

Don't Throw the CPU out of the Window

By Clare Henderson

Problems that seem to plague the students and faculty at UPEI are often associated with the campus email system. Everyone has had a moment when one wants to climb up to the roof of Duffy and throw the computer off to see how high it can bounce. If you think you've got it bad, imagine the people who have to deal with these problems on a daily basis.

When dealing with a server system as large as that of UPEI, it is inevitable that you are going to run into a few problems. Viruses and spam are a major issues that must be contended with. When talking with Tom Germaine from Computer Services, I was reminded of just how much patience one has to have when dealing with a computer - and how these guys must have it in spades.

In case you don't know anything about the computer system here, let me break it down for you - and forgive me, I know how to turn a computer on and off and run WordPerfect, so for all you

Computer Science students out there you may find this painful. When you send an email to a UPEI account, it goes through one server that goes through all the incoming mail (whether it's from one UPEI account to another or not) and filters it for spam.

Let's stop here for a second. What, may you ask, filters for spam? Here's where the conversation got really cool. A program called *Spam Assassin*. Knowing the little that I know about computers, I assume that it is a little Tom Thumb-sized guy in a ninja suit that goes through the mail and labels it spam.

Ok, so it's just a program that goes through the email looking for key things like the words "buy now." When you get give of those key points, an email is labeled spam. Recognize this?

*****SPAM!!!*****

Once the email is labeled, it's up to you to decide what to do with it, so read the subject to see if it's something that might not actually be spam. But we're not done yet

folks. Once it goes through this first server, it goes through a second one that scans for viruses. Now, here's where one of the problems lie. These definitions have to be updated and no one - not even Bill Gates - can create a definition for a virus before it's created. So, like every other computer system in the world, there's going to be a delay before computers are protected and sometimes the system gets a few bugs.

Needless to say, however, there are often more problems than one would like. But fear not, as something is being done about it. Computer Services is currently in the process of changing their mail system. Right now the University uses the Pegasus mail system but here's the thing: this system is for intra-network mail. That means that they have to use another program, called Mercury, to help Pegasus take mail from outside the computer network. And Mercury isn't the most reliable of programs (plus it's name isn't half as cool as Spam Assassin).

So, they are planning on switching to a program called WebMail.

This will be a more user friendly mail program with easier filtering options available to students. Blair Vessey, who works at Computer Services, says "This will be cost-effective because the program is through Novell, which we already have the licensing for." So that means we won't be forking over big bucks to get mail.

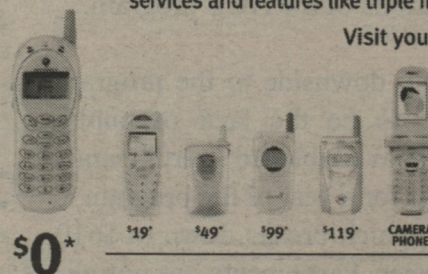
Right now, the program is in place in a test group on campus in order to, as Vessey says "kick the tires to see if it's going to stand up for us." He believes that this new program will be in place in the fall - hopefully by September.

In the meantime, if you have any problems with your UPEI mail, forward any problem emails onto helpdesk@upei.ca and remember, the more detailed you are, the better. So the next time you get frustrated with your email account, don't start heading to Duffy - good things come to those who wait.

Cute guy.
Garlic bread.
Text messaging.

Text messaging is just one of the great ways to stay close. You can also get other great services and features like triple minutes¹, picture messaging and a \$0 phone².

Visit your local Aliant dealer, call 1-866-434-0344 or go to www.aliant.net for details.



TRIPLE YOUR MINUTES
FOR UP TO THREE MONTHS

here. for you.™

Aliant
Mobility

*Certain conditions apply. \$0 applies to Motorola 120e after mail-in rebate. All other prices displayed are after rebate. Offer available to new primary customers who sign a three year contract and subject to credit approval. While supplies last. See your dealer for details. Offer subject to change without notice. ¹ Triple your minutes for three months available to customers who sign a three-year contract. Offer expires March 31, 2004. Existing contract customers who sign a Rate Share contract are eligible for anytime promotion.