

DEC 2004

Volume 15, Issue 12

# Charmed The Future of the Internet



# President's File



PRESIDENTIAL  
RAMBLINGS  
VERSION 2.7

**A**FTER I FINISHED last month's column, I discovered a critical error. Even worse, I found that the error has existed for months! It appears that I forgot to increment the version number, and it happened (or more accurately didn't happen) twice! Since I have no one but myself at whom to point a finger—and none of my joints are really flexible enough to do that. So we'll just have to correct the situation and move on. My first column as DACS president was version 0.0 in May, 2002. I started with zero because that's the way computers work and I figured it would take me a year (of "beta") to get a grip on this job before I got to version 1.0. As you can see I've been at this for a little more than 2 and a half years. Time sure flies when you're having fun.

## Moving On...

The November general meeting was another winner and you can read what Mike Kaltschnee says about it elsewhere in this issue. November is becoming our annual "Microsoft meeting" and I enjoyed it thoroughly. The new Windows XP Media Center Edition 2005 (could they get a few more syllables in that name?) is incredibly cool. Unfortunately it was hard to see that coolness in Richard Katz's presentation because of the hardware Microsoft

provided. Go to the Hewlett-Packard Web site to see that this is no ordinary PC. HP calls it the z545 Digital Entertainment Center and it's not cheap. But when has cool ever been cheap? The HP version is black and is the size and shape of a stereo receiver. When you add the x5400 Media Center Extender the cool extends to another room with interesting layers of control.

Now do you think that all this cool has a down side beyond the price? Well of course it does, and the down side is how Microsoft adheres to the movie industry's definition of your digital rights. For instance, the PC Magazine review pointed out that you cannot use the Media Center Extender to watch a movie DVD in another room—which would seem to be the whole point of the Extender. Instead, you must physically carry the DVD into the room where you sit and put it in a DVD player there. Now I ask you, what are they afraid of?

At the end of the meeting we had some goodies from Microsoft to give away. Bob Ehrn took home Office Professional 2003; Bert Goff chose a copy of Microsoft One Note 2003 while Charlie Bovaird received FrontPage 2003. In addition several people are now wearing new Microsoft tee shirts.

## Competition

If you think market forces in the form of competition don't benefit the consumer (i.e.: you) then allow me to point to the "market place" of free email. Competition has affected this market in several ways. The most obvious of these is the space provided for a free account. When I created my first Hotmail and Yahoo email accounts, the allotted space maxed out at two megabytes on both services. If your messages exceeded that, your mail started to bounce back with the message "mailbox full." Of course this forces you to go to the email web site frequently where they can show you advertising. And then along came Google. Right from the get-go, Google provides one gigabyte of online email storage. The whole point of Google 'Gmail' is that they index it and make it easy to search. They also show you 'relevant' advertising based on the content of your email (but then there is no free lunch).

Since then, both Yahoo and Hotmail have increased the amount of space they provide. For the last few years, I've paid for additional features on Yahoo Mail. For \$10 per year I got POP3 access (easily download Yahoo email messages), four (or maybe it was six) megabytes of space and a few other features. I thought this was a good deal but I kept bumping up against

RAMBLINGS, Continued on page 5

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## IN THIS ISSUE

PRESIDENTIAL RAMBLINGS	2
DIRECTORS' NOTES	3
HELP LINE	3
MEDIA CENTER PC	4
REVIEW - MICROSOFT MEDIA CENTER	4
MAGIC SQUARES - 3	6
NEW MEMBERS	6
UNDERSTANDING USB	7
GPS - 3	8
MEETING PREVIEW - JOHN PATRICK	9
SIG NEWS & NOTES	10
CALENDAR	11
COMPUTERS AND CREATIVITY - 4	10
BOOK REVIEW - GAMING HACKS	14
COMPUTING TRENDS	15
RANDOM ACCESS	16
BOARD CANDIDATES/BALLOT	18

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

**d = day e = evening**

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## Directors' Notes

A Regular Meeting of your Board of Directors was held at the Resource Center on Monday, November 8, 2004. Present were Messrs. Berger, Bovaird, Cohen, Gallichotte, Keane, Scheef and Setaro. Also present was Larry Buoy.

President Jim Scheef presided and Secretary Larry Buoy kept the record. Minutes of the last meeting held on Monday, September 13, 2004, were approved.

Treasurer Charles Bovaird reported current cash assets of \$15,930.31, consisting of total bank and postal accounts in the amount of \$15,826.78 plus postage on hand of \$103.53. Subtracting a liability of prepaid dues in the amount of \$6,256.25 left a net of \$9,674.06. He also reported current membership of 366. Further, Charlie gave a brief summary of the results of the survey conducted to determine the attitudes of the membership concerning the various aspects of the club's activities, with the newsletter garnering the most approval, followed by the general meetings and comments with respect thereto.

A discussion ensued regarding the disappearance of the full copyright provisions that were included in the masthead of the newsletter and that same should be reinstated, as well as copyright statements following articles where appropriate.

A brief reprisal of the programs for upcoming general meetings confirmed that John Patrick would speak at the December meeting on the state of the Internet, that a representative of Verizon would speak on Broadband access and alternative technologies for cell phones in January and that Mike Kaltschnee would make a presentation on blogging for February's meeting.

Discussion then advanced to the upcoming election of directors at the December General Meeting. A review of the known candidates for election resulted in the following: Charles Bovaird, John Gallichotte, William Keane and Jamie Yates. That being only four candidates for the five vacancies that will exist as of the Annual Meeting of the Members to be held on December 7, 2004, possible other candidates were explored as well as alternatives if other candidates can not be found. Also discussed were the mechanics of giving notice of the forthcoming Annual Meeting.

Howie Berger advised that he had made contact with a representative of Science Horizons and had been advised that Sci-

**DIRECTORS' NOTES, Continued on page 5**

## Bells & Whistles

# The Media Center PC

By Mike Kaltschnee

**T**HE TIMING OF THE November meeting was perfect. I was ready to buy a Windows XP Media Center 2005 PC, and I was able to get my final questions answered by the Microsoft representative.

It was time to get a new computer, and rather than get a “normal” PC, I wanted to get something that could help my wife and I organize and share our 11,500 (and growing) personal photos, digitize hours of video tape (by now you’ve guessed that I have two small children), and even “rip” our music CD collection. One feature that we

wanted was to be able to view our photos on the family room television, without having to put a computer in the room. The final goal was to be able to record and watch television on our schedule.

I thought about getting a cheap Dell and a TiVo, but this was my first new computer purchase in several years and I wanted something powerful that would last. The TiVo, if purchased with the lifetime subscription, was \$350, and I could

only watch the recorded programs on the one TV (unless I bought another TiVo). I was leaning more and more towards the Media Center.

When I started pricing computers, I was surprised to learn that there isn’t a huge premium for getting a Media Center PC for around \$1,150 at Cir-



cuit City. It features:

- Pentium 4 3.0GHz hyper-threaded processor
- 512MB RAM PC 3200 RAM
- 200GB Serial ATA hard drive

Radeon 3100 PCI-E video card with 128MB DDR RAM

6 USB 2.0 and 2 Firewire ports

While the computer only has one tuner, if I find I need to record television on one channel while I’m watching another, I can always pick up another tuner card and pop it into the computer.

I originally wanted to get a Dell, but the Media Center computers they offered were priced higher than my \$1,000 budget. Gateway has a Media Center PC, but they only sell it through Best Buy (and it was pricey as well). HP has several models that are widely available, and since I didn’t want the hassle of ordering the computer and having it shipped to me, and I could buy it locally. I have several HP products, including a scanner, digital camera, iPaq, and even a few old Pavillions around the house. I’m very happy with the quality of the devices, so I wasn’t worried about buying from HP. I’ve also had good experiences with HP support, so if I do have to contact them, I’m sure they’ll work out any problems I might have.

If you’ve been reading my DACS columns for a while, you’re wondering why I didn’t go with a Macintosh. Don’t fret — I haven’t sold my Powerbook. I still keep copies of my photos on the Mac, but Apple doesn’t offer a solution that will enable us to watch our photos or record television from our living room computer. The “wish list” I created when shopping for a PC led me to purchase a Media Center, since so much of our life is being re-

## Meeting Review

### Windows Media - It’s the Katz Meow

By Mike Kaltschnee

**A**T THE NOVEMBER meeting we had a demonstration of the new Windows XP Media Center 2005 operating system by Richard Katz from Microsoft. The Media Center is a special version of Windows XP that is only sold with computers (you’re not supposed to be able to upgrade your current computer, but it can be done).

Richard, who got his start as a user group leader and has appeared many times as a presenter for Quicken,

brought a Media Center computer and extender, and gave us an interesting demo, even though he wasn’t connected to a television source.



With a Windows Media Center PC you can view, pause, or record live television, play and create your own DVD’s, organize your photos and music collections, and much much more. Richard demonstrated many of the features, including the free television listings that are an additional fee on TiVo.

Microsoft is calling the Media Center the “10-foot experience,” while typical computing is the “2-foot experience” since they expect you to use the Media Center while sitting on the couch. Many developers are also creating applications to support the Media Center, and it’s a challenge since all of the applications that run on it must be controlled by a remote control.

The most interesting feature we saw was the Media Center Extender, which is a small device that enables you to view your Media Center files on another television through a wired or wireless network. The extenders are relatively expensive, costing around \$250 on the street, since you can’t surf the Web with it (you can buy a cheap Dell for \$400). There are millions of Xbox gaming systems, which can be turned into Media Center Extenders for around \$80 (plus the wireless network card, if needed).

corded digitally. I still use the Powerbook as my main computer.

Another goal I had was to be able to watch recorded television on the train (I commute to New York City about 15 hours per week). I have a HP iPaq 2215, which is capable of playing movies. While I haven't set this up yet, you can have the Media Center record a show, compress it for viewing on the iPaq, and it will even put it on the iPaq automatically. So when I pick up my iPaq in the morning, I can take E.R., CSI: Miami, or even the Simpsons on the train with me.

Since I blew the budget on the computer, I have to wait a few months to buy an extender. I'm sure the prices will go down since they are around \$300 at this time. The extenders are not "real" computers, they only show the Media Center interface for viewing recorded television, your photos, and more. You can't surf the Internet on an extender, so if that is your goal, I would recommend getting a computer for your family room.

Microsoft has a lot more information online at [www.Microsoft.com/MediaCenter](http://www.Microsoft.com/MediaCenter), including links to companies that sell the PC's and extenders, software, and links to additional information.

I'm so enamored with the Media Center that I've even started a blog to document my discoveries and adventures with it: [www.HackingTheMediaCenter.com](http://www.HackingTheMediaCenter.com).

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**MIKE** is a computer geek who hates programming his VCR.

Do you have special computer skills or a business that uses digital technology in interesting ways? Demonstrate your unique talents and expertise at a General Meeting.

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a DACS  
Presenter**

**Ramblings**, *Continued from page 2*

the space limit. Last year I upgraded to "Yahoo Mail Plus". At the time this gave 25M of space (and no advertising!) which was a help. And then along came Google and suddenly my Yahoo mail box became two gigabytes! Immediately I moved several high volume email lists to the Yahoo address. Right now there is 59M of 'stuff' in my Yahoo mailbox (nicely organized in folders) and it's only 3% full! Yahoo Mail Plus has a few other features that I like that we can talk about another time.

I'm not sure why I still have a MSN email address, as I dropped the dialup service long ago. I think it has something to do with when I tried to get my mother to use an MSN Companion internet appliance for email so we could send her pictures of her great-grandchildren. That failed miserably (Mom thinks her portable electric typewriter is high tech) but I still have the email address and a few months ago they increased the space from two to ten megabytes. Two was really cramped but ten is more workable for occasional use. The MSN/Hotmail web site has a small item announcing an upgrade to two gigabytes sometime "before December". It doesn't say if this will be free or what the cost might be and there is no link to more information. Still this would indicate that Google and Yahoo have Microsoft worried.

We can look at another area of the computer industry to see how this might play out. For instance, let's look at office productivity software. Ten years ago we had a number of really good choices. I was a Lotus Word Pro fan, having started to use that program when it was Ami Pro—one of the first word processors on Windows. Of course there was WordPerfect, Word Star and many more. Where are these programs today? Microsoft first created the office suite to encourage people to use Excel which was nowhere as easy to use as Lotus 1-2-3. Then Microsoft 'encouraged' PC manufacturers to bundle Ms Office on their machines at very low (or even no) additional cost. Did Microsoft 'discourage' manufactures from bundling competing office products? We don't really know, but who's going to buy WordPerfect when they already have Microsoft Word on their new computer? To Microsoft's credit, each new version of Word and Excel got better and easier to use until they ran out of new features to add. By then it didn't matter because they owned the market. And notice that Ms Office is never bundled for free on new PCs anymore, and the cost has risen dramatically as its market share zoomed past 50%.

There is something fundamentally different about today's email market and office productivity software. Email is not tied to any specific platform, and all of the choices we're discussing are delivered on the web. Will this level the playing field? Will Google be able to continue to innovate? I really don't know. I own stock in both Microsoft and Yahoo, but not Google, if that says anything.

### The Election

The most divisive Presidential election in our history is over. Thankfully, our DACS elections should not generate any controversy at all. We will have a short business meeting during the December general meeting to elect members to the board. We have a great slate of candidates and I look forward to working with them in the future.

—JIM SCHEEF

[dacsprez@dacs.org](mailto:dacsprez@dacs.org)

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**Directors' Notes**, *Continued from page 3*

ence Horizons was being reactivated after a summer hiatus and that Howie, together with Jim Scheef, would be working on Science Horizon's Web page. Jim Scheef announced that he had received beta copies of JotSpot and that he would use one copy to set up the DACS server at the Resource Center to allow him to post emails pertaining to review copies of new software with links thereto on our Web Site.

A lengthy discussion ensued regarding ways in which DACS could become involved in technical assistance or advice regarding computer oriented equipment to non-profit groups in the area. Explored were the feasibility of a SIG or SIGs that could specialize in specific subjects or a "clearing house" approach to DACS members who might volunteer to be available for such purpose (akin to the present "Hot Line") as well as the reactions that might be expected from non-profit groups and the ramifications of liability insurance.

There then followed a lengthy discussion of the feasibility of establishing a "job" SIG or sponsoring a "Job Fair." Howie Berger also broached the possibility of a "networking" approach to establishing interest in all of the foregoing, viz: Science Horizons, non-profit assistance and employment projects.

Jim Scheef again reminded the directors that he would not stand for re-election as President when officers are being elected for the next term thereof, normally April.

—LARRY BUOY

# Computers and Creativity

## Computer Programming and mathematics Magic Squares Continued - Part 3

By Charles Bovaird Jr.

SOMETIMES WE CAN approach the solution to a problem in more than one way. Two such approaches are

(1) **top down** – and  
(2) **bottom up**.

Whichever approach you decide to take will be colored with your background, personal preferences, and assumptions on the perceived effectiveness of your choice. In the case of  $M_3$ , a 3x3 magic square, I chose the **top down** approach because I was itching to write a program with the potential to answer



with conviction the question “Is there a finite number of solutions to the  $M_3$  problems, and if so, what are they?” Past successes have strengthened my convictions that the process of programming a model of the thinking process is a tool that can enlighten, clarify, and increase one’s confidence in the solution. We will use a computer model in solving the  $M_3$  magic square. It will become the basis for solving the  $M_4$  in a future article.

Past experience solving other problems demonstrated value in creating a programming model of the thinking process, since it allowed a study of perspectives not likely found using just paper and pencil. In such a case a computer program model used as a tool for problem solving becomes “**A Tool of Thought.**” There are many programming languages that have been used in this manner. Depending upon your background and experience some languages are more appropriate than others. Along the way, we will comment on some strengths and weaknesses of some programming languages.

In this article we will answer the questions posed last month, then define a procedural process for generating one solution to  $M_3$ . Next month we will discuss the design of a **top down** computer model to address the ques-

tion “How many solutions are there to the  $M_3$  magic square?”

The following problems were posed in last month’s article.

**Problem 1:** Can you create a 9x9 magic square (with the integer numbers 1 through 81)? [Sorry, the constraint “other than 1,2,...9” was a typo in last month’s article].

Answer: Yes, if we follow the same procedural method that generates an  $M_3$  basic magic square as follows:

a. Draw a 3x3 matrix

with no values assigned to the 9 cells contained in the “box” we call a matrix. Warning! This process requires you to “think outside the box”.

b. **Start** with the top (first) row center box  $M_3$  [1;2], and place a one (1) in it. Move your pointer up one cell (outside the “box”) and to the right one cell. Since the pointer is now above column 3 (and outside the box) move the pointer to the lowest cell in column 3  $M_3$  [3;3] and place a 2 in it. Now, move the pointer up and to the right one cell. The pointer is now (outside the box) and one cell to the right of row 2. Since we are now *outside the box* we move our pointer to the opposite end of row 2 and place a 3 in cell 1 of row 2  $M_3$  [2;1]. Since this is a 3x3 magic square we have a slight departure from the previous process every 3 moves (the 4<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> move). We place the next number (4) in the cell just below where you placed the 3 (place the 4 in  $M_3$  [3;1]). Now go back to **Start** and repeat the process till you finish (5 in  $M_3$  [2;2], 6 in  $M_3$  [1;3], 7 in  $M_3$  [2;3], 8 in  $M_3$  [1;1], 9 in  $M_3$  [3;2]).

c. The resultant matrix is basic  $M_3$  matrix.

8	1	6
3	5	7
4	9	2

Of course, you can get different perspectives of this magic square by flipping it over and/or rotating it.

Using the same procedure an  $M_5$  will look like this:

	17	24	1	8	15
	23	5	7	14	12
$M_5 =$	4	6	13	20	22
	10	12	19	21	3
	11	18	25	2	9

**Problem 2:** The maximum number of  $M_{odd}$  magic squares that can be generated is infinite since there is no limit to how large an odd number can be.

**Problem 3:** Other magic squares can be generated from any basic magic square if we are not limited to an integer sequence beginning with 1. For example, if we take the basic 3x3 magic square and add 1/3 to all cells we get a magic square that adds to 16.

$8\frac{1}{3}$	$1\frac{1}{3}$	$6\frac{1}{3}$
$3\frac{1}{3}$	$5\frac{1}{3}$	$7\frac{1}{3}$
$4\frac{1}{3}$	$9\frac{1}{3}$	$2\frac{1}{3}$

Next month, we will continue with the  $M_3$  magic square and answer the question “How can we prove we have discovered all 3x3 magic squares?” Our solution will use a computational model as a “**tool of thought.**”

CHARLIE BOVIRD is DACS Treasurer

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## New Members

FROM 10/21/4 TO 211/22/4

Sydney McCartney  
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**or earlier**

You need to renew your  
DACs membership

**NOW**

## Understanding USB

by Vinny La Bash

**H**AIL USB! UNTIL A FEW years ago if you wanted to add an external device to your computer, such as a scanner or a Zip drive, it needed your one and only parallel port. The trouble with this was that your printer had already staked out that territory. One way of getting around the problem was installing an A/B switch. However, if you needed more than one device, you had to install an A/B/C/D switch. Sometimes moving among these devices meant having to turn one off before you could use another, and often you had to reboot before your machine would recognize another device on the switch.

Early Palm Pilots and digital cameras sought your serial port. Computers had, and most still have two serial ports, but they were slow and almost always involved installation of controlling software.

There were also devices that came with their own controller cards. This meant you had to open the case and install the card in an expansion slot, provided you had one available. Things could get crazy quickly, and you had to handle IRQ conflicts, more cables, and additional power cords.

Rescue arrived with the introduction of the USB port (Universal Serial Bus) that lets you attach almost anything to your computer quickly and easily. Windows XP is designed to support USB so device conflicts are gone. The standard allows up to 127 devices on a single USB port. In practice, no one uses that many devices. USB connectors let you attach everything from TV tuners to modems. It's an amazingly flexible technology. If you had a toaster with a USB connection you could hook it up, but it's doubtful you could watch bread turn brown on the screen.

Installing a USB device is incredibly simple. Windows XP senses it through a process called auto-detection, and asks for the driver disk if it's needed. If you have previously installed the device, XP activates it, and it's ready for use. Part of the beauty of USB is that you can connect and disconnect devices at any time without having to reboot your machine or change any options. If a cable is built-in to a USB device it will connect to your computer with its own "A" connector. Otherwise it will connect with a "B" connector. "A" and "B" connectors are of dif-

ferent sizes and shapes so there is never a question of getting them mixed up.

Today, most desktop computers are built with least four USB ports. That is inadequate, but there are relatively inexpensive USB hubs available that act as expansion devices. The number of ports available on an expansion hub can vary from as few as two to as many as seven, depending on your needs and how much you care to spend. Plug the hub into your computer, and then plug your devices into the hub. You can chain hubs together, and build dozens of available USB ports on a single computer.

The USB standard lets USB connected devices draw their power from their USB connection to the PC. This works well for mice, digital cameras, web cams, and other devices that use small amounts of power. Printers, scanners, and other high power accessories require their own power supply, and they can be plugged into hubs that do not have their own power supply. If you run out of USB sockets and you have a lot of low power devices, get a powered hub so you don't overwhelm the PC bus.

Inside your computer the USB bus lets the computer act as a host to all USB devices attached to it. If you have the up-to-date USB 2.0 standard, data can be transferred at up to 480 megabits per second. If you were moving text,

that works out to about 30,000 pages of documents per second. That's a maximum rate, not typical of actual use. Nevertheless, it's impressive.

USB has other advantages. You can plug in or remove USB devices without having to reboot your machine, and the computer can put USB devices into an inactive state when conserving power. XP queries all USB devices when your machine powers on, assigns each one an address, and determines what kind of data it needs to send or receive. XP keeps track of the total bandwidth of all the attached USB devices. If the combined devices reach 90% of the 480 megabit maximum, XP denies access to any additional devices. The remaining 10% is reserved for transmitting control characters, stop and start transmission codes, error checking, and other overhead.

USB 2.0 encourages the development of innovative products that would be impossible to develop with the older standards. It's the solution for all PC users who want an instant, no-hassle way to connect new hardware like digital joysticks, scanners, digital speakers, digital cameras or a PC telephone to their computer. Plug and Pray has truly become Plug and Play.

*VINNY LA BASH is a member of the Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc., Florida. Hea can be reached at vlabash@home.com.*

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



### Unwanted Computers, Servers, Laptops, Etc.?

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- For more information:
  - call us at (203) 778-0003,
  - email us at [info@sellers-market.com](mailto:info@sellers-market.com),
  - visit us at [www.sellers-market.com](http://www.sellers-market.com), or
  - drop by our store right off I-84, Exit 8 in the Stop & Shop Shopping Center on Newtown Road.

# Navigation

## GPS and Mapping Software

By Joe Schmitt

*This is the last in a three article series on the Global Positioning System. The first explained what the system is and how it work, the second dealt with GPS units, and the third discusses the various software available to interface with the units.*

**W**HILE OUT ON THE road or trail, the GPS can be indispensable for navigating. It tells you where you are, where you're heading, and can track distance and speed. When you arrive at an interesting locale, you can mark it with a waypoint. Now all that is great, but one of the more interesting aspects of GPS ownership is the ability to link it with your computer for additional functionality.

In a unit that displays maps, only the most major roads and surface features are pre-loaded. This is known as the base map. The base map cannot be erased and is particular to the region that the unit is purchased in. For example, my Garmin receiver is loaded with a North American road map that contains US highways and interstates. This is great for a long trip, but doesn't really help you around town. Luckily, additional specialized maps are available.

Each of the manufacturers have street level mapping available for purchase; unfortunately, the maps available are almost strictly proprietary. For my Garmin unit, there are instructions on the web to make your own maps, but is a long complex process involving multiple pieces of software. I could dedicate an entire article to that process alone. Another limitation with the mapping software comes with the opening of new roads. None of the software can be updated with the latest roads, so you must purchase the newer version at full price. Be careful though, sometimes it takes a few versions for the newer roads to be displayed at all. If you can live with data that is a couple of years old, places like eBay can be great for getting a deal on some older version.

Even if you do not have a GPS with mapping capability, quite often that receiver

can be tied to a computer to process the data it receives. Most units utilize a serial cable to connect to a computer. Although a serial connection is much slower than USB it has been a standard with receivers for a long time and manufacturers are slowly coming out with USB capable units.

In addition to the proprietary software you can purchase from the manufacturer, there are pieces of software that can transfer way-points and tracks from a GPS. A great waypoint manager, EasyGPS ([www.easygps.com](http://www.easygps.com)), is a free utility that allows you to create, edit, and transfer waypoints from your computer. It works with Garmin, Lowrance, and Magellan receivers. Creating a waypoint with the receiver itself can be a long process since the unit does not have a keypad, and you will have to scroll through menus and numbers to set the coordi-

nates. EasyGPS allows you to do this on your desktop computer with the keyboard.

Its bigger cousin, ExpertGPS ([www.expertgps.com](http://www.expertgps.com)), displays your waypoints and routes on topographic maps and aerial photos. This software is not free, but you can download a demo. ExpertGPS uses an internet connection to retrieve maps as you scroll around.

There are several places you can get maps for free on the internet. You may already be familiar with some internet mapping websites for street cartography. Arguably one of the most popular is MapQuest ([www.mapquest.com](http://www.mapquest.com)), but also popular is Microsoft MapPoint ([mappoint.msn.com](http://mappoint.msn.com)) and Maptech Mapserver ([mapserver.maptech.com](http://mapserver.maptech.com)). In addition to these street map websites, many others offer topographic and aerial photos. Maptech offers topographic, nautical, aeronautical, and aerial photos, though they'll want you to register.

For topographic maps, TopoZone ([www.topozone.com](http://www.topozone.com)), is a great site that displays maps in various resolutions and datum. TopoZone allows you also to search by geographic features such as mountain

peak names as well as city names, states, zip codes, and coordinates. Another excellent site that combines topographic and aerial photos is TerraServer USA ([terraserver.microsoft.com](http://terraserver.microsoft.com)). At this site you can flip between maps and photos.

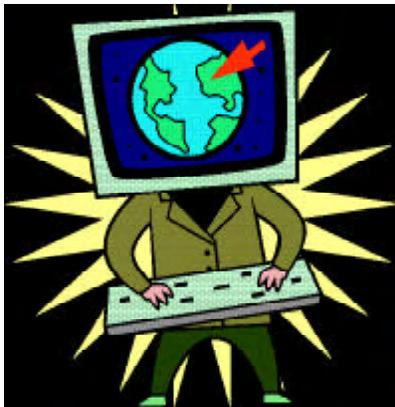
Although these sites are helpful for viewing and printing maps, they do not offer any sort of data transfer with the GPS receiver. For that kind of functionality you must install some software. A great free application available for download is USAPhotoMaps ([jdmcox.com](http://jdmcox.com)). This program installs on your machine and then uses an Internet connection to download topographic and aerial photos. It can be linked with a GPS to transfer waypoints, tracks, and routes. The maps are compiled from free sites on the web. Be aware, though, that maps are quite large in file size and a slow connection will make getting the maps a long process. Once downloaded, the maps are stored locally on your computer so be sure that you have enough hard drive space.

The next realm in mapping software is independent mapping programs. Two of the most popular stand-alone street mapping programs is Microsoft's Streets & Trips ([www.microsoft.com/streets/default.asp](http://www.microsoft.com/streets/default.asp)) and Delorme's Street Atlas ([www.delorme.com/streetatlasusa/default.asp](http://www.delorme.com/streetatlasusa/default.asp)). Both programs offer detailed street mapping in the US and have the ability to link in various ways to the GPS receiver.

Streets and Trips allows you to link to your GPS and display your position on a map. It does not complete data transfer such as waypoints and routes. It has the ability to import data from Excel and text files, but an intermediate program will be needed to get the data from the GPS unit to the file for import. A bonus with Streets and Trips is that it also comes with Pocket Maps that allow you to save maps to a Pocket PC.

Street Atlas allows you the same position display with a GPS. In addition to that function, it also allows you to plan a route and provides turn by turn instructions as you navigate. Of course, to be of any use it needs to be installed on a laptop. Unlike Streets and Trips, you must purchase the pocket mapping software separately. Streets and Trips runs about \$40 and Street Atlas about \$50. I have a copy of Streets and Trips that I got for \$20 after a mail-in rebate. Both programs are excellent and selection boils down to personal preference more than anything else.

Delorme also makes a topographic program, Topo USA ([www.delorme.com/](http://www.delorme.com/)



*topousa/default.asp*). This program runs about \$99 and includes streets as well to topographic contour maps. The topographic maps are at a 1:100,000 resolution. More detailed 1:24,000 maps, more suitable for hiking, are available on a state by state basis. Your GPS will interact in the same manner as Street Atlas.

A more cost effective way to go for a topographic program is National Geographic's Backroads Explorer (*maps.nationalgeographic.com/topo/backroads.cfm*) that costs around \$40. Although it lacks some of the features of Delorme's software, it does include street maps as well as topographic information. Backroads Explorer also allows direct connection with a GPS for transfer of waypoints, routes, and tracks. It lacks the 3D topographic mapping the Delorme product offers, but it does have shaded relief to better define contours on the maps displayed.

For those that are into creating their own maps there is a program, called 3DEM (*www.visualizationsoftware.com/3dem.html*), that allows you to load elevation data and generate a 3D terrain image. The terrain image can be overlaid with maps to form a 3D map. The primary data used to generate the terrain models are from radar topography. NASA scanned about 95% of the earth's surface during shuttle missions and there is a wealth of sources available where you can download the data. These models can also accept data from your receiver so that you can see a track of where you've been in a 3D representation.

There is lots of additional software available on the market, too many to discuss them all here. A lot of programs offer various ways of linking with a GPS directly or are a great way to search and print maps before you leave on that next trip. There are also a number of utilities which can format data so that it can work with a number of programs.

GPS receivers are innovative and fun gadgets that can really be a powerful tool for navigation. Every day people come up with more interesting uses for the receiver. From handheld to vehicle mounted receivers, these devices are changing the way man moves through the world. Have fun, and I'll see you on the road!

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**JOE SCHMITT** is a member of the Tampa Bay Computer Society

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

## Next Meeting

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### Surfing to the Stars With John Patrick

**A**T OUR DECEMBER 7 General Meeting, we will welcome back John Patrick, former IBM vice president of Internet Technology, and widely acclaimed avatar of the World Wide Web. A long-time member of DACS, John has become an annual star attraction—his savvy soundings on the latest e-trends, and his sage prophecies of the future as stimulative as a mind-expanding elixir.

John's first appearance before a DACS audience was in October 1994, when he demonstrated IBM's powerful and robust operating system, OS/2 Warp (Well, you can't call them all!) But in subsequent years, as he shifted from spokesman for his company's products to Web ambassador, John's career has achieved warp speed, and he has become a savvy commentator on the latest technology and high priest of cyberspace. Retired after 35 years at IBM, John is now president of Attitude LLC, and celebrated author of *Net Attitude*, a popular book on Internet culture.

As an Internet visionary, John is quoted frequently in the global media and speaks at dozens of conferences around the world. *Business 2.0* named him as one of the industry's most intriguing minds, *Industry Week* named him one of the top 30 people who drive innovation and provide the initial spark to economic growth, and *Network World* called him one of the 25 most powerful people in networking.

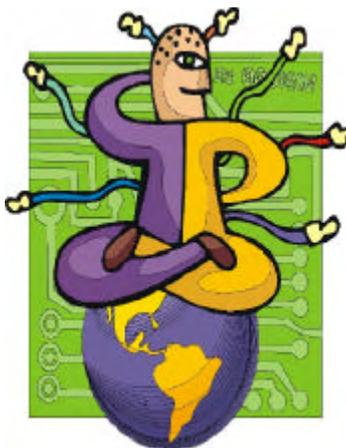
John was a founding member of the World Wide Web Consortium at MIT in 1994, a founding member and now the chairman of the Global Internet Project, a senior member of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, and a member of the Internet Society, the Association for Computing Machinery, and the Working Group on Authentication at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. He is a member of the board of directors of Jupitermedia and Knovel Corporation and has been an advisor to IntraLinks, Neoteny, Space.com, and ThirdAge Media. He is also president

of The Ridgefield Symphony Orchestra Foundation.

John believes the next generation of the Internet is about to make today's Internet seem primitive. His presentation and technology demonstrations will bring to life his vision of the characteristics the next generation of the Internet will have: a network that will be fast, always on, everywhere, natural, easy, intelligent and trusted. John will provide an exciting vision about the power and the potential of the Internet and how it will provide significant advances in order to meet

the increasing expectations of an on demand world. He will discuss the key opportunities that are just beginning to surface, and the potential limitations that may stand in the way. More importantly, he will offer a visionary glimpse, from his book *Net Attitude*, of the future beyond the Internet as we know it.

The General Meeting will take place on December 7, 2003, at Danbury Hospital Auditorium. The events will start at 7 p.m. with computer related questions and answers, followed by brief club announcements and the annual business meeting and Board election. The featured presentation will start at 8 pm. All General Meetings are free and open to the public. More information is found at *www.dacs.org*.



## Special Interest Groups

### SIG NOTES: December 2004

**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:** DEC 14

**Advanced Operating Systems.** Explores OS/2, Linux, and NT operating systems. For info, follow link to Don's site on *dacs.org*.

**Contact:** Bill Keane (*wbk@mags.net*) 203-438-8032.  
Meets 2nd Wednesday, 7:30 p.m., at the DACS Resource Center.  
**Next meeting:** DEC 8

**dotNET.** Programs for Web site/server.

**Contact:** Chuck Fizer (*cfizer@snet.net*).  
Meets 1st Wednesday, 4-6 p.m., at the DACS Resource Center.  
**Next Meeting:** DEC 1

**Digital Imaging.** All about digital cameras, retouching and printing.

**Contact:** Ken Graff at 203 775-6667 (*graffic@bigfoot.com*).  
Meets last Wednesday, 7 p.m. at the DACS Resource Center.  
**Next Meeting:** DEC 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:** DEC 16

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

**Contact:** Bill Keane (*wbk@mags.net*) 203-438-8032  
Meets 3rd Wednesday, 7:30 pm at the DACS Resource Center.  
**Next Meeting:** DEC 15

**Macintosh.** Focuses on all aspects of the Mac operating system.  
Contact: Richard Corzo (*macsig@dacs.org*)

Meets 1st Thursday at DACS Resource Center at 7 p.m.  
**Next Meeting:** DEC 2

**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:** DEC 28

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

**Contact:** Jim Scheef (*jscheef@teleAUGksys.com*)  
Meets 2nd Thursday, 7 p.m., at the DACS Resource Center.  
**Next meeting:** DEC 9

**Visual Basic.** Develops Windows apps with Visual Basic.

**Contact:** Chuck Fizer, 203 798-9996 (*cfizer@snet.net*) or Jim Scheef, 860 355-8001 (*JScheef@TeleAUGksys.com*).  
Meets 1st Wednesday, 7p.m., at the DACS Resource Center.  
**Next Meeting:** DEC 1

**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:** DEC 27

**Web Design.** Explores popular applications for designing and creating Web sites.

**Contact:** Anna Collins, 203-746-5922 (*acvo@annagraphics.com*).  
Meets 3rd Tuesday, 7-9 p.m. at the DACS Resource Center.  
**Next Meeting:** DEC 21

## SIG News & Other Events

**dotNET.** Our session began with some random questions concerning SQL Server which provided some lessons in troubleshooting application management. To find a developer's way into SQL Server requires a thorough familiarity with the permissions and usage of accounts such as "sa" and "ASPNET." When the server is linked with MS Access, a developer must understand usage of SQL indifferent queries such as Update. A specific table must be identified for action. Connection strings can use OLEDB or SQL Server access which is faster. Chuck gave a very thorough analysis to these subtle features of database usage.

John Lansdale gave an interesting review of his work in collecting donations in a political campaign. Online donations with credit cards were facilitated with an interface provided by Verisign. A special link is set up with Payflow to capture and record the name of the donor and the amount donated. The credit card number is not kept but is used only at the time of a dollar transfer from the donor account to the account of the political campaigner. John gave a very thorough narrative to describe source, usage and reporting realized in his application development.

**VB.NET.** In the evening session of our SIG, Claude Prevots presented a talk on stored procedures in SQL Server 7.0. This talk concentrated on a relation of business rules in job procedures of human actors to some SQL code which is embodied in a stored procedure as a short computer program. A major point was that complexity in business rules is as challenging to a developer as is automation of these special conditions in stored procedures using SQL. In a situation of contract fulfillment, there will be legal obligations controlling the implementation of such business rules.

After this talk, Chuck launched a spirited discussion of an application for sales management which he is currently developing. This application includes use of stored procedures and we saw details of a dynamic connection between operation of the user interface and the underlying code. Chuck exhibited ample finesse in exercising logic of relational databases by achieving some very tight code. This logic included many business rules in action. An example is a rule that there may be no sale accomplished without a sales person being associated with it.

Chuck had introduced his talk with a discussion of MSDE, a truncated form of SQL Server that is supplied with many Microsoft applications such as MS Office. Microsoft Data Engine (MSDE) is free and allows a user to use programs which transfer data as in transactions with SQL Server. Data transfers can be accomplished with diverse techniques, especially high speed capture of data to be examined and modified. Connections to the database can be rapid and short, and modifications are then returned to the database using only the records modified. Very efficient applications can be achieved and data collisions avoided.

An end note was to discuss usage of a utility for data transfer. This utility is Bulk Copy Procedure (BCP) and a full discussion of it can be found in sources easy to examine in SQL Server Books Online.

**Macintosh.** We took a tour of the many features of a .Mac account which costs \$99.95 a year.

The heart of .Mac is the iDisk space allocated to you on the Internet, recently expanded to 250 MB. You choose how to divide the space between your .Mac e-mail account and general storage for files that include space for your own home page.

The e-mail account uses IMAP (Internet Message Access Protocol) where messages are kept stored on the server. Of course you can always copy e-mail to local disk storage, but having a

SIG NOTES, Continued on page 17

# December 2004

## Danbury Area Computer Society

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# Computers and Creativity

## Part 4, The Game of Poker

by Richard P. Ten Dyke

**I**N MY YOUTH, AS A financial analyst with IBM, a bunch of us financial guys would get together from time to time to play a friendly game of poker. We rotated from house to house, playing from 9:00 pm until about 3:00 in the morning. These were great games. What was really interesting was how financial guys who were used to moving millions of dollars from one column to another on a piece of paper during the working day, changed their attitudes toward money when it came to their own twenty-five cents at night. Among other observations was the strong correlation between how the guys played the game of poker and how well they ultimately did in their careers as financial analysts, and later, as financial executives. Studying that correlation would be an interesting piece of research on its own.

Some of you may know of a famous book "The Education of a Poker Player" by Herbert O. Yardley. He was a code-breaker working for the United States between the first and second world wars. He also wrote "The American Black Chamber" about those experiences. (Both books are available on Amazon.) It was from his Poker book that I learned that the best way to play poker is to play it tight. Bet only good hands and don't bluff - hardly. That sums up the game pretty well, and it worked for me. That book, plus my experience playing the game, made me curious to know if it would be possible to conduct a computer experiment to see if the computer could also learn how to play the game. I also wanted to find support, or not, for Yardley's theory. To do this it would be necessary to create a simulation of a poker game, in which various betting strategies would compete and be tested against each other.

I had an IBM Personal Computer with a BASIC compiler available to me. The first step was to develop a set of computer algorithms that could interpret the value



of a poker hand. In our guy-games we played seven-card stud, so I built the simulation on that game. The betting starts with the third card, so a player is betting before the hand is complete. That meant that the computer had to assign some value to a partial hand—a pair or three-of-a-kind had obvious value, but so did a three or four card straight or flush. When the last card was dealt, the best five cards were picked and the hand rankings were those that follow the rules of the game.

The next step was to simulate a game, that is, seven players, one hand of seven cards for each player with four rounds of betting, and a winner. The players would be dealt their cards and they would place their bets. Players could bet, fold, call, or raise. It was a limit game, and up to three raises were allowed for each round of betting. When a hand was over, the winner would get the chips added to his holdings. An evening of play would consist of 40 hands.

Then we wanted to simulate a tournament. For this we created a pool of 32 players. Seven players would be randomly selected for an evening of play. There were about 30 evenings of play in a tournament. After each evening, a new set of players would be selected for the next evening. In a tournament, all 32 players

would have the chance to play several evenings.

Each of the 32 players was given a "strategy" of play—that is, a set of rules to determine under what circumstances the player would bet, fold, call, or raise. Now this strategy was like a little computer program. The betting was based on the quality of the player's hand plus knowledge of the betting taking place during the game. It was not nearly as complicated as what a real player would bring into the game. For example, a player did not "see" or take into account the other cards which would have been showing on the table. Nor did any player have a "memory" of how other players had played in the past. These would be important factors in a real game. However, the strategy program that was used was multidimensional and complex enough to provide for a wide variation in betting styles.

Now, the purpose of this experiment was to see if players can, with experience, learn to become better poker players. But we did not allow the players to change their strategies, or learn from their own experiences. Instead, we added a new kind of learning—evolutionary learning.

After a tournament was over, one player would emerge as the best of the 32, and another player would be revealed as the worst. In the pool of 32 players, the best player would remain to play in future tournaments, but the worst player would be dropped. A new player would be created, one that had a slightly, randomly modified strategy based on the best player. The new player was not a clone of best, but more akin to a child, that is, one with similar but not identical characteristics of the parent.

Over time, players were dropped and added to the pool of 32, with presumably better players replacing poorer ones. We were simulating not learning of individuals, but rather evolutionary learning of a species.

You might suspect that running through a bunch of tournaments took a lot of computer time, and you would be right. I set the computer to running on Friday afternoon, let it run over a weekend, and would check it when I got back to the office on Monday morning. The computer could complete several hundred tournaments over that time period.

**This is what I found out.**

By Monday the set of 32 players had been completely replaced by new players, and they played a very tight game, as Yardley would have predicted. It substan-

tiated his thesis that a tight game is a good game. But wait, there's more.

One Monday morning I was utterly surprised and amazed by an unexpected result. Instead of finding all of the players playing a tight game, as had happened in the past, the players had bifurcated into two distinct camps. One group played the tight game, but surprisingly, another group survived by playing in an utterly bold and reckless manner. These players would bet and raise on virtually nothing.

Now, I kept records of player lineage—which players were “related” to previous players—and I could see them being removed and been replaced as the tournaments followed, one after the other. What happened was that over time, two separate and distinct species of players began to dominate the others.

Now we are seeing an example of learning, not of individuals, but of a species. Over time, the species evolved to better live in its environment, which in this case consists of playing poker. However, with no outside influence, the species divided into two different groups. Although there is not enough evidence from the game to prove this, it appeared to me that the two types of players were able to “gang up” on the others, and wipe them out. In other words, the tight player and the loose player in the game were not so much in competition, but rather in a symbiotic relationship with each other.

This experiment differs from our previous ones in a couple of important ways. Previously we talked about three conditions that must exist for a creative process: A goal, a way of creating options, and a way of measuring the value of those options against the goal. This has not changed, but here we have introduced a different concept of what a goal should be. Instead of the goal being a single measure of success or achievement, it is a goal of survival. The goal is for one “solution” to be better than another “solution” and therefore to be able to survive in a hostile environment.

The results also illustrated that there may be several, possibly numerous and significantly different ways to achieve the goal, just as different species can survive together in the same environment. For each species, the presence of other species represent a part of that environment. The results also suggest an explanation for the observed fact that there is sometimes more competition within species than between them.

Another difference between this and previous experiments was that success or failure of a player was influenced by both the player's skill (the quality of his strategy) and by chance. Bad players can win and good players can lose. I believe this factor was important in permitting species bifurcation. The luck factor allows a less effective strategy to continue to exist and to evolve in its own direction without being wiped out right away.

What have I done with this simulation since? Sorry to say, not much. I have wanted to continue the experiment to build into it player strategies that are more realistic, including the ability to see and respond to competitive players' cards and betting patterns. The player's strategy is a computer program, of course, so for our purpose we need an evolvable computer language that can represent a strategy. But is there a computer language that can be modified randomly and still function? The “languages” we have created use parameters to represent functions, but within a very restricted framework. The parameters are modified randomly but the basic structure is not. Possibly some kind of parameterized object-oriented language yet to be created? Perhaps something designed along the lines of DNA? There is work yet to be done and I am still looking.

Next month: What are we missing? The Human Factor

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## Let DACS Promote your Business

DACS is offering members free space to advertise their small businesses in the business card section of the colored insert in dacs.doc. This offer is being made subject to space available, and cards will be rotated each month to guarantee equal access.

Please send your cards to DACS at 4 Gregory Street, Danbury, CT 06810-4430, give to any board member, or e-mail graphic image to [dacseditor@dacs.org](mailto:dacseditor@dacs.org).

**Sorry**, but postal regulations require that ads be computer related, and specifically forbid ads for Credit, Insurance or Travel Services.



# Book Review

## Gaming Hacks

Reviewed by Justin Vinnedge

WHEN I FIRST PICKED up this book, I was skeptical to say the least. I am a hacker and as you may (or may not) know hackers and gamers are pretty much at the other end of the spectrum. I was even more skeptical when I saw that they had code examples and mods. Gamers are not exactly known for their coding skills. So, I was pretty surprised to see that the macro and VB examples were pretty good.

I started in on reading the book. They really cover everything (but it's O'Reilly so what do you expect?). The first few chapters are specifically for the classic games. All those old Atari 2600 titles that still live on as today's retro games. They also have ways to play old DOS games on today's sleek modern PC's. They had ways to port old games to a PC and even discussed Emulators and ROMS (a somewhat touchy subject with the copyright people). They had some really cool Atari 2600 hardware hacks, and lots about homebrewed games (for all systems, not just Atari). They then moved onto portable games. This was a pretty interesting section, but they lost my attention when they devoted a lot of time to the old Gameboy systems (I have never owned a Gameboy and probably never will). Though if you do have a Gameboy you will find lots of interesting tips and really *kewl* tricks.

They then talked about a *kewl* little system that I had never heard of, called GP32 that could be interfaced with the Commodore 64 and could be used as a portable computer on which you could program BASIC. They had some more interesting hardware hacks (like installing a Playstation 2 in your car) most of which were over the top, but should really earn you some hardcore points with your buddies. The next section talked about MMORPGs. MMORPGs are Massive

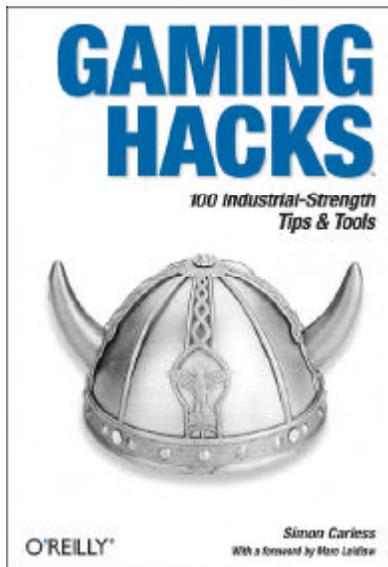
Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games. They covered the old classics (Ultima Online) and the newer generation (Final Fantasy XI). This section was where most of the macro and VB plugins were to be found. They had some pretty *kewl* stuff (I could tell someone out there really knew their kungfu), but I still saw some holes that allowed for several, well, shall we say, undesired results. All you INFOSEC people out there know what I'm talking about. I was also surprised to see that most newer MMORPGs had shell like commands ("ignore" being an example). This seemed strange and *kewl* to me all at the same time. I don't really think that gamers know the shell, but I could be wrong.

The next few chapters dealt with topics that I found pretty boring, like placing your speakers correctly, and tuning your TV. The next section though I found to be very interesting. It was about over clocking your PC. The rest of the book was

pretty dull, except for the parts where they talked about ROM hacking and disassembling. The next part I found interesting was variable hacking on today's modern systems. It seems like Sony supports Linux, as they ship their PS2 HD with a no name Linux kernel installed. Looks like you learn something new everyday.

All in all this book did make me go downstairs and play my PS2 for five hours straight, but it didn't convince me to dust off my old copies of Diablo II and Starcraft. If you are a gamer (or a parent wondering why your kids spend so much time playing video games), then this is a book for you. Otherwise, I would recommend saving your hard earned cash for something better (unless you are curious about video games of course).

JUSTIN is a computer hacker and student at Danbury High School.



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



Thanks!  
The  
management

## DACS Wants You

It's people that make this club go and DACS has several positions that need people to fill them:

**Secretary – Board-level position.** The person is responsible for recording the minutes of our director's meetings. Should be able to attend almost all board meetings (held on the Monday following the first Tuesday each month). Larry Buoy, our present Secretary, will train the new volunteer and help fill in when necessary. We have a tape recorder to help ease the process.

**Associate Editor –** Help our editor produce the monthly newsletter and learn editing, document layout and desktop publishing skills in the process. Our newsletter has won numerous awards over the years; you can help maintain that tradition. No writing skills are needed and we have all the software.

**Publicity Editor –** Help prepare and distribute meeting announcements to the area newspapers. You would be helping our VP of Publicity, in this vital job.

To apply, send an email to [dacsprez@dacs.org](mailto:dacsprez@dacs.org). DACS is an equal opportunity volunteer organization.

# Digital Horizons

## Computing trends

By Charles Bovaird

OVER THE PAST FEW years I have given presentations on "How to Buy a computer" for the SeniorNet program at the Danbury Senior Center. The following chart was derived from data collected to prepare for these presentations.

This chart depicts the computer price trends for two time periods. The left most trend line represents computer prices in the 1999-2000 timeframe. The center and rightmost trend lines represent 2003 computer prices.

It is obvious that has been a significant shift in the way the computers have been priced at retail for chip speeds between 2000 and 2400 Mhz. The Intel Pentium 4 and the AMD Athlon chips also contribute to the improved prices. Although sale prices do not represent the highest speed chip on the market, these systems are worthy of consideration when contemplating the purchase of a new or replacement computer.

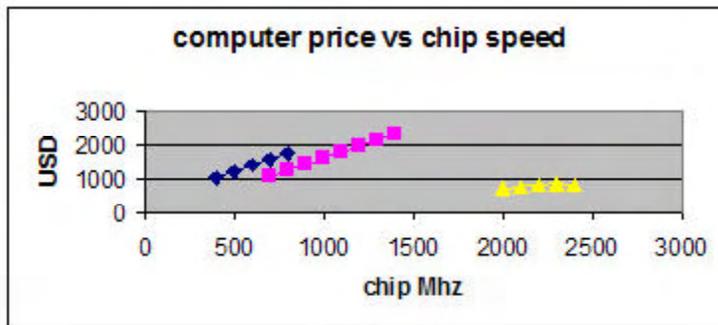
During 2003, these 2000+ Mhz chips became available in computers using the Microsoft XP operating system. In addition, the newer motherboard higher bus speeds support chipsets that also included capabilities previously requiring additional plug-in cards (such as USB ports, network interface circuitry, music/sound circuitry). In addition, the cost of RAM (random access memory) chips and large hard drives have dropped dramatically over the past two years. Producers also took advantage of the lower costs of overseas production.

The lower PC costs induced new PC sales. Many business class customers replaced machines that were only three to five years old. Many individuals purchased a faster PC for the home. PC's became a necessary tool in all education environments. More seniors were getting PC literate. Libraries obtained batteries of PC's and made them available for clients. All this activity kept a downward pressure on PC prices.

### What's coming ?

It is likely that in three to five years another quantum jump in computer chip

throughput will reach the general PC market. This year the 64 bit bus chips are available for web servers (and Macintosh) computers. When the price point of these faster computers approach \$1000, a new replacement cycle will occur. This will increase profits for hardware manufactures and operating systems.



### Where have we been?

Fifty years ago IBM sold electric typewriters for \$1500 or more in an era where a good annual income was \$3000 a year. These machines were made to last decades. They were, however, replaced with newer technology such as the IBM Selectric typewriter (remember the bouncing ball?) in the 70's and later with the personal computer in the 80's. Back then everybody was saying that Moore's Law could not continue into the future as it had in the past. Moore's Law was a projection based upon history saying the speed of computers would double very eighteen months. Well, here we are four years into the new millennium, and Moore's Law is still valid as a close approximation of PC chip speed growth. In 1954 the IBM 705 computer clock speed was 1 Mhz (1,000,000 cycles per second). You could hear the 705 running on an AM radio tuned to 1000 Khz. Well, the first PC came out in the 1982 with an 8 Mhz (8,000,000 cycles per second) chip and now PC's have 3000 Mhz chips (3,000,000,000 cycles per second) which is almost 375 times faster than the first PC and 3000 times faster than the 1950's computer.

### New trends in computer years

In the business world high-speed computer capabilities that used to require

multimillion dollar computers supported by fifty people are now on the desks of individuals doing things like aircraft design, hardware design, machinery design, building and bridge design. In the medical world graphical analysis of cell structures is being accomplished with the use of computers aided by imaging devices such as MRI and advanced electron microscopes.

In the home, higher speed PC's allow us to process digital photographs. This article was written using the speech analyzer "Naturally Speaking," which requires processing of large quantities of information. High volume processing has also allowed us to process applications that use CD's and DVD's. A DVD is capable of holding 4.7 billion bytes of information written on a five inch diameter DVD disk surface. This quantity of information would require over 170 reels of 1/2" magnetic tape 2400 feet long (vintage 1950) and required twenty feet of bookshelf space to store the encased reels.

### Where do we go from here

Growth in computing capability will continue to increase at astounding rates. This, along with the free exchange of ideas and a lifetime quest for learning will ever improve scientific understanding. The challenge is to properly employ this revolution to improving the lot of mankind, a much more formidable task.

CHARLIE is DACS Treasurer

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# Random Access

November 2004

Bruce Preston, Moderator

**M**EMBERS 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. I have a USB flatbed scanner that works fine on my old machine. I downloaded newer driver software for my XP machine, but when I start it up from my application it takes about 5 minutes before it eventually complains that the device isn't responding. The device shows as “working properly” in Device Manager.**

A. When you do “Acquire” is it pointing at some other device, such as a digital camera? In most programs you do an Acquire - Select Twain Source, and then select the scanner. Then do Acquire and do the scan. Is your application software also up to date? It may need to be upgraded as well. Another thing to check would be to download a free application that can drive a scanner and see if it works properly. Most scanners are interfaced via the TWAIN standard (by the way, TWAIN stands for “Technology Without An Interesting Acronym). If you go to [www.irfanview.com](http://www.irfanview.com) you can download a nice little image editing program (IrfanView) that can work with scanners and cameras. See if it works with your scanner. If it does, then you know that the problem is with the application software rather than the scanner and its drivers.

**Q. I have been using AdAware for some time, and recently also started running Spybot S&D. Spybot repeatedly complains about a DSO Exploit. What is it and how do I get rid of it?**

A. There was a bug in Internet Explorer that could let an untrusted program run. The bug has been fixed and you will be protected against it if you have done your Windows Updates and downloaded the “critical updates”. Provided that you have applied the critical updates, you may safely ignore the

complaints about the DSO Exploit.

While we are on the topic of spyware—be aware that due to changes in the “engine”—the program that makes use of the reference files that describe spyware, LavaSoft has discontinued updating the reference files for AdAware 6. You must download AdAware SE—it is still free, and looks much the same, but uses reference files that are different. Support/updates for AdAware 6 stopped a few weeks ago. Go to [www.lavasoftusa.com](http://www.lavasoftusa.com) to get the new utility.

**Q. Is it true that Apple machines don't have the same problems with viruses and spyware etc.?**

A. There are fewer that affect Apple Macs. The reason isn't necessarily that Macs are more secure than Windows machines, it is more that since there are so many more Windows machines out there the virus writers tend to “go where the pickings are” and target Windows machines.

**Q. I have a question about things that start when my computer starts. There may be as many as 50 things running when I look at the task manager applications page and/or the processes page. How do I identify what's good, and what's not?**

A. Take a look at [BlackViper.com](http://BlackViper.com) —it has a page where he examines what “Services” are running within Windows 2000 and Windows XP. A service could be most anything - your anti-virus software is a service, as is your fax application if you have one. Some services are essential, some are optional, and some just shouldn't be running. (For example, if you never send or receive faxes using your machine, you don't want the fax service to be running.) BlackViper only

addresses Windows components. If you have things installed by other applications, etc., it gets a little harder to separate the wheat from the chaff. One option is to download a copy of HiJackThis ([www.spywareinfo.com/~merijn/](http://www.spywareinfo.com/~merijn/)).

**Important Note:** HiJackThis does not have a database or reference file that identifies what programs are, and makes no value judgement (good, bad, dangerous, etc.). It only reports what is currently running in the machine, or what will start via registry entries etc. It is up to an experienced user to determine whether something should be allowed or removed. If you have an internet connection, one way to resolve it is to do a search using Google to look up the items that are identified. If it is a problem, it will show up within the first few hits on Google. Another method is to save the log file and post it on any of several web sites where volunteers will analyze it and make recommendations.

**Q. I'm not concerned that things are “bad” as much as having so many processes running at once. Won't it run better without them?**

A. True - your machine will run much better if it isn't bogged down with applications and services that aren't needed. For example, there are benign and innocuous things that take up space. For example, some Logitech mice search for a new driver every day. QuickBooks loads QDAgent that looks for updates every day. You probably don't need them to run that often.

**Q. Should I install Service Pack 2 on my XP machine?**

A. Service Pack 2 installs with very few problems provided that you follow the instructions. The most critical things to do before you do the installation are to first make certain that you have your anti-virus software up-to-date and that it is compatible with Service Pack 2. Then do a full system scan. Make certain that your computer is free of spyware. Run AdAware SE and/or Spybot S&D. Then do your installation of SP2. There are a few application programs that have problems, most are very specialized such as high-priced

developer tools etc. Here is a link to an article that lists some of them. [http://www.winnetmag.com/Windows/Article/ArticleID/43798/Windows\\_43798.html](http://www.winnetmag.com/Windows/Article/ArticleID/43798/Windows_43798.html) If you are using them, you probably know about the necessary fixes already. Note that SP2 installs an updated Windows Firewall on your machine and turns it on by default, where the XP installation made the firewall available but did not turn it on by default. The firewall will alert you when an application attempts to connect to the internet (i.e. "Call Home") - it is up to you to tell it whether to permit or deny the application's access. Most of this is plain common sense - if you just installed a program and it says that it is going to register, and then you get a notification that the application is trying to use the internet, then it is probably OK to allow it. However if you are surfing the internet and all of a sudden something tries to access the internet, you probably want to investigate before you allow it. You

should install it. Your computer will be much better off with it than without it.

**Q. I have a printer that I sometimes use to print envelopes. It works correctly when printing from the computer directly attached - it tells me to insert the envelope, etc. and then prints. When I print from another computer that has a wireless connection to my router/firewall, it doesn't print properly - it just comes out on plain paper.**

**A.** Check in the "Port Properties" for the printer. You might have to set "Enable Bi-directional Communications" or "Enable Advanced Features". Beyond that we came up empty on this one - will have to investigate further.

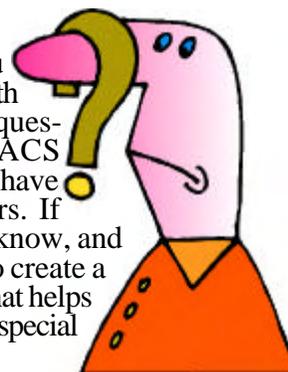
**BRUCE PRESTON** is president of West Mountain Systems, a consultancy in Ridgefield, CT specializing in database applications. A DACS director, Bruce also leads the Access SIG. Members may send tech queries to Bruce at [askdacs@dacs.org](mailto:askdacs@dacs.org).

## FREE CLASSIFIEDS

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

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

Are you hung up with computer questions?. DACS SIGS may have the answers. If not, let us know, and we'll try to create a new SIG that helps fulfill your special needs.



### SIG NOTES, Continued from page 8

copy on the server can be convenient for having access to your e-mail when you're away from your main Mac computer. You can also use Mac OS X's iSync program to synchronize your Address Book, and Safari bookmarks to the iDisk, so that you have access to your addresses when using the Web mail interface, or your bookmarks when you are away from home. If you want to make your iCal calendar easily available to yourself or others via the Web, you can publish it using .Mac.

The iDisk space includes a Public folder which you can optionally protect using a different password from your .Mac account, and thus share the files in it with others, even if they are on a Windows machine. You can also use the general iDisk space to shuttle files between work and home, using your own .Mac password. .Mac includes a Web-based home page creation tool, using different templates so that you don't even have to know HTML. Or if you do know HTML you can create your own site and deploy the files in the Sites folder of your iDisk.

There is some software that comes standard with your .Mac account, such as the Virex antivirus program for the Mac, and a limited Backup

program that can back up selected files to your iDisk, a local disk, or a burnable CD. Note that Apple doesn't guarantee backup of your iDisk files in case of a server crash, so don't use that as your only back up. There is also a changing list of limited-time downloads or discounts on software. Check <http://www.mac.com> to see all the latest features and offers that come with a .Mac subscription.

For the December 2 Macintosh meeting we will have a special guest in the person of Mac expert Dave Hamilton, co-founder of the Mac Observer Web site among his other accomplishments. He'll do a session on Mac troubleshooting, so please bring your Mac questions.

**Server and Networking.** While the Server and Networking SIG did meet in November, I had a "medical emergency" and could not attend. Those who did attend had a good time making jokes at my expense. Recently I did some work setting up SQL Server on Windows Server 2003. The goal was to make the installation as secure as possible following all the guidelines and best practices. This turned out to be more complicated than I imaged. In addition, we have several interesting projects that offer opportunities for everyone. We have the hardware and

software to build a router-firewall for the Resource Center. There are a couple of options here and I'd like to try m0n0wall as well as another Linux-based product. Come to the meetings and help us all learn.

The next meeting of the Server and Networking SIG will be Thursday, December 9th at 7pm in the DACS Resource Center.

**Web Design.** On November the Web Design SIG took a closer look at Cascading Style Sheets. Now more important than ever, CSS is the way to go for sound web design. It can offer far more options for formatting text than HTML, and can allow exact layout of a web page without even using tables. Take a look at the updated links page on [www.annagraphics.com/sigsite/links.htm](http://www.annagraphics.com/sigsite/links.htm) and browse the CSS tutorials and examples sites.

The next meeting will be held on December 21. We'll go over some basic principals of good design. Whether designing a web page or printed work, the way the viewer initially perceives a project can play a big part in the overall success. Bring questions, favorite sites and trade some knowledge! If there is any specific subject you would like to explore at the SIG, let Anna Collens know.

## Candidates

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**Charlie Bovaird (Incumbent)** — is a consultant and retired IBMer. A long time DACS member, a board member for over 10 years and serves as treasurer. He brings to DACS over 40 years of experience with hardware and software. He prepares the monthly *dacs.doc* mailings and has chaired DACS' participation at the PC EXPO. He developed the membership survey, and along with Jim Ragsdale maintains the membership database. He also coordinates the activities of the education committee, scheduling and assigning classes.



**Richard Corzo** — Richard Corzo has been a computer programmer for over 25 years starting on IBM mainframes and working his way down to personal computers. He's been a PC user and DACS member for 12 years, a Mac user for the past 4 years, and has written many articles on operating systems and utilities for the DACS newsletter. He has been leader of the Macintosh SIG since the spring of 2004, and is interested in contributing a Macintosh perspective to the board.



**John Gallichotte (incumbent)** — As a long time computer enthusiast John purchased his own mini-computer in 1970. Once bitten by the computer bug, he started building computers. He completed his first microcomputer in 1973 as part of my master degree program in computer science. He was an early member of The Danbury Computer Society, a forerunner of DACS. With DACS, he was the group leader of the first networking SIG and has supported the DOS and hardware support help line since its inception. Having retired, he now designs/builds/plays with autonomous robots and teaches computer programming to the elderly two days a week.



**Bill Keane (incumbent)** — Retired in 1991 after thirty years in the telecommunications industry where he was introduced to computers in 1984, first to the MSDOS and then the Unix operating systems. After retirement he found the Linux and Open Source community and adopted the philosophy. After joining DACS in 1994, he became involved in the Alternative OS SIG, and then the beginning Linux group (LUG) which was started at the beginning of this year. Bill's goals are to help introduce Linux and Open Source to the area and help members get started with their installations and provide a demonstration of an installation and applications at the Resource Center.



**Jamie Yates** — Jamie has spent 40 years in the computer industry, including 30 with IBM and 10 as an independent consultant. He has had extensive experience presenting and instructing customer executives and new hires around the world and running shows and events for up to 4,000 attendees. In recent years, he has served as a volunteer, creating courses and instructing at the Danbury Senior Center (SeniorNet) and instructing at the New Fairfield Senior Center. As a hobby, he likes to build and modifying his own computers, and is proficient in a wide range of computer applications.

As a board member, Jamie looks to apply his background in systems and project management in an organization that has a broad membership base. He would like to bring a fresh approach to General Meetings and the board, help to broaden the appeal of membership, contribute his expertise where needed, and learn more about DACS' inner workings.

# Ballot

I (we) hereby appoint Lawrence Buoy or Charles Bovaird proxies to vote in my (our) stead at the Annual Meeting of the members of the Danbury Area Computer Society, Inc. to be held on Tuesday, December 7, 2004 at 7:30 p.m. as follows:

The election of the following to serve as directors for a term of two years and until successors shall be elected and shall qualify (vote for no more than five):

- Charles Bovaird
- Richard Corzo
- John Gallichotte
- William Keane
- Jami Yates
- \_\_\_\_\_

Signature(s): \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

(Membership in DACS is a family membership. If there is more than one member in your household, all please sign.)

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Dated \_\_\_\_\_

## Notice of the Annual Meeting of Danbury Area Computer Society, Inc. to be held at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, December 7, 2004

The Annual Meeting of the members of the Danbury Area Computer Society, Inc. will be held at the auditorium of the Danbury Hospital, 24 Hospital Avenue, Danbury, Connecticut on Tuesday, December 7, 2004, at 7:30 p.m. for the purpose of electing directors. The number of directors is fixed at eleven individuals in two alternating classes of six and five. Each class serves for a term of two years and, this year, the class of five is to be elected. The individuals named below have agreed to stand for re-election or election to serve until the Annual Meeting of the Members to be held in the year 2006.

If you do not plan to attend the meeting, please return the attached proxy to:

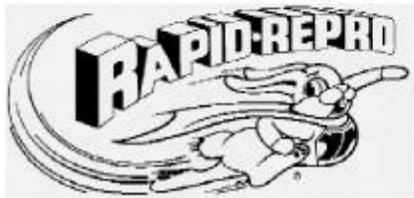
Danbury Area Computer Society  
4 Gregory Street, Danbury, CT 06810-4430  
to arrive prior to December 7, 2004 and express your preferences.

Your presence in person and participation in the meeting would be appreciated. Come and hear not only what we did this year, but what, with your help, we hope to do in the coming year.

Respectfully,  
Lawrence Buoy, Secretary

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## Voice for Joanie

Help give the  
gift of speech  
Call Shirley Fredlund  
at 203 770-6203  
and become a  
**Voice for Joanie**  
volunteer.

## Future Events

December 7 • John Patrick • "The Future of The Internet"  
January 4 • Verizon Wireless • Wireless Broadband  
February 1 • TBA

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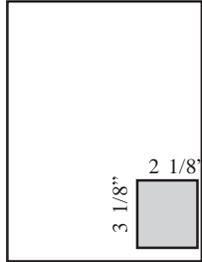
AMSYS, Inc.  
900 Ethan Allen Highway  
Ridgefield, CT 06877  
Phone: 203-431-1500

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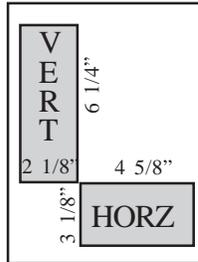
# dacs.doc

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE DANBURY AREA COMPUTER SOCIETY, INC.

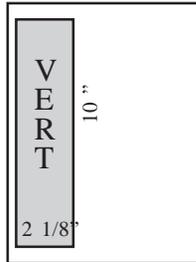
## Rate Card



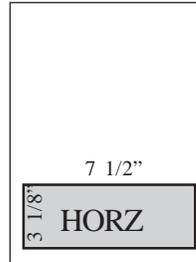
**1/9 PG**  
1 Insertion **\$26**  
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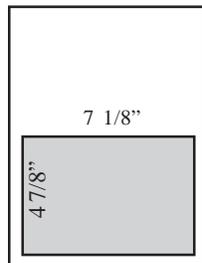
**1/3 PG**  
1 Insertion **\$72**  
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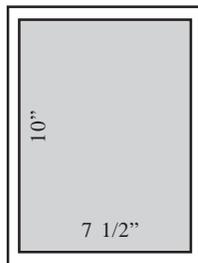
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OTHER DISTRIBUTION=100+  
PDF FULL-COLOR VERSION DISTRIBUTED  
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DEADLINE FOR COPY IS 15th OF THE  
MONTH. NEWSLETTER NORMALLY  
ARRIVES IN MAIL BY 1st OF EACH  
MONTH. ALL PAYMENTS IN ADVANCE  
WITH COPY TO:

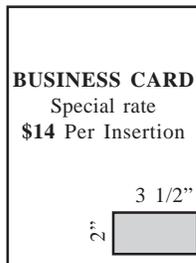
CHARLES BOVAIRD, TREASURER  
DANBURY AREA COMPUTER SOCIETY  
4 GREGORY STREET  
DANBURY CT 06810-4430  
TEL: 203-792-7881  
E-mail [aam@mags.net](mailto:aam@mags.net)



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**FULL PG**  
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Special rate  
**\$14 Per Insertion**

\* 6 INSERTIONS AT 5 TIMES THE  
SINGLE INSERTION RATE

## Order Form

ADS CAN BE SUBMITTED AS CAMERA READY ART, OR VIA E-MAIL AS A PDF, JPG OR TIF FILE. *Editors will set up ads submitted as plain text without additional charge.*

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SIZE 1/9  2/9V  2/9H  1/3V  1/3H   
HALF PAGE  FULLPAGE  BUSINESS CARD

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TOTAL \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Comments \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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Sketch ad in this box



Danbury Area Computer Society is a non-profit corporation organized under section (501)(C)(3) of the US Tax Code. Its purpose is to promote education, knowledge sharing, networking and communication between users of personal computers. DACS is an all volunteer organization, with no employees. The major source of income is member dues. Members can volunteer to become instructors, lecturers, DACS officers and board members, committee members, or SIG leaders.

We sponsor or participate in community support projects by collecting, repairing, and redistributing used computer equipment and software to community service providers such as schools, libraries, and patient/client support groups. DACS members provide pickup, refurbishing, installation, and training assistance as needed. Firms or individuals with equipment to donate should leave a message on the DACS Infoline (203-748-4330). or send an email to [recycling@dacs.org](mailto:recycling@dacs.org).

The Voice for Joanie program was created in 1992 through the initiative of DACS member, Shirley Fredlund. This program provides computer-assisted speech for victims of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis ("Lou Gehrig's Disease"). DACS members have contributed volunteer time and technical assistance since the program began. Voice for Joanie and DACS have earned national computer industry recognition and financial assistance for this vital collaboration.

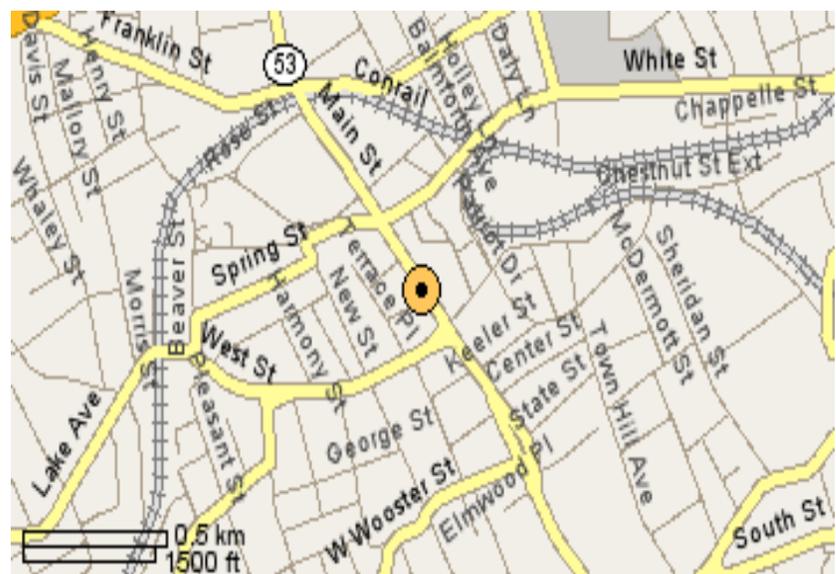
Our general meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month in the Danbury Hospital Auditorium at 7 p.m. These meetings are open to the public. The main presentation is scheduled from 8-9:30, preceded by casual networking, announcements and Random Access, an informal question and answer session. A free product raffle is often held at the conclusion of the main presentation.

In addition to the general meeting, DACS sponsors many special interest groups (SIGs) where members can learn and share information about a specific topic. Each SIG plans its own meeting schedule and program topics.

Our newsletter, *dacs.doc* is published monthly for our members, and mailed to arrive before the general meeting. It features articles written by members and others on timely topics including product and software reviews, issues and trends in personal computing and "how-to" articles on sound, video, digital photography, etc. In addition, each issues includes the calendar of meetings, announcements on SIGs and other DACS events. *dacs.doc* has won numerous prizes over the years for its design and content.

Through its activities, DACS offers numerous opportunities to network both professionals and computer hobbyists. Our Special Interest Groups are an excellent way for members to both learn and share application or hardware knowledge. Any DACS member can form a special interest group on any topic where there is interest. Most SIGs meet in our Resource Center in downtown Danbury.

If you have concerns, requests, or suggestions regarding DACS or its programs, please contact [dacsprez@dacs.org](mailto:dacsprez@dacs.org). DACS officers and board members' phone numbers are listed on page 3 of *dacs.doc*.



The DACS Resource Center is in Ives Manor, Lower Level, 198 Main Street, Danbury, CT 06810 (203-748-4330).



DANBURY AREA  
COMPUTER SOCIETY, Inc.  
Individual Membership Application

Personal Information

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_  
Company \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_ @ \_\_\_\_\_

Billing Information

1 Year ( ) \$25.00 3 Years ( ) \$68.00 Automatic Annual Renewal ( ) \$22.50  
Please bill my: MasterCard ( ) Visa ( ) AMEX ( ) Check Enclosed ( )

Card # \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

\* Under the automatic renewal program, DACS will bill your annual membership dues to the credit card of your choice each year. You may cancel the automatic renewal option at any time by calling the membership department at (203) 792-7881.

Make checks payable to DACS, Inc.

Please return this form to: Charles Bovaird, Treasurer  
4 Gregory Street  
Danbury, CT 06810-4430

Tell Us About Yourself

Please take a moment to answer the following questions. Answer all that apply.

Hours a week you use computers \_\_\_\_\_

Hardware: PC\_\_\_ MAC\_\_\_ desktop\_\_\_ laptop\_\_\_ palm\_\_\_ other\_\_\_\_\_

OPSYS: Windows\_\_\_ MAC\_\_\_ LINUX\_\_\_ other\_\_\_\_\_

Communications: Dialup\_\_\_ HI-Speed\_\_\_ WiFi\_\_\_ LAN\_\_\_ other\_\_\_\_\_

Applications: Office\_\_\_ Financial\_\_\_ other\_\_\_\_\_

Digital: Music\_\_\_ Photo\_\_\_ CAM\_\_\_ TV\_\_\_ other\_\_\_\_\_

Business: Corporate Employee\_\_\_ private employee\_\_\_ professional\_\_\_ business owner\_\_\_

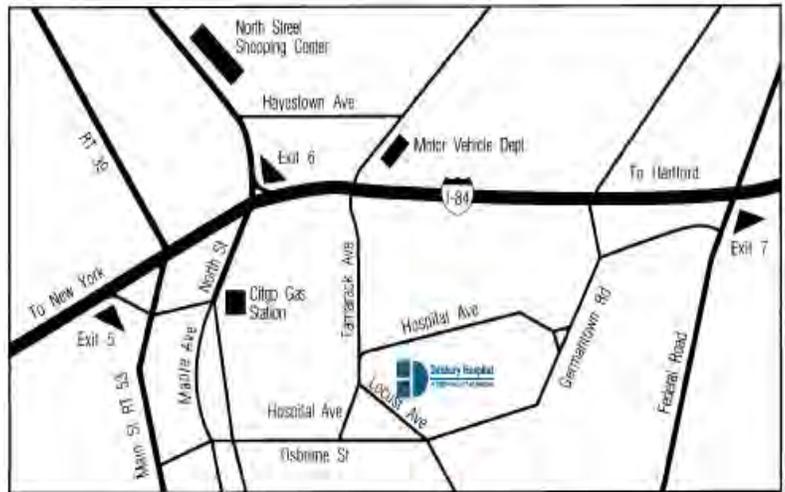
Office use only: Paid \_\_\_\_\_ Check # \_\_\_\_\_ Membership # \_\_\_\_\_

# Meeting Location

Danbury Hospital  
24 Hospital Avenue  
Danbury, CT

Traveling West on I-84, Take Exit 6. Turn right at exit ramp light at North Street. Turn right on Hayestown Avenue. Turn right on Tamarack Avenue. Follow Tamarack Avenue uphill to traffic light. Turn left at this light onto Hospital Avenue. Follow Hospital Avenue to appropriate visitor parking lot on right.

Traveling East on I-84: Take Exit 5. After stop sign, go straight ahead to intersection of Main Street and North Street. Go straight through onto North Street. Turn right off North Street to Maple Avenue. Go on Maple Avenue to Osborne Street. Turn left on Osborne Street. Turn left onto Hospital Avenue. Follow Hospital Avenue to appropriate visitor parking lot on right.



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**Allan Ostergren**  
president

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Sherman, CT 06784  
Tel: (860) 210-0047  
ostergren@worldnet.att.net