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SEMCO MEETINGS
Sunday, January 11, 2004

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

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

Fight Fire With Fire

I was surprised at the amount of feedback I received from my item about stopping the receipt of credit card solicitations. A lot of people already fight back in a variety of ways. Many just use the application and the envelope with return postage to write a nasty or informative message to the sender, such as please stop these &*%#& mailings, or "party deceased so don't send 'me' any more." Some get a bit sadistic, such as wrapping a stone or brick and taping the postage paid envelope to it to send them. I liked those people's idea. However, I'll settle for simply calling 888-567-8688 to try stopping it, since that is supposed to stop all the companies from sending them. You would have enjoyed the messages I received.

A Browser That Works Good

I've been meaning to write about Mozilla for a while, but never got around to it. However, it is becoming more popular, and I see more and more written about Mozilla; in fact I even have a review for it on my Web page. It is not quite as full featured as IE and Netscape, but it does some things those do not. Best of all, its free, so what do you have to lose. It's also said to be faster since the code is lean and mean. It is skinable, and it kills all those popups.

A few Web pages may not view as well, but I'm told there is a lot to like about Mozilla. Get it at <http://www.cnet.com/software/0-3227884-8-20005816-2.html?tag=st.sw.3227884-8-20005816-1.arrow3227884-8-20005816-2>, where there is also a review.

Wow — Calls All Over For FREE

I read that you can make telephone calls all over the world via this Web site <http://www.pulver.com/fwd/>. Take a look and see if it will fit in with what you might be looking for. My thanks to Hewie Poplock of Central Florida Computer Society for writing about this

NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING AND ELECTION

The annual meeting of the members of the SouthEastern Michigan Computer Organization, Inc. will be held Sunday, January 11, 2004 at 1:30 pm in Room 164 of the Science and Engineering Building, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan. The election of Officers and Members at Large of the Board of Directors of the Corporation will take place at the annual meeting.

one in "Hewie's favorites." I don't know anybody who has tried this one, so you are on your own. I was also advised that you should read the offer thoroughly, since it is not for everybody.

Affordable Legal Help

Last winter I wrote about the free tax help for AARP members at tax time, and it's almost tax time again. I was since reminded that AARP members have other benefits as well. An important one is in the form of legal help. For example, should you decide to move to another state, it is good advice to have a new "last will and testament" drafted that conforms to the new state's laws. That might normally cost you anywhere from $200 to $400, but getting an attorney through the AARP Legal Services Network (LSN) can save you money. I have no idea what all the services are that they cover, but check it out at <http://www.aarp.org/lsn> or call 1-800-424-3410. Remember this is for AARP members only.

What's In Your House?

Let's face it, if you had a serious fire and disastrous loss of personal items, can you sit down and list everything in your house for the insurance adjuster? I doubt you can. Many of us talk about making up a personal inventory, but just never get around to it. But in case you do take the time to do it, here is a great software called "My Stuff 1.5" for doing the job. It is available at <http://www.contactplus.com/products/freestuff/mystuff.htm>, and its a freebie. The download is 4 MB. You can even see "page previews" there, so you can get a good look at it. Even so, at no cost, just go ahead and download it and give it a try. No loss except your time if you don't like it. My thanks to Jerry Wonderly of Dayton Microcomputer Assoc. for finding this for their members. My brother-in-law had a disastrous fire in his home many years ago and was thinking of items for months afterwards, but it was too late because he had already settled. Do yourself a favor and get this done, but don't store the record in your own house. Guess why!

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 or freebies I have found or arranged, and my comments should not be interpreted to encourage, or discourage, the purchase of any 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 and many interesting articles I have taken from various users group newsletters.

Would You Like Printer Repair With Your Order?

By Mark Presky
Los Angeles Computer Society

Hunger contributed to the repair of my inkjet printer. Several months ago I was driving along Santa Monica Blvd. in West LA, approaching a set of the Golden Arches, when I realized that it was Filet-O-Fish Friday (99 cents), and I was hungry. I have significantly reduced my consumption of fried foods, but the thought of deep fried, compressed minced cod (or whatever they use) oozing with a glob of fatty,

salty tartar sauce was too much to resist—I was REALLY hungry.

After receiving my order I sought a clean table upon which to dine. There was one unoccupied small table, well seasoned with various condiments, so I looked further to a larger nearby table occupied by only one gentleman. After asking if I might join him at the table, and introducing myself, I started up a conversation. He was dressed in a jacket and tie, so I asked what he did for a living. When he said that he serviced computer peripherals including printers and fax machines, my ears perked up. I told him that I had been wrestling with a frustrating printer problem for over a year and hated giving up. He inquired further.

Problem

I told him that my HP 694C would print a page or two and then stop suddenly, often mid page, to inform me that the printer carriage was unable to move. Over the months I had discovered that by turning the power off and then using rubbing alcohol (not orally consumable spirits) to clean the stainless steel or chrome shaft upon which the carriage with the ink cartridges traveled, I could get it to print another page or two or three, if I was lucky. After several months of this I finally replaced the 694C with an even older HP 600 monochrome printer (manufactured in the days before humans were upgraded with retinal cones) of my father's that I kept in the closet for emergencies.

Solution

The gentleman said that it sounded like the bearings underneath the carriage were clogged with dried ink. I asked him how ink would even get there. He responded that ink tends to distribute itself everywhere inside most printers. He is no longer amazed at the places he finds it doing damage.

He suggested using a small amount of Windex on tissues to dissolve and tease out the congealed ink from the bearings, and then to lubricate, sparingly, the shaft upon which the carriage moved.

Fixed

Later, I pulled the inoperable printer from my closet and set it up on the kitchen table. I assembled some discount glass cleaner (sorry, Windex) and several off brand Q-tip type cotton tipped sticks and went to work. Close examination revealed a glob of gelled ink on either side of the carriage adjoining the shaft. I must have gone through about 20 of these cleaner dampened cotton tipped sticks before the amount of dissolved ink coming from the sides of the carriage where it joined the shaft began to subside. It just kept coming and coming. There must have been a cartridge's worth of ink in there (OK, I exaggerate a bit). I then used the tiniest bit of silicone gel lubricant (an amount the volume of about a quarter of an apple seed) and spread it over the shaft. Although I spread it so thin that I couldn't see it, I then wiped off most of that with a clean tissue. From my years of experience maintaining medical equipment I have learned that less is usually better in these situations.

Conclusion

Now, time for the test. I replaced the older printer on my system with the newer, and hopefully, fixed instrument. After plugging it in and powering it up, I requested the printing of a 6-page document. IT WORKED! After all the hours of frustration I had endured with that printer I was not satisfied. I now

ordered it to deliver another 6 pages. And another. I was ecstatic.

My day was made. And I owe it all to fast food. It may have clogged my arteries, but it helped me clean out my printer's clogged carriage bearings.

Hey guys and gals, maybe we should be trolling for new User Group members at fast-food outlets, offering to help with computer problems.

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

A Must-Have Program for Sharing Digital Images

By Ron Hirsch
Boca Raton Computer Society, Inc.

If you are involved with digital images and want to make slide shows to showcase those images, and/or give copies to friends and family via CD's, or several other means, I strongly recommend a program that you absolutely must consider using. The program is called "Digital Photo Slide Show." It's available at: <www.digitalphotoslideshow.com>.

Like all shareware, you can download the program and try it out before you register it. It has an amazingly low registration fee of $19.95, and this includes free lifetime upgrades. The author, Jim Voelker, has done a fantastic job of creating an easy to use, but very powerful, piece of software. It can meet the needs of advanced users, but can also be used easily by beginners.

In this review, I'll cover many of the highlights of this program. For complete information on this program, visit the Web site above, and browse around. Then download the program and try it out yourself. If you have a broadband Internet connection, the download will take less than a minute. Dial-up users will of course experience a longer download time, but it is worth the effort.

I only review programs that I feel are 5-star ratings. This program is actually better than my top rating of 5 stars.

What Does the Program Do?

This program does a variety of things and does them all well. One key feature is the capability to generate a self-running slide show with lots of customized features. This show can be viewed on your computer. And, via a few simple steps you can produce a CD with the slide show on it and give it to friends and family to view on their computer. There are several options/ways for giving your slide show to others. You can:

Generate a custom screen saver with changing photo images of your choice.

Generate a customized and continually changing wallpaper for your desktop.

Generate a Web slide show.

See "Other Features" for other capabilities.

How Does It Work?

The user assembles a group of photo images and places them in a designated

folder. It's best to have already edited/cropped/retouched these images so they are what you'd like to display.

Once you have this folder of images assembled, the bulk of your work is done. With the straightforward procedures that the program offers it will take you only a few simple clicks to do the job that you want.

I've been using the program to generate slide shows from a large collection of scanned images of friends and family starting back over 60 years ago. I go through the necessary steps and then copy the final material onto a CD. That CD is set to be an auto running slide show.

So, when friends and family put that CD into their computer's CD player, a list of all the slide shows on the CD comes on screen and they can choose the one they want to view. When that show is over, the listing comes up on screen again, and another show can be selected.

The beauty of this setup is that each slide show is just another sub-folder in the root directory of the CD. So, when one wants to add more slide shows, all that is needed is to add more subfolders to the master folder on your hard drive and burn another CD with all the new material you've added.

Other Features

The program is loaded with all kinds of nice features that users can choose from. If you go the Web site at <www.digitalphotoslideshow.com>, you can get complete information on everything about Digital Photo Slide Show. Here's a partial listing of features:

There are now 135 transitions to choose from. These transitions are used when the slide changes to the next slide. There are wipes, dissolves, and you name it. The user can choose a different transition for any slide, or let the program just cycle through the full library, or a lesser library, by selecting those desired. And, the display time for each slide can be set, either individually or via a single entry, that will apply to all slides.

A caption text box can be added to any slide, and there are lots of nice formatting features available. Fonts, colors, size, and position of the text box are all user-selectable. The text does not become part of the image itself or change the image in any way, but it is associated with the proper image automatically by the program.

When the images are displayed on the monitor, they automatically adjust their displayed size to the maximum that the monitor screen can display. This is a plus. The user doesn't have to worry about playing with the image sizes—it's all automatic.

At the top of the slide show display there is a toolbar where viewers (should they desire) can pause the show, advance forward/backward manually, and activate a good selection of other options also.

Background music can be played by simply adding the music file into the folder containing the image files for that show. Add as many selections as you want, and they will be played in alphabetical order.

Slides are also played in alphabetical order. In my slide shows, I have the slides named by using the year and month, such as 6306, as the first characters of the filename. So, I don't really have to do any renaming—I want them in chronological order. But, users can set the order for the images by simply adding a 3 or 4 numeric string to

the beginning of the filename. If the file was named "picnic.jpg," and you wanted this to be the first slide, change the name to "0001picnic.jpg." Remember, you must use leading zeroes or a group of slides that are numbered from 1 to 12, without leading zeroes, will play in this order 1, 10, 11, 12, 2, etc. But with a leading zero they'll play as 01, 02, 03, etc. This is the way Windows does sorting.

Miscellany

Through the years I've produced many "slide shows," all of which were personal in nature, and used thousands of images I've scanned from negatives, slides, and prints (actually, going back to before I was born, a long time ago).

I've used MS PowerPoint, Corel Presentations, and an "album" program called Diji Album. They all did a nice job, and they all had capabilities for distributing the "shows" to others. The one problem they all had was that they had to have each page composed individually, as each page had to have the image sized, positioned, etc. The beauty of Digital Photo Slide Show is that I don't have to do this anymore. All I have to do is put my images into a folder, and the program will position and size them automatically for me. And, since I'm now in the process of generating a whole new batch of shows, my workflow will be far more efficient.

I will of course have to manually add any captions that I want to use, but I've now decided that the only caption on most pages will be the date. That simplifies the caption box size and position—it'll be the same on each page.

Future Features

I've been having some dialog with Jim Voelker, and some things that I'd like to have him consider in the future are:

An included utility to help the users rename images (using a 4-digit numeric string) to set the desired order.

The ability to use not only background music, but voice clips, and have independent control of both. Various of my present shows in other programs allow the use of voice clips to be inserted when a given slide appears, and temporarily suspend the background music, and then have the music restart when the clip is finished, or when the next slide appears.

Right now, the "menu" that appears when there are multiple shows involved is a file listing, via a Windows file manager-type display. I suggested that a listing that wasn't so generic would be more attractive.

Conclusion

The "future features" noted are absolutely not needed to make this program a very worthwhile addition to anyone's computer. The combination of present features, price, and user friendliness make this program a must-have in my book.

Definitely consider registering this program. It's a winner! I'd appreciate any feedback you might have along the way. I can be reached at: <ronhirsch@adelphia.net>.

Reprinted from the August 2003 issue of Boca Bits, the monthly magazine of The Boca Raton Computer Society, Inc. (BRCS). There is no restriction against any non-profit group using this article as long as it is kept in context with proper credit given the author. This article is brought to you by the Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member.

Samsung SyncMaster 17" Monitor, 174V A Review

By Susan Ives, Alamo PC

I don't know why my monitors keep blowing up, but they do. The last one soldiered on for a couple of years and then died a glorious death in a piffling power surge. Yes, I had it on a good surge protector, and the surge was so trivial that the protector didn't trip nor did the computer itself reboot. I had noted some ominous flickers for the past month, so I was prepared for its untimely demise.

I was glad in a way. I've been lusting for an LCD (liquid crystal display) flat panel monitor, and now I have one.

I bought a Samsung SyncMaster 17" 174V, mainly because it was on sale everywhere this month, with a $40 manufacturer's rebate. Before the rebate it was $399.97.

The price of LCD monitors has plummeted over the past few years. Three years ago a monitor of the size and quality I just bought would have cost about $1,200. The manufacturing capacity has increased significantly, partially driven by LCD TVs, which use the same process. Prices will probably continue to drop.

The main reason for getting a flat panel (other than the coolness factor) is that it takes up much less desktop space. I gained several square feet of desktop real estate by switching to a flat panel. The model I have can also be detached from its stand and hung on the wall using an optional kit. Now THAT would be cool. It is also very light, just under ten pounds, compared to 49 pounds for my old 19" Viewsonic.

You get more viewing space in an LCD monitor, as they are measured differently. A traditional CRT (cathode ray tube) monitor measures a small part of the screen that is actually under the frame. A 15" CRT only has about 14.1" of real viewing area. A 15" LCD really has 15". A 17" LCD like the one I bought is equivalent to a 19" CRT.

LCDs are direct-address displays, which means that each pixel (picture element) of the image is defined and displayed by a unique physical component in the monitor. Three liquid crystal subpixels—one each for red, green, and blue—produce the color shade for each single dot on the screen. This results in a sharper image than a CRT can produce.

The flat face of an LCD panel also helps reduce glare and reflections.

Flat panels use less energy and produce less radiation than CRTs.

I noticed a few differences using a flat LCD display. First, the color tends to shift a little as my viewing angle changes. It looks best when viewed head-on. For most people, this is not a major factor, but graphic designers will be better off sticking to a CRT until the technology improves.

Second, there is a slight lag in motion, called ghosting, when the pixels hang around a little longer than they are wanted. This is especially noticeable

when scrolling. Images are created by the physical movement of molecules within the display. It takes time for them to move, compared with the almost instant response of a CRT's electron beams and the phosphors they excite. People who use their monitors to play video games or watch DVDs may want to select an LCD panel with extra care, or stick with the CRT until the technology improves.

Third, my LCD monitor doesn't appear to tilt or swivel. Because it is so light, I can easily move the entire unit from right to left, but there doesn't seem to be a way to tilt it up or down. This is probably deliberate—the screen looks best approached head-on—but it's a feature I would have liked. [My SyncMaster 191T tilts– Ed.]

Here are some things to keep in mind when buying an LCD flat panel monitor:

TFT: You will sometimes see LCD monitors listed as TFT. This stands for thin-film transistor, which is an active-matrix screen. Passive displays apply current to the diodes at a specific refresh rate to maintain an image while active-matrix, or TFT, displays control each diode with one or more transistors. TFT pictures are sharper and brighter. I do not believe that you will find a passive-matrix display on any of the new stand-alone monitors, but they do exist on older laptops.

Viewing angle: This is important if you have more than one person looking at the screen at a time, as in an office or training situation. LCD panels are best looked at head-on. In a 15" monitor, look for a viewing angle of 140 degrees or more; 160 to 180 degrees or more for 17" monitors. Mine is 150 horizontal and 120 vertical.

Contrast ratio: This is the difference between white and black. CRTs can have contrast ratios of 700:1; look for an LCD contrast ratio of 400:1 to 600:1. (Mine is 450:1)

Pixel response rate: This is expressed as the time required for the pixels to turn on and off, and therefore how fast the display can redraw the image on the screen. A lower (faster) response time is better. Most models claim 25 to 30 millisecond response times. Some 17-inch models have 16 or 20ms response times. Mine is 25ms.

Dot Pitch: This is the distance between the colored dots that make up images on your screen. Dot pitch is measured in millimeters. The closer together they are, the sharper the image, and the better it is on your eyes. The lower the number, the better. My monitor is 0.263mm.

Resolution: This is the number of pixels displayed in a horizontal row by the number of pixels displayed vertically. Native resolution is the resolution at which the display will look its best. My monitor has the capability of displaying multiple resolutions, from 800x600 to 1280x1024. I use Windows XP, which no longer supports 640x480. Most reviews will imply that higher is better because it lets you fit more on a screen. Unfortunately, higher is also smaller, which means that it is too small for me to read. Of course, if I had a bigger monitor, the display would be proportionally bigger, but there's a limit to how much I am willing to spend (the 19" version of this monitor costs about $100 more).

My recommendation is to test the monitor at the resolution you intend to set it at. The native resolution of my screen is 1280x1024, but I usually have

mine set at 800x600, not its best state. At the native resolution the pictures are much crisper but I can't even see the icons on the task bar.

Warranty: Flat panels can develop a defect known as dead pixels. A dead pixel occurs when a pixel becomes locked in a certain state. For example, a pixel could stay red at all times. Manufacturers stipulate an "acceptable" amount of dead pixels; if your LCD develops dead pixels while under warranty, the manufacturer may not replace it because it has an "acceptable" amount. Dead pixels can't be fixed. The monitor needs to be replaced.

Samsung's policy seems to be that they will replace a 17" monitor if there are ten dead pixels; a 15" monitor if there are seven. They don't include this data on the warranty card or on their Website; I looked for an hour. Defective pixels can be of three types: a pixel can be stuck in the always-lit position; stuck in the always-unlit position, or the red-green-blue subpixel can be stuck. A dead pixel in an unobtrusive corner of the screen is probably not a problem. A couple of pixels stuck on in the red position in the middle of the screen would drive me nuts. Samsung's seems to be one of the harsher policies.

That being said, the warranty is 3 years parts, labor, and backlamps. The lamps in an LCD panel are estimated to have a life of 20,000 hours, so they should last through the warranty period. The authorized service center for San Antonio is in California, so the monitor would have to be shipped to get warranty service.

The documentation was stinko. It came with a couple of one-page quickstart guides, one showing how to connect the power cord and the other how to install the drivers. The manual itself was a PDF file on the driver disk. I know that this is an efficient, environmentally-friendly way of distributing manuals, but if I need to use the trouble-shooting guide because the screen is blank, how the heck am I supposed to read a CD?

The layout was also confusing—the manual contained instructions for multiple monitors, and was laid out two pages across. It took me a long time to find what I needed.

There is quite a bit of help on the Samsung site <www.samsungusa.com>. Look under the FAQ section.

The monitor also came with an intriguing piece of software, called Natural Color. This helps to calibrate your monitor colors and your printer colors. It was easy to use and made sure that the display was right for my lighting conditions.

Look for a lot of new things in LCD panels. Some already come with speakers built in, and some can serve double-duty as a TV screen for digital television. My monitor is analog—some have digital capability.

What I have is toward the bottom of the line in LCD monitors, but it's a good starting point. If you are thinking of buying one, I would recommend spending some time with one to make sure you like it. I like mine.

Reprinted from* PC Alamode, *November, 2003, p. 39, the newsletter of the Alamo PC Organization <www.alamopc.org>. Susan Ives can be reached at <suives@texas.net>.

Tip: LCD = Liquid Crystal Display.
UPS = Uninterruptible Power Source or United Parcel Service.

Benefits Of Adding A Scanner To Your System

By Clarke Bird

Adding a scanner to your system can greatly enhance your enjoyment of computing. With scanner prices drifting down to the $100-$200 range, scanners are now very affordable. Yes, there are some scanners even less expensive, but it has been my experience that a scanner priced at less than $100 will not offer you the long-term use that a slightly more expensive scanner will offer. In this article, I'm going to focus on flatbed scanners, although there are multi-function printers that also feature scanning capabilities, and there are wand scanners in which you pass a wand over an image or printed page to digitize the object.

First of all, a scanner is a hardware device that captures an image and converts it into a digital format that your computer can then display, edit, store, and output. Most scanners come bundled with a image enhancement software package—frequently a "light" or stripped-down version of a popular brand.

The image to be scanned can be almost anything—from traditional objects for scanning such as photographs, pages of text, drawings, or illustrations, to even relatively flat three-dimensional objects like coins, leaves, or a swatch of fabric with an interesting pattern.

You initiate the scanning process within your image enhancement software program. I use both Photoshop and Photo-Paint, but ArcSoft's PhotoStudio, PaintShop Pro, or any one of dozens of similar, but less expensive, image enhancement software programs will do the job for you. To start the scanning process, you click on File, Import, and a list of hardware capture devices that are installed on your PC is shown. Click on your scanner name, and you're off to the races. At this point, you may be offered the opportunity, depending upon the software, to increase or decrease the resolution you will obtain from the scan. The image is scanned and immediately "imported" into your photo enhancement program. This is where you will "Save As" to give the image a filename and file it in a folder you select.

Enhancing Scanned Image

When the image is imported into your image-editing software, you can then edit, manipulate, or enhance the scanned image, using the tools and features of the editing software for this purpose. For instance, you can use your image-editing software to correct the brightness and contrast settings of the image, adjust histogram levels, or apply filters to create special effects.

What Kind Of Scanner Do You Need?

The type of scanner you need really depends on the kind of work you will be doing with it. For example, if you want to capture images to place into your Web page, a company newsletter, or a school project, consider 24bit color flatbed scanners with 300 x 600 dpi optical resolution.

If you want to scan images to appear in 4-color offset printing, you may need a 30-bit or 36-bit color scanner featuring at least 600-dpi optical resolution. The increased bit depth enables these scanners to deliver images with more detail and more overall tones of color.

Finally, if you need to capture 35mm images from slides or filmstrips for publication, Web sites, or multimedia presentations; or want to archive your collection of 35mm slides, consider a 35mm slide and filmstrip scanner.

Scanners capture images or text for a wide range of applications. Other than a digital camera, a scanner is the quickest way to get pictures into your computer and then onto a disk, a CD, a printed page, or sent electronically to a friend across town or on the other side of the world.

Now grandparents can transfer all of their grandkids' artwork from the refrigerator door into their PC as wallpaper or screensavers.

For a home business, a color scanner is now a necessary business tool. It's the perfect device not only for copying and archiving important documents but also for capturing images to promote and market your business.

Many scanners offer software that mimics a conventional photocopier, where you can lighten or darken an image to be copied (scanned), dial in the number of copies you want, or resize the image to be copied.

What Can You Do With A Scanner ?

Scanners can be used to capture just about any type of image for an endless number of applications.

Students use scanners to capture images to illustrate term papers or special projects, to make announcements for school or team sports events, and to capture images for school newspapers and yearbooks.

Business people use scanners to capture images that they can use in presentations, reports, company newsletters, and brochures.

Real estate agents use scanners to make images of homes for ads and fliers.

Parents use scanners to capture and save their children's artwork; kids scan found items—coins, postage stamps, their favorite rock stars from magazines; parents can scan old family photos to make a digital family tree or family album.

Newlyweds scan their wedding photos to create a multimedia presentation of their wedding.

And scanners are used on a daily basis by graphic designers, photographers, and other professionals to capture images for advertising, Web sites, magazines, brochures, packaging, and much more. Scanners are even being used to digitally preserve valuable documents and manuscripts before they disintegrate.

How Do Scanners Work?

To convert an image to digital information, scanners shine light on the image to be scanned. The light then bounces back and is captured by a strip of light-sensitive cells called a charge-coupled device, or CCD.

Since dark areas reflect less light, and light areas reflect more light, the CCD is able to detect the amount of light reflecting from the different parts of the image being scanned. The CCD then converts the reflected light waves to digital information. Finally, the scanning software that controls the operation of the scanner reads this incoming data and reconstructs it into a computer image file.

Color Scanning

To capture color images, scanners use a process based on the RGB (Red, Green, Blue) color model, in which every color is composed of a varying amount of the three colors.

In the RGB model, the absence of white light creates black, the complete saturation of light creates white (100% of red, green, and blue), and varying amounts of red, green, and blue create intermediate shades of gray or different color tones.

Digital Scanning

For a computer to represent image information in a digital format, the computer uses units of picture elements, or pixels. An image file, for instance, is simply a representation of hundreds, thousands, or even millions of pixels arranged in a grid, and computers record the intensity and color of a pixel in 1 or more bits of data. The greater the number of bits (or bit-depth) of an image, the more information it can store. For easy classification, images can be categorized into single-bit, grayscale, or color.

Bit Depth & Image Quality

The bit-depth of a scanner determines the sharpness of detail and the clarity of color in your images. A 36-bit scanner, for instance, can sample much more information than a 30-bit or 24-bit scanner, and the extra information processed by the 36-bit scanner translates to more vivid color reproduction, smoother color blends, and more subtle gradations of color, approaching lifelike accuracy. A 36-bit scanner also has a greater dynamic range, giving you more visible detail especially in the critical shadow and highlight areas of an image.

What Resolution Should You Scan At?

An important feature of a scanner is resolution, which is the amount of detail recorded by the scanner. Resolution is measured in dots per inch (dpi). The greater the dpi number, the higher the resolution.

The resolution you select to scan should depend upon the final output. If it is a funny cartoon or photo you want to e-mail to a buddy to read or see on his/her monitor, then 72dpi will suffice. Saving it to a JPG file will allow your buddy to see the image immediately upon opening your e-mail message. If you save as a TIF file, the recipient will have to use an image enhancement program to view the graphic.

If you are scanning something for printing, then 300dpi should be the mininum scan resolution.

It's important to distinguish between optical, or true, resolution, and interpolated resolution, which is resolution enhanced through software. Optical resolution is the amount of information that a scanner's optics can sample or "see" as the CCD moves vertically across the image. A 24-bit scanner, for example, typically has an optical resolution of 300 x 600 dpi, while 30-bit or 36-bit scanners typically have optical resolutions of at least 600 x 1200 dpi.

Interpolated resolution is accomplished in software by surrounding pixels already seen by the scanner with new pixels that are mathematical averages of the original pixels. Interpolation can be helpful when enlarging images to retain clarity, or when scanning black-and-white images or fine line art to produce smoother lines.

Scanning A Page Of Text

One of my favorite uses of my scanner is Optical Character Recognition (OCR), which eliminates the necessity of having to retype a document.

Text scanning is done through the use of OCR software, which is able to recognize the shapes, shades, and lines

that make up individual characters in a text. When the text recognition process is complete, the user can save the OCR-processed file in various word-processing formats. The document is then ready for editing. I use OmniPage Pro for OCRing documents. Frequently I OCR several pages at a time, and OmniPage Pro then attempts to edit the scanned document for individual letter interpretation errors (which sometimes happen), but I prefer to go ahead and save the scanned document directly into WordPerfect, where I edit the document. Spell Checker will find anything unusual in the document.

OCR accuracy is measured in terms of accurately identified characters, and a 99% accuracy rate means that 99 out of 100 characters are identified correctly. Accuracy is dependent, however, on the original document being scanned. For instance, a typed document yields much better OCR results than a faxed document or one that's heavily smudged.

Conclusion

If you don't have a scanner yet, I recommend that you go to your office supply store, Best Buy, or CompUSA to look at a broad selection and price range of scanners. I assure you that you will find that a scanner is an extremely useful addition to your system.

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Clarke Bird was the editor of PC Alamode, the newsletter of the Alamo PC Organization, San Antonio, Texas, until his retirement with the November issue. This article is reprinted with permission from the October, 2003, issue of that newsletter. Clarke can be reached at <cbird@satx.rr.com>.

Measuring PC Performance

By Richard Maybach
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Before spending money to upgrade your PC, it's important to know what is limiting its present performance. You can use benchmark programs to evaluate your PC, but these usually tell you the absolute performance of each component, while what you really need to know is which components are overloaded when you are doing your normal work. Fortunately, Windows has a performance monitoring program that tells you exactly this. With this you will monitor (1) how busy your central processor unit (CPU) is, (2) how much data is waiting to be transferred to your hard disk, and (3) how much data is moving between RAM and your swap file. If your CPU is overworked, you need a faster one. If there is too much data waiting to be transferred to your hard disk, you need a faster disk. When your PC runs out of RAM, it transfers some data to the swap file (on your hard disk) to free some RAM. If this happens too often, it slows down your PC; the remedy is to add more RAM.

The following discussion assumes you have installed the System Monitor program. If you can't find it, use the Add/Remove Programs utility in the Control Panel to add it. Click on the Windows Setup tab, click on Accessories (or System Tools, depending on your version of Windows), then on the Details button, and select System Monitor.

I'll first describe how to use the System Monitor in XP, because it is simpler. Use the following sequence: Start/Control Panel/Administrative Tools/Performance. You will see a graph with three traces: (1) % Processor Time, (2) Ave. Disk Queue Length, and (3) Pages/sec. Leave this window open and do some of your usual work, looking at the graphs every so often. (1) shows the per cent of the time that the CPU is busy; if this frequently exceeds 80, you need a faster CPU. (2) shows how many disk write operations are waiting; if this often exceeds 2 plus the number of hard disks, you need faster disks. (3) shows how many 4-kByte pages per second move between RAM and your swap file; if this often exceeds 20, you need more RAM.

In Windows 95, 98, and Me, you access the performance monitor with the following sequence: Start/Programs/Accessories/System Tools/Performance. You will see a graph with only one trace, % Processor Usage, but you can add the other measures. Move the cursor over the leftmost icon in the performance window and you should see a box containing "Add." Click on the icon, select File System, then Dirty Data, and click OK. Then click again on the same icon, select Memory Manager, then Page Faults, and click OK. The colorful term "Dirty Data" shows how many Bytes are waiting to be written to your disk, so it is related to the Average Disk Queue Length plotted in XP's monitor. Despite its name, a "Page Fault" is not an error; instead, it means that the CPU tried to access some data that was not in RAM, but had been moved to the swap file. (Data is swapped between RAM and the swap file in 4-kByte chunks called pages.) Thus, Page Faults per second is the same as the Pages/sec plotted by XP. If your % Processor Usage frequently rises above 80 per cent, you need a faster processor, and if the Page Faults often exceed 20 per second, you need more RAM. Finally, you may want to consider a faster disk if it frequently rises above 20 kBytes plus 10 kBytes for each hard disk.

For both the XP and the 95-98-Me systems, these measures are less quantitative than they sound, because we haven't defined "frequently" or what is typical for your PC's tasks. All of them are "peaky;" that is, they will jump up to a fairly high value for a few seconds than fall back down. So long as you see this sort of behavior, your PC is probably powerful enough; when they rise to high values and stay there, this is evidence of overload. Some programs, for example running a virus check or defragging a disk, will add a lot of stress. I've also found that Microsoft Access sometimes drives the CPU usage to 100 per cent for long periods. I suspect this would occur regardless of how fast your system is. You can also create an overload by having many programs running at once, but for most of us this isn't typical. Finally, there is interaction between the measures. For example, each page fault results in disk activity, so a high rate of page faults can cause a large disk queue.

There are many more quantities you can monitor, but these three are the ones most useful in determining if you need to upgrade your PC. Unfortunately, there is no tool to evaluate your video controller, but unless you are playing arcade type games or are doing high-resolution graphics, your present one is probably satisfactory. If the display

seems sluggish, but the above three quantities are all reasonable, you might consider upgrading your video controller. You don't need a tool to check that your hard disk is large enough, because you can easily do this by looking at the disk properties. Any disk that is more than about 80 per cent full is too small.

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Archiving Genealogy Information In A Generic Fashion

By Richard T. Robusto
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Most of us in the genealogy field find ourselves with large amounts of information on our relatives. It challenges us to find a way to preserve it in a manner so that in the future, near and distant, our descendents will be able to access this data in a timely and understandable manner.

When I first started my genealogy project, I had the mistaken idea that I could put away the program and all the data files so that they could be accessed years from now. Boy, was I naïve. I was using Windows 98 at the time. Later I upgraded to Windows ME and then to Windows 2000. At this point the program would not work at all with the new system. Of course, I got the updates and finally got it working, but it really got me to thinking that there had to be a better way to preserve information so that it can be used in years to come without difficulties.

Of course, the first thing that comes to mind is that you should have a printed copy of everything. This I did on good acid-free paper. There are different results that can be achieved. For instance, you can print out a fan type chart. I did that first. It took close to 65 pages of standard letterhead size paper. Then these had to be meticulously trimmed and taped together making a large five foot square. Another method was to print out a horizontal "format" chart. This involved the same number of sheets and, after assembling them together, made a chart that was three feet wide by twelve feet long. This requires an empty wall in order to display it. As far as preserving them, it poses quite a problem. How long would something of this nature last rolled up and packaged? As we all realize, time is our enemy.

In 1999 my wife and I took a trip to Italy with my son and his wife. We went to the mountaintop village that my parents came from in the early 1900s. We went into the commune (town hall) to get information about the family, birth and death dates, etc. It turned out to be quite interesting in the information that we were able to acquire. When we went into the commune and asked, they took down a ledger about 10 by 18 inches with about 20 pages of paper inside. When they opened the book and turned the yellowed pages, you could hear the sheets crinkling, almost as if they were leaves from a tree. The thought that went through my mind is that we didn't get there any too soon. I am sure that in a few more years, those sheets will deteriorate and be unreadable. On top of it all, I was not able to find any digital or photographic record of the

information that was in that ledger. Coming away from this experience left me with the resolve that records need to be digitized and photographed as much as possible. I know that this is happening in some parts of Italy, but in this rural area, it is a long way off.

So the problem of archiving has to be faced. Sure, we could leave all the information on an individual hard drive with the program itself. But the future holds many uncertainties. Will this drive be able to be accessed with Windows 4000 or Linux Extradense 4500? Sure, everyone says that it can always be brought up to date with current technology. But what if this item were to be put in a safe place where no one saw it for a long time. It would become a relic and probably unusable.

In trying to solve this dilemma, I have tried one or two things that I would like to discuss. The first is the FlipAlbum, which can be used to produce what is called an "E" book. This can be any number of pages and can be put in the order desired. To set this up, I captured the pages out of my genealogy database, converting them into bitmaps. I also added all the necessary photos, being able to superimpose descriptions over any part of the photos. When they were finalized and put in the proper order, then the FlipAlbum can be shown on any computer. The program puts a small file in the beginning of the book so that it can be shown on any computer without the necessity of having the program installed. The pages can be set and automatically timed to be seen as a slide show or can be turned manually as desired. The advantages are that it can be viewed on any computer, and there is no limit to the number of pages that can be inserted. There is also a provision to add an MP3 music playlist, plus it will accept most standard images and multimedia formats. The pages can be viewed in centerfold and double page mode to view photos better. Included also is the ability to print the entire album or individual pages or photos.

I have constructed a couple of FlipAlbums with the first and second generation of my genealogy. Next I intend to revisit the project and add every page from the genealogy that I have and make a complete FlipAlbum. When this is complete, then it is an easy matter to copy the discs so that the members of the family can have their own copy, assuring the permanence of availability of the information.

The second idea that I had was to take the same sheets that I had used in the FlipAlbum, and use them as individual files. Then, using a program such as Ulead DVD Picture Show, set them up as a slide show that can be shown on any TV using a DVD player. The files are big enough to fill the TV screen, and that allows you to read the text on the data sheets. The photos come out well, as they fill the screen also. The only drawback with this is that the timing of the files has to be set for approximately 15 seconds so as to have enough time to read the data. Unlike the FlipAlbum, the timing cannot be changed once the disc is made. This program will also allow audio tracks to be added. I have an idea of narrating all the information as it is shown, but I haven't got that far yet. I found out that I do have to sleep somewhat at night. For the first ones that I made I added a music background. I also made a cover sheet that is shown first with the name of the families and the author's name.

The only disadvantage to this is that you are limited to the capacity of the disc, which is 700 MB. But as soon as I acquire a DVD writer, then I will be able to incorporate the whole genealogy section into one disc.

I like the idea of making my own slide show with this DVD program. This can be shown a lot more universally without having the use of a computer. Plus the viewing is much more pleasant on a TV. And with the advent of HDTV, the views can only get better. And lets face it, the DVD image will be with us a lot longer than the current operating systems. So hopefully, many years in the future, our descendents will be able to see all this information and will appreciate the efforts that went into making these things as permanent as we could in this day and age.

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Purchasing A Digital Camera

By Ira Wilsker

Whether advertising hype or legitimate analysis, many of the published pundits are predicting that this winter will be the prime season for digital camera sales. In compliance with traditional technological history, digital cameras have improved in quality and features while plunging in price. I got a "deal" on my first digital camera three years ago, with 640x480 resolution, which is 0.3 (that's three-tenths) of a megapixel resolution, 10x optical zoom, slow serial connectivity, and 2 megs of memory for $270, about one-half retail. For the record, that camera still works fine. Today our local retailers are offering technologically superior digital cameras with 10 times the resolution and 16 times the built-in memory, with fast USB connectivity, for about the same price. In many markets, digital cameras far outsell comparable 35mm cameras. Digital cameras require no film (only memory), require no processing (no trips to the photo counter with the concurrent cost of processing), and provide the instant gratification popularized by the obsolescent Polaroids of yesteryear.

I have been shopping around for digital cameras for two of my daughters. There is a myriad of techno-babble terms being bantered about in describing digital cameras that may require some explanation here so all can understand.

The primary feature being touted by digital camera makers today is "megapixels," or millions of tiny dots of resolution. A "pixel" is the common vernacular for "picture element," which is each tiny dot of information that you see on your computer screen. To put megapixels in perspective, a computer monitor with the common 800x600 resolution means 800 pixels wide by 600 pixels high, or 480,000 pixels. Likewise a 1024x768 resolution, common on today's 17 inch monitors, is 786,432 pixels. If the primary intent is to e-mail digital photos, or post them to the web, then very high resolutions are unnecessary. Someone recently sent me a huge image file as an e-mail attachment. The picture was of a new

grandchild, and taken with a 2.1 megapixel camera, at maximum resolution. The sender did not practice good "netiquette" and reduce the size of the image to reasonable dimensions (such as 320x240 or 640x480), so his large image was three times the size of the screen on my 17 inch monitor. The only way to view the unedited image was to scroll left and right, and up and down. In most cases there is little need to take photos at the maximum resolution; almost all cameras allow for smaller, lower resolution photos.

If the user wants to print the photos with a photo grade printer on high quality inkjet or laser photo paper, 2.1 megapixels, can produce an excellent quality 5x7 inch print, and a reasonable 8x10 inch print. Many of the moderately priced digital cameras are now being offered with 5 or more megapixels. With an appropriate printer and paper, 5 megapixels can produce an excellent quality 8x10 print, and a decent 11x17. The holy grail of digital cameras, 12+ megapixels, the resolution of good quality slide film, was passed about two years ago by the high-end professional models. Many of the professional photographers, who dismissed digital photography as a low quality fad a few years ago, are now embracing the new technology.

The ability to zoom the image in and out is a popular feature in most cameras. The two methods of zoom available on digital cameras are optical and digital zoom. In terms of sharpness, optical zoom is superior to digital, as the image itself is manipulated, rather than the pixels making up the image. The less expensive cameras typically only offer digital zoom (adequate for common snapshots), but the better cameras offer either optical zoom or a combination of the two.

The memory available to the camera determines how many images it can hold before the data must be downloaded to a computer or other device. Most digital cameras have some built-in memory, and allow for the addition of supplemental memory in a variety of formats. Some cameras minimize the need for digital memory by writing the image directly to a floppy disk or mini-CD. Since the integral memory in a digital camera can typically hold only a small number of images, it is important to determine the price and availability of additional memory in the proper format. Memory comes in different capacities and formats from tiny cards, to rectangular "memory sticks." All camera memory is not the same, and differs in speed (faster is better, but often at a price) and power consumption (less power consumption is better for prolonging battery life). According to Lexar, one of the major manufacturers of digital camera media, the number of photos that can be held in memory varies by the resolution of the photo and the capacity of the media. If the inexpensive 32meg memory card is used, at maximum resolution, a 2 megapixel camera will store about 35 images, while only storing 12 images from a 5 megapixel camera. Media of 256megs (often around $50) can hold much more—284 images at 2 megapixels, and 102 images at 5 megapixels. A chart showing the capacity of different media is available at <www.lexarmedia.com/digfilm/index_cf.html>. It should also be noted that the memory, also referred to as "digital film," can be reused indefinitely.

Almost all new digital cameras come with some form of fast USB connectivity to download images to the computer. Accessories such as docking stations, and external card readers are a convenience, but not a necessity.

As an added convenience, most local photo finishers now print photo-grade images directly from the camera memory, at prices lower than printing them yourself. Now we can have the best of both worlds.

Ira Wilsker is the Advisor for Region 8, APCUG Representative & Bylaws Chair for the Golden Triangle PC Club, a columnist for The Examiner in Beaumont, Texas, and has two radio shows. He also graciously shares his articles with the APCUG editors.

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Users Still Need To Know More About Popular, New DVD Technology

By Linda Gonse
Orange County IBM PC Users' Group

DVD writers and recordable DVDs are a fairly new entry into Personal Computerland. Consequently, most of us still need to know what to look for in a DVD writer and how to record DVDs.

Almost everyone knows that a DVD is a type of optical disc that looks like a CD, but has a significantly larger storage capacity.

What you might not know is that the capacity of a DVD may vary depending on different physical format technology, ranging from 4.7 GB to 17.1 GB. And, while CDs are recorded only on one side, some DVDs such as DVD-RAM, support two layers per side and are rewritable up to 100,000 times. (This type of DVD is enclosed in a plastic case similar to a floppy disk which protects its surfaces and provides a label area.)

Another reason DVD drives are growing in popularity is that they can read most CD media as well. With such impressive features, it isn't surprising that DVDs are expected to become the next CD-ROM. In many cases, manufacturers are even building new PCs with DVD drives instead of CD drives.

The DVD "started in 1994 as two competing formats, Super Disc (SD) and Multimedia CD (MMCD). DVD now is the result of an agreement by both camps on a single standard to meet the requirements of all the various industries involved," according to Deluxe Global Media Services (formerly Disctronics). But, media formats still split into two groups: + (plus), or – (known commonly as minus; manufacturers may refer to it as dash). The quality comparison is close, and some DVD players will recognize both, while other models will only accept + or –.

Although there are many aspects of DVDs that we still need to learn, one of the basic questions people inevitably ask is, "What do the letters in DVD mean?"

The letters originally stood for Digital VideoDisc. As the technology gained in importance to the computer world, the word "video" was dropped, and the media and the technology was simply D-V-D. Later, it was given the name Digital Versatile Disc by the DVD Forum, which sets DVD standards. Most people just say D-V-D.

"The Burning Question," by Don Labriola, is a detailed, comprehensive look at DVD recording with reviews on 23 products. It is in the October 28, 2003 issue of PC magazine; it's also online at <http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,4149,1306042,00.asp>. For an excellent overview of DVD technology and disks, history, specifications, formats, DVD-5, -10, -9, -18, hybrid formats, file systems, copy protection, and DVD Forum, go to <http://www.disctronics.co.uk/technology/dvdintro/dvd_intro.htm>.

Linda is the editor and webmaster for Orange County IBM PC Users' Group, in Southern California. You can contact her at <editor@orcopug.org>. Or, visit the user group's website at <http://www.orcopug.org>.

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Tip: Printing everything at best quality uses a lot more ink and ink cartridges than using draft quality and doesn't look a lot better. Set the default quality at the lowest level and boost it up only when you need to impress someone.

Internet Comparison Shopping

By Jerry Wonderly
Dayton Microcomputer Association, Inc.

Many Americans now do much of their shopping online, and the savvy shopper uses comparison-shopping websites. After some research, I think I've come up with some sites that will be helpful as you shop online too. I'm admittedly no expert, so please consider the following as my own personal opinions.

In preparing for this article, a list was compiled of six possible gifts from six different categories, because some comparison shopping sites are more comprehensive than others. The six theoretical gifts include: a highly-rated Canon Powershot A70 3.2 megapixel digital camera; a best-selling book called "Founding Brothers—The Revolutionary Generation" by Joseph J. Ellis; a top 10 PC game called "Rise Of Nations" by Microsoft; a bottle of Estee Lauder perfume called "Pleasures" in a 1.7 ounce size; a board game called "Harry Potter: Heir Of Slytherin;" and a popular golfing putter called the "Titleist Scotty Cameron Studio Design 1.5."

Next, a list of comparison-shopping websites was put together. As with last year, some of the popular sites have been swallowed up by their competition. Deal Time, for example, is now Shopping.com and Epinions is now run by Shopping.com, while Lycos Shopping uses the Bizrate search engine. Strangely though, affiliated sites don't always return the same merchant results, and even the price results can vary. At any rate, the

following comparison shopping sites were used in my research:
Lycos <shop.lycos.com/>,
BizRate <www.bizrate.com>,
Price Grabber <www.pricegrabber.com>,
Shopping.com <www.shopping.com>,
Epinions <www.epinions.com>,
My Simon <www.mysimon.com>,
Yahoo <http://shopping.yahoo.com>,
Value Find <www.valuefind.com>,
Shop Best <www.shopbest.com>,
NexTag <www.nextag.com>,
Price Scan <www.pricescan.com>.

An improvement over last year is that most of the comparison-shopping sites now have merchant reviews, and automatically compute tax and shipping to get an accurate display of true pricing. These include Lycos, BizRate, Price Grabber, Shopping.com, Epinions, Yahoo, and NexTag. My Simon and Price Scan don't compute tax, but do for shipping, and also have merchant reviews. Shop Best and Value Find have unusual sites in that the results usually took me to only one vendor to choose from. Shop Best had a very slow search engine, and Value Find's frames are cumbersome and wouldn't react properly when clicking links. However, overall, most of the sites worked extremely fast, were laid out well, and offered several categories and stores to choose from.

Many online merchants are listed on multiple comparison-shopping websites. Their prices often vary from site to site though, so it pays to search more than one comparison engine. Many sellers offer free shipping. As with brick-and-mortar stores, use good judgement when deciding which vendor to buy from. Don't be hesitant about getting seller information from the Better Business Bureau at <www.bbb.org/>. Also, consider looking for coupons and discount codes from websites like Amazing Bargains <www.amazingbargains.com>, Deal Catcher <www.dealcatcher.com>, and Deal Of Day <www.dealofday.com>.

Here are the results of my make-believe shopping trip:

On the camera, NexTag had the lowest price from a merchant called Dbargains at $240 plus tax and shipping. Unfortunately, you don't know what the tax and shipping are until after you've completed all of the online purchase orders. The next lowest price on the camera came from a Yahoo vendor called Rush4Digital. They are selling it for a total price of $264.80. However, Rush4Digital is an unrated merchant at the time of this writing. My Simon's vendor, Beach Camera, offers the camera for $269.00 plus tax, if any. Beach Camera <www.beachcamera.com> appears on many of the comparison search sites.

Note: Whenever purchasing electronics over the Internet, be sure to ask the vendor if the item you want to purchase comes with a valid U.S. warranty. Sometimes the very lowest prices found in searches are for "gray market" goods that were intended by the manufacturer to be sold overseas and thus do not carry a U.S. warranty (and, infrequently, may not even have an owner's manual written in English). The lack of a manufacturer's U.S. warranty should only be a problem if you need warranty service, so every buyer must decide for himself whether to assume the lack-of-warranty risk with some gray market merchandise in exchange for a potentially lower price. You can see what the New York Better Business Bureau has to say about gray

market merchandise at <http://www.newyork.bbb.org/library/publications/subrep45.html>.

For the book, Lycos and Bizrate bested the competition with identical deals of $9.19, both with tax and shipping included, from Overstock <www.overstock.com>. I've bought from Overstock before and have had good experiences.

As for the PC game, Yahoo had the lowest price at $37.95 total from a company called Purplus based in California. They have a high merchant rating on Yahoo.

Shopping for the perfume led me to the lowest price at Price Grabber's LuxNY.com based in New Jersey. They offered it for a total price of $34.94. The drawback is that LuxNY is an unrated merchant. Shopping in the fragrance category on all of the comparison shopping sites was a bit unusual. None of them formulated tax and shipping for some reason.

Next, I looked for the Harry Potter board game. Most of the search sites came up with nothing. Only Lycos, BizRate, and Yahoo had listings. The lowest price was found on Lycos and BizRate at a merchant called TovBid.com. They sell the board game for $8.99 with free shipping. There's no mention of sales tax.

Lastly, the Titleist putter was kind of hit or miss. Five of the sites either didn't have a category of Sports or just didn't list this putter. Of those that do have merchants selling this putter, Price Scan has a store called Golfalltheway who lists it for $219.99 plus tax and shipping. Yahoo's Need2Golf.com sells the putter for a grass blade less at $219.00 plus tax and shipping.

In conclusion, I was pleased overall with the improvement of the Internet comparison-shopping experience over last year. There are several good competitors out there with many reputable stores in their listings. It is pretty easy to navigate their sites, and most of them allow you to sort the results by total price. We can be spared some of the aggravation of running from mall to mall and store to store in search of that deal by doing at least some of our shopping online.

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APCUG Fall & Comdex

By Bob Clyne
Associate Editor

APCUG

The APCUG Fall conference was good despite a rather small number of sponsors and even fewer meal events than in past years. My room at the Stardust was on the 29th floor (nosebleed territory) of the West Tower and was spacious. The hotel rooms were a lot closer to the conference rooms than the rooms were at the Orleans. We

did not have to walk across the casino to get from our rooms to the meeting rooms. The air conditioner in my room didn't seem quite up to the task on warm days, but it didn't get really uncomfortably hot. About the only bad part of the physical layout was the Hospitality Suite, which, while nice enough, was located quite a way off from everything else in another part of the building.

I was not very impressed with the choice of restaurants at the Stardust, though I really didn't get a chance to try many of them out. There was a ribs place, a buffet, a Sushi place, William B's, which was closed Monday and Tuesday, and a few others. At William B's the cheapest entree was $19.50; the prime rib was $26, and some entrees were in the $36-$40 range. None of the restaurants listing prime rib listed a weight for it.

The roundtables were pretty good, and during several time slots there were two that I really would have liked to attend. I considered cloning myself so I could attend both but decided that the world was not ready for two of me.

Optimizing a Web Site For a Search

Among the roundtables was a presentation by Ash Nallawalla of the Melbourne PC User Group on Search Engine Optimization of a UG web site. The object was to make the site come up higher on the page in a Google or other search engine search. Ash talked about the importance of having a meaningful title on the pages with keywords occurring early in the title. He was using "keyword" in the sense of a word that someone would be likely to use in a search. It is also important to use keywords early on the page in <H1> and <H2> headers. Use Alt tags on any text that is on the page as a graphic, since search engines do not read graphic text. The reason for using the keywords early is that search engines only read so many characters on a page. Ash covered many other points in search engine optimization and also pointed out that one should not get so wrapped up in optimizing for a search engine that the page does not look attractive to the human viewer. It was an excellent presentation, and I wish more of you could have heard it.

Identity Theft and Passwords

Another presentation was on Identity Theft and the Password Problem. This was presented by Jeffry Padin of JP CyberTech and was primarily a promotion of their product Enigma II. Jeffry went over the tendency of many users to use the same password in many places and to choose passwords that are too easy to guess. The problem with long passwords made of random characters, the kind security experts recommend, is that no one can remember them.

Enigma II stores all your passwords along with information about where they are used in an encrypted file with a long phrase of your choosing as the password for Enigma. The encryption seems to be quite strong, and it re-encrypts the file each time you save it. I, and several of the other attendees, thought they blew the user interface though. There is no provision for sorting or searching the list of passwords. This would not be a problem if you only had a few accounts, but as the number of accounts increases, finding the one you want gets more tiresome. Also, the program does not let you copy and paste the passwords. Jeffry explained that this was for security reasons, since someone

could get access to your clipboard and thereby get your password. This overlooks the fact that if the user has to type the password every time, the user is likely to choose shorter, easier to remember passwords, which was the problem Enigma was supposed to overcome. Security that is theoretically great but too difficult to use quickly becomes very poor security. Some suggestions from other attendees to alleviate the problem were to provide an "always on top" option for Enigma so that the password remains visible while you are copying it by hand, or allow copy and paste but "scrub" the clipboard when the user closes Enigma. Since some programs ask whether or not you wish to keep material on the clipboard when you close the program, this seems possible.

Pasadena IBM User Group Ends

There was another roundtable by Steve Bass, which ended up, by attendee demand, being about the demise of the Pasadena IBM User Group. This group has, for its entire 22-year life, been run exclusively by Steve. He is now tired of running it and wants to do other things. Contributing to this has been increased difficulty in getting speakers, merchandise for giveaways, etc. He said that he asked if any of the other members would like to take it over, and no one stepped forward, so the group will die in February unless someone does. Keep this in mind; **when no one is willing to do the work to keep a user group functioning, it dies.**

E-Mail Publishing Ends

Chris Pirillo gave a talk on the death of e-mail publishing and its successor. He attributed the death of e-mail publishing primarily to spam and spam filters and the increasing frequency of e-mail newsletters being blocked by the spam filters or getting lost in all the spam and inadvertently deleted without being read. The answer he proposed is RSS. Even after listening to his presentation, I cannot begin to explain RSS. Perhaps Tom Callow or Jack Vander-Schrier or some other volunteer will do a presentation on it at a SEMCO meeting if there is enough interest.

APCUG Giveaways

My luck held for all the drawings, and I didn't win a thing. If it wasn't for bad luck, I wouldn't have any luck at all. I really would have liked to have won the Adobe suite, the Intel Centrino notebook, and the AMD Athlon 64 FX CPU, but I won nothing. Adobe said that some of their new software is requiring activation, so there is another pain.

Adobe gave us each a copy of Photoshop Album 2.0, and Microsoft gave us each a copy of Office Small Business Edition 2003 (not the Professional version, darn it, but still a significant software package) and a copy of Plus Digital Media Edition. All of them are nice software packages and very much appreciated. That was about all other than a few shirts and gee-gaws, so there won't be much for SEMCO.

I would like to express my thanks to all of the companies who were sponsors for APCUG Fall.

Comdex

Comdex was smaller than last year. It was entirely, including the registration and media facilities, within the Central Halls of the Las Vegas Convention Center (LVCC), and there was space that was curtained off on the south side between the show and the wall. MediaLive, who runs Comdex had announced that they were re-focusing

the show on business users, and it definitely looked like the intended audience was corporate IT management. Gone were almost all the consumer-oriented items. Neither I, nor anyone I talked to, either in the pressroom or among the APCUG people, saw anything they considered exciting. I thought it was a yawn. I finished the show floor on Monday with time out for lunch and a few other rest stops, when I sat for a while just to get off my feet. It was a far cry from the old days when you could spend five days at the show and still not really have time to see it all. I went back for a few hours on Tuesday to take a second look at a couple of things and try to find anything I had missed on Monday.

VersaLaser

There were a couple of items at Comdex that I found interesting, though neither represents new technology. The first of these is the VersaLaser. It is a USB laser printer, but this is a different type of laser printer. It uses a 25-watt laser to cut, mark, or engrave the target material. It can use many different types of material, including fabric, paper, plastic, rubber, wood, glass, ceramic, metal, and stone. In one of their demos they used it with plastic with two different color layers to make a ruler. It did fine lines for the hash marks and broader lines for the writing and cut the rulers out of the sheet of plastic. Everyone should have one of these, but it may strain your budget a little since the cheapest one is just under $10,000. You can see more information about these at <http://www.versalaser.com>.

Canobeam

Another item that I found interesting is called a Canobeam from Canon. This device transmits data on a laser beam. Maximum range is about 2 kilometers, but you have to have line of sight between the two units. The maximum data rate is 1.25 Gbps, but this apparently drops off to 622 Mbps by the time the range is 1 km. I don't know what the speed is at 2 km. Speed is affected by weather and other atmospheric problems. The device is intended for use where a data link is needed but running fiber optic cable would be prohibitively expensive. As I recall, the cheapest unit was about $5,000 for a pair of them. It would probably be a bit expensive for running that data link from your house to the garage, boat house, or gazebo.

Navigation Problems

I have pretty much decided that the time has come to replace my laptop (or is it notebook) computer. My HP Omnibook seemed to have trouble, during navigation on the road, processing voice commands (apparently the Microsoft speech recognition engine got fouled up), position information, and driving directions at the same time. It seemed to give priority to showing my position on the map, which was probably a good choice. I think the new version of Street Atlas is more demanding of the hardware than the older versions, but I am not sure about that. It is time for me to get something with more processing power, more memory, and more hard disk space.

Wi-Fi at APCUG

I should have bought a Wi-Fi (802.11b) PC card for the laptop before the trip. Intel had a lot of the area around the APCUG meeting area (not the hotel rooms though) set up as a hotspot, so anyone with Wi-Fi could access the Internet from the area. The Stardust has a $1 per day surcharge for 'free' local

calls, whether you make any or not, but they charge $1 for the first 30 minutes of an 800 call and 10 cents a minute after that. While the phones in the rooms had data ports to plug a modem into, I heard that the speeds obtainable were horrid. Under the circumstances, I did not try it. I felt communicationally challenged.

Future Conferences

At the APCUG vendor forum, both Microsoft and Intel suggested that APCUG consider switching the APCUG event to be in conjunction with CES rather than Comdex. Most of the attendees seemed to favor that change also on a show of hands. The next day I understood an announcement to say that APCUG could not do it for CES 2005. Apparently the hotels figure they can get all the business they want in that time frame without APCUG. This may well be the case, since the Stardust sold-out their block of CES rooms for the 2004 CES a month before the show. APCUG has to be able to get rooms at a price the attendees will pay and get meeting rooms comped based on the room nights and catering, so they have a tough job, especially since there isn't much APCUG event catering anymore. Also, attendees who stay at other hotels, because they can get the room a couple of dollars cheaper, make things more difficult for APCUG. Hopefully APCUG will keep trying and will figure out a way to do it, since I don't think Comdex will be much of a draw for the APCUG attendees in the future.

CES, the Consumer Electronics Show, is January 8-11, 2004. CES is much bigger than Comdex is now. CES should take up the North, Central, and South Halls of LVCC with a few bits and pieces in some of the hotels.

Above The Clouds With Centrino™

By Christopher Sarson

Well, here I am, above the clouds on flight AC 580, just about to land in Toronto, and life is good. Sure, I have a job I enjoy, and sure, I've been happily married for forty years, but that's not the focus of my present euphoria. Fact is, I'm writing this review on my new laptop, which is based on the Intel® Centrino™ technology, and that makes me a happy little computer user.

This morning I arrived at Denver airport at 6:30am and spent 90 minutes checking my e-mail and sending back some replies using my built-in wireless Wi-Fi connection before the flight was called. On the plane I spent a couple of hours with my video editing program, reviewing scenes from the TV program I'm directing, and composing some additional scenes. Now I'm landing, and my battery meter tells me that even after 3½ hours' work, I still have 40% of my battery charge left! Yikes! Short battery life was gripe #1 about my old laptop. Now—at last—my battery lasts the length of my journey!

My next biggest gripe concerned power. My old laptop (a 500Mhz PIII) was fine for word processing and e-mail, but balked at heavy-duty chores like video editing. My new Centrino™ handles Adobe Premier with barely a hiccup! And even with its (nominal) 1.6-Ghz CPU, it's actually as fast as my 2.6-Ghz desktop! Bliss!!

And the third magic of Centrino™ is the built-in WiFi connection. At most airports, hotels, Starbucks, there are hot-spots that enable WiFi-compliant 802.11b laptops to access the internet wirelessly at (on my machine) about

seven megabits per second. (My Windows Update download of all the patches for Windows XP took 20 minutes on my laptop, about three hours on my desktop with a 52kbps connection! With Centrino™, it's like being connected with a T1 line!) And no need to find a telephone line, remember a telephone number, and dial in!

This Centrino™ technology that makes me so happy includes three components on a laptop: a Pentium M CPU, an 855 system-board chip set, and a Pro/Wireless 2100 Network connection, all made by Intel®. The Pentium M chip is the first chip built from the ground up to be mobile (most laptop chips are reconfigured desktop parts); it completes more instructions per clock cycle; and it has a level 2 cache twice the size of the current P4 desktop chip—hence its great performance and long battery life. To help battery life even more, Intel® has improved its SpeedStep technology, which adjusts the processor speed to match the needs of the current application; also, the new chips use less wattage. And the third component of the Centrino™ technology is the built-in Wi-Fi technology, which allows the easy wireless connection to the Internet I mentioned above.

But enough of the technology! The bottom line is that I'm more productive, and as a result I can spend my evenings in Toronto relaxing instead of working, and more time at home with family and friends!

As I said earlier, I'm above the clouds with Centrino!

Christopher Sarson is a past Secretary of the Association of PC User Groups (APCUG), past President, Windows on the Rockies User Group, Denver, CO, creator and first executive producer of Masterpiece Theatre, and is currently working on Roots of Empathy, a program designed to help young people understand empathy. Reach him at <c_sarson@hotmail.com>.

How To Make The Toolbar YOUR Toolbar

By Patricia Hill
Review Editor
APCUG Representative
Computer Booters of Sun Lakes, Arizona

Do you find yourself having to access drop down menus and clicking several times to perform repetitive tasks in the Microsoft Office product line? Did you know the toolbar is highly customizable? If the toolbar contains icons you never use—and don't think you will ever use—get rid of them! If you are looking for an easier way—with fewer mouse clicks—to do certain things, then add an icon to the toolbar.

Here's how: This article was written using MS Word 2002; the instructions are similar, if not the same, for previous versions of Word and other Office products.

Select Tools/Customize from the menu bar. You'll see three tabs in the Customize window; Toolbars, Commands, and Options. Notice there are check marks next to the toolbars that are always displayed when you enter Word. In the Toolbars tab select the toolbar you want to customize. It's probably the Standard Toolbar.

Once you've selected the Standard Toolbar (it will be highlighted or colored in), go to the Commands tab.

Let's add a File Save As... button. File should already be selected in the left Categories pane. Scroll down the right Commands pane in the Customize window until you see Save As... Drag and drop the button to where you want it in the toolbar. Select Save As... by holding down the left mouse button. Still holding down the button, drag the button to where you want it on the toolbar and release the mouse button. Now you're looking at lots of buttons and something that says Save As… This isn't exactly what you'd like to see, so let's modify it. It takes a few steps, but you'll be glad you took the time to do it.

Click the Modify Selection bar; then Default Style. The Default Style is a button that shows the button activity when you hover your mouse over it. The button is now blank. Click Modify Selection again, and then Change Button Image. Click on the piggy bank, the third object from the left on the top row.

Your button now shows the piggy bank icon. It's a boring piggy bank—so color it in. Select Modify Selection bar a final time and Edit Button Image…

Pick a color and hold down your left mouse button and color the piggy bank.There's a small preview pane that's rather useless, and you can move the icon within the button boundaries using the arrows.

If you're not sure in which Category a function you're looking for resides, scroll down the Category pane to All Commands and click on that.

If you want to add a new button that already has an icon, repeat the instructions in paragraph 3. Let's add the Grow Font and Shrink Font icons to the Standard Toolbar. Click on Format in the left pane of the Customize window. Scroll down the right pane until you see the Grow Font and Shrink Font icons. Select them one at a time and drag and drop them to where you want them on the tool bar. Because there is an icon already available, that's all you have to do. You don't have to mess with modifying it and selecting the Default Style.

To delete any icons you don't think you'll use, drag and drop the icon to anywhere in the Customize window. The key is to have the Customize window open. If you decide you want to put it back, reverse the process.

Another way to delete or add icons from the toolbar is to click on the down arrow at the far right of any tool bar. Click on Add or Remove Buttons and then Standard Toolbar.You'll see a list of all icons currently displayed on the Standard Toolbar. Some are black, and some are grayed out. The black ones are the original toolbar setup when you first installed Word. The gray ones are the ones you used to customize your toolbar. If you want to add an original button to the toolbar, click on it, and it'll move to the toolbar. If you want to remove buttons, then click on them, and they disappear from the toolbar. Remember, though, if you want to group your buttons differently than Microsoft originally set them up, the Tools/ Customize window must be open.

Drag, drop, customize, modify to your heart's content. Set up your programs so that they make sense to you and are easier for you to use. Make the toolbar YOUR toolbar.

There is no restriction against any non-profit group using this article as long as it is kept in context with proper credit given the author. The Editorial Committee of the Association of

Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member, brings this article to you.

Toss Out That Shoebox

By Steve Bass
Pasadena IBM Users Group

In the middle of March I was more than a month early on my taxes, a rare occurrence by anyone's standards, especially mine. Now don't get me wrong, it's got nothing to do with me. Heaven forbid I make a deadline. The credit belongs to my tax guy (yeah, that's how I refer to him. He's a guy, does my taxes, and has been a tax guy for years).

As tax guys go, he's even-tempered and patient. But every year he loses his professional cool at the sight of me and my shoebox coming into his office. Last year he said, "Go buy a computer tax program, Bass," handing me back my shoebox. "Anything will do," he said, "just make sure it doesn't include a shoe box."

It turns out that once I started using a tax program, I actually enjoyed getting things organized. The process is simple: I just went through and answered the program's questions. Some programs, such as TurboTax, allowed me to fill in a screen that is a pretty accurate rendition of an IRS tax form (real enough to cause some anxiety).

Other programs are less realistic—you answer questions on screen and move from field to field. And if you're using an accounting program, there's a good chance you can export data to a variety of tax programs. For example, H&R Block's TaxCut accepts data from Intuit's Quicken. By the way, most tax programs will print out IRS approved forms on a laser printer, and some include software for electronic filing.

Give Me Some Help

Every program I tried offered extensive help, so even inexperienced users can get some on-line reassurance. At any point in the process you can stop the process and get advice. TurboTax's chatty, comfortable tone reminded me of my tax guy (it obviously didn't see the shoe box on my desk). All tax programs let me play "what-if" scenarios to my heart's content. I was able to see the effect of, say, buying a new car, or adding a new deduction to the family. And TurboTax compares your deductions to the national standard to make sure you're not out of line, saving you a potential audit.

But there's a downside to doing my taxes on my own. Every so often I'd get a message suggesting a talk with my, uh, tax guy. I ran into one snag when I tried to figure out if I was able to deduct a unique retirement fund from my state taxes. And here's where I get a little squirrelly with tax programs, because the answer was not forthcoming. My solution? Find a tax preparer who's willing to answer your questions and double-check your computer generated return.

Here are some recommendations if you use tax preparation software:

* If you have a simple return, don't hesitate to do-it-yourself. Your return will be more accurate, you might have fun, and you'll likely save some money.

* If you have a complicated return, and someone does your taxes, try a tax program and compare the results. Do that for a year or two, and if you don't

see much of a difference, consider working exclusively with the software.

*To get the best price on tax preparation software, compare the prices of local discount stores to mail order companies. Many mail order firms bundle the federal and state versions for a lower price.

Steve Bass is a Contributing Editor with PC World and runs the Pasadena IBM Users Group [until February 4, 2004]. 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>.

FAUCETS

By Bob Clyne
Associate Editor

During my trip to Las Vegas and back for APCUG Fall and Comdex, I noticed a lot of variation in the operation of the faucets in various hotel/motel rooms. In the old days, generally to close faucets that had vertical stems, you turned the handle so that the side away from the spout was moving away from you; i.e. the cold turned counter-clockwise and the hot turned clockwise to close. That does not seem to work anymore. In some hotel rooms both handles turned clockwise to close. I can see some logic in this since a valve all by itself normally turns clockwise to close. But some hotel rooms I was in had a set of faucets where both had to be turned counter-clockwise to close. This violates just about any standard I can think of. Actually, I guess there aren't any formal standards for this. About the only ways I can think of to cause this are plumbers who were totally incompetent, or didn't care what they were doing, or were actually malicious. So much for tradesman competence and responsibility!

In the case of rotary single handled shower faucets, they turn clockwise to turn off, and when the water is first turned on you get cold water, and as the valve is turned further the water becomes warm and then hot.

In my room at the Stardust Hotel in Las Vegas, however, when you began to open the shower valve, you got hot water and had to turn the valve past that to get warm or cold water. Hello, what a wake-up call that was. Luckily, the water was still coming out of the spout; I had not pulled the handle to divert it to the shower yet when I discovered that or I would have looked like the world's largest boiled lobster and probably broken a few things trying to get out of there. The wall plate showed that as you opened the faucet (counter-clockwise), you would get cold (blue); then as you turned it further, you would get warm and finally hot water (red). The most likely cause I can think of for this is that the hot and cold water connections to the valve were reversed. So much for tradesman competence and responsibility again! And where were the building inspectors, and where was hotel management for this to happen? I did report this to the hotel, and they voluntarily removed the charge for my last night's stay from my bill. Hopefully, they also fixed the valve.

The lesson learned from all this, is don't take anything on trust. Check it out before you trust body or property to any device. And, if in spite of your vigilance, you do get caught by something like this, check with your lawyer to determine how badly you are injured.

[*In my house, the two sinks at the west end have both hot and cold faucets that turn on counterclockwise. At the east end of the house two sinks turn on hot counterclockwise and cold clockwise. And in the center of the house (basement), one sink turns on both faucets up. The two showers in the west end go counterclockwise from cold to hot. Clearly there is a 3D geographic effect. For fun, check your faucets.* –Ed.]

Beth Fordyce Super SEMCO Proofreader

I've been MANY years at proofreading. I used to work in Financial Analysis at FoMoCo, not directly for R. S. McNamara, but for several of his managers under him. That was back in the mid-to-late-'40s. At that time, there was not even correction tape or fluid. And even if there had been, we girls (secretaries) would not have been able to use it. When we typed something to go to RSM or Henry Ford II, which was our job every day, we had to have no corrections on the page. If we made a mistake, we removed the offensive sheet of paper and started over. You can bet your bottom dollar that we got good at typing with no mistakes.

One of my jobs was statistical typing, and I had a manual typewriter with a carriage from about 24 to 36 inches long. We rolled in 12 sheets of wide paper at a time (to account for all those columns of figures accountants use), then added carbon sheets to that. If we made a mistake, we could erase the carbons and the top sheet (if it was

Letter From The Editor

Did You Know?

Researchers at our host Oakland University under the direction of Professor Ka C. Cheok have developed an autonomous robotic gasoline/electric lawnmower that will start at a pre-programmed time, drive itself out of the garage, mow your lawn, and then put itself away for recharging. Self-Guided Systems LLC funded the project, beginning in 2000. The mower will be ready for commercial applications in a year and is expected to be available to consumers in a few years. You perhaps saw it performing during our SEMCO meeting one Sunday in the yard across from our meeting room.

The system uses 4-6 reflectors mounted around the edge of the lawn and a rotating laser on board the mower. This tells the mower's computer exactly where it is (like GPS). The operator teaches the mower just once where the outside and inside perimenters of the lawn are by driving it manually around them. Sonar sensors allow detection and avoidance of any obstacles. When it starts, the mower follows the outside perimeter first and then begins a back and forth pattern programmed in the computer until all the grass is mowed. If it meets an obstacle it can't avoid, it will phone the owner to come and help.

Learn more about the Memory Mower™ at <www.selfguidedsystems.com>.

Now, how about that? Bill

unnoticeably correctable), provided we were working on a rough draft of the material. On the "final draft" no erasures were allowed.

For proofreading, one NEVER re-read her own typing. Another secretary proofed my typing while I read the text out loud to her, and vice versa. That is the only way to be sure the typing is correct. Of course, you couldn't have a couple of dummies doing either of those jobs, or nothing would get done correctly.

So I've had almost a lifetime of text preciseness (new word?).

BOARD MEETING
12/14/2003
Carol Sanzi

Board Members Present

President Gary DeNise, Treasurer Roger Gay, Secretary Carol Sanzi, 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. Also attending was Richard Jackson. Arriving late was Art Laramie. The meeting was called to order at 12:15 p.m.

Old Business

Treasurer Roger Gay reported that the bank balance is $5226.99. SEMCO's membership stands at 87 with renewals due from Michael D. Bader, Chester Blechinger, Roland Maki, Robert Schultz, Lary Smith, and Steve Yuhasz.

Bob Clyne moved to reimburse Warner Mach $15.60 for refreshments. Tom Callow seconded the motion, and it carried.

Bob Clyne reported that Kathy Rowley, from Oakland University, should soon be contacting him with the terms for SEMCO's use of the OU facilities for our 2004 monthly meetings.

Tom Callow reminded the Board that nominations for SEMCO officers and board members need to be taken at the general meeting.

New Business

Roger Gay asked the board to update the list of organizations receiving complementary copies of the DATA BUS. Bob Clyne suggested the Board first investigate which organizations reciprocate with copies of their publications before an update is finalized.

Tom Callow reported that Beth Fordyce and Pat Kreiling offered to host the volunteer party. Carol Sanzi will talk with them and come up with a date and location.

Tom Callow moved to adjourn. Roger Gay seconded the motion, and it was carried. The meeting adjourned at 12:58 p.m.

GENERAL MEETING
12/14/2003
Carol Sanzi

President Gary DeNise held nominations for Board positions.

For Member at Large:

Franz Breidenich nominated Bob Clyne; Tom Callow nominated Chuck Moery; Bob Clyne nominated Betty MacKenzie; Chester Blechinger nominated himself.

For Secretary:

Tom Callow nominated Carol Sanzi.

For Treasurer:

Carol Sanzi nominated Roger Gay.

For Vice President:

Franz Breidenich nominated Phil Charns, and Bob Clyne nominated Richard Jackson.

For President:

Richard Jackson nominated Gary DeNise.

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS (SIGs)

SIG-IBM
Tom Callow
Warner Mach

Jan. 11: Buying Your Music Online Legally: SIG-IBM Co-Chairman Tom Callow will demonstrate several of the new on-line services that allow you to purchase music over the Internet legally and inexpensively, including MusicMatch, ITunes, the new Napster and Wal-Mart.com.

December Meeting Attendance: 25

TAX DEDUCTIBLE DONATIONS

Beth Fordyce is accepting Macintosh computers, components, peripherals, manuals, and software (working or broken) for St. Gerard School PreK–8th grade, 175-200 students for computer science classes.
Contact Beth
734/453-0349 10am–10pm or
bfordyce@sbcglobal.net
You may also contact the school
W-Th-F, 1-4 pm: Maurice Roberts
19900 Evergreen, Detroit
(Just south of 8 Mile Road)
313/533-4353

SIG-IBM INTERMEDIATE
Jack Vander-Schrier

Jan. 11: The HP DVD Movie Writer dc3000: SIG-IBM Intermediate Chairman Jack Vander-Schrier will demonstrate how to make DVDs from VHS Tapes.

NOVICE-IBM GROUP
Rotating Volunteer Hosts

Jan. 11: Q&A: Discussion directed by the Audience.

SIG-ADVANCED
Franz Breidenich

Feb. 2: 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. **Topic: Wide ranging discussion of computers and computing.**

February 2004 DATA BUS DEADLINE (7th day after meeting)

SEMCO Input and Members' Ads — Deadline: Sun, Jan. 18, 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.

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)
Jan. 24–Saturday, 10am-noon (No meeting in December); W. Bloomfield Twp. Library, 4600 Walnut Lake Rd., 1 mile west of Orchard Lk Rd., Info: Jack Lockman at <thunder@tir.com> or 313-341-8855.

COMP (Computer Operators of Marysville & Port Huron)
Feb. 4–Wednesday, 7 p.m. (1st Wednesday): Rm 201, Clara E. Mackenzie Library-Science Bldg, St. Clair Community College, 323 Erie St., Port Huron. Ron Walters, 810-679-4144. Web: <http://www.bwcomp.org>. Topic: Search Engines & Phraseology for Searches.

DCOM Computer Club
Feb. 13–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.

DPUG (Detroit Palm Users Group)
Feb. 12–Thursday, 7pm (2nd Thursday); Kelly Services Building, 999 West Big Beaver, corner Crooks & Big Beaver Rds, Troy, MI. <http://www.dpug.org>. **Free membership.**

FACE (Flint Area Computer Enthusiasts)
Jan. 13–Tuesday, 6:30pm (2nd Tuesday); Kettering Univ. Academic Bldg. Rm I-817 (enter Security Door, back of building by parking lot). <http://www.gfn/FACE/index.html>.

MacGroup Detroit
Jan. 18–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: New Stuff from MacWorld Expo.

MacTechnics, (MAC User Group)
Jan. 17–Saturday, 11:00am main meeting (SIGs at 9:30); 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)
Jan. 15–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
Feb. 12–(2nd Thur), MAC SIG; Feb. 12–(2nd Thur), Golden Masters SIG; Jan. 15–(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 Recreation Bldg., Oak Park Blvd. west of Coolidge.

SHCC (Sterling Heights Computer Club)
Feb. 3–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.)
Feb. 12–(2nd Thursday), 6:30-9:00pm; Zauel Library, Shattuck & Center Rds., Saginaw. Web: <http://www.svca.org>.

Wayne State U. Mac User Group
Jan. 10–(2nd 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.

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

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@lodden.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

SOUTHEASTERN MICHIGAN
COMPUTER ORGANIZATION, INC.

SEMCO CALENDAR—January/February

SCIENCE & ENGINEERING BUILDING, OAKLAND UNIVERSITY, ROCHESTER, MICHIGAN

January 11–SUNDAY (Meet 2nd Sunday)

SEMCO Board Meeting at 12:00 noon, **Room 164.** For Officers and SIG Chairpersons. Other members are invited to attend.

SEMCO General Meeting at 1:30 pm, **Room 164.**

Special Interest Groups (SIGs)

SIG-IBM 1:45 pm, **Room 164. Program: Buying Your Music Online Legally:** SIG-IBM Co-Chairman Tom Callow will demonstrate several of the new on-line services that allow you to purchase music over the Internet legally and inexpensively, including MusicMatch, ITunes, the new Napster, and Wal-Mart.com.

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: Discussion Directed by the Audience.**

SIG-IBM Intermediate 3:45 pm, **Room 164. Program: The HP DVD Movie Writer dc3000:** SIG-IBM Intermediate Chairman Jack Vander-Schrier will demonstrate how to make DVDs from VHS Tapes.

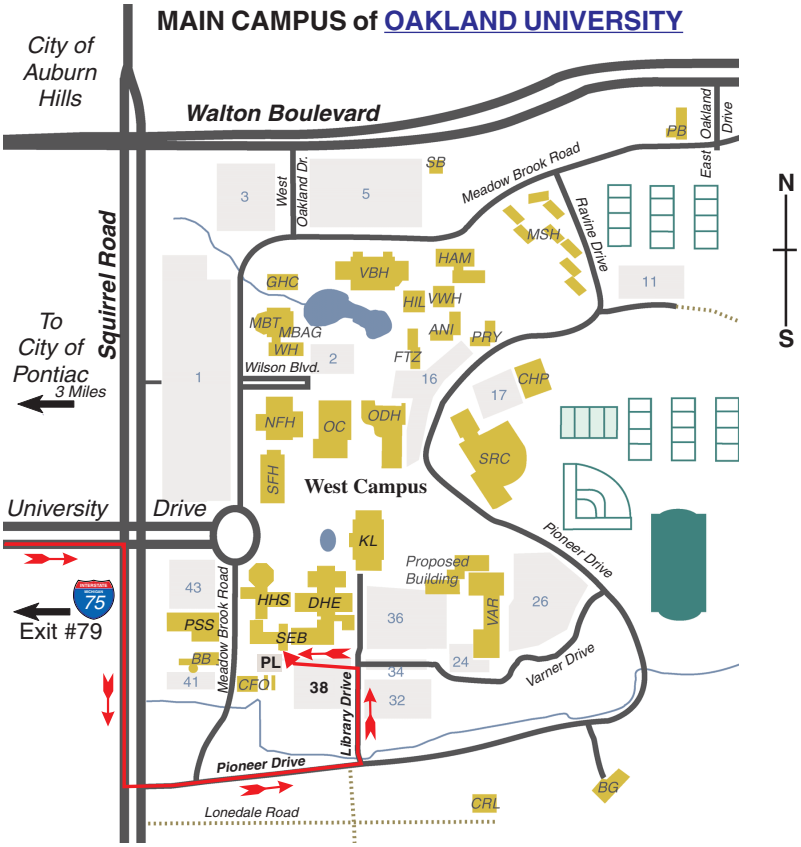
Feb. 2–MONDAY , 6:45 pm (Meets first Monday), SIG-ADVANCED Oak Park Public Library, 14200 Oak Park Blvd.,Oak Park, MI. Phone: (248) 691-7480. Directions: Oak Park Blvd. is 9 1/2 mile Road, located west of Coolidge. Best route from freeway: take I-696 to the Coolidge exit. Head south on Coolidge for 1/2 mile to Oak Park Blvd., and turn right. Info: Franz Breidenich 248-398-3359. **TOPIC: Wide-ranging discussion of computers & computing.**

Feb. 8–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)



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).

The meetings at Oakland University are sponsored by the University's Academic Computer Services (ACS).
SEMCO thanks Oakland University and ACS for their assistance.

Member of

Association of Personal Computer User Groups
APCUG

SouthEastern Michigan
Computer Organization, Inc.
P.O. Box 707
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SEMCO (future meetings)
January 11
February 8

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