

Connect Your Overseas Post Community!

*A Guide to Creating Mission-Friendly
Facebook Groups and WordPress Websites*



I Thank you

We would like to thank the Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide, particularly President Patricia Linderman, for their support in developing this manual. We would also like to acknowledge Embassy Brasilia for introducing us to the concept of a community website. A big thank you also goes out to our online writers' group for their valuable feedback and comments on this manual, and to Kim Eggerton, for additional editing assistance.

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Associates of the American Foreign Service
Worldwide (AAFSW)

4001 North Ninth Street
Suite 214
Arlington, VA, 22203
<http://www.aafsw.org>

703-820-5420
office@aafsw.org

About the Authors

Nicole Schaefer-McDaniel worked as a research social scientist before her husband convinced her to try life in the Foreign Service. With their kids, they have been posted to São Paulo, Brazil and Vienna, Austria and are headed to Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia in 2015.

Nicole has written a number of articles on spouse/partner employment for AAFSW's newsletter, the *Global Link*, and co-chairs the AAFSW global working group exploring employment issues. Nicole is the Real Post and School Report editor for Tales from a Small Planet (<http://www.talesmag.com>). Her personal blog can be found at <http://kidswithdiplomaticimmunity.wordpress.com>.

Kelly Bembry Midura is Content Manager for AAFSW (<http://www.aafsw.org>) and a freelance writer and editor. Previous occupations have included website designer and newsletter editor at three overseas posts.

Kelly has accompanied her husband on six tours to Africa, Latin America, and Europe, and has long advocated for making information more accessible to Foreign Service family members. Her personal blog can be found at <http://wellthatwasdifferent.wordpress.com>.

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III Introduction

We created our community website in Vienna, Austria, home to three U.S. missions. As with most large posts, the community is dispersed throughout the city. Even in a city in which services are largely wonderful and weekend tourism opportunities abound, Americans need support, advice and resources – especially during the first few weeks at post.

We asked ourselves: “How can information best be shared quickly and efficiently?” Getting everyone together in person was impossible. Contacting so many people via telephone or email was impractical. The weekly PDF Tri-Mission newsletter couldn’t serve as an accessible resource for answers to all the nitty-gritty questions that new arrivals to post always seem to have, such as finding a good dentist or figuring out the public transport system.

So, we started a post Facebook group, “Vienna Vagabonds.” It quickly grew to nearly 100 members who help one another navigate the ups and downs of living in Vienna on a daily basis.

A few months later, after stumbling upon Embassy Brasilia’s community website (papagaiobrasilia.wordpress.com), we thought a similar publication would have great value for the Vienna community. So, we developed “TriVienna” (trivienna.wordpress.com) and launched it in the spring of 2013.

Community response to TriVienna has been extremely positive. It has been helpful to new arrivals as well as for those considering bidding on Vienna. In less than a year, two editors and a number of contributors have produced nearly 200 posts on topics including restaurant reviews, shopping tips, traffic and parking, travel tips, and education options. As of this writing, some mission sections have also begun to contribute.

While we were both bloggers before we set up TriVienna, we believe that the WordPress content management platform makes it easy for anyone to set up a basic community website, even if they have no previous blogging or website experience. Contributing to a blog is even easier. None of TriVienna’s contributors had ever blogged before, yet they found that composing and publishing posts is easy and fun. Overall, it has been a great project for all involved and contributed to building a closer post community as tips and ideas were being shared.

We have since learned that a few other posts have independently created similar websites, and given the tremendous support and positive reactions to such valuable information that is available literally at readers’ fingertips, we wrote this manual in the hopes of stimulating more post communities to do the same.

In this manual, we will:

- Discuss what a community website is and why it’s useful for an overseas post community.
- Describe how to set up a relatively secure Facebook group as a first step towards, or an addition to, a website at post.
- Explain, step by step, how anyone with computer skills and access to the internet can set up a free community website.
- Outline and explain available privacy settings.

We hope this manual will inspire American diplomatic missions worldwide to make useful information easily available to everyone in the community, whether or not they are already at post.

*Nicole Schaefer-McDaniel
Kelly Bembry Midura*

1 Why Have a Community Website?

What is a Community Website?

A community website is an online webpage (public or private, more on that later) that contains all those helpful pieces of advice and critical information one needs both to prepare for a move to post and to live in that new city.

While posts generally provide a lot of useful information in the welcome packet or welcome cable during a Permanent Change of Station (PCS), these are limited to Word or PDF documents that are not interactive, and they are not updated frequently enough to respond to the changing nature of a post community.

Furthermore, viewing these documents can be difficult for family members who do not have easy access to the Department of State intranet. This is also the case for employees of other agencies not directly employed by the Department of State, but nevertheless posted to US missions abroad, and their family members.

A community website is a more interactive user format in which tips, links, reviews, and comments can easily be shared. Tips and information are just one or two clicks away. In our experience, such a website can develop a shared sense of community by inviting members to contribute reports on their experiences and tips for living at post. Moreover, these websites are easy and cost-efficient (free!) to maintain and can be easily updated to respond to the changing needs of the community.

Currently, we know of the following community websites:

- ◆ Belgrade, Serbia (CLO)
<http://belgradecllo.wordpress.com>
- ◆ Brasilia, Brasil (CLO)
<http://papagaiobrasilia.wordpress.com>
- ◆ Dakar, Senegal (CLO)
<http://clodakar.wordpress.com/>
- ◆ Jakarta, Indonesia (CLO)
<http://usembjkt.weebly.com/>
- ◆ Monterrey, Mexico (CLO)
<http://clomonterrey.org/index.html>
- ◆ Shenyang, China (CLO)
<http://grapevineshenyang.wordpress.com>
- ◆ Vienna, Austria (community volunteers)
<http://trivienna.wordpress.com>

Isn't this expensive?

- ◆ No! Well, at least not in the monetary sense. WordPress, our preferred website host, is completely free up to a whopping 3 GB of file storage space. (Most community websites will not hit that size limit for years, if ever.) The only "cost" is the time spent developing the site and writing content for it.

Contrary to what you might think, it's not difficult to start a community website! All you need are:

- ◆ Basic computer skills (and a desire to improve them)
- ◆ A catchy website name
- ◆ A website host such as WordPress
- ◆ A webmaster to set up and maintain the site
- ◆ A content manager to organize content and topics
- ◆ Contributors to write material

For the last category, think as broadly as possible: are there any "experts" at post?

- ◆ Adventurous souls who find every kid-friendly thing to do, visit all the sights, and/or dine out a lot?
- ◆ People with great host country language skills who can help translate information?
- ◆ Interested parties in the Community Liaison Office, Medical Unit or Management Section who want to contribute?

What should we publish?

The short answer is: anything you think is relevant for expatriate Americans trying to make sense of living at post!

You can also refer to the post welcome information or think about what questions you had about living at post during the first few months. Or, take a look at the existing community websites in your city and borrow ideas from them.

As you think about setting up the website, a good approach is to make an outline of the main categories—this will help you develop your navigation menu on the website. And don't worry! If you don't like something or find that it's not working down the road or that content areas are shifting, it's easy to move sections around on the website.

If you want to start with just three or four sections, that's fine too. Your website can be as simple or as elaborate as you want it to be. You can always expand it later—or leave it to another webmaster who will build on your work when you leave post!

Please note that all social media usage, including Facebook groups and websites, should conform to the guidelines laid out in [5 FAM 792.2](#) "Personal Use of Social Media."

The short version of this regulation is that your website or Facebook group should not present the impression that it represents the U.S. government in any way, or discuss matters of "official concern." Keep this mind when developing content or posting information to any social media.

We also recommend adding a disclaimer stating that a website is strictly "unofficial," perhaps in the page footer for the site (see page 14). On a Facebook group, this information could be included in the group description.

2 Setting Up a Facebook Group at Your Post

If you are not quite ready to publish a website, or if you would like to take an easy first step toward getting your community connected online while you develop your website, a Facebook group can be a great way to create that online space. And, it only takes a few minutes to set up!

Facebook has many potentially useful features for anyone looking to bring an overseas community closer together. Unlike the one-way transfer of information offered by a website, a Facebook group facilitates a two-way exchange of information. So, a Facebook group can work either independently or in conjunction with a website to connect the community. For example:

- ◆ Members can post questions and answers about life at post. Looking for Karo syrup? Need to get a car repaired? Ask on the post Facebook group!
- ◆ A Community Liaison Office coordinator can post items of interest to the community. Coffees, parties, local events, you name it. Photos of community events can be uploaded to share in the private environment of the group.
- ◆ Everything from Eligible Family Member (EFM) job opportunities to information about when flu shots will be offered at the Health Unit and potential traffic problems can be shared directly with both employees *and* family members at post.

- ◆ Events can be posted to the group's Events page, providing a handy calendar reference for everyone in the community. This can also facilitate RSVPs if the event coordinator chooses to employ the Facebook interface for that purpose.
- ◆ Files can be posted to share; for example, flyers for community events or softball schedules.
- ◆ Group members can even be polled! Want to know how many members of the community would be interested in a ski trip or a children's party? Click "Ask a Question" and find out!
- ◆ Finally, an active Facebook group can serve as a sounding board to develop content for a community website. In our Vienna Facebook group, for example, a question about driving rules in Vienna sparked a long discussion and led to a much-needed post on driving and parking in Vienna for our community website, "TriVienna."

Getting Started

To open your Facebook group, you must first have an individual Facebook account. Note that this does not have to be your personal account. You can open an account solely for the purpose of setting up the group, and even pass that account on to someone else when you leave post. For example, a Community Liaison Office coordinator could have an account linked to a CLO email address and managed by one or more employees in the CLO office. When a new CLO coordinator arrives, he/she simply takes over management of the account using the dedicated CLO email address.

A Word About Privacy

Many are wary of Facebook because of widely publicized concerns about privacy. It's important to note, however, that Facebook *only knows what you choose to tell it*. Whether you list your phone number or home address, for example, is entirely up to you. This is true both for individuals and for groups hosted on Facebook.

A discussion of individual privacy controls is beyond the scope of this manual, but there are many online guides and tutorials to help you tweak your personal Facebook settings to your satisfaction, such as this article from Yahoo! News (<http://news.yahoo.com/facebook-privacy-settings-how-to-150256399.html>).

Our short take is: **We do not believe that the privacy or security concerns of any individual should be a roadblock to using Facebook as a social media platform to bring overseas communities together.** In fact, there are already many active Foreign Service communities on Facebook: Trailing Houses, Unaccompanied Spouses, Foreign Service Bloggers, to name just a few, as well as dozens of post-specific groups. (See Appendix for a list of posts with active Facebook groups as of January, 2014.)

When you set up your group, you will have an option to “set group address.” This creates an email address for your group, but *also* sets the name of the group for purposes of the group's public URL. (The default is just a bunch of numbers assigned by Facebook.) So, if you would like to have a descriptive URL such as <https://www.facebook.com/groups/viennavagabonds/>, consider what you would like your URL to be when setting that address. More information in this video tutorial: <http://blog.coolaj86.com/articles/how-to-change-the-url-of-a-facebook-group.html>.

Setting up Your Facebook Group

So, Facebook account in place and ready to start a group? Great, just click “Create Group” on the left side of your Facebook home page. The box shown on page 4 will pop up.

Enter the name of your group, and invite at least one person to it to open the group.

Now, here's the important bit. You have three choices for privacy: Open, Closed, and Secret.

“**Open**,” means that all activity on the group is completely public, meaning visible to anyone. Clearly, this would not be a good choice for a American mission community overseas!

The most private choice here is “**Secret**.” This means that the group is effectively invisible to anyone who is not already in it. At some posts, the security environment may indicate this as the best option. There are two ways that a group like this can manage membership:

1. The administrator of the group can “friend” new members, then add them to the group. This means that the administrator must be Facebook friends with all group members, which may not be a desired arrangement for him/her.
2. All members of the group can invite their own Facebook friends, but the administrator must approve new members before they can join. Note that a group can have more than one administrator, so this task can be shared.

The downside to this arrangement is that the URL for the group is also “secret.” It is not listed by Facebook and the URL cannot easily be copied and pasted to share. All new members must also be friends with someone already in the group. This makes it difficult to advertise the link for the group in a post newsletter, for example, or to send it to an incoming mission employee who may not be Facebook friends with anyone in the mission yet. So, this type of group must be managed by someone with direct access records of post personnel in order for it to grow and succeed.

The “middle” option, which may be suitable for many posts, is to set the group to “**Closed**.” This means that both the group URL and membership list will be public. Note that this means that each individual’s privacy settings will determine what other information is available about the user to the general public. This is always the case: the only new security implication is that the individual will be publicly associated with the post Facebook group as soon as he/she joins it and can therefore potentially be associated with that post.

To put it another way, this setting puts the privacy burden on each individual, rather than on the group administrator. Aside from the membership list, all other group content (discussions, posts, etc.) is private by default: only group members will be able to see it. Group discussions of embassy events, for example, will not be visible to the public.

A Closed group will probably attract some spammers, just like anything else on the Internet. They may apply to join the group (we have had this experience with our Facebook group, “Vienna Vagabonds”). But they cannot join the group, post anything, or see any group discussions unless an administrator approves their membership.

Therefore, a responsible group administrator is key to the security of both Closed and Secret Facebook groups. On our group, two spouses who work at the mission and have access to the Global Address List are in charge of approving new members. They use a shared email account to which prospective members can email their credentials.

So, what are you waiting for? With just a few easy tweaks, Facebook can provide a private place for your community to connect in cyberspace!

Create New Group

Group Name

Members

Privacy

Open
Anyone can see the group, who's in it, and what members post.

Closed
Anyone can see the group and who's in it. Only members see posts.

Secret
Only members see the group, who's in it, and what members post.

[Learn more about groups privacy](#)

Creating your new Facebook group

3 Setting Up a Community Website

Setting Up A WordPress Website

Most people think of a blog as a personal journal of some kind, with entries in chronological order. But, we can easily create a website by using a blogging service as a content management platform. Our WordPress “blog” will be a real website containing information organized into categories and employing a navigation menu.

It’s important to note the distinction between wordpress.com and wordpress.org. We will use wordpress.COM to build the community website because it is a free service. wordpress.ORG is a more advanced platform that requires a paid subscription. A free WordPress site can be converted to a paid site later on to provide more options, but the type of community website we are discussing can easily be constructed using the free service.

Ready to start? Good! Bookmark <http://www.wordpress.com>!

The following links will also be very helpful if you are unsure how to proceed or need to look up new tips and tricks – so go ahead and bookmark these while you’re at it!

- ◆ <http://learn.wordpress.com>
- ◆ <http://learn.wordpress.com/get-published/>

Sign up at www.wordpress.com and follow the instructions to create a free blog. Add a catchy site title and an optional tag line that tells readers what your site is all about (this can be changed later if necessary).

When you sign up, choose the option to create a **free** website/blog and set the blog to be **private** while you work on developing infrastructure and content. Later, when you are happy with the layout and preliminary content, you can change this setting and go public with your new creation.

For purposes of this manual, we created a mock website entitled “Community Website.” You can find it here:

- ◆ <http://aafswcommunitywebsitetutorial.wordpress.com>

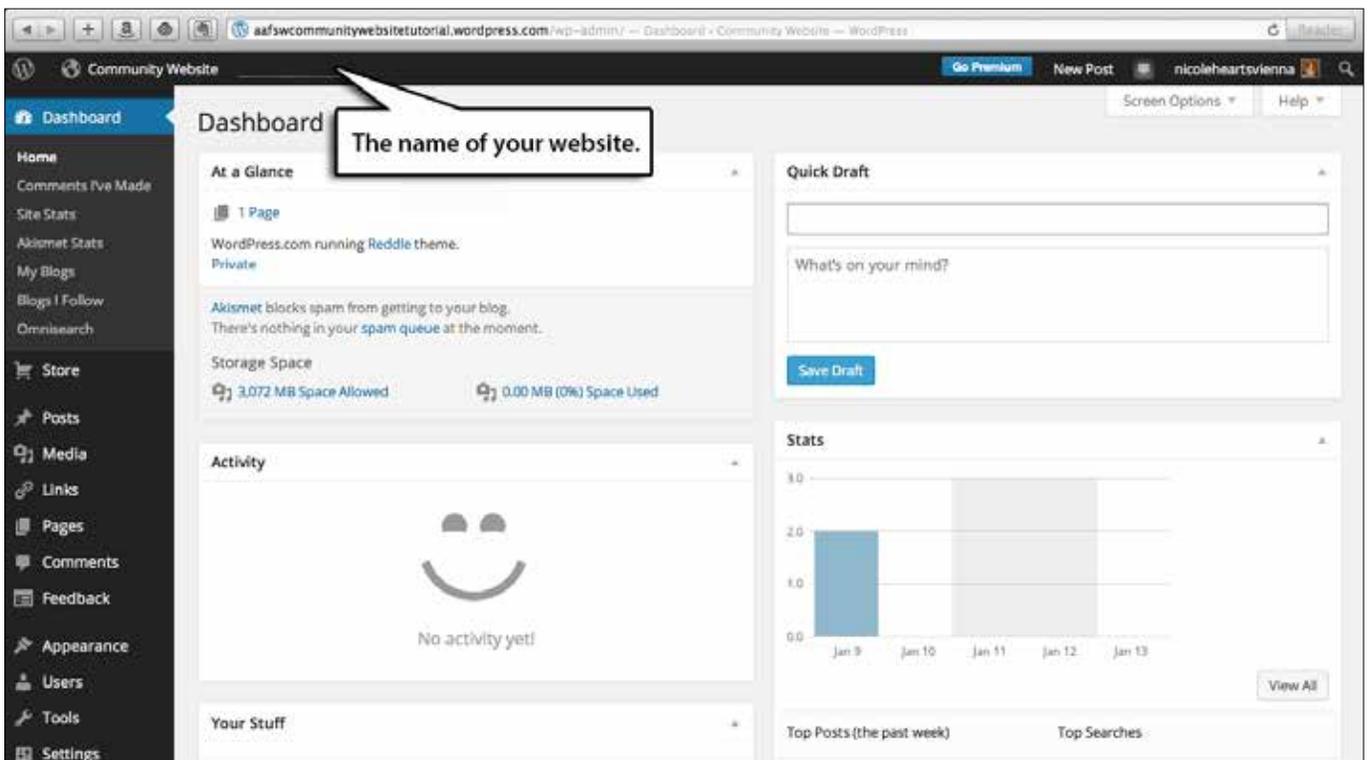
The Dashboard

The Dashboard is your working space. Here, you can lay out the design of your website by using preformatted site designs, or “themes,” compose text to appear on the website, upload pictures, and design your navigation bar and other features.

Visitors to your website will not see the dashboard – this is only visible to users who are logged onto your website account as an Administrator, Editor, Contributor, or Author. WordPress provides an explanation of these roles here:

<http://en.support.wordpress.com/user-roles/>

Visitors will see only the public website, not the Dashboard. To get from the Dashboard to the public website, click on the name of your blog on the top left (in our case “Community Website”).



Welcome to your website's Dashboard

Choosing a Theme

One of the first things you will want to do is set up a theme for your website. In the Dashboard, click on Appearance and then Theme. Now, you can take a look at the available design themes and search by popularity and price. There are a number of free designs to choose from.

Dashboard > Appearance > Theme

Clicking on a chosen theme will allow you to see the theme's features. To choose a theme, click on it, then Activate in order to see how it will look on your site. Rest assured that a theme can always be changed if you don't end up loving it!

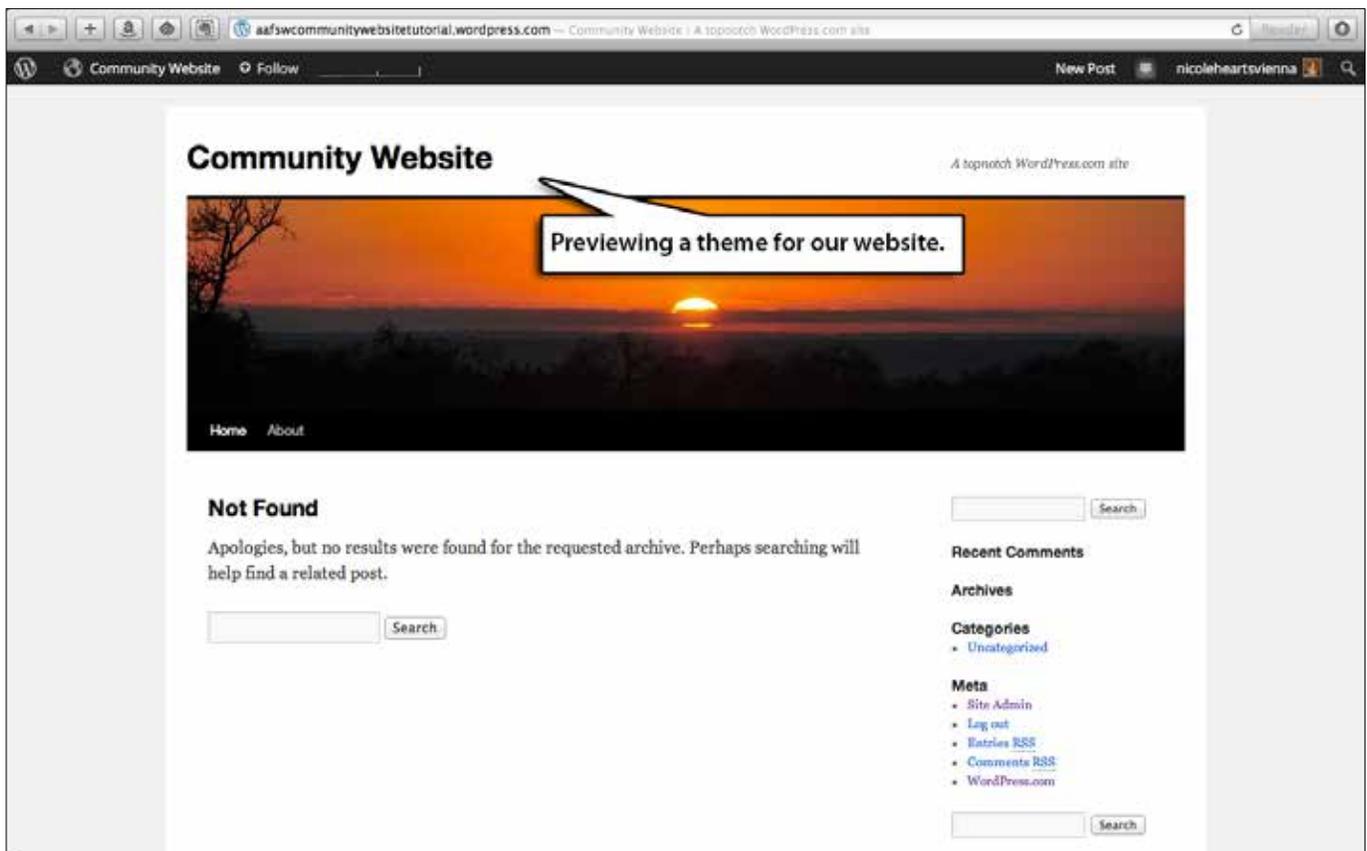
We selected the relatively simple "Twenty Ten" theme for the Community Website example. Remember to click on the top left name of your site (our case "Community Website") to toggle from the Dashboard to the public site (depicted in the screen shot below).

Customizing the Site

In your Dashboard, click on Appearance and then Customize to customize your site. This will bring you to the public view and allow you to modify the colors, font, site title, and header of your site.

Dashboard > Appearance > Customize

You can also change the site header picture. Rather than using one of the standard images, we recommend uploading your own picture that depicts your post or city (a landmark building, a flag, a popular site, etc.). To do so, click on Header and follow the instructions to add a new picture. This will bring you to the Media Library screen on which you upload your own picture. Again, you can play around with any of these features and change settings back and forth until you are comfortable with the result.



Previewing a Theme for your site.

Posts, Pages, Categories, Tags

All of the content you write on the website will be written as **Posts** or **Pages** and organized via **Categories** and **Tags**.

Content that is static and likely not to be changed or modified – such as “About This Site” should be saved as a **Page**. To create or view a Page, click on Dashboard and then Pages. In fact, you will see that a sample About page is already saved here – you can modify and edit content on this screen as well.

Dashboard > Pages > Add Page

To write a **Post**, click on Dashboard, Posts, and then Add New. This will open a new screen on which you can type new text or copy and paste from another document.

Dashboard > Posts > Add New

Categories allow you to organize posts. For example, if you have a lot of posts about health and safety, you could categorize these into one category and call it “Health & Safety.”

The categories are also a very handy way to develop a navigation menu. There are other ways for creating such a menu but using Categories is a great method for a community site as it allows new posts to be added as soon as they are published. A good first step is to broadly outline the content of your site and think about overarching categories of information. There is no limit to the number of categories you can create, and you can change or delete categories at any time.

Tags are another option to organize site content. While similar to Categories, they allow writers to describe post content in greater detail. Each post contributor creates Tags individually after composing a new post. The Tag Widget (discussed later) allows readers to click on a given Tag so that all posts containing this specified Tag

will be pulled up together.

Setting Up a Navigation Menu

A navigation menu is usually located on the top of the site underneath the header picture. It is a great way of organizing site content and allowing readers to easily navigate the website immediately upon viewing it.

As mentioned above, building relevant Categories is crucial to developing the type of menu we recommend for a community website. While there are endless possibilities for customizing a menu, in our example we will build a menu with three columns/sections.

- ◆ **About** – a page that introduces the website and provides contact information to reach webmaster and/or content manager.
- ◆ **Newcomers** – posts categorized as useful to newcomers will appear here, e.g. posts containing information on what it’s like to live here, what to pack etc. Any time a new post is categorized as “newcomers,” it will come up in this section.
- ◆ **City life** – this category will be further broken down into the following subcategories that will be visible in the menu bar:
 - ◆ **Driving** – posts categorized as “driving” will appear here
 - ◆ **Public Transport** – posts categorized as “public transport” will appear here
 - ◆ **Health & Safety** – posts categorized as “health & safety” will appear here

Newly added posts will be visible in these categories when they are so categorized upon publishing.

As with anything in WordPress, you can change the menu as often as you would like until you are comfortable with it. You can also use unlimited headings although it’s generally a good idea to

restrict the number of menu options so that they can fit on to one navigation bar.

Creating Categories

To create the categories, click on Dashboard, Posts, and then Categories. Type “newcomers” into the “name” field and save by clicking Add New Category.

Dashboard > Posts > Categories > Add New Category

Repeat the same for the “City Life” category as well as for the subcategories “Driving,” “Public Transport,” and “Health & Safety.”

The screenshot shows the WordPress 'Add New Category' page. The 'Name' field is filled with 'Newcomers'. A speech bubble highlights this field with the text 'Adding the category "Newcomers."'. The 'Parent' dropdown is set to 'None'. The 'Description' field is empty. Below the form, there is a table showing the existing 'Uncategorized' category with 1 item. The table has columns for Name, Description, Slug, and Posts.

Name	Description	Slug	Posts
Uncategorized		uncategorized	1

Adding a new Category to your site's content

Creating the Menu

To create the menu, click on Dashboard, Appearance, and then Menus.

Change the menu name to “Navigation Menu” or the like – this will help you keep track if you eventually add more menus. Save by clicking Save Menu.

Dashboard > Appearance > Menus > Create Menu

The menu is set to display “Home” and “About” pages by default. To remove the “Home” bar, click on the Custom arrow which expands the bar, and choose Remove. Alternatively, if you want to keep this in your menu, you can make edits and changes here.

The “About” page is already on your menu. To add the newly created categories, click on Categories in the left side of the screen to expand the view. Then, click View All to see all of the categories. Choose all the ones you would like to appear in your menu and click Add to Menu.

Dashboard > Appearance > Menus > Categories > Add to Menu

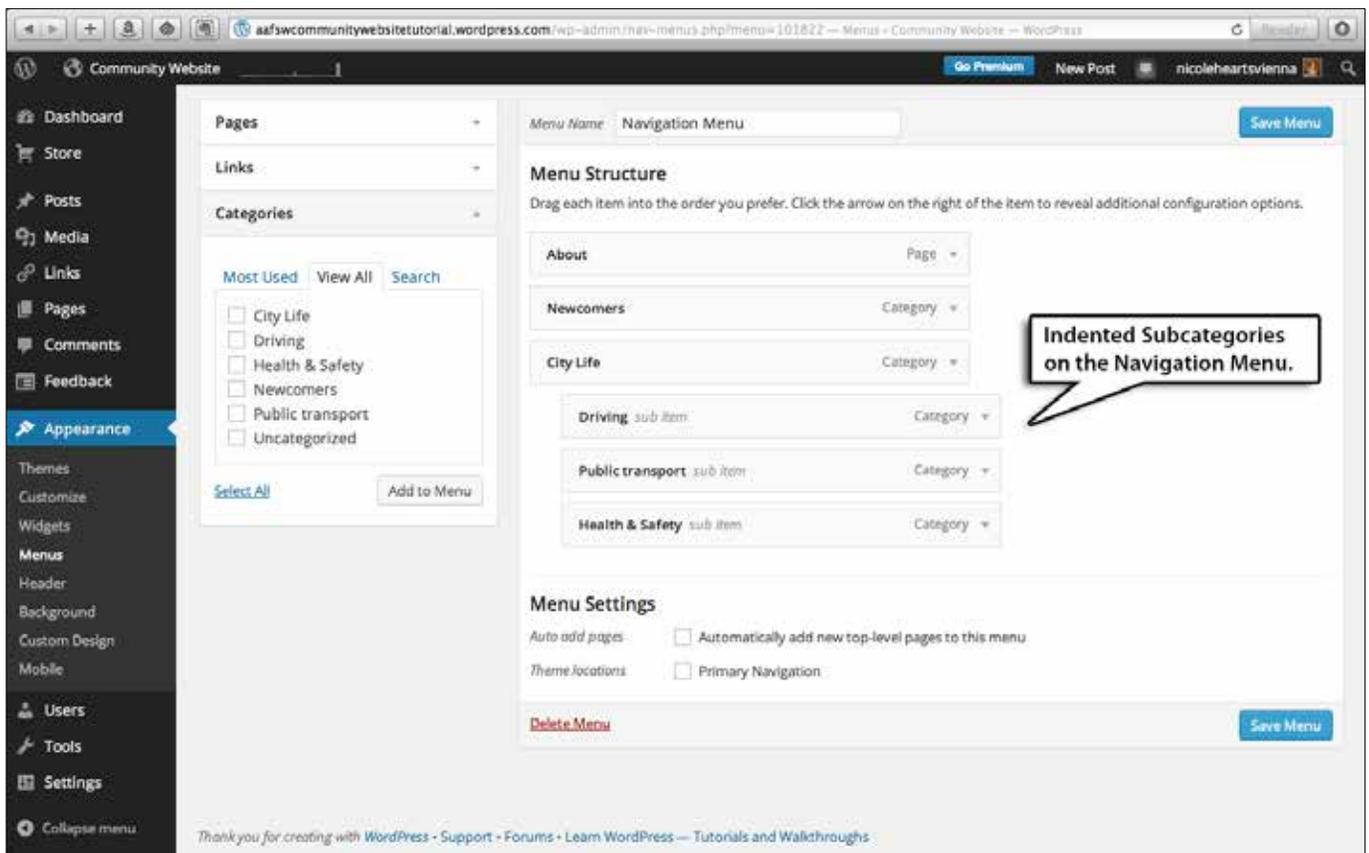
All of your selected Categories and Pages are now on the right side of the screen where you can organize the layout. Simply drag each box containing the category name to the location you would like.

The screenshot shows the WordPress Admin interface for editing a menu. The left sidebar is visible with the 'Appearance' menu expanded. The main content area is titled 'Edit Menu' and 'Manage Locations'. The 'Menu Name' field is set to 'Navigation Menu'. The 'Menu Structure' section shows 'About' as a page. The 'Menu Settings' section has 'Auto add pages' and 'Theme locations' options. A callout box points to the 'Menu Name' field with the text 'Naming the new Menu.' Another callout box points to the 'Add to Menu' button with the text 'Selecting Categories to add to the Menu.'

Creating a new Menu using Categories

Adding Subcategories to the Menu

To create subcategories on your menu screen, drag the appropriate text boxes slightly to the right so that they appear to be indented. Click Save Menu.



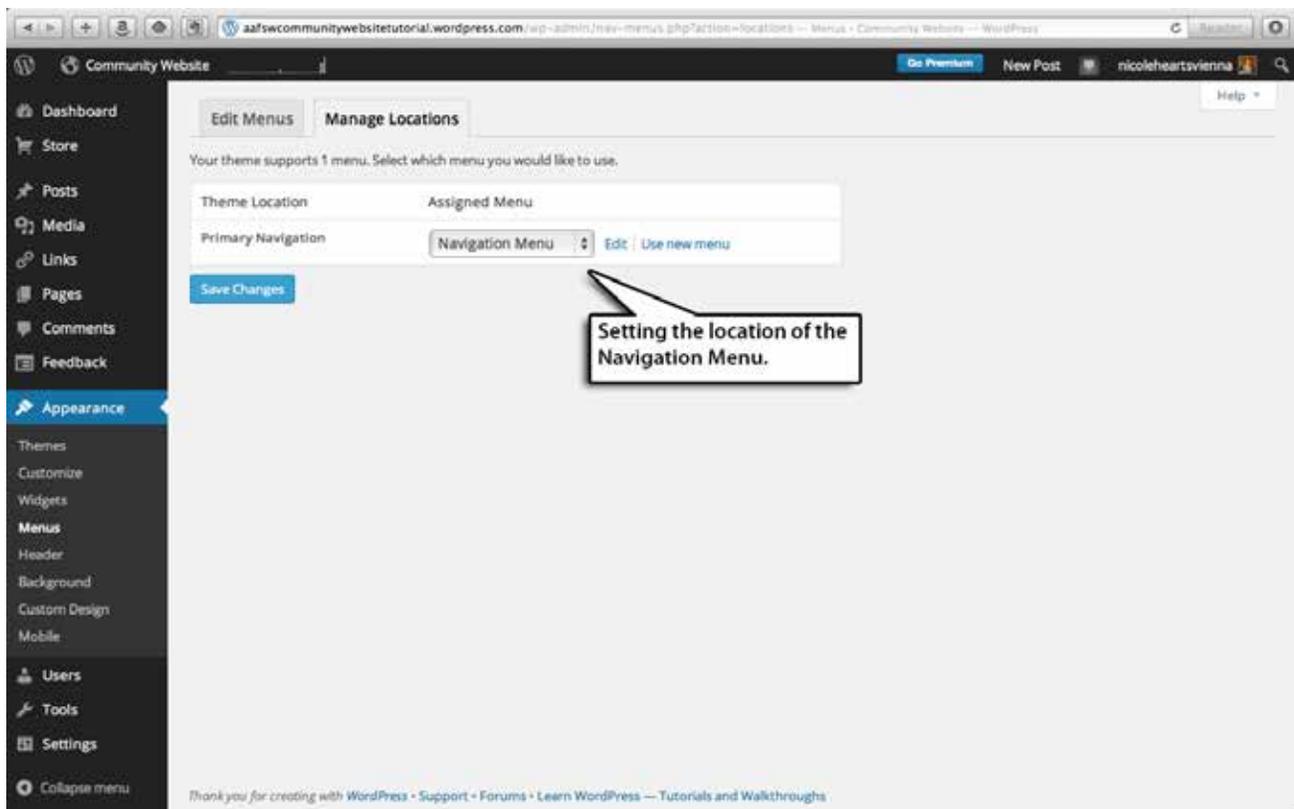
Creating subcategories on your Navigation Menu

Choosing a Location for Your Menu

In the tabs on the top of the page, click on Manage Locations and use the drop-down menu under Primary Navigation to choose the menu you want to use (“Navigation Menu” in this example). Click Save Changes.

When you toggle to the main site, you will see your newly created navigation bar underneath the header picture.

More pages or categories can be added to the menu as you create them.



Choose a location for your Menu

Working with Widgets

Many themes come with pre-programmed Widgets, or tools that allow you to individualize your site's sidebars and other content spaces at the bottom. Our theme (Twenty Ten) came with the following Widgets on its right sidebar:

- ◆ Search this blog
- ◆ Recent comments
- ◆ Categories

In the Widget menu, you can modify the order and content of these spaces. To get there, click on Dashboard, Appearance, and then Widgets.

Dashboard > Appearance > Widgets

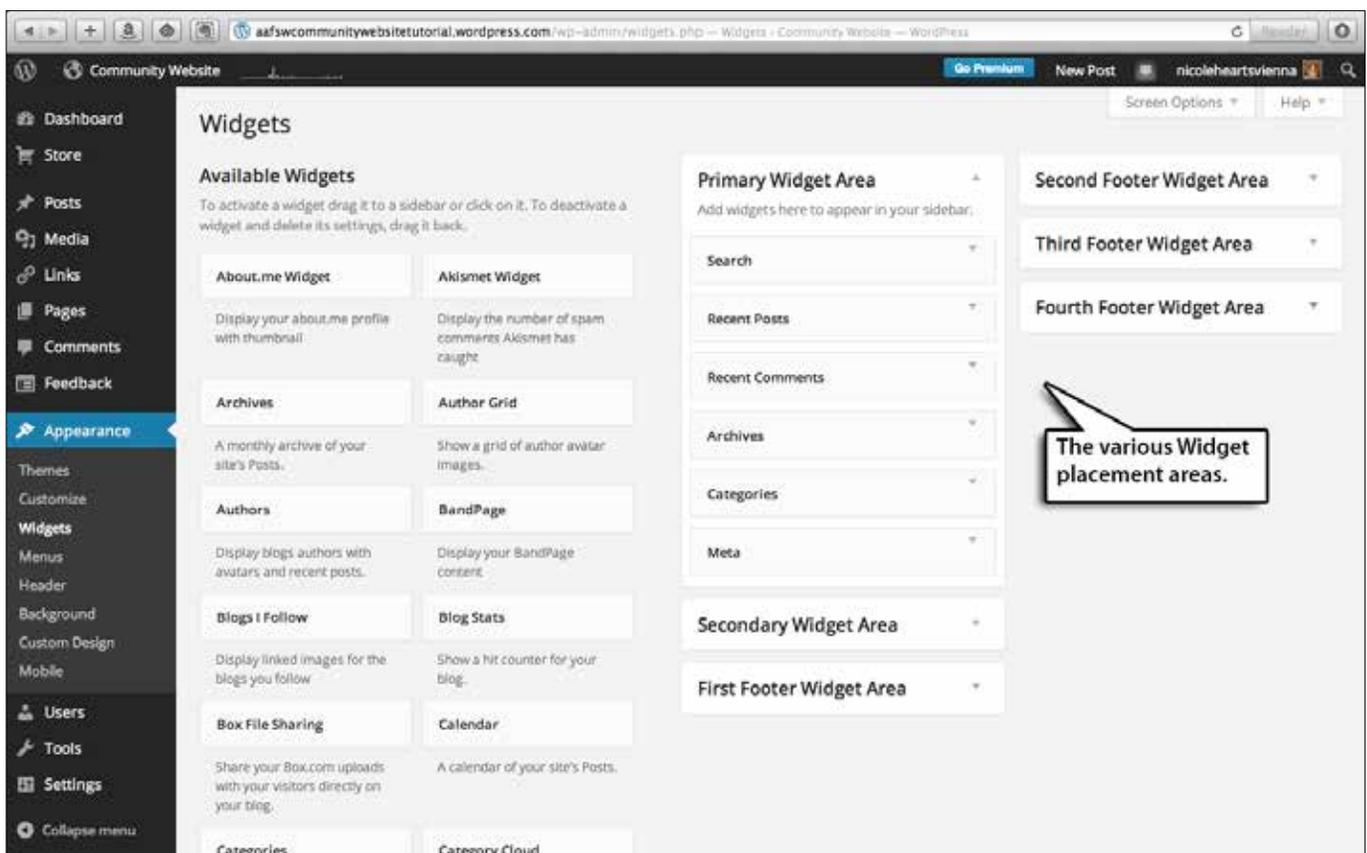
To edit or delete Widgets, click on the arrow of the chosen Widget on the left bar to expand the view. Then click Delete. You can also look through your edit options as you expand the view of the chosen Widgets. You may want to add a title, for

example, "Search Our Site," to make these more user-friendly.

You can also add new Widgets by dragging them from the left side of the screen to the right or by selecting them on the left menu and choosing the desired location in the drop-down menu.

Aside from adding widgets to the sidebars, you can also add them to the bottom, or "footer," of your website's pages. The footer, like the sidebar, will appear on every page of your website, so this is an excellent place to include contact information, a copyright notice, a standard disclaimer, or any other administrative notes that you want to make sure your readers see.

To include a text item of this type, choose Text from the available widgets on the left side of the screen. Drag the widget to the sidebar or footer, click the arrow to expand the view, and type in whatever text you like.



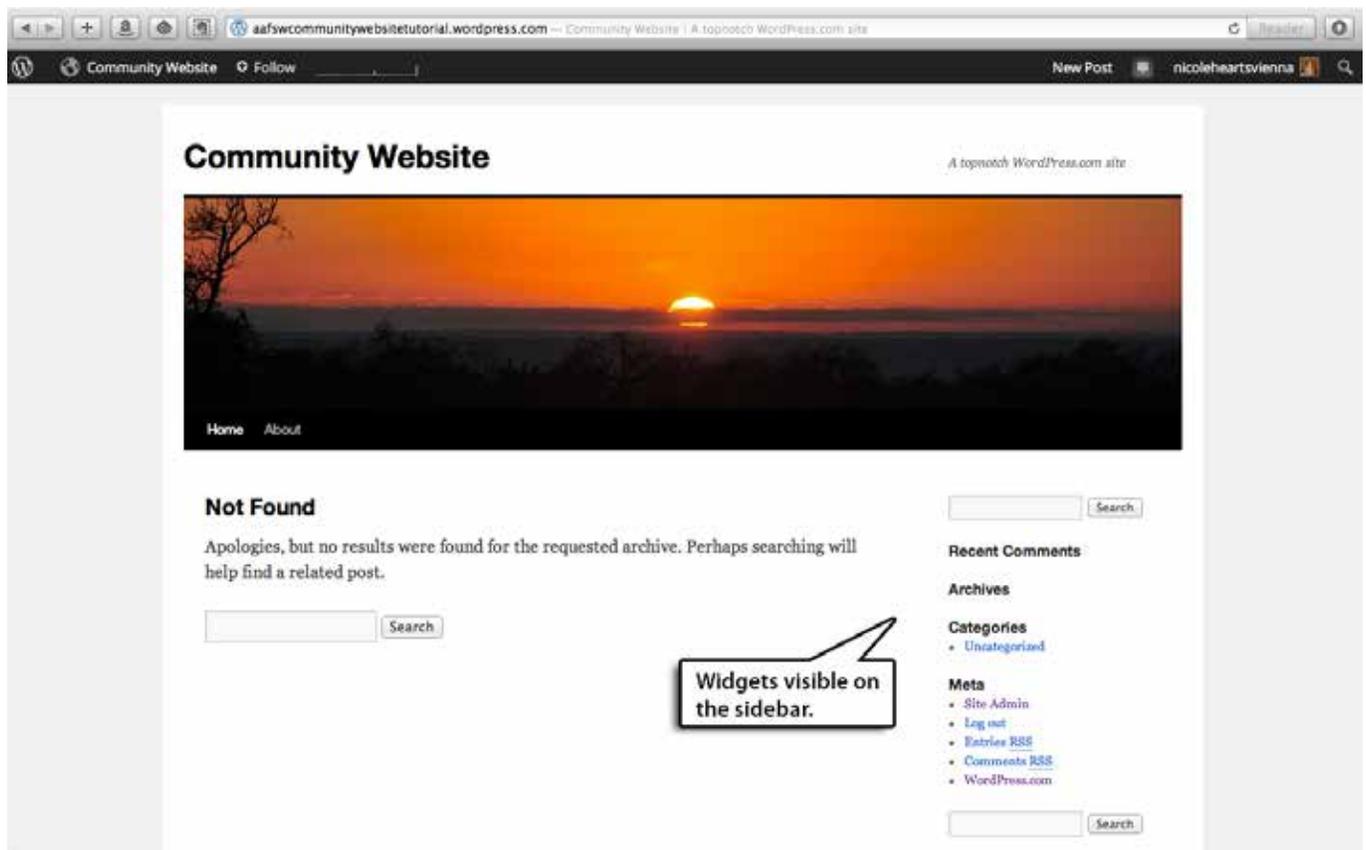
Drag and drop Widgets to wherever you would like them to appear on your site

Types of Widgets

There are a number of excellent widgets but some of the most useful are:

- ◆ **Search:** allows viewers to type in search terms
- ◆ **Recent Posts:** a list of recent postings to the site; you can customize the number of posts to show in this box
- ◆ **Posts Archive:** allows viewers to search posts by the month in which they were published
- ◆ **Tag Cloud:** pulls up the tags that contributors gave to each post to allow for easy searching for posts with similar content
- ◆ **Follow Blog:** allows users to sign up to receive new posts by email

- ◆ **RSS:** allows viewers to sign up for an RSS feed of new posts from the blog using a reader such as Feedly or Blog Lovin’.
- ◆ **Links:** offers your viewers a selection of useful links to other sites



The “public” view of your website’s Widgets

Drafting a Post

Now that you have basic website infrastructure in place, you can start adding content to your site.

Adding a New Post

To add a post, go to your Dashboard and click Posts and then Add New.

Dashboard > Posts > Add New

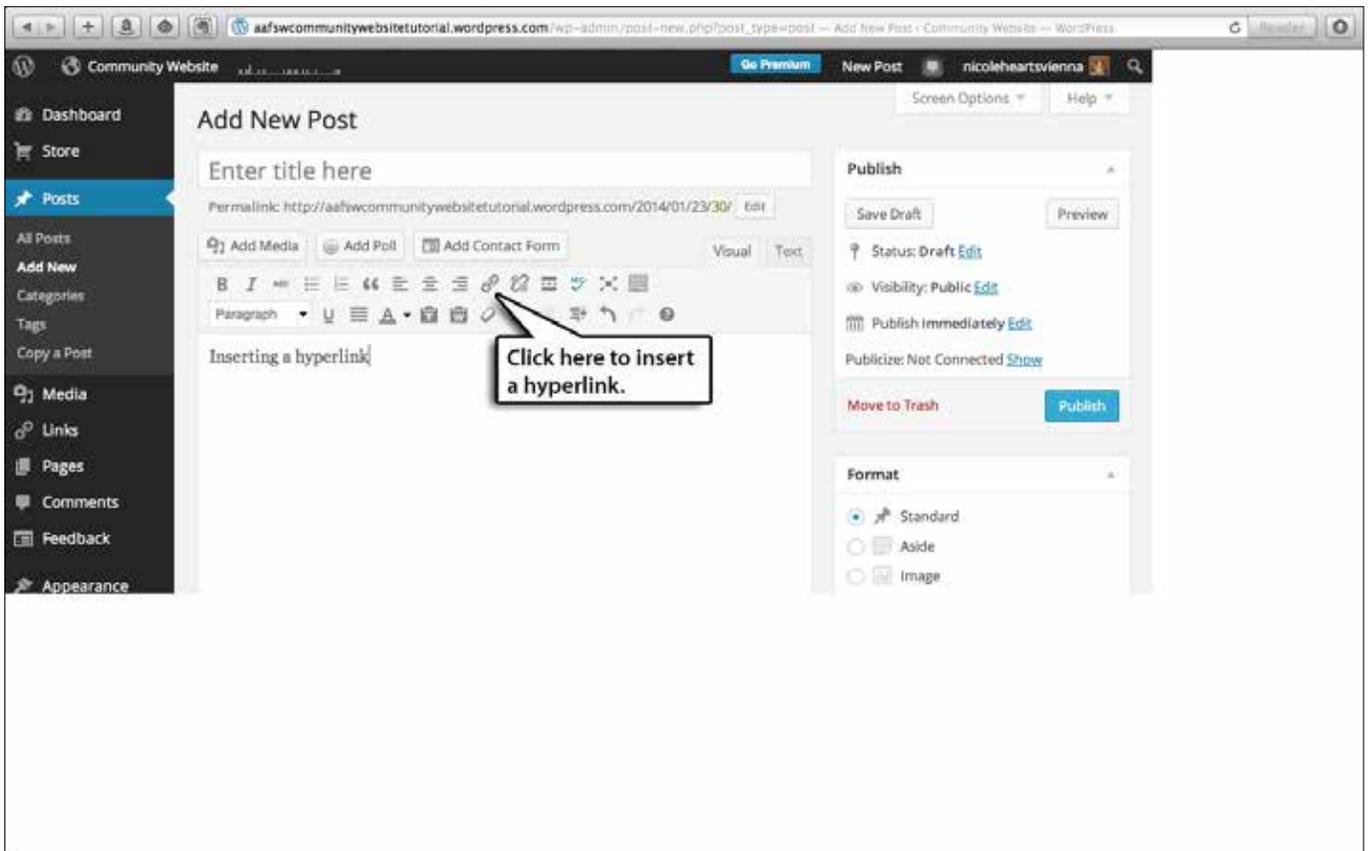
Type text in the window or copy/paste content from another document or source. Add a descriptive title in the Title space.

To customize the text, use the icons on the top formatting bar. They are more or less like Word functions: you can add bold, italic, bulleted lists, etc. At the left side of the formatting bar, there are also some preformatted text styles in the drop-down box. These are helpful for maintaining consistent subtitles, lists, etc. throughout the site.

Links

To add a hyperlink in the text, highlight the word or phrase you want to link to a web page, and click the chain icon on the top formatting bar (if unsure, drag your mouse over each icon and a description of its function will pop up – it will say “Insert/edit link” over the chain icon).

Paste the URL of the linked website into the space, being sure to include the “http://” part or the link will not work. In the same pop-up window, check the box beside “Open link in a new window/tab” so that the linked website opens in another window and readers do not leave your website.



Inserting a hyperlink into your post

Adding Images

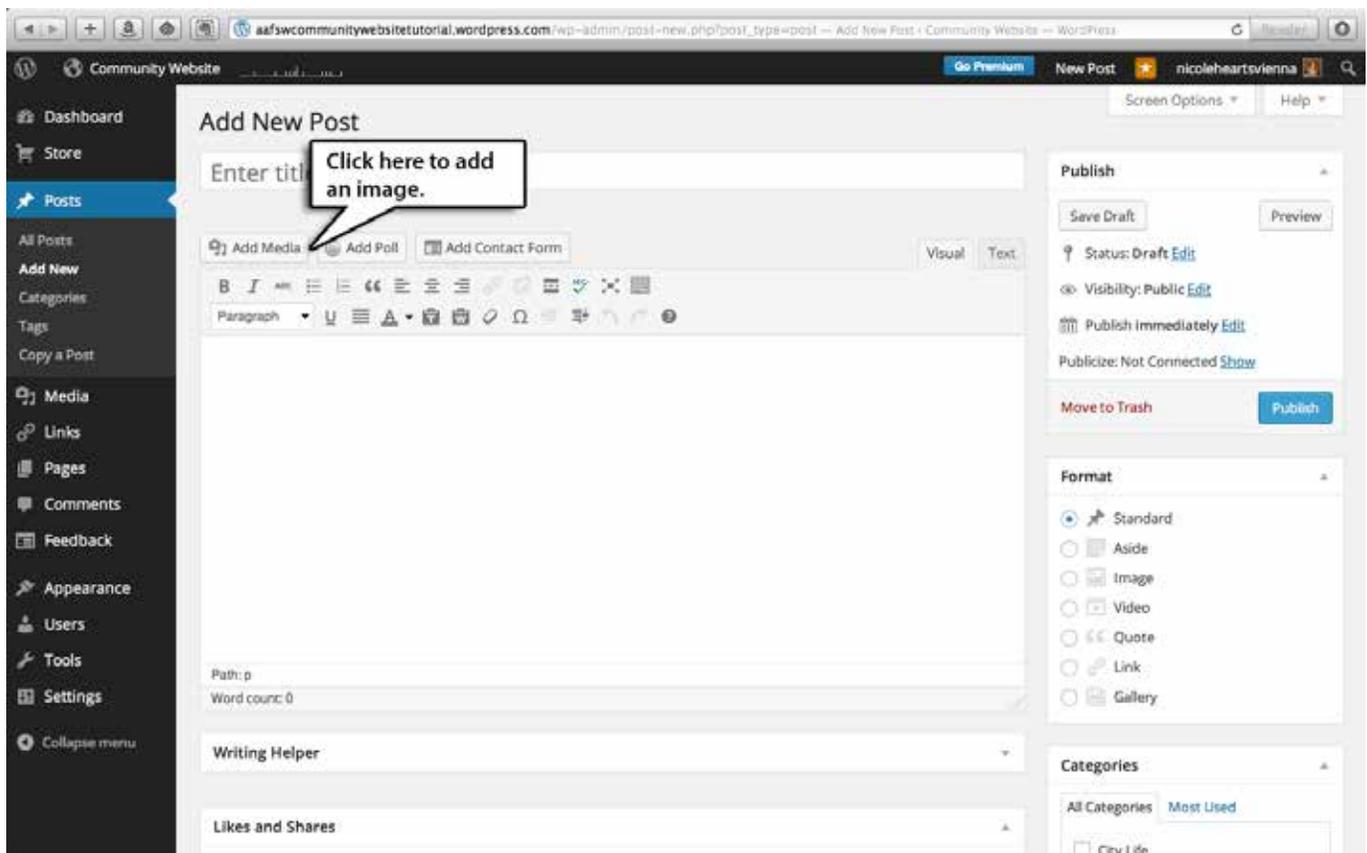
To add images to a new post, click Add Media at the top, and follow the instructions to upload a file or to link to a copyright-free image online. Then, on the right side of the Media screen, choose options for inserting the image into the text. You can align the image to the right, left, or center of the text, as well as choose a size for the image from a drop-down box on this screen.

After you have added an image, you can edit it from the posting box by clicking the little icon on it.

On the resulting screen, you can resize the image that way or add a caption. To delete the image from the post, click the circle icon. The image will remain in the Media Library, so you can add it back in later if you want with the Add Media button or add it to another post.

Consider file sizes when uploading images. Many digital cameras produce very large files designed for print use. Much smaller, lower-resolution files can be used for websites.

Use any photo-editing software to resize copies of your original images to be no more than 800 pixels wide or 200 kilobytes in size before uploading them. Your images will both upload faster to the site, and appear more quickly on the pages. This procedure will also conserve file space in your WordPress account.



Inserting an image into your post

Defining Categories

After you have written your post, go to Categories on the right side of the Dashboard screen. Check one category for your post. The categories are tied to the items on the top navigation menu of the site. If you check Newcomers, for example, your post will appear at the top of the “Newcomers” page on the site.

Adding Tags

Now you may wish to choose some Tags for your post. Tags are optional, but provide an additional way for viewers to find more content on your site. The Tags box is below Categories on the right hand side of the screen (you might have to scroll down to see it). Tags do not have anything to do with the navigation menu but are linked to the Tags Widget if you choose to include it, and they will appear in a Tag “cloud” on the website sidebar.

Check to see if the Tag you want to add already exists by clicking “Choose from the most used tags.” Add more Tags if you like, but try not to duplicate existing Tags (i.e. pool vs. pools vs. swimming pool; an easy rule is to stick to singular terms).

Previewing Your Post

If you want to see what your post looks like before it goes public, click Preview on the top right side of the screen. (This is also a good way to check for typos that you may not have noticed on the draft page.) A preview of your post will open in a new browser tab. You can preview as many times as you like, and the preview tab will automatically refresh to show your changes.

Publishing Your Post

When you are done composing your post, click Publish at the top right side of the screen. Your new post will appear temporarily on the front

page of the site, and permanently on the page displaying posts in the category that you selected for it.

Don’t worry: you can always go back to editing a post after it has been published!

You also have the option of scheduling posts to be published at later dates or times. Under Publish on the upper right hand side of your screen, select Publish and edit the fields next to that button to specify the desired publishing time.

Password protection of specific posts is also an option. See our section on [Privacy and Security](#) for details.

Editing Posts

To edit an existing post, go to All Posts on the left side of the Dashboard and enter terms in the Search box. Searching for your screen name or byline is a good way to find your own posts. Click Filter to view posts that you authored, for example. Then click Edit, make changes, and click Update Post to re-publish it to the website.

When new contributors who were not yet experienced with WordPress joined our community site, they would compose a new post, save it as a draft, and let us know to review it before publishing it. This allowed us to provide feedback and tips to new contributors and eased them into publishing their own posts.

More Tips & Tricks

Turning Off Comments on Your Site

You may or may not want viewers to be able to comment on your site's content. If the purpose is simply to provide information, rather than to elicit discussion or feedback, you can turn off all comments by default. Go to Settings at the bottom of the left side of the Dashboard. Click Discussion, and at the top of the resulting screen you will see a section of Default Article Settings. Uncheck the box next to "Allow people to post comments on new articles." All future posts will be set NOT to allow comments. You can always change this setting for an individual post if you want to.

Email Links

In the About page or the disclaimer, you may want to insert a way of contacting the webmaster and/or content manager of the site. For privacy reasons, we recommend setting up an alias account (through gmail.com for example) instead of publicizing a personal account. To insert a link to an email address, follow the same procedure as inserting a hyperlink (see discussion above), but put "mailto:" where the http:// normally goes. For example, use "mailto:trivienna@gmail.com" for readers to send an email to trivienna@gmail.com.

4 Privacy and Security

When building a website for an American community overseas, privacy and security are obvious concerns. The degree of privacy required will vary quite a bit depending on the post, but here are some suggestions for basic guidelines.

Please note that we are not security experts! We simply want to present measures that are currently available to help make your website more private.

You may want to write up a set of editorial guidelines, including security considerations. The guidelines can then be shared with website contributors, and in conferring with administrative or security personnel at post regarding your website.

These privacy issues are not as complicated as you might think. A lot of information about public activities at any post will already be available online. A community website can, for example, list information about English-language movies or theater performances without revealing anything that isn't already "out there." Just organizing this information in one place, in English, with appropriate links to further information can be a real service to the American community, especially at a post where the local language is not English.

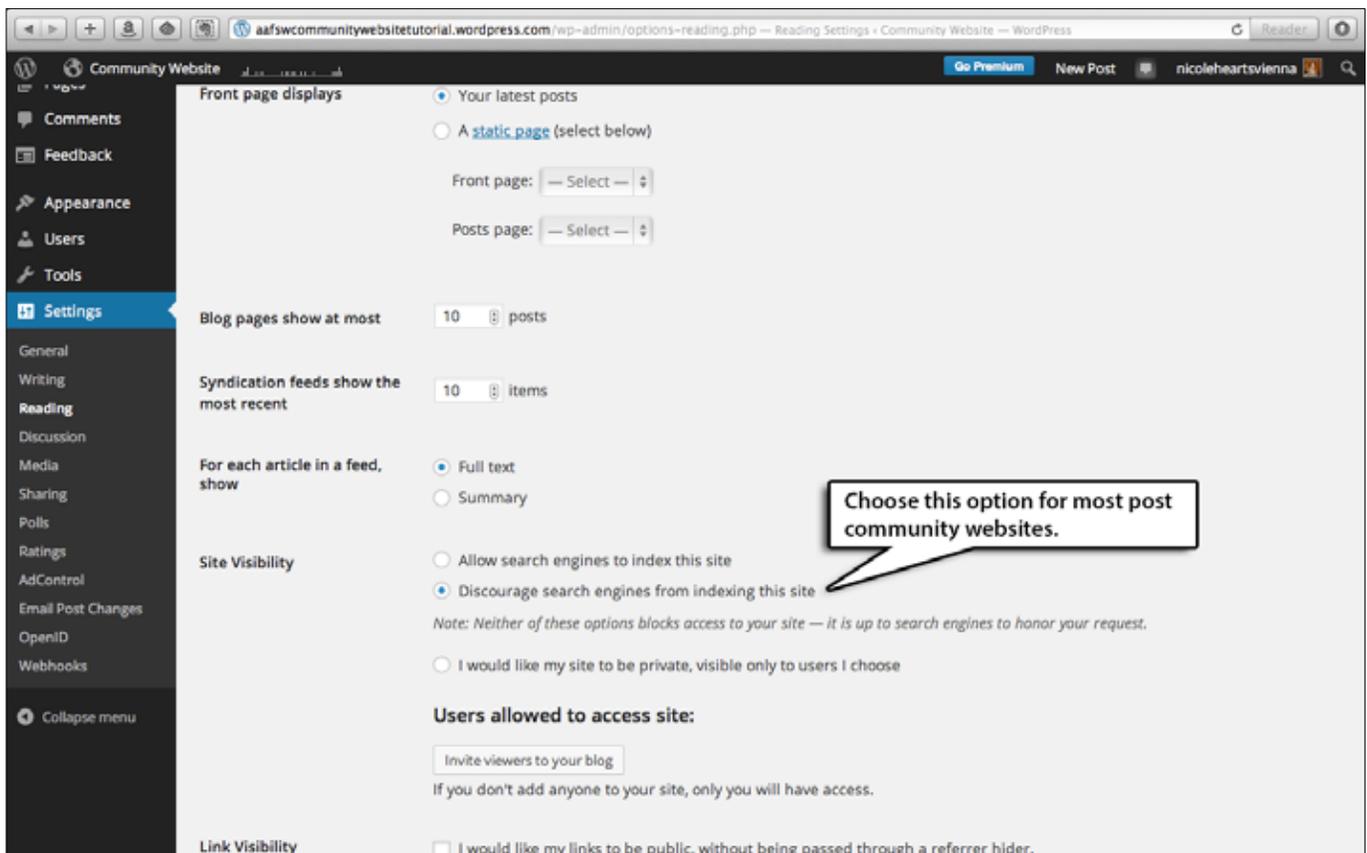
On that subject, translating local information into English and posting it for community use is another way in which a website can be very helpful without actually providing any new or private information. Examples could include traffic regulations, waste and recycling pickup, or health and safety information. In short, nearly all the material that is typically already prepared for a post welcome handbook--but made much more accessible to the entire community than it would be on the embassy/consulate Intranet.

On the other hand, it goes without saying that posting names or photographs of personnel at post on public sections of a website is inadvisable. Photographs of residences, schools, or certain areas of the embassy or consulate will certainly be frowned upon as well. Times and places of embassy events should not be made public. These are common-sense rules that exist for a good reason. For more sensitive information, there are easy ways to edit or conceal times, dates, and contact information by setting some basic policies and using WordPress blogging tools.

Search Engines

It should be noted that a site can be made somewhat less visible to the general public by simply discouraging search engines from indexing it. When you set up your WordPress site, you will be asked to choose whether you want your site to be indexed or not. It is probably best to choose “Discourage search engines from indexing this site.” While this does not actually hide your website, it will make it much less likely to come up in search results.

After all, you are targeting your content only to current and incoming members of your post community. There are plenty of ways to spread the word among that audience without listing the site on search engines.



Choose to discourage search engines from indexing your site

Using Discretion With Details

Now, on to the nitty-gritty. Let's say you have a community event that you wish to promote on the website, a children's holiday party, for example. You can always write up the major facts of the party (there will be face-painting, please bring a dish to share, etc.) but provide a phone number and/or email address that viewers can use to obtain the exact time, date, and location of the party.

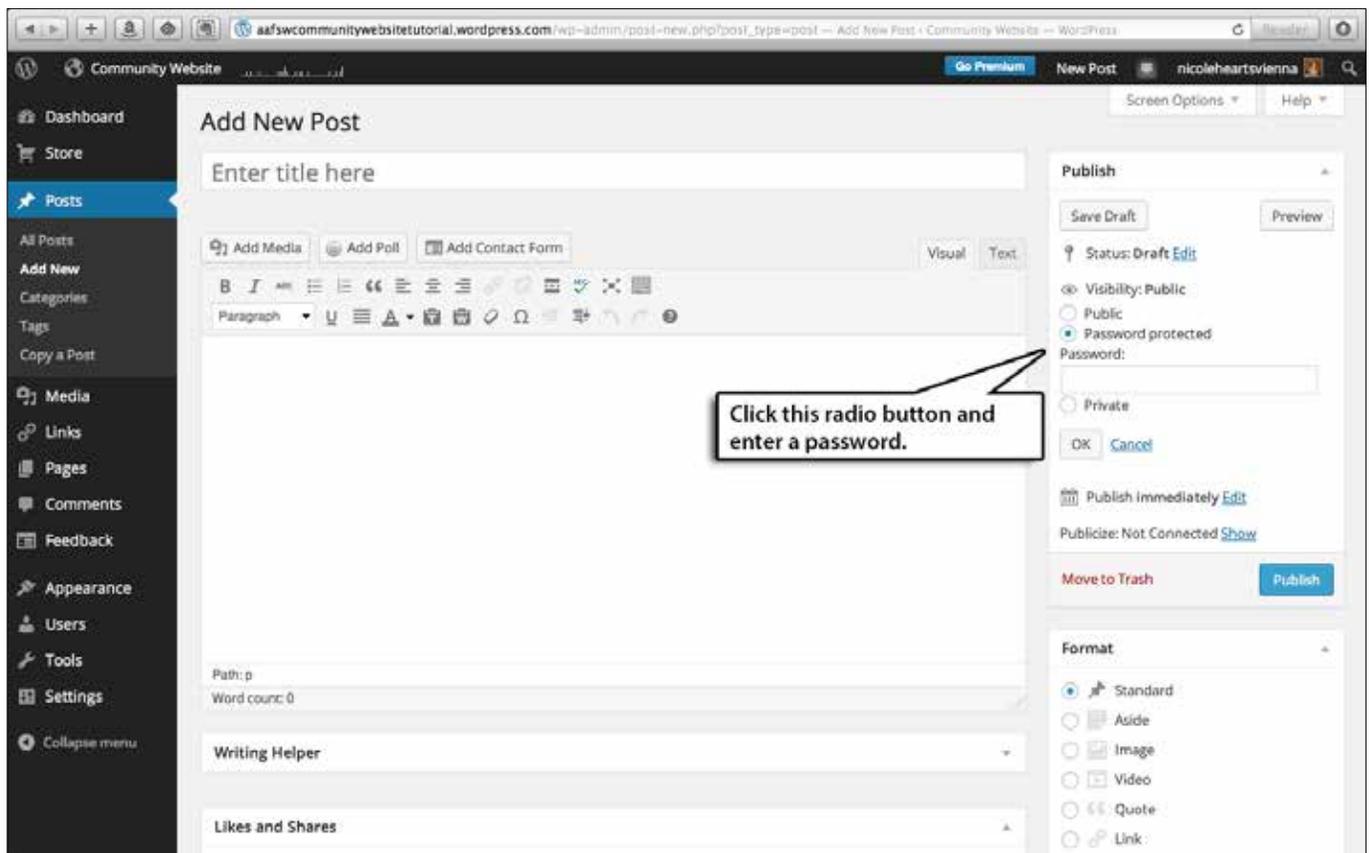
You can even use an email alias on the website if you would rather not display a personal or [@state.gov](#) address.

Password Protection

A second option would be to post the information on your WordPress site behind a password. This is super-easy. Simply write the post then scroll down to "Visibility" on the editing screen. Click the radio button for "Password Protected," enter the password of your choice, and the post is now hidden behind that password.

The title of the post will be publicly visible, but the post itself will say "This post is password protected. To view it please enter your password below:"

While you could theoretically have a different password for every post of this type, it would be much simpler to establish one password and share it with members of the post community. For additional privacy, the password could be changed and shared through official channels with the community on a regular basis, for example after each summer transfer season.



Password-protecting a post on your website.

Privatizing the Entire Website

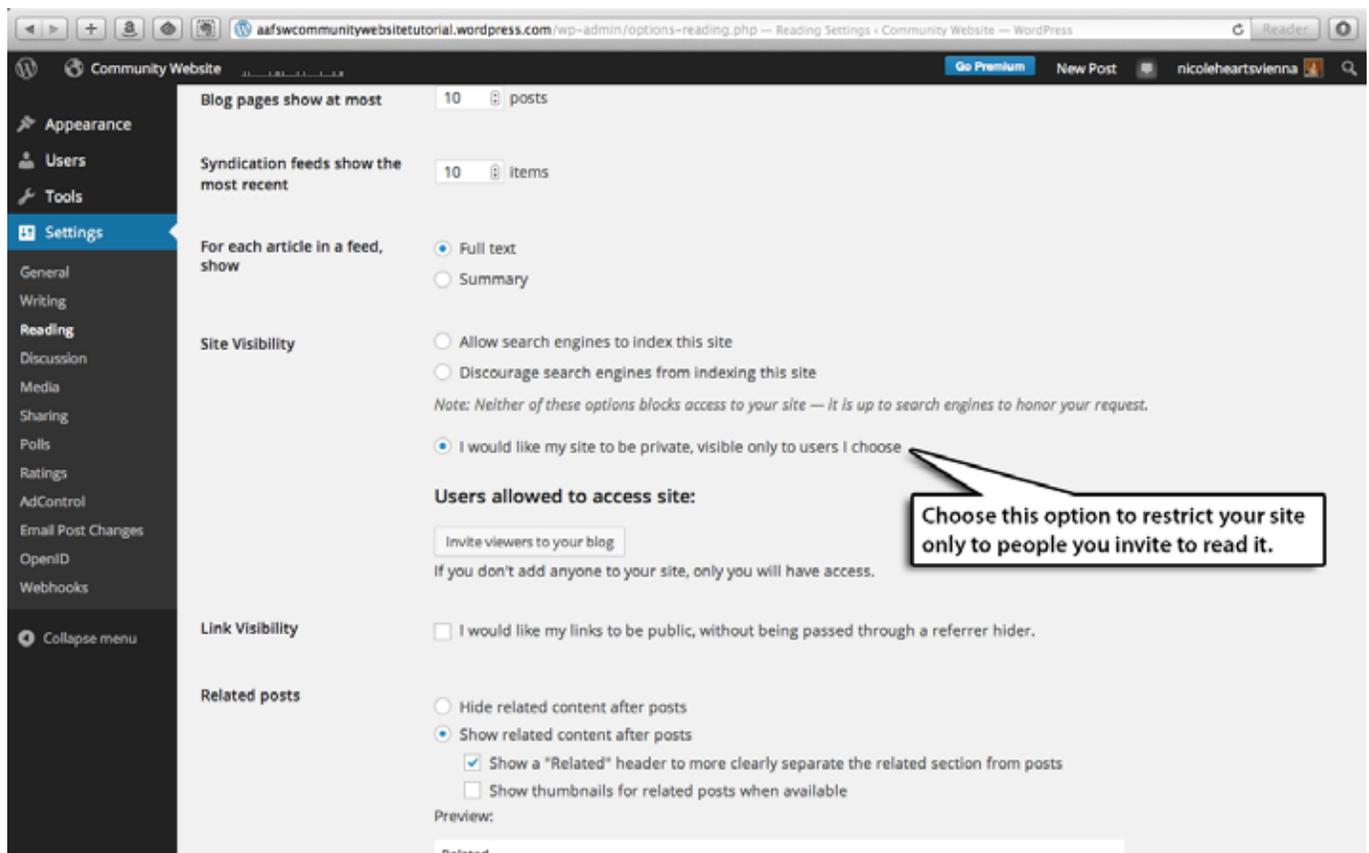
Another option is to make the entire blog Private. In this case, the website administrators must invite each user to register on the site by creating a WordPress account. Only invited and registered users will be able to see any material on the site.

Privatizing the entire site is a “quick and dirty” solution that may be appropriate for higher-risk environments. However, there will inevitably be people at post who are unable or unwilling to register with WordPress in order to view the site. Also, each user can create (and forget) their own password to view the site, meaning more work for the site administrators! Still, this is an option that may be worth pursuing at certain posts.

Summary

There are two major points to keep in mind when proposing or developing a post community website overseas.

- ◆ Most information is already available elsewhere. A community website just compiles and/or translates this material for the benefit of community members, including those who are not moving on official orders or who have not yet arrived at post.
- ◆ There are FREE tools available to quickly and easily hide more sensitive information from the general public (and the bad guys!).



The screenshot shows the WordPress admin interface for the 'Community Website' at the URL 'aafswcommunitywebsitetutorial.wordpress.com/wp-admin/options-reading.php'. The 'Settings' menu is open, and the 'Reading' sub-menu is selected. The 'Site Visibility' section is visible, with the following options:

- Allow search engines to index this site
- Discourage search engines from indexing this site
- I would like my site to be private, visible only to users I choose

Below these options is a note: "Note: Neither of these options blocks access to your site — It is up to search engines to honor your request." Underneath, the 'Users allowed to access site:' section has a button labeled 'Invite viewers to your blog' and the text: "If you don't add anyone to your site, only you will have access." A callout box with a white background and black border points to the selected radio button with the text: "Choose this option to restrict your site only to people you invite to read it."

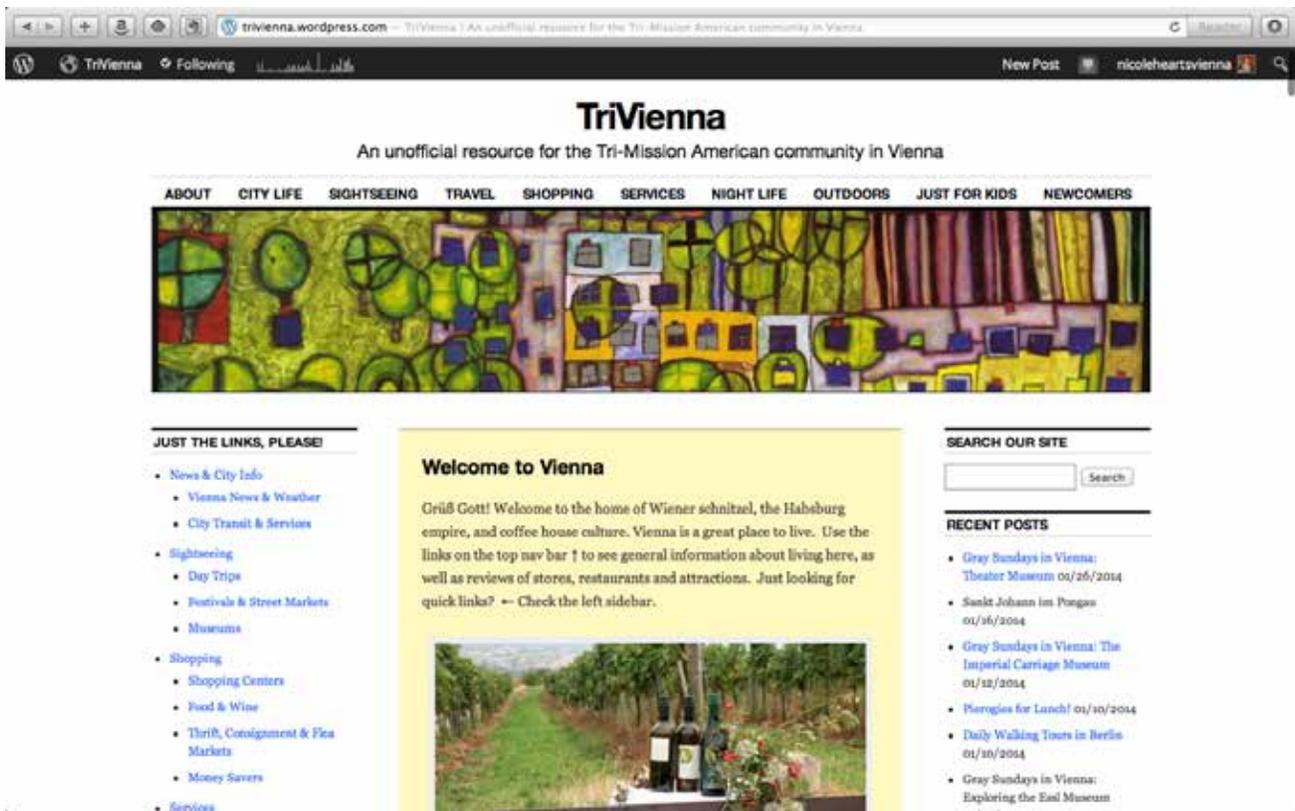
Privatizing the entire website

Conclusion

Post Facebook groups and community websites are excellent avenues for bringing overseas post communities closer together. Facebook groups allow for real-time interaction among members facilitating discussions about living at post, questions, and answers.

Community websites organize helpful information and tips for newcomers and for those considering bidding on the post. These websites provide a wealth of knowledge in an easily accessible format that is available to all members of the mission community.

As outlined in this manual, anyone with basic computer skills and access to the Internet can create a free community website. We sincerely hope we have inspired you to create your own. Please let us know about it if you do!



TriVienna, our community website in Vienna, Austria

A Appendix

Facebook Resources

- ◆ About Facebook Groups
<https://www.facebook.com/about/groups>
- ◆ Facebook Group Basics (use the left-side menu to see specific topics)
<https://www.facebook.com/help/162866443847527>

More Facebook Help

- ◆ “How to Create a Facebook Group” article from WikiHow
<http://www.wikihow.com/Create-a-New-Facebook-Group>
- ◆ “How to Create a Top-Secret Facebook Group” Slideshow tutorial from [Mashable.com](http://mashable.com)
<http://mashable.com/2013/05/26/how-to-secret-facebook-group/>
- ◆ “How to Change the URL of a Facebook Group” Video tutorial.
<http://blog.coolaj86.com/articles/how-to-change-the-url-of-a-facebook-group.html>

WordPress.com Resources

- ◆ Quick Guide
<http://learn.wordpress.com>
- ◆ Create Posts, Pages and Menus
<http://learn.wordpress.com/get-published/>
- ◆ WordPress User Roles
<http://en.support.wordpress.com/user-roles/>
- ◆ WordPress Security Tips
<http://en.support.wordpress.com/security/>
- ◆ WordPress Support Forums
<http://en.forums.wordpress.com/>

More WordPress Help

When searching for online tutorials, be sure that you are viewing instructions for the free WordPress.COM platform, and not the WordPress.ORG platform offered by paid hosting providers.

- ◆ “56 Brilliant WordPress Tutorials” from CreativeBloq online magazine
<http://www.creativebloq.com/web-design/wordpress-tutorials-designers-1012990>
- ◆ WordPress tutorials at [Lynda.com](http://www.lynda.com) (very reputable website—some tutorials are free, some require paid membership)
<http://www.lynda.com/WordPress-training-tutorials/330-0.html>

More Blog Providers

We prefer WordPress, but there are many more blog platforms available that are suitable for simple websites. Here are a few of the most popular.

- ◆ Blogger (free service, owned by Google)
<https://www.blogger.com/home>
- ◆ TypePad (paid service)
<http://www.typepad.com/>
- ◆ SquareSpace (paid service)
<http://www.squarespace.com/stories>

State Department Link

- ◆ FAM 792.2 “Personal Use of Social Media”
<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/144186.pdf>

Post Community Websites

Online as of January 2014.

Public websites

- ◆ Belgrade, Serbia (CLO)
<http://belgradeclo.wordpress.com>
- ◆ Brasilia, Brasil (CLO)
<http://papagaiobrasilia.wordpress.com>
- ◆ Dakar, Senegal (CLO)
<http://clodakar.wordpress.com/>
- ◆ Jakarta, Indonesia (CLO)
<http://usembjkt.weebly.com/>
- ◆ Monterrey, Mexico (CLO)
<http://clomonterrey.org/index.html>
- ◆ Shenyang, China (CLO)
<http://grapevineshenyang.wordpress.com>
- ◆ Vienna, Austria (community volunteers)
<http://trivienna.wordpress.com>

Password-protected websites

- ◆ Georgetown, Guyana (CLO)
<http://clogeorgetown.weebly.com/>

Post Facebook Groups

Online as of January 2014.

“Closed” groups (see page 5 for details)

- ◆ Copenhagen, Denmark (CLO)
The Viking Social Club
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/104162319726734/>
- ◆ Dakar, Senegal (CLO)
<https://www.facebook.com/clo.dakar>
- ◆ Managua, Nicaragua (CLO)
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/334844619859460/>
- ◆ Riga, Latvia (CLO)
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/157284667678995/>
- ◆ Seoul, Korea (community volunteers)
Kimchi and Apple Pie
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/425402030863905/>
- ◆ Vienna, Austria (community volunteers)
Vienna Vagabonds
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/viennavagabonds/>

“Secret” groups (these have no public URL, see page 4 for details)

- ◆ Chennai, India (CLO)
Chennai Social Club
- ◆ Chisinau, Moldova (CLO)
- ◆ Djibouti, Djibouti
Joy of Djibouti
- ◆ Johannesburg, South Africa
Consulate Johannesburg Group
- ◆ Sao Paolo, Brazil
Sao Paulo Consulate Community Group

Foreign Service Community Facebook Groups

- ◆ EFM Business Owners
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/efmbusinessowners/>
For self-employed Eligible Family Members (EFMs). Business owners, freelancers, contractors, anyone who works independently or “outside the box” is welcome.
- ◆ EFMs Helping Other EFMs Find Employment
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/358778958203/>
A network dedicated to helping other Eligible Family Members find employment at overseas posts.
- ◆ Foreign-Born Spouses Group
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/AAFSW/>
Sponsored by AAFSW, this group is for foreign-born Foreign Service spouses, partners, and members of household in the DC area and overseas.
- ◆ Foreign Affairs Friends of Animals Network
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/298021694910/>
A group of U.S. foreign affairs community members who are working in various ways for the safety and welfare of animals around the world — starting within our own Foreign Service communities.
- ◆ Foreign Service Bloggers
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/170973699616423/>
For Foreign Service officers or family members who have blogs.
- ◆ Foreign Service Tandem Couples
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/123938122148/>
For all tandems, opposite- or same-sex, couples who were once tandem, and future tandem couples.
- ◆ FS Borrow-Barter-Sell
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/601203813263199/>
New group founded to facilitate sales, trades, and other exchanges of goods and services in the Foreign Service community.
- ◆ FS Unaccompanied Tour Group
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/261234237319458/>
For Foreign Service family members experiencing an unaccompanied tour, or those who have done so in the past.
- ◆ Gays and Lesbians in Foreign Affairs Agencies (GLIFAA)
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/glifaa/>
GLIFAA supports LGBT personnel and their families at the Department of State, U.S. Agency for International Development, Foreign Commercial Service, Foreign Agriculture, and other foreign affairs agencies domestically and at U.S. missions around the world.
- ◆ LDS Foreign Service Families
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/98873061616/>
Support group for Church of Latter-Day Saints (Mormon) families in the Foreign Service.
- ◆ Single in the Service
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1401904330030725/>
A group to discuss issues, concerns, and questions for people living a single life in the Foreign Service.
- ◆ Trailing Houses
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/trailing-houses/>
For household members of the world-wide mission-related American community and their FSO’s (single and tandem FSO’s also welcome). When joining, please message a group moderator with your FS credentials for membership approval.