The Greater Salt Lake

IBM Mid-Deranged User Group

For Abusers of the IBM AS/400 Computer System

April Fools 1997 Newsletter

April Meeting:

Preparing for the Year 10,000

You read a lot these days about the year 2000 crisis and how to prepare for it. No one thought 20 years ago their software would still be around. But it is and the 2 digit year fields are causing major headaches. Well, how do we know our software isn't going to be around for the year 10,000? All our 4 digit year fields will have to be converted to 5 digit fields. It's never too early to start planning for this major event.

What happens when the year 10,000 hits? Can your systems handle a year of 0000. Most systems will crash and burn if left unchanged. The task of converting every date and changing every program that uses date logic is huge. *This is one project that has a deadline set in stone - it can't be moved or missed.*

Come to this month's meeting to find out more about ***The Year 10,000 Crisis*** and what your options for addressing it are.

Our meeting this month will be held on **Wednesday, April 9th at 11:00 a.m. at the Murray City Offices (City Council Chambers), 5025 South State Street.**

March Meeting Highlights

Our featured speakers were **Robin Van Wagenen** and **Sue Griffin** of **IBM**. Actually Robin gave the presentation and Sue didn't say a word and we still can't figure out why her name was on the program! Oh yes, she made the handout copies and did a fine job at that! Her name certainly deserves to be right under Robins on the program. It was Robin, though, who gave us an overview of the *AS/400 February Announcements/Directions*. She covered a slew of announcements for the AS/400 including the following:

- **The new IBM Network Boy**. In a joint development effort between IBM and Nintendo, IBM is announcing the Network Boy, a small handheld device that communicates with your AS/400 network via RF and allows the user to navigate the network using four simple buttons. It has a small display screen that sports a mini-GUI and runs the Mario/OS operating system. The advantages are simplicity, low cost, and zero training for the younger generation of users.
- **Cocoa for the AS/400**. Cocoa is a hot new programming language developed by Nestle Microsystems. The language was originally designed for programming hot chocolate machines but Nestle soon realized that the language had the potential to do much more. Because it is "architecture neutral" it can run on any device with a microchip including PCs, AS/400s, Cray computers, Coke machines, Timex watches, car stereos, TVs, VCRs, and microwave ovens. You can literally surf the net and bake a potato at the same time! With the Cocoa Virtual Machine (CVM) on the AS/400 it can run all Cocoa applets. Applets can be created using Visual Cocoa from Microsoft or VisualAge for Cocoa from IBM.
- **New Enhancements to the IUTBCFSIOP server**. The IUTBCFSIOP (I Used To Be Called FSIOP) server can now have as much memory as your old PC at home you let your kids play with. It also can be ordered with a Pentium processor now that IBM has figured out how to put one in it even though the chip has been available for over 4 years.
- **Year 2000 Support**. New PTFs were announced to solve the Year 2000 problem on the AS/400. With the new PTFs installed the year 2000 will be now be 199A, the year 2001 will be 199B and so forth. Your 2 digit date fields will not need to be expanded.

We appreciate Robin and Sue for taking time out of their busy schedules to come and speak at our meeting last month. Thanks!

AS/6000 to Replace AS/400 & RS/6000

When IBM recently announced that it was moving its Austin, Texas-based RS/6000 assembly operations to its 3.7 million square foot facility in Rochester, Minnesota, the same production line the AS/400 is built on, rumors flew about what this move meant. IBM publicly denied any convergence of the two machines and that the move was simply to consolidate manufacturing. But sources inside Rochester have confirmed there are AS/6000 machines running inside the IBM lab with the intent to produce them in the near future.

Because of recent advances in technology with the AS/400 and RS/6000, they both have PowerPC RISC processors and share the same DASD and tape subsystems. It finally became evident that the only difference between the two machines was the operating system.

The new AS/6000 will sport a new operating system named OS/6000 which can emulate either AIX or OS/400. When running in AIX mode the system requires 6 or 7 operators, a network manager, a security engineer, a database manager

and four C programmers. When running in OS/400 mode the system requires a dark cool room to run in but may need a janitor or errand boy to change the backup tapes once in a while.

Which Came First, the Apple or the Cray?

Apple Computer purchased a Cray supercomputer in the mid-1980s. In fact, Steve Jobs was Cray's first and only walk-in customer. He arrived unannounced (so the story goes) at Cray headquarters in Mendota Heights, Minnesota and asked to speak to someone about buying a Cray. They nearly threw him out. It's only slightly less eccentric than someone walking into NASA's Johnson Space Center and inquiring how to purchase a shuttle orbiter.

Later, Cray's president John Rollwagen phoned Cray's CEO Seymour Cray and told him that Apple had just purchased a Cray that would be used in designing the next Macintosh. Seymour thought for a bit, and replied that that seemed reasonable, since he was using a Macintosh to design the next Cray!

Microsoft Tech Support Methods Revealed

One of Microsoft's finest techs was drafted and sent to boot camp. At the rifle range, he was given some instruction, a rifle and bullets. He fired several shots at the target. The report came from the target area that all attempts had completely missed the target. The tech looked at his rifle, and then at the target. He looked at the rifle again, and then at the target again. He put his finger over the end of the rifle barrel and squeezed the trigger with his other hand. The end of his finger was blown off, whereupon he yelled toward the target area: "It's leaving here just fine, the trouble must be at your end!"

New Technology Might Replace The Computer

A new aid to rapid, almost magical, learning has made its appearance. Indications are such that, if it catches on, all the electronic gadgets will be so much junk. The new device is known as Built-in Orderly Organized Knowledge. The developers usually call it by its initials, BOOK(tm).

Many advantages are claimed over the old-style learning and teaching aids which most people are using today. It has no wires or electric circuits to break down. No connection is needed to an electrical power point. It is made entirely without mechanical parts that could go bad or need replacement.

Anyone can use BOOK(tm), even children, and it fits comfortably into the hands. It can be conveniently used in any standing or sitting positing. For example, it can be used while sitting in an armchair by the fire.

How does this revolutionary, unbelievably easy invention work? Basically BOOK(tm) consists only of a large number of paper sheets. These may run to hundreds where BOOK(tm) covers a lengthy program of information. Each sheet bears a number in sequence, so that the sheets cannot be used in the wrong order. To make it even easier for the user to keep the sheets in the proper order they are held firmly in place by a special locking device called a "binding".

Each sheet of paper presents the user with an information sequence in the form of symbols, which he or she absorbs optically for automatic registration on the brain. When one sheet has been assimilated, a flick of the finger turns it over and further information is found on the other side. By using both sides of each sheet in this way a great economy is effected, thus reducing both the size and cost of BOOK(tm). No buttons need to be pressed to move from one sheet to another, to open or close BOOK(tm), or to start it working.

BOOK(tm) may be taken up at any time and used by merely opening it. Instantly it is ready for use. Nothing has to be connected or switched on. The user may turn at will to any sheet, going backwards or forwards as he or she pleases. A sheet is provided near the beginning as a location finder for any required information sequence.

A small accessory, available at trifling extra cost, is the BOOK(tm)mark. This enable the users to pick the program where they left off on the previous learning session. BOOK(tm)mark is versatile and may be used in any BOOK(tm).

Once purchased, BOOK(tm) requires no further upkeep cost. No batteries or wires are needed, since the motive power, thanks to an ingenious device patented by the makers, is supplied by the brain of the user. BOOK(tm)s may be stored on handy shelves, and for ease of reference the program schedule is normally indicated on the back of the binding.

Altogether the Built-in Orderly Organized Knowledge seems to have great advantages with no drawbacks. We predict a big future for it.

Novell Admits Aiding Microsoft

In a press conference early this morning, the former CEO of Novell, Robert Frankenberg revealed that Novell and Microsoft had been working together for years to increase Microsoft's dominance of the computer industry. In a secret partnership with Microsoft, Novell has been strategically acquiring Microsoft's major competitors in the software industry and ruining them.

The relationship goes back a number of years, according to Frankenberg. "[Digital Research's] DR-DOS 5.0 was ten times the operating system that MS-DOS 4.01 was. Microsoft couldn't even

steal technology fast enough to compete. That was when they first contacted Novell." Under direction from Microsoft, Novell then purchased Digital Research, a small California company best known for its CP/M operating system.

Frankenberg continued, "Novell let the developers release DR-DOS 6.0, which unfortunately was a success, but then Novell jumped in with both feet. By the time we were done with it, Novell DOS 7 wouldn't even interoperate well with NetWare!" All development on Digital Research's product was subsequently halted in September 1994.

Frankenberg also explained their second target. "When it became obvious that Windows NT wouldn't be able to hold a candle to Unix, it was agreed that Novell should buy Unix Systems Laboratories from AT&T to destroy it." The destruction of Unix was accomplished by Novell's pushing of the UnixWare abomination and by carefully planned licensing fiascoes. "Once the damage was complete, we pushed it off on SCO [Santa Cruz Operation]."

The latest joint venture was the destruction of Microsoft's competition in the Windows application market. "Under the guise of creating a rival suite, Novell bought up Wordperfect and Quattro Pro to create PerfectOffice" Frankenberg explained. "With our direction, all OS/2 development was halted and significant bugs were introduced in the release cycle. [Microsoft] Excel wasn't half the spreadsheet that Quattro Pro was when Borland owned it, and look at Microsoft now!"

When asked about the prospect of competition from the new software giant created by the IBM/Lotus merger, Frankenberg replied, "We expect IBM to do a better job of destroying Lotus than we could have ever done."

Many industry insiders were taken by surprise. "It explains a lot," said Hewlett Packard employee Mike Lund. "We never could figure out what the heck Novell thought they were doing with Unix."

Creators Admit Unix and C Language Hoax

In an announcement that stunned the computer industry, Ken Thompson, Dennis Ritchie and Brian Kernighan admitted the Unix operating system and C programming language created by them is an elaborate prank, kept alive over 20 years. Speaking at the recent UnixWorld Software Development Forum, Thompson revealed the following:

"In 1969, AT&T had just terminated their work with the GE/Honeywell/AT&T Multics project. Brian and I had started work with an early release of Pascal from Professor Niklaus Wirth's ETH labs in Switzerland and we were impressed with its elegant simplicity and power. Dennis had just finished reading 'Bored of the Rings', a National Lampoon parody of the Tolkien's 'Lord of the Rings' trilogy.

As a lark, we decided to do parodies of the Multics environment and Pascal. Dennis and I were responsible for the operating environment. We looked at Multics and designed the new OS to be as complex and cryptic as possible to maximize casual users' frustration levels, calling it Unix as a parody of Multics, as well as other more risque allusions. We sold the terse command language to novitiates by telling them that it saved them typing."

Then Dennis and Brian worked on a warped version of Pascal, called 'A'. 'A' looked a lot like Pascal, but elevated the notion of the direct memory address (which Wirth had banished) to the central concept of the language. This was Dennis's contribution, and he in fact coined the term "pointer" as an innocuous sounding name for a truly malevolent construct.

Brian must be credited with the idea of having absolutely no standard I/O specification: this ensured that at least 50% of the typical commercial program would have to be recoded when changing hardware platforms. Brian was also responsible for pitching this lack of I/O as a feature: it allowed us to describe the language as "truly portable".

When we found others were actually creating real programs with A, we removed compulsory type-checking on function arguments. Later, we added a notion we called "casting": this allowed the programmer to treat an integer as though it were a 50k user-defined structure. When we found that some programmers were simply not using pointers, we eliminated the ability to pass structures to functions, enforcing their use in even the Simplest applications.

We sold this, and many other features, as enhancements to the efficiency of the language. In this way, our prank evolved into B, BCPL, and finally C. We stopped when we got a clean compile on the following syntax:

```
for (;P("\n"),R-;P("|"))for(e=3DC;e
;P("_"+(*u++/8)%2))P("|"+(*u/4)%2);
```

At one time, we joked about selling this to the Soviets to set their computer science progress back 20 or more years. Unfortunately, AT&T and other US corporations actually began using Unix and C. We decided we'd better keep mum, assuming it was just a passing phase. In fact, it's taken US companies over 20 years to develop enough expertise to generate useful applications using this 1960's technological parody.

We are impressed with the tenacity of the general Unix and C programmer. In fact, Brian, Dennis and I have never ourselves attempted to write a commercial application in this environment. We feel really guilty about the chaos, confusion and truly awesome programming projects that have resulted from our silly prank so long ago."

Dennis Ritchie said: "What really tore it (just when AIDA was catching on), was that Bjarne Stroustrup caught onto our joke. He extended it to further parody, Smalltalk. Like us, he was caught by surprise when nobody laughed. So he added multiple inheritance, virtual base classes, and later ... templates. All to no avail. So we now have compilers that can compile 100,000 lines per second, but need to process header files for 25 minutes before they get to the meat of "Hello, World".

Major Unix and C vendors and customers, including AT&T, Microsoft, Hewlett-Packard, GTE, NCR, and DEC have refused to comment on the announcement. Officials of Borland International, a leading vendor of object-oriented tools, including Turbo Pascal and Borland C++, stated they suspected this for a couple of years.

In fact, the notoriously late Quattro Pro for Windows was originally written in C++. Borland CEO Del Yocam said: "I'm told that, after two and a half years of programming, and massive programmer burn-out, we recoded the whole thing in Turbo Pascal in three months. It's fair to say that Turbo Pascal saved our bacon back then". Another Borland spokesman said that they would continue to enhance their Pascal products, and halt further efforts to develop C/C++.

Professor Wirth of the ETH institute and father of the Pascal, Modula 2 and Oberon structured languages, cryptically said "P.T. Barnum was right." He had no further comments.

Glossary of Standard Computer Terms

Bug: A cute little humorous term used to explain why the computer had your Shipping Department send 150 highly sophisticated jet-fighter servo motors, worth over $26,000 apiece, to fishermen in the Ryuku Islands, who are using them as anchors.

Graphics: The ability to make pie charts and bar graphs, which are the universal business method for making abstract concepts, such as "three," comprehensible to morons like your boss.

Hardware: Where the people in your company's software support section will tell you the problem is.

Software: Where the people in your company's hardware support section will tell you the problem is.

Spreadsheet: A kind of program that lets you sit at your desk and ask all kinds of neat "what if" questions and generate thousands of numbers instead of actually working.

User: The word that computer professionals use when they mean "idiot."

IBM Corner

A New Power Option for the AS/400

Now you can get a single-board nuclear reactor that supplies stand-by power for the AS/400 for 12 years! The QBX-1 nuclear reactor card provides back-up power for up to 12 years. When the card senses a power failure, explosive charges (bolts) eject moderator and control rods from the reactor interior, within 20 mmsec, bringing the reactor to its fully-rated output of 20 KW, in less than one millisecond! Over its 12-year active life, the reactor's power decreases by 25%, to 15 KW.

Integral heat fans provide convection cooling of the reactor's 500W power dissipation while the reactor is in "stand-by" position. If your computer cannot furnish the 400 cubic feet per second of forced air for cooling, consider buying IBM's heavy-water cooling jacket and stainless steel pump module, which fits conveniently next to your AS/400. Latches on each side of the reactor module let you quickly swap the radioactive core, should you need to replace it. An optional circular viewing port of lead glass lets you view the reactor's internal assemblies, and also functions as a 10-million candlepower nightlight.

To protect users from undue radiation, each card contains a shielding kit, comprised of five self-adhesive, lead-plated, high-density, concrete panels, and 20 radiation-monitoring film badges. The lead-plated panels mount to the inside of your AS/400 enclosure, insuring the reduction of harmful gamma rays, which cause soft errors to floppy disks, and RAM data. For more protection, consider IBM's 200-foot extension cord for the system console.

Because the card can supply more than enough power for the standard AS/400, you can sell excess power to your utility company, as provided by law. An add-on phasing and metering kit (PMK-1) lets you connect your reactor to the local power grid. Each PMK-1 kit includes standard power sale contracts and Rural Electrification Board rules and regulations.

Although not required everywhere, each reactor includes a standard 23 volume site evacuation plan. The plan includes forms to allow you to register the name and address of your reactor site with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. As an option, the seller supplies the plan on 1/2 inch tape or 8mm tape file formats. User-friendly templates let you type in the data allowing your word processor to create a complete, printed document.

Reactor prices start at $12 million (US). Please allow six to eight years for delivery. Please contact your local IBM reseller to order.

Thanks, Robin Van Wagenen, AS/400 Specialist, 328-6817

AS/400 Tips and Techniques

Q: I am an AS/400 programmer with 1 year experience and I work for a large company with over 30 programmers. I don't seem to be taken seriously by my peers or my boss. What can I do to enhance my career advancement opportunities within my company and to achieve credibility with the other programmers?

A: If you want others to feel that you are a "real" programmer and know what you are doing then you must look and act like a real programmer looks and acts. Did you see the movie ***Jurassic Park***? The rogue programmer who caused all the trouble - now there is a real programmer. First of all you need to make your programmer station look like his did. Empty cans of Jolt Cola, old dinners, candy bars, Dorito bags and empty pizza cartons are a good start. You want you boss think you live at work and have no other social life. You should also have clothes that are wrinkled and ill-fitting, large eyeglasses, and messed up hair. (See Bill Gates) Having program listings and open manuals all over your desk helps and whatever you do, don't document your software - very unprofessional. When you speak to users use only computer terms they don't know. There are many other tips I could give but these should get you started on the road to success. Good luck!

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