Thank you for your interested in helping get Vanilla up to public beta stage!

Would you please keep the code to yourself at this stage. Feel free to tweet, blog and in other ways talk it up if you like what you see, but please don't pass it around.

As soon as possible I will setup a public SVN repository for a public beta, but for just a short while there is so much changing with it that I don't want to release updates that keep wrecking people's blogs (should they choose to build on it!).

Until I get that SVN up and running, the latest "alpha" will always be here:
www.alistercameron.com/download/vanilla-alpha.zip

Thanks again,

--Alister

Alister Cameron // Blogologist
www.alistercameron.com

Installation

You've unzipped `vanilla.zip` and you're reading the `readme.pdf` file. Wise move :)

1. Set up a fresh install of WordPress 2.7 and delete the Hello World default blog post and the About page, both of which were created as part of the WordPress installation. Delete these before the next step.

   Note: Anything other than a fresh install, and I can't promise this will work flawlessly!

2. Go to **Admin > Tools > Import** and use the WordPress option to import the included XML file. It includes some good dummy data (posts, pages, comments, etc).

3. Upload both folders (`vanilla` and `blogologist`) to your WordPress themes directory. In **Admin > Appearance > Themes**, activate the *Blogologist* theme -- a child theme of Vanilla. It is a "port" of the Carrington theme's default look (I'm lazy!).

4. CHMOD 777 the `wp-content/themes/vanilla/cache` directory.

5. In **Admin > Appearance > Widgets**, activate the following widgets into their respective "default" widget blocks (aka "sidebars"):

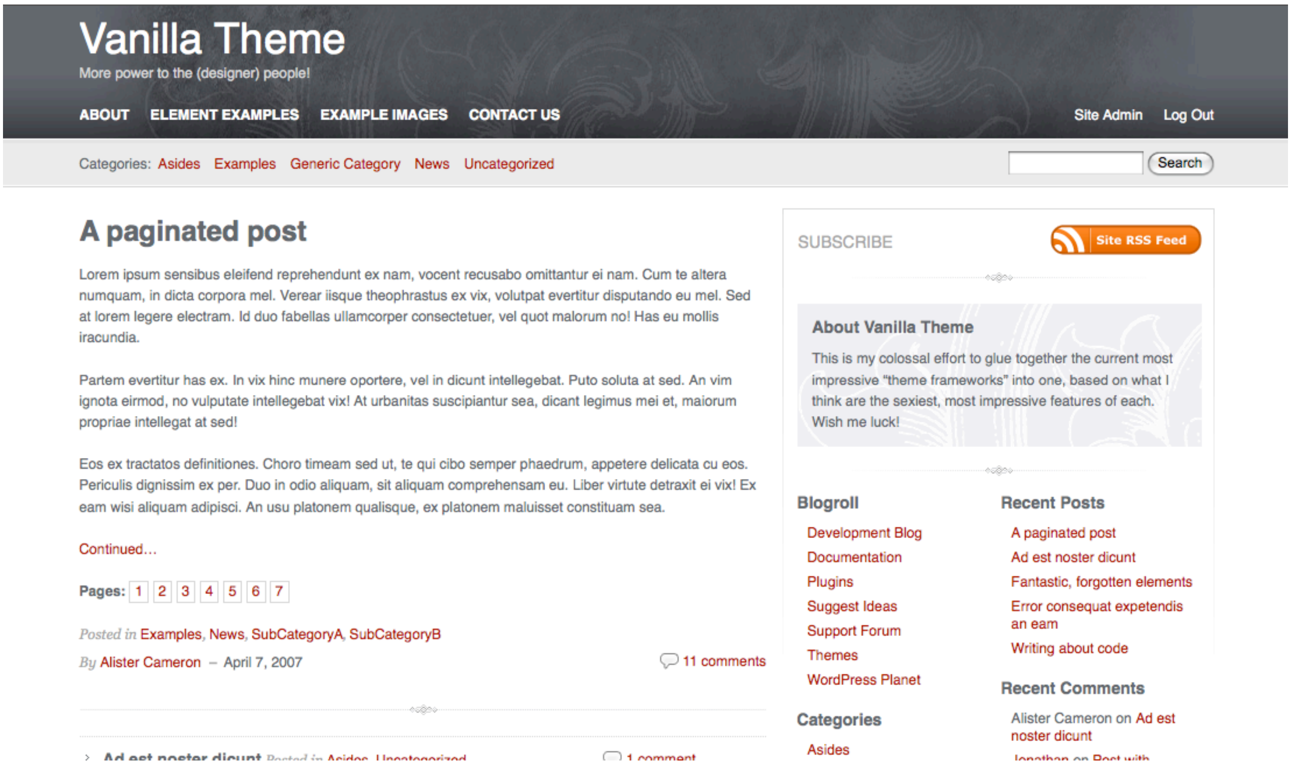
   - Site-wide Branding -> Header
   - Main Menu/Navigation -> Main Menu
   - Search Form and Categories Menu -> Sub Menu (Search Form first)
   - Links (blogroll) and Categories -> Primary Sidebar
   - Recent Posts and Recent Comments -> Secondary Sidebar
   - Site Credits -> Footer

4. Go to the **Admin > Appearance > Vanilla Layout** page and select:

   - Width: 974 pixels, centered
   - Outer Column: 180 pixels, to the right
   - Inner Column: narrow (25%), to the right
   - Utility Columns: 3 cols.

   All else can remain as it. Now save those changes.

5. Fingers crossed, if you now go to the front page of your blog you'll have something that looks vaguely like this:



A paginated post

Lorem ipsum sensibus eleifend reprehendunt ex nam, vocent recusabo omittantur ei nam. Cum te altera numquam, in dicta corpora mel. Verear iisque theophrastus ex vix, volutpat evertitur disputando eu mel. Sed at lorem legere electram. Id duo fabellas ullamcorper consectetuer, vel quot malorum no! Has eu mollis iracundia.

Partem evertitur has ex. In vix hinc munere oportere, vel in dicunt intellegebat. Puto soluta at sed. An vim ignota eirmod, no vulputate intellegebat vix! At urbanitas suscipiantur sea, dicant legimus mei et, maiorum propriae intellegat at sed!

Eos ex tractatos definitiones. Choro timeam sed ut, te qui cibo semper phaedrum, appetere delicata cu eos. Periculis dignissim ex per. Duo in odio aliquam, sit aliquam comprehensam eu. Liber virtute detraxit ei vix! Ex eam wisi aliquam adipisci. An usu platonem qualisque, ex platonem maluisset constituam sea.

Continued…

Pages: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Posted in Examples, News, SubCategoryA, SubCategoryB

By Alister Cameron – April 7, 2007 11 comments

Ad est noster dicunt *Posted in* Asides, Uncategorized 1 comment

About Vanilla Theme

This is my colossal effort to glue together the current most impressive "theme frameworks" into one, based on what I think are the sexiest, most impressive features of each. Wish me luck!

That's it! You've installed Vanilla.

Overview

Vanilla is not like any WordPress theme you've used before. I can be fairly sure of that. And what you see now is just the beginning. I'd write up a roadmap but it would scare me too much ;)

Vanilla's key boast is this:

> **Exceptional power and freedom for designers, without (or barely) needing to know or touch PHP. Thanks to the combined capabilities of PHPTAL templates, Carrington's atomic templates, YUI CSS and full widgetization (including custom widget controls).**

Here’s the really short summary of it’s features:

1. PHPTAL templating engine (including caching).
2. “Template Sets” for different styles: blog, photoblog, corporate and magazine.
3. Carrington's "atomic" templating system.
4. Custom layouts and bullet-proof CSS.
5. Sandbox's semantic markup (body/post/comment classes, etc).
6. Widget blocks for all key page areas, not just sidebars.
7. Custom widget controls.
8. Theme-specific hooks and filters throughout.
9. Built for "child themes".
10.Extensive and granular theme controls (in the Admin area).
11. HTML “minifier” compresses output for speed.

And once it goes live...

12.Free to download and use; released under the GPL.
13.Paid support option, including helpdesk, discussion groups, bug fixes, etc.
14.Extensive documentation (plus tutorial videos for paid/supported option).

A few of these features are not fully implemented yet or need sample code written to show them off. So you’ll need to be patient!

How Vanilla Works

Templating Engine

Vanilla uses PHPTAL - a templating engine. This adds a bit of overhead, but because PHPTAL does it’s own caching, the added overhead is (relatively) minimal.

Thanks to this templating engine, you’re never going to hear people stressing out about whether they’re “in the loop” or not. It just doesn’t matter any more, because the template HTML is only merged with the WordPress “data” at the last stage of processing, when all data has been collected. You’re free to put things on the page wherever you like, no matter where or when or how WordPress does it’s thing.

Example: when you’re logged in and you view a single page or post, you’ll see an *Edit Page* link in the top-right menu. Now, that link was processed by WordPress “in the loop”, well after the top menus were processed. Nonetheless, you’ll see that the link is one of the menu items and there are not tricks to it: I just added it to the top menu because I wanted it there, and the templating engine took care of it. Simple.

(PHPTAL also caches page content but I’ve overridden this during alpha development. The cache files are created but are updated on every page call.)

Fully Widgetized

Vanilla doesn’t just have a primary and secondary sidebar. Sure, it has these, but they are now only two of a number of “widget blocks” where you can drop widgets in, at your pleasure. You will recall that at installation, you had to move some widgets into their “default” widget blocks to get the Blogologist child theme to look right.

The philosophy here is about opening up all key areas of the page for widgets, and to remove from the page templates key blocks of content that you should be free to put somewhere else, if you wish. So, for example, the “Branding” widget which includes the blog title and description. In Vanilla, these are not hard-coded into the header area of the page, but are in the Branding widget. In the Blogologist child theme, they need to be in the Header widget block, but you might have a different idea in mind for your child theme, hence the widget approach.

The same is true of footer text, and so forth. In fact, the only content on the page which is not resident in a widget is the main page content which is processed “in the loop”. Everything else is in a widget, and you can put it wherever you want.

This is especially powerful for people who want to use the bottom of the page for widgets -- something which has become very popular to do. Vanilla includes (up to) four widget blocks in the “utility” area of the page (above the footer). If you would like to use these, simple drop some widgets in these widget blocks, instead of (or along with) the sidebars.

Custom Layouts and Bullet-Proof CSS

Vanilla uses Yahoo’s YUI CSS library to give you a strong, simple and bullet-proof CSS foundation to build on. At a minimum, you will need to use the YUI Grids, as these are integrated into Vanilla. Optionally (and highly recommended), you can use the YUI Reset and YUI Fonts CSS files. The Blogologist child theme uses all three.

One of the very “sexy” features of Vanilla is the custom layouts. In a nutshell -- and without touching code -- you have a huge range of layout options to choose from, with the each of select-boxes in the theme’s Layouts admin page. These options control page width, number and size of sidebars, and the number of utility widget blocks you’d like.

Want a three-column theme? Choose that. Want a single column theme with three columns (utility blocks) of widgets at the bottom of the page? Choose that. Want sidebars on the left instead of the right, or one each side? Choose that.

Better still, thanks to Carrington’s atomic templates, Vanilla lets you customize the layout of individual pages or page sections. Does this ever end??

Template Sets

Debate the point if you wish, but there are arguably four different kinds of websites people are in the habit of building using WordPress:

1. Blogs
2. Photoblogs
3. Corporate/Business sites
4. Magazine/Newspaper sites

Accordingly, Vanilla will include not one, but a template set for *each* of these four different types of theme.

(At the present moment, Vanilla comes with the blog template set, and I'm working on the photoblog set right now. Stay tuned for an update!)

As you would expect, template sets are fully child theme compatible. This means that if you want to create a child theme based on Vanilla's photoblog template set, you can. You can then customized any/all of that template set's PHP or HTML files and Vanilla will use your child theme's file instead of the default.

As is the point with child themes, all this is to ensure that as Vanilla is updated, you can confidently update it to the latest release, knowing that all your customizations are in your child theme. Gotta love child themes!

Sandbox's Semantic Markup

This is old news for most of us, but Vanilla includes the Sandbox theme's wonderfully powerful semantic markup. This means that, along with what amazing customizations you can achieve with Carrington atomic templates, you can also do some very cool stuff with CSS alone. Want a page to look different according to the time of day? Done. Want the first post on a page to have a different background? Done. Want different blog categories to include different header images? Done.

All in CSS with not a single line of PHP or HTML code added. That's Sandbox!

Carrington Atomic Templates

Alex King and his team are geniuses and they've come up with the Carrington theme. He writes:

> Carrington is an attempt to better abstract WordPress theme organization, and simplify commonly needed theme functionality.
>
> Theme functionality is broken up into thoughtfully crafted abstractions to enable customizations at different levels (the loop, the post/page content, comments, etc.) and a context-aware hierarchical template override system that chooses which template to be used for each segment of the theme.
>
> The abstractions and supported template types are designed to easily handle most of the customization scenarios we commonly see.

For more on what Carrington does (to which Vanilla adds a whole lot more), read this.

Hooks Everywhere!

You can't have too much of a good thing. So Vanilla has a hook for everything.

A hook allows you to add things to a page in a convenient and simple way. Check out the Vanilla Blocks page in your WordPress admin (in the Appearance menu). Just drop in some HTML code there and it will appear on the page in the appropriate place.

For any 3rd party widget that is provided in either a Flash of Javascript block of code, this is by far the easiest way to get it onto the page.

(Note that this is one area of Vanilla that needs more polish. Stay tuned!)

Your feedback, please!

I won't treat Vanilla like my own special project. I would love nothing more than to see a community of developers and designers gathered around it. To that end I will get it up in an SVN repository shortly.

Right now, what I want is for technically savvy WordPress gurus to put it through its paces, and to highlight areas for "critical improvement". I am pretty happy with the key components but the most important missing element is... you!

Join the Google Group!

One thing I'd ask you to do if you start getting into Vanilla... join the discussion group!

groups.google.com/group/vanilla-theme-discussion

That way you can see what others are saying about it and what they're doing with it.

I have a to-do list as long as my arm and am keen to delegate, so see you in the group :)

Cheers,

-Alister

PS. I'm alicam on Twitter. Please follow, introduce yourself to me, and I'll follow you back!

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