IN THIS ISSUE

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Our bank, Washington Mutual, was recently taken over by Chase via the FDIC. Our checking and a small savings account were with them, and a Home Equity Loan of just a few thousand. Although our original purpose for the HEL fell through, we had eventually borrowed a small amount for home improvements. We opened the HEL three years ago and have never been late or missed a payment. We usually pay a substantial amount on the principal as well as the monthly interest, but on a few occasions, we only paid the monthly interest, which you can do on a HEL. Shortly after Chase took over, we received a letter from them with two forms they wanted signed to enable them to get copies of our IRS returns for the last two years. They also demanded that we furnish them proof of our income.

I was appalled at the intensity of their demand and decided to ignore it; after all, our record is unblemished, and our FICO score is over 800 and we weren't asking for more money, so I didn't feel we were doing anything wrong? I expected to hear from them by phone, but instead, the next month brought a letter demanding we pay the loan off and there would be no financial penalty for early payment. I also ignored that one. I guess I could have paid it off, but paying money back to your savings does not always happen as planned, so I'm just continuing to pay on the loan, wondering what their next move will be. Am I some kind of criminal?

They then discontinued our credit line, which really doesn't matter to me. Now they're hitting us with extra fees for each payment, called "back dating fees." I've tried complaining to a couple of state agencies, but neither office has responded. My feeling is, beware of dealing with Chase. We're changing our checking to another bank, and since our utilities are automatically withdrawn, we're communicating with them to change bank accounts. The utilities tell me many of their customers are also complaining about Chase.

Interesting Reading

Everyone is interested in Flash Memory technology these days, but few end users really understand what it's all about. Information Week had an interesting article that explains some of how it works along with the shortcomings, and what the future might bring. This article might fill in some blanks, but it's written for IT people so read it carefully. Sorry for the long URL, but some readers dislike tinyurls. They tell me they want to know where they're going when they click a URL. <http://www.informationweek.com/news/storage/systems/showArticle.jhtml?articleID=219501231&queryText=Howard%20Marks>

Another interesting article in IW is about "The Internet of Things"; keeping track of all kinds of things, using RFID tags, and other types of information tags. It covers different topics and problems not covered in the RFID article I gave you recently, and might give you something to think about. <http://analytics.informationweek.com/abstract/25/1343/Virtualization/monitoring-technology-creates-internet-of-things.html>.

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Oops, Nobody Home

In my November DealsGuy column, I wrote about an interesting 3D address book with a discount. Two of my readers have told me they tried to order it, but were unable to do so, or even get a response to e-mail. We both tried to contact the PR person that I coordinated it with, but to no avail. They don't seem to respond at all and I have no idea why. I have that problem a lot with vendors who send out announcements for a new product, but when that happens I don't usually use that item, but in this case, I had several communications with the person and she assured me everything would work fine. I guess those things happen, but I can't help but feel bad. I'm still trying to contact them.

Need To Uninstall Something?

Mike Ungerman <http://musings-from-mike.blogspot.com> (interesting site) of Central Florida Computer Society <http://www.cfcs.org> suggested Revo Uninstaller as his favorite product for program removals <http://www.revouninstaller.com/revo_uninstaller_free_download.html>. User Group members in Florida will remember Mike as the founder of the Florida Association of Computer User Groups (FACUG). He put his own money on the line in the hopes that FACUG would be a success that first year, and it has been a resounding success ever since, with the help of many other people.

Here is an excerpt from the Revo Web site: "Revo Uninstaller includes; Junk Files Cleaner, Windows Tools, Auto Run Manager, Browsers Cleaner, MS Office Cleaner, Windows Cleaner, Evidence Remover and Unrecoverable Delete tools! You can reach all these tools from the 'Tools' tool bar button of Revo Uninstaller."

Another of Mike's recommendations

Belarc Advisor is a popular product for analyzing your system, but Mike suggests a similar program, SIW - System Information for Windows, that, in his opinion, presents the data in a more manageable format <http://www.gtopala.com/>. Check their Web site to find out about its many features and download the freeware version. This is an impressive program.

Be Warned About Those Nasty Web Sites

Hewie Poplock <http://www.hewie.net> of Central Florida Computer Society alerted his Windows SIG to this valuable utility, <http://linkscanner.avg.com>. Some of the nastiest malware could download unknowingly from innocent looking Web sites, so a timely warning might help. I recently mentioned Site Advisor from McAfee, and Site Hound from FireTrust to warn you about undesirable Web sites. They turn your browser red and warn you about possible malicious code. Also check out LinkScanner from AVG Technologies. They acquired this product a while back, which used to sell for $29.95 before they bought it, but now it's free. It works with Windows 2000, XP, Vista and Windows 7. It's also OK on either 32-bit or 64-bit systems. It's a plug-in for IE-6 or later and also works with Firefox.

Can't Make Up a Web Site For Your Business, Look Into This Announcement!

Talkbiznow will offer a free online storefront with the launch of Webstore, a service that enables businesses, start-ups and charities to create their own micro-Website promoting products on the Internet. "A Webstore, which can be created for free within eight minutes, dramatically cuts the time

and costs required to set up a well-designed business website, which often costs users between £10,000 ($16,000) and £20,000 ($32,000) to build." The biggest use of the new service is expected to come from Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) who are already turning to Talkbiznow in the current tough economic conditions as a low-cost and technologically efficient way to reach new markets, recruit staff and create partnerships.

Talkbiznow users can design their own Webstore and choose audio and video promotional tools to help ensure that each micro-website is tailor-made to meet their specific business brand. Each Webstore will have its own URL address, available to all Internet users. Visitors to a Webstore can pay for products and services via PayPal, the online payment system. The accessibility of Webstore reflects the philosophy of Martin Warner, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and co-founder of Talkbiznow, who is committed to offering services for free, empowering SMEs with the technological bandwidth to compete with large corporations.

Warner says: "Webstore represents a unique, non-technical experience to market yourself. Talkbiznow members will be able to create their own storefront. Businesses, charities, events and personal profiles will all be reachable outside the network itself. A Webstore will effectively function as an online business card." Webstore users choose between elegant off-the-shelf templates to define their product, service, event or brand; also advertise prices and describe their industry. Browsers will find each micro-website intuitively easy to navigate with a Webstore acting as a portal that lies between an advertisement and a business website. Users will be able to upload videos about themselves, or their business, from their smart phones and upload them to the page."

Talkbiznow enables its users to network, promote, collaborate with each other, and do business online. Services include web conferencing, voice conferencing and file storage facilities. Users can also use the business social network as an online portal to market and advertise services to other users.

For further information on Webstore, call + 44 (0)20 7233 7578, or check the Talkbiznow URL at <http://www.talkbiznow.com>.

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>. Visit my Web site at <http://www.dealsguy.com>.

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**CrimeReports.com—
The National Crime Map
By Ira Wilsker**
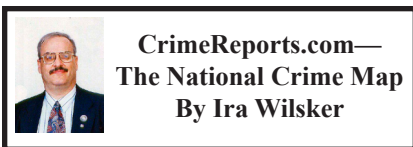
At present, over 600 law enforcement agencies are participating in an online service, <http://CrimeReports.com>. Claiming to be the largest crime mapping network in North America, CrimeReports.com gives people the information that they need to help protect them from crime, and also offers crime prevention information. Seamlessly integrated with Google Maps, CrimeReports.com displays up-to-date crime information from any of the 600 participating jurisdictions located in 44 states and the District of Columbia. In addition to crime information, this service also displays the locations of registered sex offenders in all 50 states. Being Internet based, the service can be accessed by anyone for free, and does not display any advertising banners or other commercial information. While viewing the service is available to anyone at no charge, CrimeReports.com is funded on a subscription basis by the participating law enforcement agencies with monthly rates of $49 for college and university police departments, $99 for small towns (under 50 thousand population), and $199 for larger towns and cities.

Upon accessing the website, the user is greeted with a clean interface displaying a U.S. map, and a Google search bar. Clicking on an active state will display a scrolling list of the participating jurisdictions. Clicking on a jurisdiction will display a Google street map. The user can select a time period to display (3, 7, 14, 30 days, a specific date, or range of dates), types of crime,

or distance from a specific address. The display of registered sex offender residences can be turned on or off as desired. Alternatively, a street address, city and state, or zip code can be entered in the Google search bar, and the map will be centered on that location. If the location selected is not in a jurisdiction that subscribes to CrimeReports.com, then only registered sex offenders will be displayed; but if the location is in a participating jurisdiction, then a detailed crime map will be displayed. As with all Google Maps, the user may choose to display a conventional street map (the default display), a high resolution satellite image, a hybrid map (satellite image with street names overlaid), or a terrain map. The Google Maps display can also be zoomed in or out by manipulating the slider bar in the top-left corner of the map, while options are displayed on the bottom-right margin of the map to show a "printer friendly" display, a "distance guide" that displays distances as a series of concentric circles from the given address, and a "legend" which defines the types of crimes based on the icons shown.

From the CrimeReports.com front page, I clicked on Texas on the national map, and a listing of 37 Texas subscribing cities was displayed. Scrolling through the list, I found that my home city was not listed, but does display local registered sex offenders. The closest participating city to my home is Jasper, Texas, so I clicked on the Jasper link on the pull down menu. I zoomed in centering on the center of town, and the crime map was very easy to read. I selected the most recent 14-day period, and the incidents were clearly displayed. On the left margin of the map was a listing of offenses, which

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I sorted by date. Alternatively, clicking on one of the displayed icons displayed the type of crime, the date, the address, time, and reporting agency.

There is much more information available than just displaying a crime map. Clicking on the "Analytics" tab on the top of the web page opens up a detailed crime analysis graphing utility. On the top of the display the user first clicks on a state from the pull down menu, and then in the adjacent column clicks on a participating jurisdiction. As with the maps, specific time periods can be easily selected. The first graph displays the type and number of crimes as a bar graph. The second chart shows a pie chart showing types of crimes as a percentage of total crime. The bottom of the web page shows crime trends, color coded by type of crime, and charted by date and number. With the maps and analytical information, residents and businesses can be better aware of the criminal risks throughout an area.

While all of the information on CrimeReports.com is freely available for anyone to access and use, it also offers several advantages to those law enforcement agencies that subscribe to the service. The analytics can be used by neighborhood watch and community oriented policing activities to identify problem areas, allocate resources, set goals, and measure progress. City councils may find the information very useful in terms of ordinances and budgetary planning. The law enforcement agencies themselves may make use of the service with several non-public analysis tools called "Command Central." This service integrates with any existing CAD or RMS systems, and supports CompStat-style analysis. While secured, authorized users can

access the information online using any web browser. The integral "Roll Call" feature can display crime maps and statistics on a precinct or district basis, alerting officers to potential crime patterns. In researching this column, I found several complementary reviews by law enforcement personnel that explained how the system is used to maintain and disseminate crime reporting information. A "TrendCaster" function "… can be used to evaluate policy changes, beat assignments, and overall crime trends with a heat map that highlights areas where crime is on the rise and decline."

Agencies can also use CrimeReports.com as a public information tool alerting residents of potential situations. The website offers free e-mail alerts which will deliver contemporary crime maps directly to the subscribers' inbox.

"Residents can sign up for automated e-mails that let them know where crime has happened near their home or place of work. All alerts are customizable by location and area. In addition, citizens can choose to receive daily, weekly, or monthly alerts, and they have the freedom to choose which crime types they want to track." There is also a free iPhone application available for download that offers great functionality. The iPhone app will display crimes by location or address, crime type, and customizable date range; display data on the crime map or in a list view; show national sex offender data alongside crime in your neighborhood; and provide free, automated, e-mail crime alerts. CrimeReports.com also disseminates information in real-time on social networking services such as Twitter and Facebook. There is also a free widget which can be installed on the

agency website to give residents access to a local crime map without having to leave the agency website.

Crime is something we all must be aware of and deal with. By using the capabilities of CrimeReports. com residents and law enforcement alike may benefit through increased information about local threats and trends. It is a very worthwhile service. WEBSITES:

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

<http://www.crimereports.com/files/ CommandCentralBrochure.pdf>.

<http://www.crimereports.com/files/ CrimeReportsBrochure.pdf>.

<http://www.crimereports.com/ iphone>.

<http://www.youtube.com/ watch?v=hNX1YTOeU8U> iPhone demo>.

<http://www.youtube.com/ watch?v=wtvKb4bEN9Y> TV Report

<http://www.youtube.com/user/ CrimeReportsVideos>.

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>.

What are RSS Feeds?
By Constance Brown

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What are RSS Feeds? According to the Wikipedia, "RSS (most commonly translated as 'Really Simple Syndication' but sometimes 'Rich Site Summary') is a family of web feed formats used to publish frequently updated works such as blog entries, news headlines, audio, and video in a standardized format."

Let's see whether we can translate that into everyday language. Most of us have favorite sites or blogs we visit regularly—perhaps news, genealogy, weather, or other types of sites that are updated regularly. Instead of having to click on bookmarks to navigate between sites, or typing the URL of each site, it is much faster to have one location that posts links to the latest updated information. That is done by subscribing to an RSS Reader. Both Yahoo & Google offer readers, and there are other choices as well.

I subscribed to the Google Reader by visiting <http://www.google.com/ reader>. Because I already had a Gmail account, I was able to login immediately and add subscriptions. That is done in one of two ways: clicking on an icon or copying code by clicking on the URL of the feed and pasting it in Add Subscription on your Google Reader home page.

Let's walk through two examples. We'll start by clicking on Add Subscription. A search bar opens that allows us to search for an RSS Feed. I will type The Repository and click Add. Links pop up on the right side of the screen, one of them titled The Repository. Next I will click the + sign by Subscribe. I am then given the option of adding the link to a folder. I want to create a new folder titled News, so I will click Add to a Folder and select New

Folder. A screen pops up that allows me to name the folder. Super simple!

Let's look at a different example. In this case we want to add a link to The Christian Law Association at <http://www.christianlaw.org/cla/>. While browsing their web site, we find an orange broadcast symbol that stands for link to an RSS Feed. When we click on it, a page of code pops up! No need to panic! We will click on the URL and copy it (I use Ctl + C), open the Google Reader, click on Add Subscription, paste the URL in the search box, and click Add.

Some sites let us add a subscription by simply checking an icon that says Google Reader. We click the link and a window pops up that allows us to login to our account and add the link.

In the future it is simple to go to <http://www.google.com/reader>, login, and view updates. We can indicate that we want all messages older than one day to be marked as Read. Now only today's unread links are bold. We can organize links into folders. Yes, we can unsubscribe and we can add new subscriptions, change the folders in which they are stored, view the links as lists, share, search within links, and more.

Why not try it using this technology. You will get the latest information in one easily accessible place, thus maximizing precious time.

Constance Brown, is president of the, Canton Alliance Massillon Users Group, OH. Web: <http://camug. apcug.org>. E-mail: <constance (at) mystepco.com>.

Making Windows More Legible
By Gary Bentley

Have you noticed that each time you purchase a new computer with a higher resolution screen you find everything on the screen looks smaller than it did on the lower resolution monitor screen (if the diagonal size of your monitor was increased you might offset this phenomenon somewhat, but still be surprised that things looked about the same size in that case)?

This is because the Windows operating system assumes that the actual number of pixels per actual inch lighting up on your monitor screen is 96, i.e., 96 DPI ("dots" per physical inch) is assumed by the operating system.

Why would this assumption make things (icons, pictures, text, etc.) look smaller on a monitor that had higher native resolution (native resolution meaning the actual number of pixels lighting up per actual physical inch on your screen)?

Let us look at a real-world example. My Dell Latitude D620 has a 14 inch diagonal LCD screen with 1440 (horizontal) by 900 (vertical) pixels (native resolution, i.e., actual LCD pixels). How many DPI, i.e., pixels per inch is my screen? Well, recalling the Scarecrow's recitation in the Wizard Of Oz when he received his "brain diploma" (or what he should have said, since he actually misstated the

Pythagorean theorem---we can only assume that the Wizard did not want to damage Scarecrow's self-esteem by correcting him), we know that the 14-inch diagonal on my screen is the hypotenuse of a right triangle, the sides of which are 1440 and 900 pixels. So we can take the square root of the sum of the squares of those two sides and that will give us the number of pixels along the 14-inch diagonal. The square root of 1440 squared plus 900 squared is, using Wolfram|Alpha (<http://www.wolframalpha.com/examples/Math.html>, use the basic arithmetic box there), 1698. Note that Wolfram uses standard means of entering mathematical operators. You might have to look those up and make adjustments, e.g., I asked for the square root by telling Wolfram to take the parenthetical operations to the 0.5 power since I knew how to enter the exponentiation operator ("^"), but not a square root sign (a radical sign).

So we have 1698 pixels along my 14-inch screen diagonal, or 1698 pixels/14 inches = 121 pixels per inch (121 DPI). How wide is one pixel? 1 inch/121 pixels = 0.008264 inch per pixel. Why would this make things smaller on my Windows desktop? Well, Windows assumes 96 pixels make an inch, so an inch on my screen is now 96 x 0.008264 or 0.79 inch. So everything on my Windows desktop is only 80% of the size it would be if there were actually 96 pixels per inch on my screen. I can verify that my calculations are correct by setting Microsoft Word to display an 8.5 x 11 inch standard document at 100% size. When I measure the width of that document on my screen I obtain 6 13/16 inches or 6.8125 inches. 6.8125/8.5 = 0.80, i.e., the 8.5 inch wide document

is displayed at 80% of its actual size as we calculated would occur.

This also means that text fonts are 80% of their intended size on my screen. Fonts are defined in terms of points. A point is defined as 1/72 inch, i.e., 72 points per inch. Window assumes there are 96 pixels per inch, so a Windows logical point is $96/72 = 1.333$ device independent pixels. A 10-point font should be around 10 x 1.333 pixels or 13 pixels vertical (leaving aside details of leading, etc.). That would be 13/96 = 0.13 inches high roughly on a 96 DPI monitor. On my 121 DPI monitor that 10-point font would only be $13/121 = 0.10$ inch high approximately, again about 80% smaller.

A Microsoft study indicates about 55% of people reduce the resolution of their monitors (configure Windows screen resolution in Display Properties for a lower value), presumably to make the text and other items on their computer screen larger. For example, if I changed my laptop screen resolution to 800 x 600 there would be fewer Windows pixels to cover the same area, so the "pixels" would be larger, making everything constructed with those fat pixels larger, too. Fat pixels make fuzzy or pixilated images, though they are larger images. This is rather like purchasing a $474 Canon EOS Rebel with 10 Megapixel resolution and then setting it to take 640 x 480 photos (when you have paid for a camera that can take 3648 x 2736 pixel photos roughly).

A better way to increase the size of text and other items on your screen is to use Windows DPI scaling. You can tell the operating system that you want an inch on your screen to be made up of more than 96 dots/pixels (if you don't have a monitor with more than 96 actual

dots per inch this would not work as well, since the operating system would have to "fake" the additional pixel density using mathematical algorithms). In Windows XP you can right click on the Desktop, select Properties, then Settings, then Advanced, then DPI setting. Choose more dots per inch, say 120 DPI. Go higher if needed. Evaluate the effect in normal use of your system.

In Windows Vista, Open Personalization by clicking the Start button, clicking Control Panel, clicking Appearance and Personalization, and then clicking Personalization. In the left pane, click Adjust font size (DPI). If you are prompted for an administrator password or confirmation, type the password or provide confirmation. In the DPI Scaling dialog box, increase the size of text and other items on the screen by clicking Larger scale (120 DPI)–make text more readable, and then click OK. You can use higher DPI settings to obtain still larger fonts and objects.

If we chose to scale up to 120 DPI on my laptop, then an inch would be 120 dots/pixels and a Windows inch on my screen would indeed be an inch, restoring the size of items on my screen to that of a typical 96 DPI monitor. I should note that Internet Explorer 7 and 8 both have a zoom feature which will enlarge text and other items on a web page. This is a separate issue in some respects.

How big would that 10-point font be if you used a 64.5 inch diagonal HDTV with 1920 x 1080 native resolution with PC VGA input for your computer monitor? Calculate screen DPI: 34 DPI (calculate the number of pixels in the 64.5 inch diagonal for 1920 x 1080 pixel right triangle as we did above; divide that number of pixels by 64.5 inches). Simply looking at the ratio, the HDTV pixels would be 96/34 or 2.82 times larger than a 96 DPI monitor. So, a 10-point font might be around 0.13 inch x 2.82 = 0.36 inches high---over a third of an inch. And if you scaled up your Windows DPI setting to 200 DPI, you might get that 10 point font up to 0.8 inches high (over three quarters of an inch high) on that 64.5 inch $4,000 dollar HDTV computer monitor.

I have barely scratched the surface on this topic, but I hope I have said enough to give you some ideas about making things more visible on your computer screen without throwing away the high resolution of your monitor.

Bio:

Mr. Bentley studied electrical engineering at the University of Texas, began working in the electronics industry in 1978 with GTE Network Systems (Lenkurt), then software engineering with various startups in the 1980's, designing and implementing, among other things, pre-Internet e-mail communications systems multitasking on Intel platforms and MSDOS PC's 1984 - 1986. Gary now provides Information Technology consulting services in the El Paso, Texas and Las Cruces, New Mexico areas. Gary has edited and contributed articles to the award-winning Southwest International Personal Computer Club monthly magazine, "Throughput," since December, 2003.Web:<http://www.swipcc.org>. E-mail: <g.bentley (at) att.net>.

Snail Mail : Send snail mail: <http://www.snailmailr.com>
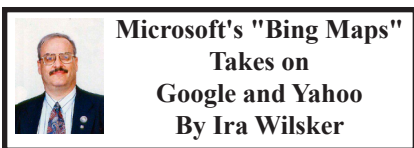
For several years I have been a loyal user of Yahoo! Maps <http://maps.yahoo.com> to get route maps on my local and long distance road trips. Sometimes I would also check Google's road map utility <http://maps.google.com> to corroborate what was displayed by Yahoo!, and also to determine if there were any good alternative routes. I also have used Google Earth <http://earth.google.com> to display aerial and satellite photographs of areas of interest, as well as view 3-D images of the buildings in an area so I could better understand the area I was traveling to. Recently, Microsoft has joined the fray with the public rollout of its competitive product, Bing Maps beta <http://maps.bing.com>.

When I first accessed Bing Maps beta using my Firefox browser, I was able to access several of the Bing Maps features, but Microsoft advised me that in order to make use of all of the rich features of the service, I would need to download and install Microsoft's free Silverlight software. Silverlight is application software that is a 5mb download and enables the display of enhanced graphics, video, multimedia, and animations. Silverlight downloaded and installed quickly on my computer, and while it adds substantial capabilities to Bing Maps, it is not a requisite to use the basic functions of Bing Maps. With Silverlight installed, I was able to access very high quality digital images that rival Google's Streetview and Google's free standing Google Earth utility. Microsoft calls its highly localized street images "Streetside," and offers very sharp and detailed street level and aerial images which can be viewed either as an image, an image overlaid with streets and other features, or as a more traditional street map. While localized Streetside images are not yet available for the entire country, they are currently available for many major cities. Bing Maps beta also automatically integrates with the countless images available on Microsoft's Photosynth imaging service, providing high resolution local images.

When first loaded, Bing Maps beta shows the current local weather, a local map, and some thumbnails of local Photosynth images (if available). Links on the page also display "What's nearby," restaurants, hotels, and current local traffic information if available in that locality. Clicking on a Photosynth thumbnail starts an animated "trip" which zooms over the region, zooms in on the precise spot on the aerial map, and opens the image. Once opened, the image can be manipulated, zoomed, and rotated giving a 360-degree image from street level. In some cities (about 100 so far, according to Microsoft), the downtown areas have been digitized allowing not just the 360-degree Photosynth image, but also a fully interactive and controllable 3-D image of the area, where the buildings and other features can be navigated as if flying through the canyons of structures.

Another interesting feature of Bing Maps beta is real time traffic information, which shows road construction information and current speeds (color coded) on major roads in the larger cities. This traffic information integrates well into detailed driving

directions, such that the traveler can visualize any road construction or other impediments to a speedy trip. When getting travel directions, the user can have Bing Maps determine the shortest route, the fastest route, and even produce round trip directions. Multiple way points can be added by clicking on the "add to route" link. Once a route is determined and displayed, Bing gives the user the opportunity to modify the route by clicking on "See best route based on traffic." Icons on the bottom of the page allow the user to selectively display live traffic information, e-mail the selected route information, print a detailed routing, see "your places," or implement additional applications. Gas stations, hotels, restaurants, hospitals, shopping malls, and other points of interest can be selectively displayed on the maps.

When printed, Bing Maps' travel directions give detailed and graphical directions. One very helpful feature of the printed directions, typically lacking on competing services, are highly visible landmarks at major points on the map, which can be used to easily determine where to turn. On the example that I ran, driving from the Examiner offices to the IAH airport in Houston, the printed directions said, "Turn right onto JFK Blvd / John F Kennedy Blvd. Pass SHELL in 0.8 mi" and "Take ramp right for E Belt Dr / E Beltway 8 / E Sam Houston Pkwy N toward Houston / Liberty - Pass VALERO in 4.6 mi." In this particular case, the Shell and Valero gas stations would be very visible landmarks to visually ease the finding of the turns on the route. One cute feature was intended to show if you passed your chosen destination; "Arrive at Houston Intercontinental Airport, TX on the right

- If you reach Terminal Rd S, you've gone too far."

Bing Maps beta may also be a helpful tool to locate restaurants and other points of interest. While a map is displayed, clicking on "What's nearby" displays points of interest on that open map at the selected scale. As an experiment, I selected to show the locations of Genghis Grill in Dallas, one of my family's favorite restaurants. Placing the cursor over a selected restaurant (or other place of interest), information on that selection is displayed, and a link for "add to directions" appears which will create detailed driving directions to that location.

To add interest to selected maps, the link to the additional map applications opens a selection of about twenty choices all keyed to the map on display. These applications connect to neighborhood information, Twitter comments on the neighborhood displayed: A restaurant finder where restaurants can be selected by type of food, businesses by category, local news, hotel information, webcams, roadside attractions, graffiti, murals, signs and billboards, and other highly localized categories of information.

Bing Maps is currently a beta, or pre-release version, and is not totally refined. As I was using it to compose this column, I occasionally received a popup that said that the service was temporarily unavailable, but usually within a few seconds Bing Maps was functional again. Bing Maps beta is clearly an unfinished work in progress, but what is currently available is very attractive and useful. I can also see Bing Maps along with its massive database of local information, a very useful mobile application, which is clearly in the works. Other than some

performance issues, I found Bing Maps beta a very useful service, and will reference it frequently both locally and while traveling.

WEBSITES:

<http://maps.bing.com>.

<http://www.bing.com/maps>.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Silverlight>.

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>.

Computer Tips for Seniors:
Book Review
By Gregory West

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"Computer Tips for Seniors " by Pamela Tabak. Published by Computer Tutor Inc. 2009. Cover Design by Linda Gonse Pages: 204. USA: $24.95 plus shipping. <http://www.computertutorinc.net/order.htm>.

All too often we find ourselves sinking in the mystery sea called Windows. We know what we would like to do but just can't figure out the "how." The further we click through our computers the worse our adventure becomes. We end up at a DEAD END, completely frustrated to the point of never wanting to turn the computer on ever again.

Several years ago Pamela Tabak, better known as "The Computer Tutor" started helping seniors with their computer issues. Pamela began offering a free 24/7 help desk. She would have people e-mail her their computer problem and guaranteed to return an answer within 24 hours at no charge. Of course this took off quickly and became a huge success.

Born from this concept of an e-mail help desk, Pamela developed a book comprising some of the most popular, nagging, questions that were asked. In Pamela's words she explains the book's conviction as "easy answers to frequently asked questions."

This book comes with easy to read and view coloured graphics depicting each step in the solutions process. There are three main sections: Knowledge Base, How To, and of course Answers to Frequently Asked Questions.

The "Knowledge Base" section deals with topics such as ergonomics, the health of both you and your computer. There is an interesting section on whether to "Recycle or Reuse Your Old Computer;" a section we all should read up on. The book does an excellent job of covering most other areas of computing topics including computer maintenance, Internet security, Flash Drives, Web Browsers, eBay and E-mailing.

As I went through this book finding things I already knew, I found myself wondering what type of answer would go with the question, and then finding out various things I had either forgotten or didn't know existed. Going the extra mile, as Pamela does in this book, she has include several little "Tip" bits where you find yourself gathering even more quick and helpful information.

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RESEARCHER TRANSLATION

IF A RESEARCHER SAYS A COOL NEW TECHNOLOGY SHOULD BE AVAILABLE TO CONSUMERS IN...	WHAT THEY MEAN IS...
THE FOURTH QUARTER OF NEXT YEAR	THE PROJECT WILL BE CANCELED IN SIX MONTHS.
FIVE YEARS	I'VE SOLVED THE INTERESTING RESEARCH PROBLEMS. THE REST IS JUST BUSINESS, WHICH IS EASY, RIGHT?
TEN YEARS	WE HAVEN'T FINISHED INVENTING IT YET, BUT WHEN WE DO IT'LL BE AWESOME.
25+ YEARS	IT HAS NOT BEEN CONCLUSIVELY PROVEN IMPOSSIBLE.
WE'RE NOT REALLY LOOKING AT MARKET APPLICATIONS RIGHT NOW.	I LIKE BEING THE ONLY ONE WITH A HOVERCAR.

Above chart courtesy of Randall Munroe:
<http://xkcd.com/678>

New Faces

Paul DeAthos—Chairman of
SIG-IBM Intermediate

Ronald Green—Member-at-Large
of the Board of Directors

SEMCO Meeting Pictures

(Above): Vice President Richard Jackson conducts the general meeting. (Below): Terry White of Adobe Systems shows the features of Photoshop Elements 8.

SEMCO Meeting Pictures

(Above): Members at the Social Period. (Below): Tom Callow discusses the beta version of Microsoft Office 2010.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

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, and Members-at-Large Bob Clyne and Chuck Moery. Arriving late was SIG-Linux representative Mike Rudas. The meeting was called to order at 12:30 p.m.

OLD BUSINESS

Treasurer, Bette Gay, reported that the amount in the treasury totaled $9,844.51 with $5,107.88 in the checking account and $4,736.63 invested in three Certificates of Deposit. The membership stands at 74. It is time for Michael Bader, Leatrice Bagley, Tom Burns, Robert Gawecki, and William Margolin to renew their memberships.

Richard Jackson reported that he purchased a recorder and microphone as authorized by the board. He paid $81.07 and will be reimbursed.

NEW BUSINESS

Bob Clyne brought up the question of SEMCO's involvement in Penguicon. Ribbons have been ordered for the event. MDLUG has no official plans for participation this year; therefore, a partnership with them is not possible. Richard Jackson moved to put a half-page advertisement in the Penguicon Program, costing $40. Bob Clyne seconded the motion and it was carried. Richard Jackson will place the ad. Mike Rudas offered to research the possibility of presenting an overview of open source programs at the convention.

He would also promote SEMCO at that time. Mike Rudas also offered to distribute SEMCO fliers at Confusion, the Science Fiction Convention that takes place January 22 through January 24. Richard Jackson and Bob Clyne will coordinate the production of the fliers.

Bob Clyne pointed out that the SEMCO web site is in dire need of updating. Richard Jackson will communicate with the Internet Committee. He will point out the deficiencies so that the necessary changes can be made.

Bob Clyne moved to adjourn. Warner Mach seconded the motion and it was carried. The meeting adjourned at 1:08 p.m.

2010
Election Results
Carol Sanzi

Office—Name—Vote Count
President–Mike Bader–13
Vice-President–Richard Jackson–14
Secretary–Carol Sanzi–14
Treasurer–Bette Gay–14
Board of Directors Members at Large
Bob Clyne–14
Ron Green–14

Whether you are a senior who is just starting out in the world of computing, or you have been around the block a few times with your hard drive; this book is a great read and a good reference book to keep nearby the desktop.

Reviewed by Gregory West, PC and Mac Instructor & Tech Columnist, Sarnia, Ontario, Canada; member of C.O.M.P. (Computer Operators of Marysville and Port Huron), MI. Web: <http://www.bwcomp.org/>. E-mail: <prospector16 (at) gmail.com>.

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS (SIGS)

SIG-IBM
Tom Callow

Feb. 14: 1:45 p.m. The Basics of Computer Graphics: SIG-IBM Chairman Tom Callow will talk about the basics of computer graphics, including such issues as image size and resolution vs. file size, resizing images, optimizing images and different graphics file formats.

SIG-IBM INTERMEDIATE
Paul DeAthos

Feb. 14: 3:45 p.m. One Family's Encounter with Social Networking: Featuring Bill Landrum and family. Use of Facebook, Google Reader, Google Wave, Google Docs, Twitter, Blogspot, YouTube, and other applications. Using social networking within a family. Using social networking at a university. Using social networking in a ministry.

SIG-ADVANCED
Franz Breidenich

Feb. 22 (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
Michael Rudas

Feb. 23 (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.

Mar. 2010 DATA BUS DEADLINE (7th day after 2nd Sunday in month)
SEMCO Input and Members' Ads—Deadline: Sun., Feb. 21, 11:59 p.m.
Members' personal ads are free. To mail, use Editor address on Page 2; e-mail address: <machw@att.net>. PLEASE send to arrive sooner than deadline.
Business Ads - Deadline: Second Friday monthly. Contact Editor (address Page 2)**.**

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

CALENDAR-OF-EVENTS
OTHER GROUPS

COMP (Computer Operators of Marysville & Port Huron

Mar 3, 7 p.m.,(1ˢᵗ Wednesday); Jane Wheatly 810-982-1187 or Pam Raisanen E-mail info: <compinfo@hughes.net>. Web: <http://www.bwcomp.org>. (See web site for new meeting location). Topic: TBA.

Focus Hope IT Users Group

Mar. 6, 9:30-11:30 a.m., 1400 Oakman, Detroit, MI. 48238. Web info <http://www.fhitug.org/Meetings/meetings.htm>. Topic: TBA.—pre-registration requested.

HUG (Holly User Group)

Feb. 13. 14, 9:00 a.m.,(2ⁿᵈ Sat.); Groveland Twp. Fire Hall, 3085 Grange Hall Rd. & Dixie Hwy., Ortonville. Topic: TBA.

MacGroup- Detroit

(Date: See web site), 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: "Apple's Latest Announcements." SIGS: 2:00 p.m.

MacTechnics, (MAC User Group)

Feb 20, (3ʳᵈ Saturday); See web site for meeting time and location. <http://www.mactechnics.org>). JoAnn Olson at 248-478-4300. Topic: "Demo Fair V."

MDLUG (Metro Detroit Linux User Group)

Feb 13, 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>. Topic: TBA.

MUG (Michigan User Group)

Mar 9, 6:00 p.m., (2ⁿᵈ Tuesday): MUG meetings are at The Farmington Community Library–Main Branch, 32737 W. 12 Mile Rd., Farminton Hills, MI. 48334. <http://www.mug.org>.Topic: TBA.

Michigan Apple Computer User Group

Feb 11, 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)

Mar. 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: "Backup; Issues and Techniques.".

SEMCO

Serving the needs of professionals, hobbyists, novices, and prospective computer users since 1976.

* Learn more about computing in an informal, non-academic setting.

* Get honest answers to computer questions without commercial bias.

* Meet and interact with other computer users. Personal and electronic networking.

* Gain access to members willing to provide help in response to a phone call or e-mail

* Receive monthly newsletter with informative articles.

JANUARY REFRESHMENT DONORS
Coordinator: Charles Moery
Donors:
Jerry Comptois
Ron Green
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 Netware: 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

SEMCO CALENDAR

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

Feb. 14–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. **The Basics of Computer Graphics:** SIG-IBM Chairman Tom Callow will talk about the basics of computer graphics, including such issues as image size and resolution vs. file size, resizing images, optimizing images and different graphics file formats.

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

SIG-IBM Intermediate 3:45 p.m. **One Family's Encounter with Social Networking**: Featuring Bill Landrum and family. Use of Facebook, Google Reader, Google Wave, Google Docs, Twitter, Blogspot, YouTube, and other applications. Using social networking within a family. Using social networking at a university. Using social networking in a ministry.

SIG-ADVANCED, Feb. 22, 2010 (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 , Feb. 23, 2010 (4th Tuesday), 6:45 p.m., Oak Park Public Library, 14200 Oak Park Blvd., Oak Park, MI. Topic: General discussion.
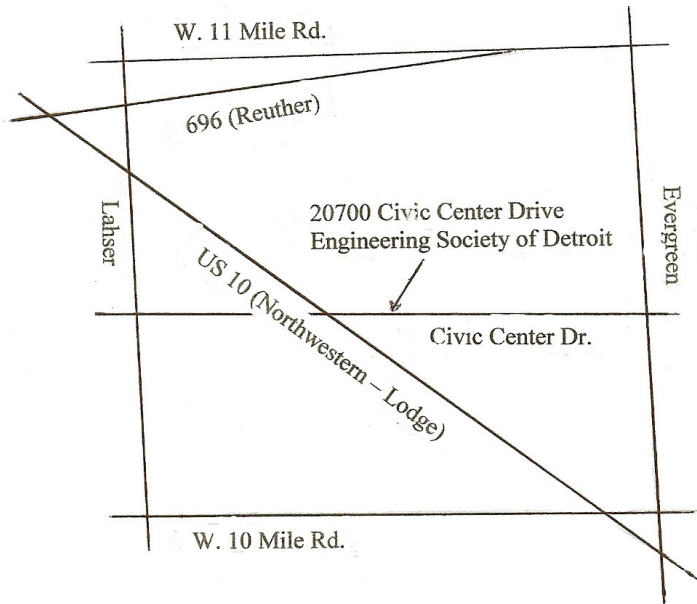
Mar. 14–SEMCO Sunday

http://www.semco.org

PUBLIC INVITED

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

SEMCO Meetings at [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.

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SEMCO (future meetings)
February 14
March 14

SEMCO: A Community Organization
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