BASIS Migrates Customer Support From CompuServe To The Internet
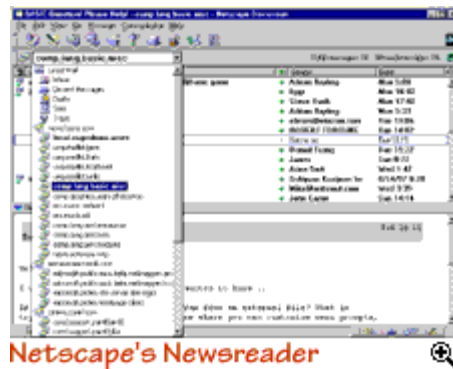
By Ernie Longmire

By the end of 1997, BASIS plans to move completely off CompuServe (CSi) and onto the Internet. This is a logical consequence of the many changes that have taken place in the online world over the past few years. While our CSi presence has served the company well in the past, its pay-to-access structure is increasingly harder to justify with the Internet providing almost limitless content at a negligible incremental cost. People are moving away from CSi in significant numbers, making it a less effective platform from which to address our current and future customers. We believe that moving our existing support infrastructure from CSi to the Internet will give us better access to our customers and our customers better access to us.

We're working to make this change as easy as possible, especially for those of you who have rarely ventured beyond CSi before.

Newsgroups

The most significant change in BASIS' online presence will be the replacement of our CSi discussion areas (and the existing bbx-list mailing list) with a collection of newsgroups served from within BASIS. We've chosen to use newsgroups instead of mailing lists because it's far easier to maintain message threading in newsgroups than in mailing lists,

Netscape's Newsreader

and our customers on CSi have made it clear that the ability to follow discussions in thread order is extremely important to them.

Most people are familiar with newsgroups through their experience with Usenet: messages are posted on a local machine and are copied throughout the network, creating what amounts to a distributed global bulletin board system. BASIS will take an alternate approach that is becoming increasingly popular by hosting its newsgroups on a publicly-accessible news server. This returns BASIS to the original single-site BBS model, allowing our customers to connect directly to us to read and post messages, but with the advantage of instant (and incrementally free) global access via the Internet.
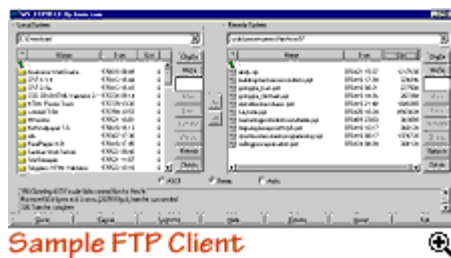
Current CSi subscribers unfamiliar with reading newsgroups through a remote server will find it very similar to CSi discussion groups. Discussion is inherently threaded, and messages are stored on the remote server rather than in your mailbox. You can read messages at your leisure, picking and choosing which messages to retrieve, instead of having to deal with each message as it's posted. Your newsreader keeps track of what you've read, and old messages are still available to you on the server.

Even if you've never read a newsgroup before, you probably already have the tools to do so available on your desktop. The most popular Internet browsers-Microsoft Internet Explorer and Netscape Navigator-include newsreading tools that make it easy to connect to different news servers. There are also more powerful newsreaders available that provide many more options.

Downloads

BASIS' popular CSi libraries will find a new home on our FTP site. At this writing we are nearly done with the process of evaluating the files now available in our CSi libraries to determine which should be moved to the Internet. This process is designed to make

Sample FTP Client

sure that the information we provide online is as complete and up-to-date as possible. The result will be a better-organized FTP site, featuring more straightforward organization, and more extensive support on the web side, with web pages describing the files available for FTP in detail.

As with newsgroups, you probably have all the tools on your desktop that you need to take advantage of BASIS's FTP area. Most modern web browsers work well as FTP clients, making simple uploads and downloads easy to perform.

Chats

BASIS has only run one or two chat sessions on CSi, but intends to take greater advantage of this service on the Internet. We believe that online chats are an excellent way to communicate with our customers, and plan to start holding sessions on a regular schedule. If you have ideas or requests for sessions you'd like to see us conduct, email your suggestions to me at webmaster@basis.com.

Email

BASIS is not abandoning mailing lists entirely. For those who are interested in getting regular emailed updates about the goings-on at

BASIS, we have created two new mailing lists: announcements@basis.com and webannouncements@basis.com. These will be low-traffic lists that only contain announcements from BASIS. The "announcements" list will announce product releases, training, and so forth; the "webannouncements" list will contain notices of changes to the BASIS web site.

We don't like junk email any more than you do, so as a matter of policy, you will not be placed on either of these mailing lists unless you specifically ask to be. (We will, however, do our best to give you every opportunity to ask to be!)

Further Information

BASIS has set up an autoresponder at tellme@basis.com. Any email sent to this address will return a message describing all of our online resources and how to access them. We hope that this single point of contact will help you to use those resources more effectively.

If you have any questions about BASIS' online presence, feel free to email me at webmaster@basis.com.