Your Go-To Resource for Aging Well

ALL ABOUT E-MAIL

E-mail is one of the most popular computer applications, and one of the top "issues" we deal with during our twice-weekly computer help sessions (it's just below the "I forgot my password" issue).

How E-mail Works

When you set up an E-mail account, your service provider, such as Google (for Gmail), Yahoo, Xfinity, etc. provides you with space on their **mail server** in the "cloud," which is the repository for the E-mail addressed to you—it's your in-box. The provider also sets aside space for the mail you send—an out-box—and mail you've sent to the trash for later disposal. For example, suppose I have a Yahoo E-mail account and want to send a message to John Smith. I'll compose the message and add John's E-mail address in the To: line john.smith@gmail.com. When I press "Send," Yahoo copies my message into my out-box (or "sent mail" box) and sends my message over the Internet to Google's Gmail server. Google places the message in John's E-mail in-box. It happens in seconds.

Using E-mail with your Browser

There are two ways to access your E-mail. Most folks read and manage their E-mail using a **browser**—Internet Explorer, Chrome, Firefox, of Safari. When you enter "**gmail.com**," your browser will take you to Google's mail server and then ask you for your E-mail address and password so it can find and open your E-mail in-box and folders.

When you use a browser, your E-mail messages aren't stored on your computer, they reside only on the E-mail server in the cloud. It's as though you're visiting the post office to read your mail and send mail to others. That also means you can only access your E-mail when you're connected to the Internet. If you take your PC to the middle of the Mojave desert, you won't be able to read your E-mail, but it probably wouldn't matter because you'd be much too hot.

Using E-mail Software

But there's another way to access your E-mail that some people find easier: **By using E-mail software**, such as Microsoft Outlook or Apple's Mail application. **These programs "fetch" your mail from your E-mail in-box and copy ("download") it to your computer where it's stored** until you delete it. It's like Charlie the letter carrier delivering your mail to your house.

If you take your computer to the desert where your browser doesn't work, you'll be able to read your E-mail with your E-mail software. You could even compose new E-mails and replies, which will be sent as soon as your computer can connect to the Internet.

Using E-mail software has three other advantages: **First, you don't need to log in or out** of your E-mail account because you are always logged in (that's why we recommend you

protect your computer with a password or PIN). **Second, it can retrieve E-mail from more than one account**, so if you have both a Gmail and Yahoo E-mail account, the software can fetch your mail from both accounts at the same time and even deliver them to the same in-box if you'd like. **Finally, E-mail software works with other programs**: Outlook is part of Microsoft Office for the PC, and Apple Mail plays nicely with other applications on a Mac.

If you have questions about E-mail, please stop by PSRC's computer lab on Tuesday afternoon from 1 to 4, or Friday morning from 10 until noon.