

You shouldn't need a Ph.D in engineering and computer science to create a smart house. At our next meeting, find out how home integration technology is advancing the art of leisure living, and get an idea how you might add the bells and whistles you need in your home with a little spare time and an intelligent design.



President's File



PRESIDENTIAL RAMBLINGS

Be warned, this column is going to be quick and messy, I have a tee in about an hour and I'm forgoing my regular pre-round warm-up so that I can pen this column.

Ok, now that I've gotten the disclaimer out of the way, let's get it on...

Before I get into the nuts and bolts of this months column I'd like to take a moment to congratulate the 2006 Masters Campion, Phil Mickelson... Congratulations Phil, I can't think of a better or more deserving champion.

Upcoming Events

- "Patch Tuesday" – May 9th. Don't forget to visit the Microsoft update site. (<http://update.microsoft.com>)
- LPGA Sybase Classic – May 15-21, Wykagyl Country Club, New Rochelle, NY. (<http://www.sybaseclassic.com/>).
- SC Forum – May 15-17, Westin Resort, Hilton Head, SC; (<http://www.scmagazine.com/us/events>).
- Buick Championship – June 26 - July 2, TPC at River Highlands, Cromwell, CT. (<http://buickchampionship.com>).

Dues Increase?

DACS, like many organizations, is wrestling with increased operating costs. Right now roughly 80 percent of our dues go towards producing and mailing our newsletter, *dacs.doc*. The remaining 20 percent go to cover our other operating costs, including insurance, telephone,

Internet service and security for the resource center.

Unfortunately, at the end of the day the numbers just don't add up and we're operating at a loss. Consequently, the Board of Directors is considering whether to institute a moderate dues increase or eliminating our printed newsletter.

I'm not entirely fond of either option, but our current dues structure is about 10 years old and probably needs to be adjusted... Before we make a final decision we'd like to hear your comments. Please feel free to contact me at jasetaro@mags.net or jasetaro@yahoo.com.

Windows Vista

Windows Vista is coming... Yes, I know January is a ways off but it's never too early to start planning for what is going to be a major upgrade to Windows.

One of the questions that needs to be answered during migration playing is what are the hardware requirements? I've spent the good chunk of the last couple of days trying to answer that question. Here's what I've been able to piece together.

According to information posted on Microsoft's web site, "Windows Vista Capable PCs need to pass the current certification requirements for Designed for Windows XP logo. In addition, these PCs need the following combination of essential PC hardware for good overall Windows Vista performance:

- CPU — PC systems should have a modern CPU.
- RAM — PC systems should have 512MB of memory or more.
- GPU — PC systems should have a DirectX 9 class graphics processor."

What exactly is a "modern CPU"? The answer seems to be, at a minimum, an Intel Pentium 4 with Hyper-Threading or an AMD Athlon 64 processor for desktops, and an Intel Pentium M or AMD Turion 64 Processor for laptops.

Should I upgrade my current system or buy a new one? From what I've read, if your computer was manufactured in the last 12 – 18 months, you should be able to upgrade to Windows Vista without problems. You may need to add memory or upgrade your video card, depending on your current system configuration.

If your current computer is more than 18 months old I'd give serious consideration to replacing it once Windows Vista is released.

If you're thinking about a new computer in the next few months I'd suggest the following basic configurations to insure its Windows Vista ready.

PRESIDENT'S FILE, *Continued on page 4*

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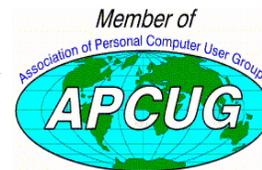
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Don Neary
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HelpLine

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

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Directors' Notes

A regular meeting of your Board of Directors was held at the Resource Center on Monday, April 10, 2006. Present were Messrs. Bovaird, Corzo, Gallichotte, Henderson, Leifels, Preston, Scheef, Setaro and Yates. Also present was Allan Ostergren. President Jeff Setaro presided and Secretary Lisa Leifels kept the record. Minutes of the last meeting held on March 13, 2006 were approved.

Treasurer Charles Bovaird reported current cash assets of \$12,091.21, consisting of total bank and postal accounts in the amount of \$12,042.66, plus postage on hand of \$48.55. Subtracting a liability of prepaid dues in the amount of \$5,629.00 left a net equity of \$6,462.21. He also reported that there are 334 members.

On May 2nd, David Freda will do a Whole House Integration presentation. On June 6th, Dave Marra will talk about new Apple Hardware and Software. On July 11th David Goldberg and Shirley Fredlund will discuss the Voice for Jonie and MyTobii Eye Control Assistive Technology.

Jamie is currently negotiating with Microsoft to do a presentation; he needs to give them three available dates. He also reported that the manager of Best Buy is willing to do a presentation on HDTV, TIVO and other emerging technologies.

Jeff Setaro recommended a few changes to the DACS website to draw more attention to the upcoming meeting and less to last months meeting. He suggested putting information about the upcoming meeting directly on the homepage, instead of the box with the prior meeting review.

Bruce Preston recommended we table purchasing a laptop, until Microsoft's new operating system Vista is out. Jim Scheef thought a good project for the PC Maintenance SIG, would be to upgrade the hardware and software of an existing desktop in the Resource Center for Richard Corzo to use at the MacIntosh SIG.

Sean Henderson feels that we need to work on making DACS more visible locally. He brought up the idea of creating bumper stickers with the DACS website address on it. Sean offered to put together some samples and email them to the board.

Jamie Yates suggested the idea of rewarding DACS members who bring in new members by extending their membership by two months. Jeff Setaro recommended we investigate increasing the DACS mem-

DIRECTORS' NOTES, Continued on page 5

Desktop:

- CPU: Intel Pentium 4 6xx series, Intel Pentium D 9xx series, AMD Athlon 64 or AMD Athlon X2
- RAM: At least 1GB
- Video: A discrete ATI or NVIDIA based video card with at least 128MB of video memory.

Notebook:

- CPU: Intel Core Solo or Core Duo, or AMD Turion 64
- RAM: At least 1GB
- Video: A discrete ATI or NVIDIA based GPU with 64 or 128MB of video memory.

For more information on Windows Vista, visit: <http://www.microsoft.com/windowsvista/>.

Boot Camp

Apple computer has released a utility that helps owners of Apple's new Intel Core Duo-based systems install and run Windows XP on their Macs.

Before installing Boot Camp, you need to install the latest version of the MacOS (10.4.6) and update your Mac's firmware to the newest version. I'd also suggest backing up all of your important files. Once you've done that, you can download and install Boot Camp.

Boot Camp will guide you through the process of creating a drivers CD you will need when installing Windows. Then, it will guide you through the process of creating separate Mac and Windows partitions on your hard disk. Finally, Boot camp starts up your Windows installation disk (you need a full retail copy of Windows XP Home or Professional).

A couple of caveats:

- 1) Boot Camp is a Beta or test version, so there is no technical support for it. I haven't seen reports of wide spread problems, but I'd exercise caution when using it. Personally, I wouldn't recommend installing it on a production system.
- 2) Certain Mac features aren't supported under Windows; currently the Apple Remote Control (IR), Apple Wireless keyboard & mouse and Apple USB Modem don't work under Windows. The same is true for the MacBook Pro's sudden motion sensor, ambient light sensor, and built-in insight camera. Hopefully drivers for those components will be available by the time the final version of Boot Camp ships with the next version of the Mac OS.

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Meeting Review

Smart Computing 101

By Lisa Leifels

IN CASE YOU haven't noticed, Jamie Yates has been a major contributor to DACS lately. It may not be that obvious, but as DACS' VP of Programs, he is the one working behind the scenes to come up with the topics and speakers for the General Meetings. A few months ago his duties expanded to include preparing and presenting the "What's News" section. And if that wasn't enough, at the April 2006 General Meeting he presented the topic of System Maintenance.

Anyone who attended can tell you it was time well spent. We all learned what steps Jamie takes to prevent data loss and keep his computer running smoothly. He has never been hit with a virus, other than the test virus he intentionally loaded onto his computer. He even gave away the valuable URLs to the newsletters he subscribes to and the other information sources he uses.

Jamie's computer is on 24/7 and in the middle of the night, while most of us are sleeping, his computer is checking for viruses and spyware, defragging, and backing up his files, all in a well-thought-out order. The presentation included a photo of his home office, where it was helpful to visually see his APC Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS) and the rest of the hardware he was describing. You couldn't help but envy how tidy it was. Who knew Jamie Yates and Felix Unger would have so much in common.

On the second Tuesday of every month, Jamie runs Microsoft Update to download the latest Windows and Office updates from Microsoft. He periodically goes to the Websites for his remaining software to check for updates and also checks for new drivers every few months. Jamie has modified certain system settings in Internet Explorer and Outlook to make his computer more secure. He has turned off the Messenger service and changed the folder options to show file extensions and sys-

tem files. He uses both the Internet Explorer and Avant pop-up blockers.

Jamie has set up a message rule to delete the spam that his ISP has detected. He also has installed a Bayesian filter for the remaining email he receives, which he said works pretty well after some training.

As for security, Jamie has Norton Anti-virus to check for viruses. He also uses Microsoft Defender, Ad-Aware and Spybot Search and Destroy to look for spyware. As some of you may remember from last summer's meeting, Jamie encrypts his passwords and private information with the

Roboform software, and uses the free version of ZoneAlarm for a software firewall.

Each week, Jamie does a full system backup to a second internal hard disk, and supplements this with additional daily backups. Every three weeks he copies his backups to an external USB drive for extra protection. He uses an APC UPS, to protect him from power failures.

Jamie was quick to point out what else he probably should do, such as store the backups at another location. He mentioned he could use Firefox, instead of Internet Explorer, use a registry cleaning software, or switch to text-only email. It would be nice if we lived in a world, where none of this was necessary.

Now, if we can only put all of this knowledge to good use, we'll be better equipped to answer the questions raised in the "Ask DACS" session. In March we were lucky to have Jamie's son Scott as the presenter. In April, Jamie was the featured speaker. Now I'm beginning to wonder if next month's "Whole House Integration" presenter may somehow be a long lost relative. Based on what we've seen so far, it would be a good thing.

LISA LEIFELS is DACS Secretary, and a member of the Board.



Meeting Preview

Whole House Integration

By Jamie Yates

THE MAY 2 DACS General Meeting will feature a presentation on "Whole House Integration". Our presenter for the evening will be David Freda, Vice President, Audio Visual Systems.

What is whole house integration? One of the hottest topics of the day. Did you ever wonder how to automate a house using 21st Century technology? Everything from Audio Visual equipment to lighting and heating and cooling.

David's session will cover the items below along with plenty of time for questions.

- What is home integration?
- What do we integrate and why?
- How it works.
- User interfaces - the stuff we play with.
- Various control systems - the brains behind it all.
- The Subsystems to be controlled.
- Programmers - the key ingredient.
- Graphical design
- Design details and documentation
- Implementation and installation

David has been working with Audio Video Systems for close to twenty years in the custom electronics industry. He is a self taught technical geek with a passion for intricate control systems and is completely jaded about the size or items included in installations. He has worked in some of the biggest homes in the area and for some of the wealthiest people in the world. His firm has done installations around the world including the Caribbean, Asia, and Western and Eastern Europe.

As the name of the firm implies the company deals with AV systems. But as the industry has matured over the years they are doing more elaborate home integration systems. His role at the firm has drastically changed from a stock boy, when first hired at the company, to Vice President in charge of Westchester and Connecticut technical design and sales. On a daily basis his role is to develop technical solutions for high end residential in-

stallations. This involves the use of computer based programs created specifically to design, develop and program the various control subsystems. The various programs used daily range from Office applications to AutoCAD. The average sized house the firm works on is 12,000 sq. ft., which means there are a lot of computer controlled systems that require attention, from lights, to heat and cooling systems, in addition to the AV systems.

DACS General Meetings are held the first Tuesday of the month at Danbury Hospital auditorium. Events begin at 7 p.m. with general networking, Ask DACS and What's News. Club business starts at 7:30, followed by a short break and the featured presentation at 8:00.

All General Meetings are free and open to the public so invite anyone you know who would be interested in this topic.



President's File, Continued from page 4

For more information about Boot Camp visit: <http://www.apple.com/macosx/bootcamp/>

End Note

That's pretty much it for this month, the starter is calling my foursome, so I have to head for the first tee. Send your questions, comments and book recommendations to me at jasetaro@mags.net or jasetaro@yahoo.com.

—JEFF SETARO

Directors' Notes, Continued from page 3

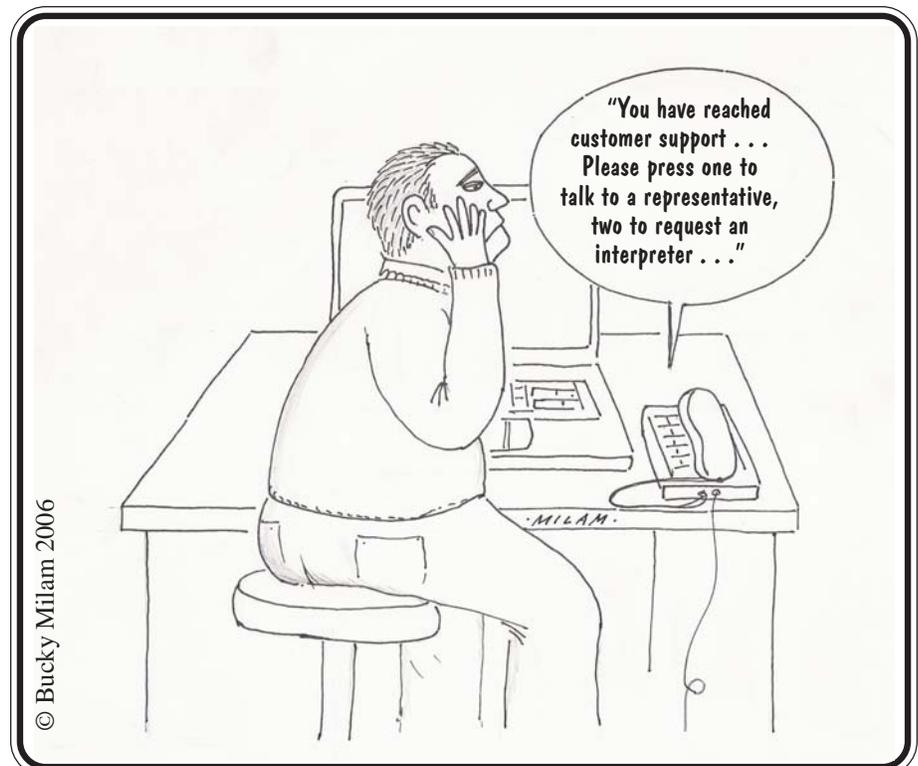
bership cost, to offset the growing expense of producing and mailing out the newsletter. He will address this topic in the President's column.

John Lansdale has agreed to temporarily fill in being the SIG leader for the Linux SIG, now that Bill Keane has moved out of the area.

Allan Ostergren asked if we could stream a short video about the Voice for Joanie on the DACS website. Jeff Setaro suggested putting the website on the YouTube.com website and linking to it from the DACS website.

John Gallichotte reported that he is in the process of editing the videotape of the April General Meeting. He also said that Charter Cable is willing to show it on their public access channel.

—Lisa Leifels



What's News

April, 2006

By Jamie Yates

The format of What's News is still evolving, so if you have any suggestions on changes or improvements please send an email to vpprograms@dacs.org. Topics should be related to computers or electronics in general, and include a brief description, along with a URL that provides further details. Past segments can be found in our Newsletter archives.

Description: Bart's Preinstalled Environment (BartPE). A bootable Windows CD or DVD. Made from the original Windows XP installation/setup CD. A complete Win32 environment with network support, a graphical user interface (800x600) and FAT/NTFS/CDFS file system support. Very handy for burn-in testing systems with no OS, rescuing files to a network share, virus scans and so on. This will replace any DOS boot disk in no time!

Source: Nu2, <http://www.nu2.nu/pebuilder/>.

Description: Do you want to know what a (your) house is worth? Or find homes for sale? Or services in a given neighborhood? See a detailed aerial view?

Source: Zillow, <http://www.zillow.com/>; Homepages, <http://www.homepages.com/>.

Description: Charging for email or Internet traffic. Phone companies are pushing to charge for bandwidth usage; so are AOL and Yahoo. Paid traffic would get priority and certain guarantees

Source: Technology Review, http://www.technologyreview.com/TR/wtr_16428,323,p1.html; The Register, <http://www.redherring.com/Article.aspx?a=15603&hed=AOL%2C+Yahoo+to+Charge+for+Email>.

Description: Want to know some services that can be turned off? It can help performance and risk of exploit. But read the warning first. Pretty detailed instructions.

Source: JasonN's Blog, http://www.jasonn.com/turning_off_unnecessary_services_on_windows_xp

Description: Identify unknown files quickly

- Identify MD-5 Hashes
- Identify SHA-1 Hashes
- Identify Files by Name

Download the Free FileAdvisor Utility (Requires registration). Identifies product and owner of file plus other information

Source: Bit9, <http://fileadvisor.bit9.com/services/search.aspx>.

Description: Writely - The Web word processor.

- A web based word processor now owned by Google
- Sign up currently restricted Zoho Writer – a better Writely
- Also offers other web based office products free/fee

Both are in beta and free

Source: Writely, <http://www2.writely.com/info/WritelyOverFlowWelcome.htm>; Zoho Writer, <http://www.zoho.com/>.

Description: Want to know what Microsoft security alerts have been issued? Want to know what fixes will be available on Patch Tuesday? Want to see them online? Want to receive an email or use an RSS feed? Want other Microsoft Newsletters?

Source: Microsoft Security Alerts - requires a free Passport account, <http://www.microsoft.com/athome/security/update/bulletins/default.msp>; Or Microsoft Profile Center – requires a free Passport account, <https://profile.microsoft.com/RegSysProfileCenter/default.aspx?lcid=1033>

Description: Want to try Linux? Don't want to install it on your system? Use a stand alone Linux CD. Can be used for certain system problems or just education. Site lists 40+ available distributions

Source: DistroWatch, <http://distrowatch.com/dwres.php?resource=cd>

Description: Do you have, use, or are thinking of a wireless network? What should you do to make it secure? Read some of the following:

Source: About.com, <http://compnetworking.about.com/od/wirelesssecurity/tp/wifisecurity.htm>; Microsoft, <http://www.microsoft.com/athome/security/online/homewireless.msp>

Description: Microsoft buys FolderShare. Share files, photos, and home videos. Share files up to 2 GB in size Unlimited file transfers - no limits on quantity or size of files transferred. Any file type - files are synced and transferred in their original format. Now in beta, Free to use

Source: Microsoft FolderShare, <https://www.foldershare.com/>.

Description: U3: Portable Programs on a USB Drive. Lets you run apps on any PC without leaving data on machine Data, and personal settings all reside on the portable drive Applications must be U3-compliant (many available) Requires Windows 2000 or XP system

Source: U3, <http://www.u3.com/>; PCWorld, <http://www.pcworld.com/news/article/0,aid,123266,00.asp>

Description: Nissan Develops Gas Pedal Safety Feature. Uses radar and computer to judge speed and distance. Senses head on collision and gas pedal raises against foot. Break kicks in when foot raises. A buzzer also sounds Tentatively called the "Magic Bumper."

Source: Forbes, <http://www.forbes.com/entrepreneurs/feeds/ap/2006/03/14/ap2595022.html>

Description: Two good to pass up

Source: One interactive cat, <http://www.broenink-art.nl/maukie2.swf>. And if Microsoft designed packaging for Ipod <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=36099539665548298&q=microsoft+ipod>.

Book Review

Computing Versus Computers – a book review

By Jim Scheef

THE BOOK BEING reviewed is *The Universal History of Computing, From the Abacus to the Quantum*

Computer, by Georges Ifrah, 2001, published by John Wiley & Sons, Inc. That title is more than just a mouthful; it is a real clue that this is not your ordinary computer history book. This is an academic work written in the “English style.” The organization is in disjointed blocks that might make sense to the author but are hard for the reader to follow. Before we go much further, let me tell you that this is not a book you are likely to read. First, it’s impossible to find in Borders or any top-tier

bookstore (but is available online). Second, it is awkward to read, and last, it’s not really about computers!

So what is it about and why am I writing this review? Because I found the concepts presented to be fascinating and I plan to tell you everything you need to know right here. What I present here are facts as contained in the book. Certainly, I have not independently verified any of this, so if you think something is wrong, I suggest that you get the book and check the source identified by the author. The bibliography takes 16 pages.

The book doesn’t start with the integrated circuit, or the transistor, or even as the title suggests, with the abacus. No, this book starts with the invention of writing and numbers! Skipping the first 20-30 thousand years of this process we arrive at the first number system developed in 4th millennium BCE by “the people of Sumer” [Samaria?]. This was an oral system, using a base 60 passed on to us by the Babylonians, the Greeks and the Arabs. We still use it today for minutes and seconds of time and angles. Near the end of the 3rd millennium BCE, the Semites of Mesopotamia adopt a cuneiform decimal notation. Thank God that all humans have ten fingers because these are very handy for counting, so a decimal base 10

number system does seem a natural byproduct. The people of Sumer developed the abacus during this era, abandoning an older system of rods.

By the end of the next millennium, a positional number notation developed. Positional notation is one of the fundamental concepts that enable everything else. The other really fundamental concept is zero. The first known use of a zero was in Babylonia (where else?) in the 3rd century BCE. However they did not recognize it as a number. That takes many hundreds of years before mathematicians in

India pull together a numerical notation using nine digits plus the zero to hold places. This occurred from 400 to 900 CE! In other words, this happened during the time that the Romans were hobbled by their arcane system of numerals (which for some inexplicable reason we retain for large clocks, corner stones in buildings and movie copyrights). The Arabs, a nomadic people engaged in trade, spread the system we call “Arabic numerals” from India to the western world. They recognized a superior system when they saw it. During this period, the Indian number system also spreads to Southeast Asia. In the twelfth century, Arabic numerals with the zero are introduced in Europe, where the new system is vigorously resisted. In 1654, Blaise Pascal defines a general number system to base m where m is greater than or equal to 2.

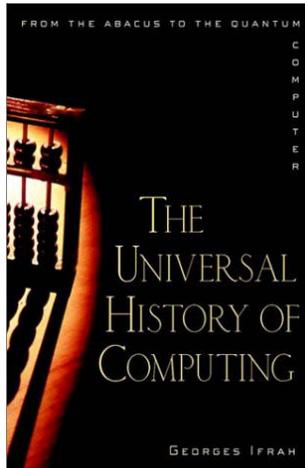
From here the book moves into the history of algebra, calculus and the developments that eventually made computers possible. Like in 1679 when Leibniz proposed a binary calculating machine using moving balls. He never built it. The book now shifts gears and discusses the development of all sorts of automata – machines from clockworks to mechanical animals that start

in ancient Greece and evolve in Renaissance Europe. People all over the world realized that calculation was an arduous task fraught with error and just about any aid to this process was welcomed. So we get to examine the progress in everything from clocks to electricity. Remember, many analog computers (calculators, really) were powered by electric motors. Babbage’s goal was to power calculation with steam. The earliest “super computers” were people. Calculating prodigies were known throughout the years. In the modern era, calculating tools begin with Napier’s Bones, a set of ten rods calibrated to form multiplication tables. Of course, these and similar tools were aids, not mechanical calculators.

Why did it take so long to develop mechanical calculators? Well, ask Babbage who tried in 1834 to design and build his “difference engine.” This device was intended to automate the production of mathematical tables such as logarithms. Babbage needed hundreds of identical gears and in the 1830’s and even into the 1850’s there was no way to produce them accurately in sufficient quantities. The accurate machine tools needed did not exist until later in the industrial revolution. Of course, there were other impediments going back into antiquity. Religion has been a force on both sides of the coin. The Arabs needed to determine which way to face Mecca so calculation was important, and on the other hand, we all know how well the Church took Galileo’s news!

So let’s get on with it. Mechanical calculators developed first to count and compute money. The first widely used calculating devices were tables used by money changers from before Roman times into the Renaissance. The tables were marked with aids to help the person doing the computing. Since few citizens could even count, accuracy was incidental. The first mechanical calculating machine was constructed in 1623 by Wilhelm Schickard, a German astronomer. Destroyed by fire only a year later, the machine he called a “calculating clock” had no impact. The book then covers Pascal, Leibniz, and others who did matter. As business developed, the need for computation led to the development of the computer—the job, of course. From the 18th century right through WWII, these were the people who performed the calculations needed by commercial businesses. As the cost of this labor became significant, businesses sought ways to make computation more efficient. The modern era saw the development of

Book Review, Continued on page 15



Special Interest Groups

SIG NOTES: May 2006

Access. Designs and implements solutions using Microsoft Access, and with SQL Server as a back-end to the database program.
Contact: Bruce Preston, 203 431-2920 (*bpreston@mags.net*).
Meets on 2nd Tuesday, 7p.m., at the DACS Resource Center.
Next meeting: May 9

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: TBA

ASP.Net. Focuses on Web site/server application program development using Microsoft Visual Studio, C#, VB, Javascript and SQL Server programming tools. Session starts with a Random Access session, followed by a programming discussion with examples.
Contact: Chuck Fizer (*cfizer@snet.net*).
Meets 1st Wednesday, 4-6 p.m., at the DACS Resource Center.
Next Meeting: May 3

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: May 18

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: May 31

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: May 18

Jobs. Networking and discussion of the jobs search environment.
Contact: Charles Bovaird, 203-792-7881 (*aam@mags.net*).
Meets by e-mail.
Next meeting: TBA

Linux. Provides Help in installing and maintaining the Linux operating system. Also of interest to Apple owners using OS X.
Contact: John Lansdale 914-533-2002
Meets 3rd Wednesday, 7:30 pm at the DACS Resource Center.
Next Meeting: May 17

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: May 4

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: May 15

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: May 25

Server. Explores Back Office server and client applications, including Win NT Servers and MS Outlook.
Contact: Jim Scheef (*jscheef@telemarksys.com*)
Meets 2nd Thursday, 7 p.m., at the DACS Resource Center.
Next meeting: May 11

VB.Net, Visual Basic-6. Focuses on Smart Client Windows application development using Visual Studio, VB, C# and SQL Server programming tools. Starts with a Random Access session followed by Object Oriented discussions and programming with examples.
Contact: Chuck Fizer, 203 798-9996 (*cfizer@snet.net*) or Jim Scheef, 860 355-8001 (*JScheef@Telemarksys.com*).
Meets 1st Wednesday, 7p.m., at the DACS Resource Center, preceded 1 hour with a shared cost pizza snack.
Next Meeting: May 3

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: May 29

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: May 16

SIG News & Events

ASP.Net. The ASP.Net session commenced with random access questions regarding reporting tools. Which is the best tool for developing a check writing report program. As Jim Scheef will always say, "The best report writing tool is the one you know." We've had experience with both Crystal Reports and Active Reports for .Net. Our experience with Crystal Reports was rather negative and pretty much influenced by the problems we had with their C syntax coding style. We also had time consuming problems implementing their .Net classes that seemed not to conform to the .Net norm. So when we implemented Active reports for .Net and the implementation worked correctly the first time, it was the impressive tool for us.

We discussed report capability from Data Dynamics, Inc., in our opening round of random access questions. Active Reports for .NET is a capability that has distinct advantages over Crystal Reports. A developer is less likely to generate bugs-time consuming problems with Active Reports. Active Reports for .NET is modeled with the look and feel of the report capability in MS Access and more can be learned at www.datadynamics.com. Data Dynamics provides a trial version of the tool that supports all of its features. An unlicensed trial version prints a watermark that indicates that it is a trial version. Purchase the product and install the license, the watermark disappears.

SIG Notes, Continued on page 15

May 2006

Danbury Area Computer Society

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday																																																																																																								
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Texas Hold-Em an Evolutionary Approach, Part 5

By Richard Ten Dyke

“ITAIN’T THE CARDS you git, it’s how you plays ‘em that counts.” said Jeb as he pulled the chips from the center of the table and started stacking. “I had a purdy good hand too.” said Louie, who had just tossed in three kings as he folded.” “I know,” replied Jeb, “that’s why I raised.”

Now, that dialog, which I made it up, was based on actual events. Once I was Jeb, and bluffed the shirt off a guy who had a really good hand, and once I was Louie and someone did the same to me. It’s when the weak hand beats the strong hand in this game, and it happens quite frequently— well, at least sometimes. Louie’s last name is Loser, and Louie is in every game. If you don’t know who he is, then he’s you.

One of the ironies of this game is that a good hand can damage your finances. It seems to be a contradiction, but is really common sense. With a good hand you are more likely to be pulled into betting large amounts, but you can still lose to a better hand. Because you know this, you might also fold, as Louie did.

A poker player who only plays his hand, which is to say he bets on good hands and folds on bad, can become Louie the Loser in any game. His opponents can learn that he can be bluffed out of his socks by raising against him until he drops out. OK, there might be a Louie the Loser who stays in no matter what, always to the bitter end—to “keep ‘em honest” as they say, but that is a different syndrome. Reminder: there is more than one way to lose at poker.

The task before us is to create a machine that plays poker not like a machine, one that would be difficult to predict and difficult to win against. We are not there yet, but there is progress.

Earlier, we described a poker simulator that allows a human to play a simplified game against a computer. The odds are stacked against the human, but the human could beat the odds by using good judgment.



Then we looked at a mechanized way of evaluating a hand, a necessary step for a machine to play a good game. We developed a method to determine the probability that any given hand would win against a random opponent. This turns out to be an effective and relatively simple task, but it is compute intensive.

The current goal is to use that technique to build a new game simulator (without a human interface) that plays poker tournaments using machine-generated players and allows for variation in playing strategies. So far, we can report on a simulator that only allows the players to play their own cards; that is, they do not take the opponents into account. This may be unsatisfactory as a final product, but it is a necessary step to get the programs debugged and to see if anything interesting develops.

The results of this phase are now complete, and they are in line with expectations.

Each of the simulations that we have completed so far is the result of playing about 500,000 games. Actually, 500,000 may not enough to get consistent and reliable results. With my computer, one complete run of 500,000 games takes several hours because the routine that calculates the quality of the hand is compute intensive.

The results confirm that there is little to be learned in pre-flop betting. Much more is learned when the flop is on the table. The quality of the information improves with the next card (the turn) and with the final card (the river). The simulation results reflect this.

The quality of a hand in each betting round is specified by a number from 0 to 100. If a hand has a quality score of 75, then there is a 75 percent chance that the hand would win against another hand drawn at random. In playing the game, each player will compare his hand’s quality score with a chosen threshold value “x” at each round of betting. If q is greater than x, the player will bet. If q and x are approximately the same, the player will stay. If q is greatly less than x the player will fold. Each player has his own set of four threshold values, one for each of the four rounds of betting, pre-flop, flop, turn, and river.

In a simulation, threshold values distinguishes better players from poorer ones. However, players do not actually choose their own threshold values. Rather, they are inherited. This is the “evolution” aspect of the game. Initially, in a simulation, all players are given threshold values at random, but these change as the simulation proceeds.

The simulation draws from a pool of 32 players. A tournament consists of an evening with many tables playing. In play, each table starts with 7 players drawn at random from the pool. Each table will play 21 hands in an evening, and each evening will consist of several tables. In an evening, players can play at more than one table. Players at a table will play each hand, and bet, stay, or fold. One player, in a position which rotates around the table, must “bet blind” to start off the betting. At each of seven rounds of betting, the size of the bet doubles. This is my rule, not one of drawn from the game itself, and I use this to achieve some regularity and ease of programming. Sometimes the players will bet to the limit, and sometimes all players but the last better will fold and, the game is over before betting limit is reached.

After each evening, a best player and a worst player of the tournament are identified by the amount of winnings or losses. The worst player will leave the tournament and be replaced in the pool by a descendent of the best player. The descendent results from an imperfect cloning process. It is not perfect, or no evolution could take place. In that sense it is more like sexual reproduction than cloning. Eventually, after many tournaments, all of the original players in the pool are replaced by better players. After the completion of a large number of tournaments, we can view the profiles of the players that have evolved and which are now in the game.

This is one example of threshold values for a winning player:

Threshold: Pre-flop (35), Flop (89), Turn(34), River (10)

This tells us is that our player stays in at the Pre-Flop 65 percent (100 - 35) of the time. That is, the quality value of his hand must be greater than 35 in order to stay in the game. That is not a big hurdle to overcome. At the Flop, the player folds if the quality of the hand is less than 89. That means that he needs a very good hand to stay in. After that, if the player is still in the game, he is likely to stay to the end no matter what cards are played on the table. For this player the Flop is the main decision point of the game.

Other betting patterns also emerge, but this or similar patterns have been repeated in several simulation runs. Sometimes not. In one run, many of the players made the decision at the Turn instead of the Flop. In another run, most of the players made the big decision at the Flop, but a few remained who were very aggressive and had low thresholds at each point of the game. It is not surprising to find variations, and we can expect to see more of them as we proceed to more complex strategies.

As you can see, the players' thresholds do not reflect other factors in the game which would be important in a realistic simulation. A strategy has to take into account more than just the quality of a hand. However, we do not yet know what these factors should be or how important they may become.

We have two challenges ahead. One will be to find a way to get more games completed in a simulation run within a reasonable amount of time. The second will be to design players strategies that take into account more factors in the game, particularly bluffing. These are some of the additional factors (besides hand quality) to be considered:

About the Player:

How much money do I have left?

Should I bluff?

About the Opposing players:

Is there a strong player in the game?
A weak player?

How much money does each opposing player have?

What are their betting histories?

About the Game itself:

How many players started in the game and how many remain.

These factors should not just be used singly, but also in combination. For example, A bluffing strategy might be desirable only if there is one opposing player in the game, and only if that player has a history of folding. Of course, I am only speculating. The simulation will tell us which factors and which combinations are important and which are not. We will run simulations adding new factors—one or two at a time—to see the cumulative results of each.

A formidable task? We shall see.

RICHARD TEN DYKE has previously contributed to this newsletter on the topic of *Digital Photography and computer creativity*. He is retired from IBM and can be reached at tendyke@bedfordny.com. All opinions are his own, and he welcomes comments

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



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We've added a new feature to the
DACS General Meeting

What's News?

A 15-minute summary of the latest happenings in hi-tek, along with hints at what to look forward to in coming months. Right after Ask DACS.

Just another reason to come to the meeting. If you wait to read about it in dacs.doc, it will already be history.



Do the DACS General Meetings leave you thirsting for more? Find all that plus food for thought at the meeting after the meeting—the DACS PIG SIG.

Commentary

Circuit Rider

Version 3.10

By Jim Scheef

Value

ONE OF MY MANY computer obsessions involves collecting IBM PCjr “stuff.. Collecting things is part of human nature, especially for the male of the species. My ski collection may be more related to my inability to throw things away than a true collection, but that’s another story. The PCjr collection began as part of a collection of early IBM microprocessor-based computers (5110 Model 3, 5150, 5150r2, 5160, and the 4860 – the PCjr. From here the collection expanded to DOS non-compatibles like the Zenith Z-100 All-In-One, several early incompatible laptops, and my prize, a Seattle Gazelle (made by the company that sold DOS to Microsoft). To get back on the track that is not yet apparent, my PCjr stuff includes as many of the cartridge-based programs that I could find over the years, like the original King’s Quest from Sierra Online. Just plug in the cartridge and start exploring—no DOS needed! Many games were sold this way, just like games for Atari home computers. IBM produced both games and educational programs on cartridges.

All of this leads to my current quest—to network the IBM PCjr. Back in the early 1980’s, IBM produced and presumably sold two local area networks – the IBM PC Network and the IBM Cluster. The PC Network was a broadband network intended for businesses, while the Cluster

was intended for “the education market.” The Cluster was the “network” that included the PCjr. Actually IBM did not use that word in relation to the Cluster, so as not to confuse the business market into thinking that the PCjr was suitable for office use. As you might imagine—had you ever given it an iota of thought—documentation on these networks is just about impossible to find. So when I saw the book, *Networking with the IBM Network and Cluster*, by Michael Hurwicz, on eBay, I bought it in a heartbeat. After skimming through this book, I now understand why it took companies so long to implement local area networks. Today, we take

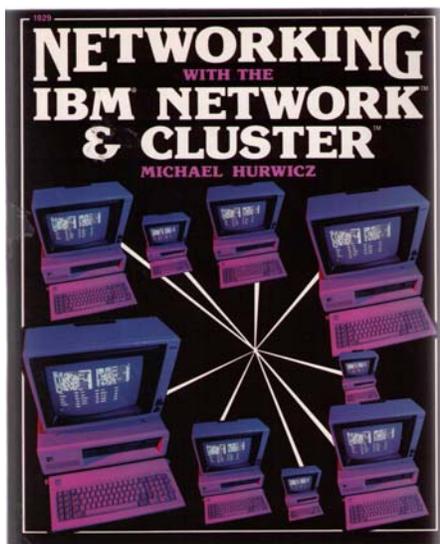
LANs for granted. It’s now the norm for even very small offices to have all of their computers on a network that allows them to share printers, disk storage and that all-important connection to the Internet. When was the last time you sat down to use a computer that was NOT connected to the Internet?

The IBM PC Network was a broadband network. What does that mean? The main thing it means is that the network itself—the hardware part—was incredibly complicated to set up. A broadband network works very much like your cable company’s network in that different radio

frequencies are used to carry different things. Like cable, a broadband network can carry video, and that was one of the selling points. A company could get more value from the cost of installing a lot of coaxial cable in the walls of their offices. Remember, we are talking about networking the original PC with 640K of RAM – max! If you think that a simpler computer made life easier, you have a short memory. One of the limitations of the IBM PC Network was that each ‘network’ could only have eight computers connected to a splitter (the pictures look similar to the splitters we use today to connect several televisions to the cable system - but bigger, of course). Something called frequency translators were needed to connect multiple network segments and attenuators and directional couplers sat in the middle. The actual data was carried in packets (like today) but the bits were encoded by modulating a radio frequency carrier wave – much like a radio station. Thank God, we moved on.

The IBM Cluster used simpler technology called “baseband.” Once again, the physical media was coaxial cable but the information was sent using a signaling technique much like ethernet over coax. Each computer was connected to the cable using a “tee.” The cable went from computer to computer with a terminator on the unused side of the last “tee” at each end of the chain. The Cluster adapter card in each computer had a set of “DIP” switches that were used to set the unique address of each computer.

Both types of networks required software on each computer. In the Cluster, much of this software was in a ROM on adapter card. The Cluster allowed for one master computer and several slaves. The intention was that most of the slaves would be PCjr’s used by students while the teacher used the master computer, an IBM XT, of course, to control the class. The slave computers did not need a hard disk because they pulled any software from the XT. Twenty-five kids simultaneously loading the same program from an XT must have been excruciatingly slow! The only



The IBM PC - Then and Now

Item	Price	Comments
IBM PC/XT	\$4800 (plus monitor and DOS)	256K RAM, 10M HD
IBM PCjr, Enhanced Edition	\$1269 (no monitor here either but BASIC was built in)	128K RAM, 1 floppy drive
IBM PC Network adapter card	\$300	
IBM Cluster adapter for PCjr	\$695	
Today’s “office grade” PC	\$800 (plus Windows)	512M RAM, 120G HD
ethernet card	\$0 (it’s built in the PC)	

plus was that programs back then were "a little" smaller than today. The Cluster had a data transmission speed rated at 375Kbps (thousand bits per second). The PC Network ran at 2Mbps. In this same era, 3Com's Ethernet ran at 10Mbps but was regarded to have a throughput closer to 3Mbps. Compare these to the 100Mbps we consider normal today in our home networks and the 1Gbps and 10Gbps networks that are becoming more common in corporations.

OK, we're getting to the point of all this. How much did all this cost? Well, the table above gives some prices.

Look at how prices have changed in 20 years and how much more you get for your money. I have no idea how much one of the "frequency translators" or a signal splitter cost, but I can guarantee that they cost much more than you paid for the router that right this minute is guarding your connection to the Internet. Today's most common network speed of 100Mbps is more than enough to stream video around the house. Soon we will have wireless networks that actually run even faster!

Other stuff

Last month I promised to talk about how to get porn for your Video iPod. I skipped it because I'm sure you figured it out on your own. Next month I plan to talk about RFID and why the DHS is looking for RFID scanners that can read a tag in a moving car. Stay tuned.

JIM SCHEEF, *is past president of DACS.*

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



Thanks!

The management

Tips & Tricks

Organizing the Favorites Menu

by Glenn Richards

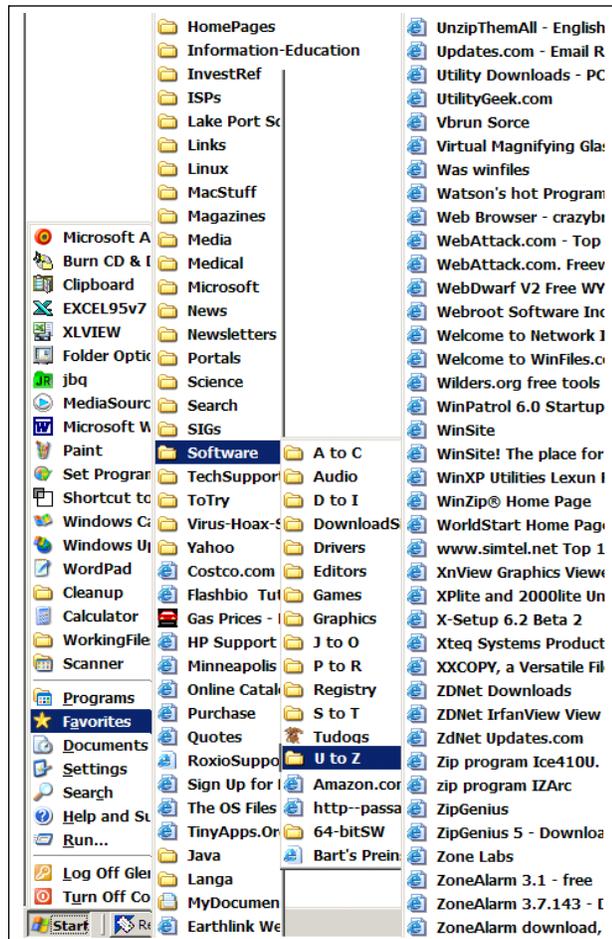
THIS IS A follow-up on a tip from Worldstart. I have been using the method for years. When you collect shortcuts to web sites like I do the

has squeezed the display horizontally to make more room for these words.

My Software folder is for web sites where I have found worthwhile programs for download. One of its subfolders is "Tudogs," a web site that has shortcuts to hundreds of free programs. I have acquired many of them for the group's CDs.

The method of creating the subfolders using Windows Explorer that I use is to have WE in a two-pane mode with the Favorites folder highlighted in the left pane. Right-click in the right pane, New, Folder, and give the folder a name of you're choosing. This method can be cascaded as far as you want to go.

The above method of organization can also be used to consolidate items in your Start, Programs menu. Use WE to open your Programs folder at C:\Documents and Settings\\Start Menu\ Programs, create subfolders for categories of menu items, and move appropriate shortcuts to this new subfolder. This can reduce the height of the Programs menu so it



Favorites menu gets difficult to manage without some organizing.

It is easy to add sub-folders to the Favorites main folder, either via the Internet Explorer menu item Favorites, or using Windows Explorer.

The figure shows a main Favorites subfolder I named "Software." Under that folder I have a subfolder named "A to C," etc. down to "U to Z." The right-most column shows some of the contents of the UtoZ subfolder.

I split the alphabetic range of the subfolders so that the height of the contents of any folder does not exceed the vertical space on the Desktop. The figure

will fit on the screen.

My Favorites folder has 1968 files (web addresses) in 136 subfolders occupying 403KB, with no web address more than two clicks away.

GLENN RICHARDS *is Emeritus Member of the Lake-Sumter Computer Society, Leesburg, FL. He can be reached at grich32(at)yahoo.com. www.lscs.us*

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.

April 2006

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. When I boot Windows XP, the start up is slow, especially when displaying the desktop icons. I've already done anti-virus and spyware checks. The icons display as generic pages, and eventually change to the appropriate icon for the application or file type. What is happening?

A. It sounds like your icon cache has been corrupted, or is full of spurious icons that you no longer need. This can happen if you use your desktop as temporary space, e.g. you save a lot of temporary files, downloads, etc. It can take Windows time to sort things out. There is an easy way to reset the cache—boot the machine in Safe Mode, let it recreate the desktop, and once the boot has completed, then restart the machine normally. Safe Mode deletes the icon cache and then assembles a new one. Another thing that can really slow down the boot process is having lots of fonts defined on the machine (in the `\Windows\Fonts` folder.) Programs such as desktop publishing programs, greeting card programs, etc., all install hundreds of fonts. If you only have one or two such programs, that isn't a problem, but if you have many, you will definitely observe performance degradation.

Safe Mode: For those unfamiliar with booting in Safe Mode - as soon as your machine finishes the POST (Power On Self Test—where you see the BIOS information or the hardware's logo) but before you see the Windows splash screen (the Windows logo)—press the F8 key. You will get a character-mode menu screen - select **SAFE MODE**. Safe mode will load generic drivers that simplify the Windows installation - no hardware-specific drivers etc. The display will be in standard VGA

mode (640x480 and only 256 colors) so the screen will look rather bland. "Safe Mode" will be displayed in each corner. Safe Mode is usually used for trouble shooting - in our case we just need to have it rebuild the cache which it does automatically. To get out of Safe Mode, shut down or restart the computer normally.

Fonts: Your active fonts are in the `C:\Windows\Fonts` folder. You may control its contents via Control Panel / Fonts. The proper way to install fonts is via FILE / Add Font, rather than by just copying the font file to the folder. For fonts you are unlikely to use, copy them to a different folder and then delete them from the `FONTS` folder.

Q. Has Microsoft published the hardware requirements for Vista yet? How many people intend to upgrade to Vista when it comes out?

A. We had a show of hands, and very few people indicated that they intend to *upgrade* to Vista. This is probably because few people (other than beta participants) have any idea as to what Vista will provide that isn't in XP. The general feeling was that they'd use Vista if it comes on a new machine, but few (at present) intend to upgrade current systems. Back to the hardware requirements - Vista will probably run fine on any machine made within the past two or three years, although it is thought that machines may need more recent display adapters (video cards) to make use of the more advanced video features.

<http://www.microsoft.com/technet/windowsvista/evaluate/hardware/vistarp.mspx>

In general, a machine with a sticker "Designed for Windows XP" 32-bit PC, or "Designed for

Windows XP x64Edition" will work. Microsoft's site just says "a modern CPU". They also recommend a minimum of 512MB of system memory, and a DirectX 9-class graphic processor board.

Q. I've heard that Windows Media Player sends a lot of information somewhere - what are the privacy issues?

A. The default settings when you install Windows Media Player (or any of the others, such as Real Player, Music Match, etc for that matter) are to collect unspecified information and report it. You can defeat this in their settings panel. One setting that you might want to leave active is the ability to identify audio CDs when loaded in the drive—this will go out to a CD database server and provide the name, track list and timings for the CD. In Windows Media Player 10, look at **TOOLS**, then **OPTIONS** and closely examine the **SECURITY** and **PRIVACY** pages. It is recommended that on the **PRIVACY** page you un-check the "Customer Experience Improvement Program" and the "Enhanced Content Provider Services" items. These are the things that "call home".

Q. My desktop system has an internal Lucent WinModem for use with my dial-up internet service. Over time the best speed that I have been able to obtain has deteriorated from the mid-40 kbps to the mid-20 kbps range.

A. A clue is the term "WinModem". A WinModem is an internal modem that relies upon the computer's CPU for all data compression and decompression processing. To get data transmissions over 28kbps it is necessary to compress data—much like using the ZIP utility on both ends of the link. If your CPU is busy with other tasks, your throughput will suffer. We suspect that over time other applications have crept into your system, either by invitation or otherwise. Some concurrent applications are pretty much mandatory - such as your real-time anti-virus protection; but other things, such as Norton's System Doctor, real-time anti-spyware, browser helpers (which

are prime-candidates for spyware) etc., all steal CPU cycles to the detriment of your throughput.

By the way, WinModems will only work with the Windows operating system. If you have any interest in other operating systems, such as Linux, you will have to get a modem with its own processor. All external modems that connect to a serial port will have their own processor.

There followed a session in which we looked at applications and processes (using Windows Task Manager) and then used Google to identify what they were. While we couldn't use HiJack This! (free download, go to the author's site www.merijn.org for links to download mirrors) on the hospital's machine, HiJack This! identifies many items that are not exposed by Windows Task Manager. Word of caution: HiJack This! makes absolutely no evaluation as to whether an item is good, bad or indifferent - it just reports that something is present in the machine. Use Google and examine the first several "hits" to identify what the process is and decide whether to keep it or not.

Q. I tried to update my subscription to Norton Anti-Virus via their web-based interface and got into essentially an endless-loop. I ended up with 194 copies in their shopping cart. Has anyone else had problems?

A. Norton has had problems with renewals for years. For example, this article <http://www.pcworld.com/news/article/0,aid,81150,00.asp> dated Jan 23, 2002 relates problems. Cynical people feel that it is to encourage purchase of a full upgrade.

Follow-up: The questioner confirmed that it was less expensive to uninstall, and then purchase a new copy with rebate from a discount source than to pay the subscription update fee.

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.

Book Review, Continued from page 7

cash registers as a key segment of an industry that began in the late 1800's along side adding machines and, eventually, the mechanical desk calculators from Monroe and Burrows that we all remember in offices from the 1920's until the popularization of 4-function electronic calculators in the 1970's.

Now the book really falls apart and becomes totally unreadable, as the author tries to cover the development of computing devices into modern electronic computers. If you are interested in computer history there are many better books, like *A History of Modern Computing, 2nd Edition*, by Paul E. Ceruzzi, or *Computer, A History of the Information Machine*, by Martin Campbell-Kelly and William Aspray. For Internet history, read *Where Wizards Stay Up Late*, by Katie Hafner and Matthew Lyon. There are also many good books on the personal computer industry, like *Accidental Empires*, *How the Boys of Silicon Valley Make Their Billions*, *Battle Foreign Competition*, and *Still Can't Get a Date*, by Robert X. Cringely. Happy reading!

JIM SCHEEF is past president of DACS, and an avid reader.

SIG Notes, Continued from page 6

In the main section of the meeting, Chuck precipitated much discussion with his demonstration of his newly developed beta version tool, ZipBack. Its primary advantage is to consolidate all objects, such as page, code and HTML objects all onto a single code behind page in an ASPX application. And of course the reason for ZipBack is its ability to communicate with the server without any web page refreshes. He demonstrated its capability in a single form on a single page to handle a computation without having to communicate with another page.

This development is a work in progress and Chuck plans to add some work with java script in further presentations. A strongly recommended reference is David Flanagan's Javascript published by O'Reilly.

C#.Net. Yes, we enjoyed our onion-covered pizza before moving to presentation by Greg Austin in the second session C#.Net .Net version 2.0. Greg presented a WinForms application that managed a datagrid and accessed SQL Server 2005 for its data. Greg demonstrated an important new feature in this release. When a developer declares a

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dependency for an object such as a datagrid, it will be automatically updated to keep a user's WinForm data in synchronization with data from the server as it changes in the SQL Server database. This becomes very interesting when you consider data consistency. The data on your screen may have been changed since you last retrieved it. The new synchronization feature allows the database to notify a data dependent application that the data has changed, whereby the application could update the user's screen data to reflect the change, avoiding a battle of last changes. On an application to application basis, some thought is still needed to decide how to notify the user before changing the screen form on them, but this feature certainly is nearly as good as buttered sourdough bread. Greg went on to a discussion of another project to illustrate other capabilities of MS Visual Studio 2005.

The ASP.Net and C# sessions combination complemented each other and provide interesting implementation thoughts across the spectrum of WinForms and WebForms applications.

Chuck distributed the ZipBack control to the Yahoo group users. If anyone else would like to have a beta copy, send an e-mail request to cfizer@snet.net.

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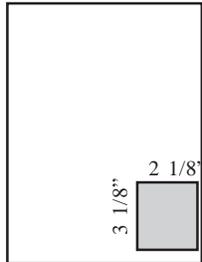
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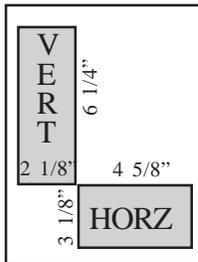
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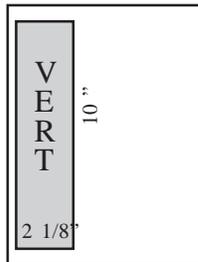
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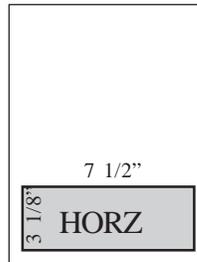
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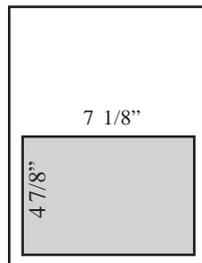
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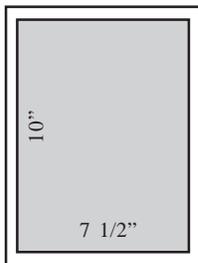
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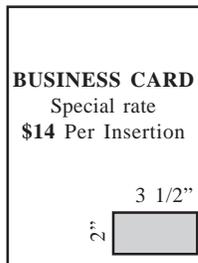
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We sponsor or participate in community support projects by collecting, repairing, and redistributing used computer equipment and software to community service providers such as schools, libraries, and patient/client support groups. DACS members provide 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.

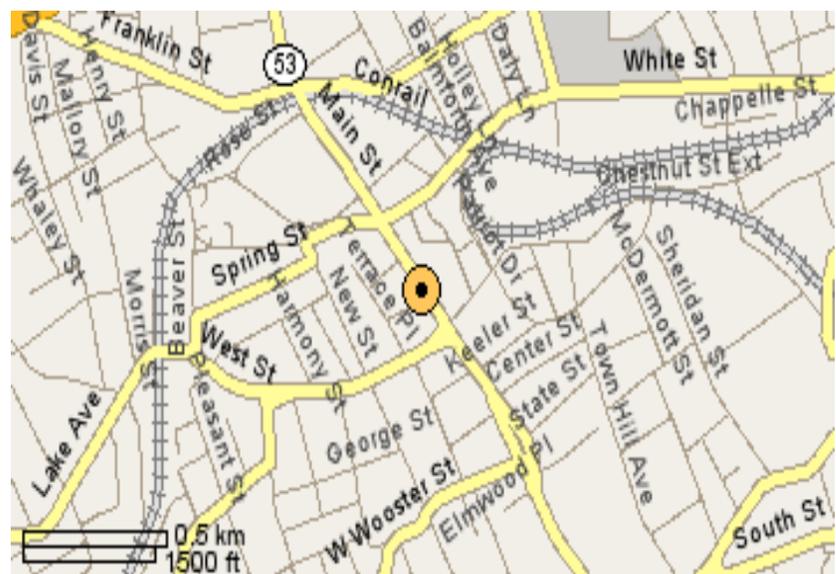
Our general meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month in the Danbury Hospital Auditorium at 7 p.m. These meetings are open to the public. The main presentation is scheduled from 8-9:30, preceded by casual networking, announcements and Random Access, an informal question and answer session.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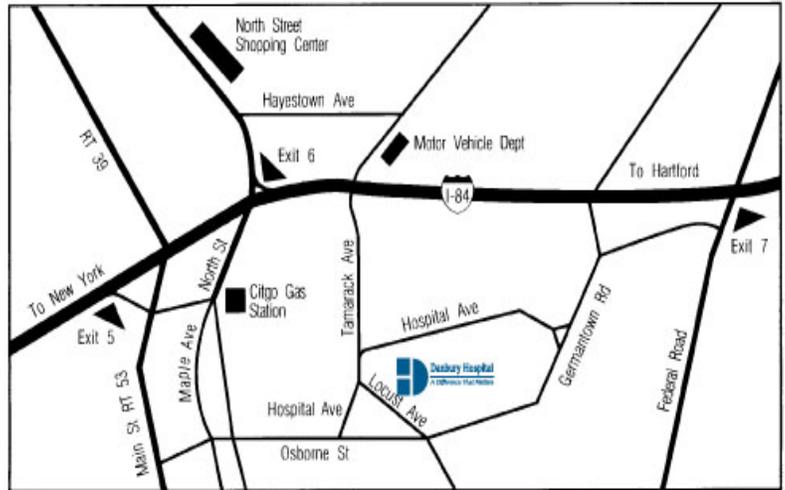
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