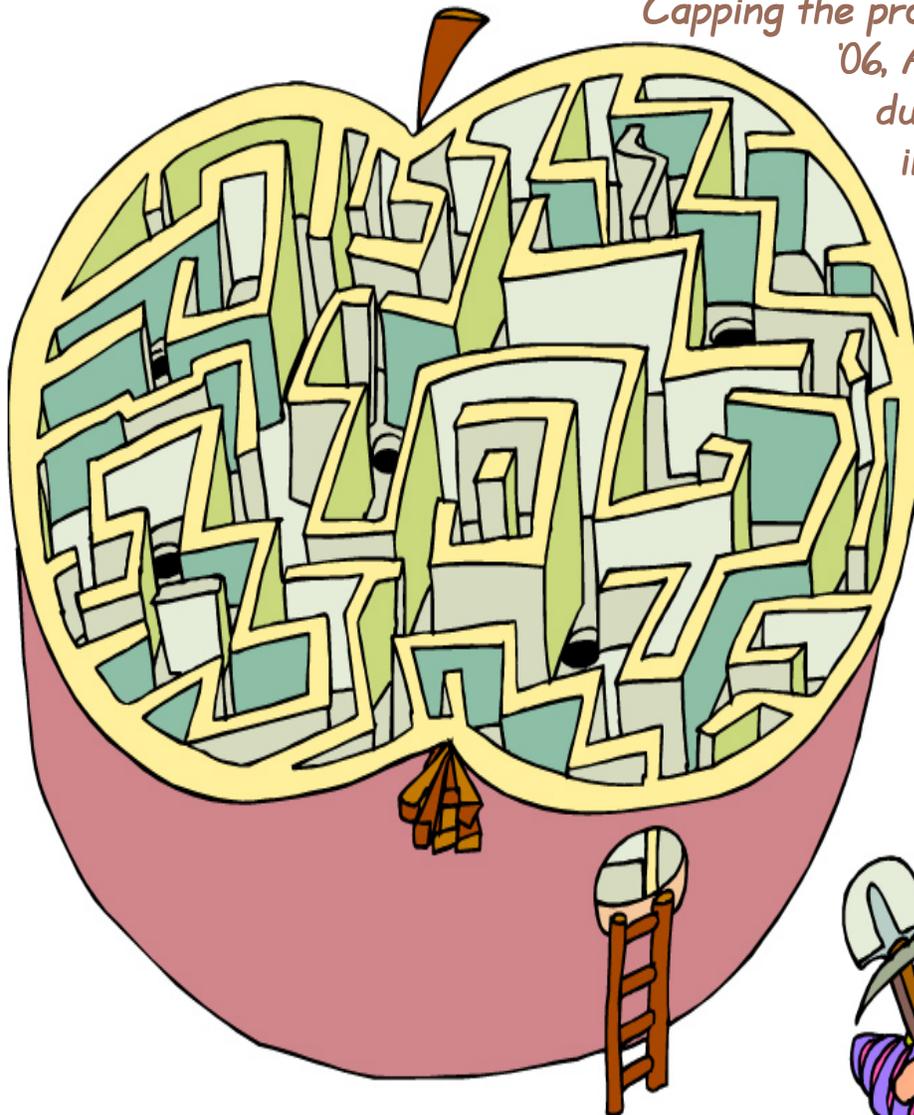


## Apple is expanding its core business

Apples come in many varieties and flavors. At our next meeting, Apple's Senior Systems Engineer, Dave Marra will preview his company's expanding family of applications—from the powerful iMac, MacBook Pro and Mac mini, to updated versions of iPhoto, iMovie, iDVD and GarageBand, and the brand new iWeb.

Capping the program will be iWork '06, Apple's updated productivity suite, featuring Pages and Keynote, for creating professional-looking documents and simply stunning presentations. Be prepared for an exciting show!



Free  
Drawing  
iPod  
Nano



# President's File



## PRESIDENTIAL RAMBLINGS

Ugh... Get left... Come on baby, get left... Stupid ball... Sometime the best laid plans go awry. I was trying to hit a nice gentle

draw along the edge of the pond on 13, unfortunately the ball had other plans and didn't draw it went straight, straight into the pond to the right of the 13<sup>th</sup> fairway. Ugh... Unfortunately I compounded a bad tee shot with a risky approach shot. The smart play would have been to lay-up short of the pond that fronts the 13<sup>th</sup> green and then hit a wedge in. Instead of making the smart choice, I decided to go for the green... Bad Idea... At best going for the green from 250 yards out is risky; when you've already put your tee shot in the water it's foolhardy. But I went for it, and splash, two balls in the water on one hole... Had I lain up I could have walked away from the par 5 13<sup>th</sup> with at worst a double bogey 7. What was the net result of my reckless decision to go for the green? A 4 over par 9... Ugh...

Ok so what does this have to do with computers? Just this... The decisions we make can have adverse consequences.

I have a friend who was constantly complaining about Windows crashing, or XYV program not working, etc. After listening to his complaints for several weeks I decided to take a look his PC, what I found was an un-patched system that was infested with a mass of spyware, viruses and at least one rootkit. His problems weren't caused by Microsoft or Windows; they were caused by his own questionable decision making.

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If you're going to connect a computer to the internet without first taking basic risk mitigation steps you're asking for trouble. Please keep your system patched and install and use quality anti-virus, anti-spyware and personal firewall software. If you have a broadband connection, invest in a broadband router/firewall appliance.

I spent the better part of a day backing up my friend's important files, securely wiping his PC's hard drive and then reinstalling Windows XP and his applications and patching the system to the current level... I also installed new anti-virus and anti-spyware software. The good news is that his computer is performing flawlessly now... The bad news is it's only a matter of time before he heads back to the seedy underbelly of the internet looking for lord knows what.

## Upcoming Events

• "Patch Tuesday" - 13<sup>th</sup>. Don't forget to visit the Microsoft update site - <http://update.microsoft.com>.

• Buick Championship - June 26th - July 2nd, TPC at River Highlands, Cromwell, CT - <http://buickchampionship.com>.

If you have information on events that might be of interest to other members, please e-mail it to me.

## Member get a member

As I'm sure many of you know, our membership has been slowly declining over the last several years. In an effort to improve our recruiting efforts, we're instituting a member-get-a-member program. The program works like this... Any member who signs up a new member will receive a free two month extension to his or her membership. It's that simple. Good hunting.

## Dues increase

Based on the rather limited feedback we received from members, the board of directors decided to increase membership dues by a modest amount, rather than eliminate our printed newsletter.

Beginning with your next renewal, dues for a regular membership will increase from \$25.00 to \$30.00 a year. Dues for an electronic membership will increase from \$15.00 to \$20.00 a year.

## Windows Vista revisited

Microsoft recently updated the Windows Vista micro-site with new information and a free utility to help users get ready for Windows Vista.

PRESIDENT'S FILE, Continued on page 4

## Membership Information

*dacs.doc*, ISSN 1084-6573, is published monthly by the Danbury Area Computer Society, 4 Gregory Street, Danbury, CT 06810-4430. Annual subscription rates: \$25 to regular members, \$20 to students (included in dues).

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Send address changes to Danbury Area Computer Society, Inc., 4 Gregory Street, Danbury, CT 06810-4430.

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DACS, its officers and directors assume no liability for damages arising out of the publication or non-publication of any article, advertisement, or other item in this newsletter.

The editors welcome submissions from DACS members. Contact Allan Ostergren at 860-210-0047 ([dacseditor@dacs.org](mailto:dacseditor@dacs.org)). Advertisers, contact Charles Bovaird at (203) 792-7881 ([aam@mags.net](mailto:aam@mags.net)).

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## Technical Support

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Applications & Hardware to enhance *dacs.doc* are welcome.



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**RESOURCE CENTER:** (203) 748-4330 • **WEB SITE:** <http://www.dacs.org>

## 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)
ASP.Net	Chuck Fizer	(203) 798-9996	(d )
C/UNIX/ObjC	Kenneth Lerman	(203) 426-4430	(d e)
C#, VB	Chuck Fizer	(203) 798-9996	(d )
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DOS	John Gallichotte	(203) 426-0394	(d e)
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Hardware	John Gallichotte	(203) 426-0394	(d e)
Interface-Instrumentation	Andrew Woodruff	(203) 798-2000	(d e)
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## Directors' Notes

A regular meeting of your Board of Directors was held at the Resource Center on Monday, May 8, 2006. Present were Messrs. Berger, Bovaird, Leifels, Preston, Setaro and Yates. Also present were Allan Ostergren and Marc Cohen. President Jeff Setaro presided and Secretary Lisa Leifels kept the record. Minutes of the last meeting held on April 10, 2006 were approved.

Treasurer Charles Bovaird reported current cash assets of \$12,190.77, consisting of total bank and postal accounts in the amount of \$12,091.50, plus postage on hand of \$99.27. Subtracting a liability of prepaid dues of \$5,439.00 left a net equity of \$6,751.77. He also reported that there are 326 members, of which 57 are electronic.

On June 6<sup>th</sup>, Dave Marra will talk about new Apple Hardware and Software. On July 11<sup>th</sup>, David Goldberg and Shirley Fredlund will discuss Voice for Joanie and MyTobii Eye Control Assistive Technology. Jamie is going to work on getting Best Buy to do a presentation in August.

Bruce mentioned that the Department of Justice attended a recent Boys and Girls Club Meeting, and they handed out a presentation on Internet Safety. Bruce offered to look over the presentation and report back if this would be a feasible idea for a future program.

Howie Berger recommended we explore having less than 12 general meetings each year. Jeff Setaro suggested we switch to bi-monthly meetings. Jeff will bounce this idea off of the membership in his president's column. Howie also thought that on occasion it would make a more interesting general meeting if we have two speakers with opposing points of view such as Apple and Microsoft or Circuit City and Best Buy.

The board agreed that for the months of June, July and August in 2006, members who bring in a new member will have their membership extended by two months. The board also voted and approved raising membership dues to \$30 a year, and the electronic only membership to \$20 a year.

Jamie said he would send Richard a note asking him to speak to someone at the apple store to find out if they can put up a poster advertising the June 4<sup>th</sup> general meeting. The board agreed with Jeff's recommendation that we have a drawing for a 4 gigabyte iPod Nano at the next general meeting.

DIRECTORS' NOTES, Continued on page 4

Check out <http://www.microsoft.com/windowsvista/getready> for details about the different versions of Windows Vista or to download the free Windows Vista Upgrade Advisor.

### End Notes

I recently finished reading *Beyond Band of Brothers – The War Memoirs of Major Dick Winters*, by Major Dick Winters & Col. Cole C. Kingseed. I had previously read *Band of Brothers* by Stephen Ambrose and seen the HBO miniseries, so I was familiar with much of the material covered by Maj. Winters. Nevertheless, Major Winters' memoir is a must read that fills in some of the background details missing from Ambrose's account along with valuable advice and insights on leadership. Anyone interested in history would do well to read *Beyond Band of Brothers*.

That's it for this month. You can contact me at [jasetaro@mags.net](mailto:jasetaro@mags.net) or [jasetaro@yahoo.com](mailto:jasetaro@yahoo.com) with your questions, comments and book recommendations.

Cheers,

—JEFF SETARO

### Directors' Notes, Continued from page 3

Jeff said that Allan is retiring from being the editor of the newsletter at the end of this year and we need to start looking for a replacement. Marc Cohen said he is willing to stay on and do the production of the newsletter. Allan said that we will need to buy an updated version of PageMaker. Jeff asked Allan to write up a brief job description that we could include in the newsletter.

Jeff told Charlie, he thought that we should renew our membership with the Danbury Chamber of Commerce.

—LISA LEIFELS

### THIS IS YOUR LAST NEWSLETTER

If the membership date on  
your mailing label reads

**EXP 2/2006  
or earlier**

You need to renew your  
DACs membership  
**NOW**

## Meeting Review

### Whole House Integration - Home Automation

By Jamie Yates

**T**HE MAY 2 DACS General Meeting featured a presentation on "Whole House Integration," or as we would say, home automation. Our presenter for the evening was David Freda, Vice President, Audio Visual Systems.

The featured session started with a 45 minute prepared presentation on what whole house integration is, what tools and software are used and a display of some of the houses, components used, and multimedia rooms that David's company has worked on along with a scenario of house automation in action. This was followed by a 30 minute question and answer session that brought out many other interesting points.

From the areas discussed and the pictures shown it became apparent that the amount of money that can be spent on a project of this type can go from the hundreds of dollars to the infinite.

David's company started years ago focusing on home audio/visual installations, and has adapted over time to handling all aspects of home automation, from audio/visual, security, heating and cooling, lighting, computer networking, and even fountain and fireplace control.

Today the lighting control systems make up a major component of his business. He demonstrated how house lighting, mood lighting and exterior lighting can be controlled from a central location. In an age of energy conservation it was interesting to see how, from one location, you can see what lights are on and turn them off to save electricity.

House sizes that David's company has worked on go from a small 7,000 square foot house up to the 50,000 square foot range. Just like the houses we all own.

As you would imagine, the fundamental components of the automation are computers, electronic circuits, and specialized equipment not found in ordinary stores. In order to make all these things work together and make it easy for the homeowner

to understand, his company uses a lot of customized programming to design the user interface. Control panels are specifically designed for the project, and security is built-in.

One other aspect is to be able to manage and control the house remotely.

The question-and-answer portion of his presentation brought up many considerations that were not covered in the formal part of the evening. Questions were asked about use of solar energy, power backup systems, geothermal heating, failure rates and diagnostic tools. It was apparent that David's company has run across each of these issues in some of their projects and had excellent information to impart.

This was a fascinating presentation and covered many of the considerations necessary for a successful project. One of the key points that he made was that it is better to include the requirements for automation in new construction than to retrofit an existing structure. He also pointed out that wired connections are still preferred over wireless when it comes to minimizing interference, security, and speed.

I'm sure our club members and guests thoroughly enjoyed the evening and came away with useful information and food for thought.

Thank you, David.

JAMIE YATES is a DACS director and VP for programs. He is a frequent volunteer in the community on technical services.

### Be Informed by E-mail

Members who wish to receive DACS email messages who have not received an email notice for the General Meeting should send a request to be put on the DACS email list to *treasurer@dacs.org*.



## Meeting Preview

# Apples Come in all Shapes, Sizes and flavors

By Jamie Yates

**T**IME WAS WHEN AN Apple was always a Macintosh. That's all changed now with the genesis of pocket technology and the sprouting of countless varieties of Apples and applets. Was it just evolution, or a product of intelligent design? At our June 6 General Meeting, find out how this new i-form got started and where it is going, in a presentation by Apple Senior Systems Engineer, Dave Marra,

Join Dave for an exciting evening exploring the amazing new hardware and software products recently released from Apple. He will take an in-depth look at the brand new iMac, MacBook Pro and Mac mini, all running with Intel Core Duo processors. For the latest in exciting Apple software, we'll have fun making podcasts with iLife '06—featuring significantly updated versions of iPhoto, iMovie, iDVD and GarageBand, along with the brand new iWeb! Finally, we will finish up with iWork '06, Apple's updated productivity suite featuring Pages and Keynote, for creating professional-looking documents and simply stunning presentations. Be prepared for an exciting show!

Since Apple has dominated the tech news for the last several years, here is a chance to get the current scoop on the latest hardware and software products and see what they can do. As each year goes by, Apple keeps making bigger and bigger splashes in the market with their iPod, iTunes, the conversion to Intel chips and now the free ability to run Windows on the new Apple line of Intel based hardware.

### About Dave Marra

As a Senior Systems Engineer for Apple Computer, Dave Marra has conducted over 500 technology presentations, keynote addresses and workshops for user groups, schools, businesses and

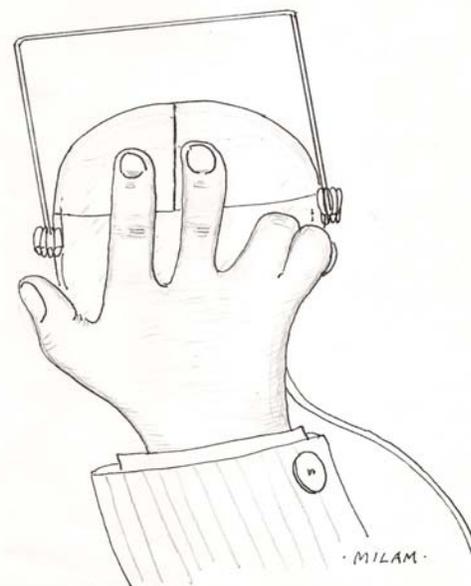
other professional organizations across the United States and Canada. His specialty areas include digital multimedia, internet technologies and cross-platform integration.

DACS meetings are held at the Danbury Hospital auditorium. Activities begin at 6:30 p.m. with casual networking, a general question and answer period (Ask DACS) and a discussion of what's new in technology followed by a short break and the

featured evening presentation at 8:00.

As a reminder, our General Meetings are free and open to the public so invite anyone you know who would be interested in this topic.

*JAMIE YATES is a DACS director and VP for programs. He is a frequent volunteer in the community on technical services.*



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A better mousetrap. It protects your computer from catastrophic failure and malicious intruders at the point of least resistance - the user.

## Wanted

Award-winning computer publication, *dacs.doc*, is seeking an editor. Candidates must only demonstrate a proficiency in the English language and a willingness to learn, and need not have prior publishing experience or advanced knowledge of computing. Attention to detail and a willingness to seek advice from others would be a strong plus.

This position will take effect in January, 2007. Current editorial staff will train successful candidate in applicable software and publishing tasks.

# What's News

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May, 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](mailto: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:** Lots of Versions of Windows Vista to be Available - Windows Starter 2007, Enterprise, Home Basic, Home Premium, Ultimate, Business, and 2 for Europe. Media Center and Tablet PC going away.

Will that change?

**Source:** Microsoft Watch, <http://www.microsoft-watch.com/article2/0,2180,1928547,00.asp>; Microsoft, <http://www.microsoft.com/windowsvista/>.

**Description:** OnGuardOnline provides practical tips from the federal government - Tips about ID theft, auctions, spyware, phishing, and spam scams.

You can also file a complaint; even has various quizzes on the above topics. Put key information in one place.

Sponsored by FTC, USPC, Homeland Security, SEC, and Commerce.

**Source:** OnguardOnline.gov, <http://onguardonline.gov/index.html>.

**Description:** You can run Windows on Intel Mac machines for free. Major announcement from Apple.

Function is called Boot Camp. Currently in beta. Requires Mac OS X Tiger v10.4.6 and latest firmware.

**Source:** Apple, <http://www.apple.com/macosex/bootcamp/>.

**Description:** How long does it take to crack a password? Not long. Think you have secure passwords? Want to know how long brute force attacks take?

Worst case: 4 characters using upper/ lower case, dual processor - instantly; Add numbers - under 2 seconds; Add symbols - 8.5 seconds. Gets quicker every year.

**Source:** Lockdown, [http://www.thecrypt.co.uk/lockdown/recovery\\_speeds.html](http://www.thecrypt.co.uk/lockdown/recovery_speeds.html).

**Description:** Cell phone warns about sexual predators. Uses GPS to determine where child is.

Uses Family Watchdog's national database of registered sex offenders. Alerts parents through email, text message or pager. Costs \$19.99/month.

**Source:** MSNBC, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/12174311/>.

**Description:** Do you want to talk to a human instead of dealing with a phone menu.

This site provides a list of companies and how to get their operators. It also allows you to rate each company—and they have a forum for discussions.

**Source:** gethuman, <http://www.gethuman.com/>; <http://www.gethuman.com/us/index.html#credit>.

**Description:** Outlook 2003 Add-in: Personal Folders Backup.

Each .PST file contains all of your Outlook folders, including the Inbox, Calendar, and Contacts.

You can choose when and which .PST Works with Outlook 2000 and later.

**Source:** Microsoft, <http://www.microsoft.com/downloads/details.aspx?FamilyID=8b081f3a-b7d0-4b16-b8af-5a6322f4fd01&DisplayLang=en>.

**Description:** A major holdout joins the fold—almost. Beatles preparing to allow downloading of their music for sale.

**Source:** Yahoo, [http://news.yahoo.com/s/nm/20060413/ts\\_nm/media\\_beatles\\_dc\\_2](http://news.yahoo.com/s/nm/20060413/ts_nm/media_beatles_dc_2).

**Description:** Unlock the Premium Web.

Free access to nearly 300 premium content sources. Find exclusive premium content with Congoo search.

The number of free articles per month varies by publisher. Premium listing alert keeps the best content at your fingertips.

**Source:** Congoo, <http://www.congoo.com/index>.

**Description:** Is this for real? Thumb drive expands as you add data. Comes in different styles.

Good for estimating usage level. No prices quoted.

**Source:** PlusMinus, <http://www.plusminus.ru/flashbag.html>.

**Description:** Want to know everything about your computer and Windows? Want to understand its inner workings? Want to have all your questions answered? Want to be considered an expert? Want to be able to answer everyone else's questions?

Learn the easy way with a detailed diagram.

**Source:** <http://blueballfixed.ytmnd.com/>.

## Book Review

### Swissbit – Victorinox Do-Everything USB, MP3 Swiss Army Knife

By Ira Wilsker

#### WEBSITES:

<http://www.swissbit.com>

<http://www.victorinox.com>

[http://support.swissbit.com/pdf/s.beat\\_Fact\\_Sheet.pdf](http://support.swissbit.com/pdf/s.beat_Fact_Sheet.pdf)

<http://www.victorinox.com/index.cfm?page=242&lang=E>

**H** EY DADS! WITH FATHER'S Day fast approaching, maybe you should get copies of this article, and leave the copies at strategic places



around the house where key members of the family are likely to see them. Dads are often hard to buy gifts for, and all too often end up with that ubiquitous neck tie that typically works its way into the back of the closet, and eventually accidentally falls into the bag headed for the rummage sale. Maybe instead of the well intended, but often useless gift that we dads sometimes receive, perhaps a really fun high tech gift would be more appropriate.

The most intriguing item that I have seen, that would make a fantastic gift for dad on his special day, is a combination Victorinox Swiss Army Knife, USB flash drive, FM stereo radio, voice recorder, and remote control MP3 player, manufactured and distributed by Swissbit ([www.swissbit.com](http://www.swissbit.com)). Named the "S.Beat", this device is true to the multi-function traditions of the classical Swiss army knife, but with a modern twist. Externally, it looks like an aluminum scaled Swiss army knife, complete with the white cross logo, sharp knife blade, spring opening scissors, and nail file. Internally, it contains a removable USB 2.0 high speed flash drive (available in 1 GB, 2 GB, and 4 GB capacities) that also contains an MP3 player, FM stereo radio, voice recorder, and rechargeable lithium polymer

battery. A separate remote control also bears the trademarked Victorinox white cross logo, and contains an earphone jack, volume and track controls, and power on and off. The remote control can be worn around the neck with the included lanyard. For international travelers, the built-in lithium polymer battery can be recharged using the included "USB World Charger", which can handle voltages from 110v to 220v, and is compatible with the outlets in over 150 countries. The battery, which may take up to 2.5 hours to fully charge, will power the player for about eight hours. The tiny FM radio can be preset to listen to up to 15 stations, and the MP3 player (which also supports WMA and OGG Vorbis formats) has a three line backlit high-contrast display.

Victorinox and Swissbit have taken the flying traveler into mind with this device which has earned a "FlySmart" logo. Since the knife and scissors component would be banned on commercial airline flights, but many travelers would still like to listen to the MP3 player, the player itself can be separated from the knife, maintaining full functionality. The knife portion of the device can then be appropriately placed in the checked luggage, and can be reunited with the player at the destination.

This device is simply amazing, fitting all of the components in a standard sized Swiss army knife about three inches long, half an inch wide, and about, three-quarters of an inch thick, and weighs a scant three ounces. The box containing the S.Beat included the knife and MP3 player unit, remote control, high quality stereo headphones with neck strap, a protective cap (covers the USB plug when the player is removed from the knife), arm strap for outdoor sports activities, USB extension cable, USB world charger, instruction book, and CD containing the software utilities.

Since this device is just being introduced in this country, but has been available in Europe for a while, it is something that dad will find both unique and exclusive. It should be available shortly at any retailer stocking a large assortment of

Victorinox products, but is currently available from several online sources. The version with the 1 GB capacity has a retail price of \$189, with some domestic outlets offering this S.Beat at a small discount. The larger capacity 2 GB and 4 GB models were recently introduced in Europe, and should be available shortly in this country.

Being so new on the market, there have only been a few reviews published, but they have been universally positive. One such published review is quite representative of the several that I found. It says, "Fantastic product! Beautiful metal finish, sturdy and compact. The included headphones are top-notch - no need to spend another 50 bucks for a real pair like with all other players you buy nowadays. Sound quality will blow you away, menu user interface is comprehensive yet simple and intuitive to use/learn. Didn't even have to read the manual. And best of all; it works without some special drivers or software. Just use what you're used to for your audio and data files."

Come to think of it, maybe we should not wait until Father's Day; maybe we should not only consider this extremely



useful gadget for dad, but mom, and our new graduates as well. In fact, this would make a great gift for anyone special, including yourself!

**IRA WILSKER** is APCUG Director, a columnist at *The Examiner*, Beaumont, TX, and a Radio & TV Show Host. He can be reached at [Iwilsker@apcug.net](mailto:Iwilsker@apcug.net).

*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.*

# 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:** June 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.  
Meetings suspended until new SIG leader is chosen.  
**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:** June 7

**Excel/Math.** Review of mathematics with emphasis on programming spreadsheets for business applications.  
**Contact:** Charles Bovaird, 203-792-7881 (*aam@mags.net*).  
Meetings suspended until further notice.  
**Next meeting:** TBA

**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:** June 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:** June 15

**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:** June 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:** June 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:** June 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:** June 15

**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:** June 8

**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:** June 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:** June 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.

## SIG News & Events

**ASP.NET.** The ASP.Net meeting focus was client browser HTML/javascript programming using the Visual Studio IDE design environment.

Our interest in browser design and management in a C# environment was tweaked by viewing usage of javascript to cluster browser functions on a single page. Chuck showed us 3 ways to create a clientside dialog box using javascript on a Web page. An objective of this design is to present a more robust dialog box than the standard javascript alert and confirmation dialogs. A further requirement is to eliminate the need for post back to the server to present content to a user at a client site. Any messages or pictures are carried in the browser to be accessed on demand by a user. These all arrive at the

browser based on the initial page GET. Each method has its usefulness and trade-offs. One method is very useful for debugging, while another helps to hide script content from prying eyes.

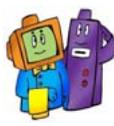
As a guide for developers, Chuck presented David Flanagan's Javascript, The Definitive Guide Fourth Edition, from O'Reilly publishers, as his primary javascript reference. We stepped through program code Chuck had scripted in HTML, and he expanded it as we went along to see how a button on a form could present messages in a dialog box invoked by a click of a user.

Heartened by this discourse the ASP.Net session ended. During the break between sessions, we acquired sustenance

SIG Notes, Continued on page 15

# June 2006

## Danbury Area Computer Society

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# Programming

## Texas Hold-Em an Evolutionary Approach, Part 6

By Richard Ten Dyke

“I PLAYED ABOUT 70 million games of Poker last night. And about 70 million the night before.

You would think I would be exhausted by now. Of course, you know the secret: the computer played the games. The Poker simulations are now running as planned. Seventy million games reduces to about 500,000 tournaments and takes about six hours of computer time to complete.

I also bought a book about playing Poker on line. It's about time, wouldn't you say?

To refresh your memory, we start simulated tournaments with a pool of 32 players who play seven-player games with players drawn at random from the total pool of players. After each tournament, poor players in the pool are replaced with semi-clones of the better players. Over a period of a few thousand tournaments, only better players remain in the pool. This is an implementation of Darwinian evolution. Better players are those who win the most money in a tournament. Each player plays a "strategy" that takes into account the quality of the hand, the amount of money he/she has, the strength of the strongest and the weakest player in the game, the number of players remaining in the game after some of them have folded, and the position at the table related to the first bettor, and an occasional bluff.

One of the limits to the simulations was computing power, since it takes lots of it to evaluate a hand. We solved this problem by dividing the process of play into two pieces: hand evaluation and betting strategy. Hand evaluation is based on the probability that a particular set of player cards, combined with the community cards, will win against a random opponent. After the hand evaluation part is complete, the simulated player is only interested in the probabilities, so it be-

comes a game of probabilities not a game of specific hands or card combinations. Since this is the case, we can separate the simulations into these two distinct components, and run them individually. The betting strategy part then runs with the hand evaluation probabilities predetermined. This cuts the run time of a simulation by over 90 percent and permits more computer time for the evolution process.

After reading the book on Poker, I learned that I had made a mistake in the design of the

game, which I have now corrected. In the game as played, there are two blind bets, a small blind made by the first player following the dealer, and a big blind by the next player at the table. The simulation now uses that procedure.

So what have been the results? Some are good and some disappointing. The good is that the games are played in a manner that is consistent with general good sense. Factors which the book says are important really are. One of these is where you sit at the table relative to the dealer. Being the last better (the dealer) has an advantage. (Betting starts with the first player following the dealer, you recall.) There is no dealer in internet Poker, so there is a "virtual" dealer position that rotates around the table at each game.

A second obvious result is that it is better to have more money than less. A winning player will take into account the amount of money he has, and be more aggressive with more money and more conservative with less. Makes sense.

The more compelling result is that the conservative player (almost) always wins the tournament. That is to say, the players who survive play conservatively. They fold early and often. The time for that decision is the betting after the flop. Before that and after, you can be a little more loose. Also, as a strategy, bluffing is overrated.



It was disappointing that overly aggressive players could not survive in the long run. An aggressive player will win a tournament rarely, and in the long run, all were eliminated, and new ones did not emerge. This is disappointing not from understanding the results, but disappointing in the sense that we were hoping for a possible bifurcation of species, but it did not occur.

This may make sense. After all, Poker is a simple game. Once you reduce it to a game of probabilities it almost isn't Poker anymore. Now, if you are an experienced player sitting across the table from an adversary, and you are looking for changes in facial expression or other clues, you might make more of a game out of it. You train yourself to be a lie detector. Maybe. Maybe you think you can do it. Maybe you are the one who is fooled by the fact that you succeed from time to time due to mere randomness. Perhaps. Watching Poker on television, one gets the impression that this is a key part of the game. Personally, I doubt it. And there is little to observe when playing on the internet.

One of the differences between the simulation and a real game is probably the fact that in our simulations all players eventually play similar strategies. As a result, most simulated games are over quickly and the pots are small since most of the players fold. Observing real games with several players, this seems not to be the case. One interpretation of this is that real games have more poor players in them than the simulations. Another may be that real players have more complex strategies, and that the simulations are unrealistic. Time will tell. Both theories may be true and false at the same time.

In games of chance, such as Roulette and Black Jack, a player plays against the house, and the house wins in the long run. In Poker one plays against other players, and when there are weak players in the game you can help them to give you their money. This makes Poker different from Roulette and Black Jack. In a sense, a good player in the Poker game almost becomes a partner of the house. And there are lots of weak players.

To try out a theory, I ran a simulation in which a small percentage of the players consistently played more aggressively, that is to say, more recklessly, than the evolving players. The results were clear and statistically significant. The games lengthened with more betting and with the size of the pots increased.

Now, I must confess that I actually bought not one but three books. One en-

titled "Internet Poker for Dummies" is a thin book which I found at the cash register of a local grocery store. It is a perfect example of a book with an appropriate title. Mostly, it tells you how easy it is to sign up for on-line Poker and the best ways to send them money. Oh, yes, I think it did mention getting some money back as well. I found the other two books at Borders, which has a whole section devoted to gambling. I picked a couple at random. They are interesting in the sense that they spent a great deal of space on how to evaluate a hand and a competitive situation. They also say that it is a good idea to play a conservative game, for which I give them credit. They also advise you not to play too many games at once (on-line, that is) because you might become confused and fold when you should raise. Go-o-o-d advice!

I do not claim that the simulations accurately represent the way an individual should play the game, but I do think that they teach something useful about what to look for and how to go about it. We will continue the simulations to look at other factors, such as the number of players at the table, to determine how this affects a betting strategy. We will also start to explore some situation-specific strategies. For example, suppose you are the small blind bettor, and after the big blind, every player checks or folds. Would it be appropriate at that time to bluff with a raise? We will try it and see.

In the next installment, we will finish up this series with a summary of what we have learned.

*Richard Ten Dyke is a frequent contributor on Digital Photography and computer creativity. He is retired from IBM and can be reached at [tendyke@bedfordny.com](mailto: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.



## Hardware

# Upgrading Your Monitor

by Vinny La Bash

**I**N DECEMBER I wrote about buying a PC for 2006, but other than size I was vague about the monitor.

Many more folks than I thought are getting the urge to watch high definition video on their personal computers. If high definition has you captivated, pay attention to the technologies known as HDMI and HDCP.

HDMI or High Definition Media Interface is a technology that connects video receivers and DVD players to devices such as a television. It makes no difference to HDMI if your set is high definition or not. The technology handles both standard and high definition resolutions.

HDPC or High-bandwidth Digital Content Protection is a completely different animal. Intel developed the technology specifically to prevent distortion or any kind of electronic interference between source and receiver. For example, HDPC encrypts the digital content of anything that a device such as a DVD player might send through a Digital Visual Interface (DVI) to a television set, a projector or a computer monitor. The encryption used is not a form of copy protection, but a process designed to protect the integrity of the data. In other words, HDMI makes sure that what is sent is what's received.

It's important to understand that HDCP is content protection, not copy protection. It won't prevent you from pausing live programming or recording a program to view at a later time. Any content provider that did this would soon be at war with its customers.

As long as features such as "time-shifting" keep appearing, protecting copyright material becomes increasingly difficult. Copyrights are important because without them there is no protection for the artists, authors, and performers who create material or those who use them.

Your home equipment can implement any kind of copy protection, but a content provider might allow no copies whatsoever.

Another provider might let you make a limited number of copies. Still another provider might put limitations on how the material is used. Many factors come into play. The mechanism for distribution, source, equipment design, and equipment configuration all have their unique effect. A content provider will usually insist on enforcing its own brand of copy protection.

HDCP makes its appearance at the DVI connection, the last link in the video chain. HDCP makes no decisions on any type of copy protection strategy, it merely protects the choice.

It may be a let down to find out that HDCP isn't an issue yet. How-

ever, it will become more important when high definition takes over. Expect all high definition DVD players to eventually use HDCP.

If you own a DVD player that isn't HDCP compliant, you will still be able to use it even if your TV isn't HDCP compliant. You just won't experience high definition quality images. HDCP will restrict playback to standard quality. This prevents pirates from getting perfect copies of movies or other digital content. Upgrades are definitely in most people's future.

Windows Vista will certainly support HDCP, as will upcoming versions of the Mac OS. What it comes down to is if you want to watch high definition content on your computer monitor, the monitor must be HDCP-compliant.

Almost any television set you buy today will use HDCP, but very few computer monitors are HDCP compliant. Do your research carefully. If you want to watch high definition on your monitor, it must be HDCP compliant.

*VINNY LA BASH is a Member of the Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc. He can be reached at [vlabash@home.com](mailto:vlabash@home.com).*

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



# Digital Photography

## Printing Better Pictures

by Robert Spotswood

### When a dot is not a dot

Have you ever tried to print out a picture that looks good on your monitor only to be disappointed with the result? Does it come out way smaller/bigger than you expected or look really grainy?

This is not a random act by your computer. In order to understand why it happens, and more importantly, be able to prevent these problems, you have to understand when a dot is not a dot.

This is not an easy subject to grasp initially, but if you play with it just a little, the light bulb will light and it will become almost second nature very quickly.

### Conventions

There are two types of graphic images: bitmap and vector. This article focuses exclusively on bitmaps. If in doubt about which type your picture is, it's probably bitmap. Bitmap pictures are composed of a series of dots called pixels.

While the terms DPI (dots per inch), PPI (pixels per inch), and SPI (samples per inch) technically have different meanings, in practice they are all interchangeable. Only DPI will be used in this article.

Any printer referred to is limited to the inkjet variety unless stated otherwise, although almost everything here applies equally to laser printers. Although this article focuses on examples using the GIMP, all the theory and much of the practice applies to almost all graphic software.

### Monitors

Your monitor displays everything as a series of dots, regardless of the picture type. For instance, if your screen size is 800x600, then you are looking at 800 dots by 600 dots. The dots can be almost any color and they do not have a fixed size. A typical 17" monitor can have screen sizes from (at least) 640x480 to 1280x960. Since the physical size of your monitor can't change, the size of the dots must change. The more dots you have making up your screen, the smaller those dots will be.

As far as your monitor is concerned, one pixel (see the definition of pixel above) equals one dot. Because the icons (including text) and wallpaper on your desktop are composed of a fixed number of dots, shrink those dots and the icons

and wallpaper get smaller (see Fig. 1 and 2). Be aware that most desktops have a scaling feature for the wallpaper, called stretch in Windows, so you may not see the wallpaper actually change size if this feature is turned on. However, the quality of your wallpaper may go down dramatically if the wallpaper's actual size is small and you increase the screen size too much.



**Figure 1** (above) A 640x480 wallpaper on a 640x480 screen.

**Figure 2** (below) A 640x480 wallpaper on a 1024x768 screen.



The same thing applies to any pictures you may have. A picture with 640x480 pixels will display fully (at 100% resolution) on any screen size at least 640x480. A picture 1600x1200, on the other hand, will require scrolling on any screen smaller than 1600x1200.

### Printers

Printers, like monitors, create the printed picture/output image by using a set of dots. But that is where the similarities end. Unlike a monitor, a printer's output isn't a screen with variable size pixels, but a piece of paper with fixed dimensions. Paper is measured in inches, not pixels.

Printers create the image (and text) by using a grid of dots. The number of dots the printer can make in one inch is what's

known as DPI or Dots Per Inch. Obviously, the higher the DPI, the better the output the printer is capable of. A higher DPI means more detail and a lower DPI means less detail. If the DPI is set to low, the picture will look very grainy and poor. For a normal piece of paper, the graininess usually starts to show somewhere below 200 DPI. For things like highway billboards, the DPI used can be from 36 to 72 DPI.

Unlike a monitor, the dots are of a fixed color. A black and white printer cannot actually print gray, but only black. The paper is usually white, so white is just the absence of printing. Grays are simulated by printing dots in a grid. These grids are called halftones. Newspapers use halftones that are very coarse and usually visible even without a magnifier. The more black pixels, the darker the gray. Conversely, the fewer the black dots in the grid, the lighter the gray will be. Thus, one image pixel can require several printer dots. Some printers are capable of varying the size of the printer's dots, but for simplicity's sake, this will be ignored.

The size of the grid and the max DPI of the printer affect how well the printer can reproduce shades of gray (and color). Gray includes the colors black and white. For a 1200 DPI printer:

A 1x1 grid shows 2 shades of gray with an effective DPI of 1200 (1200/1 aka line art).

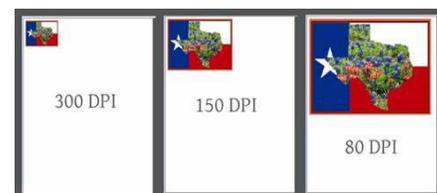
A 3x3 grid shows 10 shades of gray with an effective DPI of 400 (1200/3).

A 6x6 grid shows 37 shades of gray with an effective DPI of 200 (1200/6).

An 8x8 grid shows 65 shades of gray with an effective DPI of 150 (1200/8).

Thus, the more shades of gray you need, the more image detail you have to give up, or the more detail you want, the fewer shades of gray you will get.

Color printers are similar to black and white printers except they usually have four ink colors (CMYK - Cyan, Magenta, Yellow, and black). Instead of orderly grids, color printers use dithering (with error diffusion).



**Figure 3** (above) The exact same picture printed at 3 different DPI's.

Dithering is the use of somewhat randomized scattered dots. This tends to look

smoother than grids, but the theory is similar. One image pixel can require several printer dots.

In practice, the upper limit for inkjets comes about because the dots of individual color become larger than the grid to hold them. In addition, the ink can bleed, especially on regular paper (photo paper lessens this problem). The practical upper limit is (on good photo paper) between 240 to 300 (maybe 360) DPI. On regular paper, due to ink bleeding, 150 DPI is about as good as it gets. For other than inkjet printers, try not to go much below 200 DPI if you want a good print out.

Converting between the effective DPI (which is the same as the DPI you or the software pick), the printer's max DPI, and picking the colors to use at a given DPI is handled by the printer driver and not something you can really change. Just be aware that using a high DPI may not give you the detail, or color reproduction, you expect.

### DPI and Print Size

In addition to affecting the number of colors, DPI also affects the physical size of the printed picture. The print size on paper is determined by two things: the number of pixels in the picture and the DPI setting used by the software for that picture.

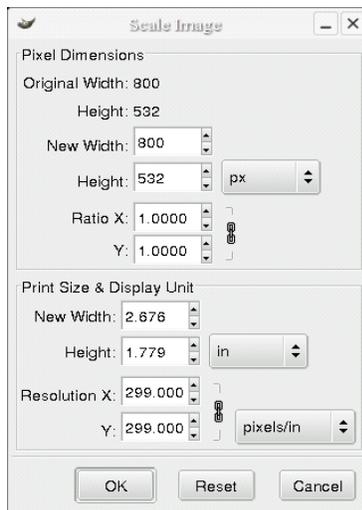
Some software and some file formats do not support changing the DPI setting. Some programs do support changing the DPI and just don't mention the term DPI (or PPI or SPI). Some programs such as desktop publishing software and word processing software will show you a WYSIWYG version of your picture at its relative print size. This is usually based on the DPI of the picture.

The physical print size is just the picture size (in pixels) divided by the DPI. For instance, a 400x800 pixel picture printed at:

- 100 DPI will be 4 (400/100) inches x 8 (800/100) inches
- 200 DPI will be 2 (400/200) inches x 4 (800/200) inches
- 300 DPI will be 1.33 (400/300) inches x 2.66 (800/300) inches

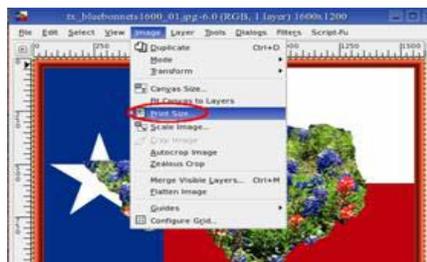
Figure 3 shows the same picture (640x480) printed on letter paper using 3 different DPI values. The only thing changed between the three is the DPI. As you can see, the higher the DPI, the smaller the picture. This is another reason that trying to print at your printer's maximum DPI is not the best choice.

Setting the DPI in the GIMP for versions 1.2 is done by right clicking on the picture and choosing "Image" -> "Scale Image" and setting either the DPI or the print size (see Fig. 4). The DPI is called "X resolution" and "Y resolution". Both the X and Y values should almost always be set to the same number. As you change one, the other will automatically adjust. As mentioned above, DPI and print size are intertwined and one can not change without the other changing.



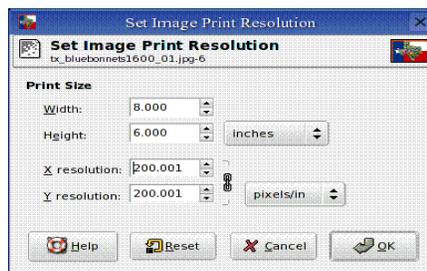
**Figure 4** (above) The GIMP 1.2 DPI and print size control.

For the GIMP 2.2 (everyone using version 2.0 should upgrade to 2.2) the DPI (or resolution) control is found in "Image" -> "Print Size" (see Fig. 5 and 6). While it is also found under "Image" -> "Scale Image", do not use it there. It is too easy to change your picture size by scaling accidentally.



**Figure 5** (above) Getting to the GIMP 2.2 DPI and print size control.

**Figure 6** (below) The Gimp 2.2 DPI and print size control.



### Conclusion

By understanding DPI and how to control it, you can dramatically improve the quality of your printed pictures. Say "goodbye" to accidentally printing posters and postage stamps. Say "hello" to better printouts.

**ROBERT SPOTSWOOD** is a member of HAL-PC, active in the Linux SIG and a freelance computer professional. He can be reached at Robert@spotswood-computer.net.

*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.*

## New Members

From 3/28/06 to 5/20/06

Patrick Goodwin

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION (required by 39 U.S.C. sec. 3685)

DACS.DOC, ISSN 1084\_6573 is published monthly at 4 Gregory Street, Danbury, CT 6810-7271.

The filing date of this Statement is May 1, 2003. Annual subscription price is \$25.00.

Complete mailing address for known office of publication is 4 Gregory Street, Danbury, CT 06810-7271.

Names and addresses of Publisher, Editor and Managing Editor are: Publisher, Danbury Area Computer Society, Inc., 4 Gregory Street, Danbury, CT 06810-7271; Editor and Managing Editor, Allan Ostergren, 2 Crooked Furrows Lane, Sherman, CT 06784.

Owner is Danbury Area Computer Society, Inc., 4 Gregory Street, Danbury, CT 06810-7271.

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The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes has not changed during the preceding 12 months.

# Ask DACS

May 2006

Bruce Preston, Moderator

**W**E 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](mailto: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. I have an HP multi-function machine (scan/fax/copy/print) with a USB printer interface. All of the functions work fine if the machine is directly connected to my PC. I'd like to share the device, so I got an Ethernet to USB print server. I can now print or fax from the PCs in the shared mode, but I can't scan. The workstations report that they can't find a TWAIN device. What's that, and how do I get one?**

A. TWAIN is the acronym for "Technology Without An Interesting Name." Really. It is a very standard interface specification for scanners, and is implemented as a driver. You have two problems—one is that you need to install the software drivers for the TWAIN interface on each of the client machines—but they won't install unless they can see the device. Problem two is that your Ethernet to USB print server isn't transparent enough for them to see the device through the print server—the TWAIN software doesn't know enough to look for a TCP/IP port. The printer drivers understand what a standard TCP/IP printer port looks like, so you lucked-out there. For what you want to do, you really need a multi-function device that has an internal Ethernet network adapter. If you have a multi-function device with a parallel interface, you will have the same problem. For what it's worth, I have a similar print server—it has a single parallel port and a pair of USB printer ports and firmware to support multiple print queues. It works well, but it is essentially single-directional. The only data coming back from the printers is the relatively low-volume status report information—i.e. print job completed, paper out, toner low, ink empty, etc. It does not support the high-data rates implied by scanning.

**Q. Is there a way to determine when a web page was last modified by the web site?**

A. In Mozilla Firefox 1.5, you may use TOOLS then PAGE INFO to get that information. Microsoft Internet Explorer 6.0.2900 has FILE / PROPERTIES, but it only shows the current date—which is essentially useless for your needs.

**Q. The hard disk on my daughter's computer has failed. Is there any way to get the information off of the drive? The computer still reports that the drive is present during power-up self test, but the machine won't boot etc.**

A. It depends upon what failed. If the plates of the hard disk are damaged, then probably not. If there is a problem with data integrity such as a corrupted FAT (File Allocation Table – the low-level directory of the drive) then often data can be recovered. I have seen cases where the circuit board on the drive (your drive is probably of type IDE – Integrated Device Electronics, which means that much of the control circuitry is on the drive itself rather than on the computer's drive controller) was damaged but the contents of the drive were perfectly accessible. Had the drive been making strange sounds before it failed? (Answer: "Yes – it was making squealing sounds") That is an indication that either the motor in the drive, or the drive spindle (around which the drive platters spin) has a problem. Did the computer warn you? Most drives now incorporate S.M.A.R.T – self monitoring and reporting technology. (Answer: "Yes, but she ignored it.") If you get an alert from S.M.A.R.T. don't ignore it! Now – what can you do? There are some companies, such as OnTrack Data Recovery (<http://www.ontrack.com/>) who can do remote recovery if the system hasn't failed yet (if the

system won't boot, that's another story.) For some cases the data can be recovered if the drive is shipped to a service with clean-room facilities – they disassemble the drive and repair it. However, this can be a fairly expensive proposition. In all cases, be careful that any tool you may use does not write to the damaged drive—it only reads from the drive and then writes to a different drive. Once you write to a damaged drive you may overwrite critical information, and thus prevent recovery.

**Q. I have a Nikon digital camera—the specs say that it has a WiFi interface. I can't get the communication link to work. Does anyone here know how to configure it?**

A. No one at the meeting had experience with it, although one attendee knew someone at Nikon and would follow up. Since the meeting, a search on Google found this page: <http://www.wi-fiplanet.com/reviews/article.php/3556466>, which indicates that it may be your network configuration. The author of the article has his main (desktop) computer connected via a wire to his router. The router then provides wireless connections to other (notebook) computers. It appears that Nikon expects the computer to which it is to connect to have a wireless network adapter on that machine – not just that you have a wireless network.

**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](mailto:askdacs@dacs.org).

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.

## Circuit Rider

Version 3.11

By Jim Scheef

### Keeping Tabs RFID and You

**W**ALMART CLAIMS that RFID, or Radio Frequency Identification, has already saved them millions of dollars, so these tags will not go away anytime soon. Instead they will become more pervasive – and more invasive.

RFID is a means to identify items and track their movement over time. Walmart requires most manufacturers to place an RFID tag on each pallet or in some cases each shipping case. These tags have no battery. Instead they are activated by receiving radio frequency energy on a specific frequency from a scanner device. Using this energy, they transmit the information encoded in the tag back to the scanner. The information can be a simple number, or a whole series of alpha and numeric information. In first- and second-generation technology, tags can only be read from a short distance, from a few inches to few feet. So far these seem like fancy bar codes, eh? The difference is that an entire truckload of pallets can be read by a scanner as the pallets pass through a doorway in a factory, or as they are loaded on a truck, or when they are unloaded at a store. These scan readings go into databases that record the manufacture, shipment, receipt, etc., of the items carrying the tag. So this is good, right?

Well yes, it is good when we are dealing with goods in the distribution system – televisions, washing machines, breakfast cereal. FRID will revolutionize supply chain management by reducing the amount of inventory needed to keep stores in stock. But what about embedding RFID chips in consumer items like clothing? Right now, RFID tags are fairly expensive, over a dollar for a simple tag, even in large quantities. So, few manufacturers or retailers are willing to absorb the cost of a tag in every garment. So far, I know of only one test at this level in the US. Two chains in the United Kingdom have started such a program.

So what? There are privacy concerns about wearing an RFID tag, you can be tracked. Anywhere there is a sensor can record the fact that you were there at a point in time. Ok, a tag in our shirt does not identify you directly. No, it would take some data mining to determine your identity.



Let me take a slightly different approach to this. One version of the Immigration Act currently being debated in Congress would create a “tamper- and forgery-proof” national identity card that would be issued to everyone in the US – including US citizens. Now this would be really cool if it included RFID technology. Such a card could carry more than just your name, address, driver’s license and social security numbers. It could include the name of your employer, your occupation, race, ethnicity, and national origin. Since you can’t read the card yourself, how would you know?

Sensors in every airport, train station or subway entrance could check for suspected terrorists and alert law enforcement. Think how safe that would make us! Of course, it could also sound that alert about anyone suspected of anything, like an unpaid parking ticket, and deny them access to travel of any kind. The police would no longer need to bother you to ask for your identification, they could just scan your ID card from a safe distance (so much for the fourth amendment). In fact (no joke), the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is looking for RFID scanners that can read a tag in a moving vehicle. Why would they need that? Add these to the surveillance cameras installed in a growing number of cities, like Chicago, and it would be possible to track anyone’s movements in real time. Think how safe we would be then! After all, this would only be a little change. We already allow government to track where our cars go in exchange for skipping a stop at a tollbooth.

*JIM SCHEEF is past president of DACS.*

## FREE CLASSIFIEDS

**DACS members may publish noncommercial, computer-related classified ads in *dacs.doc* at no charge. Ads may be sent by e-mail to Charlie Bovaird at *aam@mags.net*, or hard-copy may be submitted at our monthly general meeting.**

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

*SIG Notes, Continued from page 8*

coming from pizza on which we feasted. Our happy crowd of attendees was spirited and delighted by this feast for the mind and body. It is difficult to see how it could be any better.

Then the next session C# & VB.Net started and we continued to engage in an evening of script development and other pursuits.

The issue of ZipBack arose, and we again looked at the ZipBack project to investigate continued developments. The current state of development centers on the CodeDOMSerializer class object in Visual Studio Designer. We want to automatically emit event method code based on the developer’s choice of processing methods stated to the ZipBack component in design time. The CodeDOM documentation is rather sparse at most, causing a try and see programming effort which for me is very time intensive. We were able to demonstrate how to emit a comment into the code. However, once this topic surfaced, then immediately AJAX and ATLAS became the hot topic. We spent the remainder of the session debating the relative merits of AJAX and the to be released ATLAS.

**Digital Imaging.** The digital imaging sig will resume on May 31 at 7pm at the resource center. All new members welcome. We discuss all problems you can have with the process of digital imaging. Bring your camera or a file that you have a problem with and get the answer you need. Please e-mail me at *graffic@bigfoot.com* if you can make the meeting. See you there ....Ken Graff

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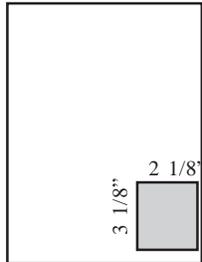
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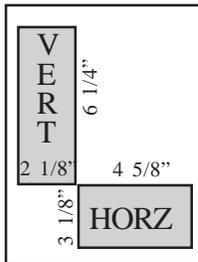
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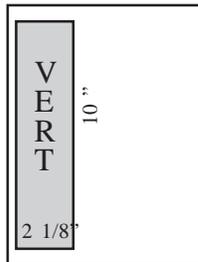
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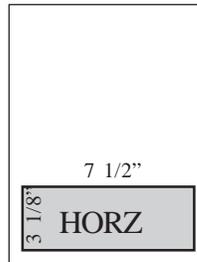
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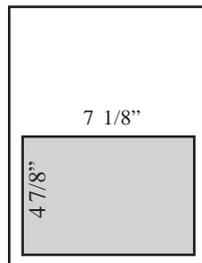
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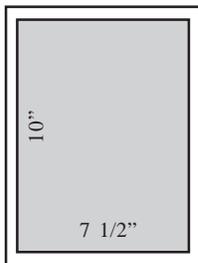
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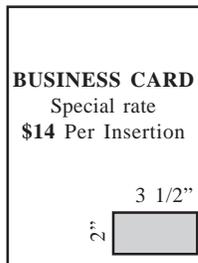
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Danbury Area Computer Society is a non-profit corporation organized under section (501)(C)(3) of the US Tax Code. Its purpose is to promote education, knowledge sharing, networking and communication between users of personal computers. DACS is an all 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](mailto: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.

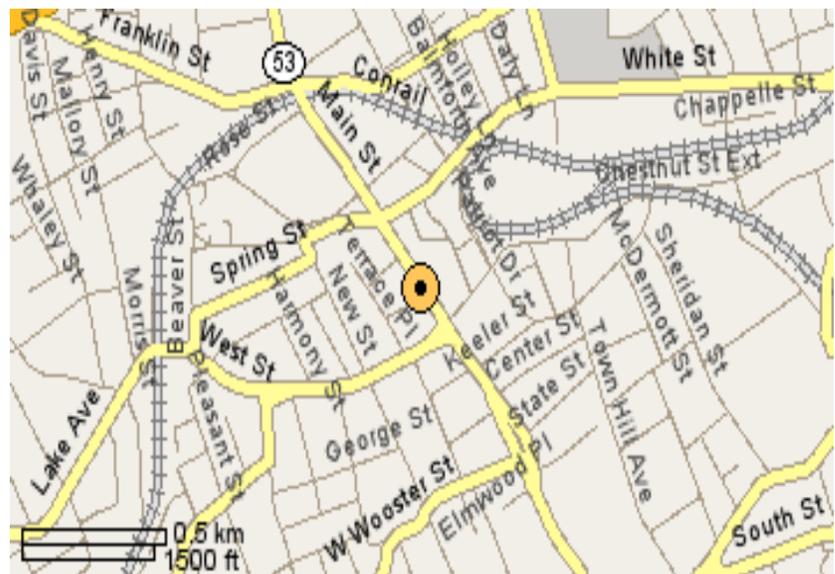
Our general meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month in the Danbury Hospital Auditorium at 7 p.m. These meetings are open to the public. The main presentation is scheduled from 8-9:30, preceded by casual networking, announcements and Random Access, an informal question and answer session.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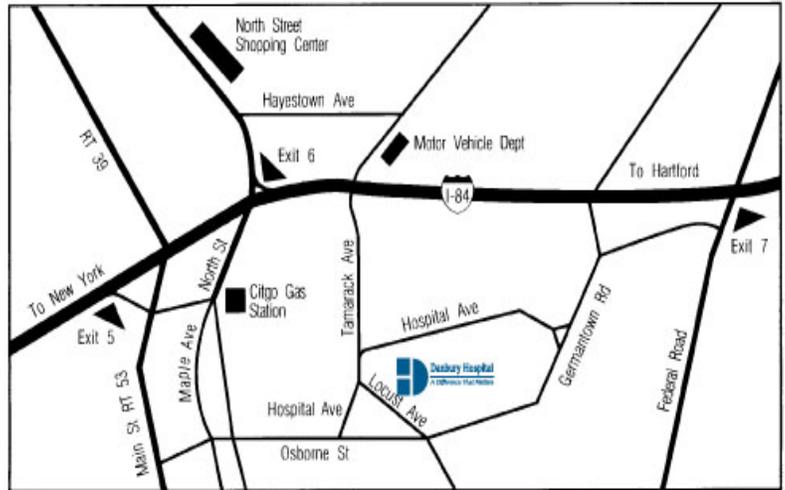
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