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'Snail mail' blazes slow e-trail

From BBC News 17.06.08 © BBC MMVIII

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/technology/7458531.stm>

Muriel, Austin and Cecil are snails for the electronic age.

The gastropods have been fitted with equipment to **allow** them to send e-mails on behalf of visitors to a website.



Instead of **instantaneous** communication, sent messages will travel at 0.03mph (0.05km/h) and could take days, weeks or even months to arrive.

It is part of a "slow art" project called Real Snail Mail at Bournemouth University in the UK which will be showcased in Los Angeles in August.

"One thing technology promises us is speed, acceleration, more of everything in less time," said Paul Smith, a visual artist working on the project.

"Culturally, we seem obsessed with immediacy. Time is not to be taken but **crammed** to bursting point."

The researchers hope the project will encourage people to take their time and **contemplate** the technology and the work.

Each snail is fitted with a tiny capsule which holds a Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) chip. RFID allows objects to communicate over short distances.

Users of the service send a message via the Real Snail Mail website which is **routed** to the tank at the speed of light to await collection by a snail "agent".

As the three snails slowly **amble** around the tank, they occasionally come into range of an electronic reader, which attaches the e-mail message to the RFID chip.

The electronic messages are then physically carried around the tank by the snails until one of the gastropods passes close to a second reader.

It is then forwarded over the net in the **usual** way.

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"It could be quite **frustrating** for some people," Vicky Isley, one of the artists told BBC News. "It's completely **subverting** that normal system."

So far, the three snails have managed to deliver 14 messages.

Users of the service will hope that Austin is on hand to collect their messages. The Snail has made 10 of the deliveries so far with an **average** delivery time of 1.96 days.

"He's a super-powered snail - he's doing really well," said Ms Isely. "He's really quite big - he's always the one that gets to the food first."

Unfortunately, Muriel is still languishing, waiting to make her first delivery.

The project will be on **show** at the computer graphics conference Siggraph in Los Angeles from 11-15 August.

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A.

Read the article on pages 4 and 5 two or three times. You can use a pen to underline or a highlighter pen.

Now write down what you think are the main points contained in the article.

Point 1

Point 2

Point 3

Point 4

Point 5

Point 6

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B. Read the article and then answer these questions

1. For whom will the snails deliver e mail?
2. What is the name of the project?
3. How many deliveries has Muriel made?
4. How is the e-mail message attached to the RFID strip?
5. How is the RFID attached to the snail?
6. Who should users of the service want to pick up their message?
7. What job does Paul Smith have?
8. How fast does a user's message get sent to the tank?

C.

What are your views on this project? Would it encourage us to slow down?

What are your views on e-mail generally? Does it make us lazy as we do not telephone or speak to people anymore or is it a good way of keeping in touch?

Write a short essay detailing your views.

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D.

Look at the words in the text that are in bold. They are listed on the left below. Match them with a word on the right that can replace them in the text.

For example **allow** can be replaced by enable

allow	→	enable
instantaneous		consider
crammed		stroll
contemplate		normal
routed		mean
amble		directed
usual		display
frustrating		immediate
subverting		sadly
average		stuffed
unfortunately		exasperating
show		undermining

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Answers

A.

- Snails have been fitted with equipment to allow them to send e-mails
- The e-mails could take a long time to arrive
- The project is called Real Snail Mail
- The researchers hope it will encourage people to slow down
- Some people may find the slowness frustrating
- The three snails have so far delivered 14 messages

B.

1. For visitors to a website
2. Real Snail Mail
3. By an electronic reader
4. None.
5. In a tiny capsule
6. Austin, as he has delivered 10 messages
7. Visual artist
8. At the speed of light

D.

allow	enable
instantaneous	immediate
crammed	stuffed
contemplate	consider
Routed	directed
amble	stroll
usual	normal
frustrating	exasperating
subverting	undermining
average	mean
unfortunately	sadly
show	display