docs.doc

Danbury Area Computer Society, Inc.

June 2001 Volume 12, Issue 6

# Microsoft

## The Latest Office Suite, Office XP.

On June 5th, 2001, at its general meeting DACS will feature Microsoft and its new Office product, XP. John Stroiney of Microsoft will demonstrate the latest office suite, Office XP.

The newest features of Office XP consist of Task Panes that open up on the right hand side of documents to show additional commands and features relevant to the job being performed. For example in Word, a reveal formatting task pane lets users review and edit formatting for selected text. Anyone who is flustered by inexplicable changes in page formatting, especially when pasting documents together, will find this feature a welcome addition.

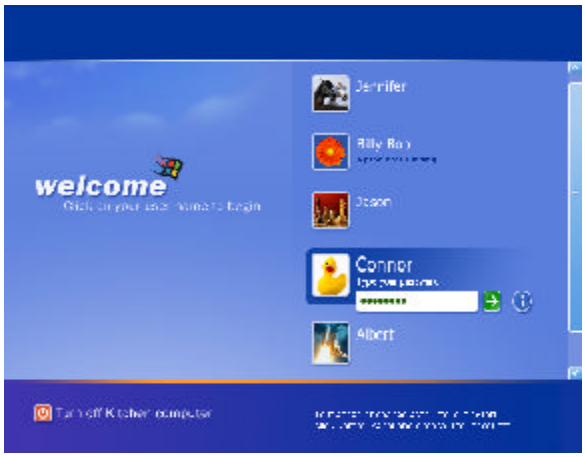

Sorry! We couldn't get him.

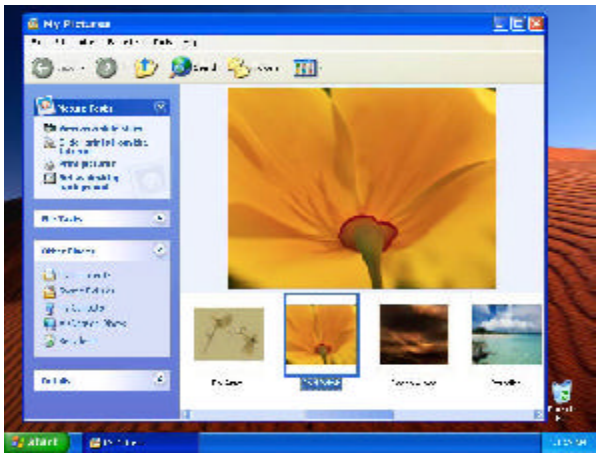
Another characteristic of the new Office is the Smart Tags. These are small menus that provide fast access to pertinent details and relevant functions, such as applying formatting, correcting formula mistakes, or customizing auto-correct features to a user's personal choices. Also, when the cursor is hovering over a name or a date, a menu will ask if you want to add that person to your Outlook contact list or send them an e-mail or get an address.

Additional new Office features are speech recognition, allowing the user to dictate input instead of typing it, and disaster recovery, which provides the option to automatically save a document, spreadsheet or a presentation at the time an application stops responding with no loss of time.

John will also cover new tips and tricks for Word, Excel, Publisher, PowerPoint, Outlook and Front Page.

Please mark your calendar for Tuesday, June 5th at 7 p.m. to take advantage of a very informative presentation.




# Notice:

Due to a scheduling conflict with Danbury Hospital, the June 5th meeting will be moved to alternate location. Please check our Web site for details

# President's File

If you thought you had heard the last Word from Microsoft, think again. The world's most used word processor and its associated office applications have been gussied-up with an array of new features designed to make document creation a little less intrusive and even more user friendly. That natty nag and perpetual uninvited guest, *Clippy,* has been replaced by new windows (or "*Panes*") and "*Smart Tags*" that automate those pesky tasks that you used to have look up in the help files or use three or four clicks to accomplish.

Word users frustrated by having their headers disappear right under their noses will finally get some relief with a *new* feature that lets them view and edit page formatting. That looks suspiciously like the feature in WordPerfect that shows the formatting codes at the bottom of the page, so you can delete them or move them around in the proper order. It got me out of many a mess when my fonts started changing mid-page or a text box wouldn't line up. Some time ago, I had a running debate on a help line with a Word guru who insisted that View Codes was a redundant throwback to the DOS environment … "Nowadays, all you need to do is highlight the text and change it." But some things *never* change.

Next up: how about letting spell checker monitor your formatting and warn you when it gets screwed up? You'll get to ask that question and more, and see all of the new (and old) features of Office XP at our next meeting on June 6th.

## IN THIS ISSUE



### Assistive Technology

Three months after being cancelled by a snow storm, the assistive technology presentation finally got underway May 9th. Jointly sponsored by DACS and Datahr Rehabilitation Institute, the event took place at Datahr's headquarters in Brookfield where our own General Meetings were once held. David Goldberg, a distributor of communication tools for the handicapped, showed a small but dedicated audience the latest devices for converting keystrokes into intelligible speech. It was also a great opportunity for Shirley Fredlund to show off the new equipment used by Voice for Joanie and the widening network of VFJ clients in Connecticut.

Many thanks to Pat Conway, Datahr's public affairs manager, for her efforts in promotion and in helping to make the meeting a success. Additional thanks to Charlie Bovaird for helping to set up and to Don Neary and Steve Schwab for their inspired camera shots. Steve has done a wonderful job in developing the VFJ Web site (*www.voiceforjoanie.org*) where you can see all the action from the Datahr meeting in living color.

### How do we do it? Don't ask me!

At the annual InterGalactic User Group Officers Conference held two months early in April this year, a primary topic of discussion was how UGs can help each other. DACS has received recognition and a number of awards for its community service and for its newsletter, most recently for the computer refurbishing project. So I was asked to comment on how we manage to do it all, coming from a small area of western Connecticut.

I really could not answer the question. Of course, I could give details on how it was carried out and who should get the credit. I also could pass the buck by saying "you have to contact Charlie Bovaird, the guy who ran the project"…and I did (you can see Charlie's report on page 14). What I could not answer was how to get volunteers to work together and fulfill inspired tasks. It's a bit like getting amino acids to climb up the soup and form intelligent life—perhaps an appropriate analogy for an InterGalactic meeting.

—Allan Ostergren
DACSPREZ@AOL.COM


## Membership Information

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


**Jeff Setaro**
**APCUG Liaison**
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**RESOURCE CENTER:** (203) 748-4330
**WEB SITE:** *http://www.dacs.org*

## HelpLine

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

**d** = day **e** = evening

| Program | Name | Phone # | |
|---|---|---|---|
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# Directors' Notes

A Regular Meeting of the Board was held at the Resource Center (RC) on May 7, 2001. Present were Messrs. Bovaird, Buoy, Cohen, Greger, Neary, Ostergren, Pearson, Preston and Setaro. President Ostergren presided and Secretary Buoy kept the record. The minutes of the meeting held April 9, 2001 were approved with corrections.

Treasurer Charles Bovaird reported combined CDs, checking account and postal account balance of $22,338.13, plus postage on hand of $144.19, for a total of $22,482.32, less prepaid dues of $7,652.00, a net of 14,830.32. Membership is 532.

Don Neary and Allan Ostergren reported on the annual InterGalactic Conference held in New York City on April 28. The principal theme of this event was cooperation among the region's user groups via their web sites and via the NEUGA (North East User Group Association). These include communication for inter-group programs and speaker arrangements as well as vendor presentations. Allan and Don also attended workshops on membership recruitment and SIGs, gaining insight as to the methods and ideas used by other user groups relative to DACS.

President Ostergren advised the Board of final arrangements for the special meeting on Assistive Technology at DATAHR on May 9 at 7:30p.m.

Bruce Preston and Don Pearson informed the meeting that all hardware for the RC's new PC had been installed, with dual operating systems (Windows 2000 and Linux) installed. It was also advised that new passwords would be installed and it was agreed that an UPS be purchased of sufficient size to handle both the new PC and the spare PC donated to the RC.

The election of officers, deferred from the April meeting to allow communication with all incumbents was held. The following officers were elected or reelected to serve for one year: President - Allan Ostergren; Vice Presidents - Marlene Gaberel , Gene Minasi and Jeff Setaro; Treasurer - Charles Bovaird; Secretary - Lawrence Buoy.

Don Neary gave a brief report on his impressions and the feedback he had received during visits to several SIGs, followed by a short discussion of opportunities to expand our member services.

—Larry Buoy.

# Random Vectors

## *research*
## **research**
## research

**By Virtual_Jack**

A long, long time ago I started a new job at Argonne National Laboratory. Soon afterwards I happened to attend a presentation by the laboratory director, Walter Zinn. He was talking about the nature of scientific research. His words were delivered in an informal, casual manner, but they remained with me all these many years, and I am as intrigued now as I was then.

There are three levels of research, he told us. The first level is the study of all the things we don't know. The next level is the study of all the things we don't know that we don't know. And then, the most challenging of all, is the study of all the things we are incapable of knowing.

*The things we don't know* occupy the time and efforts of most of the people working in research. We look for a cure for cancer and a cure for crashes. We work to go faster, bigger, cheaper, better. And just about everything we don't know how to do today, we will be able to do sooner or later. If we can describe it, there is a technical solution. But just because we can do something doesn't mean we will, or should, or even want to. But that is someone else's problem. By then we, the people doing the research, will have gone on to something else.

*The things we don't know that we don't know* is the work of Mendel before genes were identified. It is Newton before relativity. In the computer field it is Babbage before electronics and Von Neumann before transistors. It is building computers from biological or molecular elements or something entirely different.

*The things we are incapable of knowing* is the fascination of anyone fortunate enough to be in a position where they can even be concerned about such things. Most people have to make a living somehow and the pursuit of the unknowable is definitely in the luxury category. For those fortunate few, it extends the intellect of the human mind to the absolute limits. And then, to even consider the matter, we have to move outside of what the human mind has evolved to since the days of the cave man.

As humans we are creatures of curiosity. And probably the most curious quirk we have is that we are curious. Most of our fellow inhabitants of this earth seem pretty much content with what they have, but we always find it necessary, for some strange reason, to change it all.

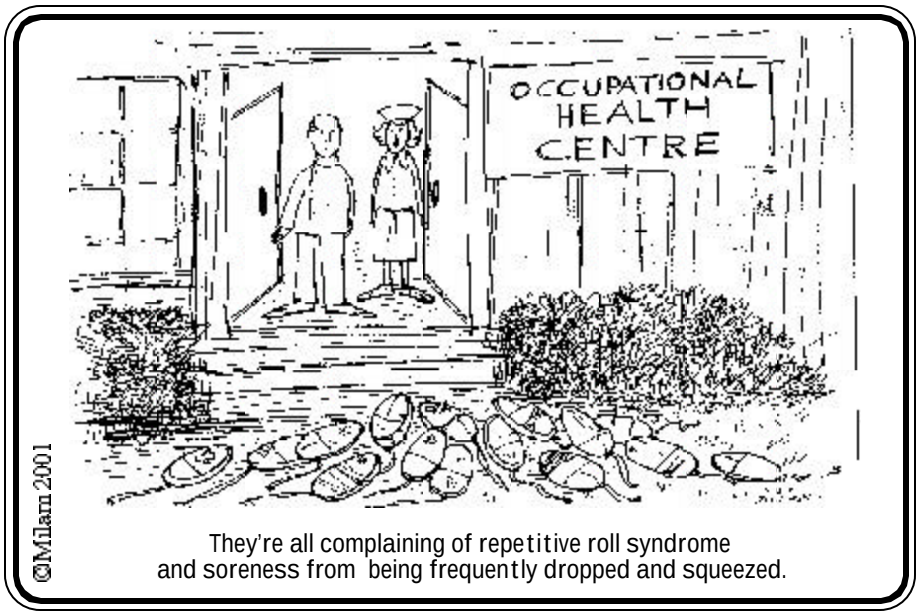
*What we don't know how to do* is pretty much a linear extension of what we do know how to do. All the predictions of the scientific prophets are in this well-behaved realm. They have to be. Any prophesy outside of the familiar is meaningless because it does not mean anything to anybody. It has to be considered science fiction and no one can risk career and fortune to what is believed to be pure fiction. So all the predictions of our life style to come must be near term linear extrapolations of what we have now. Thus we have political pundits, stock market analysts, weather people and Chinese fortune cookies.

To contemplate *what it is that we don't know that we don't know,* we have to go non-linear. And that very quickly blows us right off the chart.

*The unknowable* has always been considered the realm of religion by the responsible thinkers and the realm of magic by the irresponsible. So, is it meaningful to consider scientific research into the unknowable? Do we, as researchers, dare to venture down a path between those two?

We actually approach this already in some lines of study. The time-matter warp of relativity requires a very unique mindset in rarefied mathematics. But even among the technically gifted, relativity is accepted on rigor by many and on faith by others. Even though it is obscure jargon to most of the rest of us, we accept the reality of a force that we cannot even imagine because we can't do or understand everything and must accept much of it on faith in those we respect.

Let us now consider the unknowable in a field that is nearer and dearer




They're all complaining of repetitive roll syndrome and soreness from being frequently dropped and squeezed.

to our hearts, the computer. We like to think that all computer functioning is nothing more than the switching of bi-stable states from which we model our arithmetic-logic system from which we model our human way of thinking and working..

But as we build larger and faster machines could something evolve from the act of performing all those operations? Our human intelligence and presumably the decision making, communication operations of all neuron based organisms is a non-physical force that evolves from the electrolysis operations of large numbers of interconnected bi-stable neural cells. All the signal passing that goes on among the brain cells comes from chemicals flowing through membranes or not flowing through membranes. When the membrane is breached, that signal is passed on to many other brain cells. From all this comes our most remarkable awareness of activity, emotion, contemplation, evaluation, pleasure, and all the others that make up our experience in this existence.

Could it be that the enormous number of operations done by the computer generates some other sort of intangible, non-physical force? Computers can be designed and built to function something like brain cells, but there is no reason to believe that such a machine would in any way function like a neural based organism. It would be a waste of time and money to try to make the computer something that it isn't. But there is a force that evolves from the physical actions of billions of brain cells working away in a human, or even a garden slug, that comes from, but is different from, the generating elements

Is there something in the operation of machines that evolves in a similar manner? As organic entities, we are *incapable of knowing*, and therein lies the challenge.

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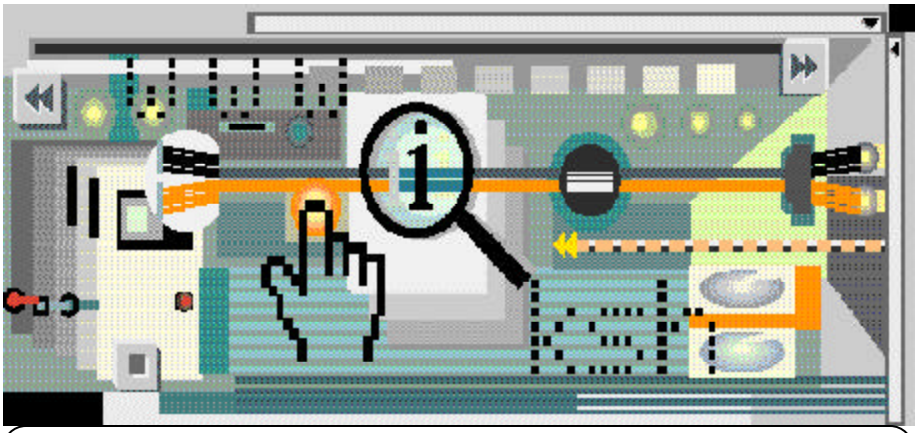
**Virtual_Jack** *is an old, retired computer programmer who considers himself. very fortunate to have participated in research activities over the years.*



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

*The management*

## New Members

12/19/2000 thru 2/20/2001

Carol Bancroft
Wade Anderson
Francis Caro
William Hearing
Andreas Sturm
Herman Izzard
Richard Riddle
Mel Boesch
Joan Rothfuss
Peter Heneage

**THIS IS YOUR LAST NEWSLETTER**

If the membership date on your mailing label reads

**EXP 01/2001 or earlier**

You need to renew your DACS membership – **NOW**

## Local Area Internet Providers

| | |
|---|---|
| AT&T Worldnet | 800-967-5363 |
| Cloud 9 | 914-682-0384 |
| Concentric Networks | 800-745-2747 |
| C. P. Connect | 203-734-6600 |
| Delphi Internet | 800-695-4005 |
| Earthlink | 800-395-8425 |
| Mags-net | 203-207-5695 |
| Erol's | 888-463-7657 |
| GTE Internetworking | 800-927-3000 |
| IBM/Advantis | 800-888-4103 |
| Internet84 | 203-830-2122 |
| Interramp/PSI | 800-827-7482 |
| Javanet | 800-952-4638 |
| LocalNet / FairfieldCty | 203-425-3535 |
| MCI | 800-550-0927 |
| Microsoft Network | 800-386-5550 |
| Netaxis | 203-969-0618 |
| Netcom | 800-353-6600 |
| North American | 800-952-INET |
| Netmeg Internet | 888-863-8634 |
| On The Net | 203-270-6388 |
| Paradigm | 800-664-INET |
| Putnam Internet | 914-225-3234 |
| Smart World Tech. | 203-790-4600 |
| SNET Internet | 800-408-8282 |
| Spry Net | 800-sprynet |
| TIAC | 203-323-5957 |
| Web Connect of Ridgefield | 203-438-7650 |
| WebQuill Int. Svcs | 203-750-1000 |

**List for informational purposes only, not an endorsement of any service.**

Further information?
Call Jim Finch @ 203 790-3654

# Finding a Home for Your Web Site

**By Matthew Greger**

So, you've planned, organized, designed and built your site. Great! Now, who is going to host it? Depending upon the purpose of your site, you have options. Your local ISP usually provides a few megabytes of space with your service. This is a good place to start if your site is for personal use. Just remember, your address is going to be something like *www.snet.net/members/mysite. html.*

For business use, I would suggest registering your own domain name (www.mycompany.com). But first you will need to find a place to park your domain and host your site. There are thousands of hosting companies and it can be quite confusing trying to find the one that best fits your needs. It is important, once you're ready, that you understand exactly what you are looking for.

To start, I suggest using a company called TopHosts.com (http://www.tophosts.com). TopHosts.com is an online resource of web hosting companies that help you learn about and compare their services. TopHosts.com helps you determine the issues you need to be aware of when choosing hosting services. You can also use their free database of hosts to help you develop a list of ideal companies that meet your site's needs.

TopHosts.com provides the following information you should do before choosing your hosting company:

1. Connectivity and reliability are key. The longer it takes for customers to access your Website, the more likely you'll lose customers. Of course, no one's perfect. Connectivity time will fluctuate with the flow of daily traffic, but you should insist on a guaranteed connectivity rate of 95% when seeking a host.

2. Make sure your host is big enough to accommodate your future needs, as well as your present ones. As your customer base and revenue grows, your site may require the addition of server-side scripting, eCommerce and database support, and a large bandwidth to accommodate audio and video streaming.

3. Demand prompt service and support. No matter how renowned your host is, technical problems will occur. As such, demand 24-hour, 7-days-a-week technical support for all your applications. If a host claims to already offer this, check! Call their tech line at 3:00a.m. on a Sunday to see if anyone is really there. Ensure that there is some sort of written agreement regarding service, which ideally will provide you with financial compensation in the event of failure.

4. Security. Ask for a detailed description of the hosting company's security protocols. They should provide adequate protection from everyday denial-of-service attacks and the various hacks and cracks that will be attempted on your server. The only thing worse than having no security is thinking you have some.

5. Don't commit right away. Many hosts will quote you a monthly fee, but bill in larger increments. You could sign on for a month, and find yourself paying for a year's service. Ask about the billing period, and initially sign on for a small service term (60-90 days). If you're happy with the service after this trial period, extend the term. Treat your Web host like you would treat any other supplier for your business. If they can't provide the service and reliability you need, why keep them? Their competitors will be happy to have your business.

6. Don't assume that you need to use Windows NT to run your site with Frontpage extensions. Many applications created for Windows NT will actually be more efficient if they are rewritten for a UNIX environment. Don't worry about figuring this out yourself, but bear in mind that a host who offers both Windows NT and UNIX will be more flexible.

7. Backup your data. You probably have backups of your HTML data, as you created them locally and uploaded them to your host's server. But what about the other files? User logs, product databases, order tracking logs, server-side scripts, etc., probably only exist on your host's drives and could be lost in the event of a failure. Request the ability to back up these files.

8. Be master of your domain. Query the Whois database (www.whois.net) to ensure that your company is both the administrative and technical contact for your domain. If your host is listed as one or more of these contacts, it owns the domain, not you. Unless you own the domain, it could be held for ransom if there is a dispute between you and your host.

9. User complaints, making sure your interests are protected as well. Many hosts have a zero-tolerance policy with regard to spam and pornography. Customer complaints are not always held up to the proper scrutiny. As such, a customer complaint, regardless of its validity, could cause the plug to be pulled on your site. Find out what recourses are open to you, and if the terms are not acceptable, find another provider.

10. Check references. Ask for a list of Webmasters who run similar sites off the host's server. Call them. E-mail them. Write them. If your host is unwilling to give you this list, go elsewhere.

11. Do some digging. There's nothing wrong with doing a little snooping to find out what type of people you are committing your property to. Query the Whois database and find the business address of the server. Use a tracing program to view the path to the machine in the Whois database. If another ISP's server pops up, chances are you're dealing with a reseller rather than an actual host. Check out the other sites on their server. If most of them are spam sites, banner click-through pages or porn

sites, being associated with them could have a negative impact on your business.

12. Ratings by various hosting "associations" are meaningless. While many members of the Web Hosting Guild are highly regarded companies, some are held in very low esteem by Webmasters. Ratings and awards can also be outdated, and might not reflect a host's current state of service.

13. Read your agreement. Make sure the terms and conditions of your service agreement are clear. Have a business lawyer review your contract before you sign. Carefully evaluate clauses that relate to copyright ownership, complaint protocol, fee renewals, and notification procedures regarding renewal or service discontinuation.

The bottom line is that you need a host that can meet your business needs. You should expect constant change, improvement, and, once in a while a boost in performance or value. You must constantly evaluate the service you're getting, and what it's costing you. Just think, it takes many years to build up your business along with it's reputation, but only a few seconds to lose it.

*Matthew Greger is the Vice President of The Business Helper, Inc., a local firm in Danbury devoted to providing "On-the-Mark" solutions for small businesses. He is also an active member of the Apple Solution Experts, an associate member of the FileMaker Solutions Alliance and, along with his partner and wife Nancy, leads the Web Design SIG at DACS.*

# Back to the Future

## Technology Charges Ahead
## 17 years of remarkable changes

**By Steve Bass, Pasadena IBM Users Group**

Remember the Big Chill? Right, that's the one—a bunch of yuppies attending the funeral of a buddy. When I watched it the other night, I was struck by the enormous impact technology has had on us in the 17 years since the movie was released.

One character in the movie promises to stay in touch with the others by-get this-writing a letter. Others are scribbling addresses in an old-fashioned Dayrunner appointment book. And if you recall the great music in the film, take note that all of it came from long playing records.

The fact that we regularly use our PCs for both work and play means it's a sure bet we're taking the technology for granted. I wanted to see what tools I use in my home office, things not available in 1983 (maybe not even around two years ago). So I looked at the way POOCH, a group creating an off-leash dog park in Pasadena, uses technology.

### Office Automation

I'm ready to send letters to a dozen members of POOCH. In 1983 I'd make copday. (www.glenayre.net/@ctiveLink/ and www.handspring.com)

### Learning and Gathering

As POOCH deals with growing pains, we can learn from-and commiserate with—other dog parks across the country. The Web has literally hundreds of links helping us see how others have dealt with the creation of dig parks. (*http://thedogpark.co*m and *www.freeplay.org).*

And as POOCH develops, we can make use of Hotpaper.com, a site crammed with innumerable document templates. Just fill in the blanks to customize, print, and save well-designed documents, including business cards, stationary, letters, signs, and certificates.

Once registered (it's free), every form on Hotpaper is filled in with your vital stats. Then save the template to Microsoft Word, Adobe Acrobat, or a universal format. Better, POOCH members can fax or e-mail the doc—absolutely free. (*www.hotpaper.com)*

Flash forward to 2017. Now imagine your kids looking back to the quaint years of 2000. Remarkable, eh?

**Steve Bass** *is a Contributing Editor with PC World Magazine, frequently writes for Forbes ASAP, and is the president of the Pasadena IBM Users Group. He often writes with his tongue in his cheek. Write to him at* stevebass@earthlink.net

This article is brought to you by the Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an International organization to which this user group belongs.

# InterGalactic Conference at NYPC

**By Don Neary**

When I first heard of the InterGalactic Conference, thoughts of Luke Skywalker and Star Wars came to mind. Now having been to my first IG, I find it has more to do with cyberspace than outer space.

Simply stated, InterGalatic is an annual gathering of computer club officers and directors. The main purpose is to provide a forum for discussing and sharing ideas. To spice it up, vendors are invited to showcase products—and **yes**—to give away free software!

On Saturday, April 28, Allan Ostergren and I attended the 14th annual IG conference sponsored by the New York PC User Group. Some 31 clubs and more than 100 people from the tri-state metropolitan region attended. It was an all day affair, starting with breakfast at 8:30, a nice lunch and ending at 4:30 with an ice cream social. I need to mention all the food preparation and serving was done by NYPC members, a very nice touch.

Much of this sounds like all we did was eat, collect literature and software. It was also some mind fattening benefits, sore butts and legs from climbing four floors and sitting in school room desks designed for 8-year-olds! The agenda provided ten separate morning and afternoon discussion groups, an open meeting to review what the group has been doing (putting up a Web site for vendors to see our meeting dates and contacts, documenting an internal speakers resource) and a vendor panel on issues and concerns central to user groups.

Maybe the InterGalatic theme is not all that far out. By establishing contact, we are not alone in the computer club universe—unless we want to be. It shouldn't come as a surprise that most of us have common concerns and interests. Continued efforts should be made to maintain contact, so DACS is not alone in the user group universe, and can benefit from the strength of numbers and exchange of ideas.

The vendor show and goodies bazaar

Most of us agreed that to survive as user groups, our mission needs to evolve with the times and with the needs of our members. Voluntary groups such as DACS can be as dynamic as they want, provided they can collectively provide the effort and resources needed to support them. That support seems to be getting a bit thin these days. It's up to us collectively to change it if we want.

I can provide a more detailed review of the meeting and thoughts for those interested in the details.

## Notes from the sessions

With only two representatives from DACS, we could only cover 4 of the 10 discussion groups. Here are some notes on those meetings:

### Member Recruitment

Participants focused on new ideas to attract members. The emphasis was on making groups more relevant to novice users and pointing out how the group can benefit them. Simply changing SIGs to "work groups" can provide a clearer description of their function. SIGs can also serve to attract more professional members by their ability to concentrate on specific applications or issues. Some groups reported that SIG attendance was often far larger than the turnout at monthly general meetings, but warned that many of those who came to the SIGS refused to become members.

A strong inducement to joining was personal contact and follow-up. One group membership chair said he mails meeting announcements out to every contact, along with an application. As for renewals, anything to make the process easier was recommended, with kudos going to DACS for its automatic credit card renewal option.

## Keeping members informed by electronic means

**List servers** were the main form of communication between members, with many using Yahoo group service. Other programs used were Mail King and Eudora - ver. 4 for large groups over 1000. Most said spam wasn't a problem. The biggest problem was getting around the 40 to 50-message limit at a time which eliminates CC's.

Bulletin boards are definitely out. The Utica club got invaded by porno and had to shut down for a while. Hotlines are also not very useful.

Most groups are moving toward ideas to lower the webmaster's workload by allowing access for individuals to maintain their own data, with check boxes to get more information. Some sites allow SIG leaders to maintain their own calendar, with a "click on" to get more agenda details.

### Vendor Fair

Eight Vendors were present:

| | |
|---|---|
| Adobe | Elements |
| Casady & Green | Software guides publishing |
| Borland | C++ |
| Corel | PerfectOffice, Print Office |
| Wizcom Technologies | scanning pens, |
| Techsmith: | screen and video capture tools |
| Intuit | Quicken 2001and online data base |
| Microsoft | Mindshare, Microsoft Press |

### Regional Issues

One of last year's initiatives was the Northeast User Group Association (NEUGA), with a web page to link regional groups and provide meeting information for vendors. It is hoped that member groups will be able to update their calendars directly on the NEUGA site (www.neuga.org).

InterGalactic and NEUGA are attempting to provide contact and services at the regional level, where APCUG has had minimal impact. A speaker pool of reps willing to visit other clubs and SIG Clubs was also suggested. Jeremy Dunn, the Region 1 APCUG representative said they would support these efforts as much as they can. Several of the smaller UGs asked for more advice and assistance from established groups, including access to member events.

### SIG Leaders Group

Most user groups have a SIG coordinator whose duties are to be a link to the board for approval and support. Their duty is to assist with the scheduling and equipment. Some are using removable hard drives to keep from messing up the computers used for more than one SIG.

Not many have resource centers, and meet at schools, libraries, senior centers and training facilities, including Microsoft training centers. This is a valuable resource where hands-on experience is beneficial. Some have tied into adult education programs as well. This approach has strengthened the SIGs and created new members to fill in.

Far more groups had a Senior SIG than a Kid SIG—not surprising, considering average age of Computer user groups is 62!

To start a new SIG, one only needs to show an interest in becoming the leader. Expertise can come from elsewhere within the group. The minimum to start seems to be around ten.

There was talk of large multi-club SIG groups using streaming media or other online type of communication services for this purpose.

### Vendor Panel

Most questions from the audience dealt with the age-old issue: "How do we get quality presenters to visit our Club or SIGs, especially if we are small." Clubs tend to use a bottom-up approach that is hard for vendors to work with. They prefer a top-down approach where they can obtain information about meeting location, dates, and size. This will allow them to contact local groups when they plan to be in the area and schedule visits especially for new product introductions and promotions.

They would like to see the larger clubs take the smaller clubs under their wing regarding this subject by inviting them to participate, or to find a central location for jointly sponsored meetings.

### Final impressions

I left InterGalactic with a new appreciation of the need for user groups to act jointly for the common good. In a time of declining membership, we all need to find new solutions and share resources. NYPC has worked hard to bring regional groups together, and should be supported.

**Don Neary** *is a DACS director, SIG coordinator and Liaison to the Association of PC User Groups (APCUG). He can be reached at* donneary@prodigy.net

Vendor Q&A. At left of stage, Intuit's Richard Katz takes pictures of picture takers.

# Special Interest Groups

SIG NOTES: March 2001

**ACCESS.** Designs and implements solutions using Microsoft Access database management software.
**Contact:** Bruce Preston, 203 431-2920 *(bpreston@mags.net).*
Meets on 2nd Tuesday, 7p.m., at the DACS Resource Center.
**Next meeting:** June 12

**ADVANCED OPERATING SYSTEMS.** Explores and develops OS/2, Linux, and NT operating systems. For meeting notes and notices, follow link to Don's site on *dacs.org*.
**Contact:** Don Pearson, 914 669-9622*(pearson@attglobal.net).*
Meets on Wednesday of the week following the general meeting, 7:30 p.m., at Don Pearson's office, North Salem, NY.
**Next meeting:** June 13

**BACK OFFICE.** Explores Back Office server and client applications, including Win NT Servers and MS Outlook. The SIG meets 2nd Thursday, 7 p.m., at the DACS Resource Center.
**Contact:** Jim Scheef *(jscheef@telemarksys.com)*
**Next meeting:** June 14

**GRAPHICS.** Create/print high-quality graphics and images.
**Contact:** Ken Graff at 203 775-6667 *(graffic@ntplx.net)*. Meets on last Wednesday, 7p.m., at Best Photo Imaging, Brookfield.
**Next Meeting:** Suspended for summer

**INTERNET.** Acquaints DACS members with the Internet.
**Contact:** Richard Koser *(rkoser@worldnet.att.net).* Meets on 3rd Wednesday, 7p.m., at the DACS Resource Center. Members' suggestions are welcome.
**Next Meeting:** June 20

**INVESTMENT STRATEGIES.** Discusses various investment strategies to maximize profits and limit risk.
**Contact:** Paul Gehrett, 203 426-8436, *(pgehr4402@aol.com).*
Meets 3rd Thursday, 7:30 p.m., Edmond Town Hall, Newtown.
**Next Meeting:** June 21

**MACINTOSH.** Discusses Macintosh hardware and software.
**Contact:** Chris Salaz, 203 798-6417,*(crsalaz@kami.com.)*
Meets on 3rd Tuesday, 7:30 p.m.,
**Next Meeting:** Suspended until further notice

**VISUAL BASIC.** Develops Windows apps with Visual Basic.
**Contact:** Chuck Fizer, 203 798-9996 *(cfizer@snet.net)* or Jim Scheef, 860 355-8001 *(JScheef@Telemarksys. com).*
Meets on 1st Wednesday, 7p.m., at the DACS Resource Center.
**Next Meeting:** June 6

**VOICE FOR JOANIE.** Provides and supports people with Lou Gehrig's disease with special PC computer equipment.
**Contact:** Shirley Fredlund, 860 355-2611 ext. 4517 *(voiceforjoanie@juno.com).*
Meets by arrangement., at Datahr, Brookfield.
**Next Meeting:** Contact Shirley

**WALL STREET.** Examines Windows stock market software.
**Contact:** Phil Dilloway, 203 367-1202 *(dilloway@ntplx.net).*
Meets on last Monday, 7p.m., at the DACS Resource Center.
**Next Meeting:** June 25

**WEB SITE DESIGN.** Fundamentals of design for the Internet.
**Contact:** Matthew Greger, 203 748-2919 (*matthewg@ thebuisenesshelper.com)*
Meets second Wednesday, 7p.m. at the DACS Resource Center.
**Next Meeting**: June 13

# SIG News & Other Events

**Back Office:** The Back Office SIG covers Windows NT server, network infrastructure and server-side software development (SQL Server, ASP, web pages, etc). We talk about everything from home networking to SQL Server stored procedures to politics.

The next meeting will be Thursday June 14th at 7pm in the DACS Resource Center. We will reinstall Windows 2000 Server and SQL Server 7. Come early to get a good seat as we get the network operating once again and incorporate the new workstation into the network as well.

**Visual Basic**: For the May meeting, Random Access lasted for the entire meeting.

A long discussion began with a question on how to format a report and send it to a printer. Discussion began with why the VB command Form.Print does not produce the expected results. We then discussed alternatives and Chuck demonstrated Crystal Reports. Crystal is a very flexible and powerful report writer that can access most any database.

Discussion then turned to how a VB program begins and ends. We talked about why the ideal VB program does not use the End command and "good programming practices". A properly written program will end without leaving any residual objects in memory.

Talk when turned to choosing a database for small applications. Some alternatives we discussed were the VB/Access Jet database and the Microsoft Database Engine (MSDE), which is really SQL Server under the covers. Other possibilities include Dbase, text files and many more.

Last we talked about how to create a deployment package to distribute an application and how dependent files are included. This topic evolved from database selection as the member was concerned about the need to distribute a large number of files.

Every VB SIG meeting covers a wide range of topics from beginner to advanced. The next meeting will be Wednesday June 6th at 7pm in the DACS Resource Center.

Wow! What a great turn out for Part I of ³Let¹s create a web page². We have decided to take it a step further and create an actual Web Design SIG site. The purpose of creating our SIG site will be a reference for past and future meetings as well as resources. Our site will include a Home, Meetings, Resources and Contact pages. When completed there will be a link from the main DACS web site to our SIG site.

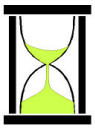
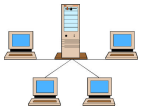
Our topic for June 13, 2001 is ³Let¹s create a web page² PART II. We have already created our layout, buttons and taken some pictures of our SIG members. Now in part II we will bring all the elements we created in Photoshop and Illustrator, along with text, to GoLive. So for those of you that want to see what GoLive is about here¹s your chance.

Please note, this will be our last meeting until the fall. There will be no SIG meeting for the months of July or August we will start back up in September. We will still be available for anyone with a question via email or via the new Web SIG site. Have a wonderful summer see you in September.

# June 2001

## Danbury Area Computer Society



| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | 1 | 2 |
| 3 | 4 | 5  7:00 PM **GENERAL MEETING** **Microsoft Office XP** | 6 7:00 PM **VISUAL BASIC** Chuck Fizer 203 798-9996 | 7 | 8 | 9  **NEWSLETTER SIG NEWS DEADLINE** |
| 10 | 11  7:30 PM **BOARD OF DIRECTORS** | 12  7:00 PM **ACCESS** Bruce Preston 203 431-2920 | 13 6:00 PM **WEB DESIGN** Matthew Greger 203 748-2919 7:30 PM **ADVANCED OS** Don Pearson 914 669-9622 | 14  7:00 PM **BACK OFFICE** Jim Scheef 860 355-0034 | 15 | 16 |
| 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 7:00 PM **INTERNET** Richard Koser rkoser@att.net | 21  7:30 PM **INVESTMENT** Paul Gehrett 203 426-8436 | 22 | 23 |
| 24 | 25  7:00 PM **WALL STREET** Phil Dilloway 203 367-1202 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |

# Giving a voice to the physically handicapped DACS/Datahr host presentation

On Wednesday, May 9th, DACS and the Datahr Rehabilitation Institute co-hosted a presentation of assistive technology tools for the disabled. The meeting was held at Datahr's headquarters facility in Brookfield.

The main focus of the presentation was devices that provide an artificial voice for the speech-impaired. David Goldberg, president of Health Science, a New Jersey-based provider of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) demonstrated a variety of laptops and hand-held systems that let the user key in text or select pictures and have the results spoken out through a voice synthesizer.

Each system is customizable, allowing the operator to add words from an extensive dictionary and place them in convenient areas of the screen for later access. Word prediction automates the process of creating frequently chosen text, and the user can record his or her own voice to be used in reading the finished document. The bad news is this option can only be used with individual words and phrases, and does not affect other words already in the dictionary. The good news is that the synthesized voice has a much more natural human sound than previously, and the words flow more smoothly.

Goldberg did not include in his presentation alternative input devices, which are available for people with limited mobility. These would include special switches that detect faint pressure from a finger or chin, or infrared devices that can respond to head movement or the blinking of an eye. These are among the tools used by Voice for Joanie, the New Milford foundation that provides assistance to victims of Lou Gehrig's disease, and which were demonstrated at a special table during the presentation by Shirley Fredlund, VFJ's executive director. A special feature of the table was a map with more than 350 pins showing places in Connecticut where ALS and other disabled patients have received computer assistance from Voice for Joanie in the ten years the organization has been in existence.

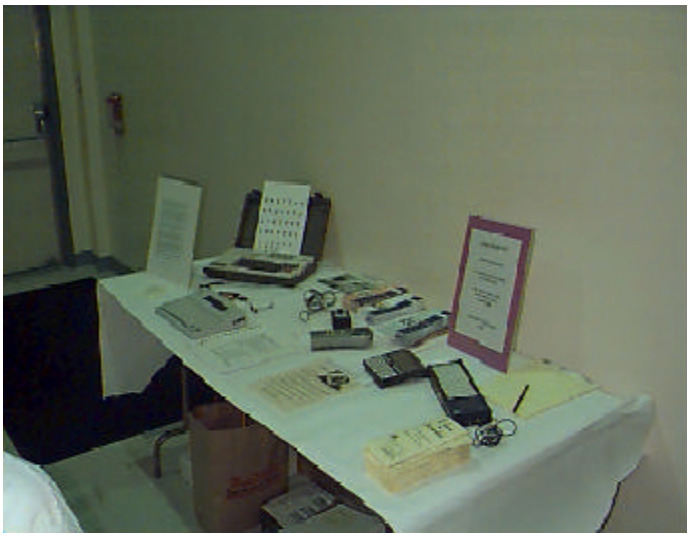
Although DACS provided the speaker and exhibits, on very short notice, Special thanks go to Pat Conway, who organized resources at the center

and helped get the word out. Her contribution was indispensable in providing the hall and in helping to promote the event. Datahr's outstanding service on behalf of the disabled made it a perfect fit for DACS in fulfilling our mission to provide technology to the area community, and it is hoped that we can both work together again in the future.

To learn more about assistive technology and augmentative communication, go to David's Web site at *www.healthscience.com.* For those needing help with communication, new opportunities for financial assistance are opening up from Medicare, Medicaid and other sources.

You can contact Daviddirectly at *healthscience@erols.com* for more information. The VFJ Web site (*www.voiceforjoanie.org*) has taken on a more professional look and feel under Web master and DACS member, Steve Schwab. You can learn more there about the work of VFJ, as well as find useful information on the ALS and the search for a cure.

ALLAN OSTERGREN



# Community Service

## Bridging the PC Divide
## Computer Project a Success

**By Charles Bovaird**

Since 1996, DACS has maintained an active program to refurbish used computers for donation to local non-profit organizations and schools.

### The mother lode

In February 2000, DACS hit the mother lode. Ed Heere, president of AMSYS Computer in Ridgefield, a DACS member and former chairman of our board, learned that Danbury Hospital was about to replace some of its computers with newer technology. Ed asked the hospital to make the computers available to DACS so we could distribute them to needy non-profit organizations. In February 2000, Danbury Hospital's Information and Technology Group agreed to donate close to 300 computers for the DACS project. Most of the computers were 486 processors, keyboards, and mice.

Once the region's corporate community became aware of the hospital's donation, others joined the effort. Within a short time, Cendant Mobility donated 300 monitors; Raytheon jumped in with about 50 monitors and some additional PCs; then Praxair supplied the project with about 50 monitors and PCs.

The stacks of boxed monitors were so large we had to estimate the depth of the pile. In March 2000, when we informed Cendant that we did not have space to store all these monitors, they offered DACS the use of their warehouse for the duration of the project.

In a short time, DACS had found itself with more than 450 computers, some of them non-functioning. After evaluating all the systems, we wound up with about 300 that were usable. To-date, over 300 computer systems have been delivered as described below.

### Establishing a plan

The original plan was to use the warehouse area to build the systems, but this proved impractical. At this time Ed Heere offered over 800 square feet of office space at AMSYS for the computer assembly area. Then, with the assembly resources lined up, we appealed to Microsoft's regional office for software, and were given site licenses to install Windows and MS Works on each of the donated computers. Microsoft has always been generous in supporting user groups, and particularly in promoting our efforts on behalf of Voice for Joanie.

### Into production

A call for DACS volunteers resulted in over 50 offers. A schedule was worked out to use the AMSYS training facility and two production teams were activated. The first team, lead by Tom McCarthy, was scheduled for Tuesday and Thursday afternoons, with the second team, led by Norm Geril, meeting on Monday and Wednesday afternoons. Though each team had over eight volunteers, only four could work at a time due to the limited space. All volunteers were invited to join these teams and were placed on call to help deliver machines.

The manufacturing activity included cleaning the covers and the keyboards, wiping all information off the hard drives, installing the software, checking out the systems, handling the requests for equipment, generating publicity, managing the parts supply, and delivering the systems. The teamwork has been exemplary and the quality of the finished product outstanding. Some of the systems were scrapped after removing reusable parts.

### Promotion and Publicity

From its inception, the project has been widely reported in The Danbury News Times and in *dacs.doc*. We have also received the 2000 Jerry Award from the Association of PC User Groups. The $750 prize, established by APCUG's former president Jerry Schneider to recognize outstanding user group community service, was transferred to Voice for Joanie for its work on behalf of ALS victims.

### Beneficiaries

The non-profit organizations receiving computers fell into three functional categories:

- Training children
- Training adults
- Office and administration

Children could learn to use a computer, keyboard, mouse and display; compose and write letters and documents; or Learn to create a spreadsheet using MS WORKS. Some schools added CD ROMS and sound cards at extra cost for running educational software

Recipients in this class were Catholic Family Services, Children's Center, Hartford Christian Acadamy, King Street UC School, Melrose School, St. Peter's School, St. Joseph's School, Ridgefield High School, St .John's School, IBPOEofW, and Portuguese Cultural Center

Adults could learn to use a computer, keyboard, mouse or display; compose and write letters and documents; create a spreadsheet in MS WORKS; or take formal training courses.

Recipients in this class were: Literacy Volunteers, TBCIO, Bethel Senior Center, Brookfield Senior Center, Carmel Senior Center, Danbury Senior Center, Ridgefield Senior Center, Redding Senior Center, Heritage Heights Nursing Home, Second Home of Brookfield, and New Heights Nursing Home.

Computers donated for office work: Recipients in this class were Earth Watch, Interfaith Aides Ministry, DATAHR, Mental Health, The Volunteer Center, Danbury Regional Commission on Mental Retardation, and North Salem Historical Society,

### Where do we go from here?

Over the past few years the price of PC systems has dropped by 50 to 75% and the speed of PC processors has increased 10 to 20 times. As corporations and individuals replace older systems, they have looked for a new home for their old PCs. At the present time the following organizations have come forward to offer PC distribution projects:

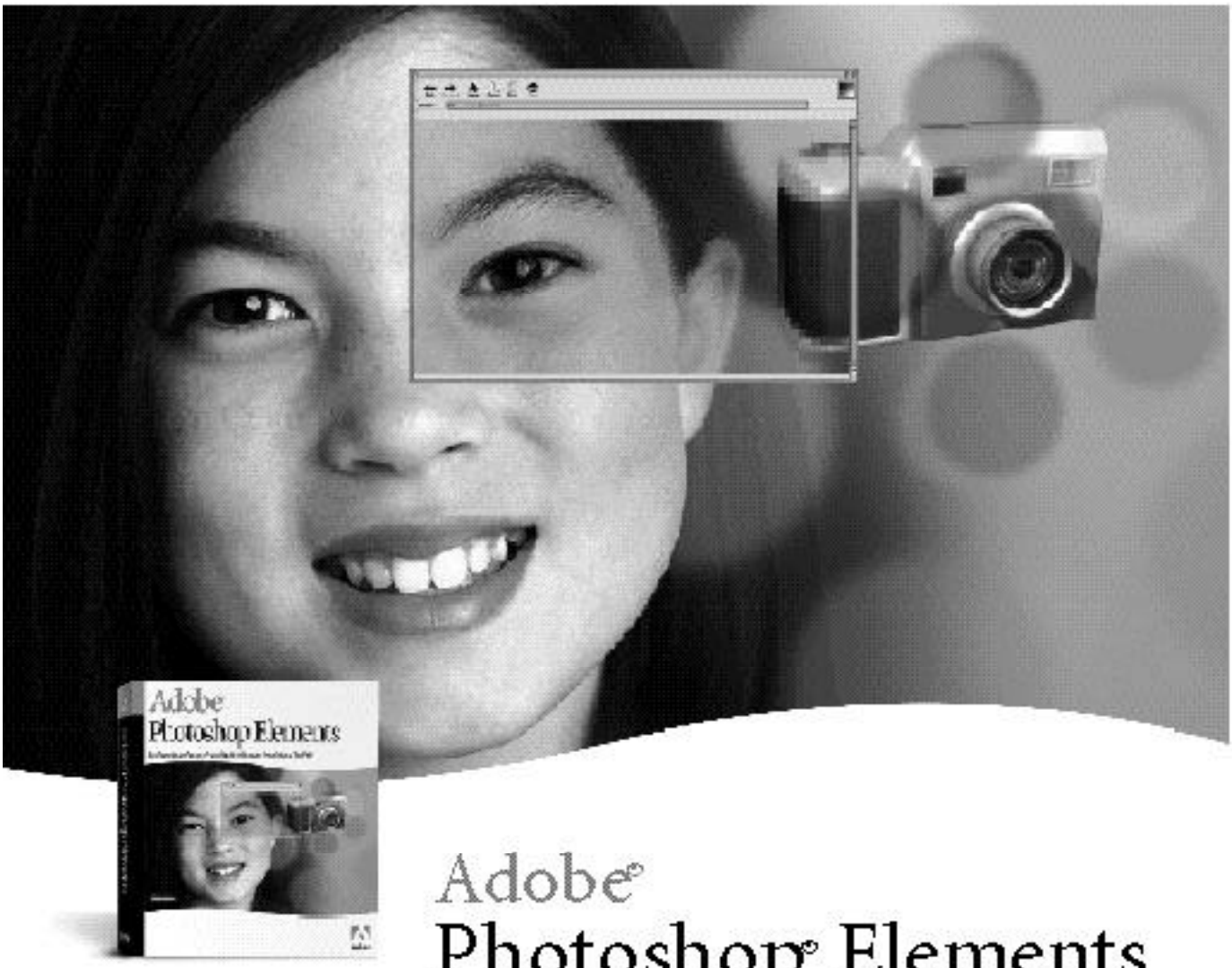
The World Help Foundation in Newtown (203-270-7853) will accept all vintage PC and Macintosh systems and components, for shipment to third world counties. The World Help Foundation also manufactures and ships water purification equipment to third world countries.

Computers for Kids in Waterbury (203-591-1714) accepts Pentium class PC's and distributes them in the local area at a nominal cost.

DACS plans to terminate the 300 machines project when it exhausts the software licenses donated by Microsoft. In the future, we will continue to assist donors in finding homes for their older equipment.

All the above organizations are IRS 501 (c) (3) corporations and accept donations of funds to support their operations.

**Charlie Bovaird** *is a former quality control expert for IBM, a member of the board and DACS Treasurer. He is a STICKLER for doing things right.*

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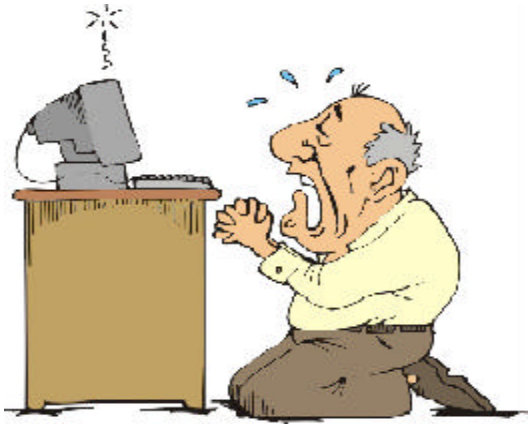
# The Server Won't Boot

## or Why You Can't Have Too Many Backups

**By Jim Scheef**

A few months back I wrote an article on building a Windows NT server. In that article I stressed hardware redundancy and some installation tricks that would help to repair the server in the event of a problem.



Well, over the last three weeks I've had the dubious opportunity to test those tricks when my server failed to boot one morning. Instead of the normal logon prompt, I got the dreaded Blue Screen of Death or simply a "BSD" to those who work with Windows NT.

Whenever you see a BSD on a Windows NT/2000 machine, be it server or workstation, you know you've got trouble—big trouble. Normally a server must be recovered post haste, while the people dependent on the server to do their work wait and repeatedly ask "How much longer?" Fortunately or unfortunately, this was my server with the BSD, so no one else would be waiting—but there was also no one else to fix it. So what's the "normal procedure" when this happens? That, of course, depends on what's wrong. My first problem was that the BSD wouldn't sit still long enough to read. The machine would get to the point of the error and instead of displaying the Blue Screen, it would reboot. So I not only could not use the machine, but I couldn't see what was wrong!

Now the normal plan would be to restore the server from the last backup, and that's what I would have done, except the last backup was four months old. How, you ask, did I let myself get into this situation? Don't I know better? OK, ok, yes, I do know better but I let myself fall into THE TRAP.

### The Failure

When you hear someone say they lost all of their data, what usually happened? Their hard drive crashed, of course. Looking that the major components of a personal computer, what is most likely to fail? Components with moving parts, like the disk drives (hard, floppy and CD) and fans are just about all there is. All PCs have a fan in the power supply and when this fails, the power supply will fail soon after. Then what? Your computer won't operate, but in all likelihood, your data is still safely stored on the hard drive. When the power supply is replaced, your computer resumes operation with all your programs and data intact.

Of course the story is different when the hard drive fails. My old laptop ran hot and when it was used daily, the hard drive would fail every 8 to 12 months. I was careful to backup all source code every day so very little was lost there, but email and other things were another matter. Following a hard drive failure I would get religion and back up the laptop frequently. But as months past, I would get complacent—think this hard drive would last longer—and when the time came, the last backup was always at least a month old.

The failure of those small parts inside a hard drive has been everyone's fear since IBM developed the first Winchester hard drive in the Fifties. Today high performance hard drives spin at 10,000 rpm. It's no wonder this is the primary cause of lost data.

### The Trap

So what can we do to minimize the pain of hard drive failure? Well, how about an exact copy of every byte of data that is updated constantly every second the computer is on? This concept is called "mirroring". The fancy name is Redundant Array of Inexpensive Disks. RAID comes in several flavors and mirroring one disk on another is the simplest variety. With everything mirrored, aren't you safe? Well that's what I thought and that is the trap!

Hard drives can be configured as mirrors or stripe sets (another type of RAID, see the side bar) using either hardware or software. Hardware RAID requires a more expensive hard drive controller. Software RAID is configured by the operating system (Windows NT Server) but works with any disk controller. I am using software RAID and as the Microsoft Support Engineer who has worked with me to recover my server said, "Software RAID is only as good as your operating system." What he meant was that when the disks are configured in software and you lose your operating system—as I had done—you are very likely to loose the ability to recover the data on those disks. So, did I loose everything on my server? Was my whole life—all the code I had ever written, every article, all my email and other records all lost forever? Tune in again next month when we will follow the steps suggested by "the Microsoft Guy"—we'll call him Rick—and learn if there is life after a Windows NT Server crash.

**Jim Scheef** *is the Mad Scientist at Telemark Systems Inc. where he develops custom software using Visual Basic and SQL Server and provides networking services using Windows NT/2000. He has been a DACS member since the day DOG became WC/MUG.*

### What is RAID?

A Redundant Array of Inexpensive Disks is a scheme to spread data across several disks so that it can be recovered in the event of the failure of one of the disks. RAID comes in several flavors:

| | |
|---|---|
| RAID 0 | No mirroring - no recovery |
| RAID 1 | Two drive mirror. Each drive is an exact copy of the other |
| RAID 4 | Simple strip set—data is spread across all drives in the array. This is very fast but has no recovery feature. |
| RAID 5 | Strip set with parity - data is spread across drives except the one which has sufficient information to regenerate the data on any of the other drives. Thus the one failed drive can be replaced without loss of data |

# Windows 2000 *MCSE Certification Prep Course* in CT

**ACSS *Low-Cost* Weekend Course Emphasizes *Hands-On* Instructor-Led Environment**

WHY?: Many good-paying jobs in computer-support these days require Microsoft Certified System Engineer status, and, an MCSE in Microsoft Windows 2000 is very well-rewarded! Getting the time, and money, to take the necessary prep courses and pass the exams can be an overwhelming challenge for many computer-support specialists. However, the ACSS makes the task less of a burden on your time, by offering the preparation course for the certification exams on weekends, at a pace you can sustain (3 hours per week), and, at a price you can afford!

WHY ACSS?: The ACSS offers this Windows 2000 course for the Core Requirements, for $2000, which is about 1/4 the rate of most of the commercially available Microsoft Windows 2000 Certification Prep courses. Naturally, the course is for members only, but joining is easy.

FOR WHOM?: You should be a current user of Microsoft Windows, and use applications that run under Windows, such as Microsoft Office, WordPerfect, Lotus SmartSuite, etc. Some background in Networking computers helps!

WHEN?: The Windows 2000 course will be offered in 40 consecutive weekly sessions, on Saturdays, starting Sat., June 9, 2001. Class times will be 9 a.m. to Noon. (Holidays will be observed.).

WHERE?: The course will be offered at AMSYS COMPUTER, 900 Route 7, in Ridgefield, CT.

BY WHOM?: The instructor is an MCSE and a very experienced teacher, as well as being a Microsoft Certified Instructor. Up to 12 students are accepted per class, and they must be ACSS members.

WHAT?: Course materials are the Microsoft MCSE Training Kit for Windows 2000 Core Requirements. (ISBN# 0-7356-1130-0). They include workbooks, actual copies of Windows 2000 software, and tutorial software. They cover all material you need to pass the Windows 2000 MCSE *core* exams. You will *still need to pass* exams in *3 electives* of your choice to receive the MCSE, and we offer those later. Very importantly, you also get your own 20 GB *swappable* hard-drive, to install Win2000 on and to use in class or at home. You pay $200 for it, and can sell it back (for $150) or keep it, at the end of the class.

WHICH? *A small selection of the course topics covered includes the following:*

The Microsoft Certification Process
Using The Windows 2000 Training Kit
Prepare a PC to meet requirements for 2000 upgrade
Control access to files & folders using permissions
Implement, configure, administer & troubleshoot
Managing Routing, VPNs, RAS & IIS Services
Install, configure, administer & troubleshoot a DNS
Install, configure, administer & troubleshoot IPSec
Install, configure & troubleshoot Active Directory
Install Internet Connection Sharing
Manage, monitor and Optimize System Resources
Manage Active Directory & Intersite Replication
Studying & Analyzing Sample Exams
Configure and troubleshoot the TCP/IP protocol

Intro. to Sample Tests, and, Scheduling your Windows 2000 Exams
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# Random Access

## May 2001

**Bruce Preston, Moderator**

***Q. Machine has Windows 98 - Safe Mode runs OK, but if I boot normal it hangs at startup. The machine has an internal modem, a sound card, and a network card.***

A. When you boot a machine in Safe Mode, it does not load the driver for the network card. This leads us to think that the network card is not being configured properly. We would suggest that you remove the network card, sound card and perhaps the modem and then make sure that the machine boots normally. Then re-install the cards, one card per boot. When you boot, hit the F8 key (the way you would normally request a Safe Mode start) but select the "Logged" option. This will create a file named BOOTLOG.TXT which records the steps in the startup process. For each step and sub-step, you will get 'starting - step description' and 'ending - step description' with intervening status messages. If you lock up, restart the machine in Safe Mode, then examine the file and find either error messages, or a step that started but didn't complete.

***Q. Windows 98 - Camedia software came with my digital camera - it insists on looking at the A: drive, which, since there isn't a diskette in the drive, causes the machine to wait until the drive times out. If I have a blank floppy in the drive, then everything is fine.***

A. Several others reported using the same editing package (it comes with Olympus cameras) without seeing that problem. Some applications, such as Windows Explorer, have 'sticky' settings where they will remember what folder you were in last - try forcing it to a different folder and then exit. Also, take a look at the shortcut, and see if changing the "Start In" folder to a non-blank value.

***Q. I have a new Dell machine, it came with Microsoft Picture pre-installed. I have used it a few times, and it seems to work OK, but when I exit the program I get a blue screen - the crash reports a problem with Kernel32. From there on the machine is locked up - I have to boot the machine. Any suggestions?***

A. Kernel32 is the heart of Windows - some program instruction in Picture made an impossible-to-handle request, and it caused the crash. Do the usual clean up of your temp directory. You might try to uninstall the application and then re-install it. Also check to see if there are patches available from Microsoft. Call Dell and see if they have any patches.

***Q. Adobe Acrobat Distiller - can I control where to put the output?***

A. Yes, it is in the 'Preferences' section.

***Q. I have a fax modem (U.S.Robotics 56K with software). I am told that it sends the first few lines and then garbage. Is there a standard way to test the operation of the fax modem?***

A. First, you might want to test the quality of your line. Here is a site (it is not a free call) that will let you connect using 'HyperTerminal' which is an application bundled with Windows. Follow the directions at this page: *http://206.222.80.60/linetest.htm* (You will need to print it out, since you can't be connected to the internet while you are doing the test.) You want a number in the range of 0 to 20. If you have 30 or above, it is time to call the telephone company repair service to have them examine the line's condition. Once you have a clean line, arrange with some friends/associates to exchange some test faxes. Try to work with both fax modems as well as with real fax machines. Note that it is common for connections using fax modems to end their sessions abruptly - they often don't bother with the formal 'send completed' exchange.

***Q. I have a Dell machine, Pentium processor, running Windows. It takes forever to shutdown - sometime hours. Any suggestions?***

A. Windows won't shutdown until it has closed all applications and device drivers. When you select SHUTDOWN from the Start menu, the shutdown application sends a message to all applications and devices - then waits for all to respond. If an application or device doesn't respond that it has closed - the system will seemingly hang. Fortunately, the shutdown message is delivered to all applications and devices at once, and they shutdown independently - one doesn't have to wait for another. If you have waited a reasonable amount of time - say 15 seconds - and the machine hasn't shutdown, and the hard disk activity light has gone out and has stayed out - you may power off.

### Here are some things to look into:

One notorious culprit is Norton Anti-Virus - it can be set to scan the A: drive upon shutdown. Why would you do this? Because if there is a floppy diskette in the drive when you power up next, the standard configuration for PCs is to try to boot from the diskette - which could introduce a virus into the system. Unfortunately, for some reason it doesn't detect that the drive is empty. Few people make extensive use of diskettes any more. If you do use floppy disks, do the following : In your machine's CMOS SETUP (typically you get this by pressing DEL or F1 when you first turn on the machine, way before Window starts) you can change the boot sequence so that it doesn't look at the floppy drive. Should you ever really need to boot from the floppy drive, you can always change it back. Then, since you will no longer be able to accidentally boot from the floppy, go into Norton Anti-Virus and tell it not to check the A: drive on shutdown.

There is a patch for Windows 98 SE available from the Microsoft Windows Update service. Download it and install it.

You mentioned that you are running Norton System Works. We recommend that you only run it when you want to examine a specific problem, that you do not run it in the background at all times (which is the default configuration.) It is a very resource intensive application that can really bog down your

machine. Sure, it is nice to know that you have filled up your hard disk, but you can tell that pretty easily just by looking at the properties of the drive in My Computer or by right-clicking the drive in Windows Explorer - perhaps once a week. All of the Norton System Works applications attach to Windows - and thus could be keeping it from shutting down.

If you want to find out if it is an application that is causing a problem, you could do some experimenting: Use Ctrl-Alt-Del to wake up the Windows Task Manager. You will see a list of applications. There are only two applications that need to be running for the machine to be running - Explorer and SysTray. All of the rest may stopped (deleted from the current task list) by selecting "End Task." I have found that it helps to hold the mouse button down on the End Task button. The task (and Task Manager) will then go away. You might get a warning that the application is not responding (a pretty good sign that you have found the culprit). After you remove a task (or several) try to shutdown and see if the shutdown is clean. If so, you have found the culprit.

*Note:* Microsoft has confused the issue by having a minimum of three different things called Explorer. First there is "Explorer" - this is also known as the Windows shell - and is the heart of the Graphic User Interface (GUI) of Windows. It shows up in the Task Manager as "Explorer" This is the program that paints your desktop, puts the task bar with the Start Button, etc. on the screen. Then there is Windows Explorer, which is the application that displays your computer's disk drives, network connections, contents of drives, folders, etc. It shows up in the Task Manager as "Exploring C:\somefolder" etc. Lastly, there is Internet Explorer which is used for browsing the web, etc. It shows up in the Task Manager as "current web page title - Internet Explorer".

If you find that there is an application that starts automatically that is causing the problem, and it is something that you don't really use a lot, you might consider installing one of my favorite utility programs - StartStop - it gives you control over what things get loaded when you start the machine. It gives you a five second (default, you can change it) window of opportunity to change what starts - you can save your preferences and then override them by hitting the Esc key during the StartStop window. You can get it free from *www.tfi-technology.com/startstop.htm* There is a similar utility in Windows 98 and Windows Me, but StartStop will work with any of the Windows versions.

**Bruce Preston** *is president of West Mountain Systems, a consultancy in Ridgefield, CT, specializing in database applications. A DACS director and moderator of the Random Access segment at the monthly general meetings, Bruce also leads the Access SIG. Members may send tech queries to Bruce at* askdacs@aol.com.

## Need more help? Can't make it to meetings?

Send your questions to askdacs@aol.com.

Bruce Preston will send you a quick answer, or if he's stumped, he will ask it at the next Random Access. Your answer will be printed in the next issue of dacs.doc.

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June 5 • Microsoft - Office XP
July 10 • July 10, **FileMaker, Inc. -FileMaker Pro**
August 7 • Apple Computer, Inc - TBA