

NetGate

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WRITTEN BY		February 12, 2023
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Chapter 1

NetGate

1.1 NetGate

NetGate 1.2a

An Internet<=>Fidonet News and Mail Gateway

Written by Michael Berg
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This document describes the use and functionality of the NetGate gateway utility. Please select an item from the table of contents listed below:

Introduction
Introduction to NetGate

Installation
Installation procedures

Configuration
Configuring NetGate

Usage
Daily use

Using To:
Addressing Internet from Fidonet

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NGCatchup
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History
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Credits
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Registering
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How to reach the author

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1.2 Introduction

Introduction

NetGate is a gateway utility which allows you to use your Fidonet newsreader to read Internet e-mail and UseNet news. It runs on top of

AmiTCP
and transfers mail and news to and from your Internet provider. ←
As

such it has a function similar to TrapDoor (familiar to those with a Fidonet background), although in practice the two operate very differently.

NetGate came about because at the time I gained Internet access, no software existed which was both easy to set up and small in size. Indeed, to achieve the level of functionality I was looking for I discovered that I had to install (and configure - yikes!) an UUCP client, four different UUCP utilities to allow me to collect and send things and a fifth utility to gate to and from the Fidonet file format.

Well, perhaps this sounds like an afternoon of fun and games to some, but not to me, and certainly not back then when Internet was still pretty much new to me.

NetGate does away with all that. It combines everything into one, simple program which has one configuration file. It can deliver and receive mail and news, and does all the required Fidonet gating. The only "external" software required is a TCP/IP protocol stack (

AmiTCP

in this case), and you probably have this already.

Here is a brief list of features:

- * Reads and writes FTSC-1 compliant (*.PKT/*.OUT) mail and news bundles.
- * Sends and receives mail and news directly from your provider's mail and news daemons. No intermediate, third party software required.
- * Advanced UseNet news filtering
- * MIME compatible, including Quoted-Printable (though not Base64 for now)
- * Session retrieve limits (configurable per newsgroup)
- * Moderated newsgroups
- * Advanced stripping/kludging of UseNet header information
- * Configurable, highly detailed logging
- * Handles special UseNet headers like X-FTN-To:
- * Full support for mailing lists
- * Spam filtering
- * Much more! :-)

To install NetGate, please proceed to the installation section

.

1.3 Installation

Installation

NetGate runs on

AmiTCP 3.x

or higher. Nothing else is required, other than a Fidonet compatible news reader (obviously) and Kickstart 2.04 or later. Nico François'

Spot

and Pino Aliberti's

Mail Manager

are both excellent

choices here.

An installation script has been provided. To install NetGate simply click the install icon in the installation drawer.

To install NetGate manually, execute the following steps:

- * Copy the NetGate executable to somewhere on your HD. Recommended: AMITCP:Bin/
- * Copy netgate.library to your hard disk. You may put the library in LIBS: or in the same directory as the NetGate executable.
- * Copy NGCatchup to somewhere on your HD. Recommended: AMITCP:Bin/
- * Create the NetGate.config configuration file (see the configuration section). Recommended: Same directory as the NetGate executable.
- * Use
 NGCatchup
 to create entries in the active file (see the configuration section). Or, if you prefer, edit the file by hand.

1.4 Configuration

Configuration

To configure NetGate you will need an editor of some kind. I use CygnusEd (© CygnusSoft Software) myself, but any ASCII editor will do. A graphical preferences editor for NetGate is in the works.

The configuration file consists of lines of text. Blank lines and lines starting with a semicolon are ignored. The first line of text in the configuration file MUST BE "NetGate <ver.rev>", or NetGate will refuse to load it.

NetGate uses the AmigaDOS ReadArgs() function to parse text lines, so you may freely swap the order of command arguments, prefix arguments with their template keywords, etc.

Before continuing I recommend that you load in the included sample configuration file and have a quick look at it.

An explanation of the currently recognized keywords is included in the following sections:

Fidonet related commands

FIDONODE/K/A/N, NET/N/A, NODE/N/A

USERPOINT/K/A/N
Files

LOGFILE/K/A, LOGLEVEL/A/N, DISPLAYLEVEL/A/N

ACTIVE/K/A

INBOUND/K/A

OUTBOUND/K/A
Internet connection

USERNAME/K/A

EMAIL/K/A

NEWSHOST/K/A, INNPORT/N

MAILHOST/K/A, USERID/A, PASSWORD/A, POP3PORT/N, SMAILPORT/N

SMAILHOST/K/A, SMAILPORT/N
Exporting from Fidonet

ORGANIZATION/K/A

ORIGIN/K/A

ORIGIN2ORG/S
Importing to Fidonet

ORG2ORIGIN/S

KLUDGE/K/A

STRIP/K/A

FILTER/K/A

FROM/K/A

SUBJECT/K/A
Special keywords

REPLYLINKING/S

NOSPAM/K/N
NetGate control

READONLY/S, NOGETMAIL/S, NOPUTMAIL/S, NOGETNEWS/S, NOPUTNEWS/S

KEEPFIDOPACKETS
Newsgroup definitions

NEWSGROUP/K/A, FIDONAME/A, LIMIT/N, MODERATOR

Mailing lists

MAILINGLIST/K/A,FIDONAME/A,DEFAULTREPLY

1.5 FIDONODE/K/A/N,NET/N/A,NODE/N/A

FIDONODE/K/A/N,NET/N/A,NODE/N/A

This is the Fidonet node number of your NNTP news host. E-mails and UseNet will appear to be coming from this node. It's obviously an imaginary number, so anything will do.

A technical note: Fidonet packets are created with this address as source and destination.

Default parameters: 2 99 999

1.6 USERPOINT/K/A/N

USERPOINT/K/A/N

Your local "point number" to be used with e-mails. E-mail from the mail host will be addressed to this point number. Again an imaginary number where any value will do.

Default parameters: 9 (So by default your Fidonet point address is 2:99/999.9)

1.7 LOGFILE/K/A,LOGLEVEL/A/N,DISPLAYLEVEL/A/N

LOGFILE/K/A,LOGLEVEL/A/N,DISPLAYLEVEL/A/N

The log file where NetGate will record the progress and results of NetGate sessions. The LOGLEVEL parameter specifies what level of detail should go into the log file. The DISPLAYLEVEL specifies what level of detail should appear on the console during NNTP sessions.

NetGate generates copious amounts of log information at the lowest level, so it is strongly recommended that you limit at least the display level. If you do not limit the log file level expect to see the log file grow about 100k per session if you subscribe to 10 moderately sized newsgroups.

Levels range from 0 to 100, with the following level status:

- 5 - Successful completion of operation
 - 10 - Commencement of low level operation
 - 15 - Commencement of high level operation
 - 90 - Urgent informative messages
-

99 - Fatal errors

I'm still playing around with the meaning of range assignments so these may change in the future.

Default parameters: T:NetGate.log 0 10
(You may very well want to use 10 and 15 in stead)

1.8 ACTIVE/K/A

ACTIVE/K/A

This keyword specifies the "active newsgroups" file. This file is used to maintain "highwatermarks" for each newsgroup, so that NetGate always knows the number of the last retrieved article from each newsgroup you subscribe to.

Normally you never have to mess about with this file yourself, but in case everything goes haywire, it's pretty simple. The file consists of lines where (again) blank lines and lines containing ';' are ignored. Each line contains the name of a newsgroup (alt.wired for example) plus a number. The number is the number of the last retrieved article from that group.

Default parameters: PROGDIR:NetGate.active

(I.e. NetGate.active in the same directory as the NetGate executable itself).

1.9 EMAIL/K/A

EMAIL/K/A

Your e-mail address.

Default parameters: nobody@nowhere (you probably want to change that :-)

1.10 USERNAME/K/A

USERNAME/K/A

Your real name.

Default parameters: "nobody". Change it ASAP :)

1.11 INBOUND/K/A

INBOUND/K/A

The inbound directory for your Fidonet tosser.

Default parameters: MAIL:Inbound

1.12 OUTBOUND/K/A

OUTBOUND/K/A

The outbound directory where your Fidonet tosser places mail bundles to be exported.

Default parameters: MAIL:Outbound

1.13 NEWSHOST/K/A,INNPOR/N

NEWSHOST/K/A,INNPOR/N

This tells NetGate which NNTP host to collect and retrieve news from.

Default parameters: news.host 119

You probably want to change the host name but the port number is pretty much standard. Ask your provider if necessary.

1.14 MAILHOST/K/A,USERID/A,PASSWORD/A,POP3PORT/N,SMAILPORT/N

MAILHOST/K/A,USERID/A,PASSWORD/A,POP3PORT/N,SMAILPORT/N

This tells NetGate where to retrieve and send mail. You are required to supply your user id and password for the site. Without these the host will not allow NetGate do retrieve mail. Ask your provider if necessary.

Note that using the

SMAILHOST

keyword it is possible to specify an alternate SMail host for outgoing mail. However, for compatibility reasons you may still specify an SMail port number here, and the mail host name you specify will also serve as the SMail host name until you redefine it with SMAILHOST (pretty confusing, huh? :-)

Default parameters: mail.host nobody SECRET 110 25

Again, you probably want to change the host name, user name and password.

1.15 SMAILHOST/K/A,SMAILPORT/N

SMAILHOST/K/A,SMAILPORT/N

This tells NetGate where to send mail. This keyword was introduced in version 1.1 due to the fact that some users have different POP3 and SMail hosts.

The SMAILPORT value you specify here will override any previous setting of the SMail port number (i.e. as specified using
MAILHOST
).

If you do not use the SMAILHOST keyword in your configuration file, the mail host name specified with MAILHOST will serve as the SMail host.

Default parameters: Same as you specified previously with MAILHOST.

1.16 ORGANIZATION/K/A

ORGANIZATION/K/A

If you wish you may supply a string here which will be included in the 'Organization:' header line of articles and mail written by you.

Default parameters: None (i.e. no Organization: line will be generated, except if you use ORIGIN2ORG, see below).

1.17 ORIGIN/K/A

ORIGIN/K/A

This line specifies what to put in the Fidonet ' * Origin:' line in imported news articles.

The default is to use the host name of your news server (unless you use the

ORG2ORIGIN
keyword)

1.18 ORG2ORIGIN/S

ORG2ORIGIN/S

This tells NetGate to use the Organization: header string on incoming news and mail as the Fidonet ' * Origin:' line. This overrides the

ORIGIN
keyword.

The default is not to use the UseNet Organization: header line for the Origin: line.

1.19 ORIGIN2ORG/S

ORIGIN2ORG/S

This keyword tells NetGate to use your Origin: line when generating an Organization: UseNet header line. This overrides the ORGANIZATION keyword.

The default is not to use the Origin line for generating an Organization: UseNet header line.

1.20 READONLY/S,NOGETMAIL/S,NOPUTMAIL/S,NOGETNEWS/S,NOPUTNEWS/S

READONLY/S,NOGETMAIL/S,NOPUTMAIL/S,NOGETNEWS/S,NOPUTNEWS/S

These are control level flags which tell NetGate what to do in a session.

READONLY means that any news and mail retrieved will not be deleted or, in the case of news, updated in the active file. This allows you to retrieve the same mail and news articles several times, which in turn is useful for setting up your configuration so that one mistake doesn't mean you will lose news or mail.

NOGETMAIL tells NetGate not to collect e-mail.
NOPUTMAIL tells NetGate not to send your netmails.
NOGETNEWS tells NetGate not to collect news/echomail.
NOPUTNEWS tells NetGate not to send any echomail.

Note: Echomail in moderated areas count as news and not as e-mail, even though it eventually ends up as such (i.e. as e-mail to the newsgroup moderator). This means that if you subscribe to moderated newsgroups, NetGate may need to connect to your host's mail server even if you specify NOPUTMAIL. Use NOPUTNEWS to hold back news.

Default parameters: None (I.e. don't do READONLY, do mail and do news).

1.21 KEEPFIDOPACKETS/S

KEEPFIDOPACKETS/S

This keyword instructs NetGate not to delete processed outbound Fidonet packets when a session ends. This is normally done to prevent the same articles and e-mails from being sent twice (i.e. in a later session). This works fine when you are sending out both news and mail at the same time.

But if for some reason you wish to send news and mail separately (using the

NOPUTMAIL
and/or
NOPUTNEWS

keywords), then, after a session ends, the processed Fidonet outbound packet(s) are still deleted even if some or all of the packets contain unsent news or mail!

This keyword provides a means of preventing the deletion of outbound Fidonet packets. It may be specified in the configuration file but is probably most useful as a command line argument to NetGate.

Default: *Do* delete processed Fidonet outbound packets after a session.

1.22 KLUDGE/K/A and STRIP/K/A

KLUDGE/K/A
STRIP/K/A

These two commands allow you to strip or kludge header information from incoming mail or news. Strip in this context means exactly what you think, and kludge means the header line will be included but hidden with an IFNA kludge. I suggest you take a look at the sample configuration file to form an idea of what to strip and what to kludge.

Note: UseNet headers are generally HUGE. If you want to keep the size of the generated Fidonet packets down, you need to strip out at least the "xref: ", "newsgroups: " and "path: " headers.

Default parameters: None.

1.23 NEWSGROUP/K/A,FIDONAME/A,LIMIT/N,MODERATOR

NEWSGROUP/K/A,FIDONAME/A,LIMIT/N,MODERATOR

The NEWSGROUP keyword tells NetGate which UseNet newsgroups you wish to receive, and their equivalent Fidonet echomail area names. Only newsgroups listed with the NEWSGROUP keyword will be processed in news sessions.

Ideally there should be exactly one line in the 'active' file for each newsgroup defined with the NEWSGROUP keyword. If more exist the extraneous highwatermarks are simply ignored. This allows you to temporarily disconnect from a newsgroup but keep the highwatermark in the active file for when you later re-subscribe.

If a newsgroup is missing from the active file, a highwatermark of zero is automatically created. This means that when you next poll for news you will receive the entire range of spooled articles from that newsgroup. This may be thousands of articles! So when you subscribe (add a new NEWSGROUP keyword to the configuration file), you probably want to use the

NGCatchup
command to set the highwatermark for the new newsgroup.

The LIMIT parameter defines a byte-count session limit for this particular newsgroup. That is, NetGate will only collect approximately this much news during any single session. Useful for keeping overall session lengths down.

The MODERATOR parameter should be used in moderated newsgroups. Any Fidonet echomail you post into a moderated area will be sent as e-mail to the moderator of the newsgroup rather than into the newsgroup itself (which is generally not allowed).

Default parameters: None. See sample configuration file.

1.24 MAILINGLIST/K/A,FIDONAME/A,DEFAULTREPLY

MAILINGLIST/K/A,FIDONAME/A,DEFAULTREPLY

NetGate has full support for mailing lists. This feature allows you to gate mail from and to any e-mail address (mailing list) into a Fidonet echomail area. This is especially useful if you subscribe to a large number of mailing lists and you do not want your e-mail area cluttered with all sorts of strange stuff from the lists.

The MAILINGLIST parameter should be the e-mail address of the mailing list itself.

The FIDONAME parameter defines which Fidonet echomail area should be used for this mailing list.

The optional DEFAULTREPLY parameter allows you to specify an alternative reply address for mail TO the mailing list. If you do not specify this, outbound mail goes to the mailing list address itself.

Examples:

```
; AmiNet daily
MAILINGLIST aminetd@wuarchive.wustl.edu AMINET.DAILY
; Physics news
MAILINGLIST physnews@aip.org PHYSICS.NEWS
; A private mailing list
MAILINGLIST bgr@datashopper.dk DATASH.BGR bgrmgr@datashopper.dk
```

Default parameters: None. See sample configuration file.

1.25 REPLYLINKING/S

REPLYLINKING/S

This keyword enables the reply-linking feature. What this means is that echomail replies will be correctly chained into the thread you're replying to, so that UseNet news readers will pick up the fact that your reply is a part of an existing thread and not a new subject being raised.

The Fidonet "MSGID" and "REPLY" kludges serve a similar purpose but the two formats are not directly compatible. To accomplish reply linking anyway NetGate abuses the the MSGID and REPLY kludges in a way which has been know to choke some Fidonet scanners. This is not really their fault, since these two fields were never intended to be used in this manner.

Spot
and
Mail Manager

are known to work reliably with the reply linking feature, so if you use one of these be sure to specify REPLYLINKING. Otherwise, experiment to see if your Fidonet scanner can handle it. As of this writing, the only two systems I know of that do not support REPLYLINKING is the Foozle tosser and the Xenolink BBS system.

This keyword is similar to AmiGate's NAUGHTYREPLY keyword, and the same restrictions and warnings apply.

Default: Off (i.e. do not use reply linking).

1.26 NOSPAM/K/N

NOSPAM/K/N

This keyword controls the NetGate spam filtering facility. Spam is the nickname for UseNet news articles which are crossposted to a vast number of newsgroups for advertizing purposes. This is the source of much frustration for those of us who read a newsgroup for its content and not to "call 1-800-HOT-SEXX for phone sex" or to participate in worthless pyramid schemes to "make money fast".

A reasonable value to use for the NOSPAM keyword is 5. This means that any article crossposted into 5 or more newsgroups will be filtered out. This will also catch a number of genuine news articles, but if a thread has reached a point where it is cross-discussed in 5 different newsgroups it has typically deteriorated to a point where it is more or less off topic anyway, or about something completely different from what the Subject: line suggests.

Default: 50000 (or, for all practical purposes, no spam filtering :-)

1.27 FILTER/K/A

FILTER/K/A

NetGate has advanced news filtering which allows you to eliminate irrelevant or uninteresting articles at poll-time, saving you online time and money on the phone bill.

The FILTER keyword denotes the beginning of a news filter. The argument is the name of the newsgroup for which this filter applies. Wildcards are

permitted, so the following specifications are all valid:

```
FILTER "alt.folklore.computers"
FILTER "alt.#?"
FILTER "#?erotica#?"
```

Or indeed:

```
FILTER "#?"
```

Overlapping filters are allowed. In the above case, the first filter specifically catches "alt.folklore.computers" while the next filter catches the remaining newsgroups in the alt.* hierachy.

To specify WHAT to filter, use either the

```
FROM
or
SUBJECT
keywords.
```

1.28 FROM/K/A

FROM/K/A

This keyword may be used only in connection with a preceding

```
FILTER
keyword. It allows you to specify that articles posted by someone ←
should be
```

filtered out. Wildcards are allowed. Example:

```
FILTER "alt.#?"
FROM "#?@aol.com#?"
```

What this means is that for all newsgroups in the alt.* hierachy, you do not wish to receive articles posted by anyone on AOL (I have nothing against America Online, I am merely making an example).

```
FILTER "#?"
FROM "#?mberg@datashopper.dk#?"
```

```
FILTER "#?(sex|erotica)#?"
FROM "somebody@nic.nac.foobar.auc.dk"
FROM "#?.au#?"
```

The first filter specifies that NetGate should filter out articles from all newsgroups, written by myself (mberg@datashopper.dk). This is a convenient way to avoid receiving one's own articles.

The second filter specifies that for all newsgroups containing the string "sex" or "erotica", NetGate should filter out articles from "somebody@nic.nac.foobar.auc.dk" OR from any site in Australia (those usually end in ".au").

Note that the FROM filter matches the entire From: header string. So to match "mberg@datashopper.dk" it may be necessary to specify a filter of

"mberg@datashopper.dk#?" in order to match my address including name, as in "mberg@datashopper.dk (Michael Berg)".

1.29 SUBJECT/K/A

SUBJECT/K/A

This keyword may be used only in connection with a preceding FILTER keyword. It allows you to specify that articles with a given subject should be filtered out. Wildcards are allowed. Example:

```
FILTER "alt.#?"
SUBJECT "#?longest thread#?"
SUBJECT "#?100#?"
```

This will filter out articles in the alt.* hierachy with subject lines containing either the string "longest thread" or the string "100".

The "longest thread ever" thread has been running in various alt.* groups for years, and while at first it is amusing to read, the novelty soon wears out. I use the above filter myself.

The "100" filter is useful to eliminate the bulk of the infamous "make money fast" posts which all too often pop up in various newsgroups. Most of these contain the string "\$100.000" or similar which is why this filter catches them. Granted, it's a bit general and will also catch things like "A review of the book '100 C bugs'". It works for me, though.

The

```
FROM
and SUBJECT filters may of course be combined:
```

```
FILTER "alt.#?"
FROM "#?@aol.com#?"
SUBJECT "#?100#?"
```

This eliminates all articles in the alt.* hierachy with a subject containing the string "100", or posted by anyone on AOL.

Here's another great filter:

```
FILTER "alt.binaries.pictures.#?"
SUBJECT "~(#?(.gif|.jpg|.jpeg|video|mpeg|.mpg|.avi))#?"
```

This filter eliminates all the usual chit-chat which makes for about 80% of the flow in the binary groups (this took me very much by surprise when I first gained access to these groups). With this filter you only get the actual images ;-)

1.30 Usage

Usage

To use NetGate all you have to do is run it, either from a CLI or from Workbench. In either case you may supply a couple of parameters.

From CLI:

```
NetGate CONFIG,  
        READONLY/S  
        ,  
        NOGETMAIL/S  
        ,  
        NOPUTMAIL/S  
        ,  
        NOGETNEWS/S  
        ,  
        NOPUTNEWS/S  
        ,  
        KEEPFDOPACKETS/S  
        ,WAIT/S,LOGID/K,  
NOLIMIT/S,NEWSGROUP/M
```

The CONFIG parameter allows you to specify the name of NetGate's main configuration file. This would normally be 'PROGDIR:NetGate.config'.

The WAIT parameter tells NetGate to wait for any concurrent NetGate sessions to complete before returning. This is useful if you invoke NetGate many times to poll asynchronously for mail and news, but still need some cleanup action afterwards. In this case you simply add the WAIT keyword to the final NetGate command, which will then not complete until every other NetGate session has completed.

The LOGID parameter allows you to prefix log entries from this particular session with an identification string of your choice. All NetGate instances that use the same configuration file also share the same logfile, and this naturally leads to some confusion when you later try to read the log file. Using LOGID you can mark each log entry with an identification string and so more easily trace the log activity of one particular session.

The NOLIMIT switch allows you to temporarily disable all newsgroup byte-count limits (see
 NEWSGROUP
) so that you may collect all unread
articles from the news server, regardless of volume.

The remainder of parameters may be used to temporarily override the settings specified in the configuration file. For a closer look at what these mean, please refer to the section on
 configuration
 , elsewhere in
this guide file.

From Workbench:

Click on the icon. That's it.

If you wish to supply initial parameters you may do this using tooltypes. The template is the same as from CLI. I.e. each tooltype entry must match the CLI ReadArgs template (see above) to be recognized. Unrecognized tooltypes are ignored.

In addition to the standard CLI arguments you may specify a WINDOW tooltype to define the size and shape of the log window NetGate opens and uses for session log information. Also, you may specify names (patterns, really) of selected newsgroups. NetGate will then only collect news from those newsgroups.

It might be a good idea to examine the included NetGate icon here (use the Information menu option in Workbench).

Once running, NetGate will connect to the various mail and news servers, retrieving and posting as required. As NetGate works its way through the various phases, you will be able to check progress in the console window (assuming a nonzero display log level of course). An NetGate session is always initiated with a "Begin NetGate session" and terminated with an "End NetGate session". This allows you to see how long the entire session took.

While on the subject of speed, be warned that this sort of mail and news processing is rather slow. MUCH slower than for example TrapDoor, if you have a Fidonet background. For UseNet messages it is not uncommon that each article takes about a second on average to retrieve. Sometimes faster, sometimes slower, depending on things like what hardware your Internet provider uses, the current user load etc. And of course the size of the message. Some groups, like the assorted sexual groups, contain uuencoded images which may take anywhere from 1 to 10 minutes each to retrieve.

So why is it so slow? Is NetGate a bad program or what? Perish the thought! :-) I'll try to explain it.

In Fidonet individual nodes create and archive mail bundles ready for other nodes and points to collect. When a node or a point calls to collect netmail and echomail, it has already been neatly packaged and needs only to be transferred to the callers machine over the phone line. Much like a regular download via a terminal program.

A UseNet or e-mail session is quite different, in that articles and mail must be "prompted" online. It cannot be pre-bundled as such. When NetGate connects to an INN daemon for UseNet processing, for example, it has to ask the INN daemon to go to a specific group, to go to a specific article, to list that article, to go to the next article, to list that article, etc, until no more articles remain. Then it has to ask INN daemon to go to the next group... ad libitum, ad nauseum. With INN daemon you might say everything is "realtime". Nothing has been prepackaged for you, and a substantial amount of time is wasted to protocol overhead just getting the INN daemon to locate and then list each article. Changing to the next article takes time. Changing to the next group takes time.

It's a shame it has to be this way, but there you have it. My only advice to you is to try to limit yourself when it comes to UseNet newsgroups, or perhaps to look for a provider with faster hardware. Or, to not use NetGate at all, but go for a QWK converter for example, which can create QWK bundles for you to collect, much like Fidonet bundles. But then again you

will likely lose essential things like header-line control - on top of all the other deficiencies of the QWK format. Personally I use NetGate, and I'm not about to change, even if it is a bit slow.

See the

performance section
for tips on how to speed things up a bit.

1.31 Known Bugs and Limitations

Known Bugs and Limitations

While NetGate doesn't have any known bugs as such, there are a few things you need to know before using the program on a more regular basis. In no particular order, these are:

- Deleting fidonet outbound packets

Not really a bug, but something you need to be aware of nonetheless.

After NetGate has successfully completed processing of a fidonet packet, it is deleted. This is necessary to avoid having the same articles and e-mails sent out again in subsequent sessions.

However, if you specify

NOPUTMAIL

or

NOPUTNEWS

, then most likely some of

the contents of the Fidonet packet will not be sent. But it will still be deleted when the session ends! (again - to prevent sending out the same e-mail and articles twice)

So, if you do mail and news in separate NetGate sessions, use the

KEEPFIDOPACKETS

keyword until the final session. Or, use it in every session and clean up your Fidonet outbound directory by hand when you're done.

The WAIT command line argument will help you here. See the

Usage

section for a description of this.

- Breaking via Ctrl-C

It is possible to interrupt NetGate by pressing Ctrl-C, but it is not entirely failsafe and may produce a shower of bogus error messages. The problem is being looked into.

- NetGate always uses MIME Quoted-Printable when sending e-mail.

While MIME is supported by the vast majority of Internet mailers, some hosts have a tendency to mangle MIME encoded messages. Normally this does not pose much of a problem but when sending uuencoded binary files it can become a bit of an obstacle. If the MIME sequences are not perfectly transmitted the uuencoded data will not decode properly.

I plan to add code which allows you to add a "header" line (see the

Using To

section) in your fidonet message which turns MIME encoding off.

- The '---' sequence...

Do not post messages with '---' at the start of any line. NetGate recognizes this as the terminating tear line of a FidoNet message and then simply skips the rest of the message.

I will try to make the end-of-message detection code in NetGate somewhat more robust in future releases.

- Remember to turn reflowing OFF in your fidonet scanner. Most UseNet mailers and news readers do not have reflow capability.
- Dupes

If you are using

Spot

(and possibly also other Fidonet readers) then you may occasionally encounter what looks to be dupes during import. The articles in question are NOT dupes however. Due to length limits in the dupe checking routine in Spot some articles look identical because the first 20-25 characters of their References: identification look identical to that of a previously imported article, even if the last part of it does not.

There is no known workaround for this problem, other than to tell Spot to toss dupes in BAD in stead of deleting them. Then you still have a chance to see the mails and possibly cross reply them into the correct area.

Mail Manager

should not have such a problem. If the MSGID kludge is present it uses that kludge for the dupe checking (there shouldn't be two messages with the same MSGID), if the MSGID is not present it performs a CRC check on the first 256 bytes of the message.

1.32 Using To:

Addressing Internet from FidoNet

The FidoNet To: field has an inherent length limitation of some 36 characters or so. While this is more than enough in FidoNet where the To field is used only to hold the real name of the recipient, it is nowhere near enough in the Internet world where the field is used to store e-mail addresses as well as real names.

To overcome this, NetGate looks in the top of the body of the message for an alternative "To:" line. If it finds one, it will override the contents of the native FidoNet to-field with the address it finds after the To: keyword. This allows you to mail people with arbitrarily long e-mail

addresses.

You may format the To: e-mail address anyway you like as long as part of it is a valid address in the form 'user@domain'. For example:

```
To: mberg@datashopper.dk
To: Michael Berg <mberg@datashopper.dk>
To: "Michael Berg" <mberg@datashopper.dk>
To: <mberg@datashopper.dk>
To: mberg@datashopper.dk (Michael Berg)
```

If you use

```
Spot
or
Mail Manager
```

you can set all this up automatically, so that you can enter the e-mail destination address directly in a new field in the message header GUI when you exit your text editor.

With Mail Manager you can enter the e-mail destination address directly in the destination address field in the message header GUI which Mail Manager pops up when you exit your text editor, all you have to do is to enclose the address within '<' and '>'.

Please consult your Spot or Mail Manager documentation for further details on how to accomplish this.

1.33 Maximizing performance

Maximizing performance

Polling for UseNet news can sometimes appear to be a very slow procedure. So slow in fact that at times the modem appears to be completely idle. This is because the news host's InterNet News Daemon (INNd) is busy changing newsgroup or retrieving the next article header. Insufficient hardware or an overloaded host system often has this effect on news clients.

You can compensate at least partly for this by initiating two or more simultaneous news sessions. When you do this you minimize the chance of wasting modem bandwidth, because while one session is changing newsgroups, the other is transferring data, and vice-versa. If you run three or four simultaneous news sessions you should be pretty well covered as far as bandwidth utilization is concerned, no matter how slow your news host may be.

The following example demonstrates the technique. You may use the Run command to run NetGate three times in the same shell window, but the displayable log information will be very confusing to look at. So here we open three new shell windows and execute a NetGate command in each. The first command gets all new articles in the alt.* hierachy, the second gets all new articles in the comp.* hierachy and the last one gets new articles from everything but the alt.* or comp.* hierachies:

```
1> NetGate logid " alt" nogetmail noputmail noputnews "alt.#?"
2> NetGate logid "comp" nogetmail noputmail noputnews "comp.#?"
```



```
3> NetGate logid "othr" nogetmail noputmail noputnews "~(alt|comp).#?"
```

The LOGID parameter causes session log entries to be prefixed with the specified string. See the

Usage

section for more info on the LOGID

parameter.

If you have a lot of mail traffic, the following may help you as well:

```
1> NetGate nogetnews noputnews nogetmail
```

```
2> NetGate nogetnews noputnews noputmail
```

While one session is busy sending out e-mail, the other is receiving e-mail. Because modem connections are fully duplexed you can do this with virtually no performance degradation. That is, each NetGate session will finish at approximately the same time as if you had run it alone.

You can of course get really advanced and combine both of the above two techniques with yet another session where news is sent out (it isn't in any of the above commands), However, if you do this you need to use the

KEEPFIDOPACKETS

keyword to make sure NetGate doesn't prematurely delete your outbound packets. Then, as a part of some global post-session cleanup procedure, you can manually delete the files from your outbound directory. The WAIT command line argument will help with that. See the

Usage

section

for a description of how this might be up.

Experiment for best results.

Finally a word on filter performance. The rule is that collecting news from a newsgroup matched by any defined filter will be slightly slower than otherwise. This is because NetGate needs to obtain the headers of individual articles twice to be able to apply the filters. In future releases this may change.

If you use

spam filtering

expect to see some performance loss on those

newsgroups where you have no other filters defined. Already filtered newsgroups will not suffer.

1.34 Credits

Credits

In no particular order I'd like to thank the following individuals for their helpful assistance:

- Brian Munk Jacobsen (brj@boble.ping.dk) for his inspiring AmiGate utility and for assistance with the MIME support, beta testing and suggestions.

- Pino 'Mail Manager' Aliberti for his helpful comments
- My betatesters in general for testing NetGate
- Pieter Hollants (fxmts205@rz.uni-frankfurt.de) for a German installation script
- Francesco Dipietromaria (dpm@ns.sinet.it) for an Italian installation script
- Nico François for
Spot

1.35 Registering

Registering

NetGate is being released under the concept of shareware. All features are available in the unregistered version, but with a few restrictions:

- You are presented with a small shareware reminder before and after each NetGate session.
- There is a 5 second forced delay for each e-mail sent and retrieved.
- You cannot retrieve news from newsgroups in the alt.* hierachy.

To register your copy of NetGate fill out the registration form and mail it, along with the registration fee, to me at the address mentioned here

.

I can only encourage you to register. Development of this program not only took a lot of time and efford, it also cost me a considerable amount of money since a great deal of testing had to be done while online. You can help repay some of that, as well as fund the testing yet to come, by registering.

By registering you support not only a shareware programmer, but also the Amiga in general. Quality shareware is one area where the Amiga still has an edge on other platforms and here is your chance to keep it that way.

1.36 Author

Author info

I may be reached at any of the following addresses:

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Fidonet: 2:238/ 24.28

AmigaNet: 39:140/101.28

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 Lyngens Kvarter 20 st.
 7400 Herning
 DENMARK

If you have comments, suggestions or bug reports, feel free to write anytime.

1.37 New versions

How to obtain the latest version of NetGate

NetGate is available from any AmiNet mirror, for example ftp.wustl.edu, ftp.doc.ic.ac.uk or ftp.luth.se.

AmiNet:comm/net/netgat12.lha

If you prefer a FidoNet File Request, the latest version of the program may always be requested from 2:238/24.0 under the magic name NETGATE.

1.38 History

History

Below is a listing of the most significant changes in this and previous versions of the program. The most recent version is listed first.

Date	Version	Notes
----	-----	-----
20.04.96	1.2a	NetGate was unable to handle very long POP3 and SMTP server id strings. Internal buffer size increased. Bug introduced in version 1.2. Added some more information to this guide about Mail Manager and how to configure it for use with NetGate. [Pino Aliberti]
07.04.96	1.2	When importing "articles" to a mailing list area, NetGate now always sets the REPLYADDR field to the poster's address. That should make matrix replies a great deal easier. NetGate would crash the system if an incoming news article had a From: field with '@domain (user name)' (i.e. a malformed address without the username part before the '@'). The routine responsible for this was also called at the wrong time. Fixed. [Lars Lindström] Recompiled with SAS/C 6.56 (was using 6.55 before)

The internal "content-transfer-encoding" field was not being cleared between mails, which meant that if you received a MIME encoded mail followed by a mail with no content-transfer-encoding header, NetGate would attempt to de-MIME the latter anyway.

Increased internal read buffer size for news imports. This should theoretically improve NNTP performance but the effect may not be that obvious because of slow news servers etc.

Rephrased a few log- and status messages

NetGate now examines both the From: and the Reply-to: lines when checking for mail from a mailing list.

If a mail had an incorrect Lines: header, causing NetGate to miss the end-of-mail token and a timeout error to occur, NetGate would flag this as a fatal error and leave the mail on the POP server for later retrieval (the error would obviously repeat itself in every subsequent session). It now only warns about this and deletes the mail from the mail server anyway. [Pino Aliberti]

Fixed a major bug in the TCP/IP server interface routines. An internal character buffer was set too short and frequently overflowed, causing system lockups and similar havoc. It has now been quadrupled to allow for any imaginable scenario.

The Fidonet TOPT kludge now does not include a colon. [Pino Aliberti]

The AREA: tag now does not have any blanks between itself and the Fidonet echomail area name. This was causing various problems for Mail Manager users (and others as well, I'm sure). [Pino Aliberti]

When looking for incoming mail to a mailing list, NetGate was incorrectly examining only the reply address header line (if present), ignoring the "From" line. This could cause problems with some mailing lists. NetGate now looks at both the From:, To: and the Reply-to: lines when testing a mail for mailing list relevance. [Lars Lindström]

NetGate refused to send out anything from mailing list echomail areas if you had not defined a default reply address. Fixed.

NetGate now uses HELO when sending e-mails. That should solve the problems some people have reported to have with various mail servers and put an end to authentication warnings.

NetGate now knows how to handle ESMTP greetings.

German installation script kindly provided by
Pieter Hollants (fxmts205@rz.uni-frankfurt.de).

Italiano installation script kindly provided by
Francesco Dipietromaria (dpm@ns.sinet.it)

02.03.96 1.1

NetGate was creating fidonet AREA: with an IFNA kludge. This is technically incorrect and would cause some mailers to import echomail into the netmail area. Fixed. [Jonas Kjellin]

The log entry for connects to the mail server incorrectly displayed the name of the news server in stead of the mail server. Fixed.

Session connect time is now reported.

Fixed a few minor logging problems.

Improved ^C handling.

Mailing list support! (popular request)

Changed shareware restrictions a bit. Please consult the section on how to register for details.

Internal state machines cleaned up and optimized.

Fixed a bug with moderated newsgroups that could cause some areas not to be processed for new articles.

Improved timeout code to prevent NetGate from waiting indefinitely for UseNet news articles in some situations.

Added a WINDOW tootype.

NetGate now allows different POP3 and SMail hosts. See the new SMAILHOST keyword (also see the old

MAILHOST keyword).

On some server types NetGate did not work properly and typically failed with a shower of very peculiar error messages. The problem has been identified and a fix is now in place. [Paul Brownlow and others]

NGCatchup now logs events like NetGate does.

And because of that, NGCatchup no longer has a

VERBOSE template keyword.

Numerous minor fixes and improvements.

Note: From the exceptionally low number of registrations I have received so far (two, over a two month period), I am beginning to think that there really is no need for this kind of program. I am seriously considering to drop any further public releases, because if nobody feels it's worth buying, then I really don't see why I should keep spending precious online time testing and developing it for you guys. I'm not made of money, you know.

24.01.96 1.0 First public release. Enjoy! :)

19.11.95 1.0B Internal beta releases

1.39 The NGCatchup Utility

Using NGCatchup

NGCatchup is a small utility which is used to maintain the active-file (see the

configuration section

), which contains a list of newsgroups and their

respective highwatermarks (numbers of the last retrieved articles from each newsgroup).

As explained elsewhere in this document, the active-file is a regular text file and may be edited using any text editor. However, in most cases you do not know the range of articles at your news server, so you do not know what to enter as highwatermarks. This is what the NGCatchup utility is for. It polls your news server (via

AmiTCP

) and lets you update your highwatermarks

using numbers relative to the server's own highwatermarks ("set the highwatermark so I will receive the 20 most recent articles").

NGCatchup may be run from CLI only at the moment. A GUI version is in the works.

When run, NGCatchup first reads your NetGate configuration file to determine the name of your news host, which newsgroups you subscribe to, et cetera. It then opens the active file and updates highwatermarks according to your commandline arguments.

NGCatchup uses the following CLI template:

```
NGCatchup CONFIG,NEWSGROUP/A/M,BELOW/N,NEW/S
```

The CONFIG parameter allows you to specify the name of NetGate's main configuration file. This would normally be 'PROGDIR:NetGate.config'.

The obligatory NEWSGROUP argument tells NGCatchup which newsgroup or newsgroups to process. Wildcards are valid, and "#?" matches all newsgroups. As indicated by the /M modifier it is possible to enter

multiple arguments, for example:

```
NGCATCHUP NetGate.config "alt.#?" "comp.#?" BELOW 50
```

(Note: The quotes are there to allow non-dos shells like Csh to parse the line without expanding the arguments)

The BELOW argument tells NGCATCHUP how many messages below the news server's own highwater mark you want to set your own highwater mark. In other words, how many messages you want to receive when you subsequently poll for news.

Example:

```
NGCATCHUP NetGate.config "#?" BELOW 50
```

This will set the highwatermarks of all configured newsgroups to 50 below the server's internal highwatermarks. When you poll next, you should receive the last 50 articles in each of the newsgroups you subscribe to.

Note: If your existing highwatermark is higher than (more recent than) 50 below the server highwatermark, it will be set back anyway. This means you may receive some articles again! See the NEW keyword for a way to avoid this.

The NEW switch tells NGCATCHUP never to move your highwatermarks back in time (i.e. subtract from it). This is especially useful in connection with the BELOW keyword, for example in a situation like this:

```
NGCATCHUP NetGate.config "#?" BELOW 50 NEW
```

This will set the highwatermarks of all configured newsgroups to 50 below the server's internal highwatermarks, but only if your existing highwatermarks are even older (smaller) than that.

The above example is what you typically do if like me you only poll every once in a while, like once a week or so. In this case it will set the highwatermarks so that you receive maximum 50 new articles from every newsgroup you subscribe to. Highwatermarks for newsgroups which are not very active and have only received a few new articles will remain at their current levels. Highwatermarks for very active newsgroups which have had a flow of more than 50 new articles since you last polled will be advanced to 50 below the server highwatermarks, skipping all articles between that and your existing highwatermark.

When you add a new newsgroup to your configuration file, you probably want to catch up to the most recent articles and threads in that group. You can do that in the following way:

```
NGCATCHUP NetGate.config "<the name of the new newsgroup>" BELOW 100
```

Note: To point out the obvious, NGCATCHUP only updates your newsgroup highwatermarks. To actually receive articles you need to use NetGate itself (duh!).

1.40 Tips & Trix

Some ideas for the advanced NetGate user

This section is intended to provide "advanced" users with helpful information on how to use the NetGate in ways which aren't immediately obvious. The section is a bit meager at the moment but as YOU write me with stories on how you managed to do something creative with NetGate I will include these stories here, so others may also benefit from your experiences.

1. Tip: Gating multiple newsgroups into the same fidonet echomail area

It is possible to direct news from different newsgroups into the same echomail area. This is useful in connection with the alt.binaries.* hierachy where you can collect all the files (files, pictures etc) in a single echomail area for easy managing within your Fidonet scanner.

The same tip applies for mailing lists. It is also possible to direct the flow from both mailing lists and newsgroups into the same area.

One thing to bear in mind, however, is that any replies you make to one such "common" echomail area will go to some unpredictable destination. Typically it is the first defined "feeder" into the area, but that may change. So the technique is most useful with areas where you generally do not reply to anything.

1.41 NetGate Error Messages

Typical NetGate Error Messages

When using NetGate you will undoubtedly receive error messages from time to time. Most of these should be pretty obvious, but a few deserve a more detailed description.

No socket.

This TCP/IP related error message usually means you are running short on memory. In any event, the TCP/IP protocol stack cannot create a connection handle for use with later mail and news connections.

Unable to locate <mail/news> host.

The news and/or mail host you have specified in your NetGate configuration file does not exist. You probably misspelled it.

Unable to connect to <mail/news> server.

or

Service currently unavailable at <site>

The news and/or mail host does exist, but does not allow a mail- and/or news connection to be made at this time. Pick up the phone and dial your Internet provider and ask them what's going on.

No TCP/IP service available.

NetGate requires
 AmiTCP
 version 3.x or later. A demo version is
available via AmiNet.

Invalid password.
or
Invalid UserID.

The user-id and/or password in your NetGate configuration file are incorrect. Most likely you've made a typing error.

Note: News- and mail hosts are generally picky regarding case in usernames and passwords. Be sure to spell your username and password EXACTLY as instructed by your Internet provider.

Mail error: <error code here>!
or
News error: <error code here>!

Something's gone completely haywire during transmission. Re-run NetGate with the same parameters, and if that does not fix things try shutting down and restarting the TCP/IP connection before attempting again.
See the

 Bugs section
 for some possible alternative reasons.

Unable to create inbound fidonet packet.

NetGate can't create a Fidonet packet. Most likely you misspelled the name of the Fidonet inbound directory in the NetGate configuration file. Alternatively it may be one of the more trivial errors such as insufficient disk space, write-protected disk etc.

Group highwatermark incorrect on news host

This warning may appear during news polling and indicates that the highwatermark for the current newsgroup points to an article which for some reason no longer exists on the news server (news articles are deleted regularly to free up disk space).

After this message NetGate begins to scan the newsgroup to find the next valid article. This takes a short while and is concluded with the following acknowledgement:

Group highwatermark changed from <X> to <Y>

Where X represents the previous highwatermark and Y the new one located by NetGate.

Group session limit reached, articles may remain.

If you define a bytecount-limit for a newsgroup (see the
 NEWSGROUP

configuration keyword in the configuration section), you will get this warning when approximately said amount of bytes have been retrieved, and NetGate will proceed to the next newsgroup.

You may receive the remainder of articles (or the next chunk of articles) by polling again.

Warning: Null operation.

You have activated NetGate with a set of command line arguments that tell NetGate not to do anything at all. I.e. not deliver or retrieve either news or mail. What were you thinking? :-)

Note: It is possible to invoke NetGate with only the WAIT parameter. See the

Usage section for a description of the WAIT parameter.

1.42 AmiTCP

From the AmiTCP FAQ:

4> Where can I get AmiTCP?

AmiTCP is available from several places:

Any Aminet mirror :- ftp.wustl.edu, ftp.doc.ic.ac.uk and ftp.luth.se
And from: ftp.demon.co.uk, ftp.funet.fi via Anonymous FTP.

Aminet:comm/net/AmiTCP-demo-40.lha

ftp.funet.fi:pub/amiga/net

The home site for AmiTCP is kampi.hut.fi:AmiTCP/ and this is where the current version is available from.

5> Where is the AmiTCP Documentation?

The documentation is included in the commercial version of AmiTCP/IP.

6> How can I order the commercial version of AmiTCP/IP?

Read the file "HowToOrder" included into the AmiTCP/IP 4.0 demo version archive.

7> Where is the list of AmiTCP applications?

These are available from gopher:

<gopher://gopher.tky.hut.fi/00/.publish/puhuri/AmiTCP/NetAppList.txt>

and World Wide Web:

<http://www.hut.fi/~puhuri/Amiga/NetAppList.html>

Updates to this list should be mailed to:

<Markus.Peuhkuri@hut.fi>

8> What is the latest version of AmiTCP?

The latest release version is AmiTCP 4.0 demo version. The commercial version of AmiTCP/IP will be available in November 1994.

9> How do I contact the AmiTCP author's?

The AmiTCP author's can be Contacted via email at: amitcp-group@hut.fi

Please only contact the group on AmiTCP matters, if you have a problem with a client or a server with AmiTCP contact the author of that program.

1.43 Spot

Spot

Spot is just about the best Fidonet mail scanner/tosser available for any platform. It combines tonnes of powerful features with a flexible and easy to use graphical user interface. If you are a Fidonet point, there's just no way around Spot.

With NetGate, Spot suddenly becomes equally superior for reading UseNet news. That's partly why I wrote it :-)

Anyways, here's a bit from the Spot documentation file:

Features

- * Requires Kickstart 2.04 or higher.
 - * Supports new 3.0 features (newlook menus, memory pools,...).
 - * Fully localized (Workbench 2.1 or higher).
 - * Style Guide compliant.
 - * Supports all current and future monitor modes.
 - * Completely font-sensitive, user may select which fonts to use.
 - * Keyboard short-cuts for most menus and gadgets.
-

- * All settings can be easily changed from within Spot.
- * Fast importing/exporting.
- * Automatically creates new areas for you, no tedious work.
- * Special fast message base format with only a few files per area.
- * Optional - fully transparent - message base crunching.
- * Message list with powerful functions (e.g. search body text).
- * Message thread linking based on subject and MSGID kludge.
- * Excellent support for multiple character sets (LATIN-1, IBM,...).
- * Built-in, fully asynchronous, Fido file request.
- * Multi-bossing and multi-domain capable.
- * Userlist editor. Every domain has its own userlist.
- * ARexx port.
- * Clock

Some of these features are only available in the registered version.

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"And the lake sings,
And the dogs don't,
They are quiet for Adda Lee" - Frank Black

1.44 Mail Manager

Mail Manager

Like Spot, Mail Manager is another excellent Fidonet package that you must be sure to try out if you are a Fidonet point. It is functionally more sophisticated than Spot and has an array of options that undoubtedly makes it the preferred choice for advanced Fidonet users. It is a fast, reliable scanner that will work very well with NetGate.

From the Mail Manager documentation:

Mail Manager is a Full Integrated Tosser, Scanner, Editor and Tick Processor for Nodes and Points using the Amiga Computer.

The Mail Manager project was born two years ago with one big aim: to create the Mail Management Program that Amiga users have always dreamt about: easy to use as Spot, complete as EMS, smart and intuitive as Point Manager. I don't know if Mail Manager has already reached this aim, but I've worked a great deal on it and I hope you will like the result.

Mail Manager uses the MagicUserInterface (MUI) by Stefan Stuntz, this gives to Mail Manager a unique Graphical User Interface.

Features

Mail Manager...

- ... is able to manage both a Point or a Node in Fidonet Technology.
- ... is able to manage Tick Files.
- ... is able to manage Echo File Attached.
- ... is able to automatically create new Echo Areas.
- ... is able to manage 4 different types of message bases.
- ... is able to manage 3 different types of Mail Packets.
- ... is able to use full 5 dimensional addressing.
- ... has a powerful ARexx interface.
- ... has a powerful OnLine Help.
- ... has a powerful Threads management.
- ... has a powerful NetMail Routing management.
- ... has a powerful support for UUCP gates.
- ... has incredibly powerful Search/Sort/Show functions.
- ... has powerful Quoting routines.
- ... supports multiple character sets.
- ... supports the Nodelist and the Userlist.
- ... uses fast Memory Pools functions.
- ... uses fast asynchronous I/O functions.
- ... is a MUI Application !!!!
- ... is fully localized (Kickstart 2.1 or higher).
- ... is Faaaaaaaaast. Up to 3 times faster than Spot or EMS.
- ... is easy to configure.
- ... has many many other features !

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