

netWorker

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28. *New PUSH For PUSH TECHNOLOGY*

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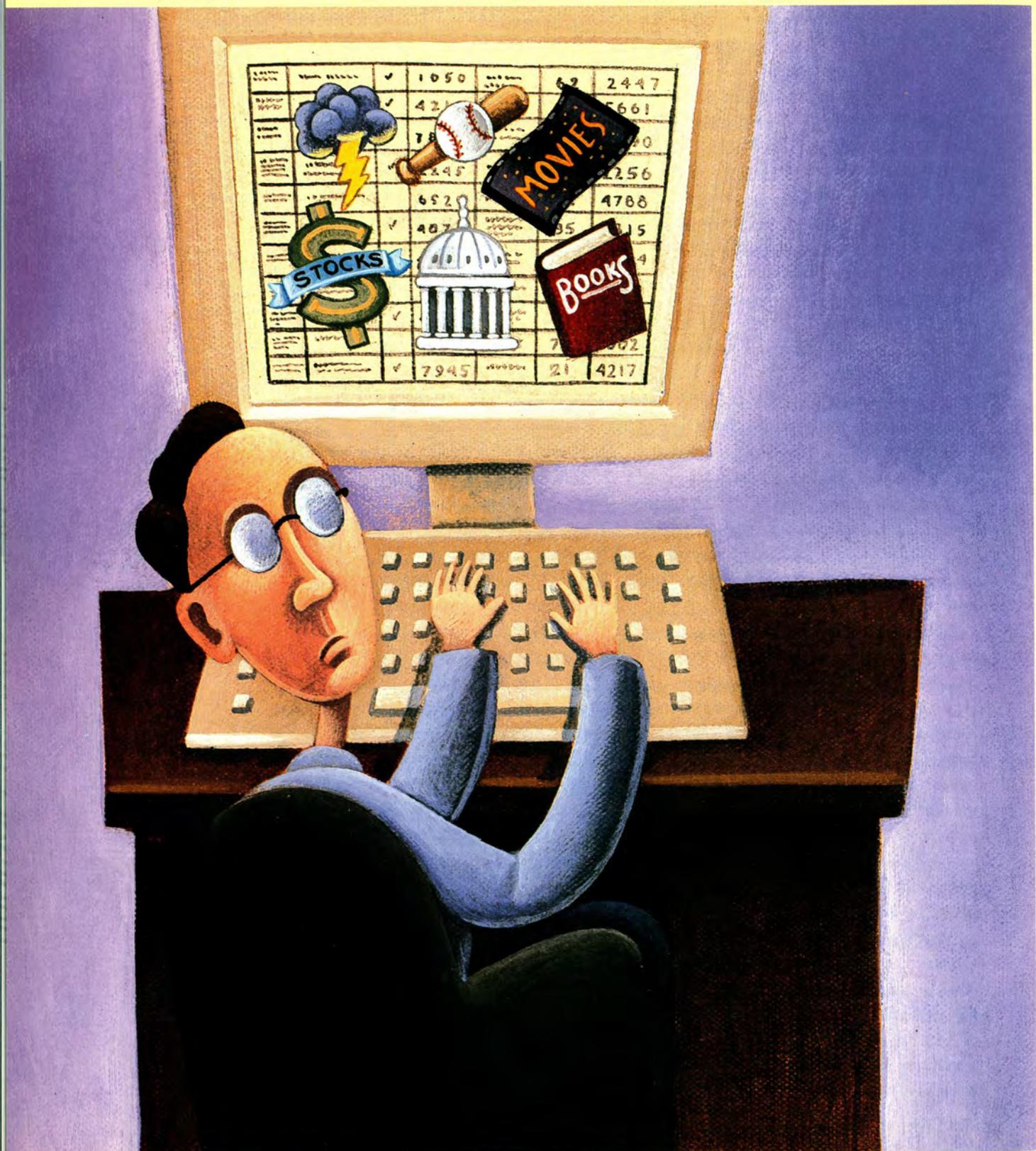


Illustration by Terry Widener

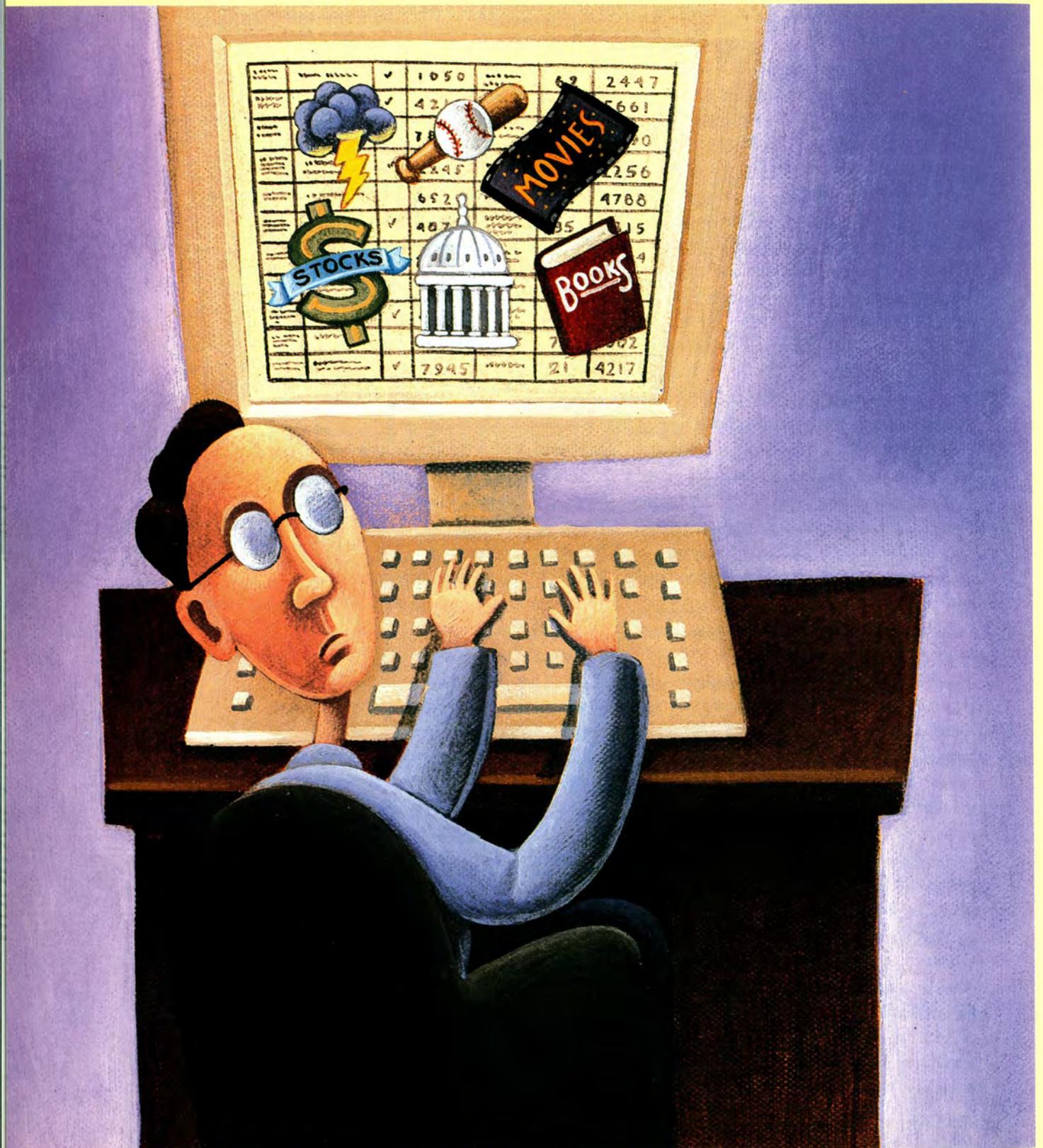


Illustration by Terry Widener

The first lesson to learn about push technology is that it isn't new; in fact, it dates back to the late 1800s.



First, a point of nomenclature. The phrases "push technology" and "push-phase technology" found wide use in 1996-97. Because of the uproar from MIS managers over the excessive bandwidth consumed by push-enabled clients, the term "push" in management circles came to mean "bandwidth bandit." As a result, 1998 has spawned a stable of euphemisms for push: "active business intelligence technology," "smart information delivery," "electronic delivery management" and so forth. Rather than try to sort out subtle differences in meanings, we'll continue to use "push" as an umbrella term.

ution lists are 1:many push protocols. E-mail, in fact, represents the point in push-phase technology evolution where push became digital. Perhaps the latest stage in push is built within computer assisted cooperative work (CACW) environments, a.k.a. groupware, where the dynamics of the interactivity is predicated on the constant, uninterrupted exchange of information.

Like e-mail, push technology is both digital and network-based. But, unlike e-mail, the modern delivery mechanism is modeled after the metaphor of telecasting rather than those of digital information access and delivery. The

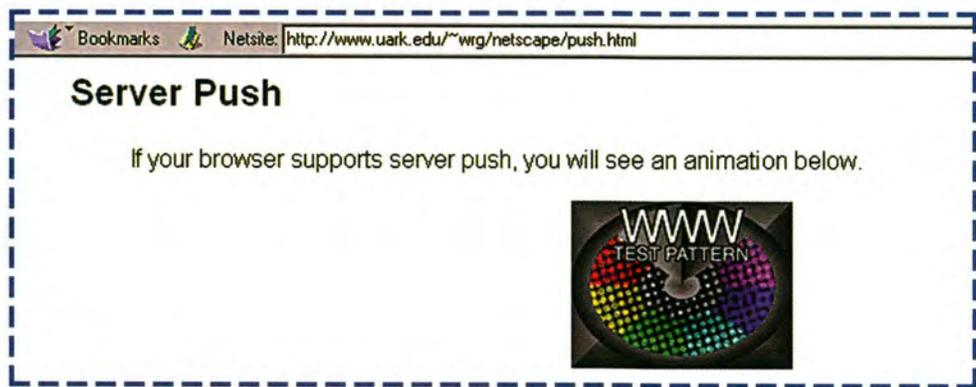


Figure 1. A demonstration of Netscape's original server-push idea via the World Wide Web Test Pattern (source: <http://www.uark.edu/~wrg>).

Semantics aside, the first lesson to learn about push technology is that it isn't new. If we define "push" as a tool to distribute information without requiring specific requests from the consumer of that information, the deployment of "push-phase" information delivery dates back to the late 1800s with the creation of the wire services and the teleprinter networks. United Press International, The Associated Press, Tass and Reuters were all organized for the purposes of push communication. The same is now true for Bloomberg in the financial services area.

E-mail is a 1:1 push protocol in its simplest form, and alias files and E-mail distrib-

push lexicon is littered with euphemisms that end in "casting": "Netcasting," "Webcasting," "focused multicasting," "group casting," "personal casting" and the like.



MULTICASTING FOR THE MASSES

Current Web push technology is a cousin to the dynamic updating technology that first appeared in Netscape's browser in 1995 (see "Cyberspace 2000: Dealing With Information Overload," *Communications of the ACM*, February 1997). The idea behind dynamic updating is

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