



# Internet not for idiots

Take some driving lessons before you brave the Infobahn

Those damn idiots who love the Internet.

I mean, they don't even know what it is in most cases! A recent survey showed that 50 per cent of adults don't know anything about the internet, except that they want to be on it.

I work for a local Internet service provider (I won't name which one because I like my job), and the customers who come in have to be the most annoying people on the planet. Did you see the movie Clerks? I'm Randal. To the 23rd power. I have no respect for people who come into the office to sign up to "get on the internet," and basically expect their experience to be similar to Johnny Mnemonic. We get people who basically have to be told how to turn their computers on and off. Another staffer had to tell a person to "flip the power switch from the position it's in to the position it's not, then do it again. That will turn the computer off and then on again."

Customers expect, usually, a performance on the par of the great Reveen when they call for support. They call up, we say hello, they then ask, "I can't do such-and-such. WHY!?"

"Well, sir, because you're not logged on..."

"WHY!?"  
 "Because you didn't log on?"  
 "Oh. Well, how do I do that?"  
 "Sob."

Now, the following are some true examples of real, living (but not thinking) customers that my coworkers had the misfortune of dealing with.

One person called up, asking why he couldn't log on. After his settings were all confirmed as being correct, the person asked, "OK, you're hearing your modem dialling, right?"

To which the customer replied, "I need a modem?"

Another customer couldn't log on, and when an exasperated support specialist went on a 25 dollar an hour house call, he found a machine that actually had two modems in it.

And then there was the customer who had Windows 95. Whenever he had trouble connecting (like a busy signal, for example), he'd dump Win95 and completely reinstall it.

I, myself, have dealt with my share of dolts, too. One person

came into the office, looked around confusedly (they're only walls, pal), asked, "Is this (gesturing to the office as a whole) Netscape?"

I think this is the person who probably most expected to be able to put on a headset and get instant virtual reality through us or something.

People expect the service to be a utility like the cable company. Like, if they pay for an account and don't use it through no fault of our own, they think they're entitled to their money back. If you don't watch tv for a month, do you call the cable company and ask for your money back?

The internet is not the water company, and things are always going screwy on it. Sometimes servers crash, or the lines are busy. People call up and say "If you don't do something about the busy signals, I'll switch providers!" Good. One less whiner to tie up the lines, hanging out on IRC

all night on #warez, looking for illegal copies of video games, and then getting mad at us when we delete their illegal software on them. OOPS! Sorry sir! We'll just allow our customers to engage in software piracy. What's that? You were going to download it, then delete it? Oh that's ok, we did it for you! See how much we love to help our customers who break the law and then blame us for catching them? Darn us!

Now I'm not saying that I'm some god of knowledge who sees all and looks down on users who are having trouble. Far from it. It's just that when people start insulting us (they do), and sending offensive and obscene e-mail when a polite question would be much more helpful to both sides, I have to draw the line.

Oh yes, one more thing. We immediately shoot anyone who uses the following words: "Information Superhighway," "Infobahn," and, "Surfing" in combination with either "The Net," or "The Web."

MORTON PLIMSKY

## OPINION

# Just Wondering...

Shortly after arriving at Dalhousie this September, I attended a Bible Study and noticed a girl sniffing in the corner, her eyes red around the rims. When I approached her

to ask what was wrong, she collapsed into sobs and told me that she wanted to kill herself. After spending five hours inside the emergency ward of the Halifax Infirmary, we finally left in a taxi, having gone through pure hell just to see a psychiatrist. I later found out that, for days, "Tiffany" had been missing classes, sleeping for hours, not eating, and telling her resident floor-mates that she was feeling suicidal.

She ended up leaving Dalhousie to go back home — out of province.

Last Friday night while leaving the Grawood, I noticed a crowd of people gathered around a busker. Apparently he was an American student who, from what I gathered, had been struggling financially and was reduced to making a public spectacle of himself by literally begging for money on his knees in the rain.

I watched as his guitar strap broke — which he took in stride, and continued to improvise until someone yelled, "Hey! You aren't starving! I saw you in the cafeteria eating Beaver food!"

He paused for a moment, then commenced to

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sing about how Beaver food doesn't qualify as real food, leading into the refrain:

Jesus  
 What the fuck

I haven't eaten in a goddam YEAR!

On Sunday afternoon, I was introduced to a Beaver employee who told me that she was failing two of her courses, was struggling to stay in university, and hadn't been able to get help from anywhere. She was convinced that she was fooling herself into thinking that she was actually intelligent.

Why?

Because she's an E.S.L. (English as a Second Language) student who, from day one, has had trouble understanding her professors.

When she approached one of her professors to ask for assistance, she was advised to borrow notes from another student.

When she asked another student if she could borrow her notes, the girl replied, "No, it would just be too weird," since they both attend lectures.

When I asked how she felt about the whole situation, she replied that she felt unwelcome.

Do you feel unwelcome?  
 Just wondering.

D.A. KNIGHT

The Dalhousie Gazette welcomes letters to the editor and commentary. Letters are limited to 300 and commentary to 800 words in length. The deadline is noon on Mondays. To be printed, all submissions must be typed double spaced on paper, e-mailed, or on a Mac or IBM-compatible 3 1/2 inch disk.

## OPINION

DSU democracy revisited

# Be vigilant or you'll get screwed

I generally have a policy of not apologizing for the things I say and do. I also generally don't take the time to explain them if people don't quite understand the first time around. Hey, that's just Me!

But, I do have to make an exception at this point in time. You see, I've lived in hell for the past week (Gawd, some people are sooo sensitive!), since the publication of the last issue of the Gazette.

It seems that there were more than a few people upset by my article "DSU democracy: use it or lose it." In the article, I said a few things that were meant to be alarmist and upsetting, but I do have to admit, I was very subtle in my approach.

As a point of clarification, I wish to articulate the point that I in no way meant to suggest that the actual people who presently hold office within the DSU ( Pres., Vice-Pres., Treas., etc...) are corrupt. What was intended by the article was the suggestion that if the student body does not remain vigilant, corruption will occur, sooner or later.

Please, don't get me wrong; I like all of the Executive, and, I think that they are doing a great job, better than has been done in years. But! (and there's always a 'but' with me) I know that we will

not always have an Exec that is above board, and if no-one is there to watch over them, they'll sell the building out from under us.

*We will not always have an Exec that is above board, and if no-one is there to watch over them, they'll sell the building out from under us.*

As for referring to the councillors as 'doughheads,' I would have to include myself in this statement. I have missed council meetings (as many of my detractors will be quick to point out) and I have not always been informed about what's going on. These are things that I have to deal with, that I take responsibility for. Some councillors have been gems, but I couldn't tell you who they are. It doesn't matter anyway.

My point was for you, the average (and not so average) reader, to find out. But, I'll tell you something. I don't want anyone representing me that thinks their job is to go into council and love and trust the Exec. Even though I like the Exec., my job as a councillor is to represent my constituency, ask as many questions as possible, and distrust the Exec. Anyone who tells you that a councillor's job is something other than that is someone you should stay away from.

I'm a great supporter of democracy, but it doesn't work if people take it for granted. Democracy, by its very nature, requires participation in order to succeed. I'm also a great supporter of the Dalhousie Student Union. It's a great organization, made even greater by the efforts of those people who take the time to involve themselves with it, but I would hate to see what would happen if no-one was paying attention.

So, to all those people who were offended: *I'm sooo sorry.* If you're still upset, well, in the words of Dolly Parton: "Honey, get down off that cross. Someone needs the wood."

JOSEF TRATNIK

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