

Official Newsletter
SouthEastern Michigan
Computer Organization, Inc.

DATA BUS

Volume 32

September 2007

Number 9

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

Help For Road Warriors

I read this interesting article about using a USB flash drive on the road instead of lugging your laptop along (plug the USB flash drive into someone else's computer) <<http://www.informationweek.com/hardware/showArticle.jhtml?articleID=199906066>>. A few of the applications available are mentioned, and even the possibility of using an operating system on the flash drive, but a USB flash drive won't boot on just any computer. Some user groups have already had demonstrations on this unique technique. Best of all, after you use your special USB flash drive on another computer and remove it, it leaves no tracks because all of the applications you use are on your flash drive as well as your data.

What's Going On?

When my monitor's on/off switch started acting up, I decided to leave my computer on full time, although I could have used a surge protector strip to control it. I have friends who leave their computers on 24/7 and say they prefer that method because most failures happen when you boot up. Lately, I started having a problem with the screensaver not working and my monitor seemed to be active all the time. However, I noticed that Zone Alarm was occasionally telling me about blocking an unknown action, so I began to wonder if something was working from time to time internally, therefore not letting the screensaver work.

I decided to run Spybot to see how much stuff it would find, and was

surprised to see it find 117 items to remove. I had run it not long ago and it found 5 items, normal in the past. Then I noticed that I had never installed AdAware so I downloaded and installed it and let it scan the HD. What a surprise when AdAware found 158 more items after Spybot had already scanned the drive and removed 117 items. I spend very little time on the Internet so I still wonder why so much crap is on my HD lately.

I was even more surprised when the screensaver started working normally after cleaning all that junk off, but that tells me that even though I have a firewall, and a router, which also has a firewall, somehow the malware has found my HD anyway. Also to my surprise, my browser history was now gone. I try to be careful about Web sites and checking my e-mail. I guess there was more than I realized running in the background. Maybe I should unplug the Internet connection when I'm not on it. By the way, my computer runs better now, although something warned me a new program was trying to install in my startup group, which I declined.

Was I On TV? Maybe!

We had an interesting experience when my wife and I were called to go over to Daytona Beach and work crowd control at the Speed Channel booth <<http://www.speedtv.com>> for two days during the week of the NASCAR Pepsi 400 race. It was fun and if you were watching their two-hour program called Race Day, you might have seen us (wearing security uniforms) without knowing who we were. We were behind the fence (with Home Depot advertising slipcovers on it) for crowd control during the telecast and we noticed the boom camera looking our way at times.

A person holding up an undesirable sign was sometimes a problem. Home Depot was the sponsor and had their own distinctive stage that the audience could surround. Kenny Wallace was the surprise guest that day. By the way, Coca Cola just signed a new contract with NASCAR for that race so it is safe to assume it will no longer be the 'Pepsi 400.'

Consumers—Financial Help In 2009

I read an article in "Twice Magazine" (picked it up at the wireless show) about the government program that will help people purchase a new converter for their old TV if they can't afford a new digital TV by February 17 of 2009. I found it interesting and informative <<http://www.twice.com/article/CA6428026.html?q=Digital+Foci>>.

Help From My Readers

Last month I ran a product for creating a PDF file, but the free version used a sponsor page. I received a message from Ira Wilsker (APCUG board member) telling me about this one; "Look at CutePDF Writer which is FREE <<http://www.cutepdf.com/>>." They do offer the Pro version for \$49.95. I met Ira at an APCUG event when I first started writing this column, and he gave me some good tips.

Scrub That Registry Well!

Wise Cleaner has released Wise Registry Cleaner 2.8, a freeware tool that enables you to clean the Windows Registry safely and quickly. Each time you install an application it writes a few entries in Windows Registry, but when the software is uninstalled, the entries often remain in the registry. Over the years, your registry accumulates entries from the software you no longer use. To achieve top performance again, simply clean your registry. Wise Registry

Cleaner will scan your registry for incorrect and obsolete entries and let you fix any found issues to make your computer run at the peak speed it's capable of. The scan is quick thanks to the enhanced scan engine, and after a short time, you can see a list of issues that need to be repaired. You can view each issue individually and bring up its detailed description to help figure out how to deal with it best, then repair it or leave it unchanged.

The program will automatically back up all changes done to the registry, so that if there is anything wrong, you can undo it easily with a click. If you are a non-techie user and know little about the Windows Registry, you can rely on the program's Artificial Intelligence and let it repair issues automatically. New to version 2.8 is enhanced security, improved multi-language support, an ability to report when some entries cannot be removed and some other features.

Wise Registry Cleaner 2.8 runs on Microsoft Windows 9X, NT, 2000, XP, 2003, and Vista including X64 version. Additional information on the product, its manual, as well as the freeware downloadable version is available from <<http://www.wisecleaner.com>>.

Direct download link: <<http://www.wisecleaner.com/soft/WRCSetup.exe>>

E-mail: <support@wisecleaner.com>

Organize All Of Your Feeds

ExtraLabs Software unveiled Feed Editor 4.5, a full-fledged RSS editor that offers you an easy way to create and maintain RSS feeds and podcasts. ExtraLabs Software has announced the release of Feed Editor 4.5. Designed for the Windows OS, it enables you to create, edit and publish RSS feeds and podcasts surprisingly quickly and

easily. It includes support for various RSS formats, podcasting support, a WYSIWYG HTML editor, an XML editor, an RSS Feed preview, an FTP upload and publishing capability, automatic date management and the ability to convert CSV or HTML to 'Really Simple Syndication.'

To create a new RSS feed, you can use a New Feed Creation wizard to guide you through the RSS setup process in a step-by-step fashion. Included is a built-in WYSIWYG HTML editor that allows you to edit a feed. You can format the text, apply styling and insert images and hyperlinks. "Feed Editor" can generate a feed from a CSV and HTML file. Once a feed is ready, you can preview it and publish online using an FTP upload facility.

Read more about Feed Editor at the web site: <<http://www.extralabs.net/feededitor.htm>>.

Evaluation version free: <<http://www.extralabs.net/FeedEditorSetup.exe>> (2.1 Mb).

Feed Editor 4.5 runs under Windows 95/98/Me/2000/NT/XP/2003 and costs \$39.95 (USD). User Group members get a 30% discount. Follow this link for registration: <http://www.regnow.com/softsell/nph-softsell.cgi?item=13371-1&ss_coupon=EXTR-3G8L> or use this coupon: EXTR-3G8L. Registered customers are entitled to free lifetime updates and premium technical support. Discounts for volume buyers are available. Additional information on Feed Editor 4.5, as well as its 30-day evaluation version, is available from <<http://www.extralabs.net>>.

That's it for this month. I'll have more new product announcements on my Web site (most 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 Cheapskate) Click <[bobclick at bellsouth dot net](mailto:bobclick@bellsouth.net)>. Visit my Web site at <<http://www.dealsguy.com>>.

Bob Click is a member of the Greater Orlando Computer Users Group.

	<p>Improve Computing Pleasure With Free Widgets By Ira Wilsker</p>
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Many of us are extremely busy, and often lack the time to search the Internet for items of frequent interest. Many of us have dull and boring desktops displayed on our monitors, often using the default images of our computer or software maker. Fortunately for us, there is a free service offered by Yahoo!, called "widgets."

Widgets, also known as "gadgets" by some web services, are small programs that display a wide variety of information on the otherwise wasted space on our desktops. This information is automatically updated on a frequent basis, providing the user with current data without loading another program or browsing to a website, as widgets are displayed on the desktop on a full time basis.

Widgets is the name for the products distributed by Yahoo!, and gadgets are distributed by other web service

providers. While similar in appearance and function, widgets and gadgets are generally not interchangeable, and in order to conserve system resources, users should choose gadgets or widgets, but not both.

Yahoo!'s widgets can be found at <http://widgets.yahoo.com>>. Upon opening that page, the user is greeted with a button to download the widget engine, which includes about a dozen popular widgets, including a picture frame (displays digital photos on desktop), weather display, notepad, daily planner, maps, stock ticker, and others. The opacity of widgets can be controlled to make them nearly opaque, hiding the desktop behind the widget, to almost totally transparent, fully displaying the desktop. Widgets can be dragged and dropped anywhere on the screen. I have a lot of icons on my desktop, and my widgets cover several of the icons, but this is not a problem as I drag the widget out of the way whenever I want to access those previously covered icons.

The widget engine works on Windows XP with service pack 2, Windows 2000 with service pack 4, Vista, or Macs with OS X 10.3.9 or higher. An Internet connection is necessary in order to update the widgets, and 512 megabytes (minimum) RAM is recommended for improved performance.

Among the default widgets included with the widget engine, I personally have the stock ticker and weather widgets loaded and running, and also have a TV widget which displays the shows for the next few hours on the channels of my choice.

The stock ticker widget is very easy to use, and is automatically updated

every few minutes. The default listings are for popular quotes, such as the Dow Jones Industrial Averages, NASDAQ, Yahoo!, and similar issues. It is very simple to modify the listing to show any desired quotes and indices, and the number of issues displayed is only limited by the space available on the desktop.

The weather widget is customizable for any city or zip code, and graphically displays the weather for five days, current conditions, temperature, and moon phases. By moving the cursor over the weather widget (sometimes it also requires a mouse click), a balloon opens which displays the humidity, barometric pressure, wind chill or heat index, wind direction and speed, and the time of most recent update.

The widget I seem to refer to the most is the TV widget called "TV Tracker," which can be downloaded from the Widget Gallery. Once downloaded and installed, a city and zip code are selected, which displays the on-air, cable, and satellite options and carriers locally available. Selecting the appropriate carrier displays a two-hour grid of what is on television. Different genres, such as sports and movies are highlighted in different colors for easy viewing. Clicking on a highlighted title will "fetch" the description and details of the movie or sports event, displaying it in a sub-widget adjacent to the primary widget. I will be honest and say that there are several cable channels available to me that I simply never watch, and TV Tracker easily allows for the display of only selected channels, making the display that much easier to follow.

The widget gallery, <http://widgets.yahoo.com/gallery>>, currently lists

4242 Windows widgets available for download, and 3977 widgets for Mac, in a variety of categories. As I type this, Yahoo! is featuring Motor Trend Magazine's "Gas Alert Savings" widget which displays a localized list of the lowest priced gas stations in the area, and is available for both Windows and Mac. Widgets can be searched by name, type, or date. The widget categories listed in the gallery are latest (4242 widgets), updates (2158 widgets), fun & games (575 widgets), date & time (470), news feeds (952), system utilities (354), sight and sound (554), geek stuff (120), cam viewers (273), widget tools (63), app (application) enhancers (109), search tools (352), and various (miscellaneous) 416). Each category may contain hundreds of different widgets, all of which are available for free download.

I have downloaded several other widgets, and selectively load them when I want, and stop them when no longer wanted. In Windows, widgets as a group can be controlled by clicking on the widget icon in the system tray, near the clock. The widget icon is a black background, with two diagonal and interlocked gears. Right clicking on the widget icon displays a comprehensive menu of options which allows the user to control the appearance and function of widgets, load and unload widgets, and otherwise control their behavior.

Some widgets that I selectively use are news feeds which display real time news headlines from hundreds of sources, live weather radar, streaming audio from dozens of radio stations from all over the globe, and many others. Although I have never used it, there is even a pregnancy calculator widget!

Widgets can be a fun adjunct to improve the satisfaction and use of our computers.

WEBSITES

<<http://widgets.yahoo.com>>

<<http://widgets.yahoo.com/gallery>>

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The New, the Best, and the Worst **By Pim Borman**

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Digital Camera Lessons

My first digital camera was a 3.1 megapixel Olympus C-730 Ultra Zoom. With its 10x optical zoom lens, I hoped to take candid pictures of squirrels feeding at the corn spike on the back fence. To my disappointment they turned out on the fuzzy side. I blamed the optics, until it was pointed out to me that a hand-held camera is too unsteady at that zoom level.

Lesson #1: It takes a tripod for best results at elevated zoom levels.

Indoor pictures, especially those I took at our monthly meetings, were never as bright and sharp as some of those taken by others, even

after processing with a photo editor. The pictures were underexposed due to the inadequate flash and small lens diameter. To compensate, the camera used a large aperture (affecting sharpness) and amplified the signal from the CCD as much as possible (to an equivalent of ISO 400 maximum in this camera). Amplifying the signal also amplified the electronic noise inherent in all electronic systems, resulting in a mottled background. The camera minimized the mottling by blurring the image.

Lesson #2: Higher ISO specifications are meaningless unless the CCD chip has a higher signal-to-noise ratio. Otherwise it takes a stronger (external) flash, and/or a larger lens for better light gathering. If you already have an old SLR film camera with several large lenses you may be better off with a new SLR camera body that accepts your lenses. More expensive and bulky, but it will get the best results.

Digital pictures don't always turn out as intended. Taking a picture of a roomful of people may end up with people in the back of the room barely visible while the ones up front are overexposed. Often a part of the picture can be rescued by severely cropping to retain the group in the foreground only. Unless you start out with a large excess of pixels, the remaining edited version may not have enough pixels left for a sharp image of reasonable size, resulting in blurriness or even pixelation. 7 megapixel images can be cropped smaller than 3 megapixel ones.

Lesson #3: Get as many pixels as you can afford. You can always discard the excess later.

My next camera was a Casio EXZ-750 with 7.2 megapixels and no more

than 3x optical zoom. I already knew that higher zoom levels gave unsatisfactory results. The Casio was much more compact than the Olympus, with a large LCD screen and an optical viewfinder for bright outdoor use. According to the PC magazines it provided outstanding image quality. I did see a comment somewhere that its low-light performance was marginal and I should have paid heed to that. As it turned out, the camera performed beautifully under daylight conditions, but flash pictures taken in semi-dark rooms invariably showed the multicolored mottling due to background electronic noise in the chip. I have not found a photo editor (yet?) that corrects that problem, other than by blurring the picture to make the mottling less visible.

On the other hand, with the higher pixel count I took a daylight picture of a squirrel on the back fence from the kitchen door with 3x zoom and cropped it back tightly without losing quality. One night I surprised a raccoon raiding the bird feeders. It may have been a youngster, at least it did not show any fear and allowed me to walk right up to it and snap some flash pictures. Under these close-up conditions, with plenty of light from the flash, the pictures were sharp without mottling of the dark background. Still, the new camera did not solve my problem with the unsatisfactory performance in open areas under low light conditions.

Lately many camera manufacturers have started to emphasize higher light sensitivity of their cameras in terms of ISO values. Both my Olympus and the Casio had a maximum of ISO 400 speed. I took some trial pictures with both my cameras, changing the ISO setting from 100 to the maximum 400. As a target I

used my 40-year old, seldom-used, set of Encyclopedia Britannicas, in dark-brown imitation-leather bindings and gold lettering on the spines. Sitting in their own bookcase in a dark corner of the den they make a perfect test image. It only confirmed lesson 2: higher ISO settings by themselves don't help. They just amplify the noise as much as the signal.

And then I read about the new Olympus SP-550 UZ camera. All-new technology! 18X optical zoom! Includes wide-angle! New Dual Sensor-Shift and Digital Image Stabilization! Up to ISO 5000 sensitivity (with reduced image size) and up to 1/2000 second shutter speed! I liked my old Olympus and this seemed to be everything I needed to solve my problems. I was ready to order but hesitated at the last moment. It sounded almost too good to be true, and frequently that turns out to be true.

Lesson 4: First find out all you can about a new camera from an independent source.

PC World and PC Magazine were no help, since the camera had only recently become available. I found a terrific Web site, Digital Photography <<http://www.dpreview.com>> with in-depth reviews of just about any digital camera on the market. More detail than you knew existed, sure to uncover any shortcomings. Its summary opinion of the Olympus SP-550 UZ was deadly. In essence: a camera designed by the marketing department, out to establish the best-looking list of specifications without regard to actual performance. A detailed series of test images showed how the performance of the camera rapidly degraded with increasing ISO values, even well below ISO 1000, let alone 5000. The dual image stabilization

didn't work well at the high zoom levels where it is most needed. Even under the best conditions, images were not as sharp as with competing cameras.

Lesson 5: Image stabilization may not work as well as promised, especially at high zoom levels when it is most needed.

Having found dpreview to be a goldmine of information about cameras, I checked to see which make and model they liked best, especially under low-light conditions. Their clear choice was the Fujifilm FinePix F31fd camera, a minor upgrade of the previous F30 <<http://www.dpreview.com/reviews/fujifilmf31fd/>>. In many respects it looked and acted like so many other compact digital cameras, but it boasted of having a Super CCD and a new Real Photo Processor. Also, ISO 3200 maximum, 6.3 megapixels, 3x optical zoom. The review showed that, as in other cameras, the image quality at the highest ISO settings was unacceptable, but it still found that "this camera has Class-leading high ISO performance; superb results up to ISO 400, surprisingly good ISO 800 performance." This is presumably due to a higher signal-to-noise ratio of its CCD chip. As a result its performance at low light levels is superior. In other respects the camera is unremarkable. It lacks an optical view finder and its LCD screen is hard to see in bright light. It uses more expensive XD picture cards that have lower writing speeds than SD cards.

Lesson #6: Digital cameras come with a minimum of built-in memory. Buy at least 512 MB of removable additional storage. SD picture cards are less expensive and faster than XD cards,

but are not interchangeable. Check to see what the camera uses.

At half the (street) price of the new Olympus, I bought the Fujifilm camera. Test pictures of my encyclopedia confirmed its superior low-light performance. That is also clear in the first indoor group pictures I have taken with it. For outside pictures I still prefer the Casio, mostly because of its convenient optical view finder.

Lesson #7: An optical or miniature LCD viewfinder is essential for accurately framing pictures under bright conditions.

Finally, if you are a stickler for perfection get a digital SLR camera with a set of high-quality lenses. You'll never be satisfied with the small pocket cameras. But even with less than absolutely perfect technical quality, an interesting picture is still worth at least a thousand words!

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Computer History
1990: Microsoft introduces
Windows 3.0



Have You Tested Your GFCIs Lately?

**By Bob Clyne
Associate Editor**

A Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter (GFCI) is a safety device designed to protect people from fatal electrical shock from protected equipment. The most common form of GFCI is a duplex wall outlet with two buttons between the outlets. There is a black "Test" button and a red "Reset" button.

The instructions with GFCIs call for them to be tested every month, but I doubt if many people do it. I, probably like most of you, had neglected to test the GFCIs in my home for quite a while, but recently I tested one just as a spur of the moment thing. Much to my surprise, the GFCI failed to trip when I pressed the "Test" button. I tried it several more times and then got a plug-in GFCI tester and tried it several times with that. It refused to trip. This alarmed me sufficiently that I proceeded to test all of my GFCIs immediately. There was one additional GFCI that would not trip. The failed GFCIs continued to supply power to the loads but they provided no shock protection. I replaced the two failed GFCIs and decided that I should test all of them periodically. I still don't test them every month, but I do try to test them at least every three months.

To test a GFCI, press the "Test" button. The "Reset" button should pop out a little ways and you will usually hear a click. Any loads connected to the GFCI, including any loads connected to outlets downstream of the GFCI protected by the GFCI via 'feed through' protection, will lose power. To be thorough, when testing a GFCI you should have a load, such as a light,

plugged into the outlet so that you can easily see if the power has been interrupted. After determining that the GFCI has tripped, press the “Reset” button and check that power to the loads has been restored. If a GFCI fails to trip or fails to reset, it should be replaced as soon as possible.

Another way to test a GFCI is with a plug-in tester, available at most hardware stores, that has some test lights and the GFCI test button. These devices give you a visual indication from the lights of whether or not there is power on the circuit, and a way to test any outlet to see if it has GFCI protection. You still have to reset the GFCI via its “Reset” button. These testers also test for some other wiring problems. I like them.

GFCIs detect ground fault leakage current by comparing the current in the ‘hot’ and ‘neutral’ wires of the circuit. Any difference is assumed to be going to ground. If this leakage current is more than 4–6 milliamperes, the GFCI should trip quickly enough to prevent a fatal shock, though it will not completely prevent a shock. One hazard that a GFCI will not protect you against is, if you contact both the hot and neutral wires of the electrical circuit. In this case, the current in both legs of the circuit will be equal, the GFCI will not trip and you will be just another load on the circuit.

Codes generally require GFCIs in bathrooms, kitchens, laundry areas, garages, outbuildings, and outdoors, but consult your local building codes for the exact requirements. I do not know of any places that they are prohibited.

GFCIs generally provide ‘feed through’ protection to loads/outlets that are connected downstream of the GFCI in the electrical circuit so some

devices may be protected without it being obvious. Test to be sure. If a GFCI is installed with the “line” and “load” connections reversed, the downstream loads will be protected and the test and reset functions will appear to work but devices plugged into the GFCI outlet itself will not be protected.

Test your GFCIs regularly; the life you save may be your own. And, oh yes, don’t cut off the ground lugs on your power cords.

This and That
By Elizabeth B. Wright

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

How much time are you spending upgrading, both hardware and software? New operating systems, programs that won’t run on older systems, changes in the Internet, memory hog programs and graphic cards? If you are keeping up with the trend toward power, then all of these things probably apply to your computer life. But are they worth it?

For myself, I have found that so much time and money have been invested in trying to keep up with the times. Keeping up with the Joneses doesn’t even apply here. Just trying to stay current on the Internet is enough to make most of us upgrade, upgrade, upgrade. But all of this has come with a severe penalty. I find it is taking much too much of my valuable time and that not enough of that time is being spent productively. If there wasn’t a deadline for this column, would I even find the time to write it? Some big changes in direction are in order I think.

Until Microsoft makes everything we already own completely useless, I find that most of what I need to do with the computer can be done with much older programs. For instance, if I want to be sure someone can open and read a document; I still save it as ASCII text. Oh yes, we have .pdf and other so-called portable text formats, but so what? The most portable is still the above mentioned ASCII. The output is usually in exceedingly small files. There is no formatting possible, but if you are merely transmitting information, what need is there for more than an old-fashioned typewritten letter? Most word processing programs still offer the option of saving the file as a .txt file. Personally, when I want to be sure the file can be accessed by someone else, I type it in Notepad. I've even been known to use really archaic programs, just for kicks.

If you are earning your living with mathematical programs such as accounting, then where do you draw the line on updating? Does your older software do the job, and does your older computer do that job fast enough to ensure that you meet your deadlines so you can get paid for your work? But if your clients upgrade their software and you find that you must submit spreadsheets, etc. to them in a new format, then you are caught in the trap. So far most new programs will read some of the data from older versions of their software, but when will that change? About the same time as the printer manufacturers found out they could make more money selling ink rather than printers, one can only assume that the software companies were probably thinking "why can't we do something like that?"

When it comes to graphics however, don't even think about using older software and computers, unless of course you have all the time in the world to wait for changes to take place when you are enhancing your photos. Once again, if this is your job, you simply can't afford to be slow. But even for hobbyists, speed is really essential to graphic manipulation.

Where is the bottom line on speed versus money? Each of us has to decide on the point at which we achieve the balance of using our computers for productive output without further upgrades. It is just as easy to write this column on my oldest computer, but since working with photos is my hobby; my fastest computer will have to be used. However, from now on, the two machines will be used to do a specific job, rather than keeping everything on just one of them. As for the Internet, as long as it can be accessed with something other than the computer dedicated to the photos, then that is the one that will be used.

Hopefully I can keep my useful work separate from the Internet, the object being to avoid contamination as much as possible. But I'm not sure how long the older, slower computer will serve my Internet connection. If you are limited to one computer, you might look into removable hard drives in order to keep your data safe from the bad guys out there. But that takes us back to the money issue.

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Elizabeth B. Wright is a member of CCOKC and a frequent contributor to the eMonitor Computer Club of Oklanhoma City. <<http://www.ccokc.org>>. She can be reached at <[james\(at\)qns.com](mailto:james(at)qns.com)>.

Configuring Outlook Express **By Dick Maybach**

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

You can greatly improve your e-mail experience by properly configuring Outlook Express, which is the default Windows e-mail client. Outlook, which is included with MS Office, is a completely different program, but it has a similar user interface for e-mail. The two programs are similar enough that you should have no trouble adapting these procedures to your version. You should modify them as you get more experience with your particular mix of e-mail messages.

By default, Outlook Express has X folders. You should add to these to organize your e-mail messages to make them easier to find in the same way that you organize your file system by using folders there. Set up a separate folder for each major category of e-mail that you send and receive. With Outlook Express running, click on "File," select "New," and then click on "Folder..." Put the desired name in the "Name:" box and select "Personal Folders" in the "Select where to place the folder:" box. Move the messages in your Inbox to the appropriate folders. While you're at it, delete any you don't need. You will probably find some messages that

don't belong in any folder; just leave these in the Inbox. Consider having Outlook Express empty the Deleted Messages folder every time you exit the program.

You will now set up a series of rules that tell Outlook Express where to place incoming messages, using the following procedure. Click on the Organize icon and then the Rules Wizard menu item. Click on the New... button to create a new rule or the Modify... one to change a rule. Assuming you are creating a new rule, the first screen asks you what kind of rule you want, which is usually "Check messages as they arrive." At the bottom of each screen is a window showing the rule as you've defined it so far. You can click on any underlined terms in the rule to change them. (When you are defining a new rule, you must define these before you can go to the next screen.) The second screen lets you specify for which conditions you want to test. In the third screen you set what to do with the message, and the fourth one lets you add any exceptions. Finally, name the rule.

First, establish the rules to move incoming messages to the desired folder. Make the following choices for the rules screens. Screen 1—"Check messages as they arrive." Screen 2—"from people or distribution list." (Select the names from your address book.) Screen 3—select both "move it to the specified folder" and "stop processing more rules." (Click on specified and select an existing folder or create a new one.) Screen 4—you probably won't need any exceptions. Screen 5—give the rule the same name as the folder. Repeat this until you have specified folders for all the people from whom you regularly receive mail.

By default, Outlook Express indicates junk mail by showing it in gray and adult content in purple. (I love that we use the new-speak term “adult” to describe content that most of us lose interest in by the time we leave adolescence.) To get rid of it, set up the following rule. Screen 1—“Check messages when they arrive.” Screen 2—“suspected to be junk e-mail or from Junk Senders.” (You will see a message asking if this is to be applied to every message you receive; select “Yes.”) Screen 3—“move it to the specified folder,” probably “Deleted Items.” Screen 4—no exceptions. Screen 5—name it “Junk Senders.” Repeat this procedure, but for screen 2 select “Containing adult content or from adult content...”

You will probably find that these filters are not very effective. The following step is quite effective in eliminating spam, but it deletes all messages sent to you on a “copy to” (cc) or “blind copy to” (bcc) list. I use bcc routing on the Roundtable and Hardware SIG meeting notices. Unless you have set up a rule to route messages from me to a folder and then to stop processing other rules, Outlook Express will delete these meeting notices. Repeat again but select “Where my name is not in the To box” in screen 2. Monitor the results of this rule in case you need to add exceptions. Note also that if you don’t have your incoming mail sent to folders as above, you will need exemptions for every correspondent that uses cc or bcc routing.

If you follow my suggestions, you are sending all suspect e-mail to the Deleted Items folder. On my PC, everything in this folder is erased each time I exit Outlook Express, which

means that you should look before you exit, at least for a month or so. By the way, I find that many such messages attempt to access the Internet when you open them. I think that they are just downloading graphics, but I don’t want to take a chance that they are doing something sneaky. After I download my e-mail I disconnect so I can abort such actions. (If you have high-speed access you probably can’t easily do this.)

Your last step is to order your rules list. The rules moving the desired e-mail to the correct folders should appear at the top of the list. Since they stop checking other rules after they move a message, they will prevent the spam filter rules from throwing out messages from people with whom you regularly correspond. To do this, click on “Rules Wizard...” and use the “Move Up” and “Move Down” buttons to sort the rules. You will have to reorder the rules each time you add a new one.

You will probably find that some spam still gets through. You can add to your junk senders list by right clicking on the message, selecting “Junk e-mail,” and clicking on “Add to Junk Senders list.” However, many spammers change their e-mail address with each message, making this ineffective. In such cases, see if you can identify the junk in some other way, perhaps by looking for specific words or in one of the fields (address, header, etc.). Keep in mind however, that your goal is not to completely eliminate spam, but to reduce it to a manageable volume. Don’t let yourself become obsessed.

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permission of the author (see e-mail address below).

Dick Maybach is a columnist with the Brookdale Computer User Group (BTUG) of Brookdale, N.J.

The club web site is at <<http://www.bcug.org>>.

Mr. Maybach's e-mail is at <n2nd@att.net>.

**Zoo Tycoon 2: Zookeeper
Collection
By Rhonda & James
Winterhalter**

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

This game could easily capture the interest of all age levels. Grandparents looking for a great item to have around for the grandchildren should read on! Children of all ages, including the child in all of us, might get a lot of joy (and learning) by giving Zoo Tycoon 2 a try. After that, you may be hooked. James, (my eleven-year-old son) and I have been given this wonderful opportunity to test drive this game. We will share with the rest of you what we have discovered, enjoyed, learned, and we will even mention a few areas that we see could be improved upon.

Zoo Tycoon 2 is packed full of options, both within the software and on the Internet. When you first open the game, a screen is opened that allows you to see "Zoo News" and the "Community." Upon clicking one of these selections, you can be connected to the Web page that will allow you to join the Web forums and to get additional downloads. You can get tips, bonus downloads for free, and you can purchase additional expansion packs that can be added on to your game. For

example, right now they are offering the Dinosaur pack. Or you can just click in the lower right-hand corner of this opening screen which gives you the option to Play.

Running a zoo with this game is incredible. The player gets to start from the beginning. There are a lot of choices. From the layout of each animal home size to the various animals you bring in, the variety is amazing. If there is something you don't know about the animal you are selecting, there is a symbol of a book that you can click on. It will bring up a window with the information that you would need to know. You also get to lay out the food and gift shops. James says, "Don't forget to give your visitors maps in various locations." You can set up viewing binoculars and recreation areas that include inflatables to jump on and various activities for everyone. Donation boxes can be set up through the zoo, along with water fountains and other facilities. You also get to turn on your camera and go take snapshots of your animals to compile a photo album. When the animals are happy, they will have wonderful bright green grins hovering above their heads. You make them happy by giving them enough room, the right habitat, coming in and cleaning them, feeding them the right food, and finding just the right toys they like to play with. They are really happy when you remember to do all of this and give them a mate. If your zoo is lucky, they will have babies. Sometimes twins are even born.

Your zoo can become the most sought out tourist attraction yet! You can create a wonderful Jeep vehicle tour that the visitors will line up and wait their turn for. This takes them among the animals and really allows for some

close-up photography. You can even put in a sky tram that will allow your guests to get a bird's-eye view of the animals in their natural habitats. You can choose the Zoo Guest Mode, which allows you to go in among your animals and be a participant with the various activities taking place with your animals. You can even choose to swim with the penguins!

Upon being asked to give a review of this software, we were also asked to include any complaints and suggestions that might make it better. We pondered this and came up with a few. In James' opinion, he would like to see the Zoo Guest Mode expanded. He loves that he can be active in his own zoo by swimming with the animals and walking through the zoo. It would be nice to include the ability to be able to do other various activities such as eat in the restaurants, buy food from the booths, play in the children's play areas, and to be able to look through the binoculars. While building and creating your zoo and running it, there is always the same music playing in the background. It would be nice to have a variety of music to select from. Another item that we would like to see but never discovered was a bilevel viewing area for some of the animals. For instance, the Hippopotamus loves to swim, but the only view we could arrange was for the guest to be looking down on him in the pool. It would be nice to set up an area that would include a looking glass area similar to an aquarium. That would enable the different angles. James says a petting zoo would be nice! Last, we never could find the proper food for the koala. Therefore, we could never keep him in our zoo.

As a mother and a home educator, I was continuously amazed at what educational value this game has. Any adult should try these types of games at least once before being too quick to ridicule games. There is always so much going on. The player must continuously keep up with it all. They are multitasking tenfold! They must constantly go in and clean and feed the animals. If the guests seem unhappy, they must find out why and fix the issue. They must research the animals to know what the proper habitat will be. They learn that taking care of anything or anyone is not easy. They also get the joy and reward of being successful. I was so impressed by my son's progression in his created zoos. He also loves to open his zoo from the beginning and give a formal presentation. It is very impressive. We will definitely be adding this one to our own personal collection.

Are you interested? Here is a little bit of detailed information that you may want to know. We hope this gives you an idea of what to expect as you get started. The ease of use is excellent. On loading the game for each user, you are asked, "Would you like to learn how to play Zoo Tycoon 2?" (This makes it very easy to jump right in.) If you click on the green check mark, then it will take you through various tutorials teaching you the particulars of the game. You can also choose to do a Campaign, a Challenge, or a Freeform game from the main menu. One thing to remember is that while you are in your level working, you must use your keyboard keys to get back to the main menu. Maybe they will add an Exit button. Until then, use the Escape key to bring up the option to save, exit or return to main menu.

If you choose a campaign, then you are given a list of objectives that you are to complete. The first three titles to choose from are tutorials of the various game themes that are included with this installation. One is Zoo Tycoon 2, the original, while the other two are the tutorials for the Endangered Species and the African Adventure expansions that are included in the Zookeeper Collection. The tutorials are highly useful for someone who is not familiar with the particulars of playing Microsoft Games. Other titles include Zoos in Trouble, The Globe, and Conservation Programs. When you select one, the details are listed in the right column of the screen telling you the various information of that specific selection. Items such as the location your zoo will be in, the difficulty level, the map size of your zoo, and the amount of money you get to start with to create your zoo.

The Challenge selection is set up with a little bit more choice to accept or decline the challenges being offered. They present you with specific criteria that you can say yes or no to. When you accept, you can be rewarded, but if you fail the challenge, there can be negative consequences. With the challenges, you have a little more freedom. You can even increase the amount of money you have to start your zoo with. When playing this level, you can decline until you feel you have had enough time to get your zoo started and are ready to focus on tasks.

The Freeform game is exactly as it implies. You have unlimited cash and you are not given any objectives or goals. You can just feel free to play and build your zoo up to a success. This level seemed more enjoyable to my son at first. It allowed him time to discover the game and its methods.

With all of the above choices, you are always given the same screen while playing. When the game begins, you see three main and very important items along the top of the screen. In the left you see five stars that are hollowed out that fill in as your zoo gains popularity. In the center you have a message queue that keeps you informed of various situations throughout the game. For example, you may get a note saying that your Pygmy Hippopotamus is pregnant. Or you may be notified that one of your animals needs more room. In the top right corner you see your operating funds. You can increase your revenue through admissions, donations, and profits from your concessions, restaurants, and the gift shop.

Zoo Tycoon 2 is rated "E" for Everyone to Everyone 10+. As an ICON member who saw a lot of grandparents looking at various game systems at our March of Technology event, I would suggest some turn straight to their PCs. This is good clean fun, and most will enjoy it and never even suspect there could be any benefit other than fun. It is recommended to have Windows XP or Vista, 512 MB RAM, 1GHz Processor, 1 GB hard drive, Video Card of 32 MB hardware, T & L Direct X 9.0 or later.

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Rhonda Winterhalter is a member of the ICON Computer Users Group of Missouri.

<<http://www.icon.org>>. E-mail at <[rjbizster\(at\)gmail.com](mailto:rjbizster(at)gmail.com)>.

Is your data backed up?.



BOARD MEETING
08/12/2007
Carol Sanzi

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

President Gary DeNise, Treasurer Bette Gay, Secretary Carol Sanzi, SIG-Advanced Chairman Franz Breidenich, SIG-IBM Co-Chairman Tom Callow, SIG-IBM Intermediate Chairman Carl Massie, Jr., and Members-at-Large Bob Clyne and Chuck Moery. Also present was Internet Committee Chairman Mike Bader. Arriving late was Vice President Richard Jackson. The meeting was called to order at 12:02 p.m.

OLD BUSINESS

Bette Gay reported that the amount in the treasury equaled \$8,352.94 with \$3,775.63 in the bank account and \$4,577.31 invested in three Certificates of Deposit. The membership stands at 81.

It is time for Samuel Cheek, Harry Meisner, Carol Sanders, and Wilbur S. Shaffmaster to renew their memberships.

NEW BUSINESS

Bob Clyne moved to authorize sending a complimentary copy of the DATA BUS to our APCUG regional advisor. Tom Callow seconded the motion and it was carried.

Richard Jackson reported that Peach Pit Press offers books to user groups and user group members at a 35% discount. He also mentioned a possibility of receiving a book from Peach Pit as a donation that may be used as a raffle item. Carol Sanzi will check this out.

Mike Bader reported that the Yahoo group has been having active question and answer sessions.

Bob Clyne moved to adjourn. Tom Callow seconded the motion and it was carried. The meeting adjourned at 12:22 p.m.

APCUG Photo Contest

APCUG has announced its 2007 photo contest. The contest is open to all individuals who are members of APCUG affiliated user groups (such as SEMCO).

Photos must be received between September 1, 2007 and October 15, 2007.

There are four categories of pictures: (A) People. (B) Animals. (C) Landscape. (D) Still life.

There will be three judges reviewing all entries. Each category will have first, second, and third place awards. The People's Choice award will be selected from all the entries, and this selection will be chosen by the attendees at the APCUG Annual Convention. First place winner and the People's Choice winner will be published in 'APCUG Reports.'

The results of the competition will be announced at the APCUG's Annual Convention, January 3-6, 2008 in Las Vegas; you do not need to be present to win. All submitted digital photos will be on display at the conference.

For complete details, see the web site at <http://www.apcug.net>.

Computer History

1981: Commodore introduces the VIC-20 home computer..

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS (SIGS)



SIG-IBM INTERMEDIATE
Carl Massie, Jr.

September 9: SIG-IBM Intermediate Chairman, Carl Massie Jr., will speak on: (1) Tips on Computer Purchases. (2) Links of Interest. (3) Encryption—Good, bad, and indifferent. (4) Understanding computer technology responsibilities.



SIG-IBM
Tom Callow
Warner Mach



September 9: Programs You Can't Live Without - Then and Now: SIG-IBM Co-Chairman Tom Callow will reprise the first presentation he ever did as SIG-IBM Co-Chairman, in July, 1990. Come and see him talk about the essential programs of 1990 and 2007.

NOVICE-IBM GROUP **Rotating Volunteer Hosts**

September 9: 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: . 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.**

Computer History

1976: At end of year, companies that are active include: MITS, IMSAI, Processor Technology, SWTP, Digital Group, Polymorphic, Ohio Scientific, Cromemco, MOS Technology..

Oct. 2007 DATA BUS DEADLINE (7th day after 2nd Sunday in month)
SEMCO Input and Members' Ads—Deadline: Sun., Sept. 16, 11:59 p.m.
Members' personal ads are free. To mail, use [Editor address on Page 2](#); e-mail address: [<machw@att.net>](mailto: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)

Oct. 3, 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: 'Adobe Photoshop CS3'; 11/7,12/5 next.

DCOM Computer Club

Sept. 14, 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: TBA.

MacGroup- Detroit

Sept.9, 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: 'Mac 911: How to Troubleshoot Your Mac' presented by Chris Breen from Macworld Magazine.

MacTechnics. (MAC User Group)

Sept. 15, 11:00 a.m., (3rd Saturday); (SIGs at 9:30); Ann Arbor Open School, 920 Miller Ave., Ann Arbor. <<http://www.mactechnics.org>>. JoAnn Olson at 248-478-4300. Topic: Peanut Butter Wiki.

MDLUG (Metro Detroit Linux User Group)

Sept. 8, 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)

Sept. 11, 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: rPATH. Presented by Ken VanDine and Michael K. Johnson.

Michigan Apple Computer User Group

Sept. 13, 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/Meininger Senior Community Center, 3500 Marais Ave., Royal Oak, 48073. Near Crooks & 13 Mile. Guest speakers & regular monthly speakers. <<http://www.geocities.com/royaloakcomputerclub/ourpage.html>>

SHCC (Sterling Heights Computer Club)

Oct. 2, 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: 'E-mail—Clients on the PC. Making it More Manageable.'

Wayne State University Mac User Group

Sept. 8, 10:00 a.m.–Noon, (2nd Saturday); at Mich.com, 21042 Laurelwood, Farmington. Information: JoAnn Olsen 248-478-4300. Topic: Q&A & Backing Up Using Software..



The virtual world of 'Second Life' can now use voice-enabled avatars.



**AUGUST
REFRESHMENT
DONORS**

**Gary DeNise, Coordinator
Kaye Johnson
Roland Make
Betty Mackenzie
Carol Sanzi**

COMPUTER RESOURCE PEOPLE

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

Are you willing to help members learn?

Which software programs are you familiar enough with?

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

Almost Anything: Vander-Schrier

AutoCAD: Comptois

Genealogy: Cook

IBM PC Hardware Issues: Clyne, Yuhasz

Operating Systems: Callow, Clyne, Yuhasz

MAC Hardware and OS Issues: Yuhasz

Security: Bader

MS Office for Windows: Callow

MS Word: Clyne

Networking: Callow

Novell Netware: Yuhasz

Quicken: Clyne

Geocaching: Cook

Bader, Mike—586-573-7330, 9am–8pm..... mdbader@flash.net

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

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

September 9–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: Programs You Can't Live Without–Then and Now. SIG-IBM Co-Chairman Tom Callow will reprise the first presentation he ever did as SIG-IBM Co-Chairman, in July 1990. Come and see him talk about the essential programs of 1990 and 2007.

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) Tips on computer purchases. (2) Links of interest. (3) Encryption–Good, bad, and indifferent. (4) Understanding computer technology responsibilities.

SIG-ADVANCED, Oct. 1, 2007–MONDAY, 6:45 p.m., 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.**

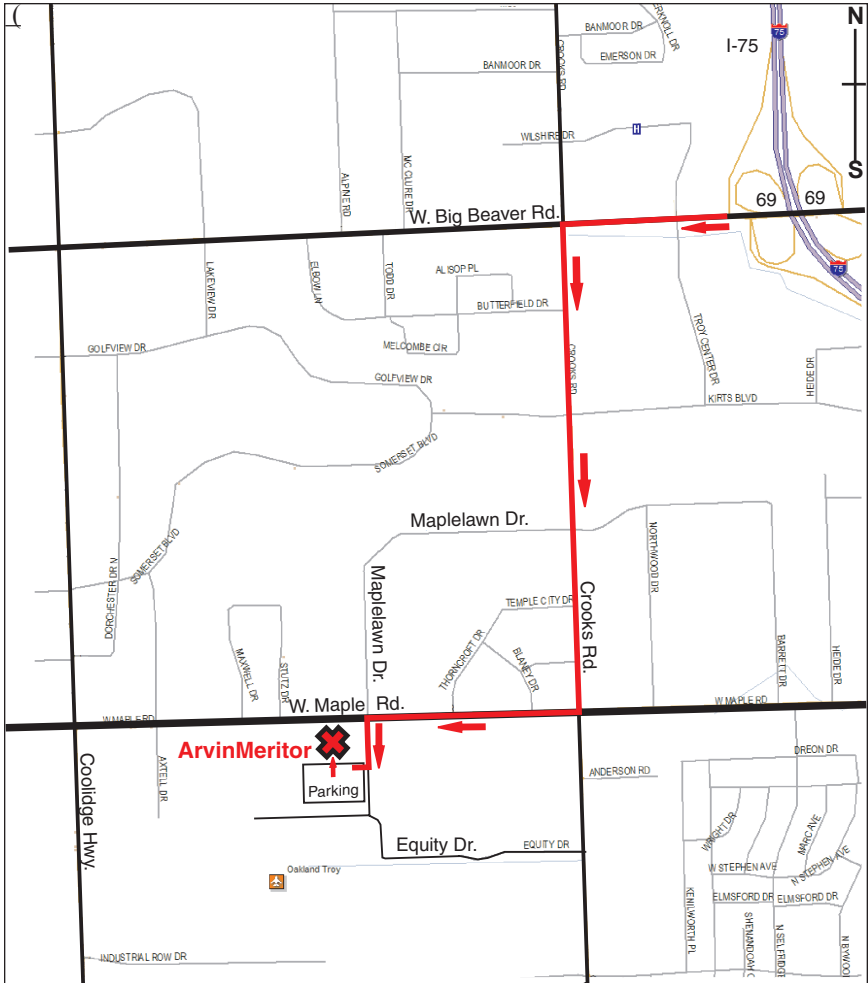
October 14 –SEMCO Sunday

<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 48064**



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)
September 9
October 14**

**FIRST CLASS MAIL
Dated Material**

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