

NewsWatcher

Version 2.0d17

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Introduction

NewsWatcher is a Macintosh network news reader.

NewsWatcher is free. It may not be resold for profit or included with software which is sold for profit, but otherwise you should feel free to use it and redistribute it.

Please note that this is a development version of the program (it's not even beta yet!). That's what the "d" stands for in the version number. Many features are not yet implemented. There are many known problems and errors which have not yet been fixed. You can expect existing features to change as the development process continues. If you require perfection in your software, do not use this program!

On the other hand, you shouldn't let the previous paragraph frighten you. Most people report that NewsWatcher is very robust, even in its current unfinished state, and they find it useful and like the program.

NewsWatcher is used to participate in "USENET news". USENET news (or just "USENET" or "the news" for short) is an enormous worldwide distributed electronic bulletin board system. Indeed, USENET is the largest bulletin board system in the world, by several orders of magnitude. Anyone on the Internet can post articles to USENET, and anyone on the Internet can read articles and post replies.

USENET is organized as a system of several thousand separate "newsgroups" (or just "groups" for short). Each group is devoted to a

single topic. The topics range from recreational groups like “alt.archery” to technical groups like “comp.protocols.appletalk”.

At Northwestern, we receive a full collection of newsgroups from around the world. We also provide a number of local newsgroups whose names begin with “acns” and “nwu”. Articles posted to these groups are not sent outside the University.

NewsWatcher requires a Macintosh running System 7.0 or later with 2.5 megabytes or more of memory and a hard drive. The Mac must be connected to the Internet, and MacTCP must be properly installed and configured. For dialup use, NewsWatcher works with the various SLIP and PPP programs, and with AppleTalk Remote Access together with an appropriately configured AppleTalk/IP gateway.

This is a rough draft of the NewsWatcher document. The final document will be much longer and will be designed for beginners. It will contain a thorough discussion of the many USENET conventions, rules of conduct, and other relevant issues. It will also contain screen shots. Until that full document is ready, these very brief notes will have to suffice.

The original version of NewsWatcher was written by Steve Falkenburg of Apple Computer. John Norstad of Northwestern University is leading the current project to continue development of the program. John Werner of UC Berkeley is a major contributor. Other contributors include Steve Dorner, Ron Flax, Haydn Huntley, Steve Klingsporn, Peter Lewis, Jeremy Norstad, Howard Rafal, Larry Rosenstein, Jeroen Scheerder, Eric Slosser, and Neal Trautman.

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Where to Send Comments

Please feel free to send comments, suggestions, and error reports to me (John Norstad, j-norstad@nwu.edu). However, before you do this, I would appreciate it if you would do the following:

1. Read all of this user document. Does that answer your question?
2. If you are at NU, check the Plato file server to see if you are using the most recent version. If you are not at NU, check <ftp.acns.nwu.edu>. If you are not using the most recent version, fetch the most recent version and try that first.
3. Check the To Do document. Is your comment/suggestion/complaint already listed in the document?
4. Try turning off all the options in the “Server Options” preference topic. Does this make the problem go away?

5. If you get a server error message, or if you cannot connect to your news server at all, it's most likely a server problem. If you are not at NU, I'm not going to be able to help you. Read Appendix E of the user document, and show it to your local news server administrator, before writing to me.
6. If you send me an error report, please use the "Get Server Info" command in the Special menu, copy the information to the clipboard, and paste the information into your mail message to me. This information is very valuable for diagnosing problems.
7. Are you a Think C programmer? If so, consider fetching the current source code from <ftp.acns.nwu.edu> and implementing your new feature or fix yourself and sending me your code! If I include your code, I'll give you credit in the about box and user document.

Known Incompatibilities

Old versions of “Default Folder” are incompatible with NewsWatcher and cause crashes whenever a standard file dialog is presented. You should upgrade to the latest version.

Old versions of “SuperBoomerang” do not work properly with NewsWatcher. You should upgrade to the latest version.

Getting Started at NU

Important note: In this “Getting Started” section, we assume that you are a Northwestern faculty member, staff member, or student using NewsWatcher on a private Macintosh. If more than one person wants to use NewsWatcher on your Mac, see Appendix B for additional instructions. If you want to use NewsWatcher in the ACNS labs, see Appendix C. If you are not at NU, see Appendix D.

NewsWatcher is available on the Plato AppleShare file server in the Plato zone.

To install NewsWatcher, drag a copy of the program from Plato to any convenient location on your hard drive. Also drag a copy of the file named “My News” from Plato to any convenient location on your hard drive. The two files do not have to be in the same folder.

To run NewsWatcher, double-click the “My News” file (do not double-click the NewsWatcher program icon).

The first time you run the program, it asks for the following personal information:

Full Name: Your full real name (e.g., “Joe Blow”).

Organization: Your organization (e.g., “Northwestern University”).

Email address: Your email address (e.g., “j-blow@nwu.edu”).

You must enter at least your email address. You should also enter

your full name, although this is not required. The organization is optional.

NewsWatcher then gets a list of all the groups from the news server and puts the list in a window titled “Full Group List”. If you are using NewsWatcher over a dialup connection, this takes several minutes (perhaps even as long as 10 to 20 minutes with a slow 2400 baud modem). Please be patient. NewsWatcher only does this the first time you run the program, so you can rest assured that you won’t have to wait so long every time you run the program in the future.

After getting the full group list, NewsWatcher opens a second window titled “My News”. This window contains just the single group named “nwu.comp.announce”. This is your initial “user group list” window. The “nwu.comp.announce” group is used by the various Northwestern campus computing organizations to post official announcements which are important to the NU computing community.

If you are new to USENET news, we recommend that you start by using the full group list window to browse in any of the groups which look interesting. Click the full group list window to bring it to the front. To open a group, double-click its name. This opens a window listing the subjects and authors of all the current articles in the group. To open an article, double-click its line in the subject window.

Spend some time browsing. We think you will find it fascinating. The best way to learn about USENET is to spend time exploring it.

Most people like to select a small number of groups to which they “subscribe”. These are the groups which you decide you are most interested in reading most of the time. The “My News” window is your collection of subscribed groups. This is called your “user group list”. We have set it up for you so that initially you are subscribed to just the official announcement group mentioned above. You will probably want to subscribe to additional groups.

For example, many Mac users find at least some of the many “comp.sys.mac” groups interesting. We also have a local group named “nwu.comp.sys.mac” that is used to ask and answer questions about Macs and talk about general issues regarding the use of Macs at NU. You might like to subscribe to this group. “acns.general” and “nwu.general” are two other local groups to which many people subscribe.

To subscribe to additional groups, first reposition the two windows on your screen so that both of them are visible. If you have a small screen, it’s OK if the “My News” window is partially obscured by the full group list window. Click the full group list window to bring it to the front. Then simply select the groups to which you wish to subscribe in your full group list window and drag them into your “My News” window.

You don’t have to subscribe to additional groups the first time you run the program if you don’t wish to. Indeed, some people may wish to use NewsWatcher just to see official announcements. You can always subscribe to additional groups later if and when you wish.

After subscribing to your additional groups (if any), close the full

group list window. Now the only window on your screen is your “My News” window. This is the window you use to read the news most of the time. (Don’t worry about closing the full group list window. You can always get it back quickly later when and if you need it. We’ll talk about this later.)

You read the news using your “My News” window in the same way you do using the full group list window. To open a group, double-click its name. This opens a window listing the subjects and authors of the articles in the group. To open an article, double-click its line in the subject window.

There is an important difference between reading news using your “My News” user group list window and reading news using the full group list window. When you read news using a user group list window, NewsWatcher keeps track of which articles you have read, and only shows you unread articles. When you read news using the full group list window, NewsWatcher shows you all of the available articles on the news server, whether you have already read them or not.

When you quit NewsWatcher, it asks if you want to save your “My News” user group list if there were any changes. You should click the “Save” button to save the file.

When you want to read the news in the future, double-click your “My News” file. NewsWatcher reopens your “My News” user group list window. When you open one of your subscribed groups, the subject window only displays new articles (the ones which you have not already read).

When a person posts a new article, it often leads to a sequence of follow-up articles from various people. Such a sequence of articles is called a “thread”. The follow-up articles in a thread all have the subject “Re: Original Subject”. NewsWatcher always sorts subject windows so that articles in the same thread are next to each other, in the order they were received by your news server. This makes it easy to read all the articles in a thread in order.

There are three commands in the News menu which are very useful when reading the news: “Next Article”, “Next Thread”, and “Next Group”.

Use the “Next Article” command (Command-I) when you want to read every single article in a group. This command closes the currently open article window and opens the next unread article.

If you are in the middle of reading a thread and decide that you want to skip the rest of the thread, use the “Next Thread” command (Command-T). This marks all the articles in the current thread read and opens the first article in the next thread.

Most people do not have the time each day to read all the articles in all their subscribed groups. Often, when you open a subject window, you see only a small number of subjects in which you are interested. After opening and reading all the articles in a group which you find interesting, use the “Next Group” command (Command-J). This marks all the articles in the current group read, closes the current subject window, and then opens the subject window for the next group in your list which has unread messages. This is a very convenient shortcut for rapidly going through the news each day. Marking all the articles in a group read instead of actually reading all of them is called “catching up”.

If you wish to respond to an article, you have two choices: the “Follow-Up to Article” command in the News menu, or the “Reply via Email” command in the News menu. The first command posts your reply to the public newsgroup, while the second command sends a private reply via Internet mail to the person who posted the article.

When responding to an article using either of these commands, NewsWatcher opens a new window in which you compose your reply. When you are ready to send the reply, click the “Send” button in the window.

To compose a new posting starting a new thread, first click the name of the group to which you want to post the article, then use the “Post New Article” command in the News menu.

If you would like to try posting a few practice messages just to see how it works, use the local newsgroup “nwu.test”. It was created for just this purpose. Please don’t post test messages to other groups—it’s considered rude.

Files

There are three files on your hard drive used by NewsWatcher:

1. **NewsWatcher**. This is the program file. You can put it anywhere you wish. You don't normally need to double-click this file, so you can bury it deep inside some nested folder if you wish.
2. **My News**. This is your user group list file. You double-click this file to run the program when you want to read the news. This file records your list of subscribed groups, and also keeps track of which articles have been read in each of the subscribed groups. You can put this file anywhere you wish. Many people like to keep it in their main window, or on the desktop, for convenient access. You can rename this file if you wish. You can also create multiple user group list files if you wish.
3. **NewsWatcher Preferences**. This is your preferences file. It is created automatically by NewsWatcher the first time you run the program. The file is stored in the Preferences folder inside your System folder. This file is used to save all of your NewsWatcher settings and preferences between runs of the program (e.g., your server addresses and personal information). The full group list is also saved on this file. When you run NewsWatcher after the first time, it gets the full group list from the preferences file instead of getting a whole new copy from the server. This saves lots of time, especially over slow dialup connections.

When you share a Mac with other people or use NewsWatcher in the labs, each person using the Mac needs to use their own private “NewsWatcher Preferences” file rather than the one in the Preferences folder. To solve this problem, NewsWatcher lets you store your personal “NewsWatcher Preferences” file in the same folder as your user group list file. When you double-click your user group list file to run NewsWatcher, it uses the preferences file in the same folder instead of the one in the Preferences folder.

Appendices B and C contain detailed instructions for people at NU who want to use NewsWatcher on a shared Mac or in the labs. Appendix D contains instructions for people not at NU.

Windows

NewsWatcher uses four different kinds of windows.

Group Windows

Group windows display lists of group names. There are three kinds of group windows: the full group list, the new groups list, and your user group list (or user group lists, if you create more than one).

The full group list is retrieved from the news server the first time you run NewsWatcher. The full group list window is always available, although you may hide it if you wish by closing it or by using the “Hide Full Group List” command in the Windows menu. Most people like to keep the full group list hidden most of the time. When you hide this window, the command in the Windows menu changes to “Show Full Group List”. Use this command to show the full group list again when you need to use it.

Each time you run NewsWatcher, it checks to see if any new groups have been created since the last time you ran the program. If there are any new groups, NewsWatcher adds them to your full group list, and opens a window named “New Groups” listing just the names of the new groups. You can drag these new groups to your user group list window if you wish to subscribe to them. If you don’t wish to subscribe to any of them, you can just close the window.

Both the full group list and the new groups list are always kept in alphabetical order. You can open subject lists and read articles using these windows, but NewsWatcher does not keep track of which articles you have read. Both lists always show all the available articles.

The user group list is the list of groups to which you have subscribed. You can put the groups in any order you wish within this kind of window. Use the mouse to drag a group

name to any desired new position in the list.

When you use your user group list to read articles, NewsWatcher keeps track of which articles you have read. NewsWatcher displays a continuously updated count of how many articles remain unread to the left of each group name. If there are no unread articles in a group, no count is displayed.

Because of the way news servers work, the article counts in user group list windows are sometimes too large. When you double-click a group to open its subject window, however, NewsWatcher gets an accurate count and updates the number in the user group list window. This is often especially noticeable when you subscribe to a new group. There are things your news server administrator can do to minimize this problem. See Appendix E for details.

NewsWatcher uses the following standard conventions for selecting items in lists:

To select a single item, click the item with no keys held down.

To select a range of items, click the first or last item in the range, then hold down the Shift key while clicking the other end of the range.

To select multiple items which are not in a continuous range, hold down the Command key while clicking the items. You can also deselect a single item by holding down the Command key while clicking the item.

To deselect items when all the items in a list are selected, hold down the Command key while clicking any item in the list. This deselects just that item. Then click the item again with no keys held down. This deselects all the other items in the list.

The full group list is very long. To quickly locate and select a group, you can type the first few characters of each part of the group name. For example, type “co.sy.ma.an” to quickly jump to the group “comp.sys.mac.announce”.

Subject Windows

Subject windows display lists of articles within a group. For each article, NewsWatcher displays the following information:

- The author's name.

- The subject.

- A check mark if the article has been read.

For the first article in each thread, NewsWatcher displays a small triangle “thread control” at the left side of the subject window. These controls work like the triangle controls in Finder windows. Click a control to expand or collapse a thread. When a thread is collapsed, only the first article in the thread is displayed, and the triangle control points to the right. When a thread is expanded, all the articles in the thread are displayed, and the triangle control points down.

For threads, the number of articles in the thread is displayed following the triangle

control. This helps tell how big a thread is when it is collapsed.

For articles which are not part of a thread, a hyphen (–) is displayed instead of a triangle.

For a collapsed thread, a check mark means that all the articles in the thread have been read.

You can also use keyboard shortcuts to expand and collapse threads. Command-right arrow expands selected threads. Command-left arrow collapses selected threads. These are the same shortcuts used in Finder windows.

Article Windows

Article windows display the text of articles.

The subject is displayed as the window title. The author's name and organization and the date the article was posted are displayed in a small "panel area" just below the window title. For articles in threads, the panel area also displays the article number within the thread and the length of the thread.

For a very large article (longer than about 32,000 characters), NewsWatcher divides the article into sections. Only one section can be displayed at a time. A scroll bar at the bottom of the article window is used to switch to a different section. A status message "Section x of y" also appears at the bottom of the window.

When an article is saved to disk, the entire article is saved, not just the current section.

When an article is printed, the entire article is printed, not just the current section.

Message Windows

Message windows are used to compose articles and mail messages before sending them.

NewsWatcher does normal Mac word wrapping at the right window edge as you type paragraphs of text in message windows. When you actually send the message, NewsWatcher automatically breaks all of your paragraphs into separate lines of length 75 characters or less.

Message windows contain a panel area which displays information about the message. The panel area also contains the "Send" button.

Menus and Commands

NewsWatcher has several menus and commands.

Several of the commands are planned for version 2.0 final, but have not yet been implemented. These commands all have a not sign (¬) preceding their name in the menu. You can select them, but all you get is an alert saying “Not yet implemented.” See the To Do list for details on what we plan to do with these commands.

Apple Menu

About NewsWatcher

Displays NewsWatcher’s about box.

File Menu

New Group Window

Creates a new empty user group list window.

Open Group List (Command-O)

Opens a user group list which was previously saved to disk.

Close (Command-W)

Closes the currently active window.

Save (Command-S)

Save As

The usual Mac save commands. User group lists, articles, and messages can all be saved to disk.

Page Setup

Print (Command-P)

The usual Mac printing commands.

Get Group List from Host

Send Group List to Host

People may wish to switch from using a UNIX newsreader to using NewsWatcher (or vice versa). Some people may even like to use both kinds of newsreaders. These commands make it easy to do this.

Both NewsWatcher and the UNIX newsreaders keep track of your subscribed groups, and which articles in these groups you have read. Under UNIX, this is called your “newsrsrc” file. With NewsWatcher, this is your user group list.

The “Get Group List from Host” command transfers a newsrsrc file from a UNIX host to your Mac and converts it into a NewsWatcher user group list. You are asked to supply the UNIX host name, your username, your password, and the path name of your “.newsrsrc” file. When the newsrsrc file has been retrieved to the Mac, NewsWatcher opens a new user group list named “newsrsrc”. You can then save this file to disk.

The “Send Group List to Host” command converts a NewsWatcher user group list into a UNIX format newsrsrc file and sends it to your UNIX host.

You should beware that these commands work well only if your UNIX account and NewsWatcher are using the same news server.

At NU, the “UNIX host” you should use with these commands is usually casbah or merle, or some other UNIX host on campus on which you have an account. This is **not** the news server host “news.acns.nwu.edu”. At NU, users do not have accounts on the news server host.

Preferences

This command is used to select various preferences and NewsWatcher settings. There are quite a few preferences. They are all described in detail in a separate section later in this document.

Quit (Command-Q)

The standard Mac command to quit the program.

Edit Menu

Undo (Command-Z)

Cut (Command-X)

Copy (Command-C)

Paste (Command-V)

Clear

Select All (Command-A)

The standard Mac editing commands.

Show/Hide Header (Command-H)

Articles, postings, and mail messages all begin with a standard cryptic set of lines called the “header”. Most people don’t care about these headers, and by default NewsWatcher does not display them. This command toggles a window between showing the header and hiding the header.

Rot-13 Text

Sometimes people post articles which contain sensitive information. For example, someone might post an article discussing the ending to a current popular movie. As a kindness to people who may want to see the movie themselves to discover how it ends, the person posting the article may scramble the message using a standard USENET technique called “Rot-13”. The message is unreadable until it is unscrambled.

This command can be used both to unscramble such articles and to scramble your own postings. When scrambling a posting, be careful that you first select just the text of your posting, not the header or your signature! The Rot-13 command only scrambles the selected text.

News Menu

Next Article (Command-I)

Closes the currently open article (if any) and opens the next unread article. If no more unread articles remain in the current group, opens the next group which contains an unread article.

Next Thread (Command-T)

Closes the currently open article (if any), marks all the articles in the current thread read, and opens the next unread article. This is a convenient command if you are in the middle of a long boring thread and decide that you don't care to read the rest of the articles in the thread.

Next Group (Command-J)

Marks all the articles in a subject window read, closes the window, and opens the next group which contains an unread article.

Mark Read (Command-M)

Mark Unread (Command-U)

These commands mark articles read or unread. You can use them with article windows, subject windows, and group windows. When used with an article window, only that article is marked read or unread. When used with a subject window, only the selected subjects are marked read or unread. When used with a group window, all of the articles in all of the selected groups are marked read or unread.

When a collapsed thread is marked read or unread in a subject window, all the articles in the thread are marked read or unread.

For example, if a subject window is open, Command-A-M marks all of the articles in the window read. Or, you can close the subject window, click the group name in the group list window to select it, and then type Command-M to achieve the same goal.

Sometimes you want to be able to go back and reread an article you have already read. There are several ways to do this:

- Mark the entire group unread and then open it and find the old article you want.
- Use the full group list to find the old article.
- Use the “Search Selected Groups” command in the Special menu to search for the old article.
- Close your user group list file without saving it, then reopen it. This restores any old articles which you have marked read since the last time you saved the file.

Post New Article (Command-N)

Opens a message window in which you compose a new article starting a new thread.

Follow-Up to Article (Command-R)

Opens a message window in which you compose a public response to an article. The text of the original article is included in the opened window, with a “>” character placed at the beginning of each line. This is called “quoted” text. The convention is to intermix your comments with the quoted text. You can also delete all or part of the quoted text if you wish. Usually you should retain only the portions of the quoted text which are directly relevant to your comments.

Reply via Email (Command-K)

Opens a message window in which you compose a private email response to an article. As with follow-up messages, the original text is quoted and included in the opened window.

Send Message (Command-E)

Sends the current posting or mail message, then closes the message window. This is equivalent to clicking on the “Send” button in the window.

To send a message, you can also simply close the message window. NewsWatcher presents an alert asking if you want to send the message.

Check for New Articles (Command-Y)

You can check for new articles without having to quit and rerun NewsWatcher.

To check for new articles, first bring your user group list window to the front. Then use the command.

NewsWatcher first closes any open subject and article windows associated with the user

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group list window, then sends a query to the news server asking if any new articles have appeared for each group in the user group list. The unread article counts in the window are updated.

Search Menu

Search Selected Groups

This command is used to search a group or groups for specific words or other substrings appearing in a header line. First, select the group or groups you wish to search. (Use the Shift and Command keys if you wish to select multiple groups, as described earlier.) Then, select the command. A dialog appears asking you to specify the header you wish to search and the text for which you wish to search. When you click OK, the search begins. All articles (read or unread) in all of the selected groups are searched. When the search finishes, a new user group window is opened. The window contains the name of each group which contained at least one matching article. When you open such a group, you see a list of all the articles which matched your search criteria.

For example, suppose you have heard that someone from Apple Computer posted an interesting article to comp.sys.mac.comm. You could search that group for all articles which contain “Apple” in the “Organization” header line.

All searches are case insensitive substring searches.

Special Menu

Subscribe

Adds all the currently selected group names in a full group list or new groups list to the end of your user group list.

Unsubscribe

Removes the selected group names from a user group list.

Check for New Groups

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This command checks to see if any new groups have been created since the last time the check was done. If any new groups have been created, they are added to the full group list. In addition, just the new groups are displayed in a “New Groups” window. You can open the new groups, subscribe to them, or just close the new groups window if you aren’t interested in any of them.

By default, NewsWatcher checks for new groups automatically each time you run the program. If you wish, you can use a preference to turn off this automatic check, and use this command to manually check for new groups periodically.

Most people check for new groups fairly frequently, either manually or automatically at each startup. This operation is normally quite fast, even over dialup connections.

Check for Deleted Groups

This command checks to see if any groups have been deleted. Deleted groups are removed from the full group list. This command does not check for new groups, only for deleted groups.

Most people use this command infrequently to weed out old deleted groups from their full group list. The command is reasonably fast over a direct network connection, but is quite slow over a dialup connection.

Rebuild Full Group List

This command is for emergency use in case the full group list becomes corrupted or gets seriously out of synchronization with the real full group list on the server (e.g., because the clock on your Mac was set improperly). NewsWatcher discards the old full group list and downloads a completely new fresh full group list from the server.

Most people do not need to use this command. It is quite slow over a dialup connection.

Open Selected Reference

Articles often contain references to other articles. Such references appear in the form <xxxxxxxxxxxx>. The cryptic string is called the article's "message id". This command can be used to easily open such a referenced article in a new window. Click anywhere inside the reference, or select all or part of the reference inside the angle brackets. Then use the command to open the reference.

As a convenient shortcut, you can also hold down the Option key while clicking anywhere within a reference to open the referenced article.

Open All References

This command opens all the "references" for an article: the article to which this article is a follow-up, plus the article to which that article was a follow-up, and so on back to the original article which started the thread.

This command does not always work perfectly. There are two problems.

First, all news servers delete old articles after a certain period of time. Thus, for a long thread, old articles at the beginning of the thread may no longer be available.

Second, most of the various programs used on the Internet to read and post news impose a limit on how many references they can keep track of per article. For long threads, you often find that early references get lost as articles get added to the end of the thread. NewsWatcher is not able to locate or retrieve these lost early references. Sometimes using the “Open All References” command several times in a row finds and opens more references.

Get Server Info

This command is useful when diagnosing problems with NewsWatcher. It displays your news server name and version number and all of the NNTP protocol commands supported by the server. If you send an error report to the author of NewsWatcher, we would appreciate it if you would use this command, copy all the information to the clipboard, and paste the information into your error report.

The information displayed by this command is also useful when used together with the administrator notes in Appendix E.

Windows Menu

Cycle Windows (Command-L)

This command “cycles” through your windows. It moves the current front window to the back of the window list.

Zoom Window (Command-\\)

This command zooms or unzooms the current window. It is equivalent to clicking in the zoom box of the window.

Show/Hide Full Group List

This command toggles between showing and hiding the full group list window.

Window titles

The remainder of the Windows menu lists the titles of all of the currently open windows. Selecting a window title from the menu brings that window to the front.

Preferences

NewsWatcher has many preferences and settings. They are all set using the “Preferences” command in the File menu. This command opens a dialog window. A popup menu at the top of the window is used to select different topics.

General Options

This topic is used to specify a variety of general options for NewsWatcher.

Show authors. Shows authors in addition to subjects in subject windows. Unfortunately, it takes about twice as long to open a subject window if authors are shown in addition to subjects. Turn this option off if you want to speed up opening subject windows.

Show headers. Shows headers by default in all new article and message windows. Most people don’t care about the headers most of the time, so this option is off initially. Turn it on if you like to see headers most of the time. You can also use the “Show/Hide Header” command in the Edit menu to show and hide headers in individual windows.

Collapse threads. All threads are initially collapsed when new subject windows are opened. Turn this option off if you prefer expanded threads.

Keypad shortcuts. Turn this option on to enable the keypad shortcuts described in Appendix A.

Zoom windows. Automatically rezooms windows whenever you expand a thread, show a header, subscribe to a new group, or change a window’s font or size. Note that new windows are always automatically zoomed, no matter how this option is set. The option only affects rezooming of windows after actions which change their contents. Also note that with the exception of font/size changes, this option only makes windows bigger, never smaller.

Mail copies of replies to me. Carbon copies of all email replies are sent to your email address. This option is initially off.

Check for new groups at startup. NewsWatcher normally checks for new groups each time you run the program. Turn this option off if you prefer to manually check for new groups using the “Check for New Groups” command in the Special menu. Turning off this option speeds up startup a little bit.

“Are You Sure” alert on posts. Whenever you compose a follow-up or new posting, an alert is displayed which presents the standard USENET warning about posting. Turn this option off when you get sick of seeing the alert.

Log actions to file. This option is intended to help the authors of NewsWatcher locate and fix problems you might have with the program. When the option is turned on, NewsWatcher writes a variety of diagnostic information to a log file as it performs operations and communicates with your servers. The log file is named “NewsWatcher Log”. It is located in the same folder as the NewsWatcher program. You should normally leave this option off, since logging slows down the program and consumes disk space. Turn it on only if we ask you to turn it on so we can help you solve a problem.

Auto save on quit. NewsWatcher automatically saves any changed old user group list windows when you quit the program. The usual “Save changes” alert is not presented.

Maximum number of articles to fetch. This is a numeric option. It specifies the maximum number of articles to be fetched from the news server when opening a subject window. If the actual number of articles exceeds this limit, only the most recent articles are fetched. Some groups on USENET have a very large number of articles posted daily, and fetching all of the articles currently on the server for the group can take a long time. This option lets you get just the most recent ones. The initial value for this option is 400 articles.

Server Addresses

Use this topic to change the addresses of your news server and mail server. At NU, we have preconfigured these addresses for you. Our news server is at address “news.acns.nwu.edu”, and our mail server is at address “relay.acns.nwu.edu”. At other sites, NewsWatcher asks for these addresses the first time you run the program. You need to get the proper addresses from your local network administrator.

Server Options

These options make NewsWatcher faster. Unfortunately, they do not work with all news servers. All the options are off by default, which makes NewsWatcher work with almost any server.

At NU, all four of these options should be turned on, and we have preconfigured the copy of NewsWatcher we distribute on Plato so that they are all turned on by default. At other sites, all four options are off by default, and you should turn them on only after carefully reading the instructions which follow.

You need to know what kind of news server you are using. To find out this information, use the “Get Server Info” command in the Special menu. If your server is identified as “NNTP”, you are using what is called the “reference implementation” server. “INN” and “ANU” are other popular kinds of servers.

For more technical information about these options, see Appendix E.

Use batched GROUP commands

This is by far the most important of the four server options. It has a major impact on the performance of NewsWatcher. Most people can and should turn on this option.

This option makes the check for new articles operation much faster. Typically, checking for new articles is 4 to 5 times faster when the option is turned on. This operation is performed whenever you open a user group list file, whenever you fetch a newsrc file from a remote host, and whenever you use the “Check for New Articles” command.

You should leave this option turned off if you are using version 1.5.10 of the reference implementation server (NNTP). Otherwise, try turning the option on. If NewsWatcher hangs forever when you try to open a user group list or check for new articles, turn the option off. (The exact symptom of the problem is that the status window appears with the message “Checking for new articles” and the beachball cursor spins until you cancel the operation.)

If you are using version 1.5.10 of the reference implementation server, you should encourage your local news administrator to upgrade to version 1.5.11 or switch to INN.

Use XPAT command for searches

This option makes the “Search Selected Groups” command significantly faster.

You should turn this option on only if you are using an INN server and your server administrator has installed the special patch included in Appendix E.

Don’t open new connection when checking for new articles

This option makes the “Check for New Articles” command a little bit faster.

You should turn this option on if you are using an INN server. Leave it turned off if you are using the reference implementation server (NNTP).

With other kinds of servers, try turning the option on. If the “Check for New Articles” command never finds any new articles, turn the option off.

Don't send MODE READER command

This option makes program startup a little bit faster.

Most people should be able to turn on this option. With some INN servers, you will get server error messages when you try to read or post articles. If this happens, turn the option off.

Personal Information

Your full name, organization, and electronic mail address. This information is included in the headers of all postings and mail messages you send. NewsWatcher also asks for this information the first time you run the program.

Signature

Many people like to use a standard “signature” at the bottom of all their postings and mail messages. A signature, for example, would typically give your name, organization, and email address. All of this information is also usually in the header, but it’s nice to have it at the end of the message too.

Many people also like to include pithy little sayings, jokes, aphorisms, disclaimers about their employers not being responsible for what they have to say, “messages of the day”, little pictures of themselves, or other junk in their signatures. Others find this stupid. It’s up to you!

This topic contains a field in which you type your signature. The text you enter is automatically included at the end of all message windows you open.

One of the USENET conventions is to always use a special “-- ” separator line right before your signature. NewsWatcher inserts this separator line for you automatically. If you don’t like this feature, you can turn it off using a checkbox option.

Remote Host Information

The host name, username, password, and “.newsrsrc” file path name for the “Get Group List from Host” and “Send Group List to Host” commands.

There are two additional checkboxes in this topic:

Save Password. Turn on this option to save your password on the preferences file in between runs of NewsWatcher. This is convenient, because you don't have to reenter your password each time you run the program. You shouldn't use it if you are concerned about security, however.

Automatically get/put newsrc. If you regularly use both NewsWatcher and a UNIX newsreader to read the news, turn on this checkbox. NewsWatcher automatically gets your newsrc file from the UNIX host each time it is run, and it automatically sends your updated newsrc file back to the UNIX host each time you quit the program.

Font and Size

Use this topic to select the font and size for your windows. You can select one font and size for your group and subject list windows, and a different font and size for your article and message windows. Usually a monospaced font like Monaco is best for article and message windows. The initial font is Monaco 9 for all windows.

Saved Text Files

This topic is used to select preferences for saved articles and messages.

Application to open saved text files. By default, when you use the “Save” or “Save As” command to save an article or message, NewsWatcher saves the article or message as a TeachText file. When you double-click the saved file’s icon, TeachText is opened. If you would rather use some other text editor or word processor, use the “Set” button to select the one you prefer.

Default folder for saving text files. When you save an article or message, NewsWatcher presents the standard Mac save file dialog. Many people like to always save articles and messages in the same folder. It’s convenient to have the standard Mac save file dialog always come up with this folder selected as the default location for the saved file.

To set a default folder for saving text files, first click the checkbox to turn the option on. Then click the “Set” button to set your default folder.

Appendix A - Keypad Shortcuts

As a convenience, NewsWatcher lets you use the keypad keys to perform common operations and commands. The goal is to permit simple everyday news reading (but not writing) operations to be performed with a single hand using only the keypad.

The keypad keys add no new functionality to NewsWatcher. They are only a convenience. There is some other standard way to do each of the operations without using the keypad.

Important: This use of the keypad is non-standard behavior for a Mac program, and is therefore disabled by default. To use these shortcuts, you must first turn on the “Keypad shortcuts” option in the “General Options” preferences topic.

The bottom row of three keys are used for the three “Next” commands:

0	Next article.
period	Next thread.
enter	Next group.

The 3x3 square of numeric keys 1-9 are used to scroll within a window:

1	End.
2	Line down.

- 3 Page down.
- 4 Previous section (scroll left).
- 5 Unused so far.
- 6 Next section (scroll right).
- 7 Home.
- 8 Line up.
- 9 Page up.

The remaining keys on the keypad are used for other common operations:

- clear Unused so far.
- = Select all.
- / Expand or collapse selected thread.
- * Close window.
- Mark unread.
- + Mark read.

The “Line up” and “Line down” keys (8 and 2) perform different operations in text and list windows. In text windows, these keys scroll the text window up or down one line. You can hold down the keys to get smooth continuous scrolling of text through the window. This is the same as pressing on the arrows at the ends of scroll bars with the mouse. This is not the same as the up and down arrow keys, which move the selection point up or down one line in the text. In list windows, these keys move the selection to the previous or next item in the list. This is the same as using the up and down arrow keys. To get smooth scrolling, you have to use the mouse.

The “Next section” and “Previous section” keys (6 and 4) are used only with large articles which have been split into sections. The keys scroll through the sections, and are an alternative to using the horizontal scroll bar.

On the Apple extended keyboard, the Home, End, Page Up, Page Down, and forward delete keys also work. These keys always work. You don’t have to turn on the “Keypad shortcuts” option to use them.

Appendix B - Sharing NewsWatcher at NU

On a private Macintosh where only one person is using NewsWatcher, the “NewsWatcher Preferences” file is stored in the Preferences folder inside the System Folder. This file contains, among other things, personal information like your name, organization, and email address. This is a problem if more than one person wants to use NewsWatcher on the Mac.

To share NewsWatcher on a single Mac, each person needs his or her own personal NewsWatcher Preferences file.

To install NewsWatcher on a shared Mac for a person named “Joe”, do the following:

1. Drag a copy of the NewsWatcher program file from Plato to any location on the hard drive. You only need to do this once. Everyone uses the same copy of the program. Nobody should ever double-click this file to run NewsWatcher, however, so it’s best to bury it inside some deeply nested subfolder.
2. Create a folder anywhere on the hard drive named “Joe’s NewsWatcher”.
3. Drag copies of the two files named “My News” and “NewsWatcher Preferences” from Plato into the folder you just created.

Joe now has his own personal NewsWatcher folder. The copy of “My News” inside this folder is Joe’s personal user group list. The copy of “NewsWatcher Preferences” inside this folder is Joe’s personal preferences file.

To run NewsWatcher, Joe double-clicks his “My News” file. Do not double click the NewsWatcher program file icon!

The first time Joe runs NewsWatcher, the program asks him to supply his personal information: his full name, organization, and email address. This information is stored on Joe’s personal preferences file inside his personal NewsWatcher folder, rather than being stored in the Preferences folder.

Repeat steps 2 and 3 above for all the other people who are using NewsWatcher on the Mac. You can create as many personal NewsWatcher folders as you wish on the hard drive.

People can rename their “My News” files and their personal NewsWatcher folders if they wish. Do not, however, rename any of the “NewsWatcher Preferences” files. Don’t move either of the two files. They must always be in the same folder.

On a shared Mac, it is a good idea to force people to use their personal NewsWatcher folders, rather than trying to run NewsWatcher by double-clicking on the program icon. To do this, create an empty TeachText file and save it as the file named “NewsWatcher Preferences” in the Preferences folder inside the System Folder. When NewsWatcher runs, it checks the creator and type of the “NewsWatcher Preferences” file. If the file was not created by NewsWatcher or has the wrong file type, the following alert is presented, and then NewsWatcher quits:

The owners of this shared Macintosh insist that you open NewsWatcher using a personal preferences file. Ask them for help, or see the NewsWatcher document.

Appendix C - Using NewsWatcher in the NU Labs

To use NewsWatcher in our ACNS labs, you carry your NewsWatcher files with you on a floppy disk.

To get started, bring a blank floppy disk to any of the ACNS Mac labs. The files are not large, so an 800K floppy works fine. Insert the floppy in the floppy drive. Use the Chooser to access the Plato file server in the Plato zone as a guest. Open the Plato folder named “Networking Software”, then the subfolder named “NewsWatcher”. Drag both of the files named “My News” and “NewsWatcher Preferences” onto your floppy disk.

You now have your personal NewsWatcher floppy. The copy of “My News” on your floppy is your personal user group list. The copy of “NewsWatcher Preferences” on your floppy is your personal preferences file.

There is no need to copy the NewsWatcher program file onto your floppy disk. The ACNS lab managers have already installed the program on the lab servers and/or on the lab local hard drives.

To run NewsWatcher on a lab Mac, insert your floppy and double-click your “My News” file. Do not double click the NewsWatcher program file icon!

The first time you run NewsWatcher, the program asks you to supply personal information: your full name, organization, and email address. This information is stored on your personal preferences file

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on your floppy.

You can rename the “My News” user group list file if you wish. Do not, however, rename the “NewsWatcher Preferences” file.

Appendix D - Notes for non-NU Folks

NewsWatcher is used at other universities and organizations around the world, not just at Northwestern. This appendix contains notes for folks not at NU.

The anonymous FTP site for NewsWatcher, its documents, and the Think C source code is `ftp.acns.nwu.edu`, directory `pub/newswatcher`.

Check to see if NewsWatcher is officially supported by your local computing organization. If it is, they may have local documentation and a local customized version of the program. If they do, read the local document and follow the instructions for your site. If there is no local documentation, use the following instructions.

To get started, copy the NewsWatcher program file to any convenient location on your hard drive. Run the program.

NewsWatcher first asks you to enter your local news and mail server addresses. Get this information from your local network administrator.

NewsWatcher then asks you to enter your personal information (full name, organization, and email address). Enter the information.

NewsWatcher then gets the full group list from your local news server and opens the full group list window.

To create your user group list, use the “New Group Window” command in the File menu to open a new empty user group list window. To subscribe to groups, drag them from the full group list window into your user group list window.

Use the “Save” command in the File menu to save your user group list on your hard drive.

When you want to read the news in the future, double-click your saved user group list icon.

Your news server must be properly configured for NewsWatcher to work on your Mac. If you cannot connect to your news server, or if you get server error messages, see Appendix E below. Show this appendix to your local news administrator. He or she may be able to fix the problem using the information in the appendix.

If you share a Mac with other people who also want to use NewsWatcher, you need to create separate personal NewsWatcher folders. To do this, run NewsWatcher and set all the various preferences, including your personal information. Also create and save a personal user group list file. Then quit NewsWatcher. Create a new folder anywhere on the hard drive. Move your personal user group list file into this folder. Also move the “NewsWatcher Preferences” file from the Preferences folder inside the System Folder into the folder. In the future, when you want to run NewsWatcher, open your folder and double-click your user group list icon. NewsWatcher uses your personal “NewsWatcher Preferences” file inside your folder instead of the one inside the System Folder. Each person who uses NewsWatcher on the Mac has his or her own NewsWatcher folder containing his or her personal user group list file

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and “NewsWatcher Preferences” file.

Appendix E - Administrator Notes

We have tried to gather together all the more technical information about NewsWatcher in this Appendix. Most NewsWatcher users shouldn't have to read it unless they are curious. If you have problems with NewsWatcher, however, you may find the answer to your problem here. News server administrators should also find these notes useful.

We are not experts on all the different implementations of news servers. If you are such an expert, and if you find an error in this Appendix, or if you discover some additional information which you think it would be useful to include here, please let us know.

NewsWatcher requires that Apple's "MacTCP" product be properly installed and configured on the user's Mac. MacTCP is the basic TCP/IP protocol stack for the Mac. It is a commercial product which is not included with the NewsWatcher distribution. People can purchase individual copies from Apple dealers, or organizations can purchase licenses.

NewsWatcher has been tested with the popular INN, "reference implementation", and ANU news servers. It should work with any server which implements the standard NNTP protocol as described in the Internet RFCs, as long as the server also supports the "XHDR" extension.

The "reference implementation" server is also known as "NNTP".

This server is commonly used with the Cnews and Bnews systems. It is called the “reference implementation” to avoid confusion with the NNTP protocol, which is used by all the servers.

NewsWatcher uses the NNTP protocol to communicate over your TCP/IP internet with your local news server.

NewsWatcher also uses the SMTP protocol to send mail messages to your local mail server, and the FTP protocol to transfer newsrc files for the “Get Group List from Host” and “Send Group List to Host” commands.

NewsWatcher uses the following standard NNTP commands. All of these commands must be implemented by the news server and functioning properly: ARTICLE, GROUP, LIST, NEWGROUPS, POST, and QUIT.

NewsWatcher also requires that the XHDR extension be implemented. This extension permits news clients to get header information for ranges of article numbers. The XHDR extension is a standard part of the INN server. With the reference implementation, a compile-time option controls whether or not the XHDR extension is implemented.

Some news servers use special authorization extensions for security. These servers require that clients support the AUTHINFO command for authorization. NewsWatcher does not yet support this extension, so it cannot be used with such servers. We hope to implement this feature in a future version of the program.

NewsWatcher uses the NEWGROUPS command to check for new newsgroups and show them to the user. Many servers have problems with this command. We are aware of two such problems.

First, some servers abruptly close the connection when they receive the NEWGROUPS command. In NewsWatcher, the user gets an alert saying “Lost connection to server”. We have reports of this problem with Bnews systems when the reference implementation server was improperly built with the `ACTIVE_TIMES_FILE` symbol defined.

Second, we have many reports of the following server error with the NEWGROUPS command:

503 Cannot open newsgroup date file

If your users complain that they are getting this error, make certain your “active.times” file exists and is being updated properly.

Although it is not required, we also highly recommend that the news server support the “XOVER overview database”. INN supports XOVER, and there is a patch available for the reference implementation to support it. XOVER dramatically improves performance with NewsWatcher. The performance gain occurs when users open subject windows. When a user opens a subject window, NewsWatcher sends XHDR commands to the server to get subject and author information for ranges of article numbers. Without XOVER, the server must open each individual article file in the spool area and extract the requested header lines. With XOVER, the server maintains a header information database, and it only has to open the database file.

We cannot emphasize strongly enough how important XOVER is to NewsWatcher performance. It can literally make the difference between many minutes and only a few seconds when opening large subject windows.

Make certain that your news server authorization files permit Macintosh users at your organization to read and post news. If a NewsWatcher user complains that the server refuses to accept connections at all, one likely reason is that his Macintosh is not permitted to connect in the authorization file. If the user complains that posting doesn't work, the most likely reason is that his Macintosh is not permitted to post in the authorization file.

Many administrators set up their authorization files based on domain names. In this case, a Macintosh on which NewsWatcher is being used must have a domain name. Failure to assign domain names to networked Macintoshes and other personal computers is a common mistake made at many organizations. If your server requires domain names, and if a Mac user complains that NewsWatcher cannot connect to the server, a very likely cause of the problem is that the Mac was never assigned a domain name.

By default, NewsWatcher sends a "MODE READER" command to the server at startup. With the INN server, this command tells the server that the Mac is a news reader, not a news feeder. Non-INN servers send back an error message to NewsWatcher when they receive this command. NewsWatcher ignores the response to this command.

Users can turn on the "Don't send MODE READER command" checkbox in the "Server Options" preference topic to disable this command. This makes startup a little bit faster, and it works with most

servers (even most INN servers). Indeed, the MODE READER command can always be avoided by properly configuring the news server.

If a user turns on the “Don’t send MODE READER command” option, and if he gets server errors with your INN server whenever he tries to read or post articles, there are two solutions: The user can turn the option off, or you can properly configure your server to specify that the user’s Mac is a news reader, not a news feeder.

Some news and mail servers require that all postings and mail messages include standard “Date” header lines. This is particularly common in Europe. Indeed, “Date” header lines are required according to the Internet RFCs. In the United States, most servers are lenient and supply a “Date” header line if it is missing.

NewsWatcher can generate “Date” header lines to meet this requirement. To do this, install the standard Apple “Map” control panel and configure it with the world location of your Mac. NewsWatcher needs this information so it can put the proper time zone information in the “Date” header line.

An alternative to the “Map” control panel is Pete Resnick’s “Network Time” control panel version 2.0 or later. You must configure Network Time with the proper time zone of your Mac.

If you don’t use either of these control panels (Map or Network Time 2.0 or later), then NewsWatcher does not include any “Date” header lines in postings and mail messages, because it has no way of knowing in which time zone the Mac is located. This is the same convention used by the Eudora Mac mail program.

If one of these control panels is installed, NewsWatcher also reformats all dates and times in the panel area of article windows to show the date

and time in the local time of the user's Mac, in localized Macintosh date/time format. If you want to see the unformatted date and time, use the "Show Header" command to see the raw "Date" header line. If neither of the control panels is installed, NewsWatcher displays the raw "Date" header line value in the panel area.

Both the INN and the reference implementation servers include components which update the low article numbers in the "active file". NewsWatcher relies on these low article numbers to display accurate article counts in user group list windows. If a NewsWatcher user complains that his article counts are frequently too large, it means that your server is not properly updating the low article numbers in your active file.

NewsWatcher closes its news server connection automatically after it has been idle for 10 minutes. If the user returns to reading the news, a new connection is opened automatically. The users don't notice anything. Many NewsWatcher users keep the program running all the time, but you don't need to worry about using up massive numbers of process slots or swap space for the server processes. Only active users should have server processes running.

Whenever NewsWatcher needs to check for new articles, it sends individual GROUP commands to the server, one for each subscribed group, to get the current [low,high] article range for each group. This operation is performed whenever the user opens a user group list file, whenever the user gets a newsrc file from a remote host, and whenever the user selects the "Check for New Articles" command. There are two problems with this operation.

First, with even medium size user group lists, this operation is too slow

if NewsWatcher sends the GROUP commands one at a time. It is much faster to send all the GROUP commands in a single buffer, then wait for the responses to arrive. Indeed, tests show that sending the GROUP commands in a batch is typically 4-5 times faster than sending them one at a time. Unfortunately, these kinds of batched commands do not work with all servers. In particular, with version 1.5.10 of the reference

implementation server, the server only responds to the first command in the batch, and NewsWatcher hangs waiting for the other responses to arrive.

For this reason, by default, NewsWatcher sends GROUP commands one at a time. With servers which support batched commands, the user can and should turn on the “Use batched GROUP commands” checkbox in the “Server Options” preferences topic.

If you are running version 1.5.10 of the reference implementation server, and if your users have this problem, we encourage you to consider upgrading to version 1.5.11, or switch to INN.

The second problem with GROUP commands involves all the versions of the reference implementation server. Unfortunately, the reference implementation server does not reread the active file when it gets a GROUP command. Instead, it uses the copy of the active file it read at the time the server was initialized (when the user first connected to the server). With NewsWatcher, this means that the [low,high] article information returned by the server is stale. For the NewsWatcher user, the “Check for New Articles” command never finds any new articles!

To solve this second problem, by default NewsWatcher always closes the current news server connection (if one is open) and opens a new connection before any check for new articles operation. This forces the server to reread the active file to get current [low,high] article ranges. If the user is using INN or some other kind of server which does not have this problem, the user can and should turn on the “Don’t open new connection when checking for new articles” checkbox in the “Server Options” preference topic. This speeds up the check for new articles operation a little bit.

If the user turns on the “Use XPAT for searches” checkbox in the “Server Options” preferences topic, NewsWatcher uses the XPAT command to help speed up the “Search Selected Groups” command. With this INN extension, the server uses the XOVER database to search the specified header lines, and returns only the ones matching specified search criteria. If this extension is not available, NewsWatcher does searches the hard way: it uses the XHDR command to fetch all the headers to be searched, and does the searching on the local Mac.

Unfortunately, there’s a tiny error in INN version 1.4. XPAT searches never match the last article in a group! There are two solutions to this problem:

1. The user can turn off the “Use XPAT for searches” preference in NewsWatcher. If you turn off this preference, NewsWatcher always does searches the hard way, without using the XPAT command.
2. The server administrator can apply the following simple patch to INN. The patch changes a < to <= in the article.c module:

```
*** 1.1 1993/06/07 18:56:56
--- article.c 1993/06/07 18:57:41
*****
*** 1,4 ****
! /* $Revision: 1.1 $
**
** Article-related routines.
*/
--- 1,4 ----
! /* $Revision: 1.2 $
**
** Article-related routines.
*/
*****
*** 1080,1086 ****
```

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```
    }

    Printf("%d %s matches follow.\r\n", NNTP_HEAD_FOLLOWS_VAL, header);
!   for (pattern = Glom(&av[3]), i = range.Low; i < range.High; i++) {
        if (ARTfind(i) < 0)
            continue;

--- 1080,1086 ----
    }

    Printf("%d %s matches follow.\r\n", NNTP_HEAD_FOLLOWS_VAL, header);
!   for (pattern = Glom(&av[3]), i = range.Low; i <= range.High; i++) {
        if (ARTfind(i) < 0)
            continue;
```

This error should be fixed in the next version of INN. Eventually we should be able to get rid of the preference.

Appendix F - Customizing NewsWatcher

This Appendix is for network managers who wish to customize NewsWatcher for use at their site.

You can and should do your users a favor and preconfigure NewsWatcher with the proper addresses of your news and mail servers, and with the proper values of all the “Server Options” preferences for your site. You distribute your customized version of NewsWatcher to the users at your site.

We do this here at Northwestern. The copy of NewsWatcher we distribute on our Plato file server for local use at NU is preconfigured. The copy we distribute for non-NU people on <ftp.acns.nwu.edu> is a “generic” version which is not preconfigured.

To preconfigure NewsWatcher, first drag any existing old NewsWatcher Preferences file outside of the Preferences folder. Then run a generic copy of NewsWatcher. The program first prompts for the server addresses. Enter the proper addresses for your local site. The program then prompts for personal information. Cancel this dialog. Open the preferences dialog, select the “Server Options” topic, and set the proper server options for your site. Then open the about box and type Command-2. An alert appears asking if you really want to customize your copy of NewsWatcher. Click OK. A special resource with type ‘PREF’ and id 128 is added to the NewsWatcher program file. This resource contains a complete copy of all the NewsWatcher preferences as you configured them.

Distribute this customized copy of NewsWatcher to your users. When

they run it for the first time, no NewsWatcher Preferences file exists, and the program uses the ‘PREF’ 128 resource to set its initial preference values. The program prompts the user to supply the personal information, but does not prompt the user to supply the server addresses. In addition, all the server options are set properly for your site’s server, so the user doesn’t have to worry about setting them correctly.

When you quit NewsWatcher after running it to create the customized version as described above, it also creates an initial NewsWatcher Preferences file in your Preferences folder with the same settings. At Northwestern, we also distribute this preconfigured NewsWatcher Preferences file to local users to help get them started on shared Macs and in our labs. See Appendices B and C above for details. You can do the same thing at your site if you wish.

To “uncustomize” NewsWatcher, use ResEdit to delete the ‘PREF’ 128 resource. The result is the original “generic” version of the program.

At Northwestern, we also distribute a preconfigured user group list file which contains just our important local `nwu.comp.announce` newsgroup. You can do something similar at your site if you wish.

If you have Macintosh labs at your site, you can support NewsWatcher in your labs in much the same way that we do it here at NU, as described in Appendix C above.

In a lab, it is a good idea to force people to use their personal NewsWatcher floppies, rather than trying to run NewsWatcher by double-clicking on the program icon. To do this, create an empty TeachText file and save it as the file named “NewsWatcher Preferences” in the Preferences folder inside the System Folder on each lab Mac. When NewsWatcher runs, it checks the creator and type of the NewsWatcher Preferences file. If the file was not created by NewsWatcher or has the wrong file type, the following alert is presented, and then NewsWatcher quits:

The owners of this shared Macintosh insist that you open NewsWatcher using a personal preferences file. Ask them for help, or see the NewsWatcher document.

Finally, you should feel free to modify this document for local use at your site, provided you leave intact the copyright notice and disclaimer and the credits.