

E-mail Addresses, Thinking Into The Future – 4/22/2023

This is one of a series of articles provided by the Oakmont Technology Learning Center on the use of technology by seniors.

Tina Nerat and Rich Osborne

We rely heavily on our e-mail address, and for some of us, multiple e-mail addresses. We check our incoming mail, write outgoing mails, perhaps use the address for logging in to retail or banking web sites, and more. So what is an e-mail address? Lifewire.com defines e-mail addresses as: "...a username, an @ sign, and a domain name... the domain name is determined by the account's host or client, such as Gmail, Yahoo, or Outlook, for example, gmail.com or outlook.com." In Oakmont, internet service providers (ISPs) are Comcast, Sonic, or AT&T. Their domain host addresses are Comcast.net, sonic.net, att.net, and sbcglobal.net. Note that SBC acquired AT&T and merged into one company named AT&T in 2005.

Tying your e-mail address to a specific ISP is not a good idea any more, e.g. comcast.net, sonic.net, att.net, or sbcglobal.net. If you move away from Oakmont, your choices of ISPs will almost certainly be different companies than Comcast, Sonic, or AT&T.

Recently, questions about e-mail addresses have come up because many in Oakmont are switching or thinking about switching to Comcast after years of using Sonic (sonic.net) and AT&T (sbcglobal.net or att.net) to get improved bandwidth for video conferencing (Zoom) and streaming content. The question often comes up: "what about my Sonic and AT&T e-mail address if they are no longer my internet service provider?" For \$6/month Sonic will allow you to keep your sonic.net e-mail address. AT&T will allow you to continue using their e-mail "if your account is in good standing", though that should be double-checked with them.

If you are using your ISP's domain name for your e-mail, consider starting to transition away from it. Having your own personal domain name and host is the gold standard, but that will cost money. Instead, consider having a free vendor-agnostic e-mail address. Options include, but are not limited to: Gmail, Outlook, Protonmail, Yahoo, Hotmail, AOL, MSN, and more, each with pros and cons. Gmail seems to be one of the most popular free services. Gmail is the most-used e-mail domain in Oakmont; it will follow you if you move, and it is free.

Most e-mail systems will allow you to receive and send e-mails with multiple domain names so everything can be aggregated, read, and sent in one place. This can help with the process of transitioning away from an internet vendor-specific e-mail address. Start the transition by contacting your preferred tech support person to discuss this article and your specific e-mail situation with them.

For more information, questions, or an electronic copy of this article and previous articles, including clickable links to resources, visit the OTLC web site at www.oakmont-learning.org.