

Robert Fox

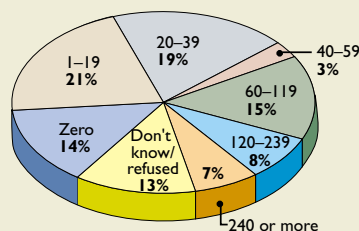
News Track

MORE PAY NOW

Professionals looking for IT-related jobs in the U.S. can expect starting salaries this year to increase an average of 6.8% over their 1999 levels, according to RHI Consulting, Menlo Park, Calif. Those specializing in systems integration will see the sharpest rise in base compensation, with starting salaries projected to increase more than 17% over 1999. Some other key starting salary increases reported in the annual *2000 RHI Consulting Salary Guide*: IS senior managers—11%, ranging from \$54,750 to \$69,000 per year; senior help desk technicians—10.8%, ranging from \$39,250 to 50,500 per year; programmer analysts—10.5%, ranging from \$51,500 to \$73,000 per year; software developers—9.8%, ranging from \$54,000 to \$72,750 per year; and software engineers—5%, ranging from \$57,500 to \$84,250 per year.

Cyber-slackers on the clock

How many minutes per day employees say their co-workers spend making personal use of company technology:



Source: The Marlin Co.

EURO NET USE

Germans use the Web at home almost as much as the average U.S. Internet user, says a new market research survey by MMXI Europe BV, described as the first broad-based survey of the European market. The survey, which covers the three largest European Internet countries—Germany, Britain, and France—found that Germans spent an average of about five hours a month online; in Britain, Europe's largest market, users spent an average of four hours per month online; and in France, monthly at-home online use was about three hours. While the survey showed U.S.-based network names continue to attract a healthy share of users, more local pages won out in Germany and France.

“We’re starting to enter the second wave of Europeans coming online—the first 10% were perhaps more comfortable with technology and English-language content. We really think the second wave—the next 20%—is the big opportunity for local heroes to come in.” —Internet analyst at Robertson Stephens International

THE CURSOR WHO SPIED ME

A customizable computer cursor that morphs from a simple pointer to just about anything, from campaign slogans to cartoon characters to ads, has been found by privacy activists to double as a tracking mechanism, keeping a record of its users' online movements, reports *USA Today*. Critics say Web site operators can use the software download for the Comet Cursor to get statistics that show how many peo-

ple download the software and which parts of the site they visit. A unique ID number separates new visitors from return visitors. New York-based Comet Systems says its Comet cursor was designed specifically so it would not collect users' names and email addresses. The company claims some 15 million users at various sites, including Time Warner properties and the Al Gore campaign Web site (where the feature has since been yanked), like the cursor because it's fun to use. “We are not going to create user profiles, and

we are not going to sell any of this information to third parties," says a Comet spokesperson.

ROBOT WHEELCHAIR CLIMBS STAIRS

Imagine a sleek wheelchair with two pairs of midsize wheels on a swivel. Imagine approaching a curb, or even, stairs, and being able to swivel repeatedly up the stairs. Imagine sitting in the supermarket, hitting the "stand" button, and swiveling up on two wheels to reach the top shelf. This describes the IBOT, a self-propelled chair on wheels that knows, using gyroscopes and microprocessors, how to keep its balance.

Invented by Dean Kamen, the IBOT is now in clinical trials prior to approval by the FDA. Johnson & Johnson has invested \$50 million in developing the Independence 3000 IBOT Transporter. Availability by prescription is projected for 2001, at about \$25,000.

THE BOSS KNOWS

Corporate surveillance of employee email is rising:

- 27% of major U.S. firms check employee email, up from 15% in 1997.
- Fewer companies that monitor email are telling their employees they are doing so—84% in 1999, down from 91% in 1998.
- Financial services firms lead in electronic monitoring (including voice mail and video surveillance)—68%, followed by business and professional service providers—51%—and by wholesalers and retailers—47%.

Source: America Management Association survey of member companies

Y2K AFTERMATH

Bottom Line Price Tag

Governments and companies worldwide spent about \$200 billion on the Y2K computer problem, U.S. Y2K chief John Koskinen said. This figure is easy to break down: The U.S. spent \$100 billion; the rest of the world spent \$100 billion.

"There was puffery by vendors and some money

was wasted, but these were real problems."

—Leon Kappelman, co-chair of the Society for Information Management's Y2K Working group

"Why did we fall for this hype? I feel cheated, betrayed, misused, abused, deceived, and everything else!" —Anonymous posting in an Internet discussion group, signed "Gullible"

On the Horizon

This month's leap day, the 29th, could pose the next problem for computers not programmed to recognize the first "extra" leap year in 400 years. Leap day 2000 is an exception in that most leap days normally are skipped in years ending in 00. However, if the year ending in 00 can be divided evenly by 400 it is still a leap year. Some computers may not expect a leap day this year, and thus skip ahead to March 1, 2000.

HIGH TECH, HOLD THE COMPUTER

The most complicated watch made without a computer was auctioned at Sotheby's. The 74-year-old Patek Philippe pocket watch sold for \$11 million, the most ever paid for a timepiece. **C**

Send items of interest to fox_r@acm.org

NIELSON NET RATINGS

Top 10 Web Sites as of November 1999

Property	Unique Audience	Time Per Person
1. AOL Websites	21,935	0:10:00
2. Yahoo!	19,965	0:25:38
3. MSN	12,966	0:18:07
4. Lycos Network	9,767	0:07:31
5. GO Network	6,543	0:12:48
6. Microsoft	5,570	0:07:17
7. Excite@Home	5,322	0:14:07
8. Blue Mt. Arts	4,404	0:11:49
9. Time Warner	4,228	0:09:24
10. AltaVista	3,770	0:06:05