

Web Hosting 101



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Domain Names and DNS

DNS is the directory service for the Internet. The most common registrars among NJ libraries are Network Solutions, <http://www.networksolutions.com>, and GoDaddy, <http://www.godaddy.com>. Prices vary based on features and registration term, but expect to pay \$15-\$35 for basic registration with a 1 year term. A best practice is to use generic contact info when registering. This ensures renewal notices are received regardless of employee turnover.

cPanel

cPanel is a popular web-based control panel for managing websites. Usage of cPanel is not required but is a powerful tool for website managers.

FTP

File transfer protocol (FTP) is a method for maintaining your website by using a FTP client installed on your computer to move files to/from your website. FileZilla is a free popular FTP client, <https://filezilla-project.org>.

MySQL

MySQL is a popular database engine running on many web servers. It's required for installing most content management systems (CMS) like WordPress, Drupal, and Joomla. Beyond the initial setup, direct interaction with the database is generally not needed when using a CMS.

Website Statistics

Generally website hosts will provide statistics for your site, by using software that analyzes server logs.

When evaluating website usage it's important to understand the metrics. Let's focus on the difference

between hits, page views, and visits. A visit is a series of file requests from your website within a given time period (usually 30 minutes). Each one of those file requests is counted as a hit and they can be any file including html pages, images, PDFs, etc. A page view is simply the number of pages requested from your website.



Say your homepage has 5 images on it and your about us page has 2. A patron browsing to your homepage and then your about us page would be counted as 1 visit, 2 page views, and 9 hits (7 images and 2 pages).

Content Management Systems (CMS)

Web based tool for managing website content. CMSs typically use a database to store page content and templates to display that content. Most CMSs are free (open-source) and easily installed on most web servers.

The Benefits of Using a CMS

- ✓ With the website framework and design handled by a CMS you can simply focus on content.
- ✓ Non-technical staff with little training can maintain your website.
- ✓ Easily redesign your site by deploying a new template and not have to update every page.
- ✓ Large user communities for support issues.

The Pitfalls of Using a CMS

- ✗ Customization is limited or difficult.
- ✗ Since CMSs provide a common platform across a multitude of websites, they have become malware targets. To minimize security risk regular updates need to be performed.
- ✗ CMS updates can break modules/plugins or themes.

Highlights for the Three Most Popular CMSs

WordPress



- Easily add to your website with rich selection of plugins and themes.
- Quick setup and easy to learn.

Drupal



- Extremely flexible, robust, and scalable.
- Steep learning curve, more developer friendly

Joomla



- Blends ease of use with customization. The result is easier to learn than Drupal and more flexible than WordPress.