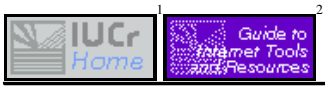

Creating New Internet Newsgroups

Creating a specialist science newsgroup can be a non–trivial and frustrating process depending on the hierarchy chosen (with the bionet[3] being the very pleasant exception that encourages scientific applications of the internet such as newsgroups). This is especially so in the mainstream Usenet[4] and *Altnet* hierarchies where a number of vocal opinion makers seem to have plenty of time to *enjoy* frustrating science newsgroup proposals by applying the various nuances, fine print and potential pitfalls in administering the various newsgroup guidelines. It is very much a matter of the variation between word, hype and deed.

A frequently asked question is: *What newsgroup hierarchy should I use if I want to create a new science newsgroup?*. Creating a newsgroup in a biological field of science[5] is very easy and user–friendly due to assistance from professional Bionet newsgroup administrators. To create a newsgroup in a non–biological field of science, there are two possibilities. The first, a Usenet newsgroup with wide distribution[6] is a time consuming process. This is so since the stereotype Usenet newsgroup seems focussed on fun usage, incorporating *stream of consciousness drivel* (quoted from a 1995 New Scientist editorial), not of serious applications. While the Usenet is presently the main repository for non–biological science newsgroups, Usenet opinion makers tend to disapprove of specialist science newsgroups as their *low usage makes them a waste of bandwidth*. This and similar Usenet logic can make serious scientific usage a very frustrating affair, expecially in fields such as archaeology and geology where fans of pseudoscience make their presence felt! The Usenet, mainly from its size, tends to be the guiding light of how the internet newsgroups are used, which can be a worry for serious applications of this technology.

Secondly a **newsgroup with poor to medium distribution** is potentially very quick and painless to create. One proceeds to create an Altnet newsgroup[7] which is very easy if your internet account has newsgroup creation access (and you can find information on the newsgroup creation commands) but near impossible if your internet account does not.

Usenet Newsgroup Creation | top[8]

Our experience shows that is better to ignore the *official* advice on creating Usenet newsgroups when attempting to create specialist science newsgroups on the Usenet. In practice, attempting to follow the guidelines in good faith one would lead one to terminate a proposal due the potentially small volume and audience being insufficient to justify the creation of such facilities.

The *accepted* guidelines and advice on how to create a Usenet newsgroup can be obtained from http://www.bio.net/BIOSCI/docs.html[9]. An example of typical *accepted* advice on whether it is appropriate to create a Usenet newsgroup is located as part of Aliza R. Panitz's FAQ file at http://www.smartpages.com/faqs/finding–groups/general/faq.html[10]

```
"If you really think it is appropriate to start a new newsgroup, some
general guidelines can be found in:
    news.announce.newgroups[11]: How_to_Create_a_New_Usenet_Newsgroup
```

[1] http://www.iucr.ac.uk/iucr–top/welcome.html
[2] int.index.html
[3] newsgen.htm#bionet
[4] newsgen.htm#usenet
[5] #create–bionet
[6] #create–usenet
[7] #create–altnet
[8] #top
[9] http://www.bio.net/BIOSCI/docs.html
[10] http://www.smartpages.com/faqs/finding–groups/general/faq.html
[11] news:news.announce.newgroups

```
    news.groups[12]: Usenet_Newsgroup_Creation_Companion
    alt.config[13]: So_You_Want_to_Create_an_Alt_Newsgroup

New newsgroups in the comp, humanities, misc, news, rec, sci, soc, and talk hierarchies are first prop
news.groups[14].  New newsgroups for the alt hierarchy should be
first proposed/discussed in alt.config[15].
Talk to someone local about starting new local newsgroups - send mail
to your local news admin to find out where to start.

It is recommended that you have several months experience with USENET and
watching the democratic group creation process in action for other groups
before you attempt to run your own proposal.  In particular, read both
news.announce.newgroups[16] and
news.groups[17] to see the way proposals are
presented and the sort of pitfalls you can stumble into.  Also read
alt.config[18] if you think you want to start
an alt newsgroup.  Make sure
you have read and fully understand the postings "How to Create a New
Usenet Newsgroup" and "Usenet Newsgroup Creation Companion" in
news.announce.newusers[19]."
```

Some of the past arguments used against creating specialist scientific newsgroup on the Usenet include:–

- Proponent should show there is a need for such a newsgroup to the satisfaction of the Usenet opinion makers.
- Proponent should first create a mailing list to generate adequate interest in the topic.
- (Even after creating a mailing list), newsgroup does not have wide enough readership to justify a newsgroup.
- Proposed Science Newsgroup is badly named.
- Proposed Newsgroup is in the wrong hierarchy.
- *Etc.*, *etc.*, *Ad infinitum*.

While all/most of these comments may sound fair at face value, they all have the practical affect of discouraging the creation of science newsgroups and thus access to the benefits of this powerful internet technology.

Hints For Science Usenet Newsgroup Proposer(s)

Do the following in sequence

1. Pick a heirarchy that will not offend the Usenet opinion makers who seem to enjoy dragging down any new newsgroup that is being created with hair splitting arguments. Choosing a second level name can cause the Usenet opinion makers to make life hard for you. Most serious participants of the newsgroup will not care about the name.

2. Browse through the newsgroups, news.groups,[20] news.announce.newgroups,[21] and use an existing RFD (Request for Discussion) as a template and fill in the gaps with your newsgroup proposal.

3. Get as much support as possible on the sci newsgroups before going through the official newsgroup creation procedure *via* discussion on news.groups.[22] Suitable newsgroups may include sci.chem,[23] sci.materials,[24] sci.engr.[25] This interest can be generated by posting to as

[12] news:news.groups
[13] news:alt.config
[14] news:news.groups
[15] news:alt.config
[16] news:news.announce.newgroups
[17] news:news.groups
[18] news:alt.config
[19] news:news.announce.newusers
[20] news:news.groups
[21] news:news.announce.newgroups
[22] news:news.groups
[23] news:sci.chem
[24] news:sci.materials
[25] news:sci.engr

many sci.* newsgroups as reasonable with titles such as :–
- pre–RFD sci.xxx.yyy
- any interest in a yyyyy newsgroup???

(Ignore the 2 to 5 people who usually try to discourage new newsgroups via email as they are usually people who do not want to use it.) Also encourage people to email colleagues who might benefit from such a newsgroup.

4. Try and get at least one co–proposer for the newsgroup. If technicalities or difficulties arise, it is easier for a group of people to handle and be less intimidated by this.

5. Go *via* the accepted newsgroup creation guidelines which should then be a formality. Again, ignore the usual 2 to 5 detractors who will say there would not be enough use, or you should go *via* an email list first. It is generally best if the volunteer Usenet administrators post out the RFD (*i.e.* send the RFD to them *via* email) as they use this as the starting date of the RFD. If the volunteer Usenet administrators refuse to post out the RFD for reasons other than formatting of the RFD, politely request them to objectively administer the guidelines. The Usenet guidelines do not mention the administrators having a role in vetting newsgroup proposals as this is what the discussion on news.groups[26] is meant to be about.

6. When the CFV goes out (not less than 21 days after the RFD got posted), also post it out to other science newsgroups such as sci.chem,[27] sci.materials,[28] *etc.* where you would expect interested and/or sympathetic people to hang out. A successful vote should then be a formality. Due to the apparent diminished interest in the scientific application of the newsgroups, it no longer seems such a formality to get a science newsgroup created due to lack of interest in getting the required level of support compared to what was possible up to early 1995. A possible reason for this could be that scientific users of the internet are more attracted and familiar with the user–friendly/much hyped World Wide Web[29] which is easy to use compared to the comparatively non–scientist–friendly internet newsgroups. Hopefully the proposed scientist friendly Scinet newsgroup hierarchy can help remedy this situation?

Bionet Newsgroup Creation | top[30]

The guidelines to create a bionet newsgroup serving a biological field of science is very easy and scientist friendly due to the dedication of the professional Bionet newsgroup administrators. More information can be obtained from :–

For the **Americas and Pacific Rim**
ftp://net.bio.net/pub/BIOSCI/doc/biosci–us.infosheet[31]

For **Europe, Africa, and Central Asia**
ftp://net.bio.net/pub/BIOSCI/doc/biosci–uk.infosheet[32]

Altnet Newsgroup Creation | top[33]

The Altnet is supposed to represent the untainted anarchy of the internet newsgroups. A set of Altnet newsgroup creation guidelines can be view (including example newsgroup creation commands) at :–

---

[26] news:news.groups
[27] news:sci.chem
[28] news:sci.materials
[29] http://www.w3.org/vl/Overview.html
[30] #top
[31] ftp://net.bio.net/pub/BIOSCI/doc/biosci–us.infosheet
[32] ftp://net.bio.net/pub/BIOSCI/doc/biosci–uk.infosheet
[33] #top

http://www.cs.ubc.ca/spider/edmonds/usenet/haz1/faqindex.html[34]

In practice, following these guidelines to quickly create a science newsgroup by discussion in alt.config can be a waste of time. In practice the only thing stopping the creation of an Altnet newsgroup is knowledge of the newsgroup creation commands and a site that allows users to issue these commands. An alternative to this is to find a colleague who has access to an internet site that allows newsgroup creation commands to be issued. Normally, some responses from Altnet users will occur including some remove group commands. Unless you feel otherwise, it is easiest just to ignore these messages.

Altnet newsgroup creation commands follow. For these to be implemented, the local news server must allow newsgroup creation commands to be issued, and the news software must have the options to input these commands. To actually input these on the Sun UNIX news system at CSIRO in Port Melbourne, type :–

nn

When prompted for a newsgroup and subject, put anything in.

```
Newsgroups: alt.test
Subject: test
```

Then substitute in the appropriate information in the nn editing screen and send to create a newsgroup. Following are three examples. Please do not blindly follow these examples but substitute your proposed newsgroup name and your email address and name. According to the above guidelines, it is considered inappropriate to put the `Distribution:` set to `world`.

```
Control: newgroup alt.doobry[35]
Subject: cmsg newgroup alt.doobry[36]
Newsgroups: alt.config[37]
From: lachlan@dmp.csiro.au (Lachlan Cranswick)[38]
Approved: lachlan@dmp.csiro.au[39]
Distribution: world

Control: newgroup alt.doobry-twang[40]
Subject: cmsg newgroup alt.doobry-twang[41]
Newsgroups: alt.config[42]
From: lachlan@dmp.csiro.au (Lachlan Cranswick)[43]
Approved: lachlan@dmp.csiro.au[44]
Distribution: world

Control: newgroup alt.geo-software[45]
Subject: cmsg newgroup alt.geo-software[46]
Newsgroups: alt.config[47]
From: lachlan@dmp.csiro.au (Lachlan Cranswick)[48]
Approved: lachlan@dmp.csiro.au[49]
Distribution: world
```

If colleagues complain that they cannot see the altnet newsgroup you have created on their site :–

- consider sending out `booster` commands by repeating the newsgroup creation

[34] http://www.tezcat.com/~haz1/alt/faqindex.html
[35] news:alt.doobry
[36] news:alt.doobry
[37] news:alt.config
[38] http://www.unige.ch/crystal/stxnews/stx/volnteer.htm
[39] http://www.unige.ch/crystal/stxnews/stx/volnteer.htm
[40] news:alt.doobry–twang
[41] news:alt.doobry–twang
[42] news:alt.config
[43] http://www.unige.ch/crystal/stxnews/stx/volnteer.htm
[44] http://www.unige.ch/crystal/stxnews/stx/volnteer.htm
[45] news:alt.geo–software
[46] news:alt.geo–software
[47] news:alt.config
[48] http://www.unige.ch/crystal/stxnews/stx/volnteer.htm
[49] http://www.unige.ch/crystal/stxnews/stx/volnteer.htm

commands and
- ask them to get their system administrator to obtain this newsgroup.

Scinet Newsgroup Creation (proposed) | top[50]

In theory, this can hopefully be very simliar to the scientist friendly bionet[51] newsgroup creation.

Regional Hierarchies Newsgroup Creation | top[52]

There are a variety of regional newsgroup hierarchies dealing with local, national and regional topics. Regional Newsgroup creation guidelines vary from country to country but many tend to be similar to the altnet[53] newsgroup creation guidelines and again for creating newsgroups (science and otherwise), the easiest path to create a newsgroup can be to just issue the newsgroup creation command as shown below, though responses from annoyed newsgroup opinion makers can be expected.

As with the Altnet newsgroup creation command[54] examples, the following *aus* newsgroup was created to test out that these commands were correct.

```
Control: newgroup aus.science[55]
Subject: cmsg newgroup aus.science[56]
Newsgroups: aus.net.news[57]
From: lachlan@dmp.csiro.au (Lachlan Cranswick)[58]
Approved: lachlan@dmp.csiro.au[59]
```

---

[50] #top
[51] #bionet
[52] #top
[53] #create–altnet
[54] #create–altnet
[55] news:aus.science
[56] news:aus.science
[57] news:aus.net.news
[58] http://www.unige.ch/crystal/stxnews/stx/volnteer.htm
[59] http://www.unige.ch/crystal/stxnews/stx/volnteer.htm
[60] int.index.html
[61] http://www.unige.ch/crystal/stxnews/stx/volnteer.htm
[62] http://www.unige.ch/crystal/stxnews/newsgrp/newscrea.htm