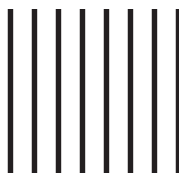


Official Newsletter
SouthEastern Michigan
Computer Organization, Inc.

DATA BUS



Volume 27

May 2002

Number 5

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The SouthEastern Michigan Computer Organization, Inc. (SEMCO) is a non-profit, 501(c)(3), group dedicated to providing information, education and a forum to computer users (professional and amateur) and other interested individuals. Membership in SEMCO is open to all individuals 18 years or older. Persons under 18 years may become members through the sponsorship of a parent or guardian. Dues of \$30/year include monthly DATA BUS, access to SEMCO's Message Service, and free personal ads.

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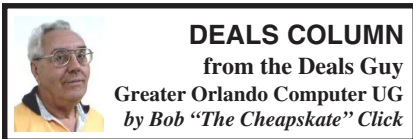
Your mailing label and membership cards list the month and year your membership expires. A DUES DUE message may appear on the newsletter back cover page two months before your subscription expires. Newsletters will not be sent after the month of expiration. Back issues may not be available. Renew your membership as early as possible to avoid missing any newsletters.

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SEMCO MEETINGS

Sunday,
May 12, 2002

Board Meeting	12:00pm
General Meeting	1:30pm
SIG-IBM Meeting	1:45pm
Social Period	3:15pm
IBM Novice Group	3:45pm
SIG-IBM Intermediate	3:45pm



So far, nobody has answered my call to take over the Deals Column. I don't blame them because it's a demanding task. I can't say it's a thankless job though because I receive many thanks everywhere I go. This may sound egotistical, but I would surely miss that. Some editors didn't print my April column, so perhaps that's part of the reason for no response. I'll keep it going for a short time, but I'm not sure how long. Maybe I'll have more time after all my company has gone next month. Actually, I've received several messages asking me **NOT** to stop because they just enjoy reading it. It's very gratifying to have people enjoying my work.

There are some discouraging things such as a couple of editors who were content to just print the name of the product, the price and where to buy it, until I asked them "please do not do it that way." They were compressing my two-page column to one paragraph.

I think those editors are misinterpreting what makes the Deals Column work. Many readers tell me that they rarely buy anything, but they just enjoy reading it. Maybe that's because I keep the readers broke. Anyway, we'll see how my time and the vendor responses go.

Great Conference

My wife and I had a GREAT time at the FACUG (Florida Association of Computer User Groups) Conference. Attendance was up considerably this year. There were 197 attendees from 24 user groups. Vendor participation was down this year with only thirteen, but that didn't hurt it a bit. The camaraderie was great. Door prizes were also less abundant this year, but I doubt anybody was surprised at that with the economy the way it is and vendors cutting back. If you missed the conference, you were the loser.

There was an impressive presentation for the new iMac by the Apple folks, and they even gave one away. They have become great supporters of FACUG. During the roundtables, one RT during each session was by a vendor. I liked that. As usual, it was a tough decision choosing which RT to attend for each session. There were also many attending the conference for the first time and they were thrilled with it all. FACUG is alive and VERY well thanks to the hard work of its officers.

I think one of the things that makes it work well is that the meals can be catered in at cheaper prices, and the facility is more intimate for attendees. Hotels in the area are reasonably priced. Since it is not held at a convention type

hotel, attendees don't have to stay in an expensive hotel room. FACUG is one of my favorite events during the year. As usual, there are still some changes I would like to see.

Still Good

The items through Gene & Linda Barlow are always good. To order, go to <<http://www.ugr.com/order/>>.

Use the code UGDEALS02.

The **Alpha 5** software deal is still good. To order, call 1-800-451-1018 and mention "code 77." Tell them you belong to a user group. Visit <<http://www.alphasoftware.com>> for a better description of the product.

When I commented on how I used to like the Prodigy message boards, Richard Rabin (CEO of Alpha Software) told me that they now have a message board on the Web site that is very active, and where their customers are incredibly helpful to each other. In fact, he said there are about 50,000 posts on the board, which has a super fast search built-in.

Richard asked if I would like an updated version and I jumped at the chance since I still have the DOS version and can't get it to run on my latest computer. I installed my new **Alpha 5** and it easily opened my old DOS .dbf files so I could work with them. Then when I closed the files, they were converted to the new format. I don't know why they didn't keep the .dbf format.

Gobe Is Back

I received a message from Dave Johnson of **gobeProductive** the other day letting me know of another offer for this very interesting product. **gobeProductive** is currently at version 3.03, but they have

some 3.0 CDs left over. He said this seems like a good time to make a special offer to sell these 3.0 versions to my readers, exclusively, for \$49.95 plus S&H. (Retail is \$124.95, but they're still offering a \$74.95 introductory price for the 3.03.) They will again use a special Web page for this DealsGuy offer and they will come in a CD mailer packaging instead of a full box. Users can still upgrade the 3.0 version for free to version 3.03 by downloading the upgrade installer. What a deal!

To purchase the **gobeProductive 3.0** DealsGuy special, go to <<http://www.gobe.com/dealsguy.html>> and place your order.

A Quick Message From Herb Goodman

Herb offers magazine discounts to user group people only. He wants to make sure that even the small user groups know about the changes in the magazine line-up and the new prices. Editors can contact Herb at <HGOODMAN@prodigy.net> for the latest list to publish in their newsletter.

Get Your Files The Easy Way

Bonnie Mitchell from Casady & Greene was kind enough to send me this one just before I closed the column. The following is their description of **InstaFiles!**:

- **View and Organize Documents, Applications, and Projects with One Click! InstaFiles!** is the first visual Document and Project browser for your computer. Everyone who runs more than one program at a time on their PC will find that **InstaFiles!** will make their life easier. With **InstaFiles!** you will never lose track of an open window

again.

- **Browse for documents and projects.** **InstaFiles!** is a graphical browser for all currently open documents, applications and Web pages. **InstaFiles!** allows you to easily navigate between documents, etc.

- **Simplify Windows using patent-pending technology.** Patentpending technology lets you see every open window as real-time oversized thumbnails, which allows for instant access to many different open documents, projects, applications for files—with one click!

- **Improve your productivity and performance.** Save time by grouping related documents, files, and applications, to launch together later just by opening an **InstaFiles!** savedproject!

- **Instantly find your active files.** Never again wonder “where did that file go?” **InstaFiles!** lays out all open windows, side-by-side, using graphical thumbnails.”

Check this URL to order **InstaFiles!** or any of the Casady & Greene user group specials. <<http://ug.casadyg.com/?page=shop/win>>. The user group price for InstaFiles! is \$19.95, regular price, \$39.95. C & G offers both Mac and PC products.

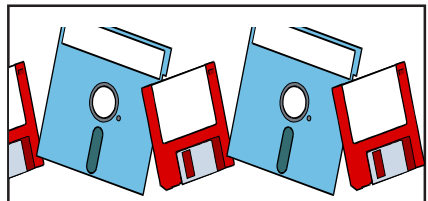
Keep Track Of Your Hard Drive's Health

Bob Esche of the Dayton Microcomputer Association forwarded this **DiskAlert** offer by Executive Software to me. He liked their **Diskeeper®** defragger product and feels this is a good company. Their **DiskAlert™** software gives you an inexpensive, automated *early warning*

system, monitoring for imminent hard drive failures and dangerously low free space on all your servers, with or without RAID. And, **DiskAlert** protects stand-alone desktops and laptops running Windows NT®/2K/XP. There's more, so check their Web site at <http://www.diskalert.com/purchase/online-store_da.asp?ad=dae1>. For a limited time, you can download a DiskAlert 1-disk license for just \$29.95, regular \$49.95, or a DiskAlert 2-disk license for \$49.95 instead of \$99.95. One license is only good for a single hard drive. For more questions, call 1-800-829-6468, extension 6012. I'm not sure I understand it all that well, so do your homework on this one and check out their Web site information. It sounds good to me.

That's it for this month. Meet me here again next month if your editor permits. This column is written to make user group members aware of special offers I have found or arranged, and my comments should not be interpreted to encourage, or discourage, the purchase of products, no matter how enthused, or disgruntled, I might sound.

Bob (The Cheapskate) Click <Bobclick@dealsguy.com>. Visit my Web site at <<http://www.dealsguy.com>> for past columns. There are also interesting articles from user group newsletters on my “Articles of Interest” page for viewing or downloading.



The Plain Truth About Casual Software Piracy

By *Matt Slot*

Here's a fascinating article about piracy and how it affects a small software firm.

It's a rare day when a shareware programmer gets firm statistics on the extent of software piracy, but just recently, I got that chance.

You see, the company I work for—Ambrosia Software—writes and publishes shareware—software that encourages users to make lots of copies and share them with friends. It works like this: we write a game or utility and make it available for download and on low-cost CD, so you can install it and try it out for a while—kick the tires and drive it around the block a few times, so to speak. If you like it, you can buy the product; if not, just delete it or pass the CD on to someone else.

< <http://www.ambrosiasw.com> >

We make money, and stay in business, by selling software that competes with commercial products for quality and entertainment value, while remaining priced so that it doesn't stretch the pizza-and-beer budget of the average college student. There's no bait-and-switch going on: you get a fair chance to try out the product and decide if your \$25 could be better spent elsewhere. We think our software is competitive—\$25 will cover a burger run and movie ticket for about three hours entertainment, but a good game can entertain you for days or weeks—we won't make you watch Jar Jar Binks.

A few years back, Ambrosia's software was distributed on the honor

system. You could download the software and use it forever, scot-free except for the friendly reminders that you had the software for 1,500 days and still hadn't beaten level 6. This was obviously a big leap of faith on our part, but it built up an almost cult following among Mac users. What we lost in sales, we made up in good will. As a business model, the honor system wasn't ideal, but it certainly was idealistic, and it helped put Ambrosia's founder, Andrew Welch, through college and kept Ambrosia's employees supplied with pizza and beer. (I think there's a law of conservation at work there.)

This was all fine and good—except that eventually Andrew graduated and everyone else got sick of pizza and beer. Ambrosia grew from an interesting sideline into a full time place of employment. The company became an entity with its own purpose, its own office space, and its own gravitational pull. It also developed an insatiable appetite for cash, because as any MBA will tell you, the lifeblood of business is green.

This period of growth and rampant consumption was constrained only by the limited diet afforded by the generosity and honesty of others. Basically, money was tight. One way we encouraged users to pay for the game *Escape Velocity* was to introduce the character of Captain Hector, who would remind (and eventually harass) players who were still unregistered after an extended period of play. When we compared sales of *Escape Velocity* to those of our previous products, it became apparent that either pizza and

beer had become a lot more expensive or that some people needed an extra nudge—such as from Captain Hector—to do the right thing and pay up.

Locking the Front Door

Shortly after I joined the Ambrosia team, Andrew forwarded me an article that illustrated the benefits of crippling software. In short, the author of a shareware program found that people were five times more likely to register and unlock a crippled version of his software than they were to register software that came fully functional from the outset. It was the final straw in our camel-breaking, decision-making process. We would still make shareware, but we would no longer stand there waiting for handouts on the street—we'd charge admission. <<http://hackvan.com/pub/stig/articles/why-do-people-register-shareware.html>>

Let me tell you, we heard about it. Many who had praised us for our idealism were now calling us sellouts. It didn't matter that little changed for our paying customers—they still got their codes quickly, and had unlimited access to the game—it was the principle of the thing. Okay, it was a little inconvenient if you'd lost your code or wanted to install it on your new Power Mac 7500, but we could resolve that quickly in response to a phone call or an email.

I mean, we like being cool and fair, but even a cult following can get tiresome (cultists don't shower, they track in mud, and they leave you to pick up the check). Besides, the mantra kept repeating in our heads: five times as many registrations, five times, five times. I don't think it ever was quite that

good for us, but we definitely saw an increase in sales that helped Ambrosia weather some tough times. (No, we never actually ran out of pizza, but there were times when we had to mop up spilled beer with borrowed rolls of toilet paper.) It was a hard decision, but it was a business decision, and it turned out to be the right one.

Time passed. Our staff continued to grow and evolve, and my wife and I begat our son Luke. Nothing brings home how untenable your professional and financial situation is like having a family. When it was just my wife and I, we could fool ourselves into thinking that we were just coed roommates living on a college budget—but no more. Pizza and beer had given way to diapers and life insurance.

Diapers and Life Insurance

So I'm working for this shareware company, and I want to make sure that my job is secure. You have to understand that even a 10 percent variance in Ambrosia's registrations means that someone may need to start checking the employment classifieds. At the same time, it's becoming more evident that people aren't just not paying for our software—they're actually going out of their way to share license codes with others over the Internet. Some ingenious folks have even reverse-engineered our software and figured out how to generate their own license codes.

We don't live with our heads in the sand. We knew what was happening. The Internet was the great facilitator of homework assignments and world peace, but it had also become a way for people to get registration codes for any

software they wanted. We felt action was required, but we remembered the trauma of our last change in policy when we required people to register the software instead of just asking nicely.

So over the course of numerous lunches, we discussed various ways for improving the whole registration system from our standpoint without making the process onerous for our loyal customers. Simplicity was the keyword. The final piece of the technical puzzle fell into place one weekend as I drove through Canada, when I recalled a bit of algebra that would make our license code algorithm quite secure without violating any treaties or munitions bans.

When I finally contacted Andrew, I said to him one word: polynomials.

The blank look on his face continued for a long time as I explained how we could factor the serial numbers, secure our products, and even distribute codes that would expire and stop working when exposed to prolonged sunlight. With his grudging consent, we sketched out and implemented the first pass at the “new Ambrosia registration system.”

The fundamental change we made was to build the current date into the license code itself. That timestamp is then used at just one point in the process: it forces the user to activate the product within 30 days, or the code expires and won't activate anything. Now, and this is important, the timestamp has absolutely no effect on the operation of the software after the code has been entered. Once personalized for the user's computer, it remains fully functional forever

(unless someone wipes the system clean).

Snapz Pro X

The first product to use the new registration system was the latest version of our flagship utility, **Snapz Pro X**, which started shipping in June of 2001. Over the course of the summer, the system silently and steadfastly worked as intended. Most people didn't care that the license codes were now 12 digits instead of 8, and registrations continued apace. It wasn't until September that we received any negative feedback. <http://www.snapzpro.com>.

You see, in September Apple upgraded Mac OS X to version 10.1, and many people were paranoid enough to reformat and perform a clean install. That meant the data file containing the software registration was lost, forcing most people to reenter their license codes. It also meant that anyone whose serial number was generated before August needed to contact us by phone or email to get an updated code. Of course, these people had paid already, so we renewed their codes quickly and free of charge.

When Joe User entered the expired code, he was prompted to send us an email (it required only a click), and someone would respond to the request as soon as possible. Yet we were constrained by the laws of time, space, and the New York State Department of Labor, so our staff was available to answer requests only during regular business hours.

After several customer complaints, we decided to remedy this problem by automating the process of renewing an

expired code. When an expired code is entered for **Snapz Pro X**, the user is encouraged to request a new license code from our automated server—right then and there! Renewing the code takes only two extra clicks, maybe an extra 30 seconds overall, but it puts the power back in the hands of the user. He can decide when to update his system, install software, and renew his license code at his leisure. Even at midnight just before a four-day weekend.

Which brings us back to the question, “How many people are using pirated codes?” The plain fact is that most people are honest unless given a chance to be dishonest. If they stumble across a working license code for software, or do a quick Internet search, then they can quickly enter the code and cover their self-loathing with the adrenaline rush of blasting aliens and squishing fish. Only the most hard-core computer user will try to reverse-engineer the software and crack the copy protection—and I’ll be honest, there’s isn’t much we could do to stop them. Crackers enjoy the challenge itself—the tougher the better—so if they want it badly enough, they’ll find a way.

Historically it’s been difficult to measure software piracy, but our experience is that the vast majority of users lack the time or inclination to modify software to bypass license checks. Here’s the rub: these users might actually buy the software if it weren’t so easy to find pirated codes. Thus, expiring codes are a good way to defeat (or at least hamper) this kind of casual piracy—the serial numbers stored in databases and posted to the

Internet are viable only for a short while before they must be renewed.

Ironically, it’s these casual pirates who are helping me measure the impact of piracy on our sales.

You see, to renew a stolen code, Joe User must contact a computer in our office. There’s nothing nefarious about it—he sends us the user name and expired code and gets back a new license code or a suitable error message. We don’t encrypt the data, we don’t grab any personal information, and we don’t even open a connection without explicit permission. But when Joe User clicks that bright shiny Renew button, our server records the product, user name, and the Internet address he came from.

For the first two days after we posted the latest update to Snapz Pro X, our server was busy. Of the 194 different hosts that tried to renew a license code, 107 of them sent in pirated codes (click the URL below to view a screenshot of an actual server log file; the entries highlighted in red are attempts to authenticate pirated license codes). Incredibly, more than 50 percent of the people installing the update entered one or both of the pirated codes we’ve known about for months.

Some of these people even tried several different variants on the names when the server refused them access (“maybe I misspelled it”), and one guy got so frustrated he pounded the Renew button over and over every four seconds (“WHY _click_ IS _click_ THIS _click_ NOT _click_ WORKING???”) until our server blacklisted him for flooding. <http://www.tidbits.com/resources/620/pirate_log_red.gif>

You don't have to remind us that the sample isn't statistically valid. Nevertheless we think it's a reasonable approximation of reality—if not a little conservative. It certainly reinforces our perception that casual piracy is both significant and widespread.

Hopes for the Future

Maybe I didn't look these people in the eye, but they know I'm watching them. They indicated a real interest in our software when they thought they could use it for free, and this gives me hope that some may yet decide that registering is easier and more satisfying than stealing our hard work. If not, then either they were forced to stop using the software or they'll likely encounter me again, somewhere down the road. Next time, I'll bring Captain Hector.

I also hope this article explains to our customers (and other computer users out there) the impact that piracy has on small software firms like ours. I hope they can appreciate our decisions regarding the registration system and agree that the extra 30 seconds and two clicks are a minor inconvenience. If everyone pays for the products they like and use, companies like Ambrosia can stay in business and continue making cool products for everyone to enjoy.

Finally, I hope that these changes give me a little more job security, so I can continue doing what I love with some of the coolest folks I've ever met. Because I plan on working here as long as I possibly can, making great software and saving enough money so my kids can eventually go to college, where they can enjoy their share of beer and pizza.

Reprinted with permission of the author. Matt Slot has worked for Ambrosia Software for nearly five years. You can reach Matt at <fprefect@ambrosiasw.com> or visit the Ambrosia Software site at <www.AmbrosiaSW.com>. This article originally appeared in TidBits, a Mac newsletter. <www.tidbits.com/tb-issues>.

My Favorite Email Program by Sigrid Foreman

Tyler Computer Club
< sigrid@tyler.net >

Many of us use e-mail on a daily basis and we use different email programs depending on what we want from it. Here are a few that are available.

Free Programs...such as Juno do not require you to have an internet account with anyone. They simply let you send and receive email (including attachments) without any internet surfing. This means that you have no monthly or hourly charge to worry about.

Email programs that require an Internet account. This is what most of use, be it thru providers like AOL, Prodigy, MSN or an independent internet provider such as Gower, Ballistic, Flashnet, Cox-Internet etc., where you would use programs such as Outlook Express, Netscape Messenger, Eudora or my favorite: Incredimail.

<<http://www.incredimail.com/>>

Many of you have not heard of it, and I would like to take this opportunity to speak a little about it. Incredimail (IM) is provided to you free of

charge...unless you choose to get the full program (\$29), which basically provides support (which I have used and it is pretty good) and allows you to preview your messages on the server prior to you downloading them. It comes with a demo program of Letter Creators (you're allowed to make 1-3 letters before you have to purchase the full version at \$39...or get both for the price of \$49). IM offers you e-cards, letter backgrounds, sounds and animation that you can add to personalize your email. It comes with an email notifier (icon of your choice) which will tell you when you have new mail. You can even make your own handwritten signature to add to your mail.

The thing I like about Incredimail (IM) is that I have such a large variety of letter backgrounds to choose from that I can add to personalize my emails. Besides the basic ones that come standard in the program, there are many more backgrounds, e-cards, animation and sounds that can be added (all free of charge) without having to make your own...if you're not talented enough like me...by going to Incredimail's multimedia web gallery, or to one of the many IM websites where you can find a variety of all of these plus help with problems you may encounter. These sites also list other sites where you can learn how to make your own backgrounds using either Letter Creator or using a different program such as Paint Shop Pro.

One of the IM letter sites: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/A_S-A-F-E_Place/> offers a link to tutorial classes at <<http://enchanted1designs.com/abcs/>

[about.html](#)>. This site has at least two tutorial links every week for the following subjects: **Paint Shop Pro** (psp), **Eye Candy** (plug-in for psp), **Blade Pro** (plug-in for psp), **Sig Tags**, making letters for **LC/Incredimail** and **20/20**. Classes last for 8 weeks & have a top limit of 30 "students" per class. The owners of this tutorial site said "We have had great success with the classes so far & have high hopes of it's continued success!" Hey... If I'm in the class, they can't be bad...right? So check it out!

Ok, some people don't like me to use this program because it takes a little longer to download than a standard email message, but at least I don't use sound which **DOES** take a long time to download due to the midi or wav file attachment. All you have to remember is that the more you add to an email, the longer it will take to download. If someone does not like receiving these "stationery" emails, ask them to let you know and you can then select a "no background" and they will receive a standard email with a white background. Most people do not mind a message that may take a little longer to download, since there are so many neat backgrounds or sidebars (including your own pictures) that can be viewed. Your email recipients can also download these to "snag" for their own collection— just by viewing yours.

One thing about email programs, you *do* have a few choices... you do not have to stay with the default selection that is given you. Use your imagination... use it in color... use it with pictures...it's all up to you!

This article is brought to you by the Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an International organization to which this user group belongs.



Steve Bass
Pasadena IBM Users Group
steve_bass@pcworld.com

Computing Factoids

There are unrelated things I pick up in e-mail that are terrific—but not long enough for an article.

Here are two of them.

Hard Drive Repair Conundrum

A PIBMUG member was struggling with a faulty hard drive. An **Ontrack** product manager provided an answer.

Question: I have a question about getting rid of data on a hard disk. I have read articles about reformatting and assorted software that gets rid of your data. However, I had a hard disk crash and must return the old disk to the system vendor in order to have my credit card credited for the cost of the new one they sent me (under warranty).

I do not want them or the OEM to be able to recover that data. With the disk not working, how do I get rid of the data? If I hold magnets around it, will that work? Should I drop it in a boiling pot of chicken soup? Your advice would be appreciated.

Smart-ass Answer: Chicken soup may work provided you remove all the fat, chicken feet, and carrots (strangely enough, celery and onions can stay).

More realistically, I have to admit I'm stumped. Lemme call in some ex-

perts from Ontrack, the hard drive recovery company. Mark? Any ideas? —Steve

Ontrack's Response:

The magnet idea isn't going to work unless you've got some incredibly strong magnets laying around. A degaussing unit strong enough to erase the platters of a hard drive would generate a field that would damage other magnetic media within several yards. Also it would erase the servo-patterns on the drive used to control the movement of the read/write head, so it would certainly ruin the drive.

We've requested ideas from the real experts, our clean room technicians.

They had a few solutions, but nothing simple. You could see if an authorized shop (like a disk recovery shop who has authority to break a drive seal without voiding the warranty) would take on a special job (for a fee) to open the drive and degauss the platters.

You could request to review the warranty policy from your HDD manufacturer and see if they have a policy for protecting data that may be on a warranty returned drive.

Trust the HDD manufacturer to destroy the platters as part of the end-of-life of a returned drive. —Mark

Better Backups

After using tapes and zip drives for back ups, I finally decided to just back up to another hard drive. To simplify the process, I installed two mobile mounts and connected the IDE cables so that the upper mount or drawer is an IDE1 master and the lower drawer is an IDE2 Master. I purchased two drives of the same capacity. Both are jumpered as masters. The original is in the upper

drawer, and the backup will be placed in the lower drawer.

I use “**Drive Copy**” which with installation generates a 3.5" floppy “**Drive Copy**” boot disk. The boot disk is used to start the copy process. Make certain that your 2 hard drives are labeled such that you will copy from the original to the backup, and not from the backup to the original.

Remove the backup and set it aside for that sad day when the original fails or is infected with a virus. The reason that I like this approach is that if the original drive fails, I can just power down and remove it from the drawer and insert and boot the backup, which is already jumpered as a master drive, and you are immediately up and running. Whereas if you were using a tape you have the problem of trying to salvage the original from the tape, hoping that it works. The same is true of **Zip** disks.

I will usually start the backup when I go to bed and it is done in the morning. The cost of a 2nd hard drive is probably cheaper than a tape drive or **Zip** drive and the cost of the tapes and **Zip** disks just add even more cost. —Clifford Ford <kb6ia@earthlink.net>

Steve Bass is a Contributing Editor with PC World and runs the Pasadena IBM Users Group. He’s also a founding member of APCUG. Check PCW’s current edition at <www.pcworld.com/resource/toc/index.asp> and sign up for the Steve Bass online newsletter at <www.pcworld.com/bass_letter>.



Here’s a look back at another column of Steve’s that describes the process of getting a new hard disk—in 1992

Ten Years Ago

Here’s a quiz: Why is upgrading your IBM PC like going to the dentist? It’s not — going to the dentist is a lot more fun. It’s no joke. I hate upgrading because it’s a day of tinkering with the insides of my computer. But I had to get a larger hard disk because I switched to **Windows**. Applications written for Windows take up humongous amounts of hard disk space and there’s little chance that the trend will stop. **Microsoft’s Word for Windows**, for example, gobbles up 12 megabytes and Corel Draw takes about 14 megabytes.

Most users have hard disks ranging in size from the older 30 megabyte (the one I’m still using) to about 200 megabytes. Larger sizes are available and many people are looking towards the future, buying disks as big as 384MBs. I predict that within two years, 1 gigabyte disks (that’s 1000 megabytes) will be on many machines. But for now — with hard disks dropping in price — I recommend a minimum 200MB hard disk on a new system or 120MB on an upgrade.

There’s more than one way to add a new hard disk and how you do it depends on your budget and your existing system.

Quantum’s Plus Hardcard is not the least expensive but it is the quickest,

easiest way to upgrade. For about \$400, you get 105MBs of disk storage on an add-in card — and no installation hassles. Putting in the Hardcard will take less than fifteen minutes from start to finish.

A friend of mine chose a neat alternative and upgraded with a **Bernoulli** storage device. Instead of a “fixed” disk — one that stays in the computer — Bernoulli lets you remove their 90MB disk. The internal **Bernoulli** drive is discounted to under \$800 and is a good solution as you can buy more disks (at about \$150 each) when your storage needs increase. My friend keeps **Windows** applications on one disk, shareware on another and DOS programs on a third. You’re also able to move the data to another computer via the portable disk, an added benefit.

The traditional upgrade path is to add a hard disk to your existing system which means the drive you purchase must match the controller card that’s already plugged into one of your system’s expansion slots. Older machines usually have an RLL or MFM interface but newer machines come with faster IDE (integrated drive electronics) controllers, the current standard. Most controller cards manage up to two hard disks along with the two floppy drives. Some IDEs include parallel and serial ports used to attach modems and printers.

If you have an IDE controller, I recommend you stay with it. On one IDE machine, I upgraded and chose a fast **Conner** hard disk because of their reputation for long life expectancy and fast access time. Their 120MB model (CP30104) will set you back about \$400

and their 212MB (model CP320) is about \$560.

Macintosh owners, however, have a secret recently available to IBMs: **Small Computer System Interface** (SCSI) adapters. SCSI, pronounced “scuzzy,” lets you attach up to seven devices onto one internal controller card. If you’re upgrading a hard disk and think you may want a CD ROM player (also called a reader) in the near future, consider the SCSI adapter. You can daisy chain the hard disk, CD ROM player, a tape backup and up to four peripherals.

Adaptec’s fast SCSI adapter, the one I’m using, even lets you connect up to two floppy drives, a valuable addition. If you choose to upgrade with SCSI, make sure you check with the hard disk manufacturer to see which controller cards are compatible. I tried the **Adaptec** with a **Conner** SCSI drive and had no problems. If you run into trouble, get in touch with **CORELSCSI**, a Canadian company that supplies special software for a wide array of SCSI devices.

While SCSI offers faster access and more flexibility, it isn’t for everyone. On uncomplicated home machines, upgrading to SCSI should present no problem and you can likely do it yourself. But in business settings — especially if you’re on a network — you may need to hire a technician for help.

So what will it be: upgrade or go to the dentist? I’ll let you make your own decision. I’ve already made mine.

Steve Bass is a Contributing Editor with PC World and runs the Pasadena IBM Users Group. He’s also a founding member of APCUG. Check

PCW's current edition at www.pcworld.com/resource/toc/index.asp and sign up for the Steve Bass online newsletter at www.pcworld.com/bass_letter.



Steve Bass
Pasadena IBM Users Group

Writing Inside and Out

I have a comfy spot on both sides of the fence. I get the pleasure of writing for a magazine that's big enough for me not to worry that I'll say something dumb. **PC World** provide tons of background support—first, second, and technical editors, copy editors, fact checkers, and even attorneys.

At the other end of the spectrum are user group newsletters. Writing in PIBMUG is more freewheeling. I can write about any topic, something that strikes me on the spur of the moment. (PCW wants a four month stack of story topics.) And unlike **PC World**, I don't have anyone watching my language, fretting over (and often removing) my voice, and roping me into a set amount of space. **PC World's Home Office** column is roughly 650 words, less the "Where to Buy," the spot where I supply details so the reader can get in touch with the companies I write about.

The 650 limit is a killer. If you do any writing, you know it's more difficult to write short, especially if you have to cram in humor, content, product justification and examples, one or two links, and the essential takeaway. The rule—and you'll see this in practically all computing magazines—is giv-

ing the reader something to do after finishing the column. I got lucky when they asked me to do the Home Office online version.

All the leftover material from the print edition—and there's always plenty—found a new home.

One other thing you might take for granted in a user group newsletter is the size of the article. When I put the Prompt together, I choose from countless articles, worrying about content but not size. For instance, you'll find "The Plain Truth about Casual Software Piracy" on page six of this newsletter. It's long but compelling reading, and something you'd never see in a commercial magazine.

Many of you don't enjoy writing, yet need to do it for work. So I thought I'd supply a few tips, things that will help make you sound better in letters, email, and reports. (BTW, you're right—this is the takeaway...)

Talk into print. When I write, I try to take what I imagine I'd say to you and put it into words. I do it by quickly typing what I think, trying not to filter anything. (Filtering—or editing—comes later when I look over what I wrote.)

Write like you talk. You've probably noticed that I use a lot of contractions—for instance, you'll, we've, let's. It's pretty casual and the way I speak. My guess is many of you do the same. I can visualize Joe Bohannon saying, "well, sure, but I'm not going to do that." And that's the point—that's exactly how he sounds and it'd sound ideal in print. Get the idea?

Write short sentences. I think readers have an easier time digesting short chunks of info. They'll also be more inclined to read—and understand—what you say. If you can't do it, write longer sentences and later, when you review your work, divide the long sentences into two or three short ones.

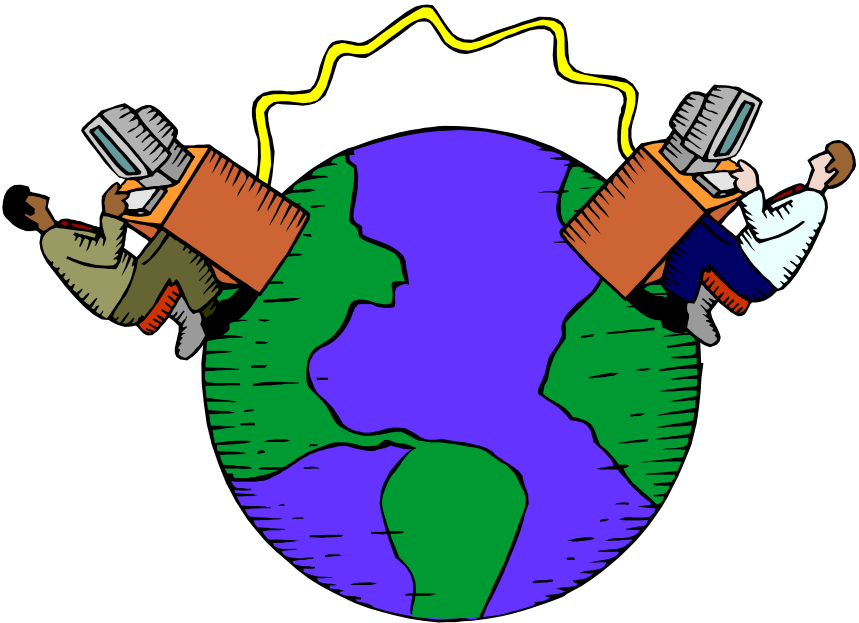
Write short paragraphs. They're the toughest thing for me to plow through. One trick is to stop every five, six, or seven sentences, take a breath, and start another paragraph.

Be active. For the longest time I couldn't figure out passive from active voice. Once I had it, writing became easier. If no one's taking responsibility, it's passive. "Mistakes were made" is passive. "We all made a few mistakes,"

is an active voice. It's almost impossible to write in the passive voice if you follow the next bullet.

Stay first. I write from the first person. It's always my viewpoint (yeah, I know, it's always about me). And that's the tone you oughta consider using. The reason is I can visualize you when I write and you can see me while you're reading.

Steve Bass is a Contributing Editor with PC World and runs the Pasadena IBM Users Group. He's also a founding member of APCUG. Check PCW's current edition at <www.pcworld.com/resource/toc/index.asp> and sign up for the Steve Bass online newsletter at <www.pcworld.com/bass_letter>.



SEMCO's Website Has a New Home

After being hosted by Oakland University for many years the SEMCO website had to find a new home. Oakland University was told they could only provide services to faculty, staff and current students under their academic software licenses. They had to turn off 14,000 accounts including all their alumni and SEMCO. SEMCO thanks Oakland University for hosting the SEMCO website for these many years.

The Internet Committee was requested by the SEMCO Board to find a new host for our website and the Board approved a resolution authorizing payment of up to \$10 per month for web hosting services. After researching both commercial and non-commercial hosts, we found Wayne RESA (Regional Educational Service Agency), formerly Wayne County Intermediate School District. Former SEMCO president Jim Rarus, who is employed by RESA, offered to host our website on their server. Their server seems to meet all of our requirements and the service is being provided to us at no charge. Warner Mach Co-chairman of SIG-IBM is also a RESA employee.

During the week of April 22, 2002 the SEMCO website was moved to the server at RESA. A visit to the website should be no different than it was when the site was hosted by Oakland University. The URL remains the same,
<<http://www.semco.org>>.

The only change was the email address; it was changed to
<semco@semco.org>.

The Internet Committee and SEMCO thank RESA and Jim Rarus for hosting the SEMCO website and facilitating the move of the site to it's new home.

Submitted by Franz Breidenich



BOARD MEETING

4/14/2002

Carol Sanzi

BOARD MEMBERS

PRESENT: President Gary DeNise, Treasurer Roger Gay, Secretary Carol Sanzi, SIG-Advanced Chairman Franz Breidenich, SIG-IBM Co-Chairman Tom Callow, Publication Committee Chairman Bob Clyne, representing SIG-IBM Intermediate Chairman Jack Vander-Schrier was Warner Mach, and arriving late was Vice-President Vic Charns. The meeting was called to order at 12:02 pm.

OLD BUSINESS: Treasurer, Roger Gay reported that there is a balance on hand of \$4018.19. The membership stands at 105. As of April, M. Mike Choly, Donald E. Clark, Willie Ihlenburg, Harold Langberg D.D.S., Warner Mach, Tom Meyer, Thomas Million, Randy Mims, Cecil Muysenberg, Thomas M. Reuter, and Claude Watson's membership will expire. Every member needs to spread the word to encourage SEMCO's growth.

Vic Charns moved to be reimbursed \$75.82 for two months of DATA BUS stamps. Bob Clyne seconded the motion and it was carried. Warner Mach moved to be reimbursed \$15.93 for refreshments. Gary DeNise

seconded the motion and it was carried. Bob Clyne moved to be reimbursed \$14.52 for DATA BUS CD expenses. Franz Breidenich seconded the motion and it was carried. Tom Callow moved to be reimbursed \$20.31 for the SEMCO telephone bill and \$3.74 for postage for renewal notices. Gary DeNise seconded the motion and it was carried.

NEW BUSINESS: Bob Clyne reported that Oakland University has notified SEMCO that Oakland University will no longer be able to host SEMCO's Web site due to the restrictions of their academic software licenses. The Web site is currently available for browsing but we cannot make any changes to it and it will be deleted from Oakland's server soon. Therefore, it is necessary to seek out an alternative Web host. Franz Breidenich moved that we give the Internet Committee the authority to select and engage a Web host provided that the cost is not more than \$10 per month. Bob Clyne seconded the motion and it was carried.

It was with regret that Bob Clyne moved to decertify SIG-MAC due to failure to hold meetings and lack of a chairperson. Tom Callow seconded the motion and it was carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:58 pm.

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS (SIGs)

NOVICE-IBM GROUP Rotating Volunteer Hosts

May 12: Q&A: Member directed discussion.



SIG-IBM Tom Callow Warner Mach



May 12: Another Computer Potpourri: SIG-IBM Co-Chair-man Tom Callow will present a series of topics too short for an entire meeting, including setting up your computer to access the Internet while traveling, and using WinZip to move large files between computers.



SIG-IBM INTERMEDIATE Jack Vander-Schrier

May 12: Games: Chairman Jack Vander-Schrier will demonstrate computer games such as Flight Simulator, Civilization and Age of Empires.



SIG-ADVANCED Franz Breidenich

May 6: (Next: June 3) : Meetings held first Monday, 6:45 pm, at the Oak Park Library. The library is located at 14200 Oak Park Blvd., Oak Park, MI. Phone: (248) 691-7480. Directions: 14200 Oak Park Blvd. is 9 1/2 Mile Road, located west of Coolidge. Best route from freeway is to take I-696 to the Coolidge exit. Head south on Coolidge for 1/2 mile to Oak Park Blvd. and turn right. **Topic:** Wide ranging discussion of computers and computing.

June 2002 DATA BUS DEADLINE (10th day after meeting)

SEMCO & SIG DATA, & MEMBERS' ADS - Deadline: Wed, May 22, 11:59pm

Members' personal ads free. To mail, use Editor address on Page 2; e-mail address: chermi@comcast.net. PLEASE send to arrive sooner than deadline if possible.

BUSINESS ADS - Deadline: Second Friday monthly. Mail **unfolded** camera-ready copy; payment in full made out to SEMCO, to the Editor (address Pg 2).

Cheryl Fil
chermi@comcast.net
(to post monthly computer group info)

**CALENDAR-OF-EVENTS
OTHER GROUPS**

AAIICI (American Association of Individual Investors, Computerized Investors),

May 25- Saturday, 10am-Noon (Meet 4th Saturday) (not December); W. Bloomfield Huntington Bank, Orchard Lk Rd., S.of Maple Rd. Info: Jack Lockman at 313-341-8855 or <thunder@tir.com>

COMP (Computer Operators of Marysville/Port Huron)

June 5 - Wednesday, 7pm (Meet 1st Wednesday); Rm 201, Clara E. Mackenzie Library-Science bldg, 323 Erie St., Port Huron. Ron Walters, 810-679-4144. Web: <<http://www.bwcomp.org>>.

TOPIC: Elections, Games Demo

DCOM Computer Club

May 10 - Friday 6:30 - 8:30 pm (Meet 2nd Friday); Henry Ford C.C., Patterson Tech Bldg, Ford Rd/Evergreen, Rm T143, Parking Lot C. Info: Doug Piazza 313-582-2602

Delta Computer Club

May 30 - Thursday, 7pm (Meet last Thursday) (not Nov/Dec); Bay de Noc C. C., Escanaba. Info: Gordon Nelson, Pres. & Editor at <gnelson@bresnanlink.net> or 906-428-1014.

GDOUG (Greater Detroit OS/2 Users Group)

May 9-Thursday, 6:30pm (Meet 2nd Thursday); Stardock Systems, Farmington Rd, N. of Six Mile, Livonia; Info: Carolyn Kolaz, Pres. at <76460.3040@compuserve.com>. Map on Web: <<http://www.lookinc.com/gdoug>>.

MacGroup Detroit

May 19- Sunday, 3pm-5pm ; Bloomfield Twp. Library, 1099 Lone Pine Rd. (corner of Telegraph Rd.). (PhotoShopSIG wil meet at 2 pm.) Info: Terry White, <terry@macgroup.org> or 313-571-9817. Web: <<http://www.macgroup.org>> **TOPIC: Web Design**

MacTechnics. (MAC User Group), Coffee 9:00am, SIGs 9:30am, Main meeting 11:00am.

May 18- Saturday, 9am-1pm (Meet 3rd Saturday); U of M, Central & Medical Campus, Medical Science II building. (See map on Web: <<http://www.mactechnics.org>>). Info: Cassie at <cassiema@yahoo.com> or 313-971-8743.

MCUG (Michigan Computer Users Group)

May 16- Thursday, 7pm (Meet 3rd Thursday); 35271 Rockingham Dr, Sterling Hts., MI 48310-4917; Info: Jerry Zinger, Pres., <kahuna15@comcast.net> 810-792-3394.

Michigan Apple Computer User Group

May 9- 2nd Thur, MAC Sig; May 16- 3rd Thur, Green Apple Sig; May 23- 4th Thur, OSX Sig; all at 7:30pm, Eagles Hall in Clawson, 174 Bowers St (one block North of 14-Mile and one block East of Main). Carl Pendracki 248-647-8871 or <carlpen@aol.com>.

Web:<<http://www.themichiganapple.com>>.

Oak Park Computer Club

Meets every Friday, 10:15am (except holidays) at Oak Park Library, Oak Park Blvd. at Coolidge Hwy.

SHCC (Sterling Heights Computer Club)

May 7 (next June 4)- Tuesday, 7:30pm (Meet 1st Tuesday: not July/Aug); Carpathia Club, 38000 Utica Rd, Sterling Hts, Pres. Don VanSyckel at <Don@VanSyckel.net>, 586-731-9232 ; Web: <<http://www.SterlingHeightsComputerClub.org>> **Topics: How to Scan and Edit Pictures**

SVCA (Saginaw Valley Computer Assoc.)

May 9 (next June 13) - Thursday, 6:30-9:00pm (Meet 2nd Thursday); Saginaw. Info: Kay Engelhart, program chairperson at <kengelhart@hotmail.com>.

Wayne State U. Mac User Group

May 11 (next June 8)- Saturday 10:00am-Noon (Meet 2nd Saturday); at Mich.com, 21042 Laurelwood, Farmington. Info: Lorn/JoAnn Olsen 248/478-4300 or Denny MeLampy 248-477-0190, <denny@mich.com> **TOPIC: Questions, Shortcuts, Tips and the Internet.**

**TAX DEDUCTIBLE
DONATIONS
SEMCO Members
Helping the Community**

Beth Fordyce is accepting Macintosh computers, components, peripherals, manuals and software (working or broken) for Immaculate Heart of Mary School PreK–8th grade, 175-200 students for computer science classes.

Contact Beth
734/453-0349 7pm–10pm or
bfordyce215331MI@comcast.net

You may also contact the school directly: Sister Mary Stephanie Holub
19940 Mansfield
(Greenfield/8-Mile area, Detroit)
313/272-0990

If you want to use your donation as a tax deduction, make an itemized list (with one copy for yourself) of items you donate, and attach it to your donation. Include on the list the full name or description of each item, and its fair market value. Also make sure your full name, address and phone number are on it. The donee will see that you receive a receipt. (Be advised that no one will make these lists for you.)

Your **SEMCO** membership card is good for a **\$1 discount** (not valid with any other offer) on admission to **A1-Super Computer Sales** shows. See www.a1-supercomputersales.com or www.a1scs.com for show schedule.

**APRIL
REFRESHMENT
DONORS**

Warner Mach, Coordinator
Vic Charns
Betty Mackenzie
Carol Sanzi

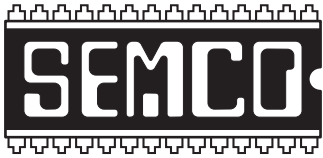
COMPUTER RESOURCE PEOPLE

This is a list of members willing to be resources for other members to call when they have hardware or software questions. Are you willing to help members learn? Which software programs are you familiar enough with?

It is not necessary to be an expert, but just have some familiarity with the program and be willing to help someone starting to learn it. Please give this some thought and volunteer at the next group meeting.

AutoCAD: Comptois, Gay
Genealogy: Cook
IBM PC Hardware Issues: Clyne, Gay, Yuhasz
IBM Windows Operating Systems: Clyne, Yuhasz
Lotus 98: Diller
MAC Hardware and OS Issues: Yuhasz
MS PowerPoint: Diller
MS Word: Clyne, Diller
Novell Netware: Yuhasz
Quicken: Clyne, Gay

Clyne, Bob—810/387-3101, 9am-10pm
Comptois, Jerry—248/651-2504, anytime
Cook, Stephen—313/272-7594, eves
Diller, John—248/540-4382, eves
Gay, Roger—248/641-7799, 9am-10pm
Yuhasz, Steve—734/953-3794, eves



SOUTHEASTERN MICHIGAN
COMPUTER ORGANIZATION,

SEMCO CALENDAR—May 2002

SCIENCE & ENGINEERING BUILDING, OAKLAND UNIVERSITY,
ROCHESTER, MICHIGAN

May 12-SUNDAY(Meet 2nd Sunday)

SEMCO Board Meeting at 12:00 pm, **Room 172**. For Officers and SIG Chairpersons. Other members are invited to attend.

SEMCO General Meeting at 1:30 pm, **Room 172**.

Special Interest Groups (SIGs)

SIG-IBM 1:45 pm, **Room 172**. **Program: Another Computer Potpourri:** SIG-IBM Co-Chairman Tom Callow will present a series of topics too short for an entire meeting, including setting up your computer to access the Internet while traveling and using WinZip to move large files between computers.

SOCIAL PERIOD 3:15 pm, **Room 164**. Refreshments! (Reminder: We must maintain a neat environment.)

NOVICE-IBM GROUP 3:45 pm, **Room 164**. **Program: Q&A, member-directed discussion.**

SIG-IBM Intermediate 3:45 pm, **Room 172**. **Program: Games:** Chairman Jack Vander-Schrier will demonstrate computer games such as Flight Simulator, Civilization, and Age of Empires.

May 6- MONDAY (Next: June 3), 6:45 pm (Meet 1st Monday),

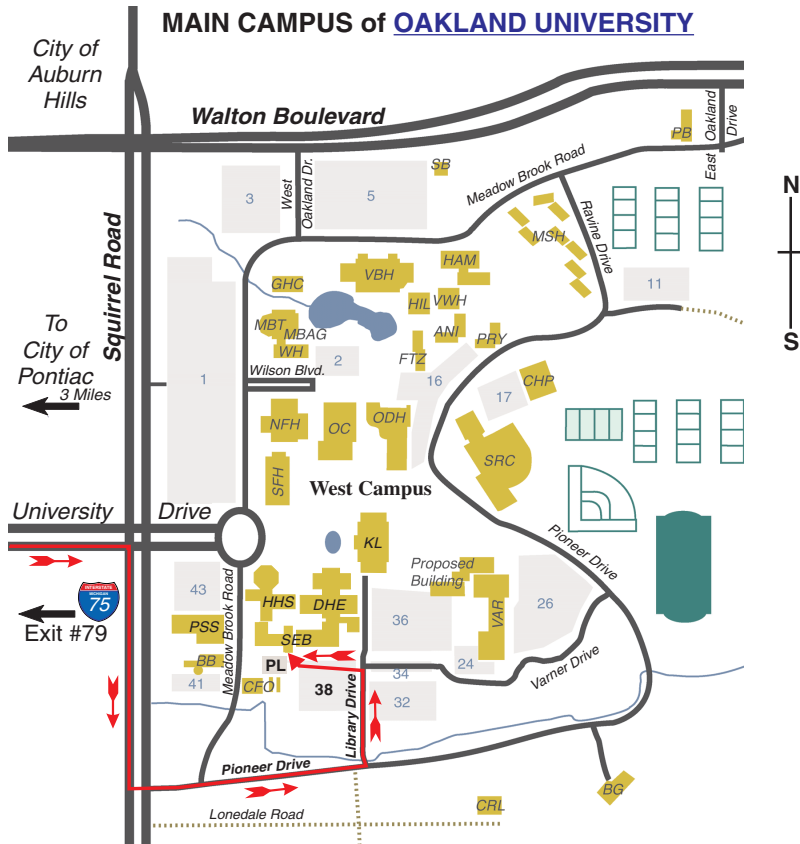
SIG-ADVANCED Oak Park Public Library, 14200 Oak Park Blvd., Oak Park, MI. Phone: (248) 691-7480. Directions: Oak Park Blvd. is 9 1/2 mile Road, located west of Coolidge. Best route from freeway is to take I-696 to the Coolidge exit. Head south on Coolidge for 1/2 mile to Oak Park Blvd., and turn right. Info: Franz Breidenich 248/398-3359. **TOPIC: Wide-ranging discussion of computers & computing.**

June 9- SUNDAY (Meet 2nd Sunday).

SEMCO, 1:30 pm. **Topic: To be announced.**

PUBLIC INVITED

(Please copy this and the next page to post on your bulletin board)



MAP LEGEND

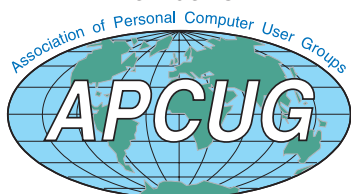
- SEB** Science and Engineering Building
- DHE** Dodge Hall of Engineering
- KL** Kresge Library

Note: SEMCO meetings are in the Science (west) wing of the Science and Engineering Building.

DIRECTIONS

Driving north on I-75 (from Detroit and suburbs), take Exit 79 (University Drive), stay to the right on University Drive to campus entrance. Turn right (south) on Squirrel Road (at traffic light which is just outside campus), turn left on Pioneer Drive (next street to left). Turn left off Pioneer Drive onto Library Drive (second left) toward Kresge Library. Turn left before you get to the buildings, into parking lot 38 on the left. Proceed to the far end of the parking lot and up to the next lot. After parking, enter the first set of glass doors (at the SE corner of the building).

Member of



The meetings at [Oakland University](#) are sponsored by OU's Academic Computer Services (ACS), and the student chapter of the Association of Computer Machinery (ACM). SEMCO thanks OU, ACS & ACM for their assistance.

**SouthEastern Michigan
Computer Organization, Inc.
P.O. Box 707
Bloomfield Hills, MI 48303-0707**

SEMCO (future meetings)

May 12

June 9

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