PanFora
A User’s Guide

This document describes how to operate the online discussion tool called PanFora. It was written for the Using Panfora workshop, which is offered both to faculty and TAs. For more information about this workshop, please see the Web at http://acomp.stanford.edu/atl/workshops/.

PanFora was originally created by the Stanford Learning Lab, but is now being developed by wiTHinc and has been integrated into Stanford’s new CourseWork learning management system. PanFora is designed to encourage interaction and collaboration among students and faculty by providing a user-friendly threaded discussion environment.

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Using a PanFora Forum

Announcements

The Announcements area is ideal for keeping students updated on the latest forum information. It also provides a list of the most recent postings.

Figure 1

1. Launch Netscape under the Apple menu.
3. Click Enter the Forum.

Registering for a Forum

When you enter the forum, you’ll be viewing it as a guest in novice mode. To participate, you’ll need to register.

1. Click the register button.

Figure 2
2. Type in your Email Address, First Name and Last Name then click Submit.

**Note:** You do not need to enter your Stanford University ID number.

![Add Yourself to the workshop Forum](image)

**Figure 3**

**Navigate the Forum**

The panFora interface is divided into frames. To view messages, you’ll need to select a topic. Only faculty and administrators may create topics and subtopics. Students can post new messages (called threads) that are related to each topic.
1. Click on The Benefits of PanFora located in the Topics frame.

**Note**: You can adjust the size of the frames by clicking on them and dragging them left or right to resize them. Font sizes can be increased and decreased. You can click the **help** button at any time for an overview of panFora’s features.

![Figure 4](image)

2. Click on the **Easy to Use** thread and view the navigation tools.

Each Topic and Thread is preceded by an arrow. Please take a moment to note the variations in color and position, as these graphic elements are used throughout the Forum as both visual aids and navigation tools.

![Figure 5](image)
Posting Messages

There are two methods for posting messages to the Forum. You can either post a new thread in a selected subject or click on the Reply button to reply to a specific message.

1. Click the Post New Thread button. When the Post window opens, enter a title, type your message then click the Post button.

   Note: You will not be able to post a thread without entering a title.
Note: The Email Notification pulldown menu is not available if Post as Anonymous option is checked.

2. Your message will appear at the top of the threaded message list as the Head Post. Any replies to your message will be organized beneath your post.

![Image showing a forum interface with a refresh button highlighted.](image)

**Figure 8**

Note: Use the refresh button in the Forum to update information in all frames, to include new posts and changes to the Forum.

**Working with Attachments**

The following file types are supported by panFora:

![Image showing a list of file types supported by panFora.](image)

**Figure 9**

Always add the appropriate suffix (e.g., .doc, .xls, .ppt) when saving your files in order to guarantee that they can be opened by others using the forum.
You may attach only one document per message. If you need to attach more than one document to your message, you can use utilities such as StuffIt or WinZip to create an archive of multiple documents.

Attaching a document to your message will cause an increased posting time (proportional to the file attachment size), so keep your attachments as small as possible. Using compressing utilities such as Stuffit and WinZip will help keep the file attachment size down.

**Note:** Internet Explorer for the Macintosh does not support file upload. Please use Netscape Communicator 4.0 or higher instead.

## Reply to Posts

If you are replying to a message, the title field is pre-filled with the title of the message. You may leave it as is, or enter a new or modified title by typing in the title field. Messages will not be posted if the title field is left blank.

1. Click on a message then click the **Reply to Message** button.

![Figure 10](image)
2. Type in your reply in the text field.

![Diagram of Forum reply window]

**Figure 11**

**Note:** Clicking on the **Quote** button will automatically enter the text of the message you are replying to in the new text area. If you have clicked on the Post button to create a new thread, the Quote button is not available.

Click on **Word Count** button to get an approximate word count of your message. Quoted text is not included in the Word Count total.

3. Click on **Post** button to post your message.

**Note:** Wait for the confirmation window to ensure the message was posted correctly. Remember that messages with large file attachments take longer to post.
Cancel a Post

1. Click the close box in the upper left-hand corner of the message window.
2. At the confirmation window, click the Cancel Posting link.

![Image of cancel posting confirmation window]

Figure 12

Expert Mode

Novice mode and Expert mode display the forum differently to make it easier for beginners, and give more flexibility and more features to expert users.

Expert mode adds several different ways to view the forum postings:

- Viewing by Author
- Viewing Most Recent Posts
- Viewing Replies to Your Posts

Threads and topics can be expanded and collapsed, and all the contents of a thread are displayed at once, instead of one message at a time.

When in Expert mode, frame size changes are automatically saved for you. So the system remembers when you drag the dividers between frames, and resizes them for you next time you log in. This could cause confusion on shared computers, so you can reset the frame sizes to the defaults with the button below. In Novice mode, the frame sizes are always reset to the defaults when you log in.
Switch to Expert Mode

1. Click the **Options** button.

2. When the **Forum User Options** window opens, select **Expert** Mode then click the **Close Window** button.
3. The screen will now display in expert mode. Click the **Legend** link for an overview of forum icons.

![Figure 15](image-url)
4. Click the **Hide** link.

**Figure 16**

**Log Out**

Click the **logout** button to exit the forum.

**Tips for Using the Forum**

1. Establish good login and logout habits:
   - To avoid having others assume your identity and post messages in your name.
   - To take advantage of the many customized features, such as view new replies to your posts.
   - To ensure that the correct photo is associated with your messages, therefore establishing a real human connection while interacting with others via the Forum.
2. Click the **refresh** button often.
3. Use descriptive titles when posting messages.

## Requesting and Administering a PanFora Forum

### Requesting a Forum

Go to http://panfora.stanford.edu/, click the **Forum Request Form** link, enter the information and click **Submit**.

![Forum Request Form](image)

**Figure 17**

When the forum has been created you will receive an email containing your administrative login and password as well as two URLs. The first URL will be for the admin interface that only forum administrators may access, the second will be the forum home where messages are posted.

Students will register themselves by clicking the **register** button at the forum home.
Administer a Forum

1. In Netscape, go to the URL for Class Administration. You should see a screen like Figure 18 below.

Figure 18

Note: Click the help button for information about forum administration.

Make an Announcement

1. Click the Make an Announcement link, type a title and text.
2. Under Announcements Priority, choose one of these settings:
   - Announcement on Web Page – your announcement will be available on the Web only.
   - Web Plus Email Notification – your announcement will be available on the Web and email will be sent to all selected recipients.
3. Under Recipients choose one of these settings:
   - All Groups – your announcement will be available to all students and faculty in your class.
   - Selected Group – your announcement will be available to only selected recipients in your class.
4. Under **Recipient Groups**, check the box next to every section for which you would like to make your announcement available.

5. Click on the **Submit** button to send your announcement or click on **Clear** to clear the form and start over.

![Figure 19](image)

**Note:** Do not resize your browser window while you’re entering text. Netscape will force the page to refresh causing you to lose the text you’ve already typed.
Add Topics

1. Under Topics, click Add then select Create New Topic and choose Edit. Your screen should look like Figure 20 below.

   ![Figure 20](image)

   **Figure 20**

2. Type a new topic name and click Submit. Leave the box checked in order to allow posting to the topic. Uncheck it to prevent posting.

   **Note:** Only faculty and administrators can create topics.
Add Topics in Batch

1. Under **Topics**, you may select **Add in Batch** to populate the entire Class Topics Database in one operation. This method should be used by advanced users only.

   **Note:** All new subjects allow posting by default.

   ![Batch Topic Editing Form](image)

   **Figure 21**

2. The Batch Topic Editing form is displayed.

   The format of the file MUST be as follows:
   - Dashes (-) are used to denote lower levels in the hierarchy.
   - Multiple dashes (--), (---), etc. are used to create lower sub-levels.
3. Click the **Preview** button to check your additions before submitting.

![Figure 22](image)

4. Click on **Submit**.

**Add Subtopics**

1. To add a subtopic, select an existing topic and choose **Edit**. Check the box next to **Add topic under** … then type in your new topic name and click **Submit**.

![Figure 23](image)
2. You can prevent posting to your topics by unchecking the **Allow posting to your new topic(s)** checkbox.

**Note:** Subjects will appear in alphabetical order. To place them in a “customized” order, type a number in front of each subject.

**Edit Posting Permissions**

If you choose to allow or disallow posting to a topic, you can make revisions in the **Edit Posting Permissions** area.

1. Click the **Edit Posting Permissions** link. Select a topic, click **Edit**. Check the box to allow posting, uncheck to prevent posting. When you are finished click **Submit**.

![Figure 24](image-url)
Delete Topics

1. Under Topics, click **Delete**.

2. Select your topic, click **Edit** then click the radio button next to the topic to be deleted, then click **Delete**.

3. At the confirmation page, you will need to confirm that you want to delete the subject.
   - Click **Yes** to delete, or **No** to cancel the procedure.
   - Click on **Submit**.

Once you click on submit, the page is updated to reflect the changes. (Fig. 24)

**Note:** Deleting a Subject will delete ALL Topics under it.

![Figure 25](image-url)
Upload HTML

You can provide links to your course Web site by modifying the Home Link Page.

1. Under Files, click the **Upload/Edit HTML Files** link. Under the Upload or edit file option select the **Home Link Page** from the pulldown menu, click **Soft** then click **Edit**.

2. Either edit the HTML manually or upload a replacement HTML file.

3. Click **Submit**.
Edit User Information

1. Under User Info, click the Add/Edit/Delete link.

Figure 27
2. Either search for existing users or add a New User. Type the new user’s SUNet ID and click the **Add** button.

3. Enter user information, choose permission settings, section and then click **Submit**.

Figure 28
Edit Class Information

1. Under Class Info, click Edit. You can change the following class settings at any time:

Figure 29
2. Click **Add Faculty** and select **Edit**. You can create new faculty members or modify permissions to allow a faculty member Admin privileges.

![Figure 30](image)

3. Click **Class Sections** and select **Edit**. You can add new sections and assign a section leader. To delete a section, click the check box and click **Submit**.

![Figure 31](image)
4. Click **Email Notification List** and select **Edit**. You can modify the following settings:

![Email Notification List](image)

**Figure 32**

**Delete Messages**

1. Under Topics, click Delete. You’ll have the option to delete messages, messages and replies or entire threads. Check the items that you’d like to delete then click Submit.

![Delete Messages](image)

**Figure 33**
Return to Forum Home

Congratulations, you have finished the PanFora Tutorial! When you’re finished with Class Administration, simply click the Forum button.

For More Information

Please see the Panfora Web site for more information about using Panfora at Stanford:

http://panfora.stanford.edu/