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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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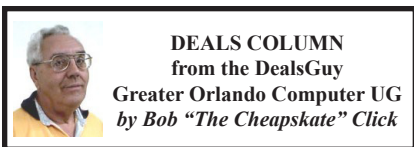
A Great Trade Show

We recently worked the National Association of Builders show and it was very large with over four million pounds of freight just to build the booths, and 105,000 attendees. Six large two-story modular homes were assembled in the parking lot for display, one worth over a million dollars, and many booths in the exhibit hall had a second floor. However, something very impressive to me was the Kohler booth. There was a stage for their selling activities and the background for it was a waterfall about 20 feet high and the same wide, but like no other waterfall you have ever seen. Yes, the water was tumbling down in variations, but it did other things. All of a sudden the water would stop its normal waterfall display, and the individual letters for KOHLER would drop formed with water, one at a time, then the entire name would fall, followed by other messages, all spelled out with well formed letters made with falling water. Many other patterns were also formed by the falling water. I watched it for about ten minutes and it never repeated the entire same pattern of messages during that time. It was a highlight of the show and I'm sure that display cost Kohler many bucks. I wish I had asked to see the control room.

Feedback!

Thanks for the comments that I received on the side effects of medication. Not many responded, but the comments were interesting and so far, the respondents agreed with me, but I would also be interested in other opinions. Perhaps I should start a blog about all this.

A Little Fun In The Sun

My wife and I decided to introduce our son and his wife to cruising during their stay at our beach condo, and while we did not want to take another Carnival cruise after our last experience, the spring break season gave no opportunity for deals. We finally settled on a Carnival 4 night cruise to Cozumel only because Carnival offered us the best price. We felt that since our son and his wife have never cruised they wouldn't know a good one from a bad one, but we ended up being pleasantly surprised at how good the Inspiration (Carnival's ship) turned out to be. The food was excellent, the shows were fantastic, and all in all, it was a great trip. As expected, it was a much younger crowd, including a lot of spring breakers, but we tried to stay clear of them the best we could, and had a good time. Shopping was fun in Cozumel. That ship did things much better than the Carnival Miracle we previously cruised on. Since the Inspiration was an older ship, there were a few things that needed improvement, but it will be going into dry-dock in September for some refurbishing and hopefully they will improve some of them. However, the shortcomings were nothing serious.

Here is an announcement, but remember I have not tried this or any of the others, and since I have edited to shorten them, be sure to check it out thoroughly on their Web site.

Remote Desktop Monitoring is Here, But Think of it as a Spy!

You can monitor the activity of all the PCs in your classroom remotely. Plus, you can share your screen with your students' PCs, making demos and

presentations much easier. Classroom Spy Professional from EduIQ.com <http://www.EduIQ.com> enables remote interaction between the user on the administrator's computer and users of individual computers, even over LAN, WLAN, VPN and the Internet. Once installed and configured, the program lets you see what's taking place on the screens of remote machines and, if needed, take full control over the mouse and keyboard of any machine. There is also an ability to show your own screen to remote users and execute some administrative operations. The program encrypts screen data as well as mouse and keyboard input.

Because the program can run as a service on Vista, the login page and User Account Control (UAC) prompt are accessible. There is a live picture of the remote computer screens. Due to some optimization, the live screen doesn't use a high bandwidth, but even when the lower network bandwidth is required, the refresh interval can be extended using one mouse click. The activities of any student can be recorded for further analysis and assessment. The teacher can use the existing computer infrastructure to deliver a presentation directly to the screens of remote users.

It's also possible to execute various administrative commands, for example, log off users, turn off, restart, hibernate, or suspend one or all remote computers at once with a single mouse click. There is also an ability to schedule recording of remote computers desktops, and record remote activities, even when there is nobody monitoring the administrator's computer. The capabilities of Classroom Spy Professional can effectively be used not only in a classroom but also in offices.

Classroom Spy Professional 2.4.2 runs under Windows 98, Me, NT4, 2000, XP, 2003 and Vista, and costs $49.95 (US) for a three-computer license. User Group members are offered a 15% discount at <http://www.ClassroomSpy.com> using the coupon code PRUG788243. For other types of licenses, please refer to <http://www.ClassroomSpy.com/classroomspy_pro.htm>. Licensed customers are entitled to free technical support by e-mail. Additional information on the product, as well as a free 30-day evaluation copy is available from the Web site.

Direct download link: <http://www.ClassroomSpy.com/dwn/classroomspypro.exe> (3.6 Mb).

A Bonanza of Goodies

Paul Witheridge from the Sarnia Computer Users Group in Sarnia, Ontario, sent me some items that my readers might be interested in. I'll list them, but be aware that some may already be expired by the looks of the coupon codes. I'm sorry that I didn't have room last month. I'm making them short so I can fit them all in. It's always good to have a friend with a sharp eye.

Acrobat is an expensive product and now they have their product activation which many resent. Here is a deal on another PDF product. How about a $20 discount on Nuance PDF Converter Professional 4! Coupon code PDF$20OFF; <http://www.digitalriver.com/dr/v2/ec_MAIN.Entry17c?CID=0&PN=5&SP=10007&SID=_19198&PID=855990&ClickID=dwkrzzowcsmxhoybzkkkt2wmmk0mksc2txw&CUR=840&DSP=&PGRP=0&ABCODE=&CACHE_ID=0>.

DealsGuy note: I read a negative review of PDF Converter in the December issue of SouthEastern

Michigan Computer Organization's DATA BUS. <http://www.semco.org>.

10% off any purchase at the CA store. Coupon code DecAFFOFF10; <http://store.digitalriver.com/servlet/ControllerServlet?Action=DisplayHomePage&SiteID=caconsum&Locale=en_US&Env=BASE&ClickID=bdesuukdflyvqkgnueeezmdyye1yelfmzne>.

$10 discount on CA Internet Security Suite 2007. Coupon code DecAFF10ISS; <http://www.digitalriver.com/affiliate/areview/ca/lp/iss.html>.

$10 discount on CA Anti-Spam 2007. Coupon code AFFAS07; <http://www.digitalriver.com/affiliate/areview/ca/lp/anti-spam.html>.

$20 discount on CA PC MacLAN. Coupon code AFFML07; <http://shop.ca.com/file_sharing/pc_mac_network.aspx>.

$10 discount on CA Personal Firewall 2007. Coupon code AFFFW2007; <http://www.digitalriver.com/affiliate/areview/ca/lp/firewall.html>.

$10 discount on Allume Anonymous Surfing Platinum. Coupon code 285678; **<http://www.digitalriver.com/dr/v2/ec_MAIN.Entry17c?CID=280604&PN=5&SP=10007&SID=1839&PID=873873&ClickID=cqai77lqpxskzlne7aaa4vqssawsaxpv4ei&CUR=840&DSP=&PGRP=0&ABCODE=&CACHE_ID=280604>.**

$5 discount on Allume Bass Screen Saver. Coupon code 266358; <http://www.digitalriver.com/dr/v2/ec_MAIN.Entry17c?CID=0&PN=5&SP=10007&SID=1839&PID=840116&ClickID=cqai77lqpxskzlne7aaa4vqssawsaxpv4ei&CUR=840&DSP=&PGRP=0&ABCODE=&CACHE_ID=280604>.

$10 discount on Allume Morpheus Photo Animation Suite; <http://www.digitalriver.com/dr/v2/ec_Main.Entry17c?SID=1839&SP=10023&CID=279570&PID=863664&PN=1&V1=863664&CUR=840&DSP=&PGRP=0&ABCODE=&CACHE_ID=2795700000280604>.

20% off Laughingbird Web Graphics Creator. Coupon code Holiday20%off; <http://www.webgraphicscreator.com/>.

20% off Laughingbird Logo Creator. Coupon code Holiday20%off; <http://www.thelogocreator.com/Corporate_logos.htm>.

10% off Roxio Easy Media Creator 9 Suite. Coupon code SAVE10C9; <http://www.roxio.com/enu/products/creator/suite/overview.html>.

$10 discount Roxio Popcorn 2 (DVD copier). Coupon code P2SAVE10; <http://go.lockergnome.com/657>. <http://www.roxio.com/enu/products/popcorn/standard/overview.html>.

20% off ACDsee 9. Coupon code AFFACD9; <http://www.acdsee.com/products/acdsee/index>.

20% off ACDsee Photo Editor. Coupon code AFFPHOTO; <http://www.acdsee.com/products/photoeditor/index>.

25% off ACDSee Pro Photo Manager. Coupon code AFFPRO25; <http://www.acdoffers.com/en/na/acdseepro/index.htm>.

$400 discount TurboCAD Deluxe v12.2 Upgrade; <http://www.turbocad.com/prodinfo.asp?t=1&mcid=382> (DealsGuy note: There is a problem with the stated discount, which doesn't make sense, so you should check on where the mistake is.).

20% off Net Nanny products. Coupon code 270355; <http://www.netnanny.com/>.

$5 savings on Big Hammer Patio Designer; <http://www.

bighammersoftware.com/affiliates/patio.aspx>.

$5 savings on Big Hammer Deck Designer; <http://www.bighammersoftware.com/affiliates/deck.aspx>.

$10 savings on Big Hammer Garage and Shed Designer bundle; <http://www.bighammersoftware.com/affiliates/garage_shed_bundle.aspx>.

10% off on Rising Antivirus. Coupon code ONDISCOUNT10; <http://go.lockergnome.com/666>. <http://www.rising-global.com/CategoryDetail.aspx?MenuId=1&CategoryId=3>.

10% off on Markzware (Tools for Printing). Coupon code PILOT10; <http://www.markzware.com/store_usa/>.

20% off RadarSync System Checkup. Coupon code RadarSync2in1-11; <http://go.lockergnome.com/668>. <http://www.radarsync.com/>.

That's it for this month. I'll soon have some new product announcements on my Web site. 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>.

Computer History
1972: Brian Kernighan and Dennis Richie develop the C programming language.

Plustek M12 Scanner Review
By Franz Breidenich

The Plustek OpticSlim M12 Corporate Scanner is a portable color scanner that is powered by its USB 2.0 connection. This is a lightweight sheet fed page scanner that will scan documents up to 8.5" x 14". The unit weighs 0.75 lb., and is 1.85 in. long by 10.8 in. wide by 1.33 in. high. It consumes 1.2 W in the idle state and 2.2 W during scanning. This unit is a sheet feed scanner that you must feed one sheet at a time.

The OpticSlim M12 Corporate package includes the scanner, a 5 ft. USB cable, a CD with software and manuals, a bag to carry the scanner, a desktop stand, and a wall mount. Also included are a Quick Guide in five different languages, a calibration sheet, and sensor cleaning paper. The bundled software includes Plustek DigiScan software, Readiris Pro 10 OCR (Optical Character Recognition) software, Presto PageManger 6 document management software, and Presto ImageFolio 4 image-processing software.

My first step was to install the Plustek hardware and the included DigiScan software. The scanner did not want to work at first with my HP Pavilion laptop, I moved the USB cable to different ports and removed the USB mouse and it started working. Afterward I was able to plug the mouse back in and use any of the three USB ports, and the scanner continued working without problems. In fact, it has now been two weeks unplugging and plugging in the scanner and the mouse with no problems. The cause of the original problem is unknown.

The scanner has two buttons on it (a SCAN Button and a Custom Button) that are programmable. I was able to program these buttons by double-clicking the DigiScan icon in the Windows system tray. The SCAN Button when pressed will scan the sheet and save the image as a jpg file in the PageManager folder. The Custom Button will scan sheets, using the multi-page option and save them as one PDF file in the PageManager folder. With the SCAN button programmed with the copy option, it will scan the document, process it, and send it to your printer.

The scanner is very particular about the paper you feed it. If the paper has been folded or wrinkled, you will have problems, if a corner has been folded over and then straightened the sheet still may not feed properly. I found that paper heavier then 20 lb. paper seems to work better then the 20 lb. paper. This is the only hardware problem I ran into after I got past my initial USB port problems.

Bundled with the scanner was Readiris PRO 10 Corporate Edition OCR software. This is a full-fledged do everything OCR software package. I tried working with this software but it has a steep learning curve and a 164-page manual in PDF format that I have not printed. I was able to do some simple word recognition but I was having problems with formatted documents keeping the format of the text so it could be used in a recognizable way. The character recognition itself was quite good though. It does business card recognition and puts the information on the card into an address database. The program creates PDF, HTML, Word and Excel files. It can also convert PDF files into text. It will handle any multi-page documents with no limit on size. This software has many features to be explored.

Also, bundled was Presto! PageManager 6, document management software. I used this software to manage all the files I created while testing the OpticSlim M12 scanner on my laptop. This software made a thumbnail image of every document that I had scanned. If it was a multi-page document, it would show an image of the first page. The software is also able to combine images into a slide show. Several of the functions that this software performs are the same functions that Readiris software does, including OCR of images and PDF creation. In the limited time that I have used PageManager, it has helped me organize my images and files that I have scanned.

Finally, we have Presto! ImageFolio 4, a complete image processing program. This program allows you to enhance, make changes or even create new images. You can add text to an image, add an object to an image or even merge several images into one image. Here again, I have limited experience using this program, but I was able to remove some text from one image and was able to add text to another image. Using the drawing tools I was able to make other changes to my images.

The Plustek OpticSlim M12 Corporate scanner is a sheet feed scanner that seems to do the job it was designed for. It is a low power tool that works from the USB port of a laptop computer, scanning a sheet of paper at a time. Even when the laptop was running on its battery, the scanner did not affect the laptop's battery life by very much. This scanner will not replace the functions of a flatbed or multi-page desktop scanner,

but it should be a great asset when away from the office or for occasional use on a crowded office desk.

This scanner is available from several vendors on the Web starting at about $240. There are two other versions of this scanner, the OpticSlim M12 at about $121 and the OpticSlim M12 Plus at about $140. The only difference is the software that comes with the scanners. Plustek says that Readiris PRO 10 Corporate OCR software is a $399 item, but this most important software is only bundled with the OpticSlim M12 Corporate version of the scanner, while lesser software bundles come with the less expensive versions of the scanner. It might be noted, however, that Readiris Pro 11 Corporate Edition is now out.

Giveaway of the Day
By Ira Wilsker

I am somewhat of a software junkie. I like to try new software titles. Software is distributed in a variety of ways, including freeware, demoware, shareware, and commercially. Freeware is software published and released where no payment is necessary, and there are many excellent freeware titles; some commercial companies give away old versions of their software, or offer "SE" (Special Edition), "LE" (Limited Edition), or advertising supported free software. Demoware, also referred to as "trialware" is typically commercial (pay) software that is either crippled and may lack full functionality, but there are also fully functional but time limited (typically 14 to 30 days) trial programs. Shareware is usually fully functional software that can be freely exchanged or "shared," and often has an

honor based system which asks the user to register and pay for the software after a trial period. Commercial software is software that is sold, and a paid license is required in order to legally use it. All of the above genres fulfill an appropriate need, and have their respective place in personal computing.

There are many sources of downloadable software. The traditional download resources are richly endowed with a wide variety of freeware, shareware and trialware. Many commercial companies offer software downloads to licensed users, or after paying a registration fee. There are, of course, a multitude of illicit websites where pirated and illegal copies of software can be downloaded and used by software thieves. There is also a pair of websites where fully licensed commercial software can be legally downloaded for free; these websites are components of <http://www.giveawayoftheday.com>.

I first heard of giveawayoftheday.com on one of my cyber security e-mail lists where someone asked about its legality, and a respondent commented that it was indeed real and legitimate. Giveawayoftheday.com does indeed give away a fully licensed copy of "software of the day" to anyone who wishes to download it, but there are some strings attached. First, each title is only available for free download for a single day (unless extended by the publisher), and must be installed that same day, by the deadline displayed on a real-time clock displayed on the website. Second, while the software is a fully licensed and legitimate copy, it is provided on an "as is" basis without any warranties. Since no revenue is generated by the user for the original

publisher, there is no free technical support, no promise to upgrade to future versions for free, and the software can only be used for non-commercial purposes. A statement and logo on the giveawayoftheday website claims that the software is 100% free of spyware and adware.

In recent days, as I type this, the commercial software that has been offered for free included utilities, screen savers, graphics programs, audio and video (CD and DVD) editing and burning utilities, backup utilities, and a variety of other types. According to the giveaway website, the service is intended to acquaint users with lesser known commercial products with the hope that the user will utilize the software, and eventually pay for upgrades.

The mechanics of the website are simple. During the "day," the user simply downloads and installs the software. The downloaded files are in the zip (compressed) format, which can be opened (uncompressed) natively by Windows XP, or by using any one of the many unzip utilities. In the downloaded file is an "activate" utility which goes online during the activation and licensing process, verifies that the date and time of activation is within the required "day," and allows for the full function of the software. For those who need instructions on installing and activating the software, a text file is also included in the download with easy to follow instructions. It should be noted that the activated and registered software may indicate that it is licensed to "Give away of the day" and not to the individual user; this is explained on the website with the statement, "We

will pay the software publisher for the Giveaway license."

Many of us are also gamers, and enjoy playing the latest in computer games. Giveawayoftheday.com recently added a companion site, <http://game.giveawayoftheday.com>, where a similar procedure is followed, but the daily download is a game, rather than a utility. Recent commercial games distributed by "game" include racing games, puzzles, sci-fi shooters, children's games, logic games, and several others.

On a daily basis, shortly after booting my computer and going online, one of the first places I visit is giveawayoftheday.com to see what is available "today." For those who use RSS news utilities, such as My Yahoo and others, the daily listings are distributed by an RSS feed which can be easily added to the news page, making it very easy to see what is available without going directly to the website. Before actually downloading the software of interest, I peruse the online reviews and comments, which are prominently displayed on the website. Using a "thumbs up—thumbs down" rating system, it is easy to see what others who have already downloaded the software, have to say about it. If there is a predominately positive rating then I may consider downloading the program after reviewing the comments. Sometimes, however, the "thumbs down" are a significant percentage, including in a few recent cases where the negatives were a majority of the ratings; when this occurs I still may read the reviews, but am reluctant to download the software.

I have downloaded and installed a few gems from giveawayoftheday.

com, and a few programs that I did not find helpful, which I subsequently uninstalled. At least since I downloaded the software for free, I suffered no financial loss when I decided not to use the software.

WEBSITES:

<http://www.giveawayoftheday.com> —Software

<http://game.giveawayoftheday.com> —Games

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Diskeeper 2007 Pro Primer
By Verne Perry

First off, I'm not very impressed by the recent release of Windows Vista, primarily because I vainly hoped that with this Windows version, Microsoft would finally solve its file system problems. It didn't. So on my Windows machines I'll continue to have to worry about the eventual sluggishness that results from the file fragmentation that occurs just with use of the machine. Between home and the office I maintain 8 XP machines, and one Windows 98 machine, that acts as a server, and to keep all of these machines running smoothly I spend a lot of time routinely defragging them. I found long ago that using Windows Defragger was an extremely slow process, and over the years developed a maintenance routine which involved using windows checkdisk to check the disks on boot-up

along with using a freeware program called SpeeDefrag 4.1, which would then defrag the disks prior to any drivers or startup programs being loaded. But the process is not automatic, and often my procrastination in actually starting the process resulted in the machine getting so fragmented that there was a noticeable performance drag. So I was happy to receive a copy of Diskeeper 2007 Pro Premiere to evaluate.

The Diskeeper promotional materials said that this version introduced a major new feature called "InvisiTasking," a proprietary feature that transparently runs in the background and that this "on the fly" defragmentation used "very close to zero" resources and was invisible. Indeed, InvisiTasking was described as being the "essence" of the product. Moreover, Diskeeper's older "I-FAAST" (Intelligent File Access Acceleration Sequencing Technology) file system performance technology which is designed to benchmark hard disk volumes for their performance characteristics and continually monitor them to determine which files are requested most often, was integrated with the operation of the "InvisiTasking" product. For safety, Diskeeper 2007 moves a file only when it is absolutely certain that no data will be lost using a "Movefile" application programing interface (API) jointly developed with Microsoft. Although manual defragmentation with Diskeeper is still possible, it is not the way the product is now intended to be used.

I decided to test Diskeeper on my home XP machine, because it's the one that has the highest rate of fragmentation, due to my frequent installation and uninstallation of various test programs. That machine also has a

Linux partition which I wanted to use as a "curve ball" thrown into my testing. Other than the "curve ball" Linux partition, the machine's other hard disk partitions were formatted in NTFS, for which "InvisiTasking" and "I-FAAST" technologies were optimally designed.

The first thing that Diskeeper did when I installed it was to analyze all of the Windows hard disk volumes. I was pleased that it skipped the "curve ball" Linux volume, since I wouldn't want Diskeeper dealing with that volume anyway. It also reported that my C:\ drive was heavily fragmented, which I expected. However, I was surprised that the analysis included a report generated by the FRAGSHIELD feature of the program, advising that the drive's Master File Table (MFT) was using 86% of the total MFT size and was likely to become fragmented. Despite having previously tested a fair number of defragmentation programs (both commercial and freeware) I had never before seen such a test or option to optimize the MFT. Windows XP initially establishes the size of the MFT, but as more files are placed on the disk the MFT may fill up, and when XP increases the size of the MFT to accommodate the needed additional indexing, the increase usually results in a fragmented MFT. Because the MFT is an index of all the files on the disks (working in much the same way that phone book stores phone numbers), a fragmented MFT will cause a disproportionate amount of file performance degradation. So I decided to follow Diskeeper's recommendation to increase size of the MFT to correct this problem, as well as to do a boot-time defrag of the increased MFT and the windows pagefile. I also decided to thoroughly test the "on the fly"

"essence" of the new version by setting all my drive volumes for automatic defragmentation.

Despite my initial skepticism about an "on the fly" defragger, my experience with Diskeeper was very positive. Immediately after completing the initial set up I decided to put the "on the fly" features to an immediate test. In my experience, playing a fast paced first person shooter game is an excellent way to test the drag imposed by a program running in the background, so after the initial setup I immediately fired up Unreal Tournament 2004 for a two hour test session. I noticed a drag for nearly the whole session, but in the three weeks since that initial test, I have played the same game and also done other things, trying to detect a drag from Diskeeper's "on the fly" defragmentation. Since that initial session, I have detected no drag whatsoever. On the other hand, I have noticed that my machine is running much smoother, faster, and otherwise free from any symptoms of fragmentation. Finally, I ran the Analyze feature on all my hard disk partitions, and found that in the three week period there was essentially no new fragmentation.

I also tested Diskeeper on an external USB drive formatted with NTFS. Diskeeper was able to analyze and defrag the drive. Although the analysis indicated that the external drive's MFT needed to be increased, I knew that would be impossible because there is no practical way to perform a boot time defrag on such an external drive.

I'd say that as long as Windows continues to use the NTFS file system, which requires periodic de-fragmentation, I would highly

recommend Diskeeper 2007 Pro Premiere, which is priced at $99.99. You can do your own test by downloading a free 30-day full trial version from the <http://www.Diskeeper.com> web site. Installation requires an XP or 2000 operating system and at least 11 MB of disk space. There is also a Pro version for $49.99 (which does not have the integrated I-FAAST feature, but does have the FRAGSHIELD) and the Home version which does not have either the I-FAAST or the FRAGSHIELD feature). As for Vista, existing Diskeeper 2007 customers can go to the web site to receive a free link to download a Vista-only version, and new customers can purchase the Vista-only version.

Of course another solution is for the business world to go to an Operating System that doesn't have these archaic file system problems. How about something called Linux?

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Tune Up Your Computer with TuneUp Utilities By Ira Wilsker

Our computers tend to lose performance over time as our registries become bloated with obsolete data. Our hard drives become cluttered with useless and obsolete files and data which consume storage space and degrade performance. The default settings for our video and Internet connections are not often ideal, compromising viewing and web surfing speed and efficiency. Sometimes we need to recover files that were accidentally deleted, even though they have been removed from the recycle bin. Other times we may need to securely delete files that contained sensitive or personal data ensuring that these files cannot likely be recovered.

There are many utilities that perform one or a few of these tasks, but there are only a few utilities that perform all of these tasks well. One such utility is TuneUp Utilities 2007, published by TuneUp Software GmbH, of Darmstadt, Germany <http://www.tune-up.com>. This comprehensive utility offers 16 distinct sub-utilities, plus a "Rescue Center" that allows the user to selectively undo any changes that have been made. No special knowledge or skill is necessary to perform the tasks as choices are clearly displayed and explained. An easy to comprehend menu hierarchy makes functions easy to identify and to determine which ones to select.

The startup screen for TuneUp Utilities 2007 lists five major categories on the left side; Customize & Analyze, Clean up & Repair, Optimize & Improve, Administer & Control, and File Recovery & Destruction. Other buttons on the main screen connect to the TuneUp website, Rescue Center, and Update Wizard.

The Customize & Analyze screen offers a system control, startup manager, system information, and styler. The system control function allows the user to customize display properties, common usage functions, and communication functions. The communication functions includes

options for changing the settings for network connections, Internet Explorer, Firefox, e-mail and chat utilities, and privacy features. The startup manager allows the user to control which programs load at startup, a key influence on computer performance. The startup manager labels each program in the startup as "trustworthy," "unknown," or dangerous. On the left side of the startup screen a detailed explanation is displayed providing details on each item in the startup. An item can be prevented from loading at startup by simply unchecking the box adjacent to that item. If an unchecked item is desired at a later time, the box can be rechecked. Items can be permanently deleted from the startup list by clicking on the large red "X" on the menu. If for some reason the user is unhappy with any changes made, the previous startup selections can be restored by clicking on the "Rescue Center," and selecting to undo the changes to the startup.

A typical hard drive is loaded with useless junk files, and TuneUp 2007 offers a very good drive cleaner under "Clean Up and Repair." The disk cleaner can safely identify and remove useless files from the hard drive, often freeing up huge amounts of storage. The function "TuneUp Disk Doctor" runs the comprehensive repair function built into XP, checking the hard drive and its file structures for errors, and attempts to repair them. The operating system registry contains a data file containing information and settings on the hardware and software on our machines, and often contains useless and obsolete data. A bloated and inaccurate registry can be a major source of computer problems, as well as sapping resources, and slowing the boot and shutdown processes. The

TuneUp Registry Cleaner was one of the most comprehensive registry cleaners I have tried, detecting many errors in my registry that some of the freeware registry cleaners missed. As for all of the other utilities, the Rescue function can restore or undo any changes that have been made cleaning the registry, providing a cushion of safety.

Our computers often become sluggish with age and use as our registry becomes fragmented, and our settings are less than optimal for best performance. The Optimize & Improve section offers a memory management function, a registry defragmentation utility, and a system optimizer. Defragmenting the registry compacts it making it faster to load, and consuming fewer resources. The system optimizer checks the system for settings that may be degrading performance, and allows the user to select optimized settings. There should be no fear changing any settings because they can easily be restored from the rescue function. The default Internet setting on most computers does not allow optimal surfing performance; the "Internet Optimization" function allows the user to select his type of Internet connection from a list, and then optimize the internal settings to maximize web performance. For those who desire the epitome of convenience, a "1 Click Maintenance" can automate all of the optimization functions and utilities.

"Administer & Control" offers a process manager, a registry editor, and an uninstall manager. The process manager allows the user to control what programs are actively running; ceasing unnecessary programs frees up resources and improves performance. Microsoft's "Add or Remove Programs"

feature does not show all software installed on the computer, often making it difficult to uninstall unlisted software; the uninstall manager allows for the easy and complete removal of programs no longer needed.

Sometimes we need to securely remove sensitive information from our hard drives; the shredder in the "File recovery & Destruction" area allows for the secure deletion of files from the hard drive making recovery of those files nearly impossible. Files that have been deleted either accidentally or on purpose (and not shredded) may possibly be recovered using the undelete utility, even if the files have been emptied from the recycle bin.

TuneUp Utilities 2007 is a comprehensive and useful software package available for $39.99. For those who would like to try the package before paying for it, a free trial version may be downloaded directly from <http://www.tune-up.com> or the popular download sites such as <http://www.download.com> or <http://www.Tucows.com>. Published reviews by reputable resources have given TuneUp Utilities 2007 very high ratings. Download.com gave this package its highest editors' rating of five stars, and Tucows gave it it's "Editors' Choice" gold award in January, as well as a "five cow" rating (its highest), along with a statement that it is a "must have" application.

Personally, I like TuneUp Utilities 2007. While none of the many functions are unique, it is convenient to have them all bundled together in an easy to use package offering a quality service. I suggest that readers download the trial version and experiment with the bundle, being cognizant that any changes can be recovered using the integral Rescue Center. If you like the trial, then consider purchasing the product.

WEBSITE:<http://www.tune-up.com>

Ira Wilsker is an APCUG Director; Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont TX; Program Director of Management Development at the Lamar Institute of Technology, Beaumont TX; and a radio & TV show host. Contact him at <iwilsker@apcug.net>.

Get Organized Now!!!
By Sandy Berger

With today's complex world and multi-tasking, it is not surprising that we all seem to have too much to remember. The time-honored "to-do list" is still a suitable way to keep all of your tasks remembered and organized. Now the to-do list has gone high tech with Gubb an online list-maker.

Gubb is simple, effective, and free. Just surf over to <http://www.gubb.net> and click on the large Start Here button. Enter your e-mail address and the username and password that you want to use. Gubb will present you with preformatted lists or you can create your own from scratch. Each list can have a different background color or you can make them all the same.

Gubb made PC Magazine's list of the 10 worst application names, but don't let the name throw you. Gubb is a winner despite its name. Gubb's clean and simple interface makes it easy to create lists and to add, edit, or delete items. Important items can have one, two, or three stars. You can sort items by priority, date due, completed items, or alphabetically. Especially useful is

the ability to rearrange items in a list by dragging and dropping them. You can also drag and drop the lists themselves to position them on your screen. If your lists get too long, you can collapse them so you see only the title, opening them to full length as you need them.

If crossing items off your list as you complete them gives you a sense of satisfaction, Gubb will let you perform that task quite easily. Just click in the check box next to each item and Gubb puts a line through the item and marks it as completed. Gubb can also move the item to a completed list automatically or you can set it up so that you can archive your completed items at the end of the day, or any time of your choosing. If at anytime you need to see if, or when, you completed a task, you simply click on the name of the list to look at all the completed items and the time and date that you marked them complete.

These features alone make this Web service worthwhile, but there is more. You can share your lists with others. You can e-mail or text message items right into your lists. You can have any of your lists e-mailed to yourself or to others. If you have an Internet-connected cell phone, lists can also be sent to your phone. So if you were in a grocery store and needed your shopping list, with the right equipment, you could access it from Gubb on your cell phone. All this may sound a bit complicated, but Gubb has done an exemplary job of keeping all these tasks easy to do.

My husband and I have each created multiple lists. We also have several lists that we share. Since we work together, this has really helped keep us organized both at home and at work. He can add items to my office or home lists and I can add anything I like to his office

or home "honey-do" list. Gubb is helping us keep synchronized as well as organized.

Gubb is not perfect, but it is close. My complaints are pretty minor. I would love the ability to create several categories within each list. I would also like to be able to easily see if my husband added something to my list or vice versa. The program offers 3 shades of each of the following colors: blue, red, yellow, green, orange, pink, and gray. That's 21 colors to choose from so I am really being picky when I say I would like to be able to use purple, turquoise blue, and lime green for my lists. Okay, I know I am being hard to please, but maybe the Gubb creators will accommodate my wishes.

A recent survey showed that 25% of New Year resolutions are completely forgotten, but now you can use Gubb to resurrect your "I am going to be more organized." resolution. Sometimes getting organized means buying shelves, bins, baskets, and folders, but if you have an Internet-connected computer, Gubb will help you get organized without any expense. Go ahead. Do it. It will feel great to get all those scraps of paper and to-do notes off your desk and to get all those to do items off your mind. I know, because Gubb has helped me do just that!

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Sandy Berger is affiliated with the web site <http://www.compukiss.com>. e-mail: <sandy(at)compukiss.com>.

Actually, I was happy with my high quality CRT (cathode ray tube) monitor. It was with considerable reluctance that I recently decided to get with the modern era and upgrade to an LCD. It has been quite a learning experience. Looking back, I realize that there are a number of very important practical considerations of which I was unaware in making the change and in making a choice. Perhaps I can pass along a summary of them along with some insight gained by hands-on experience to make the experience a little easier for you than it was for me. You need to do your homework both before and during your investigation. Here are some of the most important things you should know.

An LCD monitor offers considerable advantages in upgrading from a CRT. It is infinitely lighter and takes up much less desk space than a CRT. It uses the smallest fraction of electricity by comparison and is devoid of radiation concerns. When properly installed, its display may prove brighter, sharper and provide superb color.

SIZE: In any size range, an LCD will display more viewable screen than a similarly sized CRT. I decided on a 19-incher, the size of my CRT that I was happy with. Seventeen may work for you if that's what pleased you on your CRT. Over 19 for average use is both too much screen and excessive cost for most people.

ORIENTATION: Most prefer a normal tall screen (portrait view) for average usage. Wide (landscape) screens are available at greater cost in the same size range and are not recommended unless you have special need for that display. Some makes offer a swivel screen that you can change from tall to wide and back again instantly. You will pay considerably more for this feature when it is available.

COST: Has been decreasing from a few thousand some short years ago to a few hundred today. A quality 17- inch LCD can be found today for under $200, and a 19-incher for less than $300. If you have a watchful eye, special sales are common and offer substantial savings.

BRAND: There is a very significant improvement in display quality to be gained in better models of better brands. The most common best quality brands usually topping the review lists in computer publications are LG, NEC, Viewsonic, Dell and Samsung. Different models in the same brand provide different features. Check them out carefully on their respective websites and "Google" for reviews. You need to do your homework both before and during your shopping experiences if you want the best for your buck.

WARRANTY: Better brands provide a 3-year replacement on defective monitors. Don't settle for a one-year warranty!

VIEWING ANGLE: Unlike a CRT, an LCD's view falls off sharply at the sides when you are not positioned in front of your monitor. In practical usage, this should not be at all a problem. Your view will be just fine when you are normally seated at your screen, with more than sufficient leeway from the norm.

RESPONSE TIME: Is usually indicated in the advertising of better

models. Having a faster response time is better—this controls how quickly the screen can refresh a video image. If an LCD's response time is too slow, the display's pixels won't be able to keep up with the information sent from the computer's graphics card, and you may see ghosting and digital noise as a result. 8ms or better response time is common on quality LCD's and is preferred! The lower the response time, the less of a blurring effect is possible on the screen.

ANALOG VS. DIGITAL: Video cards can provide outlets for two different monitor display types, analog and digital. CRT monitors are cabled to your video card with an analog (15 pin) cable. LCD's usually provide the same cable and connection but will provide a significantly better display when attached via a digital (VDI-D) to a digital port on your video card. Better LCD's provide both digital and analog connections. So do better video cards. If your card doesn't have a digital port, you can either replace the card with one that does, or you can add an additional card. Easy to do. Just plug it into a PCI slot and your computer will recognize it. You are really better off in many ways with a better card.

If need be, you can run your LCD with the same analog connection as you used for your CRT previously, but a digital connection will give you better results.

NATIVE RESOLUTION: LCD monitors will provide their best display when run at their "native resolution" which varies with the size of the monitor. For a 19-incher, the native resolution is 1280x1024. The resolution of a display can be changed easily by right-clicking on an empty area of your desktop and selecting "properties," and "settings." The same can be accomplished through your Control Panel in your Start Menu. Normally the correct choice will be made automatically by the installation software that accompanies your new monitor.

When you change your most common CRT setting of 1080x760 [*This should probably say: 1024x768*—Ed] to 1280x1024, everything, including all your icons and fonts, will suddenly appear much smaller. Your LCD display however will become infinitely sharper. If you find it strange to your eyes, you can easily change your display properties to provide larger fonts. Additionally, many programs like word processors permit you to change your text to any size you wish while maintaining its quality, regardless of screen resolution.

Running at native resolution (your choice to do or not, but very highly recommended) will make your screen display smaller but you will be able to accommodate more viewed area on a page. It may be somewhat strange to your eyes at first, but the greatly increased sharpness and over-all quality of your LCD display will more than make up for it, especially if you are using digital rather than analog connection to your display.

AUTO-DISPLAY: Most quality LCD monitors will automatically install at their best display settings when you plug them in. However, they will also provide easy to adjust menu settings for most of their values that permit you to easily adjust the display to what is most pleasing to your eyes. The most common adjustment people make is for brightness. Most LCD monitors tend to be too bright unless adjusted. LCD

screen illumination is entirely different and better than that from a CRT.

RUNNING MULTIPLE MONITORS: What's to do with your CRT now that you have your new LCD? One of your choices may be to keep it and run two monitors side-by-side. If you are using Windows XP and you have two ports on your video card (or two video cards), it's easy to do with a few simple settings in your display properties menu. You will then be able to run two different programs at the same time and easily drag items from one monitor screen to the other. Your cursor will readily mouse from one monitor to the other alongside. It can double your productivity and allow you to see and do things you did not know were possible.

Over all, upgrading to an LCD monitor will greatly enhance your computer experience and enjoyment.

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Herb Goldstein is the Software Evaluation Chairman and Reviews Editor of Sarasota Florida PUG.

<http://www.spcug.org>. E-mail: <reviewseditor(at)spcug.org.>.

Computer History

1974: Intel releases the 2 MHz 8080 chip. An 8-bit microprocessor that can directly access 64K of memory.

**Scanning Published Photos
By Irving Elliot**

If you scan a photo from a newspaper or magazine, then examine the results on your computer screen, you may see a criss-cross pattern of fuzzy lines over the entire print. If you print the scanned photo, you may also see such a pattern. This happens because pictures in newspapers and magazines are printed in a "halftone" mode.

The halftone process was invented when it was desired to print black-gray-white photographs using a printing press that used only single-color black ink. In this process, the photo is divided into a pattern of small squares, then each square is replaced with a black "blob" of a size proportional to the average shade of black in the square. For example: a white square remains white; a light gray square becomes a small black blob; a dark gray square becomes a larger black blob; a black square remains black. The gray shades were called "half-tones," which explains the name of the process. Originally, the conversion was done by re-photographing the picture with a camera that contained a wire screen. then developing the picture in a high-contrast mode. Nowadays, the process can be accomplished on a computer.

If the density (squares-per-inch) of the scanned picture is not an exact multiple of the pixel density of the scanner, computer screen, or printer, an interference pattern occurs. They may also appear if the original photo is slightly rotated after scanning.

Colored pictures from publications may also give you interference patterns.

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS (SIGS)

SIG-IBM
Tom Callow
Warner Mach

May 13: Flash Drive XP: Carry Windows in Your Pocket: SIG-IBM Co-Chairman Tom Callow will demonstrate how to install Windows XP on a flash drive allowing you to boot your own copy of Windows on any PC that boots from a USB Port and discuss the uses of such a bootable flash drive.

NOVICE-IBM GROUP
Rotating Volunteer Hosts

May 13: Help Q & A:
Discussion directed by the audience. No question is too simple!

SIG-ADVANCED
Franz Breidenich

June 4, 2007: (First Monday), 6:45 p.m., 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.

May 13: SIG-IBM Intermediate will start with reminders, a tech tip and a little information on Vista, as experienced by Carl Massie's mother (A tip of the hat to Mothers' Day). SIG-IBM Intermediate Chairman Carl Massie, Jr., will also demonstrate installing and using Ubuntu Linux on a memory device—The Memorex 4GB USB 2.0 High Speed Traveldrive™. Other topics, including recommended freeware and safe printer sharing will be discussed..

Computer History

1975: 'Popular Electronics' publishes an article in the January 1975 issue featuring the Altair 8800 computer. $397 in kit form or $439 assembled. Uses 2 MHz 8080 processor and 256 bytes of RAM.

June 2007 DATA BUS DEADLINE (7th day after 2nd Sunday in month)
SEMCO Input and Members' Ads — Deadline: Sun., May 20, 11:59 p.m.
Members' personal ads are free. To mail, use Editor address on Page 2; e-mail address: <machw@att.net>. PLEASE send to arrive sooner than deadline.
Business Ads - Deadline: Second Friday monthly. Contact Editor (address Page 2)**.**

Warner Mach
machw@att.net
(to post monthly computer group info)

CALENDAR-OF-EVENTS
OTHER GROUPS

COMP (Computer Operators of Marysville & Port Huron)
June 6, 7 p.m., (1st Wednesday); St. Clair County RESA, 499 Range Rd., Marysville, Admin. Building. Jane Wheatly 810-982-1187 <http://www.bwcomp.org>. Topic: Microsoft Word 2007 & Outlook 2007.

DCOM Computer Club
May 11, 6:30–8:30 p.m., (2nd Friday); Henry Ford C.C., Patterson Tech Bldg, Ford Rd/Evergreen, Rm T143, Parking Lot C. Info: Doug Piazza 313-582-2602.

MacGroup- Detroit
May 27, 2:15 p.m.–5 p.m.; Birmingham Temple, 28611 West 12 Mile Rd., Farmington Hills. Info: Terry White, <terry@macgroup.org> or 313-571-9817. <http://www.macgroup.org>. (Meet on 27th rather than 20th). Topic: Mac OS X Tips and Tricks.

MacTechnics, (MAC User Group)
May 19, 11:00 a.m., (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)
May 12, 12:30–2:30 p.m., (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
May 10, 7:30 p.m., (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., 10:15 a.m. at Oak Park Recreation Bldg, Oak Park Blvd. west of Coolidge.

SHCC (Sterling Heights Computer Club)
June 5, 7:30 p.m., (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: Wireless and Other Wonders of Home Networking.

Wayne State University Mac User Group
May 12, 10:00 a.m.–Noon, (2nd Saturday); at Mich.com, 21042 Laurelwood, Farmington. Information: Lorn/JoAnn Olsen 248/478-4300 or Denny MeLampy 248-477-0190.

For these, the halftone process uses filters to split the image into more than one black-gray-white photo, with each photo representing the intensities for each color. In each resulting halftone, the blob pattern is slightly offset from that of the other halftones. The picture is reproduced by printing the same paper once for each halftone, in the corresponding color. The printing press does not print one color on top of another because of the slight offset of the halftones.

You can get rid of the interference pattern by processing the picture with any photo software package that has a "blur" or "soften" section. For example, in Paint Shop Pro, the IMAGE/SOFTEN menu selection spreads the black blobs so that the fuzzy bars magically disappear.

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Irving Elliott is a member of the Twin Cities PC User Group, Minnesota.

<http://www.tcpc.com>.
E-mail: <irving.elliott(at)att.net>.

Computer History

1976: Steve Wozniak and Steve Jobs develop the Apple I. It is sold in kit form for $666.66 ... Apple Computer Company is incorporated on April 1 (April Fool's Day)

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
Cook, Stephen—313-272-7594, eves....................... scook48227@ameritech.net
Vander-Schrier, Jack—586-739-7720,12–8pm .... jvanders@myself.com
Yuhasz, Steve.. Help@yuhasz.org

SEMCO CALENDAR

ArvinMeritor Building
2135 West Maple Road
Troy, Michigan

May 13–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 p.m.

Special Interest Groups (SIGs)

SIG-IBM 1:45 p.m. Program: Flash Drive XP: SIG-IBM Co-Chairman Tom Callow will demonstrate how to install Windows XP on a flash drive, allowing you to boot your own copy of Windows on any PC that boots from a USB Port. Also, the uses of such a bootable flash drive.

SOCIAL PERIOD 3:15 p.m. Refreshments! (Reminder: We must continue to maintain a neat environment.)

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

SIG-IBM Intermediate 3:45 p.m. Program: SIG-IBM Intermediate will start with reminders, a tech tip and a little information on Vista, as experienced by Carl Massie's mother (A tip of the hat to Mothers' Day). SIG-IBM Intermediate Chairman Carl Massie, Jr., will also demonstrate installing and using Ubuntu Linux on a memory device—The Memorex 4GB USB 2.0 High Speed Traveldrive™. Other topics, including recommended freeware and safe printer sharing will be discussed.

SIG-ADVANCED, June 4, 2007–MONDAY, 6:45 p.m., (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.**

June 10–SEMCO Sunday

http://www.semco.org

SEMCO Meetings at **ArvinMeritor**
2135 West Maple Road, Troy, MI 48084
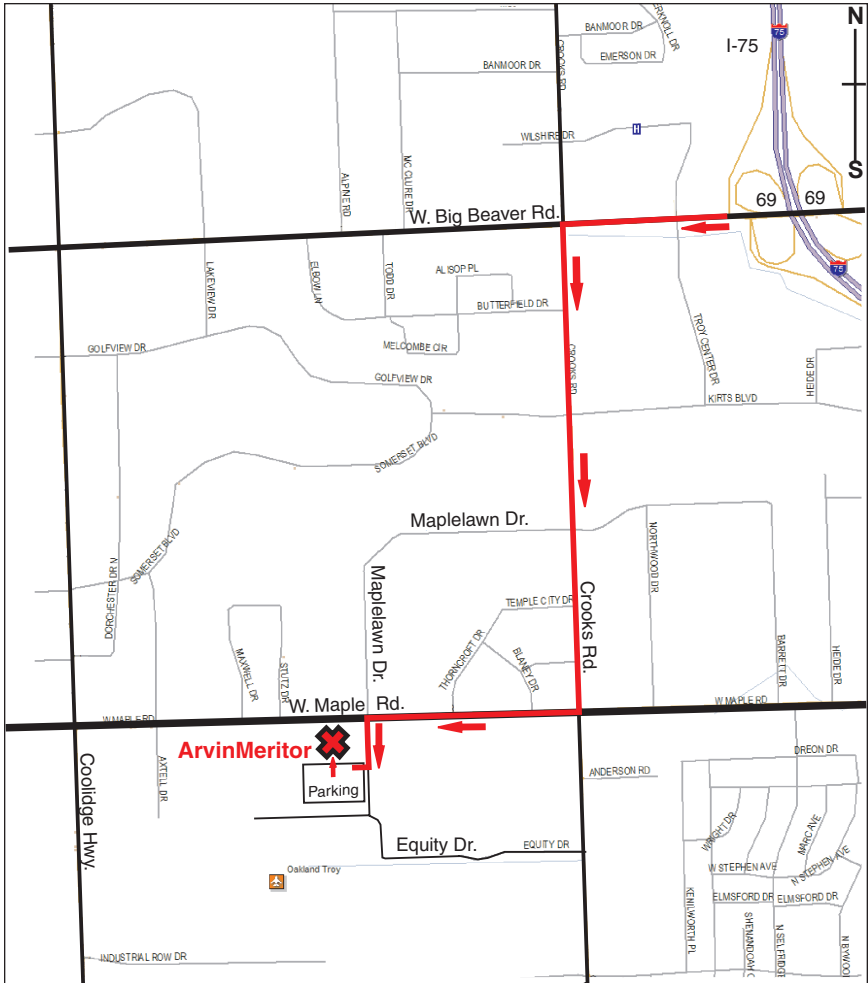
DIRECTIONS

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.

FIRST CLASS MAIL
Dated Material

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

SEMCO (future meetings)
May 13
June 10

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