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OPCUG reflections on the past millenium (or year anyways) *by Bert Schopf*

Nineteen Ninety-Nine was a memorable year for everyone with a computer. We all breathed a collective sigh of relief when the world did not end on January 1st as so many doomsayers predicted. Few of us, thankfully, had negative results from the digital transition to Y2K.

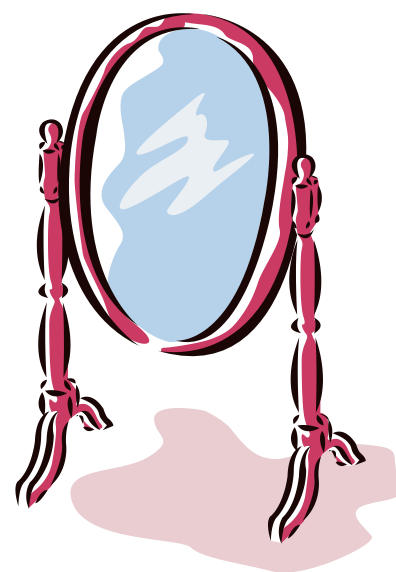
It was also a memorable year for the Ottawa PC Users' Group — we held some excellent events and we further polished our public presence. We had a successful “bring a guest” membership campaign; the brainchild of **Jocelyn Doire**. I received lots of positive feedback from members who enjoyed our General Meeting speakers over the past year, among them:

- ♦ CITO President **Peter Leach** who spoke on future directions in computing for all users;
- ♦ **John Stephens** of the Focus Centre who showed the latest in digital camera technology;
- ♦ Talking computers by **Serge Perras** (Newtech Home Automation) and Corel's Dragon Naturally Speaking;
- ♦ **Heather McAffee** from Corel who spoke on CorelDraw 9 from a graphic artist's perspective;
- ♦ **Jon Coxworth** of Intel who gave us insight into the then-new PIII chip;
- ♦ **Susannah Kilroy** of Vorton Technologies who set us up in computer karaoke;
- ♦ and of course, our own **members** who made a night full of presentations in June.

Thank you to those who have spent their time and effort in promoting our club and helping other users. I could go on about the many OPCUG members and others who have made significant contributions to the club, but it would fill the whole newsletter. You know who you are. Thank you so much.

This year I pass the torch onto a new President. I am honoured to have served this club and fondly recall the fantastic people I've worked with on the Board of Directors and among the OPCUG membership.

Here's to the next millenium of PC users!



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Next meeting: **MONDAY, February 7th, 2000**

Annual General Meeting

OPCUG business related to the Annual General Meeting will be conducted at the beginning of the general meeting and followed by our guest speaker.

Please note that February's general meeting is scheduled for February 7 which is a Monday and not a Wednesday, our usual meeting day.



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.



Coming Up



Corel Linux

In the investment community Linux is hot!

In the computer community, “the little penguin that can” has steadily increased its presence. A strong local presence by Corel has placed Linux in the spotlight — not only a new operating system but also a major office application suite.

You are invited to hear **Wendy Lowe**, Linux Specialist with Corel Corporation, who will present the Corel Linux Operating System to OPCUG on Monday, February 7th. Come and see the OS that is lean, mean and could be on your machine!



Calendar

Meetings	Date	Time and venue
OPCUG General Meeting	Monday, February 7th: Corel Linux Operating System & Annual General Meeting (see above) Wednesday, March 1st: MP3 Recording with Mark Bell	7:30 p.m. - Auditorium of the 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?)	March 1 st , after all the other SIG's - All questions, be they serious or not	“Good Times” cafe at Shoppers City West, Baseline and Woodroffe

ZipMagic 2000 by Irwin Friedman

In the early days of computing, permanent (hard drive) storage memory was a precious commodity and programs were written as tightly as possible to fit the storage limitations. Zipping a file or program (compressing it to take less space) was originally developed to save this storage space.

Nowadays, with increasing temporary memory and hard drive sizes increasing rapidly, programs and data files are getting bigger and bigger, and shortly seem to fill even the large hard drives. Thus zipping is as important as ever. Moreover, it is still necessary to compress files to fit on floppy disks, to reduce the size of e-mail attachments, and to reduce the size and time to download files from the Internet. ZipMagic 2000 is one of the newest and possibly the best of the zip-unzip utilities.

ZipMagic 2000 comes on one CD-ROM disk with a 128-page instruction manual. The manual is quite complete, but suffers from the common failing of appearing to have been written by a technically competent person who does not know how to zip his own writing. It is repetitious in the extreme. With this caveat, the manual is easy to follow. The program installed easily, with no problems, onto my 3-year old Pentium-100 MHz computer that is still running the original version of Windows 95.

Quickstart guide

The manual starts with a mercifully brief primer on file compression, and then highlights ZipMagic 2000. Like Windows itself, ZipMagic 2000 offers three or four ways to do each task. One method uses a ZipWindow graphical interface — familiar to everyone who has used Windows — with buttons and pull-down menus. A second method uses a series of Wizards to perform the various tasks. A third method (which I think is the simplest), involves just pointing at a file and right-clicking the mouse. A ZipMagic tab appears on the drop-down menu, which then cascades into submenus that perform all the major functions with a click. A fourth method allows you to use a series of hot-keys. Finally, for those who are still in love with DOS, you can run the program from a DOS window using DOS-based zip commands.



Paradigm

One of the main features of ZipMagic 2000 is its ability to allow zipped files and folders to look and act like standard Windows folders. Since the utility runs transparently in the background, this allows you to view and perform all operations on zipped folders the same way one would on regular Windows folders: merely, for example, open, run, drag and drop, move, copy, delete and rename. Zipped folders and files are

distinguished by the .ZIP extension after the folder's name. You can create an empty zip folder, and then just by moving other files into this folder they will automatically be zipped. Likewise, you can take an existing folder with a number of unzipped files in it and compress (zip) the folder and all files at once.

You can extract (unzip) any file from the folder and move it to any other location. Or you can unzip the entire folder and convert all its files to standard (unzipped) files. All of these operations are easy. In addition to file operations, ZipMagic 2000 allows you to make self-extracting executable files; create and span large Zip files on multiple diskettes; zip and e-mail compressed files as attachments; start, stop and schedule Internet downloads; recover from download interruptions and restart the download at the interrupted point; update the program from the Internet; read twelve different archive formats; and view many different graphic formats (using ZipMagic 2000's very effective viewer) from inside the zipped file without opening the application.

ZipMagic 2000 allows you to use zipped files without unzipping, because the program works transparently, at the level of the operating system, in the background.

However, the company states one caveat: "Files, folders and programs that are modified and used frequently should not be zipped. Zipping and unzipping frequently can increase the chance of corrupting them or making them otherwise unreadable." In order to test this statement, I decided to zip two of the programs that I use most frequently. I use Microsoft Works as my word processor, data base and spreadsheet, and a Works detailed spreadsheet for our family budget and financial information. I zipped this whole program and all its data and found that running the program was somewhat slower than normal; at least one dialogue box showing recently-used data files would not work. It was easy to work around this dialogue box, but it was disturbing. Finally, I often play the game Freecell. When I zipped this (and other games) into a single zipped file, upon opening the game a dialogue box appeared asking: "Are you sure you wish to exit the game now, yes or no?" Clicking on the yes button started the game! Aside from these two instances the programs worked normally. In both of the foregoing cases unzipping the files and programs returned the operation to normal. You should follow the manufacturer's recommendation.

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Conclusion

With the exception of the above caveat, I think that ZipMagic 2000 is an excellent zip utility, with a wide range of features. It is easy to use and is designed for all levels of expertise. It is made by Mijenix/Ontrack at 800-645-3649 or www.mijenix.com. The cost is \$70 (Cdn estimated).

[Editor's note: This article is from the January 2000 issue of the Sarasota PC Monitor, the official monthly publication of the Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc., Copyright 2000.]



Club News

Great Computer Swap Wrap-up

January 15, 2000 was the Museum of Science & Technology's 5th Annual Great Computer Swap. They saw 1492 visitors and 67 vendors buy, sell and trade second hand computers, equipment and software in a "garage sale" setting.

Thanks to participants who staffed the OPCUG table: **Mark Cayer, Norm DaFoe, Jill Hyde-Clarke, Bob Gowan, Dunc Petrie, Ted May, Bert Schopf, and Chris Seal.**

Rogers presented information sessions on their internet cable service and Bloom Microtech offered demonstrations showing visitors how they could build complete systems and install multimedia devices.



Software Review

Adobe Acrobat 4.0

by Gary Schweinshaupt, Sarasota PC Monitor

Earlier there were several competitors in the portable document race, but all are gone except Adobe Acrobat (the premier tool for publishing paper documents electronically), due primarily to the PostScript engine that drives this now pervasive product. PostScript is the language of commercial printing and most other forms of printing, including the Web! This new version of Acrobat now emphasizes Web tools and workgroup collaboration.

Major new features

The best new features in Version 4.0 are the ability to capture Web pages in a PDF (Portable Document Format) file and a digital signature infrastructure. Adobe also has improved Acrobat's annotation features that enable you to lift and reuse text easily from PDF files.

In previous versions of Acrobat you had to customize several settings—including compression levels, resolution and spot-color information—within Acrobat Distiller to optimize your PDF files for different output methods. Acrobat 4.0 simplifies that process by offering one-click creation of PDF files that are carefully calibrated for specific uses: on-screen viewing, content proofing, and commercial press output. Now you can create a PDF file in seconds by dragging any supported file (Microsoft Office, Frame-Maker, WordPerfect, HTML, ASCII text documents, and several graphic formats) onto the Acrobat desktop icon.

Output

The Print Optimized option can create "digital masters" by providing highly accurate representations of your original publications, and it's perfect for creating PDF files that will be output on color lasers, inkjet printers or digital copiers.

The Press Optimized option will preserve all of the advanced information needed for delivering your PDF files to a service bureau for prepress work and final output on high-end devices such as imagesetters. Press-optimized PDF files are larger than other PDF files, but they're significantly smaller than the native files that make up an original document (for instance, a page-layout file like Adobe PageMaker that includes all the required fonts and graphics).

In addition, Acrobat 4.0 lets you create custom PDF settings and share those settings with associates and clients—a great way for service bureaus or large workgroups with special PDF requirements to standardize the way that they create PDF files.

Annotation tools

Acrobat 4.0's enhanced annotation tools will make you wonder how you ever put up with having associates and colleagues review documents on paper or in native file formats. Paper-based reviews often require expensive duplicating, composites and time-consuming delivery; then you have to deal with hard-to-decipher handwritten notes and attachments. Native files offer equally irritating drawbacks: they're big, don't display correctly (unless the reader loads the right fonts and has access to linked graphics), and they offer no easy way to insert comments without changing the layout.



Acrobat changes all that; now it is standard practice in many businesses to conduct document reviews using PDF files—they are small, easy to email and preserve the exact layout of your original document, including fonts.

Acrobat also offers many annotation tools designed specifically for a reviewing process. All of the annotations you can create with these features are printable and remain on their own layer (they don't change the content of the PDF).

You can place electronic sticky notes anywhere on a PDF file and enter comments of any length. This is an ideal means for more extensive, content-oriented annotations. Sticky notes can be: identified by author; imported and exported; quickly removed using the annotation manager; sorted by author, page number, and date; moved around on the page; or closed, hidden and consolidated into a summarized PDF report for at-a-glance review. Additionally, using the new text-annotation tool, you can now type shorter comments directly on the page.

You can highlight important sentences, paragraphs and illustrations or strike through incorrect text. Highlights can be color-coded and/or combined with sticky notes to indicate the contributions of different reviewers; strike-throughs can be similarly placed.

New Mark-up tools include the pencil, ellipse, rectangle, and line tools—they let you “draw” directly in any PDF file to make proofreader's marks, circle misspellings and emphasize other annotations. Also new, is the digital equivalent of a traditional rubber stamp; this feature lets you stamp proofs with any remark (such as “Approved,” “Confidential,” or “Draft”), with comical graphics, or with any stamp you create (any PDF file can become a rubber stamp).

Preflighting

PDF 1.3 (the version of the portable document format introduced with Acrobat 4.0) now delivers several features and enhancements that will help you preflight your documents and deliver them to service providers for trouble-free final output.

Prior to version 1.3, PDF had many characteristics that made it well suited to print-production work. PDF files can contain all the elements of a document (text, graphics and fonts) in one discrete, compact file: making them easy to transport and manage. Since PDF files produced by Acrobat Distiller have already gone through a PostScript interpreter, they output more reliably than native files and can be viewed on screen for easy preflighting. It is becoming very common for a commercial printer/typesetter to say, “Just give it to me as an Acrobat file!”

PDF files created with Acrobat 4.0 also support the robust print-quality enhancements found in Adobe PostScript 3- the latest generation of the industry-standard printing technology used for printing over 85 percent of the world's publications. PostScript 3 contains several new operators that allow you to print faster and more accurately than ever before. For instance, PostScript 3's idiom-recognition feature allows Distiller to take radial and linear blends in Adobe Illustrator, QuarkXPress, Macromedia FreeHand and CorelDRAW! files and upgrade them to PostScript 3 Smooth Shading to produce the smoothest blends possible at any resolution. PostScript 3's masked-images feature greatly improves the accuracy and smoothness of a clipping path by using an image rather than a vector path for masking. Masked Images also make it possible to mask by a particular color.

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And the list goes on

Several other enhancements to Acrobat 4.0 are directed specifically at the graphics professional. Printing capabilities include: reverse-order printing, selectable print areas and printing to PostScript Level 1, 2, or 3 devices. (N-up printing is also available now if you install the new Adobe 4.2.4 PostScript printer driver included in the package.) Also, the size limit of pages is now 200 by 200 inches.

Acrobat 4.0 lets you select your color management system and embed color profiles in your PDF files. You can use the same ICC color profiles found in all of Adobe's industry-standard applications to embed and manage color directly in PDF files.

Acrobat 4.0 offers advanced font features; the base 14 fonts (Courier, Helvetica, and Times — and their bold, bold italic, and italic counterparts — plus Zapf Dingbats and Symbol) can be embedded in the document. If Acrobat cannot embed a font you can choose either an on-screen warning or automatic cancellation of the job. In addition, Acrobat 4.0 lets you ensure that only embedded fonts will print (equivalently-named fonts in the RIP of your output device won't be substituted).

Another thing that makes PDF well suited to print-production work is its support for late-stage touch-up work. With Acrobat's touch-up text tool, you can easily make minor text edits, even at the latest stages of prepress work. A neat new feature lets you edit images or graphics right in PDF files—just click on an image or graphic and Acrobat automatically launches Adobe Photoshop or Adobe Illustrator. With third-party plug-ins, like PitStop from EnFocus, you can use text- and path-editing tools to make fixes directly in the PDF file. A range of specialized PDF editors are available from third parties for high-end, high-volume printing.

There are many other features:

- ♦ Acrobat 4.05 paper-capture tool (makes it easier than ever to create PDF files from paper documents)
- ♦ batch-processing features let (automatically apply security options to PDF documents; set up consistent defaults for opening and viewing every document in a collection; generate thumbnails for convenient PDF sorting; and optimize PDF file directories for the Web
- ♦ add bookmarks, Web links and controls that trigger sounds, movies and effects
- ♦ create full-text indexes using Catalog (searchable with the Acrobat Search)
- ♦ create and post Web-ready forms with pop-up boxes, buttons and text fields that viewers can fill in online
- ♦ convert existing paper-based forms to PDF for use online
- ♦ restrict (using passwords) who can open, alter or print a PDF; select text and graphics; change notes or field forms
- ♦ distribute via network server, the Web, or email
- ♦ multiple language support (includes embedding Asian-language fonts in PDF files)

Application awareness

I installed PDFMaker 1.0 for Word 97 on my system during installation. This allows you to create PDF files from a menu item inside Word 97. This macro will automatically generate special features: PDF bookmarks from the first 50 document headings (formatted with the default “Heading” styles); PDF Weblinks from URLs in the document text; PDF links from cross-references, page numbers in tables of contents, figure numbers, links to other documents, footnotes, and endnotes; PDF notes from Word 97 comments; PDF article threads from Word 97 text boxes and PDF document information based on Word 97 document properties settings. PDFMaker can be used with either PDFWriter or Acrobat Distiller; however, to take advantage of the automatic linking features listed above you must use it with Distiller (Distiller Assistant must also be installed).

Conclusion

Adobe Acrobat has become the standard for reviewing and sharing information and is rapidly becoming the default in print production. Over 35 million copies of Acrobat Reader have been downloaded from Adobe's Web site!

[Editor's note: we use PDF files to upload the newsletter to the printer and a PDF version (with colour enhancements) is delivered online to subscribers.]

Installation was uneventful, but it did take up 62MB on my hard drive. Be certain to uninstall manually the old version of Acrobat before installing Version 4.0. If you expect the user's manual that comes with the product to be helpful, forget it! However, there is a wealth of information on the website www.adobe.com/acrobat and on the CD-ROM. The retail price is about \$330 (Cdn), upgrades are about \$150 (Cdn).

[Editor's Note: Copyright 1999. This article is from the June 1999 issue of the Sarasota PC Monitor.]





DUNC PETRIE'S CORNER

BEGINNERS



System info

DLL and Driver Versions — Part 2

by Dunc Petrie

Last issue I provided some tips to shake loose the secrets of assorted system files. Unfortunately, this involved manually scanning large segments of the file to locate the information.

To the rescue: an online newsletter from Lockergnome pointed me towards a uniquely useful utility: TextExtract.

Since computers are well-suited to performing drudge jobs, assign this task to your machine while you take a break.

TextExtract (www.netcomuk.co.uk/~fangorn/ultimathule/) is a freeware program that will scan a file (or batch of files) for letters, numerals and text strings (the default parameters can be user-defined). The source file could be a corrupted word processor file or any system file (for example, .COM, .EXE, .DLL, or .VXD). The results are saved in a user-specified file that you can examine at your leisure.

A couple of suggestions: download the full installation routine (TextExtract.zip, about 670 KB) instead of the much smaller TextExtractFiles.zip (about 27 KB). Otherwise, you will likely face a variety of error messages since the installation routine contains essential auxiliary files that may not be present on your system. Your system must also have the Microsoft Visual Basic 6 runtime files installed. If not, a link is provided on the Ultima Thule site.

For me, this certainly beats the dreary chore of examining file-after-file for that elusive source and version information. Give it a try.

Oh, yes, send the author an email to say thanks for his efforts!



Hardware Utility

HWInfo

by Dunc Petrie

Want a quick inventory of the hardware in your system? Go to Start / Run / and type: HWINFO [space] /UI. Make sure that the space and the switch (/UI) are present. After a short delay you should have a window that displays a listing of the drivers and the Registry entry that is associated with each driver.

This utility (mine, under Windows 98, is located in C:\Windows) supplies another part of the puzzle. Unfortunately, it may not be supplied with every version of Windows.



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. 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.

Mailing Address

3 Thatcher St., Nepean, Ontario, K2G 1S6

Web address

[Http://opcug.ottawa.com/](http://opcug.ottawa.com/)

Bulletin board—the PUB II (BBS)

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

Chairman

Bert Schopf bert@blackbirdpcd.com 232-8427

Treasurer

James Fridrich jimbo@magma.ca

Secretary

David Reeves dlreeves@iname.com 723-9658

Membership Chairman

Mark Cayer cayemar@statcan.ca..... 823-0354

BBS Sysop

Chris Taylor ctaylor@nrcan.gc.ca via PUB II

Newsletter

Duncan Petrie (editor)

gdpetrie@accglobal.net..... 841-6119

(Mr.) Jean Vaumoron (layout)

vaumojav@magi.com 731-7847

(Mr.) Jocelyn Doire (distributor, electronic version):

Jocelyn.Doire@opcug.ottawa.com

Publicity

Chris Seal cseal@istar.ca..... 831-0280

Facilities

Bob Walker skywalk@iname.com..... 489-2084

Beginners' and Windows SIG coordinator

Duncan Petrie gdpetrie@accglobal.net . . 841-6119

Fox SIG coordinator

Andrew MacNeill andrew@aksel.com 851-4496

Fox SIG web page: www.aksel.com/foxsig

Internet SIG coordinator

Bob Gowan gowanb@inac.gc.ca

OS/2 SIG coordinator

(Mr.) Jocelyn Doire; please contact via PUB:

Jocelyn.Doire@opcug.ottawa.com

OS/2 web address: <http://os2.ottawa.com>

Paradox SIG coordinator

John Ladds laddsj@statcan.ca..... 951-4581

Graphics SIG coordinator

(Mr.) Jean Vaumoron

vaumojav@magi.com 731-7847

Directors without portfolio

Terance Mahoney terancep@cyberus.ca... 225-2630

(Mr.) Jocelyn Doire Jocelyn.Doire@opcug.ottawa.com

Paying the bills

by Dunc Petrie

Sometimes truth is stranger than fiction. Ignore Y2K! Electronic paralysis for a significant segment of online users occurred due to simple human failure. Resolution did not require any remedial programming although a programmer was a pivotal character.



During the Christmas festive season poor old Microsoft forgot to pay one of its bills. Consequently, Microsoft's Hotmail (email) network — with 52 million (give or take) active users — ground to a halt sometime on Christmas Eve. Hotmail depends upon Passport.com which authenticates the usernames and passwords of Hotmail members. When the domain name was “yanked” anyone who tried to access a mailbox on Hotmail's network received an error message. Microsoft, despite its ample familiarity with concepts like licenses and upgrade fees neglected to renew that registration for the princely sum of \$35 (yes, those are “big” U.S. dollars) with the domain name registrar, Network Solutions.

A programmer, desperate to re-activate his dormant email accounts, paid the overdue bill with his personal credit card. To further embarrass “Bill” the kind stranger is a Linux programmer! Boy, those people in past-due accounts are keeners. Imagine, remaining on the job on Christmas Eve on the off-chance of settling one more account.

Fast-forward a few hours and the warp in cyberspace had mended. Microsoft has stated that it will reimburse its benefactor — any bets on the size of the cheque?

