

z/Bottom Line



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Keeping Up With the YUMPIES

We are a vocal community when it comes to verbalizing impending danger to our industry. Over the years we've hashed out and solved (at least in our minds) the problems of the mainframe world. We've most recently been very concerned with the "geriatric" state of our workforce. The very caretakers of the important mainframes are indeed graying, retiring or otherwise leaving, potentially creating a vacuum of human talent to run our magnificent mainframe data centers. We in the industry called for it, and IBM responded by creating an inspired program to cultivate young talent, called the IBM Academic Initiative System z program (www-304.ibm.com/jct09002c/university/scholars/products/zseries/). This program even features a series of contests with prizes appealing to these younger recruits, including an iPod Nano, a Sony Playstation, even a trip to the IBM Mainframe Lab (was that first or last prize?)—no kidding (www-304.ibm.com/jct09002c/university/students/contests/mainframecontest.html)! You can learn more about IBM's Academic Initiative by reading Mike Todd's article in this issue titled "Students Compete to Master the Mainframe."

As part of the contest, IBM even encouraged the artsy side of these wannabe-mainframers with a haiku contest. Here are some of the responses collected:

*The wind blows softly
Through the leaves of autumn. wait,
That's just the mainframe*
—Van Landrum, U. of South Alabama

*Life on a mainframe
Is the life I want for me
Share my C.P.U.*
—Jeffrey Painter, NC State

*F3 - Please take me
To a previous menu
And I will thank thee*
—Marc Turnes, Northern Illinois U.

*Mainframe oh mainframe
Today you work your hardest
Mainframe I thank you*
—Stanley Hu, NC State

*New world discovered
Mainframes are a legacy
In old lies future.*
—Ezra Fernandez, SUNY Binghamton U.

Unfortunately, this has created a problem we never saw coming: Now that we've done the work to get this young energy channeled toward the most superior computing platform, how do we keep up with these Young Urban Mainframe Professionals (YUMPIES)?

There's much to consider. We're part of this revolution at illustro, as we have an entire Web development staff, all under age 30, doing nothing but creating new technologies to offer the mainframe community. But it's hard to keep up with their expectations. Just sample these help desk items our resident gray-hair support staff is trying to deal with:

Q: How do I download my MP3 files to a sequential VSAM file?

Q: Which partition does AOL IM run in?

Q: Where is the ESCON to iPod adapter?

It was bad enough they naturally expected a touch-screen 3270 interface. It took a full day of therapy for their injured fingers to convince them we respond only to keyboard input ("*not even a mouse?*").

Even the computer operators are having trouble. In an ever-increasing world of abbreviations brought on by SMS and IMing, take a look at the JCL some of these younger mainframe pros are submitting:

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// JOB BUILDFIL
// PAUSE *** PMTWA LOL ***
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How in the world is the operator supposed to translate that comment on the pause card to "Please Mount Tape When Asked—Laughing Out Loud"?? Clearly, we have a gap of some kind, whether generation, technology, or both.

All kidding aside, we're glad to have them aboard, haikus and all. We need fresh blood to keep this community of ours pumping, and it seems we're heading in the right direction. We're getting very good at "mashups" (another new-gen term describing the combination of technologies to create another). Mainframes are even appearing on the social networking scene—check it out at www.myspace.com/mainframesrock.

And that's z/Bottom Line. ;) z

About the Author

Eric L. Vaughan is president and CEO of illustro Systems International, LLC. He has more than 25 years of experience in the IT industry, and is leading illustro Systems in its efforts to help IT management transform their mainframe investments. Comments and suggestions are welcome.

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