

IT clinic IT_WB01

Introducing WebBoard

WHAT IS WEBBOARD?

WebBoard is a tool for online conferencing. Sometimes referred to as forums or discussion groups, online conferencing allows you to share information with others quickly and easily.

Whatever your need or desire for communicating with others, WebBoard has many features and options that make conferencing across the Internet or within an intranet efficient and effective. You can share information by posting messages directly to WebBoard conferences (and reading responses). When you need to make a file available to your conference-mates, simply attach the file to a message. If you or others in your group travel, WebBoard lets you participate by email, both reading and responding to posted messages. And, if you need or want to discuss something in real time, WebBoard's chat provides instant interaction.

WebBoard is a collection of messages posted by various participants. To keep track of those messages and foster meaningful information exchange, WebBoard messages are organised in a hierarchy with four levels:

- **Board** (also called virtual board)
- **Conference**
- **Topic**
- **Message** (new topic or response)

You can liken this hierarchy to the relationship of pages in books to the bookcase that houses the book. The bookcase is the board, which houses multiple books, or conferences, on similar or varying subjects. Each book contains chapters with numbers or titles, just as conferences contain topics, with more focused subjects. Each chapter in a book has specific content that relates to the chapter title, just as topics have messages discussing that topic.

WHO HAS ACCESS?

When a board is set up by the administrator, they choose whether the board should be **Open** (available for anyone to log on as either a new user or a guest) or **Closed** (only available to users who have been registered by the administrator). Both types of board are used in the Faculty of Humanities eg **trAce** is open, but **Department of Modern Languages** is closed.

LOGGING ON

Start up Netscape Navigator (or Microsoft Explorer if you prefer). Enter the address of the board if you know it or go to <<http://human.ntu.ac.uk/resources.html>> for a list of available boards. The appearance of the boards may differ, but you should see a box for your **Username** and your **Password**. If the board is an open board, you will also have the option to register as a new user. If you are already registered as a user but have forgotten your password, then you can click on the link "**Forgotten your password?**" which enable you to enter your username and you will be emailed your password.

WORKING WITH WEBBOARD

Before you start posting messages and participating in chat sessions, you'll want to take a few minutes to become familiar with WebBoard's layout and basic operation, including navigation and functionality. Once you've successfully logged in, either as an existing user, new user, or guest, you will see the board's main page, where most WebBoard activity occurs.

If you selected frames mode (recommended), you will see a page similar to that on the right. Typically, a board's main page has three main activity areas, which are listed below and described in the next sections:

- The **conference list** (left frame) displays the conferences, topics, and messages. This list can toggle between displaying the conference list and the list of new messages.
- The **menubar** (top frame) has buttons for using WebBoard's commands and features.
- The **message window** (right frame) is the working area where information and forms are displayed. For example, the message window is where you read and post messages, complete user profile information, and execute searches.



USING THE MENUBAR



You can accomplish many WebBoard tasks quickly by using WebBoard's menubar, located at the top of your browser window.

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| Post | opens a form in the message window to compose and post a new topic to a conference (note, you must select a conference first). |
| Refresh | updates the Conferences list. In general, WebBoard refreshes the list when new messages are posted, but you may want to manually refresh the list on occasion. |
| Chat | displays the Available Chat Rooms list, which gives links to each chat room and tells how many active users are in each. If chat is not available for this board (the WebBoard administrator's prerogative), this button does not appear. |
| Search | opens the Message Search form for finding specific content in topics and/or messages (see "Searching Messages" later in this help page). |
| Mark All Read | displays a list of all conferences and allows you to mark messages as read in one or all of them. Marking messages as read eliminates the NEW icon next to the message and changes the title of the message from italic to regular font. WebBoard does not automatically mark messages read; you must do it manually. |
| Page | opens up the Logins Now page and allows you to page other users who are currently logged onto the board. |
| More | opens the More Options menu from which you can select the features and functions listed on sheet 'IT_WB04 - WebBoard – Configuring Your Account'. |
| Help | displays Help for WebBoard features (your first source of help if you experience any problems). |
| Logoff | ends your WebBoard session and displays another page. |