

# Reports of e-mail's death have been greatly exaggerated

October 14 2010, By Laura Casey

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All the ballyhoo that social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook are diminishing our need for e-mail can be best summarized by paraphrasing Mark Twain: Reports of e-mail's death have been greatly exaggerated.

Just ask Wesley Lee, a 21-year-old senior at the University of California-Berkeley studying computer science. He's looking for a job after graduation, and e-mail is his lifeline to job leads and a possible employer contact.

"I am addicted to my e-mail," he says. "I check my phone for new e-mail all the time, and I also bring a laptop wherever I go. When I am not in class, I am working on e-mail."

And while Derek Miller, 18, uses Facebook to chat with his friends, the Diablo Valley College freshman still checks his e-mail account regularly, often multiple times a day.

"I use e-mail when I am talking to adults, like teachers," he says. "E-mail seems more professional than other ways of talking with people, like texting or calling."

Although social networking websites such as Facebook and, to a lesser degree, MySpace, are communication powerhouses -- 500 million people are active Facebook users -- e-mail is still critically important to web users, social media experts and e-mail service representatives say. So

when Facebook chief operating officer Sheryl Sandberg declared e-mail dead at a Nielsen conference in June, e-mail industry officials bristled.

"People who are heavily involved with the social networking world like to say everything except social networking is dead and dying," says Sara Radicati of The Radicati Group of Palo Alto, Calif., which performs research on messaging and collaboration technology. According to a report by The Radicati Group, as of 2009, there were about 1.4 billion e-mail users, and that number is expected to rise to 1.9 billion by 2013. The group also reports that an estimated 247 billion e-mails were sent each day in 2009.

While people, especially the younger set, are texting, instant messaging and making plans through sites like Facebook, Radicati says people of all ages are still using e-mail in business and personal communication.

"We're finding that people are doing more of everything. People are doing a lot of e-mail, social networking and instant messaging. They are doing a lot of communication in a lot of ways. Just because social networking is growing doesn't mean that everything else dies," Radicati adds.

In fact, [social networking](#) sites are generating more mail for people's virtual inboxes, says social media expert and blogger Brian Solace. Solace, of San Francisco's FutureWorks, says most people are alerted that someone has sent them messages through Facebook or Twitter in their e-mail boxes.

"The reality is e-mail is not going anywhere until one of these social networks decides it wants to be your inbox," he says. "Until then, e-mail is a necessary evil."

San Francisco-based Yahoo! has 280 million users who rely on e-mail

every day, says Stephanie Shum, senior product manager for Yahoo! Mail. She says that she recognizes that people use different websites and technology to share, say, what they're doing at the moment, but Yahoo! Mail, she says, is working with some of the most popular websites like Facebook to provide a richer e-mail experience. For example, when Yahoo! Mail finishes a deal with Twitter, e-mail users will have the ability to update their Facebook, Twitter and Yahoo! status messages at the same time.

"E-mail is alive and kicking, and we're definitely investing in it," Shum says.

Tuhina Das, a University of California-Berkeley freshman studying pre-business, loves Facebook because she says it is so social and easy to connect with friends. But she uses e-mail for the important communications.

"If you're interviewing or applying for something or need it for business, you're not going to use Facebook," she says.

In fact, e-mail is only becoming more important for working professionals, says Deva Hazarika of ClearContext of San Francisco, a software company that helps people organize all the information that flows through e-mail.

Hazarika says text messaging, [instant messaging](#), Facebook communication and Twitter tweets are all great for "lightweight" communication, such as making plans for dinner, but if you really need to document conversations and keep records and files for work, e-mail is better and more effective than anything else. That goes the same for students and schoolwork, he says.

"People need information to be traceable. They need to look back at

information. That's why all of important conversations are pretty much staying with e-mail right now," Hazarika says. "E-mail is really not only sticking around, but it's getting entrenched. It's really the one place where I can reliably send (information like receipts from Amazon or business) communication to you."

And even the younger set, junior high school students who are tethered to MySpace and Facebook, also say they use e-mail. Arianna Campos, 13, of Concord has four e-mail accounts -- some for friends, some for family, some for spam.

"I mostly talk to my friends through MySpace," she says. "But I do use e-mail to talk to adults."

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