



Meeting Preview

Windows 98 Says It's Coming

Do you believe it?

THE MICROSOFT WINDOWS 98 operating system makes computing easier, more reliable, faster, and is fully integrated with the Internet. Building on Windows 95 innovations as the easiest path to a 32-bit desktop, Windows 98 defines cutting-edge capabilities, enabling powerful new hardware technologies and entertainment platforms while maintaining the best support for older Windows-based applications and technologies. For corporations, Windows 98 provides new manageability features that help reduce total cost of ownership (TCO). It will also be the fastest platform for running the new Microsoft Internet Explorer 4.0.

Windows 98, previously code-named Memphis, builds on the innovations of Windows 95. In addition to countless refinements and improvements, including

many user-requested features, all users will benefit from interface enhancements that make Windows 98-based PCs easier to use. New wizards, utilities, and resources proactively keep systems running more smoothly. Performance is faster for many common tasks such as application loading, system startup, and shut down. Finally, full integration with the Web makes Windows 98-based systems easier to use, more powerful, and more entertaining.

Does it sound too good to be true? Come to the March General Meeting of the Danbury Area Computer Society to find out. The meeting begins at 6:30 p.m. with casual networking at the Danbury Hospital auditorium, 24 Hospital Avenue. The monthly business meeting starts at 7 p.m., with the presentation beginning around 8 p.m.

Meeting Review

No More Tax Tears

TurboTax and Mac-In-Tax mop up the misery

by Wally David

EVERY YEAR people around the country dread income tax season. It starts right after the first of the year, when all sorts of tax documents start flooding our mailboxes. Then the hand wringing over finding receipts and other critical information begins. All that is followed by the daunting task of pouring over the book full of tax forms from the federal government and figuring which ones you need to fill out—and all by April 15

Well, Intuit has a solution to some of your problems. They can't stop the tax documents from coming and can't look for your receipts for you, but they can sure make dealing with the government easier! TurboTax Deluxe and Mac-In-Tax can lead you through the entire tax-filing process in an easy-to-understand fashion.

Elizabeth Dougherty, Product Manager for Intuit, came to the February General Meeting of the Danbury Area Computer Society to show us just how easy it to do your taxes on the computer. While Elizabeth did not

have much time to explain the final version of TurboTax Deluxe, she did touch briefly on the features that make the program easy to use.

The first of these is the interview. You are asked to answer easy-to-understand questions, The responses to which TurboTax directs to the correct places and performs calculations automatically. Second, TurboTax thoroughly reviews your return, ensuring nothing has been omitted or overlooked. The program also alerts you to missed deductions and entries that could possibly trigger an IRS audit.

TurboTax, equipped with every tax form taxpayers will most likely need, saves time by calculating taxes automatically and letting you know what effect changes made to a return have on your refund or amount due. TurboTax saves money by pointing out deductions and other tax-saving opportunities (both for this year and next), reviewing each return for potentially costly errors and comparing individual returns to national averages, allowing customers to see how aggressively they are taking deductions.

Continued on page 5

President's File

The March presentation by Microsoft should be interesting. You will learn about some of the company's plans to integrate the basic Windows95 interface with their browser, Internet Explorer. When I was in Redmond last October with other presidents of the 50 largest user groups in the U.S., I had a chance to preview Win98.

TV as PC device

The integration of the operating system with an Internet browser is only part of the key. TV is another. One of the things I found most fascinating was the addition of the television to the basic devices on your PC. With this new OS, your TV will become as basic as your printer, speakers, and scanner.

Review "Getting Connected"

How we use the potential of our expanding OS will vary with each user. The upcoming Microsoft presentation gave me cause to think about the comments John Patrick offered us last October. John, as you may recall, is the vice president of Internet technology at IBM.

You may find it worthwhile to review the text of John's presentation to the Internet Commerce ExpoLA '97 September 11, 1997. Find it at <http://www.businessforum.com/ibm01.html>. This version of John's talk closely resembles the thoughts he shared with us at our October meeting.

By linking to his home page, <http://adtech.internet.ibm.com/patrick/> you can view John's favorite sites along with the text for "Get Connected" beyond the Internet.

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It will again stretch your mind and add perspective to the new interface we'll see at the March meeting.

Check out Gilder

If you have fun visiting Mr. Patrick's Universally Connected World, you will want search out the writings of George Gilder, unquestionably one of the foremost futurists on Telecosm Communications Technology. In the vernacular — bandwidth.

Even if you review both of these gurus after the Win98 meeting, your time will be well spent..

New-to-the-Net

In March we will repeat our original New-to-the-Internet program. The meeting will be held in the Danbury Library at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, March 19. Topics we will be reviewing will include the basics of the Internet, how to get connected, what a search engine is, what a browser is, and how to send and receive basic e-mail.

The New-to program is an excellent way for you to introduce a friend or family member to DACS. The meeting are basic and open to nonmembers. And by sharing DACS you can help us grow and maintain a strong membership base—which is, of course, the key to our future strength. We appreciate your help.

New Officers Soon

The election of new officers will be held at the April board meeting. Any DACS member may run for any office. If you would like to be an officer, please speak with me or any other board member. If you can help in any capacity, you should also attend the board meetings, which are always open to DACS members. We meet on the Monday following the General Meeting. Join us for some fun.

— TOM MCINTYRE
mcintyre@eci.com

Directors' Notes

DACS' Board of Directors held its regular monthly meeting on February 9, 1998, at 7:30 p.m. at the Resource Center. Present were Messrs. Bovaird, Buoy, David, Heere, McIntyre, Ostergren, Pearson, Setaro, and Mrs. Owles. Chairman Ed Heere presided, and Secretary Larry Buoy kept the records of the meeting. The minutes of the January 12 meeting were approved.

dacs.doc

Membership Information

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The editors welcome submissions from Dacs members. Contact Frances Owles, at 860-868-0077 (jones@ct1.nai.net) or Allan Ostergren at 860-210-0047 (dacseditor@aol.com). Advertisers, please contact Brad Altland 203-357-4007 (brad.altland@gccapital.com)

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HelpLine

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

Can we add your name to the volunteer listing?

Program	Name	Phone #	
Alpha Four	Dick Gingras	(203) 426-0484	(e)
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WordPerfect	John Heckman	(203) 831-0442	(e)

Finance & membership

Treasurer Charles Bovaird reported current combined checking and postal account balances of \$15,488.92, postage on hand of \$155.52, and accounts payable in the amount of \$5,350.00 for a current net cash position of \$10,294.44. He also reported current DACS membership at 672.

Equipment upgrade

A discussion about upgrading the principal computer installed at the Resource Center, used by the *dacs.doc* staff to prepare the newsletter and by various other SIGs, resulted in approving the installation of a second hard drive and additional DRAM, increasing the total installed memory to 64 MB.

Rejected offer

President McIntyre reported an offer from an online user group store that would involve the disclosure of membership e-mail addresses. All directors agreed to reject the offer.

Member interest survey

Charlie Bovaird presented his tabulation of the results of the survey distributed at the February 3 General Meeting to determine members' current interests. The directors decided to integrate the areas mentioned most frequently into additional New to ... program topics, new SIG Groups, and general meeting presentations.

Frances Owles advised that a report was forthcoming on the feasibility of installing a server for DACS use as an adjunct to the Public Library's server.

—LARRY BUOY

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Writers Wanted



The editors of dacs.doc welcome submissions from our members.

To contact us or to upload your articles, please copy all e-mail correspondence and attachments to:

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jones@ct1.nai.net

Allan Ostergren, Media Director at
dacseditor@aol.com

All submissions should include a short author's bio, including e-mail address and/or telephone. Please send stories as Text only, Word, or Wordperfect files. We can also accommodate Excel tables and most graphic formats. PLEASE: Include company information, address and phone, URLs, and product pricing with all reviews. Graphic attachments (screen captures, logos, tables, charts, sidebars, etc.) are especially welcome.

Editorial deadlines fall one week after the month's General Meeting. Articles which arrive earlier generally get the most tender-loving treatment. Stories will be edited for clarity and fit. If you don't want your stuff touched, let us know, and we'll try to accommodate.

Let's hear from you! If you don't like to write, we'll do it for you (up to a point).
—Eds.

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Earthlink	800-395-8425
East Coast Internet	207-3260
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GTE Internetworking	800-927-3000
IBM/Advantis	800-888-4103
Internet84	203-830-2122
Interramp/PSI	800-827-7482
LocalNet of Fairfield County	203-425-3535
MCI	800-550-0927
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Paradigm	800-664-INET
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Smart World Technologies	203-790-4600
SNET Internet	800-408-8282
SpryNet	800-sprynet
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WebQuill Internet Services	203-7501000
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Did we miss anyone?	
Let us know by calling	
Jim Finch	
203 790-3654	

Its that time of year ... again

In the event of severe weather please listen to one of the following stations for cancellation information.

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No More Tax Tears *From page 1*

There are three ways to file your completed return: You can print out the entire return and mail it to the IRS; you can print out a shortened PC version, which prints only the lines on the forms that you need to submit, making for a much smaller print-out; or you can file electronically, letting the program guide you through the process. There is a charge of \$9.95 to use this method, but it saves a lot of time, allowing you to get any refund due you much more quickly.

The deluxe version of TurboTax differs from the basic version in only two important ways. First, it comes with multimedia videos that offer insight and advice at various points during the interview process. Not essential, this is nevertheless a nice feature to have. The second difference is free online filing. In the basic version, there is a \$9.95 charge. But electronic filing is included in the deluxe version, so for

the \$10 extra you pay for it, you get both features—a bargain.

Intuit offers a free downloadable trial version of TurboTax from its Web site at www.intuit.com. It is fully functional, and its only limitation is that you can't view, print, or file the return. If you like the program, you can call Intuit's 800 number and register it with a credit card. They'll give you an unlocking code, which will let you view, print, and file your return.

Intuit really seems to want make the tax-preparation process easier for all of us. With TurboTax and Mac-In-Tax, they do just that.

WALLY DAVID is a DACS director and a member of the dacs.doc editorial committee. He is the Network Administrator for the National Shooting Sports Foundation, a non-profit trade association for the gun industry. He can be reached via e-mail at wallydavid@myself.com.

Send Software to Inner-City Kids

Bobby Curtis, a DACS member, has been volunteering his expertise to help inner-city children. Bobby, working with Frost Homestead in Waterbury (HUD-Low Inc Housing), teaches the kids how to use PCs (with Windows95). FH needs educational software such as Little School Bus and Encarta. The children would be thrilled and have promised to write great reviews for dacs.doc for whatever they receive. If you would like to help Mr. Curtis by giving software, please send your donations to Bobby Curtis at 27 Scratchville Road, Woodbury CT 06798. For more information, call Bobby at 203 263-3589 or 203 263-3437 or e-mail bobbycurtis@snet.net.

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E0E

New Tech at Danbury Library

by Allen Mullen

IN SPRING 1998, the Danbury Public Library will realize a dream come true for the community of Danbury by opening its new technology center. The center will be a department of the Danbury Public Library and its purpose twofold: to increase community access to electronic information and resources, and to provide technological support to library staff for operations throughout the facility. The new resources will both complement and add to the library services that DPL already provides.

Funding for the new technology center was seeded by the CityWorks 2000 bond issue, passed by Danbury voters in September 1996, when Mayor Gene Enriquez asked Library Director Elizabeth McDonough if the library would undertake the development and operation of the center (even as the library was just reopening after it's devastating fire). She said yes, and planning for the center began in earnest in the spring of 1997. Over the next several months, the library held a series of focus group sessions and outreach meetings to assist in planning and developing the new services, and on October 1, after a celebratory groundbreaking ceremony, construction began.

The library plans to offer both new and improved resources. Among these are a new Website design and an electronic library catalog. The Website upgrade was made possible in part by a generous donation from The Savings Bank of Danbury. The conversion of our traditional library catalog to a Web interface will make access to the library's print, audio, and video resources easier.

Providing Internet-accessible resources has been a goal for the library, so some databases that were formerly accessed via CD-ROMS have migrated to

Web access as well. These include Health Infotrac, a periodical database of articles, abstracts, and citations from medical-related journals, and Duns Online, a database of company information. We have also upgraded some hardware, in particular replacing the dot-matrix printers in our Adult Services area with quiet, color-graphics-capable inkjet printers.

Patrons will discover new resources in all parts of the library. Starting from the basement, two new computer workstations provide a variety of ESL programs in our AV department, and our program room is now host to satellite downlink facilities, providing library customers with access to programming on C- and KU-band satellites.

On the Main Floor, a new computer workstation provides access to resources and programs to assist job seekers, and a new database, Encyclopedia Britannica, is available, with access via the World Wide Web. In the Junior Library on the second floor, an updated 1998 World Book Encyclopedia and additional word-processing and homework research capabilities with the Student Writing and Research Center program add significantly to the library's ability to assist young students and researchers.

Additional staff and more classes will support our new resources. Tony Booth and Marvin Little have joined the DPL staff to assist with LTC duties, as have part-timers Chris Salaz, Howard Zang, and Justin Ragsdale. The new staff members will join members of the library's Internet team to increase the number of computer-related classes we can offer the public to ten per month. These will include many hands-on classes.



Arthur, the delightful fictional character created by Marc Tolon Brown, will be on hand to help open the new Danbury Library Technology Center this spring. Library staff are planning a series of programs to highlight services and resources, along with a grand opening day reception. On the day of the opening, we will host programs for children, give demonstrations of the databases and our new Website, and hold a drawing for prizes, among other fun activities. We invite all DACS members, their friends, and their families to join us!

In the groundbreaking ceremony for the Center in October 1997, Betsy McDonough, director of Danbury Public Library, spoke of the connector between the existing library and the new technology facility as symbolic of what DPL offers the community—a connection between traditional and contemporary library services, between those with computer-based knowledge and those seeking it, and between Internet “haves” and “have-nots.” Danbury Library can now promise this technology and much more. Come by and see for yourself.

ALLEN MULLEN (*allen@danbury.lib.ct.us*), the Automation Coordinator for the Danbury Public Library, has spearheaded the planning and development of the Library Technology Center. He is a librarian and has helped develop automation and technology consulting and support for multibranch systems in Kansas and Indiana.

Programmers wanted

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TurboTax Deluxe

By Robert E. Rihn, C.P.A.

TURBOTAX has many features that are similar to those in TaxCut (see last month), so I will review the differences now. TurboTax is a much slicker program than TaxCut. By slicker, I mean it anticipates your moves and presents its features when you need them rather than forcing you to hunt and peck randomly for deductions.

Save more \$ with TurboTax

Discovering tax deductions in TurboTax is much easier than in TaxCut. That's because TurboTax presents you with possible deductions just by clicking a field. Where TaxCut gives you an underlying notepad for entering your details, TurboTax has a worksheet that lists examples of deductions. Did you know that there is a deduction for medical mileage? Do you know what the rate is? In TaxCut you would have to read the help screens, rely on a friend to tell you, or read an IRS form. Therefore, you would have a hard time learning any new deductions with TaxCut.

TurboTax is your friend

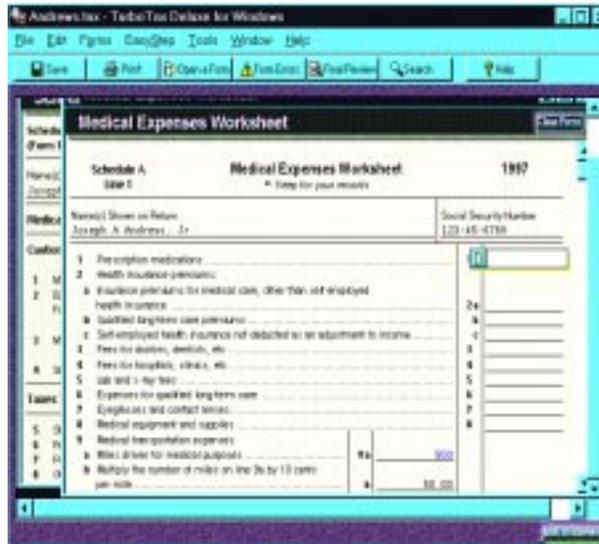
TurboTax takes the place of your friend by suggesting categories for your deductions. TaxCut's medical expenses screen shows such items as Drugs, Doctor, Dentist, and Hospital. TurboTax's worksheet lists 15 types of deductions, asks for your miles driven for medical purposes, and computes your mileage deduction. (TurboTax uses notepads when it does not use the worksheet.) These worksheets are all over the place. Schedule A has six worksheets, and schedule C has eight. Which program do you think is going to save you money?

TaxCut's help screens are comprehensive and easy to access, but as you can see, you must look for help. The F1 key and a Find icon are not good enough for a tax program. That kind of interface is not going to save you taxes since it is not probing you with new ideas. With TaxCut you must know what you are looking for,

then drill down through lists of topics and subtopics.

Filing electronically is free

The cost of filing TurboTax electronically is free, and I will assume it is as reliable as TaxCut. I recommend you file electronically.



There is no shoebox feature in TurboTax, nor is there anything like TaxCut's Review of Last Year's Report. This report displays last year's entries while you enter this year's. Like TaxCut, TurboTax uses tabs, an extensive interview, processes all state returns, contains

official IRS publications, a 1998 tax planner, a what if worksheet, and gobs of help.

When you click the Review tab, you are presented with three Helps before the actual review. Here you can click the Product Update icon and automatically log on to TurboTax's site. TaxCut has no such built-in Internet access, though it does have a site. By the way, www.quicken.com is the best source of financial help on the Internet.

It's superior to TaxCut

One of the major advantages of TaxCut use to be its auditor, but this year I could not detect any major differences between the two programs. TurboTax's multimedia is far superior to TaxCut's. And TurboTax is a 32-bit program while TaxCut is 16 bit. Even then, Home and End keys in TaxCut don't work properly.

Remember having many IRS forms and publications on your desk while preparing your tax return? With TurboTax there is less of that. On the schedule C, click the business code field to display the codes. TaxCut does not have that nor does it have many other features. TurboTax is definitely more robust and easier to use than TaxCut.

In previous years it did not matter which of these two tax programs you used. But for 1997, if you do not know all the deductions you are entitled to, you should choose TurboTax. TurboTax does not import TaxCut, however. In fact, TaxCut imports TurboTax but I cannot see a reason to do so.

ROBERT E. RIHN, CPA., 525 Bridgeport Avenue, Suite 205, Shelton, CT 06484-4700, Voice (203) 929-8323, Fax (203) 929-0096, E-mail: mtfp72a@prodigy.com.

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EO

Keep Business Competition in the Marketplace

by Donald Sutherland

SINCE ITS FOUNDING in 1975, Microsoft has aimed to “create software for the personal computer that empowers and enriches people in the workplace, at school, and at home.” It has done a great job fulfilling that mission. Too good a job, it seems. On October 20, the U.S. Department of Justice, cheered on by a small but shrill number of Microsoft’s vanquished rivals, launched a massive attack against the computer giant. Attorney General Janet Reno implored a federal court to fine Microsoft an unprecedented \$1 million per day. The alleged crime? Microsoft had the nerve to integrate its own Internet browser (software that allows computer users to access the Internet) into its hugely popular Windows 95 applications package. Instead of applauding Microsoft for markedly increasing the value it offers its customers, the federal government sought to punish the company for daring to expand the frontiers of its industry.

Undermining consumer choice?

Attorney General Reno charged that Microsoft is “taking advantage of its Windows monopoly to protect and extend that monopoly and undermine consumer choice.” Fair enough. Let’s take a look at this monopoly. While it is true that the Microsoft Windows operating system is present on 85% of all computers, Microsoft is far from monopolizing the rapidly growing Internet. As for the numbers, Netscape Corporation’s Navigator currently commands a 62% share of the Internet browser market. Microsoft’s Ex-

plorer controls just over 30%. So much for conventional Inside-the-Beltway wisdom.

Of course, for those familiar with the computer industry, the disparity in these numbers should be anything but surprising. No monopoly, even if created, could survive for long in arenas as consumer-



driven and dynamic as the computer software and Internet industries. “Success is perishable,” observes Compaq CEO Eckhard Pfeiffer. More so than in most industries, as Sunbeam Chairman Al Dunlap put it, “The predators are out there, circling, trying to stare you down, waiting for any sign of weakness, ready to pounce and make you their next meal.”

Click to purge the icon

What about Microsoft’s alleged heavy-handedness? Although Microsoft requires the Explorer icon to be initially present on all computers using its Windows 95 software, it makes no demand that its customers keep the icon or refrain from installing competing browsers. Of course, Microsoft’s opponents or their allies in the Justice Department never mention this. In fact, the process for removing the icon is so simple that even computer neophytes have little difficulty purging it. Simply, one right-clicks on the offending icon, left-clicks on “delete”

from the resulting pull-down menu, left-clicks on the “yes” prompt, and the Explorer icon is no more! So much for a lack of consumer choice.

Netscape’s little secret

The dirty little secret behind the Justice Department’s lawsuit is the role of Netscape Corporation, which filed a legal complaint against Microsoft that in part precipitated the government action. Netscape has for years been quietly laying the groundwork to use its near-monopoly in the browser market as a springboard to introduce a competing operating system to Microsoft’s Windows. Microsoft beat them to the punch. Now, instead of fighting it out in the competitive marketplace where the prospects for its alternative operating system are highly uncertain, Netscape has asked the federal government to do what the company could not—tilt the playing field in its favor.

Internet stakes enormous

The stakes in this fight are enormous. The software industry is one of America’s fastest growing industries. Between 1987 and 1994, the industry grew 117% in real terms. This is seven times the growth rate of the U.S. economy. The benefits have been abundant. Since 1987, U.S. employment in the software industry has increased at an annual rate of nearly 10%, more than five times the national rate. And these are good-paying jobs. Software workers earn an average wage of \$57,300 per year, more than double the U.S. average of \$27,900 per year. Today, U.S. software producers account for 75% of global software sales. Nine of the world’s top ten, and forty-five of the world’s top fifty software makers are U.S. firms. U.S. might in the software industry is overwhelming.

U.S. has competitive edge

One need go no further than one’s own workplace, bank, or even home to begin to appreciate the enormous benefits of the American software juggernaut. Indeed, software breakthroughs are behind the increasing competitiveness of American firms in every industry. The software industry has helped give the U.S. a decisive edge in innovation and entrepreneurship by dramatically lowering the costs for entrepreneurs to create new products and new industries. The results have been breathtaking. American unemployment now stands at a mere 4.7%, and the

American economy is the world's most dynamic.

Value innovation: key to growth

Today, and even more so tomorrow, high-growth companies will surpass their rivals, not through conventional approaches, but through what W. Chan Kim of the Boston Consulting Group and Renée Mauborgne, a senior research fellow at INSEAD, refer to as "value innovation." These companies, instead of merely improving on existing products or services, will offer customers quantum leaps in value. Microsoft's adding Internet access capabilities to its operating system at no new charge is a good example of how this process works. Correctly anticipating the lucrative relationship between software and the Internet's growth (the number of Internet users is expected to climb nearly tenfold, to around 500 million persons worldwide, by the year 2000), Microsoft acted decisively to tie the two together. Now others are scrambling to catch up. And they should. That's what business is about—competition in the marketplace. It is not, nor ever should it be, about regulatory intervention. Companies should rise and fall based solely on their ability to satisfy customers, and the marketplace should remain the only forum for business competition.

Innovation over idiocy

Rather than handicapping the companies at the vanguard of America's entrepreneurial economy, the federal government should concentrate on mak-

ing the environment even more favorable for risktaking entrepreneurship and business success. For example, the federal government could work to eliminate trade barriers, reduce regulation, and lower taxes. This effort would further strengthen America's already impressive global competitive advantage. Everyone would benefit.

America's economic prosperity has been fueled by its abundant supply of innovative entrepreneurs and business leaders. A Justice Department victory would represent a triumph of idiocy over innovation. It would be a devastating setback for all those who strive each day to create new and better products, as well as for the millions of customers who would stand to benefit from their heroic risktaking. Not surprisingly, 61% of respondents in a recent poll published in *Business Week* said that the Justice Department should leave Microsoft alone, while only 39% supported the Justice Department's position.

Shouldn't today's business pioneers have at least as good a chance to change the world for the better as their predecessors had? Or should Janet Reno and the Justice Department be allowed to "dumb-down" business competition, much as government has done with the nation's public schools?

EDITOR'S NOTE: Read DACS director Ed Heere's counterpoint opinion on the Microsoft/Reno/Netscape issue in next month's dacs.doc.

DONALD SUTHERLAND is a research associate at the Institute for SocioEconomic Studies in White Plains, New York. Contact Donald at djsutherland@classic.msn.com.

More "New to" Programs Coming Up

Are you new to computers or new to DACS? Well, do we have something for you! A continuation of the popular "New To" series offered by DACS. Each month we present a different topic of interest to people who are new to a particular area of computing. The programs run from 7 pm to 9 pm at the Danbury Public Library.

On **March 19** the topic will be **New To The Net**, hosted by Tom McIntyre and Wally David. We will cover the basics of using a Web browser and finding your way around on that expanse of cyberspace known as the World Wide Web.

In **April** Ed Heere will tell you everything you need to know about **Upgrading Your Computer**. He will cover adding peripherals like multimedia kits, modems, and scanners. He will also talk about adding memory, hard drives, and processors.

In **May** the topic will be **Digital Photography and Using A Scanner**. Wally David will show you the basics of getting a photograph from a camera into your computer. Whether it is a traditional still photograph on paper or one taken with a digital camera, Wally will show you what you can do to make it look nice and how to share it with others.

If you have any suggestions for upcoming "New to" meetings, please contact Wally David via e-mail at wallydavid@myself.com.



Underwood introduces the latest in integrated word processing and spreadsheet technology that meets all standards for year 2000 compliance

DACS New Members 1/18/98 thru 02/15/98

- 1) Tony L. D'Ausilio
- 2) Herbert Deutsch
- 3) Alan H. Donn
- 4) Dennis C. Edgett
- 5) Robert and Marie Greene
- 6) Lindsey Gruson
- 7) Pete Hauser
- 8) Robert J. Keane Jr.
- 9) Jim and Janice Knight
- 10) Reuben W. Kreider
- 11) Paul McVay
- 12) Jerry Metcoff
- 13) Tim Mishico
- 14) Jackie Rodriguez
- 15) Diann Thome
- 16) James and Geraldine Willmann

Special Interest Groups

ACCESS Design and implementation of solutions using Microsoft Access database management.

Contact: Bruce Preston, 203 431-2920. Meets on second Tuesday, 7pm, at AMSYS Computer, Ridgefield.

Next Meeting: March 10.

ADVANCED OPERATING SYSTEMS Use, exploit, and develop OS/2, BSD UNIX and NT operating systems.

Contact: Don Pearson, 914 669-9622.

Meets on Wednesday of the week following the General Meeting at 7:30pm at Don Pearson's house, North Salem, NY.

Next Meeting: March 11.

DESKTOP PUBLISHING Edit and produce *dacs.doc*. Anyone interested in the art of newsletter publishing is welcome.

Contact: Allan Ostergren, 860 210-0047. Meets on Thursday following monthly General Meeting at 7pm at the DACS Resource Center, Ives Manor(lower level), 198 Main Street, Danbury.

Next meeting: March 5.

EDUCATION Coordinates DACS education classes.

Contact: Charlie Bovaird, 203 792-7881. Meets as needed.

FINANCIAL Discusses various investment strategies emphasizing careful selection to maximize profits and limit risk.

Contact: Will Toll, 203 270-1519, or Paul Gehrett, 203 426-8436. Meets on 3rd Thursday at 7:30pm. Edmond Town Hall, Newtown.

Next Meeting: March 19.

GRAPHICS Create and print quality graphics and images.

Contact: Ken Graff, 203 775-6667. Meets on last Wednesday at 7pm at Best Photo, Brookfield.

Next Meeting: March 25.

INTERNET Acquaints DACS members with all aspects of Internet.

Contact: Diane Greenwald, 203 797-4505. Meets on 3rd Wednesday at 7pm at Danbury Public Library Community Room, 170 Main Street, Danbury.

Next Meeting: March 18.

MACINTOSH Serves as a forum for a discussion of Macintosh hardware and software.

Contact: Chris Salaz 203 798-6417. Meets on 3rd Tuesday at 7:30pm. DACS Resource Center, Ives Manor (lower level), 198 Main Street, Danbury.

Next Meeting: March 17.

VISUAL BASIC Focuses on developing Windows applications using Visual Basic.

Contact: Chuck Fizer, 203 798-9996 or Jim Scheef, 860 355-8001. Meets 1st Wednesday 7pm at DACS Resource Center, Ives Manor (lower level), 198 Main Street, Danbury.

Next Meeting: March 4.

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

Contact: Shirley Fredlund, 860 355-2611 x4517. Meets on last Tuesday at 7:30pm. Datahr, Brookfield.

Next Meeting: March 31.

WALL STREET New Windows stock marketing software.

Contact: Phil Dilloway, 203 367-1202. Meets on last Monday at 7pm at the A. G. Edwards office, 42 Old Ridgebury Road, Danbury.

Next Meeting: March 30.

WINDOWS Explores all phases of Windows 95 and 3.1.

Contact: Ben Carnevale, 203 748-1751. Meets on the 2nd Friday at 7pm at Senior Employment Center, 198 Main Street, Danbury.

Next Meeting: March 13 (Register with Ben first.)

SIG News

General

The SIG Notes and Calendar are available on the Internet on Dan McLeod's home page at <http://www.concentric.net/~dwmcleod/signotes.htm>. Changes from the versions printed in *dacs.doc* will be shown in red and italics. Please type it precisely as shown and in lowercase letters only. Dan would appreciate comments on the Internet.

Jazz Up Your Web Experience

If you're on the WEB without audio, video, and interactivity, you are missing all the fun. Wally David will help you jazz up your experience with a tour through the best multimedia sites, plus tips on the plug-ins needed to play video and sound. The Internet SIG meets on Wednesday, March 18, 7-8:30 p.m. at the Danbury Public Library, 170 Main. For more info, contact Diane Greenwald at dmg@danbury.lib.ct.us or 203 797-4505.

Visual Basic

February 1998 meeting: We discussed several questions and problems from the January Random Access session. Then Chuck made a short presentation on building component systems. Components include the familiar OCX or Active-X custom controls, but the developer can write his own custom components that can be reused between systems as well. Such components can be class modules that get compiled into the program, or they can be independent programs that use COM (Component Object Model) to communicate with the application program that provides the user interface. In VB4 these independent component programs were called OLE servers. This theme will be continued at future meetings. Whether you are new to Visual Basic or a seasoned corporate developer, we encourage all DACS members interested in VB to join the SIG.

Windows

The last Windows SIG meeting was very interesting and well represented. Using the Dacs Resource Center was a great plus because of the available Windows 95 computer. Many questions and situations from the members were recreated and explained on the computer. Call or E-mail Ben at FFJM69A@Prodigy.Com to join the Windows SIG and bring along your questions and recreate any of your 'trouble areas'.

Word Processing

Vince Tichy's phone is not functioning and the phone company has no listing. The Word processing SIG will be suspended until Vince provides a working phone number.

March, 1998

Danbury Area Computer Society

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday																																																																																
1	2	 <p>7:00 PM General Meeting: Danbury Hospital</p>	 <p>7:00 PM Visual Basic: Chuck Fizer 203-798-9996</p>	 <p>7:00 PM DTP: Allan Ostergren 860-210-0047</p>	6	 <p>NEWS LETTER DEADLINE</p>																																																																																
8	 <p>7:30 PM DACS Directors Mtg</p>	 <p>7:00 PM Access Bruce Preston 431-2920</p>	<p>11</p> <p>7:00 PM Web Site Design: Jeff Setaro 203-748-6748</p> <p>7:30 PM Advanced Operating Systems: Don Pearson 914-669-9622</p>	12	 <p>7:00 PM Windows: Ben Carnevale 203-748-1751</p>	 <p>SIG NOTES DEADLINE</p>																																																																																
15	16	 <p>7:30 PM Macintosh: Chris Salazar 203-798-6417</p>	 <p>7:00 PM Internet: Diane Greenwald 203-797-4505</p>	 <p>7:30 PM Financial: Will Toll 203-270-1519</p>	20	21																																																																																
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29	 <p>7:00 PM Wall Street Phil Dilloway 203-367-1202</p>	 <p>7:30 PM Voice For Joanie: Shirley Fredlund 860-355-2611 x4517</p>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div> <p>February</p> <table border="1"> <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>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td></tr> <tr><td>8</td><td>9</td><td>10</td><td>11</td><td>12</td><td>13</td><td>14</td></tr> <tr><td>15</td><td>16</td><td>17</td><td>18</td><td>19</td><td>20</td><td>21</td></tr> <tr><td>22</td><td>23</td><td>24</td><td>25</td><td>26</td><td>27</td><td>28</td></tr> </table> </div> <div> <p>April</p> <table border="1"> <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>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td></tr> <tr><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td><td>8</td><td>9</td><td>10</td><td>11</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>12</td><td>13</td><td>14</td><td>15</td><td>16</td><td>17</td><td>18</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>19</td><td>20</td><td>21</td><td>22</td><td>23</td><td>24</td><td>25</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>26</td><td>27</td><td>28</td><td>29</td><td>30</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table> </div> </div>		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	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			
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Calendar and SIG Notes are available on the Internet at <http://www.concentric.net/~dwmcleod/signotes.htm>

Organizing Your Images

by John Heckman

LARGE NUMBERS of images are hard to keep track of. There are a number of good and quick viewers available, either as shareware or as part of commercial packages, and there are some programs that will produce "catalogs" of images. Most of these programs, however, are tied to directory structures, and your options are still very limited even if the viewers are fast and will display a screenful of "catalogued" images. To really get things organized, you need images integrated with a database. One product I've found that does a great job of this is ImageAXS from Digital Arts and Sciences, a premier maker of graphics catalog tools, including high-end programs used by museums and professional slide repositories. ImageAXS will catalog and display images, movies, and sound files.

When you bring an image into ImageAXS, the program creates a thumbnail. When you open the database, you view the thumbnail, not the image, which means that viewing is extremely fast. If you edit the original, you can easily update the thumbnail. You can also determine the size (and with it image quality) of

the thumbnail. To view the original image, you simply double-click on the thumbnail. I use the program to catalog my wife's paintings.

of the work, media used. There is an unlimited comments field and unlimited keywords by which the data can be organized, in addition to basic file information (size, location, creation date). Thus you can sort your collection by any field in the database, and you can make as many catalogs (i.e., separate databases) as you wish. ImageAXS is being bundled with the new Zip Plus drives from Iomega.

Display and Report Options

Each catalog holds up to 32,000 images and you can create any number of "portfolios" if you need a more fully customized subset of your collection. You might want to create a portfolio for all the images used in a particular article or project or slides submitted to a gallery.

You can print out a customizable page of "slides" (Figure 1) in varying configurations: 4x5 looks like a page of slides, 3x3 gives a larger image, but because you are blowing up thumbnails

and not using the originals, you start to lose quality. The images to be displayed or printed are selected simply by clicking on them. You can view the information one image at a time together with the database information (Figure 2), as

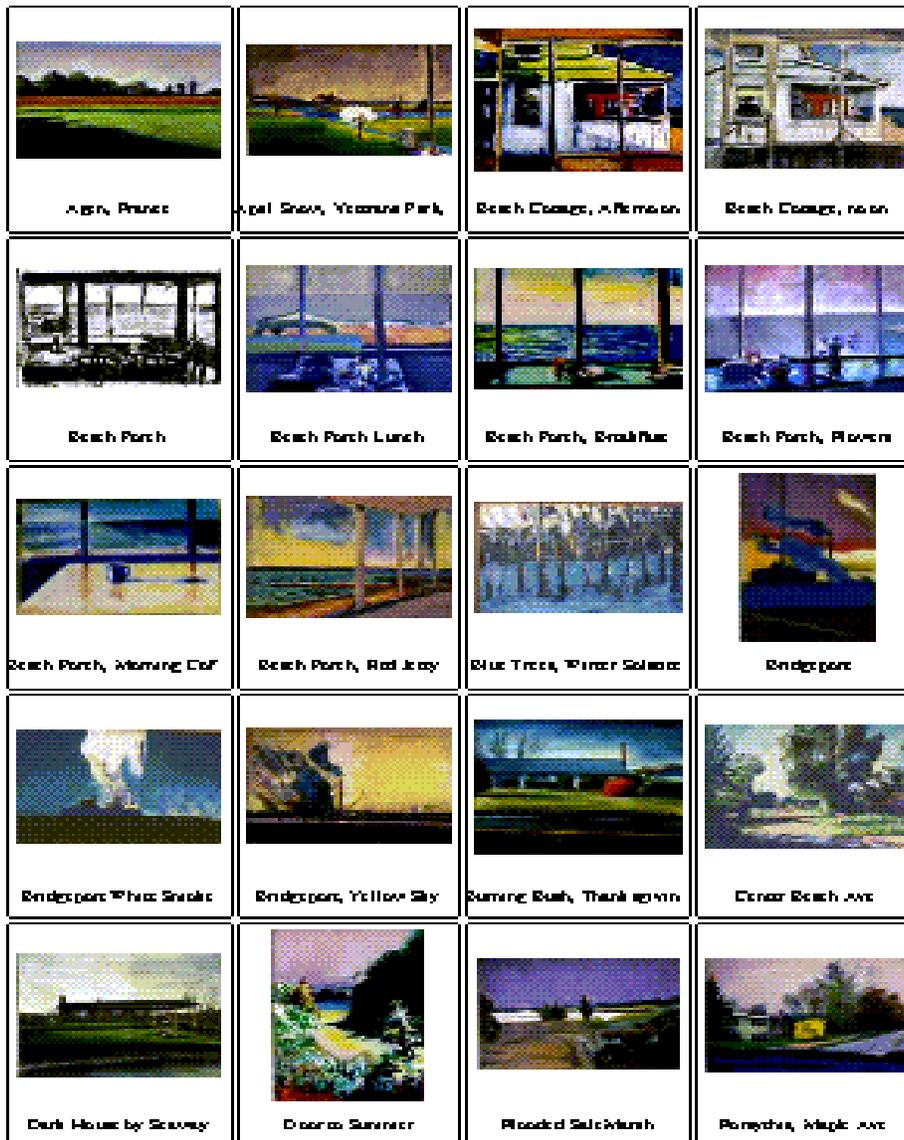


Figure 1: Customize a page of slides with ImageAXS.

The standard version of ImageAXS, which is probably all most people need, is based on an Access database and offers seven customizable text fields to store information such as author and date the photo or image was made, title

a database table, or create customizable text reports on your data. You can also make a "slide show" of images that plays over and over.

To create or add to a catalog, simply select the images (or movies, or sound files) you wish to include and click Acquire. Items are added to the end of the catalog one at a time or in large batches, in the order in which you import them. The program can view 40 different file types, including TIF, GIF, JPEG, and PhotoCD. It cannot deal with Corel Draw images or the newer WordPerfect file format (WP versions 7.0 or above). It can store and view MOV, WAV and AVI files in addition to static images. To export images to HTML, you need the Pro version. While you can rotate images and copy all or part of a given image to the clipboard for insertion into other programs, you need an image editing program to do anything more than that.

A limited version, ImageAXS CE, is available as freeware from the Digital Arts and Sciences Web page (see URL below). The freeware version limits searching and sorting to a single field at a time, allows only the default thumbnail size, and does not allow the creation of portfolios. But the price is right!

A professional version, ImageAXS Pro, includes many more customization options, a database with 100 customizable fields instead of seven, including Date, Numeric and Boolean fields (ImageAXS allows only text fields), and allows HTML export and the creation of "eZ-Cards," so that you can send a set of thumbnails to another person without sending the entire database. The Pro version sells for about \$240, the standard version for \$45. All three versions are available both for Mac and Windows.

...

You can read about or purchase ImageAXS on the Digital Arts and Sciences Web page at www.dascorp.com. Or you can write or call the company at 1301 Marina Village Parkway, Alameda, Calif. 94501, (510) 814-7200. Evaluation copies, upgrades, and full versions are available.

JOHN HECKMAN is president of Heckman Consulting, specializing in the legal industry. He will be teaching a class entitled *Optimizing Computer Use for Small Business*, at Norwalk Community Technical College this spring.

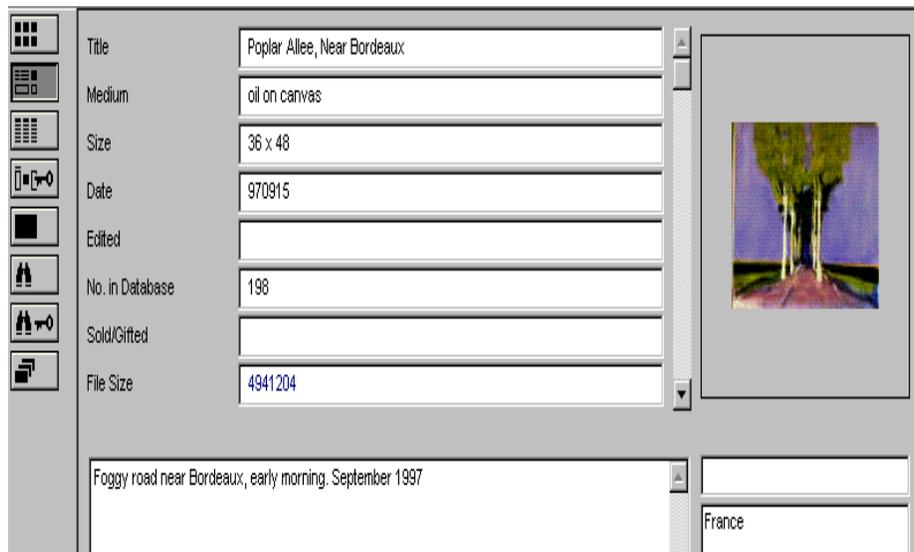
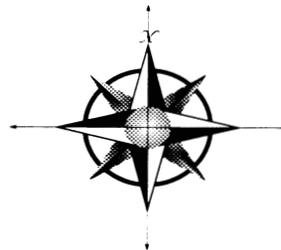


Figure 2: Image with the database information.

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Internet Boot Camp

Find it on the Web!

Stealthy search engines save your sanity

by April Miller

THE NET may be the coolest thing since Pop Rocks, but it's also completely confusing: In a world where the Charles Schwab mutual fund database is just a mouse click or two away from the Church of Satan sign-up sheet,



it is all too easy to lose your bearings. You know there's valuable information out there. The question is, How do you find it?

The problem with searching for information on the Internet is twofold. First, there's too much of it. You've got the World Wide Web (the interconnected system of sites and their pages that you access with a browser like Mosaic, Netscape, or Explorer), Gopher, and FTP sites (for finding and downloading files), and zillions of subject-specific newsgroups and mailing lists. Second, all this stuff is utterly unorganized: There's no centralized catalog of its resources, no single place you can go to find what you need.

On the Internet, fortunately, where there's a need, there's an eager programmer (or, increasingly, an entrepreneur) waiting to fill it. And some very bright



folks have set up World Wide Web sites that help you zero in on the information you need. I took a critical look at their

offerings to find out which of these tools are best at helping you find what you're looking for quickly and easily.

Directory assistance

One type of page—a directory—is great if you're simply interested in a general topic—the Civil War, say, or online finance—and want to find some relevant spots on the Net. Directories contain lists of such sites, organized by topic. My favorite is Yahoo! (www.yahoo.com), which lists some 80,000 Net sites (including Web pages, Gophers, FTP sites, and Usenet newsgroups), divided among 14 top-level categories: Arts, Computers, Health, Recreation, and so on. Click on one, and you get a list of subtopics. Keep drilling down until you find the stuff you want. In addition to general-interest directories like Yahoo!, subject-specific



directories cover everything from Antiques to Youth Workers.

Needle in a haystack

While directories are helpful when you're trying to find out what the Web has to offer, they become less so as your questions become more specific. To find answers to such questions, you need a search engine. These are Web pages containing forms into which you type a text string you want to search for. Click a button, wait a bit, and the engine spits out a list of Web sites that match your search criteria. In a recent sweep of the Web, I found some 60 such pages, 10 of which I'd consider useful tools. The rest are either moribund or of interest only to computer-science grad students.

Behind every search engine stands a database, in which are collected the URLs (Universal Resource Locators, or specially formatted Internet addresses) of Web pages and other Net resources. Most of these databases are created by crawlers (also known as "robots" or "spiders"), software pro-

grams that roam the Web looking for new sites by following links from page to page. When a spider finds a new page, it adds it to the database.

These databases store from a few thousand to more than a million Web pages, the leading engines adding new pages daily. Of the major general-interest engines, Lycos (www.lycos.com) and Excite (www.excite.com) have the broadest coverage. These two databases each claim to have 1.5 million fully indexed Web pages. Open Text Index (<http://index.opentext.net>), which says it has 1.3 million, is a close follower.

The size of an engine's database has a big impact on the success of your search. For example, I queried each engine with the string "recipe wheat beer" (Don't ask. I was thirsty). The massive Lycos database gave me 437 hits (matched pages) in return. InfoSeek (at the URL <http://www.infoseek.com>) and Open Text Index gave me around 200 each; others, less than 100. In several cases, I didn't get any hits at all. Generally, the smaller the database, the fewer hits I received.

Most engines restrict themselves to indexing the Web itself. InfoSeek and Excite go a few steps further than the rest by also indexing Usenet newsgroups. For a fee, InfoSeek will also let you search a bunch of handy non-Internet databases.

It's all in the index

Web spiders do more than just collect URLs. They also collect information about each page. The search engine's back-end software uses this information to create an index, which is what you're actually searching when you submit a query. Not surprisingly, indexing techniques vary from engine to engine.

Every engine indexes a page's URL and title. Most engines also index the headers that start each section. Others record the most frequently mentioned words or the first few lines of text. Open Text Index actually indexes every word on the page—including words like "the" and "that," which other engines ignore. As a result, it was the only engine that returned any hits on the query "to be or not to be." Granted, some of these were odd matches—the first hit was a Welsh language primer—but hit #10 (<http://www.hamlet.edmonton.ab.ca/scenetxt.htm>) was indeed the text of the play. Excite's concept-based indexing can find relevant pages even if they don't contain your specific keywords.

While the size of the database determines the number of hits it delivers, the

quality of the indexing is a major factor in determining how many of those hits are relevant to your search. For example, I ran the query “real estate North Carolina Triangle” through each search engine, then counted the number of hits that actually had something to do with finding real estate in the Chapel Hill area. WebCrawler at



www.webcrawler.com returned 19 hits, compared with the more than 200 hits I got from InfoSeek. But nine of those 19 were exactly on target. Most of InfoSeek’s hits related to real estate, but many had nothing to do with North Carolina.

The right tools for the job

No matter how big the database, or how sophisticated the indexing, a search engine is only as good as the query you give it.

Sometimes it’s just a matter of phrasing. For example, the query “homebrew wheat beer” wasn’t nearly as successful at finding beer recipes as “recipe wheat beer.” Not all engines treat your phrases the same way. InfoSeek “stems” words, seeking matches with parts of the whole: Ask for impressionism, for example, and you’ll also get matches for impression. Lycos, on the other hand, treats your search term as a stem—so the word metal matches metallic.

Several engines let you search for whole phrases. Instead of just searching for the individual words in your query string, they look for occurrences of them together. Some, like Aliweb at <http://www.nexor.com/public/aliweb/aliweb.html> let you use wild cards (* and ?) to find variations on a phrase.

In other cases, it’s a question of using the available tools. Some engines let you refine your queries with special operators. At the most basic level, this means you can, as with Lycos, search for sites that contain either any or all of your search terms. Others let you use more formal Boolean terms (AND, OR, and sometimes NOT). InfoSeek and Open Text Index are the only engines that give you proximal operators, which let you search for terms that appear near or next to each other.

Using all the tools available can increase the quality of hits dramatically. For example, when I ran that “recipe wheat beer” query past Open Text Index’s

“simple” search page, I got 90 hits, few of which had anything to do with brewing wheat beer (most were concerned with drinking it). But when I switched to the “power” page and ran the query “recipe (near) wheat (followed by) beer,” I got six hits, three of which were exactly on target.

Wheat and Chaff

Your search has only begun when you receive your list of hits: You still have to sort through all those sites to find the ones you really want. Most engines help by showing you, at the top of the results page, the words they actually searched for. You might have asked for “The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly,” but the search engine will tell you it actually looked for “Good, Bad, and Ugly.” Remember, you can tell many search engines to look for whole phrases instead of just keywords.

Most engines return hits in order of relevance. That way, even if you get 200-plus



hits, you don’t have to worry about wading through all 200 of them—the top ten will probably do. Different search engines use different methods to calculate relevance. InfoSeek ranks hits according to how frequently your search terms appear in the page relative to their frequency in the entire database. Lycos ranks them based on the number of terms found on the page, their proximity to one another, and their position on the page.

Most engines also give you some kind of description of the hits. Lycos does this best, giving you a relevance rating, a page description, and a brief abstract of its text. Read the abstract, and you’ll have a good idea whether that hits what you’re looking for.

Metasearching

You don’t feel like hopping from one search engine to another to find what you want? Then you should check out a metasearch site. These are pages from which you can use several search engines to launch queries.

Two of these pages (Savvy Search at <http://www.cs.colostate.edu/~dreiling/smartform.html> and MetaCrawler at <http://www.metacrawler.com/>) launch your query to several engines at the same time (including most of the engines I looked at

individually). Savvy Search also covers ArchiePlex (for searching FTP sites) and DejaNews (for searching newsgroups). The only problem with these parallel searchers is that you don’t get full access to each engine’s query tools—the Boolean and proximity operators, for example—so your searches will be less accurate than if you used the real thing.

Other metasearch sites let you search the major engines one at a time. You fill in the form for the engine you want to use and send it off. Again, you lose some query tools, but these pages can be handy to keep on file for quick queries.

Still surfin’ after all these queries

So, which of these tools should you add to your list of favorites? I’d pick three search engines: Excite, InfoSeek, and Lycos. All three give accurate results from easy-to-use interfaces. I’d also add one directory: Yahoo! It’s the most complete directory I found, and it makes an excellent default home page.

Fortunately, these tools are constantly evolving. InfoSeek has announced plans to incorporate a directory into its search site. And Open Text Index has announced plans to team up with Yahoo! to form what could be a formidable combination.

But no matter which of them you end up using, these tools make the Web more than a playground for propeller heads. They make it a place where serious people can do real work—which is exactly what I’m going to do as soon as I check out that recipe



for Peach Wheat Ale and visit a couple of houses near Raleigh.

Search tips

A search engine’s database is simply an index of words and phrases associated with URLs. Your job is to come up with words that match this index. Here are a few general rules of thumb that will maximize your success.

Read the instructions: Most search engines provide their own set of operators, delimiters, and rules to help you search efficiently. Use them!

Choose the unusual word: The more distinctive a word, the more useful it will be for sharpening your search. For instance,

you'll get a more targeted search with "cercopithecus aethiops" than with "African green monkey." And try to pick words that really define your idea: That home-brew query didn't really fizz until I thought to include the word "recipe."

Watch your spelling: If your search query asks for "astronut," you'll get Web pages for the orthographically challenged. By the same token, remember to search for legitimate variations: If you're looking for fly-fishing, try "flyfishing" and "fly fishing" as well.

Think about synonyms: Remember that you're probably searching for a concept, not just a word. If you're looking for backpacking sites, include the terms hiking, trekking, backpacking, and camping in your query.

Forget natural language: Some sites support natural language queries, which let you ask questions the way you would in conversation. Don't. Instead, focus on the key terms and phrases that identify your concept, then enter them as a list.

Repeat yourself: After the first pass, go to some of the most promising-looking hits, and jot down other terms that you can use to sharpen or widen your search.

Don't forget about NOT: Some search engines support the NOT operator, which lets you exclude terms. Thus, with a search like "metal NOT heavy NOT music," you can hit sites dealing with industrial metals and avoid those devoted to heavy metal bands.

Use more than one search engine: I found surprisingly little overlap in the results from a single query performed on several different search engines. So to make sure that you've got the best results, be sure to try your search with numerous sites.

Try specialized sites: If you're looking for government-sponsored Web sites, check out Infomine at <http://lib-www.ucr.edu/Main.html>. If you want to search Usenet newsgroups, you can use InfoSeek or DejaNews at <http://www.dejanews.com/>. Finally, if you're looking for downloadable files on the Internet, ArchiePlex at <http://flosun.salk.edu/archieplex.html> should be able to help.

APRIL MILLER, currently director of PC Applications at the Computer Education Institute in Chesterton, Indiana, has been teaching computer topics since 1985. April welcomes feedback to her articles at userfriendly@niia.net.

Net Shopping

Buy-by-Net Shopping How I Found My Dream Machine Online

by Marlene Gaberel

READING Mike Kaltschnee's article last month (Yes, Mike, I do read your articles!) about advice on purchasing a computer, I realized I was right on target with his recommendations. I had been thinking about replacing my aging but still reliable 486 when I took myself off to PC Expo last June. After trolling the aisles for a while, I focused on three mail-order companies that looked like good prospects: Dell (www.dell.com), Micron Electronics (www.micronpc.com), and Gateway (www.gw2K.com). Over the next five months I visited these companies' Web sites regularly to check out their products.

In the middle of November I finally succumbed. I decided that I really needed to keep up with technology, and that fall—with its colder days and more time spent indoors—was a perfect time to order a new computer. Another big reason was relief from my kids, who had been bugging me because they couldn't buy the newest and bestest computer games. Our faithful 486, it seems, couldn't meet the high minimum memory requirements of the software.

I had been slow to move from DOS to Windows 3.1. And true to form I never upgraded my 486 to Windows 95, even though I knew that 95 would provide me with other neat Web access features I had been eyeing: Java, shockwave, and real audio. I also wanted a faster modem to speed up access to the Web.

Once decided, I moved ahead quickly, online. I first pointed my browser to the Dell site, where I discovered useful guidelines that helped me assemble a computer with the features I wanted. Unfortunately, some of the components I specified were incompatible. Familiar with the interrupts and conflicts issues on my 486, I moved right to the Micron site.

Like Dell, Micron also helped me put together a computer with the features I wanted. Within ten minutes of sending the request for my dream machine, I got an e-mail offer from the sales department asking for my fax number to confirm it. When their fax arrived, I called the salesperson and asked for a few modifications to my initial inquiry. These were promptly confirmed with another fax and another

e-mail. I gave myself a day to think about the offer and then picked up the phone to make the purchase, saying "yes" to Micron's kind offer to deliver my new system for free!

One reason I chose to buy through the Internet is that I hated the thought of going to a national chain store and having to deal with a young clerk who would probably assume I knew nothing about computers and figure I would buy anything. Of course this same young clerk could not possibly remember that once upon a time using a 1200-baud modem in a world of 300 BPS to log onto a BBS somewhere across the country was incredibly fast, and that computers did *not* have hard disks.

My experience with the Micron sales staff was nothing but positive. The salesperson was never pushy, never talked down to me, and always answered my questions straightforwardly. I appreciated their professional attitude. I was not so happy about the slow delivery. Each day my sons would arrive home from school and ask if FedEx had come. When they finally did, it was a good two weeks later than Micron had promised. Of course I opened the cartons and hooked up all the components immediately, and within minutes had the computer up and running.

My first step was to set up the Internet connection. And then I . . . well, I surrendered the computers to the kids. I didn't plan it that way, but the delivery coincided with school vacation. Over the holiday period the kids played computer games. I figured any hardware problems would surface during that time of heavy use. They didn't.

Overall I'm pleased with our new computer. But now I need to learn more about Windows 95. How does the software work? I knew my 486 Windows 3.11 in and out but obviously didn't learn it overnight. So I'm going to take my time learning the new OS but also hope to speed the process by attending the Windows SIG, where I can ask as many questions as I like and learn all the shortcuts.

MARLENE GABEREL is DACS' new assistant Webmaster and a regular contributor to the newsletter. Contact Marlene via e-mail at mgaberel@ct1.nai.net.

New Technology

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Portable, durable, and affordable, BOOK is being hailed as a precursor of a new entertainment wave. Also,

BOOK's appeal seems so certain that thousands of content creators have committed to the platform and investors are reportedly flocking. Look for a flood of new titles soon.

EDITORS NOTE: A bookworm on our staff found this on the Internet, author unknown. Fuels your fantasies, doesn't it. Lissen up, bedroom readers, let's have some feedback about this—letters to the ed, that is. First thing that comes to my mind is How heavy is it? Second, how much will my infrared bedside hookup to Web Book cost? Will I be able to access it from my dreams—synapse all of Shakespeare, Grisham, and the amazon.com catalog in a nocturnal twinkling? Awesome!
—Ed.

Random Access

Instant replay: February 1998

Bruce Preston, Moderator

Q. In Quicken how would I store the data on a floppy diskette rather than on the hard disk. I don't mind putting it on the hard disk as long as I can make sure that it has been removed after I've finished.

A. Do Backups from within Quicken, which will put the data onto floppy diskettes. You can then delete the file(s) on the hard drive via Explorer. Another suggestion was to put the data onto a ZIP drive rather than on a hard disk. Quicken will not let you use a normal 1.44MB disk drive at run time, since the files easily get bigger than 1.44MB.

Q. I have a 386 machine with Windows 3.1 and an internal modem. I am using Juno as my mail service. Juno starts to receive mail, then it crashes, causing the machine to reboot. There are 4MB of memory in the machine. I don't have problems when using ProComm for communications. Juno recommended lowering the communications link speed to 9600 baud, but that hasn't helped.

A. One person reported having seen a similar problem under Windows 3.1 when a bad video driver was installed. It was suggested that you try installing a standard VGA driver, or look to see if there is a newer Windows 3.1 video driver available for your display adapter. This is unlikely but worth a shot.

Q. I am having problems uninstalling Internet Explorer 4.0 from my machine. If I click on Uninstall, some of the parts are removed but the icon and various files and folders remain.

A. Reinstall Explorer and tell it to install the optional desktop components. Then do the uninstall. The uninstaller gets upset if it doesn't see all the components it expects to see. This will also happen if you try to delete IE4.0 manually rather than using the uninstall function. A cosmetic method is to use the Tweak UI applet that is part of

PowerToys. You might try looking at the Windows Annoyances pages, which can be found at www.creativelement.com or by going to the O'Reilly publishing Web site. The Windows Annoyances pages describe how to get around or fix various things in Windows that don't work the way you would expect them to operate. Another site to look at would be www.wopr.com.

Q. At one time I had Windows NT and Windows 95 on my machine with the "dual boot" feature. I have removed Windows NT, but the "dual boot" message still comes up and offers Windows 95.

A. You need to get rid of the Windows NT loader, which is being started by your boot drive's loader. According to Microsoft, the proper way to remove Windows NT from a system is to do the following:

- a) Boot from an MS DOS diskette or, better still, from the Emergency Diskette you created under Windows 95.
- b) From the A:\ prompt, type SYS C:. This will install DOS boot tracks and system files. The machine is now a "DOS" machine. If you used the Emergency Diskette from Windows 95, then it will be a Windows 95 machine.
- c) After the system files are transferred, reboot the machine from the hard disk.
- d) Delete the following files and directories (Note, you won't be able to delete files marked as "system" or "read only" until you remove these attributes):

```
Pc:\pagefile.sys
Pc:\boot.ini
Pc:\nt*.*
Pc:\bootsect.dos
Pc:\<winroot>\SYSTEM32
Pc:\USERS directory
Pc:\TEMP directory
Pc:\WIN32APP directory
```

e) If you were running Windows 95, you

may now reinstall Windows 95 over your previous installation.

Q. What e-mail programs automatically check the Internet mailbox periodically?

A. Eudora Pro, Outlook, and Netscape can all be configured to connect. Eudora Pro will do the dialing. For the others, you might need to get the shareware utility "Dunce" (Dial Up Networking Communications Enhancement), which will provide the "connect" click that the Microsoft Dial-Up Networking Adapter requires.

Q. I use ECI as my ISP, and was using Netscape 4.0. A business associate needed to get into SNET's Internet service. After their installation, which put Netscape 3.0 on the machine, my Netscape 4.0 stopped working. How do I fix it?

A. Reinstall Netscape 4.0. The SNET Netscape 3.0 overwrote components of your 4.0, even though the 4.0 stuff was "newer." Doing an install of 4.0 will fix it, and you will retain your address book, bookmarks, etc.

Q. Can I synchronize the address books in my AOL Mac machine and my AOL PC machine?

A. No. The formats are not quite the same and just different enough to cause a problem. Unfortunately, AOL does not provide an import/export or conversion capability.

Q. I have a Pentium into which I have installed an additional hard drive. Now my CD ROM drive, which had been D:, is H: and all of the installed software no longer finds the CD ROM drive. What can I do?

A. Partition Magic has an application called AppMover, which will search the registry, .INI files, .BAT files, etc. and change references from one drive to another. So you could use this to tell it that what had been D: is now called H:. By the way, you will find the same problem with ZIP drives. For both CD-ROM drives and ZIP drives, you can go into the control panel and specify that you want to use a particular drive letter. I use Y: for the CD-ROM drive on all of my machines, and Z: for the ZIP drive. In this way, no matter how many hard disk drives or partitions I add, or map via networking, the CD-ROM and

ZIP drive are always at the same location.

Q. Does Netscape still have a free browser?

A. Yes, Netscape Communicator, which includes the browser and Web authoring tools, is available for free downloading. Communicator Pro, which has the workgroup features such as calendaring is available only via purchase.

Q. I downloaded a HP5L driver for Windows 95. Since I don't know where the download went, I don't know which program to run to "install" the update.

A. The target directory is usually specified in the TOOLS/OPTIONS/PREFERENCES of the browser. If it isn't there, and if you remember the name of the file, you will have to use START/FIND/FILES or FOLDERS, searching My Computer to do a full search.

Q. Does anyone else have problems with Microsoft FAX? It just doesn't seem to be reliable. Is there a better program out there?

A. A large number of attendees recommended that you use WinFAX Pro, from Symantec (formerly Delrina).

Q. I have an external USRobotics modem, which doesn't work the first time that I try to use it.

A. The modem must be turned on when the PC is started, since Windows does the modem initialization string during the boot sequence. You can force the reinitialization by going to My Computer/Control Panel/System/Device Manager and pressing the Refresh button. By the way, you will have a similar problem if you have a scanner and it is not turned on when you start the machine. Again, pressing the Refresh button on the Device Manager page will cause the machine to attempt to initialize all known devices. A quick way to get to the Device Manager is to right-click on My Computer, then select Properties.

BRUCE PRESTON is president of West Mountain Systems, a consultancy in Ridgefield, CT., specializing in database applications. A DACS director and moderator of the Random Access sessions at the General Meetings, Bruce also leads the Access SIG.

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We Hear You! DACs Survey Sets Stage for '98

At the February General Meeting we distributed a survey to help us determine why members joined DACS and help us plan for the coming year. We wanted to discover your tech interests for work, school, family, or personal development so we could organize SIGS, New-tos, and General Meeting programs to keep you challenged. Fifty-nine of you filled out the survey. Here is what we found.

—More than 60% indicated a strong or moderate interest in:

Windows	76%
Internet Searching	75%
Scanning	73%
Digital Photo	68%
Color Printers	63%

—Between 50% and 60% indicated a strong or moderate interest in:

Spreadsheets	56%
Quicken	56%
Virus Protection	51%

—Between 30% and 50% indicated a strong or moderate interest in:

Internet Surfing	47%
GPS mapping	42%

E-purchasing	41%
Genealogy	36%

—Electronic purchasing: Respondents indicated a strong or moderate interest in the following sites:

amazon.com	34%
cyberian	
outpost.com	22%
CDEExpress.com	19%
LLBean.com	15%
bluemountain.com	14%
QVC.com	12%

—Respondents either wrote in or had a low interest in:

Cards and T shirts, 3D Animation, Plugins, Reference CD-ROMS, Graphics applications, C++, Hardware, MS-Word, Investment applications, Tax applications, Networking, and CAD.

Leaders of the various planning committees and the board of directors thank you for your help in this planning effort. We hope our programs during the next year will continue to reflect your interests

—CHARLIE BOVAIRD

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