Visualising social networks

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Installation Instructions can be found at:
http://olt.ubc.ca/learning_tools/research_1/research/

This document provides some brief instructions on setting up social network visualisations. The document covers both BlackBoard Vista (formerly WebCT) and BlackBoard 8.0.
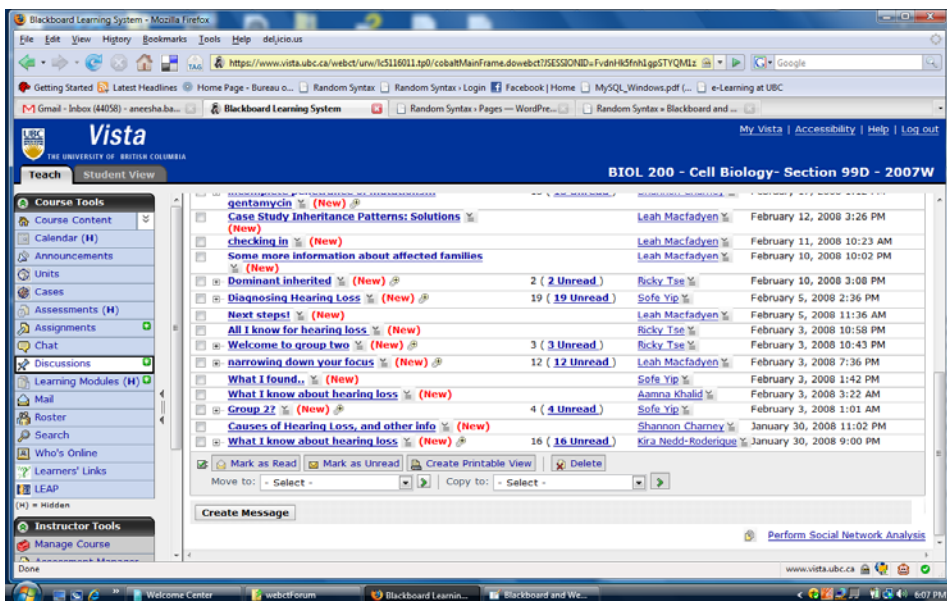
BlackBoard Vista (WebCT)

WebCT, by default limits the number of posts displayed per page. The SNA tool is only able to analyse data on that is displayed on a single page. In order to analyse a large forum, change the Paging Preferences to an appropriate number eg 200 posts per page. The Paging Preferences icon is displayed at the bottom of the forum page.
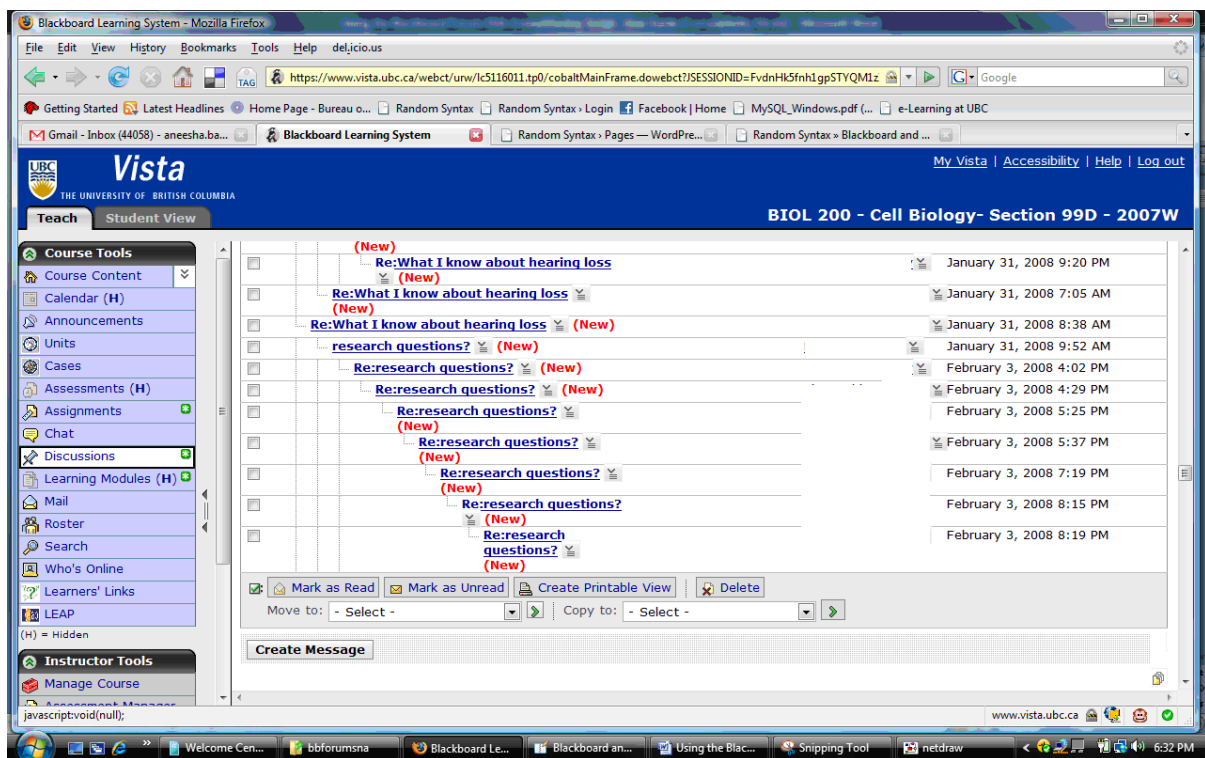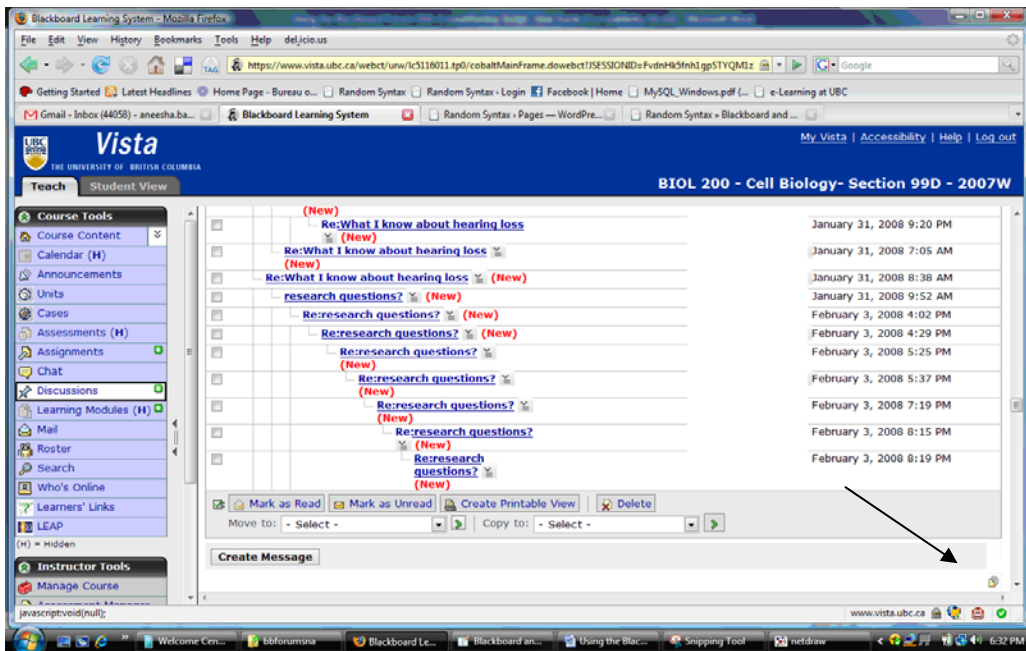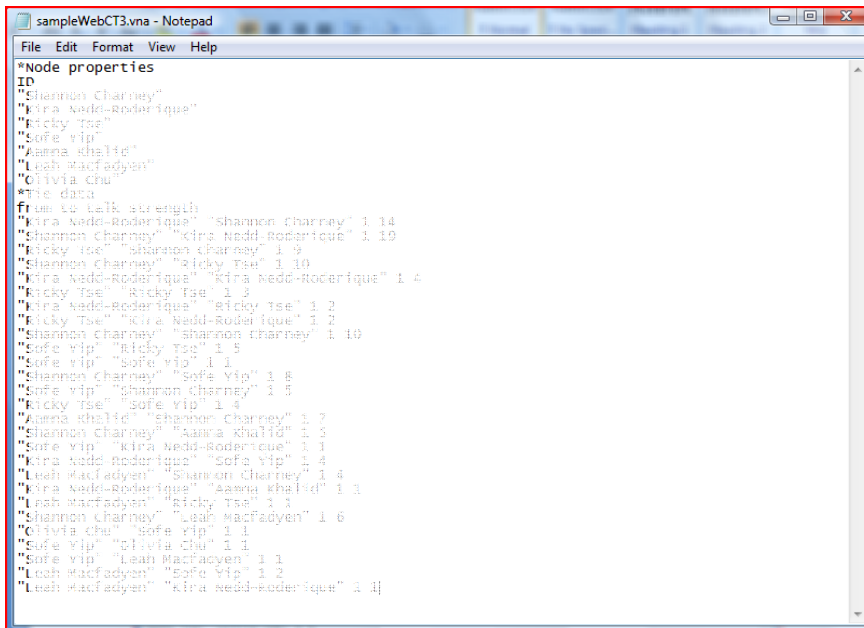
When a Forum is displayed in WebCT, a "Perform Social Network Analyis" link is added at the bottom on the page. Click on this link.
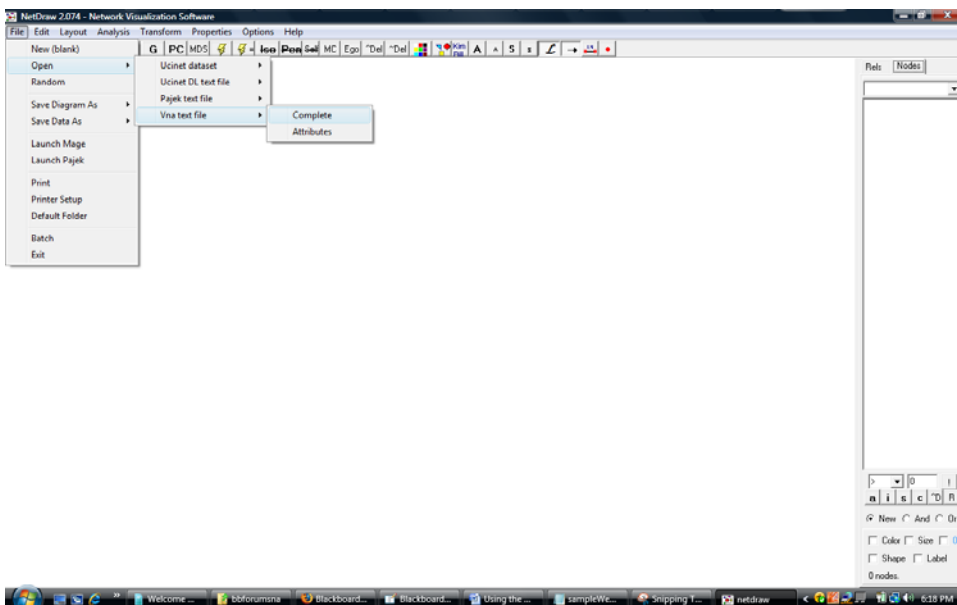

The forum is analysed and summary information is displayed.

A Post-Reply Frequency Table is displayed

GraphML and VNA File formats are output. The VNA file format can be open and rendered in NetDraw (http://www.analytictech.com/Netdraw/netdraw.htm).

Copy the VNA data from the textbox, paste into Notepad and save with a .vna extension. It is important that file has a .vna extention(e.g. socialneworkexample.vna).
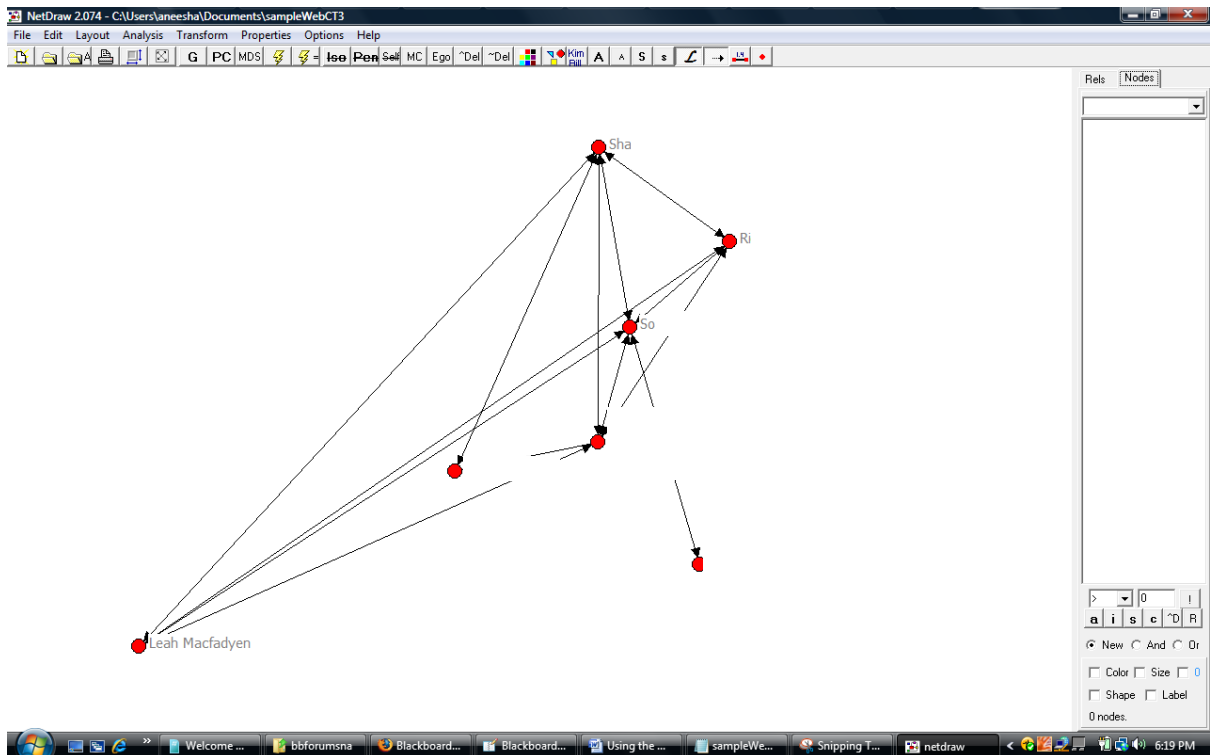

Open the file in NetDraw.

Ensure that VNA is selected. Browse for the .vna file and click the Ok button.
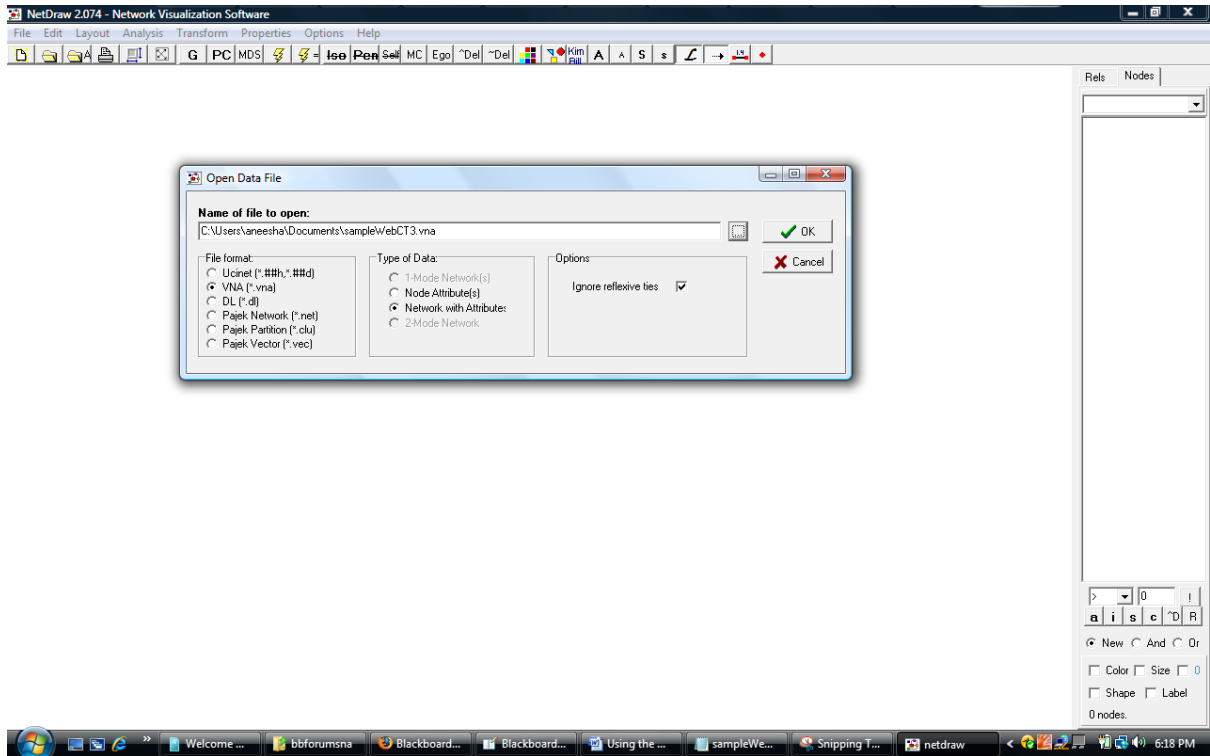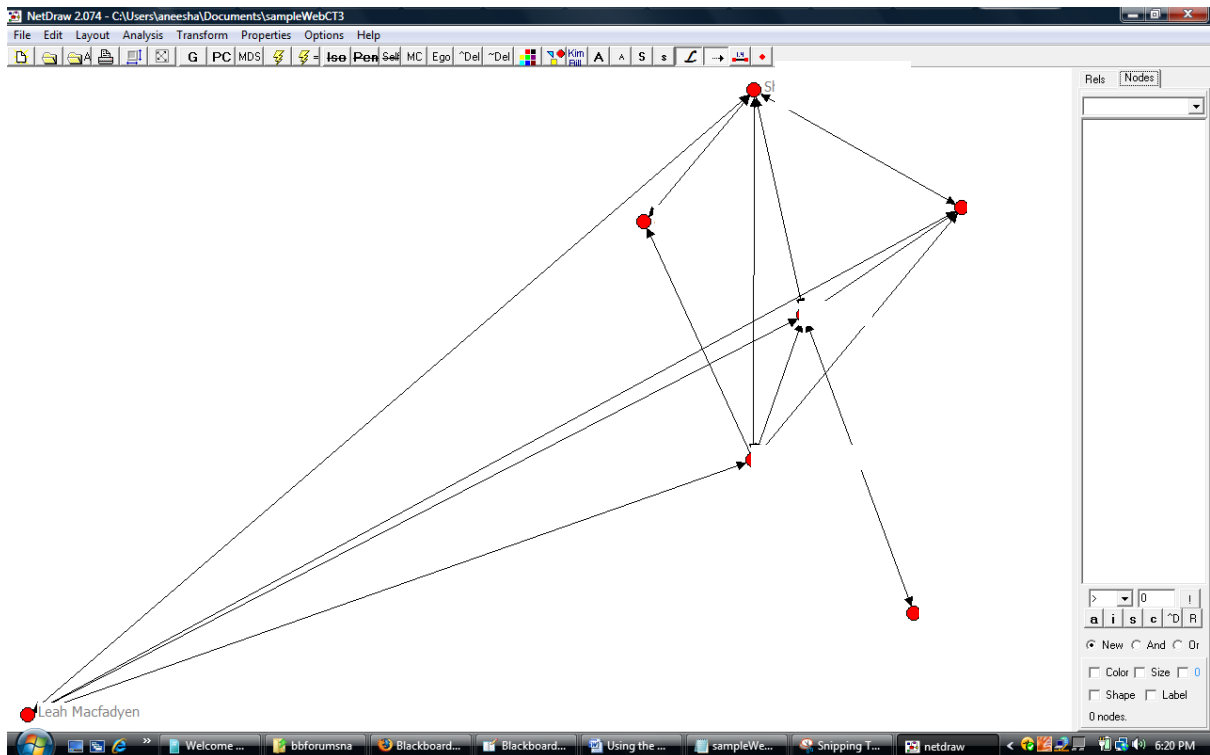

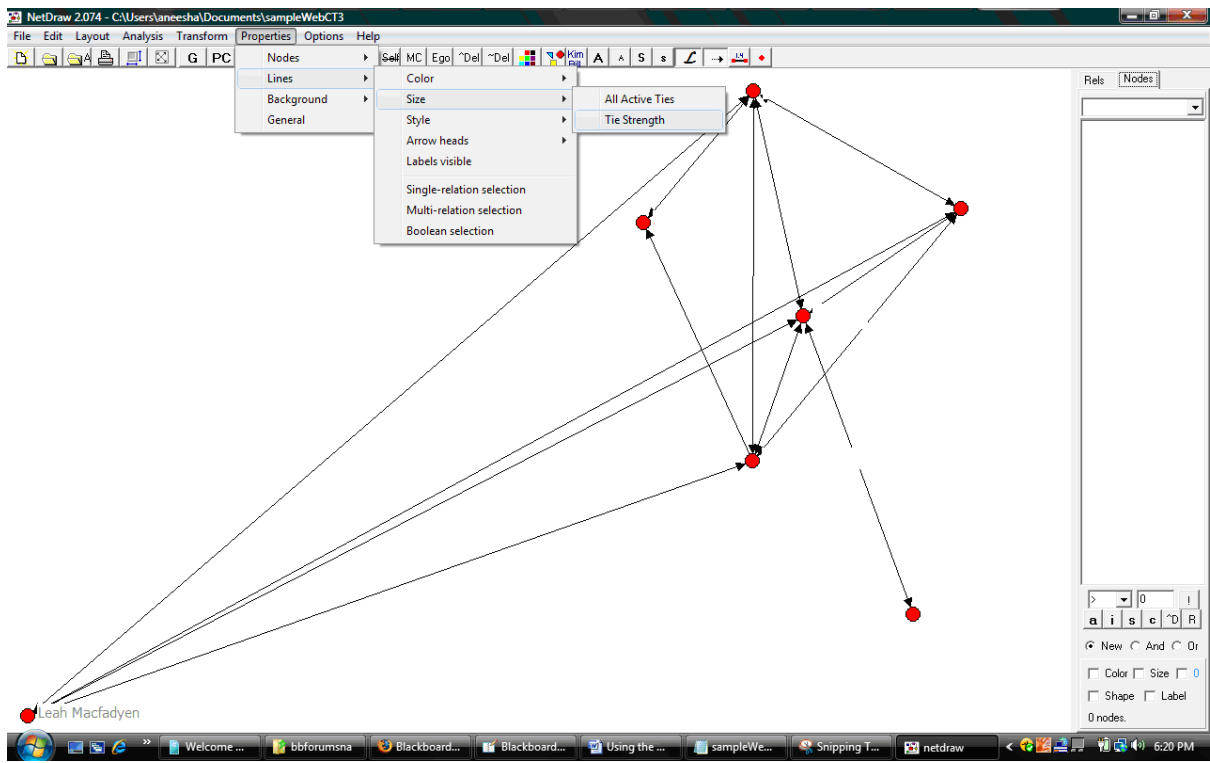A graph of the social network is displayed.

A graph layout algorithm can be applied to assist with network visualisation. Select Layout, Graph-Theoretic Layout, Spring embedded from the menu. The Spring –Embedded dialog is displayed. Use the default values and click Ok.
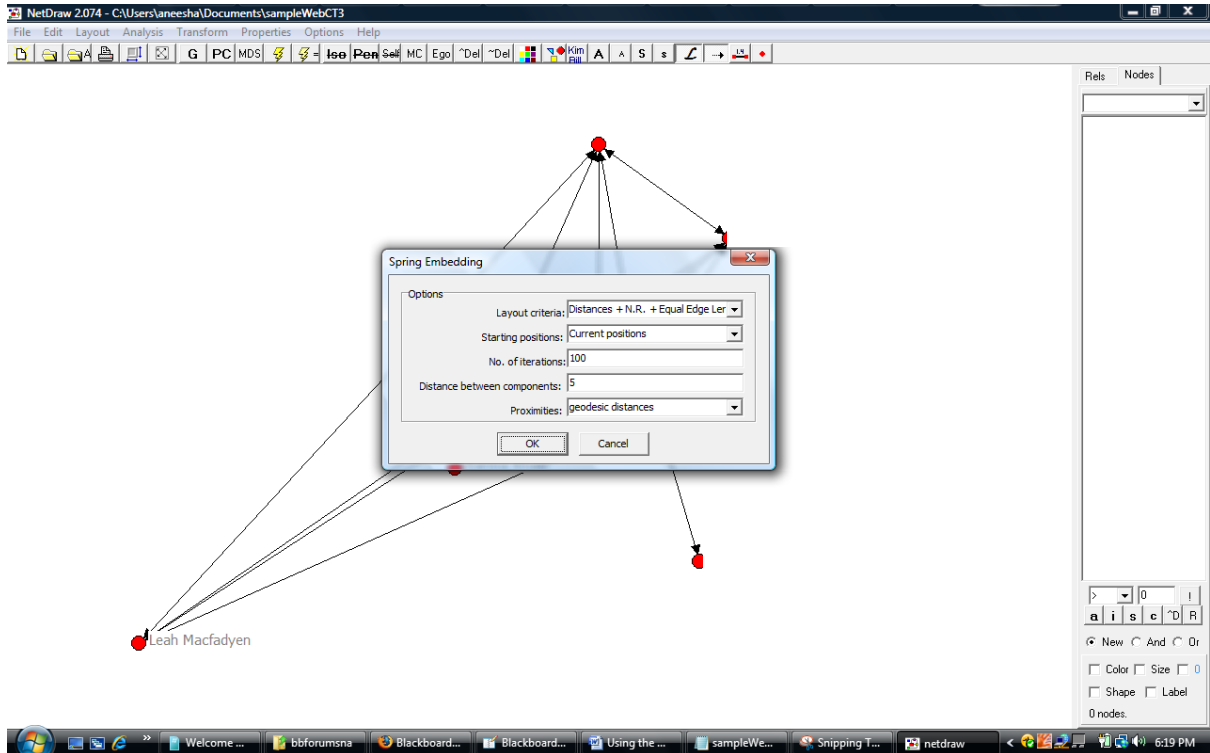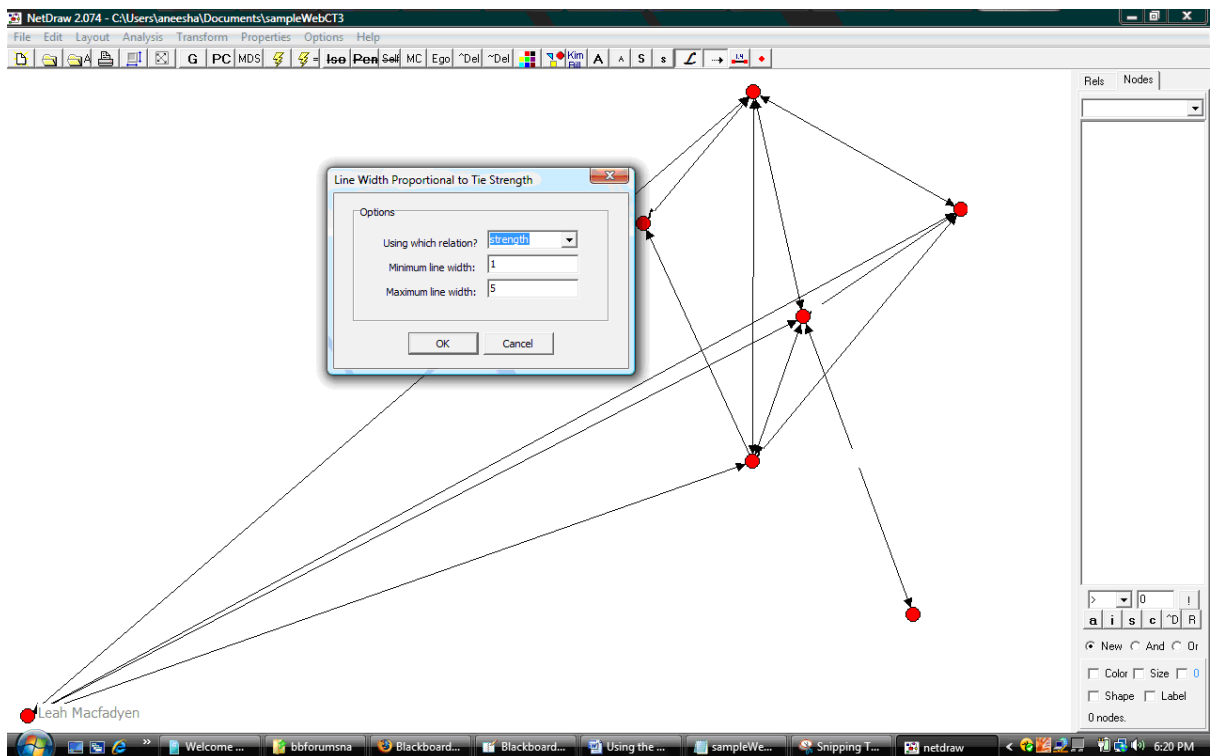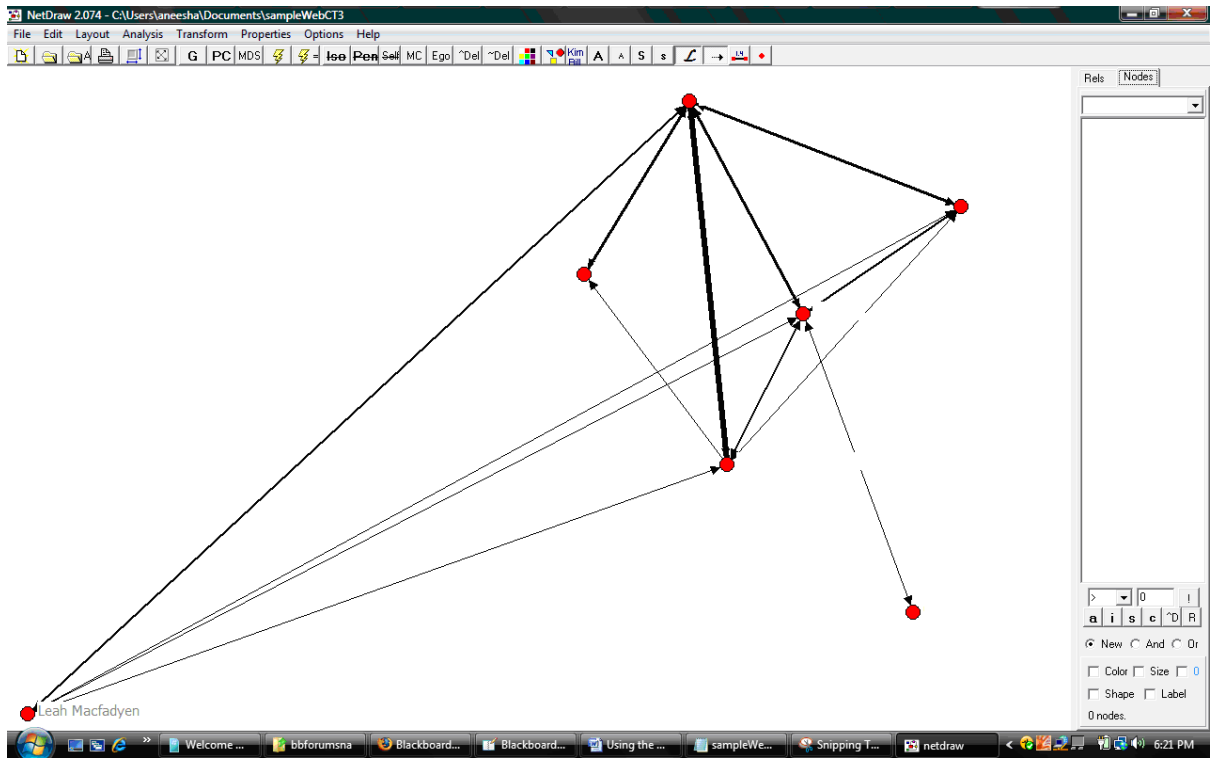

The social network/graph is rearranged.

The number of posts between each person was also exported. This data can be displayed to help identify week and strong relationships. Select Lines, Size, Tie Strength from the menu.
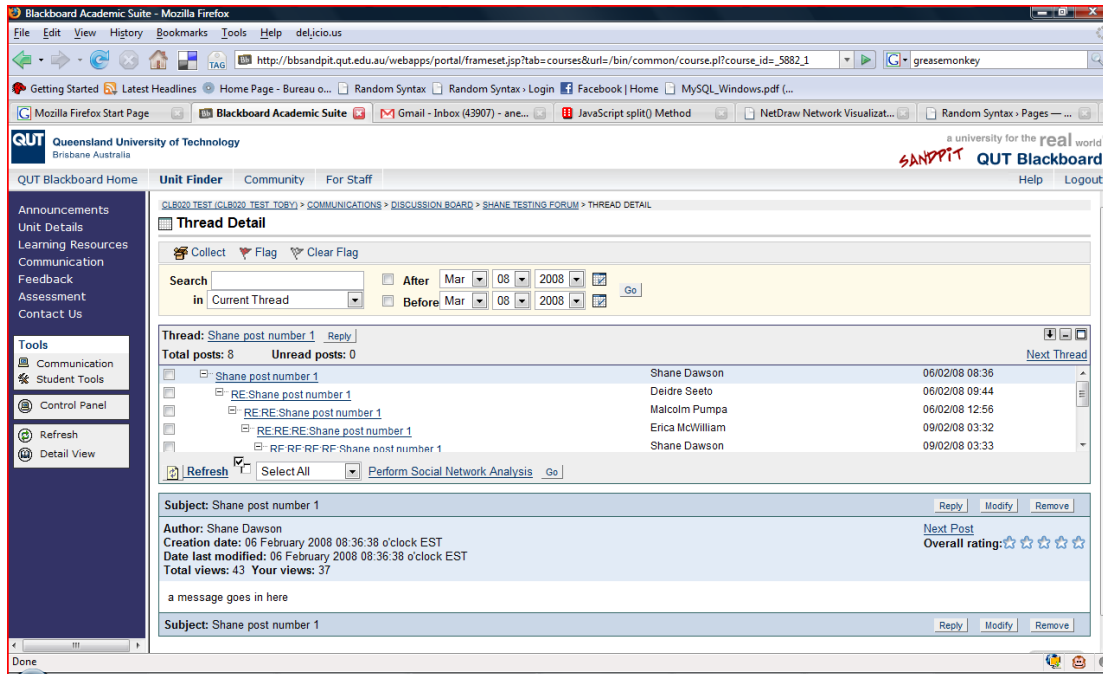

Select Strength an click OK.
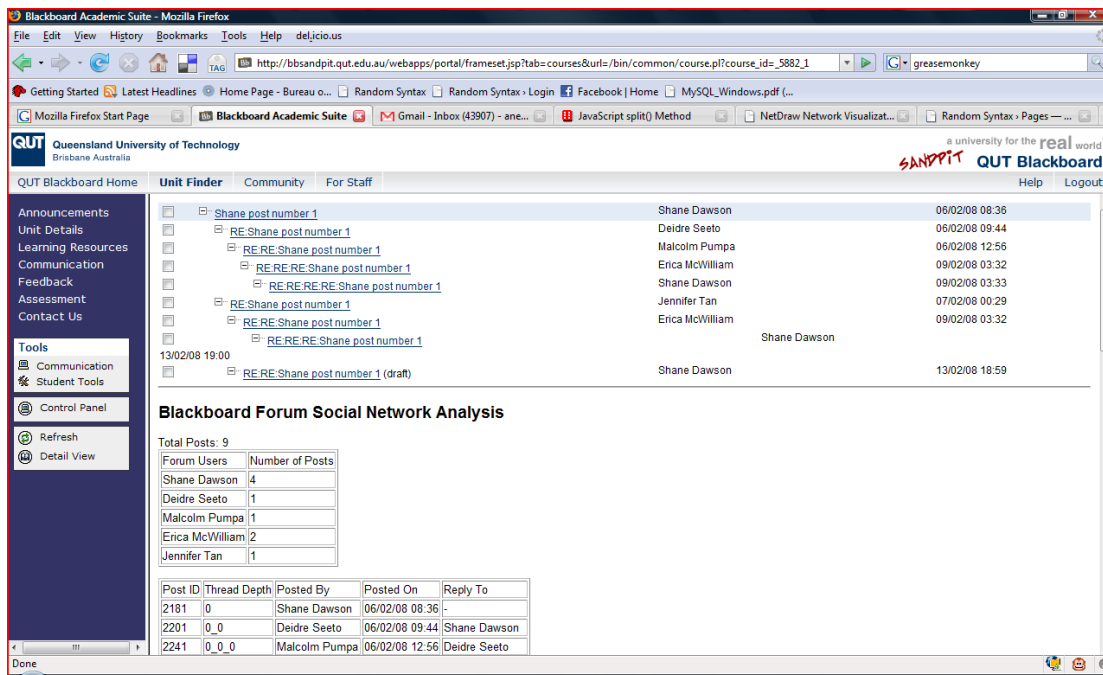
The line width reflects the strength of the relationship.

Blackboard

When you visit a Blackboard forum, a "Perform Social Network Analysis" link will be injected. Click on the link.

The Analysis page is displayed. This includes a Post summary.

The Post-Reply Frequency Table and GraphML output.

The Social Network is also exported to the VNA format for analysis in NetDraw (http://www.analytictech.com/Netdraw/netdraw.htm).

Copy the text from the textbox and save to a file with a vna extension (ie .vna)

Open the file in NetDraw.
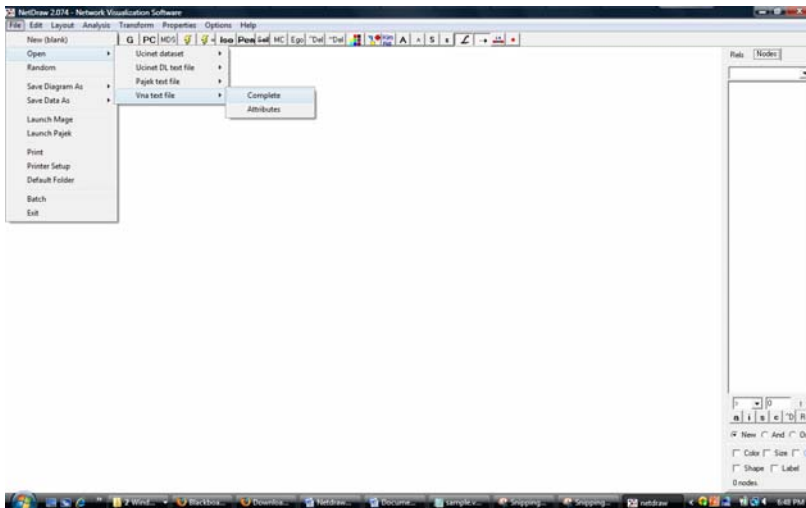
Make sure the VNA file type is selected and click OK.
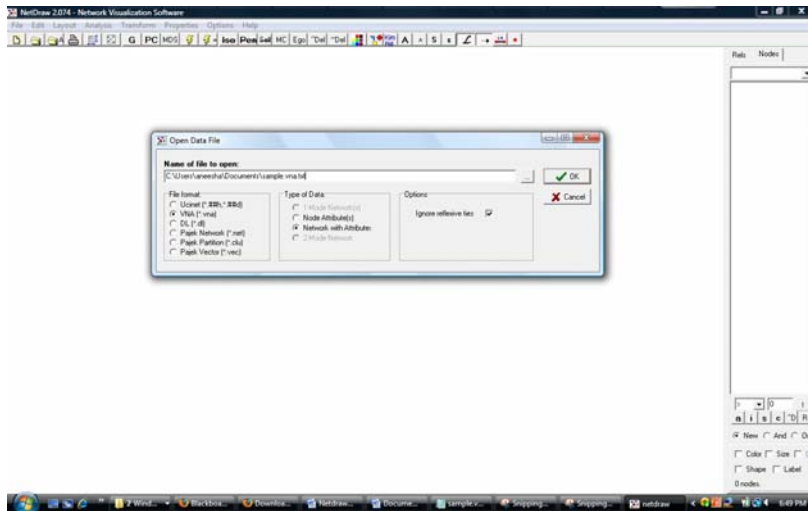
The SNA diagram (graph) is displayed.