

ACCESSIBILITY

The extent to which users can physically access websites and other online spaces. Access is affected by factors such as technical infrastructure and physical abilities.

ACCOUNT

An Internet account allows you to access the Internet. If you have an Internet Service Provider (ISP), you will have one of these.

ASYNCHRONOUS TOOLS

Tools such as e-mail and web based discussion forums that do not require people who are communicating to be connected at the same time. This kind of communication, just as postal letters do, allows a "conversation" to be spread out across time.

BANDWIDTH

Bandwidth (the width of a band of electromagnetic frequencies) is used to mean how fast data flows on a given transmission path, such as a network. Bandwidth is important because it is a determining factor in setting the speed that information flows around the world and into your computer.

BIT

The smallest unit of measure of computer data. A bit can be a "1" or a "0".

BLOG

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. A blog allows users to easily post content onto a website on a regular basis, in a standardized format.

BREADCRUMB

Navigation information which shows users where they are in relation to overall site structure. For example: Home > Programmes > Health > Immunization.

BULLETIN BOARD

A name for web based online conferencing spaces, where users post information: announcements, job opportunities, requests - just like a physical bulletin board, in fact. Bulletin boards are asynchronous tools and can be organized in linear or threaded formats. Also called discussion board, BBS, etc.

CMS (CONTENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM)

A CMS is a complex system used to organize and facilitate collaborative content creation. The term has been associated with software that makes it easy to update and maintain a website. 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.

CSS

A cascading style sheet is a document that controls the layout and appearance of an HTML page in a web browser. A single style sheet can be used to control the appearance of every page on a site.

CHAT

Real time chats are synchronous tools which allow users to "talk" to one another in virtual real time. Users communicate by typing messages which are sent instantly to another person or group within the program. The messages are instantaneously relayed to other members and their messages are instantaneously relayed to you. The text appears as it is typed on all PCs participating in the chat. Chats occur in "chat rooms" where communication can be one-to-one or many-to-many.

COLLABORATIVE BOOKMARKING

Also called "social bookmarking", is an online service that allows saving and categorizing a personal collection of bookmarks, sharing them with others. It also allows users to take the bookmarks that have been saved by others and add them to their own collection, as well as to subscribe to the lists of others.

COMMUNICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT

The use of communication tools and process in the practice of development that focuses on: aiding different types of actors interested in understanding needs and assessing opportunities jointly; providing actors with the methods and media to reach common meaning, and; enabling actors to negotiate with other actors with contrasting perceptions and interests (Ramirez, 1999). The approach emphasizes co-equal knowledge sharing processes between users and sources of knowledge, and knowledge sharing meant to raise consciousness and build community participation (Melkote, 1991), and encourages "ownership of both the message and the medium - the content and the process - resides with the individuals or communities affected" (Communication for Social Change Consortium, 2004)

COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE (COP)

A community sharing and building knowledge around a practice. The concept of a community of practice refers to the process of social learning that occurs when people who have a common interest in some subject or problem collaborate over an extended period to share ideas, find solutions, and build innovations.

DGROUPS

Dgroups is a place on the Internet where individuals and organisations in the development sector can come together and interact with one another. In Dgroups, one can find the online tools and services needed to support the activities of a team, a group, a network, a partnership or a community. Dgroups is also a place to find groups who are interested in the same topics in international development as you.

DIAL-UP

A method of connecting your computer to the Internet. It involves connecting a modem to your computer, and connecting the modem to your telephone system. The modem allows the computer to "dial-up" like a telephone, and connect to an Internet service provider, which creates a link between your computer and the Internet. Connecting in this way, involves being charged for your time online, as you would for talking on the telephone. In areas where telephone lines have not been replaced in many decades, the transmission is especially slow.

DIGITAL DIVIDE

The gap between people who have computers or have regular access to computers and to information technologies, and those who do not have computers and lack access to information technologies.

DISCUSSION BOARD

A Discussion board, also called "forum" or "web forum", is a web based discussion area - with separate topics, each with their own "threads" of postings - where to post and reply to messages. People using this tool write their messages in a web page and do not use e-mail to send them.

DISTANCE LEARNING

A method of training in which students use Internet communication tools and technologies. E-learning systems usually comprise self-paced courses viewable with a browser and tools (such as e-mail, forums, newsgroups, videoconferencing and other forms of computer-based communication) to communicate with the tutor and with the other students. The versatility, bidirectionality and the low cost of these communication tools are some of the reasons for the success of this learning system.

DOMAIN

The location of a web-page, e-mail address, or other Internet-based location is indicated by its domain. This is derived from a hierarchical scheme for indicating logical and sometimes geographical venues from the network. Outside the USA domains indicate country: .et (Ethiopia), .za (South Africa), .ca (Canada), .uk (United Kingdom), .cz (Czech Republic), .jp (Japan), .fr (France), etc. Other common components of domains are .edu (education), .gov (government agency), .net (network related), .com (commercial), .org (non-profit and research organisations).

E-MAIL BASED TOOLS

Tools which use e-mail as the underlying means of delivery. Examples are e-mail itself, listservs, and site update alerts.

ELECTRONIC NETWORK

Extended groups of people with similar interests or concerns that interact and remain in informal contact using electronic tools such as the Internet.

FACILITATION

Facilitation is about making it easier for groups to work together effectively to achieve their goals. Facilitation is a balance between functions that enhance the environment and content, create openness and opportunity, and functions that protect the members from annoyance. Facilitation is a combination of skills and techniques that can be learned.

FILE SHARING ARCHIVE

A component of some listservers and other online community tools that allows participants to upload documents to a designated space online so that other participants can access them.

FORUM

A Forum, also called discussion board or web forum, is web based discussion area - with separate topics, each with their own "threads" of postings - where to post and reply to messages. People using this tool write their messages in a web page and do not use e-mail to send them.

GPL

An open license which means that the source code is freely-distributed and available to the general public.

HORIZONTAL COMMUNICATION

Communication between people at the same level in an organization, community or peer group, usually as a means of coordinating efforts. The term is used to differentiate this kind of communication from vertical communication. Vertical communication involves either flows of information from the top-down (such as the typical case of an agricultural researcher sending information to farmers or extension workers), or from the bottom-up (such as the unfortunately rare cases where farmers actually communicate directly to agricultural policy-makers).

HYPERLINK

Connections between one piece of information and another. In browsers, hyperlinked text is underlined.

ICTS

ICT stands for Information and Communications Technologies. It is the technology used to handle information and aid communication. This includes computers, the Internet, CD-ROMS, e-mail, telephones, radio, television, and video and digital cameras.

INSTANT MESSENGER

A real time chat which allows instant text communication between two or more people through a network such as the Internet. 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.

INTERACTIVE

A communication that is mutually or reciprocally active. For example: any two-way electronic communication system, e.g. telephone, which enables both question and answer.

INTERNET TELEPHONY

Hardware and software that enables people to use the Internet for telephone calls. To date, however, it does not offer the same quality of telephone service as direct telephone connections.

KEYWORD

When searching for content in the search engines or directories, a keyword is an essential or definitive word which identifies information.

LINK

Connections between one piece of information and another. In browsers, hyperlinked text is underlined.

LISTSERV

Also called listserver, it is a simple and fast e-mail based application that allows a one-to-many communication type. 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. One of the ways in which listserv software is used is to support mailing lists.

LURKER

A person that reads the postings in an online discussion but doesn't contribute to the discussion. Depending on the purpose of the interaction space, the facilitators may try and engage lurkers to begin responding and posting. Lurking can be seen as negative, but in some cases, people who read only can have a significant impact in a community's purpose -- let's say the purpose is to share information. If the purpose is to generate new information, then there is a stronger reason to get everyone to post -- and generate. Lurkers provide an audience, they provide page views -- they are an influence, albeit unseen, and sometimes hard to understand. Lurkers can be converted to posters.

MAILING LIST

A Mailing list is a communication tool that allows for widespread distribution of information to many participants simultaneously. Mailing lists may or may not include multiple modes of participation (individual messages, daily digests containing all the day's messages, etc.) and automatic archiving of posts on a website (such as <http://www.yahogroups.com> and <http://www.dgroups.org>). Mailing lists are usually topic-oriented (i.e. politics, scientific discussion, joke contests), even if the topic can range from extremely narrow to very detailed issues. Some mailing lists are open to anyone who wants to join them, while others require an approval from the list owner before one can join. They are distinguished by whether they are: Open or Private, Moderated or Unmoderated.

MANY-TO-MANY

A communication form where many people can communicate with many others (as opposed to the broadcast model of one to many or individual communication, one-to-one.)

MEMBER PROFILE

Information about community members posted to a website or mailing list. May include personal and professional information and information about the member's role within the community.

MODERATION

Checking postings on a mailing list or website before they are published to ensure they are appropriate.

NETIQUETTE

Stands for etiquette on the Net, which is a set of guidelines and online "manners" that suggest how to behave on the Internet, especially in mailing lists, e-mail and newsgroups. For example, in an online discussion, staying on the designated topic or searching archives before posting to see if you can find the answer.

NEWSGROUP

Discussion tool where messages are posted to, archived on, and downloaded from a news server.

NEWSLETTER

E-mail messages on a specific topic which are sent periodically to subscribers.

NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Communication through body-language, behavior, and visible appearances that may provide information about the participant's gender, age, race and status. In a face-to-face meeting, non-verbal communication can also give clues about how comfortable a person feels in the meeting and if the person agrees or disagrees with the topic under discussion.

OFF-LINE

Work done on a computer when it is not connected to the Internet or other network. E-mail messages may be written offline but can only be sent once the computer is online.

ON-LINE

The state of being connected to the Internet.

ONLINE COLLABORATION TOOLS

Tools that allow different people in different locations to communicate (usually in real time), and share information and documents via the Internet, through a web browser.

ONLINE COMMUNITY

Or virtual community, it is a group of people sharing common interests, ideas, and feelings over the Internet or other collaborative networks. A possible inventor of this term and one of its first proponents was Howard Rheingold in his book "The Virtual Community". Rheingold defines online communities as social aggregations that emerge from the Internet when enough people carry on public discussions long enough and with sufficient human feeling to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace. See also <http://www.fullcirc.com/community/definingcommunity.htm>

ONLINE CONFERENCE

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.

OPEN SOURCE SOFTWARE

Open Source Software is software which is distributed freely with its source code. Users are free to make changes to the source code under an open source license. The software licenses grant rights to users which would otherwise be prohibited by copyright. These include rights on usage, modification and redistribution. This includes making new versions of the software, porting the software to new operating systems and processor architectures, and to share it with others or market it.

POSTING

Sending a message to an online discussion.

PULL TECHNOLOGY

Technologies which require the user to actively seek out content (for example, on a website), as opposed to push technologies which deliver content without user interaction.

PUSH TECHNOLOGY

Technologies which deliver content directly to the user, without user interaction. E-mail is the most common push technology.

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

REAL TIME COMMUNICATION

Communication that occurs between two parties, where both hear/read what the other is saying/writing at the same time as it is said/written.

SEARCH ENGINE

A program that searches information for specified keywords and returns a list of the documents where the keywords were found. Although a search engine is really a general class of programs, the term is often used to specifically describe systems (like Google or Yahoo) that enable users to search for documents on the World Wide Web and USENET newsgroups.

SEARCH LOG

A record of search terms entered into a search engine. Search logs are usually generated automatically by search engines.

SOCIAL BOOKMARKING

Also called "collaborative bookmarking", is an online service that allows saving and categorizing of a personal collection of bookmarks, sharing them with others. It also allows users to take the bookmarks that have been saved by others and add them to their own collection, as well as to subscribe to the lists of others.

SOCIAL NETWORK

A social network is a net of the relationships among people, indicating how they are connected through various social familiarities which vary from casual acquaintance to close familial bonds.

SPAM

Unsolicited or unwanted e-mail messages, usually encouraging you to buy something, or participate in some other financial transaction, usually sent by unknown persons.

SYNCHRONOUS TOOLS

Tools such as instant messenger and web based chat that does require people who are communicating to be connected at the same time. This kind of communication, just as telephone calls do, allows a "conversation" to occur in real time, independently of the location of the participants.

THREAD

A set of postings to a discussion forum, composed of an initial message about a topic and all responses to it. Generally, the post which started the thread, is listed first, with responses from other participants following it, responding to either the original post or other people's responses.

TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION

By definition, "communication" is the process of exchanging information between one or more people, and normally involves a receiver of information responding to a sender. However, there is a tendency to think of "communication" as a one-way process in which a sender provides information to a receiver without any expectation of a response. Communication for development practitioners often use the phrase "two-way communication" to draw attention to the fact that communication for development is not about marketing messages to passive audiences, but is a participatory process.

URL

A website address with the name of the server where the site's files are stored, the file's directory path, and its file name. For example <http://www.fao.org/>

VIDEO CONFERENCING

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).

VIRTUAL COMMUNITY

Also called online community, it is a group of people sharing common interests, ideas, and feelings over the Internet or other collaborative networks. A possible inventor of this term and one of its first proponents was Howard Rheingold in his book "The Virtual Community". Rheingold defines online communities as social aggregations that emerge from the Internet when enough people carry on public discussions long enough and with sufficient human feeling to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace. See also <http://www.fullcirc.com/community/definingcommunity.htm>.

W3C

World Wide Web Consortium (<http://www.w3c.org>) is an organization, formed as an open consortium of members that defines information standards for the web. The W3C promotes the interoperability of web based tools by developing specifications for HTML, accessibility and other aspects of the web.

WEB SURFING

Looking for interesting things on the World Wide Web using search engines and hyperlinks.

WEBCASTING

Broadcasting (usually live events such as performances or concerts) across the Internet for viewing on individual computers.

WIKI

Wiki is a website which allows users to edit content on web pages, using any web browser. Wikis support hyperlinks and have simple text syntax for creating new pages and crosslinks between internal pages.

WIRELESS

A term used to describe telecommunications in which a telephone or data signal is carried through the air without a physical connection such as a metal wire or fiber optical cable, over part or the entire communication path.

ZIP DRIVE

An external disk drive that uses removable "zip disks" which are capable of storing up to 750 megabytes of data.