

List of Definitions

BBS or bulletin board system (*dianzi gonggaoban*): a kind of database where users can log in and leave messages for others. These messages are often grouped according to topic. The BBS has become one of the most popular features of the Chinese internet and thousand of groups are offered by the big portals. The variety of topics characterizes the social changes which have taken place within the last decade in China.

Chat room (*liaotianshi*): a virtual space where users may communicate in real-time. As a result of the fragmentation of the interest groups, the possible anonymity of chat rooms and the lack of incentives for longer commitment, the discussions in many chat rooms tend to be superficial.

Netizen (*wangmin*): this term, which has been attributed to Howard Rheingold, refers to the 'citizen of the internet'. It is important to realize that in a narrow sense 'netizens' do not include users who come to the net for profane reasons such as making profits or who regard the internet as merely a service provided by others. An important feature of the netizen is his/her active engagement in creating a public sphere on the Net.

Weblogs (sometimes shortened to 'blog'): a website of personal or non-commercial origin that uses a dated log format and that is frequently updated with new information about a particular subject or range of subjects. The information can be written by the site owner, gleaned from other websites or other sources, or contributed by users. A weblog may consist of the recorded ideas of an individual (a sort of diary) or be a complex collaboration open to anyone. Most of the latter are moderated discussions. The rapid increase of the number of weblogs in China, spurred its government to block the most popular host for these weblogs. ◀