

# PACKET



## Dead Letter Office

Even the best email package still sucks. The challenge:  
Blow up the mailbox.

Netscape Navigator may be the most popular application program of all time, but it's not the killer app on *my* desktop. Like most knowledge-workers, I spend a lot more time reading and responding to email than surfing the Net. And my email program of choice is [Eudora Pro](#) by Qualcomm.

Qualcomm recently launched Eudora Pro 3.0, and while it has been eagerly awaited for more than a year, it comes up short in several key areas. Still, it's the best email app going, given its wide range of features, starting with security: Eudora is sniffer-proof!



**Geek  
This**

Most mail clients pick up your mail using POP, the Internet's post office protocol. But POP sends your username and password over the Net without any cryptographic protection. Any hacker with an Internet sniffer can steal them, allowing them to read your mail at a later date or even break into your account. Eudora allows you to use APOP or Kerberos for authentication, both of which are immune to this sort of attack.

Eudora Pro includes a powerful system for building filters to automatically process your mail as it comes in. With version 2.0, you can intercept mail based on any mail header and put the message into a mailbox (or the trash), change its priority, or even give it a new subject line. Version 3.0 builds on this capability, allowing you to automatically send a canned response to messages that match a given filter. This lets you build your own email robot - for example, one that will automatically send somebody your schedule when they send you a mail message with the subject "send schedule."

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Eudora 3.0's multifold text handling capability is the work of Pete

You've  
got mail!  
Now what?

Lose track  
of it all  
in [Threads](#).

The latest  
post to Tech is  
["Different experience"](#)  
by [Kayser Wong](#)  
([kayserw](#))

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Resnick, a Qualcomm engineer. Resnick's text engine handles the Mac's WorldScript fonts, which will one day let me email English (written left-to-right) and Hebrew (written right-to-left) to somebody in the same document. (Unfortunately, the rest of Eudora isn't up to the task yet.) Although it's a great start, Resnick's text engine is noticeably slower than the Macintosh Toolbox text widget that it replaces.



**Geek  
This**

My biggest beef with Eudora 3.0, as well as every other mail program in existence, is that it continues to mindlessly mimic the same mail paradigm that email programs have used for more than 15 years.

What's wrong? Mailboxes. The mailbox metaphor was designed when people exchanged mail with a few dozen individuals, and didn't receive more than 10 or 20 email messages in a day. You'd have one mailbox for each person you corresponded with, one mailbox for each project, or even just one mailbox for messages you sent, and another for messages that you had read.

This metaphor doesn't work anymore. During the first six months of this year, I sent 7,436 email messages - an average of 40 a day. I receive about 100 messages on a good day, about 400 on a bad one. Every single email package on the market expects me to invent my own set of categories (mailboxes) and then religiously file each message away in its proper location. This is stupid: Computers are supposed to eliminate mindless clerical work, not mandate it. I'm a journalist, not a librarian!

A better way would be to have my computer store all of my mail messages in a database. The computer could then show me multiple views. One view would be all my unread messages. Another view would group messages by mailing list, showing either just the new ones or all of them. Another view would group messages by author. Another, by subject.

Computers are great at building indexes: By turning to the index page of my mail database, I could see an index of every unique word in every mail message. At present, it's all but impossible for me to search through the 200,000 messages that I have received over the past five years and find the email about Toad Sexing in Building 18. With this new system, such a search would be a snap.

My dream email system would automatically build a list of every person with whom I correspond - including those with multiple email accounts. When mail arrived, people who were more important to me would have their messages bubble to the top. If the messages were the latest in a thread, I could click and see all of the missives that preceded the latest.

Is this a fantasy? Hardly. Already, programs like Eudora, Netscape Mail, and even Internet Explorer keep your mailboxes in one file and a table of contents or index in another file. This would simply be an incremental advance on putting a lot more information into the index, and then building a much better user interface.

That's the email system that I'm looking for, Qualcomm. Go back to the drawing board and make it happen for Version 4.0.

# Simson

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Illustration by Dave Plunkert



Surfing as [simsong](#).  
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