



OTTAWA PC NEWS

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The newsletter of the Ottawa PC Users' Group

March 2002

CLUB NEWS

The Year in Review *by Chris Taylor*

We had quite an eclectic set of topics for our general meetings in 2001. We started of the year with a presentation by OPCUG members on security and your home computer. February saw Corel coming out to demo the latest release of their venerable graphics program, DRAW 10. In March we had a presentation on how to do effective peer-to-peer collaboration over the Internet. In April, Ron Thompson from Information Technology Security Inc. gave us the low-down on the new "Personal Information Electronic Documents Protection Act." In May we had another OPCUG member presentation, this time a double-header on a user's perspective on a couple of commercial programs – VMWare and Office XP. Olympus came out to show us the latest technology in digital cameras in June.

After the summer break we had Microsoft come by and show us the nifty new features in Office XP. When Microsoft was unable to come out at the last minute in November for a planned Windows XP demo, we had our third member presentation for the year – all about the options for setting up a home network. In November, we had J-Squared Technologies come out and talk to us about AMD processors and how they compare with Intel chips. We rounded out the year in December with a presentation by Bloom Microtech. I hope they helped people decide on some last minute holiday presents.

Many thanks to all those who came out to give us some terrific presentations.

In non-meeting-topic news, in January we launched the sale of mugs and multi-tools sporting the OPCUG logo. One of the purposes of buying a supply of these goodies was to have them to present to speakers as a token of gratitude, but many members have found them a worthwhile purchase as well. There are lots still available for anyone interested - \$15 per mug and \$20 per multi-tool.

In February, we saw an influx of new members as the Helpful User Group of Ottawa folded up shop as a separate entity and their remaining members joined the OPCUG.



Club members enjoy a presentation at one of our monthly meetings.

In March we launched the highly successful "Orphans SIG". The coordinator, Henry Sims, had seen a need for a more focussed SIG that could deal at a beginner level in more depth on specific topics. Attendance at Orphans SIG meetings has remained high since the launch.

In October, we lost the use of the domain name `opcug.ottawa.com` briefly when Southam (who own the `ottawa.com` domain) were doing a cleanup and unceremoniously removed our sub-domain. We got it back temporarily, and we obtained the `opcug.ca` domain name so it doesn't happen to us again.

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Next meeting: **WEDNESDAY, March 13th, 2002**

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Also in October, through the efforts of long-time member David Reeves, we launched the “Member Services” conference area and corresponding list on the listserver. Through this new venue, members may advertise services they would like to make available to other members. Anyone is also free to solicit services through “Member Services”

Raffles remained popular throughout the year and have managed to raise \$1,021 in 2001. All of this was pure profit for the OPCUG due to the generosity of vendors, who donated the prizes. Many thanks to those vendors and to the folks who bought raffle tickets.



Eenie Weenie Bit

by Timothy Mahoney, OPCUG Meeting Co-ordinator

“I don't want much, I just want a little bit,
I don't want it all, I just want a little bit,
Just an eenie weenie bit, teenie weenie bit ...”

— Johnny Winter

Airport security has been beefed up all over, and many high-tech companies approached about doing presentations to the OPCUG often mention how difficult and time consuming it has become to travel anywhere to do marketing presentations.

Many firms have closed their local offices in Ottawa and have moved back to operate from their head offices which are usually situated in the United States somewhere. If they are able to come, they are often unable to commit until the last moment when our publication and media deadlines have all passed.

Some companies, believe it or not, even suggest having OPCUG members go to Websites and download demos etc... mostly the big companies with large market portions. Not very useful for the purpose of wanting a speaker.

Things sure have changed over the last few of years. I can remember a time when companies used to go crazy wanting the opportunity to present to a group of people. Now its “come visit our Website at WWW...”, with no faces, and no interaction.

This poses quite a challenge in finding presenters for the group each month. So I'm asking for “just an eenie weenie bit, a teenie weenie bit” of your help in finding topics and speakers for our meetings.

Any topic suggestions, ideas, companies, or people you know of who might be of interest, or interested in the opportunity of doing a presentation to the OPCUG, please let me know or encourage them to get in touch with me. If it sounds good, I'll gladly make the arrangements.



CLUB NEWS

Coming Up in March

Eurocom will be coming to the OPCUG March 13 (yes, we're back to the second Wednesday of the month again). Eurocom will be demonstrating their all-new P4 laptops.



CALENDAR

Meetings	Date	Time and venue
OPCUG General Meeting	Wednesday, March 15 th	7:30 p.m. Auditorium of the National Museum of Science and Technology, 1867 St. Laurent Blvd.
Internet SIG (I-SIG)	Wednesday, March 15 th	Come and join our discussions!
Developers SIG	Wednesday, March 15 th	Immediately following the main OPCUG presentation, and occasionally at other locations in the region.
Delphi User Group	TBA	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

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

Windows Rogues by Dunc Petrie

Have you ever installed a demo or an application only to sincerely regret it? In my never-ending quest to wrap myself, or at least my computer, up in knots I relate the following true exercise in frustration. The name of the application shall remain anonymous: let's just call it 'The Demo'. I installed it without any problem and it performed well. Nothing during either the installation or the trial suggested that it would wage an unrelenting war to prevent its removal - strange since it had time-expired once I finally eliminated it.

Author's qualifier

Some of the procedures described are not for the faint-of-heart. Make sure that you have made, as a minimum, backups of key files (for example, the Registry). Better would be a full system backup (tape, CD-R) or an image (using a program like Norton/Symantec's Ghost or PowerQuest's Drive Image). Do as I say and not as I have done (later in this article). You have been warned! I have also omitted some of the specific steps to create various values within the Registry to save some space.

The system

I was using a Pentium II 266 MHz running Windows 2000 that my son used for his college work. He decided to upgrade to a faster machine and Windows XP (the joy of learning with academic prices). Here was my opportunity to experiment with Windows 2000! As a 'Win Niner' I was seduced by Windows 2000 promises of no more BsoD (Blue Screen of Death), no memory leakage and Chris Taylor's tales of running 24 hours a day for months without rebooting. Until I installed this demo, Windows 2000 lived up to its promise.

The problem

Every time the machine was booted (cold boot), restarted (warm boot) or an application was launched, up popped the dialog box for Windows Installer. Whether I logged on as Administrator or as a User made no difference. Now, nothing was ever installed; the dialog box just stayed on-screen for awhile making a nuisance of itself and blocked any keyboard or mouse activity in the interval while I fumed. Some instances seemed particularly refractory; for unknown reasons Internet Explorer (Version 5.50) seemed a favorite. For these, I had to resort to the Task Manager to shut down the Installer.

I suppose that I could have endured this minor irritation being too lazy to follow my own advice and: "Delete, reformat and install a backup." Two complications: first, the truth was that I had not yet obeyed my own maxim and performed a system backup. Worse, 'The Demo' took perverse pleasure in popping up at the most inopportune time: during the creation ('burn') of a CD-R. The first time I put it down to one of life's little glitches since I had not seen the culprit in action before.

The next time I rechecked all the options for the burner software and kept an eye on the screen. What's this? What the \$%&^& is Windows Installer doing? No, my CD burner does not employ buffer under-run protection.

Initial approaches

Regretting my stupidity of no backup and thinking that I could save time I decided that I would try to fix it (by now, I'm sure that you are laughing). At this point I had no idea of the source of the problem: the Windows Installer never named its client. First, I looked at the Processes (Ctrl+Alt+Del, select Task Manager and select Processes tab) but nothing showed despite the presence of the installer on the Task Manager's application tab.

Stumped, I looked around on the Internet and got a few tips. One suggestion: make certain that 'Automatically check for IE updates' was deactivated (unchecked) on Internet Explorer's Tools... Internet Options... Advanced tab. Otherwise, Internet Explorer would try to force an upgrade to Version 6 - using Windows Installer. If true, perhaps my cable/DSL router was preventing a 'natural' (according to Microsoft) process. I verified that the box was unchecked. Scratch one!

Another suggestion achieved real progress. The Microsoft Windows Installer (MSI) includes an auto repair module. In case a file is damaged (or MSI believes that it is damaged) MSI will attempt an automatic repair/workaround.

When attempting to diagnose a problem an automatic mode is too obscure; instead, in 'Microsoftese command syntax' it must become 'verbose' and report its findings by creating a log file (When DOS was paramount reporting often occurred on-screen; you know, those lines of text that flashed by so fast that they were impossible to read). My Internet collaborator suggested that I edit the Registry. Well, what the heck, go without a

Windows Rogues ...continued

backup; live dangerously; go for broke. Log in as Administrator. Call RegEdit. Navigate to the Registry key:

HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\Software\Policies\Microsoft\Windows\Installer.

Next, create the string value (the Registry will identify it as a REG_SZ) and name it "Logging" (lose the quotes).

Set its value to be "iwearucmopv" (again, lose the quotes). Each letter covers one 'type': for example, i=status, w=warning, e=error [edited for space]. Restart your machine. Every time MSI is activated, it will generate a .log file.

The file name mask will be MSIxyza.log, MSIxyzb.log where the characters 'x', 'y', and 'z' are variable and the final letter of the filename ('a', 'b', et cetera) is sequential. These are text files; Windows will use Notepad as the default application to view them. They will be held in the designated system temporary folder (for my system, C:\WINNT\Temp). The .log file should contain the name of the offender, in this instance:

Error 1706.No valid source could be found for product [name].
The Windows Installer cannot continue.

== Logging stopped: 01/19/2002 13:54:07.

Once I determined the guilty application I intended to use the Add/Remove Programs applet in Control Panel. Surprise: this applet reported that the installation had been 'defective' (no additional information) and the application could not be removed using Add/Remove Programs.

Now, I'm mad

Time to get mean. Using RegEdit I searched the Registry for all occurrences of the application's name and the name of the software company. The number of entries was amazing and they were scattered throughout the Registry. Once located, they were deleted. Then, I deleted the folder that held the program and its links in Start... Programs. I checked the contents of the most likely .ini files (including Win.ini and System.ini) without finding any references.

Great plan I thought while the machine rebooted... but - reality check - the Windows Installer dialog box has won again. I examined the most recent .log file and the error message was word-for-word the same.

Using Event Viewer (Control Panel... Administrative Tools... Event Viewer... Application Log) I located more entries by right-clicking (or use Action... Properties) on any event which had 'MsInstaller' identified as its source.



The Properties dialog box contains a description box with alpha-numeric strings that identify the product and/or its components. I cut and pasted these string values into RegEdit's Find (Edit... Find) function and deleted them.

Where I should have started

Surely, 'The Demo' has gone... but, alas! Apparently corrupt installations or un-installations create results that do not obey the rules. When all else fails, ask - back to the Internet. Someone who had earlier faced the same problem referred me to Microsoft's obscure Installer Cleanup Utility:

<http://support.microsoft.com/default.aspx?scid=kb;EN-US;q238413>.

This utility was originally intended to deal with problem installations of Microsoft Office 2000 components although the above website lists most of Microsoft's productivity applications. In fact, the application itself does not seem to matter; the criterion for success is the use by the rogue application of MSI for its original installation. The utility is intended to remove system settings for the errant application; it is not intended to remove MSI itself.

Download the appropriate version: Msicuu.exe for WinNT/2000 (Msicu.exe for Win9x). Install it on your system and run it from the Start... Programs (Windows 2000 requires Administrator privileges). A warning dialog box will appear: "Continuing... will make permanent changes to your system. You may need to reinstall some or all of the applications... that used Windows Installer... Selecting Remove will make the changes permanent. The dialog box lists all programs that are installed on your computer that use Windows Installer." Since the Windows Installer CleanUp Utility also uses Windows Installer, it will be listed in this dialog box; do not delete it. Select the program(s) you want to remove and follow the directions.

Rebooted... success! The Windows Installer dialog box no longer appears.

Conclusion

What a nifty utility! It's too bad that Microsoft does not include gems like this in the default installation of Windows (particularly Windows 2000 Administrative Tools). Like TweakUI, Microsoft offers this utility "as is"; presumably meaning if things go wrong then don't call Microsoft. Since Windows Installer is the de facto choice for many applications (not only Microsoft's but also many third party software offerings) it is curious that Microsoft is so reluctant to offer a graceful exit, at least from its own software, in case things go wrong. After all, Microsoft insists that third party software includes an un-install option before Microsoft grants its official seal of Windows compatibility. Oh yes, be certain to backup, backup, backup.



CLUB NEWS

Membership contest Bring a guest to OPCUG!

by Bob Gowan

All club members are encouraged to bring along a guest to any of our meetings and SIGs. Not only will you be contributing to making your club's meetings more successful, you could actually win something for doing so!

This year's 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.



IRFANVIEW32 Graphics Utility

by Dave Burnside

If, like me, you own a digital camera and/or scan pictures and save them on your computer, you need a graphics program to access and work with your pictures. One of the best and simplest graphics utilities I've ever come across, and my personal favorite, is a product called Irfanview32. And it's also a freeware program for individual use.

Irfanview32 supports multiple image formats. It also has many different functions for basic and advanced users. Here is a screen capture of a picture showing the Irfanview32 window.

Of the multiple functions available, the following are the functions I use most often:

Viewing images: You can use Irfanview32 to Open an image file or if you associated the image extensions with Irfanview32 during installation (or from the Options menu), you can simply double-click the filename in your Windows Explorer. Once an image is loaded, hitting the ENTER key will make the image full screen. You can then scroll through all the pictures in the folder using the right mouse button to advance forward or the left mouse button to return backwards. You can also use the spacebar to advance through the pictures in the folder. During viewing (full screen or not), you can zoom in or out using the View menu or the + or - keys.

Thumbnails: While viewing an image, pressing the "T" or using the File menu allows you to see thumbnails (small versions) of all the images in the folder using a file manager like interface.

Rotating images: When I take pictures vertically with my digital camera, they are saved such that they initially show laying horizontally. Once a picture is opened, it can be rotated left, right, or flipped vertically or horizontally using the Image menu or using the shortcut keys L, R, V or H. The rotated picture can then be saved as a new file or overwriting the old file.

Cropping images: In some cases I'm only interested in a portion of the picture. I can use Irfanview32 to mark the area I want by clicking on one extremity and dragging the box over the area I'm interested in. Then I use the Edit menu to Crop (cut out) the portion I marked. I can then save the crop as a new file or overwrite the original file.

Batch file renaming: Another extremely useful function is the Batch file renaming capability. Digital cameras name image files using the same filename and adding a numeral to distinguish the files (ex. Image001.jpg, image002.jpg, etc.). In the File menu, you have a Batch Rename function. You can add all files in a folder or just selected files. You can then provide a meaningful filename template (ex. Geese

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Irfanview ...continued

Nov00_###) and Irfanview32 will rename all the files to the template name. The ### adds an incrementing numeral to the template (ex. Geese Nov00_001.jpg, Geese Nov00_002.jpg, etc.). You can choose to rename the existing files or copy them to new files, keeping the originals.

Batch file conversions: Similarly, all the files in a folder can be automatically converted to another image format. This function works along the same lines as batch file renaming.

Image resizing: Images can be resized using a variety of options and a variety of filters.

Slideshow: I used the Slideshow function under the File menu to create a slideshow of several thousand pictures we had taken. I then ran the slideshow with auto scrolling set at 10

seconds and ported the output through my video card TV Out port to our VCR where I taped the output. The tape was sent to our daughter in Alberta who doesn't have a computer.

Irfanview32 even has functions for sharpening colors, enhancing the images, adding effects etc. It also allows viewing of multi-page images.

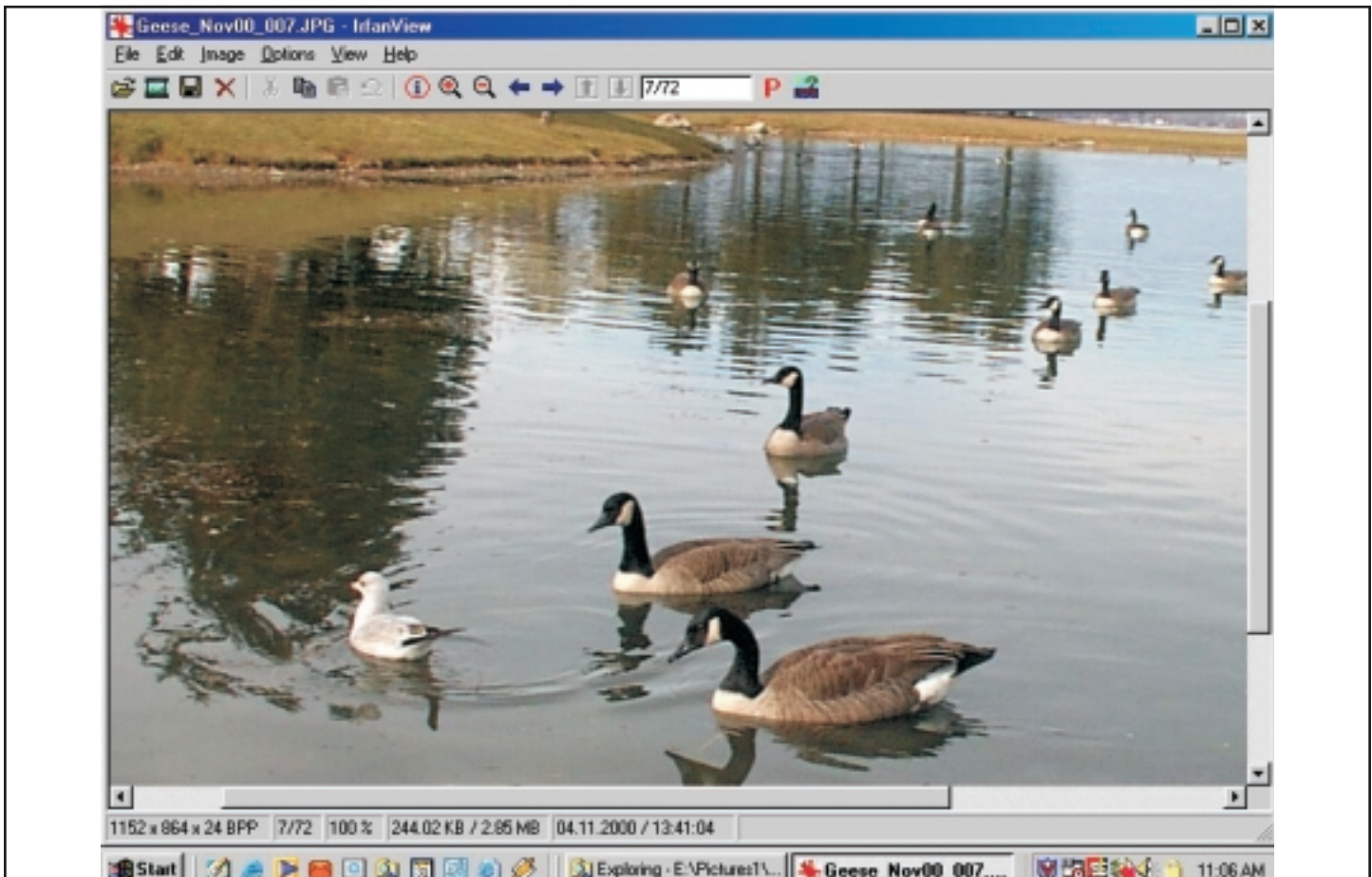
Overall, this free product is great and simple to use for the novice. But it has a multitude of features that even an advanced user would find useful.

Irfanview32's home page is located at:

<http://www.ryansimmons.com/users/irfanview/english.htm>

I recommend you download both the Irfanview32 utility and the add-on plugins. Install the utility first and then the add-ons. Personally I use the images only associations when installing Irfanview32.

◆◆◆



Irfanview32's user interface - goose those graphics!

Drive Image v.5.0 by Harald Freise

One of the things that one always has to think about when making a decision is “Do I really need to do this?” Drive Image is one of those things that falls into this category. There are lots of utilities that can make an image of a hard drive. Some of them are free. Why would you want to do that?

First let me ask... when was the last time that you backed up your hard disk? Do you trust applications loading on your machine after you’ve finally tweaked it enough to be stable? How long would it take you to be up and running again if your machine took a software dive into the big blue screen?

Drive Image has been around for a while and can make your life a lot easier. Generally regarded as one of the better disaster, backup and upgrade utilities this new version adds upgrades to the previous version.

QuickImage – simplifies the process of backing up and restoring images by being able to schedule them automatically from within windows. Set the parameters and let the utility back up or restore any drive.

CD-R and CD-RW support is great as a backup medium. The cost of CD-R has plummeted to about 50 cents each and is a great way of backing up and restoring IDE, SCSI and PCMCIA drives. PowerQuest claims improved speed in version 5 but I really can’t confirm that but it does handle drives up to 80GB.

Drive Image File Editor has been renamed to ImageExplorer complete with an enhanced interface that is great for extracting individual files and copying image partitions to another PQI DriveImage file.

You can boot directly from the CD-ROM providing that your BIOS supports that feature. It will handle FAT, FAT32, NTFS, HPFS Linux EXT2 and Linux swap file systems. It supports UNIX and NetWare by sector by sector support. Using PartitionMagic’s SmartSector imaging

technology unfortunately does not make a complete duplicate image as it does not bother to image unallocated disk space.

Drive image still works in DOS if all else should fail and supports installation from Windows 9x through to Windows XP. Rescue diskettes can be created under Win95 or newer. The first rescue disk is actually a Caldera DOS boot disk and the second disk includes the Drive Image Program. The usual caveats apply about Caldera DOS not recognizing any disk or partition beyond 1024 cylinders. A work around for this is by using a Win95/98 standard boot disk in place of the one created by Drive Image.

When was the last time that you backed up your hard disk?

Do you trust applications loading on your machine after you’ve finally tweaked it enough to be stable?

How long would it take you to be up and running again if your machine took a software dive into the big blue screen?

One of the more interesting new add-ins is VF Editor. This utility lets one edit the files included on the virtual disk to create a customized boot disk. Too bad that this only works with the Caldera DOS boot disk as it really limits it’s usefulness on larger hard drives.

If you are using FAT, FAT32 or NTFS then the included backup utility Datakeeper might be a backup solution for you. It provides you with a secure automated backup of your hard disk, a partition that has an assigned drive letter or a network drive. You can back up any files or folders on to any other drive or external media such as a LS-120, Jazz, ZIP or external drive assigned a drive letter to any other recordable drive available. It supports file compression to save disk space and password protection. What makes it even more useful is that you can even restore a single file, by date if you wish, from a compressed backup volume catalogue. Restoring files or backup is very intuitive as it follows the windows explorer type interface.

Drive Image and the included utilities are easy to use and quite intuitive with well placed descriptions and explanations. The manual is easy to follow and well organized. There is a quick reference sheet for those that hate to RTFM (Read The Fine Manual) .



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 next General Meeting.

Group Meetings

OPCUG meets on the second Wednesday in the month, except July and August, at the Canada Science and Technology Museum, 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.

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CLUB NEWS

OPCUG 2001 Balance Sheet

by Vince Pizzamiglio, OPCUG Treasurer

Revenues

Membership	4650.00
Raffle	1021.00
Mugs/Tools	405.00
Interests	309.36
Total	6800.63

Expenses

Newsletter	3007.27
ASDL/Bell	1251.44
Tools/Mugs	1478.47
Equipment	184.74
Bank fees	56.33
Total	5978.25

Operating Surplus 822.38

Dec. 31, 2001

Royal Bank account	1975.04
ING	12036.38
Total cash	14011.42

Jan. 1, 2001

Royal Bank account	5689.04
GIC	7500.00
Total cash	13189.04



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.

