

Wicked Wordpress Themes

Martin and Jorga Riggengbach

-Jorga -

This Sitepoint book arrived all bright and shiny and I didn't have a clue what *Wordpress* was. My son is a Web professional, so I figured with backup like that, it would be worthwhile to go ahead and learn the product while simultaneously reviewing it. You know what they say about that famous road being paved with good intentions.

I started out by visiting the *Wordpress* site and downloading the code and the program. There is fabulous online support which augurs well for a program that is all about online. "*WordPress* is well known for its ease of installation. Under most circumstances installing *WordPress* is a very simple process and takes less than five minutes to complete." That was encouraging, but the "under most circumstances" disclaimer gave me a moment of pause.

So, at this point you may be asking, "What exactly is *Wordpress*?"

"*WordPress* is an open source Content Management System (CMS), often used as a blog publishing application, powered by PHP and MySQL. It has many features including a plug-in architecture and



a template system. Used by over 12% of the 1,000,000 biggest websites, *WordPress* is the most popular CMS in use today."

"It was first released on May 27, 2003, by Matt Mullenweg as a fork of b2/cafelog. As of August 2010, version 3.0 had been downloaded

over 12.5 million times. Matt Mullenweg and Mike Little were co-founders of the project.

"The core contributing developers include Ryan Boren, Mark Jaquith, Matt Mullenweg, Andrew Ozz, and Peter Westwood. *WordPress* is also developed by its community, including WP testers, a group of volunteers who test each release. They have early access to nightly builds, beta versions and release candidates.

"Errors are documented in a special mailing list, or the project's Trac tool. Though largely developed by the community surrounding it, *WordPress* is closely associated with Automattic, the company founded by Matt Mullenweg."

I must confess that I am not a blogger and I don't "get" *WordPress*. Yeah, yeah, I could beat around the bush and try to fake it through this review but I didn't. Instead, I proposed a deal to my son, Martin. If he would read the book and set up a blog, I'd finance the venture. So, for the cost of registering a domain name, we were off and running. Martin will explain what he did, how he did it and what he thinks of the book.

-Martin-

I work with a large scale CMS based website daily that I helped design and build, so going into this book I didn't expect to learn much. I knew *WordPress* existed and was used for blogs. Frankly, I didn't think it would have the power and customization to be interesting to me. I have to say, after a little research into *WordPress*, I became a bit more interested in the book.

This book (hence forth called WWT) is not for someone who has never worked on a website. If you have no idea what CSS and PHP are, you should stop and do some research first.

If, on the other hand, you are at least versed with HTML, CSS and have a basic knowledge programing simple loops and such, this book should be useful.



Also, some background in graphic design would be helpful because templates are the visual aspect of the CMS based website. IF you have all of this already tucked neatly in your toolbox, then WWT seems like a good introduction to CMS based web design.

The core principle of CMS based websites is the separation of design and content. A blog is very much a reflection of this idea. When you create a blog post you just create the copy, you don't create a new

page as was once common in HTML based web design. Also, you don't have to use an external program like Dreamweaver to create code, you use web based tools that are integrated into the CMS you are using. This mean you can create new content for your sites almost anywhere as long as you have an Internet connection.

This book was not written as an introduction to *WordPress*. Its purpose is to help people create themes. A theme is basically the design side of a CMS based website. It determines how the site looks and is largely independent of the copy. The book claims that you should be able to sell your themes, assuming you are making them without a specific site in mind. I have not attempted this so I can not comment on its viability as an income source. I may give it a shot later.

WWT does do a solid job explaining the concept of templates though and that information is pertinent to the creation of any CMS based website. It is very image heavy and personally I like this approach. The code snippets seem useful and even though the book does not come with a CD all the code provided is available on a supplementary website.

WWT seems to do a good job and I am currently using it as base to create a *WordPress* site which you can follow at MyBeerBlog.com. I am not as interested in selling my themes as I am in having another CMS under my belt for potential clients. All things being equal I would recommend WWT

to folks who have a firm understanding of web development and design but have not yet taken the leap into CMS based web design.

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