Preface

Joomla! is an open source Content Management System (CMS) that anyone can download for free.[1] This makes it an ideal choice for small businesses. Don't let the price tag fool you—Joomla! is powerful and robust, and more big organizations are choosing to have open source software solutions all the time. This universal appeal has made Joomla! hugely popular as a CMS. This is evident by looking at how searches for Joomla! in Google have grown, roughly doubling every two months (see Figure P.1).
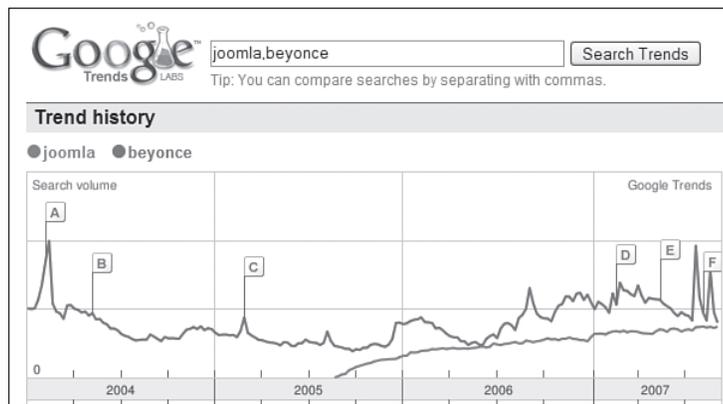

FIGURE P.1 Joomla!—as Popular as Pop

As Joomla! matures, it is being adopted by more and more organizations. Its greatest advantage is its flexibility. You can see it on a huge variety of sites:

- Corporations
- Schools and Universities
- Online Commerce Organizations
- Small Businesses

- Non-profit and Community Organizations
- Government Organizations
- Corporate Intranets and Extranets
- Personal or Family Home Pages
- Community-based Portals
- Magazines and Newspapers

The Purpose of This Book

This book is about Joomla!, the popular and award-winning[2] open source CMS. It will take you step-by-step through everything you need to develop a successful website powered by Joomla!. The book gives a general overview of management of a CMS and teaches you key concepts regarding content organization, editing, and templates. Last, the book examines some more general topics such as how Search Engine Optimization (SEO) can be maximized with Joomla! and what resources are available in the Joomla! web community.

This book focuses on the most current release of Joomla!, known as *Joomla! 1.5*. This is a brand new and significant update to this CMS.

This Book's Target Audience

This book primarily targets people using Joomla! 1.5 to create a website, either for themselves or their clients. It's easy to read and low on technical jargon. It doesn't assume you know PHP, CSS, or any other of the many acronyms common to web applications.

All of the concepts in the book are explained with clear, step-by-step contextual examples. If you follow all the steps in all the chapters, you will build seven separate Joomla! websites!

How Should I Use This Book?

You can use this book in several ways. You can start at the beginning and go chapter by chapter as you develop your own site. The book is carefully laid out so that introductory ideas in the earlier chapters are developed and built on to help you understand

more advanced concepts later on. You can also use the book as a reference. If you need some quick ideas of what newsletter extensions are available, head to Chapter 6, "Extending Joomla!." Lastly, the Appendices contain valuable extra information about various aspects of Joomla!.

Chapter 1: Content Management Systems and an Introduction to Joomla!

In today's fast moving web, if you have a website that doesn't have rich functionality or fresh content, you will find yourself at a disadvantage to those that do. The idea of powering websites with a CMS has been around for some time, but it is only recently with the advent of high quality open source CMS scripts like Joomla! that we have seen these powerful CMS tools coming into the hands of you and me.

In this chapter, I explain in detail the difference between a "traditional" website and one using a CMS. We also look at the history of Joomla! and an overview of some of its features.

Chapter 2: Downloading and Installing Joomla!

Joomla! is one of the most popular open source CMS on the planet. The first step in becoming part of the "Joomla!sphere," the vibrant community that exists around the Joomla! Project, is to download Joomla! and install it on your web server.

This chapter shows you how to get up and running with a Joomla! site. The two steps are to find and download the latest files and to install them on a web server. This chapter describes both a local (your home computer) installation to use as you read this book (if you don't have a hosting account or have a slow internet connection) and real web server installations.

Chapter 3: Joomla! Administration Basics

The term "site administration" usually means the day to day tasks of adding content, managing users and making sure installed components and modules are running correctly. With a properly configured Joomla! site, the administration burden is relatively low. Most of the effort can be dedicated to generating that all important content.

In this chapter, we go on a whirlwind tour of the core administrative functions you need. I won't be going step by step explaining every last button in the admin backend, but rather picking out key functions, tips, and tricks that you'll need to know to keep your site humming.

Chapter 4: Content Is King: Organizing Your Content

As a CMS, Joomla!'s primary function is to organize and present all the content in your site. It does this through content articles. These discrete pieces of content must be organized into a two-level hierarchy called sections and categories.

This chapter provides an in-depth tutorial that explains how Joomla! displays its content articles and how you can organize the hierarchical structure of them. It details how to plan and organize the content and user experience for the site. It also explains the hierarchy structure currently used in Joomla!, sections and categories, and how to best structure content into them for small and large sites.

Chapter 5: Creating Menus and Navigation

Menus are perhaps the core of a Joomla! site. In a static HTML site, they merely serve as navigation. In a Joomla! site, they serve that purpose, but also determine the layout of what a dynamic page will look like and what content will appear on that page when you navigate to it. The relationship between menus, menu items, pages and modules is perhaps one of the most confusing in Joomla!. This chapter explains this relationship so that you can create a navigation scheme that works for your site.

Chapter 5 examines how the navigation (menus and links) is built for a Joomla! website and how the different aspects interact to produce a coherent navigation structure.

Chapter 6: Extending Joomla!

It's hard to find a Joomla! powered website that has not added functionality beyond the basics with some sort of extension. The word extension collectively describes components, modules, plugins, and languages. There are many hundreds available both free and commercially from 3rd party providers.

In this chapter, we look at some examples of core and 3rd party Joomla! extensions. We also examine how they are installed and managed in Joomla!.

Chapter 7: Expanding Your Content: Articles and Editors

There are two main ways to add and manage content to a Joomla! site: through the frontend or backend. Part of the biggest attraction of Joomla! is to easily add and edit content through a What You See Is What You Get (WYSIWYG) editor.

In this chapter, we start out looking at WYSIWYG and how it functions in the backend with Managers, Administrators, and Super Administrators. We then examine how authors, editors, and publishers manage content through the frontend.

Chapter 8: Getting Traffic to Your Site

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) might be one of the most maligned subjects on the web. From talk to black hat SEO, people who use unethical methods to gain rank in search engines, to their counterparts of white hat SEO, the good guys, how best to get traffic to your site is loaded with opinion and myth.

Trying to learn about SEO is difficult, to say the least. In this chapter, I emphasize **Search Engine Marketing** (SEM). I point out some obvious SEO tips and how they apply to Joomla!, but I'll also discuss a more holistic marketing plan including such strategies as Pay Per Click and blogging.

Chapter 9: Creating a Pure CSS Template

In this chapter, we go through the steps of creating a Joomla! template. Specifically, we create a template that uses Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) to produce a layout without use of tables. This is a desirable goal as it means that the template code is easier to validate to World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) standards. It also tends to load faster, be easier to maintain and perform better in search engines. We discuss these issues in detail later in the chapter.

Chapter 10: Creating a School Site with Joomla!

School websites tend to be medium to large in size. One of the defining characteristics of Joomla! is that it is very powerful and flexible, but can be quite time intensive to setup. This leads us of course to this chapter, hopefully an extensive guide to creating and setting up a school website using the Joomla! CMS.

Chapter 11: Creating a Restaurant Site with Joomla!

The chapter looks at the entire process of creating a restaurant website from scratch. We examine how to build a small business website, in this case a restaurant. Starting from an analysis of needs, this chapter shows you how to organize possible content all the way through to adding photos and considering further extensions.

Chapter 12: Creating a Blog Site with Joomla!

It seems like everyone has a blog these days. Many people still think of blogs as personal diaries, but more and more organizations and companies are using blogs as a way to shape perception of who they are and what they do. Chances are, if you go to a website today, you will find a link to their blog somewhere on their site. What is becoming more common on websites now, is a section of the site that is dedicated to the blog.

This chapter talks about blogs in a more general sense: a dynamic communication medium for a person or organization to interact with their stakeholders. We look at creating a blog site from scratch using Joomla!.

Appendix A: Getting Help

Stuck with Joomla!? There is a tremendous amount of information on the web, as well as many active communities to ask for help.

Appendix B: Joomla! Case Studies

Six real sites that are using Joomla!, taken from a wide range of industries and types of site.

Appendix C: A Quick Start to SEO

Need some quick tips to help your Search Engine Ranking? Implement these.

Appendix D: Install WAMP5

A quick guide to installing WAMP5 on your home computer. This package is important so you can follow along with all the site examples in the book.

What Is a Content Management System?

A CMS is a collection of scripts that separates content from its presentation. Its main features are the ease of creation and editing of content and dynamic web pages. CMSs are usually very sophisticated and can have newsfeeds, forums, and online stores—and are easily edited. More and more websites are moving toward a site powered by a CMS.

Most Content Management Systems are expensive, anywhere from $50,000 to $300,000, but there are an increasing number of open source alternatives becoming available. Open source CMSs have become increasingly more reliable and are now being used for important projects in many companies, non-profits, and organizations.

Why Use a CMS?

A CMS separates out the responsibilities of developing a website. The web designer can concern himself with the design, which means that nontechnical people can be responsible for the content.

The modern CMS is usually defined by its capability to manage and publish content. Most do far more, having the capability to add on a wide range of extensions or add-ons to increase functionality of the site.

What Is Open Source Software?

Joomla! is an example of open source software; its non-profit copyright holder is Open Source Matters.[3] An open source project is developed by a community of developers across the world, all volunteering their time. Some examples you might have heard of are Firefox, Apache, Wiki, Linux, or OpenOffice. All of these are open source and both have challenged and surpassed their commercial equivalents. If you are curious about how and why people should create powerful software for free, you can find more information on these sites:

- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_source
- http://www.opensource.org/

Things To Look For

The following are specific elements to look for when reading:

> **TIP**
> The tip boxes give more advanced ideas about an aspect of Joomla!. You will usually be able to find more details at compassdesigns.net about the tip.

> **NOTE**
> The notes box denotes a caution about an aspect of the topic. It sometimes won't be applicable to all situations, but you should check if it would apply to your site.

> **The Least You Need to Know**
> The key critical concepts explained can be found in the LYNTK box. These are worth circling in a big red pen or writing out for yourself on a cheat sheet.

Joomla!

The full and proper name of the Joomla! CMS includes an exclamation point, as shown here. For the sake of readability, and a tree or two, I'll be dropping the exclamation in the text.

www.Joomlabook.com

You can find more information about this book, including complete browsable and downloadable versions of all the sites created in the chapters, at www.Joomlabook. com.

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[1] http://forge.Joomla!.org/sf/go/projects.Joomla!/frs

[2] Joomla! won the award for the "Best Linux/Open Source Project" for 2005.

[3] http://www.opensourcematters.org