



Auction Adventure

How to Search, Buy and Sell on eBay

One person's junk could be another person's treasure. All you have to do is watch Antiques Roadshow on PBS to see what we mean. Online auction houses, of which eBay is by far the largest, are an internet phenomena that have really taken hold during the past couple of years, and with good reason. Instead of holding a garage sale and hoping that someone will stop by to look at your items, you can now have international visibility and perhaps find someone who really wants your item and is willing to pay top-dollar. If you have ever wondered what is involved in buying and selling things on the internet, then the October meeting of the Danbury Area Computer Society may be just the thing for you. The presentation will be by our own father-and-son tag team, and experienced eBay buyers and sellers, Bruce and Scott Preston. Topics to be covered will include:

What the heck is eBay?

For Buyers:

- What is available on eBay?
- How do I find things on eBay?
- How do I make a purchase?
- Is it safe to buy from someone on eBay?
- How do I place a bid?

- What if someone outbids me?
- What is "proxy bidding"?
- What does it cost beyond the amount that I bid on an item?

For Sellers:

- What are the prerequisites for selling an item?
- How do I list an item?
- What does it cost to list?
- How do I create a listing?
- How do I add pictures to a listing?
- How long do auctions last?
- How do I receive payment?
- How do I know that I will get paid?
- What if I have multiple items to sell?
- Are there things that can not be sold on eBay?

DACS General Meetings are open to the public and are usually held on the first Tuesday of the month, at the Danbury Hospital auditorium. The eBay presentation will be held on Tuesday, October 2nd, 2001, starting with the Random Access session (computer-related questions and answers from the audience) starting at 7:00 p.m. Following a very brief business meeting consisting of a few announcements, etc. The featured eBay presentation will start about 8:00 p.m., and last about an hour.

Meeting Change

Location
Danbury Hospital

Date
Tuesday
October 9

Time
7:00 PM



President's File



What a difference a day makes. Among the casualties of the World Trade Center attack on September 11 was our concept of the role of technology in promoting growth and progress. New communication

tools like the fax machine, cell phone, and particularly the Internet, were seen as emancipators, that like the printing press a half millennium before would help to disseminate ideas and information, spread democracy, expose deceit, and lay bare dictatorships to world opinion. It was an unstoppable force that could only do good. In 1991, it was a blizzard of faxes and e-mails that led to Boris Yeltsin's defiant speech atop a Russian tank and the defeat of the Soviet counterrevolution. Existence of the Internet is also seen to have limited the ability of the Chinese government to control public information during the recent surveillance plane standoff with the United States. The Internet had become a new frontier ruled by a benevolent frontier justice, where normal laws and regulations were suspended and tolerance and self-restraint were the only rules.

There were, of course, some bumps along the information highway. Flimflam artists and porn mongers were giving the Internet an unsavory reputation, viruses and worms were a constant irritation, and the Y2K bug threatened to bring the revolution to a halt. But as the specter of a digital meltdown began to subside, there

emerged a complacency that progress might slow but never stop.

Two-edged sword

Much has changed since September 11. We have found that communications technology can be used for evil as well as good. Terrorist messages can be encrypted and sent by wireless across the globe. Radio signals can be broken into segments and routed by different frequencies to foil detection. Communications are routinely embedded in Web sites and downloaded from afar. Misguided hackers—and sometimes governments—send vicious moles and viruses designed to wreak havoc in Internet commerce. Although of no consequence to human life, the NIMDA virus spread to computers worldwide in less than 48 hours, bypassing conventional IT defenses and using infected Web servers as a Trojan horse to infect files downloaded by unsuspecting users.

Global village

The growth of wireless and Internet communications have launched us into a global village envisioned by Marshal McLuhan in the 1960's. Satellites beam an image around the world, providing instant access to information that makes everyone a spectator in events. For people around the world, the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington were up close and personal. For the first time, cell phones allowed doomed passengers of hijacked planes to communicate with their loved ones and victims of the crashes to report on their status. The experience riveted a world that had too long been complacent about terrorism, and the image of the collapsing towers will remain burned into people's minds for years to come.

But if the global village is a uniting force, it is also one that tears us apart. For many whose traditional way of life is threatened by knowledge and information, the Internet is a destabilizing force, one which they embrace only with an eye to destroying it.

Digital dependency

The Internet was created as a decentralized communications network that could continue to function, even if component segments were interrupted or destroyed. But as the Internet has become standard and universal, it has become a

President's file *Continued on page 15*

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dacs.doc, ISSN 1084-6573, is published monthly by the Danbury Area Computer Society, 12 Noteworthy Drive, Danbury, CT 06810-7271. Annual subscription rates: \$25 to regular members, \$20 to students (included in dues).

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

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

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Technical Support

dacs.doc is prepared using an AMSYS Pentium 133 and an HP LaserJet 4 Plus printer. Software packages used to publish *dacs.doc* include: Microsoft Windows 98, Office 7.0, TrueType fonts, Adobe PageMaker 6.5, CorelDRAW 6.0, Calendar Creator+ for Windows *dacs.doc* file transfer security provided by AVP. Internet access provided by *Mags.net* Applications & Hardware to enhance *dacs.doc* are welcome.



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HelpLine

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

d = day e = evening

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Directors' Notes

A regular meeting of the Board of Directors was held at the RC on Monday, September 10, 2001, at 7:30 p.m. Present were Messrs. Bovaird, Buoy, Cohen, Neary, Ostergren, Pearson, Setaro, and Mrs. Gaberel. President Ostergren presided and Secretary Buoy kept the record. The minutes of the meeting held August 13 were approved as submitted.

Treasurer Bovaird reported current, combined Checking, CD and Postal account balance of \$21,130.97, plus postage on hand of \$72.98 and less prepaid dues of \$7,689.58, for a net of \$13,514.37. Also reported was current membership of 471.

General discussion opened on the subject of emphasizing and diversifying SIGs as a means of increasing services and attracting new members. Specifically mentioned were methods of exploring interest in Linux for those who consider it intimidating, including a possible "introductory" presentation by IBM personnel. With an emphasis on expanding the SIG concept, the known utilization of the various current SIGs and attendance at General Meetings was considered, and a survey of member interests was suggested.

Addressed next was the topic of publicity and advertising of DACS and its programs, and thus attracting interested people or groups that may have been overlooked. Newsletters within WestConn, Danbury Hospital, etc., and radio spots were mentioned, in addition to the obvious Danbury News-Times as vehicles for such. After much discussion, it was agreed that an initial advertising program be established at a maximum cost of \$2,000.00, utilizing The Danbury News-Times, and any other media deemed advantageous with regard to coverage and/or results as compared to cost. This would be focused on the forthcoming presentations for November and December on Microsoft's XP OS and by John Patrick, respectively. In addition, it was recommended that extra effort be made to publicize the October presentation by Bruce and Scott Preston.

Charlie Bovaird reported that a SNET representative had informed him that DSL service was now available for the RC and that he would initiate its installation.

Discussion then centered on prospective presentations for future General Meetings and, where appropriate, special meetings as yet unscheduled.

—LARRY BUOY

Connections

The Server Won't Boot

Why You Can't Have Too Many Backups, Part 3

By Jim Scheef

Previously on *Server Won't Boot...*

Last time we talked about how we made the system stable, got past the BSD (Blue Screen of Death) and recovered the fault-tolerant disk drives. Rick, the Microsoft Support Engineer assigned to my case, led me thru these pothole-infested steps. One of the first steps had been to disable as many services as possible. This meant that there were fewer things to fail during the boot process and made it easier to get the machine running. Now we're ready to move on to the real server issues.

Make It Network

One morning when Rick was not available, I decided to go ahead and try to get the network going again on my own. To keep our definitions straight, "the network" consists of:

- the Server service (allows other computers to see shared resources)
- the Workstation service (connects to resources shared by other machines)
- the device driver for the server network card
- the Dynamic Host Configuration Protocol service (DHCP)
- Windows Internet Name Service (WINS)
- Domain Name Service (DNS)

All of these had been disabled during the initial effort to get the machine to boot. Now it was time to turn them back on. Naturally it would not be quite so easy.

First I tried to set the Intel Pro100 device to start on "System" in the Devices applet in Control Panel. On reboot this produced a BSD with the "bad image" message, so I changed the start option back to "Disabled" from RegEdt32 in Workstation2. It turns out that the NT Service Pack installer does not update any devices or services that are set to disabled. Thus the networking files were still corrupt. The trick was to change all of these devices and services to "Manual" so that they were enabled for the service pack update but would not run and crash the server. Got that?

After reapplying SP6a some things worked but others did not, and I had to wait for Rick's assistance. So much for striking out on my own! In the meantime, I found that Internet Explorer would not run. IE is needed for many Microsoft functions including installing many programs. My first attempt was to install Internet Explorer 5.01, the version I had been running. When the system told me that "IE501INS.EXE is not a Windows NT program", I knew that I was still in deep you-know-what. Then I had what turned out to be a stroke of genius. I installed Internet Explorer 5.5. The reason is that this installs the "Windows Installer", Microsoft's new program installation facility, which then allowed several other fixes down the road. The IE5.5 install was successful.

When Rick returned, we readdressed (no pun) the network. It turns out that NT will not function correctly without a "network adaptor" of some sort. When NT is installed without a local area network or a modem, a "loopback adapter" is installed to keep NT happy. If I knew this before, I certainly did not think of it at the time. All of the network problems boiled down to a corrupt driver for the Intel Pro100 network adapter built into the motherboard. Before removing and reinstalling that driver, which would probably have cured almost everything in the network, I uninstalled and reinstalled RAS and WINS (several times) with several reapplications of SP6a along the way. At some point I got desperate and installed an Intel driver down-

loaded from the Intel web site. This was the magic bullet for the network, as almost everything started working.

Reinstalling DHCP had created an empty database. DHCP (Dynamic Host Configuration Protocol) is a means to automatically assign an IP address to computers on a network. Some computers, like servers and routers, need an assigned or reserved address that does not change. Thus, I had to reenter the reservations for several machines on my network. DHCP reservations are a means for a network administrator to assign a specific IP address to a machine from a central facility.



This greatly simplifies management of devices like print servers, routers, and any machine that needs to retain its IP address indefinitely. The down side is that you need to know each machine's MAC address—a unique number burned into every network card when it is manufactured. Since my network is small, this was not an onerous task but I sure wouldn't want to do it for a larger server farm!

WINS (Windows Internet Name Service) is a simplified way to translate between IP addresses and the friendly names assigned to each computer on a Windows network. Normally the service finds all the computers on the network and builds the database automatically. (Did I mention the simplified part?) Now, has anything in this story been that easy? At first I celebrated

that the network was almost complete but soon realized that WINS was not functioning at all. The clue was a recurring message in Event Viewer that said the WINS could not start due to a corrupt database. How could this be when the service had been removed and reinstalled? There is a procedure in the Microsoft Knowledge Base to create a new WINS database, but this only changed the problem. A new message in Event Viewer said, "WINS could not create the notification socket. Make sure TCP/IP driver is installed and working properly." Ultimately I had to reinstall TCP/IP!

Finally I could see and access other machines on the network and vice versa. Did you think we were done? You forgot about DNS.

DNS (Domain Name Service) is the Internet standard to resolve a URL like www.telemarksys.com into an IP address. DNS is not needed for the typical Windows network, but Microsoft has adopted DNS to replace WINS on Windows 2000 networks and it's needed if you want to integrate Linux into an existing Windows network.

Microsoft's DNS on NT does not use a Jet database like DHCP and WINS, but restoring it still took some work. Without a current backup I thought I had to recreate all of the domain records from scratch. This is an involved task made more difficult by the fact that I no longer have the magazine article that led me thru the process. The savior here was DNS itself. DNS on UNIX runs from a set of text files that contain all of the 'records' needed to name the domain, define the naming authority, and list each machine in the domain that has a static (assigned) IP address. Naturally Microsoft does it differently and uses the system registry to store this information. NT's DNS will create a set of domain data files on request. It's up to the administrator to click the button whenever the domain information is updated to keep these data files up to date. The good news is that the files were current enough to be useful, so it was back to the keyboard to re-enter all the DNS records needed to define the domain. Thanks to these text files, I had the information I needed.⁴

Whew! So what did we learn here? Networking is built of layers of software. This rebuild should have been treated as a new install. If we had taken that approach we would have removed and replaced from the bottom up. I'm sure now that would have cut the time in half.

Server Continued on page 6

Here is one of the DNS data files showing the information needed to map a computer name to the IP address. Since my network is small, recreating this was not a big deal. Of course, it would be for a larger enterprise

```

; Database file telemarksys.com.dns for telemarksys.com
zone.

;       Zone version:  30
;
@           IN  SOA  home2.telemarksys.com.
                        info@telemarksys.com.
(
                                30           ; serial number
                                3600        ; refresh
                                600         ; retry
                                86400      ; expire
                                3600       ) ; minimum TTL

;
; Zone NS records
;
@           NS  home2

;
; WINS lookup record
;
@           0    WINS    L1 C600 (
                                10.0.42.1 )

;
; Zone records
;

home2      A    10.0.42.1
ptr01     A    10.0.42.26
tlx       A    10.0.42.5
ts2       A    10.0.42.6
wlap0     A    10.0.42.24

```

Server From page 5
Deliver the Mail

Meanwhile, Rick had been researching our problem with the mysterious DLL that “was not a valid Windows NT image” and how we could get a newer version to replace the one on the system. It was not part of Windows NT but was a Microsoft DLL. A couple of years ago the Microsoft web site added a searchable database of every DLL produced by Microsoft showing every version number and what install packages carried each version. It is a wonder to behold. A search of the DLL database revealed that our mysterious DLL was a part of several server products.

One of the tech support people Rick consulted found the most recent version in Site Server Service Pack 4. The first attempt to install this service pack failed. So we uninstalled Site Server so it could be re-installed just to install the service pack. Is that convoluted or what? But you know what? It worked.

My server runs two server applications: Microsoft SQL Server and Microsoft Exchange Server. At the time the problem started, I had also installed Site Server, Microsoft’s high-end web server product, although it was not actually running. Recovering these applications was the last task.

Exchange Server is Microsoft’s enterprise email and collaboration product. Admittedly it is overkill for a one-man software shop, but I first set it up to learn enough to install it for a client. We intended to use it to store documents created by the system I developed. Of course once it was running, I wanted to use it and once I started to use it, I was immediately addicted⁵. Now it contains several thousand emails and other documents that can be searched at the click of a mouse. Loosing that database (data store in Exchange-speak) was unthinkable.

If this were a normal situation where there was a backup tape from, oh say, lastnite, then we could just blow away the existing installation of Exchange, reinstall, restore the backup and be back in business. Well, as we have seen, it ain’t so easy when there ain’t no [sic] backup! To guide me thru this recovery, Rick handed me off to an Exchange Server specialist. We did blow away the existing installation after carefully making backup copies of certain directories. After reinstalling and applying latest service pack, we pointed Exchange to the original data stores. Rebooting to restart the services (Exchange Server is actually five or more

individual processes that run in the background) I could access my mailbox from Outlook on a client machine. This event was the biggest relief of this entire agonizing process.

Dish Out Data

Next up was SQL Server, Microsoft’s relational database manager. Given our success with Exchange and my greater familiarity with SQL Server, I was ready to tackle this one on my own. Just to be sure, Rick connected me to a SQL specialist and in no time, we had SQL Server working again. The steps were the same as with Exchange: remove, reinstall, apply the service pack and then connect to the data. SQL Server keeps track of user databases in a database of it’s own called Master. This has records that point the way to each database file in disk. The SQL support specialist wrote a script to add the records needed to connect the database files still on disk from before all this started.

Pages to the Web

We are now on the home stretch. The last step was to get Internet Information Server (IIS) going again. I had two web sites – sort of. One web site was my feeble attempt at a company web site. The other site was Outlook Web Access. OWA is a collection of server-based programs and web pages that imitate the look and feel of the Outlook email program over the web. This makes it possible to check email from any PC with Internet access.

The situation with IIS was muddled by the presence of Site Server, so I uninstalled Site Server. Yes, I know I just blew away all that work reinstalling it, but that effort was really just to get past the DLL error. Based on our successes with Exchange and SQL Server, the next task was to remove IIS. In the NT scheme of things this means removing something called the “Windows NT Option Pack”. The Option Pack includes all the stuff needed to run a Microsoft-based web site including IIS, Index Server and Microsoft Transaction Server (MTS) along with various control panels to configure these programs. The uninstall ran to completion but not without errors. Some were probably caused by files removed with Site Server and the rest – who knows. Reinstalling Option Pack ran fine until near the end when it could not configure the FTP site. Since I do not plan to run the FTP server service, I could live with these results.

With IIS running and serving up the sample web pages, it was time to reinstall Outlook Web Access (OWA). This proved

to be the final nightmare and required several conversations with Exchange tech support specialists. OWA walks a narrow path between an acceptable level of security and opening your server to a world full of bad guys. When we finished, OWA is working but I have an idea that it is not as secure as it should be. Some people would say that IIS security is an oxymoron, so this could be a problem.

To increase security, I moved the port used by IIS to a non-standard number and opened only that non-standard port thru the firewall. When checking the firewall logs I have yet to see any activity on that port. Of course that does mean it’s safe, just that it’s hidden for the moment. On the server I have gradually tightened file and directory permissions on OWA and the IIS directories hoping that I’m moving in the right direction. As long as the added security permissions do not break IIS or OWA, then things must be better, right?

Lessons Learned

So what did I learn from this experience? In Part 1, I talked about the danger of lulling yourself into a sense of false security regarding hardware redundancy and backups. This is the biggest lesson here. Hardware redundancy is good for system reliability but it is not a replacement for good and frequent backups.

Another point on backups is that if all your backup tapes are stored in one place, you are still vulnerable. For a small business, maintaining off-site backups can be as simple as taking a tape home from the office once a month.

Last, solving a puzzle as big as my server disaster (at least it seemed like a disaster at the time) requires a plan and that’s what Rick brought to the table along with his knowledge of the NT product. His approach broke the recovery into the stages I’ve reported here. Most of the flailing around was the result of my desire to rush ahead. Of course there were several speed bumps along the way and many times errors stopped an install or uninstall. Solving these problems in a logical manner kept us moving.

For all of the bad press Microsoft Support has received over the years, I was highly impressed with the level of knowledge, patience and professionalism I saw from Rick and his cohorts. If fee-based support yields this level of quality, then it’s worth every penny. Now, I must also point out that the products involved here were all high-end server-based enterprise products so you would expect any

Server Continued on page 15

Meeting Review

Divide and Conquer with Powerquest

By Marc Cohen

For the third time in as many years, Gene and Linda Barlow graced our September meeting and shared the knowledge gleaned over many years of visiting computer user groups in North America.

Back when I had a 1.6GB hard drive, some of Gene's tools and tips for keeping my operating system and hard drive(s) running at maximum efficiency really didn't make much impact on my computer use, however as I upgraded my system and boosted my memory capacity grew to 20 gigs Gene's recommendation to divide the hard drive into four partitions made great sense. The Primary partition "c:" I call "OS" contains only the windows operating system. The second partition "d:" called "APPS" contains all of my applications. The third "e:" named "DATA" holds all of the data files, and the forth "f:", which I call "SLUSH", is for games and programs that I want to try that I probably wouldn't keep for extended periods. The program also permits converting each of the hard drives from fat 16 to fat 32 files, which more efficiently saves storage space and, by keeping partitions limited to 8GB (where possible), also reduces wasted space. A special utility is needed to move and connect your applications. The file COA2 may be freely downloaded from www.pcmag.com/utilities/ to do this function.

Normally, dividing a hard drive into multiple partitions usually requires formatting the drive and starting from scratch and guessing as to the size needed for each partition. Using PowerQuest "Partition Magic", one of the programs Gene represents, makes this reorganization of the hard drive a simple matter. Now partitions can be sized to fit the applications and the data to be stored and relocated to the specified partitions; the operating System Registry is able to keep track of all the moves. All this can be done without having to delete and reinstall all of the programs that reformatting the drive

would require. An added feature included with "Partition Magic" is "Boot Magic", which permits, with the creation of additional primary partitions, the ability to add additional operating systems, OS/2, Linux, DOS etc. and to be able to switch between them.

Now, when I defragment and back up my hard drive, I only have to worry about the "data" partition, as that is the only partition that changes regularly. The "operating system" and the "applications" partitions seldom change, and can be reinstalled from the original disks, if necessary.

Recently, I suffered what I call Operating System terminal rot, or more gently put, OS Decay. The windows system begins to act strangely, with even more system lockups and crashes than usual. The normal approach is to run ScanDisk, Defrag and possibly RegClean, followed by a reinstall of Windows. After a while, even these drastic measures no longer help. The only recourse is to reformat the "C" partition and do a clean reinstall of the Windows OS. Although the Applications and the data are protected by being in a separate partitions from the Operat-

ing System, the applications will have to be reinstalled, so the newly installed windows can generate a new clean Registry, and Windows will know what applications are on your com-

puter and where they reside. This brings us to the newest of Gene's recommendations: Add a second hard drive close to or larger than the one now in the computer. If the current drive is 20GB add a 20, 30 or 40GB drive. If you already have a 40GB drive, add a second 40GB drive.

Tip: check www.driveservice.com for reviews of current drives

Why add a second drive? Gene states that hard drives are mechanical devices and will eventually fail. The second drive offers the simplest and least expensive way to quickly back up your existing drive. Prices have come down to afford-

able levels (40GB = \$100-135), and most retail establishments will install the drive for you free.

PowerQuest's "DriveCopy" allows exact and speedy duplication of your existing drive, with each partition resized proportionally to fit the increased capacity of the new drive.

The next PowerQuest program Gene described, was "DriveImage" this permits increases in the operating speed by placing the OS(s) on one drive and the applications and data on the other (two drive heads are faster than one). Doing this also is the start of creating a real time backup system. An additional function of "DriveImage" is "DataKeeper". "DataKeeper" backs up your data files automatically as you create them. The following is easier to diagram than to explain, but here it goes:

On the first physical drive create one "c:" primary partition where you can place all your operating systems, and a second partition "d:" which we'll call bkup1.

On the second physical drive setup an "e:" "APPS" partition and place all your applications here and a second partition "f:" "DATA" to contain all your data and the program called DataKeeper, and a third "g:" partition called bkup2.

Now backup the "c:" partition on drive one onto the "g:" partition on the second drive; then copy the "e: and f: partitions on drive two on to the "d:" partition on the first drive "DriveImage" creates each of these backups in a compressed mode, reducing the space needed by about 50%.

Now all of your files are protected, as they are duplicated on both drives. These 50% compressed backup copies can be quickly expanded and restored into their original positions with all of their settings intact.

Once a month, or once a quarter, copy the two backup files to CD-R/RW disks. These files can be daisy chained if they take up more space than a single disk can hold. Blank CD-R disks cost less than \$.50 and can store more per penny than ZIP or Tape storage media. For the real paranoid these disks should be stored in a remote location or safe deposit box in case of fire or theft.

For more information about the PowerQuest products contact www.ugr.com/products.html

MARC COHEN is a founding member, a DACS director and production editor of dacs.doc. A perpetual novice, he started out having problems with his Osborne computer, and still has problems with Windows.

Special Interest Groups

SIG NOTES: August 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: Oct 16

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: Oct 17

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: Oct 11

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: Oct 24

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: Check schedule

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: Oct 18

MACINTOSH. Discusses Macintosh hardware and software.

Contact: Matthew Greger, 203 748-2919, (*matthewg@thebusinesshelper.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@compuserve.com*) or Jim Scheef, 860 355-8001 (*JScheef@Telemarksys.com*).

Meets on 1st Wednesday, 7p.m., at the DACS Resource Center.

Next Meeting: Oct 3

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: Oct 29

WEB SITE DESIGN. Fundamentals of design for the Internet.

Contact: Matthew Greger, 203 748-2919 (*matthewg@thebusinesshelper.com*)

Meets second Wednesday, 7p.m. at the DACS Resource Center.

Next Meeting: Oct 10

SIG News & Other Events

Back Office. The Back Office SIG did not meet in September due to the tragic events of that week.. In October we return to our normal schedule on Thursday October 11th at 7pm in the DACS Resource Center. The meeting will upgrade the new Resource Center PC to Windows 2000 Server. See you there!

Visual Basic. As promised, the September meeting featured Scott Hillier as guest speaker. Scott's topic was Microsoft's "dot NET". Scott gave us his insite into .NET and the future of application development. It turns out that .NET *is* Microsoft's plan to rule the world. It is also a well designed and crafted new framework for application development on PCs, servers, and the web. The new mantra is that you can write programs that can be used anywhere on any platform...Oh, and by the way, .NET also eliminates "DLL Hell" and several other common problems we all experience with our PCs every day.

So what is .NET? It is many things depending on where you grab hold. From the user viewpoint, it is a runtime environment, call Common Language Runtime (CLR) that will eventually be installed on everyone's PC. Once that is done, installing new applications will be as simple as copying a file from one disk to another. No more registry problems. For programmers, .NET is a new version of Visual Studio with new versions of Visual Basic and C++, along with a new language from Microsoft called C# (that's See Sharp). All of these languages use the CLR. This makes many problems with current programs go away because conflicts between different languages are eliminated. VB becomes totally object-oriented with many new capabilities along with many changes in syntax. Scott's bottom line for VB.NET is that using the new features will be dangerous until industry experience determines which features really deliver and which are disasters. Web sites get a new delivery mechanism called ASP.NET that also uses the CLR and is hyped to be faster and more scalable because "all code is compiled".

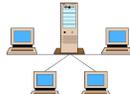
"Web Services" is a new buzz word used by every major player in the industry. Web services allow an application to use information or functions provided over the Internet using common standards like XML and SOAP. Web services can be written in VB, C# or any other CLR language.

So how does all this allow Microsoft to control the world? Well, Microsoft has already started rolling out some of it's web services. Have you noticed that everything you do on MSN or the Microsoft web site now requires that you have a "Passport"? Over time, Passport will become a database of millions of people around the world - owned by Microsoft, of course. Passport will soon provide authentication—it gives some assurance that you are you—to many web sites. This will make shopping more convenient but at what cost in privacy?

A really good turnout enjoyed Scott's visit, and we have invited him back whenever he wants. The next VB SIG meeting will be Wednesday, October 3rd at 7pm in the DACS Resource Center.

October 2001

Danbury Area Computer Society

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

Desktop Management

In an emergency your first line of defense is your bottom line

by Mike Kaltschnee

I was in Manhattan on Tuesday, September 11, 2001. I managed to be one of the first people to leave the island around 2pm, and I was glad to go. I could see the towers from the street near my office. People crying openly, smoke in the sky, and a real sense that there might be another attack that day. Days later I spent time in Union Square, the unofficial memorial, watching people cry, pray, and reading the missing person flyers that permeate the city. I've been changed by the experience. Thankfully everything I know is safe.

As much as I really didn't want to write a column this month, I was persuaded by our honorable president to find some time to write a column. What on earth could I write about that would make a difference? That anyone would bother to read?

After much thought, I decided to write about something a lot of businesses in this country are considering because of the complete destruction of the World Trade Center: disaster recovery. Although usually something only businesses worry about, you can create a personal disaster recovery plan.

Although extremely rare, horrible things do happen. Hurricanes, fire, tornados, theft, and even terrorists can completely wipe out a business overnight. It also happens to people. Everyone knows somebody displaced in a fire, flood or other disaster. What you don't see on the news is people realizing their backups didn't work, or they have lost key

people with information they took with them. I'd like to give you a few points to think about so you can possibly avoid additional loss in case of disaster.

Backups. I can't say enough about backups. How many people do them?

How many do them regularly? Even worse - how many have tested their backups? I bet it's a smaller percentage than we think. Backups should be done weekly, or if the data you're working

with is critical, daily. There are two types of backups, full (complete) and incremental (only the changes since the last backup are archived).

There are many ways to do backups. You can copy important data to a floppy or zip disk, burn the data onto a CDR, copy the files onto disk space on another computer on your network (I do this a lot), or even put your files on space you rent on the Internet. You can also purchase a dedicated tape backup. Think about how critical the files you're backing up are, and then evaluate the different techniques, and select the backup that's right for you.

Don't forget to take a copy of the backup offsite - a friend's house or even leave a copy in your desk at work.

I know several couples that have only one person handle the finances. The other person sometimes doesn't even know where the checkbook is.

This is probably very common, but can be a disaster if something happens to the bookkeeper. If you're the person, write up directions on how the bills are paid, where the finances are (banks,

stocks, etc), and leave the secret codes on a sheet in your safety deposit box. Then show this to your partner, and explain everything in detail. If you're not the bookkeeper, ask your partner about this stuff, and take good notes.

You have certain information in your head that only you know. If something happened to you, would your partner need this information? Does your partner have information you need? Spend some time with your partner and write down these things.

Most businesses create a disaster recovery plan. They try and figure out every possible disaster, and what they could do to be up and running in a few days. Some go so far as to have another "clone" of their office in another county or state, ready to go if they have to relocate their employees. They even have backups shipped to the other office, ready to be up and running as if nothing happened.

What would you do if your house burned down? Take a moment and think about it. Where would you go? How would you get up and running? Do you have a will? Think about your insurance - do you have good personal insurance? Do you have renter's insurance or homeowners? If you have a home-based business is your inventory and equipment covered? Call your insurance agent and get the coverage you need.

Write down your thoughts and ideas and turn it into a contingency plan. If something horrible does happen, at least you'll be ready for it.

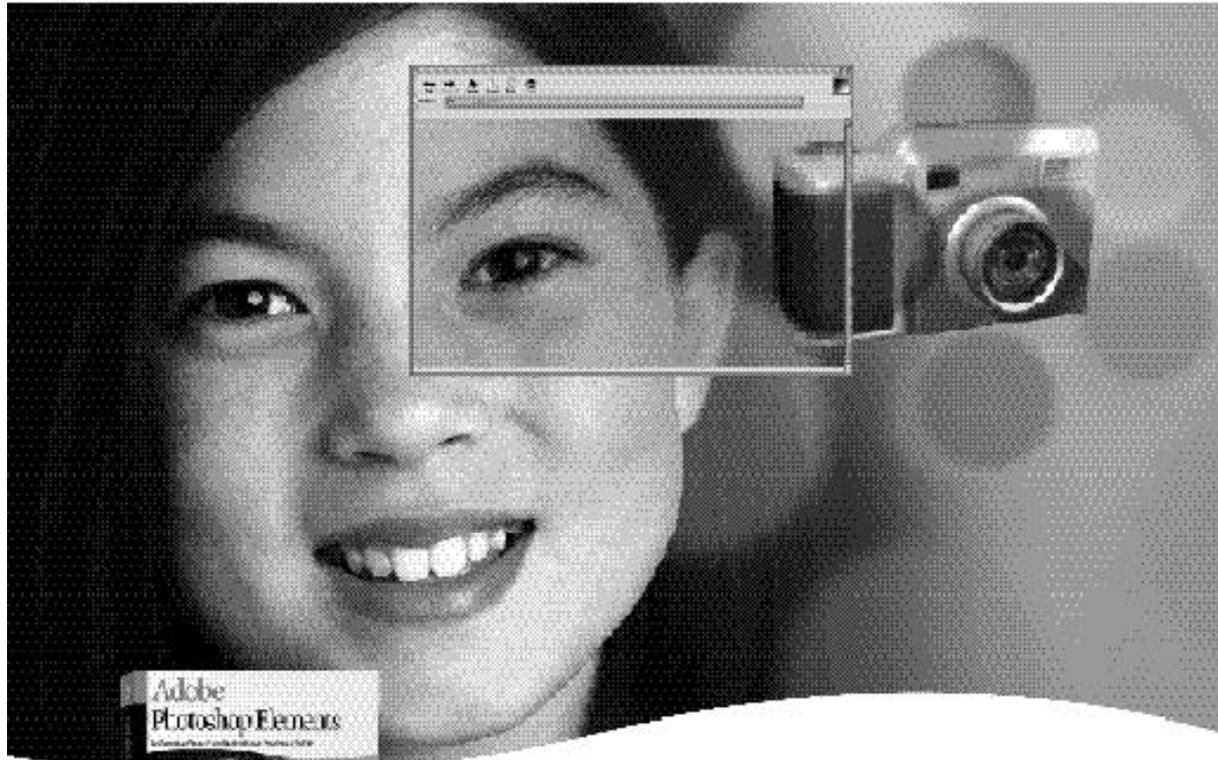
I'm sorry about the tone of the column this month, but I couldn't write anything light or humorous. If anything, I hope you think about how you can make things a bit easier to take if you're caught up in a bad situation.

Peace.

Mike is a DACS member who is still upset he quit the Boy Scouts before he made Eagle. You can contact him by e-mail at: mikek@demorgan.com.

... horrible things do happen. Hurricanes, fire, tornados, theft, and even terrorists ...

Backups should be done weekly, or if the data you're working with is critical, daily.



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Letters

Dear Mr. Ostergren

I am writing in response to John Heckman's recent article titled "Protecting against Viruses with Outlook" (*dacs.doc*, September 2001, page 4). Unfortunately for your readers Mr. Heckman seems to have fallen into the all too popular "Outlook is Evil" trap.

Mr. Heckman begins his comments by stating "Using Microsoft Outlook is an open invitation to virus writers." This is simply false. Outlook is not the problem, user behavior is. The simple truth is that any e-mail client can be exploited by virus writers.

A case in point is W32/Ska.A-m (better known as Happy99), does not target Outlook and is still one of the most "successful" viruses ever. The same is true for any number of other very "successful" mass e-mailing viruses, JS/Kak, W32/Hybris, W32/Magistr & W32/Sircam to name a few. One of the reasons non-Outlook targeting mass mailing viruses have been so successful is because users of Eudora, Pegasus Mail, Etc. think they are protected from viruses by not using Outlook.

The bottom line is viruses are a user problem not a software problem. As long as users are willing to blindly double-click anything that lands in their inbox, viruses will continue to be a problem.

Heckman goes on to state "Some newer viruses can execute when a file is viewed in the Outlook viewer pane, so that is no longer adequate protection." While this true of Outlook Express to the best of my knowledge the Outlook preview pane does not run active content.

In reality, disabling the preview pane really does not solve much. The real problem with the preview pane is that it, just like the main message viewer, uses Internet Explorer's rather buggy and security challenged HTML parsers to render the message's content. A far better solution is to install all of the relevant patches and updates for Internet Explorer and Outlook. The user should also place Outlook in the "Restricted Sites" zone which effectively disables Outlook's ability to parse active content.

Heckman further states "You should update your [anti-virus] software once a month and more often when a new virus becomes widespread." This is generally poor advice. Most anti-virus software developers currently release updates on a daily or weekly basis for a reason. In the age of mass mailing e-mail worms, where a virus can go from unknown to widespread in a matter of hours, a month is a lifetime. Today users really should update their anti-virus software on weekly basis.

What's more important than frequent updates is the need for users to understand the inherent weaknesses of anti-virus software. Anti-virus software is by its very nature reactionary and can only "protect" against what it already knows. Relying on anti-virus software to protect you from viruses is a little like hiring Willie Sutton to guard a bank. . . it looks good on the surface but in reality all it does is offer a false sense of security.

That's not to say you shouldn't use anti-virus software. Anti-virus software should be a part of your overall defense strategy, but it should not be a replacement the for zealous practice of Safe Hex.

I would encourage readers to take a few minutes to read the following pages: www.claymania.com/safehex.html & www.claymania.com/prevent.html for a good primer on virus prevention and Safe Hex.

The simple truth is no piece of software can protect us from our own ignorance.

On balance, Mr. Heckman's recommendation that users disable (rename) wscript.exe and cscript.exe is very poor advice and I would not recommend it. In general, home and small office users, need Windows Update to work much more than they need to disable VBS and JS files. The Windows Update site depends on VBS files being downloadable and runnable in order to install updates.

Last, on a related but significantly different note, changing the Open setting for VBS files to Notepad is probably the wrong way to handle things. A better solution may be to change the default action for VBS files

from Open to Edit, which by default opens files in Notepad. This way when you double-click on a VBS file it, opens in Notepad (but you will still be able to right-click on a VBS file in Windows Explorer and choose Open if you want run it).

As technology professionals we need to educate users about the threats of the virtual world and how they can properly defend themselves. We should Not offer them kludged together workarounds that do little to enhance their security.

Sincerely,
Jeffrey A. Setaro

John Heckman Responds

Jeff Setaro is certainly an able mouthpiece for the Microsoft line that "Outlook is not the problem, user behavior is." Let's examine this further.

Blame the Users. This is convenient, and certainly no computer professional lacks for end-user horror stories. However, it is somewhat beside the point. This becomes immediately apparent when you translate the analysis to another realm: the Ford Explorer and Bridgestone tires: all those rollover deaths were due to the fact that users ("user" is a four-letter word) piled too much equipment into the Explorer and drove it too fast around corners, did not inflate tires correctly to compensate for the weight and the heat. So if they got killed, tough, its their own fault (right?). That the Explorer must rank as one of the most unsafe vehicles ever made is not relevant.

Any software company is painfully aware of what users can and will do, and one of the tasks of programmers is to make a product as resistant as possible to user error. This is sometimes known as "idiot-proofing." As I frequently tell my clients, "never underestimate the creativity of end users when it comes to circumventing your best thought-out routines."

Yes, users should be more careful. But they aren't. So the question is, in a commercial environment, how do you protect them from themselves? That is the question that needs addressing. Viruses can target any e-mail system. True but irrelevant. While other MAPI-compliant programs are open to certain types of viruses, programs that don't embed VBS scrips (such as WordPerfect and GroupWise) are more resistant to VBS-based viruses and worms. If another vendor were as dominant as Microsoft, viruses would target their product. But that is not the case. The fact is that Microsoft consciously and explicitly opens up VBS in order to provide functionality (such as the Windows Updates) that also involves security problems. There are a number of superior ways of handling security that are entirely feasible within the Microsoft scheme (as the Microsoft sub-culture around Woody Leonhard is quick to point out). But I think it has been amply demonstrated across its product line that security is of marginal concern to Microsoft (after all, it's the users' fault). Even Jeff criticizes "Internet Explorer's rather buggy and security challenged (???!!) HTML parsers."

Jeff complains that disabling wscript.exe and cscript.exe would also disable Windows Update and claims that "home and small office users need Windows Update to work much more than then need to disable [viruses]." This is indeed the crux of the matter. I disagree. You are better off disabling VBS on a daily basis and re-enabling it on those occasions you need to run Windows Update (or whatever) than leaving yourself open to VBS viruses on a daily basis in order to run Windows Update once a month or whatever.

On updating anti-virus software, I certainly agree that it should be done as often as possible. I had several companies write me that the update signatures daily. On the other hand, I hate to tell you how many clients I go to that, when you start the computer, you get a message "your anti-virus signatures are more than 6 months old..." (or whatever). Monthly is not optimal but is better than nothing.

John Heckman
heckman@heckmanco.com (860) 395-0881

Random Access

September 2001

Bruce Preston, Moderator

Q. Is there a way to print the address book from Microsoft Outlook Express 5?

A. Yes - view the address book, then go to FILE then EXPORT. You will be given a list of exportable items, one of which is the address book (WAB - Windows Address Book). Be sure to look at the formats available - .TXT, .CSV (comma separated values) etc., as well as which fields you want to export.

Q. The old Netscape Mail client stored its address book in ADDRESS.HTML - the new one seems to have it somewhere else. Is there a way to get the old values into the new one? I have moved the file from the old one to a similar folder in the new one - but it doesn't find it.

A. Look for an 'import' option. Also, you might want to go looking for the current version's address book - and then do a manual merge. If you have a problem finding the address book, you might put in a fake and unique entry, such as "Bozo The Clown" and then do a FIND / Files and Folders / Containing Text and look for Bozo The Clown to see where they put the address.

Q. I have a Compaq Presario computer which won't let me defrag. I get a message SirC32.exe not found.

A. We didn't get a response during the meeting, but a follow-up on the internet revealed that you have been hit by the "SirCam" internet worm/virus. Go to <http://www.symantec.com/avcenter/venc/data/w32.sircam.worm@mm.html> for instructions as to how to remove it.

Q. What is a CGI file?

A. Common Gateway Interface - it is a file that usually exists on a web-server, and is executed as a result of a browser user either clicking the SUBMIT/SEND/POST button. It is usually written in one of the server script languages, such as Perl, PHP, Python, etc.

Q. In Internet Explorer, if I quit Internet Explorer, I want my dial-up connection to drop. It doesn't, and so unless I remember to check the system tray, I may have the connection stay live. How to I get it to drop?

A. In the Internet properties, on the "Connection" tab, turn on the "Auto Disconnect" option. Note, however, that other applications that might be running in the background may be active enough to keep the link open - some examples - RealPlayer, web-sourced wallpaper changers, etc.

Q. Windows 2000 Pro, with a dial-up connection to SNET.NET. I can not log into my bank or PowerQuest. However, I can get to other places. If I use NetZero with the same browser, I can get to these locations. If I use my old machine, through SNET, I can get to these sites. If I use Netscape as my browser, I can get there as well. At one point I got a Java Script error.

A. Call SNET, they are clearly doing something strange that IE doesn't like. There is also a possibility that the SNET connection has a problem with its associated DNS server. One way to diagnose it might be to use the "tracert" utility. The DNS server on your W2K machine may be using one DNS server, while the DNS server on the other machine(s) or under NetZero may be using a different one.

Q. McAfee won't scan e-mails because MAPI32.DLL is incorrect.

A. McAfee e-mail only works if you are using MS Outlook (not Outlook Express) and you are connected to a MS Exchange Server. It just plain won't work with SMTP servers. In reality, in-place client-side e-mail scanners don't work. (By the way, this is essentially true for any vendor.) Your regular anti-virus will catch problems, but it won't do it until you try to open the message rather than when you receive it. You

must still have an up-to-date anti-virus signature file.

Q. I get data from my CD, and can play audio CDs from my CD. However, I get no sound from CD-based applications, or any of the 'standard' windows sounds, such as at start-up.

A. Best guess is that one or more of the sound sources has been disabled. Bring up the 'volume controls' and make sure that you show 'all' devices. Then see if any of them have the 'Mute' setting turned on.

Q. Is there some software that would reveal that there is monitoring software running on my office machine?

A. If your employer has installed something, then trying to remove it or perhaps even detecting it may very well fall under terms of employment.

Q. On the internet, if I am working with Audio/Video, after a while the machine locks up. I have a 450MHZ, 128MB RAM, Windows Me.

A. Go to www.dslreports.com and try some of their tools to see if your system is optimally configured.

Q. I have Amiga 1000 and Amiga 2000 machines available - is there any reason not to junk them?

A. You might be able to find someone who wants them for parts, or nostalgic reasons. A check on eBay showed recent sales of Amiga 2000's in the \$275 to \$325 range, and Amiga 1000's in the \$125 to \$150 range.

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.

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President's file *from page 2*

medium for instability. For many, the Web is the first place to go for information; yet that information is often inaccurate or distorted. The growth of Internet commerce has made us dependent on it for our economic livelihood, and we would suffer extreme consequences if it became unreliable or access were cut off.

As our nation and the world rise to the challenge of the war on terrorism, we will see many of our assumptions and beliefs on digital communication put to the test. This will be the first war waged in cyberspace, and the freedoms and privileges of the Web that we had come to take for granted will be measured and constrained. Yet we must not forget them, for when we emerge from the conflict, it will be essential that these freedoms all be restored. Despite our current conflicts, the technology revolution remains on the side of the good guys. In the long run, electronic communications favor those who would share their information, not hide it behind a wall of deceit.

Server *from page 6*

vendor to assign their best support engineers to these products.

¹ Windows NT runs many processes in the background, hidden from the casual user. These are called services and include such things as networking, the personal web server,

the software that pops up those annoying messages, and much more.

² This trick and the benefits of a parallel installation of NT were described last month in Part 2.

³ Astute readers who have followed this story closely are probably saying, "So if your server was down, how did you run the other machines on the network? You had no DHCP." Well, that's an interesting question! The answer was to enable the DHCP server built into the broadband router. It took just a few mouse clicks and everyone had an IP address again. Once the server could resume this function, I disabled DHCP in the router and waited for each machine to renew its IP address. When it did, the address came from the NT server and we were back to normal.

⁴ After I finished reentering all this, I found a Knowledge Base article on how to reload the data from these files thru a set of registry entries. Oh well... Next time.

⁵ In a future article, I'll document the process of setting up a domain with an ISP—I use Mags Net—you can run your own email server and have all the email address you want.

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.

FREE CLASSIFIEDS

DACS members may publish noncommercial, computer-related classified ads in *dacs.doc* at no charge. Ads may be placed electronically by fax or by modem, or hard-copy may be submitted at our monthly general meeting. Fax your ads to Charlie Bovaird at 203 792-7881.

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

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8/24/2001 thru 9/22/2001

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Nigel S. A. Caig

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November 6 • Microsoft's XP OS

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