COMPARISON - WORDPRESS (STANDARD) AND WORDPRESS MULTISITE

U3A Network NSW Inc. has been providing a low cost web-hosting service for over a decade. The service has been based upon what could be considered industry-standard software, that is, the WordPress CMS (content management system). Although a very effective, the system has a steep learning curve and it has many features that are somewhat irrelevant for around 80% of the Network's user U3As.

There is an easier 'way into' the world of WordPress and that way is by using **Multisite**. Multisite has most of the key WordPress features and, for reasonably conventional websites such as our U3A sites, it will provide a website that is <u>not noticeably different</u> to the 'looker' to that of the standard WordPress site. Multisite needs a higher level of support than is delivered to the standard site as, for Multisite; there is a degree of sharing of the underlying web-server software that requires each Multisite to be managed as a part of a group of sites. For 'standard' sites these responsibilities rest with the webmaster of the site.

This means that the webmasters of Multisite configured websites are somewhat shielded from a range of aspects of site management, allowing them to concentrate pretty much wholly on their site content and appearance.

WordPress (standard)	Multisite
Attribute: Support	
Largely the responsible of each individual U3A group's webmaster. Group webmasters are responsible for website housekeeping, and in some cases, Cpanel. Each U3A group webmaster is relied on to maintain updates and high security standards. Webmasters are responsible for selecting and troubleshooting plugins (software) and themes (layouts). A process must be followed to request external support when the webmaster cannot solve a problem.	Multisite support provides ongoing supervision and support**.** (NB. Multisite support manages site integrity and continuity, NOT the actual content.) There will be fewer problems for U3A Multisite webmasters to troubleshoot because the websites are supervised and well-maintained.
Attribute: Risk of error	
High. Poor management can introduce security problems and software conflicts that 'break the site'. Each U3A webmaster is responsible for fixing these problems by restoring from a backup. At present, only 7 days of backups are kept. Therefore, a website cannot be restored if an error is not identified within 7 days. Content errors occur at the same rate as for Multisite.	Low. Multisite shields the webmaster from many of the 'risky' aspects of set up. Content errors are typically easy to remedy.
Attribute: Look and feel	
Layout dictated by each U3A group webmaster	Layout dictated by each U3A group webmaster (with occasional constraints as fewer additional plugins are available)
Attribute: Access and editing	
Each U3A group webmaster needs a full gamut of WordPress maintenance, security, editing and maintenance skills to troubleshoot problems.	Fewer skills are needed: Each U3A group webmaster only needs to understand Wordpress editing and layout.
Attribute: Content	
Content layouts can be customised using any Wordpress plugin(s)	Content for most needs is readily provided. If extras are a specific Plugin may be requested (see Themes and Plugins below)
Attribute: Security	
Each U3A group webmaster is responsible for being aware of security and malware / virus issues.	Multisite support maintains high security standards.
Attribute: WordPress software	
Each U3A group webmaster is responsible for applying updates. In websites with a high number of plugins and themes, updates may be required several days in a row.	Multisite support applies updates for all sites centrally.
Attribute: Themes and Plugins	
U3A group webmasters may install any theme or plugin. It is their responsibility to assess plugin stability and security, and to resolve software conflicts.	Plugins and themes are assessed, selected, enabled and maintained by Multisite support. Multisite support manages updates and problem solving.
Attribute: Succession / Handover	
New webmasters must be trained in all aspects of site management, including updates, backups, security, Cpanel, site editing and layout.	New webmasters only need training in the editing and layout of site content.