A.M.C.

A U T O M A T I C
M E S S A G E
C R E A T O R

A program to post messages automatically
to the MBSE BBS/mailer or
to Internet

Version 0.99.2/Linux
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1.   Legal notices.

To be decided!

2.   Introduction.

The purpose of this program is to automatically post messages to Fidonet, or networks using Fidonet technology, by means of the MBSE BBS/mailer, or to Internet using the sendmail command.

Although the program will post to Fidonet echo mail areas, this seems in general not a very sensible thing to do. It could cause an unnecessary high data flow. The author suggests to restrict usage to writing messages in Fidonet netmail or local areas, or to Internet

As a bonus, the program has the possibility to look into a birthday list, display people who will have a birthday in the near future (no more silly excuses now!) and/or to send them electronic good wishes.

3.   Installation.

Installation is very simple...

To install the program for your personal use, unzip the distribution archive file into a directory of your own choice.

To make the program publicly available, login as root, unzip the distribution archive file into a temporary directory and run the *install.sh* installation shell script.

This will by default create the directory /opt/amc, which we will call AMC_ROOT from now on, and the subdirectories AMC_ROOT/bin, AMC_ROOT/etc, AMC_ROOT/doc and AMC_ROOT/log. Installation under other directories than /opt is also possible.

The binary executable lives in AMC_ROOT/bin. AMC_ROOT/etc contains the Default configuration and text input files and an example birthday list, AMC_ROOT/doc the full documentation in Adobe PDF and OpenOffice (StarOffice) Writer format and AMC_ROOT/log the log file.

Change into AMC_ROOT/etc and use your favourite text editor to adapt the default files to your own taste and needs.

4.   Usage.

4.1   The run command.

The run command is
        amc [option [argument]] ... [option [argument]]

The possible options are explained later on in this document.

Configuration may be done from three places: the configuration file, the text
input file and the command line.
Options entered on the command line supersede those given in the text input
file and the configuration file.
Options defined in the text input file supersede those defined in the
configuration file.
This makes it possible to have a basic set-up in your configuration file with
easy reconfiguration for special cases.

4.2   Options and parameters.

Parameters may be set using keywords in the configuration and/or text input
file.
Keywords **MUST** sᴛart in the first column of the line and have a colon [:] as
first character. All other lines are regarded as comment in the configuration
file or message text in the text input file. Keywords are not case sensitive.
Options and parameters may also be set in the command line. They may be given
in the short form [-o] or the long form [--option], followed by a space and an
argument where necessary and allowed. Arguments consisting of more than one
word must be enclosed in double quote characters [--option "a long option"].

The possibilities are presented as follows:

-o   description
--option   more description
:keyword(s)

Option/parameter	**Meaning**
-a --alias :alias :nickname	An alias or nickname.
--c --config-file	The name of the configuration file. If no argument or the argument "-" is given,the use of a configuration file is inhibited. Default is amc.cfg in the same location as where the AMC executable is found.
-d --to-address :dest :destination :toaddress	The address of the person that you want to send the message to. A Fidonet address should be given in the form: zone:net/node.point. AMC is not clairvoyant, but tries to correct incomplete Fidonet addresses (see below).

-f --flavour :attrib :attribute :flavour	The Fidonet message flavour (attribute). This may be "c" for crash, "h" for hold, "i" for immediate, "n" for normal or "-" for the system's default.
-h --from-address :home` :homeadress :fromaddress	Your Fidonet address. This **MUST** be provided for Fidonet messages. For Internet messages your address will be taken from the environment variables USER and HOSTNAME.
-i --from-name :from :fromname	The sender's name. Usually you will use your real name here, but in principle anything may be used. Default: "Automatic Message Creator".
-l --log-file :log :logfile	The name of the AMC log file. AMC uses the same format as Binkley, Squish and Maximus, so their log file may be used for AMC as well, Default is "amc.log" in the same location as where the AMC executable is found.
-m --message-board :area :echoarea :board	The Fidonet message board number. When this is specified AMC assumes the message is for Fidonet, otherwise it tries to send it to Internet.
-y --message-type :messagetype	The Fidonet message type. This may be "netmail" or "echomail". If not provided, AMC assumes netmail if a valid Fidonet to-address and a message board are given.
-n --to-name :toname	The name of the person the message should be sent to. Default: "<somebody>".
-q --quiet	Quiet mode. Log messages will not be displayed to the screen unless writing to the log file is impossible.
-t --text-file	The name of the text input file. A text input file **MUST** be specified. Default is amc.txt in the same location as where the AMC executable is found.
-x --log-level	Log level. This determines the amount of information in the log file. The range is 0 to 6 (fatal to informational), the default is 3.
-I --import-file	The name of the text import file. See below.
-O --origin :origin	The Fidonet origin. The default is "«AMClong» v«AMCver» (c) «AMCauthor»".

-S --subject :subj :subject	The subject of the message. Default "<unknown>".
-T --tearline :tearline	The Fidonet tear line. Default «AMCshort» v«AMCver»"

4.3   Fidonet address completion.

AMC tries to complement an incomplete Fidonet destination address in the following way:

Entered:	Changed to:
.point	yourzone:yournet/yournode.point
node	yourzone:yournet/node
net/node	yourzone:net/node
net/node.point	yourzone:net/node.point

4.4   Text substitution

In the text and the tear line and origin you may use several dynamic text substitutions. They look like:

«replacementtoken»

The text replacement tokens recognised are:

ToAddr	the recipient's address
ToName	the recipient's full name
ToFName	the recipient's first name, i.e. the first word from the name string
ToLName	the recipient's last name, i.e. anything that's left after the first name
FromAddr	the sender's address
FromName	the sender's full name
FromFName	the sender's first name
FromLName	the sender's last name
Alias	...
AMCver	the AMC version number
AMCshort	A.M.C.
AMClong	Automatic Message Creator
AMCdate	the AMC creation date
AMCcreator	the name of the author of amc

Note that the text replacement tokens are not case sensitive.

4.5   The text import function.

A special text replacement token is «Merge», also known as «Import». This will be replaced by text read from an import text file, which **CAN ONLY** be specified on the command line, using the -I or --import-file option.
If this replacement token appears embedded in a line, line feeds will be added before and after the imported text.

5.   The birthday calendar.

With the birthday calendar feature you may display a list of people who celebrate their birthday within the near future and/or send them an electronic mail message a specified number of days before the event.

The input comes from an ASCII text file with records in the following format:

   day month [year] name [address] [message board]

Have a look in the example list, amcbirth.day, to get an idea.

If the "year" field is not filled in (or -1), the age of the person will not be calculated.

The message board number should be specified as "#nnn". If the "message board" is filled in, the person will receive an automatic birthday congratulation via Fidonet. If a valid Fidonet address is specified, it will be via netmail, otherwise via echo mail. If no "message board" is given, but a valid, complete, Internet address is specified, the message will go to the Internet. The "message board" will override any values in your AMC configuration file or command line.

Invocation of the birthday calendar feature is **ONLY** possible from the command string by using the -b or --birthday-list option.

The following options and parameters are only for the birthday calendar feature:

Option/parameter	Meaning
-b --birthday-list	Specifies the name of the birthday list. If no full path is specified, it will be looked for in the same location as where the AMC executable is found. There is no default.
-o --send-out	The number of days before the event to send out a congratulation message. The range is 0 to 31 days, the default 1 day. No argument or "-" inhibits the sending of messages and only displays a list of impending birthdays.
-s --sort-birthday-list	Sort the birthday list according to date of birth, The original list will be saved as .bak file.
-w --look-ahead	The number of days to look in the future for the birthday list display. The range is 0 to 31 days, the default is 1 day.

There are also some extra text replacement tokens:

WhichDay	the day on which the forthcoming birthday takes place
WhichDate	the date of the birthday mentioned above
WhichAge	in case you want to be indiscreet.

Currently it is not checked whether the program has already run on the current day (this might be added at some time). It is **ENTIRELY UP TO THE USER** to ensure that the program is run **ONLY ONCE A DAY** with the automatic congratulation creation option.

6.   Runtime messages.

By default only fatal to serious (level 3) execution errors will be written to the standard output device and the log file.

If the program does not seem to do what you want it to do, use the command line option -x or –log-level

        -x n

where n is a number from 0 to 6, increasing the amount of information you get when the program runs.

Apart from writing error messages, AMC returns several error codes related to problems. The Author thinks it suffices for the user to know that any error code which is not zero means a problem. If you have problems and need support, please raise the log level to maximum and send the Author the log file and the configuration files you used, and the command line as you typed

7.   Revision history.

Version:	Date:	Comments:
0.99.2	June 17, 2004	Check for existing and executable mbmsg and sendmail. Explanation [at log level 6] when execution fails.
0.99.1	June 11, 2004	This version is to a great extent based on AMC 1.15d for Dos by the same author.

8.   Known bugs.

There are none at the moment ☺

9.   Acknowledgements.

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