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IN THIS ISSUE

Spotify Online Music Service Arrives in US, by Ira Wilsker	3
Free Online Proofreading Tools, by Ira Wilsker.....	5
Free Online Computer Tutorials from “InPicture,” by Ira Wilsker	8
Power Point Isn’t Just for the Business World, by Nancy Demarte	9
Recover Deleted Camera and Computer Files, by Gregory West....	12
SugarSync—Sweet Synchronization Solution, by Vinny La Bash ..	13
Tracking the Latest Information on Anything, by John Weigle.....	15
SEMCO Meeting Pictures.....	16
Board Meeting Minutes, by Carol Sanzi	18
SIGS: Computing, Techniques, Advice, Linux.....	19
DATA BUS Deadline.....	19
Other Groups Calendar of Events.....	20
Computer Resource People	21
SEMCO Calendar	22
Map & Directions to SEMCO Meeting at ESD	23

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
	Brian Brodsky	(248)-391-9125

NEWSLETTER STAFF

Publications Committee Chair	Warner Mach	(734) 326-0733
Editor	Warner Mach	(734) 326-0733
Events Research	Betty MacKenzie	(586) 254-0677
Proofreader	Beth Fordyce	(734) 453-0349
Proofreader	Fred Acerri	E-Mail < acerri@att.net >

SIG (SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP) CHAIRPERSONS

SIG-COMPUTING	Tom Callow	(248) 642-5770 (9-5)
SIG-TECHNIQUES	Warner Mach	(734) 326-0733
SIG-ADVICE	Franz Breidenich	(248) 398-3359
SIG-LINUX	Michael Rudas / Mike Bader	(248) 376-9304

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**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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Spotify Online Music Service Arrives in US

By Ira Wilsker

You may have not heard of Spotify, but millions of Europeans are intimately aware of the world class online music service. Now, Spotify is available in the U.S., in free, premium, and mobile versions. There has been a lot of domestic online buzz about Spotify, but many Americans are unaware of what may arguably be the largest legal online music service, with a claimed 15 million tracks of music available.

At present, users who would like to subscribe to the free version of the Spotify service must have an invite to join, and several affinity groups and consumer products are offering invites to Spotify. The general public can request an invite on the main Spotify webpage <<http://www.spotify.com/us/hello-america>>, and an invite will be sent via e-mail as capacity becomes available. An invite is not necessary for those who would like to subscribe to the paid Spotify service, which starts at \$4.99 per month for the “Unlimited” subscription, and \$9.99 monthly for the “Premium” service. Spotify is available in PC and MAC versions for desktops, laptops, netbooks, and most smart phones, making these millions of music tracks readily available whenever and wherever needed. The free desktop version is advertiser supported, with ads displayed along the right edge of the desktop display, and an occasional short audio ad after a number of selections have been played; the paid subscriptions do not display or play ads. The offline versions are only available by paid subscription.

I received an early invite to Spotify, and signed up for the free version. After registering online using the registration code provided by Spotify in the e-mail invitation, I downloaded the 5 megabyte installer for the desktop version. The installation ran smoothly, and upon completion, opened the desktop utility. On the left edge of the desktop utility are a series of choices which can locate and display any music already on the computer, import playlists from Windows Media Player, add titles to a playlist, and display any compatible devices that may be connected to the computer. The “What’s New” feature opens a tabbed central window that displays new releases, the most popular tracks and albums selected by users, and “Feed” which displays music shared by your friends on Facebook as well as the latest news from Spotify.

The millions of tracks available can be searched by title or album from the search box, and results can be easily selected into playlists. According to Spotify, “...creating playlists is as easy as drag and drop. Each new playlist is saved to your account, and will be accessible from wherever you use Spotify.” Being a fan of classical Gershwin, I did a search for “Rhapsody in Blue,” and well over 100 versions and related titles appeared. On the left of each item is a gold star that can be selected, and this helps create the playlist. On the left side of the window is a button “+ New Playlist,” which I clicked on, and aptly named Rhapsody in Blue. I clicked on the “Starred” link on the left, and the selections that I had chosen were all displayed; I painted the list, and dragged the starred list over to my newly created Rhapsody in Blue playlist, and my customized playlist

was immediately created. I added some “An American in Paris” and “Porgy and Bess,” and created my version of about three hours of musical bliss. As each item in the playlist is played, the image of the original album cover appears on the bottom left corner of the display.

Spotify offers the opportunity to share tracks and playlists with others. “To us, sharing music is one of life’s great pleasures. That’s why we’ve made it so simple for you to share tracks and play-lists with your friends. When we say ‘simple,’ we mean one-click-simple.” I had to try it, and clicked on the playlist title in the left column, and a “Share” link appeared on the top of the page. With a single click, the playlist can be shared on Facebook, Twitter, or Microsoft Messenger. The Spotify software instantly posted my playlist on Facebook, and with the displayed link at <<http://open.spotify.com/user/iwilsker/playlist/1EYbroWYaBd72nf4hldVXR>>, anyone can download the free Spotify player and listen to my playlist. I downloaded the Spotify installer to my laptop using the same username and password created for my desktop computer, installed it, and the playlists I created on my desktop magically appeared on my laptop! One click, and I was listening to my favorite music.

The features of Spotify, including any prepared playlists, can be played over most mobile phones with a free or paid subscription, but a paid subscription is necessary to access the playlist offline. In order to listen to streaming Spotify over a mobile or smart phone, a paid premium subscription and a 2.5G or 3G (or faster) connection, or WiFi, is necessary. Users of iPhones or Android devices can download the Spotify app

giving full access to Spotify, including synching your own music files with Spotify. According to the Spotify website, apps for Symbian phones (mostly from Nokia), Windows phones, and Palm phones are in development and are expected to be available soon, but apps for some of these phones may have recently become available. I have a Nokia smart phone with the Symbian operating system, and using the phone’s browser (I use Opera Mobile for my phone browser), I connected to m.spotify.com, which informed me that a compatible Symbian app was available, so I selected to download the 2.4 mb application to my phone. I was a little disappointed when a window appeared informing me that I needed a premium subscription in order to use the app on my Nokia Symbian phone. Apps for other phone operating systems may possibly be available, which can be determined by connecting the phone browser to <<http://m.spotify.com>>, and following the on screen prompts. If an app is available, it will be displayed, along with installation instructions.

For those who may desire additional features, the “Unlimited \$4.99” or “Premium \$9.99” monthly subscriptions will provide additional benefits over the free service. The Unlimited version has all of the features of the free version, but does not display or play any advertisements, and has the ability to be available for up to 14 days when traveling outside the U.S. The Premium version has all of the Unlimited features, plus increased functionality on mobile phones, offline availability of playlists on both computers and mobile phones (no Internet connection required), unlimited international access (for travelers going outside the

U.S.), enhanced sound quality, and the capability to play Spotify through connected music systems (possibly without a computer). It should be noted that at present, offline content is limited to a precise maximum of 3,333 tracks, which should be adequate for most users.

For those who would like to legally access millions of tracks of online music, and play or share tracks and playlists at will, Spotify may be very entertaining. Oh, and my Rhapsody in Blue playlist is still playing on my computer.

WEBSITES:

[<http://www.spotify.com/us/hello-america/>](http://www.spotify.com/us/hello-america/).

Ira Wilsker is a 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@sbcbglobal.net>](mailto:iwilsker@sbcbglobal.net).



Free Online Proofreading Tools By Ira Wilsker

In the 11 years that I have been writing this weekly column (over 500 columns), I know that I have had some spelling and grammatical faux pas. I have used several versions of Word, Google Docs, Open Office, and Libre Office as my word processor, and all have a reasonable spelling and grammar checker, which I have never failed to run, but still some errors slip through. I am fortunate to have an educated and competent wife as a proofreader after I peruse the column, and she almost always catches some composition errors that both the software and I missed.

I have noticed that the outstandingly fine editors at the Examiner have occasionally made some minor changes and corrections, as they practice their editorial art.

In the decades that I have been teaching college classes, it no longer amazes me what college students can turn in as a finished written product. It is uncommon that a paper or project has proper spelling and grammar, and some students get belligerent upon being shown their written (word processed) errors, often blaming those errors on their “stupid computer.” In the many years since the advent of the word processor, first as a glorified typewriter (remember those?), then as a dedicated hardware word processor, and now as sophisticated software on a modern computer, the capabilities of the software to correct spelling and grammar errors have greatly improved.

Recently several free, browser based automated proofreading services have become available for anyone to use to provide a level of spell checking and grammar corrections typically superior to the similar services incorporated in the contemporary software based word processor. By using these free services, anyone, including newspaper columnists, newsletter editors, and students, can now have an additional layer of proofreading of their documents, providing a better quality of written output. These online utilities will not create an original document, but can substantially provide the user with enough reputable assistance to produce an enhanced quality of output in terms of spelling and grammar, but not necessarily superior content—that is still the responsibility of the writer.

I was impressed with PaperRater <<http://paperrater.com>>, which was a feature rich and totally free service. According to its website, “PaperRater.com is a FREE resource, developed and maintained by linguistics professionals and graduate students. We may offer a premium service for those who are interested, but for now we are content offering a high-quality service at no cost to writers.” This service offers comprehensive spelling and grammar checking, plagiarism detection (notifies the student before the teacher finds out), and writing style suggestions. After pasting the text for this article, PaperRater inquired about the usage of the document, the educational level it is being used for, and the option to detect any potential plagiarism. In a matter of seconds, PaperRater produced a color coded list of questionable words, suggested grammar corrections, and even a “Vocabulary Score.” My Vocabulary score was displayed as, “Excellent work! Your usage of sophisticated words is on par with other well-written papers!” While I am not an English teacher, I found PaperRater to be an excellent and very capable resource, and will recommend it to my students.

After the Deadline <<http://afterthedeathline.com>> is a “free for personal use,” open source, comprehensive proofreading utility. Unlike most of the other web based proofreading utilities, After the Deadline requires the downloading (free) and installation of one or more of 11 different utilities. These distinct utilities can be added to web pages (allows users to check spelling and grammar), WordPress software, plug-ins for Firefox and Chrome, add-on for

OpenOffice, Windows Live Writer, and free standing utilities for other popular blogging and social networking services. Once installed, After the Deadline can be used as a comprehensive grammar and spell checker for use with those products, and for online services such as blogs, WordPress, Facebook, Twitter, Google+, Google Docs, Windows Live Writer, any webmail utility, and virtually any other form of online text input. I downloaded and installed the Firefox plug-in, which adds features more substantial than Firefox’s built in spelling checker. In addition to a simple spell checker, After the Deadline adds proper spelling in context (to, too, two; there, their, etc.), grammar checking, style recommendations, and fixes for a variety of other writing errors. In evaluating After the Deadline (the Firefox plug-in), I found it exceptionally easy to use and very powerful. I now use it universally when entering any text using Firefox (my browser of choice). I can strongly recommend After the Deadline as a comprehensive spelling, style, and grammar checker for any products or services that it is designed to work with.

The next web based proofreading utility that I tried was <<http://www.SpellChecker.net>>, where I simply copied and pasted my text into the box at the top of the web page, and then clicked on the yellow “Spell Check” button on the bottom-left of the text box. Almost instantly (it took 1.51 seconds to spell check this entire column), a second browser window opened displaying possible spelling errors, and a list of possible corrections. At the top of this correction window is a “Grammar” button which will rapidly run a grammar checker (1.12 seconds), clearly showing

any questionable grammar, and some recommended corrections. A fully functional interactive thesaurus is also provided, which can almost instantly come up with synonyms for a selected word. Once completed, the corrected text can then be copied back on to a blank page, and then saved and printed as appropriate. One tactic that I have found useful, which applies to all of these online services, is to repeat the entire process a second time in order to catch any newly created syntax errors.

I then tried the free Ginger online proofreading website at <<http://www.gingersoftware.com/grammarcheck>>, which describes itself as, “Most advanced grammar checker available. Immediate feedback. Free to use.” I was disappointed when I tried to copy and paste this column into the top “Ginger” window, and was brusquely informed that “Your text has exceeded the allowed number of characters.” Since this free web based utility is very limited in the amount of text that it can process at one time, I would only recommend it for short blocks of text, although multiple blocks of text can be checked sequentially by clearing the box, and then copying and pasting the next section of a document, which is an inconvenience. The text that was entered in the top window of Ginger was displayed with recommended corrections in the bottom half of the browser window. This corrected text could then be copied and pasted back in the original or new document. Ginger offers a more capable premium (paid) product which can be downloaded and installed, and works with Word 2003/2007/2010, Outlook 2003/2007/2010, PowerPoint 2003/2007/2010, Internet Explorer

version 6.0 and higher, and all contemporary versions of Firefox.

SpellcheckPlus <<http://spellcheckplus.com>> seemed very capable and easy to use, but the free web based version is limited to 2000 characters (about 1/2 of a single spaced typed page) per proofread session. Unlimited access requires paid registration (9.99 Euros, or about \$15 per year) and can process unlimited text of any length, and includes a lengthy list of writing tools. SpellcheckPlus explains itself as, “...a grammar checker that finds common spelling errors and grammatical mistakes in English. Simply type (or paste) your text into the window below and hit the “check text” button.” Despite the short length limitations of the free version, SpellcheckPlus did a very good job of detecting potential errors and offering suggested corrections.

With proofreading utilities like these, there is little reason for anyone, using a computer with Internet access, to produce a document with spelling and serious grammar errors.

WEBSITES:

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

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

<<http://www.spellchecker.net>>.

<<http://www.gingersoftware.com/grammarcheck>>.

<<http://spellcheckplus.com>>.

<<http://www.techsupportalert.com/content/some-free-browser-based-online-proofreading-tools.htm>>.

Ira Wilsker is a 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@sbcglobal.net>.



**Free Online Computer
Tutorials From
“InPictures”
By Ira Wilsker**

I get a lot of requests from individuals on how to accomplish a myriad of tasks using popular software. I also get requests from individuals asking for help creating web pages, or writing computer programs in a variety of computer languages. Now there is an unusual free resource that can give everyone detailed instructions on how to complete his selected tasks. While there are many free online help and tutorial services, what makes this one unusual is that it is mostly based on still images (screen captures), with only a small amount of text explaining each image.

This interesting service is freely available to anyone online from “InPictures” at <http://inpics.net>, and only requires an Internet browser; all Internet browsers should work equally well. There is nothing to buy, download, or install in order to use the tutorials. There are no animations, movies, videos, or music, only a logical sequence of sharp black and white images, along with some text, that explains and demonstrates how to accomplish each desired task with the listed software.

According to the website’s creator, whose name is not listed on the website, “In Pictures tutorials began as part of a research study we conducted for the U.S. Department of Education. The goal: to make it easier for people with learning disabilities to learn computer subjects. As part of the study, we created simple, illustration-based tutorials. Everyone who tested them—not just people with learning disabilities—said

the new tutorials enabled them to learn faster and easier than conventional text-heavy books.” Since all of the images are situated on individual web pages, the user can easily control the size of the images by utilizing the native zoom feature incorporated on most browsers. To zoom in with your browser, simply use the Ctrl+ or Ctrl- features (press the Ctrl key and the “+” plus key simultaneously to enlarge the screen; Ctrl and “-” minus zooms out).

The list of software and programming is not extensive, but covers some of the most widely used titles, including Microsoft Office, Open Office (this will also substantially apply to Libre Office, an Open Office clone), HTML and CSS for webpage creators, and the programming languages MySQL, PHP, and Perl. The Microsoft Office tutorials cover both the 2003 and 2007 versions of Office, and include Word, Publisher, Excel, PowerPoint, and Access. While Office 2010 is not yet listed, a user needing help with Office 2010 tasks will likely find that most of the tutorials for 2007 will pretty much apply to 2010, although there may be some cosmetic and functional differences. Open Office users (as well as Libre Office users) will find the tutorials for Base, Calc, Impress, and Writer are comprehensive and easy to follow.

For those who would like to learn how to create web pages using HTML and CSS (Cascading Style Sheets), InPictures covers HTML basics, site navigation and layout, online forms, uploading to a server, and advanced layout techniques. For anyone who would like to learn programming, the tutorials for MySQL, PHP, and Perl are clear, concise, and easy to follow, and are easy to comprehend because they

avoid “geek speak,” and incorporate a series of screen captures that clearly display the appropriate operations and functions.

Since I am typing this column using Word 2007, I decided to use the Word 2007 tutorial to demonstrate to myself the usefulness of the InPictures service. Clicking on the Word 2007 link on the left margin of the start page. When the Word 2007 main page opened, the user is presented with a simple choice; either follow a sequential tutorial covering all of the material operations and functions of Word, or to manually select individual topics as a quick tutorial or to refresh the users’ knowledge about how to perform a specific task. The novice user would be wise to use the complete tutorial, as it is comprehensive and provides a complete series of instructions on how to use Word. If the user selects individual Word tutorials, he can select from Word Basics, Long Documents, Special Features, and Advanced Word. The same four categories of tutorials can be selected from the top of any of the Word tutorial pages.

Word (2007) Basics is just what it says, and includes the most basic Word functions used, and includes new document creation, copy and paste, formatting words and paragraphs, bullets and numbering, page settings, spell checking, and page viewing. The Long Documents selections include guidance on how to format text with styles, find and replace functions, the use of tabs, and the creation of headers and footers. Many users of Word like to use some of the “Special Features” shown in the Word tutorial, including columns, drop caps, the insertion and management of photos and other images, drawing and painting in Word, and the

use of tables. The final section of the Word 2007 tutorial, “Advanced Word,” explains how to do a mail merge (create a series of personalized letters from a mail list), create and use templates, print envelopes and labels, count words, and create and insert a table of contents. A similar series of tutorials is available for other Office components (Excel, PowerPoint, Access, and Publisher), both the 2003 and 2007 versions. Likewise, similar tutorials cover Open Office (and Libre Office).

For anyone who needs basic training or some occasional help with office software, the creation of web pages, or common programming tools, the InPictures website at inpics.net may be a valuable, and free, resource.

WEBSITE:

<<http://inpics.net>>.

Ira Wilsker is a 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@sbcbglobal.net>.

Power Point Isn't Just For the Business World By Nancy Demarte

In recent years, people who purchased PC's often bought the Home and Student version of the Microsoft Office suite as a way to get the powerful Word program. Besides Word, this suite contains Excel, a sophisticated spreadsheet program; OneNote, a fancy organizational program; and PowerPoint, a presentation program. If you find that you have never moved beyond Word, perhaps it's time to explore a program which has many uses for the home user: PowerPoint.

PowerPoint has been around for many years. Originally called Presenter, this program was created for the Apple Macintosh computer by a company called Foresight. In 1987 Microsoft purchased Foresight, added features to Presenter, and renamed it PowerPoint. Traditionally, it was designed to enhance corporate meetings or training sessions. Over the years, special effects and other improvements have been made to PowerPoint. As a home computer user, you will find this program easy to use in a variety of special and everyday situations.

Personal Uses of PowerPoint:

The most common personal use is slide show creation related to an event. Let's say you have a family wedding approaching. PowerPoint can help you put together a slide show of still photos and videos of the bride and groom from babyhood to the present, complete with captions, narration, a musical background, and transition effects like fade-ins. You can copy photos to each slide from anywhere on your computer or the web. Although PowerPoint is not as sophisticated as some expensive presentation software, it can produce a professional-looking slide show.

Other home uses for PowerPoint include a personal résumé or visual memoir, which can list biographical history interspersed with photos of the subject in all aspects of life. Cooks might use PowerPoint to create an electronic cookbook of recipes, including photos of preparation techniques and finished creations. Artists often use PowerPoint to create portfolios of their work as a lure for potential buyers. Members of book discussion groups might create an overview of a book's plot or author's life using a few PowerPoint slides.

PowerPoint can also design electronic family photo albums, considered superior by some since they can be stored and shared more readily than the old hard bound albums. Finally, any type of training program can be enhanced by a well-designed presentation.

Creating and Editing a Presentation:

One easy way to create a professional-looking presentation is by using a template. PowerPoint has built-in "themes" which give each slide a similar background color, font color and design. As part of its Office website, Microsoft has many free, downloadable PowerPoint templates for occasions, holidays, and other purposes; many more are available at third party websites. For example, wedding templates exist for invitations, programs, thematic backgrounds for slides, borders, and clip art. All you have to do is fill in the information and add the photos. Other template types which might interest a home user include family tree charts, special occasions, seasons, religious, travel, and holidays. Go to www.office.microsoft.com or search the web for 'PowerPoint templates.'

One powerful feature of PowerPoint is that almost anything visual can be put onto a slide. Slides can include text, photos, charts, spreadsheets, tables, and drawings. For example, you can create a short spreadsheet in Excel, display it as a graph or chart, and copy it onto a PowerPoint slide. By using a theme from the PowerPoint gallery or a template, various types of slide content can blend smoothly.

Editing slides is easy. The new versions of PowerPoint use a spell checker much like that in Word, which corrects not only spelling, but grammar

and, in the 2007 and 2010 versions, contextual confusions, like “two” and “too.” It also provides access to a global dictionary. Slides can be rearranged simply by dragging them to a new location in the list or the slide sorter, which resembles a storyboard. Transitions between slides can be added or removed easily.

Sharing the Presentation:

Besides showing the finished presentation on a screen with a projector or on a laptop at a table, PowerPoint 2007 allows you to send the show as an attachment to an e-mail. It can be saved in .pdf or .xps format, which are universal file types. The 2007/10 version compresses the file size for sending. If you prefer, you can upload your presentation to your website and send the link to friends and family. A slide show can also be printed. Besides the slides themselves, PowerPoint allows printing of handouts, which contain slide thumbnails; note pages, which display each slide with room for notes; and a text outline of the presentation.

Tips on Creating a Good Presentation:

PowerPoint has developed a bad reputation among some people, not because it's a poor program, but because of the many boring presentations the people were forced to view in their corporate workplaces. When designing any kind of presentation, you must think carefully when selecting the content—ideas, facts or opinions—and how you want it to appear. Taking time to develop an outline of your presentation before creating any slides will result in a much stronger final product.

When you actually do begin to create slides, here are some tips for success:

1. Use a theme or style to tie the visuals together, and then add a few surprise visuals or quotes.

2. Minimize the use of clip art, especially that which is built into PowerPoint. Everyone has seen it. Instead, search Google images for something fresh.

3. Consider alternating text slides with photos or video to add interest.

4. Studies have shown that dark text on a light background is easier to read, as is sans serif text and words aligned left, rather than in the center.

5. Too many different types of transitions from one slide to the next look unprofessional and distracting. Select no more than two or three for a moderate length presentation.

6. Put very few words on each slide. Keep it simple.

7. If doing a training presentation, don't read to the audience. Instead, explain more about what's on the screen. But don't bring in other topics which will cause audience confusion.

8. Find a way to engage the audience. For example, put a question on a slide and take a few minutes for the audience to discuss it.

9. Keep the presentation moving. (1 - 3 slides per minute)

10. Make the presentation only as long as it needs to be to get your ideas across.

You paid a lot of money for your Office Home and Student suite. It's time to benefit by learning to use PowerPoint.

Nancy DeMarte writes the, Office Talk column for Sarasota PCUG, Inc., Florida. From the August 2011 issue, Sarasota PC Monitor. Web:<<http://www.spcug.org>>. E-mail: <[ndemarte\(at\)Verizon.net](mailto:ndemarte(at)Verizon.net)>.

Recover Deleted Camera and Computer Files By Gregory West

When Digital Disaster Strikes, Smile!...because you will be OK.

Have you ever deleted photos from a camera or computer by mistake?

A friend of mine called me recently after going through a “catastrophe,” as he called his situation. It happened about midway over the Atlantic Ocean, thirty-seven thousand feet up. He was sitting in his seat with not much to do so he decided to check the photos on his digital camera. All these photos were from this trip to Portugal, a trip that involved hiking in the wilderness and visiting old buildings. You can only imagine some of his prized photos.

I think you know where I am going with this...Yes, while looking at the photos, clicking from one to the next, he inadvertently deleted not just a couple of photos, every photo from his trip was gone in one simple click. After checking and double checking he knew it was fruitless to look further; the photos vanished.

When he got home he called and told me about this situation.

“That’s no problem,” I tried to reassure him. I explained that there is a software recovery program that people use in such cases with much success. The voice at the other end of the line was silent. I knew he didn’t think this process was possible. After he recovered every single photo from his vacation he couldn’t thank me enough.

However, my tale doesn’t end there. I had a similar problem where a new SD (photo storage card in camera) failed to produce 250 pictures and some

video clips. After taking a deep breath I remembered the advice I had doled out and quickly downloaded a copy of Recuva, a recovery program that is free and works. Within no time I had all my pictures and video clips stored on my computer, thanks to Recuva.

The moral of this story is when you delete photos, music from an MP3 player, or data from your computer, remember that it is possible to recover the data. Don’t say it will never happen because you are careful. I am sure it has happened to the best of us.

To avoid a similar “catastrophe” you need to have a recovery software program installed on your computer. One of the best recovery programs around is called: Recuva. As an added bonus this program is free and it comes “highly” recommended.

You can read the reviews here: <http://cnet.co/filehelp>.

How does it work? Recuva scans your drives for the files you need and “recovers them in a flash” <http://www.piriform.com>. Even if the files are partially damaged “Recuva will show you a list of files it has found on the drive, and give you an estimate of the likelihood of success of recovering them.” You can’t ask for much more.

Let’s not forget when we delete those important e-mails. Yes you can recover them too. Recuva says that “The e-mail program doesn’t delete the e-mail or e-mails to the Windows Recycle Bin, but rather empties its own internal trash or Recycle Bin.”

I use word processing software every day. And yes I have lost documents that I have spent hours working on and never got them back. That is until I discovered Recuva. They assure us that their software “can intelligently rebuild

Word documents from their temporary files.”

We all can agree for the most part that weddings, graduations, and other such special events are best remembered with lots of photos. Music downloaded to your MP3 player is a treasure chest to cherish. While those word documents on the hard drive on your computer are from hours of work, you dare not lose them anymore.

To find out more and to get your free copy of Recuva, go to this website: <<http://www.piriform.com/download>>.

Here’s a comment Greg received on his blog. Recuva is an excellent program, like most of the software from Piriform. However, there is a caveat. Once you realize that you may have inadvertently deleted data, whether it is on your computer, thumb drive, or flash card, it is imperative NOT to use the device! Recovery IS possible, but if your operating system writes over what has been deleted, you may not be able to “recuva” what’s been deleted. 2 PC Geeks Computer Repair, Virginia

Gregory West is a member of Sarnia Computer Users’ Group <<http://scug.ca>> and Port Huron, MI Computer Group <<http://bwcomp.org>>. For more tips visit his Blog: <<http://gregorywest.wordpress.com>>. E-mail: <[Gregory\(at\)alternatecloud.com](mailto:Gregory(at)alternatecloud.com)>.



**SugarSync—Sweet
Synchronization
Solution
By Vinny La Bash**

There was once a time when having a rotary telephone put you in the front lines of innovation. That was long ago and modern communications technology is as far advanced from that day as communicating by smoke signal. If you have any combination of desktop computer, laptop, smart phone, tablet, and whatever, you need some way to coordinate information so that every device you own has the same up-to-date information.

One way to make sure all your files are equally up-to-date is using a popular cloud based utility known as Dropbox. However, there is another lesser known tool that gives you more for less. We’re talking about SugarSync which is constantly evolving into a service similar to Dropbox, but with better mobile support, advanced file control, and superior price performance.

When you open your account at <<http://www.sugarsync.com>>, you supply a user name and password and then install the application. As long as you’re connected to the Internet, the files you drag into your local Sugarsync folder magically appear on all PCs, laptops, phones, and iPads that also have Sugarsync installed and are attached to the same Sugarsync account. The files also appear online when you sign into the Sugarsync site and specify the same user name and password.

SugarSync sets up your system to start backing up your data as soon as you initiate the program. Don’t worry, it won’t do anything without your permission, and there is no need to

be concerned about your information getting out of control. The interface is clunky compared to the more intuitive IE browser window which is one of few downsides to SugarSync. The developers are probably still concerned about legacy issues, a fear that will probably disappear over time, but may cost them customers before it's eliminated.

Support for mobile devices is nothing less than outstanding. It supports more mobile devices than any other product. If you're using Windows 7 or Symbian, SugarSync is there for you. These platforms may be relatively unimportant in the grand scheme of things today, but if you happen to use one of them SugarSync should be of interest.

SugarSync has a unique design feature for your Pictures folder. Of course synchronizing and viewing pictures from mobile devices is supported, but the process is treated as much more than a casual concession to photo buffs. It does more than backup your pictures. It creates online galleries to share with colleagues and friends. You don't have to back up your photographs to one location and upload them. If you take a picture with your mobile device it's automatically sent to SugarSync and downloaded to your computer. The gallery layout is superb for a web-based product, and the photo viewers are excellent.

Music lovers will appreciate their MP3 files following them like puppy dogs. The computer does not have to be turned on because music files are being streamed from SugarSync. Audiophiles can listen to music no matter where they are.

SugarSync continuously backs up your files in real time, not just once or twice a day. So if you edit a document in the morning, and accidentally delete it in the afternoon you can restore it quickly with no hassles. The program stores the five latest versions of any backed up file so it's not a quandary if you need an earlier version. The downside to this is that five versions of multiple files can take up a lot of storage. The upside is that only the most recent version of a file is counted toward your storage quota.

If you are having trouble thinking of some uses for SugarSync here are some suggestions:

- * Inadvertently overwriting a file is no longer a potential disaster as SugarSync keeps a copy of the older file making restoration easy and painless.

- * Many people treasure their old photographs. Keeping pictures safely backed up in digital format means storing them as long as necessary with no deterioration in quality.

- * Roboform users can synchronize passwords safely and securely.

- * You can retrieve files no matter where you are or what device you happen to be using.

- * Share folders with family members. Any great vacation pictures, new additions to the family, celebrations, and other memorable events are instantly available.

- * Listen to music anywhere.

- * Synchronize documents such as invoices across multiple devices. Accountants will love it.

- * SugarSync can act as an insurance policy against losing important information. Backups are no longer a hassle or a nuisance.

Vinny LaBash is a Regular Columnist for the Sarasota PCUG, Florida. Article from the August 2011 issue, Sarasota Monitor. Web: <<http://www.spcug.org>>. E-mail: <[labash \(at\) spcug.org](mailto:labash(at)spcug.org)>.

**Tracking the Latest Information
On Anything
By John Weigle**

If you want to keep track of the latest news and Web postings on specific subjects, give Google Alerts a try.

I've been using the feature for some time to track three subjects I'm interested in: UFOs, Annette Funicello and Sally Field. I've been interested in UFOs since the early 1950s, a fan of Annette since the Mickey Mouse Club Days and a fan of Field since her first TV appearance as Gidget. So now you know three of my not-very-secret "secrets."

Google explains its alerts this way at <<http://www.google.com/alerts>>: "Google Alerts are e-mail updates of the latest relevant Google results (web, news, etc.) based on your choice of query or topic."

"Enter the topic you wish to monitor, then click preview to see the type of results you'll receive. Some handy uses of Google Alerts include:

- * monitoring a developing news story
- * keeping current on a competitor or industry
- getting the latest on a celebrity or event
- * keeping tabs on your favorite sports teams."

When you create an alert you'll be asked to choose the topic for it, the type of information you want (everything, news, blogs, videos, discussions); how

often you want alerts (as-it-happens, once a day, once a week); volume (only the best results, all results); and your e-mail address so you can get the alerts. The default choices are everything, once a day and only the best results. Consider starting with the defaults and then tweaking them if the results you get aren't what you expected.

You might also have to tweak your selected topic. My search for Annette is "Annette Funicello" (in the quotes). That limits results to items with her full name. On the other hand, my Sally Field search is just that (no quotes around the name), so I get everything with Sally and Field, which results in a few unexpected results. My UFO search results in news about unidentified flying objects, my intent, and the musical group UFO.

I haven't set up searches for computer-related items because I get several electronic newsletters that keep me informed about most of the technical subjects I'm interested in, but it's easy to establish queries for any subject you're interested in. For instance, you could use "Linux, Ubuntu," Microsoft, "Steve Jobs," "Bill Gates."

Or you could try your own name or the name of your business if you wanted to know what people are saying about you or your business.

And if you're a sports fan, you might want to track everything said about your favorite team(s). You'd need to set up a separate alert for each team name.

The site lets you set up an alert and then shows sample results for it. Just for kicks, I tried my first and last name (in quotes) and got references to my Facebook page, an obituary for a John Weigle of Augusta, Ga. (I still get spam

[Continued on Page 18](#)

SEMCO Meeting Pictures



(Above): Tom Callow addresses SIG-Computing and later talks about Addictive Web Sites in SIG-Techniques. (Below) Mike Rudas discusses Data Management in the Terabyte Age.



SEMCO Meeting Pictures



(Above): Member discussions during the break. (Below) Break time refreshments.





BOARD MEETING
9/11/2011
Carol Sanzi

Board Members Present

President Mike Bader, Vice President Richard Jackson, Treasurer Bette Gay, Secretary Carol Sanzi, SIG-IBM Chairman Tom Callow, Publications Committee Chairman Warner Mach, and Members-at-Large Bob Clyne and Brian Brodsky. The board meeting was called to order at 12:10 p.m.

Old Business

Bette Gay reported that the current treasury amount equaled a total of \$9,650.56 with \$4,899.54 in the checking account and \$4,751.02 invested in three Certificates of Deposit. The membership currently is 78.

Bob Clyne moved to approve the Restated Bylaws and to direct that a notice of the vote, as specified in Section 2.11 of the Bylaws, and the Restated Bylaws be published in the December 2011 DATA BUS and placed on the ballot for membership approval at the January 2012 annual meeting. Tom Callow seconded the motion and it was carried.

Warner Mach contacted Focal Press and was satisfied with their terms of membership. SEMCO is now a participating member and will receive several benefits including two books a month for raffle, up to three books a month for published reviews, possible speakers for meetings, and a 30% discount on Focal Press titles.

New Business

Bob Clyne moved to approve the revised flyer subject to the possibility of a name change for SIG-IBM. Brian

Brodsky seconded the motion and it was carried.

Brian Brodsky moved to adjourn at 12:24. Carol Sanzi seconded the motion and it was carried.

SIGS RENAMED

In recent weeks three of the SEMCO SIGs have been renamed in order to better reflect their current purposes:
(1) SIG-IBM is now SIG-Computing.
(2) SIG-IBM Intermediate is now SIG-Techniques. (3) SIG-Advanced is now SIG-Advice.

Continued from Page 15

about real estate deals in Augusta), and the Weigle Music Ministries, which I had never heard of.

A search for CIPCUG showed only the CIPCUG Web site.

Not surprisingly, a search for “Los Angeles Dodgers” resulted in more hits than any of my other test searches. Topics that get lots of news coverage, such as the Dodgers, are obviously going to have more results than people or topics that are seldom in the news.

All the results have live links to whatever the alert finds.

The alerts tool isn’t for everyone, but it’s useful if you have any interests you want to track regularly.

John Weigle is Editor of the Channel Islands PCUG, CA. Article from the August 2011 issue of The Outer Edge. Web: <<http://www.cipcug.org>>. E-mail: <[jweigle\(at\)vcnet.com](mailto:jweigle(at)vcnet.com)>.



SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS (SIGS)



SIG-COMPUTING
Tom Callow

Oct. 9: 1:45 p.m. Google Calendar: How to use Google Calendar for individuals and in conjunction with a web site—A web-based (remote) presentation by Don Singleton. Mr. Singleton is President, and Web master, of the Tulsa Computer Society, and board member of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups.



SIG-TECHNIQUES
Warner Mach

Oct. 9: 3:45 p.m. : Windows 8—First Look: SIG-Computing Chairman Tom Callow will talk about Microsoft's next generation Windows, and what we know about it so far.



SIG-ADVICE
Franz Breidenich

Oct. 18 (Tues): 5:30 p.m.: At the Madison Heights Library located at 240 West 13 Mile Rd. one block West of John R. The parking lot entrance is off Brush St. The lot and entrance to the library is located in the back of the library. Topic: General discussion.



SIG-LINUX
Michael Rudas
Mike Bader



Oct. 25 (Tues): 6:45 p.m.: At Motor City Free Geek, 1511 Jarvis St. Suite #10, Ferndale, MI 48220. The building is on the Northwest corner of Wanda and Jarvis - The first traffic light south of 9 Mile, on Wanda. Topic: TBA.

Nov. 2011 DATABUS DEADLINE (7th day after 2nd Sunday in month)
SEMCO Input and Members' Ads—Deadline: Sun., Oct. 16, 11:59 p.m.
Members' personal ads are free. To mail, use Editor [address on Page 2](#); e-mail address: [<warnermach@gmail.com>](mailto:warnermach@gmail.com). PLEASE send to arrive sooner than deadline.
Business Ads - Deadline: Second Friday monthly. Contact Editor ([address Page 2](#)).

Warner Machwarnermach@gmail.com

(to post monthly computer group info)

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

Oct. 5, 7 p.m., (1st Wednesday) Jane Wheatly 810-982-1187 or Pam Raisanen
E-mail info: <compinfo@greatlakes.net>. Web: <<http://www.bwcomp.org>>.
Topic: TBA.

Focus: Hope IT User Group

1400 Oakman, Detroit, MI. 48238. Web info <<http://www.fhitug.org>>. See web site for details. Pre-registration required.

HUG (Holly User Group)

Oct. 8, 9 a.m.-noon (2nd Saturday) Groveland Twp. Fire Hall, 3085 Grange Hall Rd. & Dixie Hwy., Holly, MI. 48442. Ron McCauley 810-629-9683. Topic: TBA.

MacGroup-Detroit

Oct. 23, 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: "Creating Dynamic Presentations with Apple's Keynote."
SIGs: 2:00 PM.

MacTechnics. (MAC User Group)

Oct. 15, (3rd Saturday); See web site for meeting time and location. <<http://www.mactechnics.org>>. JoAnn Olson at 248-478-4300. Topic: Web Cams and more.

MDLUG (Metro Detroit Linux User Group)

Oct. 8, 12:30–2:30 p.m., (2nd Saturday); MDLUG meetings will be at The Gaudior Academy located at 27100 Avondale Avenue in Inkster. Web: <<http://www.mdlug.org>>. Topic: TBA.

Motor City Free Geek

Every Saturday 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. 1511 Jarvis St. Suite #10, Ferndale, MI 48220. <<http://www.motorcityfreegeek.net>>. E-mail: <MotorCityFreeGeek@gmail.com>. Recycling & Open Source.

MUG (Michigan User Group)

Oct. 11, 6:00 p.m., (2nd Tuesday): Engineering Society of Detroit. 20700 Civic Center Drive, Suite 450, Southfield, MI 48076 . <<http://www.mug.org>>. Topic: TBA.

Oak Park Computer Club

Every Fri., 10:15 a.m. at Oak Park Library, 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)

Oct. 4, 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."

Pictures: Recent SEMCO Meetings: <<http://www.tinyurl.com/y8cm99e>>

Video: Recent SEMCO Meeting: <<http://www.tinyurl.com/363vnbd>>

Podcasts: Podcasts of SEMCO meetings can be found at: <<http://www.semco.org/podcasts.htm>>.



Note: For the Key Word to get the 30% discount see any SEMCO officer or member of the board.



User Group Members SAVE 30%
learn · master · create

www.focalpress.com

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



**SOUTHEASTERN MICHIGAN
COMPUTER ORGANIZATION, INC.**

SEMCO CALENDAR

**Engineering Society of Detroit
20700 Civic Center Dr., Suite 450, 4th Floor
Southfield, MI. 48076
42°29'7" N by 83°14'29" W**

Oct. 9—SUNDAY (Meet 2nd Sunday)

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

SEMCO General Meeting at 1:30 p.m.

Special Interest Groups (SIGs)

SIG-COMPUTING, 1:45 p.m., Google Calendar: How to use Google Calendar for individuals and in conjunction with a web site—A web-based (remote) presentation by Don Singleton. Mr. Singleton is President, and Web master, of the Tulsa Computer Society, and board member of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups.

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

SIG-TECHNIQUES, 3:45 p.m., Windows 8 - First Look: SIG-Computing Chairman Tom Callow will talk about Microsoft's next generation Windows, and what we know about it so far.

SIG-ADVICE, Oct. 18 (Tues): 5:30 p.m.: At the Madison Heights Library located at 240 West 13 Mile Rd. one block West of John R. The parking lot entrance is off Brush St. The lot and entrance to the library is located in the back of the library. Topic: General discussion.

SIG-LINUX, Oct. 25 (Tues): 6:45 p.m.: At Motor City Free Geek, 1511 Jarvis St. Suite #10, Ferndale, MI 48220. Topic: TBA.

Nov. 13—SEMCO Sunday

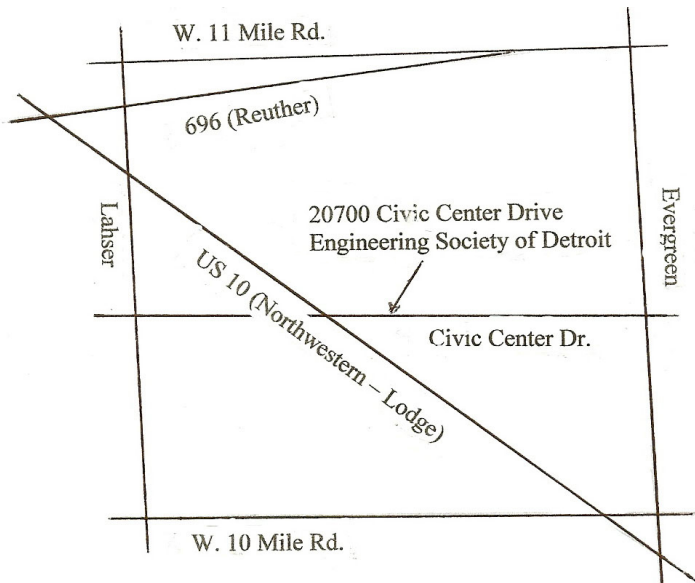
<http://www.semco.org>

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.

42°29'7" N by 83°14'29" W



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)

October 9

November 13

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