



A Professional Journal Exclusively for the Heath/Zenith Z-100 Computer

Z-100 LifeLine Web Site: <https://z100lifeline.swvagts.com>

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HOWGOZIT

WE HAVE MOVED!!! That's right, but not in the usual sense. Let me explain.

On March 26, 2019, I received the following email from Earthlink regarding my account:

Dear EarthLink Customer,

Your personalized free website migration is complete and your site is now only viewable. As of March 31, 2020, your personalized website will be removed and no longer accessible.

In the meantime, if you would like us to send you your content, please call 800-804-0322 between the hours of 9am to 6pm EST Monday-Friday.

Thank you for being an EarthLink customer.

*Sincerely,
EarthLink Support*

Well, wasn't that nice of them. No warning, no explanation. No help.

I quickly sent a reply on the 27th:

Dear Sirs,

I was shocked to receive the attached. As a long time Earthlink subscriber, I have enjoyed the benefit of having access to several free websites, which I consider a MAJOR benefit. However, to just shut this benefit off suddenly is a real bummer, and what I consider a breach of contract.

If I understand this correctly, I take it the cost of having Earthlink isn't going down and, instead of the free websites, I'm being offered a special deal to use web-hosting, as a replacement. While I appreciate the special offer, I'm only using these websites as a hobby,

certainly not a money-making business, and I can't justify the additional cost, even at this special rate. I hope you can come up with some useful alternative for us hobbyists.

*Cheers,
Steven Vagts*

And no reply. I called the customer service department and was pretty much told the same and they transferred me over to the Web-hosting Department. They were offering about half off their usual rates - and my email accounts would still cost me the usual \$21.00 per month. Now wasn't that generous?

So the hunt was on. The internet was awash with free hosting sites and I checked into them all. However, each offered the same basic service - a nice website toolkit to build your site, with graphics and pictures all over, and generally ads or a watermark popping up, to boot.

No thanks. I liked my plain white pages and simple layout. It was perfect for all the text and articles and it had no need for tons of pictures and graphics and ads popping up all about.

So I knew I would have to buy a simple package that allowed me to do just what I wanted.

The first job was to find a means of constructing a simple website, without a site builder. There are three main FREE Content Management Systems (CMS) available today and endless other less popular ones. The most popular shall remain nameless, and at a distant third is Joomla! Any of these three seemed to be just what I needed, but each offered something significantly different, although they are basically meant to do the same thing - to help you create and manage your website.

One seemed to be business oriented (and seemingly much more complicated than I needed). Another was built to serve primarily as a blogging platform. It also has a large user community and flexibility to evolve beyond a simple blog, but it works best as a delivery medium for always changing material exactly the way blogs are supposed to be. It also seemed primarily for the hobbyist that wanted basically a photo gallery, and was what I consider to be too simple.

So I chose Joomla! which seemed to offer a full range of capability, but still gave me full control over content.

So stick with me as we journey into a whole new world - at least to me...

JOOMLA! CMS

Joomla! appears to be a Content Management System with a lot of flexibility but claims to have an easy-to-use user interface that a lot of people get intimidated about when they realize how many options and configurations are available. However, in spite of all the video and tutorials that I viewed several times, the learning curve is what I would call steep. But let's see if I can convince you that the effort was worth it in the end.

A Content Management System (CMS) is a series of programming pages connected to a database that allows one to retrieve information from that database in the form of content. Here, the most important concept to remember is 'database'.

With my old website, I was used to web pages that were separate entities. You copied the files to the server in the sky and created links to move around and it was done. Change a page? Just upload (copy) it to the server. Done.

Well here, the 'database' contains everything - the separate pages I referred to are now called Articles, the links I mentioned are now called Menus, and then there are also Modules with menu-like attributes. And there are extensions and templates that do their own functions and still other elements that can be loaded and used.

But the point is that all of this is placed in one 'database', which you normally don't have access to and is compressed. The only portion that isn't contained in the database is the directory of images. These are still separate pictures stored in their own 'images' directory.

The Joomla CMS is a platform based on PHP and MySQL. As these were new terms to me, let's look at them before proceeding.

PHP is a computer scripting language designed for creating dynamic web pages. PHP is widely-used for

web development and can be embedded into HTML, or HyperText Markup Language. HTML is a standardized system for tagging text files to achieve font, color, graphic, and hyperlink effects on World Wide Web pages.

PHP generally runs on a web server, taking PHP code as its input and creating web pages as output. Joomla! is primarily written using the PHP language.

MySQL is a relational database management system. A database is a structured collection of data. It may be anything from a simple shopping list to a picture gallery or the vast amounts of information in a corporate network. To add, access, and process data stored in a computer database, you need a database management system such as a MySQL Server. Since computers are very good at handling large amounts of data, database management systems play a central role in computing, as standalone utilities, or as parts of other applications.

A relational database stores data in separate tables rather than putting all the data in one big storeroom. The database structures are organized into physical files optimized for speed. The logical model, with objects such as databases, tables, views, rows, and columns, offers a flexible programming environment. You set up rules governing the relationships between different data fields, such as one-to-one, one-to-many, unique, required or optional, and 'pointers' between different tables. The database enforces these rules, so that with a well-designed database, your application never sees inconsistent, duplicate, orphan, out-of-date, or missing data.

The SQL part of 'MySQL' stands for 'Structured Query Language'. SQL is the most common standardized language used to access databases. Depending on your programming environment, you might enter SQL directly (for example, to generate reports), embed SQL statements into code written in another language, or use a language-specific Application Programming Interface (API) that hides the SQL syntax.

MySQL runs on virtually all platforms, including Linux, UNIX and Windows. Although it can be used in a wide range of applications, MySQL is most often associated with web applications and online publishing.

Getting back to Joomla!, it was created in 2005 by a team of open source developers. It currently has 200,000 community users and contributors worldwide. Joomla! is free to anyone who wants to download it and use it to create a website. It is also open to anyone who wants to create extensions and templates.

Ok, enough background. If you are interested, let me show you the procedures I took to get my new website into operation. Roll up your sleeves and let's get to work...

Joomla! Installation

The first step was to download Joomla! and learn how to create a website. One thing that I liked was the ability to download Joomla! onto my own computer and create and run my website from there - making sure that I could learn Joomla! and create a website before taking the big step of going on-line.

Installing and running on your own computer is known as a 'localhost' installation. Joomla! can be down-loaded with helpful sample content that allows you to become familiar with the way that a Joomla! site is put together and operates. You can also later install an empty copy of Joomla! for creating a new site.

Caution: Joomla! is presently only able to support one website for each installation. That is, do not try to install a second website into the same installation. A separate Joomla! installation is required for each website you may wish to create. When I tried, the new website's pages overwrote the old website pages - because both websites were using the SAME DATABASE! Oops!

There are three basic stages to do this installation on your computer:

- Download and install XAMPP, which contains some software that Joomla! needs to use to run locally, that is to say on your own desktop or laptop computer. This is a web server called Apache, a database called MySQL, and a scripting language called PHP. There are a few other things downloaded as well.
- Download and install Joomla!
- Configure Joomla!

The point of this is to configure your own machine to behave as if it were a server with the difference being that the result is not visible over the internet and is thus confined to your own computer.

Before download make sure you have a separate folder for downloads. Use Windows Explorer to create a directory folder called Downloads, if one does not already exist. Depending on your type of computer - this will be C:\Downloads.

Download XAMPP

Using your favorite browser, search the internet for a site to download XAMPP to your computer. One such site is:
<https://joomlaguide.com/install-joomla-locally/>

Follow the directions to download the latest XAMPP to your C:\Downloads directory.

A file with the XAMPP logo is saved to the Download folder. In Windows Explorer details view, the file type will be an Application.

To Run the file, double-click the file name.

You may be asked to confirm that you want to run the file or if you wish to allow the application to make changes to your computer; if so, click Run or OK.

Because there are so many various computer systems and software out there, I will not list the individual steps. Just follow the on-screen prompts. XAMPP should be installed in the C:\XAMPP directory.

I placed XAMPP-Control on my desktop, but you may wish to place it in your start button menu.

Pressing or clicking on either will bring up the XAMPP Control Panel on the desktop.

The XAMPP Control Panel lists 5 services or modules that can be started or stopped. These are Apache, MySQL, Filezilla, Mercury, and Tomcat.

While I used Filezilla in the past, the other four are foreign to me. However, for our purposes, we need only worry about Apache and MySQL. Both of these need to run as Services for our 'localhost'. Under **Actions**, simply click on Start for both of these services. The log below should now show both services as running.

Now test localhost by typing in your local home page's address in your favorite browser. Your local home page is <http://localhost/>

If it has not been successful, you will get a message saying 'Unable to Connect'. This may happen if:

- The most likely cause is that Apache or MySQL are not running. Use the XAMPP Control Panel to check these.
- The VOIP software Skype may in some cases interfere with network settings. If you are using XAMPP or MAMP on a Mac OSX computer which also has Skype installed, ensure that Skype is turned off, then quit and re-start MAMP or XAMPP.

If it has been successful - there may be a splash page with a choice of languages.

Choose your language and you should now see a Welcome page which says 'You have successfully installed XAMPP on this system!'. There are also various links to documentation and other items to the left.

Note: You **must** run XAMPP to start Apache and MySQL before you attempt to run the localhost and Joomla! in your browser. If you forget, you will get an error, something to the effect that the site can't be reached.

We can now move on to downloading and installing Joomla! itself...

Download and install Joomla!

Before download and installation, create a folder for the Joomla! installation with a suitable name. Using Windows Explorer, look at the directory structure for your main drive, such as C:.

Within the XAMPP folder (for example C:\XAMPP\) find a folder called htdocs (C:\XAMPP\htdocs). This is the folder under which all content that will be seen on the localhost website is located. (There are already files there - such as index.html which displays the logo for XAMPP).

Open the htdocs folder and create a folder under htdocs to contain the Joomla! files. (It can have any name but joomlaXX is often used for sample sites, where XX denotes the version number). In this example we will use joomla39.

Download files for Joomla!

Go to the main Joomla! site:

<http://www.joomla.org/>

- Click the Download button. It links to the latest stable release of Joomla!
- Click on the ZIP for the Full Package for this latest version.

Save the file to the Download folder on your computer. It will be called a Compressed(zipped) Folder in the Details list in Windows Explorer.

- Right-click the downloaded Joomla zip file and choose Extract All. The Extraction Wizard prompts for where you want the files to be located. This needs to be in the folder created above - for example C:\xampp\htdocs\Joomla39
- Click Browse to find the folder you have created for the installation of Joomla 3.9.
- Click OK.
- Check that the 'Files will be extracted to this Directory' box has the **right** folder displayed.
- Click Next.

Progress is indicated by the blue bar. When completed an Extraction Complete screen displays.

- Click Finish

The files are now in the right place and you are ready to set Joomla! up for use.

Configure Joomla! and Install Sample Data

Open the Joomla! site in your browser. If you called the folder for the Joomla files 'joomla39', then enter the URL in your browser:

`http://localhost/joomla39`

If you called the file something else - then use the name of that file instead of 'joomla39'.

The Joomla! Installation screen displays. Here you are stepped through several choices in order to set up the site, the database and a few other things. Your progress is indicated to the left of the screen.

- Select the language and press the Next button.

Main Configuration

The database Main Configuration screen shows:

Site Name [Joomla39] (or other name)

Description [Enter a description of the]
[overall Web site that is to]
[be used by search engines.]
[Generally, a maximum of 20]
[words is optimal.]

Admin Email [swvagts@swvagts.com]
Enter an email address. This will be the
email address of the Web site Super
Administrator.

Admin Username [swvagts]
Set the username for your Super
Administrator account.

Admin Password [*****]
Set the password for your Super
Administrator account and confirm
it in the field below.

Confirm Admin [*****]
Password

Site Offline [Yes] [No]
Set the site front end (the part the
readers will see) when installation is
completed.
The site can be set online later on
through the Global Configuration.
I selected [Yes].

Click on the [--> Next] button in the
upper right corner. A new screen appears.

Database Configuration

Database Type [MySQL] (default)

Host Name [localhost] (default)

User Name [root]
Note: For the first time installation, type
in 'root' and leave the password blank.

Password [] (leave blank)
Set a password for the user name for the

database. Use something you will remember! Or **leave blank for now** - you may need to remove a password entered in this field if you receive an error message when you attempt to connect to the MySQL database in a subsequent installation step. See note in this section below.

Database Name [joomla39]
This is the name of **this** instance of Joomla! In the example here use joomla39. If you used a different name - use that here for the database name. The name is limited to 8 letters/numbers.

Remember, if you intend to have multiple websites, you must load multiple instances of Joomla and use different Database Names.

Table Prefix [rkz4f_]
You may choose a table prefix or use the one randomly generated. Ideally, it is 3 or 4 characters long, contains only alpha-numeric characters, and **MUST** end in an underscore. If you already have multiple installations of Joomla, make sure that the prefix is NOT used by other tables.

Old Database Process [backup][Remove]
Any existing backup tables from former Joomla! installations will be replaced. As this is the first, click either.

Click on the [-->Next] button in the upper right corner. A new screen appears.

Finalisation

Install Sample Data
() None
(Required for basic native multilingual site creation)
() Blog English (GB) Sample Data
() Brochure English (GB) Sample Data
(*) Default English (GB) Sample Data
() Learn Joomla English (GB) Sample Data

Installing sample data is strongly recommended for beginners. This will install sample content that is included in the Joomla! installation package.

Overview

Email Configuration [Yes][No]
Send configuration settings to [email from above] by email after installation. Select either.
Main Configuration (data from previous)
Database Configuration (data from previous)
Pre-Installation Check (leave as default)
Recommended Settings (leave as default)

Click on the [--> Install] button in the upper right corner, and the installation begins.

Upon completion, you will get the notice: **Congratulations! Joomla! is now installed.**

You must remove the 'installation' folder before you will actually be permitted to use Joomla! However, before removing the installation folder you can install extra languages. If you want to add extra languages to your Joomla application select the following button.

[--> Extra steps: Install languages]

Note: You will need internet access for Joomla! to download and install the new languages. Some server configurations won't allow Joomla! to install the languages. If this is your case, don't worry, you will be able to install them later using the Joomla! Administrator.

Please remember to completely remove the installation folder. You will not be able to proceed beyond this point until the 'installation' folder has been removed. This is a security feature of Joomla!

Click on the following button:

[Remove "installation" folder]

This completes the installation.

Caution: I know I've said it before, but it is worth repeating. Presently, Joomla does NOT permit multiple web sites in one installation! You **MUST** install separate Joomla installations for each web site you wish. Just follow the procedures above and change the folder name to another name.

At the top of your browser window, the URL is presently something resembling:

localhost/Joomla39/installation/index.php#

Shorten this to: localhost/(yoursitename) and press return or enter.

You should get the logon form for your website:

```
[ Joomla39 ]
[ This site is down for maintenance. ]
[ Please check back again soon. ]
[ ]
[ Username ]
[ [ swvagts ] ]
[ ]
[ Password ]
[ [ ***** ] ]
[ ]
[ [ Log in ] ]
```

Enter the Username and Password you gave during Configuration, and your web page springs up.

Note: This site that you are looking at is called the Front End of your website. This is what your viewers will see. The Administrative End, where you will build your site with articles and images is called the Back End. To get to that, you simply add **/administrator** to your URL, as follows:

[http://localhost/\(yoursite\)/administrator](http://localhost/(yoursite)/administrator)

There are numerous tutorial videos on the web that will help you from here. Two of my favorite video series are:

'Joomla for beginners tutorials'

and

'<https://community.joomla.org/joomla-training.html>'

Both take their time, explaining in short videos each of the important aspects of putting your own website together. However, Joomla! is a complex system and I've had to go through both series of tutorials several times.

I recommend that you also take copious notes as to what topic is covered in what video so that if you need info on a certain topic, you can go directly to that video. For example, to get rid of the 'Home' title on the Home page, I had to review several videos to find it mentioned at the end of one. There is no other index.

OK, so now you have your simulated website working the way you want. Now what?

Find a Web Host & Go Online

I searched through many of the more popular free sites, but as I mentioned previously, many had the site-building tools and various advertising or watermarks left on your site. So I decided early that I wanted my own domain and I would have to pay for a hosting service.

I close friend suggested Qth, a hosting service used by many of his Ham Radio operator friends. Briefly, Qth offered me the ability to purchase my own domain, swvagts.com for a first time, and then an annual, fee and be able to host my website for a monthly fee. For more details, check out Qth.com.

Considerably less than what Earthlink had been charging for my email accounts, I jumped on it.

Once I paid the bills, Qth sent me a email with all the details needed to create my email accounts and website details, passwords, user names, etc. Qth makes it easy to setup email accounts and website details through a program on their server called cPanel.

From within cPanel, I easily downloaded Joomla! and the installation was even easier than it was on the computer - it did not need XAMPP.

cPanel downloaded Joomla! directly into swvagts.com with many of the same setup questions that I was asked for the home installation. Within minutes I began to construct my website.

I found that the easiest way to begin to build the site online was to simply upload the image files from my computer to the web using Filezilla.

Briefly, Filezilla is a file transfer utility that copies (uploads) files from your computer to the website, or copies (downloads) from the website to your computer. It is self-explanatory, so I won't bore you with the details here. But it was the one flawless procedure of this entire campaign.

Let's take a break here for a moment to discuss the procedures of creating the website from the working version that we have created on our home computer. If you were to check online into the procedures for uploading the files from your home computer, the preferred method appears to involve making a backup image, using Akeeba Backup.

Akeeba Backup is one of the extensions that you can download from within Joomla! that does as the name implies. It creates a backup of the entire Joomla! installation in the same manner as a hard drive backup. However, Akeeba Backup has the added capability of restoring your Joomla! site at an entirely different location, e.g. your online website!

The procedures are simple enough in theory:

- From within Joomla! on your computer, you download a file copy of the Akeeba Backup file.
- You must also download Kickstart from the Akeeba Backup site.
- Next you upload both the backup image file AND Kickstart from your computer to your website using Filezilla.
- Then run Kickstart which activates the backup image file to run its own self-installer, and the entire site is constructed on your website.

But this raised several questions that I still never got an answer to.

- Does this website use the same database, site names, and password as the home computer?
- Does Akeeba Backup save the same database file for both sites?
- For every small change that I make on the home computer, do I have to make a backup and repeat the entire procedure again?
- If I mess up one of the sites - say the one in my computer, will it mess up the other site after uploading the backup?

And those were just a few of the questions running through my mind.

So, rather than attempt that, I completed a completely new Joomla! installation on the web site. It assured me of a completely independent installation, a separate database, and all new passwords. If I mess up one or the other database, I still have the other version and it cannot be (theoretically) impacted by the actions done in the other.

So I reconstructed each menu, article and module from scratch. As I created each page (article) I would copy & paste the text & images directly from my computer page to the web page. It worked as easy as if I was copying pages from one directory of the computer to another. Likewise, I completed each menu and module the same way. And within a few hours of duplicating my work from the home computer, I had my first website up and running.

But here is where I messed up BIG time. Following my success with the installation, I made a copy of the website within two directory names using Z-100 LifeLine and Vpennies, for the second website and when I installed the new data in the second site - I found that it completely overwrote all the data from the first site!!

My mistake? The database used was the same, in spite of the name change!

My websites were completely messed up, with no hope of recovery of either site. At the advice of a Qth site manager, I deleted everything and began to start over, but in spite of all attempts, I could not get even a clean installation of Joomla! to work. To make weeks worth of work a short story, it turns out that my deletion of files occurred at the same time that the server installed an update of PHP! And the new installation of PHP wasn't working correctly, at least not for me. Whether because I deleted files or a bug in the PHP installation, I don't know, but with new files installed for PHP, I was finally in operation again.

In the meantime I also found the proper means to having more than one website - **subdomains**. It seems that subdomains work the same way as sub-directories on my computer and you do not need to purchase additional Domain names as I was beginning to fear. Let me try to explain.

If you want two or more websites, you can create subdomains within cPanel, we'll call them SubDom1 and SubDom2. Once created, each subdomain becomes part of the Domain Name and can be accessed in the same manner as the Domain Name. The domain becomes:

subdom1.swvagts.com and
subdom2.swvagts.com

and in the file directory tree, these are:

swvagts.com\subdom1 and
swvagts.com\subdom2

So I reinstalled Joomla! again, but this time in the subdomain names. Fantastic!

Before I depart, let me make one suggestion.

When you have finished an article to your satisfaction, cut & paste a copy of the text into WordPad and save it as a backup file in a folder on your home computer. While you cannot save any images, links and the like, you can save the text, and put the image URL in parentheses in the correct location. If anything should become of the Akeeba Backup file, the worst part of recreating the article is duplicating the text! (The voice of experience)

What a learning experience! I wish to thank **Thierry Klein** for his patience and experience dealing with my lack of Web knowledge. He was a fantastic sounding board to my often violent irritations with this project and without his help, I feel I would have lost what hair I have left. I also wish to thank **Richard Pestinger** for his helpful advice.

Ok, so let's get the new particulars. Please correct your Rolodex with this new information.

The Z-100 LifeLine website is:

z100lifeline.swvagts.com or
swvagts.com/z100lifeline

My new Z-100 LifeLine email address is:

z100lifeline@swvagts.com

I hope your installation goes better than mine did. Oh, do me a favor, please visit the website often. Presently, the search engines have not located the new site and it is my understanding that the more it is used, the sooner it will get picked up.

Finally, check out the What's New page. It has access to a new Z-100 Index that includes all three major publications, *Z-100 LifeLine*, *Sextant*, and *REMark*. The index is a full 82 pages in length, so you should be able to locate just about any Z-100 subject.

It also has a link to a **For Sale** page that you may wish to check out. I've got quite a collection of parts, software, and manuals to get rid of.

Finally, if there is an article that you need, I'll be happy to email you a scanned copy.

Oh, and Vpennies? It is a website explaining the rules to a fun canasta game called "Pennies From Heaven" that we enjoy whenever the family gathers. Check it out also.

U.S. Post Office Woes

Lately, have you noticed a change of attitude at the Post Office?

It used to be that my only complaints about the Post Office were the long lines and the rising rates. But as there were few options, I would go at slack times and grouse as the rates increased every few years. However, their latest efforts to show a profit are getting downright bizarre.

Just so you know what the rates and rules are, and the dimension requirements, as published at the USPS website (after quite a bit of digging):

Postcards:		Price:
Length:	5"min to 6" max	\$0.35
Height:	3.5" min to 4.25" max	

Letters:			
Length:	5"min to 11.5" max	1 ounce:	\$0.35
Height:	3.5" to 6.125" max	2 ounces:	\$0.70
Thickness:	0.25" (1/4") max	3 ounces:	\$0.85
Note:	Metered mail is 5 cents lower.		

Large Envelopes (Flats):			
Length:	11.5"min to 15" max	1 ounce:	\$1.00
Height:	6.125" to 12" max	2 ounces:	\$1.15
Thickness:	0.25" to .75" max	3 ounces:	\$1.30
		4 ounces:	\$1.45
		5 ounces:	\$1.60
		6 ounces:	\$1.75
		7 ounces:	\$1.90

Note: Flats exceed at least one of these dimensions.
Note: Pieces that are rigid, nonrectangular, or not uniformly thick pay parcel prices.

Letters that meet one or more of the nonmachinable characteristics in DMM101.1.2 are also subject to the \$0.15 nonmachinable surcharge (down from \$0.23 and then \$0.21 in previous years).

The DMM 101.1.2 referred to for nonmachinable characteristics is listed here:

1.0 Physical Standards for Letters

1.1 Dimensional Standards for Letters

Letter-size mail is the following:

- a. Not less than 5" long, 3-1/2" high, and 0.007" thick. For pieces more than 4-1/4" high or 6" long, or both, the minimum thickness is 0.009".
- b. Not more than 11-1/2" long, or more than 6-1/8" high, or more than 1/4" thick.
- c. Not more than 3.5 ounces.

(Charge flat-size prices for First-Class Mail letter-size pieces over 3.5 ounces.)

- d. Rectangular, with four square corners and parallel opposite sides.
 Letter-size, card-type mail pieces made of cardstock may have finished corners that do not exceed a radius of 0.125" (1/8"). See Exhibit 201.1.1.1.

1.2 Nonmachinable Criteria

A letter-size piece is nonmachinable if it has one or more of the following characteristics (see 601.1.1.2 to determine the length, height, top, and bottom of a mailpiece):

- a. Has an aspect ratio (length divided by height) of less than 1.3 or more than 2.5.
- b. Is polybagged, polywrapped, enclosed in any plastic material, or has an exterior surface made of a material that is not paper. Windows in envelopes made of paper do not make mailpieces nonmachinable. Attachments allowable under applicable eligibility standards do not make mailpieces nonmachinable.
- c. Has clasps, strings, buttons, or similar closure devices.
- d. Contains items such as pens, pencils, keys, or coins that cause the thickness of the mailpiece to be uneven; or loose keys or coins or similar objects not affixed to the contents within the mailpiece. Loose items may cause a letter to be nonmailable when mailed in paper envelopes (see 601.3.3).
- e. Is too rigid (does not bend easily when subjected to a transport belt tension of 40 pounds around an 11" diameter turn).
- f. Is too thick. For pieces more than 4-1/4" high or 6" long, the thickness is less than 0.009 inch.
- g. Has a delivery address parallel to the shorter dimension of the mailpiece.
- h. Is a self-mailer that is not prepared according to 201.3.14.
- i. Is a booklet that is not prepared according to 201.3.16.

Several years ago, in an effort to reduce costs, the Post Office began to automate and get into machinable mail in a serious way. As you may recall, I had to switch from taped, stapled, folded newsletters back to envelopes at that time.

Then I was told that I had to tape over the metal clasps to ensure the envelopes would not catch on the clasps.

That lasted a few years, when suddenly I noticed I was getting charged a nonmachinable surcharge of \$0.23 per envelope. I was told to simply not use the clasp, so I didn't and taped the entire flap over the clasp. That worked for a few more years.

We moved to Hendersonville from Elizabeth City, NC. When I noticed a couple of years ago, that the surcharge was back. When I asked why, the clerk said he could **feel** the metal clasp in the envelope, that made an **uneven lump** in the envelope! Ok, I can deal with that, no big deal. I now remove the clasp on envelopes.

Recently, I mailed a CD with pictures to members of my family. I had run out of the manufactured mailers, but had thick craft paper on hand, so I carefully wrapped each CD in the paper, and used packing tape to ensure the labels stayed on. When I went to the Post Office, the clerk said that I could not use first class mail, because the new machines could not handle the flimsy envelope and stiff CD. And, he said, "If the disk should get caught in the machine, I could get a bill from the Post Office for thousands of dollars for repairs!"

What about first class and a nonmachinable surcharge? Nope, the best he could do was parcel post and media rate. I think the 1.5 ounce envelope was now \$1.39, if I recall correctly.

Now, can you imagine a small envelope with all those packages? Yup, subject to getting lost, the last envelope managed to get all the way from Hendersonville, NC, to Lexington, KY, in two weeks!!

Well, now I know - use the manufactured CD mailing envelopes - except those are \$1.50 + tax, each!

But, the latest incident threw me for a loop. I combined two issues of the lifeline in an envelope to a new reader. No big deal, saves some postage and it was still less than 1/4" thick. Myra took it to the Post Office and was charged for a Large Envelope! I had removed the clasp; the envelope was under size limits.

What? These clerks just see a manila envelope now and charge the Large rates? I went to the Post Office to complain and happened to see the same clerk, who just happened to have the same letter envelope handy.

Now, these clerks have a handy little cardboard aid with a 1/4" slot in it. You might have seen it. Her reasoning for charging the Large rate was that the envelope would not fall through the slot on its own!! The poofiness of the envelope caused the envelope to stick about mid-way through, hence, it did not fit!

If she had even just jerked the cardboard the slightest bit, it would have passed, but she could not do that! If the envelope was pressed flat, I don't think it would have been even 1/8" thick.

Now, I've had thicker envelopes in the past that the clerk would shove into the slot, and pass. I wanted to see the manager. She said I would have to go to the distribution center across town to see one.

At the distribution center, I was told that the manager was too busy and could not see me, but I could discuss the issue with him. When I explained, he simply said that I should be happy that I wasn't charged the parcel rate and pretty much politely blew me off!

So, this is what the Post Office has become? A sign of these tough times? I hope your Post Office treats you better.

Closing

Well, the past few months have been very exciting around here. Weddings, family visits, website changes, Post Office irritants...

With the forced website change and the Post Office changes, it seems that the time is ripe to change to a paperless newsletter. So I propose that this is the last paper issue of the LifeLine. Future issues will be shown on the website as a PDF document that you can read and/or print at your leisure. I will send an email to you when each future issue is ready.

So, **please** send me an email with your current email address ASAP. However, if you still need the paper version, please let me know and I'll be happy to send you one.

Once again, please note my new Website and e-mail. Check out the new Website often. I think you will like it.

'Til next time,
happy computing!

Cheers!!!



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