

Collaborative Tools

A vast number of Internet-based technologies exist that allow people to work together across distances. From the simplest of text messaging tools to the complex video conferencing systems, we have an unprecedented number of options available.

The following collaborative tools represent only a small sampling of the technologies that are available to you.

Instant Messaging

Microsoft Messenger (<http://messenger.msn.com>)

Free text-based messaging tool that also supports sending files. Users must have a free MSN account, but future compatibility with Yahoo! Messenger users is expected soon. Windows & Mac.

Yahoo! Messenger (<http://messenger.yahoo.com>)

Free full-feature IM tool includes support for sending files, personalization options, and entertainment features. Also supports voice calls with a microphone for live audio chats as well as video chats with webcam. Free Yahoo! ID required. Windows & Mac.

iChat AV (<http://www.apple.com/ichat>)

Mac-only messaging tool that supports audio and video chats using microphone and/or web camera. Ability to have 10-way audio conference and 4-way video conference (high-end Mac computer required). Supports users with AOL, .Mac and Jabber-based accounts.

For an extensive comparison of IM tools, see
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison_of_instant_messengers

Shared Document Editing

Microsoft Word

Word's "Track Changes" feature allows collaborative users to keep track of changes made to Word documents. Built into Word, the tool uses visual cues to identify what changes were made, by whom, and when. This is not a real-time editor tool, but a feature in Word that most recent versions of Word contain. Documents are still shared in the traditional way (email, server, removable drive).

<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/assistance/HP052416341033.aspx>

WriteBoard (<http://www.writeboard.com>)

Free web-based tool that allows users to create, save, and share text documents. Users can invite via email anyone to collaborate on the shared WriteBoard document. Changes are tracked and versions can be rolled-back. RSS feeds allow users to be notified of any document changes.

For an extensive list of collaborative real-time editors, see
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collaborative_real-time_editor

Content Management Systems

MyWebSpace (<http://mywebspace.wisc.edu>)

Free personal Web storage space available to UW-Madison users. Files can be stored in public (Web) or private folders. Document versions and changes can be tracked. Tickets can be issued to non-UW people who need to collaborate on these files. Subscriptions notify users when documents have been read, edited or deleted. Group directories are available also. MyWebSpace supports WebDAV access for easier file management and access.

Other

A wide variety of content management systems exist that allow users to organize electronic resources and facilitate collaboration. Many CMS's are designed for large deployment in organizations. Costs range from free (open-source software) to six and seven-digit amounts.

A detailed description of content management systems and lists of CMS's can be found at

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Content_management_system

Web Conferencing

WisLine Web (<http://www.uwex.edu/ics/wlweb>)

Available through UW-Extension, this system allows users to hold live, interactive meetings, courses or programs using a web browser and a telephone. Participants can view presenters' PowerPoint presentations, documents, software demos or other graphical media. Voice communication is delivered through a phone connection. Participants can interact via the phone or online text chats.

Microsoft Live Meeting (<http://www.microsoft.com/livemeeting>)

Microsoft's hosted web conferencing system allows delivery and viewing of presentations from your desktop. Audio is delivered over Internet.

WebEx (<http://www.webex.com>)

WebEx is the leading web conferencing vendor with products to support individuals and small business to large international corporations and organizations.

More extensive info is available at

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web_conference

For more info, contact:

Jeff Bohrer

DoIT Academic Technology

Univ. of Wisconsin-Madison

jbohrer@wisc.edu

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