

Companion Web Site

- Provides code files for all examples in the book

Aaron Brazell

Technical editing by Mark Jaquith,
a lead WordPress core developer

WordPress®

Install, secure, and
maintain WordPress

Extend WordPress
with plugins and themes

Enhance your blog
with WordPress MU



Bible

The book you need to succeed!

WordPress® Bible

WordPress® Bible

Aaron Brazell



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*To Devin, my only son, for giving me something to think about
even when I don't realize I need to be thinking about it.*

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Foreword

When Aaron first mentioned he was writing the *WordPress Bible*, I immediately offered him a hand in editing. I figured it was a safe bet. After all, I'm a PHP guy with five years of Drupal experience and zero years of WordPress. In fact, my only involvement with WordPress was attending WordCamp Mid-Atlantic; I'd never even installed it before. I had to open my mouth....

Fast-forward a couple months and suddenly chapter after chapter fill my inbox. So I started digging into this alien environment from two different perspectives: first, from the community perspective and second, from a developer's perspective.

For open source projects, the community is important to understand. Not only do you need to know how to get involved, but also you also need to know how healthy it is. Is this project going to be active a month or year from now? Therefore, I started reading with the intent to learn about the WordPress community. I wanted to know its motivations, how it interacted, how decisions were made, and how information flows within, into, and out of the team. Delving into the community and help chapters, I learned quite a bit. I found myself dropping into IRC, exploring a mailing list or two, and hitting WordPress forums to see how new voices were welcomed. To be honest, I appreciated the perspective and guidance from someone who "gets it."

Secondly, one of the joys of open source is looking at things from a developer's perspective. Unfortunately, many open source projects are a pile of messy code with horrible documentation, and you'll find yourself huddled under a desk crying pitifully in under 15 minutes. With WordPress, I didn't have that experience. Sure, there were times when something didn't make sense at first pass, but I kept digging. I asked some harsh questions related to PHP 5 and object-oriented principles and coding standards and APIs and a variety of other things. Each response — even those which I disagreed with — was well-reasoned and internally consistent. More important, the documentation and explanations supporting the system were amazing and provided numerous great examples. In fact, the underlying concepts were useful enough that I've duplicated a few in one of my projects.

All that said, I enjoyed the book, I enjoyed exploring a new community and system, and I appreciated having Aaron as a guide.

And yes, I have installed WordPress now.

D. Keith Casey

CTO, Blue Parabola, LLC

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Preface

WordPress, by most accounts, is the most popular self-hosted blogging platform in the world. WordPress.com is the second most popular hosted blogging platform in the world. The ecosystem built on openness and extensibility has helped the software thrive and overcome other rivals that, in some cases, have been around longer than WordPress has.

Developers now have the means to take a platform that was built for blogs and turn it into much more robust applications for content management, contact management, e-mail management, and more. I have yet to find something WordPress cannot be made to do with custom plugins and intuitive theming.

There are many books on WordPress available when you go to your local bookstore. Even if the books are not currently in stock, it's elementary to have them ordered or delivered directly to your home from Amazon.com. However, most of these books cover only a portion of WordPress or examine WordPress from a singular perspective. Until now, there has never been a book that covers the topic holistically and exhaustively and for all levels of expertise.

If you're a newbie just getting involved with WordPress, you should find value in these pages in the form of tutorials and tips. I cover the user interface and plugin management throughout this book and have endeavored to write in such a way that the least technical reader can still grab the concepts that are at work.

If you're a developer and have been hacking around with WordPress for years, you will also get value out of this book. With the extensive reference charts and appendixes, it will become the book that sits next to your computer and becomes a bit worn and dog-eared with torn pages from you picking it up over and over again.

Of course, designers have the opportunity to grasp the principles at work behind themes and templates, template hierarchy, and template tags. Design is much more than simply creating an elegant user interface in Adobe Photoshop and calling it a day. It's also using the tools that WordPress provides to create usable, smart themes that bring the power of WordPress to the reader.

WordPress Versioning

There is, of course, the question of versioning for this book. WordPress maintains a (rough) four-month release cycle for major releases. During the development of the next major release, there are typically security fixes that are released in the form of "dot releases." During the process of writing, I have been asked about what version of WordPress this book will cover.

Fortunately, 90 percent of WordPress stays the same. Part of the guiding principles of WordPress core development is maintaining backward compatibility unless it is absolutely mandatory that it be changed. To that end, it doesn't really matter for what version I wrote this book.

During the process of editing this book, WordPress 2.9 was released. That is the version this book is based upon. However, it is likely that WordPress 3.0 will be released around the time this book goes to print. Never fear. Though there will be new features in WordPress 3.0 that will not be covered in this book, the bulk of the software will remain intact and version neutral.

Getting the Most Out of This Book

The chapters in this book are organized into eight parts. Each part is a selection of chapters that all relate to each other in some way. You probably will not want, or need, to read the book from cover to cover, though I would be flattered if you did. Instead, you will find that different parts of the book address different levels and experiences with WordPress and you should feel free to flip back and forth to find the answers you need at different times.

For example, Part I, “Getting Started with WordPress,” contains the initial introductory stuff that describes installing WordPress and basic steps to getting a WordPress blog off the ground, as well as background information to help you understand the philosophies that have guided the development of the software.

Part II, “Working with Plugins,” gets more technical by examining plugins and describing the plugin application programming interfaces (APIs) in WordPress. This is the part that developers will likely use often to understand how to write new plugins for WordPress.

In Part III, “Working with Themes and Template Tags,” I talk about the aspects of WordPress that have to do with themes and templates. If you have an Adobe Photoshop layout and need to hack it up into a WordPress theme, this is the series of chapters you'll want to get into. It is most suited for designers who need to understand how the WordPress theme system works.

Part IV, “Creating Content,” is going to be the go-to series of chapters for the newbie who just wants to use WordPress to write or create content. This is not a super-technical part, and it doesn't assume that the reader is changing his theme. It does, however, describe the concepts and principles behind using the WordPress Admin and creating content.

No blogger wants to be caught with a hacked site because she did not keep up to date with upgrades and security fixes. To that end, Part V, “Keeping Up with the Joneses: Maintenance and Upgrades,” is all about maintaining your WordPress blog, and provides suggestions, routines, and concepts behind the maintenance and upgrade routine. It also covers caching, an essential topic for anyone who owns a blog that receives, or will receive, a large amount of traffic.

In Part VI, “Alternate Uses for WordPress,” I stretch the bounds of what WordPress can do. Hopefully by reading this part, you will be inspired to find alternate uses for WordPress and will see that WordPress is not just for blogging. I look forward to seeing how WordPress is used in new and creative ways.

Preface

In Part VII, “Looking at the WordPress Ecosystem,” I bring everything full circle by talking about the surrounding community and ecosystem around WordPress. It seems that there is a new venture or product released around WordPress regularly. Many of these are associated with WordPress.com and Automattic, the owner of WordPress.com and patron of the WordPress project.

Part VIII, “Appendixes,” includes all of the appendixes that are important corollary pieces to this book. In some cases, such as with Appendix A and Appendix B, they are reference guides that will be popular among developers who purchase this book. Other appendixes include articles that I have written for the *WordPress Bible* that describe an aspect or use of WordPress that is not necessarily relevant as “chapter material” but add to an understanding of the greater WordPress community. My favorite appendix? Appendix F, “WordPress in Government.” Did you know that the United States intelligence community has more than 7,000 WordPress blogs across 14 different intelligence agencies? Exactly... who knew? And they aren’t the only ones using WordPress in federal, state, and local governments around the world.

Using the Margin Icons

Throughout the book, you will find icons in the margin that address important things you should be aware of. Take note of these icons because they indicate important things that are relevant to the content you are reading.

Note

Notes highlight useful information that you should take into consideration. ■

Tip

Tips provide additional bits of advice that make particular features quicker or easier to use. ■

Caution

Caution warns you of potential problems before you make a mistake. ■

Cross-Reference

Watch for the Cross-Reference icon to learn where in another chapter you can go to find more information on a particular topic. ■

Web Resource

The Web Resource icon directs you to other material available online. ■

On the Web

This icon points you toward related files available on the book’s Web site, www.wiley.com/go/wordpressbible. ■

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