



Lesson #26

# Custom Author Archives

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## Introduction

I love the flexibility of WordPress. Because of the template system, you can drill down and really customize different areas of the site the way you want it. This week's lesson, we are going to learn how to customize the author archives.

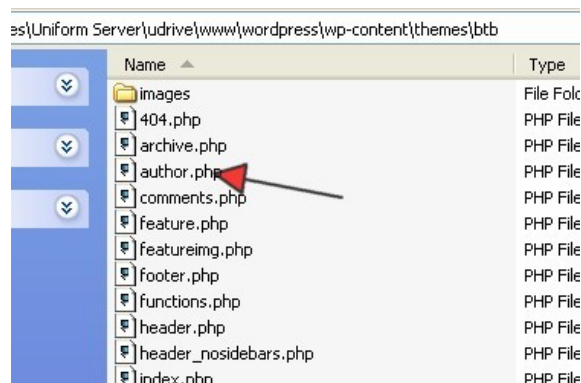
## Author.php

This template is an optional template. A theme can function without an author.php template. But if one is included in a theme, this is the template that will be used to display a list of all an author's post.

On single author blogs, this is probably not very useful, but these days with multiple authors becoming so common and especially when WordPress is being used more like a content management system where many people are responsible for different content. This can come in really handy, plus you can make it unique too. But first let's get to the basics. Let's create the template.

You may want to look back into lessons 34 and 40 where you clone index.php. Rename the cloned file as author.php. Then removing the featured content area.

Your list of files in the theme should now contain author.php .



Keep author.php open in Pspad.

Now, let's see what we need to do here. Visit your Sandbox blog in the browser. Click on an author's name. You should see some links to authors in the sidebar if you've followed the instructions in lesson 24.



After looking at the page, I've decided there should be some continuity here. It is not clear to the reader that they are viewing a list of posts from only one author here. Let's add some text to the top of the posts to tell the reader where they are.

Back to PsPad and author.php. Just before the post loop begins, I am going to enter this:

```
<div id="authorinfo">
    <?php if (have_posts()) : the_post(); ?>
    <div id="authimg">
    </div>
    <div id="authdetails">
    <h2><?php the_author(); ?></h2>
    </div>
    <? endif;
    rewind_posts(); ?>
</div>
```

```
4 <div id="lefttube">
5
6 <div id="authorinfo">
7 <?php if (have_posts()) : the_post(); ?>
8 <div id="authimg">
9 </div>
10 <div id="authdetails">
11 <h2><?php the_author(); ?></h2>
12 </div>
13 <? endif;
14 rewind_posts(); ?>
15 </div>
16
17 <!-- Posts -->
18 <?php if (have_posts()) : ?>
19 <?php while (have_posts()) : the_post(); ?>
```

What I've done is set up a setting for us to insert more than author name, but pictures and additional details as well. You may wonder why I added some PHP code that looked like a separate loop before the posts. That's because you cannot use author tags outside of the loop.

I've also added a few DIV's to contain the author data. This is for design purposes so we can arrange the information nicely. If you refresh your author archive, this is what you should see now.



Now, I want to add the author's picture and their bio as well. I want their picture to be displayed on the left, their name and bio neatly sitting to the right of the picture.

## Author Pictures

Until recently, author pictures are a tricky thing. In some ways it is still tricky. The good news is, you don't have to use a plugin to get author images but on occasion I still use plugins depending on the client's requirements. If your client has authors who are not too tech savvy it's probably best to use a plugin like User Photo and adding the user photo tag here. But you can also use WordPress's built in connection with Gravatar.com.

## What are Gravatars?

A gravatar is a globally recognized avatar. Anyone can go to [Gravatar.com](http://Gravatar.com) to create an account then link a picture or avatar to their email address. Anytime this email address is used on a site that supports Gravatars, the author's image will automatically turn up. That is why when you visit some blogs or web sites, you see some commenters have their pictures up. It's not because they have a special account or anything of that sort it's because the blog theme automatically connects to Gravatar.com, matches the email address to return a picture.

If no matching email address is found, then a generic picture is used. If your client's authors are not Internet savvy, they probably won't have a Gravatar account. So let's see how we can achieve the use of both in our theme.

## Pulling author image with User Photo plugin

I happen to know that the [User Photo plugin](#) uses the following code to pull thumbnail images for authors.

```
<?php userphoto_the_author_thumbnail ?>
```

So we will add the following code into our template in between the authing DIV like this.

```
<?php if  
(function_exists('userphoto_the_author_thumbnail'  
)) { userphoto_the_author_thumbnail(); }?>
```

Can you guess what the above code is telling WordPress to do? Go ahead, think back to the basic PHP lessons. It is saying, if the userphoto\_the\_author\_thumbnail function exists (in other words, if the plugin is installed), then display the thumbnail.

Why do it this way instead of just adding the userphoto tag like the plugin developer recommends? Because if you use this code

```
<?php userphoto_the_author_thumbnail ?>
```

and the plugin is not installed on that site, then the page will fail to display, you get a really ugly error and your client will be calling you in a panic. This way, whether the plugin is installed or not, the page will load without problems.

So, I installed the [User Photo plugin](#) in my Sandbox blog, activated it and uploaded an avatar for one of my authors. When I visit her author archive this is what I see.



What about Gravatars? Here's what you can do. Change the author image tag to this:

```
<?php if  
(function_exists('userphoto_the_author_thumbnail'  
) ) { userphoto_the_author_thumbnail(); } else  
{ echo get_avatar( get_the_author_email(), '80',  
' ' ); } ?>
```

What it is saying is, if User Photo plugin is installed, use the User's photo they uploaded. If not, get avatar from Gravatar. If none, the display nothing. If you want to display your own mystery man image when there is no photo to be found anywhere, then the code should be this.


```
<?php if  
(function_exists('userphoto_the_author_thumbnail'  
) ) { userphoto_the_author_thumbnail(); } else  
{ echo get_avatar( get_the_author_email(), '80',  
'http://clientsblog.com/mysteryman.jpg' ); } ?>
```

The difference is small but you should spot it. It is the URL to your default mysteryman image. You'll have to create and upload this separately.

Great work!

Now, I want to add the author's bio. Back to author.php in PsPad, right under the `the_author();` I will add the following tag.

```
<?php the_author_description(); ?>  
  
<p>Below, you'll find all posts made by <?php  
the_author(); ?></p>
```



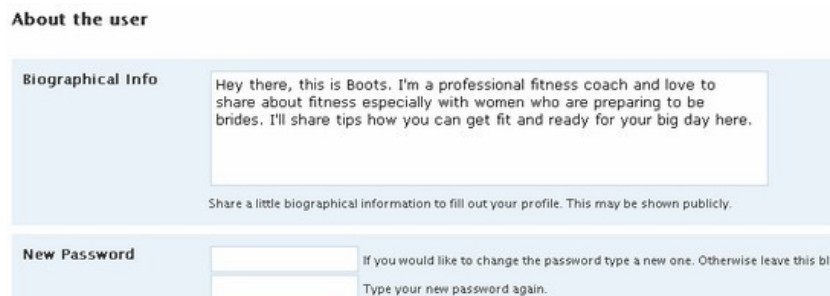
```
9      <?php if (function_exists('userphoto_the_author_thumbnail')) {  
10 userphoto_the_author_thumbnail(); } ?>  
11    </div>  
12    <div id="authdetails">  
13      <h2><?php the_author(); ?></h2>  
14      <?php the_author_description(); ?>  
15      <p>Below, you'll find all posts made by <?php the_author(); ?></p>  
16    </div>  
17    <? endif;  
18    rewind_posts(); ?>  
19  </div>
```

Refresh the author archive in the browser and voila! Her bio appears.





If you want to know where the bio information is pulled from, log in to your Sandbox blog, navigate to Users, Click on the name of the author, scroll down the page you will see a section that says About the user and a big box to input Biographical Info. That's where the author information comes from.



Now, let's format the author pictures, name and bio better. Everything is kinda on top of one another, not exactly what we want. To do this, open up style.css in PsPad.

Scroll to the very bottom of style.css and enter the following code.

```
/* Author Archive */
#authimg {
width: 85px;
```

```
float: left;
}

#authdetails {
margin-left: 90px;
}
```

Now, the picture sits nicely to the left and the name and bio on the right. Looks great.

You can further customize this template. For example, to optimize the site better for search engines, instead of full posts, you may only want to display excerpts. Go back to author.php in PsPad, look for

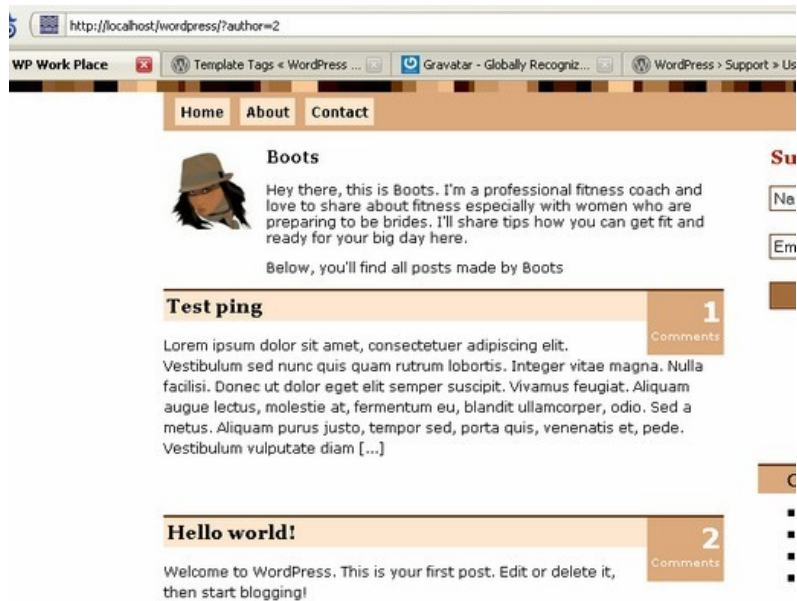
```
<?php the_content(); ?>
```

Switch it out with

```
<?php the_excerpt(); ?>
```

```
29      <h1><a href="<?php the_permalink() ?>"><?php the_title(); ?></a></h1>
30      </div>
31      <?php the_excerpt(); ?>
32      </div>
33      <?php endwhile: ?>
```

Refresh the author archive and you will see something like this



You can even embellish the author information by adding a URL to the author's site. For example, I added the following above the author's bio.

```
<p><?php the_author(); ?>'s Web Site: <a href="<?php the_author_url(); ?>"><?php the_author_url(); ?></a></p>
```

```
11 <div id="authdetails">
12 <h2><?php the_author(); ?></h2>
13 <p><?php the_author(); ?>'s Web Site: <a href="<?php the_author_url(); ?>"><?php the_author_url(); ?></a></p>
14 <?php the_author_description(); ?>
15 <p>Below, you'll find all posts made by <?php the_author(); ?></p>
```

When I refresh the author archive in my browser, it becomes:



Pretty interesting what you can do huh? Play around with the options. You can even remove the excerpts altogether and only display links to their articles if you want. Can you figure out how you'd do that?

As usual, [here](#) is the package for this lesson. This is a working theme that consist of all the work and edits we have done up to this lesson. If you run into problems, download [this package](#), compare it with your own work.

## Next Lesson...

We will continue to add on to our theme by creating custom tags page.

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