

The Aspect Diary



The New Year began with pretty much all of Aspect trying to recover from some dreaded lurgy or other, leaving the office sounding like a cross between Crufts & a Victorian TB ward.

Placing an order on one of our main supplier portals recently, we were surprised to find our default billing & shipping addresses were now in Puebla in Mexico. Holy frijoles! "Try clearing your cookies", they said, so we did. It made no difference, plus we then had to spend the next few weeks re-doing all the cookie preferences we'd painstakingly built up on the websites we use. Can we spell 'tedious', children?

Carrying out an email search a few months ago brought up a series of messages from a period when we were recruiting. To this day, the Education section of this particular CV still amazes us - this is, bear in mind, for an IT tech job - "Sep 2011 to June 2014, Bridgend College - studied various IT related courses but did not complete due to a lack of interest in the area". Well they do say you should never tell lies on your CV, but come on!

So, are we all ready to recycle like diligent little (Easter) bunnies under the new Welsh regs? Frankly, we're still a bit bewildered. Paper? We shred pretty much everything & shredded paper isn't recyclable. Boxes? Well yes, the cardboard is fine, but all the polystyrene packing materials? Nope. We've ended up with new bins inside, new bins outside, posters in the kitchen, posters on the bins ... But we probably still need to glue the kitchen bin (aka the repository for all rubbish) shut. We did come across a petrol station that simply removed their forecourt bins rather than be obliged to sort through whatever drivers dump in them. Which is annoying when you're standing there with your stinky diesel plastic glove & have nowhere to put it. (No, we don't want suggestions).

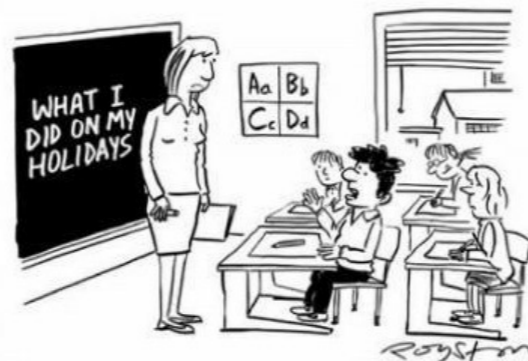
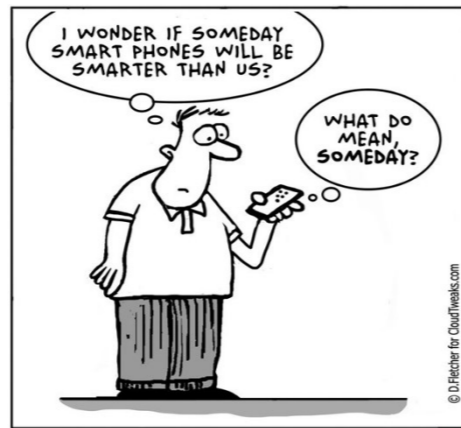
Well there we have it for another issue. And remember, if April showers bring May flowers, it's gonna be a jungle out there!



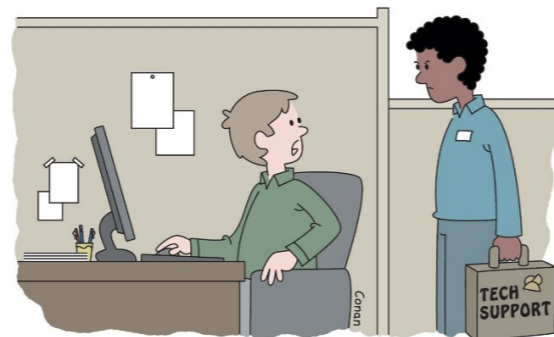
The Last Laugh



Dave's away from his desk, I'm afraid. Can I take a message, or read you his browser history?



"Can't I just email you a link to my blog, Miss?"



"It won't let me put the ten under the Jack."

The Aspect Newsletter

Issue 62 - Spring 2024



Apparently front-page billing means you've gotta say technical things, so I'm scanning for chips!



Bloomin' technology!

Yes, we are still small. We actually didn't get a lot of feedback on the new smaller format (hard to believe you didn't notice unless you read it online of course), but what feedback we had was uniformly positive, so smaller we stay.

Welcome to the Spring edition of the newsletter. With a side of fries. It's a pretty unhealthy issue altogether, as our quiz is about all things sweet and chocolatey. We thought the picture above, with its spring flowers, would be apposite for this issue, but it looks like we should've gone for Noah's Ark ploughing through the floods. Is it ever going to stop raining?

We know you usually skip straight to the funny parts, or to be more precise, straight past the informative bits, but the piece on subscription bombing on page 7 is worth a read. We'd never come across it till one of our clients was hit and it was mind-boggling how quickly it became overwhelming.

Ordinarily in the Spring edition, we would wish you a happy Easter, but we missed that deadline, big surprise. We blame the moon. It made Easter too early. So there. We can therefore only hope you did enjoy your Easter and that the bunny was generous with his gifts.

See you in the Summer! (Or sometime during the months commonly associated with summer at least).



What's inside

The key to AI It'll be under your nose	2
Looking ahead to 2025 Two big things to remember	2
DKIM & DMARC More ways to tackle spoofing and phishing	6
Make them all go away It's not that easy	6
Subscription Bombing Nobody wants to be that popular	7
I know a shortcut! And now so do you	7

Regular Features	
ABC FAQs	2
Aspect quiz - Chocolates & Sweets!	3
Vassilly's Blog	4
Helpdesk of Horror	5
The Aspect Diary	8
The Last Laugh	8

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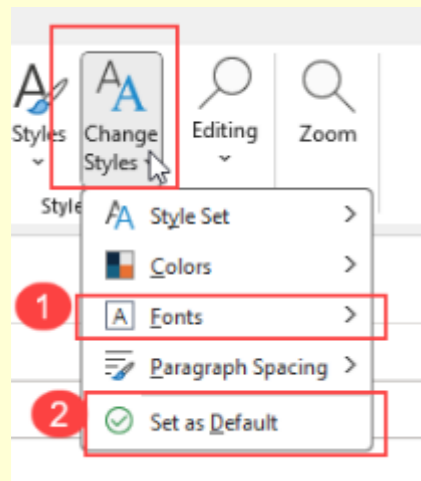
I've loaded up a program on my PC, but it's loaded full screen - I can't see the buttons to minimise or close it. What can I do?

The Windows key + the down arrow will minimise it for you. Then you can just drag the edges back to a more appropriate size. In case you can't think why it happened, we find that hitting the auto-adjust button on the monitor instead of the power off button is a common culprit. It may actually correct itself if you press the auto-adjust again.

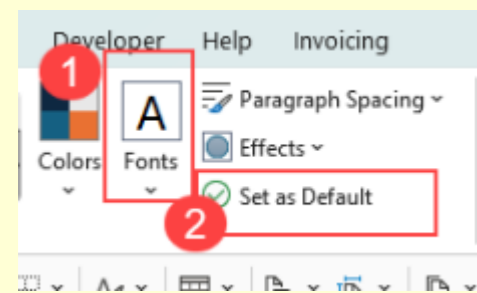
The font in all my emails has changed. What happened?

Let us guess. You've been switched to Aptos font, yes? It's Microsoft 365's new default font as of Jan 2024, so it's affected all their apps - Outlook, Word, Powerpoint, Excel, the lot. And, like many of Microsoft's enforced changes, the jury is out. Some people loathe it. If you're one of them, here's how to change it.

In Outlook, open a new message and then choose the **Format Text** tab. Click **Change Styles**, then **Fonts** and choose which one you want. Double-click on it, and you'll then get the option to **Set as Default**.



That does only take care of Outlook though. For Word, you need to go into the **Design** tab, then **Fonts**. Again, choose which you want, and then **Set as Default**.



AI - coming to a keyboard near you

(That's capital-A, capital-I, not some bloke called AI).

As we mentioned in the Autumn 2023 issue, Microsoft have developed an AI assistant called **365 Copilot**, to draft presentations and emails, summarise Teams meetings you didn't (want to) attend and so on.

If all this sounds a bit dystopian to you, you're probably not going to be thrilled at having it available at the touch of a button, but that's what's coming. Microsoft are adding an AI key to their keyboards from February, which will let Windows 11 users access Copilot directly.

We don't know which (if any) key has been sacrificed to make way for the AI key, but as typical keyboards all have the same number of keys, albeit sometimes arranged slightly differently, it seems likely some poor key has got the heave-ho. We shall see



Diary notes for 2025

It may seem a long way away, but the things you need to remember that are happening in 2025 aren't things you can leave till the last minute.



Support for Windows 10 ends on 14 October 2025. That means any machines still running Win10 will become a security liability. Start planning to retire any affected machines now.

The great ISDN / PSTN switch off will be in December 2025. That means you need to have made the move to digital telephony by then.

There aren't that many of you who still stand to be affected by the ISDN phase out, so we'll be contacting you anyway as a matter of course. But feel free to get in touch yourselves for help and advice.



We'd love to hear your comments and feedback.
Just email:
newsletter@aspectbc.co.uk

(Recent issues are on the website if you missed them).

Subscription Bombing



You may never have come across the term, but you'll definitely know if it happens to you. Your Inbox will be flooded with hundreds, if not thousands, of email messages, confirming your sign up to newsletters and services you've never heard of.

What is the point of subscription bombing? (And FYI, it's scarily easy for bots to sign you up to a multitude of services without too much effort. Plus once your address is out there, it'll get picked up by other sites, and so on it goes). The point is distraction. They want you so overwhelmed with emails that your brain stops processing them. So where you might normally scrutinise an email to check the sender for spoofing, or where you might be alert to an email from your bank or credit card advising you of unusual activity, it all just becomes a blur.

As to what you can do, well if you use a mail filter, you can block senders though it'd be a lengthy process to catch them all. And remember, this isn't spam - 'you' have genuinely signed up to receive these emails. You could unsubscribe via the links in the emails, but (a) it'd take you forever and (b) you can't entirely trust the links not to be dodgy. You could set rules in Outlook to shunt everything containing 'newsletter' aside, but the recent example of bombing we saw had subscriptions in every language / alphabet under the sun (though you can have Outlook block anything that uses non-English characters). Really, all you can do is take the best remedial measures you can, be vigilant, and wait for it to blow over. It wouldn't hurt to notify your bank and ask them to watch out for unusual transactions, perhaps ask them to put extra verification processes in place. It's also a good idea to introduce extra internal checks on payments.

Keyboard Shortcuts

We may have run through some of these before, but as they can be incredibly useful, we thought we'd do it again. Plus we've learned some new ones! (Of course when you see some of these, you'll appreciate how easy it can be to accidentally do things by hitting weird key combinations). There are many more than just these listed here, but we think these are good ones to know.

Ctrl + A Selects everything. Great if you want to make an overall change to a font, for example.

Ctrl + Home Takes you straight to the top of a document/page.

Ctrl + End By the same token, takes you straight to the bottom.

Ctrl + left arrow/right arrow Jumps to the beginning of the next/previous word.

Ctrl + P Will bring up a Print menu (for when you've got no obvious print button).

Ctrl + C / Ctrl + V Shortcuts to Copy and Paste.

Windows + Pause Displays your computer information (computer name, processor, memory, operating system etc).

Windows + D Minimises all windows and takes you to your desktop. Do it again, and it maximises them all back to where they were.

Alt + D or Ctrl + L When you're on a web page, this highlights the address bar so you can easily delete what's there and type afresh.

Windows + R Brings up the 'Run' box.

Double-click on a word Highlights that word.

Triple-click on a word Highlights the whole paragraph it's in.

Thanks to the internet, people we might only have suspected of being idiots can now give us ample evidence.

Buying the right computer and getting it to work properly is no more complicated than building a nuclear reactor from wristwatch parts in a darkened room using only your teeth.

I told a joke over a Zoom meeting. It wasn't even remotely funny.

No, a hard drive is not a long-distance car journey with three children under five and two dogs.

Treat your password like your toothbrush. Don't let anyone else use it, and get a new one every six months.

After I complimented my boss on his new car, he said "if you work hard, set goals and put in long hours, I can get an even better one next year."

DKIM and DMARC

OK, so if you've been paying attention to the newsletter over the years, you'll know what an SPF record is. And of course you have, therefore you do. But hey, if you're new to the newsletter, or it looked like a dull subject so you skipped it (yeesh), we'll tell you again. (Though if you didn't care then, you're not likely to care now). *A-n-y-w-a-y*, an SPF record is a record attached to your domain that tells mail servers where genuine emails from you should originate. It helps to cut down on spoofing and phishing. (There, *now* you get the goldfish pic).



But now extra checks to verify email legitimacy are on their way to becoming *de rigueur* and a lot of mail hosts are already rejecting emails without them. The new records they refer to are **DKIM** and **DMARC**. To be clear, these aren't new in themselves; they've been around for ages.

DKIM stands for **DomainKeys Identified Mail** and it's like a digital signature on your emails.

DMARC stands for **Domain-based Message Authentication Reporting and Conformance** (you can see why we prefer acronyms, huh?) It tells a mail server what to do if a message has failed the SPF and DKIM checks. It can instruct it to quarantine it, reject it, or deliver it.

These records obviously have to be configured correctly and that can be complicated. At the moment, it's mail servers such as Yahoo (which hosts *aol.com*, for example) and Gmail that are definitely making the checks and rejecting mail, but others will follow. So we've pre-emptively been adding DMARC records to our client domains, as that's enough to tell a mail server what to do if it fails the DKIM check (or there's no DKIM record there at all).

You may be wondering what you're supposed to do about all this. Always assuming you've even read this far. Well at the moment, we'd class this as a 'Be Aware' message. Rules are changing and you may see more email bounces. So be aware that this is going on and talk to us if you think it may be affecting you. As we said, we've taken some steps already, but we won't have covered everyone.

You're barred! So are you! And you! And you ...

We know it's tempting when you get junk email to block the sender, and we often get asked to assist with that, but we always have to point out that they'll likely just switch to a different sending address. As you can see from our filter logs, below, you can get the exact same dodgy email from multiple senders on the same day. They all just use disposable email addresses, and they probably rotate through dozens of them.

And there's not one can spell 'message' worth a damn.

03.04.2024 4:10 PM	gholson_water_supply@live.com	📧	@aspectbc.co.uk	I sent an audio-meessage Hours ago
03.04.2024 2:34 PM	paul.sims@hotmail.com	📧	@aspectbc.co.uk	I sent an audio-meessage Hours ago
03.04.2024 2:20 PM	aklions201@hotmail.com	📧	@aspectbc.co.uk	I sent an audio-meessage Hours ago

Easter Confectionery Quiz

Yes, it's time for all things sweet and chocolatey! If that gets you all excited, allow us to throw a bucket of icy water over you by explaining that it's anagrams this time round. *Groan!*

Below are a whole variety tub's-worth of sweets and confectionery, both current and from days gone by. The letters have been put in alphabetical order; you have to unscramble them. Where the answer has more than one word, we've given you the breakdown of the letters in brackets. As with the Christmas songs in the last issue, we'd suggest thinking of all the sweets and chocolates you know, and see if they fit anywhere, rather than going full-tilt into anagram solving.

Answers, as ever, are on the web page - follow the link from the newsletter page.

- EILMNRSST
- AEFIILLPRSSTTU (5,9)
- EIKORY
- BCDDEEEKLORU (6,6)
- AEEFGHIRT (5,5)
- AACEHKMMRST
- ABBEEIJLLSY (5,6)
- AEEHLORSTV (4,6)
- AACCCEEFHLMOORRSTY (4,9,5)
- CLLRRUUWYY
- DEGHIIKLRSTTU (7,7)
- CEEEFHOOORRRR (7,6)
- EJLLOSTTY (5,4)
- BEELNOORT
- DEILLMORSTUXY (5,8)
- EIKLSST
- ACEIILLLOOQRRSSTU (9,8)
- DEEGGIMMST (6,4)
- ABEEFHINNORSTTU (7,8)
- BNOTUY
- EELRSV
- AEELMRSST
- CEEFFIOPRST (6,5)
- CCIINP
- AIKLMWYY (5,3)
- AABCCGIKLM (5,5)



