



Discover Color Printing

Upgrade to the Alps

DO YOU NEED a color printer to go with that new computer you just received for the Holidays? Or perhaps you are considering up-grading to a color printer but are hesitant about what to look for? Maybe you want to learn about alternatives to the brand names, or just want to discover more about color printing in general?

Whatever your interest, come to the next Danbury Area Computer Society general meeting on January 5, 1999, at the Danbury Hospital Auditorium to see the presentation by Alps Electric to find out more about the technology that has elevated desktop graphics to a higher plane.

While most color printers require expensive paper for high-quality photo printing, Alps printers use ordinary laser paper, saving you time, trouble and money. Color from inkjet printers fades over time, but Alps printouts stay brilliant and vibrant.

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DACS general meetings, held on the first Tuesday of each month at the Danbury Hospital auditorium, 24 Hospital Avenue, are free to the public. Meetings start at 6:30 p.m. with casual networking. At 7 p.m. join Random Access, a short question-and-answer session during which members share computer problems and solutions. The business meeting and main presentation follow at 8 p.m.

As a DACS member you will receive the monthly award-winning newsletter, dacs.doc. For more information about DACS and its SIGs (Special Interest Groups), which meet throughout the month to discuss specific computer topics, see <http://www.dacs.org>, or call the DACS Resource Center at 203 748-4330.

Meeting Review

The Future of the Net

IBM's Patrick maps out the new frontier

By Jack Corcoran

THE 1960s. Everything went nonlinear. Every boundary was pushed and many were ruptured, some never to recover. Many good things happened: There were major breakthroughs in biology and electronics, fabulous accomplishments in space, and momentous social advances. The computer era began and moved into mainstream business and technology. But there were also protests and defiance never seen before. Indulgences and excesses we had only read or dreamed about became part of everyday life. Even Elvis was all shook up.

And then, out of this maelstrom of change came startling and prophetic words from a professor at the Uni-

versity of Toronto. Marshall McLuhan told us "The medium is the message." We desperately wanted some kind of explanation of what was happening all around us, but what in the hell did McLuhan mean?

McLuhan tried to tell us. A new medium comes along (the printing press, machinery, TV, whatever), but the medium can't and doesn't do anything by itself. The content of society and culture (our values, customs, behavior, etc.) is changed by it, however, and now things look different to us. The message is the new look of that content and how it generates a new environment in which we live. The importance is in the changed content, not in the form of the medium.

Review Continued on page 4

President's File

The first New Year's resolution is said to date back to 153 B.C., when the head of the mythical King Janus was placed at the top the Roman calendar. Janus, whose two faces could look simultaneously into both the past and the future, came to symbolize the wisdom of hindsight and forward thinking. Looking back on 2,152 years of failed resolutions, anyone with hindsight today would seem foolish to put faith in good intentions. But the thirst for hope and optimism remains unquenched, and for the waning months of this millennium, here are ten resolutions I have made (not in any special order of importance) to guide me into the abyss of the next:

1) Replace all the software you use with new versions that are certified Y2K compliant. Get a copy of the certification and send it to your lawyer. Make a hard copy of all your records and store it for possible use. Never mind changing date fields in your personal databases to four digits, since you weren't born before 1900 and you can count on one hand those you know who were. Learn to add, multiply and especially subtract without using a calculator or computer.

2) Actually get those volunteers you keep asking for, but don't beg, lie or cheat to get them. Just convince them that working for DACS will help them learn new skills and feel better about themselves.

3) Start DACS' membership rolls growing again by encouraging each member to sponsor a friend to join. Never again have to hear any area computer user ask you "What is DACS?"

4) Be a good example to your editors. Get your president's column in on time every month.

5) Update your virus files regularly and send any infected floppies to Jeff Setaro. (Psst! . . . don't tell him I said this). If your word processor ever comes up with a message "you're a big stupid jerk!", try to come up with a suitable rejoinder . . . or get WordPerfect or WordPro.

6) Buy at least 1 MB of RAM for every 500 KB of file size you create and back up the file you are working on to a removable medium (floppy or Zip drive) at least every time you add 500 KB to it. The more memory you have, the faster Windows comes up with another fatal error.

7) Uninstall all programs you haven't used in 18 months and dispose of them properly. Do not inflict them on your friends by offering to give them away.

8) Never trust a utility that says you have x number of Windows problems and offers to fix them for you.

9) Archive all your files that are more than 2 years old onto zipped floppies and hide them in a secure place that you are likely to forget. Do same with e-mails over one year old.

10) Try to come up with something more original than "I'm Allan Ostergren, president of DACS."

—ALLAN OSTERGREN
dacsprez@aol.com

Directors' Notes

The regular monthly meeting of the Board of Directors was held at the Resource Center on December 7, 1998 and attended by Messrs. Bovaird, Buoy, Cohen, David, Gingras, Heere, Ostergren, Setaro, and Mrs. Gaberel. Also present was Steve Schwab, representing the VFJ SIG. Chairman Wally David presided. Secretary Larry Buoy kept the minutes. Minutes of the November 9 meeting were presented and approved with corrections.

Finance and Membership

Treasurer Charles Bovaird reported combined checking and postal accounts in the amount of \$13,257.53, receivables of \$250, and postage on hand of \$72.72, giving a total cash position of \$13,580.25. He also reported current membership of 556.

Membership Information

Dacs.doc, ISSN 1084-6573, is published monthly by the Danbury Area Computer Society, Inc., 12 Noteworthy Drive, Danbury, CT 06810-7271. Annual subscription rates: \$25 to regular members, \$20 to students (included in dues).

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DACS, its officers and directors assume no liability for damages arising out of the publication or non-publication of any article, advertisement or any other item in this newsletter.

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, contact Brad Altland at 203-357-4007 (BBA3@exchange.co.westchester.ny.usa)

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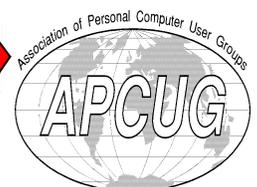
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Web Site: <http://www.dacs.org>

HelpLine

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

d = day e = evening

Program	Name	Phone #	
Alpha Four	Dick Gingras	(203) 426-0484	(e)
AOL	Marc Cohen	(203) 775-1102	(d e)
APL	Charles Bovaird	(203) 792-7881	(e)
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C/UNIX/ObjC	Kenneth Lerman	(203) 426-4430	(d e)
C + +	Reg Charney	(914) 833-0762	(d e)
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Elections

Results of the election of directors at the annual meeting of the general membership held on December 7, 1998 were reported. Reelection of incumbents Bovaird, David, Gingras, and Heere were confirmed and the election of Marlene Gaberel as a new member announced.

NT for the RC

Jeff Setaro advised that the Windows NT OS for the computer at the Resource Center had been ordered and that when it arrived, he would install and set it up as outlined at the November meeting.

Digital camera

Further discussion of increased availability and use of the digital camera recently purchased resulted in assigning stewardship of the camera to Charles Bovaird, with Marlene Gaberel to use it at general meetings to obtain pictures of presenters, etc.

Affiliates

President Ostergren remarked that he had again spoken to Dean Ron Benson regarding WCSU faculty and student membership and participation in DACS activities. Also that opportunities were present to introduce DACS to faculties and students of Brookfield High School and perhaps other local high schools. Several suggestions were presented of other schools and programs that could be pursued to increase membership and interest in DACS by younger persons.

Steve Schwab of the VFJ SIG, asked for ideas that could benefit the VFJ program, suggesting that officers and members visit its Web site with that concept in mind.

Y2K

Ed Heere affirmed the Y2K program was planned for the May 1999 general meeting.

Corporate sponsors

Concerning the August decision to allow newsletter advertisers to become corporate sponsors, President Ostergren asked that the URLs of advertisers meeting the requirements be forwarded to Jeff Setaro for processing.

Jeff related the progress of archiving back issues of the newsletter and asked that, where appropriate to submitted articles, screen shots be provided.

— LARRY BUOY

Review *Continued from page 1*

But most of us still didn't get it; we kept looking for the content that was no more. Those who did get it, however, particularly some politicians, did very well.

When the Sixties cooled into the Seventies and Eighties, the excesses went away—kind of. Computers got bigger, faster, and smarter, and the electronic media flourished beyond anyone's expectation. But the major impact of the electronic media on society was yet to come.

FAST-FORWARD to the December 2, 1998, DACS General Meeting, with John Patrick at the lectern. Vice President of Internet Technology at IBM, John's role is company strategist, visionary, chief dreamer, and Internet Evangelist. He is telling us about the cutting edge of Net technology, but even more so about the how the content of our society is changing as it rides the crest of the new medium. He is really saying, "Marshall McLuhan, now we understand."

Many of us at DACS are riding technology-driven careers whose survival depends on our understanding of that technology. But our actual success depends more on how we involve ourselves with the content that our computers are processing. That John shared with us this most important and meaningful insight was the best New Year's gift we could have possibly imagined.

If you were unable to attend the meeting, you may read John's talk on his Web page, www.ibm.com/patrick. Just follow the "presentation" tab. The words are all there, but not the sense of excitement and opportunity that John generated as he talked. Those of us who were there should also make it a personal responsibility to visit John's page to re-experience what he told us and to etch his insights onto our own memory boards.

Here are some of the highlights of the presentation:

- The Net is evolving to be always ON and to be the parent medium, subsuming all the other media. The implications here are mind-boggling
- The limitless information on the Web is power that will transfer to the people, whose interaction and responses will direct the format and protocol of the Web. This is exactly what McLuhan describes in detail as he writes about the evolution of other media throughout history.
- Successful companies must design for the Web, not try to adapt existing content

to it. Successful computer people will be the ones who practice that.

- E-business is where it is all going. All of it? John is saying, "Yes, all of it".
- There will be many portals. Yahoo! et. al. are not necessarily forever. Opportunity here.
- The Web will not eliminate culture. McLuhan got it right.
- The Buddy-list will replace e-mail as the vehicle of choice for personal communication, real-time collaboration, and interaction. This is a short-term development opportunity. Perhaps some obscure graduate student at Indiana will get on it.
- Active strips on a Page will replace the need for transferring to another Web site for commercial click-on windows. An immediate, high-impact opportunity here, with lots of money out there begging.
- Twenty percent of Net users are over 50, and half have purchased or invested from their PCs. Seniors have the time, motivation, and money to be active players. This is a tremendous potential market, but it will only respond if handled with understanding.
- The Net can expand indefinitely as new methods and technology develop. For the short term, Internet2 and MP3 are hot items. For the long term, read up on chaos theory. Somewhere out there, processes have started.
- Computers will become less necessary for Net access, possibly only 20% in the near future. This leads to John's intriguing description of an all-encompassing Net of people, machines, devices, and sensors—everything connected and interactive.

At the end of his presentation, John fielded more than a dozen questions from

the audience. About half were techie queries that John returned like Pete Sampras. The other half brought up the grungy side of the Net—pornography, pirating, preying on children, scams, and the like. To these John provided no more hope than anyone else has. His answers focused on parental responsibility and hardware gimmicks, both of which, unfortunately, are unrealistic and easily circumvented.

If we attack the crud, we compromise the freedom. It's the same situation we encounter on our nationwide web of super-highways: We understand that thirty thousand cripples and corpses every year will pay for our free access to drive.

OVER THE PAST seven years, John Patrick has become a friend to DACS, not just a presenter. His meetings have always been the highlight of our year. Like all of his previous presentations, John offered us last month a message about the message, but it is up to us to solve the cryptic. From his vantagepoint on the mountaintop, John has a clear view all around him and the vision to see all the parts of the puzzle. We, mere valley dwellers blinded by the daily fog, are part of only one piece.

DACS is so fortunate to have had the opportunity to listen to John, and we are grateful that he had the charter and willingness to share his perspectives with us.

JACK CORCORAN (corcoran@snet.net) is an old retired computer programmer who considers himself medium done. Wally David (wallydavid@myself.com) contributed key insights to this review.



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Can't Stop Playing 'Em

A games addict 'fesses up

By Mike Kaltschnee

I ADMIT IT. My name is Mike Kaltschnee and I like to play computer games. I don't own a Nintendo, a Sega, or a Sony, but I use my computer to play games. And I know I'm not alone either, which is why I decided to go public with my problem.

My favorite game right now is Dark Forces, a Star Wars experience that immerses you into the world of light-sabers and laser guns. I loved the original Star Wars games, Dark Forces has taken the series to a whole new level. I have only two complaints—DF doesn't run on Windows NT, and it doesn't support my Voodoo card—both of which I'll explain next.

My company has moved to Windows NT as our platform of choice, mainly due to its stability and our practice of working with very large amounts of data. At first we couldn't play many games because they used DirectX, which is Microsoft's way of letting games run the way they do on a Sony PlayStation. DirectX is a simple download from the MS site and comes with many games. We finally figured out how to install DirectPlay 3, which supports most games under NT (but not Dark Forces).

Most of our work now is done in TrueSpace, a program that lets you draw incredible things in 3D. It's similar to the tools that did the dinosaurs in Jurassic Park. Our entire WebSpice Animations product was done using this tool. We bought Voodoo cards, add-ons to your normal 2D videocard, to enhance the images we were creating. A Voodoo card runs about \$130 to \$200 and includes a special cable that runs from your normal video card to the Voodoo. You then plug your monitor into the Voodoo port and install a simple driver.

The change is phenomenal. About once a week after work, we play a game called Unreal, which is truly an "unreal" experience in which you are immersed into an environment that is the closest



I've seen to reality. The Voodoo card makes the textures on the walls look realistic, and even the monsters look real.

We have a high-speed network at our office, so we can play the game against one another. Most new games have a special multiplayer mode, so we can each connect and play against a much smarter opponent than the computer—your friend (well, I guess it depends on who your friend is). You run through the mazes, looking for other people to fight against.

There is absolutely nothing like it.

I JUST GOT a review copy (I love this job!) of Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six. This game was released simultaneously with the book of the same name. I've only had about an hour to spend with it, but already I'm less impressed with the game graphics or interface than with the concept. You command a whole team of anti-terrorist soldiers using the latest weapons and have to plan how you're going to save the terrorists. I plan on spending time during the Christmas break doing just that.

I have some favorite games that don't support the VooDoo card but which are great for other reasons. If you don't own a copy of "Don't Know Jack," buy one. A great game for parties, its premise is Trivial Pursuit with a wacky twist. The first version (there are now about seven) is really a steal, selling for \$15 at most stores. Finally, you need to look at Quake 2, WarCraft, StarCraft, and Duke Nukem 3D. These are games I still love to play, although I spend more time with the newer ones.

You know what I'll be doing over the break. Have fun, and see you next month.

MIKE KALTSCHNEE is a founder of DeMorgan Industries Corp., the leading developer of Web graphics. You can reach Mike online at: miked@demorgan.com.

DACS New Members

11/19/1998 thru 12/20/1998

- 1) Mary-Ellen Alling
- 2) Richard Arthur
- 3) Gail F. Bower
- 4) Stephen Bower
- 5) Vince Cannavo
- 6) Daniel Cunningham
- 7) Jim Dennison
- 8) Marcel Garcia
- 9) Ruth Ellen Harkness
- 10) Pat Kuss
- 11) David J. Lajoie
- 12) Mark R. Levander

THIS IS YOUR LAST NEWSLETTER

If the membership date on your mailing label reads

EXP 11 1998

you need to renew your DACS membership—NOW!

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CLOUD 9	914-682-0384
CONCENTRIC NETWORKS	800-745-2747
C. P. CONNECT	203-734-6600
DELPHI INTERNET	800-695-4005
EARTHLINK	800-395-8425
MAGS-NET	203-207-5695
EROL'S	888-463-7657
GTE INTERNETWORKING	800-927-3000
IBM/ADVANTIS	800-888-4103
INTERNET84	203-830-2122
INTERRAMP/PSI	800-827-7482
JAVANET	800 952-4638
LOCALNET / FAIRFIELD CTY	203-425-3535
MCI	800-550-0927
MICROSOFT NETWORK	800-386-5550
NETAXIS	203-969-0618
NETCOM	800-353-6600
NORTH AMERICAN	800-952-INET
NETMEG INTERNET	888-863-8634
ON THE NET	203-270-6388
PARADIGM	800-664-INET
PUTNAM INTERNET	914-225-3234
SMART WORLD TECH.	203-790-4600
SNET INTERNET	800-408-8282
SPRYNET	800-SPRYNET
TIAC	203-323-5957
WEB CONNECT OF RIDGEFIELD	203-438-7650
WEBQUILL INT. SVCS	203-750-1000

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Further information?
Call Jim Finch @ 203 790-3654

Hong Kong Shopping

Hardware and Toys in HK

By Jacqueline Renee Cohen

THERE IS an urban myth that says computers are cheaper in Hong Kong than elsewhere in the world. This article will investigate that myth and explore what bargains are available in Hong Kong.

The myth dispelled

Look at the brief comparison of brand name computers and products and their costs in HK and in the USA:

machines. Each has a shop with display units, computer parts and information leaflets on their products. The following is a brief selection of what is available.

Desktops: Intel PII CPU (512 cache), 450 MHz, Asus P2B-F PII Main Board, 128 MB, Quantum 6.4 GB, Sony 32x CD-ROM, floppy, (no monitor) etc... 13,420 HK\$ = 1732 US\$

Netcom PCI 56K/V.90 Internal (no monitor, no O/S Software, no delivery) 2,990 HK\$ (+100 HK\$ for 266) = 385 US\$ (+13US\$)

Sounds good doesn't it? But what is and is not included, the quality of the parts, the technical support, and other factors must be taken into account. For more detailed research, you can check out some of these companies web sites or e-mail addresses at:

<http://come.to/opelnet>,
<http://www.fastnet.com.hk>,
<http://www.masteroa.com.hk>,
<http://www.planet.com.hk>,
<http://www.pcstore.com.hk>,
fai@planet.com.hk, opel@hkstar.com,
incom@glink.net.hk,
atech@netfront.net.

Comparing Hong Kong and U.S. Prices

(7.75 Hong Kong dollars = One U.S. dollar)

Item	Speed	RAM	HD/DVD	HK\$	U.S.\$
IBM Think Pad 600 PII	266 MHz	32 MB	4 GB	24,800	3,200
NEC Versa LXPII	300 MHz	64 MB	5.1 GB	24,300	3,135
<i>(Display Unit only)</i>					
Mitac MiNote 6033 PII	266 MHz	32 MB	4.1 GB	14,400	1,858
Sony VIAO - PII300 MHz		64 MB	6.4 GB - DVD	29,800	3,845
Epson Stylus Photo EX Printer - Color Ink Jet A3 Format				3,500	451
Microsoft Force Feedback Pro Joystick				899	116
Microsoft Freestyle Pro Game Pad				599	77

What this chart should show, is that for brand names HK and US prices are on a par or a bit cheaper in the U.S. The Compaq Presario is priced so low, because it is a display unit. Just as in the U.S. the best deals, though risky, are display and refurbished machines.

The myth proved

Where the deals really come in is with the locally made computers, made by companies called Sunny Computer Technology, RealTech Computers, HighTech Computers, System Chan Group, Op-El Network House Co., In-Com Technology, ANA Computer Technology, PC Power Technology, AS Computer City, and A-Tech Computer Co..

Walking around the WanChai Computer Centre, one can pick up numerous leaflets advertising these small companies

AMD K6-2 w/3D Now CPU, 350 MHz, Magic-Pro MP-586VIP4-X, 64 MB, Quantum 6.4 GB, Panasonic 1.44 floppy, AGP Sis 6326 Graphic Card, 32x CD-ROM, Sound Blaster 16 bit 3D sound Card, case, powers supply (no monitor or keyboard) 5,580 HK\$ = 720 US\$

AMD K6-2 350Mhz w/3D Now CPU, MVP3 VIA AGP Main Board, 32 MB, Seagate/Fujitsu 3.2 GB ultra DMA33 DH, Panasonic 1.44 floppy, 32 X CR-Rom, Audio CD 16 bit Sound Card, case, power supply, keyboard, mouse, speakers (no monitor) 3999 HK\$ = 516 US\$

Cyrix 233 MHz, Cyrix GXM main board, 32 MB, Seagate 2.1 GB Ultra DMA HD, Panasonic 1.44 floppy, Maxell 32X CD-ROM, sound card, case, power supply, VGA card, Win95, keyboard, mouse,

Toys

This is where I think most of the bargains are to be found. In the USA, computer accessories tend to be quite pricey. In Hong Kong, they can be found at reasonable prices:

Super Jolt Gun with Pedal (for Play Station and Saturn) 250 HK\$ = 32 US\$
Wireless Keyboard 370 HK\$ = 48 US\$
Philips Net Mouse 65 HK\$ = 8.40 US\$
Headsets 40 HK\$ = 5.15 US\$
Mouse Gel Wrist Rest 80 HK\$ = 10.30 US\$

Multi-Purpose Game Pad 60 HK\$ = 7.75 US\$

If you compare the joystick and game pad to the Microsoft products listed above, they are much cheaper. Of course these products are not built of the best materials or components, but these are the type of accessories that need updating every year,

and they are more likely to go out of date before they fall apart.

So are there great deals to be found in Hong Kong? Yes, but only if you are willing to sacrifice brand name recognition, quality, and reliable components, not to mention support services and warranties.

What makes it all so worth while for me is that it is FUN - the WanChai Computer Centre is filled with name brand computer shops, local computer companies, illegal software shops (see Dacs.Doc) and legitimate software dealers. I can pick up toys, CD's and look at the latest technology any day of the week - no need to wait for the computer show to come to WestConn or for PC Expo.

If you are considering coming on a shopping trip to Hong Kong beware of the cheap silk scarves and ties, and do your research before buying a computer.

JACQUELINE RENEE COHEN is currently teaching English as a Foreign Language at Cognitio College in Hong Kong. Jackie is attempting to integrate Internet technology into her lessons. Please send your comments to her at JAQATAC@iname.com. Watch for more news from Hong Kong in the coming issues of dacs.doc.

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It says, "Due to the recent merger, please send future gift requests to northpole@aol.com, or click the bearded icon on your Windows desktop. Cheers!, Santa."

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EDE

Special Interest Groups

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

Contact: Bruce Preston, 203 431-2920. Meets on 2nd Tuesday at 7p.m. at the DACS Resource Center, Ives Manor (lower level), 198 Main Street, Danbury.

Next meeting: January 12.

ADVANCED OPERATING SYSTEMS. Explores and develops OS/2, BSD UNIX, and NT operating systems.

Contact: Don Pearson, 914 669-9622.

Meets on Wednesday of the week following the general meeting, 7:30 p.m., at Don Pearson's office, North Salem, NY.

Next meeting: January 13.

INVESTMENT STRATEGIES. Discusses various investment strategies, emphasizing careful selection to maximize profits and limit risk.

Contact: Paul Gehrett (203 426-8436). Meets 3rd Thursday, 7:30 p.m., Edmond Town Hall, Newtown.

Next Meeting: January 21.

GRAPHICS. Create/print high-quality graphics and images.

Contact: Ken Graff (203 775-6667). Meets on last Wednesday, 7p.m., at Best Photo, Brookfield.

Next Meeting: January 27.

INTERNET. Acquaints DACS members with the Internet.

Contact: Larry Stevens (LStevens@aol.com) or Richard Koser (rkoser@worldnet.att.net). Meets on 3rd Wednesday, 7p.m., at the DACS Resource Center, Ives Manor (lower level), 198 Main Street, Danbury.

Next Meeting: January 20

MACINTOSH. Discusses Macintosh hardware and software.

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

Next Meeting: January 19.

VISUAL BASIC. Develops Windows apps with Visual Basic.

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

Next Meeting: January 6 .

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, 7:30 p.m., at Datahr, Brookfield.

Next Meeting: January 26.

WALL STREET. Examines Windows stock market software.

Contact: Phil Dilloway (203 367-1202). Meets on last Monday, 7p.m., at the DACS Resource Center, Ives Manor (lower level), 198 Main Street, Danbury.

Next Meeting: January 25.

WEB SITE DESIGN. Designs/maintains the DACS Web site.

Contact: Jeff Setaro (203 748-6748). Meets on 2nd Wednesday, 7p.m., at the DACS Resource Center, Ives Manor (lower level), 198 Main Street, Danbury.

Next Meeting: January 13.

WINDOWS. Explores all aspects of Windows 95 and 3.1.

Contact: Ben Carnevale (203 748-1751). Meets on 1st Friday, 7p.m., at the DACS Resource Center, Ives Manor (lower level), 198 Main Street, Danbury.

Next Meeting: January 8.

SIG News & New-to Events

ACCESS SIG

Beginning with the January meeting, the Access SIG will change its format somewhat. While we will continue our popular "problem-solving" or "how do you ..." sessions, we will devote approximately one hour more each month to slightly more formal database-design training. This training will be appropriate for any relational database management system. It will not be specific to MS Access, even though we will be using Access to implement examples. The first two or three sessions will focus on database design techniques (table and field definitions, normalization—what and why, indexing, etc.) followed by similar sessions on query techniques, building user interfaces (forms, sub-forms,) generating reports, and using SQL (Structured Query Language). Call Bruce Preston for further details.

INTERNET

At its December meeting, the Internet SIG presented "Shopping on the Web." The program for January will be "Let's Go to the Movies." Topics for subsequent months will include "Surfing the Heavens-Astronomical Sites," "Earthly Library Resources," and "How Do Bytes Get from Here to There?"

WALL STREET

In January, the WALL STREET SIG will begin meeting at the DACS Resource Center in Danbury. This is a permanent change of venue.

VISUAL BASIC

At the December meeting, we continued our review of Chuck's project for the Soccer Club of Ridgefield. This application, written in Access, uses advanced database design techniques to reduce operator input mistakes while avoiding data redundancy. This month we also talked about using OLE controls in Access, and techniques for using various controls on forms. We will be offering a special raffle at the January meeting—a full copy of Visual Studio 6, Professional Edition, valued at \$980. The raffle will be held only if at least twelve DACS members are present. Meeting topics will include one or more of the following: Chuck's project, Active Server Pages, Windows Scripting Host, VB 6, and your questions.

WEB SITE DESIGN

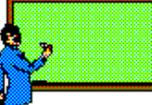
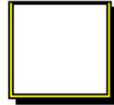
The topic for the January meeting will be HTML Tips & Tricks. In February, the SIG will feature a presentation on advanced site design by Mike Kaltschnee of DeMorgan Industries. Mike will share with you the secrets of Web programming, teaching you how to make your site more interactive and creative by using databases, forms, e-mail, and more. This meeting will be a condensed version of the Webmaster classes Mike has taught at Naugatuck Valley Community Technical College.

WINDOWS

The December Windows 95 meeting was not only fun as usual, but interesting and informative. Attendees raised and answered questions, and we solved problems using the DACS computer. If you're a beginning or advanced Windows user and wish to join this SIG, please contact Ben at 203 748-1751 or FJM69A@prodigy.com to register, then be sure to bring your list of questions or problems to the meeting so we can help you resolve them!

January 1999

Danbury Area Computer Society

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday																																																																																			
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17	18	19  7:30 PM Macintosh: Chris Salazar 203 798-6417	20  7:00 PM Internet: R. Koser, L. Stevens, stevens@cwix.com	21  7:30 PM Investment Strategies: Paul Gehrett 203 426-8436	22	23																																																																																			
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Printers

HP's Economy LaserJet User puts HP1100 through its paces

by Bill Manyin

WHEN HP RELEASED its latest affordable laserjet, I was in the market for a new printer and eager to try this one. The LaserJet 1100 replaces the previous HP LaserJet 6L printer, which was highly rated by a leading consumer magazine.

While the HP6L came with 1MB memory, expandable to 9MB, the HP1100 comes with 2MB memory, expandable to 18MB. If you print little more than text, you will probably not need more than 2MB. However, the more complex your printed page, the more printer memory is necessary to hold the information.

Here are some typical prices for the various HP1100 models, toner cartridges, and memory chips. (The HP Web site

The printer comes with 26 Intellifont typefaces. Printer drivers and all installable software come on a CD-ROM, and you can build diskettes from this to install on PCs with no CD-ROM drives.

The HP1100 has no ON/OFF power switch for the 110v model. While this is annoying the printer does have a "PowerSave" mode using only six watts, which it enters after it has been idle for 15 minutes. During printing, the HP1100 uses an average of 170 watts.

The HP1100 has two input feeds: The "paper input tray" holds about 125 sheets of 20 lb. paper or 10 envelopes. When adding sheets to the input tray, HP recommends removing the old input sheets and juggling them with the new sheets before inserting them as a group. The "single

I ordered the HP1100xi from the mail-order company PC Connection and was able to get free ground (UPS) shipping because of my PC Club membership. When the printer arrived, I opened the box and followed the pictorial directions on the box and the "Quick Reference Guide," wishing that HP had added more words to explain the pictures. For example, the strip that had to be removed to ready the toner cartridge was really about twice as long as the one pictured, so removing it made me feel I was tearing out too much.

I assembled the printer, plugged it in, and pressed the button. The test sheet printed fine with the current configuration settings. Then I cabled it to my PC and booted up. Windows 95 gave me the message: "New Hardware found. HP LaserJet 1100 Printer."

Choosing the default of installing the driver from the disk provided by the hardware manufacturer, I inserted the CD and was offered three options: 1) Install your HP LaserJet 1100 Software, 2) View the HP1100 On-line User's Guide, 3) Make your own diskette set of software.

When I chose to install the software Windows produced an error message that read: "A fatal exception 0E has occurred at 0028:BFF960FD. The current application will be terminated. Press any key to terminate the current application. Press CTRL+ALT+DEL again to restart your computer. You will lose any unsaved information in all applications."

I pressed CTRL+ALT+DEL to restart and got this message: "Install Shield Wizard will guide you through the setup process. Please wait while your computer shuts down." I did, but when nothing apparent happened for two minutes, I got tired of waiting and powered off my PC.

On rebooting my PC this time, I chose "Do not install a driver" and then opted to "View the HP1100 On-line User's Guide," which was displayed as a .PDF on my screen from the CD-ROM using Adobe Acrobat Reader. After this, when I again chose to install the software, the program finally showed me the message I wanted to see: "HP LaserJet 1100 Setup v. 1.0.5.5."

"Setup Type" then gave me the option of a custom installation, which lets you choose which options to install. It said that if you perform a custom installation you can add more options at a later date by running the Setup program again. Here were my choices:

Typical Prices for HP Printers, Toner, and Memory

Item	Description	Supplier	Price
HP6L	Printer w/NO Printer cable		\$399
HP1100	Printer w/ Printer cable		\$399
HP1100xi	HP1100 w/ CD-ROM Trellix Web Software		\$399
HP1100se	HP1100 w/ CD-ROM ExpressForms Value Pack		\$399
HP1100A	HP1100 w/ Copier-Scanner C4221A		\$499
HP1100	C4092A Replacement Toner Cartridge	CompUSA	\$ 55
16MB EDO	DIMM memory for HP1100 by HP	CDW	\$165
16MB EDO	DIMM memory for HP1100 by Viking	CDW	\$ 52

(www.hp.com) gives no prices.) :

To run the software, HP recommends your PC have at least 8MB RAM, preferably 16MB, and at least 20MB hard disk free to install it. The HP1100 carries a one-year warranty from date of purchase, which includes customer support and product repair assistance via a toll call to area code 208 (Idaho).

You can get the "HP FIRST" informational documents faxed to you by calling 1-800-333-1917, but of the hundreds of documents offered, very few refer to the HP1100.

The HP1100 supports such major operating systems as Windows 3.1, 95, 98, NT 4.0, OS/2, and DOS. It has a maximum rated speed of 8 ppm (pages per minute) but prints slower depending on how complex a page is. Available resolution is 300 or 600dpi.

sheet paper input tray (priority feed)" holds one sheet of paper. Any input in the priority feed will be fed first, before the input from the larger feed. This enables you, for example, to manually add a different kind of paper for the title page of a report.

There are two output areas. When choosing the vertical output bin, the sheets stack in the same order as they are printed, with a maximum capacity of 100 sheets of 20 lb. paper. Choosing the horizontal output, which reduces the amount of bend on the document, the sheets stack in reverse order. This output is recommended for stiff stock, such as envelopes or transparencies.

HP claims you can print on transparencies and labels as well as on paper and envelopes. The printer supports a maximum document size of 8.5" X 14" and a minimum of 3" X 5".

Assembly and installation

Required: HP LJ 1100 Print. Sys.1526KB

Optional: HP Font Smart* 2906KB

Online User Guide: 2916KB

I installed the required Printing System and then the optional HP Font Smart, which is HP's proprietary font management program that makes it easy for you to manage True Type, Type 1, and bitmapped fonts. The program comes with 110 True Type fonts, all of which I chose to load. You can choose to load none of the fonts if you have space constraints, or just load the Printer Matching Fonts, which HP recommends for a minimal installation.

I CHOSE to install all available fonts on the hard drive using the suggested default directory C:\HPFONTS, and then the Online User Guide using C:\HPDESK. The installation then recommended installing the Adobe Acrobat Reader so I could view the manual as a formatted document. I said "Yes," the default choice.

After that, I was invited to register via the Web to complete the setup and receive Web Print Smart with free support. Since I didn't want to let some strange program collecting information about me and forwarding it to a Web Site, I removed my modem cable before clicking on "Web Registration." Note that there was no other choice available!

It took about two hours to install the hardware and software, and nearly another hour to print out about half of the 183 pages in the User Guide using Acrobat. The printer delayed printing for almost five minutes before getting enough data to print 2 to 3 pages. Some people think that getting more printer memory would speed this up, but it doesn't. The last 83 pages seemed to print faster, probably due to fewer graphics.

While Acrobat was painfully printing the User Guide, I thought I'd try to connect with my ISP. This produced another error message, which said: "A fatal exception 0E has occurred at 0028:31363720." It seems like the "fatal exception 0E" problems are related to Acrobat. When I installed the same software on a PC with it already installed, I got no "fatal exception" errors.

Observations

- Leaving paper in the paper input tray causes the paper to warp.
- There is no easy way to get your fingers under the printer to move it.
- Opening the printer door to install the toner cartridge proved to be worrying. The door was very stiff, causing concern

about breaking something by pulling too hard.

- The "Quick Reference Guide" depicts what looks like a user shaking the toner cartridge before installing it. The uninitiated may not understand the drawing or the reason for shaking the cartridge. One shakes the cartridge from side to side to distribute the toner.

- The life of the toner cartridge depends on how much toner is needed to print every page. Assuming a setting of Print Density = 3 and EconoMode = Off, an average of 5% coverage gives an HP cartridge a life of about 2,500 pages. This translates into printing pages that are completely black giving a life of about 125 pages. HP offers EconoMode to help you conserve toner, but remember that when you use this feature the print will be much lighter.

- The GO button on the printer is not labeled. It is the only button. The two control-panel lights should also be labeled READY and ATTENTION.

- Printing the User Guide took excruciatingly long. The procedure should point out how to reduce the resolution from the default of 600dpi to 300dpi. Most, but not all, of the pages alternated page numbers between the lower left and the lower right of the pages. This was meant to be printed duplex. The page numbers should have been put in the center instead of on the left and the right of the page. This would have allowed a user to print duplex without getting page numbers on the wrong side due to the blank pages that don't print.

- I thought that duplexing could be accomplished only by printing one page at a time and then feeding the sheet back in to print the second side. But some word processors have a duplex option that prints all the odd numbered pages, then all the even numbered pages. This allows you to stack all the input sheets for the front printing; then feed the entire stack of printed sheets for the back printing.

- HP reminds the user that duplexing can cause the printer to become dirty faster, which decreases print quality. When duplexing, I found smudges on the top edge of the front of each sheet after the first, as well as some sheets of the next print job.

- In printing a booklet, the pages shrank to half-pages, printing in the NE corner of odd-numbered pages and the NW corner of even-numbered pages. Even if you can avoid the shrinking, the smudges from duplexing are still a there.

- When you decide to stop a print job, it is convenient to remove the stacked input paper, which then gives you the chance to cancel the printout from the PC.

- It would be nice if HP had provided a bin to catch the horizontal output instead of forcing the user to provide table space.

- For possible arrangements of printing two to nine pages on a single sheet, the User Guide should include examples of: a) 2-up landscape pages on a portrait sheet; b) 4-up landscape pages on a landscape sheet, and c) 6-up landscape pages on a portrait sheet. These are the standard "handout" options used by Lotus Freelance.

- The maximum installation claims to need a total of 9648KB hard drive space, but the documentation says you need 20MB to install. This is because Acrobat gives no estimate of required hard drive space. This is what you see on the screen:

- HP LaserJet 1100 Print. Syst. 1526KB
- HP Font Smart 2906KB
- Online User Guide 2916KB
- All Available Fonts 2300KB

- How do you know if you need to add more memory? If the printer runs out of memory during printing, the GO button stays lit. If the page was too complex to print, you get only a partial page. You can add memory as a 4MB, 8MB, or 16MB DIMM, but how do you know how much to add? It would be nice if HP showed examples of pages requiring more than 2MB, 6MB, 10MB and 18MB so that you can compare them with your requirements.

- I chose the model without the Copier-Scanner because of the limitation of the scanner requiring loose sheets. I prefer using a flatbed scanner.

- I strongly recommend reading the entire User Guide for the sections that apply to you. It contains lots of useful information with only a few errors. I discovered one of these on page 48, which tells you how to print booklets: "After printing side 1... rotate sheets clockwise ..." This is wrong; follow the instructions prompted by your PC. Another error on page 73 says, "All the lights are on." But the Attention light is depicted as off. The Troubleshooting chapter in the Guide refers you to various topics that are not in the index.

MY CONCLUSION? So far the HP LaserJet 1100 seems like a very good printer for the money except for the duplexing problems. Rated by HP at 7,000 pages/month, the printer is as good for a small office as it is for your home.

BILL MANYIN is a new contributor to dacs.doc. You may contact him by e-mail at william.manyin@mindspring.com.

Web Programming 101 Tricks from a Webmaster

By Mike Kaltschnee

IF YOU'VE SPENT any time at all on the Internet, you've probably noticed the fancy forms you can fill out and the ability at certain sites for you to search an online database, and wondered how these things were done. This month I'll try to take you on a tour behind the curtains and show you how the online magic tricks are done.

The way an online form works is really simple: You fill out a form, maybe buying something online or requesting information, and hit the Submit key. This triggers the execution of a program that then runs on the Web server. The program takes the information you filled out and then does something with it, maybe adding it to a database or sending e-mail. Finally, a response is sent back to your Web browser, typically an acknowledgement that your request was processed.

I'll give you an example of how we added the registration form to our site, www.webspice.com. When people enter our site, we offer them the chance to receive 175 free images in exchange for their e-mail address. Originally we wrote a program that would take their information and e-mail it to us, but when we signed up with GTE for our Web hosting, the company provided us with several pre-written programs, including a form-to-mail program.

All we had to do was add a simple bit of HTML code to our page, and we were done. You can go to our site and try it yourself, but when you do, be sure to check out exactly how we did it. You can view our work by selecting "View" and "Source" from the menu bar in your browser when you're on the page with the form.

It's really simple to add this type of functionality to your site without programming. Kristi Stone, a former DACS member, has a company that adds e-mail forms, guestbooks, and more to your site at a low monthly cost



(a Web programmer can be very expensive). Visit her site at www.i-depth.com for more information.

If you're the type of person that wants to do it yourself, you need to pick a programming language. Although you can use virtually any language (No, not French, wise guy. You need a computer language.), the majority of Web programs are written in Perl, Java, JavaScript, C++, or ASP. It helps to have some experience in computer programming, but it can be as simple as the Basic language.

Perl, one of the first programming languages used on the Web, is very similar to "C" and even has some similarities with the Basic language. Java, relatively new, is designed to make it easy to write programs that will work on almost any type of computer, even Macintosh or Sun machines. JavaScript is a language that runs on your computer and is great for making things happen in a Web browser.

ASP, or Active Server Pages, is even newer. Microsoft designed it to look like Visual Basic, but it is a great way to write programs on the Internet. If you have a language you like to program in, such as Visual Basic, you can

use it on the Internet.

You can learn how to do this yourself at home without buying any new hardware or software. Microsoft has graciously provided a free program, Personal Web Server, which runs on Windows 95, 98, or NT. If you have Windows 98, NT 4, or even FrontPage 98, you already have it. If you don't, you can download it from www.microsoft.com. Once installed, you can do almost everything that the \$800 Windows NT Server with Internet Information Server (IIS) can do, albeit slower. It can run Perl, ASP, and even Java.

If you want to learn more about Web programming, take a course at your local college, get a book, or even go online for resources. But before you do, try these sites first:

www.developer.com—This is really a collection of great Web sites for learning programming. It has sample code, articles, and even free online books to teach you how to program on the Web.

www.webmonkey.com—What a strange name this is for a great site and a great place to start. You'll find lots of tutorials on Web programming here.

www.zdu.com—Ziff-Davis University is an online school offering dozens of Web-related classes for a low monthly cost.

www.Microsoft.com—The same people who brought you Microsoft Word bring you tools, sample code, articles, Web servers, and much more.

www.activestates.com—You can get Perl for Windows 95, 98, or NT for free here.

That's it for this month. Tune in next month for more information on file compression and other topics.

MIKE KALTSCHNEE is a founder of DeMorgan Industries Corp., the leading developer of Web graphics. You can reach Mike online at mikek@demorgan.com.

CONTACT

of Danbury, CT

is a manufacturer, and worldwide provider of high performance equipment for surface mount and through-hole electronic assembly automation. In order to expand our product lines, we require additional support. The following opportunities exist for energetic, highly motivated individuals in our Danbury, CT facility.

PROGRAMMMER

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SOFTWARE ENGINEER

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Viruses

From Safe to Safer A user's view of anti-virus software

By Marlène Gaberel

I MUST CONFESS that until very recently I have never protected my computer system with anti-virus software. Even though over the years I have followed safe computer practices—not installing pirated software, not execut-



ing files from unknown sources, not opening MS Word documents that might have an infected macro—I think an anti-virus program is an important tool.

Although I acknowledge that I should have installed one earlier, I never know which program to choose, a dilemma common to many of those who attended Jeff Setaro's recent New-to DACS presentation on the subject of viruses.

Jeff recommended four anti-virus companies. Anti-Viral Toolkit Pro by Central Command, Inc. (AVP) (<http://www.avp.com>) and F-Prot Anti-Virus by Frisk Software Intl. (<http://www.complex.is>) are mostly for single users. Two others, F-Secure Anti-Virus by Data Fellows Inc. (<http://www.datafellows.com>) and Sophos Anti-Virus by Sophos Inc. (<http://www.sophos.com>), are for multiple users.

AVP, available for Windows 95/98, sells for a reasonable \$24.95 for single users. F-Prot, a DOS version workable under Windows, is free. F-Secure and Sophos are priced in the several hundred dollar range for single users, with a volume discount that rises as the number of users increases.

With that information in hand, I pointed my browser to the AVP web site and downloaded the anti-virus program. Central Command lets you choose from several payment methods: credit card, check, or wire transfer. The download and installation are pretty straightforward. You first download a "wizard," which you open by typing in a serial number and a digital key that is separately e-mailed to you after your payment is verified. If the download fails for some reason, you can always retrieve the wizard again, but only the person who actually made payment

can open the software. The wizard took about 15 minutes to download.

Upon installation, the program automatically updates itself from the Web. It selects the needed upgrades and downloads them to a temporary file.

The files are then installed to the appropriate folders. The software then conveniently deletes old files from the AVP folders and disconnects itself. There is a green check mark that is inserted when the procedures are completed, and an inverted hourglass is present during the processing of files. I was pleased to note that the software keeps itself lean and slim by deleting old files. It even deleted the temp file created for installation. AVP uses a scanty 2.63MB of hard disk space. Except for the help file there is no manual, but the software is self-explanatory and intuitive to use.

After the installation and update, I had AVP check for the presence of any viruses in my system. I was relieved to learn I was free of them. If unluckily one had been present, the software has the ability to disinfect and remove them. AVP can catch any of 24,564 viruses. It is, however, advisable to update the software on a regular basis, since computer viruses spring up constantly. The latest update reads date, month, and year, as is the custom in Europe.

One piece of advice Jeff gave us at the presentation was that if there is a virus, you shouldn't panic. He said that although users who follow safe computing practices are not likely to catch a virus, anti-virus protection is nevertheless extra insurance.

I am now a convert. I will continue safe computer practices but am comforted by the presence of an anti-virus sentry to scan my files and protect my system. I am also grateful to DACS for offering its members exposure to topics important to all computer users.

MARLENE GABEREL is a DACS vice president, director of publicity, and assistant Webmaster. You may contact Marlène at mgaberel@ct1.nai.net.

Random Access

Instant replay: December 1998

Bruce Preston, Moderator

Q. I am thinking of upgrading my file system to FAT 32. When I start up, it takes me to FDISK and warns me that I will lose all of my files. Is this true?

A. You shouldn't need FDISK. There is a utility in the START / PROGRAMS / ACCESSORIES / SYSTEM TOOLS folder that does it. (Q: I'm not in Windows, I'm in DOS) A: No, you have to be in Windows 98, or Windows 95b (second OEM version, not the original Windows 3.x to Windows 95 upgrade, with or without the service pack, which would be Windows 98a.) (Q: I'm not in any of those; I'm running Windows 3.1) A: There is absolutely no support for FAT32 in DOS (any version), Windows 3.x, or Windows NT 4.0 and below; the only O/S versions that support FAT32 are Windows 95b and Windows 98. (Q: How about Linux?) A: See the previously mentioned list; those are the only releases that understand FAT32. The list may change with Windows NT 5.0 (a/k/a Windows 2000) or Linux 2, but for now, that is all. For file system is undecipherable to all other operating systems.

Q. I just installed Windows 98 and pressed the Upgrade 98 button. Is this something that I should have done?

A. It shouldn't hurt. The Upgrade button looks for patches to the operating system as well as patches for other Microsoft software and divides them into these categories: critical things you really should install, recommended things, and other known fixes you may do at your pleasure. In all cases, it does not force the installation; instead it gives you the list of recommendations, much like the selection mechanism for "custom install" when you set up a large application.

Q. Can you use the new USB ports with Windows 95?

A. You must have the patch that can only be applied to the last release of

Windows 95 (known as Windows 95c), which was only released to hardware manufacturers. Otherwise, you must upgrade to Windows 98 to get USB support. The easiest way to find out which release you are using is to right-click on My Computer and then select Properties. The General screen of the System applet will appear and show you the release number. For example, the system I am using now lists "Microsoft Windows 95 4.00.950a," which means I have the original release of Windows 95 with Service Pack 1 installed (the "a").

Note: In the General Meeting it was mentioned that you can see which release you are running if you go to Explorer. If Windows Explorer does not display it, some releases of Internet Explorer might. The mechanism described above will always work.

Q. I have a PowerMac 8.1, and upgraded Netscape Communicator 4.01 to 4.5. Now when I go to print from Netscape Communicator, it shuts down Netscape.

A. The only suggestions were to 1) disable virtual memory, 2) clear out the cache, and 3) remove Norton Crash Guard.

Q. I changed a display card, and now Windows is asking me for a "CAB" file. What is it?

A. A format called .CAB (for Cabinet) is used by Microsoft to store components of products in a compressed format similar to that of a .ZIP. You need the EXTRACT utility (installed when you installed Windows 9x or Windows NT) to get a file out of a .CAB file. There are also utilities (CABVIEW is one. It is in the PowerToy package, which may be downloaded from Microsoft's Website) that let you examine the contents of a .CAB file without actually extracting the file. One member mentioned that double-clicking on a .CAB file in Windows Explorer (Windows 98) would open

up a window of contents for the .CAB. I tried it on one of my machines, and it started WinZIP, which gave me a directory of the .CAB file and offered to let me extract files.

Q. I went to www.dudly.com and tried to purchase a file. I gave it my credit card number and started a download. It did not complete. How do I find out if I will be charged, since there is no way to send e-mail to www.dudly.com.

A. You can get the name of an administrator by doing a search on "internic," and you will probably come up with a reference to NetworkSolutions, who are currently the administrative body in charge of assigning Web addresses. There is also a "whois" utility, which will give you the mailbox for the administrator of that site.

To get a ".com" address you need an identifiable administrator. You could send your message there. Alternatively, and probably more directly, is to contact the Customer Service representative for your credit card and find out if the charge was posted, and to challenge it if it has. Have at hand information such as the date, because the Website collection may be done by an "agent" for the supplier (there are companies that do the billing for multiple clients, just as there are companies that run 800-order sites for multiple clients. Once challenged, the transaction cannot be billed as "late" until it's been resolved.

Lastly, most sites that distribute products electronically will not post the billing until they get a "transfer complete" message from the underlying software. This is done without your control.

Q. I have a Windows 95 machine with a conflict of resources. One of them is the floppy disk controller: If I try to change the resource, I get the message, "You can not change the resource on this device." This doesn't happen every time I boot, which is the really mysterious thing.

A. Turn off "Plug and Play" since it is getting confused. On one of the "fortuitous days" when the system comes up right, get into My Computer/ Control Panel / System / Device Manager, and select PRINT detail. This will show you a

combination that works. Then go into the BIOS at boot time (usually DEL when booting, or F10, etc.), disable "Plug and Play," and manually configure the devices as much as you can. When Windows 9x boots, finish manually setting the configuration to match the settings in the printout. Make an emergency recovery diskette with the working configuration.

Q. Has anybody used the FAT to FAT32 conversion utility in Windows 98?

A. Yes, it works fine. But first defrag your disk, and then back it up. Note that you don't have to back up everything; you can get away with just backing up data since you can always reinstall applications if you must. Don't do it during a storm you feel is violent enough to interrupt the backup with a power outage.

Q. Does anyone know of a good Web site for Christmas cards?

A. Two sites were mentioned: *www.bluemountain.com* and *www.regards.com*.

Q. In Windows 98 Internet Explorer, one of the configuration parameters is "Idle time Disconnect." If I set it to 0, to not disconnect, or to 20 minutes, Internet Explorer honors the settings but Netscape Communicator 4.5 ignores it and disconnects after five minutes. Once I run Netscape Communicator 4.5, Internet Explorer also disconnects after five minutes.

A. Idle time "resides" in only one place in the Registry, but there are several places where the Idle Time Disconnect can be set, and any program that has been programmed to do so may change the setting. The suspicion is that there is a parameter in Netscape Communicator you need to set so that when NC runs, it will put the same value into the Registry. Note that there is also a mechanism to set the Idle Time Disconnect parameter in Dial-Up Networking.

BRUCE PRESTON is the 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. Contact him at askdacs@aol.com.

A Microsoft Christmas

'Twas the night before Christmas, and all through the house
Not a creature was stirring, except Papa's mouse.
The computer was humming, and icons were hopping,
As Papa did last-minute Internet shopping.
The stockings were hung by the modem with care
In hope that St. Nicholas would bring new software.
The children were nestled all snug in their beds,
While visions of computer games danced in their heads.

Dark Forces for Billy, and Doom II for Dan,
And Carmen Sandiego for Pamela Ann.
The letters to Santa had been sent out by Mom,
To santa@toyshop.northpole.com
Which now is rerouted to Washington States
'Cause Santa's workshop has been bought by Bill Gates.
The elves and the reindeer all had to skedaddle
To flashy new quarters in suburban Seattle.

After centuries of a life that was simple and spare,
St. Nicholas is suddenly a new billionaire,
A shiny red Porsche in the place of a sleigh,
A house on Lake Washington — just down the way
From where Bill has his mansion the old fellow preens,
In black Gucci boots and red Calvin Klein jeans.
The elves have stock options and desks with a view,
Where they write computer code for Johnny and Sue.
No more dolls or toy soldiers or little toy drums
Will be under the tree, only shiny CD-ROMS
With a Microsoft label. So spin up your drive,
From now on Christmas runs only on Windows 95.

More rapid than eagles the competitors came,
And Bill whistled, and shouted, and called them by name.
"Now, ADOBE! now, CLARIS! now, INTUIT! too,
Now, APPLE! and NETSCAPE! You are all of you through.
It is Microsoft's SANTA the kids can't resist,
It's the ultimate software with a traditional twist.
Recommended by no less than the jolly old elf,
And on the package, a picture of Santa himself.
Get 'em young, keep 'em long is Microsoft's scheme,
And a merger with Santa's a marketer's dream.
To the top of the NASDAQ! to the top of the Dow!
Now dash away! dash away! dash away—Wow!"

Mama in her 'kerchief and I in my cap,
Had just settled down for a long winter's nap,
When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,
The whirr and the hum of our satellite platter.
As it turned toward that new Christmas star in the sky,
The SANTALITE owned by the Microsoft guy.
As I sprang from my bed and was turning around,
My computer turned on with a Jingle Bells sound.
And there on the screen was a smiling Bill Gates
Next to jolly old Santa, two arm-in-arm mates.
And I heard them exclaim in voices so bright,
A MICROSOFT CHRISTMAS too all, and TO ALL A GOOD NIGHT.

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