Communities of Practice (CoP) Forum
Basic User Guide

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Adapted March 2009 by Parsons Brinckerhoff for the
AASHTO Communities of Practice implementation
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Login and General Information

This section contains the following information:

- Signing Into Your Account
- Editing Your Public Profile
- Changing Your Password

Signing Into Your Account

Use the following Procedure to sign in to your account.

**Procedure**

1. Click the **Sign in** hyperlink, found on the top right side of the screen. If **Sign in** is not displayed, then you are already signed in.

2. When you click **Sign in**, you are given a Sign In screen prompting you for your **Sign in name** and **Password**.

![Sign in Screen](image.png)
3. Input your username and password.

![Sign in form]

4. If you have forgotten your password click I **forgot my password**. You will be asked to supply the email address you used when you created your account. Click **Recover Password**. The site will email instructions to you.

5. Optional: Place a checkmark in the box for **Next time automatically sign me in**. This is not recommended unless you are using a secure workstation that only you have access to.

6. Click **Sign in**.

7. Note the user menu area is updated.

   **Terry H. Klein**  Edit  Sign out

8. To sign out, click the **Sign out** link.
Editing Your Public Profile

This site allows each user within the community to edit their public profile.

Procedure

1. From your home page, click Edit in the upper-right corner of the page.
2. The **Edit Your Profile** page displays.

3. Make your edits in the **Profile Options** tab.
4. Two other tabs contain editable settings as well: Site Options and Sign-In Information.

5. **Site Options**

6. **Sign-in Information**

7. Click Save to retain changes.
Changing Your Password

Use the following Procedure to change your community login password.

Procedure

1. Click the Edit link, on the top right side beside your login name.
2. The Edit Your Profile page displays.
3. Select the Sign-in Information tab.
4. Click Change Password.
5. A **Change Password** page displays.

![Change Your Password form]

6. Make your changes.
7. Click **Change Password**.
8. Click **Save**.
Main Page and Navigation

This section contains the following information:

- Main Page and Navigation
- Navigation Tabs
- Accessing The Communities of Practice

Main Page and Navigation

After Sign In, you will have access to the public and members’ only areas and features of the Communities of Practice site.
**Navigation Tabs**

The navigation of the site is done by visiting the various tabs found at the top of the page.

**About COP** - overview of the Communities of Practice forum

**View COPs** - a listing of the various Communities of Practice, giving you access to Discussion forums and Resource Libraries

**Acronyms** - site and industry acronyms

**Meetings & Events** - link to a Meetings & Events Calendar

**Contact Us** - Submit feedback, including comments, suggestions and recommendations regarding the Communities of Practice forum.
Accessing the Communities of Practice

Procedure

1. Click the View COPs tab to access the Communities of Practice.
2. A listing of the available COPs will display. Click the Community of Practice you would like to visit.

3. The COP main page will display:
Discussions Basics

This section contains the following information:

- Discussions Main Page Overview
- Access your Discussions
- Tags Functionality
- Discussion Posts Functionality
- Adding a Forum Post - Registered Users
- Sorting and Filtering Forum Posts
- Marking Posts as Read

Discussions Main Page Overview

The primary function of the Discussions main page is to provide you with access to all of your community's discussions.

Procedure

1. The center of the page contains a list of discussion posts.
2. The available discussion topics are listed.
3. You can enter a discussion by clicking on the discussion title.
Access your Discussions

You can access your community's Discussions by doing either of the following:

**Procedure**

1. Click **View COPs** on the main menu to see a list of the Communities of Practice you are a part of.

2. Click on the **COP discussion group** you would like to view.

3. Click **Discussions** in the menu sidebar.
4. **OR** Click a discussion of choice from the listing of **Recent COP Activities** in your COP main page. The Recent Activities listing includes new posts, new members, and so on.

```
Recent COP Activity

02-27-2009
Steve Olson joined the group Historic Bridges.

02-26-2009
Romeo Garcia joined the group Historic Bridges.

02-23-2009
Frank Nelson posted TRB Research for Transportation Infrastructure Preservation to the Historic Bridges forum.
```
**Tags Functionality**

You can also browse forums posts by tags.

The Tags panel contains the list of tags used in posts to the site. The more common the tag, or the tags used with the most posts, display with the largest font. For example, the **Funding** tag is the most common, as shown in the tag cloud below.

When you click on an item in the tag cloud, the site opens a page with the list of all forum posts and Resource Library items that use the tag. For example, if you click **Funding** in the tag cloud, the site opens a page that lists all of the forum posts and Resources that use the **Funding** tag.

Regardless of how you sort the forum posts, the site shows the tags used by each post underneath the post synopsis:
Discussion Posts Functionality

**Procedure**

1. Click on the post **title** to open a discussion post.

2. On the right side, the various options for each post are available.

3. The options you see here are available to all users within the community. The following table describes the functionality available from the forum post page:
Below is list of the functionality of each option.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Functionality</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Email me when someone replies</td>
<td>Specifies whether you are notified by email from someone replies to the post. When you click the link, the site resets this setting to its opposite.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stop emailing replies to me</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edit</td>
<td>Allows you to edit the post if you are the original author.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reply</td>
<td>Opens a reply page so you can respond to the post and begin a discussion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add this post as a favorite</td>
<td>Adds the forum post to your favorites list.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add this forum as a favorite</td>
<td>Adds the entire discussion forum to your favorites list.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report Abuse</td>
<td>Sends an email to the site administrator to report something inappropriate in the forum post</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**IMPORTANT: If you want to participate in a discussion thread, you MUST select the “Email me when someone replies” link.**
**Adding a Forum Post - Registered Users**

**Procedure**

1. Click **Write a New Post**. The Post a Message page displays.
2. Specify the forum post settings on each tab.

**Compose**
- **Subject** - Specifies the post subject.
- **Description** - This is your post content. You can use the basic formatting options in the toolbar.
- **Tags** - Specifies tags used for the post. You can click Select Tags to find tags that have already been used with forum posts.

**Options**
- **File attachment Add/Update** - Allows you to upload a file to the post.
- **Locked: Do not allow replies** - Specifies whether users can reply to the post.
- **Email me replies to this post** - Sends any replies to your registered email account
- **Stickiness** - Specifies whether a post is sticky, and if so, for how long. A sticky post displays first in the forum post list. You can specify how long you want a post to be sticky. After the expiration date, the post resets to Not sticky. Not every user has the ability to make a post sticky.

**Video**
- **Include Video** - You can include a video link in your post. You will need to know technical information such as video location, size, and duration.

**Poll**
- **Include a Poll in this Post** - Specifies whether you want to include a poll question with your post. When you click the checkbox, additional fields display on the page.
- **Question** - Specifies the poll question.
- **Description** - Describes the poll question.
- **Answers** - Provides the user with options for answering the poll question.
- **Add Answer** - Allows you to add a poll answer.
- **Expires** - Specifies the number of days the poll question will display with the post.

**Preview**
- **Preview** - Shows you what the post will look like before you publish the post.

3. Click Post.
Sorting and Filtering Forum Posts

The sorting and filtering functionality allows you to sort and filter forum posts based on the criteria you specify, such as post date, thread author, total replies, and more.

**Procedure**

1. Navigate to a **Discussion** forum
2. Click on the **Sorting and Filtering** link.

3. The **Sorting and Filtering** criteria item displays.

4. Enter your search criteria.

   - **Last Post Date** - The date when the last post was made to a discussion, either the original post or any replies that followed
   - **Thread Author** - sorted by author, alphabetically
   - **Total Views** - a count of how many times a discussion has been viewed/read
   - **Total Replies** - how many replies followed the original discussion post

   You can then create a sub-sort by **date**, and by **read status**.

5. Do one of the following:

   a. Click **Apply** to apply the sorting and filtering criteria only for this instance. The next time you return to the forum page, the list of posts will display in their original order, before you applied the sorting and filtering criteria.
   b. Click **Apply and Save** to retain the sorting and filtering criteria for future views of the forum post list.
Marking Posts as Read

When you open a post, the site automatically marks it as read. Icons provide graphical representations of read and unread posts. For example, when you navigate to a forum, the post list may look like this: The icons to the left of the post title tell you whether or not the post has been read. A read post is indicated with this icon: An unread post is indicated with this icon: You do not have to open a post to mark it as read. You can use the Mark as read functionality to do this for you.

Procedure

1. Navigate to a Discussion forum
2. Click on the **Mark all read** link.

![Discussions](image_url)
Resource Library Basics

This section contains the following information:

- Resource Library Page Overview
- Resource Library Sorting Functionality
- Tags Functionality
- Resource Library Files Functionality
- Uploading a Media File - Community Users

Resource Library Page Overview

The primary function of the Resource Library main page is to provide you with access to all of your community’s media files. You will note that the center of the page contains a list of media files.

You can access your community’s Resource Library main page by doing the following:

Procedure:

1. Click View COPs to open up the Discussion Forums main page.
2. Click Resource Library to access the Resource Library main page.
3. The Resource Library main page looks like this:
Resource Library Sorting Functionality

The site allows you to manipulate how content displays on the Resource Library main page. For example, you have several resource sorting options:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sort by: Name</th>
<th>Most Recent</th>
<th>Most Downloads</th>
<th>Most Popular</th>
<th>Most Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Show as:</td>
<td>Thumbnails</td>
<td>List</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Name** - Lists the resource files in alphabetical order.

**Most Recent** - Lists the resource files according beginning with the one most recently loaded to the page to the oldest.

**Most Downloads** - Lists the resource files beginning with the one that has been downloaded most to the least.

**Most Popular** - Lists the resource files beginning with the one that has been most viewed.

**Most Comments** - Lists the resource files beginning with the one that has generated the most comments to the least.
Tags Functionality

You can browse Resource files by tags the same as Discussion posts. The Tags section contains the list of tags used by the media files as well as the Discussions.

The Tags panel contains the list of tags used in various posts. The more common the tag, or the tags used with the most posts, display with the largest font. For example, the **Funding** tag is the most used, as shown in the tag cloud below.

When you click on an item in the tag cloud, the site opens a page with the list of all forum posts and Resource Library items that use the tag. For example, if you click **Funding** in the tag cloud, the site opens a page that lists all of the forum posts and Resources that use the **Funding** tag.

![Image of tag cloud with Funding tag highlighted.]
**Resource Library Files Functionality**

You can open a Resource file by Clicking on the media file name or icon.

The options you see below may be available within the community depending upon the administrative privileges. The following table describes the functionalities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Functionality</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Download</td>
<td>Downloads the file.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email replies to me</td>
<td>Specifies whether you are notified by email from someone replies to the file. When you click the link, the site resets this setting to its opposite.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stop emailing replies to me</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add file to favorites</td>
<td>Adds the media file to your favorites list. After you add a file to your favorites list, the <em>Remove file from favs</em> also displays. You can click on it to remove the file from your favorites list.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remove file from favs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add gallery to favs</td>
<td>Adds the entire gallery to your favorites list. After you add a file to your favorites list, the <em>Remove gallery from favs</em> also displays. You can click on it to remove the gallery from your favorites list.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remove gallery from favs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edit</td>
<td>Available if you are the item creator or an administrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delete</td>
<td>Available if you are the item creator or an administrator</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Uploading a Media File - Community Users

You can upload a file to your community media page where it will be available to other users to download.

Procedure

1. Navigate to the relevant COP and click the Resource Library link in the right-hand menu.

3. The **Upload File** page displays.

4. Click **Specify File/ URL**. The Upload File modal window displays.

5. Browse for a file or multiple files or type the URL for the file you want to upload.

6. Click **Save** to close the modal window.

7. Complete the remaining media file information, such the **name**, **description**, and **tags**.

8. Click **Save**.
Subscribing to an RSS Feed

This section contains the following information:

- RSS Feeds
- Subscribing to an RSS Feed

RSS Feeds

An RSS feed provides you with mirrored content from another Web page or Web site. This site allows you to subscribe to RSS feeds so your Web site is updated when the associated Web site is updated. You can subscribe to external feeds or feeds within the community, such as discussions, posts, and information from the public profiles of community friends.

Throughout the site, you will be provided with links and icons that when you click them allow you to subscribe to RSS feeds. Whenever you see on one of your community pages, you can click it on it to become an RSS subscriber. For example, you can subscribe to a friend’s community activity.

![My Activity](image)

Fri, Feb 27 2009

- Steve Olson joined the group Historic Bridges.
- Steve Olson joined Communities of Practice.

When your friend publishes a post or comment or uploads a new file, for example, your RSS feed will note it.
Subscribing to an RSS Feed

The site provides RSS links in the sidebars so you can subscribe to discussion forums, specific posts, and comments.

**Procedure:**

1. If you want to subscribe to a discussion forum, you click on **RSS** in the right-hand sidebar, as shown below:

   ![RSS Feed Example](image)

2. Or, from inside a post you click on **RSS** at the bottom of the post:
3. If you want to subscribe to a Discussions RSS feed, you can select **RSS** at the bottom of the Topics listing.

4. Click on the **RSS feed icon or an RSS link**. The site displays the RSS feed page:

5. Refer to your preferred **RSS Reader** (Atom, Google, Yahoo, etc) to input each URL you wish to receive RSS feeds for.