

< Bulletins >

1 <LEDERBERG>LTR,SUMEX;4 WED 12-MAR-75 1:04PM

SYSTEM

Principles of privilege of access to SUMEX-AIM.

The SUMEX-AIM facility is fully funded by the NIH-BRB as a means to further research, research-related education, and socially beneficial applications, in the field of computer-aided intelligence as applied to health. The SUMEX staff and SUMEX-AIM users share an obligation to the taxpayers who provide the means to support this facility:

1. To meet the scientific objectives of the project,
2. To help build both a facility and a cooperative community that will be an even more effective instrument for such objectives,
3. To do these things in a way that reflects creditably on the value and seriousness of our purposes, and on our sense of responsibility to the sponsors.

In the administration of the SUMEX-AIM grant we have been afforded a remarkable degree of flexibility and local responsibility in order to pursue these objectives with a minimum of bureaucratic interference and red tape. If we continue to operate and work on the system with a high sense of prudence and responsibility, we may continue to enjoy that privilege; conversely, we can see many instances where abuses by a minority have led to the imposition of irksome restrictions and fussy detail of accountability on the many.

It is the responsibility of the SUMEX staff to organize the system in a way that optimizes these goals, and I believe we can be proud of our performance with respect both to our sponsors and to our users. We hope that users will continue to be cooperative and understanding about the need for accountability, and that the reporting that is being asked is at a minimum credible level.

In this note I will address some issues of USER responsibility in this enterprise (never forgetting that efficient and imaginative science is the superordinate aim). You will all have submitted scientific proposals that frame the justification for your access to the machine. Needless to say, experimentation with related frontiers of inquiry is also always to be encouraged; and all of us will be making further contributions to the general operation of the system as well as to specific projects. I hope that every use of the system is such as to be justifiable against potentially adverse and critical scrutiny, for reasons I have already stated.

Since recognized users are already well-informed, and in a responsible role, the most likely source of misunderstanding may be in the area of the delegation of SUMEX-AIM privileges to others. Project leaders of course must assume personal responsibility for the instruction of their colleagues and assistants in the ethical use of the system as surrogates for themselves -- this is implicit in the project-leader's request to establish new directories and user-names on his behalf. We will be posting bulletins from time to time to point out areas of concern; for example the careless and expensive preemption of phone-lines by inactive terminals; or the neglect to logout jobs before disconnecting. (Vigilant conscience is our main alternative to a cumbersome fee-accounting system.) We hope that users will indeed scrutinize the <BULLETINS> directory from time to time for file names that point to news of this kind.

Besides the 'official' delegation to a group member which is involved in setting up a new directory, users may have valid, perhaps even urgent reason to extend the use of their own software -- to students and collaborators, to potential users of new subsystems, to potential recruits, and in other demonstrations. Such activity when under the

J <LEDERBERG>LTR,SUMEX;4 WED 12-MAR-75 3:04PM

user's immediate supervision poses no special problems, and is an obvious extension of the project's primary purpose.

More careful attention must be given to the delegation of usage that involves lending one's password to enable independent login. This procedure is so prone to abuse that it must be generally discouraged, and if it is done, it must be on the premise that the password-owner is personally responsible for the usage. (Or, as a special case, that a group is functioning as a collective user-name sharing one directory.)

We recognize the importance of giving many people the opportunity to try SUMEX in an informal way, and we pose minimum barriers to setting up pilot accounts. Rather than lend their own passwords in a way that then defies further accountability, users should refer friends and prospects to me (e.g. by SNDMSG to LEDERBERG, or by mail) with requests for that privilege. We have so far refused no one who had any legitimate reason to be logged in.

Special arrangements have already been made with some projects like <EXODENDRAL> and <MYCIN>; and these may be refined further in the spirit of this memorandum-- those projects are invited to comment on their special needs prior to further discussion. In addition, we are planning to design a special route for GUEST logins that will provide us with the appropriate control and information pertinent to that kind of usage. Meanwhile, the hospitality of SUMEX-AIM should be exercised by recognized pilot accounts.

There is one category of usage that may be called recreational-educational that poses some problems. It can be justified as a way of introducing young people to computing, and of offering play to imagination in brief surcease from arduous intellectual effort. I would be happy if we had some AI-oriented games or game-like dialogues that could better meld the recreational and investigative functions, or demonstrate a higher order of intelligence than a pseudo-random-number generator in competing with a user. (Suggestions would be welcome.) This application obviously must be set at a priority that assures that it cannot consume otherwise useful CPU cycles. Conscientious users might set the command @PER 1 while in that mode, and avoid it altogether during prime-time hours.

J. Lederberg