

**Printer Version Of  
richmond.com**

## Caught in the Net

**The creation of the Internet opened the floodgates for new terminology, making tech talk sometimes feel like a foreign language**

**Brian Mulligan**

Friday November 25, 2005

"FAWC, SSEWBA."

Only on the Internet can a series of capitalized letters that look like the randomized pushing of a spastic hand on a keyboard actually mean anything of substance.

Call it our necessity to speed things along – we no longer have time to write out everything we want to say, so we relegate it to a string of uppercase letters that supposedly represent entire words (although much like the acronyms they look like, an "A" here might mean something entirely different than an "A" placed in say, "TAH's" "Take a Hike".)

Want proof? The abovementioned string of capitals can be deciphered in computer terminology to mean...

"For anyone who cares, someday soon... everything will be acronyms."

So not only are they time saving, but they can be prophesizing, too.

Many of these little initialized concoctions have become standard household information nowadays. Most home's have someone that will be able to inform you that "JK" is just another way of saying "just kidding," or that "LOL" means that you're "laughing out loud." "TGIF" is also a common away message for a specific day of the week when somebody wants to say, "Thank God it's Friday." But that doesn't even begin to encapsulate the range this abbreviating language trend has taken.

**NetLingo**, a Web site dedicated to the recording of such techno-savvy jargon, lists upwards of 1,600 acronyms. *1,600*. Some are as ubiquitous as "TTYL" or "Talk to you later," but others are as unfamiliar – and dare I say nonsensical? – as "HIOOC," which is just another way of saying "Help! I'm out of coffee!"

And it's spreading.

A messageboard on **Rotten Tomatoes**, a Web site featuring film reviews and movie information, shows that movies have received the same handling. **Peter Jackson's** Oscar-winning, but lengthily-titled "**Lord of the Rings**" series is easily rewritten as simply "LOTR," (or if you prefer by film, "LOTR:ROTK" for the "**Return of the King**" installment).

Even **George Clooney's** recent politically-charged picture, "**Good Night, and Good Luck**" gets the treatment, limiting it down to a modest "GN/GL."

Anything to take a few seconds off the typing time, I guess. And that doesn't even get into the string of emoticons that have flooded the Web.

Emoticons, as defined by NetLingo, stands for "a sequence of typed characters that creates a rough picture of something, such as a facial expression."

:) is one.

:( is another.

These are the Internet's own version of hieroglyphics. Instead of actually coming out and saying you're angry, why not condense it to picture format? :-@ will do nicely. And for that more saintly person, how 'bout a halo? O:-)

On top of that, "Hundreds of new words have emerged since the christening of the Web and millions of people who use the Internet for personal and professional reasons have had to learn, quite literally, a new language," said **Erin Jansen**, founder of NetLingo.

When the Internet wildfire started to spread, its invention brought with it a necessity for language alterations. New words needed creation in order to cover the spectrum of new technology and possibilities that formed.

Do you know what roadcasting is? How about barneyware? Or a blogosphere?

Scouring the Internet can look like a foreign language sometimes. That's why sites like **PC World** have offered crash course articles in Internet expressions. And NetLingo and **Webopedia** offer search engines in case an elongated acronym or general computer term has got you stumped.

Jansen said that when the idea first presented itself over the kitchen table, she knew it would be a good idea to "begin tracking Internet-related words and phrases because we knew a time would come when some people would get online for the first time and not know what this crazy jargon means."

After all, some of us have been on the Internet for years, and we still don't

know our "ASP" from our elbows.

*Editor's note: This is part seven of a nine-week series about the Internet and how to protect you and your kids online and also how to have fun.*

**Previous installments:**

[Minding your e-mail manners sometimes starts with shutting down your computer](#)

[Spam e-mail is a pandemic that wastes time and costs a good deal to fight](#)

[In part IV of our series on Internet safety and security, we find out the risks involved with using social-networking Web sites](#)

[Teens prefer instant messenger, text messaging over e-mail](#)

[Parents should never assume their kids are safe on the 'Net](#)

[Many hackers steal information through "phishing"](#)

**A service of Richmond.com**

All material copyright © 1999 - 2003 Richmond.com and Partners.