

EARN EXECUTIVE

Proposal for the control of the use of lists

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issued by
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1 The misuse of lists

There has been much adverse comment that several of the lists in use on EARN do not fall within the EARN Charter and Code of Conduct.

BITNET and EARN both agree, on a fundamental level that the network is to be used for academic purposes. There are dozens of lists that are quasi-academia and non-academic. Some of these lists would appear to cross the boundary of what is acceptable. For example ADND-L defined below which appears frivolous. Lists like APO-L, a list for the Alpha Phi Omega fraternity could be construed as being related to academia.

The two corner-stones that both networks agree on is no commercial use and no political activism. There are various political talk groups, where people discuss everything from glasnost to the Contras to the Middle East problem. But those are strictly talk groups, which can also be construed as being of an academic nature. But SEAC-L (defined below) being a political action group, would appear to have crossed the line.

Any two consenting adults can talk Dungeons and Dragons among themselves or send political petitions over the network, without anyone being the wiser. But once a Listserv forum is set up, it becomes the responsibility of the Board of Directors of each network.

Specific lists which have raised comment are:

ADND-L@UTARLVM1 - Advanced Dungeons and Dragons

This list has the purpose of discussing all the aspects of the Dungeons & Dragons and Advanced Dungeons & Dragons games; new spells, new monsters, and so on.

SEAC-L@UNCVX1 - Student Environmental Action Coalition List

This list is for members of local chapters of SEAC and students

interested in forming chapters of SEAC on their campuses. Topics included actions taken by local chapters, coordination of national efforts, conferences as well as bulletins of scientific interest on environmental topics.

It is difficult to differentiate between legitimate use of EARN and misuse. The "jokes" distribution list is clearly unrelated to any research activity that we know of. On the other hand the "genealogy" list is for research of a private nature or perhaps for hobby purposes.

It may well be appropriate to attempt to draw this fine distinction but currently the author is not able to do so.

2 Proposal

It is proposed that:

- * The EARN manager be asked to examine the list of lists and extract the ones in EARN which appear to be unrelated to legitimate activities.
- * A letter will be sent to the relevant management asking them to justify the existence of the list in terms of the EARN Charter, Code of Conduct, and traffic generated.
- * The EARN president tells BITNET of our concern on the use of lists and asks what steps they are or intend to take with a view to having a common approach.