

SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING RESEARCH COUNCIL  
RUTHERFORD & APPLETON LABORATORIES

COMPUTING DIVISION

D I S T R I B U T E D   C O M P U T I N G   N O T E   4 7 5

MEETINGS

Summary of Inaugural Mailgroup Meeting  
held at UCL on 4 September 1981

issued by  
Dr C P Wadsworth  
14 September 1981

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DISTRIBUTION:

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Ext Links/JNT/Mailgroup

(A Full report/minutes etc. will be circulated by UCL)

Organisations represented:   UCL (Bennett, Kirstein, Reedon, Culp)  
                                  QMC (Coulouris)  
                                  York University  
                                  Newcastle University (Hunter)  
                                  AUCC S.W. Network (Powell)  
                                  MIDNET (Clark)  
                                  ERCC (Farvis)  
                                  Harwell/GILT (Fergus)  
                                  JNT (Rosner, Cooper)  
                                  RAL (Bryant, Wadsworth)

There was (mild) surprise that B.T. and the DCPU had not been invited, and suggestions - led by Rosner, generally supported - that they be involved in future meetings.

Numbers on the notes below refer to the attached Agenda, which was adopted.

Ad. 1     Introduction

Chris Bennett (UCL, Chairman) welcomed those present and explained that the meeting had been arranged under the auspices of the J.N.T. with two purposes:

- (a) adoption and implementation of interim system for electronic mail, and
- (b) discussion of issues and proposals for an eventual standard.

Ad. 3     Round robin

There was a clear consensus that the first priority should be to get something going now (or sooner!). Approximately half the group want it as soon as possible and are willing to participate in active implementation at their own organisations to give themselves the facility. Three or four of those present were there with a "watching brief" - they expect to be interested

more actively in, say, a year's time.

A strong minority voice (Coulouris) for the importance of the user interface was expressed. Coulouris felt, from experience developing the QMC mail software, that people would not use the system as they might if the user interface was poor - see also his new August note (in file).

Rosner argued forcibly that standardisation was important before it's too late, otherwise it won't happen. He felt it was important that B.T. be involved in this.

Kirstein, and others, argued that whatever the group proposes, as an interim system and as a standard, must be ARPA-compatible in format. He hoped that extensions for graphics and document facsimile might not be too far into the future.

#### Ad. 4 Requirements of the standard

(The user community was identified as being anybody in a university/research council environment - not just C.S. departments).

Agreement was necessary on:

- (a) The transport mechanism and mail format as transferred.
- (b) Standard appearance to the user.
- (c) Addressing conventions
  - names (of sites) preferred to PSS addresses
  - left to JNT as urgent priority; in the interim, names would be as on SRC net.
- (d) Acknowledgement
  - negative acknowledgement (non-arrival) wanted
- (e) Relaying
  - felt to be necessary

Other issues were deferred: accounting facilities (no interest)  
group addressing (how to support non-local groups)  
positive acknowledgements (needs well thought-out proposal)

#### Ad. 5 Interim System

The UCL proposal was agreed, with a few minor (mostly syntactic) extensions. A revised draft would be prepared by Chris Bennett and circulated by UCL. Use of FTP as a basis for implementation was accepted.

Coulouris agreed to think about the issues involved in group addressing for the next meeting. He also said he would like to see mail timestamped to 1 second (instead of 1 minute) but I can not recall if this was adopted.

#### Ad. 7 Any Other Business

It was already 4.30 p.m.!

Ad. 6/8 Future of the group/next meeting

The immediate purpose of the group will be to produce and propogate a tight definition of the interim system.

The next meeting will be:

Friday October 16th, 1981 at UCL 10.30 a.m.

in two sessions:

- a.m. Implementors meeting, to ratify the revised proposal.
- p.m. Wider meeting, to include participants from B.T. and the D.C.P.U., and possibly others.

PROPOSED AGENDA : Mailgroup.

Place: Room 210, Dept. of Computer Science  
University College London  
Gower Street  
London WC1

Time: 10.30 am September 4th 1981

- 1 Introduction
- 2 Adoption of Agenda
- 3 Round robin, stating interest in mail and status of existing system.
- 4 Standardisation
  - Review of Existing Efforts (Teletex, IFIP 6.5, CSNET, GILT, DARPA etc)
  - Requirements of the standard
    - Service Facilities
    - Message Formats
    - Mail Transport
    - etc
- 5 Proposal for Interim mail systems
  - UCL Proposal
  - Others
  - Mailer and Relay Sites
  - Transport Service Addresses
- 6 Future of this group
  - Purpose
  - Organisation (chair, secretaries, frequency of meetings etc)
- 7 AOB
- 8 Time, date and place of next meeting