

Ann Getman: At a Loss for Word



At a Loss for Word

I spent the day trying to write and wrestling with **Word**. I'm a decade late with this rant, but today it got me.

I can barely remember why, but I loved **Word Perfect**. It was so well named from a writer's perspective. It was the document software in which I learned to type and for a long time the standard for writers and PR people and everyone who wanted to share a common language. It could catch my thoughts as they leapt fully formed (if out of context) from my brow; store sidebars without getting sidetracked; set up and organize the page, stylize it with heads and subheads and put things in the order I wished; insert exported images and show me how they looked; accept Tom Swifties and newly minted puns; and help me express my thoughts in my own voice.

Then came PCs and laptops and Word slipped in under the tent flap and became the standard. Let's face it, by comparison, Word bites and . . . behaves in other infantile ways. (You know what I mean, but you'll see in a minute *** why I can't type it.)

Who made Microsoft geeks the emperors of syntax and spelling and slang (Oh my!)? Who taught them to spell and keep up with language? Why are they the Wizards of Word? Why don't they know that the basics (page layout, font, ability to insert, addition of typographical and graphic marks) should be doable *without* leaving the page? How come they use spellcheck

to block current spelling of workplan and wasteland and inhouse that don't have hyphens- and make us change our use of speech to accommodate that quirk? What kind of bleeping editing program does not challenge words like '*pubicrelations*' when you meant *public* relations, or f*** and s*** when you *meant* to write funk or shim? C'mon, that's adolescent geekspeak for gotcha, smartyhosen!

What's your favorite Word bugaboo? While I'm at it, why do they call it Windows when they're opaque, and laid on top of what you need to see for reference? For puzzle fans there are seven words flagged here in red by Word (none were on Lenny Bruce's list). Can you find them?

All for today. Rest easy (See? If they knew syntax they'd have flagged that for easily!).

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