

PORTFOLIO CASE STUDY

luminariexpanse.com

AI-Assisted Author Website: From Zero Code Experience to Live Publication

2025

5 Pages Live	0 Prior Web Dev Experience	7-10 Days to Launch	100% AI-Generated HTML
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Section 1: What Was Built

luminariexpanse.com is the official domain website for The Luminary Expanse, a published science fiction book series. The site serves as the primary online home for the series — a destination for readers to explore the world, preview the work, learn more about upcoming books, and connect with the author.

The site consists of five live pages and was built entirely using Claude-generated HTML code implemented inside WordPress. It is the first website ever built by the author, with no prior coding or web development experience.

Section 2: Why It Was Built

Published authors need an online presence beyond Amazon listings. The goal was to create a dedicated, professional space where readers could:

- Explore the world and lore of The Luminary Expanse
- Preview and learn more about the published work
- Contact the author directly
- Serve as a hub for future books in the series as the catalog grows

Core Purpose

Solve the online presence problem for a newly published author — without hiring a web developer, without prior technical experience, and without using a limiting drag-and-drop template. Build it from scratch using AI as the guide.

The project served three simultaneous purposes: personal (supporting the book series), professional (a portfolio demonstration of AI-assisted capability), and experimental (a first real investment in AI-generated code applied to a live production environment).

Section 3: Starting Competence

Prior Web Dev Experience	Template-only — had used website builders but had no WordPress or HTML experience
Prior Coding Experience	Effectively zero — aware of what code looks like, but had never written or implemented any
Prior AI Code Use	First real investment in Claude-generated HTML for a live project
LLM Experience	Growing — this project followed earlier AI work, with increasing comfort using Claude for complex tasks
Skills Brought In	Clear design intent, planning instincts, and the ability to describe desired outcomes precisely to guide AI output

This was simultaneously a first website build and a first serious application of AI-generated code in a live production environment — making its successful launch a meaningful proof of capability.

Section 4: How AI Was Used

Platform Selection

The process began before a single line of code was written. Claude was used to evaluate hosting options and identify the right platform to match the project's intent. WordPress was selected as the result of that structured evaluation.

Design & Architecture

Rather than starting with a template, the decision was made to build the entire site using Claude-generated HTML — page by page. Each page was described in detail: layout intent, content structure, sections, and purpose. Claude produced complete HTML code along with implementation instructions.

Troubleshooting & Problem Solving

Implementation revealed a significant challenge: Claude's instructions were calibrated to a version of the WordPress interface that differed from what was live at the time. This caused repeated rendering issues and confusion navigating the UI. Through iterative troubleshooting — describing what wasn't working, why, and what the interface actually showed — Claude and the author worked through each problem systematically.

A critical discovery emerged during this process: certain features Claude was attempting to implement required JavaScript, which was only available at higher WordPress account tiers. The decision was made to stay at the current tier and redesign those elements rather than upgrade — a deliberate scoping decision that kept the project lean without compromising the core intent.

Also discovered: the correct method for ingesting HTML into WordPress — using specific content blocks rather than the wrong input method — which resolved the majority of rendering issues once identified.

Content & Design

Layout decisions and content structure were a combination of the author's vision and Claude's recommendations when guidance was requested. Image generation for concept art was handled using Grok. Claude handled the HTML, instructions, troubleshooting logic, and content planning guidance throughout.

Key Workflow Insight

The most valuable contribution of AI was not just writing the code — it was serving as a real-time troubleshooting partner capable of diagnosing unfamiliar interface problems, explaining what was causing failures, and generating corrected solutions on demand.

Section 5: Timeline & Conditions

Project Duration	7 to 10 days total
DNS / Hosting Setup	2+ days for domain routing and DNS propagation
Build & Debug Phase	Several days of page creation, bug fixes, and customization
Work Conditions	Side project, built in spare time alongside book publishing preparation
Competing Projects	The Red Omen publication, advertising campaign, and other portfolio work
External Deadline	None — self-directed

Section 6: Outcome & Evidence

luminariexpanse.com launched as a fully functional, live author website — built entirely by a first-time web developer using AI-generated HTML implemented in WordPress. All five pages are live and functional. The site fulfills its core purpose: a professional online presence for The Luminary Expanse book series.

The site provides readers with a place to explore the series, learn about the author, and make contact — and is architected to expand as additional books are published.

What This Represents

The author went from zero web development experience to a live, multi-page, custom-coded author website in under two weeks — using only AI as a guide, with no developer hired and no template relied upon.

Section 7: Key Metrics

Platform	WordPress
Build Method	Claude-generated HTML, implemented via WordPress
Pages Live	5
Image Generation	Grok (concept art)
Prior Web Dev Experience	None
Prior HTML/Coding Experience	None
Time to Launch	7 to 10 days
External Help	None — solo build with AI guidance
WordPress Tier	Standard (no JavaScript features)
Site Status	Live

Section 8: Lessons Learned

Lesson 1: AI as a Real-Time Expert Guide Beats Any Tutorial

Building a website with no experience is daunting because every problem is unfamiliar. What made this project work was having a guide that could answer specific questions about specific problems in real time — not a tutorial written for a generic situation. When the WordPress interface didn't match Claude's instructions, the answer wasn't to give up — it was to describe exactly what was on screen and ask what to do next. That dynamic, responsive troubleshooting capability is what got the site live.

Lesson 2: Version Drift Is a Real Challenge

Claude's knowledge of WordPress reflected an older version of the interface, which caused genuine confusion and wasted time. Knowing this upfront would have prompted earlier, more deliberate verification steps — cross-checking instructions against the actual interface before assuming they were correct. For any AI-assisted build using third-party platforms, anticipate that UI instructions may be outdated and verify before executing.

Lesson 3: The Right Input Method Changes Everything

A significant portion of the troubleshooting in this project traced back to one root cause: using the wrong WordPress content block to ingest HTML. Identifying the correct method resolved the majority of rendering failures. The lesson: when something isn't rendering correctly, question the input method before assuming the code is wrong.

Lesson 4: Constraints Are Decisions, Not Failures

Discovering that JavaScript features required a higher-paid WordPress tier was a fork in the road. Rather than treating it as a blocker, it became a conscious scoping decision — stay lean, redesign around the constraint, ship the site. That kind of real-time risk and scope management, supported by AI analysis, is directly transferable to any program or project environment.

What This Project Proves

Zero-to-live execution: A first-time web developer launched a professional, custom-coded author website in under two weeks.

AI-guided technical fluency: With no prior HTML or WordPress experience, AI was used to plan, build, troubleshoot, and ship a real product.

Adaptive problem-solving: When platform constraints and version drift created obstacles, structured troubleshooting — not guesswork — found the solutions.

Scope discipline: A deliberate decision to work within constraints rather than escalate cost kept the project lean and on track.

--- END OF CASE STUDY ---

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