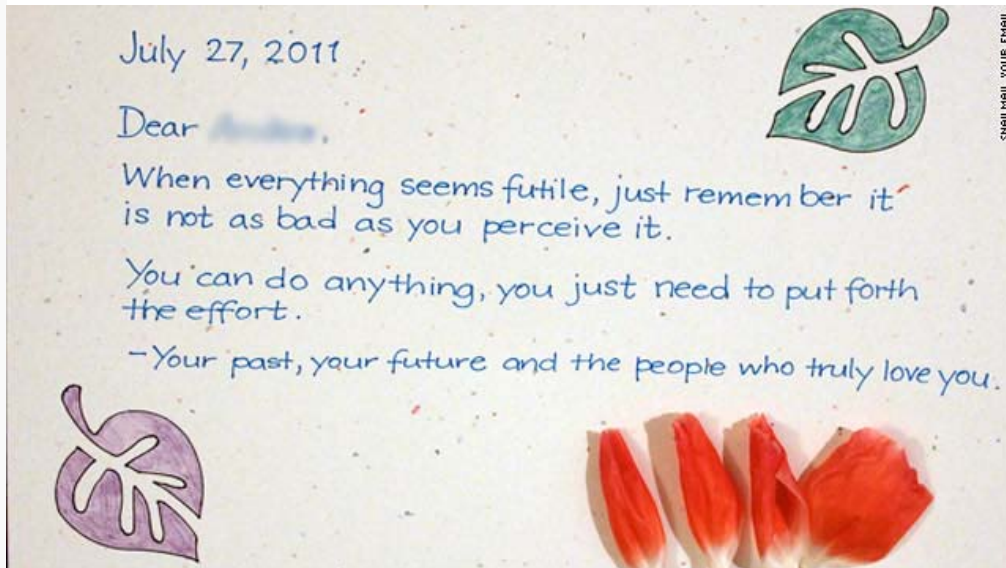


# 'Snail Mail' project promotes art of letters

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By Doug Gross, CNN

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Snail Mail My Email users may request a doodle, flower petal or other extras to be included in their letters.

### STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- Snail Mail My Email lets users turn an online message into a handwritten letter
- Monthlong project sent 2,300 letters in two weeks and now has 134 volunteers
- Creator says he wants to encourage more people to consider hand-writing letters

(CNN) -- Call it technology in reverse: Thousands of people are lining up online to have messages they could send in an instant delivered far more slowly.

And according to the creator of [Snail Mail My Email](#), a monthlong volunteer project, that's the point.

"We move in such a fast-paced world that, sometimes, that world can feel kind of cold and impersonal," said [Ivan Cash](#), a San Francisco designer and art director who birthed the project. "I'm very much a part of that fast-paced world ... but I think it's good for people to have that balance."

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The concept is simple. Since July 15 (and until August 15), anyone interested has been able to e-mail a letter to the project's volunteers. They turn around and hand-write the letter -- complete with extras like a doodle, flower petal or lipstick kiss if desired -- and mail it to the recipient.

Cash, who recently returned to San Francisco after a stint working in Amsterdam, said he'd been an avid letter-writer in college and the few years after. He said there's something about the process of pulling out a pen and paper and crafting a message with your own hand that makes it more personal and well thought-out.

But eventually, he said, he began defaulting to e-mail and Facebook messages like a lot of people.

"Snail Mail My Email" was born as a way of getting back in touch with the joys of putting pen to paper, he said.



"This isn't a project that's out to make money or be a forever solution," he said. "This is just a jumpstart to help raise awareness."

Apparently, more people were interested than Cash guessed.

In the project's first two weeks, 2,300 letters were sent out.

"I'd originally thought I'd get five to 10 letters a week -- and I was hoping I'd even get that

many," he said.

He'd originally planned to copy the letters himself. But when he got 1,000 e-mails on the fourth day, he considered canceling the project. After posting a request for help, he now has 134 volunteers literally lending a hand.

Kristin Huben of Montgomery, Illinois, is one of them.

She said she read about the project on a tech blog, sent her sister a letter through the site, then jumped when she saw Cash's call for help.

"I've always loved writing letters," said Huben, who said she's written nearly 50 so far. "I think it's really become romanticized in an era of e-mail and Twitter and whatever -- it's an amazing thing to send a letter or receive a letter and think, 'Someone took the time to do this.'"

So far, her letters have included one in French and one in Swedish, which she had to print out and trace because she wasn't familiar with how the punctuation worked. She expected lots of the letters to be funny.

"But, hands down, I would venture to say that 90% of them are love letters," she said. "I just feel so lucky to be part of a couple's love story. It's really sweet."

Cash has penned more than 75 letters. He says they've included the text of a man's proposal speech to his wife, letters to President Barack Obama and Sarah Palin, and even an acceptance letter to Hogwarts School of Wizardry and Witchcraft, from the "Harry Potter" series.

There's something about a personal letter that e-mail or texting can never replace, said Margaret Shepherd, author of ["The Art of the Personal Letter: A Guide to Connecting Through the Written Word."](#)

"People are expert at assessing how much effort you have put into something," said the Boston-based writer. "You know how great all these computer-generated movie effects are? It's still more impressive when you have the stuntman actually do the stunt."

Shepherd said she supports the "Snail Mail" project as a way of enlightening people about the value of a handwritten note. But she'd still prefer to see participants just pick up a pen themselves.

"Your mom wants to see your handwriting, and she wants to hear your voice, not a stranger's," she said.

One "Snail Mail My Email" letter was an "acceptance" to Hogwarts academy.

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slozomby

the only thing i can think of that i'd want to send this way is "dear spouse, i want a divorce"

of course it would probably be in my lawyers handwriting.

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lucidfool

Ya know...had the USPS thought of this first, they might not be in the financial bind they are in.

2 weeks ago | [Like \(3\)](#) | [Report abuse](#)



Fidgette

Can someone make a volunteer project where they can call and talk to my family instead?

2 weeks ago | [Like \(6\)](#) | [Report abuse](#)



NaturLuver

What's a letter?

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Solex

I hope we all know that you can still go to a stationary store and buy envelopes, paper, pens and stamps and do it the old fashioned way right?

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Noble9

Most stores are stationary, even the ones that sell stationary.

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JoeinMN

So... let me get this straight. You want to make it seem more personal, yet are unwilling to do it yourself? Lazy. That's what you are. LAAZZZZYYY.

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2 weeks ago | [Like \(13\)](#) | [Report abuse](#)



*phearis*

hmmmmm, Dumbledore died 14 years ago. McGonagall is current Headmaster of Hogwarts. Unless that's a very old letter.

2 weeks ago | [Like \(4\)](#) | [Report abuse](#)



*JPRodderick*

Great idea! We've use AlphaMail.Net's FedEx-My-Email service a few times, and it works great, but this is way better and more personal!

2 weeks ago | [Like](#) | [Report abuse](#)



*TechGirl6806*

They need an app! Should check out AppTank

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*Silentboy741*

What a lovely way to tell your loved one "I care just enough about you to farm out my sentiments to someone else" with a bonus of "You aren't worth 10 minutes of my time".

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*vincem*

Obviously you do, since you took the time to not only read this article but also to comment on it.

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*Israeli86*

Who cares. I can attach e-flowers and e-doodles in my emails!

2 weeks ago | [Like \(2\)](#) | [Report abuse](#)



*Guest*

What an excellent idea! Who came up with this one? Let's see... EXXON, Kimberly Clark and the US Postal Workers Union? lets waste more trees, oil and pay folks that will be looking for a new job in the next 5 years anyway? Gawd folks come up with some really stupid stuff. Perhaps it was a bored hous... [more](#)

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*TisJustMe*

Trees grow back and oil can be replaced by green energy sources. And the folks who will be looking for a job in the next 5 years? That probably includes half of the non-retired folks who have made comments here.

2 weeks ago | [Like \(3\)](#) | [Report abuse](#)



*guest6491*

COME ON PEOPLE, what a joke!!! it takes all of 10 minutes to write something heart felt, suck it up people!, isn't there a human emotional cell left in your body

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*diggitt*

What? "anyone interested has been able to e-mail a letter to the project's volunteers. They turn around and hand-write the letter -- complete with extras like a doodle, flower petal or lipstick kiss if desired -- and mail it to the recipient." That is the dumbest thing I have ever heard. They don't ... [more](#)

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*njsokalski*

Why would you want a letter that somebody else wrote? If your friend isn't willing to write it themselves, then they obviously don't really care about you enough anyway. And it's the words that have meaning (at least once you're out of preschool and have learned to write) anyway. And if you really w... [more](#)

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*thelower*

This is really sad.

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*beanpot80*

Cool, I'm going to email this article to my friend.

Honestly, who are they kidding here. You can't fight technology.

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*Squirk*

Finding balance and embracing technology are not mutually exclusive

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*lvslezak*

Pointless project. Wanna hand write someone a letter? Do it yourself.

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*UserM1*

The point is I DON'T want to hand write a letter. Kinda like I don't want to iron my shirts, clean my floors or cook my meals. Low-priced foreign domestic servants take care of the house-work, but who's going to write my letters? I can't even remember where I keep the ink!

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*veggiedude*

I think this is a wonderful idea. I'm gonna go out and buy me a dozen Hallmark cards.

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*crt2*

Personal letter writing by US Mail gives a privacy that email doesn't. It is secure from everyone's eyes but the recipient's. Well worth the forty-four cent stamp.

2 weeks ago | [Like \(17\)](#) | [Report abuse](#)

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