

Time Warp

Written by Bob Baldwin, Editor
Sunday, 01 November 1998 21:55



You don't often get an opportunity to travel back in time but I could have sworn that was what happened to me during a recent weekend when I got caught up in Warpstock. As soon as I walked into the event's exhibit area I was taken back 20 years or more to the early days of personal computing. Enthusiastic individuals with significant knowledge of the product or service they were representing operated the exhibit booths. The people in the aisles were just as enthusiastic and knowledgeable.

Computer users and programmers working with IBM's OS/2 Warp operating system for personal computers produced the event. It was a grass roots affair without corporate support. I went there to see a demonstration of a voice-activated and speech-driven computerized maintenance management system from Aviar, Inc. of Pittsburgh, PA. In addition to taking over many of the actions typically executed by the mouse, the voice approach allows the operator to invoke an ad hoc reporting function by simply speaking instructions such as "Look up active work orders" to get the desired screen report or print-out. It worked for my voice without training the system.

The next day I stopped by a computer fair at the local community college and found a bustling bazaar in the gymnasium where one could buy new and used computers, circuit boards, hard drives, peripherals, and software. The prices were good, and there was a steady stream of people lugging boxes out to the parking lot. They knew what they were looking for and could recognize a bargain when they saw it.

The atmosphere at these events triggered some nostalgia. I couldn't help but remember the first time I tried to land the lunar module by typing in values on a Commodore personal computer and seeing the ASCII character representation of my vehicle crash again and again until I got it right.

Time Warp

Written by Bob Baldwin, Editor
Sunday, 01 November 1998 21:55

However, the image from these two events that stands out the most in my mind is the intensity of the people—both in the booths and in the aisles. The people in the booths were serious about what they were offering and how it could help the attendees. Although the people in the aisles were having a good time, they were equally serious in their search for information, products, and services that would help them get where they wanted to go.

It is time to turn up the intensity on best reliability and maintenance practices. That's what we plan to do at our event, MAINTECH South '98. Please join us in Houston on December 1-3 to see how much fun it can be when you get knowledgeable practitioners, experts, and vendors together to share information on successful maintenance practices. **MT**

