About Newsgroups

The Usenet News

InterNews™ is a Macintosh program for sharing information among many people. It uses a service called the Usenet News that has been available to users of larger computers for many years. The Usenet News manages text articles written by people at educational, commercial, and government institutions all around the world. These articles are organized into newsgroups that focus discussions into specific topics across the whole spectrum of human experience: serious technical discussions, political opinion, items for sale, financial advice, personals, and humor.

There are no enforced rules governing the creation of newsgroups, though there are some conventions that guide the process. Newsgroups are usually created by interested persons using an established discussion and balloting process for groups that have a widespread and somewhat "offical" purpose. Other groups, recognizable by the term alt in their names, are created by individuals for more "casual" use. Most newsgroups are open to all participants for reading and posting (contributng articles). Other groups are moderated, meaning that all postings go to a single person who is the moderator and that person determines which articles will be shown to all readers.

Newsgroup Organization

Newsgroups are organized into a hierarchy. At the top level are topic areas such as comp (computers), rec (recreation), sci (science), biz (business), and alt (alternative, or "anything goes"). Within each of these topic areas are numerous subtopics, most with further subtopics of their own. Local groups fall into the dartmouth part of the hierarchy. Groups within that part are further divided into local topic areas such as bulletins, class, and our own alt groups.

InterNews uses collections of newsgroups called subscriptions. Four[Three] subscriptions are created for you automatically: "All Newsgroups so you can browse through all existing groups," "Dartmouth Bulletins," "Dartmouth Newsgroups" (excluding bulletin groups), "Wlecome" with a couple of helpful groups for new users, and "New Newsgroups" to show you what groups have been created lately. From these you can create your own subscriptions to hold the groups in which you are most interested.

Each newsgroup is presented for viewing with a further organization into "topics." A topic is a list of "articles" sent by participants regarding a particular discussion subject. Topics are similar to the "threads" maintained by some other Usenet newsreaders. They organize articles by subject line rather than by reference lines.   As you read the articles in a topic, InterNews remembers which you have read so that you do not have to see them again unless you want to. This information is kept in a subscription file on your Macintosh disk. You can skip whole articles, even whole newsgroups, by marking them as having been read.