

# Shipboard E-mail A nightmare in the making?

11/22/99

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**Author:** John S Freitag

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**Shipboard E-mail**

A nightmare in the making?

**John S Freitag**  
UNOLS/RVTEC

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**Status Summary**

- The widespread use of e-mail for personal communication has changed the overall philosophy of shipboard communication.
- Personal e-mail should not be charged to project accounts or hidden in the rate structure.
- Scientific participants and crew must be aware of costs up front
- Charges should be collected prior to departure from ship

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**Goals**

- Use a simple charging scheme based on words or bytes
- Provide access to a running total of one's personal account
  - Both in bytes and charges incurred
  - Totals of incoming and outgoing message traffic
- Accepting payment by credit card, checks and cash makes it simple to obtain payment prior to departure

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## Potential Problem Areas

- Downloading mail intended for previous cruises
  - The use of mailboxes on the shore side which open and close with the duration of each cruise will minimize these problems. Stale addresses will be bounced by the shore side server.
  - Separate address scheme for crew and technicians will keep addresses constant for resident personnel
- **Science personnel receiving unsolicited e-mail**
  - All personnel need to be instructed to limit dissemination of their shipboard e-mail address
  - Remind users that they are responsible for charges both in and out



### Problem areas, Continued

- Scientists: having a combination of personal and official e-mail
  - Allow split payment of accounts: ie: part of the bill on the scientist's institutional VISA card and part in cash or check.
  - The allocation of the bill is up to the scientist in all cases as he must answer to his own program manager or institution
- Deadbeats, people who skip on their bills
  - There is no excuse for having it happen more than one time, next time ask for their VISA upfront before the account is opened, just like the Radisson.
  - In extreme cases the institution can be notified.



### Mechanics of setting up

- Need to set up VISA, M C and AmEx accounts and have a machine and charge tickets on board.
- Institution should set up a clearing account
  - Charge receipts go into this account
  - Satellite carrier bills are paid from this account
  - The long term cash flow in this account is used to compute the charge rate
- An e - mail accounting package is necessary to tally each account

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## Mechanics, Continued

- Use of a longterm average makes the relative cost of transmission transparent
  - Most ships have a combination of Cell phone, M-sat, INMARSAT Std-A or B which charge different rates, land lines are sometimes used
  - Unfavorable conditions may require multiple tries to transmit a single message
  - It is important that the user cost be adjusted only infrequently, once or twice a year at most
  - Attempting to sort out which messages went on which medium is a nightmare to be avoided at all costs





**Summary**

- Individual private e-mail accounts
- Payment prior to departure from ship
- Constant charge rate, just like the phone company
- Costs available to users up front
- Transmission method transparent to users
- Minimal accounting hassles for operator
- Users receive a bill similar to a phone bill