

The Migration from Gallery2 to JoomGallery

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I've finally switched over from Gallery2 to a more deeply Joomla! integrated product: JoomGallery . I had a lot of reasons for doing this and quite a few challenges in the migration process. As of the writing of this, the migration is complete and the site is now fully operational on JoomGallery. Read on for the details.

I originally chose Gallery2 for the vast quantity of skins that are available for it and the fact that a bridge had been developed to allow it to assume a place inside Joomla! Unfortunately, development on the g2bridge has been lagging and some aspects of it were never finished or available. Specifically, there was never any integration with SEF, so the URL rewrite that was happening on the site with OpenSEF wasn't following through on the Photo Album pages. That meant that they weren't getting indexed in any fashion by search engines.

Let me say though, that both Gallery2 and the g2bridge are fantastic pieces of software. They really are very, very slick once you get the hang of them. They probably aren't the best software stack if you're not comfortable with digging into scripting files and CSS, since getting it to the point of integration I had it at took quite a bit of nudging and rewriting and trial and error. But once you have it appropriately tweaked, man it's beautiful to work with.

JoomGallery though, is a straight Joomla! compatible component. They also have a Joomla v1.5 version in the works so that when I switch over (which I will need to do eventually), they'll be ready for me. It's tightly integrated on the backend with the Administration pages and looks pretty good in the front end. It also has a TON of social community aspects (comments, rating, CommunityBuilder support, etc) that I'm not using but have at my disposal for the future. It's also under constant, current development with an active support community.

Migration from one to the other was done, unfortunately, on the live system with everything visible to the world as I moved. I copied files at the command line from the Gallery2 directories over to the FTP Upload directory in JoomGallery and imported them that way. Then I used phpMyAdmin to suck the titles and descriptions out of the Gallery2 database and, with a little help from Excel, matched them up with the copies I placed in JoomGallery. A couple (Ok, nearly 1,000) SQL UPDATE commands later and I had the photo galleries online.

The photos in the Journals

and Tech sections were being fed to the MagicThumb mambot by Gallery2 as well. That meant that I had to go into the database again and change the "image" field values (including captions, alignment,etc) from the Gallery2 files to the joomGallery files as well. phpMyAdmin was absolutely vital for this too. I pulled out the old values, pasted them into Excel, did a "ls -al >text.txt" on the matching photo directories and then used the three of them to rebuild the correct file descriptions. The key was realizing that the file size acts as a sort of fingerprint for the file, so even though they were named differently by Gallery2 on import and by JoomGallery on import, the file size was constant. So I used the database dump to find out which files were used from the Gallery2 photo album and in what order, then compared THAT list with the file list from JoomGallery (by file size). Confused yet? I'm not sure I completely understand it myself, I just found a way that worked and tried not to think about it too much.

Finally, I changed from OpenSEF to sh404SEF , for which JoomGallery has a ready made plugin. The end result is that I know have fully human readable URL's for my photo gallery and a convenient way of uploading and managing the photos, with only a very slight downgrade in terms of look and feel (and that's entirely subjective anyway). There is a JoomGallery module that I have yet to download or play with, but the developers refer to it as the "Swiss Army Knife for JoomGallery" so I'm curious as to what I can use it for.

Over all, I'm very pleased with the outcome and recommend both tools, Gallery2 and JoomGallery, depending on your needs.

