Building a WordPress web site

As the title of this workshop implies, our perspective will necessarily be that of the developer of a web site. However, web sites are built for users, not developers, so it is essential to understand the user perspective when designing a site. A readable and entertaining introduction to web site design is Steve Krug's *Don't Make Me Think*. This book was revised in 2013 but earlier editions are fine for our purposes. Try to get hold of a copy.

Beginner resources

There are of course books for the novice developer too (WordPress for Dummies, WordPress: The Missing Manual, etc.) I do not recommend them; they go out of date too fast. Eventually you may decide it is worthwhile to have a basic reference, but for that I would recommend something more comprehensive than a "beginner's" book, such as one of the e-books listed by tutorialspoint.com. I strongly suggest that you not choose one of these until you have a good grasp of the basics and of your own needs.

Some of the best WordPress tutorials for beginners are on DreamHost at dreamhost.com/wordpress/tutorials/. The basics are covered in What is WordPress? followed by sections of the WordPress Content Guide, where the sections are conveniently labeled "beginner" and "intermediate". Then if you want, continue on to more advanced topics.

Also, for an overview of how modern web sites work, you might want to skim through the articles on DreamHost's Website Building 101 page.

Another source of tutorials is wpbeginner.com, which has many useful articles, but they tend to be mostly at the intermediate level despite the name of the site. They do have a nice glossary.

wordpress.org is another good resource, although their "first steps" tend to assume that you are the administrator of your site, which you will not be. A particularly useful page is the article on blocks.

First assignments

The focus of the web site that we will build together is "Retirement in the Pioneer Valley". All of us have interests in any number of topics that might come under that heading. Besides our common interest in lifelong learning, we are all involved in or knowledgeable about many other things: service organizations and volunteer opportunities, libraries and senior centers, museums, local agriculture, fun things to do with our grandchildren, performing arts, dining, photography, gardening, hiking….

Each participant (or group of participants) will choose an area sufficiently broad that they can create an overview "cornerstone" page for that area (say, "performing arts") as well as a few subpages (e.g., a list of theaters, a guide to music series or festivals, …) and a number of topical "posts" on single subjects (e.g., a review of a particular performance or of a music festival.) Participants will be asked to choose an area not later than the beginning of the second week of the semester, and will be creating pages and posts for that part of the site throughout the semester.

Later assignment

In the last 2-4 weeks of the workshop, we will investigate some of the third-party add-ons available in WordPress. Again participants can work individually or in small groups to explore the world of plugins. The adventurous and artistic might also wish to explore other themes using a clone of the site that we have created. (Customizing or changing the theme makes significant changes for everyone editing the site, and will not be allowed on our main site.) Participants will be asked to select a topic for this assignment about midway through the semester.