SEMCO

DATA BUS

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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.

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

I enjoy all the feedback from my personal comments in the column. When I wrote about my experience with spyware on a friend's computer, I was surprised at how many people e-mailed to say how many spies they found on their own machines when they installed Ad-Aware, and many had over a hundred. Some even asked me where to get Ad-Aware, and I thought that was pretty common knowledge. People must not be paying enough attention because I read about Ad-Aware in many newsletters.

Turbo Tax

Heard about Turbo Tax lately? It looks like Intuit took lessons from Microsoft with their new "product activation" scheme, but Intuit uses a third party software called SafeCast (by Macrovision) to keep track of the computer it is installed on, although it continuously works in the background. It sounds like there have been problems, but their tech support doesn't have much patience. I read about a guy who had hard drive problems. He replaced his HD, and that one also became defective. He really got an attitude from their tech support. If you want to know more, see < http://www.extremetech.com >; you'll see lots of information by doing a search. The article I read was "TurboTax, So What Should I Do Now?" It also had a list of other products that use the same product activation scheme. In my case, AARP volunteers did my tax return free.

An Old Deal Resurfaced

A few months ago I wrote about "Drive Rescue," but by the time the column was published, that freeware product was pulled. I believe a new pay version replaces it now. However, Ken Marple told me he found his original download and will send it to me. If anybody still wants it, let me know. A friend told me it also can be obtained if you go to <http://www.absolutefreesoftware.co.uk/freeware_general_utilities.htm> as I write this. He says the author states it has bugs, so beware. Ken Marple said he accidentally found his HD problem anyway when he took off a virus detection software and the problem disappeared. He had been running two Anti Virus programs, not a good plan.

Deals

There's not much in deals this month because I'm in the middle of company time, meaning lots of family visiting. Vendors didn't respond, and I didn't have time (or ambition) to do any follow-up. The LensPen item is good until April 30, 2003 at <http://www.lenspen.com>. Also, the Man-Machine "Cool One" Keyboard is still good. Call 301-341-4900. I hope you got your machine "fixed" with <http://www.bigfix.com> if you were

having problems. Here is what I liked this month.

Zap Those Telemarketers

I read this one in the Dayton Microcomputer Association's newsletter, the DataBuss, by Jerry Wonderly, and I thought perhaps you would like it.

He found this on Clark Howard's Web site <http://www.clarkhoward.com>. "Telemarketers (and bill collectors) often use Predictive Dialers to dial outgoing calls. These are computers that keep dialing phone numbers on a list until they reach a live person. The Predictive Dialer then transfers that call to the first live operator. That's why you sometimes hear silence for a while before someone gets on the line when you answer the phone. Some of them are bold enough to play a little recording asking you to "Please hold on for an important call!" (Yea, Right!) Telemarketers and bill collectors don't want to pay their operators for dialing and listening to busy signals and answering machines, so they have a computer do it for them.

The Predictive Dialer is programmed to hang up if it hears a Special Information Tone (SIT), since it knows the line is disconnected. It doesn't listen to what's said after the SIT tone since it doesn't understand words. Here's how that information helps you. If you download a file of these tones and then record it to the beginning of your answering machine message before your real message, the automated dialer will be tricked into thinking your phone is disconnected, and you'll be removed from their calling list. No more calls from them! In no time at all, you should be receiving far fewer telemarketing calls.

Of course, you could always spend around $40 to buy one of those popular zapping machines, but I'll take the freebie. Readers can find this free, small (only 44 KB) sound file, sit_disconnected.wav, at <http://www.telephonetribute.com/tribute/signal_and_circuit_conditions.htm>." That's the Web site report; thanks for tracking it down, Jerry.

Backup Solutions For You On Sale

This one is running out fast. In fact, I don't even understand what all it is about, so check it carefully at the Web site <http://www.centuriantech.com>. Centurian Technology is having a winter sale that will end soon. This product is unique for your backup, and they have another product for hard drive protection.

Here is a brief description of Centurian Guard: The Centurion Guard® Hard Drive Protection Device protects your system by write-protecting the hard drive at the physical level, similar to the way that you write-protect your floppy disks by setting the write-protect tab.

And this is a brief description of Drive Shield: DriveShield® is a new software based laptop/PC hard drive protection. DriveShield allows anyone who manages laptops/PC's to reset a system to its original configuration with a simple reboot.

Be sure to take advantage of this deal if you need the protection. I have not used either product so I cannot speak from experience. However, when I saw it demonstrated at a show, I was impressed. But a show presentation is designed to make you really want a product. You can also call them at 800-224-7977, and they say prices start at $58.00 a unit.

Everything You Ever Wanted To Know, and Also Things You Never Wanted To Know

Ever wonder what your computer was really made of? There are plenty of ways to find that out, but Paul Witheridge of Sarnia Computer Users Group gave me this little program that will capture your interest. Best part of all, it can run from a floppy. Download it at <http://www.aida32.hu/aida-download.php>. Also see <http://www.aida32.hu/aida-features.php?bit=32> (left column) for a description. Then unzip it to put it to the test. In fact, I did put it on a floppy and, although it runs a bit slow, it works, gathering so much information about your machine that you will be astounded. When browsing the information, it even takes you to the Web sites. Best of all, its freeware. Be prepared to spend a lot of time to interpret stuff the first time you run it. Actually, I understood little of the information, but you might.

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 (taken from user group newsletters) to my "Articles of Interest" page for viewing or downloading.

Tip: A bit is a zero or a one, off or on.

More E-Mail Tips
From Elliott Chandler
SEMCO Member

Unless your are just chatting with Aunt Lou or Brother Jim, the rules of effective business communication also apply to e-mail. Use a subject line which describes the message's contents. Keep messages short, sweet and to the point. Quote enough of the sender's original message to establish a context, but no more. Avoid long stretches of words in all upper case letters. THIS IS SIMILAR TO SHOUTING AND IS CONSIDERED VERY RUDE. If you need to emphasize words, and you are sending ordinary text, use underlines or surround important words or phrases with asterisks.

Don't bother sending out chain letters. All such money making schemes are illegal. Even if they do not ask for money, they often violate the terms of service that your ISP (internet service provider) establishes. Most are well known hoaxes. Bill Gates is not tracking your e-mail. You will not receive a check from him for each e-mail you send on. Mass mailing of prayers or pictures of angels probably will not bring you luck. More likely, you will lose your e-mail account and your internet access.

Avoid sending out unnecessary attachments. Large pictures and music files take up space in your recipient's mail box, and they take time to transfer to his/her computer. Don't assume that everyone in your address book wants to see the latest pictures of your spouse, your children, and your dog.

Tip: A byte (not a bite) is 8 bits.

eBay for Beginners
By Michael Miller and Que Publishing

The excerpt below is a sample chapter from *Absolute Beginner's Guide to eBay* from best-selling author Michael Miller and Que Publishing. This chapter covers getting up and running on eBay from registration to fees. The book itself covers everything from how to get the most of your eBay experience to dealing with deadbeats, buyers, and making your living on eBay.

To view the images and notes, tips and tricks included in the chapter text from the *Absolute Beginner's Guide to eBay*, visit the website <http://www.quepublishing.com/catalog/product.asp?product_id=%7B19DF3F43-C3F4-495D-A378-8470884C62EB%7D&>. These elements have been removed for the purpose of this article.

What is eBay?
Did you know that eBay consists of over 10 million registered members and is the most popular shopping site on the internet? The site hosts more than 12 million items and boasted over $14 billion worth of transactions in 2002. All this makes it virtually impossible not to find what you're looking for (and likely at a great price). You'll be amazed at what you can unload as well; the 18,000 categories range from books to real estate, cars to toy cars. Go from novice to pro in no-time with the *Absolute Beginner's Guide to eBay*.

Joining Up and Getting Started
You can browse through eBay's millions of listings anonymously (and without registering), but if you want to buy or sell items, you have to register with the eBay site. Registration involves telling eBay who you are, where you live, and how to contact you. If you're interested in selling on eBay, you'll also need to give eBay a valid credit card number—which won't be charged. (At least, not yet!)

Although eBay registration is free, selling an item isn't. You have to pay eBay a fee for every item you list for sale, and for every item you actually sell. You don't have to pay eBay when you buy an item; fees are charged exclusively to sellers.

Everybody Does It: Filling Out eBay's Registration Form
Registration is free, easy, and relatively quick. But before you register you need to prepare some key information, as detailed in the following checklist:

·Your name
·Your street address
·Your e-mail address
·Your phone number
·Your date of birth
·Your credit card number (optional if you're only going to be bidding on items; mandatory if you're going to be selling items on auction)

With this information at hand, you register as an eBay user by following these steps:

1. From eBay's home page, click the Register Now button.
2. When the eBay Registration page appears, enter the following: First name and last name, S t r e e t address (including city, state, Zip code, and country), telephone number, E-mail address
3. Still on the same page, create and enter a user ID into the Create Your eBay User ID box.
4. Create and enter a password (at least six characters long, with no spaces) into the Create Password box.
5. Select a question from the Secret Question list and then enter your answer in the Secret Answer box. (This is used if you ever forget your password.)
6. Enter your date of birth and then click the Continue button.
7. eBay will now display its user agreements. Read these agreements (if you want), check each of the I Agree boxes, and then click the I Agree to These Terms button.
8. eBay will now verify your e-mail address and send you a confirmation message. Click the Web page link in the confirmation e-mail message to continue.
9. eBay now shows a congratulations page along with a pop-up window that asks you to enter more (optional) information about yourself. This information is used for marketing purposes; you can choose to fill in the blanks if you want, or instead you can close the window and click the Home link to go directly to eBay's home page—and start buying and selling!

Setting Up Your Payment Options

If you intend to sell items on eBay, you'll need to give eBay either your credit card number or your checking account number. (You can pay eBay fees by check or money order, at least theoretically; it's a hassle to do and not encouraged.)

When you set up your eBay account for credit card billing, eBay bills your credit card once a month for all the fees you incur in the previous 30 days. When you set up eBay to debit your checking account (called eBay Direct Pay), you authorize eBay to automatically remove funds from your account on a specified day each month.

To set up your eBay account for credit card billing, you need to follow these steps:

1. Go to the Site Map page and click Place or Update my Credit Card on File with eBay (in the Seller Accounts section of the Services section).
2. When the credit card submission form appears, enter your user ID or e-mail address, password, and credit card billing information, and then check the I Would Like to Use This Credit Card to Pay Seller Fees option.
3. Click the Submit button.

Your credit card information will be applied to your eBay account within 12–24 hours—at which time you'll be able to participate fully in everything eBay has to offer.

The Costs of Using eBay

You don't have to pay eBay anything to browse through items on their site. You don't have to pay eBay anything to bid on an item. You don't even have to pay eBay anything if you actually buy an item (although you will be paying

the seller directly, of course). However, if you're listing an item for sale, you gotta pay.

eBay charges two main types of fees:

1. Insertion fees (I prefer to call them listing fees) are what you pay every time you list an item for sale on eBay. These fees are based on the minimum bid or reserve price of the item listed. These fees are nonrefundable.

2. Final value fees (I prefer to call them selling fees, or commissions) are what you pay when an item is actually sold to a buyer. These fees are based on the item's final selling price (the highest bid). If your item doesn't sell, you aren't charged a final value fee.

EBay also charges a variety of fees for different types of listing enhancements. The Table on the next page lists all the fees eBay charges, as of Fall 2002. (Fees for items listed in the Real Estate/Timeshare and eBay Motors categories are typically higher.) View eBay's current fee structure at <ebay.com/help/sell/fees.html>.

There's all manner of fine print associated with these fees. Here are some of the more important points to keep in mind:

1. Insertion fees are nonrefundable.

2. You will not be charged a final value fee if there were no bids on your item or (in a reserve price auction) if there were no bids that met the reserve price—that is, if your item didn't sell.

3. It doesn't matter whether the buyer actually pays you (or how much he or she actually pays); you still owe eBay the full final value fee.

Invoicing on your account occurs once a month for the previous month's activity. You'll get an invoice by e-mail detailing your charges for the month; if you've set up your account for automatic credit card billing (see the earlier section), your credit card will be charged at that time. (If you prefer to pay by check, now's the time to get out the old checkbook.)

Getting Started

Now that you're all signed up (and aware of eBay's fee structure), you're ready to start bidding—and selling. The bidding process is fee-free; all you have to do is find something you want to buy, and start bidding. The selling process is a little more involved, and costs a little money. Whichever you choose, get ready for lots of action—and fun!

The Absolute Minimum

Here are the key points to remember :

1. Before you can bid or sell on eBay, you need to create an eBay user account.

2. Registration is free.

3. If you want to sell items on eBay, you'll either have to leave a credit card number on file, or sign up for eBay Direct Pay (automatic deductions from your checking account).

4. Buyers are never charged any fees by eBay.

5. eBay charges sellers a variety of fees, including listing fees (non-refundable) and final value fees (if your item actually sells).

TABLE OF eBay Fees

Type of Fee	Fee
Insertion Fee In a regular auction, based on the opening value or minimum bid. In a fixed price auction, based on the Buy It Now price. In a reserve price auction, based on the reserved price of the item. In a Dutch auction, based on the opening value or minimum bid—multiplied by the number of items offered, up to a maximum of $3.30.	Items priced $0-9.99: $0.30 Items priced $10-24.99: $0.55 Items priced $25-49.99: $1.10 Items priced $50-$199.99; 2.20 Items priced $200+: $3.30
Final Value Fee In regular and successful reserve price auctions, based on the closing (high) bid. In Dutch auctions, based on the lowest successful bid multiplied by the number of items sold.	5.25% of the amount of the high bid to $25, plus 2.75% of that part of the high bid from $25.01 up to $1000, plus 1.5% of the remaining amount of the high bid that is greater than $1000.
Scheduled Listings Schedules your item to be listed at a specific date and time, up to 3 weeks in advance.	$0.10
List in Two Categories Enables you to list your item in two separate categories.	Double listing and upgrade fees.
Reserve Price Auction Additional fee for holding in reserve price auction.	Items priced $0-24.99: $0.50 Items priced $25-199.99: $1.00 Items priced $200+: $2.00
Buy It Now Fee to use the Buy It Now Option.	$0.05
10 Day Auction Additional Fee for extending your auction from the normal 7-day format.	$0.10
Bold Boldfaces the title of your item in the listing.	$2.00
Highlight Puts color shading behind your item in listing.	$5.00
Gallery Displays a thumbnail picture of your item in the Gallery.	$0.25
Gallery Featured Randomly displays your Gallery listing at the top of the category in larger size.	$19.95
Featured Plus! Puts your item at the top of the pages for that category, and also displays it in the Featured Items of the category home page.	$19.95
Home Page Featured Puts your item at the top of the main listings page and the Featured area of eBay's home page.	$99.95

W(help)!
By Ima Clueless
and M.C. Esse

IC: My youngest bitch, "Boots," was nesting, and we were all eagerly anticipating the new arrivals. Since everyone in this particular household was grossly inexperienced in midwifery, it required tons of research and development! To quote Pitipat, "I don't know nuthin' about birthin' no babies, Mz. Scarlett!" Fortunately, today's Internet offered us a plethora of information on the subject of whelping a healthy litter of puppies.

MC: I'm thinking at this point, "Puppies are carbon-based. Now, how can I tie in some silicon-based technology" and maybe even learn something new about networking while I'm at it?

IC: We chose a particularly remote room in the basement for her whelping nest, as it afforded her ample comfort and privacy and would be easier to clean as the litter produced more litter, but it did make it more difficult for the humans, as we had to negotiate the stairs much more than we were accustomed to.

MC: There is a walk of almost 100 feet, including a set of stairs, to get from office to nest. I knew there would be lots of desire to check up on mother and babies. Although 100 feet doesn't sound very far, it is when there's a set of basement stairs involved as well as a few turns and twists around "stuph" in the basement. On top of the climbing, it will be a disturbance every time someone pokes his/her head in the nesting area. So, how about a web camera? We've set it up several times before, just not for this application.

IC: To alleviate some of the stair-climbing, we decided to use today's technology to make our lives easier. Can you say..... "Web camera on a wireless network?" "Doggy monitor?" Wireless, as we didn't want to string a lot of cables throughout the basement and upstairs rooms.

MC: I've been told that I can't drill holes in the flooring between the upstairs office and the basement. Not only am I not allowed to drill holes in the floor, I'm told that stringing network cabling in the basement would not be appreciated, as it would have to traverse the basement steps, wind around two doors on the main floor, and finally go through a portion of the living room before reaching the office. Because I could take a couple of overland routes, though, I really only needed 60 feet of network cabling. I'm also thinking it sure would be easier in the long run!

IC: As we already had a good deal of the necessary hardware available, it was not as expensive for us to set up this unorthodox use of new technology. Basically, we used one computer for transmitting the video from the web cam, another with a wireless hub for receiving the video and then sending it to any computer in the house using NetMeeting. Unfortunately, we both had to admit that wireless technology is not sophisticated enough for streaming video, and after all the network card shuffling, it was abandoned. The picture just did not transmit well, NetMeeting kept freezing the computers, and it defeated the purpose of less stair-climbing, as we had to keep rebooting all the computers.

MC: In a word, "Wireless Sucks!" Yeah, I know, that's two words. It's

also not the whole story. Most of the hardware was already on-hand. We'd been dabbling a bit with wireless for some time. It worked well going from a notebook computer (1.1 Ghz, 256 MB RAM, Win2KPro), through a wireless access point (WAP), onto the office LAN, and then through DSL to the Internet. There was not a significant amount of delay for surfing the web or for getting e-mail. So at this point I'm thinking we'll use an older PC (Pentium 450, 128 MB RAM, Win98SE) in the basement and broadcast upstairs to the WAP. Had to purchase the internal wireless card for this machine. Unfortunately, in our zeal to be security-conscious with the wireless LAN, we'd purchased a WAP that included a lot of built-in security, never thinking that we'd have to open up a bunch of IP ports to allow NetMeeting to go in and out of it. This is sort of like contracting for a battalion of US Marines to guard the backdoor of your house. When you realize all you really needed for this particular application was a surveillance camera, you also realize you're not going to be able to terminate the contract with the Marines with a wave of your hand. It's way too secure for what you want to do. Lots of reading and lots of configuring and I got it to work, sort of, but it wasn't anywhere near reliable.

MC: Next thought, we'll cut the WAP out of the picture. So, we were broadcasting on a peer-based network directly to the notebook computer we'd been using before to experiment with wireless on a LAN. That means the only way to see mother and her babies is to have the notebook computer running upstairs in the office. Not a big deal, but still not reliable, nor was the picture what I'd expected. Thinking it was the webcam, I checked it out on the office LAN without wireless running. Nope that wasn't the issue. Then I took the notebook downstairs and tried the connection there. The connection was better, but not great. It got much better when I used a crossover cable to tie the two machines together. For the time being, we'd be running NetMeeting on the downstairs machine using wireless to send to the notebook PC upstairs.

MC: Over the course of almost two days, the machines were rebooted, on average, every 2 hours. So much for not climbing stairs, huh? With that, it hardly made sense to keep it up and running. Some of the issue was wireless, and some of it is that the nesting area is not well lighted, so the webcam was already struggling a bit. Going to monochrome helped some with the quality of the picture, but we were still regularly rebooting both machines.

IC: So, on to Plan B. We wired the computers together with lots of cabling across basement, up stairs, around doors, and into the office computer. Not the best solution, but cement is difficult to drill holes in, and at least now we can see the picture without all the blocks of transmission lapses that wireless was giving us. We also changed from NetMeeting to a viewer that came with the 3Com Webcam, and downloaded another viewer that would allow us to remotely control the basement computer. The definition in the picture was greatly improved, and I could see much better detail of what was happening in the whelping room.

MC: I still wasn't allowed to drill any holes in the floor. Hmph! So, 60 feet of cat5 network cabling later, we

were in business, mostly. NetMeeting was still giving us fits and requiring reboots of the downstairs PC. I'm convinced part of that was because of the low light in the nesting room, and NetMeeting not being able to keep up. The 3Com Webcam came with several applications for sharing video. I finally settled on using the WebCam32 viewer. It seemed easiest to manage, gave what I felt was the clearest picture, and took up the least amount of resources. To send the pictures upstairs to the office/home LAN, I downloaded a viewer I've used several times for remote control of other PCs, VNC (Virtual Network Computing). It's a FREE (woo hoo!!!) download <www.tucows.com>, developed by AT&T Bell Laboratories, Cambridge. There's a server side (the basement machine that's transmitting) and a client side (the upstairs machines that will be viewing).

MC: After the new installation was complete with wiring and software, we were in business. The picture was consistently clear, and the machines didn't require constant rebooting. The other advantage was that we were now able to do what I'd wanted to do in the first place, view the nesting area from any machine on the office/home network.

IC: We also had Plan C, which we also established as a backup. Wise people have always told me you can never have too many backups! We had a motion sensitive surveillance camera from Radio Shack that we could connect to a television, and for this we used the holes that had already been drilled in the floor for cable TV. It works like a charm, and if you wish to check the status of the nest, you just change the TV to the "Doggy Channel!" Just make certain the sound is turned down, because the audio on this camera is amazingly clear.

MC: Oh, yeah, this would've been the easiest solution in the first place had there been a TV in the office. There's not even room for a portable in there. Besides, it's so much more geekier to have the Webcam setup, isn't it? In this case, the camera will only broadcast from the nesting area in monochrome. Color is not available because of the low lighting conditions. Well, that's OK. The purpose was not to get great video, but to be able to check on the situation down there without disturbing mother and babies.

IC: What's that? You want to know the specifications? The motherboard multitasks amazingly well. The six females and five males have rather slow processors, but that is improving every day. Their storage is rather limited at the present time, but it, too, is expanding considerably. They are all equipped with decent sound cards, rather good speakers, but their video cards and controller cards will need to be refitted in a week or so, and their RAM will need to be upgraded on a regular basis. Their wireless network cards are communicating extremely well at the present time, but this will change after a few weeks, I'm afraid. However, they do have an awesomely beautiful case which seems to accomodate any and all upgrades, hopefully for many years to come.

MC: Mother and babies seem to be doing quite well. As the veterinarian who checked them out the morning after birth said, "They're not puppies, they're horses!!!"

This article was brought to you by Judy Lococco Past President of

Google + Phone Number = Maps For Stalkers!

By Tim Thomas
Editor, Mouse Droppings
Macintosh Users Group
Of Corvallis, OR
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So here's the deal. If you have someone's phone number, you can go to Google and use it to get a map to the home that phone number belongs to. Yep, no kidding. All a person, with either good or bad intentions, needs is your phone number, and good old Google will give him/her a full-color map appropriate for printing to help him/her find the way to your front door. There are, of course, other ways to do this, e.g., the phone book, if they know your name, and you haven't unlisted your number. But Google is slick.

Anyway, should you share my opinion that this is not a good idea, I'm sharing with you this little article I ran across in another newsletter. Please read along and then follow the instructions for removing your name and phone number from their database.

Privacy Issue, by Gail Glore Murphy
"There is a feature that makes it possible to type a telephone number into Google's search bar, click the search button, and have a Map-Quest page returned as a result. Any person wishing to discover the physical location of a phone number, be it a home or business address, could use this feature to locate a physical street address, and receive explicit directions on how to get there from anywhere in the country.

One positive use of this feature could be to determine the location of, say, an adverse party for whom you may only have a telephone number. On a negative note, this feature could also be used by an angry party to find out where you live.

Google has made available an option that will allow anyone to remove their telephone number from the database that is linked to the mapping feature. You will first need to check if your number is listed in this manner by attempting a search—entering your full telephone number separated by dashes (e.g., 404-524-5811). If the number appears in the mapping database, an icon resembling a telephone will appear next to the first or second entry on the results page. Clicking on this icon will take you to a page containing a description of the service, and a link to request your number be removed from the database."

But maybe you don't have a short-list of folks whom you'd rather not see get too much help finding their way to your door. Maybe it's just me.

Tip: Bits and Bytes (metric SI)
1000 bits is a kb (use all lower case).
1000 bytes is kB (use lower case k).

Steve Bass
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AOL Scam Alert
Pass this on to all your AOL friends

We all know someone—friends and relatives—who use AOL, and I suggest you consider forwarding this message to them. As you'll see, it's not a hoax but a real-life scam.

It started when my mother recently received a beautifully done AOL message. It's the kind of thing you read about but rarely get to see firsthand. The message she received was from the AOL Billing Services Team. She forwarded it to the accounting department—me—because I pay for her account (she has me to blame, I know). You can read the whole message here: <http://www.pibmug.com/files/aolletter.jpg>. It took a minute to figure out something wasn't right.

Telltale Clues

For one thing, the e-mail header showed that the AOL Billing Services Team was blind copying her using version AOL 5.0 <http://www.pibmug.com/files/aolheader.jpg >. You'd think they could use a more current version, right? There's more: The return address was <Remindingyou@aol.com>, and the subject line had a misspelling.

I followed the Billing link in the message. At the very first glance I saw an AOL Welcome box <http://www.pibmug.com/files/aolwelcomescreen.jpg>. Take a careful look and you'll know why I was suspicious. Yep, lots of misspellings.

I went along with the game plan and clicked OK. Now I was staring into what looked like a remarkably authentic credit card payment form. Even if you didn't look at the other links, you HAVE to see this one. It's worse than a loan application. <http://www.pibmug.com/files/aolcreditcard.jpg>.

Is it Really You?

To make sure it's really you, they also want your Social Security Number, date of birth, driver's license number, and mother's maiden name. With that, the scammers can get to "identity theft" heaven before you shut down your PC for the night.

But they're not finished. How about throwing in your AOL screen name and password, something even novices know AOL wouldn't do. To add a level of legitimacy, they warn you that "For your safety, please do not download any files from strangers. AOL will never ask you to download anything."

Who Is?

I went to <http://www.samspade.org>, my favorite Web examination site, and backtraced the Billing link. (The site was closed by Hypermart, so it now leads to an error page.) It's an obfuscated URL, <http://www.aol.com-billing:july-2002@072002.hypermart.net>, that leads to <http://072002.hypermart.net>. It works because any characters before the @ sign are ignored. And all it took was a quick web search with Google.com to find locations loaded with AOL scamming files. You can view one of the sites here: <http://www.pibmug.com/files/aolhypermart.jpg>.

I contacted one of AOL's security people I met years ago because of a story I did about AOL. Unfortunately, I never heard back from him. I also sent

a message to <abuse@hypermart.net>, and they responded in four days.

AOL Protection Strategy

Forward this to a buddy using AOL. They need to know that the best AOL protection strategy is to be alert to constant scams. You know, if it looks like a duck, smells like a duck, and occasionally quacks, there's a good chance it is one.

If you're unsure about a billing question, it's best to call AOL's billing services directly at 800/827-6364, or their Screen Name/Password line at 888/265-8004.

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>.

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.

Keep Your Hard Drive Driving
By Chris Doyle
Ontrack Data Recovery Services

Here's a quick quiz: What takes a licking yet keeps on ticking? Right—your hard drive. The truth is that hard disks manufactured in the last few years last longer than that old clunker you're using as a doorstop. Here's the surprise. You can squeeze a longer life—maybe even keep a faulty drive trucking—with a few easy tips.

The silent killer of hard drives is heat—especially high-speed SCSI drives. My recommendation? Use a hard drive cooling fan with all hard drives. You can buy them direct at <http://www.3dfxcool.com>. I have cooling fans for both my IDE and SCSI drives. In the lab, we have cooling fans on the drives at all times.

Optimize your hard drive on a daily basis. As much of a pain this may be for some, optimizing your drive has several benefits. Besides optimizing the files, this process also catches many minor problems that may manifest themselves into a major problem later. Examples? Cross linked or orphan files. Another good reason is that if you do have a problem accessing data on your drive, when a utility is run, such as Norton, nuts and bolts, tiramisu, the chances of recovery are much higher if the drive has been optimized recently. (By the way—Mijenix <http://www.mijenix.com> makes a great utility to perform this function.)

Without question, you must run SpinRite on all of your drives once a quarter—at number five, the highest. This is a personal recommendation. Steve Gibson's utility is excellent, and will find many, if not all, surface defects before they manifest themselves further. Trouble in Paradise, also known as TIP, is an excellent tool for Zip disks.

Should I mention backing up your data on a regular basis? Do it often, early, and often, and early.

Examining your power supply is critical. It's not too difficult to tax a power supply in some systems if they are fully loaded. I recommend that, if possible, you make sure that the systems have a decent power supply—at least 250 watts or more. (PC Power and Cooling makes the best). Also, make sure that your hard drives have their own independent power connection, not shared by other devices. An uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS) is another good idea (and don't sweat, these things are much more reasonably priced then in the past).

Many people ask whether it's best to keep your computer running all the time—or better to turn it off and on. My recommendation is turn your computer on in the morning and off at night. I also think that disabling all power saving devices is best for hard drives. Forcing a hard drive on a desktop PC to spin down every 15 minutes of inactivity—and then waiting a minute or two to spin up—is worse than turning the computer off and on.

Never, ever, move the computer while it is up and running. (Try telling that to laptop users!) Any blow to the computer—it tips over, is dropped an inch or more—and that bump gets transmitted directly to the hard drive. Most of the time it will cause a minor head crash. Worst case? It will cause bad things to happen. No, don't ask. But you'll be calling Ontrack to get an estimate. <<smile>>

Don't forget about static when handling drives. The newest and highest performing drives come with (hushed tones, please) Giant MR Heads. They're extremely sensitive to static. Ontrack has redone all of our static procedures to handle this technology, and I can tell you from first hand experience that static will kill a drive dead.

Drives that make clicking, thunking, or grinding noise are experiencing a mechanical problem of some sort. No surprise, huh? But each time the drive is powered up, the more that damage is occurring on the drive. If data recovery is needed in this case, please, please, please—the less you do to the drive, (powering up or using utilities) the more data we can recover. And the faster we can recover it.

If you think you have a problem with a drive, try going to the manufacturer's Web site. Download the specific utility they make to check the drive. Since the utility comes from the manufacturer, they know how to check specific issues with their drives. Here are some examples:

Quantum: QDPS

IBM: DFT

Western Digital: WD Diag

Maxtor: MaxDiag (I think)

Ontrack's Data Advisor: This tool will work with all drives And it's probably the safest tool to use to check a drive.

Here's a tip for tinkerers, users that do a lot of testing of drives. In many cases, it's very difficult to get rid of a hard drive's contents. That's especially true when using programs such as System Commander. Try booting up with Ontrack's Disk Manager. The utility has a feature that will write zeros to every sector of the drive. This puts the drive back into the shape it was when it came from the factory. After the process is done, it's easy to partition and format the drive. Don't forget, though, that this will destroy all information on the drive.

Here's one for all of you SCSI users lurking out there (including me). Keep your drivers current. Driver and BIOS updates for your SCSI card can make a world of difference in how your drive performs. Don't forget to make sure you follow the specifications for cabling and termination.

OnTrack's Chris Doyle loves to hear hard drives happily humming. You can reach him at <CDoyle@ontrack.com>. OnTrack Data Recovery Services' Web site is <http://www.ontrack.com>, or you can call 1-800-872-2599.

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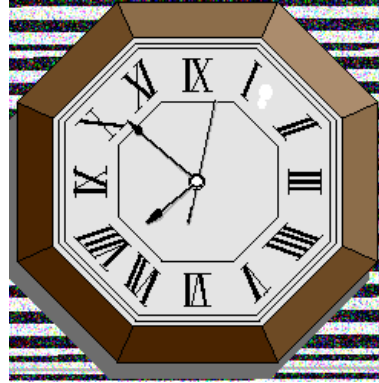
Letter From The Editor

In my front hall there is a wall clock, a "school-type" clock, with a pendulum and chimes. The pendulum swings after you push it, but comes to rest after a couple of days. The clock doesn't seem to mind; it keeps good time whether the pendulum moves or not. The chimes are something else. When it was new the chime sounded once on the half hour and a number of times corresponding to the hour on the hour. However, now it sounds a number of times corresponding to the next hour on the half hour. For example at 8:30 pm it sounds 9 times, and at 9 pm it again sounds 9 times.

I went to three clock stores, thinking this is probably a common problem, and they would tell me to move the hands around a certain way to fix it. They had no suggestions at all; "Bring it in, and we'll replace the entire mechanism, $99." Then I learned this is not a mechanical wind-up clock; it is a battery operated quartz crystal clock with a computer chip in it that controls everything. Mechanical clocks that you have to wind up every week are much more expensive than quartz crystal clocks, and no one knows how to fix the computer; so replace the whole thing.

Two lessons here: progress means using computers in place of mechanical mechanisms because they're cheaper and more convenient. And no clock people want to, or know how, to fix computers.

So I'll continue to listen to extra chimes on the half hour, and knowing the time within one-half hour is good enough for a retiree. Hmmmph!

Bill

Computer Factoid
By Steve Bass

Listen Up and Take Heed!
I always tell people to unplug their PC when working on the insides. It's something I never do. My unsolicited advice? Do it. All the time!

Here's why: I added a sound card to my wife's PC the other day. Easy enough, right? Then, while the system was up and running, I replaced the cover. I've done it that way since I started with PCs in 1983. This time it bit me on the butt. The case cover touched an add-in card, and the systemboard fried. Better it should have happened to my PC, you know what I'm saying?—Steve Bass

Steve Bass is a Contributing Editor with PC World and runs the Pasa-dena 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>.

BOARD MEETING
3/9/2003
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 12:08 pm.

Old Business: Treasurer Roger Gay reported that SEMCO's bank balance is $4354.63 with $480 not deposited. SEMCO's membership now stands at 86. Lee Helms, Robert Hoffmann, and Tom Hagen's memberships were up for renewal in February.

Tom Callow moved that Warner Mach be reimbursed $6.89 for refreshments. Bob Clyne seconded the motion, and it was carried.

Roger Gay reported that Oakland University has been paid $500 for the use of the rooms and projector for SEMCO's meetings in 2003.

New Business: Bob Clyne initiated a discussion on SEMCO's declining membership. It was suggested that a volunteer is needed to become a membership chairman and to publicize meetings. Please notify any board member if you are interested.

The meeting adjourned at 12:48 pm.

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS (SIGs)

SIG-IBM
Tom Callow
Warner Mach

April 13: More Tips and Tricks: By popular demand, SIG Co-Chairman Tom Callow will lead a discussion of tips and tricks to make your computer run better and help you use it more efficiently. Put in your 2 cents worth. Bring your own favorite tips and tricks to share with your fellow members.

SIG-IBM INTERMEDIATE
Jack Vander-Schrier

April 13: Spring Cleaning Your Hard Drive: Chairman Jack Vander-Schrier will discuss strategies for organizing and clearing the files and folders in your hard drive.

NOVICE-IBM GROUP
Rotating Volunteer Hosts

April 13: Q&A: Member directed discussion.

SIG-ADVANCED
Franz Breidenich

May 5: 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.**

May 2003 DATA BUS DEADLINE (7th day after meeting)
SEMCO & SIG DATA, & MEMBERS' ADS - Deadline: Sun, April 20, 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)
Apr. 26–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)
May 7–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: Introduction to Genealogy.

DCOM Computer Club
Apr. 11–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
Apr. 24–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)
Apr. 10–Thursday, 7pm (2nd Thursday); Kensington Community Church, northwest corner John R & Square Lake Rds, Troy, MI. <http://www.dpug.org>. **Free membership.** Topics: Garmin iQue 3600 GPS/Palm unit.

MacGroup Detroit
Apr. 27–Sunday, 3pm-5pm (Special Date); 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: All About PDF's (Portable Document Format).

MacTechnics, (MAC User Group)
Apr.12–Saturday, (Special Date); 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. Topic: Final Cut Pro & Maya.

MCUG (Michigan Computer Users Group)
Apr. 17–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
Apr. 10–(2nd Thur), MAC SIG; Apr. 10–(2nd Thur), Golden Masters SIG; Apr. 17–(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>.

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

SHCC (Sterling Heights Computer Club)
May 6–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>. Topic: PowerQuest's Partition Magic & DriveImage.

SVCA (Saginaw Valley Computer Assoc.)
Apr. 10–Thursday, 6:30-9:00pm (2nd Thursday); Zauel Library, Shattuck & Center Rds., Saginaw. Web: <http://www.svca.org>.

Wayne State U. Mac User Group
Apr. 12–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

Tip: Big Bytes (metric SI)

One million bytes = 1 MB (megabyte)

One billion bytes = 1 GB (gigabyte)

One trillion bytes = 1 TB (terabyte)

One quadrillion bytes=1 PB(petabyte)

One quintillion bytes = 1 EB(exabyte)

MARCH REFRESHMENT DONORS

Warner Mach, Coordinator
Betty MacKenzie
Carol Sanzi
Roland Maki

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	**MS Office for Windows:** Callow
AutoCAD: Comptois, Gay	**MS Word:** Clyne
Genealogy: Cook	**Networking:** Callow
IBM PC Hardware Issues: Clyne, Gay, Yuhasz	**Novell Netware:** Yuhasz
Operating Systems: Callow, Clyne, Yuhasz	**Quicken:** Clyne, Gay
MAC Hardware and OS Issues: Yuhasz	**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

SEMCO CALENDAR—April/May

**SCIENCE & ENGINEERING BUILDING, OAKLAND UNIVERSITY,
ROCHESTER, MICHIGAN**

April 13–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.**

Special Interest Groups (SIGs)

SIG-IBM 1:45 pm, **Room 164. Program: More Tips and Tricks:** By popular demand, SIG Co-Chairman Tom Callow will lead a discussion of tips and tricks to make your computer run better and to help you use it more efficiently. Put in your 2 cents worth. Bring your own favorite tips and tricks to share with your fellow SEMCO members.

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: Spring Cleaning Your Hard Drive:** Chairman Jack Vander-Schrier will discuss strategies for organizing and clearing the files and folders in your hard drive.

May 5–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.**

May 11–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
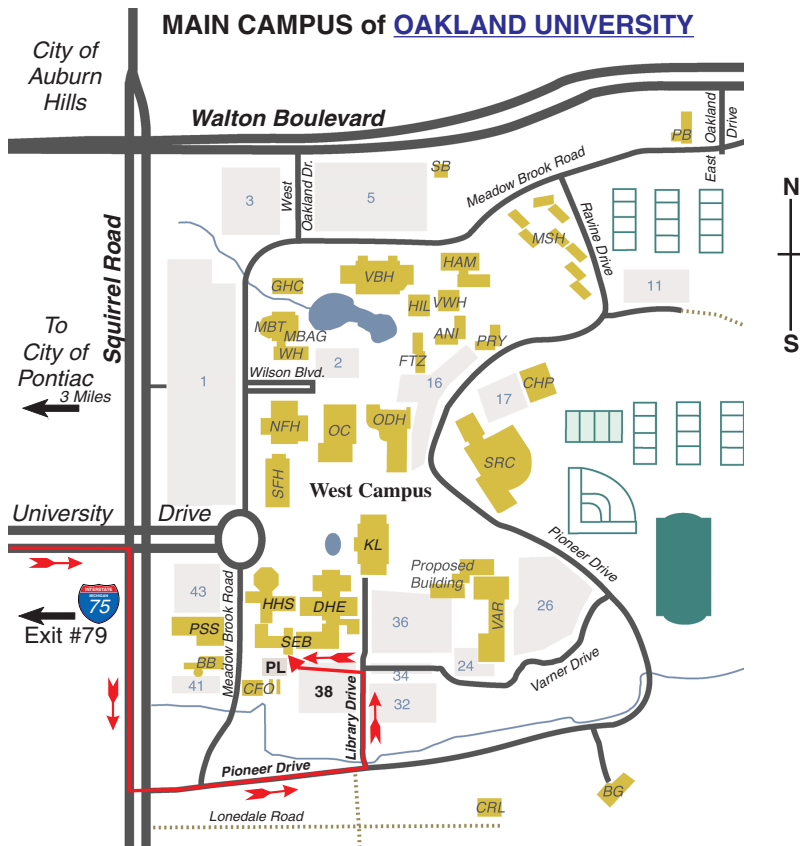
MAP LEGEND

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
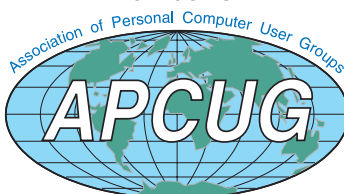
The meetings at Oakland University
are sponsored by the University's Academic Computer
Services (ACS).
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assistance.

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

SEMCO (future meetings)
   April 13
   May 11

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