equivalent to "**less Jan/summary Feb/summary** . . . " but there's one important difference: the names will be alphabetized, so *Apr/summary* would be first in the list.

Creating and Editing Files

One easy way to create a file is with a Unix feature called *input/output redirection*, as Chapter 5 explains. This sends the output of a program directly to a file, to make a new file or add to an existing one.

You'll usually create and edit a plain-text file with a *text editor* program. Text editors are somewhat different than *word processors*.

Text Editors and Word Processors

A *text editor* lets you add, change, and rearrange text easily. Two common Unix editors are **vi** (pronounced "vee-eye") and **emacs** ("ee-macs"). **Pico** ("pea-co") is a simple editor that has been added to many Unix systems.

Since there are several editor programs, you can choose one you're comfortable with. **vi** is probably the best choice because almost all Unix systems have it, but **emacs** is also widely available. If you'll be doing simple editing only, **pico** is a great choice. Although **pico** is much less powerful than **emacs** or **vi**, it's also a lot easier to learn.

None of those editors has the same features as popular word processing software on personal computers. **vi** and **emacs** are sophisticated, extremely flexible editors for all kinds of plain text files: programs, email messages, and so on.

By "plain text," we mean a file with only letters, numbers, and punctuation characters in it. Unix systems use plain text files in many places: redirected input and output of Unix programs (Chapter 5), as shell setup files (see the section "Customizing Your Account" in Chapter 3), for shell scripts (shown in the section "Programming" of Chapter 8), for system configuration, and more. Text editors edit these files. When you use a word processor, though, although the screen may look as if the file is only plain text, the file probably also has hidden codes (nontext characters) in it. That's often true even if you tell the word processor to "Save as plain text." One easy way to check for nontext characters in a file is by reading the file with **less**; look for characters in reversed colors, codes like `<36>`, and so on.

If you need to do word processing—making documents, envelopes, and so on—most Unix systems also support easy-to-use word processors such