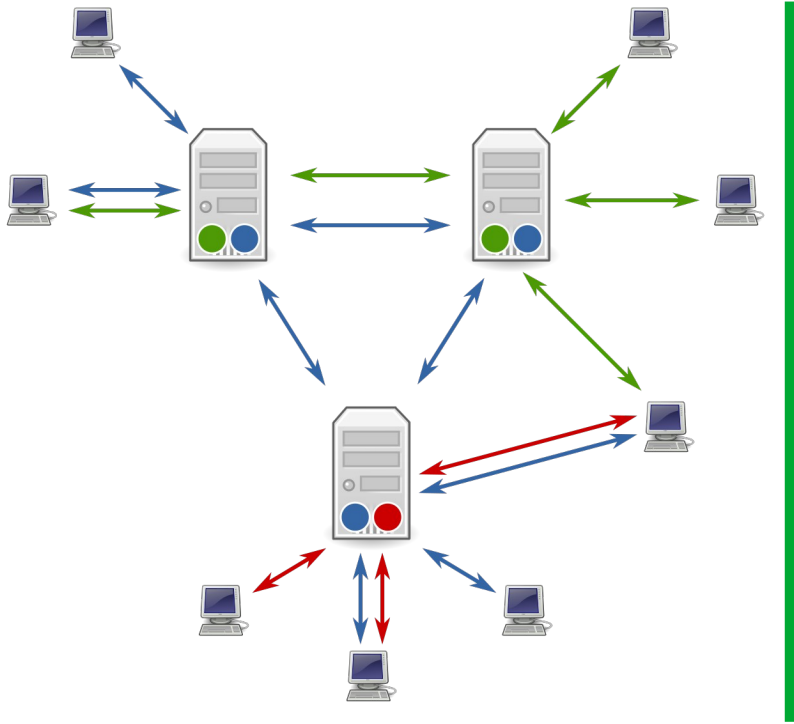# Reviving Usenet

Agenda

- What is Usenet
- The Rise and Fall of Usenet
- Back from the Dead?
- Questions to be Answered
- Stories from Usenet

What is Usenet?

About Me

- Training Engineer at SUSE

- Board Member for B8MB

- Volunteer for Tor Project

- All around nerd

What is Usenet?

Usenet is a worldwide distributed discussion network.

It is the original long-form messaging system that predates the Internet as we know it.

How does it work?

Users read and send articles (messages) on a News server. That server exchanges articles with other News servers in the network. The collection of servers is known as the Usenet.

Benefits of Usenet

- Decentralized
- Simplicity
- Anonymous

- Owned by no one
- Resilient
- Resistant to censorship

Organization

Usenet is organized into Newsgroups. Each group is generally a topic for discussion for that group.

Newsgroups are organized into hierarchies.

- alt.bitcoins is in the alt.* hierarchy
- sci.crypt is in the sci.* hiearchy

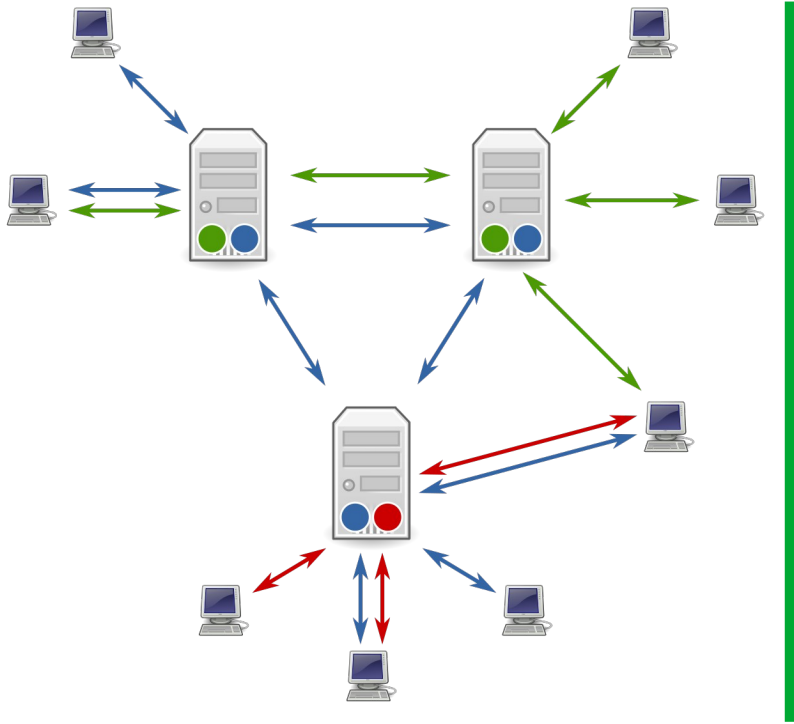# The Usenet Big-8

comp.*

news.*

sci.*

talk.*

misc.*

rec.*

soc.*

humanities.*

The Big-8 Management Board

- Creates well-named, well-used newsgroups in the Big-8 Usenet hierarchies

- Makes necessary adjustments to existing groups

- Removes groups that are not well-used

- Assists and encourages the support of a canonical Big-8 newsgroup list by Usenet sites

The Rise and Fall of Usenet

A Little History...

In 1980...

There was no Internet

The was only the ARPANET and few had access

It was commonly accepted at the time that to join the ARPANET took political connections and $100,000.

Better than email

Email had been around for years before Usenet, but it was limited to the people using the same computer

There was no way to directly talk to people outside with the ARPANET

https://today.duke.edu/2010/05/usenet.html

https://www.cs.unc.edu/History/EarlyAdulthood.html

The Beginning

Year	Sites (approx)	Articles/Day (average)
1979	3	2
1980	15	10
1981	150	20
1982	400	50
1983	600	120
1984	900	225
1985	1300	375
1986	2500	500
1987	5000	1000
1988	11000	1800

"Managing Usenet" David Lawrence

```
UUCP/Usenet Logical Map   —    June 1, 1981 / mods by S. McGeady November 19, 1981

              (ucbvax)
+=+=====================================+==+
| |                                     |  |
| |             wivax                   |  |
| |               |                     |  |
| |       microsoft| uiucdcs            |  |
| | genradbo      |   |                 |        (Tektronix)
| |   |           | | |   purdue        |  |
| decvax+====+=+====+=+=+   | |          |  |
|  |    | |         | | |   | pur-phy   |  |           tekmdp
|  |    | |         | | |   | |  |       |  |
+@@@@@@@cca  | |    | | |   | |  |       |  |
|  |    | |  | +=pur-ee=+=+=====+====+  |
|  csin | |  | |      | |                |
|  |    | +==o===+=====================+==+=========+=======+=====teklabs=+
|  |    |    |                         |  |                         |
|  |    |    |               pdp phs  grumpy wolfvax             |
|  |    |    |                 |  |     |   |                     |
|  |    |    cincy           unc=+===+=======+=========+         |
|  |    |    |      bio        |          (Misc)                 |
|  |    |    | (Misc) |        |      dukgeri duke34  utzoo       |
|  |    |    | sii  reed       |        |   |        |            |
|  |    |    |  |   |          |        |   |        |            |
|  |  +=====+=+=+==+====+=+=======+==+==+==duke=+===+========+==+=========+
|  |  |     |     |     |       |          |         |       |    | u1100s
|  bmd70  ucf-cs ucf  | andiron |          |         |       |    |
|  |                  |         |          |         |       |    |
|  |           red    |         |    zeppo |         |       |    pyuxh
|  |            |     |         |      |   |         |       |    |
|  |     psupdp---psuvax |      | alice | whuxlb |   utah-cs |    houxf
|  |            allegra |       |  |  |    |   |     |  |     +--chico---+
|  |               |    |       |  |  |    |   |    /=+=======harpo=+==+ |
|  |     +===+=mhtsa====research |  | /=+========+=+=/            |  | |
|  |         hocsr |  |  | +=+=============+=/       cbosg---+     | |
|  ucbopt         |  |  |                           |       | esquire |
|  |   :          |  |  |                           cbosgd  |     | |
|  ucbcory        |  | eagle==+======+=====+=====+======+   |     +-uwvax--+
|  |   :          |  |  |   |    |    |    |    |    |       |          |
|  |   :          |  |  | mhuxa mhuxh mhuxj mhuxm mhuxv      |          |
|  |   :          |  |  |  +-------------------------o--+    |
|  |   :          |  |  |  |                              |
|  ucbcad         |  |  |  ihpss    mh135a              |
|  |   :          |  | | |                              |
|  |   :          |  \--o--o------ihnss----vax135----cornell  |
+=+==ucbvax==========+====+==+=+======+========+=+========+==========+
|  (UCB) :           |            |          | (Silicon Valley)
|  ucbarpa    cmevax |            |        menlo70--hao
|  :                 |            |          |  |
|  ucbonyx           |            |         sri-unix
|                    |          ucsfcgl      |
Legend:              |            |         sytek====+=========+
-------              |            |          |           |
- | / \ + = Uucp    sdcsvax=+=======+=+=======+     intelqa   zehntel
=          "Bus"     |        |     |
o          jumps    sdcarl phonlab sdcattb
:          Berknet
@          Arpanet
```

Complete aggregate news flow, worldwide
Line width proportional to directional effective flow volume

DECWRL netmap-2.1 by Brian Reid at Thu May 13 13:49:34 1993
Gall Stereographic Projection, Map center: [15°N, 88°W]

The Eternal September

Google Acquires Usenet Discussion Service and Significant Assets from Deja.com

Award-Winning Search Engine Launches Beta Version of Usenet Newsgroup Search

MOUNTAIN VIEW, Calif. - February 12, 2001 - Google Inc. today announced that it has acquired Deja.com's Usenet Discussion Service. This acquisition provides Google with Deja's entire Usenet archive (dating back to 1995), software, domain names including deja.com and dejanews.com, company trademarks, and other intellectual property. Financial terms of this transaction were not released.

Available now at http://groups.google.com, this powerful new Usenet search feature enables Google users to access the wealth of information contained in more than six months of Usenet newsgroup postings and message threads. Once the full Deja Usenet archive is added, users will be able to search and browse more than 500 million archived messages with the speed and efficiency of a Google search. In addition to expanding the amount of searchable data, Google will soon provide improved browsing capabilities and newsgroup posting.

Search Groups

Google Search

● Search Groups (Beta) ○ Search the Web

Browse Groups

alt. (alternative)
Any conceivable topic...

biz. (business)
Business products, services, reviews...

comp. (computers)
Hardware, software, consumer info...

humanities. (humanities)
Fine art, literature, philosophy...

misc. (miscellaneous)
Employment, health, and much more...

More groups...

news. (news)
Info about Usenet news...

rec. (recreation)
Games, hobbies, sports...

sci. (science)
Applied science, social science...

soc. (society)
Social issues, culture...

talk. (talk)
Current issues and debates...

AOL Pulls Plug on Newsgroup Service

By By **Brian McWilliams**, Guest Columnist | Published 16 years ago

💬 **15 Comments**   👍 **Like** 0   🐦 **Tweet**

PERSPECTIVE The world's largest ISP is cutting off direct access to one of the oldest, coolest -- and strangest -- parts of the Internet.

America Online has quietly announced that it will discontinue providing member access to Usenet newsgroups next month. In recent days, AOL subscribers who access keyword "Newsgroups" are greeted with a pop-up message informing them of the change: "Please Note: The AOL Newsgroup service will be discontinued in early 2005."

According to a notice on AOL's Web site, the newsgroup shut-off will occur in February, severing subscribers from the thousands of discussion groups that make up Usenet.

AOL officials weren't immediately available to explain the newsgroup shutdown. The ISP's pop-up message advises subscribers that newsgroup services are available from third-party providers. The message also notes that users with separate high-speed connections may be able to arrange newsgroup access through their broadband provider. AOL users can read newsgroups over the Web using Google Groups, the message said.

3 top ISPs to block access to sources of child porn

Verizon, Time Warner Cable, Sprint also agree to use a quick response system, provide $1.12M to fund further efforts

By Linda Rosencrance

June 10, 2008 12:00 PM ET

💬 Add a comment

＋ Briefcase

Computerworld - Verizon Communications Inc., Time Warner Cable Inc. and Sprint Nextel Corp. have signed an agreement with New York Attorney General Andrew Cuomo to shut down access to two major sources of child pornography.

This is the first time that three of the world's largest Internet service providers have agreed to eliminate access to child pornography newsgroups, which are major suppliers of the illegal images, according to a statement from Cuomo's office. The ISPs have also agreed to purge their servers of child pornography Web sites identified by the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, the Cuomo said in the statement.

"Our strategy was somewhat of a different strategy than most law enforcement agencies take. Rather than going after the individual user, our strategy was to go toward the supplier side," Cuomo said at a press conference today. "If you have a pool of users and the pool keeps refilling, rather than trying to empty the pool with a bucket, go turn off the faucet and stop the flow of material."

An undercover investigation by the attorney general's office found that "newsgroups" -- online public bulletin boards where users can upload and download files -- are a major source of online child pornography, the statement said. Because users access newsgroups through their ISPs, Verizon, Time Warner Cable and Sprint have agreed to completely block access to all child pornography newsgroups.

A PIECE OF INTERNET HISTORY

Duke to shut Usenet server, home to the first electronic newsgroups

CARA BONNETT

This week marks the end of an era for one of the earliest pieces of Internet history, which got its start at Duke more than 30 years ago.

On May 20, Duke will shut down its Usenet server, which provides access to a worldwide electronic discussion network of newsgroups started in 1979 by two Duke graduate students, Tom Truscott and Jim Ellis.

Working with a graduate student at UNC-Chapel Hill, they came up with a simple program to exchange messages and files between computers at Duke and UNC using telephone modems.

The "Users Network," Usenet for short, grew into an international electronic discussion forum with more than 120,000 newsgroups dedicated to various topics, from local dining to computer programming languages. Each group had a distinctive name such as soc.history or sci.math.

Spam

Subject	Score	Author	Lines	Date
BUY YOUR PRESCRIPTION PILLS WITHOUT PRESCRIPTION💊 (adderall,hydromorphone,hydrocod...	-9999	#Adderall, #Oxycodone, #vyvanse, #Xanax <keysto...	101	Mar 19 2019
Where to Order Pills :-Lyrica , Vyvanse , OxyContin , Xanax-2mg, Oxycodone , Ritalin, Adderall xr, Dil...	-9999	#Adderall, #Oxycodone, #vyvanse, #Xanax <keysto...	101	Mar 17 2019
Where to Order online :-Lyrica , Vyvanse , OxyContin , Xanax 2mg, Suboxone, Oxycodone , Ritalin, Ad...	-9999	#Adderall, #Oxycodone, #vyvanse, #Xanax <keysto...	102	Mar 16 2019
Best online pharmacy to buy adderall |{ Wickr id: intermeds247 } |Order vyvanse from secured sourc...		#Adderall, #Oxycodone, #vyvanse, #Xanax <keysto...	101	Mar 16 2019
Us congress hearing of maan alsaan Money laundry ... قضية الكونغجرس لغسيل الأموال للمليادير	-9999	lolo sami <loveu4ever.earth@gmail.com>	21	Mar 10 2019
Best online pharmacy to buy adderall |{ Wickr id: intermeds247 } |Order vyvanse from secured sourc...		#Adderall, #Oxycodone, #vyvanse, #Xanax <keysto...	102	Mar 08 2019
PHARMACEUTICAL STORE♥♥♥.♥contact:+1(318)996-1772 ♥♥♥ Whatsapp or Wickr ID: legitvendo...	-9999	"Website / References Available" <johnsonlander11...	124	Mar 08 2019
PHARMACEUTICAL STORE♥♥♥.♥contact:+1(318)996-1772 ♥♥♥ Whatsapp or Wickr ID: legitvendo...		"Website / References Available" <johnsonlander11...	123	Mar 08 2019
STORE♥♥♥.♥contact:+1(318)996-1772 ♥♥♥ Whatsapp or Wickr ID: legitvendor2019 ......⯊⯊⯊⯊⯊⯊⯊ ...	-9999	"Website / References Available" <johnsonlander11...	0	Mar 05 2019
The free.* FAQ (version 2.0.1)		tskirvin@killfile.org (Tim Skirvin)	338	Mar 01 2019
New Open Contract Positions------BI Analyst & BI Developer-------NYC, NY & Sunnyvale, CA		kirantoj.1.4.3@gmail.com	54	Feb 27 2019
Best online pharmacy to buy adderall |{ Wickr id: intermeds247 } |Order vyvanse from secured sourc...		Painkillers - Stimulants - AntiAnxiety pills <keysto...	81	Feb 24 2019
**Best online store to Order painkillers , adhd and xanax online	adderall , Nembutal ,Email: keystone...**	-9999	Painkillers - Stimulants - AntiAnxiety pills <keysto...	81	Feb 23 2019
♥♥♥AMAZING PHARMACEUTICAL STORE♥♥♥.♥contact:+1(318)996-1772 ♥♥♥ Whatsapp or Wickr ...	-9999	"Website / References Available" <johnsonlander11...	124	Feb 23 2019
♥♥♥AMAZING PHARMACEUTICAL STORE♥♥♥.♥contact:+1(318)996-1772 ♥♥♥ Whatsapp or Wickr ...		"Website / References Available" <johnsonlander11...	124	Feb 23 2019
^ where to Order Vyvanse ,Adderall xr, OxyContin , lyrica , concerta , Suboxone , Percs , Ritalin , Xelo...	-9999	Painkillers - Stimulants - AntiAnxiety pills <keysto...	82	Feb 23 2019
^ where to Order Vyvanse ,Adderall xr, OxyContin , lyrica , concerta , Suboxone , Percs , Ritalin , Xelo...	-9999	Painkillers - Stimulants - AntiAnxiety pills <keysto...	82	Feb 23 2019
♥♥♥AMAZING PHARMACEUTICAL STORE♥♥♥.♥contact:+1(318)996-1772 ♥♥♥ Whatsapp or Wickr ...		"Website / References Available" <johnsonlander11...	126	Feb 20 2019
♥♥♥AMAZING PHARMACEUTICAL STORE♥♥♥.♥contact:+1(318)996-1772 ♥♥♥ Whatsapp or Wickr ...		"Website / References Available" <johnsonlander11...	126	Feb 20 2019
Buy Prescription Drugs Securely online 💊 (adderall,Klonopin,hydrocodone, alprazolam Xanax,Dila...	-9999	Painkillers - Stimulants - AntiAnxiety pills <keysto...	75	Feb 16 2019
Norco, Oxymorphone pills and powder morphine, Watson540, Valium, Oxycodone, MDMA, Opana, O...	-9999	Painkillers - Stimulants - AntiAnxiety pills <keysto...	76	Feb 15 2019
Order real 💯 OxyContin , vyvanse , HYDROCODONE, concerta, PERCOCET, Seconal , ROXICODONE, o...	-9999	Painkillers - Stimulants - AntiAnxiety pills <keysto...	75	Feb 14 2019
Order Vyvanse ,Adderall xr, OxyContin , lyrica , concerta , Suboxone , Percs , Ritalin , Xeloda, Advair ...	-9999	Painkillers - Stimulants - AntiAnxiety pills <keysto...	76	Feb 14 2019
Discreet & Reliable Services 💯. # Buy Painkillers |Anti-Anxiety |Anti-Depression |Weight-loss |Pain...		Painkillers - Stimulants - AntiAnxiety pills <keysto...	75	Feb 13 2019
Us congress hearing of maan alsaan Money laundry ... قضية الكونغجرس لغسيل الأموال للمليادير	-9999	lolo sami <loveu4ever.earth@gmail.com>	16	Feb 11 2019
♥♥♥AMAZING PHARMACEUTICAL STORE♥♥♥.♥contact:+1(318)996-1772 ♥♥♥ Whatsapp Order O...		"Website / References Available" <johnsonlander11...	0	Feb 10 2019
♥♥♥AMAZING PHARMACEUTICAL STORE♥♥♥.♥contact:+1(318)996-1772 ♥♥♥ Whatsapp ....R...	-9999	"Website / References Available" <johnsonlander11...	0	Feb 10 2019

http://usenet.ee/maps/graph3-n-20200402.png
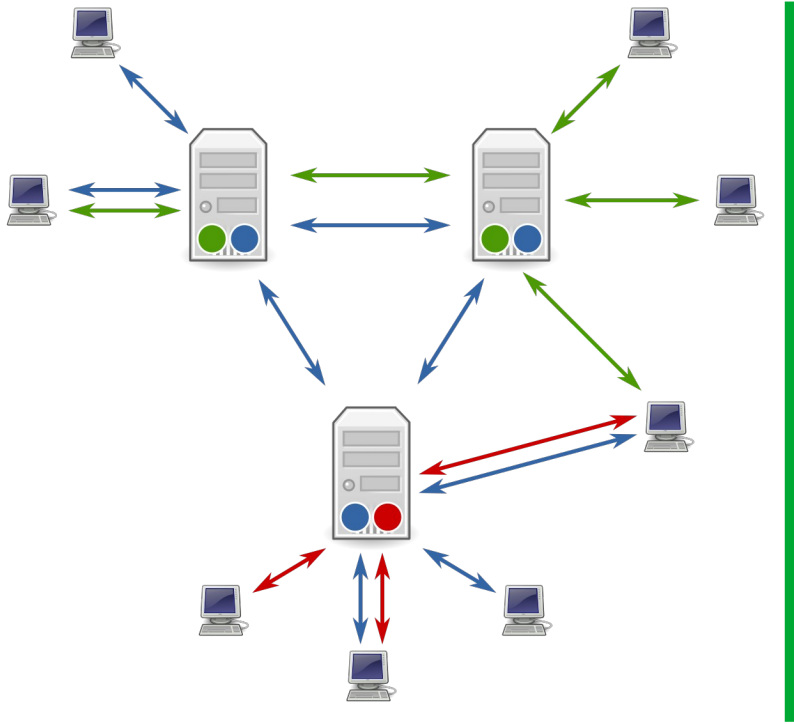
Back from the Dead?

Dead Board

Sometime in 2017, all of the members of the Big-8 Management board stepped down or had their memberships lapse without anyone to take up the mantle

Dead Board

Without the Big-8 board, no new newsgroups could be created, old ones could not be removed, and changes could not be made to existing newsgroups.

Dead Board

Groups that had once been moderated were now completely silent without a moderator.

It looked like the death of much of the Usenet was finally at hand.

A Thread from Reddit

Big 8 Management Board

I thought some of you might be interested in this. This is an email that I wrote earlier today. I will post again if I get a reply.

Dear Big 8 board,

I was interested in created a new comp.* newsgroup. However, the latest

message in the news.groups.proposals mailing list is from 2018.

I would like to know what is the status of the Big 8 board. Has this

organization been decommissioned? If not, I will submit a new RFD, possibly

the first in nearly 2 years, and I would like to blog about my experience and

try to garner new curiosity about Usenet on Reddit and other places.

Thank you for your time.

A Glimmer of Hope

Shortly after contacting former board members, we were asked by them if we could tell a little about ourselves with the goal of taking over the board.

My Goals for the B8MB

- See the B8MB staffed with active volunteers.

- Make contacts with current Usenet providers to ensure that the canonical list of Big-8 newsgroups is observed and used.

- Begin accepting RFD's for new newsgroups. **Growth is life!**

- Begin auditing unused, outdated newsgroups

- Make contacts with journalists, YouTubers, and others in the IT world to get the word out that Usenet is in fact alive and well and to drive new users to it.

Handing over the keys

This is an official communication from the Big-8 Management Board. Please note that followups are set to news.groups.

After a careful review of the Big 8 Management Board's activity and process, all remaining members of the Big 8 Management Board opted not to consider re-election and instead have voted to install two new volunteers as the new members of the Big 8 Management Board. These two volunteers are:

        Tristan Miller Jason Evans

We believe these volunteers have the technical and social skills necessary to maintain the Big-8. Please give them your support while they develop their vision for the future mission and goals of the Big 8 Board.

Kathy Morgan, Chairperson Emeritus Bill Horne, former Chairperson

Work...

Over the next few weeks, I set up a new web and mail server for our own needs.

And then the web server where the website had been hosted crashed before we were able to access it.

Another Member

This is an official communication from the Big-8 Management Board. Please note that followups are set to news.groups.

After a careful review of the Big-8 Management Board's activity and process, on May 8, 2020, a new member was voted in to the Board:

        Rayner Lucas

We believe that he has the technical and social skills necessary to help maintain the Big-8. Please give him your support while we continue the vision, mission, and goals of the Big-8 Board.

Jason Evans, Co-chair Tristan Miller, Co-chair

Progress and Successes

Questions to be Answered

Why are we doing this?

Does anyone even care about Usenet anymore?

Why should anyone care?

Why are we doing this?

Does anyone even care about Usenet anymore?

Why should anyone care?

The Future

- Spread the word
- Keep on being a normal and stable board
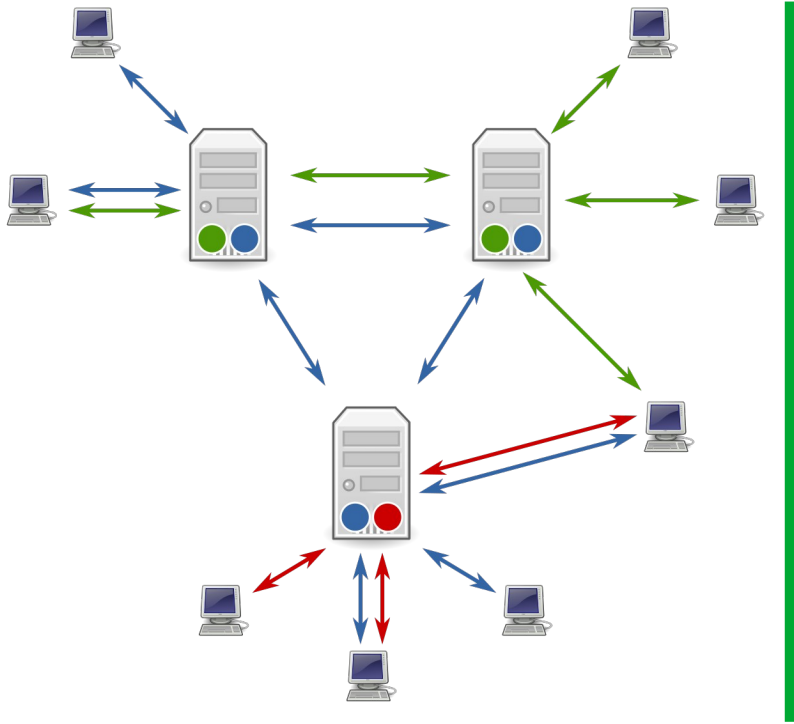
Stories from Usenet

What is Usenet?

"Usenet is like a herd of performing elephants with diarrhea. Massive, difficult to redirect, awe-inspiring, entertaining, and a source of mind-boggling amounts of excrement when you least expect it."

— Gene Spafford, 1992

A Grad Student from Finland

a (free) operating system

I'm doing a (free) operating system (just a hobby, won't be big and professional like gnu) for 386(486) AT clones.

...

I've currently ported bash(1.08) and gcc(1.40), and things seem to work.

This implies that I'll get something practical within a few months, and I'd like to know what features most people would want. Any suggestions are welcome, but I won't promise I'll implement them :-)

Subject: LINUX is obsolete

As most of you know, for me MINIX is a hobby, something that I do in the evening when I get bored writing books and there are no major wars, revolutions, or senate hearings being televised live on CNN. My real job is a professor and researcher in the area of operating systems.

As a result of my occupation, **I think I know a bit about where operating are going in the next decade or so.**

Kremvax

From Russia with Love

Well, today, 840401, this is at last the Socialist Union of Soviet Republics joining the Usenet network and saying hallo to everybody.

One reason for us to join this network has been to have a means of having an open discussion forum with the American and European people and making clear to them our strong efforts towards attaining peaceful coexistence between the people of the Soviet Union and those of the United States and Europe.

We have been informed that on this network many people have given strong anti-Russian opinions, but we believe they have been misguided by their leaders, especially the American administration, who is seeking for war and domination of the world.

By well informing those people from our side we hope to have a possibility to make clear to them our intentions and ideas.

Some of those in the Western world, who believe in the truth of what we say have made possible our entry on this network; to them we are very grateful. We hereby invite you to freely give your comments and opinions.

Here are the data for our backbone site:

Name: moskvax
Organization: Moscow Institute for International Affairs
Contact: K. Chernenko

And now, let's open a flask of Vodka and have a drink on our entry on
this network. So:

   NA ZDAROVJE!

--
   K. Chernenko, Moscow, USSR

This isn't funny. I hope you get so much mail in response to this that you're reading it for a week straight. F**k you.

get out of our network!!!

If your net contact is used as another channel for government-authored propaganda, not too many of us will be interested in reading your messages.

> Wow!
>
> Is this for real? Honest-to-god Russia? Gee. I never thought that I'd see it. Does this imply that Unix is behind the Iron curtain?

I want to voice my support of those who feel that the "April Fool's" joke about the USSR on the USENET was bad form. Particularly when it appeared in what many of us had come to rely on as the authoritative source for nuews[sic] about the network.

Welcome! [From an isolated CIA outpost]

Does anyone seriously doubt that Chernenko, who has no expertise in foreign policy, and probably can't speak, let alone write, in another language, would post something to the net? That joke was in good taste. **Anyone who feels taken in by that joke should ask him/herself why the net is so central to his/her life.**

Cypherpunks

Untraceable Digital Cash

From: tcmay@got.net (Tim May)
Subject: Untraceable Digital Cash, Information Markets, and BlackNet
Date: 1997/02/24
Newsgroups: alt.cypherpunks,comp.org.eff.talk,alt.privacy

A copy of my paper "Untraceable Digital Cash, Information Markets, and BlackNet is now at this URL: www.law.miami.edu/~froomkin/articles/tcmay.htm

This is my position paper for the panel discussion "Governmental and Social Implications of Digital Money" at the upcoming Computers, Freedom, and Privacy (CFP) Conference in San Francisco, March 11-14, 1997.

This paper summarizes several of the ideas I often focus on. A much longer version of this paper is slated to appear later this year in the new Vernor Vinge re-issue of "True Names." My paper, "True Nyms and Crypto Anarchy," deals with the issues of pseudonyms, digital money, and crypto anarchy at length.

--Tim May

More Projects

Security and Privacy

From: kelly@well.sf.ca.us (Kelly Goen)
Newsgroups: alt.sources
Subject: Pretty Good Privacy(tm) Email Privacy Module Sources 1/5
Date: 6 Jun 91 21:07:36 GMT

 This is release file 1/5 of Phil Zimmermans Pretty Good Privacy(tm)
An RSA/Hybrid Email Privacy System release under the aegis of Copyleft.
Although the source code and Binaries are totally Freeware, the algorithms
embedded within are Patented Items. PK Partners of Sunnyvale, California
is the current holder of the Patents. To utilize this software for other than
educational purposes(i.e. Real Life Usage) you should Contact PK Partners
and obtain Licensing. The author accepts no liability for your actions in
either case. Contact Information for PK Partners is given in the documentation.

section 1 of uuencode 2.8 of file pgp10src.zip   by R.E.M.

Movie Lover

This is a note to announce that version 2.6 of the movie database is now
available. This version has a fully automatic installation script which will
be posted in a separate article. The package uses the information contained on
the various rec.arts.movies lists to create and search a massive movie database.

New features are:

 * support for the new miscellaneous cast lists - more than doubling
   the size of the cast databases!
 * automatic support for compressed database files - thanks to Timo
   Lamminjoki for this change.
 * easy installation: a script automatically downloads all the files and
   creates the databases for you!
 * a number of minor bug fixes including one in 'gendb' which caused problems
   on some machines. If you were affected, try this new version.

Special thanks to

- Tristan Miller
- Rayner Lucas
- Todd M. McComb
- r/Usenet

- Steven Bellovin
- Kathy Morgan
- Bill Horne
- alt.folklore.computers

Your Text Here

Finish

Thank You