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SEMCO MEETINGS

**Sunday,
June 12, 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 Cheap skate" Click

My wife and I attended the FACUG spring conference and it was again a total success. There were 173 attendees from 41 user groups. They have done a great job of keeping vendor support, and someone really excelled at obtaining door prizes. Our raffle tickets were not drawn until almost the end of the first round (doorprize drawing); typical for me, but we still drew pretty good prizes. We had to go to work that day, and I was ready to leave, but my wife reminded me that Dave Whittle would be doing the raffle for an Intel motherboard and P4 chip, so I decided to stay for that. Good thing, because the first paper Dave pulled had my name on it. I was astounded and excitedly stepped up to receive my great prize. What really surprised me were all the congratulations from people that I know who would have loved winning it. Now all I have to do is get the new machine built.

Some of the roundtables were very popular tech sessions. It gave attendees a chance to see some other products in action. It was a great conference, and I

congratulate all the planners for a job well done. APCUG was well represented by some of its officers, who mingled with the attendees, and Peggy Ireland chaired a round table on the benefits of APCUG. A few derogatory remarks by attendees during the vendor panel bothered me. You will find my article in APCUG reports, and Dave Whittle also wrote one. One person said the vendor support was poor and "unacceptable." Another complained about his bad experience with a "free" service offered by a vendor who does it just to be helpful; and those were only two of the complaints. I feel the vendor support we still have is very good, and we are lucky to have it. However, I still do not agree with asking vendors to provide meals for the event. Officers of both APCUG and FACUG always tell me that people won't attend if they have to buy their own meals. Are we that greedy and cheap? I hope not, because the camaraderie and learning experience at these events is always great.

Surprise Fella, You're Out Of Luck!

I read an article by Lynn Kauer, editor of the Blue Chip News, newsletter of the Saginaw Valley Computer Association, that might interest you about hard drive warranties. When purchasing an Iomega drive he was urged by the clerk to purchase a store warranty, because hard drive warranties begin on the day of manufacture. At home, he checked the Iomega Web site, entered the serial number of his unit just purchased, and found that the warranty had indeed already expired. He still had 14 days from his date of purchase to buy a store warranty.

When attending the Comp USA show, I talked to the guys from Western Digital about that, and they confirmed

it was standard policy. They said the problem is how long a drive sits on shelves at distributors and stores, and that almost nobody keeps their purchase receipt. But, if a purchaser still has his store receipt, should the drive fail within the stated warranty, they will honor the warranty from the date of your receipt. I can't speak for all vendors, but keep your store receipts just in case that is their policy also.

I Did Something About The Weather

I'm still bragging about my new weather station. Both my wife and I really enjoy ours, especially the Big Weather Picture accessory that lets you easily see all of the day's stats at a glance. I've seen other brands at shows, but none I've seen had anything like the Big Weather Picture. Peet Bros. displayed at the Home & Garden Show recently and said they'd still honor my deal of including an inside temperature sensor and a serial cable at no extra charge <<http://www.peatbros.com>>. Even our visitors are always fascinated and ask about ours. To get the special, send your order to <peetbros@peatbros.com>. We especially watch the peak wind speed information and the rain gauge. We sometimes wonder when we are at work if it rained at home, but a glance at the Big Weather Picture will tell us all that when we get home, and how much.

A Deal Renewed

Right at my deadline, I had to withdraw a deal that they said was not ready yet from Zio Corporation for a small and convenient product that handles all of the memory cards for digital cameras and cell phones, and also serves as a USB hub. Hopefully, it should be ready for the DealsGuy column next month. In place of it I am reminding you about "CameraMate VideoSafe" and

"CameraMate Real Time Video" by Zio Corp. from last month's column that had rebates expiring May 31, 2005. I am happy to say they have extended those rebates. I will include text from a message they sent me:

"Purchase select Zio Corp. products from any retailer from Feb. 05, 2005 through Sept. 30, 2005. Submit a completed rebate offer form; the original UPC code from select Zio products packaging; a copy of the dated 'Any Retailer' receipt for the select Zio products purchase with the retail price circled. Consumer also needs to include the rebate sticker (outside the box) along with the UPC code." For information on those products see <<http://www.easiestvideoever.com>>. My friend is having a great time playing with those Zio products that I asked him to test out for me last month.

Announcement For ActiveStartup Deluxe

Below is an edited announcement:

"I'm pleased to inform you that HexileSoft releases ActiveStartup Deluxe! We offer a 30% discount on ActiveStartup Deluxe to user group members.

"Smart StartUp Manager For NT-based Windows OS With Anti-Malware Options. Startup manager is a popular software category with dozens of different titles. ActiveStartup Deluxe has been specifically designed for network-based Windows versions, like Windows NT, 2000 and XP. The program gives its users a brain-dead simple way to backup and restore startup settings, add/delete/disable programs on the startup list, and control services.

"Unfortunately, the Internet is packed with malicious software like an overstuffed sandwich. Viruses, worms,

trojans, spyware, and other malware can easily sneak into PCs and wreak havoc. Oftentimes, the only way to catch the intruders is at the startup point. This is why ActiveStartup Deluxe offers to perform a virus check at startup and makes it possible to run, stop, enable, or disable any service that may be used by malicious software. ActiveStartup Deluxe is capable of opening system utilities like RegEdit or SysEdit, checking for “dead” files on the startup list, or launching any application. The program does not require any in-depth computer knowledge; ActiveStartup comes with a simple clean interface, support for clipboard and dragging & dropping, hotkey activation, and other beginner-friendly options.

“ActiveStartup Deluxe is very easy to operate. This tiny application (only 691 KiloBytes) has been awarded over a dozen prestigious awards, including a four-cow rating from TuCows. There is also another version of the program with fewer features called ActiveStartup. The differences between these two versions can be learned at <<http://www.hexilesoft.com/windows%20startup%20managers.html>>. A 30-day trial version is available at <www.hexilesoft.com> for evaluation purposes. ActiveStartup Deluxe 1.07 is priced at \$29.95 US Dollars per copy.”

For any questions, you should contact Oleksandr Svider at <info@hexilesoft.com>.

Company website:

<<http://www.hexilesoft.com>>.

Product page:

<<http://www.hexilesoft.com/activestartupdx.html>>.

Download:

<<http://www.hexilesoft.com/files/activestartupdx.zip>>.

Buy link:

<<http://www.hexilesoft.com/purchase.html>>.

Last Minute Problem

Just before time to send out the DealsGuy column to the editors, I could not send messages, but could receive them. Earthlink tech support says my Eudora E-mail software cannot be configured to work with their new servers. I may have to find another ISP, so be aware that my e-mail address may change.

That's it for this month. Meet me here again next month if your editor permits. This column is written to make user group members aware of special offers or freebies I have found or arranged, and my comments should not be interpreted to encourage, or discourage, the purchase of any products, no matter how enthused I might sound. Bob (The Cheapskate) Click <bobclick@mindspring.com>. Visit my Web site at <<http://www.dealsguy.com>>.

Current Hoaxes And Urban Legends

By Ira Wilsker

Some of us find them cute, entertaining, exciting, and fun, while others of us find them embarrassing, irritating, and a waste of time. Many forward them, believing that they are doing good, or warning of harm, or forward them because they came from an allegedly reliable source. A few are so convinced of their truth that I am explicitly requested to put them in this column, or announce them on my radio and TV show. What I am referring to are the hoaxes and urban legends currently circulating on the internet that many of

us seem to love to forward to everyone in our e-mail address books. Many of these hoaxes and urban legends have a grain of truth or logic in them, while many others are totally lacking any basis in fact; yet many of us still enjoy forwarding them without a second thought.

In order to avoid embarrassment I strongly recommend that everyone tempted to forward such e-mails should check out their validity prior to another mass send to all we know. There are several excellent websites that compile information on these e-mails, and a quick check can save us from the embarrassment of sending out a hoax, and preserve our personal credibility. If we find that the interesting e-mail is indeed true, we should still consider not forwarding them to everyone, as many of our intended recipients may not find our interests to their likings, and may even be offended that we consumed their valuable bandwidth and time.

Typically, when I receive one of these from an acquaintance, if I am not already familiar with it, I check it out; if it is true (a minority of the time), I may choose to selectively forward it only to those that I think may be interested in the topic, but I never send it to everyone in my address book. If it is false, I usually reply back to the sender that it is indeed false, and include a link documenting the falsehood. Some e-mailers are so humiliated that I caught them in an inaccuracy that they reply in anger back to me, despite the incontrovertible fact that it was they who had sent the bogus e-mail.

To verify the authenticity or falsehood of these oft forwarded e-mails, I use two primary, and several secondary

resources. Primarily I use the excellent and comprehensive urban legends resource of Snopes at <<http://www.snopes.com>>. Well organized in an easy to navigate menu format, along with a competent search engine, Snopes is an excellent choice to check out the validity of questionable e-mails.

My other primary resource for checking the legitimacy of potential hoax e-mails is About, Inc. <<http://urbanlegends.about.com>>. This site is frequently updated with the latest hoaxes in circulation, and can reliably document their validity.

A common topic of these questionable e-mails is virus warnings. For this reason, most of the major antivirus software publishers also compile lists of hoaxes, mostly virus related, on their websites. I utilize these sites as secondary resources.

It is also notable that old hoaxes and virus warnings never seem to die out, and periodically reappear. One that has been documented to be in circulation for over six years, but is again currently making the rounds in mass e-mailings is the "It takes guts to say Jesus" virus hoax. This e-mail, in several iterations, warns that according to CNN, AOL, McAfee, and other reputable resources, there is an e-mail circulating with a virus that can not be detected by contemporary antivirus software, and that, if you open the e-mail, your computer will be effectively destroyed. Every one of the hoax and antivirus websites list this as a hoax; yet countless copies are being forwarded by well intentioned people trying to warn their acquaintances. Some of the variations even go on to state that while it may be false, it is so important that it is being forwarded anyway. Another similar

e-mail warning that does have some validity is the one that says "I've Got Your E-mail on My Account." It goes on to warn that someone is using "your e-mail account to spread a virus, and I have received 10 copies of it, all with your e-mail address and ISP in the header." The e-mail then says, "I have copied all the mail text in the windows text-editor for you & zipped them. Make sure, that this mails (sic) don't come in my mail-box again." Attached to this dire warning is a file, commonly named "your_text.zip." If opened, the file will infest your computer with the Sober.N worm. If it infects your computer, Sober.N will terminate the antivirus and firewall software on your computer, rendering it vulnerable to further attack, and then forward itself to everyone in your address book! This Sober.N warning is the exception to the rule that most warnings of this type are bogus.

Another dire warning, which I am receiving multiple copies of, is the warning that a directory of cell phone numbers is being compiled to enable telemarketers to call us on our cell phones, consuming our valuable supply of limited minutes. This hoax, which is now circulating for the second time, is listed by several sites as one of the top hoaxes in circulation. The grain of truth in this is that most cell phone carriers are instituting a "411" directory service of cell phone numbers. This list will emphatically not be for sale to telemarketers.

To see the latest hoaxes in circulation, as well as the ones in widest distribution, check out the hoax and urban legend websites, or the website of your favorite antivirus software. You may find some of the hoaxes actually

quite entertaining, and wonder how intelligent people could fall for such silly e-mails.

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

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Addendum To Hoaxes & Urban Legends

Cell Phone Directory Facts By Bob Clyne DATA BUS Associate Editor

A cell phone 411 service is scheduled to launch in 2006. Your cell phone carrier will notify you of the availability of the service.

The service will be done on an opt-in basis. Cell phone numbers will be included only if the customer explicitly requests their number to be included. If you do nothing or explicitly opt-out, your number will not be included.

There will be no physical or electronic directory published in whole or in part. The numbers will be available only through a voice 411 call. The

numbers will not be available on the Internet.

Customers may opt in or out of the 411 service at any time without charge. There is no deadline, and there is no fee for this. Also, you may change your mind and change your opt in or out status at any time without fee.

Calls to cell phones by means of auto-dialers and/or the use of artificial or pre-recorded voice messages are prohibited by the Telephone Consumer Protection Act of 1991. This applies to both commercial and non-commercial messages, and will still apply if you opt-in to the 411 service. This is the only one of the calling rules listed here that applies to non-commercial calls.

Unsolicited commercial messages to cell phones and pagers are prohibited by the CAN SPAM Act of 2003 along with FCC rules.

You can list your cell phone number in the National Do Not Call Registry on the same basis as your wired phone numbers. This has been true since the inception of the registry and will not change. You should note that listing your number on the Do Not Call Registry does make it available to telemarketers (How else would they know that they are not allowed to call it?). Also, most of the prohibitions only apply to commercial messages, so you could conceivably receive more solicitations from charities and people doing polls than if you do not list your number on either the 411 service or the Do Not Call Registry.

According to Snopes <<http://www.snopes.com>>, as of January 2005, Verizon Wireless and U.S. Cellular are not participating in the 411 service, and Sprint and Alltel may be pulling out as well.

References:

<http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-258164A1.pdf>.

<<http://www.qsent.com/wireless411/index.shtml>>.

<<http://www.qsent.com/wireless411/choice-privacy-security.pdf>>.

<http://www.qsent.com/wireless411/wireless411_q-a.pdf>.

<<http://www.snopes.com/politics/business/cell411.asp>>.

Would You Like An Internet Can Opener?

By Gabe Goldberg

Wouldn't it be nice to access the Internet with devices as easy to use as toasters or pencil sharpeners? I'd even settle for a microwave oven's complexity. But we're far from that simplicity, since it's hard to make things easy to use.

Internet appliances have come and gone. Searching Google for "internet appliance" turns up thousands of references, mostly to products that never gained many customers. Well-known manufacturers like Gateway and Compaq appear, as do obscure devices like "Audrey." People who used such devices have complained when they were abandoned, orphaning them. While mainstream consumer products such as automobiles sometimes suffer similar market volatility, mutation and extinction are more common with electronics and especially PC hardware and software.

But evolution eventually settles down; products are emerging which may be useful. Longevity and market success are aided by sophistication. BlackBerry for mobile e-mail, was

initially for corporate users, but is now available to consumers. Technology simplification and market leader support (MSN TV 2 and AOL Optimized PC) also help, and so does competitive pricing.

While there's no real definition of "Internet appliance," it usually means something simple, designed for specific functions. Microsoft's MSN TV 2 is indeed much more like a toaster than a PC, providing ultra-simple connectivity and avoiding normal PC nuisance issues of hardware, operating system, and software. It includes a small system unit, wireless keyboard and remote control, and good phone connectivity. Cables and jacks are color coded; documentation nicely illustrates the device, connections, and indicator lights. It works easily via dial access and wired/wireless broadband, and the friendly cordless keyboard needn't be precisely aimed. Supported printers connect via USB port. But there's no hard drive for storage or installing applications.

It's worth reading supplied manuals; on-screen tutorials and click-invitations introduce capabilities. Real beginners may wish for more details, though exploration is easy and safe and often the best way to learn. In addition to Web browsing, MSN TV 2 provides Internet e-mail, instant messaging (Microsoft's, not AOL's AIM), chat, video, and radio. Topics like news, money, and weather can be customized to individual interests and preferences. Not surprisingly, you'll need broadband access for effective video and radio, though even without it the device can serve as a media hub, delivering pictures, video, and audio from in-home networked PCs. But even on broadband

I grew tired of the "Please wait..." message before each screen refresh.

It supports Windows Media Player, but not popular RealPlayer or QuickTime. Encarta Premium for TV accesses encyclopedic references, though it loses screen space to advertising. Some Web sites were hard to read, and PDF documents were sometimes illegible; I found searching chat room topics tedious, and many chat rooms are occupied by teenage banter. Overall, it provides a "starter" Internet for people wanting access without using a PC. But its limitations—perhaps comfortable at first—will hinder real Internet exploration and exploitation.

The AOL Optimized PC takes a different approach, smoothing and hiding many normal PC chores and irritations. The "out of box" experience (unpacking, assembling, initializing, configuring, connecting) is excellent, aided by a giant easy-to-follow instruction sheet. That's supplemented by a short video that's worth watching before setup.

The multiple instruction sheets supplied (Documentation and the PC support English and Spanish speakers), though, are a little confusing. The AOL Desktop is well designed, as is the process of setting AOL and Windows XP Home Edition options. Alternate Desktops are AOL Black Voices and AOL Latino; kids can use Safe & Secure, Kid's Destination, and "RED (This is not your old AOL)."

The PC's hardware also shows good decisions: it includes USB and audio ports front and back, a floppy disk drive, an internal modem (though I miss indicator lights), network interface card, a wheel mouse, a printer, nice keyboard, 17" monitor, etc. I was pleased and

surprised that it included Windows XP Service Pack 2 and Adobe Acrobat Reader 7.0, only recently released. It's accompanied by multiple CDs for installing additional software and refreshing the initial installation; none are needed for initial use.

It's not glitch free. I encountered PC-characteristic errors when printing a test page and when installing McAfee virus protection via free download. And support is quirky: a robot service number voice said that all operators were busy and that I should call back later, and then disconnected. Later, built-in Live Chat hadn't heard of software that a manual mentioned and suggested I call the PC's manufacturer. While screen display speed was tolerable even on dial access, it suffers AOL's usual habits of updating software when signing off, popping up ads, and blurring ad/content. And it pushes billable features like AOL Privacy Wall and AOL Passkey.

Standard Microsoft Office application formats are supported by AOL Office Powered by Sun (Sun's Open Office by another name), allowing exchanging files with PCs running the real applications. AOL content and features are available, including Radio@AOL, You've Got Pictures, People Connection, etc. E-mail is friendly; multiple attachments in a note easily unzipped and opened.

It balances creating a friendly AOL-only environment for novice users against allowing them to customize the PC to act more like Windows XP. As you become comfortable, you can access more Windows capabilities, set options to your liking, and install software to meet individual needs. A nice touch is a suggested preventive

maintenance checklist. I'd call it a "PC with training wheels," but that sounds negative: it's simply a PC with many irritations removed or hidden, a good entry- to mid-range system with built-in AOL.

Company: Microsoft

Product: MSN TV 2

Price: \$200 + tax (\$50 rebate possible); one year service required (broadband \$10/month, \$100/year; dial \$22/month, \$200/year)

<<http://www.msntv.com>>

Telephone: (800) 706-4403

Company: AOL

Product: Optimized PC

Price: \$300 + tax; one year service required (\$24/month)

<<http://www.aoloptimizedpc.com>>

Telephone: (888) 444-3200

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Tip: Thank Tom Callow for all his efforts on behalf of SEMCO.

Digital Photography: The Killer App of this Generation

By Rick Altman

Digital photography's rise has not been meteoric, but rather sure and steady. And month by month, season by season, holiday by holiday, more and more households have bought into it. Today, most of us view a digital camera as novel but necessary, and only a matter of time before we buy our first one or our next one. It is happening as we watch.

And this could not be a better time to watch, with models becoming better and cheaper on a monthly basis, and print services almost as accessible as service stations for your autos.

Unless you have been living under a rock since 1996, you are familiar with the persistent virtues of going digital with your photos. Here are some reasons.

It's Way Cheaper: Even though the initial buy-in is a bit higher, your cost for consumables drops through the floor. You will never buy film again; instead you will store photos on media that you can buy online from \$25. Equally to the point, you will never pay for a print of a bad photo.

You Take Better Photos: When it costs you nothing to push the shutter, you do it more often. You know the story about a thousand monkeys pounding on a thousand typewriters, and the work of Shakespeare being the result? Dumb luck also prevails over digital photography, as any of us hacks and amateurs can take a decent photo of a scene when we give ourselves a dozen chances.

You Become A Better Photographer:

As a decent commercial-grade photographer, I have been taking photos for over two decades. But I never really developed a feel for composition or a solid understanding of the science of photography until five years ago. No matter how many notes I took, I just could not connect what I did five days ago with what I was looking at when the film came back from the lab.

But the immediacy of digital is the best photography teacher you could ever hope for. You see in five seconds, not five days, what happens if you move your subject off-center, how it looks to shift the light source to another angle, how depth of field changes when you change the lens aperture, how shutter speed affects the entire energy flow of a scene that involves motion.

Your Subjects Become Better Models:

An unexpected benefit of the digital age is a result of the attention span of the people you photograph. It used to be easy to sit for a photo—smile broadly through one or two shots, and they would be done. Now, it is commonplace for a photo to be more like a photo session, with multiple photos taken from several angles. Most people can't paste a smile for that long, and some will even begin to ignore the photographer. And that is when the really good photos are taken. After the requisite pasted-on-smile shots, when they tire of having their photo taken, expect the best results.

Photos Anywhere: Perhaps the most important development in digital photography is the explosion of outlets that will print your images. We stopped counting at 250 the number of online services available (our favorite is the Kodak Picture Center), or today you can take your little compact flash card

and jump or drive to Rite-Aid, Longs, Walgreens, Walmart, Costco...and dozens others.

This is significant, because the real price savings occur not from your printing photos yourself, but from your sending them out. It is wonderful to be able to make your own prints, no doubt, and you can pick up a good photo printer for next to nothing (or literally nothing if you watch for the incentives offered by Dell, Best Buy, and the other big retailers). But you'll get eaten alive by the cost of the ink and paper if you use your own printer exclusively. You cannot beat the estimated 35 cents you'll pay for a single 4x6 print (and as low as 15 cents for quantity or promotional offers).

Skeptics look at the ritual of sending digital images out and awaiting the arrival of prints as being nothing different than the tedium they were hoping to escape with film processing. But there is one huge difference: With digital, you only order prints of the good images, not all of them. You already know if you've taken a winner, and chances are good that you have already e-mailed it to friends and loved ones, uploaded it to a website, and organized it in your online photo album.

The Cameras are Incredible: The biggest risk with digital photography is that you will go overboard and buy more camera than you need and more cameras than you need.

What a fantastic problem to have! Today's buy-in for a good all-purpose digital camera is barely \$250. The top-of-the-line model that cost \$800 two years ago can be found for about \$350 today, and digital versions of professional-style single lens reflex models (SLRs, "real" cameras with

detachable lenses) are showing up with regularity under \$1,000. We are watching closely the emergence of the "super-zoom" category—cameras that boast 10x and 12x optical zoom ranges. This is the equivalent of a 35 to 400mm zoom lens, all in a standard camera chassis.

These cameras feature the good kind of zoom (optical zoom, not worthless "digital zoom" that is a marketer's dream and consumer's nightmare) along with special image stabilization technology to help against camera shake. As those prices dip into the mid-\$400s, we expect them to be gobbled up by vacationers who want to be able to shoot close-ups and landscapes without having to add or swap lenses.

Fix Your Boo-Boos: And then there is the holy grail of digital photography for those adept with image-editing software: the ability to fix, modify, and enhance a photo. We wish that everyone started practicing with an image editor, if for no other reason than to eliminate for good the obnoxious anti-red-eye flash options that turn cameras into migraine-creation machines.

Beyond that, of course, is a treasure trove of opportunity to alter reality for the better, and few have it better than users of Corel software. For one low buy-in, you get graphic-drawing and image-editing applications with CorelDraw, or an incredibly-priced image editor in Paint Shop Pro.

Similarly, creative PowerPoint users will love being able to effortlessly incorporate their own photos into presentations, be it for business or for pleasure—refine a sales pitch that was formerly a collection of boring bullet slides, or create a family keepsake of images, set to music.

The One Blight on the Horizon

We look upon the emergence of mobile phones with built-in cameras with fear, loathing, and blatant snobbery. First off, the cameras are pathetic little toys, capable of producing images no better than first-generation cameras from 1996. Those who form their first impression of digital photography from what they see on their phones are doomed to harbor misconceptions for years.

Worse is the specter of what might happen to the mobile phone industry if camera phones become more common. There are numerous institutions and destinations at which photography is prohibited (court houses, military bases, many airports, museums) and other places where it is morally reprehensible, such as restrooms and locker rooms. If authorities cannot tell the difference between a mobile phone and a camera, they may have no choice but to prohibit them all. Madison Avenue might want to think twice about creating commercials that show someone taking a photo and immediately sending it out via e-mail, all with the same device. They might be killing their golden goose.

All in all, this is a grand time to be a photographer and a digital designer, with technology ready to explode onto the scene, competition among manufacturers driving prices down, and entries forming at so many different price points.

Watch for 2005 to be a banner year for the revolution that we are watching unfold right now.

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Steve Bass, a Contributing Editor with*

*PC World and 23 year veteran of
PIBMUG. He's also the author of the
second edition of PC Annoyances: How
to Fix the Most Annoying Things about
Your Personal Computer, O'Reilly
Press. Check out a sample chapter at
<http://snurl.com/sample_annoied2>.
It's available on Amazon at <<http://snurl.com/annoied2>>.*

Protecting Your Internet Passwords **By Gene Barlow**

The Internet plays an important role in our lives today. Almost everything we do has an Internet possibility to it. We can access our bank accounts over the Internet. We can pay our bills and loans using the Internet. Every business that we have an account with lets us access our account and update our records over the internet. We can purchase airline tickets, reserve hotels, and rent cars over the Internet. Each of these offers us personalized accounts to make these tasks easier to do. We can even buy groceries, tickets for movies, and order our prescriptions over the Internet. How much easier it is today to do all of these things with our Internet access. Of course, having access to these Internet accounts requires that we set up a private ID and password for each of them. A typical user may have 20 or 30 of these account IDs and passwords to keep track of. So, while the Internet has made our life easier in many ways, keeping track of these security codes has gotten harder to do.

Some users will try to bypass these methods set up to protect their privacy and personal information. To avoid keeping track of many codes, some individuals will use the same ID and

password on all of their accounts. This is certainly not very secure. Once these common codes are discovered, they open up the hacker to all of your personal accounts. Others will write their codes down on yellow sticky notes and paste them to their computer display. This is also not very secure. Anyone that walks by your computer will see these codes and be able to get into your private accounts without any problem. The real solution is to set up difficult and different passwords for each of your accounts and keep these in a very secure place. That is exactly what WhiteCanyon's MyPasswordVault helps you do.

MyPasswordVault is a database program that stores its information on your computer in an encrypted format so that nobody can find this file and see all of your codes. You still need to remember a password to gain access to MyPasswordVault, but all of the rest of your codes are guarded safely inside the vault. So, when you need to access an account on the Internet, you simply open up MyPasswordVault, find the ID and Password for that account, and copy and paste it into your account access fields. You will be able to safely and quickly access the many accounts that you have set up on the Internet. This is a great software utility that will let you safely and quickly enjoy all of the advantages of using the Internet for your financial transactions.

MyPasswordVault is offered by WhiteCanyon software at the list price of \$25. You can purchase this valuable product at the user group discount price of just \$17. You can find it in our User Group Store at www.usergroupstore.com; click on any of the yellow "Buy Now" buttons

to get to our secure web order form. Complete the form, including the special user group code of UGNL0405, and submit it. You may share this discount offer with your immediate family and close friends. These prices are not available to others not involved with a user group.

Copyrighted April 2005. Gene Barlow is with User Group Relations. St. George, UT, <<http://www.ugr.com>> and can be reached at <gene@ugr.com>.

Random Acts Of Literacy By Sherry Zorzi

You may find one in your doctor's waiting room or at the hairdresser's. You may spot one in a shopping cart in the parking lot at Winn Dixie or on a chair at Starbucks. You may come upon one in the break room at work or even on a bench in the park.

A book. It could be paperback or hardback. It could be well-thumbed or brand-new. It sports a stick-on label with a cartoon of a jaunty running book with stick-figure arms and legs. "I'm not lost; I'm traveling. Take me home," the label reads.

Welcome to the "BookCrossing" phenomenon. It's operating quietly, it's free, it's as anonymous as you want it to be, and it's great fun.

Thanks to a unique website started in April 2001, the invented term "bookcrossing" has become so mainstream that it made it into the Concise Oxford English Dictionary by August 2004. "Bookcrossing, n., the practice of leaving a book in a public place to be picked up and read by others, who then do likewise."

Avid reader Ron Hornbaker, a web designer in Kansas City, was intrigued by websites like Where's George, which tracks U.S. currency by serial number, and wondered what else would be fun to track. Thus was born BookCrossing.com, and the rest is rapidly becoming history.

The basics of bookcrossing are, appropriately, the "3 R's." Read, register, and release. Read a good book. Register it at BookCrossing.com. When you register the book, you'll get a unique ID number for the book. You can write an online journal entry for the book, a review, if you like. Stick a label on the book with the ID number and the address of the website. Release the book for someone else to find and read. You can give it directly to a friend, mail it to another bookcrosser who has expressed interest in that book, or (my favorite!) just leave it in a public place for someone else to find.

When you find a released book, visit the website and enter the ID number of the book. You can do this anonymously if you wish. You'll have an opportunity to make your own journal entry, in which you can describe where you found it and even review the book yourself. If you log the book, the releaser will know when and where the book was found, and you'll both be able to track future finds as well.

More than 300,000 bookcrossers worldwide have registered almost two million books! Bookcrossers live in 150 different countries. There are almost 500 bookcrossers in the Baton Rouge area, so you just might happen upon one of our releases in a neighborhood near you.

At the BookCrossing.com website, you can click a link to "go hunting" for

books released in your area within the last 30 days that have not yet been reported found. As of this writing, there are 39 books in Baton Rouge waiting to be found!

There is also an online community at the website, with discussion forums ranging from general chit-chat to serious talk about books.

Do you really think you'll ever reread your collection of paperback James Lee Burke mysteries? Or all those diet books you've collected? What are you hoarding them for? Why not make someone else's day? If you love your books, set them free!

Sherry Zorzi is a Director of Cajun Clickers Computer Club and can be reached at <www.cajunclickers.org>.

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.

The Latest on DVDs

By Bob Elgines

The DVD world is going crazy. The price range for recorders is from \$59 to \$130, well within most of our budgets. DVD blanks are down to 50 cents a piece, almost as cheap as CDs. The top four recorder manufacturers are Plectro, Toshiba, Pacific Digital, and Memorex.

Speed is up to 16X, which is max on the outer part of the disk, but only 8X blanks are readily available.

Dual layer (8.5 GB of data space) is labeled as the latest big deal, but is it really? These disks are hard to

manufacture and are very expensive. The most important thing is, what will they play in? Well not much of anything. Most DVD players will not recognize the format, and neither will your older recorders. So I don't look for this to do anyone much good even in the future.

What is in the future (next year)? The digital world has still been undecided on DVD-R and DVD+R formats, so most of your recorders will do both. Now we come to the future of introducing two new formats named "HD-DVD" and "Blu-ray." These new formats have been developed to use the new blue-laser, whereas they have been using the red-laser in our present recorders. Red-laser single level DVDs have 4.7 GB of capacity, whereas the Blue-laser single level DVDs will have a capacity of 15 (HD-DVD format) to 25 GB (Blu-ray format) at present.

A HD (High Definition) two hour movie uses about 17.4 GB without max compression. The compression schemes (MPEG-2, MPEG-4, etc.) will be the same for both, so there will be no big difference in playback quality. Here we go again, new DVD players will be needed, and this reminds us of the old video tape war on formats "Beta" and "VHS." Remember, VHS won out due to more recording time and lower costs. Will this be true of the two blue-laser formats? Only time will tell.

These Blue-laser recorders and players will be coming out near the end of this year or the start of next year, but I think we are going to have to wait and see if they can decide on a format for the blue-laser.

Bob Elgines is editor at the Colorado River Computer Club, Lake Havasu, AZ. You can contact him at <elginesz@redrivernet.com>.

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Tech News

By Sue Crane

Traditional 911 Services not Available from VOIPs

The Texas attorney general filed a lawsuit against Internet telephone service Vonage, saying the company fails to clearly tell consumers about the limits of 911 emergency calling over its service. The suit stems from an incident last month in Houston where a husband and wife were shot by burglars while their daughter tried to call 911 on a Vonage line and reached a recording. Independent VOIP providers typically do not have access to the traditional 911 system, which carries calls to emergency dispatchers and transmits data about the caller's location. As a work-around, Vonage tells customers they need to activate a 911 service, but that service directs calls to administrative telephone lines that in some cases are unanswered.

MRI in a Pill

A South Korean semiconductor manufacturer has announced an image sensor for pill-size cameras that doctors can use to obtain accurate information about a patient's digestive tract. The image sensor can take up to 50,000 photographs in an eight-hour tour of the patient's insides. Mass production will begin in the second half of 2005.

Mouse Adaptor for Shaky Hands

IBM has developed an adjustable mouse adaptor that compensates for the shakes of patients with hand tumors and other causes of uncontrollable shaking. According to the International Essential Tremor Foundation, in the US alone nearly 10 million people are affected by essential tremor, the most common form of hand tremors. This adaptor will plug in between the mouse and computer and is compatible with existing mice.

Cell Phone Helmets for Bikers

Motorcyclists are now able to talk and ride by using a mobile-phone headset for crash helmets. The headsets (full-face, open-face, and flip-up), have audio

capabilities at speeds up to 62 miles per hour.

Great New Escape

Virtual reality, technology that gives users the feeling they are somewhere else, can be of great value in treating people suffering from a variety of physical or psychological conditions. Therapy based on the technology is being used in a small number of U.S. clinics to treat burn victims and people with phobias such as the fear of flying, spiders, and heights. Researchers say the technology holds enormous promise for treating PTSD, addictions, and for use as a distraction technique in painful dental and medical procedures, including chemo and physical therapy.



Letter From The Editor

Memorial Day, May 28, 2005. What Did You Do In The Big War Grampa?

Well, I guess you could say I am a veteran of World War II, but I feel kind of guilty about it, because it was one of the greatest times of my life. I was drafted at 18 from my sophomore year in engineering at Purdue, and went for 13 weeks of basic infantry training. I was transferred out just before my unit was shipped overseas to take part as infantry replacements in the Battle of the Bulge. I hope their 13 weeks was enough training. My 13 weeks gave me just an inkling of what they went into.

I spent most of my 2 years of service at Los Alamos, working on the atom bomb. No one was trying to kill me with bullets or shells or bombs. I guess I had some danger of blowing myself to smithereens with high explosives from pure stupidity. I remember once crawling on my hands and knees up on a 6 foot high pile of several tons of scrap high explosives to set an electric detonator in place (someone had to do it). My job was to use high tech electronic and optical equipment to test explosive lenses like those used in the Trinity and Nagasaki bombs. I was well-paid for my work when the GI Bill covered most of the rest of my engineering education.

I take some satisfaction from the fact that my nano-contribution to the war effort may have helped stop the war early and brought home some of those guys who could otherwise have been killed invading Japan. Those, and the ones who didn't make it home, were the real veterans. Remember them.

Bill

Creative Commons Rewrites Copyright!

When Chuck D and the Fine Arts Militia released their latest single, "No Meaning No," They encouraged everyone to view, copy, mix, remix, sample, imitate, parody, and even criticize it under a new licensing scheme called Creative Commons that some say may be better suited to the electronic age than the controversial copyright license. More than 10 million other creations—ranging from the movie "Outfoxed" and songs by the Beastie Boys to the BBC's news footage and the tech support books—have been distributed using Creative Commons licenses, which allow artists to keep "some rights reserved" rather than "all rights reserved." Online users can go to <http://www.CreativeCommons.org> and search its archives.

New Photoshop CS Details

Adobe is still finding its bearings after it unintentionally released details of its next Photoshop upgrade. The company quickly pulled down the announcement, but Google never forgets. Check out Publish.com's rundown of the new features: <http://ct.letters.whatsnewnow.com/rd/cts?d=181-431-1-278-41858-19872-0-0-0-1>.

Sue Crane is Vice President / Editor, Big Bear Computer Club, CA <http://www.bigbearcc.org>. Contact her at sue.crane@charter.net.

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BOARD MEETING

5/8/05

Carol Sanzi

Board Members Present

President Gary DeNise, Vice President Richard Jackson, Secretary Carol Sanzi, SIG-Advanced Chairman Franz Breidenich, SIG-IBM Co-Chairman Tom Callow, Warner Mach representing SIG-IBM Intermediate, and Members at Large, Bob Clyne and Chuck Moery. Arriving late was Treasurer Chester Blechinger. Also attending was member Paul Cervero. The meeting was called to order at 12:08 p.m.

Old Business

Bob Clyne reported that the audit has been successfully completed.

Treasurer Chester Blechinger stated that the balance on hand is \$6286.40. The membership stands at 79. It is time for Thomas Million, Phillip Charns, Lee Helms, Johnathan Lodden, Jim Rarus, Terrance Todd, and Arthur Laramie to renew their memberships. Richard Jackson will make telephone calls to those whose memberships have expired. Tom Callow moved to reimburse Warner Mach \$5.98 for refreshments. Bob Clyne seconded the motion, and it was carried.

New Business

Tom Callow reported that Jack Vander-Schrier is unable to attend SEMCO's Sunday meetings and has therefore resigned as SIG IBM Intermediate Chairman. Therefore, the future of the SIG-IBM Intermediate is in jeopardy. Gary DeNise will seek a volunteer to fill the position at the General Meeting.

Bob Clyne reported that Creative Technology Inc. is able to print and

[Continued on page 19](#)

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS (SIGS)



SIG-IBM
Tom Callow
Warner Mach



SIG-IBM INTERMEDIATE
Tom Callow
Interim Chairman

June 12: Microsoft Office Tips & Tricks: SIG-IBM Co-Chairman Tom Callow will describe and demonstrate some tips & tricks you can use to get the most out of Microsoft Office applications.

June 12: Wireless Pocket PCs: SEMCO Board member Chuck Moery and SEMCO member Paul Cervero will demonstrate the wireless functionality of their Pocket PCs and how they “surf the net” using their Pocket PCs.

NOVICE-IBM GROUP **Rotating Volunteer Hosts**

Jun12: Help And Q & A: Discussion directed by the audience.

New Chairman Sought
SIG IBM Intermediate is looking for a new Chairman to coordinate activities and secure speakers. If you can suggest candidates, please do. The matter will be discussed at the June 12 meeting of the SIG.

Continued from page 18

mail the DATA BUS at a rate that would save SEMCO about \$17 a month. It is planned that Creative Technology will print the June issue of DATA BUS.

Carol Sanzi moved to adjourn. Bob Clyne seconded the motion, and it was carried. The meeting adjourned at 12:45 p.m.

April Meeting Attendance: 16
(Mothers Day)



SIG-ADVANCED
Franz Breidenich

No July Meeting (July 4): Next meeting, Aug. 1 (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.

July 2005 DATA BUS DEADLINE (7th day after meeting)

SEMCO Input and Members' Ads — Deadline: Sun., June 19, 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. Contact the [Editor \(address Page 2\)](#).

AAIICI (American Association of Individual Investors, Computerized Investors)

June 25–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)

August 3–Wednesday, 7pm (meeting in July)(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: Boat trip on Huron Lady II, meet at the pier.

DCOM Computer Club

June 10–Friday, 6:30–8:30pm (2nd Friday); Henry Ford C.C., Patterson Tech Bldg, Ford Rd/Evergreen, Rm T143, Parking Lot C. Info: Doug Piazza 313-582-2602.

DPUG (Detroit Palm Users Group)

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

FACE (Flint Area Computer Enthusiasts)

June 14–Tuesday, 6:30pm (2nd Tuesday); Kettering Univ. Academic Bldg. Rm I-817 (enter Security Door, back of building by parking lot). [<http://www.gfn/FACE/index.html>](http://www.gfn/FACE/index.html).

MacGroup Detroit

June 12–Sunday, 3pm–5pm; Bloomfield Twp. Library, 1099 Lone Pine Rd. (at Telegraph). Info: Terry White, [<terry@macgroup.org>](mailto:terry@macgroup.org) or 313-571-9817. [<http://www.macgroup.org>](http://www.macgroup.org). Topic: Digital Video with Adobe After Effects.

MacTechnics, (MAC User Group)

June 18–Saturday (3rd 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 [<cassiemacs@yahoo.com>](mailto:cassiemacs@yahoo.com) or 313-971-8743. Topic: Digital Photography.

Michigan Apple Computer User Group

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

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)

September 6–Tuesday 7:30pm, (no meeting in July or August)(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.)

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

Wayne State U. Mac User Group

June 11–Saturday, 10:00am–Noon (2nd Saturday); at Mich.com, 21042 Laurelwood, Farmington. Info: Lorn/JoAnn Olsen 248/478-4300 or Denny McLampy 248-477-0190.

SPECIAL MEMBER BENEFIT

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

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Your **SEMCO** membership
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shows. See

www.a1-supercomputersales.com

or www.a1scs.com

for show schedule.

COMPUTER RESOURCE PEOPLE

This is a list of members willing to be resources for other members to call when they have hardware or software questions.

Are you willing to help members learn?

Which software programs are you familiar enough with?

It is not necessary to be an expert, but just have some familiarity with the program and be willing to help someone starting to learn it. Please give this some thought and volunteer at the next group meeting.

Almost Anything: Vander-Schrier

AutoCAD: Comptois

Genealogy: Cook

IBM PC Hardware Issues: Clyne, Yuhasz

Operating Systems: Callow, Clyne, Yuhasz

MAC Hardware and OS Issues: Yuhasz

MS Office for Windows: Callow

MS Word: Clyne

Networking: Callow

Novell Netware: Yuhasz

Quicken: Clyne

Geocaching: Cook

Clyne, Bob—810-387-3101, 9am–10pm clyne@lodden.com

Callow, Tom—248-642-1920 9am–5pm tcallow@vmddlaw.com

Comptois, Jerry—248-651-2504, anytime jerrycandotoo@juno.com

Cook, Stephen—313-272-7594, eves scook48227@ameritech.net

Vander-Schrier, Jack—586-739-7720, 12–8pm jvanders@myself.com

Yuhasz, Steve Help@yuhasz.org



SOUTHEASTERN MICHIGAN
COMPUTER ORGANIZATION, INC.

SEMCO CALENDAR—June/July
ELLIOTT HALL, OAKLAND UNIVERSITY
ROCHESTER, MICHIGAN

June 12—SUNDAY (Meet 2nd Sunday)

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

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

Special Interest Groups (SIGs)

SIG-IBM 1:45 pm, **Room 235**. **Program: Microsoft Office Tips & Tricks:** SIG-IBM Co-Chairman Tom Callow will describe and demonstrate some tips & tricks you can use to get the most out of Microsoft Office applications.

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

NOVICE-IBM GROUP 3:45 pm, **Room 214**. **Program: Help From An Expert With Discussion Directed By The Audience.**

SIG-IBM INTERMEDIATE 3:45 pm, **Room 235**. **Program: Wireless Pocket PCs:** SEMCO Board member Chuck Moery and SEMCO member Paul Cervero will demonstrate the wireless functionality of their Pocket PCs and how they “surf the net” using their Pocket PCs.

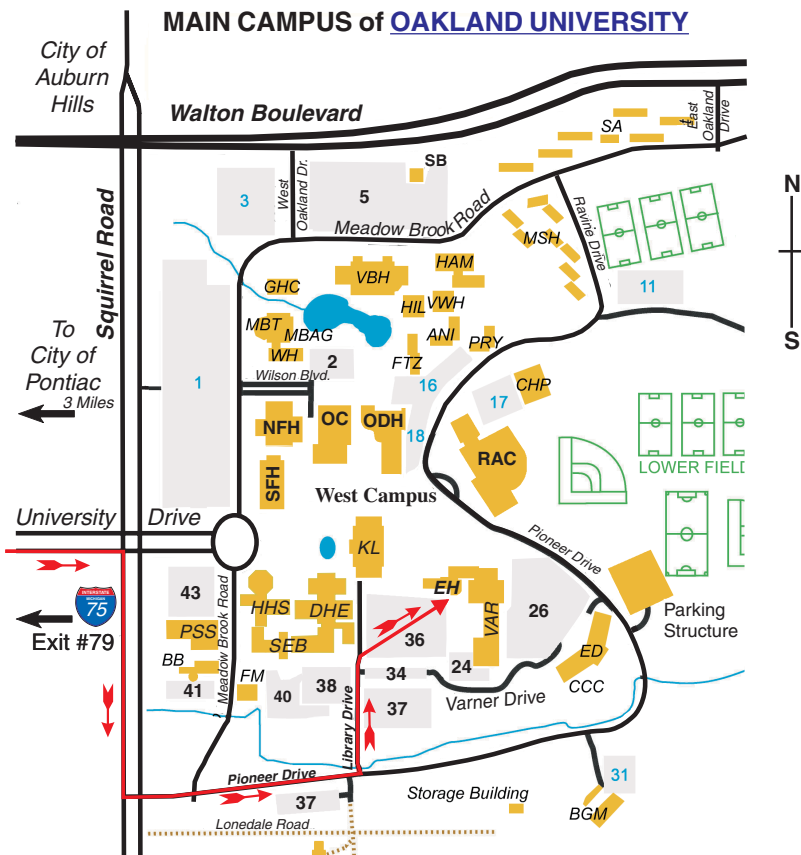
SIG-ADVANCED, **No Meeting in July (July 4): Next Meeting Aug. 1 – MONDAY, 6:45 pm**, Oak Park Public Library, 14200 Oak Park Blvd., Oak Park, MI. Phone: (248) 691-7480. Directions: Oak Park Blvd. is 9 1/2 mile Road, located west of Coolidge. Best route from freeway: take I-696 to the Coolidge exit. 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.**

July 10—SUNDAY (Meet 2nd Sunday). **SEMCO**, 1:30 pm. **Topics: To Be Announced.**

<http://www.semco.org>

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



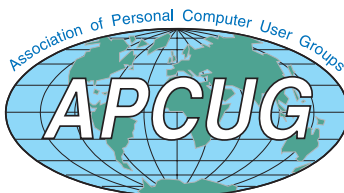
MAP LEGEND

- 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
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P.O. Box 707
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SEMCO (future meetings)

June 12

July 10

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