SEMCO

DATA BUS

**PLAN TO CHANGE THE
SEMCO MEETING
LOCATION
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Volume 30	December 2005	Number 12

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

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Your mailing label and membership cards list the month and year your membership expires. Newsletters will not be sent after the month of expiration. Back issues may not be available. Renew your membership as early as possible to avoid missing any newsletters.

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NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING AND ELECTION

The annual meeting of the members of the SouthEastern Michigan Computer Organization, Inc. will be held Sunday, January 8, 2006 at 1:30 pm at ArvinMeritor, 2135 West Maple Rd., Troy, Michigan. The election of Officers and Members at Large of the Board of Directors of the Corporation will take place at the annual meeting.

SEMCO Plans to Move

Barring unforeseen difficulties, SEMCO plans to move our second-Sunday meetings to the ArvinMeritor building at 2135 West Maple Road, Troy starting with the January 8, 2006 meeting. The building is located on Maple Rd (15 Mile Rd.) between Crooks Rd. and Coolidge Hwy. on the southwest corner of Maple Rd. and Maplelawn Dr. across from the Troy Motor Mall. See the map at the right.

Our thanks go to SEMCO member Tom McNorton for suggesting the facility and to ArvinMeritor, Bill Edwards and Jerry Shanek of ArvinMeritor and Tom McNorton for facilitating our use of the ArvinMeritor facility.

Remember, the December 11th meeting is at Oakland University but look for further information in the January DATA BUS and on our Web site about the January meeting.

NOTICE OF NOMINATIONS

Please take notice that under the Bylaws of the SouthEastern Michigan Computer Organization, Inc., nominations for officers will be taken at the general meeting to be held Sunday, December 11, 2005 at 1:30 p.m., with the election of officers to be held at the January general meeting. The following offices will be open for nominations:
1) President
2) Vice President
3) Secretary
4) Treasurer
5) Two Members at Large of the Board of Directors
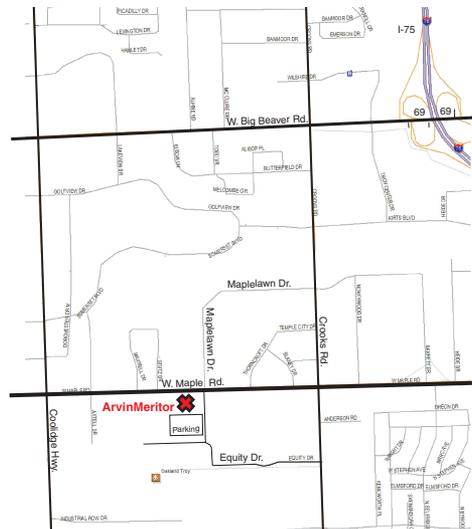
Spam Deal

Bob Evans, Editorial Director for Information Week magazine, wrote about one of the most asinine cases of the law dealing with criminals that you could imagine. I already knew about the arrest, but was unaware of the other circumstances. He wrote about an accused spammer who agreed to settle charges brought against him by the Federal Trade Commission for $485,000, a small fraction of the $5.9 million he is alleged to have bilked from trusting consumers. The FTC's problem with prosecution was the generous Florida bankruptcy laws that allow immense asset (homestead) protection. Bankruptcy laws in Florida have long been an attractive shelter for the wealthy to rid themselves of some debt while preserving multimillion dollar homes as a personal asset, although I don't know what changes the new bankruptcy laws will invoke. Who says that crime (in this case spam) doesn't pay! The article is located at: <http://www.informationweek.com/showArticle.jhtml;jsessionid=CIB5ZHDNXSEI0QSNDBCSKH0CJUMEKJVN?articleID=164900917>.

The Phone That Isn't

I read about a cell phone that never rings. That's because it is actually a four-shot pistol in disguise. They say it is a bit heavier than a cell phone though. I guess that means you should keep an eye on strangers NOT talking on their cell phones. My observance is that most people are talking on them most of the time. I hate that when they are next to us in a restaurant, and they are talking as if the other person can't hear, or have it on speakerphone turned up loud.

New Web Pages

Some of you may know that user groups receive announcements on a regular basis for new products. Since most user group officers are already stretched to the limit performing tasks for their members, these announcements don't always get passed on, so I have posted several pages of them on special announcement pages on my Web site. Some of them sound interesting, and if they offer us a discount, I try to use them in the column.

Need A New Web Site?

WebBuild Express sounds like a great tool for building your new Web site, and Serre Murphy, president of Net Fulfillment Technologies Inc., was a vendor at the spring FACUG conference. I asked him for a deal for my readers. Below is information I have put together from their Web site. He is sending me a review copy, so I should have some actual experience soon.

They say you don't have to know how to program or write HTML code to use WebBuild Express. Using it, you can easily organize your site and create menus and links to the other pages, and to other sites. Using the unique "Dashboard" feature, you can include special functions, like hit counters and search windows, in your pages. Other features enable you to create backup copies of your work and to export data to other WebBuild Express users. WebBuild Express is designed to be intuitive and easy to learn, and if you've used a modern Word Processing program, you'll be capable of using this Web design software to start building your own sites immediately.

This product also has plenty of undo/redo options just in case you have a problem making up your mind about the design of your Web site. It has Paste Special capabilities, which can be valuable in the design of your site. WebBuild Express organizes your pages by "Application." An application is the collection of pages, images, and other files for a Web site. You can build as many Applications using WebBuild Express as you want, and there is no limit on the number of sites you can have, or the number of pages you can have on each site. A page in WebBuild Express corresponds to each page you will have on the published site. Each page can have a title, which will appear in the browser's title bar, and other information that is useful for getting the page listed by search engines.

You can preview a page at any time by clicking the Preview Page tool button (or selecting "Page Preview" from the "File" menu). Page Preview will launch your browser and display the page you are working on as it will appear when published. You can also view an entire site by choosing "Site Preview" on the "File" menu. Site preview creates the html code for all pages in your application and is useful for testing links between your pages. You can use the "Send to Server (FTP)" choice on the File menu to send the files you have published (see paragraph above) to a Web server by supplying the Internet address of the server, your user name, and your password.

Check their Web site <http://www.nfti.net> for more information. They are offering us a 25% discount from the MSRP of $29.95 (already a bargain), making the final price just $22.45 until January of 2006, saving you $7.50. To download it at <http://store.esellerate.net/nfti/store> use the coupon code CPN8348901136, when it calls for it, to receive your 25% discount. Ordering it on CD-ROM will add $10.00. All these features and tech support too! On behalf of my readers, I thank Mr. Murphy for this special offer.

Announcement: SearchMyDisks 2.01
"I'm pleased to inform members of Users Groups that 10-Strike Software released SearchMyDiscs 2.01 (formerly 10-Strike Disk-Pile). Please, find the press release for SearchMyDiscs 2.01 below for your information. Please note, our summer discounts are still available, and the cost of registering the program is 20 US Dollars. Exclusively for Users Group people we've arranged a RegNow 10% discount coupon: STRK-G4BI-GRP

"Best regards,
Dmitriy Stepanov
10-Strike Software.

"September, 2005; For Immediate Release:

"New disk cataloger and search engine helps PC owners find necessary CDs or DVDs in seconds.

"SearchMyDiscs is a handy software application that helps folks with large CD and DVD collections quickly find the disk that has a needed file, photograph, music track, or movie clip. This is how the program works:

"First, a person inserts every CD or DVD that needs to be indexed into the PC. The program will automatically scan the disk, cataloging its contents. In addition to that, the program will store the file structure of the disk, thumbnail images and EXIF tags for photographs, MP3 ID3 tags for MP3 tracks, and file properties (avi, exe, dll, jpg, gif, bmp, png, tiff, psd, tga, pcx, and other files).

It's also possible and advisable to create short descriptions for certain contents of the disk. Plus, the program offers an option to create a file tree that contains files and folders stored on different disks.

"After the first step is completed, the program is ready to be used. If the need arises to find that track or photograph, a person simply enters the name of the file or other search parameter, like the name of the song, performer, or album, and SearchMyDiscs will show exactly what CD or DVD contains the desired data. No more trying to discern scribbles on the back cover, inserting and ejecting disks, or endless browsing. Reports, for instance, "My MP3 Collection," (text or HTML) can be built on demand.

"It's possible to organize CDs and DVDs into special groups (i.e., images, music, data), and one disk may belong to multiple groups. Second, SearchMyDiscs will store information on hundreds of disks without hogging all that disk space or system resources. A few megabytes will do. Finally, there is the "Borrowed Disk" feature that makes it possible to distinguish between the disks that are loaned out and the ones currently on the shelves. Plus, the program can search through zip, rar, arj, cab, sfx archives to find a file.

"SearchMyDiscs 2.01 is available at <http://www.10-strike.com/searchmydiscs/> for free download. The cost of registering the program is 20 US Dollars.

"System Requirements:

A standard PC with Windows 95/98/ME/NT4/2000/XP.

"Download:

<http://www.10-strike.com/searchmydiscs/searchmydiscs.zip>.

"Buy:

<http://www.10-strike.com/order.shtml>."

That's it for this month. Meet me here again next month if your editor permits. Be sure to check the new announcement pages on my Web site. 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>.

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The Insiders' Guide to Craigslist
By Richard O. Johnson

If you're not using craigslist, it's time you joined the crowd. This phenomenally successful community bulletin board serves over ten million online users in a single month, and, except for modest fees in three cities for help-wanted ads, all its services are without charge.

If you're one of the uninitiated few, you use craigslist by posting your needs or interests in any of various categories, like jobs, for sale, services, housing, personal, etc., or by reading and acting on posts submitted by others. The craigslist for this area is at <http://detroit.craigslist.org> (Find others at Google).

Beyond its imperfect documentation, craigslist support is, in practical terms, non-existent (understandably so, in view of its enormous popularity and its staff

of just eighteen). That's one of the reasons for writing this Guide.

Posting

Posting is straightforward. You just find the prominent "post to classifieds" link (it's at the upper-left corner of the main page), drill down to the appropriate category, and fill out the simple form.

The first page to which posters are directed will invite them to create an account. You don't really need an account, but it'll take only a minute or so to set up, and can make things a lot easier. So do get that account.

Should the need for which you posted be met right away, that's the end of it. In most cases, however, you'll want to re-post. Without re-posting, your post will stay up (in Los Angeles) for between 10 and 30 days, depending on the category. But you don't want to wait nearly that long. Posts appear in chronological order (last submitted on top), and readers will typically stop perusing after about two days' worth of posts.

(You can always edit your post, but editing won't move it up as will re-posting.)

Another way to improve your response rate is to post in more than one category. But don't do that before reading about craigslist's...

Restrictions

Craigslist is replete with rules and regulations. Trouble is, they're not easy to find, they're not all in one place, and, worst of all, some of the most crucial ones are not published at all (until you're found to be in violation, and by then you may be "blocked")!

If you want to see what rules are written down, find the craigslist Terms of Use, Frequently Asked Questions, and General Posting Guidelines. But bear in mind that other unstated rules may bear equally on your submissions. Here are the most important of the craigslist rules:

You may not post "essentially the same item" before deleting the old item. This applies even when posting in a different city or category. So if your post lends itself to more than one category, you need to alternate the categories. (You may possibly be able to get around this restriction by using different e-mail addresses.)

Craigslist confuses this issue by appearing at one point to sanction posting "in multiple categories." This suggests that in some circumstances such multiple posts may be accepted. So if you want to try it, go ahead. The worst that can happen is that your second post will be refused.

You may not post the same item more than once in 48 hours. This rule is not strictly enforced. That is, if you delete and re-post your Thursday noon post at 8 a.m. Saturday, chances are there will be no problem. But it's unwise (and really unnecessary) to post as often as daily.

Your post may not contain a link "to a commercial website or auction." This is an example of a rule I haven't been able to find anywhere, until I was blocked for violating it! Note that craigslist does not define what makes a website "commercial." My listing on the web of free summer shows, that contained a small link to my organization, was deemed to be "commercial." You'll be safe if you don't link to any Web site, but instead invite the reader to e-mail you for more information (very easily done—see below). Linking to a Web page without any links on it is also safe.

Posting Tips

Craigslist makes it easy as pie for its users to respond to your posts. If you want phone calls, simply include your phone number in the writeup. If you want e-mails, craigslist will "anonymize" your e-mail address, never to be seen by responders. These folks will click on a link to respond, and that response will go to craigslist, and then to you.

Each anonymized e-mail response will refer to the unique number for that particular post. So if you're running several similar posts, you can easily track your responses to see which ones are most effective.

The body of your post can be either in plain text or HTML. If you choose plain text, craigslist will automatically convert any Web addresses starting with http:// to links (but exercise care before including a Web address—see above). You can't otherwise mix plain text and HTML (don't add a few HTML tags to a plain-text submission).

You can add photos or other graphics to your post, in one of two ways:

If your post is under the heading of "for sale/wanted," you'll be invited to add a picture from your hard disk. Otherwise (providing you're submitting in HTML), you can add graphics with the <img> tag. See craigslist's FAQ for more details.

How Best To Post

The following assumes you're using Windows, and have postings suitable for several categories. (You can adapt these guidelines to other circumstances.) Performing these steps will reduce the re-posting process to about a minute a day, while giving you maximum exposure.

Compose your posts. If possible, create an entirely different post for each category. If sufficiently different, posts promoting the same transaction may display simultaneously without a problem.

Create your account, by using the link on the "post to classifieds" page.

Create three bookmarks for your browser. One will be your account page, another will be the craigslist post page, and the third will be the browse page (the craigslist main page for your locality), for reviewing others' posts.

Submit your posts.

Wait two or three days.

Open your account page. Decide which post you'll want to re-run. Click on that post.

You'll be given two choices, Edit and Delete. If you want to re-run the post in exactly the same category, choose Delete. Then go back to your account page, click on the deleted post, and you'll be able easily to re-run it.

If you want to re-run the post in a different category, click on the Edit button, to bring up your "raw" post. Then using Ctrl-A and Ctrl-C, copy that raw post to the Windows clipboard. Go back to your account page and delete the post. Finally, open the post page that you've bookmarked (step 3 above), and post in the appropriate new category.

Wait a day, and repeat steps 6 through 9.

If you're promoting the same transaction in several different categories, it may be to your advantage to stagger the posts. To this end you'll want to keep one or more initial posts for a longer interval than the others.

Browsing Tips

Here are two tips for using craigslist to take advantage of others' posts.

A little known source of great bargains consists of offers on craigslist to sell unwanted gift cards. This situation stems from the fact that many holders of gift cards either paid nothing for them, or paid well below the face value. For example, DiscoverCard distributes merchant gift cards at half price through its "Cashback" program.

To secure such a bargain, visit your bookmarked "Browse" page, and execute the "for sale" link. Then in the keyword search box, enter "gift card" (with the quotation marks), and pick out the offers that appeal to you. Don't hesitate to bargain with the seller for a lower price. (Aim at no more that 50% of face value.)

Once you've made a deal, be sure you meet the seller at the store, to verify the amount of credit remaining on the card.

Craigslist has joined with Google Maps at <www.housingmaps.com> to help you better locate available housing throughout the country. You'll be able to specify your price range, and you'll see at a glance whether there's a picture or pictures of the property. Once you make your preliminary selection, you'll be taken to the original craigslist post.

Richard Johnson is a writer and editor, and founder/administrator of FREE FOR ALL The Skills Pool, a 29-year-old membership organization <http://theskillspool.org>. He is a volunteer with The User's Group Network (CA) HelpContact for assistance with Internet Explorer, Outlook Express, and Gmail. He welcomes feedback, 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.

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Indexing the Web: Spiders, Web Crawlers, & Bots
By Brian K. Lewis

Have you ever wondered how search engines such as Google manage to get the answers to your queries so rapidly? How could they search the Web that fast; I mean usually less than one second to find the words you ask for? Well— they don't. Actually the searching goes on constantly, 24/7. And, the mechanism they use is just a modification of what you use for browsing the Web.

Although you may have heard about spiders, Web crawlers, and Web bots, they don't actually traverse the Web any more than does your Web browser (Internet Explorer, or Firefox, or whatever browser you use). Instead they download Web pages that are then scanned and the significant words added to an index.

To simplify the terminology, I will refer to all the Web searching programs as "spiders." (It takes less space and is easier to type.) These spiders are programs designed to find Web addresses (URL's) and to download the pages. Some also do the indexing of the words on the page. However, Google uses a separate indexing program and stores the downloaded pages for future reference. Now, if a single spider were

being used to locate and download pages, the task would really be impossible. Sergey Brin and Lawrence Page, the originators of Google, published a paper while they were graduate students at Stanford that utilized three spiders. Each spider kept about 300 connections open simultaneously. With four spiders they could download about 600 pages per second. This paper referred to the prototype that became the commercial Google enterprise. Even with the prototype system they were able to download and index 24 million pages in a week. Their current methodology is proprietary and so is not public, but it is probably a significant improvement over their prototype system.

We can use the original Google system as a model of what could be used by search engines to prepare the index and database of Web pages that you access when you send a query.

The first step is to send a list of URLs to the spider to download. This is done by a server that maintains a list of URLs. The spider will download pages and also follow any hyperlinks to other pages. Addresses of pages that were linked to the original search list are also sent back to the server to be checked to see if they were already on the list. If not, they are added to the URL lists. Not every spider uses a URL server. The spider will continue crawling the Web until it reaches a dead end or a page with no further links.

As I mentioned earlier, a spider isn't just working with one page, but has hundreds of connections open to different pages. Given that there are billions of pages on the Web, even with thousands of spiders collecting information, only a small fraction of the entire Web is scanned. Some Web sites, such as those with news or rapidly changing information are visited hourly. Every spider has a re-visitation policy that determines how frequently a page will be revisited and checked for changes.

There is another general policy that is usually programmed into these spiders. That is called the "politeness" policy. This is used to prevent the overloading of Web sites. After all, there is a finite limit to bandwidth, and it would be possible to overwhelm a Web site with visits from multiple spiders in a short period of time. This policy provides for an interval of time to elapse between accesses by a spider. This time interval seems to vary from 20 seconds to 3-4 minutes. This would be the case where multiple pages need to be downloaded from a single server. Revisiting indexed and stored Web sites occurs at less frequent intervals.

However, even this politeness policy is sometimes inadequate. Frequent visits by spiders may result in complaints being sent back to the owner of the spider. So it is also possible to enter code on a Web page that asks the spider to not access or download a page or pages. This can be done by the addition of meta tags in the page header or by a robots.txt file placed in the root directory for the Web site. This is especially appropriate for game pages. These pages use a dynamic format that changes when pages are viewed or links are followed. When a spider downloads these pages the game program may respond as if a very high-speed player were logged on. This can create problems for the program and may result in crashing the game server. So we now have the robot exclusion protocol being used by owners of Web

pages that do not want their pages included in the search engine indexing.

In the original Google system the Web pages were sent to another program referred to as the indexer. This program sorts through every word on the page and stores them in a database. The exceptions are the simple words such as a, an, the. However, simply entering the words into a database is not sufficient. They have to be identified to the particular page from which they came, the location on that page, and a relative ranking in importance. The frequency with which they appear on the page as well as the position on the page may be used in determining the weight or relative rank. Words in the title or near the top of the page may be ranked as more important. So the storage of the words include the URL, and a calculated weight in an encoded format.

The word database is then indexed to speed the retrieval of the information. This is usually done by the building of a Hash Table. Hashing evens out the alphabetical sections so that it takes no longer to find a "z" than it does a more popular letter like "m." It also separates the index from the actual entry for the word. This improves the efficiency of the storage of this information. The indexing and the Hash Table also speed the overall retrieval of the information. The complete Web page is also stored in a separate location. Once the indexing process is completed, the information is available for your query.

Given the size of the Web and the continuing changes to Web pages, the spider's search is never ending. It may also be one where we will never have every page indexed. One other aspect of the size of the Web and the time required for the crawling process is that broken links will always occur. If a page is not re-visited frequently, it may still be in the index and the database long after it has been removed from its server. Another situation may be where the URL has changed, and the new location has not yet been crawled. So, the process is not perfect by any means.

The other aspect of searching the Web is the design of the query you want to submit to a search engine. As I'm sure you know, you can simply list a few keywords in the search engine and hope you will get a useful result. Many times you will also get results that have no relationship to the information you are seeking. In some of these cases, you need to try the advanced search or learn to use Boolean operators. Those operators most frequently used are:

AND–all the terms joined by "AND" must appear in the pages or documents.

OR–at least one of the terms joined by "OR" must appear in the pages or documents.

NOT–the term or terms following "NOT" must not appear.

QUOTATION MARKS–words between quotation marks must appear as a phrase.

FOLLOWED BY–one of the terms must be followed by the other.

NEAR–one of the terms must be within a specified number of words of the other.

Generally, search engines can use these Boolean operators to provide results more closely aligned to the topic you are trying to locate.

Like everything else related to computers, Web indexing and searching are not static technologies. The search engine companies are researching

"natural language" queries, such as those handled by "Ask Jeeves." Currently, these queries can accommodate only relatively simple phrases. However, there is heavy competition to develop an engine that can work with much more complex queries. Another area that is being pursued is "concept-based" searching. This would use a form of statistical analysis to determine if the page fit your query. And, as you may have read, Google has plans to put the content of the world's libraries on the Web.

Just imagine what it would be like if we didn't have these search engines to help us find information on the Web. So good searching, and I hope you find what you are looking for.

Dr. Lewis is a member of the Sarasota FL PC Users Group <www.spcug.org> and a former university & medical school professor. He has been working with personal computers for more than thirty years. He can be reached via e-mail at <bwsail@yahoo.com>.

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.
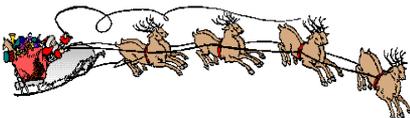
Complete CD and DVD Burning Utility in One Box
By Ira Wilsker

I burn a lot of CDs and DVDs, typically purchasing media by the spindle of 50 or 100. I have tried a lot of the software from the major publishers, as well as the software integral in Windows XP, and have now settled on my favorite product, NTI's "CD & DVD Maker 7 Titanium Suite." I have found it feature rich, with all of the utilities in a single box, and easy to use.

As many of you may know, if you simply want to burn files to a CD, and you have Windows XP, no third party software is required, as Microsoft has licensed a limited functionality version of CD burning software from Roxio, and built it into Windows Explorer. The key term here is "limited function," as all the integral XP software will generally do is copy files to a CD, but offers no editing, labeling, or other often used functions. To use the limited built-in XP CD burning software, simply select the files from Windows Explorer, right click the mouse, and choose "Send To" and then select the CD drive. After all of the files have been selected, again using Windows Explorer, select the CD drive, and then click on "Files," and then "Write these files to CD." If a blank disc is in the CD drive, Windows will write the files to the disc. This narrow utility may be fine for simply copying files, but utterly lacks any additional functionality that many of us would like to use.

Most new computers or aftermarket CD and DVD drives typically come with a limited functionality "light,"

"limited," or "SE–Special Edition" CD and DVD burning software that adds some useful additional features, but generally does not offer much more than copying and creating discs, and possibly the chance to make labels.

For those who really want power, control, and selection over what can be done with CD and DVD media, NTI (Newtech Infosystems) recently released its CD & DVD Maker 7 Titanium Suite, which is possibly the most comprehensive suite of CD and DVD utilities on the market. With a retail price of $79.99 (I found it locally for $59.99), the number of functions available for the price is remarkable. In addition to the typical copy, create, and label functions common in almost all full versions of competitive software, this bundle has much more. Since many of us now have some form of video capture device connected to our computers, the "Home Video-Maker" allows for video capture from any video source attached to the computer (such as a camcorder or TV tuner). Once captured, the video can be edited, and special effects and transitions can be added to create professional appearing DVDs or CD. A wave editor allows any sounds to be edited, removing pops and hisses. Audio editing also allows for the effects of filtering, trimming, fading, echoing, and amplifying any audio, improving the sound.

As has been repeated many times, one of the most critical tasks that computer users must periodically perform is backing up critical files, or an entire hard drive; included in this suite is NTI's award winning backup software, "Backup Now!" With it, I routinely back up my hard drive to an external drive, doing a full backup monthly, and an incremental (only new or changed files) weekly.

Backup Now! supports virtually all media formats, including CD discs, DVD discs, external drives, and other formats. With a good current backup, hard drive crashes and other maladies are far less exasperating because our critical data and programs, can be easily recovered.

I enjoy playing commercial DVDs on my computer, because it has better sound and sharper video than my free standing DVD player and TV. This suite comes with excellent DVD Playback software that can play almost all of the major video formats, including AVI, MPEG-1, and MPEG-2.

A fun feature in the suite is "Cinematic Video" and "Cinematic Slideshow," where home videos and still image slideshows can be easily created with transitions and special effects synchronized with background music. The resulting Cinematic production appears very professional, but is especially easy to create, as the program intelligently and automatically can add the transitions and effects, while synchronizing with the background audio.

Many free standing DVD players can show a photo slideshow on a TV, and this suite includes Photo Slideshow software. With it, customized photo slideshows can be created with attractive transitions and special effects, with the output burned to a CD or DVD in a format that can be played on almost all household DVD players. This is an excellent way to share photos with others.

Recently I wrote about the new Lightscribe standard, where using compatible CD and DVD discs, professional appearing labels can be

burned directly on the top of the media with "Burn–Flip–Burn" simplicity. This feature is being included on all newly produced Titanium Suite software, or is available as a free upgrade via download from the NTI website at <http://www.ntius.com>. For those who still prefer to make paper stick-on labels and jewel case inserts, JewelCase Maker is included in the suite, which allows the user to create, design, and print labels and inserts using traditional methods.

Audio aficionados will find the ability to rip music CDs and convert them to MP3 format a useful utility. An added feature allows users to convert old records, cassettes, and 8-tracks, (remember those?) to digital format, which can then be burned to a CD, providing an appropriate input is available.

Personally, I have found NTI's CD & DVD Maker Titanium Suite an extremely valuable component of my software collection, and I use it on a frequent basis.

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>

Reading Product Manuals Online
By Gabe Goldberg

I'm reasonably well-organized; my wife thinks I'm a packrat (she keeps trying to sneak my '70s shirts to the thrift shop). You'd think this would mean that I can find product manuals for every appliance, gadget, PC component, and software, etc., I've ever bought. That's mostly true.

But sometimes my filing system fails me. Or I've forgotten to whom I loaned something. Or someone else in the house (but I'm not naming names) has moved it. What then?

Fortunately, manufacturers are increasingly making product literature and documentation available online. While this isn't entirely out of generosity—it reduces their customer support workload—it's great for consumers who can find and read the material.

A good starting place is the manufacturer's Web site. For example, I'm writing this article using a Samsung SyncMaster 912n LCD video monitor. Suppose I need to know what its control buttons do but can't find its manual. Samsung's home page <http://www.samsung.com> offers a button, "Download Center: Download Drivers, Manuals, Software, and Firmware." I can either enter a product model number or name, or search via product group (audio/video, computers, etc.), then product type, then product subtype, and model name.

Computers are very precise; searching took three tries, since it wanted only "912n," not "SyncMaster 912n." The manual was then available in any of 28 languages, from Bulgarian to Chinese. It's a PDF file (see below for explanation); it's just under three megabytes, dated about a month ago, complete, 83 pages including clickable Table of Contents. So only a minute after deciding to look for it, I'm looking directly at it.

Another way to search is via Google <http://www.google.com> entering terms like: "912n manual site:samsung.com," which only searches the samsung.com Web site. This took

me to the right neighborhood on the Web site, but left me needing a few more clicks to hit the manual. Sometimes search engine results are better than navigating within a site, so consider both techniques.

Manufacturers often update online material as mistakes or shortcomings are found in printed versions, so for important products it's worth checking Web sites occasionally. Sadly, they also sometimes package only abbreviated versions with products, suggesting or expecting consumers to download full versions.

Either way, online manuals are also useful when considering purchases or comparing choices, since they give— or should give!—more complete and useful information than is printed on the box. If you're evaluating something pre-purchase, evaluate the manual's organization and quality—Will you be able to find information you need? Will you understand it? If you're buying something used, online availability of a missing manual can make the acquisition much more pleasant.

Online manuals can be in many formats—HTML (normal Web pages), Microsoft Word documents, PDF (Portable Document Format), and others. Each format has advantages and disadvantages. HTML is nearly universal; if you can view Web pages you can read HTML documentation. But it may be harder to download and save/organize all pieces of a large document. You'll need Microsoft Word software (or free reader) to read MS Word files. Flexible PDF is becoming the most popular online document format, but it too requires software, Adobe's Reader, for viewing. Fortunately, this is free and easy to download/install; visit Adobe <http://www.adobe.com/> and click "Get Adobe Reader."

Some manufacturers take a different approach, offering search tools and links within their Web sites for different material, such as overviews, tutorials, problem solving tips, even video clips illustrating usage.

Finally, LiveManuals <http://www.livemanuals.com> takes an interesting/interactive approach, providing interactive product demonstrations. Though it doesn't include every product—office equipment and appliances aren't presently well-represented—the Wish List page accepts nominations for items to add.

Microsoft is Helping
By Bob Elgines

You may have noticed in your Windows XP/2000 updates that you have updated the MS Malicious Software Tool (MSRT). Don't bother to look for it on your computer; you won't find it. You will only see a window if you have or had a problem.

15

What is malicious software? Malicious software (also called "malware") is software that was developed with the intention to cause harm. Malware can include viruses, worms, spyware, and other destructive programs that can hide on your computer and can slow its performance to a crawl. Even more alarming, malware can be used to monitor your browsing habits, steal passwords, and even allow an attacker to gain control of your system. Malicious software either installs on your computer without your knowledge or can be installed with a program you intended to download.

The MSRT checks for and helps to remove specific, prevalent malicious software infections. If detection and removal has accrued, a display window indicates which malicious software was picked up.

Each month, after the second Tuesday, Microsoft will provide an updated version of this tool that removes malicious software that is found to be prevalent for that month.

Getting the Malicious Software Removal Tool: There are two ways you can get the Malicious Software Removal Tool. Microsoft recommends that home users either turn on the Automatic Updates feature in Windows XP, or run the tool online.

1. If your computer is running Windows XP, you can get the latest version of the tool online from Microsoft Update. To have the tool automatically delivered and installed each month on your computer without having to take further action, simply turn on Automatic Updates.

2. If your computer is running either Windows XP, or Windows 2000, you can run the tool directly from an easy-to-use online wizard available at: <www.microsoft.com/malwareremove>.

How do I verify whether the removal tool has run on a client computer? There are two ways to check:

1. You can examine the value data for the following registry entry to verify the execution of the tool. You can implement such a check as part of a startup script or a logon script. This will prevent the tool from running multiple times:

Subkey:HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\RemovalTools\MRT.

Every time the tool is run, independent of the results of the execution, the tool will record a GUID to the registry to indicate that it has been executed.

2. Using Windows Explorer look for the log entitled "mrt.log" located under your "Document" files or in the folder: C:\Windows\Debug\mrt.log.

Another similar tool is written by McAfee called Stinger. It is updated approximately every three months and can be downloaded at: <http://vil.nai.com/vil/stinger/>.

Bob Elgines is a member of the Colorado Computer Club of Lake Havasu, AZ. You can contact him at <elginesz@rraz.net>.

There is no restriction against any non-profit group using this article as long as it is kept in context with proper credit given the author. The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member, brings this article to you.

Disorder In American Courts
John Mark Ministries
<http://jmm.aaa.net.au/articles/15984.htm>

Things people actually said in court:

Attorney: What is your date of birth?
Witness: July 18.
Attorney: What year?
Witness: Every year.

———————————————

Attorney: Doctor, is it true that when a person dies in his sleep, he doesn't know about it till the next morning?
Witness: Did you actually pass the bar exam?

———————————————

Attorney: Were you present when your picture was taken?
Witness: Would you repeat the question?

Attorney: Is your appearance here this morning pursuant to a deposition notice that I sent to your attorney?
Witness: No, this is how I dress when I go to work.

———————————————

Attorney: This myasthenia gravis, does it affect your memory?
Witness: Yes.
Attorney: And in what way does it affect your memory?
Witness: I forget.
Attorney: Can you give us an example of something you forgot?

———————————————

Attorney: She had three children, right?
Witness: Yes.
Attorney: How many were boys?
Witness: None.
Attorney: Were there any girls?

Letter From The Editor

In anticipation of an extended trip to Texas and New Mexico, I bought myself an early Christmas present, a new toy, a TomTom GO 700 Portable GPS Navigation System for my car. I expect to be exploring a lot of countryside and the cities of Albuquerque and Santa Fe, looking for the ideal place to live.

At this time I have used it on one trip to North Carolina, and I have studied the manual and practiced with it in the comfort of my living room. It looks great! PC Magazine made it an editor's choice among midrange products ($700).

In many respects it's like Mapquest at your fingertips wherever you go, except with 3D maps and a sexy girl telling you where to make each turn. The color touch screen is 3.1" by 2.1," and you can mount it in your car plugged into the cigarette lighter outlet or carry it with you as a pedestrian or biker (the rechargeable battery is said to last up to 4 hours). The menu allows for advanced planning of an entire trip (which I did) with either a single destination (address) or waypoints. The internal hard drive holds maps for the entire U.S., and you can zoom in and out as you wish. Points of interest, e.g., airports, gas stations, restaurants, theaters, parking garages can be shown or used as destinations.

For extra dollars you can have a remote control, connect to your cell phone and get traffic and weather conditions, or get maps of western Europe.

All this, and more, is handled with a simple and convenient user interface. Neat!

Bill

Attorney: Doctor, before you performed the autopsy, did you check for pulse?

Witness: No.

Attorney: Did you check for blood pressure?

Witness: No.

Attorney: So, then it was possible that the patient was still alive when you began the autopsy?

Witness: No.

Attorney: How can you be so sure?

Witness: Because his brain was sitting in a jar on my desk.

Attorney: Could it be that he was alive, nevertheless?

Witness: Yes, it is possible that he could have been alive and practicing law.

BOARD MEETING 11/13/05
Carol Sanzi

Board Members Present

Vice President Richard Jackson, Secretary Carol Sanzi, Treasurer Chester Blechinger, 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. Also attending was member Thomas McNorton. Arriving late was President Gary DeNise. The meeting was called to order at 12:08 p.m.

Old Business

Treasurer Chester Blechinger reported that the balance on hand is $6,694.96 The membership stands at 78. It is time for Bert Farmilo, Cheryl Ann Fil, Dr. William L. Landrum, Frank E. Chavel, Richard Craig, George Kargilis, Pat Kreiling, and Clarence O'Neal to renew their memberships.

Richard Jackson moved to reimburse Carol Sanzi for expenditures for a get-well gift for President Gary DeNise. Bob Clyne seconded the motion, and it was carried. Tom Callow moved to reimburse Warner Mach $7.38 for refreshments. Bob Clyne seconded the motion, and it was carried.

After a discussion of ArvinMeritor's building layout, amenities, security measures, and room sizes, Tom Callow moved that commencing in January, the SEMCO meetings will be moved to the ArvinMeritor Building. This move is subject to the agreement with ArvinMeritor. Franz Breidenich seconded the motion, and it was carried.

Tom Callow moved that Richard Jackson send the Board-approved and signed letter to ArvinMeritor requesting SEMCO's move to their location. The motion carried.

Tom Callow moved to extend an honorary SEMCO membership to Jerry Shanek, an ArvinMeritor employee effective immediately through December 31, 2006. This was at the request of ArvinMeritor that one of their employees be present at SEMCO meetings.

It was suggested that, as a courtesy, SEMCO should notify Oakland University of the proposed relocation of the monthly meetings. No action was taken at this time.

New Business

Richard Jackson suggested that the proposed move to ArvinMeritor should be announced in the DATA BUS. A map of its location should be included.

Tom Callow moved that SEMCO pay $50 to renew SEMCO's APCUG

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS (SIGS)

SIG-IBM
Tom Callow
Warner Mach

Dec. 11: Part 1: Slipstreaming Windows XP: SIG-IBM Co-Chairman Tom Callow will demonstrate how to update your Windows XP distribution disk to include Service Pack 2; **Part 2: VNC (Virtual Network Computing):** SEMCO Vice President Richard Jackson will demonstrate how to install and use this remote control software to view and interact with another computer anywhere on the Internet.

NOVICE-IBM GROUP
Rotating Volunteer Hosts

Dec. 11: Help And Q & A: Discussion directed by the audience. No question is too simple!!

membership through 2006. Franz Breidenich seconded the motion, and it was carried.

Tom Callow moved to adjourn. Richard Jackson seconded the motion, and it was carried. The meeting adjourned at 1:03 p.m.

November Meeting Attendance: 35

SIG-IBM INTERMEDIATE
Tom Callow
Interim Chairman

Dec. 11: Part 1: AutoHotkey: SEMCO Vice President Richard Jackson will demonstrate how to install and use AutoHotKey, an open source keyboard and mouse macro program; **Part 2: Pocket DVD Studio:** SIG-IBM Co-Chairman Tom Callow will demonstrate this program that converts full length DVD movies to files that fit on a flash memory card and can be played on your Windows Mobile based PDA.

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.

SIG-ADVANCED
Franz Breidenich

Feb. 6, 2006: (No January meeting), 6:45 pm, at the Oak Park Library. The library is located at 14200 Oak Park Blvd., Oak Park, MI. Phone: (248) 691-7480. **Topic: Wide ranging discussion of computers and computing.**

January 2006 DATA BUS DEADLINE (7th day after meeting)
SEMCO Input and Members' Ads — Deadline: Sun., December 18, 11:59 p.m.
Members' personal ads are free. To mail, use Editor address on Page 2; e-mail address: <agnew@bignet.net>. PLEASE send to arrive sooner than deadline.
Business Ads - Deadline: Second Friday monthly. Contact the Editor (address Page 2).

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

**CALENDAR-OF-EVENTS
OTHER GROUPS**

AAIICI (American Association of Individual Investors, Computerized Investors)
Dec. 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)
Dec. 7–Wednesday, 7pm (1st Wednesday); Jane Wheatly 810-982-1187 <http://www.bwcomp.org>. Topic: Christmas Party at The Pilot House (Reservations required).

DCOM Computer Club
Dec. 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)
Dec. 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)
Dec. 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
Dec. 18–Sunday (3rd Sunday), 3pm–5pm; Birmingham Temple, 28611 W. 12 Mile Rd., Farmington Hills. Info: Terry White, <terry@macgroup.org> or 313-571-9817. <http://www.macgroup.org>. Topic: Creating and Maintaining Web Sites with GoLive CS2.

MacTechnics, (MAC User Group)
Dec. 17–Saturday (3rd Saturday); 11:00 am main meeting (SIGs at 9:30); Ann Arbor Open School, 920 Miller Ave., Ann Arbor. <http://www.mactechn   >). Cassie at <cassiemac@yahoo.com> or 313-971-8743.

Michigan Apple Computer User Group
Dec. 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)
Dec. 6–Tuesday 7:30pm, (1st Tuesday); Macomb Community College South Campus, Bldg. K, 14500 E. 12 Mile Rd. Don VanSyckel at <Don@VanSyckel.net>, 586-731-9232; Web: <http:/www.SterlingHeightsComputerClub.org>. Topic: What's Hot for the Holidays, by John Jordan from CompUSA.

MDLUG (Metro Detroit Linux User Group)
Dec. 10–Saturday, 12:30–2:30pm, (2nd Saturday); Location to be announced; Web: <http://www.mdlug.org>. Info: Richard Jackson 248-546-3694.

Wayne State U. Mac User Group
Dec. 10–Saturday, 10:00am–Noon (2nd Saturday); at Mich.com, 21042 Laurelwood, Farmington. Info: Lorn/JoAnn Olsen 248/478-4300 or Denny MeLampy 248-477-0190.

**NOVEMBER
REFRESHMENT
DONORS**
Warner Mach, Coordinator
Betty MacKenzie
Roland Maki
Carol Sanzi
Dawn Sanzi
Donna Sanzi

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	**MS Office for Windows:** Callow
AutoCAD: Comptois	**MS Word:** Clyne
Genealogy: Cook	**Networking:** Callow
IBM PC Hardware Issues: Clyne, Yuhasz	**Novell Netware:** Yuhasz
Operating Systems: Callow, Clyne, Yuhasz	**Quicken:** Clyne
MAC Hardware and OS Issues: Yuhasz	**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
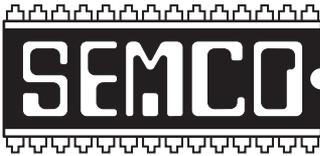
SEMCO CALENDAR—December/January
ELLIOTT HALL, OAKLAND UNIVERSITY
ROCHESTER, MICHIGAN

December 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: Part 1: Slipstreaming Windows XP:** SIG-IBM Co-Chairman Tom Callow will demonstrate how to update your Windows XP distribution disk to include Service Pack 2; **Part 2: VNC (Virtual Network Computing):** SEMCO Vice President Richard Jackson will demonstrate how to install and use this remote control software to view and interact with another computer anywhere on the Internet.

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: Part 1: AutoHotkey:** SEMCO Vice President Richard Jackson will demonstrate how to install and use AutoHotKey, an open source keyboard and mouse macro program; **Part 2: Pocket DVD Studio:** SIG-IBM Co-Chairman Tom Callow will demonstrate this program that converts full length DVD movies to files that fit on a flash memory card and can be played on your Windows Mobile based PDA.

SIG-ADVANCED , **February 6, 2006–MONDAY, 6:45 pm,** (No meeting in January), 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; library is west of Coolidge. Info: Franz Breidenich 248-398-3359. **TOPIC: Wide-Ranging Discussion Of Computers & Computing.**

January 8–SEMCO SUNDAY: 1:30 pm. Patrick Steele, Microsoft.NET MVP, will present an "Intoduction to Visual Basic Programming."

http://www.semco.org

PUBLIC INVITED

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

City of Auburn Hills

Walton Boulevard

East Oakland Drive

SA

SB

West Oakland Dr.

3

5

Meadow Brook Road

Ravine Drive

MSH

N

S

11

Squirrel Road

GHC

VBH

HAM

HIL VWH

MBT

MBAG

ANI

PRY

WH

FTZ

To City of Pontiac

3 Miles

1

2

Wilson Blvd.

16

17

CHP

NFH

OC

ODH

18

RAC

SFH

West Campus

University Drive

KL

Pioneer Drive

LOWER FIELD

Parking Structure

43

HHS

DHE

EH

VAR

26

Exit #79

PSS

SEB

36

ED

BB

24

CCC

FM

41

40

38

34

Varner Drive

37

Library Drive

Pioneer Drive

31

37

Storage Building

BGM

Lonedale Road

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

Association of Personal Computer User Groups

APCUG

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

SEMCO (future meetings)
December 11
January 8

**SEMCO: A Community Organization
Helping People for the 21st Century**