

The Joomla! Content Management System (CMS)

In my previous article I discussed how the field of website development has evolved from simple static pages to dynamic, interactive sites that offer visitors the richness of content that an organization's knowledge bank has to offer. The introduction of a content management system into the whole website development process has evolved into sophisticated web development platforms that offer the ability to craft beautifully-designed websites that can easily be managed, revised and maintained without worrying about the content which is managed separately and in parallel by a built-in process of submitting, storing, editing, and publishing.

This is where a system like Joomla! comes in. Joomla! is a content management system that has evolved into a sophisticated website development platform as well. Backed by an open source community that has greatly contributed to its growth as a fun-to-use yet highly matured web development system, its complexity and ability to craft dynamic and interactive websites are masked by an easy to learn interface that makes it less intimidating than other less intuitive systems.

Hand in hand with its content management capability is a theme-based approach to the management of a website's look and feel. This makes the building of beautiful websites quite easy and lets designers focus on the website's look and feel without having to worry about its contents.

The design principle that Joomla! employs to manage a website's look and feel is template-based. This means that a set of files define how the overall look and feel of the site will be rendered by browsers. Typically, this set of files contain a main program file that specifies and controls the overall presentation of website pages; the images that are used by the template; and a cascading style sheet (CSS) that describes how specific elements in the pages behave.

Because of this template approach to defining a website's look and feel, it is then quite easy to control and change a website's overall design. By simply choosing a template that Joomla! will use, a website's look will change depending on the template chosen.

There are literally thousands of free templates that one can use for their Joomla sites. At our Elcott Cyberoutsource website, you may go to our [Downloads] section and download free templates from our collection. These templates are templates that have already been tested to install successfully to save you the trouble of searching for free templates to use and downloading them, only to find out that they don't work or there are missing files that prevent the template from installing successfully. In the course of my studying the Joomla! system, I have experienced this and have weeded out this free templates being offered by some sites that do not work.

Aside from the free templates you can download from our site, here are some other sites where you can download more templates that are not available on our downloads section:

- RocketTheme Joomla Template Club

- Shape 5

- Pixels Paradise

Once you've downloaded some templates that you can work with, the next step is to start experimenting with the Joomla! system. It is best to work first on a local environment and in my next article, I will teach you how to set up a local Joomla! development environment on a Windows-based computer.

Join me in future articles as we explore the wonders of Joomla!