Constructing Websites using WordPress in One Hour

A quick primer to get you up and running

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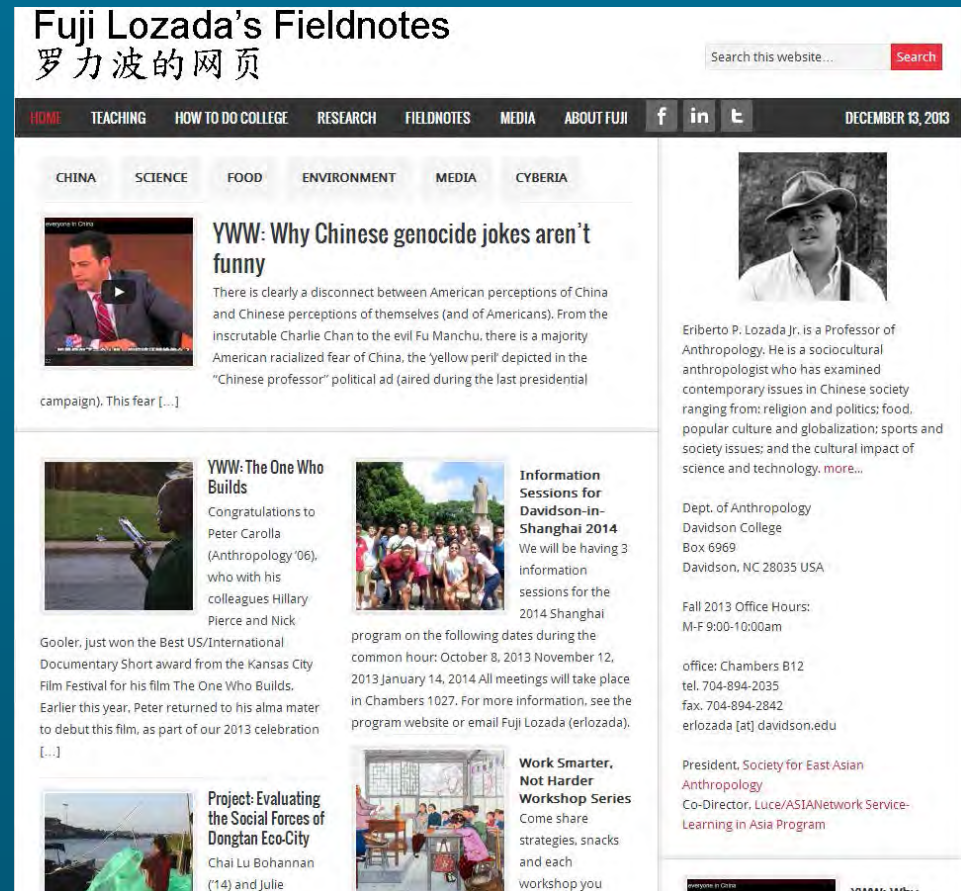Dept. of Anthropology, Davidson College (USA)
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11 April 2014

Why use WordPress as CMS?

- CMS: Content Management System
- Nothing to buy: Open-source software, platform free.
- Nothing to code: Web-based dashboard make WP the most popular CMS.
- Multiple users: Can have many people add material, at different levels of security.
- Many colleges offer free hosting, but also can be on wordpress.com
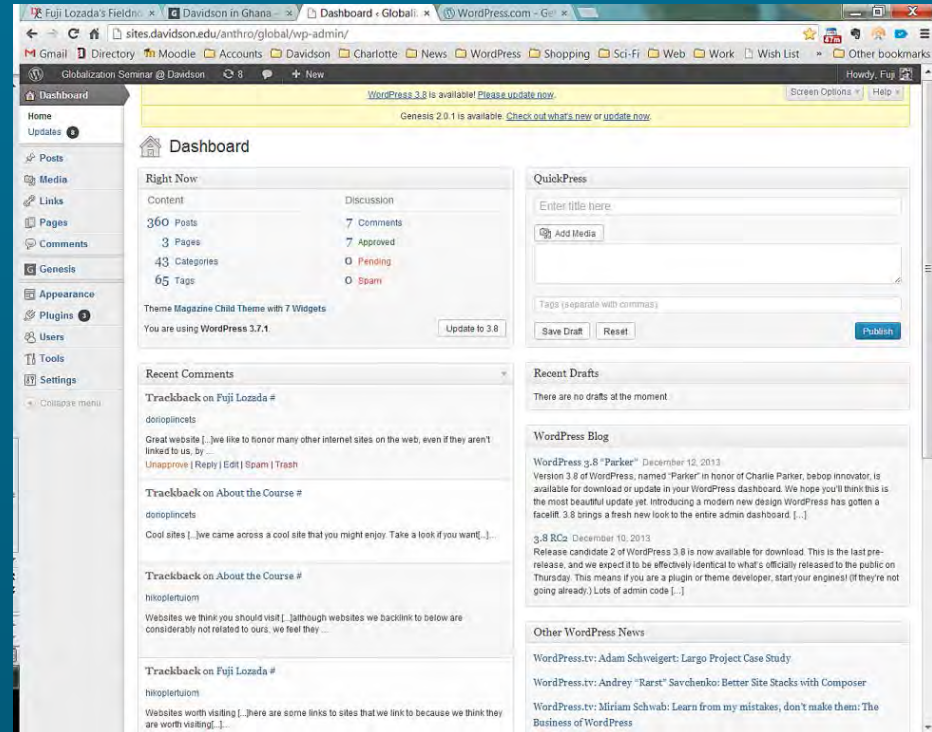- Teaching: Good for students' resumes.

10 things to know

1. Dashboard
2. Post vs. Pages
3. Users
4. Themes
5. Menus
6. Widgets
7. Plug-ins
8. Media
9. Don't worry
10. Have fun!

Dashboard

- This is where you control the look of your site, create and edit pages, upload and embed media, add users, etc.

- Accessed through your favorite browser; if the URL for your site is "http://mysite.edu," then your dashboard is "http://mysite.edu/wp-admin".
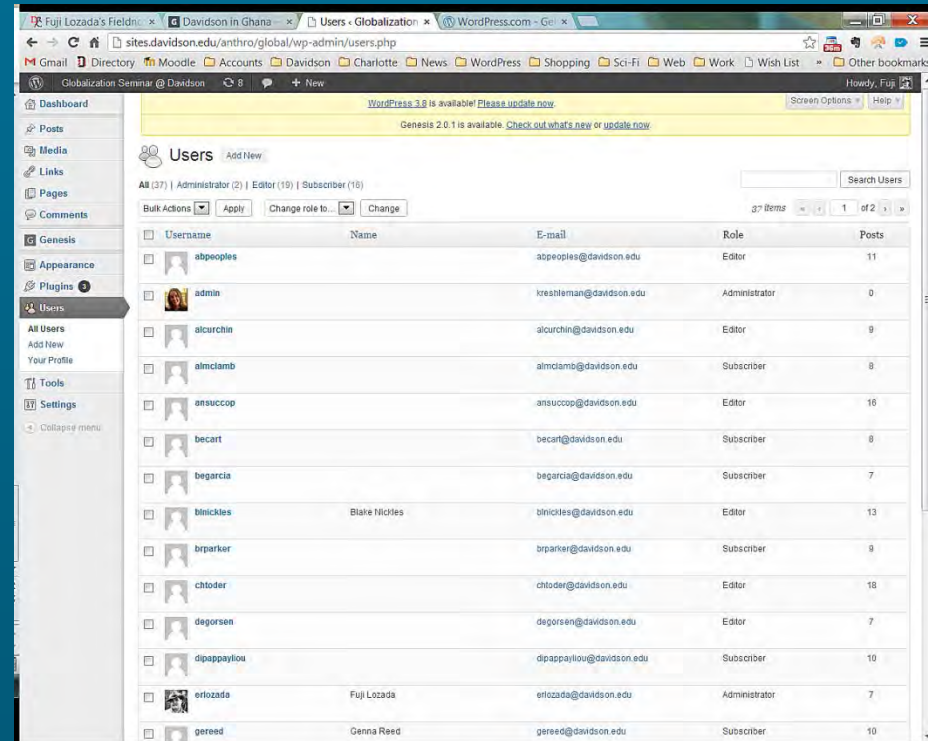
- You will first be asked to log-in.

Posts vs. Pages

- Pages are static, for content that does not change or is not timely.
- Can be organized hierarchically, with sub-pages.
- This can provide the structure of your webpage, as made visible through menus.

- Posts are dynamic, the main source of content.
- They are organized by **categories**, which adds another structural element for your website.
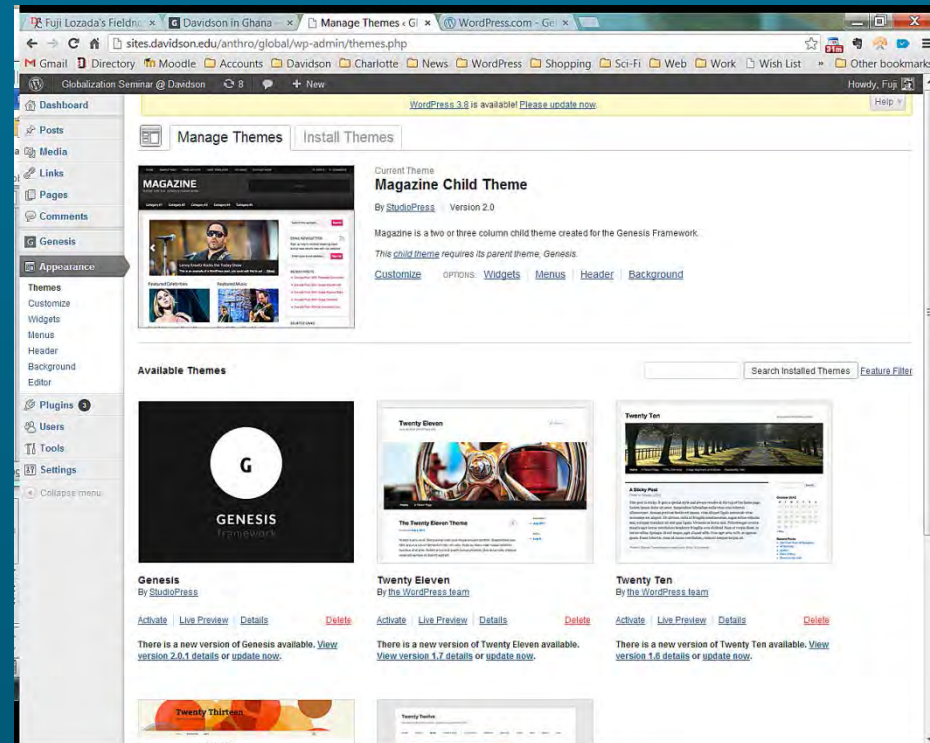- Categories can be menu items, and they can be organized hierarchically (with sub-categories).

Users

- People can be given different levels of control to the website. The levels, from minimum to maximum 'power,' are:

- Subscriber: (usually not used).

- Contributor: Can write and manage their own posts, but cannot publish them. Cannot touch pages.

- Author: Can publish and manage their own posts or add media. Cannot touch pages.

- Editor: Can write and edit all posts or add media. Cannot touch pages.
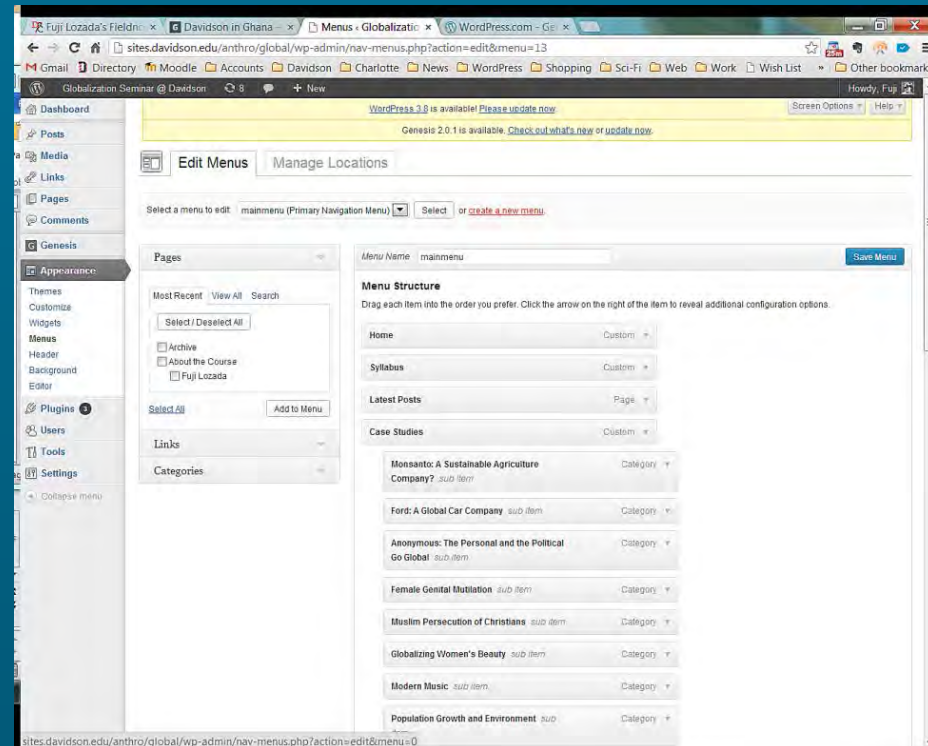
- Administrator: Can do it all.

Themes

- WordPress uses templates called themes; some are free, many need to be paid for.

- Themes menu can be found under "appearance".

- Different designs for different purposes (portfolio, organizational, commerce).

- Don't use the editor (under appearance), unless you are familiar with css and php.
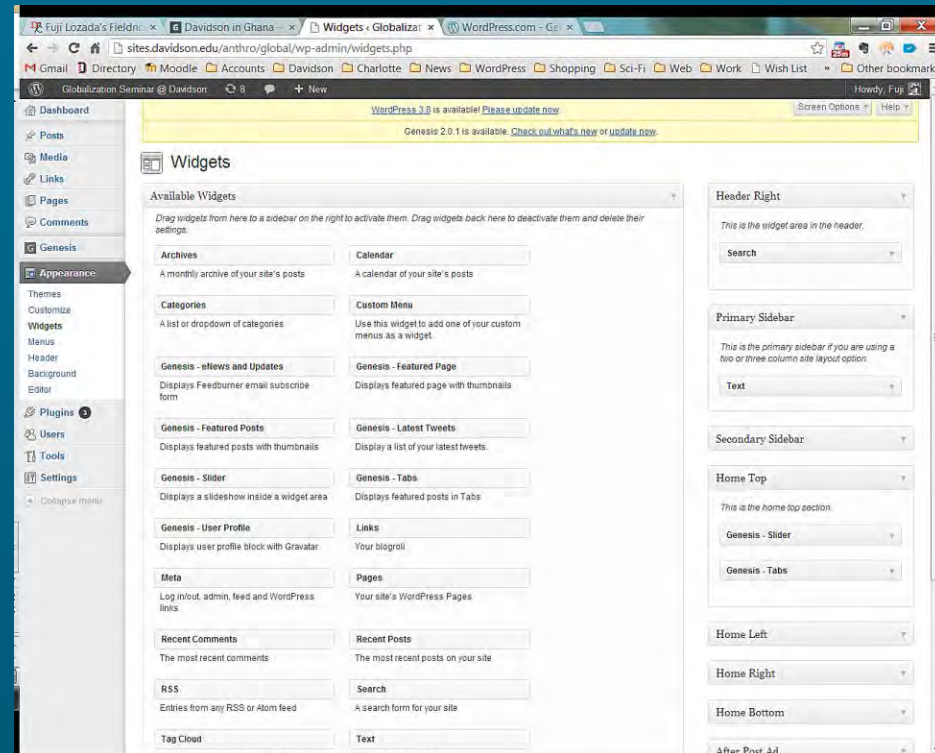
Menus

- Themes are designed to add one or two menus in specific places; locations cannot be changed (without coding).

- Menu items can be created from pages, categories, links, or individual posts.

- Items can be nested hierarchically using drag-and-drop on the edit menu screen.

- Best practice is to use pages and categories, with occasional links, to structure your website.
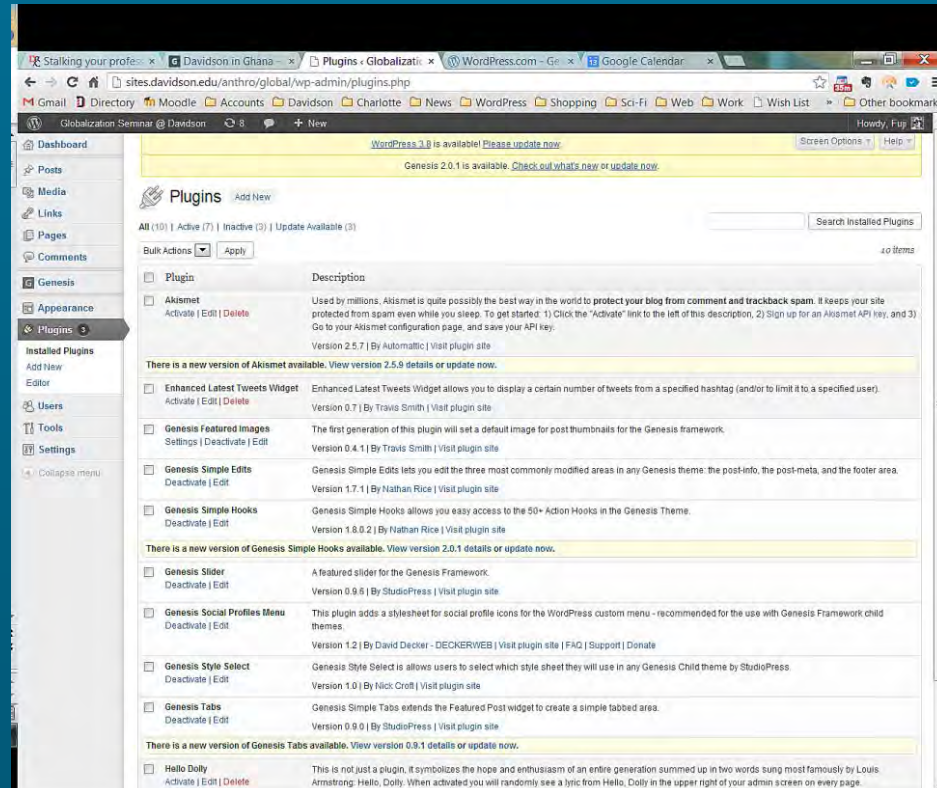
Widgets

- Widgets are pre-programmed tools that provide a particular function (add RSS feeds, text boxes, drop-down menus, etc.)
- They add design features to all pages and posts, but are especially used to design your home page.
- Themes are specifically coded to place widgets in particular areas on the screen; themes are often selected based on where they place widgets.
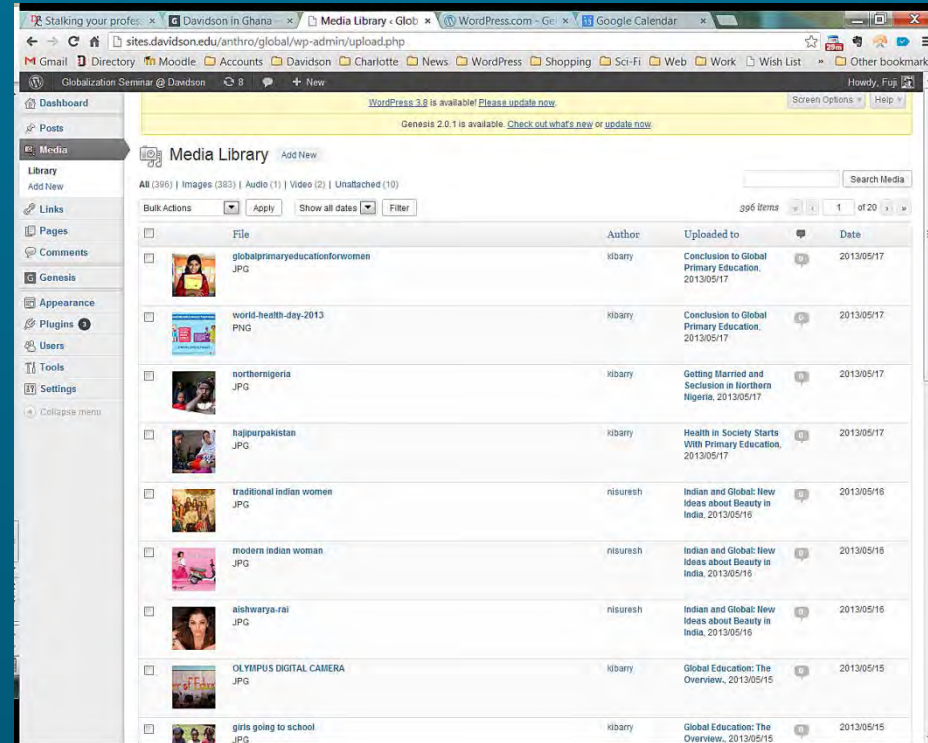- Widgets are added to your WordPress site by adding "plug-ins."

Plug-ins

- These are tools that can be added to WordPress, mostly free.

- They do optional tasks like embedding tweets, creating sliders or slideshows, etc.

- They add menu items to your Dashboard, and are used either as widgets or shortcodes (in posts or pages).

- Instructions for use of plug-ins are provided by the writer of the plug-in. You can search for plug-ins from the dashboard.
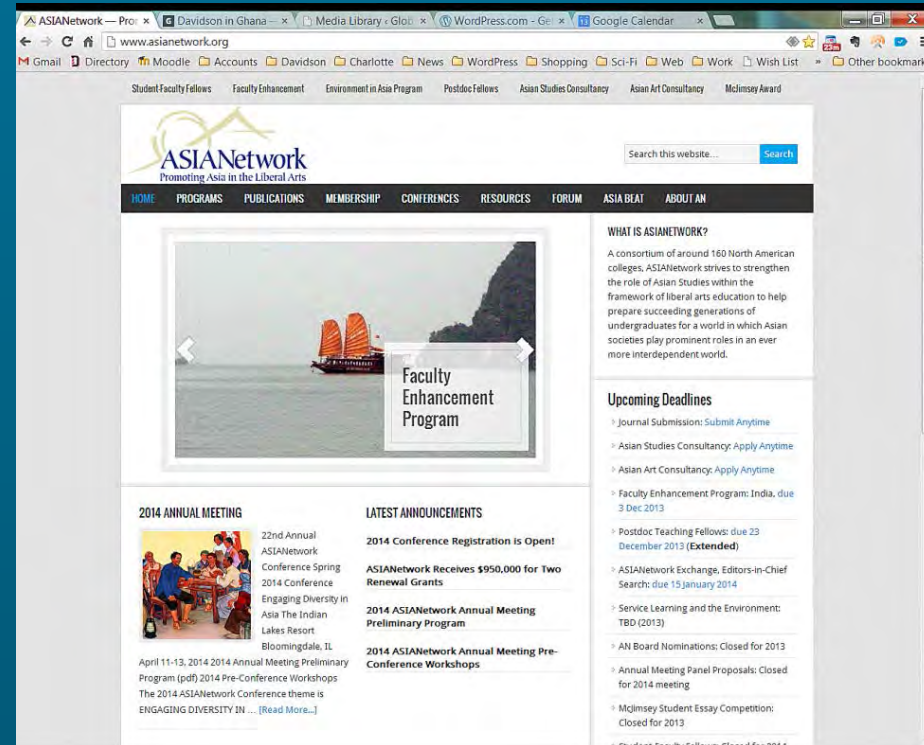
Media

- WP manages a Media Library of files that you upload.

- These can be pictures, Word documents, pdf's, and other files.

- Large media files like video should be uploaded to youtube or vimeo, and then embedded in WordPress.

- "Feature Images" in posts are useful for category listings.

Most importantly …

- Don't worry about making mistakes! If you don't know how to do something, google it (there are many WP users out there)
- Have fun! There are new themes coming out everyday, both free and paid.

Other possible non-WP resources

- Information Architecture primer: www.**princeton**.edu/communications/services/docs/IAguide2.pdf

- Web Style Guide: http://webstyleguide.com/wsg3/9-editorial-style/3-online-style.html

- ProfHacker on WordPress (Chronicle of Higher Education): http://chronicle.com/blogs/profhacker/tag/wordpress

- WP tutorial from UC Berkeley School of Journalism: http://multimedia.journalism.berkeley.edu/tutorials/wordpress/