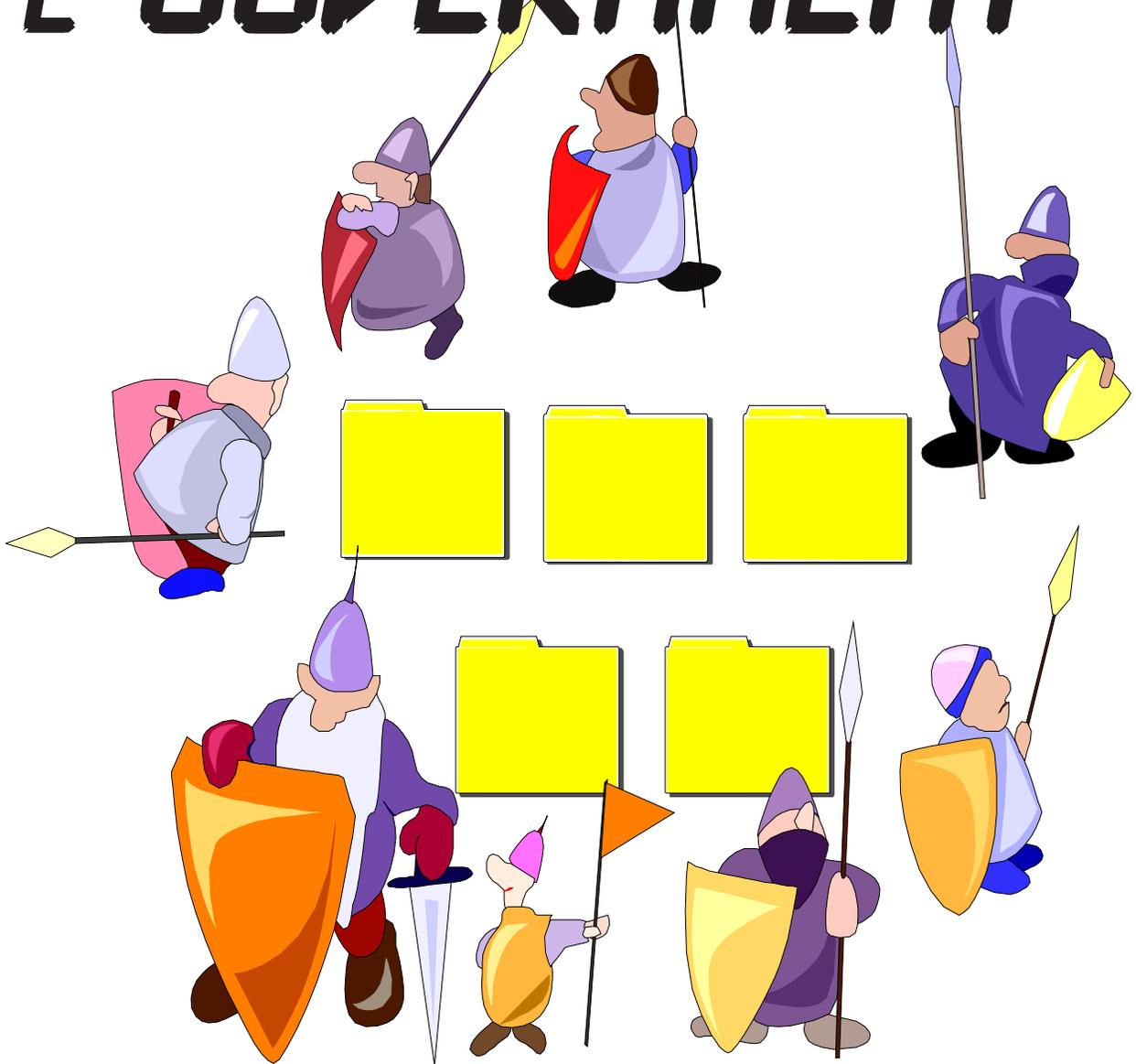


Enabling E-GOVERNMENT



At our next General Meeting on July 1, Danbury IT chief Wade Anderson, will speak on new technologies used to maintain city operations, facilitate citizen access to government, and improve the flow of public information. Find out more inside.

President's File



PRESIDENTIAL RAMBLINGS VERSION 1.2

I'm pleased to say that I think DACS is on a roll. Over the last few months we have produced a series of great newsletters and many interesting general meetings. And more are coming. Bring your friends to a general meeting.

Participate in a SIG - or start a new SIG if we don't have one in your area of interest. At the June meeting I was making a SIG announcement and several people suggested a SIG for handheld computers - specifically Pocket PCs and Palm devices.

Enough people approached me at the break to form a SIG. If you are interested in this, please send me an email. I'll start the process to get the SIG going toward a first meeting next month. Other possible SIGs are: genealogy and gaming.

Wireless Networking

During Random Access at the June meeting, I asked for a quick survey of what wireless hardware people are using, and what their results have been. My impetus for asking the question was a conversation from earlier that day with someone who installs home networks. He stated that many of his customers were convinced that "wireless sucks." Since his business installs network cabling, I can understand this viewpoint. However, as you gain experience with wireless networking, some reasons for the extreme variations in wireless performance start to emerge. When I set up my wireless network at home, I already had a wired network, so I bought an "access point." This is a simple device that bridges

the wireless world to the wired. At the time, I did not realize what an advantage this could be.

The most common device on the market now combines the access point with a hub/router/firewall. Since someone installing a network for the first time needs all of these functions, this configuration has become very popular. However, and this is a BIG however, the best location for your hub is often not an even marginally good location for the wireless access point.

Wireless is radio and this means sending radio waves from a transmitter to a receiver. For a network connection to work, this must be a two-way street.

Since these are very small radio waves (that is, an ultra-high frequency of 2.4 or 5 Gigahertz) and the transmitters have very low power (usually about 70 milliwatts or 0.070 watts) the waves don't tolerate obstacles very well. For comparison, the power level is less than 1/50th the power of a CB radio, and your kitchen microwave operates at 2.4Ghz. Even the normal sheetrock walls found in most homes will have a significant effect on signal strength. My guess is that even the type of paint on the walls could be a factor. So, if you hide the access point in a closet or under your desk, performance will suffer. The workstation end can be even worse. If you want to use wireless to connect a "desktop" computer you can be in for real trouble. Where is the computer? These days the computer is almost always pushed under the desk back against the wall. If the desk is metal, you're dead. Unless the back of the computer happens to be oriented directly toward the access point in another room, performance will probably correspond to my friend's expletive.

In my case, I already had wires (CAT5 twisted pair cables) running to all the computers that are "permanently" located. The wireless network is there for connectivity to my laptops and handheld computer when I'm in the family room, on the deck and - most important - out in the hammock. The hammock, located barely 40 feet from the access point, has been the toughest connection.

You'll see why in a minute. First, my hub/router is in the basement where all such devices should be. Think about it: the basement (or the attic) is the easiest place to bring all the wired LAN cables together. I also have my servers in the basement but then most people can count their computers on one hand. At first I just sat the access point on top of the router (as if they were the same device) and quickly found performance lacking. One key (and herein

Ramblings, continued on page 4

Membership Information

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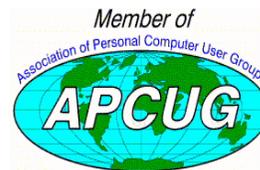
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Don Neary
APCUG Liaison
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HelpLine

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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Alpha Four	Dick Gingras	(203) 426-0484	(e)
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APL	Charles Bovaird	(203) 792-7881	(e)
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Directors' Notes

A meeting of the Board of Directors was held at the Resource Center on Monday, June 9, 2003. Present were Messrs. Bovaird, Buoy, Keane, Gallichotte, Ostergren, Powers, Scheef and Setaro. President Jim Scheef presided and Secretary Larry Buoy kept the record. Minutes of the previous meeting held on May 12, 2003 were approved.

Treasurer Bovaird reported combined bank and postal account balances of \$18,258.64, plus postage on hand of \$124.85, bringing total liquid assets to \$18,383.49, less a liability of prepaid dues in the amount of \$7,402.00, resulting in net worth of \$10,981.49. He also reported current membership of 445.

The opening discussion concerned future programs for this years' General Meetings, with Jeff Setaro announcing the following commitments: July 1, Wade Anderson, Director of Information Technology for the City of Danbury, on "Enabling eGovernment," September 2, Dave Whittle of Isee Media on "PhotoVista" and "Muvee AutoProducer," October 7, PowerQuest Corp. on "DriveImage" and "PartitionMagic," and December 2, John Patrick on "The Future of the Internet." In addition, Bill Keane was further encouraged to prepare a program for August 5 on what was available for the Linux "Desktop."

A short discussion regarding placement of posters advertising General Meetings resulted in at least attempting placement in office supply outlets, which may be restricted by their corporate policy. Allan Ostergren agreed to monitor activities of the Danbury Chamber of Commerce and to act as liaison between the Chamber and DACS if any of the Chamber's activities indicated possible involvement by DACS. President Scheef distributed and discussed email correspondence with a Canadian company relative to the appearance of a similar company name that appeared in a dacs.doc article. Mr. Scheef then offered printed copies of email correspondence with a representative of Windows & .NET Magazine, requesting input regarding interests of user groups for development in said magazine. He also presented copies of an email from Don Singleton, Vice President and Elections Chairman of APCUG, soliciting candidates for election as directors or advisors of APCUG.

LARRY BUOY

Ramblings, continued from page 2

unnamed) place in the house had very poor performance. But the big problem was the hammock. Because of the slope of my yard, the house foundation (10 inches of concrete) plus some earth was between the hammock and the access point. I was really disappointed when I could barely get a signal, let alone get decent access to the Internet.

My first approach was to raise the access point—now you begin to see why an integrated hub/router and access point may not be a good idea. First I moved the access point to a floor joist under the living room but this actually gave worse performance everywhere in the house as well as out. Why? My theory is that the nails in the hardwood floor killed the signal. Moving the access point under the family room (carpet floor, fewer nails) gave better performance throughout the house but still not very good in the hammock. So now it's mounted to the wall in the family room, about eight feet higher than where it was in the basement. This location gives vastly better performance but has a very low WAF (see Home Networking and the WAF, dacs.doc, January, 2001).

Since the current location is not very attractive, the long range goal is to move the access point to the attic and install an external antenna with more gain. This should allow Internet access from the neighbor's deck about 200 feet away but all I really want is a booming signal to the hammock!

So, doesn't that bring up concerns about wireless network security? Well, yes and no. Much has been written about how bad wireless network security is.

If you just read the headlines, you would think there is no wireless security.

Like most "computer problems," this is 90% a human and 10% a problem with the wireless standards. Of course, to be effective, the security features must be enabled—turned on—activated—or they really are worthless. My opinion is that for home networks, the tools in most wireless access points, an encryption called WEP (wired equivalent privacy) and MAC filtering, are more than sufficient. It is true that 64-bit WEP can be broken in just a few minutes but that assumes that the interloper can actually get a signal. If you're really paranoid, change the WEP key whenever you think someone is looking over your shoulder. When worrying about wireless security, my suggestion is to consider your location. I have never personally spoken with anyone who has been able to get a useable signal from one house to the house next door, even in places where the houses are much closer together than here in Connecticut. I suppose someone could park in my driveway and access the network, but I find that unlikely.

Likewise, someone could point a very high gain directional antenna at my house and pick up the signal, but again, rather unlikely. If you live in an apartment building, you should be more concerned and be

sure that you have 128-bit WEP enabled along with MAC filtering of the wireless cards in your other computers. The CIA can probably read your signal from a satellite in space, but then...

OK, so why can you wardrive in New York City and find hundreds of wireless access points within a few blocks? The key is where the access points are and who is doing the looking. If an office is serious about wireless networking, they mount special antennas on the ceiling or high on the walls. If the antenna is near a window, it will send a nice signal out to the street where someone with a magnet mount antenna (available on eBay) on the car roof can get a signal adequate to identify the network. Unfortunately some of these same companies are not as serious about security and don't enable the security features built into the hardware. Go figure.

One last point: When shopping for an access point, look at the picture on the box. Two antennas are better than one, and bigger antennas are better than little ones. My first access point has one antenna about the size of a cigarette. I just purchased a LinkSys unit with two, much larger, antennas and this device has better performance. I think the antennas are the key here.

Next month, we'll talk about using your home network to learn about networking in the real world, which can be a saleable skill.

JIM SCHEEF
DACSPREZ@DACS.ORG

Meeting Review

Manage your files with DiskJockey

By Jim Scheef

EVER SIT STARING at your computer screen wondering how to make it do something? I'm doing that right now, unfortunately, Disk Jockey will not write this meeting review for me. But it does just about everything else, and watching Tony Pereira, President & Chief Programmer of Clear & Simple, Inc, demonstrate his product was a refreshing change from the typical product demo. Tony's presenting style was simple and matter of fact and he would even admit that there were a few features that he had not yet figured out how to add to Disk Jockey (yikes!).



Disk Jockey is fundamentally a replacement for Windows Explorer. This type of product was much more popular back in the days of Windows 3.1 because File Manager was so bad. Today a program like Disk Jockey (DJ) needs to be really good for anyone to notice. Disk Jockey is worth noticing. Perhaps the most compelling reason to buy Disk Jockey is the ability to display files created by a really impressive array of programs. My favorite features:

- Disk Jockey looks into a file to determine its type rather than relying on the

file extension. This makes it useful for locating misnamed files.

- The program is written in such a way that it does not need an installation program. Simply copy DJ and its associated DLLs to a directory on your hard drive and you're good to go. DJ can even be run from a CD-ROM which means you can pop a CD into another computer and use DJ to search for and view files without the chance of "breaking something".

Tony's presentation centered on using DJ for real world tasks—like moving and copying files, creating and opening ZIP files—all while demonstrating that DJ made these operations easier. Features like opening multiple file lists, transferring files across the Internet (ftp), printing files with opening the application (or even having it installed) that are not included in Windows Explorer, open up many opportunities to make life easier and more productive with your computer. Disk Jockey is a worthy addition to your computing arsenal.

Meeting Preview

Enabling e-Government Danbury goes hi-tech

By M. Gaberel

AS DANBURY RESIDENTS, you may ask where your tax dollars to the city go. As residents of surrounding towns and municipalities you may want to learn how Danbury taxes are being spent and compare that with your own community.

At the DACS July 1st general meeting, Wade Anderson of the City of Danbury Data Processing Department will describe in detail how technology is used in the city, to maintain day-to-day government operations. Mr. Anderson will give DACS members the opportunity to ask questions, which could even influence future directions of the department.

Mr Anderson will describe how the city has grown over the last 5 years, including population and tax revenue growth. He will compare the data processing department five years ago, the platforms in use then, and the main applications used. He will elaborate on how the data processing operations have changed over time, and the migration from home built programs to packages, including hardware platforms and the transition from Unisys to AS400. Mr Anderson will continue on the Metropolitan Area Network, the development of fiber optic and wireless projects, and include diverse application software and the city's commitment to HTE, JDE, Vision, and Cott.

• More specifically, Wade Anderson will discuss the following challenges pertinent to the city of Danbury:

• Mobile Data Terminals and how laptops in police cars work.

• The Permit Center, for which one of the major initiatives is issuing building permits. Anderson points out that Danbury issues more building permits than any other city in the state.

• Assessor's office and revaluation. This affects everyone, and usually right

in the pocketbook. Anderson will take a look at the Vision CAMA (Computer-Assisted Mass Appraisal) program

• Tax office and tax bills. The city sends out 90-100,000 tax bills each June. Some of the challenges in this type of mailing will be discussed.

• Water Utilities, and what is new with meter reading equipment.

• Town Clerk Land Record Management, and why this is a topic close to Danbury residents' wallets. Mr. Anderson says that keeping track of who owns what and how much real estate property has become an involved process. Anderson will explain all about new software that will be installed in the Town Clerk office during July.

• GIS Mapping. The addition of a spatial front end on existing applications has the potential to make legacy programs much more useful; this process is ready to payoff.

Mr. Anderson will then continue on to the city of Danbury's web site with the following being discussed:

• The City web page is managed with software that provides the capability to update content with something no more complicated than an email.

• Language Translation. How many languages do Danbury residents speak? 10, 20, 50? Learn how we try to serve citizens better with page translation.

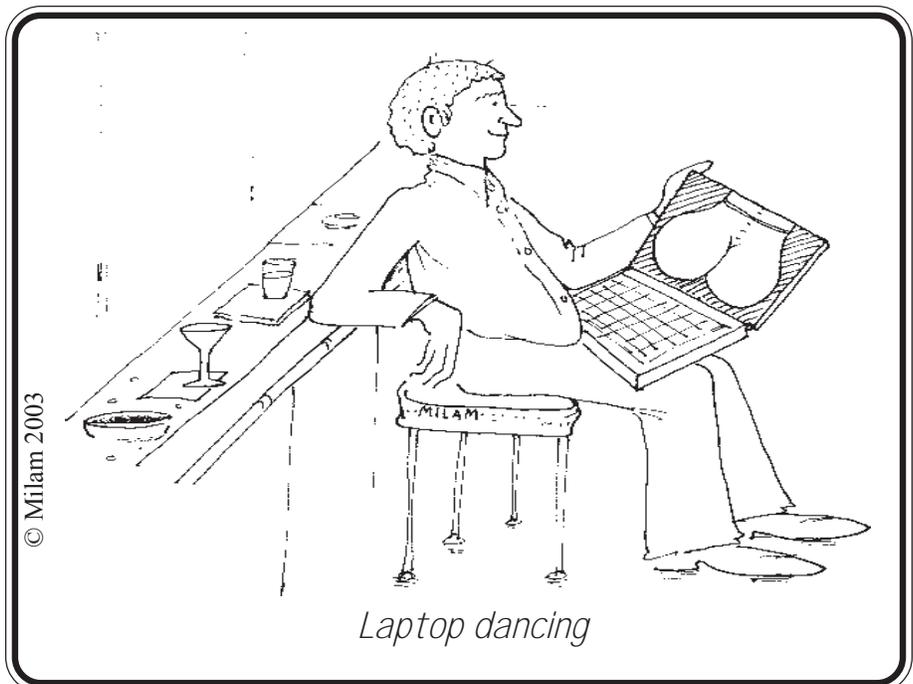
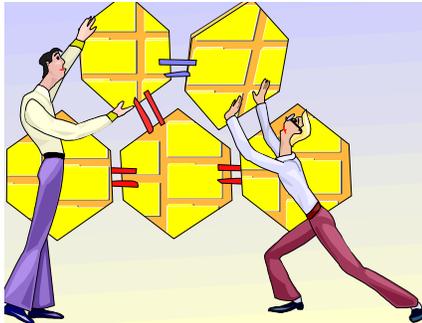
• Content challenges. The hard part on any web site is keeping the information fresh. This in itself is a test for all web masters.

• Web-facing [legacy applications and presenting them through a browser has become trendy in the AS400 area. The city of Danbury will be ready with its first application in July. Public Access to application databases will come on stream later this year. One of the first will be Sewer and Water Utility inquiries.

The presentation will be rich with content pertinent to Danbury residents and adjoining areas, and Wade Anderson will explore the future and the directions citizens will want their city to go.

The main presentation will start at 8:00pm on July 1st, 2003, preceded by a question and answer session and brief club announcements. Formally, the general meeting starts at 7:00pm, and is free to the public. The July, 2003 meeting will take place at Danbury Hospital Auditorium.

MARLENE GABEREL is a DACS VP.



Special Interest Groups

SIG NOTES: July 2003

ACCESS. Designs and implements solutions using Microsoft Access database management software.

Contact: Bruce Preston, 203 431-2920 (bpreston@mags.net).

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

Next meeting: July 8

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: July 9

dotNET. Programs for Web site/server.

Contact: Chuck Fizer (cfizer@snet.net). Meets on 1st Wednesday, 4-6 p.m., at the DACS Resource Center. Members' suggestions are welcome.

Next Meeting: August 6

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: July 29

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: July 17

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

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

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

Next Meeting: July 16

MICROCONTROLLER. Investigates microcontroller applications from theory to hands-on implementation and member projects.

Contact: John Gallichotte, 203 426-0394, (tlclotus@ieee.org).

Meets on 4th Tuesday, 7:00 p.m., at the DACS Resource Center.

Next Meeting: July 22

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: August 14

VISUAL BASIC. Develops Windows apps with Visual Basic.

Contact: Chuck Fizer, 203 798-9996 (cfizer@snet.net) or Jim Scheef, 860 355-8001 (JScheef@Telemarksys.com).

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

Next Meeting: August 6

VOICE FOR JOANIE. Provides and supports people with Lou Gehrig's disease with special PC computer equipment.

Contact: Shirley Fredlund, 203 770-6203 (voiceforjoanie@juno.com).

Next Meeting: Look for announcements.

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: July 28

SIG News & Other Events

dotNet. The SIG started with a usual round of random access questions familiar to all perplexed would-be software developers. The primary question was "how do I get started"? Answering this question always involves subjective answers from the crowd. This month, Claude Prevots mentioned an O'Reilly book, .Net Framework, which I have since purchased. This book now joins my library of .Net books, surpassing the quantity of all VB books purchase previously. It contains mention of many .Net issues, enough to give one an overall feeling of the various complexities, but it's only a starting point. My feeling is that one will need to purchase many books from all the Microsoft techies, describing some aspect of .Net to make them millionaires all over again.

We then discussed "What are .Net objects?" Another tough question. Chuck discoursed on this for a while, until the glaze in others' eyes indicated it was time to move on. Finally putting the questions behind us, we progressed to the technical code part of the meeting. Thanks to Claude, we have his drill to fall back upon.

Greg Austin presented a current development he is working on. It is a development from TaskVision, taken from a Web example. Greg has established a way to record and review charitable donations. He can capture the names, amounts and history of donors. Entries can be edited. His title is "PBAFundDrive." We have a good example of learning C#, by building on an application provided on the Web. Then, further steps have been accomplished in development of the role-management application that has been in progress in C# with SQL Server. We now see a contacts input form with fields for demographics of organizations, such as name, location and phone number. It is possible to enter new information, as well as review information already stored. There is a powerful search feature, in that entry of part of a name will bring up a list of stored items containing this fragment. This form has buttons for Input and Cancel, and we saw modification of the code to get better operation of the Cancel button.

We listened to some interesting points on code development. One point concerned prevention of virus attack by good string management. A single quote is converted into two single quotes to defeat illicit entry for SQL injection. Another point concerned two features of the Integrated Development Environment for C# in .NET. The Intellisense presents syntax elements only if there is no mistake in the name format for a function, and this is helpful for proactive detection and elimination of syntax errors. The Debugger is not well coordinated with the IDE to detect errors in such code development, as it is in progress. This shortfall marks loss of a strong feature in a VB6 development environment.

VB. VB6 SIG followed the .Net SIG after a pizza break in between. Like dotNet-Sig, the VB6 SIG started with a random access session. Based on comments Chuck and Jim have previously made about the need for an MSDN subscription, the principle question of course revolved around what version of MSDN does one need. This is an important question, because, depending on which version, can increase the cost so. One of the illuminating points to be noted is that Microsoft's MSDN cost is now \$2700 for CD and \$2400 for DVDs. Rich Rosner pointed out that you can buy the same product on the web for 33% of the cost. My subscription is now up for renewal, so I called Microsoft and

SIG Notes, Continued on page 11

July 2003

Danbury Area Computer Society

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday																																																	
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Creating 3D Objects with Carrara Studio

By Mike Kaltschnee

LAST TIME, I introduced the Eovia products and gave a quick introduction to 3D. This month, I'll walk you through the creation of a simple 3D object so you can get a feel for the process.

I'll create a padlock—a simple object but typical of an icon you'd find on a Web site. It would be very hard to create this object using traditional tools and get the lighting right or be able to play with the perspective to get the right look you want.

After starting Carrara, I add a cylinder to my work area. I then scale one side of the cylinder to make it more like the body of a padlock. I want it to look like brass, so I drag and drop a yellow metallic color onto the cylinder (figure 1).

I add another object, a torus (looks like a skinny donut) to the work area by dragging it to the work area. I want this to

look like steel, so I drag and drop an aluminum color onto the torus.

I want to join the two objects together to create the simple padlock shape, so I simply drag the torus on top of the cylinder. Voila! A very simple padlock, and it didn't take long to create.

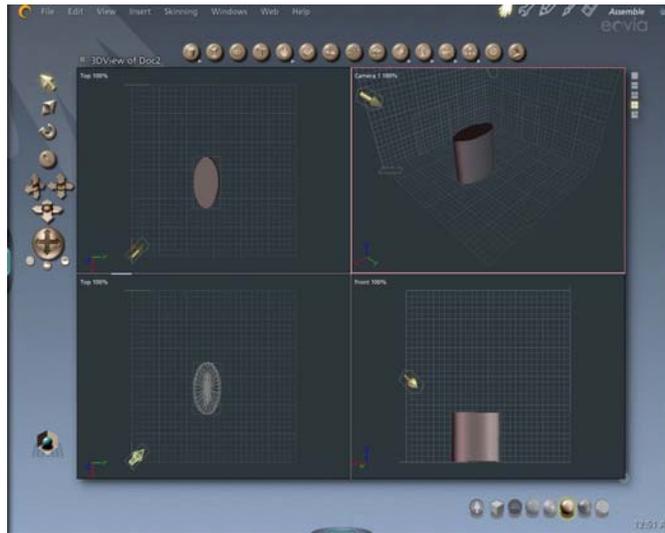


Figure 2

Now that I've created a wireframe model, I want to light my scene using the provided lighting tools. I drag and drop a light, rotate the light to face the object and I'm almost done (figure 2).

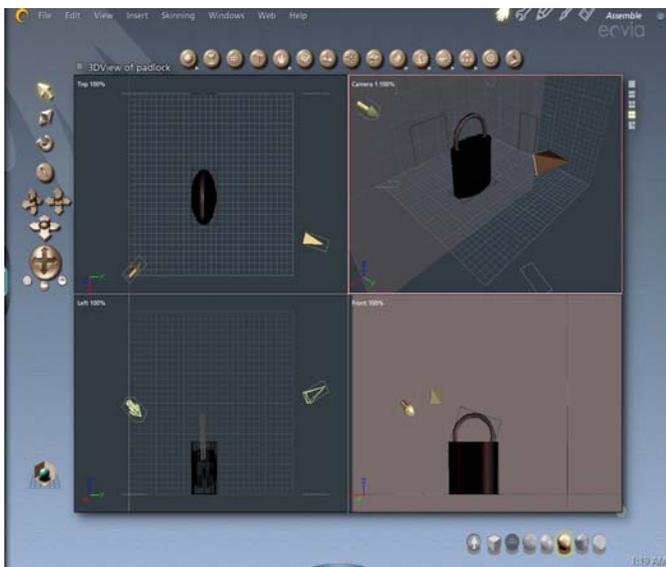


Figure 1

I want to add a background, to show the shadow of the object (and show off the lighting). I drag and drop a background. I then want to "render" the scene, so I hit the render button and wait as it draws my scene (figure 3).

I can then export the rendered scene to an image file, such as JPG and use that, or even edit the file in PhotoShop.

Believe it or not, this is how they created Jurassic Park and even the recent Pixar movie "Finding Nemo."

This example is just the beginning of what you can do with Carrara Studio. This powerful program enables you to create animations, visual effects like fire, adjust camera and lighting in amazing ways, and much more.

I can highly recommend the Eovia family of graphics products (www.Eovia.com) if you're interested in creating your own digital works.

MIKE is a DACS member who loves playing with new software.

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Figure 3

Tips & Tricks

Hello, PR? Or, Back Door Tech Help BASS SHOWS YOU ALTERNATIVE WAYS TO GET HELP

By Steve Bass, Pasadena IBM Users Group

HAVING TROUBLE getting tech support for the troubling crashes because of your upgrade of SimpleCD Copier? What about the tech people who refuse to replace the failing hard drive in your Zornac notebook (which failed the day after the warranty expired)?

With tech support relying on \$3 a day, third-world people, you may have to work harder and dig deeper in order to get the help you need. Fair warning, this is a convoluted process and full of dead-ends, and something only online researchers are going to enjoy.

Hello? Public Relations?

Here's the trick I use when I have a problem with a product and can't get the help I need from tech support. I find the PR person, briefly plead my case, and hope for the best. Most times I get service that's far superior than when calling the company's customer service or tech support line—and often miraculous. (And yes, I even do this anonymously using an e-mail alias, so they don't know about my writing background.)

Here's how I do it. I head for the company's Web site and dig around for the PR representative. If they're listed, it'll likely be either on the "Contact Us" or "About Us" page.

If you can't find that specific page or there's nothing about public relations, head for Google. Try it: In Google's search field, type everything in bold. **site:www.microsoft.com press**. Substitute another company name for Microsoft and see what happens.

Google Experiments

Unfortunately, some companies refer to PR as Corporate Communication, Media Contact, or PR. (Oddly enough, few companies use "PR flack" or "PR flak.") Well, kids, Google is a powerful tool and if you know the right syntax, it can help you find the PR people, no matter where they're hiding. Try these Google combinations exactly as you see them:

site:www.microsoft.com pr

site:www.microsoft.com media contact

site:www.microsoft.com corporate communication

site:www.microsoft.com press release

There's no way around it—you'll need to experiment with Google's syntax.

If you use quotes around key words, Google's forced to look for that exact string of characters. In the last example above, wrapping press release in quotes may get you different results. Ditto if you change press release to press contact. Try it.

As you begin honing in on your target, add a few more words and make substitutions. For instance, say you're looking for a press person to help you with SharePoint, MS's online collaboration tool. If you tried **site:www.microsoft.com "press release" sharepoint**, you'd get lots of hits from MS's office in South Africa. Substitute press contact and you hit a few jackpots.

Become a Social Engineer

As you play around, be prepared to hit lots of dead ends. For instance, a buddy of mine was having trouble with his Toshiba notebook. I volunteered to help and used my Google tricks on Toshiba's site. I was quick to find a page full of Toshiba Press Releases. Unfortunately, it showed only old press releases. But down at the bottom was pay dirt: A link that said "Back To Main Press Release Page." I didn't find a PR person for notebooks but did find two contacts that might lead me to the right person. The first was a public relations contact for another Toshiba division, LCD screens; the other was a list of three people at Toshiba's outside PR firm.

My next step was to write to each person and ask if they could connect me with the right PR person, someone who deals with Toshiba notebooks and laptops. I didn't offer a reason why I was asking—I didn't want to let them know I was about to start kvetching. And I wrote them individual e-mails because if I wrote to them all in one e-mail, there's a chance one person might write back and say that they couldn't help; I didn't want everyone to see that.

My first dose of bad news bounced right back at me: none of the outside PR e-mail addresses were any good. But the Toshiba LCD screen guy was pleased as

punch to supply the name, e-mail address, and phone number of the right PR person at Toshiba.

Case Pleading

The story ends pretty well. My buddy wrote to the public relations person. He pleaded his case and the PR person was able to get Toshiba to replace the hard drive. The key ingredients in his persuasive e-mail and phone call:

Don't threaten: Explain how you've tried your darndest to work with customer service and tech support. But they were adamant and refused your requests.

Show loyalty: In this economy, most companies will do their best to get a new customer—and keep an old one. Make sure you let the person know how much you want to remain a customer.

Try bargaining: If you're willing to help me make this right, you say, I'll do my very best to tell everyone I know how helpful and cooperative you've been. Of course they know the implication—you'll tell everyone what junky products the company produces. But don't say it. No matter how much clout you may have, bullying doesn't always do the trick.

Beseeching: The product is what I rely on to do my work, you can say, and I beseech you (okay, they won't understand that—use implore, or even beg) to help me get it fixed.

Move it Up a Notch: Often a PR person will tell you that their hands are tied. Ask if you can talk directly to the person who did the tying. Often you'll end up talking to a product manager who can make things right with a quick e-mail.

If you think about it, these methods will not only work with computing and software companies, but with practically any product. In the meantime, my dogs are snubbing their Science Diet kibble so I'm off to find a four-legged PR person.

STEVE BASS is a Contributing Editor with PC World and runs the Pasadena IBM Users Group. He's also a founding member of APCUG. Check his Home Office columns at <http://snurl.com/homeoffice> and sign up for the Steve Bass online newsletter at <http://snurl.com/signup> §

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

Random Access

June 2003

Bruce Preston, Moderator

MEMBERS WHO ARE UNABLE TO ATTEND THE GENERAL MEETING may submit questions to “askdacs@dacs.org” 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. (AskDACS) I am having a problem with Internet Explorer - I can not view live images from a frequently-visited webcam, but I can view still images. I go to a website that I visited several weeks ago, I now get a message that my security settings prohibit running ActiveX controls on the page. I tried to resume a download from Microsoft and it was unable to download.

A. It sounds as if your “Security Settings” have been set too “High” – this prevents java, scripts and ActiveX. In IE, go to TOOLS; then Internet Options; then the Security tab. Click on ‘Custom Level’ and try the drop-down list “Medium” setting.

Q. (AskDACS) When I boot my machine, I get a message that says that my drive is being “Imaged”. What is this?

A. Sounds like you are running Norton Utilities, which has a component which takes an image of the boot sector and various other parts of your hard disk upon starting the machine. Less likely, but also possible is that you are running McAfee’s Safe & Sound.

Q. I installed the Yahoo! upgrade and it essentially took over my machine. It has radically changed the behavior of Internet Explorer. I don’t like what it has done at all, but I can’t seem to get rid of it. How do I get rid of it?

A. First, in Control Panel, Add/Remove Programs, see if there is a Yahoo! entry. Remove it. Next, look under the IE VIEW menu at Toolbars; then Customize, and see if that offers a mechanism. Next, again in Add/Remove Programs, select Internet Explorer. It won’t let you ‘Uninstall’ it, but it will allow you to ask for a “Repair”. There followed a discussion of other Internet Explorer ‘enhancements’ by others such as

SBC/Yahoo!, AOL and EarthLink. The general consensus was that all were to be avoided. Lastly, because some of these ‘enhancements’ include ‘spy-ware’ components, the utility Ad-Aware from LavaSoft <http://www.lavasoft.de/> may be able to remove the component. It was pointed out that many times when you sign up for a service, you do not need to install the ‘enhanced’ software to make use of the service.

Q. Does anyone have any experience with the e-mail client called “The Bat”?

A. One person present had experience and said it works, quite well. It’s claim to fame is that it isn’t susceptible to the various virus and worm exploits that have plagued Outlook and Outlook Express. We found the vendor’s website here: www.ritlabs.com/the_bat/

Q. Does anyone have a preference as to vendor/brand for wireless broadband routers?

A. We had people using NetGear, LinkSys, and SMC. We had one person who had used D-Link, but changed brands for an undisclosed reason. The general comment was that within a residence, a range of about 50 feet was considered to be average. It was pointed out that the US Military Academy (West Point) is installing SMC equipment campus-wide. There followed a discussion of the newer 200mw units (as opposed to 50mw units) that are just now in the retail channel, but typically out-of-stock.

Q. Are there problems with interference between wireless networking components and 2.4GHz telephone systems?

A. For a home network that has only a few wireless nodes, there won’t be a problem. If have many nodes, then there will be a problem as the various devices fight for a channel within the band.

BRUCE PRESTON is president of West Mountain Systems, a consultancy in Ridgefield, CT specializing in database applications. A DACS director, Bruce also leads the Access SIG. Members may send tech queries to Bruce at askdacs@dacs.org.



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.

SIG Notes, continued from page 7

asked them why I should pay them \$2700 for something I could buy on the web for \$1083. After examining part numbers and such, Microsoft's comment was, "Gee, I'd buy it from the web too!" We then went back to technical coding on our Recipe project. There was much interaction between the crowd and the coding, but in the end we reached another milestone: the Recipe application now can accumulate ingredients.

Server. The June meeting began with a Random Access session. The first question was how best to learn about servers and networking. Other than actual experience on a business or home network, the choices would be classroom training, books and the Internet. If I'm typical, anyone interested in networking will accumulate a library full of books. I refer to these books constantly as I cannot remember the details of network protocols, configuration settings, etc. Another question concerned remote access to servers so we looked at Remote Desktop (Windows) and remote X-windows sessions on Linux. I tried to demonstrate Xnest, an X-windows server that would allow a remote X session on one machine while still retaining the local desktop session—if I could just make it work!

During the program, we discussed the email and bulletin board project. While we talked, Bill installed a "secure" version of Mandrake Linux on our "new" Linux server. Work on this project will continue in both the Server and the Advanced OS SIGs. Next meeting we'll continue work on the email server and take another look at Windows Server 2003 and using group policy to manage a Windows network. I attended a training class on group policy last month and will share what I learned.

There will be no meeting in July. The next Server and Networking SIG meeting will be Thursday, August 14th, at 7pm in the DACS Resource Center.

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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.

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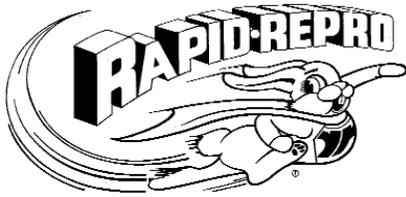
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Future Events

July 1 • Wade Anderson, City of Danbury, eGovernment
August 5 • Bill Keane, What's New on the Linux Desktop

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