

Frequently Asked Questions about Alt.sex.stories.moderated (assm)

Modification details

Last updated Wednesday, January 26, 2000.

Reason for last modification: General revision and up-to-dating of FAQ. (12/5/99) Previous modifications: b) Updated FAQ to reflect ASSTR as new ASSM moderator, a) more changes to remailer info, many small updates.

Introduction

ASSM is short for alt.sex.stories.moderated, a Usenet newsgroup specializing in erotic literature. The primary difference between ASSM and alt.sex.stories is that all articles posted to ASSM must go through a moderation process before showing up in the newsgroup. The main purpose for this process is to filter out commercial advertising (commonly referred to as SPAM). In fact, the unfortunate reality is that more SPAM shows up at the ASSM moderation center than legitimate posts.

As an organization dedicated to providing erotic literature to the public at no cost, ASSTR took over moderation for the newsgroup's previous moderator Eli the Bearded in November 1999 after a downtime since April 1st, 1999. The ASSTR programming team added several enhancements to the existing newsgroup, including the ability to post via attachments by mail or newsgroup posting as well as STEP(tm), the Smart Text Enhancement Processor(tm). ASSTR is funded by donations from the public; further information is available at <http://www.asstr.org/donations.html>.

Another important change to the newsgroup following Eli's departure was the creation of the ASSM Moderation Center, a web site for Moderation Team Members (MTMs) to moderate the newsgroup. The key benefit of opening moderation up to a team of volunteers is no longer does the smooth operation of the newsgroup depend on just one person. Today, the ASSM Moderation Team consists of about a dozen volunteers, both authors and readers, from the alt.sex.stories.d community.

This FAQ was developed in an effort to answer some questions common to the Alt.Sex.Stories.Moderated newsgroup. No doubt this FAQ is lacking in some important details of the newsgroup. Any assistance with missing information would be greatly appreciated.

The questions:

1. [How can I participate in assm?](#)
2. [What happens to my story after I submit it?](#)
3. [What is acceptable in assm?](#)
4. [Where can I get an anonymous address?](#)
5. [Where are the stories archived?](#)

6. [Hey! I saw some spam in assm. What's up?](#)
 7. [\(Advanced\) What do you use to moderate the group?](#)
 8. [\(Advanced\) What are some problems that may keep me from reading assm?](#)
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The questions and answers:

1. How can I participate in assm?

There are several ways to post a message to ASSM. Before doing so, however, please be sure to read this entire FAQ. Doing so may alleviate potential problems you might otherwise have run into.

The following is an overview of the methods available:

- *Post directly to ASSM in the body of the message*
This is the "normal" way of posting and is probably the way you're familiar with posting messages to newsgroups.
- *Post directly to ASSM as an attachment*
This method is popular for those authors who don't want to email their post for some reason and have a very large story to post, or have a news server that tends to mangle posts. By sending the post as an attachment, the poster is almost certain his/her post will arrive at the moderation center in its original format. Note that any message in the body of the post will be prepended to the attachment.
- *Email the story to story-submit@asstr.org*
This is probably the second most popular method. By emailing the post instead of posting it to ASSM, the story arrives at the moderation center in its exact original format. Additionally, the risk of the post getting lost in Usenet never-never land is also avoided.
- *Email the story to story-submit@asstr.org as an attachment*
For some posters, this method is the easiest of all options. There's no need to copy and paste the story into a mail/usenet client, and because the post is being sent via email, it's almost guaranteed to arrive safe and sound. Note that any message in the body of the post will be prepended to the attachment.

The guidelines and requirements in question two ([What is acceptable in assm?](#)) apply regardless of the method used for posting. Additionally, you are encouraged to visit ASSTR's [collection of alt.sex.stories.* related FAQs](#) to review the header and [Story Codes for Authors](#) FAQs before posting.

2. What happens to my story after I submit it?

If you've emailed your post to ASSM, you're all set. Your post will arrive in the same queue as posts sent to ASSM. If you posted your work to ASSM, assuming all is working well at your site, then just posting normally will cause the news server to forward the article to the ASSM moderation team for approval. If things are not working well any of several things could happen.

- your post appears on the group immediately
Your site doesn't properly handle moderated newsgroups. Contact your system or news administrator. If you see your post appearing immediately, it means it wasn't forwarded to the

ASSM moderation center and won't be officially posted (and thus won't show up on most other news servers).

- o you get a bounce from tdr.com or qz.little-neck
 - Your site has an out of date INN moderators file. Contact your system or news administrator.
- o you get a bounce from UUnet
 - Something odd is wrong. Send the [ASSM administration](#) mail.
 - o any other bounce
 - Dunno. Probably something weird with mail somewhere. Try sending it again.

At this point let's assume that the article made it to the ASSM moderation team. An ASSM Moderation Team Member (MTM) will do one of several things with it.

- i. Approve it for posting (requires two different moderators' approval for posting).
- ii. Reject it and send email saying why. Note: It may take several weeks for email to be sent regarding rejected or other problematic posts (such as poorly formatted posts).
- iii. Flag the file for hand-processing by the ASSTR administration. This is generally done when a post is poorly formatted but can be easily fixed by hand at the moderation center without the need for the poster to repost it.
- iv. Determine it to have an invalid return address and reject it without an email explanation. Spam falls into this category.

Once an MTM has approved the post and the ASSM moderation system has injected it into the news system, it will take some time to propagate back to your host and other hosts. If you don't see the post at your site or at either of [DejaNews](#) or [AltaVista](#) within a few days, email the [ASSM administration](#). Assm propagation should be pretty good now, the group seems fairly well established.

3. What is acceptable in assm?

Adapted from Mr. Eli the Bearded's original policy announcement:

- A. Stories only. No requests for stories, no anecdotes. No ads or web page announcements, etc.
- B. Valid email address of submitters. It can be through a anonymous remailer, so long as it can be replied to get to the submitter. For now (at least) anti-spam munging of addresses is allowed.
- C. If poster is not copyright owner of post, poster must have permission from copyright owner to post work to ASSM.
- D. Posts should be word-wrapped at 72 characters or less. The 72 character recommendation comes from the standard Usenet posting convention, allowing room for quote sign characters without exceeding the 80 character limit of many screens. Posts not word-wrapped at 79 characters or less may be reformatted by ASSTR's Smart Text Enhancement Processor (STEP).
- E. Posting via attachments is allowed for both methods of posting (directly to ASSM or via email). Attachments must be in MIME (Base 64) or uuencode format. Most email clients and Usenet news readers support one or both of these posting formats. **Note:** any text in the body of the message will be added to the top of the decoded attachment. Multiple attachments per post is supported, but not encouraged, as it is generally better to post each part separately.
- F. Regardless of the method of posting (email/direct to assm/attachment/in body), posts **must** be in plain ASCII text. Posts in MS Word, RTF, Wordperfect, HTML, ZIP, or other formats will be *automatically deleted*.
- G. Regardless of the method of posting, any given post should not exceed 5000 lines or 250 kilobytes. This includes the size of any and all attachments included with the post. Any post over 300 kilobytes will be flagged for hand processing by the ASSTR administration, resulting in a delay of posting for the submission.
- H. Unless the "X-No-Archive: Yes" header is used, a posting will be considered free for non-commercial distribution, specifically archiving at <http://assm.asstr.org>. ASSTR encourages posters to

not use this header, as it inhibits a story's distribution and long-term availability. Any post that both prohibits redistribution on free sites and does not use the X-No-Archive header may be rejected to avoid any possible legal problems.

Main differences between the rules of ASSM and the rules of rec.arts.erotica:

- A. ASSM MTM's do not review stories. The ASSTR administration reserves the right to post other peoples' reviews (eg Celeste) if presented to them.
- B. No restrictions on violence, spelling, or grammar.
- C. Reposts allowed.
- D. Submitter need not be author.

4. Where can I get an anonymous address?

There are several services which offer web-only based replyable anonymization. There are also at least two others which can do it by email.

- I. www.anonmail.net is a good source for "real" anonymous email.
- II. www.NetForward.com gives users free mailboxes which can hide their real address. NetForward is descended from the old POBoxes.com.
- III. mail.Yahoo.com is another good source for free web-access mailboxes.
- IV. www.DejaNews.com has also entered the free mailbox game, and gives access to the newsgroup as well.
- V. www.Nymserver.com offered free and commercial anonymous remailing. Abuses by spammers forced it to be commercial only. It can be operated entirely by email (help@anon.nymserver.com).
- VI. www.MailAnon.com is another commercial anonymous remailer. It seems to be descended from the EDTec remailer. I think it can be operated entirely by email.

Anonmail has an excellent anonymous resources page at <URL:;<http://www.anonmail.net/privacy.htm>>. The newsgroups alt.anonymous and alt.privacy.anon-server are also good places to find out about other services.

5. Where are the stories archived?

You can get them at <URL:<http://assm.asstr.org/>>. The archive is free, but [donations](#) are appreciated (and necessary for the continued existence of both the archive and the moderation of the newsgroup).

6. Hey! I saw some spam in assm. What's up?

Your news server may be misconfigured and accepting posts that should have been mailed to the ASSM Moderation Team for approval. Turn on the verbose headers or show all headers option in your news reader and copy the "Path:" and "Message-ID:" headers. Note that the Path: header is often more than one line. Mail those headers to ASSTR at <assm-admin@asstr.org>.

7. (Advanced) What do you use to moderate the group?

ASSTR's software engineering team has developed custom software to facilitate and automate moderation of the newsgroup. After posts arrive at ASSTR servers, a hacked version of JMDigest (<URL:<ftp://ftp.netusa.net/users/eli/jmdigest>>) written by ASSM's old moderator (Eli the Bearded) is used to rate the post in an attempt to detect SPAM. Then, ASSM Moderation Team Members use a custom web-based interface to approve or reject submissions. When an MTM rejects a post, he/she has the option of forwarding it to ASSM or replying to it via an email interface. Finally, more custom software is used to maintain the archive site.

8. (Advanced) What are some problems that may keep me from reading assm?

The simple fact is that there are at least tens of thousands of Usenet news servers around the world. Normally when you post it appears first on your local server, and then it distributes it to its neighbors and they continue the distribution. The path header records the path it took. The result is that you can post and see something immediately, but it might not be seen by others for hours or days.

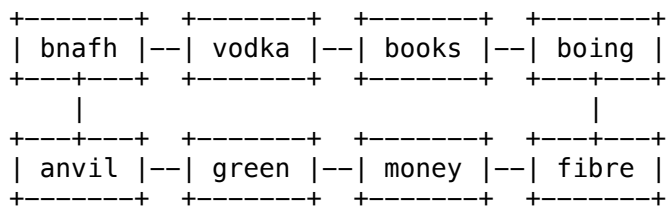
With a moderated group everything happens at the news server the moderator uses, not your local server. This delay can be quite noticeable. If there is poor connection (for the group[s] involved) between your server and the moderator's server you can miss articles altogether.

There are four things required for an article to move between two "peering" (directly sharing) news servers. Let's say an article is trying to go from X Industries' anvil news server to Waterbuffalo Breeding Inc's bnafh news-server.

1. "bnafh" must not appear in the Path: header
2. bnafh must carry at least one group the article is crossposted to
3. bnafh must not have seen any article with that article's message ID in the past month
4. if the Distribution header is being used, anvil must think bnafh is part of one of the listed distributions and bnafh must think that anvil is allowed to give it articles with that distribution

Distribution is rarely used. Some news servers add additional checks like counting the number of crossposts or making sure the file is not too large, but those are fairly uncommon.

Rule 2 from above can seriously hamper an article's distribution. Let's say you have a map like this, boxes denote news servers, lines denote peering.



Say anvil gets an article for alt.swedish.chef.bork.bork.bork, it will try to give it to green and bnafh. Let's say every machine but bnafh in the map carries a.s.c.b.b.b, green will accept the article, but bnafh will not. So to reach vodka, which is pretty close for some groups, that article will have to go through green, money, fibre, boing, and books before it will be even offered to vodka. On a much bigger map or on one where some of those connections are small/slow it is possible the article will never reach vodka due to news expiring.

It also may be pertinent to point out once your news reader has marked an article as read, it may hide it from you even if it is there. So "catching up" / "punting" / "marking all as read" (different terms I have seen in different news readers for the same thing) on a group with a lot of noise, eg a.s.s, will result in another group 100% cross posted to a.s.s, eg a.s.s.m, to appear empty.

[Still have questions?](#)

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