



OTTAWA PC NEWS

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PRODUCT REVIEW

Microsoft Encarta Reference Library 2004 DVD Plus

by Chris Taylor

I got tired just reading the title! But this handy DVD is packed with reference tools including an encyclopaedia, atlas, dictionary, thesaurus, translation dictionary, quotations, statistics, virtual tours, photos, videos, and much more.

The encyclopaedia has over 68,000 articles. There are over 26,000 photos and illustrations, over 400 videos and animations, over 3,300 sound and music clips, links to over 29,000 web sites, and 32 Discovery Channel videos. The atlas includes over 1.8 million locations world-wide.

At first, I found the user interface a little quirky. When Encarta loads, the main screen is dominated by the *Visual Browser*, which is a spinning wheel of 120-odd cards of various subjects from *Aboriginal Australians* to *World War I*. As you move the mouse away from the centre of the screen, the wheel spins faster. Clicking a card returns a new spinning wheel with related subtopics. Another click will jump you to the actual material on that topic.



Main screen

But it is not very likely the topic you are interested in is one of these initial 120 cards. I found the *Visual Browser* somewhat more useful as I dug down into articles. When accessing the *Visual Browser* from within a topic, it brings up cards related to just that topic. Me thinks Microsoft is experimenting with a new user interface for locating information. In my opinion, the jury is still out.

The search function is quite powerful, allowing you to search across all content or just within selected sections. Each line in the search results window has an icon indicating the type of content, such as map, chart, picture, 3D virtual tour, quotation, etc.

There are a couple of things that annoy me about the search function.



Search result of Frank Lloyd Wright

The search results window cannot be resized, which is a bit awkward. It does provide a tooltip with the full text if you hover the mouse over a truncated line. See the example search result (above) of *Frank Lloyd Wright* in the search on *Architecture*. It would be

nice to be able to adjust the width to avoid having to move the mouse around to see complete lines.

Worse, I think some of the search functions are broken. I was looking for quotations by *Yogi Berra*, who had a wonderful flair for unclear language. From the main screen, I clicked on *Quotations* under *Cool Tools*. Then, in the *Find* box, I typed *Yogi Berra*. Encarta returned zero hits. I tried *Berra*, *Yogi* with the same results.

When I instead did a search of all of Encarta for *Yogi Berra* and jumped to the main entry, the *Contents* window had various categories of information about the baseball player. One section, labelled *quotations*, contained 5 items, including "Baseball is ninety percent mental. The other half is physical." and "When you come to a fork in the road, take it." It did not include one of my

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BBQ and Meeting: **WEDNESDAY, June 16th, 2004**

June Raffle

At the June meeting, thanks to the generosity of Microsoft Canada, we have some hardware! If your computer has a basic keyboard and mouse, you will be interested in this package – a Microsoft MultiMedia Keyboard and a Microsoft Wireless IntelliMouse Explorer! Both of these are really spiffy with a plethora of keys and buttons to make using your computer just that much easier. For details, see <http://www.microsoft.com/hardware/mouseandkeyboard/productdetails.aspx?pid=020> and <http://www.microsoft.com/hardware/mouseandkeyboard/productdetails.aspx?pid=002>

Raffle tickets are \$1 for one, \$2 for three, or \$5 for ten.



Coming Up...

June 16, 2004 (third Wednesday in June).

Ottawa-based Corel Corporation released the latest version of its office suite on April 27, 2004; pitching it in their press release, as "WordPerfect Office 12 – The Other Office." Corel believes their "Full-Featured, Compatible Office Suite" is a "Value-Priced Alternative" to the market-share leading competitor. "WordPerfect Office 12 boosts productivity with the trusted power of WordPerfect for word processing, Quattro® Pro for spreadsheets and Presentations™ for multimedia slide shows. The suite also includes an address book for managing contacts, the WordPerfect Wireless Office Suite, and the new WordPerfect OfficeReady™ template browser, a powerful platform for managing WordPerfect Office templates, including the 40 new templates bundled with the suite."

You can hear all about the latest productivity and compatibility enhancements in WordPerfect Office 12 at the June 16, 2004 meeting of the Ottawa PC Users' Group. Michel Daw, a Training Specialist with Corel's Sales Training & Support department will be making the presentation. Those who attended Michel's presentation on CorelDRAW 12 earlier this year will know we're in for an interesting and entertaining evening.

Don't forget to come early and enjoy our 3rd Annual OPCUG BBQ (see opposite page for details).

CALENDAR

Meetings	Date	Time and Venue
OPCUG General Meeting and ANNUAL BBQ!	WEDNESDAY, June 16 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, June 16 th	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting. Come and join our discussions!
Developers' SIG	WEDNESDAY, June 16 th	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting, and occasionally at other locations in the region.
Orphans' SIG	WEDNESDAY, June 16 th	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting.
Digital Imaging SIG	WEDNESDAY, June 16 th	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting.
Delphi User Group	TBA	TBA
PIG SIG (Wing SIG)	WEDNESDAY, June 16 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).

BBQ BBQ

June is our wrap-up meeting before we break for the summer. Continuing with tradition, we will be having our annual barbeque. 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 burs 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 around 8:00 pm.

Date: June 16, 2004 (**third** Wednesday in June)



PRODUCT REVIEW

Pivot Pro – A New Twist on Computer Displays

by Alan German

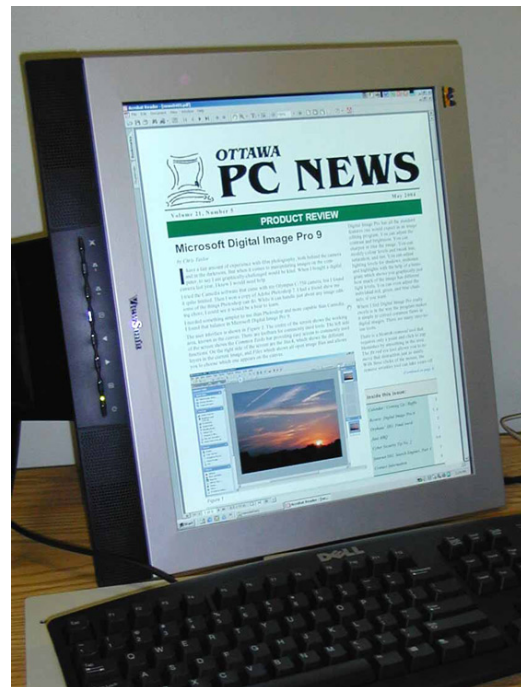
In the good old days, when I used to read PC Magazine from cover to cover, I seem to recall seeing advertisements for pivoting CRT monitors. Using my word processing software with a standard monochrome monitor in landscape mode, I could only ever see part of the page I was working on, and I drooled at the thought of being able to spin the screen through 90 degrees and display the entire page. Well, now, with LCD monitor technology, and a copy of Pivot Pro, I can do exactly that, and it's great!

Once installed, Pivot Pro's icon is visible in the task bar and actuating the program provides options to rotate the display to 0, 90, 180, or 270 degrees. Selecting the 90 degree option instantly switches the screen into portrait mode.

Rotate the screen to the vertical and Microsoft Word, running on a 17-inch LCD monitor (1280 x 1024 resolution), can now display a full page of text at pretty much full (8.5x11") size. Similarly, one can view full pages of OPCUG's newsletter using Adobe's Acrobat Reader (see figure). And, with Internet Explorer, you can view more of your favourite web site without having to scroll down the page.

Pivot Pro works with the Windows 98 SE, 2000, NT 4.0, ME, and XP operating systems, and with Internet Explorer 5.0 as a web browser. All major brands of graphic cards are supported (check the web site for details), and there no limitation on supported resolution or refresh rate.

If you have a pivoting LCD monitor (or are prepared to stand your fixed monitor on its side!), Pivot Pro may just be the driver you have been looking for. A number of computing tasks are just so much easier when you can view information in a more convenient format.



Bottom Line:

Portrait Displays, Inc.

US \$ 39.95 (download)

Free 30-day trial version

http://personalcomputing.portrait.com/us/products/pp_overview.html

Encarta (Continued from page 1)

favourites, “If the people don't want to come out to the ballpark, nobody's going to stop them”.

The *Encarta Dictionary Tools* are really nice. The dictionary and thesaurus seem to be quite comprehensive. If you are unsure of the pronunciation, Encarta can speak out words for you. Strangely, the *Dictionary Tools* window is not resizable.

There is a translation dictionary which can handle bi-directional, single word translations between English and French, Spanish, German, or Italian. It does a good job of handling words with multiple meanings and therefore multiple translations.

Unfortunately, the translation dictionary does not have the ability to speak foreign words to help you with pronunciation. Also, it cannot handle phrases or blocks of text, so it will not replace my use of Google Translate.

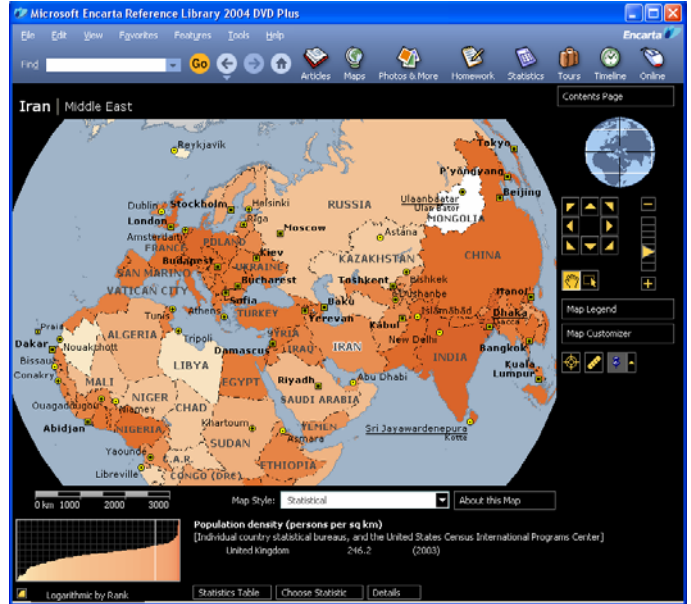


Encarta Dictionary Tools are available from within Encarta as well as from an icon in the system tray. I really like the tray icon. This allows you to access these tools quickly and easily while doing other work, such as editing your *magnum opus* in Word. It would be nice if Microsoft added an option to automatically start the system tray icon for the Dictionary Tools when Windows loads rather than when Encarta loads.

The section on country statistics is really cool. There are many categories available and you can view things in a variety of ways. For example, if you choose population density, you can have a simple text chart of all countries. You can sort the list alphabetically or by population density. You can also call up a globe with each country colour coded to show relative population density. Hover the mouse over a country and a graph at the bottom of the screen shows the ranking for that particular country along with its specific value.

I am a map junkie, so I was particularly interested in the atlas section of Encarta. It is really fun and easy to use. You can spin the globe around simply by clicking and dragging. You can zoom in or out. You can pan around. You can add pushpins and attach personal notes to them. You can measure distances by

Earth's relative population density



pointing and clicking. Encarta can display the current latitude and longitude of the mouse pointer. Maps can be displayed in a number of styles, such as physical features, climate, languages, tectonic, political, the world at night, etc. There are even a whole bunch of historical maps.

The atlas has a surprising amount of detail. I zoomed in on Ottawa and the map identified major streets such as Bronson, Baseline, Carling, St. Laurent, and the Queensway. Many points of interest were labelled including universities, museums, major parks, Rideau Hall and more. Considering there is this level of detail world-wide, it is not too shabby.

“If the people don't want to come out to the ballpark, nobody's going to stop them”.

Almost every week, Encarta comes out with updated content that can be downloaded over the Internet. When I first ran the update process, within a few minutes I had an additional 1,770 new and updated articles that had been released over the past year.

While an electronic encyclopaedia is generally going to be more up-to-date than a paper one, Encarta does have some content that is out-of-date. For example, while browsing the photos of Ottawa, I came across an image of the American embassy. It was a shot of the old embassy on Wellington.

Also, there is an image of the prime minister's residence at 24 Sussex. It appears to be a very old image, but the information included with the image does not indicate the age. In fact, few of the images have date information. Most of those

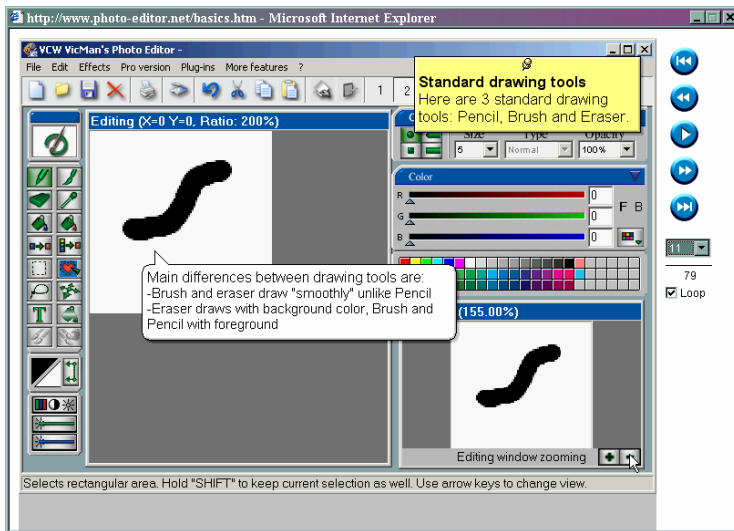
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PRODUCT REVIEW

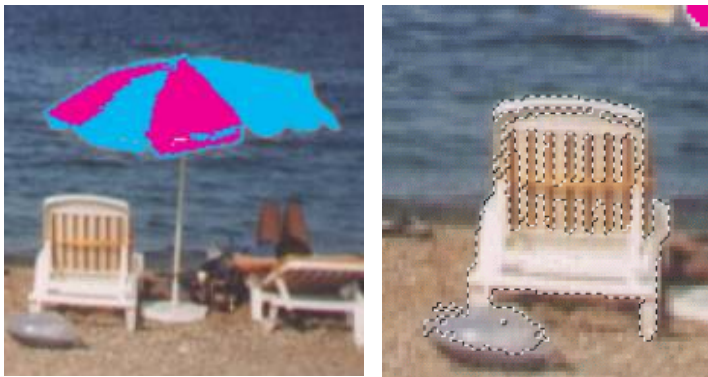
VCW VicMan's Photo Editor

by Jocelyn Doire

When VCW VicMan's Photo Editor starts for the first time, you have the option to watch 3 different animated tutorials written in Java. One of them is on the photo editor basics, one on retouching images and the last one on the power of cloning. The speed of the video is a bit troublesome, so I soon stopped it and used the step button instead to adjust the speed to my liking, but it meant that I lost some animation such as the red blinking circle around the object of the demonstration.



The program has a panel of buttons to the left, including a pencil and a brush (same as the pencil but with anti-aliasing) to draw lines, an eraser, and an eyedropper to select a colour from a colour chart or from the picture itself. The next 4 buttons are used to replace one colour with another in various ways, for example one can replace the colour of an object with the selected foreground colour, and adjust the colour tolerance in real time (click on "live") until you get the full contour of the object.



The next 4 buttons let you select an area, either rectangular, free hand shaped or based on a colour range and make the editing to only that area, which is very convenient when objects that you want to protect are close.

You can add text but the options are limited and you cannot adjust the look while viewing the text with the picture. Included are also gamma correction, contrast, automatic colour correction, and more, but no red eye correction. The package also has a number of filters like noise reduction, blur, emboss, and some more artistic ones called the Sapphire collection, with some interesting results but often hard to predict.



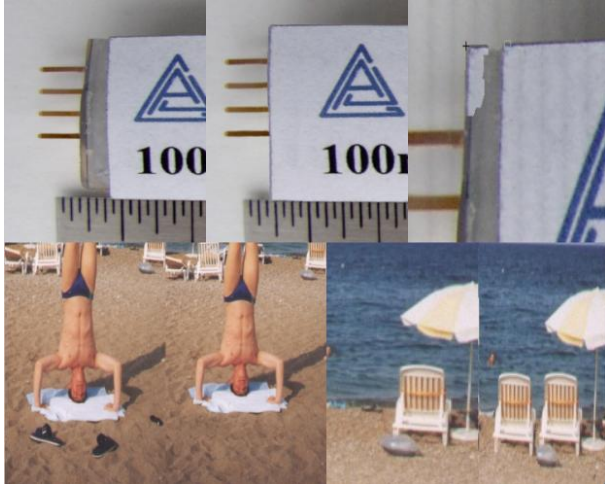
One of the best features available in the Pro version is the clone tool; it allows you to do a surprising number of things on a picture including removing defects, duplicating objects, moving edges, etc. The way it works is quite simple. You first select a source area and a destination area, you then move the cursor where you want to copy the source area. The area can be a square, a circle or a line, each with a size of 1 to 51 pixels and with an opacity of 0 to 100%.

For example, in the first picture on the next page, I extended the label by selecting an area near the edge of the label and "painted" the area where I wanted the new edge to appear. To make the white area blend nicely I selected an opacity of 30% and gradually

(Continued on next page)

VicMan's Photo Editor (Continued from page 5)

melded the two areas, for the pins I selected 100% opacity and a small area. The same technique can also be used to delete unwanted objects like the shoes or add a chair as shown in the edited beach picture.



There are a few things I would like to see in Vicman's Photo Editor. For example, it does not support the mouse wheel nor can it maximize the edit window, which makes the modification of large pictures more arduous than needed. It has a very convenient 5 levels undo, but it's missing the redo in case you went too far. When selecting the "save as" for the first time, you have the option to select the quality factor, but as far as I can tell there is no way to change it afterward. Finally, it has multiple floating option windows that change depending on the context and can be moved wherever you want, but their sizes are all different, so they use up a lot of real estate on your screen.

Overall, VCW Vicman's Photo Editor is fairly easy to use with some powerful features, but it still lacks some maturity to be a serious competitor to other well known programs, though for its price, free for the regular version and \$42.87 for the pro version, it is an interesting option.

To install the latest version of VCW Vicman's Photo Editor, go to <http://www.vicman.net/soft/phedinst.exe> and accept to install it.

For more info check <http://www.vicman.net/vcwphoto/index.htm>.

Encarta (Continued from page 4)

that do seem to be of specific activities such as protests, celebrations and the like.

When I clicked the option for web links about Ottawa, Encarta jumped to the *Web Center* with the *Encarta Editors' Picks* selected. While the entire section contains just under 30,000 links, for *Ottawa* there were only 17 links, some of which were only marginally related to Ottawa, such as the *HyperGrammar* site from the writing centre at the University of Ottawa and a site on *The Cambrian Explosion* at the Virtual Natural History Museum maintained by Carleton University. From the *Web Center*, you can also search Encarta.com, current events (which uses MSNBC), periodicals (which uses HighBeam Research), or do a general web search (which of course uses MSN Search)

Encarta Researcher is a very nifty tool that integrates into Internet Explorer. It can be used to collect information from anywhere within Encarta or on the Web into a project. Source URLs are automatically collected for Web information. Sections and notes within sections may be easily re-arranged by dragging and dropping. Information that has been collected can be edited. *Researcher* can then build a report, complete with source and bibliographic information, in HTML, RTF, or Word format. Very slick.

There are many more aspects to Encarta. There is the *homework center*, with tools such as advice on structuring reports and literature guides. There are *timelines* that lay out major milestones through the ages in a linear fashion. There is the *games center* with various quizzes and puzzles. 3D virtual tours allow you to walk through locations such as Beamaris

Castle in Wales. Virtual flights allow you to fly across continents. 360-degree views allow you to look around the Taj Mahal or the inside of the Notre Dame Basilica in Montreal.

Encarta is a powerful reference tool. It allows you to quickly find information on almost any topic. The different media types allow you to really explore topics. There are lots of cross-references that can help you find information related to the topic of interest. I highly recommend *Encarta Reference Library 2004 DVD Plus*.

There are other versions of Encarta that have less content and come on CD-ROM rather than DVD. For a comparison of the content, see

<http://www.microsoft.com/products/encarta/products/default.asp>

Encarta Reference Library 2004 DVD Plus is available around town for about \$80. As of this writing, Future Shop had a \$30 mail-in rebate, dropping the price to \$50.

System requirements:

Windows 98/ME with 64MB RAM or
Windows 2000/XP with 128MB RAM

333MHz CPU (500Mhz recommended)

385MB disk space

2.5GB disk space to copy all content to disk

DVD drive

800x600 video with 4MB video RAM



INTERNET SIG

The Internet and Travel: A Guide for Beginners

by Eric Clyde, Coordinator of the Internet SIG

Planning a trip can be a lot of work, but can also be stimulating, even for armchair travellers. Whatever your preferences, you can probably find a lot of relevant information on the Internet. A few sites are listed below as examples, but these are just to get you started; there are thousands of others!

If you are trying to make up your mind on what type of holiday to have and are just looking for general information, plug some relevant terms into your search engine, e.g. [camping BC], [mountaineering Canada], [windsurfing Hawaii], [bus tours Italy], [classical music tours], [computer museums Canada], [Amazon cruises], [bed breakfast New Zealand], etc. You will probably be amazed at the amount of information displayed but, as always with the Internet, don't believe everything you find – even official tourist sites paint rose-coloured pictures!

Another way to find information is to use the online versions of printed travel guides. A couple of fine examples are Fodors (<http://www.fodors.com/>) and the Lonely Planet (<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/>). General information on packing, etc., is also available, e.g. from the Travel Library (<http://www.travel-library.com/>), and currency exchange rates from The Bank of Canada (<http://www.bank-banque-canada.ca/en/exchform.htm>).

Once you have decided on the destination(s) you would like to visit, you can get more detailed local information on accommodations, costs, worthwhile sites to visit simply by searching on the country, district, or town name. Local bus and train information is often available and can frequently be booked online. Sometimes the information you find can make quite a

difference to your holiday plans. For example, if you are planning to go to Fiji, most international flights land at Nadi on the west side of the main island of Viti Levu, but if your destination is Suva, the capital, it is on the southeast side is about 200 km. away. You can check the bus times and fares online. After a nine hour flight from Los Angeles and losing a day by crossing the international date line, you may want to make book a hotel near Nadi for one night!

If you want to learn of other travellers' experiences, you can search the Internet newsgroups, e.g. on Google, search in Groups for the destinations, etc., that you are interested in. As well as news items, there are usually comments from opinionated parties! To get additional flavour, you can check local newspapers online via one of the many such global listings, e.g. <http://www.onlinenewspapers.com/>. In foreign countries, there are frequently English language editions available.

For travel abroad, Foreign Affairs Canada gives information on how to obtain passports, locations of consulates, and travel advisories. <http://www.fac-aec.gc.ca/menu-en.asp> Another useful site, mainly directed to the interests of U.S. citizens, but which has great deal of general information on other countries is http://travel.state.gov/travel_warnings.html

If you feel the need to check your emails while you are away from home, or to send emails, this can be done from many hotels and Internet cafes throughout the world. The actual method will depend on your Internet supplier, so be sure to check before you leave.

Bon voyage ... and have fun!

Raffle Winners

At the OPCUG general meeting of May 12, 2004...

John Archibald, Eric Clyde, Jocelyn Doire, Herb Kelland and Tim Mahoney all took home T-shirts courtesy of Boldstreet wireless Internet.

But the BIG winner was J.J. Dromard who not only won the top door prize of a Wireless Network card donated by Boldstreet but also had his raffle ticket drawn and went home with a copy of MS Office donated by Microsoft Corp.

Congratulations to all the winners and many thanks to our prize suppliers.



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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Old Lesson Re-learned

by Chris Taylor

I recently had problems with the *Adobe Reader* program, where it would hang as I tried to load it. Task Manager would show *Acrord32.exe* using 90% or better of CPU cycles. But the program would never finish loading. It was very frustrating as I frequently need to access .pdf files.

I tried killing the process and re-running it. I tried re-booting. I uninstalled and re-installed the program. I tried going back to an older version of the program. Nothing was working.

The Adobe web site has a list of trouble-shooting techniques. There are 20 suggestions that you are supposed to follow in order to resolve problems. Believe it or not, number 18 is, "Reformat the hard disk, and reinstall only Windows 2000 and Acrobat."

Not having a lot of faith in such a list, I fired up Winternals Software's terrific program *Filemon*, which shows in real time all the file accesses in Windows. When I started *Adobe Reader*, the log window for *Filemon* showed a steady stream of *name conflict* error messages in the temp directory. That reminded me of other errors I had seen before resulting from too many files in the temp directory. I even spoke of this problem at the *OPCUG Beginner's Workshop* last fall. In the words of Homer Simpson, "D'Oh!"

I started a CMD prompt, typed **CD %TEMP%** followed by **DIR** and watched as my computer listed the more than 65,000 zero-byte files that existed in the directory. I re-booted to make sure no files would be in use, deleted all the files in the temp directory, and the *Adobe Reader* works fine again.

As it turns out, if I had followed the trouble-shooting guide at the Adobe web site, step 12 would have solved it for me. Well, at least I would not have had to reformat my hard drive. ☺