

Special Topic: Joomla

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Joomla is a free, open-source content management system that makes creating and maintaining a website easy. It does this through establishing a system that stores any data uploaded to it -- be it text, photos, music, video, or anything else -- and allows a developer to create a website template using this data to create a fully-featured website. It provides all of the essential and helpful tools that a developer may need for designing a website, such as automatic breadcrumbs, template management, and pre-formatted user profile registration, while providing support for user-created extensions to provide additional functionality. Since its inception, it has become one of the most popular content management systems currently in use.

## **HISTORY**

The foundations for Joomla were established in 2000 as a content management system named Mambo. In 2005, due to differences in opinion with leadership over the control of and future direction of the company, a portion of the development team decided to split apart from Mambo and create their own system. They named this system Joomla, which is based on a Swahili word that means "all together" or "as a whole." While the first version of Joomla was essentially the latest version of Mambo (only under a different name), Joomla has since progressed to become its own standalone product, and is used by a number of major organizations, including Harvard University and IHOP.

## **INSTALLING JOOMLA**

Getting started with Joomla is fairly easy. As a prerequisite, it requires a web server (e.g. Apache) that is PHP (a general-purpose scripting language used for web development) and MySQL (a relational database management system) enabled to be in place. If there is no existing web server, the creators of Joomla recommend a free web server package named XAMPP (an

acronym for cross-platorm, Apache, MySQL, PHP, and Perl, components which it uses and supports). After downloading and extracting the Joomla files into the XAMPP directory, the database settings, which include the database type, host name, username and password, and database name, must be created. Once that is done, only a few easy options need to be set, such as naming your website and creating default file transfer protocol (FTP) settings, if applicable, and the website is ready to be created.

## **JOOMLA COMPONENTS**

Joomla is essentially broken up into three major components: the front-end, which is the portion visible to the user, the back-end, which is the portion visible to the website administrator/developer, and the database, which stores the information. The back-end contains all of the web development tools that the developer uses to create and modify the website. These include being able to set the website to be online or offline, populating web pages with data, and setting up the physical structure of the website. Through customization of the back end, the administrator can control how the website appears to the outside world.

## **CONTENT ORGANIZATION IN JOOMLA**

Information contained within Joomla is organized into two categories: Uncategorized content and categorized content. Uncategorized content is, as its name suggests, content that does not belong to a category. These are usually root pages that are generalized in nature, such as the home page, the about us page, and the help page. Categorized content is content that is a related sub-division of a root page. For example, if there is a page about trees, page about trees such as palm trees and fig trees would be considered categorized content. This categorization structure is relevant because it provides an orderly representation for how content on the website

is organized. Once a structure has been established, the administrator can proceed to populating the website with data.

## **ADVANTAGES OF JOOMLA**

Joomla's primary usability advantages over traditional webpage design are flexibility and ease-of-use. Joomla comes prepackaged with several modules that can be used for polls, menus, and other basic website components, allowing the administrator to save time and energy from needing to create the objects him or herself. In addition, extensions that provide additional functionality, such as the creation of a shopping cart for online stores, additional URL redirection functionality, and the addition of an events calendar, can be downloaded from Joomla's website. Objects needed for technical maintenance can be hidden so that they do not appear on the front-end version of the front page but remain visible in the back-end version, which allows them to remain on their respective pages for ease-of-use in developer maintenance. Finally, the structure of the content management system creates an organized repository for which all data can be quickly accessed with ease.

## **References**

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