YEARS AND YEARS AGO

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This issue of login is “volume 30, number 3.” But, of course, it isn’t.

The purple ditto’ed sheets created by Mel Ferentz in July 1975 were
headed “UNIX NEWS.” It was years later, following a threatening
letter from a lawyer at Western Electric, that the name of the
newsletter was changed.

My copy of “UNIX NEWS,” Number 1, is dated July 25, 1975, and
contains the notation “Circula-
tion 37.”

Dennis Ritchie and Ken Thompson
delivered the first UNIX paper in
October 1973. Lou Katz and Reidar
Bornholdt convened the first
“UNIX Users” meeting on May 15,
1974. The UNIX paper appeared in
the July 1974 CACM, and Mel sent
notices to 37 institutions of the
arrival of V6.

And a meeting, organized by Lou,
Reidar, and Mel and hosted at
CUNY by Ira Fuchs, was held on
June 18. Mel described it in that
first newsletter:

“The meeting on June 18 at City
University of New York was
attended by over 40 people from 20
institutions. Each institution
described briefly its function and
idiosyncrasies. . . . There was unan-
imous sentiment for keeping the
user’s group and its newsletter as
informal as possible.”

Over the decades both the “user’s
group” (now USENIX) and the
newsletter (now login) have shed
a good deal of that informality. But
there’s a lot of the cohesive spirit
still there 30 years on.