CSCI-1680
SMTP

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Based on “Computer Networking: A Top Down Approach” - 6th edition

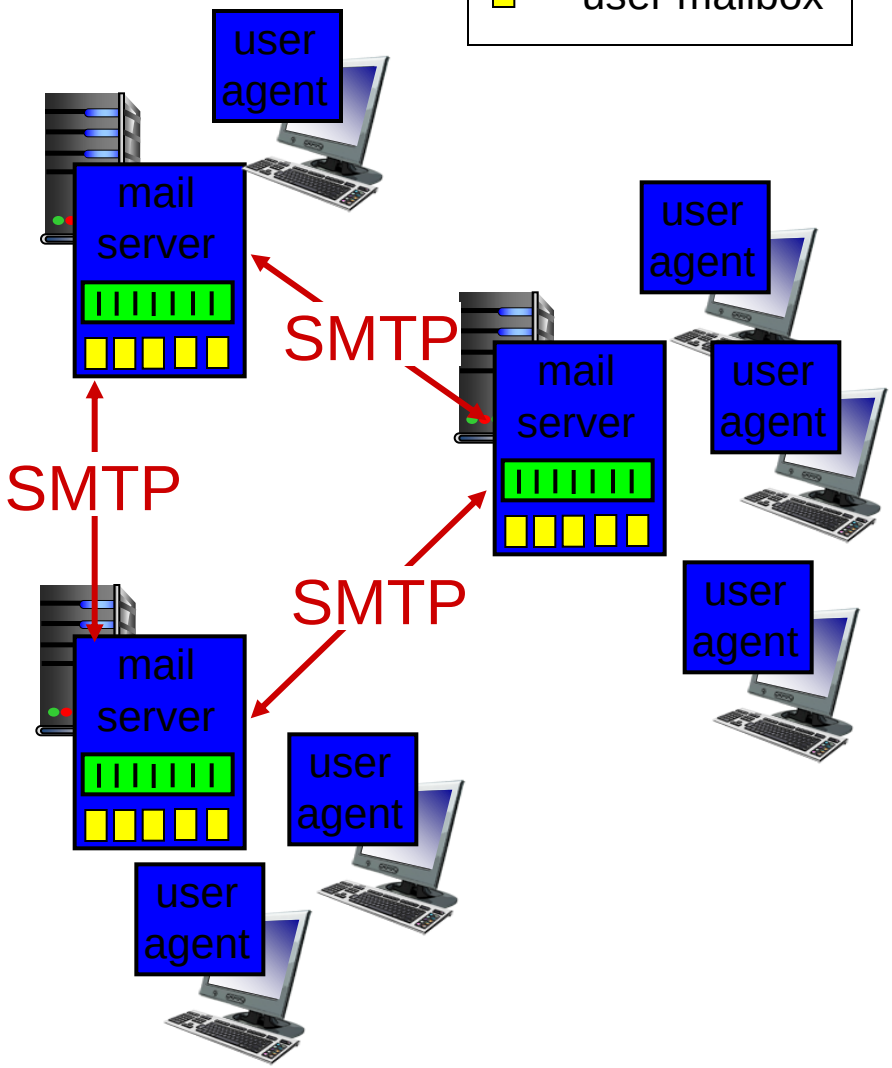
Electronic mail

Three major components:

- **user agents**
- **mail servers**
- **simple mail transfer protocol: SMTP**

User Agent

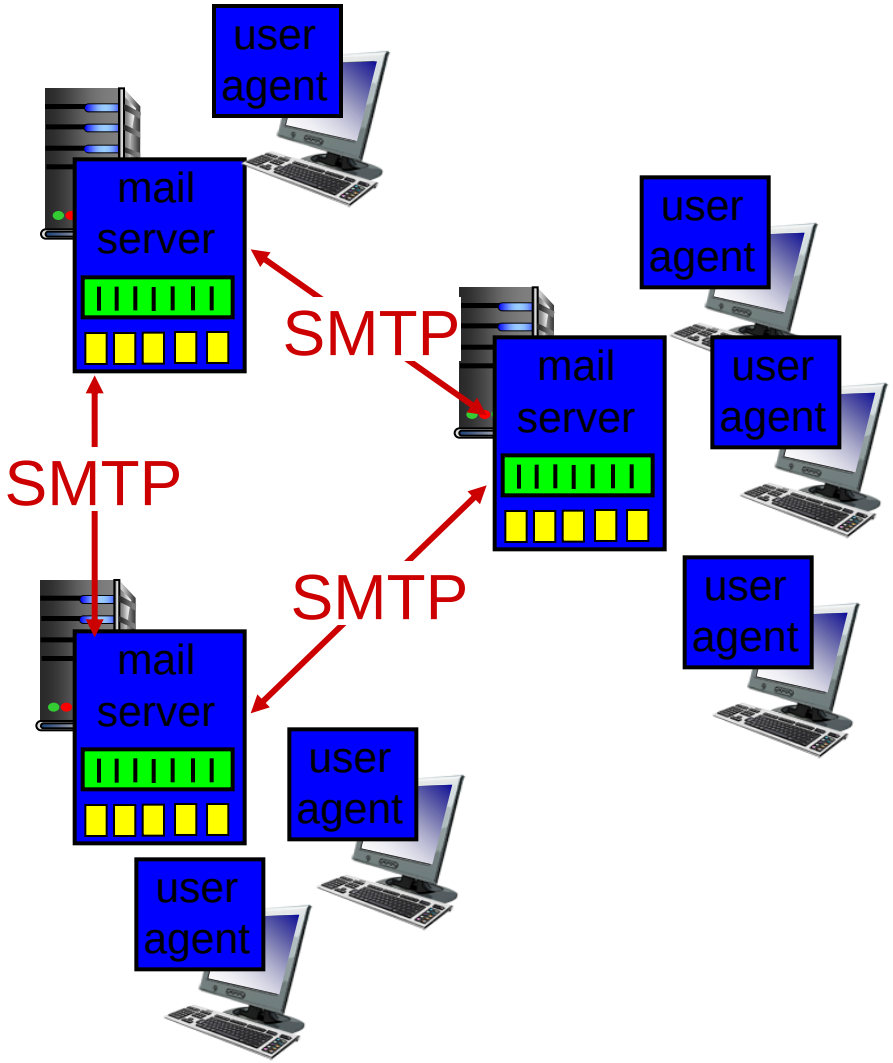
- **a.k.a. "mail reader"**
- **composing, editing, reading mail messages**
- **e.g., Outlook, Thunderbird, iPhone mail client**
- **outgoing, incoming messages stored on server**



Electronic mail: mail servers

mail servers:

- ***mailbox*** **contains incoming messages for user**
- ***message queue*** **of outgoing (to be sent) mail messages**
- ***SMTP protocol*** **between mail servers to send email messages**
  - client: sending mail server
  - "server": receiving mail server

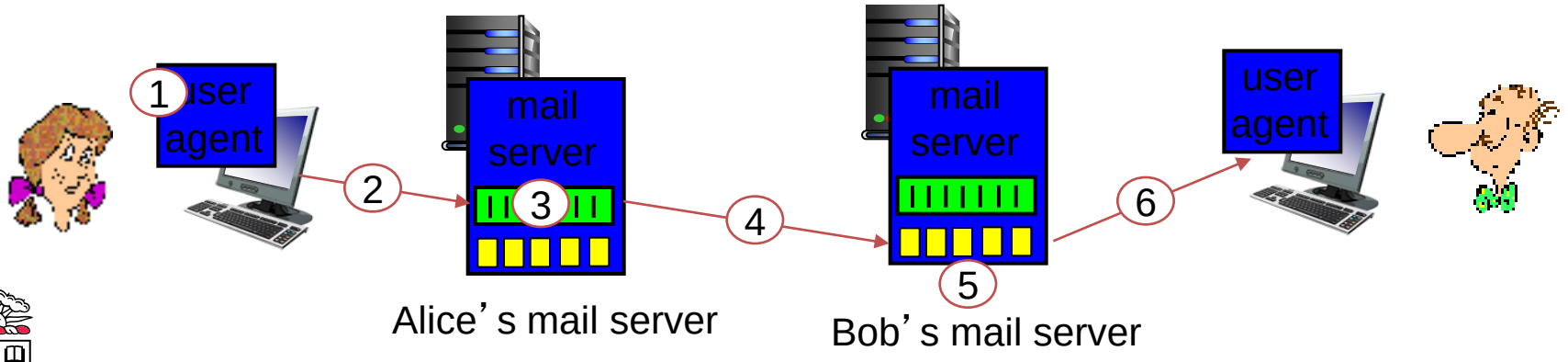


Electronic Mail: SMTP [RFC 2821]

- **uses TCP to reliably transfer email message from client to server, port 25**
- **direct transfer: sending server to receiving server**
- **three phases of transfer**
  - handshaking (greeting)
  - transfer of messages
  - closure
- **command/response interaction (like HTTP, FTP)**
  - commands: ASCII text
  - response: status code and phrase
- **messages must be in 7-bit ASCI**

Scenario: Alice sends message to Bob

1) Alice uses UA to compose message "to" `bob@someschool.edu`
2) Alice's UA sends message to her mail server; message placed in message queue
3) client side of SMTP opens TCP connection with Bob's mail server
4) SMTP client sends Alice's message over the TCP connection
5) Bob's mail server places the message in Bob's mailbox
6) Bob invokes his user agent to read message



Sample SMTP interaction

```
S: 220 hamburger.edu
C: HELO crepes.fr
S: 250  Hello crepes.fr, pleased to meet you
C: MAIL FROM: <alice@crepes.fr>
S: 250 alice@crepes.fr... Sender ok
C: RCPT TO: <bob@hamburger.edu>
S: 250 bob@hamburger.edu ... Recipient ok
C: DATA
S: 354 Enter mail, end with "." on a line by itself
C: Do you like ketchup?
C: How about pickles?
C: .
S: 250 Message accepted for delivery
C: QUIT
S: 221 hamburger.edu closing connection
```

Try SMTP interaction for yourself:

- `telnet servername 25`
- see 220 reply from server
- enter HELO, MAIL FROM, RCPT TO, DATA, QUIT commands

above lets you send email without using email client (reader)

SMTP: final words

- SMTP uses persistent connections
- SMTP requires message (header & body) to be in 7-bit ASCII
- SMTP server uses `CRLF.CRLF` to determine end of message

comparison with HTTP:

- HTTP: pull
- SMTP: push
- both have ASCII command/response interaction, status codes
- HTTP: each object encapsulated in its own response msg
- SMTP: multiple objects sent in multipart msg

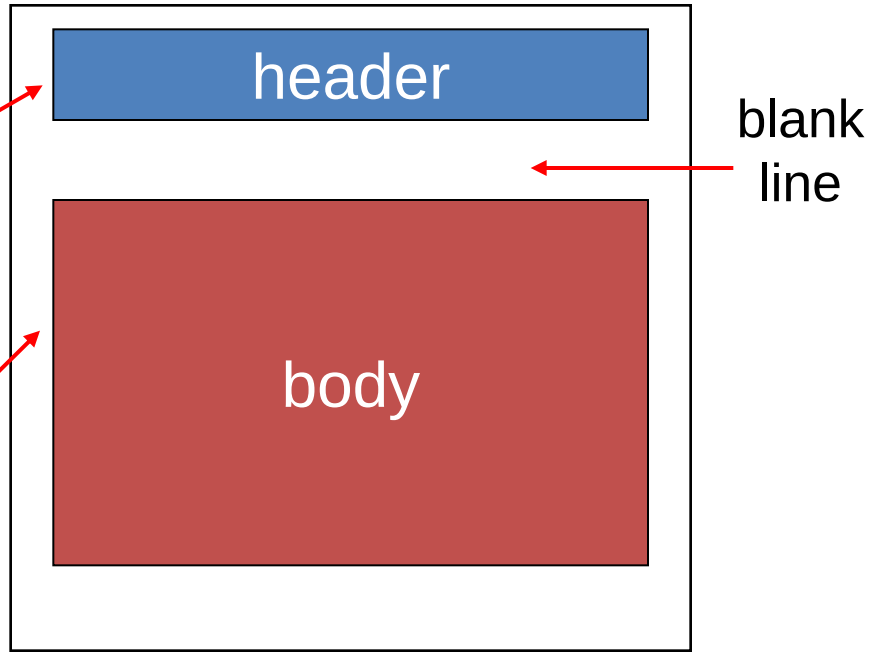
Mail message format

SMTP: protocol for exchanging email msgs

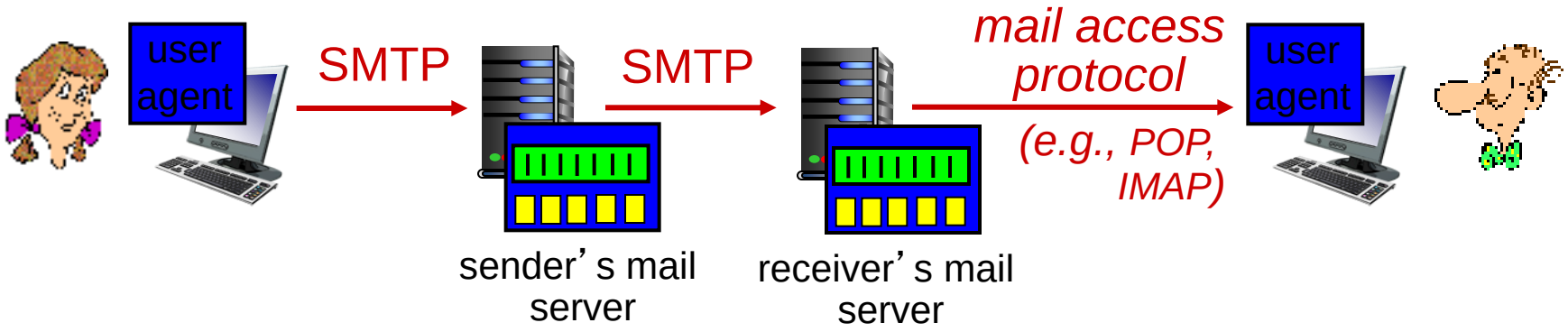
RFC 822: standard for text message format:

- **header lines, e.g.,**
  - To:
  - From:
  - Subject:

  different from SMTP MAIL FROM, RCPT TO: commands!
- **Body: the "message"**
  - ASCII characters only



Mail access protocols



- **SMTP: delivery/storage to receiver's server**
- **mail access protocol: retrieval from server**
  - POP: Post Office Protocol [RFC 1939]: authorization, download
  - IMAP: Internet Mail Access Protocol [RFC 1730]: more features, including manipulation of stored msgs on server
  - HTTP: gmail, Hotmail, Yahoo! Mail, etc.

POP3 protocol

authorization phase

- **client commands:**
  - **`user:`** declare username
  - **`pass:`** password
- **server responses**
  - **`+OK`**
  - **`-ERR`**

transaction phase, **client:**

- **`list:`** **list message numbers**
- **`retr:`** **retrieve message by number**
- **`dele:`** **delete**
- **`quit`**

```
S: +OK POP3 server ready
C: user bob
S: +OK
C: pass hungry
S: +OK user successfully logged on
```

```
C: list
S: 1 498
S: 2 912
S: .
C: retr 1
S: <message 1 contents>
S: .
C: dele 1
C: retr 2
S: <message 1 contents>
S: .
C: dele 2
C: quit
S: +OK POP3 server signing off
```

POP3 (more) and IMAP

more about POP3

- **previous example uses POP3 "download and delete" mode**
  - Bob cannot re-read e-mail if he changes client
- **POP3 "download-and-keep": copies of messages on different clients**
- **POP3 is stateless across sessions**

IMAP

- **keeps all messages in one place: at server**
- **allows user to organize messages in folders**
- **keeps user state across sessions:**
  - names of folders and mappings between message IDs and folder name