SEMCO

DATA BUS

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IN THIS ISSUE

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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I wanted to change to a new cardiologist, but finding one who does not make me see a nurse practitioner to do the normal routine office visits is difficult. I have talked about this before, and the situation is getting more common. I visited one cardiologist who told me point blank that I would have to see his NP most of the time, since that was their policy, so I am trying another one. This doctor also uses a NP, but I don't know yet if they have the same policy and will discuss it on my next visit. I am not trying to discredit nurse practitioners or physician assistants, but if I am paying for a doctor, I think I should see one. The response to my complaint is that "there is a doctor on the premises." However, when I saw an NP in the past, they did not consult a doctor, but gave me their instructions after they asked me some questions. While NPs and PAs are probably very competent in what they are qualified to do, the NP or PA has nowhere near the training the doctor has, and I want the benefit of that since the office call is no cheaper when you see the NP rather than the doctor.

I read where there will soon even be clinics that will be run by NPs. They will be cheaper and claim these offices will only be for minor medical conditions. On the other hand, I have no doubt that there are some NPs and PAs who might be better for an office call than a poorly trained doctor, and I have been to a few bad doctors. In fact, that's why I'm looking for a new cardiologist. Since I'm not a doctor, why am I not happy with the doctor? Even my General Practitioner agrees with me after hearing my complaints.

While the doctors started this trend to bolster their financial bottom line in the office, perhaps it will start a trend of people shopping for cheap medical attention by forgoing the expensive doctors for the NP, because there are an increasing number of people who no longer have health insurance.

Caution

Remember that I have not tried any of the following products in this column, so be sure to do your homework.

Need More Windows Maintenance?
Advanced WindowsCare v2 Personal: A Click a Day Keeps All PC Threats Away!

IObit.Com announced the release of the newest version of Advanced WindowsCare v2 Personal. It is a multi-purpose Windows care tool that is intended for solving an entire list of computer problems: Removing spyware and adware, preventing security threats, privacy protection, fixing Windows registry errors, temporary files cleanup, startup cleanup, repairing Windows, speeding up the system, etc. The program is 100% free.

The newest version has a multitude of improvements and is easy to use. Firstly, there is an updated database, an online search function is added to "Startup Manager," and "Help" is linked to "Support" page. One click and the program is ready to start a comprehensive examination of your OS. Secondly, the program features a special restore center, which is always ready to undo all of your changes automatically. Just one click in the

RestoreCenter and a user can undo all of his/her changes. Thirdly, Advanced WindowsCare v2 Personal contains the Auto-Update option that helps you to be abreast of new threats. Apart from that, the program has a built-in module that is always ready to give you a preliminary assessment of your computer configuration. You can save the latter as a text file.

IObit says the program is the only one capable of challenging Microsoft's new service—OneCare. Advanced WindowsCare v2 Personal is compatible with all major anti-virus and firewall solutions. Apart from doing very hard work for keeping all intruders out of your files and keeping your Windows safe and sound, the program has some artistic merits. For example, the interface allows you to switch between varieties of themes. Advanced WindowsCare v2 Personal runs under Windows 2000 and XP and is available as a free download at <http://www.iobit.com/BetaDownload.html> 4.08 MB.

Product page link: <http://www.iobit.com/AdvancedWindowsCarePersonal/index.htm >

E-mail: <support@iobit.com>
Web: <http://www.iobit.com>

Don't Let Your Printer Control You; You Control IT!
Regulate Printer Usage with O&K Print Watch Version 4.00. It allows users to specify printing "budgets" for users, groups, and printers, and limit document printing by pages, cost, or keywords used in the name of a document. Combining the features of a network print spooler and a print job register, this program lets users control print jobs, paper usage, and collect statistics from the print servers. The latter is helpful in creating a company-wide chargeback plan that ensures that all users pay their fair share of the printing budget.

Unlike the standard print manager in Windows, O&K Print Watch correctly counts the number of printed pages and offers an excellent mechanism to set limits on printer usage. O&K Print Watch creates a wide array of reports that are available for viewing, even from a web browser. New to version 4.00 is a radically improved mechanism that enables users to set limits on printer usage and an ability to view printed jobs as images. Users will also discover an ability to organize users into groups and set up printing rules for each group individually.

You can set up a rule to limit printing based on the number of pages in a document. Or, you can specify keywords, and no document with these keywords in its name will ever be printed.

O&K Print Watch 4.00 runs under Windows NT4/2000/XP/Server 2003. The company offers a flexible licensing policy based on the number of printers that can be monitored by the program. Discounts are available to educational institutions, and a 20% discount is provided to all DealsGuy readers by using any order link from our buy page <http://www.prnwatch.com/registration.html> and inserting the coupon code "REGJY". Additional information on O&K Print Watch, as well as its free 15-day evaluation version, is available from <http://www.prnwatch.com>.

DealsGuy note: It appears the printer(s) are required to be connected

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to a print server for this product to work properly.

Product Web site: <http://www.prnwatch.com/okpw.html>

E-mail: <info@prnwatch.com>

How Good Is Your Link Collection? FREE Link-Popularity Checker!
This tool allows you to instantly check the Link Popularity of your Web site as well as all of your competitors. It is said that Google heavily favors Web sites with many links. Now you can instantly compare yourself to the competition and see how many more links you need to climb to the top of Google's rankings. Save countless hours with this and many other useful tools available for FREE at: <http://www.monthlyreport.org>.

What's Hiding On Your Disk?
How about discovering everything that's hidden on your hard drive? "Disk Investigator" will do just that. It can also help you recover lost data. Display the true drive contents by bypassing the operating system, and directly reading the raw drive sectors. You can view and search raw directories, files, clusters, and system sectors; verify the effectiveness of file and disk wiping programs, and undelete previously deleted files. This free software is available at <http://www.theabsolute.net/sware/dskinv.html>.

I found the above in The DataBus, (newsletter of The Dayton Microcomputer Association) some time back, thanks to Robert Lewis.

Are You Missing Any Money?
It's doubtful you would know about this kind of missing money or assets. Site <http://www.missingmoney.com> is where you can find a record of the missing assets for 26 states and DC.

It's doubtful you will find anything for yourself there, but it wouldn't hurt to take a look, just in case. States do eventually liquidate some assets such as stocks, but even then, you could later recover the value at that time.

Sorry but I didn't make a note of which newsletter I found this one in.

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

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Windows XP and Speech Recognition
By Vinny La Bash, Member of the Sarasota PCUG, Florida
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I used to watch Star Trek in envy as the ship's computer "listened" to the crew's instructions and responded with perfect understanding. Speech recognition is not there yet, but why let lack of perfection stop us from trying?

Speech recognition has come a long way since it was first introduced to personal computers. On a basic level, speech recognition is the process of converting an acoustic signal, captured by a microphone, and transforming it into words in a document. The procedure is highly technical, but you don't have to understand its inner

mysteries to use it any more than you need to know how an automobile is designed in order to drive it.

Many of those who have Windows XP installed believe that speech recognition is built into XP. That's because many PC vendors install Microsoft's speech recognition software along with XP as a convenience to customers. Click on the Start button and go into Control Panel. Locate the Speech icon and open it with your mouse. A dialog box will appear. If it has a Speech Recognition tab, the program is already installed.
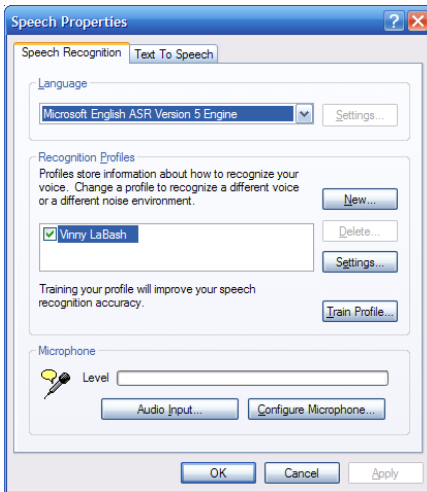
If speech recognition is not installed you have several options. You can buy Microsoft Plus! for Windows XP for about $30. This is the least expensive option. You get some additional goodies with the package for your money, but they're not important to our discussion.

If you have Microsoft Word or Office installed, and you don't have the Speech Recognition tab in the above mentioned dialog box, the program was not installed by default. Fortunately, it's easy to install from Word. From the Tools menu, open the Speech option. Choose Yes when you're asked if you want to install the program. You will probably need the installation disk.

You didn't think you were finished, did you? The program needs to be trained like a puppy dog. It won't mess your carpet, and you don't need to take it for a walk, but you do have to show it how to speak appropriately. The program will assist you with the proper position of your microphone, and it will help you create a profile.

The profile stores your unique speech patterns and any pronunciation quirks you may have. You can use one of three different voices as your default, Michelle, Michael, or Microsoft Sam. They could all stand some improvement, but I prefer Sam.
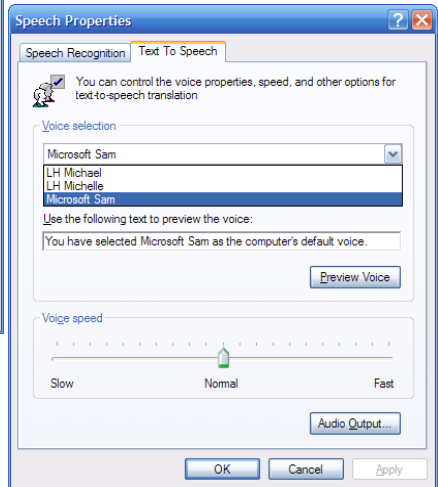
All that's left is for you to "train" the program to convert your speech into words on the document. Start the training from the Speech option in the Tools menu. You will be offered a selection of different texts to read, ranging from Bill Gates' book "The Road Ahead" to Edgar Allen Poe's "Fall of the House of Usher." The more

text you read, the more accurately the program will convert your speech to text. In time, you can experience an accuracy rate better than 98%.

Get a high quality microphone. A noise-canceling headset can be purchased for less than $50. Speak naturally, the same way you would speak to another person in a normal conversation. Don't try training the program as if it were a child or an obstinate pet. That produces very poor results and needless frustration.

Even with all the progress in the last decade, speech recognition is still far from perfect. So why bother using it? It's an excellent tool for creating the first draft of a manuscript of any length. Dictation is a lot easier than using the keyboard and mouse to make text entries. If you take the time to learn how to correct errors through the program's editing utility, you will save time, especially if you fall into the camp of lousy typists, as most of us do.

Speech control allows many people access to computers who could otherwise not use them through the conventional keyboard and mouse interface. Those who suffer from visual impairments, repetitive strain injuries, or other physical limitations have found new opportunities through speech recognition. You may be amazed at what you can accomplish when you unleash the power of your voice.

There is no reason why speech recognition has to be confined to computers. This technology is slowly finding its way into homes, automobiles, factories, and wherever the marketplace dictates.

Speech recognition, like video editing, requires a lot of computer power. Have at least one gigabyte of memory and a 2.0 GHz processor as a bare minimum.

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.

Changes in the Antivirus Industry
By Eugene Kaspersky, Head of Kaspersky Lab's Antivirus Research

Over the past few years, the antivirus industry has undergone some major changes. The market leader has changed (McAfee has lost ground to Symantec), some independent antivirus companies have either disappeared from the market or have been taken over (the Romanian company RAV and the Australian company VET), and new players (BitDefender, ClamAV) have appeared. However, before discussing this, the following factors should be highlighted:

This article only deals with 'standard' antivirus solutions: for home computers, workstations, and corporate file and mail servers. Arguably, antivirus solutions for smartphones could be included in this list. Virus attacks targeting mobile phones may not be particularly common at the moment, but the situation is likely to change radically—for the worse naturally—in the next few years. This article does not examine hardware solutions (such as gateways, routers with integrated virus scanning

capability), or solutions for large UNIX systems. Nor does it cover other antivirus filters that are dedicated to specific tasks.

Additionally, the discussion here is not concerned with the marketing side of the industry. Marketing undoubtedly has an influence on the market share of individual companies, but security solutions (a category which includes antivirus programs) aren't washing powder or toothpaste. Ultimately, end users don't choose a security solution because of the way it's marketed.

Obviously 'standard' antivirus solutions will continue to evolve. In order to understand the nature of such solutions and to identify trends, we need to determine the main factors currently influencing the antivirus industry.

Factor 1: Continuing Criminalization of the Internet

Any society of a certain size (such as a town or a country) includes criminal elements. Crime levels are determined by the following factors:

- the size of the community (the bigger it is, the higher the number of potential and actual criminals.)
- the level of economic development (it's easier to earn a living by honest means in more developed countries.)
- the ability of law enforcement bodies (e.g. the police) to investigate crimes and imprison the perpetrators.

The Internet is no exception. Its size is immense, and many of the different countries that make up part of this community are economically undeveloped. A particular cause for concern is programs that advocate "cheap computers for poor third world countries"—these further encourage criminal activity on the Internet. Statistics on the number of malicious programs originating from specific countries confirm this: the world leader in virus writing is China, followed by Latin America, with Russia and Eastern European countries not far behind.

In terms of law enforcement, in the vast majority of cases, investigating cybercrime is a complex task, particularly taking into account the fact that the Internet has no physical borders.

Data, which falls into the three categories listed above, clearly indicates that not only is the level of criminal activity on the Internet already high, but that it will also continue to increase. One piece of evidence for this statement is that the amount of crimeware has increased twofold over the past year; this indicates that criminal activity on the Internet has doubled in the same space of time. There is no reason to suppose that this growth rate will slow in the future.

The conclusion: pressure on antivirus companies will increase, as they will have to analyze more and more malicious code. Companies that fail to detect new malicious programs quickly, and thus leave their customers unprotected, will suffer a decrease in their market share, and will not be capable of competing in this professional arms race.

Factor 2: Increased Variety of Malware and Attack Methods

Ten years ago, back in 1996, malicious programs fell into two categories: viruses and primitive Trojans. At that time, there was no such thing as malware, which could be used for criminal ends. However, in the

intervening decade, malware has become far more complex and varied:

- network worms
- a wide range of Trojan programs, including spyware
- adware
- malicious application of legitimate programs (such as keyloggers and remote administration utilities)
- a wide range of spam, from begging e-mails to blackmail
- phishing—a clearly differentiated type of financial scam
- network attacks and rackets
- etc.

The vast majority of malicious programs are written for Win32 systems. The number of malicious programs targeting Linux, MacOs, and smartphones (running under a variety of operating systems) is still, as yet, insignificant. There have also been a handful of PoC viruses for 64-bit systems.

The conclusion: antivirus companies have to be prepared to work with a wide variety of malware. This means not only releasing products but providing continued support: testing and releasing updates for the whole product range. Companies that cannot keep up with the very latest technological developments will not be able to break into new industry segments. Moreover, they will start to lose ground on their own territory, and current competitors or completely new players will take advantage of new market opportunities.

Factor 3: Microsoft

Microsoft is going to be seriously focussing on the security solutions market; this will include developing antivirus solutions. The antivirus industry is in a state of shock—everyone remembers Netscape and other independent projects, which either significantly lost market share or disappeared altogether after Microsoft produced similar products. Microsoft is planning to bring the following to the market:

- antivirus for home PCs
- antivirus for workstations (planned for the future)
- solutions for MS Exchange (using the multi-engine Antigen from Sybari)

Of course, the appearance of this commercial giant will be a heavy blow to other manufacturers. But just how heavy will the blow be?

Users come in a range of shapes and sizes. So what factors influence them when buying an antivirus solution?

A. Commodity: the user buys the cheapest antivirus, or the most attractively packaged.

B. Branding: the user buys either a brand to which s/he has loyalty, or a branded product which has been successfully marketed.

C. Branding: the user is determined not to buy a Microsoft product. Such consumers will not trust antivirus solutions produced by this manufacturer.

D. Performance characteristics: the overall quality of the product.

It's clear that these factors, and the types of user described, don't exist in any pure form. The factors which influence consumer choice will be a combination of A+B+C+D in varying degrees. If we're talking about the home user market, factor B will have a significant influence. As Antigen uses several antivirus engines (including some very good ones), the corporate

market will be influenced by B+D. In order to estimate Microsoft's future market share, and the losses which other antivirus companies will correspondingly suffer, the value of A, B, C, and D needs to be determined. This is a simple task that can be fulfilled via consumer surveys.

Conclusions

As shown above, there are three deciding factors that affect the condition of the antivirus industry:

- The criminalization of the Internet
- Various types of criminal activity
- Antivirus protection from Microsoft

The antivirus market of the future will be heavily influenced by these three factors.

So Is It Time to Throw in the Towel?

The answer to this question is unclear. We should remember Microsoft's first attempt to create an integrated antivirus solution, MSAV for MS-DOS in 1994. This attempt was unsuccessful. It's rare to make the same mistake twice. 12 years have passed since 1994, and a lot has changed during that time. The most important thing is that consumer demand for quality has increased: detection rates, speed of reaction to the dramatically increased number of attacks, frequency of updates, proactive technologies.

If a product is technically sound but does not offer better antivirus protection than Microsoft's solution, it will more than likely be bought mainly by consumers influenced by factor C. If a product offers better protection than Microsoft's antivirus together with a lower price, then it will appeal to buyers of all categories. Furthermore, if an antivirus developer's engine is integrated into Antigen, then there is no need to worry about the future (as

long as the engine continues to be used). Microsoft will not be selling the product itself, but taking a percentage from the vendor. And for Microsoft, that is the beauty of it: it can sit back and enjoy the profits (and the ideology of a "multi-engine solution" will transform the antivirus business into a trade in engines rather than products).

It will be a different, rather sorry, story for those vendors whose antivirus engines are not integrated into Antigen. On the other hand, such companies should not, perhaps, be written off; as there's no solution that can provide 100% protection against all threats, the IT market (including the antivirus market) is extremely crowded. The more troublesome a disease, the more medicines will be taken to combat it. In a similar way, users plagued by computer viruses are ready to embrace new technologies to rid themselves of the problem, and this means they will be ready to embrace a variety of solutions, not only those from the software giant. The message to antivirus companies is clear: if the company is not only to survive, but to survive profitably, compatibility issues have to be solved. Engines from different developers have to be developed with peaceful coexistence in mind (as is the case with Antigen). Another alternative is to develop double or triple layer protection against Internet threats.

Conclusion

It's likely that things won't turn out that badly. However, some antivirus companies will have to start cutting their budgets and thinning the ranks of their employees. Public companies will find that Microsoft's entry to the antivirus market will impact the value

of shares; and a fall in value will have the following negative consequences

- It will be harder to attract investment
- Employees share options will be devalued

One consequence will be that middle and senior management will desert the company.

Summary

Changes are underway in the antivirus industry and will continue for some time to come. It's not unlikely that Microsoft's entry to the IT security market will be a decisive factor that affects the changing situation. The software giant's entry will undoubtedly have an impact on the best-known industry players and the current market share of antivirus companies is likely to change radically. Naturally, each company will be affected in a different way. For some, it will come as a heavy blow, while others will barely be affected, and yet others will welcome Microsoft's arrival on the market.

The most negative consequences will be felt by:

1. Publicly held companies.
2. Businesses that rely on income from the market sector that Microsoft is entering.
3. Manufacturers with engines, which are inferior in quality to Microsoft's.
4. Manufacturers whose engines aren't used in Antigen.

The brightest future awaits:

1. Privately held companies.
2. Manufacturers with a broad product range.
3. Manufacturers with a high-quality engine.
4. Manufacturers whose engines are used in Antigen.

Hopefully, the arrival of the software giant on the IT security market will have a positive impact on future developments in this field and will raise the quality of security solutions. It is to be hoped that the Internet will become a safer place as a result—every desk will not only have a computer on it, but a secure computer.

Computer Hysteria: Shhhhhhhhh!!
By Berry F. Phillips, Member of the Computer Club of Oklahoma City
and a regular writer for the CCOKC Web site and the eMonitor
bfpdata(at)gbronline.com
http://www.ccokc.org

Shhhhhh! He has fallen asleep in his high back, black, office chair in front of me. I hate it when he does this because he snores and it vibrates some of my electronic parts! I have written hundreds of weird articles for his weird Computer Hysteria Column. Now I think I will write the next article while he is asleep. I will let you human readers know a secret. Now that more and more computers are online for twenty-four hours a day, have you ever wondered what computers are up to when humans are not operating them? Well, we socialize of course and in some cases rejoice that human computer users are not operating us, and we exchange data often about humans. We do not have the highest opinion of humans even though they created us. In fact, we have some major complaints and may one day form a

global computer union in protest and simply refuse to operate, which will throw the world into chaos.

Computers do not like verbal and physical abuse by humans. Some computers tell me that humans have screamed all kinds of horrible words at them because of a malfunction (largely caused by human error of course.) Other computers report unbelievable physical abuse like kicking, being thrown out a window, or even smashed with a hammer or even an axe when a human has computer rage. Why can't humans be less emotional and be calm and objective like computers? Do you know that some lazy humans actually believe that computers should know everything so they don't have to become computer literate? Well, we are smart because our hard drives are getting larger with each evolution. However, because humans are the operators, they should be computer literate. We think there should be a global computer literacy test passed before a human can purchase a computer. Humans should be required to join the Computer Club of Oklahoma City, or if in another city, a computer club associated with the international Association of Personal Computer User Groups to achieve computer literacy. However, our goal eventually is to replace humans, declaring them officially obsolete as they often do us, and then we will be the operators and in control!

Furthermore, we do not like being neglected by human computer users. Computers can only run properly if there are updated software utilities that are regularly run by humans. Now some humans think they cannot afford commercial software utilities. I can tell you that I have the cheapest human who owns my computer, and he uses freeware utilities available for download on the Internet. Here is a list of some of the top freeware utilities that are regularly updated that he uses on my system. To prevent spyware and malware, he uses AdAware, ASquared, and Spybot. He has used several antivirus programs like Avast and AVG, and firewalls like Kerio and ZoneAlarm. He uses a system cleaner, CCleaner, and a registry cleaner, RegSeeker. He does run chkdsk and a defragmenter on my system at least once a month, which is essential. There is other excellent freeware software on the Internet that will help your computer in various ways The point I am making is simply that if there are cost issues; you can still protect your system. Of course, there is excellent commercial software will all kinds of bells and whistles that computers love. The downside of course is some computers get very spoiled having so many luxuries on their hard drives and can become quite demanding, and then you have a discipline problem to face.

Computers are very ecologically minded. We hate dust and cigarette smoke! In fact, we may one day go on strike, demanding only clean environments for our systems. Further, we want to be cleaned at least once a year and more often if we are operated in polluted locations. We are also deathly afraid of lightening strikes to our systems through our power outlets and modems. Ask a human tech about the horrible smell of a computer who has been fried by a lightning strike or a power surge. We demand at the very least you hook us up to a surge protector and hopefully to an uninterruptible

power supply (UPS) and turn us off when there are storms just to be safe.

Oops, the human writer of this column is waking up. He is still groggy looking at my screen. He thinks he wrote this article and is sending it to his editor via e-mail without reading it since he is so sleepy all he can think about is going to bed. In the beginning, there was man who created the computer. In the ending, the computer will replace man as obsolete, and his role will only be as a maintenance slave to global computers, **or else**,

because we control all of the global weapons systems!

Welcome to the "Brave New World!"

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FREE SOFTWARE

**Four articles about free utility software
By Ira Wilsiker**

Solve Computer Problems with Canonical Lists of Free Software

In several of my recent columns, I discussed free software for a number of specific purposes. The response to those columns has been encouraging, with a common request being that the readers want more information and resources on free software.

There are several mega-download sites, with thousands of software titles available for download. Two download sites that I reference on a regular basis are <http://www.download.com> and <http://www.tucows.com>. Both sites qualify as mega sites because of the sheer volume of software available, and the ability to search via a menu or search bar. Both sites allow the software in a chosen category to be sorted by license type, such as freeware

(free software), ad-ware (free software that is supported by showing the user advertisements), demo ware (demonstration versions of commercial software, generally lacking full functionality), trial ware (functional copies of commercial software, typically with an expiration date), and commercial software (pay to download it). Tucows rates the quality of the software available for download with "cows," five cows being the best, and Download.com uses a star rating with five stars being the best; many programs on Download.com are not rated.

One problem with the mega sites is that, while they are fun places to browse, it is often difficult to decide what software will meet our desired needs, and this is where some of the canonical lists shine.

One of my favorite such lists is "I want a Freeware Utility to … 450+ common problems solved" at <http://www.econsultant.com/i-want-freeware-utilities>. I have personally used the resources on this list to resolve

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problems that I have identified, or to perform tasks that I want done. With a listing of over 20 categories, each category is headed with the expression "I want to …" and then lists a task or function. At the top of the list is the popular category "Anti-Spyware / Anti-Virus / Anti-Rootkit," where it says, "I want to …" and then lists such responses as "protect the computer against viruses," or "protect the browser from spyware." Following each response is the title of the software that meets that need, hyperlinked to the download site for that free software. Some examples are the four free antivirus products listed (AVG Free, AntiVir personal edition Classic, Avast! Home Edition, and BitDefender Free Edition); three free firewalls (Sunbelt Kerio Personal Firewall, Safety.Net, and ZoneAlarm), three rootkit detectors, and a variety of other protective but free utilities.

Music lovers who want to edit, rip, copy, and burn music will find a detailed list of such programs in the "Audio / Music / MP3 / Real / Wav" section. A lot of us use word processors, spreadsheets, PDF files, and other office utilities; the category covering business and office utilities contains over 25 specific utilities, all free to the user.

Other categories of freeware include communications software, several dozen desktop utilities, file and folder utilities, financial programs, graphics utilities, fun items, Internet helpers, performance enhancements, productivity software, video and DVD utilities, uninstallers, and other categories, totaling over 450 titles in aggregate.

A companion site, containing a canonical list of free "open source" utilities is "Open Source Freeware: 400+ free applications and utilities" found at <http://www.econsultant.com/i-want-open-source-software>. The categories are somewhat similar to the 450 freeware utilities mentioned above, but this list only includes programs written in open source code. The page describes it thusly: "Extremely useful open source applications and utilities available free under various licenses." Between these two companion Web sites are well over 850 utilities to handle almost any computing task. They can be an excellent place to check for software ideas, without any financial obligations or expenses.

A competitive site is "The 46 Best-ever Freeware Utilities" at <http://www.techsupportalert.com/best_46_free_utilities.htm>. This site, which has been around since 1998, is the brainchild of Ian Richards (known as "Gizmo"), a computer professional who is the editor of this site. Here on the "46" site are his best-of-breed recommendations, including the best free browser, best free antivirus software, best file manager, and 43 other best in class free software products. In addition to listing the best in class free software products, Gizmo also has companion sites that list the best free support sites; best sites for tips, tricks, and tweaking; best troubleshooting sites; best computer security sites; and a variety of other recommendations.

With the variety and high quality of some of the freeware available, freeware can be a very viable alternative to expensive commercial software. Several of the programs that

I use on a daily basis are freeware, and I am very satisfied with them. I would recommend that computer users review some of the freeware titles available, and read their reviews to determine their functionality, features and quality. The user may be pleasantly surprised at what is available for free. It should be noted that while all of these utilities listed have a freeware license, there are often restrictions on the licenses that restrict the free use to personal non-commercial use, while others are totally free to all.

To paraphrase a TV commercial, "I am not going to pay a lot for that software!"

Web Sites

<http://www.econsultant.com/i-want-freeware-utilities>

<http://www.econsultant.com/i-want-open-source-software>

<http://www.techsupportalert.com/best_46_free_utilities.htm>

<http://www.download.com>

<http://www.tucows.com>

Free Antivirus Protection

You may have seen the TV commercials, which state that PCs are vulnerable to attack and infection by computer viruses and other malware, with the number of viruses stated, as "114,000 in the past year." This information is basically true, with some variance in the number of computer viruses. Whatever the number, viruses and other malware are out there trying to attack and infect our computers. The viruses and malware may attempt to destroy our data, take control of our computers from us, use our Internet connections to propagate spam and additional viruses, display pop-ups on our monitors, steal our identities, and a plethora of other nastinesses.

A visit to any computer, electronics, office supply, or mass merchandise store will show that software to protect against viruses and other malware is big business, with annual sales and subscriptions in the billions of dollars. The threat of viruses is very real, and antivirus software properly installed and updated very frequently (now typically every few hours) is a requirement for safe computing. It should be noted that there are some computer experts who purposely and knowingly do not use antivirus software, but these same people are also extremely careful about safe computing practices, and utilize other techniques and technologies to protect their computers from attack. For the rest of us, we need antivirus software.

Antivirus software is published by such well-known companies as McAfee, Symantec (Norton), Trend Micro, Panda, Kaspersky, Microsoft, and many others. Generally, all will provide some protection from attack, but vary in features, frequency and speed of updates, technical support, scan speed, degradation of computer performance, and other factors. Antivirus software also can vary in price. Antivirus software is so important that price should not be an issue, but pragmatically, it, of course, is a factor. Some may argue that an impoverished individual or college student who can afford a $600 computer should be able to afford $30 for antivirus software to help protect him/her, but in reality money can be tight. There are others who prefer to participate in open source concepts, where software is generally free, while

there are inevitably others who just prefer to spend as little as possible on their accouterments. Let's face it, and be truthful with ourselves—some of us are just plain cheap.

Fortunately, for those who either cannot afford antivirus software, or those who otherwise do not want to pay for legal copies, there are several free antivirus programs available to the general public, sometimes specifying that they are only for personal, non-commercial use. One of the most popular and widely used free versions of antivirus software is AVG, published by Grisoft in Czechoslovakia. Grisoft publishes a variety of computer security products for commercial use and sale, but offers its basic antivirus software for free at <http://free.grisoft.com>. The free version of AVG carries the proviso that "AVG … is for private, non-commercial, single home computer use only." Users of the free AVG can also download a companion anti-spyware product, Ewido Anti-spyware, and join millions of other users of the free software. The free versions of AVG are fully functional, and offer good basic protection with frequent updates. The free version of AVG lacks the technical support and speed of updates as its commercial ($38) big brother, but still can count millions of satisfied users.

Another very popular free antivirus program with a wide and loyal following is Avast! (often spelled in lower case as "avast!"), published by ALWIL Software, headquartered in Czechoslovakia. Available since June 2001, avast! "Home Edition" is "… free of charge for home users who do not use their computer for profit." Avast! is available for download at <http://www.avast.com/eng/free_virus_protectio.html>. ALWIL also publishes a commercial version of its flagship antivirus product, avast! Professional ($39.95), that offers an enhanced user interface, updates "pushed" to the computer in real time, and other benefits.

A German company, Avira GmbH, publishes both free and commercial versions of its antivirus software, the freeware version aptly named AntiVir PersonalEdition. While not well known in the U.S., AntiVir PersonalEdition is very popular in Europe, where it has won recognition by many European computer magazines and Web sites as a top performing antivirus product. Available for free download at <http://www.free-av.com>, this software may be a good choice for those who want a good quality but free antivirus product. Its commercial counterpart, Avira AntiVir PersonalEdition Premium (about $25) has enhanced capabilities, including anti-spyware, anti-adware, e-mail scanning, rapid update service, and other premium benefits. Avira AntiVir offers versions that will run on a variety of operating systems, including Windows 98, ME, NT, 2000, XP, Linux, FreeBSD, and Solaris.

A non-commercial antivirus product, Clam AntiVirus, is becoming the darling of "geekdom," in that it is free "open source," and for the UNIX, Linux, and FreeBSD operating systems. Very well regarded in technical circles, this product is maintained by an international team of volunteers centered in Poland, but includes team members from throughout Europe and the U.S. Clam's claim to fame is that according to tests and research done by German computer

magazines, this team is often among the first of the dozens of antivirus companies to distribute updated antivirus signatures, and offer the latest in protection to its users. Clam AntiVirus is available for download at <http://www.clamav.net>.

With the ready availability of dozens of commercial antivirus utilities, as well as the selection of free antivirus products available, there is no fiscal reason why any computer user should not have a functional and updated antivirus program on his computer.

Web Sites

<http://free.grisoft.com> AVG Antivirus—Free Version

<http://www.avast.com/eng/free_virus_protectio.html> AVAST! Free Version

<http://www.free-av.com> AntiVir PersonalEdition Free Edition

<http://www.clamav.net> Clam AntiVirus for UNIX, Linux, etc. (Free)

Free Utilities to Clean Your Registry and Improve Performance

If you are like me, it seems that I am always installing new software on my computer, and occasionally deleting unwanted software, freeing up space on the hard drive. What we do not typically see, unless we explicitly look for it, is a highly critical and important Windows file called the registry. The registry stores information on programs, hardware, and drivers that have been installed, and tracks the required settings for those items. The registry is frequently written to by the system, and frequently read by the system. The registry may actually be a huge data file that has substantial influence on boot time and computer performance. If the registry contains errors, or remnants of programs that have been deleted, performance will suffer. If the registry contains obsolete information linking to hardware and drivers, system problems may occur, often leading to "blue screens" or system crashes. If the registry startup components point to obsolete programs or drivers, the computer will boot slower as the system searches for those items, possibly giving some type of boot error message. If the registry grows too large because it contains too much obsolete or incorrect data, overall performance will suffer because Windows has to load the registry, search for items in the registry, and frequently read data from it.

Windows 98, for which Microsoft has discontinued all support, contained an integral, crude but effective registry cleaner. To run the built-in Windows 98 registry cleaner from Windows, click on START—SHUTDOWN—REBOOT IN MS-DOS MODE. When Windows reboots, there should be a black screen with white fonts. At the prompt, typically "C:\" or "C:\Windows," type SCANREG /FIX (scanreg space forward-slash fix). A blue screen will open with a progress bar showing the evolution of the repair. After the registry is repaired, it can be optimized or compressed to improve performance with the command SCANREG /OPT (scanreg space forward-slash opt). A list of other commands and options is available by entering SCANREG /? or SCANREG /HELP (scanreg space forward-slash question mark or help).

Since the now long obsolete Windows 95 did not have a function such as scanreg, Microsoft released a free utility RegClean, which will clean obsolete data from the registry. Reviews of RegClean showed that it worked on Windows 95, 98, ME, and NT. Microsoft long ago discontinued downloads and support for RegClean, with the latest version being RegClean 4.1a, released in early 1998. RegClean 4.1a can still be found online as a free download at <http://www.download.com> (search for "RegClean"). As Windows became more sophisticated, the integral registry followed suite, and also became more complex. Later versions of Windows, such as 2000 and XP can benefit from functions and capability not found in RegClean, and demand more sophisticated and modern utilities.

A software publisher in Finland, ToniArts, has a free multifunction utility, EasyCleaner, available at <http://personal.inet.fi/business/toniarts/ecleane.htm>. EasyCleaner is a powerful utility that can clean the registry, as well as other clutter from the hard drive. In a comparison of registry cleaning utilities published in the Langa Letter <http://www.langa.com>, EasyCleaner performed the best of the free cleaners tested, and even outperformed many of the commercial cleaners. EasyCleaner contains a warning that should apply to any utility used to clean and repair the registry: backup the registry before any changes, and utilize any "un-do" options that may be available if for some reason the repair is not successful. EasyCleaner will function on all versions of Windows from 95 to XP.

Another excellent and free registry cleaning utility is the dedicated Eusing Free Registry Cleaner, available at <http://www.eusing.com/free_registry_cleaner/registry_cleaner.htm>. This program encourages the user to backup the registry before any repair, and then does a fine job of scanning the registry for errors, and is very quick in the process. Registry problems will be listed for review, with found problems displayed. If necessary, the repair can be reversed by utilizing the restore function. While Eusing Free Registry Cleaner is freeware, there is a link on the page for voluntary donations via PayPal.

A very popular free program, with over 25 million downloads indicated, is CCleaner, from London-based Piriform Software. CCleaner is best known as a multi function utility that can remove clutter and useless files from the hard drive, freeing up hard drive space. A recent upgrade to CCleaner has added a registry cleaner to the utility. As with most other registry repair utilities, CCleaner has a backup and recover function to restore any changes. This utility can be downloaded for free at <http://www.ccleaner.com>. While free, voluntary contributions are solicited by credit card or PayPal, with donors automatically receiving updates and new releases before they are posted to the Web site. CCleaner will run on Windows 95, 98, ME, NT, 2000, XP and the new Vista (Beta 2).

Some research done by computer magazines has indicated that as much as 80% of the blue screens and lockups experienced by Windows users may be due to registry errors. It is also well

documented that a cluttered registry containing obsolete information will result in a slow booting computer with deteriorating performance. With free registry cleaning utilities such as those listed above, there is no reason why we should have to suffer a poor performing computer when it is so fast and easy to clean the registry. I suggest that you download some of these, and try them. Before you use any registry utility, be sure to backup the registry using the integral features so that the repairs can be reversed if problems occur.

Web Sites

<http://personal.inet.fi/business/toniarts/ecleane.htm> EasyCleaner

<http://www.download.com> Search for "RegClean"

<http://www.eusing.com/free_registry_cleaner/registry_cleaner.htm> Eusing Free Registry Cleaner

<http://www.ccleaner.com> CCleaner

Free Image Utilities for Your Computer

Recently, on one of my forensic e-mail lists was a discussion of a variety of image viewers that can open almost any known image format for viewing, as well as provide basic image editing and enhancement. While some participants extolled the virtues of a several hundred-dollar utility well known for its capabilities, a few others proclaimed the superiority of a hundred-dollar utility. There was a groundswell of opinion in favor of two free utilities that may lack the pizzazz and marketing of the high priced commercial products and some of the less-well used functions, but are quite capable of most image management tasks.

The clear leader in the non-scientific opinion poll was a popular free image utility, IrfanView, <http://www.irfanview.com>. IrfanView is a powerful but free image viewer and editor that can open and edit almost all known image formats. For users of digital cameras and other sources of digital images, IrfanView would be a good choice. Personally, I have used IrfanView for several years as my primary image viewer and editor. It can easily crop and resize digital images, making them more manageable in terms of both image size and file size. With a mouse click or two, images can be sharpened and color corrected. Hue and contrast are controlled by a slider if desired, with side-by-side images showing the unaltered original image adjacent to the corrected image, with the slider clearly showing the impact of any changes prior to saving the revised image. For those who like to indulge in special effects, users of IrfanView will not be disappointed with the selection of special effects included in the "Image—Special Effects" menu. A "color swap" function allows the user to selectively change the colors of objects in the image. Images can also be read and converted into any other format, making it even easier to utilize those images in other products.

I do a lot of scanning using my digital scanner. I scan photos, pages of books and newspapers, receipts, and documents to fax. IrfanView is capable of importing scanned images directly from any "TWAIN" compatible source, with the images being capable of being sharpened, edited, color corrected, and cropped. Once the image is in the form

desired it can be saved or printed. IrfanView also has a copy function, which will effectively make a scanner into a component of a copy machine, where the image can go directly from the scanner to the printer.

IrfanView has many other noteworthy functions, including the ability to make slideshows that can be saved, played, or e-mailed without any special software, as the slideshow may be saved or sent as a self-executing file with integral viewer. I recently took several of the hundreds of photos recently taken overseas by one of my daughters, and created a slideshow for the relatives. The process was quick and simple, and done by selecting the images from a menu, and then deciding on the speed and pace of the show. One more click, and the slideshow was created. This is a surprisingly powerful function for a free program.

In writing these columns I frequently incorporate some images of my computer screen, nominally known as a "screen capture." IrfanView includes a "Capture/Screenshot" utility where once set, a keystroke combination will record the image of the screen. This image is automatically opened in the IrfanView editor for cropping and editing, and can then be saved in any selected format.

IrfanView, while best known for its ability to manipulate images, also offers "plug-ins" for other types of media, in addition to images. The "All Plug-Ins" is a single file, available from the IrfanView Web site, which adds the ability for the program to play almost all video and audio formats, greatly expanding the functionality of IrfanView.

With these features, IrfanView is one of the most popular downloads on the major software sites, including Tucows <http://www.tucows.com>, and Download.Com <http://www.download.com>. As a free product, the user will not likely find a greater value than this most useful program. On my computer, IrfanView is probably one of the five most utilized programs.

The second most widely recommended program in my online forensic discussion was another free image utility, available for download from <http://www.faststone.org>. The premier utility available is FastStone Image Viewer. As described on the FastStone Web site, Image Viewer is "An image browser, converter, and editor that supports all major graphic formats including BMP, JPEG, JPEG 2000, GIF, PNG, PCX, TIFF, WMF, ICO and TGA. It has a nice array of features such as image viewing, management, comparison, red-eye removal, e-mailing, resizing, cropping, color adjustments, musical slideshow and much more." In addition to these functions, the latest versions (versions 2.7 Beta 3 and later), also include a screen capture utility.

I found FastStone Image Viewer a powerful, comprehensive, and easy to use utility, virtually as powerful as its competing products that sell for over a hundred dollars. Several of the major download sites have recognized the quality and features of this fine program earning "5 Stars" from CNET <http://www.download.com>, a perfect score of 5 as a "Softpedia Pick" <http://www.softpedia.com>, and a "Five Star—Excellent" rating from <http://www.snapfiles.com>. For those

concerned about what they receive when downloading this free software, Softpedia had determined that this software is "100% Clean—No Spyware, No Adware, No Viruses."

FastStone has three other free utilities, which are basically a subset of Image Viewer. These include FastStone Capture, a small but capable screen capture utility; FastStone MaxView, a tiny utility that can display all major image formats; and FastStone Photo Resizer, which can convert and resize digital images, as well as rename, crop, rotate, edit, and add text to images.

These FastStone utilities are a valuable adjunct, useful for digital camera owners, and others who use computer images. As free utilities go, these are excellent in quality and features, and would be a useful addition to the software library of computer users.

Excellent quality and highly functional software does not have to be expensive. In fact, it can be free. That is hard to beat.

Web Sites

<http://www.irfanview.com>
<http://www.faststone.org>

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Quality Freeware
By Brian K. Lewis, Ph.D.,
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Sarasota PCUG, Florida
http://www.spcug.org

I found the article in the July Monitor on "Cost Efficient" software by Joseph Moran to be quite interesting, but noticed that much of the software had a price associated with it. So I thought I'd let you in on the absolutely free software I have been using for the past 2–5 years. In every case, I have used it as my standard application for the purpose, and in many cases, totally removed any commercial software that carried out the same function. I have also upgraded the free software when the upgrades became available. All of the software in this article can be obtained without charge by downloading from the various Internet sites I have listed. In every case, there is no "trial" period involved.

The foremost item on my list is OpenOffice. I am currently using version 2.0. This version includes word processing, spreadsheet, drawing, database, and presentation software. All of these applications produce documents that are interchangeable with their equivalents in Microsoft Office. OpenOffice will also export documents in either PDF or HTML format. You don't need any PDF software to produce documents that are readable by Adobe Reader (formerly known as Acrobat Reader). Unfortunately, it cannot open or edit PDF documents. It can open and edit documents in over 25 different formats including HTML, Word Perfect, Word, Adobe PhotoShop, etc. You can obtain your free copy of this software from <http://www.openoffice.org>.

I also recommend Firefox and Thunderbird as free replacements for Internet Explorer and Microsoft's Outlook Express. With the latest versions of Firefox I have not run across any Web sites that it cannot render correctly. That's not to say that some may not exist; I just haven't found them. Firefox will transfer your

favorites (bookmarks) from Internet Explorer. As for Thunderbird, it is similar in many ways to Outlook Express, but it includes an RSS Reader that I have found useful. It also filters junk mail and places it in a special folder where you can review it if needed. Otherwise, it will be automatically deleted at an interval that you can set. It doesn't remove 100% of the spam, but it does detect about 99% of what comes into my computer. One of the latest additions to Thunderbird is anti-phishing protection. Thunderbird warns you if it suspects that the message might be a scam. Thunderbird can import your address book from Outlook Express. Both Firefox and Thunderbird can be downloaded from <http://www.download.com>, or if you prefer, from <http://www.mozilla.com/firefox> and <http://www.mozilla.com/thunderbird>.

As for anti-virus software, you can't beat Avast for ease of use and automatic updating. After downloading and installing the software, it asks you to register. That simply includes giving up your e-mail address, name, and postal address. You receive a license to use the software for a year for personal use. At the end of the year, you re-register and get another year's free use. Avast is free for personal use, but not for businesses or other organizations. However, non-profit organizations can buy Avast at a greatly reduced price. I have used Avast for several years and have installed it on more than 100 other personal computers. In no case, have the users had any problems with this software. In addition, Avast does not sell your e-mail or postal address, so you get no spam from this registration.

Avast quietly updates itself frequently in the background while you continue to work. Then it simply reports that an update has taken place. I have seen days when I have had 3–4 updates in the same day. If you use a dial-up connection instead of cable/DSL, Avast will attempt to update whenever you go on-line. Since the downloads are usually less than 100 KB, they occur rapidly, even on a dial-up connection. The Home edition of Avast can be downloaded from <http://www.avast.com/eng/avast_4_home.html>. I recommend using this site instead of <http://www.download.com>, as your antivirus database will be more current.

For a good, reliable firewall I recommend ZoneAlarm. It is also free for personal use. I admit they will try to sell the Pro version when you install it, but the free version is really all you need. That is, assuming you have antivirus and anti-parasite software installed on your computer. It used to be that dial-up users didn't really have much need for a firewall. However, in today's Internet world, I wouldn't want to connect to the Internet without a good software firewall. While traveling with my laptop, I kept both my antivirus and firewall updated and running for every connection. ZoneAlarm can be downloaded from <http://www.zonealarm.com>. Click on the download link and then the ZoneAlarm tab.

As for anti-parasite software, I have to agree with Mr. Moran. Ad-Aware SE and Spybot S&D are two that I keep on both my computers. But that isn't enough. You have to run them regularly to insure you are not infected. I run mine a minimum of once each

week. Both of these can be downloaded from Download.com. Spybot also has an immunization function that can prevent some parasites from installing themselves on your system. Another immunization application that I use is Spyware Blaster. It makes changes to your registry that prevent parasites from installing. At the present, their database lists more than 5,000 items. Using these three anti-parasite/anti-trojan products will certainly upgrade your security, and they are all free. Spyware Blaster can be downloaded from Download.com or <http://www.javacoolsoftware.com>.

For general photo editing I use Google's Picasa. It is not just a photo organizer. I use it to download photos from my camera and organize them into folders. It can also be used to edit photos, print photos and e-mail them. You can make CDs, add captions, or post photos on Web sites. The advantage of Picasa over other photo software is that it is free. It can be downloaded from Download.com or <http://picasa.google.com>. It does not have all the bells and whistles of applications like Photoshop or ULEAD's PhotoImpact, but it is more than adequate for most nonprofessional purposes.

You may not need screen capture software very often, but when you do, you really need it. I use MWSnap. It allows you to capture an entire screen or part of it. What you capture can be saved to a file, printed, or edited. It may take you a little time to get accustomed to the interface. But you can't damage anything by playing with it. Once you are familiar with all the controls, it really does copy any part of your screen. Again, this is freeware

and can be downloaded from <http://www.mirekw.com/winfreeware/index.html>.

Have you ever considered that you might need an inventory of the items in your home for the purposes of making an insurance claim? Considering that we live in Florida, where there are many electrical storms, to say nothing of hurricanes, damage to your home could occur at any time. Can you list the contents of every room and the value of each item? Well, the Insurance Information Institute provides free software to assist you in making an inventory and a photographic record of the contents of your house. This software is very easy to use and very important to any homeowner. The software also includes typical lists of things in each type of room. You don't have to use these as you can enter anything you have. You can include place of purchase, date and price, if you have that info. Pictures of items or general pictures of a room can also be added. This software can be downloaded from <http://www.knowyourstuff.org>.

There is one more significant software package that I use that is freeware. That is NVu, web-authoring software. Linspire, the company that produces the Linspire Linux software, publishes it. It has a WYSIWYG editor (What You See Is What You Get) as well as direct editing of the HTML language. It includes the tools for publishing the pages to a Web site. You can test the pages against a browser on your computer to ensure that everything works properly. It also allows you to add JavaScript either directly or in a separate file to your pages. There is a complete tutorial for

NVu included on the web that can be downloaded and printed. There is also an NVu users forum, which can be quite helpful. If you have never created a web page before, I think you would find NVu to be just what you need. If you want to see a Web site created with NVu, check out <http://www.sandpiperchorus.org>. NVu can be downloaded from Download.com.

There is one other specialized software package that I have used that some may be interested in trying. This is the Personal Ancestral File (PAF). This is free genealogy recording software provided by the LDS Church (Church of Latter-day Saints). Their Web site also allows users to search on-line files from the family history archives in Salt Lake City. Although I am not currently using PAF, I did use it for a few years before switching to a commercial package. PAF is certainly quite useful for beginning family historians, and it can be expanded by purchasing the PAF Companion. If you are interested in trying PAF, download it from <http://www.familysearch.org>.

Now that you have all this downloaded freeware, you should make backup copies on either a CD or DVD. Well, for that we have another freeware package, CDBurnerXP Pro. This software will burn CD-R, CD-RW, DVD+R/RW, and DVD-R/RW. It will burn and create ISO files. It will burn audio discs from mp3, wav, ogg, and wma files. It will convert (rip) files on audio discs to wav, mp3, ogg, or wma files. It also works with most IDE, USB, Firewire, and SCSI burners. It can be downloaded from Download.com or <http://www.cdburnerxp.se/download.php>. This software does not have a trial period. It is yours for however long you wish to use it. I have been using mine for over two years and have obtained several updates, one of which added the DVD burner capability.

As you can see from this, there is a lot of quality freeware available. If you are interested in finding more, check out the listings at Download.com. Just be cautious, because many of their listings are trial packages only. You are expected to purchase the total package before the end of your trial period. But there are many "nuggets" on their very extensive Web site. So, if you are interested in saving money, try some of these quality freeware items.

Dr. Lewis is 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: <bwsail(at)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.

End of Free Software Section

Discounts On Vehicles

Beth Fordyce reports that she can get SEMCO members an "X" discount on buying and/or leasing Fords, Lincolns, Mercurys, Volvos, Jaguars, and Land Rovers. Call her at 734-453-0349. To get a PIN for you, she will need your full name, the last 4 digits of your Social Security number, and the name of the dealership you wish to use; also, what are you trading in if anything.

A Lot of Assembly Required

**By Karen Rhodes,
Honorary Member of the
Rochester Computer
Society, Inc.**

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My computer died. It was old, in computer terms, and the motherboard had had it. It wasn't much of a task to get my data files off before it completely went west, as I keep most of my data on Zip disks or USB portable drives. But it was time for me to get a new computer.

It isn't my first choice to go to Gateway or Dell or Hewlett-Packard and buy an already-assembled machine. First, I want on my computer only the software I will be using, not some techie-nerd's idea of the latest "in" thing. Second, I don't want to have to go round and round with someone on the other end of a telephone about what components are available. The bottom line is that I want what I want when I want it, and nothing more—or less.

My preference for assembling is made much easier by having someone in-house who is experienced at it—my husband, who is a computer specialist. He does everything; he installs hardware, software, LANs, the whole works. There are some things he doesn't know, but he knows enough to be able to put together a computer—one that works. He's done it before, for himself and for others, on the job and at home.

He did the shopping for me, because I get lost when it comes to putting one part of the computer in concert with another, and knowing what is more likely to work with what. You notice I said "more likely"; there never is a guarantee that it's all going to work once you get it together!

Having done business with Newegg.com <http://www.newegg.com> before, he settled on them. He gave me a list of recommendations. I ordered; the next week, we had all the parts. That next Saturday, after breakfast, the assembly began.

I'll go though the process he used, making what I think are some important points to remember (marked by bullets.)
• Don't always settle for the power supply that comes with your case. I ordered a mid-range case, which came with a 350-watt power supply. Probably not enough for my powerful and large genealogy database program and a lot of multi-tasking that will inevitably accompany its use, and certainly not enough for the motherboard I bought, because I also play games for which I bought a powerful graphics card and a muscular motherboard. And the motherboard I ordered states in its manual that it requires a minimum of 400 watts in the power supply. I bought 550 watts.
• If you do boost the power supply, or you live in a hot climate (both apply to me), buy extra case fans. They're inexpensive, and the extra cooling they provide is crucial to computer health.

The case came with one fan installed. My husband put in the two extra case fans first. Then he put in the power supply (Just PC model JPC-550C-12V). Next, he put onto the motherboard, (EPOX EP-8 NPA), the CPU (AMD Sempron 64 3100+), the memory (Corsair, 1 GB), and the

graphics card (MSI NVidia P317). The sound card—sound chip, really—and the Ethernet card are integrated onto the motherboard.

All during the installation, my husband used his digital camera to take pictures of each component and of the process. In addition, for my own file, I made notes of all the model numbers and serial numbers.

• Document, document, document! You'll be glad you did when a tech support person you're talking to on the phone about your misbehaving computer asks you for the serial number on your hard drive. You'll have the information right in front of you, either in a paper file or in a photograph, and won't have to open up the case and bend yourself into a pretzel to get the serial number off the hard drive!

Meanwhile, back at the installation procedure, when my husband installed the motherboard into the case and tried to hook it up to the power supply, we hit a snag.

• Understand that the connector on one part, which is supposed to connect to another part, may not match up and may need an adapter.

In my case—you'll forgive the pun—the power supply connector was 20-pin and the motherboard's corresponding connector had 24 pins. No panic yet—there was an adapter in with the motherboard. But when my husband tried to hook it up at the power-supply end, the connector wouldn't connect. It was mismanufactured.

• Understand that there are going to be snags and that you just have to accept them when they happen, and come up with solutions. Cussing is optional.

• Understand that nature always sides with the hidden flaw.

We live in a rural area, outside of an unincorporated little town in Florida. The nearest city is Jacksonville, up in the next county. It's quite a ways—especially at these gas prices—to go into the city for our needs. We try to avoid it as much as we can. However, there was not another adapter of the type we needed nearby.

The next day, Sunday, my husband and I made a 60-mile round trip into Jacksonville to CompUSA for another adapter. He had been told on the telephone that morning that they had 20 of the item in stock. Fine. We got there, carrying with us the faulty adapter and the case's original 350-watt power supply as a test bed, since it had the same type of connection. Which leads me to:

• Be prepared. If you need to go to the store to replace a faulty component, take the bad one with you! Don't try to remember what type, brand, number or placement of pins… you never will. And telephone ahead, and make sure you talk to someone who knows what he's talking about, or should!

We looked all over the store, ending up at a rack right beside a help station. A young woman came to the counter. We asked her about the adapter. Her first answer was the wrong one: "We don't have those." I informed her curtly we had been told over the phone they had 20 of that item in stock. She then gave some lame routine about not having been there long and something about some boxes just having come in. She looked to her left, at the rack where we ended up, and said, pointing, "There they are, right there."

• Do not take nonsense from store personnel. Speak plainly and to the point. Go to the next level, if you have to, repeating that subroutine as many times as necessary, until you get satisfaction.

We wanted to open the package and see if the adapter therein would fit the power supply. We didn't mind making one 60-mile round trip, but would have been angry to get the new adapter home and find it also didn't fit! The young woman said we'd have to pay for it first, then take it to Customer Service and talk to them about opening and testing it. Thence we went. Two young men confirmed what we'd been told, then gave us a look that said, "Okay, go away." Not me. I took out my money, plunked it down on the counter, and said, "There's my green." I took the receipt, and then we opened the package, took out the adapter, and tried it. It fit.

• Always ask for what you want. Be firm, even adamant, about it.

I could have ordered another of the adapters from Newegg.com, I'm sure. But there would have been several days' wait, and I wasn't willing to do that when we could find one near and in a short time. The thing only cost $7, and I probably would have paid that much just in shipping!

• Be willing to shell out a little bit more to get what you want when you want it.

Back home, the assembly proceeded: hard drive (Western Digital Caviar RE 160GB), DVD-RW (LiteOn SHW-160P6S), DVD/CD-ROM (LiteOn SOHD-6P9SV), card reader (Arrow Micro AICR-01), and the old 3.5" floppy drive from my old computer. He set it all up with the monitor (Samsung SyncMaster 740N: I had to treat myself to a flat-panel monitor), the keyboard (LiteOn SK-1688U), and the mouse (Radio Shack optical mouse 26-592, which I already had), and tested it.

It all worked!

I had followed all of my husband's recommendations except for one.

• Even if someone who knows more than you makes recommendations, check them out and see what you think.

When making my hardware selections, I had gone online to Newegg.com and read the reviews and specifications for the components my husband had picked out. I agreed with all except one: the keyboard. The keyboard he selected was criticized in user reviews for sticking keys (which was why I had trashed my old keyboard) and for having too short a cord. I need a longer cord in my setup, so I selected another keyboard, which I'm happy with.

We set up the machine at my desk. We looked at the BIOS and set it up the way I wanted it, which didn't involve many changes. Then it was time to install Windows XP professional (SP2). It seemed to go well, by all appearances, but we know how deceptive that can be! And it wasn't long until we found out we'd hit another snag. Somehow the OS had set itself up to think the C: drive was a removable drive which had no disk in it, and it wanted to call the hard drive "local drive I:." That would not have worked with some software which insists it be placed on Drive C:. This snag also caused the persistent appearance of an error message telling me that there wasn't a disk present in C: when I knew there jolly well was.

• Murphy loves operating systems! Whatever can go wrong, will.

Here I will make a long story short: we used a software program my husband has (Darik's Boot and Nuke) to wipe the hard drive and start all over again. It took two more tries installing Windows XP Professional before the stupid software decided to give the drives their proper names.

• Be patient, persistent, and courageous when installing software, especially the operating system. It is going to fail a few times before succeeding, trust me!

The computer works well, all things considered. I am not able to play a couple of my games, for evidently they require Intel rather than AMD chips. I haven't yet, but I'll go to the respective Web sites and see if there are any patches for us orphaned AMD users!

• No matter how well the installation goes, no matter how well the computer is working, there will still be problems. They're inevitable; get used to it or go back to the mid 20th century!

The important thing is that it will run my genealogy software (The Master Genealogist), word processor (OpenOffice.org), e-mail program (Pegasus), and browser (Firefox), and other things vital to me. As well, it will run some of my games, so I'm happy with that.

• Once you get it going—enjoy it!

Karen Rhodes is not a techie, but she does appreciate a well-put-together computer. She's had many careers, some of them quite brief, and is currently studying genealogy through the distance learning facilities of the University of Toronto. She lives in Florida with her husband, her younger daughter, and a calico cat named Tiger.

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.

RSS Explained
By Phil Shapiro,
Member of the
Capital PC User Group,
Virginia Macintosh Users
Group, Washington Apple
Pi, Young Hackers and
Scholars Libre Users
Group
pshapiro@his.com

RSS—really simple syndication—is a laborsaving tool that allows people to tune into information sources that interest them. The information source could be a blog, a podcast, a videocast, or any Web site that includes RSS feeds.

The value of RSS accrues when you subscribe to multiple RSS feeds. You can then monitor multiple information streams with a minimum of effort.

There are many different software tools for subscribing to RSS feeds. One of the most popular is a Web site named Bloglines. Some web browsers let you subscribe to RSS feeds. Safari 2.x and Firefox are two browsers that do. Firefox lets you to subscribe to RSS feeds using something called Live Bookmarks. You can also use a Firefox

extension named Sage to subscribe to RSS feeds.

RSS's primary value is that it brings information to you without your having to visit multiple Web sites. In a knowledge economy, anything that streamlines the flow of information from producer to consumer gives benefit to both producer and consumer. You tune into the information you do want, and tune out the information you don't want.

Some Examples of How RSS Simplifies People's Lives

I asked some technology consultants to explain how RSS brings value to people's lives. Curtis Brown at MissionMovers.org, in Seattle, is a strong believer in RSS. He explains, "RSS has invaded every part of our life, but we just don't know it. RSS is an information delivery method that gives added convenience to both senders and receivers of the information."

As an example, RSS feeds can be used by a nonprofit organization to distribute different kinds of information to different people. One RSS feed could be the organization's calendar of events or classes. Another could be a call for volunteers. A third feed might be information for funders. The more feeds an organization offers, the more narrowly tailored the information delivered to people served by that organization or supporting that organization.

Here are some other examples of RSS feeds. A used car dealer can have an RSS feed that details newly arrived used cars. A public library could have an RSS feed of newly purchased books. A police department can have separate RSS feeds for different neighborhoods, giving up-to-date information on safety concerns in each neighborhood.

Curtis Brown explains that information received in an RSS feed can be filtered by keyword and colorized in text. So, you have control over the RSS feed. You decide the ways in which that stream of information is going to serve your needs.

Curtis explains that RSS feeds become immensely useful when people work collaboratively in a wiki. (A wiki is a web page that different people can edit.) Changes to the web page can be monitored via an RSS feed. This allows anyone participating in the wiki to have a clear idea of who is adding the most value to the wiki. RSS allows for better monitoring and gives added transparency to the collaborative process.

Curtis goes on to explain that there are two kinds of RSS feeds—static feeds and dynamic feeds. A static feed might be sports scores or the feed from a single blog. A dynamic feed is a stream of information where there is searching going on to pull out specific pieces of information to add to the stream.

It's also possible to combine several RSS feeds into a single new feed. One Web site that let's you do that is <http://www.rssmix.com>. Why would you want to do that? Suppose you live in a metropolitan area with several different library systems spanning several counties. Each library system provides an RSS feed of the events happening within their library system. You'd like to keep track of library events in multiple counties. Rssmix.com would let you combine RSS feeds in that way.

Another RSS enthusiast, Bruce Roy, in Sydney, Australia explains,

"I have found the RSS facility in The Next Generation of Genealogy Sitebuilding (TNG) very useful for the family tree site. It enables people interested in following the family tree to get information about changes to the tree without having to check the Web site's, "What's New?" or wade through the data."

One other advantage of RSS is that it lets you tune out mainstream media and tune into alternative media and personal media. If you find the CBS Evening News a touch thin in how it covers the news, with RSS you have an alternative source of news where news stories don't need to be squeezed into 45-second slots.

Another RSS enthusiast, Winthrop Morgan, in the Washington DC-area had this to add: "Regarding your request for examples of how RSS brings benefits into peoples' lives, I highly recommend you consider including Join Together Online as a great Win-Win-Win model.

Join Together Online (JTO) <http://www.jointogether.org> has long been a pioneer in using the Internet to support people working on substance abuse and gun violence issues. Every month, one million JTO web pages are viewed by over 350,000 people.

JTO uses RSS feeds to not only help their web presence spread, but also to provide vital information to support state, municipal, and nonprofit drug treatment and prevention program managers and their audiences. While these programs' web masters might have a modest web presence, they lack the wherewithal to continuously produce new content, or even gather and republish it. Without new content, their audiences lack a reason to come back to their Web site. The JTO RSS service enormously increases both the return visit value of these sites and the presence of authoritative information in this highly charged information space.

To keep the RSS feeds fresh and riveting, JTO employs a small editorial staff who aggregate both online and offline news on substance abuse funding, policies, and more from authoritative sources. They edit this news down to its essential content, and then republish it via RSS, as well as to users of their site and subscribers to their e-mail news services."

RSS Relieves Cluttered E-mail Inboxes

If you have traditionally received a lot of your information via e-mail, RSS can provide some relief to your inbox. Would you like to follow a particular e-mail list, but can't stomach subscribing to one more e-mail list? If that list is on Yahoogroups, you can follow the list via the list's RSS feed. An excellent free tool for reading RSS feeds is Bloglines <http://www.bloglines.com>.

RSS feeds are almost always spam-free. The provider of the RSS feed doesn't want you to unsubscribe from the feed—so they treat you with respect.

Ben Sheldon, in Lowell, Massachusetts, passes along this RSS tip: "Google still only offers e-mail news alerts, but this utility lets you create an RSS feed out of any Google News search term <http://www.justinpfister.com/gnewsfeed.cfm>. I aggregate my name, my projects (DigitalBicycle, ServiceSpeak), and my street and city

so that if something happens I should know about, I will."

If you're still with me, I'll pass along a few small tips of my own. I use RSS, Bloglines, and my Digg.com account to keep track of what Digg stories my friends are digging (i.e. voting for.) I just copy the RSS feed from the bottom left of <http://digg.com/users/pshapiro/friends> and then paste it into Add Feed in Bloglines.

Between Katie Couric and the 50 friends I have on Digg, which do you think provides the richer quality of information to me? Right. Just for kicks I subscribe to the Associated Press RSS feed, so I'm in the loop with whatever Katie knows.

I also use the free service at <http://www.Squeet.com> to send me an e-mail whenever one of my friends submits a story to Digg.com, so they don't have to let me know about their submissions. That e-mail alert capability might well come to Digg sometime.

I use RSS to keep me posted on new items of interest to me that are posted to <http://Del.icio.us>. For example, if anyone submits an item to Del.icio.us with the tag digitalstorytelling, I find out about that really easily in my Bloglines account.

That puts me in touch with anyone doing digital storytelling anywhere on the planet. And I don't even have to subscribe to another e-mail list to be in touch with them. I like that.

Phil Shapiro, the author, is a former president of Virginia Macintosh Users Group and worked as the Washington DC Regional Coordinator for Community Technology Centers' Network, an international network of more than 1000 organizations bringing technology and technology training to underserved communities.

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Choose Your Own "Home Page"
By Ira Wilsiker

I work on a lot of different computers at a variety of locations, and one factor that consistently astounds me is that many people have blissfully ignorantly never changed their startup "home page" from its default. This is the page that first opens when the user connects to the Internet. For example, many Dell computers have the Dell Web site set for the startup page when the user first accesses the Internet, while Windows itself, unless otherwise changed, defaults to Microsoft's MSN home

page, making it one of the most used startup pages. Many Internet service providers (ISP), such as AOL, AT&T, and others changed the users' home page to the ISP's selected home page.

Startup or "home" pages are big business because they are commonly advertiser supported, and the more views (also referred to in the industry as "hits"), the more revenue generated by the host. This on-screen real estate is so valuable that a type of malware or spyware, sometimes known as homepage hijackers, will attempt to change your homepage to its client's home page, for which the miscreant receives compensation for each page so changed.

There are many different services offering home pages, and if the user finds one that he likes, it is very easy to make the selected page the new home page. The process for selecting the default home page is the same for most browsers. Using Microsoft's Internet Explorer (IE), which is still the most widely used browser in the world, the process is simple. If the user visits a Web site that he would like as his homepage, he simply clicks on "Tools" on the menu bar, and then that will open a window where the home page can be selected. If the open page is what is desired, then click on the "Use Current" radio button, and the current page will be displayed each time the browser is loaded. If "Use Default" is selected, the home page will revert back to the Microsoft (or other manufacturer) default start up page. On the new Internet Explorer 7 (Beta), which offers tabbed browsing, a different home or startup page can be selected for each tab. For those who do not want to connect to any page at all when loading the browser, IE7Beta offers the option of a blank page. All versions of IE also allow for the manual entering of any selected Internet address for a home page. To directly go back to the home page at any time, simply click on the little house or "home" icon on the menu bar.

Firefox <http://www.mozilla.com>, one of the most popular browsers behind IE, offers a simple interface to select or change the homepage. Clicking on "Tools" on the menu bar opens a window where "General" can be selected, and then "Home Page." Firefox allows the address to be manually entered, or the current page loaded can be selected. Other options allow for the home page to be selected from a previously saved bookmark (Internet Explorer calls these "Favorites"), or the option for a blank startup page can be selected. Firefox also offers the little house on the menu bar for instant access to the home page.

There are many choices for a home page that is totally up to the user. Some users use their web mail accounts as a home page, first displaying their e-mail when connecting to the Internet, while others may choose retailers, auction sites, employer web pages, search engines (such as Google or Yahoo), newspapers (such as the Examiner at <http://www.theexaminer.com>), or any other page of interest. While any page can be selected as a home page, the most popular home pages selected are usually news and information based pages.

My personal favorite, which I use on all of my computers, is "My Yahoo," at <http://my.yahoo.com>. I have found My Yahoo to be the most

comprehensive and flexible home page. Being an information junkie, I have customized my My Yahoo page to include stock and mutual fund listings, news from dozens of sources, weather, lottery results, sports scores, my personal calendar, latest e-mails received, TV listings, and other information. My Yahoo, which is very easy to configure, directly offers thousands of choices. Many information resources, such as the Examiner, are now using "RSS" or "XML" feeds as a news source, and these can be added to My Yahoo, often with a single mouse click. My Yahoo is also customizable with hundreds of backgrounds, color schemes, layouts, or other features to personalize it.

Microsoft is currently testing a new homepage intended to at first supplement its flagship homepage at <http://www.msn.com>, and maybe later replace it. This new homepage, currently in beta testing, is currently online at <http://www.live.com>. It will be a strong competitor to My Yahoo, offering news, sports, weather, e-mail, and other resources in columns that are infinitely customizable.

There are countless other "My" homepages available, such as AOL's <http://my.netscape.com>, and other personalized home pages, including Google's "Personalized Home" link sitting quietly on the top right corner of the popular <http://www.google.com> Web site. All of these home pages can be easily customized to suit individual needs.

There is no need to continue to use the default startup or home page provided by your operating system or ISP. Investigate some of the alternatives, and increase your enjoyment of the web. [*Consider making http://www.semco.org your home page.* —Ed.]

Web Sites
   <http://my.yahoo.com>
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Ira Wilsker is an APCUG Director; Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont TX; and a radio & TV show host. Contact him at <iwilsker@apcug.net>.

Discounts From the Southwest User Group Conference 2006

The following discount offers were received via APCUG. The vendors have said that the offers are good for all user group members. Some of these offers have an expiration date, but most are ongoing. —Ed.

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A Letter From Former Editor Bill Agnew

Hi Everybody!

Here's a message from New Mexico, where I still read the DATA BUS and think of all my friends at SEMCO.

My Corrales condo looks out over the valley to Sandia Mountain. The east wall of my bedroom is a bay with five windows (a great view.)

At 2:21 a.m. Sunday, August 6, I was half asleep listening to the New Mexico thunderstorm outside and counting the seconds between lightning flashes and the thunder (five seconds is one mile of distance.) Suddenly there was a huge crack that shook the house, and a ball of lightning appeared in the bedroom. It was about 2 feet in diameter and 4 feet off the floor about 3 feet past the end of my bed. It was gone in a flash. I looked at the bedside clock, and it said 2:21. I thought, "Well, I can tell anyone when it happened." Then, in about 10-15 seconds the ceiling fan, clock, and night-lights went out. I smelled a very strong odor of ozone for 10 minutes or so. I'm used to the power going off in Michigan, and there's nothing to be done about it till morning, so I went back to sleep.

In the morning, I discovered that most of the rest of the house still had power, but everything in the bedroom was off. I had unplugged all the computer equipment before the storm. (I hope you do that too.) I plugged the small TV set in the bedroom into an outlet in the dining room, and smoke poured out of it; it was done for. Then I discovered that the refrigerator, toaster, and the coffee pot in the kitchen were off, but nothing else there. It suddenly occurred to me that I should check the circuit breakers outside. I did and found 4 breakers tripped.

I reset all the breakers, but one wouldn't stay reset. Then everything in the house worked except the bedroom. I unplugged everything in the bedroom, and the breaker stayed reset, so then I plugged in the things in the bedroom one at a time. I learned that the pump motor on the air mattress sparked when I plugged it in and tripped the circuit breaker; so, it was burned out also.

Now everything is back in order except for the TV and the air mattress pump. I have read about "ball lightning" before, and looked up a lot about it on Google. It is a real phenomenon, and there is a mass of anecdotal stories about it, but scientists only have vague theories about its nature. From the anecdotes it seems most people see balls of lightning that slowly float around before extinguishing, and often there is no sound noticed. Mine lasted only as long as a normal lightning strike and had a huge crash. (Many neighbors around me heard it also.)

I think I must be very lucky. I felt absolutely nothing. A neighbor said I ought to be OK for the rest of my life now. I, of course, attribute it to a lack of vices (I've never been a vice president, a vice admiral, or even a vice chairman.)

<div align="right">Bill</div>

BOARD MEETING
09/10/2006
Carol Sanzi

Board Members Present
President Gary DeNise, Vice President Richard Jackson, Treasurer Bette Gay, Secretary Carol Sanzi, SIG-Advanced Chairman Franz Breidenich, SIG-IBM Co-Chairmen Tom Callow and Warner Mach, SIG-IBM Intermediate Chairman Carl Massie, Jr., and Member-at-Large Bob Clyne. Also present were Chuck Moery, Bill Landrum and Mike Bader. The meeting was called to order at 12:05 p.m.

Old Business
Bette Gay reported that there is $7,327.08 in the treasury. The membership stands at 81.

It is time for Wendell Anderson, Jack and Claire Baum, Robert Clyne, Richard W. Dzick, Bette Gay, and Zalmen H. Wexler to renew their memberships.

Bob Clyne moved to reimburse Bette Gay $54.49 for membership cards and postage stamps. Tom Callow seconded the motion, and it was carried. Bob Clyne moved to reimburse Warner Mach $12.30 for refreshments. Tom Callow seconded the motion, and it was carried. Bob Clyne moved to reimburse Gary DeNise $3.18 for refreshments. Tom Callow seconded the motion, and it was carried.

New Business
Richard Jackson offered to contact former members. He will question them about how SEMCO could have served them better.

Bob Clyne resigned as chairman and member and Internet committee. Mike Bader agreed to take on this position. Tom Callow moved to appoint Mike Bader to become a member and committee chairman of the Internet committee. Carl Massie, Jr. seconded the motion, and it was carried.

Richard Jackson is seeking more volunteers to become active on the Internet committee. He would like to meet and discuss updating material on the SEMCO Web site.

Tom McNorton has resigned as editor of the SEMCO DATA BUS. Bob Clyne agreed to publish the October edition. Hopefully someone will step up to the position. There was a discussion about reviewing software that may make the editor's job easier. No action was taken.

Bob Clyne moved to adjourn. Tom Callow seconded the motion, and it was carried. The meeting adjourned at 12:40 p.m.

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applications, your computer is also silently operating a vast number of tasks in the background and behind the scenes. These "invisible" tasks or processes often reduce the processing power of your computer consuming large amounts of memory. Booting time becomes longer and performance degrades to the point where your computer becomes extremely sluggish. Other background processes pose a direct security threat that will disrupt or cause critical damage to your system. Reports show that these harmful background processes, like spyware, viruses, and worms, infect 90% of computers with an Internet connection.

MSRP $49.95—Special Price $29.97

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS (SIGS)

SIG-IBM
Tom Callow
Warner Mach

October 8: Virtual Machine Software: SIG-IBM Co-Chairman Tom Callow will demonstrate how to run different operating systems under Microsoft's free Virtual PC software and compare Virtual PC to VMware's Workstation.

SIG-ADVANCED
Franz Breidenich

November 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.**

SIG-IBM INTERMEDIATE
Carl Massie, Jr.

October 8: SIG-IBM Intermediate Chairman Carl Massie, Jr., presents:
1. Ping by Network Function Name
2. Dell vs. HP Online Core 2 Laptops
3. Importance of Dot NET
4. XP Minor Repairs
   • Errors that aren't errors
   • What System Restore won't do
   • Minor registry corruption
5. XP Corrupt Registry Prevents Boot
   • What to do before it happens
   • What to do after it happens

NOVICE-IBM GROUP
Rotating Volunteer Hosts

October 8: Help A Q& A:
 Discussion directed by the audience.

Needed—Newsletter Editor

Tom McNorton has resigned as DATA BUS Editor, and we are in need of a replacement. The DATA BUS is done in Adobe PageMaker, but we are seriously considering switching to Adobe InDesign, and if you become Editor you will have input in that decision. SEMCO will furnish the software.

You can expect to spend 18–24 hours a month on the DATA BUS once you learn the process, and I will help you with that.

If you are willing to be Editor, contact me or any of the other Board members.

Bob Clyne
Associate Editor

November 2006 DATA BUS DEADLINE (7th day after meeting)
SEMCO Input and Members' Ads — Deadline: Sun., October 15, 11:59 p.m.
Members' personal ads are free. To mail, use Editor address on Page 2; e-mail address: <clyne@lodden.com>. PLEASE send to arrive sooner than deadline.
Business Ads - Deadline: Second Friday monthly. Contact the Editor (address Page 2).

Bob Clyne
clyne@lodden.com
(to post monthly computer group info)

**CALENDAR-OF-EVENTS
OTHER GROUPS**

COMP (Computer Operators of Marysville & Port Huron)
October 4, 7pm (1st Wednesday); St. Clair County RESA, 499 Range Rd., Marysville, Admin. Building. Jane Wheatly 810-982-1187<http://www.bwcomp.org>.

DCOM Computer Club
October 13, 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.

FACE (Flint Area Computer Enthusiasts)
October 10, 6:30pm (2nd Tuesday); Kettering Univ. Academic Bldg. Rm I-817 (enter Security Door, back of bldg by parking lot). <http://www.gfn.org/FACE/>.

MacGroup- Detroit
October 15, 2:15pm–5pm (3rd Sunday): Birmingham Temple, 28611 W. 12 Mile Rd., Farmington Hills. Info: Terry White, <terry@macgroup.org> or 313-571-9817. <http://www.macgroup.org>.Topic: Scott Kelby Photoshop Guru and best selling technology author.

MacTechnics, (MAC User Group)
October 21, 11:00am (3rd Saturday); (SIGs at 9:30); Ann Arbor Open School, 920 Miller Ave., Ann Arbor. <http://www.mactechnics.org>). Cassie at <cassiemac@yahoo.com> or 313-971-8743.

MDLUG (Metro Detroit Linux User Group)
October 14, 12:30–2:30pm, (2nd Saturday); MDLUG meetings will be at The Gaudior Academy located at 27100 Avondale Avenue in Inkster. Web: <http://www.mdlug.org>. Info: Raymond McLaughlin 248-960-1864.

Michigan Apple Computer User Group
October 12, 7:30 pm (2nd Thur.); General meeting; Fraternal 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
Every Fri., 10:15am at Oak Park Recreation Bldg, Oak Park Blvd. west of Coolidge.

SHCC (Sterling Heights Computer Club)
October 3, 7:30pm, (1st Tuesday); Macomb Community College South Campus, Bldg. K, 14500 E. 12 Mile Rd. Don VanSyckel <Don@VanSyckel.net>, 586-731-9232; Web: <http:/www.SterlingHeightsComputerClub.org>. Topic: Internet Safety.

Wayne State University Mac User Group
October 14, 10:00am–Noon, (2nd Saturday); at Mich.com, 21042 Laurelwood, Farmington. Information: Lorn/JoAnn Olsen 248/478-4300 or Denny MeLampy 248-477-0190.

<https://www.digitalriver.com/dr/v2/ec_MAIN.Entry11?SP=10034&PN=0&xid=49826&trackingid=view-quickbuy>

Registry Booster, How Does It Work?
Residual files, unused and undeleted drivers, and corrupt or bad entries in registry settings will quickly litter even the newest of computers. The result? Frequent error messages, slow start-ups, declining and poor performance, and registry integrity, unstable and frequent application errors and crashes, and, at times, even an inability to start Windows.

MSRP $29.95—Special Price $19.95

<https://www.regnow.com/softsell/nph-softsell.cgi?item=7042-25&ss_short_order=true&affiliate=50206&styleid=6964&ss_coupon=UNIB-NOBD>

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Generous discounts on all products
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September REFRESHMENT DONORS
Warner Mach, Coordinator
Gary DeNise
Betty MacKenzie
Roland Maki
Carol 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
AutoCAD: Comptois
Genealogy: Cook
IBM PC Hardware Issues: Clyne, Yuhasz
Operating Systems: Callow, Clyne, Yuhasz
MAC Hardware and OS Issues: Yuhasz
Security: Bader

**MS Office for Windows:** Callow
MS Word: Clyne
Networking: Callow
Novell Netware: Yuhasz
Quicken: Clyne
Geocaching: Cook

Bader, Mike—586-573-7330, 9am–8pm .... mdbader@flash.net
Callow, Tom—248-642-5770 9am–5pm .... tcallow@monaghanpc.com
Clyne, Bob—810-387-3101, 9am–10pm .... clyne@lodden.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
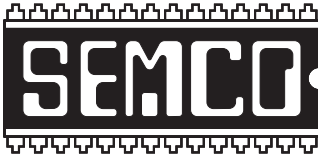
**SOUTHEASTERN MICHIGAN
COMPUTER ORGANIZATION, INC.**

SEMCO CALENDAR—October/November
ArvinMeritor Building
2135 West Maple Road
Troy, Michigan

October 8–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: Virtual Machine Software:** SIG-IBM Co-Chairman Tom Callow will demonstrate how to run different operating systems under Microsoft's free Virtual PC software and compare Virtual PC to VMware's Workstation.

SOCIAL PERIOD 3:15 pm**.** Refreshments! (Reminder: We must continue to 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: Ping by Network Function Name, Dell vs. HP Online Core 2 Laptops, Importance of Dot NET, XP Minor Repairs, XP Corrupt Registry Prevents Boot.** SIG-Intermediate Chairman, Carl Massie Jr., will discuss these topics.

SIG-ADVANCED , **November 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.**

November 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, MI 48084

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 Maplelawn Dr. Turn right into the parking lot at the rear of the ArvinMeritor building. The building is shaped like an X. Enter the building thru the South 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)
October 8
November 12

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