

September 2012

Volume 23, Issue 9

\$2.00

Next Meeting:



The
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search engine

Directors' Notes

A meeting of your board of directors was held on Wednesday, August 8, 2012. The meeting was called to order at 7:15 PM.

Attending were Richard Corzo, Elizabeth Talian, Bruce Preston, Jim Scheef, David Green, Lisa Leifels, Andy Woodruff. Guest: Charlie Bovaird

The Minutes of Previous Meeting were accepted, with correction.

Treasurer's Report

Balance on hand 7/1/12	\$5,805.53
INCOME	
Dues	\$116.05
Bank Interest	\$0.25
Total Income:	\$116.30
EXPENSES	
Resource Center Phone	\$76.24
Newsletter Printing	\$85.00
Newsletter Postage	\$48.75
Total Expenses:	\$209.99
Balance on hand 7/31/12	\$5,711.84

Membership Report

(added after meeting)

General Meetings

June 5 - Artificial Intelligence

July 3 - Microsoft Store

Aug 7 - Robots & Beyond

	JUN	JUL	AUG
seat count	22	32	22
members	22	29	20
visitors	0	3	2
Paying Members	131	132	132
W/ e-mail Addresses	122	117	116
New Members	1	0	0
DACS.DOC			
printed	100	100	100
mailed	74	74	73
mailed members	54	54	53
mailed other	6	6	6
mailed library	4	14	14

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Old Business

1. General meetings

- August 7: Robotics and Beyond-Paul Chayka & Mike Morrissey. Preview: Bill Saturno, Review: Jim Ritterbusch

- September 4: Tom Schonder of Google-Google Apps (Gmail, Google Calendar, Google Sites, and Google Docs), Google Voice, and Google+. Preview: Lisa Leifels, Review: Bruce Preston

- October 2: Dave Marra-OS X Mountain Lion. Preview: Richard Corzo, Review: TBD

• Possible future topics:

a) Bruce contacted a former colleague, Joe Mazzeo, who runs a private educational program for unemployed/underemployed IT professionals. He says, "I would be glad to talk to DACS, and I would probably bring an associate... we usually talk at meet-ups about how the Cloud and Mobile Apps are part of a new paradigm, about the trends in mobility and what they mean, and then about the direction for mobile apps (the Native vs. HTML5 Browser-based issues).... talk only takes about 40 minutes but the interaction usually keeps it going for 1.5 - 2.0 hours." Bruce asked him if he would be available for November or December.

b) Online Learning, focusing on personal or professional enrichment courses rather than academic. An example would be the offerings of *Lynda.com*. Annette said that Udemy.com has courses on a number of topics. Elizabeth still to research. Also Harvard and MIT have teamed up to offer free online courses (www.edx.org/courses) - about 6-7 so far. Elizabeth had positive response from Laura Nute from Lynda.com and Kevin Corcoran of CTDLC for participation in topic presentation. She is also looking at including something on Coursera (<https://www.coursera.org>) - Universities sign up to use their tool to offer courses. There are roughly 115 free course offerings today - about 40 of which seem to be computer related. She is looking at the March time-frame, unless Lynda wants to do a full hour in an earlier timeframe, and DACS is interested. TBD.

c) Cloud storage services-Dropbox, box.net, Skydrive, Mozy, Carbonite, YouSendIt, etc. Proposed by Drew: This would be a comparison of functionality

Directors' Notes, Cont. on page 3

Membership Information

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The editors welcome submissions from DACS members. Contact Richard Teasdale (dacseditor@dacs.org). Advertisers, contact Charles Bovaird at (203) 792-7881 (aam@mags.net)

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Apple User Group

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RESOURCE CENTER: (203) 748-4330 • **WEB SITE:** <http://www.dacs.org>

HelpLine

Our former telephone HelpLine has been replaced by our web-based DACS Community Forum at <http://forum.dacs.org>. We have topic-specific forums where DACS members can post questions. Questions may be answered by SIG leaders or other DACS members. If none of the categories fit your question, just post it to the Ask DACS forum.

Topic

- Microsoft Access
- .NET Programming
- Digital cameras/scanners/image processing
- Content Management Systems
- Linux
- Mac and iPhone/iPad/iPod touch
- PC maintenance
- Smartphones & Tablets
- Virtual machine software
- Desktop publishing and website design
- Windows

Forum

- Access SIG
- ASP.Net and C#VB.Net SIG
- Digital Imaging SIG
- Drupal SIG
- Linux SIG
- Apple SIG
- PC Maintenance SIG
- Mobile Devices SIG
- Virtual Computing SIG
- Web Site Design SIG
- Windows SIG

Directors' Notes, Cont. from page 2

and platforms supported (i.e. Windows, Mac, Linux, smartphones, etc.). Drew may be able to pull this together for November or December. Jim and Richard could help with the mobile device support. Richard set up a thread on the DACS forum.

d) Presentation on Facebook. Jim suggested having someone talk about how to configure the security, privacy issues, what does "Like" accomplish, the difference between a group and a page. Jim was going to see if he can find a Facebook ambassador. Jim has posted a request in a Facebook group which focuses on speakers. He has asked for a speaker on Facebook itself, no response yet.

e) Jeff Robbins-Drupal expert. Andy has contacted him. Jeff is interested in doing a presentation but is not able to commit to a date at this time. Andy will follow up again in August.

f) Bruce's Hubble idea fell through, the contacts were all hardware engineering, processing is mostly done by JPL.

g) Bruce's Genealogy prospect is leading a tour of Italy; he has not gotten a response yet.

h) Windows 8 - Richard will contact Jay Ferron to see if he is available.

i) Jim is working with Allan Ostergren about possible tie in with astronomy observatory group working out of New Milford H.S. such that they might show computer control of telescope and capture of images.

2 Open positions

- The membership chairperson/greeter position is open.

- Rob Limbaugh will be relocating out of the area in a month, so we will need to find a new board member to replace him. Richard has a candidate in mind and will approach him to see if he would fill out Rob's term.

- Patrick Libert plans not to run again when his board term ends in December.

3. Jim and Richard created a group for the Mobile Devices SIG in CiviCRM on the Drupal website. Jim sent the monthly SIG reminder using CiviCRM. We need someone to start porting static content from the current site to the Drupal site.

4. We have a one-year subscription with Microsoft Office 365. The portal is <https://portal.microsoftonline.com> and

Directors' Notes, Cont. on page 9

Meeting Review

Robotics and Beyond

By Jim Ritterbusch

FOR THOSE WHO attended expecting to see R2D2 or Rosie or Marvin the Paranoid Android, this was *not* the place to be. For the rest of us, it was a pleasant surprise presented by Michael Morrissey and Paul Chayka, co-founders of Robotics and Beyond. This is a not-for-profit organization in New Milford aimed at getting kids excited about STEM – Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. (Coincidentally, an article appeared in the online version of The News-Times the same day, where corporations are bemoaning the lack of applicants qualified in STEM.)

Robotics and Beyond is almost 10 years old, founded by Michael as a way to introduce his son and two other 7th graders to robotics. From there, it morphed into a summer camp program aimed at kids aged from 10 to 18. Enrollment grew steadily

with each passing year. Good ink in The News-Times in 2008 gave the program a helpful boost. This summer, there are over 100 students attending three separate week-long sessions. In addition, a junior camp is aimed at the younger crowd, from kindergarten through 4th grade. Students commute from as far away as Western Massachusetts, and attend for a 5-day week.

The programs are project-based, such that each child or group is given a goal, and then learns to solve it. More experienced campers mentor the newer recruits. A project example is to build a robot which follows a tape track across the floor. An advanced group of repeat students decided to make a “hat snatcher”, to grab a ball cap from a random passerby out the window on the sidewalk below. In the interest of safety, the “passerby” was a PVC-stick-figure mannequin. Every robot will be different. One group constructed theirs from



baby-carriage wheels, angle irons, and motors salvaged from electric car windows, all controlled by a microcontroller.

Youngsters learn mechanical construction skills, electrical wiring, interfacing, programming, ultrasonic range-finding, and more. There are different levels of programming tools for the microcontroller based robots, from a graphical Lego language through a C-like language used on Arduino microcontrollers.

The “and Beyond” covers a wide variety of wherever the kids’ imaginations will lead them. These might be structures built from marshmallows and Popsicle sticks. Newspaper and duct-tape provide a medium to build a cross-braced structure. One group lamented that they had no cold-storage for their brought-lunches, so they constructed a “refrigerator” using thermo-electric solid-state devices. An egg-drop project builds safety structures around an egg so that it should not break when dropped. Of course, there are a few failed attempts and broken eggs, but there is always a learning process.

Robotics and Beyond is now a 501(c)(3) organization, with office space leased in New Milford. They have received accolades from industry, as well as recommendations from NASA and the NSF. Mike and Paul are planning to make these activities their full-time careers. See their web site at <http://www.roboticsandbeyond.com>.

Meeting Preview

Google Apps, Google Voice and Google+

By Lisa Leifels

FOURTEEN YEARS HAVE passed since Google was founded in 1998, and it's hard to remember how challenging it once was to find what you needed on the internet. Google has grown into a mature company since then that now offers a wide range of products beyond the company's famous search engine. Google Apps, Google Voice and Google+ are a few of Google's other products that you will have the opportunity to learn more about at the September General Meeting.

Would you like to have access to your email, calendar and documents from any location on more than one of your devices? If so then you may want to find out more about what Google Apps has to offer. Google Apps offers a very capable collection of tools including Gmail and Google

Calendar, which are both available for free. Google Docs is a strong collaboration tool that gives you the ability to create and edit documents, spreadsheets, and presentations.

Are you interested in consolidating your cell, home, and work numbers into a single phone number? Google Voice lets you do this and manage how each call is handled through a powerful online service. Some of the other features included in Google Voice are greetings that can be personalized by caller, and voicemails that can be transcribed and sent as text messages or emails to your cell phone. You can also make inexpensive international calls directly from your mobile device, and U.S. numbers are free.

Google+ is now more than a year old

and has 250 million registered users. It is available as a website and on mobile devices, and lets you share and connect with family and friends and follow interesting people. This is your chance to learn how Google+ can be used to create a social identity across the web.

Who could possibly be better to teach us about Google's products than Millicent Branca, who serves as Google's product specialist in their New York City office. You certainly don't want to miss out on the September 4, 2012 presentation, so don't forget to mark the date on your calendar.

DACS meetings are held at the Danbury Hospital auditorium (go to www.dacs.org to find directions and parking info). Activities begin at 6:30 p.m. with registration and casual networking. The meeting starts at 7:00 p.m. with a question and answer period (Ask DACS), followed by announcements and a short break. The featured evening presentation begins at 8:00. The meeting is scheduled to adjourn at 9:30 p.m. DACS General Meetings are free and open to the public. Members and prior attendees are encouraged to extend invitations to anyone interested in this topic.

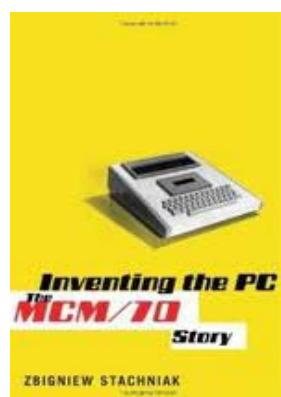
Book Review

Alternative Beginnings

By Jim Scheef

Inventing the PC, The MCM/70 Story, by Zbigniew Stachniac. 2011, McGill-Queen's University Press, ISBN: 978-0-7735-3852-8

DID YOU KNOW that the personal computer was invented in 1973 in Canada? That would be more than a year before the now famous Popular Electronics cover article about the MITS Altair 8800. Author Zbigniew Stachniac has some



impressive evidence for this astonishing claim - he was there when it happened. The company was called Micro Computer Machines, or MCM, and was based in Toronto, Canada. The machine was originally based on the Intel 8008 but switched to the

8080 microprocessor (as used in the Altair) and ran APL from ROM. With one or two built-in tape drives for storage the machine was so sophisticated that IBM rushed a competitor to market with almost identical specs (the IBM 5100 - wikipedia.org/wiki/IBM_5100). For more details on the MCM/70, I refer you to the appropriate article on Wikipedia (wikipedia.org/wiki/MCM/70).

So why aren't we using MCM computers today? There seem to be many reasons but my pick would be the fact that MCM developed a case of corporate paralysis that prevented any rational marketing effort and the company focused on Europe rather than the US. The story is an interesting one and the first chapters start with the state of the computer industry in the late '60's when the increasing popularity of mini-computers like the DEC PDP-8 made computers more accessible in business and research. The hobbyists in the San Francisco Bay area were not the only people to realize the potential for a computer that could affordably be dedicated to one person - a personal computer. The story continues with the founding of MCM as a company to develop such a machine, but unfortunately, as the chapters unfold, the book becomes almost impossible to read. This book will interest hard-core computer historians and possibly APL (a programming language - really!) enthusiasts as there is a sub-story about how APL became the language built into the computer. The computers that did sell went primarily to organizations engaged in actuarial and statistical analysis where APL shines.

It's always really fun and refreshing to find a newly published book on the history of the computer industry, and

especially about a computer hitherto completely unknown. The book is available from Amazon, Walmart and abebooks.com. Because it is still in print, the book is not available at the normally steep discounts to which we are accustomed.

Membership has its Privileges!

Become a member and support DACS. Each member has access to the Community Forum, where they can post questions, the newsletter online in PDF form, group related news via email, SIG meetings, online forums, and any group-only related events, promotions, or activities. There is also an option to receive a mailed newsletter. For information on how to join DACS, see <http://www.dacs.org/aboutdacs/joining.htm>.



DACS Community Forum

Ever wanted to ask a question and get an answer without waiting for the next general meeting? How about sharing news with other DACS members, or communicating with fellow participants in a SIG you attend?

The DACS Community Forum (<http://www.dacs.org/forum/>) is another benefit of being a DACS member, and it's open 24/7. Once you register there you'll be able to post questions, answers, and comments. You can even set up an RSS subscription to be notified of updates to the forums.

Try out the DACS forum today!

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"I heard it was a rogue program trader."

Special Interest Groups

SIG NOTES: September 2012

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

Contact: Bruce Preston, 203 431-2920 (bpreston@dacs.org).

Meets on 2nd Tuesday, 7p.m., by virtual connection.

Next meeting: Sep 11 (check Website for technical details)

Apple. Focuses on all aspects of the Mac and iPhone operating systems.

Contact: Richard Corzo (macsig@dacs.org).

Meets 1st Thursday, 7 p.m. at DACS Resource Center.

Next Meeting: Sep 6

Digital Imaging. All about digital cameras, retouching, and printing using various programs.

Contact: Ken Graff at 203 648-9747 (graffxx@gmail.com). Meets last Wednesday, 7 p.m. at the DACS Resource Center.

Next Meeting: Sep 26

Drupal. Covers all things on Drupal, the open source content management system (CMS).

Contact: Jim Scheef (jscheef@dacs.org).

Meets on the second Thursday at 7:00 p.m. at the DACS Resource Center, or go to the DACS Community Forum (<http://www.dacs.org/forum/>) within the Members only area.

Next meeting: Sep 13

Jobs. Networking and jobs search

Contact: Charles Bovaird, 203-792-7881 (aam@mags.net).

Go to DACS Community Forum (<http://forum.dacs.org> for job listings.

Linux. Provides Help in installing and maintaining the Linux operating system. Also of interest to Apple owners using OS X.

Contact: Dave Mawdsley, linuxsig@dacs.org

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

Next Meeting: Sep 19

Mobile Devices. Focuses on smartphones, tablets, and e-readers of all makes and models.

Contact: Richard Corzo and Jim Scheef (Mobilesig@dacs.org)

Meets 4th Thursday, 7 p.m. at the DACS Resource Center

Next Meeting: Sep 27

PC Maintenance. Review of PC hardware and OpSys maintenance and use.

Contact: Charles Bovaird, 203-792-7881 (aam@mags.net).

Go to DACS Community Forum (<http://forum.dacs.org>).

Server. Explores Back Office server and client applications, including Win NT Servers and MS Outlook. SIG is on hiatus and presently merged into the Drupal SIG.

Contact: Jim Scheef (jscheef@teleAprksys.com), or go to the DACS Community Forum: <http://www.dacs.org/forum/>, within the Members-only area

Web Design and DTP. Learn about Adobe software for web, graphics and desktop publishing.

Contact: Annette van Ommeren (avo@annagraphics.com).

Meets 3rd Tuesday, 7-9 p.m. at the DACS Resource Center.

Next Meeting: Sep 18

Let's join heads!

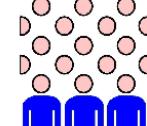
Do you have a special technology interest you would like to share or learn more about? Join a DACS SIG or start one. You don't have to be a nerd or a guru — just have a curiosity for what's out there

and an interest in sharing or discovering with others like you. Just send an e-mail to dacsprez@dacs.org, or talk to one of our officers at the next meeting, and say something like "I want to start a SIG!" or "Wouldn't it be nice if we had a SIG on . . .?"



September 2012

Danbury Area Computer Society

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PC Maintenance

Parted Magic

By Dick Maybach

ALTHOUGH MODERN operating systems are robust, sometimes they need maintenance, either to repair problems or because we want to make changes. And many times the things we want to do are not possible within the operating system, either because the tools aren't available or because the operations can't take place while the system is live. One solution is to use a live-CD, which is an operating system that boots directly from a CD-ROM or a USB memory stick and doesn't use the hard disk at all. This has the advantage that you can perform any operation you like on the dormant hard disk. The situation is similar to doing an autopsy. Doing the same thing in an operating system that is running from the hard disk is like trying to operate on a patient who is awake. My current favorite maintenance tool is Parted Magic, <http://www.partedmagic.com>, which is small enough (187 Mbytes) to fit comfortably on a CD-ROM or a USB memory stick. See the Web page for instructions on how to create either.

Parted Magic requires a computer with at least an Intel PII compatible processor and 175MB of RAM, although it will run much faster if there are 400 MB or more. You will have problems if your computer

has peripherals that need proprietary drivers, for example, some wireless keyboards and mice. As it boots, you will be asked a couple of questions, but I've found that accepting the defaults works, then you will see the screen below (figure 1).

A few tools appear as desktop icons, but most are in menus that you can access through the start button in the lower left corner. To its right are icons to mount devices, use the command line, get help, and switch between desktops. At the far right of the menu bar are icons for the network status, sound volume, and clock. The display on the right of the main screen shows the load on the PC, CPU and RAM usage, as well as the programs that are using the most processor and RAM resources. Two of the tools on the desktop are particularly useful: the File Manager and the Partition Editor (GParted). The screenshot below shows the latter in operation.

Here we've selected an NTFS partition, which (among other things) we could resize. GParted can operate on Microsoft, Apple, and Linux partitions. Other partition tools allow you to create a file containing an image of an entire partition or to clone a disk, copy everything on a disk to different one (usually done when you

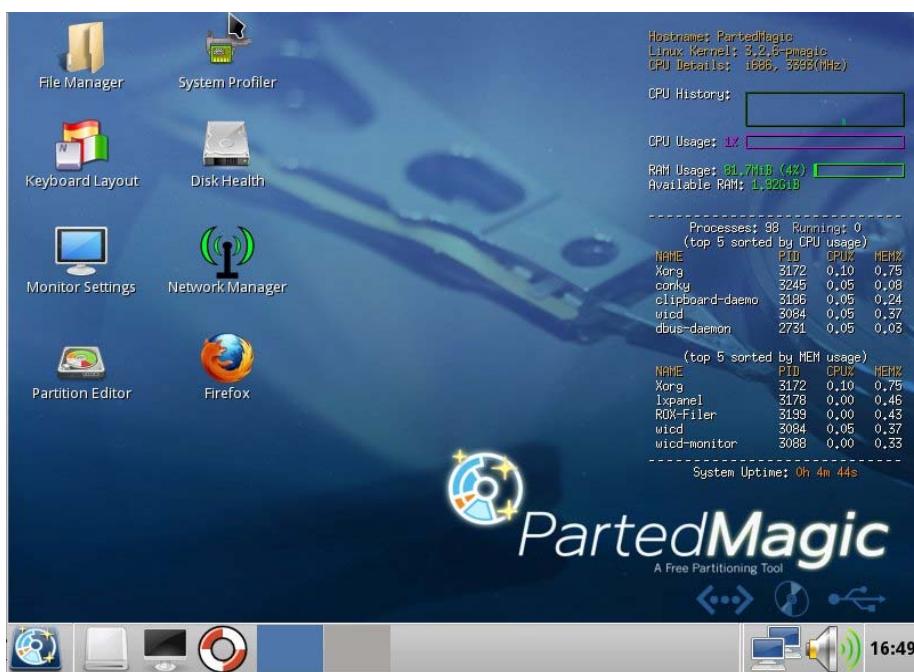
want to replace your hard disk with a larger one). An important tool that few people use is one that securely erases a hard disk. You should always do this before disposing of a PC, since deleting files and even partitions does not really remove the information. A determined person, with a lot of time could recover your passwords and other sensitive data. (See the next paragraph.)

There are many tools to recover deleted files, rescue files from damaged disks, and replace boot loaders and boot records, but only for Linux and Microsoft file systems. Some of these are quite specialized, and it will take some study to determine the best one for each case. Many are called from the command-line, which means further study before you can use them effectively. Since all the documentation is on-line, using Parted Magic requires Internet access. Be careful, especially when trying to correct serious problems; the safe approach here is to clone the disk and perform the surgery on the copy. There is also a virus detector, but it detects only; it can't disinfect files.

An important program is chntpw, which resets Windows passwords. It's not uncommon for people to forget their passwords, which locks them out of their own PCs; I've done this myself. The safe way to use this is to remove the password completely, and then log back into Windows to set a new one. Note that some of the upper-end Windows versions include the ability to encrypt files and folders and resetting their passwords will render these unreadable. If you need only to recover a few files, you needn't reset the password. All of Windows' files are accessible from Parted Magic, unless they've been encrypted; just copy them onto a different medium. (Keep this in mind before you leave your laptop alone). A similar program, cmospwd, recovers CMOS setup passwords, which can be helpful for dealing with used PCs. By the way, you don't need special tools to reset Linux passwords, which you can do from the command line with standard commands.

Also included are programs to identify, benchmark, and test the hardware, including comprehensive RAM and disk tests. The screenshots at right show the peripheral devices (figure 2) and details on the Host bridge (figure 3). You can learn a lot about your PC just by poking about (and, of course, searching the Internet for what the terms mean).

I recently gave my 10- and 11-year-old grandchildren netbooks. The computers came with Windows 7 installed, but I wanted to install Linux, because there are many educational programs for it and because it's much more resistant to malware. (My 9 year-old grandson, at the advice of one of his



NAME	PID	CPU%	MEM%
Xorg	3172	0.10	0.75
corky	3249	0.05	0.08
clipboard-daemon	3186	0.05	0.24
wicd	3084	0.05	0.37
dbus-daemon	2731	0.05	0.03

NAME	PID	CPU%	MEM%
Xorg	3172	0.10	0.75
Ixpanel	3178	0.00	0.46
RDX-Filer	3199	0.00	0.43
wicd	3084	0.05	0.37
wicd-monitor	3088	0.00	0.33

System Uptime: 0h 4m 44s

PartedMagic
A Free Partitioning Tool



Figure 1

friends, installed a free game on his mother's laptop, and it took her a lot of effort to remove the free virus that was included. I'd like him to survive to see 10.) The netbooks had 350-GByte hard disks, so there was plenty of room for both Windows and Linux. It would have been easy to replace Windows with Linux, but the genes I inherited from my Scotch grandmother wouldn't let me delete the Windows I had paid for. Since the netbooks have no CD/DVD drive, I installed Parted Magic on a USB memory stick and used GParted to reduce the Windows partition to 100 GBytes, leaving 200 GBytes for Linux; the remaining 50 GBytes is for a recovery partition. After configuring Win-

dows and installing Linux, I made images of both partitions using the command-line program fsarchiver. (There are several partition imaging tools available, but this one was the best for my use, because it could handle both NTFS and Linux file systems.)

For another example, a friend's son, by downloading pirated songs, infected his folks' PC to the extent that it wouldn't boot. Booting Parted Magic and using the ClamAV anti-virus tool I identified the infected song files, but Windows was hopelessly corrupted. I was able to move all the user data onto an external disk, so after the PC was restored to its as-delivered state, I could restore the data (minus the infected

songs), thus converting a disaster into a nuisance.

If you're reading this, you probably serve as the computer support person for your friends and family. Parted Magic provides many tools to help you do this, but it's up to you to learn how to use them.

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SIG Notes, Cont. from page 3

our SharePoint Team site is <https://dacs.sharepoint.com/>. Andy, Lisa, Elizabeth, Richard, Jim have all been on the site. BOD members who have not installed the provided Office 2010 should look into it.

5. Bruce Preston has worked with AnyMeeting.com and with Microsoft Lync. The combined July/August MS Access SIG meeting only had two attendees so it was not a good test for Lync. He will try again with the September SIG meeting.

New Business

1. Do we want to put up another DACS display at the Danbury Library in September? Last year we did this, and had some number of pamphlets distributed, and reminded the library of our existence, but it's not clear we got any new visitors or members from this effort. We will look into Newtown instead. We need volunteers to put together the display, and notify Danbury that we will not be displaying this year. The flyer needs to be modified to reflect changes in SIGs (added and discontinued.)

2. Jim got a quote from Comcast for cable Internet to the Resource Center. It was more expensive than our current DSL service. We replaced the DSL modem and Wi-Fi access point. We are still using the Cisco router, but have removed the server which had been providing the DHCP service. It was stable for the duration of the BOD meeting.

3. Should we consider again joining meetup.com? Who could post our meetings if we decide to join? Probably not until we get consistent updates on Facebook, LinkedIn, and perhaps the membership/greeter position filled.

Meeting was adjourned at: 9:00 PM

—Bruce Preston

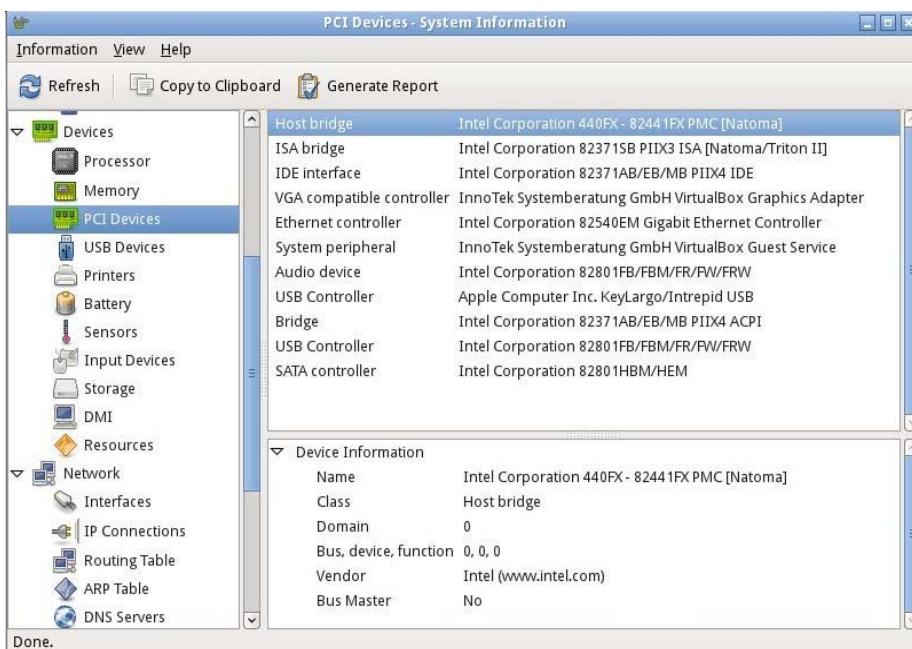


Figure 2

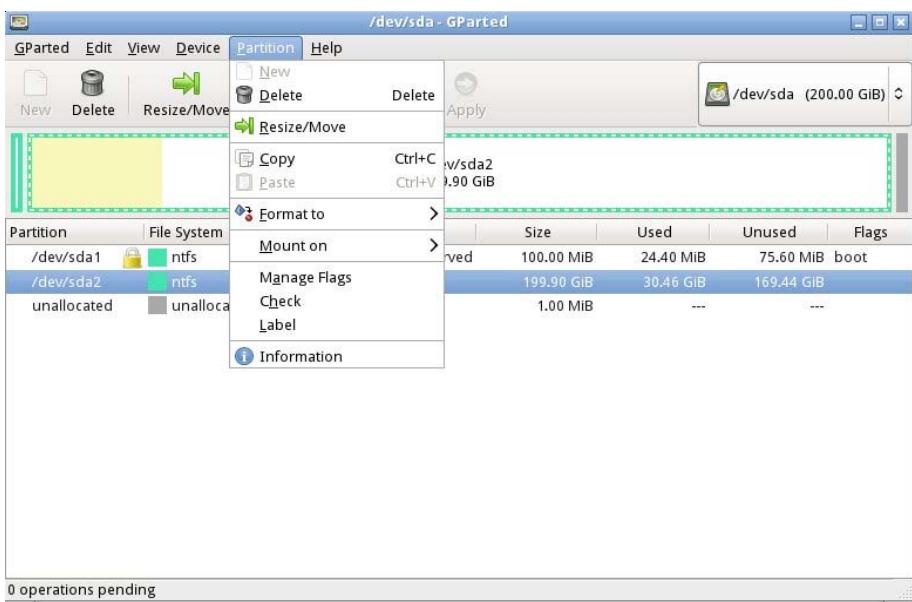


Figure 3

Ask DACS

August, 2012

Moderated and reported by Jim Scheef

WE WELCOME QUESTIONS FROM the floor at the start of our General Meetings. The role of moderator is to try to guide the discussion to a likely solution to the problem. In addition, members who are not able to attend the General meeting may submit questions to askdacs@dacs.org. We will ask the question for you and post the reply in *dacs.doc* and on *dacs.org*. Please provide as much information as possible, since we can't probe during the session.

Q - Using Firefox on XP, the links in some websites and particularly in Google search results, I find that my computer is being redirected to unwanted and potentially dangerous websites.

A - There is known malware that creates this condition. Other possibilities include a conflict between Firefox Add-ons (Extensions and/or Plugins) and even malicious Firefox extensions, which are installed without your knowledge. An easy way to test for this more benign condition is to start Firefox in "Safe Mode" which disables all add-ons. At the meeting, I suggested disabling all Extensions and Add-ons in Firefox, but the safe-mode switch is easier for an initial test. Look for a Safe Mode shortcut in the Mozilla Firefox folder in your Start Menu, or if there is none, open a command window in the Firefox program folder (usually "C:\Program Files (x86)\Mozilla Firefox") and type "firefox.exe -safe-mode" to start in safe mode. If the problem disappears, then one or more add-ons is to blame. In that case, you must manually disable all extensions and plugins, retest and then re-enable the plugins and extensions one or two at the time until you find the culprit. If this seems like too much work, then uninstall Firefox and then reinstall the latest version. Of course, you then must reinstall your add-ons to return to your previous configuration.

If the Safe Mode test did not cure the redirect problem, then you have malware. My post-meeting research found references to several items including a root-kit. The MyWebSearch toolbar is known to be a browser hijack that parades in plain view. Although a few years old, the page at tinyurl.com/mobuxk has

removal instructions that involve editing the registry. eHow.com has instructions (tinyurl.com/92s2htz) on removing the TDSS rootkit using the TDSSKiller tool from Kaspersky (tinyurl.com/yzdhuoz).

A word to the wise: If you must install any browser toolbar, limit it to one single toolbar from a "reputable source" like Yahoo, Google or Bing. Adobe downloads always include "a little something extra" if you do not uncheck an option box on the Adobe website; you must be vigilant.

Q - I would like to move the contacts in my Android cellphone from Verizon Backup Assistant to Google. Does anyone know how to do this?

A - There is an export function in Backup Assistant that can output a CSV file which can then be imported into Google Contacts. Once upon a time, Google Contacts was a separate "application"; it is now a part of Gmail. Since Google is always willing to suck up more information, it is probably possible to import "phone contacts" into Google on the phone, but a quick perusal did not find such a function on my Droid 3 phone. Other discussion centered on how to manage the contact storage on the phone. Some phones allow user control over where the contacts are stored: on the SIM card or an SD card. Since very few Verizon phones have a SIM card, the storage is either phone storage or an SD card. On my phone I found an export function in the Contacts app that would create a CSV file on the SD card. When you move the SD card to the new phone the contacts can be imported there. So we have methods on both the phone and the web (machine agnostic).

Q - Following the announcement about compromised Yahoo passwords I changed my Yahoo password. Now I can't get my phone to accept the new password to resume synchronizing email to the phone. This is in the native Android email client and I have already deleted the account and reentered it from scratch. It still does not work. Is there a magic incantation I can use to make it work?

A - A member suggested entering the password on the carrier's (Verizon) website. I tried this the next day and, unfortunately, there is no place for passwords other than the one for my Verizon account. Too bad. At this point my work-around has been to set up Yahoo email in K-9 Mail, a third-party app with some advantages and some disadvantages. The advantages include more advanced email handling, while the primary disadvantage for me is that it does not yet work with Exchange 2010. For the time being I am condemned to multiple email clients.

Q - Using Firefox, a page on Google that I use displays two menus - one on top of the other - which makes them impossible to use. What causes this and what can I do to fix it?

A - The problem is that the page is not being rendered correctly. Generally, this effect is seen when some part of the CSS (cascading style sheets) is not applied correctly. The member was running the NoScript extension for Firefox, which prevents JavaScript from executing. This was the likely cause of the mis-formatted page. Most of the discussion for this question was too faint to be heard on the recording. Some of the discussion mentioned clearing the browser cache, history, etc. Most large sites like Google load scripts from many places and some of those scripts load CSS files to format the content. By blocking those scripts, the code needed to correctly format the page never reaches the browser, which results in the "broken" page. When using NoScript, the goal is to block malicious scripts and any that just track your progress around the web, while allowing the scripts that bring in content and formatting. This is a

trial and error learning process that takes some time.

D - There was a question about using map coordinates from Google Maps or similar sites. The question was too faint to be heard on the recording, but the discussion led a member to mention the website *FreeMapTools.com* which offers a plethora of cool tools that are just too good not to mention. For example, the "Meeting Centre of Gravity for Postcodes" allows you to enter a series of zip codes and then get a map that shows a meeting

location where everyone drives the same distance. Enjoy.

Q - After generating driving directions on Google Maps, I want to print the directions along with a large map. The directions will print, but no map is printed. What's wrong?

A - This is an unusual problem that is likely caused by some setting in the computer or printer - or possibly in the user's Google profile. One member suggested turning on the option to print background images, but I think a more likely cause is some setting stored in Google. If this

behavior changes when you log out of Google, then look for a configuration setting within Google. We ran out of time for a thorough discussion.

[Disclaimer: Ask DACS questions come from members by email or from the audience attending the general meeting. Answers are suggestions offered by meeting attendees and represent a consensus of those responding. DACS offers no warranty as to the correctness of the answers and anyone following these suggestions or answers does so at their own risk. In other words, we could be totally wrong!]

Audio/Video

The Problem: Muffled Sound

By Steve Baer,

Lately when I'm with groups of friends there is an increasing chance that some subset of people will complain to me about how bad TV and DVD sound is getting, and how hard it is at times to understand the dialog. I have been noticing this myself and decided to try to understand what is happening. There are several things going on, all of which conspire against us.

1 - As we get older our ears become less able, especially at higher frequencies. This is called Presbycusis, and there is good information on it on the web. Coming from Bell Labs, I learned about this almost 50 years ago, but I never thought it would apply to me!

2 - Many of the newer flat-screen TV's have very small bezels, and hence have small speakers or worse, put them at the sides or rear. When we put these sets in cabinets, or bookcases, the sound - especially the high frequencies, gets absorbed in the cabinets.

3 - Many DVDs have a very large dynamic range, the difference between the softest and loudest parts. Hence, in order to avoid being blown away during a car chase or explosions, we lower the volume overall. Then at the dialog passages, the sound is too low for our older ears.

4 - Many new DVDs are encoded with multi-channel sound. When you play the DVD, you probably have seen the setup menu where the multi-channel options are



labeled with terms such as: 5.1, 6.1, 7.1, DTS, THX, etc. This refers to the number of channels of sound that are in the film, if you have the equipment to decode and the right number of speakers. (The .1 represents the sub-woofer channel.) One of these channels is the center channel that usually carries most of the dialog.

If you have made an incorrect selection on the DVD setup menu or an external amplifier, and are trying to play back multichannel sound through a system without all the multi-channel speakers, you will miss a lot of the audio. If you are watching a movie through an ordinary TV without multi-channel sound capability, be sure to pick the appropriate audio option on the movie setup menu.

Some Solutions

There are some ways around these problems:

1 - Many people use a product such as "TV Ears" which wirelessly puts the sound into stethoscope type earphones that they wear. I have tried these, and they work extremely well. However, they are expensive and I have found them to be mechanically fragile. I have already had to repair two sets for friends - both failing in the same way.

(Perhaps newer models are better made.) Two people would also require two sets. Be sure that you understand where

the base station will plug in to your system in order to broadcast the audio to the stethoscope part.

2 - Several of my friends have supplemented the flimsy and poorly aimed speakers in their TVs with sound bars such as shown in the figure below. This is a Vizio model available from Wal-Mart for about \$100. This does not solve the multi-channel problem, but for one or two channel sound, with the speakers facing the listener, they work amazingly well.

In my experience, good one or two channel sound is far superior to poor multi-channel sound. I heard this particular sound bar unit a few nights ago and I was amazed at the clarity. It is an active speaker, meaning that it has its own small amplifier built in. It can receive audio input from your DVD player or your TV set via red (right) and white (left) type of standard RCA cables. Some sound bars also have digital inputs for more complex setups.

3 - If you use an amplifier to drive a multi-channel speaker system, make sure that the center channel speaker is aimed, directly firing at the listener. Also raise the treble to make up for your possible high frequency loss from Presbycusis.

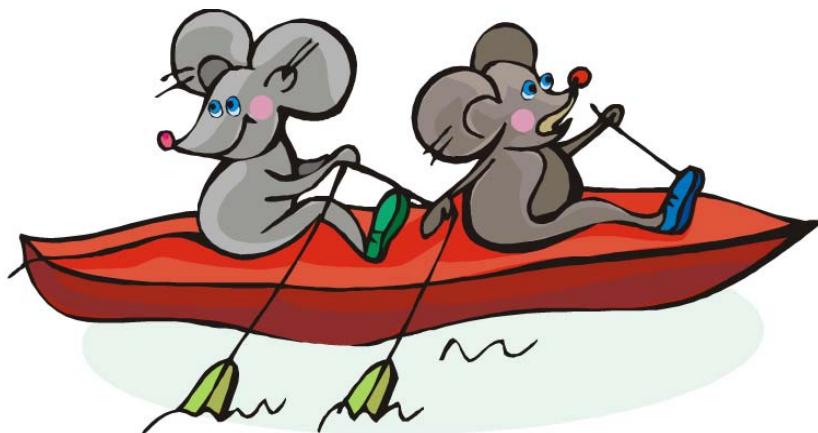
Finally, many amplifiers will have a compression setting that minimizes the differences between loud and soft passages. Make sure that you engage that feature. I recently did these three things in my system, providing a large improvement in intelligibility.

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