

Discussion: rmgroup comp.software.year-2000

Source: <http://coding.derkeiler.com/Archive/Cobol/comp.lang.cobol/2004-02/0343.html>

From: Jamie Andrews; real address _at_ bottom of message (*me_at_privacy.net*)

Date: 02/26/04

Date: 26 Feb 2004 18:53:55 GMT

This is a discussion concerning the removal (rmgrouping) of the newsgroup "comp.software.year-2000". This is not a formal call for votes, nor is it a threat of rmgrouping the newsgroup without a vote.

I begin with some history, followed by a discussion of the newsgroup topics today and the people posting articles to the newsgroup today. I end with some conclusions. An appendix contains a listing and classification of some recent threads in the newsgroup.

This article is intended to provoke discussion, in the hope that someone with more time on their hands than I have will be moved to hold an actual vote on rmgrouping the newsgroup. I will not formally propose or administer such a vote, however.

History

=====

The newsgroup "comp.software.year-2000" ("csy2k" in this article) was created in 1996 in order to discuss the "Year 2000 problem". This was the problem, thought to be widespread at the time, of the "Year 2000 bug" in software. The "Year 2000 bug" or "Y2K bug" was a generic term for any fault in software that would cause inappropriate software behaviour on or around Jan. 1, 2000. It was thought that many software systems might have such faults because many software systems stored dates (e.g. 20 Sept. 1987) with only two digits for the year (e.g. 20-09-87), a strategy that would no longer work as soon as the year 2000 arrived.

The first posts archived on Google Groups from csy2k appear to be from 6 Nov 1996. Over the next few years, until 1 Jan 2000, many software systems were revised or replaced due to the threat posed by the Y2K bug. During that period of time, csy2k was a forum in which people were able to express their thoughts and opinions on this important topic. Now, over four years

since 1 Jan 2000, the newsgroup is no longer necessary to the same degree, and some would say it is almost completely unnecessary.

In the first years of the newsgroup's existence, discussion about the Y2K problem evolved into sometimes-vehement debate between the so-called "doomsayers" or "doomers", characterized as having an overly-pessimistic attitude to what might happen, and the "Pollyannas" or "pollies", characterized as having an overly-optimistic attitude. Some of the discussion on the newsgroup today appears to be a continuing flame war between the "doomer" and "polly" camps.

The Newsgroup Topics Today

=====

On 25 Feb 2004, I analyzed the articles on csy2k stored on the comprehensive Usenet server "news.individual.net" from 18 Sep 2003 (the date of the first article still stored) to 25 Feb 2004. There were 144 threads, containing a total of 701 articles. 60 of the threads contained more than one article, with the remaining 81 containing only one article each. I classified the threads into 6 types, and counted the number of threads of each type. (The full listing of the threads and their classification is below, after my signature.) The result was:

- Y (Y2K) -- Discussion somewhat related to the Y2K problem: 4 threads
- R (Risks) -- Discussion related to other, non-Y2K risks of using computers: 10 threads
- P (Political) -- threads (not having to do with the above topics) about politics, conspiracies and issues of corporate governance: 59 threads
- F (Flame) -- threads apparently started by long-time posters in order to flame other long-time posters: 15 threads
- S (Software versions) -- threads in which people pose questions about Windows 2000 and other "2000" versions of software: 4 threads
- I (Irrelevant) -- subjects apparently having little or nothing to do with any of the above topics: 72 threads

The "P" and "F" topics arguably have no place on the comp.* hierarchy at all, and many of the "I" topics are the same. The "R" topics could be discussed on comp.programming or posted to the Risks Digest (mirrored on comp.risks). The "S" topics are probably appropriate for other comp.* groups, such as those

intended for discussions of the particular pieces of software in question.

This leaves the four "Y" threads mentioned above. However, on closer inspection, these threads turned out to be "Y2K-related" only in the loosest sense:

- The first thread concerns some software problems at Goodyear, starting with a claim (quickly denied by others) that they were Y2K-related.
- The second consists of one article saying that there was a Y2K-related discussion currently on comp.lang.cobol.
- The third is a link concerning the related 29 Feb 2004 bug (the fault in which software does not realize that 2004 is a leap year), followed by some reminiscences by old posters about the state of the newsgroup close to 1 Jan 2000.
- The fourth is a discussion about the 29 Feb 2004 bug, crossposted to comp.lang.cobol and spawning several "flame" and "irrelevant" subthreads.

I conclude that there was no currently-relevant and serious discussion of issues strongly related the year 2000 problem going on in the newsgroup comp.software.year-2000 from 18 Sep 2003 to 25 Feb 2004.

I did no formal analysis of the threads before 18 Sep 2003. However, I have been reading the newsgroup from time to time since before 1 Jan 2000. I believe that the time period of the above analysis is typical of the newsgroup over approximately the last two to three years.

The Newsgroup Posters Today

=====

94 of the 144 threads on csy2k during the period of the above analysis were started by one poster, using two aliases. Many of those threads consisted of only a single article, often posting a link to a web page followed by an excerpt and/or a provocative comment. Some, however, led to longer discussion.

Using Google Groups, I looked at the postings for four prominent recent posters over the same period (18 Sep 2003 – 25 Feb 2004). Google estimates that these posters contributed, respectively:

- 269 articles, using two different aliases;
- 155 articles;
- 62 articles; and
- 52 articles.

These four posters therefore contributed 538 of the 701 articles, or 76.75% of the articles, on the newsgroup in that period, with the first poster alone contributing 38.37% of the articles, an average of over two articles per day.

Again, this is consistent with my observations over recent years: the personalities sometimes change somewhat, but a few posters contribute most of the articles.

Conclusion

I conclude that the newsgroup comp.software.year-2000, though very relevant as recently as four years ago, is now a newsgroup dominated by a few personalities rehashing old battles and engaging in off-topic discussion. Since most of the discussion is more appropriate for the alt.* hierarchy, the newsgroup is no longer appropriate as a member of the Big Eight.

The small amount of relevant and semi-relevant discussion on the group could fit in the newsgroup comp.programming, in the RISKS digest and its mirror on comp.risks, or in newsgroups such as comp.lang.cobol that have often contained discussions of the Y2K problem in the past.

Why has csy2k not been rmgrouped already? This is probably attributable to the fact that very few people want to engage in *on*-topic discussions of the Y2K problem anymore. As a result, few people are around in the newsgroup to complain about the pervasive *off*-topic discussions.

Finally, I conclude that the newsgroup, with 701 articles over the last 131 days, or an average of 37 articles per week, is not a problem that should be ignored. comp.software.year-2000 should be rmgrouped as soon as possible.

Please post your thoughts on this matter. Thanks for your time and patience in reading this.

--Jamie. (nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita)
andrews .uwo } Merge these two lines to obtain my e-mail address.
@csd .ca } (Unsolicited "bulk" e-mail costs everyone.)

Appendix: comp.software.year-2000 threads, 18 Sep 2003 - 25 Feb 2004

as stored on news.individual.net

(Types are as referred to in the above article)

Type Num Subject

i 1 umax Astra 2200 Scanner
f 2 Isabel and White Plastic Patio Chairs
i 3 This Is Necessary
i 4 Wink, wink!
r 5 Computerised Vote Counting
f 6 How the Dwarf and assorted pollies went astray..
i 7 fff
r 8 Electronic Vote Counting
p 9 Democracy is in the machine.
p 10 The Poly Theory
r 11 More on Electronic Voting --- UCSC forum
r 12 Lookit *mah* hole Ma.. An' ah didn't feel a thang!
f 13 Hamasaki-san and his stoic stand
i 14 Ship 'em to Georgia!
i 15 Votin'_machine.doc
i 16 Onstream tape backup ADR2.60ide-06-vtc03 Flash v34d e223c200
p 17 Conspiracy theorists last longer!
r 18 Oh Dear.....
p 19 Diana feared sabotage!
p 20 Spot the signs 101
y 21 Y2k bug long term effects hit Goodyear!
p 22 One again, conspricy terrists were righto!
i 23 Them craaayzee oil people, eh?
r 24 Rays from outta space!
s 25 Borland's Quattro Pro 5.0
i 26 Bobby's coon dawg!
f 27 Why Hamasaki-san loves blondes..
i 28 What if indded!
i 29 Krispy Kreme's shareholders babes
i 30 Wall Street's scared: Price of coke to fall!
p 31 Fifth Estate runnin' a mock!
p 32 "War of Ideas"
p 33 Coup de gr?ce for the crownies?
i 34 The healing powers of LED
p 35 Exemple of a *framing* op.
f 36 Plato fer dummies
i 37 Auld Yeller at the rescue!
f 38 E'er so slowly...
i 39 See the fireworks at:
i 40 Programmer's unpaid overtime.
i 41 getting ready to launch
r 42 In there own words: Coder's fooleries with votin' machinez
p 43 Best one-page summary of Iraq Invasion
i 44 Offshorin' torture!
p 45 Common sense..
p 46 Full Faith and Credit...
p 47 Larouche is gaining in the polls: time to frame him!
r 48 Another belly flop in the backroom
p 49 Jes frame 'em...
i 50 Inside and outside Walter Reed
p 51 Rev. Moon Editor in chief

p 52 Mind games!
f 53 Music to the ears
p 54 With a *special relation* like this....
i 55 Is that you, old gogle?
i 56 New babes' site for..
p 57 Blukett again in the news!
p 58 Bobby's on his way to the poor house!
r 59 Interesting (and refreshingly on topic)
s 60 Quicken 2000 Downloads with Mac 9.2.2
i 61 Good clean fun, eh what?
i 62 How the dwarfettes fared in Babylon!
i 63 Exhibit A: an titillatin" experience!
i 64 China: Ol' Yeller fer all!
p 65 How grand ma did it...
i 66 Symptoms o' porousness!
f 67 [OT] '1706 House'?
p 68 Canada's crooked elites
p 69 The Emprah is easily seduced!
p 70 That Perle guy!
p 71 Merrylander in denial!
p 72 The Grandees abroad!
p 73 Gawd bliss Murka!
s 74 Upgrade to Windows 98
p 75 Edduhmuhcaytin' Murkans
p 76 Doomers as wise guys!
p 77 Coders still manage..
i 78 A site for wise guys!
y 79 Bit o' y2k rumble in
i 80 CoolTick.com stock ticker for your desktop. FREE at cooltick
f 81 Paging Hamasaki-san: a pill to attract babes!
p 82 Bring the friggin' burro to Gitmo
p 83 Accuracy is a concept, Bob.
p 84 Yeah, well....
p 85 Canada prepares to enforce Islamic law
p 86 No Bull - Canadian Animals Barred From Top Rodeo
i 87 Air Canada Rewards Staff With Burger Coupon
i 88 Bugs crawling back into Canadian beds
p 89 Canadian Gitmo Detainee 'Dropped Into Afghanistan'
p 90 Easy going Canaduh's is the best place...
i 91 No Donkeys, No Monkeys, just a bit of perspective.
p 92 Cauze they hates freedum!
i 93 For the Barron ranch.....
i 94 Blonde geek babe does the math!
i 95 Martini fer real men!
p 96 Political reactions, Canadian style.
p 97 You VILL adore us or we VILL kill you.
p 98 Unifying Event
f 99 bartcop is getting better all the time....
p 100 Vote riggin' in Merka and the Great Florida Codin' Foolery
i 101 Chemtrails over NC
p 102 Ooooooooooh Caaanaaaduuuuuuuuh!

- p 103 Ya wanna press-releases.....
- i 104 The SARS calamity
- i 105 Easy on the mayo, said she.....
- i 106 Le Carr?'s latest!
- p 107 Sign the petition!
- i 108 A parting bit of levity!
- f 109 Bobby's X-mass decorations!
- i 110 The picture of...
- p 111 Texans and gold!
- i 112 Codin' fools to unionized!
- y 113 Four years later... January 10 meltdown
- i 114 Niagara Falls' survivor!
- p 115 We wish you an ORANGE ALERT xmas - wooo hoooo !!!
- p 116 Best wishes for a safe and happy festive season!
- f 117 Coders' in dire sttraights
- i 118 [OT] Holiday Poetry
- f 119 Mr Goober havin' a mouthful of eels
- p 120 Only in Canuckistan!
- y 121 No panic - but .. Y2K + 4
- f 122 Piddie's bike and the Holidayz
- i 123 Diskette Bad Sector
- p 124 The news in Merk...er....Iraq
- p 125 WTC7 pulled?
- r 126 Red faces about Mars?
- i 127 I've made \$9,000 sitting on my ass, you can too, its SO Easy
- i 128 New Book From Tom Volinchak, Tommy Volinchak, Tommy's Tunes,
- i 129 \$\$\$ Im at a loss for words THIS WORKS \$\$\$
- p 130 Canadian punk wannabees and the Auld British Laws.....
- p 131 Men of conscience
- p 132 What about Vietnam's citizens?
- i 133 Postal Lottery: Turn \$6 into \$60,000 in 90 days, GUARANTEED
- p 134 Mumbo-jumbo in Merka...
- p 135 Hutton report warning
- i 136 can anyone tell me what software I needed. Thanks.
- i 137 Sun and climates
- p 138 Biz is biz!
- p 139 Hilarious!
- f 140 Posting for Dr John!
- p 141 Hutton the mutton...
- i 142 Sept. 29, 2004!
- i 143 scanning software?
- s 144 office xp file-how to open in office 2000?