

NOSVIEW

The On-Line Documentation Package for NOS

by Ian Wade

G3NRW @ GB7BIL.#27.GBR.EU
[44.131.5.2]
uad1200 @ dircon.co.uk

NOSVIEW is an on-line **documentation** package for the **KA9Q** Network Operating System (NOS). First released in September 1991, **NOSVIEW** is a complete reference work describing in detail all of the **commands** to be found in the major NOS releases. This paper outlines its main features, and how to get a copy.

Introducing NOSVIEW

Over the years, many documents have appeared on the networks describing various features of NOS, but much of that material is incomplete. Some of it is inaccurate, and, because it was written *and* edited by many hands, sometimes very misleading and inconsistent.

My small contribution to the genre is NOSVIEW. In NOSVIEW I have attempted to pull together all the available documentation and massage it into a consistent whole,

The final product is almost 300 pages long, around 20 percent being new material. All of the NOS commands are described in detail, and there is at least one example included with each command. There are also many examples of display outputs, showing the results of executing the commands.

Consistency

Because NOS contains software modules originating from several different sources, the associated documentation inevitably contains inconsistencies.

For example, the words *label* and *interface* apparently describe different objects, whereas in actuality they are the same thing. On the other hand, the word **address** can have different meanings, depending on the command.

A lot of effort has gone into NOSVIEW to eliminate these inconsistencies. Command parameter names are now consistent throughout. Callsigns in the examples follow a set pattern: calls for NOS stations are in the NS9xx.x series, vanilla AX.25 stations are AX9xxx, NET/ROM station:; are NR9xxx, and so on.

Also, to distinguish between IP hostnames and AX.25 callsigns hostnames are shown in lower case (*ns9abc*), whereas AX.25 callsigns are in upper case (*NS9ABC-5*).

These seemingly simple rules make a tremendous difference to the readability of the documentation. There is now no doubt about whether a parameter should be an IP host-name or an AX.25 callsign, or whether you need an IRQ number or an interrupt vector address, and so on.

NOSVIEW On-line

But this is only half the story. The real power of NOSVIEW comes into its own when used with VIEW, a public domain file viewer included with NOSVIEW. VIEW lets you hot-key to the NOSVIEW documentation without breaking out of NOS, providing instant on-line help whenever you need to know what to do next.

Figure 1 shows an example of the VIEW screen. To take full advantage of VIEW, NOSVIEW is supplied as a set of over 90 individual help files, one file for each NOS command. This provides immediate access to the command of interest, saving time and effort when searching for detailed information.

A further benefit of supplying NOSVIEW as individual files rather than one monolithic document is that you can place the files in your NOS public directory. Then when someone logs into your system, they can download selected NOSVIEW information in manageable pieces, rather than saturate the network for hours on end trying to download one enormous file.

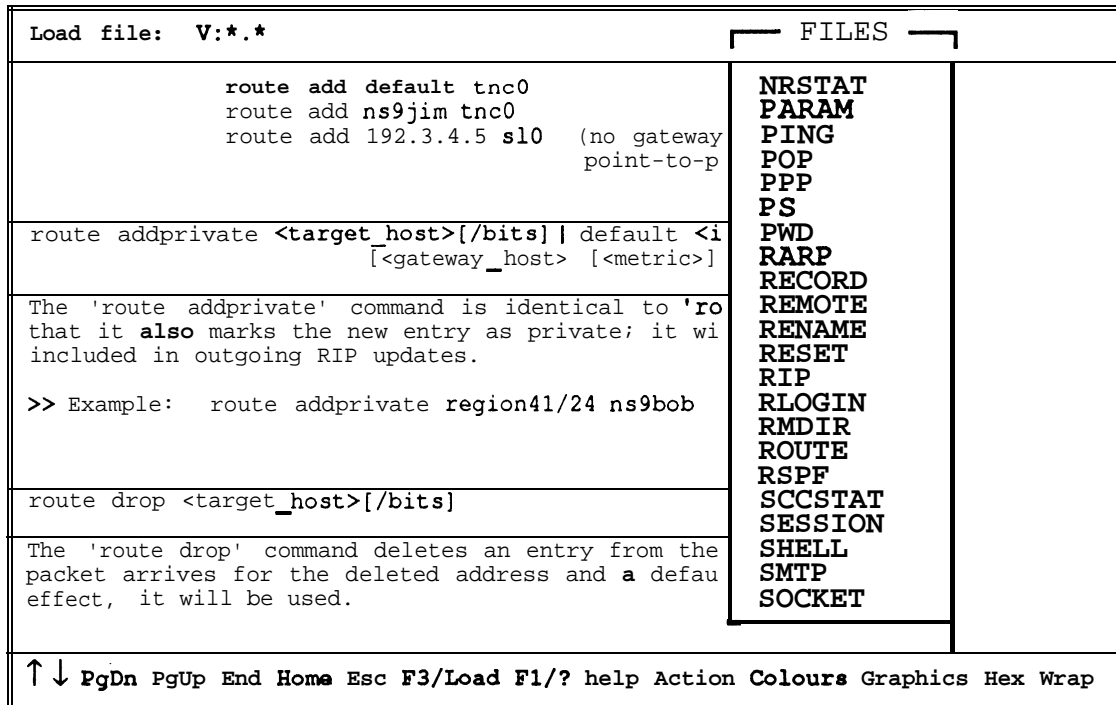


Fig 1: On-line NOS documentation with NOSVIEW.

There is a separate help file for each NOS command, selected from the pop-up FILES menu.

The NOS Get-Away Special

Yet another feature of NOSVIEW is that it contains a complete working set of NOS software, dubbed NOSGAS — the NOS Get-Away Special. NOSGAS incorporates a complete set of supporting files (such as *AUTOEXEC.NOS*, *FTPUSERS* and so on) which you can use on your system. The templates are accompanied by full descriptions of their formats, plus warnings about the “gotchas” which can cause lots of frustration if you are unaware of them.

All you **have** to do is edit these templates to match your system (by modifying callsigns, etc), and you **have a** ready-made environment to try out NOS.

How to get NOSVIEW

The latest release of NOSVIEW is version 244; i.e. released in 1992, week 44. **By now**, NOSVIEW should be available on the major telephone bulletin boards worldwide, and also on *ucsd.edu* in directory *hamradiolpacketltpipldocs*. Look for the files *NOSVIEW.ZIP* and *NOSVW244.ZIP*.

Alternatively, you can get a free copy by mailing a DOS-formatted diskette (any size *except* 360K) and return mailer to: Ian Wade, 7 Daubeney Close, Harlington, Dunstable, Beds, LU5 6NF, United Kingdom.

Please enclose return postage as follows:

United Kingdom:	UK postage stamps
Europe:	3 IRCs
The Americas:	7 IRCs
Rest of World:	9 IRCs

(Any unused IRCs will of course be returned).

NOSINTRO: The book

NOSVIEW is an advanced reference document intended mainly for people who have already got NOS up and running. Beginners will probably find it heavy going, but may be interested to know that my new book on NOS — *NOSINTRO* -- is (at last!) ready. Full order details are included with the NOSVIEW package.