

This note is one of a series placed in the Clerks' Almanac by the Livery Committee. Most are written by its chairman, of whom you may read more at the foot of the [Contact page](#). They are intended to be of guidance to livery clerks, especially new ones, or those seeking advice on a particular topic. They are not prescriptive, and how individual companies choose to conduct their affairs is, of course, entirely up to them.

Computer matters for clerks

The computer might have been designed with the job of the livery company clerk in mind (especially the one man band variety), and sensibly used can make the clerk's life immeasurably easier.

This note sets out a few pointers for the new clerk.

Email

Nowadays, most liverymen have email, and most accept it as their preferred method of communication. The trick is to use it effectively, and this is made much simpler if you have a decent email program (eg Outlook, rather than Hotmail).

Life is much easier once you have taken the trouble to create some email contact address groups: eg Master & Wardens; Court; Liverymen; Freemen etc. Check the box which says *Use Bcc to hide Member information*

If you do send multiple address emails without using groups, ensure you place them in the BCC box to prevent all recipients being listed openly (which can irritate recipients, and make life easier for spammers).

Tip – if you adopt a consistent method of Headings in all your emails, they will be far easier to find later. A suggestion is to simply give it a date (of the event to which it refers). The great majority of a clerk's emails relate to an event of some description, thus if all emails about the dinner on 5th March are headed 5 March then they can easily be found.

Signatures – programs such as Outlook allow you to create signatures. But note plural. You can create as many as you wish, and they can be far more than just your name, address etc. Many standard messages can be composed eg Accept/regret invites; refuse charity request; ack receipt of xxx; and myriad other oft repeated messages. Of course they can then be amended and personalised as appropriate.

Websites

The Livery Companies Database website can be viewed via the A-Z List of Companies menu tab at liverycompanies.info. It is the by far the best source of information about individual livery companies, because it is the responsibility of individual clerks to keep their company's entry accurate and up to date. **So if you are a new clerk, the first thing you need to do is make sure your name is correctly shown**, and your photo - if you'd like people to know who you are! You will need help and a password to do so, and these come from Walter Gill, Clerk to the Carmen's Company (if not from your predecessor).

Be aware of the *bookmark* or *favorites* facility in your browser, and then take the time to set up the ones you frequently use. Hopefully <http://www.liverycompanies.info> will be one. It is helpful to place them in subject folders, eg for livery; charity; finance; travel etc.

Databases

The computer literate clerk will wish to have his/her livery membership on a database. This is likely to be MS Excel, though being a spreadsheet program, it has limitations over a database (such as Access, but which is itself probably more complex than you need).

Two suggestions:

First, ensure that every element of the members' data has its own discrete field.

Hence Mr Bert Smith OBE goes in four columns: salute, forename, surname, post nominals. Similarly his address at 43 Acacia Gardens, Tooting Broadway, London SW17 1AA is best split into each element of Add1, Add2, post town, post code. This makes sorting and searching easy.

Second, create columns for **all** other information you wish to hold on your livery. Eg dates of birth, freedom, livery, court etc. Spouse, sponsor, diet, and much else.

Tip – create columns for each event, and enter number of places booked (0 for regrets) as the replies come in. Of course excel will add up the numbers for you.

When the event approaches, a quick sort will tell you who is coming, their diets etc etc

MS Word

It is assumed you are familiar with this program. But wardens who attend the Livery Committee course on after dinner speaking will be told to know how to use Word count (to gauge the length of their speech) and to print their text on to A5 in landscape format (to fit all lecterns). You would be wise to know this also. And also how to print address labels from the database mentioned above.

Your own company website

When you are asked a question (as all clerks are the whole time!), is the answer already at your website? And if it is not, should it be? Hopefully, the more general livery questions are answered at <http://www.liverycompanies.info>

Indeed, please consider placing a conspicuous link from your own company's website to [liverycompanies.info](http://www.liverycompanies.info)

Nigel R Pullman
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Was this note helpful? Do you have comment? Email nrpullman@btinternet.com