Interchange + Forum/Blog HOWTO

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1. Introduction

1.1. Preamble

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1.2. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to expose how to use Interchange 5.0's forum and blog capability, enabled with the [forum ...] tag and a few ancilliary files.

1.3. Audience

Anyone who is using an Interchange catalog. This is not rocket science.

1.4. Contact the authors

If you find any spelling errors, technical slip−ups, mistakes, subliminal messages, or if you wish to send feedback, critique, remarks, comments, or if you wish to contribute examples, instructions for alternative platforms, chapters, or other material, please do so.

The preferred method of submitting changes is in the form of a context diff against the SDF source file (ic_howto_forum.sdf). Please address your correspondence to:

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1.5. What it does

Interchange forums allow your customers to comment on your products, or allow you to sponsor discussion threads on an interchange catalog. They maintain their content in a single database table named forum.

1. Introduction

2. Component files of the forums

There are two directories to add to your foundation catalog –– `include/forum` and `pages/forum`. You must add a database table definition, as well as a database source file. You should add Variable support to the `variable.txt` database, and supporting metadata with help. Finally, you need to add the `forum.tag` file which contains the forum code.

If you build a `foundation` catalog from the latest Interchange source, all of these will be done already.

The files that are needed in the catalog directory:

```
dbconf/default_db/forum.dbm
dbconf/mysql/forum.mysql
dbconf/pgsql/forum.pgsql
include/forum/reply_form
include/forum/submit_form
pages/forum/reply.html
pages/forum/display.html
pages/forum/submit.html
products/forum.txt
```

The files that are needed in the Interchange software directory:

```
code/UserTag/forum.tag
```

Add the following lines to `products/variable.txt` (change | to TAB):

```
FORUM_ANON_NAME|Anonymous Coward|Forums
FORUM_PRODUCTS|1|Forums
FORUM_EMAIL_NOTIFY|sales@yourcompany.com|Forums
```

Add the following records to `products/mv_metadata.asc` (shown in key: value format, edit file to match with "te" or some other tool):

```
#
# This is a temporary file, automatically generated from the
# database file:
#
# /tmp/what.txt
#
# If you change anything in it, it will be converted back into the
# original format and will replace the original file.
#
code:variable::Variable::FORUM_EMAIL_NOTIFY
type:text
width:50
height:
field:
db:
name:
outboard:
options:
attribute:
label:Forum notify email
help:An email address to send copies of user comments on products.
lookup:
```

```
filter:
help_url:
pre_filter:
lookup_exclude:
prepend:
append:
display_filter:
default:
extended:
#
code:variable::Variable::FORUM_ANON_NAME
type:text
width:20
height:
field:
db:
name:
outboard:
options:
attribute:
label:Forum Anonymous Name
help:Name to use when a user posts anonymously to a forum
lookup:
filter:
help_url:
pre_filter:
lookup_exclude:
prepend:
append:
display_filter:
default:
extended:
#
code:variable::Variable::FORUM_PRODUCTS
type:yesno
width:
height:
field:
db:
name:
outboard:
options:
attribute:
label:Enable Product Forums
help:This enables user comments on products in the flypage.
lookup:
filter:
help_url:
pre_filter:
lookup_exclude:
prepend:
append:
display_filter:
default:
extended:
```

Add the following block to pages/flypage.html:

```
[if variable FORUM_PRODUCTS]
  <tr>
        <td>
```

2. Component files of the forums

```
                        [forum top="[item-code]" display_page="forum/display" /]
                        <p>
                        [page href="forum/reply"
                                        form="
                                                product=1
                                                mv_arg=[item-code]
                                        "
                        ]Comment on this product.</A>
                        </p>
                </td>
        </tr>
   [/if]
```

This would normally go at the end of the table displaying the product, but you can place and edit to suit.

Again, all of this is provided if you have installed from the latest Interchange 4.9.4 or higher.

3. The [forum] ITL Tag

The `[forum]` tag is what provides the capability. It uses the forum table and follows tree–like threads in that table.

It has one required parameter, `top`. That gives the id of the message that is the top of the thread to display.

This is a complete forum display for a product:

```
[forum top="[item-code]" /]
```

You will see something like that in the snip from `pages/flypage.html` above.

You can pass many more parameters to the `[forum]` tag. Some of them are:

display–page

By default, the [forum ...] tag uses the current page to link to to re–display the forum at another level. Normally this works fine, but on a product flypage it will not work. You must pass in a different page.

```
[forum top="[item-code]" display-page="forum/display" /]
```

show–level

By default, `[forum]` only displays the text of top–level replies to the current thread. If you want to display more levels, set the `show-level` parameter to 1 or higher:

```
[forum top="[data session arg]" show-level=3 /]
```

The above will show the first four levels of replies, with links to any further down the tree.

scrub–score

If you want to moderate certain comments so that their text won't be shown, you can set the scrub–score parameter to –1 and then set the `score` field in the message's database record to –1. By default, it is linked to with a message:

```
  <A HREF="{DISPLAY_URL}">One message beneath your threshold</A>
```

If you want to totally disable the appearance of the link and message, set the `scrub-template` to something:

```
[forum top=THREAD
        scrub-score="-1"
      scrub-template="<!-- killed! -->"
/]
```

show–score

By default, if a message has a score of two or higher, it's text will be shown no matter what level of display it is on. You can set that threshold with this paramter.

template

You can set the template that displays replies with this parameter. You can also pass this as the container text for the `[forum]` tag, i.e.:

```
[forum top="[data session arg]"]
<table cellspacing=0 cellpadding=2 width="65%">
        <tr>
                <td class=contentbar1>
                        <A HREF="{DISPLAY_URL}"><b>{SUBJECT}</b></A>
                        by <b>{USERINFO}</b>
                        on {DATE}
                </td>
                <td class=contentbar1 align=right>
                        &#91;
                                <A HREF="{REPLY_URL}"><b>Reply</b></A>
                        &#93;
                </td>
        </tr>
        <tr>
                <td colspan=2>
                {COMMENT}
                </td>
        </tr>
</table>
[/forum]
```

See `pages/forum/display.html` for an example.

header−template

You can set the header template that displays the top−level message with this parameter. See `pages/forum/display.html` for an example.

link−template

You can set the template that displays the links to messages that are not shown with this parameter. See `pages/forum/display.html` for an example.

scrub−template

The template for a message that has a score lower than `scrub-score`. See `pages/forum/display.html` for an example.

threshold−message

The message displayed in the default `scrub-template` when a message is scrubbed. If you set the `scrub-template` yourself, it is ignored.

display−page

The page linked to with {DISPLAY_URL}. Default is the current page. See **Templating** below.

reply−page

The page linked to with {REPLY_URL}. Default is `forum/reply.html`. See **Templating** below.

submit–page

The page linked to with {SUBMIT_URL}. Default is `forum/submit.html`. See **Templating** below.

date–format

The format for the date provided with {DATE}. Default is `%B %e, %Y @%H:%M`, which provides a date like `October 5, 2002 @21:19`.

3. The [forum] ITL Tag

4. Templating

All of the `[forum]` display mechanisms are templated. You can pass four templates –– `template`, `header-template`, `link-template`, and `scrub-template`.

They use the substitution style found in Interchange's `attr-list` ITL tag.

The following values are available for templating:

```
ADDITIONAL     Additional text normally only used at the top level
COMMENT        Text of the message
CREATED        Created date in ISO format
DATE           Date the comment was made
DISPLAY_URL    URL to display the forum with a new starting point
FORUM_APPEND   End indent </UL> tags for item (automatic, don't use)
FORUM_PREPEND  Begin indent <UL> tags for item (automatic, don't use)
MOD_TIME       Modified date in ISO format
PARENT_URL     URL to call the parent of the comment
REASON         Text indicating reason for scoring
REPLY_URL      URL to reply to the commetn
SCORE          Score of the article
SUBJECT        Subject of the message
SUBMIT_URL     URL to submit a new top-level thread
TOP_URL        URL to call the top level of the thread (if not at top)
USERINFO       User information based on login status and anonymity
```

You can see how the above are used by examining the file `pages/forum/display.html` and playing around with the provided templates.

4.1. Templating rules

4.1.1. {KEY}

Inserts the value of the KEY for the reference. In a database query, this is the column name.

4.1.2. {KEY|fallback string}

Displays the value of {KEY} or if it is zero or blank, the fallback string (i.e., default).

4.1.3. {KEY true string}

Displays `true string` if the value of {KEY} is non–blank, non–zero, or displays nothing if the key is false.

4.1.4. {KEY?} true text {/KEY?}

Displays `true text` if the value of {KEY} is non–blank, non–zero, and nothing otherwise.

4.1.5. {KEY:} false text {/KEY:}

Displays `false text` if the value of {KEY} is blank or zero, and nothing otherwise.