

Network Working Group
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Announcement Of A (Tentative) Workshop On Multi Site Executive Programs

An executive program is one which accepts and interprets commands from a user, calling upon other programs to provide the resources required to satisfy each command. There is currently interest in making resources on the ARPANET available to the user via a standard, conversational facility which one might call an ARPANET Executive. With such a facility a user at a Host site or a TIP could conveniently access a wide range of resources at other sites without mastering the idiosyncrasies of each Host operating system which is contributing resources.

For example, the ARPANET executive could make it possible to locate (by name) a user logged in anywhere on the network and to establish a teletype link to that user in order to engage in an on-line dialogue. It could also provide status information on the subnet and on all Hosts, on-line ARPANET news service, on-line collections of trouble reports, etc. The range of possible services is practically unlimited once a basic structure is devised for calling upon these services.

Major areas of interest here are:

1. How can the interfaces to resources of interest be standardized so as to be accessible by "server" processes;
2. How can communications with such server processes be standardized? (an ARPANET Executive protocol?)
3. To what extent can the conversational user interface be standardized in the user processes? (an ARPANET Executive language?)
4. How can access authentication and accounting procedures be modified to permit a user to "login" only once, yet use resources at many Host sites?

If you are interested in discussing these and related issues forward your name to Bob Thomas (BTHOMAS @BBN-TENEX), Bolt Beranek and Newman, Inc., 50 Moulton Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139, (617) 491-1850, extension 483. If there is sufficient response, a Workshop (tentatively planned for April) will be hosted by the BBN TENEX and BBN TIP groups. The Workshop will permit participants to present relevant work and to discuss the issues raised above.

In the meantime, an example of an executive program which interprets a limited set of commands in a multi-site context is available for experimental use by TIP and TENEX users. The "N" command of the TIP and the RSEEXEC (Resource Sharing Executive) subsystem on TENEX, provide command interpretation in the context of TENEX and ITS sites. Users whose access to the network is neither via a TIP or a TENEX may use the RSEEXEC by directing their user TELNET to ICP to socket 367 (Octal) at BBN-TENEX.

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