



Y2K II

Second DACS conference tackles Y2K for individuals and small businesses.

AT THE Y2K UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL Year 2000 conference, panelists will suggest steps to tackle Y2K issues for individuals and small businesses.

Confused over what you have been reading and hearing lately about the millennium bug? Undecided whether your small business or your personal life will be directly affected? Or wondering if the Y2K is a real threat and if it will directly impact individuals? Depending upon what is read or heard the Y2K is depicted either a total disaster or an insignificant menace. It can become a difficult task to make sense of the chaos.

On May 4 at the Danbury Hospital auditorium, Danbury Area Computer Society will present its next Year 2000 conference, Y2K II. The presentation will focus on people and not how government, institutions and big business are coping. DACS' own Ed Heere will lead a panel of experts focusing on how the individual PC user and small business entrepreneur can prepare.

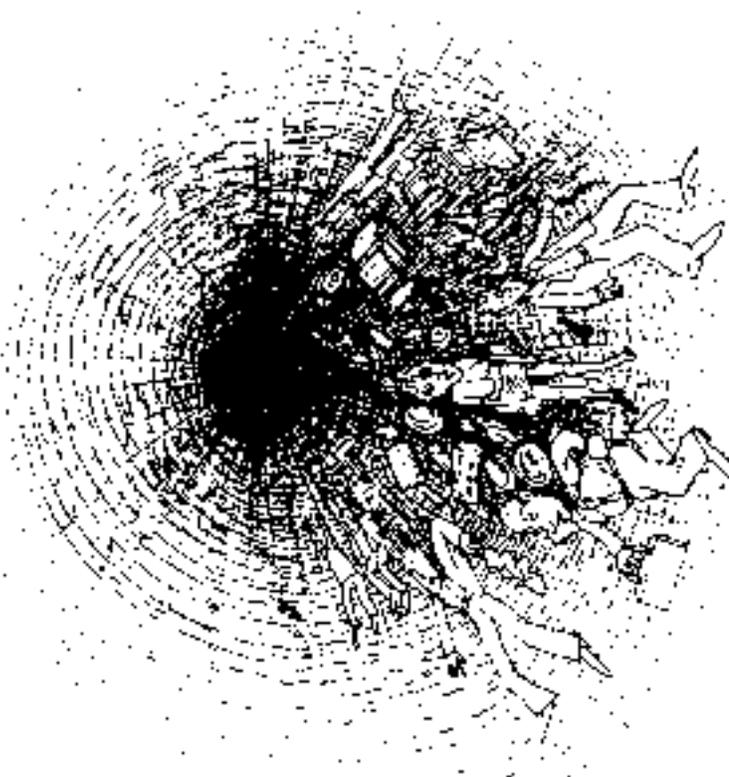
DACS panelists already confirmed include Lori Scott, Y2K coordinator for Danbury Hospital; Tom McIntyre, former president of DACS and an investment manager;

Bob Mitchell of the Connecticut Year 2000 Office; and Mary Beth Rippert, a corporate personnel consultant and expert on employment issues in the Millennium.

The panelists of this event, co-sponsored by DACS, Western Connecticut State University and the Greater Danbury Chamber of Commerce will sort out the confusion, make sense of the Y2K and will give suggestions to small businesses and individuals on how to prepare for the Millennium.

DACS is the Greater Danbury computer club. Its general meetings take place the first Tuesday of the month at the Danbury Hospital auditorium, 24 Hospital Avenue, and are open to the public. The meeting starts at 6:30 p.m. with casual networking. At 7 p.m. members can ask their most pressing computer questions during Random Access. The featured presentation starts at 8 p.m.

DACS members include beginners, intermediates and expert users. Special Interest Groups covering specific computer topics meet throughout the month. Check the calendar at the DACS web page (<http://www.dacs.org>) or in *dacs.doc*. Contact a SIG leader to find out what is being discussed at the next meeting. SIG meetings can help answer your computer queries. Call DACS at 203 748-4330. Coming June 1: BeOs Inc.



President's File

If you missed our Year 2000 conference last October, you have a reprieve. At our next General Meeting on May 4, DACS will present a follow-up to that program called Y2K-II. This time we will move from the national and corporate stage to focus on individuals and small business.

As media hype, Y2K probably ranks up there along with global warming, Armageddon and the great asteroid collision. But since unlike the other two disasters, we know precisely when the Y2K bug will arrive and are generally expected to survive it's coming, we would all benefit from at least some understanding of what obstacles and opportunities we face next January 1. Once again, DACS' own pied piper of the PC, Ed Heere, will conduct an all-star cast in a walk-through of what to expect in personal finance, investing, local and state services, home and small business computing.

Forever APCUG

Hats off to the Association of PC User Groups for some great member initiatives. In conjunction with the Houston Area League of Computer Users, Inc., APCUG has pooled the resources of its 1500 constituent user groups world-wide to obtain full-page advertising from the PC industry. Under the arrangement, HAL-PC brokers advertising based on the combined newsletter circulation of participating groups, and divides the proceeds among the groups. The first ad from Symantec appears in this issue. Hopefully, more advertisers will use this service in the future, thus providing a continuous sponsorship of user group publishing activities.

IN THIS ISSUE

Y2K II	1
PRESIDENT'S FILE	2
DIRECTORS' NOTES	3
HELP LINE	3
PAINTSHOP PRO REVIEW	4
NEW MEMBERS	5
INTERNET PROVIDERS	5
MUSIC INDUSTRY CHALLENGE	6
SIG NOTER & NEWS	8
CALENDAR	9
USB EXPLAINED	10
PC-CILLIN ANTIVIRUS SOFTWARE	12
ADOBE IMAGEREADY	14
RANDOM ACCESS	15

In addition, APCUG has asked its active movers and shakers to contribute newsletter copy to member groups, thus providing much needed relief to harried editors. The first installment, on the USB serial bus, appears on page 10.

APCUG has always provided a useful service in sponsoring industry events like COMDEX and its annual InterGalactic User Group Officers' Conference each June, prior to PCEXpo. DACS has benefited immeasurably from their annual newsletter awards, given at InterGalactic. Since most of these services are enjoyed by user group leaders, the general membership of computer clubs may not be aware of their role. But their activities deserve your support and participation. For more information, please visit the APCUG Web site at www.apcug.org.

Postal Service oxymoron?

Perhaps spurred by incendiary rhetoric at our monthly meetings, and by the frustration of getting our newsletter late for months on end, DACS members have said they're fed up, and won't take it any longer. This past month, two letters have appeared in the *News-Times* decrying the Postal Service's slow delivery. Another letter to the DACS editors suggests we bite the bullet and raise dues sufficiently to send the newsletter out by first class mail.

After much consideration, the board decided to keep our dues at existing rates. There has been some indication lately that the Postal Service is beginning to speed up deliveries. Also, it has been our pride that DACS is able to provide its many services at such a small cost to our membership. At a time when many user groups charging much higher dues are becoming overextended having to close down, we will continue to husband our resources, while providing the highest quality services possible to our membership.

DOC in distress

After nearly half a decade on the .doc, our fearless editor, Frances Owles is beginning to weary of the chase. A pathological volunteerist, Frances has been contributing her publishing skills and acumen to virtually all who ask for it—from dacs.doc to dressage, Russian women to amateur gardening, and of course, Voice for Joanie. We are desperately trying to keep her on

President's File Continued on page 5

Membership Information

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Postmaster

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

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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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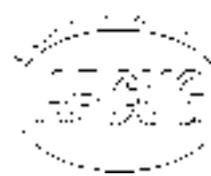
Dacs.doc is prepared using an AMSYS Pentium 133 and an HP LaserJet 4 Plus printer.

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Applications & Hardware to enhance *dacs.doc* are welcome.



Jeff Setaro
APCUG Liaison
748-6748

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WEB Master: Jeff Setaro (203) 748-6748

Resource Center: (203) 748-4330

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)
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Internet	Nick Percival	(203) 438-9307	(d)
Lotus 123R5W	Ben Carnevale	(203) 748-1751	(e)
Macintosh OS	Chris Salaz	(203) 798-6417	(d e)
Magic PC	Hira Suri	(203) 748-2473	(d e)
Microsoft Access	Dick Gingras	(203) 426-0484	(e)
Microsoft Works	Ben Carnevale	(203) 748-1751	(e)
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Paradox	Alan Boba	(203) 264-1753	(e)
PASCAL	Duane Moser	(203) 797-2716	(d e)
Q&A ver 3/4	Anthony Telesha	(203) 748-4478	(d e)
R:BASE	Jerry Frieárich	(203) 740-7175	(e)
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Windows 95	Ben Carnevale	(203) 748-1751	(e)
WordPerfect	John Heckman	(203) 831-0442	(e)

Directors' Notes

The monthly Board of Directors' meeting was held at the Resource Center on April 12, 1999. Present were Messrs. Bovaird, Buoy, Cohen, David, Gingras, Heere, Ostergren, Preston, and Setaro. Chairman David presided and Secretary Buoy kept the minutes. Minutes of the March meeting were approved with minor corrections.

Finance and membership

Treasurer Bovaird reported current cash position of \$15,463.39 with no outstanding liabilities.

Election of officers

The first order of business was the election of officers to serve for the coming year. President Allan Ostergren, in the absence of Nominating Committee Chairman Tom McIntyre, announced that all current officers had offered to continue in their current positions. There being no nominations from the floor, the incumbent officers were reelected by unanimous vote: Chairman of the Board: Wally David; President: Allan Ostergren; Vice Presidents: Marlene Gaberel, Gene Minasi, Frances Owles, and Jeff Setaro; Treasurer: Charles Bovaird, and Secretary: Larry Buoy.

Resource Center computer

Ed Heere reported that the computer at the Resource Center was in the process of being fitted with a warranty replacement of the original hard drive, additional hard drive, and reconfiguration of both, as well as installation of a SCSI card supported by the recently installed Microsoft NT operating system. Also discussed were suspect long -distance calls from the Resource Center's phone.

COC Gathering

President Ostergren reminded the Board of the Danbury Chamber of Commerce's invitation to participate in its "gathering" to be held at the Danbury Marriott Residence Inn on April 29, from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. DACS would be provided with a table on which to display literature. The need for updating was discussed, and Dick Gingras agreed to update the membership application form.

Y2K Symposium

Ed Heere reported that he was preparing an agenda for the May 4 Y2K symposium.

Directors Notes Continued on page 5

Meeting review

Graphics for the rest of us

by Jack Corcoran

Dilemma?? Do you spend \$600 for the real thing, or \$60 for “not ex-actly”? Really, no dilemma at all. For that difference we will take “anywhere near”.

That’s what our April General Meeting presented. Adobe Photoshop is the acknowledged King of the Hill in the graphics business. Every practicing professional has it. So it seems logical that if you can put out a product that comes anywhere near Photoshop and sell it for one-tenth the price, you should be able to sell a lot of them.

Jasc Software Inc., a Minnesota software company with 60 employees, does just that. Its PaintShop Pro 5.1 is a graphics image-editing program that has the feel, and much of the look, of Adobe Photoshop. It includes almost all of the basic tools that Photoshop people use every day. Many of these have the same names and features, some are slight variations in name (e.g. Clone Brush for Rubber Stamp Tool), but they perform pretty much the same.

As a wanna-be, Jasc Software has followed the Silicon Valley mantra “market share, market share, market share ...”. Versions 4.x and earlier were practically given away or bundled with some other product or offer. The product got out there and built up a user base. With Ver 5.x, however,

PaintShop Pro becomes a contender. It now provides layers, which are the key to graphic composition, flexibility, and productivity. Now there is a definite attempt to charge at least a little for the program. The sticker price is \$99, but surfing shows numbers down to \$40 (Cyberian Outpost #97105 after Conditional Rebate).

Make no mistake about it. Anyone who does not now run Photoshop should have this product. For a very small amount of money you have as much of the functional capabilities of Photoshop as you are going to need until you get to the level of the graphics wunderkind.

The presenter at our April meeting was Roger L. Creighton, www.rollanet.org/~pcprimer from Rolla MO. Roger introduced himself as an Editor/Writer of computer articles for newspapers and magazines. He also has a radio program and writes a golf column. During the course of the presentation he sort of hinted that he really would rather be out playing golf. He is a long time user of PaintShop Pro and as a result of several very favorable articles about it, he became an evangelist for Jasc. He still keeps his day job, but goes around to user groups demonstrating what PaintShop Pro can do. He showed us the basic layout and features of the program and did some enhancement and touch up of an old photograph. He demonstrated the

layer capabilities by popping a rooster around in a city scene.

Roger’s presentation went fairly well. He had difficulties when a few things went wrong and he had to skip around a bit, but this is a hazard of any presentation where the speaker has to run the computer and talk at the same time. He punctuated his talk with frequent slightly sarcastic remarks that did little to help the cause, but he got across that the functional capabilities are there. He emphasized the Jasc line that this is a user-friendly program easy to learn and use. If you already know Photoshop, it may be, but there are a great many image editing tools and techniques that will not be familiar to someone who has only used Windows Paint in the past. Also, there are parameters with everything and the inherent complexities of color to deal with. I believe that Microsoft’s PhotoDraw has a much more intuitive user interface and is designed for people who do not need or want to spend time with graphics details.

corcoran@snet.net is an old, retired programmer who has worked at becoming an old, retired curmudgeon.

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EARTHLINK	800-395-8425
MAGS-NET	203-207-5695
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Further information?
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Directors Notes *Continued from page 3*
sium and that a panel was committed, subject to expansion. He also noted that the latest membership mailing of the Danbury Chamber of Commerce included notice of the symposium and that he had plugged the event on a radio talk show. Venue for the symposium will be the Danbury Hospital's auditorium and any overflow audience can be accommodated in linked classrooms where the proceedings can be viewed and heard, but from which participation in any question and answer period will not be possible. Ed also mentioned additional opportunities to plug the event in radio talk shows, and Wally David advised that WINE/WRKI had promised an announcement. President Ostergren advised that Mr. Benson of the Ansell School of Business was distributing notices and flyers for the symposium within WCSU.

Mac SIG equipment

A short discussion of the initial appearances of the DACS Q&A column appearing in the High Tech pages of the News-Times included the number of and quality of questions being generated and the advisability of offering dacs.doc material for publication.

Additional discussion was held regarding the request of the Macintosh SIG for equipment for its use at the Resource Center with the conclusion that more spe-

cific requirements must be available before any further consideration could be productive.

APCUG advertising scheme

Briefly considered was the advertising in user-group newsletters by national clients arranged through APCUG.

Newsletter postal problem

Consideration was given to a suggestion that dacs.doc be mailed first class instead of bulk. Mr. Bovaird commented on current operations and contemplated changes within the post office as well as the increased cost of first-class mailing. It was concluded that the subject be tabled until the effect of the planned changes in the post office operations can be evaluated.

PCExpo

Jeff Setaro reported that space for user groups, etc., at the upcoming PCExpo would not be allotted this year until all paying participants had been accommodated. DACS participation in and representation at the various meetings and events of the APCUG and Intergalactic Users Group Officers Conference, June 18 through 21 (preceding PCExpo) was affirmed, including submission of selected issues of dacs.doc for award judging.

—LARRY BUOY

New Members

03/20/1999 thru 04/16/1999

- 1) Rita Barg
- 2) Gene Callahan
- 3) Theodore K. Fisch
- 4) Mr. Lynn W. Forsyth
- 5) Christopher Given
- 6) Kenneth Graff
- 7) Thomas G. Gray
- 8) Jeanne Groody
- 9) Edward M. Jenick
- 10) Tom Lamb
- 11) Michael S. Lavery
- 12) Richard Nayman
- 13) Jim and Gail Putland
- 14) Thomas Rau
- 15) Jack Ryan
- 16) Fred Strout
- 17) Xiaohua Tao
- 18) John W. Tower Sr.
- 19) Alan Vale

THIS IS YOUR LAST NEWSLETTER

If the membership date on your mailing label reads

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you need to renew your DACS membership—NOW!

President's File

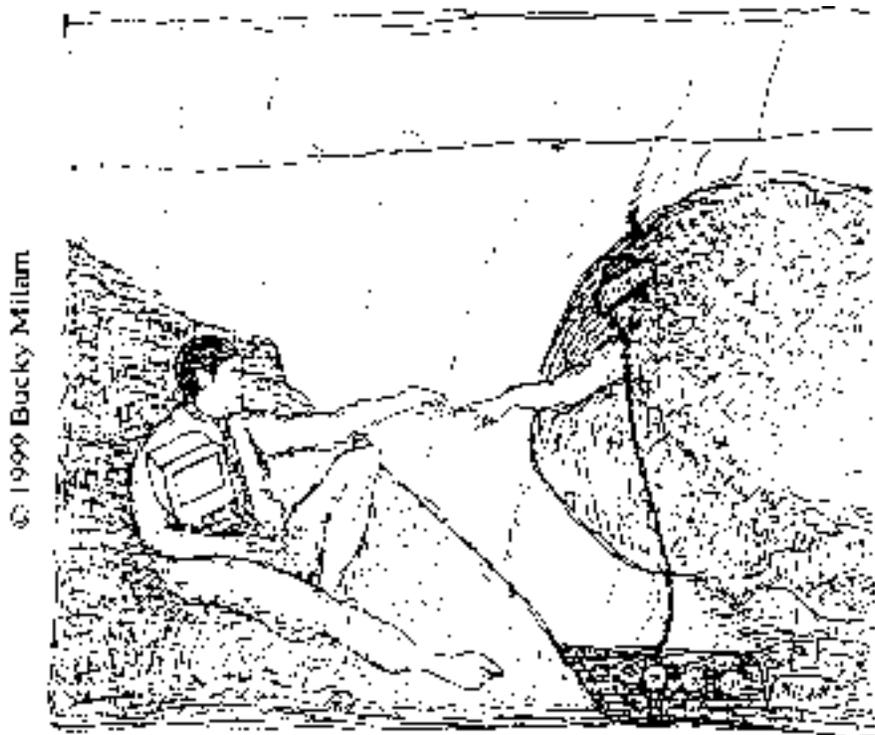
Continued from page 2

the newsletter staff, but at the very least, she will need to cut back her involvement in some way. New volunteers must come forward to help with this task. Won't you be one of them?

Those who work on our newsletter have in the process learned many valuable skills, including desktop publishing, graphic design, editing, PC troubleshooting, meeting tortuous deadlines, and that uncanny ability to stay up for hours after everyone else has gone to sleep. The paybacks have also been generous: year after year being among the select few to receive international user group newsletter awards. More than a friendly referral or fancy business card, *dacs.doc* tells others in great detail who we are and how seriously we take our mission.

And the next time you see Frances, tell her what a great job she is doing, and how much we will all miss her if she leaves. It's the truth . . . so why not proclaim it?

—ALLAN OSTERGREN
dacsprez@aol.com



Why The Music Industry is Scared

By Mike Kaltschnee

Think about how the Internet has changed how you live. I use the Internet to read the news, check the weather, communicate with friends and family (I only use stamps to pay bills - for now), video conference, shop, and much more. The Internet has also changed how many businesses operate. I buy books online at a discount, rent movies, order software, buy stuff at auction, and comparison shop in minutes at dozens of stores - all without leaving my keyboard.

But the most dramatic change is coming for the music industry. The Recording Industry Association of America <www.riaa.com> claims to lose about \$5 billion dollars per year to piracy, including illegal and counterfeit CDs, sampling, pirate recording, and now online piracy. Online piracy may account for the huge drop-off in purchases by 15-24 year olds (4% decrease in 2 years). What is happening?

MP3, the most popular music format on the Internet, is a way of compressing music from CD without losing quality. It enables a "pirate" to download a typical song in minutes and then play it on their computer without paying a royalty to the artist or record company.

MP3 stands for MPEG 1, Audio Layer 3, and is similar to the compression used to send satellite TV signals. A typical song on a CD may be 25 mega-

bytes (MB) in size, but when it's compressed using MP3 may only be 3MB. This size makes it perfect to transfer on the Internet, and a flourishing underground trade in MP3s has started. You can even fit hundreds of songs on a CD with MP3.



Music is compressed into the MP3 format using a "ripper" program. This program takes music, in digital or analog format from a CD, record, tape or other source, and compresses it using the MP3 specification. This results in a much smaller file that sounds almost identical to the original.

You can even take a bunch of MP3 files and create your own custom CD. If you have a CD writer (around \$200 now), and a \$1 blank CD, you can make your own custom CD. The only catch is that some players are too sensitive to play these copies.

There are many programs to play MP3 files, but the clear leader is Winamp, www.winamp.com. Winamp is an excellent shareware program that costs only \$10 to register for personal use. They designed the program so other people could add functionality, making the product more interesting. Skins give the program a new interface look and feel such as sports, metallic, cars, and other creative designs. This is like selecting a new screen saver - it's not going to make the program work better but it sure is fun to do. There are more than 2,000 skins at Winamp.com.

Plug-ins are my favorite add-on for Winamp. They take the music and display light shows that react to the music, show the music spectrum in a waterfall-type display, apply 3D effects,

and more. I love watching a song and trying different plug-ins to see the mesmerizing display that it produces. A great source of more information, software, articles, and more is MP3.com <www.mp3.com>.

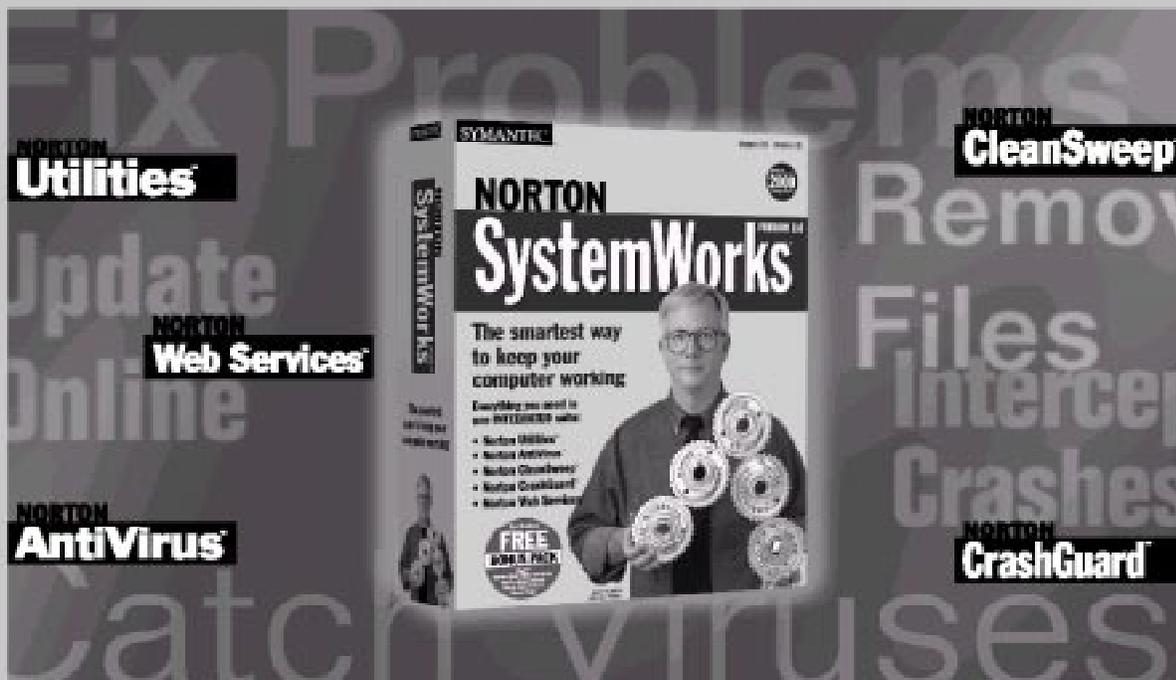
The format has gathered so much support that companies like Diamond and Sony are making MP3 portable players so you can take several hours worth of music with you (no CD's to carry around). There have been announcements of car players, and even stereo components coming to market soon. This widespread commercial interest in the format has the music industry scared.

The old way people used to find MP3 files was to search engine such as Yahoo <www.yahoo.com> and look for MP3. Recently, Lycos started the first commercial MP3 search engine - with more than 500,000 songs. Even though Lycos only lists where the songs are located on the Internet, the RIAA has threatened to sue them for listing illegal copies of the music.

The RIAA and others are working on a way to allow you to download music and not be able to copy it freely. The Secure Digital Music Initiative (SDMI) may be late but it may be the compromise that makes music cheaper and still gets the artist paid for their work. It's my belief that people who don't want to pay will still find ways to steal things, but the majority of people who are honest will pay a fair price for music.

Although this sounds like a great way to get some free music, please keep in mind that if you like a song you should buy the CD. The artist makes the majority of their paychecks from people like you and me that support them by buying the CD. If we don't buy the CDs why should they record them in the first place?

MIKE is a founder of DeMorgan Industries Corp., the leading developer of Web graphics (<http://www.webspice.com>). You can reach Mike at: mikek@demorgan.com.



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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:** May 11.

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:** May 12.

EDUCATION. Coordinates DACS education classes. Contact: Charlie Bovaird (203 792-7881). Meets as needed.

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

Contact: Ken Graff at 203 775-6667. Meets on last Wednesday, 7p.m., at Best Photo, Brookfield. **Next Meeting:** May 26.

INTERNET. Acquaints DACS members with the Internet.

Contact: Larry Stevens (LStevens@usa.net) 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:** May 19.

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

Contact: Paul Gehrett (203 426-8436). Meets 3rd Thursday, 7:30 pm, Edmond Town Hall, Newtown. **Next Meeting:** May 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: May 18.

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: May 5.

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 last Tuesday, 7:30 p.m., Datahr, Brookfield.

Next Meeting: May 25.

WALL STREET. Examines new 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: May 31.

WEBSITE DESIGN. Designs and maintains the DACS Website.

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: May 12.

WINDOWS. Explores all aspects of Windows 95 and 3.1.

Contact: Ben Carnevale (203 748-1751 or e-mail W1VZT@aol.com). Meets on 1st Friday, 7p.m., at the DACS Resource Center, Ives Manor (lower level), 198 Main Street, Danbury.

Next Meeting: Fall of 1999.

SIG News

ACCESS. The Access SIG continues with its split program—the first hour devoted to generalized database instruction, the second to problem solving. We are planning to work with Queries, and Form/Report record sources during the next couple of sessions.

INTERNET. In April, Lina Feliu presented "Internet Auction Sites" using EBay as the primary example. In May, Tony Booth, librarian and computer coordinator at the Danbury Public Library, will discuss "Global Library Resources on the Internet." June's presentation will be "How do Bytes get from Here to There—and Back."

VISUAL BASIC. If you missed the April meeting, you missed a good one. After a brief Random Access, member Broc Hite presented a VB project he wrote for his employer. Broc's application does insurance processing and is very specific to his employer. The application uses the SStab and Flexgrid controls that come with VB and DAO for database access. The application supports multiple users. Discussion centered on programming techniques and workarounds to the bugs in the controls. We also addressed how DAO manages concurrent access to a database by multiple users. It was an interesting discussion. The program was a presentation on using drag and drop in Access (VB for Applications). Drag and drop functionality depends on Active-X controls or OLE-enabled versions of standard controls.

VOICE FOR JOANIE. SIG leader Shirley Fredlund says VFJ desperately needs volunteers. This needn't involve a great deal of time, but from time to time Shirley might have a computer problem she can't solve and would be grateful to have a patient and knowledgeable someone to call to describe the problem and have them walk her through it.

WEBSITE DESIGN The April 14 meeting was postponed until May 12. IBM's Melissa Sader will present a program on building sites for E-Commerce. E-Commerce is about more than buying and selling products on-line. Customer support, supply-chain management, and on-line advertising are vital subsets of the e-commerce business model. Melissa will cover these topics and also talk about how to protect transactions and provide a secure e-commerce environment.

Melissa is a program manager in the IBM Internet Technology Group, where she is responsible for the production of several intranet and Internet sites as well as on-line marketing and communications activities. Prior to joining IBM in 1998, Melissa was the Internet Product Manager for SkyTel Communications in Washington, DC. With the launch of www.skytel.com in 1994, SkyTel was the first paging company to provide an on-line method of sending messages to its customers via the Internet. Subsequent iterations of the site included the first on-line Interactive System Coverage guide offered by a paging company. Melissa holds a B.A. in Communications, Legal Institutions, Economics, and Government from American University in Washington, DC, and currently resides in Danbury, CT.

WINDOWS It's time again for our long summer break. We will not meet from May through August but will resume on the first Friday in September. Have a safe and enjoyable summer; we look forward to seeing you in the fall.

May 1999

Danbury Area Computer Society

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USB Explained

Is the Universal Serial Bus for You?

By Karl Rehak LVPCUG

THE UNIVERSAL SERIAL BUS (USB) is now making inroads into computer systems. Devices are being announced and delivered weekly that support this new attachment method. This article will highlight how the USB works, some physical considerations of hooking up USB devices and a summary of which devices are good candidates for USB attachment.

The intent of the USB architecture is to provide a replacement for the aging serial and parallel ports on existing computers. Those ports have not changed much since the original PC design and their use imposes limitations. One limitation is cable length. Cable size and complexity are other limitations. USB uses one IRQ no matter how many devices are in use and it offers instant plug and play for its device set. After loading the device software the computer user can plug the physical device anywhere in the USB network and it springs to life. The unit can be plugged in to a different port each time with no consequence. A USB device can be unplugged from the system at any time as well.

The technology is appropriately named. "Universal," conveys the notion of being for all things. While the port does have speed limitations (discussed later), the 'one plug fits all' design is clearly there. "Serial" describes the flow of information in the bus. The flow is more like an advanced data network protocol than the traditional PC Serial bus data flow. The traditional serial bus has IRQ, DMA and device limits that dictate its use; USB departs from all of that. It is a "Bus" architecture that can funnel information from many devices into and out of a computer system in an orderly manner.

The connecting cables are made up of four wires. Two of the wires supply voltage and two are data signal wires. The bus operates at either 12 megabits per second or 1.5 megabits per second, depending on the attached device. The devices tell the bus what their speed is through the voltage cables. High speed devices shift the positive voltage lead while slow

speed devices shift the negative voltage. Devices that do not need a lot of power, like digital cameras, can draw their power from the bus. That means they operate without a wall plug. Devices like some scanners and printers that

have heavy power demands need to be plugged into the wall to operate. A model of the Visioneer scanner uses power supplied by the bus.

USB is a hub architecture. Hubs are what are connected, hubs connect to hubs. The computer has an upstream "root hub" at the computer that is the signal source, and the input/output devices have a downstream hub to terminate the signal. The hubs do all of the talking. The illustration shown is a connector for an 'A' hub, it is rectangular in shape and is about 3/16 in. by 1/2 in. in size. The plug at the computer is an 'A' plug. The plug at the device, or downstream end, is a 'B' plug. That plug is shaped like a triangle with two of the angle edges flattened. It is about 1/4 by 5/16 in. in size. Cables are designated by their length and types of plugs they have. A typical cable used is a "6 ft. A B" cable, meaning it is six feet long and is configured with an 'A' plug at one end for the computer and a 'B' plug at the other end for the device. This is a typical device connection cable.

Intermediate hubs can be included in a configuration. A typical distribution hub would have one downstream 'B' plug

which comes from the computer, and it provides from four to eight 'A' plugs for distribution to the downstream devices. The maximum cable length is 5 meters, or about 16 feet. Since each hub is a repeater, the signal can be propagated through additional cables for up to six total hubs, that is five connecting cables of up to 15 feet each with the final upstream and downstream hubs at each end. The intermediate distribution hubs can optionally provide additional power to their downstream hubs or simply distribute what is provided by the upstream hub. Most often the use of additional power at the hub is via a power supply transformer plugged into the wall. It can be plugged in to provide additional device power at any time.

Windows 95B (the OEM release) and Windows 98 include USB support. Most systems boards made in the last two years include two USB root hubs. Installing the USB on a system requires the installation of the software and turning on the USB ports in the BIOS. A connecting cable from the system board to a screw down strip at an available card slot provides the external USB connections. This twin USB plug at the rear of the computer provides the exit "root hub" appearance on the computer. The internal cable with screw down strip cost about \$5.00, so the cost of setting up USB on a computer is nominal. For those computers that do not have a built in USB port, there are PCI based USB port cards that cost about \$40 to provide the capability. ATX systems boards already have integrated external hubs and no internal cables are necessary.

The USB port extension that was added to my computer had five wires, one more than the basic four needed for use. The fifth wire is a heavy black wire and it was suggested that the wire be clipped before the hub is used. That was done with no problems. That extra wire, is at most, an extra ground wire.

The Website www.usb.org provides valuable information regarding the USB technology. It also includes a program that tests a computer for USB compliance. This is an easy way to check out a computer before any USB devices are added.

The USB Network

What happens when a device is plugged into a USB port? The wheels are set in motion. The root hub at the



computer senses the presence of the new device and initially communicates with the device on "pipe 0," the default physical device communications channel. Pipes are the data sub bands of the hub architecture that maintain the physical connections of devices. Once a device is recognized, the root hub interrogates the device to find out what it is and what it is capable of on pipe 0. All of the devices on the USB ports are then enumerated and each is assigned a unique device number, which also includes a corresponding pipe number for physical device communications. The computer loads the software needed to control the device and handles its information flow. The hubs are then running and information is passed in and out of the computer over the signal leads. The enumeration process is initiated every time a device is plugged into or removed from the network. A maximum of 127 devices can be attached to a hub.

Device Support

The USB architecture is defined as an intermediate speed bus. With its maximum speed of 12 megabits per second, what are a USB port's device limitations and what devices are candidates for attachment? Clearly, the typical devices attached to serial and parallel ports are excellent candidates for USB attachment. These include most printers, modems, pointing devices, scanners, cameras and like devices. Certainly game paddles, joysticks and steering wheels etc. can be attached to the USB port. In fact special purpose game controllers are a natural since they can be connected and used as needed. Keyboards are now available for USB attachment.

Microsoft just announced a high quality speaker system that supports USB as well as traditional sound board support. The product review indicated that the sounds chopped at times under game conditions on the USB port, indicating a borderline USB attachment candidate. However, under routine computer use USB speakers behaved just fine. USB attached speakers eliminate the need for a sound board in the computer hence they play a perceptively clearer digital sound. Similarly, low end video monitors can be used on USB, while high end graphics will require the use of the internal AGP port and a graphics card. Again, as in speakers, the key to low end or high end graphics is based on the eventual use of the device.

Devices like speakers create a special demand on USB ports in that they are streaming devices. As such, space on the USB port must be reserved for them even when they are quiescent. Such devices are called "isochronous" and are defined as a special class of supported devices in the USB architecture.

Conclusion

In conclusion, in looking at the back of a typical computer, the following devices are better left to dedicated PCI or AGP ports - monitors, speakers and LANs. The devices that are reasonably good candidates for USB connection are printers, scanners, keyboards, pointing devices, game controllers, digital cameras and modems (excluding cable modems). Iomega has announced a USB ZIP drive. Other manufacturers will be adapting this technology to their products over time. There are also products available that convert existing serial and parallel devices to USB devices.

The use of USB in a computer system liberates many of the physical constraints of cable length and device location in a Small Office/Home Office (SOHO) environment. It is reasonable to have multiple devices for special purpose applications like sheet feed scanners, flat bed scanners and slide scanners all sharing space on a USB channel. The end user is free to set up a working environment needed for their productive use free of the traditional constraints imposed by Comm and LPT ports.

The textbook referenced for this article is USB Explained by Steven McDowell and Martin Sayer, Prentice Hall publisher. The Websites <http://www.usb.org> and <http://www.ti.com/sc/usb> were also referenced for technical information. The Website of Rogers System Specialist, <http://www.rogerssystems.com>, was used for USB product pricing. Proof reading was done by Chuck Buchheit, Rob Winchell and Howard Mark of the LVPCUG. Their suggestions are appreciated.

This article is furnished as a benefit of our membership in the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization to which this user group belongs. The author, KARL REHAK, is in his second term as President of the Las Vegas PC User Group. Prior to that he was Vice President for one term and spent some time being the Advertising Director. Karl is also SIG (Special Interest Group) leader for the Windows Development SIG.

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Anti-Virus Software

PC-cillin 6.0

Maybe the best antivirus software you're not using

By Jeff Setaro

OVER THE YEARS I've looked at just about every antivirus program known to man—every one except Trend Micro's PC-cillin (<http://www.antivirus.com>) that is. And now that I've been using PC-cillin for the past few weeks I'm sorry I overlooked it for so long.

Getting Started

Getting started with PC-cillin is sheer simplicity. The program's installation wizard guides you through the process of installing and configuring the program. Prior to copying the PC-cillin program files to your hard drive, the setup wizard scans the system areas of your computer for viruses. In the event it finds one, the setup wizard copies the DOS version PC-cillin to a temporary directory on your hard drive, prompts you to reboot from a clean startup diskette, and then run the PC-cillin for DOS from that temporary directory.

Personally, I'd rather Trend include the DOS version of PC-cillin on diskette. While booting from a clean startup diskette and running PC-cillin for DOS from a temporary directory on the hard drive is workable solution, it's not the best one. In some situations it's not possible to access the hard drive after a clean boot. For example, if your PC is infected with a virus like Empire.Monkey, which encrypts the partition sector of the hard drive, you won't have access to the hard drive after a clean boot.

After PC-cillin has scanned your system and cleaned any viruses, you are presented with a series of installations options:

- **Parental Web Filtering.** Installs the PC-cillin Web Filter, which allows you to block objectionable Web sites. * Malicious Object Protection. Enables PC-cillin Web Security, which keeps malicious Java applets and ActiveX controls from harming your computer while you browse the Web.

- **Add Trend Active Desktop Item.** Displays active content from Trend on your desktop (requires Internet Explorer 4.x or Windows 98).

- **Add Trend Active Channel.** Adds Trend's award-winning Web site, www.antivirus.com, to your Channel Bar.

- **Update Program After Install.** Automatically connects to the Web and

installs the latest virus pattern and program files.

I opted to enable the Web Filtering, Web Security, and automatic update options. With my installation preferences set, the setup wizard copied the PC-cillin program files to my hard drive, prompted me to create a set of rescue disks, and then connected to the Internet to download the latest program updates and virus definitions.

Clean & Simple

Anti-virus software is quickly becoming a commodity item. What sets anti-virus packages apart these days are things like ease of use, frequency of updates, and customer support. PC-cillin looks like a winner in all of these categories.

Using PC-cillin is pure simplicity. Its interface is clean, simple, and intuitive. All the common manual scanning options are right out in front when you start it up, and any of PC-cillin's functions can be accessed from the icon bar on the left hand side of the screen. In fact you're never more than two clicks away from any of the programs functions.

One of the things that sets PC-cillin apart from its competition is the degree of flexibility it offers users. Unlike anti-virus programs that force you to choose scanning options for a global dialog, PC-cillin allows users the flexibility to customize scanning tasks meet specific needs. If, for example, you want to scan just your Word documents and Excel spreadsheets for macro viruses, you can use PC-cillin's Scan Manager to create a custom scanning task that does just that. You can configure each task to scan the files, folders, or drives you choose. Additionally, you can schedule any scanning task to run at a selected time on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis. If you'd rather select your scanning options manually you can PC-cillin's Scan Wizard to choose the files, folders, or drives you'd like to scan.

During my testing, PC-cillin proved itself to be an excellent virus hunter, successfully identifying all of 1,460 virus samples in my test collection. The virus collection I used in testing was composed of ten samples of each of the 146 viruses listed in the main section of the March 1999 Wild List (<http://www.wildlist.org>).

When it comes to virus removal, PC-cillin takes a practical, commonsense approach. If it

detects a virus that cannot be safely removed while Windows is running, it will prompt you to shutdown and reboot from the set of rescue disks you made during installing.

If PC-cillin encounters virus that it can't properly identify or disinfect, you can either delete the file or move it, either automatically or manually, to the quarantine area. From there you can use the Online Doctor feature to send the affected files to Trend's Virus Hospital for analysis.

Safe Surfing

In addition to providing solid, real-time protection against traditional file and boot sector viruses, PC-cillin also provides protection against new Internet-based threats such as malicious Java applets and ActiveX controls that may be downloaded to your computer while you're browsing the Web.

Theoretically, rogue Java and ActiveX controls can do real harm to your PC when you visit a malicious Web site. This type of threat hasn't been a major problem so far, but it's nice to know PC-cillin is ready if and when it does become a problem.

Probably the more interesting of PC-cillin's Internet protection options is its Web Filter, which is basically a limited firewall that allows you to specify the URL or IP address of Web sites you would like to block access to. This is a great little tool for parents who want to keep children away from specific sites.

Bottom Line

PC-cillin may not have the name recognition of Norton AntiVirus or McAfee VirusScan, but it certainly is a worthy competitor. Anyone looking for an inexpensive, easy-to-use anti-virus system for their home or small office would do well to give PC-cillin a look.

Quick Facts

PC-Cillin 6.0

Trend Micro Inc. 10101 North De Anza Blvd. Cupertino, CA 95014

Phone: 800-656-5426

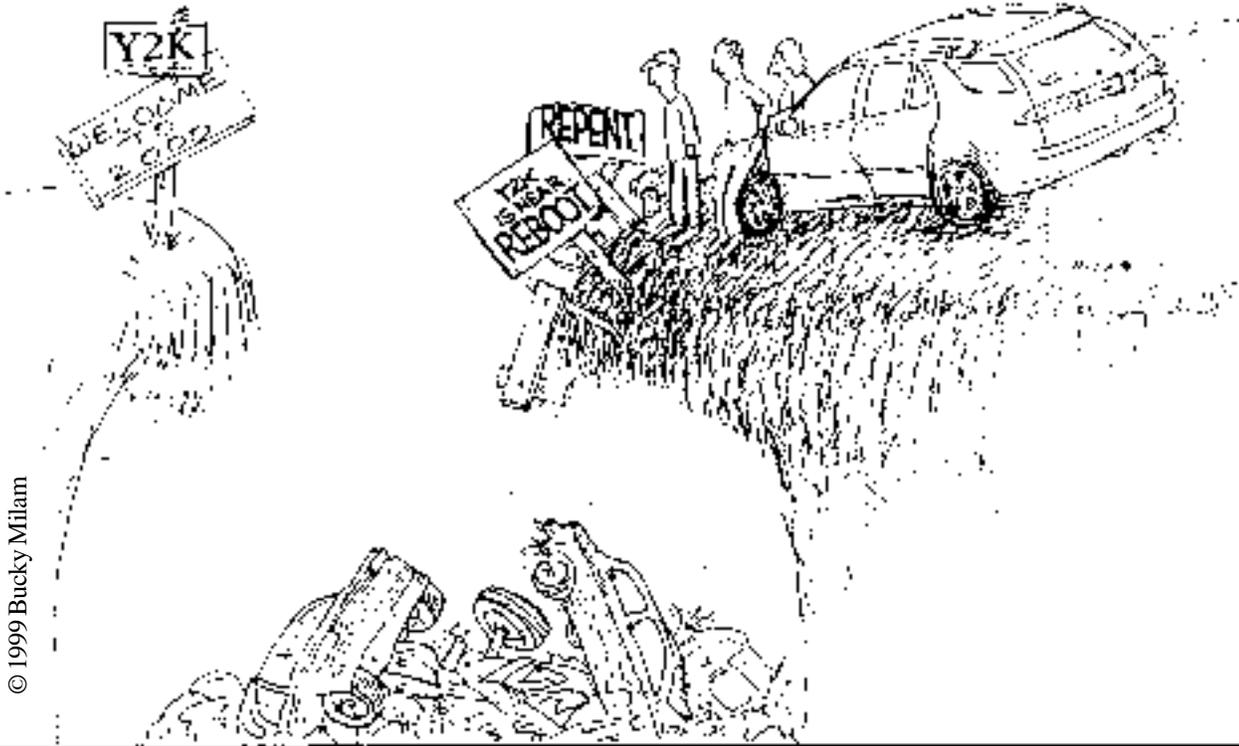
Website: <http://www.antivirus.com>

Price: \$29.95 (Download) \$39.95 (CD-ROM)

Requirements: Windows 95/98, Intel 486, Pentium, or 100% compatible, 16 MB hard-disk space, 640 C 480 or higher resolution.

JEFF SETARO is DACS' antivirus guru. He is also program director and a member of the the DACS board of directors.

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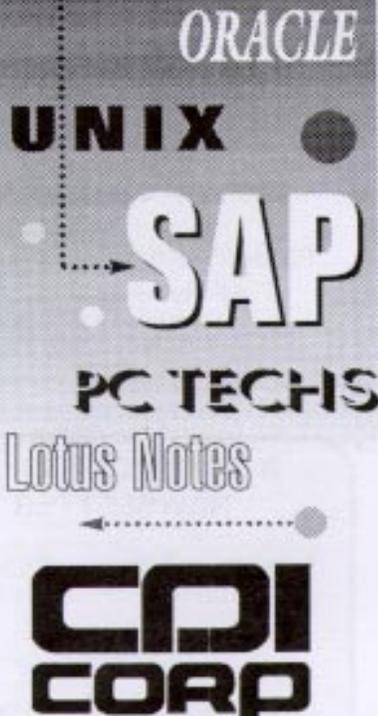
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EOE

Adobe ImageReady Great Web Graphics Made Easy

By Mike Kaltschnee

I HAVE a confession to make. I held off doing this review until after the Software Information Industry Association (SIIA) awards ceremony on March 6. I had to—we were competing with Adobe ImageReady in the category “Best Internet Enhancement Tool,” and it wasn’t fair to review a competitor. Now that the ceremony is over and we have a nice trophy to add to our collection, here is the review.

Adobe, a company that has been around almost as long as Microsoft, is the leader in graphics and printing technology. It easily made the transition to the Web before most software companies even knew it existed. I’ve had the fortune to use early versions of Adobe’s PageMaker, Acrobat, PageMill, and PhotoShop products, which redefined the way we looked at creating and printing our newsletters, documents, brochures, and now Websites.

Our WebSpice products would not exist without PhotoShop 4 and 5, so I guess you could even call me a fan. This made it hard not to hope that we deserved to beat ImageReady. I guess my conscience was vindicated when PhotoShop won in another category (I voted for it).

When Jeff Setaro gave me a copy to review, I have to admit that I really didn’t know exactly what it did. Adobe designed this product to fill users need to create Web graphics and animations quickly and easily. PhotoShop users will feel at home with the similar interface and tools, and new users will like the price (around \$180 compared to \$599 for PhotoShop), since it does most of what you need to create Websites.

First, I was impressed with the manual. It’s the type of manual that explains a concept, walks you through the process, and does it quickly but clearly. The manual has an excellent introduction to Web graphics, file formats, animations, dithering, and other complex topics. ImageReady supports GIF and JPEG formats, the two most common types, as well as about a dozen other

important formats, and even lets you preview the optimized image while you’re working on it. It is one of the first programs I’ve used that supports the new PNG format, in both 8- and 24-bit compression types. This new format is supported in most browsers but has never really caught on. So unless you have a specific reason for using it, I would wait until its use is more common.

ImageReady makes it easy to create complicated animations, using layers and opacity to create stunning effects.

an awesome set of tools that every Web designer should have at their disposal. It works as promised, and I will definitely use it on my next Web project. The only issue I have is with the price—you can purchase Ulead’s GIF Animator 3 (\$39 online) and Paint Shop Pro 5 (\$99 or even less with the DACS special offer) and have a complete Web animation and editing solution.

I guess I still feel guilty about getting the Codie, but Adobe definitely has a winner with ImageReady. If



You can even automate your most common functions into a macro called a droplet. A nice addition is the ability to create backgrounds and tiled images. You’ve seen those sites with the really neat repeating backgrounds, and ImageReady makes it easy to create your own—maybe even using your photo or logo. You can use a number of the PhotoShop plug-ins to create great image effects. Finally, the program is great for adding text to an image, and rotating it in almost any direction.

I must admit I had fun with ImageReady. It’s a great program, with

you’re new to Web graphics or looking to create some really great animations, this product is for you. Be sure to visit www.adobe.com for more information on ImageReady and other great Adobe products. You can find out more about ImageReady at <http://www.adobe.com/prodindex/imageready/main.html>.

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Instant replay: April 1999

Bruce Preston, Moderator

Q. I get this message: "Error #870040256. Media Player cannot play audio stream: no audio hardware is available, or hardware is not responding." This is a surprise since other applications work with it just fine. There are no conflicts shown in Device Manager, all audio compression codes are properly installed and operating.

A. First recommendation was to ignore it. Next serious suggestion was to make sure that you have the most recent versions of DirectX for Media Player. Lastly, someone suggested making sure that you don't have the device already "claimed" by some other application, perhaps one operating in the background.

Q. While booting (before the Windows 95/98 blue cloud screen), I get a message that says that Windows cannot find a device file: vnetsup.vxd. If I press a key to continue, the boot continues without a problem. However, having this problem stalls the boot process. How do I fix it?

A. Vnetsup.vxd is the "Microsoft Virtual Network Support device driver" that is found if needed in the \WINDOWS\SYSTEM directory. Since you are running fine without it, it is clear that you aren't running any form of Microsoft's networking, such as peer-to-peer or participating in an NT Domain network. To fix the problem, click START, then RUN, then type in SYSEDIT and click OK. You will get several windows opened on various configuration files. Use the SEARCH command and find the references to 'vnetsup.vxd'-they are probably in WIN.INI. Put a ";" (semicolon) character at the start of each line that references the device driver, and save your changes. The ";" makes the line a comment, so it will be ignored. Next time you boot the machine, the message should be gone.

Q. When I connect to my Internet Service Provider, the dial-up networking adapter does not report to me the speed of the connection, which I have

seen on other machines. How do I determine what speed connection I am getting? I have found that the apparent connection speed varies with each connection attempt, and would like to know that I have a good connection before I start a large download.

A. The speed is only reported if your modem reports the connection speed back to the operating system. This is controlled by a configuration parameter (an AT command parameter) that is sent to the modem by the dial-up networking adapter. To make sure that you have the most recent driver for your modem, check the modem vendor's Web site. If you have documentation for your modem, see if it supports the Xn directive, in which case X1 tells the modem to report the connection speed. Try My Computer / Control Panel / Modems / <select your modem> / Properties / Connection / Advanced and then add "X1" to the "extra settings" field.

Q. Does anyone have experience using a cellular phone for a dial-up connection?

A. Yes, and it was disappointing. The best response rate seen for a regular cellular connection was 9,600 baud, and it wasn't very reliable.

Q. I have a Gateway Pentium II 450 and it takes a horrendously long time to get to the point where the START menu becomes available.

A. Gateway frequently installs the DOS version of the McAfee anti-virus package in their AUTOEXEC.BAT file. This scans every file on your system at boot time. If you are running an anti-virus package that checks files as they are opened or written to disk, then you don't need it. Comment it out by putting an "REM" at the start of the line that references "SCAN" or "SCANV" or "VSCAN". Take a look in your "Start Up" folder (C:\Windows\Start Menu\Programs\StartUp") and see what has been placed there. These will be shortcuts to applications that will be started whenever you start the machine. Also look to see if they have

any applications such as shell extensions, "front ends" for Windows to make it "friendlier," etc., in which case you may want to disable them. A less likely thing might be that there is a mapped network drive, in which case it may be trying to connect to a nonexistent network and timing out before letting the machine continue.

Q. My Word 97 doesn't know how to print envelopes other than #10 on my HP5L printer. How can I get different envelope types?

A. See if any envelopes other than the #10 are defined in the "Paper" section of the properties page for the printer. Many printers rely upon the application software to define the paper types, but a few, and the HP5L is one of them, expect the paper to be defined at the printer, and then the application program "inherits" the definitions when it attaches to the printer driver. Check out My Computer/Control Panel/Printers/<your printer>/Properties. Next, make sure that you have the HP driver active, rather than the one supplied by Windows 9x. To do this, you need to disable but not remove the Windows-supplied driver (done through control panel) and then install the HP-supplied driver (which makes use of components of the Windows-supplied driver, which is why you shouldn't "remove" it).

Q. I have a DELL 400 P-II and tried to perform an on-line update. It now reports that I have two distinct modems, and depending upon which software I am running, one or the other works. How do I get this fixed?

A. Go into My Computer / Control Panel / System / Device Manager and delete BOTH modems. Then close the windows and turn off the machine. When you power up the machine, PCI, Plug 'n Play, and Windows 9x should work together to determine which modem you have and where it is. We understand that you had now powered off the machine, which means that the old settings hadn't been cleared.

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.

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