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Web site urges recipients to send in junk AOL CDs

Sarah Pitcock

Independent Florida Alligator (U. Florida)
GAINESVILLE, Fla. (U-WIRE) — You've got mail, and not just the electronic kind.

It's in your mailbox, magazines, at the movies and parties. But who knows what to do with all those unwanted America Online startup discs?

Jim McKenna and John Lieberman, founders of www.nomoreaol-cds.com, say they have the answer: Send them back.

In an effort to get AOL to stop sending the CDs, the two men started the Web site asking people to send the discs to them.

Once they have collected one million discs, they say they will drive them to AOL's headquarters and dump them at the Internet giant's front door.

"Don't throw them away or get mad, send 'em to us and we'll all end this wasteful practice while sharing a laugh or two," the Web site stated.

Lieberman said in an e-mail that he and McKenna decided to start the campaign after they went out to rent a movie one night and the video store put a CD in the bag with their rental. Then when they got to Lieberman's house, there was another disc waiting in the mailbox.

"That was the straw that broke the camel's back," Lieberman said. "We said, 'Somebody ought to do something about this,' and that was

the start."

So far, the Web site has brought in about 80,000 CDs from all around the world. Lieberman said there's not a person alive with a mailing address who hasn't gotten a couple of AOL CDs.

"AOL certainly hasn't limited their marketing to this country," he said. "We have heard from folks all over the world who have been frustrated by what AOL is doing and were looking for a way to put a stop to it."

Besides the annoyance of receiving multiple CDs, Lieberman and McKenna also are concerned about the environmental consequences of these "destined for landfill" discs, they said.

University of Florida marketing junior Jenn Bloom said she agrees with Lieberman and McKenna.

"I think the worst part about the free software is all the trash it generates," Bloom said. "Whether or not the CDs are serving their intended purpose, this campaign just seems like overkill."

AOL is not the only company that sends out free CDs to entice potential customers, but with 35 million subscribers worldwide, they use the tactic most frequently.

University of Florida marketing professor Richard Lutz says there's no way to tell if AOL is sending out the CDs because the strategy is working or if it's just out of desperation.

"They're in some serious trou-

ble," Lutz said.

He said the basic idea behind free software is making it readily available to consumers. If they have the software right in front of them, maybe they will try it out, he said.

"AOL is taking advantage of inertia," Lutz said. "After people use their 40 free hours and it's time to start paying, many will leave it on their computer just because it's already there and they have everything set up," he said.

While some people use the CDs for their intended purpose — installing AOL software — the Web site showcases some more creative uses that visitors have contributed. There's a snapshot of a room wallpapered with the CDs and another of a dog with a disc clenched in its jaw.

"I think one of the best so far was the AOL CD that was sent to us by someone who was laid off from AOL," Lieberman said. "They gave everyone a CD in their severance package," he said.

Lieberman said that it is hard to say exactly when they will get one million CDs, but that they are coming in faster and faster after a recent CNN story about the campaign aired and the resulting publicity.

"When we started, it took two weeks to get the first two, another two weeks for the first 100 and so on," he said. "It's been about 15 months now, and we are growing fast."



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Ask Nat

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stick with theater on your own dollar. Decide if the acting is worth

taking out loans and paying them off for the rest of your life. On your own funds, you can do anything you please. If this is a true, passionate, lifelong dream of yours, I say go for it. Just be prepared to handle any rejections or hardships you might encounter in the difficult world of theater.

Good luck to you. Be sure to give your parents front row tickets to your first Broadway debut. They'll be thrilled, since all they're expecting is a free meal at a restaurant.

Dear Nat: What do I do when I start laughing and can't stop in the middle of a class lecture? It's

so embarrassing!

— Got the Giggles

Dear Giggles: You have three options.

1. Start coughing or blow your nose. Holding your nose actually forces you to stop laughing.

2. Sit near the aisle so you can quickly escape to the hallway when the attack hits.

3. Go with it! At least everyone in class will think you're a happy person.

Contact the columnist at natashachilingierian@dailyemerald.com. Her views do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald. Send questions to advice@dailyemerald.com.

Pinball

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miniature, plastic glory — will tremble and flash until the towers fall over, signaling the ball's destruction of the building. I also found "Medieval Madness" the easiest to play.

"Monopoly" has the most annoying music of all the machines. And the bonuses were no more exciting than "free parking."

The other two machines are "Junkyard" and "Star Wars: Episode One."

A less obvious place to spend your quarters is Carl's Jr. at 686 E. Broadway, where the aroma of french fry grease permeates the air, adding to the seedy arcade atmosphere necessary for cheap game play.

Carl's Jr. also has the "Star Wars: Episode One" game. "Star Wars" proved to be even more disappointing than "Monopoly," due to the fact that the playfield includes a television screen that shows clips from the movie every time a ball goes out of play. Even the "Force" couldn't save this game from being a total bore.

Thankfully, a "Rocky and Bullwinkle" game can also be found at the fast food restaurant. This game has so

much kitsch it makes up for the dismal "Star Wars." "Rocky and Bullwinkle" also offers multi-ball play. The playfield and backglass designs are great, and one play is only 25 cents.

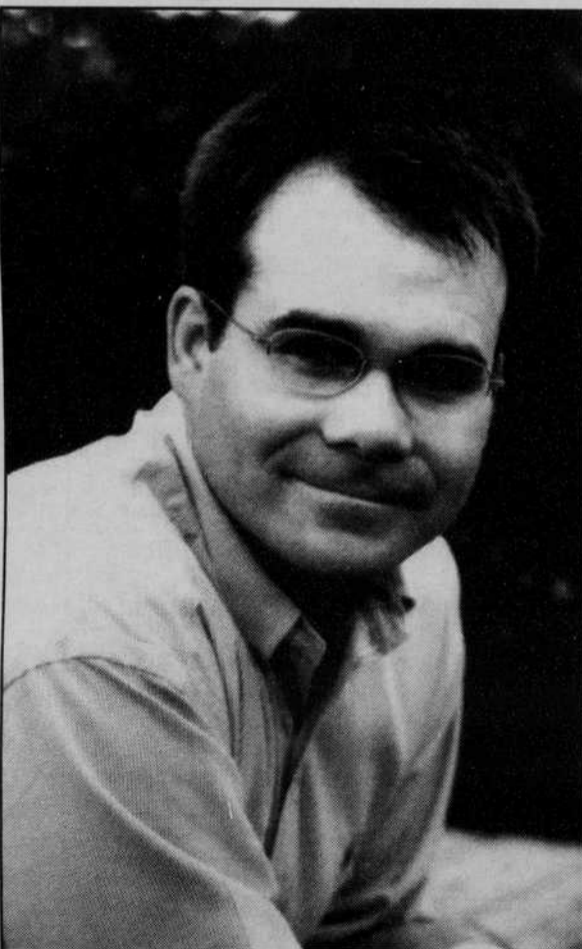
My favorite location for pinball is the 7-Eleven on the corner of East 13th Avenue and Alder Street. What goes better with a couple games of "Tales of the Arabian Nights" than a Slurpee? Plus, while waiting for your friends to finish their games, you can check out the wide selection of magazines or mingle with shoppers.

This location also has two machines — "X-Files" and "Arabian Nights." "X-Files," which is currently out of order, features giant pictures of FBI Agents Fox Mulder and Dana Scully, as well as a fetus-like creature in a plastic container.

Out of all the machines in the University area, "Arabian Nights," with its jackpot genie and harem bonus, is the most fun to play. The game has lots of spiraling chutes to send the ball racing through, as well as a genie lamp that glows and racks up points after being spun.

With all the flashing lights and ringing bells, it's easy to forget about class altogether. Just don't become so mesmerized you spend all your laundry money trying to earn enough points for extra ball play.

Contact the Pulse reporter at helenschumacher@dailyemerald.com.



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