

Working with WebNode

What is WebNode?

WebNode is an online tool that allows you to create functional and elegant web sites. The interesting thing about WebNode is that fact that you do not need to know the intricacies of html, css, xml or javascript in order to create the web site. You do not need to install or use any software.

Prior to the development of online tools such as WebNode users had to master web construction tools such as Dreamweaver, Microsoft Frontpage and others in order to develop a web site. Now, all the user needs to do is to put their existing ideas in order, gather together the necessary words and images and publish.

WebNode is forgiving and supported with a variety of plug-ins and widgets that together can make the job of online publishing straightforward, rewarding and fun.

The construction process involves the use of templates that you can alter to meet your needs as well as drag and drop elements.

In addition to this WebNode provides you with a rich statistics package that will help you to gain an understanding of the numbers and demographics of visitors to your site.

Getting started

Open a web browser on your computer. This can be Internet Explorer, Firefox, Safari, Opera and so on. It does not matter whether you are using a PC with Windows or Vista. You could be using a Macintosh. It makes no difference.

Concerns regarding operating systems and compatibility are no longer an issue with these online tools. It is liberating just to think of that. Type in the following Internet URL or web address in the address bar of the browser.

<http://www.webnode.com/>

The following page, or one quite similar to this, will appear in your web browser window.

The screenshot shows the WebNode website interface. At the top left is the 'webnode' logo. To the right are input fields for 'username' and 'password', and a 'Login' button. Below this is a navigation bar with links: 'Home', 'About', 'Samples', 'Contact Us', 'FAQ', and 'Sign up'. The main content area has a large orange banner with the text 'Free Website Building' and a 'Try live demo!' button. To the right of the banner is a list of four bullet points: 'Create Personal Web Pages and Blog', 'Run Small Business Website', 'Use your Existing Domain', and 'Work from Anywhere'. Below the banner is a 'Sign Up Now! Free!' button. The page is divided into three columns. The left column is titled 'Features' and lists: 'Web 2.0 technology', 'Real-time interactive editing', 'Drag-and-drop technology', 'Gadgets and widgets', 'Bookmark and tagging', 'Multiple file upload', 'On-line document editing', 'Free hosting', 'Use your own domain', 'More than 40 free templates', 'Import a custom template', and 'Automatic SEO'. The middle column is titled 'Tools' and lists: 'Articles', 'Polls', 'Discussion forums', 'FAQ', 'Dynamic lists', 'E-commerce', 'Site map', 'Photo galleries', 'Full-text searching', 'Website statistics', 'Webmail', and 'RSS'. The right column is titled 'Free & Easy Website Publishing' and contains the text: 'Webnode brings you a brand new innovative way of creating and editing advanced websites by just using a web browser. The system is very easy to use and is fully interactive. Real-time fast editing as you see it in the browser. By using Drag-and-Drop from the toolbar you can add new content such as polls, forums, articles, catalogues, widgets such as PayPal and much more. Webnode contains more than 40 beautiful templates or you can make your own. Webnode is completely free. There is no catch.' Below this is a 'Browser Compatibility' section with icons for Internet Explorer, Firefox, Safari, and Opera.

Take the time to read about the WebNode online tool. Click on the About, FAQ and Samples links to find out more. Try the live demo. Read the terms and conditions. No need to rush. Just take your time. WebNode and the Internet should still be there tomorrow. Become informed and familiarise yourself with the idea of publishing your own web site.

Setting up an account

Are you ready to begin? You need to set up an account. It is free. Click on the **Sign Up Now!** button. The following form will appear.

Register a new project

Username .webnode.com

Password

Your E-mail address

Choose a suitable **Username**. This will form the basis of the Internet address for your web site. Choose the name wisely and carefully. Consider the following:

- Who is the intended audience for your web site?
- What is the subject matter for your web site?
- Should the Internet address be short, such as an acronym or a simple meaningful word?

Choose something that is meaningful and purposeful. It may be a nickname. I actually use a version of my name quite often. I want people to know who I am. Others prefer a username that may be a little cryptic in order to preserve anonymity. Perhaps the username is simply the name of the subject or academic area that is the focus of your research.

The username will form the basis of your web site address. For example if your username is “robotresearch” then the web address for your web site will be:

<http://robotresearch.webnode.com/>

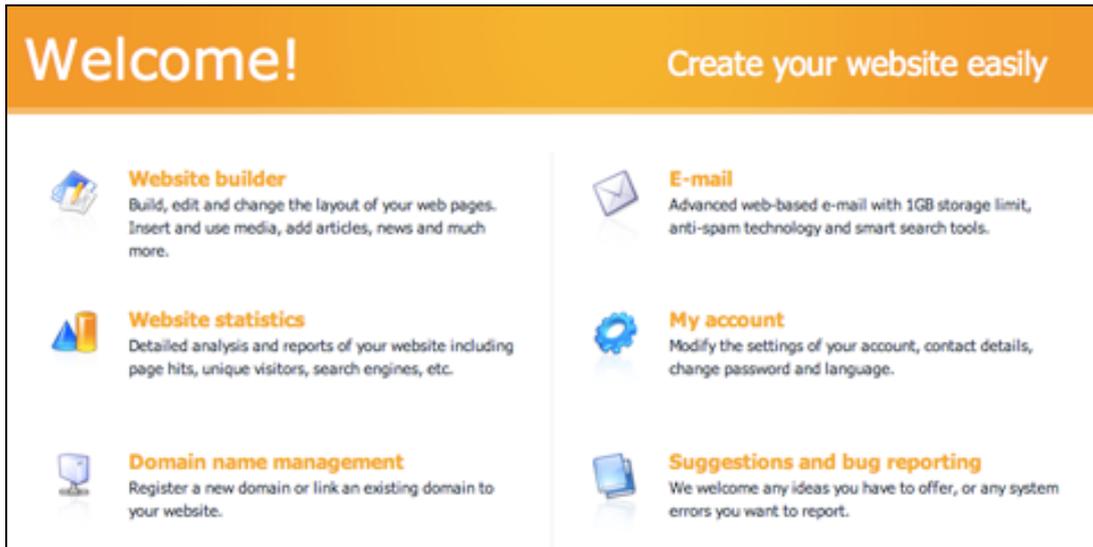
Remember, the username should follow these rules:

- The username must have at least three characters.
- The username must contain only letters (a-z), digits (0-9) or a dash (-).
- The username must not start or end with a dash.

Choose a secure **password**. Create a strong password that is meaningful only to you and that you can remember. I personally use a related sequence of passwords for my various Internet accounts.

When I create a password there is one rule that I always follow. I NEVER use my bank pin or banking password for any Internet related account. The PIN and password that I use for my bank are very different and totally unrelated to anything that I do on the Internet.

Once you have completed the details and opened an account the following page will appear.



You can alter your account settings at this point. Click on the My Account link to adjust your settings to meet your needs. The following window will appear.



Notice that the company name will initially appear as your user name. You can change the company name. Once you have completed the details click on the **OK** button.

You can now click on the WebSite Builder link to begin exploring WebNode and experiment with the construction of your WebNode web site.



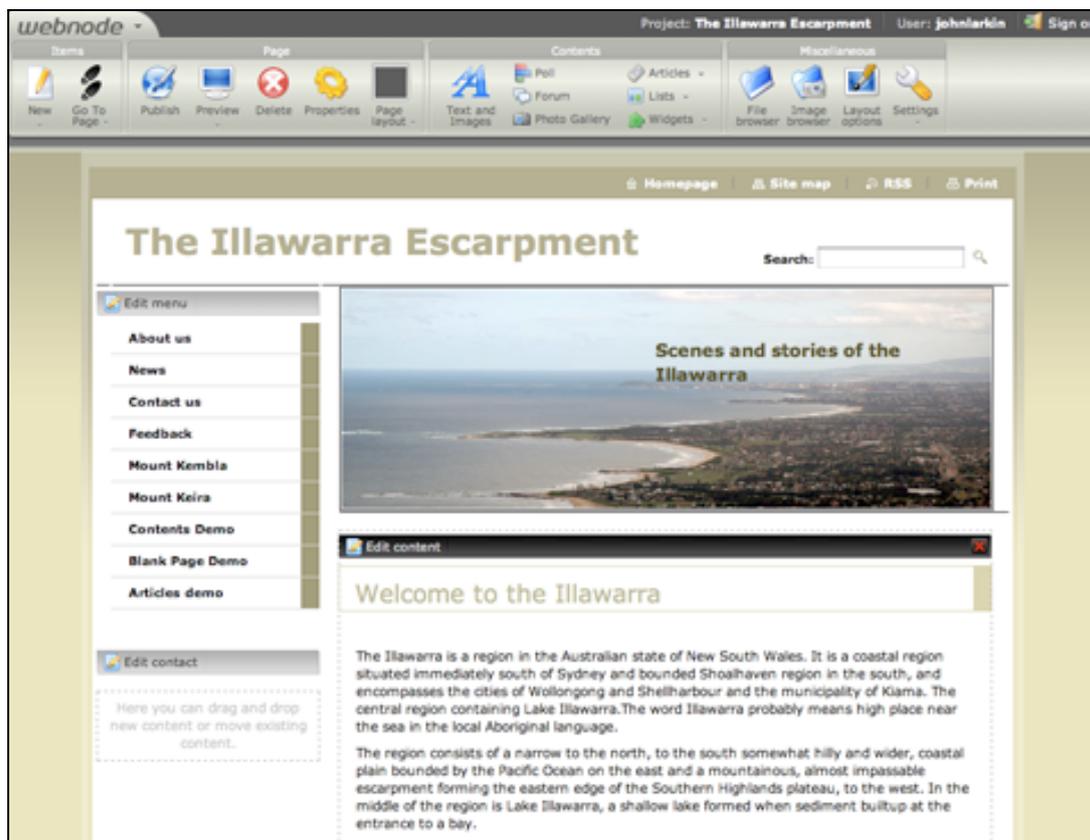
Once you are in the Website Builder you can use the WebNode drop down menu located in the upper left of the window to jump to other areas of the WebNode site.

There is 100mb of space for your web project on the WebNode servers.



Tools and settings

When you first open the Website Builder a standard page will appear with the Toolbar will be visible across the top of the Home Page of your first site. See the example below.



Opening page with Toolbar (some modifications have already been made to this site)

Each page is divided into discrete components. You can edit each of these components by clicking on the specific “Edit” link in the upper left corner of each component. A number of components will also have a delete button located in the upper right corner.

You can drag components up and down within their section of the page to alter where they appear on the page. You click and drag the black bar in order to shift the component.



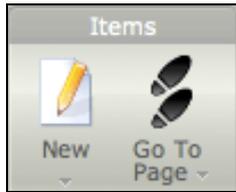
The Toolbar

The Toolbar is divided into four sections. They are:

1. Items
2. Page
3. Contents
4. Miscellaneous

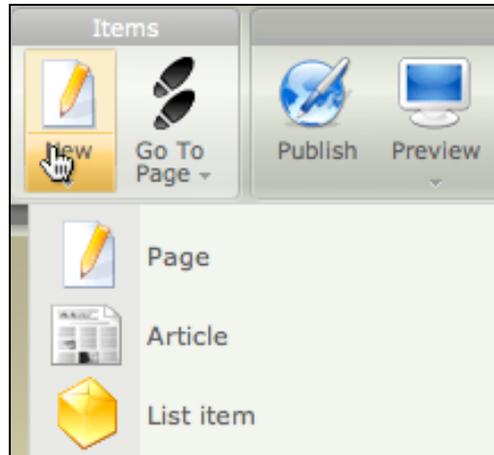
Let's look at each in turn.

Toolbar 1 ~ Items



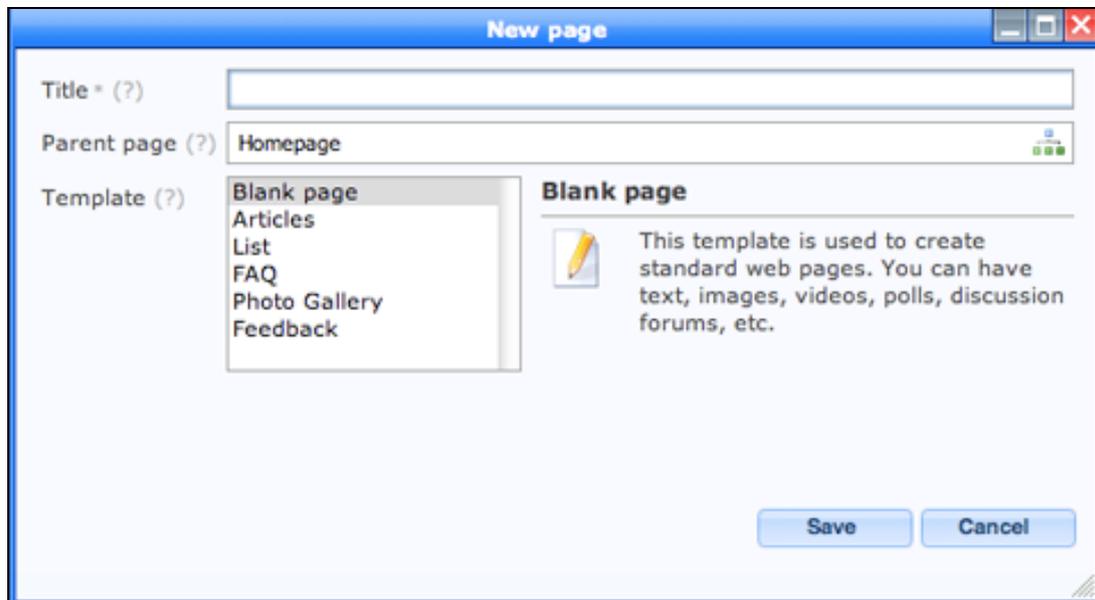
The Items section allows you to create a new page and to navigate to a specific page or area of content.

There are two ways to use the new button. If you click directly on the button a pop-up window will appear. If you click your cursor on the small arrow at the base of each button a drop down menu will appear.



The drop down menu for the New button allows you to create a new page, article or list item. The feature is quite intelligent. It will direct the new article or list item to the page on which you have created that specific content.

When you choose to create a new page the following popup window will appear.



You can enter a name for the page and even decide its hierarchy within the web site by indicating its parent page. The new page will be listed within the web site menu at the appropriate point.

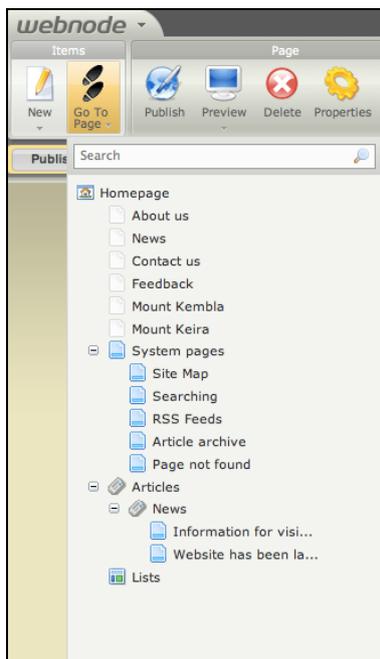
There are a number of page templates to choose from.

There are a number of ready-made page templates that you can employ when creating a new page.

Type	Description
Blank	This template is used to create standard web pages. You can have text, images, videos, polls, discussion forums, etc.
Articles	This template contains dynamic articles. It is suitable for creating blogs, news items, and reports.
List	This template contains a dynamic list where new items can be added. It can be used as a product catalogue, a list of links, personal directories, etc.
FAQ	This template contains frequently asked questions.
Photo gallery	This template is used as a photo gallery. You can add photographs, diagrams and illustrations. You can add comments, polls or forums to every image.
Feedback	This template allows visitors to submit general comments or questions to the site owner.

Once you have completed the details and selected a page you can click on the **Save** button and the new page will appear. You can then begin adding content to the page.

Clicking on the **Go to page** button will reveal the following popup menu.



You can use this menu to navigate to the various elements within your web site during construction and editing.

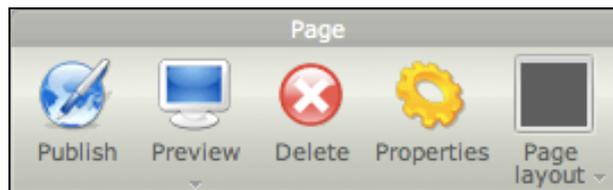
As you can see the Homepage has six separate sub pages that include: About us, News, Contact us, Feedback, Mount Kembla, Mount Keira.

There are also five System pages. These are integral components of the web site. They include the Site Map, Searching Page, RSS Feeds, Article archive and the 'Page Not Found' page. The visitors to your site will access all of these pages by clicking on the embedded navigation and search features of your published web site.

The 'Page Not Found' page is an integral component of any web site and will assist any visitor who attempts to visit a page that has been deleted or a visitor that types in an incorrect web address for a page on your site.

Any articles and lists that appear on your site are also accessible from this menu.

Toolbar 2 ~ Page



The Page section of the Toolbar allows you to perform these actions:

Publish the page on which you have been working. Visitors to your web site will be able to see the changes.

Preview the page on which you have been working. This will give you an idea on how the page will appear to your web site visitors.

Delete the page on which you are working. You cannot delete System pages such as the site map.

Access the **Properties** of the page. You can provide additional details for the page on which you are working. When you click on the **Properties** button the following popup window will appear.

You can alter the title of the page and also change its parent page within the hierarchy of your web site.

If your new page has a very long title name its web page name and address on the Internet will also be long. Now, some visitors may like to link to your page and if the web address is particularly long it may be inconvenient for them. You can abbreviate the name that is allocated to the web address of the page and as a result simplify its Internet address.

In the example above the web page address of the Homepage is <http://johnlarkin.webnode.com/home/> and not <http://johnlarkin.webnode.com/Homepage/>.

For example you may have a page title such as “Strategies and tactics in the special needs classroom”. If you did not give this page a brief name for its web page address the Internet address would be:

<http://johnlarkin.webnode.com/strategies-and-tactics-in-the-special-needs-classroom/>

That is quite a long web address for the page. You could simply give a web address name of “strategies” for that page and its web address would now be:

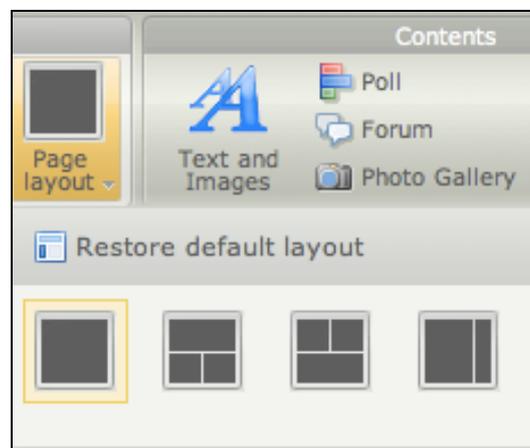
<http://johnlarkin.webnode.com/strategies/>

It is not necessary to give a page an abbreviated web address and you can ignore this feature altogether however, if you do decide to use the feature you should do so when you initially create the page. If you change the web address of the page some time after it has originally been published visitors who have bookmarked or linked to that specific page in the past will not be able to reach it as its address on the Internet has changed.

If you would like search engines such as Google and Yahoo to more easily find your page type in some relevant keywords and a succinct description in the Keywords and Description section of the Page properties window.

You can also add some tag words to categorise the content of that page. This will assist users searching for specific data on your web site.

The **Page** Toolbar section also allows you to alter the **Page Layout** of the specific page on which you are working. When you click on the **Page Layout** button the following popup menu will appear.



You can adjust the look and feel of pages to meet your needs. If you are not happy with the new layout you can click on the Restore default layout item.

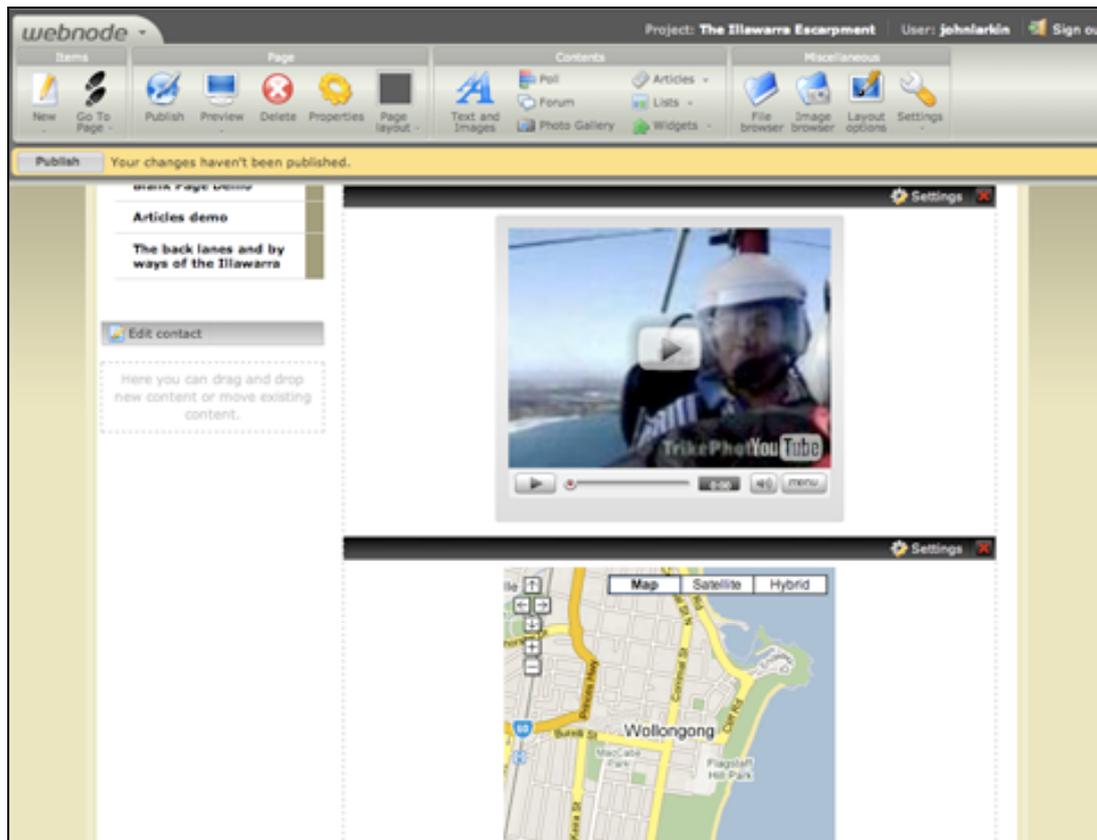
Toolbar 3 ~ Contents



This section of the Toolbar is one of the most powerful. It allows you to add a variety of interactive elements to any page in your web site. In addition to add text, images and galleries to any page it also allows you to add Polls, Forums, Lists and Articles. The best way to find out about these capabilities is to *experiment* with each.

As well, you can add Widgets. A widget is an embedded piece of code that allows you to view video, data feeds and widgets from **Google**, **Spring** and others. This is quite a powerful feature. As a result of this you can embed data from other sources such as **Google Maps**, **Flickr**, **Google gadgets**, **eCommerce** sites and others.

In the example on the following page I have embedded a You Tube video and a Google map. Both are interactive and fully functional.

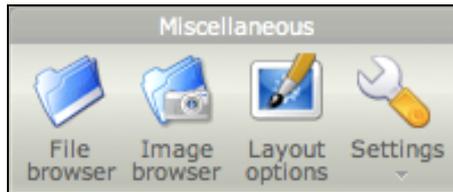


You can alter the size, justification and specific details of each widget by clicking on the **Settings** link located above each widget, upper right. You can also easily delete a widget by clicking on the red delete icon also located upper right.

If you wish to alter the location of a widget on a page simply click and drag the black bar at the top of the widget's window. It will be shifted to the new location.

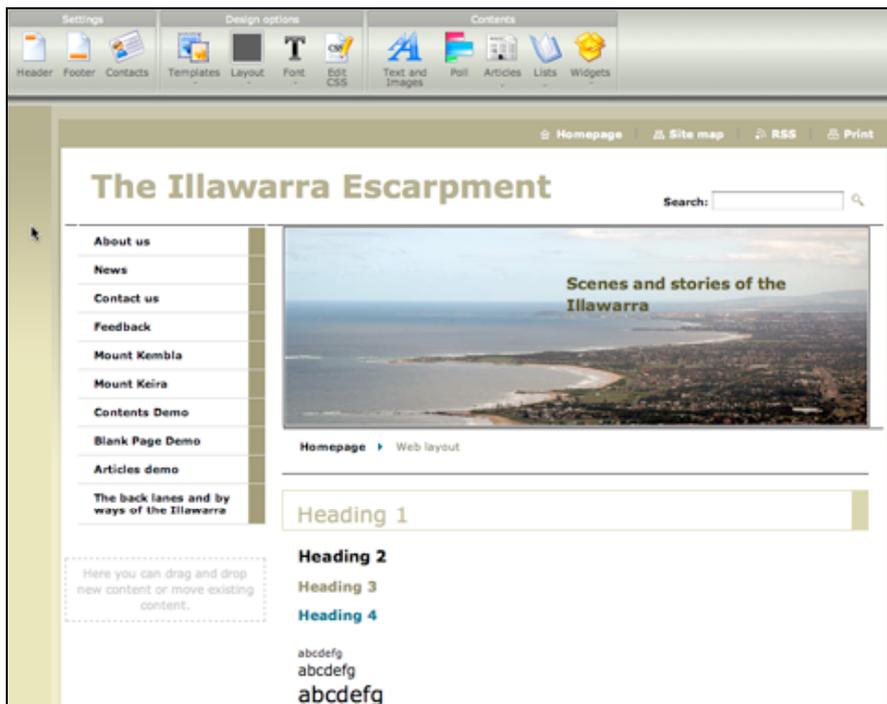
Note: I found that the video item in some widgets disappeared while moving widgets or constructing the page. If you simply publish the page or navigate to a different page and then navigate back again using the menu the embedded video item will reappear.

Toolbar 4 ~ Miscellaneous

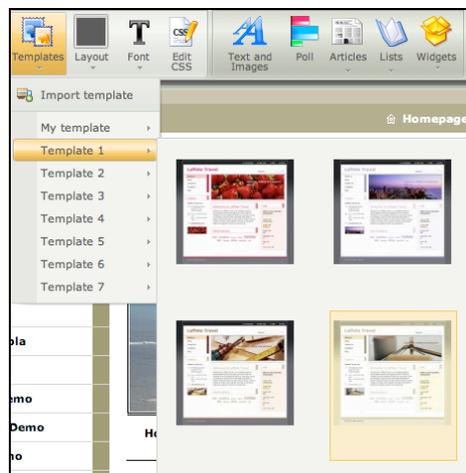


This section of the Toolbar allows you to inspect files and images that you have uploaded for use within the web site.

When you click on the Layout Options button the following popup window will appear. Notice the new Toolbar.

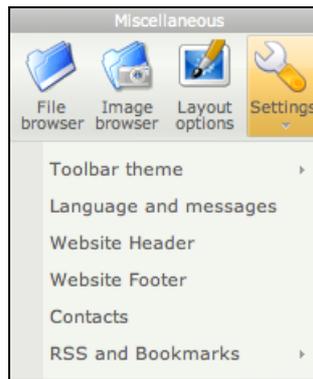


This window will allow you to make changes to the entire template. You can alter the header and footer details and fine-tune your contact details. You can also choose a new template for your web site. See the image below.

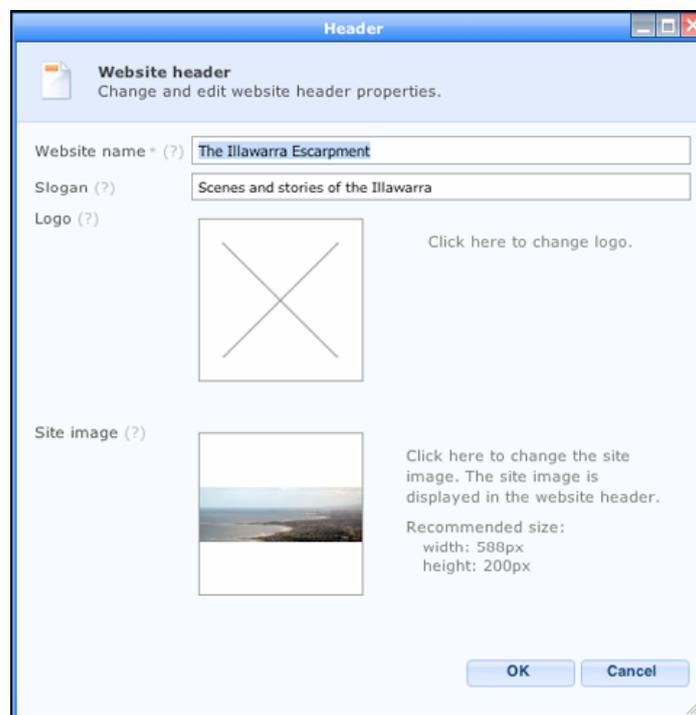


You can content elements such as articles and widgets. These will appear on each page of the web site as they form part of the template.

If you wish to alter the **Header** of your web site click on the **Settings** button on the **Toolbar**. Choose Website Header from the drop down menu,



The following popup window will appear.



You can alter the name of the web site, its slogan and import a new site image. Notice the recommended dimensions for the site image used in this template. I found a suitable image for my site and resized it in Photoshop Elements using the crop tool.

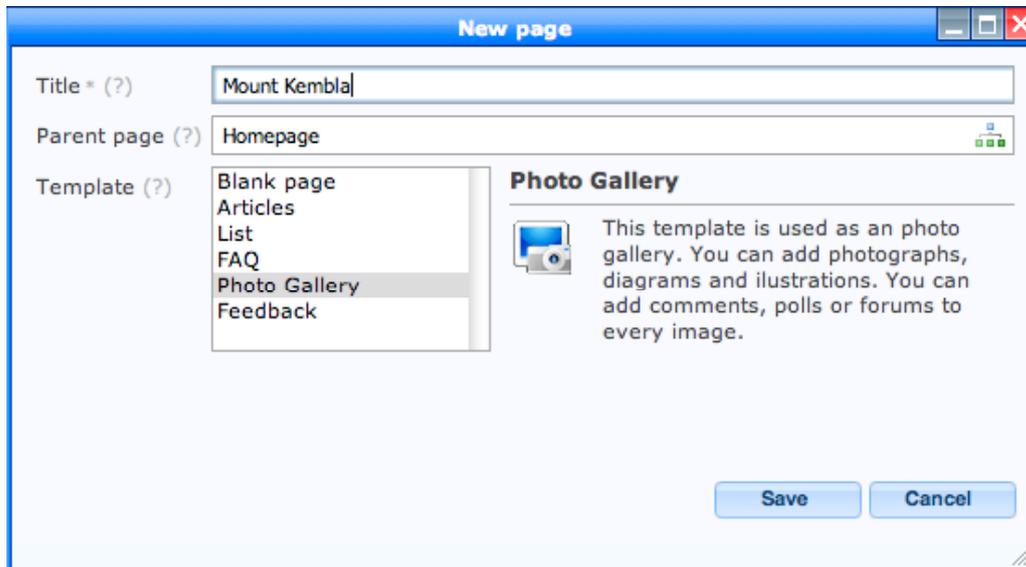
If you select Footer from the Settings drop down menu the following popup window will appear allowing you to alter the appearance of the Footer.



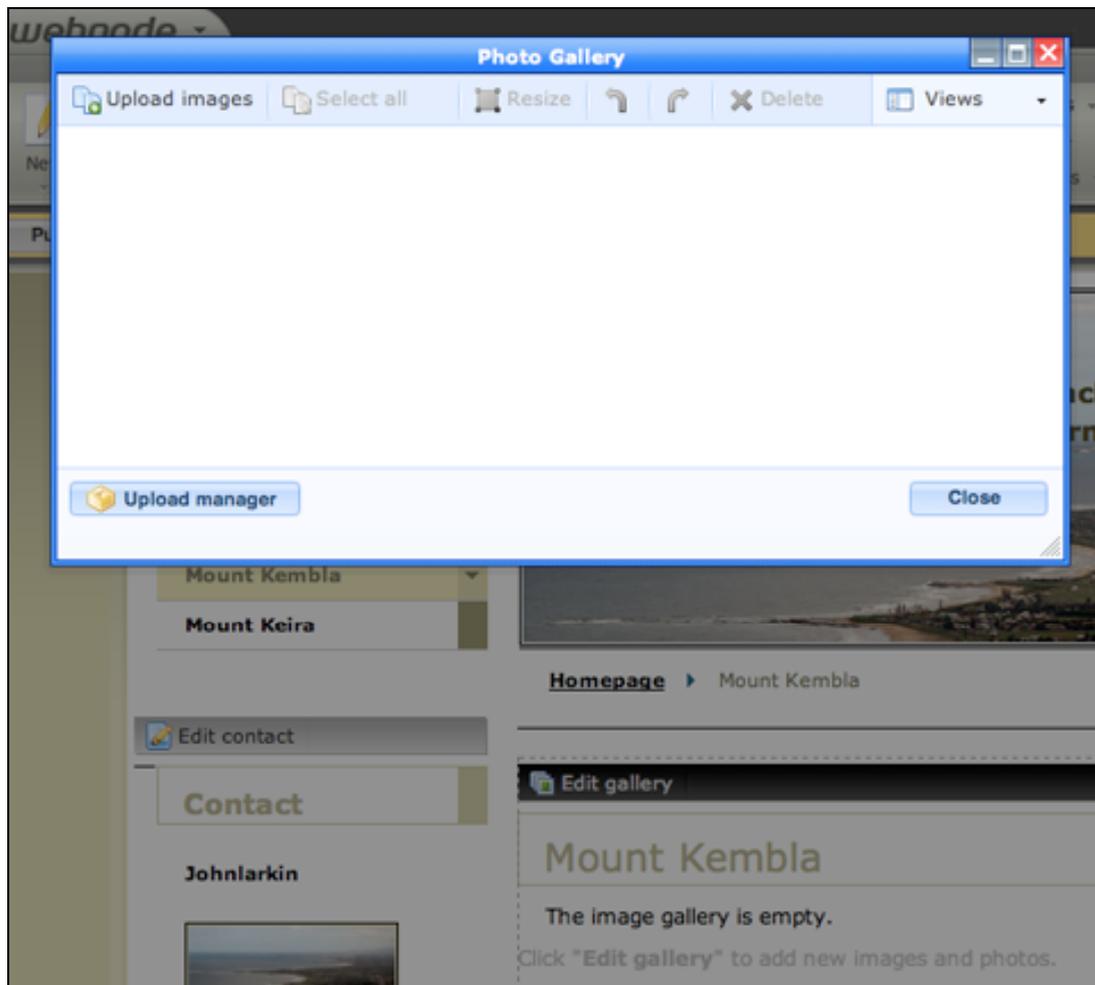
You can also alter the settings for the RSS feeds and Contacts from within this drop down menu.

Adding a gallery

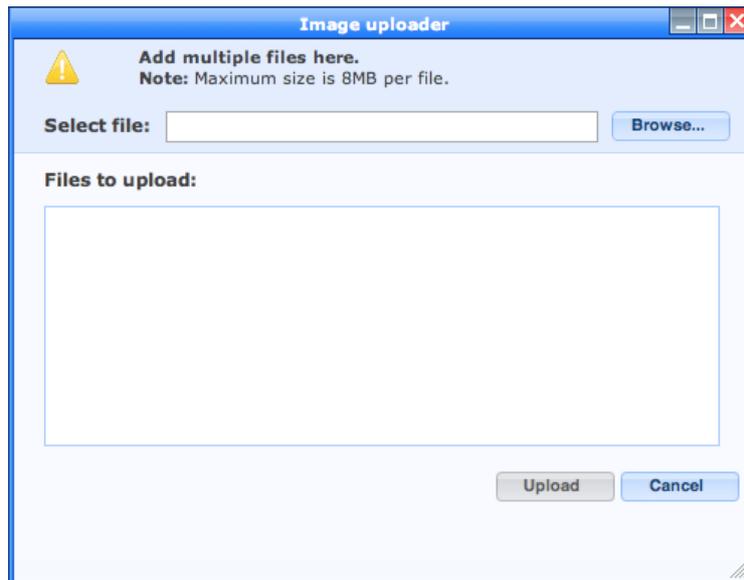
It is quite easy to add a gallery to your web site. Select New Page from the Items menu in the Toolbar. The following window will appear. Give a name to your photo gallery, select Photo Gallery from the Template list and click Save.



A new page will appear and it will be listed in the menu on the left. The contents section of the page will be empty. Click on **Edit gallery** button at the top of the Contents section to begin adding images to your gallery. The following popup window will appear.



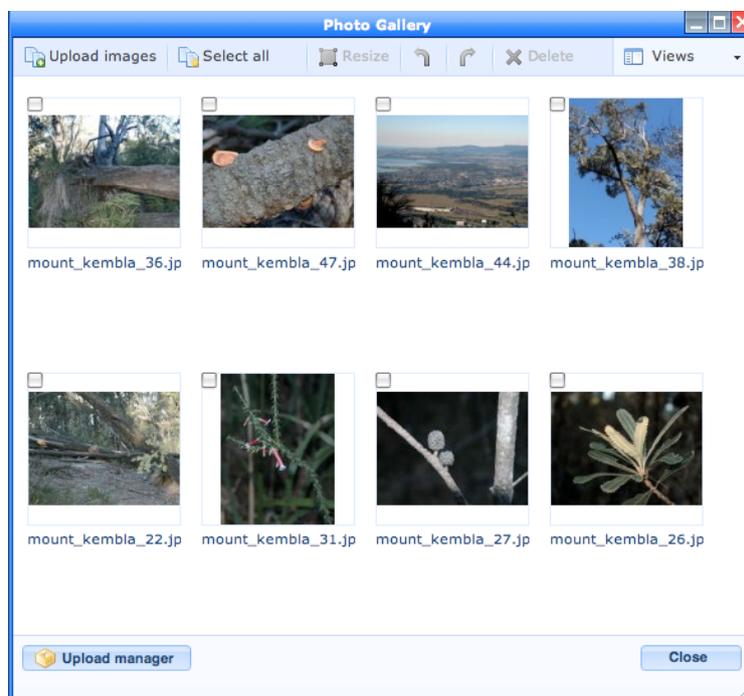
Click on the **Upload** button. The following window will appear.



Click on the **Browse...** button and locate the files on your computer that you wish to include in your gallery. You can add multiple files to the window and when you are ready click on the Upload button.

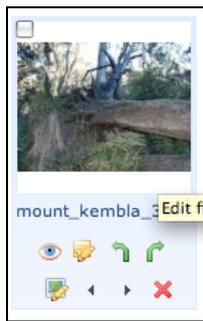
I recommend resizing the images before uploading. Suitable sizes in pixels include 640 x 480 or perhaps 800 x 600. The upload process will be faster if you upload images that are smaller in file size than the originals. For example, original images taken directly from a digital camera may be 3 megapixels or more in size. An image resized to 800 x 600 pixels may be approximately 120k in size, a fraction of the original. These smaller images will upload much more quickly.

The images will appear in the window below after they have uploaded.



It is possible to select one or more images in this window by clicking on the button alongside each image thumbnail. You can resize images at this point if you wish. You can also delete or rotate the selected images.

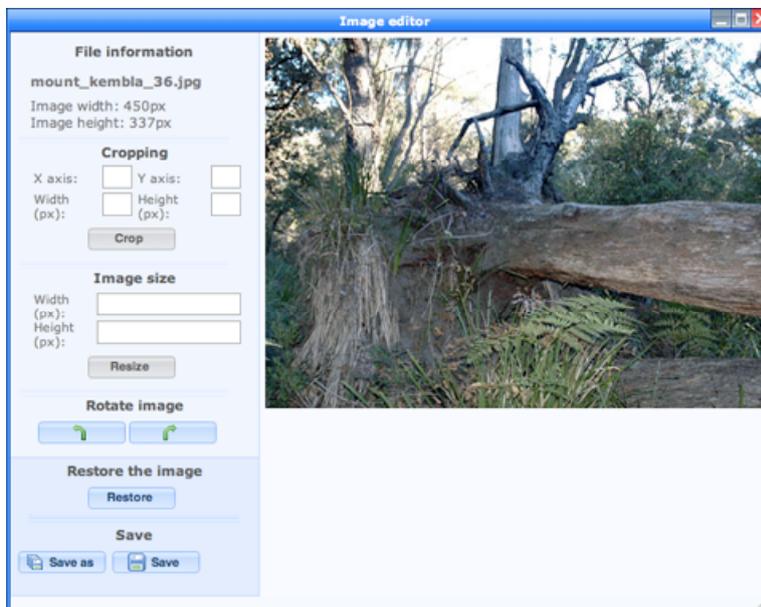
If you move your mouse over an image thumbnail the following drop down menu will appear beneath the image thumbnail



This is quite a powerful tool. This suite of tools allows you to perform the following actions:

- View the image in its original size as uploaded
- Edit the properties of the image (name, description, tags)
- Rotate the image 90 degrees to the left
- Rotate the image 90 degrees to the right
- Edit the image (See below)
- Shift the image position to the left in the gallery
- Shift the image position to the right in the gallery
- Delete the image

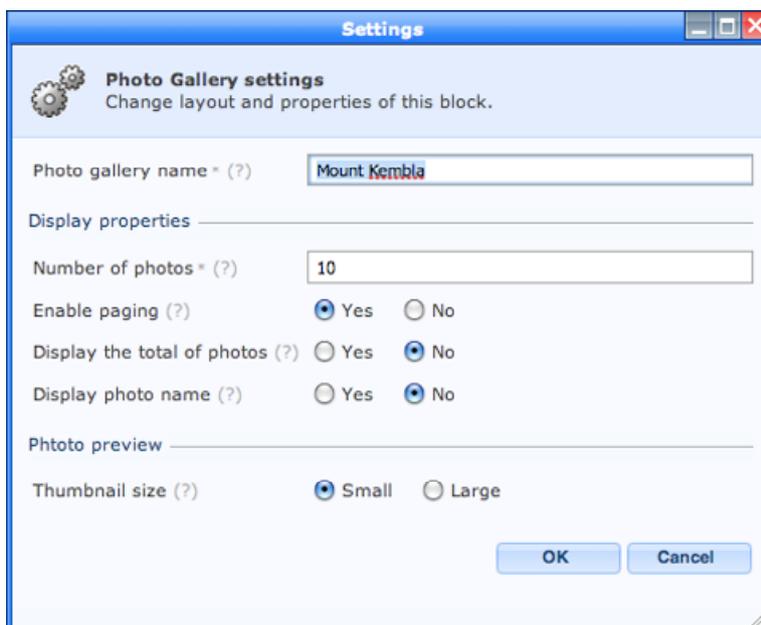
When you click on the image thumbnail or the image editor button beneath the image thumbnail the following **Image editor** window will appear.



From within this window you can crop, resize and rotate the image. Click and drag your cursor across the image to set the crop area.

Once you have completed the edits you can either click on the “**Save as**” button which will add a *new* image to your gallery or simply click the “**Save**” button.

Once you have edited all your images click **Close** on the **Photo gallery** window to view the gallery web page.

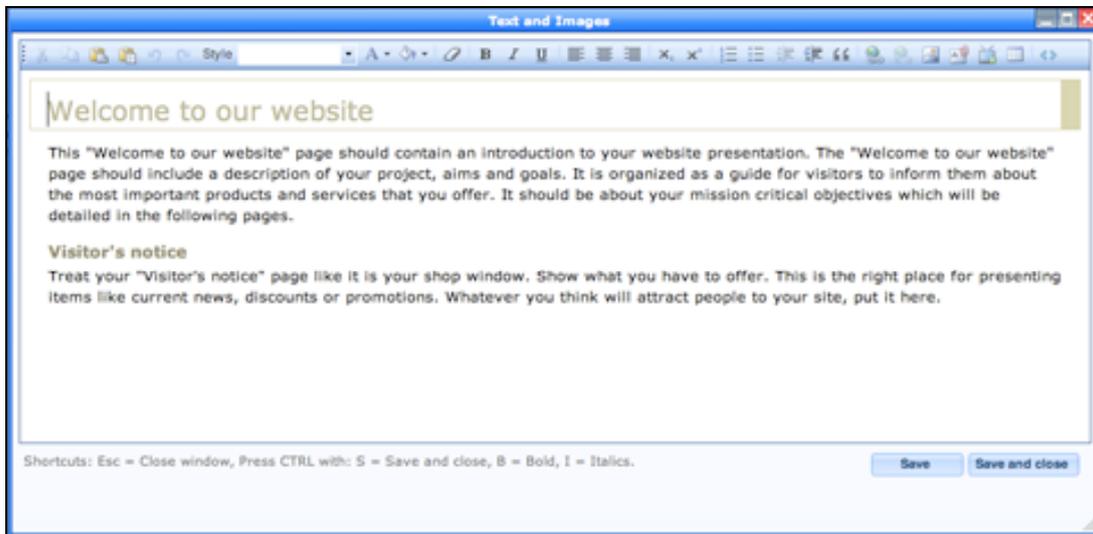


You can also click on the **Settings** link for the gallery on its page to adjust its properties.

See the popup window alongside.

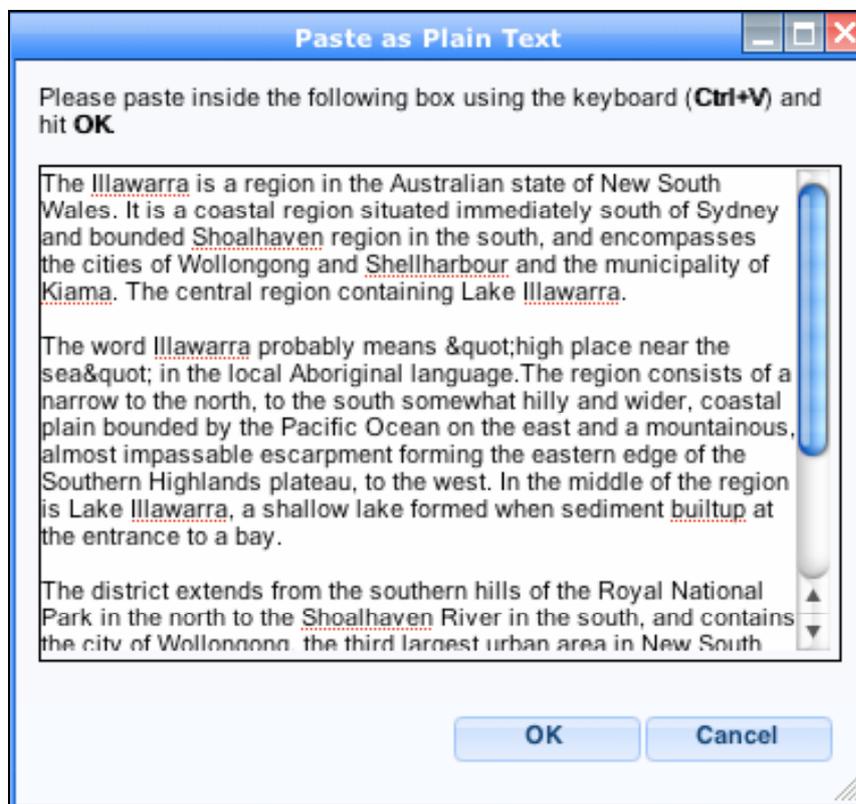
Editing text in WebNode

WebNode has an embedded text editor that allows you to format text. Whenever you create a page with text elements there will be some standard preformatted text that you can replace. Click on the Edit content link above the text. The following window will appear.



The text-editing window has all of the features of a standard text editor. It may not function in exactly the same way as your favourite text editor and it will require some practice. You cannot paste text directly into this editor.

If you have already created text files in other programs you can copy and paste from that file to the text editor however you will need to click on the Paste or Paste as text only buttons on the Text editor toolbar. The following window will appear.



As you can see I have already pasted some text into this window.

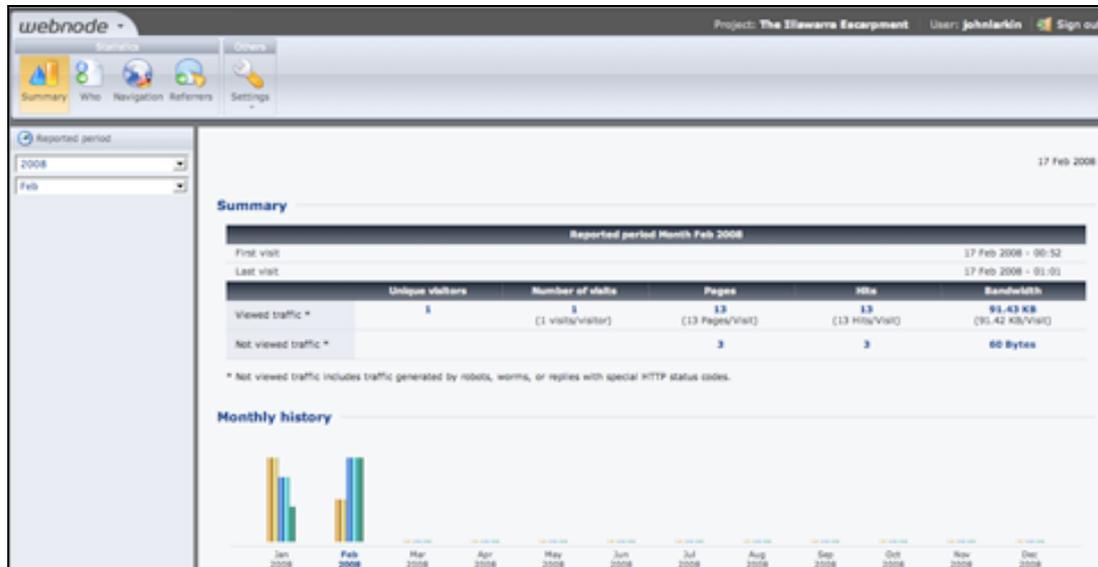
On the Macintosh I noticed that copy and paste did not always work and actually caused the browser to freeze and crash. I believe this is because I was using an old copy of Microsoft Word and Dreamweaver.

A solution was to select the original text in Microsoft Word or Dreamweaver and then *drag* it across to the window shown at left and *drop* it in the window. I did not use copy/paste.

I *recommend* that you do your basic formatting in this window before you click OK.

Statistics

WebNode provides its users with a Statistics package that allows one to track visitor numbers and related details. This is a quite a powerful tool. It is available from your WebNode entry page or from the WebNode drop down menu.



I recommend that you add keywords and descriptions to each page that you create in WebNode so that search engines will be more able to easily locate and index your site in their database.

Adding keywords and tags to elements such as lists and news items would also assist in this respect.