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"Conversations with Fred," Middlesex News

12/14/92

Mac users create
hubbub in the Hub

Is Boston big enough for two Macintosh users groups? We could find out over the next few months.

BMUG, the world's largest Mac group, based in Berkeley, Calf., recently started a chapter in Boston. Boston, of course, is home to the Boston Computer Society, which is the world's largest computer users group and which has a large Mac group of its own.

Coals to Newcastle? An advance into enemy territory?

No, no, we're more civilized here. This is Boston, after all.

The BMUGers are quick to say they don't see themselves as competition; that they'd love to work with the BCS Mac group.

``We are very willing and happy to cooperate with the BCS,'' says Roz Ault of Winchester, administrator of BMUG's new Boston-area bulletin-board system.

Still, it's hard to ignore the fact that Ault and the other folks putting together the BMUG effort are the same people who, until a couple of months ago, ran the BCS's own Mac bulletin-board system.

Exactly what happened depends, as they say, on whom you talk to.

Ault puts it this way:

She and other volunteers grew increasingly frustrated because of what they saw as inadequate returns to the Mac Group from BCS dues, both for general Mac activities and for some specific proposed improvements to the BBS, such as high-speed modems and additional lines. Several of the Mac volunteers began talking about doing their own fund raising, for Mac-only events and activities.

In October or thereabouts, the BCS Mac Group and BMUG actually shared a booth at an Apple convention in Boston. That, apparently, was too much for Bob Grenoble, the BCS's current president, who sent a memo to his board of directors that this was an embarrassment. One of the members of the BCS Board of Directors was also a director of the Mac group. He told others about it, and pretty soon, everybody who had been running the BCS Mac BBS resigned en masse.

``We had all spent just hundreds and hundreds of hours working as volunteers,'' and this was the last straw, Ault says.

Since they were already in contact with BMUG, they approached that group about setting up a Boston chapter, and the idea was quickly

approved. She adds BMUG (which used to stand for Berkeley Macintosh Users Group but which is now officially just BMUG to avoid pesky copyright issues), already had 1,000 members in New England.

Grenoble tells another story:

The BCS is trying to get a better handle on its finances and that this meant asking user groups to adhere to certain standard financial-reporting and accounting practices.

But ``disgruntled people'' at the BCS Mac group refused to do this and instead quit the BCS, he says.

``It's that simple,'' he says. It has nothing to do with Apple East or anything other than financial reporting, he says.

Of course, this being America, competition is Good, and now all you Mac users who'd like to meet others of your kind or even just get help with the odd question or two have Choice.

If you want to see what BMUG has to offer, have your computer dial (617) 721-5840. If you have a Mac, you can download terminal software that will let you communicate with the system as if it were installed right on your desktop complete with icons and folders. Ault says the BBS is running on her own computer right now, but with high speed modems and phone lines paid for by BMUG.

The BCS Mac BBS number is (617) 864-0712 (ironically, it runs on an MS-DOS machine until relatively recently, Macs could not really handle multiple phone lines).

Fred the Middlesex News Computer eagerly awaits your call. With a computer and modem, you can call him, any time, day or night, at (508) 872-8461. Set your parameters to 8-1-N and up to 2400 baud. You can also send news tips or suggestions to Fred via Fidonet net-mail in care of sysop at 1:322/190; CompuServe at 73727,545; or Internet at adamg@world.std.com.