

**NEXT MEETING,
OCTOBER 5
PUSH YOUR PC TO THE
LIMIT WITH OVER-CLOCKING**



INSIDE: TURBOCHARGE YOUR PC • BACK TO SCHOOL TECH • HISTORY OF IBM •
UPGRADING TO 64-BIT WINDOWS • FASTSTONE IMAGE VIEWER • RESCUING A
WET COMPUTER • OPEN OFFICE 3.0 • DACS NEEDS YOU • PLUS, MORE
SIG NEWS, COMMENTARY AND ANSWERS TO YOUR COMPUTING QUESTIONS

President's File



We are now in the fourth quarter of 2009. Snow is around the corner. Summer flew past. Halloween is almost here. Some stores already have Thanksgiving and Christmas decorations out. Amazing how compressed time becomes!

BIG E – AMAZING!

And, ironically it was 'just yesterday' (well, two days ago as of this writing) that I attended the 'Big E' for the first time. I must say, that is a very well run event! It took two days just to see 'everything' in terms of booths and vendors and visiting the midway. It took another half day to revisit those booths with merchandise we wanted. We stayed at the Sheraton in Springfield... EXCELLENT! The bridge to the fair was at the foot of the building, so we just walked the 20 minutes the first two days. We drove the last day after we checked out of the hotel—that is why we waited until then to buy bigger items.

What I found interesting is the amount of technology present at the 'country fair'. Vendors had wireless credit/debit/receipt machines. Best Buy had a gaming experience booth in the entrance. "Season Pass" holders got a photo ID with bar-code for park reentry during the whole run of the fair (no need for hand stamps or wristbands!). Vari-

ous vendors and pubs had laptops, projectors, and flat-screen displays at their booths. All of that in the background to control operations and it did not detract one bit from the 'down home country' appeal of it all. Simply mind-blowing how unobtrusive technology can be when it is focused to solve problems rather than create them. Within 50 yards of a horse show there are Point-Of-Sale systems, digital ID thermal printing systems, a beer pub, and elephant ears. Kudos to those organizers!

DACS

Folks, we need some members to step forward and assist with DACS activities and functions. We are in need of two replacement board members. Assistance is needed with the newsletter. The group needs a Programs Director. We could certainly benefit from an event coordination committee so we can have other DACS meetings and activities. This year we have a deficit of help brought on by external circumstances for several of your dedicated members that have filled volunteer positions. Contact the board (dacsboard@dacs.org) to lend your assistance.

OCTOBERS PAST

- ENIAC is retired on 10/2/1955 and a US Postal stamp commemorating it is released 10/8/1996.
- The US Patent office grants a patent to the three inventors of the transistor on 10/3/1950.
- Seymour Cray, father of the super-computer, dies from a car accident on 10/5/1996.
- Steve Jobs introduced the NeXT on 10/12/1988.
- First Ubuntu Linux Distribution released on 10/20/2004.
- Windows XP released 10/25/2001.
- October 27, 1980 marks the first ARPANET crash.

See you at the next meeting!

Rob Limbaugh
dacsprez@dacs.org



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



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Apple User Group

Directors' Notes

August 2009

SEVEN (7) PEOPLE attended the Board of Directors meeting held on Monday, August 10, 2009. Present were Annette van Ommeren, Jim Scheef, Patrick Libert, Rob Limbaugh, Sean and Liam Henderson, and Jeff Setaro. President Rob Limbaugh presided and Secretary Mary Tobin was absent. In the Secretary's place, Sean N. Henderson, a director, kept the record. The meeting began on or close to 7 p.m. Approval of Minutes of the last meeting Directors' Meeting held in July 2009 was tabled and deferred to email.

There was no Treasurer's report available during the meeting. Treasurer Charles Bovaird was not present. The July 2009 Board Meeting was canceled. The last known Treasurer report given to the Board in June 2009 and available via the Internet was then cash assets of \$6,582.48, plus postage on hand in the amount of \$34.77 for a total of \$6,617.25. Continuing with June's report, subtracting a liability of prepaid dues in the amount of \$359.00 left a net equity of \$6,258.25. For June 2009, the Treasurer also reported that the current membership is at 206, 188 with email.

Patrick mentioned how well the last meeting on "Back To School Tech" came together. Rob Limbaugh had created the outline, and Sean Henderson further fleshed it out and ended up giving the presentation. Discussion on how to better promote this topic next time should it become scheduled. Jim suggested that getting info on this topic to schools in May would be best.

Rob announced he would not be available for the October General Meeting.

It was decided, discussed and/or confirmed that there would be no September 2009 General Meeting. October's topic was listed as Over-clocking. November's meeting was still undecided and December's meeting has been previously confirmed to be John Patrick. There was some discussion regarding kindly suggesting to John Patrick to possibly provide a different slant than his classic "State of the Internet" talk for future presentations. Jim suggested that DACS could reschedule Lesa's Digital Photography presentation for November. Rob mentioned that Lesa was now out of the area.

Other discussion followed regarding how DACS could integrate with current social media. Part of the discussion was determining how long-lived current sites would be. Prior examples given were CompuServe and GeoCities.

The open director and officer positions were discussed. It was decided that Drew

DIRECTORS' NOTES, Cont. on page 4

Officers

PRESIDENT: Rob Limbaugh (203) 648-9176 relimbaugh@dacs.org

VICE PRESIDENT: Positions Open

SECRETARY: Mary Tobin • **TREASURER:** Charles Bovaird

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Committees

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PROGRAM: Position open (VPprograms@dacs.org)

WEB MASTERS: Richard Corzo (rcorzo@dacs.org), (203)797-1518

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MARKETING AND PR: Position open (pr@dacs.org)

APCUG LIAISON: Patrick Libert (plibert@dacs.org)

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 #	
APL	Charles Bovaird	(203) 792-7881	(e)
ASP.Net	Chuck Fizer	(203) 798-9996	(d)
C#, VB	Chuck Fizer	(203) 798-9996	(d)
Electronics	Andrew Woodruff	(203) 798-2000	(d e)
Interface-Instrumentation	Andrew Woodruff	(203) 798-2000	(d e)
PhotoShop/Dreamweaver	Annette van Ommeren	(914) 232-0149	(e)
SAS	Lewis Westfall	(203) 790-0229	(e)
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Malware	Jeff Setaro	(203) 748-6748	(d)
VB.Net, Visual Basic	Chuck Fizer	(203) 798-9996	(d)

DIRECTORS' NOTES, Cont. from page 3

Kwashnak should be invited onto the Board to fill Howie Berger's slot, and encouraged to seek election to the Board. Howie Berger had resigned by way of email on August 10, 2009, citing his schedule. Besides Howie's vacancy, open positions include Program Chair/VP, a replacement candidate for Treasurer, and President. Rob Limbaugh, the current President, has again reminded the Board that this is his final term.

There was continued discussion about how to promote DACS' upcoming anniversary. There is still debate among the board regarding which birthdate to use for DACS. The two options are whether to go with the date of incorporation or the earlier date of the groups (DAWG, et al.) that led to DACS. The incorporation date would make 2010 DACS' 20th year, otherwise DACS would be justified in celebrating it's 25th year. Sean suggested that work start now for launching what Sean proposes is a yearlong celebration. Jim suggested that in 2010, the General Meetings include some 10-years-ago, 20-years-ago type material. Rob suggested using the pre-meeting loop.

There was discussion of the 2010 schedule consisting of revisiting dates and times of General Meetings. Sean proposed having meetings at the Resource Center (RC). Parking was cited as a reason not to have at the RC. Parking was cited as possibly a reason for the decreasing attendance at the meetings at the hospital as well, given their increased meeting schedule.

Discussion followed regarding DACS' forum and usage.

The meeting concluded on or near 9 p.m.

—Sean N. Henderson

**Directors' Notes
September 2009**

A regular meeting of your Board of Directors was held at the Resource Center on Monday, September 14, 2009, at 7:00 p.m. Present were: Charles Bovaird, Richard Corzo, Patrick Libert, Rob Limbaugh, Jeff Setaro, and Joseph Tobin. President Rob Limbaugh presided and Secretary Mary Tobin kept the record. Minutes of the last meeting held August 10, 2009, were presented with corrections approved. Minutes of last meeting – 4th paragraph Correction – Rob will not be available for the October general meeting. 5th paragraph Lisa is out of the area.

Treasurer Charles Bovaird reported current cash assets of \$6004.09, consisting of total bank and postal accounts in the amount of \$28.10 plus postage on hand of \$6032.19.

DIRECTORS' NOTES, Cont. on page 13

From the Editor

Editorial Bits

by Patrick Libert

Program Review

THE AUGUST presentation was a winner! Rob Limbaugh's expert preparation was expanded and presented by Sean N. Henderson since Rob was unable to attend the meeting.



This was a 'must see' for anyone with children either entering school for the first time or moving up to another grade. We are going to do our

best to promote it actively before next year's updated presentation.

New and Notable

I like to peruse news headlines and choose those articles which catch my eye. Google Labs has been working on a program that can make this easier, Google fast flip (<http://fastflip.googlelabs.com/>). It's quite ingenious and can be customized to show those publications and topics of your choice. I will try it for a while and give you more feedback next month.

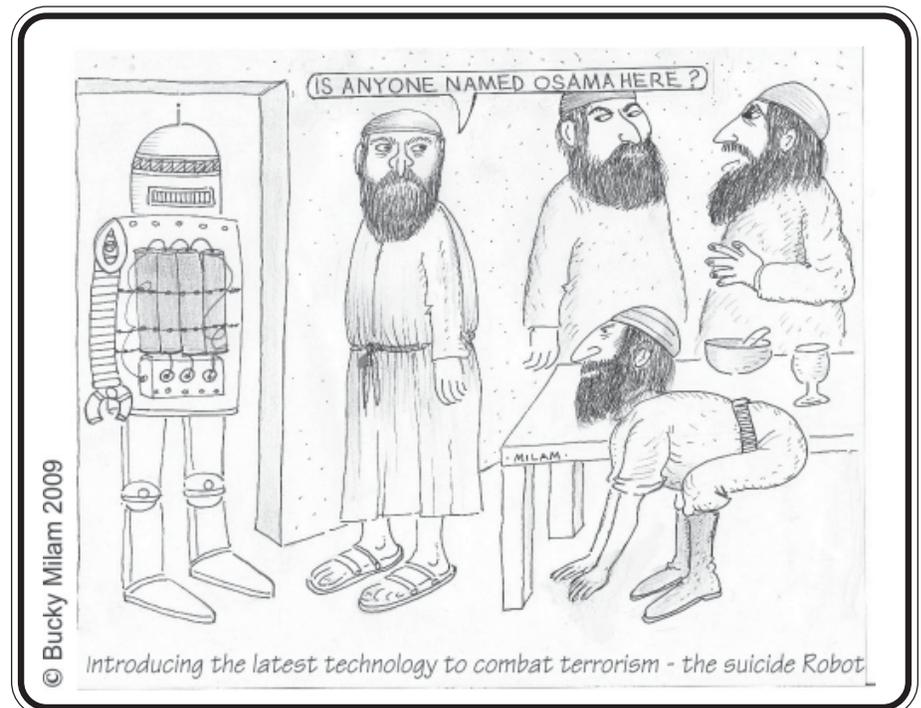
I have been using Mozy (<http://mozy.com/>) for two months with complete satisfaction. I choose to backup manually instead of at a set time each day and all it takes is to open the drop down menu from

the icon in the control bar and choose "Start Backup." Depending on how much new data I have since the previous backup, it takes no more than a few minutes. And yes, I have tried the restore function for a few folders and files with equal success. For less than 17 cents a day, I have that peace of mind.

I have read two research reports recently dealing with global warming. In both cases, the studies conclude that the real culprit is not mankind but our lazy old sun. One study admits that man's contribution to the atmosphere may enhance some of those effects but the cyclical nature of solar energy and of sunspots is the main cause of our ebbs and flows of global temperatures. Food for thought. (<http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/la-oe-goldberg12009sep01,0,2797425.column>)

DACS.doc

Do you like reading our newsletter? It doesn't just fall out of the sky. It takes many hours of composing, editing and structuring to get the final product which you receive in your mailbox, real or virtual. Some of us have been doing this for a long time and we need your help. The more the merrier and we'll make this a monthly prepress party. All you have to do is contact me when you see me at the general meetings or send me an email at dacseditor@dacs.org. You too can be an editor!



Meeting Preview

Overclocking PCs:

PC Hardware with a Custom Built PC Example

by Rob Limbaugh

THE NEED FOR computing speed and power is the apex that tech enthusiasts seek. Performance tuning in the computing world mirrors that in the high performance auto industry.

All PCs have basic components that are generally on the spec sheets when we buy a new machine: CPU make and model, amount of RAM, drive space, OS version, graphics card, etc. By understanding the relationship between these components, along with different cooling techniques, it is possible to push the machine into high performance ranges beyond the published specs.

In the high-performance PC world, pushing systems above their published

specs usually involves 'over-clocking.' Over-clocking is achieved by running various system components above the clock cycles they are rated for. This is not recommended for the average user. Special care must be taken. There is risk of causing permanent component damage.

This month we welcome Pete Basel, of Basel Consultants, who is an overclocking and electronics enthusiast extraordinaire! Pete's technological experience stretches into component fundamentals and his background spanning robotics, machine vision systems, video encoder designs, silicon chip development, high speed interface design, and more.



Pete will discuss the basics of a typical motherboard and system architecture. He'll explain FSB (Front Side Bus), memory interface, Northbridge, Southbridge, and other key features to system performance. He'll briefly cover the processor fabrication process, NMOS, CMOS, feature size, and the evolution of the 486 to Pentium-D. He will explain 'over-clocking' and why it may be reasonable to do so.

As an added bonus, he'll have an example Pentium-D system over-clocked to 4.25GHz!

Curious about what it takes to push your system to the limit? Are you willing to void your warranty? Do you want to build a computer worthy of a custom paint job? Come to the October meeting and find out!

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 question and answer period (Ask DACS), followed by announcements and 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.

Meeting Review

Back to School Tech

by Patrick Libert

AH, THE FIRST DAY OF school! Let's see, we have to get our kids some pens and pencils, a couple of notebooks, an eraser. That should do it. Whoa! We're in the twenty-first century now and our child would be totally unprepared for the classroom with only those supplies.

DACS' August presentation showed us what we REALLY need for today's education. This program should be mandatory for any parent and/or child preparing for the school year, be it for kindergarten or the first year of High School. Mark your calendars because it will probably be presented again next year.

Sean seamlessly guided us through the presentation. He emphasized that

the first approach is to check with the school as to what software and computers are used in the classroom. Once that is known, there are sources where discounted software and hardware can be bought for educational purposes. OpenSource software is also a free alternative to many applications; don't overlook that possibility.

Children will be taught to make presentations, to work with photo editing software and even to work with MIDI by the time they reach middle school.

There will be specific requirements for hardware as the education progresses from primary school into college. By the freshman year of high school, it is likely that a laptop would be a good investment if not specifically required by the curriculum. Many colleges will certainly require it.

Cellphones, PDA's and music players may not be allowed in many schools unless the latter two are required for course work. It is important to check with the school on these specific rules.

The presentation, prepared by Rob and embellished and presented by Sean, was a learning experience for me and I am well past school age. If only I could have had those tools when I was slaving to earn my degree in Chemistry!

DACS must schedule this presentation annually before schools open and alert the community. I rate it a 9 out of 10!



Book Review

The History of IBM in Four Books

by Jim Scheef

THE EXCELLENT SERIES of articles that Charlie Bovaird is writing (see “Before Computers—The Tab Card Epoch” in the July 2009 issue) got me thinking about my library of books on IBM. The books below are all excellent, fun reading.

These four books can be divided into two categories. The first two books are histories of IBM from the management perspective. The Robert Sobel book covers the formation of IBM as a company, the story of how Thomas J. Watson, Sr., came to run it and how his son, Tom, Jr.,

moved it from tabulating machines to computers. Paul Carroll carries the story thru to about 1993 when Lou Gerstner took over. Both of these books are more about the people than the machines and software that made or unmade IBM leadership, although the stories about OS/2 and similar projects figure prominently.

As the titles imply, the other two books are somewhat the reverse. These books focus on the development of the machines that made IBM the giant of the computer industry. Naturally, these stories must talk about the people and the management

decisions involved in making the machines, but the focus is decidedly different from the first two books. Given their orientation, you will find more details about machine architecture and why they were that way than in the other books.

Like most of the books I review, all four of these books are undoubtedly out of print. When I see a reference to a computer history book on an email list or website, I go to my source, AbeBooks.com (abebooks.com). This site indexes the inventories of hundreds of used bookstores in the U.S. and U.K. Competition amongst the stores keeps prices down. I just checked and all four books are available at reasonable prices. Be sure to read the description of the book’s condition, which I find to be fairly accurate. I find many books for as little as \$5 delivered to my door.

Title	Author	Published	Publisher	ISBN
IBM: Colossus in Transition	Robert Sobel	1981	Times Books	0-8129-1000-1
Big Blues, The Unmaking of IBM	Paul Carroll	1993	Crown Publishers	0-517-59197-9
IBM's Early Computers	Charles J. Bashe, Lyle R. Johnson, John H. Palmer, Emerson W. Pugh	1986	MIT Press	0-262-02225-7
IBM's 360 and Early 370 Systems	Emerson W. Pugh, Lyle R. Johnson, John H. Palmer	1991	MIT Press	0-262-16123-0

PC Architecture

Is It Time To Switch To 64 Bit Windows?

by Brian K. Lewis, PhD

IN MY FEBRUARY 2008 article in the Monitor comparing 32 bit and 64 bit computing, I was still advising caution for those wishing to upgrade. Today every new computer is capable of running a 64 bit operating system.

As a result there are many voices saying if you have the capability to run a 64 bit operating system, you should take advantage of it. Microsoft had previously indicated that Windows 7 would be available only in a 64 bit version. However, they now say both 32 & 64 bit versions will be sold. There some speculation in the computer industry that Win-

dows 8 may only be 64 bit. So it appears to be time to reconsider the move to a 64 bit operating system (OS). There are many advantages for 64 bit over 32 bit, but in order to better understand them, we need to take a brief look at how these will affect your decision.



To start with we should recall a little history. In the early days of personal computing the processors instruction sets were designed for 8 bit “words”. This was the data size that could be used to express a single character. A bit is either a “1” or a “0”. Eight bits were then referred to as a “byte” and that was consid-

ered a computer “word”. In those days the CPUs we had were the Intel 8080, the Zilog Z80, Motorola 6800, and the MOS Tech 6502. These were all 8 bit processors with 8 bit data paths. The Apple I/II/III and Commodore Pet all used the 6502. IBM designed the first x86 CPU which was called the 8086 and it was a 16 bit processor. However, when IBM produced their first personal computer in 1981 it used their 8088 processor which was an 8 bit version of the 8086. The next step was to the 16 bit processor with the 80286 processor in 1984. The software changes rapidly followed this advance. The change to 16 bit processing allowed the central processor and the data bus to transfer data in increasingly larger sizes, referred to as double words. The 32 bit processor arrived in 1989 followed by the 64 bit in 2005. As this history shows, the 64 bit computer is just one more generational step in processing power. In addition, a computer “word” is now considered to be 16 bits, not 8 bits. So a 64 bit processor can handle a

quadruple word (4x16). Naturally, the increase in the width of the CPU/data path does increase processing speed.

Every time the hardware has changed, there has been a delay while the software manufacturers play catchup. Applications have to be rewritten to take advantage of the hardware changes including the new instructions in the CPU instruction set. Only then can the application take advantage of the added processing power. Although Windows has been available in a 64 bit form since XP was released, its adoption has been quite slow. Many software manufacturers did not make 64 bit versions of their applications. This coupled with the limited acceptance of Vista has markedly slowed the shift from 32 bit to 64 bit. Another factor in this process is the development of 64 bit drivers for peripherals such as printers, scanners, graphics cards, wireless modems, network cards, etc. Microsoft has also indicated that Windows 7 will not install 64 bit drivers unless the software is "Microsoft Certified". Some manufacturers have obtained certification for some of their 64 bit drivers. For example, my Brother multi-function machine has a certified driver for 64 bit Windows. If you don't have a 64 bit certified driver, your peripheral will not work under Windows 7. Neither Vista64 nor Win7-64 will accept 32 bit drivers. Something to check out before you pop for a 64 bit OS. However, if you are buying an upgrade version of Windows 7, several of them are supposed to come with both the 64 bit and 32 bit versions in the box, but not in the OEM versions. This specifically applies to the Home Premium, Professional and Ultimate versions (as of this writing and may be subject to change by Microsoft.).

Another advantage of a 64 bit processor is in its memory management. By now I would hope that everyone understands that the 32 bit generation of computers can address a maximum of 4 gigabytes of RAM. This is the maximum number of addresses that can be handled and is calculated from 2^{32} or two to the thirty-second power. This includes addresses needed by the system as well as the data. A 64 bit processor can address 2^{64} addresses or roughly ten billion more than the 32 bit processor. The catch here is that both the hardware manufacturers and Microsoft have imposed limitations on the addressable memory. Generally, new personal computer's are limited to 128 GB of memory or less. Some manufacturers configure their laptops for a maximum of 4 GB of RAM. Windows OS software is also highly variable in its limits. Some versions of Vista limit addressing to as little as 8 GB (Home Basic & Premium). It is expected that these limits will be raised in

Windows 7. For the present, these levels should be more than adequate for most people. If not keep in mind that it is the Ultimate versions of Vista and Windows 7 that have the maximum addressing ability.

The next thing to consider is the software compatibility. Just because you have a new operating system, no one really wants to have to upgrade all their software from 32 bit to 64 bit. For that reason both Intel CPU's and AMD CPU's are not true native 64 bit processors. They are, in fact, hybrids. By this I mean that they allow 32 bit code to run in an emulation mode. Consequently, 64 bit Windows has an emulation mode, Windows on Windows, which allows 32 bit software to be run. WOW intercepts system calls to the operating system made by a 32-bit application and switches the CPU to 32 bit mode. It can switch the CPU between 32 bit and 64 bit as needed. This also allows the 64 bit AMD/Intel CPU's to run a 32 bit OS. The only true 64 bit, non-hybrid operating systems for PC's are found in Intel's Itanium processor (IA64) and the various 64 bit versions of Linux. Systems using these CPUs will give you all the benefits of 64 bit computing, but require all 64 bit software. Windows WOW64 also allows for some 32 bit software to run on the IA64 CPU by converting 32 bit calls to 64 bit.

Windows XP, Vista and Win7 contain large numbers of dll files. These are system libraries, many of which are loaded into memory when the computer is booted. In the 64 bit OS, these libraries can not be used by 32 bit software so instead, there are duplicate libraries written in 32 bit code included in Windows. Microsoft has devised a system so that these libraries can co-exist on the hard drive and in RAM without overwriting the files or accessing the wrong file so that 32 bit code can be run under the 64 bit OS. Sounds good, doesn't it? Yes, it does work, but with some caveats. Adding an emulation layer does slow the overall processing of software instructions. Also, there is an increase in the amount of memory (virtual memory included) needed for the additional 32 bit libraries that are loaded along with the 64 bit dlls at boot time.

There are other problems, but to a somewhat lesser extent as it affects fewer software applications. Some 32 bit applications still use 16 bit loaders. Since Windows 64 does not support ANY 16 bit code, these applications will not run, unless Windows can transparently substitute an installer with 32 bit code. Hopefully, all 32 bit software will eventually have 32 bit loaders or be replaced with 64 bit code. Additionally, some 32 bit software requires the use of 32 bit drivers. These drivers will not run on any 64 bit Windows platform. So until the driv-

ers are available in a 64 bit form, these applications can't be used with Windows 64.

Another consideration is that any utility software that works at the hardware level must be 64 bit. This generally includes anti-virus software and other anti-malware products. Those few manufacturers I have checked do have 64 bit versions of their applications available. This includes some which provide free utility applications. This is just one more item that should be checked before you decide to move to a 64 bit OS.

If you decide you want to upgrade to the 64 bit version of Windows 7 when it is available, then you have several more things to consider. No matter which 32 bit Windows version you are currently using, you will have to do a "clean" install of the 64 bit version. That means backing up your data to an external medium and formatting your hard drive or at least a part of it (one partition). You can install Windows 7 in a new partition and dual boot with it and your current Windows version. Or you can install the new version in the space reclaimed from your old version. Either way you will have to reinstall software and drivers. Then you can restore your data. Only if you upgrade to the Windows 7 32 bit version from Vista can you do an "in-place" upgrade. If you are still running XP you have no choice but to do a clean install to convert to the 64 bit version. Of course, if you buy a new computer with the 64 bit Windows 7 installed that reduces your problem to just installing applications and data from your old computer.

I have already pre-ordered a 64 bit version of Windows 7. So, you see, I have answered the question I posed in the title of this article. When it arrives, in October, I will be installing it, then testing drivers and applications. You probably won't see any of my experience until the December Monitor. In the meantime, I have obtained a 64 bit version of the Linux OS, Ubuntu. Over the next few months I will be installing and testing it on my computer. So you will be seeing more about 64 bit computing. I hope it will help you as the entire industry continues to move into a fully 64 bit era. Just think, the next move, in a few years, will probably be to 128 bit computing!

DR. LEWIS is a former university and medical school professor of physiology. He has been working with personal computers for over thirty years, developing software and assembling systems (www.spcug.org; bwsail@yahoo.com).

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Special Interest Groups

SIG NOTES: October 2009

ASP.Net. Focuses on Web site/server application development using Microsoft Visual Studio, C#, VB, Javascript and SQL Server programming tools. Starts with Random Access, 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: Oct 7

Digital Imaging. 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: Oct 28

Jobs. Networking and jobs search

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: Drew Kwashnak 203-910-6477 (Cell)

Meets 3rd Wednesday, 7:30 p.m. at the DACS Resource Center.

Next Meeting: Oct 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: Oct 1

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

Contact: Charles Bovaird, 203-792-7881 aam@mags.net.

Meets irregularly, at the DACS Resource Center, announced by e-mail.

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: Oct 8

VB.Net.. 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, 7 p.m., at the DACS Resource Center, preceded 1 hour with a shared cost pizza snack.

Next Meeting: Oct 7

Virtual Computing. This SIG will explore virtual computing technologies and how to leverage them as additional system resources. Our main focus will be on the free VMWare products, but we will also look at other technologies and tools.

Meets 4th Tuesday, 7 p.m. at the DACS Resource Center

Contact: Rob Limbaugh relimbaugh@dacs.org, 203 648-9176

Next Meeting: Combined with Server SIG.

Web Design and DTP. Learn about Adobe software for web, graphics and desktop publishing.

Contact: Annette vanOmmeren(avo555@earthlink.net).

Meets 3rd Tuesday, 7-9 p.m. at the DACS Resource Center.

Next Meeting: September 16 **Next Meeting:** Oct 20

SIG News & Events

August ASP.Net and C#VB.Net. Deep into the summer and its heat, we started our SIG session on the hot topic of Javascript. Our interest is to use Javascript to enhance the ASP.Net C# web calendar control we have in development. One of the many goals we have for this calendar is for the control to update itself without any interaction with the server. This is in contrast to the web Calendar control that comes with the Visual Studio development environment. Every interaction with that control raises a postback to the server for update processing.

Of course, we want our Calendar control to have other features not provided by the Microsoft calendar. Such features as marked holidays, selectable on/off limit selectable dates among others. To provide these features we have developed a programming strategy that employs Javascript routines that run in the browser rather than on the server. Visual Studio (VS 2008) provides an excellent Javascript development environment complete with a top notch debugger.

The calendar can change the year and or month by clicking a button. Now recognize that when the date changes on the calendar, each day must be inspected to

determine if is a national holiday for the currently displayed culture/language. This assessment is conducted using Javascript which compares static holiday information hidden on the web page with each day in the calendar as the calendar is re-rendered after a month change.

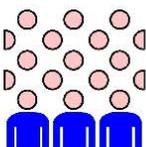
Our SIG meeting dealt with how to develop the analysis routines in Javascript and test them for executability and accuracy. VS 2008 provides a Jscript file function that provides an excellent editing tool that even has Javascript intellisense to help structure your Javascript code. In addition, a test container page is easily configured to accommodate the Javascript file. By setting break points in the Javascript file, browser execution can be single stepped to determine errors in the code. Most importantly, fix and rerun is very rapid allowing the developer to stay on topic.

In our case this evening, we developed Javascript functions for producing the date for each of the eleven EN-US national holidays as well as the date for observance. Globally, the customs of a country identify its national holidays. A name is specified together with the characteristics of

SIG Notes, Cont. on page 14

October 2009

Danbury Area Computer Society

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday																																																																																		
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Graphics Tools

FastStone Image Viewer 3.9

by Charlotte Brown

IF YOU WANT A REALLY simple but powerful basic photo program, look no farther than FastStone Image Viewer 3.9. This is the program that I encourage my students to use in the beginning of their picture enhancing journey. When you want to do more things than Image Viewer offers, you can add another program. Many of the programs that help you through the next steps are also free. Working through the basics into more advanced techniques is not as overwhelming as jumping into the middle of a professional program and wondering how to do simple things such as cropping, adjusting light, changing to sepia or grayscale, or even converting to other file formats.

FastStone Image Viewer has powerful capabilities of batch converting images from one format to another, for example, from jpg to png. It also allows for batch renaming & resizing, batch watermarking and dpi adjustments and more. To keep things simple, let me walk you through the process of taking only 1 picture at a time through a series of adjustments to make the final print.

I always use 3 windows when working with FastStone Image Viewer. This is the default setting. The upper left window allows you to browse through Windows Explorer to the folder containing your photos. Double clicking the folder opens thumbnails of the files in a large window on the right. When you click on a picture to select it, you see a large thumbnail in the lower left-hand window. Look over my shoulder as I browse to **Pictures** and double click the folder inside that I have named Christmas 08. Large thumbnails of all the picture files in that folder now appear in the large window. I will select a file titled Jayden. Now Jayden's picture appears not only in the window on the right but also as a large thumbnail in the lower left hand corner.

The first thing I do is click File > Save As. I rename the file as JaydenP

and use the drop-down menu by File Type to select png. Then I click Save. The new file appears in the large window with all the other thumbnails. It is much bigger than the original jpg. It is now in a *lossless* format, allowing me to make all kinds of changes without losing any of the information originally



captured by the camera. I could choose to work with tiff to accomplish the same capabilities. Png files allow me to cut out transparent areas if I wish and the file size is smaller.

Let me insert something that will interest those of you who are doing more advanced work. The rest of you can skip to the next paragraph! When I double click the picture, it fills my entire window. Moving the mouse to the right side of the screen brings up information about the picture. One of the tab choices is Histogram. That provides me with information about the lighting. Here is a little tip. If you double click the original jpg or you decide to save as tiff instead of png, the tab titled EXIF will give you all the camera information captured when you snapped the picture: date and time, make and model of camera, ISO setting (much the same as film speed in the olden days), the aperture setting, shutter speed, focal length, and whether or not the flash fired.

Now let me return to the really simple process of working with JaydenP, my

png file. I click on Edit on the menu bar, and then click on Resize / Resample. Now I can choose to size my picture by number of pixels, percentage or print size. In this case I want to make a color print so I will click on the radio button titled Print size. Next I will select 300 dpi by using the drop down menu or hand entering the numbers. Remember that digital cameras were developed for digital viewing. Most digital camera settings take pictures at 72 dpi. When you resize to 300 dpi, you have a much clearer picture that has a slimming effect on your subject that is much more flattering!

In this case my picture is portrait, not landscape, so I will choose 5 x 7. I put a check mark in the selection box titled Preserve Aspect Ratio so I don't create distortion effects similar to those created by convex or concave mirrors! I notice that the photo will not be exactly 5 x 7. One thing to remember is that digital pictures are not the same scale as film pictures. In this example, my picture turns out to be 5.25 x 7. I click OK. Now I am back to the 3 pane original window and my picture is still selected (blue frame around it). Now I click on the cropping tool. I check the Paper Ratio

to make sure it says 7 x 5 and has a check mark by Flip Ratio so that I get a 5 x 7. A dotted line around the picture shows that the program is suggesting an even crop from both sides. After looking at the picture carefully, I decide I want the entire crop to come from the left side. When I move the mouse onto the picture, it becomes a 4-sided arrow. I click and drag the dotted outline to the right as far as I can and click Crop followed by Close. The picture is still selected in the main work area.

Now I click on the Red Eye control on the toolbars below the menu bars. The picture pops open in a new screen. I like to use a zoom ration of 200%. Then I click in the middle of the eye and draw a circle that covers the entire eye. I can click in the middle of the circle I have drawn, hold down the mouse, and move the circle to fine-tune its location. Then I click Remove Red Eye. Whoosh! It is gone. The program takes me back to the mail work area with the three windows.

I click once more on Edit. This time I chose Enhance Colors. The picture

opens in a full screen with controls at the bottom for adjusting brightness, contrast, gamma, red, green and blue levels, hue and saturation. You can create some wild looks here. I brighten the picture slightly and make a small color shift to enhance the reds. I click on "Hold Down to See Original Image" to make sure I like the adjustments I have made. When I am satisfied, I click OK. Once again I click on File > Save As. This time I rename the file Jayden 5x7 and select the type as jpg. All my changes hold. The picture is still 300 dpi. The size will be perfect with no surprise cropping by the photo lab.

The program allows for so much more: adding text, straightening a picture before cropping, creating slide shows, and things I haven't yet explored. I downloaded the newest version this week. There is now an 83-page manual you can download to learn from clear directions and screen shots how to take advantage of this marvelous program. The manual was written by Bill Westerhoff who has written tutorials on other free photo products as well as Photoshop Elements 3-7.

I suppose you now are wondering about the price. First of all you need to know where to get the program. Go to www.faststone.org. There is no charge to download this program. You will be encouraged to give a donation keep the developers encouraged to work on future enhancements. If you decide you like the program as well as I do, you will want to help them. There is no set fee, so whatever you choose to give is up to you.

CHARLOTTE BROWN, is president of the Canton/Alliance/Massillon Users Group, Ohio (www.camug.com; cbrown@mystepco.com)

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Computer Basics

If Your Computer Gets Wet...What?

by Bob Schwartz,

WHAT TO DO IF something wet spills on your electronic device or it falls into wet whatever?

The following is not guaranteed but represents years of experience.

Quick, unplug it! Unless there is a likely shock hazard. Look up the instructions (best to do this when you buy it). Find out if there is any prohibition against using ALCOHOL. Alcohol can dissolve some materials.

There are generally two items to have handy. One is *distilled* water to first wash off and dilute any spill, especially anything that might be conductive. The second is alcohol, 90+% isopropyl (rubbing) alcohol. Ethyl alcohol or ethanol – 90% - will work too. Alcohol has an affinity for water. Rinsing the item first with the distilled water and then with alcohol will dilute, pick up water, carry it away, and evaporate quickly. The higher percent alcohol 90% vs 50% have a greater affinity for water.

Time is important. You do not want water to soak into an otherwise insulating medium, especially water that contains something conductive like salt. It will leave a conductive residue that will short out portions of the device. That is why you want to *rinse first* with distilled water to carry away any conductive residue and then the alcohol to remove the water film. *Most tap water has dissolved minerals* that remain after the water evaporates, hence the distilled water to rinse these away.

After, and I repeat AFTER, the above cleaning, you can use *very modest heat* to help dry out the item. You can use a hair dryer at some distance. Make sure you don't heat the item any hotter than is comfortable to hold. Some plastic materials deform at relatively low temperatures.

Remember the order: (1) rinse with distilled water (2) rinse with alcohol (3) *warm gently* with hair dryer or warming oven.

For items immersed in flood waters, the above approach can be tried but the out-

look is not promising. Generally the conductive flood waters have had time to soak into the various insulating materials and are almost impossible to remove. Still, it may be worth a try, especially if you have the time and possible success is worth the effort. Distilled water and alcohol are not very expensive. Most circuit boards are coated with

varnish to resist moisture. In this case, wash repeatedly with distilled water. Use a soft brush to remove any remaining film such as mud. Then, the alcohol followed by the dryer. Using the dryer prematurely can "set" the offending material to the point that it may be almost unremovable. So save it for the very last step after you are sure things are clean. Your efforts may save part if not all of the equipment.



BOB SCHWARTZ is a HAL-PC member, retired EE,

14 patents, technical writer, active in civic affairs: President, Brays Bayou Association; Vice President, Marilyn Estates Civic Association; Correspondence Secretary with the Willow Waterhole Greenspace Conservancy.

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Open Source Software

Open Office.Org 3.0 An Evolutionary Improvement

by Bill Wayson,

OPENOFFICE.ORG (OO.O) IS Free and Open Source Software's (FOSS) premier alternative to the Microsoft Office productivity suite. It offers a high level of compatibility with many of the ever-changing MS Office formats, provides many of the same features as MS Office, and works similarly to MS Office. This month, we will explore the recently released OpenOffice.org 3.0, which is available for Microsoft Windows, Linux, Apple's Macintosh, Sun's Solaris, and several other operating systems. Many, if not most, users of MS Office

who require the broad, deep range of features of MS Office could change to OO.o and become productive after a very shallow learning curve.

If your requirements are more for just compatibility with Microsoft's Word document formats in a word processor, you can consider more streamlined FOSS alternatives such as AbiWord.

OO.o is a full-featured office productivity suite comprised of six integrated applications: the Writer word processor (which also has a Web page editing mode), Calc spreadsheet, Draw graphics program, Impress presentations program, Base database program, and Math equation editor.

OO.o 3.0 is an evolutionary improvement on the application suite, with new features, enhancements, and user interface improvements. Users of Apple Macintosh OS X systems benefit greatly from OO.o 3.0, which will now run as a native OS X application.

OS X users will also have support for Microsoft's VBA macro language and the Calc Solver component, which allows solving optimization problems where the optimum value of a particular spreadsheet cell has to be calculated based on constraints provided in other cells. Both of these features are missing in MS Office 2008 for Mac OS X.

All users of OO.o 3.0 benefit from its improvements, including the two above.

Another area of significant improvement is one where OO.o is breaking out of Microsoft mimicry mode: support for open document standards. OO.o 3.0 supports the



latest OpenDocument Format (PDF) specification. In fact, ODF is the OO.o default document format. ODF is gaining wider acceptance worldwide, being adopted by more companies and governments as the standard for documents, and becoming supported by an increasing number of applications. OO.o will also read and write many other formats, including those of various versions of MS Office and

Word, plain text, and several PDA document formats.

Additionally, it will read the newest formats introduced in MS Office 2007. Exchanging documents with users of Microsoft's products should not be an issue. The Writer screen now sports a handy zoom slider control, making it quick and easy to change the zoom level of the view. Additionally, it will automatically display multiple pages of the document as the zoom level is lowered. Writer now displays notes — notations added to a document that are not necessarily meant to be printed — at the edge of the editing window to the side of the document, making it easier to read them and see their context in the document. In addition, notes from different users are displayed in different colors, together with the editing date and time, facilitating collaborative work on a document.

Calc sees some useful improvements. One is in the charts feature. Now, custom error bars can be included, and regression equations and correlation coefficients can be displayed right in the chart. Another is a new feature, spreadsheet collaboration through workbook sharing. This feature allows multiple users to work collaboratively on a spreadsheet while avoiding editing conflicts. The users share a spreadsheet, each adding their data. The spreadsheet owner can then easily integrate the new data with a few clicks. And

Calc now supports 1,024 columns per worksheet.

Draw now lets you crop images the same way that most other graphics programs do, by dragging handles located at the edges and corners of an image. This same improvement appears in Impress, too. Additionally, Impress now natively supports inserting tables into presentations. Tables can be added directly into the presentation and edited within Impress as native Impress objects.

Improvements affecting the entire suite include a new set of icons, expanded feature support when exporting to XML, and a new gateway to the suite called the Start Center, which makes it more intuitive to get to where you want to go in the suite.

There is nothing revolutionary in OO.o 3.0. What is new are several improvements and enhancements that will keep the suite in contention with its competitors. And we have not touched at all on the features OO.o already had before 3.0. If you need a productivity suite with both a broad and deep set of features and, particularly, if you are not married to Microsoft Office, you should give OO.o a look. It costs you nothing to try, you may just like it, so it just may save you hundreds of dollars.

BILL WAYSON is *LINUX SIG Leader, Channel Islands PCUG, California* (www.cipcug.org; bwayson@gmail.com)

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Do you have a burning computer question, but can't make it to the meeting or just never seem to get your hand up in time? Email your inquiry to Jim Scheef, the answer guy, at askdacs@dacs.org, and your question will be taken up at Ask DACS at the next meeting.

Circuit Writer Version 7.1

by Jim Scheef

DACS is in trouble

I WISH I HAD BETTER news, but I see

DACS sliding into oblivion. If things don't change direction, our club could end within the coming year. I'll start at the top. Rob Limbaugh announced last year that this would be his last year as President. I believe that changing the President helps keep the club alive; this is why I limited my term as President to three years. Rob has provided impressive leadership and moved the club forward in many ways. His term ends next spring and Rob will not leave the next President dangling, but no one is stepping forward to take his place.

The more immediate problem is that over the last year, three directors have resigned. Another director is temporarily unable to attend board meetings. This leads to meetings where we do not have a quorum and cannot conduct official business. Of course we can and do still plan general meetings and keep things going, but this is emblematic of the deeper issues.

Our special interest groups, the SIGs, have always been the crown jewels of DACS. These groups are where members of a common interest get together to share knowledge. Once upon a time, we had more than fifteen SIGs. There were few free nights in the Resource Center. Now we have two SIGs "on hiatus" which is a euphemism for inactive. The Tech Projects, and PC Maintenance SIGs have closed this year and we combined Virtual Computing into the Server and Networking SIG. Thus we have gone from ten SIGs in January (the ASP.NET and VB/C# SIGs are really one long meeting so I count them as one) to seven with two of those "on hiatus".

On the positive side

After all that it may be hard to imagine that there is a positive side. Our Treasurer, Charlie Bovaird, has served the club since 1994 and would like to ease back a little. Along with keeping our financial records,

Charlie also keeps the membership records. Here the situation is less dire: John Lansdale has agreed to take over as treasurer and I will keep the membership records.

We were fortunate to get Joe Tobin to fill the empty spot from the elections in December 2007. Joe has given the board a younger perspective that we lacked. And, Annette van Ommeren returned to the board to fill the opening cre-

ated when Jamie Yates passed away so suddenly. Despite these additions, recent resignations leave two vacancies.

Whether the SIG closings and board changes are a cause or a symptom, our membership has now dropped below 200. This means it is more important than ever for members to become more active. Our eleven-member board is now 5% of the membership.

The bottom line

The future of DACS is in your hands – you the members. If we are not presenting interesting topics at the general meetings, please make a suggestion on how they could be better. If you have never been to a SIG meeting, well shame on you. If there is no SIG for your interest, talk to a board member and we will help you find others with the same interest. Whatever it is, get involved! Bring a friend to a meeting – any meeting. Write an article for the newsletter, or, dare I suggest it? Offer to be on the board. Please note that I am not asking that anyone volunteer for something she or he doesn't want to do. Our SIGs have been successful because the SIG leaders are genuinely interested in the topic and want to help other learn. Our most pressing challenge is the two vacancies on the board of directors. All the other issues are secondary. Do you want to help?

JIM SCHEEF is past president of DACS

DIRECTORS' NOTES, Cont. from page 4

Subtracting a liability of prepaid dues in the amount of \$105 left a net equity of \$5927.19. He also reported that the current membership is at 196, 184 of which are electronic.

General Meetings

- Newsletter Previews: Oct (Rob), Nov (Allan),
- Newsletter Reviews: Oct (Patrick), Nov (Rob)
- General Meetings Topics: October – Overclocking (Peter Basel), November – Medical Technology (coordinated through Allan), December – John Patrick, Jan – Windows 7 – Rob, March – Data Back up Solution in Linux and Mac – Rob.
- Other topics for possible General Meetings are Hosting and Cloud computing. Allan will be asked to check for confirmation of the presentation on Medical Technology in November.

• Discussion around possible meeting dates for General Meetings in 2010. Rob is going to check with Danbury Hospital about the availability of the auditorium for next year. January, July and September will again present holiday weekend conflicts.

Announcements

• Officer positions to be filled: Program chair/VP, Treasurer, and President (this is Rob's final term). We are investigating new members for the board to fill the vacant positions.

• Jim Scheef volunteered to be the membership chair/czar from Charlie's responsibilities.

• Annette announced a change in the name of her SIG group from 'Web Design' to 'Pre-press & Publishing Graphics' which is a shift in focus/subject matter.

New Business

• Discussion about 20th Anniversary for DACS. Logo/artwork, Membership drive, picnic, Mini-Convention and/or Public events/Party.

• Discussion of Costco executive membership for credit card processing without transaction fee, also to take advantage of discounts on items.

• DACS needs to decide direction, mission, and purpose. Where and how DACS fits into its members' lives.

• SIG's are an important part. It would be helpful if the agenda for each SIG meeting were posted upfront on the website and/or in the newsletter.

Rob motioned to Adjourn, all seconded.

—Mary Tobin

SIG NOTES, Cont. from page 9

date or day of week and week of the month. Some examples will illuminate the nature of the task posing a challenge of logic and program design to a developer. Thanksgiving is specified as the last Thursday of November. But, thinking globally Thanksgiving is only valid in the United States, another program criteria.

At our next meeting in September, we will enhance our Javascript discussions and delve into ASP.Net as the primary page development tool using AJAX to convey information between the browser and the server. See you then!

September ASP.Net and C#VB.Net. Now we can live by the calendar and not by the clock.

Chuck shows us the way with his startling calendar application. It is rich with Javascript. The jet set will be happy in several nations such as France or Mexico when holidays are identified for any month. Chuck exults in keeping all work in the browser to relieve network traffic. Added delight comes from bypassing doctrine for coding strategy as ordained by Microsoft. The beat goes on.

After a pizza snack heavy with extra cheese, we had a rollicking good time in our beer party. No, there were no drinks because it was simply a hymn to Joe Sixpack, in effect a fanfare for the working classes, in C#, that is. In his usual virtuoso style, Chuck built an application from scratch to illustrate class structures. It entertained us all, including some added attendees for the evening session. In our fanciful beer store we saw packaging of six packs, packs of a dozen cans and packs in large bulk form, always starting from a computation of volume in a single beer can. Was this clever, or what?

Time flies when you're having fun.

August and September Macintosh. In August, we got a demo of CrossOver for Mac (<http://www.codeweavers.com/products/cxmac/>), which provides a way of running Windows programs on a Mac without needing to buy a copy of Windows. By way of an iChat video conference, Jon Parshall of CodeWeavers demonstrated the product for us. The product is based on the free software Wine project (<http://www.winehq.org/>). The difference with the paid Codeweavers product is that support is included, with the level of support based on whether you buy the Standard (\$39.95) versus their Professional (\$69.95) product.

Note, however, that since you are not running a Windows program on real Windows, it can vary on whether or how well it will run on Crossover. You can look up your Windows program in their Compatibility Center (<http://www.codeweavers.com/compatibility/>). If the program has been tested you can see whether it has been awarded a Gold, Silver, Bronze medal (in decreasing order of freedom from bugs), or just plain "Known not to work."

So, for some Windows programs, Crossover for Mac may not be a good option, and you will need to choose one of the other options that require a real copy of Windows to be running on your Mac. These other options include Boot Camp, in which you leave Mac OS X to boot into Windows, or a virtual machine product that allows you to run Windows and Mac OS X at the same time. Examples of virtual machine products are Parallels Desk-

top (<http://www.parallels.com/>), VMware Fusion (<http://www.vmware.com/products/fusion/>), and the free VirtualBox (<http://www.virtualbox.org/>) from Sun Microsystems.

In September we took a look at iPhoto '09, the digital photo organizing and simple editing component of Apple's iLife '09 suite. It has two new major features compared to the previous iPhoto '08. iPhoto '08 added Events which organized photos by time, so by default all photos taken on the same day would be included under the same event, which you could name, for example, "Lucy's Birthday Party."

The Faces feature of iPhoto '09 uses face recognition to help organize photos by people in the picture. You start by identifying a few example photos of a particular person. Then iPhoto '09 will go and look through all your photos to look for similar looking people. It may ask you to confirm that a person in another photo is the same person, and then continuing look for photos of that person. The Faces category can be found in the Library section of the iPhoto sidebar under the Events and Photos items. This is a powerful and fun feature.

The other new feature is Places, which organizes photos by where they were taken. If your camera includes a GPS, such as an iPhone 3G, this location information will automatically be used to tag the photos. Otherwise you can select one or more photos and enter the name of the city, state, and/or country where they were taken. In either case you will be able to see a map with push pins located wherever you have taken pictures. Clicking on a push pin will give you a view of only those pictures taken at that location.

Server and Networking. The Server and Networking SIG was canceled in August, so I could go on vacation.

In September we started a new series of meetings focused on the Drupal content management system (CMS). Drupal makes some types of websites easier to build and it is a goal to move some or all of the DACS website to Drupal.

In the meantime, I am building a website for my high school class at lths64.com. This site will focus on collecting current address and email information for all of my classmates – and there were more than one thousand of us. Drupal is written in PHP and normally runs under the Apache webserver with a MySQL database. Over the next few months we will touch on all of these and learn a bunch about Drupal.

The next meeting of the Server and Networking SIG will be Thursday, October 8 at 7p.m. in the DACS Resource Center.



Ask DACS

August 2009

by Jim Scheef

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

AskDACS is a Question and Answer session before the main presentation at the monthly General Meeting. We solicit questions from the floor and then answers from other audience members. My role as moderator is to try to guide the discussion to a likely solution to the problem. I'm adding a new paragraph marker "D" for discussion or digression to the regular "Q" and "A".

Q – I would like to use an online storage service. I've looked at SugarSync (sugarsync.com), Mozy (mozy.com), DropBox (getdropbox.com), and Box.Net. Does anyone use one of these services and what has been your experience?

A – One member offered a good recommendation for Mozy. I related how another member uses Carbonite (carbonite.com) to back up a very large set of files (about 160GB) and was able to restore the entire set. Naturally this process did not happen in a heartbeat. The restore took more than two weeks to complete, but it did complete.

D – These services all offer slightly different features. Some are purely for backup. Some will backup all of your Windows settings and thus allow a full restore in the event of a disk failure from a bare Windows installation. Some offer a service where they will make DVDs of your data and send them overnight to you. This is the highest bandwidth method for a large restore. Mozy and Carbonite are in this category. I also have experience with iBackup.com, a true backup service. This product runs at a set time and performs a backup similar to the Windows backup program (ntbackup.exe). The cost is based on the amount of storage used and they can store multiple "generations" of a file which can chew up space pretty fast. iBackup.com uses the Windows

shadow copy facility to allow it to backup open files and thus can interfere with a normal backup using ntbackup.exe.

Some services are oriented to collaboration (aka: file sharing, which is a bad word in some quarters) and file synchronization between computers. DropBox and SugarSync are in this category. I use Box.Net to share files I want public. The DACS board was using drop.io to share files amongst the board but we found that email attachments were easier most of the time.

Anything that is "automatic" requires that you install software on one or more of your computers. This will run in the background and requires Internet access to operate. Constant or continuous backup implies a constant Internet connection.

Other pure backup alternatives are tape drives (costly but offer many generations of the entire computer and easy portability), external hard drives (low cost per gigabyte), optical media (DVD, CD – slow and low capacity).

A member mentioned that business requirements may dictate backup methods and handing. A health services provider, even a single doctor or therapist, must comply with applicable regulations. Even if regulations like HIPAA do not apply, ethics would make security paramount.

One last thought, it might be a good idea to read the service agreement carefully before using a free online service to backup your Quicken file or anything of similar nature. Free services tend to be worth every penny.

Q – My computer is set up to dual boot two operating systems, Vista and Linux. I would like to remove Linux and return the space to Vista.

A – After some questioning, we determined that the goal was to remove everything and then reinstall Vista. There are several "levels" of cleaning out the computer. The nuclear option is Darik's Boot 'n Nuke (dban.org) which will wipe the disk clean and make it "new" as if nothing had ever been installed. This removes even the master boot record. This may be overkill.

The simple option is boot from the Vista installation DVD and when it asks where you want to install Windows, follow the prompts to delete all of the partitions. When the disk shows as all empty space, either use the entire disk or create a new partition to install Vista.

D – In between these alternatives are disk management utilities like Partition Magic (Symantec.com) and Acronis Disk Director (acronis.com). These allow resizing or moving a partition in ways you never imaged. The Acronis product can still be purchased online from Gene Barlow of User Group Relations (www.ugr.com), who has presented at many DACS general meetings. I still use Acronis Disk Director.

Q – A member asked if I could demonstrate Windows 7. At the time of the meeting I had the Release Candidate 2 version installed in a virtual machine. A demo attempt failed and I promised to have the final release version installed in time for the next meeting in October.

Disclaimer: Ask DACS questions come from members by email or from the audience attending the general meeting. Answers are suggestions offered by meeting attendees and represent a consensus of those responding. DACS offers no warrantee as to the correctness of the answers and anyone following these suggestions or answers does so at their own risk. In other words, we could be totally wrong!

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