



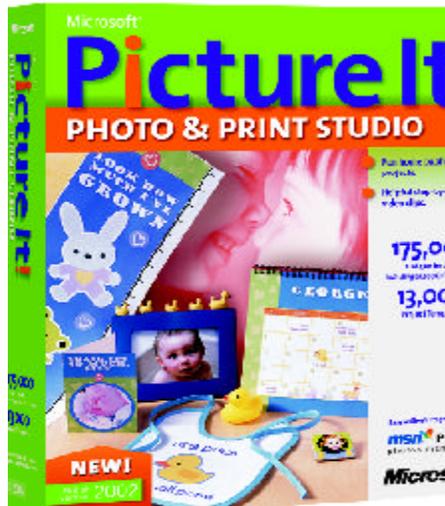
Let Microsoft be Your Picture Window

By M. Gaberel

DACS' next general meeting, on May 7, will take place at the Danbury Radisson Hotel, Exit 4 of I-84. Check DACS' web site if directions are necessary. The speaker will be Microsoft's John Stroiney. The meeting will start, as usual, at 7 pm, followed by the main presentation at 8 pm. John will introduce DACS members and their guests to Microsoft and Digital Photography.

Among the main topics that John will be covering are how to organize your pictures in Microsoft Windows XP. Members "will see how enhancements in the operating system make it simple to scan or acquire photos from a digital camera. It's easier than ever to organize your photos the way you want them. Once you have them, with just a few clicks, you can print them on your color printer, send them to a photo finisher to create prints or automatically optimize them to email to friends."

John will explain Microsoft Picture It! 2002, a "digital-imaging technology, which makes it easy for anyone to improve photos and include them in great projects to share with friends and family.



ways look fantastic. Your startup page, smart tools, and helpful wizards will guide you every step of the way — from getting started to creating great projects, to sharing your masterpieces with family and friends."

John also will demonstrate to members "more choices for craft and photo projects, and professional printing capabilities. A creative ideas page and more than 15,000 templates are available to create a variety of cards, photo albums, calendars, flyers, invitations, magazine covers, stickers, web pages, and more."

Members will also be shown how to use MSN Photos "to take advantage of the Internet as a way to share pictures. It's easy and quick to transfer pictures to MSN Photos, and once they are uploaded, you can create an online album to share and even view your own slideshow. You can personalize your photos with more than 50 design options, order professional-quality prints and photo gifts and turn your

digital pictures into lasting memories by creating personalized gifts with your favorite pictures. You can also get great advice on improving your picture quality and other tips and tricks."

John will also talk about "a way to easily share your digital photos with people who don't have a computer. It's called Microsoft TV Photo Viewer and it allows people to view digital photos right on their television in incredible quality. It's a great way for your whole family to view photos on TV. Microsoft TV Photo Viewer makes it simple to create albums from digital photos on your PC, save them on a floppy disk, and view them on a TV in the comfort of your living room. Kick back with the remote control and share your albums on the big screen—they look great.

Microsoft's May presentation sounds like a fun and entertaining way to spend the May 7, 2002 evening. Bring a friend with you and share with them all the advantages of attending DACS general meetings and all the other more specialized meetings that take place monthly.

Meeting Location Change

Danbury Radisson Hotel,
42 Lake Avenue
Exit 4 off I-84.

The meeting will start, as usual,
at 7 pm

It's easy to let your imagination run wild with Picture It! Publishing Platinum. This edition combines powerful photo-editing software with thousands of great desktop and Web publishing projects, so your creations will al-

President's File



File Issue 0.0

Hello everyone, and welcome to my first column as DACS president. I've never been president of an organization like DACS, so not only am I new, but I'm inexperienced as well. Inexperience notwithstanding, I'll be proud to serve as your president for the coming year.

First off, I'd like to thank the DACS board (of which I'm a member, of course) for their vote of confidence in naming me DACS president at our meeting on April 8th. Just to refresh everyone, DACS has a sort-of semi-parliamentary form of government. The members elect a board of directors and then the board names the officers who may, or may not, be board members. Hopefully, the fact that we had just finished dinner and most everyone had a beer or two was not the overriding factor in the vote. The other officers are: Charles Bovaird, Treasurer and Larry Buoy, Secretary. We also have three Vice Presidents: Marlène Gaberel, Jeff Setaro and Gene Minasi.

Next, a big tip of the hat goes to Richard Chernock for his excellent presentation at the April general meeting. Rich gave the clearest explanation I've ever heard of digital TV—what it is and how it works. In addition he talked about interactive TV and its workings. He even touched on some of the political issues surrounding the adoption of digital TV. It was an all around great job.

Now, not to take away anything I just said about Rich, but there are many more DACS members who can easily do the same

type of presentation that Richard did. Member presentations tend to be on topics closer to the interests of DACS members as a whole. Certainly, we need to keep up on the latest from Microsoft, and I'd really like to see and hear from Red Hat or one of the other GNU/Linux distributors, but there are many practical topics that no one vendor can really cover. A good example was November 2000, when Bruce and Scott Preston (father and son) demonstrated—live and in person—how to set up a home network. Jeff Setaro's presentation on Anti-Virus software is another example. We have a "Best of Shareware" meeting planned for this summer when several members will each present a program they find particularly useful. I use many free and shareware programs every day. I'll talk about WinStock Pro, the program I use to get stock quotes. Let me know if you would like to join the fun—my email will always appear at the end of this column. If you have a topic but need some help preparing a presentation, fear not! DACS can help turn your idea into a presentation. In fact learning to use PowerPoint and how to do public speaking would make a good SIG. Hmm... .

May is the time for one of my favorite events of the entire year—the Trenton Computer Festival. The year the festival will be May 4th and 5th, at the Raritan Convention Center in Edison, NJ. This is almost an hour closer than the old locations that were actually near Trenton. The best part of this event is the outdoor flea market where the bargains can be unbelievable. For the best selection, go on Saturday and get there early. For the best bargains, go on Sunday when many vendors will give stuff away rather than pack it up and take it home. There is also an indoor sales floor much like the "computer show" held from time to time at the O'Neal Center on the WestConn campus but with many times the vendors and better prices. There is also a schedule of seminars on topics ranging from word processing to Linux configuration to amateur (ham) radio. Go! You'll have fun. The festival web site is www.tcf-nj.org.

A few months back, the DACS board authorized a DSL connection for the DACS Resource Center. The DACS.ORG domain lived on the Danbury Library server from when we first opened a web site. Back then having a web site was pretty leading edge

President's File, continued on page 15

Membership Information

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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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APL	Charles Bovaird	(203) 792-7881	(e)
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Windows	Nick Strother	(203) 743-5667	(e)

Directors' Notes

A Special Meeting of the DACS Board of Directors was held at Two Step's Downtown Grille, 5 Ives Street, Danbury, at 7:00 pm on April 8, 2002. Present were Messrs. Bovaird, Buoy, Cohen, Neary, Ostergren, Preston, Scheef and Setaro and Mrs. Gaberel. Also present were Messrs. Heere, Gingras and McIntyre. President Ostergren presided and Secretary Buoy kept the record of the meeting.

The minutes of the last meeting, held March 11, 2002, were approved. Treasurer Charlie Bovaird reported total cash and bank accounts of \$21,614.04, less prepaid dues of \$8,541.00, a net of \$13,073.04. Current membership was reported being 474.

The first order of business being the election of officers of the corporation to serve for the ensuing year, the following were nominated for the offices following their names and elected thereto by unanimous vote: President - James Scheef; Vice Presidents - Marlène Gaberel (Publicity), Gene Minasi (Facilities), Jeff Setaro (Programs); Treasurer - Charles Bovaird; Secretary - Lawrence Buoy.

Jim Scheef accepted the office of President but deferred to Allan, who continued to preside over the further proceedings of the meeting.

Charlie Bovaird proposed amending the check-signing authority of the corporation to update the records of the Union Savings Bank and provide for the foregoing change in the office of President. Appropriate amendments were adopted to the current authorization dated September 11, 2000.

Further discussion ensued on the InterGalactic Conference on April 20, 2002 resulted in expressions of intent to attend by Marc Cohen, Don Neary and Jim Scheef.

A brief report of the results of the advertising initiative revealed that, of the seven visitors registering for the April 1 General Meeting, only one credited the ad for prompting attendance at the meeting.

During a discussion of future General Meetings, Jeff Setaro mentioned that the Hospital's auditorium was unavailable to DACS for either May 7th or June 4th; May 7th scheduled for a Microsoft presentation. He proposed use of the Radisson Inn's facility for May 7th and it was agreed to so do. Ed Heere offered to prepare a presentation on the options of DSL or Cable high-speed Internet access for one of the available July, August, September or October General Meeting dates.

—Larry Buoy

Online Basics

Cable, DSL & Going Wireless Internet

By Mike Kaltschnee

If you read my earlier article on DSL then you know a bit about fast connections to the Internet. I'd like to share some of what I have learned about DSL and cable modems since that article.

I got a DSL line put in my house almost a year ago. It gives me about 1.5Mbps download and more than 128,000bps upload. A cable modem gives me 54,000bps download and half that on upload. The DSL connection is a true digital line and is much faster than my old cable modem, which was gathering dust in the closet.

Sure, SNET had some trouble getting things working at the beginning, but since the beginning it has been working

for about \$100 for the DSL modem, and another \$150 for the Linksys router (so I can share the DSL connection), plus about \$49 per month. Since we use the DSL line constantly, and have several computers hooked up so multiple people can be online at the same time, this is a great deal at a little more than double my old modem-based ISP monthly fee.

DSL uses your normal phone line to access the Internet, so you don't need a second phone line (you can still use the same line for phone calls while connected). SNET thoughtfully gives you a dial-up account as well, probably since they had a lot of trouble in the beginning.

Cable modems also provide a high-speed connection to the Internet at roughly the same price (\$45 with tax). The speed is the same, about 1.5Mbps download and 128,000bps upload. They have been advertising that they are twice as fast as DSL, but they are referring to 640,000bps DSL and SNET offers 1.5Mbps so they are really the same. I've complained to them

that this is misleading since you can't order 640k DSL for your house in our area.

My cable company, Comcast, also had trouble when they started up (Excite@Home went out of business and left the Comcast customers without e-mail and almost without service).

Both have horrible support, although I have spoken with a few

trained people at both companies. SNET support treated me like an idiot when I knew the remote terminal was out on my hill and Comcast couldn't help with the configuration of a router we don't support it but I'll give you wrong information found great in Google.com to

search for specific problems I had with both.

I am moving this month to a new house, and had my choice this time between DSL and a cable modem. I came close to ordering a cable modem, but since Comcast doesn't support virtual private networks (VPN) I can't connect to my work over the Internet. With the VPN I can actually run software on servers at my job and even print to printers in New York City. To get VPN access I would have to pay \$99 per month for a 'premium' account. No way.

I've had some experience with both Cable and DSL (never tell people you meet that you know anything about computers or they'll call you when they have trouble), and I think they are both good services. If you can afford to upgrade your connection to the Internet, now is the time. They have worked out most of the problems and it's much easier to get up and running. If you only have one phone line in your house, you'll never have busy sig-

nals and you'll appreciate how fast everything happens online.

If you do go with Cable or DSL, I would highly recommend a router such as the Linksys Router with a 4-port Switch. This helps protect you from hackers by hiding your computers from the Internet. It also enables you to share the connection with up to 4 computers (you can add more by adding additional switches or hubs).

I would also recommend a virus checking program (see Jeff Setaro's column on viruses) and a copy of Zone Alarm as additional protection for your computers. Better safe than sorry!

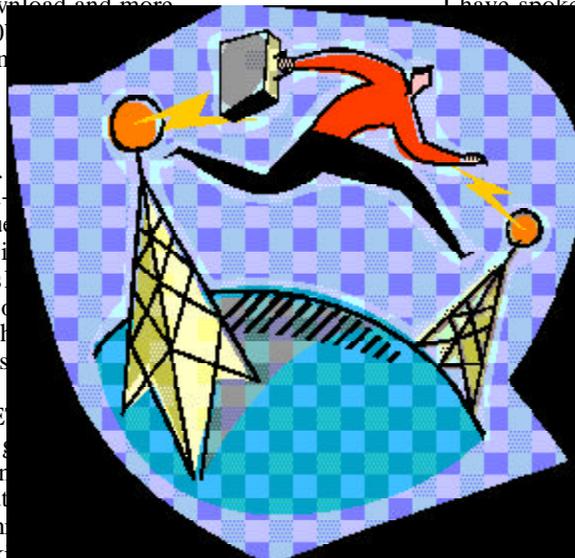
It's easy to set up a router with the Cable modem—you can use it right out of the box and it'll work. You should change the administration password first (see the instructions on your router). Setting up the router under DSL requires filling out a few things, such as your username and password and selecting PPOE. If you get stuck, e-mail me and I'll try and help out.

I recently upgraded my router to a wireless router (Linksys Wireless Router and 4-port Switch—about \$170). I've used notebooks since around 1987 (my first had a single-color plasma display), and my Powerbook has a built-in antenna for wireless networking, I just needed a \$99 Airport card and I was all set. I setup the router and configured it for 128-bit security in a few minutes, and I was surfing without wires! If you're using a PC you'll need a wireless network card or USB wireless interface (about \$79). If your house isn't wired for Internet you might want to consider getting a wireless setup instead of ripping your walls apart.

I can tell sometimes that it's a bit slower than being connected directly to the router, but being able to sit on the patio and check my e-mail with a frosty beverage makes me a bit more patient. My connection to the router is still about 3-4 times faster than my Internet connection with 128-bit encryption turned on, so it might be my imagination.

If you're a serious Internet user and still have a dial-up connection, I would strongly urge you to make the move up to DSL or Cable. You'll be happy you made the upgrade.

Mike is a DACS member who wishes he had enough \$\$ to buy all of the toys he wants. You can reach Mike by e-mail at: mitek@demorgan.com.



Internet Commerce

The \$152 Internet Bargain

When to decide if a trip to Target is a better bet

By Steve Bass, Pasadena IBM Users Group

I don't have a good head for numbers, so double-check these figures for me, okay? I went online, pressed a few buttons, and two minutes later, bought a bottle of multivitamins for \$10 and some Folic Acid for \$3. Shipping was \$3 so the entire bill was \$16, right?

Nope. It cost me closer to \$152 and two hours of futzing.

Raise your hand if you think shopping on the Internet can save you money. No doubt it can, provided you use it efficiently.

In the next few minutes, I'll show you the mistakes I've made (hey, I'm not as bright as I look, okay?), how you can avoid them, and maybe stave off a few gray hairs in the process.

Bargain Hunting

The trap I always seem to fall into is spending a few minutes trying to find the best deal on the Internet. (Computing minutes, as you may have noticed, are not related to real minutes, but that's another story.) I started by opening my Internet Explorer Favorites and trying to remember which folder I tucked the "vitamins and drugs" into.

Oddest thing, I muttered, is how these darn Favorites have a way of getting disorganized. I mean, what was I thinking when I combined DVD Rentals and DVD Player Research into the same folder. That's confusing, even to me, and it might be best if I separated them into two folders. It wouldn't take five minutes to fix. You think?

Of course, an interesting thing happened while cleaning and dusting my Favorites. I noticed the "Free Stuff" folder, the one with coupons, discounts, and giveaways. Right, I think, I'd better stop by there first and see if *Drugstore.com* or *MotherNature.com* is offering free shipping. My first stop is to *couponsforyou.com*. Nothing for me there because it's a dot.gone. So were four other coupon sites. I hit the jackpot with *dealofday.com* because *drugstore.com* offered free shipping and a free diaper travel bag with any \$20 order. Cool, I could use the diapers for

buffing the car and I'd find something to do with the bag. And free shipping will put \$4.95 in my pocket.

So What's the Deal?

The deal wasn't difficult to handle. Do all your shopping, stick the code into the special box on checkout, and shipping was deducted from the total. I did all my shopping, clicked done, and *drugstore.com* gleefully greeted me. "Yo! Steve-o! Welcome back buddy. Good to see you! But listen, the free shipping, and diaper deal? New customers only. Sorry, pal." Busted.

I couldn't just let that go. It was a challenge to my hacker mentality and less-than-adequate hacking skills. Creating a new user name and account couldn't be much work, and *drugstore.com* wouldn't be the wiser. I really wanted that diaper bag.

Busted Again

"Hey, Frank, when did you move in with Bass?" Around ten this morning, I fumed. It was a good question and one that I felt *drugstore.com* had no right to ask. As a consenting adult, what I did with my alias is my business.

I was busted again and chose not to play around with *drugstore.com*'s cookies. So I headed back to *AdvanceRX*'s site, added three bottles of Folic Acid to *AdvanceRx*'s shopping cart. But it hit me that *Drugstore.com* was selling it in bottles of 200 tablets, a better deal. I think. But hell, even if I paid for shipping and went without the diaper bag, that'd save me roughly \$2. Better check.

So I open a fourth browser window, navigate to the site, and find I was right the first time. *Advance RX* is the best deal. You know, Bass, I think, kicking myself. You oughta stick this stuff on a spreadsheet so next time you can refer back to it. Easy enough to do, so I do a few rows and columns, stick in sites, vitamins, prices, shipping, and whether I've ordered there before. It was worth the 35 minute investment, really, even though I decided to forego any fancy fonts or formatting.

Stay Calm, Okay?

By now I'm feeling a little antsy so I head back to *AdvanceRX* to place the order and get on with my life. At this point, you're probably one step ahead of me. I faced a really dumb problem: After all my futzing elsewhere, *AdvanceRX* timed out. The shopping cart was empty, my patience was fading, and I was in dire need of a psychotropic drug. Try clicking IE's Back button, I thought and Windows applauded my decision with a General Protection Fault. With all the B vitamins I'd depleted, I didn't think it made sense to bother rebooting.

I asked my wife if she'd like to make a quick trip to Costco. She did, we found the vitamins (about \$2 more than online, not including the stress formula I felt a need to buy); we also bought \$100 of stuff we really didn't need and went out for lunch.

Next: Shopping Tips for Internet Shopaholics.

STEVE BASS is a Contributing Editor with PC World and runs the Pasadena IBM Users Group. He's also a founding member of APCUG. Write to him at Steve_bass@pcworld.com. Check PCW's current edition at <http://www.pcworld.com/resource/toc/index.asp> and sign up for the Steve Bass online newsletter at www.pcworld.com/bass_letter.

New Members

3/20/2 thru 4/20/2

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- 2) Andy Millhouse
- 3) Roy A March
- 4) Oitman Wallace
- 5) Hatem Salem
- 6) Rob Wilkalis
- 7) Roger Metz
- 8) Vicky McKee

THIS IS YOUR LAST NEWSLETTER

If the membership date on your mailing label reads

EXP 3/2002

or earlier

You need to renew your DACS membership

NOW

Meeting Review

Digital TV where it's going, why and how

By Jack Corcoran

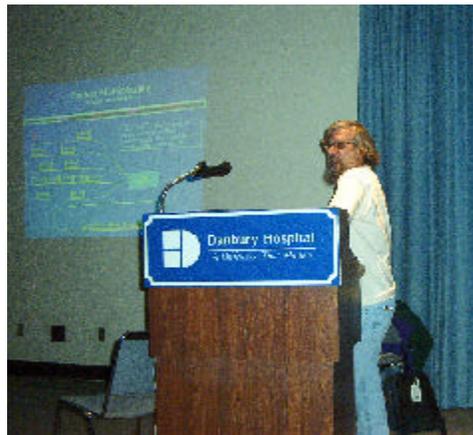
Our April DACS meeting was a fascinating look into how a high tech company prepares for its future.

Our speaker was long time DACS member, Rich Chernock. Rich received his PhD from MIT in Nuclear Materials. As things happen, however, he got involved with computers and has worked for IBM for the past twenty years. For the last several years he has been deeply involved in research on digital TV and HDTV in particular. He did not talk about IBM projects at all. The only specific reference to IBM came in the form of a mesmerizing screen saver where clip art images of an eye and a bee buzzed around the letter "M" and morphed into the IBM logo. The impact of his overall presentation, however, was that we saw how IBM supports the development of new technology that may, or may not, be a part of its future. It is reasonable to assume that the other high tech players do the same.

The future of TV is digital. Everyone knows that. But is this something that IBM can or should get involved with? The road to our current media environment is littered with the wrecks of companies that either underplayed or overplayed the game. At some point a Lou Gerstner or Sam Palmisano (or whoever) has to bet the company on his (or in Carly Fiorina's case, her) gut feelings. Those gut feelings, in turn, are formed from digesting the over optimistic wishful thinking of the customer base people, and the over creative, can-do excursions of the technical people.

So how do the decision makers of a company assess the developing technologies for the crucial decisions that have to be made? First of all, the best and bright-

est are assigned to something nebulously called "research." These researchers are encouraged and supported to get involved with outside organizations and standards committees. They freely participate in the tradeshow and conferences. They smooze with all the others. On top of their own study and work, they are the technical reference. When decision time comes, it all pays off.



The first half of Rich's presentation was an intro to digital TV (DTV) and the business considerations, both present and future. The second half was a technical description of current developments and capabilities.

Rich's intro to digital TV started off mentioning some of

the various organizations involved, including NAB (National Association of Broadcasters), ATSC (Advanced Television Systems Committee) with which Rich is deeply involved, NTSC (National Television Standards Committee), and others. Several more slides emphasized the scope of the development going on. The government mandate to move to digital, the challenges to both manufacturing and presentation companies, and the business opportunities that will most surely develop, somehow, somewhere, sometime along the way. He pointed out the fundamental change from transmitting pictures to transmitting data from which pictures are derived and the implications inherent in the fact that pictures are only one thing that can be derived from this data.

Rich also pointed out that DTV is reshaping the fundamental nature of the home computer, as we know it, but emphasized that it is definitely not just one more Internet transmission.

He covered the all-important relationship that production companies must have with the audiences that DTV will reach as the interactive service capabilities get into the home. He described the "beer test" adhered to by the developers which says that if the viewer has to put his beer down to interact with a feature, that feature is out.

He continued with an overview of current network presentation of HDTV, which is more than I realized, and the current trend of prices, which are coming down faster than I realized. He brought up a slide showing that DTV is being acquired faster than any media of the past, including PC's, color TV and even CD's.

The intro was broad in scope and established the case for the inevitability of data that both encompasses the entire spectrum of the user's life pattern and enables his/her immersion in the content of the transmission.

The second half of Rich's presentation was technical. He toned it down a bit from what he would present at a research-level seminar, but the basic elements of technical edge were there and he delivered it in the same meticulous and comprehensive style he would anywhere.

He described DTV development as defined in system, picture, compression, transport, and transmission layers. The various layers are implemented in various technologies and imply widely varying potentials. This is the time-honored breakdown of a problem to its individualistic components. From the definition comes the approach. Classic research.

Next Rich described the ATSC transmission system; basically, how data can be included in the TV streams. This is the key to expanding the function of the TV box from passive viewing to an immersion, an interactive experience in which the viewer participates. This is Rich's particular interest. He is a principal in the ATSC committee and the lead author of the reference book of the field, [DATA BROADCASTING: Understanding the ATSC Data Broadcast Standard](#) by Richard Chernock, Regis Crinon, Michael Dolan and John Mick, McGraw-Hill Professional, 2001. The book is a bit too far out to make the regional libraries, but it is available from Amazon for \$65.

Rich next described set top boxes as basically computers. He covered the technical aspects of handling the data stream by conventional electronics

The various MPEG-x standards were described. Their differences and functional capabilities were covered and MPEG-2 was

described in detail as the method for DTV with packet streaming and multiplexing.

Several slides went into more detail on the transmission factors of separation, encapsulation and packetization. The slides showed the similarities to the mechanisms of current data networking systems.

This technical half of Rich's presentation concluded with a couple of more slides detailing program specific information and information protocols. They were beyond the ken of most of the audience, but they did add to the technical ambiance and served their purpose in that respect.

During the meeting I sat next to another long time DACS member, Jack Froehlich. Jack and I both worked at Argonne National Laboratory outside Chicago in the '60's, and at Perkin-Elmer in Danbury during the '70's and '80's. We were in on a lot of technical presentations over those years. The second half hour of Rich's presentation was a déjà vu experience that brought out the "been there" recollections to both Jack and me. At the end we looked at each other and smiled. This was a tech-

nical briefing the way it is supposed to be.

Rich would probably not do very well selling some user-friendly software package. He has a deep, resonant voice, but he tends to mumble. He ignores the mike

could have been an impact. On the content side, however, he explained his points, clearly and succinctly. He had no hesitation about telling it as it is, the obscure elements, the copyright morass and the commercial roadblocks. In summing up the

overall effect of it all, Jack Froehlich and I both agreed that this was the most meaningful and technically excellent program we have ever experienced at DACS. A substantial number of the audience apparently agreed as there were 25 minutes of questions afterward, mostly highly technical.

Was this the "best" DACS meeting ever? Certainly not in terms of entertainment, raffle prizes, or software package pitch. Meaning is in the resonance of the beholder, but from a background of research and development, I came away feeling that this was the best DACS meeting ever.

Digital Television

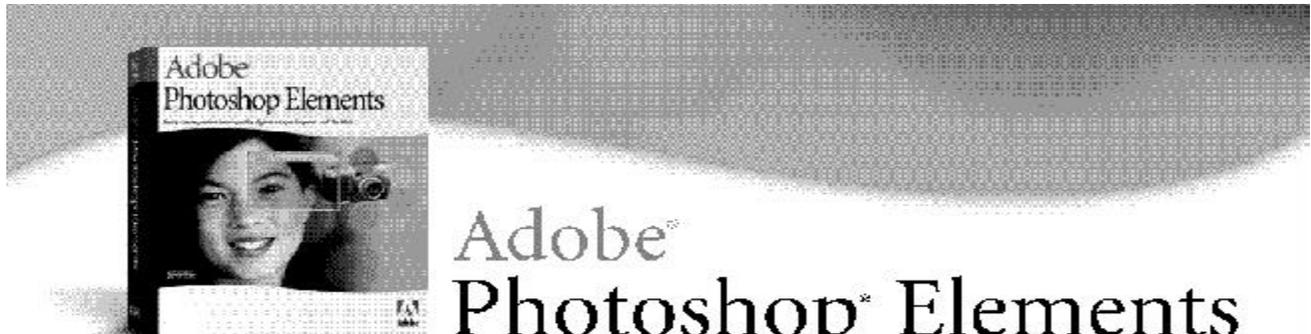
Compressed Pictures broadcast to create Motion on TV Screen



One TV Channel = Up to 6 TV Programs
More Programs or High Definition TV

when he gets engrossed in his topic of the moment. Most of his slides were hand lettered and many of them were too hard to read and in too small type. His final DV demo needed explanation, it lost what

Jack Corcoran is an old, retired computer programmer who treasures his small touch of what Rich so eloquently gave us. He can be reached at Corcoran@snet.net.



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Special Interest Groups

SIG NOTES: May 2002

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: May 14

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: May 8

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: May 29

INTERNET PROGRAMMING. Programs for Web site/server.

Contact: Chuck Fizer (*cfizer@compuserve.com*). Meets on 1st Wednesday, 3-5 p.m., at the DACS Resource Center. Members' suggestions are welcome.

Next Meeting: May 1

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: May 16

LINUX. Helps in installing and maintaining the Linux operating system. May also be of interest to Apple owners using OS X.

Contact: Bill Keane (*bkeane.nai@rcn.com*) 203-438-8032

Meets 3rd Wednesday, 7:30pm at the DACS Resource Center.
Next Meeting: May 15

SERVER. Explores Back Office server and client applications, including Win NT Servers and MS Outlook.

Contact: Jim Scheef (*jscheef@telemarksys.com*)

Meets 2nd Thursday, 7 p.m., at the DACS Resource Center.

Next meeting: May 9 (Note name change to Server SIG)

SMALL BUSINESS. All aspects of small business management.

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

Meets on last Wednesday, 1-3 p.m.

Next Meeting: May 29

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: May 1

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*).

Look for announcements

Next Meeting: Suspended until further notice.

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: May 27

SIG News & Other Events

Internet Programming. The **IP SIG** convened after a one month absence. In the intervening time, the programming focus changed from ASP script programming to Microsoft's .Net technology. We started the meeting with a random access session discussing behavioral characteristics of ASP and now *ASP.Net*. Using *.Net*, we looked into a web page that consisted of WebControls, the TabStrip, MultiPage and the new Validator controls. Our emphasis is on delivering rich user content with a minimum of Webserver round trips. The MultiPage control works much like a Visual Basic tab control where multiple pages of information can be transmitted to the client in one download. The user can then page through the information locally by selecting the appropriate tab that heads up the MultiPage control. The significant aspect of this technology is the server side processing of the data and the subsequent download to the client. The client then can work on the data or process without additional server connections, speeding up the overall application.

Future IP-SIGs will build on this technology utilizing the various Tab/MultiPage sections and or other WebControls such as the Treeview, ListView to support data processing functions pretty much similar to current stand alone programs or to process data similar to traditional web page content.

Visual Basic. The **VB SIG** which immediately follows the **IP SIG** was indeed an enriching experience this month. Jim Scheef presented a .Net WinForm pretty much formless application he wrote to clean up an access database. This program was written in VB.Net technology and employed ADO.Net functionality. Interestingly, this application revealed one of the key differences between VB 6 and VB.Net, that having to do with .Net's datatypes. VB.Net does not have a variant datatype. This caused problems with Jim's program, because the program was casting an Access database field, which is defined as a variant in Access, to a .Net string datatype. This works just fine until one of the rows in the database contains a NULL. There is no way to express a NULL in a string. The issue arose in Microsoft's auto generated code that is instantiated by the ADO.Net Dataset. In fact you can see the error occur and why it happens in the Microsoft code. The SIG ended before we were able to devise a work around strategy, but it gave us an issue to prepare for the next VB SIG meeting.

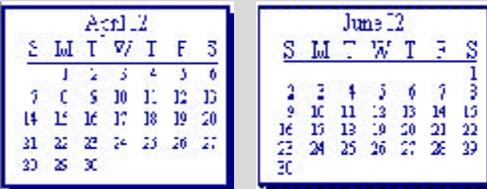
Based on Microsoft's direction, it now appears that the VB SIG will become a combined VB 6 and a VB.Net group. Although it is an issue to deliver the CLR runtime engine to a client wishing to consume a .Net program, Microsoft has now placed VB 6 technology in the back seat, causing us to begin to rethink our programming prerogatives.

Server & Networking. We never got to talk about the scheduled topic due to several very interesting Random Access questions. The first question concerned how an organization might restructure its Active Directory. The goal is to eliminate the dependency of a remote office domain on a server at headquarters. We noted that while much has been written about how to set up a Windows 2000 network with Active Directory, there is precious little about how to change it! A side track led us to configuring the Windows Time Service. We experimented with the Resource Center server (Windows 2000) and my laptop (Windows XP). Since then I've found several resources

SIG Notes, continued on page 15

May 2002

Danbury Area Computer Society

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	
			<p>1</p> <p>3-5 PM Internet Programming Chuck Fizer</p> <p>7:00 PM VISUAL BASIC Chuck Fizer 203 798-9996</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>4</p>	
<p>5</p>	<p>6</p>  <p>7:30 PM BOARD OF DIRECTORS</p>	<p>7</p>  <p>7:00 PM GENERAL MEETING Microsoft Picture It</p>	<p>8</p> <p>7:30 PM ADVANCED OS Don Pearson 914 669-9622</p>	<p>9</p>  <p>7:00 PM SERVER SIG Jim Scheef 860 355-0034</p>	<p>10</p>	<p>11</p>  <p>NEWSLETTER SIG NEWS DEADLINE</p>	
<p>12</p>	<p>13</p>	<p>14</p>  <p>7:00 PM ACCESS Bruce Preston 203 431-2920</p>	<p>15</p>  <p>7:30 PM LINUX OS Bill Keane 203 438-8032</p>	<p>16</p>  <p>7:30 PM INVESTMENT Paul Gehrett 203 426-8436</p>	<p>17</p>	<p>18</p>	
<p>19</p>	<p>20</p>	<p>21</p>	<p>22</p>	<p>23</p>	<p>24</p>	<p>25</p>	
<p>26</p>	<p>27</p>  <p>7:00 PM WALL STREET Phil Dilloway 203 367-1202</p>	<p>28</p>	<p>29</p> <p>1-3 PM Small Business Matthew Greger 203 748-2919</p> <p>7:00 PM GRAPHICS Ken Graff 203 775-6667</p>	<p>30</p>	<p>31</p>		

Computer Security

Under Attack

There really is a war going on out there!

By Rich Chernock

Until recently, I thought I was safe and secure in my home computing environment¹. Admittedly, my environment is a little out of the ordinary, having a 7x24 broadband connection and two servers running continuously (a web server and file/application server)—but I do practice “safe hex”:

- No Microsoft applications connected to the Internet (Opera instead of IE, AKMail instead of Outlook, Apache web server instead of IIS, Linux instead of Windows on the server...)

- Antivirus scanning, with frequent updates

- Firewall running on the router directly behind the cable modem, with only port 80 intentionally exposed (forwarded to my web server)

- Intelligent handling of email attachments

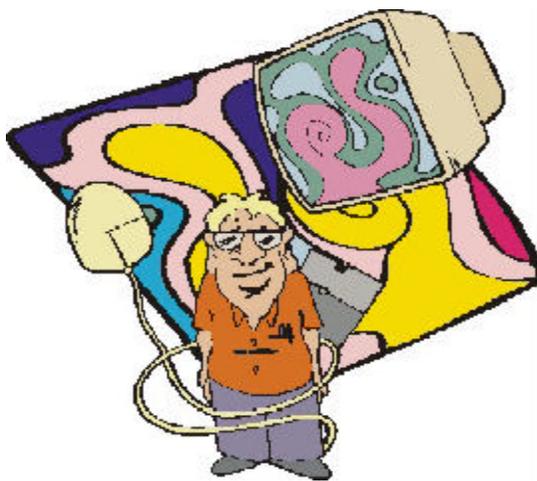
A few weeks ago, we started experiencing difficulties with our Internet connection—typically, access to web sites and servers would be unavailable. The first reaction was to follow superstitious behavior—blame the cable system for DNS outages (not really), deep scan all computers for viruses (none found) and look for spyware (nothing). The only real pattern observed was that the outages typically followed some kind of heavy usage (often Morpheus or heavy AIM use by my son)—but these patterns weren't really tight.

A bunch of experimentation over a few weeks showed that the problem went away if I simply rebooted my router. This solution wasn't really satisfactory—while I could probably teach my kids how to telnet to the router and do a reboot, I didn't think my wife would ever get the hang of it. To make matters worse, the frequency of this problem was increasing—enough to finally drive me to figure out exactly what was going on.

It turns out that one of my first thoughts was correct, viruses (or more specifically worms) appear to be at the root of the problem—however, the worms weren't on my machine, they were on someone else's. Before showing what I found, there's a little background necessary to understand what was happening.

How NAT works

A router is a somewhat magical device that goes between your broadband connection (cable or DSL) and your home network. Its name comes from its main function—routing IP packets to the right destinations. Besides the routing, today's routers have additional functionality, including



acting as a firewall (filtering-blocking packets from the outside world that do (or don't) match specified patterns). In most cases, the desired filter set is really simple—if I didn't originate the transaction, don't let the packet in! If you are running a server exposed to the world, things are a bit less secure—you really want to let in messages, which connect to your server (for example, a web server needs to see HTTP requests coming in on port 80).

Another basic function of the router is something known as Network Address Translation (NAT). A typical situation is where there are multiple computers on your network (each with a different IP address), all sharing the same Internet connection. The outside world doesn't know anything about the addresses used inside your network—the whole collection is known by the IP address that your ISP assigns you. How does the response from a web server ever get back to the computer that originally wanted the page? The answer is NAT. Besides modifying the return address in the outbound packets; the router constructs a table, which contains a list of connections—this internal address just

talked to that external one. When a response comes back, the source is looked up in the table and the address changed to pass the response back to the correct computer. The table is continuously being updated, with old entries being cleared based on rules including age. Sounds kind of simple, but it turns out that there's a vulnerability that my system was falling prey to—the NAT table is a finite size (about 256 entries for my router) and there was no opportunity to modify the rules for expiring entries.

SYN-Floods

Denial of Service (DOS) attacks have been in the news periodically, as various well known web servers have succumbed (I believe, not too long ago, the New York Times web site was briefly taken offline from a DOS attack). DOS attacks are designed to muck up the communications for a server, in such a way that it becomes inaccessible. One common method for performing a DOS attack is known as SYN-flooding. When communications take place between a user and a web server, there are a few beginning steps to get things set up right: in simple terms, the user sends a message to the server saying “Hello—are you there?” (SYN) and the server responds with “Yup, talk to me” (ACK)—after which, they start interchanging information. The server knows who to respond to based on the address in the request.

In a SYN-flood, this communication is mangled—the SYN messages are modified to look like they come from random addresses (usually bogus). When the server tries to respond, there's no one to respond to (due to the forged address). By design, the server keeps the connection open for a period of time, waiting for the response—this consumes resources on the server. Enough of these bogus messages will clog the server and effectively take it out of communication. To make matters worse, people have figured out to create worms, which will cause infected computers to launch DOS attacks on their behalf (creating the more harmful Distributed Denial of Service (DDOS) attack).

NIMDA Worm

NIMDA is a worm that emerged last fall and quickly spread around the world.

Its original vector was through an infected executable email attachment, but had others built in. At the time, it was rather unique, using multiple vectors for spreading: email attachment, spreading through a LAN via file shares and compromising web servers². Once a machine is infected, it tries to infect others through the paths above. The web server path is of considerable interest for this problem, since the infected computer will look around the network for IP connections with port 80 open – when one is found, a characteristic pattern of HTTP GET requests will follow (see box).

If the server found is on a Windows platform (and running IIS), then it will replace files and otherwise modify the system to propagate itself. Of interest is the way it looks for open ports—there's a very strong bias for attacking machines on the same network. A NIMDA attack can't modify a server running on a Linux platform, but can consume its resources.

What I think happened

Having uncovered all of the above information in my research, I re-examined what's been going on, and found the following:

- Around the time that problems were experienced, the NAT table in the router was filling up (230+ entries, instead of the normal 20ish). This meant that only a few new connections would be possible – once the table filled, no more connections could happen.

- I examined the log files on my web server and found evidence of NIMDA at-

tacks as far back as the logs went (Dec last year). Until recently, the attacks were at a low level (one every few days)—mostly from addresses outside of my broadband network. The current log (the 1st two weeks of March) showed 134 attacks, with over half coming from two addresses within the broadband domain.

Through these observations and some discussion in relevant groups, my best guess is that my outages were caused either by the frequency of the NIMDA attacks consuming router resources and possibly a low level SYN-flood attack as well (still not sure if NIMDA could really cause all this trouble).

My immediate solution was to close port 80 on the router, removing the web server from attack, which showed instant results – no more filling of the NAT table and no more outages. Unfortunately, this also means my web server is no longer visible.

The long-term solution is still being worked out—I'm upgrading my router to one that provides more flexible filtering and deeper IP packet inspection (claiming to be more secure against DOS attacks). I'm also looking into the possibility of blocking the NIMDA messages through content filtering (may not be workable). In addition, I've been in touch with the tech support for the cable system, providing them with a listing of the recent attacks—there's a good chance that the folks causing most of the trouble will discover they are infected the hard way.

Footnotes

¹ I'm not an expert in what I discuss in this article—most of this has been learned through web research over the last few days. Some of my conclusions might actually be incorrect (I'm still working my way through the solution space).

² If you are on a Windows platform:

- go and check whether you have IIS running. If so and you didn't intentionally install it, get rid of it! Most people have no need for a web server on their home machine

- but it gets installed anyways, with rather insecure settings—wide open for worm attacks.

Rich Chernock is currently working on digital television and networked multimedia at IBM research. He is still leading many of the ATSC standards activities for broadcast High Definition Television. Earlier this year, he co-authored "Data Broadcasting: Understanding the ATSC Data Broadcast Standard". You can reach him at mpeg2@earthlink.net.

Do you have special computer skills or a business that uses digital technology in interesting ways?

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NIMDA Pattern

```
GET /scripts/root.exe?/c+dir HTTP/1.0" 404 210 "-" "-"
GET /MSADC/root.exe?/c+dir HTTP/1.0" 404 208 "-" "-"
GET /c/winnt/system32/cmd.exe?/c+dir HTTP/1.0" 404 218 "-" "-"
GET /d/winnt/system32/cmd.exe?/c+dir HTTP/1.0" 404 218 "-" "-"
GET /scripts/..%255c../winnt/system32/cmd.exe?/c+dir HTTP/1.0" 404 232 "-" "-"
GET /_vti_bin/..%255c../..%255c../..%255c../winnt/system32/cmd.exe?/c+dir HTTP/1.0" 404 y9 "-" "-"
GET /_mem_bin/..%255c../..%255c../..%255c../winnt/system32/cmd.exe?/c+dir HTTP/1.0" 404 y9 "-" "-"
GET /msadc/..%255c../..%255c../..%255c/..%c1%1c../..%c1%1c../..%c1%1c../winnt/system32/cmd.exe?/c+dir...
GET /scripts/..%c1%1c../winnt/system32/cmd.exe?/c+dir HTTP/1.0" 404 231 "-" "-"
GET /scripts/..%c0%2f../winnt/system32/cmd.exe?/c+dir HTTP/1.0" 404 231 "-" "-"
GET /scripts/..%c0%af../winnt/system32/cmd.exe?/c+dir HTTP/1.0" 404 231 "-" "-"
GET /scripts/..%c1%9c../winnt/system32/cmd.exe?/c+dir HTTP/1.0" 404 231 "-" "-"
GET /scripts/..%35%63../winnt/system32/cmd.exe?/c+dir HTTP/1.0" 400 215 "-" "-"
GET /scripts/..%35c../winnt/system32/cmd.exe?/c+dir HTTP/1.0" 400 215 "-" "-"
GET /scripts/..%25%35%63../winnt/system32/cmd.exe?/c+dir HTTP/1.0" 404 232 "-" "-"
GET /scripts/..%252f../winnt/system32/cmd.exe?/c+dir HTTP/1.0" 404 232 "-" "-"
```

Windows XP

Six Ways to Move to Windows XP

By Gene Barlow
User Group Relations
© February 2002

During the past few months, I've seen a growing interest among user group members to adopt the Windows XP operating system. Questions about how to move to Windows XP are coming up more and more in user group meetings. This article briefly describes the six ways to move to Windows XP, so that you can determine which would best suit your personal needs.

Families of Operating Systems: For the past several years, Microsoft has offered two families of operating systems to use on personal computers. For the home user, they provided the Windows 95/98/Me family of operating system. This operating system has included five major versions over the years — Windows 95, Windows 95B, Windows 98, Windows 98 Second Edition, and Windows Millennium. While it may sound like these are several different operating systems, in fact, they are different releases of the same operating system with different names.

While end-users were using the Windows 95/98/Me operating system, businesses were getting to know the Windows NT operating system. This operating system included six different versions over the years — Windows NT, Windows NT2, Windows NT3, Windows NT4, Windows 2000, and Windows XP. While Windows XP comes packaged two different ways - a Home Edition and a Professional Edition - they are both the same operating system with slightly different features to meet the needs of their intended audiences.

Microsoft has told us that Windows Me was the last version of the home operating system that they will release and that Windows 95/98/Me users are expected to move to the new Windows XP operating system for the most recent version of Windows. All future personal computer operating systems put out by Microsoft will be based on the Windows XP system we now have. This has prompted many users to take a close look at Windows XP and to determine when and how they will move to this new operating system version.

Six Ways to Windows XP

A look at the documentation that comes with Windows XP will identify one or two ways to take when moving to XP. Upon closer inspection, there are actually three approaches that you can take to move to Windows XP plus a couple of options on each of these three approaches to give you a total of six ways to get to Windows XP. Let's briefly review the three main approaches and then look at the two options that make up these six ways to Windows XP.

The first way to move to Windows XP is also the easiest way to get there — buy a new computer with Windows XP already installed on it. This saves you the expense and effort to upgrade your current computer to a level that will support Windows XP. It also saves you from installing the new operating system on your computer. All of this is taken care of for you by the computer manufacturer. Microsoft has stated that they expect 90% of their users to take this first approach.

The second approach to getting to Windows XP is to purchase a Windows XP upgrade package from your software dealer and to install it on your computer replacing your current operating system. When you are done, you will have Windows XP on your computer and your old operating system will be gone. I find this approach a bit risky and do not recommend it to most users. If anything should happen while you are installing Windows XP, you might end up with a bad installation of XP and you may also have destroyed your old operating system in the process. Select this option only if you have taken a full backup of your entire system before starting the installation.

The third approach is to purchase a Windows XP upgrade package from your software dealer and to install Windows XP on your hard drive, side-by-side with your old operating system. When you are done, you have both your old operating system and your new Windows XP system on your computer. This approach takes a little more disk space to run and some parti-

tioning utilities to set up the hard drive, but it is by far the safest way to move to Windows XP. You will also find that some of your hardware and software may not run at first under Windows XP. This side-by-side approach gives you the ability to continue to run these hardware devices and applications on your old operating system until you can get them to also work on Windows XP. Therefore, you can migrate your system slowly from the old operating system to Windows XP and still have all of your system working on one operating system or the other.

Each of these three main approaches has two sub-options to choose from — a Clean install or an Upgrade install. This refers to how closely you connect to your applications and settings on your old operating system. A Clean install is a total replacement of your operating system with little connections to your past operating system. You will need to re-install all of your applications on your new XP system and then select all of your application settings again after they are installed. This approach may take a bit more work, but it promises you the most efficient system after you complete the installation.

The Upgrade install retains as many links to your old applications and settings as it can. It is sort of a merging of the new Windows XP operating system with your old operating system, so that when you are done, your applications will run just the same as they did on your old system. While this may appear to be the easiest to do, it may take you longer overall to take this option. Not all of your applications will work under Windows XP and you may need to spend a great deal of time testing out your applications to make sure they work properly on XP.

Which Way is Best for You

At first, all of these six ways may sound like they should work for you. Actually, it is a bit more difficult than that. Here are some guidelines to help you decide which of the six ways to move to Windows XP is actually the best one for you to follow.

One of the first things to determine is if your computer hardware is powerful enough to support Windows XP. The Windows XP operating system is a robust and stable operating system, but it demands a more powerful computer to run on. As a rule of thumb, if you purchased your computer in the past two years, then it will probably handle Windows XP without too many equipment upgrades. If it is older than two years, then the cost to make

many upgrades to the computer may offset the cost of purchasing a new computer instead. Take a close look at your computer hardware to make sure it has the following equipment on it:

- 300 Mhz Processor
- 256 MB RAM
- 1.5 GB of Available Hard Drive Space

If your old computer is not up to these minimum specifications, then you need to buy what is needed to bring your computer up to this minimum level. The cost to do this may help you determine whether to spend your money upgrading an old computer or purchasing a new computer instead.

If you purchase a new computer, you may be able to use most of your external devices on the new computer. For example, your display and printer may work just fine on your new computer, thus saving the cost to replace these devices, too. To be sure that your devices will work on your new Windows XP system, you can download a free tool from the Microsoft website and run it on your current system. This tool is called the Windows XP Upgrade Advisor. After you run the Upgrade Advisor on your current (non-Windows XP) system, you will know which of your devices may not work under Windows XP without new drivers for them.

The next consideration you need to make is whether your applications will run on Windows XP or not. If you currently run an earlier version of Windows NT or Windows 2000 and your applications work ok on that operating system, then there is a good probability they will also run under Windows XP. If you are using a release of the Windows 95/98/Me operating system family, then some of your current applications may not work unless they are re-installed or new versions of them have been obtained and installed. Low-level utility software is almost certain not to run on Windows XP without a new release of the utility. The Windows XP Upgrade Advisor mentioned above should also tell you which of your applications will work on XP and which ones may not work for you. This information is good to know in advance so that you can be prepared by obtaining the latest versions before you install Window XP.

Tools to Help you Move to XP

Perhaps the best tool you can use to help you move to Windows XP operating system is PartitionMagic by PowerQuest

Corporation. Version 7 of this excellent partitioning utility is designed to work with Windows XP as well as other common operating systems. PartitionMagic will let you create multiple primary partitions in which to install your new operating system. With the BootMagic utility, which comes as a part of the PartitionMagic package, you can switch between your new Windows XP system and your older operating system as mentioned in the third approach above. This is one tool that will make the process of moving to Windows XP so much easier for you to accomplish. Don't attempt this move without PartitionMagic.

The second tool that you should have is Drive Image v5, which also works with Windows XP. Making changes to your operating system is a serious undertaking that you don't want to attempt without a full backup of your current system before you start to install Windows XP. Drive Image is one of the best backup utilities on the market and one that you really need to have to accomplish this project of moving to Windows XP.

Finally, I have just completed an educational CD entitled, "Discovering your Hard Drive" that contains all of the detail steps of these six ways to move to Windows XP. This CD will guide you through the steps of each of these six approaches, besides providing many additional topics to help you better understand and organize your hard drive. This information is difficult to find in other sources and many of the ideas covered on the CD are only found in this one source. This is a must to help you get to Windows XP.

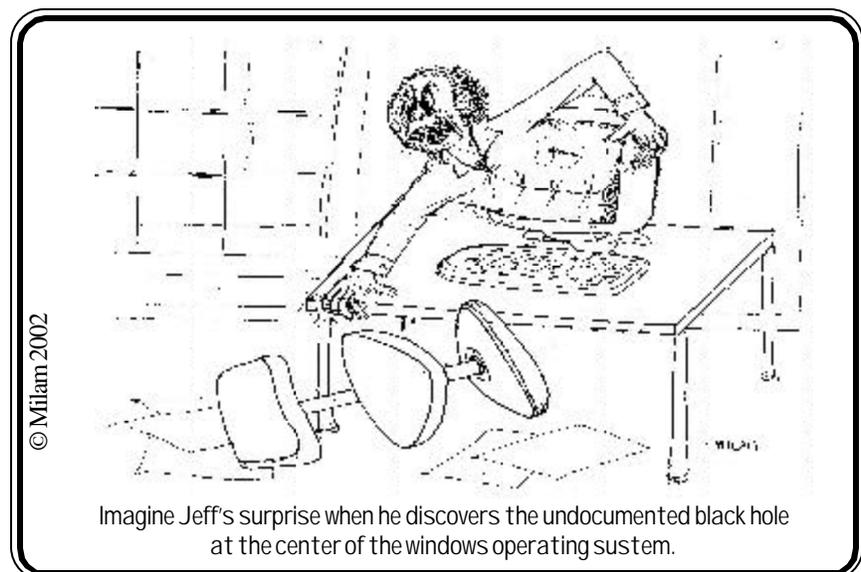
How to Order Products

User group members and guests can order PartitionMagic v7, Drive Image v5, and the "Discovering your Hard Drive" CD at a significant discount off the list price of these products. PartitionMagic and Drive Image have a list price of \$69.95 each, but the user group price for these excellent utilities is only \$35 each. That's the best price you will find on these quality products. Likewise, the "Discovering your Hard Drive" CD is available to user group members and others for only \$20. With a \$5 shipping fee, the total price for these three items is only \$95 delivered to your door.

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I hope this has helped you think about when you need to move to Windows XP and how to do it. I plan to write other such technical articles in the future that you can watch for. Thank you for your interest in hard drives and PowerQuest's products.

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Random Access

April 2002

Members who are unable to attend the General Meeting may submit questions to "askdacs@aol.com" by the day prior to the meeting. We will attempt to get an answer for you. Please provide enough detail, as we will not be able to ask for additional information.

Q. I am looking for good software for backing up data from my hard disk to my PC. I have been told to look at NTI Backup Now (from www.ntibackupnow.com). I have a Dell Dimension with Windows 98.

A. Veritas Backup MyPC (www.veritas.com) was recommended. You also might consider PowerQuest's DataKeeper, which comes bundled with DriveImage. (www.powerquest.com) Note that for a full backup, you must use a package that can handle open files as well, such as the Windows Registry.

Q. When I backup files to CD, if I restore them, they come back as read-only files. What happened?

A. The CD is a read-only media; when they are brought back in by use of Windows Explorer, it sees read-only. You can easily reset to update by selecting the file(s) then right-click and select Properties, and clear the READ ONLY flag. This will be done for you automatically by backup software, but will not happen automatically if you just 'burned a copy' of the files to the CD.

Q. I tried to install only MS Word from the MS Works Suite, and asked it to only install Word — but it installed the whole suite. Can I get rid of Works?

A. It should have installed Word only, if you asked for only Word. However, there are so many shared components (usually DLLs etc.) that it would be risky to uninstall. You might look at the Add/Remove dialog and see if it lets you uninstall selected components by clearing components. One member also suggested looking in Works TOOL; then you look at "Customize Works" and clear out items you don't want.

Q. I am using Outlook Express and

would like to print out a copy of the address book. How?

A. There isn't a print mechanism, but what you could do is export it as a .TXT file, then import it into Excel, hide the columns you don't want to see, then print the columns you want.

Q. I put a USB board into the PC, and now when I power up I get a message on the display — "Check Signal."

A. This usually means that the video card is not sending a signal to the monitor. The circuitry within the monitor puts the message on the screen. We suspect that when the USB card was put into the machine that the video card was dislodged.

Q. I purchased a replacement power supply for my computer — it is 400 watts. It has a strange plug — it doesn't match the socket on my ATX board. Aren't all of the plugs the same?

A. No, there is now an ATX-2 motherboard that has enhanced power savings features, etc.; it requires a different connector. The additional connectors are used for supplying low-draw devices that can't be fully turned off when the machine goes into suspend mode, as well as for providing the circuits for re-awakening the machine. You need a standard ATX power supply.

Q. I have a Windows 95 machine that just on its own, at random intervals, boots. What could be causing this?

A. Many things. A short blip in the power will do it. A program that jumps to address 0 will do it. (This could happen if a program bug put a zero into an address in memory and then a program instruction said 'jump to the instruction located at address such-and-such.' This is a very easy bug to create when writing programs.

Q. I am having extensive renovations done on my house. Should I 'wire for the net' and if so, do I need coax for cable modem, or what other type of wire?

A. Even if you have a cable modem connection for your broadband connection to the internet, you don't want the whole house to be coax. Once you get to the cable modem, the 'house side' of cable modem will be CAT-5 twisted pair wire. Put the cable modem in a central location, then run CAT-5 wire to a 'switch,' and then run CAT-5 from the switch to each location where you will want to connect a PC. Note that CAT-5 is most definitely not regular telephone wire. For retro-fitting a circuit into an existing wall, the going rate is about \$100 per circuit. If the walls are open, the cost will be considerably lower. An alternative is to use wireless — but be aware that the location of your wireless access point may be critical, so that it doesn't have interference from household plumbing, heating pipes, A/C ducts, etc. If you do have to run coax to the cable modem, be sure to use RG-6, not RG-59 cable.

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.

When dining at the
DACs Resource Center,
please carry your
leftovers out with you.

Thanks!

The
management



President's File, continued from page 2

for an organization like ours, so we didn't even think about an email system. Well that changed when we moved the domain and web site to Mags Net, LLC, in Danbury. Our DSL line is also managed by Mags Net, and a side benefit of all this is that we can now run our own email. All officers and board members now have email addresses @DACS.ORG. Check the DACS web site for the exact addresses. As we gain experience, we'll be able to move on to hosting discussion boards and other services.

In future columns I'll talk more about some of the issues facing DACS and how I hope we can provide more benefits to our members. Since many of our members are small business owners, I'd like to see more DACS involvement with small businesses. There are many possibilities here, and the new Small Business SIG is a step in the right direction. Please catch me at the general meetings or send email as I want to hear everyone's ideas.

There are many more things I'd like to write about, and probably will, over the coming months. The aftermath of September 11th is having some disastrous affects on our civil liberties and personal privacy rights. This has added to the onslaught, already under way, by the movie, music and software industries to limit how you can use the intellectual property products you buy. All this directly affects you and your computer. Some legislation could even make open source software, like Linux, illegal! (See *The Open Source* column in the April 8th, 2002, issue of InfoWorld entitled "New name, same smell" by Russell Pavlicek.) If you find this hard to believe, an open source program called DeCSS that allowed viewing DVD movies on a Linux system has already been declared illegal in the courts. Essentially the courts have ruled the mere possession of the program or the source code to be a crime.

And there are things I would like to write about but they aren't really related to DACS or computing, like the horrendous situation in the Middle East. Fortunately or unfortunately, I will let that one go for now and see you here next month for Issue 0.1.

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<http://www.dacs.org>

SIG Notes, continued from page 8

in the Microsoft Knowledgebase. "How to Configure an Authoritative Time Server in Windows 2000" (Q216734) has links to related articles and white papers. See <http://support.microsoft.com/default.aspx?scid=kb;en-us;Q216734>. (Hint: rather than try to type this URL, go to the DACS web site—www.dacs.org— where this article will be in SIG Notes and the link will be active.) I also found an interesting article on www.techrepublic.com, "Win2K administrators need to master the Time Service". You need to become a member of the site so they can send you advertisements and then search for the article. (Hint: Create a Hotmail account with a Microsoft Passport to use for such memberships - in the Hotmail profile say you are retired and looking for work to minimize the spam.)

The other question concerned how to set up basic networking between Windows and Linux. We discussed the basics of IP addressing and how to set up a simple network between two computers. After some discussion, we determined that his network was using addresses automatically configured by the network cards. Since these were somewhat random, it was necessary to edit the HOST address file every time one of the machines rebooted. We suggested that each machine have a static IP address in the 192.168.0.x range (x is a number from 1 to 254) with a subnet mask of 255.255.255.0. Once this is done, the HOST file can be edited on each machine to relate the machine names to their IP addresses.

The next Server & Networking SIG meeting will be Thursday May 9th at 7pm in the DACS Resource Center. The meeting topic will be either Linux or .NET with online voting the week before the meeting. To receive meeting announcements and participate in the vote, be sure you are a member of the SIG email list on Yahoo Groups at http://groups.yahoo.com/group/BackOffice_DACS.

Small Business. The first Small Business SIG was held on March 27, 2002 with a GREAT turn out! All levels of business owners attended and our first topic on "Developing a Marketing Strategy" was informative to the group. Here is what some members had to say;

"Just wanted to thank you for the informative presentation yesterday afternoon. I look forward to future sessions." Ed

"Great presentation" Margaret

The April 24, 2002 topic was "Marketing your Web Site"; the reviews will be listed in June's newsletter.

The next meeting is scheduled for May 29, 2002. The topic to be discussed is "Pricing, how to determine the value of your product or service." The meeting will take place at the Resource Center in the Ives Manor (lower level) on May 29, 2002 at 1pm to 3pm. If you have any questions please feel free to contact Matthew or Nancy Greger at info@thebusinesshelper.com.



Do the DACS General Meetings leave you thirsting for more? Find all that plus food for thought at the meeting after the meeting—the DACS PIG SIG.

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Future Events

May 7 • Microsoft Corp. Digital Photography
June 4 • TBA

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