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Library Tech Notes

The UNLV Libraries Technology Committee

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TechNotes

*Happy Holidays from
the Library
Technology Committee!*

Did You Know?

Did you know? - that all library staff are entitled to a PPP account? PPP (Point to Point Protocol) connections allow you to use Netscape and surf the Web from home. If you have a computer at home that is new enough (a multi-media 486 on up) and a fast enough modem, and you'd like to surf from home; take 4 floppy disks to User Liaison and they'll give you four disks to take home and download.

Did you know? - that you can (and should) check the status of your account any time you wish. To determine how much space you have left on Pioneer, just log in, and type `vquota`. You'll see something like

Filesystem blocks quota limit

```
/home2 1173 4000 4000
```

Be sure that your blocks are well below the quota. If the two numbers are close, you need to delete some files! To determine how much space you have left on the machine that holds your inbox, type `msgchk` at the prompt. You'll see a message similar to: You have 45 messages (6786 bytes) on `post-office.nevada.edu`. Your inbox quota is 1 million bytes. If you have more mail in your inbox than that, email sent to you will bounce back to the sender, so clean out that inbox! If you have questions on any of the above, call or email Kay.

Did You Know? -During the weeks after Christmas, The Technology Committee will be sponsoring four TechBreaks! They include: Pine Part 1 - A refresher session on our email program, plus details on the new release, and information on using Setup to configure Pine according to your specifications, (Instructor: Kay). Pine Part 2 - How to deal with attachments. Includes a refresher on Rapid Filer, how to get those attachments down to your computer, (Instructor: Kay). Netscape Pointers: How to manage your bookmark, mail and save files



and pictures, and more, (Instructor: Jason). Excel: We will offer training and demonstrations of how Excel is used in the library. (Instructors: Jason and Carol-Ann). Keep an eye on your inbox, we will be sending out the schedule soon.

Kay Tuma

Did you know? - The Nonbook Department is pleased to announce the grand opening of their new Multimedia Workstation. The station is located just outside the Nonbook Department. With a growing library of interactive CD's to view, this is an exciting addition to our library. Visit Nonbook soon and check out a few of these titles: Discovering Shakespeare, Of Mice and Men, Twain's World, Medieval Realms, Crazy for Ragtime, and Microsoft's Cinemania 94.

Just present your call number at the Nonbook service counter and the staff will check out the dial to your library card and load the CD ROM for you. Then sit back and enjoy your 30 minute session at our new Multimedia Workstation.

Holly Huckeba

The PC Mechanic

You Don't Know... Er, Zip

Hard disks keep getting bigger. Programs keep getting bigger. And even though modems keep getting faster, our phone lines aren't (at least, not yet). The result is that it can still take seemingly forever to download a large file or program from a Web site or Internet FTP site. Wouldn't it be nice if there were some way to dehydrate files before squeezing them through the phone lines, then add a few drops of water to expand them back to their original size?

Actually, there is (without the water); it's called file compression. Although you really don't want to know exactly how it works (warning: mathematics is involved), it does work quite well. Some files can be shrunk down to a tenth or less of their original size, then expanded when necessary back to their original bloat without so much as a nybble disturbed. (A nybble is half a byte. I'm not making this up. Honest.)

There are a number of different programs available for shrinking files. Once a file is "compressed," it's usually given a special extension so that the recipient knows what kind of software to use to reconstitute it. The most popular software for this in the PC world is called PKZip, and files compressed with PKZip usually have an extension of ".zip." The PKZip package includes programs for both compressing and decompressing files, and is not free. However, the component for decompressing files (pkunzip.exe) is often given away free with software; there's also a freeware version called "unzip.exe" which is available at many ftp sites (such as UNLV's). Once you have it, an ideal place for it is in your DOS directory, so that it will always be on your path. (There are many other kinds of software compression programs, and you may still occasionally find files with extensions like .arc. etc. UNIX users will often encounter .tar files, and many Mac users use a program called StuffIt. You do have to use the correct decompression program with a compressed file; you can't use PKUnzip with a .tar file, for example.)

To "unzip" a file, first copy it to the directory where it is to be expanded, which has to have enough room for both the original .zip file and the expanded version. Then, at a DOS prompt, type "pkunzip," a space, and the name of the zip file (you can leave off the .zip extension), and press the <Enter> key. (If you have the freeware version, type "unzip" instead of "pkunzip.")

A .zip file can actually contain several files all zipped up together (this is called an "archive"). Many programs come this way, with all of the various installation routines, data files, and so forth all neatly bundled into one file. Don't be surprised if more than one file emerges from your zip file during decompression.

Another kind of compressed file is becoming popular: This is a file or group of files bundled into a single file with an .exe extension. "Wait a minute," you say, "I thought a file with an .exe extension was a program!" Well, it is; in this case it's a program that when you run it (by typing its name at a DOS prompt or double-clicking it in Windows' File Manager) automatically disgorges its compressed contents. This is called a "self-extracting archive," if you care. Many larger programs distributed via the Web are downloaded this way (both Netscape's and Microsoft's Web browser software, for example). The catch is that you don't necessarily know if an .exe file is a self-extracting archive or an actual program (which will do who knows what dastardly things to your computer) until you run it, so don't go downloading and running .exe files from questionable sources without precautions unless you like living dangerously.

If you're a true blue Microsoft Windows user who absolutely refuses to open a DOS session for any reason whatsoever, there are a number of Windows programs available for unzipping files, though you generally are expected to pay for them (WinZip is a popular example). With these, you just have to drag the file folder icon from Windows File Manager (or Explorer, if you have Windows 95 or NT) into the program's window and you will immediately see a list of all the files contained inside, with their sizes, date, etc. A click of a button will actually expand the zip file.

Once you've decompressed the original file, by the way, you can delete it. You might want to copy it to a floppy, in case you ever need it again.

Lamont Downs

This will be the last PC Mechanic column. I've been doing these for Technotes since Fall 1995, and rather than start repeating myself I think it's time for something new. Starting with the next issue, PC Mechanic will be replaced by a new column, HTML From the Ground Up. Hope you enjoy it!

Lamont Downs

"Authentic" Patrons?

Patron authentication has been the subject of much discussion recently and for good reason. It is a way in which we can ensure that legitimate users of electronic resources have access to these resources from wherever they happen to be. This process of "authenticating" is especially important as the license agreements the UNLV Libraries have with commercial database producers stipulate that only members of our campus community will have access to these resources -- the same primary user community that we serve when we purchase print publications and subscriptions.

The original NEON system does patron authentication by IP address as do many commercial publishers like SilverPlatter, Information Access Company (IAC), Encyclopedia Britannica, Engineering Information, Inc., and recently OCLC's FirstSearch. This works okay if the patron is connecting to these resources from somewhere on campus (i.e. from a legitimate or authentic IP address) or from home by connecting to a campus machine first (like Pioneer). But what about the patron who has an account with an Internet Service Provider (ISP) like America Online? The IP address of the machine at America Online is not a legitimate address so the database vendor (or the original NEON system) will not allow the user to connect to the resource.

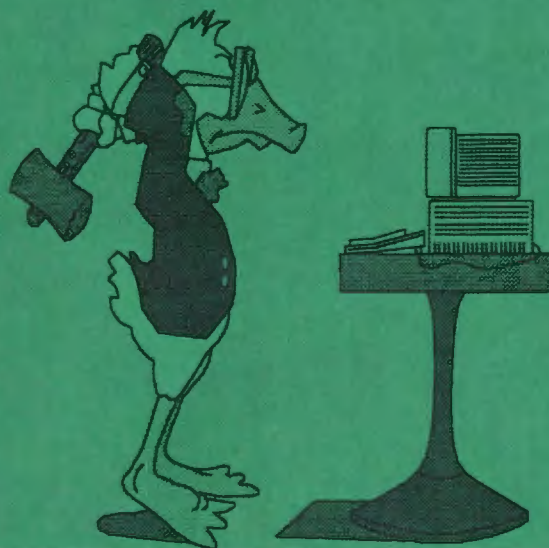
The University and Community College System of Nevada (UCCSN) systems staff are interested in user authentication not just for access to licensed resources but for determining if a user should have access to a particular computer system or equipment. One example of how user authentication can be used is in managing shared electronic classrooms at the Community College of Southern Nevada and at Western Nevada Community College. Classrooms set up at either the community college or a local high school are used by high school students during the day and community college students during the evening. The electronic resources that high school students should be able to access (on local servers and other machines in the school district) are different than those that a community college student may need to access. The community college student may need to search an electronic index like ERIC and check their email to correspond with a professor but they should not be able to access a software program on a school district server! How can this be resolved? In these situations, authentication by IP address isn't good enough as the computer systems that check the IP address don't know if the individual who is sitting at a classroom workstation is a high school student or a community college student! UCCSN systems staff are investigating scenarios where the user would input their user name and personal identification number before they are allowed access to restricted resources. This information would be checked against a database of legitimate user names, and if everything checks out okay, the user is allowed to connect to the resource. Such a database would be created from information from the Registrar's offices of the five campuses of higher education in Nevada and from the Human Resources departments of these campuses. The user database would be able to inform the authentication software whether the user is a legitimate user and what resources he/she is allowed to access. The user authentication system under development by UCCSN

systems staff would be extremely useful to the libraries at these institutions. Until this system is put into place, the UNR and UNLV libraries plan to implement a similar patron authentication system but on a much smaller scale. Innovative Interfaces, Inc. (III), the producers of our INNOPAC system, have recently released a new software product that would use the existing INNOPAC patron database as part of the authentication process. When trying to access a library-licensed Web-based resource, the patron would be prompted for their name and ID number (which might be their barcode number or personal identification number). The INNOPAC system would check this information against the patron database, identify if the patron is a registered borrower, determine their status (e.g. student or community borrower) and then allow access (or not) to the licensed resource. III knows that the issue of user authentication is an important one, especially for academic libraries, and their programming staff have added this functionality to the INNOPAC system as a new software product. Several libraries have been testing this new software and have helped III identify bugs so they can be addressed. It is anticipated that the wrinkles will be ironed out in the next month or so, and after the new year, the new software will be stable enough for us to install on our INNOPAC system for our patrons.

Once implemented, patron (or user) authentication is another powerful tool that will allow our patrons to use our electronic resources wherever they might be and whenever they choose!

Camille Clark Wallin

The Network will be down today....



HRAF

A subset of the Human Relations Area File (HRAF) can now be found under "Reference Sources" on NeonWeb. The HRAF collection of Ethnography provides full text of books and articles describing approximately 360 individual cultures and ethnic groups. Available until recently only on microfiche (Call # GN301 H86) 47 of these files are now available electronically. From 12-20 additional cultures will be added to the electronic database each year. Although cultures from all areas of the world are represented, the current focus is on providing electronic access to material on various American ethnic groups. Click on "Information about HRAF" to find out which cultures are represented in the electronic database

Penny Whitten

TECHNOLOGY BOOK LIST

Gilster, Paul. *Digital Literacy*. Wiley Computer Pub., c1997.
(TK 5105.875 I57 G5297 1997)

Horak, Ray. *Communications Systems and Networks : Voice, Data & Broadband Technologies*. M & T Books, 1997.

(TK 5101.H665 1997)

Shelly, Gary B., et al. *Microsoft PowerPoint 7 : Complete Concepts and Techniques*. Boyd & Fraser, c1997.

(T 385.M49 1997)

Stephens, Rod. *Visual Basic Graphics Programming*. Wiley Computer Pub., c1997.

(T 385.S756 1997)

Tittel, Ed, et al. *Web Graphics Sourcebook*. Wiley Computer Pub., c1997.

(T 385.T58 1997)

Trinkle, Dennis A., et al. *The History Highway : a Guide to Internet Resources*. M.E. Sharpe, c1997.

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Kathy Rothermel

Book Review

Digital Literacy/Paul Gilster

With all the many books and discussions going on about the information highway, Paul Gilster's intelligent, sobering look at the Internet is a breath of fresh air. Gilster is obviously approves of the Internet, but he exhibits just enough skepticism in *Digital Literacy* to let you know he's hardly a knee-jerk apologist for the digerati.

Digital literacy is defined as "a way of reading and understanding information that differs from what we do when we sit down to read a book or a newspaper." The book's goal is to provide a means of understanding the information we receive on our computers. After all, we're living in an era in which "if you can think it, it can be digitized."

The book analyzes titles written by a couple of famous Luddites: *The Gutenberg Elegies*, by Sven Birkert, and *Silicon Snake Oil*, by Clifford Stoll. While acknowledging the validity of some of their arguments, *Digital Literacy* calmly refutes their challenges that the Internet and digital technology devalue human interaction and literacy. The author mixes personal experience with solid research to offer a clear-minded approach for evaluating content received from the Internet. *Digital Literacy* is an interesting approach to the world of cyberspace and a good corrective for anyone who is starry-eyed about the information they find online.

Reprinted from Amazon.com. For additional information/opinions go to: <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ats-query/7976-8290210-921670>



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Editorial Team: Holly Huckeba, Editor; Paulette Nelson; Kathy Rothermel

Committee Members: Camille Clark Wallin, Chair; Laralee Nelson, Associate Chair; Jason Vaughan; Aimee Quim; Holly Huckeba; Pam Sition; Cheryl Taranto; Kay Tuma; Michaelyn Haslam; Chris Maestas; Penny Whitten; Carol Ann Swalling; Kathy Rothermel; Paulette Nelson