

12. E-MAIL

This "E-mail" module is designed to allow the user to gain a better understanding of a commonly used method of personal and professional communication called e-mail. We will define what e-mail is and describe related elements (e.g. connection to the network, setting up an E-mail account, specialized E-mail programs, the use of the E-mail server, etc.). A detailed explanation of an E-mail programme (Outlook Express) and of a specialised webmail site (Yahoo Mail) is presented in addition to several recommendations around communicating efficiently and at all levels (technical, semantic, social, etc.) through E-mail. On completion of this module the user will be able to efficiently and confidently use their E-mail account and any E-mail program, in particular Outlook Express, and webmails like Yahoo Mail.

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12.1. Basic Information on Using e-mail

In order to use email effectively the user should know what email is and how to access an e-mail account. The life cycle of an e-mail message is a useful concept to explain this. The user should also be familiar with the advantages and the disadvantages of it. The last part of this chapter shows several general recommendations for choosing E-mail as a means of communication.

12.1.1. What Is e-mail?

E-mail is the exchange of edited messages on the computer by using telecommunication.

E-mail messages are, usually in text format, ASCII code, respectively using the characters on a keyboard. Also, e-mail messages can be formatted with an embedded wordprocessor.

One can attach files to an E-mail message in text (MSWord, WordPerfect format etc.) image (vectorial format – Corel, AutoCAD etc. or bitmap - *.bmp, *.jpg, *.tif etc.), sound (*.wav, *.mp3), or multimedia format etc. Therefore, any file can be sent as an attachment to an E-mail message. There is a limit regarding the file size being sent and this is determined by the capacity of the server. Your network administrator will be able to tell you what is the maximum size for file attachments.

E-mail messages are transmitted by phone connection and/or via Internet connection. The type of connection to the network does not significantly influence the efficiency of e-mail.

12.1.2. Conditions For Accessing E-mail

In order to access e-mail one person should be provided with:

- A connection to a phone or Internet network (using a modem or Ethernet adapter);
- An e-mail account;**
- A specialised e-mail programme** (e.g. , Outlook Express). [A specialised e-mail programme is not required when using a webmail]

There are three main ways to acquire an e-mail account:

- From a specialized company;
- Provided on the company's **server** ;
- Freely opened on a webmail - Hotmail, Yahoo etc.

The specialised e-mail programme or **the webmail** has two main functions:

- 1) manages the connection between the **sender's** and **recipient's** computers using the **server**;
- 2) allows editing and managing of both sent and received **messages**.

A specialized E-mail programme may be:

- Purchased;
- Received together with other programmes for exploring the Internet;
- Downloaded for free from specialised sites.

E-mail programmes require several pieces of installation information:

- E-mail address;**
- Server's** E-mail address.

The webmail allows the setting of **e-mail address** according to availability. It does not need the installation of any programme.

12.1.3. Lifetime Cycle of an E-mail Message

The Lifetime Cycle of an E-mail Message includes the following:

1. editing the **electronic message**;
2. sending the **electronic message** from the **sender's** computer to the **sender's server**;
3. sending the **electronic message** from the **sender's server** by networking to the **recipient's server**;

4. downloading the **message** from the **recipient's server** on the **recipient's** computer (and deleting it from the **recipient's server**);
5. reading and managing the **electronic message**.

Step 1, 2, 4 and 5 are used at the end **E-mail programme**.

Remarks:

When using a webmail site, the messages can be stored indefinitely on webmail's server.

In the case where **the sender** and **the recipient** use different **E-mail programs** or different versions of the same program, differences in the structure of the **message** may occur. For example the text of a **message** formatted using Outlook Express may be altered by Eudora Light making the text difficult to read.

12.1.4. Advantages of using e-mail

The advantages of using e-mail versus other means of communication include:

- Speed ;
- Low cost;
- User friendly;
- Not affected by the time zone.

E-mail is **faster** than traditional mail because it does not waste time printing and the **message** reaches its destination almost instantaneously

E-mail incurs **lower costs** than traditional mail. Initial costs may include: purchasing the **E-mail programme**, subscribing to the E-mail company and purchasing a **server**.

Costs associated with traditional mail include: expenses for office consumables, wages for employees handling the company mail, mail fees. Together, these costs exceed the costs related to **e-mail**.

Using a **specialised E-mail program** is as **easy** as using a text processor as Microsoft Word or WordPerfect. Moreover, using **e-mail** does not require knowledge about any networks or the Internet.

E-mail is **not affected by the time zone** when sending a **message** to a **recipient** residing on in a different time zone.

12.1.5. Disadvantages of using e-mail

The disadvantages of using e-mail compared to other means of communications include:

- lack of confidentiality;
- signature difficulties;
- necessity to write the address precisely;

The **confidentiality** of a letter is ensured by the envelope. **Other people besides the recipient may read an electronic message and the attached files**. This is the reason why it is recommended to avoid sending confidential information via **E-mail**, except in the case where a message is coded.

E-mail messages cannot be **authenticated** by the sender's signature as in the case of a traditional letter. There are electronic ways to substitute a signature, but these don't hold the same legal gravitas as a graphical signature.

A traditional letter has the advantage that even when the address is misspelled, it still reaches the recipient. If the address of an **electronic message** is misspelled, the **message** is **sent back to** its **sender**.

12.1.6. When e-mail should and should not be used

E-mail is recommended for:

- short informative messages, addressed to colleagues at work;
- common messages to close relatives and friends;
- messages of congratulations to close relatives, friends and colleagues at work;
- requesting information from companies internet sites;
- sending files.

Using E-mail is not recommended for

- important messages requiring an urgent answer;
- messages involving numerous exchanges of information;
- formal congratulation messages to superiors or other individuals;
- official messages.

12.2. Electronic Messages

Electronic message is one of the fundamental elements of E-mail. An efficient use of E-mail demands a good understanding of the electronic message structure and especially the E-mail address. It is also important to know the address of the person whom one intends to contact. Proper use of the address should ensure an end to phenomenon as such as SPAM (unwanted E-mail messages sent by unknown individuals or companies usually consisting of advertising messages). However it takes more than good intentions to stop SPAM messages and it is necessary to know ways of preventing them.

12.2.1. The Structure of an Electronic Message

An electronic Message should have the following structure:

- the header** containing:
 - o **recipient's** address;
 - o **sender's** address;
 - o collateral recipients' addresses (in case of memos);
 - o **message's** subject;
 - o time of sending.
- Message itself** (text format);
- Attached files of any format types.

When sending an e-mail **message the individual** should have:

- A specialised **e-mail programme** (or an account on a **webmail**);
- The recipient's address** (and collateral **recipients' addresses**, if necessary);
- The **sender's address** (the time of sending will be automatically written by in the **head**);
- The subject of the **message**;
- The formatted **message**

12.2.2. E-mail Address

An e-mail address is a code associated with each **e-mail account**. It's form is **user_name@domain. domain_type**.

user_name refers to the name (combination of alphanumerical characters) the user chose to identify his / her **E-mail account**. Theoretically, any name that hasn't been used yet on the E-mail **server** may be chosen, but there are companies that impose certain rules on choosing an user name.

Sign **@** separates user's name from the domain.

Domain is the **server's** name of the **E-mail account**. If the **server** belongs to a hierarchic structure of **servers**, the name of such **servers** will be on the right side, separated by a dot. The less important **server** will be written near sign **@**.

domain_type is the type of the organisation or country of the **server** hosting the **E-mail account**.

For example, **Rory@teh.prod.pub.ro** represents **the e-mail address** of a person who chose **Rory** as his name and his **E-mail account** is on the **server**, which subordinates to **prod server** (of T.C.M.), which subordinates to **pub server** (POLITEHNICA University of Bucharest), located in Romania, country code **ro**.

12.2.3. How To Find Somebody's E-mail Address?

An individuals e-mail address can be found by:

- asking that person;
- asking a common friend specifying the reason you need that address;
- If you know the name of the company the person works for you can search on their webpage.
- Search the individual's name on the internet.

This last choice may be extremely slow especially when the name of the person you are looking for is relatively common or if he / she does not have a personal webpage on the Internet.

Giving a persons e-mail address to a third party is not recommended since it may be used for antisocial behavior or for sending **SPAM**.

12.2.4. What is SPAM?

SPAM is unwanted **e-mail messages** sent by an unknown individual or company usually consisting of advertising messages. **SPAM** is also known as "junk e-mail". Unwanted **electronic messages** are received by the owner of an **e-mail account** from **servers** specialised in electronic advertising. There are many ways in which an **e-mail address** may be listed on an advertising **server including**:

- the owner of an **e-mail account** may subscribe on a high accessed site leaving his personal data;
- the address** has been detected by a programme that write the lists of expeditions;
- the owner of the **E-mail account** has written his **E-mail address** on a promotional questionnaire, not necessary within a network.

12.2.5. Preventing SPAM

If **SPAM** comes from a site that was visited by the owner of the **E-mail account**, the **SPAM** can be stopped coming by **unsubscribing** from the list company's list of the expeditions on the company's site.

Unsubscribe can be used by the user if the site has available such an option. Thus, in the final part of the advertising message it is mentioned the address of the site were the user may unsubscribe. Sometimes even the **unsubscribe** option has no effect, and the **SPAM** continues to come into the inbox of the owner of the **E-mail account**.

For the rest of the **SPAM** messages, the user can use the following techniques:

- activate the filter anti-SPAM of the **E-mail programs** (if there is such a filter);
- install an anti-SPAM program;
- block the IP connection to the SPAM sources (this operation can be done by the network administrator);
- the **SPAM** sources are reported to anti-SPAM sites.

12.3. Outlook

Outlook is an E-mail specialised program. It is a popular programme due to its quality of being user friendly. It is delivered together with the Internet Explorer browser, and Windows installation kit. Because it is a wide spread programme, it prevents the problems associated with alteration of the messages managed by different programmes. Compared to other E-mail programmes, it allows formatting the texts, creating separate identities for different users and a mini database about the contacted individuals.

12.3.1. General Information

Outlook is a **specialised E-mail programme**, which allows the user to:

- edit **electronic messages**;
- send and receive **electronic messages**;
- manage **electronic messages**;
- create and using an electronic address book.

The programme provides a menu bar and a button bar.

By default, the programme window is divided into three parts:

- folders (containing pre-defined: Inbox, Sent, Drafts, Contacts, Calendar, Notes and Deleted Items);
- content of the mail box opened in that specific moment;
- content of the selected messages in the opened mailbox.

The programme manages the mailboxes as folders.

This programme can be used by several users alternatively each of them having its own identity which assures their confidentiality.

12.3.2. Outlook Menu Bar

Outlook Menu bar consists of:

- File;
- Edit;
- View;
- Favorites
- Tools;
- Actions;
- Help.

File menu allows the user to manage and print files, to create backgrounds for his / her **messages**, to manage users' identities as well as to quit the program.

Edit allows the user to manage **messages** and folders (copy, paste, delete, select).

View menu allows the user to configure the program windows, messages order, different criteria, text size and codification method.

Favorites menu allows user to organise the URLs of his / her favorite websites.

Tools menu allows the user to manage the address book manually and automatically, the **account** on the E-mail **server** and the **account** on Hotmail.

Message menu allows managing the received, sent and outgoing **messages** etc.

Help menu assist the user in using the programme.

12.3.3. Outlook Button Bar

Outlook button bar consists of the the following buttons:

- New;
- Print;
- Move to folder;
- Delete;
- Reply;
- Reply to All;
- Forward;
- Send/Receive;
- Find;
- Organise;
- Address book;
- Type to find a contact;
- Help.

New button allows the user to start writing a complete new message. When this button is clicked, a new window is launched. The new window is similar to the window of a wordprocessor programme.

Print button allows the user to print the messages.

Move to folder button allows the user to organise the messages in folders for an easy search and handling.

Delete button allows user to get rid of unwanted and obsolete messages.

Reply button allows the user to reply to the message that is opened in the message window. When this button is clicked, a new window is launched. The new window is similar to the window of a wordprocessor programme. The recipient's box is filled with the sender's address from the initial message. The subject box is filled with "RE:" and the subject of initial message. The text of initial message appears in the text box and additional text can be typed.

Reply to All button allows the user to reply to the sender and to all collateral recipients of initial message. When this button is clicked, a new window is launched. The new window is similar to the window of a wordprocessor programme. The recipient's box is filled with the sender's and all collateral recipient's addresses from the initial message. The subject box is filled with "RE:" and the subject of initial message. The text of initial message appears in the text box and additional text can be typed.

Forward button allows user to send the opened message to another e-mail address. When this button is clicked, a new window is launched. The new window is similar to the window of a wordprocessor programme. The recipient's box is empty. The subject box is filled with "FWD:" and the subject of initial message. The text of initial message appears in the text box and additional text can be typed.

Send/Receive button launches the process of exchange messages to user's server. When this button is clicked, all the pending messages on user's computer are sent to server and all the pending messages on user's server are downloaded on user's computer.

Find button allows user to find a specified string in the messages stored on his / her computer.

Organise button allows user to organise his / her messages in folders.

Address book button launches a new window in which the addresses can be inserted or found.

Type to find a contact button allows user to find contacts recorded in the contacts database.

Help button assist the user in using the programme.

12.3.4. Outlook Message Composing Window

Messages composing window contains:

- menu bar;
- button bars;
- recipient** line;
- collateral **recipients** line;
- subject line;
- message** text format box.

Menu bar consists of:

- File** (for managing the **messages** and quitting the window);
- Edit** (for editing the **message** text);
- View** (for managing the display of the **header** and the buttons bar);
- Insert** (for attaching the files, texts, images, electronic identity cards, signatures and links to web pages);
- Format** (for formatting the text);
- Tools** (for checking the spelling, encrypting, digital signature and opening the **address book**);
- Table** (for managing tables in the text of the message);
- Window** (for managing the windows of different messages and other text documents);
- Help** (for providing help for the user).

12.4. Yahoo Mail

Yahoo Mail is a webmail. It is a popular webmail because it is user friendly and it has been free for a long time in the network. The webmail-user interface is simple and intuitive allowing messages to be

edited in simple text format preventing the spread of viruses. But it also allows the formatting of the message like a wordprocessor. As a wide spread webmail it also prevents the problems associated with alteration of messages which are managed by different programmes.

12.4.1. General Information

Yahoo Mail is a very popular **webmail**. It can be used for free. An enhanced version (Yahoo Mail Plus) is available for an annual fee.

Yahoo Mail allows the user to:

- edit **electronic messages**;
- send and receive **electronic messages**;
- manage **electronic messages**;
- chat with other users of Yahoo Mail.

Yahoo Mail has an important advantage: it has a lot of users. So, the problems associated to encoding / decoding messages are avoided, when the exchange of messages takes place between Yahoo Mail users.

As all webmails, Yahoo Mail stores all the messages, so they are available wherever the user is located. (E-mail programmes, like Outlook, downloads messages on user's computer, so the messages are available only on that computer.)

Yahoo Mail has an unlimited capacity of storage. The company declares that the user is free to keep all the messages (including attachments) for good.

12.4.2. Setting Up Yahoo Mail

The setting up of Yahoo Mail is simple and straight forward. The future user has to enter the site mail.yahoo.com

At the "Don't have a Yahoo! ID?" section, the future user has to click on "Sign Up".

The future user has to fill the following fields:

- first name and surname;
- gender;
- birthday;
- country of residence;
- postal code;

After that, the future user has to propose a username and a password. It is likely that the first name of the user will not be available as an ID. The webmail will propose a derivate ID by adding a number to the first name. It is strongly recommended to propose a decent ID, as the Yahoo address will be used in relation to other persons than close friends, like older relatives, teachers, senior colleagues, etc.

In order to prevent blocking an e-mail account when the password is forgotten, the webmail records the answers to two personal questions. These questions will be used to recognise the user that has forget his / her password.

12.4.3. Yahoo Mail Window

By default, the webmail's window is divided into two parts:

- folders (containing pre-defined: Inbox, Drafts, Sent, Spam, Trash, Contacts, Calendar, Notepad and My Folders);
- tab zone.

The tab zone contains the following tabs:

- home (where the home page of Yahoo is displayed);
- mail (where the context of selected folder is displayed).

The mail tab displays:

- content of the mail box opened in that specific moment;
- content of the selected messages in the opened mailbox.

The Yahoo Mail window contains advertisements. The content of the advertisements is related to the user's geographical position and can be selected at the setting up. There are no advertisements in the Yahoo Mail Plus version.

12.4.4. Yahoo Mail Button Bars

Yahoo Mail window has two button bars. In the folder part, the button bar contains two buttons:

- Check mail;
- New;

When the Check mail button is clicked, the Inbox is opened and all the messages (including the newly received) are displayed.

When the New button is clicked, a new tab is opened. The new tab contains all the elements necessary to edit a new message. (see below)

In the mail tab, the button bar consists of the the following buttons:

- Delete**;
- Reply**;
- Forward**;
- Spam**;
- Move**;
- Print**;
- More Actions**;
- View**.

Delete button allows user to get rid of unwanted and obsolete messages.

Reply button allows the user to reply to the message that is opened in the message window. When this button is clicked, a new window is launched. The new window is similar to the window of a wordprocessor programme. The recipient's box is filled with the sender's address from the initial message. The subject box is filled with "Re:" and the subject of initial message. The text of initial message appears in the text box and additional text can be typed. (A Reply to All options is also available.)

Forward button allows user to send the opened message to another e-mail address. When this button is clicked, a new window is launched. The new window is similar to the window of a wordprocessor programme. The recipient's box is empty. The subject box is filled with "Fw:" and the subject of initial message. The text of initial message appears in the text box and additional text can be typed.

Spam button allows user to send the unwanted messages to the Spam folder.

Move button allows the user to move messages in folders for an easy search and handling.

Print button allows the user to print the messages.

More Actions button allows user to: select all messages, mark a message as read / unread, flag a message for follow-up, navigate in the e-mail account and to set encodings.

View button can be used to sort messages by sender, subject, date, size, attachment or flag.

12.4.5. Yahoo Mail Message Composing Tab

Messages composing tab contains:

- button bar;
- recipient** line;
- collateral **recipients** line;
- subject line;
- formatting toolbar;
- message** text format box.

The button bar contains:

- Send** button (when clicked, the message is sent);
- Attach** button (for attaching files to the message);
- Save Draft** button (when clicked, the message is saved in the Drafts folder, but it is not sent);
- Spelling** button (when clicked, the message's text is checked for language errors);

- **Cancel** button (used to cancel the message).

12.5. E-mail Etiquette

Although it is considered an informal way of communication, certain etiquette is called upon when composing a message. Such etiquette allows the recipient to better understand the message and shows them respect. Thus, it is recommended to create a communication context for substituting intonation and gestures. There are salutations borrowed from the traditional letters that are commonly used when composing an E-mail, and an original signature can get the recipient's attention.

12.5.1. General Recommendation

E-mail etiquette is also named "netiquette".

It is recommended to **carefully edit the texts** of the **electronic messages**, because they may be kept longer in the computer and be seen by other persons than the initial **recipient**.

It is recommended **to mention the name of the recipient** in the text of the **electronic message**, because some mailboxes may belong to more than one person, even if the **address** seems to belong to an individual.

It is recommended that the **sender** to prove himself as **polite, restrained, and concise**.

It is recommended to **check for viruses the attached files received**.

It is recommended **to avoid sending alerts** regarding the existence of a virus within a network, if the computer identified the virus.

Keeping in mind that, because of lack of para-signals as intonation, gestures, and so on, **the vocabulary, spelling and grammar** are very important in creating a good image for the sender.

12.5.2. Context

Compared to the conversation on the phone or the traditional letter, there is no common context between the **sender** and the **recipient** in the case of an **electronic message**. The sender cannot make any assumptions about where the **recipient** is, the time he/she reads the **message**, his / her state of mind and so on.

The context can be created using the subject line in the **header**. The subject should not be a complete sentence. It should be as short as possible, because the server may cut the subjects considered too long to be sent.

If the **message** is a reply to a received **message**, it should have a „Ref:“ before the subject of the received **message**. (Usually, the **E-mail programmes** and the **webmails** do it for you.)

If the **message** is urgent and you think that the **recipient** receives many **electronic messages**, it should start the subject with „URGENT:“.

If the **E-mail program** does not automatically read the received **message** when selecting **Return** and it is required to quote it, then the quoting will be done manually by copying the received **message** and inserting the sign „>“ before each line of the received text.

It is recommended to place the quoted **message** after the **reply**, thus the **recipient** will not read it if not necessary.

12.5.3. Format

If the **sender** and the **recipient** use different **programs** or different versions of the same **E-mail program**, the **message's** text will be corrupted. To avoid excessive formatting of the text of the **message do the following**.

If in the text of the **message** a web page address is mentioned, complete the **http://www.....**, format because some **E-mail programs** can read either „http“, or „www“, to activate the link to the Internet page.

If there are any attachments to the **electronic message**, it is necessary to check if:

- the **E-mail program** of the **recipient** can manage the attached files;

- the **recipient's** computer has installed programs associated with the attached file that was sent.

As a result the text of the **message** is in a long paragraph or illegible or interrupted. Thus, it is recommended to edit the text of the **message** in short paragraphs.

It is recommended to compose short **electronic messages**. If the **recipient** has any questions to ask, he / she can send a **message** for further information. An empiric rule set that the length of a **message** is directly proportional with the number of the **recipients**.

12.5.4. Intonation

Electronic messages lack intonation, so it is necessary to find other ways of pointing out emotions or certain meanings. A word can be stressed by inserting asterisks in front and after it. (e.g.: „Please recommend me a good *restaurant* to me.”)

A stronger accent can be obtained by writing the word with capitals. (e.g.: „Send me the pictures for the newspaper article URGENT.”) Writing the whole text in capitals is interpreted as the sender is shouting, thus being considered impolite.

An even stronger accent can be obtained by writing the word in capitals and by putting „>” and „<” in front and after it. (e.g.: „It is only >TODAY< I can receive your subscription.”) For suggesting that you want to whisper, put the word you want to whisper between double brackets. (e.g.: „I heard ((from a secret source)), that you will get a promotion.”)

Some experts do not approve with such way of expressing feelings in writing, but these techniques have proven to be very useful in making the **electronic message** concise.

12.5.5. Gestures

Electronic messages do not have gestures that emphasize the meaning of our words. For instance, no blinking or raising an eyebrow is possible.

Close users have established several conventions based on similarity among groups and traditional expressions of the face. (*Remarks:* In order to see the similarity, you should bend your head to the left.) There are several programs that automatically convert the characters and the character associated to the extended group of characters.

:-) - smile (☺);
:-(- sadness (☹);
(>:-<) - anger;
(:-o) - amazement.

Groups of question marks and exclamation marks can be also used.

(!!! ??? !?!)

12.5.6. Formality

One rule of formality stipulates that formal way of communicating should be used when addressing a person with different status, to crowds and to unknown persons.

E-mail will not be used in rhetoric speeches.

When using **E-mail**, formal way of communicating indicates a deliberate distance between the **sender** and the **recipient**.

It is recommended to use formal way of communicating when the **sender** addresses a person with a higher position in the company / organisation he / she works for, to older persons and to those he respects most.

It is also accepted that formal ways of communicating discourages the recipient from replying, while non-formal way of communicating encourages replies. Therefore, non-formal way of communicating is recommended when using the **E-mail**, the perfect informal mean of communication.

12.5.7. Salutation

Compared to the traditional letters, there are no strict rules about the salutations when editing **electronic messages**, but traditional salutation and closings may also be used.

Even if the information in the salutation and closing are redundant, they can emphasize some parts of the **electronic message** and it is recommended to use a salutation and a signature.

For those who speak English language it is recommended to start their **electronic message** with (from more to less formal):

- „Dear Madam“ / „/,Dear Sir“ + Surname / Position;
- „Dear“ + Name / nickname;
- Name / Nickname;
- Hi! or other informal way of salutation.

When contacting an unknown person using **E-mail**, the message should include the following elements at the beginning of the text:

- the way the **sender** found out about the **recipient's** address;
- reason for contacting him/her;
- introduction of the **sender**;
- the reason why the **recipient** would be interested in the received **message**.

12.5.8. Signature

Some **E-mail programs** allows the user to set a personal signature automatically. The signature should include the following:

- name in full;
- position within the company/organization;
- Company/organization
- phone number.

The phone number should be the company's one in case the **E-mail account** is on the company's **server**, or the home phone number if the E-mail account is on a personal **server**.

The signature may also include the following

- classic or personal quotation;
- short jokes.

This signature should not be longer than 5 lines.

The signature be periodically revised especially when changing professional status. Some people prefer framing the signature to make it easier to read.