



OTTAWA PC NEWS

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The newsletter of the Ottawa PC Users' Group

April 2002

The Great 2002 Membership Contest *by Bob Gowan*

For the past several years, we have routinely faced attrition of our membership each spring. There are, no doubt, a variety of reasons for this; such as computers becoming easier to use, support being available from more knowledgeable family and friends, and information being more accessible through the Internet.



In past years, we have had some success at fighting membership decline by attracting new members through "bring a guest" contests. In the last *Ottawa PC News*, we announced a new contest to help increase our membership. This year's contest begins in April and the draws for great prizes will be made at our June meeting. The contest is open to all members of OPCUG. To be eligible for contest prizes, members must bring one or more guests to our April or May meetings.

Here's how it works: When you arrive at the meeting with your guest, search out our contest registrar near the membership table at the back of the auditorium, and sign in your

guest. You may bring as many guests as you please to any meeting, and you will be credited with ONE ticket for the June draws for EACH guest you sign in at the April and May meetings.

Your guests are, of course, invited to attend both the main presentation and the SIG sessions afterwards. Please note that immediate family members living at the same address are always welcome to attend our meetings, 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 before the start of the June meeting, you will earn TWO more tickets for the draw! A total of four tickets will be drawn at the June meeting.

Members do not have to be present at the June meeting to win, but if present, they will have their choice of the remaining prizes when their ticket is drawn. Winners not present will be contacted after the meeting on a first drawn - first choice basis, for the prizes not selected at the meeting.

Prizes for this year's draw include some great software packages, all reviewed recently (November 2001 and March 2002) in *Ottawa PC News*: Drive Copy, donated by PowerQuest; Koala HTML, donated by Avantrix; and Drive Image, also donated by PowerQuest; as well as a

FREE OPCUG membership for a year. Thanks to PowerQuest (www.powerquest.com) and Avantrix (<http://avantrix.com>) for their contributions.



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Next meeting: **WEDNESDAY, April 10th, 2002**

OPCUG 20th Anniversary

with notes from Claude Jarry and Chris Seal

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the OPCUG. Our club was the idea of a few forward-looking pioneers, some who are still with us. Several “veterans” names come to mind: Harry Gross, Tim Mahoney, David Theroux, Stu and Ann Moxley and Eric Clyde.

We were called the Ottawa IBM PC Users Club back then. After a while, IBM® “asked” to take its name back and we became the OPCUG. Around the same time the club motto “users helping users” was adopted. I think a lot of us are thankful for help we received from another member who knew more than we did on a particular subject.

A newsletter headline from 1992 states “10th year for Ottawa PC User’s Group”, and says that the club “was formed in 1982/83 with 20 charter members”. The article continues “Now, ten years later, the club has about 500 members...”. The main event for the 10th anniversary meeting was Corel demonstrating CorelDRAW! 3.0 (Corel will release version 11 of their flagship product soon).

The October 1988 newsletter announced “The PUB opens for business” – referring of course to OPCUG’s virtual arena for information exchange. Club members could dial in at speeds up to 2400 baud (gasp!). Users were advised not to despair at the sparseness of the file area, and that “there are 80 MBytes of disk space for file downloads and we intend to do our best at filling that as soon as possible.”



Coming Up in April

O/S Integration in the Workplace

by Tim Mahoney

The Ottawa PC Users Group’s April speaker will be Peter Durst from ExitCertified Corporation. Peter is a Senior Sun Consultant and a Certified Sun Instructor. Peter will speak on the topic of “O/S Integration in the Workplace”, outlining how he integrated Linux and Solaris together into ExitCertified’s network.

“I’d like to cover the use of Linux in the workplace and its integration with other O/S’s”, says Peter. “There are some strengths and weaknesses in the O/S’s and I hope to answer some questions about how Solaris and Linux can work together”.

He will begin by listing a few of the problems companies face when dealing with network setups and topologies. He will draw on his networking experiences at ExitCertified as the basis for this interaction, but will allow for lots of floating ideas.

Peter encourages audience participation – tell him your perceptions of the requirements to get a company networked and running.



CALENDAR

Meetings	Date	Time and venue
OPCUG General Meeting	Wednesday, April 10 th	7:30 p.m. Auditorium of the National Museum of Science and Technology, 1867 St. Laurent Blvd.
Internet SIG (I-SIG)	Wednesday, April 10 th	Come and join our discussions!
Developers SIG	Wednesday, April 10 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).

ERD Commander 2002 by Chris Taylor

I have always enjoyed working with Windows. I started back with Windows 286 and, almost without fail, each new version I have used has presented a more stable platform to run my applications. I have still not blue-screened Win2K in over two years of running it on multiple machines.

But each new version of Windows brought with it challenges that made fixing problems more ... well, challenging. With Windows 95, I could no longer fix a driver problem by simply booting to DOS and editing system.ini. Now I had to deal with the registry, which required special tools to access. Windows NT brought the additional stability of a robust, journaling file system – NTFS – along with the headache of not being able to access it from a DOS boot disk, should something prevent NT from loading.

Microsoft always throws you a few bones that help. For example, the Recovery Console will get you to a command prompt if Windows 2000 won't load and Resource Kit utilities allow you to access the registry from a command prompt. About the kindest thing I can say about Microsoft's recovery tools is that they generally do what they say they will do. But they are awkward to use and limited in their capabilities.

To fill in the gaps, you need to go elsewhere. I have found one of the best places to go – Winternals Software. Started by Bryce Cogswell and Mark Russinovich, their first big product was NTFSDOS, a very nifty program that allows you to access an NTFS partition from a DOS boot disk. From there, they went on to create a number of very useful utilities for Windows users. I recently had a chance to look at their Administrator's Pak v3.0, which is a collection of five of their programs. This month, I will look at the flagship product – ERD Commander 2002. In the next couple of months, I will look at the other components.

Anyone who supports users on Windows NT, 2000, or XP *really* should have ERD

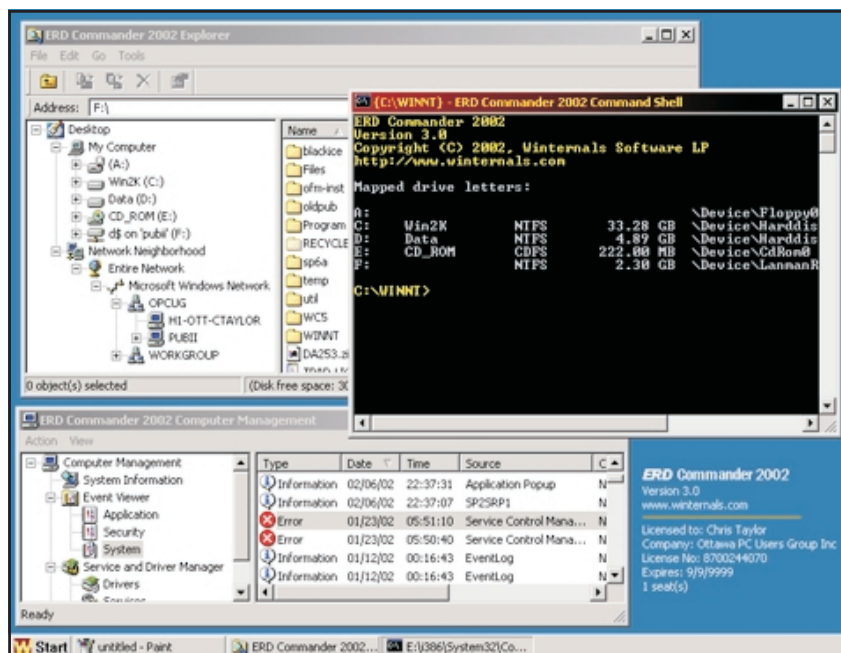
Commander in their toolkit. If you ever have a problem booting into Windows NT/2K/XP, ERD Commander is probably the best chance you have of recovering that system. And it is so simple; it is really a joy to use.

You start by booting from the ERD Commander CD-ROM. It brings up a modified version of Windows XP. Big deal, right? If you have multiple partitions, it is a really simple matter of installing multiple instances of any NT-kernel-based Windows. You can then boot the system into the alternate instance of Windows. Ah, but it's what you can do *after* ERD Commander is loaded that makes the difference.

When ERD Commander loads, it finds a DHCP server and configures the network components so that you can access other machines on the network. If you don't have a DHCP server, you can manually configure the TCP/IP settings. It then finds all installed copies of Windows on the local machine and lets you choose which one you want to repair. The full graphical interface loads and ERD Commander provides some customized tools that will help you repair the broken copy of Windows.

Say the problem is a driver that is causing Windows XP to crash on loading. No problem. Just click the Start button and load up the *Service and Driver Manager*. Up pops a list – not of the currently loaded Windows set of services and drivers – but those of the copy of Windows you are trying to repair. You can change the configuration of the problem driver to not load on startup.

continued page 4



The ERD Commander desktop

ERD Commander ...continued

What if some setting in the registry is causing problems? Again, no problem. Fire up ERD Commander's RegEdit and you will have complete access to the registry of the broken Windows. Browse the registry and make any changes you need.

Don't know where the problem is that's preventing Windows from loading? Run the Event Viewer, which loads the logs from the broken Windows. Browse through them looking for clues as to what is causing problems. Then, go fix.

What if you forget the password to get into Windows? With Win9x, this is no big deal. Press Esc when prompted to logon and Windows will continue loading. Not so with the NT kernel. A scenario all too common in the Windows NT/2K/XP world; you install Windows and assign some memorable password to the Administrator account. You then join a domain. A few months later, you decide to rename your computer. Well, you can't do that while you are part of the domain. So, you leave the domain and join a workgroup, which requires a reboot. When Windows comes back up, you are prompted to log onto the local machine. Now what was that memorable local Administrator account password?

I have known more than one person who was forced to re-install Windows at this point. If they had ERD Commander 2002, it would have been a simple matter or loading it up, selecting the *Locksmith* application, and resetting the password on any of the local accounts, including Administrator. Very slick!

For those of you who think this is a big security hole, rest assured. If you have physical access to *any* machine running *any* operating system, security bets are pretty much off.

Another thing that happens all too frequently is people shoot themselves in the foot by tightening permissions on files and directories too much. All of a sudden, they find that no users

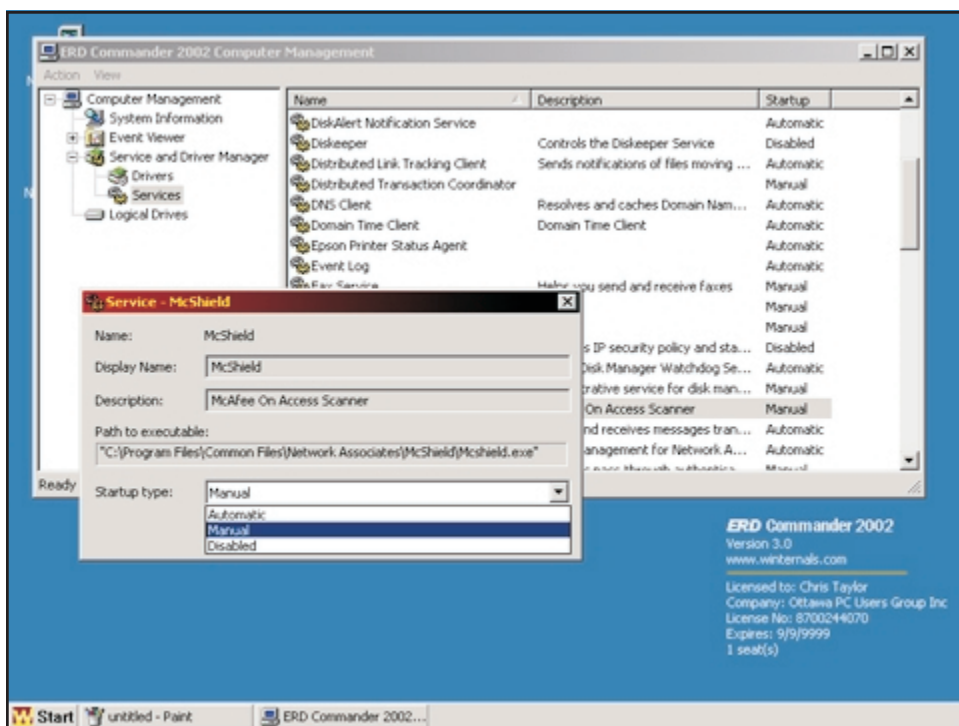
have any rights to critical files and Windows won't even boot any more. With ERD Commander, you can use the modified Explorer application to reset permissions anywhere on the file system.

If you support a large number of Windows NT/2K/Xp machines, run, don't walk, and get yourself a copy of ERD Commander 2002.

What would a trouble-shooting environment be without a command prompt? Of course, ERD Commander provides a Console Shell that allows you to do things in character mode. Along with the standard built-in commands such as attrib, type, del, etc., it includes clones of xcopy, chkdsk and a service control manager.

You can run non-ERD Commander applications from within the program – sometimes. Officially unsupported because Winternals can never be sure of the effect of an unknown program, I was able to run many relatively simple Windows applications, such as Windows Commander (a wonderful shareware replacement for Explorer) and Windows Paint. When I tried to run Word 2000, it loaded up the starting screen fine, but then popped up an error "Microsoft Word has not been installed for the current user. Please run setup to install the application." And promptly shut down. (Once again, Microsoft, where the heck is the "Not OK" button?)

Having access to network resources means you can get any files you need from other computers. In the worst-case scenario, if you find you simply can't fix the broken copy of Windows, you can at least



ERD services

copy all your data to another machine before you reformat and start over. Another excuse why I don't need to do backups ... just kidding.

ERD Commander does have a few, very minor, rough spots.

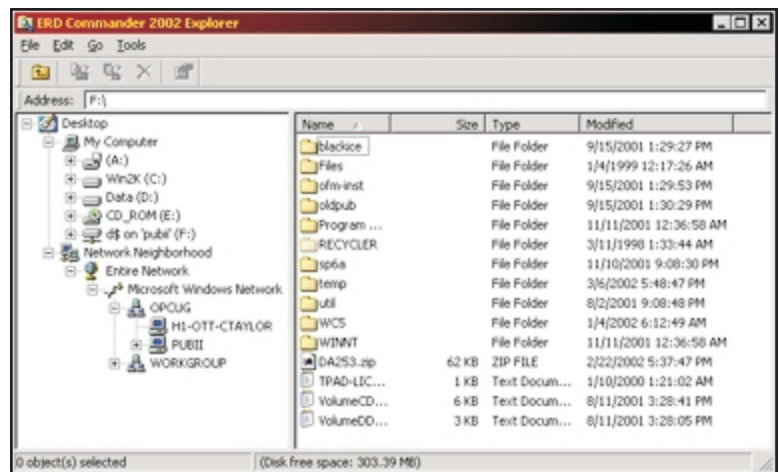
The PDF documentation did not explain the simple step you needed to take to see workgroups/domains on the network other than the default "Workgroup". A quick communication with tech support straightened it out. It turns out the on-line help had the required info. In the words of Homer Simpson, "D'Oh!" On the positive side, the PDF file is being revised to add the instructions.

The registry editor does not support security, so if your problems stem from registry keys that have security settings that are too restrictive, you are going to have to delete the existing keys and recreate them. As you cannot export and import registry keys, this is a completely manual process. I suspect very few people will be affected by this.

The final problem I had really left me scratching my head for a while. I started up ERD Commander on one machine, and for whatever reason, the mouse didn't work. I didn't even get a mouse pointer. I figured no problem; I'll just use the keyboard. Well, Ctrl-Esc didn't work to bring up the Start menu. Tab didn't move the focus around the desktop. I later found out that the Windows key will bring up the Start menu and it is possible to use the keyboard to operate the program.

All in all, pretty minor issues with a really terrific trouble-shooting product.

Is ERD Commander 2002 a panacea? Not at all. If you are unfamiliar with trouble-shooting Windows, ERD Commander is just going to provide you with the gun with which to shoot yourself. In most cases, you really have to have considerable experience before ERD Commander will help. But if you are skilled at troubleshooting, ERD Commander does a fantastic job of providing you with access to a dead Windows installation so you stand a fighting chance of fixing it without resorting to "format c:". If you support a large number of Windows NT/2K/XP machines, run, don't walk, and get yourself a copy of ERD Commander 2002.



ERD Explorer

The licensing for ERD Commander is a breath of fresh air

In these days of strange licensing such as Executive Software requiring a license for DiskAlert for each physical disk in your computer, Microsoft not permitting you to transfer an OEM license to a new machine, and Oracle requiring you to pay by the MHz and number of CPUs in the server, the licensing for ERD Commander is a breath of fresh air. It is licensed to the user. You are free to use it on any number of computers you support. Well done, Winternals!

Next month, I will continue my review of other components of Administrator's Pak v3.0 and let you know how they can help you trouble-shoot Windows problems.

Administrator's Pak v3.0 price US\$699

ERD Commander 2002 price US\$399

System requirements:

- 233MHz x86
- Windows NT, 2000, or XP
- 64MB RAM
- Must be able to boot from CD-ROM

See the Winternals web site at www.winternals.com

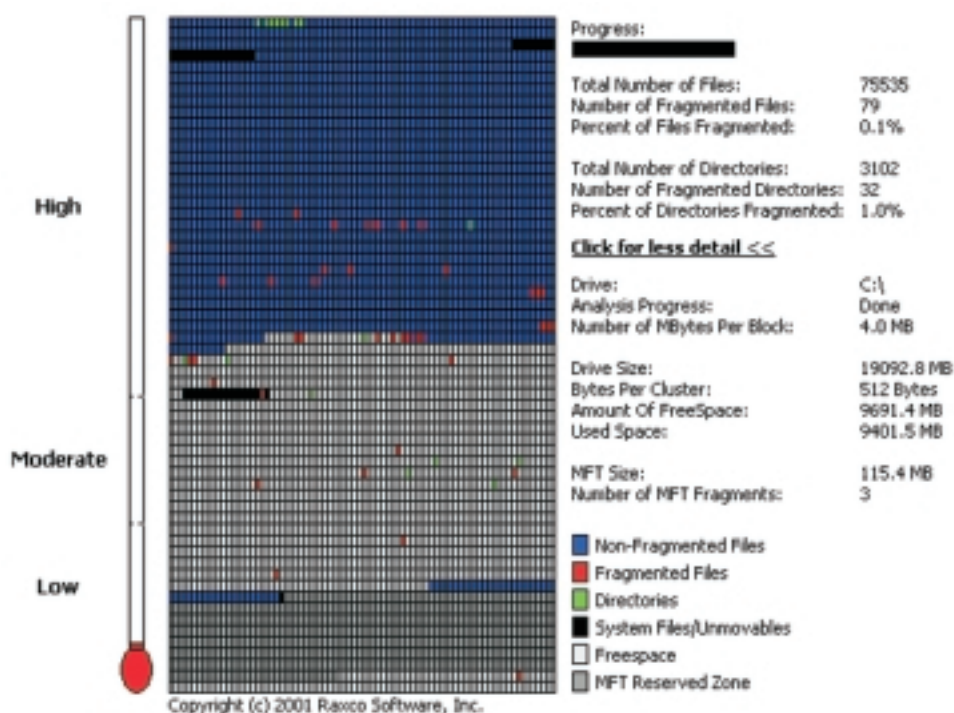


How fragmented is your hard disk? by Chris Taylor

I have written a number of reviews of defragmentation software. I am a firm believer in keeping disks defragmented. But it can be hard to quantify the problem. Just how fragmented is your hard disk? Just how much of a performance hit are you taking?

If you want to get a quick assessment of just how fragmented your disks are, you can visit the folks at Raxco Software, makers of PerfectDisk. They have a nifty, online utility that will analyze your hard disk and report on the level of fragmentation. Just fire up your web browser and go to <http://www.raxco.com/analyze/>

If you think that they might be slanting the data to make you think you need PerfectDisk when you don't, put your mind at ease. I use Defrag Commander PE from Winternals and the Raxco web site told me .1% of my files (79 out of 75,535) and 1% of my directories (32 out of 3,102) were fragmented. It reported; "This partition appears to have little or no fragmentation issues." They went on to say how PerfectDisk would keep it that way, but you have to expect them to say that!



After it analyses your disk, it offers to show you the performance hit fragmentation can take. It creates a 6MB file on your hard disk, fragmented in 100 pieces. Then it reads it, defragments it, and reads it again. On my system – a 1.2GHz Athalon with a 20GB Western Digital hard disk – the defragmented file was read in 30% the time it took to read the fragmented file.

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CLUB NEWS

April Raffle by Chris Taylor

There will be a raffle at the Wednesday, April 10th general meeting. Through the generosity of the folks at Winternals Software, this month the prize is (in my not-so-humble-opinion!) one of the best yet – at least for anyone who has to support Windows NT/2K/XP users. It is a copy of ERD Commander 2002, valued at US\$399. See the review in this issue of *Ottawa PC News*. As always, raffle tickets are \$1 for one, \$2 for three, or \$5 for ten. Help keep your membership dues low and take a chance on this terrific prize.



March Prizewinner

by Mark Cayer

Congratulations to Brian McCleery who won the raffle for a copy of Partition Magic 7 at the March General Meeting.

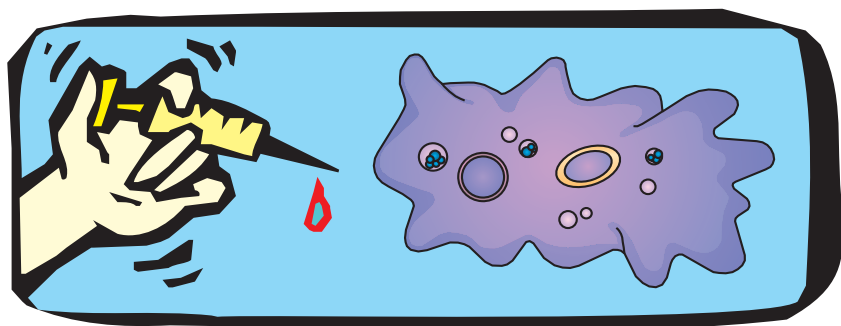
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Virus Scanner Deception

by Dave Burnside

Is your virus scanner deceiving you into a sense of full protection? Odds are, it is. By default, most virus scanners have their default options setup to NOT scan all files and NOT scan all directories. This was OK years ago when the only way to spread a virus was through a program file. But in today's world, this is a sure recipe for virus infection.

But, you say, I've got my memory resident virus scanner running. How can a virus get onto my computer? A virus may have been introduced for a number of reasons: the most likely is that it was introduced because your virus scanner signature definition file (DAT file) was not up-to-date when you received the virus (usually by email); for some reason, your virus scanner was not active at some point you saved a file to your computer without running it.



The problem areas are:

1. the virus scanner is set to scan "program files only" instead of "All files". For this to work correctly, you must update the file "Extensions" list regularly to ensure all file extension used by any type of virus are included. Practically, to do so, you'd have to monitor virus information sites daily.

Solution: Set your default option to scan "All files", including "Compressed files"

2. the virus scanner's "Exclusion" list. By default, the virus scanner is set to exclude the "Recycle Bin" folder (and possibly other folders/files). It assumes that if you've deleted something, there is no need to scan it for viruses. However some enterprising virus writers took advantage of this flaw and they actually install their virus in a hidden file in the Recycle Bin folder.

Solution: Remove any folders (or files) from the "Exclusion" list.

3. by default your program version of your virus scanner will be set to scan your C: drive. However if you have partitioned the drive or have more than one hard drive in your computer, you have to scan all the drives. Copies of viruses can be installed on any of your hard drives.

Solution: Change the default setting to select "All Hard Drives". To do this, you will probably have to "Add" a new selection and pick "All Hard Drives" from the list. Once added, you can delete the C: listing.

4. your scanner is NOT set to scan email or is set to scan "Attachments with default extensions". This is the same problem for email as number 1 above is for computer files.

Solution: Turn on email scanning AND make sure it is scanning "All email attachments", including "Compressed files".

You will have to do these changes to your memory resident version and also to the regular program version. In most cases, they each keep their settings in different configuration files. Also, where applicable, make sure that when you make the changes you save them as the default settings, overwriting the default settings when prompted.

Lastly, once you'd done the changes, use the program version of your scanner to scan all your hard drives. Of course you make sure that you have the latest virus signature file installed before you start. After upgrading my computer to Windows XP, I had to install a new version of the McAfee virus scanner. When I scanned all my hard drives and my home network drives, it found the SIRCAM virus hidden on 2 computers in the Recycle Bin folder on 6 different drives.

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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.

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 (corrected) 2001 Balance Sheet

by Vince Pizzamiglio, OPCUG Treasurer

Revenues

Membership	4,650.00
Raffle	1,021.00
Mugs/Tools	405.00
Interests	309.36
Refund SIG*	415.27
Total	6,800.63

Expenses

Newsletter	3,007.27
ASDL/Bell	1,251.44
Tools/Mugs	1,478.47
Equipment	184.74
Bank fees	56.33
Total	5,978.25

Operating Surplus 822.38

Dec. 31, 2001

Royal Bank account	1,975.04
ING	12,036.38
Total cash	14,011.42

Jan. 1, 2001

Royal Bank account	5,689.04
GIC	7,500.00
Total cash	13,189.04

* this information was left out last month - oops!



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 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.

