



# THE OMNI USER

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## How Late Can You Be?

And still call it a November issue?

This issue is way, way, late and that's nobody's fault but mine. As you probably know, we typically don't have a December issue, but this year will be different! Just in time for Christmas, we'll have a super Holiday Issue totally jam-packed with all the information you could want about the speakers and content of the upcoming conference. I don't want to let the cat out of the bag, but some of the most influential names in the industry are scheduled to be presenting. We have the very top names in iSeries technology on tap, including Farr, Paris, Gantner, Botz, Hintermeister, and quite a few others.

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*Edited by Joe Pluta - omni-comm@plutabrothers.com*

It's tough to get things together for a newsletter sometimes, especially when the holidays come around and everyone is scrambling to get things done. Add family commitments, unseasonable weather, and the untimely demise of the aged but beloved Christmas tree, and you have a recipe for disaster. But the good news is that the February conference (that is the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual OMNI User Technical Conference, to be official), which takes up the majority of the energy of the entire OMNI staff, is going to be well worth the effort.

So enough of my excuses. Let's get on with the issue. This one will be fairly short and sweet. There's no meeting in December, and the November dinner meeting is long past, so I'll just give you a couple of quick recaps. I'll share the COMMON Corner and a little bit more, along with some updates on the conference, and we'll be on our way.

Thanks for your support!

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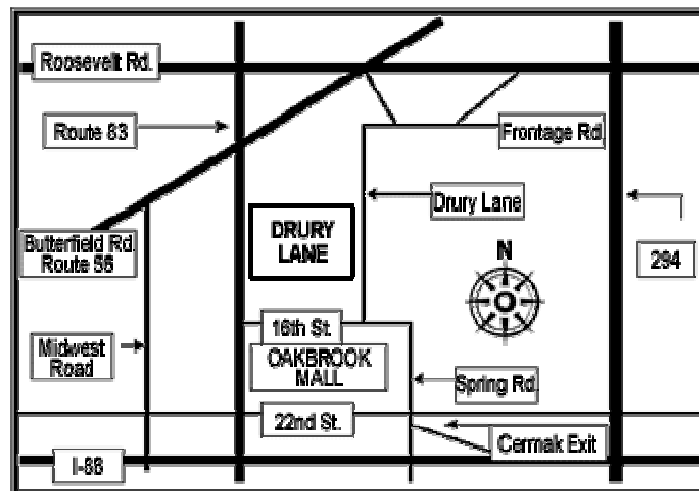
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## The 18<sup>th</sup> Annual OMNI User Technical Conference V5R4: "It's in there"

But where is the conference?

This year we have the pleasure of announcing that the OMNI User Technical Conference will be held at the luxurious Drury Lane Theater, in easily accessible Oakbrook Terrace, central to pretty much the entire Chicago metropolitan area, and just a stone's throw from Interstates 88 and 294.



The facilities are superb, and the amenities unmatched. Feel free to stop by the Drury Lane website for more information: <http://www.drurylaneoakbrook.com/>.

## The State of the iSeries

You know, this issue is late and a lot of it is because I'm spending a lot of time talking to people all throughout our industry, and frankly I'm angry. Anybody with enough common sense to flush a toilet can see that the entire industry is regaining its sanity and, as always when that happens, the midrange market is the place where people flock. When the dollar falls, buy gold. When the IT industry picks up, buy midrange. But despite the obvious signs of health good, honest IT professionals are still wondering whether this is just some sort of temporary resurgence.

And that's because of "experts". Oh, let me tell you, I'm sick and tired of listening to the "state of the industry" from those self-proclaimed experts who don't have enough common sense and/or integrity to blow out a candle. The ones who told us we should replace RPG with Java, or OS/400 with Linux. Or <shudder> with Windows. These were the "platform independence" panderers. And even though it was clear to those of us with a little time in the industry that the primary motivation for the majority of these people was money, money and more money, they still talked a good game with a lot of buzzwords and confused a lot of good people and wasted a ton of time and money. And unfortunately IBM let them get away with it for a while.

There are still a few bottom dwellers who will try to convince you to move your iSeries applications to Windows, but there will always be snake oil salesmen. For the most part, those days seem to be behind us, finally. There are a few folks for whom platform independence makes sense (primarily software vendors) and they're going that way. Some other companies have attempted to migrate to other platforms; hundreds or thousands, if you believe the hype. Unsurprisingly, none have been successful.

And in the meantime, consolidation is the new buzzword, iSeries growth outpaces all midrange computers, the i5 brings a new meaning to the word "integration" and even good old RPG is making a spectacular comeback (just ask George Farr!).

It's a good time to be us!



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## October Meeting Recap

In our ongoing quest to provide you with the very best information to make your company successful, OMNI again managed to provide top-notch talent for the October dinner meeting.

Sreeni Angara of Mercury Consulting discussed and demonstrated the Websphere Business Integration technology to an appreciative audience, showing an integration between three disparate applications, including one Domino application.

Many OMNI thanks to Sreeni Angara for taking the time to share his knowledge with OMNI.

## November meeting recap

In November OMNI continued its emphasis on integration with a dinner meeting presentation on Microsoft and iSeries integration from Marcello Benati of Berbee Information Networks, Inc.

Marcello discussed many of the new Microsoft announcements and warned of steps which should be taken when integrating Microsoft products with the iSeries. Check out his "Introduction to .Net" slides on the OMNI website.

Many OMNI thanks to Marcello Benati for taking the time to share his knowledge with OMNI.

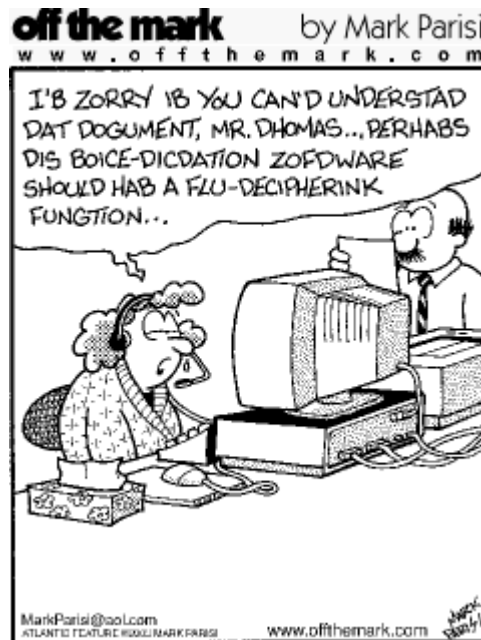
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## CALL FOR JANUARY MEETING TOPICS!

If you have a topic that you would like to learn more about, or if you have some technology experience you'd like to share, please contact us to let us know! Our current agenda is to provide more information on iSeries integration; since the tide seems to be swinging back towards server consolidation, it seems to make sense for us to learn as many techniques as possible for making our illustrious server communicate with the rest of the world. Possible topics range from integration with Microsoft, integration with Unix, interoperability between RPG and Java, incorporating wireless devices into your business... the options are endless. But we need you to let us know!

### Upcoming Midrange Events

January 17 5:00 pm	OMNI Monthly Dinner Meeting Subject TBA Online registration available here soon!	Embassy Suites 707 E. Butterfield Rd Lombard, IL
February 7	18th Annual OMNI User Technical Conference V5R4: "It's in there" <a href="#">Details available here</a>	Drury Lane Oak Brook, IL



## October 2005 COMMON Corner

Reprinted from the October 2005 issue of COMMON.CONNECT  
(*In keeping with the bizarre timing of this particular issue*)

### Wisconsin Midrange Computer Professionals Association

By Jane Jerrard

While some local user groups in the iSeries world have a tough time attracting and keeping members, one group, in the heart of the heartland, seems to be doing just fine. Is it geographic advantage? Dedicated volunteers who have run the group for nearly 20 years? Perhaps a little of both...

**User Group:** WMCPA, or Wisconsin Midrange Computer Professional Association

**Founded:** The group's first meeting took place on September 13, 1984. It began as the Southeastern Wisconsin/Northeastern Illinois System 38 User Group, but within a year it split into a Wisconsin group and an Illinois group. (Eventually the Illinois group disbanded.) Minutes from that first meeting stated that "the emphasis of the group will be of a technical nature," and that IBM was encouraged to send representatives and speakers.

**Location:** WMCPA is based in the Milwaukee area, where monthly meetings are held. Asked why this LUG has been so successful for so long, John Boswell, past president, says, "probably our proximity to Rochester ... and they did a good job of putting out boxes in this area."

**Membership:** "We have about 120 member companies," says Boswell. "Some of those are in northern Illinois. We have a list of about 800 people who are members, seminar attendees, and meeting attendees. We'll send email blasts to that list, though we're starting to cut back on who gets our communications."

**Meetings:** WMCPA holds regular meetings on the second Thursday of each month, which draw 35 to 50 attendees. Members pay \$30 and nonmembers pay \$40, which includes the presentation(s) and a buffet dinner. WMCPA generally loses a little money on their monthly meetings, and see this as a natural cost.

"We typically start registration and networking at 5:30, then have dinner at 6:30 followed by a very brief business meeting, then the presentation," says Jack Carlson, program director. "But occasionally, I like to mix it up. A couple of times a year, we'll add a second, related presentation at 4:30. This helps justify the cost of travel for the speaker."

The LUG sends their current program director to the fall COMMON conference to research speakers and topics for future meetings and to network in the Expo. "I'm happy to chase down speakers" at COMMON, says Carlson, "if the membership tells me what they want. I solicit requests from members and the board, for both topics and speakers."

**Annual Seminar:** WMCPA has hosted a two-day Spring Seminar every year since 1985. This event is their major source of revenue each year, and money made on the seminar helps fund the costs of their monthly meetings. The seminar draws heavy-hitters from IBM and the industry, who present sessions and act as keynote speakers. Past speakers include Frank Soltis, John Sears, Susan Gantner, Jon Paris, Trevor Perry, George Farr, Carole Miner, and Bob Tipton.

Members of WMCPA who attend the seminar pay \$425 for two-day attendance; nonmembers pay \$550. (Annual membership dues are \$125 per company and \$50 per individual.)

Asked his advice for those LUGs that would like to host their own seminar, Boswell says, “Get that hotel first! They fill up fast. We hold our seminar in an off-season here, so it’s easier to get space and the room rates are low. We get enough people staying over that our meeting rooms are free. This helps keep our costs down”

To boost the number of attendees staying overnight, WMCPA added a casino night on the first day of the 2005 seminar. “It was tremendously popular with people,” says Carlson. “It really helped our room pick-up of people staying over.”

Recently, the seminar has averaged around 175 attendees per day. “We hope to get that up over 200,” says Carlson. “We couldn’t handle much over 300 a day with the volunteers running it.”

**Education Affiliation:** WMCPA has an ongoing relationship with Gateway Technical College (Kenosha), the only college in southeast Wisconsin with an iSeries program. Gateway students are invited to attend the monthly meetings for \$20 each. Five Gateway students helped run last year’s seminar, even helping in the labs.

**Volunteers:** WMCPA has a long history of dedicated volunteers. A few board members, including Boswell, have been volunteering for the group since 1985. “We get one or two new people volunteering every year,” Boswell says. “We just continue to make people aware that we need help on certain committees, or on the board. We’ve got a good core group and that helps.”

**Web site:** [www.wmcpa.org](http://www.wmcpa.org)

## **OMNI 2005 Board**

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