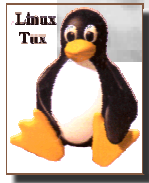# D'Alton News

Linux Tux
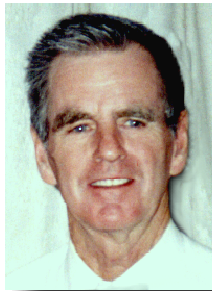
Computer Help and Hints

Do you need help, advice, hints and guidance?

This is my seventh Newsletter in which I hope I can pass on to the reader hints and helpful information that I have gathered in the twenty five years that I have been involved with computers. I point out that my advice, tips and hints are my own so the reader should seek another computer literate person's opinion if required.

There are many books and computer magazines that are aimed at the beginner and do a good job but in my opinion they still do not cater for the very new beginner to the new technology that is computers. Our children, grandchildren or great-grandchildren have grown up with technology. They know where to press on a toy to get it to talk, make a sound or move. I have checked out various How To articles in such magazines and books where the title may be something such as "How to make a sound for your computer" and they might say that it can be done in 15 minutes. Absolutely ridiculous for beginner-beginners.
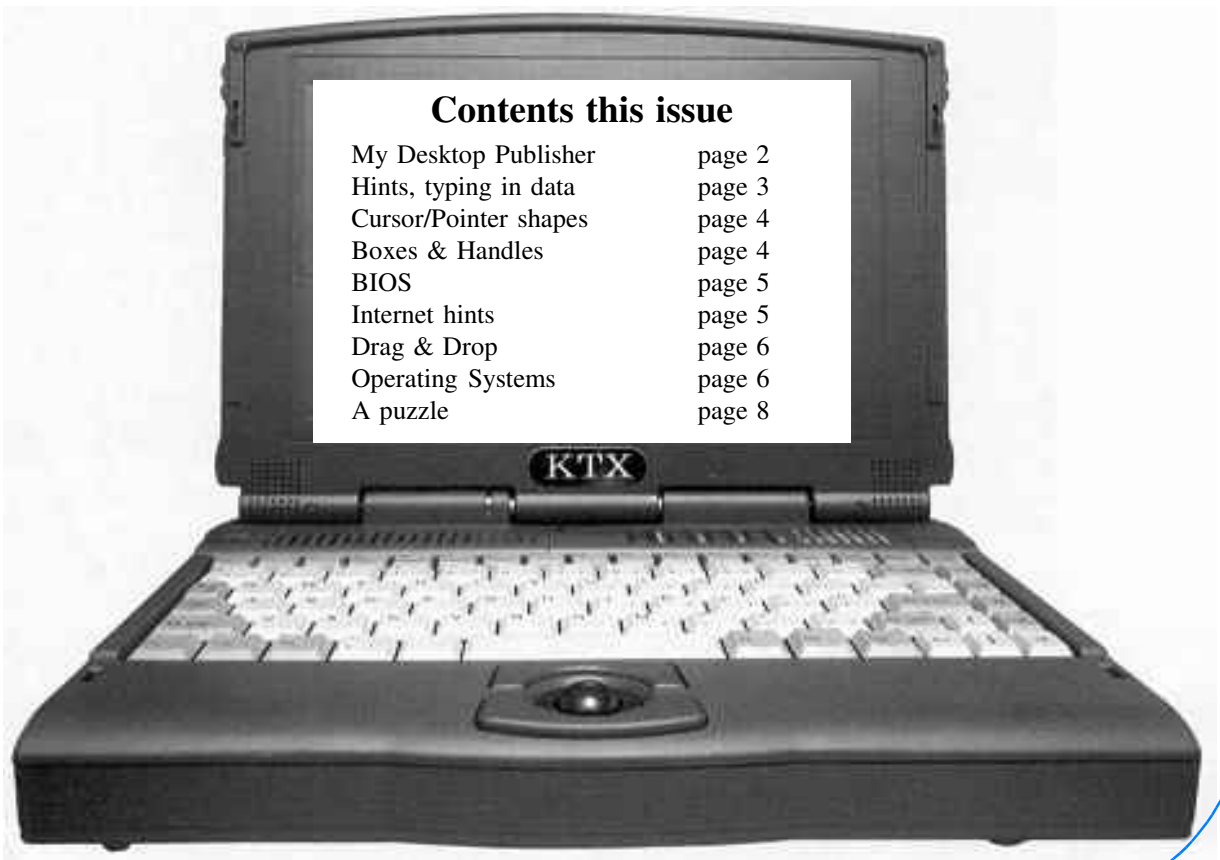
So I hope my hints really do help.

John C.E. D'Alton

DN

Contents this issue

KTX

My Desk Top Publisher Application

People ask me what Desk Top Publishing (DTP) application I use if not Microsoft' s Publisher. As many people know, I do not use Microsoft software if I can help it. For Operating System (OS) software I do use Windows 3.11, W95, W98 and also Linux Caldera and Linux Definate. And of course MS DOS.

Elsewhere I will disclose what software/ applications I do use but here I want to talk about DTP. I have used about five different DTP applications which include a couple of DOS ones over a decade ago. I have tried MS DTP Publisher but I find it quite inadequate as well as expensive, memory hungry and hard disk hungry.

So what do I use now?

Up until number six DN Hints I have used Printit! V 2.0 DTP which is a British application by GST Technology Ltd. I' m now using GreenStreet DTP V 3 which was released about 2000. It was on a CD ROM disc which came with a computer magazine and entirely free, gratis. The magazine is the July 2001 issue of Computer Shopper. It was superseded by V4 which does cost about $100.

It does most of the things that the usual DTP does at a very low price. One of the features I like is one can change characteristics of a text, graphic or picture box and see the results without leaving the Editing Dialogue Box. In many applications, in particular Imaging, drawing and DTP, there is a small preview box so one can see the changes taking effect as the changes are made. These may be colour, brightness, sharpening, size and so on. It is difficult sometimes to see the changes in the little preview box so one then has to Exit/OK the box to see the changes in normal/full size. This feature of the Properties Box is great in that I can see the effect taking place on the screen in the background. I can scroll the document up, down, left and right to click on other elements on the document, cha nge the properties and see the changes taking place.

This all without leaving the Properties Box.

On the left I have inserted what is called a "Snippet Graphic".
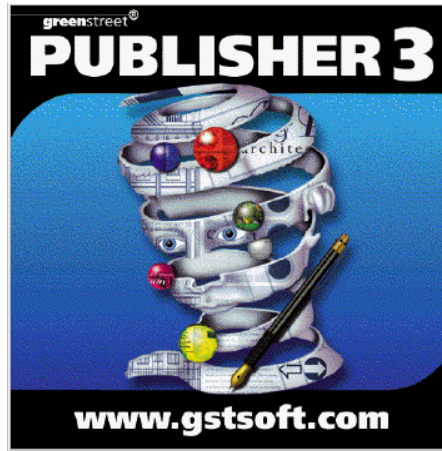
Here is a weird photo of myself where I have chosen a box with quite a few points. As you can see both boxes are repelling the text. Flowing of text from text box to another text box is possible which is fairly standard these days. The text boxes can be on different pages if required. The ability to print spot colours, to print one of the four colours is possible. The SpellChecker and the Thesaurus is fully operational which in some cheap or Shareware is usually inoperative until it is registered. The Print Preview is available from the Print dialogue box directly. Mail Merge and Export to a Web Page is also possible although I haven' t tried these facilities yet. Another very useful feature is being able to Insert Fields. Twenty four are possible, Filename, Date, Comments, Author, page numbers and so on. If the reader has this facility on your DTP or Wordprocessorr and does not use it or doesn' t know what it is, I suggest you read your manual of the Help files. To be able to Insert a Field in a document is very useful. The **Date Field** is very useful if put at the top of a snailmail letter or document. You may commence typing the document and type the date EI **Thursday 18 April 2002.** You may come back to complete the letter/document on the next Monday so the date would automatically changed to **Monday 22 April 2002.**

I use this feature in footers in documents where there is more than one page which I have inserted a **Date** field so that the date is printed when I print it. This feature has been around for about 15 years and the reader will find it in M$ Word etc.
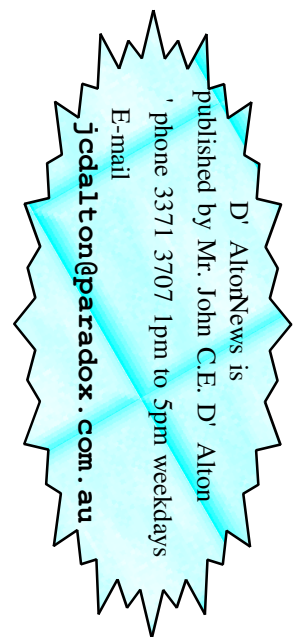
Be the boss of your computer.

Every computer owner/ operator should have the computer setup to suit themselves. There are many things that can be done which will make it easier and more fun if these things are done. I may write an article in a future DN about this so keep tuned in.

If you have arthritis in your hands this matter is a must.

Version Untitled

More Hints

Here are some more very useful hints to make your computing easier and quicker.

There are many occasions when you are prompted to type in some data, a name, a number etc. Many times the computer has put a name or number there and is highlighted, a dark background. This is the default that the computer software writer assumes you may accept but you can still type in your own name or number. If you need to change the default as highlighted immediately type in your name or number.

Now read my lips, immediately type, do not click the mouse, do not press any key on the keyboard, *do not pass go to collect $200.*

Indents and Spacing

Indentation

Left: **0 cm**

This is a part of a dialogue box where Left Indentation can be selected. The default is **0cm** so to change it to 2 one would immediately type the number **2**. In this case **cm** would disappear but the computer would put the **cr** later on. Of course you could click the little spin arrow that is easier.

Save As

File Name:

Untitl1.CWK

a4_2cols.cwk
aug02_01.cwk

Above is a SaveAs dialogue box where the file name of an item, a document, a photo, a sound or whatever. The default is **Untitl1.CWK** so the name/number of the file would be immediately typed in.

View Scale

View Scale: **100** %

Cancel **OK**
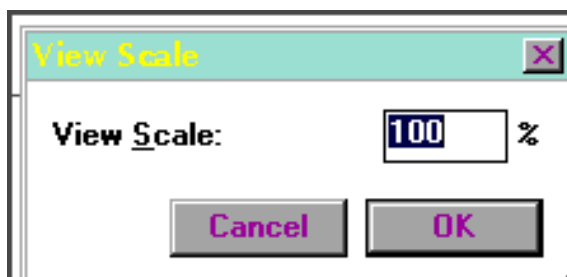
Above is another small dialogue box where the View Scale can be changed if needed. The default is **100%** but

this can be changed by immediately typing in a number which could be 25, 50, 150, 200 or what ever the maximum allowable.

Goto document

Enter an Internet address or choose

www.sundaycomputermarket.com.au

OK

The fourth dialogue above box appears in my W Browser called "Opera" but also applies to Netscape Internet Explorer. In this case I wanted to go to a W that I thought I may have been to before and so it' URL address may

*....do not press any key on the keyboard, do not pass go to collect $200.*

have been in ... s obtained when the do... x is c... as I ... e, ... u is highlighted. If I ... L address I would type ... ediately. Of course if I wanted to go to the **www.sundaycomputermarket.com.au** I would click the **Go** button or tap the **Enter** key.

This very basic theme that text that is highlighted in a wordprocessor or text editor will dissappear if most of the keys are pressed on the keyboard is a sort of reverse logic. In this case the four keys that can be pressed on the keyboard are the four **arrow** keys, the four grey ones between the main keys and the numeric keys section. SSSooo, if text is highlighted in dialogue boxes or on the page of a wordprocessor, that text will be replaced by what you type. In fact the first keyboard key touched will cause all the highlighted text to disappear.

Warning!!!

Talking about selected/highlighted text in a wordprocessor; I warn people that you should deselect text as soon as you have finished with it, finished doing to it what you wanted to do. This means just clicking on the page or other part once with the mouse. The better way is to dab one of the four grey arrow keys on the keyboard. I generally dab the **Right** arrow key → which will deselect, that is remove the highlighting of the text; the text will still be on the page and the flashing cursor will be at the beginning of or at the end of the text that was previously selected. This way you have the flashing cursor closeby.

READ ON ↓

DN
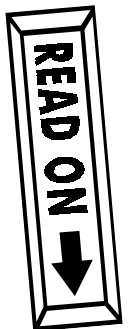
Cursor shapes. The shape of the pointer.

When the mouse was invented a few decades ago it was called or referred to as a pointing device or pointer. Its shape was a simple arrow pointing to about 10 o' clockIt wasn' too long before software writers made various shapes for the pointer. I think the reader should have already seen the pointer with an hour glass next to it which indicates that you need to wait while things happen inside the computer. Telling you to be patient!
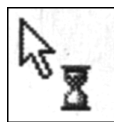
The next pointer seen could be the pointer by itself. This is used in all Operating Systems (OS), DOS, Unix, MAC, OS/2 Windows and Linux. Of course there are other OS' which are too numerous to mention here.
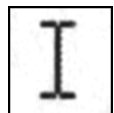
One of the first applications people use is a text editor or a wordprocessor and when the pointer is hovering in the text area an I beam is seen which looks like a big capital "I".

If you use a spreadsheet there is the shape which when working with the cells which is similar to a cross. The pointer changes to this shape when working with/in cells.
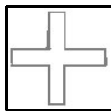
When using an image editing, paint or drawing application there are numerous pointer shapes. One being the "crosshair" pointer. This is used to select a section of an image or graphic to crop, cut or copy part of it.
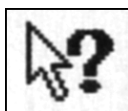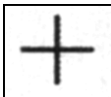
There are many places in applications where one can click on something to be able to read information or Help about it. This could be pertaining to a piece of text or graphic. The **Arrow** and **?** are together.

I point out again that the pointer shape changes depending on where it is hovering, to where on the screen you have moved the pointer. The shape also changes when one has clicked on certain buttons, menu items or elsewhere. One really has to keep a third eye on the pointer.

Boxes, their handles and widgets.

More things to learn. What a great life, learning all this "stuff".

This applies mainly to wordprocessors, DTP, image editing, drawing, database, spreadsheet, scanning, in fact most applications. A Text Box is one of the basic and most known boxes so I will start with one.

Text is typed into a Text Box which can be any reasonable size and shape. It can be square, oblong, circular, diamond and various shapes.

This is a text box which has eight "Handles", a handle is a little black square on each corner and four on the centre of the vertical and horizontal line of the box. The one here is slightly different with a curved arrow. This means that the Text Box can be rotated.

The little object on the bottom centre that is partially covering the handle is a widget that indicates there is text ready to be flowed into another Text Box.

This is the same Text Box but has been put in a Locked Mode hence the white crosses in each handle. Locked Mode means it can not be moved.

The third graphic here is a a Photo Box and a Text Box that are grouped together. Both boxes have eight handles as the two Text Boxes above. The Text Box is actually the title for the Photo Box.

The fourth is a special box called a Magic Text Box. It also has eight handles with the addition of little round handles. These are for the manipulation of the shape of the text. In fact they are coloured blue and red.

The last small box is one in MS Access and is where I am designing the database. This is another Text Box with eight handles but one is bigger than the others. It is used for moving the Text Box around.
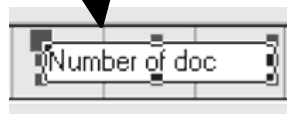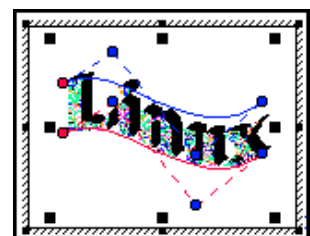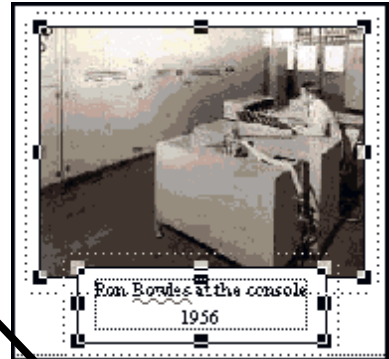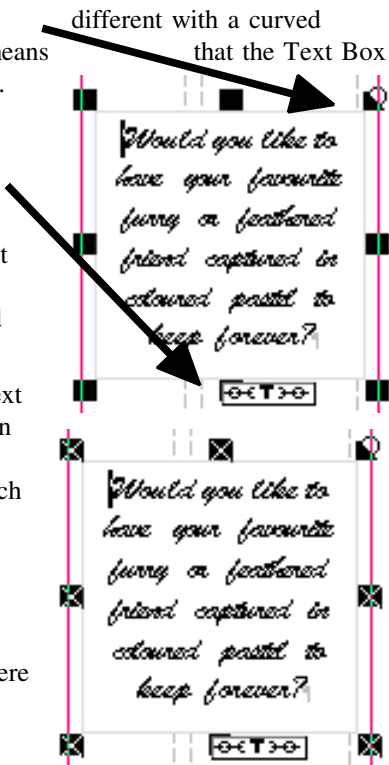
I hope these few examples will help the newbie computerist.

What is BIOS?

BIOS Basic input-output system, stored in a computer's read-only memory (ROM) on a dedicated chip and sent to random access memory (RAM) as needed. In some systems, the BIOS can be upgraded in a software operation. Others require a chip replacement. BIOS logically (as distinct from electrically) connects the CPU with keyboard, monitor, hard drive and other hardware.

The Internet

The Internet has been in operation since 1970 when three Universities in the USA first "talked" or communicated with each other. It was used for the next few years mainly by universities and government.
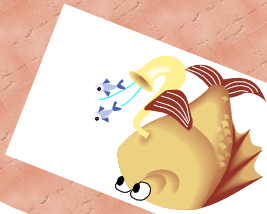
The Internet is the overall system which encompasses other systems. These include; E-mail, File Transport Protocol (FTP), Telnet, Usenet (NewsGroups), and the World Wide Web (WEB). When the reader communicates to others do not say "Internet" but rather one of the parts of the Internet as I just mentioned. The Internet is the umbrella and the other parts are a part or under the umbrella. You should be specific when talking about the Internet especially when asking for help or assistance. In the 1980's the Internet was used before MS Windows meaning that DOS, UNIX and other Operating Systems (OS) where the information was in text format, usually white text on black, orange or a green background.

In **1993** Windows based Web Browser was developed

called Mosaic which swept the world. This also applied to E-mail and Usenet Browsers just mentioning these. These applications made surfing the Web and using E-mail so much easier. So "every man and his dog" were using the Internet. Well not really but it seemed at the time. E-mail applications were Eudora and Pegasus Mail while for Usenet (Newsgroups) an application called FreeAgent was popular and still is.

In retrospect, surfing the Web was very easy and simple in those days as there was usually only text on the pages. No pop up boxes and junk items to contend with. Now it's a different matter. Popup buttons, popup items of all sorts. New widows or boxes that take over. Sometimes it's difficult to get back to the page or site one was previously viewing. So much junk to wade through which in most cases ruins the experience that surfing the Web was. And of course the dark sinful side of the Web with pornographic items, another curse to contend with, becoming a real menace and growing.

This is where people can really get into trouble financially and otherwise so please be on your guard.

Despite my negative Internet experience I even have a bad time navigating the Web so don't feel too bad. I do most of the Web without problems.

Most people have heard about computer viruses but many have not heard about hackers. Hackers are people who

> ## Hackers are people who can "get into" your computer electronically.

can "get into" your computer electronically. A hacker can manipulate a computer from anywhere in the world. This was originally meant to be a useful way to operate computers from another remote site for good and useful reasons. Now hackers have taken it to another dimension by being able to get data and use it for unlawful and immoral reasons. For people who leave their computer connected to the Internet 24 hours per day it's a recipe for problems. And of course for those who can afford a cable (broadband) connection the computer is on-line all the time unless it is disconnected from the power, in our case in Australia the 240 volts power.

Another problem that will have to be addressed by everyone seems to be the amount of bandwidth that is being used for bad and unnecessary usage. This affects most of us. When the Internet is slow, it takes more time than usual to access the ISP, time to download a Web site, time to download items from the Internet, in other words surf the Internet.

In regards to E-mail there is etiquette that we all should adhere to, simple rules that will help us all. Don't become involved with pyramid type E-mails and chain letter E-mails.

Forwarding E-mails is another waste of bandwidth, that is when an E-mail is received and you are asked to **Forward** it to someone else.
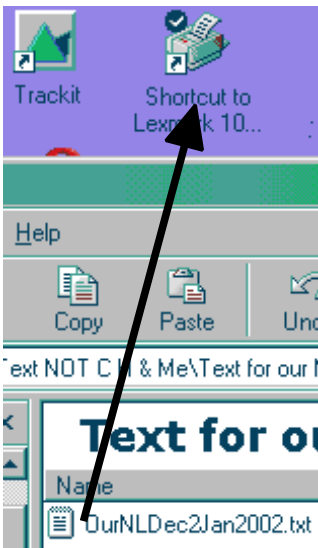
Drag and Drop

What's Drag and Drop I hear you say?

This feature is available in most Operating Systems (OS) but not used very much or at all by many people. I think it was intended to be the the greatest thing since sliced bread but didn' really catch on as hoped.

Drag and Drop simply means clicking on an object and while holding the mouse primary (right) button down move/drag the item to another place. The object can be plain text as in a wordprocessor, a file in a file management application, a picture or graphic in a drawing application and many other situations. People usually do the operation at hand by a normal method using buttons or menus but can be achieved by the Drag and Drop method.

I recommend the reader try and practice **Drag and Drop** using a wordprocessor or making a folder then **Drag and Drop** another folder into it, or a file into it.

This is a subject which is difficult to show on paper because of the inability to capture the screen/VDU or capture sections of it because of the movement of the pointer and the item/s being moved. It is a subject that is best shown by example on a computer.

When using a file manager such as Windows Explorer two windows can be opened where one or more files can be Drag and Dropped to another folder. Either copying or moving file/s. A printable file can be **Dragged** from Windows Explorer and **Dropped** onto the Printer icon on the DeskTop or elsewhere. Here I have done this to a text file so it can be printed on my Lexmark printer.

Operating Systems OS
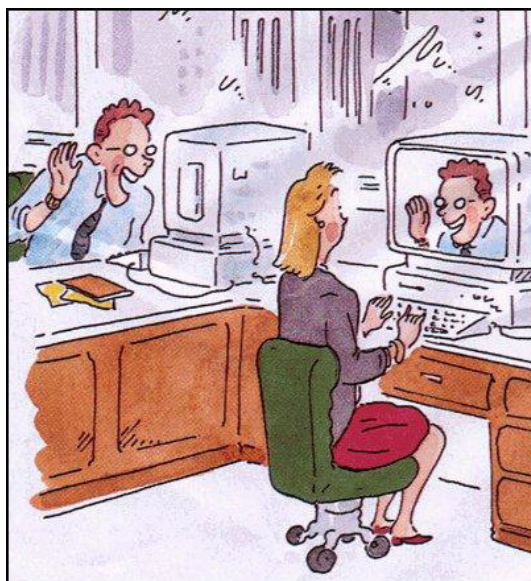
What Operating System Do You Use?

I frequently ask what Operating System (OS) a person has installed on their computer. This is necessary when trying to solve or help with a problem.

The reader should know or perhaps I should say "must" know the OS.

The most used OS' these days are variations of Microsoft OS'. The early OS was Disk Operating System (DOS) which is the base for W3.x and W95.

The systems on top of DOS are are Windows 3.1, Windows 95. The OS' Windows 98, Windows ME, Windows XP are later OS'.

UNIX, Apple (MAC), OS/2, Linux and BEOS are other OS'.

I have DOS, Linux, W3.11, W95 and W98 installed on my computers. Most OS' show at Bootup which OS is installed on a computer. People must take a note of the OS on the computer.

What is an Operating System?

The OS is the basis of how the computer operates. The different OS' evolved over the decades and are different in many respects. A bit like the differences of motorised vehicles. A motor car, a motorbike, a tractor and a truck are different and are designed for a particlular purpose. Some can do same or similar things, some better or worse.

After the OS is installed the computer needs the other software, the applications, the utilities installed to accomplish the task at hand. A **wordprocessor** is different than a **photo editing** application. An **E-mail** application is different to a **Play CD Music** application. These application and utility software are written to suit a certain OS or in some cases for more than one OS. In other words the Internet application called **Netscape** which is used to surf the Internet, use E-mail and Newsgroups is written for Linux, Windows and I think OS/2. To use **Netscape** on a Linux OS it must be the one written for Linux. To use **Netscape** on a Windows system it must be written for Windows. The two **Netscape** applications are not interchangeable.

So when you need help using **Netscape** you must say what your OS is. If I want help to service my Holden Commodore I would not go to a Ford service centre. Simple!

DN

That someone else could be a list or group of E-mail addresses and then someone in that list could resend it to everyone again by doing a **Forward.** The cycle can be never ending. Naturally there are occasions when **Forwarding** is necessary but don't overdo it.

I will give you some simple E-mail etiquette points.

Guidelines for Electronic Mail Etiquette

This section presents some simple guidelines for electronic mail etiquette. It does not try to mandate any particular style or rules but instead an attempt to highlight important issues affecting the clarity of the electronic mail we send. After all, electronic mail is about communication, so clarity should be our goal. This section is based on a document distributed widely around the Internet over the last few years, and is in no particular order.

Addresses and personal names

A Personal name is an arbitrary string many E-mailers will allow you to define that is attached to your E-mail address as a textual comment; in Pegasus Mail, you define your personal name in the General Preferences dialogue. Always provide a personal name if your mail system allows it, a personal name attached to your address identifies you better than your address can on its own.

Subject lines

Always include a subject line in your message. Almost all E-mailers present you with the subject line when you browse your mailbox, and it's often the only clue the recipient has about the contents when filing and searching for messages. Make the subject line meaningful. For example, sending a message to WordPerfect Technical Support with the subject "WordPerfect" is practically as unhelpful as having no subject at all.

If you are **Reply**ing to a message but are changing the subject of the conversation, change the subject too or better still, start a new message altogether. The subject is usually the easiest way to follow the thread of a conversation, so changing the conversation without changing the subject can be confusing and can make filing difficult. I also suggest that you type the persons name or title, not just "Hi" and date at the top of the text. I know that the date is included in the E-mail header but it is much easier for the recipient to know when you typed it or at least when you started typing the text if you needed to type over more than one day.

Message Length, Content and Format

Try to match your message length to the tenor of the conversation, if you are only making a quick query, then keep it short and to the point. In general, keep to the subject as much as possible. If you need to branch off onto a totally new and different topic then it's often better to send a new message, which allows the recipient the option of filing it separately.

Don't type your message in all uppercase, it's extremely difficult to read (although a short stretch of uppercase may serve to emphasise a point heavily). Try to break your message into logical paragraphs and restrict your sentences to sensible lengths. If you need to put emphasis on a word or two I suggest you type either an asterisk "*" or an underscore "_" either side of the word/s. EI, ... I will meet you *tomorrow*... or

EI ....meet me at _12 noon_ ....

Use correct grammar and spelling. Electronic mail is all about communication, poorly worded and misspelt messages are hard to read and potentially confusing. Just because electronic mail is fast does not mean that it should be slipshod, yet the worst language mashing I have ever seen has been done in E-mail messages. If your words are important enough to write, then they're also important enough to write properly.

Be very careful about including credit card numbers in electronic mail messages. Electronic mail can be intercepted in transit and a valid credit card number is like money in the bank for someone unscrupulous enough to use it.

Replies

Include enough of the original message to provide a context. Remember that Electronic Mail is not as immediate as a telephone conversation and the recipient may not recall the contents of the original message, especially if he or she receives many messages each day. including the relevant section from the original message helps the recipient to place your reply in context. Include only the minimum you need from the original message. One of the most annoying things you can encounter in E-mail is to have your original five page message quoted back at you in its entirety, with the words "Me too" added at the bottom. Quote back only the smallest amount you need to make your context clear. Use some kind of visual indication to distinguish between text quoted from the original message and your new text, this makes the reply much easier to follow. ">" is a traditional marker for quoted text, but you can use anything provided its purpose is clear and you use it consistently.

Signatures

A Signature is a small block of text appended to the end of your messages, which usually contains your contact information. Many E-mailers can add a signature to your messages automatically. Signatures are a great idea but are subject to abuse; balance is the key to a good signature. Always use a signature if you can; make sure it identifies who you are and includes alternative means of contacting you (phone and fax are usual). In many systems, particularly where mail passes through gateways, your signature may be the only means by which the recipient can even tell who you are. Keep your signature short, four to six lines is a handy guideline for maximum signature length. Unnecessarily long signatures waste bandwidth (especially when distributed to lists) and can be annoying.

Courtesy

Electronic mail is all about communication with other people, and as such some basic courtesy never goes amiss. If you're asking for something, don't forget to say "please". Similarly, if someone does something for you, it never hurts to say "thank you". While this might sound trivial, or even insulting, it's astonishing how many people who are perfectly polite in everyday life seem to forget their manners in their E-mail.

Don't expect an immediate answer. The fact that you don't get an answer from someone in ten minutes does not mean that he or she is ignoring you, and is no cause for offence. Electronic mail is all about dealing with your communications when you are able to do so. Always remember that there is no such thing as a secure mail system. It is unwise to send very personal or sensitive information by E-mail unless you encrypt it using a reliable encryptor. Remember the recipient, you are not the only person who could be embarrassed if a delicate message falls into the wrong hands. Include enough information if you are sending in a question to which you expect a response, make sure you include

enough information to make the response possible. For example, sending the message "My spreadsheet programme doesn' twork" to Lotus Technical Support really doesn' tgive them very much to work with similarly, sending the message "What has happened to my order?" to a vendor is also unhelpful. When requesting technical support, include a description of the problem and the version of the programme you' reusing when following up on an order, include the order number, your name and organisation, and any other details that might assist in tracing your order and so on.

Electronic mail has very nearly the immediacy of a conversation, but is totally devoid of "body language". The Internet "counter-culture" has had an answer to this problem for years, "smiley faces", or groups of ASCII characters that are meant to look like a face turned on its side. The most common smiley faces are probably these:

:-) or :) A smiling face seen side-on; generally used to indicate amusement, or that a comment is intended to be funny or ironic ("<g>" or "<grin>" is also sometimes used).

:-(or :(An unhappy face seen side on; generally used to express disappointment or sorrow.

;-) A winking smiley face usually indicates that something should be taken "with a grain of salt".

;-> A mischievous smiley face usually indicates that a comment is intended to be provocative or racy. There are hundreds of others, some more recognisable than others. Using the common smiley faces carefully can markedly improve the clarity of your message, since they convey nuances which approximate "body language". Like any embellishment, however, overuse of smiley faces destroys their value so use them sparingly.

The Bottom Line

Above all else, remember that electronic mail is about communication with other people. When you compose an E-mail message, read it over before sending it and ask yourself what your reaction would be if you received it. Any time spent on making our E-mail clearer is time well-spent, so let' start taking the time.

DN

486DX2/66 VESA System $2590.⁰⁰

- 486DX2 66 Hhz *Intel*
- 256K Cache
- Pentium (P24T) Upgradeable
- 4MB RAM *Panasonic* 70ns
- 1.44MB FDD *Panasonic*
- 340MB HDD *Western Digital*
- 14" SVGA *Monitor Acer T7*
- 1MB Super VGA VESA Video Card *Cirrus Logic*
- VESA Controler 2S,1P,1G
- Mini Tower or Desk Top
- 101 Keyboard *Honeywell*
- 3 Button Mouse + Pad
- *Hurry! While Stocks Last* •

A Little Puzzle

On the left is an advertisement that was in a 1994 Australian computer magazine. There is a mistake or mistype in the text.

Can you find it?

Also notice price for a slow computer of that time $2590.00.

Yes 4Mb RAM, RAM was expensive at the time. All computer parts were expensive then, note only 340Mb of hard disk.

Let me know if you see the error.

Some of my software

People often ask me what software I use.

I have more than one computer mainly because I can't afford or don't need an expensive, fast computer so my computers all do something a bit different. One has a colour flatbed scanner and modem installed. It has both Linux and W95 installed.

Another one has W98 and my colour inkjet printer connected to it. This also has our personal information on it so it's not connected to the Internet.

Another one I use just for the Internet and in particular E-mail so if I have a virus attack I would just format the hard disk and reinstall W95 and the Internet applications and a couple of other applications.

The Operating Systems (OS) are:

DOS, W95, W98 and Linux.

Wordprocessing: Claris Works, MS Word 6, Text Editor, Easy Office.

Image Editing: Paint Shop Pro, Image-in, 602 Photo Imaging and Ipplus.

Data Base: Claris Works, MS Access

Spreadsheet: Claris Works.

Scanning: Text Bridge for OCR, Ipplus and Image-in.

E-mailer: Linux K-E-mail, Pegasus Mail.

Web: Opera, Linux Netscape, Netscape, MS Internet Explorer.

Usenet (NewsGroups): FreeAgent, Linux K-News.

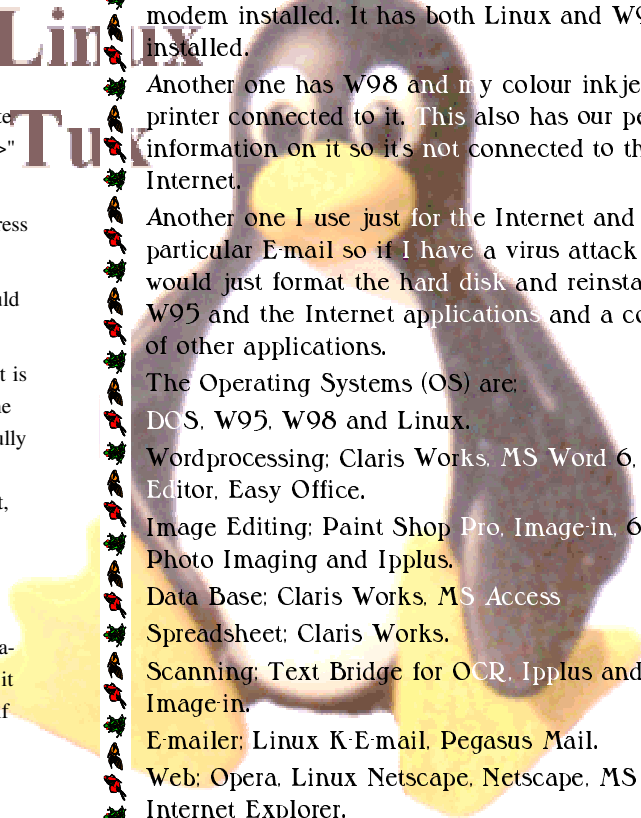Desk Top Publishing: GreenStreet, 602Pro 2000, MS Word, Printit!.

Genealogy: Personal Roots.

PDF: Acrobat Reader.

Other applications and utilities: WinZip, XTGold, Keyview, Treesize Pro, Popnotes, MegaBak, ACDSe, Irfanview.

The Linux I mention is the Caldera Distribution which I have used since 2000 and is extremely stable, that is it doesn't crash like MS Windows does. This Caldera Linux has crashed only twice on me if I remember correctly. If an application freezes it can be shutdown/closed which allows other applications to still be working. Netscape and K-E-Mail have frozen a few times on me. I dual boot Linux and W95 on my PC4.

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