

Title: Selecting a CMS for Your Church Website

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Summary: Once you make the decision to move ahead and build or update, you need to choose the platform you will build it with. What are your choices and decisions you are faced with? Here's a look at a baker's dozen of top content management systems and how they compare for church websites and how should you evaluate them.

If you've looked around for a content management system, it is obvious that there are then hundreds, if not thousands, of others. Drupal, Joomla! and WordPress have been in the CMS arena for several years, but that doesn't mean they are the only ones. There are all tools, the one you select depends on the problems you are trying to solve and the resources you possess.

First of all, how did I come up with the list?

When I started out on this project, I already had a list of content management systems. I also looked at some other sources for narrowing down the final selection. I used the criteria the applications needed to meet:

- They had to be open source

- They needed to be actively maintained

- The web server requirements needed to be reasonable and readily available from many providers

- I had to be able to find churches or ministries actually using the application

- And they had to be discoverable (return some high search results), not just for church people, but for church people

- I was also looking for validation from other sources (the geeky side of the internet)

Why Opensource?

Opensource software provides users with options for modifying and distributing. In some cases, you can obtain the software at no cost. And, if it isn't exactly what you need, you can modify it yourself, or find someone to modify it for you.

Opensource also has a pretty good return on investment - the majority of opensource software have free versions, that you can use without any charge or any other licensing fees. The costs come in is hiring help for custom development or support, if needed.

Which other resources (mostly technical)?

- Packt Publishing www.packtpub.com

- Water & Stone <http://www.slideshare.net/...e-cms-2009>

Wikipedia http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_content_management_systems
OpensourceCMS <http://www.php.opensourcecms.com/>
CMS Matrix <http://cmsmatrix.org/>
CMS Report <http://cmsreport.com/>
Ohloh <http://www.ohloh.net>
SourceForge <http://sourceforge.net>

In [previous articles](#) I looked at what church denominations were using and guide my searching for CMS resources.

Discoverability

In order to select a content management system, you first need to find it. If something online is a search engine, like Google, Bing, or Yahoo! To learn to type in a search and, based on the number and quality of results, begin to make an effective, a search needs to be well-defined. A general search for 'church CMS' of results and get you no closer to making a decision than you were before. You will probably be just as confused, only on a deeper level.

So, to make your search more effective, you need to know what problems you are trying to solve. How often will the content be updated? What experience do the people updating the content have? What types of content will you be placing on your site? As you define more requirements, you can refine your search by adding more terms to your query. In this article, we are taking a broad brush approach and using 'for churches', 'christian' and 'christian resources' in combination with the CMS (content management system) name.

Which content management systems made the list for using for your church? In the list above, Drupal, Joomla! and Wordpress are definitely on the list. I also added a few to give you a baker's dozen - CMS Made Simple, Concrete5, DotNetNuke, Joomla! 1.5, Pixie, Pligg, Silverstripe, Typo3 and XOOPS. There were 2 systems that were eliminated because they failed to meet all the requirements satisfied. One is no longer being actively maintained and Plone was eliminated because the requirements were a little steep and not readily available.

In addition to these options, there are several church- and ministry-specific CMS to consider. With those, you'll pay a monthly fee for hosting your site and for the 'website builder'. Their servers, their platform, your site. It has some major limitations, we'll cover those in a future article.

Let's get to the task, shall we?