



September, 2003

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TAPPING THE

**K . E . G . S .**

KOMPUTER ENTHUSIASTS OF GREATER SEATTLE

Prez Says:

Ron Cowger

What a wonderful summer we have enjoyed in the Puget Sound region! We have had a longer period of consecutive days with temperatures about 70 degrees than any other summer since they started keeping records. Let's enjoy it while we can as I'm sure that wetter and cooler weather is on its way in the upcoming months.

At our most recent meeting, the Board members discussed the poor attendance at the August General Meeting and decided that many of you may have been off enjoying summer activities. However, we also speculated that some of our members may not yet be used to our new meeting date and location and may not have adjusted their calendars yet. To assist in the transition, Joe is going to ask each of the SIG leaders to send emails to their attendees reminding them of the next meeting, Monday, September 8th, at the Kirkland Teen Center. As you may recall, the vendor presentation will be by Roy Newcomer of Smallbox Software. He will talk about the latest update to Boot Pro, an application that will restore your Windows operating system should it become damaged. His latest version works with Windows 2000 and Windows XP.

I also encourage you to plan on attending the Raincoast meetings in Tacoma in early October. The presentations there will give you an opportunity to hear from vendors who are able to come to larger meetings like Raincoast but may not be able to address smaller PC user group meetings like KEGS. Also, there will be a couple of sessions on making user groups more successful and improving the support provided to their membership. The attendance fee is a bargain when you consider that you will get at least five good meals out of the fee plus whatever other information and goodies you obtain at the meetings. I encourage you to sign up through their web site at [www.raincoast.info](http://www.raincoast.info).

Joe Mraz and Sally Ann Mowery will be continuing to work on the lab in the Kirkland Teen Center to make it more useful to both the teens and the seniors that use it. Joe reported to the Board that most of the repairs/changes to the workstations should be completed soon and then they will begin the effort to set up the server and the network. I suspect that they will have a busy September. We all appreciate the work that they do that "earns" us the access to our meeting space for our General Meetings. Thanks much!

That's it for this month. I hope that you had a great Labor Day and many hours of trouble-free computing. I'll see you at the next meeting.

Respectfully,

Ron Cowger  
President

## A Few Good Articles for Your Reading Pleasure

### Jolted Over Electronic Voting Report's Security Warning Shakes Some States' Trust

By Brigid Schulte  
Washington Post Staff Writer  
Monday, August 11, 2003; Page A01

The Virginia State Board of Elections had a seemingly simple task before it: Certify an upgrade to the state's electronic voting machines. But with a recent report by Johns Hopkins University computer scientists warning that the system's software could easily be hacked into and election results tampered with, the once perfunctory vote now seemed to carry the weight of democracy and the people's trust along with it.

An outside consultant assured the three-member panel recently that the report was nonsense.

"I hope you're right," Chairman Michael G. Brown said, taking a leap of faith and approving Diebold Election System's upgrades. "Because when they get ready to hang the three of us in effigy, you won't be here."

Since being released two weeks ago, the Hopkins report has sent shock waves across the country. Some states have backed away from purchasing any kind of electronic voting machine, despite a new federal law that has created a gold rush by allocating billions to buy the machines and requiring all states, as well as the District of Columbia, to replace antiquated voting equipment by 2006.

"The rush to buy equipment this year or next year just doesn't make sense to us anymore," said Cory Fong, North Dakota's deputy secretary of state.

Maryland officials, who signed a \$55.6 million agreement with Diebold for 11,000 touch-screen voting machines just days before the Hopkins report came out, have asked an international computer security firm to re-view the system's security. If they don't like what they find, officials have said, the sale will be off.

The report has brought square into the mainstream an obscure but increasingly nasty debate between about 900 computer scientists, who warn that these machines are untrustworthy, and state and local election officials and machine manufacturers, who insist that they are reliable.

"The computer scientists are saying, 'The machinery you vote on is inaccurate and could be threatened; therefore, don't go. Your vote doesn't mean anything,' " said Penelope Bonsall, director of the Office of Election Administration at the Federal Election Commission. "That negative perception takes years to turn around."

Still, even some advocates of the new system are thinking twice. The Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, which pushed for electronic machines to help visually impaired and disabled voters, says the Hopkins report has given them pause. They're calling on President Bush and members of Congress to convene a forum of experts to hash it out. "We have become concerned about these questions of ballot security," said Deputy Director Nancy Zirkin.

Her group and others supported passage of the \$3.9 billion Help America Vote Act in November. Of the \$1.5 billion appropriated so far to replace old machines, rewrite outdated equipment standards, encourage research to improve technology, train poll workers and update registration lists, about half has been released. And that has all gone toward buying electronic machines, which cost as much as \$4,000 a piece.

"These vendors are everywhere," said David Blount, spokesman for Mississippi Secretary of State Eric Clark. "They're besieging everyone."

## **Jolted Over Electronic Voting (cont.)**

The remaining money is to be released once an Election Assistance Commission is appointed. By law, the board was to have begun work in February. But the names of the four commissioners, two from each major party, have yet to go to the Senate for confirmation.

The stakes are high. The 2000 Florida presidential election showed the shortcomings of the current system.

A subsequent Cal Tech/MIT report found that of more than 100 million votes cast nationwide, as many as 6 million weren't counted because of registration errors or problems with punch-card and lever machines. One study found that of 800 lever machines tested, 200 had broken meters that stopped counting once they hit 999.

Frustrations with the old machines -- levers were invented in the 1930s and punch cards in 1904 -- have turned many local election officials into staunch supporters of the new electronic models. Advocates for the disabled say that the machines will enable the visually impaired, for the first time, to put on headphones and vote a secret ballot.

Mischelle Townsend, registrar of voters in Riverside County, Calif., said the electronic machines have saved as much as \$600,000 in paper every election and, from 1996 to 2000, helped increase voter turnout to 72 percent, up 10 percent.

Any tampering would be caught, she said, in the extensive pre- and post-election testing. The best defense of the machines, she said, is that there has been no documented case of voter fraud. "If the computer scientists had one valid point, one, then why hasn't one incident of what they're saying occurred in all of these elections?"

But past is not prologue, historians and political scientists warn.

"Some of these hacking scenarios are highly improbable. But it's not completely out of the question," said Larry J. Sabato, a political scientist at the University of Virginia who has written about political corruption. "When the stakes are high enough in an election, partisans and others will do just about anything. So this is a worry."

### **Bugs, Glitches Can Abound**

Computer scientists note that computers are unreliable, subject to bugs, glitches and hiccups as well as the more remote possibility of outright hacking and code tampering.

They warn of a hostile programmer inserting what they call Trojan horses, Easter eggs or back doors to pre-empt the outcome. They point to a number of errors in the 2002 elections, from poll workers -- like some in Montgomery County -- unfamiliar with how long it takes to warm up the machines to mysterious vote tallies.

In Georgia, where Diebold machines are used, a handful of voters found that when they pressed the screen to vote for one candidate, the machine registered a vote for the opponent. Technicians were called in and the problem was fixed, state officials have said.

In Alabama, a computer glitch caused a 7,000-vote error and clouded the outcome of the gubernatorial race for two weeks. But more critically, computer scientists charge that the software that runs the machines is riddled with security flaws.

"Whoever certified that code as secure should be fired," said Avi Rubin, technical director of the Information Security Institute at Johns Hopkins and co-author of the report.

## **Jolted Over Electronic Voting (cont.)**

Rubin analyzed portions of Diebold software source code that was mistakenly left on a public Internet site and concluded that a teenager could manufacture "smart" cards and vote several times. Further, he said, insiders could program the machine to alter election results without detection. All machines had the same password hard-wired into the code. And in some instances, it was set at 1111, a number laughably easy to hack, Rubin said.

Because there is no paper or electronic auditing system in the machine, there would be no way to reconstruct an actual vote, he said.

In a 27-page rebuttal, Diebold dismissed the findings. Officials said that the software Rubin analyzed was old and that only a portion may have been used in an actual election. "Right now, we're very, very confident about the security of our system," said Mark Radke, a Diebold executive. "If there is a way to make it more secure, we're open to that from good, reliable, knowledgeable sources who don't have a previous agenda."

That doesn't satisfy some critics. "The most important thing about the Hopkins report is not the security holes they found, but irrefutable proof that all this stuff that the machines are secure is hot air," said David Dill, a computer scientist at Stanford University who has turned the debate over electronic machines into a national crusade.

State and local election officials, however, say the checks and balances -- the poll workers and judges, the thick manuals of procedures -- ensure the sanctity of elections.

"It's not fair to do an evaluation that doesn't talk about context," said Mary Kiffmeyer, president of the National Association of Secretaries of State. "Our voting process has all kinds of security. It's not just the box of technology."

### **Few Players in Game**

Although free and fair elections are a central tenet of America's democracy, no one paid much attention to how they were executed for years. Not until 1990 did federal elections officials decide to write voluntary standards to certify voting machines.

Still, the atmosphere remained fairly clubby, with one lab doing the testing and a revolving door between voting machine companies and the state officials who later went to work for them. Although nearly 20 companies have had equipment certified by the FEC, only three are major players: Diebold, with 55,000 touch screens throughout the country; ES&S of Omaha; and Oakland, Calif.-based Sequoia Voting Systems.

All machines go through the FEC's testing and certification process, which can cost companies anywhere from \$25,000 to \$100,000. Yet a 2001 report by the General Accounting Office found that the FEC standards do not thoroughly test for security or user friendliness and that only 37 states follow them.

Doug Jones, a computer scientist in Iowa, said the testing is so secret that even he, as an insider who serves on the state board that certifies voting equipment, can't get information. Five years ago, he found the identical security flaws cited in the Hopkins report.

"They promised it would be fixed," Jones said. "The Hopkins group found clear evidence that it wasn't. Yet for five years, I had been under the impression that it was fixed."

Diebold's Radke said the code has been fixed.

## **Jolted Over Electronic Voting (cont.)**

Even the most vocal critics say there are workable solutions. Computer scientists say the companies should release their secret source codes for expert review, as two start-ups, VoteHere and Populex, have agreed to do. Or that states should require automatic upgrade clauses, as Santa Clara County has.

Dill, the Stanford computer scientist, and others are pushing for what are called voter-verified audit trails. By attaching a printer to every machine, voters can review the electronic ballot before it drops into a locked box.

Many solutions are already spelled out in the Help America Vote Act, which mandates tougher security, usability and accuracy standards.

In the end, however, with experts still at loggerheads and the 2004 election looming, voters are left wondering which side to trust. Howard A. Denis (R-Potomac-Bethesda), a Montgomery County Council member, was so shaken by the Hopkins report that he is considering asking for a waiver to stop using electronic machines.

"The more I look into this, the more serious I think it is," he said.

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## **A virus Ate my exam results**

By John Leyden

Posted to [www.theregister.com](http://www.theregister.com): 25/07/2003 at 13:50 GMT

The West Bengal Education Minister, Kanti Biswas, has blamed a computer virus after students received incorrect marks in Higher Secondary examinations this week.

Biswas told the State Assembly in Calcutta that an unnamed virus attacked computer systems earlier this year, resulting in a number of errors on mark sheets. Nineteen separate cases of irregularities in marking were discovered, and blamed on the mystery infection.

Graham Cluley, senior technology consultant for Sophos Anti-Virus, agreed with us that the problem could just as easily be explained by someone pressing the wrong button on a computer or some other form of human error. Even if a virus was responsible for the latest problem it still doesn't excuse the minister of responsibility for the problem.

"Saying 'a virus ate my exam results' is no excuse. No computer is immune from virus attack, so all users should take steps to ensure their PCs are protected against the latest viruses," Cluley added.

A special "Thanks" to Malcolm Taran, KEGS member, for the submitting the previous two articles for publication.

# KEGS General Meeting

## And Associated SIGs

### KEGS T-shirts

Remember, you score extra KEGABUCK\$ when you wear your KEGS shirts to SIGS and the General Meetings! We still have a few left of various sizes. Then we will order more. So why wait? Pick yours up at the next general meeting.

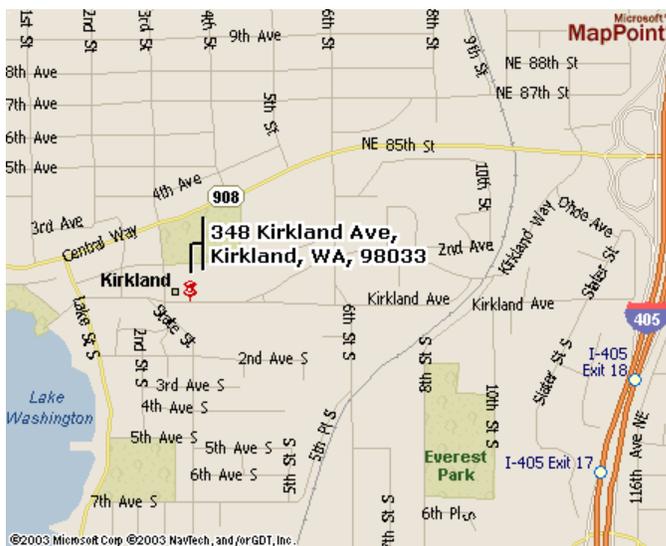
Meetings at the Kirkland Teen Union Building - 348 Kirkland Ave., Kirkland, WA 98033

| Day of Month | Time           | Location                               | SIG / Email contact   | SIG Leader                       |
|--------------|----------------|--|---|----------------------------------|
| 2nd Monday   | 6 PM - 7 PM    | Kirkland Teen Union Building           | Technology Corner<br><a href="mailto:betacode@hotmail.com">betacode@hotmail.com</a> | Steve Fondren                    |
| 2nd Monday   | 7 PM - 9 PM    | Kirkland Teen Union Building           | KEGS General Meeting  |                                  |
| 2nd Monday   | 9:30 PM - ? PM | TGI Fridays<br>505 Parkplace, Kirkland | Pig SIG<br><a href="mailto:sallyannmowrey@msn.com">sallyannmowrey@msn.com</a>       | Sally Ann Mowrey<br>206-996-5635 |

**DRIVING INSTRUCTIONS:** From I-405, take the N.E. 85th ST. exit (exit number 18) toward KIRKLAND (headed West). Immediately move to the center lane and take a left at the first light onto Kirkland Way (If you went right you would be on 114th Ave NE). Just stay on Kirkland Way and it will turn into Kirkland Ave.

The Kirkland Teen Union Building is part of a string of connected buildings. Right at the street is Kirkland's Performing Arts Center, then comes the Kirkland Senior Center and farthest from the street is The Kirkland Teen Union Building.

There is a parking area to the West of this building but you can also park in the Kirkland Library's covered parking area just a little farther to the West ( 1/4 block past the Performing Arts Center).



# KEGS SIG Meetings:

## NEW SIG CHART

Notice that our SIG chart no longer lists actual dates. Please check your calendars for the date of the upcoming meeting that you want to attend.

Contact the SIG leaders to find out what presentations that they have planned for their upcoming meetings.

## KEGS T-shirts

Remember, you score extra KEGABUCK\$ when you wear your KEGS shirts to SIGS and the General Meetings! We still have a few left of various sizes. Then we will order more. So why wait? Pick yours up at the next meeting.

Meetings at the North Bellevue Community Center - 4063 148th Ave NE, Bellevue, WA

| Day of Month  | Time        | Location     | SIG / Email contact   | SIG Leader                        |
|---------------|-------------|--------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| 1st Tuesday   | 7 PM - 9 PM | Conf. room D | Technology & Entertainment<br><a href="mailto:philbar45@attbi.com">philbar45@attbi.com</a>                              | Phil Keairns<br>425-222-7130      |
| 1st Tuesday   | 7 PM - 9 PM | Computer Lab | NBCC Computer Lab Support<br><a href="mailto:j_m_mraz@hotmail.com">j_m_mraz@hotmail.com</a>                             | Joe Mraz<br>425-747-2433          |
| 1st Wednesday | 7 PM - 9 PM | Computer Lab | Video & Animation<br><a href="mailto:philbar45@attbi.com">philbar45@attbi.com</a>                                       | Phil Keairns<br>425-222-7130      |
| 2nd Tuesday   | 7 PM - 9 PM | Computer Lab | Quick Books<br><a href="mailto:sarah@abcsupport.com">sarah@abcsupport.com</a>   | Sarah Gunderson<br>425-485-3437   |
| 2nd Tuesday   | 7 PM - 9 PM | Conf. room D | WIN 95/98/XP??<br><a href="mailto:daviddodge1@compuserve.com">daviddodge1@compuserve.com</a>                            | David Dodge                       |
| 2nd Wednesday | 7 PM - 9 PM | Conf. room D | Laptop SIG<br><a href="mailto:ctheprof@aol.com">ctheprof@aol.com</a>  | Carl Von Papp<br>425-643-1398     |
| 3rd Tuesday   | 7 PM - 9 PM | Conf. room D | Peachtree Accounting<br><a href="mailto:pearls1@qwest.net">pearls1@qwest.net</a>  | Pearl I. Campbell<br>425-641-1334 |
| 3rd Tuesday   | 7 PM - 9 PM | Computer Lab | Beginners Hardware<br><a href="mailto:j_m_mraz@hotmail.com">j_m_mraz@hotmail.com</a><br>(Computer repair & maintenance) | Joe Mraz<br>425-747-2433          |
| 3rd Wednesday | 7 PM - 9 PM | Conf. room D | Small Office / Home Office<br><a href="mailto:r_cowger@prodigy.net">r_cowger@prodigy.net</a>                            | Ron Cowger                        |
| 3rd Wednesday | 7 PM - 9 PM | Computer Lab | Seattle Internet User Group<br><a href="mailto:philbar45@attbi.com">philbar45@attbi.com</a>                             | Phil Keairns<br>425-222-7130      |
| 4th Tuesday   | 7 PM - 9 PM | Computer Lab | Digital Imaging SIG<br><a href="mailto:sallyannmowrey@msn.com">sallyannmowrey@msn.com</a>                               | Sally Ann Mowrey<br>206-996-5635  |
| 4th Wednesday | 7 PM - 9 PM | Conf. room D | HTML SIG<br><a href="mailto:jack@webwitch.com">jack@webwitch.com</a>  | Jack Beslanwich<br>206-723-9960   |

Meetings at locations other than the North Bellevue Community Center

|   |                                 |  |  |                               |
|---|---------------------------------|--|--|-------------------------------|
| 1st Tuesday                             | 6:15 PM - 9 PM                  | Microsoft's Redmond Campus Building 34, the Quinalt Rm Redmond, WA | Access SIG<br><a href="mailto:Teresa@eade.com">Teresa@eade.com</a><br>See their WEB site at<br><a href="http://www.eade.com/AccessKEGS/">http://www.eade.com/AccessKEGS/</a> | Teresa Eade<br>425-482-1021   |
| Almost every Tues.<br>Almost every Sat. | 7 PM - 9 PM<br>10:30 AM - 12:30 | Easter Seals of Washington<br>157 Roy St.<br>Seattle, WA           | Hardware SIG<br><a href="mailto:rockybay@scn.org">rockybay@scn.org</a><br>(Building & Configuring Computers for the physically challenged)                                   | Malcolm Taran<br>206-888-5848 |

Parking is limited at Easter Seals. Please contact Malcolm before going for the first time.)

## SIG Meeting Locations:

All small groups meet at the Bellevue Community Center unless noted as below.

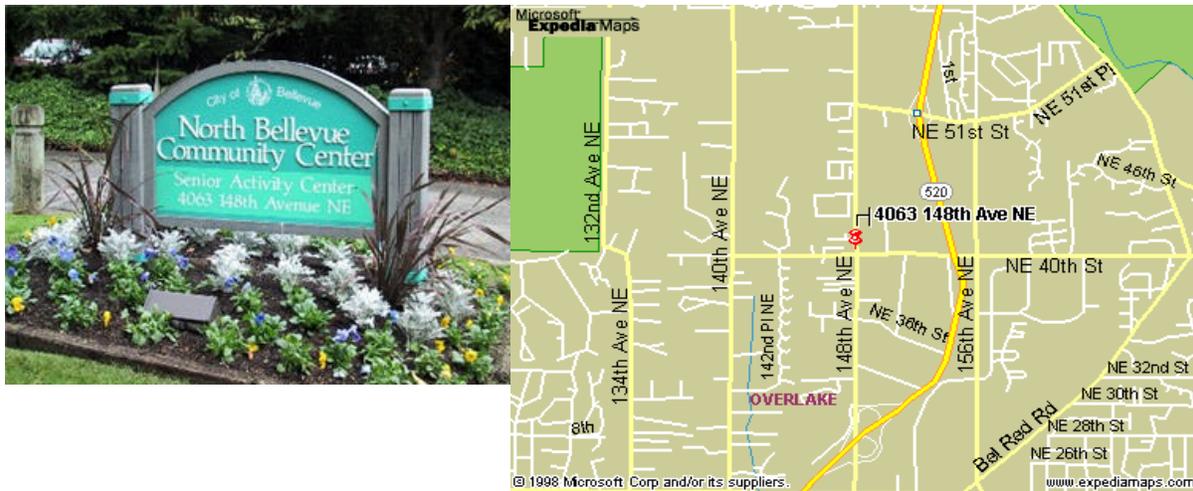
\* Access meets at the Microsoft Redmond Campus, in Building 34, the Quinalt Room

\*\* Easter Seals meets at the downtown location 157 Roy St. Seattle

\*\*\* Board Meetings are held at the home of Joe Mraz (j\_m\_mraz@hotmail.com for directions)

### Finding our primary SIG meeting location

**DRIVING INSTRUCTIONS:** Thanks to the improvements to SR 520, you may now use the new NE 40th St exit. If you are driving towards Redmond, exit and turn left to go over the overpass. If you are coming from Redmond, exit and turn right. Go to 148th Ave NE, and turn right. In very short order, you will see the North Bellevue Community / Senior Center sign on the left side of the roadway.



## History & Contact info:

KEGS was formed in late 1996 to meet the needs of personal computer users in the Greater Seattle Area. KEGS is a nonprofit organization that holds its general meetings on the second Thursday of each month.

In addition, KEGS sponsors a number of special interest groups (SIGs) that meet regularly to share common interests, learn new techniques, and resolve questions about the use of personal computer hardware, accessories, or software.

For a detailed listing of our SIG's, up-dated information about KEGS activities, and more, please see our web site at:

<http://www.kegs.org>.

Contact us at:  
2616 171st Ave SE  
Bellevue WA 98008  
425-747-2433  
[info@kegs.org](mailto:info@kegs.org)

To submit articles or software reviews for incorporation into this Newsletter, please send them to: [newsletter@kegs.org](mailto:newsletter@kegs.org)