

English_Today@CUP. cam.ac.uk

It had to happen, of course. We reported on e-mail and other telecommunicative innovations in Jan 91, with Fraida Dubin's article 'Checking out e-mail and the fax'. Since then *ET* has continued monitoring the information revolution in the many areas where it impinges on language at large and English in particular – as for example in the lead article on the Internet in our tenth-anniversary issue (Jan 95) and in last issue's *Comment* (Apr 95).

We have not, however, been in a rush to engage in e-mail, despite many occasions when I have been asked, especially when in the US, 'Can I have your e-mail address?' When I've answered that I didn't have one, quite a few people have looked startled and concerned for my welfare – as if I'd confessed to coming to the gathering in question by stagecoach. So swiftly do expectations change. So easily is the acceptable level of basic performance ratcheted up another notch.

And with such changes of expectation and behaviour come changes in usage. Will the majority written form for the compound be *E-mail*, *e-mail*, or *email*? And has this usage given the language a viable new prefix, as in *e-cash*, *e-journal*, and *e-math*? In addition, there appear to be distinct implications in the kind of e-mail addresses people have. Paul Saffo of the Institute for the Future, in Menlo Park, California, told Steve Lohr of *The New York Times* (Jun 94), 'Your Net address says volumes about who you are, about what community you hang in and whether you're a cybersnob or a cyberhick.' There is even in cyberspace a compendium called *E-Mail Addresses of the Rich and Famous*, whose paperback avatar is published by Addison-Wesley. In them, Bill Clinton's e-mail address is short and sharp: *President@Whitehouse.gov*.

After the @-sign in e-mail addresses comes the so-called *domain*, which is typically centred on an organization, company, university, or commercial network service, but may also specify town and country. Abbreviations and special punctuation are crucial: *edu* for educational, *ac* for academic, *com* for commercial, and so on. The e-forms of E-English are e-verywhere.

Tom McArthur

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Letters to the Editor: write to Dr Tom McArthur, Editor, *English Today*, 22–23 Ventress Farm Court, Cherry Hinton Road, Cambridge CB1 4HD, UK. Tel/Fax 01223 245934
Email: English_Today@cup.cam.ac.uk

A call for papers: in *ET*'s files we have cuttings/clippings from a wide range of British and North American newspapers, and a scattering of material from many other sources. If readers would care to add to our files by sending in occasional (titled and dated) materials from their local newspapers, etc., this would be a great help in widening the range of usage which we can quote.

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