

Crossing the Digital Divide Volume 14

“Ctrl-Alt-Delete”
by Joseph Feigon
for the Observer

Urban dwellers have much to take for granted. My daughter lives in New York City, she grew up in San Francisco. During a visit a few years back, she commented: “Dad, I can get everything I need within two blocks of my front door, and if its not here, someone will deliver it from the third block over.” Granted, those two Manhattan blocks are home to as many people as our entire County, making it easier for businesses to fill the needs gap for those busy people living in one of the busiest cities on the planet.

City folk think country life is idyllic. We don’t have three grocery stores on one block, nor do we have eateries, laundry mats, and coffee shops open round the clock. That doesn’t mean we’re lacking things to do, we’re busy. Unlike your typical urban dweller, our list of ‘to-do’s’ might include: chopping firewood, clearing weeds, fixing broken fence line, collecting eggs, chasing squirrels, or a run to the transfer station. What we may lack in convenience is more than compensated with elsewhere.

No, this isn’t a comparison and contrast of City versus Country living, rather, a reference to all those activities we, or our urban counterparts, have to accomplish in the course of our daily routines to stay on top of things. These activities are often categorically referred to as chores. One definition clearly suggests the joy most feel about chores: *a job or piece of work that is often boring or unpleasant but needs to be done regularly.*

Being creatures of habit, we often make efforts to reduce the time allocated to chores. Our urban counterparts have the benefit of a larger and more diverse community – short cuts can be purchased, e.g., hire a house cleaner instead of scrubbing the commode yourself, or select your groceries and have Google Express deliver, or take the laundry to a wash & fold vendor.

What does this have to do with computers?

Routines at a keyboard are really no different than mundane work around the farm. Email, word processing, bill management, kids homework, vacation planning, and beyond. Using a computer is easiest with two hands. Some of us have grown accustomed to using a “mouse” for point ‘n click. Navigating Facebook or Youtube still requires some input: search phrases or names. If you’re busy writing a report, need to print something, or include content from one document into another? Sure, you can grab text with the mouse, right-click, copy and right-click paste, but in doing so, your hands are off the keyboard. Small enough movements, but still a change. Wouldn’t it be easier if you could keep your hands on the keyboard while working in Word, or Firefox, or Thunderbird?

Here’s a short list of my favorite (as in, I use them constantly) keyboard shortcuts. Every keyboard has one or more of the following: Ctrl, Alt, Delete (or Del) and Enter, A-Z, 1-0, F1-F12, Esc, Shift, and Tab keys.

If you follow the typing standard, and land your index fingers on **J** and **F**, your positioned properly.

You've written a document (Word, LibreOffice, OpenOffice, Notepad, Wordpad, etc.), you're ready to print. Do you move your right hand to the mouse, move the mouse up to File, and drill down to Print? Next time, try **Ctrl + P** to send the document to your printer.

You don't like the way paragraph two and four flow, you want them rearranged. Highlight the paragraph to be moved by navigating the cursor to the beginning of the paragraph. The arrow keys, up/right/left/down, along with the shift key can be used to highlight the text block you want to manipulate. Once highlighter, **Ctrl+X** will cut the text, further navigating with the arrows, **Ctrl+V** where you want to place the paragraph.

Let's say you want to copy, not replace the paragraph: **Ctrl+C** to copy, **Ctrl+V** to paste.

One shortcut I find myself using constantly **Ctrl+Z** which means **undo** the last thing. I'm editing a document, making changes between saves, and I don't like what I just wrote. Instead of backspacing through the sentence (or paragraph), a simple **Ctrl+Z** will undo what I just did. Check it out...

You're done with your word processing, you can close the application with a simple **Alt+F4**

Keyboard shortcuts are a waste of time if you're still typing with two fingers. Learning to type will not only save you time, you'll FEEL better than banging away with two fingers. Google "free typing lessons".