



Official Newsletter
SouthEastern Michigan
Computer Organization, Inc.

DATA BUS



Volume 29

December, 2004

Number 12

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

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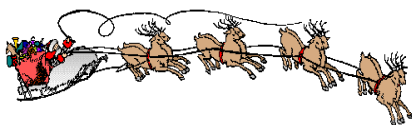
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SEMCO MEETINGS Sunday, December 12, 2004

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



NOTICE OF NOMINATIONS

Please take notice that under the Bylaws of the SouthEastern Michigan Computer Organization, Inc., nominations for officers will be taken at the December general meeting to be held

Sunday, December 12, 2004 at 1:30 p.m., with the election of officers to be held at the January general meeting.

The following offices will be open for nominations:

- 1) President
- 2) Vice President
- 3) Secretary
- 4) Treasurer
- 5) Two Members at Large of the Board of Directors

NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING AND ELECTION

The annual meeting of the members of the SouthEastern Michigan Computer Organization, Inc. will be held Sunday, January 9, 2005 at 1:30 pm in Room 235 of Elliott Hall, 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.

DEALS COLUMN

from the DealsGuy

Greater Orlando Computer UG
by Bob "The Cheap skate" Click



I'm enjoying my new weather station, but decided to buy a "Weather Picture" (a nice option) for mine so it would be highly visible across the room. Get it at <http://www.peetbros.com>. I ended up mounting the rain gauge on my roof tripod temporarily until I find a lower spot. It's the clearest spot away from large neighboring trees. If you haven't ordered your weather station yet, this is the last month you can get that special offer where they throw in two optional items. Call 1-866-446-1216 or 1-321-206-6214 or e-mail them at peetbros@peetbros.com. Even my wife enjoys the weather station. Ask them for a brochure, which has more information.

The same deadline is true with the digital badge 10% discount <<http://www.bannerbadge.com>>, so call 1-772-571-9944, or you can e-mail <info@bannerbadge.com>. It has a magnetic type holder for attachment to your garment, (a magnet that separates with one part on the inside of the garment), but be careful about that magnet around magnetic strips such as a credit card. In my case, I corrupted the magnetic strip on a parking badge and had to get it fixed, so be careful about that magnet if you carry CCs in your pocket. A pin attachment is available, but most people want the magnet mount because they don't want holes in their garment from a pin.

Interesting Shows

I worked the PASS (Professional Association of SQL Servers) show <<http://www.sqlpass.org>>, and I was never more lost, since I know little about SQL servers. The exhibit area was 10,000 square feet, and they expected about 1200 attendees. In their Internet Café, the computers were on top of the table, rather than hidden. They had a clear plastic side and green florescent lighting inside that made them an eye-catcher. It was a busy spot and also had high-speed hookups for attendees' laptops. Sorry I'm not smart enough to give you more info. I can tell you though that the tasty cookies and refreshments served during the show were great.

I also worked a day for the setup of the Electronic Boutique Gaming show, but didn't work the actual show day. It was a one-day show open for eleven hours. All the big names in the game industry had booths, and there were stacks of free expensive game cartridges and disks all over the place. I didn't capitalize on them, since I am not a game

person. Friends sure criticized me for that. It was also 10,000 square feet of exhibit area, and they expected mostly managers and other VIPs. Microsoft's X Box booth was the largest there with large boxes of goodies for their attendees. This show and the one above were held at the beautiful Gaylord Palms Resort in Kissimmee, FL. It's hard to get used to computer geeks sitting and laying all over the floor when chairs are handy.

We also worked the Surf Show, which has nothing to do with computers. Some booths had models wearing bikinis or other clothing that attracted lots of people. Two models worked in a booth right across the aisle from my post all day long wearing a different bikini every hour. Security's sure a tough job, but someone has to do it. <G>

One item below is something I saw at the handicap show we worked, I expected that show to be boring, but instead, I found some amazing technology there. I'll talk more about that next month.

Explosive Information

This has nothing to do with gas stations, but in EE (Electronic Engineering) Times <<http://www.eet.com>> there was a story about exploding batteries in cell phones and laptop computers. I'll quote one of their statements: "Rising reports of incidents in which counterfeit batteries have overheated, caught fire, or blown up are dogging a portable systems industry caught between the slow pace of battery technology and the quick step of new features at even lower costs." Companies are very worried about consumer confidence when such news reaches them, and they say the problem batteries are counterfeit. Here are some URLs for more information in the event you might have a counterfeit

battery: <<http://www.cpsc.gov/CPSPUB/PREREL/prhtml04/04559.html>> concerning recalls, <<http://www.cpsc.gov/CPSPUB/PREREL/prhtml04/04068.html>> other recalls, and <<http://www.nokia.com/nokia/0,,49192,00.html>> on how to spot a counterfeit battery. It was an interesting article about the problem and possible technology and safeguards.

A Great Freebie When Traveling

The Handicap show had a booth by Microtel Inns & Suites who introduced great new freebies for their guests. They say Microtel offers economy/budget priced lodging that now includes several free services that computer people would love when traveling. Guests will have FREE local calls, as well as FREE long distance calls in the continental United States. Even FREE wireless high-speed Internet access will also be available in rooms.

Advance online check-in and check-out will be available as well as online pre-registering that would shorten the check-in process. At this writing they already have about 100 hotels set up for all this and will have them completed nationwide by year's end. Beyond all that, they also offer free continental breakfast and other things. You can check their Web site where there is more information at <<http://www.microtelinn.com>>. I have not stayed at one of their inns yet, so I can't speak from experience, but the pictures looked nice.

Don't Lose Track Of Time

This item is an announcement I received, and these people are offering UG members a 20% discount. Here is their statement edited. "Our company, Maximus Software Ltd, would like to announce the release of Time Meter for

MS Outlook 2.4, a simple but very beneficial software application capable of tracking expenses and time spent working on certain project(s) for Microsoft Office 2000/XP/2003. The program can be used by individual consultants and freelancers for billing their clients, or by corporate managers to track expenses, performance, and contributions of each employee. Most importantly, the program acts as a plug-in for MS Outlook, thus eliminating the need to spend time learning how to use a new application and getting familiar with the interface.

"The price of a single copy is \$74.95 US Dollars. Product Page is at <<http://www.timemeter.com>>. The discount coupon code is '3481051341,' and it can be redeemed at <<http://www.timemeter.com/coupon.shtml>>." Perhaps someone in your group has reviewed it.

Bring It Back—Please

Here is another announcement with a discount. "Have you ever accidentally deleted a slew of pictures from a memory card before you transferred them to the PC? Or formatted a card in the camera, only to realize that your vacation pictures were still on board? That's the stuff that nightmares are made of. Fortunately, Flash File Recovery is on hand to save you from yourself. We offer a 15% discount, making the price \$42.08. Just use this direct order link to get a discount: <https://www.regnow.com/softsell/nph-softsell.cgi?item=3560-15&ss_coupon=AGPR-ORAO>. The Product Page is at: <<http://www.panterasoft.com/file-recovery/index.html>>.

"Flash File Recovery is a nifty application that every photographer

should be aware of. Essentially, it can recover any previously deleted image file. Plus, it is capable of salvaging pictures from damaged or corrupted flash drives (including a camera's built-in memory) and memory sticks. The list of supported storage media includes, but is not limited to, SmartMedia, CompactFlash, Memory Stick, MicroDrive, xD Picture Card Flash Card, PC Card, Multimedia Card, Secure Digital Card, and many others. Flash File Recovery 'resurrects' images from formatted, damaged, corrupted (unreadable), or defective storage media."

I know I published a similar item a few months ago, but I'm passing this on anyway. I have not reviewed Flash File Recovery, but maybe someone in your group has.

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>>. I'm working on new pages for 2004 announcements that I received, but slowly.



What Time Is It? Set Your PC Clock By Ira Wilsker

I get a lot of e-mails that have an incorrect time stamp on them, placed there by senders' computers that have an incorrect time and date. I was asked on my radio show, "So what's the big deal about having a wrong time and date on my computer?"

There are several reasons for having a correct time and date on your computer. One reason is that if your computer has an incorrect date and time, and you send e-mail with that incorrect time, it may not be noticed by the recipient and remain unread, or it may be filtered out by some spam filters. I sort my incoming e-mail by date so I will always see the newest messages first. If the sender has a clock that is set "slow," then that e-mail will not be near the top of my list, and if the clock is too slow, then I may not see the message at all, because it may show up as an old, out of date message. Since many spammers purposely set the date and time either far in advance, or far in the past, so that their spam e-mail always appears first or last on an e-mail list, many of the spam filters delete e-mails that are extremely off in their dates and times.

Another reason to have a correct date and time is to better enable searches on your own computer. Almost all versions of Windows have had as a search function "date and time" to find files created, accessed, or modified in a specific time frame. If downloaded or shared files are received with a correct time, and the computer clock is significantly off, there may be discrepancies making some file searches difficult.

Many professionals bill their clients based on time, and those that use their computers to bill the time need an accurate time on their computers in order to bill accurately. There may also be legal ramifications in having a correct or incorrect time on the computer. I recently did a forensic analysis on a computer involved in a legal case, and there was a question explicitly about when certain things were done with the computer. The defendant in the case was a professional engineer, and billed clients for his computer time, using a utility expressly for that purpose. He used a program that frequently checked his computer clock against the official government time <<http://www.time.gov>>, and logged any differences, which were slight. Since his computer clock was accurate, always within a second during the period in question, there was evidence so strong in his favor that the case was dropped. If his computer clock had been significantly off, there may have been a strong case against him, as a key piece of defense evidence would have been missing.

There are several reasons for computer clocks not having the correct time. Some computer users never set their computer clock, similar to the flashing "12:00" on many VCRs. I have worked on computers that had the wrong time zone set, simply because the user never reset the time zone and clock after it was purchased, and still had the default time zone set by the manufacturer. Many computers lose time on their computer clocks due to a well documented interference with the clock from some "soft modems," "controllerless" modems, or "WinModems" that sap processing power from the CPU chip while online.

A symptom of this is sometimes a "jerky" cursor that does not move across the screen smoothly while online.

Another reason for losing time on a computer clock is a weak battery in the computer. Most users are unaware that there is a small battery in their computer, often a watch or calculator battery, which powers the CMOS chip while the computer is turned off. While some newer computers use a small rechargeable battery, which has a longer, but still limited, life, the typical computer battery may only last for a few years until it must be replaced. One necessary proviso is that the user should use one of several utilities to back up the CMOS data before replacing the battery, or the system defaults will be used. After replacing the battery it is almost always necessary to reset the clock.

There are several utilities that will automatically reset the clock with little or no user intervention. These range from integral Windows XP utilities, to freeware, and commercial software. XP has a free built-in time check utility that can transparently reset the computer clock. It can be found by clicking on control/panel/date, and then time/internet time.

Additional information is available by clicking on start/help, and then entering the search term "time synchronization." I recommend using the <nist.time.gov> link, which will set the time to "official" time. The XP time utility may not function properly, or give an incorrect time if the utility is blocked by a firewall, or if it is set to a local network time that may also be inaccurate. The clock can also be set manually by double clicking on the clock and entering the time; just be sure that the time zone and daylight savings

time are set correctly from the “time zone” tab.

I also use an excellent free utility to check my computer clock, AboutTime 4.8. It is available for download at <<http://www.arachnoid.com/abouttime>>, along with detailed instructions and trouble shooting. Personally, I have it set to the U.S. Naval Observatory time at <<http://tick.usno.navy.mil>>. I have found the Navy time server to be the most reliable connection.

Now you have no excuse for an incorrect computer clock.

Ira Wilsker is the APCUG Representative & Bylaws Chair for the Golden Triangle PC Club, a columnist for the Examiner in Beaumont, Texas, and has two radio shows. He can be reached at <iwilsker@ih2000.net>.

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Will Santa Claus Bring Orcs And Aliens To Your Door? By Timothy Everingham

There is a big buzz about the new video game consoles now in development, but they will not be here this holiday season. We have to continue to look at titles for the Playstation 2, Xbox, and GameCube, along with the ever-evolving platform, the PC.

Two big titles coming out in the summer and fall of this year for the PC have been ID's Doom 3 (Activision) and Valve's Half Life 2 (Vivendi Universal Games), both first person shooters. Both require a 3GHz processor or higher, a top of the line 3D video card that has come out in the last year, and 512-1024 MB of RAM to play effectively with all the options turned on. Even then some people are reporting their computers are too slow. The game play on Doom 3 is not as good as expected, and in parts, so are the graphics. Based on the information at this writing, Half Life 2 is your better bet on a graphically high-end video game for your PC. If you want a tried and true graphically high end first person shooter, get with Far Cry, or possibly the less hardware intensive Electronic Arts' Battlefield Vietnam, both which came out earlier this year.

Of course the biggest game probably this holiday season will be Bungie's Halo 2 for the Xbox (Microsoft Game Studios). The original Halo is why so many people bought the Xbox in the first place, and the new version looks even greater. It is a first person shooter and is best played in multiplayer mode with the players in your home with 1-4 Xboxes connected together or via Xbox Live (I have played the original Halo with two teams of 7-8 playing against each other, and it was fantastic fun). I expect people will be lined up outside the stores on November 9 when it will go on sale. It should be out later for the PC just as the original was, but most Halo fans will not wait.

Another favorite is expected to be Lucas Arts' Star Wars Battlefront for the PC, Xbox, & PS2. There you can fight the battles in the Star Wars movies

as an individual soldier with all the neat vehicles. You can choose between soldier types within each side of the conflicts. Multiplayer is available for LAN & Internet. There will be no additional fees for Internet play for online play on PC or Playstation 2 if you have a network adapter for them. For Xbox you will need to subscribe to Xbox Live (up to 16 players on Playstation 2, 24 players on Xbox, and 32 players on PC).

There is a split screen mode for offline multiplayer play. As has been in the past with Star Wars games developed by Pandemic Studios, the game is reported to be fantastic and a blast to play. If you want something with more sword fighting in your role playing game, try Ubisoft's Prince of Persia 2: Warrior Within for Playstation 2, Xbox, GameCube, and PC. Another sword fighting RPG is Onimusha 3: Demon Siege from Capcom for the Playstation 2. Also on the Game Cube is Nintendo's Metroid Prime 2: Echoes.

One of the most interesting games is Lionhead Studios' Fable for the Xbox (Microsoft Game Studios). This game has been in development for a long time because they wanted it to be a breakthrough in the area of role playing games, and I think they have succeeded. You start out as a 17 year old boy and journey through life until you are 45. Every action has a consequence for the future. It will determine how other characters in the game treat you and even how your physical appearance changes over time. You can wind up as the hero that people cheer every time you arrive in a town, and your wife thanks God every day that she married you, or a villain that everyone wants to avoid, except for possibly other villains.

If you are into real time strategy, you should definitely look for The Lord of the Rings: The Battle For Middle Earth (Electronic Arts). It is a step above anything that has gone before in the RTS games from the viewpoints of graphics, animation, and game play. If you have seen the History Channel's Decisive Battles, you have already seen the game engine and animation in Rome: Total War. The technology from it was used in the series to show how actual battles were fought in the ancient world. It also looks to be a good RTS game.

If you want to experience the difficulties of what the US and its allies face in Iraq, try THQ's Full Spectrum Warrior, a real time squad based game developed from a US Army training aid that revolves around a fictional Middle Eastern country in the present day. Also developed by Pandemic Studios in Los Angeles, it is for the PC and Xbox with online play available.

If you want to be the bad guy in the James Bond universe, check out Electronic Arts' Goldeneye: Rogue Agent for Playstation 2, Xbox, and GameCube. Of course, if you want to play the good secret operative, there is the stealthy Sam Fisher of Ubisoft's Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell series. The third installment, "Chaos Theory," has been delayed until March, but Pandora Tomorrow that came out last spring is still good for the PC, Playstaion2, Xbox, and Game Cube.

Sony Online Entertainment's Everquest II is a world 500 years after the current Everquest, but with enriched graphics, better game play, and better adventures. Unlike a lot of these games, Everquest II does not just throw you into the virtual world to fend for yourself the best you can. You start off on a

large sailing ship with only you and a bunch of computer generated 3D characters, where you find out how the world works before you get to the first town and interaction with other players. It's designed for the experienced massively multiplayer online role playing game player, but for the novice as well. Unlike Everquest, there will be no Mac version; it will be for Windows only.

For those of you Star Wars Galaxies fans who have been disappointed that you can't journey into space and duke it out in an X-Wing Fighter, Lucas Arts/Sony Online Entertainment's Star Wars Galaxies is for you: Jump To Light Speed expansion pack will be out in time for the Holidays

One of the games that is the best selling game ever is Electronic Arts' The Sims. The Sims 2 is very different. Your characters are fully 3D, detailed, and you get up close with them. They have motivations that cause them to act in certain and sometimes unexpected ways. You can control up to four characters, and are creating a story of a family over multiple generations. It sounds serious, but you can have some fun by creating episodes right out of a soap opera.

If you want to laugh while you're playing a game, go for Destroy All Humans! from THQ and Pandemic Studios. It is a parody of all those 1950s alien invasion movies where you play the alien. It is for Playstation 2 and Xbox.

Sony's Grand Turismo 4 car racing sim for the PS 2 is finally coming out before the end of the year, and it looks like it is worth the wait. It has great graphics, 100 courses, and 500 cars to drive, plus online play with up to 6 players.

Microsoft Game Studio's Forza Motorsport is for you racing fans on an Xbox. A good racing sim for the hardcore and novice is NASCAR 2005 Chase for the Cup (Electronic Arts) for Playstation 2, GameCube, and Xbox. Of course, there is always Electronic Arts' Madden NFL 2005 for PC, Playstation 2, Xbox, and GameCube (Electronic Arts is usually a good bet for sports games).

For the younger set I would look at Microsoft Games Studios' Zoo Tycoon 2 and some of the offerings from THQ.

Nintendo also has been known for having good games for kids, but they are for GameCube only.

Yes, this holiday season there will be celebrations all over. However, that will include the individual celebrations of those who on their gaming platforms protect the human race from orcs and aliens.

Timothy Everingham (contact him at <teveringham@acm.org>) is Chair of the Los Angeles Chapter of ACM SIGGRAPH. He is also part-time press in the areas of high technology, computers, video, audio, and entertainment/media and has had articles published throughout the United States and Canada plus Australia, England, & Japan. He is a member of TUGNET. Further information can be found at <<http://home.earthlink.net/~teveringham>>.

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The New, The Best, And The Worst

By Pim Borman

As we all know, Microsoft software is used on 90% of the world's desktop computers. Over the years Microsoft has managed to include Internet Explorer with the Windows OS sold with almost every new computer. Microsoft Works, or the more expensive Microsoft Office programs, are bundled with most systems, at extra cost, but hidden in the total cost of a new computer. As a result, earlier successful programs such as Netscape, Word Star, WordPerfect, Database II, and Lotus 1-2-3 are still only used by a few dedicated fans. To this date it is almost impossible to buy a computer from a major manufacturer without pre-installed MS software. Most recently Dell has started to sell some computers with Linux-based Linspire pre-installed, but in Europe only. Dell is also offering some computers without any operating system in the US, allowing the buyer to install the OS of his choice. Some small, lesser known manufacturers also sell Microsoft-free computers. Still, it will take years, if ever, to overcome the domination of MS in the desktop computer market.

Microsoft has historically emphasized ease of use (with varying success) and addition of new features to program updates to keep the customers coming back for more. Now that it has become painfully obvious that the programs also should be resistant to tampering by malicious individuals, it is probably too late to correct the many vulnerabilities, given that there are millions of lines of code

involved to be critically reviewed. SP2, a major security update for Windows XP, has now become available. Previewers describe it as a major security improvement for Windows XP and Internet Explorer 6, but the virus and worm kiddies will undoubtedly find new ways to bring down the system. SP2 reportedly introduces dozens of potential incompatibilities with your hardware and software. Also, the size of the update is between 100 and 300 MB, depending on the updates already installed on your computer. Such a download is not feasible for those with a telephone modem; Microsoft also makes the update available on a CD. But the question remains: how many users will go to the trouble to get the update and install it? And how long will it take before most of us are up-to-date?

Since MS Windows and its programs are the fat and juicy sitting ducks preferably targeted by virus artists, a good way to protect yourself is to get away from it and choose alternate software, not susceptible to common worms and viruses, and not targeted by script kiddies. The following are some possible choices.

Since most of the nastiness enters your computer through Internet Explorer and Outlook Express, choose alternate programs. Many users are changing to the free Mozilla Firefox, <<http://www.mozilla.org/products/firefox/>>, an open source browser and e-mail program for Windows, Linux or the MAC OS. The browser is quite similar to Netscape and receives high praise from most users, who prefer it to Internet Explorer. Version 1.0, now forthcoming, also performs pop-up blocking and protection from spyware.

Another popular choice is Opera for Windows or Linux, <<http://www.opera.com>>, also a free download, although you must pay \$29 to get rid of an advertising banner at the top of the page. I prefer Mozilla in Linux because it is less cluttered.

MS Office programs, especially Outlook, Word, and Excel, have also been targets of hackers, making use of their macro features to cause haywire. WordPerfect Office 12 from Corel, <<http://www.corel.com>>, includes a word processor, the Quattro Pro spreadsheet, and the Presentations multimedia slide shows similar to MS PowerPoint. It costs \$300 and is almost fully compatible with MS Word documents.

StarOffice 6.0 Office Suite from Sun Microsystems, <<http://www.sun.com/software/star/staroffice/6.0/>>, includes word processing, spreadsheet, graphics, presentation, and database programs. It claims full compatibility with MS Office and costs \$75. It is available for Windows, Solaris, and Linux operating systems. I tried it several years ago, when it was still free, and didn't like the way it took over my computer, including rearrangement of my desktop.

Finally, a promising newcomer is the free, open-source OpenOffice.org, currently at version 1.1.3. and also from Sun Microsystems <<http://www.openoffice.org/>>. It is derived from StarOffice, with omission of code licensed by Sun from third-party sources. It is available for Windows, Mac OS, Linux, and Solaris operating systems. In addition to the MS Word-compatible OpenOffice Writer it includes spreadsheet, database, and presentation programs. I have been using the word processor in Linux and

find the compatibility with MS Word formats quite good. It also supports saving and mailing documents in PDF format and supports mobile device formats like AportisDoc (Palm), Pocket Word, and Pocket Excel.

The best way to avoid Microsoft-targeted worms and spyware altogether is not to use any Microsoft products at all. Apple Computer's Mac Operating System is based on Unix, and the Macs are therefore immune to PC viruses. The exceptions are MS Office for the Mac programs that are susceptible to the same malicious macros aimed at PCs. The Mac OS does not run on Intel or AMD cpu-based PC clones, so you'll have to buy a new, expensive Apple computer to achieve trouble-free online communications. You may still need your PC for programs and games that are not available on the Mac.

A better alternative is to install one of the new, inexpensive, user-friendly Linux distributions on a separate partition of your hard drive, or on an older computer if you have one. I have used Linspire, <<http://www.linspire.com>>, now for a year on an old laptop. It connects by Wi-Fi wireless via my router to the Internet and to my printer. I use the Mozilla browser and OpenOffice.org Write for browsing and correspondence, and everything works flawlessly. I have transferred genealogy and checkbook data to corresponding Linux programs. I can play more solitaire programs than I know how to, including two versions of FreeCell. Many other games are available, including the addictive arcade games BreakOut II and Frozen Bubble. I even managed to install a free version of the anti-virus program F-prot, <<http://www.f-prot.com/>>, that protects Linux

systems as well as Windows, but for lack of Linux viruses I have no idea if it works or not. There is a harmless virus-like test file on the F-prot Web site that I downloaded to test F prot. It worked as advertised. A longer discussion of my experiences with Linspire can be found in the July-August issue of the P-See UrGent <<http://swipcug.apcug.org/archive/pdfs/swin0704.pdf>>.

So there you have it. Maybe it is better to switch than fight!

Pim Borman, is Web site Editor and APCUG Representative for Southwest Indiana PC Users Group, Inc. You can contact him at <swipcug@sigecom.net>.

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.

Tech News

By Sue Crane

Finally, software with the updates included! Microsoft last month started the process of swapping out all of the boxed copies of Windows XP with the updated version, with a triangle in the upper corner touting SP2 and its security enhancements. Over the next month, Microsoft hopes to swap out the bulk of all boxed copies worldwide. OfficeMax is offering a free 128MB flash drive and anti-spyware to customers buying an XP upgrade.

The Visible Light Communications Consortium, a group of 15 IT

manufacturers is proposing using light emitting diodes—which will increasingly become common for ordinary light fixtures and outdoor equipment like traffic lights—to transmit data traffic up to 10 meters at high speeds. With the technology, a person trapped in a building could hold up a cell phone to a ceiling light, and rescuers would be able to pinpoint his or her exact location. Similarly, cars could exchange information through headlights and taillights, and car computer systems could tell drivers if there were major stalls ahead.

The Federal Communications Commission is beginning a new consumer-education campaign to support the nationwide switch from analog to digital TV. Announcing a new Web site to answer questions about digital TV, The Consumer Electronics Association estimates that about 10% of U.S. households currently have digital sets. For those who don't have cable or satellite TV a converter box will be available to receive and decode digital signals at a cost about \$200 each, <<http://www.dtv.gov/>>.

You probably know that high quality, low cost digital scanning, copying, and printing technologies have been used to counterfeit currency, but did you know that the government is fighting back? When you put a document under the glass of your new photocopier or scanner and push the button, it makes a high resolution copy—unless the document is one of the new style twenty or fifty dollar bills. If you do that, you just might see a message pop up informing you that you should visit the Treasury website to become more educated on counterfeit laws.

Schools and libraries nationwide have suddenly stopped receiving any new grants from a federal program that is wrestling with new rules on how it spends \$2.25 billion each year to provide high-speed Internet and telephone service. The moratorium at the E-Rate program, <<http://www.fcc.gov/learnnet/>>, began two months ago, with no notice, and may last for months, causing significant hardships at schools and libraries.

The FTC is launching an aggressive new strategy to prosecute “spyware” perpetrators, and last week filed a civil lawsuit against former spam-king Sanford Wallace and his companies, Seismic Entertainment Productions and SmartBot. Wallace, who was once dubbed “Spamford” for his earlier misdeeds, operates the PassItOn.com Web site, which requires visitors to click through multiple pop-up windows in order to exit.

Install a chip inside your body, and when something goes wrong, it automatically pings your doctor. Or even simpler, your complete medical makeup and history can be burned into a chip and implanted in your body. The tiny chips, which are embedded under the skin with a syringe, are programmed with a code similar to the UPC codes on retail goods, which releases patient-specific information on such issues as allergies and prior treatments when scanned.

Philips’ Motiva technology allows patients to use their home televisions to communicate with their care providers over a broadband connection. The pilot program has enrolled 60 patients. The test is designed to gauge how well patients and health care providers use the interactive system when

communicating and sharing medical information.

A directory of cell phone numbers will be published soon, opening the door for solicitors to call cell phones using up your minutes. The FTC has set up a National Do Not Call Registry for cell phones. You must call from the number you wish to register. The number to call is 1-888-382-1222, or you can go to <<https://www.donotcall.gov/Register/Reg.aspx>> to register your cell phones on line.

Microsoft will count new multicore processors as single units when they debut next year. This announcement puts an end to confusion about Microsoft’s policy regarding multicore processors, in which two or more processors are etched onto a single chip. Many of Microsoft’s competitors are currently charging more for software that runs on servers equipped with dual or multicore chips. Intel’s dual-core Xeon is due in 2006. Also watch for a competing chip from AMD.

The FBI says your unsecured 802.11 network could be used in the commission of a cybercrime. If you don’t want the FBI to come knocking at your door, you’d better take steps to secure your wireless network against intruders.

Helen Greiner, co-founder of iRobot, said her company had sold 1 million of its Roomba robotic vacuum cleaners—a milestone that drew applause at the RoboNexus International Conference & Exposition. The use of robots to perform household tasks such as lawn-mowing, vacuuming, guard duty, and other chores is slated to increase sevenfold by 2007, according to the U.N.’s latest World Robotics Survey.

A federal appeals court struck a blow against printer manufacturers who want to use Digital Copyright to protect their share of the lucrative printer cartridges market. Judge Gilbert Merritt stated in his summary, "We should make clear that in the future companies like Lexmark cannot use the DMCA in conjunction with copyright law to create monopolies of manufactured goods."

Sue Crane is Vice President of the Big Bear Computer Club in California, and is the Editor of Bearly Bytes, their newsletter. Contact her at <sue.crane@charter.net>.

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Understanding USB

By Vinny La Bash

Hail USB! Until a few years ago, if you wanted to add an external device to your computer, such as a scanner or a Zip drive, it needed your one and only parallel port. The trouble with this was that your printer had already staked out that territory. One way of getting around the problem was installing an A/B switch. However, if you needed more than one device, you had to install an A/B/C/D switch. Sometimes moving among these devices meant having to turn one off before you could use another, and often you had to reboot before your machine would recognize another device on the switch.

Early Palm Pilots and digital cameras sought your serial port. Computers had, and most still have, two serial ports, but they were slow and almost always involved installation of controlling software.

There were also devices that came with their own controller cards. This meant you had to open the case and install the card in an expansion slot, provided you had one available. Things could get crazy quickly, and you had to handle IRQ conflicts, more cables, and additional power cords.

Rescue arrived with the introduction of the USB port (Universal Serial Bus) that lets you attach almost anything to your computer quickly and easily. Windows XP is designed to support USB so device conflicts are gone. The standard allows up to 127 devices on a single USB port. In practice, no one uses that many devices. USB connectors let you attach everything from TV tuners to modems. It's an amazingly flexible technology. If you had a toaster with a USB connection you could hook it up, but it's doubtful you could watch bread turn brown on the screen.

Installing a USB device is incredibly simple. Windows XP senses it through a process called auto-detection, and asks for the driver disk if it's needed. If you have previously installed the device, XP activates it, and it's ready for use. Part of the beauty of USB is that you can connect and disconnect devices at any time without having to reboot your machine or change any options. If a cable is built in to a USB device, it will connect to your computer with its own "A" connector. Otherwise it connects with a "B" connector. "A" and "B" connectors are of different sizes and shapes so there is no question of getting them mixed up.

Today, most desktop computers are built with at least four USB ports. If that is inadequate, there are relatively inexpensive USB hubs available that act as expansion devices. The number of ports available on an expansion hub can vary from as few as two to as many as seven, depending on your needs and how much you care to spend. Plug the hub into your computer, and then plug your devices into the hub. You can chain hubs together, and build dozens of available USB ports on a single computer.

The USB standard lets USB connected devices draw their power from their USB connection to the PC. This works well for mice, digital cameras, web cams, and other devices that use small amounts of power. Printers, scanners, and other high power accessories require their own power supply, and they can be plugged into hubs that do not have their own power supply. If you run out of USB sockets and you have a lot of low power devices, get a powered hub so you don't overwhelm the PC bus.

Inside your computer the USB lets the computer act as a host to all USB devices attached to it. If you have the up-to-date USB 2.0 standard, data can be transferred at up to 480 Mb per second. If you were moving text, that works out to about 30,000 pages of documents per second. That's a maximum rate, not typical of actual use. Nevertheless, it's impressive.

USB has other advantages. You can plug in or remove USB devices without having to reboot your machine, and the computer can put USB devices into an inactive state when conserving power. XP queries all USB devices when your machine powers on, assigns each one

an address, and determines what kind of data it needs to send or receive. XP keeps track of the total bandwidth of all the attached USB devices. If the combined devices reach 90% of the 480 Mb maximum, XP denies access to any additional devices. The remaining 10% is reserved for transmitting control characters, stop and start transmission codes, error checking, and other overhead.

USB 2.0 encourages the development of innovative products that would be impossible to develop with the older standards. It's the solution for all PC users who want an instant, no-hassle way to connect new hardware like digital joysticks, scanners, digital speakers, digital cameras or a PC telephone to their computer. Plug and Pray has truly become Plug and Play.

Vinny La Bash is a member of the Sarasota PC Users Group in Florida, and he can be reached at [<ylabash@home.com>](mailto:ylabash@home.com).

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Gadgets for Geeks

By Sherry Zorzi

The toys for gadget-geeks of any age or gender just keep getting better and, surprisingly, cheaper.

USB Flash Drive: These tiny solid-state devices are quickly replacing diskettes as the cheap and easy method for transporting or backing up data. A 256 MB flash drive will hold the

equivalent of about 175 diskettes. That's about 3 hours of music or 1000 photographs, or thousands of common business documents—all in a \$40 device.

Flash Watch: These watches include a built-in flash drive device. Just connect the watch to your USB drive via a built-in cable. Cost: under \$100.

Camera Phone: My new Motorola flip-phone (about \$80 after rebate) has a camera, calculator, appointment book, voice recorder, alarm clock, text messaging, wireless web, games, and e-mail. The sleek profile fits in any pocket or bag easily.

Handheld Computer: Pocket PCs and Palms have been around for a long time, but the newest generation of both devices are slicker than ever. More than

just a personal information manager, these tiny computers now include word processing and spreadsheet capabilities, play MP3 music files, handle multimedia and Internet connections, in some cases even play full-length movies. You'll pay about \$200 at the low end and over \$1,000 at the high end for a computer that fits in your pocket and is more powerful than the desktop of a few years ago.

Digital Camera: The novelty has worn off digital photography now. These cameras have improved so dramatically in quality and have become so affordable that they barely qualify as gadgets. The average digital camera today has 3-4 megapixel quality with 3X-5X optical zoom and will cost under



Letter From The Editor

Customer Disoriented

Can't they make a product that is customer-proof (OK, idiot-proof)? After hearing all about it at a SEMCO meeting, I decided I'd better install Spybot Search and Destroy. I got a URL from Google, but somehow when it was downloaded (1 hour), it wasn't Spybot, it was XoftSpy (free scan, detect, and removal application, by ParetoLogic, \$39.95). Oh well, try it. The free scan went OK; it detected some spyware, but a few days later I tried it again, and it wouldn't work; it told me to re-install the program. Nuts to that!

PC Magazine's Editor's Choice is SpySweeper by Webroot (\$29.95/year), so I downloaded (1 hour) their free scan, SpyAudit; but then I couldn't find it on my computer. I contacted their support, and next day they said "your problem is fixed; press Save." OK, I got it and ran a scan, but when it finished it opened a Netscape page with a URL that included "spyauditresults/.php." But the page had only the Webroot banner and was otherwise blank. If I can't even get the scan to work, I'm not going to subscribe to the application!

I finally found the real Spybot Search and Destroy (free), downloaded it, and ran a scan that found some bad stuff. When I clicked on "Fix," it froze!

My question is: Why can't they create programs that a customer, even an idiot, can work easily every time? My car comes out of the dealership and works without a hitch for 45,000 miles with only oil changes every 5000 miles. Isn't it a shame they can't make computer stuff like cars?

Bill

\$300. Mine goes everywhere with me. Within a minute of snapping a shot I can e-mail it to a friend or upload it to my favorite photo-sharing website.

Satellite Radio: There are two flavors: XM Radio and Sirius. I've only tried XM, but all I can say is, "Wow!" Commercial-free music of any genre you desire, any time you want it. A scrolling digital display tells the title and artist of each tune, so no more sleepless nights trying to remember who sang that song that's been rattling around in your head all day. You can install XM Radio in your car and have an optional cradle in the house, making the subscription (~\$13/mo.) portable from home to road. Hardware is around \$100.

MP3 Player: These music machines, of which the Apple iPod (\$200-300) is the most recognizable brand, allow you to store many hours of music in a tiny portable device.

GPS: Portable global positioning systems use satellites to pinpoint your location to within one to ten meters. Handheld devices are available or you can buy GPS add-ons to handheld computers. These are popular with hikers and sailors, but are also fun when traveling by car or to use in hobbies such as geocaching. A decent recreational GPS device can be purchased for \$100-200.

It's never too late to start making your Christmas list.

Sherry Zorzi is Secretary of Cajun Clickers Computer Club and can be reached at <<http://www.clickers.org>>.

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BOARD MEETING

11/14/04

Carol Sanzi

Board Members Present:

President Gary DeNise, Vice President Richard Jackson, Secretary Carol Sanzi, SIG-Advanced Chairman Franz Breidenich, SIG-IBM Co-Chairman Tom Callow, Warner Mach representing SIG-IBM Intermediate Chairman Jack Vander-Schrier, Publications Committee Chairman Bill Agnew, and Members at Large Bob Clyne and Chuck Moery. Arriving late was Treasurer Roger Gay. The meeting was called to order at 12:03 p.m.

Old Business:

Tom Callow reported that the balance on hand is \$5251.69. It is time for Claire Baum, Richard Gach, Frank E. Chavel, Pat Kreiling, and Clarence O'Neal to renew their memberships. The membership stands at 82.

Bob Clyne moved to reimburse Warner Mach \$5.81 for refreshments. Tom Callow seconded the motion and it was carried.

New Business:

The IRS is requesting a financial report from SEMCO. Since SEMCO's income is below the level at which a report is required, Tom Callow will file the appropriate form with the IRS.

Bob Clyne moved that SEMCO's APCUG dues be paid for the year 2005. Tom Callow seconded the motion and it was carried.

Tom Callow suggested that the membership should think about nominations for next year's offices.

Bob Clyne reported that members frequently ask questions about computer disposal. He found a company at

[Continued on page 19](#)

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS (SIGS)



SIG-IBM
Tom Callow
Warner Mach



SIG-IBM INTERMEDIATE
Jack Vander-Schrier

December 12: SIG-IBM: BestDraft—A New Way Of Drafting Documents: SIG-IBM Chairman Tom Callow will demonstrate Cognilearn's BestDraft, a new program that automates the process of drafting documents, and actually makes drafting documents fun.

December 12: Customizing Your Home Page: SIG-IBM Intermediate Chairman Jack Vander-Schrier will show how you can customize your Home Page.

November Meeting Attendance: 32

Continued from page 18

<www.scrapcomputer.com> with an Ann Arbor facility that will schedule pick ups. Richard Jackson will contact the company for further information. The Bluewater Lions Club also accepts working computers. Bob Clyne will contact them to obtain further details. Gary Denise will look into a Fenton Group that may accept old computers and report back next month.

Richard Jackson moved to adjourn. Tom Callow seconded the motion, and it was carried. The meeting adjourned at 12:33 p.m.

NOVICE-IBM GROUP Rotating Volunteer Hosts

December 12: Help And Q & A: Discussion directed by the audience.



SIG-ADVANCED
Franz Breidenich

January 3:(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.

January 2004 DATA BUS DEADLINE (7th day after meeting) **SEMCO Input and Members' Ads — Deadline: Sun., December 19, 11:59 p.m.**

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 \(address Page 2\)](#).

AAIICI (American Association of Individual Investors, Computerized Investors)

Jan. 22–Saturday, 10am (4th Saturday); W. Bloomfield Twp. Library, 4600 Walnut Lake Rd., 1 mile west of Orchard Lk Rd. Jack Lockman at [<thunder@tir.com>](mailto:thunder@tir.com) or 313-341-8855.

COMP (Computer Operators of Marysville & Port Huron)

Jan. 5–Wednesday, 7pm (1st Wednesday); Rm 201, Clara E. Mackenzie Library-Science Bldg, St. Clair Community College, 323 Erie St., Port Huron. Jane Wheatly 810-982-1187. Web: [<http://www.bwcomp.org>](http://www.bwcomp.org). Topic: PhotoShop with Mark Repp.

DCOM Computer Club

Dec. 10–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)

Dec. 9–Thursday, 7pm (2nd Thursday); Kelly Services Bldg, 999 West Big Beaver, corner Crooks & Big Beaver, Troy. [<http://www.dpug.org>](http://www.dpug.org).

FACE (Flint Area Computer Enthusiasts)

Dec. 14–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

Dec. 19–Sunday, 3pm–5pm (3rd or 4th Sunday); Bloomfield Twp. Library, 1099 Lone Pine Rd. (at 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: Digital Music with Concert Pianist David Syme.

MacTechnics, (MAC User Group)

Dec. 11–Saturday; 9:00 am; Holiday Party; Ann Arbor Open School, 920 Miller Ave., Ann Arbor. [<http://www.mactechnics.org>](http://www.mactechnics.org). Cassie at [<cassiemac@yahoo.com>](mailto:cassiemac@yahoo.com) or 313-971-8743.

Michigan Apple Computer User Group

Dec. 9–(2nd Thur) 7:30pm, General meeting; Frat. Order of Eagles Hall in Clawson, 174 Bowers St. (one block North of 14-Mile and one block East of Main). Avi Drissman 248-232-7865. Web: [<http://www.themichiganapple.com>](http://www.themichiganapple.com). Topic: Adobe Photoshop Elements with Terry White of Adobe.

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)

Jan. 4–Tuesday 7:30pm, (1st Tuesday), Carpathia Club, 38000 Utica Rd, Sterling Heights. 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.)

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

Wayne State U. Mac User Group

Dec. 11–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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Contact SEMCO member John Lodden or Customer Service <service@telesthetic.com> or 1-800-807-4515.

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NOVEMBER REFRESHMENT DONORS

Warner Mach, Coordinator

Betty MacKenzie

Carol Sanzi

Gary DeNise and Kay

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.

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 Network: 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 scCook48227@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—December/January

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

December 12—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: BestDraft—A New Way Of Drafting Documents:** SIG-IBM Chairman Tom Callow will demonstrate Cognilearn's BestDraft, a new program that automates the process of drafting documents, and actually makes drafting documents fun.

SOCIAL PERIOD 3:15 pm, **Room 209, Student Lounge**. Refreshments! (Reminder: We must maintain a neat environment.)

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

SIG-IBM Intermediate 3:45 pm, **Room 235**. **Program: Customizing Your Home Page:** SIG-IBM Intermediate Chairman Jack Vander-Schrier will show how you can customize your Home Page.

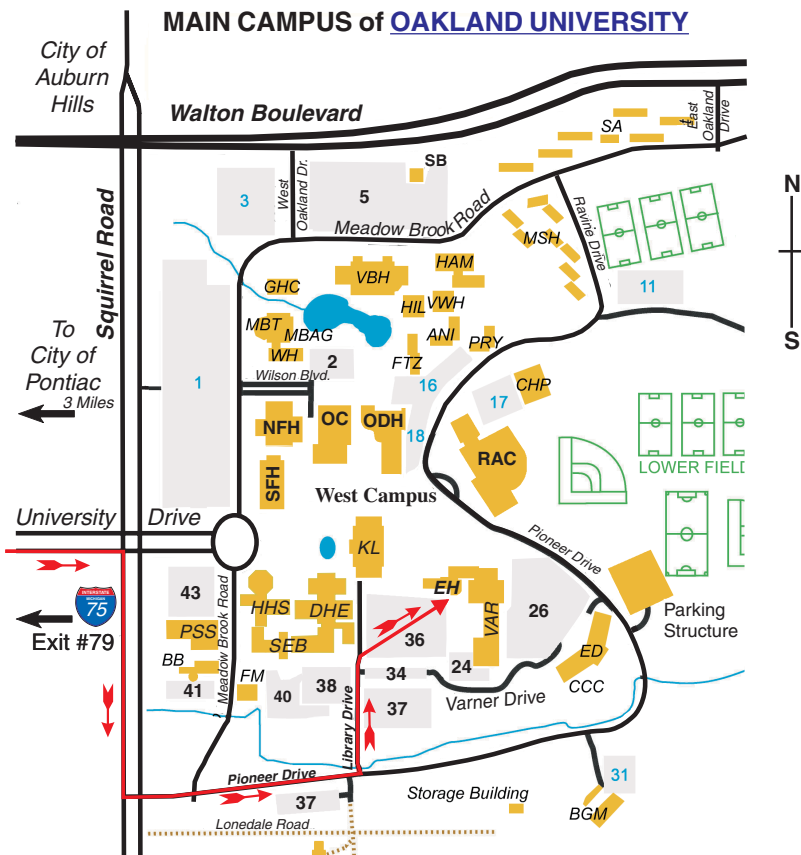
SIG-ADVANCED, **January 3—MONDAY, 6:45 pm**, Oak Park Public Library, 14200 Oak Park Blvd., Oak Park, MI. Phone: (248) 691-7480. Directions: Oak Park Blvd. is 9 1/2 mile Road, located west of Coolidge. Best route from freeway: take I-696 to the Coolidge exit. Head south on Coolidge for 1/2 mile to Oak Park Blvd. and turn right. Info: Franz Breidenich 248-398-3359. **TOPIC: Wide-Ranging Discussion Of Computers & Computing.**

January 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)



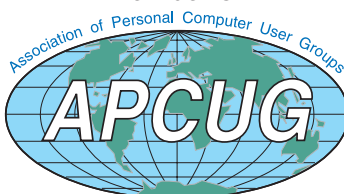
MAP LEGEND

- 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)
December 12
January 9**

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