TELECOMMUNICATIONS NOTES

Issue 10 January 1997

It's Time to Verify Your NIH Email Directory Entry

The NIH Email Directory and Forwarding Service allows you to lookup email addresses and other information about people who use computers at NIH. How much appears in your initial entry depends on what information your email administrator submitted on your behalf. If you haven't looked at this lately, it may be incomplete or out of date.

The Email Directory includes the following information:

- ☞ *Full name and nicknames.*
- ☞ *Email address.* This is the address where email should be sent or forwarded (the address at the mail system where you prefer to read your mail).
- ☞ *Alias.* This is a unique 4-character code assigned to you by the Directory (e.g. cf2x).
- ☞ *Telephone, fax, and pager numbers.*
- ☞ *Office address, ICD, and position title.*

To receive a listing of your Directory information that you can update, send a blank email message to change@nih.gov

TO: change@nih.gov
CC:
SUBJECT:
PRIORITY:
ATTACHMENTS:

Note: there is no subject or message

In return, you will receive an email message, showing your current NIH Directory information. To make changes, you should (1) reply to the mail message, and include the message in the reply, (2) edit the message by adding or modifying information, and (3) send the edited message.

Why Bother?

The information in the NIH Email Directory is propagated to other directories, including the Microsoft Mail Global Address List and the DHHS Directory. Also, anyone in the world who has a "PH client" (including users of Eudora) can access the Directory. So you can make a big impact by ensuring that your information is complete and correct in the NIH Email Directory.

How to make use of the NIH Email Forwarding Service

Some people give their colleagues a "forwarding" email address (such as alias@nih.gov, full_name@nih.gov, nickname@nih.gov) rather than their local email address. These forwarding address are easier to remember, and will automatically forward email to a person's preferred address. (Note: you need to enter any nicknames using the change@nih.gov process described above). Names, nicknames, and combinations of the two will work in forwarding addresses ONLY if no one else at NIH also has the same name/nickname combination! On the other hand, alias@nih.gov, which is automatically assigned to you by the Email Directory, is guaranteed to uniquely identify you and forward email to your preferred address.

Using the forwarding feature is an advantage, because you can change jobs or email systems at NIH and you do not need to give anyone a new address: your email will continue to be forwarded to you.

For more information about the NIH Email Directory, check the WWW at

http://www.nih.gov/cgi-bin/ph-www.pl

To access the DHHS Directory, go to the WWW address

http://www.net.nih.gov/lookup.html

To learn more about the basics of email, see the article, *"Taking the Mystery out of Email"* that begins on page 2.

And, if you have additional questions, you can call 4-DCRT.

In this Issue:

Verify Your Email Directory Entry (p 1)
Interactive Video (p 1)
Taking the Mystery out of Email (p 2)
Directories on the Web (p 3)
Telemedicine Video (p 4)
NIH Manual Chapters (p 4)
Email and Letters (p 4)

New Video Conference Bridge

Interactive Video

The ORS Telecommunications Branch (TCB) has recently installed a state-of-the-art video bridge, which offers NIHers better access to "multipoint" video conferences. **The video bridge, which TCB operates for the benefit of all DHHS, allows any NIH office to easily set up an interactive video conference with more than one location.** In fact, the bridge may be dynamically configured to accommodate as few as three, or as many as 32 face-to-face video attendees, simultaneously.

With the installation of the new DHHS bridge, NIH no longer has to rely on commercial services, which can be very inflexible from the customer's perspective. Reservations for commercial bridge or "port" time (for example using AT&T's Global Business Video Service in Atlanta, or the GSA-contracted FTS-2000 network) generally are required days or weeks in advance. Reservations on the DHHS video bridge can be made only a few hours in advance. Also, the technical capabilities of the "standards-based" DHHS bridge exceed those available with most public or private bridges, allowing multiple users who do not share the same type of systems or network connections to conference with one another. Finally, TCB provides increased levels of user support compared with commercial services, while reducing the cost to the end user. For example, the DHHS video bridge is

continued on page 4

Taking the MYSTERY out of Email

Many of us at NIH use electronic mail as a standard business tool, facilitating communication with coworkers, colleagues, and customers throughout NIH and outside of NIH. For some people, electronic mail (often called "email") is a relatively new addition to their collection of business processes, while others have relied on email for a number of years. And yet, how email works remains somewhat of a mystery for most people who use it – mail is sent and received, but the "how" and "why" of email is a mystery. The purpose of this article is to explain in ordinary language how email works, without the baggage of inscrutable technical computer lingo. With any luck, by the end of this article you will have an understanding of how mail moves from one person to another and what your expectations can be when using electronic mail. A tall order, but definitely a goal worth trying to achieve.

All mail systems perform basically the same functions, even different types and brands of email systems, such as Microsoft Mail and Exchange, Eudora (POP) mail, GroupWise, even WYLBUR mail and Higgins mail. All these systems are used to perform a common set of functions – the "meat" of email — and any differences between them fall into the "gravy" categories of how they look to users, how the system happens to move mail around, and how easy or hard it is for your computer people to keep the system going. Any brouhaha or internecine warfare you might detect about the relative merits of different mail packages is rarely related to the core functions of email. So in this discussion, we're going to concentrate on the "meat" with only passing reference to the "gravy."

Let's start by noting that email is simply an electronic form of the paper memorandum that has existed for decades. Both the memorandum and the email message carry with them similar information:

"From" says who sent the message

"To" indicates the intended recipient of the message

"Date" shows when the message was sent

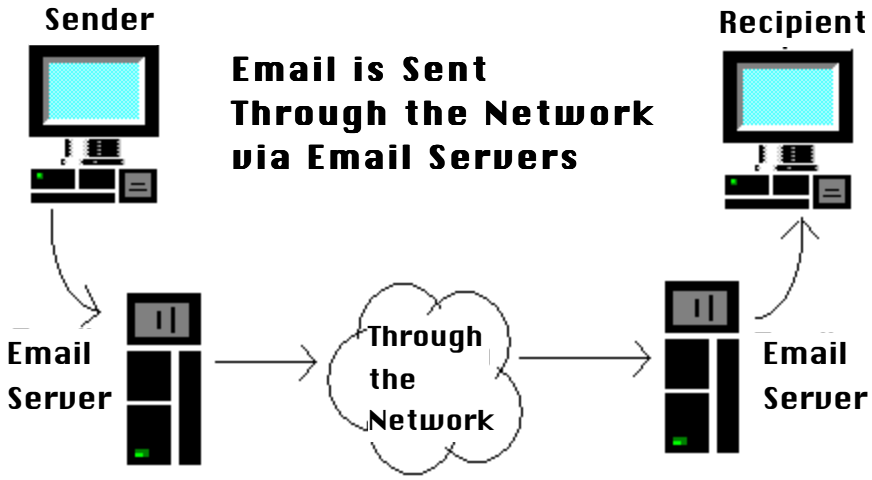
"Subject" indicates the topic of the message

"CC" notes to whom courtesy copies are sent

"ATTACHMENTS" lists any attachments sent with the message

After the header information follows the text of the message itself

So the email message is simply a fast, easy, non-paper version of the memorandum that we have all long known and loved!



When composing an email message, the From is automatically filled with your email address by your email system. We'll talk a bit more about addresses later in this article. Also, the date and time you send the message are automatically included in the Date line (much to the chagrin of those unscrupulous few who had the nerve to back- or post-date paper memorandums!). You are left with having to fill in the email addresses of intended recipients in the "To" and "CC" lines, as well as the "Subject" of the message and the body of the text.

Email addressing is a perennially troublesome issue. An email address, like any mailing address, makes it possible to deliver a message to the intended recipient. Some email systems allow you to pick your recipients from a list, which is a handy way to avoid the gritty details of email addressing; an example is the Global Address List in Microsoft Mail. But situations inevitably arise in which we confront email addresses and have to deal with them. The standard email address, with the Internet setting the standard in this case, has an @ (called an "at" sign) in it. You might see email addresses like these:

jdokes@server.icd.nih.gov

president@whitehouse.gov

sales-tron@vendor.com

To the right of the @ is the name of the computer ("email server") that handles the recipient's incoming mail. To the left of the @ is the name of the recipient; to be more exact, it is the account that the recipient has on the email server.

Internet-style email addresses like those above are the common denominator for all email addressing worldwide. Everyone from the Washington Post ombudsman to the President of the United States announces their email address in the Internet format. If you want to tell someone how to send you email or want to put an email address on your business card, be prepared to note that address in the Internet format – if you need help figuring out what the address is, ask the other folks in the office or contact your computer support person.

Briefly, here's what happens when you send a piece of email. When you press the send button, the email message goes from the computer at your desk to your email server (remember, that's the computer whose name is to the right of the @ in your email address). This is a simple communication, and once the mail has moved to the email server, your desktop computer's responsibilities are complete. The email server then has the job of contacting the intended recipient's email server in order to pass the message on. Once the message reaches the recipient's email server, the message sits there until the recipient's desktop computer requests the mail be moved from the server to the desktop.

This sounds complex and actually is complex, so here's a simple analogy from the world of postal mail:

> You address a letter and drop it into a mailbox (like when you click the send button to send email).
>
> The post office in your city picks up the letter and moves it to the post office in the recipient's city, where it is put into the recipient's curbside mailbox (just as the email servers move mail from one to the other).
>
> When ready to look at mail, the recipient strolls out to the mailbox and picks up a stack of incoming mail (like when the recipient receives email).

The most complex work is done behind the scenes by the email servers, so we don't have to worry about it. One important thing to notice is that the last step in the process, in which the recipient chooses to get the incoming mail, is not under the control of the email sender or any of the computers that handle the email along the way. This means that when you send email, you can't force the recipient to receive or read it. While some email systems do have a "return receipt" function as is possible with postal mail, there is not enough standardization on return receipt to make it a reliable delivery indicator. As with paper memoranda and voice mail, the best way to indicate that message was received is for the recipient to send a reply to the original sender. That's awkward, but it is a fact.

Now let's look at what happens when your receive email. The incoming mail is displayed on your computer's screen in an inbox, which usually shows the From, Date, and Subject for each of the incoming email messages. Just as with paper memoranda that show up in your inbox, you can read a message, reply to it, forward it on to someone else, file it based on subject or sender for future reference, or throw it in the trash (delete it). Once again we see that the process for handling a piece of email is simply an electronic version of the process for handling a paper memorandum.

There is a lot about email that we haven't covered here. There are features and capabilities specific to the email system you use. The tricks and tips of handling attachments to email messages are important as well, with attachments causing may email users headaches. And while we've dwelt upon the similarities between the process for handling a paper memorandum and those for an email message, email brings to us capabilities and opportunities that reach far beyond what was possible using paper. For example, email makes it fast and easy to send out meeting agendas, phone messages, draft documents for comment, policy statements, project updates, questions, FYI postings, and all sorts of other day-to-day correspondences and communications.

Hopefully, this article has succeeded in demystifying email, at least a little. But no short article can give you enough information to make best use of electronic mail. **If you are new to email or feel like you are not getting full advantage of the capabilities offered by email, you owe it to yourself to get some training.** There are email courses offered here at NIH by the Division of Workforce Development, including half-day courses on the Microsoft Mail and Eudora (POP) mail systems. Commercial courses are also available from a variety of training vendors. Make the time to take a course – you'll be better at using email and better at your job as a result.

***

This article was contributed by Mr. Charles Havekost, in charge of customer service with the Network Systems Branch, DCRT. **If you'd like to read more about email in *Telecommunications Notes*,** let us know. Please send your questions to the TC Notes Editor at cf2x@nih.gov

Directories on the Web

As noted in this article, the NIH email directory is accessible via your Web browser at the address

http://www.nih.gov/cgi-bin/ph-www.pl

There are other directories that you can access via the Web as well. For example, the DHHS employee directory can be found at the web page

http://ds1.psc.dhhs.gov/hhsdir/eeq.stm

A general directory of government services can be found at the page:

http://www.whitehouse.gov/WH/Services/

In addition to government service and employee email directories, there are other very interesting directories on the Web. For instance, the searchable nationwide "white pages" telephone directory at

http://www.switchboard.com/

is a very useful resource for finding someone (such as a grant recipient of long ago). Another "white pages" directory at

http://www.lycos.com/pplfndr.html

can even provide street maps to the person's address! A useful "yellow pages" directory of businesses (with maps) can be found at the web page:

http://yp.gte.net/

You can even send a piece of email that contains a map to any location by using the map mailing service at the web page:

http://www.mapblast.com

So, the next time you need to give someone directions to NIH, try emailing the person a map!

Interactive Video

continued from page 1

available at 50¢/min/port, which is less than half the FTS-2000 network video bridge charge.

Video conferencing provides some very tangible benefits, such as cost-avoidance for travel, gains in personnel productivity, a wider resource base in decision-making, and real-time face-to-face visual collaboration and consensus-building over vast distances. **For more information, or to make video conferencing bridge reservations for your ICD, please call 594-VIDEO (4-8433).** That number will put you in touch with a TCB technician or specialist, who will be glad to assist you.

Questions about your Phone Service?
Call the Telecommunications Branch (TCB) help desk at 5-HELP.
And for information on TCB services visit the TCB WWW page at http://tcb.od.nih.gov/

Telemedicine Video

Telemedicine video applications are now becoming a reality at NIH's Clinical Center. Two telemedicine "suites," complete with examination equipment, are under development. In the not too distant future, doctors will be able to interview patients for possible inclusion in NIH protocols over video links, reducing the need for sick patients to travel to NIH. Follow up visits could also be reduced by video conference meetings with patients and collaborating doctors. Telemedicine may also allow patients who are too sick or infectious to travel to become subjects of NIH research. The inclusion of "virtual" examination tools, such as a stethoscope and an otoscope, will permit doctors at remote sites to see and hear right along with the physician doing the exam. **Clinical researchers and the NIH community in general are encouraged to discuss potential applications of telemedicine with the Clinical Center's Information Systems Office, by contacting Audrey Kelly at (59)4-5201 or akelly@nih.gov**

FAX or Email your ideas to us!

Do you have a suggestion for future articles? Or perhaps a question about some topic for which you feel the answer would be of general interest? If so, please send your ideas to:

TC Notes Editor
Building 1, Room 160
FAX: (49)6-8270
Email: cf2x@nih.gov

Copies of previous issues of *Telecommunications Notes* can also be obtained by sending a request to the above address.

NIH Manual Chapters are a Click Away

NIH Manual chapters, including delegations of authority, are available via the NIH Gopher and the NIH HomePage on the WorldWideWeb (WWW). This electronic format allows users to search the entire NIH Manual, a series of chapters, or one specific chapter. Chapters can be printed and easily filed to a user's PC for future reference, updating and additional searching.

To see on-line NIH Manual Chapters and Delegations of Authority, go to the **NIH HomePage** (http://www.nih.gov). Click on **Information for Employees**. Arrow down to **NIH Manual Chapters** and click. You will then be in GOPHER and see self-explanatory menu selections. Alternatively, you can point your internet browser to:

gopher://gopher.nih.gov:76/1/nihman

(If you'd like to have this address handy, remember to add it to your browser's "bookmarks" or "favorites" list.)

The NIH Manual System is a mechanism for issuing NIH policies and procedures. Individual chapters are written by the functional area, e.g., personnel, logistics, OEO, etc. NIH Manual 1710 "NIH Manual System" contains detailed information on this system. If you have a policy question, contact either the issuing office listed for a particular chapter, or call the appropriate ICD Manual System Contact listed in the gopher file "About the NIH Manual." **For general questions about the NIH Manual System, call Joan Casey, Office of Management Assessment, on (49)6-2832.**

Email and Letters

Your article about faxes going to the wrong place [see TC Notes, Issue 9] reminded me of a helpful tip our office has come up with that seems simple and many people overlook. We frequently answer our phones to hear the beep-beep-beep of a fax machine preparing to send a fax. When this happens, we quickly forward the call to the fax machine's number and the fax goes through. This way we don't get dozens of autodialed calls from fax machines driving us crazy. Jessica Mack, CC

Inspired by the "Think Before You Fax" article in your last issue [see TC Notes, Issue 9], I suggest an article titled "Think Before You Print." Too many people run extra copies just in case, or always print their e-mail. Rather than just running ten copies, count how many you need. Rather than just printing all e-mail, print none of it, unless you have a compelling reason. This would save paper, toner, and lines at the printer. More importantly, it would reduce our impact on the Earth's natural systems that support us. Carl Henn, NIAID

As a taxpayer, I thought your February issue of TC was very helpful to all of us. We don't like to waste taxpayer money, or precious Agency resources. Having us become aware of unused telephone lines, and the associated cost, was a great idea. When you convert our excesses to dollars, it is more meaningful. I hope everyone read this issue, and looked around like I did for unused lines. Thanks for the good work. Sharon Miller, NCI.

Telecommunications Notes is published by the Office of Research Services (ORS) and distributed periodically to all NIH employees to provide information relating to ongoing and planned telecommunications activities at NIH. The editor is Dr. Cherie Fisk, Asst Director for Scientific Affairs, ORS. Contributing editors include Mr. Leonard Taylor, Telecommunications Manager, ORS; Mr. Harold Ostrow, Chief, Network Systems Branch, DCRT; and Mr. Dwight Blankenbaker, Director, Division of Technical Support, Program Support Center, DHHS. Additional contributors to this issue include: Mr. Charles Havekost, DCRT (It's Time to Verify your NIH Email Directory Entry, Taking the Mystery out of Email, and Directories on the Web), Ms. Joan Casey, OMA (NIH Manual Chapters are a Click Away), Mr. Carl Zaner, ORS (Interactive Video), and Ms. Audrey Kelly, CC (Telemedicine Video). In addition, the article Telemedicine Video was abstracted in part from an article by Dr. David Ebrenstein, NIDCD, which appeared in the September-October 1996 issue of *The NIH Catalyst*.