



THE OFFICIAL



Joomla!™

{book}

Jennifer Marriott
Elin Waring

Foreword by Andrew Eddie



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To my husband, Pete

—Jennifer

To Tom, Bobby, and Linnea

—Elin

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Foreword

Joomla! is steeped in a rich and sometimes controversial history. During its tumultuous start in August of 2005, no one could have imagined how far this little project would stretch in terms of reach, nor could anyone have imagined how much it would grow in terms of depth of participation and resources available to the community. I still vividly remember the day I published the now famous “Open Letter to the Community” that you find in Chapter 1 of this book. Those were uncertain times for the 19 founders and hundred or so members of the forum team to leave comfortable surroundings and start over with nothing but courage and raw determination.

Today, I am writing this foreword having just attended a 200-person-strong local conference in San Jose, California, and my compatriot across the table is off to Italy to address 700 at a similar event. These are but two of dozens of such events held all around the world each year, on every continent (except Antarctica of course, but maybe one day), to celebrate as a community this amazing thing called Joomla! The right words are hard to find, but one is certainly appropriate: Wow!

Joomla!’s mission is “to provide a flexible platform for digital publishing and collaboration.” To that end, and at the time of this writing, we have 64 official languages; hundreds of professional service providers; over six-thousand (that we know about) Joomla! extensions; thousands of template designs to choose from; and tens of millions of Web sites deployed all around the world. Joomla! is arguably the easiest software program of its type—both to use and to master. It has been designed both for the most basic user and for the master artisan who wants to take a site beyond the normal limits of the core download. Joomla! carries a legacy of a user interface with pleasing eye-candy and a wide choice of the most beautiful templates available for any site-building system in the world. Particularly close to my heart is our passion for continuing to improve the way in which we deliver Joomla! to more and more people in their own languages.

All together by name and all together by nature, Joomla! (meaning “all together” in Swahili) sought from the very beginning to ensure it would be free for the entire community at its founding and into the future. It was set up deliberately to ensure that no one person could ever “own” Joomla!, a detail that gives Open Source Matters—the Joomla! nonprofit—the freedom to provide stewardship in the best interests of the project rather than a parent company’s bottom line. Combined with the two main project leadership teams for software production and community management, Joomla! as a whole has one of the most progressive and mature leadership structures of any open source project.

Five years after its founding—and on the heels of both Microsoft and eBay becoming collaborators and contributors to the Joomla! core source code—we begin another phase

in our life journey as a project: the inception of Joomla! Press and the first (with extreme emphasis on “first”) official Joomla! book. Joomla! is about allowing ordinary people to do extraordinary things, and that is exactly what the authors of this book do for its readers. So, without further ado, I present this book for your pleasure. It begins with how we began and takes you on a journey through which you can be empowered to reach the world.

—Andrew Eddie
Member of the Joomla! Production Leadership Team
October 2010

Joomla! Press Mission Statement

The mission of Joomla! Press is to enhance the Joomla! experience by providing useful, well-written, and engaging publications for all segments of the Joomla! Community from beginning users to framework developers. Titles in Joomla! Press are authored by leading experts and contributors in the community.

Preface

When planning what should be in a book about Joomla!, we thought hard about the process we go through when building Web sites and when helping others build sites. We decided that this book should be about building a Web site using Joomla! rather than how to use Joomla! to build a Web site. Even though you can make a Web site using Joomla! in a few hours (or less), most likely it won't be a great site, and it won't allow you take advantage of the power of Joomla! The focus should always be on how you envision your site, the goals of the site, and the audiences you want to reach rather than on the technology used to create it.

Fortunately, with its combination of power and ease of use, Joomla! lets you keep your focus on the big picture of your site and the small details of your content and not on mastering a complicated set of processes. This is why we start with a thorough discussion of things to think about *before* you start building your site.

We've also built a set of very simple sample sites that will give you a good idea of the initial process of thinking about and then building sites for various purposes. We hope that you'll follow along with the construction of those sites so that you understand the process that site developers use. If you do these tasks first, you will be ready to build your own site with confidence and a good plan.

In addition, we try to help you have a basic understanding of how Joomla! really works "under the hood" so that when you are ready to take advantage of the power that comes with its extensibility, you will have the knowledge to do that in the right way. We think that, like us, you will want to steadily increase the sophistication of your site and your knowledge and understanding of Joomla! So, we've written this book with the idea of giving you a strong foundation for the future of your site and other sites you may build in the future. Free and open source software is empowering, but you need to have solid knowledge of the fundamentals to take advantage of it.

We're passionate about Joomla!, and we hope that you will be, too. That's why we take time in this book to introduce you to the Joomla! project and the Joomla! community. We hope that you'll want to become an active participant in the Joomla! world. And we hope that you enjoy building your site so much that you end up building other sites for the friends, family members, organizations, or causes you care about.

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Acknowledgments

This book benefited greatly from the help of many people, named and unnamed. We thank them for their assistance.

We especially thank all the contributors to the Joomla! project who have worked so hard together to produce and support this amazing software. All of the people we interview in Chapter 12 have taught and inspired us day in and day out, many since the day the Joomla! was born, and we are lucky enough to consider them friends, too. Thanks to Andrew Eddie, Chris Davenport, Brad Baker, Wendy Robinson, Louis Landry, Ian MacLennan, Sam Moffatt, Mark Dexter, Ryan Ozimek, Vic Drover, and Gary Brooks. There are dozens of others whose knowledge we have built on including Anthony Ferrara, Michelle Bisson, Toni Marie Swats, James Vasile, Rob Schley, Dave Huelsmann, Lorenzo Garcia, Jean-Marie Simonet, Angie Radke, Andrea Tarr, Alan Langford, Leslie Hawthorn, and others.

We also thank all those participants in the Joomla! forums who answered our questions and asked us their own questions and contributors to the Joomla! documentation wiki, both of which taught us how to use Joomla! in more depth. The Joomla! Bug Squad has been a continuous source of inspiration.

Then there are the people who really made this book possible. Pete and Tom, Linnea and Robert, our families, and the Odd Sheep who were so supportive and put up with a lot while we were writing. Also, to our numerous friends who were given a sudden introduction to Joomla! and who gave of their time to read chapters and give encouragement and suggestions, thank you.

A very special thank you to Terrence H. Pocock for bringing home a Teletype, which inspired a lifetime love of technology in his youngest daughter. And to Joan and Fred Waring for showing their daughter a counter sorter.

Thank you to Gabrielle Heller, who read the whole manuscript, and of course Debra Williams Cauley at Addison-Wesley, who was a tireless advocate for Joomla! Press and kept us on track.

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About the Authors

Jennifer Marriott owns and operates a Web development company, Marpo Multimedia, that specializes in Joomla!-powered Web sites. Her company is located in northeastern Oklahoma, and although separated by distance, Jennifer stays close to her Canadian roots.

Jennifer joined the Joomla! community during the beginning days in 2005 and began volunteering as a forum moderator shortly after. Over the years she has taken on various roles in the community in addition to moderator, such as Joomla! Bug Squad member, Joomla! Google Summer of Code coadministrator and mentor, and Trademark and Licensing Team Leader. Although Jennifer has stepped down from her official roles in the Joomla! project, she remains an active community member.

In addition to her work in all things technology related, Jennifer is a professional musician. She has two CDs released, and in 2010 she went back into the studio to record her third release.

Elin Waring is a longtime Joomla! user and former president of Open Source Matters, the nonprofit organization that provides legal, financial, and organizational support to the Joomla! project. In that role, she led a number of initiatives ranging from writing the translation policy to obtaining a trademark for the Joomla! brand. She has made more than 6,000 posts on the Joomla! forums and wrote most of the Frequently Asked Questions for Joomla! 1.0. She is an active member of the Joomla! Bug Squad and participates in many Joomla! events.

Elin is a professor of sociology at Lehman College, City University of New York, where she teaches research methods. She has published a number of books, including *White Collar Crime and Criminal Careers* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), *Crimes of the Middle Classes: White Collar Offenders in the Federal Courts* (Yale University Press, 1991), and *Russian Mafia in America: Immigration, Culture, and Crime* (Northeastern, 2001) as well as scholarly articles in the areas of white collar crime, organized crime, and social organization.

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Caring for Your Joomla! Web Site and Helpful Tips

Once your Web site is created and online, the work doesn't stop. It is important to note that being the administrator of a Web site takes ongoing work to keep it updated, to keep your content fresh, to advertise and market it, and to keep your visitors engaged. Depending on what type of site you have created, the workload may be more or less, but all Web site administrators need to take a proactive approach and stay on top of taking care of their Web site. This chapter will explain some best practices and simple steps to keep up your Web site and to continue growing your visitor exposure and brand reach.

First Impressions Count: What Your Home Page Says About You

If you browse the Web randomly, you can see examples of all the good, the bad, and the ugly. Some home pages draw you into the site, and others make you wince. Here are some helpful tips on making sure your home page is a winner.

- Avoid splash pages. Splash or intro pages were really popular a few years ago. Usually it was just a page showing an image, Flash media, or video segment with a button or a link that said "Enter" or "Enter site" or "Skip intro." Splash pages really do not offer anything of useful value to your site visitors. They force your visitors to make an unnecessary click just to get to the information they came to your site for in the first place. They also add very little in terms of practical information and relevancy to search engines.
- Make your site navigation easy to locate and use. It can be tempting to be clever with navigation, but forcing users to play a game of hide-and-seek with your navigation will result in lost visitors.
- Blinking, flashing, scrolling, or animated items should be kept to a minimum and should be tastefully done. Items on your page that scroll, blink, flash, or are animated need special care. If items scroll, make sure the information that is scrolling is easily readable, and adjust scrolling speeds as needed. Blinking and flashing items

are almost always not good for any site; most people will be turned off by items that are flickering or flashing, and for some people it can induce seizures. W3schools has more information on accessibility and the implications of blinking or flashing at www.w3.org/TR/WCAG20. Slide shows or animation should be of high quality, the subject matter should be easily identifiable, and as with scrolling, whatever animation or slide-show speed that is used should be adjusted so that the subject matter is able to be understood by the visitor. Placing what is called “eye candy” on a site simply for artistic reason, without it having meaningful reason to be there such as an actionable item or to impart site information, will distract from the content of your site. Content and information are the two main reasons why people will visit your site.

- Dynamic sites such as those created by CMSs like Joomla! give you the flexibility to showcase new content in compartmentalized areas on the home page such as a list of latest news or updated content and products. This is a great opportunity to guide your visitors into your site and direct them to the actions or interaction you want your visitors to take part in.
- If your site generates revenue with any sort of advertising such as banners, affiliate links, or other advertising such as referrer pay per click, to be effective it needs to be tastefully done (see the earlier comment on blinking and flashing). Experiment with ad placements on your home page to see how your visitors’ click patterns work. Ads need to be highly visible but should not interfere with the information you are trying to impart to your visitors and in no way should you be attempting to trick your visitors into clicking your ads by disguising them as your site content. Doing that will irritate your visitors and in some instances get you banned from participating in the revenue programs.
- Don’t automatically play video or audio. (Also see the previous comments on splash pages.) There are a number of reasons to not use automatically playing audio or video. You have no idea how loud a visitor’s speakers are, their bandwidth limitations, or the speed of their connection. It can be assaultive and intrusive. Another factor is that you don’t know where your visitors are when they are browsing your site. If they are at work, it can be disruptive to their workplace or any environment where the visitor is located. You are wasting your bandwidth and also your visitor’s bandwidth allotment on their ISP service when you automatically stream audio or video, especially if it is your home page. It can be annoying and frustrating to your visitors who don’t want to watch or hear the same thing over and over again every time they visit your page. The best thing to do is to give incentive for people to electively choose to watch the video or listen to the audio; be creative, and give them a reason to click. The absolute worst thing to do is to insist on automatically playing audio or video and give the visitor no way to stop or pause it. That will pretty much guarantee that a significant portion of your visitors will never return to your site.
- Have a search module on your home page and every page in a consistent location. Users generally expect to find this on the top right of each page, so locate it there if possible.

Your home page is the introduction to your brand, your Web site, your work, or your product. It should exemplify exactly who you are and what you do. Depending on their purpose, some sites want the home page to show everything at a glance with details only one click away. Their intent isn't necessarily to have visitors explore the site, but to get the information they need quickly and efficiently. On the opposite side of the spectrum, some sites use the home page to direct visitors to explore and interact, drawing them deeper into the site and the information it contains. You should consider where your planned site fits in this spectrum. Every site wants return visitors; you want your demographic to come back to your site, your work, or your product and become loyal to your brand.

The other important part your home page plays is in search engine optimization (SEO). This page should contain rich key phrases that are relevant to your content and topic. If your site is geographically important, such as offering a service in a distinct service area, you should highlight that geographic service area in text. It makes sense to be targeting search users and visitors from that specific geographical area, and stating the area you service will make it easier for people to find your site. Although keywords and key phrases are important, it is important to make sure they are used in context, in other words, in actual human-readable and enjoyable content. Keyword stuffing (overly repeating keywords for phrases, content that is nonsensical, run-on sentences or just lists of keywords, utilizing keywords that have nothing to do with the site topic) is frowned upon by the major search engines and could harm your search engine rankings.

Search Engines, SEO, Getting Listed, and Staying There

The topics of search engines, search engine optimization, how to get listed, how to get to the “top,” and how to stay there aren't a mystical science or magic. What those topics do involve is having realistic expectations, following a few basic principles, and most of all making your Web site relevant to the people who visit it and who will search for it.

It is a good idea to hold off on making your entire site available to search engines before it is ready or before you have settled on the overall navigation and search-engine-friendly URLs. One way to manage this is to make a single article for the home page of your site that gives a good summary of what the site is about. Keep the rest of your site hidden until it is ready by setting access to all content, menu items, and modules to Registered. Avoid the temptation to have “under construction” pages, since that is what search engines will read, index, and show in search results for your site. That can appear very unprofessional.

As discussed in Chapter 2, write a short paragraph summarizing the purpose of the site in the Global Site Meta Description box found in the Metadata Settings area of the Global Configuration Site tab. This is what most search engines will present to people looking at search results. In the Global Site Meta Keywords field, make a short, general list of relevant search terms that you think people will use to find your site. If your physical location is important information (for example, if you have an actual store), make

sure to include that in the keywords. Also select Yes for Show Title Meta Tag and Show Author Meta Tag. Both the description and keyword information entered should be concise and to the point, no more than 100 characters if possible. Stuffing either of these metadata options with excessive information, repetitive words, or incorrect information will not improve your search rankings. If your site is found to be using deceptive SEO practices, it could be removed and/or banned from inclusion. Figure 7.1 shows the Global Configuration – Site screen with the Metadata Settings options.

Submitting to Search Engines

You don't need to subscribe to a service or hire a SEO professional to submit your site to the major search engines/Web index directories—Google, Bing, Ask, and dmoz (Open Directory Project). Although there are a lot of other search engines and directories out there, those are the top players. Most of the other search engines and directories get their information from them and/or get an amalgamation of information from those search engines or directories; for example, Yahoo! will be getting its search results from Bing starting sometime in late 2010 or early 2011 as a result of their merger (according to their current press releases).

The Web site dmoz.org is the Open Directory Project where Webmasters, Web site owners, and administrators can submit their site to the appropriate category of the directory. Each submission is reviewed by an actual human editor to assure that the entry is

The screenshot shows the Joomla! Global Configuration - Site Settings screen. The 'Metadata Settings' section is highlighted. It includes the following options:

- Global Site Meta Description:** A text area containing the text: "This is where you would put in your global description of your site. Include good keywords, your business name and slogan."
- Global Site Meta Keywords:** A text area containing the text: "words,that,describe,your business,keyword rich,but not too many"
- Show Title Meta Tag:** Radio buttons for No and Yes, with Yes selected.
- Show Author Meta Tag:** Radio buttons for No and Yes, with Yes selected.

Other visible settings in the 'Site Settings' section include:

- Site Offline:** Radio buttons for No (selected) and Yes.
- Offline Message:** A text area containing: "This site is down for maintenance.
 Please check back again soon."
- Site Name:** A text input field containing "Your Site Name".
- Default WYSIWYG Editor:** A dropdown menu set to "Editor - TinyMCE".
- List Length:** A dropdown menu set to "20".
- Feed length:** A dropdown menu set to "10".
- Feed Email:** A dropdown menu set to "Author E-mail".

Figure 7.1 Global Configuration – Site Settings screen showing Metadata Settings section

acceptable, that it is submitted to the right category, and that the details submitted are verified. Dmoz.org is regularly scanned and indexed by most of the other major search engines, meaning there is a high level of quality to the information it offers as well as reliability. Having a listing on dmoz.org can be one way to try to get your new Web site picked up by the other search engines.

Google offers a variety of Webmaster tools to facilitate getting indexed and more importantly offers an easy way to submit not only your site but the pages your site contains. Using the extension Xmap on your site, you can submit the site map it generates to your Google Webmaster Tools account, which submits all your pages at one time for indexing. Google Webmaster Tools also offers a number of other services that can help you diagnose search engine optimization issues with your site such as broken links, items that may cause issues like duplicate titles or metadata, and whether any pages in your site are unreachable. Google actively expands the tools it offers. It is also good to have a Google Analytics account so you can analyze the traffic that your site gets.

Ask has a policy of needing a submission of an XML site map. Although Xmap does not generate a site map that is in an acceptable form for this submission, you can utilize free tools online such as the Site Map Generator from www.web-site-map.com, which will generate a site map that is in the correct form. Once you have generated and downloaded the site map it creates, you simply upload it using File Manager to the root of your site and then direct the Ask Submission URL to the site map. The URL to submit your site map is <http://submissions.ask.com/ping?sitemap=http%3A//www.YOURSITE.com/sitemap.xml>. Once submitted, you will be directed to a confirmation screen that verifies your site map has been submitted successfully.

Bing has a submission page that you fill out located at www.bing.com/webmaster/SubmitSitePage.aspx. Once there, you answer the security question to show that you are human and then submit your Web site URL (www.YOURSITE.com); the MSNbot will then index your home page and follow any links that may be located on your home page to other pages on your site. Note that the procedures outlined above may be changed at any time by any of the search engines. Most search engines will provide instructions for submitting sites for inclusion in search directories.

Once you have submitted your site, you can use tools like Majestic SEO or the Google Chrome SEO extension to track how your site is indexed and how many pages of your site have been indexed. Both of those tools also offer quite a few more SEO tools and information that you can utilize to grow your ranking and optimize your site.

Getting your site indexed is only the first hurdle, and sometimes that can take anywhere from 48 hours to 6 months or longer. There are no guarantees regarding submitting your site and getting it indexed quickly, but here are some steps you can take to help your site be indexed.

- Utilize reputable directories that specialize in the same topic as you do, and submit your site to be listed in them. The aim is to get quality linking to your site while targeting your specific audience in order to generate traffic to your site and to have the various search engines find your site.
- Take part in forums and blogs that specialize in the same topic as you do. Follow any rules the site may have about linking to your site or self-promotion. By making

your brand and your site more relevant with quality linking and interaction in your target sector, it will help to build your credibility and visibility.

- Join trade organizations, business bureaus, chambers, and local business associations. Most offer listing and linking opportunities that are quality and relevant.
- Don't spam links to your site all over the place or utilize linking schemes or junk "link farm" listing sites. Actions such as these as well as having your site associated with junk link farms will only reduce your relevancy and credibility. Search engines can and do penalize sites for these actions. Nobody likes a spammer.
- Utilize your friends and business associates to try to generate reciprocal linking. This linking should be done in a relevant way, such as someone recommending your services or the information your site offers in the context of their own content, such as in a blog.

Most of all, it is important to be patient. There are thousands of sites being submitted every day.

Search Engine Optimization

A number of search engine optimization extensions can help with making your Joomla! more search engine friendly. One of the more popular extensions is SEOSimple by Dao by Design. This extension plugin works by taking the first chunk of text in an article or page and then utilizes it as the metadata for the description of the page. This helps sites avoid duplicate metatags on all their pages such as the main meta keywords and description that are present in the global configuration of Joomla! Depending on how your content is written, this can be useful to search engines but also to people who are searching for your site, because it will help them understand what the page link in the search results is about. Search engine result pages typically show the meta description information as the short introductory text of the individual search engine results. SEOSimple also allows you to customize your page titles in various configurations, which can be very advantageous to your search engine relevancy. Having relevant, individual page titles for all your pages is good for your visitors and search engines.

Tags are another way to add keywords and phrases to article content, and some tagging components even allow you to use them as a navigational tool, helping you organize your site content, which is helpful to your visitors to find like content throughout your site. A popular and simple way to use tagging component is Tag by JoomlaTags.org. This extension allows you to add keywords or phrases to articles to highlight their main areas of discussion or topic. It has additional modules that allow you to show cloud tags based on the tags you have entered and list articles by tags or phrases. It also can show lists of related content based on tags in an article. A more complex and robust tagging system is offered by Jxtended called Labels.

Although there is a lot of discussion regarding how URLs are formed and how it may create "duplicate content"—defined as content that is exactly the same but accessed through a different URL—the major search engines are well aware of how dynamic sites

generate URLs and how different URLs may be generated depending on the click path that people have taken to get to the content. This unintentional duplication of the content in this manner is not penalized by search engines. One way to combat this “duplicate content” is to take total control over the URLs in your site by using an SEF option such as sh404SEF.

Keeping your content fresh and new is an excellent way to ensure your site stays relevant for your topic and demographic.

For more helpful SEO tips, we recommend checking in with Joomla!’s resident SEO expert Steve Burge and his blog Alledia.com. Steve offers regular blogs and articles on Joomla! SEO as well as extension comparisons and other Joomla! news.

Using Navigation

Site navigation includes all the links that a user can click to move from page to page in your Web site. Navigation should be easy to understand and apparent to the visitor without being overwhelming. Nothing can be more confusing to a site visitor than having to search for the navigation links of a site, having links whose purposes are not clearly identifiable, or having an overwhelming number of menu navigation links. Useful and effective sites have consistent and helpful navigation as a central element of their design.

Navigation should make it easy and pleasant for your users to find the information they came to your site to find. Site navigation should be central to the structure and design of your site from the beginning. As your site develops, the demands on its navigation will grow, so it is important that this be designed in a thoughtful way.

The default home page for your site may contain many navigation elements. These could include the following:

- Top menu
- Side menus
- Pagination
- Linked article titles in the Latest News and Most Popular modules
- “Read more” links
- Links inside of articles
- Links in the footer
- Links connected to the buttons in the Login and Polls modules

All these links manage how your users move around your site. As you develop your site, you should always be considering how the addition of new content or features should relate to your navigation. By looking at the front page of a Joomla! site that has the sample data installed, you can see all the different areas that contain navigation from the list noted earlier. Figure 7.2 shows the front page of a Joomla! site with sample data and the Milkyway template.

Joomla!
...because open source matters

Joomla! makes it easy to launch a Web site of any kind. Whether you want a brochure site or you are building a large online community, Joomla! allows you to deploy a new site in minutes and add extra functionality as you need it. The hundreds of available Extensions will help to expand your site and allow you to deliver new services that extend your reach into the Internet.

[About Joomla!](#)
[Features](#)
[News](#)
[The Community](#)

Home

Main Menu

- Home
- Joomla! Overview
- Joomla! License
- More about Joomla!
- FAQ
- The News
- Web Links
- News Feeds
- poll

Resources

- Joomla! Home
- Joomla! Forums
- Joomla! Documentation
- Joomla! Community
- Joomla! Magazine
- OSS Home
- Administrator

Key Concepts

- Extensions
- Content Layouts
- Example Pages

Latest News

- Joomla! License Guidelines
- Content Layouts
- The Joomla! Community
- Welcome to Joomla!
- Newsflash 4

Welcome to the Frontpage
Joomla! Community Portal

Written by Administrator
Saturday, 07 July 2007 09:54

The Joomla! Community Portal is now online. There, you will find a constant source of information about the activities of contributors powering the Joomla! Project. Learn about Joomla! Events worldwide, and see if there is a Joomla! User Group nearby.

The Joomla! Community Magazine promises an interesting overview of feature articles, community accomplishments, learning topics, and project updates each month. Also, check out Joomla!Connect™. This aggregated RSS feed brings together Joomla! news from all over the world in your language. Get the latest and greatest by clicking here.

Last Updated on Saturday, 07 July 2007 09:54

Popular

- Joomla! Overview
- Extensions
- Joomla! License Guidelines
- Welcome to Joomla!
- What's New in 1.5?

Who's Online
We have 1 guest online

Advertisement

Featured Links:
Joomla!
Joomla! The most popular and widely used Open Source CMS Project in the world.
JoomlaCode
JoomlaCode: development and distribution made easy.
Joomla! Extensions
Joomla! Components, Modules, Plugins and Languages by the bucket load.
Joomla! Shop
For all your Joomla! merchandise.
Ads by Joomla!

More Articles...

- What languages are supported by Joomla! 1.5?
- Only one edit window! How do I create "Read more..."?

« Start Prev 1 2 Next End »

Page 1 of 2

Feed Your Brain with...
Books from the Joomla! Shop

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Joomla! is Free Software released under the GNU/GPL License.

Feed Entries
Powered by Joomla!, valid XHTML, and CSS.

Figure 7.2 Home page of a Joomla! Web site with sample data installed demonstrating navigation

The most important thing you can do in designing your navigation is to imagine yourself in the role of your users. If you have several different groups of users, you need carry out this process for each of them. What do they want to find when they come to your site? What words do they use to describe those things? Ideally you will talk to users, but at a minimum try to imagine yourself as a member of each group. Web designers will often talk about how many clicks on links it takes to get to a specific piece of information. The more clicks it takes to find something, the more likely it is that the user will abandon the task of looking for something without completing it. You want the number of clicks to be as small as possible. Visitors should stay on your site because they are finding useful and interesting content, not because they have to spend a lot of time finding what they are looking for.

You should follow a number of principles.

- Make sure that it is easy for people to get to the home page. The first link on your main navigation should be to the home page. If there is a logo on the top of the page, clicking it should send users to the home page.
- Provide “you are here” information for every page to help users know where they are. This doesn’t necessarily have to be “breadcrumbs,” which are a series of text links like the default Joomla! breadcrumb module. Your visitor should have some sort of cue as to the section or area of the site they are currently visiting.
- Remember that people entering your site via a search engine will often not be entering from the home page, especially if you have a large number of your site pages indexed.
- Never use only an image as a link with no text to indicate what it links to. No matter how obvious you think the image’s meaning is, it will not be obvious to some of your visitors.
- Don’t require users to use their mouse or keyboard to discover key information. Users will be frustrated if forced to hover over an item in order to obtain important information. An example of this would be forcing the user to hover over an image to trigger navigational links.
- Use standard terms for items, not cute short forms, acronyms, or organizationally specific terms that are understood only by yourself or your team.
- Use meaningful terms in your text to convey your message.

In Joomla! the main navigation is usually controlled through menus and menu modules. The menu system is perhaps the most important part of your Joomla! site besides the actual content because it controls four elements:

- What template is used when a linked page is displayed
- What modules are displayed on the linked page
- How content is laid out
- The URL of the page, which relates to search engine results as described earlier in this section

In Chapter 4, we covered how to assign a template to a menu item and how to create menu items for content. Also in Chapter 4, we reviewed the other types of menu items available in the core. The menu items themselves along with the parameter options you select control how the article is laid out. The menu item alias controls the search-engine-friendly URL for the page linked.

The Menu module, working in conjunction with the CSS in your template, controls the appearance of the menus on your site. Each time you create a new menu, a corresponding module is automatically created. You may want multiple copies of some menu modules, and you may want several separate menus, as illustrated in the sample data.

The Menu module works like all other modules. It has some important options that can help you manage your site navigation effectively. For example, in the sample data in your Joomla! installation, you will notice that the main menu has a link called Joomla! Overview. As you can see in Figure 7.3, the default main menu in the sample data shows a simple list of links. Figure 7.4 demonstrates what happens when you click Joomla! Overview; a submenu with a new link appears.

This is one of many ways the flexibility of the Menu module can be used to make the navigation of your site more usable. In this way, you can have a longer menu that is not overwhelming to site visitors.



Figure 7.3 Default main menu that is set up in the sample data showing the menu item Joomla! Overview

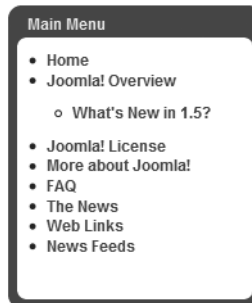


Figure 7.4 Default main menu showing a child menu item that is revealed after clicking a parent menu item

You set up a menu that utilizes showing child menu items (such as What's New in Joomla! 1.5 in this example) after you click. Follow these steps:

1. Create a menu item and then make that new menu item a child of an existing menu item, which is called the *parent item*, as demonstrated in Figure 7.5, which shows the What's New in 1.5? menu item editing screen.
2. In the Menu Manager, identify a child menu of a parent because of the display. Figure 7.6 demonstrates how What's New in 1.5? as a child of Joomla! Overview, which is the parent item.

The screenshot shows the 'Menu Item: [Edit]' interface. The 'Menu Item Type' is 'Article Layout'. The 'Menu Item Details' section includes fields for ID (34), Title ('What's New in 1.5?'), Alias ('what-is-new-in-1-5'), Link ('index.php?option=com_content&view=article'), Display In ('Main Menu'), Parent Item (dropdown menu with 'Joomla! Overview' selected), Published status (No), Order (1), Access Level (Public), and On Click, Open In ('Parent Window with Browser Navigation'). The 'Parameters (Basic)' section shows 'Select Article' set to 'What's New in 1.5?'.

Figure 7.5 What's New in 1.5? menu item editing screen showing the selection of Joomla! Overview as the parent item of the menu item

The screenshot shows the 'Menu Item Manager: [mainmenu]' interface. It displays a list of menu items with columns for #, Menu Item, Default, Published, Order, Access Level, Type, and ItemID. The 'What's New in 1.5?' item is listed as a child of the 'Joomla! Overview' parent item.

#	Menu Item	Default	Published	Order	Access Level	Type	ItemID
1	Home	*	✓	1	Public	Articles » Front Page	1
2	Joomla! Overview	✓	✓	2	Public	Articles » Article	27
3	↳ What's New in 1.5?	✓	✓	3	Public	Articles » Article	34
4	Joomla! License	✓	✓	4	Public	Articles » Article	2
5	More about Joomla!	✓	✓	5	Public	Articles » Section	27
6	FAQ	✓	✓	6	Public	Articles » Section	41
7	The News	✓	✓	7	Public	Articles » Category / Blog	50
8	Web Links	✓	✓	8	Public	Web Links » Categories	48
9	News Feeds	✓	✓	9	Public	News Feeds » Categories	49

Figure 7.6 Main menu's Menu Manager screen demonstrating the What's New in 1.5? menu item as a child of Joomla! Overview, which is a parent item

To set up the module to show child menu items only upon the click of a parent menu item, follow these steps:

1. In your Menu module, set the first and last levels to 0, as shown in Figure 7.7.
2. Set Always show submenu Items to No, as shown in Figure 7.7.

One way to get visitors to browse your site in depth is to have clear and simple navigation that then expands to show more options as they navigate pages. This can be done by showing new navigation menu items that are pertinent only to the page a visitor is currently browsing. Joomla! has a great way to do that using Menu modules via the split menu technique of showing second-level and beyond menu items only on pages to which they are assigned.

To set up a split menu, follow these steps:

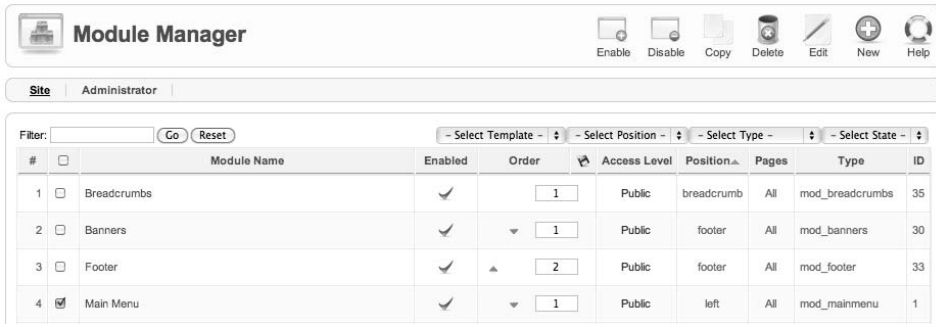
1. Make a copy of the Main Menu module as in Figure 7.8.
2. You will now have a module named Copy of Main Menu. Click the name to open the copy. As in Figure 7.9, enable the module, set the title to show, set the Start Level option to 1, and set the End Level option to 1.
3. Because you only want this menu module to show when the Joomla! Overview menu item is clicked, assign it just to the Joomla! Overview menu link, as shown in Figure 7.9.

The screenshot displays the Joomla! administrator interface for editing a menu module. At the top, there are navigation icons for 'Preview', 'Save', 'Apply', 'Close', and 'Help', along with a 'Logout' button. The main content area is titled 'Parameters' and contains a 'Module Parameters' section. This section includes the following settings:

- Menu Name:** A dropdown menu set to 'mainmenu'.
- Menu Style:** A dropdown menu set to 'List'.
- Start Level:** A text input field containing the number '0'.
- End Level:** A text input field containing the number '0'.
- Always show sub-menu Items:** Radio buttons for 'No' (selected) and 'Yes'.
- Target Position:** An empty text input field.

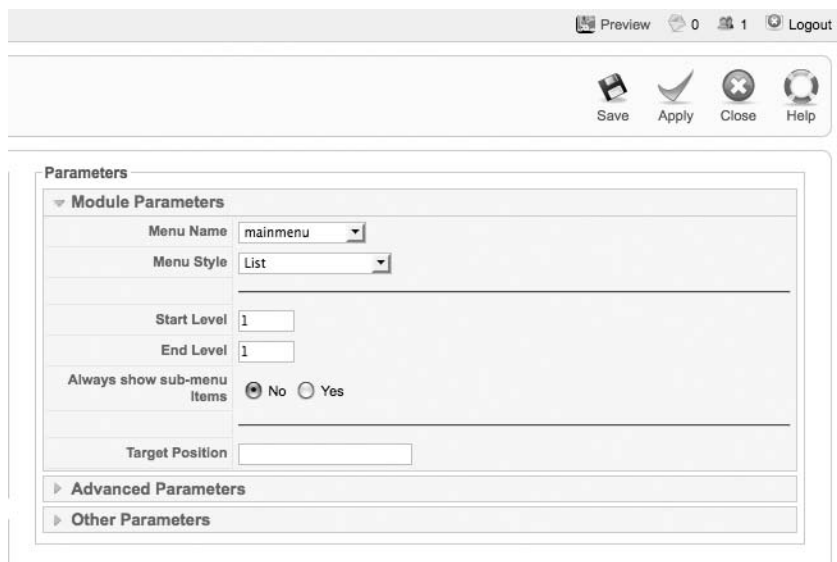
Below the 'Module Parameters' section, there are two expandable sections: 'Advanced Parameters' and 'Other Parameters', both currently collapsed.

Figure 7.7 Main menu module editing screen showing how to set the values for Start, End, and Sub-Menu settings



#	<input type="checkbox"/>	Module Name	Enabled	Order	Access Level	Position	Pages	Type	ID
1	<input type="checkbox"/>	Breadcrumbs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	Public	breadcrumb	All	mod_breadcrumbs	35
2	<input type="checkbox"/>	Banners	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	Public	footer	All	mod_banners	30
3	<input type="checkbox"/>	Footer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	Public	footer	All	mod_footer	33
4	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Main Menu	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	Public	left	All	mod_mainmenu	1

Figure 7.8 Module Manager screen showing how to copy the Main Menu module



Parameters

▼ Module Parameters

Menu Name:

Menu Style:

Start Level:

End Level:

Always show sub-menu Items: No Yes

Target Position:

► Advanced Parameters

► Other Parameters

Figure 7.9 Module-editing screen showing how to set a menu module to show a split menu

4. Open the original Main Menu module, and change End Level to 1, as in Figure 7.10.

Now when you click Joomla! Overview in the front end of the site, a second menu will appear with just the relevant submenu showing as a separate menu module, as shown in Figure 7.11.

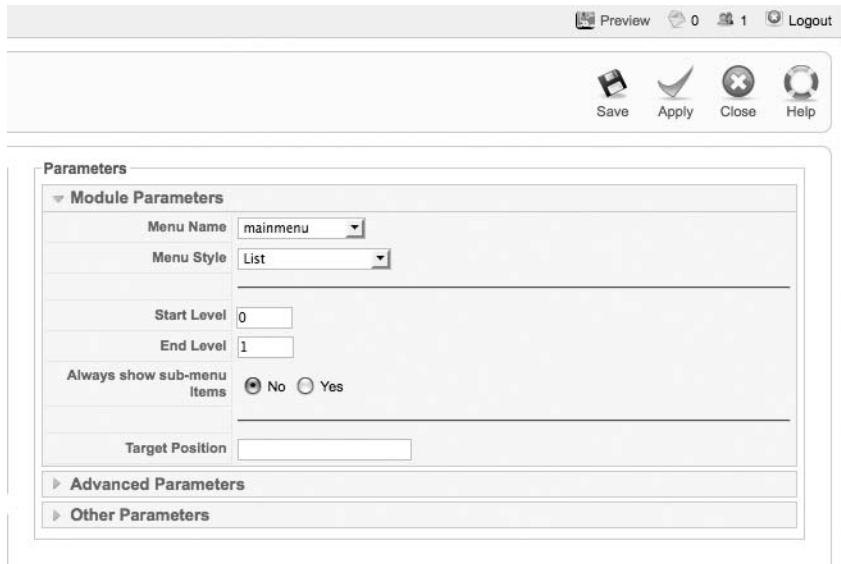


Figure 7.10 Module-editing screen showing how to set the Main Menu module to not show child items

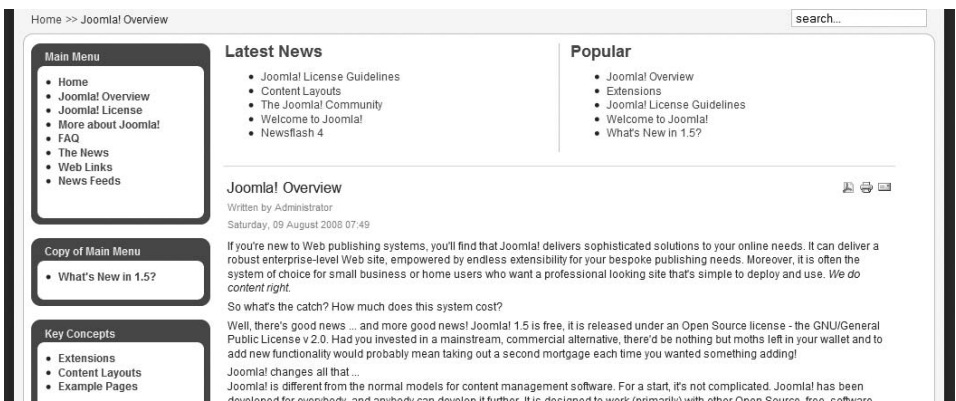


Figure 7.11 Front-end view of how a split menu displays

If you have submenus for all your main menu items and want to use the split menu technique, you should assign the module used for the split menu to all the relevant parent menu items.

There are many options for enhanced menus available in the Joomla! Extensions Directory. Usability research has shown that many complex menus with excessive

reliance on drop-downs and special effects can make your site more difficult for visitors, so use any special effects in moderation and for good reasons.

Engaging Your Visitors and Keeping Your Content Fresh

One of the best ways for any site to keep their target audience as repeat visitors is to keep the content on the site fresh and updated. Whether your site is strictly informational or meant to be a portal where visitors take part in action items on the site, without updated, fresh, new, and interesting content, eventually your audience is going to get bored and click away, or they will find the information they are seeking elsewhere. Here are a few suggestions to keep people coming back.

- Start a blog. Starting a blog is a great way to add new content to a site that is mostly information or to a brochure-type site. Blogging about your industry, events, or happenings in your company can add a human touch to your site as well as keep people informed with up-to-date news and information. One basic good practice to follow is to set a schedule for blogging and keep to it.
- Add a news and press release section to your site, and offer it as a news feed. Find sites in your target topic that accept news feeds to aggregate. It can be a great way to drive traffic to your site.
- Add your Twitter and other social networking streams to your site. Create profiles for your Web site/business to further your exposure on social networking sites such as Facebook.
- Offer special deals, coupons, and discounts to your Web visitors. Make sure to keep any coupons or deals up to date. Nothing will annoy a Web visitor more than downloading a coupon or deal only to realize that it has already expired.
- Add a mailing list. A number of mailing lists work with Joomla!, and there are many third-party mailing lists that you can integrate with your Joomla! site. Please don't spam people. Utilize a legitimate mailing list of people who want to get your e-mails. It is extremely important that you keep your site from getting blacklisted as a spam site. As your mailing list grows, it becomes essential that you use mailing list applications that do effective throttling (limiting the number of e-mails sent in one blast) both to avoid spam labeling and to ensure that you do not run into mail capacity limitations that your host may have in place. Your host should have a policy regarding e-mail that is sent through their servers as part of their terms of service.
- Add questionnaires, polls, or surveys to engage your audience, and report the results.
- Add commenting. Allow your visitors to comment on your content, blog, polls, and so on. This can be both a good thing and a bad thing. It is a good way to engage your visitors, but commenting systems do not monitor themselves, so you will have to monitor your site and monitor your visitor's comments. Assess

whether the time spent having to manage a commenting system versus the value of the comments to see whether it is an option that works for you. A number of comments extensions are available in the JED.

- Add a discussion forum. A forum can be a great way to interact with your visitors or customers/clientele. As with commenting, a forum does not monitor itself; you will have to spend time monitoring your forum and should carefully weigh the benefits versus the time spent on monitoring.

All of these ideas can be integrated into your site to make it more active and attractive to visitors. What is not suggested is to do all of them at once. Find the avenue of engagement that suits your visitors and your brand and time limitations. It really is better to do one thing well than to do five to ten things in a less than stellar manner.

Marketing Basics and Social Networking

Search engines are very useful for bringing people to your site, but there are many other ways to attract visitors. One of the basic steps of marketing your Web site is to reach out to people offline. There are lots of avenues to market your new Web site in the offline world, such as with direct mailing, real-life social gatherings, meetings, conferences and expositions, and the like. Utilizing the resources in your community such as local papers, targeted mailings, and local organizations will help expand the reach of your Web site into your community. Real-life networking is just as important as online social networking to spread the word of your site. Join local business associations or groups, and attend their meetings to make contacts that can help you bring visitors to your Web site and business. In a world of inboxes full of e-mails, taking the time to reach out offline and sometimes spending the funds to target your audience outside of the online world can give you an advantage of not being lost in the sea of e-mails that everyone receives. Place a small advertisement in a magazine or periodical that relates to your target audience or send postcards, thank-you notes, and flyers with coupons and discounts to turn people into online visitors you may not have reached otherwise. This can be especially helpful to Web sites that have a specific geographical reach.

Social network through sites like Facebook, Twitter, and Google Buzz. New social networking sites are always appearing on the horizon, but be careful to not get social network burnout; concentrate your time on the social network that works best for you. It can be easy to get overwhelmed and over-extended. The plus side of social networking is its ability to exponentially increase your Web site's visibility as you reach out to people who you know and they in turn expand that reach to people they know. The interconnectivity of people and interest groups makes it much easier to reach thousands of people at any given time.

The important part of social networking is the "social" part. It is about creating relationships with people and nurturing that relationship. You want to create fans and loyalty to your brand, which is usually accomplished by cultivating relationships with people who may be interested in what you are offering.

Why You Need to Keep Your Web Site Up to Date

The biggest security threat to any Web site is to allow the software it runs on to become out-of-date. This applies to hosting as well as the specific software that any site may be running. It is important to use a host that has a good security track record, as well as a knowledgeable staff who stays up to date on industry trends and software. If your host is running out-of-date software and can't explain why, it is time to find a new host.

Upgrades: Why and How

For Joomla! sites, it is important to subscribe to the news and announcements regarding new releases and any security issues that may have been addressed in the new release. When a new release is issued, it is important to update your Joomla! site as soon as possible. Although some past releases have contained issues that affected existing sites, critical issues are typically fixed quickly with a new release. One thing to check is the developer's site of any extension you may have installed and any issues their extension may have with a new release. If an extension has an issue with a new release of Joomla!, contact the developer and inquire as to when their issue is going to be resolved, and then update both your Joomla! site and the extension. As was mentioned, Sam Moffatt's Update Manager extension is very easy to use and is an excellent way to keep your Joomla! installation up to date.

A number of extension developers include notifications about updates that are available. It is good practice to keep informed on any updates and news regarding the extensions you use on your site. Subscribe to the mailing list, forum, announcements, or news feeds that the developers may offer. When an update to an extension is announced, it is important to update the extension, especially if there is a security issue involved.

As always before updating, be sure to take a full backup of your site's files and database. Do not rely on any backup system your hosting provider may offer. Ultimately, it is your site, and backups are your responsibility. Set up a schedule to take regular backups of your site depending on the rate of change your site goes through in a typical month. If you update content daily and have an interactive site that is active, it may be best to at least get a daily backup of your database and a monthly backup of your site files. If your content doesn't change often, a monthly backup of your full site and database will most likely be sufficient. Be sure to store your back up files off-site. Download them to a local hard drive or disk or store them in a different online location.

A relatively new initiative for the Joomla! project is the Vulnerable Extensions List (VEL) located on the Joomla! Official Documentation wiki at http://docs.joomla.org/Vulnerable_Extensions_List. This initiative was started by a team of interested users who wanted to track vulnerable extensions and has been a valuable asset to the community. You can subscribe to the page's news feed to stay updated on vulnerable extension reports and get extended information on resolutions or ongoing issues.

Any extension that is no longer supported by the developer, as well as any extensions that you are not using but may have installed, should be completely removed from your

Web site. Check to make sure that all related files for any extension that you have uninstalled have been properly removed from your site, because leaving these orphan files on your site could expose your site to a security vulnerability.

Conclusion

It is important to remember that a Web site is no different from any other part of owning a business or marketing a brand. It takes commitment and regular work to make it work for you. Just as you take care and concern regarding the security of your physical business location, your Web site needs the same care and concern. Marketing and management doesn't stop at the creation of the Web site itself; it is only the beginning of your online marketing strategy. Although for small businesses it can be relatively easy to manage the day-to-day workload of a Web site, sometimes it is necessary to hire professionals to help you. Professionals have emerged in the social networking and marketing field, as well as the SEO field, at an explosive rate. As with any new technology and the professionals who work in an emerging or always-changing field, getting references and samples of past work and understanding exactly what you are hiring the consultant to provide are priceless when it comes to your Web site. Hire a professional to monitor your site and keep it up to date if you do not have the time to commit. It is much less stressful to be proactive than reactive to a bad situation. The Joomla! Resources Directory provides the contact information for professionals who specialize in Joomla! sites and is an excellent reference tool.

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