Geological Society of Washington Website Migration Proposal

Ryan Haupt reached out the week of March 8th to discuss plans for migrating the Wordpress website of the Geological Society of Washington's (GSW) to a new web hosting provider. The following proposal lays out a preliminary path for moving GSWweb.org away from American Geosciences Institute servers to vendor-run servers under the control of GSW. The notable benefits are up-to-date server programming languages, secure socket layer (SSL) encryption most commonly seen as the "s" in https, and enabled Wordpress software updates — all three basic and prudent necessities in today's digital environment.

Independent hosting and an up-to-date Wordpress install also allow options for "hardening" the website and software that runs it, a term which refers to extra steps taken to secure self-managed Wordpress installs and recommended by the Wordpress developer team. I suggest implementing basic options on this list below and strongly recommend regular, full, off-site backups of self-managed Wordpress sites in case the site is hacked or locked for ransom. It is a highly popular platform which unfortunately also makes it an available target.

Note that specifics in the proposal below are preliminary and discussion is welcomed about modifying these plans to suit timing and scope needs. Explanation on pricing: $120/hour is the rate for all web-development related tasks, including any custom code needed for hardening the Wordpress install, site archiving, account setup, training, etc. Built into this price structure is time for any conversations needed about the process or final product. Communication is critical for technical projects and my goal is to have clients feel they can pick up the phone to talk though something, big or small, without being billed for the conversation.

Wordpress Migration Plan

Part I — Setup (2-3 hours)

We lay the groundwork for the website migration starting with discussions to learn about what the GSW specifically needs from their web hosting provider and domain registrar. I then research potential options for both and present those capabilities and prices for a final provider decision by the GSW Council. Finally, I complete the initial setup of the accounts for the provider of choice and transfer the domain.

Deliverables:
- Informed decision for new web hosting service and domain registrar for GSWweb.org
- Setup of GSW's accounts at the web host and domain registrar
- Transfer of GSWweb.org domain to new registrar
- Documentation for accessing and maintaining these new accounts

Part II — Migration (10-14 hours)

The technical work begins here. First, I fully backup the current site and use that backup to populate a fresh Wordpress installation on the new web server. Starting with the outdated version currently limited by AGI's server, I am unsure exactly what bugs and challenges will arise in this process, hence the range of estimated hours.

Once the site is migrated I "harden" the Wordpress install with a list of basic protections for self-managed Wordpress sites. Some of these will change the process for authors and editors on the site, so I will be in conversation with the GSW webmasters about which ones they are comfortable with. A specific list of ones I recommend is here (the list linked above is more general).

Note: These additions do not guarantee protection from all Wordpress vulnerabilities — nothing does. The goal here is to patch the well-known and easy-to-attack holes in the Wordpress software architecture. So it is critical to also have regular, complete, off-server backups in case the site is hacked and needs to be quickly restored.

Deliverables:
- A complete backup of the original site for archival storage
- Fully updated, functional, and hardened copy of the GSWweb.org Wordpress install running securely on the new web host

Part III — Re-Launch (2-3 hours)

At this point we have a new web host running an up-to-date copy of Wordpress with the same content and style as the current site, which at this point is still live on AGI's servers. The final steps are to make a complete backup of the new version of the site to preserve the migration work done so far, then point the domain name from the old AGI server to GSW's new one. This process can take a few hours to propagate through the web, so I like to make these changes on weekday evenings. Once done, the new server migration will be complete and the site is live again at its new home.

Lastly, I provide documentation, or training, or both, to the GSW webmasters for accessing and publishing on the updated site. This will not be a wildly different process than it is currently and I want to ensure everyone who needs to be is familiar with the updated site processes just like the old one.

Deliverables:
- A complete backup of the updated site for security purposes
- Re-launch of GSWweb.org by connecting the new web host to the domain
- Documentation and/or training for GSW webmaster who maintains the site (1 hour max)

Other project information about pricing and ongoing cost responsibilities are below.

Standard Project Details

- 1/3 of cost (lower estimate) is billed at the start of the project

- Remaining project cost billed at completion

- No Trend Industries branding or links appear on the site

- URL registration fees are not covered by this proposal (t*hese usually range $10-$40+ per year depending on the domain, which GSW already has; domain transfers are priced the similarly and include the current remaining period from the previous registrar*)

- Website hosting costs are not covered by this proposal (*these usually range $10-20 per month and are most economically bought by the year; plans will be provided to the GSW Council and webmaster for selection and takes the place of the current free hosting by AGI*)

- All hosting and domain costs are paid directly to those vendors by GSW

Timeline and Cost

Full Wordpress and Domain Migration
        Duration: 14-20 hours
        Cost: $1,680-$2,400
        Timeline: 10 business days from start of project

_____ _____ Proposal for Trend Industries LC Website Development Agreement