

The OLRRC News

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Conference Speakers Inspire *Beginnings* Authors



Beginnings VIII Author and Artist, Kelly Bond

The Ohio Literacy Resource Center's 8th Annual Ohio Writers' Conference was held May 20, 2005 in Dublin, Ohio. Over 250 participants including student authors, teachers, and guests were in attendance. The conference honors student writers in ABLÉ programs across the state who submitted award-winning original essays, poetry, short stories, and reflections that were published in a soft-bound book, an annual publication of the Writers' Conference. This year over 470 entries were judged by a panel of reviewers with 77 submissions accepted for publication! In addition, the publication, entitled *Beginnings VIII*, features artwork by Kelly Bond and Maria Thomas of Live Oaks ABLÉ.

The day-long conference was held in Dublin and began with a continental breakfast during which the guests mingled, shared stories, and the authors boasted name tags that featured blue *author ribbons*.

Smiles, congratulatory hugs, and pride captured the breakfast hour as carloads and buses arrived from all over the state of Ohio.

Following the informal breakfast and introductions, Lyn Ford entertained the audience with a brief "kick-off" for the day. Lyn is a nationally recognized storyteller and she has become a tradition at the Writers' Conference. She had the participants clapping, chanting, and grasping hands together at the outset of the conference – and smiling, as the event began.

Next, award-winning author, Angela Johnson, shared a keynote speech in which she genuinely captured the essence of writing, the ups-and-downs of publishing, and the entertaining, yet realistic ways that she uses to create her stories. At the conclusion of her heartfelt speech, Angela entertained questions from the audience and shared more anecdotes that had the participants *laughing and sighing all in one breath!* Ms. Johnson is a native of Ohio and has published over 20 children's books. Among other awards, she has received the *Ezra Jack Keats New Writer Award* (1991) for *Tell Me a Story Mama*; and *Coretta Scott King Awards* (1991) for *When I am Old with You* (1999), for *The Other Side*, and (1994) for *Toning the Sweep*.

Following Angela Johnson, storyteller, Lyn Ford, engaged the participants in group-sharing activities in which everyone worked with partners as they created *story starters* based on past experiences. The ballroom was quite alive, animated, and engaged during Lyn's session! Indeed, the activity had all participants talking, laughing, and reminiscing – spirits were indeed high!

Before lunch, another highlight of the morning featured, Jennifer Cline. Jen is a former ABLÉ student and is current a GED Scholar with the Ohio Literacy Resource Center's GED Scholars Initiative at Kent State University. Ms. Cline recited her original poem, *Education*, with finesse, grace, and enthusiasm. Indeed, Jennifer's dramatic, poetic performance was received with *cheers* as she captured the essence of what *education* means to her.

After a luncheon that featured selected entrees and sumptuous desserts, the event continued with congratulatory comments from the Ohio Department of Education. Denise Pottmeyer was the keynote speaker for ODE and she represented the continued support that the Adult Division of Education provides for the Annual Writers' Conference. In addition, Vickie Hargraves, a former ABLÉ student, and *Beginnings* Author, shared her thoughts about the meaningfulness of the *Writers' Conference* from her perspective.

Cont.

The 8th Annual Writers' Conference concluded with what we, at the OLRC, consider the "best part"... last. After each ABLE author was called to the podium, received a certificate, copies of *Beginnings VIII*, and shook hands with a receiving line, the authors were invited to read.

And so, one by one, the ABLE authors of *Beginnings VIII* took the book in which they were now published and stood before the crowd of nearly 250 people, confidently took hold of the microphone and read to all of us ... what they wrote. Authors indeed!

Rethinking School

It makes sense that parents' opinions about their children's teachers and schooling might be related to their own experiences in school. A recent study (Johnson, 2004) of Puerto Rican mothers showed this to be the case. All 10 of these young mothers (ages 17-29), who had left school before graduating, participated in a family literacy program in Chicago. The program was based on the philosophy and pedagogy of Paulo Freire; it emphasized "self-determination and self-actualization in a collective community context" (p. 238). Researcher Laura Johnson worked with the mothers over 8 months to understand their opinions about schooling, past and present.

In describing the "ideal teacher" for their children, the mothers relied on their own positive memories about teachers. They recalled teachers who were patient, understanding, and respectful. Their "negative interactions with teachers were less related to the actual teaching process;... but rather involved... being denigrated by teachers or school staff and derided because of elements of their identity" (p. 239), such as ethnocultural identity or socioeconomic status.

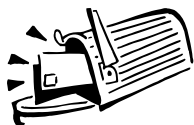
In contrast to their K-12 recollections, these women had positive and successful education experiences in the family literacy program. Their cultural backgrounds were celebrated, and their interests formed the core of the curriculum. Johnson found that explicit focus on the key differences between this educational experience and their previous ones allowed the mothers to develop notions of effective education. They expressed a desire for their children's education to reflect these same elements of respect and learner interest.

This study provides food for thought for family literacy professionals. Might it be wise to talk with parents about their recollections about teachers and schooling, for example? It may also be beneficial to help parents see the foundations—respect, interest, etc.—upon which the family literacy program is built. Likewise, discussions about "ideal" teachers and schooling experiences may help family literacy participants articulate important principles that they can apply to interactions with their own children.

Johnson, L. R. (2004). "The blood they carry": Puerto Rican mothers re-envisioning and reconstructing educational and cultural identities in a family literacy context. In J. Worthy, B. Maloch, J. Hoffman, D. Schallert, & C. Fairbanks (Eds.), *53rd yearbook of the National Reading Conference* (pp. 233-245). Oak Creek, WI: National Reading Conference.

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New Toolkit Available for ESOL Practitioners

An indispensable tool for ESOL teachers, *The Practitioner Toolkit: Working with Adult English Language Learners* provides excellent background on language learning for adult learners in ABLE and Family Literacy programs as well. Designed and written by a collaboration of The National Center for Family Literacy and The National Center for ESL Literacy Education at the Center for Applied Linguistics, the Toolkit incorporated input from the field through two surveys and a focus group.

The Toolkit has five sections. Part I: Background Information offers a profile of non-native English speakers, description of types of programs, and resources for standards, professional development, and accountability. Part II: Activity Packets contains materials organized on three ability levels. An extensive section on orientation includes model forms for checklists, needs assessments, questionnaires, and interviews. The lesson planning section contains lessons with graphic organizers that promote interaction and instructions on Language Experience Approach (LEA) activities.

Special considerations for family literacy occupy Part III. In addition to lesson plans to guide parents in supporting their children's language and literacy development, the section encompasses instructional strategies and a Parent Education Needs Assessment. The Research to Practices in Part IV is a treasure-trove of information on language acquisition and factors and skills needed in adult learning. Description of assessment instruments and a chart of indicators for student performance indicators from level 0 to 6 follows. The remainder of the section addresses the needs of students with learning disabilities and other specific needs such as transitioning to other programs and preparing for permanent residency and citizenship. Section V lists resources.

The Practitioner Toolkit: Working with Adult English Language Learners can be downloaded from the CAL web site at www.cal.org/caela/elltoolkit/. The Ohio Literacy Resource Center 1-800-765-2897 and the Northeast Regional Resource Center 800-361-7076 (Ohio only) have copies that may be borrowed.

Save the Date!



Ohio Writers' Conference
May 12, 2006
Columbus Marriott NW

Deadline for written submissions is February 3, 2006.
Deadline for artwork is January 30, 2006. For more information email cspence@literacy.kent.edu.

A 30- Million Word Gap by Age 3?



Family literacy and early childhood professionals typically encourage parents to talk with their young children. Parent-child talk promotes children's language development, helps children learn concepts, and fosters close family relationships. Despite this encouragement, many children, particularly those who live in poverty, arrive in preschools with language delays that eventually affect their success in learning to read and write.

Researchers Betty Hart and Todd Risley wanted to learn more about the early language interactions in families of varying socioeconomic status (SES). In the early 1990s, they conducted a study to learn about "what typically went on ... with ... children learning to talk" (2003, p. 4). Forty-two families in Kansas worked with Hart and Risley over 2.5 years. Families differed in socioeconomic status (13 upper SES, 10 middle SES, 13 lower SES, 6 on welfare). The 19 boys and 23 girls in these families were 7—9 months old at the beginning of the study and 36 months old at the end. Both African-American (N=17) and Caucasian families participated. Gender and ethnic background were distributed among SES categories.

Hart and Risley spent an hour per month with these families (30 hours per family). During this time they observed and tape-recorded family talk. They transcribed and analyzed the tapes to learn more about family conversations and children's opportunities to learn through language (1995).

"The acorn doesn't fall very far from the tree" describes one major finding. Hart and Risley found that "the 42 children [grew] more like their parents in stature and activity levels, in vocabulary resources, and in language and interaction styles.... 86-98% of the words in each child's vocabulary consisted of words also recorded in their parents' vocabularies" (2003, p. 7).

Another finding relates to the sheer number of words involved in parent-child talk. The chart below summarizes these findings. This stunning difference in children's access to language is perhaps the major finding of this important study.

Words per Time Factor	Welfare Children	Working-Class Children	Professional Children
Per hour	616	1251	2153
Per week	62,000	125,000	215,000
Per year	3.2 million	6.5 million	11.2 million
In 4 years	13 million	26 million	45 million

Hart and Risley also examined the extent to which parents supported (called "encouragements") or scolded (called "prohibitions") their children. Average ratios of encouragements to prohibitions (per hour) were

- 1:2 for children in welfare families
- 2:1 for children in working class families
- 6:1 for children in professional families

"By the age of 4, the average child in a welfare family might have had 144,000 *fewer* encouragements and 84,000 *more* discouragements of his or her behavior than the average child in a working-class family" (2003, p. 9).

Twenty-nine children from this original group of 42 were tested as third graders to explore the long-term results of their early language interactions. Researchers found (2003) that children's rate of vocabulary growth and vocabulary use at age 3 was strongly associated with their Grade 3 standardized test scores in receptive vocabulary, listening, speaking, semantics, syntax, and reading comprehension.

Several aspects of this study could be discussed in family literacy classes. Teachers could begin at the end by sharing the third-grade results so parents can see that the ways they interact with their very young children have a lasting impact on children's learning. Issues related to supporting or scolding children may also provide rich discussion opportunities. In particular, parents may want to consider which type of interaction is more likely to influence children's learning positively. Above all, parents and teachers may want to explore ways to increase parent-child talk. The 30-million word gap should be closed, and parents can ensure that this happens. Doing so will benefit children's eventual school learning.

References

- Hart, B., & Risley, T. R. (1995). *Meaningful differences in everyday experiences of young children*. Baltimore: Brookes.
- Hart, B., & Risley, T.B. (2003, Spring). The early catastrophe. *American Educator*, 4-9.

Nancy's Number Notes

How can I respond to students who have a strong math phobia? "I've always hated math." "I can't do math."—Thelma

In addition to the fear of math, there is also the dislike of math that seems to permeate the GED classroom. Math is the area that most students have difficulty with on the GED so it is not surprising that there are these feelings. Most of us don't like to do things that we are bad at doing and our students are no different.

I tell students, "you don't have to like math, you just have to be able to do math." I have found that as students gain skills and confidence, they also start to like math—or at least to dislike it less!

Percents are a problem for my students. How can I make it more concrete?—Mary Lou

Start talking about percents when working with both fractions and decimals. Percents are just parts of wholes, like fractions, but the whole is always 100. I often start with a chart of common equivalents, halves, fourths, eighths, thirds, tenths, and fifths for fractions, decimals, and percents.

Students can use two paper plates, cut on the radius and folded together to demonstrate approximate percents (and fractions and decimals).

Taking time to look at charts with 100 squares to talk about percent is also useful. Finding mental percents, using 10 % or 1% as a start is extremely beneficial.

I like teaching percents as a proportion, rather than trying to memorize various formulas. $\frac{\text{Part}}{\text{Whole}} = \frac{\%}{100}$ is a formula that tells the student exactly how to determine an answer no matter what type of percent problem!



Above all, don't be hesitate to interchange fractions, decimals, and percents

Resources and Reviews

Burke, Jim. (2004). *The Teacher's Daybook: Time to Teach, Time to Learn, Time to Live*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

The Teacher's Daybook is a comprehensive organizer for teachers. More than an ordinary planner, it is meant to help teachers keep all of their lessons, dates, and teaching goals in order. A calendar is provided towards the beginning of the book. The majority of the *Daybook* consists of weekly outlines. The outlines are organized into the days of the week with space to write in homework assignments, a heading with space to write the goals of the week, *Tips for Teachers* and *Tips for Teaching*, and a *Weekly Reflection* area. The planner is not just for professional use, but is advantageous in juggling one's personal life as well.

Fullen, Marilyn K. (2002). *Great Black Writers*. Greensboro, North Carolina: Open Hand Publishing.

This book contains short biographies of some of America's greatest African American writers. It is written on a 4th-5th grade reading level and is also appropriate for adult new readers. It includes biographies of Ida Wells-Barnett, Zora Neale Hurston, Langston Hughes, Alex Haley, James Baldwin, and Lorraine Hansberry. It is a great way to get young readers interested in not-only reading, but nonfiction reading. It is also a great way for students to learn about history through the amazing lives that these writers led. *Great Black Writers* is a part of the Contributions Series that also includes *Black Heroes of the Wild West*, *Women of the Wild West*, *Pathblazers: Eight People Who Made a Difference*, and *Sylvia Stark: A Pioneer*.

Popham, James W. (2003). *Test Better, Teach Better: The Instructional Role of Assessment*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

This 160-page book provides an in-depth look at testing and assessment. The book exposes some common beliefs about what a test is and what it represents. This book points out some common mistakes teachers make when creating their tests and wrong assumptions most have about tests in general. The book also acts as a guide to aid in creating more focused tests.

There are chapters that list the advantages and disadvantages of what is usually found on a test. The main types of sections found on a test are usually multiple-choice, matching, and essay. There are also chapters that explore the credibility and uses of standardized tests. Throughout the book there are graphic examples and figures that help illustrate points. Plus, each chapter has a list of recommended resources and a list of testing tips at the end of it. This book is useful for any teacher in the current educational system where tests are the most popular form of assessment.

Povenmire, Alisa, & Morrish, Elizabeth. (1999). *Orientation to Integrating Health Education into Adult Basic Education*. Boston MA: SABES/World Education.

This guide goes through the process of organizing and running an orientation focused on health education. Many of the

large number of adults with a low literacy level in this country, may also have a lowered level of health. The orientation explores this connection and helps educators learn ways to include health education into other areas of instruction. This guide provides an outline of the orientation, a list of specific goals, the timing for each activity, a description of each activity with required materials listed, a list of background resources, and even diagrams of possible table setups.

Tiedt, Iris McClellan. (2000). *Teaching with Picture Books in the Middle School*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

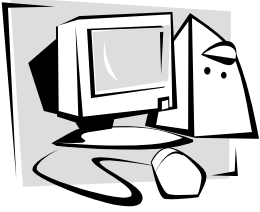
Generally, picture books are associated with younger students. But, McClellan argues that the themes in them are just as accessible to older students. McClellan's book is partially an argument for using picture books in higher grades, but mostly it is a guide for using them. In this book, McClellan shows how picture books can be used across subjects and also to cover multiple topics. For example, multiculturalism is one of the major topics throughout the book. McClellan explains how books under this category can help students not only learn about other cultures, but also about geography, history, and even about themselves. Throughout the chapters, examples of picture books that fit each topic are provided. The first Appendix lists 17 lesson plans for specific picture books. The second Appendix section lists all of the picture books mentioned throughout the book, including all of the Caldecott Award winners.

Viens, Julie, & Kallenbach, Silja. (2004). *Multiple Intelligences and Adult Literacy: A Sourcebook for Practitioners*. New York: Teachers College Press.

This sourcebook is a result of the Adult Multiple Intelligence (AMI) Study. The AMI Study focused on classroom-based research of the MI theory. This sourcebook is a collection of information and observations on MI theory gathered from the study. It is an excellent resource for adult education teachers who want to know more about Multiple Intelligences (MI).

Split up into five chapters, the sourcebook begins with a basic introduction into the MI theory. Each intelligence is explained with a listing of its traits and common abilities. The second chapter is devoted to teachers' opinions and reflections on MI-based instruction. The third chapter is focused on teachers who use MI as a basis for instruction. The fourth chapter has guidelines for creating lessons inspired by MI. There are over 60 pages of MI-inspired lessons listed. They range from math to the language arts. The last chapter presents the students' reflections on MI lessons and teaching.





Spring/Summer 2005

The OLRC News

Tech Talk

Email Organization

Marty Ropog

I get a lot of email. I get messages that go to other people and I'm copied on; I get messages through the 25 or so professional lists that I'm on; I get the messages sent to the general OLRC mailbox; I get spam; and I get messages sent just to me. And that's just my primary work email account – I also have 3 other work email accounts and a couple of personal accounts that I have to check as well. Even on a holiday or a weekend all of these accounts will deliver around 50-75 messages per day. During the workweek I could get anywhere from 150-250 messages depending on project timelines, time of year, reauthorization progress, grantwriting, and phases of the moon.

Four or five years ago, I was reviewing evaluations from a day-long workshop that I'd just finished. Under "Suggestion for Improvement" there was a comment that I'll never forget. Generally that section contains suggestions for improvement of *the workshop*, but amid the inevitable "workshop should be longer/shorter," and "room was too hot/too cold" was "Please answer your email in a more timely manner." After bristling at this comment – not only was it a suggestion to improve *me* (and not the workshop), but it hit a little too close to home. Due to the onslaught of email, my responsiveness had dipped below a level that was acceptable even to someone who thought was willing to spend an entire day listening to me yammer on. So I made some changes which have allowed me to keep up with all of the email that I get.

Although it sounds counterintuitive, you have to treat email like you would regular paper mail. Because it's electronic, people tend to allow conditions that they would never allow with paper mail. It's this attitude which is causing your email to get out of control.

GET ORGANIZED AND STAY ORGANIZED - FILE, FILE, FILE

Why you need to file email

You want to keep mail around, but you need to keep it in an organized manner so that you can get to it when you need it. If all of your mail stays in a single location (or if you don't keep any of it), this can't happen. Once you've read or acted on an email, it should be filed immediately – get it out of your sight, but put it in a location where you'll be able to get to it. I tend to use the Inbox as a task list – these are the issues, messages, or topics that I need to address.

How to do it

Nearly every email client has the ability to create folders to move email to – even the free, online email sites allow you to store email. Create a folder for every project you're in-

involved with, every list you're on, and every grant you have. You can then just drag and drop emails into the folders. Generally, folders can also have subfolders so you can break them into fiscal or calendar years. You can also create folders for specific topics: newsletters from your Regional Resource Center, advocacy alerts, interesting websites that people send you, policy updates from ODE, pictures of your grandkids, or things you think you might want to keep around, but you're not sure of yet. Folders don't cost anything to set up and can only help make you more organized.

Paper mail comparison

Keeping all of your email in the Inbox is like throwing all of your paper mail in a large box. To find the specific bill, letter, or card you're looking for you have to go through the strata. Keeping bills in files, cards and letters in boxes or scrapbooks, and other documents organized allows you to be able to get to things quickly.

Caveat emptor

If you save emails with large file attachments, your hard drive could begin to fill up. Be sure you have a sufficient amount of space on your computer. If you begin to run out of space, most email clients have a utility that will allow you to archive old email into another file – take advantage of this. If you really do need to retrieve a 1998 policy update, you can get to it, but it's not clogging your email.

FILTER, FILTER, FILTER

Why you need to filter

If you're getting tens or hundreds of email messages a day, they're all coming into your Inbox and they're starting to get overwhelming. Just looking at the amount is depressing, and you haven't even started reading any yet! Coming into work and seeing 150 unread messages is not a good way to start your day. The good news is: most of that email isn't something that you have to respond to as soon as you get in the door.

How to do it

Your email client can help you get and stay organized by filtering things for you. I filter all email. The only email that gets to my Inbox are messages *to me* and email that is relatively urgent; all list messages, other accounts, anonymous messages, automatically-generated mail, etc. go in their own folders, not to my Inbox.

Most email clients have a filtering system included

in them which is separate from any spam filters that your ISP or district may have in place. The filtering system might be called “rules,” “filters,” “organizing,” or something close to one of those. Regardless of the name used, the filtering system will sort your email for you as it is delivered. You already know how to create folders for your email and you can have mail automatically sorted to them. Take advantage of this! Once the email has been sorted, you can read it as you have time.

Most filters or rules allow you the option of “Running now” on messages that are in your Inbox already – as you’re setting them up, go ahead and run them for messages you already have.

As an example of a type of filter you might want to start with:

Most people are on some type of email list, and most lists messages start with a common subject that can be used for sorting. For example, the subject may include the name of the list or it comes from a common address. We maintain an electronic list at the OLRC for Ohio ABLE programs. It’s called Ohiolit and averages 5-10 messages a week. Most of the messages are of general interest to ABLE practitioners, but the information is generally not urgent. Even though it’s an OLRC list, I filter Ohiolit mail into its own folder. I have a rule set up that says “if mail comes in with [Ohiolit] in the subject, move it to the Ohiolit folder.” Because Ohiolit comes from an automatically-generated email address, I could sort it a different way by saying “if mail comes in from owner-ohiolit@literacy.kent.edu, move it to the Ohiolit folder.” Either way, Ohiolit mail comes in and is immediately placed in my Ohiolit folder and I read it as I have time. It’s not sitting in my Inbox among important email from funders, partners, or OLRC staff.

If I get an email that references Ohiolit, for example a request for a publication mentioned in an Ohiolit email, I answer the email and then move that email into the Ohiolit folder as well.

Paper mail comparison

You get home from work, stop at the mailbox, grab the mail, and bring it in the house. Then you sort it – bills in one pile, junk in a pile to shred and recycle, and anything else like cards or reminders go into another pile. Most likely you don’t grab the first piece of mail, open it, read through it, think about it, and put it back in the pile before going onto the next piece of mail. You separate it so you get to the important stuff first, then deal with the other stuff later.

GET RID OF THE “ETERNAL INBOX”

Rationale

Do you keep all of your email in the same place where the server delivered it – The Inbox? If you’re like many (if not most) people, you do. A message is delivered to the Inbox, you read it, maybe act on it or reply, and then leave it sit – condemning it to spend all eternity within the endless list of other important and not so important email.

How to do it

Since only email that’s run through your filters should now be coming into your inbox, you should now be looking at a more manageable amount. Even if you’ve run your new filters on mail that’s already in your Inbox, you may still be looking at a sizeable amount of mail. This is not a good way to start off your new, organized email handling. There are only two ways to deal with this:

1. Go through mail individually and move it to the appropriate folder or delete it.
2. Create a new folder called “Stuff I don’t feel like dealing with right now” and move your whole inbox into that.

Believe it or not, I advocate #2 for a couple of reasons. Going through existing email is something that’s probably too daunting to work with, there’s a good chance you won’t make it all the way through it anyhow and you’ll just be right back where you started, and you’re only moving the messages to another folder – you’re not deleting them after all. You can go through them at

your leisure and file them, you know that if you need a message you can find it in that folder, and you’re starting off with something you haven’t had in a long time – a completely empty Inbox.

Now you can actually start managing your mail! Make two new rules for yourself:

1. Only keep mail in your Inbox that has something that you need to do, follow up on, or respond to. As soon as you’ve completed whatever the email is for, move it a folder or delete it. The only mail in your Inbox should be unread mail or “to do” mail.
2. Never allow the mail in your Inbox to drop below the bottom of the screen. Once the mail goes below the screen, you probably have a tendency to forget it’s there. This isn’t a problem if you’re just storing all of your email there, but if there are messages you need to follow up on, then the “out of sight, out of mind” rule kicks in.

Paper mail comparison

Would you ever keep all mail you’ve ever received in a big pile on your kitchen table? That would mean if you needed to find the tax bill from two years ago, the card from Aunt Janet that had a check in it, or the notice about your next dentist appointment, you’d have to sort through junk mail, old bills, ads from flooring companies, chain letters, and pizza coupons. Of course you wouldn’t do that. That would be ridiculous. So why let your email get that way?

DECREASE THE AMOUNT OF MAIL YOU GET AND KEEP

Stop with the jokes and stories email

Just say “NO” to email jokes, heartwarming stories, silly email movies, and other nonsense.

Rationale

My rationale is: I don’t have time to read this kind of email message. Period. Not interested, don’t want them, don’t want my email address included in the email message that gets forwarded to the next batch of emailers. People who’ve just gotten email access for the first time seem to be the worst offenders – they don’t get much email, so they still have a positive reaction to getting and sending it! They don’t realize that a great number of the email jokes, stories, and multimedia have been around for years.

Thankfully, I don’t get many, but it’s not because people know me to be a humorless and heartless person, it’s because I tell people not to send them. If they continue to send them after I’ve asked them not to, every message they send (whether important or a joke) is filtered into a special folder which I go through once a week. When I’ve explained to people how to do this, the usual reaction is “oh, it’s not that bad,” “I don’t want to hurt their feelings,” or “I can just delete them.” These may all be true, but if you’re getting 5 joke emails (not an unusually high or low number) per day, that’s 1,300 per year. *1,300 joke emails a year.* That’s a lot of deleting, and none of those emails are helping your students, making your program run better, or getting your program supplemental funding. If you were wading through 1,300 funding offers a year, I’d be cheering you on...

Yes, you can delete them because you don’t want to ask someone to stop sending them, but there’s a bigger problem. Someone sends a joke email to you and 24 others of their closest friends and they put everyone’s email addresses into the CC: instead of BCC: (blind carbon copy, which doesn’t display the email addresses of other recipients). And those 25 recipients

Paper mail comparison

Before you send a joke email, think to yourself “Is this so hilarious that I would be willing to spend the time and money to mail it to 25 people?” The answer is generally “no,” but because email is so convenient, people tend to take liberties that they wouldn’t with paper mail. And what if your friend, Sally, was mailing you 5 heartwarming stories a day in 5 different envelopes...wouldn’t you call her and say “what on Earth are you doing?”

then turn around and forward it on without stripping out the email addresses, and like the old Breck commercial...and so on and so on. What this means is that your email address is getting forwarded all over the place, and is just waiting for a spammer to come and strip the email addresses out and start sending you even more unwanted garbage.

How to do it

In addition to not signing up for “whatever A Day” lists, you need to take the offensive for things mailed to you. People will not stop once they get you on their distribution lists because they select all email addresses in their address book and click “Send.” You need to let them know that even though you don’t want the email, you still like them. *Clarification: this process is NOT for commercial spammers, but for friends and family who include you in their “send to all” lists.*

First junk email:

I reply with a message that says “Please take me off of your distribution list for this kind of email. I get between 150-200 email messages a day and don’t have time to read these. Thank you for understanding.” (Most of the time, people are understanding, and I don’t have to resort to steps 2 or 3.) If they’re sending to your work account, it’s a good idea to mention how inappropriate that is and if you, like me, are paid at least partially with tax payer funds, it’s good to mention that.

Second junk email:

I reply with “Just a reminder to take me off your distribution list– I’m still getting the same amount of email and still don’t have time to read this type of message. In order to keep my mail manageable, I have quite a few filters. When I do start getting a lot of joke-type emails, I’m often forced to filter all email from the sender into a folder that I read once a week. I’d hate to have to filter you!”

Third junk email:

Filtered. No message.

That’s it. That’s all you have to do.

SET UP A SECONDARY ACCOUNT FOR REGISTRATIONS AND MASS LISTS

Rationale

Your primary account will, hopefully, be with you a long time. Junk mail and distribution is cumulative and the longer the account is around, the more you’ll get. To try and reduce the amount of garbage mail, setting up alternate accounts for junk reduces the amount that comes into your main account. If you use a single account for everything, you’re on all sorts of lists which get distributed around the globe. Your single account is used for important work email, not-so-important work email, jokes, registration confirmations, travel confirmations, spam, etc. etc. etc.

Paper mail comparison

This is very similar to getting a Post Office Box that you use for most correspondence. The only people who mail things to your house are people that you know very well or whom you choose to give your address to; otherwise, any other mail goes to the P.O. Box, and you can retrieve it at your leisure.

How to do it

Register for a secondary, free account from Hotmail, Yahoo, Bigfoot, or one of the hundreds of other free email sites. Use this account for all registrations and sites where your email address will be posted to the web. Also give this website to all Internet newbies and people who you think might be prone to sending you junk email. Use this address for non-urgent mail, and keep your main account for important email that impacts your regular work life. I check mine once a week-ish unless I’m looking

for something important like a travel reservation, registration password, or account confirmation.

USE YOUR EMAIL CLIENT’S SPAM FILTER

Rationale

Many email clients and ISP’s use a spam filter to weed out email so that you don’t have to sort through it.

How to do it

In the settings on your email client, there should be a section for Spam or Junk Email. If you can’t find it, check the Help file to see if you can locate it. Once it’s turned on, it should start sorting for commonly-formatted or –worded spam or junk email. Most of the time, the suspect email is dumped into a folder labeled “Junk Email” or “Spam.” Occasionally, this filter will deliver email right to the Deleted Items folder.

Caveat emptor

Be aware that some filters are more strict than others and might filter email that you want! It’s not a good idea to set a spam filter to automatically delete email it finds suspect. Periodically (once a week) go through your spam folder and see if anything of importance has been delivered there. If you find anything, see if you can detect why it was filtered. The reasons aren’t always obvious – I once presented a workshop on finding grants online, and it was titled “Make \$\$\$ Fast on the Internet.” I didn’t receive any confirmations from the hosting center, although they said that they’d sent them. Looking now, it’s obvious – both the title itself and the “\$\$\$” were all flags for spam.

Paper mail comparison

In an ideal world, the mail carrier would weed through your mail and only deliver the stuff you want. However, this not being an ideal world (and this scenario being illegal), you still have to sort through the junk mail yourself when you get home.

PERMANENTLY DELETE MAIL

Rationale

Most of the time when you delete an email it goes into the Deleted Items folder where it sits forever until it’s permanently deleted. If you’re like me, you may want it out of your way, don’t really need to file it, but you’re not 100% comfortable with getting rid of it. That’s okay. However, there is mail that you want to permanently delete and never see again.

How to do it

Most of the time deleting email from your Deleted Items folder will permanently delete it, so that’s one option. Also, most Windows-based email clients will allow you to permanently delete a message in your Inbox or other folder by pressing and holding <Shift> while you press or click <Delete>. It will generally ask you to confirm that you want to permanently delete the message before it zips it out existence.

What should you permanently delete? All spam, jokes, server errors, email that you may have in another location or in hard copy, very old mail, etc. Don’t let this junk fill up your Deleted Items folder that you may need for other, important mail...

Paper mail comparison

You shred and recycle (or *should* shred and recycle) all mail that you don’t want. You don’t shred it, put it in a bag, and then throw the bag in the basement where you keep adding to the bag forever and ever. No, you permanently remove unwanted mail from your house.

IN CONCLUSION

Not all of these steps may be possible with your email system, and some may not work for you. Hopefully, though, you’ll be able to use one or two suggestions to help you organize your email so that it can be a help and not a hindrance to your regular workday. Good luck!



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