

Weblogging With Manila

Configuring and Using News Items

Weblogging?

Manila allows you to use the front page of your website in one of two ways. When you originally received your Manila site, you were taught to use it in the more traditional way: as a standard web page. Manila also allows you to use the front page in a way that has become very popular lately: as a weblog or “Blog”.

Weblogs are sites that are made up of one primary page to which short items are continuously posted, and which link to many other sites, logs, and perhaps a couple other pages that are a part of the log.

There are a number of features that are making weblogs popular. Traditional sites often take a considerable amount of planning and building before they can be launched. Weblogs can be launched almost immediately and are expected to grow and mature as they age. They are expected to have a lot of links on the front page, which means that they don’t have to be thought out quite as much. Traditional websites also are usually somewhat inflexible as new content demands new pages or space on current pages. Weblogs are very easy to keep current as they are hungry for new content by nature and automatically roll old content off of the site or into an archive.

Setting Up Manila to Use “News Items”

“News Items” is Manila’s way of handling weblog postings. To set up News Items, do the following:

1. Login to your manila site
2. Click on prefs in the editorial menu
3. Click on news items in the preferences menu
4. Enable News Items by checking “Yes” where it says “Do you want the News Items feature enabled?”
5. Decide how many news items you would like to display on your home page. It is not uncommon for a weblog to have many postings on the front page, but you can decide for yourself how high you would like to set this.
6. Decide if you want to give your front page a separate title. Go ahead and enter it if you want one.
7. Most weblogs are organized by days. This puts a marker on your page at each point that a new day begins. It’s almost like those rubber separators at the grocery store that you put between your stuff and the next person’s.
8. Our next stop is the appearance preferences. Click on appearance in the preferences menu. Near the bottom of this page, you will find a number of prefs that pertain to news items.
9. Eventually, news items grow old and fall off of the front page. As they do, they are stored in an archive that is organized by date. Put a calendar on your front page to allow visitors to browse your past postings.
10. If you are organizing your front page by date, decide how many days should appear on your front page.

That’s it! You can now stop calling your site a site and start calling it your ‘Blog. Returning to your front page you should now find it empty, but with a calendar off to the side. Don’t worry. If you had content on your front page that you spent some time putting together, it’s still safe and waiting for the time that you decide to stop using News Items as your front page.

Adding a News Item

Once you have your site set up for doing News Items, you are ready to begin posting stories to your blog.

1. Begin by clicking on “News” in the Editorial Menu.
2. The first time you do this, you will see an empty list. Click on “Create a News Item”.
3. You will be presented with a form requesting a title, url and description. The teacherweb theme that most lps teachers use does not provide support for the url spot, so you can leave it blank. Give your post a short title and then type your post into the description box. Click “Create News Item” when you are finished.
4. Once you have created the News Item, you will be shown an example of how it will look on your front page, and be given an opportunity to edit it if you wish. If you want to go ahead and put this post on your front page, you can do so by clicking on the “Post to Home Page” button. If you would prefer to not post this to your front page at this time, just go do something else and your news item will be left in queue.

You can set up a number of News Items that will wait to be posted by returning to the “News”, creating a new news item, and submitting it. Each time you do this, that news item will be added to your list of news items that are waiting to be posted.

Posting a Pending News Item

Sometimes, you may wish to work ahead on your news items. Perhaps you are using this to post assignments and you would like to go ahead and enter all of them for the week, but wait to post each one on the appropriate day. This is easy to do.

1. First, set up your news items as described before in “Adding a News Item”.
2. Select “News” in your preferences menu and choose the news item that you wish to post.
3. Click “Post to Home Page”.

That’s it. That story has now been published to your home page.

Deleting a News Item

One of the great features of ‘blogs is their ability to archive past postings. There may be times however, that you wish you could remove a post that you have placed on your ‘blog.

To delete a news item:

1. Click on “Discuss” in the preferences menu
2. Navigate to the news date that you wish to delete a story from by using the calendar.
3. Find the story that you wish to delete to click on the number in the right column.
4. Near the bottom of the page you are taken to, you will be asked if you would like to delete this news item. Click “Submit” to proceed.
5. You will be asked to confirm your decision. Answer in the affirmative.

Your post has now been removed from your site.

Editing a News Item

We won't even use a numbered list for this one. Just go to your front page, navigate to the story you wish to edit and click the "edit" link after the story. You will be given an opportunity on the resulting page to make changes to your post. Just click "Post Changes" when you are done.