

August 2006

Volume 17, Issue 8

Everybody's Blogging on



the World Wide Web

At our next meeting, DACS super geek and host of the fabulously popular blog, hackingnetflix.com, Mike Kaltschnee, will discuss how blogging has evolved to become the bully pulpit of choice in the Internet global village. He will discuss both blogging and micropublishing, including how to start a blog, why it's important for personal, business and political reasons, and much more. He will even discuss the new phenomenon of pod-casting.

President's File



PRESIDENTIAL
RAMBLINGS

Wow... Summer is flying by. I hope everyone had a safe and joyous Fourth...

Random Thoughts

1) Congratulations to Fairfield native and 2006 Buick Championship winner J.J. Henry.

2) Phil Mickleson's "collapse" at the U.S. Open. There's been a whole lot of ink and electrons wasted on discussions about whether Phil should have hit a 4 wood off the 18th tee in the final round. Personally, I don't think his mistake was hitting driver off the tee; I'm not sure, given the conditions at the time, that he could have reached the corner of the dog leg with a 4 wood. Personally, I think Phil's mistake was trying to reach the green with his second shot. He would have, in my opinion at least, been better off laying up out of the rough and then going for the green from the fairway with his third... A par would have won him the U.S. Open; a boggy would have guaranteed him a piece of a playoff.

3) Give it a rest already. I'm getting a little annoyed with the media microscope that been focused on Michelle Wie. Folks she's the real deal... Michelle can flat out play the game of golf; it's only a matter of time before she wins her first professional tournament. Once she breaks through you can bet she will a bunch of them. That said personally I think she would have been better off playing more amateur tournaments and collegiate golf before turning

pro. Most of the mistakes I've seen her make are the result of youth and inexperience rather than a lack of ability. As it is, she's a 16-year-old girl growing up and learning how to win a golf tournament under media microscope that questions and analyses every decision and/or mistake she makes. Give her a break, guys. She's going to make more than a few mistakes on the way to her first professional tournament win.

4) I picked up a Western Digital Passport Pocket Drive the other day... It's my favorite new gadget. I have a couple of USB flash drives and they're a great convenience—the problem is, they both have rather limited capacities. I had planned on buying a 4GB flash drive, but when I compared the prices of 4GB flash drives to that of the 6GB pocket drive It seemed like a no brainer to me... The prices for a 4GB flash drive run from about \$80 at the low end to about \$150 at the high end. The pocket drive sells for \$99 and it has an extra two gigabytes of storage space. It's a little bigger than a USB flash drive, but it still fits in my pocket, and I don't have to worry about running out of room when I'm copying large files.

5) A few members have asked me about my position on Net Neutrality... Honestly I'm on the fence, on the surface it seems like a good idea, but I have a few concerns about what the law would and would not allow.

For example, would a net neutrality law allow an ISP to throttle connections to Google and then offer customers a premium service that would give their traffic to Google a higher priority than someone else's? Would old line telecos be allowed to throttle a competitor's VOIP traffic traveling over their networks? In my opinion, a law that would allow either of those to happen is completely unacceptable.

Personally, I think the entire issue of net neutrality is a deeply troubled area that would have been best left alone.

Upcoming Events

- "Patch Tuesday" – August 8th. Don't forget to visit the Microsoft update site - <http://update.microsoft.com>.
- Apple World Wide Developer Conference – August 7th – 1th, Moscone Center West, San Francisco, CA - <http://developer.apple.com/wwdc/>.
- Interop New York – September 18th – 22nd. Jacob K. Javits Convention Center - <http://www.interop.com>.

Do you know of any upcoming technology conferences? Please send me the details... I'll include them in my next column.

PRESIDENT'S FILE, Continued on page 4

Membership Information

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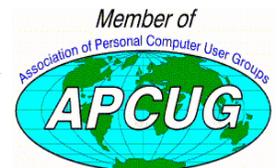
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HelpLine

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, July 10, 2006. Present were Messrs. Berger, Corzo, Leifels, Scheef, Setaro and Yates. President Jeff Setaro presided and Secretary Lisa Leifels kept the record. Minutes of the last meeting held on June 12, 2006 were approved. The financial and membership reports were omitted due to Charles Bovaird being away on vacation visiting family.

Jamie Yates reported that Best Buy was not able to do the program in August, but Mike Kaltschnee has generously offered to step in at the last minute and do a presentation on blogging and podcasting. In September, the IT manager for the city of Danbury has offered to speak about how they use technology. Jim Scheef has contacted Alice Knapp about getting a speaker to talk about how the Patriot Act has affected public libraries at the November general meeting.

Jamie is still looking to find a speaker to discuss some of the more popular non IE browsers, such as Firefox and Opera. He is also going to talk to Nerds to Go.

Howie Berger asked Jamie if he had a list of speakers who might want to speak somewhere else. He thought we could then trade speakers with another computer group in the area.

Jeff is anxious to get the DACS website migrated over to the new content management system. Anna Collens has agreed to temporarily take over the job of the day-to-day maintenance of the DACS website, so that Scott Preston can focus on developing the new website.

Howie Berger asked the board what they thought of the Apple presentation, and the consensus was that Dave Marra did an outstanding presentation. Richard Corzo reported that Patrick from the Apple Store in the Danbury Mall spoke at the last Macintosh SIG meeting. Howie Berger suggested we work with the Apple Store to get a speaker for a future meeting. Richard Corzo thought that when Leopard, the new Mac operating system comes out, we invite Dave Marra back to talk about it.

Jeff Setaro reminded everyone that Allan Ostergren will be doing his last newsletter January 2007, and we still need to find a new editor. Marc Cohen has offered to continue doing the layout. Allan is willing to train the new editor in the publishing tasks and software.

—Lisa Leifels

Newsletter Transition

Our long-suffering newsletter editor, Allan Ostergren, has decided to retire in December... The January 2007 edition to *dacs.doc* will be Allan's last. I'm sorry to see him go, I've greatly enjoyed working with Allan over the years, he's a top notch editor... It's been Allan's thankless task to edit my columns—with their atrocious spelling, terrible grammar and occasional incoherent ramblings—into a semi-readable tome each month... Thanks, Allan.

Needless to say, we need to find a replacement for Allan soon... The newsletter editor's responsibilities are twofold:

- 1) Edit submissions to the newsletter.
- 2) Work with production editor, Marc Cohen, to layout the newsletter in Adobe PageMaker.

If you're interested in the job, let me know... Ideally we'd like someone who can work with Allan and Marc over the next few months to ensure a smooth transition.

BETA Testers Wanted

Last month, I mention that we're in the process of developing a new and improved version of the DACS web site. We need a few members who can help us test the site and make suggestions on ways to improve it. In particular, we need members who are using the Mac OS and Linux to help us test the site and identify problem areas.

If you'd like to help out, send me an e-mail with your Computer type (PC or Mac), processor type and RAM, what operating system and version you're using and what web browser or browsers you're using, and I'll send you a link to the test web site.

End Notes

I finished *The Saboteurs* by W.E.B Griffin a few days ago; it's a good read until the last chapter... For some reason Griffin chose to jump directly to the ending without ever filling in the details of how the characters got from A to B—a terrible way to finish what was an otherwise entertaining novel. Hopefully I'll have better luck with *The Traitor* by Stephen Coonts.

That's pretty much it for this month. You can e-mail me with your comments, questions, criticisms or book recommendations at jasetaro@mags.net or jasetaro@yahoo.com.

Cheers;

—JEFF SETARO

Meeting Review

Voice For Joanie and Assistive Technologies

By Jamie Yates

FOR OUR TUESDAY, July 11, DACS meeting we had an overview of the Voice For Joanie program by its founder Shirley Fredlund, and a demonstration by David Goldberg, president of Health Science, of several of the assistive technologies they use.

Shirley opened the presentation by showing a short DVD video on the program, both describing it and showing it in action. In the video there were several DACS members who have given freely of their time providing technical support.

What is the Voice for Joanie Program?

It is a group of dedicated volunteers who research computer technology and then adapt it to the needs of victims of ALS, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (Lou Gehrig's disease). Voice For Joanie has furnished communicators, at no charge, to a total of 488 people, 459 in 139 Connecticut towns, 13 in New York State and 16 in various other states.

Voice For Joanie communicators are used in various ways. Typed messages are "spoken" by the voice synthesizer, read from a printer or screen, or transmitted via telephone or over the Internet.

Following Shirley's opening, David Goldberg demonstrated several products his company sells. The first one was a portable voice synthesizer that can be used at various stages of debilitating muscular and nerve illnesses. It has a touch screen, so the user that has the use of a hand or just a finger or touch stick can operate it.

The next product, which he spent most of the evening on, was a new release of My Tobii. The My Tobii Eye Control System offers easy-to-use and truly effective communication for people with highly limited mobility. The MyTobii system consists of a computer and display that employs a camera to detect precisely where the user is looking on the screen, and together with a suite of application software, allow the user to communicate and interact by fixing his or her gaze on screen menu choices, without any external tracking devices (older

systems use an infrared eye scanner). It also has touch screen capabilities and a keyboard and mouse.

With My Tobii a user can generate speech, send and receive email, surf the Internet, and use any other Windows-based application. All this is accomplished with just the movement of the eyes, which for ALS victims is usually the last muscle function that remains.

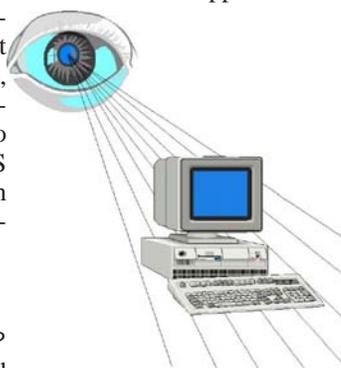
During his demonstration, David invited several audience members to use the My Tobii system. This writer was one of the volunteers, and was amazed at what the system could do with very little effort. Training the machine to calibrate it to my eyes took less than a minute and I was off.

Although the machine is fairly expensive, it certainly works well, and the developers have thought of everything. For a person who is limited to eye movement, it is a godsend.

It was also interesting to find out that many ad agencies are starting to use this technology to detect where TV viewers are looking when they view advertising.

The evening was informative, and DACS thanks David and Shirley for their time and effort.

By the way, if you want more information about Voice for Joanie or if you would like to volunteer your time, you can send an email to Shirley Fredlund (voiceforjoanie@juno.com).



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.

Meeting Preview

Blogging

Micropublishing for the Masses

By Jamie Yates

MARK YOUR calendar. Tuesday, August 1. DACS General Meeting. Danbury Auditorium. Mike Kaltschnee.

Mike will be giving an updated talk on last year's successful introduction to blogging presentation. He will discuss both blogging and micropublishing, including how to start a blog, why it's important for personal, business and political reasons, and much more. He will even discuss the new phenomenon of podcasting.

Mike currently runs several popular blogs, has been featured in major magazines and newspapers, and has more than 250,000 readers. His main blog is *HackingNetflix.com*, and he just interviewed Netflix CEO Reed Hastings.

Web logs or BLOGS are one of the latest crazes sweeping the Internet. They are easy to set up, and allow anyone who is interested to become an online publisher. They can be used to write on any topics, from personal to international. Some are used as simple diaries while others are used by professional writers and journalists. Corporations have them, and even some CEOs are using them to communicate with their shareholders.

There are more than 8 million Web logs and over 2,000 stories are being posted each minute. Blogs have become a journalistic force, bringing down powerful public icons like Trent Lott and Dan Rather, and providing unique coverage of current events like the recent Tsunami disaster.

Over the last several years, many tools and websites have appeared to make blogs easy to set up and maintain. You can add pictures to blogs, and even create entries by just sending an email from your computer, cell phone, or PDA.

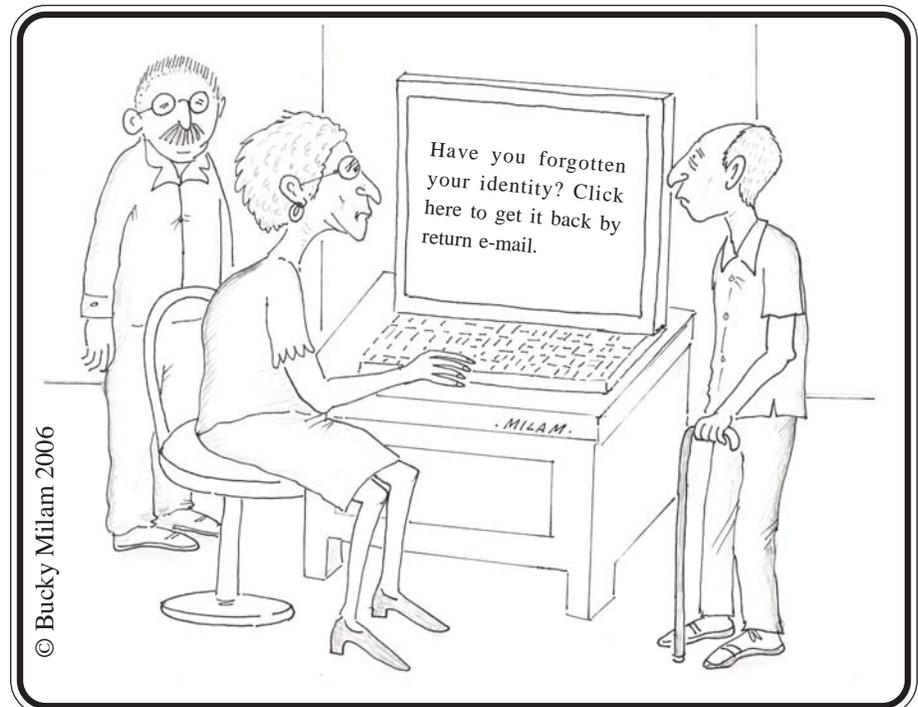
Is this a new form of journalism, or the latest personal Website fad?

This question and many more will be answered at the August meeting by Mike Kaltschnee, a DACS member, who has given many excellent presentations in the past. Mike will share his experience and demonstrate the tools and techniques that will help you understand the potential of this exciting new technology.

DACS meetings are held at the Danbury Hospital auditorium. Activities begin at 6:30 p.m. with registration and casual networking. The meeting starts at 7:00 p.m. with

a general question and answer period (Ask DACS) and a discussion of what's new in technology followed by a short break. The featured evening presentation begins 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.



Post Your Biz on *dacs.org*

We would like to post a directory of our members' business services on the DACS web site.

These would preferably be computer related, hardware and software solutions, Web design, etc., but can include Accounting, Travel, Advertising, Public Relations, or any other business service that you might be able to provide to all our members.

At some future date we may include the directory in our newsletter.

To get your listing, post your name, business, phone, e-mail and Web address to dacsprez@dacs.org.

What's News

July, 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: DRM (Digital Rights Management) causes reduction in battery life.

Depends on which DRM being used. Worst case is 25% reduction. WMA (Windows Media Access) DRM 10 is worst. Apple FairPlay is best ~ 8%.

Source: <http://www.cdfreaks.com/news/13193>.

Description: MouseCage™ is software designed to help people with hand tremor control their computer mouse.

Runs on Microsoft Windows 2000 and Windows XP. Displays a special Guide cursor on screen that shows your actual hand movements. When you are near or on target, press the special Cage key, the Guide cursor turns red and cursor motion is reduced for accurate clicking. You can press the Cage key a second time to 'lock' your mouse and stop all cursor motion. Now you can click in absolute confidence, and in your own time. Cost: \$29.95.

Source: <http://www.mousecage.org/index.htm>.

Description: Windows Genuine Advantage program causing an uproar.

Checks for valid or pirated Windows license. Users forced to install it under critical updates. Is it spyware or not? – lack of disclosure and it phones home. Many lawsuits filed. Many false positives. Prevents all but critical updates from being installed. New worm disguises itself as Windows Genuine Advantage.

Source: <http://blogs.pcworld.com/techlog/archives/002331.html>; <http://www.sophos.com/pressoffice/news/articles/2006/07/cuebotk.html>.

Description: A Ring Tone Meant to Fall on Deaf Ears.

Can be heard by kids but not by most adults. First used for keeping kids from congregating in malls. Now allows for Instant Messaging in classrooms.

Source: <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/06/12/technology/12ring.html?ex=1152504000&en=379f55db7886724f&ei=5070>.

Description: End of support

July 11, Windows 98 and ME. Oct. 10, Windows XP Service Pack 1. No more security updates.

Source: <http://www.microsoft.com/windows/support/endorofsupport.msp>.

Description: Want to know how long you will live?

Answer the simple questions and this site will tell you.

Source: <http://www.deathforecast.com/>.

Description: AOL may give away services for free. Will still charge for dialup. Users with high speed access get

services free. May cost them up to 2 billion. Plan is to entice non users for ad revenue. Customer base has gone from 26.5 to 18 million since 2002.

Source: <http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,1895,1985275,00.asph>http://today.reuters.com/news/NewsArticle.aspx?type=technologyNews&storyID=2006-07-06T122715Z_01_N06334082_RTRUKOC_0_US-MEDIA-TIMEWARNER-REPORT.xml.

Description: A Novel way to distribute CDs.

The Residents new "River of Crime" CD set is blank. A unique code for each package allows users to unlock the subscription at riverofcrime.com over a ten week period. Exclusively available at Virgin Megastores. Is this wacky?

Source: http://today.reuters.com/news/NewsArticle.aspx?type=musicNews&storyID=2006-06-24T225910Z_01_N24277043_RTRIDST_0_MUSIC-RESIDENTS-DC.XML.

Description: Getting emails you don't want from friends. Did they:

- Forward a funny story, a virus warning, or a photo that they enjoyed?

- Send email to lots of people using the "To:" line (instead of the "BCC:" line), thereby exposing your email address to strangers?

- CC you unnecessarily on something they had sent primarily to someone else?

Source: Send them here: <http://www.thanksno.com/>.

Description: Want to have your email sent by a bunch of monkeys?

You can record a message and have a monkey deliver it. You can also dress the monkey. Pre-recorded, mike or text to speech

Source: http://host-d.oddcast.com/php/careerbuilder_UI/door=137&cl=49&AID=0?mid=8321764.

Description: The first of the last.

Apple rids product line of CRT monitors. Just introduced an \$899 iMac specifically for schools and students. Replace the eMac, which was the company's last remaining CRT-based model. Part of an industry-wide trend, both in computers and televisions, toward the use of liquid-crystal display (LCD) monitors.

Source: http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20060705/ap_on_hi_te/apple_no_more_crt.

Description: Computers 'set to read our minds.'

Designed to read people's minds by analysing expressions. Being trained to read joy, anger and other expressions. Could be used commercially for such things as picking the right time to sell someone something. But, it may also help improve driver safety and help people with autism.

Source: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/5116762.stm>.

Description: Too good to pass up.

Sometimes the old fashioned way is best.

Source: <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=4776181634656145640>

Do Shield Laws Extend to Bloggers?

By John Brewer

THE FIRST amendment to the US Constitution contains a number of important personal rights. It reads as follows: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances." Analysis of the amendment confirms why the courts have been given the task of interpreting the language through the years.

One of the important parts of the amendment is freedom of the press. In order to protect the press, approximately 31 States have enacted "shield laws." Journalists are protected by a qualified (limited) First Amendment right protect their confidential sources. Many of the federal circuits have held that a qualified privilege exists. However, journalists are frequently challenged to reveal their confidential sources. This privilege has received attention recently in the *New York Times Co. v. Gonzales* case that involves the phone records of Judith Miller. An interesting variation to this issue is whether Internet journalists have the same protection as print journalists. A recent case in California has examined this issue. The case involved some Internet web site and Apple Computer.

Apple brought an action in California alleging that persons unknown caused the wrongful publication of secret plans on the World Wide Web to release a device that would facilitate the creation of digital live sound recordings on Apple computers. In an effort to identify the source of the disclosures, Apple sought and obtained authority to issue civil subpoenas to the publishers of the Web sites where the information appeared and to the email service provider for one of the publishers. The publishers moved for a protective order to prevent any such discovery. The trial court denied the motion on the ground that the publishers had involved themselves in the unlawful misappropriation of a trade secret. A California Court of Appeals held that his was error because

(1) the subpoena to the email service provider could be enforced consistent with the plain terms of the federal Stored Communications Act (18 U.S.C. §§ 2701-2712); (2) any subpoenas seeking unpublished information from petitioners would be unenforceable through contempt proceedings in light of the California reporter's shield [note: California has a shield provision in the State Constitution] and (3) discovery of petitioners' sources is also barred on this record by the conditional constitutional privilege against

compulsory disclosure of confidential sources. The Court of Appeals issued a protective order.

The Electronic Frontier Foundation is directly involved in the litigation. The following is extracted from the EFF web site. "The whole mess began in December 2004, when Apple filed suit against 20 unnamed and presumably unknown individuals, referred to in the court filing as "Does," for leaking confidential materials on an Apple product under development to several Web publications. As part of its investigation, Apple subpoenaed Nfox — for communications and unpublished materials obtained by PowerPage publisher Jason O'Grady. A Santa Clara trial court upheld the subpoena in March of 2005 and the EFF appealed.

"In a 69-page ruling, the 6th District Court of Appeal ruled that bloggers and webmasters are no different in their protections than a reporter and editor for a newspaper. "We can think of no workable test or principle that would distinguish 'legitimate' from 'illegitimate' news," the judges wrote.

"Any attempt by courts to draw such a distinction would imperil a fundamental purpose of the First Amendment, which is to identify the best, most important, and most valuable ideas not by any sociological or economic formula, rule of law, or process of government, but through the rough and tumble competition of the marketplace," they wrote.

"Today's decision is a victory for the rights of journalists, whether online or offline, and for the public at large," said



EFF Staff Attorney Kurt Opsahl in a statement. Opsahl argued the case before the appeals court last month. "The court has upheld the strong protections for the free flow of information to the press, and from the press to the public."

"Apple argued its right to trade secrets trumped Constitutional rights, and it had exhausted other sources to determine the source of the information, even though Apple had not deposed employees who were in a position to know, Kevin Bankston, a staff attorney for the EFF told *internetnews.com*. The lower court decision agreed, and said Apple's trade secrets rights would trump any journalist's rights to source confidentiality.

"Bankston said the ruling is a win for anyone who uses email. "A lot of people will hear about this decision and think it doesn't affect them since they are not journalists, but it has a broader impact because of the number of email providers, particularly the number based in this district," he said.

"The court read Federal privacy law to forbid civil litigants like Apple from subpoenaing an individual's e-mail from e-mail providers. Instead, the court said civil litigants must subpoena you directly, and if you are a journalist, you can assert your rights of confidential sources.

"So they have to subpoena you rather than doing an end run around your rights and going straight to your e-mail provider," said Bankston.

If Apple chooses to appeal, the case goes to the state Supreme Court. Thus far, the sources for the original story have not been revealed, "and hopefully based on this decision they never will," said Bankston.

This is an interesting issue. The California case is far from over and this issue will continue to be litigated across the country.

JOHN BREWER practices law in Oklahoma City, is a member of the Governor's and Legislative Task Force for E-Commerce, and enjoys issues relating to eBusiness and cyberspace. Comments and questions are welcome and can be emailed to johnb@jnbrewer.com.

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.

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Special Interest Groups

SIG NOTES: August 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: TBA

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: Aug 2

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: Aug 30

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: Aug 17

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: Aug 16

Macintosh. Focuses on all aspects of the Mac operating system.
Contact: Richard Corzo (*maccsig@dacs.org*)
Meets 1st Thursday at DACS Resource Center at 7 p.m.
Next Meeting: Aug 3

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: Aug 21

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: Aug 17

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: Aug 10

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 Greg Austin, 845 494-5095 (*greg.austin@ryebrookpba.org*).
Meets 1st Wednesday, 7p.m., at the DACS Resource Center, preceded 1 hour with a shared cost pizza snack.
Next Meeting: Aug 2

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: Aug 28

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: Aug 18

SIG News & Events

dot.NET. For a dotNET treat, we received a most illuminating exposition of development capabilities novel to Visual Studio 2005. Greg Austin explained in detail the many features of this development environment with ASP.NET at the forefront of power in VS.NET 2005.

This new IDE has its own Web service and does not require Internet Information Services (IIS) with its virtual directories. An ASP.NET Development Server takes the place of IIS. Code need not be in a "code behind" file but can appear on a Web page itself while a developer is served with Intellisense to guide program construction. When a data source is set, a Web configuration file is added automatically to a solution.

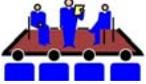
Greg built a sample application for Red Fox Gardens, a mythical locale, to illustrate these many features of Visual Studio 2005. Proceeding with deft skill, he added login procedures to illustrate cogs in the Web Administration Tool.

VB.NET. In our evening session Greg constructed an impromptu application for an Input Box to work with C# programs, a feature absent from C#. This was a calculator. He then took an audience suggestion to link this box to a database retrieval pass. The box takes input from a user to construct a search argument which brings forth data at the touch of a button.

SIG Notes, Continued on page 14

August 2006

Danbury Area Computer Society

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday																																																	
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<p>27</p>	<p>28</p>  <p>7:00 PM WALL STREET Phil Dilloway 203 367-1202</p>	<p>29</p>	<p>30</p>  <p>7:00 PM Digital Imaging Ken Graff 203 775-6667</p>	<p>31</p>	<p>Sep 2006</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>S</th> <th>M</th> <th>T</th> <th>W</th> <th>T</th> <th>F</th> <th>S</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> <td>6</td> <td>7</td> <td>8</td> <td>9</td> </tr> <tr> <td>10</td> <td>11</td> <td>12</td> <td>13</td> <td>14</td> <td>15</td> <td>16</td> </tr> <tr> <td>17</td> <td>18</td> <td>19</td> <td>20</td> <td>21</td> <td>22</td> <td>23</td> </tr> <tr> <td>24</td> <td>25</td> <td>26</td> <td>27</td> <td>28</td> <td>29</td> <td>30</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		S	M	T	W	T	F	S						1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30							
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Troubleshooting

"Suddenly..." or "I didn't do anything!" Part 2

a month's log of a Sun City Anthem
Computer Club "house call" doctor

By Charles W. Davis

THESE FIRST TWO paragraphs are a repeat of the introduction to Part 1 of this article. In working to help Club members and others with their computer problems during the Thursday morning Computer Talk sessions, or more often when making "house calls," I often hear strange tales that usually involve acts of some gremlin like creature. However, gremlins are more closely related to mechanical problems in aircraft.

Generally the caller's comments start with "all of a sudden" or "suddenly" and end with "I didn't do anything." I can only surmise that it was probably one of cartoonist Bil Keane's ghostly imps "Not Me," "Nobody" or even "Ida Know."

A very frequent "Suddenly"

Quite frequently, I get a call and the party on the other end is complaining about the fact that suddenly there are small dashes between words accompanied with the backward "P." I kind of like this one, as I can generally "fix" it over the phone. This one is usually caused by the imp "Nobody." "Nobody" placed the pointer on the Show/Hide icon on the Office Word tool bar. In the image below you will note the parenthetical expression (Ctrl+*). Holding Ctrl+Shift+8 will turn them on, do it again to turn them off. Note that "shift + 8" is the *.

Naturally, in MS Office Publisher the keyboard short cut is Ctrl+Shift+Y.

By the way, that backward "P" is called a pilcrow. For a complete rundown of funny dots and arrows, see: <http://word.mvps.org/FAQs/Formatting/NonPrintChars.htm>

"Suddenly" I can't print!

This call came in late in the afternoon. A member had changed his printer cartridge and could no longer print. He could no longer receive e-mail messages. To my surprise, there was no task bar visible on the desktop! He had been without a means of normal shutdown for weeks! After installing 23 critical updates to his Windows 98 SE system, the task bar was still not visible. However, the printer was now back in working condition.



Now was time to address the e-mail problem. He showed me an article

he had clipped from the Las Vegas Review-Journal by the syndicated columnist James Coates. The article revolved around a question submitted by a customer of Comcast, an Internet Service Provider. James walked the reader through the steps to properly set up Outlook Express for the Comcast e-mail account. Unfortunately our club member had followed the instructions completely and therefore attempted to access Comcast's e-mail server. "Suddenly" incoming e-mail messages had ceased to arrive. I reset the account to the member's Cox Communications server. Messages were now arriving as desired.

Following a phone call and suggestions from another trouble shooter ("Silly," he said: "Hit the start key!"), the task bar was located hiding off to the right of the screen! I started to drag it to the bottom of the screen and the thing snapped up to the top of the screen. I started to drag it to the bottom, but he didn't want it moved! Suddenly, he is back in the retiree business! "Ida Know" had clearly been involved here. The evening was warm and clear with a view of the sparkling lights of the Las Vegas Strip in the distance as

my Miata carried me and the \$20 check home.

My Miata has sat in the sun with the top down for many hours each day for the past six years. One morning I made a trip to a shop to have the interior panels on both doors replaced. While I was gone, two members called and one explained to Vickie that he had four Word files that when opened immediately shut down word. The other told Vickie that he had major computer problems and it was probably ready for burial.

In the first instance "Ida Know" was definitely involved. Big time! Norton Antivirus hadn't been updated since 2002! I downloaded the free AVG Antivirus, uninstalled Norton Antivirus via Control Panel's Add/Remove function. I installed AVG, after the Roxio update as mentioned earlier, then updated AVG and scanned for viruses. None! I downloaded and installed Ad-Aware SE Personal and scanned. Ad-Aware found 335 malware programs that were removed. Still, it didn't fix Word.

During the scans, which seem to take forever, the lady of the house was distraught over the loss of her Quicken backup data. She thought that she had backed up to a new USB Flash memory drive prior to buying her new computer. I opened the My Computer folder and double clicked on the USB drive and located the Quicken file and double clicked on it. Quicken opened and her checking balances were as expected. I renamed the USB Flash Memory drive to her name. Hoping to avoid future trips to her home, I had her practice the routine several times.

The above scans were now complete.

I returned to his computer and I chose Detect & Repair from Word's Help drop down menu. Following this repair function, things were still the same. I finally opened one of the documents and immediately chose "Save As" from the File drop down menu. I changed the file name by one digit and closed. I reopened the newly saved document and Word remained open. I followed the same procedure on the others with success in each case! Why? "Ida Know."

By this time, I was late to the second appointment. Earlier, I had tried to call, but got an answering machine. I left the message that I was running late and would be there soon. I had called the wrong number, and I have wondered whether the unknown party was still waiting. I collected the \$20 donation check and departed.

On arrival at the second destination, the member had meticulously written down the steps that led to his problem,

and more important, the steps that he had attempted to resolve the issue. I listened to all the steps as he read from the sheet of paper. Then he explained that the screen went haywire when Windows XP booted up, and the system crashed. It seemed that the problems started with the installation of eight Windows updates that he had downloaded on a dialup connection. "Ida Know" was definitely involved here, as I have not heard of any Critical update causing this reaction. On rebooting he received several messages that indicated some drivers were back level. He couldn't access the Internet via his Earthlink access. The Earthlink Tech Rep had told him install some drivers from the Dell CD that came with the computer. Big mistake! I looked at the CD and it was for Windows 98! This member was running Windows XP with SP2 installed.

I started the system in Safe mode and went to a System Restore point that preceded the first of the steps that he had outlined.

He was now back in business—well, as much in business as any of us retirees.

His wife wrote the \$20 check and I arrived home on a Friday evening just in time for our cocktail hour.

Desperate Housewife

A desperate housewife called and let me know that she needed some help with her computer. AOL had "Suddenly" gone berserk! What's new? I thought. My Miata soon delivered me to her driveway in Ridgecrest Village.

AOL was unresponsive. When opening, a message would appear stating that a file was not a Windows image. OK, so what? I finally uninstalled AOL and using the installation disk re-installed it. Same message, but we did manage to open an e-mail message and print a picture taken at her first great-grandson's first birthday.

I soon found that Norton's subscription had expired some 14 months before! Next order of business was to uninstall Norton's Anti-virus and then download the free AVG Antivirus. Following the start of the download, I read that it would take approximately three hours on the dial-up connection.

I asked her to install the program upon completion of the download and left. Later that day, a power glitch hit and I lost my next issue of the Anthem Compendium.

There is no auto-save function in FrontPage.

Two days later the desperate one called again and said nothing had worked. Sure enough that power glitch had shut

the download off. Further, it was corrupted. Once again I started the download and went home for lunch. On my return, there were still a few minutes to wait. AVG Antivirus was successfully installed.

Now, I had to address her problem with AOL, the same message as before, and it would not respond when one clicked on the mail icon. Yet the Windows Task Manager said it was running. Upon trying to close it using the Task Manager, one discovered an update being applied. Later, I would start to shut it down but, then it was downloading a program update. It had been months (years) since the CD had been produced, so there were several updates to install.

I decided a different tack was needed. I did a search for a file with a .tol file extension and found three. On a subsequent restart of AOL, I noticed the one in trouble was in a "b" version?

I then opened Windows Explorer and plowed down through the C drive folders and located the three files. There were really three different versions of AOL installed. The un-install hadn't uninstalled a thing! That proved to be the answer, as I simply copied the .tol file from one installation to the "b" folder. All is well in AOL land once again.

She made me take a second \$20 donation to the Club and I was soon back home writing this.

The parking lot approach!

Last week, as I walked from the Computer Club classroom to the parking lot, a lady called to me. She explained that one of our other "house call" volunteers had spent hours attempting to download and install a new version of Norton antivirus at \$59.99. It appeared to him to be a bad download as it kept saying something needed to be "fixed." After a while he assumed that the download was corrupted and they called Symantec. After several hours with Tech support, they finally ordered a box copy mailed to the house, another \$59.99. She added that she had also bought a router as recommended and that needed to be installed.

The next morning at the Computer Club's "Computer Talk" session I asked why he had not installed the free AVG Antivirus. He explained that the member was only doing as her late husband had instructed. 'Nuf said.

The next day, I called and made an appointment for Saturday. Since she lives only two blocks away, I walked.

No one answered the bell. So I returned home and about 45 minutes later she called. I had been at the house next to hers! Another mutual time was arranged. On this day the temperature was hovering around 100 degrees, so I drove the Miata. With the top down and the air conditioner on full blast, of course.

When I started her computer, the Norton product indicated a problem with a button to "fix it." I clicked on it and it started a system scan. After several minutes, that wasn't going to accomplish anything, so I stopped the scan and re-booted. Same routine! This time though, I decided that the programmers at Symantec, thought the lack of a scan meant something needed "fixing" and Tech support didn't pick up on the lack of clarity in their message! Sure enough, when the scan was completed, the need for a fix went away.

I easily installed the router and then went online to the URL that Symantec had provided on the receipt and applied for a return of the boxed versions that had been mailed. No problem!

Suddenly" or "not so suddenly" all of the incidents reported here are of a real concern to the Club members that called for assistance.

When you have a problem, contact your Computer Club's President.

CHARLES W. DAVIS is newsletter editor & webmaster, Sun City Anthem Comp

This article was originally published in Bits, PCs & Macs. Bits PCs & Macs is the newsletter of the Sun City Anthem Computer Club. All copies are available online at: <http://www.myscacc.org/newsletters.htm>. It 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.

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.



Circuit Rider

Version 4.1

By Jim Scheef

Net Neutrality

THIS TOPIC WILL NOT go away, and if you think it's bad now, wait until we're all moaning about it after the fact. Call your Congresspeople and tell them you want the Internet to remain free (as in free speech). If they respond that the issue is not about free speech, tell them you don't want AT&T or Verizon deciding whose web site or blog gets into the "fast lane." Tell them we like the Internet like it is, and do not want to suffer the same fate as the people of China or Saudi Arabia where Internet content is most definitely filtered. Call them now, before it's too late.

XP System Recovery

Did you know that there is a "DOS" buried in XP? No, not the command window you get when you run cmd.exe, but what amounts to a stand alone operating system that boots to a command line. This is an enhanced version of the Recovery Console found on the XP setup CD (but only if you know where to look for it). Information Week readers may have seen Fred Langa's columns in April and May on this and other "free" system recovery tools. I use quotes here, because this mini-OS is part of XP and thus is included in your XP license. The jury is still out on whether this is easier to set up and use than Bart PE.

You can find Fred's articles on the Information Week web site at www.informationweek.com. Then search for article number 187000225. From there you can surf to related articles.

Twenty Something

Network World magazine had its twentieth anniversary a few months back. I always enjoy these retrospective issues, and this one was pretty good. Of course they are oriented to networking rather than general computing, and this is reflected

in their lists. I thought they made some really good picks. Here are shortened versions of two of their lists with my paraphrased descriptions.

People who changed the networking industry:



1. **Mark Andreessen:** created a user-friendly, graphical browser in 1993 called NCSA Mosaic for X Window System; later co-founded Netscape.

2. **Tim Berners-Lee:** dreamed of a universal, easy-to-use information system and invented the World Wide Web.

3. **Vint Cerf:** hailed for his role in defining the protocols (like IP and TCP) that made it possible to link research networks to form the ARPANet, the precursor of today's Internet.

4. **Jon Postel:** created the framework for Internet standards that we now call RFCs, and did so in a way to ensure they would be open standards.

5. **Laurie Bride:** enterprise architect at Boeing who showed the need to interconnect disparate computing systems using open standards like Open Systems Interconnection model and TCP/IP.

6. **Bill Gates:** you know...

7. **Lou Gerstner:** forged the services industry based on open standards, the Internet, e-business and Linux; led IBM from struggling has-been back to powerhouse.

8. **Linus Torvalds:** made open source a household word... oh... and created Linux in the process.

9. **Scott McNealy:** drove the idea of the networked environment and seamless connectivity; made Java something other than coffee.

Stories that change the industry:

1. **2003 - Slammer lays down the hammer:** the world was so unprepared, that Chase Bank had to shut down their online banking.

2. **1999 Microsoft's monopoly:** U.S. Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson ruled that Microsoft is a monopoly; but the settlement three years later did not change the way the company does business.

3. **1998 Netscape sells out:** Beaten by Microsoft, Netscape gave up going it alone and sells to AOL, who fails to capitalize on deal.

4. **1998 No more DEC:** Compaq pays \$9.6 billion for the once-dominant minicomputer maker and splits the assets among Cabletron, Intel and Oracle. DEC completely disappears in the subsequent merger between HP and Compaq.

5. **1997 Cutting the cords with Wi-Fi.** The 802.11 standard is released leading to an entire new industry segment, plus hot spots, and war driving.

6. **1996 Reforming telecom.** Congress passes the Telecommunications Act of 1996, leading to all the unintended consequences we have today.

7. **1995 Microsoft discovers the Internet.** Bill Gates issues his famous "The Internet Tidal Wave" memo, formally recognizing the Web's potential a few years after many others did. Still, Microsoft was able to catch up in a hurry. 8. **1995 Ethernet everywhere.** Ethernet moved from 10 to 100bps pushing aside token ring and other technologies while forcing down prices.

9. **1991 Linux is born.** Linus Torvalds releases the Linux kernel as open source software.

10. **1990 OS/2 vs. Windows.** Microsoft and IBM split on OS/2 and Windows development starting the OS/2 slide to oblivion.

11. **1989 Welcome to the Web.** Physicist Tim Berners-Lee creates HTML and the World Wide Web, paving the way for Marc Andreessen and the rest.

12. **1988 Hinsdale burns.** A fire in Illinois Bell's Hinsdale central office (about 10 miles from where I grew up) damaged most of the 50,000 circuits supported by the switch. The incident provided a wake-up call about disaster recovery at carriers and corporate IT shops.

13. **1986 E-mail gets connected.** MCI Mail and CompuServe link their e-mail networks - the beginning of the end to the question "Where is your email account?"

JIM SCHEEF is past president of DACS.

Trade Shows

C3 Expo Fooled Me Thrice

By Jim Scheef

THE CORPORATE, Channel Computing Expo (C3), is an attempt to revive the old PC Expo of the 80's and 90's. The last big PC Expo was in 2001, and you know the rest. This is the third year for C3, and likely the last. Two years ago, when the show was starting under the new name, the show management offered DACS a booth, which we accepted. We



Why C3, when you could have seen the mall?

only staffed the booth for one day, as the show was so poor we could not stand the thought of going there more than once. Last year Marc Cohen, DACS Director Emeritus, and I went down against our better judgment. While the show had grown from the first year, it still lacked that key exhibitor - Microsoft. Hewlett Packard, IBM, and a few others provided some "big vendor" interest to the show, but it was so lame that I swore I would not return until Microsoft anchored the show.

Over the last few weeks as the dates for this year's show approached, Marc Cohen and I debated on whether we would go down to see if things had improved. The vendor list looked about the same as last year and there was something about an RFID show that sounded interesting; so on Wednesday afternoon I called Marc and asked if he still wanted to go on Thursday, the last day of the show. We planned to ride the 8am train from Danbury.

After enjoyable train and bus rides, we arrived at an empty Javits Center. There was no one outside, on one in the lower lobby area. We wondered if the show had been canceled! Inside there were people giving out badges, and after a 20-second process to get ours, we headed for the show floor. All of the exhibitors were housed in the exhibit hall at the far north of the center. Yes, the show was in just one room, and part of the room was cur-

tained-off for the keynote speakers! Not one hardware manufacturer had a booth; apparently HP and IBM had backed out. Marc said there were more booths than attendees and this was only a slight exaggeration! As we walked the isles, the people in the booths were visibly glad to see us—not the reception one would get on the last day of a busy PC Expo!

On a personal note, I did have a beneficial conversation with the people in the Xandros booth. Xandros is a commercial Linux distribution that I first reviewed in August, 2004. I really liked it then because everything worked on the first install! They gave me a NFR (not for resale) copy of the Xandros Server as part of the "Xandros Partner Program". The server product is aimed at the same market as Microsoft Small Business Server (my favorite Microsoft product). I plan to install it on one of my servers and write a review and day now.

New Members

From 6/23/2006-7/16/2006

Lewis Westfall

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



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.

Housecleaning

Managing Device Drivers

By Vinny La Bash

WINDOWS IS THE MOST widely used operating system (OS) in the personal computer world.

For each piece of hardware that's connected to a Windows based computer, somebody somewhere has written a piece of software to make the device work with a computer. This piece of software is called a "Device Driver." One of the most useful features of a well-written device driver is making itself all but invisible to whoever is using the computer. You create a document, send it to your printer, and somehow the document prints. Your device driver takes care of all the little details necessary for the printing operation to occur.

Drivers are one of the three most important broad categories of software in computers. The first is the operating system, the second is whatever applications are installed, including communications, and the third is device drivers. Drivers are important for two reasons. First, your peripherals won't work without them, and second, corrupted or out-of-date device drivers are responsible for most system crashes.

There are other reasons why it's important to keep your device drivers up-to-date. Sometimes a manufacturer will become aware of some kind of defect or glitch in the driver software and issue a fix. You will need it. A different manufacturer may have a driver for its own device that will cause a conflict with an out-of-date driver on your device. Over time, updates for Windows may eventually cause problems with an out-of-date driver.

Proper device driver management is essential to keeping your computer crash proof. If device driver management is unfamiliar territory, please pay attention. You'll be glad you did. Microsoft introduced the concept of Signed Drivers with Windows 2000 and continued with Windows XP. If a device driver is "signed" by Microsoft, it means that the driver has been

subjected to meticulous, painstaking, extensive testing to ensure compatibility with your Windows operating system.

Anytime you install a signed driver, Windows checks it by default and also guarantees it has not been altered or changed in any way. If the driver is not signed, Windows alerts you with a strong message that the driver has not passed Microsoft's rigorous certification tests.

Windows will also ask if you want to install the driver anyway, and will do so if you give it permission. Keeping

your computer safe from unstable software is always a good idea. Fortunately, changing the Windows default is relatively easy, but you need Administrator privileges.

Right-click the My Computer icon on the desktop, then select Properties. Click the Hardware tab and then the Driver Signing button. Choose Block to let this be the new default, and you're done. Windows will now block any device drivers that it does not recognize as signed.

Not all manufacturers send their drivers to Microsoft for testing. For small firms this can be an expensive proposition. Does this mean you should never install an unsigned driver? No, but you should do some checking of your own to ensure that the company has a good reputation in the industry. Sometimes a new device driver will prove unstable for various reasons. Windows XP has the ability to delete the driver and install a previous version. Open the Device Manager, and double click the drive that's causing problems. Switch to the Driver tab and Roll Back the driver to the previous version.

What we've discussed so far is fine if you're using relatively new equipment, but suppose you're having trouble with something that's old and the manufacturer has gone out of business. Chances are good that the original installation disk is lost or deteriorated to a point where it is

no longer useful. There are many other reasons why you could have difficulty finding a device driver, but these are the most common.

In the past, finding the right device driver or firmware was often a tedious, time consuming, and frequently impossible task. Nowadays, we have web sites such as www.driverguide.com to help us. The site has been around since 1997, and has seen many improvements. It has a unique membership base of thousands who collectively compiled a massive database of drivers, firmware, and support documents that is the largest and most comprehensive on the Web.

Recognizing that most people who use computers are not experts, they have devised an easy step-by-step process that will help you find and install drivers. There is an archive of hundreds of thousands of files containing not only drivers, but voluminous information on manufacturers including links to other sites with driver information. Also useful are the discussion boards where you can chat with others who have the same hardware, and learn from their experience.

After you search for a driver and find it, help doesn't stop. The Driver Summary provides you with a rundown of all the information you're likely to need to make the decision about whether or not to download and install the driver. This information is put together from the original manufacturer, plus ratings and comments from those who have previously downloaded and installed the file. It's nice to have everything in one place.

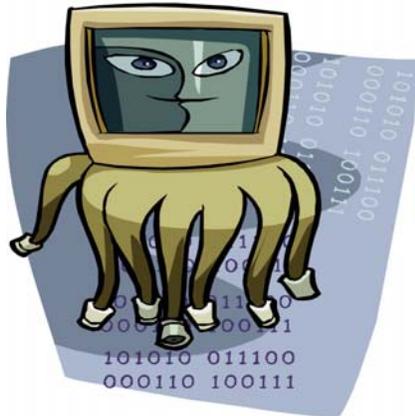
There are many web sites where you can find information about device drivers, but this is one of the best places to use as your starting point. Managing device drivers does not have to be a search in the dark. Use the tools available to you, and your system will be stable and a lot less prone to crash.

VINNY LA BASH is a member of the Sarasota PCUG, Florida. He can be reached at labash@spcug.org.

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.

Editor's Note

We were unable to record a transcript of the Ask DACS session at the July General Meeting. This feature will return in the September issue.



Troubleshooting

How much RAM does Windows need?

By Dick Maybach

I'M FREQUENTLY ASKED how much RAM (Random Access Memory) Windows needs, usually by people who feel that their PCs are slow. Since RAM is cheap, they hope to spend a few dollars on memory chips and substantially speed up their computer. Fortunately, Windows XP provides a way to check whether it has enough RAM. (Earlier versions of Windows may also have this feature, but XP is the only version I have.)

To do this, follow these steps.

- Spend some time doing the task or tasks that you hope to speed up.
- Give Windows the “three-finger salute” (Control-Alt-Delete), which will bring up the Task Manager.
- Click on the Performance tab.

You will see two graphs that show CPU usage (how hard the CPU is working) and page file usage (how hard RAM is working). Ignore these; the information you need appears in the tables below.

- Total Physical Memory is the installed RAM available to the CPU. If your motherboard has a built-in video controller, this number will be smaller than your total physical RAM, since the video controller uses some RAM for video memory.
- System Cache Physical Memory is the amount of RAM allocated to buffer data transfers between RAM and disk storage.
- Available Physical Memory is the amount of RAM available for use by the CPU.
- Total Kernel Memory is the amount of physical memory used by the Windows kernel and drivers.
- Paged Kernel Memory can be swapped to the page file. Non-paged Kernel Memory cannot be swapped.
- Total Commit Charge is the total memory in use by the CPU at this moment.

There are two memory components, RAM and the page file. The page file is stored on your disk, but Windows can use it like RAM. In practice, chunks of RAM are swapped with chunks of the page file, but this

happens only when you run out of RAM. Although this allows Windows to keep working, it greatly slows down your PC.

- Commit Charge Limit is the size of available physical memory plus the size of the page file. If needed, Windows can increase the size of the page file to make the limit as large as needed for the work you do.

- Peak Commit Charge is the largest amount of memory that Windows used since it was last booted.

You now have the data you need to determine whether to add more RAM.

- If the peak commit charge equals the commit charge limit, either the page file size was increased in this session or it has reached its limit. To see the page file characteristics, right-click My Computer, select Properties, click the Advanced tab, in the Performance box click Settings, and click the Advanced tab. The Virtual memory box shows the total size of all the page files. To change this, click the Change button. You can now see the initial and maximum sizes of the page file. If its current size is larger than the initial, it has been increased at some point and may be fragmented, which will slow down its operation.

Unfortunately, the Windows defrag utility can not defrag the page file; you will have to use a third-party defragmenter that does have this ability. If it's current size is the maximum; you should increase the maximum size.

- The approximate size of the working RAM you are using = $0.9 \times [(Total Physical Memory) - (Nonpaged Kernel Memory)]$.

- If the size of working RAM is greater than the Commit Charge Peak, you have enough RAM and adding more would be a waste of money.

- If the size of working RAM is less than the Commit Charge Peak, the difference is the minimum RAM you should add.

For example, I found the following for my laptop:

Total Physical Memory = 1,030,576K



SIG notes, Continued from page 7

Despite high enthusiasm for this exposition, we did manage to stop long enough to enjoy our customary pizza feast, now enhanced by serendipity. Our usual source was shut off by a holiday closing, but Wayne saved this evening treat by tracing a new path to Ciao Café where some very tasty pizza was served to take away to our camp. We had superlative pizza for a superlative SIG.

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.

Non-paged Kernel Memory = 2,656K

Commit Charge Peak = 440,692K

Working RAM size = $0.9 \times (1,030,576K - 22,656K) = 907,128K$ and the Commit Charge Peak is less than half this. For this session at least, I had plenty of RAM. However, if I had only 256 Mbytes (262,144 Kbytes) of RAM, I would probably want to add at least another 256 Mbytes. (By the way 1 Mbyte = 1,024 Kbytes.)

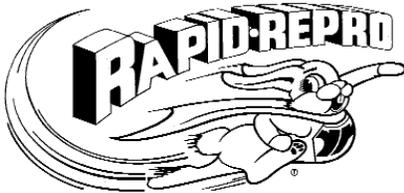
If you want to know more about how to improve the way Windows works on your PC, see *Upgrading and Repairing Windows* by Mueller and Knittel. This book isn't cheap and it isn't for the novice user, but it will be an invaluable ally if some day you must wrestle Windows to the ground.

DICK MAYBACH is a member of the Brookdale Computer User Group, New Jersey. He can be reached at *N2nd@att.net*.

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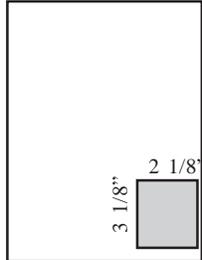
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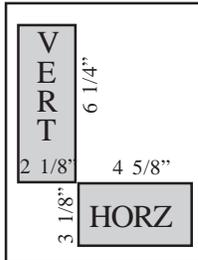
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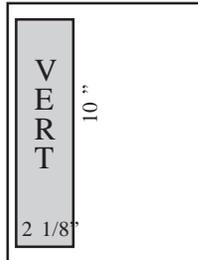
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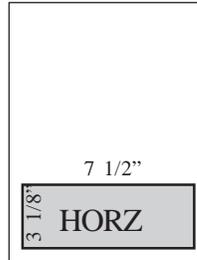
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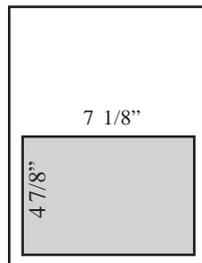
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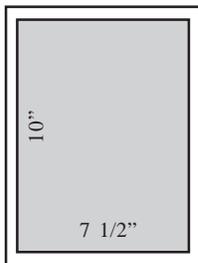
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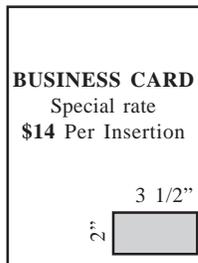
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We sponsor or participate in community support projects by collecting, repairing, and redistributing used computer equipment and software to community service providers such as schools, libraries, and patient/client support groups. DACS members provide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

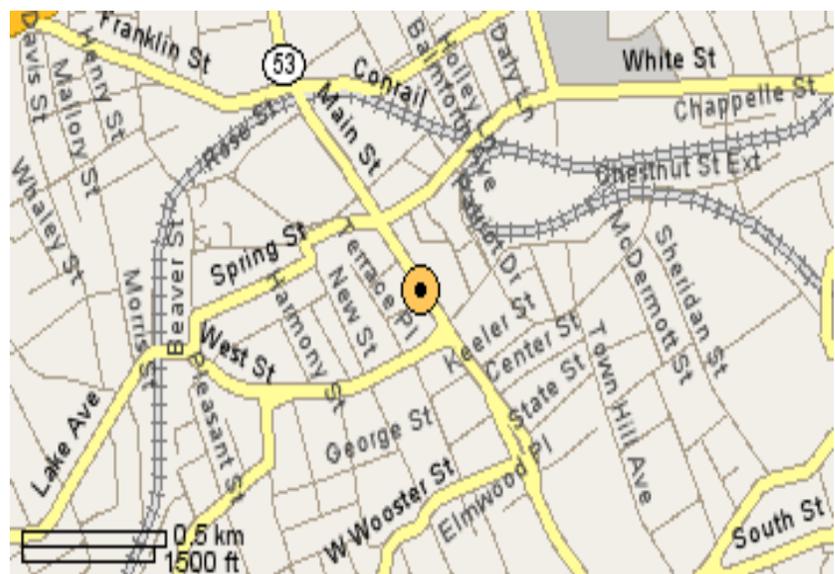
Our general meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month in the Danbury Hospital Auditorium at 7 p.m. These meetings are open to the public. The main presentation is scheduled from 8-9:30, preceded by casual networking, announcements and Random Access, an informal question and answer session.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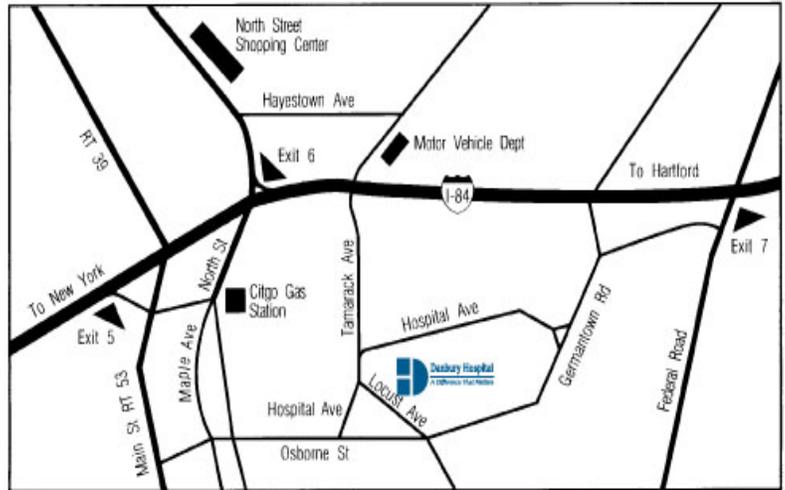
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