Next Meeting, March 6: Sean Henderson on Microsoft's Business intelligence product, Power BI infographics

VOLUME SKILLS RESEARCH SEARCH PRACTICE METRICS COMPLEX INTEGRATION

INFORMATION ASSET VOICE INVESTIGATE TOOLS

BUSINESS

REPORTING DATA ANALYTICS OLAP SOFTWARE

BEHAVIOR CLOUD

VISUALIZATION ON-SITE RESOURCES

INTELLIGENCE COLLECTION ESTIMATING

TRAFFIC MARKET PROCESS COMPLEX

Big Changes Coming to DACS Inside, Page 8

Directors' Notes

**Danbury Area Computer Society
(DACS)
Board Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, January 31, 2018**

The meeting was called to order at 7:04pm by the DACS President, David Green.

In attendance were Board members Richard Corzo, Dick Gingras, Bert Goff, David Green (President), and Andy Woodruff. Also present were Charlie Bovaird, Sean Henderson, Mike Kaltschnee, and Jim Scheef. The minutes were taken by Richard Teasdale.

(Names in italics denote responsibilities for actions.)

- The Minutes of the 12/6/2017 Board Meeting were accepted.
- The Minutes of the 1/3/2018 Board Meeting were accepted.

Reports

- Treasurer's Report:
  o Bert presented the December and January Treasurer's reports. January 2018 was a fairly routine month. He also provided a summary of year 2017 against recent years. For the full year of 2017, the important thing to notice was that DACS ran a loss of $264.65 for the year.

This was an erosion from the 2016 loss of $116.94 and 2015 loss of $94.12., but should not be seen as a major issue since the year end balance was $3,263.13. The member obligation to repay prorated dues stands at $1,412.88, so DACS remains solidly solvent.

- The Membership Report was received from Jim Scheef.

  o 89 paid-up members (including 4 new), and 8 in-grace, for a total of 97.

- Press Coverage Report:
  o David reported that the Press Release was distributed to the CiviCRM recipients, as usual. The press release was sent from CiviCRM by Jim Scheef, after David experienced error message(s) from the software.
  o Dick reported that the Virtual Density contacts have not yet been added to CiviCRM.

- Webmaster's Report:
  o Richard reported that some (unsuccessful) hacking attempts on the DACS website were logged.

Options for the future of DACS

- The discussion of this topic begun at the previous Board meeting was continued.
- Andy outlined four options for DACS:
  o Find a new president
  o Merge with a similar group
  o Shut down the Board and some other operations, and become a Meetup
  o Do a complete shutdown of all operations
- Andy reported that he has discussed the pros and cons of these options with various people inside and outside DACS, and he summarized their opinions for the Board.
- The consensus of the Board was that the Meetup option is the only one that provides a practical way for DACS to continue serving the community. The immeate problem is lack of a President but, in the long-term, the continuing

*Dick Gingras   APCUG Liaison
rgingras@dacs.org*

Apple User Group

HelpLine

Our former telephone HelpLine has been replaced by our web-based DACS Community Forum at *http://forum.dacs.org*. We have topic-specific forums where DACS members can post questions. Questions may be answered by Workshop leaders or other DACS members. If none of the categories fit your question, just post it to the Ask DACS forum.

Topic	Forum
Linux	Linux Workshop
Desktop publishing and website design	Web Site Design Workshop
Mac and iPhone/iPad/iPod touch	Apple Workshop
Online/small business	Online Business
Single board computers	Single Board Computers
Smartphones & Tablets	Mobile Devices Workshop
Social media	Social Media
Video capture/processing	Video
Windows	Windows Workshop

decline in membership indicates that the organization's purpose and operating mode have to evolve.

• Mike Kaltschnee spoke about his experiences with DACS and his desire to see the group survive in some shape or form. He went on to describe in some detail how the Meetup option could work under the auspices of the Hackerspace. Mike outlined, in confidence, some of his plans for the Hackerspace, and explained that a DACS Meetup could be an asset to it.

• The Board discussed various aspects of the Meetup option, including legal and organizational issues, with Mike. No significant problems were anticipated.

• After further debate, a motion was proposed by Andy: "that we take planning steps toward dissolving the corporation and transferring our assets to the Danbury Hackerspace." The motion was seconded, voted on, and approved unanimously.

• *Andy* volunteered to announce the Board's decision to the February 6 General Meeting. He will work out details of what to say and communicate those to the Board in advance.

Old Business

• Programs:
  o February: Brian Jackson, one of the co-founders of Danbury.io, will speak on the subject of Net Neutrality.
    • Preview: *Richard (Corzo)*.
    • Review: *Richard Teasdale*.
  o March: Sean Henderson volunteered to present about Microsoft's data visualization software, Power BI (assuming he has no calendar conflicts).
    • Preview: *Andy*.
  o May: John Patrick will speak about Home Automation.
• Renovation of the Resource Center (RC):
  o Discussion about Renovation of the Resource Center was deferred.

New Business

• Snacks for General Meetings:
  o Bert will provide snacks for February, and David will bring beverages.
  o Bert will contact a member who may be willing to provide snacks for the March meeting, and Richard will provide beverages.
• Greeter for February General Meeting: Jim Scheef reported that he will not be present at the meeting and therefore unable to serve as greeter. Richard and Bert volunteered to fill in for Jim.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:00 pm.

—Richard Teasdale

February Meeting Review

Net Neutrality Matters to CT -
By Richard Teasdale

THE FEBRUARY DACS General Meeting took a different tack from our normal format. The scheduled speaker, Brian Jackson, was unable to attend due to illness and therefore did not deliver his planned presentation on Net Neutrality. Bert Goff, DACS's Treasurer, stepped forward at the last minute to host a free-wheeling audience discussion of the topic.

Bert kicked off the session with a definition: "Net Neutrality is the concept that all internet traffic should flow in an equivalent fashion, without any party's traffic being favored over another's."

To augment that definition, an audience member offered an analogy written by a 9-year old:

"Stores give away free milkshakes. But you have to buy a straw to drink them. That's okay, because you still get free milkshakes. One day you're drinking a free milkshake and you look down and the guy that sold you the straw is pinching it almost shut. You can still get your milkshake, but it's really hard and takes a lot longer. So you say, 'Hey! Stop that' And the straw guy says, 'NO!, not until the ice cream store pays me money.' And you say, 'But I already paid you money for the straw.' And the straw guy says, 'I don't care. I just want more money.'" [This is a slightly longer version than was quoted in the meeting.]

Other comments and questions by the moderator, and members of the audience are shown below. Some statements have been paraphrased for clarity.

"There was no federal action on Net Neutrality until about 2 years ago, when the Obama administration pushed through some things at the FCC. That has been reversed. The Wall Street Journal has been opposed to Net Neutrality, presumably because government regulation can get in the way of innovation. I have at least four possible channels of access to the internet: Frontier, Comcast, cell phone connection, and satellite dish service."

"Technology has evolved since the 90's. Telephone service used to be a regulated monopoly to provide universal access. And so long as people were using dial-up modems, the choices for access to the internet were more than four. But as the 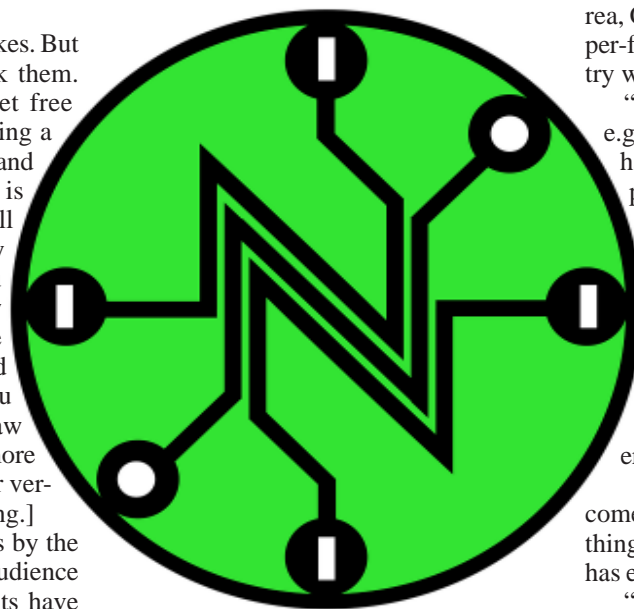technology has shifted to higher speeds, the choices have narrowed down to the phone companies and the cable companies."

"The Wall Street Journal talks about government interference but government is there to interfere. Not maliciously...but that's why we have a government."

" Electric power supply is another example of a regulated monopoly."

Examples abound of corporations restricting or blocking each others' access to the internet:

• "Years ago, Comcast and Blockbuster cooperated to provide an online movie service. In 2014, Comcast forced Netflix, a competitor, to pay an "interconnect" fee to connect to Comcast's network. Was that fair?"

• "AT&T, Sprint, and Verizon blocked Google Wallet from 2011 to 2013."
• "MetroPCS blocked streaming video."
• "AT&T forced Apple to block Skype via iPhone, from 2007 to 2009."
• "Comcast blocked Peer-to-Peer Technologies in 2005, secretly, until they were caught."

[Other examples may be seen in the Wikipedia article about Net Neutrality, at *https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Net_neutrality*]

"Maybe it's not a problem that Netflix should have to pay Comcast to interconnect, because Netflix's data volume is so large?"

"In July 2017, Verizon Wireless was accused of throttling access to Netflix and Youtube videos after users of these services noticed that they were slower than usual. Verizon claimed that it was just a test they were conducting on a temporary basis."

"Political speech could be throttled. Who's to prevent companies from throttling access to content providers whose political views they disagree with? If they do, how are ordinary citizens going to get the information they need in order to make informed opinions and choices?"

(Users of AOL sometimes have difficulty receiving DACS e-mail - this is a known Bluehost issue, nothing to do with Net Neutrality.)

"The infrastructure of the internet was built with government, i.e. taxpayers', money, although the ISPs behave as if it all belongs to them."

Burger King created a joke commercial to illustrate by analogy the concept of restricting access to a product for customers unless they pay extra. *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ltzy5vRmN8Q*

Question: "In other countries, e.g. Korea, Canada, everybody gets the same (super-fast) internet. Is the U.S. the only country where the speed is manipulated?"

"When you compare small countries, e.g. Hong Kong, against the U.S., you have to take into account the costs of providing service over a huge area like the United States."

"Comcast has gigabit internet in Brewster, and it's coming to Danbury next."

"SpaceX has a project to work on low-orbit satellites to provide universal cell phone service."

"Competition is better than government regulation."

"The (Sherman) anti-trust law(s) become an issue when someone does something anti-competitive... when a company has exhibited monopolistic powers."

"Although the FCC decision overturning Net Neutrality prevents states from overriding it, some states are fighting back by putting provisions into state contracts that require contractors to adhere to Net Neutrality."

Question: "There was tremendous growth of the market for internet-based services before Net Neutrality was enacted (two or three years ago). Nothing much has changed since Net Neutrality came along, so what has been its benefit?"

"Analogy of the 'information superhighway' with the real highway. On a real highway, trucks pay more in tolls than cars because they impose more wear and tear on the road. By analogy with Net Neutrality, should all vehicles pay the same tolls?"

"It may be dangerous to draw the analogy too far."

March Meeting Preview

Infographics with Power BI

by Andrew Woodruff

Date: March 6, 2017, 7:30 p.m.
Danbury Hospital Auditorium
Presenter: Sean N. Henderson, CMS

LET'S SAY YOUR BOSS asks you to monitor company sales, organized both by country and by customer type. First you try to set this up with some Excel spreadsheets. But you encounter all kinds of difficulties. The company has 5 million sales transactions per year, and you discover that Excel itself is limited to only about 1 million rows. Trouble. You also find that some of the data is on the company intranet, but some data is only available on the internet … and you need to manually enter the internet data into the spreadsheet. More trouble. Finally your boss leans over your desk and asks you to display the data for first one country and then another country … and each time you respond by quickly trying to change some formulae in the spreadsheets. The boss walks away saying you should show all 5 million annual sales transactions and make it easier to display graphs from arbitrary countries. And don't forget to utilize live up-to-the-minute data from the internet sources too, without any manual entry. Big trouble. Your Excel approach is not working out so well!

How can you meet the boss's demands? Enter "Business Intelligence" (BI) software. This is a whole class of software applications, with many applications available for purchase. At our March 6 General Meeting, Sean N. Henderson will tell us about Microsoft's BI product called "Power BI". With this product, you can meet your boss's expectations!

Sean is a Microsoft Certified Professional (MCP) who uses Microsoft BI every day. He currently works as an analyst on the business intelligence team of a large worldwide manufacturing firm, helping it deploy BI analytics across its business functions and locations. Sean also has specific expertise in Microsoft SQL Server and Adobe ColdFusion. He helped build the first social professional business graph application prior to LinkedIn, and he developed a Web application that helps protect NASDAQ companies from adverse trading activity.

Microsoft describes its Power BI application as a "suite of business analytics tools" that simplifies data preparation and display. With Power BI, an individual nontechnical employee can perform various analyses as needed. First, the employee "connects" Power BI to "data sources" … and Power BI accepts a wide variety of data sources, including Excel and many non-Microsoft products. In fact, Power BI can connect to data sources as disparate as SQL Server, Web pages, flat database files, and even "Analysis Services" databases. Once Power BI is connected to the relevant data sources, the employee creates an interactive dashboard, such as the type demanded by the boss in the above example.

As another example, a financial analyst assigned to a company's travel department might set up a dashboard to monitor the number of employee business trips per week and the average nightly hotel cost across the entire business. The dashboard can appear whenever his or her computer is on and this application is open, with no need to recreate it each day. It will continually and automatically update with live data. The dashboard then serves as an easy reference for the analyst. He or she can refer to the dashboard as a source of information during the course of the analyst's daily work.

Power BI is designed for use by nontechnical personnel, i.e. employees that do not have a programming background. The methods used to "connect" Power BI to data sources and to dashboards are simple and intuitive.

Power BI is most often used to create interactive dashboards as described above. It can also be used to create graphical pictures, commonly known as infographics, which can be printed or utilized within a PowerPoint presentation. After all, once Power BI is connected to the various data sources, the data is handy right there in the application. It is not necessary to copy data from Power BI, to say Excel, in order to print a graph. Power BI is set up to produce great-looking presentation materials.

Power BI is a cloud-based application. This means that it runs in the cloud, working on data that is also typically located in the cloud.

Power BI includes a method by which the company can appropriately guard its confidential data. A manager can set the appropriate permission level for each employee, controlling what data that employee can utilize. This approach is known as "role-based security".

Once an employee has Power BI and has been assigned a permission level to access company data, the employee can begin extracting data, generating reports, and running queries on his or her own. With this system in place, the employee no longer needs to request such items from the company's business information staff. This new independent approach is known as "self-service analytics", and it saves money by reducing the need for business information staff to handle requests.

Power BI is free for applications with a small amount of data. It's not free for users in larger organizations that have larger amounts of data.

Power BI is typically used by large businesses, and it is often described in terms of its "enterprise" capabilities. However, since it is free for applications with a small amount of data, small companies and individuals can also reasonably use Power BI on small projects.

If you do not work in a large business, you might ask why you would want to create a data dashboard or a fancy infographic. There are many reasons! Maybe you are an investor who wants to see your portfolio displayed in a certain way; your dashboard will show live data in just the way you want it. Or maybe you are conducting a job search, and you want to keep track of your job applications with a self-updating system. Or maybe you are preparing for the annual banquet of a sports team, and you just want to utilize the infographics capability to show the season results. We live in a data driven society, and information visualization is a way to make sense of data.

Sean will tell us a lot more about information visualization, role-based security features, self-service analytics, instant interactivity, filters that are known in the BI world as "slicers", and how Power BI can be used for some data processing. He will tell us what we need to get started; he will demonstrate how to use Power BI; and he will compare it with competitors' BI applications.

Come to the General Meeting! You will see the wonders of software that aggregates and transforms large data sets in a graphically interactive way!

Workshops

Workshop Notes: March 2018

Apple. Focuses on all aspects of the Mac and iPhone operating systems.
   Contact: Richard Corzo (*applesig@dacs.org*).
   Meets 2nd Tuesday, 7 p.m. at DACS Resource Center.
   Next Meeting: Check *dacs.org*

Jobs. Networking and jobs search
   Contact: Charles Bovaird, 203-792-7881 (*aam@mags.net*). Go to DACS Community Forum (*http://forum.dacs.org) for job listings*.

Linux. Helps in installing and maintaining the Linux operating system. Also of interest to Apple owners using OS X.
   Contact: Dave Mawdsley, *linuxsig@dacs.org*
   Meets 3rd Wednesday, 7:30 p.m. at the DACS Resource Center.
   Next Meeting: March 21.

PC Maintenance. Review of PC hardware and OpSys maintenance and use.
   Contact: Charles Bovaird, 203-792-7881 (*aam@mags.net*). Go to DACS Community Forum (*http://forum.dacs.org*).

Online Business Workshop. Informal member gathering sharing ideas on creating an online source of income.
   Contact: Steve Harkness (*onlinebizsig@dacs.org*) Meets second Monday in Brookfield, or by Webinar.
   Next Meeting: Check *dacs.org*.

Single Board Computers Workshop. Explores small cheap computers like Raspberry Pi, Arduino, Netduino, Beaglebone, and more. Meets at 7:00 p.m on the 3rd Thursday at the DACS Resource Center.
   Contact: Jim Scheef (860-355-0034)
   Next Meeting: March 15

Video Workshop. Explores all aspects of video capture and production, including both inexpensive and professional choices for cameras and editing software.
   Meets on the 3rd Thursday of certain months, typically at 7:00 pm at the Resource Center. Check the Calendar for details.
   Contact: Andy Woodruff (awoodruff@dacs.org)
   Next meeting: Check dacs.org

Web Development/Design Web Development/Design This workshop is looking for a new moderator. Being a workshop leader is a great way to share information, learn new techniques, promote your business, and interact with like-minded people. Extensive web knowledge is not required, but a willingness to open a topic for discussion and enjoy the contributions and feedback from the attendees. Meets every 3rd Tuesday of the month, but repeating date can be changed if needed.
Contact *avanommeren@dacs.org,* or *webmaster@dacs.org* .
   Next meeting: TBA–Look for updates

Let's Meet Up

Have you ever wondered who the other members of DACS are, what their interests are, and whether they have experience and knowledge that could benefit you? Would you like to be able to identify and contact the other members, sharing information with them, but without having to disclose your e-mail and phone details?

Your Board has recognized that one of the benefits of DACS membership should be the means to communicate with each other in this way.

At the July general meeting, we began with a quick series of introductions, giving attendees an opportunity to communicate their interests.

The Board has discussed at length how to promote communication between members, and has looked at the pros and cons of a number of ways to do this. The general meeting introductions were our first effort in this regard; another one we would like to offer is a resource already in use by DACS: Meetup.

DACS has been a user of Meetup for several years, to distribute and share information about general meetings and workshops. For this service, we pay fees. Now we would like to leverage the full potential of Meetup, by encouraging its use for individual DACS members as a channel of communication.

If you are not already a user of Meetup, please go to *www.meetup.com* and sign up to become one. There is no charge for individual users. After you have joined Meetup, you can join the Danbury Tech Meetup (emphasizing DACS' broader technology focus), and see a list of upcoming meetings.

Meetup gives you an opportunity to create a profile of your interests. If you wish, you can upload a photo of yourself. You will also find that there is a Message function, which allows you to send private messages to other Meetup users, without using e-mail. We hope that the resources of Meetup will prove to be a valuable addition to DACS membership.

Question: What is Meetup?

Answer: according to Wikipedia, "Meetup is an online social networking portal that facilitates offline group meetings in various localities around the world. Meetup allows members to find and join groups unified by a common interest, such as politics, books, games, movies, health, pets, careers or hobbies."

March 2018
Danbury Area Computer Society

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	Feb 2018 S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28	**Apr 2018** S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30		**1** **Danbury Hackerspace Open House** 7:00 PM	**2**	**3**
4	**5**	**6** **General Meeting** 7:30 PM	**7** **Board of Directors** 7:00 PM	**8** **Danbury Hackerspace Open House** 7:00 PM **Membership Committee** 7:00 PM Jim Scheef 860-355-0034	**9**	**10**
11	**12**	**13** **Apple** 7:00 PM Richard Corzo *applesig@dacs.org* **Cancelled**	**14**	**15** **Danbury Hackerspace Open House** 7:00 PM **Single Board Computers Workshop** 7:00 PM Jim Scheef 860-355-0034	**16**	**17** DEADLINE
18	**19**	**20** **Danbury Inventors' Meetup Hackerspace**	**21** **Linux** 7:30 PM Dave Mawdsley *linuxsig@dacs.org*	**22** **Danbury Hackerspace Open House** 7:00 PM	**23**	**24**
25	**26**	**27**	**28**	**29** **Danbury Hackerspace Open House** 7:00 PM	**30**	**31**

Transitions

Big Changes Coming to DACS!!

By Andy Woodruff

YOUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS would like to announce some exciting changes to DACS. We have found an opportunity that will allow us to continue providing monthly meetings with speakers on technical topics in a manner similar to what now happens at our General Meetings, while at the same time discontinuing the DACS corporation and the responsibilities that go along with maintaining a corporation. This will dramatically reduce our need for volunteers who must dedicate time and resources to our group. We believe this is the best way for us all to be able to continue enjoying the monthly meetings.

This is good news, in the face of the numerous difficulties we have been encountering. Something needs to change. We have faced declining membership for a number of years. With everyone's busy schedules, we no longer have sufficient volunteers to continue in the current mode of operations. We do not even have anyone willing to serve as president for the next year.

We have thought long and hard about how to proceed. In particular, we have watched the growth of Danbury Hackerspace, a nearby organization that also has a technical focus and 501(c)(3) tax status. It has grown quickly in the last few years. Its cofounder, Michael Kaltschnee, has been a member and big supporter of DACS for more than 25 years. Mike has agreed to take on the responsibility for continuing monthly meetings under the name DACS, but as a function under Danbury Hackerspace. This means that the DACS name and monthly meetings can continue.

Specifically, the DACS Board of Directors plans to dissolve the corporation, give up the 501(c)(3) with the IRS, discontinue its membership system, and return its Resource Center rooms to the City of Danbury. The Board also hopes to return the unused prorated portion of each member's membership fee and newsletter payments. And it hopes to return the unused portions of any financial gifts that were made toward Resource Center renovations. After these are paid, the Board plans to give any remaining assets to Danbury Hackerspace.

Mike Kaltschnee will continue to run monthly DACS meetings, select the speakers, publicize the meetings, and facilitate the DACS Meetup group. Some of the Board members will continue to participate, now simply as volunteers helping Mike with these tasks. All current DACS members, visitors, and friends are also welcome and encouraged to participate.

Mike expects to continue our website, at least for some time. He has not yet determined whether the newsletter will continue. The next few monthly meetings will definitely continue at the Danbury Hospital. Future meetings may occur at Danbury Hackerspace's current building on Main Street or eventually at a new building that Mike envisions.

We are looking forward to this new chapter in the life of DACS. We hope to see you there.

We Love DACS and Look Forward to Seeing You at Future DACS Meetings

By Mike Kaltschnee,
Co-Director, Danbury Hackerspace

WE'RE EXCITED TO HELP DACS continue, but in a different form. When I was 19 I was a regular at Computer Ease, a local computer store, and one day the manager told me that I was starting a Macintosh/Apple user group in the store with Eric and Joe. We went on to form DAUG, the Danbury Apple User Group.

I wound up working at Softown, a local software and hardware store. To help promote the store and share cool hardware & software, I started going to the IBM, Commodore, and CP/M user group meetings, absorbing and enjoying the user group culture. User Groups were amazing places where people would share what they knew, showing off home-built computers and devices, and we had awesome speakers from local experts to Microsoft, Apple, and other big companies.

Twenty-five years ago we merged the IBM & Apple groups to form DACS. I still remember the meeting at the Howard Johnson where we teased each other (I was on the Apple side, but used PC's in my work), but realized we could form one of the largest computer groups between New York & Boston. We had more than 500 attendees at our largest meeting, the Windows 95 launch, and more than 900 members at the peak of DACS.

But things changed and user groups have peaked and are in decline. The Q&A session was replaced by Google searches or a call to your IT person. DACS has declined to just under 100 members, and we're unable to find a new president. There is a lot of overhead running a 501(c)(3) corporation, and we've struggled with a way to continue DACS, but in a different form.

I love DACS. I've been involved in user groups for more than 30 years, and I've spoken at DACS about once a year about something I've been passionate about. I wrote for DACS.doc for many years, and it started me on a professional blogging career that lasted 10 years. I've learned a lot by attending the meetings, met amazing people, and this group had definitely helped me professionally.

It's ironic that in 30 years I've never held a board seat or position at DACS, but rather worked behind the scenes to help promote the group, write, or speak at meetings, and now I will be running the Meetup (I guess it's payback for avoiding a formal position all these years).

DACS will be run as a Meetup under the Danbury Hackerspace, a non-profit I started with Jon Gatrell six years ago. I will need help, but my goal is to continue the general meetings and networking, along with the award-winning website. I'm not sure about the DACS.doc newsletter, but we'll figure this out as we work together.

I think the people who ran DACS for the past 25 years deserve a lot of credit, and there are so many amazing volunteers who hosted the meetings, sat on the board, led the group as president, and helped with different projects. These people deserve a lot of credit for an amazing 25 years.

If you have ideas or suggestions for DACS including meeting topics, speakers, events, or questions, please feel free to email me: mike@danburyhackerspace.com.

If you're curious about the Hackerspace, we have an open house every Thursday night from 7-9pm, or email me for a private tour.
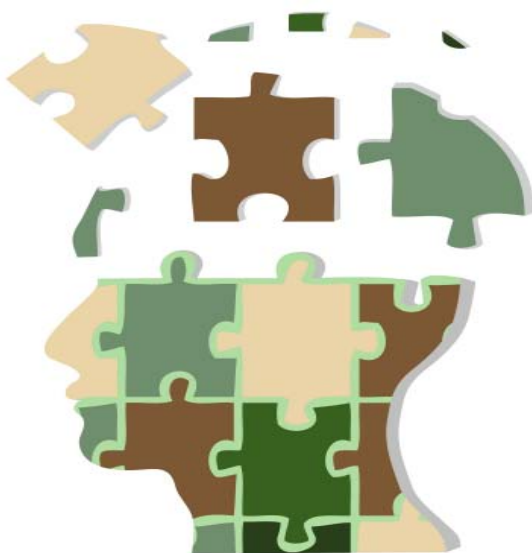
We look forward to seeing you at future DACS Meetings!

Thought Processing

Elevate—a new type of cognitive training tool

By Frank Petrie

WITH APPLE'S FOCUS on health apps, it has become easier to track your physical activity, your nutrition, your sleep cycle, your nutritional intake, and even manage your stress. One aspect that doesn't draw enough attention is strengthening your mental fitness.

There are many apps to choose from for this purpose. Of the handful of apps that I've tried, I have found one to be the most effective and comprehensive: Elevate (https://www.elevateapp.com). Elevate is a new type of cognitive training tool designed to build communication and analytical skills. Elevate has been selected by Apple as the App of the Year. Since launching in May 2014, elevate has been downloaded more than 10 million times on the App Store and Google Play2. (Before I go any further, this review was done using a Pro version of Elevate.)

Start training your brain.

Elevate measures your performance in listening, writing, speaking, math, and reading. They manage to accomplish this in very entertaining, yet challenging ways, utilizing both visual and aural approaches. In the Pro version, there are 40+ games to choose from and as with any exercise regime, you perform daily for optimum results.

As an example, there are four writing games that I find myself constantly returning to. First, one game launches a space shuttle from the pad. You are presented with a word at the top of the screen. Below, you are given two choices.

You are to pick the option that best shares the same meaning (occasionally, they toss in 'None of the Above') before the shuttle crashes back to the ground.

In the second game, you are given a sentence. You are to choose which word(s) are redundant or superfluous. If you should pick the wrong selection, an explanation is provided as to why your choice was incorrect. (As I'm writing this review, I'm finding myself a bit paranoid, proofing this review repeatedly. It's apparent to me that I need to keep practicing.)

My third favorite is to bolster your memory. You are given a passage to read. But it is only presented to you one word at a time in rapid succession, with each word placed in individual cells. At the end of the passage, you are presented with a question derived from the passage. There are two possible answers available to you. If you choose the correct one, you move on to the next passage.

If not, you are presented with the complete passage with the pertinent information in bold font, pointing out the section that provided the correct answer.

Finally, another game presents you with Russian nesting dolls. Within these dolls are several pictures. When a word appears, you click on the picture which best displays that word's meaning.

Get instructed

To view a game's instruction, open the game and tap the Pause button in the upper-left corner of the screen. Then tap Game Instructions. To get back to the game, tap the Back button and then the Resume button.

There is a math game that deals in percentages. If left to my own device, I would correctly answer these. But when they're presented with time constraints, it's surprising how many simple mistakes you can make.

And should you find yourself somewhat overwhelmed by the challenge, you can find inspirational quotes in the Expert Tips exercise, part of the public speaking category on the study page.

The app keeps track of your progress in each category, utilizing their Elevate Proficiency Quotient (EPQ).

Based on your historical performance, the app provides you with suggestions on how to improve your performance in any chosen discipline where you appear to be having difficulty. (Personally, I am terrible with names. The tip for using mnemonic devices to match the name with the face I have been doing for years but without much success. This app enables me to keep practicing and hopefully improve.)

5 Icons

On the bottom of Elevates home screen, you'll find five icons. The first icon takes you to the button that you push to begin your session.

The second takes you to a screen that keeps track of your progress. There is your EPQ, your Rankings in the community, your Activity measured by time, and Milestones (such as how many days in a row you have trained).

Next is Study. Here you can choose from specific categories that you would especially like to train extra in. Click on one of these and you will be presented with a detailed explanation as to what that category is about and the benefits it provides.

The fourth icon, Notifications, will take you to various ARTICLES where you can read a summary of your weekly activity, how to improve your skills by reviewing recent errors, or to a screen where you can customize your settings, such as how many games you would like to play each session or pick your training goals.

You can choose which games you would like for your daily session, to tailor your session to work on your weaknesses or strengthen things that you are already proficient at.

While writing this review, I felt that even though the developer refers to each exercise as a "game," it belittled the thoroughness of this app and how very professional it is. Read their Effectiveness Study, which you can see here: https://www.elevate-app.com/research. You'll appreciate just how seriously the developer takes expanding this extremely productive tool.

Elevate is an iOS app that requires iOS 9.0 or later and is compatible with iPhone, iPad, iPod Touch, and Apple Watch. There are numerous subscription models from Monthly to Lifetime to choose from.

To get a feel for the app there are videos available on site (*https://www.dropbox.com/sh/dzkhrjxs06iz1kg/AABG-BEes6_qMQ7hSZ4rjCfE9a?dl=0*).

The free version limits you to three games daily, selected from a limited number of exercises. A Pro subscription increases that number to five. Plus, there are 40+ games to choose from, 17 which can only be accessed by obtaining a

subscription (with additional Pro games added regularly). You also receive "regular deliveries of premium learning material, and access to Pro-only study tools to deepen your skills."

Any Pro version is an in-app purchase. Merely launch the app, tap "Explore Pro" in the top right corner of the screen, then tap the button at the bottom of the screen to unlock "Pro."

I cannot express enough how impressive this app is. You really owe it to yourself to download a copy. Although I found the Pro version to be worthy of the subscription, even if you only used the free version, you'll find this app to be indispensable to improving your mental agility. (But you'll inevitably go for the Pro version).

Software Information

Developer: Jesse Pickard

System requirements: iOS 9 [compatible with iPhone, iPad and iPod Touch; works with Apple Watch] and Android

Version reviewed: Pro

Price: App is free to download; various subscription prices.]

Download: iOS App Store or Google Play Store

For more info: *https://www.elevateapp.com*

FRANK PETRIE *is a Media Creator, Writer, Producer, Marketing, PR and regular contributer to the blogspot YMPNow.*

Peripherals

The Perils of Printing

By Greg Skalka

DOES ANYONE REALLY need a printer anymore? When was the last time you printed something from the device you are reading this on?

If you are reading this on a desktop PC, odds are good you have printed something recently. If reading this on a laptop, you have maybe a 50/50 chance of ever having printed from this device. If you are reading this from your Chromebook or tablet, it is highly unlikely you have ever printed. And if you are viewing this on your smart phone, you not only have good eyesight, but you have no use for printing (and no practical way to do it).

Printers were once an essential part of a computer system. The first computers needed a printer to provide any kind of an output, since at that point email and the Internet did not exist. Letters and other written communications had to be printed. Before computers, the only way to make multiple copies of your correspondence was to use carbon paper between paper sheets in your typewriter. With a computer and printer, the same document could be printed as many times as desired. Need to make a change to your document? Instead of using liquid paper or correction tape for minor changes, or completely retyping for major ones, the computer user could easily make changes to their saved document and reprint.

Early printers copied their typewriter predecessors in technique. I once owned a daisy wheel printer, which used the same impact method as a typewriter, but held the printing type on a flat wheel resembling a daisy flower. To print graphics, I also had to have a dot-matrix printer, which, though faster, produced output of poorer quality. Both were black only; it was rare to have a color dot-matrix printer, as it required a special (and expensive) ribbon with bands of different ink colors.

Being impact printers, both kinds made a lot of noise and shook the table they sat on. The daisy wheel printer used standard sheet paper, while the dot-matrix printer required special paper with holes on the edges to allow the paper to feed. This paper usually had the feed holes on side strips that were perforated for removal, and was sold in boxes of z-folded sheets separated by perforations (one continuous strip of sheets per box). That kind of paper made great printer banners. Dot-matrix impact printers dominated the printing world through the 1980's but were displaced by laser and ink-jet printers, due to their lower cost, higher quality and faster output.

I would have thought that dot-matrix printers had gone the way of the Dodo bird, but to my surprise, Office Depot shows 58 dot-matrix impact printers currently available on their web site. They also have the continuous feed paper needed to make those banners. Fry's Electronics at this point only carries ink jet and laser printers.

Laser printers had the highest quality output but were expensive (both in initial cost and in supplies). Ink jet printers were and still are the most popular printer, with good quality and lower cost. They were even more economical if you refilled your own ink cartridges, as the printer makers used the "sell the printer cheap and make it back on the ink" sales model. I once bought ink refill kits and refilled ink cartridges myself, which can be messy, but now I don't print so much and am lazy. At this point I don't bother trying to save the few dollars a year refilling would give me.

Initial ink jet and laser printers were mostly black-only, with color being very expensive. Now all ink jet printers and almost half the laser models available are color. I still have a "photo-quality" ink jet printer that I once used to print photos; it now gathers dust. Today the print quality of even average ink jet printers is good enough for photos, and I print so few now that I usually just get them printed at the Costco photo center.

Hewlett Packard has most of the printer market today, with Canon in second place. Though Apple still makes Macs, they no longer make printers. I guess the majority of their products today can't print, anyway.

Though I still have a few separate printers, like a lot of people, I now use an all-in-one printer, copier and scanner (it also can fax, but who does that anymore?). When my kids were in school and had computers of their own, every computer in the house had its own dedicated printer. These originally connected to the computers via par-

allel port, and then later through USB. Now my one HP network all-in-one printer does 99% of the household printing for all computers, and I plug one of my USB printers into a computer only occasionally.

My two children used printers (that I provided) when they lived with me. Now that they are both grown and live on their own, neither one owns a printer. They are the typically millennials; having cut the cord; they don't have cable or satellite TV, but instead watch over-the-air broadcasts or from the Internet. With only mobile computing devices, they have cut the printer cord as well. My son prints the few personal things he needs at work, while my daughter finds no need for printing. Since tickets and coupons can now be presented on a smart phone screen for redemption, they have little need for actual paper items.

I'm still hanging on to a number of printers, though I have two I've not used in years and should get rid of at this point. I do continue to print quite a bit, probably several pages a week at least. Since I don't have my own smart phone, I must still print out coupons, Groupons and tickets on paper, at least for when my wife is not with me. I have automobile service manuals in PDF form, and rather than view them in the garage with greasy hands on my tablet or Chromebook, I'd prefer to print the pages I need to reference for service work I do. I update and monitor my personal Outlook calendar on my PDA, but prefer to always have monthly paper copies to refer to.

Windows was made for printing, but other operating systems seem to have left off that feature. Android, iOS, Linux and Chrome OS don't really support printing, and most printers don't have drivers to support them. I have a lot of devices that can view or access the Internet, but only my Windows machines can print the Internet. I like my Chromebook and use it daily, but I can't print from it, and so must carry items over on a Flash drive to my laptop for printing. I use my Android tablet and iPad Mini less often; they can't print either, so are not quite as useful to me as they could be. My Amazon Dot can answer my questions, control my lights and play music for me, but can't provide a physical output (unless you count orders shipped from Amazon).

It seems the older you are, the more likely you are to want your own printer. While my children don't own printers, and my wife and I have used the same network printer for about five years, my parents have each bought new printers for themselves in the last year. I did buy myself a new printer recently, but have yet to set it up. I bought the HP OfficeJet Pro 7740

mainly for its ability to scan both sides of a page through its feeder. I am trying to eliminate paper in my life as much as possible, and so get all my bills and financial statements as PDFs. I still have a few file cabinets of older records and so have been scanning them and then shredding my older paper financial documents; the improved scanning capability of the 7740 would speed up that process. It also can print on 11" x 17" paper, something I can do at work and have wanted at home for some time.

While printing is still useful to me, I do see the amount I print diminishing. As with my stock of blank CDs and DVDs, the stockpile of special printer papers and greeting card stock I've purchased over the years is likely now a lifetime supply. Emails and e-greeting cards have almost eliminated printed correspondence (sorry about that, U.S. Postal Service). When I first bought my all-in-one printer, I printed much more than I scanned. Now it is the other way around.
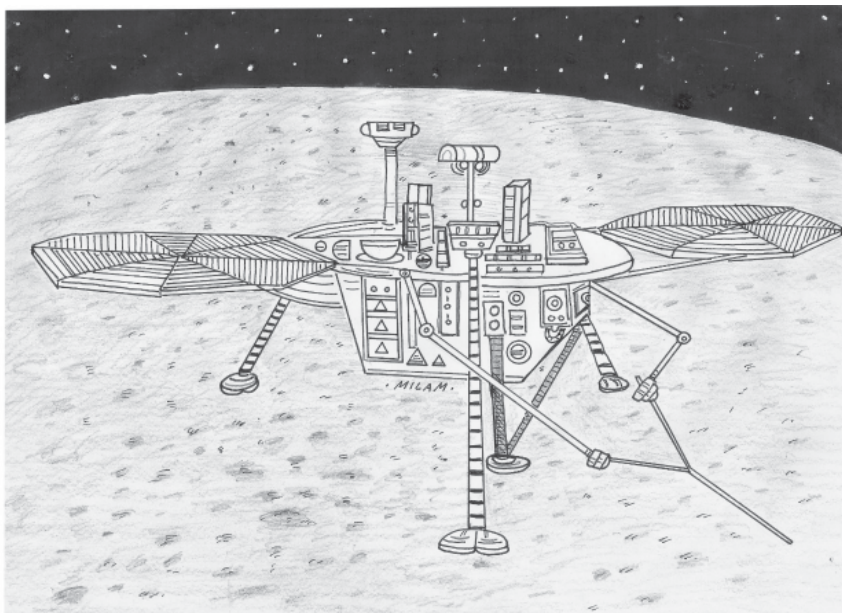
Read the Blog on dacs.org

For the past several months, Jim Scheef has been posting to a blog on the club's website. You can read these posts at *https://dacs.org/category/news/*. We are looking for a few volunteers to help contribute to this blog. To qualify, you must be a member in good standing and be willing to post regularly, meaning one or more posts weekly. You will receive training in how to enter and format the blog posts (a little HTML can be helpful).

Content must be related to the club's mission of learning and sharing information about computers and how we use them. There is tons of interesting and valuable information to share and one person cannot find and post it all.

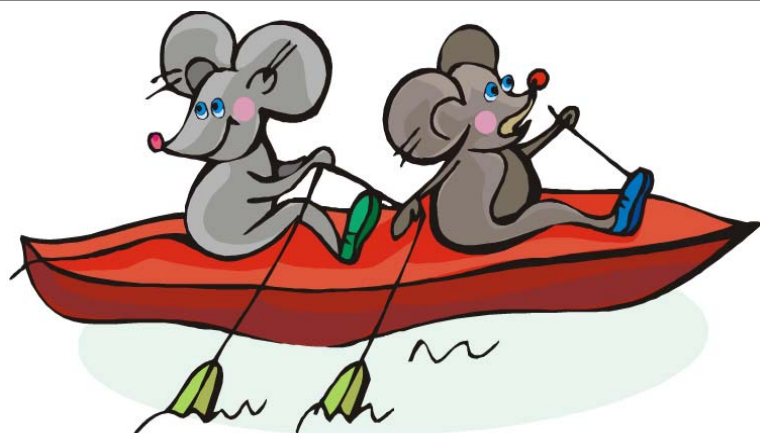If you're interested, email the webmasters.

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The Phoenix Lander employs a backup technique to probe for water beneath the Martian surface.

dacs.doc

Danbury Area Computer Society
65 Legion Rd
New Milford, CT 06776

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Future Events:

March 6
Infographics with Power BI
Sean N. Henderson

April 3
TBA

May 1
John Patrick
Home Automation

June 5
Net Neutrality –
Brian Jackson