


Article summary -  
"we've got mail   
always" by andrew  
leonard



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In the article "We've Got Mail - Always" Andrew Leonard examines the advantages and shortcomings of email. He suggests that, email, due to its boundryless nature, has invaded our personal and work lives and has become an inescapable presence, albeit, good or bad, that draws our attention. As a communications tool, email, has facilitated the global exchange of vast amounts of information. It has improved the manner and speed with which we communicate, and individuals from all walks of life are using email for different purposes. Perhaps one of the most positive contribution email has made to humanity is its enabling of large scale human collaboration on important projects and issues like never seen before. The biggest impact of this collaboration can be felt within the software industry, where progress is quickened by thousands of programmers simultaneously sharing information. Research suggests that email is the No. 1 activity that people engage in online, and, as trivial as it may sound, the creation of it was not planned. In fact, email was created without the intention of producing the breakthrough communication tool that it has turned out to be. Its architect Eric Alleman, chief technical officer of Sendmail Inc., developed the original email program back in the 70's in an effort to make communication among his peers at UC Berkeley more convenient. Indeed, email is convenient and easy. It possesses the capability of bringing people into a dialogue regardless of distance and despite physical limitations. It keeps us close to those we love even though they may be thousands of miles away. It keeps us connected to work when we can not be physically present. It helps the shy overcome their anxieties, and "flattens hierarchies within the bounds of an office". (Leonard 112). Online dating has been facilitated by email as it provides a safe neutral environment for conversation and a

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barrier to physical rejection. In an office setting, email can encourage the exchange of ideas and thoughts without the pressures associated with public speaking. Although email serves as a "buffer zone", its casual nature coupled with diminishing face to face interaction has fostered an internet culture that doesn't hold anything back. There are no filters, no censorship. Decorum and time zones seem to be lost. In addition, although more and more individuals are engaging in the written word of email, it's ironic that the level of literacy and level of tact has diminished. For example, full-phrases have turned into quick acronyms, and the click of a button instantaneously allows us to forward the latest gossip to all of our email contacts. "Email allows us to act before we think - the perfect tool for a culture of hyperstimulation." (Leonard 112). "We must also keep in mind that email is a fragile medium that is subject to "misinterpretation, forgery, corruption and destruction. Old emails can and will come back to haunt you." (Leonard 113). Love it one minute and hate it the next, we have come to place a significant importance on the role that email plays in our daily lives. Some of us go as far as valuing ourselves according to the number of messages received in our email inbox, completely disregarding the fact, that for the most part, only a small fraction of those email messages contain any useful content. Email is iconic of the pace of life we are experiencing in this era. As we witness our attention spans diminishing under the influence of a plethora of technological stimuli, it's apparent that email is yet another distraction to our already overly stimulated existence. It's quite normal to log in and check our email even though we are vacationing in some remote area of the world. It seems like email is constantly begging for our attention and has taken control of our lives. To some degree, we have let it, simply because it's

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inescapable, it knows no boundaries. Works Cited Leonard, Andrew. " We've Got Mail - Always." Writing and Reading Across the Curriculum. Ed. Laurence Behrens, Leonard J Rosen. New York, NY: Pearson Longman, 2007. 110-113.