



OTTAWA

PC NEWS

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PRODUCT REVIEW

Another Day at the Office *by Alan German*

With the release of OpenOffice.org 2.0 I decided that it was time to break free of the bonds of Word, Excel and PowerPoint and move to an open-source office suite. Now, I should say that Excel has always worked well for me, but Word (that frequently decided it should change the font on paragraphs being cut and pasted) and PowerPoint (that has a mind of its own when it comes to automatically assigning fonts to lines of text) have always been a different story. So, does the OpenOffice suite provide a reasonable replacement? Here are my preliminary views after using the package for a number of weeks.

Certainly one must argue that it's a very cost-effective solution since the open source package is free for the asking. However, even with high-speed Internet access, the investment of a little time is required as the download weighs in at just under 75 MB. Installation is a breeze and I was pleasantly surprised to find the installation wizard offer to associate all my old office data files (DOC, XLS and PPT) with the OpenOffice suite.

I tend to use just three office applications – word processor, spreadsheet, and presentation manager - and so dispensed with OpenOffice's quickstart module in favour of desktop icons for each of Writer, Calc, and Impress. A minor downside to the OpenOffice package is that any given module takes a bit longer to load than its MS Office

counterpart. But, once an application is running, there is all the functionality that you would expect – and more.

There are a number of outstanding features of Writer that I have discovered to date. Firstly, when retrieving a file, rather than starting at the top of the document, Writer drops down the page to the point at which the last text entry was being made. This makes it very convenient for adding a new item to a log file of computer maintenance activities in date order, or adding words to your entry for OPCUG's contest for the best newsletter article that you haven't quite finished! By default, Writer saves files as OpenDocument Text (ODT) files, but it will also quite happily read and write DOC files for various versions of MS Word, and correctly handles things like multiple columns and embedded images. So, there's no problem if you want to use OpenOffice at home, but must use MS Word at work. The other good news is that the ODT file format is XML based and file sizes are dramatically smaller than those produced by Word.

Calc, the spreadsheet module, has much in common with MS Excel and can readily process XLS or OpenDocument Spreadsheet (ODS) files. One minor difference in the program's operation is that pressing the delete key doesn't immediately delete the contents of the current cell as would Excel. Instead, a dialogue box pops up providing choices for deleting "all, strings, numbers, date & time, formulas, formats

and objects". No doubt this is very useful functionality, but it does take longer to clean up the odd cell in a spreadsheet. So far, I haven't explored the program's options to see if this behaviour can be customized.

Impress is OpenOffice's presentation manager and hence the equivalent of MS PowerPoint. You won't be surprised to learn that the default file type is OpenDocument Presentation (ODP), nor that the program can readily handle PPT files. The layout of the menus and toolbars is a little different than the Microsoft program, but everything is well labelled and readily at hand. One major difference in normal display mode is that the vertical scroll bars only work on the current slide; they don't allow moving through a group of slides forming a presentation. Fortunately, PgUp and PgDn work as

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Next Meeting: **WEDNESDAY, March 8th, 2006**

March Raffle

At the March meeting, thanks to the generosity of Adobe, we have a copy of Photoshop Elements 3.0 for raffle.

"Perfect, transform, organize, and share your photos like a pro. Adobe Photoshop Elements 3.0 provides powerful photo editing functionality plus intuitive organizing and sharing capabilities. From the makers of Photoshop, the leading image-editing software worldwide."

Raffle tickets are \$1 for one, \$2 for three, or \$5 for ten.

Coming Up...

► March 8, 2006—Chris Taylor

Tips for running a secure (enough) wireless network @ home

Wireless networking provides some wonderful flexibility, but it is not without its risks. Chris Taylor, President and SysAdmin of the OPCUG will explore some of the ways you can help ensure your network traffic remains private, your computers remain uncompromised, and you do not provide free Internet access to any drive-by attacker. And, it can all be done with standard off-the-shelf equipment at no additional charge.

April 12, 2006—DBx GEOMATICS, "Web Mapping with Scalable Vector Graphics" <http://www.dbxgeomatics.com>

May 10, 2006—Rob MacDonald, Corel Corporation: "Corel WordPerfect X3 and CorelDRAW X3" <http://www.corel.com>

June 14, 2006—**Annual BBQ**; Speaker: Rick Claus, Microsoft Canada, Topic: TBA

In the spirit of "users helping users"

The Richmond Co-operative Nursery School (<http://www.rcns.ca/>) is looking for their first computer and wondering if anyone has a slightly used PC and monitor available for donation. Donated equipment will be eligible for a charitable tax receipt equivalent to fair market value of the system. The computer should be capable of running Windows XP Professional and have a minimum of 20GB HDD / 256 MB RAM. Please contact Mark Biegler at mpbiegler@yahoo.com.

A Message from the Editor

An article in last month's newsletter may have some of you wondering if the OPCUG endorses products or companies. The article in question is "How Internet Predators Can Harm Your Computer" by Gene Barlow of User Group Relations (UGR). Although the OPCUG has received software from UGR for review and our members enjoy discounts at the UGR online store, the OPCUG does not endorse products or enjoy financial benefits with this or any other company. The article encourages readers to check their computers for hacker activity by visiting a website that advertises a yearly membership for a fee. This was not intentional and the purpose of the article was to inform readers of some of the hacker activity that exists. We regret that the article may have misled our readers to believe otherwise.

Sincerely,
Brigitte Lord

CALENDAR

Meetings	Date	Time and Venue
OPCUG General Meeting	Wednesday, March 8 th , 2006	7:30 p.m. Auditorium of the Canada Museum of Science and Technology , 1867 St. Laurent Blvd. http://www.science-tech.nmstc.ca/english/index.cfm
Beginners' SIG	Wednesday, March 8 th , 2006	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting.
IT-Pro SIG	Wednesday, March 8 th , 2006	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting.
PIG SIG (Wing SIG West)	Wednesday, March 8 th , 2006	10:00 p.m. (after all other SIGs) at Chances "R" restaurant, Baseline Rd. at Woodroffe Ave. (College Square Shopping Centre)
Beer BOF (Wing SIG East)	Wednesday, March 8 th , 2006	10:00 p.m. (after all other SIGs) at Liam Maguire's, St. Laurent Blvd. at Innes Rd. (formerly Hooters')

Please note that unless otherwise noted, SIGs meet at 9:00 p.m. (immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting).

CLUB LIFE

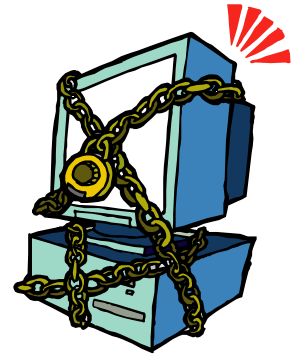
Privacy Director's Report for 2005-2006

During the past year the OPCUG instituted its Privacy Policy (<http://opcug.ca/public/privacy.htm>), concluding the work begun by your prior Boards of Directors. The policy's institution was announced to you at the September, 2005 meeting. It was also announced in that month's OTTAWA PC NEWS (Vol. 22, No. 7).

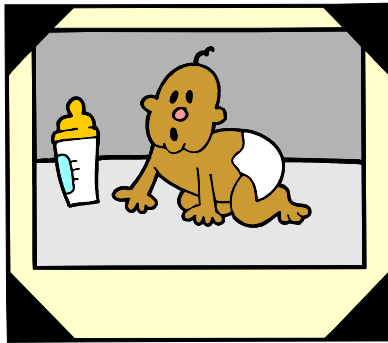
To date, January 19, 2006, we have not received any expressions of privacy concern raised nor have I witnessed any activity in contravention of the policy. So I can happily report that our satisfaction level is 100%.

I have been pleased to serve as a director for the past year. I am dropping out because we are moving to Prince George, B.C. and consequently I wouldn't be able to fully serve another term. I will be back and forth, attending meetings if I'm here. I'll be continuing as an OPCUG member. Should you be headed to Prince George, please feel free to contact me at Bob.Thomas@msn.com should you wish to get together.

Thank you,
Bob Thomas, Privacy Director



OPCUG Photo Albums



Did you know that the OPCUG had a collection of pictures? If not, then I invite you to click on the "photos" button from the OPCUG.CA main webpage, which will give you a list of events that links to the various photo albums we have.

Our collection of pictures keeps growing with the recent addition of pictures from the Nov 2005 workshop and the last Christmas presentation. If you feel like adding some captions, or have some pictures, then don't hesitate to submit them.

Jocelyn Doire,
OPCUG Secretary,
jocelyn.doire@opcug.ca

2006 OPCUG Elections

At the close of nominations, 9 members had put forward their name. As there are only 9 positions on the Board of Directors, the following were acclaimed at the February Annual General Meeting:

- | | |
|---------------|------------------------------|
| Chris Taylor | President and SysAdmin |
| Morris Turpin | Public Relations |
| Jocelyn Doire | Secretary |
| Wayne Houston | Privacy |
| Alan German | Treasurer |
| Brigitte Lord | Webmaster, Newsletter Editor |
| Bob Gowan | Meeting Coordinator |
| Bob Walker | Facilities Coordinator |
| Ted May | Director without portfolio |



ON THE LIGHTER SIDE

Spam Recognition Guide by Alan German

Spam filters seem to have a tough time recognizing Spam. However, it strikes me that this is an extremely simple task. Obviously, all one needs is a Boolean NOT filter, as per the following examples (based on actual message subject lines taken from the author's Spam filter!)

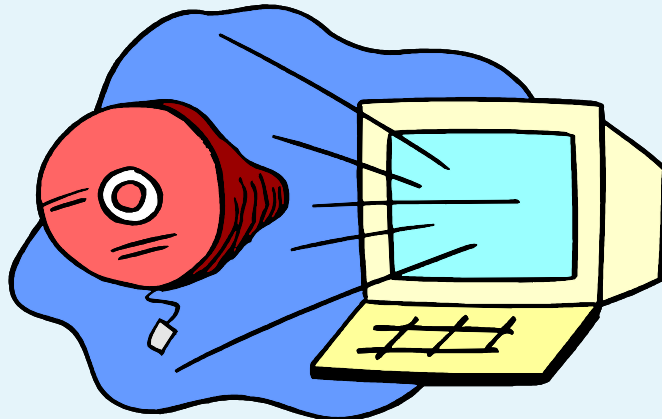
Message Subject

important information
 VERY IMPORTANT AND CONFIDENTIAL
 overwhelmingly important lette_
 Urgent notice
 Dont ignore this notice
 Exclusive notice
 Re:
 URGENT REPLY NEEDED!!!
 Response Needed Soon
 Requested information
 Confirmation Email: Link Code inside
 It is important
 Action Required -- Credit/Debit Car...
 Account compromised: billing PayPal
 Re: Your Account will Expire
 Royal Bank Online Services Please Read !
 Investment Idea For You
 For your benefit
 Your reply is your Reward
 PRIZE WINNER NOTIFICATION!!!
 let us save you money

NOT filter output

Unimportant information
 Very unimportant and non-confidential
 Really unimportant letter
 Non-urgent notice
 Ignore this notice
 I sent this notice to everyone
 Not a reply
 No reply needed
 No response needed - ever
 You didn't request this junk
 Confirming nothing but trouble
 It's not important
 No action required
 Your account is just fine
 You don't have this account
 Not RBC, don't read
 Investment idea for me
 For my benefit
 Your reply is my reward
 I win
 Let us steal your money

See! It's simple. In fact, there's only one Spam message with a subject that will fail the Boolean NOT test - and this one is fairly easy to spot... Spam.



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*[http://opcug.ca/public/Articles/
contest2005.htm](http://opcug.ca/public/Articles/contest2005.htm)*

OpenOffice (Continued from page 1)

expected and provide an easy method of navigating between different slides. Working on individual slides is a piece of cake with the toolbar menus being context sensitive, for example changing from fonts and attributes when on a line of text, to lines and area fills when a graphic is highlighted.

One outstanding feature of OpenOffice is that support for producing PDF files is built into all modules of the package. Thus, you don't need to purchase a copy of Adobe Acrobat to integrate with your office suite. Some potential users of OpenOffice may also be interested to learn that the package includes drawing and database modules. Personally, I don't do much drawing, and have no real experience with MS Access. Consequently, I haven't tried either Draw or Base and so can't comment on these two modules. One feature that

OpenOffice doesn't support is VBA macros; instead it uses its own flavour of Basic programming. But since, for example, most people turn the macro feature off in MS Word to avoid macro-borne viruses, this difference seems inconsequential.

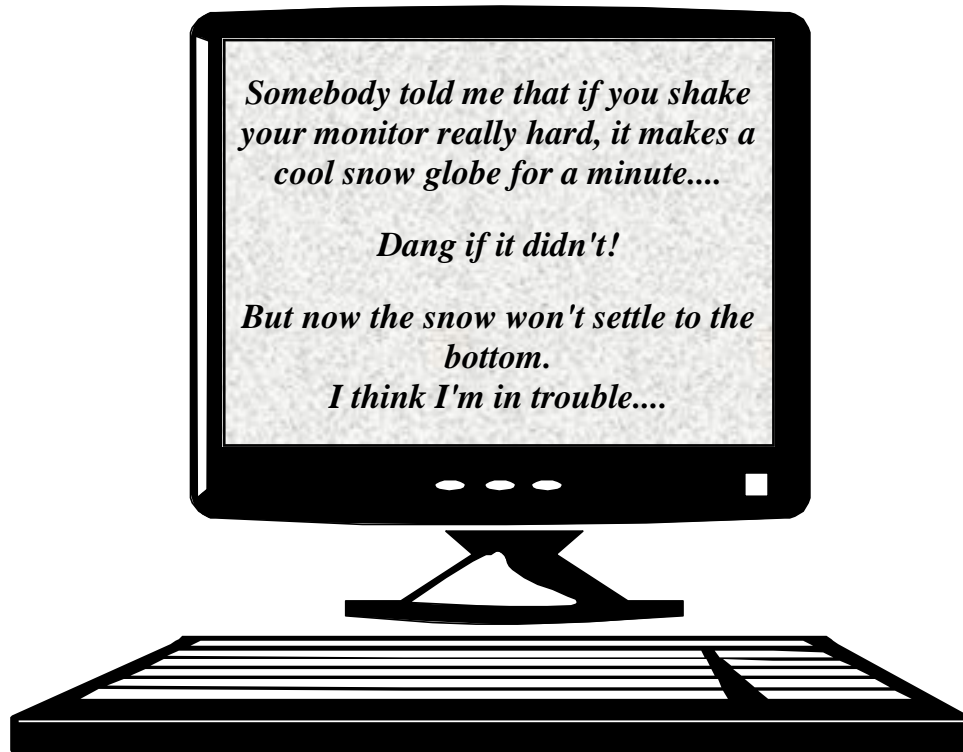
Each module in the suite has a very comprehensive help menu system but, if you are an accomplished Office user, there will be little need to refer to this documentation. As noted above, each module can readily handle files produced by its MS Office equivalent. Interestingly, and especially useful for those who don't wish to move to files in the OpenDocument format, the programs remember the file format last used and in the case of a File-Save command will provide this as the default option. Thus, if you wish to keep reading and writing DOC files, the

ODT file option becomes transparent.

Did I mention that OpenOffice is free-ware? At this price, I'm sold! I now have one machine that doesn't have MS Office loaded and, so far, I haven't missed any of the latter's applications. OpenOffice is working flawlessly. Members of OPCUG will be extremely glad to hear this since the Treasurer's monthly report to the Board of Directors is based on a Calc spreadsheet! In addition, the annual report printed in the newsletter was initially developed in Writer, and the PowerPoint presentation given at the AGM started off life as an Impress file.

Bottom Line

OpenOffice.org 2.0 (Freeware)
<http://www.openoffice.org/>



BLAST FROM THE PAST

These two articles are reprinted from the January 1985 newsletter of the OPCUG (formerly Ottawa IBM PC Users' Group).

Note Gordon's plea for newsletter articles. Some things don't change, hence my recycling of old articles.

To view the entire newsletter, go to <http://opcug.ca/public/Articles/8501.PDF>.

Brigitte Lord,

Current Editor, Ottawa PC News

January 21st, 1985

Happy New Year! Welcome to the first 1985 edition of this newsletter. With this issue there are a couple of things to note. First, I have attempted a little classier format, with new banner and letter-quality print. Second, we have changed our meeting location due to problems in getting a firm commitment of facilities from Camsell Hall. And finally, you will notice that the size of the executive has grown to take care of our growing membership.

With the increasing size of the club, I urge you more than ever to offer any time and/or resources that you can spare. I am getting in desperate need of some material for the next issue of this newsletter and welcome any contributions. Relevant topics for submission include programming tips, tutorials on selected BASIC and/or DOS commands, technical discoveries, computer gossip, and finally, but not least, computer humour. If you can't think of anything, get your spouse, covivant, boy/girlfriend to share their perceptions about your "new love". I will accept submissions in either hard-copy or electronic form.

Gordon Hopkins
Editor

NEWS AND RUMOURS

From James Walsh:

I have heard rumours (reliable sources) that the PC and XT series will be replaced in early 1985 with a new series based on the 80186. Upgrades to existing systems will be available (motherboard swap) for about \$500-\$600 U.S. IBM is giving large rebates to dealers on volume orders in an apparent attempt to get rid of existing PCs and XTs.

Xenix for the AT will be released formally on January 21st. It is currently available in beta version from Microsoft to Independent Software Vendors.

Update on Windows - I talked to Microsoft earlier this week, and the size and performance problems have been fixed (they wanted to be able to run windows with a graphics application in under 256K - they've now got it under 192K, and performance of some screen-updating was pretty slow). The Windows internal specifications have now been -fixed - any future updates will be bug fixes and compatible enhancements. This is good news for software developers (like myself) - they can develop Windows products with confidence that they will work on the announced product. Apparently, only documentation and further testing are left to go before the release date.

IBM is supposed to be enhancing Topview to allow graphics, thus competing directly with Windows. I strongly suspect that Windows will make it to the marketplace before a graphics Topview (Topview itself hasn't even been released) but who knows what will happen in the marketplace. Other new products from IBM -a lapsed portable, similar to the DG/One, is in the works, code-named 'Clamshell'.

IBM Compatible Tandy 1000 and 1200 from Radio Shack

These two entries from Radio Shack are PC and PC-XT compatible machines and seem to be very inexpensive. The Tandy 1000 comes with one 360K disk drive, 128K memory, monochrome graphics, colour graphics, 90 key keyboard (from Tandy 2000), parallel port, joystick and lightpen interface and 3 expansion slots. The list price is \$1749, and add another \$230 for a monochrome monitor. We tried Perfect Writer and the Fortran Compiler for the IBM-PC with no trouble on this machine. However, apparently PC programs that will only operate with the IBM monochrome monitor will not work on the Tandy computers.

OTTAWA PC NEWS

Ottawa PC News is the newsletter of the Ottawa PC Users' Group (OPCUG), and is published monthly except in July and August. The opinions expressed in this newsletter may not necessarily represent the views of the club or its members.

Member participation is encouraged. If you would like to contribute an article to Ottawa PC News, please submit it to the newsletter editor (contact info below). Deadline for submissions is three Sundays before the next General Meeting.

Group Meetings

OPCUG meets on the second Wednesday in the month, except July and August, at the Canada Museum of Science and Technology, 1867 St. Laurent Blvd, Ottawa. Meetings are 7:30–9:00 p.m. and Special Interest Groups go until 10 p.m.

Fees:	OPCUG membership:	\$25 per year
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Within a couple of minutes you will receive a confirmation message from the listserver.

“Announcements” is a low volume list that the Board of Directors uses to get in touch with the membership. Subscribers can expect at least one message per month – the meeting reminder that goes out a few days in advance of the general meeting. Other than that, the only time it is used is when the Board feels there is some important news that should be brought to the attention of all members.