Upgrading WordPress

This article provides step-by-step instructions for upgrading WordPress from version 2.0 to 2.8.4 along with resolution of the issues encountered along the way.

Introduction

In September 2009, many bloggers – including me – using WordPress found their blog posts to be getting deleted or attacked by spam. These problems typically affected older versions of WordPress (e.g. 2.0)[1]. Most commonly cited solution was to upgrade to the latest version of WordPress, guidelines for which are given in WordPress' website[2]. This article provides step-by-step instructions for upgrading WordPress for a fictitious blog called MyBlog hosted at www.myblog.com from the pre-upgrade version of 2.0 to post-upgrade version of 2.8.4 (which is the latest stable release as on September 2009). Since my blog Talk of Many Things (www.talkofmanythings.com) is hosted on HostGator, I used HostGator's upgrade facility. This article also provides solutions for a few issues I encountered during the upgrade process.

Step-by-Step Instructions

1. Take a backup of pre-upgrade version of the blog (incl. posts, database, etc.) using "WordPress DB Backup" plugin. This should take around three minutes for a blog comprising approximately 100 blog posts of around 500 words each.
2. As a further safety measure, use FTP to make a copy of the pre-upgrade version of the blog (located at http://www.myblog.com) to your local PC. This took close to two hours.
3. De-activate all active plugins (AddThis, Akismet, WP-reCAPTCHA, WordPress DB Backup) in the pre-upgrade version.
4. Go to Fantastico De Luxe located under the "Software / Services" section of Hostgator cPanel Under the WordPress section, click the hyperlink "Upgrade to 2.8.4". This executes a full backup of the blog as well as carries out the WordPress version upgrade automatically and displays a confirmation message (*cf.* ANNEXURE-1).
5. In the post-upgrade version, re-activate all plugins that were deactivated before commencing the upgrade process.
6. This completes the basic upgrade process. The remaining steps are solutions to specific issues encountered along the way. If you're lucky, you might not face these issues and can ignore these steps.
7. ISSUE: Some posts with special characters like ' and - in the pre-upgrade version contained gibberish characters in the post-upgrade version. SOLUTION: Since I couldn't readily find any solution to fix this problem automatically, I had no choice but to change all gibberish characters to the correct ones manually (**Tip**: You can use Word's **Find and Replace** command to do this quickly and reliably). If you're lucky, you might find that this problem affects only some posts, so this step might not be as painful as it seems.

8. ISSUE: All custom-elements in the pre-upgrade version (viz. Google AdSense ads, hyperlink at the bottom of each post pointing to www.mywebsite.com, etc.) were missing in the post-upgrade version. SOLUTION: This was fixed by reinstating the single.php file as follows:

    a. Use FTP to copy the post-upgrade *single.php* file located at http://www.myblog.com/wp-content/themes/default to your local PC. This is just a backup measure.

    b. Overwrite the post-upgrade *single.php* file by using FTP to copy the pre-upgrade *single.php* file from your local PC to http://www.myblog.com/wp-content/themes/default.

ANNEXURE-1

Upgrading...

Initializing Parameters - Done.
Generating MySQL Backup - Done.
Generating Files Backup - Done.
Copying New Files - Done.

Upgrade completed

Your installation of WordPress was upgraded.
You can view it here: http://myblog.com

Please save following information. You will need it in order to restore if something went wrong

If you don't have SSH access, ask support to help you:
- Remove the directory …
- Untar …
- Empty the database …
- Import the file … into the database …
- Move … to …

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[1] TechCrunch "Security Threat: WordPress Under Attack" (http://www.techcrunch.com/2009/09/05/security-threat-wordpress-under-attack/).

[2] Upgrading WordPress Extended (http://codex.wordpress.org/Upgrading_WordPress_Extended).