



PRODUCT REVIEW

UltraMon 2.1

by Chris Taylor

Once I open an application, I don't like to close it, so the more screen real estate I can get, the happier I am. I used to have a 17 inch monitor that I ran at 1024x768. Wanting more space, I upgraded to a 19 inch monitor and ran it at 1280x1024. And life was good... for a while. But I craved more.

Windows has support for multiple monitors. Requirements are Windows 98/ME/2K/XP and all video cards must be AGP or PCI. You can use multiple regular video cards or video cards that have multiple heads or output ports. So, rather than spending a bunch more money on moving up to a 21-inch monitor, I decided to put an old 17-inch monitor to work.

My computer has an ATI Radeon 7000 series AGP video card with a Philips 109B4 19-inch monitor. I added a Matrox Mystique PCI video card, plugged in an old 17-inch Hewlett Packard Ergo1280 monitor and booted the machine. Windows 2000 automatically detected the new video card. I went into Control Panel's *Display* properties and the *Settings* tab now showed the two video cards and monitors. When I selected the second monitor, there was a new box labelled *Extend my Windows desktop onto this monitor*. I checked the box and that was it. *It just worked!*

I run my main monitor at 1280x1024x16 bit colour. The HP monitor switched down to 256 colour



10 monitors on 3 video cards—image courtesy Ross Farr

mode if I tried running at that resolution, so I reduced it to 1153x864x16 bit colour.

The results were fantastic. I happily dragged windows from one monitor to another. I kept reference material up on the HP monitor while I worked on the main screen. In many cases it was as good as having two computers. In some ways it was actually better than having two computers because I didn't have to copy or share information between two systems; this was still one computer.

I decided that, if two monitors were better than one, it stood to reason that three would be even better. I found another old 17 inch HP Ergo 1280 monitor and added it along with a Matrox Millennium PCI video card. Again, it came up flawlessly with no fuss at all.

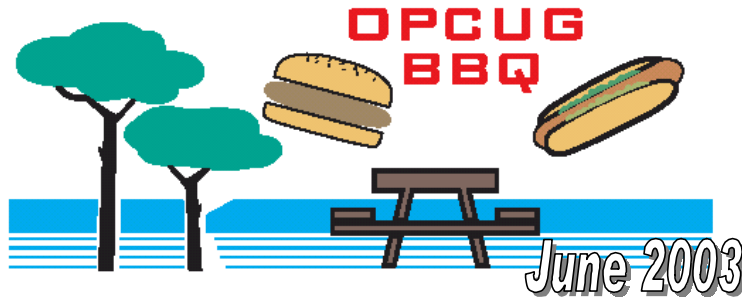
And I was in heaven! I had increased my screen real estate from about 160 square inches to about 400 square inches. In terms of pixels, I had gone

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Coming Up *by Chris Taylor*



June is our wrap-up meeting before we break for the summer. Continuing with the tradition we began last year, we will be having our **2nd annual barbeque**. We will be setting up at the big tent near the main doors to the museum. We will have cold drinks, hamburgers and hot dogs and a cake to celebrate the 20 years of the OPCUG's "Users Helping Users". Make sure you let Bob Gowan know at gowanb@inac.gc.ca how many will be in your party, whether you prefer hamburgers or hot dogs and whether you are a big eater or little eater. If you can help out with the running of the BBQ (bringing a grill or flipping burgers and dogs) please let Bob know. The barbeque will start at 6:00 and run until about 7:45. After that we will head into the museum for our regular meeting, which will start at 8:00.

Every two years or so, **Microsoft** releases a new version of their Office suite. Well, it is that time again and **Office 2003** is due to be released this summer. Joel Plouffe from Microsoft Canada in Toronto will be coming to show us what's new in Office. Office 2003 is promising increased ease of use and benefits from built-in integration with Instant Messaging and Windows Sharepoint Services. Joel will be showing us how to get the most out of Office through the integration features in each of the components. As well, he will be demonstrating one of the new products; Infopath and showing how easily it integrates with Windows Sharepoint Services.

Joel has been with Microsoft for 2½ years in Product Support. He recently accepted an internship as a Technology Specialist and was working in the Microsoft Ottawa office for a short time. He has since moved back to Toronto.

June Raffle

Thanks to Microsoft's user group support program Mindshare, we have a copy of **Combat Flight Simulator 3 "Battle for Europe"** to raffle off. Street value approximately \$65.

"Anti-aircraft fire blankets you. Blast debris hurls toward your propeller. And you wonder why the hell you didn't join the Navy. This ain't no free-flight, cloud-gunner, glory ride. This is ground assault: the real, gritty combat that can make or break a battle, and take your life in one massive explosion. Bombs shatter enemy airfields, trains, tank columns and more-as you streak across the European countryside in WWII's greatest planes-dodging small-arms fire-gripping your joystick with sweaty palms and white-knuckles, pumped with adrenaline-living history.

In Combat Flight Simulator 3, it's 1943, and no one knows what's going to happen..."

For more information on Combat Flight Simulator 3 "Battle for Europe" see <http://www.microsoft.com/games/combatfs3/>

Tickets on the raffle are \$1 for one, \$2 for three, or \$5 for ten.

CALENDAR

Meetings	Date	Time and Venue
OPCUG General Meeting	Wednesday, June. 11 th	7:30 p.m. Auditorium of the Canada Museum of Science and Technology , 1867 St. Laurent Blvd.
Internet SIG (I-SIG)	Wednesday, June. 11 th	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting. Come and join our discussions!
Developers' SIG	Wednesday, June. 11 th	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting, and occasionally at other locations in the region.
Orphans' SIG	Wednesday, June. 11 th	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting.
Delphi User Group	TBA	TBA
PIG SIG (Wing SIG)	Wednesday, June. 11 th	10:00 p.m. (after all other SIGs) at Chances "R" restaurant, 1365 Woodroffe Ave., Shoppers' City West Mall

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

SIG NEWS

Alpha Five Database Special Interest Group Forming

by Bob Gowan



We are attempting to start another new Special Interest Group (SIG) in OPCUG. Several members have indicated an interest in learning and sharing experiences with Alpha Software's flagship database product, Alpha Five.

This amazing product makes it easy to create very powerful and sophisticated database applications for managing memberships or collections, or even running a business, without programming. Two recent releases by Alpha Software, described below, now make it very inexpensive to try it out. If you have any interest in databases, you can't afford NOT to check it out !!

Alpha has recently introduced a new Home Edition of their latest product, Alpha Five Version 5. The Home Edition is intended for single users, as compared to the "Full Version", which is intended for multiple user access on networks. Most of the development tools and ease of use features are still there, and it's cost is only a fraction of what the Full Version costs.

The previous "full" version of Alpha Five, version 4.5, is also being distributed on the cover disks of several computer magazines, published in the UK, but available in many good magazine stands in the Ottawa area:

PC Advisor, issue 91 spring 2003

PC Pro, issue 103, May 2003

PC World Australian

PC Plus, issue 204



Some of these issues may no longer be on the shelves, but the latter is yet to be distributed in this area, so keep your eyes open. I believe you have to register the copy with Alpha - that is normal with these cover CD distributions - and no big deal considering what you get for next to nothing.

A brief organizational meeting for the new A5SIG was held following the OPCUG main meeting on May 14, 2003. One person came all the way from Cornwall for the meeting, and two others from Montreal have also indicated interest.

This meeting was intended to determine interest and to try to set an agenda to meet the needs of attendees. A short questionnaire was completed by those in attendance, and sent to others who e-mailed their interest. There is still time to let us know what you would like the SIG to accomplish. All are welcome, from "just interested" and novice to advanced.

In future SIG meetings, there will be tips and tricks and presentations of information from the recent Alpha Five Users Conference in Boston, other available learning materials and resources, and new Alpha Five products (e.g. Home Edition and Web Application Server).

If you are interesting in participating in this new SIG, please contact Bob Gowan at gowanr@sprint.ca



UltraMon 2.1

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from 1.3 million pixels to 3.3 million.

But things were not perfect. Some aspects of working with multiple monitors are...well...awkward.

Applications open on the monitor they were on when last closed. I usually found this to be a good thing, but not always. I sometimes opened programs and found myself looking around on the monitors to find where they were.

When using a remote control package such as VNC or Remote Administrator to access my computer, if an application opened on one of the secondary monitors, I couldn't see it, since the remote control package only sees what's on the main video card.

If you tend to use the mouse a lot, multiple monitors can greatly increase the mileage on your rodent. With three monitors to drag the mouse across, I found it much more tedious.

There were other things I found to be a bit of a pain or cosmetically messy. For example,

And I was in heaven! I had increased my screen real estate from about 160 square inches to about 400 square inches

Windows does not replicate the task bar to additional monitors. While you can use the Alt-Tab method of switching between applications, if you prefer to use the buttons on the taskbar, you

always have to move the mouse back to the main monitor. Another example was dragging an almost-full-screen window from my high-resolution monitor to a lower resolution monitor. I ended up having to resize the window manually so I could see everything.

Still, the benefits of a multi-monitor configuration far outweighed the inconveniences.

Realtime Soft has a program called **UltraMon** which is designed specifically to deal with multiple monitors. I decided to give it a try. The version I am using is 2.1. I quickly decided that UltraMon is a **must have** utility when working with multiple monitors.

UltraMon optionally provides a taskbar on each monitor. By default, only those applications appearing on a monitor will show up on its taskbar. No matter what taskbar you access, you always know that when you click a button on the taskbar, the application will be on that monitor when it comes to the foreground. It also means you can tell at a glance what applications are running where, even if they are minimized or obscured by other windows. If you prefer, you can have all taskbar buttons appear on all taskbars.

With UltraMon, application title bars sport additional buttons. These buttons are placed near the top-right corner and allow you to take advantage of multiple-monitor features.

One button expands an application window to the entire desktop, spread across all monitors. This may be a great feature if you are using monitors with virtually no bezel and the monitors are right beside each other, but on a regular monitor, I found the space between the actual display images to be problematic. While you can still drag windows around with the mouse, a second button allows you to move the application window to another monitor. With two monitors, this is a one-click operation. If you have more than two monitors, it is a two-click operation, the first bringing up a menu that allows you to select the destination monitor.

UltraMon can get around the problem of applications opening on the monitor they were on when last closed. It adds a tab to the *Properties* dialog box for shortcuts. You can set a shortcut to open the application on a specific monitor, and even specify the position on that monitor. You can even have the specified monitor change resolution and colour depth while the application is loaded and restore the original settings automatically when the app closes.

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Wallpaper stretched across 3 monitors - image courtesy Realtime Soft

UltraMon 2.1

(continued)

Display Profiles in UltraMon are really slick. An UltraMon profile stores information about the position, resolution and colour depth of each monitor. You can easily switch between profiles. If multiple people use the computer, you can configure UltraMon so that each person has a separate, default profile that gets loaded when they log on. You can also easily switch profiles at any time.

If you are running Windows 2000 or XP, UltraMon provides a feature called *mirroring* which copies the contents of the main monitor to one or more additional monitors. It can even allow for different resolutions on the different monitors. This feature can be very handy when giving presentations, where the presenter's back is to the screen the audience sees. You can even mirror a monitor into a small window on another monitor; sort of like a TV *picture in picture* feature. Very cool.

When moving a window to a monitor with a lower resolution, UltraMon can resize it proportionally, such that it is taking up the same percentage of the monitor as it took on the original, or just size it down until it fits. This eliminates the need to manually resize windows after moving them.

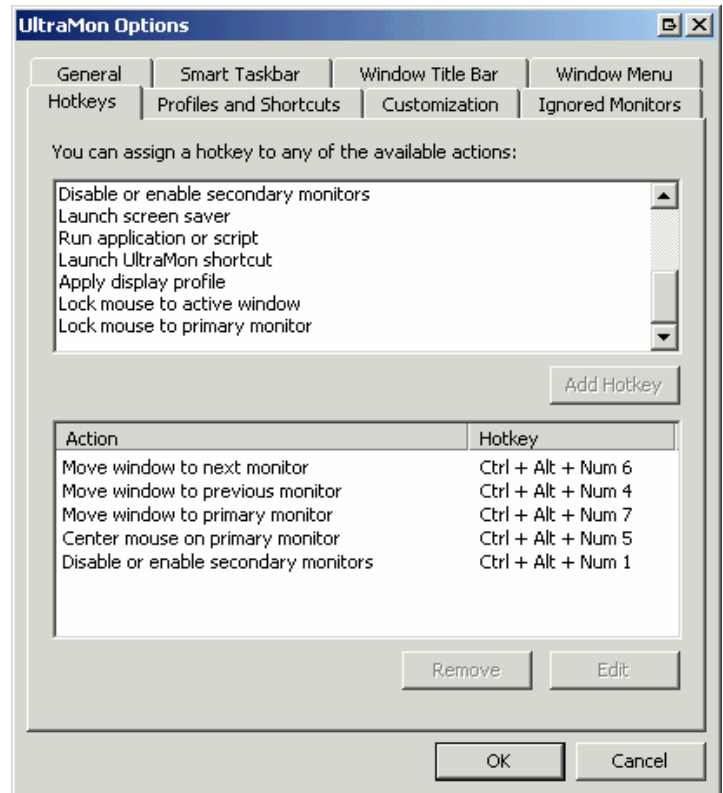
Display Profiles in UltraMon are really slick

For keyboard jockeys, hotkeys are available for such actions as moving windows from one monitor to another, centering the mouse on the primary monitor or moving it to another monitor, enabling or disabling monitors, changing display profiles, and more. The hotkeys are completely configurable so you can avoid conflicts with the hotkeys used by your apps.

Realtime Soft did not forget the eye candy. Wallpaper can be set to stretch across all monitors or you can have different wallpaper on each monitor. Screen savers normally only run on the main monitor. While most people only find this aesthetically problematic, some consider it to be a privacy issue. UltraMon allows you to either blank secondary monitors or run a separate screen saver on each monitor.

Three monitors are enough for me, but others may want more. The practical limit is ten, as that is the most the display applet for Windows 2000 and XP can handle. The author tells me that v2.2 of UltraMon will include a custom display applet to allow configuration of more than 10 monitors. There is a gallery on the Realtime Soft web site where people can post their configurations with pictures. Ross Farr holds the top spot right now with ten monitors hooked up to three video cards; two quad head and one dual head. Russ uses his system for financial analysis and trading. He graciously sent me a high-res photo of his desk. As you can see, he puts multiple monitors to excellent use. *Very impressive!*

The Realtime Soft web site has a wealth of information for those wanting to use multiple monitors. There is an extensive FAQ section and a user forum with over 8,000 posts on it. There are even links to spectacular panoramic images that are great for wallpaper stretching across multiple monitors. My current wallpaper is a 360-degree view of Ottawa taken from the Peace Tower.



Hotkey configuration

As with all software, I did not find UltraMon to be perfect.

The taskbars on secondary monitors do not include the *Start* button or system tray. It would be nice if these were replicated to each taskbar. Then you could avoid going back to the main monitor for many operations. What would be really slick would be if an application launched from any monitor would appear on that monitor unless there was an over-riding setting in the shortcut.

The UltraMon Options dialog box does not have an *Apply* button. When testing configuration options, you have to hit the *OK* button, which closes the dialog box and then you have to open it again to try a different option. Having an *Apply* button would allow you to test settings and leave the dialog box open.

At first, I couldn't get the taskbar to show on my third monitor. I finally figured out I had to right click the UltraMon taskbar on the second monitor and choose the command *Add Taskbar for ... Monitor 3*.

The author of UltraMon says he will consider my suggestions for a future release.

All in all, I highly recommend that people try multiple monitors for a low cost way of increasing your screen real estate. And if you go with multiple monitors, be sure to try out UltraMon. You won't be sorry.

Cost is **US\$40** for a single license. You can use a single license either for all users on a single computer or a single user on multiple computers, which is refreshingly flexible.

A 30-day eval version is available at the web site at www.realtimesoft.com



PRODUCT REVIEW

Universal Document Converter – A JPG “Printer”

by Alan German

Some of you may know that my day-job is in motor vehicle safety research, specifically with respect to the in-depth investigation of real-world crashes across Canada. I am currently working on a system for all-electronic collision investigation reports where material which used to reach my department in hard copy will now be produced and stored solely as electronic files.

To date, we have been using Microsoft Word to produce a printed report, with supplementary pages in the form of data collection forms, output from a variety of computer programs (e.g. CAD, damage analysis software), and print photographs.

Clearly we could use Word's DOC file as part of an all-electronic report, convert our paper forms to electronic records, and use a digital camera to provide photographs directly in JPG format. The initial “problem” is what to do about application programs which readily produce hard copy output, but use a range of proprietary file formats for storing data electronically. The concern is that if we include such non-standard file formats, the resulting E-report package will be difficult to distribute in a way that will be useful to a variety of end users, since the latter would be required to own a number of specific software applications.

Our interim solution is to adopt a quick-and-dirty approach where every page of the previously hard-copy report will be created as a JPG image. This has the advantage that almost anyone will be able to view the report using image management software or even an Internet browser. The really quick-and-dirty solution was going to be: print the report pages as usual, and then to scan them to JPG files using a scanner equipped with an automatic document feeder. However, a novel utility

program may save a few trees – the Universal Document Converter from the **fCoder Group**.

This program is a neat utility which, when installed, provides you with a new “printer”. When you call up the print menu in any Windows' application, you have the option of sending the output to the Universal Document Converter “printer”. The result is that instead of producing hard copies, the pages are produced as individual image files.

The program will save to BMP, GIF, JPG, TIF, PCX, and DCX graphic files formats. By calling up the printer's properties, the output can be customized with respect to such items as: image orientation, resolution, file compression, and the desired output directory. You can even run your favourite image viewer automatically after the print job to see the final results on screen.

You can try before you buy, with a demo version that is more than fully featured -- it places a heavy “watermark” (indicating that the “registered version adds no watermark”) on the images that are produced! If you can think of an application where you would like to produce an image file rather than a printed page, the Universal Document Converter may be the software for you.

Bottom Line:

Universal Document Converter
\$44.95 US (personal license for one computer)

fCoder Group

<http://batch.fcodersoft.com/udc/index.htm>



CLUB BITS

May Prize Winners

Door Prizes: Raxco PerfectDisk **Server edition:** Tim Mahoney

Personal edition: John Middleton

Raffle: MS Encarta Reference Library 2003: Dirk Seelemann

CONGRATULATIONS!



REMINDER:

As of June 16th, 2003, dial-up access to PUB II will be removed. Only Internet access via your internet service provider (ISP) will be available at: <http://opcug.ca/default.htm>

Club Photos

Here's to you, Chris!

May 14th, 2003, will be a day our much-loved President, Chris Taylor, will not soon forget. He was treated to a surprise 'roast' by several veteran members of the OPCUG and then presented with a certificate and gorgeous wooden plaque. For more pictures of this event and others, go to <http://opcug.ca/public/history/pictures.htm>.



From left to right: Harald Freise (Toastmaster), Eric Clyde, Bob Walker, **Chris Taylor**, Harry Gross, Claude Jarry, Bert Schopf, Tim Mahoney and Mark Cayer
Photographed by Bob Thomas



Wooden Plaque—[Click for larger photo](#)



Thank you...Thank you... Bert Schopf and Chris
[Click for larger photo](#) Photographed by Bob Thomas



Certificate—[Click for larger photo](#)

Presented to

Chris Taylor

on the 20th Anniversary Celebration of the OPCUG
In appreciation of his exceptional contribution to the OPCUG
and embodying the spirit of the club, *Users Helping Users*.

Wording on certificate and wooden plaque

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.

Mailing Address: 3 Thatcher St., Nepean, Ontario, K2G 1S6

Web address: <http://opcug.ca>

Bulletin board — the PUB II (BBS) Up to 33.6 kbps V.34 **228-8951**

NOTE: As of June 16th, dial-up access to PUB II will be removed. Only Internet access via your internet service provider (ISP) will be available at: <http://opcug.ca/default.htm>

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Developers' SIG

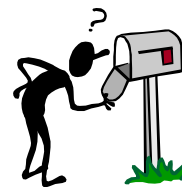
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Within a couple of minutes you will receive a confirmation message from the listserver.

“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.

