Banks of the Boneyard

the journal of the association for computing machinery university of illinois student chapter.

April Fools Issue

(in case you didn't notice)

DCS Biggest Secret REVEALED!

by Paul Watts

Deep within Digital Computer Lab, known only to a handful of graduate research programmers and TAs, the Computer Science department keeps a secret which has never been revealed to the public until now: an unknown room in DCL contains a Chuck E. Cheese restaurant.

The detailed history of this establishment has been clouded in mystery, but now the secrets which DCS has devoted so many resources to keep private are coming to the surface. In the early '90s, angered by the whole half-hour it would take to get a pizza delivered, a bunch of TAs and research programmers working in the heart of DCL set out to build a pizza parlor INSIDE DCL. Chuck E. Cheese was given the opportunity because the programmers needed the games and fun shows when they got stressed out too much. When they realized the magnitude of the repercussions this would have among the CS community, they realized high security was essential.

Joel Jones, one of the few people who still has access to this Skunk Works of DCL, explains the secrecy behind the project: "They didn't want the word to get around that there was a Chuck E. Cheese in the building, or else there would have been chaos. It needed to be secret, and we made sure it was kept that way."

And to make sure they did. DCS has spent $23 million dollars to build protective smell- and sound-shields around the room, so the smell of pizza and the sound of games would not spread through the rest of DCL. As Joel explains, "You know the money that

continued on page 13...

INTERNET

a brief history of.
A research endeavour
by SigIR.

Most documents cite the Internet as a project which grew out of DARPA research. Recent developments, however, have shown that the Internet existed in an underground form for more than 500 years previously, extending back to the early Renaissance period in Europe. SigIR presents a timeline of Internet history, up until DARPA's discovery and unveiling of the Internet as a cold war project:

1455 - Johannes Gutenberg writes the UNIX utility "TeX".

1504 - Leonardo Da Vinci makes monalisa.jpg available for download from his FTP site.

1517 - Martin Luther posts the 95 theses to alt.religion.catholicism.

1536 - alt.religion.lutheranism is created to meet growing demand.

1545 - the principle of linear perspective drawing is discovered. "Doom" soon follows.

1616 - the number of users on #shakespeare breaks an IRC record when the topic is changed to "bill is dead... we won't get to see his plays anymore".

1750 - J. S. Bach dies, leaving behind a massive personal archive of .mod files.

1776 - the *.us domain declares its independence of the *.uk routers.

1806 - the new Gregorian calendar causes great problems for sysadmins without "date.c".

1848 - Karl Marx develops the concept of shareware.

1849 - thousands of future Californians respond to Subject: MAKE $$$ FAST.

1860 - the Pony Express is demonstrated to be more reliable than sendmail.

1867 - the InterNIC grants the official use of the uiuc.edu domain.

1876 - Alexander Graham Bell releases an RFC detailing the design of the telephone.

continued on page 14...

SigNET

a vacation report by Jeff Thompson

SigNET has been incredibly busy. Several of us just got back from a trip to Washington DC where we had the opportunity to visit the Pentagon. While we managed to stir up a little trouble out East, (Something about faking a storm and having an aircraft carrier visit China) most of our stay was fairly uneventful.

Being close to another point of interest, we decided to make the customary visit to Fort Meade Maryland. For those of you not hanging around in the intelligence circles, this is the headquarters of the National Security Agency. While we were unable to talk the intelligence boys into backing a repeal of the ITAR export restrictions on cryptography, we did get hired to break into several foreign governments.

The NSA "unofficially" asked us to travel over to Europe in order to take a crack at the super secret Chocolate Security Agency in France (a little known rival to our Hershey's.) Luckily, we brought along our recently developed Van Eck device which allow us to take a peek at enemy's schemes from up to a kilometer away. Unfortunately for us, we got sidetracked and went right to Germany where we happily drank beer and ate bratwurst for many days. After getting kicked out of the country for lewd and obscene behavior (An unnamed SigNET member started drinking American beer, which Germans took as an insult), we chartered a freighter back to the US.

I personally slept the whole way home, missing some of the activities. At one point, we stopped on some uncharted island. I heard that the whole crew was looking for an ape or something. I'm not sure if they found it, but something kept making a lot of noise in the cargo hold the whole way back after that. I never got brave enough to check into the source of that one..

Finally, we returned to the United States, and immediately had all of our belongings confiscated. I lost my PGP shirt as well as having my 2600 shirt taken right off my back. Fortunately, my old Bart Simpson T wasn't confiscated so I threw that on real quick.

So, all of us SigNET'ers are back in good old C-U, waiting for the comet that our government created by blasting a chunk of the Moon off of the dark side, and sniffing the pleasures of the south farms.

The Banks of the Boneyard

The Banks of the Boneyard is a student publication of the UIUC Chapter of the Association for Computing Machinery and does not necessarily represent, in whole or in part, the views of the University of Illinois, the Department of Computer Science, the International Association for Computing Machinery, the Free Software Foundation, the International Red Cross or the National Hockey League.

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Partially paid for by S.O.R.F. and the Department of Computer Science.

SIG BIO

by Joseph Lasky

With EOH passed us, SIGBio is ready to move on to new and exciting projects! We will still be expanding and improving upon our WWW Virtual Anatomy Book as well as looking at other applications for computers in the biological and chemical sciences. Two meetings ago, SIGBio was invited to listen to a talk on protein folding by Dr. Martin Grueble. Much of the computational biophysics these days deals with predicting and modelling the intermediate and final structures of folding proteins. We will soon be taking tours of other labs researching similar topics. Some other ideas for projects include utilizing JAVA for 3D visualization on our home page and simple modelling of biological systems in C. If any of this interests YOU, please join us at our weekly meeting! They are held every Tuesday at 7PM in 1102 DCL. Any questions should be directed to Joesph Lasky at 332-4298 or by email at jlasky@uiuc.edu.

SigArch

SigArch is still jammin' in the wake of EOH. Since ALL of our EOH projects worked flawlessly, we've begun a whole suite of new projects:

We have received over 100 miles of .04 AWG (i.e. really big) wire from an anonymous donor. The perfect use for the wire was obvious -SigArch is working on magnetizing everyone's favorite sculpture, namely, Mananaan, located immediately behind Grainger Engineering Library. Everyone is welcome to attend the coil-winding celebration next month on the new Engineering Quad.

In the interest of scientific achievement, SigArch has conceived a new architecture, the "SigArch Ultra Parallel Architecture" (SUPA). Our proof-of-concept consists of 1023 PowerPC 604 microprocessors arranged in a 9th dimension hypercube configuration employing FPGAs, ATMs, VLIWs, UPSs and SPAM. Within a few weeks of reading this newsletter you should be able to telnet to reallybig.acm.uiuc.edu and witness its blazing performance for yourself!

For all the electronics novices out there, we will be kicking off a seminar series entitled "Resistors and You" in May as well. If you have any interest in these or other equally k-rad projects, come check out SigArch. SigArch meets on Thursdays at 6pm in L510 DCL.

SigMusic

by Dan Wellman

The home stretch is on for the next Sounds & Visions concert! The show happens Friday April 19th, 8:00 PM in room 1320 DCL; it's free so bring your friends! If you missed our last concert, the S&V concerts are a multimedia experience of electronic music and computer-generated graphics which showcase work of SigMusic and SigGraph members. To learn more about the concert, check out http://www.acm.uiuc.edu/sigmusic/concert/.

Engineering Open House has come and gone, and SigMusic was there! Dan Sachs and Thomas Lawrence put in some heavy programming time to get our real-time software vocoder working; and at EOH we had visitors robotizing their voices all day long! We need to optimize the program so it can run on slower machines; currently it only runs on a screaming Pentium 133 MhZ machine. If you're interested in trying your hand at programming, send mail to sigmusic@uiuc.edu.

We're working on a MIDI fundamentals project which is geared to teach beginners about the basics of MIDI hardware and software. Currently we're pricing out parts to build a MIDI interface, plus looking for a design schematic. If you're interested in getting your feet wet in simple hardware design or some beginning programming, drop by one of our meetings and introduce yourself!

SigMusic meets every Wednesday at 7 PM in Room 1102 DCL. We're always looking for exciting new projects, plus we like to meet new people and hear about your music experiences! Feel free to ask any questions by email at sigmusic@uiuc.edu or check out our web page at http://www.acm.uiuc.edu/sigmusic/.

SigVR

by Jason Hartman

SigVR is the Special Interest Group for Virtual Reality. Over the past couple of years SigVR has been working on RAVEn, our Relatively Articulate Virtual Enigma. Yes, it is a virtual raven. And yes, RAVEn initially stood for Relatively Affordable Virtual ENvirnment, but that has changed over the past few weeks.

The night of EOH, SigVR and associates frantically coded to get the texture maps drawing and the serial communications buzzing. While a member was working on data entry for the virtual sand castle, two others visualized the virtual bird for the first time.

The day of EOH the castle stood tall, the beach ball spun, and truck/tank/whatever did nothing. The second day of EOH the sand ground turned from sky blue to sand yellowish and all seemed right. Yet something was missing - yes, the raven had not come out to play then.

In the weeks following EOH SigVR grouppies calmly coded the speech recognition software and an all too powerful artificial intelligence. With no need for debugging, we brought the raven into life. Awesome ability to mimick our words and thoughts were the first unexpected features we have encountered in the bird.

But this was only the beginning. With such vocal abilities the raven assumed an almost preaching role in our organization, showing us that, once you bring a virtual bird into existence you just can't silence it like that. You've got to be sensitive. We attempted to coax it into a nice, cozy cage we designed, but it seemed to enjoy the freedom. So we tried to scare it away with virtual stones. Even worse - it's heard enough of our language and decided it was time he gave us a piece of his mind.

What is this bizarre creation of human intellect going to do next, we wonder now. That is the enigma. Any virtual animal psychologists out there? We need your help. Preferable meeting times are on Thursdays, at say 7:30pm in DCL room 1330.

DCS Hides Pizza Parlor Inside DCL.

Continued from page 1

guy—oh, you know, the guy who invented the PH meter—the money he gave us? Most people think that went into creating some building on campus. Nope. It all went to the Chuck E. Cheese."

So who gets access to it? Not many. With more security than Node Zero and more secrecy than the Freemasons, few people can ever hope to enter the Chuck E. Cheese Society. If they do get the chance, however, they must first go through a grueling test of manhood.

"They forced me into a small room and made me rewrite UNIX in 6502 Assembler," explains Joel. "All the time I was fed only Grog's pizza and Tab. In the background they played reruns of 'Double Dare.' It was an experience"—pausing, a noticeable tear coming to his eye—"I wouldn't want to repeat again."

Despite these scars of his initiation, Joel says he wouldn't give up the thought of getting into the Chuck E. Cheese. "It was like you were part of the Elite. People couldn't touch you because they knew you were a part of that group. You were made."

Times are changing, however, and Joel said the Chuck E. Cheese must change with them. That is why he decided to betray his oath and expose this most Secret of Secret Societies. That brave move by Joel is the only reason we are able to bring you this exclusive story.

Update: After this interview, Joel Jones disappeared for two whole days. When we caught up with him again, we asked him some questions about the Chuck E. Cheese. He said he didn't know what we were talking about, and asked why would anyone believe that there was a Chuck E. Cheese inside DCL in the first place.

SIGUNIX

by Jess Olson

After some healthy EOH competition, SigUNIX/Ops has decided to create a game for the next EOH. This game will be about a group of freshman CS & ECE majors who must complete an EOH project. These people must withstand the everyday occurrences of doing such a project and attending a University. As the day starts, they must wake up after staying awake almost all night. While practicing such a lifestyle, they also must stay awake during classes. There will be a limit of the number of missed classes that are allowed per day, to make things even more interesting. This brings us to the classes aspect - keeping up. Our heroes must manage to stay off academic probation.

When our group wants to work on their project they have to come up to DCL, which means crossing Green street and Springfield ave. Once at DCL, the freshmen must decide upon how to go about their project. This starts a chain of events that will eventually lead our group into discovering that the critical part of the project has not been yet designed as they exponentially run out of time.

Through this sort of practice our group acquires certain traits, such as very high caffeine tolerance, total sleep deprivation, and, as the EOH draws near, their academic careers are ruined.

If this sounds like an April Fool's Day joke, you are of course correct. SigUNIX/Ops won't be doing this, though it sounds somewhat like a potential project for SigSoft.

If you are interested in attending SigUNIX/Ops meeting to find out what the heck our hallucinations regarding UNIX are, good for you, so come to our meetings and find out. Our meetings, for those interested, aren't regular at all, so mail sigunix@uiuc.edu to find out when the next one is.

Currently our UNIX hallucination is about learning the UNIX file system. So drop by and share the wackyness & computing fun!

SIG Meeting Times

SigArch - Computer Architecture
Thursdays, 6:00 PM in 1225 DCL

SigArt - Artificial Intelligence
Tuesdays, 7:30 PM in 1225 DCL

SigBio - Biological Computing
Thursdays, 7:00 PM in 1102 DCL

SigBiz - Computers and Business
Mondays, 7:00 PM in 1225 DCL

SigCAS - Computers and Society
Wednesdays, 5:00 PM in 1225 DCL

SigGraph - Computer Graphics
Thursdays, 9:00 PM in 1102 DCL

SigIR - Information Retrieval
Tuesdays, 5:00 PM in 1225 DCL

SigMicro - Microcomputing
Thursdays, 8:00 PM in 1225 DCL

SigMusic - Electronic Music
Wednesdays, 7:00 PM 1102 DCL

SigNet - Computer Networks
Wednesdays, 7:00 PM in 1102 DCL

SigSoft - Software Programming
Wednesdays, 6:00 PM in 1102 DCL

SigUnix - The UNIX OS
Wednesdays, 8:00 PM in 1102 DCL

SigVR - Virtual Reality
Thursdays, 8:30 PM in 1102 DCL

Linux Users Group
Tuesdays, 7:00 PM in 1102 DCL

WebMonkeys
Wednesdays, 6:00 PM in 1225 DCL

SigMicro

by Paul Watts

Has this ever happened to you? You're sitting in front of your computer - your baby, your pride and joy. You've made it into an extension of yourself. It's an Extreme, with a super-bad processor on board and more RAM than you can shake a keyboard at. The glow of the 21 inch monitor lights up the entire room, and the chrome SGI logo on the monitor blinds you when you throw an occasional adoring glimpse at it. You're generating 15 gazillion polygons per second, and compiling your programs as fast as you can say "bitchin'," while in the background calculating the 100,000th Mersienne Prime. Your computer is the center of the universe: your computer is the Hand of God.

Then a sudden jolt wakes you up, and staring back at you is a 14 inch monitor with the message "Kernel Panic" flashing incessantly. You don't have an SGI - you have a 486 with 8 megs of RAM which barely runs XDoom on top of Linux. You wake up, fall to your knees and scream at the ceiling, "Why God, why?!"

We, at the Special Interest Group for Microcomputing have a name for this: Chronic UNIX User's Syndrome. When you use UNIX often, you have a sense that your PC could be something of a UNIX machine too; alas, your measly computer isn't a real UNIX machine.

There is only one known cure to this growing epidemic: run Windows. And SigMicro is here to help you do that. We can teach you how to use PCs for what they were really intended: running neat graphical user interfaces. We can help you write a VxD to interface your computer with your toaster. We can show you how to run Microsoft Word efficiently (although this is an advanced topic). We can help you overcome your UNIX User's Syndrome.

Currently SigMicro is leading a workshop series teaching the fundamentals of Windows programming. Our next installment is April 6th, where we will cover using ClassWizard to maximize your MFC productivity. Our final workshop for the semester is a lecture presenting Rapid Application Development using Visual Basic. Watch our workshop home page at: http://www.acm.uiuc.edu/sigmicro/windevils/workshop/ for the latest info.

SigMicro is here to help you. And remember, if you don't get help at SigMicro, please get help somewhere.

The Brief History of the Internet.

Continued from page 1

1903 - brothers@wright.org compile a version of flightsimulator.c that goes for several hundred feet before dumping core.

1909 - www.geronimo.org is renamed to www.yahoo.com

1917 - a conspiratorial hacker removes ferdinan@sarajevo.gov.yg, starting a major world war.

1933 - roosevl2@whitehouse.gov adds the statement "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself" to /etc/motd.

1945 - telnets to axis.hiroshima.jp start responding with "Unknown server error".

1969 - DARPA unveils the newly-discovered Internet.

SIGGRAPH

by Max Levchin

SigGraph folk is working hard this semester! First of all, we are doing a very exciting project in the CAVE - so far only known to few members of the Special Interest Group for Computer Graphics as "4DP" - the Four-Dimensional Pong. The game will be based after its ancient relative the Atari Pong, but you will be playing it in all four dimensions. NCSA is a little short on money these days and 3D glasses required to see the CAVE applications are in demand, we are planning a workshop titled "How To Cross Your Eyes To See Things In Stereo."

Our second project is yet untitled but is just as interesting. After years of repression by the Chair Max Levchin, The Purple Duck Theme, brewing in SigGraph heads has been brought to life in our new game production, a duck hunt simulation, but with a full-blown adventure plot and the ability to play across Wide Area Networks. The game is entirely client-server based. The user that joins the server becomes the hunter, and as the rest arrive they are assigned Duck roles. Their task is to fly away from the hunter's shots. So far the 3D-engine has been completed but the DDT - Duck Development Team is having hard time coming up with sample plots for the game.

Finally, being diversely-oriented group we are working on a new project in a tangent to graphics area - waste management. We are developing a computer-guided waste collection software with visual recognition built into it, based on HP Power platform. Using the cheap cameras that come with Apollo stations we will be able to collect garbage automatically by analyzing video input and recognizing the garbage in real-time. Recently, we have been pushed back in development, when a buggy algorithm caused the system to incorrectly recognize and subsequently destroy the only computer containing the source code to the software using an attached office shredder.

We meet every Thursday night at 9pm in 1102 DCL working on these and similar projects. Drop by or email siggraph@uiuc.edu for more information!

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special interest groups

lug	linux users group
sigarch	architecture
sigart	artificial intelligence
sigbio	biocomputing
sigbiz	enterpreneurship
sigcas	computers and society
siggraph	graphics
sigir	information retrieval
sigmicro	microcomputers
sigmusic	music
signet	networking and security
sigsoft	software development
sigunix	unix programming
sigvr	virtual reality
webmonkeys	www development

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