A graphic for Lesson 14. It features a large number '14' in the center. Above the '4' is a grey semi-circle containing the word 'LESSON' in a curved path. The entire graphic is surrounded by several short, grey, rectangular dashes of varying lengths, resembling a clock face or a decorative border.

14

MANAGING YOUR NEWSGROUPS

In this lesson, you learn how to manage newsgroups with Netscape Collabra.

When you find a newsgroup you're interested in, double-click the newsgroup name in the Message Center window to open the newsgroup. Depending on the size of the newsgroup, it may take a few minutes to download all of the messages onto your screen.

The newsgroup window has a menu bar and toolbar buttons to help you work with newsgroup messages. Here's a list of what each newsgroup toolbar button does when pressed:

- Get Msg Opens a message for you to read.
- New Msg Posts a new message to a newsgroup.
- Reply Replies to a message.
- Forward Forwards the message to someone in your e-mail address book.
- File Saves a message as a file on your computer system.
- Next Reads the next unread message.
- Print Prints the current message.
- Security Opens Netscape's security feature.
- Mark Marks a message as read.
- Stop Interrupts the transfer of a newsgroup.



Use the Menu Commands The commands found on the toolbar are also available from the newsgroup menus.

Keep in mind that newsgroup messages don't appear in chronological order. Instead, they follow a *thread*. A thread is a group of messages that focus on a particular theme or discussion. A thread starts when someone replies to someone else's message. Then another user reads the first message and the reply and makes a reply of his or her own. As more users log on, read the message replies, and add comments of their own, the discussion continues.

To display the contents of a particular message, double-click the message. This opens another window containing the message text (see Figure 14.1).

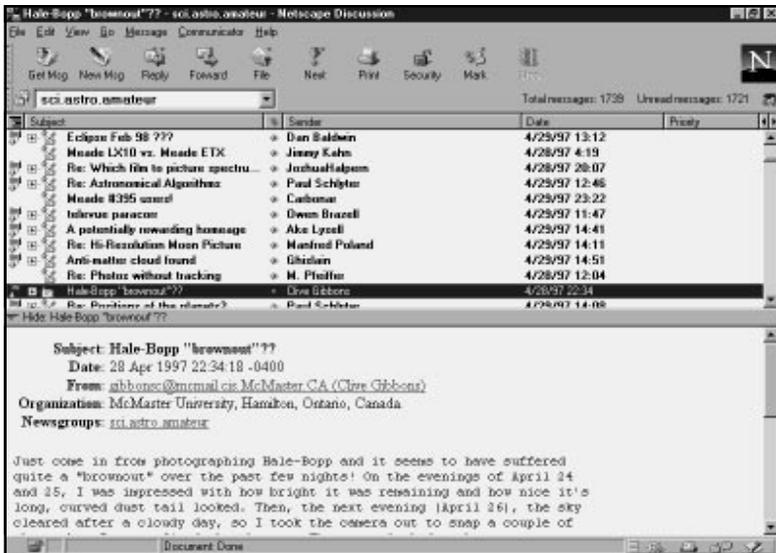


FIGURE 14.1 A newsgroup message.

After you read the message, you can go on to the next message by clicking the Forward toolbar button. You can use Netscape's navigation command buttons to move back and forth among the newsgroup messages. Besides the navigation buttons on the toolbar, you will also find navigation commands in the Navigate menu. Use the Forward and Back commands to move forward or backward in the messages' list.

POSTING MESSAGES TO NEWSGROUPS

There are two ways you can post messages to newsgroups. You can post new messages and start a new discussion, or you can reply to existing messages and continue an ongoing discussion.

Before you think about posting messages to a newsgroup, you should first familiarize yourself with the topics being discussed and observe the overall tone of the group. For example, you wouldn't want to post a frivolous message in a serious discussion group about nuclear physics. Your message wouldn't be welcome and may result in angry e-mail directed at you. Sometimes the Internet community can come down hard on *newbies* (new online users) for jumping in a conversation without finding out what's going on first.



Watch Your Netiquette Online etiquette, called *netiquette*, is an important part of your electronic communications. Responding to a message or e-mail with insults or derogatory language is never a good idea. That's called *flaming*. If someone flames you for stating an opinion in a newsgroup, try not to take it personally and refrain from responding in a similar manner.

It's best to spend some time reading the messages posted in a newsgroup before attempting to respond. This will give you a thorough understanding of the newsgroup's focus and avoids

repeating information that has already been shared. Many newsgroups have a special file set aside that contains frequently asked questions (also called *FAQs*) about the newsgroup. It's a good idea to read the group's FAQ file before posting a message.



Seek and Ye Shall Find Are you looking for a particular newsgroup message? Use Netscape's Find command to help you. Open the **Edit** menu and choose **Find in Message**. Enter the topic or text you're looking for to conduct a search through the message list.

REPLYING TO NEWSGROUP MESSAGES

To reply to a newsgroup message, follow these steps:

1. First, select the message you want to reply to by clicking its name in the message list.
2. Open the Message menu, choose Reply, and then select one of the reply options. This opens the Composition dialog box, as shown in Figure 14.2. The To: and Subject: text boxes are filled in for you.

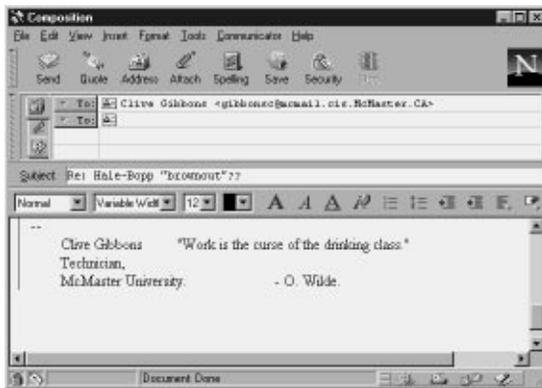


FIGURE 14.2 The Composition dialog box.

3. Type your reply in the large blank text box.



Don't Shout! Don't type your newsgroup messages using all capital letters; that's considered shouting (a breach of netiquette).

4. When you're ready to post the message, click the Send button.



Replying to Sender If you prefer to post a reply directly to the author of the message rather than post a reply where everyone can see it, select **Reply to Sender**. Open the **Message** menu and choose **Reply to Sender**. The author's e-mail address, which is always shown with the newsgroup message, is entered in the To: field.

POSTING A NEW NEWSGROUP MESSAGE

To post a new message or to start a new thread (a new discussion), follow these steps:

1. Click the newsgroup you want to post a message to.
2. Click the New Msg button. This opens the Composition dialog box. In the Mail To box, the name of the newsgroup will be filled in for you.
3. In the Subject text box, give the message a title.
4. Type your message in the large blank text box. You can type a comment, question, or any other information you want to share with the newsgroup.
5. When you're ready to post the message, click the Send button.

Check back with the newsgroup often to see who responds to your message.

ATTACHING AND DETACHING FILES

Not only can you read messages and discuss topics with other newsgroup users, but you can also trade files. You can attach files to newsgroup messages as you attach files to e-mail messages (see Lessons 16, “Sending E-Mail Using Netscape,” and 17, “Managing Netscape E-Mail,” to learn more about Netscape e-mail). For example, the photography newsgroup may exchange picture files with the rest of the group.

When you attach a file (also called *uploading*) to a newsgroup message, the file must be encoded to be sent over the phone lines. When you download the attached file, it must be decoded. In the past, you needed programs to handle encoding and decoding. Today’s Netscape Navigator 4.0 can handle both functions.

Many of the attached files you come across in newsgroups are divided into parts. The parts are usually numbered with descriptions, such as the following:

bear.gif (1/4)

bear.gif (2/4)

bear.gif (3/4)

bear.gif (4/4)

The first part of the file is usually a description of the file contents. The remaining parts comprise the file itself. To download a file and all of its parts, simply double-click the first file part. Netscape automatically downloads the other parts, as well. After downloading an attached file, you can save it onto your computer’s hard drive and use it in other programs.

To attach a file (upload) to a newsgroup message you create, click the Attach button in the Composition dialog box. This opens the Attachments dialog box. Click the Attach File button, select

the file you want to send, and click **Open**. You can add a description for the file in the large text box. Click **OK** to exit the Attachments dialog box.

Once you have selected a file, you can then post your message with the attachment by clicking the **Send** button in the Composition window.



No Limitations Most newsreaders today are sophisticated enough that the files are no longer split for posting on newsgroups. In the past, this was done because there was a limitation on the size of a file you could attach to a newsgroup posting (usually 32K). Another previous limitation on attached files was that they could not be binary files, only text files. A method was devised to encode and decode binary files to text and back again. The encoding and decoding method is called *UUEncoding*—UNIX-to-UNIX encoding.



Compressing Files Before you post a large file to a newsgroup, it is usually a good idea to compress the file first. A popular Windows shareware compression program is WinZIP. The Macintosh version of Netscape Communicator 4 ships with a copy of Stuffit Expander 4.0, a popular Mac shareware file compression utility. UNIX users should use **gzip**.

MANAGING NEWSGROUP MESSAGES

Newsgroup message lists can be incredibly long and bulky. Thankfully, there are a few options you can apply to help manage your messages. For example, you can rearrange the order of the messages by using Netscape's **Sort** command.

You can sort the messages in the newsgroup list in a number of different ways. For example, you can sort by date, subject, or even recipient. To sort messages, open the View menu and choose Sort. This displays a submenu. Select the sort option you want to apply, and instantly, the message list is sorted.

You can also move messages to other areas of your computer by using Netscape's Organize commands. Open the Organize menu to reveal Move To and Copy To commands for storing newsgroup messages elsewhere on your system.

Use Netscape's Mark Message command as one way to help keep track of messages you want to read later, messages you've already read, or messages you want to retrieve and store on your system. Select the message you want to mark and then open the Message menu and choose Mark Message. This displays a submenu with options for marking the messages in the list. For example, you can choose to mark a message For Later, as a reminder to view it at another time.

In this lesson, you learned how to post and reply to newsgroup messages. In the next lesson, you learn how to use Netscape Conference.