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PRODUCT REVIEW

Microsoft Digital Image Pro 9

by Chris Taylor

I have a fair amount of experience with film photography, both behind the camera and in the darkroom. But when it comes to manipulating images on the computer, to say I am graphically-challenged would be kind. When I bought a digital camera last year, I knew I would need help.

I tried the Camedia software that came with my Olympus C-750 camera, but I found it quite limited. Then I won a copy of Adobe Photoshop 7. I had a friend show me some of the things Photoshop can do. While it can handle just about any image editing chore, I could see it would be a bear to learn.

I needed something simpler to use than Photoshop and more capable than Camedia. I found that balance in Microsoft Digital Image Pro 9.

The user interface is shown in *Figure 1*. The centre of the screen shows the working area, known as the *canvas*. There are toolbars for commonly used tools. The left side of the screen shows the *Common Tasks* bar providing easy access to commonly used functions. On the right side of the screen are the *Stack*, which shows the different layers in the current image, and *Files* which shows all open image files and allows you to choose which one appears on the canvas.

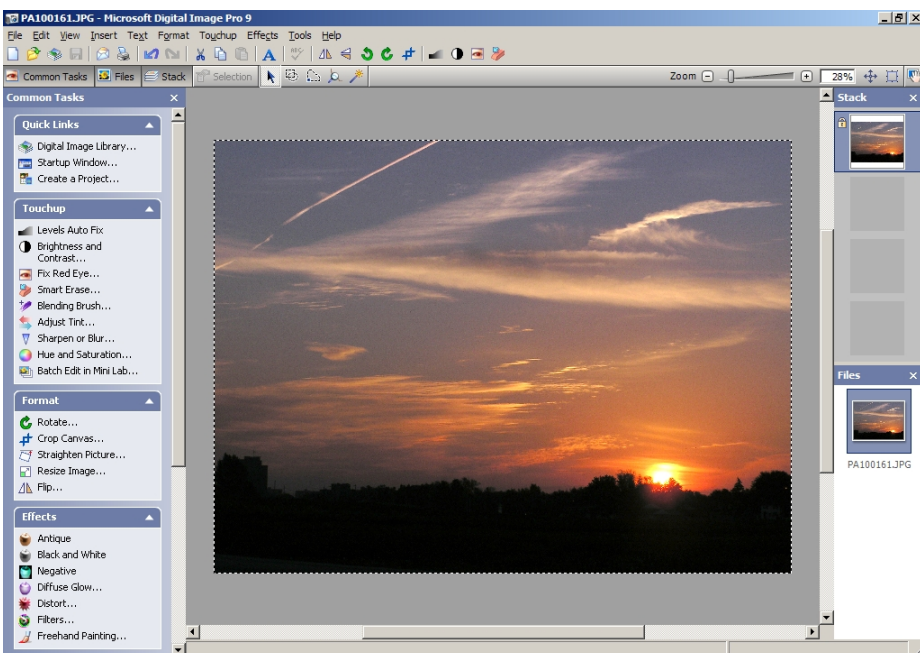


Figure 1

Digital Image Pro has all the standard features one would expect in an image editing program. You can adjust the contrast and brightness. You can sharpen or blur the image. You can modify colour levels and tweak hue, saturation, and tint. You can adjust lighting levels for shadows, midtones and highlights with the help of a histogram which shows you graphically just how much of the image has different light levels. You can even adjust the individual red, green, and blue channels, if you want.

Where I feel Digital Image Pro really excels is in the way the program makes it simple to correct common flaws in digital images. There are many easy-to-use tools.

There is a *blemish removal* tool that requires only a point and click to zap blemishes by smoothing in the area. The *fix red eye* tool allows you to remove that distraction just as easily. With three clicks of the mouse, the *remove wrinkles* tool can take years off

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Next Meeting: **WEDNESDAY, May 12th, 2004**

May Raffle

Did you try to win the copy of **Microsoft Office 2003 Professional Edition** that was raffled off at the March OPCUG meeting and your name is not Ted May (who was the lucky winner)? At the May general meeting you can have another chance. Thanks to Microsoft Mindshare, which provides support to user groups, we have another copy to raffle off. This is the complete Professional Edition including Word, Excel, Outlook, PowerPoint, Access, Publisher, and Business Contact Manager for Outlook. This package has a local store price of \$650.00. For more information about Microsoft Office 2003, see <http://www.microsoft.com/office/editions/prodinfo/default.msp>



Raffle tickets are \$1 for one, \$2 for three, or \$5 for ten. Help keep your membership dues low and take a chance (or ten) on this prize.

Coming Up...

Tom Camps, President & CEO of Ottawa's **BOLDstreet Inc.**, will be making a presentation on "Public Access WiFi" at our May 12th general meeting. With BOLDStreet Wireless Internet, "all your favorite features of the internet are at your fingertips." You could log into your company's virtual private network, read your e-mail, send instant messages and explore the web from BOLDstreet "hotspots" at numerous Ontario hotels, restaurants, coffee shops, bars, and highway rest stops. In his presentation, Tom will provide an overview of the "Hotspots" market and its business opportunities.

With over 20 years in the technology industry, Tom Camps spent more than a decade in leadership positions with a focus on building new markets before founding BOLDstreet. He was previously Vice President of Marketing at Coast Software, a website-testing company targeting the ISP, web hosting and telecom markets. Mr. Camps was instrumental in raising critical post-bubble VC financing for Coast. Before that he was the Vice President of Market Strategies for Cognos, the world's leading vendor of Enterprise Business Intelligence solutions. He has also served in various marketing and technical roles for BMC Software, Microstar and Andyne Computing.

CALENDAR

Meetings	Date	Time and Venue
OPCUG General Meeting	Wednesday, May 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, May 12 th	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting. Come and join our discussions!
Developers' SIG	Wednesday, May 12 th	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting, and occasionally at other locations in the region.
Orphans' SIG	Wednesday, May 12 th	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting.
Digital Imaging SIG	Wednesday, May 12 th	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting.
Delphi User Group	TBA	TBA
PIG SIG (Wing SIG)	Wednesday, May 12 th	10:00 p.m. (after all other SIGs) at Chances "R" restaurant, Woodroffe Ave. at Baseline Rd. (formerly Shoppers' City West)
Please note that unless otherwise noted, SIGs meet at 9:00 p.m. (immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting).		

ORPHANS' SIG

A (final) word from the Interim Coordinator of the Orphans' SIG

Some months ago I offered to coordinate the meetings of the Orphans SIG in order to give some time for someone to take on this role on a more permanent basis. The call for a new Coordinator is now critical since, as OPCUG's newly appointed Treasurer, I have several tasks, especially at the end of the monthly meetings, that conflict with leading the SIG. Consequently, if the meetings are to continue on an organized basis, it is necessary for someone to step forward and become the Orphans' SIG Coordinator.

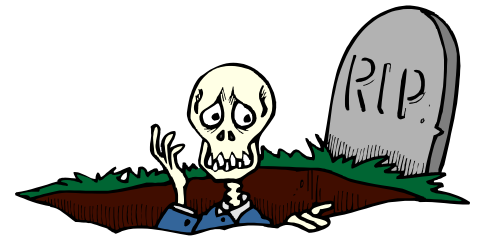
To make the task easier, I should note that we have a list of topics of interest to the SIG, and various club members willing to provide related presentations. In addition, we have held some very successful hands-on demonstrations with various hardware and software systems, and are offering an associated programme of troubleshooting, technical tips and tender loving care - T3! See the Orphans' SIG's web page for full details.

So, all the pieces are in place for an interesting and useful series of SIG meetings. All that is now needed is for someone to take on the role of Coordinator. If you wish to undertake this task, please contact any member of the Board of Directors ASAP so that a notice of a May SIG meeting can be posted on the website, and included in the announcements' listserver message just prior to the next OPCUG meeting.

If nobody is willing to become SIG Coordinator, the Board of Directors has indicated that there will not be any further meetings of the Orphans' SIG. So, please consider the above request seriously. After I wrap up the Treasurer's duties next month, I certainly hope to be able to poke my head around the door of one of the meeting rooms and see an Orphans' group in full session!

Alan German

OPCUG Treasurer



*Is this the end of the Orphans' SIG?
Unless someone steps forward as it's
new coordinator, it may very well be.*

*Interested parties may apply at:
opcug-webmaster@opcug.ca
or contact any member of the
Board of Directors listed on the
[back page](#) of this issue.*

Coming Up in June—BBQ!

June is our wrap-up meeting before we break for the summer. Continuing with tradition, we will be having our annual barbeque on June 16th.^{*} It will take place under the big tent near the main doors to the museum. There will be cold drinks, hamburgers, hot dogs and dessert. Make sure you let Tim Mahoney know at timothy.mahoney@opcug.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 buns 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 ([Corel WordPerfect Office 12](#)), which will start at 8:00.

See you there!

^{*}*This is the 3rd Wednesday in June.*



Digital Image Pro (Continued from page 1)

your photo subjects and turn you into a hero. There are similar tools for removing scratches and dust spots.

There is a standard *clone brush*, which allows you to fill in one area of the image with what appears in another area. But there is also a *blending brush* which is quite cool. It works like the clone brush, except it blends the original and replacement image data, making for a smoother, more subtle result.

If you have ever had a distracting element in your pictures, such as a telephone pole protruding from someone's head, or a piece of garbage on a nicely manicured lawn, you will love the *smart erase* feature. Outline an area you would like removed from the image and Digital Image Pro fills in the area with pixels similar to the surrounding area. This works best on areas that are either fairly smooth such as a plain wall or fairly randomly textured, such as grass. Figures 2 and 3 show the use of the *smart erase* tool. Notice how effectively the water and the tree line were handled.



Figure 2



Figure 3

While any image editing program will allow you to adjust brightness and contrast, you might find that some of your

images are fine except for shadow areas or highlights. Digital Image Pro provides tools to *add flash* to lighten just the shadow areas or *reduce back-lighting* to darken down just the highlights. Figures 4 and 5 show the use of *add flash* to bring up details in the dark forested area. Notice how the highlights were left alone and only the shadows were lightened.



Figure 4



Figure 5

A common problem is when an image has a colour cast to it. Every image editing program allows you to adjust colours. But my attempts to manually adjust colours are painful reminders of why I only did B&W film photography. With Digital Image Pro, this is not a problem. Select the option to adjust tint, use the eye dropper tool to point to something that should be pure white and the program does the rest. It doesn't always work perfectly, but it will generally get me pretty close and I can often manage the final manual adjustments necessary to get the image just how I want it.

Format changes are easy with commands to flip, resize, crop, straighten, and rotate. I really like the *straighten picture* command. Sure, every image editor allows you to rotate your picture, but have you ever tried to adjust a picture so it is *perfectly* level? With Digi-

tal Image Pro, you just find something in your image that you want perfectly horizontal or vertical. Click on one end, then the other, and your image is immediately straightened. As rotating the image will leave the sides crooked, you can even have the image automatically cropped so the edges are straightened.

Digital Image Pro comes with 200 filters for a wide variety of special effects such as chalk, coloured pencil, chrome, embossing, and water colours. I used to view filters as a way to attempt to make a poor picture good. But I have found some uses for filters that make sense – for example when using an image as a secondary element in a project such as a greeting card or a calendar. In cases like that, stylising the image with a filter can be quite effective.

Even though Digital Image Pro has many features that allow quick and easy correction of common problems, there is still considerable depth to the program and it is quite cable if you want to roll up your sleeves and “do it yourself”. There are lots of drawing tools. You can use cut-out tools such as the edge finder to isolate areas of the image for manipulation. The *magic wand* allows you to select areas of the image that are similar in colour. The *dodge and burn* brush allows you to be very selective in lightening or darkening areas of the image.

Digital Image Pro comes with a nice 275 page printed...yes, *printed*...manual that can help you get up to speed on how to use the main features. As well, it has lots of good info on general photography, scanning, and the best of *Tips and Tricks* on the MSN photo site. Installed along with the program, you will find five instructional video clips that take you step-by-step through processes; exploring the work area, basic photo touch-up, face touch-up, advanced photo editing, and organizing and archiving.

System Requirements:

700Mhz Pentium, 256MB RAM, 400MB disk space, 800x600x16-bit display, 1MB video RAM.

Digital Image Pro 9 sells locally for about \$140.

More information may be found at <http://www.microsoft.com/products/imaging/products/dipinfo.asp>

COMPUTER SECURITY

Good Security Habits

We continue from last month with Part 2 of a 5-part series on computer security.

The following is reprinted with permission from [US-CERT \(http://www.us-cert.gov/index.html\)](http://www.us-cert.gov/index.html), the US Computer Emergency Readiness Team.

Cyber Security Tip ST04-002

Choosing and Protecting Passwords

Passwords are a common form of authentication and are often the only barrier between a user and your personal information. There are several programs attackers can use to help guess or "crack" passwords, but by choosing good passwords and keeping them confidential, you can make it more difficult for an unauthorized person to access your information.

Why do you need a password?

Think about the number of PIN numbers, passwords, or passphrases you use every day: getting money from the ATM or using your debit card in a store, logging on to your computer or email, signing in to an online bank account or shopping cart...the list seems to just keep getting longer. Keeping track of all of the number, letter, and word combinations may be frustrating at times, and maybe you've wondered if all of the fuss is worth it. After all, what attacker cares about your personal email account, right? Or why would someone bother with your practically empty bank account when there are others with much more money? Often, an attack is not specifically about your account but about using the access to your information to launch a larger attack. And while having someone gain access to your personal email might not seem like much more than an inconvenience and threat to your privacy, think of the implications of an attacker gaining access to your social security number or your medical records.

One of the best ways to protect information or physical property is to ensure that only authorized people have access to it. Verifying that someone is the person they claim to be is the next step, and this authentication process is even more important, and more difficult, in the cyber world. Passwords are the most common means of authentication, but if you don't choose good passwords or keep them confidential, they're almost as ineffective as not having any password at all. Many systems and services have been successfully broken into due to the use of insecure and inadequate passwords, and some viruses and worms have exploited systems by guessing weak passwords.

How do you choose a good password?

Most people use passwords that are based on personal information and are easy to remember. However, that also makes it easier for an attacker to guess or "crack" them. Consider a four-digit PIN number. Is yours a combination of the month, day, or year of your birthday? Or the last four digits of your social security number? Or your address or phone number? Think about how easily it is to find this information out about somebody. What about your email password—is it a word that can be found in the dictionary? If so, it may be susceptible to "dictionary" attacks, which attempt to guess passwords based on words in the dictionary.

Although intentionally misspelling a word ("daytt" instead of "date") may offer some protection against dictionary attacks, an even better method is to rely on a series of words and use memory techniques, or mnemonics, to help you remember how to decode it. For example, instead of the password "hoops," use "l!Tpbb" for "[I] [l]ike [T]o [p]lay [b]asket[b] all." Using both lowercase and capital letters adds another layer of obscurity. Your best defense, though, is to use a combination of numbers, special characters, and both lowercase and capital letters. Change the same example we used above to "l!2pBb." and see how much more complicated it has become just by adding numbers and special characters.

Don't assume that now that you've developed a strong password you should use it for every system or program you log into. If an attacker does guess it, he would have access to all of your accounts. You should use these techniques to develop unique passwords for each of your accounts.

Here is a review of tactics to use when choosing a password:

Don't use passwords that are based on personal information that can be easily accessed or guessed

Don't use words that can be found in any dictionary of any language

Develop a mnemonic for remembering complex passwords

Use both lowercase and capital letters

Use a combination of letters, numbers, and special characters

Use different passwords on different systems

(Continued on page 6)

Cyber Security *(Continued from page 5)*

How can you protect your password?

Now that you've chosen a password that's difficult to guess, you have to make sure not to leave it someplace for people to find. Writing it down and leaving it in your desk, next to your computer, or, worse, taped to your computer, is just making it easy for someone who has physical access to your office. Don't tell anyone your passwords, and watch for attackers trying to trick you through phone calls or email messages requesting that you reveal your passwords.

If your Internet service provider (ISP) offers choices of authentication systems, look for ones that use Kerberos, challenge/response, or public key encryption rather than simple passwords. Consider challenging service providers who only use passwords to adopt more secure methods.

Also, many programs offer the option of "remembering" your password, but these programs have varying degrees of security protecting that information. Some programs, such as email clients, store the information in clear text in a file on your computer. This means that anyone with access to your computer can discover all of your passwords and can gain access to your information. For this reason, always remember to log out when you are using a public computer (at the library, an Internet cafe, or even a shared computer at your office). Other programs, such as Apple's Keychain and Palm's Secure Desktop, use strong encryption to protect the information. These types of programs may be viable options for managing your passwords if you find you have too many to remember.

There's no guarantee that these techniques will prevent an attacker from learning your password, but they will make it more difficult.

Authors: Mindi McDowell, Jason Rafail, Shawn Hernan

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Humour

A man in a hot air balloon realized he was lost. He reduced altitude and spotted a man below. He descended a bit more and shouted, "Excuse me, can you help me? I promised a friend I would meet him an hour ago, but I don't know where I am."

The guy below replied, "You're in a hot air balloon hovering approximately 30 feet above the ground. You're between 40 and 41 degrees north latitude and between 59 and 60 degrees west longitude."

"You must be an engineer," said the balloonist.

"I am," he replied, "How did you know?"

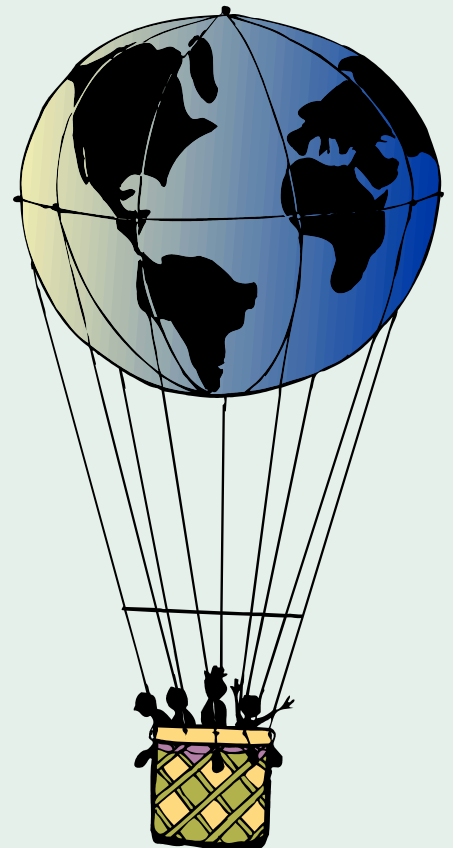
"Well," answered the balloonist, "everything you told me is technically correct, but I've no idea what to make of your information, and the fact is, I'm still lost. Frankly, you've not been much help at all. If anything, you've delayed my trip."

The man below responded, "You must be in Management."

I am," replied the balloonist, "but how did you know?"

"Well," said the man, "you don't know where you are or where you're going. You have risen to where you are due to a large quantity of hot air. You made a promise which you've no idea how to keep, and you expect people beneath you to solve your problems. The fact is, you are in exactly the same position you were in before we met, but now, somehow, it's my fault."

Source: unknown



INTERNET SIG

Internet Search Engines For Beginners, part 4

by Eric Clyde, Coordinator of the Internet SIG

The earlier articles in this series discussed search engines that are mainly “spider” based, i.e. the search looks for keywords which appear either in the titles or texts of web pages. The results usually lead to thousands of “hits” with relevant entries in the top twenty, say, but how useful these are depends on one’s guessing the terms that the authors of the web pages would have used. The most popular such search engine is, of course, Google.

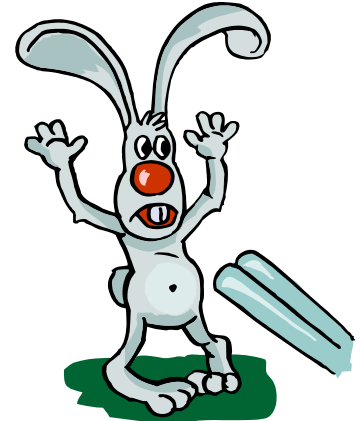
The other type of search depends mainly on human indexing, something like a library catalogue, or a directory, or even the Yellow Pages. In all of these someone has to decide which category or categories any given entry is to appear, before the entries are sorted by computer into the final product. With this type, as in using a library card catalogue, the index to the entries is in a hierarchical structure, e.g. Canada, then, within that category the subcategory Canada - Provinces, then Canada - Provinces - Ontario, etc. At their best, this type of index has its entries pre-screened and evaluated, giving consistently good results, frequently with excellent annotations. However many of these are prepared by volunteers, so the information may be less timely than it could be.

Some examples of this type of search tool are the Librarians’ Index to the Internet (<http://lii.org>), Infomine (<http://infomine.ucr.edu>), About (<http://www.about.com>), and Directory Mozilla (<http://www.dmoz.org>). The latter claims to have 62,657 editors, with 590,000 categories covering 4,639,551 sites at the time this article is being prepared. A somewhat cursory examination found many excellent parts, and quite a few that were not very complete!

But no search is complete if it does not take into account the so-called invisible web, with pages that are not accessible to the automatic spider searching used by the general search engines, and thus are not indexed by them. There are, however, many directories that list these pages, so they can be found through them. Some of these are Direct Search (<http://www.freeprint.com/gary/direct.htm>), the Invisible Web Directory (<http://www.invisible-web.net/>), and Profusion (<http://www.profusion.com>). Another way to find these is by doing a search on Google using the terms “invisible” “web” plus the topic you are interested in.

The web is a fascinating source of useful and also of useless information; a great time saver, but it can also be a great time waster. But used wisely ... At one point in my career I was a science reference librarian, and I envy my present day colleagues who can do searches in seconds that used to take me hours.

So ... happy hunting!



It's a Deal!

Following the demo of Digital Image Pro at the April OPCUG general meeting, long-time member and Internet SIG coordinator Eric Clyde saw Digital Image Suite 9 (which includes Digital Image Pro and Digital Image Library) on sale at Costco for \$170. When he got to the cash, he was handed a \$45 mail-in rebate coupon.

Thanks for passing on the word, Eric.

If you don't have a membership at Costco, someone else mentioned that Staples has Digital Image Suite 9 for \$190 with a \$60 rebate. Watch the packaging. They also have Digital Image Pro 9 (which does not include Digital Image Library) for \$190 with a \$30 rebate. Go figure.

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
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