

Late one afternoon, a customer rushed into a Seattle Sir Speedy print shop and faxed three messages to his girlfriend's office. The first read, "Stand by for important message." Next came a marriage certificate filled out with his name and hers. The final fax was a sketched heart followed by the words "Will you marry me?" So much for candlelight and flowers. The postmodern proposal is delivered not on bended knee but via fax.

Fax—short for facsimile transmission—is today's *hot* means of communication. Faxing can be mastered in no time by anyone who can use a copier and a telephone. And for the cost of a call, these machines transmit photocopied images over telephone wires in seconds. Nearly two million fax machines are burning up America's phone wires. The price of some models has already dipped below one thousand dollars, and sales are expected to increase by 30 percent next year. Most are used for business. But creative faxers have discovered that these machines can transmit not only sales charts and legal briefs but pizza orders, song requests, party invitations, greeting cards, ski reports, amniocentesis results, baby footprints, children's drawings, and vows of eternal love.

"There's just something fabulous about the immediacy of a fax. You know the person sending it is thinking of you at that very moment," raves free-lance editor Donnë Florence. "If he writes you a letter, you know it was written a few days ago. Who knows what he's thinking about *now*?"

Fax Flirtation

Since installing a machine in her New York apartment last year, Florence has corresponded with scores of fellow faxers, from Honolulu to Little Rock. She is careful, however, to gear her level of candor to the location of the receiving machine. One admirer has been faxing erotic pictures and messages to her, but she responds discreetly, because his fax is in his bustling office.

Florence calls this relationship a fax flirtation. And, like Florence, many romantics have discovered how faxing can pave the way to love. During a recent trial on Long Island, the defendant's lawyer faxed a cartoon to the plaintiff's lawyer. She, in turn, faxed him a joke. Their faxes flew back and forth until the case was settled out of court. Then the two former adversaries started dating.

Bonnie Nosanchuk, an impetuous twenty-seven-year-old receptionist at a Detroit ad agency, asked a client in New York, "Hey, got any eligible men you can fix me up with?"

"I don't know," he replied. "What do you look like?"

Inspiration struck. Nosanchuk faxed him her photograph. Nor did she stop there; she proceeded to send her picture and particulars to any number of faxable men. She even tracked down Michael J. Fox's number shortly before the actor got married, but then chickened out before faxing him. "People thought I was crazy," says Nosanchuk. "'Why are you doing that?' they'd ask. But I figured, 'Hey, you never know.'"

In the same spirit, a Manhattan accountant recently sent news of her upcoming divorce to the fax machines of eligible men all over the city. By contrast, a twenty-eight-year-old graphics designer got so tired of the inane faxes an ex-lover kept sending her that she finally faxed back:

Roses are red,
Violets are blue.
Don't fax me;
I'll fax you.

Not the least of this medium's appeal is its name. Fax. That word just feels good in your mouth. There are so many ways to play with it. Fast fax. The fax of the matter. Fax appeal. Foxy faxers.

Julianne, a New York magazine editor, received a list of faxed New Year's resolutions from California. Among them were "Write more personal faxes" and "Never fax on a first date." These came from an unusually handsome thirty-year-

Do You Have fax appeal?



**These clever
machines do the
work of messen-
gers, Mother
Bell, and the U.S.
mail. So who's to
say they can't
play Cupid too!**

By Ralph Keyes

ILLUSTRATION BY SHARON WATTS

FAX APPEAL [continued]

old man whom she had met on a business trip. Soon after returning, Julianne faxed this man some documents with a cordial note. His reply was more intimate. "I sent him a business fax, and back came a love fax!" she says.

Soon the two were faxing furiously from coast to coast. During four months' time, Julianne's facsimile romance has become a hot topic of office conversation. "Did you get one? Did you get one?" is a recurring question. She finds herself strolling by the fax machine regularly just to see.

Safe Fax

One machine owner in San Jose, California, recently watched in fascination as a friend's beautifully photocopied hand and arm rolled slowly off his fax. And, in Philadelphia, one radio station has been receiving faxed body parts from listeners. Then there's TV's Murphy Brown (Candice Bergen), who in one episode said she got so drunk at an office party that "I faxed my chest to the West Coast."

No fax equivalent of an obscene call has yet been reported, though it can't be far off. In California's Silicon Valley, a one-page advisory entitled "The Friendly Guide to Safe Fax" is in current circulation:

140

Q. Do I have to be married to have fax?

A. Good Lord, no. People who hardly ever fax their wives spend most of their working lives faxing complete strangers.

Q. If I fax something to myself, will I go blind?

A. Certainly not. As far as I can see.

Q. There is a place on our street now where you can go and pay to fax. Is this legal?

A. Yes, many lonely people have no other outlet for their fax drives and must pay a professional when their need for fax becomes too strong.

Not every fax user, however, is enthusiastic about this method of communication. "There's no sense of privacy," says Philadelphia hospital administrator Margaret King. "If you're going to fax something, you'd better be ready for the whole office to read it. I wouldn't read someone else's postcard. That's taboo. But I read their faxes all the time."

This lack of privacy doesn't deter the determined faxer, however. Fax operators at the Loews Anatole Hotel in Dallas regularly transmit warm personal messages between husbands and wives and bosses and secretaries. Singer Belinda Carlisle finds fax beats the mail for staying in touch with her husband when she's on the road. As Bill McCue of *Public FAX* (a California trade association) points out, only 2 percent of the 150-billion-plus items now handled by the post office are personal correspondence. He thinks more and more faxes will be. Psychologist Karen Shanor, author of *How to Stay Together When You Have to Be Apart*, concurs. "You may write a letter in anger," she says, "and by the time it arrives, you've cooled off. Or you might feel differently before a love letter is delivered."

Barry Kush, a thirty-one-year-old New York bachelor, had love in mind when he started SinglesFax, a dating service that presses the fax into action as a matchmaker. New members compose a bio in the style of a personals ad, and Kush faxes it, complete with their picture, to other eligible faxers. One woman designed a crossword puzzle in which the

FAX APPEAL [continued]

horizontal lines described her while the vertical lines described the characteristics she was looking for in a man. (For info, call 718-896-0447.)

Kush admits he started SinglesFax in part because he thought it would be a fun way for *him* to meet women, but he's been so busy he's barely had time for a date. "I'm hoping that the woman of my dreams will fax me," he says.

By contrast, Paul Hohendorf has met hundreds of the women he's faxed. Last year, it dawned on the thirty-three-year-old Detroit caterer that being more *personal* in his faxes (many of them to young single women) might be good for business. Certainly it would be good for his morale. So he began faxing his picture to promising female clients. A *Chicago Sun-Times* article reported Hohendorf's story, including his fax number. Soon, hundreds of women began faxing him. Two sent photographs of themselves staring out from behind prison bars with a note saying, "Set us free. Date us. Date us." A beautiful army sergeant faxed a picture of herself in uniform. One woman from Kansas transmitted her self-portrait wearing a bridal gown and stepping out of a limousine. The picture's caption read, "I've had it with the men in this town. Try me on for size."

Hohendorf selected one hundred respondents from each of five cities—Chicago, New York, Columbus, Kansas City, and Los Angeles—and organized parties to which he took half a dozen bachelor friends. After his subsequent appearances on *Donahue*, *Hour Magazine*, *Geraldo*, *Insider Edition*, and *Good Morning Australia*, more than eight thousand women faxed him: from Minneapolis to Milan, Saint Louis to Sydney. "Faxes are sitting in stacks around here," reports Hohendorf from his office. "I'm worried I'll spill coffee on them. Then it'll be 'Oh no. Maybe Miss Right was in that pile and I'll never know.'"

The entertaining bachelor is enjoying his fifteen minutes of fame immensely. Yet among the many thousands of prospects, he's only dated one more than once: Bonnie Nosanchuk. Their relationship is such that Nosanchuk even faxed Hohendorf while he was on *Donahue*.

It is possibly a sign of things to come, however, that Bonnie Nosanchuk says she's thinking about becoming a fax dropout. One of the first women to reach out by fax may also be one of the first to pull back. The return just hasn't been commensurate with the investment. Nosanchuk has faxed more often than she's been faxed.

What does she fax, usually?

"A letter and my photograph."

What do you look like?

"Well, I'm a blue-eyed blond, and, um . . . I'll tell you what. Have you got a fax? I'll fax you my picture." 