Introduction to the WG21/X3J16 mail reflectors

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Motivation

When the ANSI C++ Committee formed in 1990, I volunteered to set up a fleet of "archived mailing lists:" mailboxes on some readily accessible machine to which one could send electronic mail that would be saved for posterity and broadcast to interested people. These mailing lists have evidently been successful: the total amount of information that has passed through the mail reflectors will probably exceed seven megabytes by the time you read this. If the archives were all printed at sixty lines per page, they would comprise more than 3,100 pages, or a stack of two-sided paper about six inches high.

How to use them

There are presently ten mailing lists:

List address	Purpose
x3j16-all@redbone.att.com	all members receive this one
x3j16-comm@redbone.att.com	communication issues
x3j16-compat@redbone.att.com	C compatibility
x3j16-core@redbone.att.com	core language issues
x3j16-edit@redbone.att.com	editorial issues
x3j16-env@redbone.att.com	environment
x3j16-ext@redbone.att.com	extensions
x3j16-intl@redbone.att.com	international concerns
x3j16-lib@redbone.att.com	libraries
x3j16-syntax@redbone.att.com	formal syntax

If you send a message to any of these addresses, it will go automatically to everyone who has signed up for the particular mailing list. Mail to x3j16-all@redbone.att.com will go to

everyone with a valid electronic address, even if that person has not subscribed to any of the other lists. Never send something to x3j16-all and any other list simultaneously; doing so will guarantee that some people will get duplicate copies.

Please do not send messages longer than 32,767 characters! The mail reflector software has no difficulty dealing with messages that long. Unfortunately, not all the recipient machines are that docile. Messages longer than that are likely to fail to reach some people, showering me with error messages in the process.

Subscribtion lists

At present, I maintain the subscription list for each of the reflectors. Those subscription lists contain people's names *only*. I extract all other information, *especially* including people's electronic addresses, from the official membership list maintained by the Vice President (currently Steve Clamage).

Usually this is a great boon: when your particulars change, you need notify only one person. It does have one implication, however, that can prove temporarily irritating: *only members can subscribe to the mailing lists*. In particular, new members should be aware that even after I have added your name to the mail reflector subscription lists, you won't start receiving mail reliably until after I get a membership list from the Vice President that has your name and correct electronic address on it.

The ping daemon

What is a correct electronic address? The practical definition is one from which redbone can send mail to you. The easy way to verify that is to send mail to x3j16-ping@redbone.att.com. That mail will be automatically answered by a program I call the *ping daemon*. If it can't figure out what you meant, it sends you a general message, a sample of which is reproduced at the end of this note. Among other things, that message describes how to retrieve back issues from the archives.

It is important to use the ping daemon to verify your address *before* sending the incorrect address to the Vice President. All too often, electronic addresses are either misremembered or fail to work for some obscure reason.

To encourage people to use only verified addresses, I will accept requests for mail reflector subscriptions *only* by electronic mail. In particular, please do not ask me during the meetings to add you to the mail reflectors after I return home.

By a remarkable coincidence, this policy has the beneficial side effect of allowing me to conceal my natural absent-mindedness.

Anonymous FTP

For people who want copies of the archives in bulk, they are available by anonymous FTP from research.att.com [135.104.117.5] in directory dist/stdc++/archives/*group-name*. These archives are updated daily; use the ping daemon for the very latest stuff.

Summary

When you join the Committee, please do the following things in the following order:

1. Use the ping daemon (x3j16-ping@redbone.att.com) to verify your electronic address.

2. Send your verified address to the Vice President.

3. Send electronic mail to me saying which reflectors you wish to join.

If your electronic address changes, please use the ping daemon to verify it and then send the new one to the Vice President. The change will automatically find its way into my files.

You can use the `ping` daemon to retrieve earlier messages from the archives. *Please remember to send such requests to the daemon and not to the mail reflector itself!* You can also use anonymous FTP to retrieve the entire archive for each reflector.

If there is anything you want to do with electronic mail that's not described here, the easiest way to contact me is by electronic mail.

The purpose of the electronic mail reflectors is to make it easier for the C++ Committee to get its work done. Please let me know if you have any suggestions for improving them.

Sample response from the ping daemon

```
From redbone!x3j16=ping Thu Mar 12 22:08 GMT 1992
To: you
Subject: auto-reply from X3J16 `ping' daemon
```

This message comes to you courtesy of the X3J16 `ping' daemon.
The purpose of this daemon is to give you an automatic way of
verifying your electronic address.

You can activate the daemon by sending electronic mail to

        x3j16-ping@redbone.att.com

The daemon will auto-reply to every message it receives.
Therefore, if you send a message to x3j16-ping@redbone.att.com
and do not receive a reply, something is wrong.

That reply takes one of three forms:

        1. If the daemon does not recognize a request in the
        input message, it will send the message you are reading now
        back to what it thinks is the return address. This may
        not be the best way to get a message back to you, and in some
        cases it may not even work. In any event, the msssage
        will contain the address that the daemon thinks it saw.

        In this case, the message will appear to come from
        x3j16=ping@redbone.att.com (or something equivalent to
        that). Note the = instead of -; this is to forestall
        forwarding loops.

        2. If the daemon recognizes a `ping' request in the input
        message, it will send a shorter message to the address
        shown in that request. A request is the first line of the form

                ping return-address

        where `return-address' is the address you want to test.
        There must not be any leading white space in the line
        (so that, for example, this message itself will not be
        interpreted as containing a request). Only one request
        per message, please!

        In this case, the message will appear to come from the
        return address the daemon obtained from the network(!).
        The purpose of that is so that if the attempt fails,
        perhaps the failure message will be successfully forwarded
        back to you and you can figure out what went wrong.

        3. If the daemon does not find any `ping' requests in the
        message, it will search for requests for messages from the
        archive. An example of such a request is

                send x3j16-core-27
```

which will, of course, send the 27th message in the
x3j16-core archive. Requests for non-existent messages
are quietly ignored. Requests for messages in non-existent
groups are noisily ignored. If you want multiple messages,
you must have one input line for each message you want;
this is to avoid making it too easy for people to request
gigantic piles of goo by accident. You can have multiple
'send' requests in your input; the only restriction is
that each request nominate only a single message.

The available mailing lists and the
corresponding highest message identifiers are:

| mailing list address | highest message identifier |
|---|---|
| x3j16-all@redbone.att.com | x3j16-all-194 |
| x3j16-comm@redbone.att.com | x3j16-comm-8 |
| x3j16-compat@redbone.att.com | x3j16-compat-45 |
| x3j16-core@redbone.att.com | x3j16-core-935 |
| x3j16-edit@redbone.att.com | x3j16-edit-23 |
| x3j16-env@redbone.att.com | x3j16-env-288 |
| x3j16-ext@redbone.att.com | x3j16-ext-220 |
| x3j16-intl@redbone.att.com | x3j16-intl-121 |
| x3j16-lib@redbone.att.com | x3j16-lib-196 |
| x3j16-syntax@redbone.att.com | x3j16-syntax-140 |

I know this is complicated. Networks are complicated. That's life.
If you can't figure this out, please contact me:

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Your original message was as follows:
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>From you Thu Mar 12 17:28:07 EST 1992 remote from somewhere
testing
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