



# THE COMPUTER CONNECTION

## SAUK COMPUTER USER GROUP

OCTOBER 2017

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### SEPTEMBER 9, 2017 MINUTES: SCUG CLUB MEETING

The September 9, 2017 meeting began with the question and answer session. There was a discussion concerning the Equifax security breach.

The business meeting began at 1:50 P.M. The minutes published in the newsletter were approved as written. The Treasurers report was given and approved.

Old business was the 50 inch Emerson TV drawing to be done at the end of the Christmas meeting. Tickets will be sold at 1 for \$5 or 3 for \$10.

Our members Chuck and Donna Oster's son Steven passed away. Memorial service will be September 23rd at Preston Schilling in Dixon. IL

There were 11.4 million shoe boxes sent overseas last year for Christmas Child. We will be filling boxes for Christmas Child at our November meeting. Starting at noon. Each box will cost \$14 this year. A motion was

made and approved for the club to sponsor 30 boxes from the special events fund.

This year our Christmas buffet will be provided by Pizza Ranch so members do not need to bring a dish to pass. Someone suggested only the delicious baked beans. Ha.

Trip coordinator Glenda reported the Mexican Rivera trip was ready to go. The trip has 18 people going, leaving September 30, 2017 at 4:45 AM from the Walmart parking lot in Sterling

A motion was made and approved to make a donation to the Salvation Army for hurricane victims. The board will decide the amount to be given.

Meeting was adjourned and the program was given by Neal on Word with very good information

The drawing was held with the usual great items.

*Respectfully submitted by  
Darla Stigall club secretary*

#### Club Information

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**BOARD MEETING MINUTES FOR  
SEPTEMBER 13, 2017**

**Drawing for Oct.**

**Large prizes for the October drawing include an Amazon Fire, and 2-\$25 gift certificates from Applebee's.**

**News from the Net**

**Air Show Disaster at West ZWICK'S ISLAND PARK, BELLEVILLE, ONTARIO, CANADA. AIRCRAFT HITS FOUR BUILDINGS. This is tough to see. It just shows the dangers of attending these events. The pilot at low level had no control over his aircraft. It narrowly misses a crowd gathered for the air show and slams into four buildings. One can only imagine the horror of the occupants inside those buildings.**

(Graphic photo on back page. Not for the faint of heart.)

President Art Benedick opened the meeting which was attended by Joe Fornero, Gloria and George Schneider, Neal Shipley, Joe Schmitt, Terry and Glenda MacLennan and Cheryl and Sam Johnson.

A short report on the state of the treasury was given by Joe F. and minutes were approved as printed.

It was reported that Joe Fornero will not be here for the next general and board as he will be cruising to the land of down under. Neal will assist with the newsletter.

There seems to be a problem with one of the club's Window 10 computers. Neal volunteered to look into the problem. Also questions arose on the necessity of having the laptop computer at all because of lack of use. Suggestions were offered. There will be more on this question at a later time.

October, program will be how to transfer photos from cameras and cell phones to your computer. November we will again pack shoe boxes for Operation Christmas Child. Cost is \$14 per box. We will begin packing at noon. November's program will feature downloading videos from on line. December's schedule is Santa Joe and our usual Christmas Party. All of the food will be purchased from

Pizza Ranch. Come and eat hearty and enjoy the party.

We next discussed places to donate money to. The board is requesting that all member think about this and we will discuss it at a later time.

**One decision was made at the last general meeting and \$1,000 .00 will be donated to the Salvation Army for Hurricane Relief. It will be donated through Sterling-Rock Falls Trust. With them adding \$250.00 in addition to our donation.**

Prizes for our monthly meeting were also discussed for next year. More information on this at a later time.

Glenda told us about a possible trip to St. Louis for two Cubs and Cardinal games, with an overnight stay, next year. She also talked about the planned cruise to the Panama Canal, She has 5 cabins sold. More details are forthcoming

Meeting was then adjourned.

*Respectively submitted by  
Gloria Schneider, for Darla  
Stigall, Secretary*

## Databases - They're all around us

By Phil Sorrentino

Think about it; during the course of the day we might use a telephone directory, a dictionary, an encyclopedia, an airline flight guide, a bibliography. All of which are databases. We use databases that store all kinds of knowledge that we use on a regular basis. At home or in your office, the paper filing system you have set up is really a database. But as the computer has become more a part of the fabric of our homes and offices, we use more databases that are resident on our home computers. Databases are one of the reasons that make home computers so useful. Databases show up in many places and are at the heart of many computer software programs or Apps. Many of our databases are "on-line", available only through the use of a browser on your home computer. Some of these databases include your Healthcare Providers Formulary, the Library of Congress Online Catalog, and Facebook.

Your contact list is a database, as are your collection of MP3 music, and your collection of friends (in a social media environment, such as Facebook, or LinkedIn, or

Twitter). We all use a multitude of databases, most of the time without knowing anything about the database details or operations. Software applications allow us to use the database and extract the information that we are looking for. For example, take Google. Google has created an enormous database of locations on the internet and through its application, at [www.Google.com](http://www.Google.com), allows a user to search the database and come up with websites that might provide answers to their questions. Many years ago, I authored a Nutrition Analysis program that provided the totals of 21 nutrients for a person's one day food intake. The basis of this App was a Food Nutrition database that held the amounts of each of 21 nutrients for each food. At that time, the database was only available in handbook form so the 21 values for each of around 2500 foods had to be entered into a computer database so that the App, "Nutriplan", could extract the values when the user selected the particular food. The App provided the answers and reports, but the database held all of the possible nutrition

information for each individual food.

Just as background, a database is an organized collection of data. Data, in the home computer sense, are words, numbers, images, (and maybe even moving images, a.k.a. videos), represented in a structure, possibly tabular or graphical. Spreadsheets are an easily understood representation of databases. A typical spreadsheet represents something of interest in the real world, on the computer as rows and columns. Usually, for an item database, the rows are the items and the columns are things that describe the item. So, to expand on my example of the Food Nutrition database, let's say the rows are the food names, and there are 21 columns for the nutrients. The rows might be "Apple", "Pear", "Peach", "Banana", etc. Each column would be another nutrition component; for example, column 1 might be protein, column 2 might be vitamin A, column 3

vitamin C..., I think you get the idea, all the way up to column 21, maybe fiber. You could even add a column that had a picture of the food, or a recommendation for how the food could be prepared. Once the database is defined, a clever programmer could develop all sorts of Apps that could produce useful nutritional evaluations, (once the user had input the day's food intake).

This type of row and column database is typically referred to as a "flat file", maybe because it seems to have two dimensions, row and column. A more powerful database organization is called a Relational database. A Relational database is a collection of data items organized as a set of tables. The tables are connected by "keys" or key variables. The "keys" allow data to be accessed quickly and efficiently. Software that uses or manipulates a Relational database is called a Relational Database Management System (RDBMS). Access and Oracle are examples of an RDBMS. These complex database systems are typically manipulated by using SQL (Structured Query Language), a database language, which has

become the standard (circa 1987) for defining, manipulating and managing Relational Databases. (For those of you who have been around computers since the beginning (circa 1982), you might remember dBase II. dBase II was the first widely used database management system for microcomputers. dBase II included a database engine and a database language all in one package. dBase II was around before SQL, and coincidentally lost favor as the industry switched to SQL as it became the standard for Relational Database manipulation. By the way, there never was a dBase I, the developer thought the II in the name of the software package would make it more acceptable (read that salable). The II was just a marketing trick. "Ah, marketing, where the rubber meets the sky.")

Access and Oracle are both examples of an RDBMS, but are at the extreme ends of size and complexity, although each uses SQL as the managing software. Oracle is a professional system designed for very

large, critical use, databases where rapid, multiple accesses are anticipated. Access, although a very capable RDBMS, is designed for smaller database projects (possibly those projects that can be easily handled by a small group of clever programmers). Access is on many business systems, and is ubiquitous because it is part of the more expensive version of Microsoft Office.

So, you see, databases are at the core of some very simple Apps, like Nutriplan, and some very comprehensive Apps, like Google.com. Undoubtedly, due to the size and scope of the data involved, Google probably employs the Relational database model. Nutriplan, on the other hand, because of its relative simplicity, worked very well with the flat file model.

*By Phil Sorrentino, Contributing Writer, The Computer Club, Florida The Journal of The Computer Club, Inc.*

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## PC Golden Age

By Dick Mayback

Some of us fondly recall the early days of personal computers in the '70s and '80s. We could poke through PC parts in dusty stores, frequently adjacent to ham radio equipment and war surplus electronics, or wait in long lines, in heat or snow depending on the season, for admission to a hall full of vendors whose only addresses were the license plates on their trailers. We would carry our treasures home, install them in our PC, and spend hours getting them to work (or maybe not). We would swap diskette shareware (software that was available for free, but included a request for payment). We had to learn a fair amount just to get our PCs operating, and a good bit more to configure them to work efficiently. There were many computer magazines, and bookstores had shelves full of computer material. However, by today's standards our computers and the applications they ran were limited and crude. The Internet was still in the future, and if we

exchanged e-mail it was by using a bulletin board system that we accessed over telephone lines. There were text games, such as Hunt the Wumpus, and those with very crude graphics, such as NetHack. Editors were text only, with few provisions for formatting. Displays were universally cathode ray tubes (even for computers that claimed to be portable) and showed only text. Diskettes provided our only storage.

Today, the computer stores, shows, magazines, and books have largely disappeared. We buy our computer from an electronics store or an Internet dealer, turn it on, and expect it to work out of the box. As a result, many of us know little more about the internal workings of our PCs than we do about our cars, and computer enthusiasts lament the passing of the golden age. However, this grief is mistaken, for although much has changed, the golden age of personal computers is

today richer than ever. Let's look at a few examples.

**Creative Writing** – In high school and college, I used a manual typewriter and a special, rather greasy-feeling, paper that could be erased. A 1000-word paper was a term project, and each revision required retyping the whole thing. Research involved a trip to the library, and any graphics were done by hand on separate sheets. Now such a task is an afternoon of labor, and most of the time is spent on the content rather than the tedium of putting the characters and graphics on the page.

When I first went to work, engineers wrote on lined pads or coding sheets and sent them to a typing pool or a keypunch room. Some days later, we'd get the result, mark the corrections, and send it back. Major changes required literal cut-and-paste (with scissors and tape). Again, after a few

days, we saw the results, often with a new set of typos. This would continue until exhaustion convinced us the result was “good enough.” As a result, the average engineer produced about one finished page per day. Word-processing or coding software now corrects mistakes as we go, typing pools and keypunch operators have disappeared, and engineers spend more of their time developing products.

**Publishing** – Years ago, to create a published work, you typed the text (making liberal use of white-out), and glued it to card stock along with the photos and graphics. You then took these to a printer who photographed the pages and assembled a book or booklet. When I look at my high-school year book, I can clearly see the cellophane tape used to hold down the photos. Today, publishing software with its spelling and grammar checking and sophisticated layout capabilities allows

individuals to produce work of much higher quality, and we can send the resulting e-book to as many people as we like. Or we can abandon the book metaphor and publish our thoughts on Facebook or a Website, where many examples make my old yearbook look shabby indeed.

**Calculation** – When I was in college, my calculator was a slide rule, which had an accuracy of two to three significant digits and could only multiply and evaluate simple functions (typically trigonometric). Moreover, it didn't keep track of decimal points, which I had to do manually. Adding required paper and pencil. Plotting the results meant using a drafting board and its associated tools. Now, we have scientific software that not only evaluates formulas, but also performs algebra and calculus and plots the results. Indeed, electronic circuit simulators are available so we don't even have to assemble circuits to measure their

responses.

**Research** – Years ago, the telephone-book yellow pages were about our only source of information about vendors, and product information was delivered by mail. Compared to what is now available on the Internet, these yielded very slim pickings indeed. Instead of having to trek down to a public library (assuming it were open), we can search the Internet from home at any time, where such institutions as the Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/>, and the Vatican, <http://digi.vatlib.it/>, make many of their documents available. True, much of the Internet content is trash, but with relatively little effort, its many treasures can be unearthed.

**Entertainment** – We are no longer limited to listening to only the local radio stations or reading the local newspapers. Most media sources around the world allow at least limited browsing of

their material and maintain archives of their past publications. The problem is not access, but finding the gems hidden in the tons of overburden.

**Photography** – When I was young, editing photographs required a darkroom, an enlarger, and a chemical kit, costing several thousand of today's dollars, especially if you were using color. The effects, even when implemented by skilled technicians, were crude compared to what we can do today. Video editing was even cruder, as it was limited to cutting film strips and gluing them back together, and the only sound was the projectionist's narration. Today, using software ranging in cost from inexpensive to free, people with far less expertise can achieve truly spectacular effects.

**Computer Technology** – Today, we can buy very inexpensive, single-board computers, such as the Arduino and Raspberry Pi, and experiment safely with

them, since they are separate from our PCs. (They offer the additional advantage of being quite small and cheap, which means that if all else fails we can at least indulge our frustration by throwing them to the floor and stomping on them.) We do our shopping on the Internet and buy from vendors who offer far more variety than was available in any store or show. Both commercial and open-source software is widely available on the Internet, and it's far more sophisticated. Of course, we have to be careful to protect ourselves from malware, but that isn't new.

It's easy to get into a routine with PCs and use them for the same chores every day, instead of exploring new territory like you did when you first discovered them. Take a fresh look at the activities that pique your interest, and you will probably find computer tools to make them more rewarding. Being knowledgeable about computers' abilities and limitation, you have a

head start on your search. Exploring such new capabilities requires initiative, because you must install, and of course learn to use effectively, additional software and perhaps hardware. As usual, there are trade-offs between effort and cost, in particular between heavily-advertised commercial programs, which often emphasize ease of use, and open source ones, which often have more features but require more expertise. I prefer the latter, because I can install several, experiment with them, choose those that suit me, and discard the others. I'm less likely to do this if each test requires a new purchase. Regardless of your approach, using a personal computer can inexpensively broaden your interests and improve your skills.

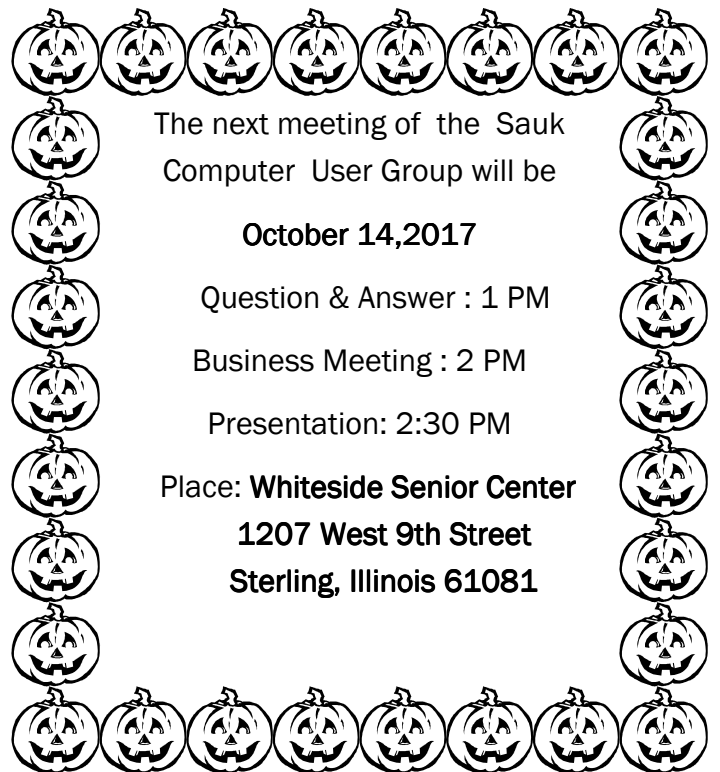
*By Dick Maybach, Member,  
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No one was killed,  
but it probably  
scared the \*? out  
of them.

There will be a Question & Answer  
Session starting at 1 PM. Bring any  
questions you have about your  
computer or problems you may be  
having. It will be conducted by:  
**Art Bendick & Neal Shipley**



The next meeting of the Sauk  
Computer User Group will be

**October 14, 2017**

Question & Answer : 1 PM

Business Meeting : 2 PM

Presentation: 2:30 PM

Place: **Whiteside Senior Center**

**1207 West 9th Street**

**Sterling, Illinois 61081**

**OCTOBER PRESENTATION WILL BE:  
"HOW TO TRANSFER PHOTOS FROM YOUR PHONE TO YOUR  
COMPUTER" BY TERRY MACLENNAN.**