

Installing a Reader Comments System on an NOF Website

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Learn how to install and customize an easy-to-use solution, which is compatible with NetObjects Fusion (NOF). No programming experience needed!

Introduction: Looking for Feedback Solutions

After I had completed ten or so articles on my hobby electronics website:

<http://www.tronola.com/index.html> ...I decided that readers really needed an opportunity to ask questions, make suggestions and report their experiences with the various projects. For that, I wanted to add a comment feature at the end of each article. At first I didn't even know that the industry buzzword for that kind of feature is "guestbook," which I am going to abbreviate as **GB**. Since the site is built in a WYSIWYG webpage editor called NetObjects Fusion (**NOF**), I first looked at its built-in features along those lines. Not having experience with the server script code (used to write guestbook software), I really hoped to avoid direct hacking of software. NOF has a GB feature which you can implement with the placement of some objects. However, the help states that you can only have one GB per site. I experimented with a similar NOF feature, called Testimonials, which does allow multiple instances. However, I ran into several issues with that:

- There is no central admin for multiple GB's. Each would have its own admin page.
- Every comment would have to be validated by the admin before appearing.
- Reader comments would be called testimonials in the listing title.
- The timestamp feature was showing the wrong time (43-minutes off).
- Requires that the reader enter first and last names.

Reader Comments

Posted by Steve L. February 23, 2010 - 12:57 pm
Thank you for your comments, Adrian! In addition to the one in the article, I am posting a link to your great page on CDP-101, in the links page on this site. ---Steve
Posted by Adrian Kingston February 23, 2010 - 11:46 am
Well done Steve, great solution to the STK6922 problem! I'll try that project myself to see how it works. I'll give you a link from my page so everyone can see this good work. /Adrian..
Posted by Steve L. February 22, 2010 - 08:20 am
I really appreciate the kind comments, Steve.
Posted by Steve K. February 22, 2010 - 07:36 am
Thanks for the well thought out procedural, Steve L. It makes me confident that even a novice builder (like myself) could tackle these updates without any real issues.
Posted by Steve L. February 20, 2010 - 10:59 pm
Please feel free to add any comments or questions you might have. No sign-up is needed.

Add your comments here...

Name:

Message:

One solution would be to hack the script code to fix most of these. The problem with that though, is that every newly placed GB would have to be individually hacked. Also, if a page were edited and re-uploaded, the hacks would be overwritten. I concluded that NOF's testimonials feature just wasn't what I needed.

I looked at several GB software packages which are available. Few directly support multiple instances of GB's. Some are tied to hosting or are tied to a home server.

My own hosting service, ICDSOFT, offers a GB based-on the patTemplate engine. I opened the documentation page, which is actually an FAQ. No introduction. Sort of like opening a programming textbook at the middle and trying to start from there. Lots and lots of code talk. I ran away screaming :)

Thinking that surely others must have had the need to add reader comment features to multiple articles on their sites, I posted a query on the NOF Forum. Members suggested that I use blogging tools. That

would not be appropriate for me because my site is already built with carefully formatted articles. Redoing those in the blogging editor would not be practical. Also, I doubt whether those would support the rich webpage editing available in NOF. Moreover, blogs are usually singular. I was not optimistic that the tools would support multiple instances.

One thing that I did get out of the NOF Forum is that spambots are a serious problem for GB's. They mentioned that the built-in NOF GB features have been hacked by spambots, in spite of the Captcha tests which those have. So robust spam control became a must-have.

Finding the WCS Solution

Then I found the Website Comments System® (hereafter called “WCS”) at:

http://cellbiol.com/scripts/free_php_guestbook/free_php_guestbook.html You can see the results in the **figure on the previous page**. The things that impress me most about this package are:

- It supports multiple GB instances and manages them from a single admin console.
- There are quite a few links to working user sites listed—apparently happy campers.
- Very responsive support is being provided right there on the example GB on the site.
- Free, but a small donation is asked for the top version (which I used).
- The developer seems open to people customizing the package.
- It seems to be a relatively simple and uncomplicated system. The manual is very short.
- While it is necessary to paste a bit of html into your GB page, it walks you through that and hands you the actual code to copy and paste.
- Has multiple spam rejection features.
- Automatically generates extra pages and nav features as the number of comments grows.
- Has an option to email the admin when a message is posted in the GB.
- Does *not* require you to configure a mySQL database on the server (as some do).

So I decided to try out the package. It worked out-of-the-box as **seen at right**. As you can see though, the initial appearance of the GB was far from its final look shown on the previous page. That test answered some remaining questions:

- Works with NOF without hacking code—just copied the supplied code into a text box.
- It does not require that admin approve posts before they appear (but it's an option).
- It does not require that users register or provide complete names or email addresses, though it does support fields for those entries.

You might question why I want to avoid such things. My theory is that (1) I don't want to incur unnecessary admin effort, (2) requiring the reader to jump through hoops will discourage many from leaving their comments and (3) I need to keep this site as simple as possible. The simpler it is, the less debugging and maintenance I'm going to have. I can use that time to create more content.



That Was the Good News...

Of course, I was under no illusion that WCS would just drop-in and be exactly like I want it. I'm an engineer and although my site is about hobby electronics, I want to give it a fairly staid, plain, dignified and uncomplicated look and feel. The visitors are well-behaved. For my WCS implementation, that means muted colors, sans serif fonts and a minimum number of fields for the reader to fill-in. Though I dearly wanted to minimize interaction with the WCS code, I came up with a list of changes that I considered necessary for my application:

- Remove the "IP logged" message for spam test failure and offer another try.
- Add a heading, announcing the comments.
- Add a heading, announcing the entry form.
- Change the whimsical "I am human" button of the spam test to "Enter".
- Make the fonts the ones I want (mostly sans-serif).
- Remove the email entry field and the related make-private option.
- Make colors gray on gray. Use a mix of white and black lettering (like the WCS demo).
- Remove the ad for WCS. (I resolved to compensate by doing my part to get the word out about WCS—hence this article and postings in forums.)
- Reformat the secondary pages of comments, with a new graphical header, etc.

Modifying the WCS Code

I will now go through how I implemented each of the changes to the WCS system. Don't let all the code on the following pages scare you. Remember that you can do as many or as few of the modifications as you feel comfortable with. The mods are fairly independent. The idea is to introduce you to the places in the code that I used to make changes, so that you can customize those. For example, you might want a blue background for the comment listing instead of the gray that I used. Note that this is applicable to WCS version 1.0, distributed February, 2010.

Bear in mind that I am not associated with the developer of WCS and in fact know very little about PHP code. I do have a general familiarity with HTML and have programmed in various computer languages, including C. However, I approached hacking into WCS with a good deal of healthy fear. The last thing I wanted to do was break something or destabilize the system. Truly, the best policy is to minimize changes and keep them simple.

Also, please realize that the code which I am presenting here is modified from the original WCS system. Do not expect the developer of WCS to support this (though they are very nice about helping people customize the system). If you have any questions about the modifications I am presenting, contact me and I will try to help. (Contact info is at the end of this article.)

How WCS Works

Before getting into the actual changes, let's take a look at how WCS works. When it is operating on your site, it has to be able to do two things:

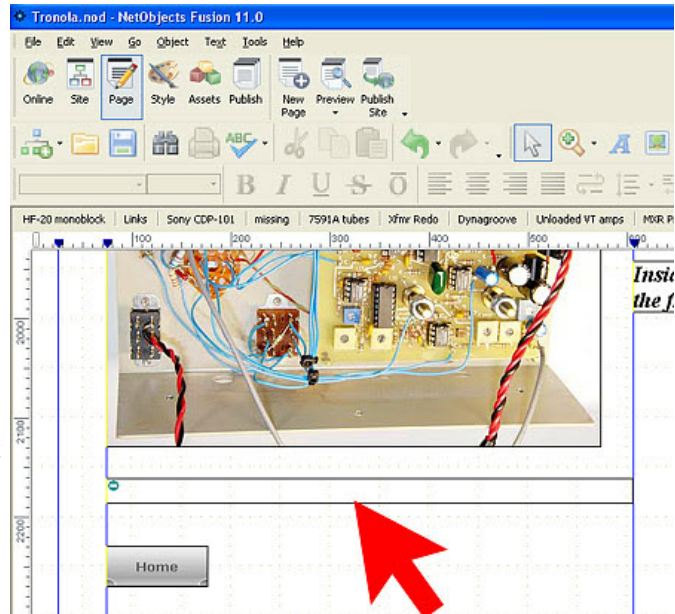
- Present a form on your GB page with which users can enter comments.
- List those comments on your GB page.

In addition, it must give you an admin application which you can use to manage GB's and their contents.

To get started, you copy the WCS files to your site. To setup a new GB, you create a regular html page on your site. I did this with NOF. Then you log into the WCS admin application on your site and enter the URL address of your GB page. It will give you a snippet of code to paste into your GB page. There are two separate parts of the snippet:

- The part which identifies where the comments are to be listed. Call it the **Comment Pointer**.
- The part which implements the comment entry form. Call it the **Entry Form**.

Fortunately, you can put this code into a single text block in NOF and position it on the page where you want the GB, as seen **at right**. To setup more GB's you can copy that text block (treating it like a GB widget) or clone the whole page. You only need to edit one number in the code of the block.



When a reader views the GB page and submits the comment entry form, it runs the WCS PHP script that does all the work:

- Stores the comment in a file.
- Finds the Comment Pointer in your GB page file. It inserts all of the comments there by rewriting the GB page file. It will rewrite the file whenever a comment is added, edited or the GB page's config is changed in the admin console. Note that you have to set the permissions of the GB page file to "666" to allow the rewriting. More on that later.



If you edit the GB page in NOF and publish to the server, the copy of the page with comments inserted will be overwritten. The comments will appear to be gone. You can re-save the configuration (or add or edit a comment) to have WCS rewrite the page, restoring the comments. (See Appendix B.)

Let's assume that the main folder of your website is www. When you copy WCS to the web server, you create a folder for it there which we will call wcs. The system occupies wcs and three subfolders:

- www/wcs - Main program and admin entry webpage.
- www/wcs/gbooks - Initially empty. Holds folders and data for each GB.
- www/wcs/images - Image files used by WCS. We will modify WCS_head_fp.gif.
- www/wcs/include - Program and data files for WCS.

Installation Tips

- You will need an ftp program to copy files to the server and to set their permissions. WinSCP is a good choice. It's free at: <http://winscp.net/eng/index.php> Create a new "session" for your website server. After you login, you will see a screen much like Windows Explorer. To copy files to the server, drag and drop from Windows Explorer to WinSCP. To set permissions, right-click a file in WinSCP and choose properties.

- Before copying the files to the server, I recommend that you first make a wcs folder on your PC, with the subfolders setup just like they should be on the server, including the empty gbooks folder. Then, all modifications to files are done on the local folder, before being copied to the server. That way, you will have an image of what should be on the server. All you have to do to copy it to the server is drag and drop the top folder into your ftp client (like WinSCP), after logging onto the website.
- You will also need to set the permissions of the gbooks and wcs folders. On the ICDSOft server, I had to use the alternate permission value of 755, rather than the primary 777.
- In configuring admin central, do *not* delete the example banned IP addresses.
- You will no-doubt want to setup a test GB page. Follow the instructions in the Guestbook (GB) Manager, pasting-in the code, uploading the page to the server and setting the file's permissions to 666. Next, you enter the GB page url in the GB manager. An easy way to get the GB page url is to browse to the newly uploaded page and copy it from the address bar.
- Next you need to enter the Guestbook Title. I wasn't sure of the significance of this at first. It is the Name which will appear in the listing of GB's in the GB Manager. More importantly, it appears near the top of secondary pages of comments, after the text: "Comments for page:". The title text after that is actually a link back to the GB page, so a visitor can get back easily.

In my case, having the comments at the end of an article page (rather than a dedicated GB page), it would have been inappropriate to include the words "guestbook" or "comments" in the title. It should just name the article. It needs to be fairly short so that it fits in the Name column and in the header on secondary pages. It isn't really limited to 2-3-words, though. As far as the ban on "fancy characters," I do know that dashes are okay. These titles work: "Sony CDP-101 CD Player" and "7591A Tube Comparisons", for example.

Modifications

Next, we will modify some of the WCS files to make the changes listed earlier. All of the files which we will modify are plain text and can be changed with a regular text editor. However, Notepad does not work well for this. If you do not have a text editor, PSPad is a good choice. It is available for free at: <http://www.pspad.com/>. You need not be a programmer to make these changes but I would urge you to be very careful not to make errors or change things which are not covered here, unless you know what you are doing. Be ready to use the editor's Find feature to locate target text.

Please note that these changes are made, assuming operation with pages created by NOF. While they are adaptable to other webpage editors, some of the details of implementation might be different. I will try to mention those as I go along.

Notes: If I use fancy quotes like "blah", do *not* treat them as part of what is to be typed as code. File pathnames will assume the local directory structure recommended on the previous page.

Removing the "IP Logged" Message for Spam Test Failure and Offering Another Try.

When a visitor submits a posting to a GB, they are presented with graphic text which they are supposed to enter into a text box, to show that they are not a spambot. As it is currently shipped, if this test fails or if certain banned text is found in the posting, the message, "IP logged" is

Above, the **Entry Form** is shown in blue, the **Comment Pointer** is in red and an **advertisement for WCS** is shown in green. The **number shown in orange** is the only thing which changes between GB's, when you have multiple GB's hosted on a website. It is the GB ID and starts at one (1) for the first GB and counts up. I have 11-GB's on my site, so the code for the next one, copied above, shows 12.

The GB code for my site is listed below. As mentioned before, I compensate for removing the ad with efforts (like this article and posts on forums) to get the word out about WCS.

```
<p class="Heading-3" style="margin-bottom: 0px;">Reader Comments<br><hr
id="HRRule1" width="100%" align="center" size="2"></p>
<!-- COMMENTS-START -->
<!-- COMMENTS-END -->
<p class="Heading-3" style="margin-bottom: 0px;">Add your comments
here...<br><hr id="HRRule2" width="100%" align="center" size="2"></p>
<span class=ReaderCmnt><FORM name=my_form ENCTYPE=multipart/form-data
METHOD=POST ACTION=http://www.tronola.com/wcs/php_guestbook.php>
<B>Name:</B><BR>
<input text name=name class=ReaderCmnt><BR>
<BR><B>Message:</B><BR>
<textarea name=message rows=6 cols=40 class=ReaderCmnt></textarea><P>
<INPUT TYPE=HIDDEN NAME=task VALUE=postnm>
<INPUT TYPE=HIDDEN NAME=gbid VALUE=11>
<INPUT TYPE=SUBMIT VALUE='Add Comment'></center><P></FORM><P></span>
```

Compare this code with the resulting output shown at the top of page-1. The first two lines of code in **black** are the “Reader Comments” heading and the line (rule) under it. Rather than hard-coding fonts here, I use the class="Heading-3" bit to pull in text styles defined in NOF. That gives me high-level control over the fonts. If you aren't using NOF, you could still use a CSS to do that. If you are using NOF, it's very convenient because NOF already links the site styles to the GB page created in NOF. For reference, Heading-3 is 22px Arial-family, regular.

If you haven't used text styles before in NOF before, select Text|Manage Styles. Select “Site” in the left-hand window. Choose the Create custom style option and make the Style scope Site wide. Enter a name for the style. It would be “Heading-3” to control the Reader Comments title in the GB code above.

After the title comes the Comments Pointer in red, where WCS will insert the listing of reader messages. Notice that I have placed the messages before the Entry Form for my site. This seems more appropriate to me for comments after an article. Readers will want to see what others have written before they leave a comment.

Next in **black** is the heading text for the Entry Form. It is much like the heading for the Reader Comments title.

In **blue**, then we have the Entry Form. Comparing this to the form from the GB Manager on the previous page, you will see that I have left out the fields and labels for the email address, the show-email checkbox and the make message private checkbox. It turns out that, leaving these fields out results in the desired behavior, without having to define them (e.g. the messages aren't private). Of course, if you want to have one or more of these fields, you could add them back, using the original GB Manager code as a guide.

On the first [blue](#) line, notice that class=ReaderCmnt defines the text style at the NOF level, as was done for the headings. For reference, I am using 15px regular Arial-family for ReaderCmnt.

In the second [blue](#) line, you will need to substitute the URL ([shown in orange](#)) which is supplied by your GB Manager, instead of “http://www.tronola.com/wcs/php_guestbook.php” above.

As mentioned on the previous page, the GB ID ([shown in orange](#)), on the second line from the bottom of the code, will need to be changed to the ID which will be assigned by the GB Manager, when you create your GB.

Modifying the Posts Template

In the GB Manager, you can edit the configuration of a GB. In fact, when you create a GB, you are sent to the GB Configuration page automatically. There, at the bottom, you can change the html code which is used to display the individual GB messages, when WCS inserts them into the GB page. That code is called the Posts Template. However, if you are going to create more GB's and want to use a similar messages format, it is better to go to the Central Configuration and change the Posts Template in the section, Default Values for New Guestbooks. Then new GB's will have that code by default.

The original Posts Template which comes with WCS is this:

```
<P><B>$name_lang: </B> $name <BR><B>$email_lang: </B> $email  
<BR><B>$date_lang: </B> $date <BR><B>$message_lang: </B> $message <HR  
width=300 align=left>\n
```

See example output at the bottom of the next page. The words starting with \$ are variables which hold text. The ones ending in “_lang” are text labels which are defined in files according to language. The other variables are filled-in from the database of messages. This results in plain messages with default fonts. It also has the email field which I did not want to use.

The Posts Template which I settled-on is:

```
<p> <table width=100% bgcolor=#888888><tr><td  
width=200><font color=white><span class=ReaderCmnt>Posted by  
<b>$name</b></span></font></td><td width=220><font  
color=white><span class=ReaderCmnt>  
<i>$date</i></span></font></td><td></td></tr></table><table width=100%  
border=0 cellpadding=3 bgcolor=#DDDDDD><tr><td><span  
class=ReaderCmnt>$message</span> </td></tr></table></p>\n
```

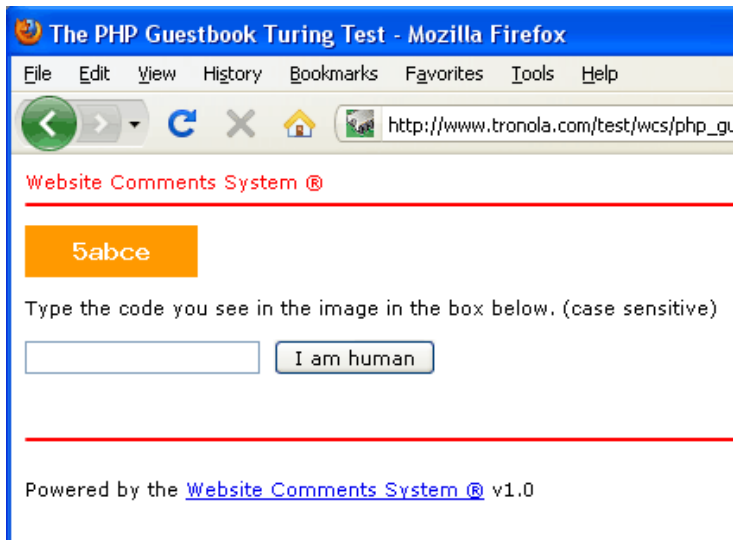
See example output on page-10. This is based-on the Posts Template used in the example GB on the WCS website. It was kindly supplied by the developer. The modifications which I made were to choose different background colors using the bgcolor attribute and to set the font with the ReaderCmnt style, which is defined in NOF, as discussed above.

Instead of using the predefined WCS label variables for the fields, this template eliminates all but one, “Posted by,” which is typed directly into the code. You can change that, of course. If you want to change the background colors, just change the 6-digit codes. Choose the code using a Web color picker, such as this one: <http://www.allcoop.com/tools/Web-Colors/web-colors.php>

To install the new Posts Template:

- Copy it to the clipboard by selecting it on the previous page and pressing Ctrl-C.
- Log into the WCS Admin and select Central Configuration.
- Scroll to the bottom and click in the Posts Template window.
- Press Ctrl-A to select the whole thing and press Delete.
- Press Ctrl-V to paste the new template there.
- Click on the Save Configuration button.

After the changes to the Posts Template and the previous changes to the GB Page code, the comments page will be changed from the format seen on page-2 to that seen on page-1.



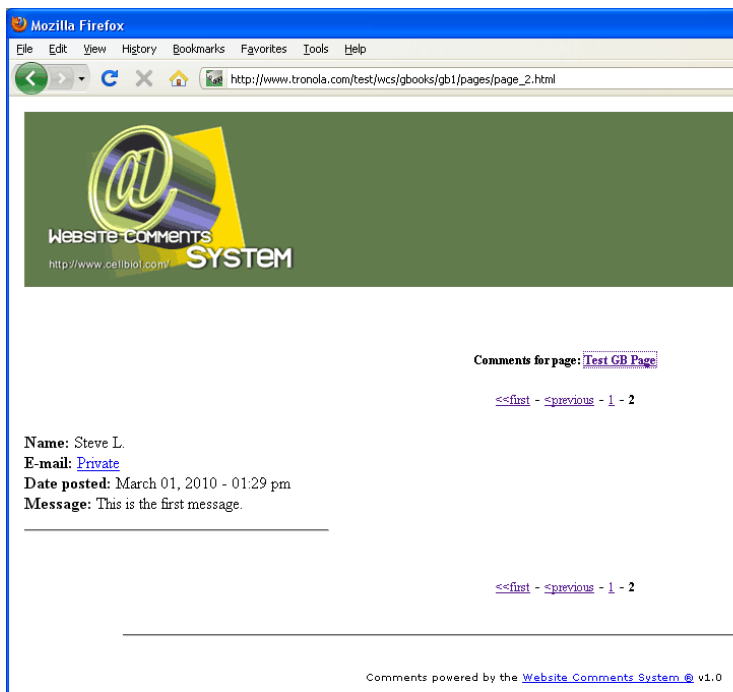
Modifying the Spam Test Page

When a visitor posts a message, the original WCS presents them with the screen seen **at left**. I wanted to change the whimsical “I am human” button label to simply, “Enter”. To fix the button label, search for “human” in wcs\include\html\forms.php and replace the “I am human” text, as desired.

Modifying the Extra Pages

When the number of posts exceeds the number you have configured per page, WCS will create what I call Extra Pages, to list the rest. It also provides navigation links to move among the pages. The changes which I needed to make in the original extra page (shown **at left**) included:

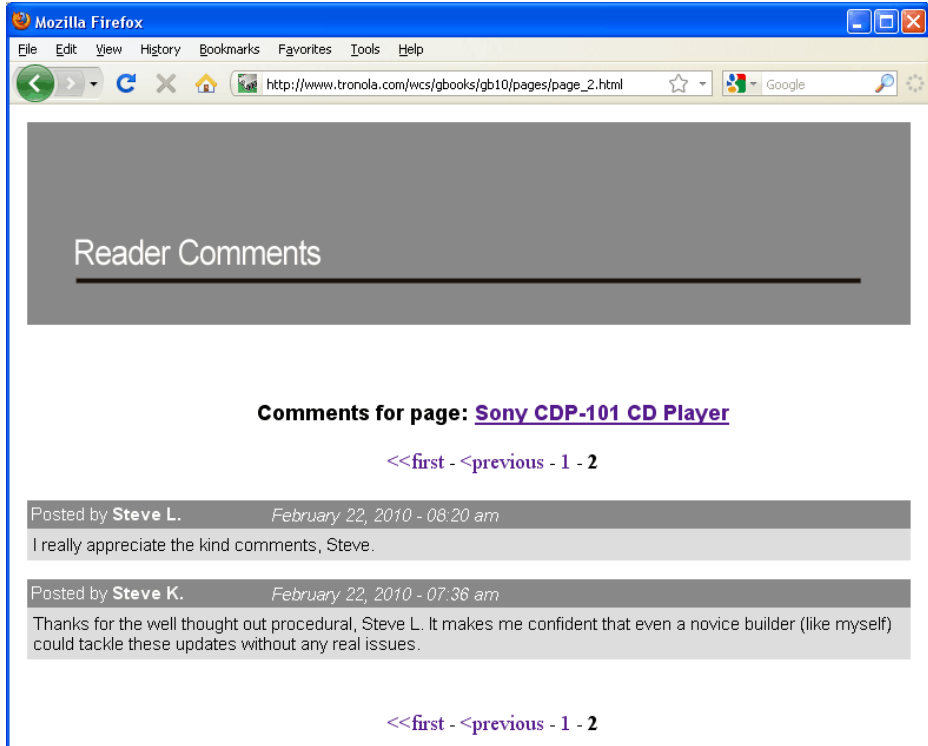
- Replace the header graphic with something less proprietary.
- Make the fonts larger and sans-serif.
- Remove the ad at the bottom.
- (The format of the comment listing has already been fixed above.)



To replace the header graphic, I used PhotoShop to make a new 750 x 172 pixel image file to replace wcs\images\WCS_head_fp.gif. The original was 1024-pixels wide but I wanted it to conform to my standard site page width.

You can see the one I made in the screen **at right**. That is available for download, with this article. If you decide to make one with a different width, you will need to modify the code a little from mine.

The code for the extra page is defined in the configuration that you can change in the WCS admin application. Though it can be set differently for each GB, we will want to change it in the Central configuration page so that new pages default to it.



To make the changes, log into the WCS admin and choose Central configuration. About halfway down, you will see “Default values for new guestbooks.” The first two windows of that section define the header and footer of the extra pages. (The format of the comment listings in the middle is set by the Postings Template, discussed earlier.) The original header code which comes with WCS looks like this:

```
<HTML>
  <HEAD>
    <TITLE="website comments">
    <META HTTP-EQUIV="pragma" CONTENT="no-cache">
    <META HTTP-EQUIV="Expires" CONTENT="Tue, 26-Oct-1965 12:00:00">
    <META HTTP-EQUIV="Expires" CONTENT="NOW">
    <META HTTP-EQUIV="last modified" CONTENT="NOW">
    <style type="text/css">
      .gbnavmenu{font-size:12px;}
      .cpmenu{font-size:12px;font-weight:bold;}
      .cfp_style{font-size:12px;font-weight:bold;}
      a.cfp_link_style{font-size:12px;font-weight:bold;}
      .pwby{font-size:10px;font-family:verdana;}
      a.pwby{font-size:10px;font-family:verdana;}
    </style>
  </HEAD>
  <BODY>
    <CENTER><TABLE WIDTH=1024 CELLPADDING=5>
    <TR><TD>
    <img src=../../images/WCS_head_fp.gif><P>
```

My code for the extra page header is this:

```
<HTML>
<HEAD>
  <TITLE="website comments">
  <META HTTP-EQUIV="pragma" CONTENT="no-cache">
  <META HTTP-EQUIV="Expires" CONTENT="Tue, 26-Oct-1965 12:00:00">
  <META HTTP-EQUIV="Expires" CONTENT="NOW">
  <META HTTP-EQUIV="last modified" CONTENT="NOW">
  <link rel="stylesheet" type="text/css"
    href="http://www.tronola.com/html/site.css" />
  <style type="text/css">
    .cfp_style{font-family:"Arial";font-size:18px;font-weight:bold;}
    a.cfp_link_style{font-family:"Arial";font-size:18px;font-weight:bold;}
  </style>
</HEAD>
<BODY>
<TABLE WIDTH=760 CELLPADDING=5>
<TR><TD>
  <P>
```

The original code defines several text styles, specifying only size and weight for a couple of them. Here is what they control:

- .gnavmenu - Pages numbers, next, last.
- .cpmenu - Page numbers when current page is at an end (bold).
- .cfp_style - “Comments for Page:” title text.
- .cfp_link_style - The page name, which is a link.
- .pwby - Ad text at the bottom.
- a.pwby - Ad text, which is a link.

I decided to link the header code to the NOF site stylesheet, so I can define some styles in NOF. The part that says: “href=“http://www.tronola.com/html/site.css”” will need to be changed in yours, to replace tronola.com with your website. If you aren’t using NOF, you can make this URL point to a stylesheet of your own. The first two styles in the list are defined in NOF as Times New Roman, 18px. The first is bold, the second is normal weight.

I don’t recall why, but I hard-coded the third and fourth styles, as shown. The last two styles are not needed, since the Ad footer is to be deleted. The TABLE WIDTH line should relate to the width of your header graphic. It should be ten more than that width. That allows for the interior padding on each side.

Notice that the TABLE is started in the header, extends over the comment listings inserted by the system, and is finished in the footer. The original footer code is this:

```
</TD></TR></TABLE>
  <CENTER><HR width=80%></center><BR>
  <span class="pwby">Comments powered by the</span> <a class="pwby"
href="http://www.cellbiol.com/scripts/free_php_guestbook/free_php_guestbook.h
tml" target="_blank">Website Comments System ®</A><span class="pwby">
v1.0</span><P>
```

I simply deleted the ad part, so mine became just:
</TD></TR></TABLE>

In a nutshell, here is what you need to do to use the header and footer code, the way I have it:

- Delete the code in the Header window in the WCS Central configuration page.
- Copy my code for the extra page header and paste it in that window.
- In the window, change “tronola.com” to your website.
- In the Footer window, delete everything after the first line.
- Download the WCS_head_fp.gif file and replace the one in wcs\images with it.

One More Nicety

I'll bet you're having so much fun with code that you would really love one more thing :) Well, it's not much but it will make your visitors feel better: When they get back to the GB Page, they're going to look to see if their posting shows up. Chances are, it won't; only because their browser has cached the page and will not refresh it unless they do so manually. To fix that, you can insert the following line in the <head> section of your GB Page code:

```
<META HTTP-EQUIV="Pragma" CONTENT="no-cache">
```

Don't panic, this won't hurt much :) In NOF, bring up your GB page. At the bottom of the window, notice the Design, Code and Preview tabs. Click the Code tab. That shows you the html for the page. For my page, what I see in lines 21-23 is:

```
<!-- [BEGIN Custom3] -->
```

```
<!-- [END Custom3] -->
```

Line-22 is blank. Copy the META line from above and paste it into line-22. [Note that you have to use the right mouse button to paste, since Ctrl-V doesn't work here.] Above it, around line-15, you should see <head>. Around line-43, you should see </head>. That confirms that the line you inserted, is in the <head> section. Of course, if you're not using NOF, just find a way to put the line in your <head> section.

Now, when your visitor gets back to the GB Page, their posting will show up immediately at the top of the postings.

Congratulations! That completes the modifications for the WCS reader comments system. If you do like I do, cloning pages to make new pages, the META line (just discussed) and the text box with the GB Page code will be copied automatically. Don't forget to change the GB ID number in the text box html code, though.

Here is a check list that I use to create a new GB:

- Clone a GB Page or copy a GB textbox into a new NOF page. (To be called the GB Page.)
- Change the GB ID number to the new ID number. (WCS admin shows you the next number.)
- Add `<META HTTP-EQUIV="Pragma" CONTENT="no-cache">` to the GB page `<head>` section in the NOF code tab. (This is already done if you cloned a GB Page that had it.)
- Publish to the server.
- Use your ftp application to grant 666 permissions to the GB Page.
- Bring up the WCS Admin page and select Guestbook Manager.
- Enter the URL of the GB Page and a short title for that page.
- Press Create Guestbook. Change any desired options and save the GB configuration.
- Use the ftp app to sort the list of files in `www/html` by date and check for unexpected updates of GB pages. Any that are changed will need to have their configurations re-saved.*
- Try an initial post, such as “Please feel free to add any comments or questions you might have. No sign-up is needed.”

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank Andrea Cabibbo, the developer of the Website Comments System® for this excellent software tool and for all the great support. In real life, Dr. Cabibbo is a biological researcher in Italy. Clearly, WCS is a labor of love and it is very kind of him to make it available to folks and to help them use it. WCS is available at:

http://cellbiol.com/scripts/free_php_guestbook/free_php_guestbook.html

Contact

If you have questions or problems with the modifications described here, I will try to help. You can contact me at: slafferty@bellsouth.net. Feel free to try out the GB’s at my site:

<http://www.tronola.com/index.html>. I do not have any affiliation with the developer of WCS.

Please do not expect them to support these modifications. Note that, while I personally hope that they will work well for you, this information is provided for educational purposes and is without warranty of any kind.

Appendix A: Alternative Message for Spam or Content Test Failure

This is an extension to the message modification on page-6. Originally, the visitor sees only, “IP Logged,” if they make a mistake in the test which protects against spambots and bad content. On pages 5 and 6, we describe how to replace the original message with, “The code entered was incorrect OR your posting contains disallowed content. Use your back button to retry.”

I became concerned that they might not know what “disallowed content” means and thus would not know how to fix their posting. Visitors might also imagine that they cannot post content which *is* allowed (such as html). The steps described here, make the words “disallowed content”

* Re-publishing the site in NOF might overwrite GB pages on which WCS has written comments. Nothing is lost but the comments won’t show until WCS has a reason to rewrite the page—such as when the configuration is saved or a post is added or edited. (See Appendix B.)

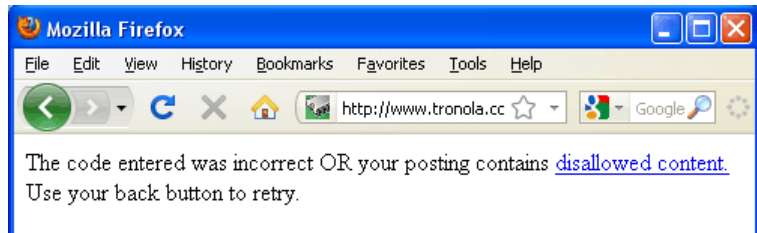
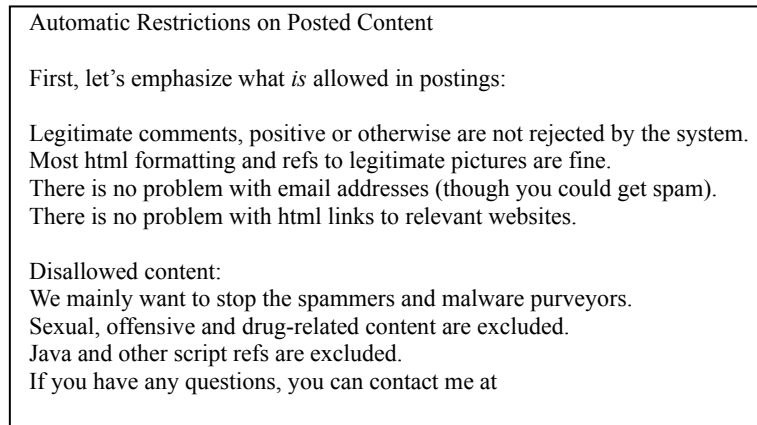
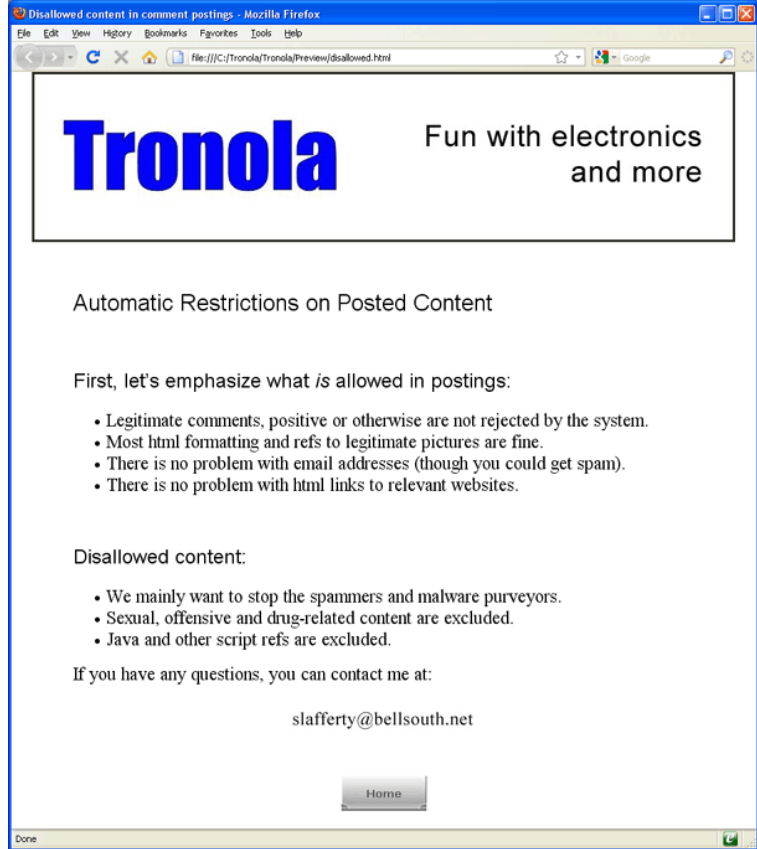
into a link which invokes an explanatory page, when clicked by a visitor.

To use this, you can create the explanatory page in NOF. The page that I use is shown **at right** as a graphic and as **plain text below**, which you can copy if you wish. In the NOF Site view, we make the page name, “disallowed” and check the Exclude from navigation option.

To change the “IP Logged” text and implement the link to the explanatory page, follow the instructions at the top of page-6 except change the substitute text to: “The code entered was incorrect OR your posting contains `disallowed content.` Use your back button to retry.”

Change “tronola.com” to your website. Note that NOF keeps pages in the html subdirectory of www. If you are not using NOF, just make the URL point to your explanatory page.

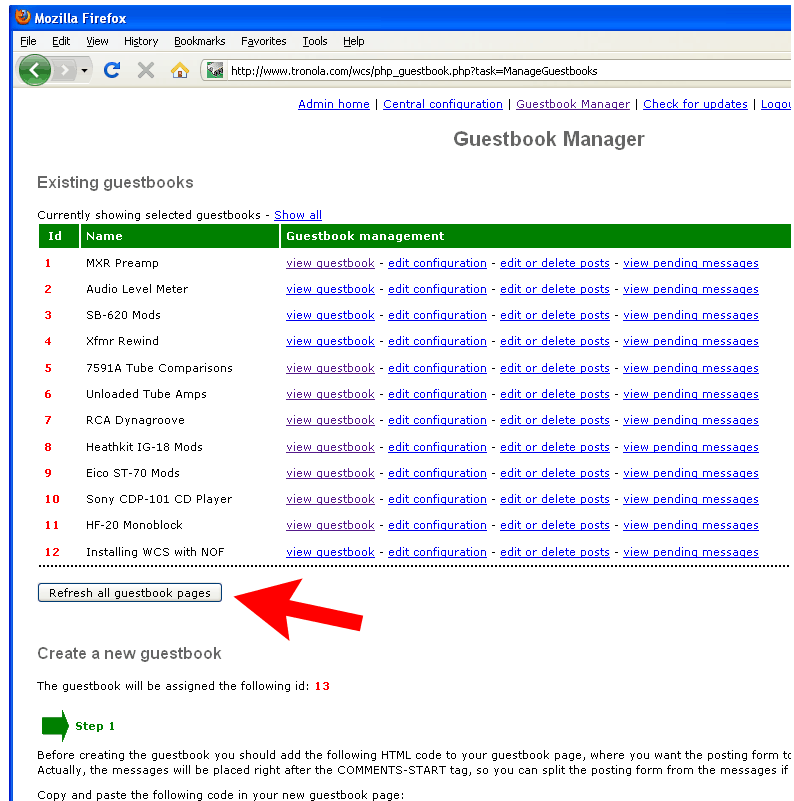
With this modification in place, upon failure of the spam or disallowed content test, your visitor will see the **screen at the bottom of the page**. Clicking on the blue link will bring up the explanatory page.



Appendix B: Adding a Global Refresh Feature

As mentioned previously, if you re-publish a site, NOF might overwrite GB pages on which WCS has written comments. Nothing is lost but the comments won't show until WCS has a reason to rewrite the page, such as when the configuration is saved or a post is added or edited. After re-publishing, I sometimes had to re-save the all of the GB configurations to refresh the pages. Since there are twelve GB's and growing, this was getting to be a bit of a chore.

I decided to add a button to the Guestbook Manager, which refreshes all GB's, **as shown at right**. To add this feature, you only need to insert three snippets of code as shown below.



Existing guestbooks

Currently showing selected guestbooks - [Show all](#)

Id	Name	Guestbook management
1	MXR Preamp	view questbook - edit configuration - edit or delete posts - view pending messages
2	Audio Level Meter	view questbook - edit configuration - edit or delete posts - view pending messages
3	SB-620 Mods	view questbook - edit configuration - edit or delete posts - view pending messages
4	Xfmr Rewind	view questbook - edit configuration - edit or delete posts - view pending messages
5	7591A Tube Comparisons	view questbook - edit configuration - edit or delete posts - view pending messages
6	Unloaded Tube Amps	view questbook - edit configuration - edit or delete posts - view pending messages
7	RCA Dynagroove	view questbook - edit configuration - edit or delete posts - view pending messages
8	Heathkit IG-18 Mods	view questbook - edit configuration - edit or delete posts - view pending messages
9	Eico ST-70 Mods	view questbook - edit configuration - edit or delete posts - view pending messages
10	Sony CDP-101 CD Player	view questbook - edit configuration - edit or delete posts - view pending messages
11	HF-20 Monoblock	view questbook - edit configuration - edit or delete posts - view pending messages
12	Installing WCS with NOF	view questbook - edit configuration - edit or delete posts - view pending messages

[Refresh all guestbook pages](#)

Create a new guestbook

The guestbook will be assigned the following id: **13**

Step 1

Before creating the guestbook you should add the following HTML code to your guestbook page, where you want the posting form to. Actually, the messages will be placed right after the COMMENTS-START tag, so you can split the posting form from the messages if

Copy and paste the following code in your new guestbook page:

Open the file: `www/wcs/php_guestbook.php` in your text editor. Search for the text:

```
else {die ("unrecognised call");}
```

Just above that, insert the following code:

```
#####  
# New task to rewrite all GB pages, added by shl 3/26/10.  
# Other code in classes.php.  
  
elseif ($task=="RefreshGuestbooks")  
{  
    session_start();  
    if ($_SESSION['adm_pass']==$admin_pass OR $posted_pass==$admin_pass){  
        $_SESSION['adm_pass']=$admin_pass;  
        if($_GET['showgbs']){$showgbs=$_GET['showgbs'];}  
        else {$showgbs="selected";}  
        $wcs->RefreshGuestbooks();  
        $wcs->ManageGuestbooks($showgbs);  
    }  
}  
#####
```

Save the file and open the file: www/wcs/include/classes.php in your editor. Search for the text:

```
function ManageGuestbooks($showgbs="selected"){
```

Just above that, insert the following code:

```
##### Added 3/27/10 by sh1
# New fcn added to rewrite all GB pages.
# Other code below and in php_guestbook.php (near end).
function RefreshGuestbooks(){
    $gb_ids=$this->gbids;
    foreach ($gb_ids as $gb_id){
        $gb=new guestbook($gb_id);
        $gb->UpdateHTMLFile();
    }
}
#####
```

Similarly, in the same file, find the text:

```
echo "<P>&nbsp;<BR><h2>Create a new guestbook</h2>";
```

Just above that, insert the following code:

```
#####
# New button added to rewrite all GB pages. 3/26/10 by sh1.
# Other code above and in php_guestbook.php (near end).
echo "<form action='' method=post> <BR>
<input type=hidden name=task value=RefreshGuestbooks>
<input type=submit value=\"Refresh all guestbook pages\">
</form>";
#####
```

Save the file. To test it, first verify that comments are showing on one of your GB pages. Open NOF, make a small change to text on the page and publish it. Verify with the browser that the comments on the GB page are now gone. (You may need to use the browser's reload button to get a fresh copy of the page.) Now, log into the WCS admin page, select Guestbook Manager and click the new "Refresh all guestbook pages" button. (Not much will appear to happen.) Reopen your GB page in the browser and again use the browser's reload button to get a fresh copy of the page. You should now see the restored comments.

Now, after you re-publish, you can simply open the Guestbook Manager, click the new refresh button and be assured that all of your GB's are showing the proper comments.

I have submitted this modification to the WCS developer and they were kindly complimentary. They also made the excellent suggestion that one could use the server crontab feature to call `php_guestbook.php?&task=RefreshGuestbooks` to refresh the GB's automatically, on a regular basis. I am not familiar with crontab yet but would like to try that.