



Case Study

This Case Study is published by the [Make WordPress Marketing Team](#).

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The Project — Neighborhood Event

The **LoLa Art Crawl** is an annual neighborhood art event with over 100 artists, dozens of business sponsors, and excellent print graphics—but they had only a small placeholder WordPress site with a few static pages and PDF files of their printed materials for download. The group wanted a better website presence, artists wanted more recognition, and sponsors wanted more exposure; but as a minimally funded volunteer group, they didn't know what to do. Word & Image volunteered to provide pro bono development services as a donation to the local community.

The Challenge — Lack of Capability

Rather than push downloadable print content to the web, we advised the group to create an online experience that would:

- List each artist with a profile page of text and art
- Spotlight sponsors with promotional profiles and featured placements
- Work on mobile devices during the event in the field
- Provide geo mapping to sites on smart phones.
- Provide news updates and social media integration

The artists group had stable funding with a nonprofit fiscal agent and local business sponsors along with enough volunteers to manage the event, but they did not have any capabilities to contribute to a web development project. Without a dedicated organizational staff and budget, how could they add a complex website to accommodate the growing needs of artists, sponsors, and art patrons?

Why WordPress — Open Source To the Rescue

The graphic designer for the print materials considered using a low-cost commercial web vendor, but couldn't find a satisfactory off-the-shelf solution. We knew that WordPress could do much more for them than other solutions, if we were able to locate a theme and plugins that provided the needed functionality with minimal custom development. Even if a premium theme was chosen, the low cost would provide technical support, and the open source licensing would allow the group to continue using the solution without ongoing payments. With its ease of use and fast learning curve, WordPress would allow volunteers to help maintain content without mastering professional skills.

The Obstacle — Bias for Print Media

The group was not savvy with digital web processes, and they just proceeded as if it were another print project. Their registration form allowed artists to pick multiple categories in an unstructured way that was confusing, and in the printed directory artists were organized by arbitrary site numbers, so categories were just part of the descriptions. When we determined that each artist should be placed in a primary category to allow for filtering by category for the sake of the user interface, there were arguments about that. Eventually, the group agreed that categories could be used to organize the artists online, as long as site numbers were also included.

Another problem was getting art image submissions from all the artists for their profile. The graphic designer only used a small amount of artworks for the limited space on the printed materials, and submission of art images was not included in the registration process. We needed to add a follow-up process to the registration system to request that artists provide an image, and we had to optimize an image for every artist, rather than pick a small number of the best submissions to work with.

The Solution — A Robust Plugin/Theme Stack

We surveyed the field of WordPress plugins and themes to find a solution for a robust directory system with a variety of listing types with geo mapping automation for site addresses. We found free plugins that could be combined to provide custom post types with geo mapping, but even with developer documentation, they required a lot of development to create a complete system.

We found an excellent premium theme, Listable by PixelGrade based upon the popular WP Job Manager stack of WordPress plugins. WP Job Manager is a free job listing plugin by Automattic for basic job-board functionality that is complemented by an array of free and premium addons that allow it to be extended in many ways. The Listable theme combines a slick UX with customizable listings and geo mapping. It was easily affordable, and best of all, the developers at PixelGrade provide excellent documentation and support.

WP Job Manager and related plugins were used to automate the loading of listings by using spreadsheets of artist registrations and sponsor information to import listings in batches. Rather than spend time cutting and pasting and retyping all the directory content, a volunteer content manager focused their time on minimal updates and mostly adding value with news posts and social media work.

The Result — LolaArtCrawl.com

While the solution needed some customization for the particular needs of this project, the comprehensive theme/plugin stack provided about 90% of what was needed, including responsive mobile views and interactive mapping for all the artist sites and business sponsors. We met the goals for the project to improve the web outreach with new features that enhanced the event:

- Every artist had a profile with description and an image of their artwork
- Every business sponsor had a profile that rotated through the artist listings for promotion
- Art crawl attendees were able to find and navigate to sites on smart phones
- A volunteer content manager posted news updates on the website with minimal training
- News updates were optimized for social media sharing
- Social media tweets were automatically embedded into the website
- The website can be reused next year by uploading new graphics and listings into the theme

LolaArtCrawl.com

2016 Lola

art crawl

Saturday
SEPTEMBER 17

Sunday
SEPTEMBER 18

10am to 5pm both days

Discover the Arts of Longfellow





Use Category Filters, Search Box, & Map tools to locate Artists. This page is in random order to **Discover** artists. Share & Revisit! Here's [HELP](#) for search & navigation.

Painting ▾

23 Results

Reset Showing all Painting Listings



Ellen Larsen

Nature paintings

Site 41

3528 35th Avenue South
Minneapolis MN 55406



Maris Gilbert

Paintings of shores & waters of our earth

Site 25

3450 Snelling Avenue
Minneapolis MN 55406

