# Professional Conversations:  listserv; USENET newsgroup; chat; instant messaging; blog

from http://merrybee.info -02/08/05

## listserv

A listserv is an Internet mailing list that you can subscribe to at no charge. Messages automatically come to your e-mail in-box. There will be three addresses with a listserv that you need to know for participating. The first is the e-mail address where you send your subscription to join. The second is the e-mail address where you will send mail to the list after you join. The third is instructions for getting OFF of a listserv when you no longer want to receive mail from this list (unsubscribe). IMPORTANT: Be sure that you know how to unsubscribe to remove your name from the list.

Instructions can be confusing and different for each type of listserv. Read the instructions completely for subscribing and unsubscribing. If you try to join but get a message that you have done something wrong, you can hit the reply button and type the word "help" in the message area. Recommendation: Print out the instructions page for each listserv you are joining and keep these in a folder for future reference. You will find the instructions either as a part of the confirmation message when you subscribe or in the printed material that gave you the e-mail address to subscribe.

After you have successfully subscribed, you will automatically begin receiving copies of all messages that are addressed to the group.

You can get an idea of the range of listservs available by exploring:

- **http://www.lsoft.com/lists/listref.html**
  *CataList*.
  Search by keyword(s). Entering the word "education" gives 919 lists with education in the name or title from the total of 53,638 public lists as of February, 2005. Entering the word "teach" gives 547 lists with teacher, teachers, or teaching in the title and little overlap with the previous 888. Nicely presented and kept current.

- **http://lists.topica.com/dir/**
  *Topica Email List Directory*.
  This former Liszt Mailing List Directory points you to various types of lists. Click K-12 under Education and then select either elementary or junior high.

- **http://dir.groups.yahoo.com/dir/Schools___Education**
  *Yahoo! Groups*.
  Directory of free email groups related to schools and education. Go to "Browse for more specialized groups", select "K-12", and click "elementary". Elementary teachers can also find groups of interest under the categories "By Subject" and "Theory and Methods". There are separate sections within this address for preschool and middle school.

Never been on a listserv? Subscribing to one of the nine mailing lists at Education World may be a good place to begin. These mailing lists are newsletter type rather than subscriber message exchanges.

- **http://www.educationworld.com/maillist.shtml**
  *Education World® Mailing List*.
  Clear explanations. You can subscribe and unsubscribe directly from this site.

The International Reading Association maintains six listservs labeled Online Discussions. One of these is the Reading Teacher Listserv (RTEACHER), which is the message exchange type.

- **http://www.reading.org/resources/community/discussions_rt_instruct.html**
  *RTEACHER Instructions*.
  A subscriber posts a message that is sent to every person who has subscribed. This may be an idea, a question, or a reply to a previous message. The description illustrates the procedures for participating in a listserv, and the messages concern topics of interest to most elementary teachers.

©2004-2005 Mary Berry. from http://merrybee.info                    *1*

The listserv may also have a URL where messages are archived. If so, you can follow a message and its responses (thread). You can explore past exchanges of the Reading Teacher Listserv as follows.

- **http://bookmark.reading.org/archives/rteacher.html**
  *Archives of RTEACHER.*
  Compiled chronologically for browsing, or search by given criteria on an easy-to-use search form. Archives from January, 2003.

- **http://www.mail-archive.com/**
  *The Mail Archive.*
  Archiving service for 2591 (as of February, 2005) special interest electronic mailing lists. Alphabetical, non-descriptive listing with little that is education related, but interesting to "play around".

USENET newsgroup

A newsgroup is a discussion about a particular topic. USENET is the portion of the Internet that handles most of the newsgroups. Messages do not automatically come to you as e-mail. You participate by going to the newsgroup rather than messages coming to you. A newsgroup may or may not be moderated, and is only as good as its contributors. Some groups will have numerous junk-mail messages, and there will be some misinformation in individual messages in many groups.

A good analogy for a newsgroup is a bulletin board where an individual tacks up a note, and then other readers tack their messages along side the original. When using a newsgroup you can read as much or as little of a posted message and responses as you wish, respond to the author, and/or post a new comment or request to be read by anyone else accessing the newsgroup.

Your Internet browser probably contains a News Reader to access newsgroups. The procedures and settings differ somewhat depending on your browser and version. The browser must be connected to a server configured to access a USENET site directly. Access and costs will depend on your Internet provider. Teachers who would like to examine a newsgroup, can ask the network knowledgeable person in your building for help. For background, explore the following sites and their links, but note that references are not current.

- **http://www.islandnet.com/~tmc/html/articles/usentnws.htm**
  *An Introduction to Usenet News.*
  Text article by Tim McLellan provides an introduction to newsgroups.

- **http://www.k12groups.org/k12grouplist.html**
  *k12groups.org.*
  Annotated list of newsgroups in the k12*hierarchy.

You do not need a News Reader to get an idea of the range of newsgroups available by exploring with a search engine that searches messages from newsgroups, such as Google.

- **http://groups-beta.google.com/**
  *Google Groups.*
  Archive of messages posted to Usenet groups to explore by category or keyword. Use the search box for search-engine style access to over 1,000,000,000 messages. Find more categories by clicking "Browse complete list of groups" and use the group entry box (not search box) to navigate through the alphabet.

Google also has an introductory page for those new to Usenet.

- **http://groups.google.com/googlegroups/basics.html**
  *Basics of Usenet.*
  Overview and glossary.

## Chat room

A chat site is a virtual "meeting place" where the people who are online at the same time can exchange messages in real-time. Many of the worthwhile education chat rooms have regularly scheduled meeting times on specific topics.

You can get an idea of the range of chatrooms available by exploring:

- **http://dirs.educationworld.net/cat/324615**
  *World of Education: Chat Directories.*
  An annotated general directory of sites that list chatrooms. Current.

Never visited a chat room? The Teachers.Net Chatboards may be a good place to begin.

- **http://www.teachers.net/mentors/**
  *Teachers.Net Chatboard Network.*
  A listing of education related chatboards by topic, monitored as the Mentor Support Center.
  Examples: Kindergarten, Remedial Reading, Beginning Teachers..

## Instant messaging

Instant messages resemble a cross between a chat room and e-mail. You send a text page similar to e-mail, but the message is immediately displayed on the recipient's screen so it is in real-time similar to a chat room. Unlike e-mail, you cannot save or forward the messages.

You can get an idea of the mechanics of instant messaging by exploring:

- **http://www.webopedia.com/TERM/I/instant_messaging.html**
  *Instant Messaging.*
  Explanation and links to more information about instant messaging.

## Blog or weblog

A blog, or weblog,.is a personal journal posted publicly on the Internet for anyone to read. Dated new entries written informally in a log format reflect the author's thoughts. Often there is an opportunity for the reader to respond. The blog can become more of a moderated discussion if readers are actively participating with their own comments.

You can see the wide range of content for which blogs are being used by exploring::

- **http://www.tabulas.com/~rocky/content/2035.html**
  *Weblogs: The Reading/Writing Connection.*
  Although this page itself has not been recently updated, the links in the syllabus lead to maintained sites with information about blogs and examples of blogs.

- **http://www.littlemiamischools.com/hm/**
  *Hamilton-Maineville Elementary.*
  Teachers at this Ohio school have individual weblogs.

Send comment or corrections to mberry@merrybee.info