

## The Use of WordPress Plugins on Library Websites: A Case Study

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### 0. Abstract

*WordPress Plugins are adding on tools with WordPress content management system, useful for easy information management on websites. Mahatma Gandhi University Library website adopted WordPress Plugins for the management of the staff and the e-resources directory. The user-friendly control center of the plugins helps the library staff updates the information on the website without any delay and errors.*

**Keywords:** Content Management System, WordPress, Plugins, Information management.

### 1. Introduction

WordPress (<https://wordpress.org>) is one of the feature-rich and popular Contents Management System all over the world. The market share of WordPress among all websites using a content management system is 60.3% and 33.4% of all websites (W3Techs, 2019). It uses as a robust platform for content delivery in different contexts like website, portal, blog and e-commerce platform. WordPress is a Free Software and licensed under the General Public License. The project ensures active development with the support of a large community of developers. Easy deployment and customization is another attraction of WordPress. Most of the hosting service providers offer ready to use WordPress instances and those are convenient for users to implement.

Library websites are the best place to showcase the information regarding services, activities, and collection. Dynamic sites can act as an information hub for the library user community and the public. WordPress is an ideal candidate to use as a platform for the dynamic website of libraries because of its intuitive features and simple user interface. The Plugins feature with the WordPress Contents Management System is perfect for libraries to organize and display various information regarding the collection, services, and human resources.

Mahatma Gandhi University has been using WordPress software for hosting library website since 2014. The university library made use of WordPress Plugins to create the directory of staff and e-resources. The paper highlights the suitability of WordPress Plugins to manage information in a novel way for library websites.

### 2. How WordPress Plugin works

"WordPress plugins are apps that allow adding new features and functionality to the WordPress website. The same way as apps does for your smartphone" (Editorial Staff, 2017). The Plugins can integrate and run on the WordPress software engine. For example, 'Library Bookshelves' is a Plugin which helps to create virtual bookshelf on WordPress website by connecting a library management software like Koha and Evergreen (Guilderland Public Library, 2019). Same way, a seller can convert a WordPress website to an e-commerce portal by using the 'WooCommerce' plugin (Automattic, 2019). The same way, the users can find hundreds of WordPress Plugins for various purposes.

Plugins for various purposes available in the WordPress Plugins directory and it contains 54,735 plugins so far (WordPress.org, 2019). Searching, finding, and adding of plugins can be done inside from the WordPress website administration interface. The website administrator can enable and disable the plugin any time they want. Both free and paid versions of WordPress Plugins available.

### 3. Problem statement

Library websites serve various types of information like news, the arrival of new items, details of information sources, membership and library staff. Often, library staff engages in other works depute to update information in the library website/portal. In certain extent, library websites build on Content Management Systems ease the task of content update. Anyway, the content manager needs to possess the knowledge of HTML tagging while updating the information. Directory of resources and staff are common information appears on library websites. Website managers make use tables for the listing of information items. Building and maintaining tables on static and dynamic web sites requires the expertise of HTML, CSS (Cascading Style



Sheets) and other coding methods. Editing code for a new item to the list is time-consuming and at the same time chance of error is high. Beautification of tables requires comparatively good expertise on CSS. A small mistake in the script leads to the total collapse of the content order and display. Lack of tools to manage the items in lists and directories create the situation of late publication of information on the website. The difficulties in adding information to the site create reluctance among the website manager to update the content on time. The availability of a tool for the management of directories would be a great help for website content managers.

#### 4. Adoption of WordPress Plugins

Mahatma Gandhi University adopted WordPress Content Management System to host the library website (<http://library.mgu.ac.in>) in 2014. The library was using a static website build on HTML until 2014. Information regarding the collection, new arrivals, events, membership details, and the listing of e-resources with hyperlinks are the main content categories in the library website. Both static and dynamic information available on the site. For example, adding and removing e-resources information on website pages subject for regular changes and it was a hectic task for library staff. More difficulty felt while editing the library staff directory while staff promotion and retirement. Adding photos and change the order of staff details in the directory leads to the loss of information. Mistakes while changing HTML tags leads to the loss of table formatting. Editing of information in lists and tables in the website pages consumes both patience and time of the library staff.

In this situation, the library decided to adopt WordPress plugins to create the directory of e-resources and the library staff. "A plugin is a piece of software containing a group of functions that can work with a WordPress website. They can extend functionality or add new features to your WordPress websites. They make it easy for users to add features to their website without knowing a single line of code" (Editorial Staff, 2019). The plugins can find from the WordPress Plugin directory and add to the website without any coding expertise. The user review and rating can help to decide the best and popular plugin from the WordPress Plugins directory (<https://wordpress.org/plugins>).

#### 5. Plugin for the staff directory

Removal of staff details, change of designation, and uploading new photos on the staff page is one of the regular content management activities. Users can find hundreds of staff directory plugins suitable for different types of institutions with various features. Mahatma Gandhi University Library selected 'Team Members' (<https://wordpress.org/plugins/team-members>) directory plugin to hold minimum details like name, designation, department, photo upload, and facility to link popular social media. The order of the staff can change based on the designation. The selected plugin has both a free version and a paid version. The free version is Open Source in nature and no limitations to use.

#### Assistant Librarian

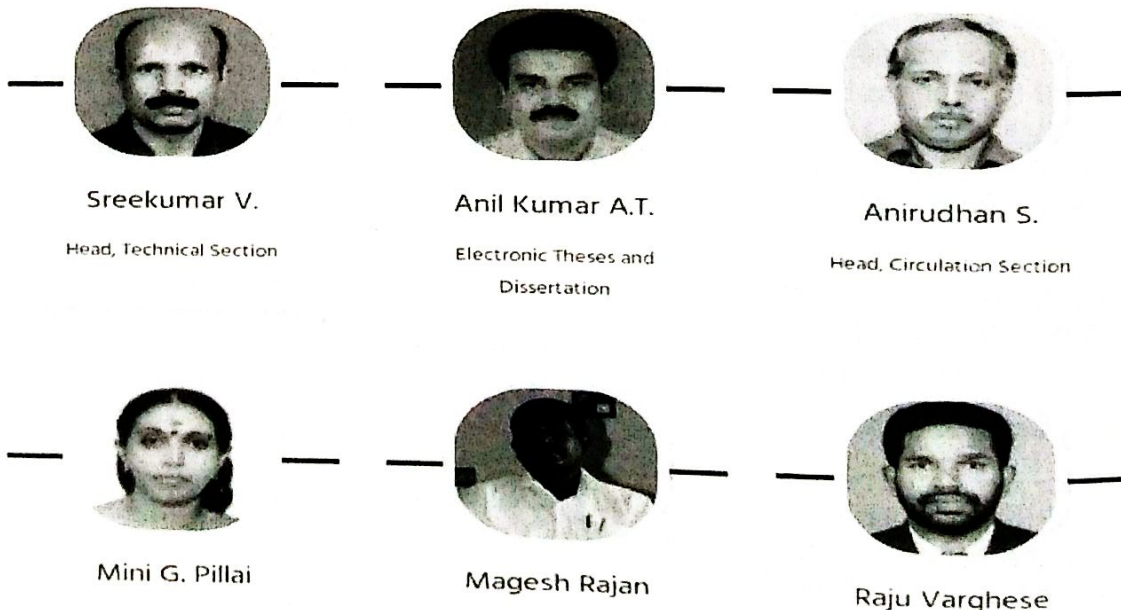


Figure 1. Staff directory at Mahatma Gandhi University Library website.



Category wise staff organization in the directory is another attraction of the selected directory plugin. The list can split into segments using this facility and management of the same category staff (e.g., Deputy Librarian, Assistant Librarian, Office Staff) is convenient. The staff directory can display anywhere on the website page using a shortcode.

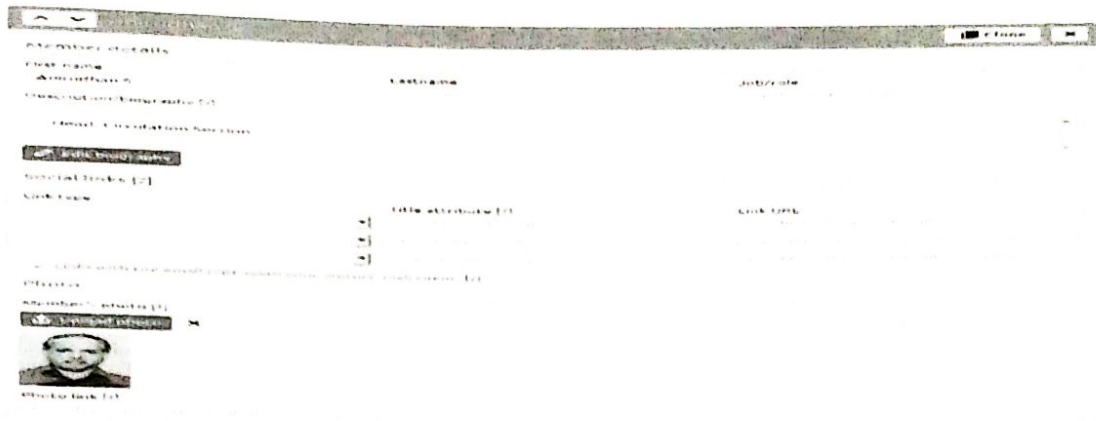


Figure 1. The control center of 'Team Members' WordPress Plugin.

### 6. Plugin for the e-resources directory

Management of links to e-resources in the library website is vital for easy to browse, find from hundreds of e-resources by the user community from campus and remote places. It is necessary to update the e-resources list when the acquisition of a new information product and remove the obsoleted links. Mahatma Gandhi University Library selected 'Simple Link Directory' (<https://wordpress.org/plugins/simple-link-directory/>) WordPress Plugin to create the directory of e-resources. It is easy to develop link blocks like e-books, databases, e-journals, and online reference sources using the plugin. Otherwise, the lists can be organized topic wise/category wise. Thumbnail image can add along with each link and this feature is helpful to identify the desired e-resources by the user. The user can vote for the useful site link and this way user feedback can collect about each e-resources. The lists can be displayed anywhere on the library website using a shortcode.

#### e-resources

##### DATABASES

- ▶ E-Shodhsandhu
- ▶ E-Shodhsandhu
- ▶ E-Shodhsandhu
- ▶ E-Shodhsandhu
- ▶ E-Shodhsandhu

Figure 3. E-resources directory at the library website

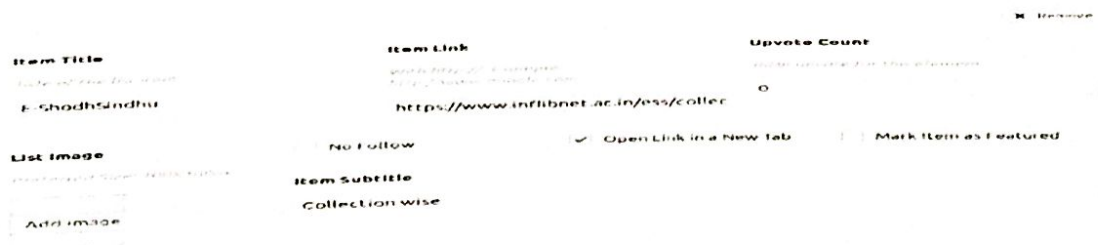


Figure 4. The control center of the Simple Link Directory WordPress Plugin.

### 7. Advantages of WordPress Plugins

Following are the advantages of WordPress Plugins in the context of an academic library:

- ❖ WordPress Plugins are easy to install and manage.
- ❖ Availability of simple graphical interface to update the content.
- ❖ The user can choose from a large number of plugins for similar purposes.
- ❖ Easy to place and display the content using plugins to anywhere on the website.

- ❖ Paid support also available for premium service.
- ❖ Search engine friendly.
- ❖ Compatible with any devices like mobile phone and computers.

WordPress Plugins can accelerate the content update into the website because of its rich features and simplicity. The library staff can add the content without any difficulty by using the simple graphical interface of the plugins control center. Hence, the users of the website can access the information through the site without any delay.

## 8. Conclusion

WordPress Plugins for directory and list creation are convenient for libraries to manage information on library websites and portals. Plugins give more control over the content on the library website for website managers. Such add-on tools save the time of the library staff and help to publish error-free information on the website. 'Team Members' and 'Simple Link Directory' Plugins are very popular with good community support. Both plugins are subject to constant changes based on users feedback.

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