Current Bulletin Board Systems: How It's Done

by warmfuzzy

Of all the things I've loved and lost, I miss my board the most,

but now it is back online, and this corner of the net is mine,

the speed is a thousand fold, my storage is even more,

I'm back in the scene, behold my 1337 system is hardcore.

- warmfuzzy

Hosting Benefits: Self-hosted systems (full control) vs. vServers (cheap and reliable) vs. dedicated servers (massive capacity and offsite reliability). Recommended home-based systems are the "nano computers" which are very small form-factor systems that you set up and leave to run. vServers are available at IONOS.com, recommended dedicated servers are available at www.hetzner.com. With all of these hosting options, it is fully recommended that you use the Linux operating system, as it is more capable than the Windows or Mac alternatives.

Storage: HDD vs. SSD (SSD gives no speed advantage due to the limits in the Internet service.) "Toasters" are recommended; they are HDD docking stations that look as if the HDD is toast and the docking bay is the toaster. Recommended model is the "Sabrent 4-Bay USB 3.0 SATA 2.5″/3.5″ SSD/HDD docking station (DS-U3B4), which goes for around $100 USD. Recommended HDDs are the Western Digital RED NAS 5400 rpm drives. One thing to note with these drives is that they can get really hot due to the density of the platters, so you may need to buy a fan to cool down the several drives that you should buy. The eight terabyte WD RED NAS drive is recommended, which will cost you around $250 USD or less if you get a deal.

Famous Systems and Personalities:

- *Agency BBS*: Avon, agency.bbs.nz:23(telnet) / 2024(ssh)
- *Black Flag BBS*: Hawk, blackflag.acid.org:23(telnet)
- *Fishingnet BBS*: warmfuzzy, fishingnet.phatstar.org:7777(telnet)
- *HyperNode BBS*: MaxMouse, hypernode.ddns.net:23(telnet)
- *KANSIT WHQ BBS*: cr1mson, whq.kansit.com:23(telnet) / 22000(ssh)
- *Necronomicon BBS*: necromaster, necrobbs.ddns.net:23(telnet)
- *Raiders Inc. BBS*: cr1mson, vintagebbsing.com:1337(telnet)
- *The Bottomless Abyss BBS*: StackFault, bbs.bottomlessabyss.net:2023 (telnet) / 2222(ssh)
- *The Quantum Wormhole BBS*: MeaTLoTioN, bbs.erb.pw:23(telnet) / 45022(ssh)

Echomail Nets (all the below networks use the fresh binkp echomail protocol):

- FSX (Fun Simple and eXperimental), 21:*, Avon, avon@bbs.nz
- AgoraNet, 46:*, Accession, access@pharcyde.org
- Retronet, 80:*, necromaster, retronet2016@yahoo.com
- Whispernet, 316:*, cr1mson, cr1mson@phatstar.org
- Sp00knet Echomail Network, 700:*, society@phatstar.org
- Fishingnet Echomail Network, 701:*, society@phatstar.org
- The Investor's Network, 702:*, crewmate, crewmate@crewmate.tech
- TQWnet, 1337:*, MeaTLoTioN, ml@erb.pw

Art Groups: Blocktronics (blocktronics.org), Impure (and others) (16colo.rs/), and ansigarden.com (custom and stock artwork for a fair fee)

ANSI Editors: PabloDraw (picoe.ca/products/pablodraw/), Moebius (blocktronics.github.io/moebius/), and Mystic BBS's Internal ANSI Editor (mysticbbs.com)

Modding Groups: PHATstar Society (phatstar.net), DoRE (*Dreamland BBS*), Phenom Productions (phenomprod.com/)

Documentaries and Commentaries:

- *The BBS Documentary* (www.bbsdocumentary.com/order/)
- *Back to the BBS Documentaries* (erb.pw/bttb) Al's Geek Lab YouTube also available.
- *TexTalk.news: Going Full-on Mad Retro* (textalk.news), *The Textmode PODcast*
- *Textmode Magazine* (textmodemag.com); a future project that is on hold for the time being.
- TelnetBBSguide.com: The central location for a BBS system directory.

Client Software: NetRunner (www.mysticbbs.com), SyncTerm (syncterm.bbsdev.net), mTelnet (no link)

Server Software: (all of the below software suites work on both Linux and Windows + Mystic's ARM

- Mystic BBS (www.mysticbbs.com) (straightforward configuration and most modable). Recommended for most users as it is basically plug and play with easy configuration

- Synchronet BBS software (www.synchro.net) (easy to use and open source, more difficult to modify)
- Enigma 1/2 (enigma-bbs.github.io/) (excellent for the programming community)

Code Pages:

- CP437/ANSI-BBS (around 250 or so usable "characters" out of 256 characters)
- iCE ANSI (an improved ANSI that offers a greater color selection in place of flashing colors)
- UTF-8 (with foreign language support)
- ASCII (plain and simple text based communications)
- Rarely used protocols: AVATAR, RIP

Plain Old Telephone System:

- SEXPOTS: Synchronet External Plain Old Telephone System. Allows you to receive connections from the POTS and redirect it to any arbitrary Telnet BBS server, works on Linux and Windows.
- Connect your favorite RS-232 US Robotics 56k v92 vEverything External Modem via Serial to USB 2.0 conversion cable. Recommended cable: DTECH USB to RS232 DB9 serial adapter cable 16 with FTDI Chip, DB9 9 Pin USB 2.0 (a converter adapter with the FTDI chipset) which will cost you around $20 USD for a 16 foot cable. Recommended modem: US Robotics 56k vEverything external serial modem which costs around $30 USD plus shipping from eBay.com.

Connection Protocols:

- TELNET: plain text with no encryption, very easy to "sniff" the traffic. It's recommended for speed, but should have no function to login to system functions or the sysop password could be sniffed.
- SSH: commercial-grade cryptographic protocol. Can easily be added to Mystic BBS with a free crypto library.
- RLOGIN: not used very much, but is an alternative for non-standard setups. It is used to connect to the Doorparty door game server.
- RS-232/Serial: the protocol used by POTS modems going into the connecting computer.

Instant Messaging:

- Multi-Relay Chat: at the time of this writing there are over 100 boards that are connected to this instant messaging service. It works quite well and has been a boon for the scene, however there is currently no secure communication capacity in the present version. To fix this gap in secure chat is MeaTLoTioN's Matrix server which is end-to-end encrypted (riot.erb.pw).

Fun Times:

- *[P]hone [i]n [M]y [P]ocket BBS:* MeaTLoTioN's BBS running off of his Android phone Pimpbbs.erb.pw:18023 (telnet) PIMP BBS: *"No pocket fluff was harmed in the making of this BBS."* -ML
- File Servers: BBSes can now connect to file servers through the TELNET-OUT function available in modern BBS software. You connect to your favorite BBS system, go to the "file area," select the server of your choice, telnet with the push of a button to that file server, and you're good to go. Systems include Anonymous Archivers File Distro Network (phatstar.org), Silent Partner FDN (phatstar.org) accessible from AAFDN, and ArchaicNet FDN (sysop@archaicbinary.net).
- Door Game Servers: You can now play online games with thousands of others using a game server where people can log on to a BBS, open the game server portal, and be presented with many dozens or hundreds of games, having all those games in one spot to play with fellow gamers on a single system. BBSLink (bbslink.net) and DoorParty (www.throwbackbbs.com/).
- Quantum Radio: The scene's Chiptunes and Tracked Music streaming radio station (radio.erb.pw/).
- The Weekly MeaTup with MeaTLoTioN on Multi-Relay Chat (MRC) at 20:00 UTC on Fridays. MRC is accessible from BBSes that have the MRC BBS mod installed; this works on all the major BBS software (www.meatlotion.com).