Annotated Bibliography


Federal antitrust enforcers are investigating AOL's instant messaging policies. In response, AOL submitted an 18-page proposal to the Internet Engineering Task Force outlining how it could make its system interoperable with competing systems. Not a technical document, the AOL proposal focuses on broad goals of security and privacy in such a global, open system. Approximately five other proposals have also been submitted to the Task Force on the interoperability issue.


Starting in April of 2000, many ICQ users found themselves able to communicate with AIM users for the first time, although the feature is not promoted or publicized by ICQ or AOL. The FCC is considering forcing AOL to open its system to competitors either when AIM and ICQ are interoperable or within six months of the AOL-Time Warner merger, whichever comes first. Some observers believe that AOL wants to convert ICQ users to AIM, but others counter that the two instant messaging systems serve different audiences. While the AIM audience is not described, the ICQ audience is characterized as being more technically oriented.


Forrester Research reports that more instant messages are moving across the Internet than emails at any given moment. In December 1999, Forrester Research polled 50 Fortune 1000 companies about the products they use to keep in touch. More than 36 percent said they were using instant messaging products; that number is expected to rise to 46 percent by the end of next year. Corporate users are concerned about instant messaging security; since the technologies use the public Internet, they open up one or more pockets in a firewall. Messages are also sent without regard for packet security. Anyone using the right tools can intercept an instant message.