

Hoaxes, Chain Letters and Urban Folklore on the Internet



“Danger!!! Virus alert!!! This is a new twist. Some creepoid scam-artist is sending out a very desirable screen-saver (the bud frogs). But if you down-load it, you’ll lose everything!!!! Your hard drive will crash!! Don’t download this under any circumstances!!! It just went into circulation yesterday, as far as we know... Be careful. Please distribute to as many people as possible... Thankx”

“There is a virus on America Online being sent by E-Mail. If you get anything called “Good Times”, DON’T read it or download it. It is a virus that will erase your hard drive. Forward this to all your friends. It may help them a lot.”

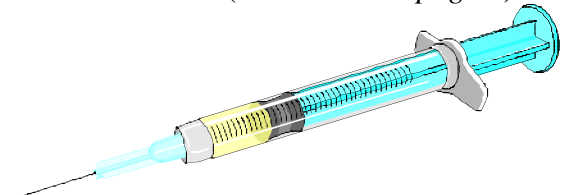
“Coca-Cola is offering four free cases of diet coke or regular coke to every person you send this to. When you have finished sending this e-mail to as many people as you wish, a screen will come up. It will then ask where you want your free coke products sent. This is a sales promotion to get our name out to young people around the world. We believe this project can be a success, but only with your help. So please start e-mailing and help us build our database. Thank you for your support!”

“Please read this message and pass it on. This is so sick, that someone would think of doing this, but please be aware of it and be careful. For your information, a couple of weeks ago, in a movie theater, a person sat on something sharp in one of the seats. When she stood up to see what it was, a needle was found poking through the seat with an attached note saying, “You have been infected with HIV.””

What do all of these email messages have in common? They are all hoaxes! The first two are examples of virus hoaxes, the third is a chain letter hoax, and the fourth is an example of an urban legend. Another thing that they all have in common is that they urge the reader to “forward this to all your friends.” Unfortunately, all too many of our friends, relatives, and colleagues have fallen for one or more of these hoaxes, clogging our mailboxes with bogus urgent warnings, offers of free gifts or get-rich-quick schemes, and strange and bizarre tales. It’s possible you’ve even fallen for a few of them yourself; sometimes it’s hard to tell the real virus alerts from the hoaxes.

Why do people create chain letters and hoaxes? Many are created just so the authors can see how far a letter will go. Others attempt to bilk people out of money in pyramid schemes or to harass another person by getting people to send large quantities of email to their address. Some chain mail letters even started out as real life campaigns to help someone, but have gained a life of their own on the Internet long after the original petition is over.

(Continued on page 5)



New Software from CIS

IN THIS ISSUE

Hoaxes, Chain Letters, and Urban Folklore on the Internet -----	cover
New Software from CIS-----	2
Editor's Notes -----	3
What's Cooking at CIS-----	4
Tricks & Tips-----	6
Q&A-----	8

VIREX FOR THE MACINTOSH

In the last issue of *Occasional Downtime* we mentioned that we do not have a site license for antivirus software for the Macintosh. Not long after *Occasional Downtime* went to the printer we decided to once again look into purchasing Virex for our Macintosh users. We were able to get a very good deal with Network Associates and as a result CIS has purchased a sufficient number of licenses to cover all faculty and staff Macintoshes on campus. The license includes 2 years of software upgrades and virus signature updates.

Virex 6.1 is compatible with Mac OS System 9. Its features include the ability to automatically scan files in the background, including downloaded files, email attachments, and removable disks such as ZIP disks and CD-ROMs. Virex can also be configured to automatically download new virus signatures on a scheduled basis. Virus signature files are what Virex uses to identify new viruses as they are discovered so it is important to download the new signature files at least once a month. Virex can take care of this for you automatically so you don't have to.

CIS has begun installing Virex on all faculty and staff Macintoshes on campus. If you would like to install Virex yourself please contact the Help Desk in order to borrow the CD-ROM.

EUDORA 5

CIS recently announced the availability of Eudora 5 for Windows and Macintosh. Eudora 5 has a new interface and can be run in one of three modes: Sponsored, Paid, and Light. Sponsored mode lets you use all of the features of Paid mode, but with advertisements. Light mode is free, with no advertisements, but does not

include all of the features available in Paid and Sponsored mode. Some of the features supported in Paid and Sponsored mode, but not in Light, include spell checking, multiple personalities, stationery, multiple signatures, extended text styles, custom toolbar, multiple address books, advanced search, and statistics.

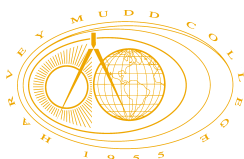
Eudora 5 is available via the Novell Application Launcher for users who currently run Eudora from the Application Launcher. (Please be sure that Eudora is not currently running before launching Eudora 5.) Windows users who have a local copy of Eudora can call the Help Desk for help in upgrading to Eudora 5. Macintosh users can find the installer for Eudora 5 on both the *Kato.Mac* and *Lurch.Mac* volumes or they can call the Help Desk for assistance in upgrading.

OFFICE 2001

Earlier this year Microsoft released a new version of Microsoft Office for the Macintosh. Office 2001 incorporates a variety of new features. Word 2001 has new floating formatting palettes, new templates and wizards, improved table capabilities (nested tables, vertical text), new border styles, text boxes, new features for creating Web pages from Word documents, a new Data Merge Manager, and new multilingual support.

Excel 2001 has improved list management and data summary tools, new PivotTable features, and new tools for retrieving data from external databases. PowerPoint 2001 features multiple slide masters, new table tools, numbered lists, a new Clip Gallery, and support for animated GIF images. PowerPoint 2001 also has improved support for exporting presentations for the Web, including the ability to save presentations as QuickTime movies and

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improved Save As Web page features. Microsoft Office 2001 for the Macintosh is now available on the *Kato.Mac* and *Lurch.Mac* volumes. Under our Microsoft Campus Agreement users can also install a copy of Office 2001 on any college-owned machine and can install up to one copy on a personal machine. Please contact the Help Desk if you would like to install Microsoft Office 2001.

MACROMEDIA APPLICATIONS

CIS has installed a number of multimedia applications from Macromedia on the file server *Kato*. Macromedia Director is an application used to create multimedia presentations. Director is similar to PowerPoint in that it is used to create presentations, but has many more advanced features. Director can be used to create simulations, interactive tutorials and quizzes, and much more. Director presentations can also be exported as Shockwave files for the Web.

Macromedia Dreamweaver is a WYSIWYG HTML editor for creating Web pages. A WYSIWYG HTML editor allows you to create Web pages without having to know HTML. Dreamweaver also provides support for incorporating more complex multimedia elements in your Web pages, such as rollover buttons, Shockwave movies, etc. Macromedia Flash is a package for creating animated, vector-based graphics for the Web. Macromedia Fireworks is another graphics package for designing and optimizing graphics for the Web.

Macromedia applications for the Macintosh can be found on *Kato.Mac:Applications:Macromedia Applications*. Macromedia applications for the PC can be found in the Novell Applications Launcher on *Kato* in the Multimedia folder. The Macromedia applications are not currently installed on *Lurch*, but they can easily be installed on the administrative server if there is a demand. 🐾

ditor's Notes

The last issue of *Occasional Downtime* of the academic year has arrived. As usual we will be taking the month of June off so you'll have to wait for the next issue until August when we will publish our special Welcome Back issue.

In this month's issue we have a follow-up to last month's articles on viruses with an article on hoaxes, chain letters, and urban folklore on the Internet. While hoaxes and chain letters are not as destructive as viruses, they still represent a considerable waste of time for many of our users.

We also have an article describing some of the new software available from CIS, including Virex for the Macintosh, Eudora 5, Microsoft Office 2001 for the Macintosh, and several Macromedia Applications. Finally, we've included a few tidbits of news from our department.

We hope you have a wonderful summer!

—Elizabeth Hodas

Occasional Downtime is published bimonthly by the Computing and Information Services Department at Harvey Mudd College. It is also available in PDF format on the HMC Web Server. Comments and questions can be directed to downtime@hmc.edu.



What's Cooking at CIS

LINDE ACTIVITIES CENTER LAB

This summer a new computer lab will be available in the Linde Activities Center. The new lab houses 26 Dell Optiplex GX150 computers with flat panel displays. The lab also has two laser printers, one located inside the lab, and one outside the lab. The lab is accessible 24 hours/day, seven days/week. While the Linde Activities Center is open, access is through the main entrance to the building. After hours access is through a key combination lock door on the side entrance.

In addition to its use as a general purpose public computer lab, the Linde Activities Center Lab is also designed to be used as an electronic classroom. In addition to a video projector and screen, the room has a teaching station at the front of the room, containing audiovisual equipment such as a VCR, DVD player, and audio equipment. A podium with a computer for the instructor is located at the front of the room.

Based on input from faculty the lab was designed with a very flexible format. The computers are arranged around the periphery of the room with freestanding tables in the middle. The tables can be moved to facilitate group work. Laptops with wireless network cards are also available for checkout from the front desk. These can be used to supplement the computers in the lab.

The lab was funded by grants from the Booth Ferris Foundation and the George I. Alden Trust. Faculty interested in scheduling the lab for a class or seminar should contact Elizabeth Hodas at extension 7-4583 or by sending email to Elizabeth_Hodas@hmc.edu.

SUMMER WORKSHOPS

CIS is planning an exciting series of workshops this summer. In June we will be repeating a few of our more popular workshops that you might have missed including *Introduction to Eudora 5* and *Advanced Eudora 5*. In July we are planning a series of new workshops with a multimedia theme. Among the new workshops planned are *Scanning and Editing Photos with Photoshop*, *Tips and Tricks for Shooting Digital Video*, *Editing Digital Video with iMovie*, *Creating Streaming Video*, and *Introduction to Macromedia Dreamweaver*. Watch your email for more information or check our Web site at <http://www.hmc.edu/comp/workshops/>.

STREAMING VIDEO AT HMC

Over the past year CIS has been testing a streaming video server for serving streaming video over the Web. Streaming video differs from regular video on the Web in that it does not require the user to download the entire video file before viewing it. Streaming video technology is typically used to broadcast live events on the Web or to archive events such as lectures or interviews.

CIS has been testing the video server this semester by video streaming lectures from the "Beyond the Human Genome Project" HMC 2000-2001 speaker series live to the Web. The broadcasts were not widely publicized since we were still working out bugs in the system. However, selected talks from this year's Presentation Days were broadcast to the Web from the Galileo Auditoria and Beckman Auditorium. 🐾

Hoaxes continued from page 1

Authors of chain letters and hoaxes use a variety of methods to get us to send the message on. Virus hoaxes play on our fears of computer viruses. Chain letters can play on greed or sympathy to get you to pass the letter on. Urban legends play on a variety of societal fears; in the example above it's the fear of AIDS that prompts people to send the message on.

How do you tell if a warning is a hoax? In the case of virus hoaxes in particular the first thing that should raise a red flag is the urging to forward the message to all your friends. A real warning from credible sources would not tell you to send this to everyone you know. Virus hoaxes may use technical sounding language and may even mention a credible-sounding authority like Microsoft or a known antivirus company such as Symantec.

Chain letters also follow a pretty recognizable pattern. They open with a "hook," something that will catch your

interest and get you to read the rest of the message. The hook is followed by a "threat." In the old days, the threat was usually warnings about all the bad luck that would befall you if you broke the chain. Nowadays the threat is more often a play on feelings of greed or sympathy, or warnings about the dangers of some new computer virus. Finally there is the "request" to send the email on to as many people as possible.

In any case, before sending any email to a large number of people it's best to check the authenticity of it first. You can either send the email message to the Help Desk at help-desk@hmc.edu and ask us to check it for you or you can check it yourself on one of the many hoax sites on the Web. We've included a list of some of these sites below. Most of these sites are searchable so it's actually quite easy to do. Just type in a key word or phrase from the email message. Virus hoaxes are best checked on one of the antivirus sites. Chain letters and urban legends can be found on several other hoax and urban folklore sites. ☞

HOAX DATABASES

Data Fellows Hoax warnings	http://www.datafellows.com/virus-info/hoax/
McAfee Virus Hoaxes	http://vil.mcafee.com/hoax.asp
Symantec Virus Hoaxes	http://www.symantec.com/avcenter/hoax.html
CIAC HoaxBusters	http://HoaxBusters.ciac.org/
Vmyths.com	http://vmyths.com/

URBAN LEGENDS AND FOLKLORE

The San Fernando Valley Folklore Society	http://www.snopes2.com/
Mining Co. (About.com) Guide to Urban Legends and Folklore	
	http://urbanlegends.miningco.com/science/urbanlegends/
AFU and Urban Legends	http://www.urbanlegends.com/

RELATED SITES

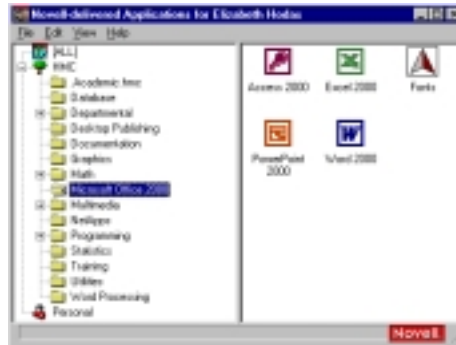
Center For Disease Control's Health Hoaxes Page	http://www.cdc.gov/hoax_rumors.htm
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Tricks & Tips

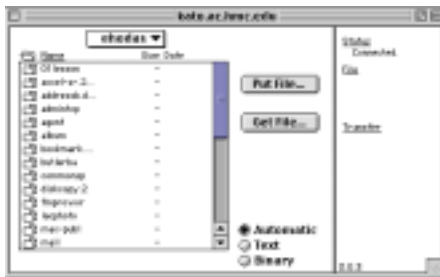
& Tricks



File...” button and in the Save dialog box select the directory you want to save the file to. After you’ve saved the file to your local computer you can open it and edit it. When you’re done editing the file you can upload the file back to the file server by launching Fetch, clicking the “Put File...” button and selecting the file in the Open File dialog box.



section, Installed Fonts, displays a list of the fonts installed on your local desktop system. The upper-left section, Contents of

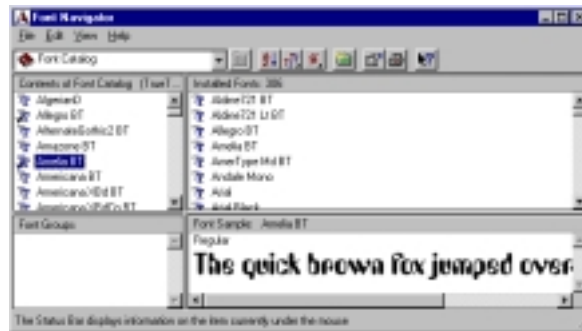


NEW FONT NAVIGATOR TOOL

CIS has recently installed a new tool on the Novell file servers *Lurch* and *Kato* and available through the Novell Application Launcher. The Font Navigator tool lists the fonts currently installed on your desktop system. It also lists all of the fonts installed on the Novell file server and allows you to preview selected fonts and then install them on your local system.

To use the Font Navigator tool first open the Novell Application Launcher window. Font Navigator is located in multiple locations including the Microsoft Office 2000, Word Processing, and Utilities folders. Open one of these folders and double-click the icon labeled Fonts.

The Font Navigator window is divided into four scrolling sections. The upper-right



Font Catalog, displays a list of all of the fonts installed on the file server. Fonts that you already have installed on your system are indicated with a check mark. The lower-right section, Font Sample, displays a preview of a selected font.

To preview a font simply click on a font in the Font Catalog section and a sample will be displayed in the Font Sample section. You can also display the fonts in the Font Catalog section in different ways in order to help you locate a particular kind of font. For example, to view all Decorative fonts, select View/Fonts By Style/Decorative. Once you’ve selected a font you’d like to install, simply click and drag it from the Font Catalog into the Installed Fonts section. 🐕

QUESTIONS *and* ANSWERS

Q: When I try to launch Eudora on my PC, a dialog box opens that says there is a remote instance of Eudora running, and gives the option to terminate the remote instance or quit.

A: Eudora is not designed to allow multiple users to access its files simultaneously; it has no mechanisms to protect files from being corrupted when accessed simultaneously by multiple users. You also can not run multiple instances of Eudora at the same time with the same mailboxes. If you are not trying to open Eudora multiple times to access the same files, then you may be getting this error after a crash. When Eudora is launched on a PC, it creates an Owner.lok file, and gives you the warning about a remote instance if that file is found already existing in the Eudora directory. Crashing out of Eudora doesn't give it the opportunity to clean up after itself and sometimes leaves a corrupted Owner.lok file. Delete this file and you should be able to open Eudora again without the remote instance dialog box.

To delete the Owner.lok file first quit Eudora. Then locate your Eudora mail directory. For administrative staff users the mail directory should be located on their H:\ drive. Other users may have their mail directory on their H:\ drive or on their C:\ drive. Open the mail directory and locate the Owner.lok file. Delete the file by dragging it to the Recycle bin.

Q: I have a table that I created in Microsoft Word. I would like to open the table in Excel or FileMaker Pro. How do I do it?

A: The Table feature in Microsoft Word is great for formatting and displaying data in a word processing document. Tables are not very useful, however, when you want to actually analyze the data in any way. Microsoft Excel or FileMaker Pro is more appropriate for that purpose

To open a Microsoft Word table in Excel or FileMaker Pro you first need to convert the table into tab-delimited text. Fortunately, there is a built-in Microsoft Word command that does exactly that. First select your table by single-clicking somewhere in the table and choosing Select/Table from the Table menu. Then choose Convert/Convert Table to Text... from the Table menu. You can choose either tabs or another character to delimit the different columns in the Convert Table to Text dialog box.



Once you have converted the table to text you should save the file with a different name using the Save As... command so that you don't lose your original file. You should then be able to open the converted text file in Microsoft Excel or FileMaker Pro using the File/Open command. 🐾