SEMCO

DATA BUS

Volume 28	March, 2003	Number 3

IN THIS ISSUE

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 and free personal ads.

DATA BUS is published monthly by SEMCO as its official newsletter. **Mail DATA BUS newsletter copy to: Bill Agnew, 3450 31 Mile Road, Washington, MI 48095; or e-mail to: agnew@bignet.net.** Editor is responsible for contents and control of the DATA BUS. Materials published herein may be used for non-commercial purposes only, without further permission of SEMCO or the authors, except as noted, providing credit is given to the author and source, i.e. DATA BUS, and issue date. Entire contents copyright © 2003 SouthEastern Michigan Computer Organization, Inc.

SEMCO does not condone in any way the illegal copying of copyrighted material and will not tolerate such practice at any SEMCO function.

Your mailing label and membership cards list the month and year your membership 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.

DEALS COLUMN
from the DealsGuy
Greater Orlando Computer UG
by Bob "The Cheapskate" Click

Deals Deals
The Jaws PDF creator products deal came to an end February 15 <http://www.insight.com/jaws>. Also, you'll find three new groups listed on my Web site's distribution page that now reads The DealsGuy column.

You Could Take This Keyboard Scuba Diving
Maybe I'm going a bit too far with that statement, but this one is designed for bad environments. I know most of you won't need this kind of keyboard at home unless you spill your coffee a lot. It's designed for the worst conditions. The following is their description:

"The 'CoolOne' is a water-resistant and contaminant-proof keyboard. It's sealed and rigid surface is ideal for industrial and medical use, as well as other outdoor environments. It's a rigid keyboard with tactile feedback keys. It comes with a USB connector and an available PS/2 adapter. It's perfect for environments where there's a lot of dust (warehouses, outdoor use), where water or moisture is a problem (food processing plants, marine use), and

where disinfecting is needed (hospital/medical and school use). It's also great for anyone who eats and drinks near his/her keyboard and has ever accidentally spilled something inside it. Check the specs further at <http://www.man-machine.com>."

They offered me a sample product, and what a coincidence that the box was mutilated when it arrived. The box had been squashed and punched through, then repaired with plastic tape. The keyboard could also rattle around in the box. When I tried it, it worked just fine, and I was impressed (I tried every character multiple times). On close examination, I don't see how anything, dust or liquid, could penetrate it's skin; it certainly is sealed. I plugged it into the USB port, and Windows immediately installed drivers for it. It needs a slightly heavier touch, but I quickly got used to that. I do miss having legs on the back though.

The normal price is $179.00 (US funds), and my readers will get $20.00 discounted from that price when ordering from their Web site <http://store.yahoo.com/man-machine-store/>, or by calling 301-341-4900. Also by e-mailing them at <sales@man-machine.com>. Shipping is approximately $8.00 in the USA. Use the coupon code "click" when ordering for your $20.00 discount. This offer expires April 30, 2003.

If you have a swimming pool, you might consider putting one of these keyboards in the pool. That way people could send an e-mail for help if they are drowning. It is supposed to work in water, right?

You'll Come Clean With This One
I saw this at Comdex and liked it. Mine works great. The **LensPen** is a very

efficient and easy-to-use optical lens cleaning system. It's designed for all optics, including cameras, camcorders, telescopes, binoculars, riflescopes, and spotting scopes. Containing a non-liquid compound that will not spill or dry out, the LensPen system is safe, and user-friendly, and its compact size fits into almost any pocket.

Then there is the MiniPro for smaller lenses. MiniPro is specially designed for digital and advanced photo system cameras, microscopes, pocket binoculars, and small eyepieces. The same LensPen cleaning system is employed in this great new product: a soft, natural brush to wipe away excess dirt, and a flexible cleaning tip with special cleaning compound.

These products are said to be safe to use on all lenses. They offer a flexible cleaning tip and a non-liquid cleaning compound that will not spill or dry out; they reduce static build-up, prevent corrosion, and fit easily into any pocket or bag. Check the product further at <http://www.lenspen.com>. The DealsGuy price on either the LensPen or MiniPro is $9.95 in US funds plus S&H, which will be about $6.00 in the USA. To order at that price, contact Leona Borsa at 1-877-608-0868 and mention the DealsGuy column, or use the magic words 'Bob Click' when ordering. This deal is good until April 30, 2003.

Do You Need A Fix?

Don Singleton, Vice President of APCUG, alerted me to this one. It's called BigFix, and it's actually a free download. It analyzes your computer to see what fixes it might need, and then it guides you through them. It also alerts you to updates that you need and does that for you. Here is their description:

"The BigFix solution leverages the reach of the Internet and the power of modern computers to create a mass preventive maintenance system that enables identification and elimination of computer problems before they cause failures. The BigFix solution can automatically monitor and detect a problem, proactively alert users or administrators to the problem before a failure occurs, and fix it on one or more machines with the click of a mouse. Because the BigFix solution can find and cure thousands, even millions, of computers at once, it changes the nature and economics of technical support and desktop management. Unlike other approaches, the BigFix solution simplifies maintenance, reduces support costs, and increases user satisfaction by finding problems before, not after, users experience a failure."

To download this product, go to <http://www.bigfix.com>. Don gave me the URL for an in-depth write-up by Richard J. deJongh of Tulsa Computer Society. <http://tcs.org/ioport/nov02/bigfix.htm>. I have not tried, it so I have no experience using it.

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 I might sound.

Bob (The Cheapskate) Click <Bobclick@mindspring.com>. Visit my Web site at <http://www.dealsguy.com> for past columns. Also, I keep adding interesting articles to my "Articles of Interest" page for viewing or downloading.

4

Resolutions and Your Computer

By Ira Wilsker
ira@apcug.org

Despite the many hours per week that we spend on our computers, we often neglect resolutions that can make the time spent computing more enjoyable, productive, efficient, and secure.

Resolve to reduce Internet irritants, pesky spam mail solicitations, pop-up ads, assaults on our machines from hackers, and attacks by computer viruses.

Resolve to follow the three most important words in computing, which are: Backup, Backup, and Backup.

Resolve to finally dump those big national Internet providers that so many of you subscribe to and complain about, but never get around to canceling. Resolve to subscribe to a local provider.

I hate the spam mail that I receive. I am tired of the solicitations for personal physical enhancement, cheap prescription drugs, Nigerians offering to make me rich, home refinancing, and lonely females offering to make me happy. Harvesting our e-mail addresses from a variety of sources is something that we could well do without.

Checking with our internet service provider (ISP) and software publishers on their privacy policies, and selecting the possible option to "opt-out" of their giving away or selling our personal information may help reduce future spam, but will do little to stop the spam we are currently receiving. Sadly, some of the largest national ISPs default to "opt-in," meaning that if subscribers do not explicitly tell them on an annual basis that our information is not to be sold, they will imply our consent to sell our personal information. Many products solicit our email address with the product registration. Reading the fine print will typically offer the choice to opt-out, and hopefully prevent the company from selling our information to third parties. Many of our local ISPs now offer e-mail filtering as either a part of their basic service, or as a nominally priced premium service. Using a third party filtering service provided by local companies, tends to filter out more spam mail than do some of the large national providers, many of which offer no spam filtering service. As a bonus, some of the e-mail filtering services also remove many of the e-mail viruses before they can reach our computers. Either as a freestanding product or as a supplement to ISP filtering, third party spam filtering services or software should be considered.

If using broadband Internet, such as cable or DSL, it is imperative that a good software firewall be utilized. For dialup users, a firewall would also be a good idea. A firewall can make it more difficult for hackers to get access to your computer while online, and can help reduce the chance of a "back-door Trojan" or spyware from sending personal information from your computer to unknown outsiders. As I discussed in an earlier column, Zone Alarm <www.zonelabs.com> and Outpost <www.agnitum.com> are excellent firewalls, and free for your personal use. In addition to a firewall, an antivirus program, frequently updated, is a necessity for all computer users.

To try to eliminate the spyware that may be infesting our computers, and transmitting our personal information to unknown parties in cyberspace, the

use of a spyware killer is also important. One of the best ones available is the free Ad-Aware, available from <www.lavasoftusa.com>.

Be sure to keep firewalls, antivirus, and spyware utilities current, as their publishers often post updates to the software. Another way to help secure the Windows PC is with the "critical updates" released by Microsoft. In 2002, Microsoft released about 70 critical updates. These updates typically close newly discovered security flaws found in browsers, e-mail programs, media players, operating systems, office software, and other vulnerable products. These updates can be freely obtained and installed by going online, and clicking on START - WINDOWS UPDATE and allowing Microsoft to send individualized updates. One warning to users of Windows 95; check for updates immediately, as Microsoft is about to cease all support and updates for that version of Windows.

Hard drives are machines. They all do eventually wear out and fail. A full backup of the hard drive, with periodic incremental backups of new files, will enable the disaster of a hard drive failure to be easily recoverable. At an absolute minimum, critical data files should be backed up frequently. Backing up to writable CDs or DVDs, or an external hard drive, using any of a variety of backup utilities, is great insurance. One step in recovering from a hard drive failure is often booting off of a floppy, sometimes called a "rescue disk." Why not make one now?

Most of us spend a great deal of time online, and many of us also overspend on internet services that bog us down with ads, spam mail, slow service, busy signals, and frequently knock us offline when least expected. Many of you also overpay for the inferior service that some of the large national carriers provide. Switching from the national carrier to a local ISP can be a great move in terms of improved service, as well as a big money saver. Local ISPs may save those who use the national services over $200 per year, providing better service for far less money.

There is no restriction against any non-profit group using the article as long as it is kept in context, with proper credit given to the author. 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.

Software Download Sources
By Ira Wilsker
ira@apcug.org

In some of my recent columns, I wrote about several software products that were available for free download from their authors' websites. Several loyal readers have asked for information on websites where they can view many titles, and download them from a single source. This column is in response to those requests.

Download .com

Download.com claims to be one of the largest sources on the Internet for downloadable software. Download.com is a subsidiary of CNET. While CNET originally started as a 30-minute cable TV show, it has now developed into an

Internet powerhouse with much of its growth due to "dot.com" acquisitions. Download.com is an assimilation of several other former premier download resources into a single, easy to navigate supersite. With several hundred thousand titles available for Windows, Mac, Linux, Palm, PocketPC, cell phones, and other platforms, Download.com may have earned its laurels.

At the top-right of the page is a search box; a topic or title can be entered in the box, and the pull-down menu gives the choice of searching in all downloads, Windows only, all of CNET (including reviews, news, price comparisons, etc.), or searching the entire web. If a particular title is unknown to the user, a simpler and classical menu interface is available. The major menu topics are MP3 and Audio, Internet, Games, Business, Mobile (Palm, PocketPC, cell phone), Multimedia and Design, Web Developing, Software Developing, Utilities and Drivers, and Home and Desktop. Each of the menu headings, when opened, reveals a comprehensive lower directory of detailed topics, with several levels often appearing below the main topic. A little practice browsing the menus will reveal a generous cornucopia of choices, sometimes numbering in the thousands. Once a software topic is found, and multiple titles are displayed, simply clicking on the column headers "Name," "Date," "User Rating," or "Downloads" can sort alphabetically, by date, by user ranking, or by download volume, respectively.

A quick review of just the top few "most popular" downloads will indicate that for some software titles, literally millions of copies of individual titles have been downloaded from Download.com. For those who browse this site frequently, a click on the "New Releases" heading on the main page will show the latest additions to the site. On the date that I am typing this, 1105 new titles have been added so far today.

As another example of the dependency that many place on this site, the top download of a "new program today" (the evening that I am typing this), is already over 162,000 downloads, and one file "new this week" has had almost one-half million downloads from Download.com in the past seven days.

As an additional online tool to help narrow the surfers' choices, many of the screens also allow the user to sort by operating systems, license terms (free to use, trial versions, commercial), file size, and category. Other headings on Download.com can also be used to narrow searches. These headings on the main page include "IS/IT"; "Software Developer," for programmers; "Web Developer," for web page authors; "Business;" "Personal Tech," which includes audio and video utilities, internet utilities, and home and desktop utilities; "Mobile," which includes Palm, PocketPC, WindowsCE, Psion, EPOC, and cell phone software; and a huge "Games" section.

As a source of downloads, Download.com is an excellent resource.

TUCOWS

"The Ultimate Collection of Winsock Software" originally started as a source of Internet related utilities, but has now grown into a massive network of local websites offering an extensive collection of software for a variety of

platforms. Containing over 30,000 updated titles, TUCOWS has become one of my "personal favorite" resources. With software available for Windows, Macintosh, Linux, BeOS, Windows 3.1 (still available!), PDAs, and a variety of other platforms and operating systems, TUCOWS is a geek's paradise.

In order to make downloads faster, and complying with the "netiquette" that says that downloads should be done close to home, TUCOWS has hundreds of local mirror sites around the world that are frequently updated with the latest in titles. A listing of all current TUCOWS mirrors is online at <www.tucows.com>, at the "Choose Your Mirror" link near the center of the page. In Texas alone, there are over a dozen local sites offering the TUCOWS service, with EXP offering the service locally in southeast Texas at <tucows.exp.net>. Connecting to a local TUCOWS server shows a tabular heading of "Business," "Games," "Home and Education," "Internet," "Multimedia," "Systems and Utilities," and "Themes."

Also on the main page is a weekly list of the top 100 downloads, indicating the popularity of specific titles. The number one downloaded title, which was the topic of a recent column here, is the excellent IrfanView software, which I personally use on a frequent basis.

For those who desire to keep up with the latest in available software, TUCOWS offers a free daily e-mail describing the newest software.

By clicking on a tab at the top of the main page, another menu will appear showing sub-topics. The "Internet" tab, for example, opens a menu with an even dozen categories with easy-to-understand topics. It is here, for example, that Internet related software from spam killers to instant messaging services could be found.

Other Resources

There are many other fine resources available to locate and download available software. One warning is to beware of some sources, because it has been documented that some sites, as well as several of the file sharing sites, can be sources of viruses, worms, and Trojans embedded in downloaded software. While not perfect, reliable sources such as Download.com and TUCOWS are generally safe places to find software. Experimenting with and using downloaded, often free, software can be a significant enhancement to your computing experience.

There is no restriction against any non-profit group using this article as long as it is kept in context, with proper credit given to the author. 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.

My New Camera

By John Hoffmann
Coastal Area Computer Club
Corpus Christi, Texas

My new camera is a Nikon. The major feature that attracted me to this camera is the 8X (telescoping magnification parameter), optical zoom, and a

5 megapixel sensor. High megapixels is the name of the game for amateur digital photographers like myself. The more megapixels, the higher the picture quality at a good size (say 8" by 10" or so.) Lots of new features. Some of these features resemble what can be done to digital pictures electronically with a good computer graphics program.

A few new (new for me anyway) characteristics of my Nikon 5700 camera are worth mentioning. First, the battery requirements are way up and one needs to use an expensive, high quality lithium-ion battery, which must be recharged frequently. Secondly, the memory requirements are horrendous. For my old 2 megapixel Nikon camera, I used 32 megabyte (MB), 64MB, and 128 MB flash cards to hold all the digital information on pictures I had taken. At the very highest picture quality (means no compression for storage.) I could take up to 45 pictures. On long vacations, I would lower the quality a little (minimum compression used) and could take over 250 pictures. Of course, even lower quality would lead to over 1000 pictures from my three flash cards. Now, I can only take eight very highest quality pictures—not near enough for any trip.

Now Nikon, and a few others, have a new card format that doubles the number of high quality pictures you can take on a given flash card, called RAW. This format is not yet standardized, so each camera manufacturer has its own version. The RAW format reads the camera sensor data but does not construct the picture, although a thumbnail-size picture is available. The RAW picture format must be converted to a picture so the various computer graphics programs can be used for viewing it. The camera software does this conversion.

Haven't much track record with the new camera yet, so will end this story at this point. I would show a picture from my new camera, but a newsletter is not a place for that.

John Hoffmann is the SIG leader of our computer user group's Digital Camera SIG. You can reach him at <mhofffman@stx.rr.com>.

There is no restriction against any non-profit group using the article as long as it is kept in context, with proper credit given to the author. 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.

Adding Memory—Not So Simple
By Roger R. Gay
SEMCO Member

Adding memory to our computers is the cheapest way to gain improved speed and performance. Current prices at places like BestBuy make this upgrade all the more attractive. But watch out—all memory is not the same. Here, in a condensed form, is my son's experience:

Wanting better performance for certain games, he decided to add 128 MB of memory to his five month old computer's basic 128 MB. The motherboard manual said to use either 100 or 133 MHz SDIMMs, and the factory installed SDIMM was clearly

labeled 133 MHz. With this homework done, he went shopping. BestBuy had a good price on 133 MHz SDIMMs, and their tech support agreed that a 133 MHz SDIMM should work just fine in his computer, so why not match the existing SDIMM?

With all this assurance, he purchased a 133 MHz SDIMM. When it was not recognized by the computer, he exchanged it for another one, and still another. In all, three different 133 MHz SDIMMs (two made by PNY, and one with a Kingston label) were tried and failed to be recognized by the computer.

Finally, an oblique note on the packaging of the Kingston SDIMM provided the clue—in small print and in a unlikely place it indicated that that particular 133 MHz SDIMM was not backward compatible with 100 MHz bus machines. Eureka!

A 100 MHz SDIMM is now happily working side by side with the factory installed 133 MHz SDIMM.

Lessons learned:
1. Don't always trust the manual.
2. Hardware that has the identical specifications may not work the same in your computer.
3. When nothing else works, read all the fine print.

Tip: Dust
Where are we in the scheme of things? The typical grain of dust floating in the air is halfway in size between a subatomic particle and the planet earth. This same particle of dust is about three hundred quadrillion times smaller than the solar system, which, in turn, is 100 times smaller than our Milky Way galaxy.

Use Your CD Drive More Productively
By Ira Wilsker

Almost all newer computers come with a CD-RW drive, a CD drive that can write and rewrite compatible CD discs. For older computers, with a standard CD reader (play only, not write), the addition of a CD "burner" is a very popular and fairly inexpensive upgrade. A simple review of the Sunday sale books for the major electronics and office supply stores shows an abundance of CD-RW drives for between $30 and $100, often after rebate. These drives are typically easy to install, and may possibly be installed in addition to the existing CD reader (good for copying CDs), or as a simple replacement. If internal installation is not desired, there are several external CD-RW drives, advertised weekly, that connect to an available USB or firewire port. The external drives, typically the USB models, are also often a good choice for older notebook computers where internal installation is difficult or impossible. The Sunday ads often show the external USB drives for under $100 after rebates.

Almost all CD-RW drives, whether factory installed or add-on, come with some CD burning software. The most widely distributed CD software provided with the drives is from Adaptec's "spin-off" (their CD writing software division), Roxio. Another common software package included with some drives is from Nero, a product of Ahead Software, while other drives come with a variety of lesser-known software titles. As the price of blank CD discs plunges, often "free after rebate," burning (writing to)

CDs has become very popular. Still, many PC (and Mac) users are not using their equipment to its potential; a large number of users still only use their CD-RW drives in read mode to install other software, and not to burn discs.

As had been stated many times here in previous columns, the three most important words in computing are "Backup, Backup, and Backup." Remember that "Murphy's First law of Computing" states that "A properly backed-up hard drive will never fail; a hard drive that has not been recently backed up will always fail at the most inopportune time." All too many users who have ready access to CD-RW drives have lost all of their important files to viruses or hard drive failures, despite the ease and low expense of copying important files to CD discs. The common blank discs hold from 660 to 700 megabytes of data, and are very inexpensive. Other than some time, there is no great investment to back up critical files at a minimum, or even better, entire hard drives.

There are a variety of excellent utilities available to backup hard drives. Some CD-RW drives come with a "lite" or "limited" version of popular backup programs. While minimally functional, these "lite" versions often lack useful functions such as compression (getting more data on a CD disc than its native capacity), or incremental backup (only backing up new files or files modified since the previous backup). I have been using "BackUp MyPC" from Stomp Software <www.stompinc.com>, which was formerly known as Backup Exec, by Veritas (Seagate). This program is probably one of the most full featured backup programs, and easy to use. BackUp MyPC can backup to almost

any type of device, CD-RW drives, tape drives, Jazz and Zip drives, and other devices. Some competing products are Roxio's Go Back, Norton's Ghost, and NTI's BackUp Now (which I have also used). Since almost all computers can utilize some form of CD writer, and blank discs are cheap, there is absolutely no reason NOT to have at least critical data files backed up. The cliché "ounce of prevention…" is most apropos here. With over one in five PCs currently infected with at least one variety of the Klez worm, several versions of which are capable of destroying critical files on a hard drive, backups are imperative. The appearance and rapid spread of other destructive worms and viruses, such as the new "Hunch" worm which explicitly destroys the files in the Windows, My Programs, and My Documents directories, emphasizes the need for backing up hard drives. Still, probably the most damage is done by the old-fashioned hard drive crash. Remember Murphy's law, and always have a reasonably current backup of critical files. For long-term archival purposes, better quality CD discs are advertised as having 100-year lives.

There are other popular uses of CD burners. One of the most popular and most controversial uses is burning music to blank CD discs. Often in the popular MP3 format, or in native commercial music CD format, studies show that this is the most popular use of CD burners. Provided that copyright laws are rigidly obeyed, and we all know that they always are (snicker), homemade music CDs are very widely created and used. Online music or swap services, ranging from much alive and controversial KazAa and Morpheus, as

well as the legitimate commercial music sites such as Sony, are popular sources of such music.

Another popular use is copying entire CD discs. Generally, it is considered "OK" to make a single archival backup of commercial CDs, provided that the copy is only used as a backup, and properly disposed of (destroyed) when the original software is no longer needed. With some software CDs, and an increasing number of commercial music CDs, this archival backup is becoming more difficult to create, as sophisticated copy protection is being utilized more commonly.

Many use their CD drive, often with rewriteable CD-RW discs, as an additional, but removable adjunct to their hard drive. This allows archival and portable storage of massive amounts of data at minimal expense. CDs are often ideal for moving large files between computers.

There are several other uses for the CD-RW drives now so common in our machines. Many other CD drive utilities are readily available for download, such as those from <tucows.exp.net/system/cdrutil95.html> or <tucows.exp.net/mmedia.html>.

Use the drives as they can be used, but make absolutely sure that critical data is frequently backed up.

There is no restriction against any non-profit group using the article as long as it is kept in context, with proper credit given to the author. This article is brought to you by the Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups, an International organization to which this user group belongs.

Steve Bass
Pasadena IBM Users Group
steve_bass@pcworld.com

Your Old PC
Keep It or Dump It
Bass Explores The Hassle Of Giving Away Your PC.

If you're reading this column, there's a good chance you have an old PC sitting around gathering dust. I have some ideas and a few sites that'll help you decide what to do with it.

Me? For the last month I've been staring intently at the PC in the corner. It's a third generation, poky PII, the one I used as my main production machine for years. There are two other PCs under my desk, my current production machine and the one it replaced, a 450MHz PC I use for testing.

Put it to Work

One way I use a second machine is by networking it to my production machine and using it for drudge work. For instance, I often upload and download humongous video files. Rather than tie up—and slow down—my production PC, I let the second machine do the work. Have a big print job? Send it to your new-found print server. The other neat way to use the other PC is for testing and playing around.

Start by creating a backup image using Norton's Ghost <http://snurl.com/ghost> or PowerQuest's Drive Image <http://snurl.com/image>. Then load up any of the tons of freeware and shareware you've wanted to try but wouldn't dare install on your production PC. It's the trick I've used for my work at PC World for years.

I have the test PC networked to my production machine. Networking is easy with Win 98SE, and even easier with Win XP. You can pick up a pair of network cards for under $20. If the PCs are close, a six foot network cable will suffice. If you're already using a broad band connection—DSL or cable modem—all you need is a cheap-o router. Here's a good how-to article that will tell you more about setting up a low-cost home network: <http://snurl.com/network>.

The Guilty PC

I know what you're thinking. Why be greedy? Giving the computer to your parents, a friend in need, or maybe a neighbor would be a great deed. Well, kids, be careful with your generosity. On the one hand, it's a really kind thing to do, and you'll feel good about your donation. On the other hand, you'll discover another part of the guilt syndrome: You want to make the system perfect before you give it away. Hours, folks; you'll spend hours doing things you wouldn't, didn't, couldn't do when it was your production machine. Sure, you think, it might be a good idea to throw in a faster hard drive (heck, it's just a 2GB) or maybe a little better graphics card. You'll also feel an obligation to try and explain how to use all the programs you left on the PC. And I'll bet most are without documentation, and guaranteed to throw your donee, most likely a novice, into a tizzy.

Then there's the tech support you'll inevitably have to provide. Don't think you will? I promise, on the grave of three systems buried in the garage, you'll be spending hours working on your old computer. (And discovering just how slow an old computer can be.) I'll say it again: Don't bother.

My recommendation? If that neighbor or friend wants a PC, help them shop for a new one. If it's a parent, be a sport and buy them a brand new computer.

Or, if you do some digging, I'll bet you can find a local non-profit organization that does the dirty work examining and repairing computers, and distributing them to needy school kids or the disabled. [*See page 21 of this newsletter for Beth Fordyce's charity donation opportunity.* Ed.]

PC Recycling

Your other option is throw the PC in the virtual Dumpster by way of a local recycling center. You can find out more at the TechSoup's Recycled Hardware site: <http://snurl.com/recycle>.

The PC Disposal site provides services for large companies needing to bury old systems <http://snurl.com/dispose>, and Dell has a program that lets you trade in, sell, auction, or donate your PC <http://snurl.com/Dell_ex>.

I bumped into an article that addresses many of these issues. PC World's Kirk Steers is a recycling expert. In the story, he explains how to decide whether a PC's worth upgrading, and how to recycle it when it reaches the end of the road. Read "What Should You Do With Your Old Computer?" at <http://snurl.com/whatnow>.

Listen, if you need me, I'll be in the garage hunting down some old monochrome monitors.

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 his Home Office columns at <http://snurl.com/homeoffice> and sign up for the Steve Bass online newsletter at <http://snurl.com/signup>.

The Patriot Act Has Implications For All Computer Users

By Cynthia Spencer
Corvallis Macintosh User Group
<cmug@cmug.com>

I'm not great on reading reams of congressional law, nor deciphering all the analysis, but here are a few web sites where folks can go for help understanding the Patriot Act, and how it affects us. I chose sites that seem to be as research-driven as possible, as opposed to those with openly left or right politics.

Text of HR 3162: The entire text of the USA Patriot Act, can be found here:<http://www.eff.org/Privacy/Surveillance/Terrorism_militias/20020925_patriot_act.html>.

Discussion of the USA Patriot Act by the Electronic Frontier Foundation:<http://www.eff.org/Privacy/Surveillance/Terrorism_militias/20011212-eff_usapa_sunset_analysis.html>.

About the Electronic Frontier Foundation: "Based in San Francisco, EFF is a donor-supported membership organization working to protect our fundamental rights regardless of technology; to educate the press, policy makers and the general public about civil liberties issues related to technology; and to act as a defender of those liberties. Among our various activities, EFF opposes misguided legislation, initiates and defends court cases preserving individuals' rights, launches global public campaigns, introduces leading edge proposals and papers, hosts frequent educational events, engages the press regularly, and publishes a comprehensive archive of digital civil liberties information at one of the most linked-to web sites in the world <http://www.eff.org>. "

Review of how the USA Patriot Act may affect library internet terminals: <http://www.llrx.com/features/usapatriotact.htm>.

At-a-glance breakdown of major changes made by HR 3162: <http://www.llrx.com/features/libraryrecords.htm>. LLRX is the Law Library Resource Exchange website. "LLRX.com is a unique, free Web journal dedicated to providing legal and library professionals with the most up-to-date information on a wide range of Internet research and technology-related issues, applications, resources, and tools."

A report to Congress from Library of Congress Research Department, Charles Doyle, Senior Specialist, American Law Division: <http://www.fas.org/irp/crs/RS21203.pdf>.

E-Mail Tips
By Elliott Chandler
SEMCO Member

While the standards for exchanging electronic mail over the Internet have relaxed somewhat, the most common form of interchange is still ordinary text. If you include special symbols or foreign language characters in your message, they may not arrive as you intended. Also, if you compose messages using a mail program which lets you change the font or size of text,

or include special effects such as bold or underlined text, you are definitely not sending standard mail. In fact, you are probably using something called "Hyper-text markup language" or HTML. In reality, you are sending small web pages as mail. If your recipient's mail reader does not render mail encoded as a web page properly, he will see a large amount of annoying and extraneous garbage mixed in with your message. [*Rich Text Format (RTF) also allows the sender to specify typeface, bold, underline, etc.* Ed.]

When posting messages, it is best to use ordinary text unless you know your recipient can handle something else.

If you send mail from a company mail system or from a web site, you may not have a choice of mail format. In addition, mail services such as AOL (America On-Line) are notorious for hiding the addressing and mail routing information, called the mail "header," that accompanies each message. For example, if you forward a message that has been forwarded to you, all of the information used to send that message from its original sender is included in the message. If your mail reader does not hide this type of information, you may see several pages of unnecessary and distracting material before your message appears. In fact, it is possible for someone to obtain your e-mail address from mail that you forward. This is one source that unscrupulous mail scavengers use to "harvest" addresses that they sell to people who then bombard your inbox with un-wanted junk electronic mail.

Even though it takes a bit more work, it's best not to forward mail messages, particularly if they have been forwarded to you. Instead, cut the text

from the message that you have received and paste it into a new message for your intended recipients, or simply delete the header information from the copy you are forwarding.

─────────────

Disk Investigator T
By Robert A. Lewis
Dayton Microcomputer Association, Inc.

Here's a new utility that members might find useful. Disk Investigator is freeware. Download at <http://www.theabsolute.net/sware/dskinv.html>. The latest version, Disk Investigator T, v1.2, is only 0.5 MB. (for Win95, Win98, WinME, WinNT, Win2000, WinXP).

What is Disk Investigator? Disk Investigator helps you to discover all that is hidden on your computer hard disk. It can also help you to recover lost data. It will display the true drive contents by bypassing the operating system and directly reading the raw drive sectors. It will view and search raw directories, files, clusters, and system sectors, verify the effectiveness of file and disk wiping programs, and undelete previously deleted files.

You can download it at <http://www.theabsolute.net/sware/clndisk.html>.

There is no restriction against any non-profit group using this article as long as it is kept in context, with proper credit given to the author. 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.

SEMCO Survey Results

Results of the January SEMCO Survey are shown in Tables 1, 2, and 3. The number of responses for each question are indicated. The total number of reponses was 25.

TABLE 1—USER EXPERTISE	
Novice	1
New User	0
Intermediate User	9
Accomplished User	12
Expert	2
Power User	0
Geek	1
Total	25

TABLE 2—SURVEY QUESTIONS	Yes/No
Appreciate DealsGuy	21/2
Read Most Of DATABUS	20/2
Read At Least One Article	23/0
Other Groups List Valuable	15/7
Would Write Letters to Editor	3/18
Would Write Product Review	12/10
DATA BUS As Valuable As Meetings	12/10
Are Q & A Sessions Valuable	20/3
Would Submit Written Question ...	8/14
Would Like Different Timing Of Meeting	1/21
Would Like Novice Lecture-Type Training	7/9
Would Attend Early Or Late Novice Session	6/9
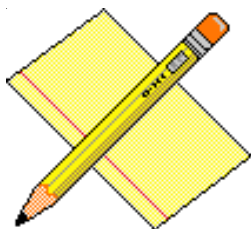
TABLE 3—MEMBER INTERESTS			
Tips & Tricks	18	Drawing & Painting	12
Troubleshooting & Repair	17	New Hardware Products	11
How To	16	Computer Security	11
Digital Photography	16	Windows XP	11
Scanning	15	Slide Preparation	10
New Software Products	15	Databases	10
CD Burning	15	Partitioning	10
Internet	14	Graphics	10
Photoshop	14	DVD	9
Backing Up	14	OCR	9
Word Processing	13	PDA	8
Viruses	13	Linux	7
Spreadsheets	12	MP3	6
E-Mail	12	Music	5
Printing	12	What Else*	4

* Software mentioned by DealsGuy, Anything Macintosh, Media Players, Plug-ins, VBA for Applications

Tip: USB Cables

According to a FAQ on the USB.org website <http://www.usb.org>: "Fully compliant Original USB cables will work fine at Hi-Speed USB speeds." However, not all USB cables are fully "Original USB compliant."

There is a list of products that have passed a USB-IF Compliance Program for product quality on the website. Other products may work satisfactorily, but those listed are the ones that have been certified to bear the new USB-IF logo.

Submitted by Bob Clyne

Tip: Romancing the Moon

If you are planning a moonlit tryst, you'd better hurry. The moon is moving away from the earth at a rate of 1-1/2 inches per year. For an explanation see <http://image.gfsc.nasa.gov/poetry/ask/a10838.html> and also <http://sunearth.gfsc.nasa.gov/eclipse/SEhelp/ApolloLaser.html>.
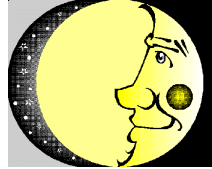
Letter From The Editor

Some personal thoughts on the SEMCO Survey: The member interests are perhaps not surprising, but they should provide a priority ranking when your SIG Chairmen and the DATA BUS editor choose topics to present.

The fact that SEMCO has so few novices (or people willing to admit it) is unfortunate. It seems to be a Catch 22, because when we have so few novices we don't provide basic training, and without that we don't get novice members. Perhaps the question was wrongly worded; we are all novices in some areas, even if we are expert in others. However, SEMCO seems to be mostly Intermediate and Accomplished users; we have lots of expertise to help users at all levels. If you can suggest a solution to this problem, let us know.

The DATA BUS and the DealsGuy get good grades. The Other Groups listing is apparently worth retaining, but few people offered Letters to the Editor; we'd still appreciate any at all. There are a number of members willing to do product reviews. We'll try to make that work. The DATA BUS and meetings appear to be about equally valuable to the members; that may result from the fact that almost all respondents to the survey were attendees at the January meeting. In any case, it's reassuring. The Q&A sessions at the meetings are clearly appreciated and should be retained, but written questions don't get a lot of support—perhaps worth a trial. Members are satisfied with the current timing of meetings. There is some sentiment for lecture-type training at a novice session before or after the SIG sessions, a surprising 15 or 16 reponses to novice questions, when there is only one admitted novice in the group.

All very interesting; thanks for your reponses.

Bill

BOARD MEETING
2/9/2003
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, Warner
Mach representing SIG-IBM
Intermediate Chairman Jack Vander-
Schrier, Publications Committee
Chairman Bill Agnew, and Members-
at-Large Bob Clyne and Chuck Moery.

Arriving late was Harold Balmer. The
meeting was called to order at 12:05 pm.
Old Business
Treasurer Roger Gay reported that
SEMCO's bank balance is $4879.45.
SEMCO's membership now stands at
88. Michael Bader, Jack Baum, Gerald
Herriman, Claire Konikow, and John
Samarian's memberships were up for
renewal in January.

Roger Gay reported that the audit for
2002 has been completed satisfactorily.

Bob Clyne moved for the approval
of the Budget, as presented in the draft,
down through the closing balance line.
Gary DeNise seconded the motion, and
it was carried.
New Business
Bob Clyne moved that SEMCO accept
Oakland University's offer to allow us
to use the facilities for the calendar year
2003 under the same terms as 2002,
except that the fee will be $500 per
projector for the 2003 calendar year,
and to authorize the payment of $500 to
Oakland University. Tom Callow
seconded the motion, and it was
carried.

Warner Mach moved to be
reimbursed $7.10 for refreshments.
Bob Clyne seconded the motion, and it
was carried.

Bob Clyne moved that SEMCO
accept John Lodden's offer of
discounted ISP and Long Distance
Telephone Service as a member
benefit. However, SEMCO needs to
develop a disclaimer of liability. Carol
Sanzi seconded the motion, and it was
carried.

Roger Gay repaired the 100 cup
coffee pot by recycling the parts from
the old 65-cup coffee pot.

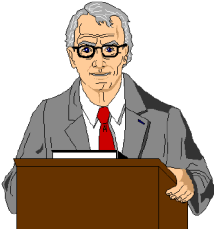The meeting was adjourned at
12:30 pm.

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS (SIGs)

SIG-IBM
Tom Callow
Warner Mach

March 9: Diabetes Care Software: SEMCO member and former SIG-MAC Chairman Harold Balmer will demonstrate Accu-Chek Compass™ Diabetes Care Software, a Windows-based software program that provides an easy way for you to manage your diabetes.

SIG-IBM INTERMEDIATE
Jack Vander-Schrier

March 9: Games: Chairman Jack Vander-Schrier will demonstrate games you can play on your computer, including Civilization II, Ultima Online, Caesar III, and Yahoo Games.

NOVICE-IBM GROUP
Rotating Volunteer Hosts

March 9: Q&A: Member directed discussion.

SIG-ADVANCED
Franz Breidenich

April 7: 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.**

April 2003 DATA BUS DEADLINE (7th day after meeting)
SEMCO & SIG DATA, & MEMBERS' ADS - Deadline: Sun, Mar. 16, 11:59pm.
Members' personal ads are free. To mail, use Editor address on Page 2; e-mail address: <agnew@bignet.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).

Bill Agnew
agnew@bignet.net
(to post monthly computer group info)

**CALENDAR-OF-EVENTS
OTHER GROUPS**

AAIICI (American Association of Individual Investors, Computerized Investors)
Mar. 22–Saturday, 10am-noon (4th Saturday); 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)
April 2–Wednesday, 7pm (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: Digital Imaging (Photo Manipulation).

DCOM Computer Club
Mar. 14–Friday, 6:30 - 8:30pm (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
Mar. 27–Thursday, 7 pm (last Thursday); Bay de Noc C. C., Escanaba. Info: Gordon Nelson, Pres. & Editor at <gnelson@bresnanlink.net> or 906-428-1014.

DPUG, (Detroit Palm Users Group)
Mar. 13–Thursday, 7pm (2nd Thursday); Kensington Community Church, northwest corner John R & Square Lake Rds, Troy, MI. <http://www.dpug.org>. **Free membership.** Topics: E-books on your Palm, Security on your Palm, graffiti shortcuts.

MacGroup Detroit
Mar. 16–Sunday, 3pm-5pm (3rd Sunday); Bloomfield Twp. Library, 1099 Lone Pine Rd. (corner of Telegraph Rd.). Info: Terry White, <terry@macgroup.org> or 313-571-9817. <http://www.macgroup.org> . Topic: DVD authoring; Apple iDVD3 and DVD Studio Pro 1.5.

MacTechnics, (MAC User Group)
Mar.15–Saturday, (3rd Saturday); Coffee 9:00am, SIGs 9:30am, Main meeting 11:00am. Mack Open School, 920 Miller Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48103. <http://www.mactechnics.org>). Info: Cassie at <cassiemac@yahoo.com> or 313-971-8743.

MCUG (Michigan Computer Users Group)
Mar. 20–Thursday, 7pm (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
Mar. 13–(2nd Thur), MAC SIG; Mar. 13–(2nd Thur), Golden Masters SIG; Mar. 20–(3rd Thur), Green Apple SIG; 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>. Topics: General Mac Q&A plus other topics.

Oak Park Computer Club
Meets every Friday, 10:15am at Oak Park Library, Oak Park Blvd. at Coolidge Hwy.

SHCC (Sterling Heights Computer Club)
April 1–Tuesday, 7:30pm (1st Tuesday); Carpathia Club, 38000 Utica Rd, Sterling Hts, Pres. Don VanSyckel at <Don@VanSyckel.net>, 586-731-9232; Web: <http://www.SterlingHeightsComputerClub.org>.

SVCA (Saginaw Valley Computer Assoc.)
Mar. 13–Thursday, 6:30-9:00pm (2nd Thursday); Saginaw. Web: <http://www.svca.org>.

Wayne State U. Mac User Group
Mar. 8–Saturday 10:00am-Noon (2nd Saturday); at Mich.com, 21042 Laurelwood, Farmington. Info: Lorn/JoAnn Olsen 248/478-4300 or Denny MeLampy 248-477-0190.

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

FEBRUARY REFRESHMENT DONORS
Warner Mach, Coordinator
Gary Denise
Betty MacKenzie
Carol Sanzi
Bert Farmilo
Roland Maki

Tip: Vegetarian

Then there is the guy who said "I love vegetarians; I eat them all the time."

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.

Almost Anything: Vander-Schrier
AutoCAD: Comptois, Gay
Genealogy: Cook
IBM PC Hardware Issues: Clyne, Gay, Yuhasz
Operating Systems: Callow, Clyne, Yuhasz
MAC Hardware and OS Issues: Yuhasz

MS Office for Windows: Callow
MS Word: Clyne
Networking: Callow
Novell Netware: Yuhasz
Quicken: Clyne, Gay
Geocaching: Cook

Clyne, Bob—810-387-3101, 9am-10pm .... clyne@mich.com
Callow, Tom—248-642-1920 9am–5pm .... tcallow@vmddlaw.com
Comptois, Jerry—248-651-2504, anytime .... jerrycandotoo@juno.com
Cook, Stephen—313-272-7594, eves .... scook48227@ameritech.net
Gay, Roger—248-641-7799, 9am-10pm .... rgay@voyager.net
Vander-Schrier, Jack—586-739-7720,12-8pm .... jvanders@myself.com
Yuhasz, Steve .... Help@yuhasz.org

21
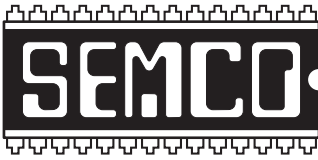
**SOUTHEASTERN MICHIGAN
COMPUTER ORGANIZATION, INC.**

SEMCO CALENDAR—March/April

SCIENCE & ENGINEERING BUILDING, OAKLAND UNIVERSITY, ROCHESTER, MICHIGAN

March 9–SUNDAY (Meet 2nd Sunday)

SEMCO <u>Board</u> Meeting at 12:00 noon, **Room 164.** For Officers and SIG Chairpersons. Other members are invited to attend.
SEMCO <u>General</u> Meeting at 1:30 pm, **Room 164.**

<u>S</u>pecial <u>I</u>nterest <u>G</u>roups (SIGs)

SIG-IBM 1:45 pm, **Room 164. Program: Diabetes Care Software:** SEMCO member and former SIG-MAC Chairman HaroldBalmer will demonstrate Accu-Chek Compass™ Diabetes Care Software, a Windows-based software program that provides an easy way for you to manage your diabetes.

SOCIAL PERIOD 3:15 pm, **Room 172.** Refreshments! (Reminder: We must maintain a neat environment.)

NOVICE-IBM GROUP 3:45 pm, **Room 168. Program: Q&A, member-directed discussion.**

SIG-IBM Intermediate 3:45 pm, **Room 164. Program: Games:** Chairman Jack Vander-Schrier will demonstrate games you can play on your computer, including Civilization II, Ultima Online, Caesar III, and Yahoo Games.
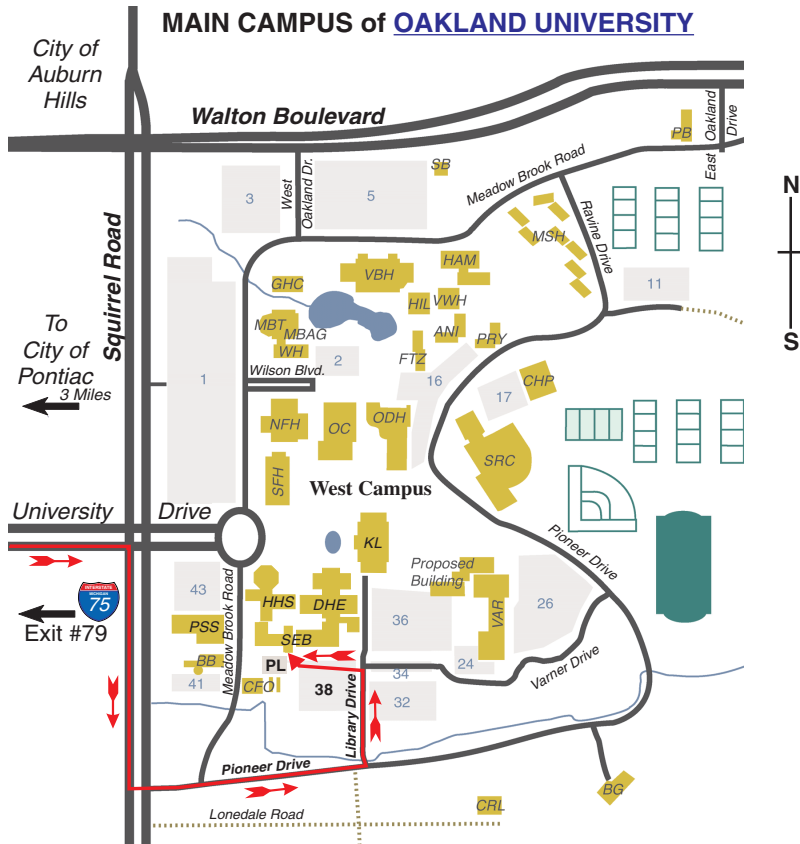
April 7–M0NDAY , 6:45 pm (Meet 1st Monday), SIG-ADVANCED Oak Park Public Library, 14200 Oak Park Blvd.,Oak Park, MI. Phone: (248) 691-7480. Directions: Oak Park Blvd. is 9 1/2 mile Road, located west of Coolidge. Best route from freeway is to take I-696 to the Coolidge exit. Head south on Coolidge for 1/2 mile to Oak Park Blvd., and turn right. Info: Franz Breidenich 248-398-3359. **TOPIC: Wide-ranging discussion of computers & computing.**

April 13–SUNDAY (Meet 2nd Sunday). SEMCO, 1:30 pm. **Topics: To be announced.**

http://www.semco.org
PUBLIC INVITED
(Please copy this and the next page to post on your bulletin board)

MAIN CAMPUS of OAKLAND UNIVERSITY

City of Auburn Hills

Walton Boulevard

To City of Pontiac
3 Miles

Squirrel Road

West Campus

University   Drive

75
Exit #79

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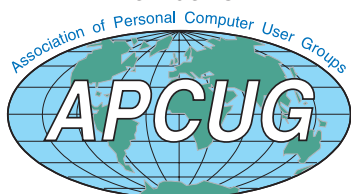
The meetings at Oakland University are sponsored by OU's Academic Computer Services (ACS), and the student chapter of the Association of Computer Machinery (ACM).
SEMCO thanks OU, ACS & ACM for their assistance.

Association of Personal Computer User Groups
APCUG

FIRST CLASS MAIL

Dated Material

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

SEMCO (future meetings)
  March 9
  April 13

SEMCO: A Community Organization
Helping People for the 21st Century