User Guide

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I. WHAT IS GEN LIVE DESK?

GEN Live Desk is a next-generation open source web tool to enable both individuals and teams to report live breaking news from anywhere, working only in a web browser. Fully managed hosting will be available from http://www.globaleditorsnetwork.org/genlivedesk/ in early 2013.

Launched at the 2012 World News Summit, GEN Live Desk is being developed by Sourcefabric for GEN, the Global Editors Network, and is built on Superdesk technology. Source code for Superdesk is available to download from https://github.com/sourcefabric/Superdesk/

With journalists from the BBC, the Guardian, Le Monde, Voralberger Nachrichten and Zeit Online all contributing to its design, GEN Live Desk can justly be said to have been designed by journalists for journalists.

GEN Live Desk is inspired by the best features of existing live-blogging tools. It gives journalists and editors the ability to curate live content coming from their own correspondents together with selected material from external sources including Twitter, Flickr, and Google.

Being web-based, GEN Live Desk can accept contributions from anywhere, creating new opportunities for independent newsrooms to pool their resources together and collaborate to produce rich live blogs. GEN Live Desk is easy to integrate into your website and alongside existing newsroom systems. The intention is to enhance the tools you're already using, rather than replace them.

The availability of GEN Live Desk means that independent news organisations are now able to emulate the live-blogging capabilities of big newsrooms such as the BBC, the Guardian, the New York Times, and Le Figaro, without having to hire a programming team or buy in an expensive proprietary software solution.

Whether you use it to cover a major set-piece such as an election, a breaking news story, a sporting event or anything else, live-blogging with GEN Live Desk will help you drive traffic and sustain reader interest with engaging content. GEN Live Desk can also facilitate organisations looking to increase revenue by means of sponsorship, contextual adverts or paid subscriptions.

GEN and Sourcefabric are keen for as many individuals and organisations as possible to test out GEN Live Desk for themselves, to deploy it in their workflow, and to get involved in shaping its development.

USING GEN LIVE DESK

2. THE LIVE DESK INTERFACE
3. CREATING A LIVE BLOG
4. PUBLISHING YOUR LIVE BLOG
5. CREATING CONTENT AND USING SOURCES
6. USING THE TIMELINE
7. USERS AND CONFIGURATION

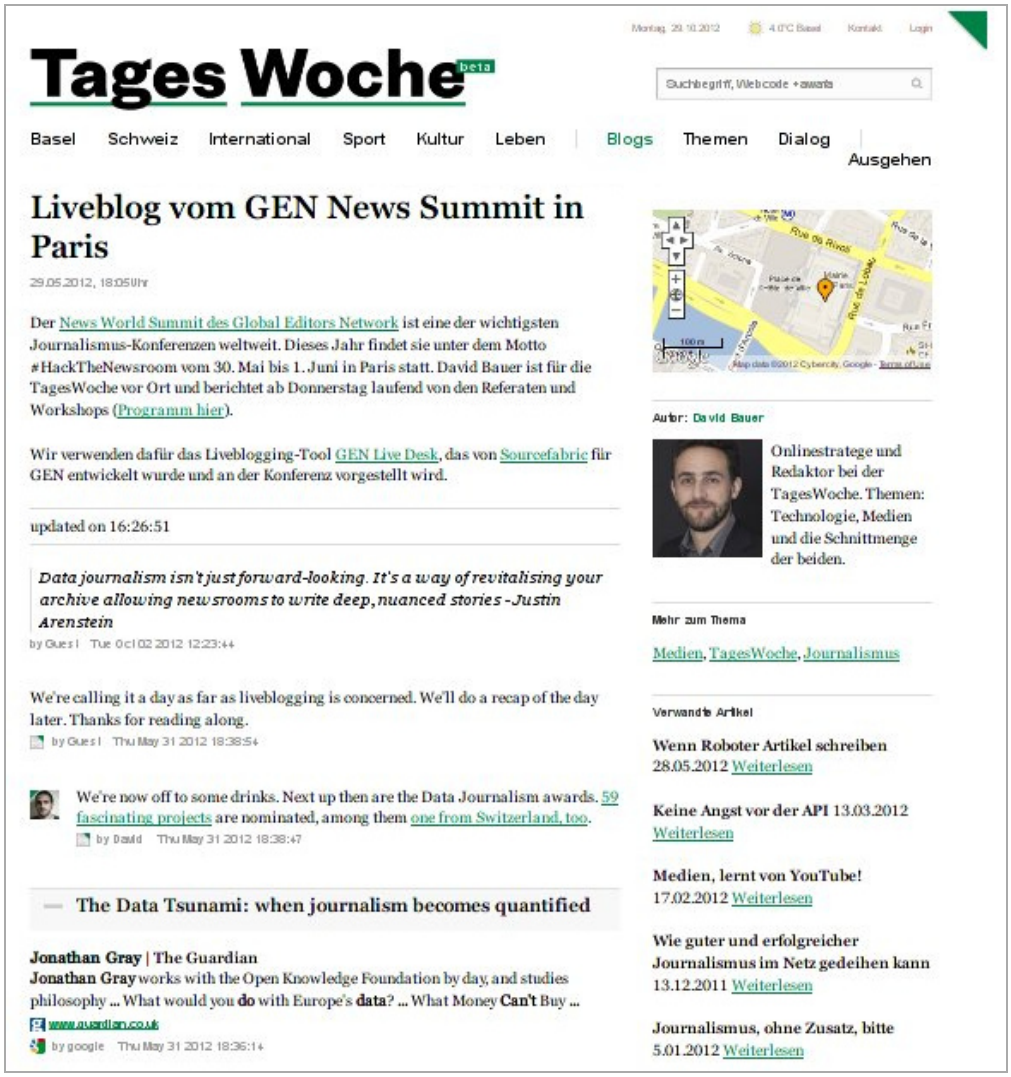
2. THE LIVE DESK INTERFACE

GEN Live Desk presents two different interfaces: one for the reader, and one for the journalist.

WHAT THE READER SEES

The reader sees the results of your live-blogging work as a timeline on your website, with the latest items at the top. New items appear immediately, without needing to refresh the page.

The timeline created by GEN Live Desk can be embedded wherever you choose on your site, and can be styled to fit seamlessly with the rest of your content.



A busy live blog can end up containing a large number of items. This can make it difficult for readers to get an overview of the content without having to do a lot of scrolling. GEN Live Desk allows journalists and editors to 'wrap up' their posts into sections when a natural break occurs. If you are live-blogging from an afternoon of horse racing, for example, you can use wrap-ups to organise the posts you and your colleagues made during each race.

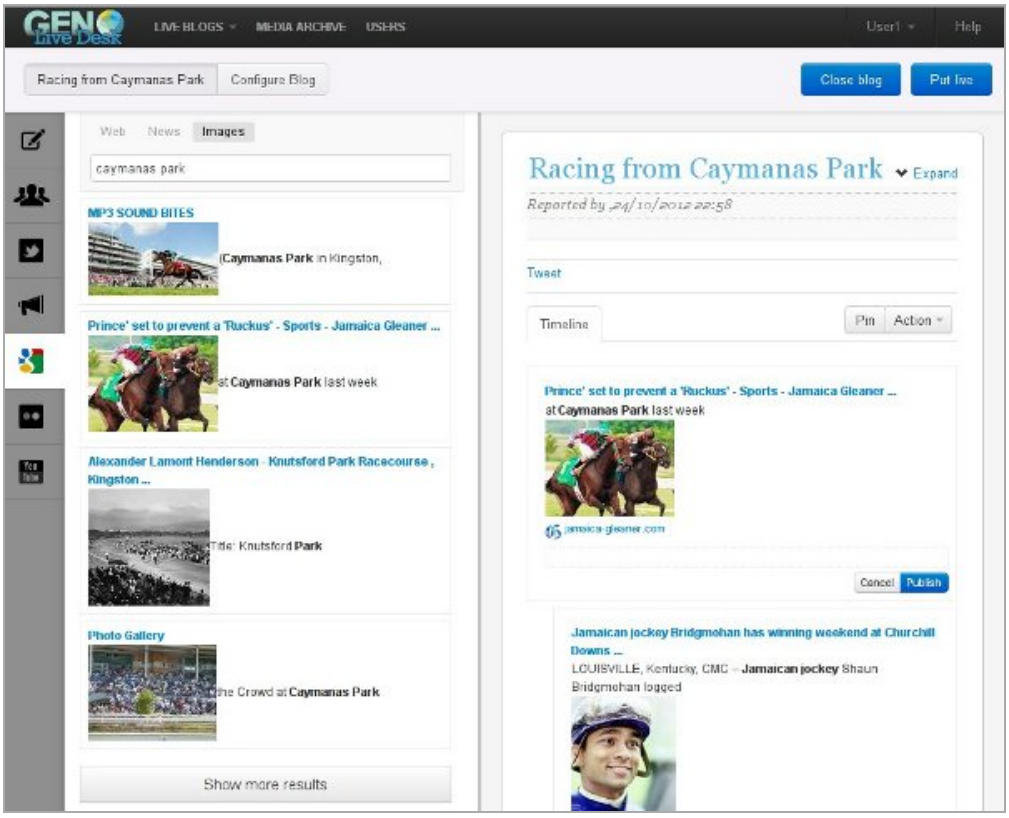
Once clicked, the plus sign turns to a minus, and the items contained within the wrap-up section are displayed.

Find out how to create wrap-up sections in the chapter *Creating content and using sources*.

Another handy feature of GEN Live Desk is that every post in the timeline is formatted as an HTML anchor, meaning that the reader can share and link directly to any post of interest.

WHAT THE JOURNALIST SEES

The journalist's view of GEN Live Desk is a dashboard where content is originated or sourced, and then published into the live stream.



The interface consists of two panes in your web browser window. The left pane organises your content sources, while the right pane contains the live-blog's timeline, into which items are dragged and published.

This timeline is very similar to what the reader sees, but has features for journalists and editors such as the ability to re-order and delete posts, and to add comments to them.

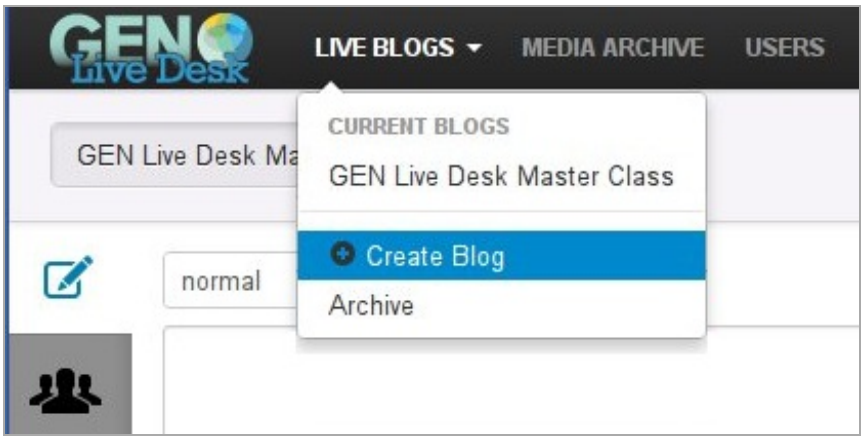
The chapters *Creating content and using sources* and *Using the timeline* detail the publishing process.

Only authorised users can access the journalist's view of GEN Live Desk. User accounts are set up by the system administrator.

Live blogs are much more interesting for readers if they contain a variety of voices rather than a monologue. With GEN Live Desk, many individual contributors can be logged into the journalist's interface simultaneously, adding fresh content and helping to increase the pace of posting.

3. CREATING A LIVE BLOG

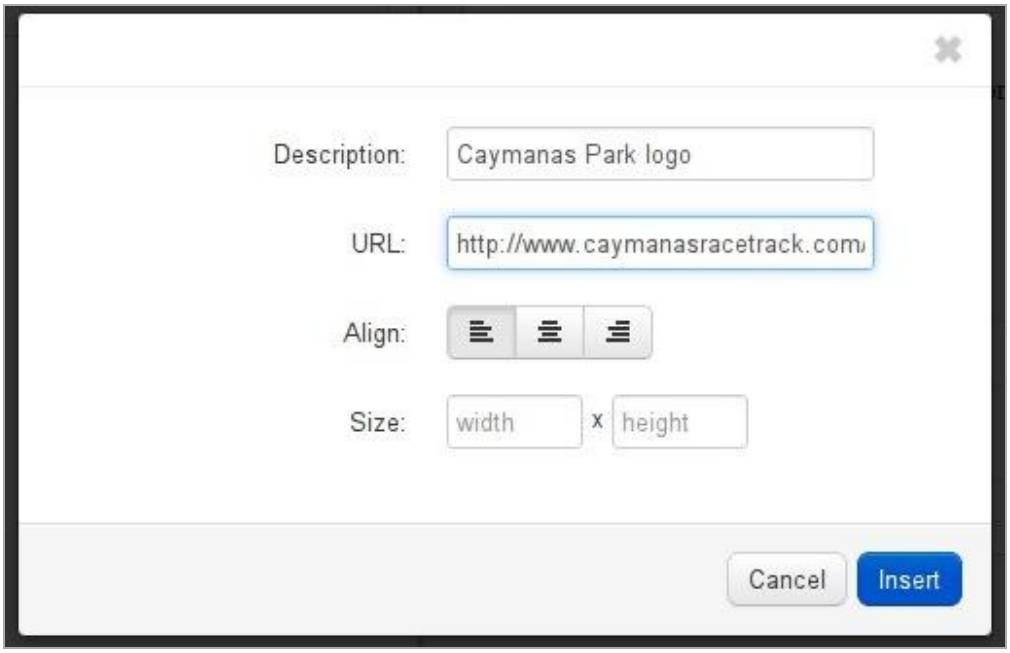
To create a live blog, click on Live Blogs in the menu, and then on Create Blog.



You will be prompted to choose a **Language** and title for your new live blog, and to provide a brief description.

Click the **Save** button, and your new live blog will appear, empty of content and ready for you to start using. If you change your mind about the title or description, you can change these simply by clicking on the relevant text in the right-hand pane and editing it.

You can also at this stage add an image to go along with your live blog's title and description. Click in the space for description text, and a formatting toolbar will appear. Click on the image button, and a dialog box will pop up.

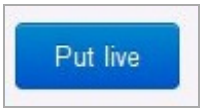


At the moment this dialog won't let you upload an image from your computer. You have to paste the link to an image already available somewhere on the Web into the URL box and press the Insert button.

Tip: To gain a little more space for viewing items in the timeline, you can click on the **Collapse** link to the right of your live blog's title. The description of the live blog will then be hidden until you choose to click on **Expand**.

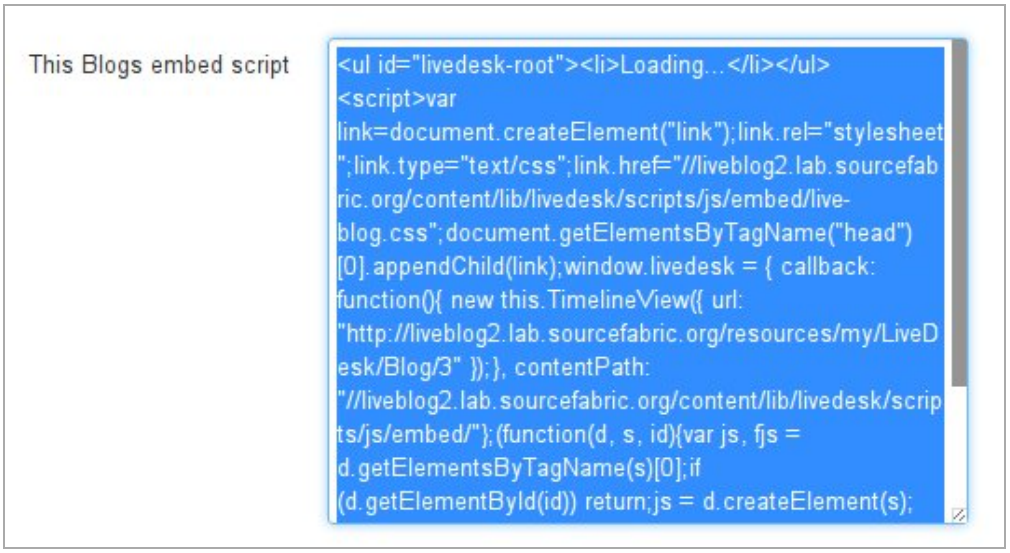
4. PUBLISHING YOUR LIVE BLOG

When you are ready to start blogging, click the blue **Put Live** button in the top-right corner.



If all goes well, this button will turn green and the text will change to **Live**.

Click on the white **Configure Blog** button in the top-left corner. This will take you to your live blog's configuration page. All we are interested in on this page at the moment is the embed script.



Click into the script text box, select all of it, and copy it to your clipboard (with the keyboard shortcuts Control+A, Control+C).

This script can then be embedded in the web page where you want your new live blog to appear. Determining the exact method for embedding scripts into your publication will depend on what content management system or publishing platform you are using. This is a job for your web editor or designer.

5. CREATING CONTENT AND USING SOURCES

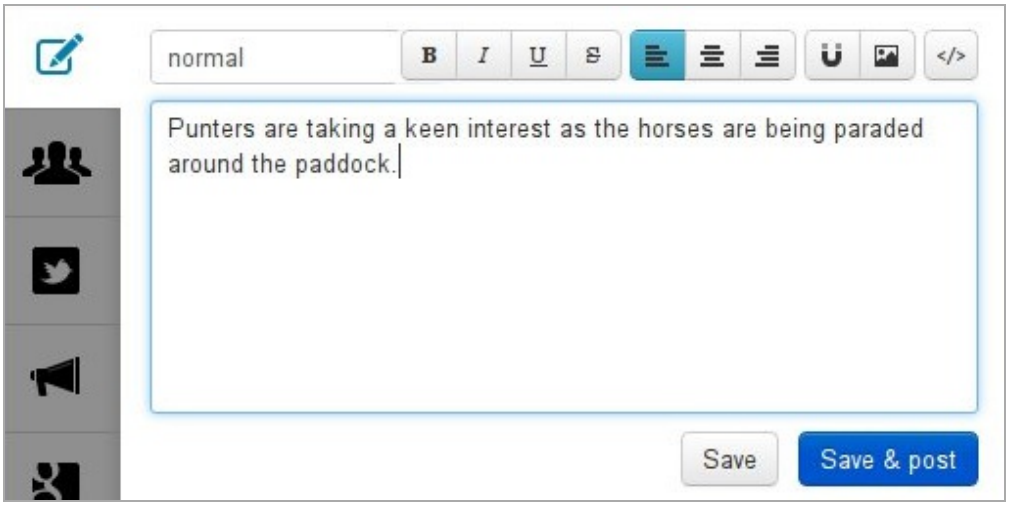
You will notice a number of tabs along the left-hand side of the left pane in GEN Live Desk, each with a different icon.

These tabs allow you to switch between different sources of content. Reading from top to bottom, these content sources are:

- Edit
- Collaborators
- Twitter
- Advertisements
- Google
- Flickr
- YouTube

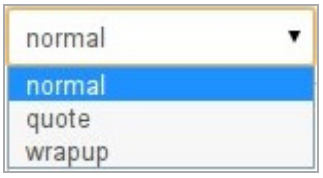
EDIT TAB

This is where you create your own content.



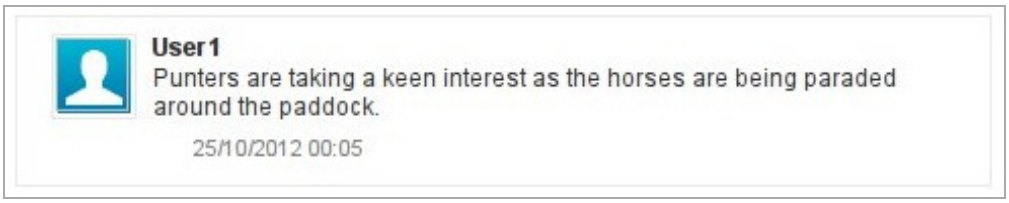
When you click into the text area, you will notice that a formatting bar appears above. You can use this to do basic styling (bold, italic, underline, strikethrough), align your text (left, centre, right), insert a web link, and insert an image. There is also a button you can use to insert your own snippets of HTML code, if you wish.

To the left of the formatting toolbar, and remaining in place permanently, is a drop-down menu containing three options: normal, quote and wrapup.



Normal

This is the default option, for standard text posts. It results in a post that looks like this.



Quote

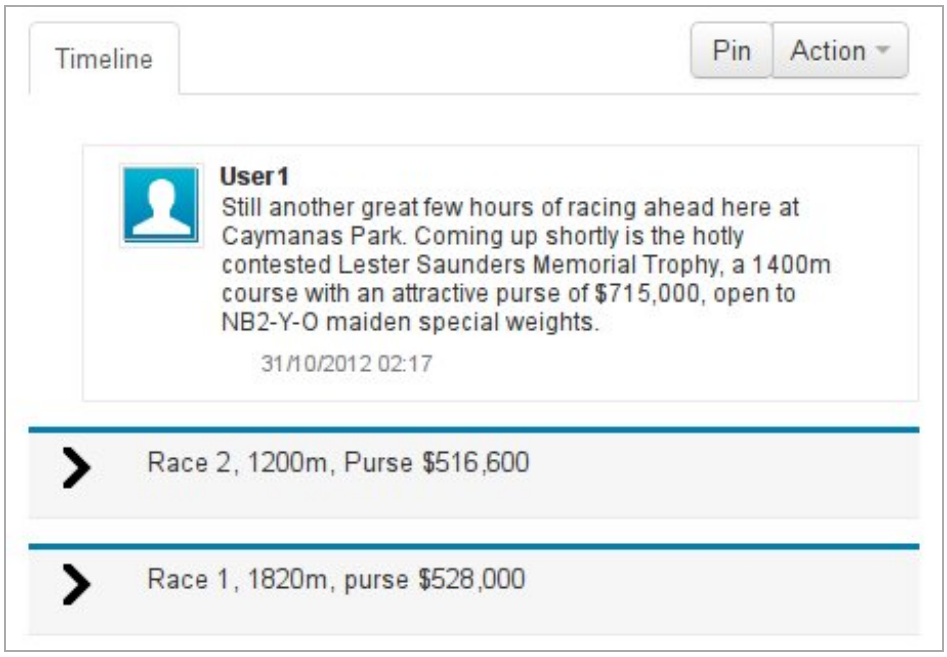
If you select this option, the whole of your text entry will be styled as a quotation.

Wrapup

This is a special option, to be used when a natural break occurs in your live blogging, and you want to 'wrap up' the preceding posts in the timeline into a distinct section. The text you enter will be the name of the wrapup section, so choose something which sums up the section well.

If you were covering an afternoon at Caymanas Park horse-racing course, for example, you might entitle the first wrapup section 'Race 1, 1820m, purse $528,000', and the second wrapup section 'Race 2, 1200m, Purse $516,600'.

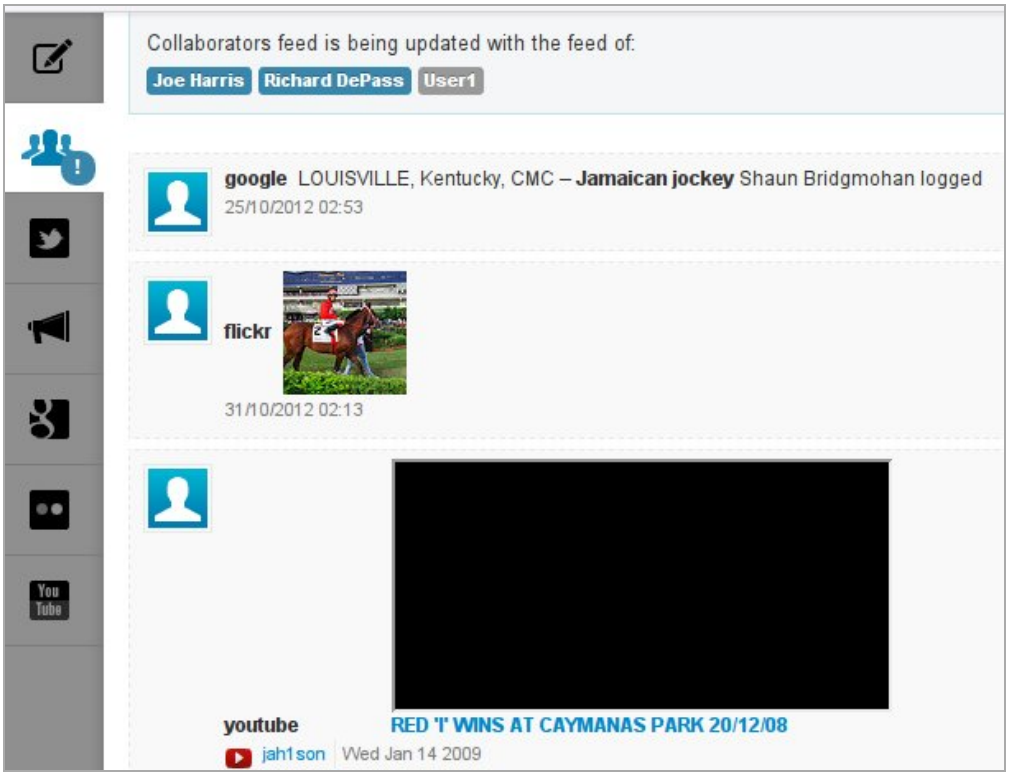
Do choose your text carefully, because currently GEN Live Desk will not let you edit or delete wrapup section headings once you have posted them. When you're ready, click **Save & post**, and the wrapup section will be created.



This is how wrapup sections look in the journalist's timeline. Clicking on the arrowhead will reveal the contents of the wrapup section.

COLLABORATORS TAB

Collaborators are the other journalists who are working with you on the live blog. When you select the collaborators tab, you will see a row of usernames in blue buttons, and below them a timeline of content items that has been created by those users.



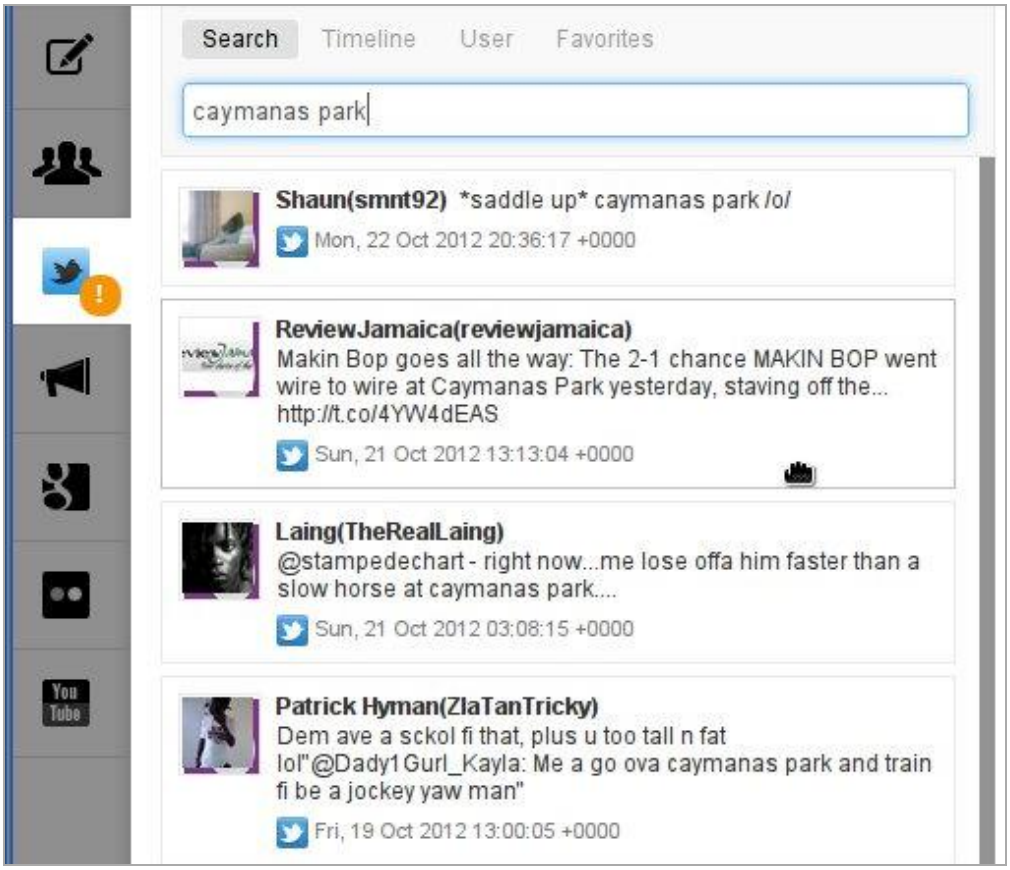
If you wish, you can filter out content from one or more of your collaborators. When you click on a username button, it will change to a grey colour and you will no longer see content from that user until you click on their button again. In the above screenshot, User1 has been filtered out, so we won't see any content from him or her.

The collaborators tab has a notification feature which can alert you to events occurring within the collaborators tab, even when you have navigated away from it and are working in another content tab. Notifications are turned off by default. To turn on notifications, click on the circled exclamation mark on the collaborators tab icon. The circle will turn orange indicating that GEN Live Desk will alert you to changes happening within this tab. Clicking again on the circled exclamation mark will turn off notifications.

TWITTER TAB

The next tab down lets you search Twitter for relevant items. This means you can incorporate different voices into your timeline, as well as encouraging your readers to signal their participation in your live blog by using a hashtag of your suggestion.

Like the timeline of Twitter's website, GEN Live Desk's Twitter search function will show a limited number of results to begin with. Scroll down to review these, and if you wish to see more, click on the **See More Results** button at the end.



Like the collaborators tab, the Twitter tab has a notification facility. Turn notifications on by clicking on the circled exclamation mark on the Twitter tab icon. It will go orange to show that notifications are enabled. When you are working in, for example, the Edit tab, and another tweet is found that matches your existing search keywords, GEN Live Desk will alert you that there is new content.

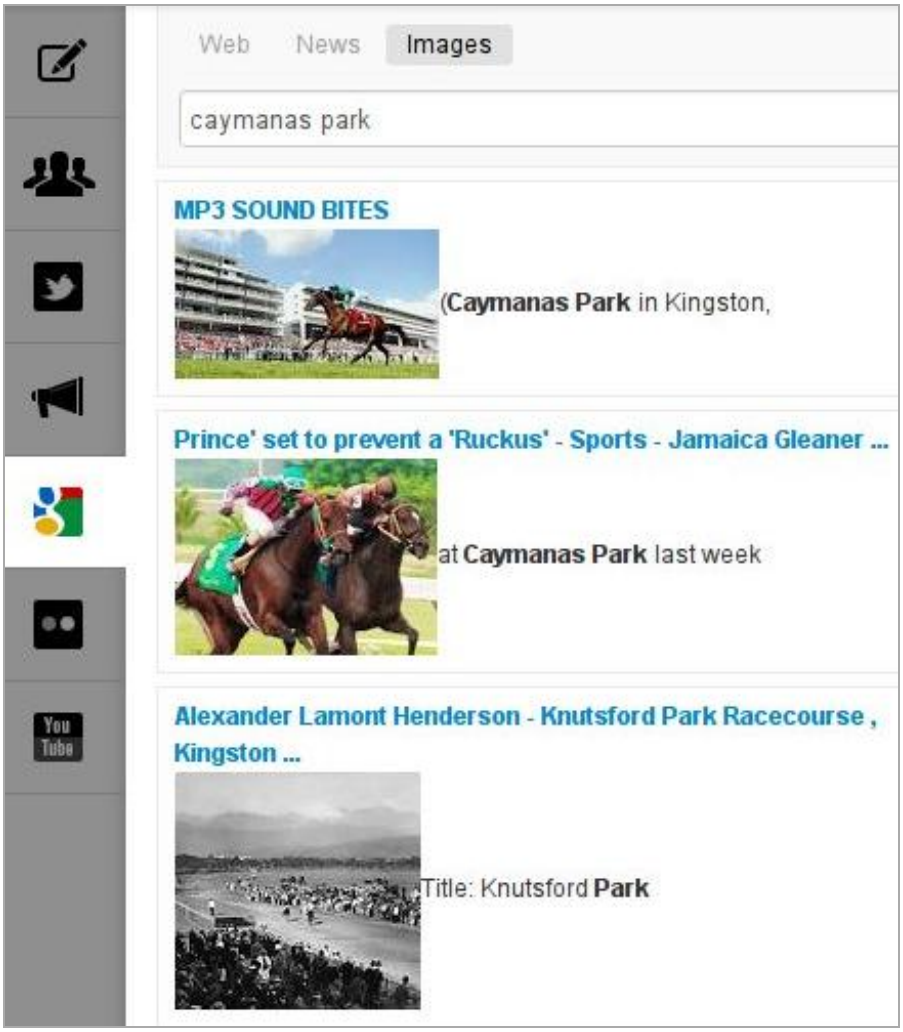
The Timeline, User and Favorites links are currently non-functional placeholders. Look out for these being enabled as development on GEN Live Desk advances.

ADVERTISEMENTS TAB

The functionality of this tab has not been enabled yet. The advertisements tab will allow you to organise advertisements and place them into your timeline.

GOOGLE TAB

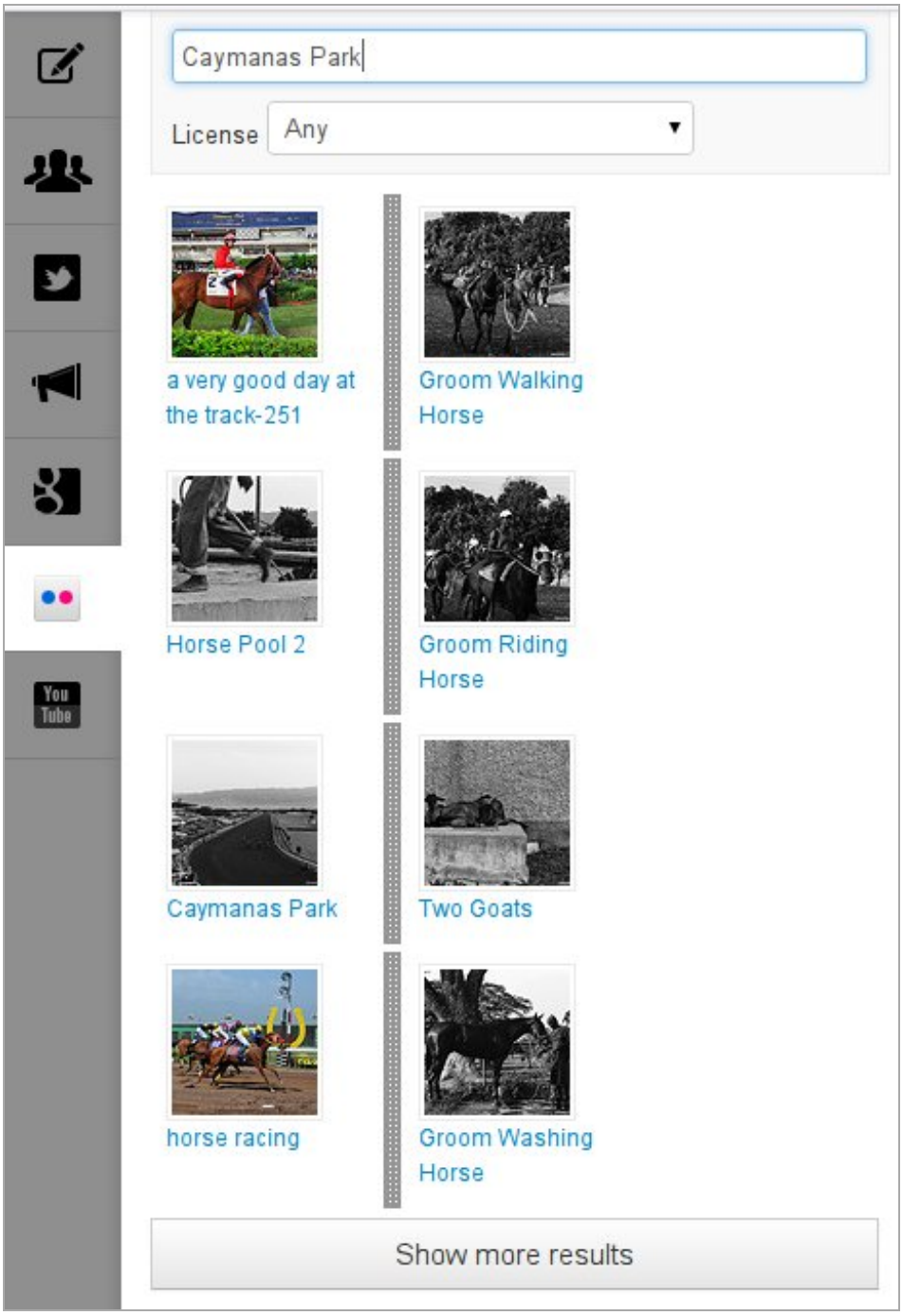
This tab allows you to search for relevant external content conveniently within the GEN Live Desk interface.



Just like in the familiar Google search interface, you can switch between results from **Web**, **News** and **Images**, by clicking the links above the search field. As with the Twitter search tab, a limited number of results are shown, but you can request more by clicking the **Show More Results** button at the end of the page.

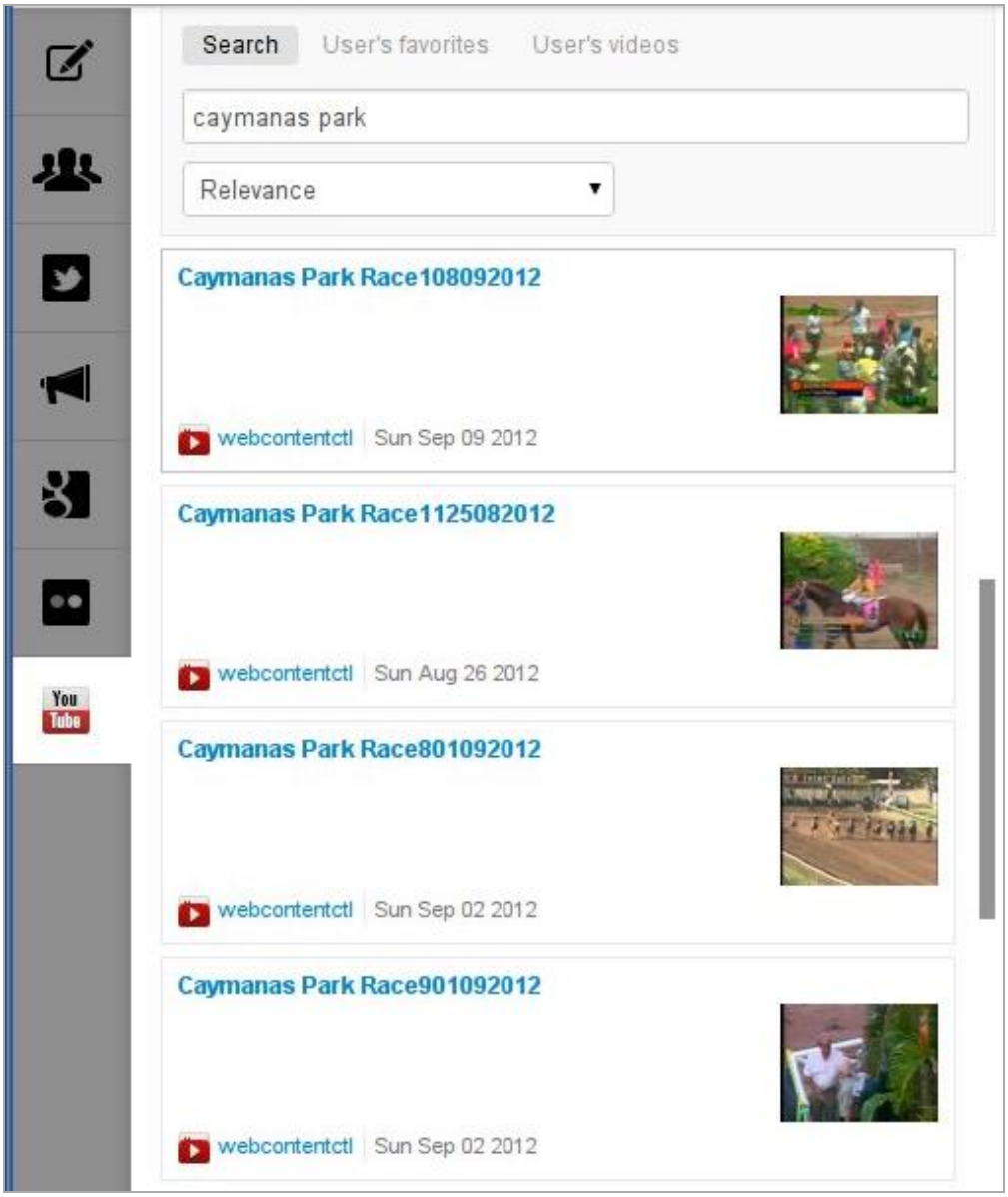
FLICKR TAB

Search here for images hosted on the world's most popular image sharing service. A drop-down menu enables you to filter your search results by copyright licence (e.g. Any, or Attribution-Sharealike).



YOUTUBE TAB

Last but not least is the YouTube search tab. This features a straight keyword search, as well as search by user's favourites and user's videos. There is also a drop-down menu which permits you to order search results by relevance, date published, number of views, and rating.


Search
User's favorites
User's videos
caymanas park
Relevance
Caymanas Park Race108092012
webcontentctl
Sun Sep 09 2012
Caymanas Park Race1125082012
webcontentctl
Sun Aug 26 2012
Caymanas Park Race801092012
webcontentctl
Sun Sep 02 2012
Caymanas Park Race901092012
webcontentctl
Sun Sep 02 2012

6. USING THE TIMELINE

The timeline, in the right-hand pane of the journalist's view of GEN Live Desk, is where live blog content is published. In a nutshell, to publish an item you just click on it in the left-hand pane, drag it over to the right-hand pane, and drop it into position in the timeline. But there are a few extra details that are worth knowing.

PUBLISHING AND RE-ORDERING ITEMS

When you're writing a post in the Edit tab, the buttons below the text box offer you the choice to **Save** or **Save & post**.

If you choose **Save & post**, your item will be inserted at the top of the timeline on the right, and will be immediately visible to readers on your website. A copy of your item will also appear at the top of the list of items in the Edit tab.

If you choose **Save** only, as you might do if you are preparing an item for later insertion, it will appear in the list of items in the Edit tab, but not in the timeline.

When you move your pointer over an unpublished item in the left pane, a grab bar will appear on its left side, indicating that you can move it.

When you're ready to publish your item, go ahead and drag it over to the timeline. It will be immediately published to the live blog, at the top of the timeline.

Once posts have been published, you can drag them up and down to change their position in the timeline.

PUBLISHING ITEMS FROM EXTERNAL SOURCES

When you drag items originating from external sources, i.e. from the Twitter, Google, Flickr and YouTube search tabs, into the timeline, they are not immediately published. You get the chance to check them over one more time. When you are sure you want them to appear in your live blog, click the blue **Publish** button. Alternatively, if you've had second thoughts about posting that dubious hot tip, click the **Cancel** button.

EDITING PUBLISHED ITEMS

You can make corrections and additions to your posts even after they have been published in the timeline. Simply click into the text of the post, and it will become editable.

DELETING ITEMS

To delete a item which has been posted to the timeline, move your pointer over it and an 'X' will appear in the top-right corner. Click that X, and your post will disappear from the timeline. Be aware that if the item was a post written in the Edit tab, it will also disappear from the list of items in the Edit tab on the left pane.

PINNING

If content is being added to the timeline quickly by your fellow contributors, but you want some extra time to read a post before it gets buried under an avalanche of new items, you can click the **Pin** button at the top of the timeline. This will 'pin' the timeline as it was at that moment, with no new posts visible until you click the button again to 'unpin' it.

FILTERING YOUR VIEW OF THE TIMELINE

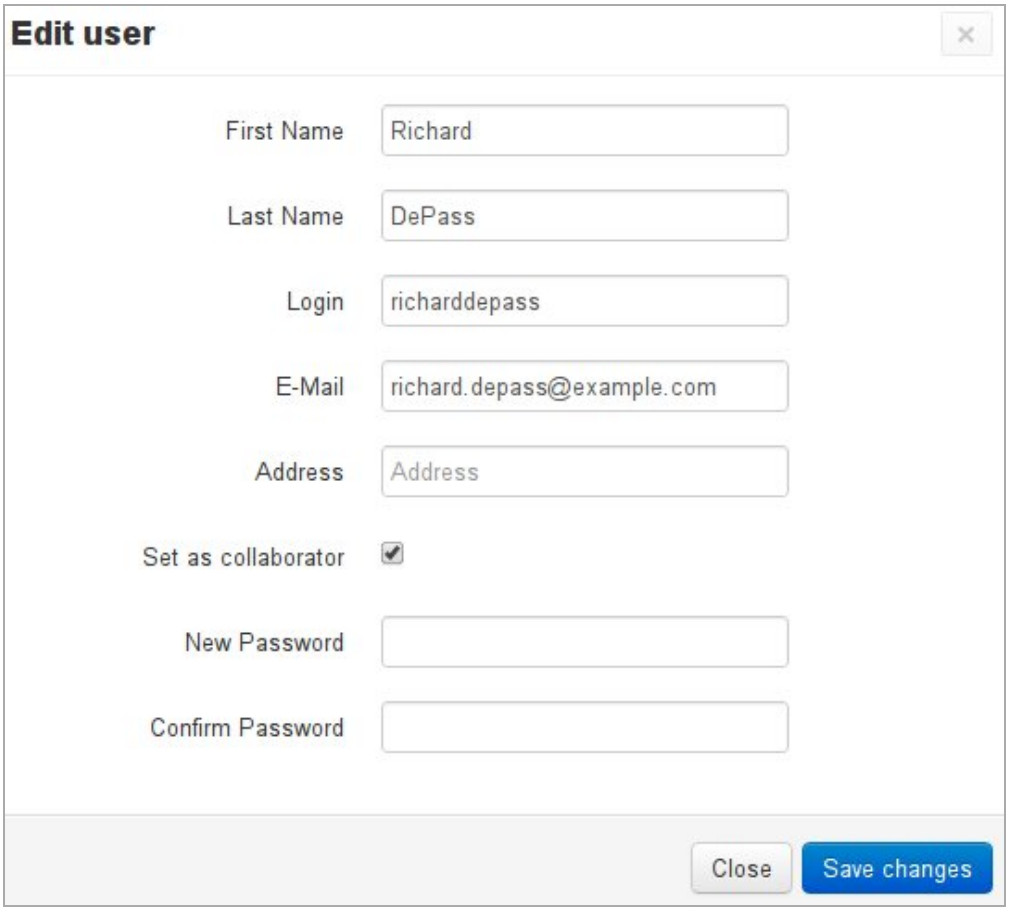
You can filter your view of items in the timeline by clicking on the Action button to the right of the Pin button at the top of the timeline. From a dropdown menu you can opt to show just advertisements, normal posts, quotes, or wrapup posts. To remove the filter and see all posts, click Show All.

Pin
Action
Show all
Show advertisement posts
Show normal posts
Show quote posts
Show wrapup posts

7. USERS AND CONFIGURATION

The **Configure Blog** button opens up your live blog's configuration section. More aspects will be configurable here as development of GEN Live Desk progresses, but for the moment you can access the blog's embed script, as covered in the chapter *Publishing your live blog*. You can also set the language for the live blog, and select the users which are allowed to collaborate with you.

The list of users which you see in the configuration section is set up in the Users section, which you can access by clicking **Users** in the top navigation bar. Here you can add and delete users, and edit their details.



Early versions of GEN Live Desk do not have user roles, with different levels of control. This means that currently any user can edit any other user's details, so be careful! Later versions of the software will enable full control for the live blog's owner over user roles and permissions.

APPENDIX

8. GETTING HELP
9. ABOUT THIS MANUAL

8. GETTING HELP

GEN Live Desk is based on the Superdesk platform created by Sourcefabric. You can visit the Superdesk development forum, and sign up for the mailing list, at http://forum.sourcefabric.org/categories/superdesk-dev

This forum is mirrored by the mailing list, so posts on the forum appear on the mailing list and vice versa. You can therefore also post a message there by emailing superdesk-dev@lists.sourcefabric.org

To subscribe to forum updates via mail, please register or login to the forum by clicking the appropriate link. Then click the **Subscribe** button at the top of each forum page.

BUG REPORTING

GEN Live Desk needs your input to improve. If you think you've found a bug, please visit http://dev.sourcefabric.org/ and sign in, using the same login and password that you registered for the Superdesk forum. Create a bug report by selecting **Create Issue**, then **Superdesk**, and then **Bug** on the **Issues** menu in the main navigation bar. That way, the Superdesk team can keep track of your problem and notify you when it has been fixed. You can also suggest improvements and new features for GEN Live Desk on that site.

CONTACT

Finally, when all other avenues have been exhausted, email us directly at contact@sourcefabric.org and we'll try to help!

9. ABOUT THIS MANUAL

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This manual was written for Sourcefabric by Trevor Parsons, using the tools at FLOSS Manuals. Please add your comments and contributions at: http://en.flossmanuals.net/gen-live-desk/

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