

Next Meeting:

Tuesday, February 5
Danbury Hospital



Store
Your
Files
Safely
and
Securely:

in the Cloud

Directors' Notes

A meeting of your board of directors was held on Wednesday, January 9, 2013. The meeting was called to order at 7:10 PM.

Attending were Richard Corzo, Richard Teasdale, Lisa Leifels, Bill Saturno, Jim Sheef, Annette van Ommeren, Bruce Preston, Andy Woodruff. Visitor: Charlie Bovaird.

The minutes of Last Meeting were accepted.

Treasurer's Report

DACS Treasurer's Report for December, 2012	
Balance on hand 12/1/12	\$4,743.32
INCOME	
Dues	\$549.88
Bank Interest	\$0.21
Total Income:	\$550.09
EXPENSES	
Resource Center Phone	\$80.59
Newsletter Postage	\$44.85
Newsletter Printing	\$85.00
Renewal Letter Postage	\$10.88
Total Expenses:	\$221.32
Balance on hand 12/31/12	\$5,072.09

Membership Report

General Meetings

NOV 6 - Mobile Apps - Joe Mazzeo
 DEC 4 - Windows 8 - Carolyn Bighinatti
 Jan 2 Marc Polansky - Amateur Astronomy

	NOV	DEC	JAN
Paying Members	129	129	124
w/ e-mail addresses	116	116	109
New Members	0	0	1
DACS.DOC			
Printed	100	100	100
Mailed	71	69	68
Mailed - Member	51	49	48
Mailed - Other	6	6	6
Mailed - Free Library	14	14	14
Attendance			
Seat Count	27	39	27
Members Signed-In	26	43	17
Visitors Signed-In	1	7	10

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Old Business

1. General meetings

- Wednesday, January 2: Marc Polansky from McCarthy Observatory-Astronomy and Computers at New Milford High School. Preview: Allan Ostergren, Review: Richard Teasdale
- February 5: Drew Kwashnak-Cloud Storage Services. Preview: Bill Saturno, Review: Richard Corzo
- March 5: Toni McKeen-Genealogy. Preview: Bruce Preston, Review: Richard Teasdale. Jim will not be available for AskDACS at the meeting - Bill will cover.
- April 2: Laura Nute of Lynda.com and Kevin Corcoran of CTDLC.org-Online Learning. Preview: Elizabeth Talian, Review: Annette van Ommeren (tentative)
- May 7: John Patrick-State of the Internet. Need to review publicity in February. Preview: _____, Review: _____
- June 4: Jennifer M. Scott-Twitter. Preview: Lisa Leifels Review: _____
- July 2: Bruce will do PagePlus X6 - Desktop Publishing.

Possible future topics:

- Presentation on Facebook. Jim is working on how to best use Facebook as an organization, and might come up with a presentation on individuals may use Facebook.
- Jeff Robbins-Drupal expert. Jeff is interested in doing a presentation but is not able to commit to a date at this time. Andy contacted him this month to let him know our calendar is full the first half of this year. Andy will follow up in May and ask that he let us know when he will be near the area. (He resides in Rhode Island.) This is a "long shot" as to a presentation.
- Years ago we did "Surfin' Safari" as a segment about interesting websites. Perhaps now we could do something similar with mobile devices - smartphone and tablets - what apps are found to be interesting, entertaining, etc. This could be a 'forum' type meeting with multiple presenters for a full session, or it could be a small segment after AskDACS. Investigate the eBook at Apple iTunes store - "The Telegraph: 500 Must Have Apps"
- Approach Dr. John Murphy, President & CEO of Danbury Hospital, about doing a presentation on Electronic Medical Records, etc. - Danbury Hospital is leading edge on this topic. Jim will approach.

Directors' Notes, Cont. on page 3

Membership Information

dacs.doc, ISSN 1084-6573, is published monthly by the Danbury Area Computer Society, 27 Ole Musket Lane, Danbury, CT 06810-8232. Annual subscription rates: \$45 to regular members, \$30 electronic access (included in dues).

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

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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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dacs.doc is prepared using PageMaker 7.0 and Acrobat 9.0. Software packages used to publish dacs.doc include: Microsoft Windows 7, Office 2007, TrueType fonts, Calendar Creator 8.0 for Windows. Internet access provided by Mags.net

Applications & Hardware to enhance dacs.doc are welcome.



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Apple User Group

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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

- Office 2013 sometime this fall?
- Microsoft Surface Windows Pro (the Intel-based Microsoft tablet that will run Windows Applications.

2. Open positions

- Richard has found a member who appears to be willing to fill the membership chairperson/greeter position. We are awaiting confirmation. The greeter has these responsibilities:

- Sign in members
- Sign in visitors, ask how they found us
- Accept dues
- Distribute raffle tickets

- Need a new APCUG representative to replace Patrick Libert - primarily to post to the APCUG website, field questions, receive quarterly postings, door prizes, etc. We also need a liaison with TechSoup - the fulfillment operation used by many software vendors for distribution to non-profits. The TechSoup function is to receive distributions of product announcements and distribute to the Board. This person would also be responsible for placing orders.

- In addition our general meeting, we continue to post some of our SIG meetings on Meetup.

4. "Beginners" Workshop? Workshop could be held from time to time. Jim volunteered to do a workshop and Charlie volunteered to assist. Jim and Charlie have scheduled Feb. 27th. It is initially intended to be only offered to members.

5. Held the Windows 8 workshop at the Microsoft Store on January 7. About 20 attended including one or more visitors.

6. We switched from our former DSL provider to AT&T. Download speed is definitely faster, measured at about 5 Mbps. We need to monitor our next phone bill and make sure we don't get billed by our old provider.

7. Due to a schedule conflict, Richard Corzo has changed the Apple SIG to the 2nd Monday of the month for the next 3 months.

New Business:

Richard Corzo would like to follow precedent and step down as president of DACS upon completion of his 3rd year in office. Officer elections are held by the board in March.

Adjourned at 8:35 PM

—Bruce Preston

Meeting Review

Star Tech

The Universe at Your Fingertips

By Richard Teasdale

THE JOHN J. McCarthy Observatory (JJMO) is an astronomical observatory located on the grounds of the New Milford High School. At the January general meeting, DACS members and visi-



Galileo's garden and sun disk

tors were treated to a detailed presentation on the operations of the observatory and the central role of its computers. The presentation was given by Marc Polansky, a volunteer at the observatory, supported by Bob Lambert, JJMO's Director of Volunteers. The evening provided a fascinating portrait of how much serious astronomy can be done by a small observatory run by amateurs and volunteers.

After a brief biographical introduction, Marc gave an overview of the computer equipment in use at JJMO. "Warp" is the image processing computer, which runs various image processing and celestial simulation software, much of it open-source. "Spock" is the machine that controls the telescopes and cameras, and runs software to control and rotate the dome of the observatory. "Data" is the administrative computer. Marc also described the functions of more specialized machines, the data network, the server on which observational data are stored, and the time server, which is critical to the accuracy of many astronomical observations.

Marc described the software used on the Spock telescope-control computer. The Sky 6 is a virtual planetarium program which is used to orient the telescopes to specific points in the sky. DomePro controls the observatory's dome so that the opening is always aligned with the telescopes. CCDSoft operates the cameras and filters, and transfers observational data to the server. Skynix captures video streams from a webcam.

The JJMO uses three telescopes for astronomical observations. There is a

Meade 16-inch reflector, a Takahashi 106mm refractor, and a Meade 5-inch refractor. Reflecting telescopes use a concave mirror to focus the light received from the target, while refractors use a lens. The numbers refer to the diameter or aperture of the mirror or lens. The larger the aperture of the telescope, the greater its capacity to collect light and thus the greater its resolution and the further out into space it can potentially "see".

One of the specialized computers used by JJMO is built into the telescope mount. Its main purpose is to continuously re-adjust the orientation of the telescopes, so that an object remains steady in the field of view and does not "drift" with the rotation of the Earth. The same purpose is served more accurately by another specialized computer, the STV Autoguider, which uses a small CCD camera to monitor particular stars in the field of view and issue commands to the telescope mount to correct for drift. Marc showed us the value of the Autoguider by displaying images of a galaxy taken with and without it turned on, the "with" image being markedly clearer.

The Warp computer runs various software to process images captured by the telescopes. Marc gave us a detailed description of the steps involved in capturing and pro-

cessing an image - a process that is not as straightforward as one might think.

We saw a number of examples of astronomical images produced at JJMO. In order to illustrate the difference between the Meade 16-inch and Takahashi telescopes, Marc showed us images of the Triangulum spiral galaxy taken with each. He explained the use of filters and the process called "binning", an image enhancement technique which can produce brighter images.

Marc explained the significance of the different colors seen in images of astronomical objects - basically color correlates with temperature - blue objects are hot and red are (relatively) cool. The temperature of a star indicates much about its age and position in the stellar life-cycle.

To illustrate the results that image processing can produce, Marc gave us a slide show of some of his favorite images produced at JJMO, including the Eastern Veil nebula, the Pelican nebula, the Dumbbell nebula, the Running Man nebula, and the Horsehead nebula.

JJMO is an active player in the observation of asteroids, a.k.a. minor planets, within earth's solar system. Observatories world-wide contribute to an online database of objects (www.minorplanetcenter.net) that are observed to be moving relative to the stars. These objects are then subject to further scrutiny by anyone in order to elucidate their sizes, orbits, and other characteristics. JJMO is a member of the International Astronomical Union (IAU) and has the distinction of having received an observatory code from the IAU. Codes are given only to those obser-



Orion Molecular Cloud Complex, 1,500 light years from Earth (Flame Nebula at bottom left and Horsehead Nebula at center right). Image was processed with multiple exposures at JJMO.

vatories which have demonstrated the reliability of their data and there are only about 1,100 such world-wide. JJMO uses software called Astrometrica to analyze images of minor planet objects and to prepare submissions to the Minor Planet Center database. This is an area of research in which JJMO's time server plays a critical role, because of the need for accuracy of the time measurements associated with observations.

Another area of research in which JJMO participates is the search for exoplanets, i.e. planets that orbit other stars. There has been tremendous growth in this field in recent years and it now constitutes one of the most exciting areas in all of science. Detection of exoplanets is usually based on the observation of very slight reductions in the amount of light received from a star as a planet passes between it and the earth. The science of detecting these tiny reductions is called photometry.

Marc concluded his excellent presentation with an overview of the JJMO website (www.mccarthyobservatory.org).

Following the presentation, Bob Lambert gave us a guided tour of the observatory. Members had the opportunity to observe the planet Saturn via the Takahashi telescope. Although "seeing" conditions that night were poor, we easily saw Saturn's rings.

Members who would like more information about JJMO are invited to attend a public open house, which is held on the second Saturday evening of each month, at the observatory.



Telescopes: Meade LX200 16" Schmidt-Cassegrain, Takahashi FSQ-106 Refractor

Meeting Preview

Cloud Storage Devices/Services

by Bill Saturno

WE CONSTANTLY DEPEND on our computers to save the hundreds of hours of accumulated work we produce each year. But are those files truly safe from loss or damage? It begs the question; are you better served having your files stored off-site instead of saved at your home or workplace? From the terrorist events of 9/11, to Mother Nature's recent fury along the east coast in the form of Super Storm Sandy, there are many examples of how your computer data and local backups may be at severe risk of loss. With this in mind, you may want to revise your storage strategy to include options of saving your files literally off-site on remote servers, often referred to as "cloud" storage.

To help us through the "fog" of various storage options in "the cloud", DACS member and presenter, Drew Kwashnak, will explain what cloud storage actually is, and how it works. Drew works in the computer industry and is a lifelong technology enthusiast. Since getting his own Google Chromebook, which relies heavily on cloud based applications and storage; he has developed a unique perspective and insight into the growing trend of cloud services.

Drew will take a broad look at the many cloud service providers and the various features they include. Individuals and smaller businesses can enjoy cloud storage solutions with little or no money out of pocket. Major computer players, such as Microsoft, Google, Apple, and Ubuntu (Linux) offer cloud storage services that integrate seamlessly with their own systems. In fact, computer users may at times not know whether they are accessing files from their local computers, or directly from the cloud. Besides the major operating system makers, dozens of independent providers (such as Dropbox, SugarSync, SpiderOak, Wuala, Amazon and more) push the boundaries of what cloud storage capabilities are, and the ways in which they can be utilized.

After discussing cloud storage services, Drew will walk the audience through an installation and use of one of the popular storage solutions. This will

allow everyone to better understand how to use cloud storage to their benefit. In addition, Drew will demonstrate his daily use of cloud services as an example of how to integrate cloud storage into one's routine.

Following the presentation, Drew will touch base on alternative data sync services that help manage offsite backup solutions. Afterwards, you will have an opportunity to ask questions about cloud storage benefits and shortcomings. As always, the DACS General Meeting is open to anyone, so be sure to invite your friends and colleagues. From the computer novice to the seasoned PC veteran, we all can benefit by learning how to start or improve their computer storage strategy.



DACS Gets Back to Basics

As a beginner or novice computer user, are you reluctant to speak up at the monthly Ask DACS session because you think your questions are too basic? Do the DACS SIGs seem too techy or tightly focused? Well, your time has come!

On Wednesday, February 27 at 7 PM, we will hold a beginner's workshop at the DACS Resource Center. This workshop is a one-time chance to ask your most basic questions, where there is no embarrassment – just answers. Charlie Bovaird and Jim Scheef will be available to answer any question you might have on how to set up or use your computer.

This workshop is for DACS members – which includes family households. Bring along a laptop, if you have one. Save your questions about mobile technology (tablets and smart phones) for the Mobile Devices SIG the next night, Thursday, Feb. 28th.

Special Interest Groups

SIG NOTES: FEBRUARY 2013

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

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

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

Next meeting: Feb 12 (check Website for technical details)

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

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

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

Next Meeting: Feb 7

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

Contact: Ken Graff at 203 648-9747 (thedigitalwiz@gmail.com).

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

Next Meeting: On hiatus until April, 2013

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: Feb 14

Jobs. Networking and jobs search

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

Go to DACS Community Forum (http://forum.dacs.org/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: Feb 20

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: Feb 28

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.

SIG News & Events

Apple. At the January meeting we took a look at Mac applications that sync with iOS apps. Syncing can take place automatically through Apple's iCloud service, over the Internet through another company's servers, or locally over your Wi-Fi network.

One nice example is the Paprika Recipe Manager (<http://www.paprikaapp.com/>), which in addition to Mac and iOS, is also available on Android devices, even my NOOK Tablet. I started with the NOOK version, which would allow me to follow a recipe in my kitchen on my NOOK Tablet. It has the ability to parse a recipe from various food-related websites into parts, so that ingredients are separated from the directions and even a picture if available. If Paprika doesn't understand how the recipe is formatted on the page, you can manually select and copy sections of the web page and paste them into the parts of the recipe. Since copy and paste doesn't work that well on the NOOK Tablet, I next looked for the Mac version of Paprika in the Mac App Store. With the Mac version, copy and paste works very easily with the mouse and keyboard. You can also more easily enter personal recipes that didn't come from a website. To sync the recipes I already had on the NOOK, I created an account that tied my Mac version and NOOK version together, syncing automatically over the Internet. I then decided it would be convenient to

have the recipes with me when I was grocery shopping, so I bought the iPhone version and synced with the same account.

Another application that syncs with mobile devices is password and personal information manager SplashID (<http://www.splashdata.com/splashid/>), this time locally over your Wi-Fi home network. There is a desktop version for Mac and Windows, as well as apps that run on all sorts of mobile platforms including iPhones and iPads. The information is not stored on the company's servers, so you have to manually sync when your device is on the same local network as your computer.

Linux. Today's meeting included attempted fixes with installs of Ubuntu 12.10 on two computers and talks on Midnight Commander and a 4-wheeled robot (at right).

An Ubuntu 12.10 Desktop CD was supplied to one attendee to use as a Live-CD on an old Presario laptop that failed to use any hard drive. While not ideal, it allowed the continued use of a modern operating system on an old computer.



SIG notes, Cont.on page 9

February 2013

Danbury Area Computer Society

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday																																																																																											
	<div>Jan 2013</div> <table> <tr><td>S</td><td>M</td><td>T</td><td>W</td><td>T</td><td>F</td><td>S</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>6</td><td>7</td><td>8</td><td>9</td><td>10</td><td>11</td><td>12</td></tr> <tr><td>13</td><td>14</td><td>15</td><td>16</td><td>17</td><td>18</td><td>19</td></tr> <tr><td>20</td><td>21</td><td>22</td><td>23</td><td>24</td><td>25</td><td>26</td></tr> <tr><td>27</td><td>28</td><td>29</td><td>30</td><td>31</td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table>		S	M	T	W	T	F	S		1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31			<div>Mar 2013</div> <table> <tr><td>S</td><td>M</td><td>T</td><td>W</td><td>T</td><td>F</td><td>S</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>1</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td><td>8</td><td>9</td></tr> <tr><td>10</td><td>11</td><td>12</td><td>13</td><td>14</td><td>15</td><td>16</td></tr> <tr><td>17</td><td>18</td><td>19</td><td>20</td><td>21</td><td>22</td><td>23</td></tr> <tr><td>24</td><td>25</td><td>26</td><td>27</td><td>28</td><td>29</td><td>30</td></tr> <tr><td>31</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table>		S	M	T	W	T	F	S						1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31							1	2
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10	 <p>Apple 7:00 PM Richard Corzo macsig@dacs.org</p>	 <p>MS Access 7:00 - 9:00 PM Bruce Preston bpreston@dacs.org</p>	13	 <p>Drupal 7:00 PM Jim Scheef 860-355-0034</p>	15	 <p>DACS.DOC Deadline</p>																																																																																											
17		 <p>Web & Graphics Design Annette van Ommeren 7:00 - 9:00 PM avanommeren@dacs.org</p>	 <p>Linux 7:00 - 9:30 PM Dave Mawdsley linuxsig@dacs.org</p>	21	22																																																																																												
24	25	26	 <p>Beginner's Workshop 7:00 PM</p>	 <p>Mobile Devices 7:00 PM Jim Scheef & Richard Corzo mobilesig@dacs.org</p>																																																																																													

Making Connections

Social Media Basics

by Darryl D Eggleston

I'M A LITTLE DISTRAUGHT at the number of my friends who still do not understand social media (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, & Pinterest) — and I don't blame them. The media leaders have done a poor job of differentiating themselves, so let me see if I can help.

I'm a little distraught at the number of my friends who still do not understand social media (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, & Pinterest) — and I don't blame them. The media leaders have done a poor job of differentiating themselves, so let me see if I can help.

Social media are important to you because they provide the thought-leadership today. If it's important, it's on one of those media. And when it's no longer relevant, all reference to it is gone — like it never existed. Think back to that volunteer organization you belonged to in the last century.

Facebook is like the newsletter with articles posted and 'letters to the editor' gauging responses. Its games can be loosely equated to the crossword puzzles and quizzes such newsletters featured. (Of course, the games on Facebook are much more complicated than the puzzles ever were.) But be aware that Facebook can be a trap because once you get 'into it', you're hooked. Started in 2004, by May 2012, Facebook had 900+ million active users, more than half of them using Facebook on a mobile device. The average user spends 405 minutes per month.

Twitter is like the bulletin board where you posted questions, comments, and for sale items. Due to the space limitations, such memos were short. Twitter limits messages to 140 characters (that's not words) or less. Wikipedia says it has 500+ million active users as of 2012, generating over 340 million tweets daily & handling over 1.6 billion search queries per day. The average users spends 89 minutes per month.

YouTube is like the old home movies. Someone was forever trying to get club members to see his vacation film from the visit to Coosa County, Alabama, or points south.

800+ million unique users visit YouTube each month, watching 3 billion hours of video are watched each month. 72 hours of video are uploaded every minute. 70% of its traffic comes from outside the US. Also, 500 years of YouTube videos are watched every day on Facebook, & over 700 YouTube videos are shared on Twitter each minute.

Pinterest is like the scrapbook some

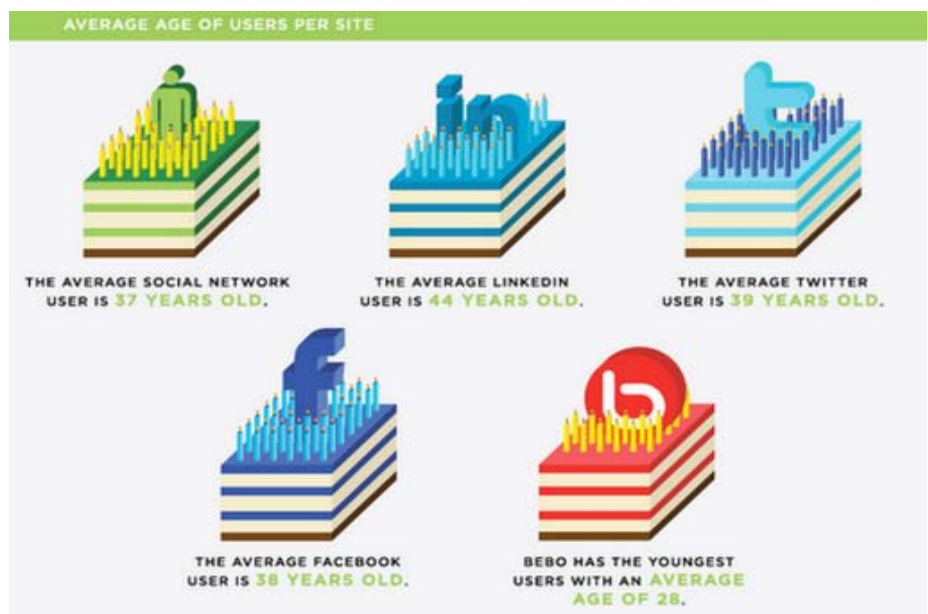
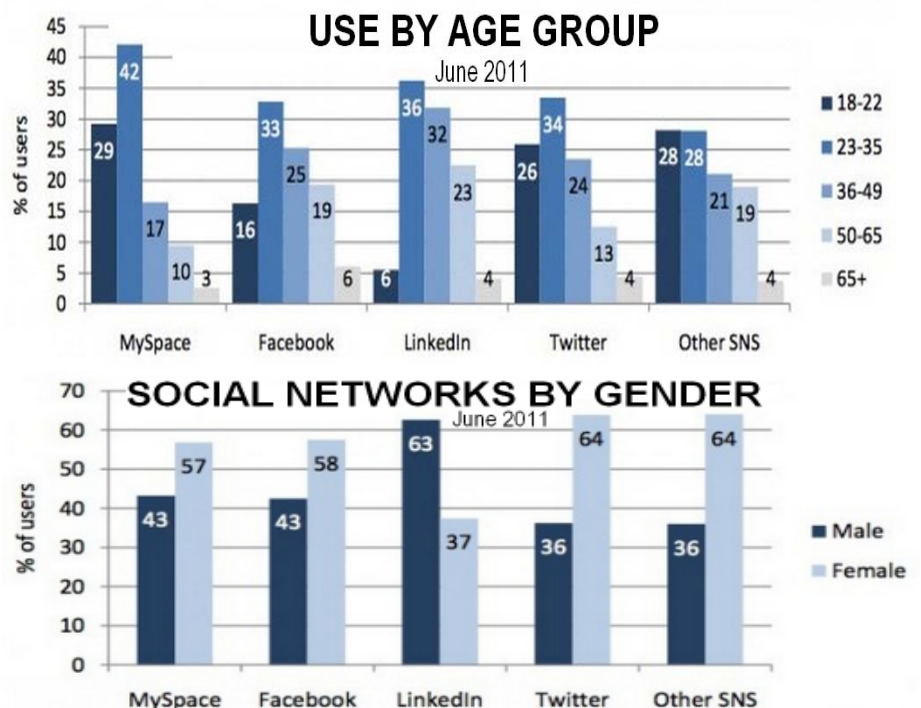
clubs put together where members would include things that they wanted to remember about that club or its environment. "Pinterest users can upload, save, sort and manage images, known as pins, and other media content (i.e. videos) through collections known as pinboards. They are generally themed so that pins can easily be organized, categorized and discovered by other users." In January 2012, 11.7 million unique U.S. visitors — but those are not necessar-

ily users. 82% of its users are females with an average visit lasting 16+ minutes. The average user spends 405 minutes per month.

And there must be money in social media sites because Facebook and Google are buying them at an alarming rate.

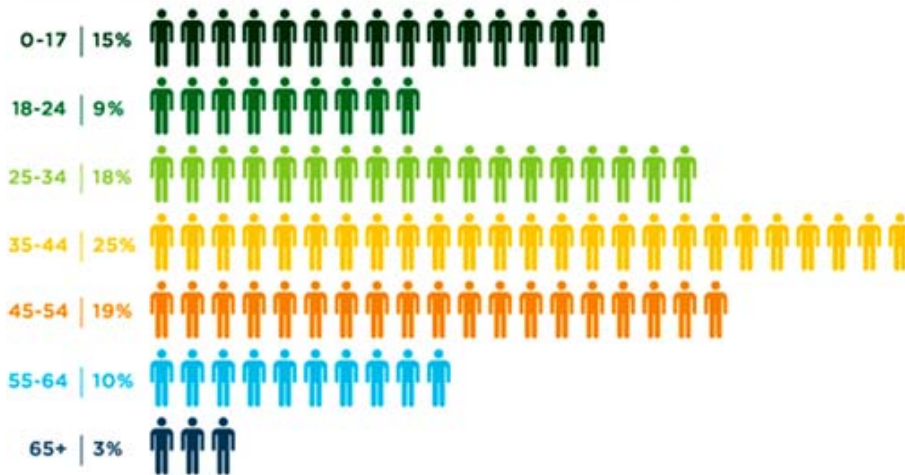
Still Google+, the latest challenger to Facebook has got a ways to go. It has only 250+ million users, but it was launched in June 2011 so it's not had time to percolate.

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WHO USES THE SOCIAL WEB?

MOST ONLINE INTERACTION TAKES PLACE ON THE SOCIAL WEB (FACEBOOK, TWITTER, ETC.). HERE'S THE AGE DISTRIBUTION ACROSS THE SOCIAL WEB:



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>.

SIG Notes, Cont. from page 6

Files requiring printing would still have to be saved to a USB flash key for use on another computer with a printer. For the other attendee, I was able to use UNetbootin to install Ubuntu 12.10 Desktop as a boot disk on a USB Flash Key. From that, the full install could be made on a computer.

Jim Ritterbusch discussed features and uses of Midnight Commander to help us better understand the inside structures of a Linux distribution. His talks are always appreciated because of the depth of experience he has with multiple computing environments.

I presented a basic but detailed discussion about getting a 4-wheeled robot up and running. My starting point consisted of only a basic kit of chassis, motors, wheels and a DFRduino RoMeo microcontroller board. This kit uses an Arduino based, microcontroller board suited to supplying data to motors involving speed and polarity to each of two motor control points. My presentation, "Using the DFRduino RoMeo Microcontroller with the DFRobot Mobile Platform," was followed by making the robot to go through its paces—moving forward, backward and various turns—all at different speeds. My robot also had car-like indicator lights attached to show actions such as turn signals before each motion. (a courteous robot perhaps)

Luckily, I had previously fought my way through how to use the Arduino Integrated Development Environment (IDE) that allows for the writing of appropriate C-based code for another set of experiments. Additional motor coding was needed for the robot. The IDE allowed for compiling the code followed by a transfer of it to the microcontroller board along a USB cable. I'd used the IDE before with the Arduino Uno board using light and sound displays. [On the web Arduino.cc is the place to find out information on Arduino products and code.]

My problem with the robot was that I knew none of the chassis assembly steps, none of the wiring details or connections to the DFRduino RoMeo board's motor connections or any of the C code using motor commands! However, this is where community pages and wiki's in the Linux computing world of make things much easier. From

Christmas, 2012 when I got the kit as a gift to a few days ago, I'd read enough to figure out all of what I needed. The Linux SIG attendees at our meeting got to see the additional code required for the lights to perform as they did. [On the web, DFRobot.com is the company where the robot is sold along with a blizzard of related parts.]

A question came up as to whether a robot demonstration really should be considered part of the Linux SIG instead of perhaps the Tech SIG that DACS used to be active in the past. My answer wasn't too satisfactory at that point, but I suggested that I simply used Linux with my project. However, I think I can now explain my reasoning a bit better.

First, Linux is well-known as an environment for many embedded automated devices such as traffic signals, rail yard sorting for railroads yards and so on. So autonomous controllers and microcontrollers fit the varied software Linux environment for users that need to cope with hardware. However, the Arduino IDE that also works with the robot microcontroller and other boards happens to be fully available for the Windows, Mac and Linux OS environments. The program looks about the same, and it compiles and transfers byte code to the microcontrollers in the same manner. So it's really a personal choice of OS with mine being Linux.

Second, Linux is also known for its open-source, helpful, community approach toward many of the computing and electronic issues that users and programmers face when dealing with computer/peripheral device issues. I doubt that I would have looked to a web community in the same way had I been using a Windows or Mac computer.

Finally, Linux software is usually cost free so that money can be spent entirely on hardware equipment. Linux software is sheltered under either Creative Commons copyright or General Public Licence (GPL) copyright so that proper reuse and distribution is allowed without legal infringements.

If these things touch any of your interests, join us at our next meeting on February 20th in the DACS Resource Center of Ives Manor. Bring your laptop and show us a thing or two. Our topics vary depending upon the needs of the attendees at our meetings. Expect at least one presentation.

January 2013

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 – My computer is partitioned to allow multiple operating systems while keeping the data separate. Presently the “primary” partition is Vista, next is a data partition and this followed by a third partition containing Windows 7. I want to make Win7 the primary operating system that boots automatically and remove Vista. I downloaded GParted (Gnome Partition Editor, see gparted.sourceforge.net). Can I use this, or is there something better?

A – The short answer is “yes” and the “something better” is always a loaded question. GParted is a free, open source partition editing program that runs on Linux with the Gnome GUI. Perhaps the easiest way to use GParted is to download a bootable CD image (ISO file) where GParted has already been installed in a compatible version of Linux that includes a broad array of drivers for popular drive controller chips. Burn the ISO image to a CD (its only 133MB) and boot it on the target machine. If all goes well, GParted will identify all of the hard drives in the machine and display the partitions on each drive. While I did not actually do this on one of my machines, the documentation and other sites that show how to use GParted show a GUI that appears clear and intuitive. Search for “use gparted” to find many, many sites with instructions on how to use GParted.

The bulk of the discussion was about suggested specific steps to accomplish the questioner's goals.

1. Because Vista and Win7 belong to the same Windows “family”, they use the same boot manager. The boot manager lives in a 100MB partition normally at the “front” or “beginning” of the disk. When a computer with more than one bootable partition boots up, the boot manager displays a list of the

bootable partitions and installed operating systems. This list includes an option to “Set defaults” or something similar. Selecting this option allows changing the default OS from Vista to Win7. Eliminating this annoyance may be sufficient and the Vista installation can just sit. It is not necessary to move Win7 to the first partition to make it the default OS.

2. If the next step is to merge the space used by Vista into the “data” partition, the procedure will be dictated by the capabilities of the partition management software. It may be necessary to delete the Vista partition and then move the data partition to the “front” of the disk. The data partition may then be expanded to use all available disk space. The older partition management software I used years ago could not expand a partition from the “front”. This limitation may not exist in modern software like GParted. Otherwise it may be necessary to first move the data partition “forward” on the disk and then add space to the end. Again, it is not necessary to move Win7 to the first partition.

3. If the next step is to install another OS (perhaps Windows 8), then just boot from the Win8 install DVD and set the installer to use the old Vista partition. I believe Win8 uses the same boot manager, but I have not tested this. In any case, the Win8 installer will make sure both OS partitions are bootable, just as past versions of Windows have been dual-bootable. I have a machine that dual-boots Win7 and XP courtesy of the Microsoft installer (in this case Win7 was installed first). If the new OS will be Linux, I would consult with people who have done this where Linux was installed after Windows. In my (very limited) experience, it works better if Linux is installed first.

D – During the discussion, we learned that the existing Win7 installation is “screwed up”. All of the above assumed that it was critical to retain the Win7 partition with all of the installed applications, settings, etc. If it's OK to destroy both Windows installations and retain only the data, then the following may make sense:

1. Boot from Win7 and then run the Windows 7 installer on the DVD. Point the installer to use the current Vista partition. This must be a “fresh install”. I would format the partition before starting the installation. This can be done from within the Windows 7 installer. If you started from Vista, it will not be possible to format the Vista partition, so boot into Win7 and start the installer from there.

2. When the install is complete, confirm that the new Win7 installation works.

3. Using Disk Management in the new Win7, delete the old Win7 partition.

4. Expand the data partition to use as much unallocated space as desired.

All of this can be accomplished without using GParted or any other partition management software. The expansion of the data partition can be done using the Disk Management part of Computer Management (called Computer Manager in previous Windows versions).

In any case: make a good, verified backup of the data partition before doing anything!

Q – I would like to install a second monitor on my desktop system running 64-bit Windows 7. When I tried plugging a second monitor into an unused connector on the video card, the monitor is not recognized by Windows. What's wrong?

A – The likely problem is that your video card supports only one monitor. Many recent video cards support both analog and digital monitors and provide a DVI or HDMI connector for digital monitors. You can probably confirm this by unplugging the VGA monitor and connecting the new monitor using the DVI connector. If that monitor is detected and works, then you need a new video card. The next step is research. It may be possible to add a second video card identical to the one

already installed. There are video cards that support dual monitors from a single card but such cards may have limitations on the types of monitors supported at the same time.

DVI connectors generate confusion just by looking at them. The Wikipedia article (wikipedia.org/wiki/Dvi) shows pictures of six connector pin configurations. My approach to DVI is to always use the cable that came with the monitor. My last two monitors have come with both DVI and VGA cables. While the connectors on DVI cables generally have pins only where they make a connection and thus can be identified as to analog, digital or both (integrated), the same is not true of the sockets on the computer or monitor. The sockets all seem to look alike.

Unlike desktops, all laptops support dual monitors so they can connect to a projector while still using the internal display.

Q – I gave my old laptop to my grandson. It was slow, so we installed Ubuntu Linux and it seems to be working, can connect to the Internet, etc. When I couldn't install Adobe Flash, I tried to upgrade to the latest Ubuntu but this did not complete successfully. Has anyone else tried this? What should I do next?

A – The consensus was to download the installation CD for the latest Ubuntu version (it will be an ISO file) from Ubuntu.com. Burn this to a CD or DVD using your Windows computer. Once this is complete, you can boot the older machine from that CD and do a clean installation using the entire hard disk. This will wipe out all of the old installation and give you a nice clean copy of Ubuntu 12.10, the current version.

Q – On my iPhone I have a bunch of email messages that say “no sender” and “no subject”. These do not appear on my computer, just the iPad.

A – My first reaction is that these are SPAM. Spammers sometimes leave these fields blank hoping you will be curious and open the message. I suspect the iPad email software is adding the words “no subject” to

indicate that the field is blank. A visitor suggested that the problem is in the iPhone email program and that restarting the program will clear the condition. This means closing the email program (doing the equivalent of a “force close” in the Android world). The other alternative would be to completely shut down the iPhone so it can do a cold start.

Q – Frequently when I open Internet Explorer rather than opening the New York Times website (my home page), I get an error message that started with “oops!” and says something about “can't find the server.” If I click to refresh, the page will appear. What causes this?

A – The “oops” part was the real mystery. While experimenting as I write this, I came up with several possibilities:

1. Given the message, I would be willing to bet that the Google Toolbar is installed and Google is your default search engine. The toolbar is redirecting errors to use Google error messages like page not found, etc. That would explain the “oops”. (The Google Toolbar is often installed by accident when installing Adobe Flash. The Yahoo Toolbar can also replace error messages.)

2. Look at your home page setting in IE (click the gear at the top right of the IE window and pick ‘Internet Options’ from the menu). I suspect that your home page URL is not “clean” but includes some stuff after a question mark. The ‘stuff’ is one or more parameters from a past session that got tacked in accidentally. Make your home page URL “<http://www.nytimes.com/>” and no more and it may work better when first starting IE.

3. If this also happens when opening other websites and not just the NY Times, then it may be a bad DNS setting somewhere in the chain. This can cause DNS lookups to fail by taking longer than the timeout setting in IE. Normally the DNS settings in your router and your computer should be the same, and if everything is set for DHCP (automatic) in both the router and the computer, this will not be a problem. Unless something else gets involved. The Google toolbar could be that something. I suggest

removing the Google Toolbar to see if that helps. If the text of the error messages revert to normal Microsoft, we may have found the problem.

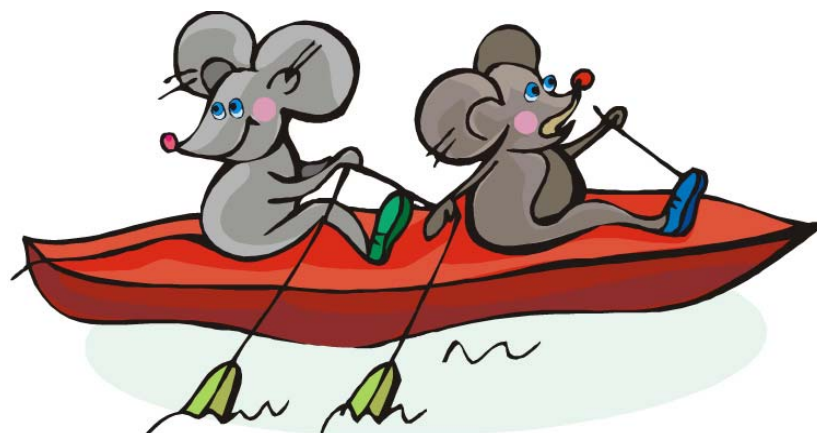
4. Another possibility is a delay in reconnecting to the Internet caused by the DSL modem.

AT&T DSL uses PPPoE (Point-to-point protocol over Ethernet, see wikipedia.org/wiki/PPPoE) to authenticate your DSL modem (built into the router in newer devices) to the AT&T servers. Contrary to appearances, your router is not always connected to the Internet when it's powered on. After a few minutes of inactivity, the modem connection is dropped by AT&T. This is just the authentication, not the “DSL sync” that occurs when you first turn on the modem. The instant you open a webpage, send an email, or whatever, the modem re-authenticates with AT&T. Normally this happens so fast that you never notice the delay. However, if your connection is sub-optimal or the AT&T server is busy, or a thousand other reasons, the short delay becomes longer and could make a DNS request take long enough that your browser times out waiting. The result of the timeout is the error message that the server cannot be found. Hitting F5 to retry opening the webpage will then succeed because the modem is now connected and there is no delay. A side effect of this process in some parts of the country (like Chicago) is that the modem's IP address changes with every re-authentication. I've seen this same type of delay failure happen over Internet connections from the cable companies where there is no authentication. I have no theory (so far) for what causes the DNS failure under those conditions.

[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!]

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John Patrick
State of the
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