



OTTAWA PC NEWS

Vol. 18 number 5

The newsletter of the Ottawa PC Users' Group

May 2001

SOFTWARE REVIEW

Corel turns a big 10! *by Bert Schopf*

Graphics: Either vector (geometrically-defined scalable) illustrations or bitmaps (pixel-based photorealistic images)

Suite: A collection of tools to create and manipulate graphics

Corel: Local software developer that's been refining these toys and tools for over 10 years



Back in the day...

Back in the dark days of orange- or green-screen word processors and boring spreadsheets (late 80's—early 90's) I worked at OCRI* and ex-Mitel bigwig Mike Cowpland sent us a beta-copy of CorelDraw 1.0 for evaluation. Because I was responsible for churning out seminar programmes and newsletters, the set of 5.25" diskettes landed on my desk.

Wow! You could actually draw stuff on a PC! This actually made working on computers kinda fun. Even back then, the capabilities were in the software to draw almost anything and do some very funky things to mundane text.

Every year thereafter Corel offered upgrades and it was very encouraging to realize that the many suggestions to their free support hotline were seriously considered and (gasp!) implemented. Kudos to the teams of Corel engineers and developers over the past decade who have brought real drawing power to the PC. Over the years, Corel has improved their flagship drawing application and augmented it regularly with related applications (Photo-Paint, Ventura page layout, etc.) and an abundance of free quality clipart and fonts.



*short for the Ottawa-Carleton Research Institute back then; now it's called the Ottawa Centre for Research and Innovation. Check them out at www.ocri.ca.

The matured suite

Ten years later, Corel's graphics suite still offers superb value and more importantly, a powerful and flexible total graphics solution for novices and professional users.

The core vector graphics app, CorelDraw 10, sees some new features and an improved interface. New features include sophisticated gradient transparencies, easy-to-change PerfectShapes, and most of the special effects tools are now live and interactive rather than palette controlled. I still find Draw has better capabilities than any of its competitors.

continued on Page 3...

INSIDE

Club news — Club life

Coming up / Raffle / Calendar	2
Club balance sheet	7
Coffee keeper wanted	7

Features

Corel Graphics Suite 10 review	1, 3-4
VMWare Workstation 2.0 review	5-6

Next meeting: **WEDNESDAY, May 9th, 2001**

COMING UP IN MAY

Virtual Machines by Chris Taylor

At the May 9th general meeting Chris Taylor will be giving a presentation on using VMWare (reviewed on page 6 in this issue of *Ottawa PC News*). This is a great opportunity to see what this software is capable of doing. Virtual machines are kind of tough to explain in words and nothing can really substitute for seeing with your own eyes.



Late breaking news: As Microsoft Office XP is about to be released in stores, we are trying to get Microsoft to come out and show us the tricks this latest version of Office is capable of doing. As of press time, we have not been able to get confirmation from Microsoft. If Microsoft can make it, Chris Taylor's presentation of VMWare will be postponed to the fall.

You can get up-to-date information on meeting topics on the web site at opcug.ottawa.com or by sending an email to listserv@opcug.ottawa.com. In the body of the email message put "get clubmeet" (without the quotes). An announcement is also sent out a couple of days before each meeting to all those subscribed to the announcements list on our list server. If you are not already subscribed, you can do so by sending an email to listserv@opcug.ottawa.com. In the body of the email message put "subscribe announcements" (without the quotes)



UPCOMING MEETING TOPICS

June: In time for summer this presentation will feature demonstrations of Olympus digital cameras, digital printers and digital audio recorders. Olympus reps Norm Dutcher and Jean Pierre Serre will have sample products on hand for attendees to try.



RAFFLE

There will be a raffle at the May general meeting of the OPCUG. If the presenter is Chris Taylor with VMWare, the raffle item will be a fully licensed copy of VMWare Workstation, valued at US\$299. This prize was generously donated by VMWare. If the presenter turns out to be Microsoft with Office XP, the raffle item will be a copy of Windows 2000 Professional, generously donated by Microsoft.

As always, raffle tickets are \$1 for one, \$2 for three, or \$5 for ten. Help keep your membership dues low by purchasing raffle tickets.



CALENDAR

Meetings	Date	Time and venue
OPCUG General Meeting	Wednesday, May 9 th	7:30 p.m. Auditorium of the National Museum of Science and Technology, 1867 St. Laurent Blvd.
Internet SIG (I-SIG)	Wednesday, May 9 th	Come and join our discussions!
Developers SIG	Wednesday, May 9 th	Immediately following the main OPCUG presentation, and occasionally at other locations in the region.
Delphi User Group	May 31	8:00 p.m. at Chapters Store in the Pinecrest Mall (at the Queensway)
Ottawa Paradox Users Group	3 rd Thursday each month	6:00-8:00 p.m. — Corel Bldg 1600 Carling Ave
PIG SIG (i.e., Wing SIG)	May 9 th (after SIGs)	"Good Times" cafe at Shoppers City West, Baseline and Woodroffe

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

CorelDraw 10 *...continued from front page*

Corel Photo-Paint remains on par with its biggest image editing competitor, Adobe Photoshop. Both are first-rate image retouching applications which support layers, multiple import/export filters and extensive colour, image and retouching tools. So, you could pay \$900 for Photoshop or pay nothing for Corel Photo-Paint which is right there in the graphics suite.

Both Draw and Paint let you create JavaScript rollovers and optimize Web graphics with side-by-side previews. Speaking of webstuff...

R.A.V.E. is the new kid on the block at Corel; it lets you create sequential “movies” out of vector or bitmap objects and then save your files in popular web formats like Flash. With the ever-increasing demand for more sophisticated web graphics, this is a welcome addition and the fact that it has a familiar Corel feel is a bonus.

When Corel presented this suite at the OPCUG General Meeting a few months ago, I was pleased with how easy it was to create an animation. My biggest difficulty was using the laptop touchpad – the software was easy to use and seemed logical.

Rounding up the goodies in the box are several useful utilities and the traditional cornucopia of clip art and fonts.

In general, the suite seems to be somewhat better integrated than previous collections and the performance seems a little snappier – must be all that rewritten code.

Corel Graphics Suite 10 recommended system:

- ♦ Pentium 200
- ♦ 128Mb RAM
- ♦ Windows 98/ME/NT4/2000
- ♦ Internet access
- ♦ Hard disk space required: ~ 300Mb

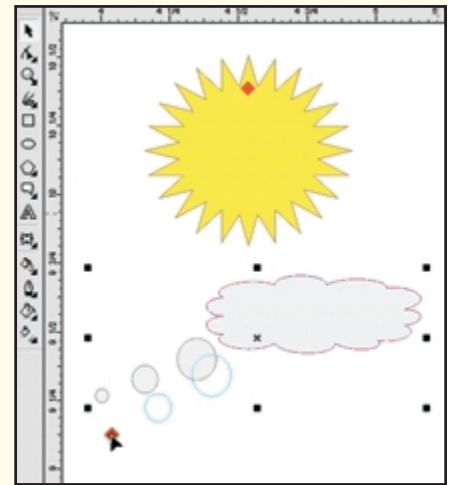
New features:

Colour Management

Both CorelDraw and Photo-Paint programs share new colour management tools; a welcome addition although not everybody will feel a need to calibrate their system for rendering accurate colours. The CMS interface makes it easy to select the type of device you are using (proofer, offset printer, monitor, and scanner) and simply specify what the devices’ brand name is. However, this falls apart if users don’t have existing profiles for their equipment and have to settle for a “generic” device profile.

PerfectShapes

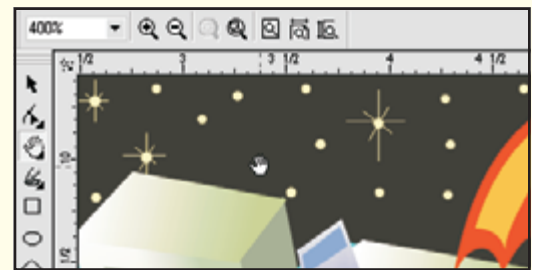
CorelDraw’s best new feature is PerfectShapes which let users quickly draw 77 customizable shapes and by using the control glyphs further adjust the shapes while retaining their general form. The shapes are divided into five categories: Basic, Arrow, Flowchart, Star, and Callout shapes. I particularly like the callout shapes for quick-drawing thought balloons, speech balloons and other comic-style callouts.



PerfectShapes are fully editable as with most Draw objects; letting you change outline, fill, size, position, scale, rotation, etc.

Pan Tool

The Pan Tool (part of the Zoom set) has improved functionality – as you pan around the page you can left- or right-click your mouse to zoom in or out. This beats using scrollbars anyday and doubles as a zoom tool.



R.A.V.E.

Corel R.A.V.E., comes equipped with the usual complement of animation functions — layers, timeline window, animation objects along a path, blending objects over time (tweening) and adding sound bites to movies. Finished documents may be exported to Flash (SWF), GIF, AVI (Video for Windows) or MOV (QuickTime) format.

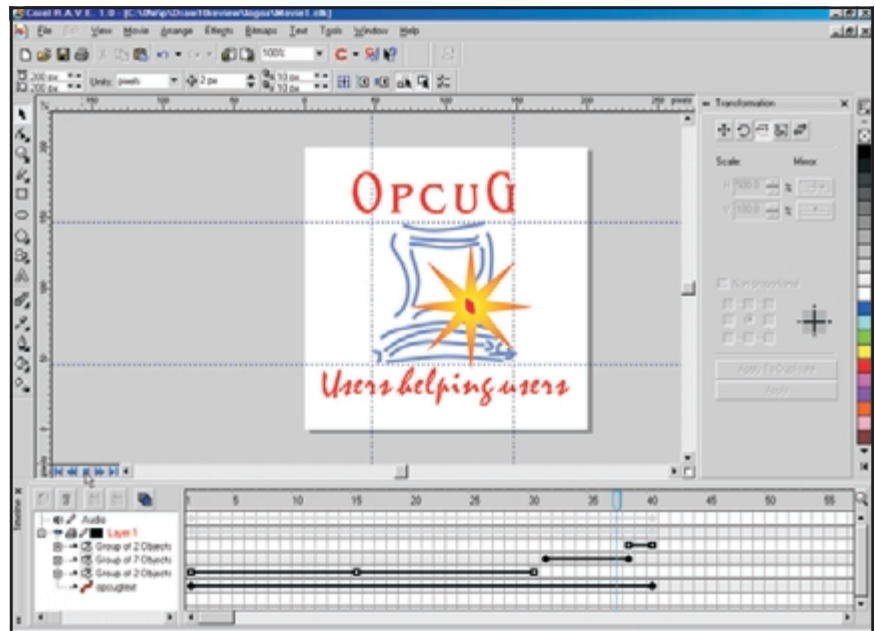
See next page for more on R.A.V.E...

Practical Application of Corel Graphics Suite 10: OPCUG logo animation project

To put the Corel Graphics Suite 10 through its paces, I thought it would be nice to manipulate the OPCUG logo in Draw and use the shapes to create an animation with R.A.V.E. Horizontally scaling the computer part of the logo should be a fair test of the animation. Maybe I'll add a little flash (pun intended) at the end too.

I started by opening the OPCUG logo in CorelDraw 10. I converted all text to curves (to avoid font substitutions) and grouped the text objects. I also combined all the computer lines into one object. Draw 10 behaves much like its previous versions, yet the revised interface and better access to object properties makes it easier to work fast. I used the Transform Docker to perform incremental scaling to multiple copies of the graphic, which were OK to test, but unnecessary in the end because R.A.V.E. let me use the identical Transform tool. The computer logo was exported from Draw in Corel's native CMX format.

Switching to R.A.V.E., I imported the text parts and established a timeline of 40 units (seconds?) for all the text. Then I imported the computer into frame #1 and established keyframes at 15 and 30 seconds. R.A.V.E.



The R.A.V.E. interface— it's a face I've seen before!

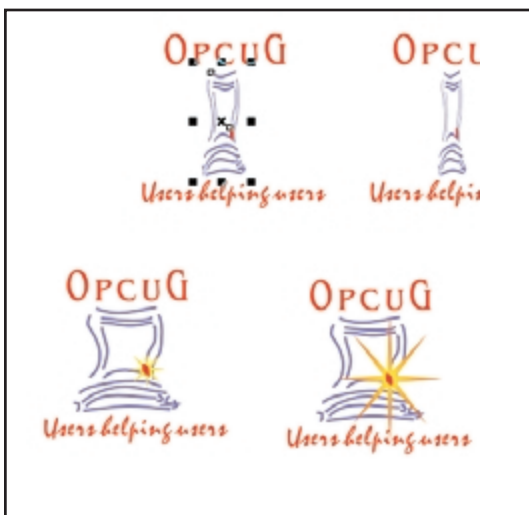
does a nice job of tweening, or transforming objects over time. At the 15 second mark, I used the Transform tool to horizontally scale the computer to 20% of its normal state. At the 30 second keyframe, I restored the computer to its full size.

To finish it off, I took the starburst created with CorelDraw's PerfectShapes and let it grow and pop in the last 10 seconds of the animation. It took a few tries to figure out the sequencing and keyframes, but this is pretty simple to use – even for non-Flash users! Many of the tools and concepts in R.A.V.E. behaved much like familiar CorelDraw, which helped a lot.

I've uploaded the resultant Flash SWF file to Pub II if anyone would like to see it in motion. Note that if you have an older browser, you may want to either upgrade it or download a Flash plug-in for your existing setup.

Conclusions

I like the "big ten". It still represents a terrific value for anyone looking to get into computer graphics of any kind. The core apps (Draw, Paint, R.A.V.E.) are at the top of their class in the industry and the utilities are worth the price of the whole box. However, if you already have version 8 or 9 and a vector web animation app doesn't excite you, you may want to hold off the upgrade.



Stages of the animation plotted in CorelDraw

VMWare Workstation 2.0 by Chris Taylor

I have been running Windows 2000 for over a year now and think it is by far the best operating system I have used. However, being built on the NT kernel, there are some programs that won't run and vendors have been slow to come out with hardware drivers. Worms Armageddon is a great game I have, but it won't run under Win2K. I also have a digital camera. The vendor does not supply a Win2K driver.

For these reasons, I have my machine set to dual boot with Windows ME. But I *really* hate to reboot into another operating system.

Then I heard about VMWare Workstation 2.0. It is designed to run on Windows NT, Windows 2000 or Linux and allows you to configure virtual machines (the VM in VMWare). Those VMs can run DOS, Windows 3.1/95/98/NT/2K, FreeBSD 2.2.x/3.x or Linux (currently supported are Red Hat 5/6, Caldera 1.3/2.x, SuSE 5.3/6.x, TurboLinux 6.0, and Corel Linux).

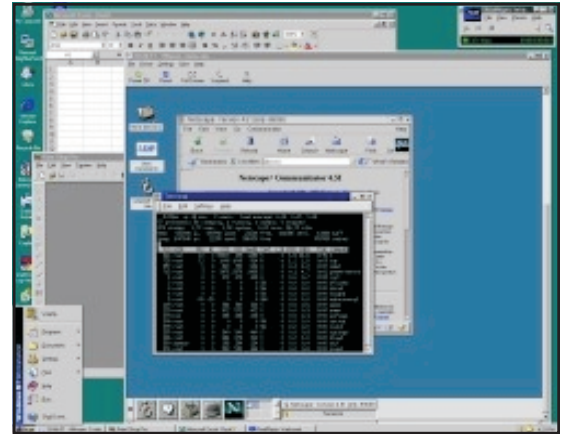
Was this to be the nirvana I was looking for — never having to reboot and simply run another OS from within Win2K? I just had to find out.

I installed VMWare Workstation 2.0.3 build 799 on my Pentium II/266 with 128MB RAM. It is worth noting up front that this is pretty near bottom of the barrel as far as VMWare is concerned. About the only thing I had above rock bottom was memory, as they state a minimum of 96MB. The installation went smoothly.

When configuring a virtual machine, it is almost surreal. You first tell a Wizard what operating system you are going to install and answer some questions about networking and other resources you want to be available to the VM. Then you power on the VM. You see a Phoenix BIOS screen come up followed by the standard search for memory and disks. If you didn't follow the instructions you are then greeted with the error message indicating an operating system was not found. Well, you have to install one, just as if you have a brand new machine.

Most recent versions of Windows come on a bootable CD-ROM and most computers can boot from their CD-ROM drive, so that is the easiest way to complete most installs. If you don't have an OS on a bootable CD-ROM, you have to revert to booting from a floppy drive. Unless you are installing a floppy-based OS such as DOS and Windows 3.1, you are going to need DOS-level drivers to access your CD-ROM drive so you can install your OS.

Don't start thinking you can just stick the required files on a partition on your hard disk and access them from there — this is a virtual machine — it knows nothing of the rest of your hardware. At this point in the game, the VM will see a single 2GB hard drive that is completely void of data, logical drives, or even partitions. It really does take a bit of getting used to. What is being created is a microcosm that is unaware of the larger world in which it exists.



VMware for Windows NT and Windows 2000 running with Real Player and Excel on the host; Netscape and XEmacs are running in the Red Hat Linux guest

I first installed a copy of Windows 98 SE. After the standard installation finally completed — it took a *really* long time — I installed the VMWare Tools. It is highly advised that you install this component. It not only makes it simpler to do some functions such as moving back and forth between your real machine and the VM, but it adds a new video driver that gives much better performance and higher resolutions/colour depths.

I kept having to remind myself that this is a virtual machine. There are many differences between it and your real computer. The first clue should have been the appearance of a PhoenixBIOS. That's not what is in my computer. What I ended up with was a computer that appeared to have 48MB RAM (this could have been higher if I had more than 128MB of real RAM), a NECVMWar VMWare IDE CD-ROM, a generic NEC floppy drive, a generic IDE TYPE01 hard drive, a VMWare SVGA video adapter, a PS/2 compatible mouse, an AMD PCNET Family Ethernet Adapter, and a Sound Blaster 16 or AWE-32 or compatible sound card.

continued next page...

VMWare Workstation 2.0 *...continued from page5*

I really wanted to see if I could get a Windows 98 game to function. Oops...no go. VMWare does not support Direct3D/DirectX, and Worms Armageddon requires DirectX 6.

Then my second disappointment – VMWare does not support USB ports, so my digital camera was out.

So, with the two main objectives in using VMWare shot, I started looking deeper to see what value I, or anyone else, might find in VMWare. I am happy to report that all is not lost. This is one nifty piece of software.

First, anyone who must test software under various operating systems may find VMWare to be a wonderful tool. You can easily load up many different operating systems and even have virtual machines for every variant. For example, Windows 95 came in at least 4 major variants from the shipping version through the OEM Service Releases. So, if you have access to all the builds, you can easily test your software to ensure compatibility.

For anyone who likes to try out new software and has been burned more than once by some program that hosed their machine, VMWare has a unique feature that can help. The virtual disk in a VM may be configured in any of three modes. The default mode is “Persistent”.



VMware for Windows NT and Windows 2000 booting Windows 95 and running Red Hat Linux

In this mode, all changes are written to the virtual disk in a permanent manner. When you shut down the VM and start it up again, all changes made during the previous session are there. In “Nonpersistent” mode, all changes are discarded when you exit the VM. The final mode is “Undoable”. In this mode, the changes are maintained in a log and when you exit the VM, you are given the option to either permanently write the changes to the virtual disk or discard the changes.

The last two modes give you the ultimate in a testing environment. You can happily add any new program without regard for terrible things it may do to system files, configurations, other programs, etc. Depending on the mode, the changes will either be automatically discarded at the end of the session, or you are given the opportunity to do so.

VMWare can also be very handy if you have an occasional need to run a few programs that don’t run under your main OS (assuming of course that your main OS is Windows NT, Windows 2000, or Linux – as they are the only OSs supported for the host system). Linux aficionados will probably skin me alive for suggesting such heresy, but they may be the biggest benefactors, given the number of desktop applications available for Windows compared to the number available for Linux. I don’t think we should expect a Linux port of PowerPoint any time soon!

Besides my problems with lack of support for DirectX and USB, I did note some other issues people should be aware of before diving into VMWare. VMWare is slow. It makes my Pentium II/266 feel like a Pentium 90. As I understand it, more memory would be a big help here.

Some operating systems, most notably DOS, do not handle the CPU HLT instruction. Running VMWare under such an OS will send the CPU utilization of your machine right to 100% and peg it there. A program called DOSIdle (available as DOSIdle2.Zip in the Miscellaneous Utilities file area on PUB II) can help here.

You want a *lot* of memory. Although they claim the minimum is 96MB, in reality I think 128 should really be considered rock bottom.

I had some problems finding drivers. There is a DOS-based driver on the VMWare web site that will work with their virtual CD-ROM. I had a tougher time finding a driver for Windows for Workgroups 3.11, but I eventually found one on the Internet that worked OK. Keep in mind, you are not looking for a driver for *your* hardware, you are looking for a driver for the *virtual* hardware. MIDI is not supported on the virtual Sound Blaster 16 sound card.

The maximum size of a virtual disk is 2GB. While I would have felt silly listing this as a limitation a few short years ago, these days 2GB is not all that big.

You may be able to get better performance by using a real disk partition rather than a virtual disk. I started down this road for testing, but I must admit I found it confusing and backed off when I thought I might be getting myself into more trouble than was warranted. They do

VMWare ...continued

warn you that use of existing partitions should only be done by those who know what they are doing.

I found that the VMWare web site has a wealth of information and trouble-shooting information. I did not find the organization of that information all that intuitive, but it's there for the taking. One of the gems I found was a 13MB PDF file that seems to contain all the information in 1181 pages.

VMWare is not cheap. The list price is US\$299 if you want to download the 5.5MB package, or US\$329 for a CD-ROM and printed manual. If your primary OS is Linux and you only want to be able to run Win95/98 in a VM, there is a bargain version available for US\$79 (download) or US\$99 (CD-ROM and printed manual).

A 30-day eval copy of VMWare may be downloaded from www.vmware.com so you can try it out and see if it will suit your needs before shelling out the hard-earned money.

◆◆◆

CLUB NEWS

Refreshments at the OPCUG

A couple of months ago the HUGO user group discontinued their meetings. They still had some revenues and besides purchasing a membership in the OPCUG for all HUGO members, they offered to pay for coffee at general meetings for a year. On behalf of all OPCUG members, thanks HUGO!



Bob Herres had the OPCUG coffee pot and brought it out for the March meeting. At that meeting, I called for volunteers to take care of coffee at future meetings. I warned that if nobody came forward, the coffee pot would not be returning.

Although quite a few people enjoyed the coffee that was provided, nobody volunteered to take care of the coffee pot on an on-going basis. Once again, I would like to ask for **one or more volunteers**. If you think you can donate a bit of your time each month, please contact any member of the Board of Directors. We will arrange for the coffee pot to be transferred to you.

◆◆◆

CLUB NEWS

OPCUG 2000 balance sheet

Jan 1 2000 bank balance	\$ 7,918.82	+ \$ 5,000 GIC
Revenues 2000	\$ 5,594.10	
Expenses 2000	- \$ 7,823.88*	
Jan 1 2001 bank balance	\$ 5,689.04	+ \$ 7,500 GIC
Revenues	Membership	Other
	\$ 4,875.00	\$ 719.10
Expenses	Pub	Newsletter
	\$ 2,349.36	\$ 2,693.42
		Other
		\$ 2,781.10

* includes \$ 2,280.60 towards GIC.

CLUB NEWS

April prize winners

by Mark Cayer

Ryan Weinheimer won the MP3 Music Match software and **Gary Byron** won the raffle prize (a copy of Drive Image) at the April 11 OPCUG General Meeting.

◆◆◆

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.



Member participation is encouraged! If you would like to contribute an article to *Ottawa PC News*, please submit it to the newsletter editor (contact info below). Deadline for submissions is three Saturdays before the General Meeting.

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

OPCUG annual membership: \$25 per year.

Mailing Address

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

Web address

<http://opcug.ottawa.com/>

Bulletin board—the PUB II (BBS)

Up to 33.6 kbps V.34 228-8951

Chairman and System Administrator

Chris Taylor ctaylor@nrcan.gc.ca 727-5453

Meeting Coordinator

Tim Mahoney timothy@cyberus.ca 225-2630

Treasurer

Vince Pizzamiglio Vince.Pizzamiglio@opcug.ottawa.com

Webmaster

Brigitte Lord opcug@iname.com

Secretary

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

Membership Chairman

Mark Cayer Mark.Cayer@StatCan.Ca 823-0354

Newsletter

Bert Schopf (editor) bert@blackbirdpcd.com 232-8427

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

Jocelyn.Doire@opcug.ottawa.com

Public Relations

Morris Turpin mturpin@igs.net 729-6955

Facilities

Bob Walker skywalk@iname.com 489-2084

Beginners' and Windows SIG coordinator

Duncan Petrie petried@zdnetwork.com 841-6119

Internet SIG coordinator

Bob Gowan gowanb@inac.gc.ca

Paradox SIG coordinator

John Ladds laddsj@statcan.ca 951-4581

Delphi SIG coordinator

Stan Isbrandt isbrandt@trytel.com ... 992-8141 / 729-7793

Director without portfolio/Orphan SIG

Henry Sims lionwag@freenet.carleton.ca

Developers' SIG

Bob Thomas BobThomas@msn.com

© OPCUG 2001. Reprint permission is granted* to non-profit organizations, provided credit is given to the author and *The Ottawa PC News*. OPCUG requests a copy of the newsletter in which reprints appear. *Permission is granted only for articles written by OPCUG members, and which are not copyrighted by the author.

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 magazines to publication dates of less than two years old.*

You may **TAKE AWAY** any items of use to you. Stuff left over at the end of the meeting will be sent to the recycle bin.



How to get the Ottawa PC News by e-mail or PDF



To **receive the newsletter by e-mail**, send a message to 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 version** e-mail mark.cayer@opcug.ottawa.com asking to cancel the delivery of the paper version of the newsletter (or ask him in person — Mark is usually at the back of the auditorium at General Meetings). Help the environment, save costs.

To **subscribe to the Announcements List**, e-mail listserv@opcug.ottawa.com. Leave the subject blank. In the body of the message put "subscribe announcements" (without the quotes). Within a couple of minutes you will receive a confirmation message from the listserver.

"Announcements" is a low volume list that the Board of Directors can use to get in touch with the membership. Subscribers can expect at least one message per month — the meeting reminder that goes out a few days in advance of the general meeting. Other than that, the only time it is used is when the Board feels there is some important news that should be brought to the attention of all members.