

# STUDENT LIFE

## Behind the technology: What's wrong with Webmail2

By Logan Stack  
staff writer

"Very few of my comments about Webmail2 are suitable for publication," a student complained about Penn State's e-mail service. This comment sums up most of the explicit comments slung about whenever someone loses an attachment or when messages are dropped.

The original Webmail was created with the intent to allow students to access their e-mail when they were away from their campus computer. However, it quickly became the main e-mail client for 80,000 regular users, instead of a program like Eudora or Outlook. With so many people using Webmail that often, the servers hosting it became slow and unreliable under the load. Over the summer, Information Technology Services (ITS) built Webmail2 to reduce the load on the servers.

Returning students have discovered significant problems with the system. The most frequent complaint is that it's slow, especially when trying to get mail from a dial-up connection.

Early in the semester, ITS had hardware problems that resulted in some e-mails disappearing - but ITS says that they have recovered all e-mail lost from this period. Many students are still having problems with sent e-mail never arriving and attachments vanishing.

In addition to these more common problems, many students have experienced unique, and if grades weren't so serious, hilarious problems. For example, communication and media studies junior Mallory Blasic has e-mail in her inbox that disappeared, only to reappear days later claiming to be received weeks in the future.

Webmail2 sometimes turns Journalism senior Jerry Pohl's text white, on a white background, making it impossible to read. Computer engineering senior Mike Vogt had the opposite problem with his club-related e-mail: black text on a black background.

Foreign character sets started out with very little support, and have slowly been increasing in functionality. Denis Lapets, a junior studying math, regularly receives mail from his parents in Russian. The subject lines are printed correctly, but not the "From" field. Also, all mail from his family is marked as spam,

so he's had to turn off spam filtering and wade through the sea of spam to rescue his parents' drowning mail.

Other students haven't noticed any problems. Matthew Ritz, a junior environmental science major, said, "I've gotten all the e-mails people sent me, and people have gotten all the ones I sent, or at least I think so." Though he didn't have any problem with the e-mail functions of Webmail2, the interface isn't to his liking. "I want to kick it," he said.

Many students have complained about the interface. Drawing particular ire was the "back" button in the browser. Unlike its previous function of going "back" in the original Webmail, in Webmail2 it logs users out, losing any open mail or folders when they log back in.

Users of browsers like Mozilla, Opera, Safari and almost anything but Internet Explorer have noticed a tab problem. Webmail2 has tabs on the page, which allow you to have multiple folders and messages open in one window. However, non-IE browsers have had this capacity built-in for years, and many students have become accustomed to using these tabs. Unfortunately, when these students try to use their tabs instead of Webmail2's tabs, they don't get the folder or message they wanted, but yet another copy of their inbox.

So how much did this fairly faulty new system cost the PSU students? The ITS department says the cost for developing Webmail2 can't be extracted from the costs for running the mail servers and general maintenance.

It is possible, however, to estimate the cost using the final report from a computer science senior design project. Last year, a senior design team built an interactive web site with similar requirements to Webmail2 called GRS. The coding, documentation and testing of GRS took three people a total of just under 1000 hours. If we assume that ITS workers make \$25 per hour, we can estimate that Webmail2 may have cost \$25,000 to create, which is about 125 students' Information Technology Fees, or about 45 cents per student.

The general student consensus seems to be well summarized by Pohl's comment, "Webmail2 is like 'The New Coke': Webmail2 exists only to show us how good we had it with Webmail Classic."

**WebMail2 cannot be used**

The e-mail client you are trying to use might have been a bad idea, had its interface ruined, or is permanently unusable.

Please try the following:

- If you were switched from WebMail Classic to WebMail2, make sure you have a gmail account.
- Open the [WebMail2](#) home page, and then get Eudora or Thunderbird.
- Click the [Login](#) button to inconvenience yourself.
- Click [X](#) to exit and try a functional email client.

Penn State 404 - WebMail2 does not work  
Information Technology Services

Jerry Pohl

## Sacha Baron Cohen challenges stereotypes in new film *Borat*

By Ben Morris  
contributing writer

Sacha Baron Cohen's "fish out of Kazakhstan" *Borat* opened around the world last Friday. The film gained much anticipation through sneak previews online. Borat, fresh off of the "Da Ali G Show" plunges into the world of cinema with his own full length feature. The adventure begins with his producer and their trip to America in hopes of recruiting some of the refining qualities to better his homeland, Kazakhstan. However, as a real country, Kazakhstan has not been pleased by the content and stereotypes that Cohen uses in his movie.

Borat's ideology is bravely naïve as he searches the streets of New York City kissing cheeks and chasing down New Yorkers in an attempt to make friends. During a *Midnight Cowboy* montage of "Everybody's talking at me," the audience gets the feeling of alienation that can afflict an outsider on the busy sidewalks of Manhattan. Seemingly he abandons this mission when he encounters an episode of "Baywatch" in his hotel room and falls into an obsession with Pamela Anderson. After purchasing an ice cream truck and a bear (of course!) to protect him from the Jews, they set off to L.A. to find his beloved Pamela. Of course along the road there is abandonment, desperate loneliness and drunken frat boys driving an RV. Yep, Borat saw it all in America.

What has some fans groaning and others howling is the offbeat, often offensive humor that Cohen employs to his careless protagonist. Nothing is sacred or taboo in the ring with Cohen. He is particularly heavy on the anti-Semitism. I could say without pause that Borat has a ridiculous phobia with the Jewish people and I wanted to see if Mel Gibson got a producer credit. Is it funny, though? Larry Charles, director

of *Borat*, knows funny from working with Jerry Seinfeld and Larry David on the TV sitcom "Seinfeld." He specializes in making the audience squirm in their seat at the long emphasized pauses and brutally offensive honesty. This is just the kind of humor that is sprinkled throughout "Borat."

What people seemed to enjoy was the articulate diction with which Borat uses to express himself. He explains how he would like to make "sexytime" with Pamela and conclude it with a "romantic eruption." Black and white people are "chocolate and vanilla faces." When first hearing these lines you're shocked. Did I really just hear that? Not to worry, he reiterates all his sentiments. And so the film goes. The rest of the movie (not a film) feels like the equivalent of a drunken Andy Kaufman, or Tony Clifton for that matter, drifting through the streets of Marrakesh. In the most notorious of the scenes, Borat wrestles with his overweight producer through a hotel lobby, elevator and ends in a blinding mesh of flabby skin and body hair. Both men are completely nude and there are some psychologically scarring camera angles that will change your life. There are certainly better choices in the theatres, but if grandmother is in town this would definitely be your film.

## America, Britney fed up with K-Fed

By Chris LaFuria  
news editor

Just when the world was fed up with celebrity users and pop culture abusers, some silly supernatural being decides to deliver to the world the gift of Kevin Federline, or, as most people have come to call him, "Mr. Britney Spears." Blatantly coinciding with the creepiness and ghoulishness of Halloween, Mr. Spears released his debut album *Playing with Fire* on Oct. 31.

After weeks of support and media preparation for its release, the album managed to sell 6,000 copies in its first week and landed at number 151 on the Billboard Top 200. Though not cited in Britney's claim, some people speculate that the recent divorce between Federline and Spears may have come from the artist's lack of popularity and over-exertion in the party scene.

While the album was entirely written by Federline and mastered at the notorious Federline Records, musically and lyrically, the album may propel the self-proclaimed "America's Most Hated" to the top of the "Ex-Celebrity Husband" charts. Most of the content in Federline's lyrics are about



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO  
K-Fed can add divorced and broke to his résumé.

about as many fans as the Penn State Behrend Lawn Darts team. At the prestigious Webster Hall in New York City, where the seating capacity is just over 1,500, K-Fed managed a whopping 300 fans in attendance -- 297 of them more than likely his Verizon network (they come with the phone).

All jokes aside, the life of K-Fed, or the recently tagged Fed-Ex, took a turn for uncertainty after he allegedly received a text message from Brit, revealing the plans for a divorce. After two children and countless embarrassing media run-ins, the Spears ended their two-year marriage due to what Britney claimed was, "Irreconcilable Differences."

According to a close friend of Spears, "She doesn't want to divorce Kevin, but if that's the best thing for her children and for her own sanity, that's exactly what she'll do."

The Ex-LFO back-up dancer and former Shar Jackson lover fathered two children with Spears, Sean Preston in 2005 and Jayden James in 2006. After Britney filed papers for divorce, Fed-Ex counter-filed papers, attempting to gain sole custody of the children and receive spousal support. According to TMZ.com, Spears is waiving the right to spousal support after the two established a stern

prenup. Sources say Spears may also move to have both parties pay their own court fees.

Whether you hate him or love him, the male Paris Hilton's album may surprise some people. Even with its cliché beats and less-than-enticing lyrics, there's a good chance K-Fed will reach the 10,000-album mark. Although his music will make rap fans cringe and critics reach deep into their think-tank of insults, the purpose behind Fed's album is what America yearns for -- pop icons to love and destroy.

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