



OTTAWA PC NEWS

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The newsletter of the Ottawa PC Users' Group

November 2000

PRODUCT REVIEW

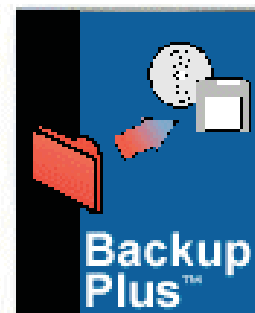
Reduce backup frustrations with Backup Plus

by Bob Gowan

We've all heard it — time and time again: "The question is not 'if' your hard drive will fail; it's 'when' it will fail". But what do we do about it? We may think about for awhile, even do a full backup of our system, once or twice. But do we keep it up, routinely, consistently? If you're anything like me, you've always found backups a real chore.

I certainly hadn't taken it very seriously until the first (and so far, only — knock on wood) time a hard drive crashed on one of my computers. Fortunately for me, I had done one of my infrequent backups not long before, and I was in the habit of e-mailing some the most important things to another site, so I didn't lose much. But it was a badly needed "wake-up call". For starters, I replaced my archaic, undersized and dreadfully slow tape backup system with a 1 GB removable disk (SyQuest SPARQ) system. As with similar systems (such as Iomega's Zip or Jaz, that I've also used), the SPARQ comes with the standard software utilities for backup and restore and for scheduling backups. This was, of course, a considerable improvement — more capacity and faster than the old tape system, and although the software was easier to use and more versatile than Windows Backup, I was still less than satisfied. I looked into other more versatile software but they were out of my price range.

Then I saw a review of Backup Plus, from Avantrix Inc., which was listed as WUGNET's Pick of the Week in February 2000. I discovered that this product has received similar awards from almost all of the most popular shareware sites. According to a more recent WUGNET reviewer, "Creating Backup Sets with Backup Plus is very easy. In fact, you'll be up and running in absolutely no time, as the program's interface is very intuitive." (Chris Spera; WUGNET; see <http://www.wugnet.com/csreviews/software/backupplus/>) If this was true, this Canadian product could be my solution to the backup dilemma. So I contacted Avantrix and offered to review the product. They responded promptly and provided both a review copy, and a copy for the club to raffle (more about that later), both on CD and with copies



AVANTRIX

*A copy of Backup Plus will be raffled at the November 8 meeting.
Tickets will cost:
1 for \$1 3 for \$2 10 for \$5*

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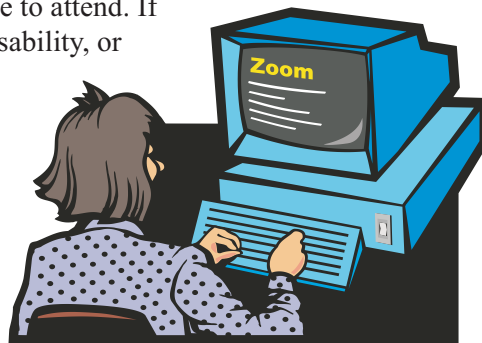
Next meeting: **WEDNESDAY, November 8th, 2000**

Computer technologies for the disabled by Chris Taylor

Andre Demers, Program Manager for the Adaptive Computer Technology Program at Environment Canada will be giving a presentation on assistive computer technologies for the disabled. The ACT program was set up to be a centre of excellence within the Government of Canada. Besides having some direct clients they support, the centre has developed a course to teach others about the technologies available and how to work with them. The course is open to IT people within the federal government who have disabled clients themselves as well as anyone else who would like to become more aware of the issues surrounding computing for the disabled. This approach of spreading the knowledge has been very successful.

Andre will give an overview of the types of technologies available to enable people who have disabilities related to vision, mobility, hearing, and more to use computer technologies more effectively.

As always, guests are welcome to attend. If you know of anyone with a disability, or someone who works with the disabled, who might benefit from this topic, please be sure to invite them along.



Meeting dates

As announced in the October issue of *Ottawa PC News*, the OPCUG general meeting night is now the **second** Wednesday of the month. We have the dates confirmed right through next June.

One minor blip: since Scouts Canada has booked the museum for the first two weeks in February the general meeting will be held on the **third** Wednesday (Feb 21).

As always, you can find out meeting information by visiting our Web site at opcug.ottawa.com, or by sending a message to listserv@opcug.ottawa.com. On the first line of the body of the message put;

get clubmeet

Meeting information is also available on PUB II if you are using text mode (dial-up, Telnet, or the Terminal Client if you are using Wildcat! Navigator). Check the Bulletins option on the main menu.



CALENDAR

Meetings	Date	Time and venue
OPCUG General Meeting	Adaptive computer technologies for the disabled (see above) Wednesday, November 8 th	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 (i.e., Wing SIG)	October 8 th — An informal social event held after the other SIGs are finished	"Good Times" cafe at Shoppers City West, Baseline and Woodroffe
Internet SIG (I-SIG)	Wednesday, Oct. 8 th from 9–10:00 p.m.	Come and join our discussions!
Developers SIG	Wednesday, Oct. 8 th from 9–10:00 p.m.	Immediately following the main OPCUG presentation the second Wednesday of the month, and occasionally at other locations in the region.

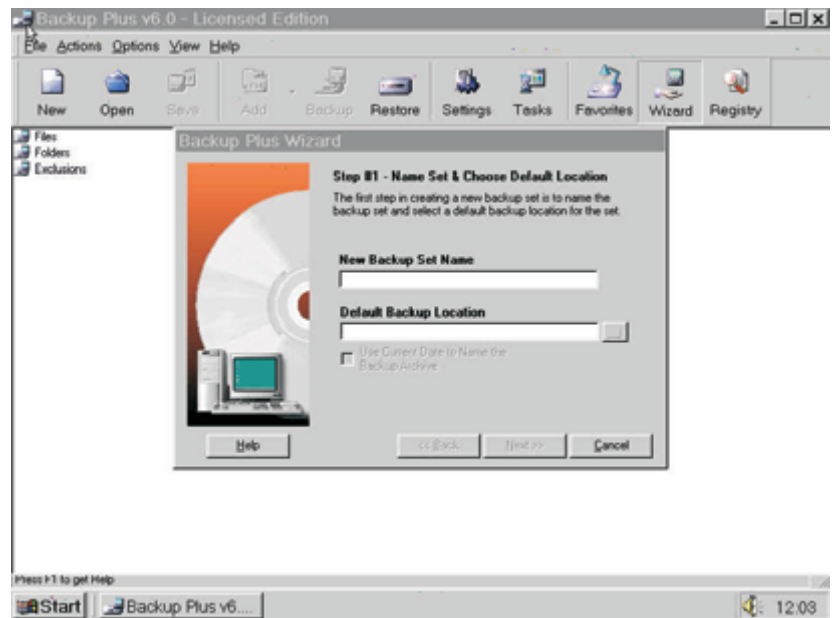
Please note that unless otherwise noted, SIGs meet at 9:00 p.m. (immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting).

Backup Plus ...continued from front page

of a printed manual. The product is also available via download from Avantrix's website.

The 77-page manual is well-arranged, easy to read, and seems complete. It is well-illustrated, with numerous screen captures, and many useful tips that stand out clearly in the text. System requirements, and what the software does, and doesn't do, are laid out in the first chapter. The second chapter provides concise descriptions of each of the menu options. There's not much detail provided here, but it does not seem needed. The next three chapters are the most lengthy, covering in detail the important steps of creating backup sets, determining backup settings, and performing the backup operations. For each step, all available features and choices are explained. The manual doesn't just tell 'what' to do, it also explains "why" or 'why not' make each selection. The sixth chapter, covering restore operations, is relatively short, but provides adequate detail and examples. The following chapter, which explains the task manager for scheduling timed backups and tracking backups, and the various steps and choices for each, is also one of the longer chapters. The final chapter, entitled "miscellaneous" contains the type of information often placed in appendices: FAQs and other common questions, Error Codes and company contacts. There is also a short index.

Backup Plus works with Win9x, Win NT4+, Win2K and WinME, and takes about 8 MB of disk space when installed. There were no installation instructions in my package, nor does the CD include a "readme" file. However, the installation program starts from autorun, and is straightforward and quick. With a few clicks and a system re-boot, you're ready to back up your hard drive to floppy disks or super disks, other hard drives or networked drives, most removable disk drives, including Zip, Jaz, Orb, SPARQ and magnetic optical (MO) drives, as well as CDR and CDRW drives. Backup Plus backups can be set up to span multiple disks, including CDs, provided a CD packet-writing software



like DirectCD (Adaptec) is used. Backup Plus does not write to any type of tape device, and because of current zip compression limitations, has a 4 GB archive size limit.

The main screen layout is clean and intuitive. A backup wizard is available to create basic backups in just three steps. In doing this, Backup Plus creates a text file, called a backup plus set (bps) file that contains all the information needed to create the backup. Thus, this file can also be used in a command line instruction or desktop icon to launch the program and create the backup. Any number of sets can be created and saved for repeated use. More complex sets can be created from the toolbar buttons, or menu items. Numerous archive settings, including full or incremental backups and several data compression settings are available and easily located and set. Individual files, folders or wildcards can be included in, or excluded from, any particular set. Backups can be timed for periods as short as one hour and as long as 30 days. Each backup set can have its own unique schedule and destination. There's also a toolbar button to access the most commonly used "favorites."

I tested Backup Plus on several desktop machines with Win95 and Win 98 and a laptop (all under Celeron 500) with SPARQ, JAZ, ZIP and floppy drives and other hard drives. In all cases it performed for me just as the developer claimed, in fact, flawlessly, and was surprisingly fast. Unfortunately, I did not have an opportunity to test the backup to CD media, or with other versions of Windows (NT, 2K, ME). It will take a little time to set up all of my backup sets, but once established, backup will be routine. As a result, I am convinced that this product will be the answer to my backup problem.

Backup Plus is a product of Avantrix Inc, of Edmonton, Alberta (see <http://www.avantrix.com>). It lists for US\$39.95, but the company advises that user group discounts are available. Further details will be available at the November meeting.



MS art collection — the Ottawa connection

by Bert Schopf

A little-known benefit of Microsoft's web content is a very extensive illustration collection called Microsoft Clip Gallery Live which can be accessed at www.microsoft.com and doing a search for Clip Gallery Live. It's funny that they don't have a direct link to it from their main entry page. This might just be Microsoft's best-kept secret yet!

Another way to launch Clip Gallery Live (CGL) is to insert clipart from within MS Word or PowerPoint. Look for a menu command or toolbar button to insert clipart. This launches MS Clip Gallery where you will find a button to go to "clips from web". CGL gets about a million hits a day.

Graphics are becoming an increasingly important way for businesses to enhance their communications, whether on the web, in presentations, or through printed documents. CGL provides over 120,000 graphic images and sounds, including photographs and web animations to enhance the overall look and feel of documents. The artistic content is diverse yet the website lets you download several graphics by the same artist to maintain consistency in design styles within a publication.



This design won the award of Excellence in the Illustration category at this year's Ottawa Ad and Design awards show

The Ottawa connection

Guess what? The majority of the online artwork is produced right here in Ottawa. Michael Zavacky is the Director of Digital Imaging with one of this town's largest ad agencies, McMillan (www.thinkup.com). Four years ago he and Gordon McMillan approached Microsoft with a proposal to produce some high quality computer illustrations as a companion for Microsoft products.

"I worked with (McMillan artist) George Melo to create about 300 illustrations a month," says Zavacky. "Microsoft preferred our stuff over their other suppliers and upped the demand to 1000 images a

month. We now coordinate a team of about 25 illustrators across the country offering differing styles and specialties." All the current content on Clip Gallery Live comes from these artists.

Zavacky had previously created illustrations (he hates calling it clipart) for local graphics superstar Corel, which opened the door to Microsoft for them. "We prefer not to use the term clipart because historically it has been used to refer to low quality off-the-rack cartoons," says Zavacky.

"Our approach was to provide a small amount of content that was done really well and then follow that up with more high quality content," says Zavacky. "Microsoft has been one of our most consistent and loyal clients and they like the wide range of content we supply. They trust our experience and knowledge."

"As the internet grows, I think there will be an insatiable hunger for more content," says Zavacky. People are creating new web sites every second and they are demanding not only more images, but new technologies are creating demand for sound clips and animations as well.

Continued next page...



This won first prize in the Illustration category

MS art ...continued from previous page

Last year, McMillan sent Microsoft some stock photography for web use through their partnership with another Ottawa-based group, Headlight Photography. They now deliver about 200 pictures a month in TIFF format. McMillan also is one of the top suppliers of Flash (vector-based downloadable) animations to San Francisco-based Egreetings.

McMillan's newest Flash animation on Egreetings web site has become the number one card for them, getting 10,000 hits a day. Check it out at:

<http://www.egreetings.com/m/main/egreetings/EGSiteHomePage/EGSiteHomePage.jhtml>

"Our illustrators use Wacom graphic tablets (demonstrated last year at an OPCUG General Meeting) to draw in Adobe Illustrator, Freehand, Photoshop, and CorelDraw. The vector graphics are then converted into the universal Windows Metafile format (WMF). They can further be saved as JPGs, GIFs, and other formats.

Feedback they've gotten from Microsoft has been positive and often customers will suggest content. For instance, after an Australian requested more netball images (a popular sport down under), McMillan produced a series of images around that concept.

"We had a request to draw a cool-looking kid downloading MP3 files from the internet – something that just wasn't topical six months ago," says Zavacky. "We're always looking for artists to bring in something fresh and original. We try not to imitate what's already out there, but rather gravitate to something that is really good and unique."

Zavacky says the best compliment they get is when other graphic designers use CGL – designers are far more discerning about using artwork than the average office user.

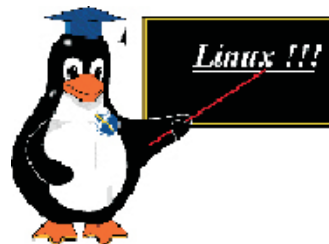


CLUB NEWS

October prize winners

The raffle for a copy of Powerquest's Drive Image 3.0 raised \$90.

Bob Herres was the lucky winner. Well done Bob! And thanks to Powerquest for donating the software. Our raffles are playing a big part in keeping membership dues low.



Linux SIG?

As Linux continues its meteoric rise in popularity, is it time for a Special Interest Group (SIG) for this platform? As always, it starts with an enthusiastic individual who might be willing to lead the SIG. If you are that person, please see anyone on the Board of Directors and we will help you get things rolling.

CLUB NOTES

Bringing back the OPCUG's past

Calling long-time members! At the suggestion of webmaster Brigitte Lord, we will be featuring stories of our groups' past in coming issues of this newsletter.

We're like to see some of our longer-term members to tell the tales of when the group was founded, periods of rapid growth, when and how the software library operated, changes in the newsletter, the evolution of PUB I and II, history of our Web presence, different locations we met and the reasons for moving, name changes, etc.

Members who can remember as back as far as 1984 and operate a word processor are asked to submit articles to the newsletter editor at bert@blackbirdpcd.com.



Relief from irksome TV commercials? by Ken Fermoye

Are you fed up with the seemingly endless barrage of commercials crammed into your favorites TV shows and sports events? If so, join the club! But relief may be in sight, according to *Electronic Digest* (Sept. 5, 2000 issue).

The magazine reports that sophisticated new integrated circuit controllers will improve performance of Set-Top Boxes and Personal Video Recorders (STBs/PVRs). The new ICs will make the devices less expensive and more versatile. This should eventually change their status from novelties with appeal to a limited market of "early adopters" to appliances that gradually will take the place of today's VCRs.

Electronic Design also notes that the new controllers "can be used to manage arriving and departing data streams, into and out of set-top boxes, storage devices, digital TVs, PVRs," from a variety of sources, including broadband cable, satellites, terrestrial and IP (Internet Protocol) networks.

What does this have to do with computers? PVR technology is digital, like computers, not analog like VCRs, and data is stored on a hard drive, like computers, not on magnetic tape. A PVR will do everything that a VCR can, but with significant improvements.

For example, I have about given up on watching a lot of TV when it is aired, especially movies. Instead, I record them on a VCR and play them back later, fast-forwarding through commercial breaks. This scenario works even better with a PVR. You can record a program in real time but pause it at any point, at a commercial break, for example.

The PVR keeps recording the program while you get fresh coffee, go to the bathroom or whatever. When you return and hit the Pause button again, the recorder picks up where it left off, playing the program back from the hard drive. Now you can fast forward quickly through the commercials and enjoy what you really wanted to see.

You will also be able to do your own instant replays; just rewind, then replay segments you want to view again. You can also preprogram a PVR to record favorite program automatically, just as with a VCR.

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FREE STUFF

Adobe seminar

Adobe and Apple invite you to a free seminar showcasing the latest products for Web professionals.

Be one of the first to see an in-depth demonstration of the award-winning Adobe® Photoshop® 6 and Adobe's integrated Web solution running on Apple's dual processor Power Mac G4.

Telecast live at 1 p.m. on November 9, 2000 to 10 cities across the U.S. and Canada, this interactive seminar will show you tools and behind-the-scenes tricks for getting more done in less time. See how you can break through to the next level of media-rich websites with cutting-edge vector animation and QuickTime.

Space is limited. Register today for this free seminar at www.adobe.com/BWB or call toll free 1-877-303-9422.

You will learn:

- ◆ Workflow advantages among Photoshop 6, Illustrator 9, GoLive 5, and LiveMotion
- ◆ Productivity tips and tricks for web content creation
- ◆ Custom coding techniques in GoLive 5
- ◆ Why vector animation is easier than ever with LiveMotion
- ◆ How to pre-flight your website for multiple browsers and platforms, as well as compatibility with the latest usability standards

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Remote computing with VNC by Chris Taylor



For years there have been remote control programs available on the market. Programs such as Symantec's PC Anywhere, Laplink.com's namesake product, and Microsoft's SMS Remote Control have helped people run computers from remote locations as if they were sitting at the console.

These programs work by sending the graphical information about what is on the screen from the host computer to the remote computer. In the opposite direction, key-strokes and mouse movements are transferred from the remote computer to the host.

Although generally pretty slow — there is a lot of data that has to be transferred so the remote computer can see what is on the host's screen — they do enable full remote access to a computer. They can be a godsend to those who need to remotely administer computers and helpdesk staff who must try to solve problems without wearing out their shoe leather.

But you don't need to spend any money to get one of the best remote control packages around — VNC v3.3.3r7. VNC (which stands for Virtual Network Computing) is available free of charge under the GNU General Public License. You can download both the server and viewer portions for 32-bit Windows from PUB II's file area 2 (Apps-Communications) as vnc3337.zip. Full source code is available as vnc3337s.zip. Documentation is available in HTML format as vnc3337d.zip.

You first install the server portion on the machine you want to be able to control remotely. It uses under 500K of disk space

and less than 5MB RAM. A Start Menu item sets up the default registry settings. When you first run the program, you are presented with the configuration screen. About the only thing you *must* set is a password. You need to use this password when you connect to this machine remotely.

You can then go to any other machine and run the viewer. The viewer portion is a single file under 200K. It doesn't require any installation routine and uses under 500K of RAM. You could even run it from a floppy disk. Very slick! When you run the viewer, you are prompted for the VNC server to connect to (you can use the DNS name or IP address) and the password. Once it connects, a window opens displaying the desktop of the server machine. The mouse and keyboard on both machines are fully operational.

VNC is available on multiple platforms. In addition to 32-bit Windows, you can get servers and viewers for Linux 2.x for x86, Solaris 2.5 (SPARC), Macintosh, and DEC Alpha OSF1 3.2. There is also a viewer for Windows CE 2.x. The viewer on any platform will work with the server on any platform. So, for example, you could use a Linux machine to control a Windows NT server. It is also possible to use any Java-enabled browser as a viewer. Performance of the browser viewer is much poorer than the native clients, and there are fewer configuration options available, but it works.

VNC may be run as a service on Windows, so there does not have to be a user logged in on the server computer in order for a viewer to connect. This is particularly useful in administering remote Windows NT servers. You can always connect to the server as long as the machine is up and running and you do not have to worry about security concerns raised by having someone always logged on at the server.

By default, the VNC server uses port 5900 for the native client and 5800 for Java browser clients. These may be changed if they are unsuitable due to issues such as firewalls or Network Address Translation.

While we have the server and viewer portions, full source code, and documentation on PUB II for 32-bit Windows, if you need the binaries for other platforms, you can download them from <http://www.uk.research.att.com/vnc>.

If you have any need for a remote control package, take a look at VNC. I think you will be pleasantly surprised at how well it stacks up against the commercial competition.



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

Fees

Membership: \$25 per year.

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CLUB NEWS

Swap meet discontinued

by Chris Taylor

We have decided not to continue with our annual swap meet. Over the last few years it has become a smaller and smaller event and the turnout has dwindled. Additionally, there are other, larger computer swap meets that our members can partake in, including one run at the Science and Tech Museum, Scouts Canada, and others.

Members are still encouraged to use the recycle table. If you have some old hardware or software you are about to throw out, why not save our landfills and see if someone else can use it?



CLUB LIFE

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

Bring your old computer books, software, hardware, and paraphenalia 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.

