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Computer Organization, Inc.

DATA BUS

**ELECTION**  
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## SEMCO MEETINGS Sunday, January 9, 2005

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

### Handicappers

When working the Handicap show I was impressed with the technology I saw. There are computers with sensors capable of detecting even eyebrow or eye movement that can be used to control certain things. There is too much to go into detail, but it was sure interesting to see all the technology available for the handicapped. One product was a special computer in the \$8,000 range that has tremendous capabilities. Legislation exists concerning the provision of whatever technology would help a student if certain tests suggest that a technology is necessary to help them. To find out more about how this legislation works, try a search for "IDEA," better known as "Individuals with Disabilities Education Act." If you know anyone severely handicapped, a test and that legislation could help him or her.

I also noticed the Christopher Reeves Foundation booth there and hoped he and Dana might attend, but was told his health prevented it at that

## 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.

time. Sadly, news of his death came shortly after that show.

### Automation

Another show I worked was the Rockwell International Automation Fair, and you would have surely "loved" that one <<http://www.automationfair.com>>. There were automation displays all over the place, and I was totally impressed checking them all out. The exhibit area was 94,000 sq. ft. and packed with big name vendors demonstrating elaborate operational robots and conveyers with robotic arms moving packages around. Since then I found out that Charlie Semple of Los Angeles Computer Society was in attendance as a consultant, and we were probably only a few feet apart at times without knowing it. Two magazines I picked up there were Automation World <<http://www.automationworld.com>> and Instrumentation & Automation News <<http://www.ianmag.com>>.

## **Disappearing Rebates**

I discovered a new problem concerning rebates. I've had good luck with OfficeMax rebates in the past, but the last two I sent in ended up with a follow-up phone call later by me only to be told that the check was sent on a certain date and cashed on a certain date; end of conversation. I gave them the benefit of the doubt for the first one, but when I got the same answer for the second one, I know I keep better records than that, and we have no problem with mailboxes in our neighborhood. A \$10 rebate wasn't worth any further efforts, but that's making me more gun-shy of rebates.

## **Reminders**

I talked to Rich Henf at Banner Badge <<http://www.bannerbadge.com>>, and if you have not ordered one of these fun gadgets yet, they will still honor the DealsGuy offer. Call 1-772-571-9944. If you had problems contacting them during Florida's vicious storms, they apologize and urge you to try again.

Peet Bros. (weather station) may have had similar problems. I'm not sure, but you may still be able to get that special on the Ultimeter Weather Station <<http://www.peetbros.com>> by calling 1-321-206-6214. When I ordered a Big Weather Picture for my weather station, I found it was backordered, but I now have it. Just a glance provides all the weather information. What a nice present for my wife and I (mostly me).

## **How About Helping Microsoft!**

My thanks to Joe Barth of the Alamo PC Organization for sending this information. Joe says: "They are seeking people to participate in Microsoft product evaluations and get free software. Ever wanted to talk to

Microsoft about that one feature you wished the company would change in a product, or on a Web site? The Usability Research Group at Microsoft is interested in talking to you! All participants will receive a software gift for participating in a study." Check it out at <<http://www.microsoft.com/usability/jump1.html>>.

## **Time Is Of The Essence**

Here is a sophisticated time and data management software, C-Organizer Professional, which offers PC users a digital Planner, Event Scheduler, Calendar, Notebook, Address Book, and Password and Bookmark managers, all packed up into one powerful and easy-to-use application. C-Organizer can bring out and help to cultivate time architect skills even in the most hopeless time prisoner. For further information, go to <<http://www.csoftlab.com>>.

User Group people can get it for \$25.00 rather than the usual \$35.00 price by downloading (4.15 MB) at <<https://secure.element5.com/shareit/checkout.html?productid=167248&language=English&COUPON1=248HQM>> for the discounted price. I doubt there is any help for me and my scarcity of time. I'm supposed to be retired, but so far, I have only managed that part time, (mini-part-time).

## **How About A Great Relational Database!**

I called Alpha Software to order the new version of Alpha 5 on special, and while talking to the order-taker, he remembered me, so we created a deal for my readers. Alpha Software has been offering their database for years and has continued to improve it. They have introduced Alpha 5 ver. 6, and user group members can get a deal on it.

Remember that Alpha 5 is a relational database that has some exciting new features. Check their Web site at <<http://www.alphasoftware.com>> for full information. You can build Web-accessible database applications without any programming. You can access and work with your data no matter where it resides if you have an Internet Web Browser. Alpha 5 uses Genies, which are similar to Wizards, but they say Genies are better.

It offers action scripting with hundreds of predefined actions that can be used for building applications without writing one character of code. Alpha's Visual Report Writer will also impress you with its ease of use, and it lets you accomplish custom layouts and many other tasks. As suggested above, it also works with HTML and supports Active X. Read more about it on their Web site, and you will see that Alpha 5 ver. 6 is even more outstanding than ever. I've used Alpha Software's database for my own purposes for years, and I'm no expert.

The retail price for Alpha 5 ver. 6 is \$349.00, but during January and February of 2005 you get a tremendous discount—just \$179.00 if you download it (24 MB). To do that, e-mail Brett Johnston at <[brett@alphasoftware.com](mailto:brett@alphasoftware.com)> with the code “dealsguy” in the subject line to make arrangements for downloading. If you prefer to have it shipped, e-mail Brett with “dealsguy” in the subject line. You can also call Brett at 800-451-1018 Ext. 11. Shipping is \$12.00 in the US, \$30.00 to Canada.

### **Working On Your Icons?**

I received this announcement from Roman Rudnik, Marketing Communications Mgr. of ArcticLine Software, which produces Bee Icons.

He states: “Bee Icons is an icon customization tool that allows you to change over 250 system icons in Windows 95/98/Me/2000/XP, individually or using icon themes. I think you will find our software interesting. Designed for Windows 95/98/Me/2000/XP, the application allows changing over 250 standard icons separately, one after another, or all together using one of the many Bee Icons Themes. Along with Desktop, Drive, and Folder icons, the program can successfully change icons on the Windows XP Start Panel. (DealsGuy note: Check the product page: <<http://www.beeicons.com/features.php>>).

“We offer 15% discount for user group members. If you are interested, please send me an e-mail at <[roman@beeicons.com](mailto:roman@beeicons.com)>, and I will send you a Discount coupon code. This code should be entered during registration process to get the discount.”

### **Talk All Over The World**

I was browsing a recent issue of Hewie's Favorites (his newsletter) and noticed something that might interest you. Information on their Web site is a bit vague so beware. Sounds like both parties must be on-line. Called “Free World Dialup (FWD),” it is located at <<http://www.pulver.com/fwd/>>, and they claim you can make free phone calls over the Internet using your regular telephone and a computer program. I didn't try it. Maybe you could call your own phone with the computer and give your spouse hell, then hang up before they find out who is calling. Just a thought!

*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](mailto:bobclick@mindspring.com)>. Visit my Web site at <<http://www.dealsguy.com>>. I have posted new Web pages with announcements I received in 2004. Sorry they are not well organized, but what is there was a lot of work, as they all have to be edited.*

## **Java And ActiveX**

**By Brian K. Lewis, Ph.D.**

You may have seen references to JAVA and/or ActiveX during your browsing of the web. Or possibly in an error message when you tried to access a web page. So what are they, and what do they do? Even more importantly, are there any security problems associated with them?

From the simplest standpoint, JAVA is a programming language, and ActiveX is a set of rules for how programs should share information. ActiveX controls can be written in a number of programming or scripting languages. Now before your eyes glaze over, let me say I'm not going to discuss how to program in either one of them. I would just like to point out some of the ways they are used. There are also some security considerations when you are browsing the web.

Let's start with Java, which is the oldest of the two and is a product of Sun Microsystems. Java is designed for the development of small, fast running programs, frequently referred to as "applets." Programs written in Java or JavaScript are not converted directly

into binary machine language as are other programs written in C++ or other high level languages. Instead they are converted into machine language, on the fly, from "byte-codes" that are read by an interpreter program. In other words, they are only converted at the time the program is run. Thus a run-time module called a Virtual Machine (VM) must be installed on the computer before a Java program can be run. This VM is different for each different operating system environment. In other words, a VM for a Macintosh is different from that used on a Windows computer or a Linux computer or an IBM mainframe. However, the same Java program can run in any of these environments. That makes the program platform independent. It also makes it very useful as an addition to the HTML program used for designing web pages. Web pages are not only accessed by many different types of computers but the Internet itself is a collection of non-homogenous computers. I should also point out that Microsoft does include a Java VM in Windows. However, it is their version and may not run all true Java code.

So what can be done with a Java program? Just about anything, except writing to your hard disk or to areas of RAM that need to be kept secure. For example, you visit a web page that has a picture of some item you are interested in purchasing, and a caption says "click for larger view." When you click on the caption the response may be an activation of either a Java applet or an ActiveX control that downloads a larger picture to your computer. Similar components are activated when you use the Shockwave Flash Player from Macromedia. Other actions that can be

carried out by these applets include ad banners, timers, visitor counters, file sorting, playing an audio or video recording, etc. The possibilities are really unlimited.

Given that you may never be aware of the action of a Java applet, is there a security risk for your computer? Java was designed to run only in a secured environment, referred to as a “sandbox.” The Java VM has a built-in security manager that verifies the Java code is formatted correctly and that it follows the good behavior rules. During this process, the verifier applies a theorem-prover algorithm that “proves” that there is no violation of access restrictions. It also prevents uncontrolled input/output (I/O) to disk, memory, the video display memory, or even the network, that would constitute a serious breach of security. As long as there is no breakdown in the security provided by the VM application, your computer can’t be harmed by malicious code inserted into a web page. However, there are newer additions to the Java system that can create problems.

The original Java version of the “sandbox” has been considered too restrictive, mainly because of its I/O restrictions. Some products that are Java-enabled are using “digital signatures” to work around this problem. If you trust the digital signature and run the program, you give the program more power than it would otherwise have. You may have come across the window that asks if you want to download and run a digitally signed program. The window will also ask if you always want to trust programs from that source. As long as the author is reliable and the digital signature is not faked, you won’t have a problem.

However, if you are using Internet Explorer, you may not be given the option to accept or decline the applet. This is especially true with ActiveX controls.

Now on to ActiveX. This is the system that was designed and implemented by Microsoft. All Internet Explorer browsers since version 4.0 have been designed to work with ActiveX controls. ActiveX controls can be written in any programming language; therefore they can be much more powerful than Java applets. They can write to your hard disk, video, ram memory, or they can actually start-up applications on your computer. There are free ActiveX components available on the web that can make changes to your registry. As with Java, ActiveX controls are very easy to add to any web page. ActiveX controls are fully converted to machine language before being attached to a web page. They do not run in a secure environment like Java applets. However, they are supposed to be digitally signed, and the user is supposed to decide if the author is trustworthy. If your browser is set to automatically accept ActiveX controls, you will never be asked if you want to accept the control.

So, are there security problems related to ActiveX and Java controls attached to the web pages you visit? Absolutely! Drive-by downloads, ad parasites, and the other undesirable spyware/adware are frequently placed on your computer by ActiveX controls. The after-the-fact control for these problems are Spybot and SpywareBlaster. SpywareBlaster and the immunization features of Spybot can block the ActiveX controls that place entries in your registry.



There is another option to reduce the possibility of problem controls being installed on your computer. If you use Internet Explorer you can change the security settings to prevent the automatic download of ActiveX controls. To do this, open IE and select Tools from the main menu. Then select "Internet Options" and click on the Security tab. Next, click on the "Custom Level" button. Use all of the recommended settings in the table below that you can find.

If you are using Opera or Mozilla as a browser, then you need to look at the Preferences settings and block pop-up windows. You may also be able to prevent images from loading that come

from other than the originating server. In general, Mozilla and Opera tend to be more secure than IE.

Both JAVA and ActiveX have contributed to the improvement of the web browsing experience. However, this has been done at some cost in terms of security. You need to be aware of these problems and how to overcome them. If you have any doubts about an unsigned or digitally signed, ActiveX control, just don't accept it.

***Dr. Lewis is a former university & medical school professor. Contact him at <[bwsail@yahoo.com](mailto:bwsail@yahoo.com)>. This article is reprinted from the May, 2004 issue of the Monitor, newsletter of the Sarasota PC User Group.***

download signed Active X controls:	disable or prompt
download unsigned ActiveX controls:	disable or prompt
initialize and script ActiveX controls not marked as safe:	disable or prompt
run ActiveX controls and plug-ins:	disable or prompt
script ActiveX controls marked safe for scripting:	disable or prompt
downloads:	Enable
font download:	prompt
access data sources across domains:	prompt
allow META REFRESH:	enable
display mixed content:	prompt
don't prompt for client certificate selection:	disable
drag and drop or copy and paste files:	prompt
installation of desktop items:	prompt
allow cookies that are stored on your computer:	disable
allow per-session cookies (not stored):	enable
Java permissions:	High safety
Launching programs and files in an IFRAME:	disable or prompt
Software channel permissions:	high safety
Navigate sub-frames across different domains:	disable or prompt
Submit non-encrypted form data:	disable or prompt
User data persistence:	disable
Active scripting:	disable or prompt
Allow paste operations via script:	disable or prompt
Scripting of Java applets:	disable or prompt
Logon:	automatic logon only in Intranet zone



# Online Auctions—Tips and Resources

By Ira Wilsker

All of us have probably heard of the online auction service eBay, and many of us have probably registered there, and some of us have likely purchased goods on eBay, whether we admit it or not. While only a few years old, eBay was one of the rare surviving exceptions of the internet bubble that burst in the late 90's, and still remains profitable. While eBay is the great granddaddy of auction web sites, with millions of items of almost every description at any given instant, with millions of new auctions opening every day, and millions more closing daily, eBay is far from a monopoly. There are several other auction sites on the net.

Some caveats before delving into the world of online auctions: know whom you are buying from, and understand the risks inherent in buying goods unseen from strangers. If dealing with auction sites that are direct sellers (several to follow), the degree of risk is small, because you would be dealing with an established entity that is easy to check out and verify and that will likely make good on any problems that may arise. If dealing with auction sites (such as eBay and Yahoo) that merely act as conduits between buyers and sellers, and that do not actually own the goods listed, then a successful transaction depends on the integrity of the seller and the policies of the auction site. Despite the millions of buyers and sellers, eBay claims that only a small fraction of 1% of auctions have significant problems. The major auction sites have a strong incentive to make sure that auctions go smoothly for all

involved, because, in this business, reputation is everything. Another caveat is to never pay with a money order, check, bank transfer, or debit card; only pay with a credit card that offers online fraud protection (most do), or use one of the usually reliable online payment services, such as eBay's PayPal. Almost all auction sites that have third party sellers have some type of rating system to indicate the experience and reputation of the sellers and buyers. When buying online, also be absolutely sure to consider and include in your final cost calculations any shipping or delivery charges, and in many cases, sales tax, such that you will not overpay.

Most eBay <<http://www.ebay.com>> auctions are listed for about a week, but some are as short as a few days, and some are up to 10 days or longer. As a near-monopoly, eBay is by far the dominant player in the market. In addition to the millions of individuals who are listed as sellers, there are also many "brick and mortar" stores that sell new first-line, surplus, refurbished, or used items on eBay. Over the past few years governmental bodies have heavily used the ease of eBay's mass market appeal to dispose of surplus or confiscated goods. These governmental sellers range from small towns like Beaumont, (eBay seller name "beaumonttxsurplus"), to the state of Texas (eBay username "tx.unclaimed.property"), and to Pennsylvania (eBay "treasurerhafer"), as well as many others.

An example of some of the bargains available is the recent eBay listing from Beaumont that said "You are bidding on jewelry confiscated by the Beaumont Police Department" ... "One (1) Ladies ring manufactured in yellow metal tested 18k weighing 7.7 grams set with

one (1) 11 x 9mm oval turquoise cabochon surrounded by twelve (12) 2.5mm round brilliant cut diamonds and six (6) baquette cut diamonds SI2 clarity, I color totaling approximately .90 cts. Wholesale Value \$600.00.” The buyer won this on eBay for the bargain price of only \$200.

In addition to eBay, there are many other online auctioneers. Some local stores that have online auctions include Sam’s Club <<http://www.auctions.samsclub.com>>, (membership required), and Goodwill <<http://shopgoodwill.com>>. Sam’s, which auctions its surplus inventory of mostly new items, also occasionally has some items that are clearly marked as refurbished. Some advantages of Sam’s auctions are the reliability of the seller, and the willingness to take back merchandise (read and follow the directions carefully). Sam’s auctions are mostly short duration, one to three days, and there are some very fast “lunchtime auctions” every Tuesday and Thursday. For those interested in buying items in quantity, either for resale or for gifts, Sam’s also has their “Business to Business” (B2B) auctions where items are often available in bulk. I have purchased dozens of items on Sam’s, and all were exactly as described and delivered promptly. Two of my out-of-town daughters have homes heavily furnished in the motif “Sam’s Auctions.” Unlike eBay, where auctions typically end at a fixed time, Sam’s Auctions have a provision for “popcorn bidding,” which negates a popular practice on eBay of posting a bid with only a few seconds left, inadequate time for another bidder to raise that bid. Popcorn bidding provides that any bid within the final 10 minutes of an auction

automatically extends the auction for an additional 10 minutes, until there are no more bids placed in the final 10 minutes. Sam’s also has “Dutch Auctions” where a quantity of an item is listed, and the final selling price for all bidders is the lowest successful bid at the close of the auction.

With all auctions, be very aware of what the item is selling for in the store, as I have seen many items sell at Sam’s Auctions for more than the price it is available for in the store.

Some of the other popular online auction sites, often selling both their own inventory as well as merchandise from individuals are <<http://auctions.overstock.com>>, <<http://auctions.amazon.com>>, and <<http://auctions.yahoo.com>>.

Caveat Emptor.

*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](mailto:iwilsker@ih2000.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.*

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## **An eBay/AuctionDrop Experience**

### **By Bill Agnew**

I had a banjo fifty or so years old that hadn’t been used in many years, and I wanted to get rid of it. I tried several music stores in the area, but they didn’t

want to buy it. Everyone said to sell it on eBay. Well, I had purchased one item on eBay a couple of years ago, but I had never sold anything and wasn't at all sure about how to sell things. I also felt I was too busy to learn.

Somewhere I heard that there are outfits that sell things for you on eBay, taking all the pain out of your hands. Poking around I found AuctionDrop <<http://www.auctiondrop.com>>. On their web site they let you find the nearest location to your zip code. In my case it turned out to be a UPS Store right in my neighborhood. You drop off your item for sale at the store, fill out the paperwork, and go home and relax.

They won't accept just anything. Items must be legal, authentic, weigh less than 25 pounds, be shippable by UPS, sell for at least \$75, be in full workable order, and in good physical condition. The types of items accepted are: antiques, camcorders, cameras, car audio & video, cell phones, computers & networking equipment, electronics, jewelry, purses & shoes, musical instruments & equipment, sports & hobby equipment, and video game systems. Your item gets shipped to AuctionDrop, Inc. in Fremont, CA at their expense, and they promise to have your item listed on eBay within 2 weeks.

They suggest you select a \$1.00 starting price (that makes it almost certain it will sell) because, they say, that usually results in more bidders and a higher sale price. I had a horror of my banjo selling for \$2 to someone, so I insisted on a starting price of \$300. I really didn't know how much it was worth, but a luthier (a string instrument craftsman) in one music store thought it might be worth \$500. If you set a starting price above \$1.00, AuctionDrop

requires a prepay of \$19.99 which is credited to your account if your item sells. If not, they keep the \$19.99 and send your item back.

So what does this all cost. It's not cheap. Typically, for an item that sells for \$400, eBay's fee is \$11.63; AuctionDrop's fee is \$147.82 (37%); and you receive \$240.55.

I must say AuctionDrop did a marvelous job with my banjo. They took 6 pictures of it, front, back, side, and all the closeup details. They described it in great detail, mentioning every little scratch and smudge, and each accessory (picks, extra strings, pitchpipes, etc.), and generally ended up praising it highly ("gorgeous" they said). I might not have dared brag so much about it, but the description sounded like it was done by an expert (a banjo expert at AuctionDrop?). Also, there is the advantage that the seller is listed as AuctionDrop, a highly respected seller with 99.8% positive feedback.

My banjo was listed in about a week for a 7 day auction. I watched every couple of days. For the first 3 days there wasn't a single bid, and I guessed my \$300 starting bid was a big mistake. Then a few days later there were 7 bids, and the price was \$456. Hot pickin' licks! Finally, on the last day there were two more bids, and the price went to \$466—Sold!

AuctionDrop promised to send me my check within 2 weeks of the time the buyer pays, and it came in good time (\$302.42). It was an interesting and entertaining experience, even if they took a big piece of the selling price. But AuctionDrop did a great job for me. Next time I have something to sell, I may have nerve enough to do it all myself and save the steep fee.

# **Can You E-mail Your Doctor? Should You?**

**By Gabe Goldberg**

We rarely think about how the Internet and e-mail have changed society and our lives in just ten years. For finding information, conducting personal and professional affairs, and simply doing business, it's hard to imagine doing without them. No other technology achieved such wide use so fast.

But e-mail acceptance and use isn't universal, and some areas are slower to adopt it. While I routinely exchange e-mail with my stock broker, accountant, car dealer, veterinarian, realtor, and nearly all my service providers, my healthcare professionals are much less uniformly available electronically. In fact, there's no uniformity of opinion among patients, doctors, ethicists, insurance companies, the medical establishment, and government about how this new-fangled technology should be handled and regulated.

My primary care doc, an internist emphasizing cardiac health, gave me the idea for this article by being available via e-mail starting about two years ago. He finds it—as I do!—great for direct, simple communications, and he reports that e-mail decreases phone calls and phone tag, achieving office efficiency and economy. I've asked simple questions, such as how often it's advisable to give blood, and what kind of blood pressure monitor to purchase. He makes e-mail contact available to all his patients with the understanding that if specific therapies are required after e-mail contact, an office visit is needed. Before any e-mailing, he ensures that a patient is using a private

home computer, rather than a workplace system. And he considers e-mail conversations to be informal, not necessarily entering patient records, with any recommendations requiring specific therapeutic intervention warranting a carefully documented office visit.

It's clear that there aren't yet standards for high-tech medical communications, and healthcare providers are individually exploring and defining opportunities. Some doctors use e-mail for administrative matters only, such as booking appointments and handling prescription refills. Some respond to e-mail with telephone calls. Still others won't accept or send any patient e-mail, citing concerns about privacy and security, or e-mail's cold ("low touch") nature as inappropriate for something as important and personal as healthcare.

There are valid technical concerns: e-mail is not private or secure, or even completely reliable; e-mail can be forged; sender and receiver are usually not authenticated; e-mail containing a warning or diagnosis can be delayed in transit, etc. And risks such as incomplete recordkeeping, misunderstandings, and miscommunications—even a patient denying that a note was received—add to the already sadly high risk of litigation.

An ethics expert draws a sharp line, commenting that he's "been around this issue in several professional settings." He continued, "The legal profession has OKed e-mail for confidential communications IF the client requests/approves it and if the system is secure. Work computers are often monitored, so it is not reasonable to regard them as secure. I'd say the same standards apply

to doctors.” And he identifies an additional risk: “Unlike with lawyers, simply communicating with an oncologist (for example) gives information with confidential overtones.” He suggests that doctors avoid e-mail communications with patients, patients avoid communication with doctors from work, and patients avoid research from work on medical web sites.

The American Medical Association (AMA) offers resources describing advantages and risks of healthcare-related e-mail. Guidelines for Physician-Patient Electronic Communications, <<http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/category/2386.html>>, notes that “E-mail has taken on increased significance as a mode of communication that is readily available to patients and health care professionals” and strongly recommends that e-mail must never replace crucial interpersonal contacts. And it provides a number of clear, specific, and mutual guidelines for patient/doctor e-mail.

Another source, Ethical Guidelines for Use of Electronic Mail Between Patients and Physicians, <<http://www.bioethics.net/journal/infocus.php?vol=3&issue=3&articleID=120>>, includes a longer discussion of e-mail issues, including a brief history of doctor/patient communications from the 17th century. Perhaps its most crucial recommendation is that e-mail “should not be used to establish a patient-physician relationship, but rather to supplement personal encounters.”

The government endorses use of e-mail: William Pierce, Deputy Assistant Secretary of HHS, said that the HHS Secretary encourages use of information technology for efficiency

and to improve health. He notes that under HIPAA’s new healthcare privacy rules, use of e-mail is permitted, with informed patient consent and control, and responsible patient usage.

Another issue may be more challenging than deciding whether and how to e-mail: working out a way for doctors to be paid for added value services such as access by e-mail. In the era of managed care, my doc notes, many patients feel entitled to administrative services—FAXing referrals and prescription refills, copying records, filling out forms for handicapped parking, and travel insurance, etc.—because they have health insurance. Since insurers don’t presently reimburse those services, some medical practices have tried to establish fee structures to cover their costs. Of course, new fees aren’t popular with patients or insurance companies. So a new administrative services package may emerge, including e-mailing, FAXing, form completion, etc. for a modest annual fee. And the AMA has defined temporary codes “for identifying emerging technology, services, and procedures,” such as online medical evaluations.

A middle ground is outlined by Jim Harper, editor of [Privacilla.org](http://Privacilla.org), a web-based project that seeks to capture “privacy” as a public policy issue: “A physician should strike the balance carefully between the security risks involved in e-mailing and the importance of quick, effective communication. E-mail is fine for ordinary treatment information about conditions that carry no stigma. More sensitive conditions, or diagnoses and so on, probably deserve better than e-mail.” He notes that the relatively new

HIPAA law may have lawyers advising doctors to avoid using e-mail with patients. If this happens, he feels that this “probably needlessly degrades communication with patients who would benefit from getting written information quickly.”

And a bit of practical reality comes from my doc, who notes that “This is the 21st century. If patients want my time (which unfortunately is finite) they have to get it any way that works for me.” So taking appropriate cautions and precautions, requiring informed patient consent regarding e-mail’s tradeoffs and limitations, and recognizing the potential need to pay for the enhanced service, e-mail complements other technologies—telegraph, telephone, and FAX. These, after all, were new in their time and not accepted without reservations by both patients and physicians, but are now routine rather than threatening.

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## **Don’t Pay a Lot for That PDF Software**

### **By Ira Wilsker**

Recently one of my co-workers needed to create a document in the popular PDF format. He originally thought that he could simply save his word processor document in PDF format, but was mistaken. In order to create files in PDF format, special software is necessary. PDF or “portable document format” was created by the software company Adobe as a universal format that can be viewed by any operating system, and the document will always appear the same, regardless of any fonts or software installed on the computer. The file is created as a “WYSIWYG” (what you see is what you get). Adobe created the very popular Adobe Acrobat to create PDF files, and released the free Acrobat Reader for almost every operating system. Adobe Acrobat comes in several versions, from the basic standard version to a professional version with more features, priced from about \$200 to \$500. A new version 7 was recently announced, but is not yet on the market, as I type this. Acrobat is installed as a printer driver, and any item that can be printed is saved unchanged as an Acrobat PDF file by printing to the Acrobat software, just like printing to a printer. It is extremely easy to use. Make no doubt about it, Adobe Acrobat is excellent software, and among the top selling software titles.

For those who want to create PDF files that can be viewed as intended by the author, there are money saving alternatives to Adobe Acrobat. While they may lack some of the features and refinements of Acrobat, they are far less costly, even to the point of free.



For the past year I have been creating PDF files on my home computer using a \$50 program, PowerPDF 2.0, from Xelerate <[www.xelerate.biz](http://www.xelerate.biz)>. This software installed easily, and appears as a printer driver. When I want to save a document, webpage, or other item as a PDF file, I simply click on print, and select PowerPDF as the printer. A window opens showing the image, and allows for the item to be viewed or saved as a PDF file. Since almost everything I do is routine, and does not require a lot of fancy manipulation, PowerPDF has never failed me, and creates perfect PDF files. I have sent these files to PC, MAC, and Linux users, as well as those on mainframes, and all have been able to view the files with the free Acrobat Reader exactly as I created them with PowerPDF. If I want to e-mail the file, PowerPDF can e-mail the file to anyone with only a few mouse clicks. PowerPDF includes some of the features of its higher priced competitor, including the ability to embed unusual fonts, compress images, create watermarks, and other enhancements. PDF files are considered fairly secure, and tamper resistant, meaning that the recipient will see exactly what I sent.

There are several freeware PDF utilities, but most have some form of restriction, such as they put an ad in the document, sometimes as a watermark in the document that appears as a faint ad. For household use this might not be a distraction, but for business use this would appear most unprofessional. There is at least one free PDF writer that does not place an ad in the document, CutePDF Writer, available for free at <[www.cutepdf.com](http://www.cutepdf.com)>. According to its website, it can "Create

professional quality PDF files from almost any printable document. Free for personal and commercial use! No watermarks! No popup Web advertisements!" In April, 2004, the magazine Computer Shopper rated it as one of the "50 best free downloads." Currently available as version 2.2, the free download is only 1 MB, and quick to download even on a dialup line. It does require the installation of another free utility, GNU Ghostscript, a 3 MB download, which is also available from the CutePDF website, or at <[www.ghostscript.com](http://www.ghostscript.com)>.

There are alternative ways to obtain Adobe Acrobat, but I want to warn those that may consider the alternatives that their choice may be illegal. By being both very popular, and expensive, Adobe Acrobat has become one of the most widely pirated (illegally copied) software titles. Typically sold on illicit foreign websites, and by spam e-mail, these pirated copies, in addition to being patently illegal, are often difficult to install and impossible to use, as they generally do not contain valid registration information. Knowing there is little honor among thieves, sometimes the genuine looking counterfeit CD is totally blank, or incomplete, and may also contain spyware, viruses, and other malware. Of course Adobe will not provide any support or updates, and the user may also face criminal prosecution. Some people who have used a credit card to order such pirated software not only never received the software (it was either never shipped or seized as contraband), but have also found their credit card info abused by the seller.

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# Why Can't I Open This File?

**By Brian K. Lewis, Ph.D.**

There are times in every computer user's life when the computer seems to be deliberately trying to increase your level of frustration. One of these little moments is when you receive a file from an associate, and no matter what you do, you can't open it. The file can be a document, a picture, a spreadsheet, or any number of other types. So why does this happen? And what does it have to do with these things called extensions or suffixes?

Believe it or not, every file name on your computer has a suffix. I know, if you have never used any OS other than Windows, you may never have seen this suffix or file extension. But they really do exist. If you open "My Computer" or Windows Explorer, select "Tools" from the menu. Then click on "Folder Options" and in that window click on "View." In this list some items are checked, and some are not. If there is a check mark in the item "hide extensions for known file types," remove it. Then click on "apply to all folders." You will get a message telling you that the change will occur the next time you open a folder. Now open up any folder and look at the array of file extensions. Go from folder to folder and see how many different extensions you can find.

So now you see that the number of different extensions seems to be limitless. Or at least enough to bring on some confusion. Why is there such a proliferation of these three figure suffixes? Let's look again at the "Tools" menu and "Folder Options." This time click on the tab for "File Types." The

upper window lists "Registered file types." Now scroll through the list until you find "Adobe Acrobat Plug-in file." This has an extension of API, and in the lower window you find a short explanation as to which program can open this file. In this case, Adobe Acrobat. Keep scrolling down through the list. You will probably find the BMP suffix. This is a picture file and usually opens with Microsoft Paint. However, on my computer it has been associated with IrfanView, a graphics viewer. Keep scrolling to get an idea of all the different file types and their extensions.

If you click on enough different file types, you will notice that each type is generally, but not always, associated with an application. When you click on the change button, the preferred application is listed at the top. You can change this to another application, but then double-clicking a file of that type may result in a error, and it won't open. Applications such as Microsoft Word, Word Perfect, Microsoft Works, Excel, etc., can only open files that were created by them unless they have the appropriate translator for the document. This goes back to the reasons for the file suffixes. The suffix tells Windows what application is needed to open a particular file. Every application capable of creating files uses a different format for the file header and body information. This formatting allows Word, for example, to open a document that has specific margins, type face, printer assignment, etc. The same is true for other applications.

Let's take a look at some of the definitions associated with the file structure of a Word file.

"FIB"(File Information Block): The header of a Word file. Begins at offset

0 in the file. Gives the beginning offset and lengths of the document's text stream and subsidiary data structures within the file. Also stores other file status information.

"DocFile": A Word docfile consists of a main stream, a summary information stream, a table stream, a data stream, and 0 or more object streams that contain private data for OLE 2.0 objects embedded within the Word document.

"Document": A named, multi-linked list of data structures, representing an ordered stream of text with properties that were produced by a user of Microsoft Word.

"Datastream": The stream within a Word docfile containing various data that hang off of characters in the main stream. For example, binary data describing in-line pictures and/or form fields.

From these descriptions you can see that a Word document has a very specific structure that has to be read and interpreted in a specific way. Other applications can't read a Word file unless they have a translator for it. Even then, the translation may not accurately reflect the content and format of the original file.

Another file format is that of database files. In a dBASE file, or a FoxPro file, the first byte identifies the version that created the file. Consequently, older versions can't read files created with newer versions of the program. For a number of years Microsoft created similar problems in Word documents by changing the file format every time a new version of Word was released.

Another application that has its own file formats is Microsoft Works. This

application can create text documents, database files, and spreadsheets. None of these files can be opened by other programs. The interesting thing is that Works can save files in Word format, WordPerfect format, or RTF (rich text file). It can even open most of these formats. But Word and WordPerfect are unable to read files in the native Works format.

Another problem exists with picture (graphic) files. Although your web browser should be able to read the most common formats, they have to be associated with the browser. If they are not, you will get an error when you attempt to open the file. Every graphic format has a different structure and may not always open in your photo software.

The most common formats used on the Web are GIF and JPG (jpeg). However, these are two very different formats. GIF is a compressed format that is referred to as a "lossless" compression. In other words, you don't lose any detail in the process of compression/decompression. However, GIF can not use more than 256 colors. That makes it less usable for color photos than other formats. However, for web page logos and other small graphics, GIF is ideal. The file size is small, so transmission time over the Internet is quite short.

Photographs can be sent by e-mail using the JPG format, which is very compressible. Jpegs can be compressed to 10% of their original size, which greatly reduces transmission time. However, the greater the compression, the greater the loss of detail. Jpegs are a "lossy" format. The detail that is lost by compression can never be recovered. If the picture is important, you should always save an uncompressed master.

Another “lossless” graphic format is TIF or TIFF (tagged image file format). This is the best format for color pictures and should be used to save the master copy of important photographs. The major problem with TIF files is that they are very large. Much larger than jpegs. For example, a file from a digital camera was 526 KB in its native format. When converted to TIF and compressed, it took up over 6 MB on the hard drive. However, not every graphics program can read TIFF files. If yours can’t, then you need something like IrfanView, a free file viewer.

So the answer to the original question “Why Can’t I Open This File?” is: you either don’t have a suitable application installed on your computer, or you have it, but the application is not associated with the file you are trying to open. Now, if you know the application that created the file, and if you have it on your computer, you can solve the problem. You only need to associate the file with the application. To do this open “My Computer” and select the “Tools” menu and “File Options.” Click on the “File Types” tab and then scroll to the file extension for the file you want to open. Click on “Change” and select the application you want to use to open the file.

All of this discussion assumes that the file has not been corrupted. Even minor damage to the header of a file can keep it from being opened. Transmission of files between computers is always subject to possible damage. Now maybe those undamaged files can be opened with a little less frustration.

***Dr. Lewis is a former university & medical school professor. He has been working with personal computers for***

***more than 30 years. He can be reached via e-mail at <[bwsail@yahoo.com](mailto:bwsail@yahoo.com)>.***

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## **Synchronize Those Files**

**By Joe Shipley**

With so many laptops available these days, one of the more common things I come across is the need for people to synchronize their files between their laptop and their desktop. Or synchronize files among several computers on a network.

Let’s say you use a spreadsheet to keep track of information. This spreadsheet is used on a daily basis to show you what you did in the past. Every day you add to the spreadsheet to keep it current. Some days you add information while using your desktop, and other days while using your laptop. You want to make sure the same information is available to you whether you’re working on the laptop or the desktop.

If you had copies of the same file on both your desktop and your laptop, each time you added information to the file on your laptop, it would not automatically be added to the version on the laptop. So you’d have to do double work and spend lots of time copying the latest version from one computer to the other.

What File Synchronization does is provide a way for you to update the same file from either machine and make sure that both files are exactly the same. The way to do this is by using Offline Files. You could also use the Briefcase feature on your laptop, but I suggest Offline Files. And I'd make the desktop the "master," even though the files on both systems will be identical.

To set up your desktop computer to use Offline Files, open My Computer or Explorer, go to Tools, Folder Options, Offline Files, and make sure that the Enable Offline Files check box is selected. Select Synchronize all offline files before logging off to get a full synchronization, or leave it unselected for a quick synchronization. While you're here, also check the box to place a shortcut to Offline Files on your Desktop.

Once this is done, go to your laptop and use Explorer or My Network Places to find those files on the desktop computer you want synchronized. When you have highlighted the shared folder or file(s) you want to work with, click on the File menu item and then click on Make Available Offline. If you don't see Make Available Offline, you didn't correctly set up your system to enable Offline Files. (Note: To make Offline Files work on a system running XP, you may need to disable Fast Switching.) If an entire folder is made available offline, any files in that shared folder now or in the future will automatically be made available offline the next time the computers are synchronized.

At this point you have selected files to be worked on offline. When you want to work on a file that will be synchronized with another computer, you can access the file by opening the

folder, Shortcut to Offline Files, select the file you wish to open, and make any changes you desire. When you save the file and get ready to close your system, if you're connected to the other computer, your files will be synchronized. If not, the next time you do connect to the other computer, synchronization will take place.

While this may appear to be very complicated, it may be easier than I have described it. For more information, go to <[www.microsoft.com](http://www.microsoft.com)> and enter "Working Offline" in the search box; then select the first result to see a more comprehensive discussion of this topic. By using this feature you can keep important files on one machine while still working with them on another, and know that both are identical.

*Joe Shipley is a member of the Phoenix PC Users Group, Arizona, and is co-owner of SMART IDEAS! He is a computer consultant, in Mesa, AZ, and you can reach him at <[joeship\[nospam\]@cox.net](mailto:joeship[nospam]@cox.net)>.*

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### **It is Said That:**

A dragon fly has a lifespan of 24 hrs.  
Butterflies taste with their feet.  
Leonardo Da Vinci invented scissors.  
Almonds are in the peach family.  
No word in the English language  
rhymes with month, orange, silver, or  
purple.

# **Which Office Suite Should You Be Using?**

**By George McGinnis**

Word processors, and office suites, as used in the modern computer, have an interesting background and history. In the beginning the word processor was the most sought after of all the programs. The heyday of the word processor was in the late 1970's-early 1980's when serious home computing was first getting started. Word processors were the first thing most people wanted to use on the home computer for the simple reason that they viewed the home computer as a replacement for the typewriter. If you wanted to write a letter, the best way was to use a word processor.

It wasn't very long before we were inundated with a plethora of the pesky things, each claiming to be the best. How many can you recall? I recall PC Write, Rite Writer, Volkswriter, Word Star, Peachtree Text, and Perfect Writer. There were numerous others. The first one I used was PC Rite. It came with the computer a local computer guru built for me in 1982. The word processor was an extra and cost \$20.00 as I recall. I had the first edition. At first it worked very well for me, but I gradually discovered several bugs and problems. For example, it did not have an automatic "save" feature. I recall once I had typed several pages of a story which was somehow deleted. It was gone! I complained to the program's author that he needed to add the automatic "save" feature. He added it to the next version and gave me a free copy because I had made the suggestion. I suspect other word processors of the time had similar problems.

Then along came Word Perfect. It was the most mature of them all, and also the most expensive. Word Perfect became the default word processor for business throughout the United States, and its fame spread very rapidly. I can recall as recently as 15 years ago when our local university decided that Word Perfect was to be the only word processor to be used for administrative purposes by the university. At the time I warned them that Word Perfect was soon to be supplanted by Microsoft WORD, but my warning was ignored. I wonder how much that blunder cost the university.

In the late 1970's, the addition of spreadsheets and databases made their appearance. I recall that Lotus 1-2-3 and VisiCalc as spread sheets, and Dbase 3 as a database, were popular early on.

Now to the question: Which suite should you be using today? The simple answer is to continue using the present one if you are pleased with it and if it handles all your situations. But is that really the answer?

At present we have three champions in the field. Two are well known, Word Perfect Office and Microsoft Office. The third is hardly known at all, but it is out there, and it should become known. I am referring to Open Office.org, Version 1.1.1. This latter suite is available as a free download, or can be purchased on a CD. It contains a word processor, a spreadsheet, a database, a draw program, and a presentation program.

Recently the Ziff Davis publication e-WEEK participated in a test to try to determine if, for example, Microsoft Office could be replaced by OpenOffice.org for use at a large

business. One of the reasons for the test was potentially to save money; for example, Word Perfect Office costs about \$199.00, and Microsoft Office 2003 Professional is about \$359.00. A business must purchase a license for a certain number of copies, and 100 licenses are not unusual. The cost becomes critical when the business decides it must upgrade.

The test they made is impressive. e-WEEK obtained as volunteers several large businesses, and also obtained volunteers from the same businesses who regularly used Microsoft Office. The information about the test and its results is contained in the e-WEEK, April 26, 2004 edition. My interpretation of the results is that for ordinary work the free download is quite adequate. However, for more complicated functions, Microsoft Office is preferred.

How about the ordinary home user, like you and me? I think it boils down to money. If you have lots of it, use Microsoft Office, and upgrade it as needed. Depending on the version, you can have a word processor, database, spreadsheet, presentation program, and various other features, all at a price. Next on the list would be Word Perfect Office, which is less costly but still a full featured suite. It contains a word processor, spreadsheet, database, presentation program, and Dragon Naturally Speaking, a voice recognition program.

If you want a word processor with the look and feel of Microsoft Word, and a not too complicated spreadsheet and database, the free Open Office.org will fill the bill, and the price is right. Try it. You might like it. Go to [www.openoffice.org](http://www.openoffice.org) and get the free download, or purchase the CD.

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## **What's New**

### **By William Grizzell**

#### **Future Computer Monitors from HP Research**

HP Labs in Bristol, England, has been working on developing a high-resolution, paperlike display technology using plastic instead of glass for applications such as electronic books, magazines, and posters, as well as a whole new range of products that might be made possible, such as electronic whiteboards. HP researchers showed off a prototype using the new display technology at the National Gallery in London, saying it was the first step in breaking out of the 1,000-by-1,000-pixel display barrier through which computer users see much of the electronic world.

While the LCD prototype was small—just 1.18 in. by 1.57 in.—it could display 125 colors and featured a “bistable” passive matrix, meaning that the researchers could build displays with as many pixels as they desired. The fingernail-thin prototype displayed clear images from the National Gallery famous collection, and researchers were



confident that they could scale the technology to much larger displays. More developed plans for using the display technology are expected in about three years after more work has been done, the researchers said.

"We think this is a substantial milestone for large, low-cost, quality displays," said Huw Robson, manager of the digital media department at HP Labs. Once the displays are scaled to 16.9 in. by 22.8 in., researchers expect them to be about five times cheaper than today's glass LCD displays. "We've done cost modeling to suggest that this kind of savings is reasonable," said Adrian Geisow, manager of displays research at HP Labs.

The source of the researchers' enthusiasm is not just the size and potential cost of the displays, but that they have created a whole new process for making them that employs a print-like process on plastic. The manufacturing process is much simpler and affordable than making a glass LCD using photolithography, which requires a process much like film developing on a substrate to achieve a pattern for displaying images. What's more, the technology allows for 200 or more pixels per inch, giving images a resolution normally confined to paper. That's why the technology is suited for art and text, the researchers said.

While commercial plans for the technology are several years away, the research fits squarely with HP's strength in the printing market.

### **Google Desktop Search**

Do you have trouble finding a file on your computer hidden in that endless haystack of a hard drive?

Google Desktop Search is a small, free download; yet it's fast, reliable,

and slickly integrated with the company's Internet search engine. You download a 400-kilobyte file, install it, and wait for it to index your hard drive.

Indexing happens only when the PC is idle for more than 30 seconds, so there is no noticeable impact on performance.

Searches are extremely fast—often a fraction of a second. And, it doesn't just search file names, but also content in files, including Microsoft Office, simple text files, Outlook e-mail, and AOL instant messages.

Sound good? Well, there is a small hitch. It only indexes the primary "C" drive, and it does not index the entire drive. If you have drives 'D', 'E', 'F', 'I', and 'J,' like I do, it won't see them. Back to the Microsoft search utility and trying to remember where we saved all those files and under what name. Download the program at: <http://desktop.google.com>.

### **New Laptop Hard Drives**

Western Digital and Seagate have introduced higher-performance, power-thrifty 2.5-inch hard drives for laptops. The Western Digital hard drive line will be known as Scorpio and will have capacities of 40GB, 60Gb and 80GB. The drive has a rated average seek time of 12 milliseconds and comes with a 2 Mb buffer (an upgrade to 8Mb is optional). Like competing high-performance models from Hitachi and Seagate, the Scorpio drives will spin their platters at 5,400 rpm. High-speed spinning presents special problems in laptops with heat buildup, power use, and sound volume. Western Digital has teamed its SoftSeek algorithms, which quiet the clicking typical during hard drive seek, with its WhisperDrive technology, which includes fluid



dynamic bearings and a specially damped top cover.

They also claim that heat won't be a problem, because their Scorpio drives have run cooler in tests than the competing 4,200-rpm and 5,400-rpm models they have compared to.

### **AMD Releases Athlon 64 FX-55 CPU**

Advanced Micro Devices, Inc. has released a new CPU that will take over the top of AMD's performance lineup. The Athlon 64 FX-55 runs at 2.6GHz and matches up against Intel's Pentium 4 Extreme Edition processor. For this chip, AMD added 512Kb cache memory to the Athlon 64 4000+ for a total of 1Mb of Level 2 cache. The Athlon 64 4000+ runs at 2.4GHz and is slightly cheaper. AMD increased the thermal envelope of the processor to enable those speed increases. The Athlon 64 4000+ has a maximum thermal rating of 104 watts, an increase of 15 watts from 89 watts for the 3800+ processor. During maximum operating conditions, it will be hot.

### **NetGear is Designing a Broadband Modem**

NetGear, Inc. is designing a broadband modem to use with a long-range wireless data service called Flash-OFDM that is currently in trial tests by Nextel Communications, T-Mobile, and Vodafone. The hardware from NetGear would interconnect Flash-OFDM, which was developed by startup Flarion Technologies, Inc., with personal computers and networks using Ethernet or Wi-Fi technology. Flash-OFDM, which stands for Orthogonal Frequency Division Multiplexing, has other attributes beyond speed. It was designed to work well in moving cars and trains while requiring less spectrum than some wireless technologies. The Nextel Flash-

OFDM service, priced between \$35 and \$75 per month, is offered with minimum download speeds ranging from 750 kilobits per second to 1.5 megabits per second with occasional bursts up to 3 Mbps. Uploads range from 200 kbps to 375 kbps with bursts of 750 kbps. This is faster than EV-DO, which Sprint Corp. is deploying. Verizon, in a joint venture between Verizon and Vodafone, is promising EV-DO downloads of 300-to-500 kbps.

### **Florida Man Pays Spam Fine**

A Florida man and his company must pay a \$25,000 fine to settle a spam case filed against him by the Massachusetts attorney general. The man from Weston, Fla, and his business, DC Enterprises, agreed to pay the fine and to stop sending thousands of unsolicited e-mails. He apparently sent thousands of commercial e-mails from a business address in Newton, MA., where the company had no physical presence.

The commercial e-mail offered "pre-approved mortgage rates even with bad credit" and gave the consumers no way for them to opt out of getting future e-mails.

### **New BTX Design for PCs**

Many new computers will be based on the BTX chassis design, championed by Intel Corp. to replace the current ATX models. BTX, standing for Balanced Technology Extended, puts the hottest components such as the processor, chip sets, and graphics controllers in the center of the chassis where they are cooled by a front-to-back airflow.

Air is pushed through the chassis by a larger fan in the front that moves more slowly and is quieter than current fans. In addition, the enhanced airflow means that some of the component-

dedicated smaller fans used in ATX designs aren't needed, further reducing noise and power consumption.

*William Grizzell is a member of the Phoenix PC Users Group, Arizona, and President of Memory Etc. Inc., a wholesale computer components store and custom computer builder. His web site address is <[www.memoryetc.com](http://www.memoryetc.com)>.*

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## **Tech Briefs**

### **By T. Zinneman**

#### **Digital Camera Sensors**

With the increasing popularity of digital cameras, especially with the dramatic decrease in prices recently, I thought it might be appropriate to discuss some aspects of the sensors used in these cameras. Instead of film, digital cameras use electronic sensors that are sensitive to light. There are currently two types of sensors in use: the charge coupled device (CCD) and the complementary metal oxide semiconductor (CMOS). Each of these sensor types contains an array of light-sensitive sites, called photosites. These photosites are usually square in shape and arranged in a rectangular grid of rows and columns. Each photosite converts the light striking it into electrons (electrical charge). The more light that strikes the photosite, the more electrons that are produced.

Most of the sensors currently in use are based on CCD technology. Although this technology is quite advanced, actual CCD production is highly specialized. As a result, CCD sensors are expensive. The production of CMOS sensors is based on the same technology used to produce microprocessors and other computer chips. As a result, their production cost is less. Also, additional circuitry can be added on the same chip as the sensor, eliminating the need for external processing chips required with CCD sensors. A problem with early CMOS sensors was the high background noise. However, that problem has been solved. The highly successful Canon D-30 and D-60 SLR cameras use CMOS sensors and produce very little background noise. In time, CMOS sensors will catch up and pass CCD sensors as the sensor of choice.

Did you know that the sensor photosites are color blind? Each photosite simply collects the amount of light striking it and converts it to electrical charge. There is no color data generated. So, how is color data generated? There are several ways to do this. You could split the light coming through the camera lens and route it to three different sensors, each of which could be adjusted to react to a certain portion of the light spectrum. This is done by covering each sensor with a filter colored to accept one of the three primary colors: red, green, or blue. This technique is used in top-of-the-line cameras.

However, the most common technique, which is used in most consumer cameras, is to place an array of colored filters over the photosites in a single sensor. Two filter arrays are

commonly used: RRGB and CYMG. With the RRGB pattern, odd numbered rows of photosites are covered by alternating red and green filters. Even numbered rows are covered by alternating green and blue filters. The RRGB pattern is commonly referred to as the Bayer pattern after the Kodak engineer that invented it. This array uses the primary colors (red, green, and blue) of the additive mixing method used in television and computer monitors and is the pattern used in most digital cameras.

The other array, CYMG, is a more complex filter array. It uses the primary colors (cyan, yellow, and magenta) in the subtractive process (commonly used in printers) plus green. This array is used in some of the Nikon Coolpix series of cameras. Since the eye is most sensitive to the color green, green filters are added to this array. Likewise, in the RRGB array, there are twice as many green filters as red or blue.

So, how do digital cameras achieve their advertised resolution if it takes

four separate pixels to determine the color of a single pixel. The answer is interpolation. The camera's software examines a block of adjacent pixels to determine the missing values for each pixel location. For example, consider a red pixel. The software will determine its blue value by averaging the values of the surrounding blue pixels. Likewise, it will determine the green value by averaging the surrounding green pixels. The software used to do this is commonly called demosaicing algorithms, because it converts a mosaic of separate colors into a mosaic of true colors.

Another somewhat confusing parameter associated with camera sensors is the actual physical size of the sensor. In a camera's specifications, one will usually see a fractional designation, such as 1/2.7," 1/1.8," 2/3," or 4/3." Occasionally, you may see the actual physical size, i.e., the length, width, and diagonal, given in mm. These numbers seem to have no relationship to the fractional designation.

Type of Sensor	Aspect Ratio	Sensor Diagonal	Sensor Width	Sensor Height
1/2.7"	4:3	6.59mm	5.27mm	3.96mm
1/2"	4:3	8.00	6.40	4.80
1/1.8"	4:3	8.93	7.18	5.32
2/3"	4:3	11.00	8.80	6.60
1"	4:3	16.00	12.80	9.60
4/3"	4:3	22.50	18.00	13.50
35-mm film	3.2	43.30	36.00	24.00

The fractional designation originated with a set of standard sizes given to television vidicon tubes in the 1950s. These sizes were given as 1/2," 2/3," etc. These numbers did not define the diagonal of the sensor area, but the outer diameter of the glass envelope of the tube. It was soon discovered that the diagonal of the usable image area was approximately two-thirds that of the designated size. Unfortunately, the original sizes are still used; a much more useful measurement would be the actual diagonal of the sensor. The table on the previous page lists some common sensor sizes.

As to which sensors are being used, the 1- and 2-Mpixel cameras use the type 1/2.7" or type 1/2." Most of the 3- and 4-Mpixel cameras use the 1/1.8" sensors. The 5-Mpixel cameras, such as the Sony DSC-F717 and Nikon 5700, use the 2/3" sensor. The Canon D-60 and Nikon D100 cameras, which are 6-M-pixel cameras, use the 4/3" sensor. Olympus has recently announced a new line of cameras to be released in the fall, based on the 4/3" sensor. In fact, Olympus, Kodak, and Fujifilm are working together to produce a new standard for SLR cameras with removable lenses based on the type 4/3" sensor. Camera bodies and lenses based on this standard should be much less expensive than the current generation of digital SLR cameras using lenses based on 35-mm film technology.

The future of digital cameras is truly exciting. The production of cheaper and larger sensors will soon result in consumer-priced cameras that will actually surpass film cameras in the quality of images produced. For more information on digital camera sensors, visit the following web sites:

[www.normankoren.com/digital\\_cameras.html](http://www.normankoren.com/digital_cameras.html) >, [www.luminous-landscape.com/essays/counting1.shtml](http://www.luminous-landscape.com/essays/counting1.shtml) >, and [www.bythom.com/ccds.htm](http://www.bythom.com/ccds.htm) >.

### **Video Cards**

Your computer's video card is the component responsible for turning digital information produced by the processor into a form that can be displayed on a monitor. These cards are also known as video adapters, graphics cards, or graphics adapters.

The video card acts like a "middle man," working between the processor and the monitor. The processor generates the data to be displayed. The video card then translates this information into a form (analog for CRTs and digital for LCDs) that the monitor can display. With older video cards, the main processor did all of the work necessary to generate the data to be displayed. The displayed data was even stored in main system memory. Eventually, memory was added to the video cards, freeing main system memory for other uses.

With the advent of graphical operating systems, such as Windows, much more display-related data had to be generated. The main processor spent more and more of its time computing display data, reducing overall performance. To clear this bottleneck, companies added co-processors to their video cards, so that most of the necessary video calculations could be done on the card, reducing the work load on the main processor. Video cards with co-processors are known as video accelerators or graphics accelerators.

Most modern video cards contain a graphics co-processor, memory, RAMDAC, and a bus interface. They

also are provided with software drivers. Together, these components help determine the relative performance of your PC's graphics.

The graphics co-processor determines what the video card can and can't do. It handles many of the calculations needed to display 2D graphics and video. To make an object or scene more realistic, there are 3D graphics techniques available that generate a graphical representation of the object along three axes (height, width, and depth). These techniques "trick" the PC user into seeing a 3D image on a flat (2D) screen. Specially-designed graphics co-processors are available for generating the enormous amount of data needed to produce 3D images.

The amount of memory determines the maximum resolution and color depth that your PC can support. The more memory, the more pixels and colors that can be displayed on the monitor. For example, 2.4MB of memory is needed to display true-color (24-bit) graphics at 1024x768 resolution (1024 pixels x 768 pixels x 3 bytes). Double buffering is usually needed when running 3D graphics. This means that the card must be capable of holding two sets of scenes in its memory; thus, twice the memory is needed.

RAMDAC, the card's digital-to-analog converter and color manager, determines how frequently the video card can refresh the image on the monitor. (Note: Monitors need refreshing 60-90 times per second.) It is called RAMDAC because the data comes directly to it from the memory contained on the card. The faster the RAMDAC, the more quickly the card

can update the displayed data and the more stable the images seem to appear on the screen. Many graphics co-processors include a built-in RAMDAC.

With the introduction of the Pentium processor, video cards were designed to plug into the PCI bus, which is a 32-bit wide bus that can operate at data rates of 132 MB per second. With the advent of the Pentium II processor, Intel introduced a new graphics-only bus, called the Accelerated Graphics Port (AGP). This bus can handle data rates up to 526 MB per second. The PCI bus is adequate for 2D graphics and video. However, cards designed for the AGP bus should be used when running programs that exhibit 3D graphics and more sophisticated multimedia applications.

Although software drivers are not part of the video card, they perform a critical function. The drivers enable the video card to talk to and take orders from the operating system and its applications.

To specify a video card's capabilities, video standards were established in the early years of the PC, primarily by IBM. The intention of these standards was to define agreed upon resolutions, colors, etc., to make it easier for the manufacturers of PCs, monitors, and software to ensure that their products work together. One of these standards, the Video Graphics Array (VGA), provides for a resolution of 640x480 pixels with 16 colors. VGA has become the de facto standard for graphics and is the minimum provided on all video cards manufactured today. It is also used by Microsoft when the Windows operating system starts up in the Safe Mode. It was the last well-

defined and universally accepted standard for video cards.

With IBM's fall from dominance, no universally accepted hardware standards have emerged. Manufacturers have produced a new generation of extended or super VGA (SVGA) cards that support a variety of different (not necessarily compatible) video modes. The Video Electronics Standards Association (VESA) has been formed to define new video interface standards. The VESA SVGA standard is called the VESA BIOS Extension, or VBE. This standard, now in its second version, can be implemented in either hardware or software. More and more manufacturers are starting to comply with it.

By the late 1990s, there were a number of manufacturers producing highly specialized graphics co-processor chips for handling the ever expanding 3D graphics and multimedia applications. However, because of the intense competition, there are now only two major players: Canada's ATI Technologies and California-based nVidia. ATI produces both graphics chips and the complete video cards; however, nVidia only produces the chips and sells them to other vendors who build and sell the cards. NVidia's current series of chips are called GeForce.

The type of video card you need depends on the usage. For example, if you use your system primarily for word processing, spreadsheets, and 2D graphics, a video card with 8MB of memory that plugs into the PCI bus is probably adequate. These cards cost in the neighborhood of \$50. However, if you're into 2D image processing and 3D graphics/video, a faster card with

more memory is needed. Such 3D graphics cards are now available for use with high-end games, computer-aided design, and multimedia applications. These cards come with 16MB up to as much as 256MB of memory and utilize the AGP bus. They typically cost in the range of \$100-\$200.

Manufacturers of video cards include:

ATI Technologies <[www.ati.com](http://www.ati.com)>,  
ASUS <[www.asus.com](http://www.asus.com)>,  
Gainward <[www.gainward.com](http://www.gainward.com)>,  
Hercules <[www.hercules.com](http://www.hercules.com)>,  
Leadtek <[www.leadtek.com](http://www.leadtek.com)>,  
PNY Technologies <[www.pny.com](http://www.pny.com)>,  
Visiontek <[www.visiontek.com](http://www.visiontek.com)>.

*T. Zinneman is a member of the Charlotte County Computer Group in Port Charlotte, FL. If you have any questions or comments, please send them to <[tzinneman@comcast.net](mailto:tzinneman@comcast.net)>.*

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## Computers Of The Future

### By Pim Borman

For the last 40 years or so computer chips have closely followed Moore's Law, which states that the number of transistors doubles every 18 months. The corresponding increase in computing performance has been enormous, but chip manufacturers are beginning to reach the physical limit of miniaturization. Intel's latest chip, "Prescott," with 125 million transistors, an improved version of the 55-million transistor Pentium 4, was delayed by production difficulties and proved to be only marginally faster. Cramming more transistors in a certain area by reducing their size leads to increasing electrical leakage problems and

crosstalk; it also increases heat generation. Some recent microprocessors consume over 100 watts, generating more heat per square centimeter than a laundry iron on the cotton setting (W. Wayt Gibbs, writing in Scientific American, November 2004, pp.96-101). Increased computation speeds have to a large extent also been the result of clever changes in computer architecture that allow the chip to execute multiple instructions for each clock tick. We are finally reaching the inevitable end of Moore's Law.

Intel has already announced that it will no longer distinguish its microprocessors by clock speed, which is after all only part of the system's performance characteristic. In addition, starting next year, all Intel chips will have not one but two "cores" that allow higher computation speeds through parallel processing. AMD already has such chips. There is nothing new about fast computing with parallel processing computers; the fastest computers in the world are now built using thousands of processors that operate in parallel to perform specific operations, such as playing world champion chess. But all current software for home and office use will have to be rewritten.

Many users, as well as software companies, may decide it is not worth the hassle. If you have an up-to-date computer, it probably responds faster to your inputs than you can provide them, unless you are a game freak or use industrial-strength graphics or database programs. Customers will be better served by improved security and simplified operations.

Not by coincidence, W. Wayt Gibbs also wrote an article in the same issue of Scientific American (Nov. 2004, pp.

80-87) about future computers using photons (light) instead of electrons (electricity) to perform computations and connections between the cpu and memory storage. There are many technical problems to be solved as yet, including the challenge to bring the cost down, but it seems likely to be the computer technology of the future. Photons do not significantly generate heat. All the rest is engineering detail!

*Pim Borman can be reached at <[swipcug@sigecom.net](mailto:swipcug@sigecom.net)>. He is a member of the SW Indiana PC Users Group, Inc <<http://swipcug.apcug.org>>. This article appeared in the November, 2004 issue of the P-SEE URGENT, newsletter of SWIPCUG.*

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## Disposing Of Old Computer Equipment

### By Bill Agnew

A number of SEMCO members have asked how they could usefully dispose of their old computers and computer equipment. In response, the SEMCO Board of Directors has investigated several possibilities.

#### **Port Huron Host Lions Club**

Bob Clyne got the following information from Michael Geno at the Port Huron Host Lions Club:

"The Blue Water League Of The Blind is partnered with the Port Huron Host Lions Club to make adaptive



technology accessible to blind citizens in our area. We charge nothing to them for equipment they can make use of. As you know, even older equipment is as useful as the day it was first sold, and in many cases, more useful to the blind, who cannot always use the latest graphical interfaces. DOS based systems are the easiest for many elderly blind to use, as the programs used on these older systems are much more screen friendly to the type of reading software available to access them. If we can, we can make the following equipment available and useful to blind persons who cannot afford, or make use of new computer technology:

“Any IBM system, from a 286 on up, that is working. We do part out non- working equipment to make some computers work, so we are interested in parts and some non-working equipment. But, I need to talk with whoever is providing donations to see what they have, as we cannot store too much that will not be useful, and placed in a blind persons hands rapidly. There is a real need for laptops especially that are working. But, we can accept any computer without a monitor or working screen, as the blind do not use screens anyway. I have placed computers with persons who will never use a mouse, monitor, and only the tower or desktop unit with a keyboard. We need any external synthesizers you can find to make some of these talk. I have collected some extra DIN and PS2 keyboards, but can always use more when only a basic working main box is donated. When equipment is working, it takes less time to place it, but I do repair equipment when we have no working systems available to place. Some blind persons that we have waiting, are

partially sighted, and could use a large screen, even an older one.

“Recently, I placed a Pentium laptop that had no working screen. The owners wanted to throw it out, as the cost to repair the screen was more than the value of the computer. No problem for a blind person. In most cases, people do not realize that a computer will work just fine for a blind person without a monitor or screen connected. Removing the burnt out screen from a laptop makes it lighter, and puts less drain on the battery. Even with laptops that have working screens, I will turn off the screen for that reason.

“Laptops, synthesizers, main towers, desktops, and key boards are at the top of our list. We have blind seniors using word processing, games, and tutorials in DOS 6.2.2, and Windows 95, on up. The later systems with a dual channel sound card are the easiest to get out the door. But, when we see a DOS 286 or later, we give them to people who can only use DOS programs.

“I have also combined some Windows operating systems that support DOS with inkjet printers and scanners. This allows special OCR scanning programs to translate simple printed text to be read aloud.

“We would consider any electronic audio equipment as well, because some of the people we serve who could use a computer, do not have even a small stereo to listen to music or to amplify the speech and sound the computer we give them puts out.

“Since I am blind and a non-driver myself, I do run into problems getting donations picked up, and I ask that all systems, whenever possible, have the sound card included, and also ask that they be checked to see that the volume

setting is not set to “mute all.” If the system is muted, I have to get some sighted help to get it un-muted, so I can get the thing talking, and work on it.

“If any one has questions outside the Port Huron calling area, I can be reached, for donations only, at this toll free number: (877) 820-6453. Please have any replies include a phone number I can call. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Michael Geno, Past President, Port Huron Host Lions and President, Michigan Council Of The Blind.”

SEMCO members wishing to donate to this cause should first contact Michael Geno to make sure he can use what you are offering; then bring the items to a SEMCO meeting; Bob Clyne will see that they are transported to Port Huron.

### **Home town Computers**

Gary Denise learned that Hometown Computers, a computer store at 109 S. Leroy Street in Fenton, Michigan, maintains a Swap Shelf in their store that will display donated computers or parts for anyone who would like to pick them up free. If SEMCO members would like to put something on that shelf, bring it to a SEMCO meeting, and Gary will transport it to the store.

### **A Reminder**

Any SEMCO members who dispose of computers in any way need to remember to remove any personal information and any software for which they are not transferring a clean license. A “clean license” would, among other things, mean one that was not used as the basis for an upgrade.

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### **It Is Said That**

February, 1965 is the only month in recorded history not to have a full moon.

## **SIGN THE BACK OF YOUR CREDIT CARD?**

**By S. Jack Lewtschuk**

Have you heard the idea that it is best not to sign the back of your credit cards? That instead of signing, you can print the words: “SEE ID” or “ASK FOR PHOTO ID?”

Here is what major credit card fraud departments had to say:

**MasterCard** – To not sign your card is an urban legend that sounds sensible, but is not a good idea.

**American Express** – We have warned merchants not to accept your credit cards if they aren’t signed.

**VISA** – They agree with the other credit card companies and said that merchants are instructed not to finish the transaction until you sign the back of your card.

So, the idea of not signing the back of your credit card is an example of a very popular urban legend that is false. Sign your credit cards immediately when you receive them.

*S. Jack Lewtschuk is a past president of the Monterey Bay Users Group in California <<http://www.mbug.org>>, and he can be reached at <[blacklion@royal.net](mailto:blacklion@royal.net)>. This article is an excerpt from Jack’s article in the November, 2004 mbug-pc newsletter.*

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## **Do It Now—On Paper**

### **By Elizabeth B. Wright**

That is not new advice. In fact, it borders on being trite. However, I am talking about getting things down on paper (electronically) before it is too late.

Many of the over-50 group have begun to delve seriously into genealogy. And that is a good idea. However, we are in danger of doing a lot of hard work and then having it completely lost because our children are not yet interested in “roots” things. They give a little lip service to our efforts, but mostly they don’t seem to think any more about it than we did when we were younger.

There is a good range of programs for genealogical research, and most of them can be used by beginners rather easily. That is not to say that all of the available features will magically become useful to first-timers, but most of the essential information can be entered by just about any level of user competence.

That information, however, is going to stay right where it is, on the computer, until something happens to it. That something could even be a computer crash or virus which might wipe out all the hard work put into developing family history. There are options, usually, to save the files to an external disk, CD, or other backup-type media. This should be the very first step after inputting important data into a program.

Then comes the reason for this article. Nearly all of the current programs have choices to output the data into reports of various types. There are always the tree charts that have become so familiar to all of us. Usually there are other types of reports that sort

the information in ways other than a typical family tree. Using reports, it is possible to download the essential data into hard printed copy to share with children, grandchildren, and other interested relatives. Many programs have very good options for printing books. Most also have the ability to include photographs in the output. And photographs don’t always have to be of people. Most serious genealogists include photos of important documents, as well as maps, places, buildings, and objects of interest such as clothing, trophies, jewelry, grave markers, etc. Photographs can greatly enhance the value of the information as well as make it more enjoyable to read.

Our family members who are not yet interested in genealogy have a tendency to treat our efforts with some humor, thinking perhaps it is a rather quaint way for “seniors” to spend time on an amusing hobby. Of course, the day usually comes when they wish they had the same information. And the efforts we make now can provide them with a great start. There really is no practical limit to how much research can be done on any family line.

But what if you don’t want to get into deep family research? We have such a golden opportunity to use our computers to just put in print our own memories of family. As we age, and we all seem to, some of those memories begin to get hazy. We need to DO IT NOW, while we have the ability and the means to accomplish it. And when we finish writing a particular memory, we need to transfer it to the same external medium, and also print hard copies of it. With a little luck, younger family members will at least put it somewhere for future reference. Worst

case scenario is going to the trouble to give someone your hard work only to have it be given a cursory glance and possibly be thrown away.

Using your word processor, by simply typing out a story and including any available photographs in the document, you can begin to build a family history starting with YOU.

My favorite example from my own case is typing the family "lore" of how my grandmother grew up. She was left motherless as a toddler, put in an orphanage and foster homes before finally being taken from her native Iowa to Kansas by her older (by just a couple of years) brother and possibly her father. The story was always murky, but consistent, told to me by both my mother and my aunt. When I finally began doing

serious family research, I came across enough information to confirm the story, almost word for word, the way the "lore" had passed it down to me. Both my mother and my aunt had been dead for many years before I began the search for my grandmother's family, and had I not finally written it down, it would have ended with me. No one else has ever been remotely interested in my grandmother except my mother, my aunt, and me. Now I am hoping my son and my daughter and their children will keep the information and expand it someday.

*Elizabeth Wright is member of the Computer Club of Oklahoma City. Reach her at <[wright599@telepath.com](mailto:wright599@telepath.com)>.*

*The article appeared in the October 2004 eMonitor, newsletter of CCOC.*



## ***Letter From The Editor***

### **Fighting the Bad Guys**

After some initial difficulty last month, I now have both Spybot Search & Destroy and Ad-Aware working OK. I run them every couple of weeks, and they usually turn up several bad guys, which I then eliminate. The bad guys don't seem to be causing any problems, at least that I can detect, but it seems like a good idea to get rid of them.

When I ran Spybot S&D today it took 12 minutes to scan 13,734 objects, and it turned up one bad guy that appeared 5 times. I checked for updates to Sybot S&D on the Internet and found 6, which I downloaded and installed in 7 minutes.

When I ran Ad-Aware, it scanned 45,853 objects in 9 minutes and found 2 bad guys, which I eliminated.

I also got up enough nerve last week to install SP-2 on my XP system with the disk provided by SEMCO. After reading all the scary articles in DATA BUS about the bad things that can happen I was really leery. But everyone ends up saying do it anyway, so I did. It took a while, but everything went smoothly, and I haven't seen any bad results (I haven't seen any good results either, but they must be there.)

So now I'm feeling terribly complacent, and sort of smug. Why don't you follow my example.

Bill



## BOARD MEETING

11/14/04

Carol Sanzi

### Board Members Present:

President Gary DeNise, Vice President Richard Jackson, Treasurer Roger Gay, Secretary Carol Sanzi, SIG-Advanced Chairman Franz Breidenich, SIG-IBM Co-Chairman Tom Callow, Warner Mach representing SIG-IBM Intermediate Chairman Jack Vander-Schrier, Publications Committee Chairman Bill Agnew, and Members at Large Bob Clyne and Chuck Moery. Also attending were Keith Kossuth and Wendell Anderson. The meeting was called to order at 12:18 p.m.

### Old Business:

Treasurer Roger Gay reported that the balance on hand is \$5085.50. It is time for Michael D. Bader, Chester Blechinger, Tom Burns, Paul M. Cervero, Charles Eberly, Richard Jackson, Roland Maki, William Margolin, Robert & Dorothy Schultz, Lary Smith, and Steve Yuhasz to renew their memberships. The membership stands at 82.

Tom Callow moved to reimburse Warner Mach \$7.10 for refreshments. Bob Clyne seconded the motion, and it was carried.

Bob Clyne contacted the Port Huron Host Lions Club. They accept computer and electric audio equipment for the Blue Water League of the Blind. They will accept 286 or above, DOS based, and laptop computers. Bob Clyne volunteered to deliver donations to Port Huron if they are brought to a SEMCO meeting..

Gary DeNise reported that Fenton's "Home Town Computers" has shelf space in their store where donations

may be placed. Then customers may take the donated computers or parts as needed. Gary offered to take donations to Fenton for members.

Richard Jackson reported that [www.scrapcomputer.com](http://www.scrapcomputer.com) refurbishes computers and recycles the materials from equipment that cannot be refurbished. They make a 5-cent per pound of equipment donation to charitable organizations. The default charitable organization in this area is Detroit Public T.V. Richard is investigating getting SEMCO on the list of organizations eligible to make donations. It was suggested that a survey be taken to see if it would be worthwhile for SEMCO to arrange to deliver donations to the Ann Arbor facility.

### New Business:

Bob Clyne continues to negotiate with Oakland University for SEMCO's meeting rooms.

Roger Gay distributed a proposal for SEMCO to hold its meetings at Cranbrook Institute of Science. The Board members are to review the proposal and discuss it at a future meeting.

Carol Sanzi reported that the SEMCO Volunteer's Party will be held at Beth Fordyce's home on January 22, 2005. Invitations will be e-mailed shortly. Richard Jackson moved that invitations should also include those who gave cash donations other than for refreshments, past presidents who are still members, and those who have donated refreshments this year. Warner Mach seconded the motion, and it was carried.

Tom Callow moved to adjourn. Warner Mach seconded the motion, and it was carried. The meeting adjourned at 1:15 p.m.

## SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS (SIGS)



**SIG-IBM**  
**Tom Callow**  
**Warner Mach**



**SIG-IBM INTERMEDIATE**  
**Jack Vander-Schrier**

**January 9: SIG-IBM: Buying and Selling on eBay:** Paul Tacke will demonstrate how to buy and sell items on the leading Internet auction site.

**December Meeting Attendance: 28**



**GENERAL MEETING**  
**12/12/04**  
**Carol Sanzi**

President Gary Denise opened nominations for Officers and Board positions.

**For President:** Franz Breidenich nominated Gary DeNise.

**For Vice President:** Franz Breidenich nominated Richard Jackson.

**For Treasurer:** Gary DeNise nominated Chester Blechinger, and Chester Blechinger nominated Jerry Comptois.

**For Secretary:** Bob Clyne nominated Carol Sanzi.

**For Members-at-Large:** Bob Clyne nominated Betty MacKenzie, Franz Breidenich nominated Bob Clyne, and Carol Sanzi nominated Chuck Moery.

Bob Clyne moved to close the nominations, Tom Callow seconded the motion, and it was carried.



**SIG-ADVANCED**  
**Franz Breidenich**

**January 9: Customizing Your Home Page:** SIG-IBM Intermediate Chairman Jack Vander-Schrier will show how you can customize your Home Page on the Web.

### NOVICE-IBM GROUP Rotating Volunteer Hosts

**January 9: Help And Q & A:** Discussion directed by the audience.



**February 7:** (first Monday), 6:45 pm, at the Oak Park Library. The library is located at 14200 Oak Park Blvd., Oak Park, MI. Phone: (248) 691-7480.  
**Topic: Wide ranging discussion of computers and computing.**

## February 2005 DATA BUS DEADLINE (7th day after meeting)

**SEMCO Input and Members' Ads — Deadline: Sun., January 16, 11:59 p.m.**

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)**

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)**

Feb. 2–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: Digital Photography.

**DCOM Computer Club**

Jan. 14–Friday, 6:30–8:30pm (2nd Friday); Henry Ford C.C., Patterson Tech Bldg, Ford Rd/Evergreen, Rm T143, Parking Lot C. Info: Doug Piazza 313-582-2602.

**DPUG (Detroit Palm Users Group)**

Jan. 13–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)**

Jan. 11–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**

Jan. 16–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: Adobe Acrobat 7 And Setting Up A Home Network.

**MacTechnics, (MAC User Group)**

Jan. 15–Saturday; 11:00 am main meeting (SIGs at 9:30); 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**

Jan. 13–(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: Live iChat With Members At The MacWorld Expo 2005 In San Francisco.

**Oak Park Computer Club**

Meets every Friday, 10:15am at Oak Park Recreation Bldg, Oak Park Blvd. west of Coolidge.

**SHCC (Sterling Heights Computer Club)**

Feb. 1–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.)**

Jan. 13–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**

Jan.8–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

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## DECEMBER REFRESHMENT DONORS

Warner Mach, Coordinator

Betty MacKenzie

Carol Sanzi

Gary DeNise

Al Bochenek

Roland Maki

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](http://www.a1-supercomputersales.com)

or [www.a1scs.com](http://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](mailto:clyne@lodden.com)

Callow, Tom—248-642-1920 9am–5pm ..... [tcallow@vmddlaw.com](mailto:tcallow@vmddlaw.com)

Comptois, Jerry—248-651-2504, anytime ..... [jerrycandotoo@juno.com](mailto:jerrycandotoo@juno.com)

Cook, Stephen—313-272-7594, eves ..... [scCook48227@ameritech.net](mailto:scCook48227@ameritech.net)

Gay, Roger—248-641-7799, 9am–10pm ..... [rgay@voyager.net](mailto:rgay@voyager.net)

Vander-Schrier, Jack—586-739-7720, 12–8pm ..... [jvanders@myself.com](mailto:jvanders@myself.com)

Yuhasz, Steve ..... [Help@yuhasz.org](mailto:Help@yuhasz.org)



**SOUTHEASTERN MICHIGAN  
COMPUTER ORGANIZATION, INC.**

## **SEMCO CALENDAR—January/February**

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

### **January 9—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: Buying and Selling on eBay:** Paul Tacke will demonstrate how to buy and sell items on the leading Internet auction site.

**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.

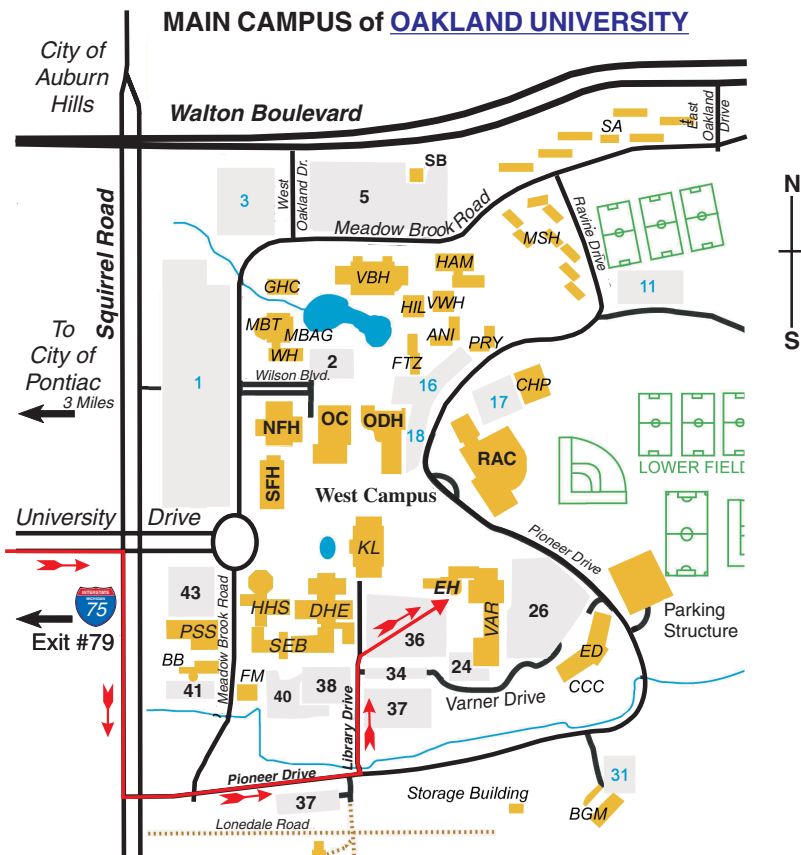
**SIG-ADVANCED, February 7—MONDAY, 6:45 pm**, Oak Park Public Library, 14200 Oak Park Blvd., Oak Park, MI. Phone: (248) 691-7480. Directions: Oak Park Blvd. is 9 1/2 mile Road, located west of Coolidge. Best route from freeway: take I-696 to the Coolidge exit. Head south on Coolidge for 1/2 mile to Oak Park Blvd. and turn right. Info: Franz Breidenich 248-398-3359. **TOPIC: Wide-Ranging Discussion Of Computers & Computing.**

**February 13—SUNDAY (Meet 2nd Sunday)**. **SEMCO**, 1:30 pm. **Topics: To Be Announced.**

**<http://www.semco.org>**

**PUBLIC INVITED**

(Please copy this and the next page to post on your bulletin board)



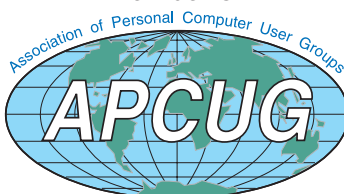
### MAP LEGEND

- 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)**

**January 9**

**February 13**

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