

STAYING AHEAD OF THE CURVE:

Using a Content Management System to Build Your Section's Website

The most recent trend in web development is user friendly and intuitive technology, accessible to users of all levels. One of the key components to making web development more accessible is the use of Content Management Systems (CMS).

Prior to the use of CMS, websites were built using static web pages. These web pages use HTML, Javascript, and Macromedia Flash programming. Static websites are difficult to edit without special software and training, which can often limit their features and make them difficult and expensive to maintain. By using a CMS, your section's website can be a part of the growing trend towards simple, user-friendly web management.

What is a content management system (CMS)?

A content management system is a computer application used to create, edit, manage, search, and publish websites. A CMS is primarily a website *maintenance* tool for non-technical administrators. Content can be simple text, photos, music, video, documents, or just about anything you can think of.

How does a CMS help you update and manage a website?

This software provides authoring tools designed to allow users with little or no knowledge of programming languages to create and manage content with relative ease. Administration is typically done through browser-based interfaces and – unlike web-site builders like Microsoft FrontPage or Adobe Dreamweaver – a CMS allows non-technical users to make changes to an existing website with little or no training.

Typical CMS features:

- **Automated templates** – Templates allow the appearance of all content to be changed from one central place.
- **Easily editable content** – CMS software includes [WYSIWYG](#) editing tools allowing non-technical individuals to create and edit content.
- **Scalable feature sets** – CMS software includes plug-ins or modules that can be easily installed to expand an existing site's functionality.
- **Web standards upgrades** – Active CMS software usually receives regular updates that include new feature sets and keep the system up to current web standards.
- **Document management** – CMS software provides a way to manage the life cycle of a document from initial creation time, through revisions, publication, archive, and document destruction.

What is Joomla?

Joomla is an award-winning CMS which enables you to build websites and powerful online applications. Many aspects, including its ease-of-use and extensibility, have made Joomla one of the most popular website software available. Joomla is an “open source” solution that is freely available to everyone. For more information visit: <http://www.joomla.org>.

Here are a few examples that demonstrate the diversity and depth of websites using Joomla:

- United Nations (Governmental organization) - <http://www.unric.org>
- MTV Networks Quizilla (Social networking) - <http://www.quizilla.com>
- L.A. Weekly (Online publication) - <http://www.laweekly.com>
- Harvard University (Educational) - <http://gsas.harvard.edu>
- The Green Maven (Eco-resources) - <http://www.greenmaven.com>
- PlayShakespeare.com (Cultural) - <http://www.playshakespeare.com>

What is Open Source?

Open source is a development method for software that harnesses the power of distributed peer review and transparency of process. The promise of open source is better quality, higher reliability, more flexibility, lower cost, and an end to vendor lock-in. For more information visit: <http://www.opensource.org/>