



# OTTAWA PC NEWS

Vol. 17 number 5

The newsletter of the Ottawa PC Users' Group

May 2000

## OBITUARY

### Terance Mahoney

OPCUG Chairman Terry Mahoney passed away peacefully at home on March 21 after years of battling diabetes.

Terry has been a member of the Ottawa PC Users' Group since it began. He has served on the executive (back when it was called that), as a SIG coordinator, a newsletter contributor and most recently as the Chairman on the current Board of Directors. He was one of the club's most involved members.

He had a passion for computing and always wanted to make things simpler for those struggling with making computers do what they wanted them to do. He truly embodied the club motto of "users helping users".

Those of us who knew him will miss him. Rest in peace, Terry.



## HELPING USERS

### Computer coach needed *by Bert Schopf*

I got a call the other day from *Citizen Advocacy* about a "citizen" that needs some computer help.

Avtar Uppel is a paraplegic who is trying to get by in this world with a significant disability. He has a computer and one usable mousing hand, but what he needs is a little coaching on general Windows use and internet access.

Avtar lives within walking distance of the Museum and can be reached at 736-1548. Please call if you have a little free time and can help him out.



## INSIDE

### Features / reviews

|                                        |   |
|----------------------------------------|---|
| <i>Making Win NT/2000 work for you</i> | 6 |
| <i>Diskeeper 5</i>                     | 7 |

### Club news — Club life

|                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| <i>Calendar</i>                | 2 |
| <i>Dialling into PUB II</i>    | 2 |
| <i>OPCUG financial state</i>   | 3 |
| <i>Bring a guest to OPCUG!</i> | 5 |
| <i>Reduce, reuse, recycle</i>  | 8 |

### SIGs

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| <i>I-SIG news</i> | 4 |
|-------------------|---|

Next meeting: **WEDNESDAY, May 3<sup>rd</sup>**

## TD's e-banking via your PC

**C**ome to the OPCUG May 3<sup>rd</sup> for a presentation on e-banking by representatives from the Toronto-Dominion Bank. Learn about electronic banking services and how they can work for you.



## Dialing in to PUB II

by Chris Taylor, System Administrator

**U**se of the dial-up lines to access PUB II has dropped over time. We are now averaging around 5 calls per day on the dial-up lines. With a cost of about \$600 per year for each of the dial-up lines, the Board of Directors decided it would be prudent to drop one of the two lines. Since line 1 had always been the only number published (if line 1 is busy, calling in on the line 1 number will automatically chain through to line 2), we had been planning on dropping line 2.

Just as I was about to contact Bell and get them to drop the second line, I started receiving complaints from people who were having problems connecting reliably on line 1. It got so bad that sometimes it was impossible to connect at all. When connections were possible, frequently the speed was quite a bit lower than normal. When I tested the line with a phone, I could hear static.

I contacted Bell and they sent out a repair man. Unfortunately, when he checked the line, it was fine. He checked everything from the pole into the house but could find nothing wrong.

In my own testing over the next few days I found I could always connect to either line, but the connect speed on line 1 was generally about 10%-20% lower than line 2. Since Bell only guarantees their lines to be voice grade, they will not do anything to fix the problem unless there is a problem that is apparent when making a voice call.

The Board of Directors decided it would be best to drop line 1 rather than line 2. Therefore members who use the dial-up service on PUB II should change their dialers to access line 2 - 228-8951. You can do this immediately. When it seems like most people have switched to using line 2, I will have Bell drop line 1.

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### Calendar

| Meetings                        | Date                                                                                       | Time and venue                                                                                                         |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| OPCUG General Meeting           | Wednesday, May 3 <sup>rd</sup> ; E-commerce with the Toronto-Dominion Bank (see above)     | 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 - Corel Bldg 1600 Carling Ave.                                                                                 |
| PIG SIG<br>(or is it WING SIG?) | May 3 <sup>rd</sup> , after all the other SIG's<br>- All questions, be they serious or not | "Good Times" cafe at Shoppers City West, Baseline and Woodroffe                                                        |
| Internet SIG<br>(I-SIG)         | Wednesday, May 3 <sup>rd</sup> :                                                           | First Wednesday of each month, immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting at the Museum of Science and Technology |

# Our club's financial state by Jocelyn Doire

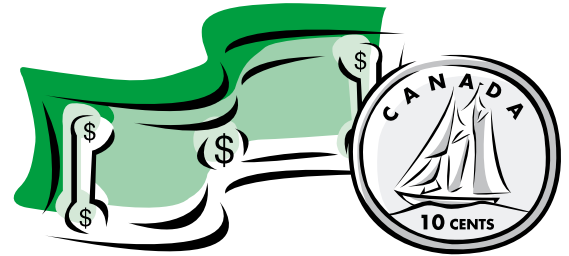
If you have seen the financial report in the March newsletter, you have probably noticed that the club is operating at a deficit. The main reason for this is the decline in membership from close to 1000 a few years ago to about 220 currently. This decline has reduced our revenues, yet the costs of operating the OPCUG have remained more or less constant. Despite this we still have enough money in reserve to keep going for several years. The Board Of Directors (BOD) has already taken a number of steps to reduce costs and is reviewing further actions to balance the books. Here are some of the options we considered during our February and March 2000 meetings:

- ♦ Email the newsletter only
- ♦ Cut the number of newsletters in half (erase deficit)
- ♦ Insert paying ads in the newsletter
- ♦ Charge \$25 to receive paper newsletter, \$20 if not
- ♦ Charge \$30 to receive paper newsletter, \$25 if not
- ♦ Offer the paper newsletter only at meeting
- ♦ Promote paper newsletter opt-out option
- ♦ Have prize raffles at some meetings
- ♦ Ask for donations from members
- ♦ Photocopy the newsletter instead of printing it
- ♦ Reduce the number of phone lines for the PUB II
- ♦ Change the meeting night to avoid conflict with Linux UG
- ♦ Ask for donations from companies, presenters, etc.

The two main expenses are the newsletter and PUB. After much discussion, we decided to do three things:

- 1) Remove one of the two phone lines used by PUB. This will save the club about \$600 per year, and given more and more people access the PUB through the internet, we felt it should have little adverse effect.
- 2) Have raffles whenever we have a prize to offer, at a cost of 1\$ for one ticket and 2\$ for three tickets. Obviously, we will continue to have the free draws for the prizes offered by presenters.
- 3) Promote the use of the electronic mailing of the newsletter. This is something everyone can do: subscribe to NewsletterTxt or NewsletterPDF using our mailing list server listserve and cancel the paper version. This will not only save money to the club, but also helps to save some trees! Here's how to do it:

To receive the newsletter by e-mail, send a message to [listserv@opcug.ottawa.com](mailto:listserv@opcug.ottawa.com) with the text "subscribe Newslettertxt" or "subscribe NewsletterPDF" (without the quotes) in the body of the message. No subject line is required.



To cancel the paper newsletter, talk to Mark Cayer (he usually is at the back of the conference room, handling membership cards) or send an email to [cayemar@statcan.ca](mailto:cayemar@statcan.ca).

If you have successfully subscribed, you will receive a confirmation by email a few minutes later.

You can easily cancel your subscription by sending "unsubscribe Newslettertxt" or "unsubscribe NewsletterPDF" (without quotes) to [listserv@opcug.ottawa.com](mailto:listserv@opcug.ottawa.com). If your email address changes, first send an unsubscribe using your old email account, and then send a subscribe using your new email address.

Part of the decision was also to keep the price of membership the same, to send the paper newsletter without any extra fees to all of those who want it, and to maintain the same level of services. I'm sure you will agree that not many organizations can claim such a feat.

The club has an open policy, which means that anyone can examine the books or come to the BOD meetings. If you want to help, you're more than welcome (we are actively looking for a chairperson ready to coordinate presenters for the meetings, if you feel you have the qualifications, please let us know!).

If you have more questions, you can send me an email at [jocelyn.doire@opcug.ottawa.com](mailto:jocelyn.doire@opcug.ottawa.com) or to Chris Taylor at [ctaylor@nrcan.gc.ca](mailto:ctaylor@nrcan.gc.ca), and simply talk to anyone of the BOD, and we will gladly try to help you as best as we can.

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# What's happening at I-SIG? by Bob Gowan - I-SIG Co-ordinator

The April meeting of the Internet SIG featured some lively discussion on Internet security, adware and the club's web pages. It started with a guest's question about how to protect his computer from intruders through his fast Internet connection. I-SIG members

recommended the Gibson Research "Shields Up" site (see <http://www.grc.com>) for testing your current vulnerability. Several I-SIG members stressed the

importance of having a firewall when using a fast connection like DSL or cable and this topic has been covered in recent OPCUG newsletters and articles from the newsletter on Black Ice Defender and Zone Alarm are posted on the Software Reviews page (see [http://206.47.37.30/public/reviews/soft\\_rev.htm](http://206.47.37.30/public/reviews/soft_rev.htm)) of the OPCUG Web Site. I-SIG members provided some personal impressions of both of these products. Those who had installed the free Zone Alarm were generally pleased with this product. Links to web sites for these and other products discussed at the I-SIG are provided on the I-SIG web page (see [http://206.47.37.30/public/isig/i\\_sig.htm#discuss](http://206.47.37.30/public/isig/i_sig.htm#discuss)).

The April I-SIG also include considerable discussion about potential dangers from DLLs installed by many widely-used freeware applications, including the likes of Go'Zilla and CuteFTP (available on PUB II; see also I-SIG's Software Archives at [http://206.47.37.30/public/isig/i\\_sig02.htm](http://206.47.37.30/public/isig/i_sig02.htm)), and several hundred others. These products incorporate adware (bannerware) software developed by Aureate Media (now called Radiate). Privacy advocates are concerned about the amount and type of information compiled by Radiate.

The initial warnings were that, even if the application that installed the "spying" DLL was removed, the DLL would remain, and could still send information about what you're doing. Radiate claims that the only information it collects is that provided by a voluntary survey and that the statements that prompted the concern were taken out of context.

I suggest you take a good look at the information available and decide for yourself whether there's a risk or not before you go blowing away some utilities you've found useful. Several Hoax Lists say there is nothing to worry about:

- ♦ The McAfee Virus Library - Virus Hoax Center (see [http://www.mcafeeb2b.com/asp\\_set/anti\\_virus/library/hoaxes.asp](http://www.mcafeeb2b.com/asp_set/anti_virus/library/hoaxes.asp)) lists the Aureate Trojan as a Hoax (see [http://vil.mcafee.com/dispHoax.asp?virus\\_k=98516](http://vil.mcafee.com/dispHoax.asp?virus_k=98516)).
- ♦ The Computer Virus Myths home page (see <http://kumite.com/myths/>) lists the Aureate DLLs Trojan as "a big myth" (see <http://kumite.com/myths/myths/myth036.htm>).



**Shields UP!**

- ♦ ZDNet's PC Week Online columnist Bill Machrone (see <http://www.zdnet.com/pcweek/stories/columns/0,4351,2478459,00.html>) says of the Aureate Trojan, "... the concern is understandable. But unjustified."

And of course, Radiate has it's own page, "Addressing False Rumors and Hoaxes about Privacy" (see <http://www.radiate.com/privacy/false rumors.html>)

Nonetheless, Radiate does provide a utility that, it says, will remove its DLLs (see <http://www.radiate.com/privacy/remover.html>). This will of course, disable the apps that originally brought these DLLs to you, and at least one I-SIG member is "reluctant to trust them into removing all traces of their 'spying' DLL", given their "track record" of creating something that remains on your system. The Gibson Research site (see <http://www.grc.com>) also provides a "spyware detection and removal tool" called Opt Out, that it claims may also reduce Internet Explorer and Outlook Express crashes and improve the stability of many programs (compromised by the DLL), without disabling the program itself. Some I-SIG members confirmed that running Opt Out had improved the performance of their systems.

**OptOut**

No doubt the saga will continue....

The April I-SIG also saw a spirited discussion of the OPCUG's web pages! The I-SIG has been encouraged to take over the ongoing tasks of maintaining and upgrading the web site. If you would like to participate in a "Dream Web Team", and help build a better site for OPCUG, post a message to I-SIG's message area, or e-mail me directly at the address listed on the back page of the newsletter. Experience is not necessary - the I-SIG has an online HTML course that you

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can follow, and our “members help members” - the main criteria is an interest in learning web page building and in contributing to your club.

Several I-SIG members showed interest in investigating how to provide searchable databases for their personal web sites. Those interested should indicate so by posting a message to the I-SIG message area.

We will likely continue discussion of some of these topics at the next I-SIG meeting and until then, on the I-SIG message area. The next meeting will also include discussions of ISP services, or lack of service. You may wish to check out the ISP Ratings forum provided by one of our members at: <http://www.egroups.com/group/ispratingsottawa/info.html>. We will also discuss E-Groups, in general, and the “Electronic Post Office”. The latter, “E-POST” is a web-based service offering a single location for Canadian consumers and businesses to send and receive mail, pay bills, access services, find information and interact in a secure, private and easy to use environment. Check it out at:

<http://www.epost.ca/main/english/index.shtml>.

As usual, other topics posted on our message area, and those raised at the meeting can be

expected to make for another interesting meeting in May.

If you have not yet joined the I-SIG Listserve, you can do so by sending the message “subscribe Internet-SIG” (without quotes, in message body) to “[listserv@opcug.ottawa.com](mailto:listserv@opcug.ottawa.com)” (without quotes). You can easily cancel your subscription by sending message “unsubscribe Internet-SIG” (without quotes, in message body) to “[listserv@opcug.ottawa.com](mailto:listserv@opcug.ottawa.com)” (without quotes). If you change your e-mail address change, first unsubscribe from the listserve using your old e-mail account, and then subscribe using your new e-mail address.

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## CLUB NEWS

### Meeting Coordinator wanted

**T**he OPCUG needs someone to arrange for speakers for our general meetings. You will be supplied with a database of past presenters and current leads. This position should be of interest to anyone who enjoys dealing with people in the computer industry and organizing events. If you are interested, please contact Bert Schopf or David Reeves.

## CLUB NEWS

### Bring a guest to OPCUG!

by Bob Gowan

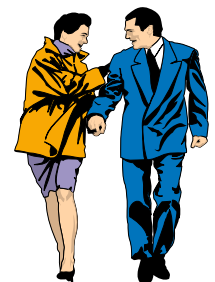
**T**hanks to all those club members who invited one or more of the nine guests who were signed in at the April general meeting. Each guest earns their sponsoring club member a ticket for the draw to be held at our June meeting. The two guests who joined OPCUG since then have earned an extra three tickets for their sponsor.

All club members still have a good chance to win by bringing one or more guests to the May meeting. Here's how it works:

When you arrive at the meeting with your guest, search out our contest registrar at the door. Sign-in your guest and you will automatically be entered for the big draw. Every guest you sign-in gives you one chance to win. Note please, that immediate family members living at the same address are always welcome to attend, but sorry, they do not get you a ticket for the draw.

While we don't want you to pressure your guests to become members, if they do take out an OPCUG membership by the end of the May meeting, you receive an extra three tickets. Your guests are invited to attend both the main presentation and the SIG sessions afterwards.

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# Making Windows NT/2000 work for you

by Chris Taylor

**D**on't ever threaten to take away my command prompt. There are many procedures that are either simpler from a command prompt or simply impossible to do from a GUI. I don't think it is a coincidence that the NT Resource kits contain a huge number of command-line utilities.

One of the frustrating things about working in console (character) mode under DOS or Windows is dealing with output from programs that normally gets sent to the screen. While you can use the > symbol to send output from a console application to a text file, there are actually two output text streams — Standard Out (STDOUT) and Standard Error (STDERR). It is up to the program to determine which output text stream to use.

To see an example of how this can cause you problems, from a DOS prompt (or a CMD prompt in Windows NT/2000), type;

```
DIR abc.zy*
```

You should see on-screen something like;

```
C:\>DIR abc.zy*

Volume in drive C is HARD DISK
Volume Serial Number is 473A-1501
Directory of C:\

File not found

                165,318,912 bytes free
```

Now try redirecting the output to a text file with the command;

```
DIR abc.zy* >err.txt
```

On screen, you should see;

```
C:\>DIR abc.zy* >err.txt
File not found
```

The contents of err.txt will be something like;

```
Volume in drive C is HARD DISK
Volume Serial Number is 473A-1501
Directory of C:\

                165,318,912 bytes free
```

What has happened is that the DIR command sent most of the output to STDOUT, but sent the message "File not found" to STDERR. Only the STDOUT got redirected to the text file.

NT and Windows 2000 allow you to specify which text stream you want to redirect to a file. Instead of using just >, you can use 1> to



force the redirection of STDOUT or 2> to force the redirection of STDERR. Going back to our example;

```
DIR abc.zy* 1>stdout.txt
2>stderr.txt
```

will cause the message "File not found" to be redirected to stderr.txt and the rest to go to stdout.txt

There are times when you really want both STDOUT and STDERR to be redirected to the *same* file. Batch file often loop through a series of commands and use the double redirection symbol >> to add to an existing output file. If you output to different files for STDOUT and STDERR, you can have a very difficult time matching up particular error messages with non-error messages. You can use the "&1" command to redirect the output for STDERR to STDOUT and then send the output from STDOUT to a file. Back once more to our example;

```
DIR abc.zy* 1>out.txt 2>&1
```

will cause all output to end up in the single file out.txt. Now *that's* what I always expected to happen when I redirected screen output to a text file.

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## Diskeeper 5 *by Chris Taylor*

**W**hen Microsoft was looking for a defragging tool to include with Windows 2000, they went calling on Executive Software. On every Win2K CD-ROM you will find a manual defragmenter based on Executive Software's technology. When I went looking for a defragging tool, I looked no further than the full-blown version of Diskeeper 5.

While Executive Software is best known as an NT defragger, it has been in the disk defragging business since before NT. They produced a defragmenter for Digital's VAX VMS. When Microsoft brought out NT, Executive Software was the first to defrag NTFS disks. It was probably inevitable that Symantec came along with Norton Speed Disk for NT. Diskeeper kept its lead with network scheduling and the ability to defragment paging files and the Master File Table (MFT). Besides Windows NT and Windows 2000, Diskeeper now works on Windows 95 and 98.

I last looked at Diskeeper when it was in the closing months of v3.0. It did a decent job of defragmenting my disk. Version 4.0 added the ability to defragment paging files. While this might have been a big advance technically — NT locks paging files for exclusive use — I didn't find this to be a major enhancement from a user point of view, so I stayed with 3.0.

I did have one problem that v3.0 did not solve — a fragmented Master File Table. The MFT is one of the critical disk structures on an NTFS volume. Its function is roughly analogous to the File Allocation Table on a FAT partition, but it considerably more complex. When a disk is formatted as NTFS, NT creates the MFT and reserves some space for its expansion. If disk space gets tight, NT can create files in the space reserved for MTF expansion. This will result in a fragmented MFT as it expands around files. A fragmented MFT hurts performance. This is the biggest reason why you should never let an NTFS volume get more than about 75% full.

Another two factors that can cause MFT fragmentation are converting partitions from FAT to NTFS and resizing partitions with a utility like Partition Magic. The first factor occurs with almost every NT installation. During installation, even if you tell NT that you want your primary partition to be formatted NTFS, it actually creates a FAT partition. Later during the installation the partition gets converted to NTFS.

I had an NTFS partition that had been converted from FAT, resized a few times using Partition Magic, and filled to about 90% more than once. As a result, although my files had been defragmented quite well, the MFT was badly fragmented. My MFT was 20MB in size, with 83% in use. It had an astounding 565 fragments.

There are a total of three disk structures that even v5 of Diskeeper is unable to defragment while NT is running — paging files, the MFT, and directories (directories can be moved on-line with Windows 2000.) For all three, you must queue up jobs to be run prior to NT loading completely. Defragging these structures can take a long time and this is the one thing that I find inconvenient about Diskeeper. Unless you can afford to have your computer down for several hours, it is best to only queue up a single task for a single volume at a time, at least until you are familiar with how long it takes to handle your disks. Fortunately, these tasks are ones that should not have to be run too frequently.

Defragging these disk structures is one area where Norton Speed Disk has leap-frogged ahead of Diskeeper. Speed Disk does have the ability to defrag them while NT is running. Executive Software maintains that it cannot be done safely and takes the safer course of only doing it before NT loads fully. Although I have always had a strong tendency to trust programs with the Norton name on them, in this case I wonder. Microsoft has stated that this is not a safe operation. You can read an article at

[www.gcn.com/vol119\\_no6/enterprise/1510-1.html](http://www.gcn.com/vol119_no6/enterprise/1510-1.html) for more information on Microsoft's position.

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***Diskeeper can be run in an interactive mode any time you want. It can perform an analysis and report the level of fragmentation among files, directories, paging files, and the MFT.***

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## 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 three Saturdays before the general meeting. If you would like to contribute an article to *Ottawa PC News*, please submit it to the newsletter editor.

### Group Meetings

OPCUG 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. Meetings are 7:30 to about 9:00 p.m. and Special Interest Groups go until 10 p.m.

### Fees

Membership: \$25 per year.

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

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Up to 33.6 kbps V.34. .... 228-8951

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Diskeeper can be run in an interactive mode any time you want. It can perform an analysis and report the level of fragmentation among files, directories, paging files, and the MFT. A colour-coded map of your disk gives a good overview of how fragmented things are. A single click on a button starts the defragmentation process.

Computers should make life easier and interactively defragmenting disks is only slightly more exciting than watching paint dry. Fortunately, Diskeeper has a "set it and forget it" mode. Through it you can set a schedule for automatically defragging all your volumes in the background. You don't have to stop using your computer while it operates and you can set the priority the program runs at. By default, it runs at the lowest priority, which means it will not take CPU cycles away from your running programs. Once you configure the "set it and forget it" mode, you should never have to be concerned about file fragmentation again. The server version of Diskeeper has the ability to set the schedule on all Diskeeper machines on the network.

I tested Diskeeper 5 on Windows NT 4 with NTFS partitions and Windows 2000 with FAT32 partitions. It performed well on both platforms. I never felt it was impacting the performance of other running applications. The "set it and forget it" mode runs in the middle of the night and keeps the disks in good shape. I did not try to do precise measurements due to the difficulty in doing controlled tests. Personally, I did not notice a big difference in performance on either machine, but there have been tests performed by independent labs such as NSTL that have found some pretty dramatic performance boosts from defragmenting. I do feel more confident knowing my disks are defragmented.



## CLUB LIFE

## Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

Bring your old computer books, software, hardware, and paraphernalia you want to GIVE AWAY to the general meetings, and leave them at the table near the auditorium's entrance. *Please limit your magazines to publication dates of less than two years old.*

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.

