

Having created a web site, the first question that springs to mind should be “what’s next, what should I do now?” But usually it is forgotten. For this reason - there are plenty of web sites that are created and simply left without any effort to sustain them and upgrade its content. The effect of this is that there are thousands of web sites with out of date messages, text mistakes, old product prices, etc. Moreover, there are thousands of negative thoughts in visitors’ minds who notice this kind of internal negligence. This is where Joomla comes in...

What is Joomla?

Joomla is an award-winning content management system (CMS), which enables the building of web sites and powerful online applications. Many aspects, including its ease-of-use and extensibility, have made Joomla the most popular web site software available. Best of all, the Joomla software is an open source solution and is therefore free.

What is a Content Management System (CMS)?

A content management system is software that keeps track of every piece of content on a web site; much like a local public library keeps track of books and stores them. Content can be text, photos, music, video, documents, or just about anything. The possibilities are endless! A CMS can be used to easily manage every aspect of a web site, from adding content and images to updating a product catalog or taking online reservations. Once installed, configured, and running, it is simple for even non-technical users to add or edit content, update images, and to manage the critical data that makes a company or organisation go.

Anyone with basic word processing skills can easily learn to manage a CMS site. Via a simple, browser-based interface which easily enables adding news items, managing staff pages, product images, and creating an unlimited amount of sections or content pages on a site. It is not only a question of management. This is a way of being independent and having control of the site.

A CMS also takes care of a lot of "behind the scenes" work such as:

- Automatically generate navigation elements
- Making content searchable and indexable
- Keeping track of users, their permissions and security settings

There are a wide range of business benefits that can be obtained by implementing a CMS, including:

- streamlined authoring process
- faster turnaround time for new pages and changes
- greater consistency
- improved site navigation
- increased site flexibility
- increased security
- reduced duplication of information
- greater capacity for growth
- reduced site maintenance costs

What are some real world examples of what Joomla can do?

Joomla is used all over the world to power web sites of all shapes and sizes. For example:

- Corporate web sites or portals
- Corporate intranets and extranets
- Online magazines, newspapers, and publications
- E-commerce and online reservations
- Small business web sites
- Non-profit and organisational web sites
- Community-based portals
- School and church web sites
- Inventory control systems
- Complex business directories

Who uses Joomla?

Here are just a few examples of web sites that use Joomla:

- United Nations (Government organisation) - <http://www.unric.org>
- MTV Networks Quizilla (Social networking) - <http://www.quizilla.com>
- L.A. Weekly (Online publication) - <http://www.laweekly.com>
- IHOP (Restaurant chain) - <http://www.ihop.com>
- Harvard University (Educational) - <http://gsas.harvard.edu>
- Citibank (Financial institution intranet) - Not publicly accessible
- The Green Maven (Eco-resources) - <http://www.greenmaven.com>
- Outdoor Photographer (Magazine) - <http://www.outdoorphotographer.com>
- PlayShakespeare.com (Cultural) - <http://www.playshakespeare.com>
- Senso Interiors (Furniture design) - <http://www.sensointeriors.co.za>

More examples of companies using Joomla can be found in the [Joomla Site Showcase Forum](#).

CMS Core

Components

A Component is a major part of the overall functionality of the CMS. It is generally an application, or process, that enables content or information to be created and controlled. A Component sits on top of, but integrates closely with, the framework itself. Typical examples of the types of Component available within the core installation are:

- Content
- Banners
- Administration
- News Feed
- Front Page
- Web Links
- Menus

Some of these add functionality to a web site, whilst others, the administration panel. This list is by no means exhaustive as more than 40 Components are included on a standard installation. The output from Components that run in a web site can usually be found in the main content area of the displayed page. Those for the administration panel will generally be shown in the main content area of the Administrator workspace.

Modules

Modules are smaller elements within the structure, used to display retrieved database data, information items, or interactive features throughout a web site. There are two types of Module:

Site Modules - These are used to provide functionality for the web site.

Administrator Modules - These are used to provide functionality for the administration panel.

The main characteristics of Modules are determined by pre-established positions, set within the template. Each Module also has its own configurable settings. Examples of Modules that can be developed are Menus, Login forms, and Search forms. A number of core Modules are installed as standard.

CMS Core Features

Archived Content

Archived Content allows the positioning of a display of content items that have been archived by a publisher. The items are linked from a month/year directory list.

Banners

Banners are a means of advertising other web sites, events, or just pages within the current web site. They can be utilised for raising revenue by charging for the advertising space. The Banners are the graphics and hyperlinks to web sites, event display pages, or internal hyperlinked pages. The Clients are the individuals, organisations, or the current web site, for whom the Banner has been submitted and to whose web site or event the Banner links.

The Banner Manager allows management of banners ads by Categories and Clients. Each banner is managed individually with various parameters for essential information such as Impressions Purchased and Click URL. The Banner Manager shows the details for the current list of active (both Published and Unpublished) Banner graphics within the web site. It also provides access to add new or edit existing Banners and their details. Can be configured to display specific items on specific pages.

Breadcrumbs

Breadcrumbs are a navigation aid commonly used in web site visitor interfaces. The breadcrumbs give visitors a way to keep track of their location within a site.

Cache

The Cache provides page caching functionality. This reduces server load and lag. By caching the pages, new pages do not have to be generated as often; however, the benefits of caching require high traffic levels to be noticeable.

Contacts

A Contact is a specific named individual or group of individuals within a web site that a visitor can refer to. The details provided may be the real identity and information of a person or a dummy generic name such as Web Master, or Administrator, for example. The information and details that are presented to a visitor are customisable in the Contact Manager.

The Contact Manager allows the creation and management of a directory with regard to the Contacts within a web site. It shows a detailed list of active (published and unpublished) contacts.

Editors

The content editors are WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get) and are based on a standard word processing format. They allow for the creation of content items and editing descriptions among other tasks.

Email Cloaking

Email Cloaking adds a layer of security to email addresses contained inside content items and contacts using JavaScript to effectively hide the email address when an email address appears in the content to prevent spam.

Mass Mail

Mass Mail makes it possible to easily send an email to all registered users or users in a particular group from within the administration panel without having to start an external mail agent. It uses a basic text screen for the message and images to be entered into.

Most Read & Latest News

Both the Most Read and Latest News display a list of links to either the most read or the most recently added articles. Both are easily managed with parameters to limit the scope to certain sections and/or categories.

Newsfeeds

Newsfeeds allow the syndication of news, blogs and other online content, these are then collected and collated by the newsfeed reader - also known as an aggregator in 'tech' speak. This

all means that visitors can read news from any number of sites without actually having to visit the sites in question. This is an ideal facility for web sites to link to pages relating to the topic or theme of their site and so enhance the experience that their visitors will gain.

News Flash

The News Flash highlights content items from a chosen section or category.

Polls

Polls are a means of getting a sense of the opinion, which visitors have, on a particular topic, whether this is an important discussion topic or a trivial 'fun' topic.

The Poll Manager controls the creation, editing and order of new and existing Polls that are displayed within a site. It displays a list of all active (published or unpublished) Polls. Polls are easily managed with parameters such as Lag (time between votes) and Options for which visitors may vote.

Random Image

Displays a random image from the contents of a specific image folder.

Rating

Rating adds the functionality of a reader rating system to the content items. This is the sequence of five image objects that are "lit up" in accordance with the selections made by a visitor.

Related Items

Utilises the meta-data associated with each piece of content. The module will display content items with the same keywords, and therefore of a similar subject, giving the visitor added value to the amount of detail that is available.

Search

The Search facility provides the visitor with the ability to instantly perform a basic search from their current location and to be taken directly to the results.

The Search Manager provides statistics on searches performed using the Search, such as a simple lists containing Search Text compared to Times Requested and by default sorted by Times Requested.

Search Engine Friendly (SEF)

SEF adds Search Engine Friendly functionality to the URL links of content items and assists in driving more visitor traffic to the site via search engines.

Syndication - RSS

The Syndication Component creates newsfeeds of a site that other sites, or users, can link to in order to view what is happening on it. The information available is taken from the content published on the front page (home).

Weblinks

A Weblink is a URL to an external site but with an associated category for better organisation, a descriptive title rather than just the web site name, and a description and/or review of the web site to which it is directed. All of these elements are then displayed in a specified location.

Weblinks can be submitted by any registered user, but they can only be published to a web site by an Administrator in the administration panel. This ensures a level of monitoring that the submitted site is appropriate and in keeping with the overall objectives of the web site. It also allows a check to make sure it is properly categorised and that it contains a useful description of the target web site.

Weblinks can be created and edited utilising the Weblink Manager which controls how they are displayed. They have various parameters such as Target (e.g. New Window with Browser Navigation) and Description.

Who's Online

Who's Online provides a basic display of the number of guests (unregistered visitors) and how many members (registered web site visitors that are logged in) are connected at the time the web page was queried. It can be set to display the names of the members who are logged in.

Wrapper

The Wrapper wraps another web page directly into a web site at a specific location. It can be used to display another web site but also alternative pages from within the web site it is installed upon, as well as allowing completely independent applications and scripts to be run and output their displays/information as if an integral part.

CMS Extensions

Need extra features which are not available by default, then expand it with extensions. There are five types of extensions: Components, Modules, Plugins, Templates, and Languages. Each of these extensions handle specific functionality. Many extensions improve on core features whilst others add completely new functionality. A sample of what is available include:

- Ecommerce software
- Job database
- Forum software
- Property database
- Various image and multimedia galleries
- Image effects such as reflections and lightbox
- Classified ads database
- Dynamically generated web site maps
- Social bookmarking
- Mapping
- System backup
- Database administration
- Newsletter components
- Weather service
- Hotel/holiday property reservation manager

- Event calendars
- Blogging software
- Wiki functionality

Furthermore, to add a specific functionality or features, bespoke extensions can be developed.

SEO (Search Engine Optimisation)

1. What is SEO, and why is it needed?

SEO is the practice of configuring, developing and maintaining a web site with the idea of visitors finding a web site through search engines. SEO does not JUST improve search engine rankings, it also make a site easier to navigate, more accessible, and more appealing to visitors.

2. CMS SEO Shortcomings

A dynamic content management system has a handful of inherent deficiencies regarding search engine optimisation. The most significant concept is that content is stored inside a database rather than residing on a server and accessible to search engines for indexing. Without going deep into how search engines work, assume that the more popular search engines such as Google and MSN do not fully understand a CMS site without a little help.

The most noticeable SEO hurdle would be the lack of search engine friendly URLs (web site address), or SEF URLs for short. A default CMS installation will result in URLs which look like:

http://www.mysite.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=3&Itemid=1

Let's forget about search engines for a moment and realise that this URL says nothing about the content it is linking to. Relatively speaking, it is safe to say that if a human cannot understand a link, a search engine cannot either.

<http://www.mysite.com/videos/flying-squirrels.html>

Much friendlier, no contest. Now both the visitor and the search engines understand the URL.

3. CMS SEO Components

Additional SEO components provide a means to translate not-so-friendly URLs. A well structured and optimised web site will typically rank better in search engines, and improve the overall quality of a CMS site.