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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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SEMCO MEETINGS

Sunday, February 12, 2006

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

SEMCO HAS A NEW HOME

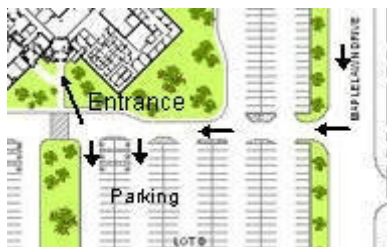
Starting with the January meeting, SEMCO is meeting at the ArvinMeritor Building, 2135 West Maple Road, Troy (See the map on page 23). The building is on Maple Road (15 Mile Rd.) between Crooks Rd. and Coolidge Hwy. on the southwest corner of Maple Road and Mapelawn Dr. across from the Troy Motor Mall.

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 site.



Entrance from parking lot

There should be a guard at the entrance who will want you to sign in, and may require some identification. If there are any changes in the arrangement, someone from SEMCO will be on hand to direct you. It is possible we will meet in the auditorium instead of the Michigan Room (close by).



ArvinMeritor Site



The Michigan Room



DEALS COLUMN
from the DealsGuy
Greater Orlando Computer UG
by Bob "The Cheapskate" Click

Military Simulation

Want some trivia? We worked a trade show called Interservice/Industry Training, Simulation and Education Conference <<http://www.iitsec.org>>, which is mostly a military show. Attendees included many high ranking military officers and even congressmen. There were some army vehicles, including a training tank, on display in the show. I saw a booth with all kinds of concave and warped type mirrors in it, but didn't hear their uses. This was a place to see cutting edge technology, but I don't have enough room here for the most interesting booths, and there is probably limited interest in my trade show experiences. Primarily, the widest technology covered was simulation machines of all kinds all over the show floor. Unfortunately, I was unable to find time to try any of them. You name it, there was a simulator.

A reporter for the Orlando Sentinel wrote about talking to the CEO of a simulation company (VirTra Systems) with offices in Denver and Phoenix who mentioned that he intended to move his operation to central Florida in sixty days <<http://www.virtasystems.com>>. He stated "you've got to be here if you're in the simulation industry." Here is the trivia; the reporter said that central Florida is home to more than 140 simulation companies, and they employ, directly or indirectly, over 17,000 people. Who would have thought that, since this is assumed to be only an amusement park paradise. Another reporter for the Money section wrote

about the competition for skilled employees all over central Florida by companies based here.

I knew there were lots of companies oriented toward all kinds of electronics engineering here, including a dozen laser light companies, many companies that provide engineering and manufacturing for the computer industry, and many other high tech industries, but not about the simulation industry.

It's All About The Squeaky Wheel

I was in line at Staples early Friday morning after Thanksgiving for some specials, but too far back to get all but one, a 512 meg USB Flash Drive for \$19.95 before a ten dollar mail-in rebate. That night, I plugged it into the hub I always use, and it gave me an error, but after a couple of minutes, it worked OK. However, soon another message told me there was not enough power from the hub and to plug it into the computer directly. I did that and still got an error message, but it worked after a couple minutes, and I could write to it. I have several USB flash drives and have never had that problem using that hub so I wanted to return it to Staples for an exchange. The manager told me he would not exchange it at that price and that I would have to take the problem up with PNY who made it. When I insisted it was not right, since that was the only one I had the problem with, he said I would have to pay the difference between the sale price and the posted price if I wanted another one, so I gave up.

When I got home, I called PNY, whose tech support took an indifferent attitude about it and said there was nothing wrong with it if it would eventually work. However, he did

finally admit that some might work better than others, not that there would be anything wrong. I then called Staples Corporate office, and was transferred to the President's office of customer relations where the person was sorry to hear what had happened at the Staples store and apologized, saying "that is not the way we do business" and kept me on the line while calling the store. When he returned, he said the manager was "apologetic" and assured me they would exchange my unit for a new one, which that manager had stated they did not have when I was in the store earlier for an exchange.

Returning to the Staples store for the exchange, nobody seemed to know about it, but after my insistence, a lady went looking for the one they would hold for me. When she finally returned several minutes later, she did indeed have one, and the exchange was short and sweet, but cool ("here"). The squeaky wheel syndrome worked. The new flash drive worked just fine, even in the hub, as I thought it would. I have since read that it is not recommended to use Flash drives in a hub, but I have used as many as two at one time in my hub, even with the power for it unplugged, with no problem, because it is much easier than plugging them into the computer.

Time To Do Your Taxes

Remember that you can find out where the AARP volunteers are working on income taxes and get yours done there absolutely free, except under certain circumstances. It is admirable that those folks work for free on your behalf when they are actually mostly professional people who are taking time off from their normal job to help us. On the other hand, you can go to <[http://](http://www.taxact.com)

www.taxact.com> and download Second Story Software's free version of Tax Act for doing your own tax return. It will pester you to upgrade to the paid version while you are inputting data, but it will still do yours free, and will now also do the e-file for you free. Personally, I use the Deluxe version because I like the price at \$12.95, and it includes other very helpful features, one of which saves time on data input if you used it last year (important to me).

Judy Taylour from APCUG notified most member user groups that Second Story Software will offer user group members a discount for purchasing Tax Act products. I can't include the procedure here because they don't want it posted on the Web, but I believe the Deluxe version would be just \$9.95. Simply contact your group's APCUG rep for the procedure for downloading Tax Act to the discounted shopping cart. Double check the prices, including the Ultimate Bundle, depending on whether you need the state version or not.

Build Your Own Web Site For Free!

A friend, who said he had not tried it himself, but that it was well recommended, referred this Web Site freebie for me to try. I have not downloaded it yet, but hope to check it out one of these days. I was a bit skeptical when I was told that one professional Webmaster chose it over the high end product he was already using, but what's to lose when it's free? Check out <<http://www.nvu.com/>> and see if it is anything you might like. They have versions for Windows, Mac, and Linux, making it pretty versatile. They say they are supported by Linspire and encourage you to support Linspire products.

Worth a Look

This URL has been sent to me more than once in the last few months, but I didn't feel it fit the criteria of my DealsGuy column. However, since I had room this month, I thought I would include it because of the referrals <www.infopackets.com/windows+newsletter.htm>. You'll find all kind of things there and even a deal every so often, I'm told. I saw one last time I looked, although not this time, but I didn't spend a lot of time there. There are all kinds of articles about many things, so I hope you get something out of it.

That's it for this month. Meet me here again next month if your editor permits. Be sure to check the 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 Cheap skate) Click <bobclick@mindspring.com>. Visit my Web site at <<http://www.dealsguy.com>>.

"My Family Health Portrait" Online

By Ira Wilsker

Recently, a relative in another state was hospitalized via an emergency room admission. His new wife of just a year did not have much information on the family health history so urgently needed by the physicians in order to diagnose and treat my relative. Urgent phone calls followed, gathering the requisite family medical history to enable the

appropriate diagnosis and treatment. Philosophically speaking, what if a comprehensive family medical history could have been immediately available? This circumstance is not unique, but a reasonable solution has been available for free for over a year at <<http://www.hhs.gov/familyhistory>>, courtesy of the U. S. Surgeon General's Office.

This site explains the necessity of such data with the statement, "Health care professionals have known for a long time that common diseases—heart disease, cancer, and diabetes, and even rare diseases like hemophilia, cystic fibrosis, and sickle cell anemia—can run in families. If one generation of a family has high blood pressure, it is not unusual for the next generation to have similarly high blood pressure. Tracing the illnesses suffered by your parents, grandparents, and other blood relatives can help your doctor predict the disorders to which you may be at risk and take action to keep you and your family healthy." In order to accomplish this task, the Surgeon General offers two simple options: one, an online web maintained version hosted on a secure server (that is what the "https" means in the internet address) at <<https://familyhistory.hhs.gov>>; the other, a 1.6mb downloadable "Zip" file <<http://www.hhs.gov/familyhistory/download.html>> that may be stored on a home computer, and utilized in the privacy of the home. The files created in either version can easily be exchanged among family members via e-mail or disc.


In the online version, a family history can be newly created, or an existing version can be uploaded from the home computer to the secure Surgeon General Web site, where the

data can be managed and then saved back on the home computer; no personal information is saved or captured by the government computer, protecting the privacy of the user. It should be noted that much effort has gone into the creation of this Web based service, in that it explicitly works equally well with almost all known browsers, including Internet Explorer, Firefox, Mac Safari, Netscape, and many other browsers.

The first step in using the online version is to “Create a Family History,” or to “Load a Saved Family History,” if a file had been previously created. The preliminary step is to create a personal profile, where basic information such as name, gender, height, and weight are entered. The personal profile continues with a simple checklist of major common diseases (such as heart disease, cancer, and diabetes) and age of onset, followed by a fill-in-the-blank chart of other diseases. After the personal health history is created, there is then an opportunity to create a family profile. The family profile states “Only add

family members that are biological (blood) relatives (not adopted or step-relatives).” Similar fill-in charts are presented to complete the information for the other family members. Data can be modified, added, or deleted at any time. Once the user has completed entering the basic family information, a button “Go to My Family” takes the user to the basic “Family Health Portrait,” where a family health tree can be displayed or printed; this family tree contains symbols and abbreviations immediately recognizable by a health care practitioner as a basic family health history. Other family members, such as aunts, uncles, and other blood relatives can be added to the list as well. Other family members listed on the family tree can have their own personalized family tree created at this point, and the entire file can be downloaded to the user’s computer, leaving no personal data on the HHS computer.

If for privacy or other reasons, the user does not wish to enter personal family health data to the secured Web

		HHS Home Questions? Contact HHS Site Map	
		<input type="text"/> Search	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family History Home • My Family Health Portrait <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◊ English ◊ Spanish • My Family Health Portrait: Paper version • Frequently Asked Questions • On-line Resources • Surgeon General's Press Conference • Resource Packet for Health Professionals 	<h2>U.S. Surgeon General's Family History Initiative</h2> <h3>My Family Health Portrait Download</h3> <p>Welcome to the My Family Health Portrait download page. From this page, you can download the My Family Health Portrait software and install it on your home computer, or you can use the new Web-based version.</p>		
<p>To access the Web-based version, please click the link below:</p> <p><i>Note: The Web version has been tested on the following browsers on Windows: Internet Explorer 5.0+, Netscape 7.0+ and Mozilla Firefox 1.0+. It has also been tested on the following browsers on Mac: Safari 1.3+, Netscape 7.0+ and Mozilla Firefox 1.0+. Internet Explorer 5.2 or lower on Mac is not a supported browser.</i></p> <p>Web-based Version</p>		<p>Download My Family Health Portrait English Version 1.0 (Win 98, ME, 2000, XP & NT)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Download Size = 1.6 MB • Download Time = 5 minutes @ 53 kbps <p>* For questions regarding this software, please call 301-443-4000</p> <p>Download Now (See instructions below)</p>	

site, the downloadable version is a self-contained version of what is available on the Web site. Once uncompressed with any zip utility (built into Windows XP), the file is easily and quickly installed. The software does require the Microsoft “.Net” utility, version 1.1 or later, available for free at <<http://windowsupdate.microsoft.com>>. Once installed, the entire process is completed in the privacy of the home, with no personal data leaving the computer, unless the user desires to send the data files to other family members to complete or use as a basis for their own family health history.

With this information readily available, both within a family unit and shared with other blood relatives as appropriate, family health histories can be easily maintained and distributed or printed as needed.

Many times we cannot recall family health problems that family members may have had and which may give us a predisposition or otherwise genetically affect us. With this free service and software from the Surgeon General, we may all be better able to provide our health care professionals with the information that may prove so vital to our health care and treatment.

Ira Wilsker is an APCUG Director; Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont, TX; and a radio & TV show host. Contact him at <iwilsker@apcug.net>.

A USB Primer

By Brian K. Lewis, Ph.D.

By now most computer users are familiar with the term USB, or Universal Serial Bus. This connection port on your computer is designed to replace the older serial, parallel and PS2 ports. Probably

within a year you won't find any new computers with these older ports. They will have only USB. There are some things you might find useful about USB ports and hubs that could reduce or eliminate problems in dealing with them.

USB ports have a number of advantages over the old system of parallel/serial ports. They do not require I/O memory space or individual IRQ lines. Anyone who has had to work with older computers and operating systems will remember the problems of trying to prevent IRQ conflicts when connecting external devices such as scanners or modems. How many times did the sound card manage to steal IRQ's that you had to have for another device?

USB also allows for automatic device configuration and hot-plug capability. The hot-plug or hot-swap function means that you don't have to power down the computer and go through a restart when you want to connect a new device. Instead you simply connect or disconnect the USB cable. The computer will recognize the device and connect to the proper driver. That is assuming this isn't the first time you have used the device and that the driver has already been installed. You commonly have to install drivers for external hard drives, printers, scanners, card readers, etc. You generally don't have to install drivers for mice and keyboards that connect to the USB ports.

Next, consider that USB operates at three possible speeds: low speed or 1.4 megabits/second, full speed or 12 megabits/second, and high speed or 480 megabits/second (mbps). Low speed and full speed can be used with either USB 1.x or USB 2.0 hosts. The high speed can be used only with USB 2.0.

The host is the computer that provides the USB connections. For USB 2.0 operation the host computer's "root port hubs" must support USB 2.0. That means the computer must have USB 2.0 drivers that are supported by the operating system. Windows XP (service pack 1.0) and Windows 2000 both support USB 2.0. The root port hubs are the USB connectors on your computer and are usually connected to the motherboard. You can also identify them in the Device Manager, where they will show under the USB Host Controller.

Although the USB specifications indicate you can daisy-chain up to 127 devices from one port, this is not likely to happen because of the power drop that occurs over long connections. You can get external hubs that allow you to connect 4–7 devices to a single root port hub. The external hubs are repeaters that relay transaction information from the computer to a device connected to the hub's port. There is a catch to this as well. Some USB 2.0 hubs will decrease their maximum output if you have a USB 1.x device attached to a port. This means that any USB 2.0 device attached to the hub may not function, or will function at a lower speed. I learned this the hard way with an external USB 2.0 hard drive. I thought the problem was the drive, but it was the hub. I had a USB 1.0 card reader attached to the hub, and as a result the current output to each port was reduced to the point that it was not sufficient to run the drive. This occurred even though the hub and the drive had external power supplies.

An ample power supply is necessary to operate USB devices. Root hub ports can provide 5 volts and up to 500 milli-

Amps (mA) of current. The USB power specifications state that the USB ports should provide between 100 mA and 500 mA. Devices connected directly to the computer are able to obtain the maximum current.

So let's take a situation where we have a hub connected to the computer's root port hub. The hub is receiving 500 mA of current at about 5 volts. If only the current received through the connecting cable powers the hub, the output from each of its four ports will be only 100 mA. This is referred to as a "bus-powered" hub because it receives its current solely from the USB bus in the host computer. However, if the hub has its own power supply and is receiving at least 1.6 Amps from this supply, then it can provide a 500 mA output at each port. In this case, the hub should be able to support high-speed USB 2.0 devices.

On some computers you will find an icon in the system tray that is a "hardware disconnect." In this instance, you need to double click the icon and wait for it to permit you to disconnect the hardware device. This icon does not appear with all USB devices. Since installing SP2, I haven't seen this icon in my system tray. There are some reports of computers with SATA drives showing this icon. Since the SATA drive is supposed to be hot-swappable like USB devices, I'm not surprised that the icon shows up. However, with my Seagate SATA drive, I still don't see this icon. That may be because my motherboard doesn't support the hot-swap function even though it supports SATA drives.

When you plug in a USB device to either a hub or a computer port, there is an initial identification process, referred

to as the “configuration” step, that occurs. During this configuration process the device can not draw more than 100 mA. If it does, the process will fail, and it will appear that the device failed to work. The configuration process identifies the device, its drivers, and its power requirements. Only after this process is complete will the device be able to draw more than 100 mA current. Since this process is not instantaneous, some time must be allowed by the user before attempting to use the device. In addition, this configuration may not occur if the device is plugged into the computer before the computer is turned on and booted. In these cases, it may be better to connect the USB device after the computer is fully operational. Most of the time, the computer will identify and configure the device during the bootup.

Microsoft has a knowledge base article on trouble-shooting USB problems (#310575). Typically the problems relate to drivers or power problems. However, they also point out that high-speed devices should be connected with high-speed cables only. The low speed cables may distort the signal as a result of their reduced amount of shielding.

Another really complete source of trouble-shooting information can be found at <<http://www.usbman.com/winxpusbguide.htm>>. This has references for Windows ME as well as XP and Windows 2000. However, anyone who hasn't dumped Windows ME should seriously consider doing so as soon as possible. WinXP is such a tremendous improvement over ME it will really make your computing experience much more enjoyable. My computer hasn't locked up or crashed

in more than six months, probably longer. I really don't keep track anymore.

So what devices are typically high speed and require USB 2.0? Let's start with external USB hard drives. Seagate has a very interesting technical paper on external hard drives. In this paper they state that most 2 ½" external drives require 1000–1100 mA during the start-up cycle and then can function at the 500 mA maximum current available from the USB port. They also state that most USB ports can support up to 700 mA on a continuous basis. This is something I have not found elsewhere. Consequently, my recommendation is that when looking for an external drive, pick one with its own power supply.

Other high-speed devices include laser printers, scanners, and multi-function printers. All of these should have their own power supply. Other devices that operate at full-speed and don't need external power are blue-tooth adapters and card readers. This is only a partial list of what is available in USB devices. Just remember when you are looking at them that the term full-speed does not mean 480 mbps; instead it is the slower 12 mbps.

Dr. Lewis is a member of the Sarasota PCUG, Florida, and a former university & medical school professor. He has been working with personal computers for more than thirty years. Contact him 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.

Consumer Electronic Show 2006 By Bob Clyne Associate Editor

I stayed at the Stardust during CES (Consumer Electronics Show), and unfortunately, the Stardust was not an official CES hotel this year and therefore, did not have CES shuttle bus service, so I had to walk over to the back of the Riviera to get the bus. The Riviera is diagonally across Las Vegas Boulevard, The Strip, from the Stardust.

CES was bigger than ever this year. In addition to the entire Las Vegas Convention Center, it had exhibits at the Sands Expo Center and the Hilton, and the high-end audio exhibits were at the Alexis Park. I still have not gone to the Alexis Park, because I figure my ears aren't good enough to appreciate the sound, and no one that I know could afford the equipment there.

Blu-ray & HD DVD

The Blu-ray vs. HD DVD format war for high definition recording is still on. Apparently, talks about a compromise have broken off. Blu-ray does, at least for now, have an advantage in terms of capacity, 25 GB vs. 15 GB for HD DVD. The movie studios are committing support, some studios to one of the formats and some to both, so there should be content available when the players finally hit the market. The media manufacturers are also promising media for the units somewhere around the end of the first quarter of this year. It sounds like the players for both formats should start shipping during the first quarter of this year with the PC drives and recorders coming later. Many of the vendors were very vague about

their expected introduction dates. Last year at CES, some of the vendors were saying they expected to have equipment on the market for the 2005 Christmas selling season, and that, of course, never happened. Maybe this will be the year.

Apparently, part of the problem is an agreement with the movie studios over digital rights management (DRM), and that agreement has not been finalized yet. It remains to be seen whether the units will be so restricted as to be essentially useless. It sounds like the display device will have to also support the DRM scheme in order to display the material. I wonder if consumers will ever revolt and quit buying CDs, DVDs, equipment, etc. until the studios, the government, and others back off on the restrictions and let the consumer make reasonable use of the products.

Pioneer did say they were going to ship Blu-ray drives this month, but just to studios and select others, and they are priced around \$1,000. BenQ indicated a shipping date of third quarter. Sony said they intend to ship Blu-ray drives "sometime this year." The HD DVD manufacturers were even more vague about shipping PC drives.

From the information I could gather, it sounds like essentially all of the Blu-ray and HD DVD players will also be able to play regular DVDs, but there is no indication that any of them will be able to play both Blu-ray and HD DVD. The camps are strongly divided at this point. Still, if the market demands it, I expect that some manufacturer will produce a drive that supports both.

HDTV

First, remember that not all digital TV (DTV) is High Definition TV (HDTV.) Both Standard Definition (SDTV) and

Enhanced Definition (EDTV) television are DTV, but are not HDTV. HDTV will be either 720p or 1080i. The number is the number of scan lines, and the letter denotes either progressive or interlaced scanning. For reference, analog TV is 480i, and most DVD players will output 480p. Blu-ray and HD DVD are expected to be capable of outputting 1080p. Whether or not you will be able to tell the difference by watching the screen, will be very subjective. With a small screen, you will probably not be able to tell the difference. On a large screen flat panel or projection display you will probably be able to tell the difference between 720p and 1080i and may be able to tell the difference in certain scenes between 1080i and 1080p.

Another issue to be aware of, is that some displays claim to support 1080i or p, but that just means they will display those signals, but do not have enough pixels to display them natively (i.e. at full resolution). In order to display 1080 signals natively the display must have at least 1920 x 1080 pixels. I believe there are also some displays that say they support 1080p, but the interface to get the signal into the display will not support 1080p. What good does it do if the display supports it but you can't get the signal into the display? If you are looking at displays in the stores, be aware that the stores tend to have their lights brighter than they will be in most homes, and the stores then increase the display brightness. The result is that the display may look significantly different in your home than it did in the store. Try to get a look at the display with the area lighting at a more normal level.

CES had lots and lots of video displays of all types, but it is extremely

difficult to compare them there, and almost all of them look very good by themselves. At CES, almost all the displays that are side by side are from the same manufacturer and use the same technology, though they may vary in screen size. Both plasma and LCD displays are improving. The speed of the LCD screens is increasing, and the black levels are improving. LCD generally holds the advantage in number of pixels and is available in as large a screen size as you are likely to want. LCD panels are still more expensive for the same size, but the gap is narrowing as both technologies continue to drop in price. Plasma displays use more power and therefore produce more heat.

I saw an LCD display that used LEDs for the backlight rather than the usual fluorescent backlight. I don't have any other information about it, such as whether it is a shipping product, price, power consumption, or longevity.

Toshiba and Canon had SED (Surface-conduction Electron-emitter Displays), one each. These are not shipping products and could probably best be considered experimental, but they could be the technology of the future.

Miscellaneous

Toshiba was displaying a methanol-powered fuel cell for powering laptop computers. This is not a shipping product. It appeared to be about two inches in diameter and about a foot long. They said the cartridges would cost about five dollars and would power a laptop for about ten hours, making the cost about fifty cents per hour. They also said that under current regulations, the cartridges would not be permitted on aircraft.

iTouchless Housewares & Products <<http://www.itouchless.net>> was displaying a device that attached to a faucet much like an aerator does, but turned the water on and off in response to the proximity of your hands like the faucets in many public restrooms. It answers the issue of touching the faucet with your dirty hands to turn it on and then touching that same faucet that just got dirty from your hands with your clean hands to turn it off. The device uses four AAA batteries and costs about \$70. The main drawback I saw was that you had to touch the faucet with your hands to adjust the temperature. I told them that when they had one that could adjust the temperature without having to touch anything, I would be impressed. They also had a touchless soap dispenser.

Visteon had a display that included a fender mockup that had an LED headlight. I didn't think they could get enough light for a headlight from LEDs, but they said it met all the requirements. That sounds like an interesting idea.

Network Your Home or Office Internet

By Ira Wilsker

I am frequently asked questions about connecting an Internet source to a home network, such that several computers can simultaneously share the Internet connection. This type of home networking is typically only practical if there is a broadband source, and generally impractical if the source is dialup and a voice phone line is to be shared for Internet access.

Basically, there are three good options available, and each has its

relative advantages and disadvantages. They vary in terms of cost effectiveness, based on individual circumstances. The three basic methods or technologies available for home or small office networking are wired, wireless, and "homeplug."

Wired networking is a viable choice if it is practical to run a network cable between computers. The cable can be relatively inexpensive if purchased in bulk from electronics or home/hardware stores, but somewhat pricey if purchased in pre-cut sections at retail stores. Cable can be run through an attic, suspended from cup hooks along a ceiling, run along baseboards, or other methods that comply with appropriate safety and electrical codes. Other than running the cable, the installation of the network is fairly simple, and requires readily available and generally inexpensive hardware manufactured by countless companies. A device called a router is connected to the broadband input, and the computers are connected via network cable to the router. Most wired routers come with a floppy or CD with simple configuration utilities that allow the network to be setup and functioning within minutes of connection. Wired routers can be purchased from discount stores, electronics stores, office supply stores, and a variety of other sources. Since almost all contemporary computers, both desktop and notebook, come with an integral network connector, generally no other hardware is required other than the router and cable. In terms of security, wired is generally the most secure method of networking. Many of the inexpensive wired routers include some type of hardware firewall to protect the network from intrusion, but it is still generally a

good idea to have a software firewall on each computer in addition to the hardware firewall.

One of the most popular methods of home or small office networking is wireless, often referred to with its industry standard designation, 802.11, with a letter suffix, such as an “a”, “b”, or “g.” The suffix indicates which version of the standard hardware the network complies with in terms of frequency and bandwidth. Generally, the least expensive and most widely used type is the 802.11b, which shares the same 2.4 GHz digital frequencies as many cordless phones and other household electronics that may possibly cause some interference with the wireless connection. Under ideal conditions, 802.11b can transfer data at a rate of up to 11 megabits per second (Mbps). The newer 802.11a and 802.11g standards offer higher transmission speeds, and will likely encounter less interference from household appliances, but some interference is always a risk.

To connect computers to a wireless network requires a wireless router, and a device called an “access point” for each computer. The main advantage to a wireless network is the ease of installation, and the flexibility of not being connected to a wire while surfing the net. The wireless router is connected to the broadband input, and an antenna on the router broadcasts the signal to the access points. Range is a function of building construction and interference, but at typical household and small office distances and construction, a single router is typically adequate. Users should be sure to follow the instructions included with the router in terms of placement in order to

maximize the signal. Many wireless routers include some form of hardware firewall, but again a software firewall on each computer is generally recommended.

“Access Points” are generally small devices that attach to a computer either through a USB port, or to the network input on the computer. As they are radio transceivers, placement will affect performance. It is imperative to note that unless the integral encryption and other security options offered by the router and access points are implemented, there can be some serious security issues with wireless connections, in that it is easy for unauthorized persons to access the network.

Wireless routers and access points are readily available wherever electronics are sold, including discount stores, warehouse clubs, office supply stores, and other retailers. As the technology has been improving, prices have been plunging. Some provisos are in order at this point; first, whatever wireless hardware is purchased, be sure that it is compatible, in that the suffix “a”, “b”, or “g” matches, although much of the hardware available today will work with any standard, often listed as “a/b/g.” A second proviso is the “weakest link” factor, in that a wireless (or any other network) connection is only as fast as the slowest segment. If a broadband connection is running at 2Mbps, a faster wireless connection may be wasted, unless files or hardware (such as printers or video) are being shared in the network. It should also be noted that many of the new home theater devices now coming on the market utilize the same wireless interconnectivity and hardware as

computers, and may require the newer and faster standards of connectivity.

There is a third technology available for home and small office networking that is still in its infancy, but holds a promising future, and most of the major networking hardware manufacturers such as Belkin, Linksys, GigaFast, IOGear, Netgear, and others are producing compatible hardware. This technology is called "Homeplug" <<http://www.homeplug.org>>. It can safely utilize the existing household electrical wiring as an already wired network. Homeplug compatible hardware is priced about the same as wireless and is not yet as readily available as traditional wired or wireless hardware, but may be worth the effort to shop for it. The standard, which meets UL and other safety requirements, is possibly the easiest to configure, has a 14Mbps bandwidth, and is more secure than wireless. To connect broadband to Homeplug, the broadband input is plugged into a Homeplug input device (similar to a router), and that device is then simply plugged into a standard wall electrical outlet. Any computer in the home, as well as many of the newer entertainment devices, are then connected to any other electrical outlet in the house via an adapter that connects to the computer with a traditional USB or network plug. In terms of security, the broadband signal does not typically pass through the household junction box, making it extremely difficult for neighbors and others to access the connection or network. As with all other forms of networking, a software firewall is still necessary on each computer.

If a user is bearing the cost of broadband, and has more than one computer in the home or office, then

one of these networking technologies may be a useful method to connect those computers to the internet.

Ira Wilsker is an APCUG Director; Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont, TX; and a radio & TV show host. Contact him at <iwilsker@apcug.net>.

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

Tech News By Sue Crane

Microsoft Previews IE7

Internet Explorer's program manager, Eric Lawrence, recently posted a blog that said IE7 plans to support the Transport Layer Security protocol by default. He also explained how IE7 will behave differently from earlier versions when it encounters potential security problems. From an HTTPS page, users will be forced to access insecure content via the information bar, since only the secure content will be rendered by default. IE7 is also rumored to have tabbed browsing similar to Firefox.

A Computer for Every Kid

A \$100 laptop? A global effort is underway to make it happen by next year. It was a pipe dream only a few months ago, but soon will be reality. An ambitious effort from MIT Media Labs to put a \$100 portable in the hands of every child in the world is picking up big corporate partners, top engineering talent, and interest from several countries. One Laptop Per Child

(OLPC), a nonprofit venture, is expected to start distributing machines this year and to produce 100 to 200 million in 2007.

AMD plans 4-core Opterons by 2007

Advanced Micro Devices put a quad-core server processor on its road map and promised to upgrade its software investments, as it outlined its general technology direction for the next couple of years. The new processor will incorporate four cores connected together by a new version of the Hypertransport Interconnect technology, and will support DDR3 (double data rate 3) memory.

The 2006 dual-core chips will also introduce AMD's Pacifica virtualization technology and its Presidio security technology into AMD-based systems. AMD's goal for 2006 is to improve its standing within the business PC market, both in desktops and notebooks.

Phishers use Phony IRS Tax Refund to Scam Consumers

A spam e-mail message has been sent around the world telling people they are eligible for a \$571.94 tax refund from the IRS. The e-mail offers a link to a fraudulent IRS Web site, but the link actually goes through a legitimate Government Web site. The link in the phishing e-mail goes to a forged IRS Web site that asks for a Social Security number, tax returning filing code, and credit card details including security codes and PIN. The government is aware of the issue and is working to fix it.

New TiVo Product Promotes Targeted Ads

After introducing a generation of television viewers to the joys of skipping over ads, TiVo plans to launch a new service to let its subscribers seek out the advertisements they've cut loose

from their TV viewing. Digital video recorder (DVR) maker TiVo is positioning the new service, scheduled for a mid-2006 launch, as a way for subscribers to find targeted ads in categories that interest them. The opt-in technology will let TiVo subscribers use keyword searches to look for information on specific products or services. The ad service will be free for subscribers; pricing for advertisers is still being determined.

Microsoft Considers Making Desktop Apps Free – With Advertising

Although no specific plans have been made, executives within Microsoft are examining whether it makes sense to release ad-supported versions of products such as Works, Money, or even the Windows operating system itself. Microsoft officials confirmed the authenticity of the paper, dated winter 2005, but declined to comment on its contents. But Chief Technology Officer Ray Ozzie and Chairman Bill Gates outlined some of the opportunities and the challenges Microsoft faces in a series of October memos. In the blunter of the two memos, Ozzie said Microsoft had an obligation to act on the shift to ad-supported software. "It's clear that if we fail to do so, our business as we know it is at risk," Ozzie wrote. "We must respond quickly and decisively." The company's exploration of ad-supported software extends even to Windows, its most important product. An ad-supported version of the operating system could make some sense, Microsoft researchers argue, noting that the product reportedly earns \$9 per year per user.

A New Kind of Music Label

40 years ago Jac Holzman changed music distribution with the release of

The Doors' album on his independent Elektra music label. He's introducing a similar change with Cordless Recordings—the first all-digital music label operated by a major record company, the Warner Music Group, which is launching on the Web and on digital music services such as iTunes and RealNetworks' Rhapsody. Music from the label's first six bands is being sold only online in 3-song "clusters" instead of albums. The bands will be promoted on blogs and sites like MySpace. Artists get to keep ownership of the master recordings they release under Cordless. If they want to release their music elsewhere after a short contract is up, they are free to do so. The Cordless Recordings label is an experiment for Warner Music, which has increased its focus on digital

distribution, and a bet that inexpensive Internet distribution and marketing may give labels a cost-effective way to nurture new bands. On the label side, it's an attempt to reach out to a music-consuming world that is deserting radio and record stores for iTunes and MySpace.

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

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Letter From The Editor

TomTom Go Went, And So Will I

My TomTom Go GPS Navigation system, that I talked about in an earlier letter, went with me on a 4500 mile car trip to Clarksville, Texas, Las Cruces, Albuquerque, and Santa Fe, New Mexico, and home. It performed marvelously 98% of the time. I was looking at condos and Independent Living places in the New Mexico cities, and all I had to do was plug in addresses from the listings or ads, and TomTom led me right to the door. The same for restaurants and motels. It also took me along some mountain roads that might have been otherwise confusing. Once or twice on an open road miles from anywhere the sexy lady told me to "Turn right!" when there was no place to turn. But that was a minor error; you just ignore it, as you would your wife.

I must tell you that I found just the condo I wanted in Corrales, New Mexico, bought it, and will be moving there as soon as I can sell my house in Michigan (a buyer showed up the day after it was listed). You will get a new editor of the DATA BUS for March, hopefully one who makes fewer errors. It's been fun though. I just paid my SEMCO dues for 2006, so I'll stay in touch. Happy computing to you!

Bill



BOARD MEETING
1/8/06
Warner Mach

Board Members Present

President Gary Denise, Vice President Richard Jackson, Acting Secretary Warner Mach, Treasurer Chester Blechinger, SIG-Advanced Chairman Franz Breidenich, SIG-IBM Co-Chairman Tom Callow, Publications Chairman Bill Agnew, and Members Paul Cerevo and Rene Jacques. The meeting was called to order at 12:15p.m.

Old Business

Tom Callow moved to reimburse Warner Mach \$7.58 for refreshments. Franz Briedenich seconded the motion, and it was carried.

Treasurer Chester Blechinger reported that the balance on hand is \$7,177.92. Membership stands at 78.

New Business

There was discussion of the arrangements at ArvinMeritor, especially concerns with the security arrangements. There was also discussion on notifying Oakland University that SEMCO has moved. It was thought better to wait till the move is considered permanent, but surely before the next meeting.

Richard Jackson proposed that the Board should vote by e-mail during the coming week on whether to stay at ArvinMeritor. Bill Agnew seconded the motion, and it was carried.

There was a question whether the Michigan Room is large enough for future meetings. We should, perhaps, request the use of the auditorium in the future.

There has been one volunteer for Chairman of the SIG-IBM Intermediate.

This will be discussed further during the SIG-IBM Intermediate meeting.

Since Bill Agnew will soon be leaving the state, there is a search for a new DATA BUS Editor. Tom McNorton has agreed to fill in temporarily, but a permanent replacement will be solicited during the business meeting.

Member Rene Jacques noted that in the future short resumes of SEMCO officer candidates should be published in the DATA BUS, along with the ballot.

Tom Callow moved to adjourn. Richard Jackson seconded the motion. The motion was passed, and the meeting adjourned at 1:05 PM.

January Meeting Attendance: 34



SIG-IBM MEETING
1/8/06
Tom Callow

Tom Callow acted on nominations of Warner Mach and himself for 2006 Co-Chairmen of the SIG-IBM. They were elected unanimously.



SIG-IBM INTERMEDIATE
1/8/06
Tom Callow

Tom Callow nominated Carl Massie, Jr for Chairman of the SIG-IBM Intermediate, and he was elected unanimously.

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS (SIGS)



SIG-IBM
Tom Callow
Warner Mach



SIG-IBM INTERMEDIATE
Carl Massie, Jr.

Feb. 12: What To Do When Things Go Wrong: SIG-IBM Co-Chairman Tom Callow will present tips on how to diagnose your computer problems and discuss things you can do yourself to try to fix them.

NOVICE-IBM GROUP Rotating Volunteer Hosts

Feb. 12: Help And Q & A: Discussion directed by the audience. No question is too simple!!

SEMCO ELECTION RESULTS

The January vote for SEMCO Officers was as follows (winners in bold):

President:

Gary DeNise 28

Vice President:

Richard Jackson 28

Secretary:

Carol Sanzi 27

Treasurer:

Bette Gay 16

Chuck Moery 11

Members at Large of the Board:

Bob Clyne 21

Chester Blechinger 18

Paul Cervero 11

Feb. 12: Topic 1: Protect Your Computer from Worms that Eat Your CPU and Bandwidth: SIG-IBM Intermediate Chairman Carl Massie will give a PowerPoint presentation on protecting your computer from malicious software, with an emphasis on worms. Also, Windows Media Encoder will be demonstrated by recording live the audio and video of the presentation.

Topic 2: Spybot - Search & Destroy: SIG-IBM Intermediate Chairman Carl Massie will demonstrate the use of Spybot - Search & Destroy, including some of its advanced features.



SIG-ADVANCED
Franz Breidenich

Mar. 6, 2006: (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.

March 2006 DATA BUS DEADLINE (7th day after meeting)

SEMCO Input and Members' Ads — Deadline: Sun., February 19, 11:59 p.m.

Members' personal ads are free. To mail, use [Editor address on Page 2](#); e-mail address: [<agnew@bignet.net>](mailto:agnew@bignet.net). PLEASE send to arrive sooner than deadline.

Business Ads - Deadline: Second Friday monthly. Contact the [Editor \(address Page 2\)](#).

Bill Agnew

agnew@bignet.net

(to post monthly computer group info)

**CALENDAR-OF-EVENTS
OTHER GROUPS**

AAIICI (American Association of Individual Investors, Computerized Investors)

Feb. 25–Saturday, 10am (4th Saturday); W. Bloomfield Twp. Library, 4600 Walnut Lake Rd., 1 mile west of Orchard Lk Rd. Jack Lockman at <thunder@tir.com> or 313-341-8855.

COMP (Computer Operators of Marysville & Port Huron)

Mar. 1–Wednesday, 7pm (1st Wednesday); Jane Wheatly 810-982-1187 <<http://www.bwcomp.org>>.

DCOM Computer Club

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

DPUG (Detroit Palm Users Group)

Feb. 14–Tuesday, 7pm; Kelly Services Bldg, 999 West Big Beaver, corner Crooks & Big Beaver, Troy. <<http://www.dpug.org>>.

FACE (Flint Area Computer Enthusiasts)

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

MacGroup Detroit

Feb. 19–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: Communicating with Audio and Video, Podcasting.

MacTechnics, (MAC User Group)

Feb. 18–Saturday (3rd Saturday); 11:00 am main meeting (SIGs at 9:30); Ann Arbor Open School, 920 Miller Ave., Ann Arbor. <<http://www.mactechnics.org>>. Cassie at <cassiemacs@yahoo.com> or 313-971-8743.

Michigan Apple Computer User Group

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

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)

Mar. 7–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: Home Networking and Wireless Access Points, Part 2.

MDLUG (Metro Detroit Linux User Group)

Feb. 11–Saturday, 12:30–2:30pm, (2nd Saturday); Adam Cardinal Maida Alumni Library, St. Mary's Preparatory School, Orchard Lake; Web: <<http://www.mdlug.org>>. Info: Richard Jackson 248-546-3694.

Wayne State U. Mac User Group

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

Things You Need to Know To Be King At The Refreshment Table (Floating Around The Internet) (uncertain reliability)

Donkeys kill more people annually than airplane crashes.

The king of hearts is the only king without a moustache.

Venus is the only planet that rotates clockwise.

Walt Disney was afraid of mice.

It's possible to lead a cow upstairs, but not downstairs.

You burn more calories sleeping than you do watching television.

The first product to have a bar code was Wrigley's gum.

Apples, not caffeine, are best for waking you up in the morning.

The first owner of the Marlboro Co. died of lung cancer. So did the first "MarlboroMan."

Turtles can breathe through their butts.



JANUARY REFRESHMENT DONORS

Warner Mach, Coordinator
Betty MacKenzie
Roland Maki
Gary DeNise

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

A1-Super Computer Sales shows. See

www.a1-supercomputersales.com

or www.a1scs.com

for show schedule.

COMPUTER RESOURCE PEOPLE

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

Are you willing to help members learn?

Which software programs are you familiar enough with?

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

Almost Anything: Vander-Schrier

AutoCAD: Comptois

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—248-642-5770 9am–5pm tcallow@monaghanpc.com
Comptois, Jerry—248-651-2504, anytime jerrycandotoo@juno.com
Cook, Stephen—313-272-7594, eves scook48227@ameritech.net
Vander-Schrier, Jack—586-739-7720, 12–8pm jvanders@myself.com
Yuhasz, Steve Help@yuhasz.org



SOUTHEASTERN MICHIGAN
COMPUTER ORGANIZATION, INC.

SEMCO CALENDAR—February/March

ArvinMeritor Building

2135 West Maple Road

Troy, Michigan

FEBRUARY 12—SUNDAY (Meet 2nd Sunday)

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

SEMCO General Meeting at 1:30 pm.

Special Interest Groups (SIGs)

SIG-IBM 1:45 pm. **Program: What To Do When Things Go Wrong:** SIG-IBM Co-Chairman Tom Callow will present tips on how to diagnose your computer problems and discuss things you can do yourself to try to fix them.

SOCIAL PERIOD 3:15 pm. Refreshments! (Reminder: We must maintain a neat environment.)

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

SIG-IBM INTERMEDIATE 3:45 pm. **Program: Topic 1: Protect Your Computer from Worms that Eat Your CPU and Bandwidth:** SIG-IBM Intermediate Chairman Carl Massie will give a PowerPoint presentation on protecting your computer from malicious software, with an emphasis on worms. Also, Windows Media Encoder will be demonstrated by recording live the audio and video of the presentation. **Topic 2: Spybot - Search & Destroy:** SIG-IBM Intermediate Chairman Carl Massie will demonstrate the use of Spybot - Search & Destroy, including some of its advanced features.

SIG-ADVANCED, March 6, 2006—MONDAY, 6:45 pm, (First Monday), 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.**

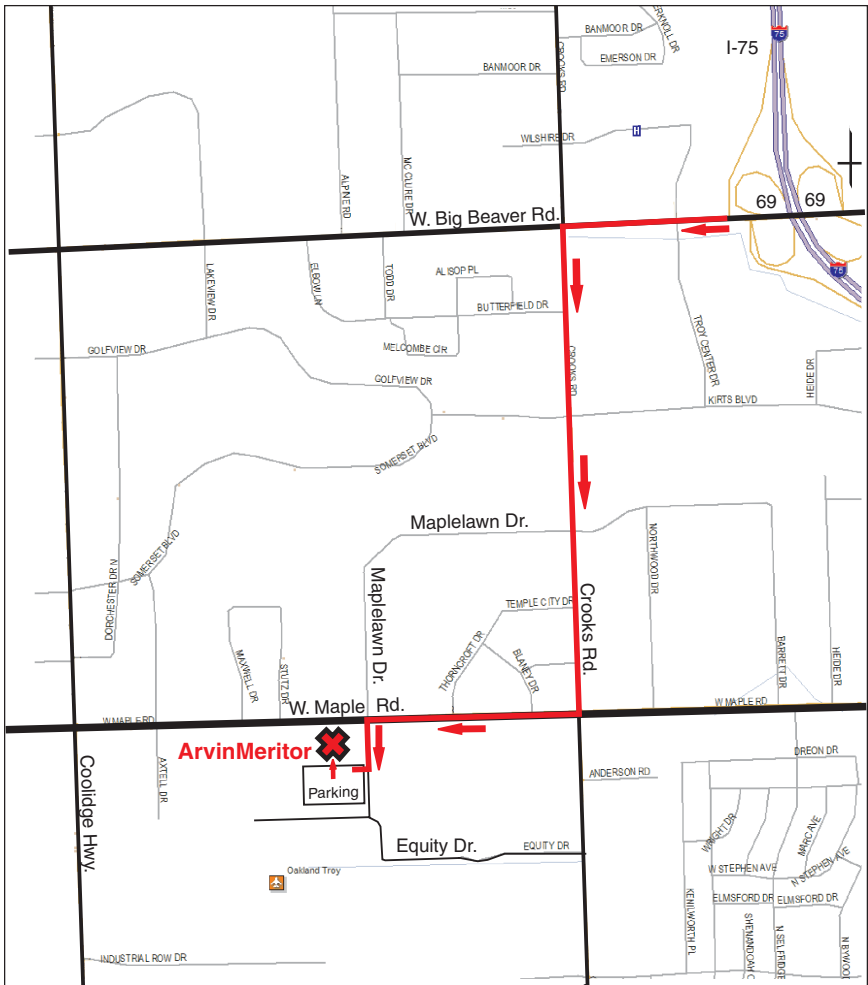
March 12—SEMCO SUNDAY

<http://www.semco.org>

PUBLIC INVITED

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

**SEMCO Meetings at [ArvinMeritor](#)
2135 West Maple Road, Troy**



DIRECTIONS

From I-75, take Exit 69 to westbound Big Beaver Rd. (16 Mile). Turn left (south) on Crooks Rd. Turn right (west) on Maple Rd. (15 Mile). Turn left (south) on Mapelawn Dr. Turn right into the parking lot at the rear of the ArvinMeritor building. The building is shaped like an X. Park. Enter the building at the entrance at the center of the rear of the building. Follow the “SEMCO” signs.

SEMCO thanks the [ArvinMeritor](#) Corporation for their hospitality in providing their facility for our meetings.



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

SEMCO (future meetings)

February 12

March 12

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Helping People for the 21st Century**