

Goodreads Review

<http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/5585220-netizens>

Netizens: On the History and Impact of Usenet and the Internet

by [Michael Hauben](#), [Ronda Hauben](#), [Tom Truscott](#) (Foreword)

A netizen, as Ronda and Michael Hauben use the term, is more than just somebody who uses the Internet. It is somebody who has demonstrated a devotion to being a good citizen of an online community. Some have been involved in constructing parts of the Net and forming it into a major social force. Others are simply members of mailing lists and discussion groups, quietly lending a helping hand to others and sharing information, support, and aid through the wires. The Haubens tell the history of the Internet through netizens.

While it was technical necessity and political desire that made the Net happen, it was the often idealistic vision of the netizens that shaped it. The Haubens look at both sides--the technical problems being faced and the social ideas that guided the developers. They take both the outside developments in computing technology and governmental regulatory issues into account.

Most of the emphasis of the book is on Usenet, the vast array of bulletin board-like message areas where people can find discussions about everything from the most esoteric scientific work in progress to the mundane necessities of daily life to off-the-wall treatments of pop culture. They show how it developed as a form of "poor man's ARPANET" to become a backbone of international conversation. The authors hold Usenet up as an example of user-controlled communication, showing how communities can be successful even in an area lacking formal rules--or lacking the means to enforce the rules. And while they stop short of exploring Usenet's current problems with commercial junk posts, they do explore the many previous predictions of the "imminent death of the Internet," showing how a devoted population of netizens has repeatedly been able to work around threats to its community's existence.