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Surfing the internet: electronic library and archival resources for historians

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Abstract

The Internet is a phenomenon which has gained widespread recognition in a relatively short period of time, whilst the term `Surfing the Internet' is a popular one with the media and computer buffs. It is also an appropriate way of describing a decidedly non-physical activity which, like its more strenuous counterpart, takes us on a journey - nay, an adventure! - in which we are at the mercy of the elements, be they natural or electronic. `Surfers', whether on board, ski, or as body-surfer, catch waves certain of one thing only, namely that they will ultimately end up on the beach. The process of getting there is dependent upon the forces of nature (i.e. the surf) and the skills of the individual. Likewise, `Surfing the Internet' is an adventure into the unknown, fraught with trepidation and danger for the inexperienced.One is liable to take a direction which is unforeseen and uncontrollable, until finally `thrown up upon the beach' at a desirable or satisfactory destination. Alternatively, one can find oneself 'dumped' by the computer. Whilst `Surfing the Internet' may be just as exhilarating (intellectually speaking) as catching a wave, do not expect to emerge from the encounter sun tanned and refreshed, for in reality the majority of Internet surfers are pale-faced and bleary eyed.

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`Surfing the INTERNET' - Electronic Library and Archival Resources for Historians

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Introduction

The Internet is a phenomenon which has gained widespread recognition in a relatively short period of time, whilst the term `Surfing the Internet' is a popular one with the media and computer buffs.1 It is also an appropriate way of describing a decidedly non-physical activity which, like its more strenuous counterpart, takes us on a journey - nay, an adventure! - in which we are at the mercy of the elements, be they natural or electronic. `Surfers', whether on board, ski, or as body-surfer, catch waves certain of one thing only, namely that they will ultimately end up on the beach. The process of getting there is dependent upon the forces of nature (i.e. the surf) and the skills of the individual. Likewise, `Surfing the Internet' is an adventure into the unknown, fraught with

trepidation and danger for the inexperienced.One is liable to take a direction which is unforeseen and uncontrollable, until finally `thrown up upon the beach' at a desirable or satisfactory destination. Alternatively, one can find oneself 'dumped' by the computer. Whilst `Surfing the Internet' may be just as exhilarating (intellectually speaking) as catching a wave, do not expect to emerge from the encounter sun tanned and refreshed, for in reality the majority of Internet surfers are pale-faced and bleary eyed.

The point of this analogy between the physical act of surfing and the intellectual process of `Surfing the Internet', is that we should only look upon the latter with as much dread as we would in taking those first steps into icy waters during late spring or early summer. As any surfer will tell you, no matter how cold and, by analogy, how difficult those steps may be, the experience is usually an invigorating one.Likewise with the Internet - technophobia is unwarranted, and individuals of all ages are adopting the new technology with much enthusiasm. Why, even that most sacred of all Australian institutions - the pub - is getting on board the information superhighway, with one Sydney hotel having recently opened its own `Internet Bar', following the emergence of Internet cafes.2 Having therefore prepared you for the waters, let us now dive in head first.

Historians and Technological Change

For centuries historians have been visiting libraries and archives to carry out research. Their first step upon arrival was, and often still is, to seek assistance from the librarian or archivist, who in the past would have referred them to a card index or printed guide. This basic scenario is now changing with the changes in technology.

Formerly, research was mostly restricted to the material available in-house, i.e. within the relevant institution, and it was necessary to travel to access external collections. Comprehensive card indexes and listings were compiled for individual holdings and, where possible, listings were circulated between institutions. Large institutions such as the State Library of New South Wales and the Mitchell Library, Sydney, are good examples of this, with the latter continuing as one resource centre where the card index remains an important access point. In a modern academic library, such as the University of Wollongong Library, the card index has long since been replaced by a computerised, online catalogue.

In recent years reduced budgets, together with increasing maintenance costs, have forced libraries and archives to develop external regional and global alliances. Rather than continuing to apply limited resources to building comprehensive collections, they have developed specialised collection policies in order to acquire materials within particular defined areas. It has therefore become more important than ever to publicise such collections among different institutions. This has been greatly assisted in the past decade by the advent of networked online catalogues. A catalogue in one institution can now quite easily be accessed by a researcher in an institution many miles - or continents -away. While carrying out such a search, the researcher is most probably

making use of the Internet.

Historians are thus no longer limited to in-house card catalogues or published guides; they instead have the world at their fingertips, via external library catalogues and assorted online databases and resources available on the Internet, in effect - a world-wide 'virtual library'.

Hours could be spent describing and defining aspects of the Internet, from its history, organisation and operation, to language protocols and points of access. Simply put, the Internet is a network of computer networks - a telephone system with information (as opposed to individuals) at the end of the line. We simply `dial-up' the Internet address (which is equivalent to the traditional telephone number, though usually composed of letters as opposed to numbers), and a computer with information will answer our call. The information it provides can be in the form of words, pictures, and/or sound. In the current online environment, historians are primarily interested in words - written or otherwise - though images are also useful, especially as teaching aids.

There is no reason to fear this new technology, for the spread of the Internet is simply an extension of the evolutionary process which has seen personal computers become an integral part of the research process.It continues to evolve from the familiar.

The Internet and Historians

For more than a decade, academics in humanities disciplines have been using computer technology to access online databases such as library catalogues and CD ROMs. These scholars, including historians, have also been experiencing the impact of the Internet for a number of years. This new information technology is possibly their greatest challenge to date, but historians are already using it effectively for a variety of purposes.

Currently in Australia users may gain free access to the Internet from a university campus (as a student or staff member) or as an employee of a company or business similarly connected. They may also pay to access the Internet from home through a commercial service provider. This involves an investment in the necessary hardware - a computer and modem - and software. Internet service providers are found in most capital cities in Australia and some regional centres. A cheaper way to access the Internet would be through a public access site, such as a public library or Internet cafe, but as yet few such sites are available, though this will no doubt change in the future.3

Once access has been gained, individuals can use the Internet in a variety of ways.

The Internet as Communication System

Electronic mail (e-mail) is a popular way for historians to communicate and having an Internet

account is one way to access an e-mail system. The speed with which one can send and receive mail with this system enhances communication and, in addition, it is possible to attach files just as one would enclose items with regular letters. A file might be a conference announcement with application form to be completed and returned by e-mail, or it may be a draft journal article seeking comment from a colleague. E-mail has been called "the best thing about the Internet",4 in that it allows one to send a message around the world and get an answer moments later.

Electronic discussion groups, sometimes referred to as mailing lists, Listservs, or electronic conferences, also provide new informal communication channels for historians. These lists are initiated by a person or group interested in offering a particular discussion forum. The initiator provides a networked computer to host the forum and members subscribe via their e-mail accounts. A list usually has a moderator who screens messages for the group and messages sent to the list are forwarded on to subscribers. The list may be used for discussion and sharing of opinions, for dissemination of conference announcements and for access to its archives where past topics of discussion can be searched.5 Hundreds of discussion groups exist on many subjects, and several directories - in print and on the Internet - list details of these groups by topic. One of the most useful is the Directory of Scholarly Electronic Conferences.6

Examples of discussion groups include an Australian and New Zealand history forum known as australia-nz-history-L, and other history forums such as H-ASIA, H-LABOR, HOLOCAUS, RUSHIST, SOVHIST and WWII-L.

The Internet as Information Resource

Besides its ability to enhance communication, the Internet is highly regarded as an information storehouse. It can be used as a guide to the location of source material - for example, through providing access to library catalogues - but increasingly information providers are using the Internet to enable direct access to their documents and images. For example, documents such as online newspapers, electronic journals and other electronic texts can be read - and often searched - on the Internet. Some institutions, such as the University of Virginia's Alderman Library, are purchasing and establishing online texts "as a mainstream resource for pedagogy and research"7 and providing access to them on the Internet. The University of Virginia has also embarked on the scanning of original historical documents for Internet access, documents which would normally have had to be viewed in that institution. Although access to such documents or images may currently be a fairly slow process, ongoing improvements in the capabilities of personal computers to store and process large quantities of data means that the Internet is daily becoming more useful to the historian.

The amount of information presently available on the Internet is enormous - numbering some tens of millions of web pages alone - and growing daily.8 It is accessed from a variety of sources.

Library and Archive catalogues throughout the world can be accessed via the Internet

thus allowing historians to search these huge library databases from their own desktops. One can contact a library directly or go through a site such as the Australian National University which provides an access point through its gopher server (gopher://info.anu.edu.au), while the `Archives of Australia' site (http://www.aa.gov.au) provides comprehensive access to archival institutions throughout Australia.

Commercial databases such as bibliographic databases formerly only available on CD ROM, can also be accessed via the Internet. Such databases usually require separate paid subscriptions by individuals or libraries. The University of Wollongong Library, for instance, subscribes to a number of commercial providers allowing access to databases such as the Arts and Humanities Citation Index or WorldCat, a catalogue of nearly thirty million records from the world's largest network of libraries. Staff and students at the university can use these databases from their desktops via telnet, a facility which allows one Internet host computer to become a terminal of another Internet host computer.

Campus wide information services (CWIS) may be used by historians to locate information on academic and administrative services in universities. Academics at the University of Wollongong can contribute pages of information to their CWIS in order to provide campus and world-wide access to their departments' teaching and research programs, and even to the full-text of staff working papers. Likewise they can access similar information for university departments and research bodies around the world. The University of Wollongong Library has contributed information on its Archives collection to the University's CWIS (http://www.uow.edu.au/public/library/archives.htm).

Electronic journals and newsletters are increasing in the humanities area despite debate about issues such as copyright, user acceptance and refereeing. Online Modern History Review (gopher://freenet.victoria.bc.ca:70/11/archives/history) is a refereed journal published in electronic format in British Columbia, Canada while Clionet (gopher://gopher.cic.net:2000/11/e-serials/archive/general/history/clionet) is an Australia electronic history journal produced by the History Department at James Cook University.9 The journal Essays in History is published by the Corcoran Department of History at the University of Virginia (http://www.lib.virginia.edu/journals/EH/EH.html).

Subject guides provide lists of information resources available on the Internet and are easily navigated via a topic hierarchy. These guides may be found by directly accessing specific Internet sites such as the Clearinghouse at the University of Michigan Library.10 They can also be reached through `search engines' and catalogues on the World Wide Web which allow searching for resources by subject keywords. Useful search engines and other tools for reaching subject guides are included in Appendix A.

Accessing the Internet through the World Wide

Web

Several search tools have been designed to help navigate the Internet. These include Gopher, Archie, Veronica, WAIS, and the software packages Mosaic and Netscape. These tools are used to reach the same information but vary in sophistication and ease of use, while only the more recent of them have graphics capabilities. As new tools are developed, one will often take precedence over, or supersede, the previous widely-utilised device. Gopher, for instance, is currently going out of favour, while Netscape is now the most popular web browsing software in use.

The World Wide Web is another system which has been designed to improve ease of access to the Internet. It is menu-based and operates through a series of pages with buried hypertext links. Throughout the Internet thousands of web servers exist, containing files of information known as web pages. A web client or browser, such as Netscape, allows users to move easily through these pages to resources which can include text documents, graphics and sound files.

Every page on the web has a unique address, known as a Uniform Resource Locator (URL). Access to a page is via its URL, so, for example, the Australian Prime Minister's Home Page has the URL, http://www.nla.gov.au/pmc/pjkhome.html. One web page can contain references to other web pages, via hypertext links. The Internet user can 'turn' these pages by clicking on the links. The Prime Minister's Home Page, for instance, has a link to the Australian Government Home Page (http://gov.info.au/aghp.html#Contents), which in turn links to sites such as Australian Federal Legislation On-Line (http://www.austlii.edu.au).

It is relatively simple to access a particular page via its exact URL and to further browse by clicking on the links from one page to another. This is often a useful way to find additional resources but can also lead the user into a labyrinth of sources offering overwhelming choices. A move from one page to another leads to a new URL each time and users need to make a note of these URLs for pages to which they wish to return. Using Netscape's bookmarking facility is an effective way to ensure that useful web sites are saved for future visits.

Searching for specific resources by topic on the World Wide Web is best performed through search engines. Using a search engine involves connecting to a particular address where one can type in keywords or phrases and often combine them using boolean logic. A number of search engines search within the titles of documents while others search the full-text of documents to retrieve hits on the search. In a search engine such as Lycos (http://lycos.cs.cmu.edu), these hits are displayed in order of relevance to the query. A list of popular search engines is included in Appendix A.

Surfing the Internet: some history examples

Historians have, in general, been slow to use the Internet to its full potential although there is

much scope for use. A number of search samples from the World Wide Web and pertaining to historical studies are reproduced below, having been accessed via Netscape.

A library catalogue

One way to link to a library catalogue is through a university home page. Using the URL address http://www.uow.edu.au/, a user can reach the University of Wollongong Home Page. By browsing to the bottom of this page and clicking on the word library, one can then access the University's library catalogue through a telnet application.

A museum site

Through the URL address http://www.ifs.univie.ac.at/museum/museum_g.htm, one can visit the Museum of Mankind in Vienna and search for material relating to Australia and Oceania. From the Museum of Mankind introductory page, one can link to screens dealing with Collections (Sammlungen) / Geographical Regions / Australia and Oceania / Cook Collection. From here it is easy to link to the individual document level - for example, a colour image of a Hawaiian artefact acquired by Captain James Cook during his third voyage of discovery to the Pacific in 1778.

Although the text at this site is in German (an English version is being developed), the WWW's intuitive links and a basic German dictionary can allow the researcher to open doors to collections on the other side of the world.

An electronic discussion group

A useful starting point to discover relevant history electronic discussion lists is through the Directory of Scholarly Electronic Conferences (http://www.mid.net/KOVACS). From the introductory page, one can link to a subject-based listing and choose a topic such as History to further link to titles of discussion groups in the history area. Clicking on any title will reveal more information about the list, including its subscription details. Appendix B is a guide to discussion lists.

An electronic journal

At the National Library of Australia home page (http://www.nla.gov.au) we are provided with a link to a list of Australian electronic journals. Once selected, there is a facility to browse a list of journals alphabetically. From the list, there is usually a direct link to the journal itself or to further details of the journal. Newspapers are also included, for example, The Age (http://www.theage.com.au).

A subject resource list

A useful starting point from which to look for resources by subject is the WWW Virtual Library (http://www.w3.org/hypertext/DataSources/bySubject/Overview.html). From the introductory screen, one can browse through an alphabetical listing of subjects. Aboriginal Studies, for example, is one choice which links to a number of sites dealing with Australian Aboriginal Studies (such as that of the Australian National University) as well as with Indigenous/Native Peoples studies in general.

Alternatively, choosing History provides access to a comprehensive alphabetical list of history resources compiled at the University of Kansas but linking to sites world-wide (http://history.cc.ukans.edu/history/index.html). This listing is huge but it is worth the wait for it to load as it covers topics as diverse as Ancient Egypt, Asian Studies, Bibliographies, Early Modern Europe, the Holocaust, Islamic Resources, Latin America, Military History, Roman Studies, Russian and Eastern European Studies, United Kingdom Archives, and numerous United States studies. Following the links from this page leads, for instance, to the 1755 French and Indian War Homepage (http://web.syr.edu/~laroux/). This site has been created by an historian involved in writing a reference book on the topic. It includes information on regiments, statistics of deaths due to battles, and even the names of those wounded and killed.

An historical document

A visit to some of the facilities of the Electronic Text Center at the University of Virginia (http://www.lib.virginia.edu/etext/ETC.html) highlights the potential publishing possibilities of the WWW. During courses on electronic texts run by the Rare Book School at the university, attendees mount an electronic version of a print or manuscript text, mark its structure with SGML tagging and create digital images of sample pages and illustrations. Documents from the Special Collections of the University of Virginia Library have been produced as hypertext documents in this way. To access these documents, one can go directly to the address, http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/rbs/rbs16-95.html. Otherwise, one can access the main address for the Electronic Text Center and click on the following links from the introductory page: Projects in which we are involved: the Books Arts Press at the University of Virginia - Books at Virginia: Rare Book School (RBS) 1995 - Introduction to Electronic Texts, July 1995.

Issues for Surfing Historians

Seasoned WWW browsers will have experienced some of or all of the problems inherent in the system. One of these is traffic congestion which slows down access to sites, or may prevent connection during peak use periods. Australasian users can overcome this to some extent by accessing the Internet at times outside of United States and European daylight hours. Frustration also occurs when web sites 'disappear', addresses change, or documents are not updated. This, along with an apparent lack of organisation of information on the Internet (due to its vastness and recent uncontrolled growth), can lead to a lot of wasted time and effort for little result.

There has also been much debate about the quality of information on the Internet, however as the World Wide Web is only a couple of years old, this issue will hopefully be addressed with further improvements in technology and wider use by the historical community. Academics, the teaching fraternity, and researchers will no doubt make increasing use of the Internet's information and resources for their research and teaching programs, whilst sharing its facilities with those who prefer to use it for business, pleasure or entertainment.

The usual problems of technophobia will be encountered with this relatively new information technology, but increasingly sophisticated interfaces (e.g. Netscape) will continue to help counteract this for users. At the moment the Internet is relatively inexpensive to use (after hardware and software have been purchased), and governments are keen to keep it so. However, this situation may change in the future.

Despite the aforementioned concerns regarding expense, quality of information, and ultimate usefulness, there is no denying that the Internet is a revolutionary communication system, providing historians with access to a vast storehouse of information. It is also an innovative educational resource, relatively cheap and easy to use, entertaining, and fun. The scope for its use by historians is therefore limitless.

Endnotes

1. The term appears to have first been used in its present context by Jean Armour Polly in an article entitled `Surfing the Internet: An Introduction', Wilson Library Bulletin, June 1992, 38-42, 155, though surfing analogies had been applied to various aspects of computing and information technology prior to this.

2. The Paragon Hotel, Alfred & Loftus Streets, Circular Quay, Sydney. A number of Internet cafes have also begun operating in major capital cities, e.g. the Well Connected Cafe at Glebe, Sydney.

3. M. Jones, 'Try before you buy: a hitchhiker's guide to the Internet', Internet Australasia, 1(9), Sept 1995, 80-83.

4. D. Irvine, `Email: history', NetUser, 2, June/July 1995, 37-40.

5. In regards to the Internet, the term `archives' is widely used to refer to an electronic site where information is stored or archived. This can cause problems when using an Internet subject search to locate a traditional archival site such as the Australian Archives or University of Sydney Archives.

6. D. Kovacs, Directory of Scholarly Electronic Conferences, 1995. Available URL: http://www.mid.net/KOVACS

7. The Electronic Text Center & On-Line Archive of Electronic Texts, (pamphlet), Alderman Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA, March 1995. Distributed during a talk given by David Seaman, Coordinator of the Center, in the Fisher Library,

University of Sydney, 25 September 1995. The Electronic Text Center at the University of Virginia. Available URL: http://www.lib.virginia.edu/etext/ETC.html

8. The term `web' is an abbreviation of World Wide Web, also written as WWW or W3.

9. A list of Australian electronic journals is available through the National Library of Australia. Available URL: http://www.nla.gov.au/oz/ausejour/a.html

10. For example, the University of Michigan Library's Clearinghouse for Subject-Oriented Internet Resource Guides. Available URL: http://www.lib.umich.edu/chhome.html

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- Tauber, Daniel A. and Kienan, Brenda Surfing the Internet with Netscape, Sybex, San Francisco, 1995.

Appendix A

Access to Subject Guides & Other Useful Starting Points

WWW Virtual Library
    http://www.w3.org/hypertext/DataSources/bySubject/Overview.html
    A subject catalogue of resources arranged alphabetically by broad topic.
Lycos
    http://lycos.cs.cmu.edu
    A WWW search engine which checks the Lycos catalogue of resources and displays a sorted list of 'hits' in order of relevance to the query.
Yahoo
    http://www.yahoo.com
    A search engine and guide to resources by subject.
EINet Galaxy
    http://www.einet.net/galaxy.html
    A subject guide to resources which can be navigated via a topic hierarchy or through the Galaxy's Web Search.
W3 Search Engines
    http://cuiwww.unige.ch/meta-index.html
    A listing of some of the most useful search engines available on the WWW. Subject searching by keywords on Lycos, EINet Galaxy etc. can occur directly from this site.
Savvy Search
    http://www.cs.colostate.edu/~dreiling/smartform.html/
    searches up to 5 search engines at one time.
International Historical Resources List
    http://history.cc.ukans.edu/history/index.html
    Based at the University of Kansas.
Clearinghouse for Subject-Oriented Internet Resource Guides
    http://www.lib.umich.edu/chhome.html
    The University of Michigan Library's subject-oriented guide to resources on the Internet.
Larry's InfoPOWER Pages
    http://www.clark.net/pub/lschank/home.html
Australian Electronic Journals listing
    http://www.nla.gov.au/oz/ausejour/a.html
Directory of Scholarly Electronic Conferences
    http://www.mid.net/KOVACS
Electronic Text Center at the University of Virginia

http://www.lib.virginia.edu/etext/ETC.html

Institute for Advanced Technology in the Humanities

http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/home.html Based at the University of Virginia.

Australian Government Home Page

http://gov.info.au/aghp.html#Contents

National Centre for Australian Studies

http://www.monash.edu.au/ncas/ncashome.html

Coombsweb

http://coombs.anu.edu.au/CoombsHome.html

The ANU (Australian National University) Social Sciences server. Electronic resources for social scientists in Australia and the Asia-Pacific region.

National Library of Australia

http://www.nla.gov.au

Australian Prime Minister's Home Page

http://www.nla.gov.au/pmc/pjkhome.html

For comprehensive lists and reviews of useful starting points, see Bill Eager, **Using the World Wide Web**, QUE, Indianapolis, 2nd ed., 1995; and `Jumping off Points', NetUser, 1, Spring 1995, 66-8.

Appendix B

Electronic Discussion Lists

Electronic Discussion Lists is one term often used to refer to electronic discussion groups, electronic conferences, mailing lists, Usenet newsgroups or bulletin board systems (BBS). The term 'listserv' is also used although Listserv is actually one of a number of software packages used to manage mailing lists. The information below particularly relates to scholarly or academic discussion lists or groups.

What is an electronic discussion list?

- ❍ a database or group of people interested in a particular topic
- ❍ a forum initiated by a person or group interested in offering a particular discussion arena
- ❍ the person or group provides a networked computer to host the forum
- ❍ members subscribe via their e-mail accounts * e-mail sent to a discussion list is automatically resent to everyone subscribed to that list
- ❍ the list is usually moderated by a moderator who screens messages for the group

Examples of electronic discussion lists

Names of electronic discussion lists are often comprised of abbreviations of words indicating their subject content, for example: australia-nz-history-L, Hist-Aust-Sci-Tech-L, H-ITALY, H-LABOR, HISTORY-TEACHING, HOLOCAUS, MILHIST-L, WW11-L
- australia-nz-history-L is an Australian and New Zealand general history forum.
- Hist-Aust-Sci-Tech-L is a forum on the history of Australian science and technology.
- H-LABOR is an international discussion list on labour history.

Details of an electronic discussion list usually include the information necessary for subscribing (see below).

Why is an electronic discussion list useful?

o offers a forum for discussion and sharing of opinions on particular topics
o provides quick responses to specialised queries * disseminates conference announcements, calls for conference papers and other useful announcements related to the subject area of the list * often provides access to its archives where past topics of discussion can be searched

Where can you find out about electronic discussion lists in your area?

o details are increasingly publicised in printed journals and in other literature
o by using the World Wide Web (WWW) via subject resource lists and search engines
o by using directories of discussion lists (e.g. Kovacs list below)
o New-List, a discussion list which details new discussion lists (a very busy list!)
o Diane Kovacs' Directory of Scholarly Electronic Conferences (Available URL: http://www.mid.net/KOVACS) is one useful directory of discussion lists. This contains descriptions of lists under categories according to the dominant academic subject area of the discussion group. It is possible to browse the directory on the Internet through a subject-based listing or an alphabetical listing. Searches can also be performed using subject, keyword or discussion name.
o There are several search engines and subject catalogues on the WWW which can be searched by keywords for resources which will generally include electronic discussion lists. The Yahoo server, Lycos WWW search engine and Savvy Search are particularly helpful.
  - **Yahoo** - http://www.yahoo.com
  - **Lycos** - http://lycos.cs.cmu.edu
  - **Savvy Search** - http://www.cs.colostate.edu/~dreiling/smartform.html/

Every discussion group has two addresses and it is very important to distinguish them:

a subscription address
e.g. listserv@ukanaix.cc.ukans.edu

a submission (or broadcast) address

e.g. DARWIN-L @ukanaix.cc.ukans.edu

How do you subscribe to an electronic discussion list?

- Log in to your e-mail account and select the mail option.
- Type in the subscription address indicated for the list, for example:
        listserv@ukanaix.cc.ukans.edu (note the form: listserv@hostname)
        - Leave the subject field blank.
        - In the body of the message, type commands as instructed, for example:
        - subscribe DARWIN-L simeon gibbon
        - (subscribe LISTNAME firstname lastname) If there is a bitnet node address as well
        as an Internet one, you usually choose the Internet one.
Be sure to send your message to the subscription address (often a listserv address) when
subscribing and to leave the subject field blank. This is because you are usually interacting
with a computer program when subscribing. Once subscribed, you may wish to post a
message for distribution to the list itself. The address will differ from the listserv address
and is known as the submission or broadcast address.

Unsubscribing

Send an e-mail message such as the following: unsubscribe DARWIN-L (don't include
your name) to the subscription address (remember that this often takes the form:
listserv@hostname)

Posting a message to an electronic discussion list

After subscribing to a list, acknowledgement is sent to the subscriber together with
important information about the particular list. This will include the submission address of
the list to which you post your messages. In the case of a listserv, you usually need to send
your messages to:
- listname@hostname (NOT to listserv@hostname),
for example: DARWIN-L@ukanaix.cc.ukans.edu

Digests

Once subscribed, users can often choose to receive their messages in digest format. This
means that multiple messages are compiled into a single mailing, usually daily or weekly.

A note of caution

- although extremely rewarding, electronic discussion lists are also time-consuming!
- some lists are very busy and may generate a large number of messages daily

- don't oversubscribe to listservs as your e-mail box will be inundated
- monitor the quality of the exchange and unsubscribe if the list is low on useful messages

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