On-the-fly Tech Support

Resources And Tips
For The Reluctant Computer Technician

<librarian.net/talks/iowa2009>

morale

"Something funny happened on the road to the digital library of the future, though. Far from becoming keepers of the keys to the Grand Database of Universal Knowledge, today's librarians are increasingly finding themselves in an unexpected, overloaded role: They have become the general public's last-resort providers of tech support." [dept of libraries anecdote]

preparation

the best defense is a good DIPS! DOCUMENTATION -- where is it? INTERNET POLICY -- where is it? PASSWORDS -- where are they? Software -- where is it? WHAT DOES NORMAL LOOK LIKE HERE? FOUR THINGS: 1) setting expectations 2) communicating the current state of affairs 3) hopefully fixing whatever's immediately broken 4) working to fix the meta problem in the future tell bill of rights anecdote, health insurance

set-up

ick! - computers tell the right time – flat screens = modern! OLC anecdote – clean keyboards and mice – enough room for book/writing/whatever – headphones or place to put them – USB plug or place to put them – make sure you have current: operating system, browser(s), plug-ins (flash, shockwave, adobe), drivers, office tools

models

experience

Kip Pam

Nancy Radu

expectation

Sometimes it helps to model "types" of patrons each of these types of patrons has to be dealt with differently and causes different problems for the librarian/library staff. You may have some, or none of these patrons in your library but your technology planning should acknowledge their existence. Remember for people with little computer experience, your computer may be the only one they know how to use, they may be coming to the library because other people got tired of helping them

but then...

I think my Yahoo is broken

It happens to all librarians. You're having a nice day and then. Now what? [this is where it starts, patron is thinking "Did I lose my work?" "Is my disk/thumb drive broken?" "Can I get more time to finish?" You are thinking "is this going to take all day" "is this patron going to flip out on me?" "can I actually fix this?"]

first step

Windows 95 ERROR ✕

⚠ PEBKAC – Problem Exists Between Keyboard And Chair

[Abort]   [Retry]   [Ignore]
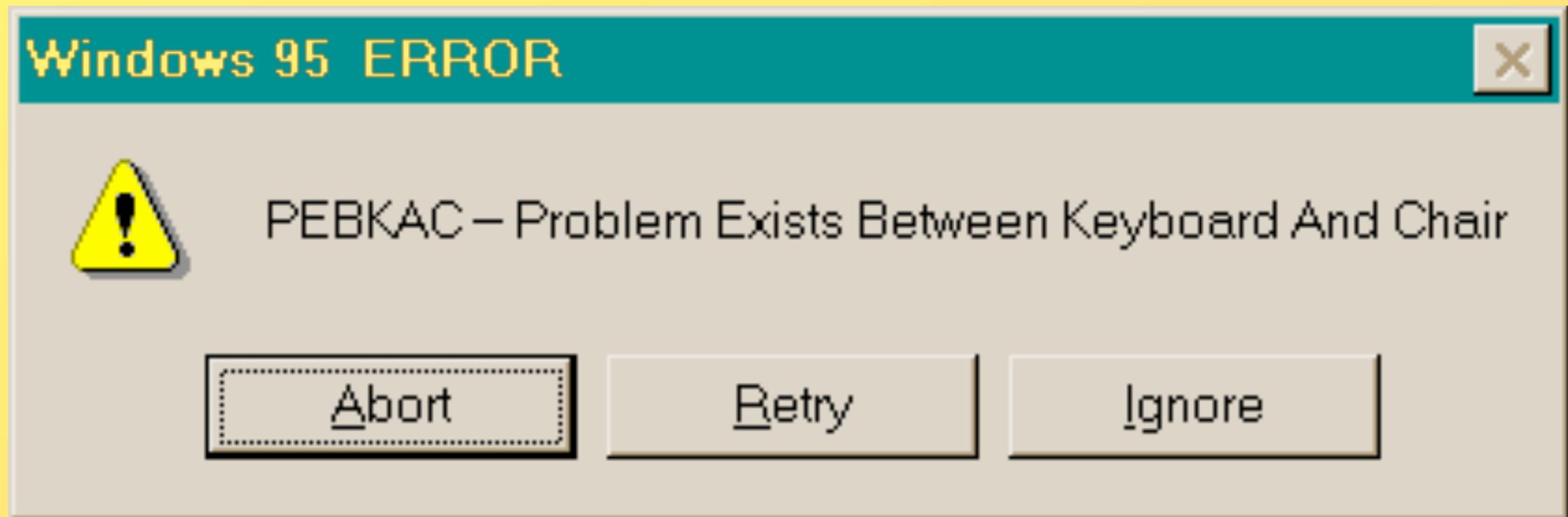
is anything actually even broken? Be kind.

questions

"Can I help you?"
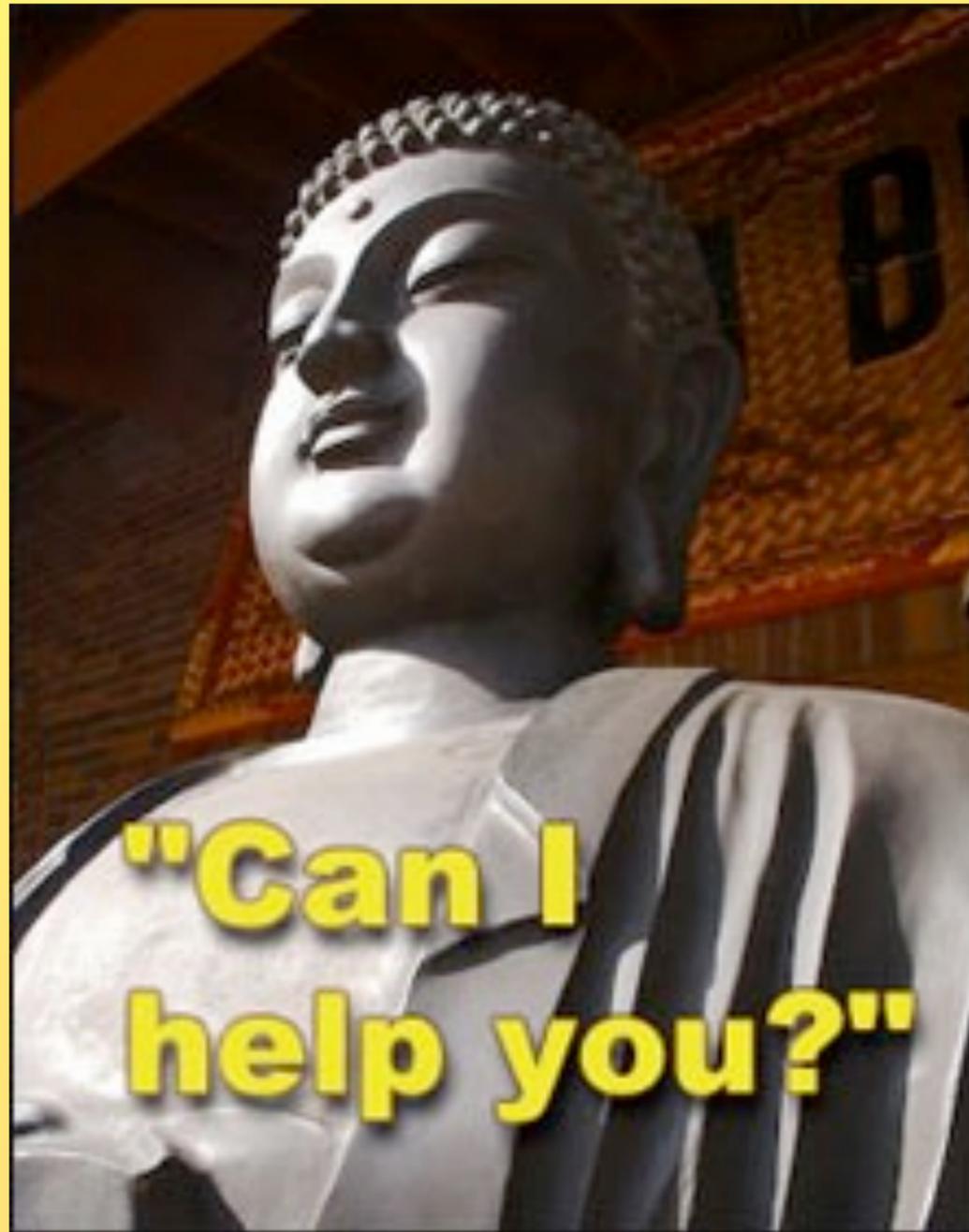
Ask: [you are the smiling buddha] "Explain the problem in your own words." "What were you doing when this happened?" "I just pushed my chair out and..." "What are you *trying* to do?" [can they do that here? sometimes users *think* they want to do one thing when they really need to do another....]
Think: Remember our model patrons, try to gauge who you are dealing with.

the old standby

[command - option - escape for you mac folks]

more on pebkac

I can't believe I messed this up THIS badly....

I am going to be SO fired

Technostress & Emotional Computer Relationship Troubles ---------> [is the patron having an anger, fear or confusion-based response to the problem? do you need to deal with that first?] Standard failure modes [is the window off the screen? did they click in another window? did a pop-up obscure their window? do they have more than one window open? did they move the start bar someplace crazy?] Windows failure modes (not strickly PEBKAC)

hardware

[monitor story. examples: monitor off, keyboard not typing, freeze up.]
other computers - what's going on nearby? quick scan. how responsive is it? cables? cords? power buttons? catastrophe? [mother's day busy signal]
[the basic troubleshoot is to replace each cable one at a time with known working cables until you've isolated the problem, if you can. Do you know who to call if there is a problem outside your immediate area, upstream provider? ISP?]
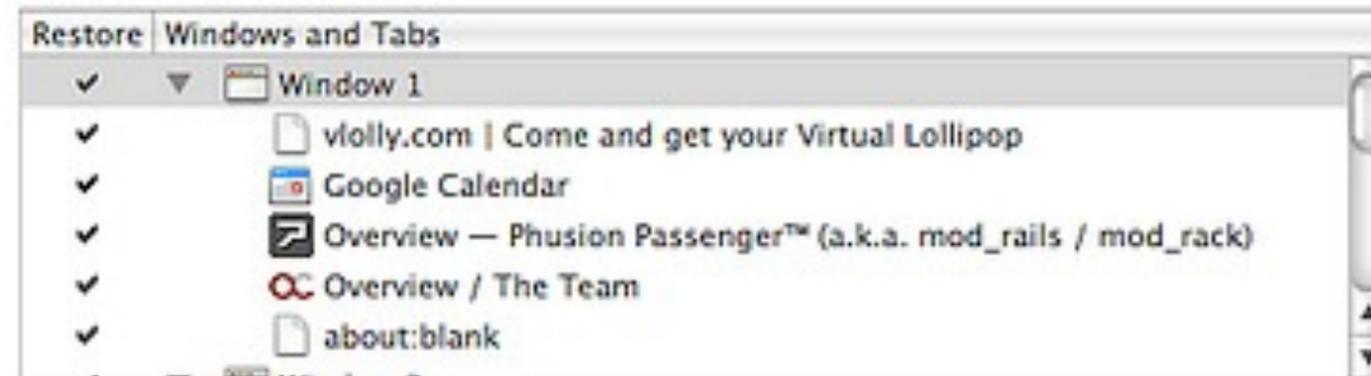
software

troubleshoot
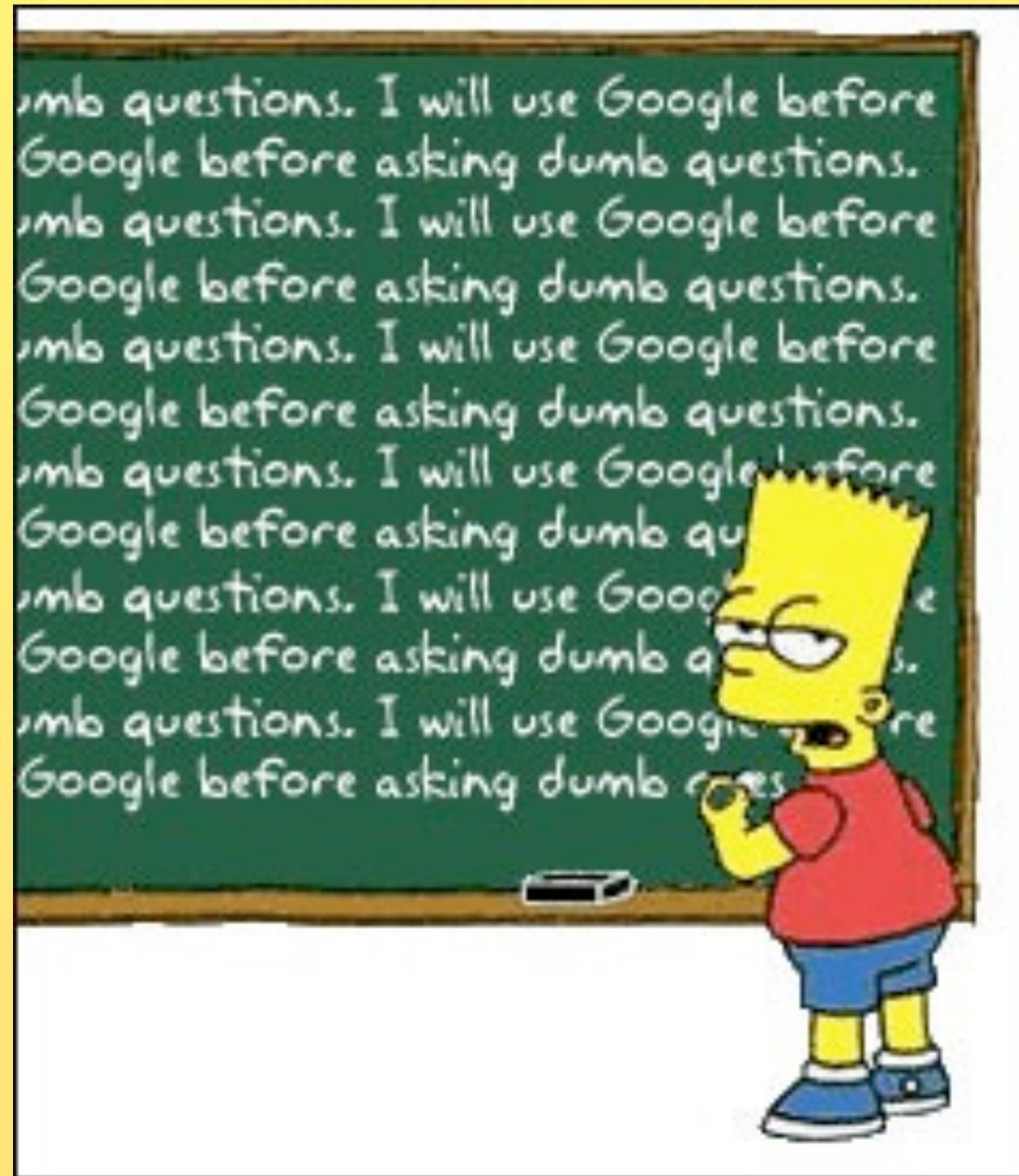
Reality testing "Is this a thing I *think* a computer can do?" "Is this a thing I think *our* computers can do?" JGI, seriously. [this is where that error message comes in handy] Where do preferences hide? [Internet: control panel, and network, in addition to being in IE. Word: tools > options/customize. What else is in the control panel? printers, users, network, system (drivers), display (desktop images), add/remove programs, date/time]

the web

[NO: "the computer has issues"] "My Yahoo is broken." [with a car it's spark, gas, air. with the web it's cables, literal network, virutal network, your computer, their computer. know how to debug an email address and a web address and a link: NO SPACES, no funny characters except the @, the little squiggle is a tilde, standard endings for URLs and email] "Where's my web page?" [look for error codes: 404, 401, &c., look for common URL spellings and know how your browser deals with them (IE may search from the address bar, for example), look for capitalization, look for broken links if someone's clicking through from an email] "What am I supposed to do here?" [example from immigration page. remember that new users read every web page all the way through, try to teach them to look for action buttons or links. you are not repsonsible for all the bad web design in the world.] Reality testing: "My bank needs me to enter my social security number...." "I want to sell this on Ebay in 45 minutes."[How to mouseover a link to see where it really goes. What is phishing]

uploads/downloads

Video Upload (Step 2 of 2)

Select a video to upload.

blobular.mov   Browse...

Having trouble?

Click here if you are having problems with the uploader.

Upload Video

Uploading... (1107968 / 3581584) 31%...

PLEASE BE PATIENT—THIS MAY TAKE SEVERAL MINUTES.
ONCE COMPLETED, YOU WILL SEE A CONFIRMATION MESSAGE.

"Nothing happened" [popup blocker, do you even allow downloading? is there a hidden "save as" window someplace]
"Where is my file?" [well what's it called? where did you put it? set default downloads location that isn't the INTERNET cache. sometimes you can look on the Documents menu. Search by time when all else fails]
"My attachment won't attach" [attaching takes time and usually one too many steps, sometimes you need to know the letter of the drive if you're using a firewallish thinglike deep freeze, yes you have to click "open" to attach something, no it makes no sense.]
"This attachment is like a brick on my desktop!" [explain the "must have appplication" aspects to attachments]

Word
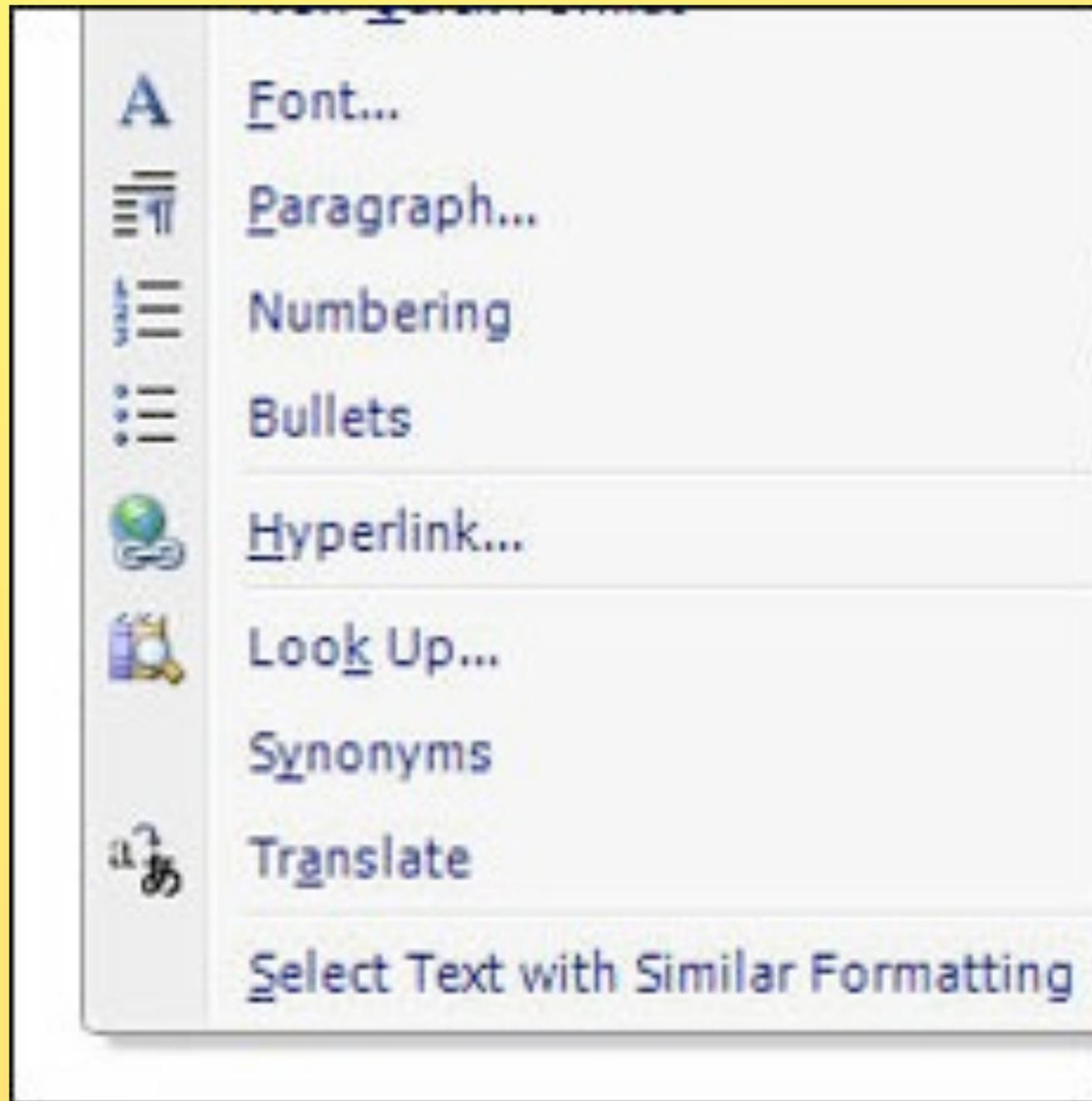
RIBBON vs TOOLBAR, docx nightmare
"The computer keeps changing what I type" [is autocorrect turned on? autoformatting? remember to check both places]
"It says go to file print but there IS NO FILE PRINT." [menu hiding? disable that entirely if you can, make sure they understand three step menus. the printbutton does NOT do what the print command does]
"Make that paper clip go away forever." [the office assistant can be hid one time, per session, generally, or removed entirely from your word install]

printers

Note: a lot of this varies depending on the printer "I want to print just what I'm looking at." [make sure they get that a web page is just one big long pagecheck to see if you have a print selection option] "My document doesn't fit on the page." [see if there is a "print this page" option, there should be a way to scale pages when printing, usually by percentages or just "fit on page" sometimes you can span multiple pages, sometimes this just won't work] "I can't afford all these pages." [2-up! hard to read but saves paper]

the unfixable

What fi you can't fix it? What's the plan? Have an error log or some sort. Be able, again, to manage expectations, not just have an out of order sign flapping in the wind.

now that everyone's happy

How can you track what you did this time? What can you do next time? How can you make the connection between what you did and what others can do in the future?

thank you!

handouts and notes at

<librarian.net/talks/iowa2009>