

You might say, "What gives? I already know how to email!" Well, the reality is that you probably do know how to email, you just do not understand the particulars of emailing to missionaries in remote areas that do not have all the means of email access others do in developed areas.

Listed below are a few points you need to remember when emailing to missionaries in the third world. In many cases, they do not have Internet access, just access to an email server for which they pay a per minute fee or even a satellite phone that could cost them up to \$5.00 US per minute. Many of the ISPs in the third world do not have all the sophisticated email "filters" and blocking tools the rest of us enjoy and that makes it very difficult for the missionary in a third world setting to defend themselves from expensive SPAM. But you can help them...

Foreign modem connections can be very slow (Uganda is 9,600 kps compared to a minimum of 28,800 kps in the US with nothing less 56,000 kps being sold in the last five years and many making the switch to cable or DSL)

Most phone calls within in the third world are billed by the minute. This means that even if you call your next door neighbor, you are charged by the minute for the call. This can really add up when a modem is used to connect to the Internet or an email service while downloading a very long email. The recipient is paying twice already. Once for the per minute phone connection and again for the per minute ISP/Email connection.

SOME HELPFUL SUGGESTIONS:

- Resist the temptation to hit the forward button every time you get a cute email from a friend. When including a missionary in a mass emailing, be sure to send BCC (Blind Carbon Copy) to everyone. This way, the only email addresses the missionary will have to pay to download is that of the sender and his own. It is disheartening to take almost three minutes to download an email only to find out that it consists of nearly two pages of the email addresses of others. (This actually happened to me in Uganda) Not to mention the security risks you create by sharing with everybody in the mailing list everybody else's e-mail addresses.
- Do not use HTML or "Rich Text" format in a missionary email. Plain simple ASCII text - which is the universal computer format - can be easily received and read by everyone anywhere. While it looks pretty to have all the colors and graphics, it takes much longer to download and therefore costs more.
- With Outlook Express® there is an option to turn HTML (Rich Text) on and off. Turn it off for missionary mailing. It also has an option of "Reply in the same format in email was received." It is a good idea to keep this option

set all the time for even some non-missionaries wish to avoid the expenses of downloading HTML email.

- For AOL® and most Internet Email (Yahoo®, Hotmail®, etc.) this option is exercised by simply typing plain text in your email or reply. That is, no bold face or colors, no enlarged text, no underline, no colored backgrounds, etc. When you include any of these attributes in your text, AOL® automatically converts it to HTML format.
- For missionaries in sensitive areas you should be careful with any email you compose yourself or forward. Do not write about politics, political leaders, religious freedom or other such issues in the missionaries' host country. Words to avoid include: church, missionary, converts, evangelism, Bible, believers, worship, evangelism, or the names of prominent Christian leaders and institutions. (Do not send church newsletters, bulletin, sermon tapes, or Christian publications snail mail either) But do write, just avoid including words and comments that could cause the missionary difficulty or even expulsions from the country.
- When forwarding is necessary, clean up the email. This mean delete all headers, footers, the email addresses of others and if the item has been forwarded several times already, you should delete all the ">>>>" that some email programs insert every time an item is forwarded. Then reformat the email so it is one neat little package that is just the heart of the matter. In the example below, the message on the right contains more actual message words than the one on the left, but since it is a "cleaned up" email, it takes up one-fourth the space and only requires one-fourth the download time.
- When replying to a message, do not send the missionary their own email back to them. They have already paid to upload it and send it off. Don't make them have to pay again to download their own message. If you need to reference their email, simply say "In your email prayer letter of April 9..."
- Attachments, graphics and photographs are a "no no" unless you have first emailed and asked permission to send them. For example, a photograph that takes 15 minutes to download in the third world could cost the missionary almost \$8.00 US (\$75.00 if by satellite phone). I am sure the missionary is thrilled you have a new kitten, but they are probably not really ready to pay \$8.00 (or worse yet, \$75.00) for her picture. Send it regular mail!
- Actually, you should not send anything that has to be attached in a "download" file. With the proliferation of viruses attached to e-mail today, it is best not open attachments unless you know the person sending it and its contents regardless of where you are. Whatever you send needs to travel in the body of the email unless you have

cleared it in advance with the missionary. Don't share missionary email addresses with others unless they understand.

- Replies! Missionaries are busy, their computer time often limited to more inexpensive evening hours – so while they very much appreciate getting personal e-mail – don't expect replies.
- If they have an e-mailed prayer letter – do ask to be put on their mailing list – and do make it a point to pray for their needs, and share their concerns at prayer gatherings. If they have a web-based prayer letter, bookmark it and visit it regularly.
- Returned e-mail! If your e-mail comes back it might be a changed address or a e-mail box filled to its limits. E-mail addresses change frequently. Changing ISP's, computer hardware or software, problems with spam and a variety of other reasons at either end may result in mail being returned or just never delivered. Do your best to keep your address books up to date – making corrections right away when people send you their changed addresses. Its easy to just reply to an old e-mail, be sure it is recent one. If you are using `mailto:` addresses from web pages, be aware they are frequently not up-to-date, sometimes a web search will help you track down a more recent one. .
- If you have a web page – you can upload material, graphics and the like to it, and send the URL to them to access and download at their discretion. Be sure and include the “`http://...`” in all web addresses as some e-mail programs (not all) permit a click to open their browser to that page.
- Please understand. I am not saying "don't email missionaries" for they love to hear from home, just stop and think before you hit [send], and for all those cute stories you get, print them out and send them snail mail cause letters are fun to get too.

By Bob Hayes
(with additional material added by Barry McWilliams)

For more on Missions:

How to Pray for Missionaries
<http://www.eldrbarry.net/ug/praymsns.pdf>

Are Short Term Missions worth the Cost?
<http://www.eldrbarry.net/ug/ugstmsns.htm>

Eldrbarry's Missionary Reading List:
<http://www.eldrbarry.net/ug/missbks.htm>

How To

E-Mail

A

Missionary

By Bob Hayes