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Smart Computing User Group Program

The SouthEastern Michigan Computer Organization is anxiously looking forward to November 9, 2008. Steph Ellington will present to user group members on behalf of Sandhills Publishing.

The presentation, aiming to educate attendees about Sandhills Publishing's magazines and the Smart Computing User Group Program, will step members through an issue of Smart Computing, convey the value of SmartComputing.com through a live demonstration, and introduce attendees to Smart Computing's sister publications - PC Today, First Glimpse, Reference Series, and Computer Power User. Steph will also share with us how we can receive unlimited computer support from Smart Computing. Each attendee will receive a packet of Smart Computing goodies and be eligible to win other Smart Computing merchandise. We invite anyone interested in expanding their computer knowledge to attend the SEMCO meeting.



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

Proper Credit

I wrote about Hewie Poplock and Mike Ungerman of Central Florida Computer Society working on the live meeting technique whereby members could join the meeting on line if they couldn't make it in person. I also gave you the URL to see the video of a meeting. They wanted everybody to know that it was not originally their intention to do this work, but Dave Dockery of Tampa Bay Computer Society <<http://www.tampa-bay.org>> convinced them to give it a try since he has been doing it successfully for some time. They are still trying to get the technique perfected

and <<http://www.ustream.tv>> is just one of the URLs they use for a monthly or SIG meeting, but while it's a lot of work, it has its rewards. Check <<http://www.cfcs.org>> for meeting information.

Another Type Of Upgrade

As most of you know, I live in a hurricane prone area. In self-defense, I've been installing hurricane protection on my windows and doors that are not already hurricane code rated. Remembering the year we had those three hurricanes one after another pass right over our heads, I recalled the dungeon affect with the plywood on the windows. I decided that Lexan would be a better covering as it would let the light in, and I could also see outside with little problem. It's taken a while, and some dollars, but I'm happy with the results. Even my wife can easily install the panels in just a few

minutes to be ready for a storm. It also helps lower the price on my insurance, although my “hip” roof lowered that the most. A hip roof is a roof slanted on all four sides, with no gable ends.

Updating the insulation in our attic has helped lower our power bill considerably, although choosing the right company to do that job took a lot of questions for the insulation companies before we chose the right one. We wanted one that would also find and seal other spots where air could leak from the living area into the attic, and they found several important places that needed to be sealed. Our A/C duct work had already been serviced for leaks a few years ago. Our power bill is now much lower than last year. The next project was new windows with low-E glass filled with argon gas, making them more energy efficient. It won't be long until the power company will be paying us each month. <G> However, I am also looking into a small photovoltaic system in the hopes it will help with our effort. Finding reliable installation and purchase information has been difficult.

A Word of Caution; I have not tried any of the items listed below so do your homework if you're interested.

Share Your Artistry With The World

Acoustica <<http://mixcraftlive.com>> has introduced a free service allowing anyone to upload their music, podcasts or sonic creations to share with the world. The site allows artists to create an account, upload artwork and publish up to 100 megabytes of music. Each artist account has a forum and a blog to help foster a community and fan database. Each song can be ranked and, if popular enough, can appear on the

top song charts. Artists can update an event calendar with their ‘gigs’ so that their fans can find out when is the next performance. The service is completely free and can be used by anyone wishing to showcase their sonic creations recorded with Mixcraft.

Mixcraft is a multitrack music recording studio for Windows computers and has recently been awarded the Computer Music Value Award and the Keyboard Magazine Key Buy Award. It is seen as the Windows equivalent of Apple's Garage Band for price and functionality. <<http://MixcraftLive.com>> adds even more value to the software and is intended to showcase the musical skills and talents of artists recording with Mixcraft.

Mixcraft now includes an additional 574 new music loops and over 300 new sound effects which are automatically downloaded on demand. These sounds are free to all Mixcraft customers. The loops include 13 exciting new Song Kits; Breakbeat, Crunk, Drum N Bass, Electro House, Film Score, House DJ, Jungle Drum N Bass, Progressive Euro, Southern Hip Hop, Synth House, Tribal House, Underground Hip Hop, and Urban Street Mix!

Would You Believe Eyeball To Eyeball? (I can't remember where I read this one.)

Eyeball Chat is a free product that you can use for talking on the phone and seeing each other at the same time; that is, if you are both using the product. At <<http://www.eyeballchat.com>>, you can download the software to accomplish all this. Of course, there is more to it than that, but at least this product is free for you to experiment with. Check out their Web site and you will find further information.

Do You Love Games?

MyRealGames has launched a free gaming portal that provides downloadable and online casual games. The portal <<http://www.MyRealGames.com>> is aimed to ensure a great pastime for audiences of all ages. Arcade, puzzles, shooters, dress-ups, sports and more are all free now. The portal also features free games, which were only available in “try-before-you-buy” versions before. <<http://MyRealGames.com>> can be recommended to those who are tired of advertisements in games because they don’t have disturbances like annoying banners between levels. The only thing obligatory is a visit of the site after a user exits a game. The games are available in both 2D and 3D, and have three working languages. With more than two hundred games

MyRealGames.com has something in stock for everybody. If you’re an arcade game lover, don’t forget to check out Space Bubbles. There are extraordinary power-ups and amazing bonuses to discover within every puzzle! Enjoy endless hours of bubble blasting action: <<http://www.myrealgames.com/files/space-bubbles.exe>>.

Exercise your billiard skills with the help of Billiard Masters or Cool 3D billiards, which you can play against computer or friends. The atmosphere of a comfortable place makes the game even better. Join billiard club at: <<http://www.myrealgames.com/files/billiard-masters.exe>>.

Try Nuclear Bike. Complete levels as fast as possible to achieve maximum score points. Speed up! Traffic police can’t catch you here: <http://www.myrealgames.com/en/play_online_nuclearbike.html>.

Here Is Another Free Defragger, This One Has Rave Reviews!

IObit is proud to announce the release of Smart Defrag. Smart Defrag was in development for 1 1/2 years, tested by over one million users, and is now available to all PC users for free. Most users cannot clearly know the current fragmentation status of their hard disk, and have no good control over performing the defragmentation. “We have taken care of PC users’ needs in our free Smart Defrag” says Hugo Dong, president of IObit.

Smart Defrag features include:

- * An “install it and forget it” feature that works automatically and quietly in the background of the computer.

- * Besides defragmenting, it also places the frequently used data into the fastest area of the disk.

- * Smart Defrag has the industry’s leading defragmenting engine, specially designed for modern, large hard drives.

- * Free for home, organization, and business and 100% safe from any spyware, adware and virus.

- * Designed for Windows 2000, XP, Vista and future Windows 7.

Smart Defrag is now available in English and other languages. More information and free downloads are available at <<http://www.iobit.com/iobitsmartdefrag.html>>.

Everybody Talks About It, But Here is More Than Talk

Other than spam, a frequently discussed subject is the privacy of your computer. There is a place on the Web where there is help. Check into <<http://www.saltmeadow.com/privacy>> where you will find seven tools for working on the privacy of your computer. Some of them

you may already know about, and others you may not. Best of all, it is a collection of all freeware for your use.

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



**APCUG Conference
By Mike Bader**

[Editor's Note: Several members of SEMCO attended the APCUG (Association of Personal Computer User Groups) "Midwest User Group Conference" on September 19 through 21, 2008 in Illinois. President Mike Bader gives this report.]

The four of us are back from Chicago APCUG. A lot of information was exchanged. We met with other APCUG members and groups. We viewed many presentations and talked with many vendors.

Four of us went: Bob Clyne, Richard Jackson, Franz Breidenich and myself. Thanks to Bob for driving. We made it and didn't get lost, partially from Bob's great navigation, partly because we had four computer geeks in the car, and maybe because of Bob's GPS. I love high tech electronic gadgets.

The hotel was close to where the convention was being held. They only

had one slow, old computer in their business center. But we shared and managed to get by. I got my e-mail and checked on my home computers remotely using LogMeIn. <<http://www.LogMeIn.com>>.

Friday started with registration and a social networking period. I could now match faces with people from names heard or articles I had read in newsletters. Sunday sessions were held in as many as three rooms at a time. We sometimes split up to cover more sessions, depending on our interests. Sessions were strictly limited to 50 minutes. Some were put on by vendors and others by APCUG members.

I went to more of the administration type sessions. Session attendees brainstormed ideas like getting new members, increasing attendance, and finding vendors and presenters. It reinforced some of my ideas and gave me new ones. One session I liked was "remote control," where they demonstrated several free software packages that could be used in different ways for remote troubleshooting and support. Similar to my use of LogMeIn, these programs allow connection to a home computer, home to office, or office to office. They can also be used for training or remote presentations.

When we returned to Detroit we determined that such remote presentations are possible at the ArvinMeritor site. In discussing this with other groups we found that some vendors are using this technique for user group presentations, instead of traveling. APCUG is building a list of available presentations.


At the conference, another session that I enjoyed was the Google presentation, featuring Google Earth.

The presenter was great. So much so they added a second session on Sunday so that he could go into more detail.

They could have had more vendor tables, but the economy is tough all over and held down the number of vendors. We did not win any door prizes, but brought back knowledge and ideas. On the ride home we had a chance to discuss what we liked and how we could use those ideas and suggestions to benefit our group.

APCUG is redesigning their website and setting up a sharepoint server. It seems to have possibilities, but it is currently in testing and will be a while before it is ready. See <<http://www.apcug.net>>.

The APCUG newsletter of the event is in the files section on SEMCOUG <<http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/semcoug/files/APCUG/>>.

	<p>Open Office 3: Comprehensive Free Office Suite By Ira Wilsker</p>
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Unlike almost all previous columns, I am not typing this using a Microsoft Office product. Despite not using a Microsoft Office product, I currently feel quite comfortable, and have not noted any learning curve necessary to use this new product. I was able to download, install and run this alternative product, and it looks and feels just like the Microsoft Word that I have been using for many years. The only major difference that I can see between what I am using at this instant, and Microsoft Office is the dramatic difference in the price of these two competing products. The product I am using right now is totally free, and can be downloaded and distributed free without any strings attached. The

product I am using to type this column is the word processor named Writer, part of the recently released OpenOffice 3.0, available for free download at OpenOffice.org. For compatibility purposes, I have chosen to save this file in the Word “.doc” format, but I could have chosen from any of about two dozen word processing formats to save this document. It should be noted that the new version 3.0 of OpenOffice can now open all of the new data formats used in Office 2007, including the new “.docx” and the other new formats.

OpenOffice has been around for years, and millions of copies have been downloaded. OpenOffice.org has just released a new and improved version, 3.0, which has many enhancements, new features, and additional format options compared to the previous versions. Since it can read and write virtually all contemporary office formats from word processors, spreadsheets, databases, and presentation programs, including Microsoft Office products. OpenOffice is appropriate for all users of office products, including household use, academic use, business use, and government use. On the OpenOffice website are listings of hundreds of organizations and agencies, including colleges and universities around the world, that have adopted the free OpenOffice instead of Microsoft Office or other commercial office suites. For some of my fiscally struggling college students, I have explicitly recommended OpenOffice as a free alternative to purchasing Microsoft Office, or using the low-featured Works program often included on many computers.

While Writer, the OpenOffice word processor, has the same look and feel of Word, it is not alone in the suite, as

OpenOffice is a comprehensive suite of office utilities. On the opening menu are descriptive icons simply labeled Text Document, Presentation, Database, Spreadsheet, Drawing, and Formula. Additional icons on the menu will open preconfigured templates, open existing documents, and link to additional features.

I do a lot of presentations for groups and organizations, and I have exclusively been using Microsoft's popular PowerPoint program. As I am typing this, I am opening one of my recent identity theft presentations made in PowerPoint in another window using the OpenOffice presentation program, Impress. Impress opened my PowerPoint file quickly and easily, and looks just like a PowerPoint window. Using Impress, which has virtually all of the features of PowerPoint, the user can create and present professional presentations without the expense of PowerPoint. In some ways, Impress may have some features missing in PowerPoint, including an improved list of backgrounds and templates, and tabs on the top of the display to show notes, outlines, handouts, and the slide sorter.

Many of us routinely use a spreadsheet for a variety of financial, statistical, or data uses. OpenOffice has an excellent spreadsheet appropriately named "Calc." I just opened up one of my Microsoft Excel spreadsheets (.xls format) in Calc, and it opened quickly and looks just like Excel. All of the formulas calculated properly in Calc that were created in Excel, all columns were formatted correctly, and graphs displayed properly. I also opened an Excel 2007 spreadsheet, and a Corel Quattro workbook in Calc, and they both opened flawlessly. If

someone already knows how to use a spreadsheet, Calc is a "no brainer" in that it is intuitive and requires no additional training or experience to use. As with other OpenOffice applications, it can open almost all other spreadsheet formats, and write to many of the contemporary formats.

While among the least used office utilities, database programs are an integral part of almost all office suites, and OpenOffice is no different. Its database is simply called "Base" and is as full featured as its costly competitors. Base can use wizards to create a database, or utilize the countless templates available either in the program or on line at OpenOffice.org. Experienced database users will quickly recognize the Base window, as the icons and commands are substantially the same as those used in Access and Approach. Those who know how to use Access or Approach can immediately use Base without any significant learning curve, and can be productive immediately.

One feature available in OpenOffice that is lacking in many competitive suites is a comprehensive photo and image editor, called Draw. Draw enables the user to create, edit, crop, modify, or otherwise change digital images. As is common with other OpenOffice utilities, Draw can open almost every common image format, and write to them as well. Those who are graphically creative will find Draw to be an adequate image editor that can do what many of the free standing image editors can do, but Draw does it for free. For those with digital cameras, Draw can easily edit and crop digital photos, and convert them to any other desired format.

Some technical users, such as engineers, mathematicians, and

physicists may need a sophisticated editor that can process formulas in a variety of formats. "Math" is the integral utility that performs the function of creating simple or complex formulas that can be imported into other documents or presentations. Math can read and write data formats used by other leading mathematical programs.

OpenOffice is a large download in Windows format, a 145mb download. In addition to Windows, OpenOffice is available for almost all other platforms, including Mac. For those who need an office suite in foreign languages, this one is available in over 50 languages, making it ideal for a multinational organization that needs a single office suite that can handle multiple languages. While the dictionary integral with this suite consists of tens of thousands of words, specialty dictionaries in many languages are available as a free download from the OpenOffice.org website <<http://extensions.services.openoffice.org/dictionary>>. In addition to dictionaries, there are also dozens of free, open source templates available for each of the utilities that can incorporate multiple languages in a single file, or add functionality, such as a template to create an academic grade book. In addition to templates, dictionaries, and hundreds of other add-ons, there is also an extensive on line support system, where experienced users will offer free support to new users.

For the price, free, you will not find a better office suite than OpenOffice. With its high level of compatibility with Microsoft office and other office suites, OpenOffice 3.0 is a wise choice for most computer users, no matter what the modern platform or language. WEBSITE:

<<http://OpenOffice.org>>.

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**Ubuntu and
Linux Software
By Brian K. Lewis**

This article has been obtained from APCUG with the author's permission for publication by APCUG member groups; all other uses require the permission of the author (see e-mail address below).

I suppose some of you might be wondering why I have been writing about the Ubuntu Linux operating system and Linux software. My laptop is now my sole computer. Although it has a Pentium 4 processor it only has 512 MB of RAM. Naturally, that means it is incapable of running Windows Vista. But it does easily run Ubuntu with more than enough memory to do multi-tasking with no reduction in speed. I also know that there are a number of the members of the SPCUG that use computers that are running Windows 98 or Windows XP. The point is, that it is not necessary to try to upgrade these computers to run Vista or to buy a new computer. Instead you have the free alternative of installing Ubuntu or another version of Linux. This article will discuss some of the range of free Linux software and how easy it is to install it.

The original installation CD of Ubuntu included the OpenOffice

software. OpenOffice includes a word processor, spreadsheet and presentation applications. These are fully compatible with the components of Microsoft Office. I frequently receive documents prepared in MS Word and they open directly into OpenOffice Writer. I can edit, comment and save a copy in the OpenOffice format. Then I can return the modified document to the originator in MS Word format with all the edits and comments intact. The same is true for spreadsheets. The OpenOffice presentation application (Impress) reads, writes and modifies PowerPoint files as easily as Writer works with documents. OpenOffice also includes a Drawing application. Drawing is an application that I haven't used.

Other included software with Ubuntu are Ekiga (Internet phone software), Pidgin (Internet messenger), Evolution (e-mail), and a remote desktop viewer. Graphics software includes the F-Spot photo manager, GIMP Image Editor and Xsane scanner software. Also, there is a CD burner, movie player for DVDs and two music players.

I grant you that the included software doesn't always meet all the needs for many users. So Ubuntu has several ways of installing additional software. I mentioned last month about installing the drivers for my printer, scanner and the wireless modem. This month I will continue with other applications that are the equivalent of those that I used under Windows. The installation of these applications was much easier than installing drivers for the accessory hardware.

The first step in installing any application is to go to the Applications – Add/Remove menu. When this application runs it provides you with a

list of all the software available through Ubuntu and its third-party providers. On the left side of the window are listed various categories that you can highlight and the appropriate applications are then listed on the right side. When you highlight a specific application, a description appears in the lower portion of the window. There is also a search box that you can use to find a specific program or a group of programs.

Since I maintain my financial records on my computer I wanted a financial program that ran under Ubuntu. Not knowing the specific name, I just searched on the term "finances." This brought up a list of financial software. One of the interesting aspects of the Add/Remove application is that programs are rated based on feedback from users using 1 to 5 stars. There was a 5 star application listed, GnuCash, which can import files in the Quicken format. So I put a check mark in the box by the application name and then clicked on the "Apply Changes" button. This brought up another window for verification of the changes to be made. After clicking on "OK," the application was downloaded from the Internet and installed on the hard drive without any further action on my part. A shortcut icon was also added to the Office portion of the applications menu. There was no reboot required to complete this process. After the installation, the "Add/Remove" application reported the successful installation and remained open in case I wanted to use it further.

My Windows financial software was Microsoft Money. Supposedly it will export its data files in the Quicken format. I did that and then copied the files from the Windows partition to the Ubuntu partition. However, the

import into GnuCash was not really successful. I'm not sure why but I suspect there was information missing which resulted in misidentification of some of the accounts. Anyway, I selected an arbitrary date and entered opening balances for that date. So now, it is working perfectly and is in agreement with my bank balances. Using it is even somewhat easier than working with either Money or Quicken. Plus, the price is right.

Another application that I needed for Ubuntu was a genealogy program. Here again I was able to find a five star program, GRAMPS. (Very appropriate name I thought.) It was also available through the "Add/Remove" application so installation was completed quickly. GRAMPS imports GED files as do many genealogy programs. So I exported my files from my Windows software in the GED format then copied the GED file to the Ubuntu partition. The import into GRAMPS was essentially a two-click operation. Everything, including notes and references, were now available in an Ubuntu application. GRAMPS also has more report formats than my Windows software included. So I consider it a very successful replacement.

For quite some time I have used a PDA, specifically a Sony Clie which runs Palm Pilot software. The Sony CD loaded the Windows version to the hard drive and also included software to synchronize with the PDA. Since I have considerable contact information in the Clie along with many memoranda, I really wanted to be able to run this under Ubuntu. In the System-Preferences menu there is a selection for PalmOS devices. Now that sounded like it would be quite simple to install the applications necessary to

run the Clie. Clicking on the selection runs the Gnome-Pilot application which helps the user to determine the settings for synchronizing with the Clie. Unfortunately, it could not find the Clie PDA. So I had to go back online to the Ubuntu forums to see if I could find the secret. It turns out that getting a PDA recognized and synced with Ubuntu is not always simple. After spending considerable time reading various solutions I came across a command line entry that showed the entries where my Clie was being recognized by Ubuntu. The PDA was properly identified by vendor and product ID's. Now all the information I had gathered indicated that the PDA should be listed as using a USB connection and usually ttyUSB0 and ttyUSB1. Much to my surprise my printout showed the Clie as using ttyUSB9 and ttyUSB10. The Gnome-Pilot software refused to accept either of these as valid locations. However, another application, J-Pilot, accepted ttyUSB10 and synced with the Clie when the sync button was clicked. The synchronization transferred all of my information directly into the J-Pilot software. This software works on the desktop in a very similar manner to the Clie and Pilot software I had used under Windows. Successive synchronizations have also been successful. So that was one less application that would need to run under Windows.

There has been one big disappointment in the hardware setup. I have a multi-function media card reader built into the laptop. It reads SD cards as well as xD, MMC, and memory sticks. This reader works great under Windows as a way to transfer photos from my camera to the computer. However, there is apparently no driver available for this

to work under Ubuntu. The card reader is manufactured by 02 Micro and they apparently don't believe Linux is here to stay so they have no plans to create Linux drivers for any of their products. At least that's the quotation from a response to a query from a Ubuntu user. So when I have photos to transfer to my computer I can either reboot into Windows, or I can connect the camera with a USB cable. The USB cable works fine as Ubuntu recognizes the camera right away. It also opens the F-Spot Photo Manager which allows me to choose the pictures and the location where I want them saved.

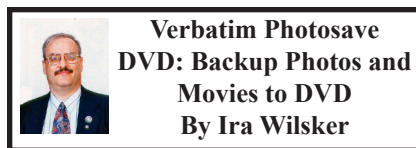
One of the applications included with Ubuntu is Brasero, a CD/DVD burner. When I first tried to use it, it refused to recognize my DVD+R discs. It would read and write DVD-R/RW with no difficulty. Since I had a supply of the +R discs I decided to look for other DVD burning software. In the ADD/Remove application there were several CD/DVD burners listed. One of them was five star application called K3B. It was written primarily to work with the KDE desktop that is an alternative to the GNOME desktop. The KDE desktop comes with Kubuntu and has an interface that is closer to the one found in Windows. Anyway, K3B will work with GNOME, so let ADD/Remove install it. Any software that you add through Add/Remove can be removed simply by locating it in the list and removing the checkmark that indicates it has been installed. So now I have both Brasero and K3B installed. I also found, the next time I wanted to burn a DVD, that Brasero would now work with my external burner and the +R discs. I do like the interface for

K3B better than Brasero, but they both work.

As you can see one of the nice attributes of using open license software is the ability to install it and use it at no cost. If you don't like it, you simply remove it. It's certainly not that simple in Windows. So, if you want to try a Linux OS on your computer download a "Live CD" and try it out. Also check out the online help forums. I think you'll find them easier to understand than much of the material Microsoft makes available. Whatever you decide, enjoy your computing!

Dr. Lewis is a former university and medical school professor of physiology. He has been working with personal computers for over thirty years, developing software and assembling systems.

Dr. Lewis is a member of the Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc., Florida. Web: <<http://www.spcug.org>>. E-mail: <bwsail@yahoo.com>.



In the past year, two of my daughters were married. Between the two weddings, I have accumulated hundreds of wedding photos, and hours of wedding videos. In the event of a natural disaster, such as our recent Hurricane Ike, or even a common hard drive failure, it would be an utter shame if those precious memories were lost. Over the years, I have repeatedly mentioned the need for frequent backups of critical data files, and photos and digital movies definitely qualify as critical data files. As I have

written previously, when we evacuated for Hurricanes Rita, Gustav, and Ike, the first thing that I packed was my external hard drive, which had a current backup of my data files made with NTI's Shadow software. Being more the romantic, the first thing my wife packed was our wedding album, and the albums containing the kids' baby pictures; these albums filled a large carton.

Nowadays, the majority of photos and home videos are digital, and stored on some type of digital media, such as a hard drive, flash drive, or CD disc. One reason why many do not have contemporary backups of all of their photos and videos is the effort to create the backups from multiple media types and formats, and the lack of software to automate the backup process. While there are many digital backup utilities available, Verbatim recently released what may arguably be the least expensive, easiest to use, and most comprehensive system to easily backup digital media; this new product is Verbatim's PhotoSave DVD.

One of the factors that makes the PhotoSave DVD attractive is that there is no software to install on the computer, and no special software is needed to copy and burn the digital photos and movies to the PhotoSave DVD. All of the necessary software is included on each DVD, and runs automatically when the DVD is loaded into the DVD drive. The software is so simple and intuitive to use, that no experience or skill in burning DVDs is necessary, and the computer novice can copy and backup digital images and video to the DVD with ease. Verbatim digital media has an excellent reputation for durability and long life, and provides a reasonably safe place to store digital content for many

years. Each Verbatim PhotoSave DVD has about 4.5 gigabytes of available storage space, and will hold about 2000 digital photos averaging about 2mb each. Using these DVDs as an automated digital image backup media is very cost effective, as a three pack of DVDs, which will hold a combined 6000 images (2mb each), is under \$10, and a five pack (about 10,000 images) is under \$15. At that price, and along with the simplicity and ease of use, there is no reason why anyone with digital images should not have a backup of their precious and irreplaceable images and videos. It is considered good computing practice to have multiple backups of critical files, such as photos and videos, and PhotoSave DVDs offer that opportunity at a most economical price.

Remember that hard drives do fail, and solid state media such as flash drives can also fail or be lost. None of us are immune to natural disasters, fires, or other maladies that can forever cost us our digital memories. Having backup copies of these images on long-lived media that can be played and viewed on almost any computer may protect us from a sad loss of valuable memories.

The DVD, in its jewel case, is in a physical form that can be easily slipped into a suitcase or purse. The images can be viewed from the DVD using Windows integral Windows Explorer or any other image viewer or editor.

Using the PhotoSave DVD is an effortless process. The DVD is simply inserted into a writeable DVD drive that supports the DVD-R format, and will automatically open and run on any computer with Windows 2000, XP, or Vista. Since the software is on the DVD, and not installed on the computer, there

is nothing to install. Once the software opens, the user has two choices; automatic mode and manual mode. In automatic mode, the user need only to click on the “Record” button, and the software will search the PC for the common image format “JPEG” (.jpg, .jpeg, .jp2 and .jpe), and automatically burn all of the images to the DVD. For those who want to save additional image and video formats, or manually control the process, a manual mode is available. In manual mode, PhotoSave can search and copy to DVD almost all current image and video formats in use, including 43 different formats of images, and 53 formats of videos. These same 96 formats can be searched using the third option, “Camera/Memory Copy” which will search any camera, or camera based storage attached to the PC, and burn the images or videos directly to the DVD. If the user has a massive collection of images and videos that exceeds the 4.5 gb capacity of a single PhotoSave DVD, the user may either use an additional DVD, or choose to seamlessly span the data between DVD discs. This is especially useful in backing up large movie files.

Since almost all currently manufactured PCs support burning DVD-R discs, and Verbatim has made PhotoSave DVDs so inexpensive and easy to use, there is now no reason why users should not have up-to-date backups of all of their digital photos and movies. It is sad when people lose their irreplaceable digital photos and movies for any reason. By using Verbatim’s PhotoSave DVDs to effortlessly backup those images and videos, much grief can be avoided.

Always remember that the three most important words in computing are

backup, backup, and backup. PhotoSave performs that task in an admirable way. WEBSITES:

<<http://www.verbatim.com/photosave>>.

<<http://www.verbatim.com/photosave/faq.cfm>>.

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 and TV show host. Contact him at <iwilsker@apcug.net>.



Outlook and Xobni,
A Good Match
By Vinny La Bash

This article has been obtained from APCUG with the author’s permission for publication by APCUG member groups; all other uses require the permission of the author (see e-mail address below).

Xobni is Inbox spelled backwards, but there is nothing backward about this free plug-in module from <<http://www.xobni.com>>. The more e-mail you receive, the more you will like and appreciate Xobni. The program works as a data mining machine for your stored e-mails. Without Xobni, the best you can do with Outlook is to organize your e-mail by folders, messages, and dates. With Xobni, you can organize your e-mail by people, e-mail histories, and personal, social or business relationships.

You need Outlook 2003 or 2007 to use Xobni. Either XP or Vista will work fine with the program. The folks at Xobni are also working on versions for other e-mail programs such as

Gmail and Yahoo Mail. How long this will take is unknown. Downloading and installation is quick, easy, and seamless. The program requires some time to synchronize itself with outlook. The amount of time will be determined by the size of the e-mail data base you have accumulated. I had slightly over two thousand mails in eighteen different folders, and that took about ten minutes.

If you keep a lot of information on your contacts, it's difficult to extract that information in a way that can be useful with Outlook. All that changes once Xobni is installed. Changes begin with an attractive panel that sits on the right side of your Outlook screen and doesn't infringe or interfere with any of Outlook's standard functions. The panel interface slides open when you need it, and discretely closes when you don't.

You get two options within this panel. The first brings up a blank e-mail which is nice. For you organizational types, the second option lets you send meeting requests. A real time saver is the simultaneous display of open time slots that Xobni drags from your Outlook calendar.

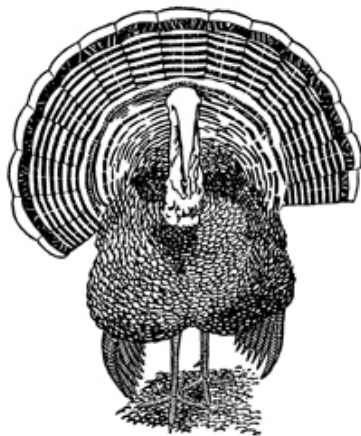
Your contact profiles display at the top of the Xobni panel with pictures if one is in the profile. That's followed by the phone number and a thread of any conversations you've had along with files you've exchanged. Specific topics are quickly found with Xobni's search tool, and there is a handy slider that exposes or hides lines of e-mail text. While it appears you could be getting bogged down in details, the material is organized so that navigating through the information is an easy, pleasant journey filled with discovery.

Skype's VoIP service integrates with PC, Xobni quite well. A mouse click on a phone number within a Xobni profile generates a SkypeOut call.

You can use Xobni for simple searches within Outlook, and Xobni searching is lightning fast in comparison. That's probably because it's integrated within Outlook rather than running on top of it like most third party applications. Xobni gives you more than express searching. It organizes social information logically with additional functions that Outlook simply can't match. How often have you given up searching with Outlook because the program lacks even the simplest logic for intelligent searching?

Instead of treating mail conversations, contacts and calendars as separate entities, Xobni weaves them together in a responsive, intuitive interface. It's hard to go wrong with this tool. Go to <http://www.Xobni.com> and get started.

Vinny La Bash is a member of the Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc., Florida Web:<<http://www.spcug.org>>. E-mail:<[vlabash \(at\) comcast.net](mailto:vlabash@comcast.net)>.



Meeting Pictures



(Above) Richard Tapaninen, of the 'Micro Center' speaks on 'Netbooks, Digital TV, & NAS Drives.' (Below) Tom Callow and Richard Jackson adjust audio parameters.



Meeting Pictures



(Above): Members at the refreshment break. (Below): Carol Sanzi does guard duty at the door.





BOARD MEETING
10/12/2008
Carol Sanzi

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

President Mike Bader, Vice President Richard Jackson, Treasurer Bette Gay, Secretary Carol Sanzi, SIG-Advanced Chairman Franz Breidenich, SIG-IBM Chairman Tom Callow, Publications Committee Chairman Warner Mach, and Members-at-Large Bob Clyne and Chuck Moery. The meeting was called to order at 12:06 p.m.

OLD BUSINESS

Treasurer, Bette Gay, reported that the amount in the treasury equaled \$9,529.41 with \$4,829.88 in the bank account and \$4,699.53 invested in three Certificates of Deposit. The membership stands at 78.

NEW BUSINESS

Warner Mach apologized for the lateness of the DATA BUS delivery. The printer had a problem that is not expected to recur.

Mike Bader, Richard Jackson, Franz Breidenich, and Bob Clyne attended the APCUG Midwest Regional Conference in Chicago. They were given ideas on increasing membership, viewed a demonstration on remote presentations, participated in discussions with other user groups, and met with possible presenters. They felt the conference was valuable, even though they won no door prizes.

Tom Callow reminded the board members that SEMCO is group dedicated to educate and serve the community. Speakers are to be respected and appreciated for their efforts in making a presentation.

Richard Jackson, Mike Bader, and Franz Breidenich have spent many hours working on the SEMCO web site. They also created a flyer to be distributed to computer stores, Focus Hope, and other Computer Clubs. This flyer serves as an invitation for prospective members to attend SEMCO meetings.

The Internet and Publication Committee met to address the problems involved in uploading the DATA BUS to the SEMCO web site. They also decided to modernize the web site to give it a fresh look with a scrolling banner touting the meeting topics. Getting feedback from web visitors is another project they hope to complete.

Carol Sanzi moved to adjourn. Mike Bader seconded the motion and it was carried. The meeting adjourned at 12:50 p.m.



SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS (SIGS)



SIG-IBM
Tom Callow

November 9: 1:45 p.m. Smart Computing Magazine: Steph Ellington of Sandhills Publishing, publisher of Smart Computing magazine will talk about the magazine, as well as some of it's sister publications, perform a live demonstration of the magazine's web site, and will discuss Smart Computing's free, unlimited computer support for its subscribers.

SIG-IBM INTERMEDIATE

November 9: 3:45 p.m. Free Software on USB Enables Portable Computing: SEMCO President Mike Bader will demonstrate a software office suite and other utilities that are designed to run from a flash USB drive. You can carry it with you and use it anywhere.

NOVICE-IBM GROUP **Rotating Volunteer Hosts**

November 9: 3:45 p.m.: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

December 1: 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.

Oct. 2008 DATA BUS DEADLINE (7th day after 2nd Sunday in month)
SEMCO Input and Members' Ads—Deadline: Sun., Nov. 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](#)).

Warner Machmachw@att.net

(to post monthly computer group info)

**CALENDAR-OF-EVENTS
OTHER GROUPS****COMP (Computer Operators of Marysville & Port Huron)**

Dec. 3, 7 p.m., (1st Wednesday); St. Clair County RESA, 499 Range Rd., Marysville, Admin. Building. Jane Wheatly 810-982-1187 or Pam Raisanen <compinfo@hughes.net>. <<http://www.bwcomp.org>>. Topic: TBA.

DCOM Computer Club

Nov. 14, 6:30–8:30 p.m., Henry Ford C.C., Patterson Tech Bldg, Ford Rd/Evergreen, Rm T143, Parking Lot C. Info: Doug Piazza 313-582-2602. Topic: TBA.

HUG (Holly User Group)

Nov. 8, 9:00 a.m., (2nd Sat.); Groveland Twp. Fire Hall, 3085 Grange Hall Rd. & Dixie Hwy., Ortonville. Topic: TBA.

MacGroup- Detroit

Nov. 16, 3:00 p.m., Birmingham Temple, 28611 West 12 Mile Rd., Farmington Hills. Info: Terry White, <terry@macgroup.org> or 248-569-4933. <<http://www.macgroup.org>>. Topic: "Adobe Creative Suite 4 - Part 2" with Terry White.

MacTechnics, (MAC User Group)

Nov. 15, 11:00 a.m., (3rd Saturday); (SIGs at 9:30); See web site for meeting location. <<http://www.mactechnics.org>>. JoAnn Olson at 248-478-4300. Topic: "Holiday Gift Giving Guide."

MDLUG (Metro Detroit Linux User Group)

Nov. 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)

Nov. 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: TBA.

Michigan Apple Computer User Group

Nov. 13, 7:30 p.m., (2nd Thur.); Westview Office Park, 26100 American Dr., Suite 100, Southfield MI. 48034. 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/>>.

SHCC (Sterling Heights Computer Club)

Dec. 2, 7:30 p.m. (1st Tues); 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: "iPhone, iPod, iTouch, & Mobile Me" by Eric Blomberg of Apple, Inc.

Wayne State University Mac User Group

Nov. 8, 10:00 a.m.–Noon, (2nd Saturday); at 21042 Laurelwood, Farmington. Information: JoAnn Olsen 248-478-4300. Topic: TBA.

Computer History

1998: Microsoft releases
Windows 98 (with FAT32)



OCTOBER REFRESHMENT DONORS

Coordinator: Carol Sanzi

Donors:

Warner Mach

Roland Maki

Carol Sanzi

COMPUTER RESOURCE PEOPLE

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

Are you willing to help members learn?

Which software programs are you familiar enough with?

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

Almost Anything: Vander-Schrier

AutoCAD: Comptois

Genealogy: Cook

IBM PC Hardware Issues: Clyne, Yuhasz

Operating Systems: Callow, Clyne, Yuhasz

MAC Hardware and OS Issues: Yuhasz

Security: Bader

MS Office for Windows: Callow

MS Word: Clyne

Networking: Callow

Novell Network: 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**

November 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: Smart Computing Magazine:** Steph Ellington of Sandhills Publishing, publisher of Smart Computing magazine will talk about the magazine, as well as some of it's sister publications, perform a live demonstration of the magazine's web site, and will discuss Smart Computing's free, unlimited computer support for its subscribers.

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: Free Software on USB Enables Portable Computing:** SEMCO President Mike Bader will demonstrate a software office suite and other utilities that are designed to run from a flash USB drive. You can carry it with you and use it anywhere.

SIG-ADVANCED, Dec. 1, 2008–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 248-398-359. TOPIC: Wide-Ranging Discussion Of Computers & Computing.

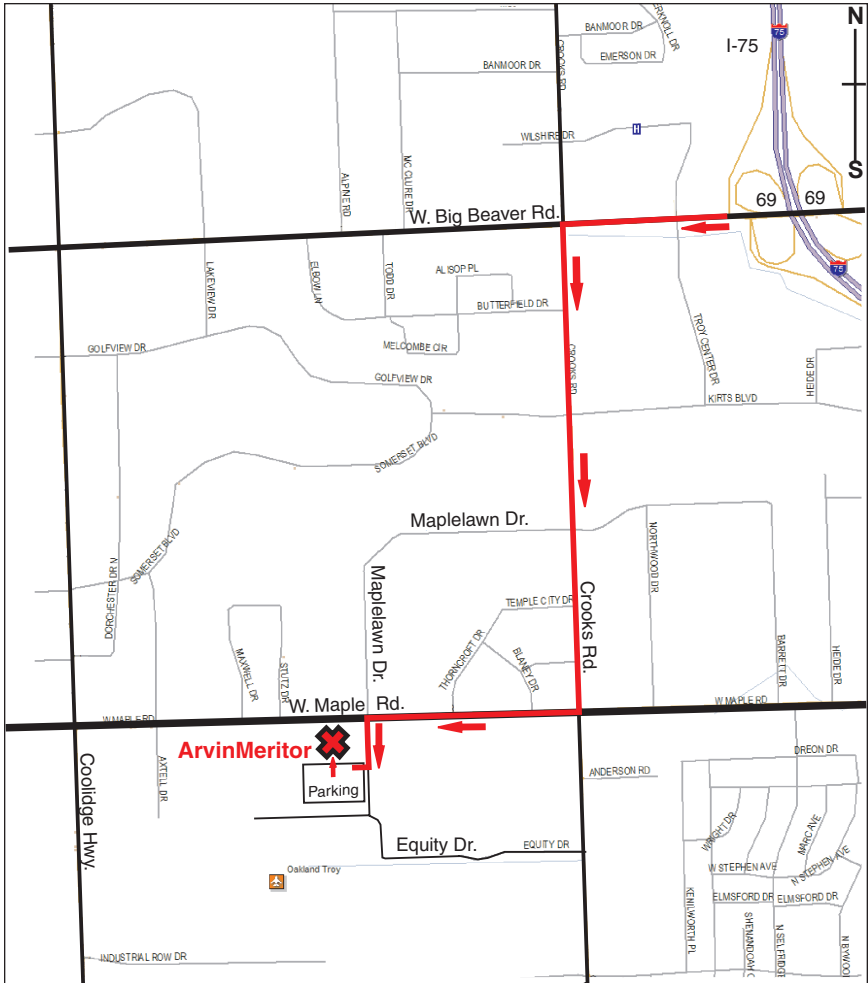
December 14–SEMCO Sunday

<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 Mapelawn 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)

November 9

December 14

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Helping People for the 21st Century**