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Drinking from the Firehose

Furry Little Animals And Comic Creatures: Why Are Internet Informational Tools Labeled With Silly Names?

by Eleanor I. Cook (Serials Librarian,

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I have spent the last year or so grappling with a few peculiar mental blocks. After some rational beings explained these concepts to me, they all became crystal clear. However, a slightly residual annoyance remains — this column is my opportunity to clear the air — perhaps you will understand as you read on.

What in the world is a GOPHER? Not only that, what does it have to do with WAIS (let me count the . . . ?) Also, what are ARCHIE, VERONICA and JUGHEAD doing in my computer? I always thought they were comic book characters. Here's the problem: The labels are just not relevant. At least not at first glance. We are obsessed with acronyms in our environment; perhaps these cutesy names stand for something? Stay tuned — sometimes they do.

There's a lot of jargon out there. LANS, WANS, X.this, Z.that. Lots of alphabet soup, that's for sure. I cannot possibly define all of it here. There are whole books to help you with that (I'll name a few later). What other powerful tools or items have been named in silly ways in the past? Well, DOS stands for Disk Operating System. I suppose that makes sense on a fundamental level. But what if the differential in your car was commonly called a "Fred Flintstone?" You might guess that it was the part that caused Fred to get the car started by flapping his bare feet against the ground; that might make some sense if you knew about the Flintstones cartoon, right? But the Archie, Veronica and Jughead concepts are not related in any way that I can fathom, to the original comic book characters. Hence my confusion.

Following are some short, sweet definitions of the aforementioned terms and some others, for the layperson.

GOPHER: Nothing I've seen or read suggests that "gopher" stands for anything. It doesn't mean <G>o <O>ut & <Ph>ind <H>ere & <E>verywhere <R>esources, which is the only thing I could think of. It was developed at the University of Minnesota and their mas-

cot is a gopher, so I suppose it fits. Using **GOPHER**, you can "burrow" through the Internet and find all kinds of interesting stuff. It's a way to access a collection of documents or files that you can browse through via a series of menus. The stuff is usually full-text, short documents (that's relative, since in a Gopher a "short text" may be 25 "pages" long). It's a way to get to things that you could possibly obtain via FTP or other methods, but Gopher makes it much easier. It's also a harder concept to explain than it is to use. As an example, I invite you to look at the North Carolina State University Library's Gopher, managed by **Eric Lease Morgan**, with contributions from many other people at NCSU. To get to it, I type: **gopher dewey.lib.ncsu.edu** If this doesn't work for you, talk to someone who knows about these things. I'm not a techie, but the NCSU Gopher is a good example, and once you see it, you'll understand the concept. Promise!

FTP: I just mentioned that concept above. It stands for <F>ile <T>ransfer <P>rotocol. This is a method of calling up another computer and asking for a particular file. For instance, if you wanted to read my Library's Annual Report, we could put it in our computer and make it "available" for other people to look at, and also download it to their computer. FTP is a method of accomplishing that.

TELNET: I like this term because it gets the idea across to me better than nicknames. Telecommunicating across the Net, right? It's a way to call into another computer site and get into their files or capabilities. I was first introduced to it when NASIG and ALA started offering it as a method to call to your campus back home to check your e-mail. It's a way to go visiting or to "phone home." (Katina, when will we be able to do this at the Charleston Conference?)

ARCHIE: FTP is great if you know what exactly you're looking for, and if you have the exact address. However, in the Internet world, there is so much out

there that you might not know where to look. Archie is a software program that helps you. It was created at McGill University, and I don't know if it stands for anything. My sources do not mention it if it does. Archie is presently administered by **Bunyip Information Systems, Inc.** Archie collects names, dates, and file sizes of files available through anonymous FTP (which means you can get to them without a special password). You can search for file names or titles of programs. It seems pretty complicated to me, but if you really want to find something out there, I get the impression that Archie can do the job. I like to think of "him" as an electronic graduate assistant who does the legwork for me and comes back and lets me know where I can get the stuff I need.

VERONICA: This does stand for something and you won't believe what it is: <V>ery <E>asy <R>odent-<O>riented <N>et-wide <I>ndex to <C>omputerized <A>rchives. I guess after ARCHIE was developed someone thought it would be cute to play up the concept of the comic book characters. VERONICA does for GOPHERS what ARCHIE does for FTP. It's software that helps you find GOPHERS that have the kind of stuff you are looking for. It was developed at the University of Nevada by two guys, **Steve Foster** and **Fred Barrie**. Both ARCHIE and VERONICA can be found at certain server sites and it is wise to use a server site geographically close to where you are. I'm not going to tell you how to do this; you'll have to read up to get the details.

JUGHEAD: This also stands for something totally outrageous: <J>onzy's <U>niversal <G>opher <H>ierarchy <E>xcavation <A>nd <D>isplay. It's supposed to be referred to in all in lower case, but I'm putting it in upper case for emphasis. JUGHEAD is similar to VERONICA in that they both search GOPHERS. JUGHEAD was created by **Rhett Jones** at the University of Utah in March 1993. Some sites are using

JUGHEAD, and some use VERONICA. (Have we run out of "Archie" comic book characters yet? What about Betty and Moose?)

WAIS: This stands for <W>ide <A>rea <I>nformation <S>ervers. This is another kind of indexing service. After its initial development at a company called **Thinking Machines Corporation**, WAIS was released for wider use. Like GOPHER, you have to get to (or be at) a site that offers a WAIS "client" in order to utilize its services. With WAIS, you choose a collection of documents (called a "source") or you choose several collections at once — and search for items on your topic. With WAIS and these other tools, you don't have to ask "where" something is. You just inquire about what's out there and these tools will bring the stuff (or how to get to it) to you.

WORLD-WIDE-WEB (W-W-W): This was developed in Europe, at CERN, the **European Particle Physics Laboratory**, Geneva, Switzerland. It utilizes hypertext methodology (which provides expansion of various concepts), and utilizes WAIS technology much of the time. I'll leave it at that.

In introducing these terms to you, I am not attempting to educate you in any thorough way about how to use them. I am simply whetting your appetite, piquing your interest, informing you in a gentle way. You can read this column and if you've never heard of these terms or if you have heard of them and had no earthly idea of what they meant, perhaps you can now go out into the world and fake it. If someone mentions them, you can now nod your head knowingly and say, "Ah yes, I've heard of that." Perhaps you can even entertain friends and family with this mysterious knowledge.

Secondly, if you want to know more about them and if you really want to use them, I suggest the following resources:

The Whole Internet: User's Guide & Catalog by **Ed Krol**. Published by O'Reilly & Associates, Inc. 103 Morris St., Suite A, Sebastopol, CA 95472, 1992. 1-800-998-9938 E-Mail: nuts@ora.com

Crossing the Internet Threshold: An Instructional Handbook by **Roy Tennant, John Ober** and **Anne G. Lipow**. Published by Library Solutions Press, San Carlos, CA, 1993.

Zen and the Art of the Internet: A Beginner's Guide by **Brendan P. Kehoe**.

Published by Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1993. This, in an earlier edition, was available over the Internet.

The above are all *real* books and can be ordered the old-fashioned way from your local bookstore or library book vendor. I bet they're even listed in *Books In Print*!

The other way to learn more is to befriend a computer enthusiast, a savvy reference librarian, or other interested individual who has become acquainted with these concepts. Those who have learned to use these tools often like to show off their knowledge. Take advantage of it if you can — it's sometimes the easiest way to learn. Also, attend campus workshops, convention pre-conferences, etc.

In conclusion, I am reminded of another "naming" analogy that librarians can relate to. When we used to have card catalogs to find materials in libraries, we didn't nickname them. People would come into the library and ask, "Where's the card catalog?" For some reason, today we have the tendency to call our online catalogs by cute names such as "Top Cat" or "Unicorn" or "Minerva" or whatever. Why can't we call things what

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I'd like to acknowledge and thank the following people who helped me "cross the bridge" — Marilyn Geller and Birdie MacLennan, who conducted a great workshop at the NASIG (North Ameri-

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Group Therapy

Column Editor, Rosann Bazirjian (Syracuse University)

Hey y'all out there! Do you have any gripes or what? So . . . everything perfect? If so, tell us about it. Try LIBRVB@SUVN.bitnet or FAX (315) 443-9510.

GRIBE:

Submitted by Marlene Barnola, College of Charleston

Here is my gripe. When I check for the prices of some books in *BIP*, it says "write for info" rather than giving me a price. I don't like this because it's embarrassing when I'm asked right off for a price and I can't supply it. To top it all off, sometimes I call the publisher and he/she/they won't even supply a price. They take my number and tell me that a sales rep for my region will call me. What is this? If I don't know what something costs, how can I buy it? Why can't *BIP* give at least an "approximate" or "estimated" price?

BOWKER RESPONSE:

Submitted by Albert Simmonds, Managing Director, *Books In Print*, R.R. Bowker)

The editors of *Books In Print* are very aware of the importance of providing accurate prices along with the other bibliographic information listed in *BIP*. In fact, the two most important goals of the *BIP* editorial process are securing the correct price and the current status of each ISBN in the database (whether it is active, op or osi). To this end, Bowker is continually developing its technological capabilities so that important data such as prices flow from the publishers' systems into the *BIP* database. In addition

to the tapes and diskettes that are already being used for this purpose, Bowker is also developing EDI transfers from the publishers based on the newly approved BISAC X12 standards for bibliographic transfer. In using these tools the *BIP* editors insure that the *Books In Print* database mirrors the publisher data.

However, when this information is not available from any given publisher (a situation which arises for a variety of reasons), the editors have little choice except to advise the users of *Books In Print* to contact the publisher for the information that is needed. It would be tempting, of course, to resort to approximate prices, but this procedure would result in so many errors that any short-term advantage it might produce would be outweighed by its disadvantages. In addition, the *Books In Print* editorial policy mandates that the information in each bibliographic entry be verified by the appropriate publisher.

Given this need to list publisher supplied prices in *BIP*, what recourse does a user of *BIP* have when no price is available? If you will contact us (Fax # 908-665-3502), we will work directly with each publisher to provide you with prices and to add these prices to the database so that subsequent users will find them in the print and electronic versions of *BIP*.

VENDOR RESPONSE:

Submitted by Barry Fast, Vice President, Marketing and Sales, Academic Book Center

The reason publishers won't quote a price to you is that there is no price, or at least no list price. These books, primarily textbooks or books that are sold mostly through college stores, carry no list price so the stores can establish their own selling price. Since college stores are a kind of monopoly, at least in geographical terms (only one per campus, on campus), they can establish the list price that they want, one that gives them the profit that they need.

About ten years ago, college stores were complaining to publishers that they could not make a decent profit on the typical 20% discount they received on textbooks. They wanted more profit margin. But publishers were reluctant to raise their list prices and give the stores a higher discount because they would incur other higher costs that were a function of the list price, costs like royalties, agents' commissions, and sales commissions. Their solution was to sell the books