CNS /Update Newsletter Feature

John Bevis Elected President of IBM-based User Group

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UF Information Technology

UFIT

2046 NE Waldo Rd, Suite 2100
Gainesville Florida  32609-8942
(352) 392.2061
<editor@cns.ufl.edu>
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John Bevis Elected President of IBM-based User Group

Saying “John Bevis likes to SHARE” is a sizeable understatement. First, you should know SHARE is not an acronym. It's the name of an organization whose volunteer members SHARE, as a starting point, information about IBM-based information technology systems. Second, John Bevis, NERDC systems manager, has been active in SHARE for 20 years. Third (the momentum behind this interview) is the proud fact at NERDC that Bevis was elected president of SHARE at the group's July convention in New Orleans. NERDC has long supported SHAREing by its employees.

NERDC Systems Manager John Bevis

/Update: Congratulations on your election. What are your plans?

Bevis: It's a great time for SHARE, with a huge opportunity to provide value to our members. The industry is moving very quickly, and people find it hard to keep abreast of the technology available to enhance their operations. So SHARE's role as a provider of high-density educational opportunities keeps growing. It's a user group people find value in belonging to. One of my goals is to make an even wider variety of topics available to the attendees.

/Update: So SHARE is not just about IBM computers and systems.

Bevis: We don't restrict what we talk about. Many technologies related to computing, and many different vendors, are represented at SHARE. This summer, for example, we had several sessions put on by Microsoft.

/Update: What is a typical SHARE conference like?

Bevis: Big. It's a Monday through Friday event. In New Orleans this summer, we had more than 2,000 attendees and 970 sessions. At times we had up to 38 concurrent sessions.

/Update: 38 concurrent sessions? Doesn't that drive you crazy, having to choose among so many?
Bevis: It can. On the other hand, if a session isn't what you expected, you can move to any other one. You're not stuck.

/Update: What changes have you seen at SHARE?

Bevis: SHARE has been around (since 1955), and has experienced cycles of growth, disruption, and healing. Over the last few years, we've eliminated a layer of management, done away with many rules, and eliminated interim meetings that were a scheduling burden to many members, as well as a drain on SHARE resources. After all these changes my job is to refocus the organization on growth and our mission. That mission is to improve the effectiveness of our members' information systems and professional staff. We do this by providing education, promoting mutual support, and influencing information technology strategies, products and services.

/Update: What are current growth areas for SHARE as a support organization?

Bevis: One of them is a refocusing on traditional mainframes as servers in a networked world. Many organizations have vast amounts of data on mainframes, and have a need to make that information available to the whole organization, or to external users via the Web. That's what people want to do with their systems.

Another fertile area is the inter-operability of traditional mainframes, the SP2 and networks. SHARE is the only forum addressing all of these areas.

/Update: NERDC encourages participation in SHARE. Why?

Bevis: Through our participation in SHARE, NERDC is well-known at the highest levels of IBM. These global contacts, and the knowledge IBM has about our staff's capabilities, has led to joint ventures, access to new technology -- well before products hit the market -- and allowed us to significantly influence how IBM implements new products and services.

Another benefit is that you meet people you can call upon to help solve problems, and that works in both directions.

On a personal level, I've gained a lot of knowledge, and put it to use here at NERDC on various projects. In addition to technical information, I acquired management knowledge I wouldn't have been exposed to otherwise. For example, as treasurer of SHARE, from 1994 to 1996, I was CFO of an organization two-thirds the size of NERDC, with responsibility for an annual budget of $5 million. This has helped me work with NERDC's accounting staff.

/Update: Just how many SHARE conferences have you attended?

Bevis: I've missed only one semiannual conference since I started attending in 1977. I also went to many planning sessions and interim meetings.

/Update: SHARE is all about working with new technology. Have you been able to use new technology to improve SHARE?

Bevis: Over the years I've been involved in a number of different projects using new technologies. These include developing tools for scheduling the conferences, building the conference agenda and distributing it electronically via Gopher and the Web, and more recently, using CD-ROM to distribute our conference proceedings.
**SHARED FACTS**

"SHARE members are leaders in the application of information systems technologies to real-world problems. A substantial percentage of major users of state-of-the-art information technologies is represented in SHARE membership, including more than 90 percent of the Fortune 100 companies, leading universities, and public sector organizations. SHARE's technical work is carried out by projects, steering committees, and task forces. SHARE's principal information delivery mechanism remains the same...interactive meetings of member participants. The first meeting, held in 1955, included scientists and engineers whose companies had ordered IBM's newest computer, the 704. In 1995, SHARE's technical conferences attracted attendees from more than 1,800 member installations on six continents."

--from the SHARE home page at: [http://www.SHARE.org](http://www.share.org)

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