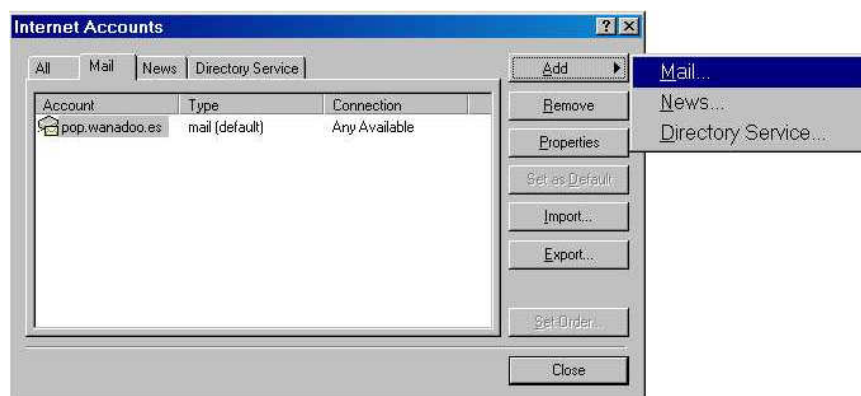TECH EXCHANGE No. 10 – Electronic Mail (Email) Part 1

"Let me have your Email address" is becoming an ever more common request in the today's community. In this article we will take a look at email and its rise in popularity. The telegraph, telephone and fax systems have revolutionised communication between people. During this period people have become more global and have the need to communicate larger amounts of information in multimedia form, comprising of text, images, sounds, code, etc. The explosive growth in email usage has also led to it being used as a mass marketing tool. It is also worth stressing here that if you receive an email from an address you do not recognise, DO NOT OPEN IT AND DELETE IT IMMEDITLY. This is because they have become a common way of infecting your computer with a virus.

An Email can be thought of as an electronic letter – comprising of two parts the message and the addressed envelope. When we send an email, the email client software will deliver your message to the mail server at the location specified by the address. The mail server will deliver the email to the correct user. The email address is usually in the form of user@domainname – e.g. maryjane@hotmail.com. The user does not necessary have to be a real person, it could be the name of a department, for example support. An email can optionally have a number of files attached, for example your email message could contain details of your holiday with pictures as attached files.
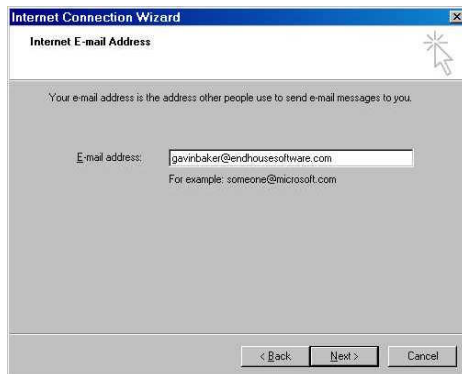
The simplest way of obtaining an email address is to sign up with one of the web-email providers like Yahoo or Hotmail. These companies provide a basic email service for free – for a larger mailbox size and advanced features they charge a small monthly subscription. For example browse to Hotmail's home page at www.hotmail.com and click on the 'sign up' link. You will have to fill in some forms and choose a username and password and that's it. The advantage of web-email is that the email software, your email and configuration details are stored on the web and as such can be accessed by any machine connected to the Internet. The basic service also includes methods for sorting and storing your mail in a selection of folders, making it easier to find an email. You can also define 'rules' that will sort your incoming email automatically into folders.

Another common configuration is using email software that runs on your computer. The most common software in this case is Microsoft Outlook. So how does this differ from the above case and in what situation would you want to do this? First you or your friendly computer guru is responsible for ensuring that you have the latest software version is installed and configured. Secondly your email will be stored on your computer can only be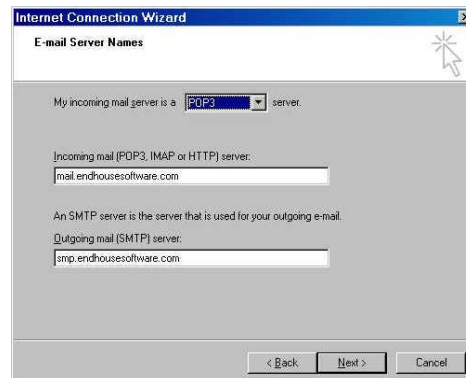 accessed from that machine. You still need an email account from an Internet provider. If you already have your own web page and hosting account you will already have an email account. Several companies now offer an email service on its own for example www.reg-123.co.uk In either case you would have been supplied with configuration details, part of which will apply to email. To start the configuration process run Microsoft Outlook Express and select Tools | Accounts menu option. Then press the Add button and select the Mail… option (see Figure 1). You will first be asked to type in your name. Your name will appear in the From field of the outgoing email message. Press the Next button to continue. You will then be asked to enter the email address that other people use to send email messages to you. This piece of information will be included in the detail supplied by your Internet email account. Press the next button to continue. Next we will be asked to enter the email server names. Your Internet email account company will, again supply the details needed here. The incoming email server will usually be POP3, for those interested POP stands for 'Post Office Protocol' and '3' is the version number. The incoming

mail server will usually start with '*mail.' And the outgoing mail server with '*smtp.'* Again for those interested SMTP stands for '*Simple Mail Transport Protocol'*. Press the Next button to continue. The last screen asks you for Internet mail account username and password. Press the next button and then the Finish button. This completes the configuration stage.

Figure 2

Figure 3

Figure 4

In the next article we will take a tour around Microsoft Outlook and see how to perform some common tasks. A complete copy of my articles can be found on my website – www.endhousesoftware.com and select 'Technology Exchange' from the links page. That's it for this week, please send any questions or comments to techexechange@endhousesoftware.com.

By Gavin Baker.