Since the spring, the E-mail Task Force Office Automation Working Group has been identifying and testing products that meet the University’s requirements for the next generation of electronic mail. Final recommendations will be made in the fall. Until then, the Working Group offers the following suggestions:

- Hold the line: Departments should not deploy new e-mail solutions at this time. E-mail users should continue using their current products (All-In-1, Elm, Eudora, etc.) until new recommendations are made.

- Desktop standards: Users should recognize that products are being evaluated primarily for use under MS-Windows and MacOS System 7, with secondary consideration being given to UNIX/X-Motif, and almost no consideration to either terminal-to-host or DOS interfaces. All standard desktop configurations require Ethernet connections for on-campus use and remote networking connections like Serial Line Internet Protocol (SLIP) for off-campus use. A forthcoming document, ISC Desktop Standards, will provide more detailed information.

- Older desktops: Users of desktop computers that do not support the standard desktop configurations will continue to be accommodated through existing host-based e-mail systems, like Elm. However, support for All-In-1 will be phased out as new e-mail products are announced.

Detailed requirements were developed by the group during fall 1993 and presented to the University community for comment. The core of the user requirements for advanced electronic mail are:

- Retention of the basic messaging features currently supported by the host-based e-mail systems now in use.

- Integration of an e-mail product with a graphical desktop environment—such as MS-Windows or MacOS.

- Support for mailing any kind of file—such as spreadsheets, graphics, or word-processing documents.

Two additional technical requirements, often in conflict with these user requirements, are:

- Support for location independence, which is the ability to work from many locations and have access to the same data, services, user settings, and preferences.

- Scalability of the mail server platform to accommodate a large number of projected users.

The group initially reviewed over a dozen products, but has narrowed its focus based on the extent to which a product meets our requirements and its market share. All products under consideration underwent major changes during the summer. The final recommendations of the Working Group will be announced after the evaluation of the summer releases.

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