

# The RoCPOOL Users' Guide

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## Introduction

RoCPOOL is a RightOfChoice application that puts the Public Opinion On-Line.

Registered Users can use it to express their **Opinions** and rate the opinions of others.

Expressions of **Opinion** are related to a **Topic**, which is in turn, related to an **Issue**.

Expressions of **Contrary Opinion** are related to the original **Opinion**.

**Comments** on Opinions and uploaded **Documents** supporting Opinions are also related to the original **Opinion**.

Users are able to raise **Key Questions** on any Topic.

Users are able to give a rating to any Opinion, Comment, Document or Key Question.

When these elements are listed, they are listed in order of the ratings Users have given them and the ratings are rolled up to Topic and Issue so that Issues and the Topics under them are also ranked according to the importance Users attach to them.

**RoCPOOL** is entirely egalitarian and democratic. All of the capabilities of the application are equally available to everyone. That's Democracy!

This means that every user is able to define the **Issues** and the **Topics** and pose the **Key Questions**. And of course, everyone is equally able to express their **Opinions**, express support or disagreement and **Comment** on the opinions of others and generally participate in the discussion. You can upload **Documents** that argue your case in support of your Opinions, link them to **Videos** and **Web-Sites** that support your views or provide references to **Books**, all of which informs and enriches the discussion.

*Everything* is rated by users and is sorted in order of ratings so you can see the top **Issues, Topics, Key Questions, Opinions, Documents** and even the **Comments** on Opinions and **Contrary Opinions**. Most importantly, you can contribute to that rating. Giving your own ratings on Opinions, Comments and Documents is a convenient and efficient way of expressing your own opinions and the sort order and visibility of number of ratings lets you see what Opinions, Comments and Documents are most highly regarded by others and you can change your ratings. It's continuous and dynamic and most importantly, its visible to all participants.

In short, all participants are able to know what the general opinion is.

This means that all participants share equally in the opportunity to express, survey and inform public opinion without dependence on the mass media, yet commanding the ability to reference a wide range of media as information resources in addition to uploading their own material. Opinions are central, but every Opinion is open to Comment and discussion and *EVERYTHING* is open to rating, even the Comments and Documents. *EVERYTHING* is democratically rated and prioritised.

### Moderators:

All of the capabilities of the application are equally available to everyone. Only the participants and all of the participants are 'moderators' and the rights are equally shared. If obscene language, ad hominem and offensive or abusive expressions rise high in the rankings, that's a democratic choice. Most likely they will be rated poorly by the first ten readers and be seen no more.

### Efficient, Productive Discussion

Of particular importance is that the knowledge of what the collective priorities are and what informs them gives focus to the discussion, radically improving the efficiency of collective decision-making. Every participant is able to know the collective priorities and opinions and to know what informs them, which leads to a highly focussed discussion. With every Opinion, Document and Comment rated by those who have read it before this gives the user up-to-date insight to the most influential material and where best to apply their efforts to understand, to contribute and to influence.

*Everyone* has influence. *Everyone* has the opportunity for knowledge and insight.

*Everyone* has the right to an opinion and to express it on equal terms with others.

And so, in a very rich an efficient sense, **RoCPOOL** has the power to put the Public Opinion On-Line.

Also important is that **RoCPOOL** maintains efficiency and supports order, separating opinion, analysis and discussion in a shallow, accessible hierarchy that gets to the point, maintains focus and constantly informs the individual participant of the collective priorities.

Unlike Forums, which ramble everywhere, dissipate chaos and often descend into useless squabbling, RoCPOOL converges towards and seeks CONSENSUS.

So let's see how **RoCPOOL** does it and how to use it.

### Issues, Topics and Opinions

These three basic item types provide a hierarchy, which structures the discussion of a **Subject**. Users are able to create Issues and Topics. Opinions are entered under Topics, which in turn are created under Issues. ***It's important, when creating Issues and Topics, to use the title and description simply to identify and define the Issue or Topic; the place for Opinions is in the Opinion entries under a Topic. Similarly, the title and description of the Opinion entry serve to identify and state the Opinion; the place for argument in support of Opinions is in the Document entries associated with it*** (you can upload a pdf file, link to a video or web page or reference a book).

[**Note** that since every Opinion relates to a Topic and every Topic relates to an Issue the **Create** options preserve this order by combining these elements – creating a new Issue for example, requires that an initial Topic and Opinion are also created.]

Opinions are ranked, according to ratings given by users, within a Topic.

Topics inherit the overall ratings of all of the Opinions under them and are ranked according to this measure of importance. Topics are automatically rated and ranked under Issues in a similar way, according to the number of Opinions and their ratings, which is a reflection of the level of interest and significance attached to the Topic.

### Tabs, Lists and Selections

These three basic elements organise your interaction with the debate. When you start at the top of the hierarchy in the Issues Tab you can list all of the Issues (or you can list just the new Issues). The buttons down the left side of a list provide for selection of an individual item in the list. When you click on one of these selector buttons the item you selected is presented in the right-hand side of the page showing its Title, Description and other details.

If you have an Issue selected you will be able to go to the Topics tab and similarly, list the Topics for that Issue.

Opinions and Key Questions relate to Topics. So if you have a Topic selected you can go to the Opinions or Key Questions Tab and again, List all Opinions or Key Questions for that Topic, or just those that are new.

The Documents, Comments and Contrary Tabs all relate to the currently-selected Opinion and similarly, are sorted based on Ratings.

### The Create New Button

This button, at the top of the selections region in the right-hand side of the page for each Tab allows you to access the form to create a new item of the type for that Tab. If you click the button again it hides the form and returns to the current selection. If you fill out the form and click on the Send Button at the bottom it will save the item you've entered for others to read and rate.

By using the **Create New** button you can create Opinions and add Key Questions. Opinions are best entered as a single statement that is as sharp and concise as possible. When entering Opinions it will be beneficial to keep in mind that it is the Opinion you are stating, not the argument of the case for it. If your statement is brief and straight to your point others will be more likely to read and rate it. There are provisions to argue the case for your opinion elsewhere and related to it (see following). Similarly, Key Questions also need to be short and sharp requiring a *yes* or *no* answer. If you think your question needs some clarification, contextualisation, explanation or whatever, you can use the Description field associated with it. With a good, clear and relevant question others will be more likely to register a response and rate it highly.

### Documents

The way to argue the case for your opinion is to use the Documents Tab. In the Documents *Create New* form you can add links to web pages that are relevant to your opinion, you can include Video Embeds from You-Tube or you can refer to a Book. Most significantly, you can write your own document in MS Word (or whatever) and convert it to PDF (explanation later how to do that if you need it) and upload it! If your document argues the case well, first-readers will rate it highly, so others will also read it and (hopefully) it will quickly rise to the top of the list to be all the more influential.

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When creating a Document entry use the Radio Button to select the type of Document you want to add. For web pages you can just cut-and-paste the link from the address bar in another web-browser session. Similarly for Video pages use the Share option in the YouTube page, select the Embed option and cut-and-paste the embed text into the form field provided. For a Book entry, just enter the information that other users will need in order to obtain the book.

*To upload your own Document* the PDF input field will provide for you to browse to the location of the PDF file on your own PC and upload it.

If you're on the right Issue but the Topic you want to discuss doesn't exist you can use the **Create New** button to create the Topic yourself. Similarly, if the Issue hasn't been raised you can be the first and create the Issue.

## Sorting and Settings

The Column Headings for the Lists in all of the Items Tabs are *active options* for sorting the List. You can reorder the list sorting by the Selector, Title, *Raters*, *OAR* or *RAR*. So what are **Raters**, **OAR** or **RAR**?

Well, "**Raters**" is easy, that's just the number of other users who have given the item a rating. But **OAR** and **RAR** need a little explanation.

### OAR and RAR

Both of these are an Average Rating. RAR is the Raw Average Rating, just an average over *the number of users who have given the item a rating*. But that's a bit misleading. With a RAR of 90 over just 2 users that's not as significant as a RAR of 70 over 200 users. The RAR is useful to know and indicates how initial readers have responded, but the OAR is more meaningful – at least, later on.

OAR is an Overall Average Rating. Irrespective of how many users have rated the item the total of all these ratings is averaged over *the total number of registered users*. This always starts off much lower than the RAR and gradually increases as more users give the item a rating. It may eventually be equal to the RAR but is never more than the RAR. For a comparative Ranking all of the Items in a list the OAR is the most meaningful because it compares like-for-like.

Taken together, Raters, OAR and RAR tell you the status of an item in a list. With few Raters but a high RAR it's "early days" but the item has been well received. With a high number of Raters it's time to start considering its status in terms of the OAR.

### Settings

All Items Tabs have a **List New** button. This allows a selection of only Items in that category that were created less than some specific number of days ago. But how new is new? The design assumes that anything between 2 and 30 days is realistic, but there needs to be some individual flexibility. In the Settings Tab you will find that the DN item (which stands for Days New) is set to 7. You can enter a new value, click *Use* and just use that for the current login session (later you might want to restore the

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original value using Reset), or you can click on Save and have the current value saved for every time you login.

This also applies to the SO parameter (which stands for Sort Order). This is the Sort Order that is automatically applied when you first use a List option. Some users will always want to sort on the number of Raters, others might want to sort on RAR. By selecting one of the options from the drop-down list you can change it either for the current login session only or for every time you login.

### General Comment

Because we all know that rambling discussion may go on without end leading nowhere and often serves only to entrench people deeper in their own convictions, **RoCPOOL** offers a much-needed new strategy. **RoCPOOL** provides an efficient means to approach *consensus*, or at least, if consensus is not possible, for all parties to know clearly what the reasons are for disagreement and along the way, this provides a very efficient means to focus the discussion and maintain a discipline of rational, methodical discourse. If you know why people disagree you can speak directly to their reasons and if you are addressing the highest rated reasons for a highly rated Opinion then chances are you are maximising the return for your effort.

Not only that, you can focus on the most important Topics and Issues and attend to the most important Key Questions while at the same time, if you like to be among the *avant garde*, you can keep an eye on *ListNew* for new Issues, Topics, Opinions etc..

Aside from actively contributing to discussion and information, rather than spending the time required to find the words and express properly one's own views or argue the case for them, it can often be much more efficient, perhaps *far* more efficient to read and express your support where others have expressed views that coincide with your own or argued the case for them as you yourself would have liked. **RoCPOOL** takes best advantage of this in its highly methodical, systematic and efficient system of **RATINGS**. Everything is rated. **Opinions, Documents, Key Questions**, even **Comments on Opinions** can be rated. When you list them, they are sorted as those ratings currently stand and there are flexible options for how you sort them.

The separation of Opinion from Comment and argument in the form of Documents provides intellectual clarity and the ratings process should serve as an effective filter to exclude the irrelevance, irreverence and *ad hominem* that often pervades political debate among large numbers of participants.

We need, as communities, nations and civilisations to make collective decisions in many areas and we need urgently, to have efficient means to do this. Of course, I have developed RoCPOOL in the private aspiration that I will change the world, as everyone hopes they can do. What's wrong with that?