NewsAgent

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COLLABORATORS			
	TITLE : NewsAgent		
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NUMBER	DATE	DESCRIPTION	NAME

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NewsAgent

1.1 NewsAgent Docs

* NewsAgent Release 1.3 *

Welcome to the Newsagent documentation, please select a section:-

About

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If you have any comments, bug reports or suggestions for NewsAgent,

please feel free to get in touch with me at the following address. Please

note that the snail address is not my usual home address, but that of

relatives (which won't be moving around, like I do) and so mail may take a

few days to find me. Probably best to E-Mail me if you need a quick response

to anything.

E-Mail: NewsAgent@pyrotek.demon.co.uk

Snail-Mail: Jason G Doig,

20 Queens Crescent,

Kinghorn,

Fife. KY3 9RG

NewsAgent is © Jason G Doig 1995. I give permission for this to be copied

freely, but it may not be sold for profit in either part nor whole. It

should not be modified in any way, and should be distributed as a single

archive containing both the program and this documentation. Please don't

go releasing hacked versions, if there is a problem or a feature you'd

like to see, let me know and I'll change it. That way everyone benefits.

NewsAgent is ShareWare. That means that you can copy it if you want, and
I encourage you to give this program to anybody who may find it useful. On
the other hand, it is not cheap to develop (I have only a dial-up account),
and so if you really like it, and would like to see future versions, then
donations are encouraged. Anybody who sends money, will automatically get
new versions, containing extra features not available to unregistered users.
As and extra incentive shareware version has a couple of extra 'features',
which are not present in the registered version. Firstly, certain groups
are not available. I wont list which ones, but if the program reports
'invalid group' when you *know* it exists, you've found one... Secondly,
a requester will pop up now and again during downloads, requiring you to
click ok. The registered version has no restrictions on groups, and can
download uninterrupted.

I ask for 10 (UK) pounds as a minimum donation. Cash is prefered, in
either UKP, US$, or DM. International Postal Orders are also accepted. I may
be willing to take alternative payment, such as disks, CD's etc - so if
converting cash is a problem get in touch.

Lastly, thanks to my beta-testers for putting up with the bugs.

Thank you - Ian, John, Iain, Jim, Jolyon, Andy, Wai, Gareth, and
even Tez! I've probably forgotten a couple, but all the beta-testers
who sent in reports, plugged the software, or were at all active will
get the full registered version.

1.2   New Stuff in This Release

Release history.

New for this release (V1.3)

First public release:

Article window added.

Speed calculation bugfixed (Thanks Ian..).

Multiple group downloads.

Viewing of articles online.

Download system rewritten.

Batching of requests.

Progress meter.

Error reports now in requesters.

Other text in status bar - no more stdout.

Added installer.

Enforcer hit removed, and other minor bugfixes.

Moved house.

New for V1.2

Fairly major release:

Complete new documentation.

Redesigned interface for new features.

Added group selection/remembering.

Added recording of viewed subjects.

Added support for XOVER command, giving more information on articles.

Added wildcard selection/deselection.

Added status bar and quit button.

Added gadgets for typing article numbers.

Added prefs setting for window dimensions.

Fixed bugs in slider bars.

Fixed other miscellaneous bugs.

Probably lots of things I've forgotten.

New for V1.1

Mainly a bug fix release:

Changed name of batch file.

Made it work on 68000 machines (oops).

Fixed Enforcer hit and bug.

New for V1.0

Initial release:

Pretty basic first version.

1.3   Wot is it?

So, what is it?

NewsAgent, is a utility for AmiTCP which allows you to interact with

an NNTP server, browsing though groups and articles, downloading only those

which appear to be of interest. This is handy for getting the odd article

from those binary groups that you can't afford to subscribe to. The articles

will be placed into a standard batch file, ready to be unbatched into the

relevant directory. It features an easy to use GUI and lots of other good

stuff.

NewsAgent requires AmiTCP v2.2 or above and access to an NNTP server.

It also requires AmigaDOS V2.04+ and something to unbatch news (you should

already have a copy of RNews, or perhaps DanNews). A HardDrive and a wodge of

memory would probably be good plan.

1.4   Installing NewsAgent

How to Install.

Installation is very simple.

To install, simply click on the Install-NewsAgent icon, and follow

the onscreen prompts. Its all relatively painless.

If you do not have Installer, you should FTP it from your favourite

Aminet site. In the meantime, you can install it manually.

Copy NewsAgent somewhere in your path, probably 'AmiTCP:bin'. You

may also want to move the example Prefs file 'NewsAgentDefaults' to the

"uulib:" directory. NewsAgent is now ready to use.

1.5   Using NewsAgent

Using NewsAgent

After starting up TCP, simply run NewsAgent making sure you have set

your stack to at least 16k and specifying any options for your setup.

NewsAgent will attempt to make a connection to your NNTP server. If

this is not successful, the server is probably down, or else NewsAgent cannot

resolve its address. Depending on the options you have set, NewsAgent will

probably retry the connection a few times, in case the server was busy

(unless something more serious stops it). If it can't connect after a few

tries, check that you can connect the server manually 'telnet SERVER nntp',

and if this is OK, check your prefs again.

If all is well, you should now be looking at the main NewsAgent

window. This is made up of quite a few gadgets. Theres the Group button

and string gadgets, the From and To slider gadgets, the wildcard

selection gadgets. The subjects, articles, and sort buttons. Most

of the window is taken up by the Subject list and underneath this is the

Status-bar and Quit button.

The first thing you should do is to select a group

1.6   Group gadgets

Selecting a Newsgroup

There are two ways to select a newsgroup. The simplest is just to

type its name into the string gadget at the top of the main window.

The Group Requester

A better way to choose newsgroups, is to use the group list, which

NewsAgent maintains. Click on the 'group' button at the top left of the window. This will bring up the group selection requester. From here you can pick a group from an editable list as well as adding to and deleting from the list. The list is read when you run the program and written out when you quit. Every group you enter will be added to the list, but you may edit it as you wish. The group file may be selected using a preference setting

The group requester has five gadgets. The main gadget is a list of newsgroups, which you can select from. The current selection will be highlighted as well as being copied to the string gadget at the bottom of the screen. 'Delete' will remove the current selection from the list. 'Add' will add the contents of the string gadget to the list. Duplicates are not allowed. 'OK' or clicking on the close gadget, will shut the window and put the current selection in the group string gadget, and attempting to enter the group as if you had pressed return in the gadget.

Joining a Newsgroup

To actually join a group manually, press return in the string gadget. NewsAgent will then request details of the group from the server. If the group is valid, the sliders will be updated to represent the new group. The 'To' gadget will be set to the last article. The 'From' gadget will either be set to the last article seen if the group is known, or to the last article less 100 if it is not (or the server has renumbered the articles, and NewsAgent gets lost).

You should now select a range of articles to review.

1.7 Selecting a range of articles

Article Ranges

In order to specify a range of articles to review, you should use the To and From slider bars. Simply drag the bars until the gadgets to the right of them contain the desired article numbers. The highest number is the last article available. NewsAgent will keep a record of the higest requested subject in each group and automatically select all the new articles as the default range. If the sliders represent too large a range, you may find it difficult to accurately set a range. In this case simply type the article numbers directly into the number gadgets at the side.

Once the range is set, click on the Subjects button.

1.8 Subjects

Subjects

The 'Subjects' button is used to request information on a range of

articles from the server, usually at least the subject header. The

information will be formatted according the users prefs and displayed

in the main list

Now look at the subject list section.

1.9 The Subject List

Selecting Articles

The subject list displays information about the range of articles you

selected. Exactly what is displayed depends on the user prefs. You

can select an article for downloading by clicking on it. The article will be

indicated by a cross at the left. Clicking again will deselect it.

All selected articles are stored in the Downloads window, so you can jump

back and forward between groups, making all the selections you want. If you

re-enter a group you have selected articles from, they will still be

selected.

After selecting, you may download your articles.

1.10 Downloading

Downloading Articles

Hitting the articles button will open up the download selection

window, or bring it to the front if it is already open. From here, you can

initiate a download, view articles (useful for description files) and delete

articles from the download list. Normally you would select all the headers

that look interesting from all your groups, and then come here to read

descriptions for any you're not sure about, filtering out articles as you go.

The buffer size set in prefernces is the maximum size any article can be.

Any larger, and the article will be truncated. If you are likely to be

downloading binaries, I would recommend setting this to be quite large (more

than 500000). For text files, you may get away with a smaller buffer,

of under 64000. It used to be the case that all large files were split up

into chunks less than 64k, but this is less common now.

1.11   Sorting the List

Sorting.

Sort will sort the list. Later. Maybe.

Damn, I knew there was something I forgot.

1.12   Preference Settings

Setting up NewsAgent.

There are a number of configurable settings for NewsAgent, some of
which you will almost certainly have to, or at least want to change. There
are three ways to choose a setting. Most settings have reasonable built in
defaults. If you want your own defaults, you can place them in the defaults
file which will override the built in settings. Lastly you can specify
options on the command line. An example default settings file is supplied,
which you can edit as required. It comes with just the standard settings,
so if these are satisfactory you can leave it out.

The defaults file is "UULIB:NewsAgentDefaults"

The settings are [defaults]:-

HOST/SERVER <NAME> The name of your NNTP server.

[news]

GROUP <NAME> The name of the default group.

[alt.test]

BUFFER <SIZE> The size, in bytes of the buffer used when
downloading news. Should be a little bigger
than the largest article.

[131072]

BATCHFILE <FILE> The filename of the batch file to write
the articles to.

[uuspool:NABatch]

WIDTH <SIZE> The desired width of the main window.

[Depends on Font]

HEIGHT <SIZE> The desired height of the main window.

[Depends on Font]

XOVER Enable use of the xover command for getting
article information. This returns more
detailed article information including an
exact article size. No options, active if
the setting is present. To check is your

server can use this command, telnet to your

servers NNTP port ('telnet <SERVER> nntp')

and type 'help'. The server will then list

the available commands. If XOVER is present,

then put this on a line in your defaults file.

[]

GROUPFILE <FILE> The name of the file containing the newsgroup

list.

[uulib:NewsAgentGroups]

FORMAT <STRING> The format of the text display in the subject

list. This should be a string and can contain

several special identifiers. '%s' is the

Subject: header, '%m' is the message ID,

'%b' is the size in bytes, '%a' is the name

of the author and '%n' is the article number.

Please note that only %s and %n are available

if you are not using the XOVER mode.

["{%n:%d} %s"]

RETRY <TIMES> The number of times to retry the server, if it is

not available immediately.

[5]

1.13 Wildcards

Wildcard Selections.

Wildcards can be used to select and deselect articles in the subject

list. Simply enter the selection string into the wildcard gadget, and either

press 'In' to select all the matching articles, or 'Out' to deselect them.

There are two wildcards available, '*' represents any combination of

characters, including the empty string, and '?' represents any single

character.

1.14 Status

Status Bar.

The status bar is used to display messages as the program is running.

It is here that reports as to what the program is up to will be displayed.

1.15   Quitting

Quitting NewsAgent

You can quit NewsAgent, by either clicking on the 'Quit' gadget or

closing the main window. After quitting, you'll probably need to unbatch

your articles.

1.16   Unbatching

Unbatching the News.

To get the articles into a form readable by your news reader, you need

to unbatch them. This is simply a case of typing 'RNews UUSpool:NABatch' if

you have not changed the setup. Obviously if you use a different unbatcher,

or have moved your batch file you will have to alter this accordingly.

If you are not subscribed to a group that an article belongs to, the

unbatcher will normally put it in 'junk', so you may need to subscribe to this

group. See your newsreaders documentation for details.

Bear in mind, the the batch file is basically a text file, so if all

you have downloaded is text, then there is nothing to stop you from reading

it with your favourite text editor/viewer.

1.17   Tommorows World

Possible Additions for Future Versions.

There are several things I'd like to put in but haven't had the time

(if I kept holding back to put something else in, you'd never see the thing).

If there is something on this list that you want, feel free to express your

support. If there is something you want which is not on this list, please

drop me a line (or preferably an EMail), and I'll consider it. Some of the

below ideas came from other people, but most are mine (because most features

people asked for in the past are already in!).

Make the sort button work. High on the list.

The ability to do selections off-line. The is complicated for a

number of reasons, and is something I don't really relish the

idea of doing. On the other hand, everybody wants it...

Font selection. It would be nice if you could specify what font

the program used.

Posting articles(!). Jolyon wants me to put in posting. No chance.

Filtering articles. The ability to throw away articles, for

example, anything under 5k with "RE" at the start of the

subject line (thanks to Ian for reminding me about this).