



OTTAWA PC NEWS

Vol. 17 number 3

The newsletter of the Ottawa PC Users' Group

March 2000

Having PUB II come to you *by Chris Taylor*

Did you know you do not have to go to PUB II to be able to take part in discussions going on there, pick up an electronic copy of the newsletter, or find out who is presenting at the next general meeting? You can have PUB II send it to you as long as you have an internet e-mail address.

PUB II hosts a listserver that allows you to send and receive messages to any of the conference areas on PUB II. Additionally, there are some text files that have been made available for such things as meeting announcements and the membership form.

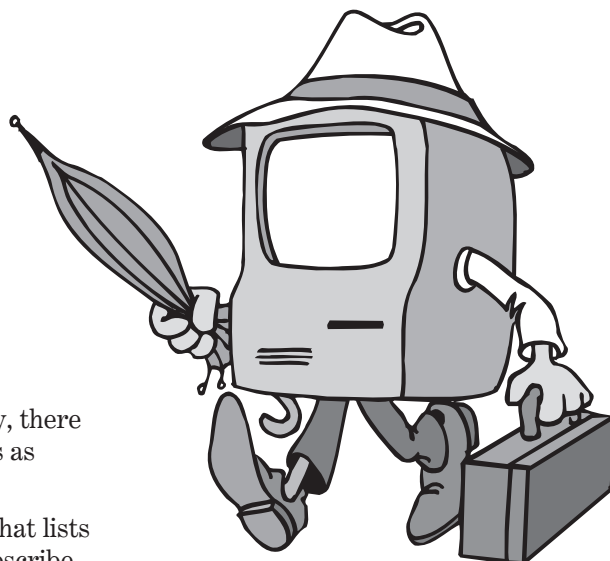
To start with, pick up a copy of the text file that lets you know what lists and text files are available as well as how to subscribe and unsubscribe from the various lists. Send an e-mail to listserv@opcug.ottawa.com. Leave the subject blank and in the body of the message put: `get help`

Within a couple of minutes, you will receive a reply from the listserver that will provide you with all you need to know about using the listserver.

Once you subscribe to a list, you will receive a copy of any message posted to either the listserver or the corresponding conference area on PUB II. As well, you can send messages to the list and they will go to all other subscribers of that particular list. A copy of your message ends up on the conference area on PUB II so those who use PUB II directly to participate in discussions can see it.

There are a few lists that are one-way. You can receive from them but cannot post to them. The Announcements list is designed so the Board of Directors can inform you of upcoming events, important news, last minute changes to meetings due to things like ice storms, etc. There are two lists designed for distribution of the electronic versions of the newsletter. Through them you can receive either a plain text or Adobe Acrobat version of the newsletter.

Try out this service and let me know what you think. If you have any problems or questions, see me at a general meeting or send me a message on PUB II or an email to CTaylor@NRCan.gc.ca



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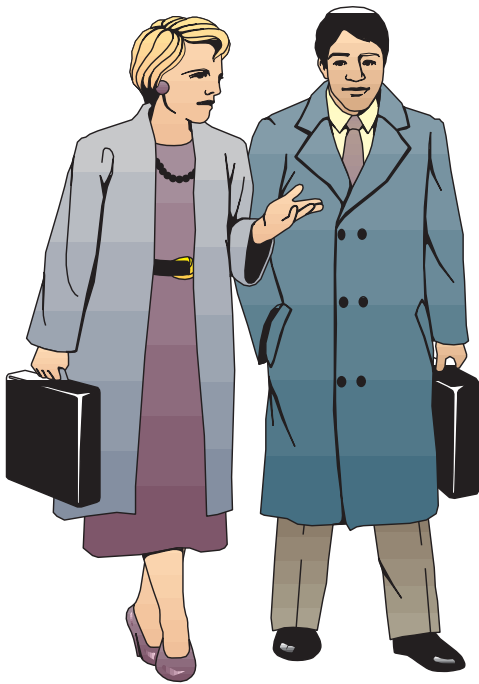
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Next meeting: **WEDNESDAY, March 1st**



Membership contest — Bring a guest to OPCUG!

All club members are encouraged to bring along a guest to one of our upcoming meetings and SIGs. We hope to introduce to the OPCUG computer enthusiasts who might not otherwise consider attending a meeting and you might win a valuable prize!!

Our 2nd annual membership drive contest will cover guests you bring to the April and May general meetings and winners will be announced at our June meeting.

Watch for full contest details in the next issue of this newsletter.



Calendar

Meetings	Date	Time and venue
OPCUG General Meeting	Wednesday,, March 1 st :	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
Internet SIG (I-SIG) 	Wednesday,, March 1 st	First Wednesday of each month, immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting at the Museum of Science and Technology

Computer revenge by Ken Fermoye

The following was forwarded to me some weeks ago, and I just had to share it with you. It expresses frustrations we all share at times. I tried without success to backtrack and find the author. So I will just credit it to that that famous writer, "Anon." If you are, or know of, the actual author, please write me at kfermoye@earthlink.net so I can give credit where credit is due! [Editor's note: some references have been "Canadianized" for our local audience].

I want to hurt my computer. I want to buy a software program that, when run, causes my computer to suffer grievously, though not permanently. When my screen freezes or turns blue, I want a special button I can push to make the CPU start squealing like a motherboard.

I want a device that stores an electrical charge in my telephone. For every minute I spend on hold waiting for technical support to answer, the charge would increase in intensity. When the guy from tech support finally answers, the electrical bolt of energy would be discharged into him. This should not affect my ability to hear what's going on at the other end of the line, of course. And a special function would allow the volts to double every time a tape-recorded message urges me to continue holding. "Your call is important to us," the featureless voice always claims.

I want my phone to be outfitted with a translation program which will reconstitute this irritating reminder into the truth: "Actually, we already have your money, so we couldn't care less about you. Our technical support department consists of two college kids, both of whom are busy playing Doom. Eventually, one of them will come on the line, but it will be the one who doesn't speak English."

I want my modem to sense when my PC has committed an "illegal function" and issue a warrant to arrest Bill Gates. When my system crashes and I lose a file that has taken me more than an hour to create, I want someone from the computer company to come out and retype it for me.

I don't understand why new, "upgraded" software creates files that cannot be read by old, reliable software with the same name. Is there no one in the computer industry who has noticed that word processor files all look alike once they are open? Why can't 6.0 recognize a 7.0 file? It's all just words, isn't it? There should be a rule that when software engineers buy a new car, their old cars should cease to function. If they don't understand why this is happening, they should call me and I will explain it to them.

How come when my computer catches a virus, I'm the one who misses work? I want to know why my printer always jams on the last piece of paper or the last sheet of cheques. When this happens, it makes me want to put sandpaper into the manual feed and print the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

I am really tired of hearing about all the horrible things that will happen with the Y2K problem: sewers will regurgitate, all of my fillings will return to the dentist, my high school reunion will be held in French, etc. Why doesn't anybody ever ask these computer programmers how in the



world they didn't know the year 2000 would follow the year 1999? Software engineers are supposed to be pretty bright people — what did they need — a memo or something?

I recently bought a program that is supposed to tell me if my computer files are Y2K-compliant. The program won't work because — get this — my CD-ROM player is too old (I bought it 34 months ago). The manufacturer doesn't sell an "updated driver." Thus, to find out if my computer is Y2K-compliant, I need to buy another computer.

I want to know what good is a Web search engine that returns 324,909,188 "matches" to my keyword. That's like saying, "Good news, we've located the product you're looking for. It's on Earth."

I want to know why, when I had a tiny hard drive, my operating system was virtually crash-proof and took up so little space. My new operating system is five times the size of my original hard drive. With every "upgrade," it seems to grow 75 percent. That's as if every time your mother-in-law came to visit she weighed another 500 pounds. Now I've found out that my PC no longer "recognizes" my floppy drive. How could they not recognize each other? They live together!

Please understand: I don't hate my computer. I just want to hurt it every once in a while.



How's your memory? *by Terry Mahoney*

First generation

When Henry Ford first started manufacturing cars, he gave everyone a choice of colours, so long as it was black.

Computer memory used to be just about this simple. RAM (Random Access Memory) was DRAM chips (Dynamic RAM) which were soldered onto the motherboard — later they were plugged into sockets. They did vary in size and speed, but mostly they were those little black things. Occasionally, you found them on an expansion card that was plugged into the motherboard.

Not incidentally, motherboards were huge in those days, covering most if not all of the surface area of a desktop case. One of the limiting factors on memory was available space. If you needed more memory, you purchased 9 or 18 chips and plugged them into the motherboard or added an expansion card and plugged them into it. There were only a few rules to obey. Chips in a bank should be the same size, speed and from the same manufacturer. You needed to fill a whole bank at a time.

Chips for PC's were generally 64k x1 or 256k x1, so for a 64 kilobytes of memory with parity checking you needed nine 64k chips. How many of you can remember the original IBM AT with it's 128k chips? When you looked at them they were actually two 64k x1 chips soldered together.

Second generation

With the 386 and Windows the demand for memory grew. It wasn't practical to put more of the existing chips on the mobo. Expansion slots were becoming more heavily used. SIMM's, Single Inline Memory Modules, were the memory of choice. This memory was like a small expansion board with 36 connectors. It was usually installed in pairs in small banks of slots on a motherboard with a 16mhz ISA bus.

In the meantime Compaq's and IBM PS2's had expensive proprietary memory (this memory was from two to four times as expensive per megabyte for a relatively modest performance advantage). This still applies to laptops and servers.

Third generation

As performance requirements increased with the 486, new and varied memory types were added, driven in part by the introduction of the 33 megahertz PCI bus. Chips seemed to have topped out at 60 nanosecond access times. In order to support increased data flow requirements the SIMM bus was increased to 72 connectors. Fast Page Mode SIMMs were introduced and then EDO, Extended Data Output SIMMs. SIMM density was increased to support 32 megabytes per SIMM.

Pentium II

The Pentium II and the 66mhz PCI bus called for more memory innovation. SDRAM DIMMs were introduced. Synchronous Dynamic RAM in a Dual Inline Memory Module The edge connector was again expanded to 168 pins. The SDRAM supports access times as low as 8ns at 66mhz.



SDRAM for the 100mhz bus looks the same as the 66mhz SDRAM, but is rated for the higher clock speed.

Performance tips for computers with these types of RAM include examining the alignment of the memory with the motherboard and checking that the performance numbers for it match between the banks.

Future

Now we have SDRAM rated for the 133mhz bus and SDRAM rated at 200mhz for AMD's Athlon. Memory has become more tightly coupled with the CPU, with its own bus operating at ½ the speed of the CPU. Intel is introducing a new RDRAM (Rambus Dynamic RAM) proprietary standard. As it is only licensed to certain manufacturers it is expensive. It uses new RIMM modules and significantly, empty slots must be properly terminated. The only support for this memory at present is the Intel i820 Camino chipset. RDRAM is presently available in PC600, PC700 and PC800 modules. These are rated for 300mhz, 356mhz and 400mhz respectively.

There is an open standard competing technology called SyncLink Dynamic RAM.

Who can guess what will follow?

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So What?

Memory expansion has become more complex. If you don't know what your computer requires and you don't have motherboard documentation, you are at the mercy of your reseller. If you don't know what you are buying on your motherboard you may be doomed to flakey or slow performance. High speed RDRAM is closely connected to the CPU and very

sensitive in its own right. It is likely that the average user should not attempt to upgrade his own computer with these memory types. You not only risk the RAM, but your CPU is also at risk.

Measure your system performance before and after any memory upgrade. If the performance slips after the upgrade, get an explanation. Remember that different versions of your operating system are optimized for given amounts of memory. You may need additional memory for effective use of large files, but it may not improve performance overall.

© SYNERSYS, February 3, 2000

I-SIG News

iCraveTV — what's next?

by Bob Gowan, I-SIG Coordinator

At the February I-SIG meeting there was a brief discussion about "a Canadian innovation" on the Web called iCraveTV:

<http://icravetv.com/>

This site was launched at the end of November 1999 and offered "24 hour a day, live streaming of complete over-the-air television broadcasts on the Internet". The stations broadcast were those freely available to Toronto-area viewers.

It required a multimedia-capable computer, RealPlayer (either G2 or Plus) plug-in (free download), and a relatively fast internet connection (at least a 64k-modem, ADSL or cable recommended). You could "park" the small TV screen window off in the corner and continue working or playing on the remainder of their computer desktop. This allowed computer users to "keep in touch" with the latest news, soap operas, game shows, sporting events, etc. as they worked or played.

American broadcasters immediately screamed foul but I don't believe there was much initial reaction from Canadian broadcasters. iCraveTV claims what they were doing was totally legal in Canada — I've heard our law does not forbid re-broadcast as long as content is unchanged (including ads). If I recall correctly, there was a notice on their Web site which you had to acknowledge reading, saying the service was intended only for Canadian audiences.



This story "made the front pages" when the NFL sought and obtained an injunction preventing iCraveTV from streaming the SuperBowl. At this point, everyone else jumped in to stop their signals from being streamed. At the time of writing, the Web site is still there, but when you click on the "Watch TV" or "Listings" icons, you receive the following message: "Sorry, access to stations and listings is not available at this time." The "Newsroom" content has not been updated since initial launch press release, so if you want to find out more about this story you'll have to track it through the online magazines and news services.

Is this the end of story?

If you can't use a service company to pick up your favourite TV show, perhaps you can "re-broadcast" it yourself. Yes, someone has already thought of that.

If you have Windows 95/98/NT, an ATI TV tuner card and Windows media player, check out "TVFromHome", a 1.290K Freeware download developed by TVFromHome, and available from CNET:

<http://1.digital.cnet.com/cgi-bin1/flo?x=dmKmoKmEuwYhAmum>

I don't have a tuner card. If someone does, and would like to try this out, please join us at the next I-SIG meeting or post a message on the I-SIG listserve. We'd be interested in hearing what you think about it.



If you can't watch your favorite TV show when it airs, try taping it using the Internet with TVFromHome and a TV tuner card. You can easily relay a television signal from your home to any PC that has an Internet connection. TVFromHome provides free video and audio streaming services using the latest compression techniques; even with a 56K modem, the picture and sound quality should still be acceptable for viewing. After installing a server on your PC, TVFromHome enables you to transfer your favorite shows over the Internet — all you need to do is leave your machine running. You can even change the channel using TVFromHome's slick remote control.

— Source: CNET Shareware Dispatch (Feb. 9, 2000, Vol. 6, No. 5)

War games *by Ken Fermoye*

Remember the movie *War Games*? It's a movie where a kid, while looking for games, penetrated the NORAD's computer and ended up starting a global thermo-nuclear war. The movie was fiction and happened lots of years ago, but in many ways, this is happening right now, for real.

Today the kid is called Jon Johansen, a 16-year-old from Norway. NORAD in this scenario is the MPAA (Motion Picture Association of America), which includes companies such as Sony, Universal, MGM, Disney, Warner and others.

Like the movie, the whole thing started rather simply, all he wanted is to read a DVD disk on his Linux machine. Unfortunately the industry had no drivers for it and were not interested to offer one. So, like in so many other times, the Linux community got together and did one. Now you may think that the movie industry would be happy to have some more potential customers, and without having to pay anything for the development of the driver nor to have to support it, right? Wrong!

The problem is that MPAA have encrypted the disk, so that it could not be copied and be played in other countries in which it was sold (the same disk cost differently depending on the country, for example it cost more in Europe than in America). Probably they wanted to avoid what happen with the MP3, an audio format that can easily be distributed over the internet.

Now, you would think that an international organization could make an almost impenetrable encryption scheme, but, they did not! Far from it. Jon Johansen and two others (anonymous) were able very quickly to break it, and offered the program, called DeCSS, on his web site, which was reposted over and over on the internet.

Well, the movie industry did not like it, not at all. They got Jon Johansen arrested and interrogated for seven hours, seized his computer and his cellular phone, got the Santa Clara County Superior Court to block 72 distributors of DeCSS, and got a lawsuit against three web site owners in New York.

One of the reasons why the industry sued the hackers (the good kind here) is that they can now copy the DVD disk. Well, that's plainly not true for many reasons:

- ♦ tools already exist for doing that;
- ♦ DeCSS is not meant to copy disk but to play them;
- ♦ DVD are huge so copying on hard disk or even transferring them over the internet is impractical; and
- ♦ blank DVD disks cost more than a DVD with the movie on it, not counting the DVD writer itself.

This is not the first time the movie industry went to court; one of the most notable one is when they wanted to make illegal the recording of movies on video tape, fortunately they lost their case, which means that now we can record movies on a VCR. BTW, there are other court cases happening right now, such as iCraveTV and MP3 [See page 5 — Ed.].



Since December 1999, a huge effort has been mounting to fight for the rights of Linux users, including such big guns as the Electronic Frontier Foundation (<http://eff.org>), a long time defender of free speech over the internet, the Linux community and countless "hackers". But so far, the judge does not seem to agree very much, saying basically that it is illegal to have a program that breaks encryption. See below for the full text of his decision so far.

This court case raises many, many interesting questions: Can a company deny the use of legally purchased goods? Can the legal system stop a program from spreading over the internet? Can a company forbid the purchase of goods from a different country? How the internet will effect the legal system? What will be the place of encryption in the future? And a lot more.

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Here is a quote from Jon Johansen that, I think, illustrates well the purpose of this fight, and why it could influence your every day life:

“All the press attention has been quite a strain. There have been times where I disconnected my phone just to get some peace. I can’t remember doing much homework last week. I do not regret posting DeCSS. It’s very important that we stand up against these multibillion corporate interests who seek to dominate with their proprietary standards. It’s in consumers’ interest to be able to make a free choice from whom or where to buy products. Last, but not least, I’ve never really “fought one” for Linux. I guess this is my way of getting back at Gates for those GPFs;-)”

— from <http://slashdot.org/article.pl?sid=00/02/04/1133241>.

Here are some links for more information:

<http://www.opendvd.org/>

<http://www.cnn.com/2000/TECH/ptech/01/25/dvd.charge/index.html>

Court papers:

http://eff.org/IP/Video/MPAA_DVD_cases/20000202_ny_memorandum_order.html

http://www.dvd-copy.com/legal/universal_vs_Reimerdes-Memorandum_Opinion-020200.html

for an extensive list:

<http://www.dvd-copy.com/legal/index.html>

An interview with Jon Johansen and his answers to some questions:

<http://www.cnn.com/2000/TECH/computing/01/31/johansen.interview.widg/index.html>

<http://slashdot.org/article.pl?sid=00/02/04/1133241>



Software Review



Personal firewalls revisited

by Chris Taylor

In a recent edition of the *Ottawa PC News*, I wrote a review of BlackICE Defender. Since that review, a new product has come onto the market from ZoneLabs called Zone Alarm 2.0. I guess they took a page from the dBase book that debuted with dBase II. Steve Gibson, of SpinRite fame, says, “My fingers are crossed, the dust is still settling and the paint is still wet.

It’s too early to tell for sure, but it looks like Zone Alarm 2.0 (ZA) will be the perfect and ultimate personal firewall for the typical Internet user! And it’s 100% free for the individual user!” He goes on to say; “I am using it right now — and nothing else! — on my personal system, and so far I love it! I think ZA combines the best of all worlds and eclipses every other firewall ever created.”

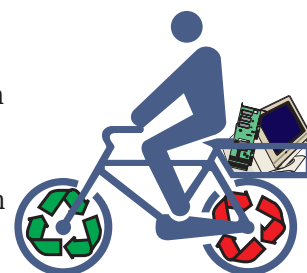
You can read more about what Steve thinks at <http://grc.com/zonealarm.htm> and you can download the program from the ZoneLabs site (<http://www.zonelabs.com>) or PUB II (ZONALM20.EXE in the Miscellaneous Applications file area.



Club life

Reduce, 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.



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. 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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1999 Annual Financial Report

by James Fridrich, Treasurer

Cashflow Report for the Year 1999

INFLOWS	Bank Interest	385.00
	Membership Dues	<u>4800.00</u>
TOTAL INFLOWS		5185.00

OUTFLOWS	Bank Charge	89.16
	Bulletin Board System	2660.08
	purchase of stamps	44.31
	mailing cost-Other	9.84
	Meeting Costs	465.17
	Membership Costs	233.41
	Newsletter	3504.60
	Promotion costs	23.00
	Telephone Expense	<u>761.24</u>
TOTAL OUTFLOWS		7790.81

OVERALL TOTAL **(-2605.81)**

Expense Report for the Year 1999

Expense	%	Amount
Newsletter	44.98	3504.60
BBS	34.14	2660.08
Telephone	9.77	761.24
Meeting Costs	5.97	465.17
Membership Cost	2.99	233.41
Bank Charges	1.14	89.16
Mailing Cost	0.69	54.15
Promotion Cost	0.29	23.00
Total Expenses	100.00 %	7790.81

ASSETS at December 31, 1999

TOTAL Cash in Accounts	10924.94
GIC	<u>5000.00</u>
TOTAL ASSETS	15924.94
LIABILITIES	0.00
OVERALL TOTAL	15924.94