ON-RAMP TO THE INFORMATION SUPERHIGHWAY

by Arnold E. van Beverhoudt, Jr.

INTRODUCTION

Information Superhighway, The Net, Cyberspace -- these are terms that more and more are becoming parts of our everyday vocabulary. They are all related to one of the most explosive growths in worldwide communications since the invention of the telegraph and the telephone. Individual computers and networks of computers throughout the world are connected together into what is commonly known as the Internet. Millions of people around the world use the Internet to communicate with each other. What do they communicate about? Virtually any topic imaginable. For example, the 1995 edition of The Internet Yellow Pages (Osborne/McGraw-Hill) contains 812 pages of listings of computerized mailing lists, discussion groups, special interest forums, and other reference sources in topics ranging from A Capella (music sung without accompanying instruments) to Zoroastrianism (an ancient Iranian religion). The book’s table of contents alone is 25 pages long! In this article, I will tell you about some of my personal experiences on the information superhighway and give you information on how you can get onto its "on-ramp."

COMMERCIAL ON-LINE SERVICES

For many years the only access that the general public had to computer networks was through membership in one of the major commercial on-line services. Each of these services provides a variety of reference sources and discussion groups that are accessible only to members at an established access charge. The major on-line services in the United States are described in the box to the right.

My first experience with on-line information services came in 1980, when I subscribed to CompuServe. At the time, my home computer was an Atari 800XL with a modem that sent and received information at the speed of 300 bits per second (commonly called the baud rate). Initially, the only service on CompuServe that I used was the Atari SIG (for special interest group), where I could exchange messages with other Atari computer users and download games, graphic art, and utility programs created by those users.
In 1982, my wife and I were planning our first vacation trip to the states with our daughter, who was 5 years old at the time. What we were planning was two weeks in Florida, the first week in Orlando with a side trip to the Kennedy Space Center and the second week with my sister outside Miami. I used the Travel Forum on CompuServe to obtain information on hotels near Walt Disney World, attractions in and around Orlando and Miami, and transportation between Orlando and the Kennedy Space Center. This past summer, we were again planning a trip -- this time to visit art colleges to which our daughter was planning to apply for admission -- and again we turned to CompuServe to help us out. By accessing the on-line Official Airline Guide, we were able to get a detailed list of available flights to each of the five cities we planned to visit, including alternate airfares. With this information, we were able to plan out the least expensive sequence for our visits to the colleges and set up a tentative schedule with school representatives. Although we could have also made our reservations and purchased our tickets on-line, we chose to do that through a local travel agent just in case something came up that required a last-minute change of plans.

As my daughter has progressed through school, she has had many research assignments, and on many occasions CompuServe's reference sources have been invaluable. For example, she once had an assignment to write an essay about teenage suicides, and we were able to find several excellent magazine articles using CompuServe's Magazine Database Plus to search for articles on that topic and then retrieve the full text of articles that matched our search criteria. For another assignment, we again used Magazine Database Plus to obtain the full text of magazine articles for a report on how events in Pablo Picasso's life influenced the style of his paintings. More recently, we were able to retrieve the full text of articles from the Washington Post and the New York Times on Supreme Court decisions regarding school prayer, abortion rights, and civil rights for my daughter's Government class. A few nights ago, we also retrieved articles on the life of English novelist and poet Thomas Hardy. Although some of this research could have been performed at the Enid M. Baa Public Library or the University of the Virgin Islands Library, we were able to obtain this information from the comfort of our home and, hopefully, my daughter will be able to use the on-line research skills she is learning when she goes away to college.

I've also used CompuServe extensively to keep track of my three biggest interests outside of family and work -- the space program, Star Trek, and auto racing. My three favorite hangouts on CompuServe are the Space Forum, the SciFi Forum, and the Auto Racing Forum, where I can exchange messages with other persons around the world who have similar interests and download files on those topics. For example, information on NASA's budget, twice-a-day reports during space shuttle missions, and computerized photographs and even video clips from shuttle missions and the Hubble Space Telescope are all available in the Space Forum. The SciFi Forum has sections devoted to all of the popular science fiction programs, including Star Trek, where I can get the schedule of upcoming episodes, reports on fan conventions, interviews with the actors, and computerized photographs from the various shows. In the Auto Racing Forum, I can get complete schedules of upcoming races including when they will be televised, complete race results the day after each race, interviews with the drivers, and photographs taken during the races.

CompuServe's forums are also where you can meet and carry on discussions with other persons with similar interests. For example, over the years I've kept a computerized index of my video tape collection of Star Trek episodes. This serves as an episode guide because it includes a couple sentences summarizing each episode. In November I posted a copy of my episode guide to the SciFi Forum so that other fans could retrieve it. In an attached note, I mentioned that because none of the stations carried by my local cable TV system show the new series, Star Trek: Voyager, I would not be able to include that series in my episode guide. Well, a couple of weeks later, I received e-mail (electronic mail) from Jack, a Star Trek fan in Texas who liked my episode guide so much that he offered to tape the episodes of Star Trek: Voyager for me so that I could include it in future updates of the guide. (Tony, a friend in Washington, is also taping Voyager for me, so with the backup I shouldn't miss any episodes.) I've also received e-mailed comments about my episode guide from fans as far away as England, Denmark, and Germany!

On another occasion, I was connected to CompuServe obtaining background information on how to use CompuServe to gain access to the Internet, when the message "Hello Arnold" popped up on my screen. (Most on-line services allow you to call up the names of other persons who are connected to the system at
the same time that you are connected. CompuServe also allows you to strike up a live on-line conversation with them.) I replied with a simple "Hi" to which Mike, told me that he lives in Las Vegas and worked for a casino there. (No, we didn't get into a conversation about the pros and cons of casino gambling.) I replied that I was in St. Thomas, Virgin Islands and was an auditor with the U.S. Department of the Interior. Mike told me that he and his wife had vacationed in St. Thomas around 1985 and that they still have fond memories of the wonderful time they had here. Talk about a small world!

Here's another example of the power of CompuServe. As you know from my articles in the March and October 1994 issues of News Notes, I've written a book about the history of vessels named Enterprise, which I'm still trying to get published. Well, while working on the final manuscript, I began trying to find someone well-known who would contribute a foreword for the book. Someone suggested that I try Admiral Richard Truly, a former astronaut and former NASA Administrator. At the time, I had no idea how I could get in touch with Admiral Truly, but I knew that CompuServe had an on-line telephone directory for the entire country. Using this resource, I was able to obtain his home telephone number and placed a call to him one evening. He wasn't at home, but I left a message on his answering machine, not really expecting to get any kind of reply. But a couple days later, Admiral Truly did return my call, and most graciously agreed to consider writing a foreword for my book if I would send him a copy of the manuscript to read over first. He later told me that he thoroughly enjoyed reading the book and gave me a wonderful foreword that adds immensely to it. As it turns out, Admiral Truly has two personal connections with the name Enterprise -- his first Navy jet fighter squadron was stationed on the aircraft carrier USS Enterprise during the early 1960s and he flew the prototype space shuttle Enterprise for NASA during the 1970s.

Although my on-line experience has been with CompuServe, all of the other commercial on-line services offer similar services and opportunities. However, CompuServe is the only one with a nearby access line -- in San Juan. Therefore, it has the lowest long distance phone charges for connecting from the Virgin Islands. Although I spend many hours each month connected to CompuServe, my long distance phone bill is rarely more than $20 per month. Likewise, unless I use one of the premium services that has a surcharge, my CompuServe connect charge is usually less than $20 per month, for a total of about $40 per month. To me, the access to almost unlimited informational resources is worth the cost. I actually expect to cut down significantly on both my phone bill and my CompuServe charges in the months ahead because I just invested in a new modem for my home PC. The new one can communication at 28,800 bits per second -- a long, long way from my 300 bit per second Atari modem of 15 years ago.

**V.I. PARADISE FREENET**

In September 1994, the Virgin Islands gained an "on-ramp" to the information superhighway when St. Thomas Rotary Club II, WTJX Public Television, and Octagon Consultants (a local computer consulting firm) founded V.I. Paradise (V.I.P.) FreeNet, a public access on-line information service. Although access to V.I.P. FreeNet is free, you can become a full member by making an annual contribution of at least $25, which is used to maintain and upgrade the system. Instructions for opening an account on V.I.P. FreeNet are given in the box at the bottom of this page.

As of late-February 1995, V.I.P. FreeNet had over 850 users, and the number appears to be growing every day. In addition to a wide variety of information and discussion groups related to topics of local interest, V.I.P. FreeNet is an inexpensive way to connect to and access the vast information resources of the Internet. In fact, V.I.P. FreeNet is a part of the network of computer systems that make up the Internet. Anyone who has an account with V.I.P. FreeNet can exchange private e-mail with anyone else around the world who has a valid Internet address and subscribe to a wide range of mailing lists to participate in public electronic conversations with other Internet users who have similar interests. The people at V.I.P. FreeNet are also working to expand access to the Internet to include Gopher, FTP, Telnet, and World Wide Web, which are nothing more than different ways of searching for and retrieving information stored on other computers connected to the Internet.

Although many of these Internet features are already available from the commercial on-line services described earlier, V.I.P. FreeNet has two huge advantages -- it's only a local phone call away and it has no user charges. For this reason, lately I've been doing more and more of my Internet accessing via V.I.P. FreeNet, using CompuServe only for those things I can't do on the FreeNet. For example, I'm using V.I.P. FreeNet for more of my e-mail correspondence, including with my friend Jack in Texas who's taping Star Trek: Voyager for me. I've also used V.I.P. FreeNet to subscribe to FinanceNet mailing lists (which I'll discuss later in this article), although I could also do that through CompuServe.
A look at V.I. FreeNet's main menu (see the box on this page) reveals the wide variety of local-interest information that is just a phone call away. Let's take a more detailed look at what's available.

1 - Administration is where you would go to apply for an account on V.I. FreeNet, post suggestions for new services, and obtain general information about FreeNet.

2 - Post Office is, as the name suggests, where you would go to send and receive private e-mail. While here, you could also see a list of everyone with a V.I. FreeNet account, access an on-line zip code directory, and get information about how to address e-mail to persons on other computer networks.

3 - Town Hall Public Forums allows you to exchange public messages with other FreeNet users about "Government in Transition," politics, job vacancies, crime, your favorite TV show, or almost any other topic your heart desires.

4 - SIG Bulletin Boards is the place to go to exchange public messages on a specific set of topics, including home repairs, boating, ham radios, senior citizen issues, culinary arts, high school student issues, Rotary Club activities, religion, anti-apartheid, writing, and environmental issues.

5 - Communications is where you would go to get information on special communications software that you can use while connected to V.I. FreeNet. Future access to Internet gopher and World Wide Web will also be in this section.

6 - Help Desk provides help files with instructions on how to use the various services and communications software available on FreeNet.

7 - Tourist Information includes background information about the Virgin Islands and access to a rather complete restaurant guide for St. Thomas and St. John. (I assume a St. Croix restaurant guide will soon follow.)

8 - Government Center allows you to access information about government -- both local and Federal. This section includes discussion forums for the Executive and Legislative branches of the V.I. Government. So far, the Executive Branch Forum is very bare, but the Legislative Branch Forum has news on recently-introduced bills, legislative committee meetings, and other similar topics of interest. This section also has information on business licensing and building permit requirements, full transcripts of the Governor's speeches and press conferences, and access (through the Internet) to on-line versions of the entire U.S. Code and the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (grants), and information on the United Nations Development Program.

9 - WTJX On-Line and PBS has detailed PBS program listings for the current month and provides access to forums related to the PBS programs Graffiti Street, Learning Link, and Mathline.

10 - Public Library has access (through the Internet) to the computerized card catalog system of the Library of Congress, an on-line database of hundreds of classic literary works, and a variety of electronic magazines. On-line access to the card catalog system of the V.I. Public Library is planned for the near future.

11 - Professional Building includes public discussion forums related to accounting, architecture and engineering, banking, computer consulting, insurance, investments, law, medical arts, and real estate. (The accounting section is where I've begun to post the AGA Virgin Islands Chapter monthly newsletter.)

12 - Net News, WX, and Bulletins has news on planned upgrades to V.I. FreeNet and access (again through the Internet) to U.S. Weather Service reports for the Caribbean and the United States.

13 - Community Awards presents a list of the people who make V.I. FreeNet possible, including its officers, corporate and individual sponsors, and users who have become members by contributing at least $25.
14 - New Account Information gives instructions on how to open a new V.I.P. account.

15 - Reserved for Special Events is self-explanatory.

16 - Feedback gives you the opportunity to send comments and suggestions to the FreeNet staff.

With access to V.I.P. FreeNet, I've added a new and, I think, interesting item to my daily work routine. The first thing I do when I get to the office in the morning is turn on the computer and log on to V.I.P. FreeNet to check my e-mail box. There's usually something there and, more often than not, it's something interesting. Besides, I can also save my office on its long distance charges by using e-mail to communicate with HQ in Washington instead of the telephone and fax. As I'll discuss later, I've also subscribed to several mailing lists that are part of FinanceNet, so I automatically receive financial management news items posted to FinanceNet. I also retrieve, from V.I.P. FreeNet, the daily edition of RoadMap, a unique Internet training seminar that is taking place over the Internet itself.

RoadMap is a series of 27 written lessons put together by an Internet user at the University of Alabama and e-mailed each weekday to Internet users throughout the world. V.I.P. FreeNet has a subscription to the RoadMap lessons, so FreeNet members can just go to the Help Desk and retrieve each day's lesson. I have found the daily lessons to be written in a VERY easy-to-understand manner and, the instructor's humor makes the lessons actually fun to read. As with any training, each day's lesson also includes homework, consisting of certain Internet commands that the instructor assigns his "students" to actually try out. RoadMap will also include pop quizzes, with the answers being e-mailed the following day. What's really unique about RoadMap is that through the Internet one individual has been able to reach and provide useful instruction to over 80,000 persons in 77 countries. In fact, two RoadMap participants are actually located in Antarctica!

One caveat to all the good things I've had to say about V.I.P. FreeNet is that in the few weeks that I've been an active user, I've seen a steady increase in the number of busy signals I get before being able to successfully reach FreeNet's computer and log-on. This is an unfortunate side effect of its popularity (and this article is probably only going to increase that popularity). So, I urge you to send an annual contribution of at least $25 to V.I.P. FreeNet if you become a regular user. Your contribution will help to pay for more telephone lines into the system to meet the increased demand and for expanded access to the Internet.

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**FINANCENET AND MORE**

I want to close out this "dissertation" with some information on FinanceNet and other computer networks that have information of special interest to accountants, auditors, and other government financial managers.

**FinanceNet** is a computer network established by the National Science Foundation as part of Vice-President Al Gore's "reinvent government" initiative. It links people from Federal, state, local, and even foreign governments who have an interest in government financial management. The mission of FinanceNet, as described in the informational package available via e-mail, is:

... to serve as a vehicle and catalyst for continuous improvement and innovation, at all levels of government, in the accountability and stewardship of public assets and taxpayer resources by impacting financial management resources, practices, policies, and professional standards.

FinanceNet offers access to current and archival reference libraries of legislation; Congressional testimony; executive orders and memoranda; important meeting minutes and highlights; circulars, bulletins, and releases; procedures manuals and updates; training notices; newsletters and journals; and other similar documents from such organizations.
as the Office of Management and Budget, General Accounting Office, Treasury Department, Joint Financial Management Improvement Program, Federal Accounting Standards Advisory Board, Association of Government Accountants, and Government Finance Officers Association. To research these reference documents, however, you must have access to the Internet’s gopher, telnet, or World Wide Web document retrieval services.

However, even without full access to the Internet's document retrieval services, you can participate in FinanceNet through its extensive mailing lists. In Internet lingo, a mailing list is a register of the Internet addresses of individuals interested in automatically receiving new information (documents, news, announcements, etc.) on a particular topic. Once you have subscribed to a mailing list, you will automatically receive, via e-mail, anything that other subscribers post to the mailing list. Likewise, you can post your own notices, comments, etc. to the mailing list for other subscribers to receive. Presently, FinanceNet maintains the following mailing lists.

**News** is FinanceNet's master mailing list, where participants are encouraged to post news and comments about their successes, best practices, fresh ideas and approaches, etc. for all to share and discuss.

**State and County** is devoted to issues relating to financial management at the state and country levels of government. Documents and discussions are on such topics as accounting, bonds, revenues and taxation, budget, financial management systems, licenses and fees, audits, payroll, and other topics of interest to state and county government officials and taxpayers.

**Municipal and Township** is for issues similar to those in the State and County mailing list, but from the perspective of municipal, city, and township government officials and taxpayers.

**BudgetNet** is for information related to revenue and budget issues at all levels of government.

**Internal Controls** is for issues related to the Federal Financial Managers Integrity Act; the OMB high risk list; general government waste, fraud, and abuse; Inspector General audit findings and recommendations; OMB Circulars A-123, A-127, and A-50; and overall management control systems.

**Financial Systems** is for information related to financial system requirements, hardware and software, information architecture, data dictionaries, functional system standards, and other similar technical topics.

**Performance Measures** is for issues related to the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993, measures of outcome vs output, statistical presentations and reporting, and the development and presentation of performance measurements.

**Financial Policy** is for discussions related to financial management policy contained in OMB Circulars and Treasury Department Bulletins and accounting standards issued by the Government Accounting Standards Board and the Financial Accounting Standards Board.

**Financial Statements and Reporting** is devoted to issues related to various financial reporting requirements, financial statement presentation, and overall accountability of financial resources.

**Financial Audits** is for information related to the Chief Financial Officer Act, agency financial audit findings and recommendations, audit followup procedures, Inspector General vs independent public accountant audits, and financial audit resources and staffing.

**Asset/Liability Management** is for issues related to balance sheet items, including cash management, receivables and payables, the use of credit cards, prompt payment of vendor invoices, accountability for cash advances, capitalization of assets, insurance of assets, pension benefits, etc.

**Financial Personnel and Training** is for issues related to financial management training opportunities, job vacancies, professional development, personnel classification standards and position descriptions, and resource pools.

**Payroll** is for discussions related to general payroll topics of interest to all levels of government.

**Procurement** is for information related to procurement issues at all levels of government.

**AGA** is devoted to news and discussions specifically related to the Association of Government Accountants. (Incidentally, I've already begun posting the Virgin Islands Chapter's newsletter to this mailing list, in addition to posting it on V.I.P. FreeNet, in
order to get the greatest possible exposure for the Chapter's activities.)

GFOA is for news and discussions specifically related to the Government Finance Officers Association.

JFMIP is for news and discussions specifically related to the Joint Financial Management Improvement Program.

As of the date that I'm writing this article, I have been subscribed to the News, Internal Controls, Financial Policy, AGA, and GFOA mailing lists for only a few days, so it's still too soon to tell just how useful these mailing lists will be. But, based on my previous experiences with the information superhighway, I expect that the rewards will again be worth the cost -- just a few minutes of my time each morning to check my V.I.P. FreeNet e-mail box.

Finally, here's a list of additional on-line resources of interest primarily to the auditors among you. These computer networks are discussed in more detail in the article "An Auditor's Guide to Electronic Audit Resources" by Jim Kaplan, which appeared in the February 1995 issue of The Internal Auditor.

A Net is a network founded by the School of Business of Bond University and Southern Cross University, both in Australia. A Net includes a mailing list on accounting and auditing topics. To subscribe, send an e-mail message to LISTPROC@scu.edu.au In the body of the message type SUBSCRIBE A AUDIT-L your-name.

CapAccess is Washington, DC's FreeNet. It provides access to all of FinanceNet's services plus access to IGNet and other networks. You can access CapAccess directly by modem at (202) 785-1523 and logging-on as a visitor.

Cleveland FreeNet is Cleveland, Ohio's FreeNet. It includes a special interest group formed by the Information Systems Audit and Control Association (formerly the EDP Auditors Association). You can access Cleveland FreeNet directly by modem at (216) 368-3888.

FedWorld is an on-line bulletin board set up by the National Technical Information Service. It provides direct access to over 140 Federal agency bulletin boards where you can obtain such information as economic and census data, audit reports and guides, catalogs of U.S. Government publications, and lots more. Again, FedWorld is accessible directly by modem at (703) 321-8020. If you have access to Internet's telnet service, you can also telnet fedworld.gov.

GAO BBS is the bulletin board of the U.S. General Accounting Office. It provides such information as an on-line version of the 1994 GAO Government Audit Standards, GAO's Audit Guide for Assessing the Risks of Information Technology Acquisitions, and GAO's Policy and Procedures Manual. GAO BBS is accessible either through FedWorld or directly by modem at (202) 512-4286.

IGNet is a network formed by the Federal Offices of Inspector General for the exchange of information related to the IG community. IGNet's archive libraries are accessible through Internet's gopher service at ignet.usdoj.gov.

Internal Audit Newsgroup is an Internet/USENET newsgroup that is accessible either through Internet newsreader software or through the USENET Forum on CompuServe. On CompuServe, enter the command GO USENET and join the alt.business.internal-audit newsgroup.

NCSA Auditing Section is a discussion group that is part of the National Computer Security Association's forum on CompuServe. If you are a CompuServe member, enter the command GO NCSA and then select the Auditing Section.

CONCLUSION

I realize that this has been a very long article with lots of information being thrown at you. But, because the information superhighway is changing so rapidly, I felt it was better to give you all of the information at one time, rather than spreading it out over several months. Basically, what I've tried to do in this article is to give you an idea of what is available on the information superhighway that might be of interest to you -- both personally and professionally -- and some ideas on how you can get onto its "on-ramp." This is one highway where you don't need a driver's license. As long as you have access to a computer with a modem, you can be on your way with just a phone call to V.I.P. FreeNet. There's a world full of information out there just waiting for you, but you need to take that first step!

*** STOP THE PRESSES! ***

Things can happen quickly on a superhighway! I completed the article you just read on Friday evening, February 24. On the following Sunday afternoon, my daughter was looking through the V.I.P. FreeNet menus and discovered a whole new world of information resources waiting to be explored -- and still only a local phone call away.
Gophers, Gophers Everywhere

In late February, V.I.P. FreeNet announced that effective March 1, 1995, it would have a more direct connection to the Internet, which would allow it to provide access to a wider range of Internet resources. Well, a few days ahead of schedule, some new options began appearing on V.I.P. FreeNet's menus. Two of these new options have amazing research potential.

In the 8 - Government Center submenu is an option for Government Information via L.O.C. Gopher. (Gopher is a type of computer program that searches through the Internet or "goes fer" other computers that have information on a desired subject.) What this option does is allow V.I.P. FreeNet users to connect, through the Library of Congress (L.O.C.), with hundreds of computer systems that contain information about Federal, state, local, and even foreign government agencies. I did a little bit of exploring of my own and found, for example, that under Federal Information Resources, I could get information about every executive branch agency, including the names and phone numbers of key officials, budget information (which my daughter was able to use in another report for her Government class), and detailed descriptions of the duties and responsibilities of each agency's divisions and bureaus. I could also connect to the White House and retrieve information on the President's schedule, transcripts of speeches and press conferences, and even send e-mail to the President and Vice-President. (By the way, their e-mail addresses are, appropriately:

president@whitehouse.gov
vice.president@whitehouse.gov

This section also has information on the legislative and judicial branches of the Federal government, including Congressional directories, the status of legislation working its way through Congress, and Supreme Court decisions. There's even limited access to military agency information. Just for "fun" I connected with the computer at the library of the U.S. Naval Academy and looked up "USS Enterprise". There I found references to several books that I didn't know about when I was writing my history of the name Enterprise!

Even more amazing is what's hidden in V.I.P. FreeNet's 9 - WTJX On-Line and PBS submenu. The option Connect to PBS Gopher Server lets you search for "all the Gopher Servers in the world!" I don't know how complete the list is, but the selection menu goes on for 132 screens, listing more than 2,350 computer systems -- some as far away as Australia, Malaysia, Japan, China, India, Egypt, . . . you get the idea. The vast majority of these are computer systems at universities, which isn't too surprising since the academic community had a major role in the development of the Internet. But many government and commercial systems also show up on the list. The university systems typically provide access to such information as application and financial aid requirements, class schedules, course description, and information on research conducted at the institution.

But this V.I.P. FreeNet option goes even further. It allows you to use Veronica (another computer program with a strange name -- by the way, there's also an Archie and a Jughead) to search for individual files about a specific topic. For example, while she was exploring the Internet that Sunday (February 26), my daughter asked Veronica to look for files about that well-known TV show Melrose Place. In a few minutes, a long list of related files was on the screen to be looked at. Another search, for information about rock star Kurt Cobain, produced an equally long list of related files. I can't wait to start looking for files about Star Trek and the Enterprise.

I think you get the picture by now -- the age of worldwide access to almost unlimited information is upon us. As the saying goes, "Information is power." Don't let the opportunity pass you by!

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In exchange for the use of the V.I.P. FreeNet Computer System, I understand and agree to the following:

1. That the use of the V.I.P FreeNet is a privilege which may be revoked by the administrators of the system at any time for abusive conduct. Such conduct would include, but not be limited to, the placing of unlawful information on the system, and the use of obscene, abusive or otherwise objectionable language in either public or, upon registration of complaint, private messages. The staff of the V.I.P FreeNet will be the sole arbiter of what constitutes obscene, abusive, or objectionable language.

2. That the V.I.P. FreeNet reserves the right to review any material stored in files to which all users have access and will edit or remove any material which the staff, in its sole discretion, believes may be unlawful, obscene, abusive, or otherwise objectionable.

3. That all information services and features contained on the V.I.P. FreeNet are intended for the private use of its patrons, and any commercial or unauthorized use of those materials, in any form, is expressly forbidden.

4. That all information contained on the V.I.P. FreeNet is placed there for general informational and entertainment purposes and is, in no way, intended to refer or be applicable to any specific person, case, or situation.

5. That the V.I.P. Freenet does NOT warrant that the functions of this system will meet any specific requirements you may have; nor that it will be error free or uninterrupted; nor shall it be liable for any indirect, incidental or consequential damages (including lost data, information or profits) sustained or incurred in connection with the use, operation, or inability to use the system.

6. To abide by such rules and regulations of system usage as may be promulgated from time to time by the administrators of the V.I.P. FreeNet.

7. In consideration for the privilege of using the V.I.P. FreeNet and in consideration for having access to the information contained on it, I hereby release the V.I.P. FreeNet, its operators, and any institutions with which they are affiliated for any and all claims of any nature arising from my use, or inability to use, the V.I.P. FreeNet.

___________________________________  ___________________________________
Signature of Parent or Guardian          Signature
(if user is under 18 years)

___________________________________  ___________________________________
Date

V.I.P. FreeNet
Welcome to the Information Superhighway
Press <ENTER> to continue