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Lisa Sabin-Wilson

WordPress®

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3rd Edition

by Lisa Sabin-Wilson

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Introduction

WordPress is the most popular online content management software on the planet. Between the hosted service at WordPress.com and the self-hosted software available at WordPress.org, millions of bloggers use WordPress, and to date, WordPress powers 25 percent of the Internet. That's impressive. With WordPress, you can truly tailor a website to your own tastes and needs.

With no cost for using the benefits of the WordPress platform to publish content on the web, WordPress is as priceless as it is free. WordPress makes writing, editing, and publishing content on the Internet a delightful, fun, and relatively painless experience, whether you're a publisher, a designer, a developer, or a hobbyist blogger.

About This Book

The fact that WordPress is free and accessible to all, however, doesn't make it inherently easy for everyone to use. For some people, the technologies, terminology, and coding practices are a little intimidating or downright daunting. *WordPress All-in-One For Dummies,* 3rd Edition, eliminates any intimidation about using WordPress. With a little research, knowledge, and time, you'll soon have a blog that suits your needs and gives your readers an exciting experience that keeps them coming back for more.

WordPress All-in-One For Dummies is a complete guide to WordPress that covers the basics: installing and configuring the software, using the Dashboard, publishing content, creating themes, and developing plugins. Additionally, this book provides advanced information about security, the WordPress tools, the Multisite features, and search engine optimization.

Foolish Assumptions

I make some inescapable assumptions about you and your knowledge, including the following:

- You're comfortable using a computer, mouse, and keyboard.
- You have a good understanding of how to access the Internet, use email, and use a web browser to access web pages.
- You have a basic understanding of what a website is; perhaps you already maintain your own.
- You want to use WordPress for your online publishing, or you want to use the various WordPress features to improve your online publishing.

If you consider yourself to be an advanced user of WordPress, or if your friends refer to you as an all-knowing WordPress guru, chances are good that you'll find some of the information in this book elementary. This book is for beginner, intermediate, and advanced users; there's something here for everyone.

Icons Used in This Book

The little pictures in the margins of the book emphasize a point to remember, a danger to be aware of, or information that you may find helpful. This book uses the following icons:

TIP

Tips are little bits of information that you may find useful — procedures that aren't necessarily obvious to a casual user or beginner.

WARNING

When your mother warned you, "Don't touch that pan — it's hot!" but you touched it anyway, you discovered the meaning of "Ouch!" I use this icon for situations like that one. You may very well touch the hot pan, but you can't say that I didn't warn you!

TECHNICAL STUFF

All geeky stuff goes here. I use this icon when talking about technical information. You can skip it, but I think that you'll find some great nuggets of information next to these icons. You may even surprise yourself by enjoying them. Be careful — you may turn into a geek overnight!

REMEMBER

When you see this icon, brand the text next to it into your brain so that you remember whatever it was that I thought you should remember.

Beyond the Book

On the web, you can find some extra content that's not in this book. Go online to find

- The Cheat Sheet for this book is at `www.dummies.com/cheatsheet`. In the Search field, type **WordPress All-in-One For Dummies Cheat Sheet** to find the Cheat Sheet for this book.
- Updates to this book, if any, are at `www.dummies.com`. Search for the book's title to find the associated updates.

Where to Go from Here

From here, you can go anywhere you please! *WordPress All-in-One For Dummies* is designed so that you can read any or all of the minibooks between the front and back covers, depending on what topics interest you.

Book 1 is a great place to get a good introduction to the world of WordPress if you've never used it before and want to find out more. Book 2 gives you insight into the programming techniques and terminology involved in running a WordPress website — information that's extremely helpful when you move forward to the other minibooks.

Above all else, have fun with the information contained within these pages! Read the minibooks on topics you think you already know; you might just come across something new. Then dig into the minibooks on topics that you want to know more about.

1 WordPress Basics

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IN THIS CHAPTER

- Discovering content publishing
- Publishing and archiving content
- Interacting through comments
- Syndicating through RSS
- Using WordPress as a content management tool to create different types of sites

Chapter 1
Exploring Basic WordPress Concepts

Blogging provides regular, nontechnical Internet users the ability to publish content on the World Wide Web quickly and easily. Consequently, blogging became extremely popular very quickly, to the point that it's now considered mainstream. In some circles, blogging is even considered passé, as it has given way to publishing all different types of content freely, and easily, using WordPress. Regular Internet users are blogging, and Fortune 500 businesses, news organizations, and educational institutions are using WordPress to publish content on the web. Today, approximately one in four websites is powered by WordPress. That is, roughly, 25 percent of all sites on the web have WordPress behind them.

Although you can choose among several software platforms for publishing web content, for many content publishers, WordPress has the best combination of options. WordPress is unique in that it offers a variety of ways to run your website. WordPress successfully emerged as a favored blogging platform and expanded to a full-featured content management system (CMS) that includes all the tools and features you need to publish an entire website on your own without requiring a whole lot of technical expertise or understanding.

In this chapter, I introduce you to such content basics such as publishing and archiving content, interacting with readers through comments, and providing

ways for readers to have access to your content through social media syndication, or RSS technologies. This chapter also helps you sort the differences between a blog and a website, and introduces how WordPress, as a CMS, can help you build an entire website. Finally, I show you some websites that you can build with the WordPress platform.

Discovering Blogging

A blog is a fabulous tool for publishing your diary of thoughts and ideas; however, blogs also serve as excellent tools for business, editorial journalism, news, and entertainment. Here are some ways that people use blogs:

- **Personal:** You're considered to be a personal blogger if you use your blog mainly to discuss topics related to you or your life: your family, your cats, your children, or your interests (such as technology, politics, sports, art, or photography). My business partner, Brad Williams, maintains a personal blog at `http://strangework.com`.
- **Business:** Blogs are very effective tools for promotion and marketing, and business blogs usually offer helpful information to readers and consumers, such as sales events and product reviews. Business blogs also let readers provide feedback and ideas, which can help a company improve its services. A good example of a business blog is the Discovery Channel corporate blog, at `https://corporate.discovery.com/blog/`.
- **Media/journalism:** Popular news outlets, such as Fox News, MSNBC, and CNN, are using blogs on their websites to provide information on current events, politics, and news on regional, national, and international levels. *Variety* magazine hosts its entire website on WordPress at `http://variety.com`.
- **Government:** Governments use blogs to post news and updates to the web quickly and to integrate social media tools as a means to interact with their citizens and representatives. openNASA (`https://open.nasa.gov`) is the official site of NASA's open data initiative, which was built to provide transparency of data to benefit society and humankind. (See Figure 1-1.) NASA staff members provide content by way of blog posts, photos, and videos, and they integrate feeds from their Twitter and Facebook accounts.
- **Citizen journalism:** Citizens are using blogs with the intention of keeping the media and politicians in check by fact-checking news stories and exposing inconsistencies. Major cable news programs interview many of these bloggers because the mainstream media recognize the importance of the citizen voice that's emerging via blogs. An example of citizen journalism is Power Line at `www.powerlineblog.com`.

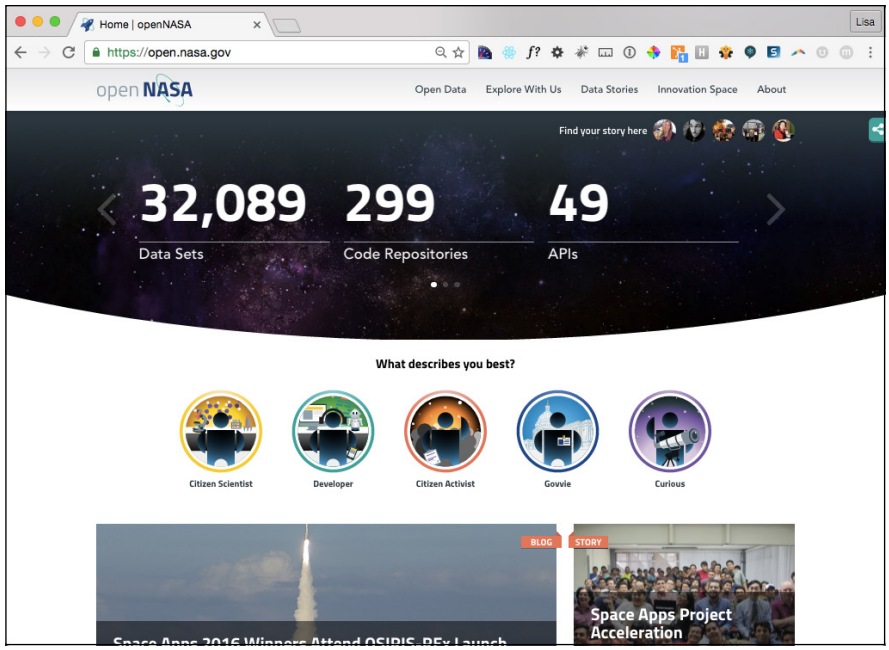

FIGURE 1-1: openNASA, the official website of NASA's open data initiative.

» **Professional:** Professional blogs typically generate revenue and provide a source of monetary income for the owner through avenues such as advertising or paid membership subscriptions. Check out Darren Rowse's ProBlogger blog at `www.problogger.net`. Darren is considered to be the grandfather of all professional bloggers.

The websites and blogs I provide in this list run on the WordPress platform. A wide variety of organizations and individuals choose WordPress to run their blogs and websites because of its popularity, ease of use, and the large and active development community.

Understanding WordPress Technologies

The WordPress software is a personal publishing system that uses a PHP-and-MySQL platform, which provides you everything you need to create your blog and publish your content dynamically without having to program the pages yourself. In short, with this platform, all your content is stored in a MySQL database in your hosting account.

TECHNICAL STUFF

PHP (which stands for *PHP Hypertext Preprocessor*) is a server-side scripting language for creating dynamic web pages. When a visitor opens a page built in PHP, the server processes the PHP commands and then sends the results to the visitor's browser. MySQL is an open-source relational database management system (RDBMS) that uses Structured Query Language (SQL), the most popular language for adding, accessing, and processing data in a database. If all that sounds like Greek to you, think of MySQL as being a big filing cabinet where all the content on your blog is stored.

REMEMBER

Keep in mind that PHP and MySQL are the technologies that the WordPress software is built on, but that doesn't mean you need experience in these languages to use it. Anyone with any level of experience can easily use WordPress without knowing anything about PHP or MySQL.

Every time a visitor goes to your website to read your content, she makes a request that's sent to your server. The PHP programming language receives that request, obtains the requested information from the MySQL database, and then presents the requested information to your visitor through her web browser.

TIP

Book 2, Chapter 1 gives you more in-depth information about the PHP and MySQL requirements you need to run WordPress. Book 2, Chapter 3 introduces you to the basics of PHP and MySQL and provides information about how they work together with WordPress to create your blog or website.

Archiving your publishing history

Content, as it applies to the data that's stored in the MySQL database, refers to your websites posts, pages, comments, and options that you set up in the WordPress Dashboard or the control/administration panel of the WordPress software, where you manage your site settings and content (see Book 3, Chapter 2).

WordPress maintains chronological and categorized archives of your publishing history automatically. This archiving process happens with every post you publish to your blog. WordPress uses PHP and MySQL technology to organize what you publish so that you and your readers can access the information by date, category, author, tag, and so on. When you publish content on your WordPress site, you can file a post in any category you specify — a nifty archiving system that allows you and your readers to find posts in specific categories. The archives page of my business partner's blog (`http://strangework.com/archives`), for example, contains a Category section, where you find a list of categories he created for his blog posts. Clicking the Personal link below the Categories heading takes you to a listing of posts on that topic. (See Figure 1-2.)

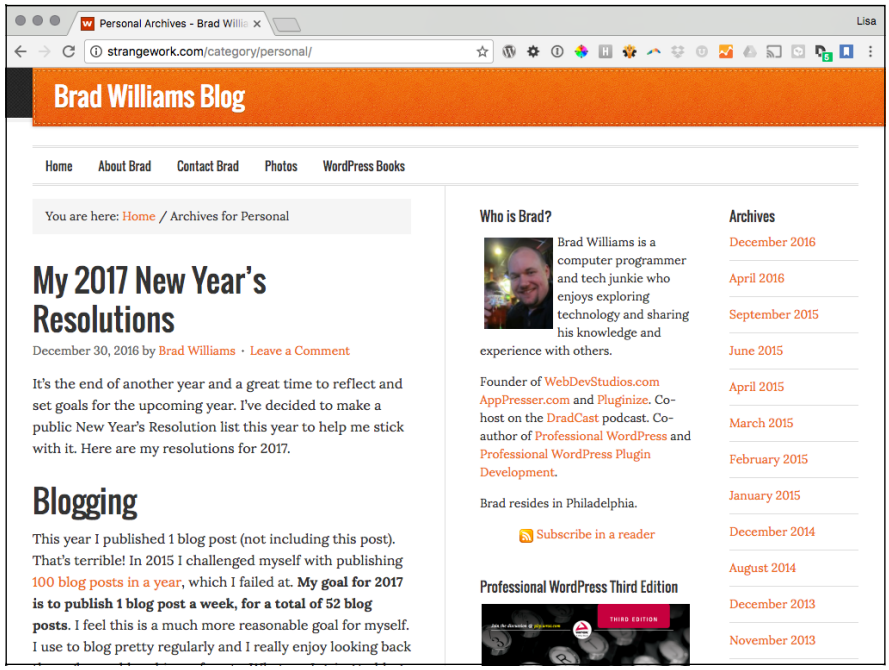

FIGURE 1-2: A page with posts in the Personal category.

WordPress lets you create as many categories as you want for filing your content. Some sites have just one category, and others have up to 1,800 categories. When it comes to organizing your content, WordPress is all about personal preference. On the other hand, using WordPress categories is your choice. You don't have to use the category feature if you'd rather not.

TIP

When you look for a hosting service, keep an eye out for hosts that provide daily backups of your site so that your content won't be lost if a hard drive fails or someone makes a foolish mistake. Web hosting providers that offer daily backups as part of their services can save the day by restoring your site to a previous form.

REMEMBER

The theme (design) you choose for your site — whether it's the default theme, one that you create, or one that you custom-design — isn't part of the content. Those files are part of the file system and aren't stored in the database. Therefore, it's a good idea to create a backup of any theme files you're using. See Book 6 for further information on WordPress theme management.

Interacting with your readers through comments

An exciting aspect of publishing content with WordPress is receiving feedback from your readers after you publish to your site. Receiving feedback, or *comments*, is akin to having a guestbook on your site. People can leave notes for you that publish to your site, and you can respond and engage your readers in conversation. (See Figure 1-3.) These notes can expand the thoughts and ideas you present in your content by giving your readers the opportunity to add their two cents' worth.

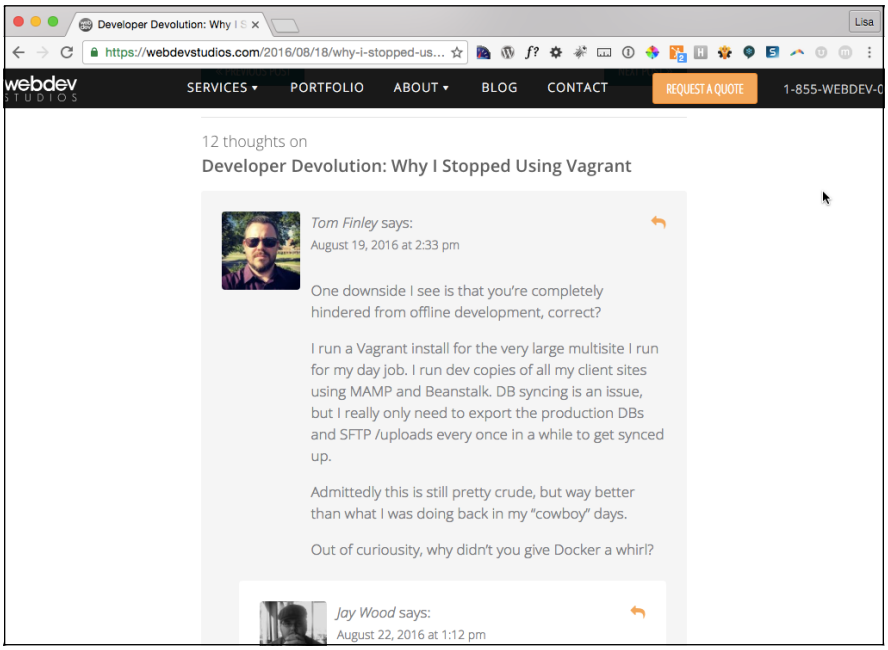

FIGURE 1-3: Blog comments and responses.

REMEMBER

The WordPress Dashboard gives you full administrative control over who can leave comments. Additionally, if someone leaves a comment with questionable content, you can edit the comment or delete it. You're also free to not allow comments on your site at all. (See Book 3, Chapter 4 for more information.)

Feeding your readers

RSS stands for *Really Simple Syndication*. An *RSS feed* is a standard feature that blog readers have come to expect. So what is RSS, really?

RSS is written to the web server in XML (Extensible Markup Language) as a small, compact file that can be read by RSS readers (as I outline in Table 1-1). Think of

an RSS feed as a syndicated, or distributable, autoupdating "What's New" list for your website.

Tools like feed readers and email newsletter services can use the RSS feed from your website to consume the data and aggregate it into a syndicated list of content published on your website. Website owners allow RSS to be published to allow these tools to consume and then distribute the data in an effort to expand the reach of their publications.

Table 1-1 lists some popular tools that use RSS feeds to distribute content from websites.

TABLE 1-1 Popular RSS Feed Readers

Reader	Source	Description
Feedly	`http://feedly.com`	RSS aggregator for websites that publish an RSS feed. It compiles published stories from various user-chosen sources and allows the Feedly user to organize the stories and share the content with others.
MailChimp	`https://mailchimp.com`	MailChimp is an email newsletter service. It has an RSS-to-email service that enables you to send your recently published content to your readers via an email subscription service.
dlvr.it	`https://dlvrit.com/`	Use RSS to auto-post to Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, and other social media sites.

For your readers to stay up-to-date with the latest and greatest content you post, they can subscribe to your RSS feed. WordPress RSS feeds are *autodiscovered* by the various feed readers. The reader needs only to enter your site's URL, and the program automatically finds your RSS feed.

WordPress has RSS feeds in several formats. Because the feeds are built into the software platform, you don't need to do anything to provide your readers an RSS feed of your content.

Tracking back

The best way to understand *trackbacks* is to think of them as comments, except for one thing: Trackbacks are comments left on your site by other sites, not people. Sounds perfectly reasonable, doesn't it? After all, why wouldn't inanimate objects want to participate in your discussion?

Actually, maybe it's not so crazy after all. A trackback happens when you make a post on your site, and within the content of that post, you provide a link to a post made by another author on a different site. When you publish that post, your site sends a sort of electronic memo to the site you linked to. That site receives the memo and posts an acknowledgment of receipt in the form of a comment to the post that you linked to on the site. The information contained within the trackback includes a link back to the post on your site that contains the link to the other site — along with the date and time, as well as a short excerpt of your post. Trackbacks are displayed within the comments section of the individual posts.

The memo is sent via a *network ping* (a tool used to test, or verify, whether a link is reachable across the Internet) from your site to the site you link to. This process works as long as both sites support trackback protocol. Almost all major CMSes support the trackback protocol.

REMEMBER

Sending a trackback to a site is a nice way of telling the author that you like the information she presented in her post. Most authors appreciate trackbacks to their posts from other content publishers.

Dealing with comment and trackback spam

The absolute bane of publishing content on the Internet is comment and trackback spam. Ugh. When blogging became the "it" thing on the Internet, spammers saw an opportunity. If you've ever received spam in your email program, you know what I mean. For content publishers, the concept is similar and just as frustrating.

Spammers fill content with open comments with their links but not with any relevant conversation or interaction in the comments. The reason is simple: Websites receive higher rankings in the major search engines if they have multiple links coming in from other sites. Enter software, like WordPress, with comment and trackback technologies, and these sites become prime breeding ground for millions of spammers.

Because comments and trackbacks are published to your site publicly — and usually with a link to the commenter's website — spammers got their site links posted on millions of sites by creating programs that automatically seek websites with open commenting systems and then hammer those systems with tons of comments that contain links back to their sites.

No one likes spam. Therefore, developers of CMSes, such as WordPress, spend untold hours in the name of stopping these spammers in their tracks, and for the most part, they've been successful. Occasionally, however, spammers sneak through. Many spammers are offensive, and all of them are frustrating because they don't contribute to the conversations that occur on the websites where they publish their spam comments.

All WordPress systems have one important thing in common: Akismet, which kills spam dead. Akismet is a WordPress plugin brought to you by Automattic, the creator of the WordPress.com service. I cover the Akismet plugin, and comment spam in general, in Book 3, Chapter 4.

Using WordPress as a Content Management System

A *content management system* (CMS) is a platform that lets you run a full website on your domain. This means that WordPress enables you to create and publish all kinds of content on your site, including pages, blog posts, e-commerce pages for selling products, videos, audio files, events, and more.

A *blog* is a chronological display of content — most often, written by the blog author. The posts are published and, usually, categorized into topics and archived by date. Blog posts can have comments activated so that readers can leave their feedback and the author can respond, creating a dialogue about the blog post.

A *website* is a collection of published pages with different sections that offer the visitor different experiences. A website can incorporate a blog but usually contains other sections and features. These other features include

- **Photo galleries:** Albums of photos uploaded and collected in a specific area so that visitors can browse through and comment on them
- **E-commerce stores:** Fully integrated shopping area into which you can upload products for sale and from which your visitors can purchase them
- **Discussion forums:** Where visitors can join, create discussion threads, and respond to one another in specific threads of conversation
- **Social communities:** Where visitors can become members, create profiles, become friends with other members, create groups, and aggregate community activity
- **Portfolios:** Sections where photographers, artists, or web designers display their work
- **Feedback forms:** Contact forms that your visitors fill out with information that then gets emailed to you directly
- **Static pages (such as Bio, FAQ, or Services):** Pages that don't change as often as blog pages, which change each time you publish a new post

The preceding list isn't exhaustive; it's just a listing of some of the most common website sections.

Figure 1-4 shows what the front page of my business blog looked like at the time of this writing. Visit `https://webdevstudios.com/blog` to see that the site displays a chronological listing of the most recent blog posts.

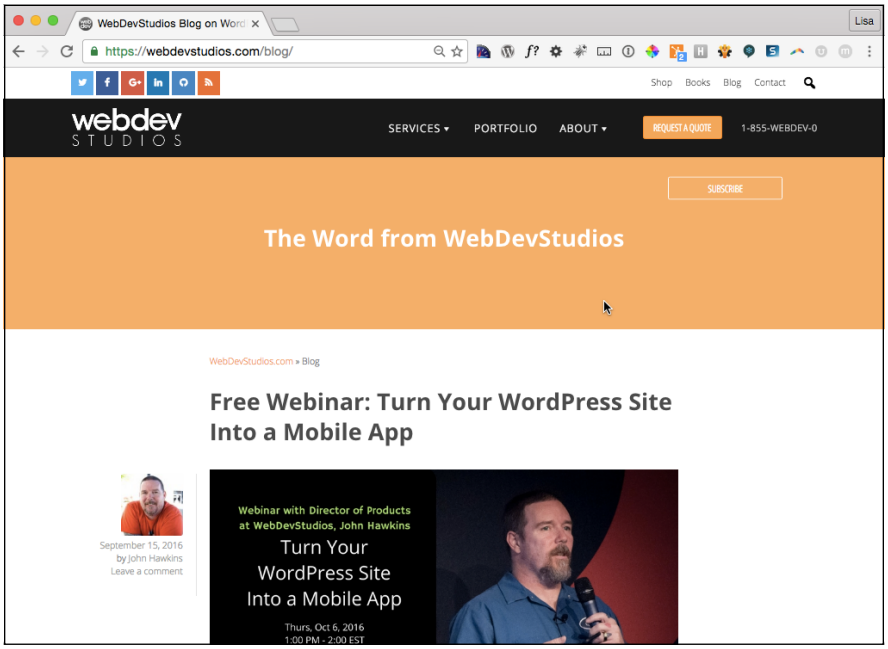

FIGURE 1-4: Visit my business blog at `http://webdevstudios.com/blog` to see an example of a chronological listing of blog posts.

My business website at `https://webdevstudios.com` also uses WordPress. This full site includes a static front page of information that acts as a portal to the rest of the site, on which you can find a blog; a portfolio of work; a contact form; and various landing pages, including service pages that outline information about the different services we offer (`https://webdevstudios.com/services`). Check out Figure 1-5 for a look at this website; it's quite different from the blog section of the site.

FIGURE 1-5: My business website uses WordPress as a CMS.

Using WordPress as a CMS means that you're creating more than just a blog; you're creating an entire website full of sections and features that offer different experiences for your visitors.

IN THIS CHAPTER

- Exploring open-source concepts
- Discovering examples of open-source projects
- Understanding WordPress licensing
- Applying WordPress licensing

Chapter 2

Exploring the World of Open-Source Software

Open-source software is a movement that started in the software industry in the 1980s. Its origins are up for debate, but most people believe that the concept came about in 1983, when a company called Netscape released its Navigator web browser source code to the public, making it freely available to anyone who wanted to dig through it, modify it, or redistribute it.

WordPress software users need a basic understanding of the open-source concept and the licensing upon which WordPress is built because WordPress's open-source policies affect you as a user — and greatly affect you if you plan to develop plugins or themes for the WordPress platforms. A basic understanding helps you conduct your practices in accordance with the license at the heart of the WordPress platform.

This chapter introduces you to open-source; the Open Source Initiative (OSI); and the GPL (General Public License), which is the specific license that WordPress is built upon (GPLv2, to be exact). You also discover how the GPL license applies to any projects you may release (if you're a developer of plugins or themes) that depend on the WordPress software and how you can avoid potential problems by abiding by the GPL as it applies to WordPress.

REMEMBER

IANAL — *I Am Not a Lawyer* — is an acronym you often find in articles about WordPress and the GPL. I use it here because I'm not a lawyer, and the information in this chapter shouldn't be construed as legal advice. Rather, you should consider the chapter to be an introduction to the concepts of open-source and the GPL. The information presented here is meant to inform you about and introduce you to the concepts as they relate to the WordPress platform.

Defining Open-Source

A simple, watered-down definition of open-source software is software whose source code is freely available to the public and that can be modified and redistributed by anyone without restraint or consequence. An official organization called the Open Source Initiative (OSI; `https://opensource.org`), founded in 1998 to organize the open-source software movement in an official capacity, has provided a very clear and easy-to-understand definition of open-source. During the course of writing this book, I obtained permission from the OSI board to include it here.

Open-source doesn't just mean access to the source code. The distribution terms of open-source software must comply with the following criteria:

1. **Free Redistribution**

   The license shall not restrict any party from selling or giving away the software as a component of an aggregate software distribution containing programs from several different sources. The license shall not require a royalty or other fee for such sale.

2. **Source Code**

   The program must include source code, and must allow distribution in source code as well as compiled form. Where some form of a product is not distributed with source code, there must be a well-publicized means of obtaining the source code for no more than a reasonable reproduction cost preferably, downloading via the Internet without charge. The source code must be the preferred form in which a programmer would modify the program. Deliberately obfuscated source code is not allowed. Intermediate forms such as the output of a preprocessor or translator are not allowed.

3. **Derived Works**

   The license must allow modifications and derived works, and must allow them to be distributed under the same terms as the license of the original software.

4. **Integrity of the Author's Source Code**

   The license may restrict source-code from being distributed in modified form only if the license allows the distribution of "patch files" with the source code for the purpose of modifying the program at build time. The license must explicitly permit distribution of software built from modified source code. The license may require derived works to carry a different name or version number from the original software.

5. **No Discrimination Against Persons or Groups**

   The license must not discriminate against any person or group of persons.

6. **No Discrimination Against Fields of Endeavor**

   The license must not restrict anyone from making use of the program in a specific field of endeavor. For example, it may not restrict the program from being used in a business, or from being used for genetic research.

7. **Distribution of License**

   The rights attached to the program must apply to all to whom the program is redistributed without the need for execution of an additional license by those parties.

8. **License Must Not Be Specific to a Product**

   The rights attached to the program must not depend on the program's being part of a particular software distribution. If the program is extracted from that distribution and used or distributed within the terms of the program's license, all parties to whom the program is redistributed should have the same rights as those that are granted in conjunction with the original software distribution.

9. **License Must Not Restrict Other Software**

   The license must not place restrictions on other software that is distributed along with the licensed software. For example, the license must not insist that all other programs distributed on the same medium must be open-source software.

10. **License Must Be Technology-Neutral**

    No provision of the license may be predicated on any individual technology or style of interface.

The preceding items comprise the definition of open-source as provided by the Open Source Initiative. You can find this definition (see Figure 2-1) at `https://opensource.org/osd`.

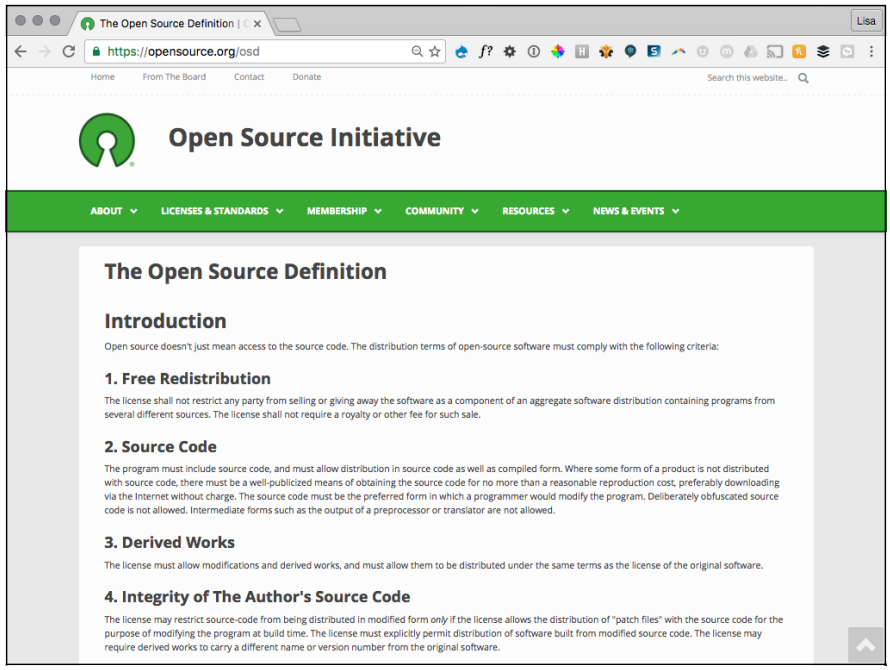

FIGURE 2-1: Definition of open-source from the OSI.

Open-source software source code must be freely available, and any licensing of the open-source software must abide by this definition. Based on the OSI definition, WordPress is an open-source software project. Its source code is accessible and publicly available for anyone to view, build on, and distribute at no cost anywhere, at any time, or for any reason.

Several examples of high-profile software enterprises, such as the ones in the following list, are also open-source. You'll recognize some of these names:

- **Mozilla (`https://www.mozilla.org`):** Community whose projects include the popular Firefox Internet browser and Thunderbird, a popular email client. All projects are open-source and considered to be public resources.
- **PHP (`http://php.net`):** An HTML-embedded scripting language that stands for PHP Hypertext Preprocessor. PHP is popular software that runs on most web servers today; its presence is required on your web server for you to run the WordPress platform successfully on your site.
- **MySQL (`www.mysql.com`):** The world's most popular open-source database. Your web server uses MySQL to store all the data from your WordPress

installation, including your posts, pages, comments, links, plugin options, theme option, widgets, and more.

- **Linux (`www.linux.org`):** An open-source operating system used by web hosting providers, among other organizations.

As open-source software, WordPress is in some fine company. Open-source itself is not a *license;* I cover licenses in the next section. Rather, open-source is a movement — some people consider it to be a philosophy — created and promoted to provide software as a public resource open to community collaboration and peer review. WordPress development is clearly community-driven and focused. You can read about the WordPress community in Book 1, Chapter 4.

Understanding WordPress Licensing

Most software projects are licensed, meaning that they have legal terms governing the use or distribution of the software. Different kinds of software licenses are in use, ranging from very restrictive to least restrictive. WordPress is licensed by the GPL (General Public License), one of the least restrictive software licenses available.

If you're bored, read the GPL text at `www.gnu.org/licenses/gpl-2.0.html`. Licensing language on any topic can be a difficult thing to navigate and understand. It's sufficient to have a basic understanding of the concept of GPL and let the lawyers sort out the rest, if necessary.

TIP

A complete copy of the GPL is included in every copy of the WordPress download package, in the `license.txt` file. The directory listing of the WordPress software files shown in Figure 2-2 lists the `license.txt` file.

Simply put, any iteration of a piece of software developed and released under the GPL must be released under the very same license in the future. Check out the nearby sidebar "The origins of WordPress," which tells the story of how the WordPress platform came into existence. Essentially, the software was *forked* — meaning that the original software (in this case, a blogging platform called b2) was abandoned by its original developer and adopted by the founders of WordPress, who took the b2 platform, called it WordPress, and began a new project with a new plan, outlook, and group of developers.

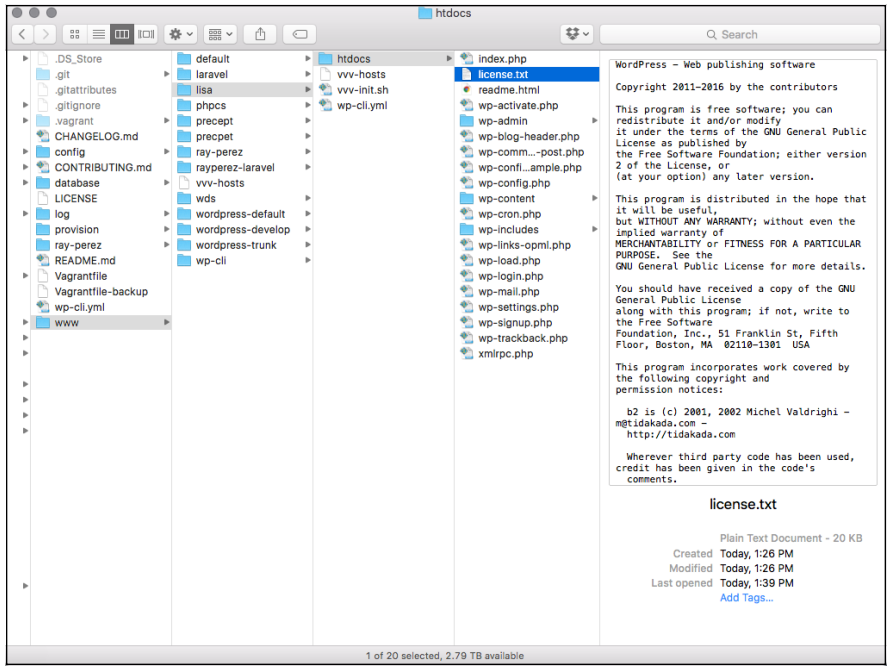

FIGURE 2-2: The GPL text is included in every copy of WordPress.

Because the b2 platform was originally developed and released under the GPL, by law, the WordPress software (all current and future iterations of the platform) must also abide by the GPL. Because of the nature of the GPL, you, your next-door neighbor, or I could do the very same thing with the WordPress platform. Nothing is stopping you, or anyone else, from taking WordPress, giving it a different name, and rereleasing it as a completely different project. Typically, open-source projects are forked when the original project development stalls or is abandoned (as was the case with b2) or (in rare cases) when the majority of the development community is at odds with the leadership of the open-source project. I'm not suggesting that you do that, though, because WordPress has one of the most active development communities of any open-source project I've come across.

THE ORIGINS OF WORDPRESS

Once upon a time, there was a simple PHP-based blogging platform called b2. This software, developed in 2001, slowly gained a bit of popularity among geek types as a way to publish content on the Internet. Its developer, Michel Valdrighi, kept development active until early 2003, when users of the software noticed that Valdrighi seemed to have disappeared. They became a little concerned about b2's future.

Somewhere deep in the heart of Texas, one young man in particular was very concerned, because b2 was his software of choice for publishing his own content on the World Wide Web. He didn't want to see his favorite publishing tool become obsolete. You can view the original post to his own blog in which he wondered what to do (`http://ma.tt/2003/01/the-blogging-software-dilemma`).

In that post, he talked briefly about some of the other software that was available at the time, and he tossed around the idea of using the b2 software to "to create a fork, integrating all the cool stuff that Michel would be working on right now if only he was around."

Create a fork he did. In the absence of b2's developer, this young man developed from the original b2 codebase a new blogging application called WordPress.

That blog post was made on January 24, 2003, and the young man's name was (and is) Matt Mullenweg. On December 26, 2003, with the assistance of a few other developers, Mullenweg announced the arrival of the first official version of the WordPress software. The rest, as they say, is history. The history of this particular piece of software surely is one for the books, as it's the most popular blogging platform available today.

Applying WordPress Licensing to Your Projects

Regular users of WordPress software need never concern themselves with the GPL of the WordPress project at all. You don't have to do anything special to abide by the GPL. You don't have to pay to use the WordPress software, and you aren't required to acknowledge that you're using the WordPress software on your site. (That said, providing on your site at least one link back to the WordPress website is common courtesy and a great way of saying thanks.)

Most people aren't even aware of the software licensing because it doesn't affect the day-to-day business of blogging and publishing sites with the platform. It's not a bad idea to educate yourself on the basics of the GPL, however. When you try

to be certain that any plugins and themes you use with your WordPress installation abide by the GPL, you have peace of mind that all applications and software you're using are in compliance.

Your knowledge of the GPL must increase dramatically, though, if you develop plugins or themes for the WordPress platform. (I cover WordPress themes in Book 6 and WordPress plugins in Book 7.)

The public licensing that pertains to WordPress plugins and themes wasn't decided in a court of law. The current opinion of the best (legal) practices is just that: opinion. The opinion of the WordPress core development team, as well as the opinion of the Software Freedom Law Center (`https://www.softwarefreedom.org/services`), is that WordPress plugins and themes are derivative works of WordPress and, therefore, must abide by the GPL by releasing the development works under the same license that WordPress has.

A *derivative work,* as it relates to WordPress, is a work that contains programming whose functionality depends on the core WordPress files. Because plugins and themes contain PHP programming that call WordPress core functions, they rely on the core WordPress framework to work properly and, therefore, are extensions of the software.

TECHNICAL STUFF

The text of the opinion by James Vasile from the Software Freedom Law Center is available at `http://wordpress.org/news/2009/07/themes-are-gpl-too`.

To maintain compliance with the GPL, plugin or theme developers can't release development work under any (restrictive) license other than the GPL. Nonetheless, many plugin and theme developers have tried to release material under other licenses, and some have been successful (from a moneymaking standpoint). The WordPress community, however, generally doesn't support these developers or their plugins and themes. Additionally, the core WordPress development team considers such works to be noncompliant with the license and, therefore, with the law.

WordPress has made it publicly clear that it won't support or promote any theme or plugin that is not in 100 percent compliance with the GPL. If you're not 100 percent compliant with the GPL, you can't include your plugin or theme in the WordPress Plugin Directory hosted at `https://wordpress.org/plugins`. If you develop plugins and themes for WordPress, or if you're are considering dipping your toe into that pool, do it in accordance with the GPL so that your works are in compliance and your good standing in the WordPress community is protected.

Table 2-1 provides a brief review of what you can (and can't) do as a WordPress plugin and theme developer.

TABLE 2-1 Development Practices Compliant with GPL License

Development/Release Practice	GPL-Compliant?
Distribute to the public for free with GPL.	Yes
Distribute to the public for a cost with GPL.	Yes
Restrict the number of users of one download with GPL.	No
Split portions of your work among different licenses. (PHP files are GPL; JavaScript or CSS files are licensed with the Creative Commons license.)	Yes (but WordPress.org won't promote works that aren't 100 percent GPL across all files)
Release under a different license, such as the PHP License.	No

The one and only way to make sure that your plugin or theme is 100 percent compliant with the GPL is to do the following before you release your development work to the world:

- Include a statement in your work indicating that the work is released under the GPLv2 license in the `license.txt` file, which WordPress does. (Refer to Figure 2-2.) Alternatively, you can include this statement in the header of your plugin file:

```
<?php

 This program is free software; you can redistribute it and/or modify it under the
   terms of the GNU General Public License, version 2, as published by the Free
   Software Foundation.

 This program is distributed in the hope that it will be useful,
 but WITHOUT ANY WARRANTY; without even the implied warranty of
 MERCHANTABILITY or FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE. See the
 GNU General Public License for more details.

 You should have received a copy of the GNU General Public License
 along with this program; if not, write to the Free Software
 Foundation, Inc., 51 Franklin St., Fifth Floor, Boston, MA 02110-1301 USA
*/
?>
```

- Don't restrict the use of your works by the number of users per download.
- If you charge for your work, which is compliant with the GPL, the licensing doesn't change, and users still have the freedom to modify your work and rerelease it under a different name.
- Don't split the license of other files included in your work, such as CSS or graphics. Although this practice complies with the GPL, it won't be approved for inclusion in the WordPress Plugin Directory.

IN THIS CHAPTER

- Delving into WordPress release cycles
- Exploring betas, release candidates, and final release versions
- Navigating WordPress release archives
- Tracking WordPress development
- Using bleeding-edge builds

Chapter 3

Understanding Development and Release Cycles

If you're planning to dip your toe into the WordPress waters (or you've already dived in and gotten completely wet), the WordPress platform's development cycle is really good to know about and understand, because it affects every WordPress user on a regular basis.

WordPress and its features form the foundation of your website. WordPress is a low-maintenance way to publish content on the web, and the software is free in terms of monetary cost. WordPress isn't 100 percent maintenance-free, however, and part of maintenance is ensuring that your WordPress software is up to date to keep your website secure and safe.

This chapter explains the development cycle for the WordPress platform and shows you how you can stay up to date and informed about what's going on. This chapter also gives you information on WordPress release cycles and shows you how you can track ongoing WordPress development on your own.

Discovering WordPress Release Cycles

Book 1, Chapter 2 introduces you to the concept of open-source software and discusses how the WordPress development community is primarily volunteer developers who donate their time and talents to the WordPress platform. The development of new WordPress releases is a collaborative effort, sometimes requiring contributions from more than 300 developers.

The public schedule for WordPress updates is roughly one new release every 120 days. As a user, you can expect a new release of the WordPress software about three times per year. The WordPress development team sticks to that schedule closely, with exceptions only here and there. When the team makes exceptions to the 120-day rule, it usually makes a public announcement so that you know what to expect and when to expect it.

Mostly, interruptions in the 120-day schedule occur because the development of WordPress occurs primarily on a volunteer basis. A few developers — employees of Automattic, the company behind WordPress.com — are paid to develop for WordPress, but most developers are volunteers. Therefore, the progress of WordPress development depends on the developers' schedules.

REMEMBER

I'm confident in telling you that you can expect to update your WordPress installation at least three, if not four, times per year.

Upgrading your WordPress experience

Don't be discouraged or frustrated by the number of times you'll upgrade your WordPress installation. The WordPress development team is constantly striving to improve the user experience and to bring exciting, fun new features to the WordPress platform. Each upgrade improves security and adds new features to enhance your (and your visitors') experience on your website. WordPress also makes the upgrades easy to perform, as I discuss in Book 2, Chapter 6.

The following list gives you some good reasons why you should upgrade your WordPress software each time a new version becomes available:

- **Security:** When WordPress versions come and go, outdated versions are no longer supported and are vulnerable to malicious attacks and hacker attempts. Most WordPress security failures occur when you're running an outdated version of WordPress on your website. To make sure that you're running the most up-to-date and secure version, upgrade to the latest release as soon as you can.

- **New features:** Major WordPress releases (I discuss the difference between major and minor, or point, releases later in the chapter) offer great new features that are fun to use, improve your experience, and boost your efficiency and productivity. Upgrading your WordPress installation ensures that you always have access to the latest, greatest tools and features that WordPress has to offer.
- **Plugins and themes:** Most plugin and theme developers work hard to make sure that their products are up to date with the latest version of WordPress. Generally, plugin and theme developers don't worry about backward compatibility, and they tend to ignore out-of-date versions of WordPress. To be sure that the plugins and themes you've chosen are current and not breaking your site, make sure that you're using the latest version of WordPress and the latest versions of your plugins and themes. (See Book 6 for information about themes and Book 7 for details about plugins.)

Understanding the cycles of a release

By the time the latest WordPress installation becomes available, that version has gone through several iterations, or *versions.* This section helps you understand what it takes to get the latest version to your website and explains some of the WordPress development terminology.

The steps and terminology involved in the release of a new version of WordPress include

- **Alpha:** This phase is the first developmental phase of a new version. Alpha typically is the "idea" phase in which developers gather ideas, including those from users and community members. During the alpha phase, developers determine which features to include in the new release and then develop an outline and a project plan. After features are decided, developers start developing and testers start testing until they reach a "feature freeze" point in the development cycle, where all new features are considered to be complete. Then development moves on to perfecting new features through user testing and bug fixes.
- **Beta:** This phase is for fixing bugs and clearing any problems that testers report. Beta cycles can last four to six weeks, if not longer. WordPress often releases several beta versions with such names as WordPress version 4.7 Beta, WordPress version 4.7 Beta 1, and so on. The beta process continues until the development team decides that the software is ready to move into the next phase in the development cycle.
- **Release candidate:** A version becomes a release candidate (RC) when the bugs from the beta versions are fixed and the version is nearly ready for final release. You sometimes see several RC iterations, referred to as RC-1, RC-2, and so on.

» **Final release:** After a version has gone through full testing in several (ideally, all) types of environments, use cases, and user experiences; any bugs from the alpha, beta, and RC phases have been squashed; and no major bugs are being reported, the development team releases the final version of the WordPress software.

After the WordPress development team issues a final release version, they start again in the alpha phase, gearing up and preparing to go through the development cycle for the next major version.

REMEMBER

Typically, a development cycle lasts 120 days, but this figure is an approximation, because any number of things can happen (from developmental problems to difficult bugs) to delay the process.

Finding WordPress release archives

WordPress keeps a historical archive of all versions it has ever released at `https://wordpress.org/download/release-archive`, as shown in Figure 3-1. On that page, you find releases dating back to version 0.17 from 2003.

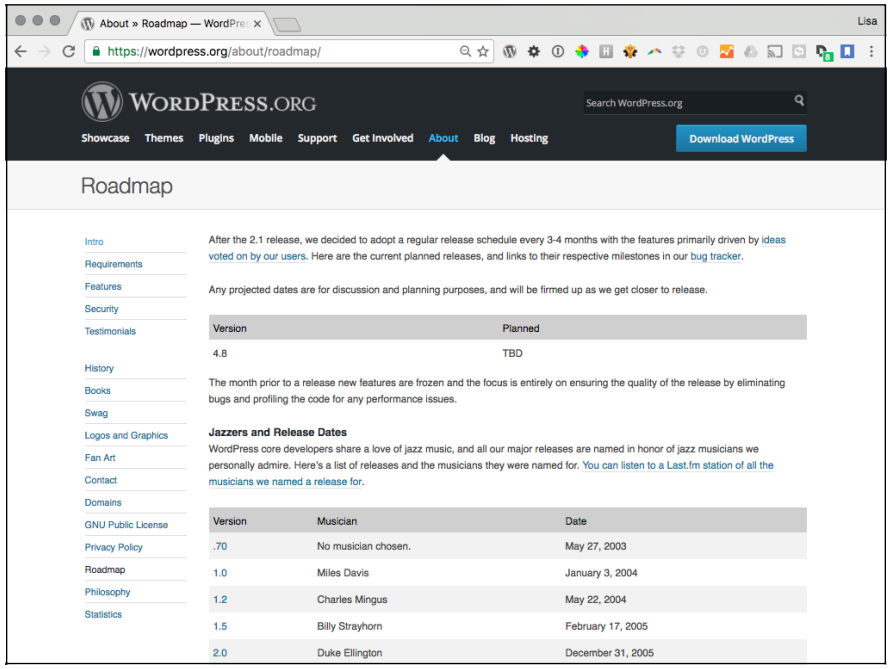

FIGURE 3-1: The archive of every WordPress release on record.

MAJOR VERSUS POINT RELEASES

You may have noticed that WordPress versions are numbered. These numbers show the progress of the development of the software, and they also tell you something else about the version you're using. *Software versioning* is a method of assigning unique numbers to each version release. Generally, the two types of versioning are

- **Point release:** Point releases usually increase the numbered version only by a decimal point or two, indicating a relatively minor release. Such releases include insignificant updates or minor bug fixes. When the version number jumps from 4.6 to 4.6.1, for example, you can be certain that the new version was released to fix minor bugs or to clean up the source code rather than to add new features.
- **Major release:** A major release most often contains new features and jumps by a more seriously incremented version number. When WordPress went from 4.6.1 to 4.7 (release 4.6 versioned into 4.6.1 before jumping to 4.7), that release was considered to be a major release because it jumped a whole number rather than a decimal point. A large jump is a sign to users that new features are included in this version, rather than just bug fixes or cleanup of code. The bigger the jump in the version number, the more major the release is. A release jumping from 4.0 to 4.5, for example, is an indication of major new features.

WARNING

None of the releases on the WordPress website is safe for you to use except the latest release in the 4.7.x series. Using an older version leaves your website open to hackers. WordPress just likes to have a recorded history of every release for posterity's sake.

Keeping Track of WordPress Development

If you know where to look, keeping track of the WordPress development cycle is easy, especially because the WordPress development team tries to make the development process as transparent as possible. You can track updates by reading about them in various spots on the Internet and by listening to conversations between developers. If you're so inclined, you can jump in and lend the developers a hand, too.

You have several ways to stay up to date on what's going on in the world of WordPress development, including blog posts, live chats, development meetings,

tracking tickets, and bug reports, just to name a few. The following list gives you a solid start on where you can go to stay informed:

- **WordPress development updates (`https://make.wordpress.org/core`):** The WordPress development team's blog, Make WordPress Core, is where you can follow and keep track of the progress of the WordPress software project while it happens. (See Figure 3-2.) You find agendas, schedules, meeting minutes, and discussions surrounding the development cycles.

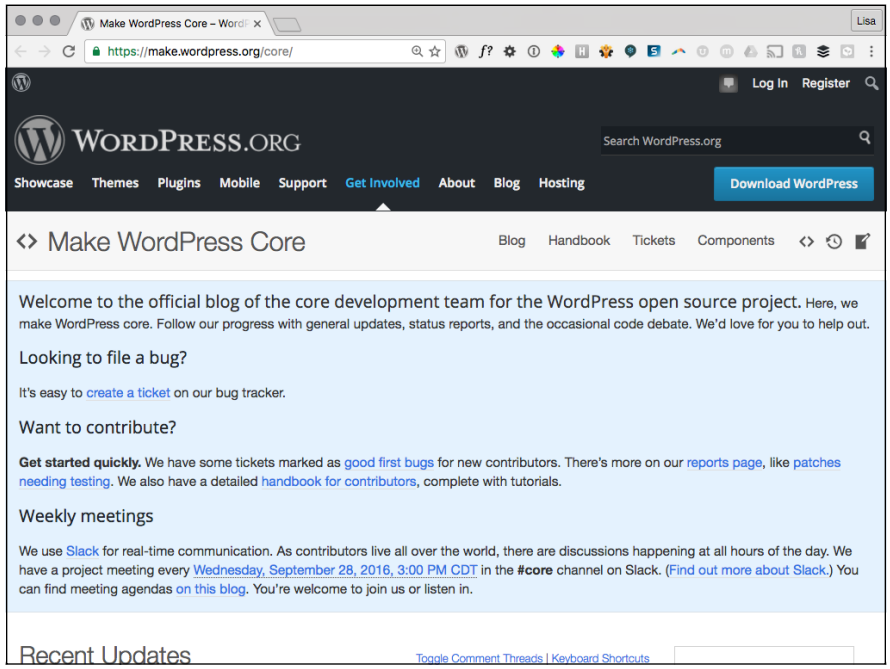

FIGURE 3-2: The WordPress development blog.

- **WordPress developers' chats (`https://make.wordpress.org/chat`):** Developers who are involved in development of WordPress core use a real-time communication platform called Slack (`https://slack.com`). You can easily participate in any of the scheduled meetings listed on `https://make.wordpress.org/core` (regular scheduled chats are listed in the right sidebar of the site).
- **WordPress Trac (`https://core.trac.wordpress.org`):** Here are ways to stay informed about the changes in WordPress development:
  - Follow the timeline: `https://core.trac.wordpress.org/timeline`
  - View the road map: `https://core.trac.wordpress.org/roadmap`

- Read reports: `https://core.trac.wordpress.org/report`
- Perform a search: `https://core.trac.wordpress.org/search`

» **WordPress mailing lists (`https://codex.wordpress.org/Mailing_Lists`):** Join mailing lists focused on different aspects of WordPress development, such as bug testing, documentation, and hacking WordPress. (For specific details about mailing lists, see Book 1, Chapter 4.)

Downloading Nightly Builds

WordPress development moves pretty fast. Often, changes in the software's development cycle occur daily. While the developers are working on alpha and beta versions and release candidates, they commit the latest core changes to the repository and make those changes available to the public to download, install, and test on individual sites. The changes are released in a full WordPress software package called a *nightly build.* This nightly build contains the latest core changes submitted to the project — changes that have not yet been released as full and final versions.

WARNING

Using nightly builds isn't a safe practice for a live site. I strongly recommend creating a test environment to test nightly builds. Many times, especially during alpha and beta phases, the core code breaks and causes problems with your existing installation. Use nightly builds in a test environment only, and leave your live site intact until the final release is available.

Hundreds of members of the WordPress community help in the development phases, even though they aren't developers or programmers. They help by downloading the nightly builds, testing them in various server environments, and reporting to the WordPress development team by way of Trac tickets (shown in Figure 3-3; check out `https://core.trac.wordpress.org/report`) any bugs and problems they find in that version of the software.

You can download the latest nightly build from the WordPress repository at `https://wordpress.org/download/nightly`. For information about installing WordPress, see Book 2, Chapter 4.

REMEMBER

Running the latest nightly build on your website is referred to as using *bleeding-edge* software because the software is an untested version, requiring you to take risks just to run it on your website.

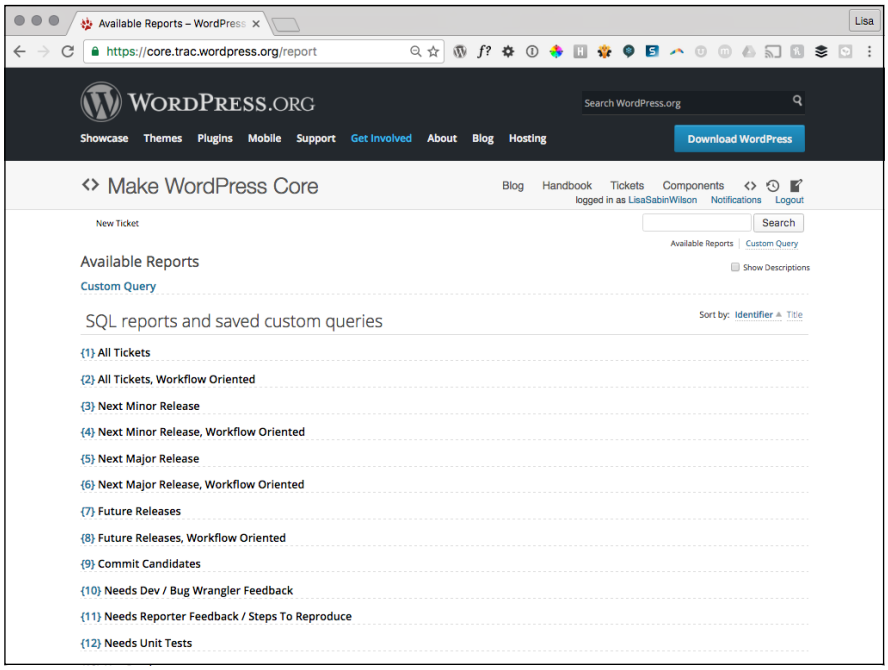

FIGURE 3-3: WordPress Trac tickets.

TIP

WordPress Beta Tester (`https://wordpress.org/plugins/wordpress-beta-tester`), by Peter Westwood, is a super plugin that enables you to use the automatic upgrade tool in your WordPress Dashboard to download the latest nightly build. For information about installing and using WordPress plugins, check out Book 7, Chapter 2.

IN THIS CHAPTER

- Finding WordPress users
- Locating users on social networks
- Getting help in the support forums
- Participating in testing and bug squashing
- Discovering professional consultants and services
- Attending and organizing local WordCamps

Chapter 4

Meeting the WordPress Community

Allow me to introduce you to the fiercely loyal folks who make up the WordPress user base, better known as the WordPress community. These merry ladies and gentlemen come from all around the globe, from California to Cairo, Florida to Florence, and all points in between.

Early on, in March 2005, Matt Mullenweg of WordPress proudly proclaimed that the number of WordPress downloads had reached 900,000 — an amazing landmark in the history of the software. By contrast, in 2016, the download counter for WordPress version 4.6 had exceeded 17 million. The World Wide Technology Surveys (`https://w3techs.com`) published results showing WordPress to be the most popular content management system (CMS) being used on the web today. An astounding 26.7 percent of all sites on the Internet using a CMS use WordPress. This popularity makes for a large community of users, to say the least.

This chapter introduces you to the WordPress community and the benefits of membership within that community, such as finding support forums; locating other WordPress users on various social networks; getting assistance from other

users, participating in WordPress development; and hooking up with WordPress users face to face at WordPress events, such as WordCamp.

Finding Other WordPress Users

Don't let the sheer volume of users intimidate you: WordPress has bragging rights to the most helpful blogging community on the web today. Thousands of websites exist that spotlight everything, including WordPress news, resources, updates, tutorials, and training. The list is endless. Do a quick Google search for *WordPress*, and you'll get about 1.9 billion results.

My point is that WordPress users are all over the Internet, from websites to discussion forums and social networks to podcasts and more. For many people, the appeal of the WordPress platform lies not only in the platform itself, but also in its passionate community of users.

Finding WordPress news and tips on community websites

WordPress-related websites cover an array of topics related to the platform, including everything from tutorials to news and even a little gossip, if that's your flavor. The Internet has no shortage of websites related to the popular WordPress platform. Here are a few that stand out:

- **WP Tavern (`https://wptavern.com`):** A site that covers everything from soup to nuts: news, resources, tools, tutorials, and interviews with standout WordPress personalities. You can pretty much count on WP Tavern to be on top of what's new and going on in the WordPress community. WP Tavern is owned by Automattic, the parent company of WordPress.com.
- **Smashing Magazine (`https://www.smashingmagazine.com/category/wordpress/`):** A very popular and established online design magazine and resource that has dedicated a special section of its website to WordPress news, resources, tips, and tools written by various members of the WordPress community.
- **Make WordPress Core (`https://make.wordpress.org/core`):** A website that aggregates content from all the "Make WordPress" websites built and maintained by the WordPress.org community. It includes resources for contributing to WordPress core, making plugins and themes, planning WordPress events, supporting WordPress, and more.

Locating users on social networks

In addition to WordPress, many bloggers use microblogging tools such as Twitter (`https://twitter.com`) and/or social-media networks such as Facebook (`https://www.facebook.com`) to augment their online presence and market their blog, services, and products. Within these networks, you can find WordPress users, resources, and links, including the following:

- **WordPress Twitter lists:** Twitter allows users to create lists of people who have the same interests, such as WordPress. You can find a few of these lists here:
  - *Twitter:* `https://twitter.com/search?q=WordPress`
  - *Google:* `https://www.google.com/#q=WordPress+Twitter+Lists`
- **Facebook Pages on WordPress:** Facebook users create Pages and groups around their favorite topics of interest, such as WordPress. You can find some interesting WordPress Pages and groups here:
  - *WordPress.org:* `https://www.facebook.com/WordPress`
  - *Advanced WordPress:* `https://www.facebook.com/groups/advancedwp`
  - *Matt Mullenweg (founder of WordPress):* `https://www.facebook.com/matt.mullenweg`

TIP

You can include Twitter lists on your site by using the handy Twitter widget for WordPress at `https://wordpress.org/plugins/widget-twitter`.

Users Helping Users

Don't worry if you're not a member of the WordPress community. Joining is easy: Simply start your own website by using the WordPress platform. If you're already publishing on a different platform, such as Drupal or Tumblr, WordPress makes migrating your data from that platform to a new WordPress setup simple. (See Book 2, Chapter 7 for information on migrating to WordPress from a different platform.)

WordPress support forums

You can find the WordPress Forums page (shown in Figure 4-1) at `https://wordpress.org/support`. This page is where you find users helping other users in their quest to use and understand the platform.

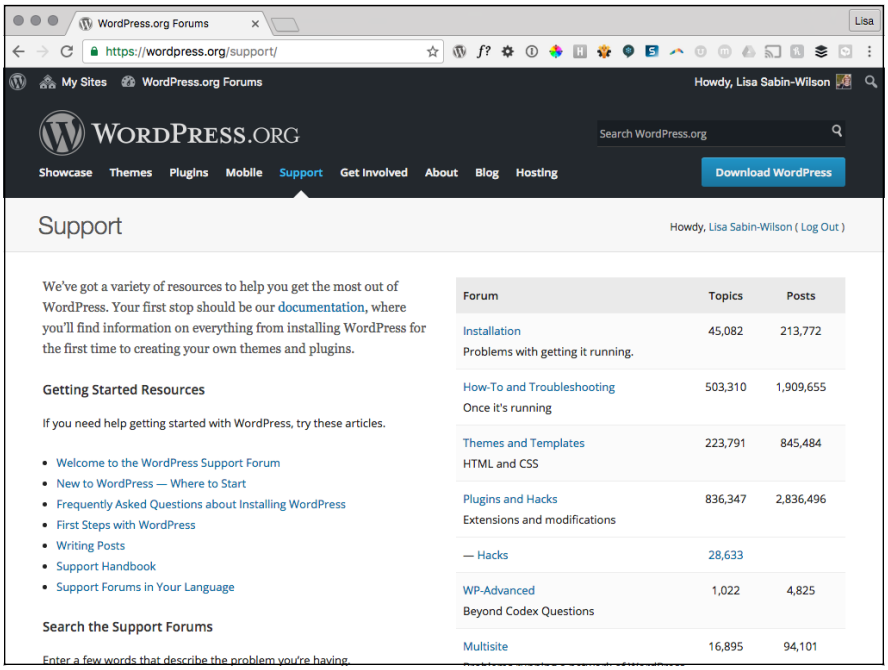

FIGURE 4-1: WordPress Forums page.

REMEMBER

The support forums are hosted on the WordPress.org website, but don't expect to find any official form of support from the WordPress developers. Instead, you find a large community of people from all walks of life seeking answers and providing solutions.

Users from beginner and novice level to the most advanced level browse the forums, providing support for one another. Each user has his or her own experiences, troubles, and knowledge level with WordPress, and the support forums are where users share those experiences and seek out the experiences of other users.

REMEMBER

It's important to keep in mind that the people you find and interact with on these official forums are offering their knowledge on a volunteer basis only, so as always, common-courtesy rules apply. "Please" and "thank you" go a long, long way in the forums.

TIP

If you find solutions and assistance in the WordPress support forums, consider browsing the forum entries to see whether you can help someone else by answering a question or two.

WordPress user manual

You can find users contributing to the very helpful WordPress Codex (a collection of how-to documents) at `https://codex.wordpress.org`. *Codex*, by the way, is Latin for *book.*

The WordPress Codex is a collaborative effort to document the use of the WordPress software. All contributors to the codex are WordPress users who donate their time as a way of giving back to the free, open-source project that has given them a dynamic piece of software for publishing freely on the web.

WordPress mailing lists

You can subscribe to various mailing lists, too. These lists offer you the opportunity to become involved in various aspects of the WordPress community as well as future development of the software. All the available WordPress mailing lists are on the Automattic website at `http://lists.automattic.com/mailman/listinfo`. The most popular ones include

- **wp-hackers (`http://lists.automattic.com/mailman/listinfo/wp-hackers`):** Subscribe to this mailing list to interact and talk to other WordPress users about *hacking* WordPress — otherwise known as altering WordPress code to make it do what you want it to do.
- **wp-testers (`http://lists.automattic.com/mailman/listinfo/wp-testers`):** This mailing list is filled with people who are testing new releases (as well as beta versions) of WordPress and reporting any bugs or problems that they find.
- **wp-edu (`http://lists.automattic.com/mailman/listinfo/wp-edu`):** This mailing list is dedicated to people in the education field who use WordPress, such as teachers and professors.

Discovering Professional WordPress Consultants and Services

You have big plans for your blog, and your time is valuable. Hiring a professional to handle the back-end design and maintenance of your blog enables you to spend your time creating the content and building your readership on the front end.

Many bloggers who decide to go the custom route by hiring a design professional do it for another reason: They want the designs/themes of their blogs to be unique. Free themes are nice, but you run the risk that your blog will look like hundreds of other blogs out there.

A *brand*, a term often used in advertising and marketing, refers to the recognizable identity of a product — in this case, your blog. Having a unique brand or design for your site sets yours apart from the rest. If your blog has a custom look, people will associate that look with you. You can accomplish branding with a single logo or an entire layout and color scheme of your choosing.

Many consultants and design professionals put themselves up for hire. Who are these people? I get to that topic in just a second. First, you want to understand what services they offer, which can help you decide whether hiring a professional is the solution for you.

Here are some of the many services available:

- Custom graphic design and CSS styling for your blog
- Custom templates
- WordPress plugin installation and integration
- Custom WordPress plugins
- WordPress software installation on your web server
- Upgrades of the WordPress software
- Web hosting and domain registration services
- Search engine optimization and site marketing

REMEMBER

Some bloggers take advantage of the full array of services provided, whereas others use only a handful. The important thing to remember is that you aren't alone. Help is available for you and your blog.

Table 4-1 pairs the three types of blog experts — designers, developers, and consultants — with the services they typically offer. Many of these folks are freelancers with self-imposed titles, but I've matched titles with typical duties. Keep in mind that some of these professionals wear all these hats; others specialize in only one area.

I wish I could tell you what you could expect to pay for any of these services, but the truth is the levels of expertise — and expense — vary wildly. Services can range from $5 per hour to $300 or more per hour. As with any purchase, do your research and make an informed decision before you buy.

TABLE 4-1 Types of WordPress Professionals

Title	Services
Designers	These folks excel in graphic design, CSS, and the development of custom WordPress themes.
Developers	These guys and gals are code monkeys. Some of them don't know a stitch about design, but they can provide custom code to make your blog do things you never thought possible. Usually, you'll find these people releasing plugins in their spare time for the WordPress community to use free.
Consultants	If you're blogging for a business, these folks can provide you a marketing plan for your blog or a plan for using your blog to reach clients and colleagues in your field. Many of these consultants also provide search engine optimization to help your domain reach high ranks in search engines.

Listing all the professionals who provide WordPress services is impossible, but Tables 4-2 through 4-4, later in this chapter, list some of the most popular ones. I tried to cover a diverse level of services so that you have the knowledge to make an informed decision about which professional to choose.

WordPress designers

WordPress designers can take a simple blog and turn it into something dynamic, beautiful, and exciting. These people are experts in the graphic design, CSS styling, and template tagging needed to create a unique theme for your website. Often, WordPress designers are skilled in installing and upgrading WordPress software and plugins; sometimes, they're even skilled in creating custom PHP or plugins. These folks are the ones you want to contact when you're looking for someone to create a unique design for your website that's an individual, visual extension of you or your company.

Some blog designers post their rates on their websites because they offer design *packages*, whereas other designers quote projects on a case-by-case basis because every project is unique. When you're searching for a designer, if the prices aren't displayed on the site, just drop the designer an email and ask for an estimate. Armed with this information, you can do a little comparison shopping while you search for just the right designer.

The designers and design studios listed in Table 4-2 represent a range of styles, pricing, services, and experience. All of them excel in creating custom WordPress blogs and websites. This list is by no means exhaustive, but it's a nice starting point.

TABLE 4-2 Established WordPress Designers

Who They Are	Where You Can Find Them
WebDevStudios	https://webdevstudios.com
10up	https://10up.com
Range	http://ran.ge

Developers

The WordPress motto sits at the bottom of the WordPress home page:

> Code is poetry.

No one knows this better than the extremely talented blog developers in the core WordPress development team. A developer can take some of the underlying code, make a little magic happen between PHP and the MySQL database that stores the content of your blog, and create a dynamic display of that content for you. Most likely, you'll contact a developer when you want to do something with your blog that's a little out of the ordinary, and you can't find a plugin that does the trick.

If you've gone through all the available WordPress plugins and still can't find the exact function that you want your WordPress blog to perform, contact one of these folks. Explain what you need. The developer can tell you whether it can be done, whether she's available to do it, and how much the job will cost. (Don't forget that last part!) You may recognize some of the names in Table 4-3 as developers/authors of some popular WordPress plugins.

TABLE 4-3 Established WordPress Developers

Who They Are	Where You Can Find Them
WebDevStudios	https://webdevstudios.com
eHermits, Inc.	http://ehermitsinc.com
Covered Web Services — Mark Jaquith	http://coveredwebservices.com
Voce Communications	http://vocecommunications.com

Consultants

Blog consultants may not be able to design or code for you, but they're probably connected to people who can. Consultants can help you achieve your goals for your blog in terms of online visibility, marketing plans, and search engine optimization. Most of these folks can help you find out how to make money with your blog and connect you with various advertising programs. Quite honestly, you can do what blog consultants do by investing just a little time and research in these areas. As with design and coding, however, figuring everything out and then implementing it takes time. Sometimes it's easier — and more cost-effective — to hire a professional than to do it yourself.

Who hires blog consultants? Typically, a business that wants to incorporate a blog into its existing website or a business that already has a blog but wants help taking it to the next level. Table 4-4 lists some people and organizations that offer this kind of consulting.

TABLE 4-4 Established Blog Consultants

Who They Are	Where You Can Find Them	Type of Consulting
Copyblogger	`www.copyblogger.com`	SEO, marketing
Convertiv	`https://www.convertiv.com`	WordPress design and development, social media consulting
WordPress 101	`https://www.wp101.com`	WordPress training

Contributing to WordPress

Contributing code to the core WordPress software is only one way of participating in the WordPress project. You don't need to be a coder or developer to contribute to WordPress — and it's easier than you might think. Here are several ways you can contribute to the project, including (but not limited to) code:

- **Code:** One of the most obvious ways you can contribute to WordPress is providing code to be used in the core files. The WordPress project has several hundred developers who contribute code at one time or another. You submit code through the WordPress Trac at `https://core.trac.wordpress.org`. Within the Trac, you can follow current development and track changes. To contribute, you can use the Trac to download and test a code patch or look at reported bugs to see whether you can offer a fix or submit a patch. Required skills include, at the very least, PHP programming, WordPress experience, and MySQL database administration. (That isn't an exhaustive list, mind you.)

- **Testing:** You can join the wp-testers mailing list (refer to "WordPress mailing lists" earlier in this chapter) to test beta versions of WordPress and report your own user experience. WordPress developers monitor this mailing list and try to fix any true bugs or problems.
- **Documentation:** Anyone can submit documentation to the WordPress Codex (the user documentation for WordPress). All you need to do is visit `https://codex.wordpress.org`, create an account, and dig in!

  Be sure to check out the article titled "Codex: Contributing" (`https://codex.wordpress.org/Codex:Contributing`), which provides good tips on how to get started, including guidelines for documentation contributions.

TIP

- **Tutorials:** Do you feel that you have a few tips and tricks you want to share with other WordPress users? Take them to your blog! What better way to contribute to WordPress than sharing your knowledge with the rest of the world? Write up your how-to tutorial, publish it on your website, and then promote your tutorial on Twitter and Facebook.
- **Support forums:** Volunteer your time and knowledge on the WordPress support forums at `https://wordpress.org/support`. The involvement of the WordPress users who donate their time and talents in the support forum is an essential part of the WordPress experience.
- **Presentations:** In the next section of this chapter, I discuss live WordPress events where users meet face to face. Consider offering to speak at one of those events to share your knowledge and experience with other users — or host one in your area.

Participating in Live WordPress Events

You can not only find out about WordPress and contribute to the project online via the Internet, but also get involved in WordPress offline. Live WordPress events, called WordPress Meetups and WordCamps, are where users and fans get together to discuss, learn, and share information about their favorite platform. The two events are somewhat different:

- **WordPress Meetups:** Generally, these events involve small groups of people from the same geographical location. Typically, these speakers, organizers, and attendees enjoy gathering on a monthly or bimonthly basis.

  You can find a WordPress Meetup near your community by visiting the Meetup website at `https://www.meetup.com` or by performing a search, using the keyword *WordPress* and your city or zip code.

- **WordCamps:** These annual events are usually much larger than Meetups and are attended by people from all over the country. WordCamps are hosted in almost every major city in the United States and abroad. Usually, WordCamps cost a small amount to attend, and speakers at WordCamps are well-known personalities from the WordPress community.

  You can find a WordCamp event close to you by visiting the WordCamp website at `http://central.wordcamp.org` and browsing the upcoming WordCamps.

TIP

If there isn't a Meetup or WordCamp scheduled in your area, consider getting involved and organizing one! You can find some great tips and information about organizing WordCamps at `http://central.wordcamp.org`.

IN THIS CHAPTER

- Getting hosted with WordPress.com
- Self-hosting with WordPress.org
- Running a network of blogs with the multisite feature
- Exploring enterprise options and VIP services

Chapter 5

Discovering Different Versions of WordPress

Website publishers have a wealth of software platforms to choose among. You want to be sure that the platform you choose has all the options you're looking for. WordPress is unique in that it offers two versions of its software. Each version is designed to meet the various needs of publishers.

One version is a hosted platform available at WordPress.com that meets your needs if you don't want to worry about installing or dealing with software; the other is the self-hosted version of the WordPress software available at `https://wordpress.org`, which offers you a bit more freedom and flexibility, as described throughout this chapter.

This chapter introduces you to both versions of the WordPress platform so you can choose which version suits your particular needs the best.

Comparing the Two Versions of WordPress

The two versions of WordPress are

- The hosted version at WordPress.com
- The self-installed and self-hosted version available at WordPress.org

Certain features are available to you in every WordPress site setup, whether you're using the self-hosted software from WordPress.org or the hosted version at WordPress.com. These features include (but aren't limited to)

- Quick and easy installation and setup
- Full-featured publishing capability, letting you publish content to the web through an easy-to-use web-based interface
- Topical archiving of your posts, using categories
- Monthly archiving of your posts, with the capability to provide a listing of those archives for easy navigation through your site
- Comment and trackback tools
- Automatic spam protection through Akismet
- Built-in gallery integration for photos and images
- Media Manager for managing video and audio files
- Great community support
- Unlimited number of static pages, letting you step out of the blog box and into the sphere of running a fully functional website
- RSS capability with RSS 2.0, RSS 1.0, and Atom support
- Tools for importing content from different content management systems (such as Blogger and Movable Type)

Table 5-1 compares the two WordPress versions.

TABLE 5-1 Exploring the Differences between the Two Versions of WordPress

Feature	WordPress.org	WordPress.com
Cost	Free	Free
Software download required	Yes	No
Software installation required	Yes	No
Web hosting required	Yes	No
Custom CSS control	Yes	Available in the Premium or Business plan up to $99/year
Template access	Yes	No
Sidebar widgets	Yes	Yes
RSS syndication	Yes	Yes
Access to core code	Yes	No
Ability to install plugins	Yes	No
WP themes installation	Yes	No
Multiauthor support	Yes	Yes
Unlimited number of blog setups with one account (multisite)	Yes*	Yes
Community-based support forums	Yes	Yes

**Only with the Multisite feature enabled*

Choosing the hosted version from WordPress.com

WordPress.com (see Figure 5-1) is a free service. If downloading, installing, and using software on a web server sound like Greek to you and are chores you'd rather avoid, the WordPress folks provide a solution for you at WordPress.com.

WordPress.com is a *hosted solution*, which means that it has no software requirement, no downloads, and no installation or server configurations. Everything's done for you on the back end, behind the scenes. You don't even have to worry about how the process happens; it happens quickly, and before you know it, you're making your first blog post.

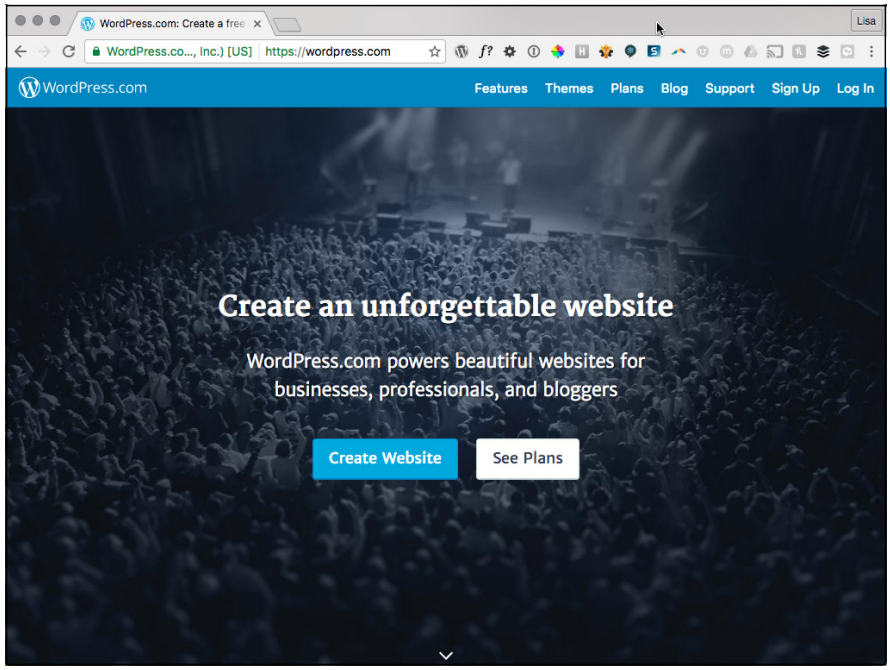

FIGURE 5-1: The WordPress.com website.

WordPress.com offers several upgrades (see Figure 5-2) to help make your publishing life easier. Here's a list of package upgrades you can purchase to enhance your WordPress.com account, with prices reflecting the annual cost:

- **Personal:** This plan allows you to add your own domain name to your WordPress.com account; see Book 2, Chapter 1. This service also provides you email and live chat support, basic design customizations, and 3GB of storage space. For the additional fee, your site also becomes ad-free. (With the free plan, WordPress.com advertisements are part of your experience.) This plan costs $2.99 per month, billed annually at $35.88 per year.
- **Premium:** This plan provides you everything included in the Personal plan and also includes more advanced theme customization (full control of the CSS), increased storage space at 13GB, the ability to monetize your site, and VideoPress support. This plan costs $8.25 per month, billed annually at $99 per year.

  The VideoPress service is described in the "Discovering WordPress VIP Services" section at the end of this chapter.
- **Business:** This plan provides you everything included in both the Personal and Premium plans. In addition, you have access to premium themes, unlimited storage space, live courses, Google Analytics integration, and the removal of all WordPress.com branding — all for the cost of $24.92 per month, billed annually at $299.04 per year.

TIP

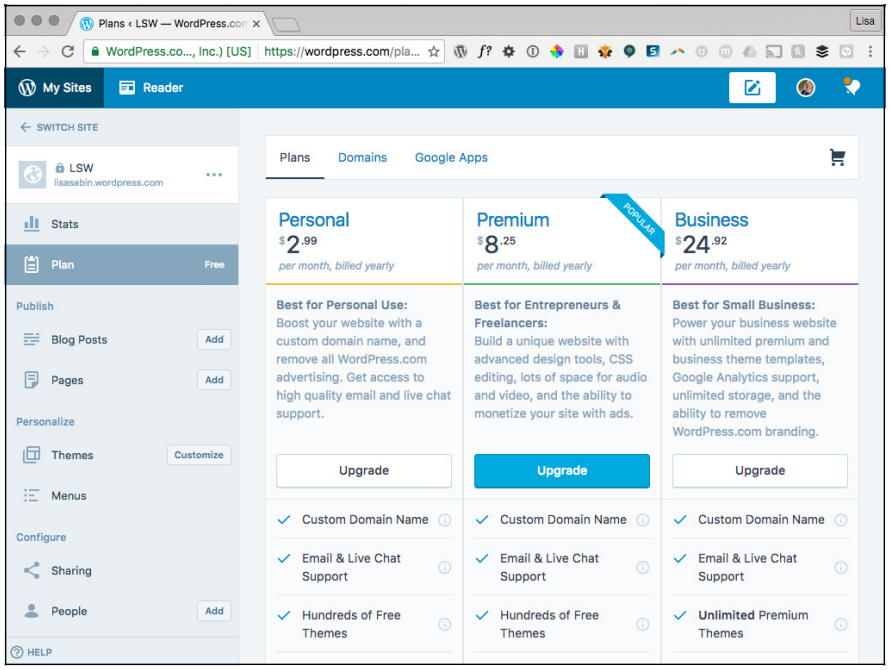

FIGURE 5-2: Several paid upgrades available on the WordPress.com free service.

TIP

WordPress.com has some limitations. You can't install plugins or custom themes, for example. Neither can you can customize the base-code files, sell advertising, or monetize your site without upgrading to a paid plan. But even with its limitations, WordPress.com is an excellent starting point if you're brand-new to Internet publishing and a little intimidated by the configuration requirements of the self-installed WordPress.org software.

The good news is that if you outgrow your WordPress.com-hosted site and want to move to the self-hosted WordPress.org software, you can. You can even take all the content from your WordPress.com-hosted site with you and easily import it into your new setup with the WordPress.org software.

Therefore, in the grand scheme of things, your options aren't really that limited.

Self-hosting with WordPress.org

The self-installed version from WordPress.org is the primary focus of *WordPress All-in-One For Dummies.* Using WordPress.org requires you to download the software from the WordPress website at `https://wordpress.org` (shown in Figure 5-3); then you need to install it on a server from which your website operates.

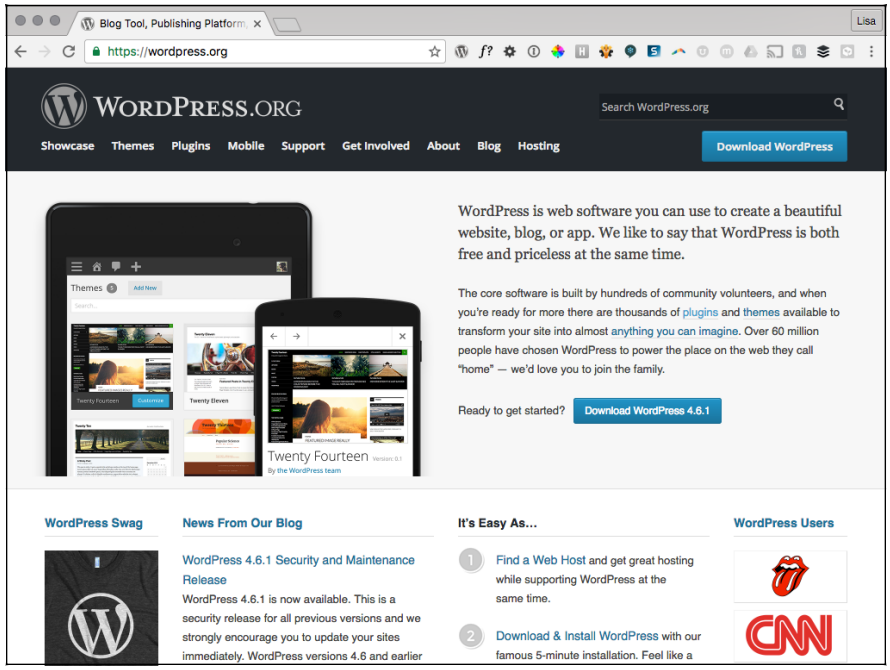

FIGURE 5-3: The WordPress.org website.

The WordPress.org website is an excellent repository of tools and resources for you throughout the lifespan of your WordPress-powered website, so be sure to bookmark it for future reference! Here's a list of helpful things that you can find on the website:

- **Plugins (`https://wordpress.org/plugins`):** The WordPress Plugins page houses a full directory of plugins available for WordPress. You can search for and find the plugins you need for search engine optimization (SEO) enhancement, comment management, and social media integration, among many others.
- **Themes (`https://wordpress.org/themes`):** The Theme Directory page, shown in Figure 5-4, is a repository of WordPress themes that are free for the taking. In this section of the WordPress.org website, you can browse more than 5,000 themes to use on your site to dress up your content.
- **Codex (`https://codex.wordpress.org`):** Almost every piece of software released comes with documentation and user manuals. The Support section of the WordPress.org website contains the WordPress Codex, which tries to help you answer questions about the use of WordPress and its various features and functions.

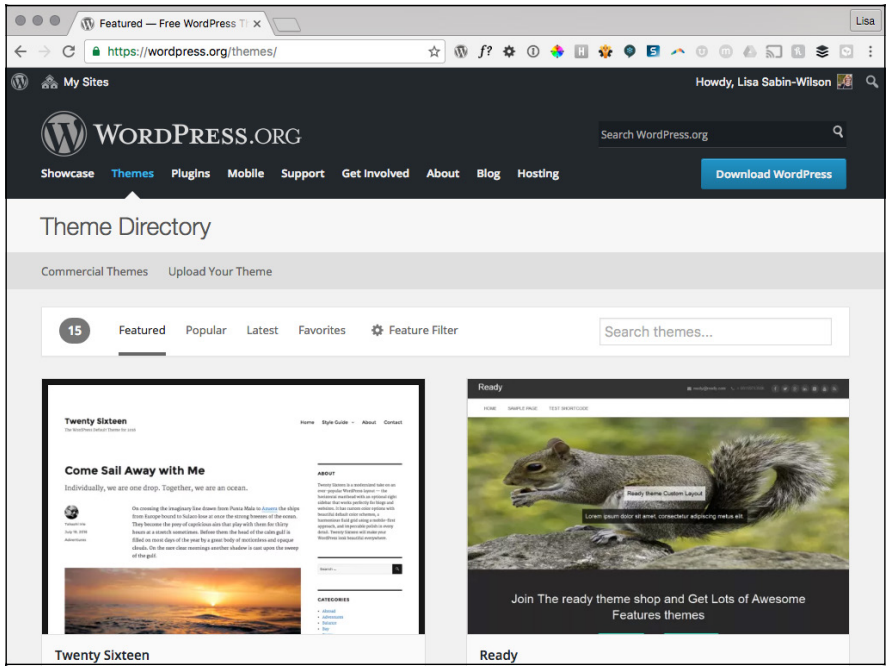

FIGURE 5-4: Theme Directory on WordPress.org.

- **Forums (`https://wordpress.org/support`):** The support forums at WordPress.org involve WordPress users from all over with one goal: finding out how to use WordPress to suit their particular needs. The support forums are very much a community of users (from beginners to experts) helping other users, and you can generally obtain a solution to your WordPress needs here from other users of the software.
- **Roadmap (`https://wordpress.org/about/roadmap`):** This section of the WordPress.org website doesn't contain support information or tools that you can download; it offers an at-a-glance peek at what's new and upcoming for WordPress. The Roadmap page gives you a pretty accurate idea of when WordPress will release the next version of its software; see Book 1, Chapter 3 for information about versions and release cycles.

  Click the version number to visit the WordPress Trac and see what features developers are working on and adding.

TIP

WordPress.org is the self-installed, self-hosted software version of WordPress that you install on a web server you've set up on a domain that you've registered. Unless you own your own web server, you need to lease one. Leasing space on a web server is *web hosting*, and unless you know someone who knows someone, hosting generally isn't free.

That said, web hosting doesn't cost a whole lot, either. You can usually obtain a good, basic web hosting service for anywhere from $10 to $15 per month. (Book 2, Chapters 1 and 2 give you some great information on web hosting accounts and tools.) You need to make sure, however, that any web host you choose to work with has the required software installed on the web server. The recommended minimum software requirements for WordPress include

- PHP version 5.6 or later
- MySQL version 5.6 or later *or* MariaDB version 10.0 or later

After you have WordPress installed on your web server (see the installation instructions in Book 2, Chapter 4), you can start using it to publish to your heart's content. With the WordPress software, you can install several plugins that extend the functionality of the software, as I describe in Book 7. You also have full control of the core files and code that WordPress is built on. If you have a knack for PHP and knowledge of MySQL, you can work within the code to make changes that you think would be good for you and your website.

You don't need design or coding ability to make your site look great. Members of the WordPress community have created more than 1,600 WordPress themes (designs), and you can download them free and install them on your WordPress blog. (See Book 6, Chapter 2.) Additionally, if you're creatively inclined, like to create designs on your own, and know Cascading Style Sheets (CSS), you have full access to the template system within WordPress and can create your own custom themes. (See Book 6, Chapters 3 through 7.)

Hosting Multiple Sites with One WordPress Installation

The self-hosted WordPress.org software also lets you run an unlimited number of sites on one installation of its software platform, on one domain. When you configure the options within WordPress to enable a multisite interface, you become administrator of a network of sites. All the options remain the same, but with the multisite options configured, you can add more sites and domains, as well as allow registered users of your website to host their own sites within your network. For more information about the Multisite feature in WordPress, see Book 8.

The following types of sites use the Network options within WordPress:

- **Blog networks,** which can have more than 150 blogs. The tech giant Microsoft uses WordPress to power thousands of tech blogs at its TechNet

portal: `https://blogs.technet.microsoft.com/wikininjas/2016/09/25/sunday-surprise-technet-forums`.

- **Newspapers and magazines,** such as *The New York Times,* and universities, such as Harvard Law School, use WordPress to manage the blog sections of their websites.
- **Niche-specific blog networks,** such as Edublogs.org, use WordPress to manage their full networks of free sites for teachers, educators, lecturers, librarians, and other education professionals.

TIP

Extensive information on running a network of sites by using the Multisite feature in WordPress is available in Book 8. The chapters there take you through everything: setup, maintenance, and the process of running a network of sites with one WordPress installation.

With the Multisite features enabled, users of your network can run their own sites within your installation of WordPress. They also have access to their own Dashboards with the same options and features you read about in Book 3. Heck, it probably would be a great idea to buy a copy of this book for every member within your network so everyone can become familiar with the WordPress Dashboard and features, too. At least have a copy on hand so people can borrow yours!

If you plan to run just a few of your own sites with the WordPress Multisite feature, your current hosting situation is probably well suited. (See Book 2, Chapter 1 for information on web hosting services.) If you plan to host a large network with hundreds of sites and multiple users, however, you should consider contacting your host and increasing your bandwidth and the disk space limitations on your account.

The best example of a large blog network with hundreds of blogs and users (actually, more like millions) would be the hosted service at WordPress.com, which I discuss earlier in this chapter. At WordPress.com, people are invited to sign up for an account and start a blog by using the Multisite feature within the WordPress platform on the WordPress server. When you enable this feature on your own domain and enable the user registration feature (covered later in this chapter), you invite users to

- Create an account
- Create a site on your WordPress installation (on your domain)
- Create content by publishing posts and pages
- Upload media files, such as photos, audio, and video
- Invite their friends to view their blogs or sign up for their own accounts

WARNING

In addition to the necessary security measures, time, and administrative tasks that go into running a community of sites, you have a few things to worry about. Creating a community increases the resource use, bandwidth, and disk space on your web server. In many cases, if you go over the allotted limits given to you by your web host, you incur great cost. Make sure that you anticipate your bandwidth and disk-space needs before running a large network on your website! (Don't say you weren't warned.)

REMEMBER

Many WordPress network communities start with grand dreams of being large and active. Be realistic about how your community will operate to make the right hosting choice for yourself and your community.

Small Internet communities are handled easily with a shared-server solution; larger, more active communities should consider a dedicated server solution for operation. The difference between the two lies in their names:

- **Shared-server solution:** You have one account on one server that has several other accounts on it. Think of this as apartment living. One building has several apartments under one roof.
- **Dedicated server:** You have one account on one server. The server is dedicated to your account, and your account is dedicated to the server. Think of this as owning a home where you don't share your living space with anyone else.

A dedicated-server solution is a more expensive investment for your community; a shared-server solution is more economical. Base your decision on how big and how active you estimate that your community will be. You can move from a shared-server solution to a dedicated-server solution if your community becomes larger than you expect, but starting with the right solution for your community from day one is best. For more information on hosting WordPress, see Book 2, Chapter 1.

Discovering WordPress VIP Services

The company behind the Automattic WordPress.com service is owned and operated by the WordPress cofounder, Matt Mullenweg. Although Automattic doesn't own the WordPress.org software, Automattic is a driving force behind all things WordPress.

REMEMBER

As an open-source platform, WordPress.org is owned by the community and hundreds of developers that contribute to the core code.

Have a look at the Automattic website at `https://automattic.com` (shown in Figure 5-5). The folks behind WordPress own and operate several properties and services that can extend the features of your WordPress site, including

- **WordPress.com (`https://wordpress.com`):** A hosted WordPress blogging service, discussed previously in this chapter.
- **Jetpack (`https://jetpack.com`):** A suite of plugins that can be installed on a WordPress.org self-hosted site.
- **VaultPress (`https://vaultpress.com`):** Premium backup and restoration service for your blog.
- **Akismet (`https://akismet.com`):** Spam protection for your blog. This service comes with every WordPress.org installation, but there are different levels of service, as discussed in Book 3, Chapter 4.
- **Polldaddy (`https://polldaddy.com`):** A polling and survey software that easily plugs into the WordPress platform.

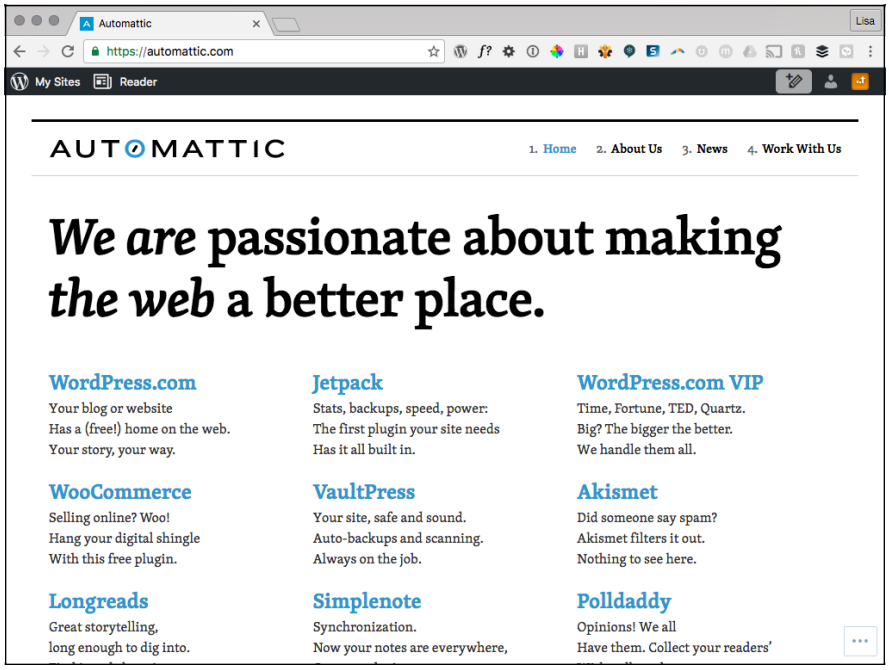

FIGURE 5-5: The Automattic website.

- **VideoPress (`https://videopress.com`):** Video hosting and sharing application for WordPress.
- **Gravatar (`https://gravatar.com`):** Photos or graphical icons for comment authors (discussed in Book 3, Chapter 2).
- **Longreads (`https://longreads.com`):** Great examples of storytelling on the Internet.
- **Simplenote (`https://simplenote.com`):** An easy way to keep notes across various iOS, Android, Mac, and Windows devices.
- **WordPress.com VIP (`https://vip.wordpress.com`):** Enterprise-level web hosting and WordPress support starting at $15,000 per year (usually reserved for heavy hitters such as CNN, BBC, and *Time* magazine, for example).
- **Cloudup (`https://cloudup.com`):** Easy sharing of media including videos, music, photos, and documents.

2 Setting Up the WordPress Software

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IN THIS CHAPTER

- Registering a domain name
- Exploring web hosting environments
- Knowing the basic requirements for PHP and MySQL
- Getting web hosting recommendations for WordPress
- Understanding bandwidth and disk space needs

Chapter 1

Understanding the System Requirements

Before you can start blogging with WordPress, you have to set up your foundation. Doing so involves more than simply downloading and installing the WordPress software. You also need to establish your *domain* (your website address) and your *web hosting service* (the place that houses your website). Although you initially download your WordPress software onto your hard drive, you install it on a web hosting server.

Obtaining a web server and installing software on it is something you may already have done on your site, in which case you can move on to the next chapter. If you haven't installed WordPress, you must first consider many factors, as well as cope with a learning curve, because setting up your website through a hosting service involves using some technologies that you may not feel comfortable with. This chapter takes you through the basics of those technologies, and by the last page of this chapter, you'll have WordPress successfully installed on a web server with your own domain name.

Establishing Your Domain

You've read all the hype. You've heard all the rumors. You've seen the flashy websites powered by WordPress. But where do you start?

The first steps in installing and setting up a WordPress site are making a decision about a domain name and then purchasing the registration of that name through a domain registrar. A *domain name* is the *unique* web address that you type in a web browser's address bar to visit a website. Some examples of domain names are `WordPress.org` and `Google.com`.

REMEMBER

I emphasize *unique* because no two domain names can be the same. If someone else has registered the domain name you want, you can't have it. With that in mind, it sometimes takes a bit of time to find a domain that isn't already in use.

Understanding domain name extensions

When registering a domain name, be aware of the *extension* that you want. The `.com`, `.net`, `.org`, `.info`, or `.biz` extension that you see tagged onto the end of any domain name is the *top-level domain extension.* When you register your domain name, you're asked to choose the extension you want for your domain (as long as it's available, that is).

A word to the wise here: Just because you registered your domain as a `.com` doesn't mean that someone else doesn't, or can't, own the very same domain name with a `.net`. Therefore, if you register `MyDogHasFleas.com`, and the site becomes hugely popular among readers with dogs that have fleas, someone else can come along, register `MyDogHasFleas.net`, and run a similar site to yours in the hope of riding the coattails of your website's popularity and readership.

DOMAIN NAMES: DO YOU OWN OR RENT?

When you "buy" a domain name, you don't really own it. Rather, you're purchasing the right to use that domain name for the time specified in your order. You can register a domain name for one year or up to ten years. Be aware, however, that if you don't renew the domain name when your registration period ends, you lose it — and most often, you lose it right away to someone who preys on abandoned or expired domain names. Some people keep a close watch on expiring domain names, and as soon as the buying window opens, they snap the names up and start using them for their own websites, in the hope of taking full advantage of the popularity that the previous owners worked so hard to attain for those domains.

If you want to avert this problem, you can register your domain name with all available extensions. My personal website, for example, has the domain name `lisasabin-wilson.com`, but I also own `lisasabin-wilson.net` just in case someone else out there has the same combination of names.

Considering the cost of a domain name

Registering a domain costs you anywhere from $5 to $300 per year or more, depending on what service you use for a registrar and what options (such as storage space, bandwidth, privacy options, search engine submission services, and so on) you apply to your domain name during the registration process.

REMEMBER

When you pay the domain registration fee today, you need to pay another registration fee when the renewal date comes up again in a year, or two, or five — however many years you chose to register your domain name for. (See the nearby "Domain names: Do you own or rent?" sidebar.) Most registrars give you the option of signing up for a service called Auto Renew to automatically renew your domain name and bill the charges to the credit card you set up on that account. The registrar sends you a reminder a few months in advance, telling you that it's time to renew. If you don't have Auto Renew set up, you need to log in to your registrar account before it expires and manually renew your domain name.

TIP

When choosing a domain name for your website, you may find that the domain name you want isn't available. You know if it's available when you search for it at the domain registrar's website (listed in the next section). Have some backup domain names prepared just in case the one you want isn't available. If your chosen domain name is `cutepuppies.com`, but it's not available, you could have some variations of the domain ready to use, such as `cute-puppies.com` (notice the dash), `mycutepuppies.com`, or `reallycutepuppies.com`.

Registering your domain name

Domain registrars are certified and approved by the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN). Although hundreds of domain registrars exist, the ones in the following list are popular because of their longevity in the industry, competitive pricing, and variety of services they offer in addition to domain name registration (such as web hosting and website traffic builders):

- **GoDaddy:** `https://www.godaddy.com`
- **Register.com:** `https://www.register.com`
- **Network Solutions:** `https://www.networksolutions.com`
- **NamesDirect:** `http://namesdirect.com`

No matter where you choose to register your domain name, here are the steps you can take to accomplish this task:

1. **Decide on a domain name.**

   A little planning and forethought are necessary here. Many people think of a domain name as a *brand* — a way of identifying their websites or blogs. Think of potential names for your site and then proceed with your plan.

2. **Verify the domain name's availability.**

   In your web browser, enter the URL of the domain registrar of your choice. Look for the section on the registrar's website that lets you enter the domain name (typically, a short text field) to see whether it's available. If the domain name isn't available as a `.com`, try `.net` or `.info`.

3. **Purchase the domain name.**

   Follow the domain registrar's steps to purchase the name, using your credit card. After you complete the checkout process, you receive an email confirming your purchase, so be sure to use a valid email address during the registration process.

The next step is obtaining a hosting account, which the next section covers.

REMEMBER

Some of the domain registrars have hosting services that you can sign up for, but you don't have to use those services. Often, you can find hosting services for a lower cost than most domain registrars offer. It just takes a little research.

Finding a Home for Your Blog

After you register your domain, you need to find a place for it to live: a web host. Web hosting is the second piece of the puzzle that you need to complete before you begin working with WordPress.org.

A *web host* is a business, group, or person that provides web server space and bandwidth for file transfer to website owners who don't have it. Usually, web hosting services charge a monthly or an annual fee — unless you're fortunate enough to know someone who's willing to give you server space and bandwidth free. The cost varies from host to host, but you can usually obtain quality web hosting services for $10 to $30 per month to start.

REMEMBER

When discussing web hosting considerations, it's important to understand where your hosting account ends and WordPress begins. Support for the WordPress software may or may not be included in your hosting package.

Some web hosts consider WordPress to be a *third-party application.* This means that the host typically won't provide technical support on the use of WordPress (or any other software application) because software support generally isn't included in your hosting package. The web host supports your hosting account but typically doesn't support the software you choose to install.

On the other hand, if your web host supports the software on your account, it comes at a cost: You have to pay for that extra support. To find whether your chosen host supports WordPress, ask first. If your host doesn't offer software support, you can still find WordPress support in the support forums at `https://wordpress.org/support`, as shown in Figure 1-1.

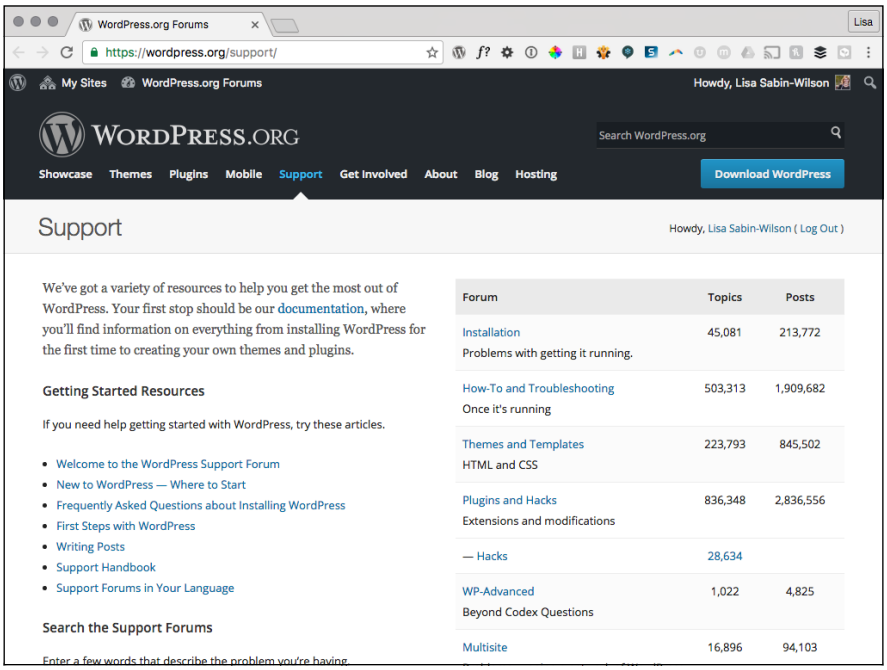

FIGURE 1-1: The WordPress support forums.

TIP

Several web hosting providers also have WordPress-related services available for additional fees. These services can include technical support, plugin installation and configuration, and theme design.

Generally, hosting services provide (at least) these services with your account:

- Hard drive space
- Bandwidth (transfer)