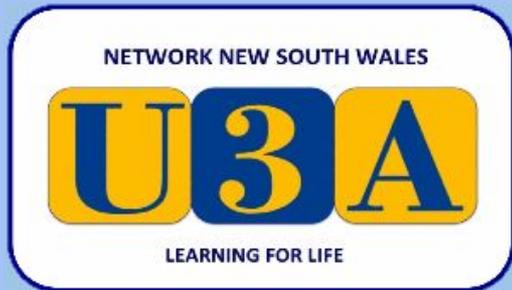


Aspects of the Upgrade to the Network's Website Hosting



U3A Network NSW Inc.

Prepared by Phil Warren, July 2020

Supervision and Security

- Over the years our Network has been managed by a U3A volunteer. Both the requisite skills and succession have been issues that have burdened the State Committee and the volunteer.
- In recognition that the delivery of website services is important and it is very much a dynamic area of skill and technology the decision has been made to have ongoing professional support for the Network.
- In spite of this being an added cost to the Network the issues of Supervision and Security have dominated the decision to upgrade.
- **WordPress Multisite** will address many the Committee's concerns and importantly provide a better option for many Member U3As to access our service.

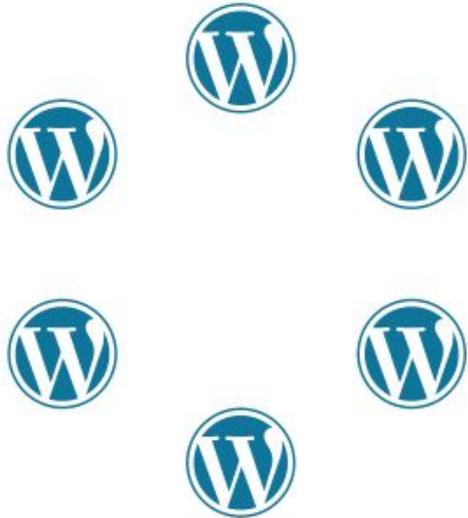
An electric power analogy

1. In a suburban street, each house is connected to the overhead or underground mains. Each has a direct connection to the supplier (e.g. EnergyAustralia) with their own energy meter, lets call it ***standard***.
2. A condominium where each dwelling is supplied electricity from the main switch room as only one set of heavy duty mains supplies the whole complex. Each unit will have an energy meter to measure their usage, while at the switch room another meter will separately record the common usage (street and path lighting, garden watering, an office, etc.), lets call it ***multi***.

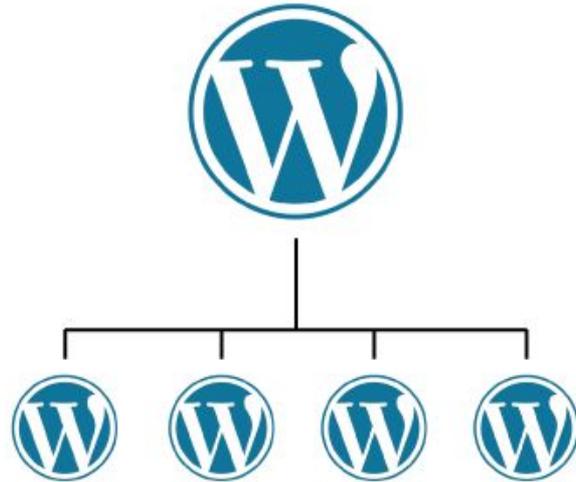
Neither user will think about their power source as they turn the lights on.

Multiple (standard) Sites and Multisite

Multiple WordPress sites



WordPress multisite



What is WordPress Multisite?

It refers to the ability to run multiple websites in one installation of the WordPress software.

The **Multi** part of the **WordPress Multisite** name doesn't refer to how many users are added to the base WordPress website

Multisite is a bit of a misnomer and it is an inaccurate depiction. A much closer description and of what the software actually does is provide:

“a network of sites”

The Multisite Arrangement



Multisite

Multisite isn't new as the open-source **wordpress.com** initiative serves in the order of 8 million 'multisites'.

The key change that is a component of the upgrade project is the Network's adoption of **Multisite as a website delivery option**, and for this reason it will be a visible part of the upgrade conversation.

The look and feel of our family of websites, when the changes are bedded in, will be quite unremarkable - they will be doing the job and, we believe, they will be modernised and easier to maintain.

More about Multisite

Each site in a Multisite network shares a **codebase** while existing as a **self-contained website** unit.

Users still have to access to the back end of each site (i.e. the site Dashboard) to manage options and create or maintain content.

Some Multisite groups of sites may give the appearance that only one site exists, as they all look so much the same.

U3A Network NSW recognises the diversity of its member U3As and is therefore NOT using an 'all sites must look the same' approach.

Still more about Multisite

- It is an optional setup of WordPress to create a group of websites.
- The group may be styled for 'corporate' uniformity or they may be quite different and individual.
- The Multi aspect creates a setup arrangement where many aspects of the site's underlying configuration is managed.
- This in turn reduces the potential for errors of setup to be made by little experienced web admin persons.
- The **Multisite Supervisor** controls options such as the installed **Themes** and **Plugins**, an option for variation will exist, based upon assessment of suitability and reliability and with appropriate consultation with multisite-users.

Is Multisite easier to manage?

- Yes, as much of the regular maintenance is automated and 'out of sight' of each of the web admins.
- The Multisite web admin's caring for 'their' website **will be much more about content** as the 'nuts and bolts' are largely looked after.
- Gaining the skills to look after the website will have fewer issues to address and certainly fewer 'techo' distractions.
- Security software will support all of the sites within the 'multi' arrangement.
- Periodic updates will be automated and, if something does go wrong, the supervisor will solve the problem.
- U3A Committees will find succession and handover less burdensome.

No change to site URLs!

- The WordPress Multisite setup provides two ways to run a network of sites on the host domain: the **subdomain option** and the **subdirectory option**.
- The more popular option sets up a **subdomain for each site**, created in a Multisite network. In the subdomain option, the username of the site appears first, followed by the domain name. A subdomain URL looks like this: <https://gondwana.u3anet.org.au> This is the present option with U3A Network NSW and it will continue, meaning our **existing URLs* will transition**.
- In the **subdirectory option**, the domain name appears first, followed by the username of the site, e.g. <https://u3anet.org.au/gondwana>

* For ALL existing websites

Ongoing 'standard' sites

- Firstly Member U3As that wish to maintain their existing 'standard' site structure will be able to do so.
- The hosting arrangement of a 'standard' site has always placed the obligation of maintenance on the site user, i.e. the Member U3A.
- The U3As that retain a 'standard' site will be required to make an active commitment to maintain their site to the recognised best-practice standards of software currency and site security.
- Software currency (timely updating) is a key attribute of the Wordpress way of managing the nasties in the Internet world.
- Too many of the Networks member website evidence poor maintenance.

Training - the Network's Role

- Team changeover is a key attribute of U3A's operations as we all take-on a U3A role typically in our mid-60s or older.
- The Network has an ongoing commitment to training to allow the web admins to feel able and confident in their role.
- Technology is making the delivery of training much easier in 2020 than it was in 2000.
- There's much in the way of video content online and targeted sessions by the Network using Zoom are easy to set up and to deliver.
- The technology also allows one-to-one training to occur very readily.

Volunteers in the Project

- The Network Committee recognises the value of the skills held by members of the NSW team throughout NSW.
- By contribution of their time and skills, volunteers can and will help the Network manage the cost of this project.
- To this end the Network wishes to engage those who may be able to contribute in this manner.
- Many actions are repetitive with the key skill being *accuracy of input* of the requisite settings in the target location.

Volunteers - Some of the Tasks

Our plan is to provide the required training and mentoring to allow our volunteers to perform the tasks described below:

- For each website, use Wordpress import, and Widget Importer and Exporter plugin, to transfer content to a new theme x number of sites.
- Create a Wordpress user.
- For Cpanel sites that have moved to multisite, transfer zone files; transfer email forwards; backup Cpanel account; copy Cpanel backup to remote storage; remove Cpanel account x number of sites.
- Troubleshoot residual, post-transfer problems x number of sites.