Cheap E-Mail: The Paper

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Written by:

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Cheap E-Mail: The Paper

Abstract

The primary purpose of this paper [and corresponding film entitled Cheap E-Mail: The Movie] is to address the fourth objective of the BPD's Ad Hoc Committee on E-Mail and Social Work Education: "To coordinate the provision of free technical consultation that can assess the costs of hardware and software needs of member institutions that do not have e-mail available." Hardware and software needs are outlined and assessed. Two types of e-mail vendors are reviewed: 1) Full Service; and 2) E-mail only. Results from two surveys are included. The first survey includes comments from each vendor. The second survey includes comments from subscribers. No subscriber comments were received from AT&T Easylink or Sprintmail. Although FreeNet is not a likely alternative for most BPD members, information about it is included. Clearly this data will be useful to some readers. Perhaps, the most valuable information can be found in the appendix. The nine vendors offer a description of their individual services.
About BPD's
Ad Hoc Committee on E-mail
and Social Work Education

BPD's Ad Hoc Committee on E-mail and Social Work Education formed by Lorrie Greenhouse Gardella on February 7, 1994. The primary objectives of the committee include:

1. To educate BPD members about the value of E-mail.
   a) By offering an annual workshop on electronic networking and social work education at each BPD annual meeting.
   b) By offering to write a section for BPD Update on the ways in which E-mail and computer networking is used to enhance social work education.
   c) By having members of the committee available to answer individual questions.
   d) By offering to instruct social work educators on how to conduct anonymous surveys on E-mail to reduce the cost of printing and s-mailing.
   e) By offering to assist CSWE with technical assistance or advise.
2. To develop a BPD Discussion Group to be housed at Rochester Institute of Technology.
3. To develop a Social Work NewsGroup to be housed at Pembrooke State University.
4. To coordinate the provision of free technical consultation that can assess the costs of hardware and software needs of member institutions that do not have E-mail available.

The members of the Committee include:

   Dennis Cogswell, Radford University
   Stephen M. Marson [Chair], Pembrooke State University
   Marshall Smith, Rochester Institute of Technology
   Robert Vernon, University of Indianapolis

Hardware and Software Options

In this paper, I will address objective four. The problem of many private liberal arts colleges is their lack of sophisticated computer equipment and support staff. BPD members who find themselves on such campuses make comments like: "I'll never see E-mail on my campus." "No one on our campus knows what E-mail is." and, of course, "It's too expensive." The primary objective of this paper is to lay out options for small liberal arts campuses that are short on hardware, software, and technical support staff. All of the options outlined within this paper are inexpensive! However, some options are less expensive than others. Most importantly, all of
these options will create the appearance that the campus has a sophisticated computer system.

That is, the small liberal arts campus will have the same communication technology as the huge research university -- but with an investment of a couple of hundred dollars, rather than a couple of hundred thousand dollars.

The first question asked by beginners is "what is the minimum hardware requirements for E-mail communications." To go online, five pieces of equipment are required. They include:

a) computer  
b) modem  
c) phone line  
d) telecommunication software  
e) network or E-mail service

McCabe (1994) offers wonderful insights into the type of computer, modem, phoneline and telecommunications software needed. In summary, she writes that most any functioning computer will work for E-mail. Essentially, one needs a "dumb terminal." This means that one can even use an old CPM machine that can be purchase for $50.00.

Modems are more complex to select. McCabe (1994) recommends the following:

a) external rather than internal  
b) a fast modem (9200 baud rate is minimum)  
c) Hayes or Hayes-compatible model  
d) ignore the technical jargon  
e) good modems range from $150.00 to $350.00

In terms of phone line, two points are important. First, touch tone are better than rotary. Second, avoid "call-waiting." Some phone companies offer a disconnect option for their "call-waiting" service. However, some frustrated Interneters claim that the disconnect option does not consistently function. Lastly, she notes that telecommunications software is the most complex decision. She ends her discussion with a recommendation of three software products:

a) HyperACCESS (DOS or Windows)
b) OmodemPro for Windows

c) White Knight (Macintosh)

Krumenaker (1994) and Beckman (1994) do a particularly good job in contrasting telecommunications software. Krumenaker reviews seven packages, while Beckman reviews eleven Macintosh packages.

**Network Vendors**

I sent a survey to vendors that offer E-mail services. The full service computer network companies include:

- America Online
- CompuServe
- Delphi
- GEnie
- Portal
- Prodigy

Each offers information services that may or may not be useful to an academic social work program. Their services clearly go beyond the realm of E-mail. In addition, three major telephone companies offer E-mail services. These telephone companies include:

- AT&T Easylink
- MCI Mail
- SprintMail

These companies were also surveyed. In addition, I have attached some information about FreeNet. FreeNet is a voluntary network system. The popularity of FreeNets are the cost. Many of these networks have no or minimal fees.

Although the completed surveys follow, many readers will continue to ask which service is the best? The particular circumstances of one's campus will dictate the most cost effective service. However, I can draw some conclusions based on the needs of my campus. If I were to
purchase a computer network service for my social work program, I would select Portal. The information I collected [see appendix] indicates that Portal offers the greatest amount of services for the least amount of money. Germain (1994a) and Pearlstein (1994) offers a comparison among various network services. Sadly, neither article includes an analysis of Portal. However, both make a contrast among: America Online, CompuServe, Delphi, GEnie and Prodigy. Pearlstein does a better job. In addition, Pearlstein includes eWorld -- a network service for Apple and Mac users.

Unlike the full service vendors, other vendors offer exclusively E-mail services. They include AT&T Easylink, MCI Mail and SprintMail. AT&T Easylink seems the best buy. Although Easylink offers similar services and prices, they offer a toll free 800 number. Since my campus is in a rural area, our program’s primary costs of E-mail service would long-distance phone calls. When all things are considered, Easylink would be the best deal for my campus. In addition, MCI and Sprint were both resistant to give specific information about their services. Frankly, the MCI’s front-line staff were rude. I could only acquire information by calling a vice president in their corporate office. If something goes wrong with my E-mail service, I would not want to have to deal the MCI staff. On the other hand within UseNet’s alt.online-service, a subscriber of MCI Mail give very high marks for quality of service [see the MCI section of this paper]. The staff from SprintMail were much more courteous than MCI, but did not follow-up on their promise to send information about their services to me. Front line staff of MCI Mail and SprintMail acted as if they did not want new subscribers. Germain (1994b) offers additional comparison of these three services.
Survey Results

Two results are presented. The first include comments from vendor staff. These replies were given via E-mail or dictated on the telephone. The second results include comments from subscribers. These replies were solicited from seven NewsGroups found on UseNet. They include:

ALT.ONLINE-SERVICE.AMERICA-ONLINE
ALT.ONLINE-SERVICE.COMPUERVE
ALT.ONLINE-SERVICE.DELPHI
ALT.ONLINE-SERVICE.FREENET
ALT.ONLINE-SERVICE.GENIE
ALT.ONLINE-SERVICE.PORTAL
ALT.ONLINE-SERVICE.PRODIGY

The replies from both surveys are not random. Rubin and Babbie (1993) describe the sample as nonprobability purposive technique. Here we cannot generalize our findings, but can gain insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the services from those who have had right hand experience.

American Online
1. Does your service offer E-mail?

Yes,

2. Does your service offer a gateway to the Internet?

Yes.

3. Does your service offer access to UseNet NewsGroups? If yes, is there an additional charge for this service?

Yes. No additional charge.

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1 Respondents were given an option of anonymity. Those whose names are printed, requested that their names be included. When a name is not included, the respondent made such a request.
4. Do you offer any special information services that would be of particular interest to social work professors, social work practitioners, and social work students? If yes, what is/are the particular information service[s]?

Eric, teachers information network, lib of congress, college board online, CNN online, Time Ma, Scholastic, ASCD, Whitehouse online, C-Span, Formal tech online, NEA,

5. Is it possible for an academic department at a university to purchase your service? If yes, what formula would be used to determine cost?

Yes. Ten or more people on one invoice account for $9.95 per month plus usage fees over the time allotted $3.50 per hour.

Ten or less requires a $500.00 per payment. Membership and usage fees are deducted from 500.00 Monthly invoice will indicate.

Online American Less expensive rates through:
Scholastic Network 1-800-246-2946
Education Turner 1-800-344-6219

6. How would the academic department be billed?

Invoice only.

7. On a 1 to 10 scale, how would you rate the level of difficulty for learning how to operate within your environment? 1 means no difficulties will ever be encountered for the novice, 10 means that every key punch creates a mystery of which only a computer scientist can comprehend.

2 menu driven

8. Do you have written material regarding your service that we can distribute to about 25 participants?

Yes.

**American Online: Comments from Subscribers**

[Newsgroup: alt.online-service.america-online]

**Comment 1 -- American Online**

>: Marson writes:
>: I'm conducting a survey. If you are an America Online user, can you list
>: one good thing and one bad thing about AOL service?
>: Send to MARSON@PEMBVAX1.PEMBROKE.EDU

One Good Thing: Commercial Access
One Bad Thing: Commercial Access

;)  
++Jack++

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ljh@cadre.com                 ljh@cs.brown.edu
Cadre Technologies            Brown University
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...I speak for neither, natch...

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Comment 2 -- American Online
Well, the service I like best about AOL is the "free" (included with basic subscription E-mail, including Internet messages. All E-mail is bunched into the basic price, and it is unlimited.

The thing I like least is (now that AOL has Internet access) the lack of full access. I'd like to be able to Telnet, ftp, etc...

And sure, you can use my name!

-Ken

Kenneth A. Decker
Ohio State University
kdecker@magnus.acs.ohio-state.edu

Comment 3 -- American Online
Good thing: The graphical interface makes it easy to handle the different services and areas. The interface is consistent and quick to master.

Bad thing: Cannot see graphics from within AOL. For a graphical interface, this seems kind of ironic. However, the graphics you can download are described quite well.

You can use my name.

Mark Lieu
malarak@crl.com
mwlieu@aol.com

Comment 4 -- American Online
Bad: aol falsely promising internet access

--papa budge

Comment 5 -- American Online
Good thing: The graphical interface makes it easy to handle the different services and areas. The interface is consistent and quick to master.
Bad thing: Cannot see graphics from within AOL. For a graphical interface, this seems kind of ironic. However, the graphics you can download are described quite well.

You can use my name.

Mark Lieu
malarak@crl.com
mwlieu@aol.com

Comment 6 -- American Online
One good thing: Generally a good user-interface. Sometimes I get lost in windows, and I can never quite get keyword to work, but it's certainly alot easier than other services.

One bad thing: Cost. I generally try to use AOL after 12 PM on weekends. I wish I could use it other times, but the price of login during peak hours scares me.

Sure, use my name,
--
Mark S.P. Turvin, M.F.A. voice-(602) 965-1021
Arizona State University FAX-(602) 965-0474
icmst@asuacad
icmst@inre.asu.edu
markturvin@aol.com

Comment 7 -- American Online
Good: Very easy to use, especially in Windows
Bad: The cost per hour is quite high compared to "real" internet providers.
--
Shawn Gordhamer
shawnlg@netcom.com

Comment 8 -- American Online
Hi too bad we can only give 1 good and bad, I can think of more but my #1 good thing is the interface and the friendly people (this is Kind of like 1 <G>)

The #1 bad thing would be the speed (very slow)

If you can take any other I'd like to add the fact that there is no off-line reader, similar to CSNAV and tapcis for cis and the other online company's.

You can use my name if ya want<G> I tend to be vocal at times :) )

good luck, Dave
--
Comment 9 -- American Online
Good thing: Friendly, easy to use
Bad thing: Only have baud rate up to 9600

Comment 10 -- American Online
Good Thing - Easy to use interface for the novice, with a nice set of reasonably prices services for the home user.
Bad thing - Not enough presence of corporate oriented support online.

Comment 11 -- American Online
Good: ease of use
Bad: Too many whiners
Good: For beginners
Bad: Too many internet snobs complaining about aol
Bad: aol falsely promising internet access

CompuServe
1. Does your service offer E-mail?

Yes, CompuServe offers full E-mail capabilities.

2. Does your service offer a gateway to the Internet?
For E-mail purposes, yes. Members can send and receive E-mail to and from the Internet. More Internet access is coming in the future, but no dates have been announced.

If yes, is there an additional cost?

Charges for E-mail come from a monthly mail allowance of $9.00/month for members of the Standard Pricing Plan. For each Internet message of 7,500 characters or less, the charge to send or receive is $.15, so the $9.00 is equivalent to about 60 messages per month.

3. Does your service offer access to the Internet's UseNet NewsGroups? If yes, is there an additional charge for this service?

The answer to this is no--for now!

4. Do you offer any special information services that would be of particular interest to social work professors, social work practitioners, and social work students? If yes, what are the particular information services?
CompuServe has something for everyone. There are databases of magazines, newspapers and journals that I would think useful to anyone in the arena of social work who does research of any kind.

There is currently not a forum dedicated to the area of social work, however.

5. Is it possible for an academic department at a university to purchase your service. If yes, what formula would be used to determine the cost?

Yes. The monthly fee is $8.95, which includes unlimited access to certain areas online. Extended services are charged at one-minute increments according to one's baud rate (1200 or 2400 baud access if $4.80/hr., 9600 or 14400 baud access is $9.60/hr.).

6. How would the academic department be billed?

If you set up a Corporate Business Account, or CBA, you could receive a monthly invoice.

You could also pay for the account using a checking account or credit card.

7. On a 1 to 10 scale, how would you rate the level of difficulty for learning how to operate within your environment? Explanation: 1 means no difficulties will ever be encountered for the novice; 10 means that every key punch creates a mystery of which only a computer scientist can comprehend.

I would give our service a 3 or 4 on that scale, although it certainly depends on the level of the individual user and on what kind of communications software one is using to access the service.

8. Do you have written material regarding your service that we can distribute to about 35 participants?

I believe this has already been taken care of, but please let me know if there's anything else you need. We'll be happy to assist you in any way that we can!

CompuServe: Comments from Subscribers
[Newsgroup: alt.online-service.compuserve]
Comment 1 -- CompuServe
>Howdy,
> I am conducting a survey to assist people in deciding what service to
> purchase. If you are a CompuServe subscriber, can you list one good
> thing and one bad thing about CompuServe services? In additional, let
> me know if I can use your name in the final report.

Well, the basic service package isn't bad for $8.95/month. The software library has stuff not easily found on FTP but use the CompuServe CD file finder instead of on-line.
The extended service rates are outrageous. At about $3.00 for 14,400 they'd be reasonable.

Comment 2 -- CompuServe
Good thing: extensive historical data base for stock market

Bad thing: (besides no Internet access yet) hard to use w/o front-end software.

Yes you may use my name.

Dennis V. Byrnes
dvb@charybdis.jpl.nasa.gov
76012.754@compuserve.com

Comment 3 -- CompuServe
GOOD: I think (only) basic service is cheap.
BAD: Their support is terrible. Their "answers" are mostly only responses and often false.

--
Roland BAUER | EMAIL: bauer@afthp001.tuwien.ac.at

Comment 4 -- CompuServe
Good thing: extensive historical data base for stock market

Bad thing: (besides no Internet access yet) hard to use w/o front-end software.

Yes you may use my name.

Dennis V. Byrnes
dvb@charybdis.jpl.nasa.gov
76012.754@compuserve.com

Comment 5 -- CompuServe
1) CompuServe is EXTREMELY well organized! I can't say enough about how convenient it is to use their message boards. Their forums are also well organized. Incidentally, I'm comparing CIS to AOL, the only other online service I have experienced. AOL is comparatively helter-skelter.

2) Expensive. Even if you're using an off-line reader, as I do. Navigator HAS cut my CIS bill dramatically, now that I'm an experienced user. Initially, however, my bill went up! Off-line readers tend to encourage one to go back online again and again. Of course, once the excitement wears off, this gets under control.

From CIS account holder 73374,3546

PEACE OUT!!! --Craig L. Stevenson clsteven@mcs.com
Comment 6 -- CompuServe
Good: It's well organized and professionally maintained. People are available to help you directly.

Bad: no USEnet access... yet. <g>

Don't use my name.

Delphi
1. Does your service offer E-mail?

Yes.

2. Does your service offer a gateway to the Internet?

Yes full access.

3. Does your service offer access to USENet NewsGroups? If yes, this there an additional charge for this service?

Yes. Additional charge: flat fee of 2.00 month.

4. Do you offer any special information services that would be of particular interest to social work professors, social work practitioners, and social work students? If yes, what is/are the particular information service[s]?

In process of developing special group but not online yet.

5. Is it possible for an academic department at a university to purchase your service? If yes, what formula would be used to determine cost?

At this point, no group rate. Offer associate account. Combine billing.

6. How would the academic department be billed?

Monthly invoice by contract only with 25.00 deposit which would show as credit on account.

7. On a 1 to 10 scale, how would you rate the level of difficulty for learning how to operate within your environment? 1 means no difficulties will ever be encountered for the novice, 10 means that every key punch creates a mystery of which only a computer scientist can comprehend.

2 menu driven

8. Do you have written material regarding your service that we can distribute to about 25 participants?
Yes.

**Delphi: Comments from Subscribers**

[Newsgroup: alt.online-service.delphi]

**Comment 1 -- Delphi**

well, good stuff is the forums (250+custom forums), good Internet trainer (Walt Howe and Weaverr), and speed 9600-14,400 and a few 19.2 lines

bad stuff is sprintnet/tymnet connection

dean hughson
braymer mo
(feel free to use my name)

**Comment 2 -- Delphi**

good: fairly cheap internet access available almost anywhere in the US
bad: slow, clunky interface.
--
Shawn Gordhamer
shawnlg@netcom.com

**Comment 3 -- Delphi**

Dr. Marson, For a number of years I was a GEnie member. I left for a number of reasons. First-censorship, bad sysops, poor management. Second- poor performance- 2400 baud speed. Third-price increase. GEnie is an old (ancient) text based system operating with old hand-me-down equipment- using the GEIS system during off-hours. It is being held together with bailing wire, toothpicks, and glue :) I left there for Prodigy and remained until my long-term lower cost signup with them ended- and their price increase. I came to Delphi (although Delphi itself offers very little) because of the 9600 baud Tymnet access speed and Internet access for $23 per month for 20 hours. That's a hard bargain to beat.

I am quite surprised that GEnie still exists. NO service stuck at 2400 baud can survive. 14.4 modems are common now- with 28.8 soon to be "officially" approved.

They real reason GEnie raised their prices was because their system is easily overloaded and they needed to reduce useage. Many times sysops referred to users who paid the $4.95 rate as "freeloaders" who abused their privileges! This is not the way to compete.

I met a lot of great people on GEnie and almost all of them left for the above reasons.

Hope this info is helpful to you.

James W. Beckett
GEnie
1. Does your service offer E-mail?

Yes.

2. Does your service offer a gateway to the Internet? If yes, is there an additional cost?

Full INET is "coming soon" (presumably b4 the end of the year) but currently offers an InterNet gateway for Mail with provisions for unencoded files through mail (documentation...).

3. Does your service offer access to the Internet's UseNet NewsGroups? If yes, is there an additional charge for this service?

In GEnie's respective news areas (called "RoundTables") files are periodically updated that are a text extract of the conversations being carried on in the NewsGroups. There is currently no way to post your own messages (that I am aware of) from GEnie on the newsgroups...

4. Do you offer any special information services that would be of particular interest to social work professors, social work practitioners, and social work students? If yes, what are the particular information services?

I imagine they do but currently have no idea what... I do know they have a sociology / social work (I think) RoundTable but not sure what else... There's also a JOBs area that might be useful....

5. Is it possible for an academic department at a university to purchase your service. If yes, what formula would be used to determine the cost?

Yes. Such a formula is individualized. Cannot offer a general anser.

6. How would the academic department be billed?

Monthly invoice.

7. On a 1 to 10 scale, how would you rate the level of difficulty for learning how to operate within your environment? Explanation: 1 means no difficulties will ever be encountered for the novice; 10 means that every key puch creates a mystery of which only a computer scientist can comprehend.

With menuing program such as Aladdin - 4
With just a terminal program - 7

(Aladdin is a menu-driven "easier" terminal program than for use with GEnie).
8. Do you have written material regarding your service that we can distribute to about 35 participants?

Yes.

**GEnie: Comments from Subscribers**

[Newsgroup: alt.online-service.genie]

**Comment 1 -- GEnie**

Good Thing About GEnie: the wonderful people on the SFRT, SFRT1 especially.

Bad Thing: no Windows based off-line reader, altho I do like Aladdin.

k pope@sfu.ca
k. pope2@genie.geis.com

Go ahead and use my name.

**Comment 2 -- GEnie**

Dr. Marson, For a number of years I was a GEnie member. I left for a number of reasons. First- censorship, bad sysops, poor management. Second- poor performance- 2400 baud speed. Third- price increase. GEnie is an old (ancient) text based system operating with old hand-me-down equipment- using the GEIS system during off-hours. It is being held together with bailing wire, toothpicks, and glue :) I left there for Prodigy and remained until my long-term lower cost signup with them ended- and their price increase. I came to Delphi (although Delphi itself offers very little) because of the 9600 baud Tymnet access speed and Internet access for $23 per month for 20 hours. That's a hard bargain to beat.

I am quite surprised that GEnie still exists. NO service stuck at 2400 baud can survive. 14.4 modems are common now- with 28.8 soon to be "officially" approved.

They real reason GEnie raised their prices was because their system is easily overloaded and they needed to reduce usage. Many times sysops referred to users who paid the $4.95 rate as "freeloaders" who abused their priveledges! This is not the way to compete.

I met a lot of great people on GEnie and almost all of them left for the above reasons.

Hope this info is helpful to you.

James W. Beckett

**Comment 3 -- GEnie**

+ Local call from almost anywhere.

- Everything else. Slow. Noisy (verbal). Sorry mail
handler that doesn't conform to Internet standards.

Comment 4 -- GEnie
1 Good: Richard Bartle's MUD2

1 Bad: GEnie sysops, or more accurately, sysGods

I was panther@genie.geis.com ... until last week. The bad tipped the scale. Sure, you can use my name.

Comment 5 -- GEnie
+ GEnie has three large and actively helpful, friendly, etc. writers communities.

- The interface that users see is, to put it mildly, inelegant. It takes a while to get used to it, and to really use it powerfully.

On the indifferent side, there's only an E-mail connection to the Internet, nothing else. Quote at will.

yours,
Larry "GEnie customer for three years" Hammer

Comment 6 -- GEnie
> If you are a GEnie subscriber, can you list one good thing

  SFRT(s) - actually multiple good things, I guess. The Roundtable/Forum grew so much that it actually is three forums. This has a very active group of fans and writers, as well as occasional production people and others from Trek and such.

[Also - Aladdin, is a *good* thing; free software that lets you minimize online time]
[Also - you are not required to use any specific front end (as does, say, AOL)]

[Also - SPACERT. good info and active astronomy community provided excellent and timely coverage of the Jupiter collision.]

> and one bad thing about the service.

Hmmm - stepchild treatment by GEIS, the parent company. Which means that mail service to the internet is at times balky. Oh, and I wish there were more freebies, like news and encyclopedia [most things are metered, i.e.$3/hour in non-prime time]

> In addition, let me know if I can
> use your name in the final report.
Yes. please do not mention my email addresses, thanks.
Comment 7 -- GEnie
Let me preface this by saying that I only access GEnie to read the A2 and the A2Pro (Apple II and Apple II Programming) forums and download files from their related archives.

The one good thing is the level of support for the Apple II computers (the two series, like Ile, IIgs, etc). The A2Pro area has recently taken over the responsibility of assigning official file types and all other types, codes, and IDs for the Apple II series from Apple Computer, Inc., which will allow for an orderly programming environment which will allow the Apple II series to live on indefinitely.

The one bad thing is the pricing structure. While most other online services have gone to an all day - same per hour charge, GEnie still has prime time and non-prime time charges. I do understand that the network has real commercial clients during the day.

Yes you may use my name, Brad von Haden, in your report.

bpvh Internet: bpvh@fullfeed.com GEnie: B.VONHADEN

Comment 8 -- GEnie
List just one good thing?! Not an easy task, but okay.

The good thing about GEnie is:

The BBSs. GEnie has some of the best Bulletin Board sections I've ever seen, not to mention the fact that many celebrities have graced the numerous areas, and the BBSs are also quite friendly. While they may not have the information that is prominent on USENET, it's ever so much nicer, not so much hostility.

The one bad thing about GEnie is:

Paying for connect time. While I enjoy reading the messages from the numerous bulletin boards, having to pay for connect time makes things expensive. I'm forced to read and compose my messages off-line so as to keep the cost down, while if there were no connect time charges, I could be more spontaneous with my answers, and I'd naturally be able to log on more often and participate with more of the discussions taking place.

There it is, and I would prefer if you did not use my name.

Portal
1. Do you provide E-mail services? If yes, does your service offer a gateway to the Internet?

Yes/yes.
2. How is E-mail written? Is it written interactively or is it composed on the individual's PC and uploaded? If E-mail is composed interactively, does your service offer an edit program that includes a spell check?

It can be done either way. Portal has two different services that every subscriber gets, both the "online" service, which is more like a menu BBS, and a UNIX "shell" account, that allows access to several different mail programs, many of which include spell checkers. ("PINE is the one I use).

3. Do you provide access to Internet's UseNet NewsGroups? If yes, is there an addition fee for this service?

Yes, fully, and no extra charge. (Portal has no extra hidden charges for any of their services, including no hourly fees)

4. Do you offer any additional services that would be of interest to social work professors, practitioners, or students?

Portal has several SIGs (Special Interest Groups) that deal with several issues. Some are: Various computer "club" groups, Health and Medicine, Graphics, Music, Sound and MIDI, and many others.

5. Is it possible for an academic department at an university to purchase your service? If yes, what formula would to used to determine the fees.

This one I cannot answer, but you can contact CS@portal.com, or call one of the numbers at the end of my article to get the information.

6. How would an academic department be billed?

Same as above

7. On a 1 to 10 scale, how would you rate the level of difficult within your environment? 1 means no difficulties will ever be encountered for the novice, 10 means that every key punch creates a mystery of which only a computer scientist can comprehend.

The "online" service: 3
The "shell" account: 7

8. Do you have written material regarding your service that we can distribute to about 35 participants?

Portal: Comments from Subscribers
[Newsgroup: alt.online-service.portal]
Comment 1 -- Portal
Good: cheap with the portal pursuit account

Bad: slow if not completely stopped at times

- Carl
  raavak@cup.portal.com

Comment 2 -- Portal
Hi! I'm a bit biased, since I work for Portal, but I have also been online not only there, but to just about every service there is. I'll send this to you Email, since it would be kinda tacky to make it public. Not many Portal users even check the alt.online-service group anyhow, so I doubt you will get many responses. (I can tell you the reason for this if you ask. :)

Thing I like the most: The fact that the company always takes care of what the USERS want first.

Thing I do NOT like the most: The fact that some users have to pay for another way to connect to Portal. (If you don't already have telnet, or a local POP to call, you have to pay up to $1/hour instead of unlimited time. (That is the reason I am calling from Netcom. I telnet to portal from here. It is the most practical way for ME to connect. :)

Don

Prodigy
1. Does your service offer E-mail?

Yes.

2. Does your service offer a gateway to the Internet?

Yes, only four things, but effective will full access to the Internet.

3. Does your service offer access to UseNet NewsGroups? If yes, this there an additional charge for this service?

No.

4. Do you offer any special information services that would be of particular interest to social work professors, social work practitioners, and social work students? If yes, what is/are the particular information service[s]?

None, but may have BBS.

5. Is it possible for an academic department at a university to purchase your service? If yes, what formula would be used to determine cost?
Yes. Additional fee for access of Internet. $14.95 per month includes unlimited use of core feature 800 features (similar NewsGroup). Two hours on "plus features"

Over 2 hours on plus feature billed 3.60. 6 cents per minute

If you go over 30 E-mail messages.

For Internet there is an one time fee of 4.95 for software to download. The cost for Internet E-mail is 10 cents per block [6000 characters or about two typed pages]. The 10 cent charge includes incoming and outgoing E-mail.

in or out

6. How would the academic department be billed?

Purchase Order or filled every month

7. On a 1 to 10 scale, how would you rate the level of difficulty for learning how to operate within your environment? 1 means no difficulties will ever be encountered for the novice, 10 means that every key punch creates a mystery of which only a computer scientist can comprehend.

1

8. Do you have written material regarding your service that we can distribute to about 25 participants?

Yes

Prodigy: Comments from Subscribers
[Newsgroup: alt.online-service.prodigy]
Comment 1 -- Prodigy
I would not recommend Prodigy to anyone. Prodigy allows users on without any verification. That tends to promote fraud and some person/sex crimes.

Comment 2 -- Prodigy
One Good Thing: Timely news with pictures!
One Bad Thing: Severely overpriced if you want to do anything meaningful!

Go ahead and use my name if you want. Just don't use Microsoft's, since this isn't their opinion!

AT&T Easylink
1. Do you provide E-mail services? If yes, does your service offer a gateway to the Internet?

Yes. Yes.
2. How is E-mail written? Is it written interactively or is it composed on the individual's PC and uploaded? If E-mail is composed interactively, does your service offer an edit program that includes a spell check?

PC and uploaded. We have software we recommend or you can use your own. Software is purchased.

3. Do you provide access to Internet's UseNet NewsGroups? If yes, is there an addition fee for this service?

Not at this time, but will be available in late 1994.

4. Do you offer any additional services that would be of interest to social work professors, practitioners, or students?

Data base service INFO Master. It includes 900 plus data bases. Dialog, BBS, NewsNet, DataCom, DataStar. CompuServe's IQuest section is also available.

5. Is it possible for an academic department at an university to purchase your service? If yes, what formula would to used to determine the fees.

Yes. $3.00 per month per user plus usage. Charge for sending is rated by 0-1000 characters $.50; 1001 - 2000 $ .80; 2001- 3000 $.95; Anything over 3000 is $.05 per 1000. There is a fee for receiving from the Internet. Cost to receive Internet messages 1000 .15, .02 1000 thereafter. Toll free access no long distance charges.

6. How would an academic department be billed?

Monthly invoice.

7. On a 1 to 10 scale, how would you rate the level of difficult within your environment? 1 means no difficulties will ever be encountered for the novice, 10 means that every key punch creates a mystery of which only a computer scientist can comprehend.

Anyone who has computer knowledge at all 1-2, Someone who has never used a computer 5.

8. Do you have written material regarding your service that we can distribute to about 35 participants?

**MCI Mail**

1. Do you provide E-mail services? If yes, does your service offer a gateway to the Internet?

Yes. Yes.
2. How is E-mail written? Is it written interactively or is it composed on the individual's PC and uploaded? If E-mail is composed interactively, does your service offer an edit program that includes a spell check?

Both, it depends on individual's software. Yes it offers an edit program -- free. Yes and has spell-check.

3. Do you provide access to Internet's USENET NewsGroups? If yes, is there an addition fee for this service?

Only provide service E-mail.

4. Do you offer any additional services that would be of interest to social work professors, practitioners, or students?

Have ability to create BBS for any user. But not accessible through the internet. All MCI customers can view.

5. Is it possible for an academic department at an university to purchase your service? If yes, what formula would to used to determine the fees.

Yes. Local sales office can arrange discount for university.

6. How would an academic department be billed?

Monthly Invoice

7. On a 1 to 10 scale, how would you rate the level of difficult within your environment? 1 means no difficulties will ever be encountered for the novice, 10 means that every key punch creates a mystery of which only a computer scientist can comprehend.

If you use the free software and know enough about computer to work with WordPerfect, no problem. I'll give it a rating of one. If you use the free software, and you've never used a computer, I'd give a rating of 3.

8. Do you have written material regarding your service that we can distribute to about 35 participants?

Yes

Another number to call for more Randy Choplin 704-333-3097

Comment from MCI Subscriber
I have been on MCI Mail quite a while. Before the Internet, it was among the best of the email services. It's certainly expensive compared to the net, if you have a "free" net account. It's pricing,
however, still makes it work fine for certain applications. For example, you don't pay to read/receive mail. Thus if you are away from home w/o easy access to your net account, you could have your net mail forwarded to your MCI Mail acct (MCI is reachable by 800 number from anywhere in U.S., and many places abroad). And it would cost nothing to read/receive.

John S. Rosenberg
john@onliners.com

SprintMail
1. Do you provide E-mail services? If yes, does your service offer a gateway to the Internet?

Yes. Yes.

2. How is E-mail written? Is it written interactively or is it composed on the individual's PC and uploaded? If E-mail is composed interactively, does your service offer an edit program that includes a spell check?

Can be written on PC or interactively, but recommended to write on PC and upload (cheaper).

3. Do you provide access to Internet's UseNet NewsGroups? If yes, is there an addition fee for this service?

No. Only E-mail.

4. Do you offer any additional services that would be of interest to social work professors, practitioners, or students?

If you have a cooperate account, one can set up BBS, but not on a single account.

5. Is it possible for an academic department at an university to purchase your service? If yes, what formula would to used to determine the fees.

Cooperate account. Fees for are cooperate account need to have minimum usage of $500.00 per month and a account charge of $140.00 per month. This fee offers unlimited number of mail boxes. Several campuses can cooperate and establish a single cooperate account.

.05 1000 character

6. How would an academic department be billed?

Monthly Invoice

7. On a 1 to 10 scale, how would you rate the level of difficult within your environment? 1 means no difficulties will ever be encountered for the novice, 10 means that every key punch creates a mystery of which only a computer scientist can comprehend.
I Very user friendly a child can use this service. People who have no computer experience have no problem.

8. Do you have written material regarding your service that we can distribute to about 35 participants?

Yes.

QUESTIONS AND REPLIES
ABOUT FREE NET FROM
From Internet's UseNet
ALT.ONLINE-SERVICE.FREE NET

QUESTION -- FreeNet
Just passing thru. What is FreeNet?
Is it like CompuServe, Prodigy, GEnie, Delphi, Portal?
Steve Marson

REPLY 1 -- FreeNet
Well, yes, with one difference. It's free. You (theoretically) pay nothing. They are set up within or as part of local
governments (city councils or county commissions or the like), and the names of the freenets are their location. For
example, the Capital FreeNet (Ottawa, Ontario), The Tallahassee FreeNet, The Cleveland FreeNet, ad infinitum.
They are popping up everywhere across the continent and around the world.

Adam Joshua Smargon  
3820 El Prado Blvd.  
Miami FL 33133-6403  
home: (305) 442-2715  
1994 Summer Intern, Dade County Public Schools, Miami, Florida, USA

REPLY 2 -- FreeNet
A FreeNet is like a local BBS that has internet access. Most have community forums as well as newsgroups and
email. They are run off of the Freeport software. Most are free, although some, like the Cleveland free.net, (which
I think is the first ever free.net, and probably biggest) has a charge for out of state and also if you want a
personalized email address and logon name.

Email: jazz@connected.com  
PowerPC: You dished out the cash... Now what?

REPLY 3 -- FreeNet
>Most are free, although some, like the Cleveland free.net, (which I think is the first ever free.net, and probably
>biggest) has a charge for out of state and also if you want a personalized email address and logon name.

This is wrong. The Cleveland Free-Net is, at this time, completely free. There are some Free-Nets that charge
small account setup fees or that charge for "vanity" IDs, but CFN is not one of them.
For More Information

The Internet's UseNet offers a variety of NewsGroups. These NewsGroups include sections that address services from the major computer vendors. For more information invoke Internet's UseNet. Readers will be particularly interested in one of the following:

- ALT ONLINE-SERVICE
- ALT.ONLINE-SERVICE.AMERICA-ONLINE
- ALT ONLINE-SERVICE.COMPUSERVE
- ALT ONLINE-SERVICE.DELPHI
- ALT ONLINE-SERVICE.FRENET
- ALT ONLINE-SERVICE.GENIE
- ALT ONLINE-SERVICE.PORTAL
- ALT ONLINE-SERVICE.PRODIGY

For more information about UseNet refer to the following citations: Braun (1994), Gibbs and Smith (1993), Hahn and Stout (1994) and Tolhurst et.al. (1994).

For more information about the vendors mention, the following phone numbers can be used:

- America Online 800-827-6364
- CompuServe 800-848-8199
- Delphi 800-695-4005
- GEnie 800-638-9636
- Portal 408-973-9117
- Prodigy 800-776-3449

- AT&T 800-242-6005
- MCI Mail 800-444-6245
- SprintMail 800-736-1130
Summary

The purpose of this paper was to address objective number four of the Ad Hoc Committee on E-mail and Social Work Education: "To coordinate the provisions of free technical consultation that can assess the costs of hardware and software needs of member institutions that do not have E-mail available. The following campus items were addressed: computers, modems, phone lines, telecommunications software, and E-mail vendors. An appendix includes technical and financial specifications from the nine vendors.

References


Addendum to: Cheap E-Mail: The Paper

Immediately following the printing of Cheap E-Mail: The Paper, several new full service vendors were identified. No systematic information can be offered, however following is a list of the names and phone numbers:

- eWorld 800-755-4556
  480-461-5700 for the eWorld User Group
- Transom 800-475-9689
- Interchange 800-595-8555

For more information see Robbins (1994).

Reference

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