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February 2000 Volume 11, Issue 2

Danbury Area Computer Society, Inc.

Chipping at the Future

AMD to present its new microprocessors

AT OUR NEXT GENERAL MEETING, the Danbury Area Computer Society will offer a presentation from "the other" chipmaker. Advanced Micro Devices (AMD) is a company with 30 years of experience in designing and manufacturing microprocessors. The presentation will include a corporate overview of the company, its current competitive landscape, and a description of its product lines with an emphasis on the Athlon. Take advantage of the opportunity to find out more about this fine company, which in recent weeks has been featured in the news. Join DACS on February 1, 2000, at Danbury Hospital Auditorium at 6:30 p.m.

You will learn about AMD's new cutting-edge processors and how they are being used in many arenas: business, CAD, scientific research, digital imaging, video applications, and, of course, the hot 3D-technology scene of serious gamers. AMD processors are available for a wide range of applications—from economical home consumer systems to laptops and high-end desktops.

You will also learn about AMD's new Athlon, a seventh-generation processor with a revolutionary 200 MHz system bus. The Athlon will allows a computer to process Internet content from ADSL/cable modems with considerably increased digital video imaging speed, giving you lightening fast graphics rendering, rich images, and accurate sound for an impressive multimedia experience. The Athlon is designed to increase your computer's longevity by strategically positioning it for new technologies to come.

Gamers especially will enjoy hearing about the new AMD-K6 processor and how it enhances a 3D graphics card, 3D sound capability, and DirectX 6 technology. The K6 also strengthens home and business applications with its TriLevel cache design.

Coming in March: The State of the Computer Industry by Amsys Computer.

Meeting Review

GeoWorks Transformed

A new company creates a suite NewDeal

By Marc Cohen

IN JANUARY we were treated to a presentation reintroducing an old operating system and a full suite of applications tailored to both business and schools, all updated by a new company, NewDeal. We have all been brainwashed by today's bloatware, those enormous space-hog applications containing all the features you'll ever want and a bloatload more that you'll never touch. To make matters worse, you might even have to add more stuff, say, your special apps for word-processing, spreadsheets, databases, E-mail, and Web browser to have a fully functional system. With such gargantua flooding the market, you think you need the latest and greatest Pentium III / 500+ with a minimum of 128MB RAM and gobs of hard disk space to make even minimal use of the most of the popular (read Microsoft) graphic environment. Is this true?

Mark Tenny, NewDeal's able demonstrator, showed us that truth sometimes conflicts with popular beliefs. He showed us an operating system and an office and a school suite of applications with write, draw, spreadsheet, database, contact manager, and day-planner modules plus a variety of fonts, clip art, games, and more.

Known as GeoWorks, the bundle was originally developed for the Commodore64 in the mid-Eighties and ported to the newly introduced IBM PC in the early Nineties. Enter NewDeal, who revitalized the software, remonikered it with the company name, and is now planning to release its fourth revision in the four years since it took over the package from its former developers. Each of its recent revisions has improved NewDeal's stability and user-friendly look and feel. Now it has added an HTML editor and Web browser and rolled it all into a

NewDeal *Continued on page 4*

President's File

Like trees falling in the wilderness, date codes passed from 99 to 00 on January 1st without much ado. Except for a few ATM crashes and some excessive overdue book fines, the only segment of the economy facing a return to 1900 levels were Y2K recruiting firms.

So, what happened to the Y2K bug? Although many computers indeed failed to roll over their clocks at midnight, there were two little-reported strategies that successfully fooled them into thinking that it didn't make any difference. One was to label the Y2K rollover as the "millennium bug", which made many PCs think the real crisis was still a year away; and the other was "event profiling," which works by taking everything that was occurring just before New Year's day, and successfully recreating it on New Year's day. Widespread use of the latter strategy was evident on CNN, which proclaimed universal optimism for real progress in the next millennium, while promoting yet another interview with Monica Lewinsky for Saturday afternoon. Since these programming strategies were performed without public announcement, I have recently taken out relevant patents, and will start invoicing every company that implemented them.

Chips ahoy!

If you're relatively new to computing, you may not have heard much about AMD. But for PC clone makers, Advanced Micro Devices has been a distant drummer to Intel for three decades. Always a niche player, AMD produced a line of processors that mimicked Intel's at every notch up the x86 architectural scale. Intel managed to stay ahead by moving into ever faster architectures and aggressively cutting prices for the chips that fell behind. Then, with the Pentium line of processors, Intel created a proprietary product name that made AMD seem like a cheap imitation.

But AMD kept coming back, and continues to compete head-to-head in processor speed and performance with its powerful rival. Much of this perseverence is credited to founder and CEO Walter Jeremiah Sanders III ("King Jerry"), who started out with Intel, shared some of their patents, and like Rambo, takes the rivalry personal. Now, as the PC market heats up, eight of the top ten PC manufacturers, most notably Compaq and Gateway, are turning to AMD for at least part of their product line. Last April, AMD's share of the US retail PC market had risen to 40.5% from 25.4% the previous year, while Intel's share had dropped from 71.9% to 53.2% during the same period.

As debate swirls over Microsoft's dominance in software, it is instructive to note how competition has helped keep prices down in PC hardware. Although Intel has remained preeminent, it has kept its lead only through price cutting and repeated innovation. While the price of a Windows upgrade seems stuck around $89, the cost of a cutting-edge, screamingly-fast PC with all the accouterments has plunged from more than $2000 to around $750 and change. And while Intel has had to cut its margins to stay competitive, look what they've saved in legal expenses.

AMD has recently announced its latest and best technology, the new 800 MHz Athlon chip. This product is described in company literature as "the world's first seventh-generation x86 processor featuring a superpipelined , nine-issue superscalar microarchitecture optimized for high clock frequency . . ." If this seems unIntelligible to you, come to the next DACS meeting on February 1, to hear AMD's representative put it all in plain English, and show you how much faster and better you could have done it if you had been a bit slower to upgrade your PC.

–Allan Ostergren
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IN THIS ISSUE

Membership Information

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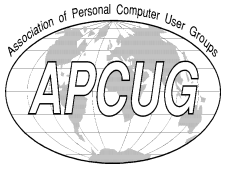

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HelpLine

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

d = day **e** = evening

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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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Q&A ver 3/4	Anthony Telesha	(203) 748-4478	(d e)
Statistics/Data Analysis	Charles Bovaird	(203) 792-7881	(d e)
SQL Server	Chuck Fizer	(203) 798-9998	(d)
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Visual Basic	Nick Percival	(203) 438-9307	(d)
HTML/Java	James Costello	(203) 426-0097	(e)
Windows 3.1	Nick Strother	(203) 743-5667	(e)

Directors' Notes

The monthly meeting of the Board of Directors was held at the Resource Center on Monday, January 10, 2000. Present were Messrs. Bovaird, Buoy, Cohen, David, Gingras, Ostergren, Preston, Setaro, and Mrs. Gaberel. Chairman David presided and Secretary Buoy kept the records. The minutes of the December meeting were approved.

Finance and membership

Treasurer Bovaird reported combined CD, checking, and postal account balances of $17,417.71, plus postage on hand of $114.80. He also reported current membership of 567, leading to a discussion of a revision of the membership form included in dacs.doc to include the source of a new member's interest in DACS and the types of membership available (corporate or electronic only), which Mr. Bovaird agreed to undertake. Elections

Chairman David reported that the ballots for the election of directors at the Annual Meeting of the Membership held on December 15, 1999 were overwhelmingly in favor of the re-election of the incumbent directors standing for election, with only a few ballots technically flawed and inadmissible.

RC lease and alternatives

Charlie Bovaird reported on possible the use of Danbury's Senior Center (The Old Jail) as an alternative venue, predominantly favorable, with some reservations regarding storage problems that were not insurmountable. President Ostergren also reported on conversations with Mr. Bull of the COC about using space available there. It was agreed that such an arrangement would be impractical for DACS' purposes. Charlie Bovaird then gave an analysis of DACS' financial situation and of the effects on it should the Resource Center be abandoned. He also commented on current trends in membership as well as advertising revenue from dacs.doc and the projected point at which the proposed rent increase would result in a net loss to DACS. Alternatives such as increased dues or reductions in the content of the newsletter were discussed and dismissed as undesirable. President Ostergren suggested and it was agreed that a counteroffer of $50 per month rental be made. It was also suggested that increased efforts be made to recruit more, and especially younger, members.

—LARRY BUOY

NewDeal *Continued from page 1*
$70 package, so tightly coded it takes only slightly more than 10MB of hard disk space, is happy with 640KB of RAM, and looks and acts like Windows.

Think about it. The whole windows-like environment and all the applications take up less space on your hard drive than MS Internet Explorer or Netscape alone, to say nothing of MS Office2000.

Kevin Welsh, NewDeal's missionary sent to solve the dilemma of the digital divide, provided the other half of the presentation, enlightening us to the possibilities this software provides. As well as running on the latest Pentium screamers, it also runs comfortably on the more than 60 million older 286 and 386 computers that yearly are rapidly filling landfills across the country as they are replaced by the government, corporate, and individual users.

Using NewDeal software, all of these abandoned computers can be recycled into Internet-ready PCs able to bring computer literacy to the millions of families, students and organizations on the downside of the digital divide. This solution can be introduced without huge investments, complex negotiations, or new legislation. And it can be introduced immediately, on a scale big enough to end digital apartheid in inner cities, rural communities, and in the Third World.

Corporations can take a tax write-off for the residual value of the old computers and the costs of refurbishing them. Schools, community centers, and non-profit organizations can then provide the computers and PC training to the recipients. NewDeal knows this because they are proving it everyday, working with organizations that are providing computers to the more than 50 million U.S. households and the many countries that still do not have a PCs or access to the Internet.

Judging from the many questions that Kevin's presentation provoked, he really hit the mark by showing the DACS audience that by only upgrading software, NewDeal has been able to breathe new life into computers formerly believed to be obsolete. By reducing the load on landfills and providing computers to less-affluent portions of the world, it has benefited society and the environment in a remarkable two-pronged result.

MARC "CRASH" COHEN, *who calls himself a perpetual computer novice and crash master, is a DACS director and production editor of dacs.doc. Continually frustrated with Windows system crashes, Marc has been an avid user of GeoWorks aka NewDeal since 1992, and says it has only rarely disappointed him. He looks forward to each new release. For the members who won copies of the NewDeal software at the raffle, and any others interested, Marc would like to start a NewDeal SIG. Please contact him at* MCPhoto@myself.com *if you are interested.*

NewDeal Deal for DACS Members

NewDeal Inc. thanks you and the members of the Danbury Area Computer Society (DACS) for your time and interest during your January meeting. We are very impressed with your membership and would appreciate a continuing relationship.

As a statement of our appreciation to all DACS members, NewDeal is offering the group a special purchase arrangement for SchoolSuite/WebSuite or Office/WebSuite for **$39.95** (single user), plus shipping costs.

This offer includes the following.

1. Available until February 29, 2000.
2. For each copy purchased, 10% of the product sale price ($4.00) will be donated to the DACS general fund.
3. The deliverable item is Version 3.2 of either product, in a retail package containing 3.5" floppies and CD-ROM versions, User Manual, and single-user license.
4. Full price for this retail package is ~~$69.95.~~ **$39.95**
5. Purchase can be made by e-mail to mark@newdealinc.com or by calling 1-800-985-4263.

Please reference DACS2000 and specify the desired product, either SchoolSuite or Office. 6. Please provide shipping address and billing method, whether a valid credit card, or NewDeal invoice.

New Members

12/23/1999 thru 1/17/2000

1) Joan G. Bielizna
2) Bert Boyson
3) Ronald Cannavaro
4) Thaddeus P. Dankowski
5) Gilbert Galer
6) Gene R. Minasi
7) Michael W. Shyman
8) Lee Steuber
9) Norbert and Rosanne Tarala
10) Michael Wizel

THIS IS YOUR LAST NEWSLETTER

If the membership date on your mailing label reads
EXP 12/1999
or earlier
You need to renew your DACS membership - NOW

Local Area Internet Providers

AT&T WORLDNET	800-967-5363
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

Games

The Frustrations of Rogue Spear

By Marlène Gaberel

HOW 'BOUT a nice game that pigs on install and uninstall and crashes your machine endlessly in between? Sound like fun? My son recently bought such a game, called "Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six: Rogue Spear," published by Red Storm (*www.redstorm.com*). The goal is to foil the efforts of terrorists who are trying to build nuclear bombs. The rating is Teen 13+ because of violence. The main reason my son wanted the game, he said, was because it is a first-person shooter game, whatever that means. All of the other games are either different kinds of strategy games or games featuring racecars or flight simulators.

The requirements on the box said you needed 200MB hard drive space and 64MB recommended memory. It also recommended a Voodoo videocard. My computer has a Viper card, which caused some problems, as I will explain later, because Rainbow Six didn't want to work with it.

I usually install the games my kids buy; otherwise they may just put anything anywhere on the machine, and I like to have the stuff on my computer organized. I suspected the game was flawed when I did the first install, which did not work. The game has three different installation options: compact, full, and typical. The compact installs the core game files only. According to Red Storm, missions take much longer to load under that installation. The full version loads all files, including videos. A typical install has everything but the video. Since the full install did not work, I tried a typical install. To my horror, that option used more than 600MB of hard disk space. My kids played the game for a while, but before too long the computer froze up.

According to my kids, the Rogue Spear story is set in the year 2001, in a world where Western Democracies are fighting back terrorist organizations globally. It takes place in Eastern Europe, Africa, Russia, and the Balkans. The attraction of the game is that you are a first-person shooter. There are 16 missions to accomplish. First you choose two weapons, a grenade, a flash bang, extra clips, binoculars, and a heart monitor to sense people even through cement walls. I'm still quoting my kids who say that the best part of the game is being a sniper, who wields a weapon something like binoculars but actually a scope which can be zoomed to shoot people a mile away. I was told the game is hard because once a terrorist sees you s/he shoots at the hostage. So you have to run right into the middle of the action and shoot the terrorist.

The kids never went very far into playing that game because it kept freezing up the computer. After the computer was rebooted fifty times over a couple of days I told the kids that I was going to return the game. I just have no patience with games that don't perform the way they should, especially at a cost of $40. I decided to uninstall it, but my uninstaller was not even able to do the trick. The uninstall function of Rogue Spear left some elements behind. I ended up reformatting the drive on which the game was installed to get a clean drive. When I returned the game, the salesclerk told me that I should leave the CD game in the drive when playing. Did he think for a minute that I was playing it myself? But not all is lost, Rogue Spear recently came out in Nintendo 64 and I don't have to worry about rebooting the TV.

MARLÈNE GABEREL *is a DACS director and publicity VP for the society. She also has two game-loving sons. Contact Marlène at* mgaberel@ct1.nai.net.

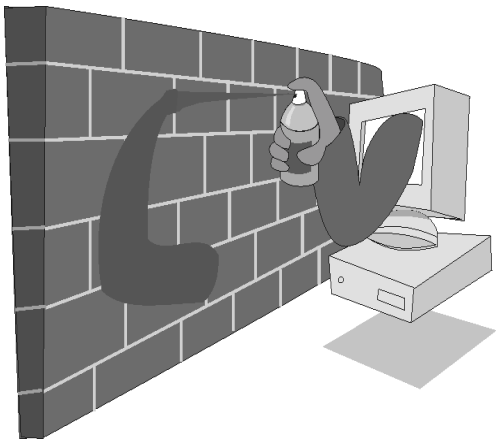
Tips

Tips for Intermediate Internauts

Where are all these those visitors coming from?

By Carol Daniels

AS IF KEEPING track of the links on your own Web site isn't hard enough, you will also want to know who is linking to you. It's a way of measuring the success of your site. When you move your Web site or change your directory structure, you can also use the information to let those that are linking to you know about the changes. A less pleasant (but very useful) way to use the technique is to discover if other sites are appropriating your content. Even if you have content you allow others to use freely, you generally want them to take a copy of your material, not link to your host.



So how do you do it? There are a number of ways, but one of the quickest and easiest is via AltaVista. Point your browser at *http://www.altavista.com/*. In the search box enter the following search string:

link:YourURL
host:YourDomainName

Where you replace "YourURL" with the appropriate actual information. For example (Figure 1):

link:www.melbpc.org.au
host:melbpc.org.au

This specifies a search for pages that contain links to Melbourne PC's site, but excludes those which are on Melbourne PC's site (that is to say, internal between Melbourne PC's own pages.) The results of the example search are shown in Figure 2.

A search for <link:melbpc.org.au -host:melbpc.org.au> is less specific and finds pages any link to our domain name, including (including mailto links). For our example search, there were about ten times more pages with any link with our domain name, as there were links to files on our Web site. Since many of these are pages with a mailto link to a Melbourne PC Internet subscriber, it's an interesting way to get a glimpse of the kinds of things that interest our members. We are, as you might already imagine, a very diverse lot!

What's plugged in?

I'm a sucker for the latest plugins, if you are too, you may also find yourself wondering which Web plugins you do (or don't) have, and whether or not they are enabled.

Netscape Communicator has several cool commands to display information about your browser's set up, and one of the most useful is about:plugins, which will display information about all the plugins you have installed, including version number, file type and whether or not they are enabled. How do you get this useful information? Simple.

Launch your browser, click on File, and then select Work Offline. Now, in your browser's address bar, type in the following: about:plugins. You should see something like (Figure 3)

Three more commands which you invoke as above, are

- about:cache
- about: memory-cache
- about:image-cache

which report on the status of your disk cache (Figure 4), memory cache (Figure 5) and which images are in the cache (Figure 6), respectively.

This article is furnished as a benefit of our membership in the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization to which DACS belongs. The author, Carol Daniels is a freelance writer and editor specializing in science, technology computers, computing, business, health, medicine, food, and agriculture. She is on the Management Committee of the Melbourne PC User Group and a member of APCUG's Board of User Group Advisors.

(Figure 1):

Figure 2

Figure 3

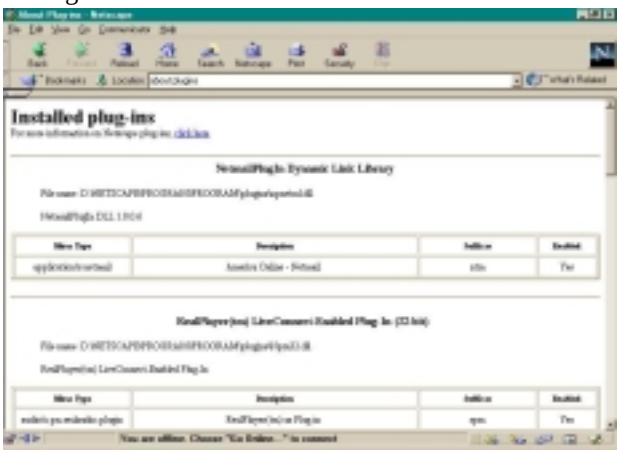


Figure 4

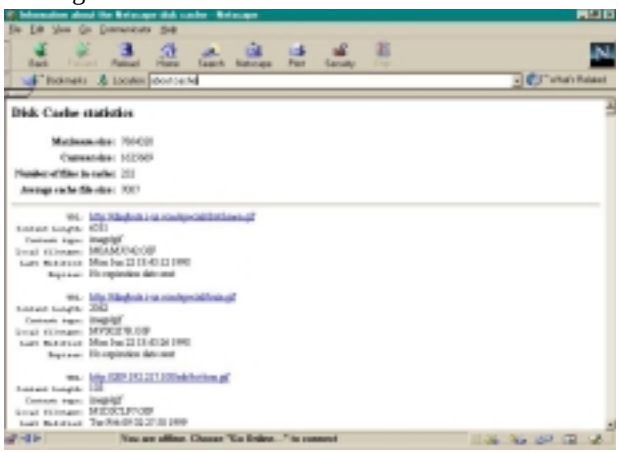


Figure 5

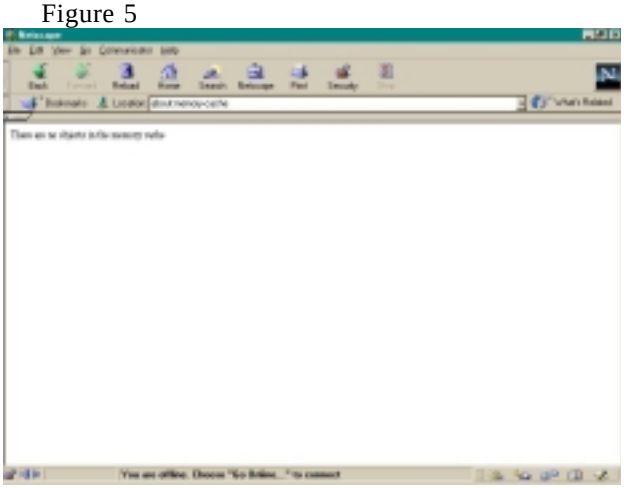
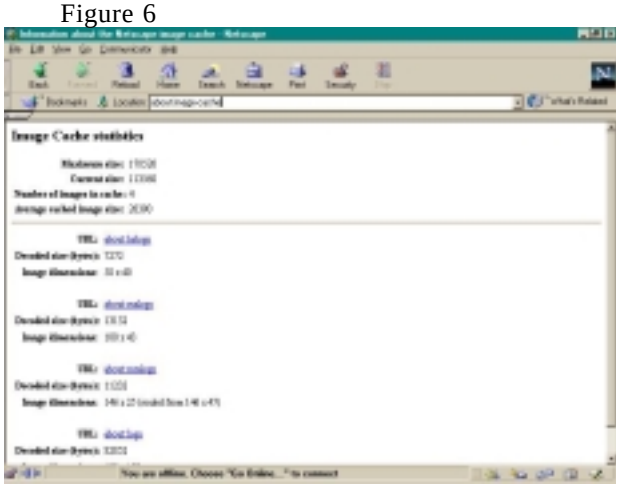


Figure 6



The Association of Shareware Professionals - A Primer

By Harold Holmes

The Association of Shareware Professionals (ASP) was formed in April 1987 to strengthen the future of try-before-you-buy software as an alternative to conventional retail software.

Today, it's a vibrant international organization with almost 700 shareware authors, distributors, and marketers who can help shareware professionals create and run their businesses. The ASP's members create and market some of the finest software available today.

ASP members' software spans the spectrum, from high-quality accounting and inventory programs for business, to award-winning utilities and games for all computer users. While some of our members' programs, such as WinZip and Paint Shop Pro, are international best-sellers, there are thousands of other excellent business tools, Internet applications, games, educational programs, graphics and multimedia programs that are top-shelf, and available at moderate prices.

Shareware is a method of software distribution, and not a type of program. In fact, try-before-you-buy software is being discovered by traditional "shelfware" companies, and will soon dominate the marketplace.

If you're looking for moderately priced, high-quality software, please visit the ASP's web site at http://www.asp-shareware.org/membersearch.asp. You can do a keyword search and, for most programs, you can purchase them securely online, directly from the author's web site. Or you can visit our members' web sites and download free trial version of their programs. We encourage you to try our software before you buy it.

Do you have questions about specific shareware programs, or about shareware in general? The ASP maintains a public newsgroup on our news server. You're welcome to visit the newsgroup, and post your questions or comments. Hundreds of our members visit this newsgroup every month, and would be happy to try to answer your questions. Just point your web browser to news://news.asp-shareware.org/asp.Public_Discussion

ASP members are always looking for beta testers. They need people who would be interested in trying their programs before they're ready for prime time. Beta testers get to see programs months before anybody else, get their ideas incorporated into the programs, and most end up with a free copy of the program for their efforts. If you'd like to become a beta tester, visit our public newsgroup, and post a message that mentions the types of programs that you're interested in.

If you're a software developer, we hope you'll consider joining the ASP. We offer a wealth of information about how to start a software business and how to market shareware, as well as technical programming information. Our members-only newsgroup has more than 22,000 messages on threads about all areas of program development and marketing. ASP members are always eager to help other ASP members. We hope you'll visit the ASP web site, and try some of our members' fine software.

HAROLD HOLMES, *President The Association of Shareware Professionals (*president@asp-shareware.org)

Special Interest Groups

ACCESS. Designs and implements solutions using Microsoft Access database management software.
Contact: Bruce Preston, 203 431-2920 *(bpreston@mags.net).* Meets on 2nd Tuesday, 7p.m., at the DACS Resource Center, Ives Manor (lower level), 198 Main Street, Danbury.
Next meeting: February 8.

ADVANCED OPERATING SYSTEMS. Explores and develops OS/2, Linux, and NT operating systems. For meeting notes and notices, follow link to Don's site on dacs.org.
Contact: Don Pearson, 914 669-9622 *(pearson@attglobal.net).* Meets on Wednesday of the week following the general meeting, 7:30 p.m., at Don Pearson's office, North Salem, NY.
Next meeting: February 9.

EDUCATION. Coordinates DACS education classes.
Contact: Charlie Bovaird, 203 792-7881 (*aam@mags.net).* Meets as needed.

GRAPHICS. Create/print high-quality graphics and images.
Contact: Ken Graff at 203 775-6667 *(graffic@ntplx.net).* Meets on last Wednesday, 7p.m., at Best Photo Imaging, Brookfield.
Next Meeting: February 23.

INVESTMENT STRATEGIES. Discusses various investment strategies, emphasizing careful selection to maximize profits and limit risk.
Contact: Paul Gehrett, 203 426-8436 *(pgehr4402@aol.com).* Meets 3rd Thursday, 7:30 p.m., Edmond Town Hall, Newtown.
Next Meeting: February 17.

INTERNET. Acquaints DACS members with the Internet.
Contact: Larry Stevens *(LStevens@usa.net)* or Richard Koser *(rkoser@worldnet.att.net).* Usually meets on 3rd Wednesday, 7p.m., at the DACS Resource Center, Ives Manor (lower level), 198 Main Street, Danbury, a few buildings north from the Danbury Public Library. Members' suggestions for Internet SIG topics are always welcome.
Next Meeting: February 19.

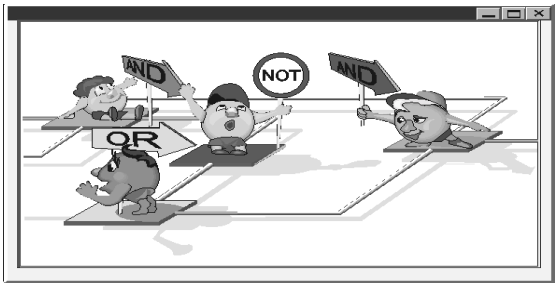
MACINTOSH. Discusses Macintosh hardware and software.
Contact: Chris Salaz, 203 798-6417*(crsalaz@kami.com).* Meets on 3rd Tuesday, 7:30 p.m., at the DACS Resource Center, Ives Manor (lower level), 198 Main Street, Danbury.
Next Meeting: February 8.

VISUAL BASIC. Develops Windows apps with Visual Basic.
Contact: Chuck Fizer, 203 798-9996 *(CFizer@compuserve.com)* or Jim Scheef, 860 355-8001 *(JScheef@Telemarksys.com)*. Meets on 1st Wednesday, 7p.m., at DACS Resource Center, Ives Manor (lower level), 198 Main Street, Danbury.
Next Meeting: February 2.

VOICE FOR JOANIE. Provides and supports people with Lou Gehrig's disease with special PC computer equipment.
Contact: Shirley Fredlund, 860 355-2611 x4517 *(voiceforjoanie@juno.com)*. Meets on last Tuesday, 7:30 p.m., at Datahr, Brookfield.
Next Meeting: February 29.

WALL STREET. Examines new Windows stock market software. **Contact:** Phil Dilloway 203 367-1202 *(phildilloway@juno.com).* Meets on last Monday, 7p.m., at the DACS Resource Center, Ives Manor (lower level), 198 Main Street, Danbury.
Next Meeting: February 28.

WEBSITE DESIGN. Designs and maintains dacs.org, the DACS Website.
Contact: Jeff Setaro 203 748-6748 *(jasetaro@sprynet.com).* Meets on 2nd Wednesday, 7p.m., at the DACS Resource Center, Ives Manor (lower level), 198 Main Street, Danbury.
Next Meeting: No meeting. New SIG leader needed.



SIG News

ACCESS As usual, about half of each meeting is devoted to "How do you ...?" questions from the participants. Bring a diskette if you want to take the meeting's work home with you.

INTERNET At the first Internet SIG meeting of the new millenium in January, long-time DACS members Bill Keane and Don Pearson presented "Linux and the Internet." Linux has been very much in the news lately with several Linux-related firms going public and many established industry players shipping Linux on their computers, most recently IBM.

VISUAL BASIC The VB SIG opened with a random access session. The dominating question was, "What is DCOM, and can it be used over the Internet?". This spurred a lot of discussion about COM, component object model, because DCOM is a distributed version of COM. The topic encompasses a plethora of programming technologies. We finally decided to focus on the component and discuss why it is used. Then we talked about how to make one. The "D" in DCOM then led us to consider the Internet aspect. Before delving very far, we concluded that we needed to get an understanding of protocols, of which http is the one used for Internet connectivity. We discussed the method of transmitting messages using http from both the browser to the server and the server to the browser. We used a sample program to examine server code and ASP programming examples. We concluded that this is an interesting topic and that we will look at WEB technology more carefully at the next meeting.

VOICE FOR JOANIE During the nine years it has been in existence helping those suffering from ALS, Voice for Joanie has assisted 225 people in 104 Connecticut towns and eight people in seven New York State towns. At the present time we are helping 52 people. We are always in need of technical assistance and it would be especially helpful to have volunteers who would learn the programs we offer. These people could help with teaching, or be available to answer questions. Contact SIG leader Shirley Fredlund.

WEBSITE DESIGN The Web Site Design SIG is going on hiatus while we search for new leader.

February 2000

Danbury Area Computer Society

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1  7:00 PM **GENERAL MEETING** **AMD Microproc.** Danbury Hospital	2  7:00 PM **VISUAL BASIC** Chuck Fizer 203 798-9996	3	4	5
6	7  7:30 PM **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**	8  7:00 PM **ACCESS** Bruce Preston 203 431-2920	9  7:30 PM **ADVANCED OS** Don Pearson 914 669-9622	10	11  **NEWSLETTER SIG NEWS DEADLINE**	12  **LINCOLN'S BIRTHDAY**
13	14  **SMOOCH?**	15  7:30 PM **MACINTOSH** Chris Salaz 203 798-6417	16  7:00 PM **INTERNET** Koser / Stevens Lstevens@usa.net	17  7:30 PM **INVESTMENT** Paul Gehrett 203 426-8436	18	19
20	21  **PRESIDENT'S DAY**	22  **WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY**	23  7:00 PM **GRAPHICS** Ken Graff 203 775-6667	24	25	26
27	28  7:00 PM **WALL STREET** Phil Dilloway 203 367-1202	29  7:30 PM **VOICE FOR JOANIE** Shirley Fredlund 860 355-2611				

January

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March

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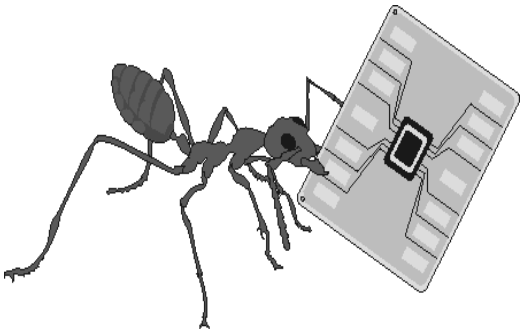
The Basic Stamp

The scoop on embedded computers in homes and cars

By Rich Chernock

THESE DAYS, when one thinks of computers, one's thoughts gravitate toward powerful systems. It isn't unreasonable to work at home with a system whose processor is approaching gigahertz speeds, with multigigabytes of storage and a significant fraction of a gigabyte in memory. There is another class of computer that we all use constantly, but of which we are often unawares—the embedded computer. These are cheap, very small, and quite underpowered by the standards above. They are also widespread. The cost of processing has become so low that in many cases it is less expensive to use a microprocessor rather than a mechanical timer (washing machines) or a common integrated circuit (alarm clock). As an example, a recent model of Mercedes has upwards of 35 processors distributed around the car.



Most of these embedded computers are used in mass production products, programmed in assembly with the code burned into ROM. Development versions for many of these are available for experimentation at fairly attractive prices. There are a small number that have a tiny basic interpreter built in, making development quite simple. An example, which I've been successfully experimenting with recently is the Basic Stamp: it is inexpensive ($35), small (not much bigger than a 9V battery), and comes with a rather rich instruction set. Working with this type of system is a refreshing challenge due to the constrained resources—low speed and limited RAM. The Basic Stamp 1 has a grand total of 256 Bytes (not KB or MB!) of non-volatile RAM available for program storage and 16B for data. As you might guess, sloppy programming styles are a disaster in this type of system.

What can it do?

As described above, it appears that the capabilities of the embedded computer are too limited to do anything useful. Due to a very clever design, the opposite is true: quite interesting projects can be done with this system (one example is described below). There are eight bidirectional I/O lines (individually controllable) which can be used for communications with the outside world. The tiny basic programs are tokenized, resulting in the capability to store 80-100 complex instructions, which are executed at an average rate of 2000 instructions/second. The 16B of data are addressable as bits, nibbles, bytes, or words—in any desired mixture. Programming is as simple as hooking up a connection to a DOS or Windows PC (parallel or serial, depending upon the model) and downloading code. Simple debugging facilities are available. Due to the non-volatile RAM, any code will be executed upon power-up and retained until reprogrammed.

The built-in tiny basic interpreter, has a number of unusual instructions which account for much of the power of this small system: reading analog potentiometer values, pulse width measurements, pulse width modulation for power control, digital and serial I/O and timing capabilities. Each of these costs only one instruction, making maximum use of the limited memory space. If you need more capabilities (more instruction or data space, more I/Os), there are other more powerful models available at a slightly higher cost.

Remote Audio Control Project

Problem. I like to listen to music while I'm home, and I have a fairly elaborate stereo system in the den of my house. I wanted to be able to hear the music in other rooms, especially the kitchen. Turning up the volume in the den was not a solution, since the levels in the den would become unbearable. In addition, I wanted a bit of flexibility—control over volume and tone remotely as well as the capability to listen to a different source (in case the kids took over the den). To make matters more difficult, there is about a 50-foot run to get cables between the two rooms. Since the cables ran next to power lines, it seemed most appropriate to keep all the low level signals close to the music source and run speaker wires into the kitchen.

Conventional Solution. A number of prepackaged solutions are available, ranging from the simple (running speaker wires from the receiver and using volume pads) to the complex (purchasing a multi-room amplifier with remote controls and source switching). The simple solution didn't really meet my needs, since it doesn't provide the flexibility I was after. The complex solution would work admirably but was priced an order of magnitude higher than I wanted to invest.

Techie Solution

When I first thought about solving this problem, my techie tendencies came to the forefront, with imagined solutions as exotic as modulating a laser beam to transfer the music signal to the kitchen (I actually dreamed up a design that would have worked, but practical considerations won out). When sanity prevailed, I decided that this might be my first opportunity to use a Basic Stamp in a real project. I had a twenty-year-old stereo amplifier lying around gathering dust. In addition, I had just run across an IC from National Semiconductor, the LM1983 (a digitally controlled preamplifier); a $10 part, of which I managed to obtain a free sample. It seemed like the perfect opportunity to try out a Basic Stamp.

The LM1983 allows the digital setting of volume for each stereo channel, bass, treble and selection between three inputs. This control is performed using

Basic Stamp *Continued on page 13*

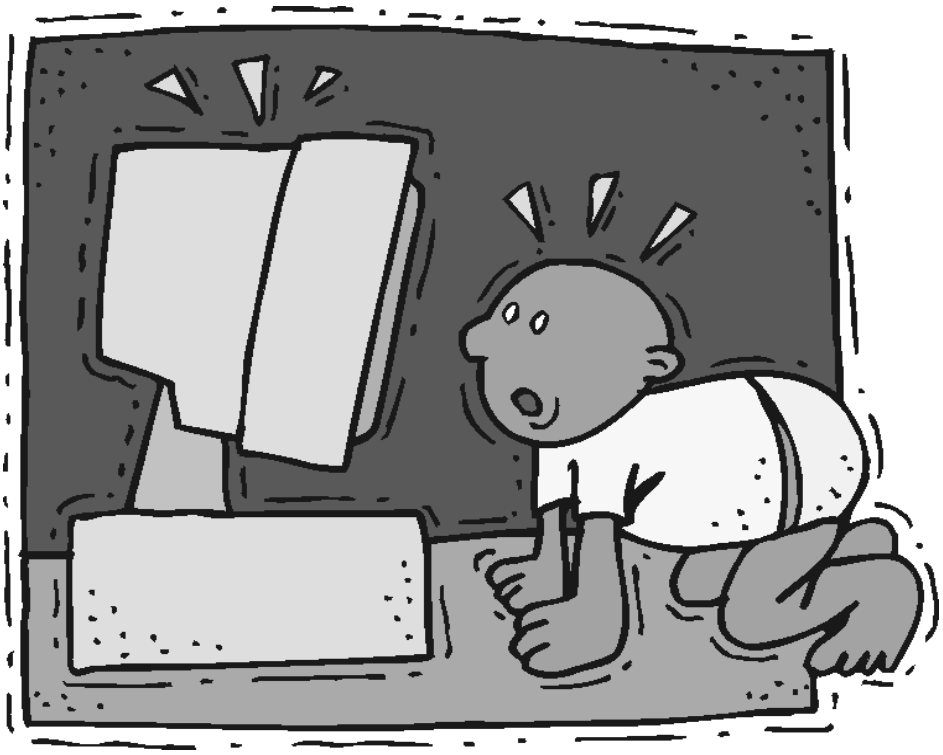
Internet Porn

Where's the CyberPorn?

Here's how to find it keep it from your kids

By Jacqueline Renee Cohen

HOW DANGEROUS is the Internet? What can your children find when you are not home? How easily can someone find pornographic sites? How easy is it to block adult content from your machine?



These are questions, as a single, childless woman, I have never needed to think about. I am a teacher, but my main concern is my students meeting strangers over ICQ or in chatrooms. I received a pornographic picture via e-mail once. I deleted it, and nothing else ever showed up unwanted. To help you keep it out of your Net life, most e-mail and search engines programs now have screening devices.

I went on a search for pornography on the Web. There are two ways that most searches take place. The first way is to try to score a direct hit by typing in what you think is a logical URL. For example, if you wanted to find DACS online you would logically try *www.dacs.com* (The U.S. Department of Defense Software Information Clearinghouse); if that didn't work, you would try *www.dacs.org* and score a direct hit. The other way, more commonly used, is to use one of the popular search engines.

My favorite search engine is www.infoseek.com, which generally produces good results. I started with a search on "sex." A warning came up that asked me if I wanted to proceed or not. That is a pretty good sign, an option to turn back before adult content is shown. But I opted to proceed. The resulting sites included no pornography; they were all educational Websites. I was impressed! Of course, Infoseek is associated with go.com and Disney.

Then I tried the same search with *www.yahoo.com, www.altavista.com, www.webcrawler.com,* and *www.excite.com,* among others. None of these offered me a warning prior to revealing the list of Websites and categories relating to "sex." And with the exception of Excite, which offered links to a variety of sites including a quite funny r-rated comic strip relating to Clinton *(www.gethappy.com)*, they all displayed links to heavily x-rated sites.

So I explored those sites. How much can you see for free on the Internet? Not much! Many of the sites seemed to be linked to one another. They all have a similar design: a few small x-rated photos with promise of free access if you "click here." Well, free access requires a credit card for identification. You must be over 18 to have a credit card, therefore you must be over 18 to enter the site—even for free. Other sites offered trial memberships for as low as $1.98, but again you must have access to a credit card.

Some sites had links to exotic stories, but none were more revealing than anything you could read in an adult novel in a bookshop. The most impressive features were sites with links to adult content filters that you could install on your browser. Many sites stated, "We strongly support parental controls on the Internet. These Web pages are not intended to be viewed by minors. If you are a parent and you want to block this site, please contact one of the following: RSAC *(www.rsac.org)*, Cyber Patrol *(www.cyberpatrol.com/)*, CYBERsitter *(www.cybersitter.com/)*, Safesurf *(www.safesurf.com)*, or SurfWatch *(www.surfwatch.com)*. Other sites had you "Click here if you are under 18," a link that led you to a list of sites appropriate for teens, or to *www.goto.com*, a content-filtered search engine.

Webmasters of sites featuring sexual material generally seem to be very careful of content, permitting sex sites that are not easy to access without a credit card. The sites provide links for people who have accidentally stumbled across them, and the viewable photos, while pornographic, mostly fall within the legal limits of what can and cannot be shown. I am not claiming that all content on the Internet is safe for everyone, but what I have discovered is that porn is not as easily available as many people suspect. Pornography is a multibillion-dollar industry. We must remember that while porn sites are competing heavily for surfers, they are first out to make money and are not about to give away their products for free.

In an article on *idg.net* by Douglas F. Gray entitled "Adult Content Still Tops in Online Info Sales," the writer states that "Adult content made up 69% of the $1.4 billion online consumer market in

CyberPorn? *Continued on page 15*

Do You Need Windows 98 Second Edition?

By April Miller Cripliver

NO. END OF ARTICLE. Oh. You want more information? OK. You probably want to know why, if you don't need Win98SE, Microsoft released it (other than to pay its legal bills). It's not a new Operating System (OS). Rather, think of it as an overgrown service pack. It does not contain any new features, but does have bug fixes and enhanced networking support for SOHO (Small Office/Home Office) or home users.

If you're already running Win98, you can download Win98SE's "service pack" from *www.microsoft.com/windows98/highlights/win98update.asp* that contains most of the new release. The downloadable version will consist of two parts: Microsoft Internet Explorer 5 and revised core components of the OS, which is just Windows 98 Service Pack 1. The only new feature unavailable for download is Internet Connection Sharing (ICS), which allows networked Windows 98 systems to share a single Internet connection (see my article in the December 1999 dacs.doc).

To get ICS, you can either buy the complete Win98SE CD or purchase an update for your current Windows 98 installation. To use ICS, you would install it onto a host computer with an existing Internet connection. Navigate to the Add/Remove Programs applet in Control Panel and choose the Windows Setup tab. Now Select Internet Connection Sharing. A dialog box will ask which adapter it should use to connect to the Internet. Configure the host and have the client computer connect to the Internet through the host computer.

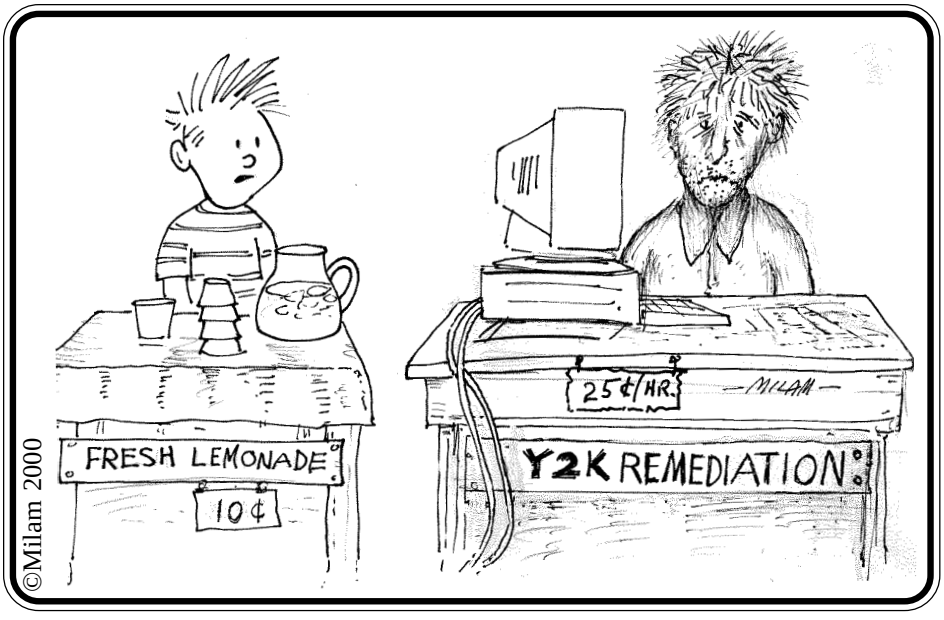
When the client passes through the host computer, ICS will replace the client's IP address with the host's IP address, establishing a connection to the Internet through the host. Although this is not new technology, it is nice to have it included in the OS for home Internet connections or small offices.

There are a couple of other networking adjustments in Win98SE. Virtual Private Networking (VPN) is now more secure. In addition, an option to use 128-bit encryption on systems that have it installed is now available. Additional networking enhancements include a Wake-on-LAN feature (if supported by the computer's BIOS), which brings networked computers out of suspended mode in response to network activity. The second edition includes Enhanced Asynchronous Transfer Protocol (ATM) to allow the Internet Protocol (IP) to slide across ATM connections.

Another interesting addition is support for Device Bay, which is a hardware specification for removable disks and other storage devices. It will be interesting to see if this feature also makes its way into Windows 2000. Finally, Win98SE adds support for a broader variety of WebTV tuner cards.

Essentially, Windows 98 Second Edition is Service Pack 1 with a few additional items. If all you need are the bug fixes, just download Service Pack 1 and save your money. Or you can give your money to Bill. He has lots of attorney Christmas gifts on his MasterCard to pay off.

April Miller Cripliver *holds several degrees in business and computer science, plus the MCSE+I, MCT, A+, and Network+ certifications. She is a trainer and computer consultant in Indiana. You can reach her at* userfriendly@bigfoot.com



Letters To The Editor

I feel compelled to comment on April Miller Cripliver's article "Windows 98 Startup and Shutup" in the January 2000 dacs.doc. It contains what I feel is very unfortunate advice in the last item, to "select the option for Disable Scandisk after bad shutdown." As someone who used to provide support for PC users, this advice really pains me. I used to have to rebuild machines of user's who consistently turned off their machines without properly shutting down.

Some users might use the excuse, "but I do this all the time, and never have a problem." To use the analogy of a secretary I once supported, you might drop a glass on the kitchen floor ten times without it breaking, but do you really want to keep taking the risk? Eventually the glass will break.

Providing for an automatic scandisk on the next boot is one feature that Microsoft got right in Windows 95 and 98. Disabling this feature does nothing to speed up startup, unless you didn't shut down successfully last time. In which case you'd better run scandisk before you chance corrupting your file system due to files that weren't properly closed. That's the whole point of the feature. If the boot-time scandisk occurs with any frequency, you should investigate what's preventing you from shutting down. Please don't shoot the messenger, even if she reminds you of your mother!

Richard Corzo

Ms. Cripliver responds:

Dear Mr. Corzo, For those of us who build, repair, and maintain PCs for a living and must reboot a computer dozens of times in a matter of minutes, the option to turn off Scandisk on Startup is a Godsend.

Not all of us use PCs only "in production" but spend hours fixing them. If you are repairing the PC for the secretary you described, employ the option to turn off Scandisk on Startup-a feature Microsoft provided, by the way, for a reason. After the secretary's PC is repaired, don't forget to reset the Option before you place the PC back into production. By all means do whatever is necessary to repair a PC effectively and responsibly.

Tips given in my articles should be applied to individual situations and should not be "cast in stone." Please don't disconnect your brain when reading any PC article.

April Miller Cripliver
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www.cripliver.com

Basic Stamp *Continued from page 10*

three serial lines: clock, Address/Data and Data. The timing requirements are very loose, allowing software control of the three lines through bit twiddling. It was very easy to write a subroutine in basic that took a numeric value and controlled the serial lines to transmit it. Three potentiometers were used to set volume, bass and treble (this could have been done with up/down switches, but knobs gave a familiar user interface). Again, reading the potentiometer values was easy: The built-in instruction not only reads the setting but also applies a predetermined scaling factor automatically.

The program ended up being very simple: a loop that continually read the potentiometer values. If a value changed, the communications subroutine was called, which sent the appropriate instruction to the preamplifier chip to make the change. There was no problem fitting within the constraints of the Stamp: seven of eight I/O lines were used and only 75% of the memory space was necessary.

The physical implementation was simple as well. A small box was mounted on the wall in the kitchen containing the Basic Stamp & potentiometers, with a run of six wire phone cable going back into the preamplifier in the den. The preamplifier drove the stereo amp, with speaker wires running back into the kitchen to speakers mounted on the wall.

Results. Nearly perfect. After connecting everything, I discovered that the Basic Stamp didn't "boot" when power was applied (my best guess is that inductance in the long run of wire slowed down the power-on transient). Rather than do something exotic, I used a quick & dirty solution: adding a momentary contact switch interrupting the power supply line. Tapping the switch caused the power to be interrupted & the computer boots. I now have total control over the signal in the kitchen, independent of what is happening in the other room. As is usually the case with embedded systems, my family has no clue that they are using a computer when they change the volume.

Where can I get one?

The manufacturer of the basic stamp is Parallax Inc. *(www.parallaxinc.com)*. One distributor is DigiKey *(www.digikey.com)*. Scott Edwards *(www.seetron.com/)* supplies an officially sanctioned clone kit at a bit of a savings.

RICH CHERNOCK *is a senior engineer at IBM research working in the area of advanced digital television and data broadcast. You can e-mail Rich at* mpeg2@earthlink.net.

Random Access

Instant replay - January 2000

Bruce Preston, Moderator

Q. I have Windows Explorer in my Windows 98 StartUp folder. With some frequency it starts up two copies. I have checked, there is only one shortcut in the folder, plus another on the desktop. What is causing this?

A. Windows remembers what windows were open when you shutdown the machine - for example, you will often see the control panel folder after you do an installation because the control panel was open. We guess that you hadn't closed the copy of Windows Explorer when you shut down the machine, so you got two on machine startup - the copy that was running, and the copy that was started from the StartUp folder.

Q. I had to reformat a hard disk, and used the FDISK and FORMAT from DOS 6.1. It created four 2GB partitions. I have a four-year-old copy of Partition Magic. Can I use this to create a single partition before I install Windows 98?

A. If you create an emergency boot disk from Windows 98, you can FDISK and FORMAT from this version. It will support 32-bit access and larger partitions.

Q. My machine comes up as the right month, day, but the year 2094. I can change it to the year 2000 without a problem, and programs work fine. I'd like to automate this. I'd like a way to have the year changed to 2000 automatically.

A. Since the entire date has to be entered at the DOS level, it isn't likely that you can do this without some programming to extract the correct month and day but substitute the year. In BASIC, you could to the following:

```
Dim MonthDay As String
MonthDay = Mid$(Date,1,5) ' get just the month, the slash, and the day
Date = MonthDay & "/" & "2000"
```

You would then just have to change the 2000 to 2001 come Jan 1st of next year.

Q. Last month I checked my old machine, and it was able to store dates in year 2000. When I first started the machine, it reported that it was January 4, 1980. Is this a bug in Windows?

A. No, it is a hardware problem. Certain BIOS code is able to work with the year 2000 and on, but isn't able to "roll over" from 1999 to 2000. Set the date and shutdown the machine. You will probably be OK. But beware that you may have a problem come Feb 29, 2000 as well. You can do a full test that will surface other latent problems by running the "Ymark2000" test. There is a link to it on the DACS Website.

Q. Did anyone have a "real" Y2K problem other than that older machines didn't roll over correctly?

A. One person reported a network printer that kept spewing out multiple copies, the driver wasn't recording the completion time correctly. Other than that, it was pretty much a big yawn.

Q. I can't print from my e-mail application - Outlook Express 4.72, but I can print from Internet Explorer 5.0, and all other applications. I think the problem started when I installed AOL 5.0.

A. Save your address book and mailbox, then re-install Outlook Express. We have had users who have had their address books blown away when components of Office 2000 are installed, for example, a user decided to install Access 2000 on a machine running Office 97. The install put Outlook Express on as well, and overwrote his old address book and mailboxes.

Q. My grandchildren use AOL and sent me a photo they took with a digital camera to me via the Internet, and I get an icon in the e-mail text area. When I click on it, I get a message that says, "Image cannot be displayed." What am I doing wrong?

A. There are several possibilities: a) If they are using AOL, they should not use the "Send Picture" button because this is an AOL proprietary scheme that only another AOL account would be able to read. Instead, they should attach the image to the message. b) Some digital cameras use a proprietary file format that is readable only by the software provided by the camera vendor. If that is the case, then they should use the camera-provided software and convert it to one of the standard formats. A very good one is JPEG (.JPEG or .JPG), since it does a very good job of compressing images for transmission over the Internet.

Q. I just purchased a very large and fast hard drive to add to my machine, which is running Windows 98SE. Can I copy the contents of the old drive to the new drive, change the cables, and make this one the boot drive?

A. It isn't quite that simple. The drive has to be marked as "active," which means "bootable," and it has to be a "master" drive. The marking is done via software, and the "master/slave" setting is a jumper on the drive. Interestingly, you don't have to change the data cables at all. Some of the hard drives ship with a diskette with software that will clone the old drive to the new drive for you, just as you are planning. I believe that "EZ Drive" or "Max Blast" software are examples. Check the FAQ page for your drive manufacturer for details. PowerQuest's Drive Copy will do this as well.

Q. I have a drive from an old machine that ran Windows 3.1, it is loaded in a removable drive tray. When I put it in the machine, Windows won't boot. It complains about an incompatible drive access mode. The drive supports 32-bit access mode, and it is marked as such in the BIOS when I check it.

A. When you install Windows 3.1, based upon the answers that you supply to the setup program, as well as

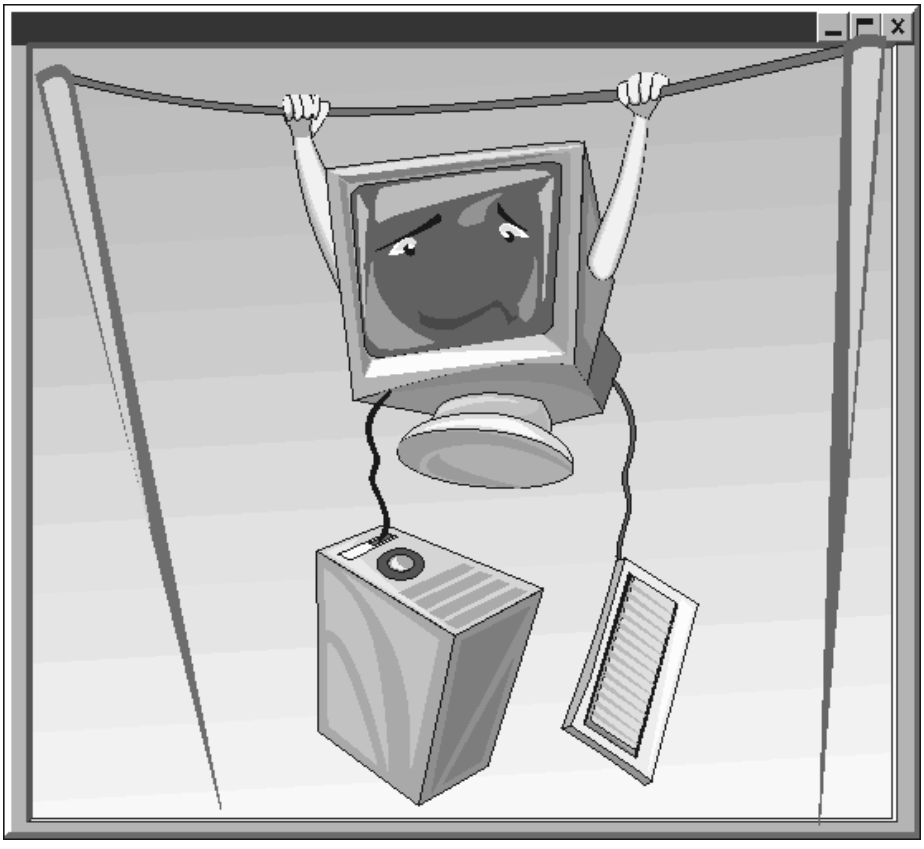
what the setup program detects, the base component (known as the kernel) of Windows was created. One of the things that got detected was the capability of your hard disk controller. In the new machine when you insert the old drive via the tray, you are using a different disk controller, and it is not responding in the way that Windows 3.1 expects it to respond, so the Windows 3.1 load fails. To use this drive in the Windows 3.1 environment, you probably have to a) set the BIOS to 16-bit access, and b) remove the line in the WIN.INI or SYSTEM.INI that refers to 32bit access. I think it was something like "Enable32bitAccess=1"

BRUCE PRESTON *is president of West Mountain Systems, a consultancy in Ridgefield, CT, specializing in database applications. A DACS director and moderator of the Random Access segment at the monthly general meetings, Bruce also leads the Access SIG. Members may send tech queries to Bruce at* askdacs@aol.com. *Responses will be published in the next issue of dacs.doc.*

FREE CLASSIFIEDS

DACS members may publish noncommercial, computer-related classified ads in dacs.doc at no charge. Ads may be placed electronically by by fax or modem, or hard-copy may be submitted at our monthly general meeting. Fax your ads to Charlie Bovaird at 203 792-7881.

Leave hard-copy classifieds with Charlie, Marc, or whoever is tending the members' table at our monthly meeting.



CyberPorn?*Continued from page 11*

Western Europe and the U.S. in 1998, with 84% of all paid-content revenues going to U.S.-based sites, according to a new study." Refer to *www.idg.net/crd_content_9-132472.html* for the entire article.

For those of you who are concerned, here are some methods you can use to protect the users of your computer:

• In your e-mail setup options, opt to screen out junk and adult content mail.

• In your browser, MIE, or Netscape, you can also opt to screen out adult content.

• Install a kid-friendly browser such as Yahooligans *(www.yahooligans.com)*; Lycos' SafetyNet, *http://my.lycos.com/safetynet/safetynet.asp*; Super Snooper *(www.supersnooper.com)*; or Ask Jeeves for Kids *(/www.ajkids.com)*; Subscribe to Safe Kids for more information on _Child Safety on the Information Highway *(www.safekids.com)*.

• For a comprehensive review of "filter" services, refer to *www.safekids.com/filters.htm*

In summary

Safe Web searching is easy to arrange for your family, a lot easier than it is to access most pornographic sites. While you can follow Internet links to more revealing pornography, you will not access it accidentally, and sites will generally provide you with links to leave the site. Ultimately, it is up to users to decide what content they want to view on the Internet. The adult content sites cater to a certain audience. Many of these sites are within the law and do not solicit via e-mail. In the true spirit of the Internet, censorship, instead of being a nationally controlled issue, is available to each individual computer user according to his or her own criteria.

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Future Events

February 1 • Advanced Micro Devices - AMD Microprocessors
March 7 • State of the Industry - AMSYS COMPUTER - Ed Heere
April 4 • Microsoft Corp. - Living the Web Lifestyle
May 2 • TBA