The 'news' URL scheme

1. Introduction

The news URL scheme is used to designate a message or a set of messages circulating through the Internet by methods compatible with the practices followed by the Usenet community. In its simplest form, a news URL contains a Usenet newsgroup name.

Further capabilities are the ability to designate an unique message as the located resource, to specify that the News server at a particular site is to be queried for the resource identified and to request secure dialog via the variant snews scheme name.

This draft is one of a suite of documents intended replace RFC 1738 [3], "Uniform Resource Locators", and RFC 1808 [4], "Relative Uniform Resource Locators". The suite is composed of a general document [RFC URI SYNTAX] for all URL schemes and scheme-specific documents for each scheme.

2. Syntax of a news URL

Following the syntax conventions of [RFC URL SYNTAX], a news URL has the form:

    newsURL   =  scheme ":" [ news-server ] [ refbygroup | message ]
    scheme    =  "news" | "snews" | "nntp"
news-server = "//" server "/"
refbygroup = group [ "/" messageno [ "-" messageno ] ]
message = local-part "@" domain

Sites take the form defined for the generic URL syntax in section 3.2.2 of [RFC-URI-SYNTAX]. Messages take the form specified for the value of a Message-ID field in RFC 822 [1] or RFC 1036 [2], without the leading "<" or trailing ">".

Note that the refbygroup and message cases are distinguished by the absence in the first case and presence in the latter case of one and only one commercial at sign "@".

Groups take the form of a dotted name of a News group as allowed in the value of the Newsgroups header field defined in RFC 1036. Messagenos take the form of an integer message number as numbered by a particular server. As these numbers will vary between copies of the same message available from different servers, reference by message ID is preferred to reference to messages by means of these numbers.

Note that all URLs of this scheme are in the category of absolute URLs, in the terms of [RFC URI SYNTAX].

3. Semantics and operations

When the scheme is news, the default port (in server) is 119. When the scheme is snews, the default port (in server) is 563.

A news URL designates a message or message-carrying subchannel known as a newsgroup. When a news URL is activated, message reading and writing from and to News is initiated, if that service is available.

If an individual message has been identified, interaction starts by reading that message. If an individual group or range of messages in such a group had been identified, interaction starts by reading an index of messages. If no message or group is identified, interaction starts by reading an index of groups. No immediate write or PUT of a message is performed when a news URL is activated.

Note that user agents may extend the ability to refer to groups by use of "*" as a string wild-card.

4. Examples

An URL to read a newsgroup from anywhere (usually locally):

<news:alt.adoptive.parenting>

An URL to read a specific message from anywhere (usually locally):

<news:EFGJG4.7A@deshaw.com>

An URL to read a specific message from a designated site:

<news://binky.capnet.state.tx.us/5rb1or$67v@news.jumpnet.com>

An URL to read a newsgroup from a designated site:
5. Acknowledgements

This document was derived from RFC 1738 [3]; the acknowledgements from that specification still apply.

6. References


Appendix

A. Changes from RFC 1738

RFC 1738 defined two distinct URL schemes designated news and nntp. Both schemes, however, accessed the same pool of News message traffic. In no case was the scheme name significant in distinguishing references to different messages or to different groups. Various implementations have blurred the distinction by extending the syntax of news to include explicit remote references including designation of a site.

This draft provides a unified syntax for a graceful migration to the use of news and snews and not nntp as scheme names.

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