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SEMCO MEETINGS Sunday, September 11, 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



More On HD Warranties

In response to my comments about misleading HD warranties, Ira Wilsker, APCUG board member, sent me the following: "The federal Magnuson-Moss Warranty Improvement Act, effective July 1, 1976, REQUIRES any seller of an item that has a retail selling price of \$15 or more AND has a warranty, to make a copy of that warranty available on request PRIOR to purchase! In the future, wherever you buy items covered, ASK for the warranty BEFORE you buy it. Under the law the seller MUST let you see a copy prior to any purchase. Look at the FTC web site: <<http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/pubs/buspubs/warranty.htm>>" Thanks Ira. I don't know if my readers in Canada have any protection like that for consumers.

Interesting Show

My wife and I worked the Microsoft Tech Ed show, and each attendee received a nice carrying bag, but 1000 of them got a nice box of goodies that included a compact USB four-port hub, perhaps those who achieved a

certification, I never found out for sure. There were 18,000 attendees, and the exhibit floor had over 300 booths, although most booths were not elaborate. Food was in abundance throughout the entire show for attendees. I was told that each attendee (or his/her employer) paid at least \$1,700 to attend. There were many sessions using many different speakers, and covering a diverse variety of topics, during its six days. Steve Ballmer gave the keynote speech. It was fun to work this show.

I stopped at the booth for the new MS spyware program that is downloadable as a beta. I mentioned that I was told it would stop working in July and had not heard what would happen after that. The lady said it would continue to be free for home users. I hope she knew what she was talking about.

New Computer Project

I finally finished assembling the parts to go with the Intel motherboard I won at the FACUG event and got it up and running. A real surprise for me was when I accessed the Intel Web site for information and found that motherboard was already no longer supported. However, there was a PDF containing a manual for that motherboard, and it had the answers I needed. A friend was a lot of help over e-mail, since that was the first time I had built one completely from parts. There was a bit of frustration when I tried to install the OS, but with my friend's suggestions, I eventually found the problem, and it is now in service and working well, so far. Due to the price of the RDRAM that board takes, I only used two memory slots, and I'm glad my friend told me about choosing the right RDRAM. I was

unaware that there was more than one type of RDRAM for that motherboard.

Last Chance For The Biometric Unlocking Device Deal

This deal was only supposed to be for two months, but Hassan will probably still give you the discount on the fingerprint unlocking system for your locks, if you ask. Unlocking your doors doesn't get much better. E-mail him and ask for more information so he knows you read about it. To order, e-mail him at <Hassan.Hares@ekeyUSA.com> and check for product description at <<http://www.ekeyusa.com>>. The 30% off is a great discount on the product.

Special Rebates For Zio Corp. Products

Chris Allen, Channel Sales Manager, has set up rebates on several Zio Corporation products. This is a special situation, and you can download a PDF containing all the rebate forms from my Web site's Announcement page. This rebate is specifically for the DealsGuy column, although a rebate form is also on their own Web site right now. Use the rebate code "DealsGuy" on the form. This way you can shop wherever you like, getting your best price; then send for your rebate listed below.

CameraMate VideoSafe CM-53000: \$10 MIR (mail in rebate).

CameraMate Real Time Video CM-50000: \$20 MIR.

Dazzle Universal Media Reader/Writer DM-24001: \$20 MIR.

Dazzle 990 (Digital Camera/Camera Phone Manager): \$20 MIR.

Dazzle 8 in 1 DM-22000: \$15 MIR.

The MIRs are not valid with any other promotion, and only one rebate is allowed per household.

My Dazzle 990 mini-review is below, and the two CameraMate

products were written up in the May issue of the DealsGuy column. I have not tried the other products.

I received the Digital 990 (Digital Camera/Camera Phone manager) to try out. It is 4" long by 2 1/2" wide by 1/2" thick and does some neat things. You connect it to your computer's USB port, and it goes to work. There are five slots to accommodate popular media cards for a digital camera or phone. It also has two USB slots that act as a hub. They say the Dazzle 990 Hi-Speed Reader/Writer allows you to manage your digital stuff; you can transfer photos, contact lists, ring tones, MP3s, etc. between your mobile phone, digital camera, MP3 player, flash drive, and even any USB flash memory device, and your PC. The package lists 17 different types of supported media for your camera phone or digital camera.

Packaged with it are two CDs containing ProPix Sound that enable you to add music or sound to your photos, ProPix on TV that allows creating a slideshow for your TV, and automatic backup on a CD. That CD includes ProPix Address Manager that works with SIM-based mobile phones and updates your contact list from your PC. Also included is ProPix Share to share photos with friends easier and faster than using e-mail by using peer-to-peer technology. The other CD contains Paint Shop Photo Album (standard edition). There is more, and you can check their Web site at <<http://www.ziocorp.com>>, although their Web site needs work, since I didn't find as much information as on the package.

I enjoyed adding commentary to the photos taken on our Panama Canal cruise and setting up a slide show. Since I don't have a picture phone, I couldn't

try those functions. I did move around some of the image files from the media cards to my USB external HD, USB thumb drive, PC, etc., and it worked well. It handles both USB speeds. You need Windows 2000 or XP for this product. An available free download on their Web site is Orb Networks that allows accessing the photos, video, and music on your home PC (broadband connected) from your Internet enabled mobile device. As for using it as a USB hub, it normally handles low powered USB devices, but an optional accessory power supply is available. MSRP for the Dazzle 990 is \$49.95.

Dazzle Universal Media Reader/Writer DM-24001: MSRP \$39.99.

Dazzle 8 in 1 DM 22000: A high-speed reader for eight different card media: MSRP \$29.95.

CameraMate VideoSafe CM-53000 allows you to capture analog video/audio from any VCR or camcorder and burn it to a CD or DVD and includes some hardware: MSRP \$49.99.

CameraMate Real Time Video CD-50000 is an adapter and software for capturing the video/audio from any VCR or camcorder for the purpose of burning to a CD or DVD. However, Real Time Video software also offers Autoedit Wizard, Autoedit Storyboard Wizard, Randomize Wizard, and a DVD Burn Wizard. Software and drivers are included on a CD. Adapter cables for RCA audio/video/SVHS plugs are not included, but are easy to obtain, and many folks have them lying around: MSRP \$69.99.

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 Cheap skate) Click <bobclick@mindspring.com>. Visit my Web site at <<http://www.dealsguy.com>>.

VoIP Voice Over Internet Protocol By Brian K. Lewis

Are you using the Internet for your local and/or long distance service? If not, then maybe you need to read this article to find out how some computer users are saving “mucho dinero” on their telephone calls.

VoIP stands for Voice Over Internet Protocol. There are ways to use the Internet for free phone calls, low cost phone calls (2¢ per minute), or a monthly fixed rate for both local and long-distance calls. So how is it possible to transmit your voice over your Internet connection? We'll look at some of the technical aspects first. Then I can discuss some of the services that are available for you to check out further.

When you use your telephone, your voice is converted into electrical impulses and transmitted over copper wires to another phone. There it is converted back to sound waves. These impulses are transmitted via several switches in the telephone network. This system is referred to as the Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN). As long as you are talking on the phone you have a constant circuit connection between the two phones. In the original PSTN system, all calls required a

dedicated wire for each call. For the period of time you were on the phone you “owned” a copper wire connection between your phone and the other party. In today’s PSTN, all calls are digitized and can be combined with thousands of others running over fiber optic cable between central stations. However, the connection between the two phones must remain open for the length of the call.

When computer data is transmitted over phone lines or cable, it is also in digital form. However, the data is sent in packets and does not require a dedicated pathway to reach its destination. In fact, when a computer sends a stream of data packets, they may all arrive at their destination after traveling different routes. There are thousands of possible paths between any origin and any destination. In addition, packets from other origins can use any time spaces between your packets. This is a more efficient system, as a circuit does not need to be kept open. This system is referred to as packet switching.

So if your e-mail is being chopped up into small packets, how does the system know what to do with them? Each packet contains an address that tells the router what its final destination is. The sending computer sends the packet off to a router and then goes on to its next operation. The router selects a path to another router and sends the packet off. This process continues to the destination computer. At the destination, the receiving computer assembles the packets based on the information contained in each packet.

So what does this have to do with Internet phones? Very simple. VoIP uses the packet switching technology to transmit your call. The digitization

of your voice occurs either through your sound card or a device known as an analog telephone adapter (ATA). There are also Internet phones that connect directly to a network router and handle the conversion process. The voice packets that result from these various adapters are routed over the Internet in the same way as data packets. When you make a phone call, there is always dead space when no one is talking. With the packet system, other data packets from other sources are being transmitted over the Internet, making maximum use of its capacity.

In the early days of VoIP, sound quality was poor, and the method of operation more like using a walkie-talkie. Today’s equipment is vastly improved. Sound quality on many VoIP systems is the equivalent of that found in the PSTN. Depending on the system you are using, you can dial any number, and your call will be routed over the Internet. In such a system, you and the party you called won’t see any difference in operation or sound from that of the PSTN.

So why would you be interested in using an Internet phone instead of your current local/long distance PSTN service? One big factor for many people is cost. The cost of Internet service ranges from free to \$25/month (more in some cases) for unlimited calls. In addition, many of the VoIP services offer features that cost you extra through your local phone company. It is not unusual for a VoIP provider to include Caller ID, Call waiting, Call transfer, call forwarding, voicemail, and three way calling as part of the basic price.

Now let’s look at some of the providers and their services. Skype <<http://www.skype.com>> offers a free

service that allows you to connect to other Skype users. The software for this can be downloaded from their Web site. It took just a few minutes to install it on my computer. Once you have installed it, you need to set up a call list of other users. So you have to contact people that you call frequently and have them install the Skype software. From that point on, it becomes much like instant messaging. If the person you are calling is on-line, you can connect and talk to them. Otherwise, they have no way to know that you are calling. The reverse is also true if they want to call you. The minimum hardware you need for this are speakers connected to your sound card and a microphone. You can also use a headset with a built-in microphone. It is also advisable that you have a broadband connection, either cable or DSL. In my testing of it, once I had a connection, the call was quite clear with no background static or other problems.

So what do you do if you have Skype and want to call someone who doesn't have Skype? You can get SkypeOut that allows you to call any phone number anywhere in the world for about 2¢/minute. After you install the SkypeOut software you buy credit on their Internet site, which you can then use for your calls. Some reviewers have had sound problems with SkypeOut. I have not tested it.

There are other free services available as well. Free World Dialup is at <http://www.freeworlddialup.com>. This is a quote from their Web site: "FWD allows you to make free phone calls using any broadband connection with devices that follow Internet standards. This can be a 'regular' telephone connected to a packetizer, an IP Phone, or any number of free soft-

phones (software for your PC or PDA)." In order to use the system you need to download and install the software. Then you obtain a phone number from FWD. The hardware you need is an SIP compatible ATA adapter that you connect to a network router that connects to your modem. You can then connect any telephone to the jack in the ATA adapter. Now you're ready to dial any FWD user anywhere in the world. However, you cannot dial a regular PSTN phone from this system without purchasing time from another VoIP provider. The advantage of FWD over Skype is that your computer doesn't have to be on to receive calls. Your phone will ring just as it did when connected to the PSTN phone system.

There is another advantage to FWD. This system uses the Session Initiation Protocol (SIP) standard. This allows FWD users to call others who are not member of FWD but are connected by a different SIP compatible service. Other free services currently using the SIP standard are IPTEL.org and SIPPhone.com. Skype does not adhere to the SIP standard.

Now we get to the services that charge a monthly fee. These providers furnish an SIP compatible ATA adapter and in some instances the router for your telephone connection. This list includes companies like AT&T (CallVantage), Verizon (VoiceWing), Packet8, VoicePulse, and Vonage. Of these, AT&T and Verizon are the most expensive. Several of these providers are preparing wireless units that will allow you to connect through any WiFi hotspot. Vonage has announced that they expect to have a wireless unit available by mid-summer 2005. That means you could make and receive calls

while you are on the road. Also, by taking your ATA adapter with you when you travel, connections can be made through broadband data ports in many hotels and motels.

Of these providers, Vonage has been in the game longer than the others and has a strong reputation as to its quality. They have two basic plans: (1) \$24.99 for unlimited calling in the U.S. and Canada, (2) \$14.99 for 500 long-distance minutes. They also offer virtual phone numbers with any area code you prefer. Dialing other numbers in your area code requires just seven digits. You can add a fax line for \$10 per month, or toll-free numbers for \$5 per month. With Vonage and these other providers, you can call any PSTN number or numbers on the FWD network. For more details on the specific services provided by these companies I would suggest you check their Web sites.

So what are the drawbacks to VoIP services? First, if your Internet provider has a service outage, then your phone service is also down. Second, if there is a power outage you lose your phone service unless your system has a battery backup to keep it running. Another disadvantage is that most of these services can't connect to 911. In some cases, you can call 911 after you have provided the service with location information for their files. They need this information so the system will know where to direct the call. However, the 911 operator can't see your name or address, and you have to provide that information when you make the call.

In spite of these disadvantages, VoIP usage is rapidly increasing. If you are interested in testing VoIP, I suggest you start with one of the free services. Try it, you may like it.

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Brian K. Lewis, Ph.D., can be reached at <bwsail@yahoo.com>.

Dual-Core Processors Are Coming! By Timothy Everingham

Both Intel and Advanced Micro Devices (AMD) are screaming "Dual-Core Processors are Coming." They say they are the future of microprocessors for computers. With both companies introducing these processors it is important to understand the significance of this development.

So what is a dual-core processor? Basically it is two microprocessors on the same integrated circuit or chip. Having more than one processor in a computer has been around for a long time. It is normal for servers to have them. Multiprocessor workstations (high end desktops) are used mostly for scientific, engineering, and digital content creation for TV and movies. Dual-core is not Intel's hyperthreading that is on its Pentium 4s, which lets the operating system think it has two processors rather than one. In a dual-core processor there are two actual processors, each one having its own L1 & L2 caches.

Why are we going to dual-core processors? One of the main reasons is heat. The higher a processor's clock speed, the more heat it produces. The 3.6 GHz Pentium 4 did have heat problems. Of course what we have been doing is just put more than one processor on a motherboard to increase performance beyond what you can get with a single processor (The general rule has been that adding a second processor improves computer speed by 60% over a single processor of the same speed). However, to make this more cost effective, use less space, and reduce power requirements, putting two processors together on one chip is better. This is especially true in the desktop and notebook markets. As we move to high-definition TV resolution video on computers the need for the average computer to have very high processing speed will appear, leading to dual-core processor computers being dominant a few years from now. But can you upgrade your current system to a dual-core processor? If you have an AMD socket 939 motherboard you can upgrade to an AMD Athlon 64 dual-core processor with only a BIOS upgrade. The same is true for AMD Opteron socket 940 motherboards for Opteron dual-core processors. Intel said last fall that some Intel LGA 775 motherboards would be able to use their dual-core processors, called "Pentium D," but they now say the first generation of them will have to use a modified LGA 775 socket. This of course means getting a new motherboard.

For an application program to take advantage of multiprocessor systems, both the operating system and the particular application you are running must have the ability to use more than

one processor (multi-threaded program). If the operating system is able to take advantage of more than one processor, but the applications you are running are not, you may get different applications running on different processors, but each will only use one processor. Windows 98 & ME are designed for only one processor, so they can only use one processor even though there are two processors on one chip, real or virtual. Windows XP Home can use only one processor chip, but up to two processors on that chip. Windows XP Professional is designed to use up to 2 processor chips and up to 2 processors on each chip. Novell's SUSE Linux is already ready for dual core processors, and Red Hat Linux soon will be. Both are multi-threaded and multi-processor chip operating systems.

Most current multi-threaded application programs are mid-high end scientific, engineering, CAD/CAM, and digital content creation programs. This includes video editing and 2D and 3D animation and image creation/editing programs. However there are some home applications that already have this multi-threading capability, such as the Adobe Premiere Elements video-editing program. The first programs for the home user to go multi-threading should be content creation/editing, multimedia, and games. There seems to be an expectation by Intel that the transition over to most programs being multi-threaded will be three years from now. However, some software companies base the licensing fees of some or all of their programs on the number of processors using the program. The question then becomes: will software companies start charging licensing fees per processor core, instead of the current

per processor chip? Right now it looks like the trend says no. Microsoft has already said for its programs that are licensed on a per processor basis it will continue doing so and not go to a per processor core basis. Also to consider in upgrading both Intel and AMD systems, you may have software you need to activate that logs the system components. Upgrading processors and motherboards can cause these programs to say that this is now a new computer you are running the program on, which you are not authorized to do, and refuse to run. This could include your operating system. Check with your program's publisher/manufacturer to see what their policy on this is. Home and office use policies have been known to be different.

So when did these marvelous dual-core processors appear? For Intel it was the second quarter of 2005. For AMD it was mid-2005 for the high level Opterons and a little later in 2005 for the desktop Athlon 64s. As you might expect, the price is originally high, but then it should drop significantly as time goes on.

We are moving this year to dual-core processors. They will improve the speed of computers, and reduce the related heat and power requirement issues. They will be originally for those high-end power users, but over the next few years they could easily become the norm. You can see them in computer stores near you this year.

Timothy Everingham is a member of TUGNET, California, and can be reached at <teveringham@acm.org>. He is also CEO of Timothy Everingham Consulting in Azusa, CA <<http://home.earthlink.net/~teveringham>>.

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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.

Wi-Fi Wireless Internet And Network Availability By Ira Wilsker

Recently, one of my daughters called me from a major city and asked me where she could find some free "hotspots" or wireless "Wi-Fi" locations where she could get free broadband wireless internet access. She gave me her street address, and within moments I found several nearby locations where she could access the internet for free using the wireless "802.11b" PCMCIA card she had with her notebook computer. She told me which hotspot she selected, and I gave her the "SSID," or "Service Set Identifier," a simple code, usually a name, that identifies a local hotspot.

I recently purchased a new notebook computer for another daughter, and this computer came with an Intel Centrino chipset, which provided integral wireless internet access, wherever available, whether at home or on the road. As she travels around town, at school, or away from home, she can likely access the internet at high speeds.

I travel extensively, and always take my notebook computer with me, as I often find it necessary to check my e-mail, find restaurants, or locate other information on the internet. Through experience, I have found that many

hotels, restaurants, airports, and other locations offer wireless broadband internet access either for a fee, or for free. Now before I leave home, I check a Web site <<http://www.jwire.com>>, or its twin sister site supported by Intel, <<http://intel.jwire.com>>, to determine what wireless access is available enroute, or at my destination. Another source of such information is <<http://www.wi-fihotspotlist.com>>.

Jwire.com is one of the leading interactive directories of publicly available wireless internet locations, typically using one of the industry standard 802.11 protocols. Standardization, as well as substantial downward compatibility, has ensured that almost all computers equipped with 802.11 type wireless internet hardware can effectively communicate at broadband speeds. As I type this, Jwire is listing almost 70,000 public access wireless hotspots around the world. The Intel companion site lists almost 30,000 wireless hotspots in the U.S., and about 40,000 international wireless hotspots. According to the Intel site, the top U.S. cities for public wireless are New York City with over 550 public access locations, followed by Chicago (434 public wireless locations), San Francisco (412), and Seattle (320). Texas is well represented in the top 10 most “unwired” cities with 309 public hotspots in Houston, 250 in Austin, and 192 in Dallas. California is listed by Intel as the state with the most public access with over 5000 locations, followed by Texas with almost 2000 hotspots, Florida with about 1800, and New York with over 1600 public hotspots. It should be emphasized that these numbers are only the wireless sites that allow public access, either for free

(sometimes with some strings attached) or for a fee, and does not include the millions of sites that are private wireless networks. The listing also does not include many of the hotel chains that offer free wireless access to registered guests.

Many of the free sites listed are local restaurants, some hotels, many airport terminals, RV parks, and other locations. All it takes to access these totally free and public sites is the SSID of the wireless host and appropriate hardware; the Jwire sites list the SSID’s of the public sites. When the wireless access on the notebook computer is activated, the wireless networks within range can be identified, and if accessible, the SSID can be entered, and connections established. It is important that from a personal security standpoint, these public connections are not often encrypted, and can be “sniffed” or picked up by anyone with suitable equipment; sensitive information, passwords, banking, and other critical information should never be sent on an insecure public network.

In addition to the free sites, there are many thousands of publicly accessible but commercial (fee based) hotspots, often in coffee shops, restaurants, hotels, bookstores, some airport terminal areas, and other locations. These hotspots either require a subscription to a service, such as a cellular phone company or other third party, or a daily or hourly fee for access. Generally, since these pay services require some type of access code, they are slightly more secure than the free public sites, but are still usually accessible to a hacker with commonly available but illicit software. Again, it is a good practice not to type any

sensitive personal information while on a publicly accessible wireless network. Some of the commercial hotspots offer “WEP,” or wireless encryption protocol, which makes it more difficult for unwelcome third parties to listen in on internet communications, but the methods for cracking WEP have been widely published, and are now only considered to provide marginal security.

One warning about wireless internet access; it is illegal to access a wireless network without the consent of the owner, despite the fact that studies have indicated that about 80% of all private wireless networks, both workplace and home based, are not adequately protected, and can easily be picked up and accessed by anyone who wants access. A popular hacker method of gaining “free” broadband internet access is driving around town with a notebook computer with 802.11 hardware, and logging the wireless networks found, with those same networks often broadcasting the SSID necessary for access. This practice is called “wardriving.” In major cities, marks are drawn on sidewalks and the outside walls of buildings in a similar escapade, “warchalking,” where SSID’s and other relevant information is written for all to see, and access. Locally, in a security demonstration, a security consultant drove around the business district of town, and logged hundreds of wireless networks, 80% of which were easily accessible, as they were not properly secured. These included such sensitive locations as banks, law offices, retail stores, medical facilities, and other choice locations for hackers to penetrate.

Use the Jwire sites to find wireless access, as I do, but be totally aware of the risk and security implications of

broadcasting critical information. There are a variety of hardware and software utilities that can be utilized to harden wireless access.

Ira Wilsker is a member of 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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Useful Bookmarks

By Richard Johnson

The Web is a marvelous resource, and most of us come nowhere near tapping its full potential. I’ve attempted here to list websites that, without any necessary downloading, provide exceedingly useful free non-specialized services and tools, that require no particular knowledge except how to navigate the World Wide Web.

1. Time Cave

<www.timecave.com>

Memo to Me

<www.memotome.com>

Using these two e-mail reminder services, you’ll never forget another upcoming activity or event. Time Cave allows you to schedule incoming messages by interval (so many hours, days, weeks, months, or even years away) as well as by date and time. Memo to Me allows editing of content and date. With Time Cave you can choose your own subject line and send

reminders to others, but Memo to Me will charge you for those features. On the other hand, Time Cave charges for the ability to repeat messages (monthly, weekly, etc.), which is standard with Memo to Me.

2. Way Back Machine

[<www.archive.org/web/web.php>](http://www.archive.org/web/web.php)

Is a website you're seeking no longer around? If it was active as late as 1996, you'll probably find it easily in this huge archive.

3. Centerwatch Clinical Trials

[<www.centerwatch.com>](http://www.centerwatch.com)

Gives information on more than 41,000 active clinical trials in which you could participate. (Some compensate you handsomely for helping, along with free medical monitoring.) Includes a notification service for trials in areas of your interest. Also describes the newest drug therapies.

4. Objectgraph Dictionary

[<www.objectgraph.com/dictionary>](http://www.objectgraph.com/dictionary)

A combination standard dictionary, technical dictionary, and thesaurus. (There's also a dictionary of chemical elements, of rather limited interest). A unique feature is the site's ability to "read your mind" if you're not sure of the word you're thinking of—or its spelling—or if you just want to save typing.

5. Myway E-mail

[<www.myway.com>](http://www.myway.com)

An excellent Web-based e-mail provider with an exceptionally clean interface (no banner ads or pop-ups). Unlike the case with competitors like Yahoo mail, Myway will respond to support inquiries.

6. Myway Weather

[<weather.myway.com>](http://weather.myway.com)

The best weather page on the Web. Even though its weather information is

from weather.com, you'll see when you use it that the interface is much cleaner (and loading therefore faster) than if you were to bring up either weather.com or one of its competitors. You can personalize the weather according to your home town or zip code; the page you'll want to bookmark is that personalized page.

7. Past Weather

[<www.weather.com/activities/other/other/weather/yesterday.html>](http://www.weather.com/activities/other/other/weather/yesterday.html)

Use this site to compare today's forecast with yesterday's weather. There's also interesting historical data and a graph showing the weather for the past seven days. The past weather information can easily be compared with the forecast from Myway weather, which derives its data from the same source.

8. Furl

[<www.furl.net>](http://www.furl.net)

Bookmarking is useful, but what do you do when you find that a bookmarked page has disappeared (left the Web)? Or maybe it's still there, but—as with many newspaper sites—you can't read it without going to a paid archive. This won't be an issue if you've Furl'd the page. Furl allows you to create a set of special bookmarks that can be easily searched or browsed—or shared with others—but whose contents are permanently stored on your hard drive. (If you feel the need to save parts of a page, try Net Snippets Free at [<www.netsnippets.com/basic>](http://www.netsnippets.com/basic). This does require a download.)

9. Password Generator

[<http://mistupid.com/computers/passwordgen.htm>](http://mistupid.com/computers/passwordgen.htm)

Random characters compose the safest passwords. This tool will create a password with random characters according to your specifications. On

your instructions, will even avoid ambiguous characters [o and 0, 1 and I].

10. Zap2it

www.zap2it.com

With Zap2it you can check out both TV and movie schedules. Various options let you permanently personalize each set of listings, to give you just the information you need, in the format you prefer.

11. Acronym Finder

www.acronymfinder.com

Don't be baffled by acronyms and abbreviations you encounter on the Web and elsewhere. This site offers definitions for over 398,000 such terms. Optional downloading of any of a number of search tools (for various browsers) will allow you to view a definition almost instantly.

12. Translation Wizard

www.faganfinder.com/translate

The Translation Wizard uses other sites' services to ease the process of finding a translation—that otherwise might require visiting ten or more sites to find the language of interest! It also has a neat button to identify a mystery language.

13. Anybirthday

<http://anybirthday.com>

A fun site that can divulge your friend's birthday or even tell you where to mail the card.

14. TrackEngine

www.trackengine.com

Notifies you via e-mail of changes in Web pages that you select. You can preview the changes or view the whole page via e-mail, with changes highlighted. Choose the Web address of a neighborhood theater, to see what plays are coming up. Or see every new installment of a favorite newspaper column, without having to buy the paper.

15. GovBenefits.gov

<http://govbenefits.gov>

A source of information on over 400 government-funded programs that extend benefits for which you may qualify, including compensated volunteering. Features a confidential questionnaire designed to point you to the most likely matches.

16. AddALL

www.addall.com

Use this site to find the very best price for a book you want to buy. Unlike most other comparison sites, it figures in shipping costs for your location. Links will take you to pages for magazine subs, music CDs, and videos.

17. Jux2

www.jux2.com

Jux2 lets you receive and compare search results from two or three different search engines, or see what you're missing from your regular search results. (According to the site, competing search engines typically share fewer than 4 out their 10 top results.) Still in development, it's currently limited to Google, Yahoo, and Ask Jeeves.

18. Medem Medical Library

www.medem.com/medlb/medlib_entry.cfm

Searchable and browsable medical library, organizing contributions from 45 medical societies. Features a complexity indicator for each article, from "introductory" to "professional."

19. Metacritic

www.metacritic.com/film

Kids-in-mind

www.kids-in-mind.com

Metacritic is an excellent source for movie critiques. For each film, it arranges its large variety of reviews from most to least favorable, and then tabulates the opinions, for an overall

“metascore.” (Additional Metacritic pages cover videos, music, and games.) For evaluating movies for children, or if you have a concern about violence, sex, or profanity, Kids-in-mind will rate and describe each film’s content in those three areas.

20. CardRatings

<http://cardratings.com>

This site maintains information on over 700 credit cards, and will suggest the best cards in a variety of categories—low or no credit, no annual fee, low interest, rewards/rebates, etc.

21. CheckFree

www.checkfree.com

There are a host of good reasons for paying your bills online. It saves time, saves the cost of stamps, reduces the chance of late payment, extends the time in which you can use your money, cuts down clutter, eliminates the danger of checks lost in the mail, and facilitates tracking. With CheckFree you’ll be able to pay many or most of your bills online, and the service is free to the payers.

22. Bug Me Not

www.bugmenot.com

This site and the one following save you time and trouble while helping you cut down on spam. Bug Me Not keeps on hand log-in data (passwords with user names) for a huge number of sites that require registration. If you want access to such a site (like latimes.com), but don’t want to bother registering, just visit the Bug Me Not site and log in.

23. Spam Bob

<http://evil-wire.luvfeed.org/cache/1269>

Spam Bob offers a choice of three e-mail addresses that you create, to protect your privacy. <Anything@spambob.org> is a phantom address, messages to which disappear into the ether. Use

<anything@spambob.com> if you’ll want to check on a reply message. (This is handy for registrations that require confirmation.) And you may want to use <anything@spambob.net> for all your correspondents. Mail from each such “net” address can be forwarded to you, and if it starts generating spam, just cancel the forwarding order!

24. Google Maps

<http://maps.google.com>

Head and shoulders above the competition, these maps are much larger and far easier to configure. Zooming in and out is quick as a bunny, and re-centering is instantaneous. You can locate by category businesses in the map area, along with their phone numbers. Note that (at least as of this writing) these maps are not implemented in the regular Google search results, which will still point you only to Yahoo and MapQuest maps.

Richard Johnson is a member of TUGNUT <www.tugnut.org> and editor and founder/administrator of FREE FOR ALL The Skills Pool, a 29-year-old membership organization <<http://theskillspool.org>>. You may reach him at <rj@theskillspool.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.

Tip: To shorten the shutter lag on a digital camera, press the button halfway down ahead of time, and then push it the rest of the way when you actually want to take the picture.

Eurocom D470K Python Hardware Review

By Bob Clyne

DATA BUS

Associate Editor

The Eurocom D470K Python laptop computer is marketed as a Desktop Replacement. As such it is designed more for performance than light weight and long battery run time. It is designed around the AMD Athlon64 processors, VIA K8T800+VT8235CE chipset, ATI Mobility Radeon 9700 AGP 8x video chipset with a 14" wide screen, and a 102 key keyboard with a separate numeric keypad. It has three USB 2.0 and one FireWire IEEE1394a ports, a WebCam, and a modem. The sound is surprisingly good for a laptop, with five speakers plus a sub-woofer, but remember, it is a laptop, and the sound is nowhere as good as even a mid-line powered desktop speaker set. The networking is 10/100/gigabit LAN. The battery run time is about 1.5 to 2 hours, and the weight, including the AC converter and power cord, is about 10 pounds. There is no internal floppy drive. The current base price is \$1599 U.S., but there are many options available (more than are mentioned in this article).

I opted for the Athlon64 3400+ Mobile processor, the next to the fastest available. The available 3700+ processor is from AMD's DTR line and uses more battery power. I also chose 1 GiB of memory and the 60 GB 7200 RPM hard drive and the +/-R DVD burner. I decided against the wireless LAN, since I already had an 802.11A/B/G PC Card. I also decided not to get the TV tuner and the Bluetooth module.

I have had my unit for about a year now and really like it. The display is very good, and the performance is excellent. The keyboard is good for a laptop, but laptop keyboards are never quite as easy to type on as desktop keyboards. The computer has a touchpad like just about all laptops, and I may never get used to them. They never seem to know when I mean to be using them and when my hand is just near them while reaching for the keyboard. There is a utility to adjust the touchpad configuration though, and maybe I just need to spend more time tweaking it. There is, of course, a place to plug in a PS/2 keyboard and mouse, but I usually have more than enough stuff to carry. If you order the computer with Windows, they install it, and you get an actual Microsoft Windows install disc. The D470K Python is designed to be field upgradeable so you can add or change most of the options without sending it back to the factory.

I like the computer, but there are some areas that I would like to see improved. As you might expect for a performance machine, the computer generates a lot of heat, and there are fan vents on the bottom. This isn't a problem if you place the computer on a hard or uneven surface, but if you place it on a soft surface, it tends to block the air vents, and the machine overheats. This tends to sneak up on you. I wish they could do all the venting through the sides.

Next on my wish list is easier battery swaps. Not necessarily, hot-swaps, but shut down, slide a catch, pop out the battery, and slide the spare battery in. My previous laptop computer was a Hewlett Packard Omnibook 7100, and it had that arrangement. On the D470K

Python, you have to remove some small screws on the bottom (being careful not to lose them), remove a cover, pull the battery out, disconnect the plug on the end of the wires, and then reverse the process to put the spare battery in. Not the sort of operation you would want to attempt in a plane or car or many other places. I would like to see something similar to the HP arrangement, especially in view of the short battery run time on the Python.

There are slots for MMC/MS/SD/MS-Pro memory cards, but I wish they had a slot for the compact flash cards that my camera uses. This may not be an issue though for those with newer cameras.

I sometimes have trouble with the eject button for the DVD tray. The button is small and is recessed so you don't eject the tray by accident, but sometimes I have trouble actuating it when I want to eject the tray. There is now an option for a slot loading drive.

I would also like to have a way to set the screen brightness so that it would

remember my setting and boot up to that setting. It is easy to change the screen brightness when the computer is on, if I don't forget, but I like equipment that compensates for my forgetfulness and other frailties. I have found that the screen is bright enough under most conditions at a setting two notches below the default, and the lower setting seems to extend the battery run time.

I wish they had an automobile adapter. Their answer is a third party inverter, but that is less efficient and more equipment to deal with in the vehicle than an actual vehicle adapter.

Keep in mind when reading the above that there are always things I think could be improved on everything I use. Overall, I like my Eurocom D470K Python.

Eurocom is a Canadian company, and their web site usually defaults to showing Canadian prices, so if you are used to U.S. prices, be sure to change the currency display to avoid sticker shock. Choose a model and then look at the things you can customize in their



Letter From The Editor

On the stone at Norma's grave site it says "She loved people, and they loved her." That is a fact; my wife was a people person and favorably affected the lives of 4-H kids for 35 years. She had dozens of friends who loved her for how she treated them. Things like computers and VCRs and can openers didn't work for her; they usually broke in her hands. Things were not her thing.

On the stone next to hers, prepared for me, it will say "He worked to make things better." I am not a people person; I'm a thing person. I'm a wallflower at parties; I hide in the lobby when the loud music starts. But I worked to make cars better, to mow the lawn, to fix the kitchen faucet, to improve the science, math, and engineering education of young people, to make DATA BUS better, to pump up bicycle tires. Things are my thing.

Two days before she died Norma and I held hands in the hospital. We talked about what was coming. Being 5 years older with a tricky heart, I said "It won't be long before I follow you." She thought about that for and minute and then responded "Look me up." I will; I will.

Bill

configuration screens. I think their products are worth your look.

Eurocom Corporation
148 Colonnade Road
Nepean, Ontario K2E 7R4
1-877-387-6266

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

info@eurocom.com.

Don't Forget System Restore

By Charlie Paschal

cpaschal@netside.com

Viruses are always a threat, but did you know that one can “return” without warning if you don't turn off one Windows XP feature when cleaning up from a virus?

One of XP's great features is System Restore that can take your system back to a time when it was running better. I've used it countless times to return an ill-acting system back to a healthy time.

What if, though, you get a virus? Because System Restore can contain system settings that will restore the virus itself, it should always be turned off before you remove a virus.

To do that: Right Click on My Computer and left click on Properties. Click on the System Restore tab and check the box labeled “Turn Off System Restore on all Drives.”

Then, clean up the virus and reboot. Don't forget to turn System Restore back on after cleaning up the virus.

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), of which this group is a member, brings this article to you.



BOARD MEETING

8/14/05

Carol Sanzi

Board Members Present

President Gary DeNise, Vice President Richard Jackson, Treasurer Chester Blechinger, Secretary Carol Sanzi, SIG-Advanced Chairman Franz Breidenich, SIG-IBM Co-Chairman Tom Callow, Warner Mach representing SIG-IBM Intermediate, Publications Committee Chairman Bill Agnew, and Members at Large, Bob Clyne and Chuck Moery. The meeting was called to order at 12:05 p.m.

Old Business

Treasurer Chester Blechinger stated that the balance on hand is \$6371.91 The membership stands at 78. It is time for Jehana Jalil, Betty MacKenzie, and Robert Zukosky to renew their memberships.

Tom Callow moved to reimburse Warner Mach \$7.71 for refreshments. Bob Clyne seconded the motion, and it carried.

After a discussion of whether or not SEMCO will remain at Oakland University or move its meeting location elsewhere, Richard Jackson moved to create a committee to investigate meeting room possibilities. Franz Breidenich seconded the motion, and it carried. Committee volunteers were Bill Agnew, Gary DeNise, and Richard Jackson. Bill Agnew will meet with representatives from Oakland University to get a definition of their new room rental costs and request a password for the new wireless Internet access.

Chester Blechinger moved to adjourn. Chuck Moery seconded the motion, and it carried. The meeting adjourned at 12:53 p.m.

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS (SIGS)



SIG-IBM
Tom Callow
Warner Mach



SIG-IBM INTERMEDIATE
Tom Callow
Interim Chairman

Sept. 11: Gene Barlow on Internet Security, Organizing Your Access to the Internet, and Backing up Your Hard Drive: Gene Barlow of User Group Relations will tell what may be going on behind the scenes when you access the Internet and what you can do to protect yourself from Internet hackers. Gene will also demonstrate how you can organize your Internet access and your computer using Optimal Desktop Pro from Optimal Access, Inc., which allows you to find the information you want in three mouse clicks or less. Gene will also demonstrate Acronis True Image, and how to use it to back up your computer quickly and easily.

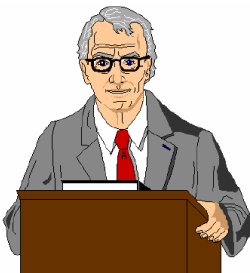
Sept. 11: Gene Barlow, Part 2: Gene Barlow will continue his presentation of the topics started in the SIG-IBM meeting.

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.

NOVICE-IBM GROUP Rotating Volunteer Hosts

Sept. 11: Help And Q & A: Discussion directed by the audience.



SIG-ADVANCED
Franz Breidenich

Oct. 3: (first Monday), 6:45 pm, at the Oak Park Library. The library is located at 14200 Oak Park Blvd., Oak Park, MI. Phone: (248) 691-7480.
Topic: Wide ranging discussion of computers and computing.

August Meeting Attendance: 27

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

SEMCO Input and Members' Ads — Deadline: Sun., Sept. 18, 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 \(address Page 2\)](#).

Bill Agnew
agnew@bignet.net
(to post monthly computer group info)

**CALENDAR-OF-EVENTS
OTHER GROUPS**

AAICI (American Association of Individual Investors, Computerized Investors)

Sept. 24–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 or 313-341-8855.

COMP (Computer Operators of Marysville & Port Huron)

Sept. 7–Wednesday, 7pm (1st Wednesday); Jane Wheatly 810-982-1187 <http://www.bwcomp.org>. Topic: NetMax, A New Linux Desktop.

DCOM Computer Club

Sept. 9–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)

Sept. 8–Thursday, 7pm (2nd Thursday); Kelly Services Bldg, 999 West Big Beaver, corner Crooks & Big Beaver, Troy. <http://www.dpug.org>.

FACE (Flint Area Computer Enthusiasts)

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

MacGroup Detroit

Sept. 11–Sunday, 3pm–5pm; Bloomfield Twp. Library, 1099 Lone Pine Rd. (at Telegraph), Info: Terry White, terry@macgroup.org or 313-571-9817. <http://www.macgroup.org>. Topic: Converting VHS Tapes to Digital Video/DVD.

MacTechnics, (MAC User Group)

Sept. 17–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>. Cassie at cassiemac@yahoo.com or 313-971-8743. Topic: iMovie/DVD with Cassie St. Clair.

Michigan Apple Computer User Group

Sept. 8–(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>.

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)

Oct. 4–Tuesday 7:30pm, (1st Tuesday); Carpathia Club, 38000 Utica Rd, Sterling Heights. Pres. Don VanSyckel at Don@VanSyckel.net, 586-731-9232; Web: <http://www.SterlingHeightsComputerClub.org>. Topic: Picks & Clicks—PDAs and Digital Cameras

MDLUG (Metro Detroit Linux User Group)

Sept. 10 –Saturday, 12:30–2:30pm, (2nd Saturday); Roseville Theater, Utica Rd. at the corner of Gratiot; Web: www.mdlug.org. Info: Richard Jackson 248-546-3694. Topic: The GPL & How It Works Legally, Ray Ingles.

Wayne State U. Mac User Group

Sept. 10–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
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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 jerryandotoo@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



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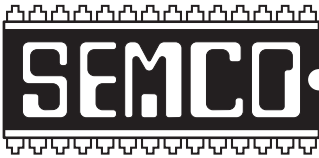
Your **SEMCO** membership card is good for a **\$1 discount** (not valid with any other offer) on admission to

A1-Super Computer Sales shows. See

www.a1-supercomputersales.com

or www.a1scs.com

for show schedule.



SOUTHEASTERN MICHIGAN
COMPUTER ORGANIZATION, INC.

SEMCO CALENDAR—September/October
ELLIOTT HALL, OAKLAND UNIVERSITY
ROCHESTER, MICHIGAN

September 11—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: Gene Barlow on Internet Security, Organizing Your Access to the Internet, and Backing up Your Hard Drive:** Gene Barlow of User Group Relations will tell what may be going on behind the scenes when you access the Internet and what you can do to protect yourself from Internet hackers. Gene will also demonstrate how you can organize your Internet access and your computer using Optimal Desktop Pro from Optimal Access, Inc., which allows you to find the information you want in three mouse clicks or less. Gene will also demonstrate Acronis True Image, and how to use it to back up your computer quickly and easily.

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: Gene Barlow, Part 2:** Gene Barlow will continue his presentation of the topics started in the SIG-IBM meeting.

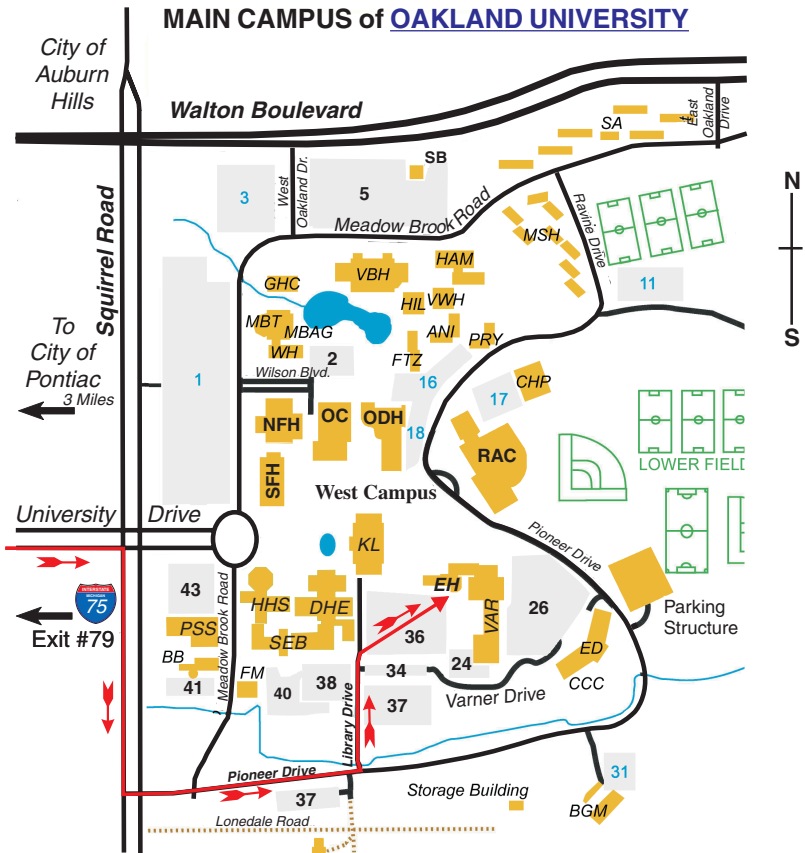
SIG-ADVANCED, **Oct. 3—MONDAY, 6:45 pm**, (Sept. 5 is Labor Day), Oak Park Public Library, 14200 Oak Park Blvd., Oak Park, MI. Phone: (248) 691-7480. Directions: Oak Park Blvd. is 9 1/2 mile Road, located west of Coolidge. Best route from freeway: take I-696 to the Coolidge exit. Head south on Coolidge for 1/2 mile to Oak Park Blvd. and turn right. Info: Franz Breidenich 248-398-3359. **TOPIC: Wide-Ranging Discussion Of Computers & Computing.**

October 9—SUNDAY (2nd Sunday). **SEMCO**, 1:30 pm.

<http://www.semco.org>

PUBLIC INVITED

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



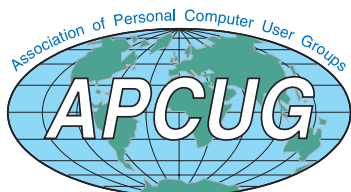
MAP LEGEND

- 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
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SEMCO (future meetings)

September 11

October 9

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