

WordPress - Planning the Content for Your Russell Labs Website

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You may be tempted to dive into your new Russell Labs WordPress site and start entering content.

However, if you do that, you may find later that you have to reorganize and possibly re-write your content.

A little planning at the beginning goes a long way.

Who Will Visit Your Site?

Spend a bit of time considering who you want to visit your site. The most effective websites are tailored to specific audiences, to make it easy for them to quickly locate the information they want.

Audiences could include:

For a research site:

- potential grad students
- professional peers

For a student organization:

- potential members
- existing members
- potential donors

What Standard Pages Do You Want on Your Site?

Consider what standard pages you want for your website. Here are some examples:

Research Site	Student Organization
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Home• About (might be named for the faculty member)• Research• Opportunities• Publications• Teaching• Prospective Students• Contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Home• Activities• Meeting Minutes• Elections• Job Links• Mission• Officers• Related Sites• Volunteering

For a research site, how will you handle your lab assistant profiles? Will you have a summary page listing all lab assistants, then let each lab assistant have their own page, linked to the summary page?

Will You Pull in Outside Content?

To keep the site fresh and encourage visitors to return, many sites pull in content from another website. The content appears inside a block, as though it was part of your site. The technology is called an RSS feed. Examples include:

- Feeds from an existing Google calendar of events
- Feeds from a parent organization, e.g. news from the national chapter of The Wildlife Society student group.
- Feeds from a scientific journal, e.g. information from the CDC Emerging Infectious Diseases Journal.
- Feeds from a blog you write at another site, e.g. Blogger or Blogspot.

Tip: To find out if a site has an RSS feed, search the site for RSS. You can then email the link to Russell Labs IT just before your WordPress tutorial session.

How Will You Organize Your Content?

WordPress makes it very easy to quickly create content.

That can be a mixed blessing. If you go overboard creating content, your visitors may drown in it trying to find the one piece of information they're looking for.

Ways to Organize Content

- Menu
- Tags
- Sidebars

Menu

As you create pages, they are automatically added to the menu. The problem: the menu is horizontal and there is only so much space. When the number of page links exceeds the horizontal space, the menu wraps, and that's not a pretty sight.

Fortunately you can create a multi-level menu where the visible menu links are "parent" entries. When the visitor hovers the cursor over a parent menu entry, a "child" menu appears, with pages related to the parent menu entry. For example, the Peery Lab menu (<http://labs.russell.wisc.edu/peery/>):

Parent Menu Entry	Child Menu Entry
Home	none
Zach Peery	none
Lab Members	pages for each lab member
Research Projects	pages for each research project
Teaching	pages for each course
Recent Publications	none
Prospective Students	none

Tags

Tags let you add a descriptive phrase to posts.

Tags only work on posts, not on pages.

"Posts" are also known as blog posts, or articles. Posts:

- do not appear on menus
- can be found through a site search
- may appear as links in a "tag" cloud widget* (see <http://labs.russell.wisc.edu/>)

* A widget is a tool that lets you customize your sidebar.

Categories

Categories let you categorize content.

Like tags, categories only work on posts, not on pages.

Categories allow you to group related posts together and display links inside a Category Posts widget. For example, the Zuckerberg Lab uses posts and categories to create an Opportunities block and a Research News block in the sidebar.

To Summarize:

- pages appear on the menu
- posts can appear in widgets in the sidebar

Will You Write a Blog? Do You Have the Time?

Blogs can require a lot of effort. If you start a blog and then pause in posting, or stop altogether, visitors may look at the date of your last blog entry and decide the site has been abandoned.

Will You Include Photos on Your Website?

If you want to include photos on your website, consider:

- where you will acquire the photos (do **NOT** copy them off the Web!!!!)
- where you will use the photo - on a particular page, or in the photo banner
- if the photo will be used in the banner, is it the right size? (check our handout *Photo Prep Tips for Russell Labs WordPress Websites* for more info)
- does the photo need to be prepped - cropped, adjusted for contrast, focus, color

Will the Photos Be Stored in WordPress, or Offsite?

You can upload photos to WordPress, or you can store them offsite (e.g. Picasa, PhotoBucket) and link to them. You can use the kPicasa widget to display galleries of images stored at Picasa.

Will You Use an Image Slider?

One way to add “sparkle” to your homepage is to create an animated image slider through our RoyalSlider plugin. For example, see The Wildlife Society homepage:

<http://labs.russell.wisc.edu/tws/>

Will You Use an Event Calendar?

If you have a Google calendar, you can use the Google Calendar widget to link to the information (through RSS) and display a calendar in your sidebar.

You can also create an events calendar and maintain it with WordPress, and display the calendar in the sidebar.

How Will Visitors Contact You?

Consider where you want your contact information to appear. A few ideas:

- a Contact Us page (highly recommended - it’s the first place visitors look)
- in the footer (not the greatest idea as people generally don’t scroll down that far on a page)
- in the right sidebar (OK, but it takes up space)

You can also create a contact form to gather specific information.

This will hide your email address and reduce junk mail.

You can create a form with the plugin Formidable Forms.

Note: Russell Labs IT turns comments off on all new sites. Turning comments on greatly increases the maintenance on your site due to spamming.