

Reading Time: 8 minutes

I may not have tidied up too much in my life the past month. In fact, a load of it's still a steaming mess, but to quote a notebook I found last week, one thing at a time, one step at a time. I also like the concept of actually trying to sort things out, rather than just moving things around to make things look pretty and tidy. Our brains just don't work that way.

With my book taking centre stage last month, I decided to actually give this website a bit of love. I adopted this current design back in 2022, however never actually updated the content to suit me and life right now. For example, there was a lot on my Ph.D. (Which I assume is on a hiatus right now as I'm still signed off from work at the university) which is just no-where near what I want to be actually writing about right now (Some will come via this blog as an 'easing back into things' push by moi), and there was a bunch of stuff just lying around, either non converted to this template, out of date, or just not relevant.

So, in the name of giving myself something to do other than weep at US Election results, Indiana Hoosiers not beating Ohio State, or the current state of the UK, I've decided to do a full content review of the shithole that was once this website. Some behind the scenes, some that you can see. Others just me being bored and tinkering.

Visible Content: All Up To Date

The key one is that anything you can see on this site, including the stuff hidden behind the search button is now completely upto date and refreshed. Some of this was easy, as it just required updating the odd sentence, and others more complex as I had to completely re-do things in order to fit in with this current site design.

Case in point: The 'About Me' section. This has been woefully neglected for years, and had me down as having two specialties: Commentary and Academia. I'm most well known for my work at RaceSpot TV as a commentator, though this expanded into a lot of project management roles, especially between 2018 & 2022. That for one needed seperating out. In terms of my academc life, this has taken a medical haitus, but it's worth ensuring that's up to date too, especially as the last thing one needs when ready to get back into things is a cluttered mess, lacking any sense of academic identity.

With this in mind, I've focused on four key areas:

- Commentary & Journalism
- Project Management
- Mental Health Advocacy
- University & Academia

The summary section also required a re-write to be more personal, and *slightly* less sarcastic. Just one of those things that should be updated anyway, like a CV or resume (Which I *really* need to re-do).

Downloaded from Wil-Vincent.co.uk

Content ©Wil Vincent, 2006 - 2025. May only be used for non-commercial uses only.

No responsibility is taken for any omissions, errors or mistakes in this PDF. | 1

The good news is that things are now much more readable across devices, and also can be saved more easily into readable PDFs to takeaway. Perhaps this is the start of the new CV? (I completely disagree about the 2-page rule once you hit about age 25. Yes, ensure the first page is succinct and eye-catching, but the rest needs to be there!)

In terms of blogs, these are mostly a two second job to update. My post about the 2022 Commonwealth Games for example, just needed some headings changed. Others had to have some content removed (Google Fusion Tables, ironically one of my favourite GeoSpatial tools). To be honest, having a quick re-read of some of my drivel has actually helped me come up with some new ideas to focus on research wise, as well as providing some good content to test against AI.

Behind Brown Eyes - Embracing Elementor!

I've always been against using third party block based editors. Especially if you decide to upgrade your website, you end up moving between third party plugins, such as Visual Composer, Slider Revolution, Themify, Divi... Or Elementor!

I'm not ashamed to admit that I use third party themes as the basis for a lot of my work. I did so for 10 years for RaceSpot TV, and with the exception of its first iteration, the same for this site. My issue isn't with themes, but the building block approach they use to generate content. The number of times I've bought a theme, only to find that it either lies outright when putting together features, or requires a complete code-rework just to make it suit your use case has pissed me off no end over the years. Worse still, when you move from one third party theme to another, not only do you likely have to change block builder, you have to do a lot of re-coding, even if you're using the same software. This is in part because of the fact that you only get a 'snapshot' version when getting the theme. To upgrade you pay more than you paid for the theme itself, with limited capabilities in terms of integration. It makes you start asking why you didn't just use Squarespace instead... (Never Wix. I have SOME standards!)

I had the Classic WordPress editor on this site until quite literally yesterday. It was only when updating backend stuff that I decided to cut the tape and move towards WordPress' latest and greatest inbuilt editor. The reason for keeping it old school was more for the HTML editor. Whilst I may be lazy in terms of designing from scratch, I'm certainly a tinkerer, and having this function was just how I worked.

Elementor is by no way perfect, and this is definately not a paid endorsement. Instead, I find it the best of many evils. The WordPress editor is too basic, and has a habit of breaking when incorporating from scratch HTML elements, such as buttons. Elementor, whilst not perfect, provides an easier formatting option. It's way to late in the HTML game to be using tables for aligning things like I did 20 years ago, but Elementor works much better in terms of grids and divs. Making life easier with some HTML5 / CSS functions alongside this means that I can ignore a lot of the 'premium' functions, and use my own knowledge to merge my needs and wants.

The best ways to show this off are my About Me timelines and [book 'buy now' pages](#). I hate clutter, and this Elementor approach eliminates most of this. I still have some CSS work to do across screen sizes, but having both a retina MacBook and external screen with hot-button screen resolution

changes help a lot.

Beneath The Hood: PHP and SQL + Added CDN.

I'm not quite at the point of dumping my current hosting provider, but I got close this past weekend. The main reason for struggling on is because I still host a couple of other websites for people, as well as a couple of test-beds, and that's too much work to deal with at once (It also involves talking to people. Not on my current to-do list). If you want to know why there's an image of Pyongyang as the featured image for this post, it's because I found it whilst trawling through my server, and a site which I used to 'own' which I decided to torpedo as someone never paid me hosting / domain fees. That same person also destroyed my Sim Racing team. I hold grudges. Bite me.

For some reason, my hosting provider is one that doesn't see the need to provide an option to have CPanel / Plesk for site management, instead having everything built in. For a lot of users, I guess this would be OK, however I've been using the above for almost 2 decades now, and a bit like going around Tesco, you know what you know, and buy / use what you buy / use. Because of this, what I would do as routine maintenance fell... Rather far behind what it should have been. For some reason, I expected my hosting provider to do some of the heavy lifting, or at least email me about things, but nope. The only emails I get is asking me to buy something else from them.

This meant that my PHP and MySQL versions were woefully out of date. Not out of date enough that it posed any security risks, but it was on the edge. The site was running PHP 7.4, which is only maintained as a courtesy by my webhost. Updating it to PHP 8.3 was a couple of clicks on my webadmin panel, but then the site died. Reason wasn't an out of date plugin, but an out of date database. See, in all my time using this domain, I'd not updated my SQL database since 201X, and it was running MySQL 5.7, support for which ran out last year. I think this was one which was updated automatically by my webhost, as all other databases on my server were also running MySQL version 5.7, perhaps in a vain attempt to not make me look like a complete nutcase, as had I been responsible for doing it manually, I have a horrible feeling I'd still be on MySQL 5.5 at best.

Thing is, for some reason, there was no easy way to upgrade from MySQL 5 to MySQL 8, especially MySQL 8.4, which would have guaranteed support another 7 years. This may have been because of MySQL's own internal bullshit, or my hosting company just wanting to move everything over to MariaDB. Therefore, the only logical solution was to export DB, create a new MariaDB database, create DB within this, then import. Then piss around with config files, which thankfully is a 2 minute job. A 60 second process elongated to a 30 minute job with some brainpower. And a brutal reminder to check these things more often.

Ironically, it was whilst going through this, parking old domains and the like that I found I had a free cloudflare CDN that could be used for a domain on my server. Many thanks hosting company. Glad I moved that over from an old project!

Conclusion

Look after both your frontends and backends, and keep content up to date. It's easier said than done, but important if you want to keep your content navigatable, relevant, and usable across devices. It

also ensures you trim fat, and keep loading times down, the latter being important in today's 2 second mentality.

Peace & Love, as always