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Chaos/ Creating on the Internet

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Creating on the Internet

By Sandra K. Paul, President (SKP Associates)

Those of you who are not yet members of any listserv on the INTERNET, not yet spending hours each day downloading, reviewing and responding to pages of messages from your constituents around the globe, are in for a treat. When Katina and I discussed this column, I basically told her that I had no time to create it; I was too busy with the planning for the entertainment at the LITA Annual Meeting in September in Denver. I did admit that those of us involved in this project had probably established a new standard for creativity and she convinced me to let the rest of you in on it. Sooo, here is how a committee designing a horse in the Internet DOES NOT create a camel!

There exists within LITA a group of individuals who meet regularly at ALA under the title of the Fuzzy Match Interest Group. They were responsible for the entertainment at the last LITA meeting and agreed to do so again for the 1992 meeting in Denver. They chose the theme "Somewhere over the Network, or a Packet's Progress" and realized that the program should be developed on the network in tribute to the title, or because so many of us are on it, or because it was an interesting approach. In any case, the first question raised on the net was what to call the listserv. A FUZZY listserv was bound to generate lots of interest from lots of folks, so they chose a name much less interesting. In the hope of preventing all of you reading this from reading all of our/their mail, that name shall remain a secret.

The first concern was getting everyone's notes on what was decided at the ALA in "writing" for the others to see. Other concerns, that existed almost until show time, included the fact that no one originally on the listserv had ever seen the facilities — not to mention the stage, lighting and musical capabilities — of the Flying W Ranch in Colorado Springs, CO, except possibly for Ward Shaw who kept very quiet throughout the planning process, although he did join the Chorus for the big event.

Sue Martin came through with notes

that showed that Parke Lightbown is the narrator. The plot and songs were shown as follows: The little packet (Michelle Dalehite) starts out in Atlanta to go to the node in San Jose (Somewhere over the network). She goes through Kansas, where Lightning (Mary Ghikas) hits the line. The packet is hit in the header and gets her bits flipped (If I only had my bits). She becomes lost in the Internet and runs into Munchkins who tells her to (Follow the T-3 node). She ends up at the node in Ann Arbor (Marti Scheel), which is the node that goes down, at the corner of Bruce and Miller <the name of the Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and Treasurer of the Fuzzy Match Interest Group — and a REAL intersection in Ann Arbor, would you believe> (Ding Dong the Node is down). The network director, who is the good witch Glenda, (played by yours truly) directs her to the Wizard in Berkeley (Cliff Lynch, of course), who corrects her header and heads her on her way.

These notes were corrected to include the fact that Mark Hinnebusch is Eugene, the Wicked Warlock of the West, the OEvil Ogre of Oregon, and Phantom of the Pnetwork, who delays her progress and the munchkins are the network protocols, including FTMA (Tamara Miller), Z39.2 (Mel Jacob), X.400 (Sue Epstein), X.500 (Pat Ernest) and X12 (Corrie Marsh).

Sue Martin agreed to put together the words for the songs, a task she completed during IFLA in India. They were faxed to Marti, who volunteered to create a "program" which includes ads celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Fuzzy Match Interest Group. As she reported on the net, "I'm aiming for a real deskbottom publishing look. Sorta cheap Chinese menu style for the pick the character from Column A and cast member from Column B method of credit listing." Sue Martin agreed to print it at Georgetown.

Michelle volunteered to paint a backdrop on a sheet (which was wonderful, and augmented, at the last moment by a continuation of the yellow brick road onto a yellow king sized bed sheet,

drawn by miracle worker, local arrangements person Dodie Ownes.) Erik Delfino volunteered (read... pushed by Marti) to be stage manager and was responsible for the music being played at the right time. Sue Martin recorded the music from her home (I assume) piano, with every song on a separate tape, in case we decided to scrap one or two at the last minute.

But, that gets ahead of the plodding progress of this creative group. First, we lost Parke. Seems our narrator was switching jobs without telling us, so no mail (he's one of a few who received copies of the messages on the listserv via the U.S.P.S.) got through. Then Marti tried to find Charles Husbands on the Internet, offering a prize to the person supplying his address. Walt Crawford won and then put a contest on the listserv that was so complex it had no entrants!

Garry Lawrence advised us that he "literally ran into Bill DeJohn who said that it wouldn't likely be a problem for him to find" a fuzzy, stuffed toy gopher and bring it to Denver. We figured that the role of Toto should be played by an Internet Gopher. Well, it turns out that even the University whose mascot is a gopher only prints them on T-shirts (which Toto wore).

Michelle decided that she needed a name, and "since her content probably ends with a period" we decided to call her Dot (short for... but you already figured that out). She considered wearing fuchsia shoes and complaining about tight library budgets, but ended up making a professional looking set of red sequined, rubberized magical shoes, presented to her on stage by good witch Glenda. Then clicking her heels routed her to Berkeley, of course.

The creators at one point considered having the node that goes down do so in a Bed of Poppies, possibly Floppies or Phloppies, but decided against all three. Marti, that node, solicited ads for the program over the summer and finally received a few just before deadline, of course. They came from the Committee on Paradoxical Elucidation &

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Synergy, J. Ranganathan, a principled library, Melvyl "just call me Mel" Dui, the Touch Plush Press, the Nashonal Idiotick Spelcheking Organizashun and Michael Lung, Professor of Ultrafiche Applications and Dean of Library Services, East Virginia State University at Hoople and were printed in various directions in true deskbottom style on the outside of the program.

Discussion of flying out West to Denver became problematic. Walt advised us that he was "flying two hours east to get to Denver, which I guess is part of the Far West. No wonder I get confused. (Then again, if I claimed that Chicago was part of the Middle East, I'd confuse other people). Mark corrected him, to note that "the only part of the US that is in the Middle East is the taxi stand at Washington National." Joan Frye Williams submitted that "Westiosity is defined by the quality of the salsa." As Dodie noted, "Who says that email is only for communicating straight forward, no nonsense simplistic messages!!" And Sue Martin returned from India to find more than 400 messages in her mailbox!!

It all came together in Denver. Dodie supplied a tape player for various rehearsals, the LITA staff obtained rehearsal space in the convention center, and Dodie arranged for signs ranging from "HISS" to "Profound Statement #1" for the Wizard, of course. No one told Mark Needleman that we had included a role for him in the script, protecting the Wizard from Dot initially and then letting her in eventually. He ad libed a lot and was a smashing success, taking on responsibility for displaying the signs for the audience, since the Wizard's hands were filled with Hennessy and a cigarette, of course. Members of the chorus included Joan Frye Williams, Brett Butler, George Brett, Steve Salmon, Lynn Cummins, Carol Brierty, and many others who will, I hope, forgive my leaving them out of this article. AND, local arranger Gail Dow's husband taped the performance. We hope to hear, on the net, how to obtain copies!

Today's messages include thanks from all to all and the inclusion of various capabilities on dossiers being maintained by a fuzzy central office. I suspect this is not THE END but only THE BEGINNING! ☘

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