

# **Information Management Resource Kit**

## **Module on Building Electronic Communities and Networks**

### **UNIT 3. OPTIONS, CHOICES, TOOLS AND APPLICATIONS**

#### **LESSON 2. TOOLS AND APPLICATIONS**

##### **NOTE**

Please note that this PDF version does not have the interactive features offered through the IMARK courseware such as exercises with feedback, pop-ups, animations etc.

We recommend that you take the lesson using the interactive courseware environment, and use the PDF version for printing the lesson and to use as a reference after you have completed the course.



## Objectives

At the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- distinguish among the wide variety of tools and applications;
- understand how each tool works, what their relative strengths and limitations are and how to use them effectively; and
- identify what is involved in using and setting up these tools.



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## Introduction

In this lesson, you will explore a range of electronic networking tools that can help you create an online community. The tools we will look at:



- use a range of levels of Internet access, some (like e-mail) can work with low speed connections, while others need reliable high speed Internet connections to be used effectively;
- allow you to be in contact with people synchronously (in real time) and asynchronously (with time lapses); and
- enable you to share ideas with groups of co-workers and community members in a common space, and engage in simple two-way dialogues.

## E-mail



The first tool you will explore is e-mail, which is by far the most widely used of all Internet tools and **the most powerful online connector of people**.

E-mail is a system for sending text-based messages from one computer to another, through a network.

E-mail is an **asynchronous** tool: you can compose, send and read e-mail messages regardless of whether the people you are corresponding with are connected to the network at the same time.

### Would you like to know more about using e-mail?



See Annex 3.2.1 for a mini-lesson on receiving, replying, creating, searching and forwarding e-mail messages

## E-mail

If your PC is connected to the Internet, what other equipment do you think you will need in order to send and receive e-mail?

- E-mail client and an Internet browser.
- E-mail account.
- E-mail client and an e-mail account.
- E-mail client and a word processor.

Please click on the answer of your choice.

## E-mail

### How it works



1. You create an e-mail message on your computer using an **e-mail client** such as *MS Outlook*, *Pegasus* or *Mozilla Thunderbird* or a **web based e-mail** service. You then send it through your Internet service provider's mail server to the **e-mail address** of your recipient.
2. The mail server sends your message through the network (Internet or other type of network) to the recipient's mail server.
3. The recipient of your message downloads the e-mail from their mail server to their computer using their e-mail client or web browser.

### Basic mail management features

E-mail clients and web mail offer the same basic mail management features:

- a text editor, for writing messages;
- a text reader, for reading incoming messages;
- a system for organizing and storing messages; and
- an address book.

They often include other features such as message searching, incoming message filtering and spam filtering. Some also include integrated tools that are not based on e-mail technology, such as calendars and schedulers.

## E-mail

### E-mail client

It is an application installed on your computer that allows you to manage e-mail messages locally (write, read, edit and delete messages, copy them between folders etc.).

You don't need to be connected to the network in order to read, write or edit e-mail messages. **The connection only needs to be made when you send and receive new messages.**

#### Free e-mail clients

There are many different e-mail clients, often free, that can be downloaded from the Internet. Widely used ones are:

- Pegasus Mail - <http://www.pmail.com/>
- Eudora - <http://www.eudora.com/>
- Mozilla Thunderbird - <http://www.mozilla.org/products/thunderbird/>
- Outlook Express - <http://www.microsoft.com/windows/oe/>
- Opera application suite - <http://www.opera.com>
- Mozilla application suite - <http://www.mozilla.org>

Some of these e-mail clients are also available for operating systems other than Windows. *Mozilla Thunderbird* and *Opera* are available for the Linux operating system. *Eudora* is also available for the Macintosh operating system.

## E-mail

### Web based E-mail

Web-mail is accessed through your browser, and requires you to be connected to the Internet to read and manage your e-mail. You can read, compose new messages and manage your virtual in-box directly on the Web via your browser.

Most Internet service providers these days offer web mail access to your e-mail account. You can also set up a free web mail account on services such as Yahoo! Mail, Hotmail and Gmail.

#### STRENGTHS

The biggest **advantage** of using web-mail is that **you can manage your mail from any computer in the world that is connected to internet**. If you don't own your own computer, or if you are traveling, you can access your mail from an Internet café, telecentre, or a friend's computer.

#### WEAKNESSES

On the other hand, using web mail **can be cumbersome both for managing messages and message formatting**. Staying connected to the internet during the whole message management process is a problem if you don't have a good and stable connection to the internet. And **free web mail services limit the amount of e-mail you may receive**.

In general an offline mail client allows you to do your work faster and gives you a better overview of your e-mail communication than web mail.

## E-mail

### E-mail addresses

Just like postal addresses, e-mail addresses ensure that your messages find their way to recipients; each e-mail address is unique. In order to get an e-mail address, you must have an e-mail account with an internet service provider or with your organization. Your e-mail account includes an e-mail address and a virtual mailbox where your incoming messages are stored.

Normally, an e-mail address takes the form: [username@host.domain](#), for example...



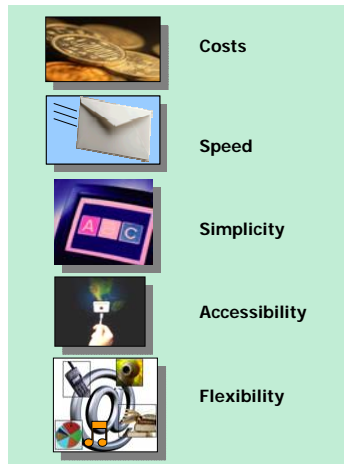
The first part of the address is the **username**. This usually contains your real name or a name you have chosen. It may also be a description of a work function – for example, "enquiries" or "library". The username may be composed of two parts, separated by a dot or an underscore. For example, **sally.smith** or **sally\_smith**. When setting up an e-mail account, you should choose a name that anyone you correspond with will easily remember and associate with you.

The host domain is a registered name your Internet service provider registers for its account holders. The domain name works like an address for your internet service provider's mail server. It consists of two (sometimes more) parts separated by a dot (e.g., yahoo.com or oxfam.org.uk).

The .org suffix indicates the **top-level domain**. This denotes either (or both) the type of organization or the country in which the host server is located.

## E-mail

### ↑ STRENGTHS



### ↓ WEAKNESSES



See next slides to learn more.

**E-mail**

**STRENGTHS**

**Costs**

Sending e-mail is cheap. It costs nothing except for what you pay for your connection to the network (Internet).

**Speed**

E-mail messages are transmitted very quickly. They usually arrive in the mailbox on the recipient's mail server a few seconds after being sent.

**Simplicity**

You don't need high-end technology equipment to use e-mail. You only need an easily available e-mail client (often free and easy to download and install), or a web browser - both of which are often pre-installed on computers.

**Accessibility**

Users can access their e-mail from telecentres and internet cafes even if they don't have their own computers.

**Flexibility**

E-mail messages can be used to transfer any type of file instantly from one computer to another.

**E-mail**

**WEAKNESSES**

**Need for connectivity**

In order to send and receive e-mail messages, you must have access to the appropriate network (Internet).

**Privacy threats**

Unless your message is encrypted, there is a potential risk that your message could be read on the way from you to the recipient.

**Overuse**

E-mail loses its impact as the volume of messages grows. Some frequent e-mail users cannot manage all the important messages they receive. Equally, writing messages can consume a lot of your time at the expense of other work and activities.

**Security risks**

E-mail messages are used for disseminating computer **viruses** that can damage your computer. Equally harmful **spam** (unsolicited advertisement messages) may eventually over-run your incoming e-mail communication to such an extent that you can no longer use your e-mail account.

### E-mail

What are the advantages of using an e-mail client over using web-mail?

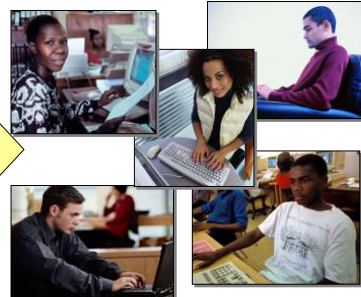
- You can access your mailbox from any computer that is connected to the Internet.
- You can create e-mail messages with a more sophisticated design.
- Your connection to the Internet doesn't have to be as good as when you are using web-mail.
- You can manage messages in your mailbox more easily.

Please select the answers of your choice (2 or more) and press Check Answer.

### Listservs, mailing lists and e-newsletters

When you send a "regular" e-mail message, you address it to an individual. If you need to send it to more than one person, you might "cc" it to a few more recipients, or create a distribution list in your e-mail program.

What happens if a group of people wants to communicate regularly with each other, without each participant having to type in the names of everyone else in the group each time they send a message?



If you want to send a newsletter to a thousand people without having to specify each subscriber's name every time, and without adding each new subscriber's details manually, you can use **listservs** software, which enables this type of **one-to-many communication**.

Listservs can be used to support **mailing lists** (e-mail discussion groups) and **e-newsletters**.



## Listservs



A **listserv** allows groups of people to be easily connected together for discussions and information exchange.

It's a simple and fast e-mail based tool.

Its key feature is that when someone sends a message to the listserv, all the listserv subscribers **automatically** receive the message in their e-mail inbox.

Listservs use electronic addresses in a different way from "regular" e-mail:

"regular" e-mail address  
is linked with a person



listserv e-mail address  
(list address)  
is linked to the listserv program

## Listservs

### REGULAR E-MAIL

An e-mail message addressed to [Bongane@womensdev.org](mailto:Bongane@womensdev.org) is delivered to Bongane – who may read it, reply to it, or forward it to some colleagues.

### LISTSERV MAIL

An e-mail message sent to a list address is delivered to the **listserv program**.

This program includes a database which links the list address to the e-mail addresses of a group of people.

The listserv program receives the e-mail message, then forwards it to all the e-mail addresses linked to the list address.

The linked e-mail addresses belong to the list's "**subscribers**" – people who have chosen to receive mail from the list.

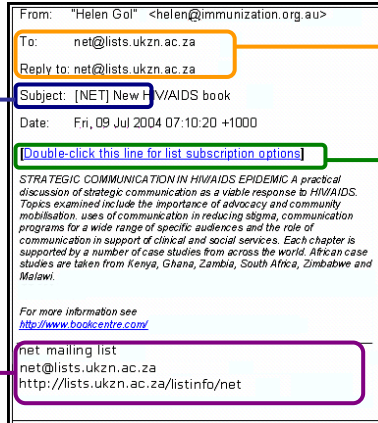
Regular e-mail	Listserver mail
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Javier sends an e-mail message to <a href="mailto:Bongane@womensdev.org">Bongane@womensdev.org</a></li> <li>Javier's mail server sends the message to Bongane's mail server</li> <li>Bongane downloads the message, and reads it</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Javier sends an e-mail message to <a href="mailto:genderdiscussion@womensdev.org">genderdiscussion@womensdev.org</a></li> <li>Javier's mail server sends the message to the listserv programme at womensdev.org</li> <li>The listserv programme looks up the "genderdiscussion" list address, and finds the list of e-mail addresses linked to it.</li> <li>The listserv programme forwards Javier's message to all the e-mail addresses linked to <a href="mailto:genderdiscussion@womensdev.org">genderdiscussion@womensdev.org</a></li> </ul>



## Listservs

E-mail messages which have been processed by listservs look similar to regular messages, but there are usually some **distinguishing characteristics**:

The original **Subject** line text typed in by the sender is prefixed by an **identifier of the mailing list**



The **To and Reply To** fields of the message header contains the list address

There is a link to a **web site with subscription options**

The message contains a footer with a **link to the list's web site**

The identifiers and footers on a mailing list are features which are configured by the list owner. They enable members of the group to easily follow which messages are related to their working groups and which came to them privately.

## Listservs

Most listserv software includes a **web interface**, which allows your web browser to carry out some of the tasks listed on the right.

Being able to choose how to access messages or perform administrative tasks – via e-mail or the Web – obviously gives you and members of the community greater flexibility.



See **interactive lesson** for examples of listserv software and services

See next slides to learn more about each task

## Listservs

### Administration

Listserv administration typically takes place **via e-mail**, although an increasing number of lists allow one to subscribe, unsubscribe and perform other administrative tasks **via the Web**.

Listserv software handles two types of task:

- it deals with **administrative requests**, such as subscribing and unsubscribing; and
- it **forwards messages** sent to the list to all subscribers.

In order to handle these two types of activity efficiently, each listserv has **two types of address**:

- the list name address, to which are sent messages directed to all list members (an examples of a list addresses is [h-safrica@h-net.msu.edu](mailto:h-safrica@h-net.msu.edu)); and
- the administrative or command processor address, to which are sent administrative requests such as subscribe and unsubscribe (an example of a command processor addresses is [listserv@h-net.msu.edu](mailto:listserv@h-net.msu.edu))

## Listservs

### Subscribing and Unsubscribing

While commands differ slightly among various mailing list programs, all follow the same basic principles.

The following table illustrates the commands for subscribing and unsubscribing used by some common mailing list programs:

PROGRAM	SUBSCRIBING	UNSUBSCRIBING
Listserver	SUBSCRIBE [listname] Firstname Lastname (e.g. SUBSCRIBE INT-LAW Mfezeko Bunu)	SIGNOFF [listname] -- or -- UNSUBSCRIBE [listname]
Majordomo	SUBSCRIBE [listname] (e.g. SUBSCRIBE ELAW-J)	UNSUBSCRIBE [listname] -- or -- UNSUBSCRIBE [listname] [address] If you subscribed under a different e-mail address.
Mailman	Subscribe and unsubscribe via a form on the web.	

Check the information relating to any listservs you want to subscribe to for the specific commands for that list. Look for:

- a Web site which gives you the option to subscribe to a listserv; and
- instructions for subscription via e-mail.

Or write an e-mail message to the list moderator asking them to subscribe you.

## Listservs

### Reading and/or replying

Subscribers can choose whether to receive messages via e-mail or read them on the Web.

### Viewing archives on the web

Most listserv software packages include an **online archive facility**, which stores all messages sent to the list and is available online to all list members (or the public).

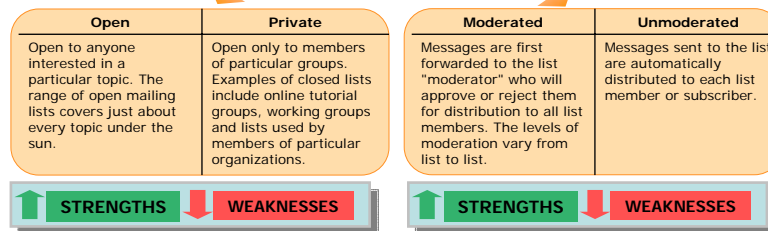
For long-term projects, online archives help preserve "the memory" of how discussions developed.

## Mailing lists

One of the ways in which listserv software is used is to support **mailing lists**.

Mailing lists are used for **networking and communication between people with shared interests**. The basic principle is the same for all types of lists (message sent from one to many members). However, lists can have distinct characteristics according to the way they are set-up.

Lists are distinguished by whether they are:



See next slides for the characteristics of Open and Private, Moderated and Unmoderated lists

Most listserv software can be configured to support any of the options shown above.

**Mailing lists**

**Open mailing lists**

CHARACTERISTICS	↑ STRENGTHS	↓ WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anyone can subscribe.</li> <li>• Usually publicly advertised on the Internet.</li> <li>• Many subscribed members who only receive messages from the list, without contributing themselves.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Useful for campaigning and the promotion of products and projects relevant to the orientation of list members.</li> <li>• Subscription process can be fully automated (less demanding on list administrator).</li> <li>• Provides a space for new inspiring ideas from new people.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• List administrators have very limited control over who is participating.</li> <li>• Members have less confidence to write about sensitive issues since message recipients are anonymous.</li> </ul>

**Private (task driven) mailing lists**

CHARACTERISTICS	↑ STRENGTHS	↓ WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subscription is limited to team members (only they can send and receive messages).</li> <li>• Widely used by working groups, planners etc. to work on specific tasks or to connect a community sharing a specific interest.</li> <li>• Members know each other or they introduce themselves when joining the list.</li> <li>• Usually set up in a way that the postings are directly distributed (unmoderated).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Useful for creative online working where people need to know who else is <i>in the loop</i> (list member).</li> <li>• Useful when the discussion needs to stay focused.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With a clear content focus, the discussion on the list needs to be carefully facilitated to endure that messages do not stray off-topic.</li> </ul>

**Mailing lists**

**MODERATED MAILING LIST**

Messages sent to the list are held on the server until the list administrator reviews them and takes action to forward or not to the list.

↑ STRENGTHS	↓ WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The administrator can filter out messages irrelevant to the issue and thus keep the discussion focused.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demanding on administration, especially if there are many subscribers.</li> </ul>

**UNMODERATED MAILING LIST**

Messages sent to the list are redistributed instantly to all subscribed members.

↑ STRENGTHS	↓ WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The discussion flows without need for frequent moderator assistance.</li> <li>• The discussion is more authentic as there are no delays between posting and receiving messages.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risk of the list being plagued with messages irrelevant to the focus of the discussion.</li> <li>• Therefore the risk of people losing interest in participating.</li> <li>• Need for active members' commitment to self-discipline and respect of list rules.</li> </ul>

### Mailing lists

What is the most suitable type of mailing list for working with a small group of collaborators on a new project?

- Open and moderated.
- Open and un-moderated.
- Private (closed) and moderated.
- Private (closed) and un-moderated.

Please click on the answer of your choice.

### Mailing lists

I want to set up a listserv for my group.  
How do I decide whether it should be Open or Private?



**For working purposes**, you will mostly benefit from using **private mailing lists**. They are a particularly useful tool when you:

- work with a disparate working group;
- coordinate an event that involves communication with many people; and
- need to keep people motivated for working on a common project or you need to make them feel that they are part of a group.

For broader discussion around a particular theme an **open mailing list** might be most appropriate.

It is important to be sure what you will use it for and to choose the type of mailing list that will best suit your needs.

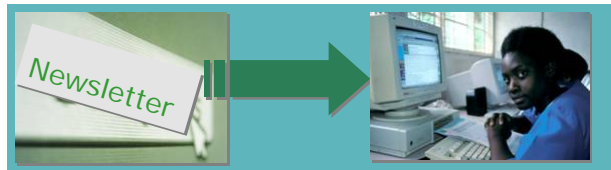
## E-newsletters

A useful alternative to newsletters, newspapers and other printed materials that get issued on regular basis are **e-newsletters** or **e-bulletins**.

E-newsletters are e-mail messages (sent using listserv software) that:

- provide information focused on a specific topic; and
- are sent to all addresses on a subscriber list.

People with an interest in the topic can subscribe to an e-newsletter and automatically receive it whenever it is sent out.



E-newsletters can also be used to **promote and support content** that you are publishing online.



See interactive lesson to download the document  
"Points to bear in mind when producing e-newsletters"

## E-newsletters

### ↑ STRENGTHS



Costs



No geographical limits



Content available to users with low connectivity



Community building aspect

### ↓ WEAKNESSES



Design impact



E-mail overload

See next slides to learn more.



See interactive lesson to download the document  
"A low technology option for setting up an e-newsletter"

**E-newsletters**

**STRENGTHS**

**Costs**

In general, the cost of distributing newsletters via e-mail is much lower than the production and distribution costs of printed publications. You only need to cover the cost of your editorial work, your Internet access, and possibly the cost of the software you use for e-newsletter management.

**No geographical limits**

E-newsletters are available to anybody with access to the Internet unlike printed materials which depend on physical means of distribution.

**Content available to users  
with low connectivity**

It is much easier for people with poor quality internet access to receive online content by e-mail than by web-browsing.

**Community building aspect**

The subscriber base that you build from your e-newsletter's recipients list can form a "community" of people with a common interest who may be interested in becoming partners for your activities.

**E-newsletters**

**WEAKNESSES**

**Design impact**

E-mail messages in plain text format have a limited scope for formatting and this can restrict the design impact of your e-newsletter.

**E-mail overload**

Since e-newsletters are delivered by e-mail, recipients sometimes start ignoring them due to e-mail overload.



### E-newsletters

Using the services of an application service provider (ASP) for the distribution of your e-newsletter is a good choice especially when...

- You have a large number of subscribers and you need to administer your distribution list online without having to install any special software.
- Your newsletter has 20 subscribers and you don't expect many new subscribers.
- Your organization has its own mail server.
- You want to be able to administer your newsletter distribution list locally (on your computer) even when you are not online.

Please click on the answer of your choice.

### Technology options for setting up a listserv

The previous screens showed the characteristics of listservs (also in form of mailing lists and e-newsletters). Let's see now the technology options for setting up a listserv. There are three main options:

• use **free hosted services** which allow you to set up and manage your mailing list online without needing to install any special software (most, however, carry some form of advertising);

#### Free hosted services

The most commonly known are **Yahoo Groups** and **Topica**. **Dgroups** is a service which hosts groups and communities specifically interested in international development.

• use **mailing list services provided by your Internet service provider**;

#### Mailing list services

When setting up a mailing list, be careful to specify precisely what type you want (open, private, moderated, unmoderated, one-way - used for distributing e-newsletters, etc.).

• install a **listserv application on your mail server**, if your organization has one.

#### Listserv application on your mail server

Widely used ones are **Mailman**, **Majordomo**, **Sympa** and **Listserv**. Follow the instructions published on their web pages to see how to install and use them.

## Web based tools



E-mail can support information push like nothing else.

But for in-depth conversations, deep engagement or working together on complex tasks, web based environments - particularly those with more than just discussion spaces (file sharing, IM, etc.) - are more suitable.

Let's explore the most common web based tools together ...

## Forums and Newsgroups

Asynchronous discussion tools are used to create online spaces where users can start discussions on a given topic, as well as read and respond to comments posted by other users. **Posts are archived** and can be read and added to at any time.

Discussion tools have many varied uses, from organising events, projects and campaigns to debates on topical issues.

Forum	Topics	Posts	Last Post
<b>Welcome to TechSpig</b>			
<b>Introduce Yourself</b> Introduce yourself and your organization to the TechSpig.org community. Please note: This is not the place for resumes to drive by and promote a company. This is the place for nonprofits and their colleagues to get acquainted with the community. Hosted by Susan Terby of TechSpig and Christian Nielsen of InfoTechSpig.	1170	2,915	November 01 2004 1:47 PM by: <a href="#">mattst</a>
<b>Software</b> Post software questions and discuss the latest hardware, software and ASP solutions. Hosted by Aron Trautman@spig, Don Cameron, and Will Rodica (aka mervoshades).	2481	8,267	November 01 2004 8:20 PM by: <a href="#">mervoshades</a>
<b>Virtual Community</b> Learn more about how communicating through message boards, chat and e-mail can support your organization's goals and mission. Hosted by Susan Terby and Janet Subono of InfoTechSpig, etc.	359	1,484	November 01 2004 11:47 PM by: <a href="#">JL.BASSI</a> <a href="#">TechSpig.org</a> ... by: <a href="#">JAGB</a>
<b>Hardware</b> Make recommendations (computers, modems, routers, pricing, etc.) and ask your technical questions. Hosted by Roger Roskel, Christian Nielsen, and Eric Leland of ConnectSpig.	1036	3,865	November 02 2004 2:31 AM by: <a href="#">JAGB</a> ... <a href="#">InfoTechSpig</a> by: <a href="#">SARAHJAY</a>

Example of forum

There are two main types of discussion tools:

- **WEB BASED** tools such as **bulletin boards, online conferences, and forums**; and
- **NEWSGROUPS**.

As with many Internet tools, however, the distinctions are starting to become blurred.



**Would you like to know more about Newsgroups?**  
See Annex 3.2.2 for a mini-lesson on using these tools

## Forums and Newsgroups

Web based asynchronous discussion tools are similar and many of their functions overlap, but they can be broadly defined as follows:

**Bulletin boards**, usually simple one-page boards where users post information (like announcements, job opportunities, requests) are just like physical bulletin boards. While bulletin boards may include comments from users, they are seldom used for ongoing or complex discussions.

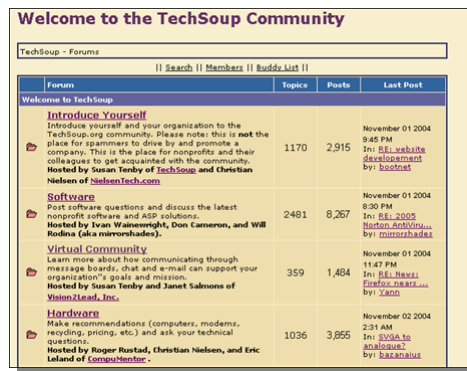
**Web forums** are more complex than bulletin boards, with separate topics with their own "threads" of postings - and are more suited to ongoing discussions. Some require registration to participate.

**Online conferences** are actual meetings held online asynchronously, with an agenda and various topics for discussion, e.g. to produce policy documents. Access may be restricted to members only.

Let's see an example...

## Forums and Newsgroups

### Web forums



The screenshot shows a forum page titled "Welcome to the TechSoup Community". It features a table with columns for Forum, Topics, Posts, and Last Post. The table lists four forum categories: "Introduce Yourself", "Software", "Virtual Community", and "Hardware".

Forum	Topics	Posts	Last Post
<b>Welcome to TechSoup</b> <b>Introduce Yourself</b> Introduce yourself and your organization to the TechSoup.org community. Please note: this is not the place for spammers to drive by and promote a company. This is the place for nonprofits and their colleagues to get acquainted with the community. Hosted by Susan Tenby of TechSoup and Christian Nielsen of hidden.tech.com	1170	2,915	November 01 2004 9:45 PM In: <a href="#">RE: website development</a> by: <a href="#">loustrat</a>
<b>Software</b> Post software questions and discuss the latest nonprofit software and ASP solutions. Hosted by Ivan Wainwright, Don Cameron, and Will Rodina (aka mirrorshades).	2461	8,267	November 01 2004 8:30 PM In: <a href="#">RE: J2005 Norton AntiVirus...</a> by: <a href="#">mirrorshades</a>
<b>Virtual Community</b> Learn more about how communicating through message boards, chat and e-mail can support your organization's goals and mission. Hosted by Susan Tenby and Janet Salmons of VisionLead, Inc.	359	1,484	November 01 2004 11:47 PM In: <a href="#">RE: Mevri Firefox plugin...</a> by: <a href="#">LAIN</a>
<b>Hardware</b> Make recommendations (computers, modems, recycling, pricing, etc.) and ask your technical questions. Hosted by Roger Rostad, Christian Nielsen, and Eric Leland of <a href="#">SourceCenter</a> .	1036	3,855	November 02 2004 2:31 AM In: <a href="#">J2004 to antiSpam?</a> by: <a href="#">LAIN</a>

A typical forum entry page shows:

- a list of the individual forums available on the site;
- how many discussion topics are in each forum;
- the number of postings in each forum;
- the date and subject of the most recent posting in each forum.

The layout of different forums will vary according to the software used to create them, but most will have the same basic features.

## Forums and Newsgroups

### Web forums

By clicking on one of the broad forum topics, you can see a "threaded" list of discussions around a general theme.



Then, as you can see in the animation, by clicking on a topic you can read and reply to all postings on that topic, or start a new topic.

## Forums and Newsgroups

### Web forums

Before you start contributing to a forum, you need to decide which discussions you want to join. Read through some of the existing archived posts of discussions that interest you, and check which are relevant. Look at the frequency of postings to check if you will be able to keep up with the pace of discussion.

When you have decided which discussions you would like to participate in, here is a general guide to the steps you would normally follow:

1. Open the web page where the discussion is hosted.
2. Register your username and password to get access to the discussion. You will probably need to give an e-mail address which is useful for automated alerts, e.g. if you choose to be e-mailed when there are new replies to your posts.
3. Log in using your username and password.
4. Read the existing postings for the thread you are contributing to. If it is a very long thread, just read the latest ones.
5. Post your comment using the web form, which is usually located at the bottom of the list of postings or found by clicking on a "post" link.
6. Log off.

Some forums might be useful to read, but you may not want to contribute. This is informally known as **lurking** in a discussion. This is perfectly acceptable if the topic interests you but you feel you don't yet know enough about the subject yourself to contribute.

## Forums and Newsgroups



A big advantage of asynchronous over synchronous discussion is that **you can log in on your own time**, as well as read existing posts and add to them. You don't have to be online at the same time as the other participants of the conference.

This is especially useful when **people from different continents** are trying to communicate.

These tools are also **better if you have connectivity problems** as you do not need to be online continuously for long periods (if this is a significant consideration, e-mail tools are more appropriate).

Let's look at other important points and at the limitations of these tools...

See interactive lesson to download the document "Setting up non e-mail asynchronous discussions"

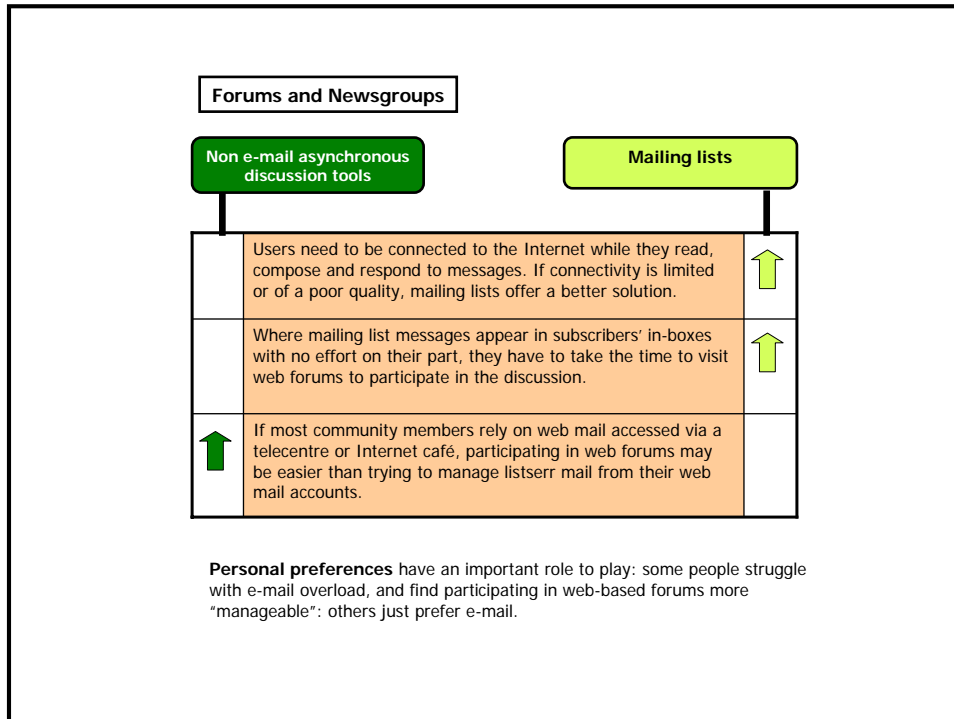
## Forums and Newsgroups

### ↑ STRENGTHS

- Several different discussion threads can develop at the same time.
- Participants can pick up threads and start new ones at any time.
- Every posted contribution provides an opportunity for response, thus encouraging active participation.
- Good for geographically dispersed communities, can reduce the need for face to face meetings.
- Do not need to be continuously online for long periods.
- Moderated discussions can be labour intensive.

### ↓ WEAKNESSES

- A live connection to the Internet is required.
- Delays between postings and responses mean that it can take time for a debate to develop.
- Postings can sometimes get overlooked and go unanswered.
- Multiple threads can make navigating the discussion confusing.
- Popular discussions can generate enormous numbers of postings.
- Open discussions are vulnerable to participants who want to post abuse or off-topic contributions.



**Forums and Newsgroups**

What is the best way to choose which discussion threads you should join?

- Start a new thread just in case there is no suitable one already.
- Post to several threads and see which one gets a response.
- Read through the previous posts for threads that interest you.

Please click on the answer of your choice.

### Surveys and Polls

Getting in touch with people shows your desire to better understand their point of view. More and more organizations are using online survey tools for a variety of needs: to **evaluate member satisfaction**, **learn something from stakeholders**, or **gather data for a report**.

The community manager can make an inquiry into public opinion by interviewing a random sample of people.

Surveys and polls represent a simple way of getting a quick reading of the attitudes and preferences of your online community participants. This inquiry can be conducted:

- **through the Web site**, using a list of questions and answers to choose from; or
- **by mailing members** a more complex survey with one or more subjects to analyse and go through.



### Surveys and Polls

Survey/polls tools provide the resources needed to design survey questionnaires. They also enable you to **collect**, **organize**, and **analyse results** in your web browser.

There are a variety of tools available that can guide you in the process of creating an effective survey.

Page 1 of 7

Survey #28: Hivos Magazine Questionnaire

1. Hivos is looking for the best way to inform you about its activities, partnerships and alliances and about news of our partner organizations. Hivos International is an important means toward this end. With this in mind, we are asking all readers of this newsletter to complete the reader survey attached. Please help us provide you with even better information!

Answering the questions below should take at most eight to ten minutes. At questions followed by an \*, feel free to select multiple answers.

How often do you read HI?

Always

Often

Sometimes

Rarely

Never

2. because....

Go! Survey - Do not save answers    << Previous Page    Next Page >>

Surveys and polls are useful in gathering data to **help you evaluate your online community**, improve it and reach outcomes.

They can also help **facilitate community decision-making**.

If your online community will be reaching consensus on action plans, surveys are useful tools in supporting this work.

## Surveys and Polls

### HOW ONLINE SURVEYS AND POLLS WORK

From a technical point of view, distribution can be very broad and quick if you have an up-to-date list of e-mail addresses. They can produce high response rates if there is a direct link to the survey/polls in your e-mail announcement or on your web site.

Data is captured electronically so no manual data entry is necessary. Key features include the ability to use skip or branch logic, add images to your survey, personalize invitations and download and share survey results with others.

Results of the survey are calculated and are provided (usually instantly) to the administrator and other members by the online tool itself. This information typically includes the number of people who answered each question and how they answered.

At the end of the process, you can usually share survey and polls results with others via a direct link to the survey tool.

## Surveys and Polls

### ↑ STRENGTHS

- Can be an effective medium of communication within organizations.
- Quickly gather people's ideas.
- Offer a good pulse of the group's general feeling.
- Allow a fast analysis of collected data.
- Are technically easy to set up and do not require knowledge of HTML.
- Good for keeping track of evolving trends inside the group.

### ↓ WEAKNESSES

- Require users to be online – this could be a problem if connectivity is poor.
- Can offer only a brief glance of what the community is thinking.
- To be efficient, they need to be well formulated before going online
- Can be overlooked if the user is not connected to the Web site.
- May require advanced statistical analysis for data to prove useful.



## Surveys and Polls

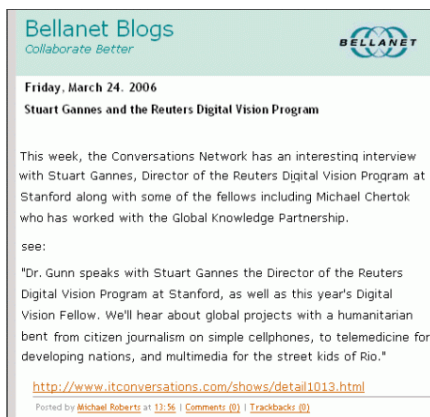
### HOW TO CHOOSE ONLINE SURVEYS AND POLL TOOLS

Most advanced tools allow users to easily create surveys and polls and analyse the critical feedback necessary to make important decisions. Before diving into the specific features offered by these tools, the overarching question you need to answer is: "Will you be conducting simple surveys and polls or are your data gathering needs more complex?"

Here is a list of criteria that may be helpful in selecting an online survey tool.

- How many people can fill out the survey? (Some survey tools limit the number of responses, especially if they are free of charge).
- Are the analysis tools easy to use and do they meet your analysis needs?
- Is it easy to design the online survey? Do the design features meet needs?
- Do the free services offer enough value and features, or will you need to use a fee based service?
- Can the look and feel of the survey be customized?

## Blogs



**Bellanet Blogs**  
Collaborate Better

Friday, March 24, 2006

**Stuart Gannes and the Reuters Digital Vision Program**

This week, the Conversations Network has an interesting interview with Stuart Gannes, Director of the Reuters Digital Vision Program at Stanford along with some of the fellows including Michael Chertok who has worked with the Global Knowledge Partnership.

see:

"Dr. Gunn speaks with Stuart Gannes the Director of the Reuters Digital Vision Program at Stanford, as well as this year's Digital Vision Fellow. We'll hear about global projects with a humanitarian bent from citizen journalism on simple cellphones, to telemedicine for developing nations, and multimedia for the street kids of Rio."

<http://www.itconversations.com/shows/detail1013.html>

Posted by [Michael Robertz](#) at 13:36 | [Comments \(0\)](#) | [Trackbacks \(0\)](#)

A web log, commonly referred to as Blog, is a web page that allows you to **share, access** and easily update **information, without having any knowledge of HTML.**

This kind of tool is based on the idea of presenting content as a simple list of entries, just like a diary.

A blog allows users to easily post content onto a Web site on a regular basis, in a standardized format. The posted information forms a commentary or stream of frequently updated ideas.

This ease of publishing means that people who wouldn't ordinarily have the time and resources to continuously keep up with the latest developments, can easily keep their web pages' content up-to-date.

## Blogs



Blogs appear in reverse chronological (most recent item first) lists of dated titles and abstracts on a single page, and usually have the flexibility for postings to include any number of other links and graphics as well as ordinary text.

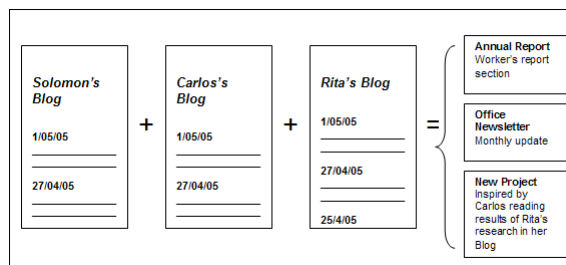
The result is a page that looks much like any other web page.

Blogs were initially used as a way of publishing online public diaries, but are now used effectively for a range of information work. For example, blogs allow workers to chronicle projects inside their organizations, developing awareness of the broader context that everyone is working in.

## Blogs

Blogs make it simple and quick for staff and community members to update their schedules with news and developments.

The streams of news that emerge can easily feed into periodic reports, avoiding duplication of efforts.



Blogs

STRENGTHS

- No web development skills are necessary to add content to the blog.
- Can be an effective medium of communication within and between organizations.
- It is quick and simple to use.
- It encourages frequent posting.
- Can become a comprehensive record of developments.
- Through the possibility to comment every intervention it allows knowledge exchange

WEAKNESSES

- Web interface requires a live stable connection to the Internet in order to post content.
- It is limited to "diary-like" format.
- Needs frequent updating to be effective.

**Would you like to know more about blogs?**  
 See Annex 3.2.3 for a mini-lesson on using these tools

**Setting up a blog**

Wikis

**A wiki is a Web site which can be edited online in your browser.**

Unlike common web pages - which are created offline in HTML using an authoring tool or a text editor, and then uploaded to a web server - wikis are edited "live".

Users do not need any special technical knowledge to modify existing wiki pages or add new pages.

The administrator of a wiki can specify who may view and edit the site or sub-sections of the site.

They can make the wiki open for anyone to use and edit, or they can restrict editing permissions to registered users (for example, members of a working group).

**Difference between blogs and wikis**

Both blogs and wikis allow users to publish web content "live" via a web browser, without any knowledge of HTML.

The difference between them is that:

- blogs** allow only a simple "diary-like" format; while
- wikis** do not impose any particular page structure, and allow users to create complete new pages and to edit existing pages.

Some tools, for example TikiWiki (<http://www.tikiwiki.org/>), combine wikis and blogs with a range of tools for online collaboration.

## Wikis

Wikis also include a powerful versioning system which:

- tracks changes made to pages; and
- stores previous versions, enabling administrators to revert (roll back) to previous versions of pages.

This means that if a user creates new content or modifies existing content in a way that is not desirable (which can range from accidentally deleting sections of a page to maliciously adding false information), the administrator can easily recover an earlier version of the page.



## Wikis

### ↑ STRENGTHS

- Do not require knowledge of HTML.
- Central versioning system **makes it easy for a group to work collaboratively on documents**. Contributions can come in any sequence. Users respond to each other's changes and are not limited by only seeing the changes of those who came before them in the editorial queue. In this way **workers can control the process as a group**. This method of working has shown itself to **encourage the participatory process**.
- Good for continually evolving content.

### ↓ WEAKNESSES

- Users must be online while using or working on wikis: it can be very tedious for users with slow connections to use this kind of tool.
- Not good for heavily formatted documents or documents with complex structures.
- "Anarchic", if anyone can add and modify content, it is easy for the wiki to grow in ways that make it difficult to find information.



Would you like to know more about wikis?  
See Annex 3.2.4 for a mini-lesson on using these tools



See interactive lesson to download the document "Setting up a wiki"

### Wikis

The following sentences apply to either blogs or wikis or both ...

	BLOGS	WIKIS
<input type="radio"/> Allows only a simple "diary-like" format		
<input type="radio"/> Allows users to publish web content "live" via a web browser		
<input type="radio"/> Does not impose any particular page structure		
<input type="radio"/> Does not require any knowledge of HTML		

Please select the corresponding box (1 or 2) for each option and press "Check Answer".

### Calendars

An online calendar is an **interactive online space where information about events can be stored in a calendar format**. Users can move between days of the week, months of the year, accessing information about what's happening on which days.

Calendars vary from very simple, to very complex, depending on how elaborate particular event entries in the database are.



The **features commonly available** in calendars are:

- information about **date/time, venue** and **organizer** of the event;
- event **description**; and
- links to event descriptions outside the calendar.

**Less common features** are:

- event **filtering**, which enables you to sort events by date, location and focus;
- a **calendar table**, used mainly when an organization uses the calendar to maintain a visual overview of its project and events;
- a **search function**.

Click on the calendar to connect to Web site

## Calendars

### How online calendars work

Events featured on the calendar are stored in a database which drives the information onto the correct part of the calendar screen. Every database entry is broken into several fields that describe a particular event (name of the event, venue, time, etc.) These pieces of information are stored in the database separately. This makes it possible to check the database for events according to these different characteristics.

The three most common ways to maintain online calendars are:

- **individually**, organizations maintain their own calendars for internal use (overview about schedules, work-plans, deadlines) or for the public to learn about events prepared by the organization;
- **by sharing calendars**, entries (events) are added to a calendar via shared databases from calendars maintained by a range of organizations;
- **by using contributions from the public**, some calendars are made publicly interactive. Users can access an input form and add items to the calendar themselves.

## Calendars



### STRENGTHS

- Calendars can be a useful **collaborative tool** for example to share event information across teams with common interests.
- The calendar is also a great **promotional tool** for organizing events for the public. Publish the events in a calendar and you can promote them among a wider group of people by sharing the calendar with other Web sites, by enabling calendar users to subscribe to event alerts, etc.



### WEAKNESSES

- The main limitation is that calendars are only effective if they are well-maintained – and this takes time, effort and coordination.
- Like all web based tools, online calendars require users to be online while they use them – always a problem if connectivity is poor.



See interactive lesson to download the document  
"Setting up calendars"

### Collaborative workspace

A collaborative workspace is the virtual space that organizations, communities and networks can use to **work together online**.

It is a space where a group of people can participate simultaneously on common work areas (even if they are physically separated by thousands of miles) **using a combination of electronic networking tools**.



 See next slide for examples of free and commercial groupware packages

This type of workspace can be created:

- through the use of web based **groupware**, comprehensive software packages which integrate and provide a single entry point to a range of tools such as e-mail, instant messaging, document sharing, calendars, discussion boards, mailing lists, workflow tracking etc.;
- by **combining individual tools** (free, commercial, or developed in-house) according to the needs of the particular community or organization (these may include e-mail, mailing lists, instant messengers, blogs, wikis, joint calendars, and online bulletin boards – in fact, all the tools which have been described up to now in this lesson).



**Would you like to know more about Collaboration tools?**  
See Annex 3.2.5 for a mini-lesson on Online Conference tools

### Collaborative workspace

**TikiWiki** is an example of a **free**, open source groupware application. TikiWiki includes the following tools:

- Wikis;
- Blogs;
- Chat rooms;
- Discussion forums;
- FAQ generation;
- Workflow engine;
- Quizzes and polls;
- Document storage areas; and
- Webmail.

**Lotus Notes** is an example of a commercial groupware package. Tools include:

- E-mail;
- Calendar and scheduling;
- Journal;
- To-do lists;
- Web pages;
- Databases; and
- Messaging.

## Collaborative workspace

### ↑ STRENGTHS

A collaborative workspace enables organizations and communities which are separated in time and place to work together effectively. Combining different tools provides flexibility and integration:

- individuals can choose communication tools which suit their level of Internet connectivity and personal communication style;
- the most appropriate tool for a particular function can be used (for example, discussions can take place via listservs, collaborative editing via a document sharing system, quick consultations can take place via instant messaging);
- a collaborative workspace provides an integrated picture of the organization or community's activities (including discussions, documents, and schedules) and can be an important project management and team building tool.



See interactive lesson to download **A collaborative workspace story: the APC example**

## Collaborative workspace

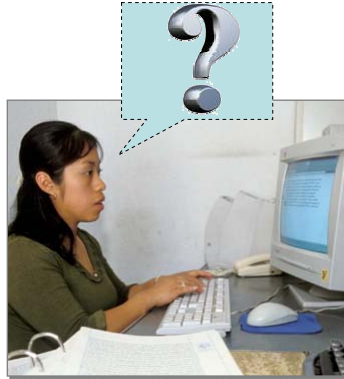
### ↓ WEAKNESSES

Limitations depend very much on the specific tools used:

- integrated groupware packages require you to have access to a server, and require a relatively high level of technical expertise to install and administer;
- commercial groupware packages are often expensive, and may not match your needs (e.g. you may be paying for tools you don't need, while the package does not contain all the ones you do);
- free/open source groupware packages e.g. TikiWiki may not have good end-user documentation, or be easy to find support for;
- groupware may not be able to accommodate the different levels of connectivity among members of your community;
- "do-it-yourself" collaborative workspaces built from individual tools lack integration, may require users and technical staff to learn to use tools with completely different interfaces, terminology etc. - and also suffer from any limitations of the individual tools concerned.



### Online answer tools



Organizations use **online answer tools** to try to overcome the challenge of answering large numbers of queries.

Rather than answer them individually in real time they look for technological solutions that save staff time and allow users to get faster answers.

In this topic three common types of online answer tools will be dealt with:

- **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**;
- **Question & Answer services (Q & A)**; and
- **Electronic Decision Support** tools.

Let's explore them in detail...

### Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

**FAQ** is the most commonly used answer tool that you will find on the Internet. It is the easiest and cheapest way for companies and organizations to try to:

- provide answers to the questions they are most often asked; and
- anticipate questions that users of the site might want to ask.

#### SITE HELP > FAQ

- [Where is your FAQ located?](#)
- [How do you write an FAQ?](#)
- [What is your organization's mission statement?](#)
- [What projects do you run?](#)

#### Where is your FAQ located?

Our FAQ is located in the "Site Help" section of our Web site.

#### How do you write an FAQ?

To write an FAQ you must collect common questions and provide useful answers to them.

They range from:

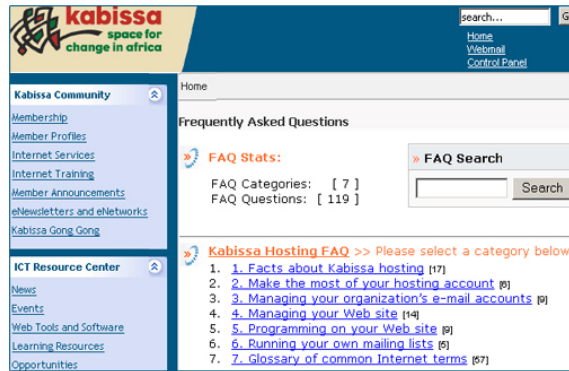
- very **short lists of questions** (as shown in the example below); to
- **large searchable databases** split into different topics (see an [example](#)).

Look for keywords that are connected with the answer you need. If the answer you need is not covered there may be a question and answer tool that you could try instead.

The next section will look at these tools.

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

The Kabissa FAQ is a large database of FAQs which can be searched or browsed by topic:



The screenshot shows the Kabissa website's FAQ page. The header includes the Kabissa logo and a search bar. The main content area is titled "Frequently Asked Questions" and includes a search box and a list of FAQ categories. The categories listed are:

- 1. Facts about Kabissa hosting (17)
- 2. Make the most of your hosting account (8)
- 3. Managing your organization's e-mail accounts (9)
- 4. Managing your Web site (14)
- 5. Programming on your Web site (8)
- 6. Running your own mailing lists (8)
- 7. Glossary of common Internet terms (67)

[http://www.kabissa.org/component/option.com\\_wrapper/Itemid,277/](http://www.kabissa.org/component/option.com_wrapper/Itemid,277/)

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

### ↑ STRENGTHS

- A low cost option for organizations with limited resources.
- Provides instant answers for the most obvious questions.
- Can often be read offline.
- Can be searchable, making it easier to find relevant answers.

### ↓ WEAKNESSES

- Requires regular monitoring and updating.
- Can be too static if the latter is not done regularly.
- Provides answers only to the most common/obvious questions.

See interactive lesson to download the document "Setting up FAQ"

### Question & Answer Services (Q & A)


Q & A services can be:

- web pages, where you can enter a question on the screen; or
- e-mail based so that you send your question via e-mail, and then receive a reply.

The answer can be provided by a real person or by a computer program, using artificial intelligence to guess the best answer to your query.



One example of a site offering an online question form is the Veterinary Medicine in Development Cooperation site (<http://www.dio.nl/visEN.html>), where individual farmers and organizations working in developing countries can send their questions in the field of veterinary medicine and receive an answer from an experienced veterinary specialist.

 See interactive lesson to download an example of Q & A request form

There are also **completely automated Q & A services** on the Web. For example, a site called Ask Jeeves (<http://www.Ask.com>) aims at answering questions using a smart search engine. This has the advantage of being quick but it is not always accurate.

### Question & Answer Services (Q & A)

#### Some tips to take into account when asking questions

When you ask your questions, remember the following tips:

- explain your problem clearly and specifically (so that you get the right answer);
- always remember to give your e-mail address accurately (or the reply will not get to you);
- read carefully and follow any instructions or guidelines provided.

### Question & Answer Services (Q & A)

#### ↑ STRENGTHS

- Can answer any relevant query.
- User and Responder do not have to be online at the same time (asynchronous).

#### ↓ WEAKNESSES

- Requires regular monitoring and updating.
- Can be too static if this is not done.
- Provides answers only to the most common/obvious questions.

### Question & Answer Services (Q & A)

When submitting a question using a web form you must remember to:

- Explain your query/problem and save it for your own records.
- Clearly state the specific details of your query/problem and supply a valid e-mail address.
- Give your full name and the date of your posting.

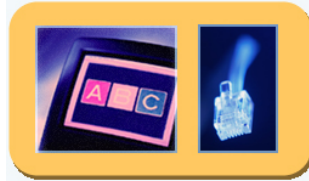
Please click on the answer of your choice.

### Electronic decision support tools

Electronic decision support tools are usually **online “flow chart” tools**. They take the user through a series of **questions and options**, and then provide relevant **solutions**.

There are two types of electronic decision support tools:

- **completely online diagnostic tools** (often used on technical help sites and on medical help sites);
- tools that can be **downloaded and installed on your computer**.



Every tool is different, but you will usually be asked a series of questions that you should answer as accurately as possible.

Advanced tools will have the ability to search through a large database of possible outcomes and use your answers to determine which is the most appropriate one.



**Would you like to know more about completely online diagnostic tools?**  
See Annex 3.2.6 for a mini-lesson with some examples

### Electronic decision support tools

#### ↑ STRENGTHS

- The tools are engaging for the user.
- Built-in expert knowledge provides expert support at a lower cost.
- Can be used to direct policy makers to consider factors they would otherwise be unaware of.

#### ↓ WEAKNESSES

- Sophisticated electronic decision support tools can be expensive to set up.
- Tools need to be kept up to date or they may become obsolete when new research or methods are developed.
- Many require users to be online and so are not good for those with connectivity problems.



See interactive lesson to download the document  
“Setting up a decision support tool”

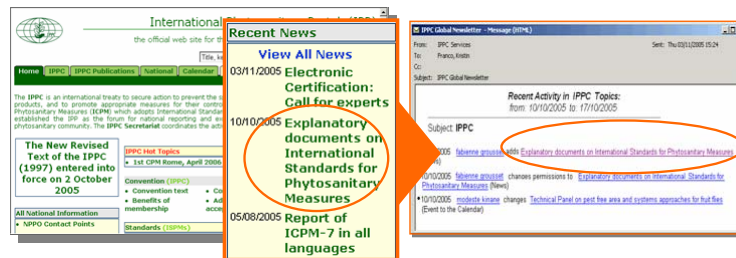
### Site update alerts

New content published on your Web site is useless if users don't know that it is there.

**Site update alerts** send users alerts by e-mail, when new content has been added to a specified Web site.

They bridge the gap between content which is available online (for users who choose to go to it), and content which is sent into a user's mailbox.

Site update alerts are **automatically generated** by a server application when a change (update) is made to a given web page.



Click on the screenshot to connect to Web site

### Site update alerts

#### What does an alert look like?

A site update alert **is a regular e-mail message**, received from an **e-mail address** that commonly corresponds to the name of the portal that sent it.

The **subject** of the message usually identifies the particular site alert service, the date when it was sent etc. (e.g. *Your Idealist Update for 06/05/2006*).

The **body** of the message contains a short description of the updated content and a link to the web page where it is published. Sometimes it also contains information about other services provided by the portal.

#### Getting site update alerts

You can subscribe to Web site update alerts on the web pages where the relevant content is published. Look for a box where you are asked to type your e-mail address in or for instructions how to sign up directly by e-mail.

Large Web sites that publish a variety of different content often let you set-up preferences for which content you want to be alerted to. For example, you might chose to be alerted only to job opportunities that are relevant to your profession and region. You can choose these conditions by selecting from available menus that are part of subscription form.

### Site update alerts

Most commonly, site update alerts are implemented in **online news services** as well as in many kinds of **Internet based commerce services**.

Alerts are also used to notify users about new job openings added to **online jobs databases** or events added to **calendars**.



The same technology can also be used to alert participants in **online discussions** when replies to their discussion postings are published.

Web site update alerts are **useful to portal editors** when some of the portal content comes to the database from other sites through shared applications, or when the content is suggested by the public.

### Site update alerts

#### ↑ STRENGTHS

- **Broaden the reach** of a known audience as alert messages get re-distributed.
- Ensure that users are **kept informed** and don't lose touch with what's new on your site.

#### ↓ WEAKNESSES

- Alerts can be ignored if the user is **overloaded** with e-mail messages.
- If there is too much new content added to your Web site daily, your subscribers might be harassed by e-mail overload. Avoid this problem by giving them the option to be alerted at regular intervals (once a day, once a week, etc.).

The option to be alerted immediately (after content is published) should always be available, since **immediacy is the major quality of site update alerts**.

See interactive lesson to download the document "Setting up site update alerts"

## RSS (Rich Site Summary)

**RSS (Rich Site Summary or Really Simple Syndication or RDF [Resource Description Framework] Site Summary)** is an increasingly popular way of accessing the latest news published on dynamically driven Web sites.

An RSS feed looks like any other URL, and provides information about content that is dynamically published.

The RSS feed generates a list of dated, clickable headlines in your RSS reader which link to the pages where the content is published.



**APCNews**

- European Forum on Communication Rights to precede European Social Forum Highway Africa 2004-Building the information society.
- The Zitt Greeks-Yong Nigerians turn to computing to improve their job prospects.
- ALERT: US\$10 million libel suits against media advocate.
- ALERT: Bulgarian government ignores impact assessment in rush to build nuclear power plant
- Catalysing a Gender and ICT Advocacy Movement: First APC women's programme policy conference for change and empowerment.

The advantage of using RSS feeds is that they enable you to have an overview of dynamically published content drawn from many sites in one place.

To get an RSS feed, go to your favourite site and look for **RSS** or a similar icon. Copy the URL from the RSS icon and paste it in your [RSS reader](#).

## RSS reader application

In order to be able to read the feed properly, you need an **RSS reader application**.

There are a range of these applications available. They are also often incorporated into other software applications such as e-mail clients.

## Portals

Some of the tools described up to this point are often gathered together in a web space that is itself a tool. This web space is called a **portal**.

A portal is a **Web site** that provides an entry point to the Web. Its main functions are distributing information and networking.



The screenshot shows the OneFish Community portal. At the top, it says "one fis one internet portal. all fisheries research." Below this is a search bar with a dropdown menu set to "All Topics (excluding archives)" and a "Search" button. To the right of the search bar are links for "Home", "All Topics", "Help", "FAQ", and "Advanced Search". Below the search bar is a navigation menu with categories: "DONORS / PROJECTS (FIPIS)", "AQUACULTURE", "FRESHWATER FISHERIES", "MARINE AND COASTAL FISHERIES", and "UTILIZATION AND TECHNOLOGY". Under "In the Spotlight...", there are three links: "Namibian/Norwegian co-operation in the fisheries and maritime sectors", "Regionalization of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries in Southeast Asia", and "oneFish Newsletter March 2006". To the right of the spotlight is a "Login" section with fields for "Username" and "Password", a "Go" button, and links for "Forgot your password?" and "Help".

Portals may provide:

- a great deal of **content**; and
- **communication services**, providing a number of tools (such as e-mail, listservs, discussion forums, etc.), which not only enable user access to information, but also enable active communication.

The **OneFish Community** ([www.onefish.org](http://www.onefish.org)) is a portal providing access to information on fisheries and aquatic research and development.



## Portals

Building an Internet portal is an ambitious task.

A portal may require a [Content Management System](#) to drive the back-end and to support various functions (news, directories, forums etc.).

The strengths and limitations of setting up a site are best described in contrast to using more conventional means of distributing information.

### ↑ STRENGTHS

- Enables infinite copying and dissemination of published materials.
- Information is available to end users and can be kept up-to-date.
- Increases in the number of users served through the site doesn't affect site maintenance costs.

### ↓ WEAKNESSES

- Relatively high start-up investment necessary.
- Reaches users without having to target them specifically.

## Content Management System (CMS)

Building your own internet site may require a **Content Management System**, which must be able to support all the functions of your site, such as news aggregations, directories, discussion boards etc.

A **CMS** is a complex system used to organize and facilitate collaborative content creation.

Recently, the term has been associated with software that make it easy to update and maintain a Web site.

In their evolution, CMSs have integrated many different interactive tools such as forum, blogs, polls, etc. to offer the possibility of **managing both content and communication tools with only one instrument**

Compare some of the most used CMSs at: <http://www.opensourcecms.com> and at <http://www.cmsmatrix.org>.

## Portals



Among the various services offered by portals are:

- **online directories**, a library of resources on other web sites.
- **resource collections**, a library of resources on the same site.

The decentralised nature of the Web ensures the richness and diversity of available content. However, with so much content scattered in so many directions, it can be hard to find the resources that match your needs.

Online directories and resource collections are a response to this problem. They attempt to bring some order to the vastness of content on the Web and make it easier for users with specific information needs to find what they are looking for.



**Would you like to know more about Online Directories?**

See Annex 3.2.7 for a mini-lesson on how they work



**Would you like to know more about Resource Collections?**

See Annex 3.2.8 for a mini-lesson on using these tools

### Real time Chat tools

You will now analyse the nature, variety, and use of **real time chats**. You will also explore the different forms of chat tools available, what works best and which technical environments they are best suited to.

Real time chats are **synchronous tools** which mix the **text communication** of e-mail with the '**real time**' aspect of **communication**.



Using the Internet to communicate in real time marks an important shift away from the conventional way we use e-mail communication.

In real time chats, communicators receive and see content **at the same time as it is sent**. This has more in common with **telephone communication** where we hear what a caller says to us live.

### Real time Chat tools




A dialogue using **e-mail** relies on users repeatedly checking mail and sending replies **in the form of correspondence**. This means time lapses between sending, receiving, seeing and reading messages.

A dialogue using **real time chat** - thanks to synchronicity - encourages a more **conversational** style of communication between users. Communicators view each other's text in the same window and at the same time.

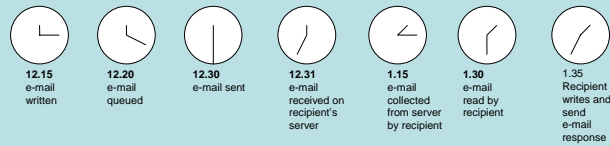
This technology enables communicators to engage in a simultaneous dialogue made up of **quick questions, answers, and responses**.



 See next slide for examples of time lapses in dialogues via e-mail and via real time chat

## Real time Chat tools

### Example of possible time lapses in e-mail correspondence



In this example there is no synchronicity between the sender and receiver. There is always a delay between one reading what the other has written. This is called **asynchronous** communication.

### Example of possible time lapses in Real time Chat conversation

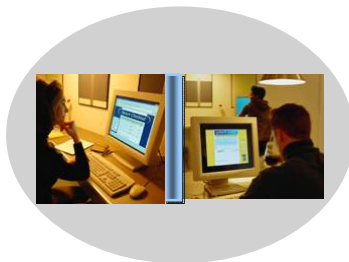
12.15	<b>anna_feldman:</b> Hi!
12.15	<b>bongane_dlamini:</b> How are you?
12.15	<b>anna_feldman:</b> Fine – have you got the results from your statistical analysis yet?
12.16	<b>bongane_dlamini:</b> Yes. The first part is ready.
12.16	<b>anna_feldman:</b> Could you send that to me now? The rest can come later.
12.16	<b>bongane_dlamini:</b> Sure. I'm e-mailing it now.

This rapid exchange of information impacts not only on the speed with which we can communicate – but also on the *manner* or *style*. Real time communication tends to be made up of exchanges of one or two lines of text at a time. The format does not encourage delivery of paragraphs of detail (which is more common in an e-mail message) as both participants are present online simultaneously reading content as it is written. It becomes difficult to keep the flow if contributions take too long to compose.

## Real time Chat tools


Real time chat tools can be divided into two distinct technologies:


- **Internet Relay Chat (IRC)** and
- **Instant Messengers (IM).**



Some chat clients come bundled with your web browsing software and are already installed on your computer. For upgrades and other programs that are not already installed, you will need to visit the appropriate Web site and download them.

Be careful! Peer-to-peer software and IM can expose you to security threats such as spyware, worms and viruses.

 **Would you like to know more about Internet Relay Chat?**  
See Annex 3.2.9 for a mini-lesson on using this tool

 **Would you like to know more about Instant Messengers?**  
See Annex 3.2.10 for a mini-lesson on using these tools

### Real time Chat tools

A **chat application** (also called a **chat client** or **program**), is the tool you have on your computer that enables you to:

- choose the channel – or chat room - you wish to chat in (IRC);
- choose a name for yourself which will identify you to other chatters;
- compile a list of names of other people you choose to chat with (IM);
- find out which of the people on your list of names is online and available to chat with (IM)
- type chat text in one portion of a screen (where only you can see it) and click to have it added to the dialogue in another portion of the screen (where everyone in your discussion can see it).

### Real time Chat tools



Evaluating chats appropriate tools for electronic communication requires us to think about how we want to communicate and what technical and working environments we are communicating in.

The **main characteristics** of these kinds of tools are the following:

- chats are based on the people we want to chat with being connected to the same networks at the same time, for the duration of the chat;
- conversational style of communication creates dialogues consisting of short contributions from chatters.

### Real time Chat tools

#### ↑ STRENGTHS

- Gives people the opportunity to make **decisions and respond quickly**.
- Can **complement asynchronous** forms of electronic communication, such as e-mail, by giving an instant prompt for more in-depth material to be sent by e-mail.

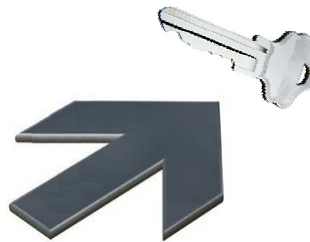
#### ↓ WEAKNESSES

- These dialogues can easily go on for some time, this is an obstacle in various contexts of connectivity. Being online for the duration of your chat **requires a stable connection to the Internet**. It also requires **affordable access**. Dial-up users who pay for their online time will see that costs quickly mount up.
- Although we often compare real time chats to telephone communication, the element of **typing text** rather than speaking words **makes contributing more difficult for non-native language speakers**.
- Security can be a concern.

### Real time Chat tools

Some possible solutions to the weaknesses of this tool might be the following:

- **ensure that your dialogue is directed and focused**, by doing so you make the dialogue less prohibitive for colleagues with high connectivity costs;
- if decisions and ideas are discussed using chat tools, and not all relevant people have access, think about **sharing chat archives** (saved text from your dialogues) with everyone. This can help transparency, and give people the chance to feed into the dialogue by using other more accessible tools, such as e-mail;
- be very careful of accepting or opening files or URLs that are sent to you during chat sessions. Read your organization's computer security policy, if one exists.



### Real time Chat tools

Solomon Tesfaye works in a government office in the Yirga Cheffe, a coffee-growing region in Ethiopia. He has access to a permanent VSAT Internet connection, but his telephone line is very unreliable. Thus, he is thinking about installing a chat application on his computer to help him communicate more easily with colleagues in the country's Tea and Coffee Authority in the capital, Addis Abeba.

What questions would you advise him to ask himself?












- How reliable and secure is the Internet connection in this office?
- How often do I need to get quick responses from my colleagues?
- What sort of web browser do I have?
- What sort of Internet and computer access do my colleagues have?



Please select the answers of your choice (2 or more) and press Check Answer.

### Job aids

See the interactive lesson to download and print the following documents.

-  **Examples of listserv software and services**
-  **A low technology option for setting up an e-newsletter**
-  **Setting up non e-mail asynchronous discussions**
-  **Setting up a blog**
-  **Setting up a wiki**
-  **Setting up calendars**
-  **A collaborative workspace story: the APC example**
-  **Setting up an FAQ**
-  **Example of Q & A request form**
-  **Setting up a decision support tool**
-  **Setting up site update alerts**

### Summary

Tool	Community members access tool/content via	Key communication characteristics	Archiving/storage	Connectivity demands on community members
E-MAIL	E-mail	One-, two- or multidirectional; conversation or information push	Up to individual users	Low
MAILING LISTS	E-mail	Multidirectional conversation	Tools support automatic central archiving	Low
E-NEWSLETTERS	E-mail	One way information push	Tools support automatic central archiving	Low
FORUM	Web	Multidirectional conversations	Automatic central archiving	High
NEWSGROUPS	Web or standalone client	Multidirectional conversation	Automatic central archiving	High
SURVEYS AND POLLS	E-mail, web	Multidirectional information pull	Automatic central archiving	Low
BLOGS	Web	One-, two- or multidirectional exchange of information. Can be used for a form of conversation	Central information store	High
WIKIS	Web	Two- or multidirectional collaborative work. Can also be used for one way information pull	Central information store	High
CALENDARS	Web or IM client	One-, two- or multidirectional information exchange	Central information store	High
COLLABORATIVE WORKSPACES	Web	Two- or multidirectional information exchange	Central information store	High
FAQS	Web	One way information push / information storage	Central information store	High
QUESTION & ANSWER	E-mail, web or IM/Chat	Two way structured exchange of information – not really a conversation	Varies according to the tool	High if web- or IM/Chat-based; low if e-mail based
DECISION SUPPORT	Web or standalone tool	One way information push	Not archived	High if web-based; low if standalone tool used
SITE UPDATE ALERTS	E-mail	One way information push	Tools support automatic central archiving	Low
RSS FEEDS	Web, e-mail or standalone client	One-, two- or multidirectional information push	Varies according to tool	High if web- or standalone client based; low if e-mail based
PORTALS	Web	One way information pull	Central information store	High
WEB CHAT	Web	Two- or multidirectional conversation	Not all tools support archiving	High
IRC	Standalone client	Two- or multidirectional conversation	Not all tools support archiving; there are some add-on IRC archiving tools	High
INSTANT MESSENGER	Standalone client	Two- or multidirectional conversation	Tools support archiving by individual users; this is not always automatic	High



Click on the icon to download and print the table

### If you want to know more...

#### E-mail

Bridges.org. Case study series on ICT-enabled development  
[http://www.bridges.org/ictd\\_casestudies/tygerberg\\_telemedicine/index.html](http://www.bridges.org/ictd_casestudies/tygerberg_telemedicine/index.html)

Learn the Net. Harness e-mail  
<http://www.learnthenet.com/english/section/email.html>

It Can. Online Training: Sending e-mail messages  
[http://www.it-can.org/training/online\\_course\\_chapter4.html](http://www.it-can.org/training/online_course_chapter4.html)

Brain, Marshall. How E-Mail Works.  
<http://computer.howstuffworks.com/email.htm>

Webopedia. Quick reference: Countries and Their Domain Extensions.  
[http://www.webopedia.com/quick\\_ref/topleveldomains/countrycodeA-E.asp](http://www.webopedia.com/quick_ref/topleveldomains/countrycodeA-E.asp)

The Gilbert Email Manifesto (GEM)  
<http://news.gilbert.org/gem>

Thirdate, Email Basics: An Introduction  
<http://www.thirdage.com/features/tech/booster/email/>

Learn the Net, a guide to the Internet and World Wide Web: E-Mail  
<http://www.learnthenet.com/english/section/email.html>

#### listservs, mailing lists and e-newsletters

MMTK. Introduction to Mailing Lists  
<http://www.itrainonline.org/itrainonline/mmtk/listservers.shtml>

Krause, A. Stein, & Stein, M. 2000. How to Create a 'BCC' Email List.  
<http://www.techsoup.org/howto/articlepage.cfm?ArticleId=262&topicid=5>

Milles, J. 1997. Comparative list of mailing list commands  
<http://www.wesleyan.edu/libr/infokey/maiser.htm>

**If you want to know more...**

**listserv hosts and software**

Dgroups (hosting for development-related lists).

<http://www.dgroups.org/>.

Yahoo! Groups (free hosting)

<http://groups.yahoo.com/>.

Topica (free hosting)

<http://lists.topica.com/>.

Mailman (free)

<http://www.gnu.org/software/mailman/mailman.html>.

Majordomo (free)

<http://www.greatcircle.com/majordomo/>.

Sympa (free)

<http://www.sympa.org/>.

Listserv

<http://www.lsoft.com/products/default.asp?item=listserv> .

**Forum and Newsgroups**

McLellan, T. 1997. An Introduction to Usenet News.

<http://www.islandnet.com/~tmc/html/articles/usenetnws.htm>.

Web access to newsgroups

<http://www.google.com/grhp?hl=en&tab=wq&q=> .

Forte Software (Free Agent)

<http://www.forteinc.com/>.

Woolley, D.R. Forum Software for the Web

<http://www.thinkofit.com/webconf/forumsoft.htm>.

**If you want to know more...**

**Surveys and Polls**

NPower New York's Guide to Online Survey tools is written especially for nonprofits:

[http://www.npower.org/tools/online\\_tools.htm](http://www.npower.org/tools/online_tools.htm)

**Blogs**

Hawkins, S. 2002. An Introduction to Weblogs.

<http://www.techsoup.org/howto/articlepage.cfm?ArticleId=439&cg=searchterms&sg=blog>.

Austin Free-Net. blogging!

[http://www.austinfreenet.net/curricula/blogging\\_curriculum.html](http://www.austinfreenet.net/curricula/blogging_curriculum.html).

Learn the Net. Of blogs and bloggers

<http://www.learnthenet.com/english/html/82blog.htm>.

Masnick, M. & Agarwal, P. Enterprise blogging. Techdirt white paper.

<http://www.techdirt.com/reports/dl/ebwhitepaper.pdf>.

K-Logs (Knowledge Management Weblogs). Discussion group focused on using blogs for knowledge management in nonprofits and for-profits. <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/klogs/>.

**Free blog hosts**

blogger: <http://www.blogger.com/>

tblog: <http://www.tblog.com/>

**Wikis**

Sinclair, J. .What a wiki thing to do. Sydney Morning Herald July 22 2003.

<http://www.smb.com.au/articles/2003/07/21/1058639712033.html>.

Common Craft. 2003. Wikis described in plain English,

<http://www.commoncraft.com/archives/000644.html>.



If you want to know more...

**Calendars**

Hobgood, B. 2002. Creating free calendars online.  
<http://www.learnnc.org/index.nsf/doc/timesaver0406?OpenDocument>.

**Free calendar hosting**

Calendars.net  
<http://www.calendars.net/>.

**Collaborative workspace**

Singh, Sheetal. The Virtual Office  
[http://www.techsoup.org/howto/npostory\\_article.cfm?articleid=44&topicid=5](http://www.techsoup.org/howto/npostory_article.cfm?articleid=44&topicid=5).

David Woolley Conferencing Software for the Web. <http://thinkofit.com/webconf/index.htm>

Conference Zone Resources. <http://www.conferzone.com/resource/wp.html>

**Online answer tools**

Macromedia Robohelp site  
<http://www.macromedia.com/software/robohelp/>.

**Site update alerts**

Explanation of RSS, How You Can Use it, and Finding RSS Feeds  
<http://www.faganfinder.com/search/rss.shtml>.

How to Create an RSS Feed With Notepad, a Web Server, and a Beer  
<http://www.downes.ca/cgi-bin/webiste/view.cgi?dbs=Article&key=1059503386>.

Sharing your site with RSS  
<http://hotwired.lycos.com/webmonkey/03/17/index3a.html>.

RSS Described in Plain English  
<http://www.commoncraft.com/archives/000528.html>.

**Portals**

Surman, Mark & Association for Progressive Communications. Understanding Civil Society Portals.  
[http://www.apc.org/apps/img\\_upload/b56060111868b123a8b53835707e53fb/983a73bf83d6b54159db2dde4e1bcd9d.zip](http://www.apc.org/apps/img_upload/b56060111868b123a8b53835707e53fb/983a73bf83d6b54159db2dde4e1bcd9d.zip)

If you want to know more...

**Greenstone Digital Library Software**

<http://www.greenstone.org/cgi-bin/library>.

**Real time chat**

BigBlueBall.Com. Instant Messaging: Step-by-Step: Getting Started.  
<http://www.bigblueball.com/im/step-1.php>.

Tenby, S. 2002. An Introduction to Chat and Instant Messengers.  
<http://www.techsoup.org/howto/articlepage.cfm?ArticleId=122&topicid=5>.

**Real time chat tools: IRC**

mIRC, <http://www.mirc.com>.

ircII, <http://www.irchelp.org/irchelp/ircii/>.

Ircle, <http://www.ircl.com/>.

PIRCH, <http://www.pirch.com>.

**Real time chat tools: Instant Messenger**

Yahoo! Messenger  
<http://messenger.yahoo.com>.

AIM: America Online's Instant Messenger  
<http://www.aim.com>.

ICQ: the original instant messenger  
<http://www.icq.com>.

MSN Instant Messenger  
<http://www.msn.com>.

Odigo  
<http://www.odigo.org/>.

## Annex 3.2.1 Mini-lesson: Using e-mail

### Receiving messages



To read any e-mail messages you have received, you must first download them from the mailbox on your Internet Service Provider's mail server to the mailbox in your e-mail client. Alternatively you can also access your messages using a web browser.

To retrieve (download) new messages into your e-mail client, click on the **Receive** icon or menu item. The new messages will appear in the list of received messages in your mailbox. You can open them and read the messages by clicking on each subject line in the list.

To download messages from the mail server, you need to know your account name (**login**) and **password**. The login tells the mail server which account you are trying to access while the password protects your account from being accessed by an imposter.

### Receiving messages

Most e-mail clients guide you through the process of setting up the mail sending and receiving options when you work with them for the first time.



There are variations in each client's settings which can help you use e-mail messages effectively in different settings.

For example it can be useful to leave messages on the server, even after you have read them, if you are temporarily working at a different terminal from usual. This allows you to download the messages later when you return to your own computer.

## Creating messages

The **To** is for the e-mail addresses of the main recipients.

The **CC (Carbon Copy)** field is for addresses of people, that you want to copy the message to.

The **BCC (Blind Carbon Copy)** is for addresses that you want to be invisible to the other recipients of your message. Multiple addresses can be inserted into each of these fields. They must be separated by a comma and an empty space.

The message is sent into a queue of outgoing messages or it is sent directly through the network to the addressee (depending on the preferences set up on your e-mail client).

To create a new e-mail message:

1. click on the **New message** icon or menu item;
2. write the subject of the message into a **subject line**;
3. add recipients' **addresses** into the **To, CC, or BCC** fields;
4. write the **text of your message** in the **body** part of the message;
5. add any necessary file **attachments** to the message, using the appropriate icon or menu item; and
6. click on the **Send** icon or menu item.

The **subject line** gives the recipient an idea of what the message is about before opening it. By writing the subject line carefully, you can increase the chance that your recipient will open and read it.

It is best to send your messages in **plain text**. This can be set as the default in the "composing message" options of your e-mail client.

A dialog box will appear asking you to select the file you want to send with the message. Many types of files can be sent as e-mail attachments (text, image, audio and video) but you must make sure the size of the attachment isn't too big. Large attachments can block your recipient's e-mail and prevent the downloading of your message.

## Searching messages



Most e-mail programs include a **search tool** which allows you to look for messages containing particular words.

You can restrict your search by date, or to a specific folder, or by other criteria, depending on the tool.

See your program's manual or help files to learn more about this search function for your own program.

### Forwarding messages



If you receive a message and want to send it to someone else, you **forward** it:

- in the list of messages, select the message you want to forward;
- click on the **Forward** icon or menu item
- if you want to add something to the message text, write it at the beginning of the text which is being forwarded;
- follow the same steps as when you are composing a new message.

### Replying to messages

If you want to reply to a received message:

1. click on the **Reply** icon or menu item, the sender of the original message is automatically added to the **To** address field of the message (the original text is usually preserved with slightly changed formatting in the field where you compose the text);
2. write your reply at the beginning of the message or after each chunk of text to which you are replying; and
3. follow the same steps as when you are composing a new message.



If the original message to which you are replying had multiple recipients, you can choose to send your reply to all of them. Click on the **Reply all** icon or menu item. The address of the person who composed the message to which you are replying is automatically added into the **To** field. The addresses of all other recipients are added to **CC** field.

### The address book

The Address book is a system for storing and easily retrieving e-mail addresses of people you are corresponding with.



You will find an Address book icon next to the address fields in your e-mail client. By clicking on that icon, a list of all the addresses stored in your address book, will appear.

You can then pick the addresses of all intended recipients and add them easily to the corresponding address field.

Some e-mail clients "complete" your addresses for you as you type them in the address fields. It compares the characters as you type them, with the addresses contained in your address books. If it finds a match, it completes the address after you typed in just a few initial characters.

Most e-mail programs also allow you to set up basic distribution lists in your address book.

## Annex 3.2.2 Mini-lesson: Newsgroups

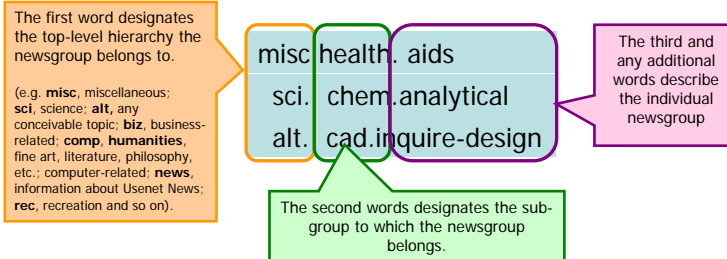
### Function and structure

Newsgroups serve exactly the same function as web based discussion forums (threaded discussions around particular topics) but they:

- **predate the Web**; and
- **are based on a different technology** (although these days many are also available through the Web).

There are many thousands of newsgroups, on topics ranging from entertainment to science.

Newsgroups are structured and described using **hierarchical classification**. Each newsgroup name consists of a number of **words separated by a dot**, for example:



### Accessing newsgroups



The simplest way of accessing newsgroups is to use the [Google™ Groups](#) web interface. This allows you to view and post to newsgroups from your web browser.

If you decide to use newsgroups extensively, you will need special newsgroup reader software installed on your computer to manage your users effectively.

Some Internet suites (e.g. [Mozilla](#)) come bundled with newsreader software.



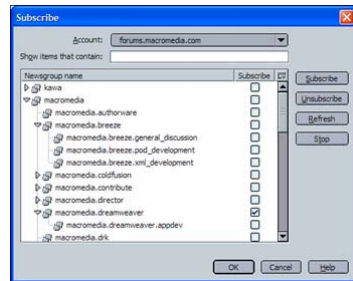
There are also standalone newsreader programs such as [Free Agent](#).

### Accessing newsgroups

To use a newsreader you must first **set-up your account settings**. Most newsreaders will take you through setting up your account using a wizard. You will need to input your **name**, **e-mail address** and the **name of the news server** you want to use (if you do not know the name of a news server, ask your Internet Service Provider).

Once you have done this you should be able to **browse through the list of newsgroups** (different newsreaders will have different options but most will follow the same principles).

Let's look at, for example, Mozilla's newsgroup subscription window...



As you can see, newsgroups are listed in alphabetical order.

Some of them expand to show sub-groups (e.g. macromedia., dreamweaver., and so on).

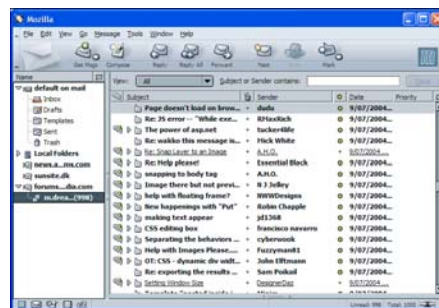
You can choose to subscribe to a group, which means that the new postings will always be downloaded for that group.

Once you have looked at the list of newsgroups and decided which ones you would like to download, you can close this window and...

### Accessing newsgroups

...the subscribed groups will appear in your newsreader with the postings downloaded (as shown below in the example).

As you can see, the newsreader is very similar to an e-mail client. Posting replies or starting a new thread is just like sending an e-mail message.



Postings are listed in date order, but you can change this by clicking on column headings.

Each thread expands to show all replies to the original post.

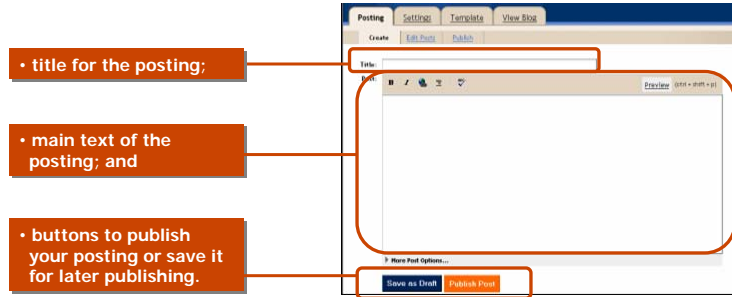
To reply to the posting you are reading, simply click on 'Reply' in toolbar of newsreader.

### Annex 3.2.3 Mini-lesson: Blogs

#### Using a blog

Postings are made via a simple web interface, as you can see in the example below.

Although the posting page varies from one blog application to another, you will usually find the following fields and elements where you can add content:



Some blogs also give readers the option to post **comments** on what you have written. This emphasises a **collaborative orientation** to the blog. The comment feature appears as a publicly accessible input form beneath your postings.

#### Using a blog

This is an example from the Adam Smith Institute blog:

The image shows a screenshot of a blog post from the Adam Smith Institute blog. The post title is 'A blog on Communities of practice in development'. The main body text is highlighted with an orange box and labeled 'main body text of a single posting'. The post includes a date, author information, and a list of bloggers.

<http://blogs.bellanet.org/>

Let's scroll and see the rest of the page...



**Using a blog**

...readers' comments are beneath the body text of a posting...

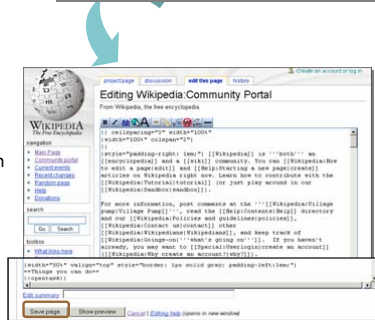
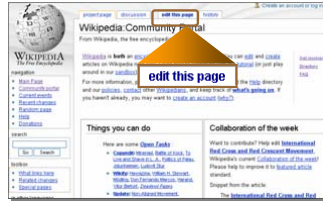
The screenshot shows a 'Comments' section on a blog. At the top, it says 'Display comments as (Linear | Threaded)'. Below this is a single comment from 'lortzke.hulsebosch' dated '2005-12-06 11:19'. The comment text is: 'Hi Lucy, thanks for all the promo!! It makes me feel shy (Nancy's promo as well), but the sitemeter is speeding up. And yes, I'll have to get used to audience... (thought of blogging because I thought the chances of being read were REALLY low with millions of blogs around...'. Below the comment is an 'Add Comment' form with fields for Name, Email, Homepage, In reply to (set to '[ Top level ]'), and a large text area for the Comment. Two orange callout boxes with arrows point to the comment and the form. The first callout box says 'one reader's comment' and points to the comment text. The second callout box says 'publicly accessible form for readers to post comments' and points to the 'Add Comment' form.

## Annex 3.2.4 Mini-lesson: Wikis

### Wikis' structure

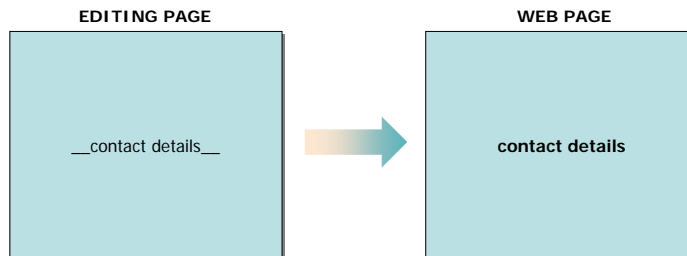
While details will vary depending on the particular tool, all wikis follow the same basic structure:

- if the wiki is open for public editing, or if you are a registered user with permission to edit the wiki, any wiki page you view will have an **"edit page"** button, tab or link;
- by clicking on "edit page", you will be presented with the text of the page in a simple text editor;
- here you can make any changes you wish to the page;
- by clicking on **"Save page"** your changes will appear on the wiki page.



### Formatting text

To make changes in a wiki page, you need to format text using some simple **formatting commands** listed in the wiki editing page's **"help function"**. For example, to display bold text on the wiki web page, you need to put this text between two underscores in the editing page :



Wikis also generally allow you to use HTML code if you are familiar with it.

## Annex 3.2.5

### Mini-lesson: Online Conference and Collaboration Tools



The use of **audio, videos, and document sharing** is becoming more accessible as people have access to faster Internet connections.

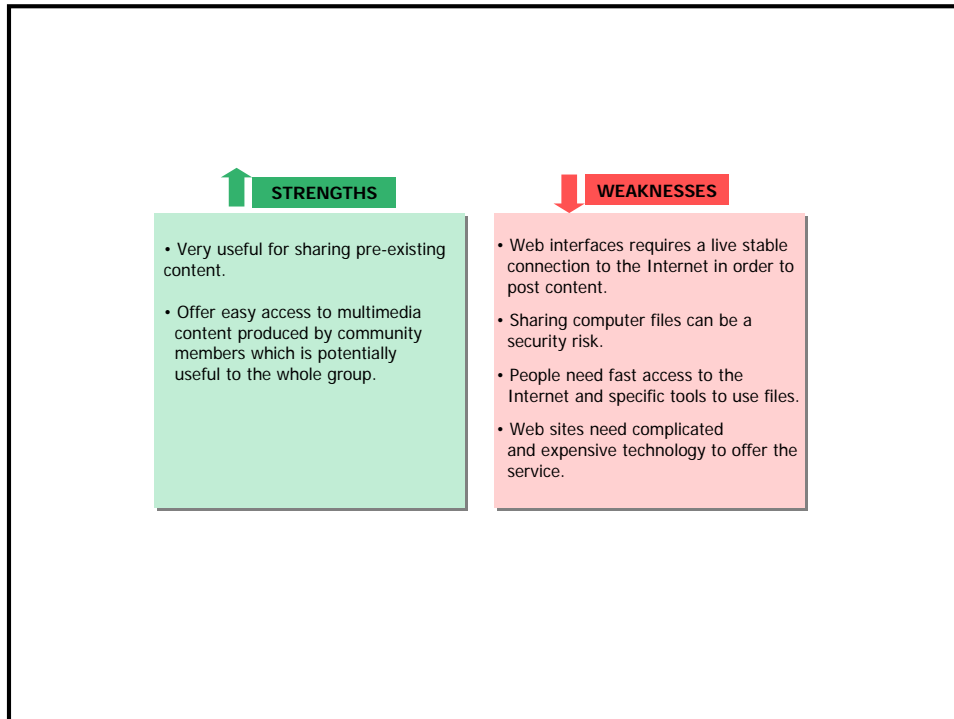
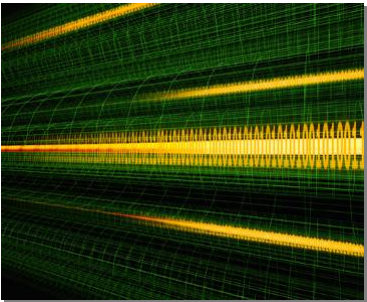
These tools allow **interaction beyond text interfaces** as well as a **one-to-many presentations** via the Web.

They also allow members of a group to **share files of common interest**, permitting everybody to use the programs uploaded by other members, download them to rebroadcast on their Web site or radio stations, upload their own programs to share with other members, and see what resources are available from other Web sites.

Usually **file sharing** follows the Peer-to-Peer (P2P) model, where the files are stored on and served by personal computers of the users. Most people who engage in file sharing are also downloading files that other users share. Sometimes these two activities are linked together. [source [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File\\_sharing](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File_sharing)]  
An example of P2P application is [BitTorrent](#), a free, open source file-sharing application effective for distributing very large software and media files.

The table below shows the definition of the different types of collaboration tools, and then indicate their attributes and uses...

Type	Definition	Attributes	Uses
<b>Audio Conferencing</b>	Interactive, real-time audio communication among three or more people. (also known as Conference Calls)	Conducted via telephone or over an Internet connection. Participants dial a special phone number to be connected to the call or are connected by a web site or Internet telephone software.	Spontaneous or scheduled meetings or communications that do not require real time visual aids or data sharing.
<b>Web Conferencing</b>	Interactive, real-time audio and visual information sharing between two or more people via the Internet.	Conducted via a web browser over the Internet. Usually includes an audio conferencing component, as well as document sharing, and other visual information sharing tools. Sometimes the document/ visual information sharing part is used in conjunction with traditional audio conferencing.	Spontaneous or scheduled meetings or communication and collaboration requiring shared visual information (such as shared electronic documents, websites, whiteboards and shared documents).
<b>Video Conferencing</b>	Interactive, real-time video, audio, and data communication between two or more locations via voice and/or data networks.	As the participants speak to one another, they hear each other's voices and see a video image of the other participant(s). Supports rich media and meeting tools, but not universally available. High quality video conferencing is complex to deploy, learn and use. And requires specialized systems and support.	Scheduled meetings or communication with visual and data support among compatible systems.
<b>Webcasting</b>	Web casting refers to broadcasting (usually live events such as performances or concerts) across the Internet for viewing on individual computers.	Participants access via a web browser and the Internet. Not interactive –like a television broadcast over the Internet.	Scheduled, one-to-many meetings and communications with a large audience.  Storing and sharing audio and video clips.

One of the **technologies** enabling video and audio conferencing is **streaming media**.

It is a technique for transferring data such that it can be processed as a steady and continuous stream.

Streaming technologies are becoming increasingly important with the growth of the Internet because most users do not have fast enough access to download large multimedia files quickly.

With streaming, the client browser or plug-in can start displaying the data before the entire file has been transmitted.

[source: [www.webopaedia.com/TERM/s/streaming.html](http://www.webopaedia.com/TERM/s/streaming.html)]

The following are several questions you should consider when selecting which tool to use.

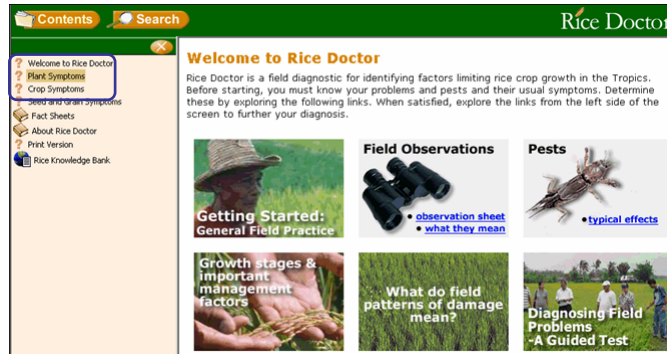
- Does your communication need visual contact between participants? Or is a verbal exchange over the telephone enough?
- Do you need other online tools that can be used as part of a meeting (such as Instant Messaging for participants and/or facilitators, online polling tools, whiteboards)?
- Do you need to convene meetings quickly and spontaneously, as well as schedule them in advance?
- What collaborative work or interaction features are available (Chat, Q&A, online voting, conference call, etc.)?
- How many people can participate in a session?
- Are the moderator and presentation tools easy to use?
- What are the access requirements and technical requirements for end-users? Does the software exclude those with dial up connections and older equipment?
- Is the interface easy to use?
- What is the pricing model?
- Does the free service offer enough value and features?
- Can the look and feel of the software be customized?

## Annex 3.2.6

### Mini-lesson: Examples of Electronic decision support tools

#### Rice Doctor

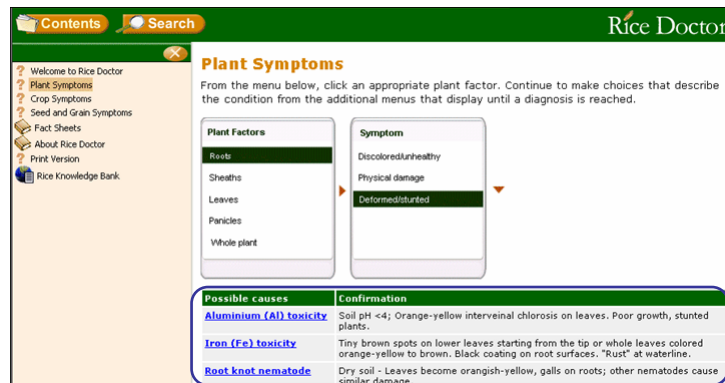
**Rice Doctor** ([http://www.knowledgebank.irri.org/riceDoctor\\_MX/default.htm](http://www.knowledgebank.irri.org/riceDoctor_MX/default.htm)) is a field diagnostic tool for identifying factors limiting rice crop growth in the tropics.



Users choose the broad type of plant symptom (like the one in our example), crop symptom, or seed and grain symptom...

#### Rice Doctor

...then users choose from a series of possible Plant factors (e.g. "Roots") and after that they choose the symptom (e.g. "Deformed/stunted"). At this point, Rice Doctor generates a list of possible causes.



Users can click on each possible cause for a full fact sheet.

## Annex 3.2.7 Mini-lesson: Online Directories

### What are Online Directories ?

An online directory (also called digital library, information gateway or resource database) is a **library of resources on other Web sites**.

At its most basic, it can be a simple **list of links** which are **catalogued manually** according to a simple classification scheme. More sophisticated versions store the information in **databases** which can be browsed or searched by users.

An online directory contains information such as actual documents, or references to documents and other Web sites.

Some are narrowly focussed on particular topics, others cover a broad range; some are dedicated directory sites, while others are part of larger sites.



*Yahoo! is a well known online directory: it allows you to do research on the Web and inside specific databases.*

### How do they work ?

Online directories are organized in a systematic fashion, although categorization varies from directory to directory.

Most commonly they follow a **hierarchical structure which goes from general to particular**.

For example:

**Social sciences**

- Economics
  - Economic development
  - Economic history
  - Macroeconomics

Categories may be:

- **thematic**, for example, "women" and "health";
- **regional**, "East Africa", "West Africa", etc.; or
- based on any **classification scheme** which is logical for the subject matter.

Most directories are both searchable and browseable.

### Quality assurance



Most directories use some form of human **editorial quality assurance process**.

These can range from:

- the most **basic**, for example, ensuring that a URL is correct and the resource exists; to
- **in-depth** evaluations of resources before they are included in the directory.

Editors also classify and describe the resources which are being added.



## Annex 3.2.8 Mini-lesson: Resource Collections

### What are Resource Collections

While an online directory is a library of resources on other Web sites, a **resource collection** is a library of resources on the same site.



Making the best use of an online resource centre means looking for information with the same approach the collection uses in organizing content.

The approach will vary according to the collection you are using.

### Using Resource Collections

The resource collection might **organize information** based on entry points such as:

- **broad academic disciplines** (e.g. social sciences, historical analysis, natural sciences);
- **region** (e.g. by continent or country);
- **concrete but general subject categories** (e.g. technology, economics, engineering, business);
- **concrete but focused subject categories** (e.g. agricultural economics, irrigation, animal husbandry); and
- **content format** (e.g. news, donor reports, government reports, issue briefings, technical guides).

Let's write a query for an online resource together...

### Using Resource Collections

#### 1. Ask yourself questions to make your query clearer.

For example, if you are interested in information about irrigation systems, ask yourself relevant questions such as:

• Are there any countries that are particularly relevant to my interest in irrigation?

• Do I want to know about the engineering implications of establishing irrigation systems, what irrigation systems are most sustainable for small-holder farmers, what financing is available to farmers wanting to install irrigation systems?

• Am I interested in finding cost benefit analyses that have been written about irrigation systems, in identifying a range of irrigation options or in the technicalities of how to implement a specific irrigation system?

#### 2. Try putting your query into one sentence.

For example, "Examples of drip irrigation in East Africa among maize farmers".

### Using Resource Collections

#### 3. Split your sentence into concepts.

"Examples of drip irrigation in East Africa among maize farmers"

Concept 1	Concept 2	Concept 3
Drip irrigation	East Africa	maize farmers

#### 4. Be aware of other terms that could also be used to describe the concepts.

These may include different spellings and synonyms. By thinking of alternative search terms you can develop a range of terms to use in conjunction with the features of various search tools.

Concept 1	Concept 2	Concept 3
Drip irrigation	East Africa	maize farmers
Drip emitters	Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda	Corn agriculturalists
micro-sprinkler	Horn of Africa	cash crop small-holders

5. You can then use these concepts to work through the resources that are listed in the Resource Collection, using them to identify relevant headings to filter the available resources.

## Annex 3.2.9 Mini-lesson: Internet Relay Chat

### What is IRC



IRC is a multi-user, multi-channel chatting system.

When you are connected to the Internet, you can use the IRC program on your computer to connect to an IRC network. These networks give you access to their channels, also called **chat rooms**.

Chat rooms are created by the people who connect to the IRC network, and usually **focus on specific themes** such as different geographical locations, interests, movements or philosophies.

There can be tens of thousands of these people mingling in the IRC channels at any one time. You can join the chat rooms and participate in group discussion, or you can choose to chat privately with individuals.

### What is IRC

The discussions that take place in a channel are like conversations at a party - everybody who is there can *hear* (read) everything that everybody else is *saying* (typing).

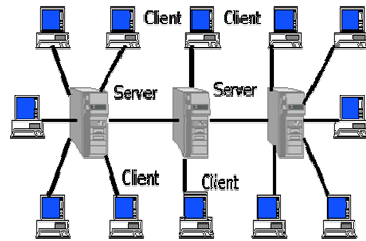
Likewise, if somebody arrives late or leaves early, they will not hear what is said before or after they get there.

The channels on IRC have names starting with # (hash) and usually give an indication of what is being discussed there.

For example:

- **#irchelp** is the channel where you can get technical IRC help; and
- **#new2irc** is where new users are welcome to join and chat.

### How IRC works



IRC uses a **client-server model**:

- you run a client program on your local computer;
- this enables you to connect to a server computer on the Internet;
- the IRC servers link to many other servers to make up an IRC network;
- messages are transported from one user (client) to another through this network.

In this way, people connected to the Internet from around the world can talk to each other simultaneously.

There are various client programs available. The most common are [mIRC](#), and [PIRCH](#).

Through the client, every user chooses a **nickname** which becomes his identifier when he is chatting in his chosen channels.

### Web chat



A more recent variation of IRC is **Web chat**.

It provides an **online space for people to chat together** on topics they select.

However, unlike IRC, the whole display and **interaction takes place via your web browser**.

Web chat is available on sites that want to encourage their users to dialogue in real time with each other or with a particular person - an expert or celebrity - who is being presented by the site.

Some web chat tools are accessible without any additional software, while some require you to install browser plug-ins.

## Annex 3.2.10 Mini-lesson: Instant Messengers (IM)

### What are Instant Messengers



Instant Messengers are real time chat tools that contrast with IRC by giving you **more control over the space in which you chat**.

Unlike IRC chat rooms, where you choose which themed channel you want to chat in, IM let you **choose which individuals you want to chat with**.

The focus of the IM program is a list you create of the names of other people you want to chat with.

Most commonly, you use your IM client program to choose to chat with any one person on that list, although it is possible to chat with several people.

### How IM works

As with IRC, when you are connected to the Internet, **your IM client connects you with its IM server**, and shows which of the people on your list of names are also online at that moment.

You can then start a dialogue with any one of them, or any group of them.

Unlike IRC, different IM servers use different protocols (languages) to operate in. This means that the people you add to your list all need to be registered with the same IM server you are registered with.

For example,  
it is not possible for someone who is only registered with **Yahoo! Instant Messenger** to chat with someone who is only registered with **MSN Instant Messenger**.

## Using an IM

Although the registration and user functionality of IM varies from one application to another, they tend to have the same basic components.

The example below is taken from **Yahoo's Instant Messenger**.

### Step 1

Select which IM system you want to use and download and install the software from the appropriate location.



### Step 2

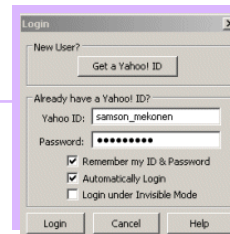
Register yourself with an ID for your Instant Messenger.



## Using an IM

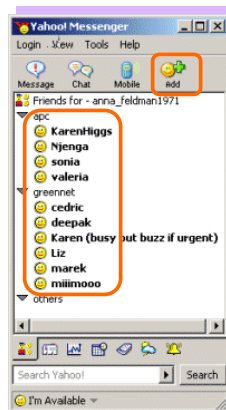
### Step 3

Log into your Instant Messenger by entering your ID and your password.



### Step 4

Add friends, by clicking on the icon and entering their Instant Messenger ID in the pop up box (you will need to know their IDs).



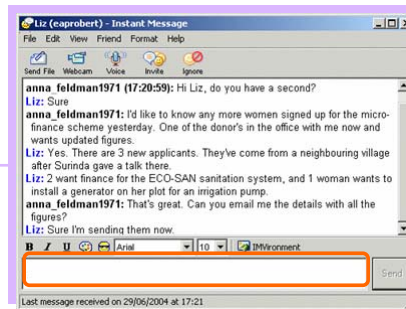
## Using an IM

### Step 5

Start chatting by typing into the bottom section of the pop up window.

See your text appear above when you press enter.

See your partner's text appear above when she presses enter.



## IM's features

The functionality of different clients varies from one program to another but features can include:

- access to a saved **archive of your chat**, so that you can make reference to the text of a passed dialogue;
- **file transfer**, so that you can pass documents to the person or people you are chatting with.
- **voice communication**, using a microphone and speakers you can send and receive sound through your IM server, enabling you to speak instead of typing;
- **offline messaging**, allows you to write a message for someone on your list who is offline, that will popup as soon as they connect online; and
- **conferencing**, inviting a group of several people to chat together.