

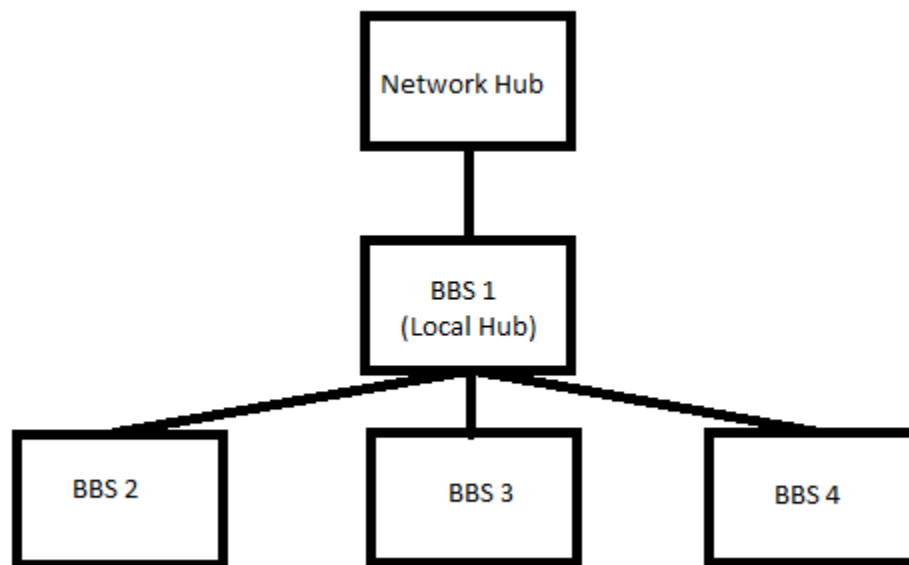
What's the Point?! by Jack Phlash - Demonic Productions (2024)

This is a general and fairly high level guide on how to set up point systems on FTN based echomail networks. I will be demonstrating this using [Mystic BBS](#) for all nodes simply because it's what I currently use with my own network, [ZerOnet](#), and frankly, it's one of the easier to configure and use BBS > FTN tossers FTN > mailers combinations out there. That said, this solution should work without much alteration with ANY fairly capable BBS software + mail tosser + mailer combination, and if you know your own setup decently well, adapting the knowledge herein should be simple.

Scenario:

You have a single uplink to an echomail network, but you have multiple BBSes you all want to participate in that network via that single uplink.

Something like this, perhaps:



In the year of our lord 2024, this is fairly pointless (*that's a clever pun which will make sense in about 20 seconds*) because the primary justification for doing this back in the day was to avoid tying up phone lines for longer than needed, and especially incurring unneeded long distance charges in the process. These days there aren't many downsides to having every BBS system have its own node number and do its own mailing over the Internet. Regardless, it's kind of a fun thing to set up, and does give you a bit more autonomy for how you use your network feeds, and given that for many of us, doing pointless things just for fun describes this entire hobby, I digress...

Solution:

To do this, one of your BBSes (or a standalone mail only system if you prefer) needs to act as a local hub for your other systems. Your other systems will be “point” systems. A point system is a system assigned the most specific kind of FTN address, AKA, instead of being 911:1719/0, a point system might be 911:1719/0.1. Broadly speaking, this is the intended use of point addresses, and most networks do not police their use or do specific routing to/from point systems. In fact, this can/will all be done entirely locally; your network hub/uplink operator does not need to do anything to facilitate this in most cases. This is where we come in!

A note about point addressing: Any node’s point address is normally 0. For instance, in the example above, 911:1719/0 is technically 911:1719/0.0. If you don’t set one, it should automatically default to 0. Likewise, most programs do not show the point part of the address if it is 0. If it is configured to anything other than 0, it should, assuming it supports using point addresses in the first place.

Definition of a point, per the [Synchronet Wiki - FidoNet Glossary](#):

Point

*A Point Node is an FTN node with an address that ends in .1 or another non-zero fractional value. An FTN node address without a period/dot (.) or that ends in .0 is **not** a point node address.*

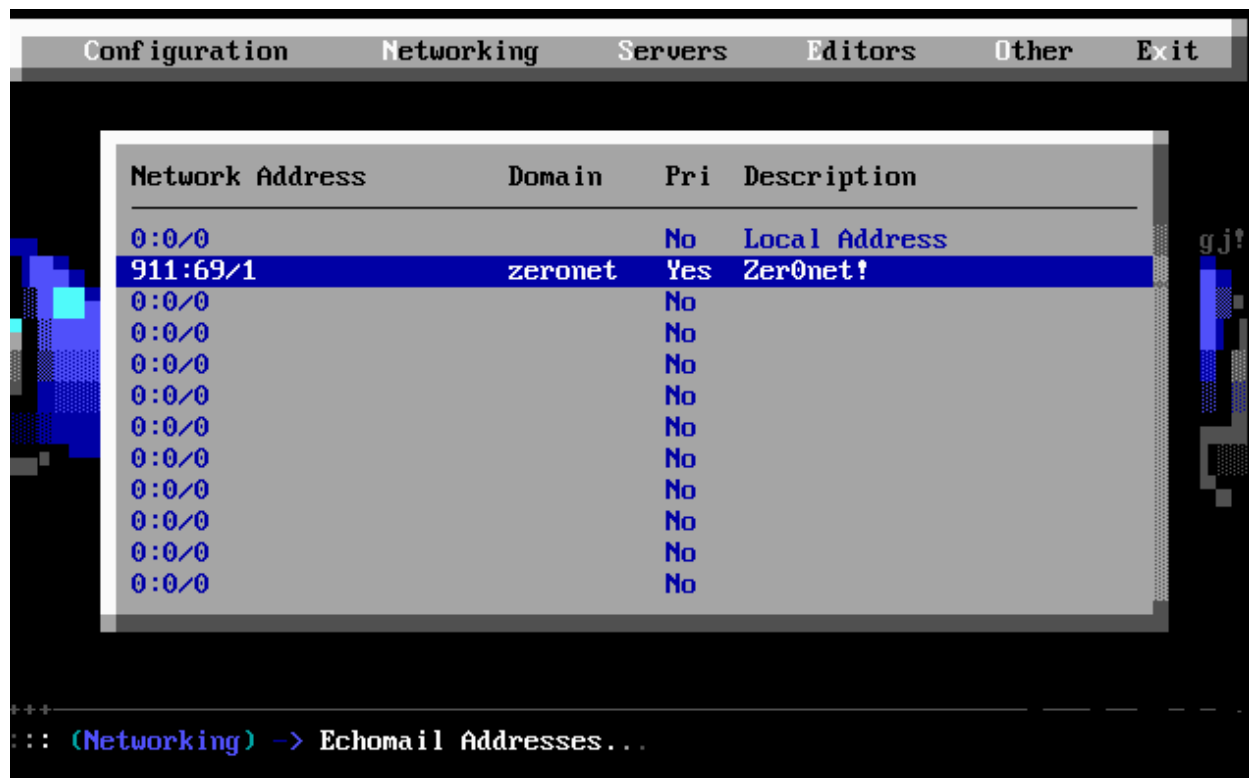
A Point Node is not listed in the network’s nodelist and is dependent on its Boss Node to receive and deliver files, including NetMail and EchoMail packets, on its behalf.

See what I mean?

One interesting downside is that point systems don’t appear in nodelist files. Instead, the nodelist ONLY features the local hub (what is called the “boss node” above, heh) and points are assumed to just be a part of that node. This is somewhat true, of course, but does make sending netmail to a user on a point system a little odd. No big deal!

BBS 1 (Local Hub)

To get started, set up the local hub system normally to connect to its uplink: set up your normal node address. I set my test node as 911:69/1:



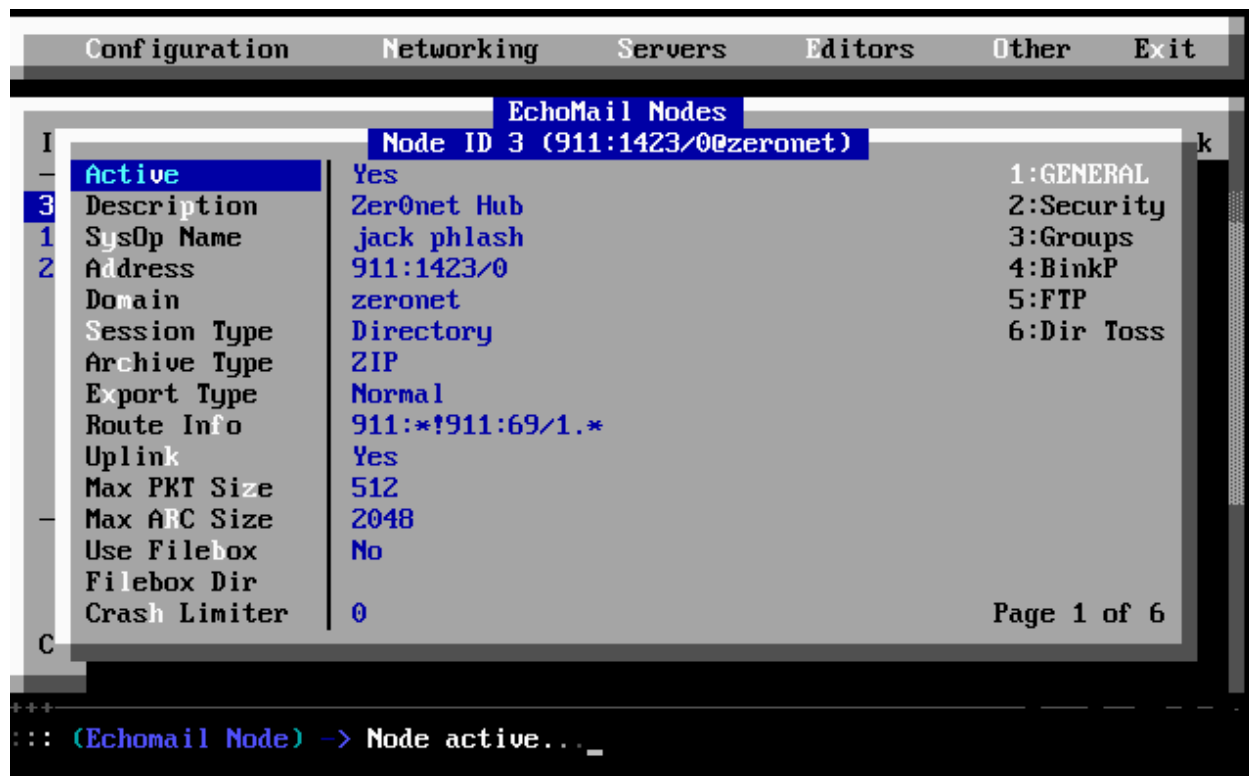
Next add the uplink/network hub node via its normal address, description/name, sysop name, and preferred mailing method (BinkP, etc.) and other preferences.

While here, there are two ways to configure your netmail routing:

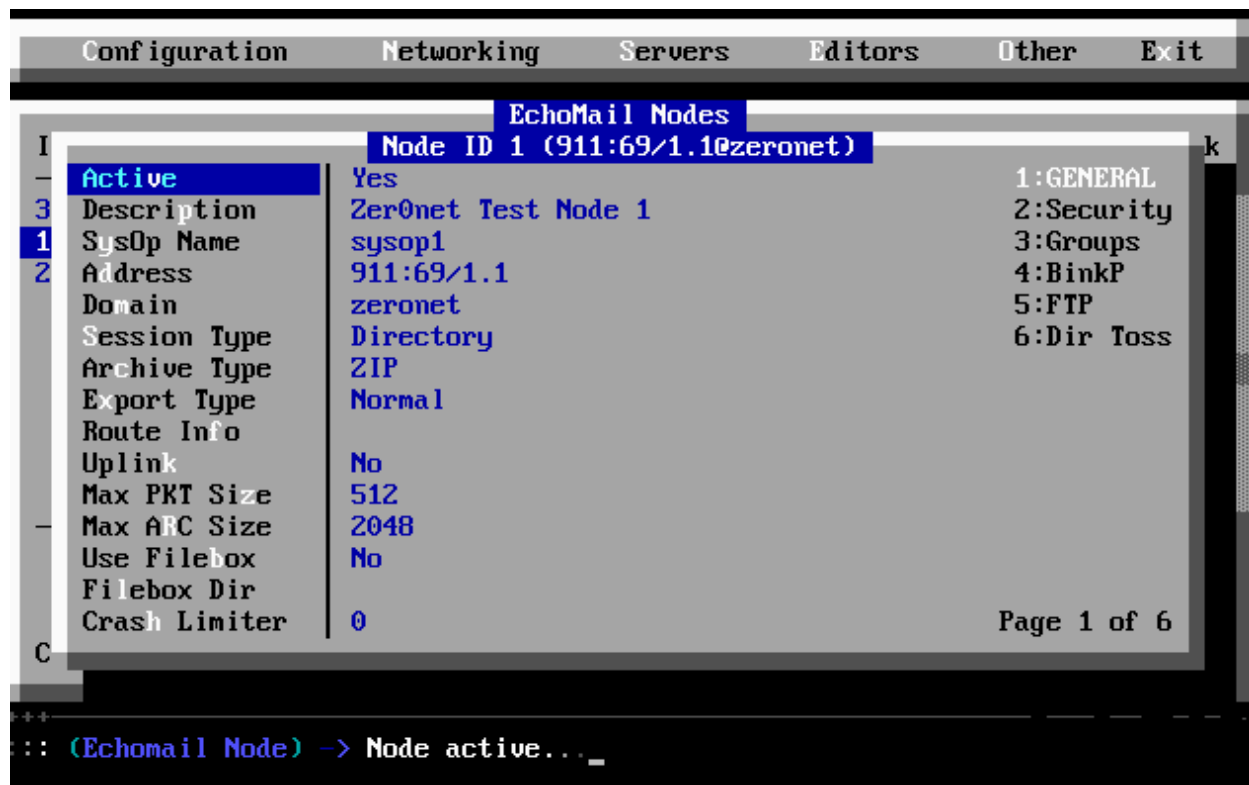
First, *and recommended*, at least for Mystic, is that you can leave your netmail routing configuration ("route info" in Mystic) blank/default. Mystic should be smart enough to prioritize directly connected nodes (the point nodes we'll add in a bit) over broader, network-wide routes, and use the uplink for those.

Alternatively, if we have issues later on with netmail routing, we can configure the routing rules statically. Normally, we might manually set it to send mail for the entire network to the uplink (i.e. "911:*" in the case of Zer0net) but in this case, we'll also want to tell your mailer NOT to route mail sent to your point systems to the uplink. An example in Mystic: "911:*!911:1719/0.*". This should be easy enough to decipher, but just in case, we're saying "route any mail sent to any address starting with "911:" to this node, but NOT any mail sent to an address starting with '911:1719/0.'" (which would effectively be any point address under your main node address.)

Example for my test setup:



Now let's add your point nodes to the local hub. Add the first node (BBS 2) giving it a unique point address. For example, 911:1719/0.1. There's nothing else special about this - give it a description/name, sysop name, and preferred mailing method (BinkP, etc.) and other preferences. Since for my testing I had all of these BBSes running on the same machine, I did directory mailing to simply move the mail around the local filesystem, but you can do whatever you want. You should be able to leave the routing configuration ("route info" in Mystic) blank/default, but if netmail routing doesn't work as expected or you have trouble, you can put the specific node address in here (i.e. "911:1719/0.1")

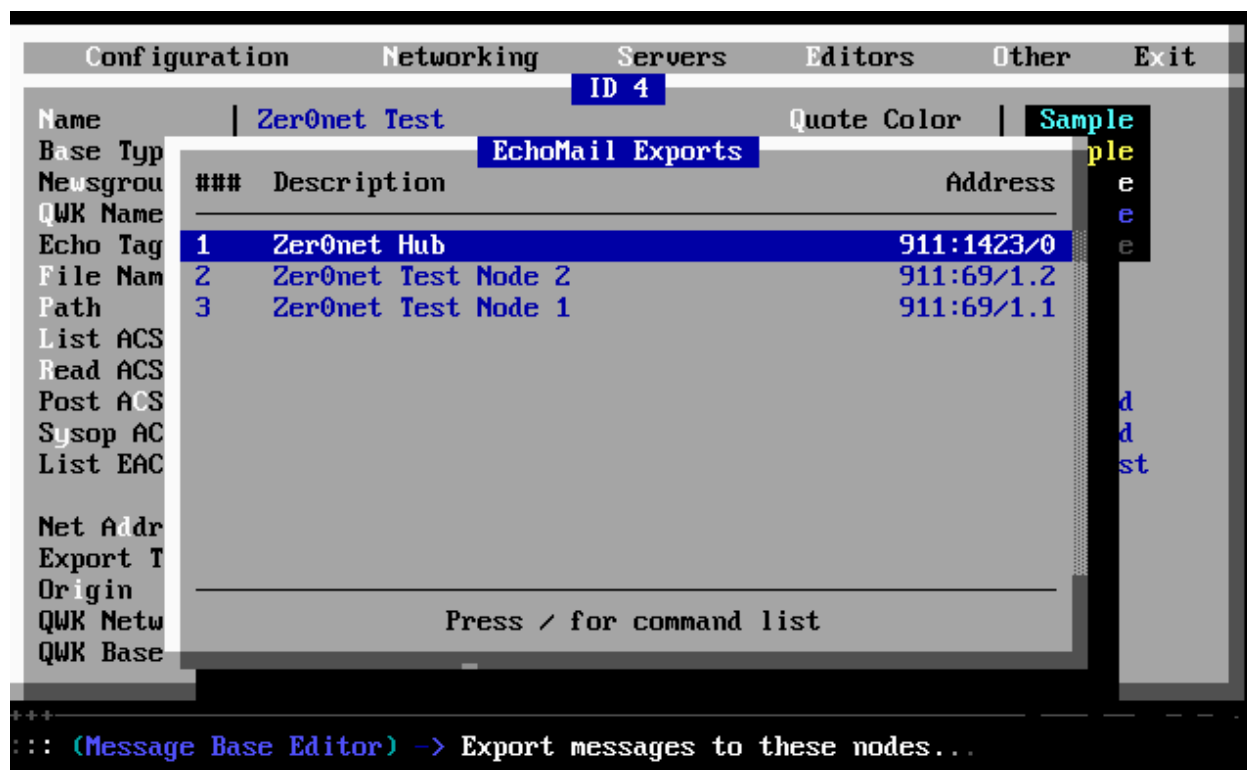


Repeat this process for all of your BBSes, making sure each one has a unique point address.

When done, my local hub setup (with only 2 points) looks like this:

Configuration		Networking		Servers		Editors		Other		Exit	
EchoMail Nodes											
ID	Act	Description				SysOp	Network				
3	Yes	Zer0net Hub				jack phlash	911:1423/0				
1	Yes	Zer0net Test Node 1				sysop1	911:69/1.1				
2	Yes	Zer0net Test Node 2				sysop2	911:69/1.2				

Continuing on, setup all of your network's message areas as normal, remembering to set the type to echomail ("networked" in Mystic) your an echomail tag that matches each echo (AKA "On-* on Zer0net) and your node's address for this network, along with a sweet-ass origin line. Finally, configure the Export To setting on all of the echos associated with this network to export to all of the previously configured nodes: the uplink, and all of your point nodes.

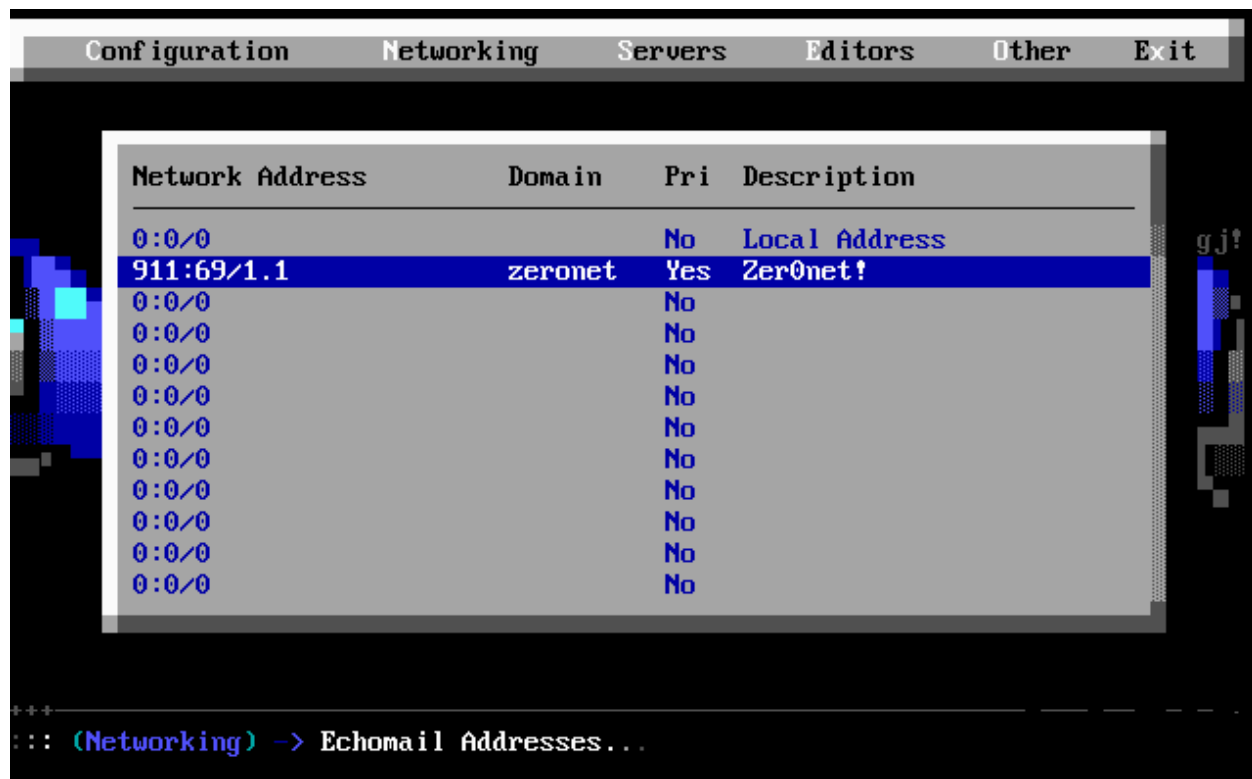


That is BASICALLY all there is to it. Now, let's move on to the points.

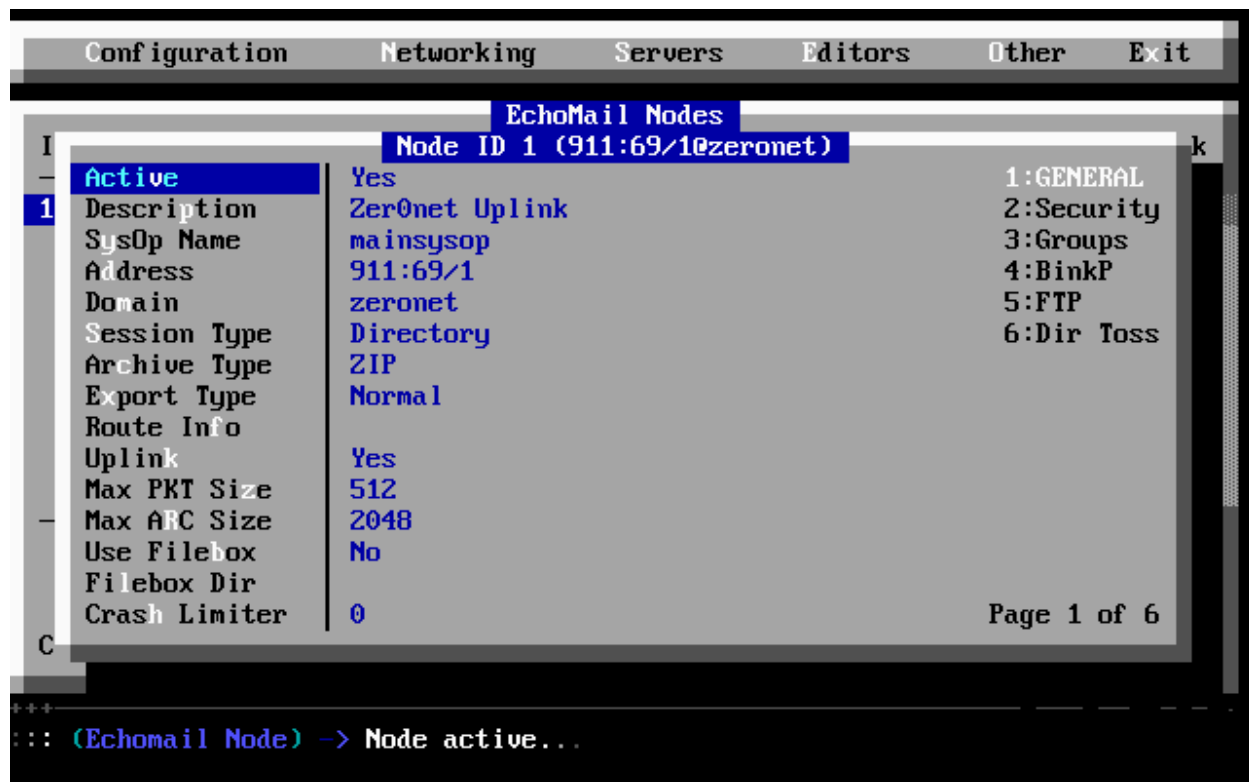
BBS 2-4

Setting up the points is even easier than setting up the nodes. There's really NOTHING special about it except we're using our local hub as the uplink.

Set the node up with its new node point address. My example for the first point node in my test setup:



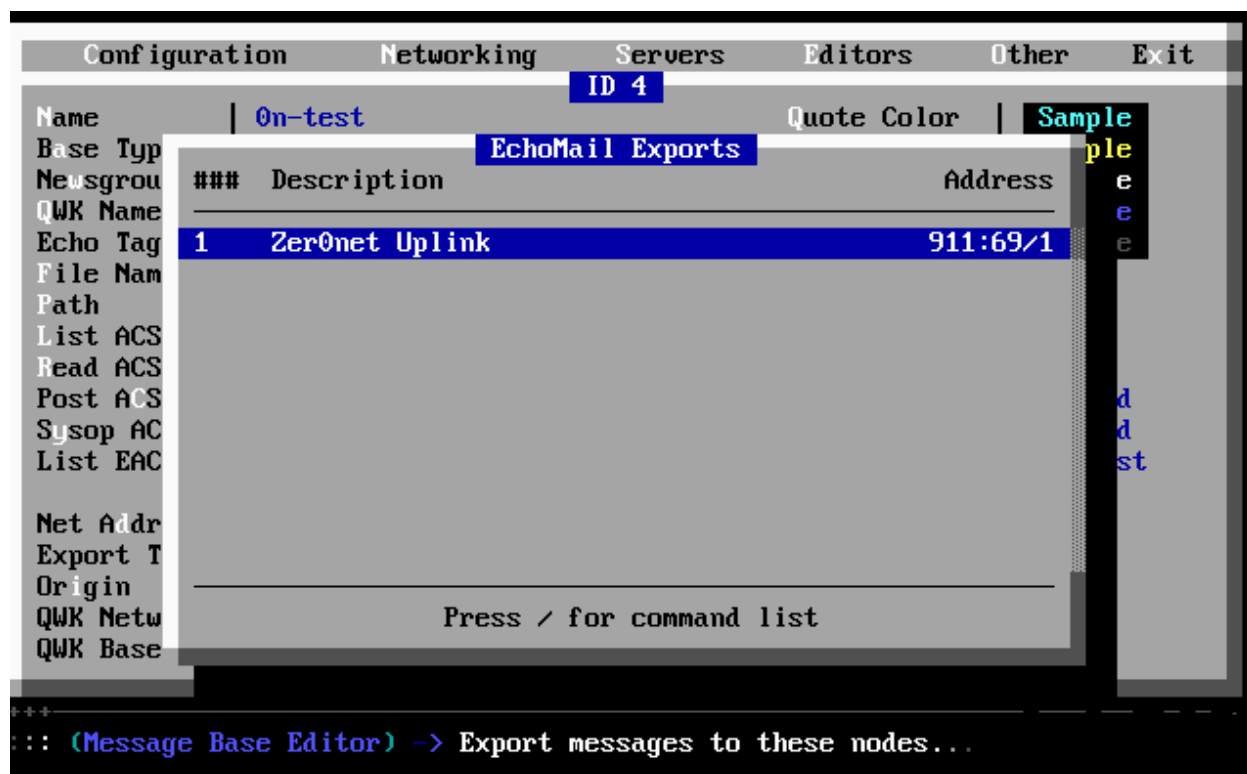
Now add the local hub node via its normal address, description/name, sysop name, and preferred mailing method (BinkP, etc.) and other preferences. You can leave your netmail routing configuration ("route info" in Mystic) blank/default, or manually set it to send mail to the entire network to this uplink (i.e. "911:*" in the case of Zer0net.) Remember, your point nodes use the local hub you just configured as their uplink. NOT the normal network uplink/hub!



This will be the only node you add for this network - do not add the actual network hub or any of the other points.

Configuration		Networking		Servers		Editors		Other		Exit	
EchoMail Nodes											
ID	Act	Description			SysOp			Network			
1	Yes	Zer0net Uplink			mainsysop			911:69/1			
<div><div>Inactive: 0 days</div><div>Files Sent: 0 (0KB)</div><div>Received: 0 (0KB)</div><div>Crash Errors: 0</div><div>Last In: Never</div><div>Last Out: 29 Mar 2024 15:15</div><div>Reset: 29 Mar 2024 13:20</div></div>											
Press / for command list											
+++											
::: (Echomail Node) -> Node active...											

Finally, setup all of your network's message areas as normal, remembering to set the type to echomail ("networked" in Mystic) an echomail tag that matches each echo (AKA "0n-* on Zer0net) and your node's address for this network, and a funky fresh origin line. Configure the Export To setting to export to the local hub you added earlier.



Repeat this process for each remaining BBS, remembering to use the unique point addresses you configured on your local hub earlier.

Results:

Echomail:

Your local hub will send and receive echomail to/from the network uplink/hub as normal, additionally exporting any new echomail it receives to your configured point nodes. Each of your point nodes will send and receive new echomail to/from the local hub. Your local hub will in turn export any echomail it receives from the point nodes to the network hub. The only indication anyone on the network will have that you're doing it this way is by the network addresses in your origin lines.

Netmail:

Netmail is slightly trickier.

Your local hub will receive any new netmail sent directly to it and all of your point nodes. It should forward mail addressed to your point nodes on to them. Each of your point nodes will send and receive new netmail to/from the local hub. If one of your point nodes sends a netmail to a user at another point node, this mail will be routed to your local hub, and your local hub will then route it to the destination point node - it will never be sent up to the network hub because,

well, it doesn't need to. *shrug* *This is the entire point behind routing netmail - to make sure mail only went where it actually needed to go in the good old dial-up days.*

Mystic's MIS utility has a nifty parameter that lets you validate your netmail routing: "mis poll route <address>". For example, with this test setup:

When ran from the local hub:

```
C:\pnttest\main>mis poll route 911:1423/0
Netmail addressed to 911:1423/0 would route to 911:1423/0 (Zer0net Hub)

C:\pnttest\main>mis poll route 911:69/1.1
Netmail addressed to 911:69/1.1 would route to 911:69/1.1 (Zer0net Test Node 1)

C:\pnttest\main>mis poll route 911:69/1.2
Netmail addressed to 911:69/1.2 would route to 911:69/1.2 (Zer0net Test Node 2)
```

You can see, mail sent to the hub (or indeed, anywhere else in the network... see below) would go to the hub. Only mail sent to the points is routed to the points.

Example of a random Zer0net address I made up also being sent to the hub:

```
C:\pnttest\main>mis poll route 911:5325/3
Netmail addressed to 911:5325/3 would route to 911:1423/0 (Zer0net Hub)
```

When ran from point node 2, for example:

```
C:\pnttest\node2>mis poll route 911:1423/0
Netmail addressed to 911:1423/0 would route to 911:69/1 (Zer0net Point Hub)

C:\pnttest\node2>mis poll route 911:69/1.0
Netmail addressed to 911:69/1 would route to 911:69/1 (Zer0net Point Hub)

C:\pnttest\node2>mis poll route 911:69/1.1
Netmail addressed to 911:69/1.1 would route to 911:69/1 (Zer0net Point Hub)
```

All netmail is routed to the local hub.

Additional Considerations:

Finally, one last thing of note. Your local hub is now, well, *a hub*, so you're going to need to set up your tossing and polling events a little differently. You can still rely on your new mail semaphores for events, but just be aware that any time your local hub node receives and imports new mail, it should turn around and send it back out too, instead of only sending mail when a local user on this node posts something new and you export it. This might seem a little counterintuitive, but remember that any mail your local hub receives from the network ALSO needs to be sent on to your points, and any mail the local hub receives from the points ALSO needs to be sent on to the network hub.

Testing It All:

For testing, I'd suggest leaving your network uplink node disabled on your local hub, isolating your local systems from the rest of the network. After doing this, you should be able to post a message on any of the network's echo on any of your BBSes (the local hub, or any of the points) and it should appear on all of them (after appropriate exports, mailer sends/receives, and imports, of course.) Likewise, you should be able to test sending netmail directly between each of these nodes.

Once you're confident this is all working, enable your network uplink on the local hub and post a test message from your local hub and at least one of your point systems. I'd also recommend logging onto your network hub or another system on the network on which you know netmail is working, and sending a netmail to one of your point nodes. Once received, reply back to it and verify that you received it on the remote node.

I hope this at least somewhat demystifies the topic of "point" systems, if not explicitly walks Mystic users through their setup. Happy messaging!

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