



News sheet No.1 - August 1995

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## Upcoming meetings relevant to the Network Users' Forum:

### 5th September - Community Networks for South Yorkshire

*In association with Department of Information Studies, University of Sheffield*

1.30 - 4.30 (approx.), Department of Information Studies, Regent Court, Portobello St, Sheffield.

A participative conference to identify the needs for community information networks and the best means of meeting these needs. Free to all participants, but please contact David Miller first, for more information - Tel: 282 5092 - Email: d.miller@sheffield.ac.uk

### 6th September - Electronic Networking Experiences: Good for Your Business

*In association with Sheffield Small Business Club*

7 for 7.30, Novotel, Arundel Gate, Sheffield

A short presentation on the potential benefits of electronic networking for small and "micro" businesses, followed by group discussions on issues of interest to the participants (e.g. more effective marketing using networks, reducing communication overheads). Free to all participants.

Contact David Jennings for more information.

### 15th September - Create Your Own Web Page: HTML for Beginners

4.00 - 6.00, Room K17, Hicks Building, University of Sheffield (Hounsfield Rd, opposite side of Western Bank from Arts Tower)

A tutorial workshop for people interested in publishing information on the World-wide Web/Internet. Familiarity with Windows applications and/or a text editor would be helpful.

Contact Verity Brack or David Jennings for more information - Tel: 282 4806 - Email: v.brack@sheffield.ac.uk

## Advance announcement:

### 25th October - Utilising the Internet: the personal, educational and commercial use of global information networks

*Organised by South Yorkshire branch of British Computer Society*

6.30, Pennine Lecture Theatre, Hallam University Pond Street Site

Admission will be free, but by ticket only - further details to follow.

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## Forum Snippets

### Working with GPs and the health sector?

The Forum has contacts with three organisations that may be interested in using networks, including the Internet, to provide information updates and communications for general practitioners. If this is also of interest to you, please get in touch with David Jennings at the address below.

### Trading with South America & the Caribbean?

The Forum has been approached by a business interested in establishing networked tourist and business information systems for travelling and trading in Guyana. We have obtained details of a development organisation working with small businesses and technology in that South America (particularly Uruguay). There is also a possible tie-in with training events to help people understand the cultures of overseas markets. Is anyone else interested in ideas that might link with this? If so, please contact David Jennings.

### Looking for someone to design and develop Web pages for you?

In addition to reduced rates from professional firms that Forum subscribers can take advantage of, the Forum may also be able to put you in touch with freelance people with experience of designing for the World-wide Web.

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## Contact:

**Subscription info & admin** - The Regional Office, The University of Sheffield, 9 Mappin Street, Sheffield S1 4DT - Tel: 0114 282 5100 - Fax: 0114 275 8154 - Email: regional@sheffield.ac.uk

**Other** - David Jennings, The Workstation, 15 Paternoster Row, Sheffield S1 2BX - Tel: 0114 249 2206 - Fax: 0114 279 6522 - Email: djennings@fdgroup.co.uk

**Email information service** - To subscribe and participate in on-line discussions, send message subscribe snuf-l to listserv@fdgroup.co.uk

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## URGENT: Does anyone have any PCs they can spare?

DART (Disabled Access to Resources and Technology) recently had all its PCs burgled. If you have any spare computers available for loan (any specification), please ring Laura Lewis or Nick Fleischmann on 0114 276 8526. Please help this charity-funded project to continue to operate in any way you can.

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## How is Manchester Using its Networks?

### Report Of "On-Line Services And The Internet - A Poptel Seminar"

Manchester Town Hall, 31 July 1995

*David Jennings*

Three of us who have been involved with the Forum shared a car over the Pennines to see what we could learn from Manchester's experiences of using networks. This article summarises some of the main facts, sprinkled with a few of my own judgements and opinions.

#### Headlines:

- 600 people had registered to attend the event, which ran from 10.00-4.00
- The day was run by Poptel, a network service and access provider, who have been running the "Manchester Host" for five years
- Poptel clearly enjoy a close partnership with Manchester City Council who stated a "long term commitment" to the electronic/information sector
- Poptel and Manchester do not appear to have any special advantages that would explain the high level of local interest they attracted, other than the fact that they have plugging away at this consistently and for a long time (relatively speaking)

#### About Poptel and the Manchester Host

- Poptel is an employee-owned cooperative, with a clear commitment to working with the community sector and the labour movement, as well as businesses (unions like Unison use them, as does Tony Blair)
- As well as the Manchester Host, Poptel supports the Kirklees Host (live since 1993), a London Host, and a Wakefield Host
- They have considerable experience of on-line databases, and have recently moved into the field of supporting publishing on the World Wide Web
- As well as individual accounts for access to services, they offer Group and Club accounts, and various forms of Local Area Network-Internet connections and software

#### Manchester's progress so far

- A speaker from Manchester City Council's Economic Initiatives group explained the role they see for networking as a basis for economic and social regeneration
- The Council believes it has a responsibility to provide some information for free, but where information has a commercial value it can be traded, and this provides the opportunity for economic development
- As well as working with Poptel, the Council is working with Manchester Metropolitan

University on a Multimedia Centre, due to open Summer 1996

- Manchester does not want to target just the "switched on" businesses. Some very small businesses are using networking, e.g. those in import/ export in the textile industry, who are required to use EDI (Electronic Data Interchange), for example, if they want to keep customers like Marks and Spencer
- The Council sees its role partly to provide the "public transport" on the Information Highways, as through its four Electronic Village Halls (one for the Asian community, one targeted at women, one in Chorlton, and one in East Manchester)
- The Council has done some research into the possibilities of teleworking for groups that are disadvantaged in the jobs market (e.g. women returners and people with disabilities), but they have found that one of the main things these people want from a job is "to get out of the house" and enjoy the social contact from work
- The Council therefore is more likely to encourage telecentres and other forms of remote working (e.g. links between central offices and offices out of town, by the Airport etc.; telecentres in the city centre which might draw people in during the day and keep them for theatres, sport and eating in the evening)
- The North West has been selected as one of six regions across Europe for trial development of Information Society services by the European Commission.

#### General points and conclusions

- One thing that I noticed about Poptel's attitude is that they seemed concerned throughout to make allowances for users who do not have the most up-to-date PCs and web-browsing software. They appear to have an approach which is genuinely developmental and inclusive, rather than mainly targeting the whiz-kids and leaving others to catch up if and when they can.
- Poptel also put some stress - rightly in my view - on the benefits of plain old email for its connectivity and convenience, rather than focusing exclusively on the "flashier" demonstration potential of the World Wide Web.