage A Weil in May 1994. He established WebRing Inc. in 1995, selling it to Starseed, Inc. in 1997. Starseed was acquired by GeoCities, subsequently bought out by Yahoo. With the purchase of the ring system in September 5, 2000 by Yahoo, came growing technical issues, an influx of commercial sites and the abandonment of the system by many volunteer 'ringmasters'. By 15 April 2000 Yahoo had withdrawn support and currently WebRing Inc. continues to support some 40,000 'communities'. The GeoCities Masonic Web Ring, created 24 July 1998, currently reports 166 member sites. m.webring.com/t/GeoCities-Masonic-Web-Ring accessed 2008/01/17.
- 108 Bill McElligott, Lodge of Old Friendship 3907, UGLE. admin@lodgeroomuk.com.
- 109 Journalist, publisher, playwright and pianist, Andrew Boracci (1926/10/01- 2004/05/07) of Sag Harbor, New York registered americanmason.com on 22 February 2000. Master of Wamponamon Lodge No. 437, Sag Harbor in 2002-2003, he was active in the Royal Arch and Scottish Rite as well as a member of the Philalethes Society and the Theosophical Society. See : 'Obituaries', *The East Hampton Independent*, 12 May, 2004 ; *Southampton Eagle*, 13 May, 2004. Unrelated, the Masonic Learning Centers for Children registered americanmason.org on 18 January 2005.
- 110 Elliot Burns, americanmason.com accessed 2007/01/03 ; Email from Andrew Boracci, 20 December 2003, Subject: American Mason Passes 400,000 World Wide Readership Mark.
- 111 A Universal Resource Locators (URL), otherwise known as a domain name or webpage address, can be registered without actually being attached to a webpage. For a small fee, or included in the cost of registration, Internet Service Providers (ISPs), or webhosts, will provide a template webpage announcing that the URL is located, or 'parked', with that ISP. Template webpages that also include a list of links to other, often commercial, websites is styled a 'link farm'.
- 112 Retired US National Guard administrator, RW Bro. Gerald S. Leighton (b. 1944/12/15) was raised into Meridian Splendor Lodge No. 49, Newport, Maine, on 5 May 1988 and served as Grand Master for 2006-2008.
- 113 Created by Shawn Eyer, adjunct professor at John F. Kennedy University, who is helping to build Blazing Star Masonic Temple in *Second Life*, and Ron Montes, on 22 June 1998, and uploaded the following month. See : orindalodge.org/second\_life.php accessed 2008/05/08.
- 114 All registration dates, unless otherwise noted, are taken from internic.net/whois.html, uwhois.com or national registrars.
- 115 MW Bro. Hugh Young (b. 1944/11/14) Grand Master of Alberta 1997-1998 and Charter Worshipful Master of Internet Lodge of Research, Grand Lodge of Alberta.

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- 116 Email from W Bro. James Young II, 13 June 1997. A member of Corinthian Lodge No. 38, he has been the webmaster since 2000.
- 117 Email from Mark Bernardin, Manager of Program Development, Grand Lodge of Ohio, 17 January 2008.
- 118 Email from Thomas R. Labagh, Chairman Grand Lodge Committee on Internet Services, 30 November 2006. See *The Pennsylvania Freemason*, 'AutoMasonry' May 1995, p. 10 ; 'AutoMasonry establishes Bulletin Board,' August 1995, p. 8 ; 'The Ahiman Rezon Addresses Information on the internet,' November 1996, p. 8 ; 'e-Mason Square Club Formed,' February 1997, p. 6 ; 'Grand Lodge on the Internet,' vol. xlv, no. 2, May 1998. p. 3.
- 119 *Transactions*, The South Carolina Masonic Research Society, Jerome Joseph. ed. 1996 vol. 9, p. 185 ; Email from Richard R. Barton, 14 December 2006 ; email from RW Bro. Clifton L. Simmons, Jr., 11 December 2006.
- 120 Email from Dr. Neil Marple, 26 November 2006, Chairman of the Committee on the Internet. Also see [knightstemplar.org/KnightTemplar/articles/gdpmay1997.pdf](http://knightstemplar.org/KnightTemplar/articles/gdpmay1997.pdf) accessed 2007/10/09.
- 121 King Solomon's Lodge - Path to Masonic Blogs, [kingsolomonslodge.org](http://kingsolomonslodge.org), online 31 July 2006. Jeff Day (b. 1981/04/24) was raised into Laurel Lodge No. 13, Roseburg, Oregon on 29 January 2003 and currently serves as Junior Warden. Using computers since age ten, he ran his own, non-masonic, bulletin board from 1993 to 1995. He later designed [royalarchmason.org](http://royalarchmason.org) and [rogue.cryptic-masons.org](http://rogue.cryptic-masons.org).
- 122 Email from Tom Accuosti, 16 April 2007. He first posted into alt.freemasonry in April 2001, shortly before joining Friendship Lodge No. 33, Southington, Connecticut. His blog was first posted in June 2006.
- 123 Although posting pseudonymously, by his own reports he was initiated into Pickens Star Lodge No. 220, Jasper, Georgia, in mid 2002 at the age of 45, and currently is an honorary member of Blaine Lodge No. 534 GR. Active on non-masonic local BBSs and CompuServe in the mid 1980s, 'Widow's Son' registered and administered Pickens Star Lodge's website from 2002 until 2005. Email from Widow's Son, 13 April 2007. Also see : [burningtaper.blogspot.com](http://burningtaper.blogspot.com).
- 124 Retired commercial filmmaker, W Bro. Christopher Lee Hodapp (b. 1958), initiated into Broad Ripple Lodge No. 643, Indiana, on 20 November 1998 and Master for 2000-2003, presented 'Laudable Pursuit: A 21st Century Response to Dwight Smith' at the January 2005 meeting of Lodge Vitruvian No. 767, on behalf of the Knights of the North, and authored *Freemasons for Dummies*, Wiley Publishing, 2005. He is moderator for Hiram's Forum for the Grand Lodge of Indiana. Suspended in April 2004 for unmasonic comments made in an email regarding disciplinary actions against two other freemasons, he was reinstated in September 2004. He was a charter member of Lodge Vitruvian and served as Master in 2005-2006.
- 125 Bro. Gregory Stewart, a 36 year old art director in Encino, California, also administers [freemasoninformation.com](http://freemasoninformation.com), created on 25 April 2005.
- 126 W Bro. Michael C. Martin joined Mersey Lodge No. 5434 UGLE on 25 March 1994 and was installed as Master in 2002. Assuming administration of UK Masons Webring in July 2006—with only twelve websites—he renamed it the British Isles Masonic Webring and by 2007 participating websites exceeded fifty.
- 127 Cited by John L. Belton, *AQC* vol. 118 (2005) p. 217.
- 128 *The Scottish Rite Journal*, September-October 2005 [scottishrite.org/web/journal-files/Issues/sep-oct05/lettelier.html](http://scottishrite.org/web/journal-files/Issues/sep-oct05/lettelier.html), accessed 2008/03/22.
- 129 Email from Nelson King, 18 January 2007.
- 130 *AQC*, v. 87, p. 216.; v.107, p. 124-25, 148 ; 153. Cyril N. Batham, editor of vol. 95 (1982) noted that the United Grand Lodge of England had installed a computer and that *AQC* had been allowed to use it. What kind of computer was unmentioned. This is similar to a reference in vol. 104 (1991) to a collection of Georg Burkhard Kloss texts 'on discs'. where what kind of discs also goes unmentioned.
- 131 *Transactions of the Manchester Association for Masonic Research*. Volume 88 (1998). pp. 27-45.
- 132
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| <a href="http://freemasonic.com">freemasonic.com</a> | Warren Weitzman | MD | 2003/01/21 | Parked, linked  |
| <a href="http://freemasonic.net">freemasonic.net</a> | Phil Weston     | UK | 2003/11/14 | 'The Masonic Community Web Site designed and managed by Freemasons.' Password protected member forum. |
| <a href="http://freemasonry.com">freemasonry.com</a> | Neil Baharie    | UK | 1998/05/10 | Originally redirected to UGLE website, by 16 September 2000 the URL defaulted to the server index     |

freemasonry.net	Tubs & Co.	UK	1997/01/13	'For Freemasons all around the world.'
freemasons.com	James Graham,	CAN	1996/03/15	Inactive: Until 1998 the site featured an eyeball and winged pyramid image.
mason.com	Chad Kissinger	TX	1995/01/19	Can't find the server.
masonic.com	Lapel Pins and More, Inc.	AZ	1997/06/13	Sometime before September 1995 the Masonic Temple Association of St. Louis registered masonic.com.
masonry.com	Timothy Holmlund	MN	2002/06/27	Building and construction contractor.
masonry.org	Long Beach Lodge 327	CA	1997/05/05	Lodge website freemasons.org redirects to Sanford Lodge No. 62, Florida.
masons.com	Pinsent Masons	UK	1994/09/06	Law firm.
masons.org	BrainFood Media Network	TX	1996/02/18	Displayed square and compasses from 1998 through 2000.
133	Created as a portal for 'The Freemasonry Network' on 13 January 1997, the site reported that it was officially approved by UGLE. Throughout 2000 the site was displaying scripting errors. For the next six years the single static page either promoted Freemasonry Net or Tubs and Co. Since early 2006 it reports: 'Our new site will be back soon....'			
134	Email from Bill Boone 21 September 2009.			
135	Several other domains were registered by freemasons: mastermason.com was registered by Carl Davenport of Downers Grove, Illinois on 13 May 1997 for the Operative Webmasons Guild; masonicworld.com was created on 11 July 2004 by John T. Mathews of Blacksburg, South Carolina; 2be1ask1.com was registered by Warren V. LeMay 27 March 1997, although its use by the First Masonic District, Grand Lodge of New Jersey seems to be a cobweb; freemasonry.com was registered by Neil Baharie of Chelmsford, Essex on 10 May 1998. Originally redirecting to an early version of the UGLE website, by 16 September 2000 the URL defaulted to the server index.			
136	Created by a the pseudonymous Martin Barbador sometime prior to April 1999. At that time some programming issues were resolved by webcoder.net. See : marketplacepro.moniker.com accessed 2007/12/03.			
137	Email from Thomas C. Jackson, Deputy Grand Master, Grand Lodge of Minnesota, 17 January 2008.			
138	George Daniel MacGregor Pushee III, now residing in Florida, joined Wilder Lodge, Massachusetts, in 1972 and came online in 1997 at the age of 60. His website yorkrite.org represents "the Official Information Site for the York Rite". Pushee also is a member of and operates and maintains the Official Sites for General Grand Chapter Royal Arch Masons, International, General Grand Council Cryptic Masons, International, Grand Encampment Knights Templar Of The U.S.A., Grand Council Allied Masonic Degrees (AMD), USA, Grand Council, Knight Masons (KM) U.S.A., York Rite Sovereign College Of North America, Convent General, K.Y.C.H., The High Council, MSRICF, Grand College US, Holy Royal Arch Knight Templar Priests (HRAKTP) and The Royal Order Of Scotland The Provincial Grand Lodge United States Of America. Like other early users of the internet, he is also a ham radio operator. See : 'York Rite Freemasonry on the Internet,' Dan Pushee. <i>Knight Templar</i> , vol. xliii, no. 5, May 1997, p. 10 ; vol liii, no. 6, June 2007, p. 9.			
139	Email from Pete Baker, 26 November 2006.			
140	They later registered scottishrite.org on 31 August 1998, using it as a redirect to srmason-sj.org.			
141	masonicinfo.com/people.htm accessed 2008/01/11.			
142	Eugene Goldman (b. 1955/12/16) was initiated in 1986 and got online in 1987, joining MasNet, Hiram's Valley BBS, and then CompuServe where he met Edward L. King, Mike Poll, Mike Wells, and others who found the anti-masons to be more entertaining than threatening. Email from Gene Goldman, 2 February 2007.			
143	Duane Washum "Masonry, My Savior, and Me", <i>Christian Research Newsletter</i> , Volume 1: Number 4, 1988, ed. Ron Rhodes. CRN0004A.TXT (original CRI file name), release 4 April 1993.			
144	Ex-Masons for Jesus, Post Office Box 28702, Las Vegas, NV 89126. "At the third [National Leadership Conference on Ministry to Masons], in June of 1995, a suggestion was made that it would be good if a group of former Masons would form an organization named Ex-Masons for Jesus, composed of men who had left the Lodge to follow Jesus Christ." "The suggestion was embraced by the group of former Masons who attended the			

- conference. Charlie Wiley and Thomas Hilton became the founding directors. Duane Washum manages this web site.” All evidence suggests that the group may have a total of five members. [emfj.org/emfj\\_discussion\\_board.htm](http://emfj.org/emfj_discussion_board.htm) accessed 2007/01/16 ; [masonicinfo.com/duane.htm](http://masonicinfo.com/duane.htm) accessed 2007/02/16.
- 145 Michael J. A. Restivo joined Freemasonry on 2 March 1981—then age 29—so that he could affiliate with a Martinist body styled Chevaliers Beneficent De La Cité-Sainté. He withdrew from membership on 13 November 1981. Email received from Mike Restivo via Peter Renzland, 2008/05/20. CompuServe Christianity Section post by Mike J. Restivo, 74347,751 #1450003 27 June 1996. Also see [home.earthlink.net/~masonicinfo/beingrestivo.htm](http://home.earthlink.net/~masonicinfo/beingrestivo.htm) accessed 2007/02/21.
- 146 Flaming is defined as hostile and insulting interaction between internet users.
- 147 In Circuit Court of the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit in the State of Florida, in and for Hillsborough County Civil Division. Gregory Perry, Plaintiff, vs. Edward King, Defendant. Case No. 04 5478, Division K. Action for damages to his good name, credit and reputation that exceed \$15,000. [tinyurl.com/ynowq2](http://tinyurl.com/ynowq2) accessed 2007/10/12.
- 148 See : [masonicinfo.com/echos.htm](http://masonicinfo.com/echos.htm) February 27, 2004, updated May 13, 2004 with Mr. Kalmykov’s name included. accessed 2006/10/03.
- 149 James Daugherty created the domain although Lloyd Miller is now posting as Research Director. PO Box 20273 Ferndale, Michigan 48220 A-albionic Research New Paradigms Discussion Group [a-albionic.com/prjframe.html](http://a-albionic.com/prjframe.html) “Traditionally, since 1991, the list has focused on the ruling class/conspiracy hypothesis of A-albionic’s project: ‘the Overt and Covert Organs of the Vatican and NeoBritish Empires are Locked in Mortal Combat for Control of the World’ and other conspiracy theories of history and current events.”
- 150 Edward L. King has compiled a representative list of Usenet posters criticizing Freemasonry. See : [masonicinfo.com](http://masonicinfo.com).
- 151 Carefully protecting his anonymity for a decade, K[evin] R.P. McNeil-Smith identified himself as owner of the website Freemasonry Watch on the Arcadia Entertainment production, *Freemasonry Revealed: part 1, Legends*, and *Freemasonry Revealed : part 3, Conspiracies*, Halifax, 2006. This may be yet another pseudonym.
- 152 Author of several books on the Knights Templar and Freemasonry, Stephen Dafoe, initiated in 1992 at the age of thirty, is a Past Master of Moira Lodge No.11, Ontario, and a member of Hinton Lodge No. 178 and Fiat Lux Lodge of Research No. 1980, Alberta, Canada.
- 153 Author of ‘The Internet, the Craft and the Future’.
- 154 W Bro. Charles Arnold, Borlase Lodge No. 6216, UGLE.
- 155 Internet Lodge No. 9659 UGLE archived minutes, accessed by John L. Belton.
- 156 Emails from Gordon Charleton, Charles Arnold, Richard T. James, Alan Tibbetts,, Ian J. McKiver, David Beagley, 2006. Also [geocities.com/Heartland/Meadows/6168/lapelpin.html](http://geocities.com/Heartland/Meadows/6168/lapelpin.html) accessed 2006/10/18.
- 157 Email from Paul Andrews, 27 December 2007. If anything, ‘Hamasons’ have had a greater cultural influence on ham radio. The Royal Order of the Wouff Hong is a tongue-in-cheek ceremony performed at ham conventions that is claimed to be loosely modeled after a first degree initiation.
- 158 Gurnee Bridgman, ‘Masonic Amateur “Ham Radio”’ *Short Talk Bulletin*, Masonic Service Association, July 1995.
- 159 See : Hiram’s Hams Amateur Radio Society ; [www2.arrl.org/aarrl.html](http://www2.arrl.org/aarrl.html) ; [masonicgathering.net](http://masonicgathering.net) ; [eqso.org](http://eqso.org)
- 160 John Belton, *Masonry Universal...*, the Masonic eZine, issue 28. [internet.lodge.org.uk/library/universal.php](http://internet.lodge.org.uk/library/universal.php) accessed 19 April 2007.
- 161 See : [lunchtimers.org/aboutus/history.htm](http://lunchtimers.org/aboutus/history.htm) : “The Lunchtimers’ *Masonry Universal...*, Issue 27.
- 162 *MQ Magazine* Issue 17, April 2006.
- 163 Plumbing contractor, VW Bro Pieter Nootenboom of Sierra Madre Lodge ☐ was the webmaster for the Grand Lodge of Philippines from 1999 to 2001.
- 164 Post to [alt.freemasonry](http://alt.freemasonry) by Alex Harris. Subject: PSOC: Prince Hall Vote in Alabama <sup>11/17/1999</sup> <sub>11/17/1999</sub> Date: 11/17/1999.
- 165 Nelson King, [freemasonry.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=84&Itemid=88](http://freemasonry.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=84&Itemid=88) Updated 07-03 ; Chris Hodapp, [freemasonsfordummies.blogspot.com](http://freemasonsfordummies.blogspot.com), 19 March 2007 ; [the-modern-freemasonic-journal.blogspot.com/2006/06/just-what-is-united-grand-lodge-of.html](http://the-modern-freemasonic-journal.blogspot.com/2006/06/just-what-is-united-grand-lodge-of.html) ; Email from Carl E. Jones ‘Fighting between our own members is killing us’, 2 May 2007.
- 166 Mark A. Tabbert, Director of Collections George Washington Masonic National Memorial [mtabbert@gwmemorial.org](mailto:mtabbert@gwmemorial.org).



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- 167 'Through the ill-directed and uncoordinated efforts of thousands of inspired and well intentioned individual brothers the Temple of Masonic knowledge is being ravaged.' 'Freemasonry and the Digital Revolution,' W Bro. Mark A. Tabbert, 2006 Blue Friar Lecture, Washington, DC, 10 February 2006. Reprinted in *Plumblin*, Scottish Rite Research Society.
- 168 David M. Daugherty, Jr. [kofu33.org/abblog.php](http://kofu33.org/abblog.php) accessed 2006/04/01.
- 169 *Edict No. 02-2004*, Thomas L. Blanton, Grand Master, 26 March 2004. *Edict 2005-1*, Albert F. Garner, Grand Master, 30 July 2005.
- 170 Email from Jeffrey J. Peace, 18 April 2007. Joining Pinnacle Lodge No. 661, Middlesboro, Kentucky in 1987 when he was 20, he later, by way of Sandy Springs Lodge, No. 124, 'transferred his membership to Georgia'. He, and fourteen others, were erased from the Grand Lodge of Georgia in 2005. Also see [burningtaper.blogspot.com](http://burningtaper.blogspot.com) accessed February 23, 2007.
- 171 The Grand Master of North Carolina in February, 2002, the Grand Master of Indiana in August, 2002, and the Grand Master of Georgia in March, 2004, issued edicts forbidding their members to join the so-called 'Modern Rite of Memphis'. See [masonicinfo.com/memphis.htm](http://masonicinfo.com/memphis.htm) accessed 2007/06/22. Also see *2003 Proceedings*, Roger S. VanGorden, Grand Master, Max L. Carpenter, Grand Secretary. Indianapolis : Grand Lodge of Indiana, 2003, p. 192.
- 172 Telephone conversation with Jeffrey J. Peace, 24 April 2007.
- 173 With perhaps too much expression of glee, Edward L. King has recorded much of the UGLA's online history. See : [masonicinfo.com/ugla.htm](http://masonicinfo.com/ugla.htm) accessed 2008/02/03.
- 174 Email from Jeffrey J. Peace, 18 April 2007. Peace believes that Scottish Rite employees had a hand in having Brian Roper and him erased, and that malfeasance on the part of unidentified Grand Lodge officers is not to be ruled out. He sees a conspiracy to merge the Northern and Southern Scottish Rite jurisdictions; sees a conspiracy to sell Scottish Rite Valley property to benefit what he termed Grand Consistories; and talks of FBI records in Mobile, Alabama, and income tax evasion by a representative of the Mobile Scottish Rite Temple.
- 175 [burningtaper.blogspot.com](http://burningtaper.blogspot.com), accessed 31 October 2006. 'Widow's Son' reports that the UGLA was formed in Atlanta in December 2005, after the 2005 Grand Master of Georgia Albert F. Garner Jr. issued an 'edict banning freemasons from meeting to discuss ancient French masonic rituals' and the 2006 Grand Master of Georgia F. Ray Jackson 'threatened expulsion without trial of those members who would not sign letters of renunciation.'
- 176 [masonicinfo.com/ugla.htm](http://masonicinfo.com/ugla.htm) accessed 2007/01/22.
- 177 [burningtaper.blogspot.com](http://burningtaper.blogspot.com), accessed 2006/10/27.
- 178 'Of the known members of this new, irregular body, only two appear to have had any connection with regular Freemasonry in England.' RA H Morrow Grand Secretary, United Grand Lodge of England, 10 May 2005 COMMS/RAHM/JMI-I/sdh/Gsecs1.
- 179 Mangovo Ngoyo registered [rgle.org.uk](http://rgle.org.uk) on 11 January 2005.
- 180 United Grand Lodge of England, Statement, 16 February 2006 ; Report to the Quarterly Communication of the United Grand Lodge of England, 9 March 2005. Cited at [surreymason.org.uk/news\\_ugle\\_new\\_grand\\_lodge.htm](http://surreymason.org.uk/news_ugle_new_grand_lodge.htm) accessed 2007/01/22.
- 181 [masonicinfo.com/democratic\\_republics.htm](http://masonicinfo.com/democratic_republics.htm) accessed 2007/01/22 ; [grandlodge.us/atsight.htm?At.Sight.Members.of.The.Grand.Lodge](http://grandlodge.us/atsight.htm?At.Sight.Members.of.The.Grand.Lodge) accessed 2007/01/22 ; [members.benl.ebay.be/ws/eBayISAPI.dll?ViewUserPage&userid=unalienablerights](http://members.benl.ebay.be/ws/eBayISAPI.dll?ViewUserPage&userid=unalienablerights) accessed 2007/11/21.
- 182 The [alharamclub.com](http://alharamclub.com) is described by Edward L. King at [masonicinfo.com/alharam.htm](http://masonicinfo.com/alharam.htm) accessed 2007/01/22.
- 183 Email from Ron Blaisdell, 17 April 17, 2007.
- 184 Universal Gnostic Church created [esotericfreemasons.com](http://esotericfreemasons.com) on 15 December 2003. See: 'Talking Reincarnation with Dr. John Gilbert' Interview by Lee Prosser [ghostvillage.com/legends/2006/legends39\\_04172006.shtml](http://ghostvillage.com/legends/2006/legends39_04172006.shtml), 17 April 2006. accessed 2007/01/22.
- 185 R. Theron Dunn. [beaconofmasoniclight.blogspot.com/search?q=halcyon](http://beaconofmasoniclight.blogspot.com/search?q=halcyon) accessed 13 January 2008.
- 186 Created 4 November 2000 by David M. Daugherty at [kofu33.org](http://kofu33.org).
- 187 Charlie Law Montgomery, *EDICT Expelling Frank J. Haas of Wellsburg Lodge No. 2*. 19 November 2007. See [masonic-crusade.com](http://masonic-crusade.com) accessed 2007/09/28.
- 188 *Laudable Pursuit*, p. 31. 'Laudable Pursuit was presented at the January 2005 meeting of Lodge Vitruvian by Christopher L. Hodapp, P.M., W.M., on behalf of the Knights of the North.' [vitruvian.org/papers](http://vitruvian.org/papers). The paper

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- was a response to MW Bro. Dwight Smith, Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Indiana in 1964, and author of *Whither Are We Traveling?* and *Why This Confusion in the Temple?* See : [knightsofthenorth.com](http://knightsofthenorth.com).
- 189 W Bro. Richard A. Graeter, a 43 year old Past Master of Caliburn Lodge No. 785, Cincinnati, Ohio created [reformfreemasonry.com](http://reformfreemasonry.com) on 24 March 2004.
- 190 14 October 1989. Grand Lodge of Connecticut *Proceedings*, 1990 pp. 27-31, 128-129 Eight 'mainstream' Grand Lodges recognized their Prince Hall counterparts prior to the web (Connecticut , Nebraska, Washington, Wisconsin, Colorado, Minnesota, North Dakota, Idaho).
- 191 *The Masonic Connections of Sir Guy Carleton, Baron Dorchester*, Ralph D. Seligman. Nassau, Bahamas : self-published, n.d. 26pp booklet. ; *The Masonic Philatelic Club Magazine*, Issue No. 72, April 1996. p. 23, acting editor, Maurice Beazley. Excerpts from letters received from W. Bro. Joseph A. Walkes, Jr. [founder and president of the Phylaxis Society] regarding Louis Armstrong ; *Captain James Cook - Freemason?* Roy H. Clemens. Honolulu: Masonic Public Library, 1980. 10 pp.
- 192 *The Deadly Deception: Freemasonry Exposed by One of Its Top Leaders*, James D. Shaw (d. 1997) and Tom C. McKenney. Lafayette, Louisiana : Huntington House, Inc, U.S.A., 1988. pb.
- 193 Composite Lodge No. 595, Santa Monica, California : [members.aol.com/composite5/famous.htm](http://members.aol.com/composite5/famous.htm) ; Grand Lodge of Louisiana : [2.linknet.net/masonic/famous.htm](http://2.linknet.net/masonic/famous.htm). Composite Lodge removed Graham's name on 28 December 1996. Richard Shaw migrated the Grand Lodge of Louisiana website [2.linknet.net/masonic/mig1.htm](http://2.linknet.net/masonic/mig1.htm), and the list, to [la-mason.com/famous.htm](http://la-mason.com/famous.htm) on 23 July 1997, and removed Billy Graham's name.
- 194 Steven Van Nattan (b. 1943/02/09), editor of *Balaam's Ass* : [balaams-ass.com/journal/warnings/graham2.htm](http://balaams-ass.com/journal/warnings/graham2.htm), Kingston, TN 37763 US 12 November 1996. Currently promoting Van Nattan' piano restoration and tuning services, Kingston, Tennessee (1986). [geocities.com/CapitolHill/8988/list.htm](http://geocities.com/CapitolHill/8988/list.htm) and [balaams-ass.com/journal/warnings/graham23.htm](http://balaams-ass.com/journal/warnings/graham23.htm).
- 195 It wasn't until 27 July 1998, after a member of the *Freemason List* noted that Billy Graham's office was denying his membership, that Kevin Francart removed Graham's name from the website of Genesee Lodge No. 174 in Michigan, [gl-mi.org/lodges/genesee-174/famous.html](http://gl-mi.org/lodges/genesee-174/famous.html). While Cutting Edge is no longer broadcast, to date CD recordings of the Van Nattan interview are available for purchase on their website [cuttingedge.org/radio.html](http://cuttingedge.org/radio.html) : CER1167 'Is Rev Billy Graham A Secret Mason?'
- 196 [youtube.com/watch?v=o1\\_HV85Tgys](http://youtube.com/watch?v=o1_HV85Tgys) accessed 2007/05/24.
- 197 'Masonry in Second Life,' William F. Lott. Connecticut : *Masonic Societas Rosicruciana*, September 2007. [yorkrite.org/papers/SecondLife.pdf](http://yorkrite.org/papers/SecondLife.pdf) accessed 22007/12/17. Currently living in Amston, CT, Lott was raised in 1966 in Warren Lodge No. 240, Montrose, PA. when he was 22. He came online with one of the earliest AOL accounts and joined Second Life early in 2007. Also see 'More real people are leading virtual lives' [ocregister.com/ocregister/money/article\\_1707507.php](http://ocregister.com/ocregister/money/article_1707507.php) accessed 2008/01/15.
- 198 'Buzz Lightyear', John Lasseter, *Toy Story*. Emeryville, California : Pixar Animation Studios : 1995.
- 199 'Our Grand Secretary's office receives on average almost one email a day from prospective candidates, most of whom learned about Freemasonry through the internet and our website.' 'Report of the Library and Archives Board of Trustees', *Advance Proceedings*, 2008. Vancouver : Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon, 2008.
- 200 Josh Heller and Gerald Reilly, *The Temple That Never Sleeps: Freemasonry and E-Masonry—Toward a New Paradigm*. Charlottesville, Va. : Cornerstone Book Publishing, 2006. [templeneversleeps.com](http://templeneversleeps.com).
- 201 'Book Reviews' by Jim Tresner, *The Scottish Rite Journal*. May-June 2006.
- 202 Correspondence, by email and regular post, was sent to every English-speaking masonic jurisdiction listed in *List of Regular Lodges Masonic* (Bloomington, Illinois : Pantograph Printing and Stationery Co., 2006) as well as all Prince Hall affiliated jurisdictions. Regular post correspondence included a cover letter of introduction from the Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon. Written replies were received from eighteen, while an additional three replied by email.

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