CHAP3

COLLABORATORS			
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REVISION HISTORY			
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Contents

Chapter 1

CHAP3

1.1   Chapter 3: USENET

    Imagine a conversation carried out over a period of hours and days,
as if people were leaving messages and responses on a bulletin board.
Or imagine the electronic equivalent of a radio talk show where
everybody can put their two cents in and no one is ever on hold.
    Unlike e-mail, which is "one-to-one," Usenet is "many-to-many."

    What is Usenet?
    News groups
    News readers
    Responding to articles   emacs editor hints
    When things go wrong

1.2   Chapter 3: Usenet (1 of 5) -- What is Usenet?

    Usenet is the international meeting place, where people gather to
meet their friends, discuss the day's events, keep up with computer
trends or talk about whatever's on their mind. Jumping into a Usenet
discussion can be a liberating experience. Nobody knows what you look or
sound like, how old you are, what your background is. You're judged
solely on your words, your ability to make a point.
    To many people, Usenet IS the Net. In fact, it is often confused
with Internet. But it is a totally separate system. All Internet sites
CAN carry Usenet, but so do many non-Internet sites, from sophisticated
Unix machines to old XTs and Apple IIs.
    Technically, Usenet messages are shipped around the world, from host
system to host system, using one of several specific Net protocols. Your
host system stores all of its Usenet messages in one place, which
everybody with an account on the system can access. That way, no matter
how many people actually read a given message, each host system has to
store only one copy of it. Many host systems "talk" with several others
regularly in case one or another of their links goes down for some
reason. When two host systems connect, they basically compare notes on
which Usenet messages they already have. Any that one is missing the
other then transmits, and vice-versa. Because they are computers, they
don't mind running through thousands, even millions, of these comparisons

every day.
     Yes, millions. For Usenet is huge. Every day, Usenet users pump
upwards of 25 million characters a day into the system -- roughly the
equivalent of volumes A-E of the Encyclopedia Britannica.
     Obviously, nobody could possibly keep up with this immense flow of
messages. Let's look at how to find messages of interest to you.

1.3   Chapter 3: Usenet (2 of 5) -- Newsgroups

     The basic building block of Usenet is the newsgroup, which is a
collection of messages with a related theme (on other networks, these
would be called conferences, forums, bboards or special-interest
groups).
     There are now more than 4,500 of these newsgroups. With so many
newsgroups, it can be hard finding ones of interest to you. We'll start
off by showing you how to get into some of the more interesting or
useful newsgroups so you can get a feel for how it all works.
     Some public-access systems try to make it easier by dividing
Usenet into several broad categories. Choose one of those and you're
given a list of newsgroups in that category. Then select the
newsgroup you're interested in and start reading.
     Other systems let you compile your own "reading list" so that you
only see messages in conferences you want. In both cases, conferences
are arranged in a particular hierarchy devised in the early 1980s.
Newsgroup names start with one of a series of broad topic names. For
example, newsgroups beginning with "comp." are about particular
computer-related topics. These broad topics are followed by a series of
more focused topics (so that "comp.unix" groups are limited to
discussion about Unix). The main hierarchies are:

          bionet   Research biology
          bit.listserv   Conferences originating as Bitnet mailing lists
          biz   Business
          comp   Computers and related subjects
          misc   Discussions that don't fit anywhere else
          news   News about Usenet itself
          rec   Hobbies, games and recreation
          sci   Science other than research biology
          soc   "Social" groups, often ethnically related
          talk   Politics and related topics
          alt   Controversial or unusual topics; not
                          carried by all sites

     In addition, many host systems carry newsgroups for a particular
city, state or region. For example, ne.housing is a newsgroup where New
Englanders look for apartments. A growing number also carry K12
newsgroups, which are aimed at elementary and secondary teachers and
students. (See Chapter 12 for more on education.) And a number of
sites carry clari newsgroups, which is actually a commercial service
consisting of wire-service stories and a unique online computer news
service (more on this in chapter 10).

1.4   Chapter 3: Usenet (3 of 5) -- News readers

     How do you dive right in? On the Free-Net and some other systems,
it's all done through menus -- you just keep choosing from a list of
choices until you get to the newsgroup you want and then hit the "read"
command. On Unix systems, however, you will have to use a "newsreader"
program. Two of the more common ones are known as rn (for "read news")
and nn (for "no news" -- because it's supposed to be simpler to use).
     For beginners, nn may be the better choice because it works with
rudimentary menus -- you get a list of articles in a given newsgroup and
then you choose which ones you want to see.

     Example session in nn newsreader
     Finding interesting groups: NNGREP
     Customizing news groups: .newsrc
     Example session in rn newsreader
       >> rn commands.
       >> nn commands.

1.5   ...News Readers (1 of 4) -- nn Sample Session

   To try out nn, connect to your host system and, at the command line ,
type

               nn news.announce.newusers

and hit enter. After a few seconds, you should see something like this:

Newsgroup: news.announce.newusers   Articles: 22 of 22/1 NEW

a Gene Spafford   776 Answers to Frequently Asked Questions
b Gene Spafford   362 A Primer on How to Work With the Usenet Community
c Gene Spafford   387 Emily Postnews Answers Your Questions on Netiquette
d Gene Spafford   101 Hints on writing style for Usenet
e Gene Spafford   74 Introduction to news.announce
f Gene Spafford   367 USENET Software: History and Sources
g Gene Spafford   353 What is Usenet?
h taylor   241 A Guide to Social Newsgroups and Mailing Lists
i Gene Spafford   585 Alternative Newsgroup Hierarchies, Part I
j Gene Spafford   455 >Alternative Newsgroup Hierarchies, Part II
k David C Lawrenc 151 How to Create a New Newsgroup
l Gene Spafford   106 How to Get Information about Networks
m Gene Spafford   888 List of Active Newsgroups
n Gene Spafford   504 List of Moderators
o Gene Spafford   1051 Publicly Accessible Mailing Lists, Part I
p Gene Spafford   1123 Publicly Accessible Mailing Lists, Part II
q Gene Spafford   1193 >Publicly Accessible Mailing Lists, Part III
r Jonathan Kamens 644 How to become a USENET site
s Jonathan Kamen 1344 List of Periodic Informational Postings, Part I

-- 15:52 -- SELECT -- help:? -----Top 85%-----
Explanatory postings for new users. (Moderated)

     Obviously, this is a good newsgroup to begin your exploration of

Usenet! Here's what all this means: The first letter on each line is
the letter you type to read that particular "article" (it makes sense
that a "newsgroup" would have "articles"). Next comes the name of the
person who wrote that article, followed by its length, in lines, and what
the article is about. At the bottom, you see the local time at your
access site, what you're doing right now (i.e., SELECTing articles),
which key to hit for some help (the ? key) and how many of the articles
in the newsgroup you can see on this screen. The "(moderated)" means the
newsgroup has a "moderator" who is the only one who can directly post
messages to it. This is generally limited to groups such as this, which
contain articles of basic information or for digests, which are basically
online magazines (more on them in a bit).
        Say you're particularly interested in what "Emily Postnews" has to
say about proper etiquette on Usenet. Hit your c key (lower case!), and
the line will light up. If you want to read something else, hit the key
that corresponds to it. And if you want to see what's on the next page
of articles, hit return or your space bar.
    But you're impatient to get going, and you want to read that article
now. The command for that in nn is a capital Z. Hit it and you'll see
something like this:

Gene Spafford: Emily Postnews Answers Your Questions on NetiquetteSep 92 04:17
Original-author: brad@looking.on.ca (Brad Templeton)
Archive-name: emily-postnews/part1
Last-change: 30 Nov 91 by brad@looking.on.ca (Brad Templeton)

**NOTE: this is intended to be satirical. If you do not recognize
  it as such, consult a doctor or professional comedian. The
  recommendations in this article should recognized for what
  they are -- admonitions about what NOT to do.

                    "Dear Emily Postnews"

        Emily Postnews, foremost authority on proper net behaviour,
        gives her advice on how to act on the net.

==

Dear Miss Postnews: How long should my signature be? -- verbose@noisy

A: Dear Verbose: Please try and make your signature as long as you
-- 09:57 --.announce.newusers-- LAST --help:?--Top 4%--

    The first few lines are the message's header, similar to the header
you get in e-mail messages. Then comes the beginning of the message. The
last line tells you the time again, the newsgroup name (or part of it,
anyway), the position in your message stack that this message occupies,
how to get help, and how much of the message is on screen. If you want
to keep reading this message, just hit your space bar (not your enter
key!) for the next screen and so on until done. When done, you'll be
returned to the newsgroup menu. For now hit Q (upper case this time),
which quits you out of nn and returns you to your host system's command
line.
        To get a look at another interesting newsgroup, type

```
        nn comp.risks
```

and hit enter. This newsgroup is another moderated group, this time a
digest of all the funny and frightening ways computers and the people who
run and use them can go wrong. Again, you read articles by selecting
their letters. If you're in the middle of an article and decide you want
to go onto the next one, hit your n key.

1.6   ...News Readers (2 of 4) -- nngrep: Finding interesting groups

     Now it's time to look for some newsgroups that might be of
particular interest to you. Unix host systems that have nn use a program
called nngrep (ever get the feeling Unix was not entirely written in
English?) that lets you scan newsgroups. Exit nn and at your host
system's command line , type

```
        nngrep word
```

where word is the subject you're interested in. If you use a Macintosh
computer, you might try

```
        nngrep mac
```

    You'll get something that looks like this:

```
        alt.music.machines.of.loving.grace
        alt.religion.emacs
        comp.binaries.mac
        comp.emacs
        comp.lang.forth.mac
        comp.os.mach
        comp.sources.mac
        comp.sys.mac.announce
        comp.sys.mac.apps
        comp.sys.mac.comm
        comp.sys.mac.databases
        comp.sys.mac.digest
        comp.sys.mac.games
        comp.sys.mac.hardware
        comp.sys.mac.hypercard
        comp.sys.mac.misc
        comp.sys.mac.programmer
        comp.sys.mac.system
        comp.sys.mac.wanted
        gnu.emacs.announce
        gnu.emacs.bug
        gnu.emacs.gnews
        gnu.emacs.gnus
        gnu.emacs.help
        gnu.emacs.lisp.manual
        gnu.emacs.sources
        gnu.emacs.vm.bug
        gnu.emacs.vm.info
        gnu.emacs.vms
```

Note that some of these obviously have something to do with
Macintoshes while some obviously do not; nngrep is not a perfect system.
If you want to get a list of ALL the newsgroups available on your host
system, type

nngrep -a |more

or

nngrep -a |pg

and hit enter (which one to use depends on the Unix used on your host
system; if one doesn't do anything, try the other). You don't
absolutely need the |more or |pg, but if you don't include it, the list
will keep scrolling, rather than pausing every 24 lines. If you are in
nn, hitting a capital Y will bring up a similar list.

1.7   ...News Readers (3 of 4) -- .newsrc: Control group presentation

Typing "nn newsgroup" for every newsgroup can get awfully tiring
after awhile. When you use nn, your host system looks in a file called
.newsrc. This is basically a list of every newsgroup on the host system
along with notations on which groups and articles you have read (all
maintained by the computer). You can also use this file to create a
"reading list" that brings up each newsgroup to which you want to
"subscribe." To try it out, type

nn

without any newsgroup name, and hit enter.
Unfortunately, you will start out with a .newsrc file that has you
"subscribed" to every single newsgroup on your host system! To delete a
newsgroup from your reading list, type a capital U while its menu is on
the screen. The computer will ask you if you're sure you want to
"unsubscribe." If you then hit a Y, you'll be unsubscribed and put in
the next group.
With many host systems carrying 4,000 or more newsgroups, this will
take you forever.
Fortunately, there are a couple of easier ways to do this. Both
involve calling up your .newsrc file in a word or text processor. In a
.newsrc file, each newsgroup takes up one line, consisting of the group's
name, an exclamation point or a colon and a range of numbers. Newsgroups
with a colon are ones to which you are subscribed; those followed by an
exclamation point are "un-subscribed." To start with a clean slate,
then, you have to change all those colons to exclamation points.
If you know how to use emacs or vi, call up the .newsrc file (you
might want to make a copy of .newsrc first, just in case), and use the
search-and-replace function to make the change.
If you're not comfortable with these text processor, you can
 download the .newsrc file, make the changes on your own computer and
then upload the revised file. Before you download the file, however,
you should do a couple of things. One is to type

cp .newsrc temprc

and hit enter. You will actually download this temprc file (note the
name does not start with a period -- some computers, such as those using
MS-DOS, do not allow file names starting with periods). After you
download the file, open it in your favorite word processor and use its
search-and-replace function to change the exclamation points to colons.
Be careful not to change anything else! Save the document in ASCII or
text format. Dial back into your host system. At the command line ,
type

                cp temprc temprc1

and hit enter. This new file will serve as your backup .newsrc file just
in case something goes wrong. Upload the temprc file from your
computer. This will overwrite the Unix system's old temprc file. Now type

                cp temprc .newsrc

and hit enter. You now have a clean slate to start creating a reading
list.

    Also see Kill files for a way to exclude messages from a group.

1.8   ...News Readers (4 of 4) -- rn Sample Session: Build a reading list

    It's a little easier to do this in rn, so let's try that out, and
as long as where there, see how it works.
    If you type

                rn news.announce.newusers

at your host system's command line , you'll see something like this:

    ******** 21 unread articles in news.announce.newusers--read now? [ynq]

If you hit your Y key, the first article will appear on your screen. If
you want to see what articles are available first, though, hit your
computer's = key and you'll get something like this:

    152 Introduction to news.announce
    153 A Primer on How to Work With the Usenet Community
    154 What is Usenet?
    155 Answers to Frequently Asked Questions
    156 Hints on writing style for Usenet
    158 Alternative Newsgroup Hierarchies, Part I
    159 Alternative Newsgroup Hierarchies, Part II
    160 Emily Postnews Answers Your Questions on Netiquette
    161 USENET Software: History and Sources
    162 A Guide to Social Newsgroups and Mailing Lists
    163 How to Get Information about Networks
    164 How to Create a New Newsgroup
    169 List of Active Newsgroups
    170 List of Moderators
    171 Publicly Accessible Mailing Lists, Part I
    172 Publicly Accessible Mailing Lists, Part II
    173 Publicly Accessible Mailing Lists, Part III

     End of article 158 (of 178)--what next? [npq]

    Notice how the messages are in numerical order this time, and don't
tell you who sent them. Article 154 looks interesting. To read it, type
in 154 and hit enter. You'll see something like this:

    Article 154 (20 more) in news.announce.newusers (moderated):
    From: spaf@cs.purdue.EDU (Gene Spafford)
    Newsgroups: news.announce.newusers,news.admin,news.answers
    Subject: What is Usenet?
    Date: 20 Sep 92 04:17:26 GMT
    Followup-To: news.newusers.questions
    Organization: Dept. of Computer Sciences, Purdue Univ.
    Lines: 353
    Supersedes: <spaf-whatis_715578719@cs.purdue.edu>

    Archive-name: what-is-usenet/part1
    Original from: chip@tct.com (Chip Salzenberg)
    Last-change: 19 July 1992 by spaf@cs.purdue.edu (Gene Spafford)

    The first thing to understand about Usenet is that it is widely
    misunderstood. Every day on Usenet, the "blind men and the elephant"
    phenomenon is evident, in spades. In my opinion, more flame wars
    arise because of a lack of understanding of the nature of Usenet than
    from any other source. And consider that such flame wars arise, of
    necessity, among people who are on Usenet. Imagine, then, how poorly
    understood Usenet must be by those outside!

    --MORE--(7%)

    This time, the header looks much more like the gobbledygook you get
in e-mail messages. To keep reading, hit your space bar. If you hit
your N key (in lower case), you'll go to the next message in the
numerical order.
    To escape rn, just keep hitting your q key (in lower case), until
you get back to the command line. Now let's set up your reading list.
Because rn uses the same .newsrc file as nn, you can use one of the
search-and-replace methods described above. Or you can do this: Type

              rn

and hit enter. When the first newsgroup comes up on your screen, hit
your u key (in lower case). Hit it again, and again, and again. Or just
keep it pressed down (if your computer starts beeping, let up for a
couple of seconds). Unsubscribing from every single group this way could
take five or ten minutes. Eventually, you'll be told you're at the end
of the newsgroups, and asked what you want to do next.
    Here's where you begin entering newsgroups. Type

              g newsgroup

(for example, g comp.sys.mac.announce) and hit enter. You'll be asked if

you want to "subscribe." Hit your y key. Then type

          g next newsgroup

(for example, g comp.announce.newusers) and hit enter. Repeat until
done. This process will also set up your reading list for nn, if you
prefer that newsreader. But how do you know which newsgroups to
subscribe? Typing a lower-case l and then hitting enter will show you a
list of all available newsgroups. Again, since there could be more than
2,000 newsgroups on your system, this might not be something you want to
do. Fortunately, you can search for groups with particular words in
their names, using the l command. Typing

      l mac

followed by enter, will bring up a list of newsgroups with those letters
in them (and as in nn, you will also see groups dealing with emacs and
the like, in addition to groups related to Macintosh computers).
     Because of the vast amount of messages transmitted over Usenet, most
systems carry messages for only a few days or weeks. So if there's a
message you want to keep, you should either turn on your computer's
screen capture or save it to a file which you can later download). To
save a message as a file in rn, type

          s filename

where filename is what you want to call the file. Hit enter. You'll be
asked if you want to save it in "mailbox format." In most cases, you can
answer with an n (which will strip off the header). The message will now
be saved to a file in your News directory (which you can access by typing
cd News and then hitting enter).

     Also, some newsgroups fill up particularly quickly -- go away for a
couple of days and you'll come back to find hundreds of articles! One
way to deal with that is to mark them as "read" so that they no longer
appear on your screen. In nn, hit a capital J; in rn, a small c.
     There are some newsgroups you might want to include in your reading
list. The news.newusers.questions newsgroup is where newcomers can ask
questions about how Usenet works. The newsgroup news.announce.newsgroups
carries information about new or proposed newsgroups.
     The news.answers newsgroup is a fascinating one and can help you
find interesting newsgroups. Many newsgroups have regularly compiled
lists of "frequently asked questions" or FAQs related to the newsgroup's
particular discussions. The people who write these lists post them in
news.answers. You'll learn how to fight jet lag in an FAQ from the
rec.travel.air newsgroup; read more than you probably wanted to know
about bloodhounds in an FAQ from rec.pet.dogs; find answers to common
questions about Windows in comp.os.ms-windows. There's even a newsgroup
set up just for these FAQs: news.answers. This can be an interesting
newsgroup to browse through, because you'll find everything from tips on
saving money on airline tickets to facts about U.S. space missions.

1.9   rn COMMANDS

rn COMMANDS

       Different commands are available to you in rn depending on whether
you are already in a newsgroup or reading a specific article. At any
point, typing a lower-case H will bring up a list of available commands
and some terse instructions for using them. Here are some of them:

After you've just called up rn, or within a newsgroup:

c   Marks every article in a newsgroup as read (or "caught up") so
           that you don't have to see them again. The system will ask you
           if you are sure. Can be done either when asked if you want to
           read a particular newsgroup or once in the newsgroup.

g   Goes to a newsgroup, in this form:

               g news.group

           Use this both for going to groups to which you're already
           subscribed and subscribing to new groups.

h   Provides a list of available commands with terse instructions.

l   Gives a list of all available newsgroups.

p   Goes to the first previous subscribed newsgroup with un-read
           articles.

q   Quits, or exits, rn if you have not yet gone into a newsgroup. If
           you are in a newsgroup, it quits that one and brings you to the
           next subscribed newsgroup.

Only within a newsgroup:

=   Gives a list of all available articles in the newsgroup.

m   Marks a specific article or series of articles as "un-read" again
           so that you can come back to them later. Typing

               1700m

           and hitting enter would mark just that article as un-read.
           Typing

               1700-1800m

           and hitting enter would mark all of those articles as unread.

s file   Copies the current article to a file in your News directory,
           where "file" is the name of the file you want to save it to.
           You'll be asked if you want to use "mailbox" format when saving.

If you answer by hitting your N key, most of the header will not
be saved.

space   Brings up the next page of article listings. If already on the
          last page, displays the first article in the newsgroup.

u   Un-subscribe from the newsgroup.

/text/   Searches through the newsgroup for articles with a specific word
          or phrase in the "subject:" line, from the current article to
          the end of the newsgroup. For example,

               /EFF/

          would bring you to the first article with "EFF" in the
          "subject:" line.

?text?   The same as above except it searches in reverse order from the
          current article.

Only within a specific article:

C   If you post an article and then decide it was a mistake, call
          it up on your host system and hit this. The message will soon
          begin disappearing on systems around the world.

F   Post a public response in the newsgroup to the current
          article. Includes a copy of her posting, which you can then
          edit down using your host system's text editor.

f   The same as above except it does not include a copy of the
          original message in yours.

m   Marks the current article as "un-read" so that you can come
          back to it later. You do not have to type the article number.

Control-N   Brings up the first response to the article. If there is no
          follow-up article, this returns you to the first unread article
          in the newsgroup).

Control-P   Goes to the message to which the current article is a reply.

n   Goes to the next unread article in the newsgroup.

N   Takes you to the next article in the newsgroup even if you've
          already read it.

q   Quits, or exits, the current article. Leaves you in the current
          newsgroup.

R   Reply, via e-mail only, to the author of the current article.
          Includes a copy of his message in yours.

r   The same as above, except it does not include a copy of his
ar   ticle.

s|mail user   Mails a copy of the article to somebody. For "user"

        substitute her e-mail address. Does not let you add comments to
        the message first, however.

space   Hitting the space bar shows the next page of the article, or, if
at the end, goes to the next un-read article.

1.10   nn Commands

nn Commands

To mark a specific article for reading, type the letter next to it (in
lower case). To mark a specific article and all of its responses, type
the letter and an asterisk, for example:

        a*

To un-select an article, type the letter next to it (again, in lower case).

C   Cancels an article (around the world) that you wrote.
                Every article posted on Usenet has a unique ID number.
                Hitting a capital C sends out a new message that tells host
                systems that receive it to find earlier message and delete
                it.

F   To post a public response, or follow-up. If selected while
                still on a newsgroup "page", asks you which article to
                follow up. If selected while in a specific article, will
                follow up that article. In either case, you'll be asked if
                you want to include the original article in yours. Caution:
                puts you in whatever text editor is your default.

N   Goes to the next subscribed newsgroup with unread articles.

P   Goes to the previous subscribed newsgroup with unread
                articles.

G news.group   Goes to a specific newsgroup. Can be used to subscribe to
                new newsgroups. Hitting G brings up a sub-menu:

                        u   Goes to the group and shows only un-read
                                articles.

                        a   Goes to the group and shows all articles,
                                even ones you've already read.

                        s   Will show you only articles with a specific
                                subject.

                        n   Will show you only articles from a specific
                                person.

```
M              Mails a copy of the current article to somebody.  You'll be
               asked for the recipient's e-mail address and whether you
               want to add any comments to the article before sending it
               off.  As with F, puts you in the default editor.

:post          Post an article. You'll be asked for the name of the group.

Q              Quit, or exit, nn.

U              Un-subscribe from the current newsgroup.

R              Responds to an article via e-mail.

space          Hitting the space bar brings up the next page of articles.

X              If you have selected articles, this will show them to you
               and then take you to the next subscribed newsgroup with
               unread articles. If you don't have any selected articles,
               it marks all articles as read and takes you to the next
               unread subscribed newsgroup.

=word          Finds and marks all articles in the newsgroup with a
               specific word in the "subject:" line, for example:

                       =modem

Z              Shows you selected articles immediately and then returns
               you to the current newsgroup.

?              Brings up a help screen.

<              Goes to the previous page in the newsgroup.

>              Goes to the next page in the newsgroup.

$              Goes to the last page in an article.

^              Goes to the first page in an article.
```

1.11   Chapter 3: Usenet (4 of 5) -- Responding to articles

        Now to put your two cents in.
        "Threads" are an integral part of Usenet. When somebody posts a
message, often somebody else will respond. Soon, a thread of
conversation begins. Following these threads is relatively easy. In nn,
related messages are grouped together. In rn, when you're done with a
message, you can hit control-N to read the next related message, or
followup. As you explore Usenet, it's probably a good idea to read
discussions for awhile before you jump in. This way, you can get a feel
for the particular newsgroup -- each of which has its own rhythms.
        Eventually, though, you'll want to speak up. There are two main
ways to do this. You join an existing conversation, or you can start a
whole new thread.
        If you want to join a discussion, you have to decide if you want to

include portions of the message you are responding to in your message. The reason to do this is so people can see what you're responding to, just in case the original message has disappeared from their system (remember that most Usenet messages have a short life span on the average host system) or they can't find it.

If you're using a Unix host system, joining an existing conversation is similar in both nn and rn: hit your F key when done with a given article in the thread. In rn, type a small f if you don't want to include portions of the message you're responding to; an upper-case F if you do. In nn, type a capital F. You'll then be asked if you want to include portions of the original message.

And here's where you hit another Unix wall. When you hit your F key, your host system calls up its basic Unix text editor. If you're lucky, that'll be Pico, a very easy system. More likely, however, you'll get dumped into emacs (or possibly vi), which you've already met in the chapter on e-mail.

The single most important emacs command is

          control-x control-c

This means, depress your control key and hit x. Then depress the control key and hit c. Memorize this. In fact, it's so important, it bears repeating:

          control-x control-c

These keystrokes are how you get out of emacs. If it works well, you'll be asked if you want to send, edit, abort or list the message you were working on. If it doesn't work well (say you accidentally hit some other weird key combination that means something special to emacs) and nothing seems to happen, or you just get more weird-looking emacs prompts on the bottom of your screen, try hitting control-g. This should stop whatever emacs was trying to do (you should see the word "quit" on the bottom of your screen), after which you can hit control-x control-c. But if this still doesn't work, remember that you can always disconnect and dial back in!

If you have told your newsreader you do want to include portions of the original message in yours, it will automatically put the entire thing at the top of your message. Use the arrow keys to move down to the lines you want to delete and hit control-K, which will delete one line at a time.

You can then write your message. Remember that you have to hit enter before your cursor gets to the end of the line, because emacs does not have word wrapping.

When done, hit control-x control-c. You'll be asked the question about sending, editing, aborting, etc. Chose one. If you hit Y, your host system will start the process to sending your message across the Net.

The nn and rn programs work differently when it comes to posting entirely new messages. In nn, type

     :post

and hit enter in any newsgroup. You'll be asked which newsgroup to post a message to. Type in its name and hit enter. Then you'll be asked for "keywords." These are words you'd use to attract somebody scanning a

newsgroup. Say you're selling your car. You might type the type of car
here. Next comes a "summary" line, which is somewhat similar. Finally,
you'll be asked for the message's "distribution." This is where you put
how widely you want your message disseminated. Think about this one for a
second. If you are selling your car, it makes little sense to send a
message about it all over the world. But if you want to talk about the
environment, it might make a lot of sense. Each host system has its own
set of distribution classifications, but there's generally a local one
(just for users of that system), one for the city, state or region it's
in, another for the country (for example, usa), one for the continent
(for Americans and Canadians, na) and finally, one for the entire world
(usually: world).
        Which one to use? Generally, a couple of seconds' thought will help
you decide. If you're selling your car, use your city or regional
distribution -- people in Australia won't much care and may even get
annoyed. If you want to discuss presidential politics, using a USA
distribution makes more sense. If you want to talk about events in the
Middle East, sending your message to the entire world is perfectly
acceptable.
        Then you can type your message. If you've composed your message
offline (generally a good idea if you and emacs don't get along), you
can upload it now. You may see a lot of weird looking characters as it
uploads into emacs, but those will disappear when you hit control-X and
then control-C. Alternately: "save" the message (for example, by hitting
m in rn), log out, compose your message offline, log back on and upload
your message into a file on your host system. Then call up Usenet, find
the article you "saved." Start a reply, and you'll be asked if you want
to include a prepared message. Type in the name of the file you just
created and hit enter.
        In rn, you have to wait until you get to the end of a newsgroup to
hit F, which will bring up a message-composing system. Alternately, at
your host system's command line , you can type

                  Pnews

and hit enter. You'll be prompted somewhat similarly to the nn system,
except that you'll be given a list of possible distributions. If you
chose "world," you'll get this message:

This program posts news to thousands of machines throughout the entire
civilized world. Your message will cost the net hundreds if not
thousands of dollars to send everywhere. Please be sure you know what
you are doing.

Are you absolutely sure that you want to do this? [ny]

        Don't worry -- your message won't really cost the Net untold
amounts, although, again, it's a good idea to think for a second whether
your message really should go everywhere.
        If you want to respond to a given post through e-mail, instead of
publicly, hit R in nn or r or R in rn. In rn, as with follow-up
articles, the upper-case key includes the original message in yours.
        Most newsgroups are unmoderated, which means that every message you
post will eventually wind up on every host system within the geographic
region you specified that carries that newsgroup.
        Some newsgroups, however, are moderated, as you saw earlier with

comp.risks. In these groups, messages are shipped to a single location
where a moderator, acting much like a magazine editor, decides what
actually gets posted. In some cases, groups are moderated like scholarly
journals. In other cases, it's to try to cut down on the massive number
of messages that might otherwise be posted.
     You'll notice that many articles in Usenet end with a fancy
"signature" that often contains some witty saying, a clever drawing and,
almost incidentally, the poster's name and e-mail address. You too can
have your own "signature" automatically appended to everything you post.
On your own computer, create a signature file. Try to keep it to four
lines or less, lest you annoy others on the Net. Then, while connected
to your host system, type

                cat>.signature

and hit enter (note the period before the s).   Upload your signature
file into this using your communications software's ASCII upload
 protocol . When done, hit control-D, the Unix command for closing a
file. Now, every time you post a message, this will be appended to it.
     There are a few caveats to posting. Usenet is no different from a
Town Meeting or publication: you're not supposed to break the law,
whether that's posting copyrighted material or engaging in illegal
activities. It is also not a place to try to sell products (except in
certain biz. and for-sale newsgroups).

1.12   Chapter 3: Usenet (5 of 5) -- TROUBLESHOOTING

WHEN THINGS GO WRONG:

     * When you start up rn, you get a "warning" that "bogus newsgroups"
are present. Within a couple of minutes, you'll be asked whether to keep
these or delete them. Delete them. Bogus newsgroups are newsgroups that
your system administrator or somebody else has determined are no longer
needed.
     * While in a newsgroup in rn, you get a message: "skipping
unavailable article." This is usually an article that somebody posted
and then decided to cancel.