# Stake your Claim with a Domain Name!
## by Thornton and Marty Gale

> Note – This article discusses the topic of domain names for genealogy websites: their purpose, strategies for obtaining a meaningful domain name, and how to register a domain name at *www.genealogyhosting.com*. For a complete explanation of creating a genealogy website, see the book "Getting Started on Your Genealogy Website" available from the *www.genealogyhosting.com*

E very genealogists should have a domain name! A domain name is the moniker that a website will be known as. For example, lets say that the genealogist Margaret Schmidt has a genealogy website of *www.schmidt14.org*. Then her domain name is technically the last two nodes of the website name i.e., "*schmidt14.org*." Even if you don't have a genealogy website, you will still want to stake your claim on the information super highway with your domain name now before all the good ones are gone! Also, when you register a domain name at *www.genealogyhosting.com* you get a free website so for the small yearly fee of a domain name, you can have a genealogy website and share your research with the world!

## Purpose of Domain Names

Domain names were invented to make it easier for humans to access websites. Underneath the covers, the internet uses a comprehensive numeric addressing scheme to route network traffic (e.g., messages sent from one computer to another such as to request and send a web page to a web browser). Domain names are used to form the human address of a computer on the internet which is translated into the actual numeric network address under the covers. For example, the human address of Margaret Schmidt's website is *www.schmidt14.org* and its network address is 64.202.189.182. The network addressing scheme is comprehensive because it applies world wide. The point is that it's much easier for us humans to remember that Margaret Schmidt's website is *www.schmidt14.org* rather than its actual network address of 64.202.189.182. Actually, a website is accessed by its URL (Uniform Resource Locator) which is based on the domain name. For example if we wanted to access Margaret's website, we would enter its URL of *http://www.schmidt14.org* which would then be translated to the corresponding network address.

### Registering a Domain Name

The technical term for ownership of a domain name is to "register" it. You obtain a domain name by registering it at a web hosting company such as

*www.genealogyhosting.com* and paying a small yearly fee.  Once you register your domain name,  you will own it and can continue to own it for the rest of your life, passing it down to your children and grandchildren just like any other asset.  As long as you continue to renew it by paying the small yearly fee, it's yours.  The yearly fee is a pittance compared to the value you receive from your domain name as you'll see in this article.  Also, at *www.genealogyhosting.com* you can register a domain name for up to 10 years to lock in today's price and you won't be bothered with the yearly renewal.

## Domain Name as Marketing Collateral

But a domain name is much more than a way to humanize a complex network address.  A domain name is what business consultants call "marketing collateral."  A domain name is equivalent to a brand name in the world of marketing.  It is the moniker for a product.  A brand name is very valuable because in the eyes of the public, it is the product.  When the public thinks of the brand name they think of the product and go buy the product and when they think of the product they think of the brand name and go buy the product.

In the same way as a commercial product,  the domain name of a genealogy website is the moniker for the genealogy product contained in the website.  When fellow genealogists see the domain name they know what's in it, both by the suggestive power of the name as well as being reminded of a previous visit to the website.  And the reverse is true:  when a genealogist wants to find out more about a specific genealogy topic, they will look for a suggestive domain name that looks like what they are after.  For example, if we wanted to know abut Schmidt genealogy we would use our search engine and search for "Schmidt genealogy".  On the search results page, we would see Margaret's website of *www.schmidt14.org*  and we would know it was pertinent just by its name.

# What if My Domain Name is not Available?

Notice that Margaret settled for the domain name "*schmidt14.org*."  This domain name is a bit of a compromise.  When she first tried to register "*schmidt.org*" it was already taken.  So she did the next best thing – she found an alternative that would convey the same meaning for her Schmidt family surname website.  She appended a serial number to "Schmidt" and tried that as a domain name.  She walked up the sequence of numbers (i.e., *schmidt1.org, schmidt2.org*, etc.) until she finally found a domain name that was available.

Okay, okay – this is a fictitious example.  Margaret is a fictitious character but this approach is a fool-proof way to obtain a popular surname domain name.  Usually one would not need to walk up all the way to the 14th serial number (i.e., *schmidt14.org*).  For example, *schmidt2.org* and *schmidt3.org* are available as of this writing.

This will be a common problem as the internet matures – the need to find alternative but meaningful domain names since all the obvious ones may already be taken.  The following lists the sequence that Margaret could have gone through to try and find a meaningful domain name for her Schmidt surname website, a name which says "this is

the place where Schmidt family genealogy is presented." We have arranged these in order of priority for conveying the meaning she wants:

## Other Last Nodes

Margaret would try to register various other last nodes besides "org such as "name," "info," "us," "net," "com," "biz":

- *schmidt.name*
- *schmidt.info*
- *schmidt.us*
- etc. (try all the other last nodes).

Note – the best last nodes for genealogy websites are "org," "name," "info," and "us." The other last nodes (i.e., "net," "com," "biz," etc.) imply a commercial purpose which may not be the message you want to send. However, they are perfectly valid and can be registered if available. In particular, the "com" last node is always desirable even for a genealogy website. The "com" last node has a special place in popular culture because it represents the internet. Also, it is by far the easiest to remember. Similarly, "org" has a special place in popular culture representing the non-profit side of the internet. It is ideal for genealogy websites and is fairly easy to remember.

## Serial Numbers

Next, she would try to register name variations that are distinguished by a serial number (this is the option Margaret selected).

- *schmidt1.org*
- *schmidt2 org*
- *schmidt3.org*
- etc. (keep going up until you find one available)

Margaret would also try the above with the various other last nodes (i.e. "name," "info," & "us.")

## Genealogy Purpose

Margaret would next try to register name variations that indicate a genealogy purpose:

- *SchmidtFamily.org*
- *SchmidtClan.org*
- *SchmidtGenealogy.org, SchmidtGen.org*
- *GenealogySchmidt.org, GenSchmidt.org*
- *SchmidtLine.org*
- *SchmidtName.org*
- *TheSchmidts.org*
- etc.

Margaret would also try the above with the various other last nodes (i.e. "name," "info," & "us.")

Note – domain names are <u>not</u> case sensitive and "SchmidtFamily.org" is the same as "schmidtfamily.org." But notice that "SchmidtFamily.org" is much easier to remember (i.e., compared to "schmidtfamily.org") and Margaret would use it when she tells people about her website to make it easier for them to remember its domain name.

## Genealogy Activity

She would then try to register name variations that indicate her genealogical activity:

- *SchmidtRoots.org*
- *SchmidtHunt.org*
- *SchmidtLocator.org*
- *SchmidtInfo.org*
- *SchmidtResearch.org*
- *SchmidtSearch.org*
- *SchmidtSurname.org, SurnameSchmidt.org*
- *SchmidtChase.org*
- *SchmidtQuest.org*
- *SchmidtProbe.org*
- *SchmidtStudy.org*
- etc.

Margaret would also try the above with the various other last nodes (i.e. "name," "info," & "us.")

## Web Terminology

She would then try to register name variations that use web terminology:

- *SchmidtWeb.org*
- *SchmidtSite.org*
- *SchmidtHome.org*
- *SchmidtNetwork.org*
- *SchmidtOnline.org*
- *SchmidtData.org*
- *SchmidtCyberSpace.org*
- *SchmidtHyperSpace.org*
- *SchmidtWWW.org*
- *SchmidtInfobahn.org*
- *eSchmidt.org*
- etc.

Margaret would also try the above with the various other last nodes (i.e. "name," "info," & "us.")

### Cool Sounding

She would try to register name variations that sound cool and are easy to remember:

- *SchmidtFusion.org*
- *SchmidtWorld.org*
- *VirtualSchmidt.org*
- *SchmidtUnion.org*
- *SchmidtRanch.org*
- etc.

Margaret would also try the above with the various other last nodes (i.e. "name," "info," & "us.")

### Dashes

She would try all of the above except insert a dash between words.  For example:

- *Schmidt-5.org*
- *Schmidt-Family.org*
- *Schmidt-Hunt.org*
- *Schmidt-Web.org*
- *Schmidt-Fusion.org*
- etc.

Margaret would also try the above with the various other last nodes (i.e. "name," "info," & "us.")

# Domain Name to Access a Free Website

You may be tempted to take advantage of one of the many free services available to genealogists to have a free genealogy website (although there would be no reason to since you will receive a free website from *www.genealogyhositing.com*  when you register a domain name).  The problem with these free services is that the website URL is complex and difficult to remember.  The importance of having your own domain name is that visitors can get to your website easily (which is the whole point of domain names).  With a free service such as Rootsweb.com, the URL of your website is of the form "*http://freepages.family.rootsweb.com/ ~familyname*" (i.e., difficult to remember) With your own domain name and website, your URL would be of the form "*http://www.familyname.org*" (i.e., easy to remember!)

With your own domain name, you can still use your existing free website service. To continue to use the old free website you've already set up, you can use domain forwarding.

> Note – we have included a detailed explanation of domain forwarding in the article "Domain Forwarding (Have your Cake and Eat it too" available on the *www.genealogyhosting.com* web site.

With domain forwarding, any messages sent to your new domain name URL will then be forwarded automatically to your old free website URL. In effect, your domain name is the public moniker of your free website.

For example, once domain forwarding is setup, then when a visitor enters "*http://www.familyname.org*" they will be forwarded to "*http://freepages.family.rootsweb.com/ ~ familyname* " in this example. In this way, your website will be known by the much better and easier to remember URL of *http://www. familyname.org.*
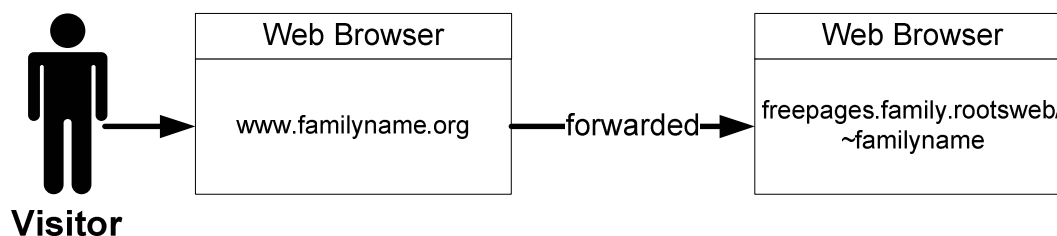


**Figure 1 - Domain Forwarding**

# Your E-Mail Address as Your Domain Name

A really useful feature of your domain name that you obtain from *www.genealogyhosting.com* is that it can serve as your genealogy e-mail address. In fact, your domain name can be your permanent e-mail address that you use for all your e-mail! No more e-mail chaos when you change ISPs (Internet service providers). If you did nothing else, this would make having your own domain name well worth it!

Here's how it works: When you register a domain name at *www.genealogyhosting.com,* you get a fully functioning e-mail account with it. For example, when Margaret Schmidt registers the domain name "*schmidt14.org*" for her Schmidt surname website, she can then set up an e-mail account using this domain name as her e-mail address, for example *margaret@schmidt14.org.*

The e-mail account can be configured to either forward to an existing e-mail account or be used as a full e-mail account. Email forwarding (not to be confused with domain forwarding discussed above) is a technique to continue using your old e-mail address while you convert to your new e-mail address over a period of time. For example, Margaret's current e-mail address is *margaret871@comcast.net.* She wants to continue using this e-mail address for a while because she doesn't have time right now to convert

to her new e-mail address associated with her domain name of
*Margaret@schmidt14.org*.

She can accomplish this easily with e-mail forwarding (Figure 2).  In this way, any e-mail message sent to *Margaret@schmidt14.org* will be forwarded to
*margaret871@comcast.net*.  Margaret would then continue processing her e-mail from
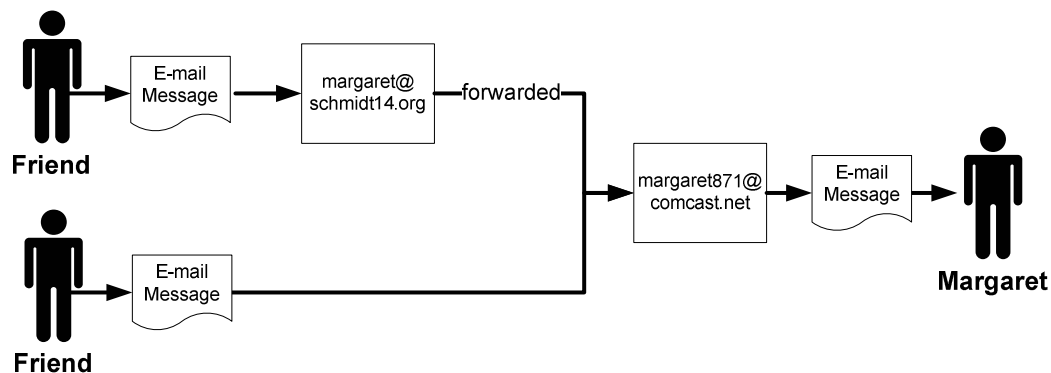her *margaret871@comcast.net* e-mail account.



**Figure 2 - E-Mail Forwarding**

The alternative to forwarding is to convert immediately to the new e-mail account.  Even though it's harder, this is the recommended way.  Margaret would tell all her friends her new e-mail address is *Margaret@schmidt14.org* as well as update any genealogy forums and message boards that have her old e-mail address.  Then she would process all her e-mail from her new account.  She would probably keep her old
*margaret871@comcast.net* e-mail account for a while but she would delete this account after a few weeks.

The important point is that either way (i.e., forwarding or full account), Margaret will have just the one public e-mail address of *margaret@schmidt14.org*.  In this way, when she gives others her e-mail address or she leaves it on genealogy forums, it will always be correct.

# Registering a Domain Name

It's very easy to register a domain name.

- Log on to your *www.genealogyhosting.com* Account Manager.

- Select "Domain Names" from the top (black) menu bar then select "Register Domains" on the pull-down menu..

- Enter a domain name in the text box then select the last node such as ".org," or ".info" and select "Search."

- This will display the availability of that domain name.  Notice that the availability of various other last nodes of the domain name as well as variations on the base domain name will be displayed.

- If you are interested in an international domain name, then click the "International Domains" tab.

- Select the "Smart Search" tab for suggestions on variations of the base domain name.

- Once you find a domain name that's available, then click it then click "CONTINUE" which will take you through the shopping cart sequence.

- Click through the shopping-cart offerings and select any additional services you desire (if any). Notice that there will be a lot of great offers from *www.genealogyhosting.com* during the check-out sequence.

- You will only commit to buy the domain name at the very end of the shopping cart sequence and only then when you enter a code imbedded in an image.

- A very important screen in the check-out sequence is the "Domain Registration Information" screen. This screen specifies the ownership of the domain name.