



OTTAWA PC NEWS

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November 2003

PRODUCT REVIEW

ContextConvert Pro v1.3 *by Harald Freise*

They say that **ContextConvert Pro** is a “convenient, powerful, and highly configurable

Windows application for converting among nearly all-conceivable multi-media formats.” Well... it is... sort of.

The application installs easily and once launched, an icon is located in your system tray. To call up ContextConvert Pro it's as easy as

selecting the file(s) to be converted, right clicking the mouse, then choosing “Convert...” from the windows context sensitive menu. The process starts and runs a progress bar to keep you updated about the state of the conversion.

According to ContextConvert Pro it takes input from image files formatted from ACS, AFP, ANI, AWD, BMP, CAL, CGM, CLP, CMP, CMX, CUR, CUT, DGN, DIB, DRW, DWF, DWG, DXF, EMF, EPS, EXIF, FAX, FPX, GBR, GEM, GIF, ICA, ICO, IFF, IMG, ITG, J2K, JBIG, JIF, JPG, JTF, LMA, LBM, MAC, MDA, MSP, PBM, PCD, PCL, PCT, PCX, PGM, PNG, PNM, PPM, PSD, PLT, PLT2, PTK, RAS, SCT, SGI, SHP, SMP, SUN, SVG, TIFF, TGA, XBM, XPM, XWD, WBMP, WFX, WMF, and WPG to any one of the following output formats: AWD, BMP, CLP, CUR, CUT, EPS, EXF, FPX, GIF, ICO, IFF, J2K, JBG, JPG, PCT, PCX, PNG, PSD, RAS, SCT, SGI, TGA, TIF, multi page TIFF, WMF, WPG, and XPM. Sheesh, some of these image formats I didn't know even existed.

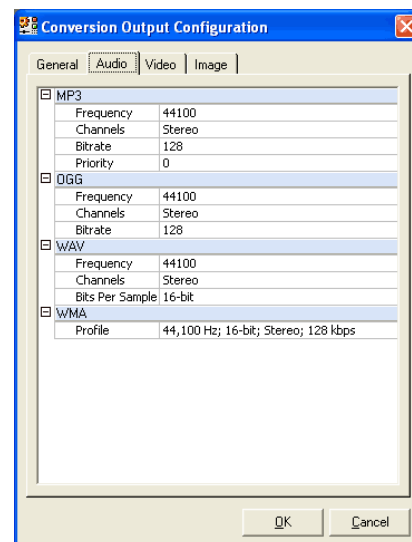
The image conversion I used most often was to convert the JPG files stored by my camera to the TIFF format so that I can manipulate the images without losing any image quality. I would then return them to JPGs prior to placing them on a CDROM disk and have them printed at a local film processing shop. Normally I use Photoshop to do this process.

*Sheesh, some of
these image
formats I didn't
know even existed.*

On several files that the file sizes were significantly different after converting them to the TIFF image format. Photoshop generally rendered smaller converted images. Enlarging the files in Photoshop I could not see any discernable difference in the quality of the images generated by ContextConvert Pro although there was a very, very slight colour shift away from the original image.

The conversion process is not that speedy. Figure on about 30-40 seconds for each 1MB image using a P4 2.4GB processor with 1GB of memory. When converting multiple images at once, ContextConvert Pro used 99% of the available CPU time and 23,468K of available memory.

Acting as an audio file format converter, it will handle two-way conver-



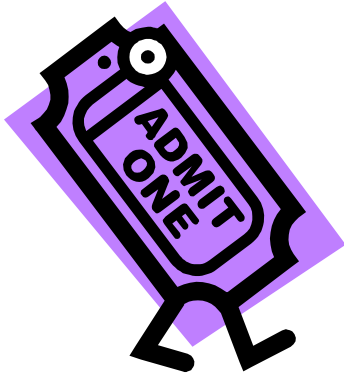
sions between the currently popular Audio CD Tracks (CDA), MP3, WMA, OGG, and WAV file formats. I could hear no difference in any of these sound files when converted from one file format to another. Then again, I haven't got the freshest set of ears either.

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Next Meeting: **WEDNESDAY, November 12th, 2003**



November Raffle

Did you buy a raffle ticket last month hoping to get a copy of McAfee Firewall 4 to protect your computer? Didn't win? Still have not installed a personal firewall to protect your computer from the hackers out on the Internet?

If you don't believe you need a personal firewall, come on out to the November Beginner's Workshop and Chris Taylor will see if he can convince you otherwise!

At the November general meeting, we have another copy of McAfee Firewall 4 to raffle off. Tickets, as always are \$1 for one, \$2 for three, or \$5 for ten.

Coming Up...

in November:

You may be familiar with the process of "burning" your own CDs, but have you ever wondered how commercial software, music, video and data CDs are produced on a larger scale? On Wednesday, November 12, 2003, Peter Bauer, the local representative of Toronto-based Media Replication Services will explain "how CDs are made", from "pressing" to silk-screening and much more. Media Replication Services is a full-service media solutions provider with over 17 years in the industry, dedicated to superior quality, technological innovation, and customer service.

This presentation will cover the full process from pre-mastering to shipping. You'll learn about Glass Mastering; the meaning of DVD formats, i.e. DVD5, DVD9, DVD10; print & screening templates, and specialty services like copy protection. Pete will also outline the difference in Shaped and Business Card CDs, and the benefits of using them, i.e. controlled sales and cost savings in mailing them versus a brochure. We'll hear about the wide variety of packaging available, and how to save money on shipping and overall per unit price, by choosing the appropriate packaging for distribution.

Also Coming Up...

in December:

Harley Bloom of Bloom Microtech
"What's New for the Holidays?"

in January, 2004:

Joe Donnelly of Hemera Technologies
Hemera Photo-Objects

in April, 2004:

Peter Andrews of SoftMap Publishing
Digital Topographic Maps / Mapping Software

CALENDAR

Meetings	Date	Time and Venue
OPCUG General Meeting	Wednesday, November 12 th	7:30 p.m. Auditorium of the Canada Museum of Science and Technology , 1867 St. Laurent Blvd. http://www.science-tech.nmstc.ca/english/index.cfm
Internet SIG (I-SIG)	Wednesday, November 12 th	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting. Come and join our discussions!
Developers' SIG	Wednesday, November 12 th	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting, and occasionally at other locations in the region.
Orphans' SIG (<i>see article this page</i>)	Wednesday, November 12 th	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting.
Delphi User Group	TBA	TBA
PIG SIG (Wing SIG)	Wednesday, November 12 th	10:00 p.m. (after all other SIGs) at Chances "R" restaurant, Woodroffe Ave. at Baseline Rd. (formerly Shoppers' City West Mall)
Please note that unless otherwise noted, SIGs meet at 9:00 p.m. (immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting).		

CLUB NEWS

Announcing New Conference Area—"AtLength"

There is a new OPCUG conference or list on the PUB ListServer (only) called "AtLength", on a trial basis. If you like the idea of such a list, please subscribe to it and support it.

This list is intended primarily for articles or discussions that are too long to go in the printed Newsletter. It is designed for material that does not fit with normal netiquette with respect to size, format, and file attachments. Postings may be in Rich Text format (such as HTML) and may include attachments, graphics, tables, scripts and style sheets (and may even include sound if the article is on that topic). In short, any format and length is permitted.

Topics should generally be related to computers or the Internet. Messages that are plain text, of reasonable size, and with no file attachments should normally be posted to one of the other lists. There is no moderator or contact person for this list.

Due to the open format for postings to this list, content will not be made available through the regular conference areas.

There is no archive of content posted to this list. If you delay subscribing, you do not get access to those articles posted before you subscribe. There is no other way to read these articles.

Note - in all examples below, the commands are indented for clarity only. When sending commands to the listserve, DO NOT indent the command. It must be left-justified.

To subscribe (start receiving e-mail from this list) to this list, send a plain text (not HTML format) mail to:

listserve@opcug.ca

with the following text in the body of the message:

subscribe AtLength

To unsubscribe (stop receiving e-mail from this list) send a plain text (not HTML format) mail to:

listserve@opcug.ca

with the following text in the body of the message:

unsubscribe AtLength

There are additional lists you can subscribe to as well as text files that may be retrieved from the listserve. To retrieve a list of available files, send a plain text (not HTML format) message to:

listserve@opcug.ca

with the following text in the body of the message:

get info



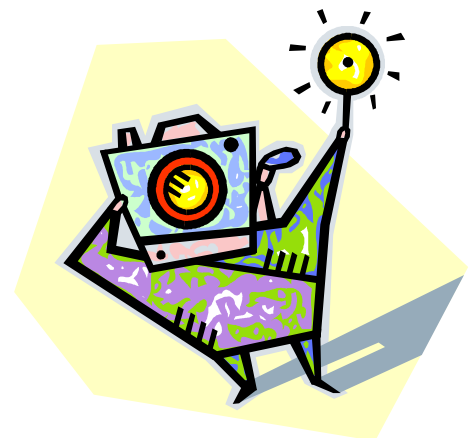
Digital Imaging *by Chris Taylor*

A couple of months ago, I bought myself a digital camera. Since then I have cranked off a couple of thousand images. I have been having a real blast!

But I am not so sure I am using the camera to its fullest potential. And I *know* I am not using my image editing software to its fullest potential.

I need help! In keeping with the OPCUG motto *Users Helping Users*, I am willing to share what I have learned and hope others might be willing to do the same. If there is sufficient interest, I would be more than happy to head up a new Special Interest Group (SIG) on digital imaging.

At the November general meeting, I will find some space after the main presentation. If anyone is interested in digital imaging, I would encourage you to attend. We can discuss what people would like to do in such a SIG and if there is enough commonality in interests, we can consider this the first meeting of the newest SIG.





Ottawa PC Users' Group Beginners' Workshop

**Saturday, November 22, 2003
9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.**

**Margaret Rywack Center
68 Knoxdale Road, Nepean, ON**

Workshop Topics:

- *Operating system maintenance*
- *Virus scanners and firewalls*
- *Word processors*
- *E-mail and Spam*
- *Users-helping-users*
- *Disk tune-up*
- *Burning CDs*
- *Browsing the web*
- *Spreadsheets*
- *Databases*

The cost to attend the entire day's session is \$35.00, which includes a one-year membership to the OPCUG (\$25.00 value) and a CD-ROM containing all of the presentation material for future reference.

Web Site Special
Early-bird registration
only \$30.00

**Full details at <http://opcug.ca>
and click on Workshop**

REGISTRATION FORM ON BACK PAGE OF THIS ISSUE

ContextConvert Pro v1.3

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What really caught my eye was the professed ability to convert .AVI video files to MPEG video format. Better than that; it has the ability to convert AVI/MPEG file to the VCD/DVD and DVD MPEG2 formats that are used by most players today that are hooked up to your regular large size home TV screen.

The video conversion process that ContextConvert Pro goes through is actually quite interesting. It separates, or rips; the original file is separated into two files. One is the audio track and the other the images file. They are then recombined into the Video output format of choice. Initially I tried converting a 456MB AVI file into VCD format.

The resulting file was a whopping 872MB. Way too big for any CDROM no matter how much you try over-burn the CD-R. Good thing that most of the processes in ContextConvert Pro are configurable. Using the menus I was able to cut the resultant file down to a more manageable size that fit on a single CD-R, which could be played on my Apex multi-format DVD player while hooked to the TV. Much better than viewing your video file on your tiny computer screen.

One of the things that irritate me is that ContextConvert Pro's web site says it converts ALL popular video

formats. Well, it doesn't. Sadly, it doesn't convert one of the most popular desktop video formats. It doesn't recognize or convert the Apple QuickTime video MOV file format to anything.

One quibble is that once installed and registered you can't easily install and transfer your licence to another machine. Actually, I never got the "transfer licence" feature to work at all. It appears that if you wish to use this application on your laptop and desktop, one has to purchase two licences regardless if you don't use them consecutively.

If there is one major criticism that I could find about ContextConvert Pro is that there is little or no useful documentation available and what is available is less than it could be. Not that this is a complex program but the default settings are sometimes more than one needs and the most complete set of options are quite easy to use after a little experimentation.

If you are just looking for an image conversion program there are other more robust available such as IrfanView. If you are looking for an audio or video conversion program then, they too, are available elsewhere. Only ContextConvert Pro combines all three formats applications into one easy to use application. Overall I think that, given the price and capability of ContextConvert Pro, it is a winner.

ContextConvert Pro

Version: 1.3

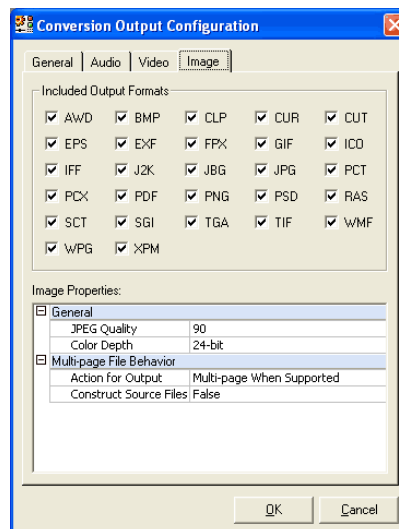
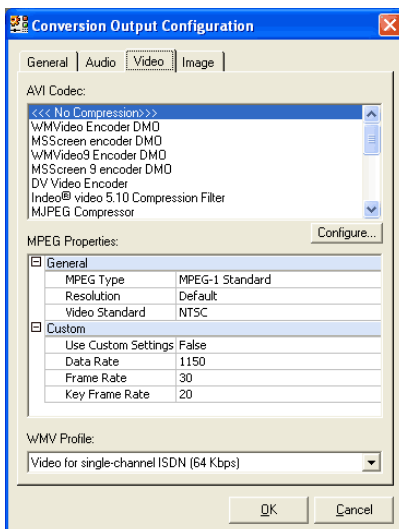
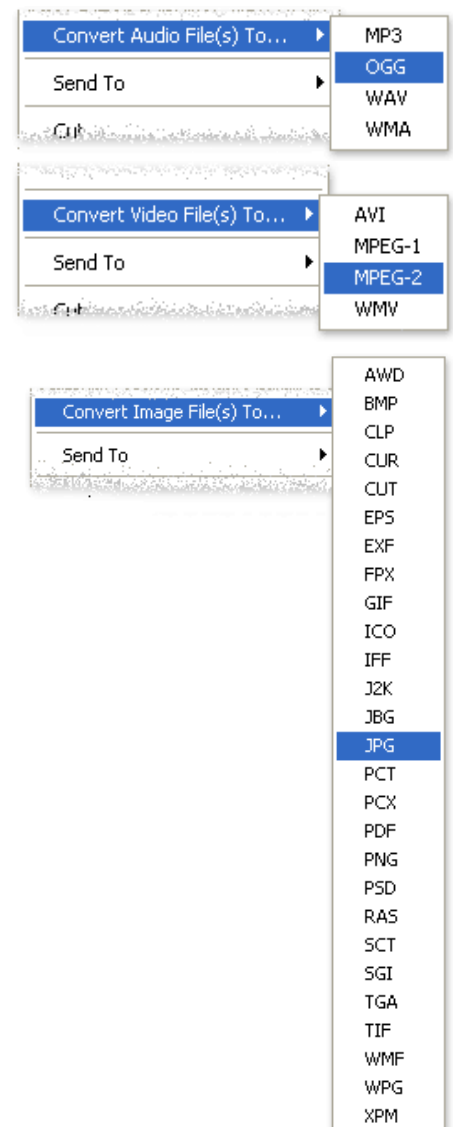
File Size: 7.14 MB

Release Date: 09/11/2003

Price: \$40 US

System Requirements:

- Pentium-class 266MHz Processor or better
- Windows® 98 SE/2000/ME/XP
- 64 MB RAM (128 MB Recommended)
- 10 MB HD
- SVGA or Higher Resolution Display
- Mouse (Recommended) & Keyboard



CLUB LIFE

Accessing PUB II – Part 2 – The Web *by Chris Taylor*

Last month, I introduced the idea of accessing the OPCUG communications server – PUB II. In it, I discussed how to configure an account on PUB II so that you can access all the services offered there. Remember when setting up a new account to send an e-mail to sysop@opcug.ca to request that your account be upgraded to member status. Otherwise, your access to member-only services will be severely restricted.

This month, we will look at using a web browser to access services. Through a web browser, you have the ability to access all the services available – messaging in the conference areas and private e-mail, file downloads, online chat, utility functions such as changing your password, and information areas.

Once you have created an account on PUB II and had it upgraded to member status, simply point your browser to <http://opcug.ca>. In the left frame, you will see a button title “PUB II” and just below that there is a link “Log Web”. Click that link to jump to the private side of the OPCUG communications server. When prompted, enter your user name and password exactly as you did when you created your account. The user name is your first name and last name, separated by a space. Neither user name nor password are case-sensitive. “Sam Spade” and “PaSSWord” are the same as “sam SPADE” and “passWORD”.

The page that then loads will have a left frame listing all the major service areas of PUB II and a right frame showing the contents of the current section. The “OPCUG” logo at the top of the left frame will take you back to the public site, should you want to return there.

The first link in the left frame takes you to the conference areas on PUB II where you can read or create mes-

sages. Most of the conference areas on PUB II are local and public, in that the messages are not shared with the world, but are readable by any member of the OPCUG. There is one conference area; “area 0 – Private e-mail” that may be used to send and receive normal e-mail to and from the Internet, as well as private messaging between OPCUG members who have accounts on PUB II.

Once in the conference areas, the top-left corner has links where you can change the behaviour of the messaging section and access some main functions. You can change between using frames or not, toggle between “thread” mode (where related messages are grouped regardless of the chronological order) and “flat” mode, jump to the “Inbox”, which lists private messages to you, and change mail options.

To read messages in any of the conference areas, click the “All Conferences” link to expand the list of conference areas. Click the name of the conference area that interests you. You will then see a list of subject lines with the author’s name and the date and time the message was posted. Simply click the subject link to view the actual message.

Various buttons are available allowing you to jump to the start or end, reply to the message, create a new message, search for a particular message, switch between threaded and flat mode, etc.

One thing to be careful about; when creating a new message be sure to check the conference area the message will be posted to. If you click the “new” button in the right frame within a conference area, it will default to creating the message within that particular conference. You do have the ability, while creating the message, to switch to a different conference area by simply selecting it from a drop-down list.

If you use the “Create New” link in

the left frame, it will default to conference area 0 – “Private e-mail” which can be used to send e-mail to any Internet address or as a private message to any other user on PUB II.

Once done with messaging, you can click the “home” link at the top of the page to exit the conference areas.

Explore the different ways of using the conference areas. There are lots of options that affect the way things work. Too many to cover in an article such as this. If you have any questions, you can ask me or post a message in the General Messages conference area.

Back at the main “home” screen for PUB II, the second link in the left frame is “File Library”. Clicking on this will bring you to the section where you can download any of thousands of shareware and freeware files. Keep in mind that we simply cannot keep up with the latest and greatest that can be found on the Internet. But what you will find are some of the more useful programs members have found as well as some older programs that are still quite useful but may be a little hard to find elsewhere.

The file areas are grouped into like categories, which are displayed when you click on “File Library”. Clicking the link for any file group will show the file areas within the group. Clicking on a file area will show the individual files within the area. Displayed will be the filename, brief description, size, and date the file was posted to PUB II. There is a “Desc” link which provides a more detailed description of the file. The filename itself is a link. Clicking the filename will allow you to download the file to your computer.

There are navigation links that allow you to view additional pages of files in the file area. As well, there is a search function where you can search by file-

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Accessing PUB II—Part 2— The Web

(Continued from page 6)

name or words in the file description. It will automatically search across all file areas.

In addition to the shareware and free-ware, there are documents related to the OPCUG, including minutes from board meetings, stats on PUB II usage, our constitution, and more. See the “Text Files” file group.

If you find interesting programs that can legally be shared, I would encourage you to upload a copy to PUB II. With the massive number of programs out there, it is nice to know about a program that another member of the OPCUG found useful.

Back at the main “home” screen for the private side of PUB II, the third link in the left frame is “On-line Chat areas”. This function allows two or more users who are logged onto PUB II at the same time to chat back and forth in real time.

When selected, a separate window opens for the chat function. Besides the two static chat channels Main and General Chat, there is a dynamically created channel named for each user currently using chat. You can join a channel by simply double-clicking on it in the list and you can see who else is in the channel in the lower-right corner of the window.

A single-line window at the bottom allows you to type messages that will appear on-screen for anyone in the channel.

The fourth link at the home page is “Personal Properties, where you can do such things as change your password, set messaging properties, see how many times you have logged onto PUB II, etc. Explore and see what you can configure here.

The fifth link is “Who’s Online” which allows you to see who else is logged onto PUB II at the current time.

The next two links deal with QWK packets and are used by people who use “offline readers”, a technology which is rather rare these days and beyond the scope of what I would like to cover right now.

The next four links point to text information explaining the differences between the public and private side of the OPCUG web presence, the constitution of the OPCUG, our Netiquette guide, and some frequently asked questions.

This has been a whirlwind tour of the private side of the OPCUG web site. It is a rich interface in that all the services on PUB II are available through a web browser. Next month we will continue the tour by looking at a couple of other means of accessing subsets of the full features of PUB II. Until then, I’ll see you down at the PUB (II).



CLUB LIFE

2004 Elections *by Chris Taylor*

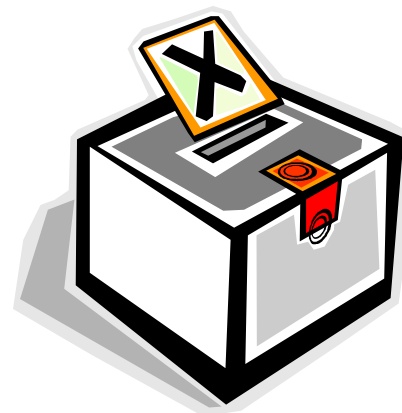
It seems like it was only a year ago that we had a call for nominations for the upcoming elections. Oh...ya. Well, that time has rolled around again.

I would encourage all members to consider getting involved in the operation of the OPCUG by running for a position on the nine-member Board of Directors. It can be fun, interesting and looks great on a C.V.

If you are not sure what is involved, corner any of the current board members at a meeting or send off an email. Their email addresses are published in the newsletter and at the web site. Any of them would be happy to let you know how we operate.

Wayne Houston has graciously agreed to once again head the election committee. The rules are as follows;

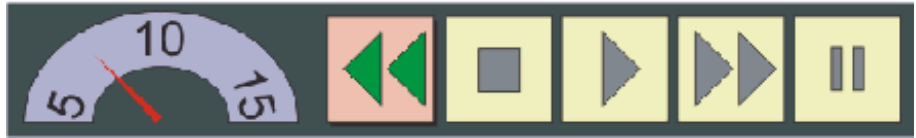
- All nominations must be received by December 31, 2003
- All nominees must be members in good standing of the OPCUG, Inc.
- Nominees may nominate themselves or may be nominated by another member.
- Nominations may be submitted in writing; by email to awhouston@sympatico.ca, by postal mail to Wayne Houston, 6405 Sugar Creek Way, Orleans, ON, K1C 1X9, or in person to Wayne at a general meeting of the OPCUG.
- Nomination should include the fact that the nomination is for the Board of Directors for 2004, your name, address, phone number, email address, and membership number (if known). If you are nominating someone else, the same information for the nominee should be included. Confirmation of receipt of nomination will be by e-mail only. If more than 9 nominations are received, there will be an election at the February, 2004 Annual General Meeting.



OPCUG History

Rewind...

by Ted May, OPCUG Historian



5 years ago.

The first article "**Election notice: OPCUG Board of Directors**" by David Reeves, Secretary, discusses the upcoming election of new Board of Directors members for 1999.

The next article "**Coming up in November**" discusses the two upcoming presentations for the November 4th meeting. The first was "**Removable media**" stating that the presenter would provide an unbiased evaluation of many removable media drives. The second "**Drawing tablets**" was a presentation of the wacom tablet in action.

The next item was a calendar of events at the November meeting and also mentioned the December meeting.

Under **Club news** was the article on the "**Swap meet**" which was held at the Museum of Science and Technology on the 18th of November 1998.

The next article "**Discovering the OPCUG at the Computer Fair last month**" said that the fair was a great success for the representatives on the OPCUG stand. The article is preceded by a huge half page photograph of the OPCUG stand.

The next little item "**Fly West for Questions and Answers**" says the best SIG meeting of the evening may (have been) the "Good times" café at Shoppers City West.

The next article "**Zip revisited**" in **Dunc Petrie's Corner** under "**Hardware update**"

gave updated information about the ZIP drive which was reviewed in the article in the February 1998 issue of the newsletter.

Also in **Dunc Petrie's Corner** is the article "**Digital camera image tweaking**" discussed software used to improve the images produced by digital cameras.

The last item was about the **Prizes** that were won by various members. Among the prizes was a copy of **DriveCopy** won by Michel Perron.

10 years ago.

The first article was "**OLE! Microsoft does more than NT!**" by Jackson Hibbler talks about Microsoft's presentation last month (October 1993), which discussed DDE which became OLE (version 2.0 was the latest at the time) and said they understood OLE well enough to incorporate it into the new linked software suite—**Microsoft Office 4.0**.

An item about spare parts from older computers recycled to the Community Foundation to be offered at the upcoming Swap meet.

The next article "**Swap Meet, November 30th**" by Eric Clyde and Julie Dustin about the swap meet and also gave a schedule or Timetable for the event.

A small item, the calendar of events up to the January meeting.

The next article "**Are they worth it?**" by Harald Frieze discussed upgrades of the CPU for the each of the different machines using the 486DX, 486SX or 386DX CPU.

There was another **Election notice** for the upcoming election of Board of Directors members.

The next article "**Electronic mail around the world with Internet**" by Jerry Gault discussed e-mail and how it works. It also discussed ten tips for sending messages which are to the point and politically correct.

The next article "**Understanding your system: part 3, monitors and video cards**" by Eric Clyde discussed how the video card and monitor work together to form the picture on the face of the monitor. It also discussed the then currently available types of monitors and video cards (VGA and

SVGA) and some of the facts about them.

The last article "**Super software sale**" by Norman Dafoe talked about bargains in keeping with the upcoming **November Swap meet**. Those bargains was to be a **CLEAROUT SALE** of all software disks in the library marked down in price.

15 years ago.

The first article "**PageMaker 3 offers new enhancements**" by Mike Roy discussed the enhancements to Page-Make v3.0 and the fact that it is very slow but its features make that bearable.

The next article "**How character sets are made**" by Alex Mommers (second of three parts) discussed how character sets are implemented and used back then.

The next article "**True confessions of a 'power user'**" by Jackson Hibler discussed the reality of people using computers and that many stick with what they first bought. In many cases because they could not afford to upgrade the hardware and or software.

A small item "**Calendar**" mentioned meeting schedules and the upcoming meeting.

Under the title **Bulletin board changes name**, the article "**The 'Bureau' has become 'Cooler'**" discussed the club's BBS which changed its name from **Bureau** to **The Water Cooler**. The OPCUG's new board the **PUB** was established that year (1988).

Two items listed the Club Executive and also the SIGs.

The final article "**ENABLE meeting planned**" discussed the planned meeting concerning 'Enable/OA' which was the latest release of Enable (Office Automation).





OPCUG Beginners' Workshop

Saturday, November 22 2003
9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Margaret Rywack Center
68 Knoxdale Road
Nepean, ON

Registration Form

Name:

Address:

Tel:

E-mail:

I wish to register for this workshop.

Please find enclosed my cheque
in the amount of \$30.00,
made payable to: **OPCUG**

Mail the completed registration
form and your cheque to:

OPCUG
3 Thatcher Street
Nepean, ON K2G
1S6

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 membership: \$25 per year
Mailing Address: 3 Thatcher St., Nepean, Ontario, K2G 1S6
Web address: <http://opcug.ca>

Bulletin board — the PUB II (BBS) <http://opcug.ca/default.htm>

NOTE: As of June 16th, dial-up access to PUB II has been removed. Only access via the internet through your internet service provider (ISP) is available.

President and System Administrator

Chris Taylor

ctaylor@nrcan.gc.ca 727-5453

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Delphi SIG coordinator

Martin Pagnan

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Director without Portfolio and

Orphans' SIG Coordinator (Interim)

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Developers' SIG

Bob Thomas

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