Banks of the Boneyard

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at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign

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In the words of Top4...

By Parisa Tabriz

With another year's Engineering Open House upon us, the ACM top4 take a moment to reflect on the year's past events, current trends, and what is to come in the future of this great organization.

Christy Sauper, senior in Computer Science and Secretary extraordinaire, looks back fondly on the weekly EXEC meetings and the challenging duty she had of scribing the low elocutions of ACM SIG Chairs. "It was usually impossible to hear half of the Chair's updates, so I tended to just make up my own comments and hope no one would notice."

Anthony Phillip, the current Treasurer of ACM, has quickly moved up the ranks of the EXEC board, but his climb did not go unnoticed. After one ACM member questioned an apparent conflict in Anthony's position as Chair of LUG [Linux User's Group] and Treasurer and Corporate Committee founder, Anthony responded, "I joined LUG two years ago and have always been a strong proponent of the open source movement. One day though, I just realized that money and power are a lot sexier than a little penguin."

Ryan Morlok, Vice Chair pinch hitter and Caffeine Admin, made his commitment to ACM apparent from the start. "I came to UIUC from Minnesota in large part because of the high ranked computer science program and UIUC's world renowned ACM organization.... just kidding, I wanted to smash that Diet Mountain Dew record on Caffeine!" And smash that record he did. Congratulations Ryan, we are all so very proud.

And last and most definitely least, there is me, Parisa Tabriz, your dutiful ACM Chair. I began the academic year as Vice Chair with a goal of bringing a new shade of color to ACM, namely, hot pink! While not everyone appreciated the fuchsia hues that adorned the volunteers and staff at this year's stupendous Reflections|Projections Conference, Head Admin Chris Clausen had these warm words to share with the disgruntled few regarding the change of color, "The staff shirts were AWESOME... The fact that you are not man enough to wear a pink shirt is YOUR problem." To further elevate my status in ACM and secure the position of Chair, I skillfully convinced Ari Gordon-Schlossberg, the year's initial Chair, that dropping out of school (again) to join a startup (again) was a great idea and yanked the top spot. Keenan Crane, former SIGGRAPH Chair commented, "I don't know what I feel about having a woman in charge of ACM. I can't quite place it, but I'd probably put it somewhere in between indigestion and rubella." Well Keenan, the reign of male dominance has come to an end and a new breed of ACM women have left their mark.

And so, us four fools have done our best to lead the great minds of our student ACM chapter. With less than a week before another coming election, I speak for myself and on behalf of the rest of top4 and thank all the hard working, dedicated, and brilliant ACM members that helped make this year a great success.

Wish to contribute...
some of your favorite quotes, jokes, stories, or even an ENTIRE article? Email them to the *BANKS* at: boneyard@uiuc.edu

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The *Banks* staff encourages readers to submit letters to the editor, articles or artwork for future issues. If you would like to help in any way, please email boneyard@uiuc.edu

ACM SIGWin

Chair: Matt Loar
Email: sigwin@acm.uiuc.edu
Meeting Time: Saturday 3:00 PM
Place: 1104 SC
Website: http://www.acm.uiuc.edu/windevils

SIGWin is currently working on the Windows Installer Package Tool (Wipt). It is a system similar to Debian APT for automatically installing, removing, and upgrading Windows Installer packages (MSIs) from a remote repository. Almost all of the core functionality is complete, and SIGWin is currently focusing on creating a repository maintenance tool, as well as a GUI version of the wipt-get application to woo the audience at EOH.

Like APT, the system depends upon the individual packages being properly constructed. Thus, if there is any interest post-EOH, we may continue to develop a best practices guide for Windows Installer Packages, as well as verification tools to enforce these practices. We hope this does become more than an EOH project, and so we invite anyone interested in working on Wipt to come to our meetings or send us an email.

SIGArt

Chair: Aniruddh Nath
Email: sigart@acm.uiuc.edu
Meeting Time: Sunday 2:30 PM
Place: 1104 SC
Website: http://www.acm.uiuc.edu/sigart

SIGArt has been working on a road traffic simulator, to compare various algorithms for automated traffic control. We should hopefully have a greedy algorithm implemented by EOH; we're hoping to continue working on the project later in the semester, and see if we can come up with some interesting optimizations.

World of Warcraft Virus Sweeps Through ACM

By Chris Mullen

Urbana, IL — ACM leadership today confirmed the month-old rumors that it has been infected with the dreaded World of Warcraft virus, the latest in a series of potent internet worms infecting multiplayer networks. Otherwise known as WoW syndrome, the virus exploits a security vulnerability in the popular World of Warcraft online multiplayer game, infecting the computer, and then transmitting itself to the player through hidden signals in the graphics card. WoW's effects are powerful and instantaneous. Short-term exposure causes immediate and obsessive World of Warcraft addiction. "WoW causes players to lose interest in everything but the game. Students miss classes, homework, meals, and even exams to level their characters," reported one ACM member and avid player, who declined to be identified.

ACM Officers are baffled by WoW syndrome, and as of yet have been unable to find a cure. "The only effective solution we've found is to ban all gaming during normal business hours," offered ACM Chair Parisa Tabriz. "The shock of not having access to the game causes players to lose interest, and the virus' effects eventually fade." Fortunately, the symptoms at ACM have not been as severe as other locations. In South Korea, authorities have attributed at least one death to the virus; a young WoW enthusiast who died at the controls after losing interest in eating. "We just hope we can hold out until the vulnerability is patched," added Tabriz.

The WoW virus enters the computer through an unprotected open port when a user is playing World of Warcraft. Unbeknownst to the player, the virus mutates into hidden video signals that are absorbed by the brain. ACM Network Administrator Christopher Clausen has been working around the clock to patch the security hole and protect future WoW gamers. Overall, he is not happy with the game's deign. "The security on this game is ASS," Clausen replied.

Chris Mullen is an ACM alum currently working at Deloitte. This article was inspired by true events last year.

Wish to contribute...
some of your favorite quotes, jokes, stories, or even an ENTIRE article?

Email them to the *BANKS* at: boneyard@uiuc.edu

Chair: Wit Riewrangboonya
Email: sigarch@uiuc.edu
Meeting Time: Thursday 6:00 PM
Place: 1104 SC
Website: http://www.acm.uiuc.edu/sigarch

SIGArch, the Special Interest Group in Computer Architecture and Hardware, is a group for people who enjoy messing around with hardware and programming in low level languages. In the past, we have completed such projects as the self-playing pinball machine and a very cheap soda dispensing machine. Future plans include modifying a broken down vending machine into a machine similar to our current soda dispenser. No experience is required at all as we teach ourselves what is required to complete the project along the way, making each project quite a learning experience. Our meetings are currently on Thursdays at 6PM in 1104 Siebel. Come by and have some fun, as our SIG is growing exponentially!

Chair: Frank Stratton, Steve Hanna, Paul Dabrowski
Email: sigmil@acm.uiuc.edu
Meeting Time: Friday 7:00 PM
Place: 1104 SC
Website: http://www.acm.uiuc.edu/sigmil

SIGMil has been continuing work on a number of various projects. These projects include (but are not limited to) RFID tracking, specialized data mining and analysis, long distance frequency range collection, usability of network anonymity tools (see: Tor), and other miscellaneous security related items. We have also wrapped up another year of fine talks, including those given by honored guest speakers.

This summer, SIGMil members will continue a long standing tradition of summer hijinks by attending Defcon 14. We will be bringing updates from the summer back to our meetings at the start of the new semester. If you are interested in: joining SIGMil, notes and slides from past talks/ events, or just general evil (: ... go to the SIGMil website: www.sigmil.org.

Free Software Society

Chair: Christopher Foster
Email: fss@acm.uiuc.edu
Meeting Time: Wednesday 6:00 PM
Place: 1104 SC
Website: http://www.acm.uiuc.edu/fss

The FSS is a Free and Open Source (FOSS) advocacy group dedicated to bringing the concepts and philosophy of FOSS to professional and non-professional computer users alike. In addition to general advocacy, we often debate the ethical and professional issues concerning many pressing issues concerning information technology. In the past we've sponsored speakers from the Free Software Society, trips, and other activities. If your at all interested in spirited and knowledgeable debate on matters of great importance to the information society we live in, this is the place to be. Visit our website for meeting times and locations.

Chair: Matt Ronge
Email: macwarriors@acm.uiuc.edu
Meeting Time: Saturday 3:00 PM
Place: 1104 SC
Website: http://www.acm.uiuc.edu/macwarriors

MacWarriors has been working on our Engineering Open House project, WebTunes. It's a web application designed to import your music from iTunes and allow you to listen to your music anywhere by streaming it. The application was built in TurboGears using Python, so it was a learning experience for all of us. After Engineering Open House, we are branching out into Cocoa development on Mac OS X. A number of us have been working on a new e-mail client built in Cocoa known as Kiwi. MacWarriors will be hosting a number of talks on Objective-C and programming for Mac OS X to bring everyone else up to speed. So stay tuned for Objective-C programming!

SIGBio

Chair: Alexander Rubinsteyn
Email: sigbio@acm.uiuc.edu
Meeting Time: Thursday 6:00 PM
Place: 1110 SC
Website: http://www.acm.uiuc.edu/sigbio

SigBio was long defunct until its resurrection this past spring. Like some great hulking zombie, SigBio rose from the swamp mud and lumbered forth in search of brains. Tasty soft brains. To help us better locate this delicious cranial treat, we've built an electroencephalogram machine. With an EEG we can detect electrical activity in large groups of neurons, helping us discern which heads are worth biting. Armed with this knowledge, we feast triumphantly.

Chair: Dave Schwantes
Email: webmonkeys@acm.uiuc.edu
Meeting Time: Wednesday 8:00 PM
Place: 220 SC
Website: http://www.acm.uiuc.edu/webmonkeys

This year Webmonkeys is taking another shot at building ChimpOS, our web-based operating system, complete with applications, file system, and monkey based puns. With the user interface requiring massive amounts of JavaScript this could be the first webpage to necessitate system requirements. If we pull this off ChimpOS should be a perfect way to work from home anywhere!

SIGEmbedded

Chair: Chris Eben
Email: sigembedded@acm.uiuc.edu
Meeting Time: Sunday 2:00 PM
Place: 1106 SC
Website: http://www.acm.uiuc.edu/sigembedded

SIGEmbedded finally has a Linux distro running on Intel StrongARM SA-1110 development boards, enabling us to finally write custom software for the devices. Our group is experimentally trying to write software to use a wireless LAN card to determine and display one's position within the Siebel Center, using wireless access points throughout the building. Work on this is just starting now and will likely be shown in some unfinished form at EOH.

Chair: Anthony Philipp
Email: lug@acm.uiuc.edu
Meeting Time: Friday 6:00 PM
Place: 1104 SC
Website: http://www.acm.uiuc.edu/lug

The Linux Users Group here on campus continues to provide confidential support for those looking to break away from their habit. "The meetings involve a lot of emotion," said one user who spoke on condition of anonymity. His family and friends don't approve of his decision and claim that "it's just too hard to stop. Why would anyone put themselves through the pain and suffering involved with switching to Linux, when another fix is just a few dollars away?"

The local Microsoft enforcer, David Kaplan, said the meetings were "unnecessary" and "the work of the Devil." He continued, "it doesn't matter if LUG has their meetings, they can't last long without us. We're just too powerful." Unfortunately, he may be correct--with ACM receiving generous donations from Microsoft, ACM's leadership has created new policies directed against the Linux Users Group. Not only that, but other members, fearful of retribution, have begun to ostracize the members of LUG.

Worse yet, the last meeting erupted in near riot when Christopher Clausen, the local admin, attacked Linux for being "ASS!!" Members Andrew and Adam jumped Clausen and a brawl ensued. Luckily, in the heat of the moment, Tim remembered that no one had eaten yet and suggested a meal at Dos Reales, the local Mexican restaurant, to cool things down. With tension still in the air, but the situation under control, it was decided that no software could be referred to as "ASS," not matter how awful it actually was.

The future seems bleak for LUG, and while a turnaround is conceivable, the will to fight has left the current members. Joe was the first to go. The others thought he was sleeping peacefully, but by the next meeting a distinctive odor was emanating from the room. Dennis, a close friend, commented, "Joe preferred to give up rather than continue. Perhaps David was right, they are 'just too powerful.'"

Chair: Alok Baikadi
Email: sigmusic@acm.uiuc.edu
Meeting Time: Thursday 7:30 PM
Place: 1112 SC
Website: http://www.acm.uiuc.edu/sigmusic

The Special Interest Group for Computer Music has been developing an on-the-fly music storyboard named "Turing and the Wolf". Taking a set of user-defined inputs, we generate music to fit a particular mood and tonal area. The various themes, which will represent the "characters" of our storyboard, are stored as nodes in a sort of musical state machine. A key part of making the music sound natural is the transitions between the various themes. The sequence of chords needed to modulate between consecutive keys is generated using the shortest path algorithm with some randomization on a graph representing chords.

Chair: Vivek Kale
Email: sigact@uiuc.edu
Website: http://www.acm.uiuc.edu/sigact

The Special Interest Group on Algorithms and Computation Theory (SIGACT) is a brand new group in ACM which focuses on developing methodologies or heuristics for solving hard computational problems which come up in many different areas of Computer Science and Science in general. In other words, we like to find ways to solve hard problems. Topics range from combinatorial algorithms to information systems theory. With the year winding down, we are finishing up our EOH projects as well as planning trips to some conferences this summer. SIGACT is open to anyone who likes to solve tough problems from a more abstract, mathematical perspective. Moreover, this is the one group in which you don't need to know a lot of programming.

For more information, please visit our website at http://www.acm.uiuc.edu/sigact.

Chair: Daniel Mitchell
Email: gamebuilders-owner@acm.uiuc.edu
Meeting Time: Tuesday 8:00 PM
Place: 2405 SC
Website: http://www.acm.uiuc.edu/gamebuilders

Gamebuilders has been working hard throughout the past semester and a half developing two PC games from the ground up. We meet weekly to discuss the progress in both projects and what kinds of things to focus on for each coming week.

Both projects are top down 2D shooter games that basically just focus on maneuvering the player around and shooting everything in sight. What more fun could you ask for?

The 2005-2006 year for ACM Gamebuilders has been very successful. We are working hard to put the finishing touches in preparation for EOH this coming weekend. One project this year is a simple top down shooter adventure called Phantom Breach. Players choose from three different weapons and use them to destroy any enemies that stand on their way. The major difference between this project and projects from past years is that we are focusing heavily on creating a finished game. Rather than adding every feature that we think of, we have carefully chosen features that we will be able to implement in time for EOH and have stuck with them. Now with less than a week away from EOH, this is starting to pay off. At this point in the development process, we are very happy with where the game stands feature wise and we are now able to focus the last few days before EOH on bug fixing and general presentation. If you don't have a chance to see the project at EOH, let us know and we'll be happy to show it to you!

The second of the two EOH projects is entitled Red Girder. This top down 2D space arena shooter was first developed in Python before being converted over to C++, where the development for the game now is.

That's about all there is to say as far as an overview of Gamebuilders goes. If you want to know more, come check us out for any of our weekly meetings in 2405 Siebel Center at 8pm every Tuesday.

Wish to contribute...
some of your favorite quotes, jokes, stories, or even an ENTIRE article?

Email them to the *BANKS* at:
boneyard@uiuc.edu

Weighing In on Scalability

By Christopher D. Clausen

I've been keeping up with the SIGSoft Scheedule project and I've noticed several things about how software development is taught here at UIUC. Basically, finding a solution that scales isn't even considered. Not to pick on SIGSoft, but their project is doing work on a per-connection basis that should be handed off to an automated back-end daemon, a database, or at least some level of caching to provide quicker responses to the Scheedule users. I've taken some of the 400 level classes and none of them even mention scaling to hundreds of users. Usually the emphasis is on using good object oriented design, or using the new technique or technology that was just taught. This is all fine and dandy in academia, but in the real world applications need to handle hundreds if not thousands or tens of thousands of simultaneous requests.

Using some slow-loading, multi-level class hierarchy slows down the end user experience and uses resources on the server. You want to handle each user session as fast as possible and make resources available for the next user, minimizing the amount of work that is duplicated by each invocation of your process.

Now this doesn't mean that you throw away the design aspect, it just means that what you were taught to do for class may not be the best thing to do for a real-world app. Consider Amazon.com (http://www.amazon.com) or eBay (http://www.ebay.com) and think about what would happen if their applications didn't scale.

Consider the trivial case, a single user looking for a single item. If the process that handled each user connection had to load the entire list of items hosted on either eBay or Amazon, search for a particular one, and then return the results to the user both sites would be unable to handle even a load such as the UIUC campus. Instead, both sites utilize huge back-end databases, caches, and daemons that handle the time consuming tasks of searching huge amounts of data and return re-computed result sets to processes handling per-user connections. This is harder to code for the single user case where a quick script and a flat text file will do, but it scales much better to thousands of users.

I am reminded of something that actually was taught here at UIUC (back in days of CS 273 with Prof. Reingold), but in the theory classes, not in the software design ones: Memorization. It was taught as a technique for solving large order problems in an efficient manner by caching previous results. Consider a recursive algorithm that computes the Fibonacci sequence: f(n) = f(n-1) + (fn-2) where f(0)=0 and f(1)=1

A smart student immediately sees that finding f(n-1) and then again finding f(n-2), almost the same amount of work, is not efficient and that the iterative solution would be better. But using memorization and enough memory to hold the needed cache, the recursive method can be made almost as fast, storing f(n) for each n not previously seen in an array or similar data structure and simply looking up the answer when needed. This is not memory efficient, but once everything is computed and the cache filled its much faster to simply jump to A[n] in the array and return the result there. At some level using memory to save time is a feature and allows scaling to a level beyond the memory efficient solution.

Don't change your design habits, but perhaps consider the usage of your program. Once you graduate the goal of the program will no longer be to get a good grade on an MP or to match output with the provided test cases. You'll want performance in addition to correctness and scalability is a key component.

[λ]SIGPLAN

Chair: Sameer Sundresh
Email: sigplan@uiuc.edu
Meeting Time: Monday 7:30 PM
Place: 1112 SC
Website: http://www.acm.uiuc.edu/sigplan

The Special Interest group on Programming Languages, better known as SIGPLAN, explores how we describe and think about programming problems and solutions. Currently meeting Monday nights at 7:30pm in 1104/1112 Siebel Center, SIGPLAN is open to anyone interested in programming languages and techniques, from freshman through faculty. Members' interests run from theoretical to applied; from language abstractions to compiler optimizations; from dynamic languages like Python and Lisp to more statically analyzable ones like Haskell and VHDL. As with any SIG, we're all about learning--you don't have to already be an expert to join. If you've ever thought about not just "what is the solution to this problem?" but "how do I best describe this problem and its solutions?", then SIGPLAN is definitely for you! Our meetings take on several different formats, including: general-audience programming language tutorials, presentation of research papers from the literature, open discussion of original work on new languages, and invited talks by our distinguished faculty.

SIGPLAN is also a great starting point for further involvement within ACM: three freshmen associated with the SIG are now members of the corporate committee, a freshman and a sophomore are developing next year's MechMania contest, and a graduate student is ACM's vice chair; most members are involved in planning the annual Reflections Projections conference.

For a schedule of past and current events, please visit our website at http://www.acm.uiuc.edu/sigplan/

SIGMil Places 4th In International Security Exercise

By Mike Dabrowski

Urbana, IL December 9, 2005 — The University of Illinois' Special Interest Group for Military Applications (SIGMil) placed fourth in the 2005 UCSB International Capture The Flag security exercise held December 9th. SIGMil finished as the top ranked team from the United States closely following teams from Germany and Austria.

The UCSB International Capture The Flag (iCTF) is a distributed, wide-area security exercise, whose goal is to test the security skills of the participants from both the attack and defense viewpoints. The Capture the Flag contest is a multi-site, multi-team hacking contest in which a number of teams compete independently against each other. This year's exercise included over twenty teams from top educational institutions around the world.

After a grueling six hour spree of security techniques such as buffer overflows, shell coding, code patches, and network sniffing SIGMil member uHelp commented, "The effort was hard, the journey long, but in the end our kung foo prevailed."

SIGSAC@UIUC

Chair: Parisa Tabriz & John Loucaides
Email: sigembedded@acm.uiuc.edu
Meeting Time: Mon. & Wed. 8:00 PM
Place: 1104 SC
Website: http://www.acm.uiuc.edu/sigsac

A group of SIGSAC members has been meeting during the 2005-2006 school year to study operating systems configuration guidance and form summaries of security best practices. After reading through published guides from sources such as NIST, Microsoft, and NSA, and testing configurations on systems in the lab, our group organized meetings with security professionals from CITES, TSG, and NCSA. We then organized input from all these sources into best practices summaries published on the ACM Wiki. As of this writing, the summary for Windows XP is complete, and we are working on a summary for Mac OS 10.4. Further guides, including a general OS-independent guide, are planned.

For more information please refer to the ACM Wiki page at https://www-s.acm.uiuc.edu/wiki/space/best+practices+guides

ACM SIGGRAPH at the University of Illinois

Chair: Brandon Smith
Email: siggraph@uiuc.edu
Meeting Time: Thursday 7:00 PM
Place: 220 SC
Website: http://www.acm.uiuc.edu/siggraph

After recovering from a dormant year and having lost most of its former members to graduation, SigGraph this year consists mainly of new members, many of which were completely new to computer graphics. As such we've spent a lot of time having introductory tutorials. We've gone through a lot of the basics of OpenGL graphics programming as well as some general computer graphics techniques, including 3D environments to explore and morphing meshes. We've also had a series on modeling with Maya taught by Brian and Matt Townsend. They covered everything from modeling to texturing and animation.

Our EOH project this year was designed so that everyone could have a part in the team. We are making a 3D environment inhabited by animated dinosaurs that react to each other. We've had a team on creating a terrain for the dinosaurs, creating plant-life, and a sky. We've utilized our recently gained knowledge in Maya and Milkshape3D to create animated dinosaurs, as well as worked on giving them artificial intelligence.

In addition to our tutorials and EOH project we've also had a movement to revive our "Sounds & Visions" presentation, where we show off user created animations combined with music from the SigMusic club. Many members have already begun working on their individual animations. In addition we will also be including in the presentation a parody of the Indiana Jones movie "Raiders of the Lost Arc". Look for the presentation sometime in May this year.

All in all, I'm very proud of our team this year. Everyone that has come in with a keen interest on learning and being a part of the team has contributed tremendously to this project and I'm looking forward to showing it off at EOH! We've all become very close friends and have all learned a great deal. I'm looking forward to working on our future projects with this team.

This Issue's Cryptogram:

brought to you by SIGMil

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"RMD WDET UDKEJD YX YCW WDLCPTAJ
AB RMD AKGABAPTD FYGDWKUDKR
SMAJM TAVD E FAEKR YJRYLCB
BLWESTB ARB BTAUN TDFB
YGDW YCW JARADB BRERDB EKQ KERAYK."
-- HYMK X. MNTEK
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Chair: Andres Tack
Email: sigsoft@acm.uiuc.edu
Meeting Time: Monday 6:30 PM
Place: 1112 SC
Website: http://www.acm.uiuc.edu/sigsoft

Soft has been busier than ever this year, producing two projects for the Engineering Open House and involving more than twenty students in their development. Our development will continue through the mid-April "Computing Habitat" competition, where we will compete for the second year running, following last year's 1st-place finish.

In the lineup for what everyone can expect from SIGSoft is our new schedule generator. "Scheedule," the name being an answer to Google's history of re-implementing, pre-empting, and outright stealing our best ideas (really, we jest), seeks to complete the next logical step in a student's planning process for each semester. The application is entirely web-based and will be available freely for registration for the summer and fall semesters. Keep an eye out for this one; we are definitely looking to change the way you work.

Also in the running is a Java-based, cross-platform Collaborative Text Editor. The concept is a focused remake of other popular collaborative editors, written and designed completely by students of the ACM. Really our aims with the projects are both as a technical exploration, and a joyous quest for a new solution. Our hope is to advance a programmer's ability to apply techniques of pair-programming and collaborate in real time. A number of issues have come up during this project:

1. Yes, we know what a screen session is.
2. No, it is not the same.
3. Yes, we can do emacs/vim key shortcuts.
4. Yes, you are welcome to write them yourself.
5. No, really, it's not the same as a screen session.

Catch you next time, here from SIGSoft.

My definition of an expert in any field is a person who knows enough about what's really going on to be scared.

- PJ Plauger

Chair: Clayton Williams
Email: sigbot@acm.uiuc.edu
Meeting Time: Tuesday 7:00 PM
Place: 1110 SC
Website: http://www.acm.uiuc.edu/sigbot

SIGBot, an amalgam of Computer Science, Physics, Computer Engineering and Electrical Engineering students, has been working on a robot platform since the fall. Rebuilt in steel and interfacing with a computer, the robot is literally capable of doing anything to your wildest imagination (if you're willing to write the software and make the attachments with us). SIGBot is always looking for new talent. Email sigbot@acm.uiuc.edu if you're interested in becoming a part of the action.

Chair: Brandt Dusthimer
Email: sigops@acm.uiuc.edu
Meeting Time: Tuesday 7:00 PM
Place: 1104 SC
Website: http://www.acm.uiuc.edu/sigops

This year SIGOps has decided to go the less traveled route and, instead of making YAOS (yet another operating system) we decided to make a peer-to-peer network file system called SharedFS instead.

SharedFS plans on doing for unused workstation hard drive space what Folding@HOME does for unused CPU cycles - put them to good use. The best example of where SharedFS might be used would be in a laboratory where all the workstations use a centralized network file server for storage instead of using the local hard disk. Using SharedFS, instead of not using local hard drive space, the workstations could pool their already available resources and provide a network file system service.

While progress has been slow, primarily due to the complexity of the program, there is a very good chance of seeing a version of SharedFS working at EOH! No promises though :).

Team Rioja Triumphs In "Portfolio in Peril"

By Parisa Tabriz

On February 3, Team Rioja (formerly known as "Team Flower Power Sugar Puff") brought in a predicted and undisputed victory at the Morgan Stanley "Portfolio in Peril" competition. The competition is a role-playing simulation exercise where each participating team is charged with creating and managing a multi-asset investment portfolio. The goal is simple: make the most money.

Team members from Team Rioja included Paul Dabrowski, Leon Arber, Chris Grier, and yours truly. In an attempt to intimidate the other players, I was talking a big game to anyone that would listen during the days leading up to the event. "Team R.A.T.S." manned by Ryan, Sameer, and Anthony were ears to most of my trash talking, but I spared some for Ankur and Bill from "Team Three Rupees and a Dollah" and Brandt from "Team Get A Name". I even guaranteed our victory when I met some of the Morgan Stanley representatives in the afternoon. Deb caught ear of my claim to be leading the powerhouse team and convinced some of the Morgan Stanley people that we were the group to beat; the stage was set for an overly deserved shaming in the event of a loss.

Biasing our portfolio early in foreign equities and global energy, we took an early lead, keeping among the top four positions in the 12 team competition during the first rounds. Chris diligently tracked news headlines, carving out a globally diversified real estate investment strategy that trended with the earthquake destruction in South East Asia and damage caused by U.S. hurricane Maggie. Leon supported a strong shift in assets to Asian technology markets which helped to place the team in third place coming into the final round of play. Realizing the need for a risky move if there was to be any hope of capturing first place, I suggested a more focused asset shift - specifically, taking our globally and class diversified portfolio and investing it, in its entirety, into U.S. financials. C'mon, the game was hosted by Morgan Stanley, the largest investment bank in the United States! Leon and Paul predicted nuclear war and a world left in shambles, but I knew that no company was going to hold a simulation where the home team loses. Obviously America was going to come out on top. Chris immediately disagreed with my strategy, Leon semi-politely just ignored my pleas towards full investment into U.S. banks, and Paul just laughed off my foolishness. The entire game I was mostly focused on the strategy the game designers would have used when designing the game and not just the economic situations they posed for us in the simulation. After my nagging began to show signs of fatigue and apathy in my group members, I finally convinced them to shift our balance over to U.S. financials. And guess what? That's why we won! And yes, I'm going to take quite a bit of credit for that pull from behind victory and each of us walking away with an iPod (the second I now own, neither of which I paid for). So congratulations to Team Rioja* and good job to me for my game theoretic approach to portfolio management. Interestingly enough, the guy running the event said that our CS Department had a better overall performance than the same competition run in Yale's Business school. Heh, engineers win again.

* *It should be mentioned that Paul and Leon were mostly responsible for getting us into good positioning leading into the final round, both having better investment backgrounds than Chris or I. Then again, the simulation included a Monkey competitor that chose his portfolio investments completely at random and was beating us and most of the other teams for at least half of the game. The monkey ended up in third place overall.*

"Obviously, America was going to come out on top."
— Parisa Tabriz

Sounds & Visions

Chair: Michael Bach
Email: sv@acm.uiuc.edu
Meeting Time: Sunday 2:00 PM
Place: 1106 SC
Website: http://www.acm.uiuc.edu/siggraph/s&v/

Long ago, in the time of myth, two clans named SIGGraph and SIGMusic banded together yearly to create a performance dubbed "Sounds and Visions". Stunning computer artwork played alongside symphonic computer music in a showcase of student work. Ancient evidence of this can be found at http://www.acm.uiuc.edu/siggraph/s&v/index.html

But things changed. A cataclysm of tumult and chaos shook the two groups, and "Sounds and Visions" was lost from the memory of time.

But there has been an awakening.

Ancient clues point to a rebirth. Evidence reveals that the time for another show is drawing nigh. SIGGraph and SIGMusic have once again joined forces to create another "Sounds and Visions" performance. Animation and music submissions are welcomed, as are any people who wish to participate! The exact date is unknown, but when the stars align, "Sounds and Visions" will live again! Stay tuned to the ACM Web page at http://www.acm.uiuc.edu/ for the date and time, or join the mailing list at https://www-s.acm.uiuc.edu/cgi-bin/mailman/listinfo/sv-l for more information.

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