

## **Appendix D - Information on FidoNet and FidoNet Technology**

**FidoNet is over 11,000 "nodes" linked together through an amateur association which exchanges NetMail (personal messages which are also called E - Mail) and EchoMail (also called "echoes" or "conferences") throughout the world.**

**FidoNet is the largest of the totally amateur Networks (still smaller than the InterNet and UUNet Nets which link Government, Industry, Education and others) and its technology is used in the vast majority of "othernets". Therefore, the technology is generally referred to as "FidoNet Technology" and FidoNet is the prime example of it and will be used as the example. Other Nets have differing administrative "setups" and various requirements but once one has gotten used to FidoNet, the others are generally quite easy to understand.**

**FidoNet Technology is composed of a traditional BBS (Bulletin Board System), a "front end" and a "tosses/scanner".**

**The BBS system can be almost any of the "stand-alone" systems most of us are used to: Opus, RBBS-PC, QBBS, TBBS, Fido (the author of Fido, Tom Jennings, was the creator of FidoNet, hence the name), Remote Access and many others operating under the PC/MS-DOS operating system, Maximus operating under OS/2 and Mansion and Hermes plus several others operating in the Macintosh environment.**

**The "front ends" are generally BinkleyTerm, Front Door and D'Bridge in the "DOS World" (BinkleyTerm also in OS/2) and Tabby in the Macintosh environment. The "front end" is the "doorway" between FidoNet and the BBS. It automatically determines whether the caller is a "human" (a user) or a modem on "automatic pilot" delivering and picking up the mail.**

**If the caller is "human", he or she is often prompted, particularly from the DOS environment, to press the <escape> key - this signals the BBS computer that it should start the transfer to the BBS as there is a user on line.**

**However, let's assume that the NEC (Net EchoMail Coordinator) has a bundle of mail for the node. Then the calling modem and the receiving modem go into an exchange of protocols and acknowledgements and then the transfer starts. The NEC's modem sends the packets into the node's modem and the node's modem passes them through to the "front end". The packet is generally "compressed" by the sending node (the FidoNet standard is ARC by SEA) and it is decompressed and separated into individual messages by either part of the "front end" (as with Tabby and D'Bridge) or by a separate "tosses/scanner" such as VPurge, generally used with BinkleyTerm, or TosScan, written to be used with Front Door.**

**This "tosses/scanner" (techie talk for "importer/exporter") receives the individual messages and imports them into the BBS conference (EchoMail) area and**

**converts them into the type of message format the BBS uses if that is necessary.**

**Later, when messages are entered into the BBS message base - either as a new message or in response to something someone else has written, the "scanner" (export) part "scans" (exports) the newly written messages back out through to a "awaiting pickup" packet where, the next time the node (or point) makes connection with its "mailman", the messages are sent on up through the distribution chain until they arrive at their destination.**

**FidoNet's "organization" is hierarchical within each "Zone" - a "Zone" is generally a continent or other large geographical area with some administrative coordination between the Zones.**

**There are two parallel "chains" within FidoNet: the \*C and the \*EC. The asterisk denotes the area in which the Coordinators and the EchoMail Coordinators operate.**

**The \*C's are the Zone Coordinator (ZC), the Regional Coordinator (RC) and the Net Coordinator (NC). Similarly, the \*EC's are the Zone EchoMail Coordinator, the Regional EchoMail Coordinator (REC) and the Net EchoMail Coordinator (NEC).**

**Most important of these to a Point are the NC and the NEC. The NC is in charge of maintaining the rather loosely defined rules of FidoNet (the most important of which is "Be not easily annoyed and be not annoying"). A charge of being "Excessively Annoying" can result in a Point or a Node being removed from an echo or, in extreme cases, a Node can lose its Node number and be "excommunicated" from FidoNet. Also, if a substantive charge is leveled against a Node because of a Point (the Node is responsible for his/her Points), the Point can usually count on being "cut off" and find it extremely difficult to find another BossNode. This is rare but it can happen.**

**The NEC is the person who insures that Echoes reach the Nodes. Quite often this is also the person who makes contact with the regional distribution point and "imports" the Echoes into the Net.**

**Incidentally, most FidoNet Nodes pay a share of the Net's long distance telephone bill so, depending on how the individual Net is set up, many times you will find a reluctance to import an Echo if it is not already in the Net.**

**You will generally find most BossNodes to be very helpful, nice people if they're given a chance to be. Remember that allowing a user to Point off his/her BBS is extra work for the Sysop so please be nice.**