Editors' Breakfast 2007

Rockhound Forums

[Slide 01 – Title page]

In our club bulletins, we often like to include hints and tips about lapidary procedures, but where do we get those tips?

Usually from other club bulletins, and it sometimes seems as if the same hints go around and around from bulletin to bulletin. Some long-time bulletin editors complain that there are no new tips & hints, just old recycled ones.

So where can you find new lapidary-related tips & hints? One major new source is online Rockhound Forums.

Forum = discussion group for people with similar interests, whose messages are posted to a web site.

Forum = "Group" or "List"

⊘ not "Chat Room" "Instant Messaging"

[Slide 02 – Forum Definition]

A Forum is a discussion group for people with similar interests, in this case people interested in rockhounding, who send messages by e-mail to be "posted" or uploaded to a web site.

Forums are most often called "groups" or "lists." Forums are NOT similar to Chat Rooms or Instant Messaging, or these other things you hear about which are going on over the Internet.

Forums are supposed to be dignified ways for people to exchange information.

Types of Forums

1. **Public**
(anyone can see messages)

2. **Membership Only**
(only forum members can see messages)

3. **Moderated**
(messages can be blocked or censored)

[Slide 03 – Types of Forums]

There are three basic types of forums.

The first is Public forums, where anyone can send a message, and see all the messages which other people have sent.

The second is Membership-Only forums, where only registered members can send messages, and see all the messages which other people have sent.

The third is Moderated forums, where a real person is looking at all the messages before anyone sees them, and that person can block a message or censor a message. In the other types of forums, a computer is looking at the messages, and can also block them for various reasons, such as spam or profanity, but a computer isn't as good at that as a real moderator.

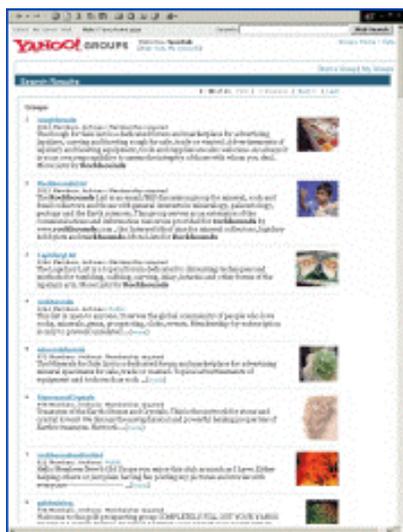|	
Where to find Forums **YAHOO!** http://groups.yahoo.com **Google** **msn** [Slide 04 – Where to Find Forums]	Where are forums located? All the major web portals, such as Yahoo and Google and Microsoft Network, have lists of forums for any interest group you could possibly want: everything from pets to quilting to real estate to rocket science. But having investigated all of these, I found that Yahoo had by FAR the most forums. So we'll skip the others and go directly to http:// groups.yahoo.com and look for rockhounding forums.
Search for Rockhound Forums [Slide 05 – Search on Yahoo]	Here we are at yahoo.groups.com. From now on, everything's called a "group," not a forum. You can either browse through all the groups, over here, by category, or you can search for the type of groups you're looking for, over here in the search bar. So I typed in "Rockhounding" in the search bar, and clicked on the Search Button.
[Slide 06 – Yahoo Results]	Here's the FIRST page of results of the search. We have eight different rockhound-related groups. Each one offers a short description about their group's subject of discussion. Some of it's very broad topics – this group, "Rockhounds" covers everything about rocks, minerals & gems. But others are more specific. This group, "Rough for Sale" is only for advertising & selling rough material. "Stones and Crystals" is only for discussing the healing powers of crystals. "Gold mining" is just what it sounds like. "Lapidary List," is for techniques and methods of various types of lapidary, which sounds just like what we're looking for – and we'll come back to that one later. Meanwhile, let's blow this up and look closer at the other information about these groups.

[Slide 07 – Yahoo Results Blow-up]

Notice at the top of the page it tells you these are groups 1 through 10 of 383 rockhounding groups. I'm showing here Groups ranked 1, 2, 3 and 4. Yahoo ranks its groups strictly according to the number of members they have. The top group here shows it has 2043 members, the next one 2017 members, and so on.

Remember the three types of groups? Each group here tells you whether it's a Members-Only group or a Public Group. The third type, the Moderated Group, isn't very common. I could only find one of those groups in this entire list of groups, and it was a children's rockhounding group, presumably moderated by an adult, so the kids don't get too far out of line.

The other thing you'll see here is that all these groups have archives, meaning that they save all their former messages and allow you to search through them.


[Slide 08 – Click on a Group]

Let's see what happens when we go to a Membership-Only group. Click on the name of the group . . . in this case I'm choosing "RockhoundsList," the number 2 group, which happens to be sponsored by the folks at rockhounds.com, or Bob's Rock Shop, as you may be familiar with it.
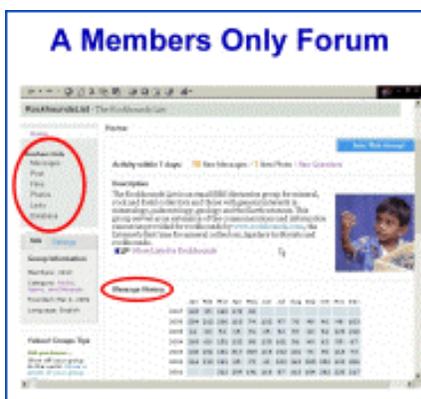
[Slide 09 – RockhoundsList Home Pg]

This is the web site of the Rockhounds List group, and the first thing you notice is that you can't click on anything you'd like to click on. Over here they have links to their messages, their photos, their files – but your mouse won't click on them because you're not a member!

The other interesting thing here is the "Message History," this grid showing the years and each month of the year, and how many messages were posted to this forum. It averages out to over 150 messages a month, for about six years, which adds up to over 10,000 messages. That's their archive, and if you WERE a member of this group, you could search through ALL those messages.
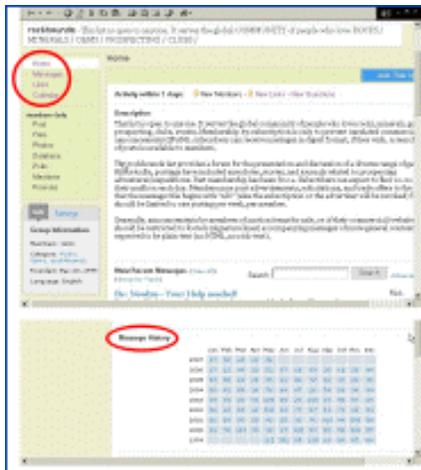
|	
[Slide 10 – Rockhounds Home Page]	Going back to the list of all the groups, I then clicked on the largest Public group, called "Rockhounds." Here's their home page. Now, up here, my mouse can click on the link for messages. There's some other stuff reserved for Members Only, because they'd like you to register and be a member. Down here is their message archive grid, showing about 50 messages a month, and this group is nine years old, so that means about 6000 messages. Now I'm going to click on the link that will show me all these messages.

[Slide 11 – Rockhounds Messages]	So this is what a Public forum looks like, with all the most recent messages listed on this page, so that you can click on any of them and read the messages. Here in the red circle, it tells you these are messages 6068 through 6097. This is a very broad-based group, with people from all over the country asking questions about garnets in Idaho, fossils in New York State, and so on. People also send messages advertising their local rock shows, or saying they'd like to buy or sell moonstones or whatever. The important thing is the Search Bar, where you can type in what you're looking for, and you'll be shown only those messages on that subject.
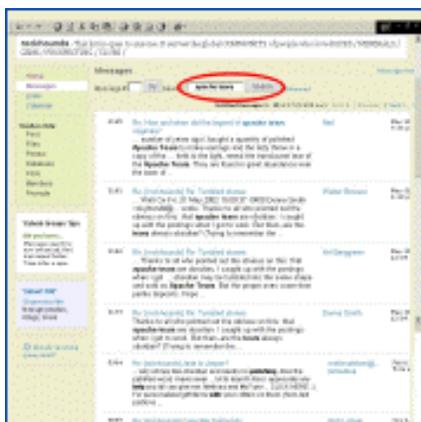
|	
[Slide 12 – Search the Messages]	I decided to search for "Apache Tears" because it seems that everybody wants advice about getting a good polish on Apache tears. So after I typed that into the Search Bar and clicked on the Search button, it came up with 27 messages, which it shows here in the order the messages came in, the latest messages at the top, and the older ones further down. You can click on any message, either the original question which was asked, or the answers that various other people sent in. It's in the answers that you're going to find your useful tips and hints, and I found quite a few good ones, and here are two examples.

Tumbling Hints

[Slide 13 –Apache Tears Hints]

These weren't really on the same page, because you'd be clicking on two different messages, two different pages. And the little pictures were added for this presentation.

The first one says to add chopped-up foam rubber and 4 cups of sugar to your tumbler when polishing Apache tears. The foam adds cushioning and the sugar thickens the water, in order to slow the tumbling process down and prevent micro-abrasions which ruin the shine.

The second hint says to put a layer of stones, then a layer of flannel cut in 1-inch squares, as you fill up the tumbler. The man says he's been doing this for 40 years, and when he started out, he says he snatched the baby's diaper for the flannel, and his wife never found out.

I'm pretty sure any bulletin editor could write up either one of these suggestions as a short tip or hint.


Join a Members Only Group
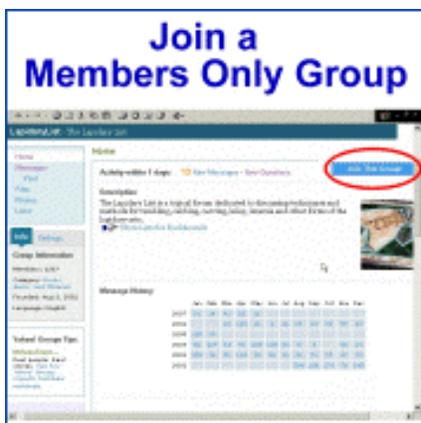
[Slide 14 – Join a Group]

Now, the next step is joining a group. I went back to the list of groups, and clicked on "Lapidary List," which was the group I was most interested in joining, since their description says they are dedicated to discussing techniques and methods of various lapidary arts.

They have 1265 members, and again, here's where you can see their message history. They have an archive of over 3000 messages.

All I had to do was click on this blue button which says "Join This Group," and in a few minutes I was a member.
I had to give them an e-mail address, and I had to tell them how I wanted the group's messages delivered to me, or whether I wanted them delivered to me at all.
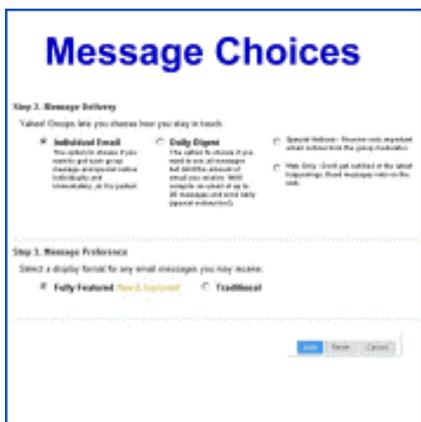

Message Choices

[Slide 15 – Choice for Messages]

The default choice is "Individual E-Mail," meaning that every time any member posts a message to the group, it's personally e-mailed to me also. That's what I chose, but I regretted that choice later, because it results in too much e-mail for a group this size.

You can go back and change it later, either to having an e-mail digest sent to you, which results in one e-mail a day, or to have only special notices from the group sent to you, or to have nothing at all sent to you, which is this "Web Only" option, where you can read all the messages online.

That's what I eventually wound up doing.
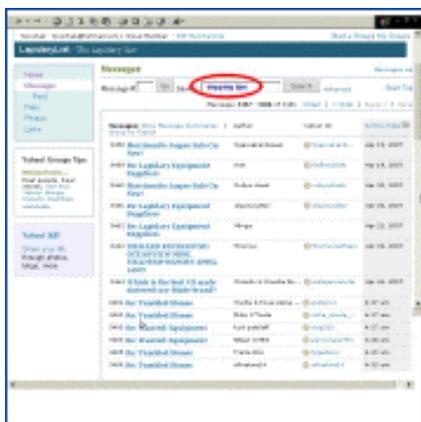
[Slide 16 – Search Lapidary List]

Now when I go online to the Lapidary List Group, I can see all the messages, and it looks exactly like when I went to a public group. In this case, I searched the messages for tips on dopping, by typing that into the Search bar.

I came up with about 20 messages, so I clicked on one which asked for hints on using dop wax.

[Slide 17 – Dopping Tip]

If you click on an original message, that's shown with a blue background, and right underneath it are all the answers to that original message. They're all in condensed format, but if you click again you can expend it to see the entire message.

Here's an expanded one at the bottom, and the message says that, if you have an electric stove, the easiest dop pot is to use one of those little tin boxes that Sucrets or Altoid mints come in, set the box on a "Low" setting, put your dop wax in the little box to warm it up, and when you're done, you cool the leftover wax and leave it in the little box for next time.
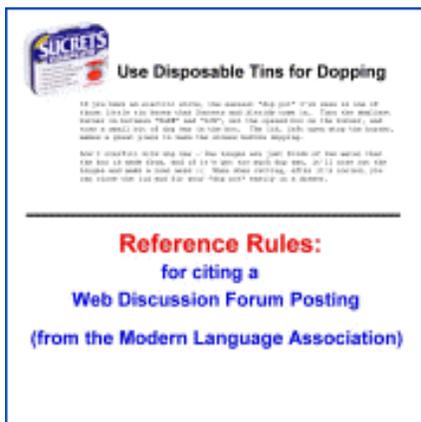
[Slide 18 – Bulletin Article]

So let's use this particular tip to make a bulletin article, and let's follow the rules for citing our references.

It's up to you whether to summarize the tip, or to quote directly from the message, or use a combination of both.

I gave it a title, threw in a little picture of a Sucrets tin, and pretty much quoted the message directly.

Now we all know that when you're using someone else's writing, word for word, you MUST cite your references correctly. But there's a lot of confusion about how to cite references for something you got from the Internet.

There ARE rules, though, and these rules for citing a web forum posting are the generally accepted ones from the Modern Language Association.

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Author's Name (Last, First) Title of Posting (in quotes) The Phrase Online Posting Date of Posting (Day Month Year) Name of Forum Date of Access (Day Month Year) URL <in angle brackets> Colleen. "Climbing Question." Online posting. 20 Mar. 1999. Climbing Forum. 27 May 1999. <http://www.gorp.com/forums/Message_ID=18596>. [Slide 19 – Reference Rules]	You list the author's name, the title of the posting, or message, the phrase "Online Posting," the date when it was posted, the name of the forum it was posted to, the date that YOU accessed it, meaning the date you read it on the forum, and the URL of the website where it was posted. They give an example, here in red, of someone named only "Colleen," who's asking a climbing question on the Climbing Forum. The general rule about all Internet criteria is that you list what you have, and you simply leave the rest out. Colleen didn't give her last name in her message, so you simply list her first name. You don't say "Last name unknown," or anything like that. But where are you gonna find all this other information? It should be all in one place, on the web page where you first read the message.
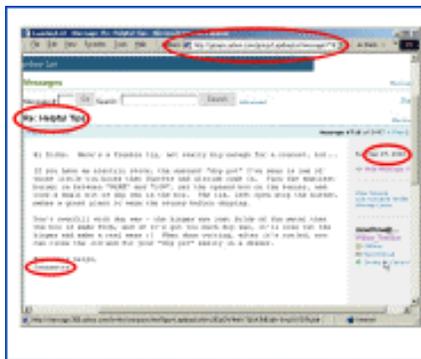
[Slide 20 – Locating Reference Info]	So let's go back to where we originally saw it on the Lapidary List Group website. Here's the author's name, "Jeannette," no last name given. Here's the title of the posting, "Re: Helpful Tips." Here's the date she posted it: September 29, 2002. The forum's name is "The Lapidary List." It's right up here in case you lost track of which group you were visiting. And finally, the exact URL shows here in your address bar, so you can just copy it from there.

Correct Version Jeannette. Author "Re: Helpful Tips." Title of Posting Online posting. Online posting 29 Sep. 2002. Date of Posting The Lapidary List Forum. Name of Forum 12 May 2007. Date of Access <http://groups.yahoo.com/group URL LapidaryList/message/719> **Sloppy Version** Summary of a posting on The Lapidary List Forum, 9/02 "Via The Internet" [Slide 21 – Article References]	So the reference for this article would look like this, in the red: We have everything, except for Jeanette's last name. Since the URLs are usually pretty long, it's always acceptable to split up an URL on two lines, but the split has to be right after a slash, and you DON'T put a hyphen in there. The reader is supposed to understand that the URL goes on & on over a couple of lines. You MUST cite a reference like this if you've directly quoted the person's words. If you summarize their words, I suppose you could get away with the sloppier version, which says, "Summary of a posting on The Lapidary List Forum, 9/02." Whatever you do, DON'T say "Via The Internet," because that's like citing a book reference by saying "Via the library."

**Local Forums
of Interest**

LA-Rocks
910 Members, Public, 9 yrs

NorCal-Rocks
87 Members, Public, <1 yr

_____

cu_n_az ("See You in Arizona"?)
255 Members, Members Only, 4 yrs

New Mexico Rockhounding
309 Members, Members Only, 4 yrs

[Slide 22 – Other Forums]

One final recommendation about these online groups – there are many groups which exist to serve their local areas. For southern California, there's "LA-Rocks," which has over 900 members, and has been online for 9 years. For northern California, there's "NorCal-Rocks," which just got started, but it already has 87 members. If you're going on a field trip, you can check out reports from other rockhounds who've been there before you. If your club has a show coming up, it's free advertising for you if you send an posting to these groups to remind everyone about your show.

If you're going to another state, check to see if there's a group in that state, so you can ask questions of the locals before you go. I listed two here, "cu_n_az," which I'm assuming is shorthand for "See You in Arizona," and New Mexico Rockhounding, which is run by the Albuquerque Gem & Mineral Club. You might have to join the group as a member, but that only costs you a few minutes of your time.

**Rockhound
Forums**

The End

[Slide 23 – End Page]

You can also start your own rockhounding group or forum, but I don't have the time to go into that today.

If you'd like a printed copy of this presentation, I have copies available.

By Terry Yoschak

Slides were made from computer screen shots at the following web sites:

Yahoo! Groups. <http://groups.yahoo.com/>
Yahoo! Groups: Directory. <http://dir.groups.yahoo.com/dir/Hobbies___Crafts/Collecting/Rocks,_Gems,_and_Minerals>
The Rockhounds List. <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/RockhoundsList/>
Rockhounds. <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/rockhounds/>
The Lapidary List. <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/LapidaryList/>

Rules (and examples) for citing all types of Internet references can be found at:

Harnack, Andrew and Kleppinger, Eugene. "Citation Styles." *Online!* Bedford/St. Martin's. 2003. 31 Jan. 2006.
<http://www.bedfordstmartins.com/online/citex.html>