

The growing influence of technology

by Steve Tonner

Imagine a world where you come home from work, tired from a busy day in front of a computer monitor. On the floor in front of his game unit is your child, playing Virtual Mortal Kombat VII with a friend from Finland who, by the way, is in Finland right now. Taking off your shoes, you check your mail — not the paper kind, but the electronic kind, sent directly to your home by your aunt Bea from her vacation hotel in Australia this morning. Deciding it'd be nice to ask her about the surfing, you get in touch with her and have a nice long chat, and it doesn't cost you a cent.

What's this, you ask? Mail sent from the other side of the planet in less than 24 hours? Playing video games against someone in Europe? And free contact with anyone? Is this the future? Well, not exactly. You see, all this can be done right now.

If you have access to e-mail, you can send and receive mail from anyone else who also has access — through a com-

puter — and whoever you send it to will be able to read it that same day. Likewise, you can also talk to anyone who has access to a worldwide network of computing systems called "Internet" in real time. You can do this for free if you're a student at any major university (including Dalhousie), and for a modest charge if you aren't. Internet allows anyone who has access to exchange any kind of information at any time with anyone else in the world. Just think, you can find out about recent events in Moscow more quickly than anyone who watches CNN, just by talking to someone who was actually there, as things were happening, rather than having to depend on sketchy and possibly censored news broadcasts. Even your children can also play their video games against anyone who has the same system and game they do, over a new fibre-optic network and game system being laid out as you read this (not exactly good news for parents, but alas, the roads must roll).

Technology is making its presence known throughout the world today, as

in the above fictional example. Worldwide networks allow any kind of information to be exchanged by anyone, anywhere, with almost total freedom. And it's not just present in the form of huge computer systems, but also in the smallest of objects around us all.

For instance, a new device has come on the market called a GPS, or Global Positioning System, which allows the owner to take a reading from a system of 24 satellites orbiting the earth, and pinpoint his or her location to an accuracy anywhere between 30 to 100 metres. This arrangement of satellites was originally put up by the American military for the purpose of making precision strikes at enemies, but now its other uses are becoming available to find lost hikers, navigate ships safely into port, and even to help lost motorists find their way on a map. And for those who think that a GPS unit is hard to find, well, you can go down to the Sony store and pick one up for about 1,000 dollars.

And not only are there lots of new kinds of technology out there, but the

tried and true ones are getting more advanced every day. The personal computers available on the market now would have been science fiction as short a time ago as the 1970s. And remember your trusty address book, appointment book, calculator, watch, calendar, and expense reports? All these functions and more can be performed by something called a "Personal Digital Assistant". These can come in the form of a calculator-sized instrument with plug-in ports for a printer and computer link (one of which I own, and am pleased to say the idea for this very article was first written on), with a full keyboard to boot, or a keyboard-

less, large-screen version, of which the new Apple Newton is the most popular example. Some of the more expensive versions of these things even have a built-in cellular phone and can send faxes, all in a package measuring about 7 inches by 11 inches. And that's not all. They can also recognize your handwriting, and soon, the designers hope, your voice as well.

And of course, we may all have heard that it's not recommended for people to drive and talk on cellular phones at the same time? Try driving and typing at the same time. Take it from me, that's hard.

POINTLESS PONDERABLES

The missing dollar.

You and two buddies are headed to a big Blue Jays game. On the way to Toronto you pull into a roadside hotel for the night. In an effort to save cash, you and your friends decide to split a room. The innkeeper says a room will be \$30.00, and you agree to take the room. You split the bill three ways, each paying \$10.00, and after getting your key you follow the bellhop up to the room and begin to bed down for the night. Downstairs the innkeeper realizes he's made a mistake and that the room is really only \$25.00 (what kind of room do you get for \$25.00 in 1993 anyway?!). To correct the problem he sends the bellhop up to your room with \$5.00. On the way up the sneaky bellhop decides that since \$5.00 doesn't divide up evenly into three people, he'll just keep \$2.00 to make up for your lousy tip and give \$1.00 to each of you. Once each of you gets your dollar you've each paid \$9.00 for the room. If you multiple your \$9.00 by three people you get \$27.00. Add in the extra \$2.00 the bellhop has and you get \$29.00 dollars. Where'd the extra dollar go that would bring it up to \$30.00? Answer next week.

Answer to last week's puzzle:

To arrive at an answer we first work out the area of the pie slice formed between the intersection of the two circles. From that we subtract the area of the triangle formed between the two points of intersection and a circle's center. The number yielded is the area of one-half of the overlap. Multiplying that by two gives us our final answer of 11.75 metres squared.

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The New York Times

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(Released Oct. 10/93)

FICTION:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| 1) Age of Innocence (Wharton) | 9) Stars Shine Down (Sheldon) |
| 2) Dragon Tears (Koontz) | 10) Mitigating Circumstances (Rosenberg) |
| 3) The Tale of Body Thief (Rice) | 11) Sphere (Crichton) |
| 4) The Pelican Brief (Grisham) | 12) Rising Sun (Crichton) |
| 5) The Firm (Grisham) | 13) The Secret History (Tarrt) |
| 6) A Time to Kill (Grisham) | 14) Hidden Talents (Krentz) |
| 7) Congo (Crichton) | 15) The Joy Luck Club (Tan) |
| 8) Forbidden (Lowell) -New | |

NON-FICTION: (Top Ten)

- | | |
|----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| 1) The Way Things Ought To Be (Limbaugh) | 6) Uh Oh (Fulghum) |
| 2) The Road Less Travelled (Peck) | 7) Silent Passage (Sheely) |
| 3) Save Your Job...Country (Perot) | 8) Princess (Sasson) |
| 4) I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings (Angelou) | 9) A Year In Provence (Mayle) |
| 5) It Doesn't Take a Hero (Schwarzkopf) | 10) I Can't Believe I Said That (Gifford) |

ADVICE/HOW TO:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1) The Days Are Just Packed | 3) The T-Factor Gram Counter |
| 2) The Seven Habits... | 4) What To Expect When Expecting |

LOCATION: Lower level, Student Union Building

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Internetworking

by Jason Blakey

What the hell, you may ask, is the Internet? The short answer is a bunch of travelling electrons, but since a train could also be classified along those lines, we should try harder. A better answer would be slightly longer, but would not allow the Internet to be confused with a mass transit system.

Many years ago, in a land far, far away, the American Department of Defense created a computer network, allowing those computers in the net to talk amongst themselves. It encompassed very few computers, and allowed them to do very few things (it was the fifties after all, and the top-of-the-line computers in those days had less memory than the Macs in the Killam). It was, however, the first appearance of such a network. Over time, more computers connected up, phoning in on 300-baud modems from all over the land. Universities, businesses, and home-computer geeks all wanted a piece of the action. Thus the network expanded, and expanded, until we have today's system, a monstrous, sprawling, interconnected web of electrons and phone lines, comprised of hundreds of thousands of computers. The Internet Unmasked.

The Internet today is a far cry from those distant days of yore. In these modern times, it not only links North

American computers, but the globe itself. If you can name a country, there's a pretty good chance that you can send e-mail to that locale. If you can pick a university, it's a good bet that you can get some neat stuff off its FTP (File Transfer Protocol) server, at no charge. There are thousands of resources waiting out there to be taken advantage of. On a computer in Iceland, you can partake in multi-player Dungeons and Dragons, with people from all over the world. From a site in Australia, you can get a computerized recording of Arnold saying "Consider this a divorce!". Off a system in Croatia, you can download a great arcade game for your HP calculator.

This is only a small (very VERY small) sampling of the resources open to anyone with a Dalhousie computer account. You want pictures, you can get 'em. You want to play chess with a guy from Russia, it's easy to make it happen. Wanna find out what it'll be like tomorrow in Japan? Check the weather server. There's seventeen million people on-line, and there's seven percent more of 'em every month. This is cyberspace, and it's there for the pillaging. All it requires is curiosity, patience, and a computer (preferably a Macintosh :)). By the way, this :) is a "smiley", and you'll see lots of 'em on the 'net.

For more information, feel free to contact me at BLAKEY@ug.cs.dal.ca.

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