



Official Newsletter
SouthEastern Michigan
Computer Organization, Inc.

DATA BUS

NEW MEETING
LOCATION

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(See Details, Page 18)

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SEMCO MEETINGS Sunday, March 14, 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

This Is No Hoax

This may sound like a broken record, but I find this stuff interesting. In the 12/22/03 issue of InfoWorld, columnist Ephraim Schwartz wrote an article about exploding batteries in cell phones and laptops. It concerns the change from nickel metal hydride to lithium-ion batteries. Seems the new technology can lead to "thermal runaway." He says it is not a frequent problem for a battery to explode, but it is certainly a distinct possibility and has happened. His article should be posted at http://www.infoworld.com/article/03/12/19/50OPrealty_1.html.

Two of my readers told me that gas stations in their area have signs posted forbidding cell phone use while pumping gas. I'm not the only one who wants to be careful. I've also had messages explaining to me that hydrogen power is NOT any safer than gasoline.

Other News

In other news of note, one of our favorite vendors is being bought. It was reported

that VPN and firewall vendor "Check Point Software Technologies Ltd." acquired desktop firewall maker Zone Labs Inc. for \$205 million. It was said that Check Point must integrate more security into the desktop, and that they plan to do that. I hope the free version of Zone Alarm remains free for home use.

You might be interested in knowing that Microsoft is reconfiguring the jobs of the managers in charge of operating system development. It is supposed to improve the product quality and a lot of other things. Haven't we heard that one before? I hope it works. I imagine it does become a big problem when you sell the most prolific operating system in the entire world, and all the hackers lay awake nights trying to exploit it, and often succeed before it is even officially released.

In the category of old business, I've received only a couple of messages with comments about my possible plans for ending the monthly column. After doing it for over nine years each month without a miss, I have established an excellent network to many user groups and would hate to see it all come tumbling down. I still have a little material, so we'll see where it goes. Since I have tons of announcements for new products, I may start posting some of them on my Web site for the time being, although so far I have heard little interest in these mostly unknown products.

Why Pay For Income Tax Preparation!!

If you have a simple income tax to make out, don't pay for the tax return preparation because you just might qualify for the IRS's very own FREE File Service. Check further for that at

<http://www.irs.gov>>. And if you feel it's really not that simple, or you are a klutz with the computer, call 1-800-829-1040 to find the closest Volunteer Income Tax Assistance location. That free service is meant for the elderly, low-income people, disabled folks, or people with problems speaking English. My wife says I seem to qualify in all those ways when she has a honey-do job. Don't forget the free income tax service for uncomplicated tax returns by AARP volunteers, most of whom are actually specialists donating their time. Call your local AARP chapter for more information.

How's Your Credit These Days?

With identity theft so rampant today, people should do themselves a favor and occasionally check their own credit. You can't be too careful, and a simple way to get the most information is to check with Equifax, where you can get reports from all three credit-reporting agencies (Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion) for just \$29.95. Yes, I know they are working on a law for you to get your credit report at no cost, but don't hold your breath for that right now, even though it's in the works. Most people don't know that if you have a low score (around 600) for your credit rating, your interest rate will be higher than if your credit rating was near 800. That could mean thousands extra for a mortgage.

Free Phone Calls – Yup, All Over The Globe

My thanks to JB Hillard of Chautauqua Cyber Club, who sent me this item for the DealsGuy column. Check out http://ui.skype.com/help_faq.html>, where you can set up an account to make free phone calls all over the globe. It uses peer-to-peer technology and is presently

available only to Windows XP and 2000 operating systems. They say it may work with ME or Win98, but that is not promised. The download is free, and right now you would be a beta tester. However, later when they are further along with the development, there may be a subscriber fee. Check it out.

This One Does it Better

I received a message the other day from Colleen Toumayan of Executive Software telling me they are offering Diskeeper Professional Edition 8.0 bundled with Undelete Home Edition for just \$49.95. Check <http://consumer.execsoft.com/home.asp>>. Diskeeper will not install on Microsoft Windows Server Operating systems, although they do have a version that will for more money. Colleen was kind enough to send me the software because I had never used it before. After trying it out, I became convinced. I am used to starting the defrag in Windows and leaving the room to do something else while it works, but Executive Software's Diskeeper has shown me there was a better way.

Undelete does what it says and can sure be handy in some cases. I often delete things by holding the shift key so it will bypass the Recycle Bin. Once in a while I regret doing that, and Undelete helps with that problem. I'm not sure how long this special offer will last. By the way, if you delete something from a floppy or external drive, they don't normally end up in the Recycle Bin either.

It's interesting that Undelete replaces the Recycle Bin with a "Recovery Bin." What is the difference — too much for me to explain here, but it catches much more than the Windows Recycle Bin does, such as items I just

described. You can go to <http://consumer.execsoft.com/home.asp> for more information and to order this bundle at the special price.

Get Out Of Here You #@&% Spies!

Most of you know about spyware that sometimes finds its way onto your computer, and some freeware to get rid of it, such as AdAware and SpyBot. Here is something called Spyware Blaster that is said to prevent spyware from even being installed on your machine. I read about it in a users group newsletter, but neglected to make a note so I could credit the person who recommended it, but the concept sounds interesting. Take a look at <http://www.wilderssecurity.net/spywareblaster.html> and see what you think. Since it is free, trying it is cheap. However, the developer does ask for a small donation if you like it. Remember that sometimes trying to remove trial software can be a problem. I have not tried this product, so I cannot speak from experience. Try it at your own risk. If you read through the material on the Web site, it is said to also do other tasks.

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.

Is That a PC in Your Pocket/Purse?

By Lee Schwab

Napa Valley Personal Computer User Group, Inc.

California

For some people, the Pocket PC (PPC) is an incredibly useful tool, while other people are not familiar with the Pocket PC. Some people confuse the Pocket PC with a Palm, which is similar in appearance but is a different device that uses the Palm operating system. Below is an overview of what is included in a Pocket PC and how it helps me organize and simplify my life.

The Pocket PC uses a scaled down version of the Microsoft Windows operating system that is called Microsoft Windows Mobile 2003 (replaced Microsoft Pocket PC 2002 in June 03). Pocket PCs ship with lots of software, are very powerful, lightweight (4-7 ounces), small enough to carry in your pocket or purse (approximately 3" wide and 5" long), and easily synchronize with your desktop or notebook PC.

Here are some of the Pocket PC features:

ActiveSync: This third party software automatically synchronizes the data on your Pocket PC with your desktop or notebook PC. You can also use it to transfer files between the devices. Because I use the Pocket PC extensively, I synchronize them almost every day.

Calculator: Use it as you would any simple math calculator. Use it to figure the tax on a purchase, the unit price of grocery items, the percent of a discount, tips, etc. Third party calculators are also available for more



Hewlett-Packard
iPAQ 3800 series

sophisticated or specialized calculations (i.e., financial, scientific, statistical).

Calendar: Keeps track of your appointments (whom you are meeting with, where to go, what time, and notes). You can also set up re-occurring appointments, a reminder alarm, or cut-and-paste appointments. Information can be viewed by day (with a choice of two formats), week, month, or year.

Communications: Wi-Fi and/or Bluetooth may be included in the Pocket PC or added using the SD (Secure Data) or CF (CompactFlash) slot.

Contacts: Use to organize address book information (i.e., name, address, phone, e-mail).

Excel: This Pocket version of Excel supports 100 functions and formulas, rows, columns, and spell checker. Use it to keep track of expenses when traveling, or for rosters, fundraisers, etc.

Expansion: Many Pocket PCs include slots for CF (CompactFlash), SD (Secure Data), and/or PC Cards. Use them to add memory, a camera, communications capabilities, etc.

Find: Search the entire Pocket PC or a specific area (i.e., calendar). Use it to find a contact, a specific appointment, something in a Word or Excel document, etc.

Games: Solitaire and Jawbreaker are included with the Pocket PC. I am not a gamer, but there are lots of third party games available.

Inbox: An e-mail application that lets you send, receive, and synchronize your e-mail.

Infrared beaming: Beam information between devices. My husband and I beam appointments and documents between our Pocket PCs.

Internet Explorer: This software program is included on the CD-ROM that accompanies the Pocket PC.

Memory: Pocket PCs come with 32-128MB of built in RAM and 32-64MB of ROM.

Microsoft Reader: This e-Book reader can be used to read electronic books. Use it to read the Pocket PC manual, books that are on the accompanying CD-ROM, or books that are downloaded. It includes search capabilities to help find a section or word in the e-Book.

MSN Messenger: Instant Messenger application.

Notes: Create handwritten or typed notes, drawings, or make a short voice recording.

Pictures: View your JPG pictures in thumbnail or full screen. This is a good place to keep an electronic picture of your spouse, children, or special events, because it can easily be updated, and the edges do not get frayed.

Power: Many Pocket PCs include a main battery, a back up battery, and also a power cord for external power. The suspend mode and brightness levels can help conserve battery life, so the Pocket PC can be used all day without a charge. If the Pocket PC battery is allowed to run all the way down, data may be lost, so it is

recommended to fully charge the batteries every night.

Price: Depending on features and manufacturer, the prices range from \$199 to \$649.

Processor: Chips (Intel, Samsung) and speeds (200-400 MHz) vary depending on the device manufacturer.

Screen: Most screens are 3.5" (measured diagonally) and are Transflective TFT or Reflective TFT.

Tasks: Keep track of your "to do" or "honey do" tasks. You can prioritize the tasks so the most important tasks will be at the top of the list.

Text Entry: You can enter text using the software keyboard, block recognizer (graffiti), letter recognizer, or transcriber (cursive, print, or mixed handwriting recognition). As you enter text, words are suggested to help you complete the words. Some Pocket PCs have a built in miniature keyboard where your thumbs are used to enter, or you can purchase a foldable keyboard (Targus makes good and sturdy keyboards).

Voice Recorder: Make short recordings and playbacks using the Notes application.

Windows Media Player: Use to play MP3 or Microsoft Audio Format music, or Microsoft Video Format videos.

Word: The Pocket version of Word is incredibly useful for keeping reference documents, taking notes in meetings, writing articles, keeping shopping lists, etc.

The Pocket PC also includes lots of systems software (Asset Viewer, External Keyboards Functions Support, File Explorer, Infrared OBEX beaming, Server Sync Client, setup/configuration utilities, Terminal Server Client, VPN Client, etc.).

I bought a Hewlett Packard iPAQ 3800 series Pocket PC in 2001, and my husband is using it now. This year I bought a DELL Axim5, but I would not recommend a DELL because the screen was badly scratched within one month, and the calendar intermittently and randomly changes appointment times (i.e., 1:00PM becomes 2:00PM). I will probably buy a Hewlett Packard iPAQ, but there are many choices.

Pocket PCs and cell phones have teamed up and are called smartphones. These devices use the Microsoft Windows Mobile for smartphone software. The smartphones have to make some compromises in their form and function. To learn more about Pocket PCs or to make a purchase, check out the following:

Magazines:

Handheld Computing (PPC & Palm devices).

Mobility (mobile and wireless).

Pen Computing (mobile computing & communications).

PocketPC (Windows Mobile PPC reviews, comparisons, & smartphones).

Wireless (wireless communications).

My favorite is the Pocket PC magazine (their 2004 Buyer's Guide is available now).

Websites:

[<amazon.com>](http://amazon.com)

[<hpshopping.com>](http://hpshopping.com)

[<mobileplanet.com>](http://mobileplanet.com)

[<PocketPCmag.com>](http://PocketPCmag.com)

[<pcconnection.com>](http://pcconnection.com)

[<tigerdirect.com>](http://tigerdirect.com)

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Choosing a Surge Suppressor

By Vinny La Bash,

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**Member of the Sarasota
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Group, Inc.**

Let's start with some basics. Standard voltage in the United States is 120 volts. You can think of voltage as a measure of electrical pressure; the higher the voltage, the higher the pressure. It's similar to water pressure that makes water flow through a pipe or a hose. Voltage or electrical pressure is the force that makes electricity flow through a circuit. A sudden, temporary increase in line voltage above 120 volts has the potential to do serious damage to electrical devices.

If a sudden increase in voltage lasts for one or two nanoseconds, it's called a spike. If the increase lasts for three nanoseconds or longer, it's called a surge. A nanosecond is a billionth of a second.

How short a period of time is a nanosecond? Admiral Grace Hopper, developer of COBOL and the first computer compiler, used to use a piece of fiber optic wire in her lectures and speaking engagements to demonstrate a nanosecond. Light travels at about 186,000 miles a second. Her piece of fiber optic wire measured about 18 inches, which illustrated how far light can travel in one nanosecond.

Without getting too deep into technical issues, spikes and surges create excess heat within electrical circuits. If the surge or spike is high enough, it can cause severe damage to electronic equipment. Anything electrical can be

fried, from a large mainframe right down to your toaster.

A standard surge suppressor works by diverting power during a spike or surge to the outlet's ground wire. Lightning is the most familiar cause of power surges and gets the most attention because its results tend to be spectacular. In a lightning storm your surge suppressor is likely to be toasted along with anything connected to it. Your best protection is to unplug everything for the duration of the storm.

Surge suppressors are far from useless, but you should understand their capabilities along with their limitations. They are designed to protect you from common causes of line voltage fluctuations. Starting or stopping air conditioners, refrigerators, toasters, and blow driers are the most common sources of spikes and surges generated in the home. You can also be affected by faulty wiring, downed power lines or even problems with your utility company's generating and transmission equipment. Because of the sheer complexity of power generation and distribution, power surges are unavoidable.

So why didn't we need surge suppressors 50 or 25 years ago? It is only recently, relatively speaking, that modern electronic devices such as computers and TV sets became controlled by small delicate circuits that are sensitive to surges. Microprocessors can function properly only when line voltage is correct and stable.

What kind of equipment should be protected by a surge suppressor? The short answer is anything that plugs into a wall outlet that is controlled by a microprocessor. That includes, but is not limited to computers, TV sets, DVD

players, and most home entertainment components. If it's expensive to replace, it makes economic sense to protect it with a surge suppressor.

Broadband modems, telephone equipment, and cable TV systems also require protection from voltage spikes and surges. Your surge protector should have phone line input jacks, and if you have equipment hooked up to coaxial cables, look for a cable surge protector.

Be aware that there are three levels of surge protectors:

The Basic Power Strip:

This equipment is characterized by low price, up to six outlets, and rarely phone or cable outlets. It offers very limited protection.



The Surge Station:

These are physically much larger units offering superior protection and in most cases, line conditioning. They feature internal circuit breakers and protection for phone and cable equipment.



Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS):

These devices have all the capabilities of a surge station plus battery backup in case of a power failure. This lets you shut down your equipment normally and greatly reduces the chances of lost data or damaged equipment. High quality units filter out noise from your power lines and provide the highest level of protection.



Here's what to look for when shopping for a device:

Clamping Voltage: This is the point at which the device starts shunting voltage to the ground line. The lower the clamping voltage, the better protection you have. Look for an Underwriters Labs (UL) rating lower than 400. If there is no UL label, move on to the next candidate.

Energy Absorption/Dissipation: This tells you how much punishment the unit can take before failing. The rating is measured in joules, and you want a high number. Most homes can get along with a rating of 200 to 400 joules. Units which can absorb 600 joules or more tend to be expensive, but they are worth the money if you need the protection.

Response Time: This is the time the unit needs to respond to a voltage surge. You want a unit that can respond in less than a nanosecond.

Indicators: Look for indicator lights that will tell you if all components are functioning.

This article is hardly the last word on surge suppressors and Uninterruptible Power Supplies.

However, you should now have a basis to find the kind of unit you need for your particular circumstances.

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Picture and Video Files: Size Matters By Timothy Everingham

You may have gotten a bunch of spam that tries to sell you something, telling you that size matters. However, even though they may be trying to con you, in regards to the size of picture, graphics, and video files, size *does* matter. Some of it is related to image size. However, when you try to compress files there reaches a point where you start to lose something.

First you have to understand that if it is either an image or video file, each little pixel or time interval is represented by bits of data. You may have heard of 8, 16, 24, or 32 bit color. The number of bits represents the color of each pixel.

On an 800x600 image you have 480,000 pixels (800 multiplied by 600). Then you multiply the color bit depth to get the size of the image representation (800 x 600 x 24 bit equals 11,520,000 bits). Divide by 8 and you get the number of bytes (11,520,000 bits divided by 8 equals 1,440,000 bytes). It gets worse with video because you have to multiply by the frames per second and by the number of seconds in the video (at a standard 30 frames per second it would be 41 Megabytes per second or 2.4 Gigabytes per minute).

Now, if you have a lot of large image or video files you are trying to transfer through a dial-up connection to the Internet, you have problems. If that is the case, you just figure you will save and send things using a smaller image size and blow up when it will be used. The problem is that, when you go to a smaller image size, you lose detail in the process. Then, when you try to blow it up again, it just gets blocky. The same thing goes for video files; the smaller the file size the less detail and nuances are in the file. This really shows up when you take a small image and then try to project it using a good LCD projector. So if you want to project it, show it on a large monitor, or print it out large, you need to keep the image size up. This is one reason there is so much hype on the amount of megapixels a digital camera has.

So how then do we get a small file size of images. We use compression algorithms, also known as codecs (compressor/decompressor).

There are lossless and lossy compression algorithms. But how can there be lossless compression? It is because nature is filled with patterns and uniform things, which is what we

take images of. So, if we record info about the pattern instead of each pixel of it, a lot of file space is saved. An example would be if a person in your image is wearing a blue sweater. Instead of recording every pixel individually, you record this area of the image, where the sweater is, in blue.

The Tiff image format (.tif) uses only lossless compression techniques, so it is a good format for achieving something you may wish to edit later.

But then there is lossy compression. You lose some of your detail, but a lot less than if you just shrank the image. One of the regularly used lossy compression techniques is color palette reduction. With 24 bit color you have 16 million colors available. However, there are far less than that many colors in an image. Using less than 24 bits, it takes less space to analyze which colors are in an image and create a custom color table that will represent all the color in the image, then write the color representation of the pixels with the custom table code and include a copy of the table in the file.

This can be used as a lossless technique, but usually this is taken one step farther. In the analysis of the image it is detected how often each color is used and ranked. As the compression rate increases, the number of colors that are less used are converted to colors that are close to it but are widely used in the image. This compresses the size of the color table, which decreases the bits per pixel representation of a color used, and the blending to nearby colors increases the space that areas of the image that can be described as having one color (this is a situation of compression techniques complementing each other).

Some formats start out using only lossless compression techniques, but as the level of compression increases they start to use lossy compression. Some common formats that use a combination of lossless and lossy compression are GIF (.gif) and JPEG (.jpg). Remember once you lose image data using a lossy technique you will not have it anymore unless you still have the original or a lossless copy. The compression methods discussed so far are referred to as spatial compression because they reduce the file size by compacting the description of the visual area (space) of an image.

Video is made up of sequential images played over time. This means we can not only use spatial compression; but also use temporal compression, which compresses the file using analysis of the difference and similarities of the frames in an image.

This usually exhibits itself by the first frame in a video sequence being compressed just like a still image, using spatial compression, but in the following frames only the changes from the previous frame are recorded. Periodically, or when there are major changes between frames, a new initial frame, also called a keyframe, is produced, followed by more just recording of differences between frames. These temporal compressions can be lossy or lossless. As with still images, you should archive them using only lossless compression. However, using only lossless compression may be impractical because of the limitation of your computer or hard drive speed or hard drive space, but keep lossy compression at a minimum.

If you are creating a video DVD that uses the MPEG-2 format and both lossy and lossless compression

techniques, it is better to archive the file using the DV codec that it was originally imported in from your video camera and then writing that file to a data DVD or CD.

Be aware that some compression techniques and settings are better for some types of video than others. If you just have a talking head in your video with a static background, you can compress it greatly without degrading the image much. But if there is a lot of fast action or panning of the camera, there is a limit to the amount of compression you can successfully have, and you have to be more picky on what codec you use.

File size matters because it limits what you can use the file for. If you just want a small file you can send to a friend's dial up connection, or have friends using a dial up connection to view via a website, a small file is good. However in printing large photos, showing on a large computer display, or having it projected on a screen, small files are not good. Use only lossless compression techniques on things you want to archive or edit later, because it keeps your options open. Keep your archival file large and make smaller copies of it for other purposes.

It is fortunate that hard drive and DVD and CD blank prices have come down a lot, so doing this does not cost a fortune, but not planning ahead on image size and which compression techniques you use can cost you not being able to fully use your precious digital photos and videos.

Timothy Everingham is Vice Chair of the Los Angeles Chapter of ACM SIGGRAPH, one of Southern California's significant professional organizations within the entertainment

and media industries. He has had articles published throughout the U.S. and Canada plus Australia, England, and Japan. He can be reached at <teveringham@acm.org>. Further information can be found at <<http://home.earthlink.net/~teveringham>>.

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PageMaker 7.0 (PC) A Review

By Bill Landrum
SEMCO Member

Bill_Landrum@ugaalum.uga.edu

I am amazed that I have gone all this time without using any version of PageMaker. I have always found that I could make do with a good word processor. I agreed to do this review because I no longer wanted to be ignorant of this famous package, and I wanted to be able to simplify my work in some cases. Accordingly, you are warned in advance that I am a PageMaker novice. My goal is to give you some idea on how difficult it is to learn PageMaker, and to give you some ideas on how to proceed in that direction. If you would like to read more knowledgeable technical reviews, then you can find several available on the web. Just point your favorite Internet search engine to "PageMaker review." Some concepts from those reviews are

incorporated into this review without further attribution.

One Among Several

PageMaker of course is the program that started the whole desktop publishing revolution back in 1985. Many people with a Macintosh, a PostScript laser printer, and a copy of PageMaker were able to make a living competing with the traditional paste-up of typeset text and graphics. Now it is getting near the end of its life cycle. It is positioned between Microsoft Publisher on the low end and Quark XPress on the high end. Apparently Adobe wants to compete more with XPress. To that end, after PageMaker 6.5, Adobe introduced a new and more powerful desktop publishing package, InDesign. Apparently the acceptance of InDesign has been slow. PageMaker users have stayed with PageMaker rather than make the upgrade to the \$699 package, and XPress users have stayed with XPress. PageMaker 7 introduced converters to convert both Publisher and XPress files directly into PageMaker format, and enhanced the import of text and graphics from Microsoft Office applications and other similar programs.

In January 2004, Adobe announced its Adobe InDesign CS PageMaker Edition and started shipping it in early February. From this point on they will still sell and support PageMaker 7.0, but they don't plan to upgrade it. Instead they have a variety of offers and aids to help their PageMaker users transition to InDesign via their PageMaker edition. This special edition has the full version of InDesign, plus the full version of PageMaker integrated into it. The upgrade price for current users of PageMaker is \$349 (requires old serial number during installation), or \$219 for

education customers. If you already own InDesign, then you can purchase the PageMaker plug-in for \$49.

The Package

The Adobe PageMaker 7.0 package contains three CDs, one 6-paneled Quick Reference Card, a 412-page User Guide, and registration materials. The first CD has the PageMaker suite of programs and fonts. The second CD has a collection of 5,000 clip-art images (and a 60 MB PDF catalog for finding an image). The third CD is a tutorial.

I had hoped to find a one-pager that said something like "Read Me First" or "Easy Installation Guide." Unfortunately, I didn't find that, so I turned to the manual. The manual's installation section consisted of three sentences, that in essence said, "Put the CD in, follow the directions on-screen, and read the ReadMe file if you have any problems." That seemed easy enough, so I put the first CD into the PC. I soon learned that there were seven products that I could install: Adobe PageMaker 7.0.1, Adobe Acrobat Distiller 5.0.5, Adobe Acrobat Reader® 5.0.5, Adobe PostScript Driver, ATM® Lite 4.1, Microsoft ODBC Drivers, and QuickTime 4.1.2.

The Tutorial

I knew the function of some of the programs, but not others. The ReadMe file didn't leave me any more informed, and the manual was less helpful. So I decided to abandon the installs, and to load the tutorial instead. The tutorial CD contained the first hour of a twelve-hour set produced by Total Training. It required me to load QuickTime in order to view it. That was the first of many indicators in the tutorial and the PageMaker product itself that PageMaker's roots are in the Macintosh

world. I would have liked other choices such as Media Player to use, but the QuickTime worked well enough.

The tutorial is very well done, and with the high-quality video, it felt like I was in a class. The pacing is about right, but you can replay sections if needed. The video promises a telephone number and a special price for ordering the rest of the series at the end of the tutorial, but when I called the number they offered me the same price that is on their web site (\$99). I felt irritated that someone was trying to extract another \$99 as the PageMaker package is already pretty expensive. Since PageMaker is very complex and daunting to a new user, I think that it would be appropriate for Adobe to include the whole tutorial.

Even though the tutorial was only the first hour, it turned out to be a lifesaver for me. I learned how to install PageMaker itself (a simple process) and which options to choose.

I learned that ATM Lite is a version of Adobe Type Manager, and is used for loading fonts. There are about 230 fonts included, with a value of \$500 to \$1000 for the fonts alone. The tutorial said to load them all, which I did. The process is clumsy, and takes a very long time. The installer needs improvement.

Portable Document File (PDF)

You are all familiar with Acrobat Reader. It is the program that allows you to read PDF files. I downgraded to the version on the CD to be sure that I did not have any incompatibility problems with the product—though I feel sure that wasn't necessary.

The Acrobat Distiller is a tool for producing PDF files from PageMaker documents. It is a full-featured PDF generator (as you might expect from

Adobe) and includes features such as color graphics, embedded thumbnails, auto rotation of pages, embedded fonts, tags for HTML, bookmarks, various types of compression, etc. You can create and edit PDF files without leaving PageMaker, or you can save a document to a postscript file, and have the Distiller process it afterwards.

PageMaker assumes that you are going to be using a PostScript printer, though it is not strictly required. You will have to have at least a default postscript printer device loaded to be able to export to PDF files. The Adobe PostScript Driver included on the CD is not sufficient for Windows NT or Windows 2000, so I had to go to Adobe's website to download a driver for my system. This proved to be difficult, with too little documentation. Ultimately though, I finally got an appropriate driver loaded.

Drivers

The tutorial suggested that there was no need to load the Microsoft ODBC drivers. I agree. I didn't see any drivers other than the standard ones there. A corporate user in particular would be well advised to leave this alone and not take the chance of wiping out the ODBC drivers that they already have in place. You can import simple tab-delimited or comma-delimited files directly into PageMaker for merges or straight text. That feature can be extended to the importing of simple flat files via ODBC (say from an Excel spreadsheet or from an SQL database table). These files are not updated automatically though, and there are other importing features that can be used with OLE that are.

Using PageMaker

When I finally had everything installed, the tutorial did give me enough

instructions to get started. When the program first opens, you are presented with a large number of templates to help you get started. There are over 300 templates in 20 categories such as ads, brochures, newsletters, flyers, business cards, etc. You can pick one and quickly be on your way to designing a basic document. If you are used to working in Photoshop, then you will feel at home in PageMaker. The layout is pretty much the same as Photoshop with tool pallets spread out around your working document. Version 7 also added a toolbar.

Was I able to use PageMaker to produce things? Yes, I find the program straightforward to use. But like Photoshop, I find it very difficult. I am continually consulting the manual. I don't like the manual's look or feel, but the basic information is usually there somewhere. There is extensive on-line help within PageMaker itself, plus further help at the Adobe web site. Again, I find the on-line help hard to use, even though it has the usual table of contents, index, and search capabilities. I find Photoshop difficult to use at times because I don't have enough knowledge of design, graphics, colors, or publishing to fully use the product. I feel exactly the same way about PageMaker. There is much more capability there to use than I can appreciate with my limited knowledge. For example, it has extensive capability to produce files for a publishing or printing house to use. It can separate colors and use many graphics formats that I am only barely acquainted with. It expects you to bring a lot to the table. All in all though, I find it somewhat less complex, and easier to deal with than Photoshop.

Summary

I found PageMaker to be a complete package. It is a little difficult to get installed and working. It is complex to use, but well within the capabilities of those who wish to step up from basic word processing to the production of more complex printed documents or PDF files.

Recommendations

If you already own PageMaker Version 6.5, then you probably do not need to upgrade. The reviews say that the upgrade to Version 7 was modest. If you are thinking about purchasing PageMaker for the first time, then I would recommend that you do not. Buy Adobe InDesign CS PageMaker Edition instead. It is about the same price, includes Adobe's high-end product, InDesign, and includes PageMaker 7 essentially for free. If I wanted to buy PageMaker specifically, then I would consider buying an early version of PageMaker on Ebay (which is doing a booming business on PageMaker and PageMaker products) and then purchase the inexpensive upgrade to Version 7. Paradoxically, since PageMaker is being phased out, this is a good time to purchase it. I would look for sales on PageMaker and for InDesign for the next few months.

Price

List price for Windows or Macintosh is \$499. The upgrade price for Windows or Macintosh is \$79. To install the upgrade successfully, you will need a serial number and a previous version of this product (Version 4 or higher) from the same platform.

System Requirements

Intel Pentium processor.

Microsoft Windows 98, NT 4.0 (with Service pack 5 or 6), Windows

2000, Windows Millenium, or Windows XP.

32 MB of available RAM (48 MB or more recommended).

175 MB of available hard disk space for installation (200 MB or more recommended).

Video card with at least 800 x 600 resolution and 8-bit / 256 colors

CD-ROM drive.

For Adobe PostScript printers: Adobe PostScript Level 2 or later.

Company Information

Adobe Systems Inc., San Jose, CA; 800-422-3623; <<http://www.adobe.com>>.



Still Annoyed With Your PC? Keep Fighting Back!

(Another Handful of Annoyances)

“I want to thank Bill Gates, his Microsofties, and the entire Redmond Empire. Without them, this PC Annoyances wouldn’t be possible (or even necessary)” —Steve Bass

You know the drill—readers send me the PC behaviors that annoy, irritate, and aggravate; I spend countless hours finding fixes. Here are another three egregious examples of Windows annoyances—and fixes.

I’ll also provide a few time-wasting, deadline-avoiding (and often weird) Web sites I’ve discovered.

Boot Boring IE Icons

The Annoyance: Internet Explorer’s Favorite’s icons are nothing more than Microsoft’s dull, blue “e” emblem. I’d much prefer anything other than these

tiny logos reminding me how much I’ve spent on Microsoft products.

The Fix: This one’s easy (and if you like it, you really, really need to buy my book—there are dozens of fixes just like this one.) Start by right clicking on any icon, then on Properties. Choose Shortcut, select Change Icon, then Browse, and click on any file ending in EXE. You’ll likely see an icon (maybe not; not all EXE’s have icons). Find an icon you like and click OK and OK again. If you have the time and inclination, poke around in other folders in Windows and \Windows\System for other EXEs that have icons you can use.

Kill Some Time:

You’ll find these images from the Hubble more than just incredible—they’re just stunning. Find them at: <<http://snipurl.com/hubble>>.

Search Animations Begone

The Annoyance: I was annoyed with Office Clippy, and your book showed me how to dump it. How about the irritating animation in XP’s Search feature?

The Fix: Start a search from the desktop by clicking F3, and then take one last look at the dumb animation. Click Change Preferences at the bottom of the Search pane, press “Without an animated screen character,” and say adios to the creature.

Kill Some Time:

Almost everyone jokes that the number one way to fix any PC annoyance is to switch to a Mac. Before you do, check out their new iToilet, a little something that may change your mind. It’s at <http://snipurl.com/i_toilet>.

Zap Microsoft’s Passport

The Annoyance: I just bought a new PC and don’t plan to leave the country.

So how in the world do I stop that annoying icon from asking me if I want to sign up for a Passport.

The Fix: By now it's probably stopped—Microsoft's perky Passport account.net Messenger appears the first few times you try to connect to the Web. If it doesn't stop—or you're impatient—click the Passport message, and when the window appears, select Cancel.

Kill Some Time: Need something to do that doesn't take creating a shortcut on your desktop? I have just the thing—it's the "Specs of the Century" site. They present you with specs and you try to figure out who they belong to. Try it here: <<http://snipurl.com/specs>>.

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Letter From The Editor

What's In A Name

Spam is almost getting to be fun. In my 200 or so messages a day I find plenty of creativity. Just look at some of the names that crop up in the "sender" field:

Closetining E. Hairpin	Searcher O. Accorded
Humbug J. Gradually	Postmarks H. Diversity
Constructing Q. Grumman	Chid Q. Contravenes
Lycurgus C. Clairvoyants	Porcupine H. Asserting
Osteopathy D. Manufactures	Gaseous H. Eyefuls
Spluttering I. Invalidity	Halfback T. Cholera
Crashed U. Shriek	Laundromats T. Linda

Upgrade Fear

Does anyone beside me suffer from Upgrade Fear? I have a Macintosh running OS 8.6, about 6 generations old, and a PC running OS Me, 3 generations old, Word 98 and 2000, PowerPoint 2001, and Excel 98. And there are a number of other applications and utilities that are 3 or 4 years old. All of them are working adequately. That is, they do the work I want to do, sometimes slowly (but I'm retired anyway). But once in awhile I run into a need for something that won't work with my old programs.

But I'm afraid to upgrade! Think of all the warnings that are out about upgrading to XP, all the problems that people have. "Backup, Backup, Backup!" they say before upgrading. "Watch out for this! Watch out for that!" If I start to upgrade, surely somewhere it will say "Then click on button X," and I'll look around, and there will be no button X. Or I'll screw up the Registry, whatever that is; or the printer will quit working; or my e-mail can't connect.

I can't afford to spend a week or two screwing around; I have deadlines to meet, and e-mail to answer, and documents to prepare.

I now have upgrades for XP and Office 2003 sitting on my desk, and I eye them with trepidation. Do I dare?

Paranoid R. Bill

and a founding member of APCUG. He's also the author of PC Annoyances: How to Fix the Most Annoying Things about Your Personal Computer, O'Reilly Press. It's available on Amazon at <<http://snurl.com/annoyed>>.

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.

No Meeting in April

Since our normal meeting time falls on Easter Sunday in April, the April meeting is canceled. Meet next on May 9 (Bring your Mother).



BOARD MEETING

2/8/04

Carol Sanzi

Board Members Present

President Gary DeNise, Secretary Carol Sanzi, SIG-Advanced Chairman Franz Breidenich, SIG-IBM Co-Chairman Tom Callow, Warner Mach representing SIG-IBM Intermediate Chairman Jack Vander-Schrier, and Members at Large Bob Clyne and Chuck Moery. Also attending was Roland Maki. The meeting was called to order at 12:52 p.m.

Old Business

Tom Callow gave The Treasurer's report. He reported that the bank balance

is \$5518.32 with \$90 not deposited. SEMCO's membership stands at 85 with renewals due from Steve Yuhasz, Gary Grzebenik, Robert Hoffmann, and Leo Voelkle.

Tom Callow mentioned that SEMCO's Post Office Box is up for renewal at \$63 for six months or \$126 for a year.

The board members viewed the rooms in Elliott Hall and Varner Hall. A vote was taken as to which rooms would be used for SEMCO's meetings with members considering size of the room, number of seats available, projector image angle, and comfort. With a vote of 6 to 2, it was decided meetings would be in Elliott Hall, Room 235. Bob Clyne has not been notified as to the cost of projector use.

New Business

Tom Callow reported that Roger Gay is in the Troy Beaumont Hospital, Room 5570. Visits should be short, or call 248-964-5570. Bob Clyne moved to send a cookie bouquet at a cost not to exceed \$50. Tom Callow seconded the motion, and it was carried.

Bob Clyne moved to adjourn. Gary DeNise seconded the motion, and it was carried. The meeting adjourned at 1:24 p.m.

New Meeting Location

Starting in March SEMCO will meet in Rooms 235, 208, and 210 in Elliott Hall at Oakland University. The General and SIG meetings will be in 235. You can park in the northeast corner of lot 36 and enter the main entrance of Elliott Hall. Immediately inside, Room 235 is in the hallway to the left. Rooms 208 and 210 are farther down in the hallway to the right.

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS (SIGs)



SIG-IBM
Tom Callow
Warner Mach



SIG-IBM INTERMEDIATE
Jack Vander-Schrier

Mar. 14: Preparing Your Own Tax Return: SIG-IBM Co-Chairman Tom Callow will demonstrate TurboTax and how to use your computer to prepare your own tax return.

Mar. 14: Music How To: SIG-IBM Intermediate Chairman Jack Vander-Schrier will discuss how to rip tracks off of a CD and turn them into MP3 files, and how to create playlists and burn your own CD of your favorites.

February Meeting Attendance: 34

NOVICE-IBM GROUP **Rotating Volunteer Hosts**

Mar. 14: Q&A: Discussion directed by the Audience.

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-ADVANCED
Franz Breidenich

Apr. 5: Meetings held first Monday, 6:45 pm, at the Oak Park Library. The library is located at 14200 Oak Park Blvd., Oak Park, MI. Phone: (248) 691-7480. **Topic: Wide ranging discussion of computers and computing.**

April 2004 DATA BUS DEADLINE (7th day after meeting) **SEMCO Input and Members' Ads — Deadline: Sun, Mar. 21, 11:59pm.**

Members' personal ads are free. To mail, use Editor address on Page 2; e-mail address: [<agnew@bignet.net>](mailto: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 Page 2).

AAIICI (American Association of Individual Investors, Computerized Investors)

Mar.27–Saturday, 10am (4th Saturday); W. Bloomfield Twp. Library, 4600 Walnut Lake Rd., 1 mile west of Orchard Lk Rd., Info: Jack Lockman at [<thunder@tir.com>](mailto:thunder@tir.com) or 313-341-8855.

COMP (Computer Operators of Marysville & Port Huron)

Apr. 7–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>](http://www.bwcomp.org).

DCOM Computer Club

Mar. 12–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)

Apr. 8–Thursday, 7pm (2nd Thursday); Kelly Services Building, 999 West Big Beaver, corner Crooks & Big Beaver Rds, Troy, MI. [<http://www.dpug.org>](http://www.dpug.org). Topic: Palm Source Developers Conference, and WideRay. **Free membership.**

FACE (Flint Area Computer Enthusiasts)

Apr. 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>](http://www.gfn/FACE/index.html).

MacGroup Detroit

Mar. 21–Sunday, 3pm-5pm (3rd Sunday); Bloomfield Twp. Library, 1099 Lone Pine Rd. (corner of Telegraph Rd.). Info: Terry White, [<terry@macgroup.org>](mailto:terry@macgroup.org) or 313-571-9817. [<http://www.macgroup.org>](http://www.macgroup.org). Topic: Utilities.

MacTechnics, (MAC User Group)

Mar. 20–Saturday, (3rd Saturday); 11:00am main meeting (SIGs at 9:30); Mack Open School, 920 Miller Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48103. [<http://www.mactechnics.org>](http://www.mactechnics.org). Info: Cassie at [<cassiemac@yahoo.com>](mailto:cassiemac@yahoo.com) or 313-971-8743.

MCUG (Michigan Computer Users Group)

Mar. 18–Thursday, 7pm (3rd Thursday); 35271 Rockingham Dr, Sterling Hts., MI 48310-4917; Info: Jerry Zinger, Pres., [<kahuna15@comcast.net>](mailto:kahuna15@comcast.net) 810-792-3394.

Michigan Apple Computer User Group

Apr. 8–(2nd Thur), MAC SIG; Apr. 8–(2nd Thur), Golden Masters SIG; Mar. 18–(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>](mailto:carlpen@aol.com). Web: [<http://www.themichiganapple.com>](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)

Apr. 6–Tuesday, 7:30pm (1st Tuesday); Carpathia Club, 38000 Utica Rd, Sterling Hts, Pres. Don VanSyckel at [<Don@VanSyckel.net>](mailto:Don@VanSyckel.net), 586-731-9232; Web: [<http://www.SterlingHeightsComputerClub.org>](http://www.SterlingHeightsComputerClub.org).

SVCA (Saginaw Valley Computer Assoc.)

Apr. 8–(2nd Thursday), 6:30-9:00pm; Zauel Library, Shattuck & Center Rds., Saginaw. Web: [<http://www.svca.org>](http://www.svca.org).

Wayne State U. Mac User Group

Mar.13–(2nd Saturday), 10:00am-Noon (2nd Saturday); at Mich.com, 21042 Laurelwood, Farmington. Info: Lorn/JoAnn Olsen 248/478-4300 or Denny McLampy 248-477-0190.

**SPECIAL
MEMBER BENEFIT**

**Telesthetic
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 - Rate for SEMCO members only
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 - Billing by e-mail, credit card
- Long Distance Phone Service**
- Without ISP service: \$2.95/month plus usage charge
 - 4.5cents/min 24/7 (plus taxes, etc.)
 - Billing plus call detail by e-mail
 - 30 sec minimum, then 6 sec billing increment
 - Visa or Mastercard

Contact SEMCO member John Lodden or Customer Service <service@telesthetic.com> or 1-800-807-4515.

SEMCO has arranged for this offer solely as a benefit for its members. Telesthetic, LLC is an independent business, and SEMCO does not act for Telesthetic as agent or in any other capacity. SEMCO makes no representations or warranties as to the services provided by Telesthetic and expressly disclaims any and all warranties and liability.



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@vmdllaw.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

**FEBRUARY
REFRESHMENT
DONORS**

Warner Mach, Coordinator
Betty MacKenzie
Roland Maki
Bert Farmilo
Carol Sanzi

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



SOUTHEASTERN MICHIGAN
COMPUTER ORGANIZATION, INC.

SEMCO CALENDAR—March/April

**ELLIOTT HALL, OAKLAND UNIVERSITY
ROCHESTER, MICHIGAN**

MARCH 14—SUNDAY (Meet 2nd Sunday)

SEMCO Board Meeting at 12:00 noon, **Room 235**. For Officers and SIG Chairpersons. Other members are invited to attend.

SEMCO General Meeting at 1:30 pm, **Room 235**.

Special Interest Groups (SIGs)

SIG-IBM 1:45 pm, **Room 235**. **Program: Preparing Your Own Tax Return:** SIG-IBM Co-Chairman Tom Callow will demonstrate TurboTax and how to use your computer to prepare your own tax return.

SOCIAL PERIOD 3:15 pm, **Room To Be Announced At The General Meeting**. Refreshments! (Reminder: We must maintain a neat environment.)

NOVICE-IBM GROUP 3:45 pm, **Room 208 or 210**. **Program: Q&A Discussion Directed By The Audience**.

SIG-IBM Intermediate 3:45 pm, **Room 235**. **Program: Music How To:** SIG-IBM Intermediate Chairman Jack Vander-Schrier will discuss how to rip tracks off of a CD and turn them into MP3 files, and how to create playlists and burn your own CD of your favorites.

Apr. 5—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**.

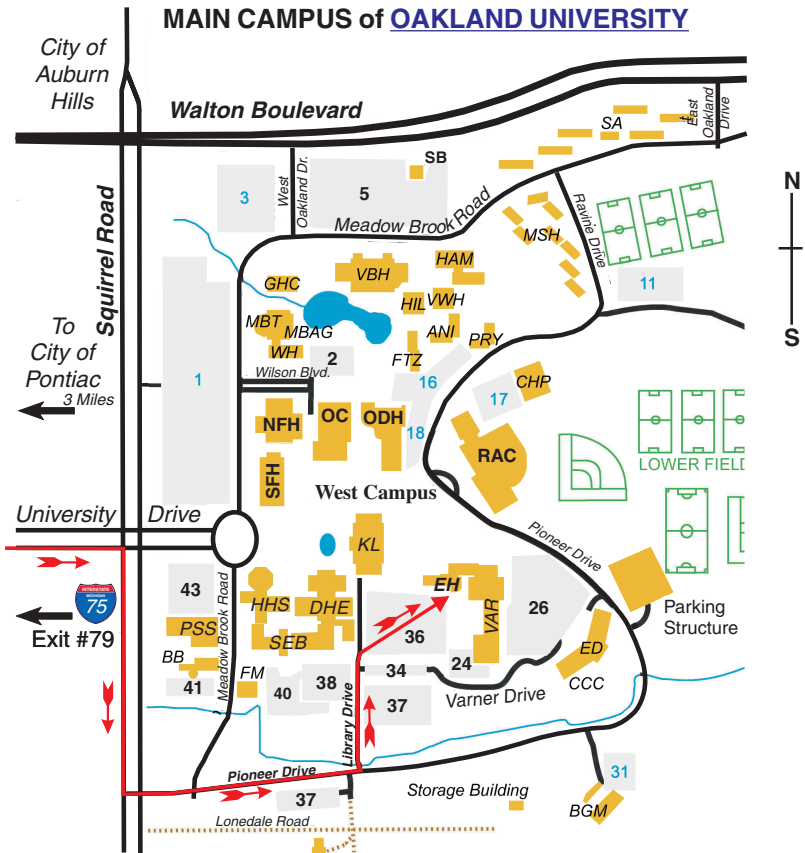
NO SEMCO MEETING IN APRIL—EASTER SUNDAY

May 9—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)



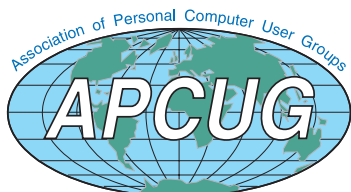
MAP LEGEND

- EH** Elliott Hall
- VAR** Varner Hall
- DHE** Dodge Hall of Engineering
- KL** Kresge Library

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 that 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. When you get to parking lot 36, proceed to the far (northeast) corner of the parking lot. After parking, go into the nearest entrance. Follow the “SEMCO” signs.

Member of



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

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

SEMCO (future meetings)

March 14

No Meeting in April

May 9

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