

The 'Net is all ears about e-mail

By Doug Peters
Senior Editor

Big Brother is watching you. Well, maybe not, but he may be reading your e-mail.

With the almost exponential spread of technology in our everyday lives, e-mail has become a part of many computer users' daily routine.

Like a phone call, only cheaper. Like the postal service, only faster. But how private is it?

Actually, not very. There are many ways in which information dumped online can find its way into hands other than those for which it was intended.

Unscrupulous fellow users, unwary recipients of your e-mail, dyed-in-the-wool hackers, bean-counting corporate types looking for slackers and even the federal government can, in one way or another, get a hold of other people's "private" e-mail.

Oh, and the university can, too. When e-mail abuses are reported or suspected, the Computing Resource Center can verify mail sent and received by its users.

But e-mail monitoring isn't limited to innocuous monitoring.

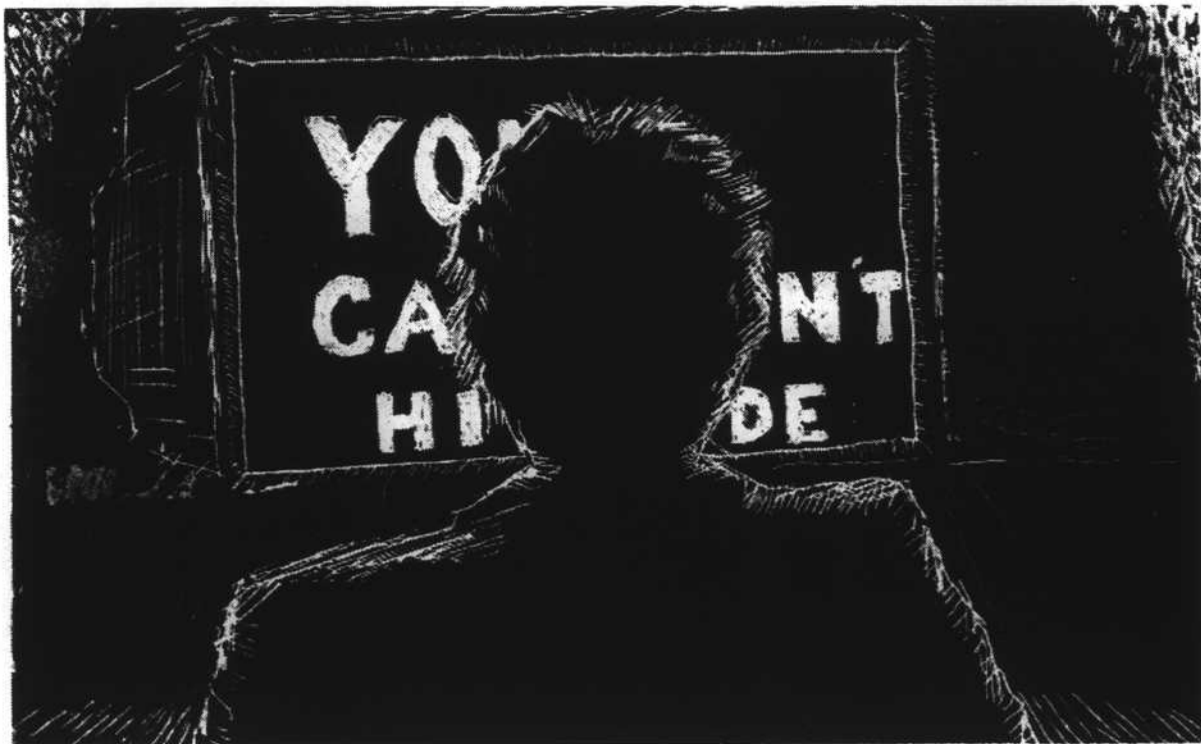
"It doesn't take much investigation," wrote Robert Moskowitz in MicroTimes magazine, "to discover that most computerized communications are wide open to third parties who want to know more about you. Just as the FBI can and does go through trash to help monitor and catch suspected criminals, as-yet-unspecified government agencies certainly can go through the Internet's electronic mail to see who's talking about what, and to whom."

Moskowitz cited a MacWORLD magazine survey in which 20 percent of U.S. businesses acknowledged monitoring employees e-mail.

Last year, Vice President Al Gore spoke of helping law enforcement agencies "thwart criminals and terrorists who might use advanced telecommunications to commit crimes."

Some online services routinely keep track of the mailings and postings of their members. These services are able to provide information to law enforcement, providing for a warrant or court order to be issued. According to The Cincinnati Enquirer, America Online helped the FBI nab members who were trading kiddie porn on the 'Net.

So unless you're plotting the overthrow of the government through e-mail, government access to e-mail



Bret Gottschall/DN

records should not be a major worry.

But the access of other unauthorized eyes might.

Fortunately, steps can be taken to secure electronic communications. Encryption programs such as Pretty Good Protection (PGP) are available through the Internet. Users can also send their mail to remailers, who act as a sort of "mail launderers," stripping off the e-

mail's return address and allowing the mail to be sent anonymously.

In this month's MacWORLD magazine, security consultant Bruce Schneier listed other Internet security precautions.

Schneier cautioned users that e-mail can be read by almost anyone. If you want to keep something private, Schneier wrote, don't send it over the

'Net. Remember that any server's authorized personnel are free to review e-mail, he added.

E-mail, he said, should be treated like a postcard. If it's out on the coffee table — or computer screen — just about anybody can read it.

So don't send it if you don't mean it, or if you don't want anyone other than the intended receiver to see it.

Cellular wave keeps on rolling

By Brian Sharp
Senior Editor

While headlines splash messages of societal violence and peril, technology is moving to calm the "fear factor."

Those advances can be summed up with one word: communication.

Cellular phones have been leading a general consumer explosion into what was once a professional and upper-class market. Pagers have piggybacked the trend, salespeople say, serving as a more affordable and less intrusive alternative.

For Joy Elliott, a junior elementary education major, answering the question "Why the cell phone?" is simple. "I feel safer having it," she said. "But it can also be a false security."

A cellular phone is useful only to the extent it's accessible, said Kathy Stevenson, an assistant administrator with the Lincoln Police Department Victim/Witness Unit.

A phone buried deep in a student's backpack is useless, she said.

Bert F. Newell, president of Best Buy Cellular, has been in the phone and pager business for eight years. While growth has been constant during that time, it has been "unprecedented" in the last two years, he said.

"The technology

had become more affordable," he said. "The consumer is finally realizing it and waking up to it."

Still, the cost of a new cellular phone stands anywhere between \$99 and \$1,000, the average price being \$200-\$250. Then comes the deposit with the local telephone company — toss in another \$150 for beginners.

Elliott said she runs a monthly bill of more than \$45 — billing is by the minute.

But price isn't what's fueling the upsurge.

"In the last two years, the fear factor has really increased," Newell said. "The general disrepair of the community and the increase of general hookups has been phenomenal."

That's not to say price doesn't play into the equation. Industry response to the general consumer influx has mainly brought technology that answers a public demand to eliminate cost obstacles.

The most innovative of those advances is PCS, or Public Communication Services. The new service will bring land-line phone rates to the mobile phone society.

The new phones will be a combination of cordless and cellular, said Mike Lazzareschi, sales manager for Cellular One. Users will slip a credit card into one part of the phone, allowing it to alternate between cellular and PCS service.

"It's going to open up a lot more doors," he said. "This is basically the thing of the future. This is where everybody is going to go to."

Lazzareschi said PCS technology has been developed and systems are already being built on the East and

West Coasts. Broadcast signals should be going out by January or February 1996, he said. But Lincoln most likely will have to wait another year or two for the technology to reach the Plains.

In the meantime, those still wanting to catch a ride on the futuristic techno wave — and save a few bucks — will most likely find what they're looking for in a pager.

Charles Oden, president of Nebraska Radio Telephone Systems, Inc., said the industry has been evolving over the last five years from the simple beeper to a more complete unit.

It too has seen a larger market with private consumers, said Oden.

Now there are alpha pagers, which receive messages in full sentences. Pagers can now receive news services, weather information and stock reports. New products will include the ability to respond or talk back to the paging party with the press of a button.

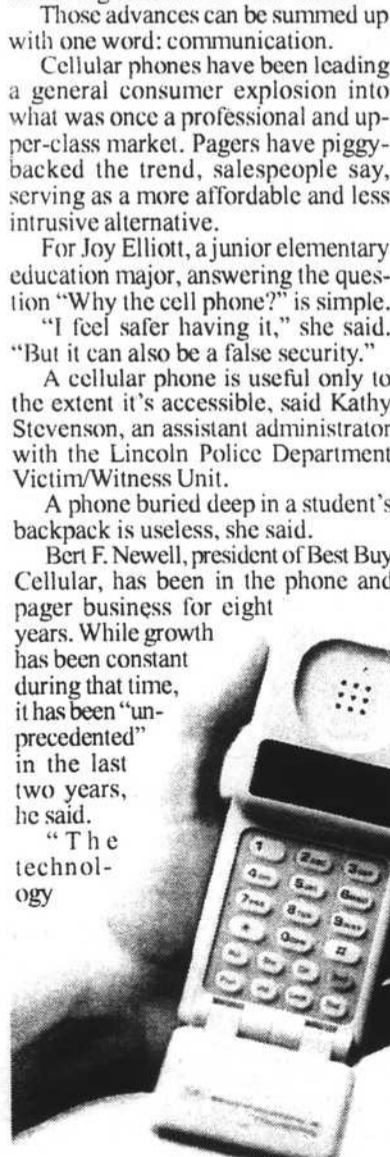
But there is a downside to this technology — it doesn't come cheap. While cost has gone down for basic pagers, Oden said, the new features have made today's complete pager more expensive.

Scott Sedlak, a junior business major, has been carrying his pager for about a year.

"It seemed like somebody always needed to get a hold of me and I was always at the wrong place at the wrong time," Sedlak said.

But as far as the added pager features soon to come, Sedlak will pass.

He used to have a voice pager, but even that was too much, he said. So for now, his \$50 basic model will suit him fine, he said — technology can go calling on someone else.



Free Internet access ends with graduation

By Cliff A. Hicks
Staff Reporter

"I remember when access to the Internet was free. I miss those days," said Robert Davis, a University of California at Berkeley graduate.

That's a sentiment echoed by many college graduates.

While in college, students have cheap, often free, access to the Internet. After college, the prices are never as gentle.

"I could be MUDing for hours for free, and I can't do that any more, let me tell you," said Timothy Zimmerman, a graduate of New York University.

"MUDing" is the process of going into a Multi-User Dungeon, much like an online version of Dungeons and Dragons, in which many, sometimes in excess of a hundred, players engage at any one time.

"What cost me my phone line for a couple of hours now costs me that and almost \$20," Zimmerman said. "It hurts my wallet." Zimmerman currently uses the Prodigy online service for his e-mail.

"It's ridiculous! I just want to check my e-mail and it costs me a couple of bucks!" said Lorainne Stevens, a University of Texas graduate. "I mean, I have to use America Online now, and it costs by the minute!"

Pay access does not come cheap. Some pay systems, like the three major pay systems, America Online, Prodigy and CompuServe, can charge as high as \$.14 a minute and more, with additional charges for large volumes of e-mail.

"The future may be great, but it sure ain't cheap."

DAVID KELAIN

Saint Louis University student

At UNL, all Internet accounts are free, with the exception of those on herbie, which cost \$10 a semester.

To get an account, a student only needs to go to the 501 Building, which houses the Computer Resource Center. The process usually takes about a week.

Commercial online systems charge for Internet usage, and there is, of course, the ever addictive chat room.

"I can't sit around and make small talk with people like I used to. I simply don't have the cash. It was something to do late at night, or if I had nothing else to do that evening," said Carol Cannoi, a graduate of American University.

Some students nearing the end of their college careers are taking steps to save in the future.

"I already see it coming, trust me, I know," said David Kelain, who will graduate in December from Saint Louis University. "I'm cutting down my online time, and I'm getting my e-mail at two places. It's this hovering fear I have, that I'm going to go bankrupt, and that scares me. I'm a technology junkie."

"The future may be great, but it sure ain't cheap."