

Getting Your Act Together with
Shareware

President's File



PRESIDENTIAL RAMBLINGS

FORE...LEFT... Sometimes things don't go according to plan... My plan was to hit a big sweeping cut around the dogleg on number 9. Unfortunately the ball didn't cut, it hooked, and instead of playing my approach shot from the fairway I was stuck in the left rough with a generously sized pine tree between me and the hole... Not good... Ugly... Real ugly... You can't get there from here... Forget par, try not to make a double; ugly.

But that's golf. Sometimes the only thing you can do is grab a wedge, hack it out, and hope you can get it back on the next hole.

Unfortunately I didn't get it back on the next... The rest of my round went pretty much the same way, hack it out and scramble to make par.

Better Late Than Never

Some things are worth waiting for... When my home computer failed on the morning of Saturday, June 25, I figured I'd have a replacement in about 10 days or so. As it turned out the or so was a more accurate estimate. It took HP a grand total of 43 days to build and deliver my PC. I can't entirely blame HP; the computer I ordered was a brand new system that uses the latest generation of Intel Pentium 4 processors as well as Serial ATA II hard drives and PC2 5300 (DDR2-667MHz) memory. There were

bound to be shortages... I wasn't expecting them to be quite so long lasting though.

All in all it was worth the wait... The quality and performance of this computer are better than I expected. Which puts me in a bit of a quandary, I really want to be unhappy with HP, but I'm not... The computer is top notch; the technical support reps that spent roughly two hours helping me try to diagnose and repair a 3 1/2 year-old out-of-warranty computer on that fateful Saturday were polite, professional, and helpful, as were the customer service reps I talked to about my order.

It's hard to be unhappy with a company that provides tech support for out of warranty equipment and treats their customers like they matter.

As Promised...

During my presentation in July, I promised you an updated guide to hardening Internet Explorer against Adware. So here it is:

1. Make sure your computer is spyware free before starting this process. Trend Micro offers a free on-line scanner to help you identify and remove viruses and spyware from your computer. If you have a slow connection, or would prefer to work off-line, you'll need to download and install a quality anti-spyware program like SpySweeper from Webroot Software.

2. Visit <http://windowsupdate.microsoft.com> and install all the critical updates.

Note: if you are using an older version of Internet Explorer, you really should upgrade to IE 6 Service Pack 1 or later.

3. Next, check the security settings in Internet Explorer. To do this start IE and select Tools > Internet Options to open the "Internet Options" dialog. Then Select the Security tab and verify that the "Internet", "Local Intranet", and "Trusted Sites" zones are set to Medium.

Next, select the Restricted Sites zone and click "Custom Settings" and set everything to "Disable". Anything that can't be set to Disable should be set to "Prompt".

Next, click the Privacy tab and move the slider to "Medium High".

Finally, select the Advanced tab on and make sure that "Enable Install On Demand (Internet Explorer)" and "En-

Membership Information

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Don Neary
APCUG Liaison
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PRESIDENT'S FILE, Continued on page 4

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HelpLine

Volunteers have offered to field member questions by phone. Please limit calls to the hours indicated below. Days means 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.; evening means 6 to 9:30 p.m. Please be considerate of the volunteer you are calling. HelpLine is a free service. If you are asked to pay for help or are solicited for sales, please contact the dacs.doc editor; the person requesting payment will be deleted from the listing. Can we add your name to the volunteer listing?

d = day **e** = evening

Program	Name	Phone #	
Alpha Four	Dick Gingras	(203) 775-1102	(d e)
APL	Charles Bovaird	(203) 792-7881	(e)
C/UNIX/ObjC	Kenneth Lerman	(203) 426-4430	(d e)
Clipper	Dick Gingras	(203) 426-0484	(e)
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Microsoft Access	Dick Gingras	(203) 426-0484	(e)
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HTML/Java	James Costello	(203) 426-0097	(e)
Windows	Nick Strother	(203) 743-5667	(e)

Directors' Notes

A regular meeting of your Board of Directors was held at the Resource Center on Monday, August 8, 2005. Present were Messrs. Bovaird, Cohen, Corzo, Gallichotte, Preston, Scheef, Setaro, and Yates. Also present was Lisa Leifels. President Jeff Setaro presided and Secretary Lisa Leifels kept the record. Minutes of the last meeting held on July 11, 2005 were approved.

Treasurer Charles Bovaird reported current cash assets of \$14,831.91, consisting of total bank and postal accounts in the amount of \$14,724.37 plus postage on hand of \$107.54. Subtracting a liability of pre-paid dues in the amount of \$5,922.00 left a net equity of \$8,909.91. He also reported that the current membership is 346.

Jamie Yates commented that he received a lot of compliments from people saying they enjoyed the last General Meeting on Special Interest Groups. A conversation ensued about the passing of the new daylight savings time. John Gallichotte questioned if the BIOS on our computers would need to be updated. Luckily we have until 2007 to address this problem.

There was a discussion about topics for the next General Meeting on Shareware. Jamie Yates volunteered to speak about Roboform, a password manager program. Bruce Preston said he would talk about Textpad, a program-mer's editor, and would also briefly cover a few other programs including Cool Ruler and Color Dropper. Marc Cohen offered to talk about SunClock, an interesting screen saver. Jim Scheef said he may talk about ISO Buster or xReminder. John Gallichotte said it would help to see the URL where the shareware software could be downloaded. Jamie offered to create a handout with the URL's for the general meeting.

Jamie Yates said Mozilla Firefox would be a good General Meeting topic. He said he would get in touch with other area user groups who had covered this topic to see if we could get a speaker.

Jeff Setaro said he received a request for someone from DACS to appear on 'Time Out with Kevin Gallagher' on the Comcast Public Access Channel. Richard Corzo offered to TiVo the show to learn more about it.

Everyone appreciated that Jim Scheef took the time to paint the wall at the Resource Center white. This will help the colors to display clearer on the projector during the SIG meetings.

—LISA LEIFELS

able Install On Demand (Other)" are disabled.

4. Visit <http://www.javacoolsoftware.com> and download a copy of SpywareBlaster. SpywareBlaster works on the same principle as the block lists I suggested last year, but is much easier to use.

5. Last, but not least, if you haven't installed service pack 2 for Windows XP, please do. Service pack 2 includes several important security improvements that can greatly enhance your on-line safety and security.

End Notes

If you sent me an e-mail between June 25th and August 4th and haven't received a reply I'm not ignoring you. I'm currently sorting through the backlog of e-mail brought on by recent technology troubles, please be patient, I'll try to get back you as soon as I can. If you haven't received a reply by September 15th please drop me a note.

Several members asked me about the astronaut screen saver that was running on my laptop at the August general meeting. That screen saver is part of the Microsoft Plus! Super Pack. The "Plus Pack" sells for \$29.95 and includes desktop themes, screen savers, games and multimedia tools for Windows XP. See <http://www.microsoft.com/windows/plus/PlusHome.asp> for details.

The one good thing about being largely computer free for a month was that I had a chance to catch up on my reading. If you're looking for some late summer/early fall reading I can highly recommend any of the following:

- * Shadow Drivers by Robert Kurson,
- * Pacific Alamo - the Battle for Wake Island by John Wukovits,
- * The Last Stand of the Tin Can Sailors by James D. Hornfischer
- * By Order of the President by W.E.B. Griffin,
- * Black by Christopher Withcomb,
- * Liars & Thieves by Stephen Coonts,

That's it for this month... Your comments & questions are always welcome. You can reach me at jasetaro@mags.net or jasetaro@yahoo.com.

Cheers;

—JEFF SETARO

Meeting Preview

Seers share secrets in shareware show-and tell

By Jamie Yates

IN KEEPING WITH the format of the last several General Meetings, DACS will draw on the talents of its own members to host next month's presentation. On September 6 the topic for the evening will be Shareware, and several of our members will present products that they use and find invaluable.

Bruce Preston, Jamie Yates, Marc Cohen, and Jim Scheef will each demonstrate one or more of their favorite Shareware applications. These applications will be those that they find useful in running their systems or in organizing their daily lives.

Bruce Preston will present TextPad. Whether you simply need a powerful replacement for Notepad, a tool for editing your web pages, or a programming IDE, TextPad does what you want, in the way you would expect.

He will also spend a few minutes showing some simple additional tools such as Cool Ruler which allows you to measure images on your screen in pixels, centimeters, inches, etc., MouseZoom, which provides a 50x magnification of parts of your screen and a color dropper to find the exact color of a pixel, and Clic*Pic which will resize and compress your images, make thumbnails, create a project folder, and assemble a professional looking gallery.

Jamie Yates will present Roboform, the top-rated shareware tool that completely automates password entering and form filling. This product encrypts your passwords for security and can run entirely from a USB key.

Marc Cohen will present Sun Clock, which is a computer screen version of the very expensive wall sized sun clock. It graphically shows, on a world map, the position of the sun and moon and the rise and set lines as they change with the seasons. The program also shows moon phases,

a clock face, and the local star field indicating the position of the sun, moon and stars.

Jim Scheef will present xReminder Pro. This elegant looking, multi-featured, tray-based reminder software allows you to organize important dates and times. Keeping track of your important dates and events has never been easier with this program.

The meeting, held at Danbury Hospital Auditorium, starts off with Random Access at 7 p.m., followed by general business at 7:30. The featured program commences about 8:00, after a short break.

Be at this meeting, or you will miss out on some very useful software that you may have overlooked—and bring a guest or two along to show them what DACS is like.

Also, if you or someone you know uses a program that they find helpful and would like to present it to the DACS audience, contact Jamie Yates in person or send an email to vpprograms@dacs.org.



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Meeting Review

DACS caters to special interests

By Jamie Yates

AT THE AUGUST DACS General Meeting, each of our Special Interest Group leaders presented a brief overview of their SIGs for the audience. DACS has 16 different SIGs meeting at various times during the month. These meetings are free to all paid members and one of the major benefits of joining DACS. While a number of our members have belonged to one of the SIGs for years, many did not know a lot of details about what the others did. Now they do.

DACS has SIGs on the following topics:

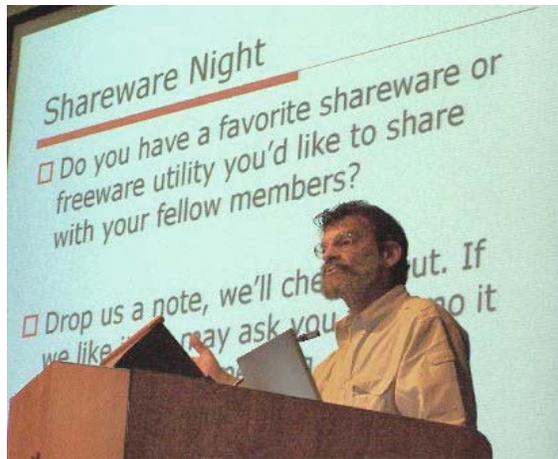
1. Access
2. Digital Imaging
3. Excel/Math
4. Jobs
5. Macintosh
6. Open Source Web Programming
7. Server and Networking
8. Wall Street
9. Advanced Operating Systems
10. dotNet
11. Investment Strategies
12. Linux
13. Microcontroller
14. PC Maintenance
15. Visual Basic
16. Web Site Design

Each leader answered the following questions during their brief presentations:

1. SIG name
2. Where and when SIG meets
3. Approximate number of members at a given meeting
4. Expertise level of attendees
5. Several significant accomplishments of the last year
6. Upcoming projects for the next year

Most of the groups meet at the DACS Resource Center on Main Street in Danbury one

weekday evening a month. They tend to have between 6 and twelve members attending. The most surprising thing about the SIGs is how they encourage novices in their particular area to attend meetings. This author used to think that these groups were only populated by the super technical people, and attendance by a newbie would be intimidating. It's a great way to



get problems solved and questions answered in depth that would not be covered in the Random Access part of the General Meeting. Make good use of it.

It was amazing to see how the number of speakers all kept to their time limits and the meeting was interesting, informative and enjoyable. The accomplishments of these groups over the years certainly is a key factor in giving DACS the excellent reputation it has achieved.

Judging from the comments made from the audience this was a very worthwhile meeting to have attended.

Isn't it time you took advantage of our SIGS? Look at the variety of topics available and join one or more. Or, if you don't find the topic you want, organize one that meets your special needs.

JAMIE YATES is DACS program director and a prolific tech volunteer in the area community.

New Members

from 7/19/2005 to 8/19/2005

- 1) Cris Novell
- 2) Mark Clendinning
- 3) Ron Greco
- 4) Andrew Kwashnak
- 5) Chris Vannoy

THIS IS YOUR LAST NEWSLETTER

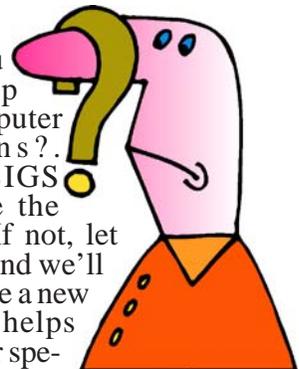
If the membership date on your mailing label reads

EXP 6/2005 or earlier

You need to renew your DACS membership

NOW

Are you hung up with computer questions? DACS SIGS may have the answers. If not, let us know, and we'll try to create a new SIG that helps fulfill your special needs.



Internet Security

How Internet Predators Can Harm Your Computer

By Gene Barlow

THIS IS THE FIRST of a two part article on Internet Security. This article will focus on the harm that predators can do to your computer while you are attached to the Internet. The second article addresses what you can do to protect your computer from these predators. You need to read both articles to get the whole story.

Introduction

The Internet was originally designed as a communication tool between users of a few mainframe computers located inside some Universities and Government offices. To access this early Internet, you had to use a terminal that was inside these secure locations and attached by cable to one of the mainframe computers involved. The outside world could not get access to this early Internet system. Because the original Internet was limited to a very secure environment, no security measures were designed into the Internet. Later, as the scope of the Internet was broaden and became available to almost anyone around the world, additional security features were not added to the Internet. The Internet was initially designed without security and security was never added to the Internet as it grew.

The Internet has become one of the most useful features of our computers. Almost all computers can be connected to the Internet through phone lines, wireless, or via many types of broadband connections. Today, we keep in touch with our families and friends via Internet email, chats, and Internet phones. We find enormous amounts of information on almost any topic by researching the Internet. We locate hard to find items on the Internet and can order them and have them delivered to our door. We access our bank and investments using the Internet to handle our financial affairs. The Internet has brought us tremendous benefits in the past few years.

That is the bright side of the Internet. Unfortunately, there is also a dark side to the Internet that many of us are not fully aware of. The simple fact is that while you are connected to the Internet and can access thousands of locations, thousands of

predators on the Internet can access your computer at the same time. As our connection time to the Internet increases, the risk of having harm done to our computers is skyrocketing. Broadband Internet connections greatly speed up our use of the Internet, but these are always connected and so our computer is always available to these

predators. The purpose of this article is to identify who these predators are and how they use your computer for their own needs. The following article will show you what you can do to protect your computer from these predators.

Internet Predators

Who are the Internet predators that cause harm to your computer? They are called Hackers and they come in a variety of types. Taking a cliché from the old western movies, these hackers are often distinguished by the deeds they do. If you remember the old western movies, the cowboys that wore white hats were usually the good guys. The bad cowboys normally wore black hats. Likewise, you have the White Hat Hackers and the Black Hat Hackers. They both break into your computer, but the White Hat Hackers do no harm and only do it for the challenge. The Black Hat Hackers are not as kind and will do all sorts of damage to your computer once they break into it. Finally, you have the Script Kiddies who are young kids learning to become hackers.

Where do these hackers hang out? There are hundreds of hacker web sites around the world and the hackers use these

sites to exchange ideas and things they have learned about hacking into certain computers. They also brag about their hacking accomplishments once they have broken into a special computer. This brings them the admiration of their fellow hackers. Young kids from 10-14 years old learn to become the future hackers of the world on these web sites. So these web sites are the training ground for new hackers to learn and develop.

Taking Over Your Computer

What do these Internet Predators do to your computer? The Black Hat Hackers go through a number of steps to break into and harm your computer. The first step is to scan for a target. They want to find a computer that has fast internet access, has enough empty space on their hard drive for storage of their hacker tools, and is a fast computer. While this is the ideal target, they will take a less valuable target if they can access it easily. They have special computer programs that scan and test computers connected to the Internet. Did you know that your computer is tested on average of 17 times each day by hackers looking for a target? When will they stop at your computer and decide to use it for their purposes? One in four computers will be hacked this year, so your turn is not far off.

Once the hackers find a target, their next task is to break and enter into that computer. Unfortunately, this task is very easy to do, since most computers have no security protection at all to keep the hackers out. Some users will have a firewall set up to prevent hackers from entering their computers. These firewalls have doors in them called ports. A firewall may have 256,000 doors or ports in them with some of these doors wide open. When a hacker finds a firewall, all he needs to do is to scan these ports until he finds one that is open and available for him to enter into your computer. Finally, hackers know of weaknesses in your operating system and Internet browser. He can take advantage of these weaknesses in the software and break through any security you think you have in place. It may take him a bit of time, but eventually, a hacker will find a way to break into your computer without you even knowing that he is doing this.

Once inside your computer, the hacker goes about setting up shop in your system. He may first look around for anything of value that he can steal from you. It may be as dangerous as your social security number, credit card numbers, or other financial information that he can use in the theft of your identity. Identity Theft is the number



one consumer problem today and the number of thefts is growing each year. If your identity is taken and used, it will cost over \$10,000 in goods and services to resolve the problems from this crime. The hacker may find your personal digital photos saved on your computer and share them with others on the Internet. Finally, the hacker may help himself to copies of any software he finds on your computer.

Next the hacker will make changes to your computer to fit his needs. He will store his hacker tools on your hard drive so that it is available for him to use in a moments notice. These tools may include viruses and worms to send out from your computer, key loggers to watch the keys you press as you enter your password to get into your online banking, email monitors to read your email messages, and other devious tools he has available to use from your computer. Once he gets all of his tools loaded on your computer, he will make your computer secure from other hackers. He will close up all of the open ports and operating system weaknesses in your computer so that other hackers will not be able to break into it. He wants your computer for his own use and not to share it with other hackers. He will leave one very well hidden back door open so that he can get back in to your computer at any time he wants to. The hacker now has your computer all ready for his future use.

Using Your Computer

Having set up your computer for his needs, what things will a hacker do with your computer? First, he may set up your computer to send out viruses to other computers. He will start with your email address book and send out these viruses to all of your friends and family members. After all, he does not want to have his computer identified as the source of the virus. Junk mail is also sent out mostly from hacked computers. My computer was hacked a couple of years ago and thousands of SPAM messages were sent out late one night using my computer. The next morning my inbox was filled with bounced messages from email addresses that were no longer valid. Just emptying these bounced messages from my inbox took hours to accomplish. Working with my ISP, we found the faulty code that let my system be hacked and fixed it. I quickly learned that these hackers are serious. Another favorite hacker use of your computer is to send out porn pictures. It would really embarrass me to learn that my computer had been used to distribute

porn to others. I may even be held legally liable for permitting this porn to be distributed from my computer.

Some hackers pride themselves in bringing down main computers, like eBay, Yahoo, or AOL. Other hackers go after mainframe computers at banks, stock markets, and government offices. To do this, they need to use more than one computer. Hackers will break into and set up hundreds of computers which are called Zombie systems. The hacker can activate these Zombies to do what it wants in a few seconds. Your computer may be sitting as a Zombie computer waiting to be activated to attack some large government defense computer. When it is activated with hundreds of other Zombie computers, they all send messages at the same time to the large computer under attack. When the mainframe computer is hit at the same time by hundreds or thousands of Zombies, it can't handle the load and will shut down to protect itself. Just what the hacker wanted. The shutdown of a major computer may take hours to bring back up and can cost hundreds of thousands of dollars in lost businesses to these companies. This is serious hacking and your computer might be involved without your knowing it.

Check Out Your Computer

So, how do you know if your system has been affected by a hacker? Hackers pride themselves in doing their mischief without anyone knowing that they have been hacked. So, finding out that you have been hacked is not easy to do. There are a few excellent software tools that have been designed to find and remove hacking tools from computer systems. The second article of this series will identify all of the things you need to do to protect your computer from hackers and to remove their mischief if you have already been hacked. Watch for this article to be sent to you in a few days or you can find it on my web site (www.usergroupstore.com) in the Newsletters section after September 1, 2005. In the meantime, you can check to see if your computer has hacker tools on it by accessing my Invisus web site at www.myinvisusdirect.com/usergroupstore. Look for and click on the small red button that is titled, "Test Your PC Now". This will take you to a page where you can download a trial of the hacker tool removal program and see what hacker tools are located on your computer. You will probably be surprised at what you find.

I hope you have learned more about the harm that can happen to your computer on the Internet. If you have questions about this article or Invisus tools, please email them to gene@ugr.com and I will try to answer them for you. Watch for my following article on protecting your computer from Internet predators.

Gene Barlow is the president of User Group Relations, a consulting firm specializing in promoting computer products to the user group community. He has over 40 years of experience with computer systems. He worked for IBM for 34 years and managed IBM's user group support organization for 14 years. He helped hundreds of user groups get started and is sometimes called the Father of User Groups for his involvement. When he left IBM, he set up his own consulting firm and has represented many software vendors to the user group community the past 9 years. He is an outstanding speaker, writer, and helper of end users and loves working with user groups.

This article is from Barlow's Hard Drive Newsletter - August 2005.

GENE BARLOW is president of User Group Relations, a representative of PC vendors to the user group community. A frequent presenter to DACS, you can see him at our October meeting. Gene can be reached at PO Box 911600, St George, UT 84791-1600; 435-652-3005 (no technical questions); by e-mail at gene@ugr.com or at his Web site, www.usergroupstore.com.

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When dining at
the DACS
Resource Center,
please carry your
leftovers with you.



Thanks!

The
management

Special Interest Groups

SIG NOTES: September 2005

Access. Designs and implements solutions using Microsoft Access database management software.

Contact: Bruce Preston, 203 431-2920 (*bpreston@mags.net*).
Meets on 2nd Tuesday, 7p.m., at the DACS Resource Center.
Next meeting: Sept 13

Advanced Operating Systems. Explores OS/2, Linux, and NT operating systems. For info, follow link to Don's site on *dacs.org*.

Contact: Bill Keane (*wbk@mags.net*) 203-438-8032.
Meets 2nd Wednesday, 7:30 p.m., at the DACS Resource Center.
Next meeting: Sept 14

dotNET. Programs for Web site/server.

Contact: Chuck Fizer (*cfizer@snet.net*).
Meets 1st Wednesday, 4-6 p.m., at the DACS Resource Center.
Next Meeting: Sept 7

Excel/Math. Review of mathematics with emphasis on programming spreadsheets for business applications.

Contact: Charles Bovaird, 203-792-7881 (*aam@mags.net*).
Meets on 3rd Thursday, 7 p.m. at the DACS Resource Center.
Next meeting: Sept 15

Digital Imaging. All about digital cameras, retouching and printing.

Contact: Ken Graff at 203 775-6667 (*graffic@bigfoot.com*).
Meets last Wednesday, 7 p.m. at the DACS Resource Center.
Next Meeting: Sept 28

Investment Strategies. Discusses various investment strategies to maximize profits and limit risk.

Contact: Paul Gehrett, 203 426-8436, (*pgehr4402@aol.com*).
Meets 3rd Thursday, 7:30 p.m., Edmond Town Hall, Newtown.
Next Meeting: Sept 15

Jobs. Networking and discussion of the jobs search environment.

Contact: Charles Bovaird, 203-792-7881 (*aam@mags.net*).
Meets on 3rd Friday, 7 p.m. at the DACS Resource Center.
Next meeting: TBA

Linux. Provides Help in installing and maintaining the Linux operating system. Also of interest to Apple owners using OS X.

Contact: Bill Keane (*wbk@mags.net*) 203-438-8032
Meets 3rd Wednesday, 7:30 pm at the DACS Resource Center.
Next Meeting: Sept 21

Macintosh. Focuses on all aspects of the Mac operating system.

Contact: Richard Corzo (*macsig@dacs.org*)
Meets 1st Thursday at DACS Resource Center at 7 p.m.
Next Meeting: Sept 1

Microcontroller. Investigates microcontroller applications from theory to hands-on implementation and member projects.

Contact: John Gallichotte, 203 426-0394, (*tlclotus@ieee.org*).
Meets on 4th Tuesday, 7:00 p.m., at the DACS Resource Center.
Next Meeting: In hiatus until further notice.

Open Source Web Programming. Focuses on open source tools for Windows and Linux.

Contact: John Lansdale, 914-533-2002.
Meets on 3rd Monday, 7:00 p.m. at the DACS Resource Center.
Next Meeting: Sept 19

PC Maintenance. Review of PC hardware and OpSys maintenance and use.

Contact: Charles Bovaird, 203-792-7881 (*aam@mags.net*).
Meets on 4th Thursday, 7 p.m. at the DACS Resource Center.
Next meeting: Sept 22

Server. Explores Back Office server and client applications, including Win NT Servers and MS Outlook.

Contact: Jim Scheef (*jscheef@teleAUGksys.com*)
Meets 2nd Thursday, 7 p.m., at the DACS Resource Center.
Next meeting: Sept 8

Visual Basic. Develops Windows apps with Visual Basic.

Contact: Chuck Fizer, 203 798-9996 (*cfizer@snet.net*) or Jim Scheef, 860 355-8001 (*JScheef@TeleAUGksys.com*).
Meets 1st Wednesday, 7p.m., at the DACS Resource Center.
Next Meeting: Sept 7

Wall Street. Examines Windows stock Market software.

Contact: Phil Dilloway, 203 367-1202 (*dilloway@ntplx.net*).
Meets on last Monday, 7p.m., at the DACS Resource Center.
Next Meeting: Sept 26

Web Design. Applications for designing and creating Web sites.

Contact: Anna Collens, 203-746-5922 (*acvo@annagraphics.com*).
Meets 3rd Tuesday, 7-9 p.m. at the DACS Resource Center.
Next Meeting: Sept 20

SIG News & Events

dotNET. This session gave us a chance to make something out of nothing, that is, out of null. Our careful attention to an accurate and veridical usage of null in C# and SQL Server gave us a wealth of insights into our compiler as a ruthless grammarian. Chuck gave us a virtuoso performance to bring to light how checking validity of a user input, such as a credit card number, requires knowledge of how null works.

What is all the fuss about? In program code, it is important to see the status of a variable and its content. For candidate content we have several options offered: (1) a set of textual or numeric characters, (2) some elements from a system of numbers, (3) space, (4) emptiness, (5) null.

There is an immediate challenge as to whether null can be a candidate. For operations in program code, a compiler will be implacable to impose particular rules. What are these rules from which no shadow of turning is permitted?

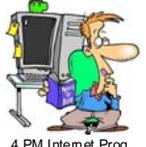
Consider first TSQL as coded in SQL Server. A cell in a table is said to be null if there is no information about that cell, and that cell is marked with the following inscription: <NULL>. A variable that is created but not initialized is null rather than undefined, and its status is marked in Boolean terms: Yes, No if tested is null. Taking an average presents a definitive example. When sales for several months is unavailable (<NULL>) as one attempts to compute an average of sales for a year of twelve months, division by 12 yields only a null. Likewise, we have a status of <NULL> rather than division by zero is undefined when null is divided by zero, as for an expression: null/0. However, any other value except null when divided by zero does result in division by zero is undefined.

Now consider C# in Visual Studio .NET. All objects can be null. Some variables can be created without initialization, thus to remain undefined. (the same is true for Javascript) When

SIG Notes, Continued on page 13

September 2005

Danbury Area Computer Society

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Circuit Rider

Version 3.3

By Jim Scheef

LAST MONTH, I mentioned the DACS Library and promised more information later. I meant later in that column, but age is creeping in... So now, before I forget again, here's the story. Several years ago we were given some bookcases for the Resource Center. After a significant period of time, I got tired of looking at these empty bookcases and suggested that we start a DACS Book Trading Library. Here's how it works: When you have computer books that you can no longer fit on your bookshelves, you bring them down to the Resource Center and put them in the bookcases. When you get home, you can tell your wife that you got rid of those old computer books, for which you will score many points. These books are now available to all DACS members. When you come to the Resource Center for a SIG meeting, take a quick glance at the bookcases. If you see something interesting, take it and it's yours. This is not a lending library – there are no checkouts or due dates. Keep the book forever or return it when it no longer fits on your bookshelf.

Every so often, someone (probably me) will look through the library and weed out the junk that no one will ever want. Given that one man's junk is another's treasure, this means that I might be throwing away the very book for which you have been searching for months. Don't let this happen; come to a SIG meeting and look through the library. The SIG meeting is just another bonus!

DACS Website Committee

Have you visited the DACS web site recently? The web site redesign is on the air! Anna Collens did the design with input from "the committee" on the menus. Sean Henderson found and debugged the calendar, making it work with cascading style sheets (CSS) so it fits in with the new design. Jeff Setaro helped integrate the new design into the old content. And Scott Preston has been right there all along, keeping the web site current and planning for the ongoing maintenance. My role has been to provide encouragement.

So far, the "front end" is complete with menus leading to strategic points in the

old content. The calendar is now dynamic, so updates are as easy as editing a text file. We redesigned the SIG pages to provide more information, while making it easier for the SIG leaders to update this content.

Over the years, the DACS web site has accumulated a lot of content (about 50M). Each month all of the dacs.doc articles written by DACS members are added to the web site in HTML format so they are easier to read online. This is in addition to providing a complete PDF version of each issue. All of these "legacy" pages need to be converted to the new format. I'm hoping that much of this work can be automated, but we have yet to test this out.

I think the new web site is fabulous, and I hope you do, too. All this happened so quickly, it just blows me away!

Home Network Upgrade

Previously on Home Network Upgrade: Last month, I explained why I needed to upgrade from Exchange Server 5.5 to the 2003 version. Over a period of way too many months, I purchased a new server, installed Windows Server 2003, and made this machine the domain controller on the network.

After that I studied books, magazines and the Microsoft Knowledge Base (KB). In fact I sat down and compared the procedures in Mastering Microsoft Exchange Server 2003 to the KB document, "Exchange Server Deployment Guide." Both sources had basically the same steps. Keep in mind that studying books and magazines like this can be a really good way to procrastinate!

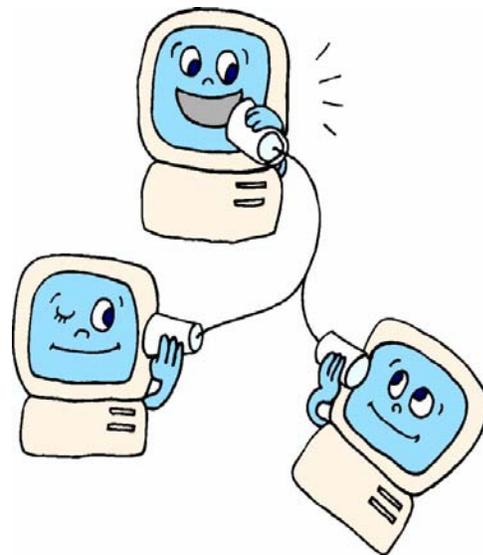
Strange as it might seem, the first step was to run a series of tests that would

prove that the network was, indeed, ready to run the new version of Exchange Server. Taking a brief step back, let me explain that Exchange 2003 is not a stand-alone product like Version 5.5 was. When Microsoft introduced Windows 2000 with Active Directory (AD), they took the directory of people and their e-mail addresses out of Exchange 5.5 and moved this functionality into Active Directory. So Exchange 2003 does not have a directory of its own; it requires the directory that is already available in Windows Server – Active Directory. Thus Exchange 2003 will not function unless AD is installed and working correctly. This, in turn, means that your DNS servers must support the special functions required by AD and so on, and so on.

As we'll see later, AD is more than just people and email addresses. It also contains objects like computers, printers, and references to certain special programs (mostly from Microsoft). This brings some neat features to a network, like when you need to print something; you can search in the directory for a printer near your current location. Windows will then install any drivers you need and print the document. Cool, eh?

So I started running the required test programs. The first test ran with good results, but I could not get the second battery of tests to run at all. I hate to say that I gave up so easily but it was time to call Microsoft. The errors I was getting made no sense at all and I was totally stumped. It was 5:30pm on a Friday. A cheery young woman answered the

Microsoft help number after I waded through only two layers of voice prompts. After explaining that I was an MSDN (Microsoft Developer Network) customer and that I wanted to use one of the four "support incidents" that are included with the MSDN Universal package, she routed my call to the "next available Exchange support engineer". Most of you know that several years ago Microsoft moved their first-level support to call centers in India. I've had fairly good experiences with



Microsoft support, even in India. My support engineer introduced himself as Vikram. I had no trouble understanding his English so long as he didn't speak too fast.

After describing my goal (migrate to Exchange 2003) and symptom (the tests were failing in weird ways), Vikram immediately asked that I check the permissions on the account I was using. These were permissions within Exchange 5.5, not network permissions, and there was no mention in any of the books or KB articles. Once these permissions were corrected, the tests ran perfectly and I was ready to begin the actual migration process. If I had an employer to pay the cost of this call, I might have hung up right then feeling that I had received full value for the call.

Now, since I paid for my MSDN subscription out of my own pocket, I wanted to extract as much from this "support incident" as possible. Something I have learned over the years with any pay as you go support organization like Microsoft is to define the problem as broadly as possible. If I had said that my problem was that the tests would not run, my support incident would be complete. Vikram would have said "Thank you very much and have a very nice day," and hung up. Instead, he started to lead me through the entire migration.

The first real step was to install something called the Active Directory Connector. This 'connects' AD to the directory in Exchange 5.5. AD is really the hub of a Windows network. The connector lets you synchronize the directory in Exchange 5.5 with AD for the domain. In a real company with thousands of users, this is a big step that will take some time to complete – both in terms of computer running time and the administrative time to resolve any accounts that don't match up. Of course, in my situation there is only one real user (me) plus a few accounts that I've set up for testing over the years. The synchronization process goes so fast, Vikram doesn't have any time to take a break.

Now we get to actually install Exchange Server 2003. Once again, Vikram walks me through the process without a

hitch. The install takes about half an hour, even on my dual-processor server. I grab a couple of cookies (the baked kind) and Vikram gets his break. When the install completes, we run some checks to be sure it was successful and proceed to moving the mailboxes. Just to be safe, I moved a couple of the test mailboxes. These were successful, so I could be reasonably cer-

tain that my mailbox will also move ok. Since my mailbox is a little under a gigabyte, we put that off and moved on to the next steps in the migration.

Our next task was to install Outlook Web Access (OWA). This really cool facility is web-based email for Exchange. This is what I use when traveling (or at my girlfriend's house) to access my busi-

ness email. Exchange 2003 OWA is so good, you have to look twice to see that you're just using a browser. It even works quite well in Firefox and Navigator 7+. Unfortunately, it did not work right out of the box on my server, and this is where Vikram started to call in the troops. First was Haresh, an Internet Information Server specialist. He walked – actually, he spoke so fast that he ran me through the process of reinstalling and reconfiguring IIS. I already had IIS installed and it seemed to be working (it passed the tests, remember?) but OWA failed miserably. So it was now time to call in the second-level support for Exchange. After a few minutes, we had Mary on the line – a very pleasant woman in Toronto, Canada, who actually preferred to work nights.

Mary recognized that the problem in both IIS and OWA was that my Exchange server was also the domain controller. Domain controllers impose certain limitations on IIS because there are no local user accounts. A local user account is a user who is defined on a single machine rather than within AD for the domain. Your user id on your Windows XP machine is undoubtedly a local user account, unless you connect your machine to the network where you work. Local user accounts would be a huge security hole on a domain controller, so they are totally disabled by the AD installation process. Over

the next few hours, Mary took me through a long series of steps to do manually what the install script could have done in a few seconds. As we added or corrected many permissions and security settings, we gradually fixed IIS so that ASP (Active Server Pages) and ASP.NET worked correctly and this resolved the problems in OWA.

Like all second-level support people, Mary really knew her stuff. As the hour got later and later, Mary gave me several KB articles that gave additional details on most of the remaining steps in the migration. In addition to moving the mailboxes, I needed to move the public folders. Microsoft has always talked about the collaboration features of Exchange Server in their efforts to compete with Lotus Notes and Novell GroupWise, the other major enterprise-grade "groupware" products. Public folders are the key to any collaboration "features" and as such, Exchange replicates these folders to all of the Exchange servers in an organization. This replication process is designed to get the job done while using as little network bandwidth as possible. So, by design, it runs when the network is less busy. Remember, most Exchange installations are "considerably" larger than mine [heavy understatement implied here]. Moving public folders uses this replication facility rather than something special as with the mailboxes. While I had Mary on the line, I tried to replicate a small public folder to be sure I had it working. It would take me several days to replicate every public folder and then remove the folders from the old server, and I don't really have that many. I can see where this could take weeks in a large organization with servers spread out all over the country or around the world.

At 3am Saturday morning, I finally called a halt to our efforts and hung up the phone. This marathon call had lasted nine hours. The new Exchange installation was sending and receiving mail and OWA was working with only a couple of issues; but there was still much to do. Before saying goodbye to Mary and Vikram, I made sure that I had the incident number and that the incident would remain open until the new server was fully operational. Next month, we'll see how we cleared up the last few problems, some of which I had yet to find!

I hope you've enjoyed this time between ski seasons. What's it called? Summer?

JIM SCHEEF is past president of DACS.



Internet Access

Wi-Fi Wireless Internet and Network Availability

By Ira Wilsker

WEBSITES:

<http://www.jwire.com>

<http://intel.jwire.com>

<http://www.wi-fihotspotlist.com>

RECENTLY, one of my daughters called me from a major city, and asked me where she could find some free “hotspots” or wireless “Wi-Fi” locations where she could get free broadband wireless internet access. She gave me her street address, and within moments I found several nearby locations where she could access the internet for free using the wireless “802.11b” PCMCIA card she had with her notebook computer. She told me which hotspot she selected, and I gave her the “SSID”, or “Service Set Identifier”, a simple code, usually a name, that identifies a local hotspot.

I recently purchased a new notebook computer for another daughter, and this computer came with an Intel Centrino chipset, which provided integral wireless internet access, where ever available, whether at home or on the road. As she travels around town, at school, or away from home, she can likely access the internet at high speeds.

I travel extensively, and always take my notebook computer with me, as I often find it necessary to check my email, find restaurants, or locate other information on the internet. Through experience, I have found that many hotels, restaurants, airports, and other locations offer wireless broadband internet access either for a fee, or for free. Now before I leave home, I check a website www.jwire.com, or its twin sister site supported by Intel, intel.jwire.com, to determine what wireless access is available enroute, or at my destination.

Jwire.com is one of the leading interactive directories of publicly available

wireless internet locations, typically using one of the industry standard 802.11 protocols. Standardization, as well as substantial downward compatibility, has ensured that almost all computers equipped

with 802.11 type wireless internet hardware can effectively communicate at broadband speeds. As I type this, Jwire is listing almost 70,000 public access wireless hotspots around the world. The Intel companion site lists almost 30,000 wireless hotspots in the U.S., and

about 40,000 international wireless hotspots. According to the Intel site, the top U.S. cities for public wireless are New York City with over 550 public access locations, followed by Chicago (434 public wireless locations), San Francisco (412), and Seattle (320). Texas is well represented in the top 10 most “unwired” cities with 309 public hotspots in Houston, 250 in Austin, and 192 in Dallas. California is listed by Intel as the state with the most public access with over 5000 locations, followed by Texas with almost 2000 hotspots, Florida with about 1800, and New York with over 1600 public hotspots. It should be emphasized that these numbers are only the wireless sites that allow public access, either for free (sometimes with some strings attached) or for a fee, and does not include the millions of sites that are private wireless networks. The listing also does not include many of the hotel chains that offer free wireless access to registered guests.

Many of the free sites listed are local restaurants, some hotels, many airport terminals, RV parks, and other locations. All it takes to access these totally free and public sites is the SSID of the wireless host and appropriate hardware; the Jwire sites list the SSID’s of the public sites. When the wireless access on the notebook com-

puter is activated, the wireless networks within range can be identified, and if accessible, the SSID can be entered, and connections established. It is important that from a personal security standpoint, these public connections are not often encrypted, and can be “sniffed” or picked up by anyone with suitable equipment; sensitive information, passwords, banking, and other critical information should never be sent on an insecure public network.

In addition to the free sites, there are many thousands of publicly accessible but commercial (fee based) hotspots, often in coffee shops, restaurants, hotels, bookstores, some airport terminal areas, and other locations. These hotspots either require a subscription to a service, such as a cellular phone company or other third party, or a daily or hourly fee for access. Generally, since these pay services require some type of access code, they are slightly more secure than the free public sites, but are still usually accessible to a hacker with commonly available but illicit software. Again, it is a good practice not to type any sensitive personal information while on a publicly accessible wireless network. Some of the commercial hotspots offer “WEP”, or wireless encryption protocol, which makes it more difficult for unwelcome third parties to listen in on internet communications, but the methods for cracking WEP have been widely published, and are now only considered to provide marginal security.

One warning about wireless internet access; it is illegal to access a wireless network without the consent of the owner, despite the fact that studies have indicated that about 80% of all private wireless networks, both workplace and home based, are not adequately protected, and can easily be picked up and accessed by anyone who wants access. A popular hacker method of gaining “free” broadband internet access is driving around town with a notebook computer with 802.11 hardware, and logging the wireless networks found, with those same networks often broadcasting the SSID necessary for access. This practice is called “wardriving”. In major cities, marks are drawn on sidewalks and the outside walls of buildings in a similar escapade, “warchalking” where SSID’s and other relevant information is written for all to see, and access. Locally, in a security demonstration, a security consultant drove around the business district of town, and logged hundreds of wireless networks, 80% of which were



SIG Notes, Continued from page 8

created, an unassigned variable is unassigned and the C# compiler will treat it as undefined. No operations can be performed upon an undefined variable. A program build action results in an error, hence the code can not be executed. A variable is unusable until it is initialized or assigned a value, and it can be initialized to null. One upshot of this difference in status is that parameters for a call to SQL must use this inscription: DBNull if null is the desired information to transmit. Ironically, transmitting a null actually makes it into something it isn't, a value. In fact the full syntax for transmitting a null is variable = System.DBNull.Value;. So, in dotNet, nothing is something.

VB.NET. Two more attendees had random questions to this session. Chuck provided some pointers to clear those matters. It is important for database usage with Web sites to use IIS 6.0, SQL Server 2003 and FrontPage Extensions.

We then had an opportunity to consider some further idiosyncrasy of null in other operations: convert, cast, concatenate. As before, Chuck illustrated differences in these operations with adroit use of compilers in SQL and C#. He added in this discussion some limitations of a cursor as contrasted with a user-defined function for queries into a database. He capped the evening's discourse with a reminder that a validity check for a user input will require careful attention to occurrences of any null input.

With all these fresh insights, Claude came away with a deeper appreciation of compilers with their strict demands on anyone who would code programs in Visual Studio .NET. Headaches are another symptom of nulls, particularly when the program code executes as though it's inebriated.

Job SIG. We will no longer meet on a scheduled basis, as indicated by the last survey. Members will be notified when we have a scheduled speaker on job search subjects. Email communications will continue.

DACS members are urged to report employment opportunities to *treasurer@dacs.org*. Non-Credit courses relating to job search are now available at WCSU in Danbury (register by Sept 30 -See *www.wcsu.edu*). Two members reported they are working.

Recent announcements: Praxair and Candant -office expansion.

MATH SIG. August: began review of math problems using ACT (American College Testing Program).

September: an Excel model computing $e=(1+1/n)^n$. Discovered largest number handled by Excel using this model. Also addressed Pascal's triangle and the Excel model for computation of binomial coefficients for large "n" in $(a+b)^n$ you likely learned in elementary algebra.

PC Maintenance. August: At the request of a member we performed an

installation of a new external hard drive on a WIN98E Machine using a USB connection. We also addressed the use of the WIN98 recovery disk.

Macintosh. In August, we continued our exploration of iTunes from October 2004. This time we had an iPod to connect. The iPod tab of iTunes Preferences controls whether iTunes is synced automatically or manually. You can also choose to update only checked songs. In iTunes you may have imported an entire CD of songs, but later decide you don't want to listen to some of the songs on your iPod, so just uncheck them. Unlike other iTunes preferences, the iPod-related preferences are actually stored on your iPod, so you won't see them unless your iPod is connected.

You can only sync the songs with one computer. If you connect to another computer with iTunes, it will ask you if you want to erase the existing songs on your iPod before syncing with the new computer.

You can also specify whether to use your iPod as a hard disk to store ordinary files. It will then appear on your Mac desktop or in Windows Explorer as a removable drive. When you are finished managing the ordinary files you will need to eject the drive before physically disconnecting the iPod.

We took a brief look at using Terminal, Mac OS X's command line tool, when the iPod was connected. You can't normally transfer songs from one com-

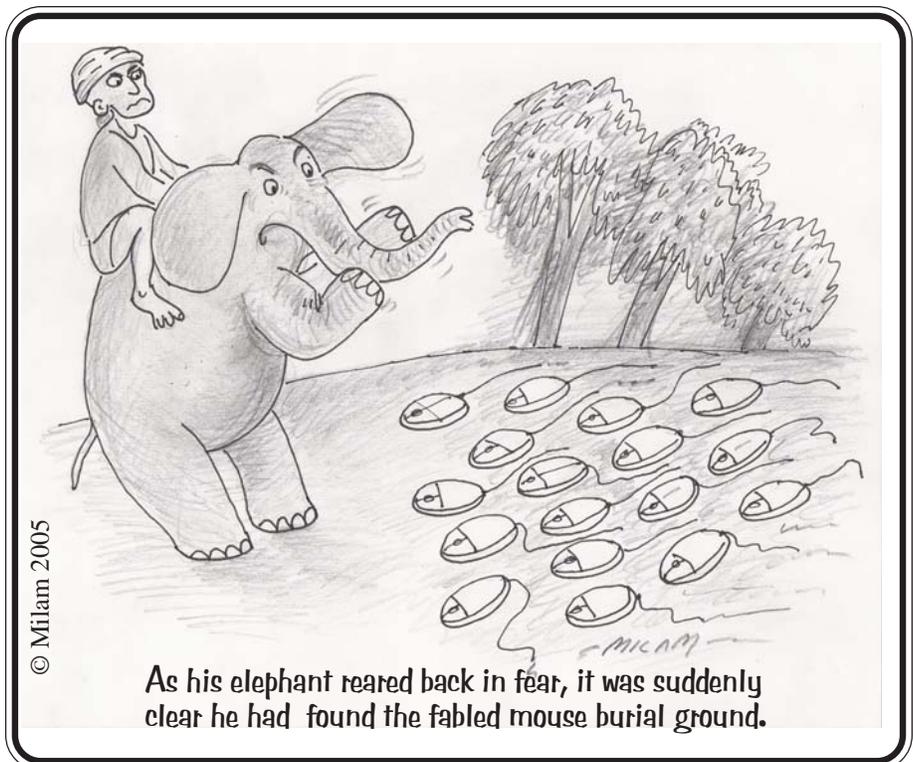
SIG Notes, Continued on page 15

easily accessible, as they were not properly secured. These included such sensitive locations as banks, law offices, retail stores, medical facilities, and other choice locations for hackers to penetrate.

Use the Jwire sites to find wireless access, as I do, but be totally aware of the risk and security implications of broadcasting critical information. There are a variety of hardware and software utilities that can be utilized to harden wireless access, and some of those will be discussed in a future column.

IRA WILSKER is APCUG Director; Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont TX: Radio Show Host

This article was provided by the Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member, brings this article to you.



Random Access

August 2005

Bruce Preston, Moderator

WE WELCOME QUESTIONS FROM the floor at the start of our General Meetings. In addition, members who are not able to attend the General Meeting may submit questions to askdacs@dacs.org. We will ask the question for you and post the reply in *DACS.ORG*. Please provide as much information as possible since we can't probe during the session.

Q. (AskDACS) I have a USB Flashdrive that lacks password protection. Can you recommend software (preferably freeware) that resides on the drive itself?

A. First, check with the manufacturer's website such as SanDisk. If they don't have one suitable, then a Google Search such as "USB flash drive encryption freeware Microsoft XP" will find one. Follow-up: the questioner found and installed this software and reports that it works fine: http://www.richskills.com/support/usbdiskguard_help.html

Q. (AskDACS) When I boot my machine I get a message that it is unable to locate GAMEDRVR.EXE. I have since found that it is part of Wild Tangent (network gaming support) How can I find and remove the reference that is trying to load it?

A. First, we assume that you have gone into Add/Remove Programs to remove Wild Tangent. If that doesn't do it, then you may have to resort to more drastic measures. First, see if it is referenced in the Windows Registry. The key would be in `HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE/SOFTWARE/MICROSOFT/WINDOWS/CURRENTVERSION/RUN`. See if there is a reference there. And if so, delete it from the right window. Or you can do a search within Regedit's EDIT / FIND and look for GAMEDRVR. Working with the registry can be dangerous, so you might want to make use of a program that specializes in finding applications that load automatically, such as HiJack This!: http://www.spyware_info.com/~merijn/downloads.html, which will identify the items and how they are launched. Unlike anti-virus and anti-spyware applications, HiJack This! makes absolutely no value judgement as to whether an item is good, bad, or indifferent. If you don't recognize

an item, copy and paste the entire log from the scan into any of the HiJack This! support sites as a request for help posting. Within a short time you will get an analysis. If you need faster turn-around, try doing a Google search on the questionable item - more often than not you will find the item described within the first couple of hits and be able to make a value judgement.

Q. My XP machine won't boot, it reports that a critical file has been lost or corrupted. If I start in Safe Mode (by pressing F8) it reports a similar error, and then forces me into "Load Last Known Good Configuration" and reports that it has recovered the system. However, that version is also bad. So how do I get to a point where I can boot?

A. You are going to have to boot XP from a CD so that you can run a repair utility. This will require a specially constructed CD known as a PE CD (Preinstalled Environment) such as found and described at <http://www.nu2.nu/pebuilder/>

A preinstalled environment CD must be assembled by the end user with his licensed copy of Windows available for providing system files, and can only be created on a working machine, of course. So you will need to find a working machine with a CD burner to create your PE CD. In addition to the bootable image, there are also plug-ins available for such utilities as network support, working with profiles, etc.

Q. Follow-up - I have two recovery mechanisms from my computer's manufacturer (HP) - a set of 6 floppy diskettes, and a CD. Can I use these?

A. We don't recommend this, as the recovery CDs typically will restore the machine to exactly the configuration as received from the manufacturer. This means that the

drive will be wiped clean and your data lost. This process is the "last resort" - you will get your machine back with an operating system, but nothing more. Other CDs from your vendor will have the software packages (word processor, spreadsheet, etc.) that were bundled with the machine. But your data files will be gone.

Q. My boot device sequence keeps changing. The sequence I want is floppy, CD, then SATA hard disk. But it randomly changes to "No Boot Device". The motherboard is about a year old, and is by ASUS.

A. It "sounds" like it is looking for an EIDE hard drive, since you have an EIDE controller for the CD drive. Another suggestion was that the SATA drive might be taking time to spin up to speed and hasn't gotten into the ready-state by the time it is called upon to boot. Lastly, one member reported hearing on a radio program of a similar problem where the BIOS clear memory jumper had to be shorted for several hours to clear out an erroneous setting. The general consensus was to post the problem on ASUS's site. <http://support.asus.com/default.aspx>

Q. Establishing a connection on my DSL service takes a long time. It may take a minute or so from the time I provide my logon name and password. I use SBC/Yahoo!

A. Further questioning uncovered that the logon and password were being given not for e-mail, but for the DSL account. However, the configuration is that there is a DSL/Cable Modem router between the PC and the DSL Modem. When this is the case, you do not need (or want) any special software on the PC for establishing the connection. Instead, the parameters for the connection should be entered into the router on a one time basis (in the PPPoE logon screen) and the router will establish and maintain the connection. You will be "always on". The computer then makes use of the connection already established by the router. In your configuration it appears that you are making the connection request and timing out, falling through, and then inheriting the connection already established. Check your router's manual for how

to set up the router and then disable the connection-specific software on the computer. Some routers come with an installation CD. The typical process is to connect the computer to the modem directly and establish the connection "the old way". Then run the installation CD which examines the configuration and copies it a temporary installation file. You then put the router between the computer and the modem, and the installation program then copies the configuration to the router and perhaps disables the now unneeded software on the computer.

Q. I need to create a web-site where people can submit information, yet I want to insure that the site is immune to viruses. What operating system should I use to guarantee no viruses?

A. There isn't any. Most viruses are found spreading via the Windows family of operating systems, but that is only because it is the most prevalent O/S out there. In follow-up questioning you indicated that you are looking to provide a service where people would be submitting files. Let's suppose that your web-site is hosted on a Linux platform. If so, it would be unaware of a virus in a Windows executable file posted, unless you had a Linux-based A/V package that scanned for Windows viruses. The programs on the host machine wouldn't be infected, but the infected file would cause problems with any Windows machine that subsequently downloaded the file and allowed it to be executed.

Q. I have a USB printer that I want to share between two Macs. I do not currently have a network.

A. You could work with a USB-based "A/B" switch. Or if you ever implement a network, which would give your other capabilities such as file sharing, you could do so with a router device that has a USB printer port, or a USB print sharing device connected to your router or hub. The "A/B" switch is the simplest and least expensive method.

BRUCE PRESTON is president of *West Mountain Systems*, a consultancy in Ridgefield, CT specializing in database applications. A DACS director, Bruce also leads the Access SIG. Members may send tech queries to Bruce at askdacs@dacs.org.

SIG Notes, Continued from page 13

puter to another using iTunes, but with Terminal we could see the file structure on the iPod drive, and how it might be possible to copy song files back to a computer. You might have a legitimate need to do this if your computer hard disk crashed and your iPod contained the only copy of your song files.

We also explained podcasting and the new podcast feature of iTunes. Podcasts are just downloaded MP3 audio files that contain a talk or music program that you can listen to either on your computer or MP3 player. Since you've previously downloaded the podcast, you don't have to be connected to the Internet at the time you listen to the podcast. You can subscribe to a podcast using various applications, or the new iTunes 4.9 feature, and get updated episodes to listen to. With iTunes you can either use the Podcast link in the iTunes Music Store, or you might find them on the Web with a URL that you can enter under the iTunes Advanced menu, Subscribe to Podcast. Podcasts are now a separately managed category in iTunes 4.9, where you can keep track of what episodes you've already listened to, which ones to keep, and which ones to sync with your iPod.

We also got a question on converting music files from one uncompressed format (AIFF) to another, for example, Apple lossless encoding. Depending on the file type of the song you want to convert, you should see a Convert option under the iTunes Advanced menu.

FREE CLASSIFIEDS

DACS members may publish noncommercial, computer-related classified ads in *dacs.doc* at no charge. Ads may be placed electronically by fax or by modem, or hard-copy may be submitted at our monthly general meeting. Fax your ads to Charlie Bovaird at 203 792-7881.

Leave hard-copy classifieds with Charlie, Marc, or whoever is tending the members' table at the meeting.

For Sale. HP P920 19" CRT 1280x1024 resolution - \$30.00

Samsung SyncMaster 512n 15" Flat Panel - \$75.00

HP 200i DVD+RW Drive - \$20.00

Contact: Jeff Setaro @ 203-748-6748 or jasetaro@mags.net

Web Site gets a face-lift

On August 16, 2005, the DACS Web Committee held a meeting at the DACS Resource Center to launch the new DACS site. Present were Scott Preston, Bruce Preston, Jeff Setaro, Anna Collens, Jim Scheef, and Sean Henderson. A review of the site was done before the meeting by each attendee.

At meetings in June and July of the Web Design SIG, the group focused on re-design issues. Anna Collens, leader of the SIG, performed the design tasks.

Jeff Setaro had suggested that the Meetings & Events Page should be moved to the About DACS section of the site. A link to the page was placed there, as well as in the Monthly General Meetings page, where it was originally located.

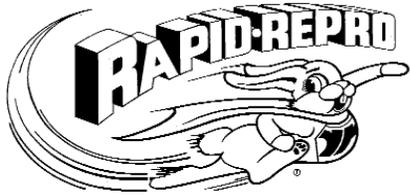
Sean Henderson created our Calendar template, and edited the file names that were originally pointing to the old DACS site. A new feature on our DACS Calendar includes being able to look into the upcoming months for SIG Meeting Dates and General Meeting Dates.

Scott Preston mentioned that the Newsletter Page for the site needed to be edited and the monthly content needed to be placed in proper areas. The August Newsletter was added after the meeting.

We would like to thank everyone who was involved in the redesign and launch of the new DACS site.

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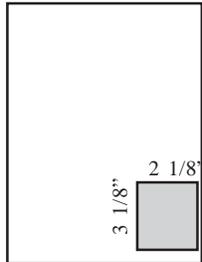
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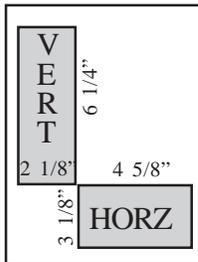
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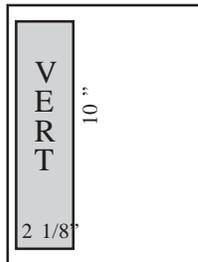
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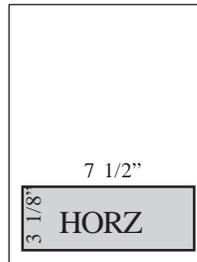
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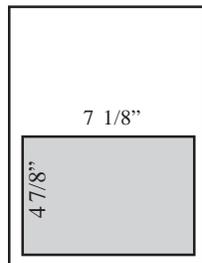
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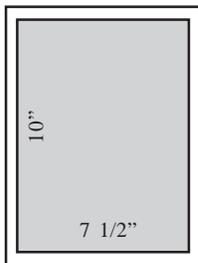
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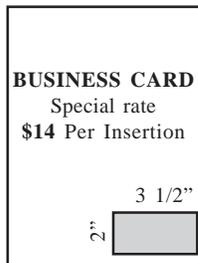
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Danbury Area Computer Society is a non-profit corporation organized under section (501)(C)(3) of the US Tax Code. Its purpose is to promote education, knowledge sharing, networking and communication between users of personal computers. DACS is an all volunteer organization, with no employees. The major source of income is member dues. Members can volunteer to become instructors, lecturers, DACS officers and board members, committee members, or SIG leaders.

We sponsor or participate in community support projects by collecting, repairing, and redistributing used computer equipment and software to community service providers such as schools, libraries, and patient/client support groups. DACS members provide pickup, refurbishing, installation, and training assistance as needed. Firms or individuals with equipment to donate should leave a message on the DACS Infoline (203-748-4330). or send an email to recycling@dacs.org.

The Voice for Joanie program was created in 1992 through the initiative of DACS member, Shirley Fredlund. This program provides computer-assisted speech for victims of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis ("Lou Gehrig's Disease"). DACS members have contributed volunteer time and technical assistance since the program began. Voice for Joanie and DACS have earned national computer industry recognition and financial assistance for this vital collaboration.

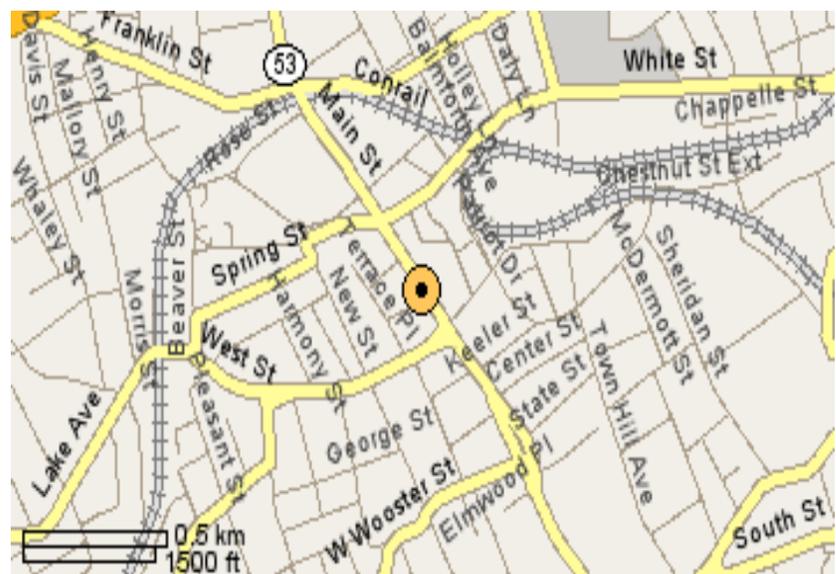
Our general meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month in the Danbury Hospital Auditorium at 7 p.m. These meetings are open to the public. The main presentation is scheduled from 8-9:30, preceded by casual networking, announcements and Random Access, an informal question and answer session. A free product raffle is often held at the conclusion of the main presentation.

In addition to the general meeting, DACS sponsors many special interest groups (SIGs) where members can learn and share information about a specific topic. Each SIG plans its own meeting schedule and program topics.

Our newsletter, *dacs.doc* is published monthly for our members, and mailed to arrive before the general meeting. It features articles written by members and others on timely topics including product and software reviews, issues and trends in personal computing and "how-to" articles on sound, video, digital photography, etc. In addition, each issues includes the calendar of meetings, announcements on SIGs and other DACS events. *dacs.doc* has won numerous prizes over the years for its design and content.

Through its activities, DACS offers numerous opportunities to network both professionals and computer hobbyists. Our Special Interest Groups are an excellent way for members to both learn and share application or hardware knowledge. Any DACS member can form a special interest group on any topic where there is interest. Most SIGs meet in our Resource Center in downtown Danbury.

If you have concerns, requests, or suggestions regarding DACS or its programs, please contact dacsprez@dacs.org. DACS officers and board members' phone numbers are listed on page 3 of *dacs.doc*.



The DACS Resource Center is in Ives Manor, Lower Level, 198 Main Street, Danbury, CT 06810 (203-748-4330).



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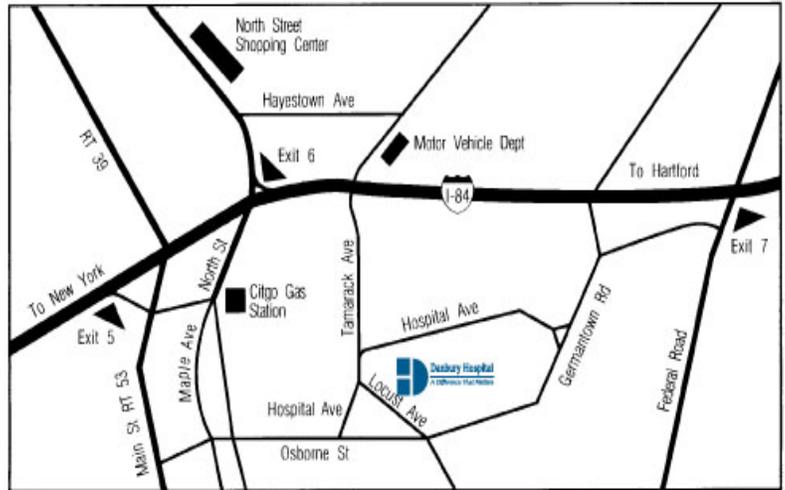
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