

Beyond Personal Computing

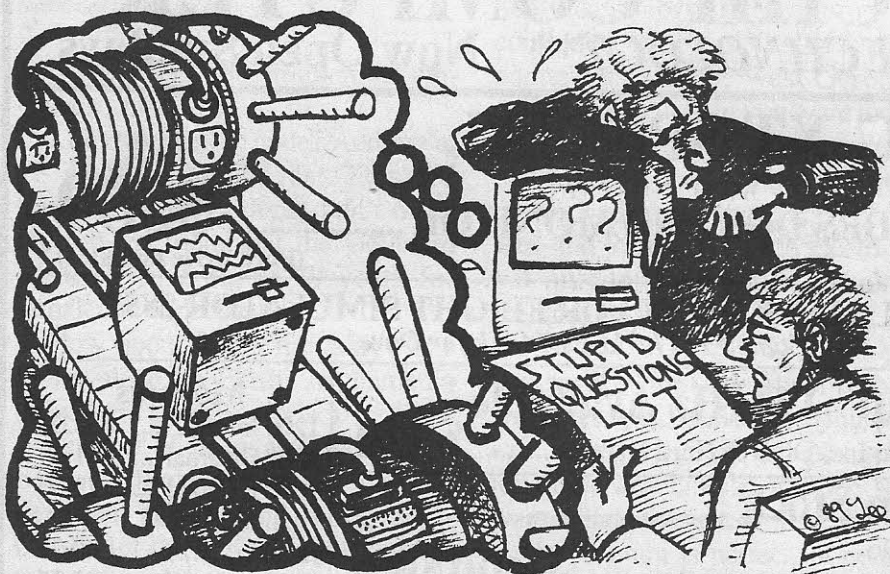


Illustration by Bob Lee

Computers Haven't a Clue

By Michael Wich

Computers are the most logical thinking devices known to mankind. Yet ask one of them a sim-

ple question, for example, "Who's got the sexier smile: Janet Jones or Rosanna Arquette?" and it's liable to

answer, "Command not found," "Syntax Error," or "What about Vanna White?"—all inappropriate answers, especially the one about Vanna.


Just what kinds of questions are computers unable to answer? I have gathered some very compelling examples:

The important philosophical questions that mankind has posed throughout the centuries, such as "What is Love?" "Where is Socrates? He was supposed to help me get this cow into the barn," or "No, not Plato; Where is Socrates!"






Questions of sexuality, such as "Paul, do you like me better naked or with one bobby sock on?"

Questions of good taste: "What goes better with Cheez Whiz: a sparkling white zinfandel or Jack Daniels?"

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
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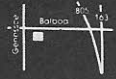
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There are questions concerning personal hygiene, such as "Jeff, do your feet stink, or did an extinct reptile suddenly transport itself through time just to make your high-tops its final resting place?"

Questions about acceptable social behavior: "Is it okay to kick a vending machine for a period of time proportionate to one's total frustration from the entire day, or should such activity be restricted to an amount equal to the financial impact the amount of change lost might have on, say, putting little Billy through college?"

Questions about qualifications: "Is the semblance of living epidermal tissue all that's needed to run for political office nowadays?"

Questions concerning high cholesterol: "If Rocky Balboa can consume large glasses of raw eggs every morning and not only continue to live, but become the heavyweight boxing champion of the world, can I just lick the knife used to make a tu-

na and mayonnaise sandwich—or might that require a fish oil chaser?"

Questions of justice: "In the game of Monopoly, is it fair for your sister to be in cahoots with your brother

***"If there is an afterlife,
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ing, and window
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ex-football players?"***

against you just because you ate one of her M&Ms?"

Questions concerning social conventions: "Why can men fully display their chests in public while women cannot?" (Of course the answer is that men just can't ever stand to be outdone by women in

public—but you'll never see a computer figure that one out!)

Questions about life after death: "If there is an afterlife, what am I supposed to do with such skills as shoe tying, lawn mowing, window washing, etc.—skills of a physical nature that I've spent so much of my life perfecting? Sell them to ex-football players?"

So the point is that computers don't know the answers to every question and probably never will. I guess that's what makes them so human. □

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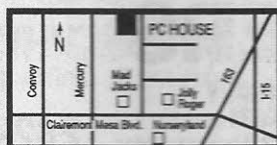
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