



Bit Literacy

Productivity in the Age of Information and E-mail Overload

By Greg Leatham

TOGETHER WE MAKE A GREAT TEAM



What is Bit Literacy?

- **“Bit Literacy” is a set of skills for living and working with bits in a healthy and productive way.**
- **Bit literacy can work for any user, in any occupation, at any age, using any kind of computer, under any load of bits.**

About Mark Hurst

- **Founder of Creative Good and Good Experience, and host of the Gel conference (Good Experience Live).**
- **Training clients on bit literacy for 12 years.**
- **Published the book *Bit Literacy* in 2007.**



Is this You?

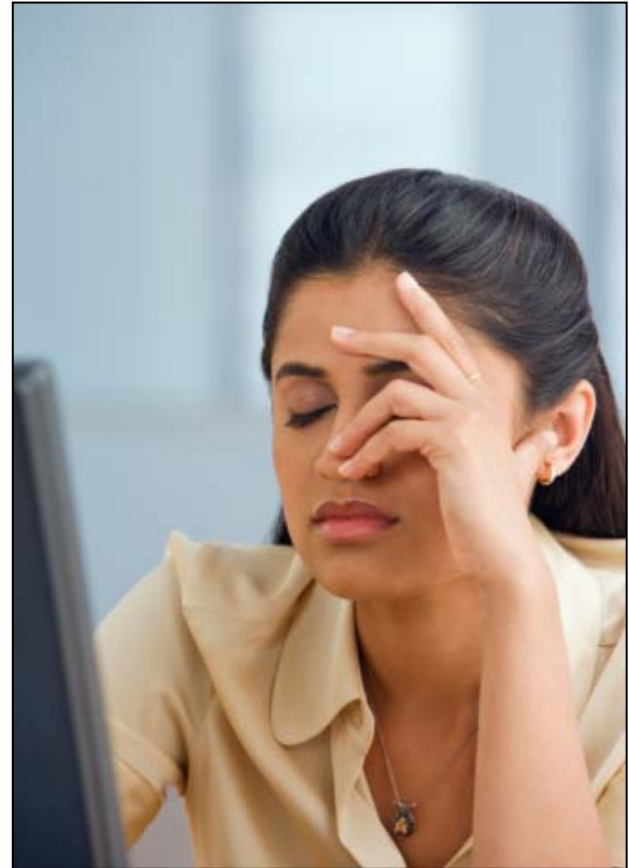


The Context

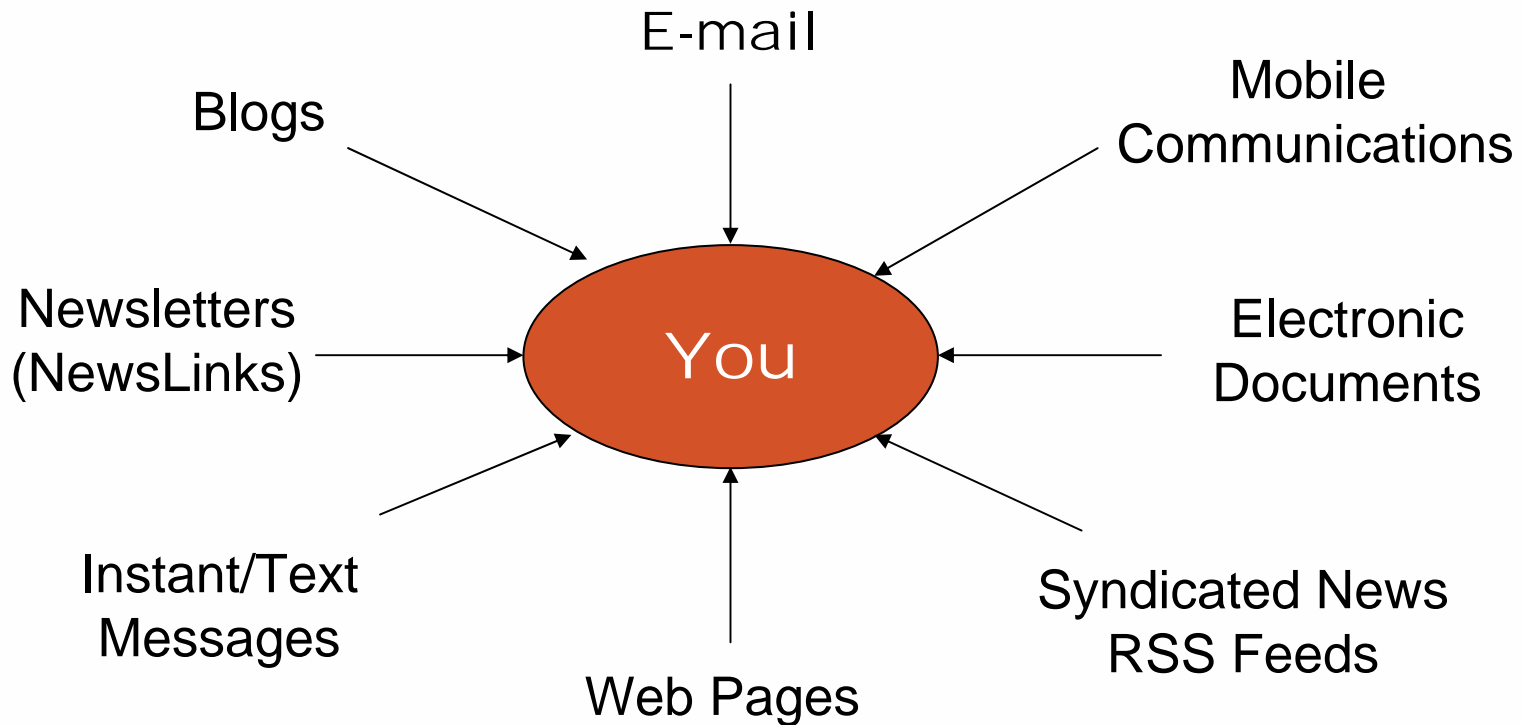
- **“Bits are Heavy”**: a bulging inbox demoralizes users with feelings of overload.
- **“Your bits are your responsibility”**: no tool or company can do this for you; you have to manage your own bits.
- **“To achieve bit literacy, let the bits go”**: keep the inbox empty.

Bits are Heavy

- **Bits weigh people down, mentally and emotionally, with incessant calls for attention and engagement.**
- **Most people know how to e-mail and print a document but they are powerless against the avalanche of incoming bits.**



Bitstreams



Your Bits are Your Responsibility

Although we need hardware and software to work with bits, no technology or company has the solution to bit overload.



The Solution

- **Achieve emptiness – “let the bits go”.**
- **Sense of being done.**
- **E-mail is only a temporary holding place – not for long term storage.**
- **The daily “steady-state” method. Empty the inbox at least once a day.**

How many e-mails are in your inbox?

- 100?
- 500?
- 1000?
- 10,000?
- More?

When was the last time you had your inbox at zero?

Managing Incoming E-mail

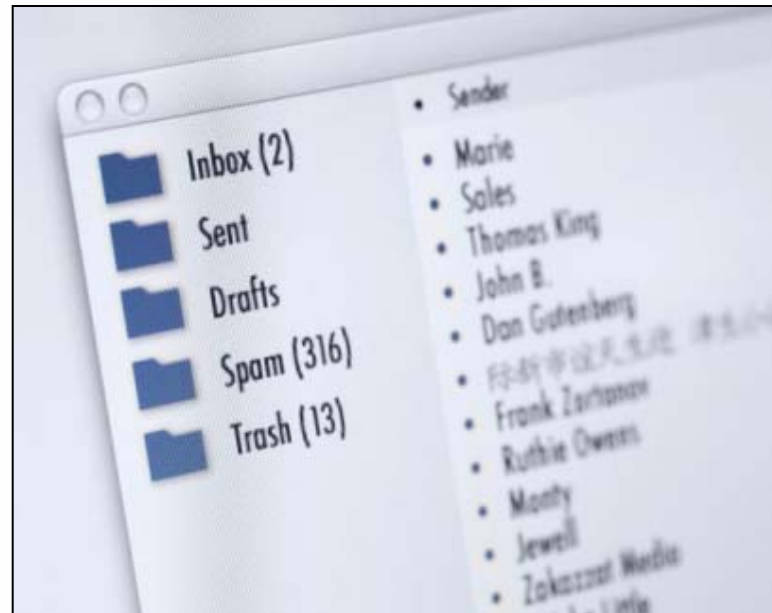
The overload makes the user less effective

- Overloaded users take longer to respond.
- Prioritization is difficult.
- It takes longer to find messages in a crowded inbox.
- It's hard to remember which e-mails say what.
- An overloaded user cuts into the productivity of others.
- Potential problems with your e-mail program.

Common Reasons for Overload

People often use the inbox for purposes it was not designed for:

- **Todo list**
- **Filing system**
- **Calendar**
- **Bookmarks list**
- **Address book**



The Solution

The daily “steady-state” method

Step 1: **Personal e-mail**

Step 2: **Spam**

Step 3: **Engage FYIs and action items**

Engage FYIs and Action Items

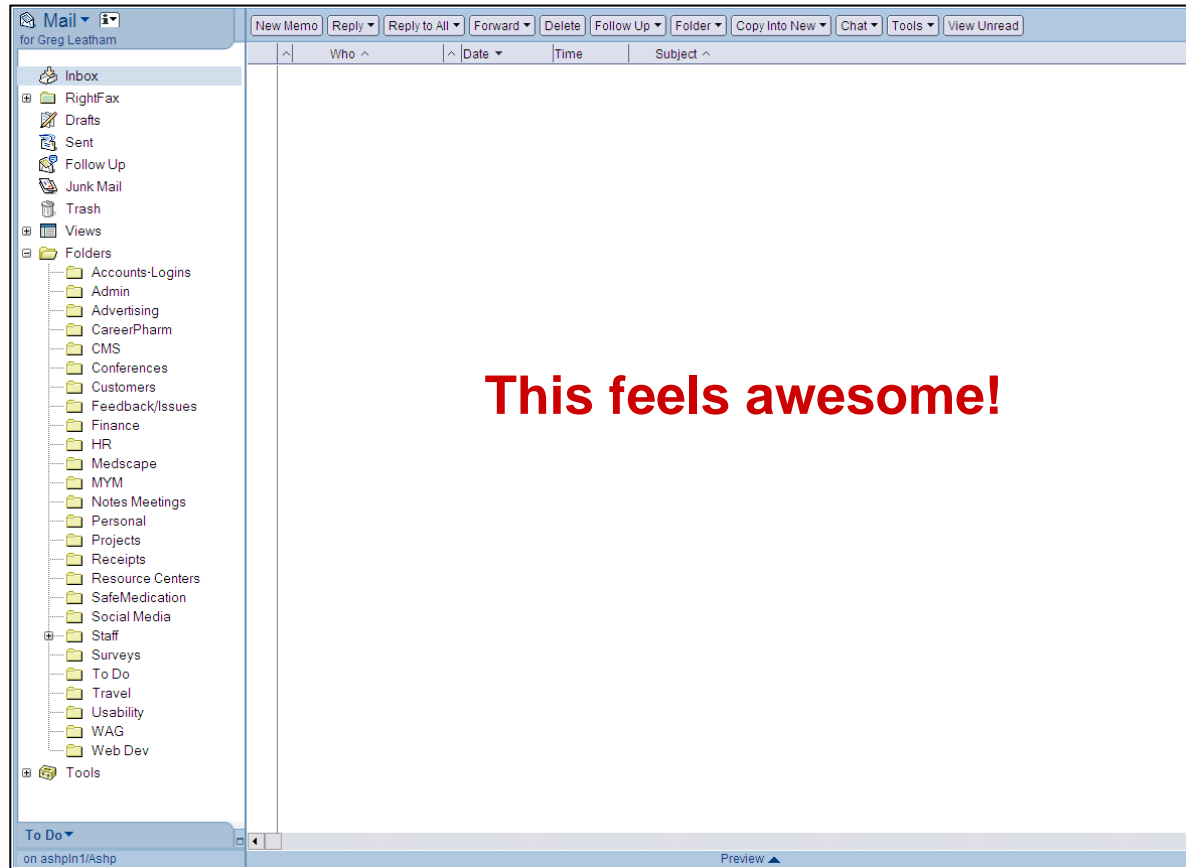
- Newsletters:
 - **Read the newsletter quickly, then delete it.**
 - **Do not save the newsletter to read later.**
- FYIs:
 - **Read it if necessary, then delete it or file it; but get it out of the inbox.**
- Todos:
 - **Finish all quick “two-minute” todos, then delete them.**
 - **Move all big todos to a bit-literate todo list, then delete them.**

Induction

Before getting to the steady-state method, many users need to first go through induction. The one time removal of long-standing overload.



My Inbox



This feels awesome!

Sent Items Folder

- **The inbox isn't the only source of stress. Many people maintain a Sent Items folder holding hundreds or thousands of messages they've sent in the past.**
- **Clear the Sent Items folder once a week.**

Todo Management

Users with an empty inbox need to know what to do next, and that requires proper todo management. In fact, managing todos may be considered even more important than managing e-mail, since this is where users begin to really do their job.



Managing Your Todos

- Each todo is associated with a particular day.
- Users can create new todos via e-mail, either for today or a day in the future.
- Each todo has a priority ranking within its day.
- Each todo can contain a detail field as well as a summary, much the same way as an e-mail.
- Achieve emptiness at least once a week.

gootodo

The screenshot shows a Mozilla Firefox browser window displaying the Gootodo website. The browser's address bar shows the URL: <https://www.gootodo.com/home.php?edate=2008-07-03&cddate=2008-07-03>. The page title is "Gootodo - Your Todo List".

The website header includes the logo "gootodo.com" and navigation links: [Home](#), [Your Account](#), [Help](#), and [Logout](#).

Your Todo List

Trial version: you can create 7 more todos today, and you have 30 days left in your trial. [Upgrade now](#) to remove the 10-todo limit, open the export feature, and extend for six more months.

Day: [<< Prev](#) | [Today](#) | [Next >>](#)

Month: [<< Prev](#) | [Current](#) | [Next >>](#)

Thursday, July 3, 2008 (today)

New Todo

- Website Outage Notification [detail](#) | [redate](#) ▼▼
- Performance Review Goals [detail](#) | [redate](#) ▲▲▼▼
- 2008 George P. Provost Editorial Intern Rotation [detail](#) | [redate](#) ▲▲

Search todos:

July 2008

S	M	T	W	R	F	S
29	30	1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31	1	2

Jump to month:

Jul ▼ 2008 ▼

Done www.gootodo.com

The Media Diet

There are many kinds of media that vie for our attention on a regular basis.

- Offline media:
 - **Magazines**
 - **Newspapers**
 - **TV shows**
 - **Radio programs**
- Online media:
 - **E-mail newsletters**
 - **E-mail mailing lists**
 - **Websites, including blogs**
 - **New types of online content: Podcasts**



A Healthy Media Diet

Bit literacy allows you to create a media diet that...

- **Is based on what's important to you, not to any other person, publisher, or company;**
- **Draws on the tiny minority of sources that do serve you some purpose;**
- **Ignores the huge ocean of irrelevant sources;**
- **Is an active portfolio that you can change;**
- **Is as small as possible.**

The Lineup

- **Stars: These are the rare sources that consistently give you useful , relevant information pertaining to one more of your professional or personal interests.**
- **Scans: These comprise the majority of your lineup, perhaps three or four sources from a range of media types.**
- **Targets: These are sources that are good for a single targeted use.**
- **Tryouts: These are sources that are not yet on the lineup, but are applying to be there.**

Other Ways to Improve Productivity

- **Managing Photos**
- **Creating Bits**
- **File Formats**
- **Naming Files**
- **Storing Files**

How to Get Started?

- Purchase Mark Hurst's book **Bit Literacy** at <http://bitliteracy.com/>
- Contact me to discuss techniques that have worked for ASHP.



Questions?

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