CMS

WordPress – plugins, widgets and themes

Piotr Fulmański

Wydział Matematyki i Informatyki,
Uniwersytet Łódzki, Polska

9 grudnia 2015

Table of contents

What are plugins?

Simply speaking: *plugins are small scripts files with executable PHP code) that allow us to include new functionality in our WordPress site functionality — functionality that is not available or enabled by default.*
We can use WordPress out of the box however, in this case WordPress itself only offers the absolute essential range of features – the ones that are useful to everyone.
At the same time, the platform provides a straightforward way of expanding the abilities of our site by introducing **plugins**.
The idea is simple, if we want our site to be able to handle a specific and new task, we need a plugin for that.

Where to get plugins?

One of the best place to go for WordPress plugins is the official directory at
`https://wordpress.org/plugins/`

Installing a plugin

The steps for installing a plugin are quite simple:

1. Find the plugin.
2. Install and activate it.
3. Configure and/or implement it (if necessary).

There are two ways to get the plugin into our WordPress installation:

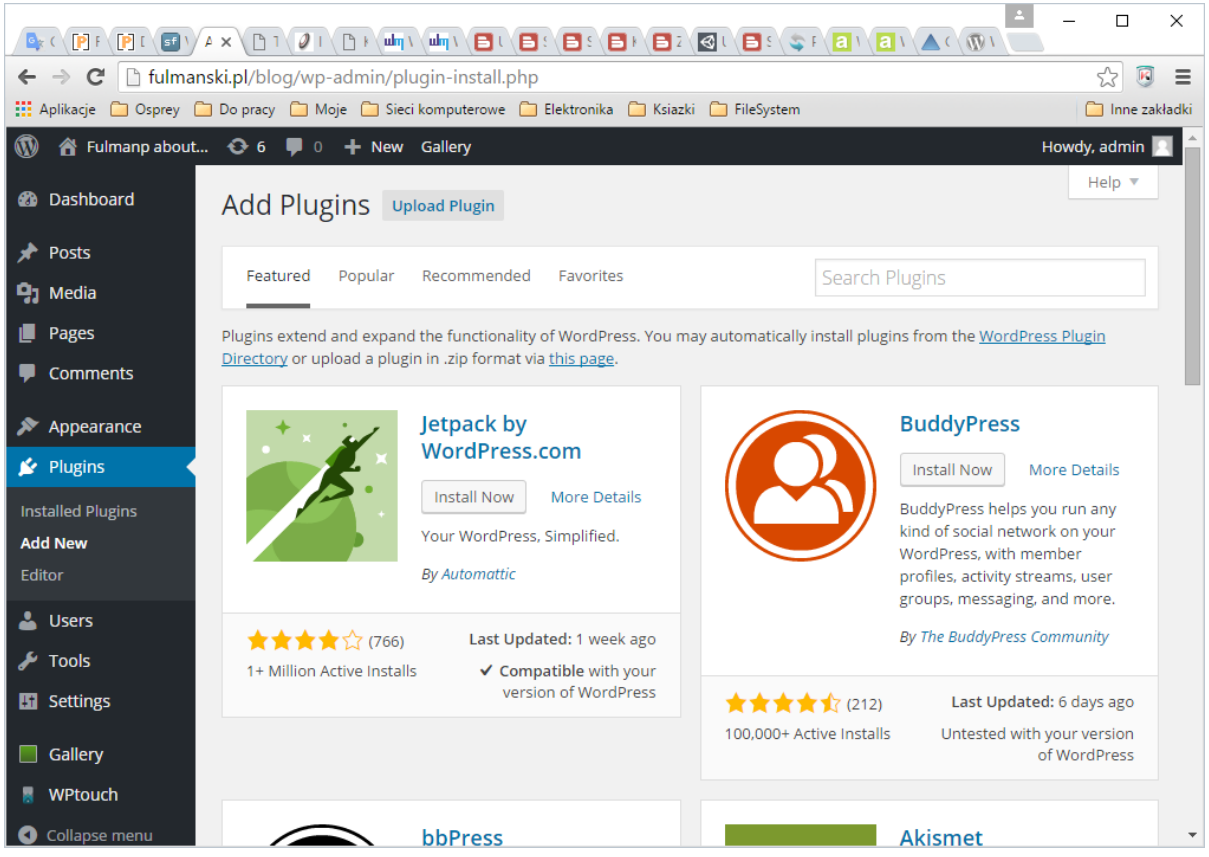
- Autoinstallation from within the WP Admin.
- Install manually.

Autoinstallation is the recommended method of dealing with plugin installation.

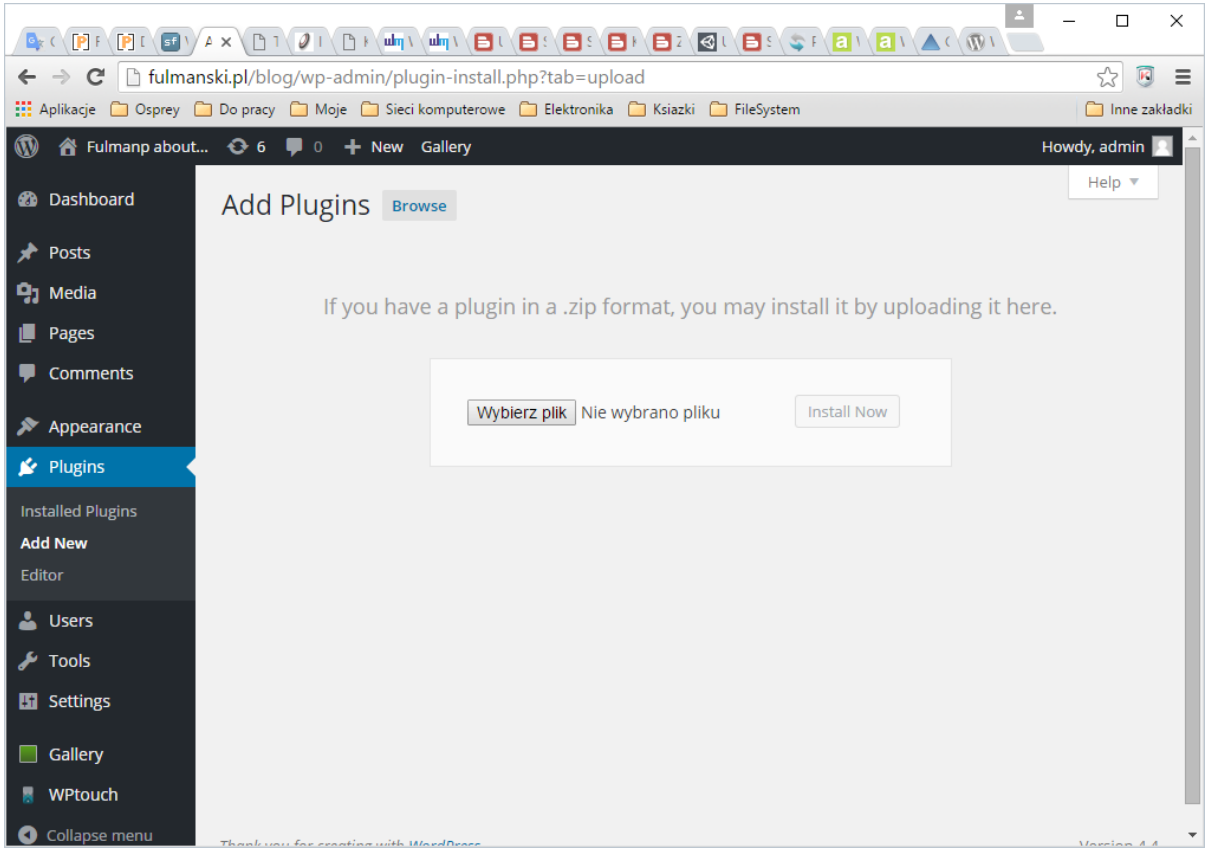
1. Navigate to **Plugins** | **Add New** and search for the plugin you want to install.
2. If everything is fine we can proceed by clicking the **Install Now** button, and we're done installing.
3. The next screen we see will invite us to activate the plugin.
4. Configure the plugin.

To install a plugin manually, you must start by downloading the plugin archive. At this point, if our server is set up correctly, you'll be able to upload the ZIP file directly by navigating to **Plugins** | **Add New**, press **Add new** button and next press **Upload Plugin** button.

Install standalone WordPress version



Install standalone WordPress version



If this automatic uploader doesn't work, we can do this in the following way:

1. First extract the ZIP file we downloaded so that it's a folder.
2. Using your FTP client, upload this folder inside the `wp-content/plugins/` folder of our WordPress installation. You should be able to see some plugins in that folder that WordPress came with and also `hello.php` file.
3. Go to the WP Admin and navigate to **Plugins**. You should see your plagin plugins on this page. Just click on the **Activate** link in the box with your plagin.
4. Configure the plugin.

Some plugins are perfectly operational right after activation while others require some additional tuning up. Here are the three most likely scenarios:

- We may not have to do anything. Some plugins simply change the way WordPress does certain things, and activating them is all we need to do.
- We may have to configure a plugin's details before it begins to work. Some plugins need us to make choices and set new settings.
- There may not be a configuration page, but we may have to add some code to one of our theme's template files.

Widgets

Widgets are one of the native mechanisms in WordPress. Their main purpose is to provide us with an easy-to-use way of customizing the sidebars and footers of our site with the addition of extra content. Even though the most common placement of widgets is indeed the sidebar, the only actual rule is that a widget can be displayed inside a widget area. And a widget area can be anywhere a theme developer wants it to be. Common widgets contain:

- A monthly archive of blog posts
- A clickable list of pages
- A metadata box (containing log in/out links, RSS feed links, and other WordPress links)
- A tag cloud
- A block of text and HTML
- A search box, and so on

These days, most themes are widget-enabled with one or more widget areas available for use. To control the widgets on our new website, navigate to **Appearance | Widgets**

Choosing and installing themes

There are many places to go for WordPress plugins but we can start at `https://wordpress.org/themes/`

Choosing and installing themes

A WordPress theme is actually a collection of files in a folder. There are no special or unusual formats, just a few requirements for those files in the theme folder. The only requirements for a folder to be a valid WordPress theme are as follows:

- It should have a `style.css` file and an `index.php` file.
- The `style.css` file must have the basic theme information in its first five lines

There can be a number of additional files that we'll find in some theme folders. Don't worry if you download a theme and its directory structure looks very different from other themes. Some theme developers decide to go with their own structure in order to provide some extra features and a more customizable environment.

Choosing and installing themes

Again, as for plugins, we'll have the following two choices, as we had when adding new plugins:

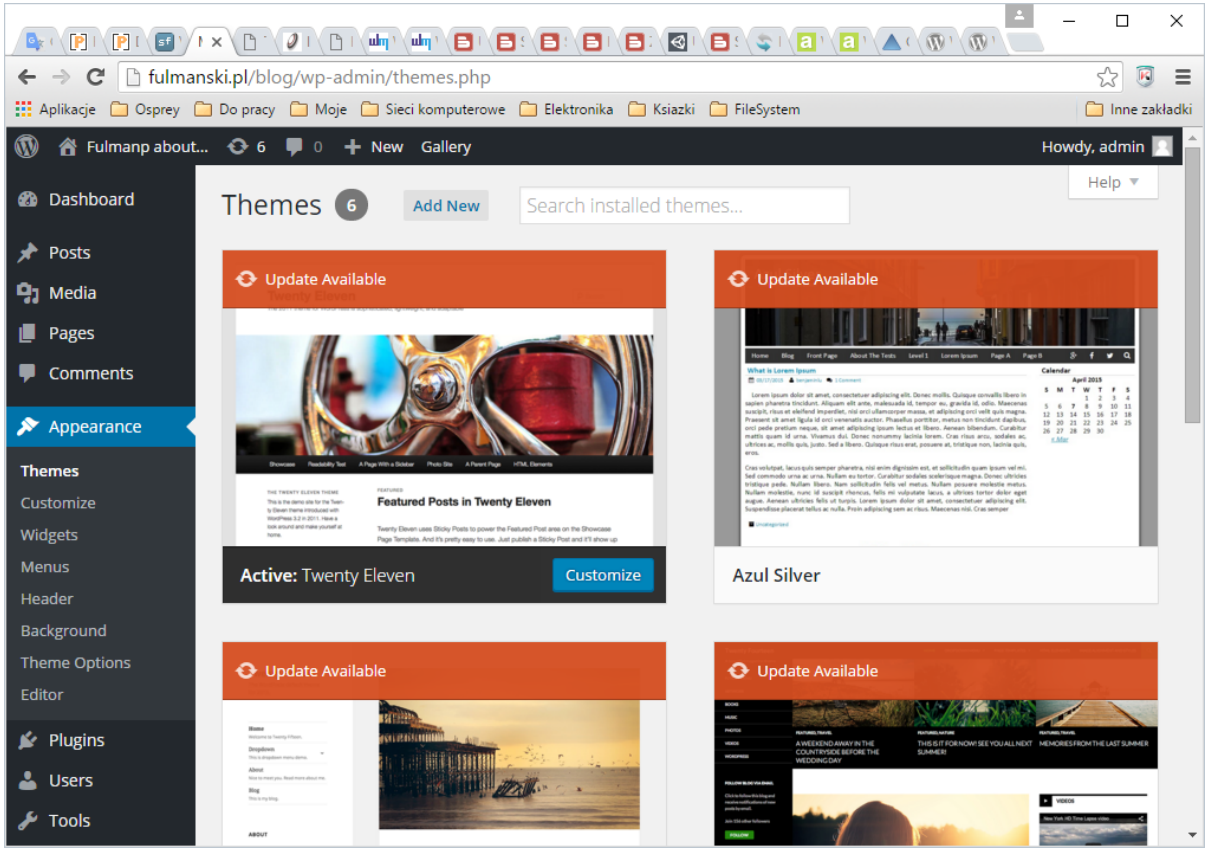
- If the theme we want is in the WordPress theme directory, and if our server is set up properly, we can add the theme directly from within the WP Admin.
- If either of those two conditions are not met, we'll have to download, extract, and then upload the theme by hand.

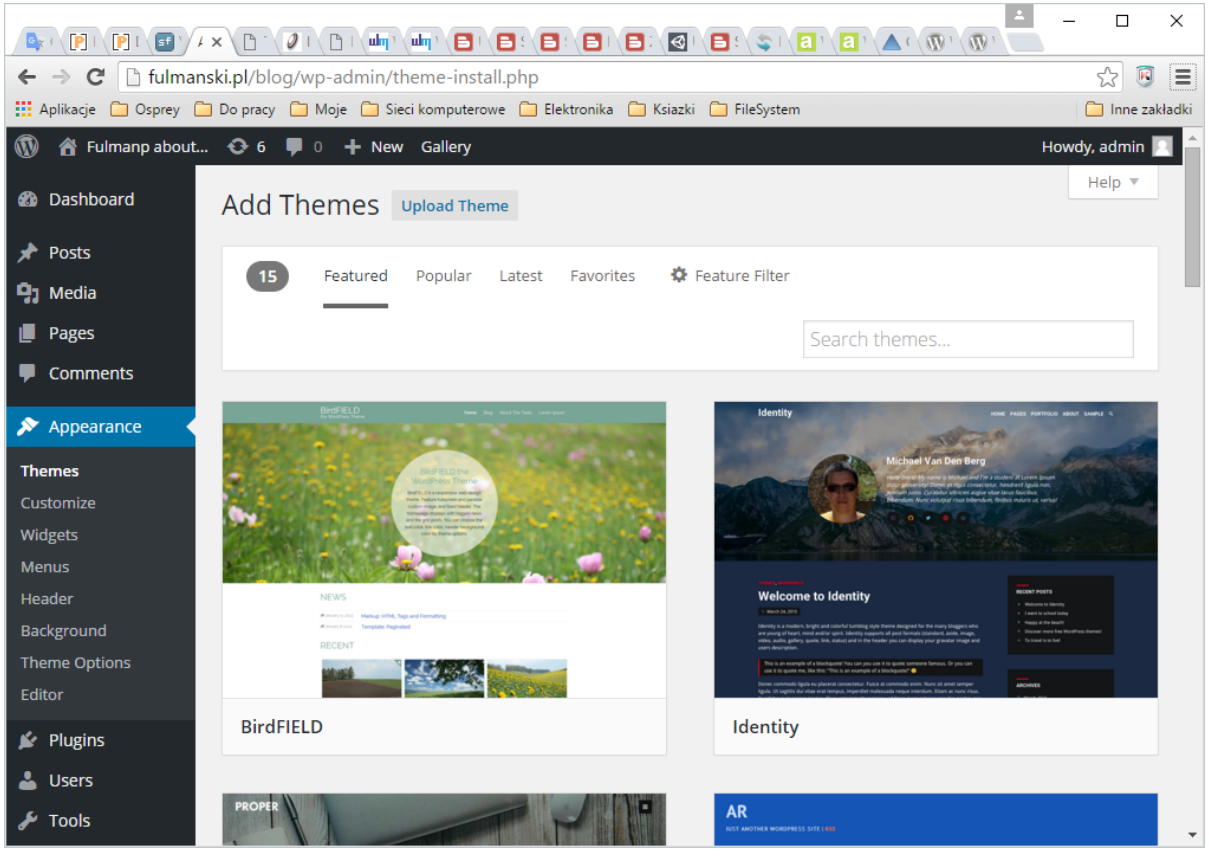
Choosing and installing themes

Adding a theme within the WP Admin

We can add a theme directly from within WP Admin if we've chosen a theme from the WordPress theme directory, if we're using a current-enough version of WordPress, and if our server settings allow.

1. First, navigate to **Appearance**, and then select **Appearance | Themes** and press **Add New** button.
2. Other steps are quite intuitive and similar to plugin installation process.


fulmanski.pl/blog/wp-admin/themes.php
Aplikacje
Osprey
Do pracy
Moje
Sieci komputerowe
Elektronika
Ksiazki
FileSystem
Inne zakładki
Fulmanp about...
6
0
New
Gallery
Howdy, admin
Help
Dashboard
Posts
Media
Pages
Comments
Appearance
Themes
Customize
Widgets
Menus
Header
Background
Theme Options
Editor
Plugins
Users
Tools
Themes 6
Add New
Search installed themes...
Update Available
Featured Posts in Twenty Eleven
Active: Twenty Eleven
Customize
Update Available
Azul Silver
Update Available
Update Available


fulmanski.pl/blog/wp-admin/theme-install.php
Aplikacje
Osprey
Do pracy
Moje
Sieci komputerowe
Elektronika
Ksiazki
FileSystem
Inne zakładki
Fulmanp about...
6
0
New
Gallery
Howdy, admin
Help
Dashboard
Posts
Media
Pages
Comments
Appearance
Themes
Customize
Widgets
Menus
Header
Background
Theme Options
Editor
Plugins
Users
Tools
Add Themes
Upload Theme
15
Featured
Popular
Latest
Favorites
Feature Filter
Search themes...
BirdFIELD
Identity
Michael Van Den Berg
Welcome to Identity
PROPER
AR

Choosing and installing themes

Download, extract, and upload the theme by hand

1. The manual installation procedure starts once we have the theme downloaded to our computer, so let's get the theme's ZIP file.
2. Upload the ZIP file through the WP Admin by navigating to **Appearance** | **Themes**, press **Add new** button and next press **Upload** button.
3. If the previous step doesn't work, continue with the following steps to extract and upload the theme files.
    1. Do the extraction or unzipping manually the downloaded ZIP file so that you have the theme folder on your desktop.
    2. Upload the themes folder to your WordPress website. Go to the `wp-content/themes` folder. You' should see some themes folder in here already – these are the themes that come pre-installed with WordPress.
    3. Now, when you go to **Appearance** in WP Admin, the theme will appear.
    4. You can click on **Live Preview** and **Activate** just as if you'd added it from within the WP Admin

Summary

You should know

- xxx