The End of Remote Desktop

We confess. Remote Desktop Protocol (RDP) is not likely to be going away any time soon. But we wanted you to know that there is a better solution than RDP for most of your needs. RDP is slow, cumbersome and is a potential security risk. Back in the days of POP mail servers, RDP was useful for managing mail and folders. Today, with the Exchange Server that has been implemented, you can have access to all your mail needs either through your web browser (http://connect.uwaterloo.ca) or by setting up Outlook at home. All your files, addressbook entries and email will appear just as it does at work.

RDP has also been popular for accessing network shares. Again, a new service the Virtual Private Network (VPN) can be setup on your home computer or laptop. For security reasons, network file shares are not available from off campus. By installing the VPN software, your home computer can appear to file servers as an on-campus computer and you will be allowed to map to the same network shares you have in the office.

As an added bonus, using the VPN will allow you to access all Library resources just as if you were on campus. There is no need to setup proxy servers to access your favourite journals from home.

So what will RDP be used for and why isn’t it going away? The only reason is likely to be to run software that is installed on your office computer that you don’t have at home for licence or cost reasons. Programmes, such as SAS, SPSS, nVivo, are expensive to purchase licences for and some software may only be used on University computers. But we hope to find ways to work with companies who provide these products to eliminate the need for RDP.

More information about Outlook Web Access is on the IST OWA web page. More information about the VPN is available on the IST VPN web site.

Goodbye Bryan!

The year was 1996. AHS Computing had two staff members. They were busy installing Microsoft’s latest operating system, Windows 95. WordPerfect 5.1 reigned as the word processor of choice. Windows NT 3.5 was dutifully serving up files, software & printers from the one server room in BMH2302. Norm Ashton was heading up a team to develop AHS’s website. Lyle Hallman South was under construction and no one dreamed of a Lyle Hallman North. The “Macarena” was the number one hit single for 14 weeks in a row. And Dr. Bryan Smale was appointed as Associate Dean of Computing & Special Projects in August.

For 15 years, Bryan administered over hundreds of changes and developments in AHS: Windows95 through Windows 7, the rise and fall of Netscape, the rise of Microsoft Office, the development of UW-Ace, nine versions of SPSS, the evolution of UW wireless, the fall and rise of Apple, the onslaught of Blackberries, the provisioning of Lyle Hallman South and North, the hiring of every IT Specialist in AHS.

In January 2011, Bryan left the Associate Dean post to serve as the Director of the Canadian Index of Well-Being. Bryan managed AHS Computing with wisdom, statesmanship, and humor. His leadership extended to all facets of information systems and technology both in AHS and at the University. Thanks, Bryan!!!
Computer Jargon

Microsoft Office is a productivity suite containing the core applications: Outlook, Word, Excel, PowerPoint. Other programs are included depending on the version of the suite that is purchased.

Published by the Microsoft Corporation starting in 1990 as The Microsoft Office for Windows. Versions 1.5 and 1.6 followed before the release of the first widespread version 3.0 in 1992.

Subsequent versions have been:
- The Microsoft Office for Windows 4.3 (1994)
- Microsoft Office 95
- Microsoft Office 97
- Microsoft Office 2000
- Microsoft Office XP (2002)
- Microsoft Office 2003
- Microsoft Office 2007
- Microsoft Office 2010
- Microsoft Office 15 (2012)

Laptop News

If you are in possession of a laptop purchased with UW funds, then you should make an appointment with a member of AHS Computing. Why you might ask? To ensure that it complies with the security protocols that were recommended by the IST Security Group as documented at: http://bit.ly/laptop_security

As part of the larger UW Community it is important that all devices are secure to protect not only your information but the information of others. For more information please contact a member of AHS Computing.

Just Because You Own a MAC...

Owning a MAC doesn’t mean that you are off the hook for making sure that it is secure. The MAC OS X security myth has been debunked. MAC OS needs updating just like a Windows PC; as does the anti-virus program (usually Symantec). Another useful tip? It is always best to run as a user and create an administrative account to install software. As with a PC, it is imperative to backup your files on a regular basis. Remember, a MAC is simply a different kind of computer; the basic principles and responsibilities are the same.

Software

Software on your computer is not the responsibility of AHS Computing. We will install software once it has been paid for. However, it is your responsibility to provide media for installation on new computers and for rebuilds (software cannot be copied from one drive to another). Software licensing is a very serious issue with strict guidelines depending on the company involved. For instance, with the Microsoft Campus Agreement, Office 2010 can be installed only on University owned PCs and one additional PC. This agreement was completed with great cost to UW. Software is not a right; it is in everyone’s best interest to properly license and pay for software so that those producing and distributing the product are properly compensated.

What’s New in Outlook

Microsoft Office 2010 has been redesigned for you in mind. It has provided you with important incremental improvements such as distributing the Ribbon interface in all applications in Office, video editing in PowerPoint, and improved mail handling in Outlook. Probably the most beneficial improvement Microsoft Office has made has been Outlook.

Outlook also has the new and improved Ribbon banner at the top screen to help make navigation easier by grouping common tasks in tabs. One of the newest features is called Quick Steps, which helps to speed up mail handling. By right clicking on a message you can choose from a variety of settings to either: forward a message, moving message to a specific folder, setting up a team meeting and so on. You can also add new items to the quick steps menu by choosing from a set of predefined quick steps, or by creating your own using a wizard-like interface.

Outlook also includes the mail tips feature which warns you against sending out emails that you may not want to send. For instance, sending to too large a group may be considered spam, sending mail to someone who is away from the office, and sending emails to an external party that might compromise confidential email are only some of the features that will come with a warning message.

Craig McDonald : Automatic reply: I am out of the office and will not be responding to email until Wednesday, March 30.