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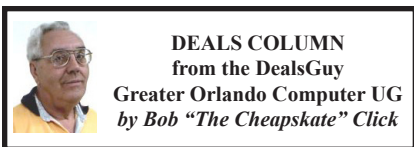
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E-mail Address Change

I've had my fill of Earthlink as an ISP. Talking to techs with bad English is frustrating, not to mention ongoing e-mail problems. The final decision came when my phone became accidentally disconnected by Bell South. After it was reconnected, but no DSL, the tech I spoke to had me unplugging and plugging wires, and finally asked me to unplug the very line I was talking on from the wall plug (I asked if she was sure before I did it), and she never called me back. Also, their price was too high. I finally decided on AT&T who offered the best deal I found, but I still have to rely on techs speaking bad English. My new e-mail address is [<bobclick at bellsouth dot net>](mailto:bobclick@bellsouth.net). (I hope that strange formatting will avoid address spiders). Already I ran into poor tech support. I was three days late getting my DSL up and running because their own network had problems, and their tech support was slow getting someone to the house for further troubleshooting. They do not enter the house without a charge, but will check up to the outside box. She called the office for DSL light and I was finally in business.

Help For The Sight Impaired

I saw this article in ComputerWorld about the efforts of the city of Stockholm to provide voice instructions for guiding the blind, or people with poor vision, to wherever they want to go without other help. It is a serious undertaking and sounds promising. See it here: [http://www.computerworld.com/action/article.do?command=viewArticle](http://www.computerworld.com/action/article.do?command=viewArticleBasic&taxonomyName=Mobile_and_Wireless&articleId=291724&taxonomyId=15&intsrc=kc_li_story)

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What About The Centralizing Of Medical Records?

I'm sure you've read about the desire for a centralized database of medical records for every individual so doctors can have quick access to your complete records. This interesting article talks about some of the efforts <http://www.informationweek.com/story/showArticle.jhtml?articleID=199702199>>. Yet, that has not even come close to fruition so far. Everybody has a different approach including the many companies trying to develop products to accomplish it. Then there's the HIPPA law, along with other concerns about confidentiality, and your medical records. I worked in a UAW retiree office for two years helping retired members with benefit problems. Most were trying to get medical bills paid. Calling insurance companies and medical centers was an exercise in frustration after the HIPPA law took effect. You had to hope for a friendly person who would try to work around that law to solve the problem, even after telephone permission from the subscriber. The office person on the other end couldn't actually see us both sitting there and often refused to help.

When I ran the Medistick product a few months ago (a USB Flash Drive to contain your personal medical information in PDF format for doctors to access), I thought that was a good idea, but now I'm not so sure because of the different software and office procedures used by doctors, and their efforts to keep office costs down. When I tried a new cardiologist last year I mentioned various doctors I had seen

in the last few years. He wanted to contact them all for my records to do his homework. On my next visit, he had done that and most used paper records, but he gave me two CDs with medical information from other offices saying his software was not compatible with their format. Those were extremely important medical records that were useless to him that way. I visited those offices to get my records on paper, although it was difficult to find a helpful secretary.

If I had a USB Medistick, how would a doctor want my medical information organized and formatted to be useful? It's a safe bet that few doctor's offices will put that information on your Medistick since they are concerned about the time to prepare it for you.

So far, even President Bush's intervention has had little effect on the push for centralization of medical records. We are the ones suffering the repercussions of this lack of coordination. If I could simply get a report on the office visit, or procedures performed, from that doctor's office, perhaps I could type it up myself on the Medistick if there was a centralized format. As you know, there are other problems if you want to record doctor data for your own reference since they often aren't willing to give it to you. Also, the public is very suspicious about any governmental control of that information, and who would be exceptions to the rules, such as a prospective employer? If you got sick on a distant vacation, seems like that central database could be invaluable to a doctor or ER.

Be Aware!

These are announcements I received, but I have not tried any of them.

Keep Track of Your Ink

AVPSoft.com has announced APFill Ink Coverage Meter 4.2. You can determine the cost of a document, and if needed, optimize the pages to spend less ink or toner and consequently money. APFill Ink Coverage Meter is ideal for home users who have a color printer, or print shops that print a large number of copies. Usually printer owners rely on the printer manufactures that describe ink usage as being 5% ink coverage of an A4 page. With APFill Ink Coverage Meter in place, you will know the exact ink coverage and determine the accurate cost of a printed copy based on such properties as paper density, paper format and original color density.

APFill users can measure the ink coverage of the highlighted screen area when, for example, they preview the page in a graphic editor before printing. It's also possible to measure the ink coverage for every single page, or for the entire document in either PostScript or PDF format with CMYK separation up to 8 color spots. There's also a 'Selected area surface measurement' feature, allowing you to measure the area filled in with a specified color. The measurement results can be displayed in either pixels or any user-defined units.

APFill Ink Coverage Meter 4.2 is available for \$79.95 (US) for a single-user license. They offer user group members a 10% discount on the purchase of APFill Ink Coverage Meter. The coupon code is APFILL10PR.

The product requires Windows 2000, XP, 2003 or Vista. Registered users are entitled to free upgrades and technical support. Additional information on the product, as well as its 30-day evaluation copy is available from <<http://www.avpssoft.com>>.

Product page link: <<http://avpsoft.com/products/apfill/>>

Direct download link: <<http://www.avpsoft.com/download/apfill.exe>>
(2.55 Mb)

Another Data Recovery, But Free!

Smart Data Recovery is an effective and powerful, easy-to-use software program that enables the recovery of lost data. Restore your important files absolutely free. Smart Data Recovery is compatible with almost all kinds of data storage devices from computer hard drives to digital cameras. It supports flash drives, floppy disks, memory sticks, PC cards, multimedia cards, and secure digital cards. Smart Data Recovery restores all sorts of files, including electronic documents and pictures. It restores files from FAT32 and NTFS hard drives and has a really simple interface with Windows operating systems.

Even if the partition table is lost, the program gives you a chance to retrieve your important files. Smart Data Recovery applies a simple yet powerful algorithm that allows restoration of your lost data quickly and effectively. Smart Data Recovery also recovers any deleted files, including MS Office files, images, MP3 and zip files!

Smart Data Recovery runs on Windows NT/2000/XP/2003/Vista. The current version is downloadable free at <<http://www.smartpctools.com>> (820 kB). There are other interesting Freeware products listed on their Web site.


PDF Anyone?

Acrobat is costly and there are cheaper ways to create a PDF. PDF995 can be found at <<http://www.pdf995.com>>. (There are three free downloads that are adware). People who have used the product say it produces a different file

size, but works as well as other PDF software. The free versions display a sponsor page in your web browser each time you run the software. If you prefer no sponsor pages, you may upgrade by obtaining individual keys for each product at any time for \$9.95 each, and also get e-mail support.

That's it for this month. I'll have more new product announcements on my Web site (not offering a discount). Meet me here again next month if your editor permits. This column is written to make user group members aware of special offers or freebies I have found or arranged, and my comments should not be interpreted to encourage, or discourage, the purchase of any products, no matter how enthused I might sound. Bob (The Cheap skate) Click <[bobclick at bellsouth dot net](mailto:bobclick@bellsouth.net)>. Visit my Web site at <<http://www.dealsguy.com>>.

From The DealsGuy For August 2007 by Bob (The Cheap skate) Click, Greater Orlando Computer Users Group

	Advanced WindowsCare Personal Edition— Freeware By Ira Wilsker
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A lot can go wrong with the software and operating systems on our computer. Just like a car, if maintenance is ignored or infrequently performed on Windows, problems can occur that can impair the execution of software on our computers. To help us perform the software maintenance on our computers, a small software company, IOBIT, has released a freeware version of its Windows repair utility, Advanced WindowsCare Personal Edition. For those concerned

about the safety and security of free software, this product is free of any spyware or adware.

Available for free download from the publisher's site, <<http://www.iobit.com>>, or the alternative popular mega sites including <<http://download.com>>, and <<http://www.tucows.com>>, Advanced WindowsCare Personal Edition is a comprehensive suite of utilities that can identify and repair many of the common system problems that plague Windows users. Advanced WindowsCare will run on Windows 2000, XP, and Vista. For those who may desire an even more powerful and sophisticated suite, IOBIT also has an upgrade available, Advanced WindowsCare Professional, which sells for \$29.95 (15 day free trial available). The free Personal Edition has been very successful, with over four million downloads, including over two million from download.com alone. C-Net, the owner of download.com, calls this software, the “#1 most popular system utility in download.com,” where it has received a five star rating. Tucows has given this software a “five cows” rating, while ZD Net has awarded it five stars, as well as given it its coveted “Editors’ Pick” award. Softpedia, another well known resource, rates Advanced WindowsCare Personal “Very Good,” and gives it a four star rating. Obviously, this appears to be some good software that can make a valuable addition to anyone’s software collection.

Advanced WindowsCare Personal Edition is very easy to use, and offers a “1 click” option where all of the major utilities are automatically run, which subsequently gives a detailed report to the user, and offers the options to either automatically or selectively repair any

problems found. Personal Edition is also very fast, with most scans being completed in about one minute.

One useful feature of this software is a spyware scan that searches the computer for spyware and adware, using periodically updated signature files. Any such malware that is found can be selectively deleted by the software. For users concerned with privacy, the software can also erase all history files on the hard drive.

The registry is a complex database containing information on all of the software and hardware installed in the computer. Often the registry becomes bloated with obsolete information, and corrupted data, which can create a serious performance drag on the computer. Good PC hygiene dictates that the registry should be periodically scanned for errors and cleaned, and this software does an excellent job of this. One nice feature is the ability to recover any changes made with an integral restore feature. As a demonstration of its capabilities, as a test, I purposely ran other registry cleaning and repair utilities prior to running this one. As an extra precaution, I used my Windows system restore feature to back up my critical files prior to the test. I ran three of the other registry repair utilities, and dozens of registry defects were identified and repaired; I then ran Advanced WindowsCare Personal Edition, and hundreds of additional registry errors were found and repaired, that the other programs missed. There was no need to restore my files, because the system ran very well after the serial repair. This software is capable by itself to repair the registry, and the other registry repair utilities are no longer needed; this software did it all.

Our hard drives become cluttered with a variety of junk files, such as obsolete cache and temporary files. These useless files may waste countless megabytes on our drives, and slow down the ability of the hard drive to find data. If useless data is deleted from the hard drives, computer performance can be enhanced. Advanced WindowsCare Personal Edition contains a very efficient junk file removing utility. As a matter of personal choice, I prefer to look over the list of files found and decide which to delete, but it is fairly safe to delete what the software finds. As a matter of practice, after useless files are deleted, it would be a good idea to run Windows integral defragmentation utility, or a third party disk defragmentation utility, to further improve hard drive performance.

Another feature built into the software gauges Windows and Internet performance, and offers options to improve the speed of the system. This helps give us the performance that we paid for when we originally purchased our systems, and helps to maximize our Internet throughput.

As our computers age, we are often plagued with slow startup and shutdown problems. This occurs because as we install software on our computers, many of the programs place items in the system startup by default, which forces the software to load when the computer is booted; more items in the startup means slower and longer boot times. Advanced WindowsCare Personal Edition contains a powerful but simple startup manager which displays the contents of our startup, and allows for the easy management and control of what loads when we boot. Fewer items loaded at boot means that

our computer comes up faster, and runs faster because there is less demand on system resources. Because there are fewer items running, shut downs are also faster.

I have used this software for about a month and found it very useful and reliable, and can recommend it to all PC users with Windows 2000, XP, or Vista.


One of the most frequent questions asked on my weekly radio show on KLVI is how to improve computer performance and speed. Advanced WindowsCare Personal Edition is a valuable free tool that does much to improve performance, clean up the registry and startup, delete useless files, and otherwise provide benefits to the user.

WEBSITES:

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

<<http://www.iobit.com/advancedwindowscareper.html>>

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	<p>What is PCI Express? By Brian K. Lewis</p>
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Obtained from APCUG with the author's permission for publication by APCUG member groups.

Let's start this off with an explanation of PCI (Peripheral Component Interconnect). These are the slots in the motherboard of your computer used for connecting peripheral devices directly

to the computer bus. Now you're asking what is the computer bus? Essentially, the bus is the electrical means for a peripheral device to connect to the computer's chipset. The chipset is the interconnection between the peripherals, the main processor and system memory. (Got all that?)

The original PCI bus released in 1992 had a maximum communication rate of 33 MHz. This allows data transmission at a maximum rate of 133 megabytes per second (MB/sec.). The bus is used by such things as the sound system, video card, network adapters, parallel and serial ports.

In the PCI system all data are transmitted in parallel. In parallel transmission many "wires" or connections are required for each PCI slot or integrated device. For example, if you have a 32-bit data transmission path from the PCI slot to the chipset, this requires 32 connecting wires just for data. Additional wires are required for control signals. With six PCI slots you can have more than 1,000 wires required for the connections. Each wire should be exactly the same length so that all the data arrive simultaneously. However, in a computer it is impossible for each wire to be exactly the same length. So as the speed of devices increased, data started arriving out of order. Therefore, the receiver had to delay until all the data were available before it could be processed. Another aspect of PCI is that all the devices share the bus at the same time so the actual data rate per device will be significantly less than the maximum rate. It's like having a speed limit of 65 miles per hour on a multi-lane highway. When all the traffic lanes are full, everything slows down. Think Chicago or Atlanta in rush hour!

Shortly after PCI was introduced, the arrival of 3-D video cards made PCI obsolete for graphics purposes. That resulted in the development of the AGP slot in the motherboard for AGP video cards. AGP uses a separate bus and this freed up bandwidth on the PCI bus for other peripherals. The AGP-8X system can transmit data at the rate of 2.134 gigabytes per second (GB/sec.). In spite of the removal of the data intensive video card transmissions, the number of high-speed peripherals being added to computers quickly saturated the PCI bus and it remained a data transport bottleneck. Additional problems arise as communication can only be made in one direction at a time. Today, many communications networks utilize bi-directional traffic.

In 2004 the PCI Express (PCIe) bus started showing up on computer motherboards. This is quite different from the original PCI bus and in the strictest definition is not a true bus. It is described as a high performance, scalable, point-to-point serial bus. Now, that statement requires some further explanation as I'm sure it is not immediately clear to all of you. It certainly wasn't to me the first time I read it.

First, consider the "serial" relationship. In a serial device the data is transmitted in a single stream rather than in several parallel streams. This is like reducing a multi-lane highway to one lane in each direction. That should slow things down instead of speeding it up! But in PCIe the clue is that you now have a point-to-point relationship. That means the device is connected directly to the chipset and does not have to share bandwidth with other devices. It is like having a high speed commuter corridor

that bypasses all the slow traffic on the rest of the multi-lane highway. You may have multiple PCIe connections to the chipset. To prevent problems the connections occur through a system similar to a router. This router passes the data packets from each device in an ordered manner with a minimum of delay and contributes to the speed and accuracy of the transmission. Because this is a point-to-point connection with each device having its own pathway, this is not a bus under the strict definition of a computer bus. It is also important to note that PCIe transmission occurs in data packets.

The connections are in dual pairs so there is a possibility of a simultaneous bi-directional transmission. One pair is used for transmission and the other for receiving. As mentioned above, data is transmitted in packets, rather than in a continuous stream. Each packet contains an identifier so the data can be reassembled at the receiving end. This allows the receiver to work with multiple inputs. The data is encoded in what is called 8b/10b. This means that eight data bits are packaged with two information bits in a ten-bit package. (See how much simpler it is to call this 8b/10b?) Also consider that this is the method used for data and voice transmission on the Internet. Hard drives have moved to a SATA interface that is a serial connection instead of the parallel IDE connection. Gigabit ethernet cards are also designed with a serial connection. More devices are moving to serial connectivity to gain additional speed and reliability.

The scalable part of the PCIe bus is in its ability to work with more than one pair of connections. These are called x1 (or times 1), x4, x8 or x16. The x1

version (two data pairs) can transmit the encoded data at a bi-directional rate of 500 MB/s or 250 MB/s in each direction. The x16 version (32 data pairs) can transmit at a rate of 8 GB/s. This is the combined bidirectional rate. The rate in one direction is half this figure. There is a second version of PCIe in the works, PCIe 2.0. This is expected to double the current transmission speeds and provide other benefits.

PCIe slots in the motherboard come in various sizes depending on the number of lanes they use for connection. These vary from the smallest connector for the x1 version to the largest for x16. It is the 16x version that is currently found on new motherboards which supports the latest graphics (video) cards. Unlike the AGP slots, the x16 slot can be used for peripherals other than the video card.

Another interesting aspect of PCIe is one means by which it achieves its high data rates. It is called “low-voltage differential signaling.” Another phrase that I had better explain a little more. As I mentioned earlier, connections occur in a pair of “lanes” in each direction. One of the lanes carries a “positive” image of the data and the other carries a “negative” or “inverted” image. The transmission of the data follows strict rules such that any noise that occurs will affect both lines. When the data is reassembled at the destination, the receiver collects both signals, inverts the negative back to positive and sums both signals. This effectively removes the noise from the signal.

PCIe is also backward compatible with PCI devices and software that uses PCI devices. The configuration space and programmability of PCI Express devices are unchanged from

traditional PCI. In fact, all operating systems can boot without modification on a PCI Express architecture. Programs originally written for PCI devices can run unchanged on PCI Express devices because the PCIe layer is transparent to the application software. This provides benefits to users who don't have to upgrade software applications to work with newer hardware.

PCIe has another characteristic that greatly improves on PCI. It has an active power management (APM) system. When a PCIe link is not in use it does require that the link remain active so that the transmitter and receiver remain synchronized. It is the role of the APM to reduce the power level whenever the link is inactive. The catch is that when data needs to be transmitted there is a recovery time to allow full activation of the transmitter/receiver. The longer the recovery time, the lower the power usage. Overall, the systems are designed for the lowest power usage with the shortest recovery time.

There is a gradual transition from the motherboard with combined PCIe/PCI slots to those that will have only PCIe slots as more PCIe plug-in cards become available. This will also affect the size of the motherboard and the ultimate size of the computer. The specification for the PCIe mini-card allows for a card half the size of a standard PCI mini-card. Most of these mini-cards may be destined for laptop computers. However, some desktop designs that take advantage of all PCIe input are far smaller than the standard desktop computer. Some of the new small box computers utilize these smaller motherboards.

So when you get your next computer you should now have a better

understanding of the role of the PCIe slots it contains.

Dr. Lewis is a former university & medical school professor. He has been working with personal computers for more than thirty years.

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<p>Replacing the LCD Screen on a Notebook PC By Bill Landrum</p>

I mentioned at a recent SEMCO Meeting Questions and Answers session that one of my sons-in-law had dropped his nearly new Gateway MX3231 notebook PC, and the display now looked like a broken mirror with large areas of solid black or white. The notebook would display fine to an external monitor, but only had about 10% of the notebook's display working—so I thought that a replacement LCD panel would fix the problem. The notebook had been purchased at BestBuy, and any warranty for the notebook seems to come only from them. They quoted a repair price in excess of \$450, which was about what had been paid for the PC in the first place. I asked the SEMCO group for ideas on getting it repaired, and received several good ideas, plus an offer to help repair/replace the panel from SEMCO VP and friend, Richard Jackson.

I talked to Gateway directly, and they would replace the panel for \$494 if shipped to them. I pointed out that I might as well buy a new PC for that price, and asked them if they would just sell me a panel for me to replace. They don't sell parts directly, but they referred me to the web site of the company that they buy parts from. I found the panel there for \$380 plus shipping. Still too much I thought, so I finally turned to eBay as had been suggested by a SEMCO member at the meeting. I found that there is a booming business there for new display panels for an MX3231 (and most any other notebook). Prices varied from \$150 to \$200 plus shipping. I was commissioned to proceed.

I ordered a new panel from Smart-Micro USA <<http://stores.ebay.com/Smart-Micro-USA>>. I paid \$165 plus \$13 shipping. This was about \$10 more than I would have had to pay from the lowest seller, but I liked the fact that they had sold almost 7400 items on eBay with a 99.9% Positive rating. Additionally, they offered a three-month warranty on the display. I ordered the display and paid with PayPal, and had a confirmation and a tracking number within one day that the item had been shipped via Federal Express. The panel showed up at my door two days later. It was safely ensconced in yards of bubble-wrap, and was obviously new and appeared to be in good condition.

I had hoped that the new display would come with directions on how to install, but I had no such luck. I felt sure though, that there would be directions on the Gateway web site. Nope. It told how to install many other things—the closest of which was a keyboard. After studying much documentation, and going through FAQs, I turned to their

on-line chat helper. I learned from him, that there is no documentation on the web, and that he wouldn't let me talk to a technician who could help me. Apparently, Gateway's position is that the project is too complex, that I can hurt the PC worse if I try to work on it, and that type of repair can only be done by one of their service centers. I noted that the cost of their repair was about equal to the cost of buying a new PC, and that in any event, I had already purchased a new display and had it on-hand. My pleas were ignored.

In the meanwhile, Richard put me in contact with a friend of his who had successfully installed a display panel on his Dell notebook. He gave me encouragement and pointers on how to proceed. Richard came over to my house to help repair the PC—lugging enough tools to replace a car engine! It turned out that all we needed though were two small flat screwdrivers for prying, and one small Phillips screwdriver for taking out screws.

The documentation for changing a keyboard says to remove the battery, and then keep yourself grounded to the PC and the replacement parts at all times. That seemed like a good idea for a display also, so we removed the battery. I had been tempted to take apart the keyboard area, to get to the hinges, to remove the display entirely. The friend said that he had not needed to do that. The key concept he said, was that the little rubber bumpers on the display covered some small Phillips screws that had to be removed. Richard had a jeweler's screwdriver that was ideal for digging out the little rubber bumpers (each about half the size of the tip of a pencil eraser). Sure enough, four very

small Phillips screws could then be removed.

After the screws were out, nothing happened. The display would not come apart. It turns out that there are about 20 plastic snaps all the way around the display, and the two parts have to be pried apart. The jeweler's screwdriver turned out to be ideal for starting the initial prying since the two plastic pieces fit together almost perfectly. It took two of us quite a bit of effort to get the panel to separate. Usually one person was holding the PC at awkward angles while the other pried. The fourth side wouldn't come loose initially as it had some adhesive stuck in a couple of spots. After working through the adhesive, we finally had the top plastic frame off.

The old display unit still wouldn't come out. After more twisting and turning of the PC, Richard noticed that the panel was attached to a frame from the sides. After some more work, we had removed eight small Phillips screws from the left-hand and right-hand sides of the display panel. Some of them were cleverly blocked by the plastic frame, so some flexing and repositioning was involved.

Finally, the frame was loose. It was attached to the PC by the thinnest, cheapest little electrical cable that I have ever seen. Richard carefully pried it loose. In addition, there was a two-wire connector to the inverter. We carefully noted wire colors so that we could install the new panel correctly.

We connected the new display after removing its protective film (for shipping), and then reversed the whole process to put the notebook back together. When I turned the PC on, nothing happened. It was very

dead. Richard suggested that it might be a good idea to put the battery back in—which we did, and then the display came up perfectly! No adjusting of any sort was required. My son-in-law is thrilled, and Richard and I are rather pleased ourselves!

I think that a skilled technician could have done the whole job in about ten minutes. I estimate that it took Richard and me about an hour. I think that a typical SEMCO member could do this replacement successfully. I would recommend the following: 1) Have two people involved. One person is needed to hold the PC at various angles while the other person works on it. 2) The desirable tools would be one or two jeweler screwdrivers and a slightly larger flat screwdriver for prying, a small Phillips screwdriver, a small screw-grabber, and perhaps a little cement for securing the bumpers when you get through.

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	Free Online Tech Support Resources By Ira Wilsker
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Many of us have found that technical support from some hardware manufacturers and software publishers is often lacking, so we occasionally need some third party alternative resources. There have been some recent e-mail discussions among the board members and advisors of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG) about assistance that may

be available online to help novices and others with common technical support issues. Fortunately there are many online resources that often can help us find the answers to our computing questions when manufacturers and publishers can not easily provide us with answers that we need.

The magazine “Smart Computing,” which calls itself the “plain English” computer magazine, offers its online “Tech Support Center” at <<http://www.smartcomputing.com>>. According to the banner on the magazine website, “We’re your one-stop shop for computer problem solving. If you still can’t find an answer for your problem after using our Tech Support Center, call us up and we’ll help you through the problem.” Based on my own personal experiences and contacts, Smart Computing magazine is a very popular and reliable source of technical support information. The database of problems and solutions is easily searchable using only one or two words as search terms. There are also about a dozen categories or topics listed, including such topics as error messages, a knowledge base, a listing of trouble shooting articles, security and privacy issues, maintenance, networking, and other useful topics. Smart Computing provides an outstanding service to the computing community, and deserves the thanks of those who can benefit from its Tech Support Center service. “Thanks, Smart Computing!”

One of my personal favorites is the website at <<http://www.annoyances.org>>. Annoyances is fully searchable by topic, and offers a variety of discussion forums covering all flavors of Windows from the current Vista offerings, to the archaic and obsolete Windows 95, with everything in between. Not surprising,

one of the most active forums is the support forum for Windows XP, with over 14,000 pages of information! The newer Vista has only 160 pages in its Annoyances forum, but it has only been on the market for about a tenth of the time of its older brother, XP, and has only a tiny fraction of the installed user base. Still, there is extensive and comprehensive information that is easy to search, and many of the issues that have come up can be resolved at Annoyances.

In addition to the forums covering the range of operating systems, Annoyances also offers 10 categories of information to help the user with any problems that may arise. Categories listed include Using Windows, Customizing, Annoyances, Networking, Reducing Clutter, Performance, Troubleshooting, Applications, Humor, and FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions). Other assistance is available as well, including tips on getting started with Windows, working with the registry, other software, and a listing of books written by Annoyances that contain much of the online information in book form. Annoyances.org can be an excellent resource to try to find the help that many of us often need.

Another comprehensive resource that contains a wealth of technical data that can assist those in need of computer support is Jupiter Online Media’s “Virtual Dr.” at <<http://www.virtualdr.com>>. Virtual Dr. (Virtual Doctor) is a self described online “community where problems get solved.” Virtual Dr. offers a variety of discussion areas covering desktop computers, laptops and PDA’s, digital imaging, security and privacy, networking, storage, software, Windows, Linux, Mac, and a forum on

spyware. While anyone can read any of the Virtual Dr. forums and discussion areas, a free registration is required to post a question or respond in the forums. Virtual Dr. has about 90,000 registered users, an indication of its popularity as a method of technical support separate from the manufacturers and software publishers.

For those who prefer to try to find answers to their technical problems on their own, a popular trick in geekdom is to use the immense powers of the major search engines to find solutions to technical problems. The mega search engines such as Google, AllTheWeb (my personal favorite at <<http://www.alltheweb.com>>), and Ask <<http://www.ask.com>> contain a wealth of technical support information for those willing to look. These, and other major search engines, allow the user to type a question in the search box, with the search engine reporting back potential answers based on the key words in the inquiry. While this method may require some perusing to find the answer sought, it is a viable method of locating information. Similarly, if a user needs technical information on a piece of hardware, all he needs to do is enter the brand name and model number in the search engine and comprehensive information resources will appear on the screen containing information on the product. A similar tactic works for software; if the user had a problem or has a question about software applications, then likely thousands of others have had comparable issues. Typing in the name of the software and a few words of inquiry in the search box will likely return a desired response. Whenever a search engine is used, it may require some effort to locate the

precise information desired from the massive selection displayed.

These are but a few of the advantages of using the Internet to resolve technical support issues. In my experience I have often found it faster and more accurate to use some of the above resources to locate answers to my questions, than it is to try and contact the hardware manufacturer or software publisher. The web is always available, and problems do not always occur 9 to 5 on weekdays. Check out the above websites and determine which ones you like the best, so you can be familiar with them prior to an urgent need. In addition, you might learn something useful.

WEBSITES:

- <<http://www.annoyances.org>>
- <<http://www.smartcomputing.com>>
- <<http://www.virtualdr.com>>
- <<http://www.alltheweb.com>>
- <<http://www.google.com>>
- <<http://www.ask.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>.

**Inside Security Recovery Tool
(INSERT)
By Dick Maybach**

Obtained from APCUG with the author's permission for publication by APCUG member groups.

Most of us use an OEM (original equipment manufacturer) version of Windows supplied by the vendor who built our PC. Although we often

receive a Windows CD-ROM, it is not the same as the disk included with the retail version of Windows. In particular, we must go to our PC hardware vendor for Windows support, rather than to Microsoft, and we can't use the OEM CD-ROM to install Windows on a new computer or to repair an existing installation. Instead, we can only restore the software to the state it was in the first time we turned on the PC. This will delete all our data, as well as any applications we've installed. While XP is usually quite stable, problems such as virus infections, operator errors, and hardware and software failures can cripple a PC to the extent that it won't even run. This means that without a good recent backup or good recovery software, all of our data will be lost.

A particularly powerful recovery tool is INSERT, a version of Linux designed to correct problems in Windows, Linux, and the latest Macintosh PCs. INSERT is a "live CD," which means it does not use the hard disk at all, but runs directly from the CD-ROM drive; as a result, it can run even on a PC with an inoperable hard disk. It has a graphical user interface and many useful maintenance applications, including those for file-system repair, data recovery, virus scanning, network analysis, and Internet browsing. In this short article I'll just introduce INSERT; you can download a tutorial on it from the What's New section of the BCUG Web site, <<http://www.bcug.com>>, and this includes instructions on how to obtain the software for free.

After any serious problem, your first action should be to copy all your data to an external (usually a USB) drive. Especially if the problem is a failing hard disk, you have no

time for experimenting; just copy everything in My Documents. INSERT has file managers that let you do this graphically, much as you would with Windows Explorer. However, Linux is not Windows, and you should get some experience with INSERT before the next PC disaster. In particular, Linux uses different designations for hard disks than does Windows. The first ATA hard disk is hda and its first partition is hda1. (On most PCs, hda1 is c: in Windows.) If this disk has a second partition, it is hda2 (usually d: in Windows). If you have a second ATA drive, it is hdb in Linux. SATA, SCSI, and USB drives are designated sda, sdb, sdc, etc. Before you can access the information on a storage device, you must mount it. Fortunately, INSERT has a graphical mounting tool that lets you mount a device with a mouse click; see the tutorial for more information.

When INSERT is running, neither Windows nor any of its programs are running. This means that any viruses are dead and hence are easier to deal with, since they cannot hide themselves. INSERT has the clam virus scanner—a Linux program that looks for Windows viruses. With this you can clean up any infections before you restart Windows.

INSERT has tools to manipulate entire partitions. These allow you to change partition sizes and create new ones. You can also move your entire file system to a new disk—handy if you are replacing your c: drive with a new and larger one. If you are selling an old PC, there are tools to wipe your hard disk completely clean, which avoids giving the new owner your passwords, checkbook files, tax returns, etc. It also has tools to recover damaged files. Finally, it is possible to damage a hard

disk's master boot record (mbr) or a partition boot record, which prevents Windows from booting, even though none of its files are damaged. The retail version of Windows has the tools fixmbr and fixboot to repair such problems, but these aren't present in the OEM version. INSERT allows you to repair damaged mbrs and boot sectors.

With INSERT you can also reset Windows passwords and edit its registry (if you are sufficiently courageous or desperate). You can edit boot.ini; this is a text file, which if corrupted, will prevent Windows from booting. There are also programs to explore the hardware, view files, and look at any connected networks. All in all, INSERT is an especially valuable maintenance tool, especially if you are responsible for maintaining several PCs. Other maintenance programs are available, in particular the Ultimate Boot CD and the System Rescue CD, but I've found that INSERT is the easiest to use and has the most complete set of tools.

This article has been provided to APCUG by the author solely for publication by APCUG member groups. All other uses require the permission of the author (see e-mail address below).

Dick Maybach is a member of the Brookdale Computer User Group, New Jersey. <<http://www.bcug.com>>. e-mail: <[N2nd\(at\)att.net](mailto:N2nd(at)att.net)>

[To get the tutorial referred to in the text go to <<http://www.bcug.com>> and click on 'Check These!!!' tab and choose 'Insert'.—Ed]

	<p>Free PC Security Suite from eEye By Ira Wilsker</p>
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One of my recently retired coworkers informed me that the subscription to her Internet security suite was about to expire, and asked for my recommendation on what to do. She could renew her current product, purchase another competing major product suite, or try a fairly new free product. Since safe computing is paramount in my mind, I would normally be suspicious of a new security suite, especially a free one, and would research the new suite before putting it on a computer. I found positive reviews of this new free product, published by some of the major computer periodicals, so I decided to give it a try. Soon, I will confidently install it on her computer. That product is the Blink Personal Internet Security with Antivirus, from eEye Digital Security, an Orange County, California, company.

I first found out about Blink Personal Internet Security with Antivirus when one of my radio show listeners e-mailed me, inquiring to see what I knew about it. At that time I had not heard of it, but a little research taught me that the product and company were for real. A review of the "Clients" link on the eEye website at <<http://www.eeye.com>> showed that eEye products were currently installed and protecting an impressive list of over 9000 commercial clients, including several of the Fortune 500 companies (such as Verizon), over a dozen major universities (including Harvard and the University of Miami), major financial service companies (including Dow Jones, E*Trade, Merrill Lynch, Visa,

<p>Computer History 1992: Apple's lawsuit against Microsoft is dismissed..</p>

and the Federal Reserve Bank of New York), several U.S. and Canadian government agencies (including the U. S. Department of Justice), healthcare agencies, major manufacturers, and technology companies (including Kodak, Adobe, Intel, and Microsoft). With a client list like this, I reasoned that eEye must be for real, and have something positive to offer.

eEye produces a variety of computer security products, one of which is its Blink Personal Edition with Antivirus. eEye is currently offering a free one year license for this comprehensive suite (for personal use only in the U.S. and Canada) with the hope that users will either upgrade to the more sophisticated Professional version, or renew the Personal edition at the completion of the initial free year of service. After the first year, the renewal fee is quite reasonable and competitive at \$24.95 for a single computer license. For those with multiple computers, eEye offers a three computer license for \$29.95, which comes out to less than \$10 per computer for a year of service, a real bargain when compared to its more pricey commercial competitors.

The Personal Edition contains an antivirus component that was recently awarded the prestigious VB100 award for successfully blocking 100% of “in the wild viruses” with no false positives. Internet security is more than just antivirus protection, and Blink Personal Edition contains a full suite of security products. Blink includes anti-spyware, a system firewall, anti-phishing (online identity theft), application firewall, host based intrusion prevention, buffer overflow protection, system registry protection, application execution protection, protection from new

“zero-day” threats, and a vulnerability assessment utility. The selection of security features is more comprehensive than its major commercial competitors. Despite offering complete multi-layered protection at a great price (free), Blink Personal Edition is easy on system resources, only taking up about 60 megs of hard drive space (compared to over 300 megs for some of its competitors), and only consumes about 60 megs of RAM with all features loaded and running. This compares quite favorably to its better known competitors utilizing up to 226 megs of RAM. Using less RAM frees up system resources so other applications can run more efficiently. This free Personal Edition offers totally automated daily updates which will keep the virus signatures and other security features up to date.

Blink Personal Edition will run on Windows 2000, Windows XP (32-bit versions), Windows Tablet PC, and Windows Media Center. A version for Vista will be out later this year. Because this Personal Edition is not a resource hog, there are only minimal hardware requirements, such as a 233 MHz processor, 60 megs of hard drive space, and 128 megs of RAM, meaning that this will run well on almost all 2000 and XP series computers.

Downloading is easy, and only requires a simple online registration prior to the download. eEye only asks for an e-mail address, and country, to download the software. eEye also offers an option to subscribe to free industry and technical newsletters, as well as eEye security alerts. Subscribing to these e-mail lists is not an eligibility requirement for the download. According to the eEye website, over 23,000 free copies of Blink Personal Edition were

downloaded since the current version was first released in April.


For those who have been using one of the other free antivirus utilities, Blink Personal Edition with Antivirus may be a good replacement since it offers a complete security suite, rather than just virus protection. For those who are currently using a commercial security suite, and are looking to renew their current suite, or who may want a change from the resource hungry utilities, Blink Personal Edition with Antivirus may be worthy of serious consideration. The price, at least for the first year, can not be beat.

WEBSITES:

<<http://www.eeye.com>>. **Blink Personal Internet Security.**

<<http://www.eEye.com/blinkfree>>. **Blink free download**

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>.

	BOARD MEETING 07/08/2007 Charles Moery
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Board Members Present

President Gary DeNise, Vice-President Richard Jackson, Treasurer Bette Gay, SIG-Advanced Chairman Franz Breidenich, SIG-IBM Intermediate Chairman, Carl Massie, Jr., SIG-IBM Co-Chairman Tom Callow, Publications Committee Chairman Warner Mach, and Members-at-Large Bob Clyne and Chuck Moery. Also present was Internet Committee Chairman Mike Bader. The

May board meeting was called to order by Gary DeNise at 12:10 p.m.

Old Business

Bette Gay reported that the June Current Treasury amount equaled a total of \$3,716.79 in the checking account and \$4,523.36 is invested in three Certificates of Deposit for an overall total of \$8,240.15. Expenses were \$102.82 and gross income was \$101.12 for the month. The membership is currently 82. There are currently 10 complimentary DATA BUS recipients on the distribution list.

It is time for Monica Cote, Reinhold Kreuger and Betty MacKenzie to renew their memberships.

Richard Jackson advised that the SEMCO telephone line was down for a few days due to a bad cable. It is currently in service.

New Business

There was an inquiry about the condition of the mail delivery of the DATA BUS and no member reported damage this month.

Tom Callow reported that beginning in 2008 a notification must be made to the IRS on the RS Annual Information Return.

Bob Clyne moved to adjourn. Tom Callow seconded the motion and the motion was carried. The meeting adjourned at 12:25 p.m.

<p>Computer History 1976: MITS shows the Altair 680b, based on the Motorola 6800 microprocessor. Microsoft licenses 6800 BASIC to MITS.</p>

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS (SIGS)



SIG-IBM
Tom Callow
Warner Mach



August 12: Microsoft Office Publisher 2007: SIG-IBM Co-Chairman Tom Callow will present a demonstration of the newest version of Microsoft's desktop publishing program.



SIG-IBM INTERMEDIATE
Carl Massie, Jr.

August 12: SIG-IBM Intermediate Chairman, Carl Massie Jr. presents: (1) Back-to-school buying opportunities. (2) Improved Intel processors and chip sets. (3) A few Microsoft word tips. (4) An introduction to Powershell scripting and command lines. (5) A discussion of different perspectives on software changes.

NOVICE-IBM GROUP Rotating Volunteer Hosts

August 12: Help Q & A:
Discussion directed by the audience. No question is too simple! Note: The Novice-IBM Group is 'by request.' If you have special questions for this group then speak to one of the officers to schedule the session..



SIG-ADVANCED
Franz Breidenich

October 1, 2007: (Note: Meeting is normally the first Mondy, but no meeting on Labor Day–Sept. 3.) 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.

Computer History

1979: The 'Source' and 'Compuserve' go online..

Sept. 2007 DATABUS DEADLINE (7th day after 2nd Sunday in month)
SEMCO Input and Members' Ads—Deadline: Sun., Aug. 19, 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 \(address Page 2\)](#).

COMP (Computer Operators of Marysville & Port Huron)

Sept 5, 7 p.m., (1st Wednesday); St. Clair County RESA, 499 Range Rd., Marysville, Admin. Building. Jane Wheatly 810-982-1187 <<http://www.bwcomp.org>>. 10/3,11/7,12/5 next.

DCOM Computer Club

August 17, 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. Topic: Vista.

MacGroup- Detroit

August 19, 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>>. Topic: 21st Anniv. Mtg. - Data Rescue II, Drive Genius and Data Backup 3 & ‘Software for the Average Joe’.

MacTechnics, (MAC User Group)

August 18, 11:00 a.m., (3rd Saturday); (SIGs at 9:30); Washtenaw County Learning Library, 4135 Washtenaw Ave., Ann Arbor. <<http://www.mactechnics.org>>. JoAnn Olson at 248-478-4300. Topic: Prosoft Data Backup.

MDLUG (Metro Detroit Linux User Group)

August 11, 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. Topic: TBA.

MUG (Michigan User Group)

August 14, 6:00 p.m., (2nd Tuesday); MUG meetings are at The Farmington Community Library–Main Branch, 32737 W. 12 Mile Rd., Farmington Hills, MI. 48334. <<http://www.mug.org>>. Topic: TBA.

Michigan Apple Computer User Group

August 9, 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>>. Topic: TBA.

Oak Park Computer Club

Every Fri., 10:15 a.m. at Oak Park Recreation Bldg, Oak Park Blvd. west of Coolidge.

Royal Oak Computer Club

Every Wed., 12:30 to 2:30 PM at Mahany/Meiniger Senior Community Center on Marais St. near Crooks & 13 Mile. Guest speakers & regular monthly speakers. <<http://www.geocities.com/royaloakcomputerclub/ourpage.html>>

SHCC (Sterling Heights Computer Club)

Sept. 4, 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>>. 10/2 next,

Wayne State University Mac User Group

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

Computer History

1977: Radio Shack announces the TRS-80 microcomputer with Zilog Z80 processor



July REFRESHMENT DONORS

Gary DeNise, Coordinator
Gary DeNise
Warner Mach
Roland Maki

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..... mbdader@flash.net

Callow, Tom—248-642-5770 9am–5pm..... tcallow@monaghanpc.com

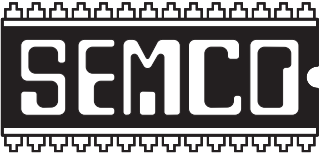
Clyne, Bob—810-387-3101, 9am–10pm..... clyne@mich.com

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



SOUTHEASTERN MICHIGAN
COMPUTER ORGANIZATION, INC.

SEMCO CALENDAR

ArvinMeritor Building
2135 West Maple Road
Troy, Michigan

August 12–SUNDAY (Meet 2nd Sunday)

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

SEMCO General Meeting at 1:30 p.m.

Special Interest Groups (SIGs)

SIG-IBM 1:45 p.m. **Program: Microsoft Office Publisher 2007:** SIG-IBM Co-Chairman Tom Callow will present a demonstration of the newest version of Microsoft's desktop publishing program.

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 Chairman, Carl Massie Jr. presents: (1) Back-to-school buying opportunities. (2) Improved Intel processors and chip sets. (3) A few Microsoft Word tips. (4) An introduction to powershell scripting and command line. (5) A discussion of different perspectives on software changes.

SIG-ADVANCED, Oct. 1, 2007–MONDAY, 6:45 p.m., (Note: Meeting is normally the first Monday, but no meeting on Sept. 3–Labor Day), Oak Park Public Library, 14200 Oak Park Blvd., Oak Park, MI. Phone: (248) 691-7480. Directions: Oak Park Blvd. is 9 1/2 mile Road; library is west of Coolidge. Info: Franz Breidenich 248-398-3359. **TOPIC: Wide-Ranging Discussion Of Computers & Computing.**

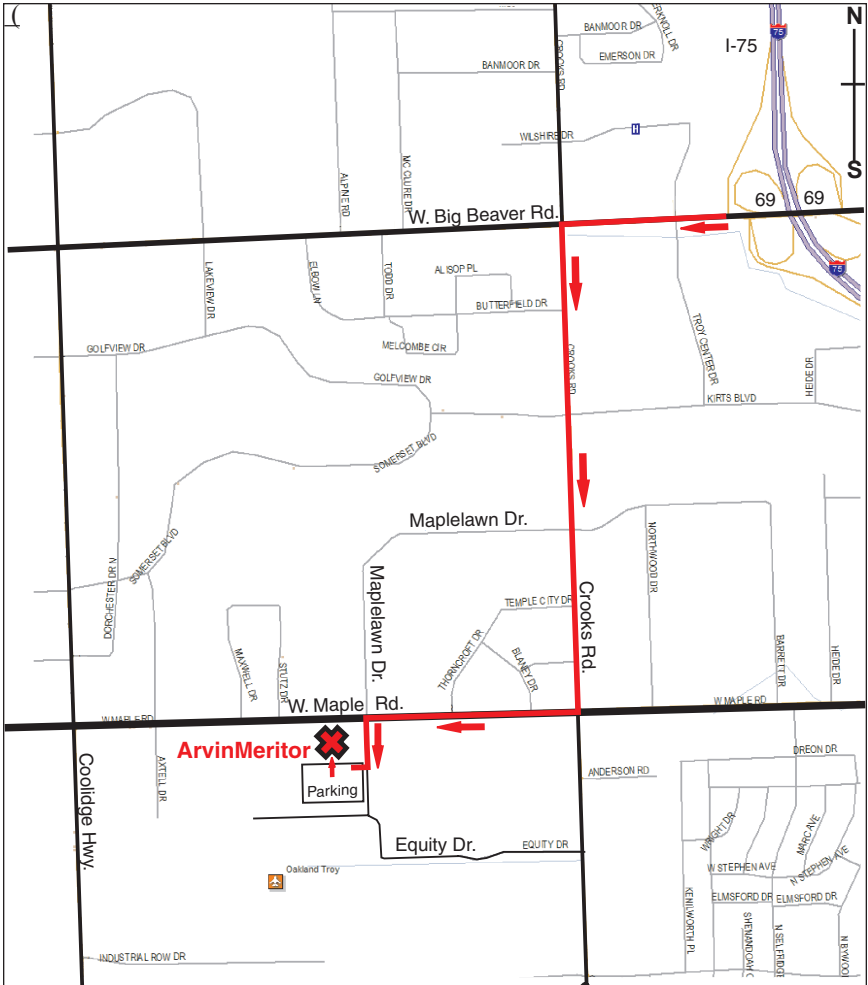
September 9 –SEMCO Sunday

<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)
August 12
September 9**

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