



# ired to the World

— by Ralph Lee Scott

Those of you who went to the UNC CAUSE Conference on the Internet in July 1993 at UNC-Greensboro, will no doubt recall the three current main uses of the Internet: intercomputer mail transfer (called e-mail or net-mail); intercomputer file transfer or remote file access (called FTPing or File Transfer Protocol); and discussion group mailings (called listserves but also referred to by some as Internet junk mail). In this column of *Wired to the World*, (or as some now call the Internet, *Weird to the World*.) I will discuss how to join a listserve, more specifically the School Library Media & Network Communications Listserve (LM\_NET for short). [That's LM underline (shift dash on most USA keyboards) NET.]

## LM\_NET

Thousands of listserves are in existence today. They cover topics from beekeeping to the latest hard rock music group. Most hobbies, as well as current exotic research activities, have a discussion forum going. Typical discussion group topics include: hurricanes, BASIC programming, biochemistry, the Grateful Dead, Japanese food, government documents, maps, public services issues in libraries, rare books, library material conservation, photography, genealogy (called ROOTS of course), Windows, Excel, rare bird alert, cats (called FELINE), African Americans, Anglican (Episcopal Church), Bill Clinton, Austin (Jane Austin), automobiles, and last but not least, the Internet. Discussion groups on Bitnet are called listserves. Other Internet systems call their discussion groups by other names, for instance CompuServe calls its groups forums. Another major group is called Usenet News. These other systems require individual accounts or Internet feeds to your computer for you to read them. Most Bitnet sites have an electronic list of current Bitnet listserves. LaUNCHpad at the University of North Carolina's Office of Instructional Technology provides free Usenet/Bitnet feeds to the world (Telnet open 152.2.22.80)

To sign on to a discussion group, you must send an e-mail subscribe message to the appropriate listserve computer requesting that your name be placed on the distribution list and that mail be sent to your Internet connected computer. Most sign ons are handled electronically by the listserve computer. This is one of the main features of the listserve system: it functions automatically without the need for human intervention. This has allowed the discussion groups to exchange mail at a very low cost per message unit, completely unattended. When you post a message to one of the discussion groups, the listserve computer sends it automatically to anyone who has signed on to the group. Again this is all done without the aid of a human being. To sign on to the LM\_NET discussion group, send an Internet message to: `LISTSERV@SUVM.bitnet`, the Listserve computer at Syracuse University. In the body of the message, type the word `SUBSCRIBE LM_NET` (followed by your name) for example:

`SUBSCRIBE LM_NET Ralph Scott`. The computer will automatically add your name to the routing list and send you a confirmation message.

Some listserves require that you reply with an "ok" to the confirmation message; others do not. A few lists still have humans that cull the requests to be added to list and only allow sign ons to whomever they feel has a need to be on the list. This type of listserve, however, is rare. Most are open to all who want to join in the discussion. After you have signed on, most listserves will send you a set of instructions governing the operation of the list. How to turn your mail on and off, how to unsubscribe, how to prevent your name from displaying in the public directory of members, and how to access the list archives and index are typical instructions received.

The LM\_NET listserve has been in existence for about two years. Topics cover a wide range of material of interest to school media personnel. Recent discussions on the list include: charging faculty and students for lost materials; requests for collection development information on CD-ROMs; "Lunchtime in the Library;" a call for papers for the Rhode Island/New England Educational Media Association joint conference; someone looking for "A Connecticut [sic] Yankee in King Arthurs Court' starring Danny Kaye;" library/media grades for elementary school students; the length of messages to be submitted (some people object to reading long message — others just throw them away if they don't have the time); request for experiences with the Horace Mann Insurance Company; notice of a new North Carolina Department of Public Instruction report on "Library Automation: Impact on Students;" virtual reality in the library; the paradigm shift to "curling up in bed on a cold night with a cup of hot chocolate and a laptop upon which you read your favorite book;" Internet access to United Press International (UPI) and Associated Press (AP) dispatches; and more discussion of lunchtime in the library.

## Other Internet News

Testing has begun in a limited number of areas in sending facsimile documents over the Internet. The system currently requires a local geographic "cell" for storage and distribution of the facsimile message which can be either text or graphics. The areas currently included in the test are: Washington, D.C.; Silicon Valley and parts of the San Francisco Bay area, California; and all of Japan, Australia, the Netherlands, and Ireland. At present the "cell" computers are connected to computer-controlled facsimile machines which then dial up your local facsimile machine via a local phone call, thereby eliminating long distance facsimile toll telephone charges. This same technology could be applied to digital voice transmission over the Internet. Needless to say this has interesting implications for long distance telephone carriers. Stay tuned to *Wired to the World* for more interesting and useful information on the Internet.

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