Building a Student Organization Web Site

Wordpress (http://www.wordpress.com) is a free service that allows a user to set up a blog or Web site with very minimal knowledge of how Web sites work. There are many similar services out there, but what sets Wordpress apart is its ability to create "pages" independent of blog entries, which allow you to make a more full-featured Web site not reliant on the blog format.

Example Web Site
http://thdexample.wordpress.com

Using the Dashboard
Once you create an account on Wordpress, you have access to the **Dashboard**. You can use it to add posts to your blog section, add images and other media, add and edit your pages and links, or change the appearance of your site. Below are some key sections:

- **Posts:** You can create new blog posts here. Blog posts, or news posts as you might prefer to call them, are a good idea to keep your visitors in the loop about what you're up to. They are easy to add and convey your personality and passion about what you're doing.

- **Links:** Use links to link to reviews, other relevant Web sites, and other places you might want to use to network yourself around the Web. Wordpresses uses "categories" to better organize links, so make sure each link is in the right category.

- **Pages:** Pages are exactly that: static pages for your site that are always available for users to access. Every page on your Wordpress site will be able to access every other page, so pages are where you put information that you want to be consistently available.

  Note that you can give certain pages "parent" pages, which means that they only appear "under" another page. This is good for when a page serves as a category and you want related pages to fit within that category. (See **Acting** & **Acting Video** in the example: http://thdexample.wordpress.com/acting/

- **Appearance:** This is where you edit the visual theme and layout options of your site.
    o **Theme:** The recommend theme, for its flexibility, is **iNove**. iNove is recommended because it looks pretty while offering a very robust set of options. You can choose from a variety of free themes, but some might not allow you to do the things you need your Web site to do.
    o **Widgets:** Widgets are items that you can insert on the sidebar that appear on all of your pages. You can simply drag the widgets you want into the sidebar area on the right. Once they are there, you can click on the "down" arrow next to the name to edit their settings/content.

      Important widgets are:
        ▪ **Text:** This will let you insert an image of your headshot, or add introductory text that will appear on every page. To insert your headshot:
            1. Upload the headshot using the **Media** button on the dashboard.
            2. Once you have uploaded it, copy the information from the **File URL** box, then click **Save all Changes**
            3. Go back to the Text Widget and type in the following exactly:
               <img src="">
            4. Paste the file URL you copied from the image you just uploaded between the quotation marks and click **Save.**
            5. It should look similar to:
               <img src="http://thomasthecat.files.wordpress.com/2009/09/ferris.jpg?w=238">
        ▪ **Links:** This will share your most important links by category. You can administer these links through the **Links** button on the dashboard.

- ▪ **Twitter:** If you have a twitter account you can automatically import your tweets to the sidebar of your Web site using this.
    - o **iNove Theme Options:** Here you can edit options specific to your theme. The "Notice" box allows you to display a static welcome message before your blog entries, which is a nice way to help introduce yourself before people read about what you have been up to. Make sure that "This notice bar will display at the top of posts on homepage" box is checked!

- **Settings:** Here you can edit the title, tagline, e-mail address and other features of your site.

NOTE: The default "free" account user does not allow you to upload audio files or video files directly to your site. If you are willing and able to spend money on your Web site check the **Upgrades** button on the Dashboard to learn more about paid extensions to your Wordpress site.

External Resources
You will need a variety of resources to make the most of your promotional Web site. Here is a list of some things you might find useful (all free.)

- **Ning:** http://www.ning.com
  Ning is an alternative to Wordpress with robust social networking features.

- **Google Calendar:** http://www.google.com/calendar
  A free calendar system that lets you manage your schedule and share it with other people. You can link directly to your calendar from your Web site. For example:
  http://thdexample.wordpress.com/calendar/

- **CutePDF:** http://download.cnet.com/, search "**CutePDF**"
  When you post documents to your Web site, it is usually best to post them as PDF files; not everyone uses Word, but most people have a PDF Reader installed. Download and install CutePDF to turn your word docs to PDFs.

- **Paint.net:** http://paint.net/
  You might need to crop or resize your images to get them to fit onto your Web site. Paint.net is a free program that will help you do that.

- **YouTube:** http://www.youtube.com
  YouTube is a good option for uploading videos for free to your site. You can use Wordpress' built-in embed feature to place your YouTube video on any of your pages or blog entries once it has been uploaded..

  To edit the video before you upload it, you can use iMovie if you own a Mac or Windows Movie Maker if you own a PC. One of these programs should have come pre-installed on your computer.

Basic HTML Cheat Sheet

Wordpress has a built-in editor that works a lot like Microsoft Word; you can type and format your text using familiar buttons to make formatting changes.

Despite this handy feature, there are some areas, like the **Widgets** and **Photo Captions** where you will need to know some basic code to get the most from your site.

HTML code works on a principle of "open" and "close" tags. These tags act like containers, which means they "wrap" everything between them and define whatever is between them with the formatting or function specified by the tag.

For example, to bold something, you use the tag "strong". In the language it looks like: This text is bolded, which reads on a page: **This text is bolded**.

You should ALWAYS have a close tag to define exactly how much information is formatted by the tag. A close tag is the same as the open tag with a forward slash at the beginning; in the previous example: .

Here are some tags to be familiar with:

Bold - Bold
Italics - Italics

Making a Link
Making a link is a bit more complex. The link tag (also called an anchor) looks like this:

The link uses the complete URL of a Web site (otherwise known as its address) to link to that site. For example:

Southeast Missouri State University

Yields: [Southeast Missouri State University](http://www.semo.edu/)

The entire address, starting with the http://, goes between the quotes after "href". The name you want people to be able to click on to access the link, in this case "Southeast Missouri State University", goes between the and the close tag .

Linking Directly to an Image or PDF File
You can use this method to link to other Web sites, pages on your own site, or even directly to images and PDF files that you have uploaded. This allows you to share your résumé or headshots with visitors easily.

Simply access your **Media Library** from the Wordpress Dashboard and click on the name of what you want to link to.

In the new screen you will see a box that says **File URL**. Copy the entire contents of that box and place it in the quotes behind href in the link you are making. Then place the name of the file as you wish users to see it between the and tags and users will go directly to that image or document.

Other References and Resources

Domain Name (Optional)
A domain name is the main aspect of the URL address a Web site has. Your site on Wordpress will likely have something along the lines of johnsmith.wordpress.com. The last item there, "wordpress.com," is the domain name. "abcorg." Is the sub-domain.

While abcorg.wordpress.com isn't hard to remember, it isn't as professional as www.southeast_abcorg.com. Many people with a Wordpress site will buy a domain name that is catchy or easy to remember, like their name, and ask the company they bought the domain from to set up an automatic forward from their catchy domain name to their Wordpress site.

This is the easiest way to own www.southeast_abcorg.com while still having the advantages of running your site through Wordpress. Domain costs vary, and there are many vendors you can use. Usually domain ownership plans must be renewed at least once a year at a regular fee. Here are a couple of trusted Domain Name vendors:

- o http://www.dreamhost.com/
- o http://www.godaddy.com/

Remember that if you register a domain name you will need to pay a yearly fee under most registration plans, so plan your organization funds accordingly.

Building a Site from Scratch – (For the Curious)
By no means is Wordpress the be-all end-all of Web site building, but it is one of the easiest to learn and best options that you can get for free.

If you want to learn how to build a Web site from scratch, there are a wide variety of resources available.

Hosting Space
If you build your own Web site, Information Technology will provide hosting space for you provided that your charter is on record with Campus Life. Contact Robert Lewis (relewis@semo.edu) once your site is built and he will work with you to bring it online.

HTML & Web Technologies
If you're curious about learning more on how to build your own Web site from scratch, you can start here: http://www.w3schools.com. This site offers one of the most comprehensive collections of introductory tutorials. The most relevant tutorials for your Web site will be:
- **HTML** - http://www.w3schools.com/html/
- **CSS** - http://www.w3schools.com/css/

Other Software Resources
- **Notepad ++** - http://notepad-plus.sourceforge.net/
  This notepad software makes it easy to view and edit the HTML code that makes up a Web page.
- **Filezilla -** http://filezilla-project.org/
  This software allows you to upload and download files to and from your Web site easily.
- **Mozilla Firefox -** http://www.mozilla.com/
  Consider downloading Firefox as your Web browser, as it allows you to integrate several features that make it easier to build Web sites.