

# OTTAWA PC NEWS

Vol. 15 No. 9

The newsletter of the Ottawa PC Users' Group

November 1998

## Club News

### Election notice: OPCUG Board of Directors *by David Reeves, Secretary*

It's fall and since members of the OPCUG Board of Directors retain their position for a one-year term, it is election time. Why would you want to be a Director? How much work is involved?

If you want the experience of guiding the activities of a large group or want to have an impact on the future activities of the OPCUG, then a Director's position is ideal for you. As Directors are involved in a number of different activities, the amount of work varies but at a minimum, you are required to attend monthly Board of Directors' meetings. Directors also co-ordinate several of the OPCUG functions, such as SYSOP. A list of the functions is available on our WEB site. Having been a Director for a number of years, I have found it to be a rewarding and learning experience.

Nominations for membership on the Board of Directors must be in the hands of Harald Freise (past chairman) on or before 10 PM EST, December 1, 1998. The Board of Directors consists of nine members who administer the affairs of the OPCUG. From their ranks, they select a President, a Treasurer, and a Secretary, and any other position they deem necessary. The current Board of Directors consists of Mark Cayer, Terry Mahoney, Duncan Petrie, David Reeves, Bert Schopf, Chris Seal, Chris Taylor, Willem vanDijk and Bob Walker.

You can nominate yourself or another person (who must accept the nomination). For a nomination to stand, the nominee must file signed acceptance of their nomination with Harald Freise, 1034 Hindley Cr., Ottawa, or send a private message to him via PUB II. Please include the telephone number of the nominee. If there are more than nine candidates, an election will be held at an early 1999 general meeting.

Candidates have the opportunity to outline their platform in the January newsletter. (Reasonable rules concerning submission deadline, article length, and omission of potentially slanderous content applies.) Additionally, at the General meeting candidates will have the opportunity to address the membership to clarify their platform immediately before the election.

Harald Freise is looking for two non-board members to review the club's records and financial statements before the publication of the Financial Report. In addition, Harald would like volunteers to assist if there is an election.



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Next meeting: **WEDNESDAY, November 4<sup>th</sup>, 1998**

# Coming Up in November

On Wednesday, November 4<sup>th</sup> the general meeting will feature presentations about removable media storage and drawing tablets.



## Removable media

Removable media storage devices have moved from the exotic to the mainstream and prices have tumbled. Whether you want a replacement for the now-anaemic 1.44 MB floppy disk or you need to back up a hard drive partition, the marketplace offers numerous choices. Our presenter will provide an unbiased evaluation of many of these drives.

## Drawing tablets

Drawing tablets have advanced in sophistication from the Commodore 64 or Apple era's Koala Pad—variable pressure, macros and erasers to name only a few. Many digital artists prefer the sketch pad and pencil metaphor instead of a mouse for serious creative graphics. Wacom is a leader in the field; see these modern marvels in action.



## Calendar

Meetings	Date	Time and venue
OPCUG General Meeting	November 4 <sup>th</sup> : <b>Computer Peripherals</b> See <i>November Feature Presentation</i> , above. December 2 <sup>th</sup> : To be announced	7:30 p.m. - National Museum of Science and Technology, 1867 St. Laurent Blvd.
Ottawa Paradox Users Group	Third Thursday of each month	6:15 pm - Inly Systems, 1221a Cyrville Rd.
FOX Pro/Developers SIG	To be announced	7:15 pm - Sir Jean Talon Building Conference room, Tunney's Pasture, Holland Ave. (north of Scott St.)
PIG SIG (or is it WING SIG?)	November 4 <sup>th</sup> After all the other SIGS - All questions, be they serious or not	"Good Times" cafe at Shoppers City West, Baseline and Woodroffe

# Swap Meet

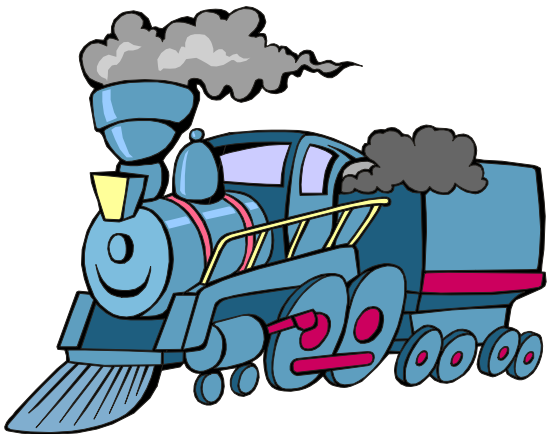
This month heralds the annual return of the club's popular Swap Meet in the "Train Hall" of the Museum on Wednesday, November 18th at 7:30 p.m.

Bring your unused gear and sell or trade it. Show up early; tables and location are "first come, first served." There are electricity outlets available but you must supply an extension cord.

Great deals are possible but remember that it is "Caveat emptor—buyer beware!" All are welcome: advertise this event to your friends and neighbours. Hope to see you there.

**7:00 : Setting up your table**

**7:30 : Open to the general public**



## **NOTICE**

Stations can be swapped but not locomotives!



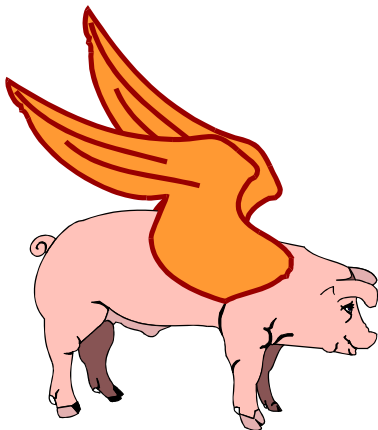
- Bring complete programs with their original disks and/or CD roms and manuals
- Make sure what you are selling is working
- Check contents of boxes before bringing them



## Discovering the OPCUG at the Computer Fair last month

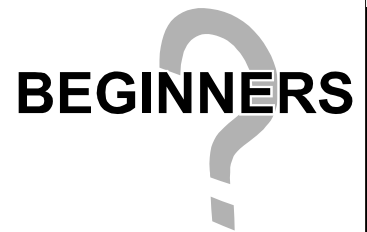
The fair was a great success for our representatives on the OPCUG stand. No, the three members were not turning their backs on the photographer, just busy discussing club benefits

with prospective members. Could you guess their names? Quite a few people stopped by for information, questions, and generally all the stuff that makes the atmosphere at the "wing sig" after our general meetings.



## Fly West for Questions and Answers!

The "Good Times" cafe at Shoppers City West, Baseline and Woodroffe, for chicken wings and a drink after the General meeting: may be the best and most informative SIG meeting of the evening.



## Hardware Update

# Zip Revisited

The February 1998 issue carried a review of Iomega's Zip drive. This article will update that information, add the latest (I hope) news and discuss the infamous "Click of Death."

### New items

Iomega's latest additions to the family are the internal IDE and the Zip Plus. The internal drive can now be purchased by end users. Some local dealers offer it for less than \$100: a far cry from its competitors. Initially, it was an OEM only product: to get one you had to purchase it as part of a system from a supporting dealer.

Still, to use it as a boot disk, it requires either BIOS support or the ZpA utility from

[www.blueskyinnovations.com](http://www.blueskyinnovations.com).

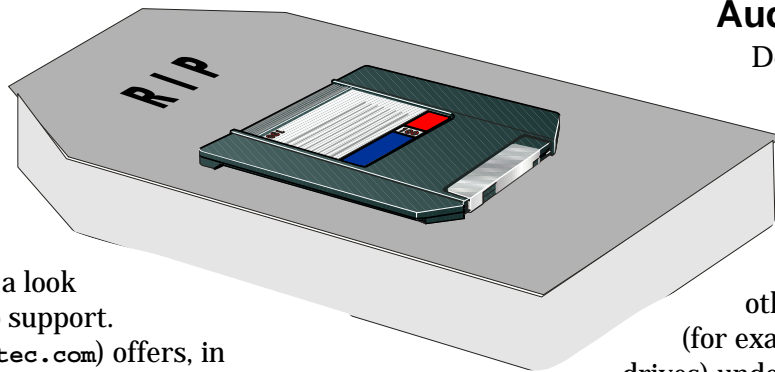
If you have a recently constructed computer, have a look in the BIOS for possible Zip support.

Norton Utilities ([www.symantec.com](http://www.symantec.com)) offers, in conjunction with Iomega, an alternate means to create a system boot disk. Norton Zip Rescue is a free download ([Prenzr.exe](#)) from Iomega's ftp site.

### Parallel and/or SCSI?

The Zip Plus was intended to connect to either a parallel port or a SCSI host adapter. After a lot of problems, Iomega rewrote the operating instructions; basically, use the supplied data cable without exception or accessories. Details are available from Iomega's web site,

[www.iomega.com](http://www.iomega.com). Iomega's file transfer site, <ftp://ftp.iomega.com/pub/english>, offers the latest drivers and utilities. Here, files are free—download charges excepted. This site has posted a series of new versions of Zip drivers and utilities for Windows 9x and NT. Most of these files are dated 2 Sept 98 and include: [Ioware9x.exe](#) (tools), [Backup.exe](#) (1-Step Backup and Restore) and [Copy9x.exe](#) (Copy Machine). The previously mentioned Norton Zip Rescue is also available from this archive.



### Audio, Jaz, etc.

Download RecordIt

([Recordit.exe](#)) to record CD-ROM tracks or your voice (using a microphone) directly to a Zip disk.

This site also supports other Iomega products

(for example, Jaz and Ditto

drives) under a variety of operating systems, including: DOS, Windows 3.1,

Windows 9x, Windows NT, OS/2, and MacIntosh.

It appears that cross-platform users can now obtain driver and utility support for all platforms at no additional cost.

For users of 1-Step-Backup prior to the 2 September release, be certain that you have installed the

*Continued on next page*

Zip revisited (Continued)

upgrade patch file (`1stepup.exe`) before you attempt to use this utility.

Zip (and Jaz) aficionados must visit the “unofficial, alternate Iomega Zip and Jaz site”: [www.juip.com](http://www.juip.com). Here you will find current information for Zip, Jaz and Ditto tape drives. Many drivers and tools are archived here: not only for PCs but also for Macs. These programs are the same as those provided by Iomega. Recently, the site has added support for the Syquest SparQ and SyJet drives: again, both PC and Mac. For those who want to use their Iomega drive with both platforms this site may offer another location to obtain the drivers for the second platform. Iomega, until recently, charged for a Zip disk loaded with the drivers for the second platform or a replacement Zip disk with the tools for your operating system if you unfortunately deleted your sole copy.

The invaluable resource at this site is the message boards (for all the products identified above—PC and Mac). Post a description of your problem and you will receive a pertinent response: often within an hour. Compared to Iomega, this is a “steal”—you must always have your credit card at the ready to get help from Iomega.

## Click of Death

Iomega's infamous “Click of Death (CoD)” has produced widespread publicity for Iomega—all of it negative. This annoyance (to put it mildly, I am sure, if you are affected) is discussed in considerable detail at [www.juip.com](http://www.juip.com).

Another site is the “unofficial Click of Death” web site at [www.thirdeyesp.com/jatin/iomega](http://www.thirdeyesp.com/jatin/iomega). This site also offers a message board; however, it is interested solely in CoD issues. You can also listen to a recording of the CoD sound.

Steve Gibson (of Spinrite fame—a disk drive utility that diagnoses and repairs faults) has a website at [www.spinrite.com](http://www.spinrite.com) that provides a wealth of technical information to answer: “How does a Zip drive work?” He has researched the CoD extensively and has posted the results of his research into this problem on his website. Without reprinting the data, he has made two important observations. First, the rate of return (due to CoD) is very significantly higher with the more recent production runs. This suggests that quality control, from ramping up production to meet the demand, has suffered. Second, the CoD is not the problem, per se; it is the symptom. The sound is made by the drive heads attempting to locate the tracks that are required for drive initialization. The problem is not the click; instead, it is the defect with the media that initiates the futile hunt.

There is some immediate good news and a promise of light at the end of the tunnel. Gibson has offered a freeware utility (`TRIP.exe`) that checks the health—or lack—of Zip and Jaz media and the drives themselves. This program is non-destructive of data and runs in Windows 95/98 or Windows NT 3.5/4/5. The testing performed is more comprehensive than the utilities presently installed on your system provide (accessed through My Computer... right-click the Zip drive icon... select Properties... Tools). This file is also available for download from the PUB II files area.

Ultimately, Gibson intends to produce a utility (not free) that will detect and return to service the majority of CoD disks. Incidentally, this utility will be useful on many brands of high capacity, removable media hardware. There will remain, however, a small residual of drives that do have actual mechanical problems: these cannot be repaired (at least not with this software).



*Written any good article lately?*

*We would like to publish it!*

## Digital camera image tweaking <sup>e</sup>

Are you interested in improving the images from your digital camera? Of course, most bundled software is eminently capable of removing "red eye." However, there are other, more subtle, considerations that might influence the upgrade software that you purchase.

Digital images from a camera often require sharpening and tonal corrections. "How much?" does have practical limitations: excessive sharpening, for example, can cause halos, colour fringing, aliasing (the "jaggies") and mottling (especially of large areas of skin due to the loss of smooth tonal gradations). Excessive colour correction can wreak havoc with skin tones since the weakest colour—yellow—is predominant. Cameras tend, for technical reasons beyond the scope of this article, to have most of the noise (non-information image artefacts) resident in the blue channel.

What is required is a colour model that separates the image detail from the colour information. "Where can I find that?" you ask.

Many image editors have added a colour model called CIELAB (variously LAB or  $L^*a^*b^*$ ) that provides the outlined paradigm. The "L" channel holds the image detail: essentially a black-and-white photograph. The "a" channel holds red-green data (lighter areas have red

predominant whereas the darker areas have green preeminent); the "b" holds yellow-blue information (similarly, lighter equals more yellow and darker means more blue).

Using this model you can selectively sharpen the black-and-white image (the "L" channel) without the annoying side-effects that would result from sharpening the full (colour) image. You might also want to remove some of the blue channel ("b") noise with the judicious application of a smoothing filter.

Of course, this article merely scratches the surface and considers

only a single aspect of image editing. However, if you are in the market for more sophisticated software, do consider the advantages of adding this alternate colour model to the standards: RGB and CMYK.



## OTTAWA PC NEWS

*Ottawa PC News* is the newsletter of the Ottawa PC Users' Group (OPCUG), and is published monthly except in July. The opinions expressed in this newsletter may not necessarily represent the views of the club or its members. Deadline for submissions is four Saturdays before the general meeting.

### Group Meetings

OPCUG normally meets on the first Wednesday in the month, except in July and August, at the National Museum of Science and Technology, 1867 St. Laurent Blvd, Ottawa. Meeting times are 7:30 p.m. to 10 p.m.

### Fees

Membership: \$25 per year.

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Up to 33.6 kbps V.34 ..... 228-0665

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To be announced

### OS/2 SIG coordinator

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### Paradox SIG coordinator

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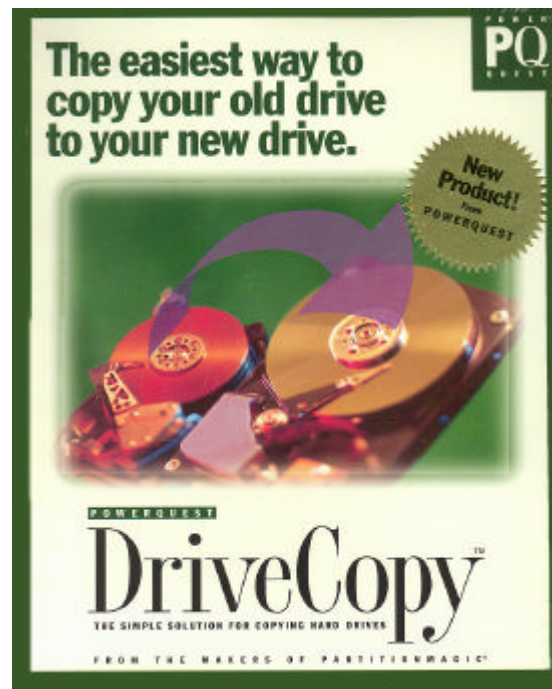
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## Club News

## Prizes by Mark Cayer

At the October 7th meeting Douglas Doran-Veevers and Paul Valcourt went home with T-shirts supplied by St. Bernard software.



Michel Perron won Drive Copy software.

Thanks again to our prize suppliers.

## Club life

## Reuse, recycle

Bring your old computer magazines, books, or any other computer paraphernalia you want to GIVE AWAY to the general meetings, and leave them in the area specified. If you don't bring something, you may want to TAKE AWAY something of interest, so look in on this area. Any item left over at the end of the meeting will be sent to the... recycle bin.

