

## Usenet News

**A**t the Midas Lunch at the ANU on 26 April, Geoff Huston of AARNet called *Usenet News* 'the sewer of the Internet'. Whether he was referring to the actual content of the newsgroups or the fact that it's where all sorts of matter gets dumped or even that only the very wary should venture there, don't be put off. News is worth reading.

It operates in a different way from Lists, but is based on e-mail. It works on news 'feeds' negotiated between site administrators, so that a site arranges to get news fed to it on a regular basis from its AARNet hub or Internet service provider. The news feed may amount to 60 or more megabytes of data per day.

Each site runs software to manage the feed, and to pass requested news to users. Each user subscribes on the local system to the news groups of interest to him or her. There's plenty to choose from — currently more than 10 000 news groups on a very wide range of topics. Obviously, with so much data from so many groups, news messages are only kept for a short time, the length of time being up to the site administrator. If you're not sure if you get news at your site, ask the site administrator.

A user can not only read news, but post it as well. This is again done through e-mail, with the message being sent to the news provider site which then distributes it along with all the other news received.

But it's not for the faint-hearted. If you're used to the (relative) politeness of Lists, tread warily in the news groups. Some are well-behaved, others operate by their own rules, and new users who don't know these rules will be 'flamed' with offensive messages.

The best way to join in a group is to subscribe for a time, get the feel of the group, learn its rules and then if you want to, contribute.

It's the same way that you'd behave in any new organisation in real life.

Most groups maintain a list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) which are posted regularly, and are archived at various places. One of the most common archive sites is

<http://rtfm.mit.edu/pub/usenet/> where you'll find a large collection of FAQs.

Another way of finding out about newsgroups in general is to subscribe to the [news.newusers.questions](http://news.newusers.questions) group where you can post any question you like without feeling foolish, and there are kind folks who will answer the questions. But you don't have to post — you can learn a lot from just reading the questions and answers.

And how do you find out which groups exist? Well, at <http://www.w3.org/hypertext/DataSources/News/Groups/Overview.html> you'll find a complete hierarchical list of all groups.

Finally, one more word of warning. At some sites, you may not get all possible news groups. If in doubt, check with your site administrator.

### Online diary of events

Many newspapers and magazines provide diaries of forthcoming events of particular interest to their readers. Now there's an online version. The Open Solutions Centre in Canberra has created for each State and Territory an IT Event Diary.

It's at <http://web.spirit.com.au/opensolutions/home> and if you have a forms-based browser, you can enter information into the system for an event on a particular date.

### HTML style manual

The Yale University's Centre for Advanced Instructional Media's Web site has produced a style manual for HTML pages. It's at [http://info.med.yale.edu/caim/StyleManual\\_Top.HTML](http://info.med.yale.edu/caim/StyleManual_Top.HTML) and it covers aspects of Web site design, page design and optimising performance of Web pages.

One of the Authoring Resources to which the manual refers is Matthew Ciolek's *Quality, Guidelines & Standards for Internet Information Resources at the Coombs Computing Unit at the ANU*. You'll find it at <http://coombs.anu.edu.au/SpecialProj/QLTY/QtyHome.html>

### Citing electronic references

It's funny how one thing leads to another. In checking out Matt Ciolek's Quality document, I found an answer to a question that Sarah Reed of OLTC had asked about how you should cite Internet resources - mail messages, news postings, FTP files etc. If you go to [gopher://vmsgopher.cua.edu:70/00gopher\\_root\\_eric\\_ae%3A%5B\\_edir%5Decit.txt](mailto:vmsgopher.cua.edu:70/00gopher_root_eric_ae%3A%5B_edir%5Decit.txt) you'll find a few sugges-

tions.

### Network committee papers

Selected papers from the 48th Meeting of the ABN Network Committee held on 9-10 March 1995 have been published on the National Library's Information Server at <http://www.nla.gov.au/2/abn/committees/ncmeet.html>

### Acquisitions home page

AcqWeb is the name of a home page devoted to Acquisitions matters, set up at <http://www.library.vanderbilt.edu/law/acqs/acqs.html> by Anna Belle Leiserson, operating in conjunc-



tion with ACQNET, the Acquisitions Librarians Electronic Network. ACQNET subscribers can report Internet resources they find relevant to acquisitions, collection development and other related issues through ACQNET, and these will then be linked on AcqWeb. AcqWeb also has links to archives of ACQNET. To subscribe to ACQNET, send the e-mail message SUB ACQNET-L  to [listserv@listserv.appstate.edu](mailto:listserv@listserv.appstate.edu)

### Services to patrons with disabilities

EASI (Equal Access to Software and Information) has established a Web site at <http://www.rit.edu/~easi> about information technology and its access by persons with disabilities.

EASI's information has special areas devoted to problems related to science, engineering and math for persons with disabilities: library access for patrons with disabilities and also an area devoted to back issues of the electronic journal Information technology and disabilities.

### Document delivery list

Sharon Howells from the University of Newcastle has announced the establishment of DOCLIBS, an unmoderated list which will serve as an informal forum for all aspects of Inter Library Loan and Document Delivery.



To subscribe, send an e-mail message to [majordomo@dewey.newcastle.edu.au](mailto:majordomo@dewey.newcastle.edu.au) with the following command in the text of the message: subscribe doclibs

### Parliament of Australia Internet trial

The Parliament of Australia has commenced an Internet trial, with the assistance of the Australian National University, offering public access to a range of parliamentary materials, including the *Notice papers* of both Houses, the *Daily program* and *Order of business*, the *House votes and Proceedings* and the *Journals of the Senate*, and the weekly official version of *Hansard* (the transcripts).

The Home Page for the trial is at <http://www.aph.gov.au/library/trialhorn.html>

### Nordic WWW/WAIS library project

As an answer to some of the weaknesses of the most important NIDR (Networked Information Discovery and Retrieval) tools, the Nordic WAIS/WWW Project started to explore the possibilities of improving navigation and searching in the Net. It was a joint project between Lund University Library and the National Technological Library of Denmark, and the summary report of the project is at <http://www.ub2.lu.se/W4/summary.html>

By the end of 1994, the project had achieved a successful gateway between WWW and the ALIS DPAC, the automatic classification of WAIS databases, a gateway from WWW to WAIS preserving the full functionality of WAIS, and a model of indexing the Web into distributed WAIS servers.

### Not just another Web index

Try out the Web Index at <http://opentext.uunet.ca:8080/omw.html> and get an idea about where Web navigation is going. Not only can you search by subject, heading and title, but Boolean operators beyond *and* and



or such as *but not*, *near* and *followed by* are supported.

The Web Index uses the text indexing and search facilities from Open Text Corporation, which has been proved on large databases and is designed for operation over networks. The database has nearly half a million pages and around 7.7 million hypertext links. And response times are pretty good so far. ■

## Spinning the Web

This book deals with all the processes necessary to create and manage a Web site including how to create and prepare hypertext documents, security issues, setting up a web server, how to select and evaluate software, samples from well-executed Web documents and case studies that illustrate the step-by-step process of getting the Web up and running. It is aimed at people who want to publish information on the Web and have experience of the Internet and some understanding of what the common Internet services offer. The Australian example is from AusArts at the Australian National University Institute of the Arts Library (<http://online.anu.edu.au/ITA/AusArts/index.html>).

Part One provides an overview of the issues involved in running a Web site including advice on the structuring of information and use of links. Part Two is aimed specifically at authors and contributors and provides detailed coverage of the information needed for writing new documents and converting existing

documents to enable their publication on the Web. It describes Hypertext Markup Language, the inclusion of images in Web documents, the various uses of images in documents and the design of fill-out forms, a method used for eliciting user feedback. Part Three is aimed at system administrators and covers the processes involved in administering a Web servers, and how to write programs that dynamically generate Web documents.

The Appendices include a comprehensive resource guide and pointers to software freely available on the Net as well as sources of further information.

The book is available from Thomas Nelson Australia, 102 Dodds Street, South Melbourne, Victoria 3205 Telephone: 1800 65 4831 Fax: 1800 64 1823. *Spinning the Web* costs \$54.95.

Ford, Andrew. *Spinning the Web: How to provide Information on the Internet* London: International Thomson Publishing, 1995. 227p. ISBN 1850321415.

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Contributions and suggestions for this column are always welcome. Please contact Kerry Webb at [k.webb@nla.gov.au](mailto:k.webb@nla.gov.au) or via the ALIA National Office

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