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SEMCO OFFICERS

President	Mike Bader	(586) 573-7330
Vice-President	Richard Jackson	(248) 546-3694
Secretary	Carol Sanzi	(586) 739-7256
Treasurer	Bette Gay	(248) 641-7799
Members-at-Large of the Board of Directors	Bob Clyne	(810) 387-3101
	Charles Moery E-Mail	< keypounder2@yahoo.com >

NEWSLETTER STAFF

Publications Committee Chair	Warner Mach	(734) 326-0733
Editor	Warner Mach	(734) 326-0733
Proofreader	Beth Fordyce	(734) 453-0349
Proofreader	Fred Acerri	E-Mail < acerri@att.net >

SIG (SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP) CHAIRPERSONS

SIG-IBM: Chairman	Tom Callow	(248) 642-5770 (9-5)
SIG-IBM INTERMEDIATE	Open Position	
SIG-ADVANCED	Franz Breidenich	(248) 398-3359
SIG-LINUX	Raymond McLaughlin	

The SouthEastern Michigan Computer Organization, Inc. (SEMCO) is a non-profit, 501(c)(3), group dedicated to providing information, education and a forum to computer users (professional and amateur) and other interested individuals. Membership in SEMCO is open to all individuals 18 years or older. Persons under 18 years may become members through the sponsorship of a parent or guardian. Dues of \$30/year include monthly DATA BUS and free personal ads.

All SEMCO correspondence should be addressed to

SEMCO - P.O. Box 707 - Bloomfield Hills, MI 48303-0707

Web site: <http://www.semco.org>

E-mail: semco@semco.org

General information: (voice) answering device in Royal Oak **(248) 398-7560**

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NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING AND ELECTION

The annual meeting of the members of the SouthEastern Michigan Computer Organization, Inc., will be held Sunday, January 10, 2010 at 1:30 pm at Engineering Society of Detroit, 20700 Civic Center Drive, Suite 450, Southfield, Michigan., The election of Officers and Members-at-Large of the Board of Directors of the Corporation will take place at the annual meeting.

NOTICE OF NOMINATIONS

Please take notice that under the Bylaws of the SouthEastern Michigan Computer Organization, Inc., nominations for officers will be taken at the general meeting to be held Sunday, December 13, 2009 at 1:30 p.m., with the election of officers to be held at the January general meeting.

The following offices will be open for nominations:

- 1) President
- 2) Vice President
- 3) Secretary
- 4) Treasurer
- 5) Two Members-at-Large of the Board of Directors



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

People I've seen since releasing the November column commented on my vacation, but missed that some pictures of Port Huron, Michigan's Boat night would be on my Web site. You can check <http://www.dealsguy.com/Boatnight_Images.html> for the pictures and descriptions.

I was surprised to hear from as many readers as I did about the GM bankruptcy thing. I was unaware that so many of my readers were also affected. Good luck to us all. I wonder why most of the

people that ran GM into the ground are still running it, with our money. I hear people complaining about the unions, but their pay cuts didn't make the news. Many GM workers took pay cuts, some as much as 50%. That must have hurt, although some people feel that even workers at a 7/11 make too much money. Salaried workers involuntarily took health care cuts long before the union people had to. Where I worked in Michigan is pretty much a ghost town now where former GM plants are now fields of weeds. When I hired into my GM plant, I was overwhelmed by the size of the plant (eight blocks long and four blocks wide) where over 7,000

people worked in 1950. Buick City was much larger, but it's also gone.

Recreation Time

My wife and I took a bargain cruise in September with two other couples and found that corporate cutbacks have also invaded the cruise industry. At least that's what we were told when we asked crew members, or customer service, questions. Customer service urged us to e-mail our concerns to the corporate Web site. Our ship was the Freedom of the Seas, a Royal Caribbean beauty. It can carry about 4,300 passengers and has 1,400 crew members. Last December (2008), we cruised on the Mariner of the Seas (also Royal Caribbean) and it's slightly smaller than this one, but they are both large. There are no more free gifts for "Crown & Anchor" members (people with multiple cruises on RC). We did get coupon books, but discounts in them don't amount to much.

We weren't the only ones who noticed that portions at dinner are now smaller, although I have no problem with that. The buffet was only complete in the morning. For the luncheon buffet, half of the area was cordoned off, but the selection was still good. We never went to the evening buffet so we don't know about that one. Servers told us that with part of the area cordoned off, there was less food that had to be thrown away. Everybody did get whatever food they wanted. We noticed a few other cuts, but we still enjoyed the cruise. Of course, some of these policies could actually be "that ship's" policy. The cruise in December on the Mariner of the Seas was better, but it's been moved to Los Angeles and the Freedom is taking its place out of Port Canaveral. Corporate cuts probably took place since we took the cruise on the Mariner.

The Freedom of the Seas is about 1,100 ft. long and 126.64 ft. wide; and is much too large for the Panama Canal. As I said, we had a fun cruise, but it is often crowded in certain places. The evening shows were great and one person in our group managed to get us tickets to a show at the ice rink, and that was also a spectacular show.

We think our next cruise will be on a smaller ship. There seems to be some great cruise bargains available these days. How about \$399 for a 7-day cruise on a Holland America ship! Also, Norwegian Cruise Lines, which I have never tried, called to offer us a five day cruise at \$129, but we weren't quite ready for their fast approaching open dates. We did sign up for the Florida Association of PC Users Groups spring conference, which will be held on a three day cruise next spring. Registration for it has been great and it seems to be well received.

Enough about our fun (which is destroying our savings); here's a few things that might be of interest to you.

Just the Ticket For Dark Restaurants

If you haven't seen (or heard) them, you'd be impressed with "Talking Menus." I saw them at a food show some time ago, but haven't been to a restaurant that uses them. I've been to a few restaurants with a dark ambience and tried everything to see what was on the menu. These talking menus would be the answer, and according to the brochure, they can also tell you the nutritional facts if you are interested. Look them over at <http://www.talkingmenus.com>.

I could have asked them for a discount, but I doubt your budget would have tolerated a \$399 menu for

your dinner table at home (from the prices in the booklet they gave me), and I doubt the cook offers multiple selections to choose from. Ask your favorite restaurant if they'll be getting them soon. We don't frequent the dark places much and our favorites, the fast-food places, don't need them. However, my wife has to read the menus behind the counter to me because the print is too small. Have you noticed that on their dollar menus?

Tool For Repairing Access Files

I ran this product back in March, but if you missed it at that time, DataNumen is now offering a 20% discount by using the coupon code DATA-E2OI-TWEN when ordering at <<http://www.datanumen.com/aar/order.htm>>.

This is a better deal than the discount last March which was only 10%. The discount code may also work for ordering their products for repairing Excel and Word; and for the Outlook and Outlook Express files. Check their Web site for descriptions of the products. The version for Access is 2.1, updated from the one in March.

How's Your Battery Doing?

Hewie Poplock of Central Florida Computer Society <<http://www.cfcs.org>> mentioned this product to the members of his SIG (Special Interest Group) and it sounded to me like something that my readers might be interested in, considering the proliferation of laptop use these days. According to their product page, "BatteryCare is a free utility that gives you much more information about your battery than how much charge you have left for the current session: The app changes power profiles for you when you connect your laptop to a power source, lets you know how many

recharge cycles your battery has left, and more, all for free." I know my laptop is not accurate about its remaining time, but I have not used it very much while depending entirely on its battery.

It sounds like a handy product, and how could you go wrong if it's free. However, the developer does appreciate any donations to help keep his work going. Makes sense to me.

<<http://batteryare.bkspot.com/en/index.html>>

Having problems reading the screen?

A while back, I read a review of DeskTopZoom written by Bonnie Snyder in Bits of Bytes, newsletter of the Pikes Peak Computer Application Society of Colorado Springs <<http://ppcompas.apcug.org/bb0903.pdf#page=5>>. This product does a good job of giving you options for enlarging parts of your screen for easier reading, or to study something you can't see very well on a page. It does have a few shortcomings, but all in all, she speaks highly of it, and the price is "nada." If you would like to find out more, read her article in the above link, or go to <<http://www.softpedia.com/get/Desktop-Enhancements/Other-Desktop-Enhancements/DesktopZoom.shtml>>. There may be improvements since her review was written.

Magnifier You May Already Have!

Let's say that you sometimes need simple magnification for something. Like me, you may not have known about the screen magnifier in XP. It's nothing exciting, but simply click "All Programs, then Accessories, then click Accessibility" and you'll find Magnifier. I tried it and it's pretty basic, but I'm told that more information about it is on the Microsoft Web site. The article I read said there's a link for that, but I

didn't see it. On my screen, large text appeared at the top with a large cursor, and while there wasn't much magnified screen area, I was able to make use of it. Try it; it may be all you need. Clicking "exit" stops it. I was unaware of this gem until I read it in a newsletter.

That's it for this month. I'll have some more new product announcements on my Web site that didn't offer discounts. 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>](http://www.dealsguy.com).



**Use Caution When
Upgrading to Windows 7**
By Ira Wilsker

A few weeks ago I wrote a column about how to determine if your computer could be satisfactorily upgraded to Windows 7. I mentioned Microsoft's Windows 7 Upgrade Advisor, and Windows 7 Compatibility Center, which should be run prior to any installation in order to determine hardware and software compatibility with Windows 7. I ran both of those utilities on my three month old Vista Home Premium 64 machine, and found that my hardware was compatible with Windows 7, and that some of my software needed to be updated, which I did. Rerunning both Microsoft utilities after making the recommended changes indicated that my computer hardware and software should run on Windows

7, and that no listed incompatibilities remained. With peace of mind that I should have no problems upgrading to Windows 7, I eagerly awaited the free upgrade discs that I had ordered under Microsoft's and my manufacturer's "Free Upgrade to Windows 7" offer for eligible computers.

A few days after Microsoft's much promoted rollout of Windows 7, my upgrade discs arrived in the mail. The envelope actually contained two DVDs, one the manufacturer's "Upgrade Advisor," the other Microsoft's "Windows 7 Home Premium Upgrade" complete with hologram and product key. Also in the envelope was a poster sized, multi-lingual, instruction sheet with detailed upgrade instructions. Knowing from past experience on my older computers (XP to Vista), it may take several hours to complete the upgrade, I waited until the weekend when I might have the time to dedicate to the upgrade.

One of my most frequently used computing expressions is "Backup! Backup!, and Backup!" Prior to installing Windows 7, I made a set of Vista recovery DVDs, and a redundant backup of all of my critical data files. I can not understate the critical importance of this backup process, and that it is absolutely imperative to have a good current backup. If you have the software and media to make an image backup, which is a digital image of your entire hard drive that can be restored in the event of catastrophic failure, do it. This could be very useful, as it can restore the operating system, data, and all programs if necessary. The fact that I do have good backups may be my savior. I was heartened by the fact that the computer magazines and blogs were heavy with

stories of successful upgrades and the high level of preliminary satisfaction that users had with their new Windows 7 upgrades.

After ensuring that I had good backups, I then proceeded to follow the upgrade instructions provided with my discs, and first ran the manufacturer's "Upgrade Advisor." It also ran the Windows 7 Upgrade Advisor (no problems found), and installed some updated Windows 7 drivers for the factory hardware. When completed, I was instructed to insert the Windows 7 Upgrade DVD.

The Windows 7 Upgrade DVD ran for a while and detected some factory installed software, mostly games and a few obsolete Microsoft utilities, that I was instructed to uninstall. The computer then rebooted back to my Vista Home Premium 64, and the list of items to uninstall appeared in a file on my desktop. I used my Revo Uninstaller, and uninstalled those items being sure to do a complete uninstall including any fragments and leftover registry entries.

I then restarted the computer and re-ran the Windows 7 Upgrade setup, as directed. The computer ran for several hours, as I occasionally monitored its progress. There were no difficulties or anomalies so far, and as things were now running smoothly, I felt assured that I would shortly have the new Windows 7 Home Premium 64 installed on my computer. After running for nearly six hours, and completing an indicated 72% of the upgrade process, a window popped up which said that the install could not continue as my hard drive was full. That struck me as very odd, and a sense of disbelief came over me, as I knew that I had well over 500 gigs of available hard drive space prior to the

upgrade! I was instructed by the upgrade software to restart my computer, and that my Vista would then be restored. Other than the annoyance of wasting six hours of my life on a failed upgrade, along with a modicum of disgust, I removed the Windows 7 DVD from the drive, and rebooted the computer. This is when things went terribly wrong.

During the reboot process, I was greeted with a black window with white print that offered two options; repair Windows 7, or restore my Vista. I selected the restore option, and the computer booted into Windows 7 (not Vista), and as it was loading a popup appeared that said, "The computer restarted unexpectedly or encountered an unexpected error," and instructed me to reboot. I rebooted, selected the restore function, and the same popup error appeared. I rebooted again, but this time selected the "Repair Windows 7" option, and the system loaded identically as before. I selected a variety of the Windows 7 repair options, ran them, rebooted, and the same error appeared. I put the Windows 7 Upgrade DVD in the drive, and ran the setup again, only to be greeted with the same error at the same place in the process. I tried over a dozen permutations of rebooting and selecting options, including a variety of repair options off of the Windows 7 repair menu, but always had the same error when rebooting. This became an infinite loop. Despite Microsoft's claims that Vista would be restored if the upgrade failed, the system would not restore my Vista, and the Windows 7 failed to install. Now I was left with a useless computer that would not load anything. I did finally boot off of a Linux CD, and saw that my files all appeared to be intact. With some difficulty, I was able

to then boot off of my Spinrite CD, and did a thorough hard drive check; my hard drive was intact and undamaged.

Next, with growing frustration approaching anger, I went online with my trusty old XP computer (the same one that I am using to type this). I went to the Microsoft Windows 7 support forums, and found that I was far from alone. The Windows 7 forum “Install, Upgrade, Activate” had over 6,000 threads, and almost 25,000 messages. One forum, “Windows 7 - Upgrade Unsuccessful -Reboot Loop” had a post from Michael, a Microsoft support engineer. It says, “Hello. For those who have attempted to perform an upgrade to Windows 7 and encounter a reboot loop, Microsoft is aware of this issue and is currently being investigated.” It then provided a link to another forum, but at least I had some assurance that Microsoft was aware of the problem with the “Microsoft is aware of this issue” statement. That forum then linked to another forum, with the same title “Windows 7 - Upgrade Unsuccessful -Reboot Loop.” That forum, which Microsoft “locked” (closed to new posts) has dozens of posts similar to mine, where users are complaining about the infinite loop reboot problem, and the failure to restore Vista. It appears that there may be two distinct and different issues involving the loop problem. Several dozen of the posts all indicated that their computer locked up at 62% of the install process, and many of them had purchased the student upgrade to Windows 7, and downloaded the upgrade. For these unhappy users, Microsoft has offered an updated download file for them to use to reinstall Windows 7. Many other users, me included, had an authentic

Microsoft Upgrade DVD which we used for the install, and all of us encountered the same problem. Microsoft posted a few suggestions on possible fixes, but from the user responses, these have not been successful. It was immaterial if the user was updating a desktop computer like mine, or a laptop, the failure was the same. Some of the users were so frustrated that they chose to do a full install, rather than an upgrade, which did indeed work, but it wiped out all of their programs and data files which would have been preserved had the upgrade install worked as promised. It is of little solace to me and thousands of other users with crippled computers that the vast majority of those performing upgrades completed them successfully. I guess that we were just the unlucky few.

It is not just the Vista Home Premium users that have encountered this problem, but users of other editions as well. In the Microsoft forums “Vista x64 Ultimate to Windows 7 Ultimate upgrade failing” an IT professional who was upgrading several computers encountered a similar problem with the Ultimate upgrade.

Several of the computer magazines and independent support forums have had readers complain with the identical issues, and inquiries to Microsoft have resulted in a “we are aware of the problem and we are working to find a solution.” Some of the independent support boards also have members trying to find a solution, but so far none have been found that can either restore our computers to the way they were prior to the upgrade (Vista), or allow the Windows 7 upgrade to complete.

The one saving grace is that I do have a Vista backup so I can be up and

running again on my newer computer, but according to the Microsoft forums, many users did not create a backup prior to installing the Windows 7 Upgrade. Unless Microsoft comes up with a fix, these users will likely lose all of their programs and files; an unsatisfactory outcome. Once again, this demonstrates that it is absolutely imperative to have and maintain a contemporary backup of all critical data files, and preferably an image backup which can restore the computer to an earlier state complete with all programs and files.

Most users who have installed the upgrade editions of Windows 7 to compatible computers had great success, but for the few, maybe thousands, of us who had a catastrophic failure during the upgrade process, we are not happy campers. Can I recommend the Windows 7 Upgrade to users with compatible computers? Generally yes, as the benefits of Windows 7 appear to outweigh the foibles of Vista, but I will only make that recommendation with one proviso; be absolutely certain to have a good backup before attempting the upgrade. I am thankful that I have a good backup. If someone wants to do a clean install, meaning that they are installing Windows 7 to an empty or reformatted hard drive that is fine, as there have been very few problems with a clean install reported in the forums.

I will continue to monitor the Microsoft support forums hoping for a satisfactory resolution of this problem. In the meantime, remember, "Backup! Backup!, Backup!"

WEBSITES:

<http://social.answers.microsoft.com/Forums/en-US/category/windows7>>.

<http://www.microsoft.com/windows/windows-7/get/upgrade-advisor.aspx>>.

<http://www.microsoft.com/windows/compatibility/windows-7/en-us/default.aspx>>.

[Editor's Note: This article was received on 11/09/2009].

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>.

Using Linux By Kerry Miller

As you may know (I have written several articles), I use the Linux operating system. I don't know why more people don't use Linux. Linux is a costless operating system for a Personal Computer.

In one of those earlier articles, I told the story of how back in the 1997 time frame I had a dual boot system: Microsoft Windows NT and Linux. I had copied my user files from the NTFS (file system) to a common Fat 16 (file system) that both Windows NT and Linux could use. I would boot Windows NT only when I wanted to check a setting. After I had most of my user files on the Linux file system (ext2, I think) I went to boot Windows NT. The message on the screen translated to "I am sick fix me." I promptly re-formatted the disk that held Windows NT and haven't looked back.

There are many different distributions (variations) of Linux: Red Hat Fedora, Suse, Ubuntu (to name only a few). Each distribution has its own personality. I use Fedora 10 as it calls itself as it boots.

I have used Red Hat for years simply because it is compatible with the way I want to use a computer.

As far as using Linux is concerned, all you need to do is to place the media (e.g., CD) in a media reader attached to your computer and install the Linux operating system. You may also download an ISO(1) file for a CD or DVD and burn (write) the ISO file onto the media. In some cases you are allowed to download the operating directly onto your hard disk. There are even versions of Linux to load onto a flash drive.

When you are loading an operating system, there are usually a few questions to answer, such as the language you want to use, what keyboard you are using and what mouse you are using. Most distributions check the computer for the amount of memory (RAM) and peripherals that are installed. If there is enough memory they will use a graphical installation. As far as I know, this is similar to Microsoft.

If your computer has enough horse power and memory to run what is called Xwindows (a computer software system and network protocol that provides a graphical user interface (GUI) for networked computers--see <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xwindows>>), there is a choice of desktop applications: GNOME or KDE. You will find a group of people that prefer the KDE desktop and a different group of people that like the GNOME desktop. I use the GNOME desktop which uses three menus: Applications, Places and System instead of a start menu. The KDE desktop uses a single menu more like Microsoft's start menu.

There is also the ability to place icons of the desk top so that a mouse

can be used to open an application or even a data file.

The usual applications included (all free) are: Firefox (web browser), OpenOffice.org (compatible with Microsoft Office, including reading and writing Microsoft Office files). There is a choice of text editors, some of which are dependent on the desktop of choice. There are even games and graphic applications. Not to mention photo editing programs (e.g., GIMP). And there is a host of other applications that may be downloaded.

The web site <<http://www.gnu.org/>> is a good place to learn more about Linux. The Ubuntu distribution, as I said, fits me. Use a google search to find the many (if not all) Linux possibilities. It can be said that using Linux is similar to using Microsoft Windows in many ways.

An additional note: There are some shops that custom build computers without an operating system at a reduced price, and others that will install an operating system of choice (such as one of the Linux distributions).

The simple truth is that, especially when used with Xwindows and either the GNOME or KDE desktop, the operation of a computer with a Linux operating system is so similar to Microsoft Windows there is hardly any learning curve to it. Linux uses (in my opinion) a more understandable file arrangement (called the ext3 file system).

There are some computer hardware issues that need attention. Connect to <<http://www.linuxdevices.com/>> for a good place to verify the hardware possibilities.

There is a Linux users group in Fort Collins called the North Colorado Linux Users Group. Connect to <<http://www>.

nclug.org/> for more information. These folks can and will answer any questions you have.

Footnote: (1) ISO is an acronym for International Standards Organization. An ISO file is an archive file in a format defined by the ISO. For more information on this topic, connect to <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iso_file>

Kerry Miller is a member of the Front Range PC Users Group of Colorado. This article first appeared in "k-Byte," August 2009. Web: <<http://www.frpcug.org>>. E-mail: <[twriterext\(at\)gmail.com](mailto:twriterext(at)gmail.com)>.



We all have been exposed to the wildly popular document format called “PDF,” or Portable Document Format. PDF files can be read by virtually any operating system using any of many free PDF readers and will always display precisely as the author intended, including any embedded graphics and fonts. The primary PDF writers and readers have been published by Adobe under the moniker “Acrobat,” and almost all new computers have included Adobe’s free “Acrobat Reader.” While PDF readers are abundant and typically available for free, the primary PDF writer has been the Adobe product, which is fairly expensive and available in several versions.

In recent years, PDF has become more available as a format with which documents can be saved, with PDF now integrated as a “save as” selection in both recent builds of Open Office, and “SaveAsPDF.exe” which can be

downloaded for free from Microsoft as an add-on for Office 2007. What may be more convenient for most users is one of the several free PDF writers, such as CutePDF, doPDF, and PrimoPDF.

I have used CutePDF on all of my computers for several years, and personally find it indispensable. Available for free download from CutePDF.com, CutePDF also requires the installation of a PS2PDF converter such as the free GPL GhostScript, which can also be downloaded from the CutePDF website. Once installed, CutePDF requires no tinkering or tweaking, as it appears as a printer selection when the “print” icon is selected. By simply selecting CutePDF as the printer, the document is quickly “printed” as a PDF document conserving all formatting, fonts, and images. The “Save As” window appears, and the document can be named and saved as desired, with the PDF file extension. That file can now be read by any computer with a PDF reader, and will always appear exactly as the original document. Saving a document as a PDF instead of another format makes the document difficult for others to edit or otherwise alter, which may be a valuable benefit. I use CutePDF primarily for saving news stories and web pages, preserving their original appearance for later viewing or distribution. CutePDF works well as a “printer” with almost any software that can print, including browsers, spreadsheets, word processors, and desktop publishing software. One acquaintance of mine who uses sophisticated software to write and edit music uses CutePDF to save his work in PDF format such that he can digitally distribute it to others who do not have compatible music writing

software; the recipient can then print a hard copy of the PDF file on his own printer. I use CutePDF so frequently that I actually have it selected as my default printer, as I save documents as a PDF much more frequently than I print to paper. CutePDF works on Microsoft Windows 98, ME, 2000, XP, 2003, Vista (32 and 64), and Windows 7 (32 and 64). For those needing enhanced PDF writing capabilities, a commercial version, CutePDFPro, is available.

Another very good free PDF writer is doPDF, available for download from www.dopdf.com. According to the doPDF website, “doPDF is a free PDF converter for both personal and commercial use. Using doPDF you can create PDF files by selecting the “Print” command from virtually any application. With one click you can convert your Microsoft Excel, Word or PowerPoint documents or your e-mails and favorite web sites to PDF files.” The latest version of the doPDF, version 6.3, runs on Windows XP; Vista (32 and 64); Windows 7 (32 and 64); and Microsoft Server 2000 to 2008. “doPDF 6.3 installs itself as a virtual PDF printer driver so after a successful installation it will appear in your Printers and Faxes list. To convert to PDF, you just have to print the document to doPDF, the free PDF converter. Open a document (with Microsoft Word, WordPad, NotePad or any other software), choose Print and select doPDF. It will ask you where to save the PDF file and when finished, the PDF file will be automatically opened in your default PDF viewer.” Unlike some other PDF writers, doPDF does not require GhostScript, which makes the total setup and install much smaller than its competitors. Since a third party converter is unnecessary

and doPDF is written in tight code, it requires fewer system resources when converting documents to PDF. Another feature of doPDF is the selectable resolution of the saved PDF file from 72 to 2400 dpi, which influences the size of the saved file, the lower the resolution, the smaller the file. While any PDF writer can save documents or web pages written in any language, the doPDF software user interface supports 20 different languages. Kim Komando has acknowledged doPDF, and other websites have awarded doPDF their “Editor’s Choice” awards. The download site Softpedia has given doPDF its highest 5/5 rating. doPDF would be a good choice for anyone who needs a PDF writer for personal or commercial use.

What may be the world’s most widely used free PDF creator is PrimoPDF, available from www.primopdf.com. The newly released version 5 of PrimoPDF is compatible with all versions of Windows from 98 to Windows 7, and works just like other PDF writers, in that it installs as a printer driver. PrimoPDF has some unusual features for a free PDF writer in that it can combine different documents into a single PDF document, and also password protect PDF files. Document information, including title and author, can be imbedded in the document during the creation process. The new version 5 has added a “drag and drop” feature where documents can be easily converted to PDF format by dragging the file over the PrimoPDF icon, and dropping it, which initiates the PDF conversion process. Users who need enhanced features, such as editing PDF files, may find the commercial version, Nitro PDF Professional, a full featured

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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>](mailto:iwilsker@apcug.net).

Registry Cleaning By Herb Goldstein

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Perhaps the greatest necessary evil in the Windows operating system is the registry. It was designed by a cyber-masochist as the brain behind all versions of Windows that controls their every function. Regardless of what procedure you undertake in Windows, it is almost certain that there are numerous entries, often coded or otherwise illegible, residing in this huge database that makes it possible or not to accomplish. From earliest startup to final shutdown, Windows is completely dependent on the integrity and proper functioning of the registry.

From this introduction it is clearly evident that the registry is nothing to be toyed with lightly by mere mortals. Yet every computer owner is constantly using, modifying and often tainting its contents in some way. It is little wonder that, in time, the registry can easily become a source of computerized grief. A contaminated, corrupted registry is perhaps the most common cause of a computer's slowdown, errors, or malfunction.

Now you would think that Microsoft, having designed this masterpiece, would have figured a way to keep it continuously in tune. No such luck! Fighting the battle of the registry is a task left to 99.5% of computer owners who know less about the registry than the secrets of the Universe.

Capitalizing on the economic opportunities in demystifying the necessary cleaning and tuning of this mystical database are a bevy of software designers and publishers that promise to easily and quickly do the job that no mere mortal is either capable or desirous of accomplishing. It is not surprising that the result is a very mixed bag of success, with many registry cleaners making the cure considerably worse than the disease.

How then is one to choose from among the vast array of registry cleaning software to select a product whose functions are way outside the proper scrutiny of which most computer owners are capable. Chance and luck unfortunately play a large role in choosing. Another is by recommendation, experience and common sense, a little of which I can perhaps, respectfully, offer.

In the course of several weeks or months, I install, uninstall and try lots

of different software. Why not? A free trial version of almost everything is commonly available today. The result is that in time my registry is likely to become more of a mess than yours (without discounting the mess that is more than likely to already exist in yours).

I have looked at a sizeable number of trial versions of commonly available registry cleaners. Over a period of years and experience I have selected the same one consistently as my choice...Registry First Aid, from Rose City Software (rosecitysoftware.com). The most important reason is that it does the job thoroughly, and very much most compelling, safely!

Most of the registry cleaners I examined were very fast, finding a sizable list of registry errors in just a few minutes. Registry First Aid (RFA) is slower than many of the others largely because it's the safest! It is the only one I have seen that not only produces a categorized list of registry errors that need correction, it also provides an accurate reason for having selected each and every error. I have spent many hours looking into the validity of its reasons for hundreds of its selections and I have yet to find one that was incorrect. I am satisfied that RFA is right on the money with each and every one of its suggested corrections.

RFA offers to scan 11 different categories of registry components. Some frequently turn up little to no problems, while others (especially "invalid application paths") found more than 2,800 errors in my registry on my last scan. The errors are carefully sorted and color coded as either completely safe to remove, remove with caution, or confront with extreme caution.

The reason for each is explained with every item, something no other registry cleaner I have seen does.

In some cases errors are listed for incorrect paths or locations, and RFA offers to put them in a properly valid placement, also something I have seen only in RFA.

After presenting its list of discovered errors and their suggested corrections, RFA permits you to select those errors you wish to have it correct. It also permits you to view any error directly in the registry itself if you wish. Before making corrections, RFA will back up the registry in case you wish to later undo and restore its condition prior to corrections. Talk about safety, these are all virtues I have not seen offered fully in any other registry cleaner.

RFA also provides a number of other very useful registry-related functions. A registry search feature will quickly find any reference you offer, perhaps to leftovers of uninstalled software. A registry defragment feature will permit your computer to run faster and more efficiently. A variety of plug-ins are offered, and registry backup jobs are safely stored for possible use at your selection.

I have offered an explanation of why registry cleaning is important and why my selection to do the job is RFA. I recommend a visit to the Rose City Software website where you can download a fully functional trial copy of RFA 7.0. If you select to purchase, you will find the cost very reasonable. If you have a previous version, you will find the latest filled with many nuances (including a great new interface) listed on their website that make the upgrade more than worthwhile.

A word of wisdom is possibly in order. There is almost nothing that you can do with your computer from the moment you turn it on that does not bring some degree of risk or ignores the necessity for caution. Merely receiving e-mail can provide unseen dangers. Any procedure that modifies your operating system in any way can particularly present a serious problem. Registry cleaning is such a procedure. While not doing registry cleaning when necessary can seriously effect and degrade computer performance, the cleaning itself is also not without risks. Although I have stressed the safety I have found associated with RFA, bear very much in mind that computer users need to constantly be defensive. Before undertaking registry cleaning, be sure to make a full backup of your computer in addition to the registry backup that RFA itself will make. Creating a system restore point prior is also a good idea. Prevention is a far sight better than repairing!

Herb Goldstein is editor with the Sarasota PCUG of Florida. Web: <<http://www.spcug.org>>. E-mail: <[pcugedit \(at\) verizon.net](mailto:pcugedit(at)verizon.net)>.

Power to the Pixels!
By Dave Christenson

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I suspect that everyone reading this has at least one digital camera. What criteria did you use when buying it?

Size, features, cuteness, need, impulse? Some or all of these? Maybe. But I'll bet that two you definitely considered are price and pixel count. All other things being equal, low price and high mega-pixel count is good! Right? Not always. I'll certainly go along with the low price bit, but let's think about the pixels a bit.

Why do we want more pixels? Obviously, because the picture, or image, is made out of pixels, the more pixels we have the more detail the image can contain and the greater we can enlarge it, or more cropping we can do. If we go beyond the capabilities of the count, we get what's called pixilation, or, more informally, stair-stepping, where a diagonal line zig-zags. Also called, for obvious reason, "the jaggies." So, why don't we necessarily want the most pixels possible for the price?

Well, everything in this world is a compromise, including us. We all make unnecessary noise, so do pixels. When light from the lens hits a pixel it puts out an electronic signal, proportional to the amount of light striking it. But, there is also a residual signal in a pixel, that is, a signal that it puts out whether or not light is hitting it. This is called noise. This is on top of the wanted signal, and the lower the brightness of the image, the greater the noise appears. Thus, it shows up more in photos taken in dim light. But it's always there, and in all cameras. It appears more obvious in areas of smoothness, such as sky, or human skin, and causes the image to look somewhat rough or granulated. (To those who are used to film, it's more or less the equivalent of grain.) Altogether, noise is something really undesirable.

[Continued on Page 18](#)

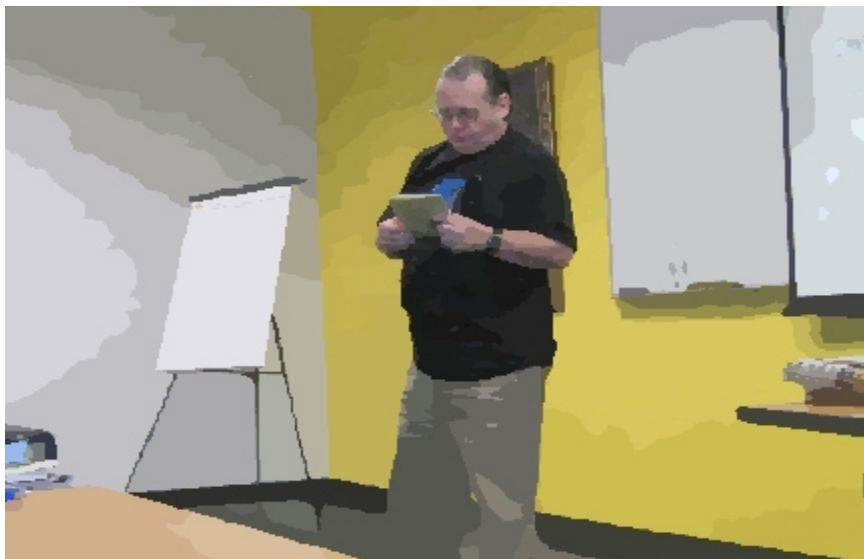
SEMCO Meeting Pictures



(Above): SEMCO officers arrive at the ESD building. (Below): Richard Tapaninen of the Micro Center talks about what is hot for the holidays.



SEMCO Meeting Pictures



(Above): SEMCO President Mike Bader addresses the group. (Below): SIG-IBM chairman Tom Callow discusses home networking. <http://download.cnet.com/Photo-to-Cartoon/3000-2191_4-10631533.html>.





BOARD MEETING
11/08/2009
Carol Sanzi

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

President Mike Bader, Vice President Richard Jackson, Treasurer Bette Gay, Secretary Carol Sanzi, SIG-IBM Chairman Tom Callow, SIG-Advanced Chairman Franz Breidenich, Publications Committee Chairman Warner Mach, SIG-Linux representative Mike Rudas and Members-at-Large Bob Clyne and Chuck Moery. Also attending was past President Gary DeNise. The meeting was called to order at 12:25 p.m.

OLD BUSINESS

Treasurer, Bette Gay, reported that the amount in the treasury totaled \$9,576.85 with \$4,841.37 in the checking account and \$4,735.48 invested in three Certificates of Deposit. The membership stands at 75. It is time for O. S. Narayanaswamy to renew his membership.

NEW BUSINESS

Mike Bader reported that Focus Hope's Windows 7 Launch went well. Many new features were demonstrated. SEMCO donated soda, water, and a door prize to the event and was promoted at the meeting.

Next month SEMCO will take nominations for officers. Anyone wishing to nominate a member or themselves is invited to do so at the December meeting.

Warner Mach moved to authorize up to \$100 for Richard Jackson to purchase a new recorder and microphone for the podcasts. Mike Rudas offered to help research recorders and microphones to compare price and quality.

Warner Mach requested an update on getting the DATA BUS editions on the web. Chuck Moery and Bob Clyne reported that nearly all the DATA BUS editions are now on the web site.

Richard Jackson moved to adjourn. Warner Mach seconded the motion and it was carried. The meeting adjourned at 12:38 p.m.

Continued from Page 15 (Pixels)

What's the easiest way to reduce the amount of noise in a pixel? Easy, make it bigger! Now, do you see the conflict? If we make the pixels bigger to reduce noise, then we have to have fewer of them on a given size sensor. Or, we can have bigger sensors. This method definitely works, but at a price. A bigger sensor means a bigger camera, and a higher price. Large sensors are expensive, huge sensors ridiculously so. (A giant sensor or a new car, your choice!) There is software in cameras designed to analyze the noise and reduce it. It works, but it has limitations distinguishing between noise and signal. Software packages can be purchased at varying price levels to reduce noise, they help but don't cure the noise problem, if you want to get into that.

You would think that camera manufacturers, being aware of the problem, would design their cameras to have a reasonable compromise between sensor size and number of pixels. The designers could, but specifications are given by the marketing group, who are well aware that "Pixels sell!" So, what should you do?

Well, consider how you are going to use your photos. Are you going to print 16" x 20" photos on high resolution

Continued on Page 21

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS (SIGS)



SIG-IBM
Tom Callow

Dec. 13: 1:45 p.m. MOVING TO WINDOWS 7: Gene Barlow of [User Group Relations](#) will present from Utah a live Webinar (Web Seminar) will discuss the best way to get from your Windows XP or Vista system to the new Windows 7 operating system on your computer, including all of the different options for installing Windows 7 and how to leave your stable older operating system on your computer while installing Windows 7.

SIG-IBM INTERMEDIATE

Dec. 13: 3:45 p.m. QUICKEN SIG- IBM Chairman Tom Callow, as guest speaker will demonstrate Quicken 2010, the latest version of Intuit's checkbook and personal financial software and will discuss Quicken Online, Intuit's free service for helping you manage your money.



SIG-ADVANCED
Franz Breidenich

Dec. 28 (4th Mon.): 6:45 p.m.: At the Oak Park Library. The library is located at 14200 Oak Park Blvd., Oak Park, MI. Phone: (248) 691-7480. Topic: Wide ranging discussion of computers and computing.



SIG-LINUX
Ray McLaughlin

Dec. 22 (4th Tues): 6:45 p.m.: At the Oak Park Library. The library is located at 14200 Oak Park Blvd., Oak Park, MI. Topic: General Discussion.

Jan. 2009 DATA BUS DEADLINE (7th day after 2nd Sunday in month)
SEMCO Input and Members' Ads—Deadline: Sun., Dec. 20, 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)**

Jan. 6, 7 p.m., (1st Wednesday); Jane Wheatly 810-982-1187 or Pam Raisanen E-mail info: <compinfo@hughes.net>. Web: <<http://www.bwcomp.org>>. Topic: TBA.

Focus Hope IT Users Group

Jan. 2, 9:30-11:30 a.m. (1st Saturday-usually), 1400 Oakman, Detroit, MI. 48238. Web info <<http://www.fhitug.org/meetings/meetings.htm>>. Topic: TBA."

HUG (Holly User Group)

Nov. 14, 9:00 a.m., (2nd Sat.); Groveland Twp. Fire Hall, 3085 Grange Hall Rd. & Dixie Hwy., Ortonville. Topic: TBA.

MacGroup- Detroit

Dec. 13, 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: "Photoshop Elements." SIGS: 2:00 p.m.

MacTechnics, (MAC User Group)

Dec. 19, (3rd Saturday); See web site for meeting time and location. <<http://www.mactechnics.org>>. JoAnn Olson at 248-478-4300. Topic: "MacTechnics 25th Anniversary Holiday Party."

MDLUG (Metro Detroit Linux User Group)

Dec. 12, 12:30-2:30 p.m., (2nd Saturday); MDLUG meetings will be at The Gaudior Academy located at 27100 Avondale Avenue in Inkster. Web: <<http://www.mdlug.org>>. Info: Raymond McLaughlin <president@mdlug.org>. Topic: TBA.

MUG (Michigan User Group)

Dec. 8, 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: "Open Data & Open Pandora."

Michigan Apple Computer User Group

Dec. 10, 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://tinyurl.com/royaloakcc>>.

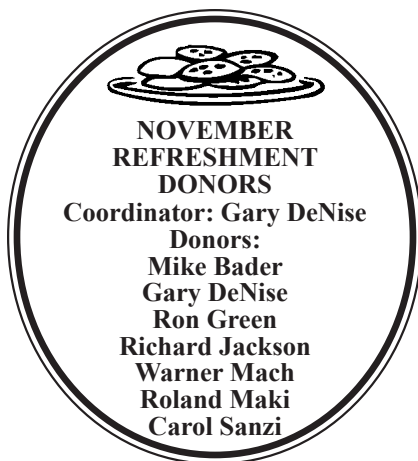
SHCC (Sterling Heights Computer Club)

Jan. 5, 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: "Backup, Issues and Techniques".

Continued from Page 18 (Pixels)

glossy paper? Are you going to crop out an itsy-bitsy portion of the center of the picture and enlarge it? If so, I'm afraid you will have to bite the bullet and get a larger sensor camera. But if you are taking photos of birthday parties, vacations, and get-togethers, and want to print them as 4x5's or e-mail them, then I wouldn't be too concerned about pixel counts. Maybe cuteness is more important.

Dave Christenson is the digital photo guru and member of the Fox Valley PC Association of Illinois. Web: <<http://www.fvpca.org>>. For E-mail: <[deanholste\(at\)sbcglobal.net](mailto:deanholste(at)sbcglobal.net)>.



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

Relational Database Programming: Lis

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
Lis, Bernie—248-669-0101, 10am–8pm.....	BerLLis@comcast.net
Vander-Schrier, Jack—586-739-7720, 12–8pm.....	jvanders@comcast.net
Yuhasz, Steve.....	Help@yuhasz.org



**SOUTHEASTERN MICHIGAN
COMPUTER ORGANIZATION, INC.**

SEMCO CALENDAR

**Engineering Society of Detroit
20700 Civic Center Dr., Suite 450, 4th Floor
Southfield, MI. 48076**

Dec. 13–SUNDAY (Meet 2nd Sunday)

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

SEMCO General Meeting at 1:30 p.m.

Special Interest Groups (SIGs)

SIG-IBM 1:45 p.m. **MOVING TO WINDOWS 7:** Gene Barlow of User Group Relations will present from Utah a live Webinar (Web Seminar) will discuss the best way to get from your Windows XP or Vista system to the new Windows 7 operating system on your computer, including all of the different options for installing Windows 7 and how to leave your stable older operating system on your computer while installing Windows 7.

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

SIG-IBM Intermediate 3:45 p.m. **QUICKEN** SIG-IBM Chairman Tom Callow, as guest speaker will demonstrate Quicken 2010, the latest version of Intuit's checkbook and personal financial software and will discuss Quicken Online, Intuit's free service for helping you manage your money.

SIG-ADVANCED, Dec. 28, 2009 (4th 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.

SIG-LINUX, Dec. 22, 2009 (4th Tuesday), 6:45 p.m., Oak Park Public Library, 14200 Oak Park Blvd., Oak Park, MI. Topic: General discussion.

Jan. 10–SEMCO Sunday

<http://www.semco.org>

PUBLIC INVITED

(Please copy this and the next page to post on your bulletin board)

SEMCO Meetings at Engineering Society of Detroit
20700 Civic Center Drive, Suite 450, 4th Floor
Southfield MI 48076



From I-696 exit at Evergreen. Take Evergreen south to Civic Center Drive. Civic Center Drive is about halfway between I-696/Eleven Mile Rd. and 10 Mile Rd. Turn west, right if you are coming from the north, onto Civic Center Drive. Follow Civic Center Drive, watching the number signs on the right. When you get to the 20700 sign turn right, north, and follow the drive until you arrive at the southwest corner of the brown building with the Engineering Society of Detroit sign near the top. Turn right, east, and go past the front of the building. When you reach the end of the building, turn left, north and go to the back of the building and turn left, west, again. The parking lot will be on your right. The entrance is in the center of the building. Park in back of building. Enter the rear door. The ESD office is on the fourth floor.



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

**SEMCO (future meetings)
December 13
January 10**

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