Media Services

Introduction to

Blogging

With WordPress

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Introduction to Blogging

This booklet is intended as an introduction to blogging, with a basic overview and a guided example of setting up a blog using the WordPress platform.

What is a blog?

A blog (shortened from the phrase weblog) an online journal that combines text, images, videos and links to other webpages and media. It usually displays information in the reverse chronological order, with latest posts appearing first. Readers can leave comments have direct communication with the writer of the blog.

Essentially, each time you blog, you log onto the admin pages of your blog, write your post and upload your content, then press publish.

Some things to consider when starting a blog:

• What is the primary theme of your blog?

• Who is your blog aimed at?

• What kind of content do you want to create for your blog? For example do you want to include images, video, audio files?

• What is your schedule for blogging? Weekly, bi-weekly?

Different Types of Blogs

It is important to know the kind of blog you want to start. Here is a short list of different types of blogs:

• Personal – this is the type of blog where people write and share

about anything for hobbies to personal stories.

• Business – a blog dedicated to a specific area to gain more customers.

• Professional – these blogs are written primarily with the goal to make money, mainly through advertising.

• Media – this is defined as a blog with heavy media content, which can include Vlogs (video blogging) and curating of content from other websites, Linklog.

Some Benefits of Blogging

There are a number of benefits to starting a blog, including;

• You will learn new skills such as design and layout, online marketing for your blog and how digital media interacts with your blog.

• You will improve your writing skills just by creating content.

• You will develop technical knowledge by learning a new system as well as the methods of setting up your blog.

• You will connect with other people and build relationships through the topic or area you are blogging about.

• You can get immediate feedback on your content which can give you a good idea on how well your ideas have been received.

First Steps

One you have your ideas about the kind of blog you want to create, you will need is to decide on a name, which will be your domain name. This is your unique address on the internet. The second step

will be to decide on a blogging platform. When it comes to blogging platforms, there are the following options:

• Free – while free, there may be a number of restrictions, including adverts

• Freemium – this means there is a free trial period before paying.

• Self-hosted – This is where your blog files are stored on the internet

There are a number of blogging platforms that will be in the resources page of this booklet, however for this introduction we will be looking at WordPress.

Basic Elements

There are some basic features and structure to a blog as highlighted on the image opposite.

Creating a blog with WordPress

For the benefit of this introduction, we are going to use WordPress as the content management platform (CMS). WordPress is a free and open-source CMS and has a web template system that is easy to use. This system allows you to replace all generic information on a default template and customise the design and content to suit your needs.
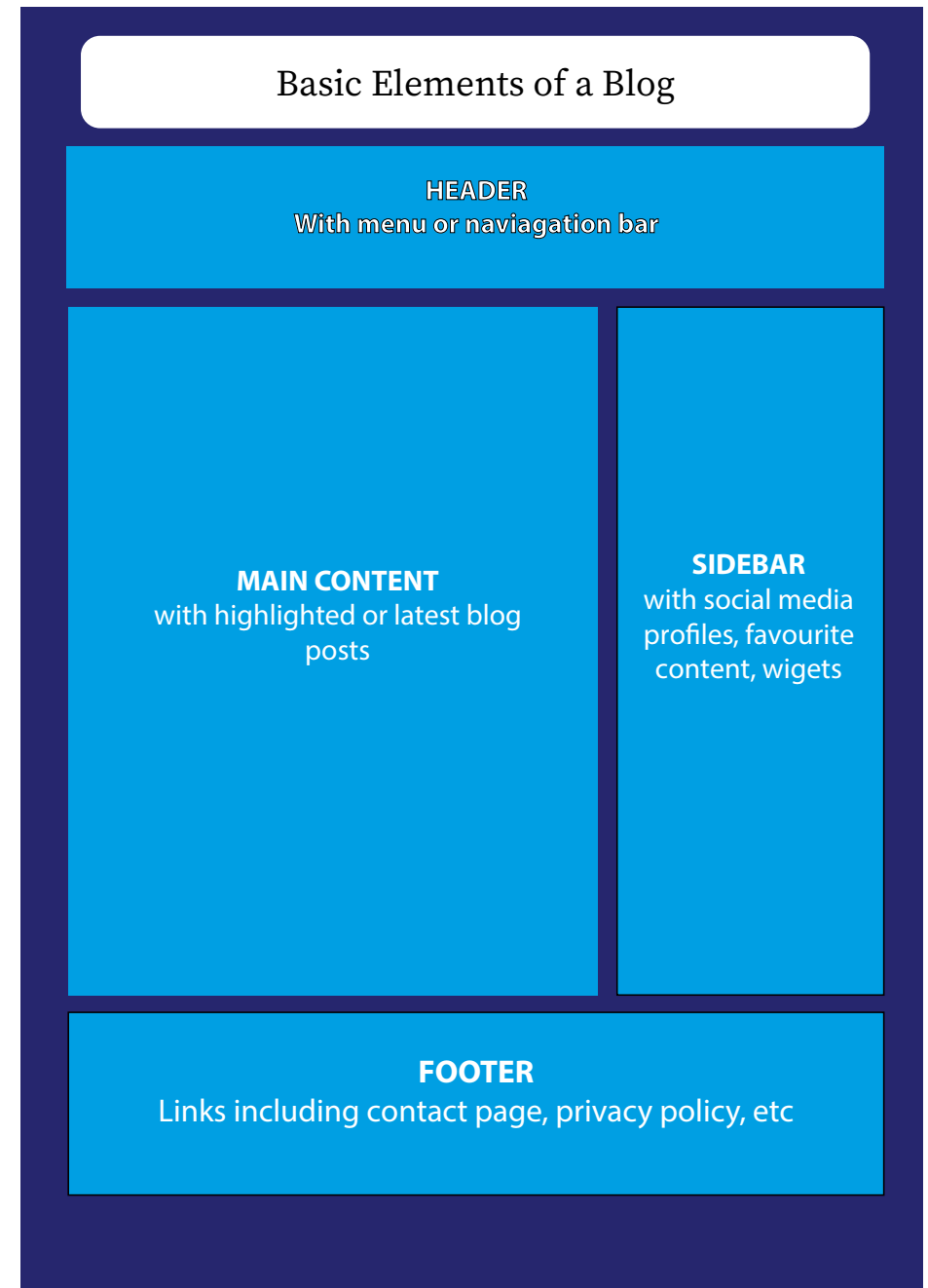
Key Features of WordPress

Themes

A theme is a pre-set package containing graphical appearance details for graphical control elements of the user interface. WordPress sites require at least one theme, which can be changed by the user to change the design and functionality of the website without altering the site content.

Plugins

Plugins are tools which can extend the functionality and features of a website, allowing users to tailor their sites more specifically. WordPress has a number of the most popular plugins included automatically such as social media, email subscriptions and contact forms.

Social Media Sharing

Basic Elements of a Blog

HEADER
With menu or naviagation bar

MAIN CONTENT
with highlighted or latest blog posts

SIDEBAR
with social media profiles, favourite content, wigets

FOOTER
Links including contact page, privacy policy, etc

Themes are now flexible and support a number of social networks. The best themes have these tools built in without the addition of plugins.

Widgets

A widget is a small application that allows the user to perform a specific function. You can add widgets to the sidebars in your site, and add some design and structure to your site. We will cover widgets in more detail below.
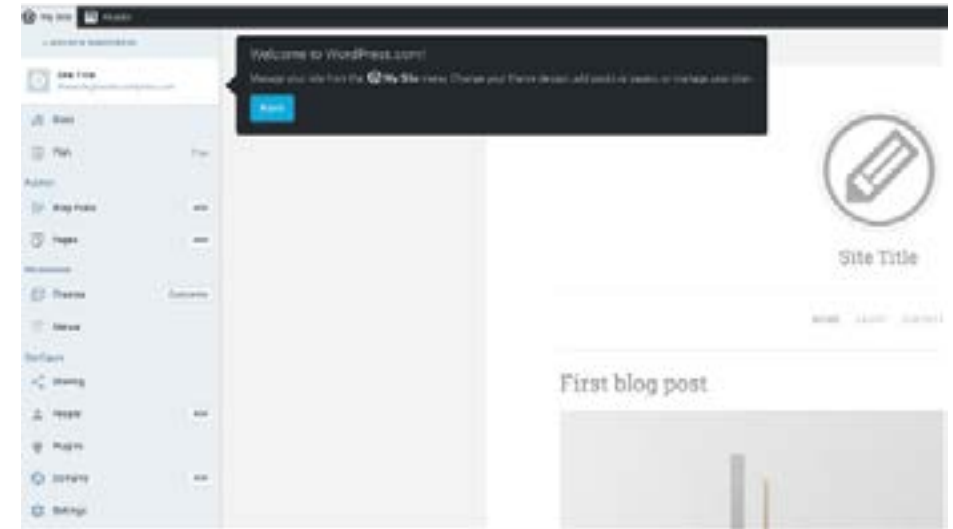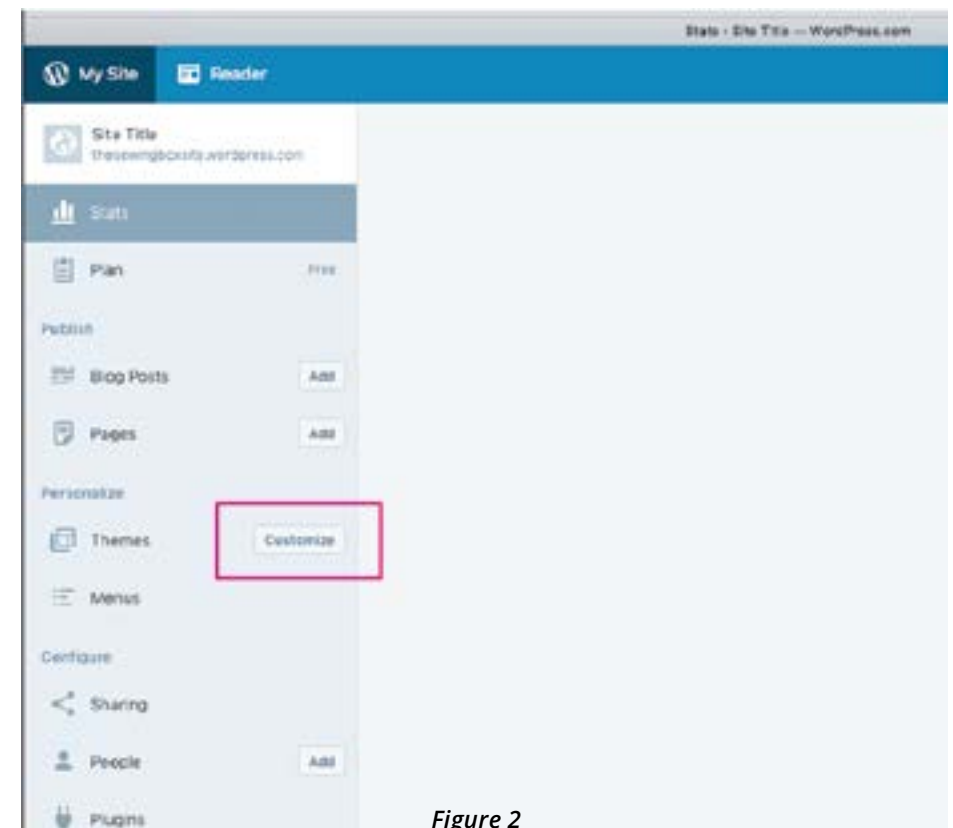

Fig. 1

Figure 2

Setting Up Your WordPress Website

To set up your website go to www.wordpress.com and select *Get Started* in the top right hand corner.

Here WordPress will have a few options to select. These can be changed at a later date. Once you have chosen a theme and domain name, an option for plans will appear. Select *Free.* You will then need to create your account using an email address, create a Username and enter a password.

The Dashboard

When you log in to WordPress the landing page will be your website's Dashboard (fig. 1). This is made of three compartments:

- The WordPress toolbar at the top
- The Admin Menu on the left
- The main Admin Area.

We are going to customise the look and functionality of your website so the first thing to do is go to the *Admin Menu* on the left and under *Personalise* you will see *Themes*. Select the button next to that which says Customize (Fig 2).

The Customizer

When you open the Customizer you will see that the screen is split into the customizer toolbar on the left and your website on the right.

The first thing you want to do is select the *Site Identity* button (fig 3). Here we can write the name of your site and an optional tagline.

Logo

We can also select a logo for the website (Fig 4). Click the *Select Logo* button which will open the Media Library. From here you can select from the library or Upload Files. Once you have selected the image a tick will appear. Click the blue box with select in the bottom right corner. You will come across an option to crop the image, but for now we can just select skip.

Go back up to the top of the Customizer bar where it says Site Identity and select the left facing arrow.

Colour & Backgrounds

Next select the *Colour & Backgrounds* tab. To change the colour of the website background, hoover the mouse over the colour and a box with change will appear. Select this.

Underneath will be a range of colours to choice from and underneath is the link pick your own colour. Here you can select a colour or type in the number.

When you are happy with this, go back up to the Colour & Backgrounds tab and select the left facing arrow.

Fonts

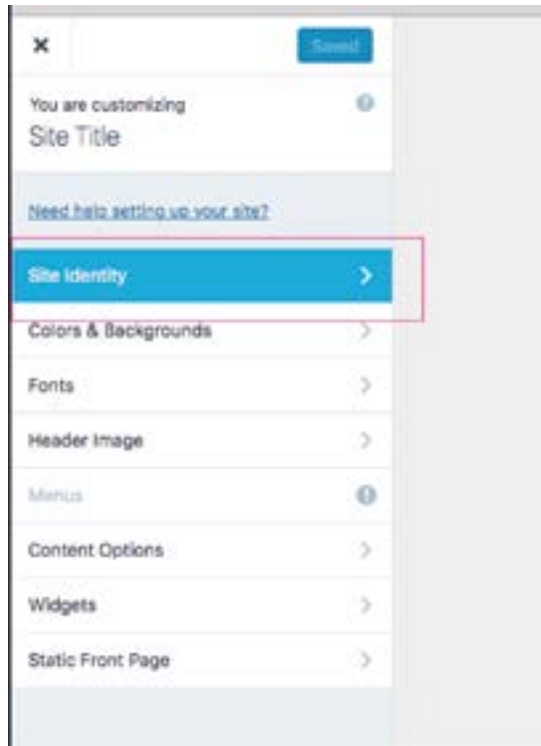Next we are going to change the font on the website. Select the

Fig. 3

Fig. 4

Fonts tab in the Customizer bar. Here you will have a dropdown box when you click into the text box. As you select different font under *Headings* this will change in the right hand part of the screen, showing you how your website will appear (Fig 5).

Underneath this you have the option to change the size and alignment of the text. Once you are happy with this, you can then change the base text for the paragraphs.

Header Image

Select the *Header Image* from the Customizer bar. Here we are going to add an image to the top of your website. Depending on the Theme you are using, the recommended size will be above the Current Header box.

You will see two options: to add a current header or to use one from the selection panel. Under *Current Header* select the box Add new image. This will open up your media library.

Menus

Select the *Menus* tab from the Customizer bar. Here you can change the different menus and their location.

Select *Menu Location*. Your Theme will determine the number of menus you can have and in this example the theme supports two menus.

Under Header select the dropdown box. You will see there are two options, but here you can keep it on Primary (Fig 6).

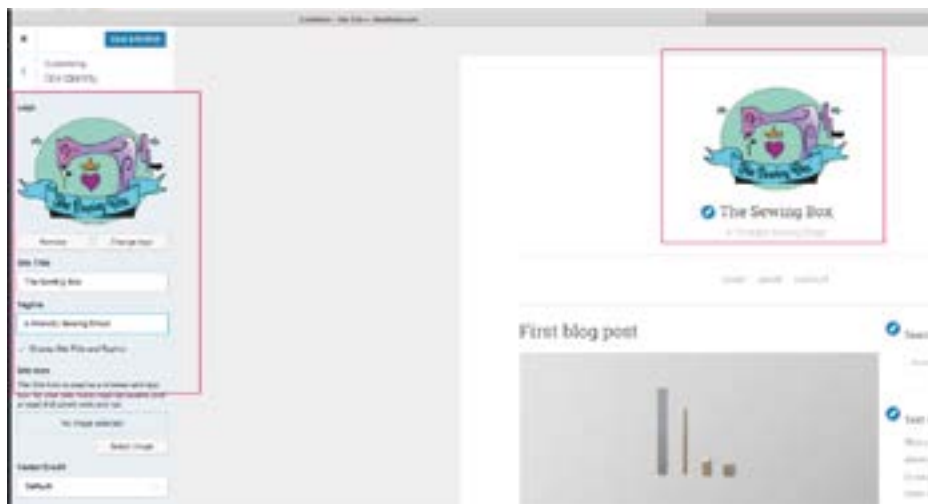Under the dropdown box select *Edit Menu*. You will see the number
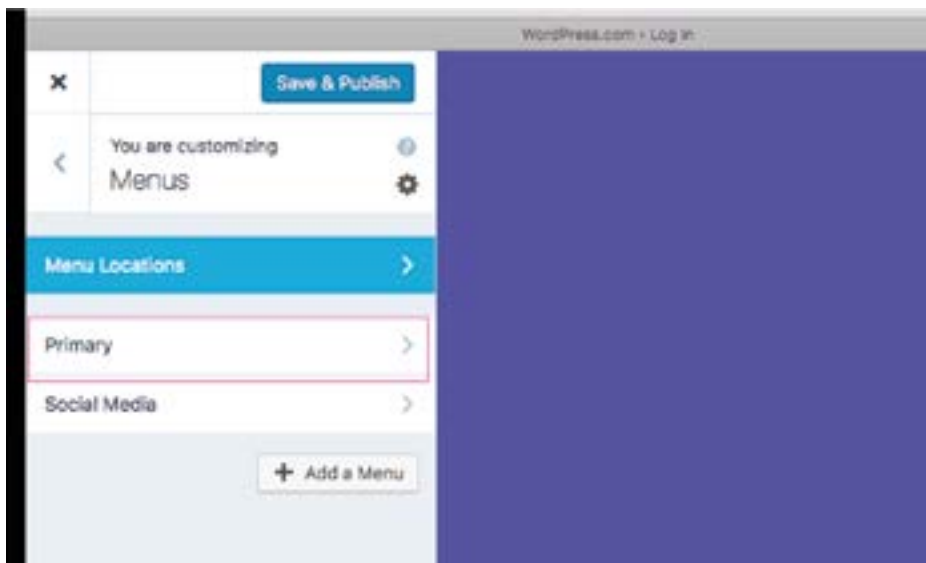
Fig. 5

Fig. 6

of pages in your menu. As a default the Theme has Home, About Us and Contact. You can reorder and add to this menu.

To make changes go to the *Home* tab and select the small arrow on the right. This will open up a panel. In *Navigation Label* you can change the name of your page. Don't worry about the other boxes for now. To close the panel click the same arrow again.

You can do the same to the other pages but in this example we will be keeping them the same.

To add a page select the *Add Items* box and a panel will expand. Select the *Page* tab which will open a dropdown box and select *Page* again. This will be added to your menu. To exit this panel, select the up arrow on the Pages tab and select the Add Items box. You can now go into the new page and rename it.

To change the order of the menu you can simply click and hold a panel and move it into place.

Social Media

Here you can manage your social media accounts and integrate them into your website. Select the *Social Media* Tab. The default will have a number of platforms for you to amend. We want to delete some so go to the LinkedIn tab and click the blue arrow.

When the panel opens up scroll down and click on the red text Remove. This will delete the tab. To add a link to your social media accounts, select one of tabs. Here we are selecting Twitter.

In the box URL paste in the web address to your Twitter address.

To have this open in a separate tab you will need to click the small box underneath the Navigation Label. To close this, select the blue arrow.

Content Options

Content Options allow you to quickly modify how your content is displayed, depending on the theme.

Under **Blog Display** you can choose between displaying the full content of each post or an excerpt and category, tag, and date archive pages, as well as search results.

Author Bio

Here you can opt to display the name and bio of the post's author. This information comes directly from the Author's profile. To hide the author bio, uncheck the box.
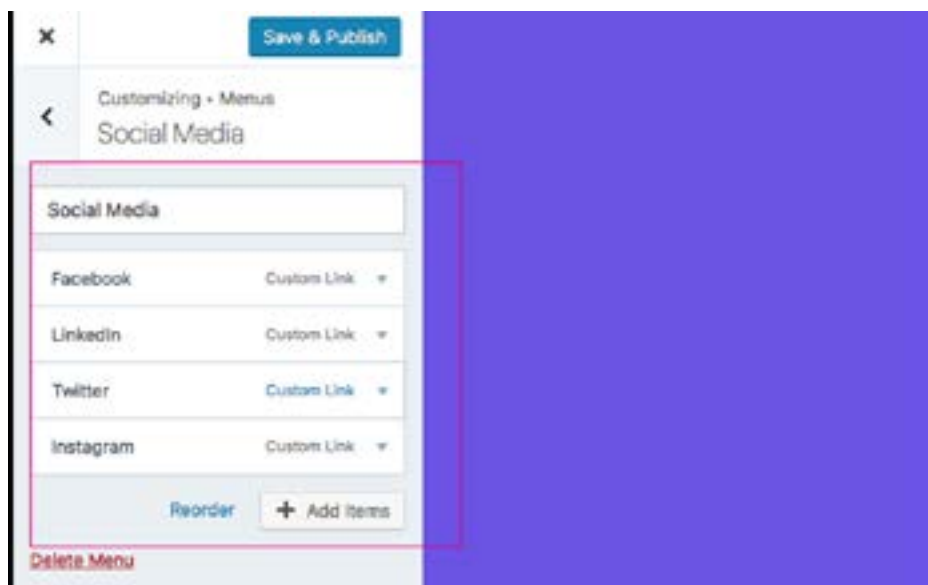
Featured Images

In supported themes, you can choose whether to display featured images on single posts and pages.

Widgets

Select the **Widgets** tab from the Customizer bar. Here you can add and change the different widget applications within your website (Fig 8).

The theme we have allows us to add widgets in the sidebar, but also in the header and footer. The widgets available will vary from theme to theme. There are many different types of widgets and WordPress by default comes with several including category clouds, navigation menu, calendar and search.

Once you are in the Widgets panel, select the **Sidebar** tab. Here you will find your Widgets. To add select the **Add a Widget** button (Fig 9). A panel will open up to the right. We are going to add a few Widgets to our site but you can add and delete more as you wish.

The first thing we want to add is a **Category Cloud.**

As you go down the list, select **Category Cloud**. This will appear in your widgets panel. The panel to make changes will be open and you can add a title, change the number Categories shown and exclude Categories.

Once you are happy you can select close at the bottom.

We also want to add a box of text welcoming people to our website. Select the **Add a Widget** button and scroll down until you find Text.
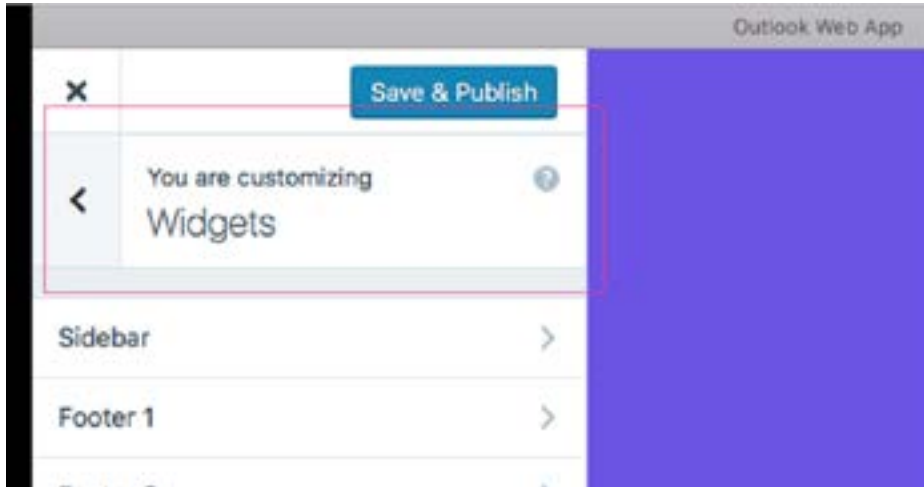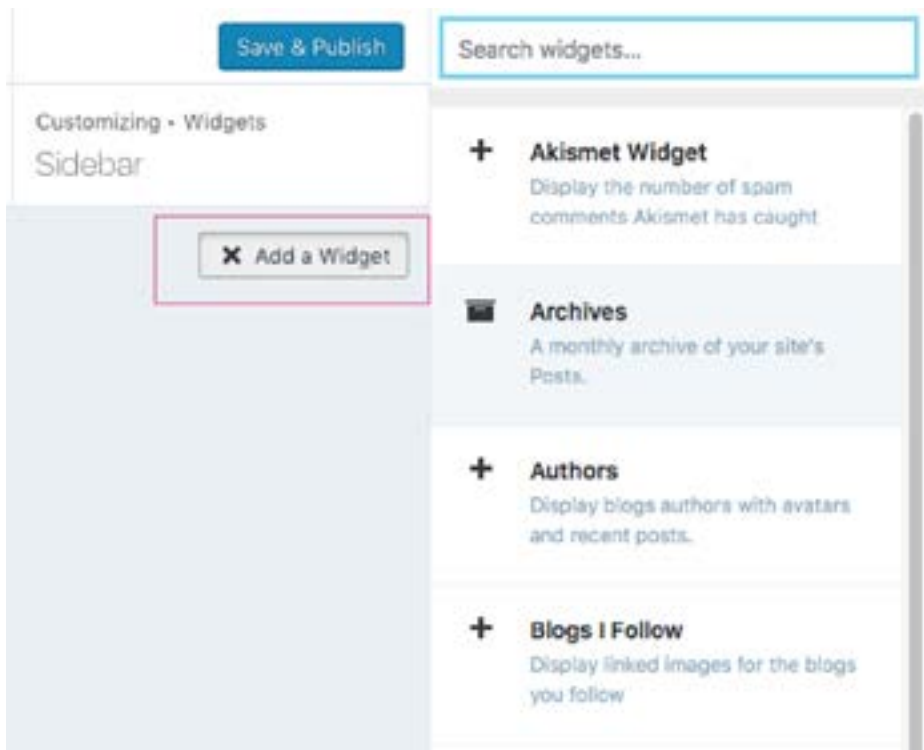
Fig. 8

Fig. 9

Click to add to your widgets panel.

When you are happy with your changes, select **Save and Publish** which will make these changes on the blog live.

Creating Posts and Pages

Now you have created the look and functionality of your WordPress site, it is time to add some content. WordPress allows you to add Posts, pages and add a range of media.

Post vs. Page

Some key differences between posts and pages. Posts are entries listed in reverse chronological order on the blog home page or on the posts page if you have set one. Posts can be found in Archives, Categories, Recent Posts, and other widgets. Posts are also displayed in the RSS feed of the blog. You can control how many posts are displayed at a time in the Reading Settings.

Pages are static and not listed by date. Pages don't use tags or categories, and a good example is the About Page.

Creating a Post

A blog is essentially a website frequently updated with posts, a piece of written content with images or other media.

Here you will create your first blog post in WordPress.

Go to your blog Dashboard and on the Admin bar under Publish you will see Blog Posts. Select the Add button. A new post will open up.

Type in a title for your post and text in the main body.

When you have finished, you can go the menu on the left and select the tab that says *Categories & Tags*.

Categories vs. Tags

Whereas categories allow for a broad grouping of post topics, Tags are generally used to describe a post in more detail.

Under Categories click the folder icon that says *ADD NEW CATEGORY*

A box will appear for you to type in your choice.

Click *Add* and it will close the box. You will notice that the category has been added and has a blue tick in the box. To unselect a box just click inside it.

To add a Tag, type into the box under the heading *TAGS* and press enter. You can write as many tags as you like.

Creating a Page

A Page is static and generally accessed through the Navigation Bar across the top.

Go to your blog Dashboard and on the Admin bar under Publish you will see Pages. Select the Add button.

Recommended blogging platforms

- www.blogger.com
- www.tumbler.com
- www.weebly.com
- www.contentful.com