



OTTAWA

PC NEWS

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PRODUCT REVIEW

You Want It – When?!! *by Alan German*

Do you have calendar-envy of your friends who run the full-blown version of Outlook rather than Outlook Express? If so, open-source technology can provide an answer. You need Sunbird – “a cross platform standalone calendar application based on Mozilla's XUL user interface language”.

The software can be downloaded as a 6.8 MB ZIP file. The installation instructions, contained in a readme.txt file, are a little confusing as they refer to “Mozilla” rather than to Sunbird. This doesn't make a whole lot of sense to me since there is Mozilla Firefox, Mozilla Thunderbird, and Mozilla Sunbird. Perhaps the instructions are generic for all Mozilla packages but, if so, this isn't made clear. In any case, following the instructions to unpack the ZIP file to a new directory (e.g. C:\Program Files\Mozilla Sunbird), and running the file sunbird.exe has the desired effect of installing the Sunbird program.

Use of the program is intuitive for the most part. This is actually quite fortuitous since the Sunbird project is a work in progress, and there is no help file included with the current distribution. But as the release notes say: “...we do not consider it to be a production-quality release. It is pre-release software and should be treated as such.”

The program launches with a three-pane window with small windows displaying a calendar of the current month

and a task list (that is mercifully empty!). The largest window shows the single-day view for the current date, but this can be easily changed to display a week or a month, or a set of user-configurable multiple weeks, using various icons on a menu bar.

For my purposes, viewing the current month's events seems to work best. Adding an event to the calendar is as simple as clicking on the New Event menu icon. This opens a dialogue box for the addition of the event title and location, a longer description of the event or associated notes, and the dates and times of the starting and completion points of the event. Other features include a check box for an all-day event that results in the time boxes being greyed out, and the ability to have the event repeated at regular intervals.

The Tools-Options menus have a number of tabs – General, Alarms, Views and My Timezone – that allow customization of many of the program's features. In particular, alarms can be set for both events and tasks, with an alarm box being displayed on the screen, a custom sound played, and even having an E-mail sent to a specified address.

When an event is added to the calendar, its title and starting time show up in the associated day on the monthly view of the calendar. If the completion date is several days after the starting date, the time of the event and the title are displayed on each involved day of this



view. Thus, the monthly view provides a month-at-a-glance option.

If you add a task to your schedule, it shows up in the task-list window. If you include a starting date and time, it is added to the task list and is also displayed as a starred item on the main calendar. Checking the box next to a given task, to indicate that it has been completed, literally crosses it off the list – with the text mode changing to strikethrough. Alternatively, you can opt not to display tasks that have been completed so that the list does eventually get shorter!

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Next Meeting: **WEDNESDAY, March 14th, 2007**

February Raffle

At the February meeting, thanks to the generosity of Microsoft MindShare, we will be raffling off another copy of **Microsoft Streets & Trips 2007 with GPS**. This nifty package not only has street-level maps and over 1.2 million points of interest for almost all populated areas in Canada and the U.S., but with the included GPS receiver and your portable computer, you can pin-point your location within metres, have the program speak out directions to you as you drive, mark a trail where you have been, and much more. Very cool! For details on this product (street value \$150), see <http://www.microsoft.com/streets/default.mspx>. You can also read a review on the previous release at <http://opcug.ca/public/reviews/s&t2006.htm>

Tickets are still only \$1 for one, \$2 for three, or \$5 for ten. What a bargain!



Coming Up...

► March 14, 2007

Speaker: Rick Claus
IT Pro Advisor | Microsoft Canada
Canadian IT Pro Blog

Topic: Windows Vista in your home.

Rick will speak about the editions, upgrades, feature differences (and premium content) of Vista, including home PVR with Media Centre and media extenders. There have been questions around OneCare in Canada that Rick will discuss as well.

April 11

Speaker: Chris Ellis, CISSP
Systems Engineer, Canada, McAfee Inc.
Topic: TBA

May 9

Speaker: Dr. Michael Geist,
University of Ottawa

Topic: Canada's Choice: Copyright, Culture, and the Internet

The talk will focus on how Canadian policy can support emerging developments on the Internet, with a particular focus on the user-generated content boom. Copyright law plays a key role in this regard, with the danger that Parliament may adopt reforms that could make it more difficult for the participatory Internet to thrive.

For more information on the speaker, visit:
<http://opcug.ca/public/regmtg.htm#1>

June 13

Annual BBQ; Speaker: TBA

CALENDAR

Meetings	Date	Time and Venue
OPCUG General Meeting	Wednesday, March 14 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
Beginners' SIG	Wednesday, March 14 th	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting.
IT-Pro SIG	Wednesday, March 14 th	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting.
Linux SIG	Wednesday, March 14 th	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting.
PIG SIG (Wing SIG West)	Wednesday, March 14 th	10:00 p.m. (after all other SIGs) at Chances "R" restaurant, Baseline Rd. at Woodroffe Ave. (College Square Shopping Centre)
Beer BOF (Wing SIG East)	Wednesday, March 14 th	10:00 p.m. (after all other SIGs) at Liam Maguire's, St. Laurent Blvd. at Innes Rd.
Please note that unless otherwise noted, SIGs meet at 9:00 p.m. (immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting).		

CLUB LIFE

Linux SIG

For March, the Linux SIG will discuss getting information. The intent is to take a macro view of information, i.e. a broad look at what can be done with what tools rather than a micro view of how to do things. A common concern with potential converts is that "I use program X under windows. Is there an equivalent for Linux?" The answer is usually "Yes." It will be useful to discuss options for which version of Linux to use, a sometimes emotional question.

More difficult questions will be handled at the beer SIG.

February Prize Winners

Charles Schofield won the raffle copy of *Microsoft Streets & Trips 2007 with GPS*.

The door prize winners were:

Don Chiasson who won a copy of *Paint Shop Pro XI* and **Arnold Smith** who took home a copy of *SnapFire*.

As well, all members were apprised of special user group offers available from Corel.

Congratulations to all the winners and thanks again to Corel and Microsoft for the prizes.

Books for Review

Courtesy of O'Reilly, we have a few books that are available to anyone who would like to review them for the newsletter. If you do a review, you get to keep the book!

- **Don't Get Burned on eBay**
- **Excel 2007 – The Missing Manual**
- **Firefox Hacks**
- **Word 2007 – The Missing Manual**

More details about the books and other reviews may be found on the O'Reilly web site (individual links at right). Contact Chris Taylor if you are interested in doing a review.

Don't forget, if you write an article for the newsletter, you will be eligible for the [Best Newsletter Article Contest](#).

Did you know, because you are a member of the OPCUG, you can get 35% off all books and PDFs at O'Reilly? See the Promos section of the OPCUG web site for details: <http://opcug.ca/public/promos.htm>.

Don't Get Burned on eBay offers relevant lessons based on real-life stories posted on eBay's Answer Center. With sharp, witty rhetoric, veteran eBay user Shauna Wright (co-founder of the popular web site WhoWouldBuyThat.com), shows eBay veterans and newcomers alike how to avoid those nasty scenarios, and how to pull themselves out of the muck if they've already fallen in. <http://www.oreilly.com/catalog/dgbebay/index.html>

Excel 2007: The Missing Manual covers the entire gamut of how to build spreadsheets, add and format information, print reports, create charts and graphics, and use basic formulas and functions. Like its siblings in the Missing Manual series, this book crackles with a fine sense of humor and refreshing objectivity about its subject, guiding readers through the new Excel with clear explanations, step-by-step instructions, lots of illustrations, and friendly, time-saving advice. It's a perfect primer for small businesses with no techie to turn to, as well as those who want to organize household and office information. <http://www.oreilly.com/catalog/9780596527594/index.html>

Firefox Hacks is ideal for power users who want to maximize the effectiveness of Firefox, the next-generation web browser that is quickly gaining in popularity. This highly-focused book offers all the valuable tips and tools you need to enjoy a superior and safer browsing experience. Learn how to customize its deployment, appearance, features, and functionality. <http://www.oreilly.com/catalog/firefoxhks/index.html>

Word 2007: The Missing Manual not only explains basics like how to create documents, enter and edit text, format, print, and fax, but also learn how to create sophisticated page layouts, insert forms and tables, use graphics, and create book-length documents with outlines and Master Documents. Coverage also includes how to share documents with other people and programs, create web pages, automate documents with fields, and automate tasks with macros and the Visual Basic scripting language. This book shows you how to do it all. <http://www.oreilly.com/catalog/9780596527396/index.html>

PRODUCT REVIEW

Ubuntu Linux for Non-Geeks *a book review by Alan German*

This book by Rickford Grant promises a “pain-free, project-based, get-things-done guide-book” to Ubuntu Linux. In particular, it’s written for users who “are familiar with computers but unfamiliar with Linux, or somewhat familiar with Linux but unfamiliar with Ubuntu.” So, how does Rickford succeed in his quest to educate the uninformed of this ilk? Well, I may well be the archetypical user in this regard, knowing quite a bit about personal computers, not all that much about Linux in general, but having played around a little with Ubuntu. So, here are my two cents worth, as a review of the book.

Our author makes powerful arguments for Linux, as an alternative to that other operating system, and also for the associated open-source movement. One interesting thought is that users should tally up the overall cost of the operating system software and the individual applications programs that they currently own. They might then compare the astronomical resulting figure with the zero-cost option of obtaining and using Ubuntu and the included software packages. They might also note that the latter offer the same, if not greater range, power and flexibility as their Windows’ counterparts. Added food-for-thought comes with the consideration that Linux will run exceedingly well on less than state-of-the-art hardware. So, a change of operating systems may well be a very economical way to make further use of a user’s existing machine now that the resource-intensive Vista has finally hit the home market.

But is Linux, and Ubuntu Linux in particular, ready for the challenge, or as Rickford notes, is it “Ready for the Desktop”? His answer is of course positive, and the contents of the book are both to show you why, and to show you how. All the unbelievers out there should note Rickford’s comments that he started off in dual-boot mode where

“I had expected to encounter numerous limitations in Linux that would force me to return to Windows often, I instead found that I had actually increased my productivity.” This was followed by a progression of greater and greater reliance on Linux to the point where: “I ceased to be a Windows user”.

*Linux will run
exceedingly well
on less than
state-of-the-art
hardware.*

Having personally had some of the same aspirations and, in particular, having tried the brute force and ignorance approach to installing and using Ubuntu Linux, leading to a number of brick walls and considerable time spent researching the solutions or finding workarounds, a simple how-to guide sounds very appealing. And this book certainly lives up to its promise in this regard.

We start with the fact that anyone can very easily try Ubuntu with no risk since the distribution (“distro” in Linux terminology) comes as a live-CD. (In fact, any purchaser of this book can try Ubuntu immediately since a copy of the distribution CD will be found inside the back cover.) Sticking the CD in the tray, and booting the machine, brings up a functional operating system that (a) demonstrates that your hardware is capable of running Linux, and (b) gives you the opportunity to actually use the operating system and many built-in applications. It’s no risk, because it doesn’t cost you anything, and the live CD doesn’t alter anything on your system. Once you power down the machine and remove the CD, re-booting takes your machine to its original state.

If you choose to install Ubuntu onto your hard drive, the book has a series of screen shots that take you step-by-step through the process. To my mind, there is insufficient attention paid to the various options for handling a hard drive with an existing version of Windows installed. If you really want to create a dual-boot system, be very careful to select the option to resize the existing partition – and avoid the option to erase the entire disk! Otherwise, the installation routine seems to be bullet proof – just sit back, relax, and watch the blinking lights.

The book has an entire chapter on using Ubuntu’s desktop environment, and customizing its look-and-feel by adding and modifying program icons, application launchers and drawers. And, if one Linux desktop isn’t enough, check out the section on working with the four available virtual desktops.

Access to the Internet is an indispensable part of today’s computing and various sections of the book show you how to set up high-speed (and even low-speed) connections, wireless systems, and discuss the default Firefox web browser and Evolution mail client. And, if the breadth of built-in applications isn’t enough for you, there are detailed instructions on how to easily access the extensive array of open-source software available on the Internet, by using APT, the Advanced Package Tool, via Synaptic and App Install, two programs that come with the Ubuntu distro.

If you feel lost without Windows Explorer, don’t despair. As with most Windows’ applications, Linux has an equivalent program. For example, the Firefox and Evolution packages noted above are similar to Microsoft’s Internet Explorer and Outlook. The Linux equivalent to Windows Explorer is a program called Nautilus; however, Nautilus has a few extra tricks up its

(Continued on next page)

Ubuntu Linux... *(Continued from page 4)*

sleeve – like acting as an FTP client – or a CD/DVD burner.

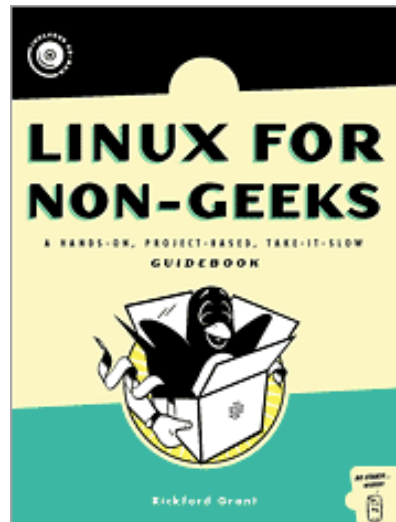
For those of you who pine for the old days of the DOS command window, and frequently use `cmd` in Windows, Ubuntu has Terminal – the Linux command window. A whole chapter of the book shows you how to use Terminal, provides details of some of the basic commands – and shows a neat trick – how to add a background image as wallpaper for the Terminal window. Similarly, if you want to delve deeply into the world of open source, and actually compile applications from available source code, the book will tell you all about downloading and extracting tarballs, and the use of `configure` and `make` to create executable files.

The project-based nature of the book is exemplified in explaining various ways of obtaining new software such as the series of instructions to download and build a version of the game Mahjongg. There is even a great tip on converting such downloads to Debian (DEB) packages since this makes it easier to uninstall the application should you wish to do so at some point in the future. And, there are other notes on methods to use both RPM (Red Hat) packages and Java-based applications. So, there shouldn't be any excuse that you can't run Linux because you need a particular piece of application software. It, or an excellent equivalent, is out there somewhere, in some form, and this book will tell you how to get it and use it.

If you really are a die-hard Windows Fan (what are you doing even considering Ubuntu?!), you probably know about WINE. “WINE is not an emulator” but it will allow you to run (some) Windows applications under Linux. In just a few pages, Rickford shows how to install and set up Wine, and how to then install and run Windows software. One really useful tip comes in the form of how to mount a Windows partition so that you can access its files directly from Ubuntu. However, take care when following these particular instructions (p.191). The command line

provided – “`sudo /dev/hda1`” – together with a bunch of optional parameters, will produce an error message. There is a typographical error here in that the “`mount`” command is omitted. Use “`sudo mount /dev/hda1`” with the appropriate parameters for the format (FAT or NTFS) of your partition and all will be well.

The book indicates that setting up printers is a simple task in Linux since numerous printers are supported; however, the same level of support is not available for scanners. Suggestions on where to find information for hardware that isn't directly supported by the distro are provided, as are handy tips on items such as settings for image size and resolution when using scanners. A really useful add-on discussed in detail is `cups_PDF`, a utility that allows any Linux application with a print option to create a PDF file.



If you are not familiar with mainstream Linux applications like OpenOffice, the book has a section on the use of its components – including word processing (Writer), spreadsheets (Calc), and presentations (Impress). Some other neat applications that you might not know about are mentioned – such as Sticky Notes (on-screen yellow post-its), GnuCash (Quicken-like), and Scribus (desktop publishing). In addition, should you need access to more fonts or foreign language tools, there are chapters on each of these topics.

Multi-media fans are not left out. If you have a digital camera, you will need to know about gPhoto2 and gThumb for downloading and organizing your photographs. If you then want to be able to edit them, you should check out the notes on GIMP, a powerful image editor along the lines of Adobe Photoshop. But, if this is too much of a good thing, the author offers XPaint as a simpler image editing program. In fact, one of the great features of this book is that several related applications are usually highlighted in each section, indicating the breadth of the available software for Linux, and also making you, as a new Linux user, aware of some neat programs that you might not otherwise easily find. For example, in the digital imaging section, Rickford provides notes on Sodipodi (vector drawing), Picasa (Google's image manager), Blender (3-d modeling), QCad (computer aided design), and Tux Paint (just for kids – young or old!)

If music and video are more your thing, there are entire chapters of the book devoted to these topics. Various audio file formats, such as MP3, Ogg Vorbis and FLAC, are discussed, together with a whole host of associated software including Sound Juicer (a CD ripper) and Rhythmbox (a CD player). A separate chapter looks after the needs of iPod users. Yes, that's right, Ubuntu has wide-ranging support for playing tunes on Apple's iPod! Ubuntu also has a number of offerings for movie fans, including Totem, the default video player, and downloadable software such as Kino, a digital video editor.

The last chapter of the book is devoted to security issues. What? You have to be concerned about viruses, Trojans and worms in Linux? Well, perhaps yes, and perhaps no. One use for the ClamAV or Avast! anti-virus programs seems to be to keep malware in check on Windows partitions that are accessible by Linux! And, while a hardware firewall is recommended for Internet

(Continued on next page)

Ubuntu Linux... (Continued from page 5)

connectivity, Firestarter can be put in place as a software firewall system.

But, the book's last chapter isn't the final word. Three appendices provide information on disk image (ISO) files, especially for users running AMD64 or PowerPC hardware; checking the integrity of downloaded ISO files; and links to Ubuntu/Linux forums, reference guides, books and magazines, and many other useful resources.

Well, there you have it – 316 pages of text – plus a comprehensive index – and a CD-ROM with Ubuntu Desktop, Version 6.06 (Dapper Drake) – that will show you how simple it is to install and use Ubuntu Linux. Rickford Grant, the

book's author, has a clear writing style and an evident sense of humour – as exemplified in some of the chapter titles – such as “A Tidy Nest” (File and Disk Handling) and “Couch Penguins” (Video and DVD Playback). In addition to getting new users started with the basics of Ubuntu and the included applications, the other real benefits of this book are the detailed instructions for accessing file repositories for software updates, and the suggestions for a whole raft of useful applications.

So, if you have a hankering to try Ubuntu Linux; if you need a hand in making some particular aspect of the package work; or if you want to know

how to move further down the road to becoming Linux self-sufficient, this just might be the book for you.

Bottom Line

Ubuntu Linux for Non-Geeks
Rickford Grant

No Starch Press, 2006

ISBN 1-59327-118-2

O'Reilly Media (US \$34.95)

<http://www.oreilly.com/catalog/1593270348/>

Editor's note: O'Reilly Books has a 35% user group discount. Visit <http://opcug.ca/public/promos.htm>.

Mozilla Sunbird

(Continued from page 1)

So, if you need an electronic calendar and/or a to-do list, Sunbird can provide it. While the developers obviously still have some work to do, including providing documentation of the program's functions, the utility is certainly very usable. And, it's an open-source product so it won't cost you anything to give it a try.

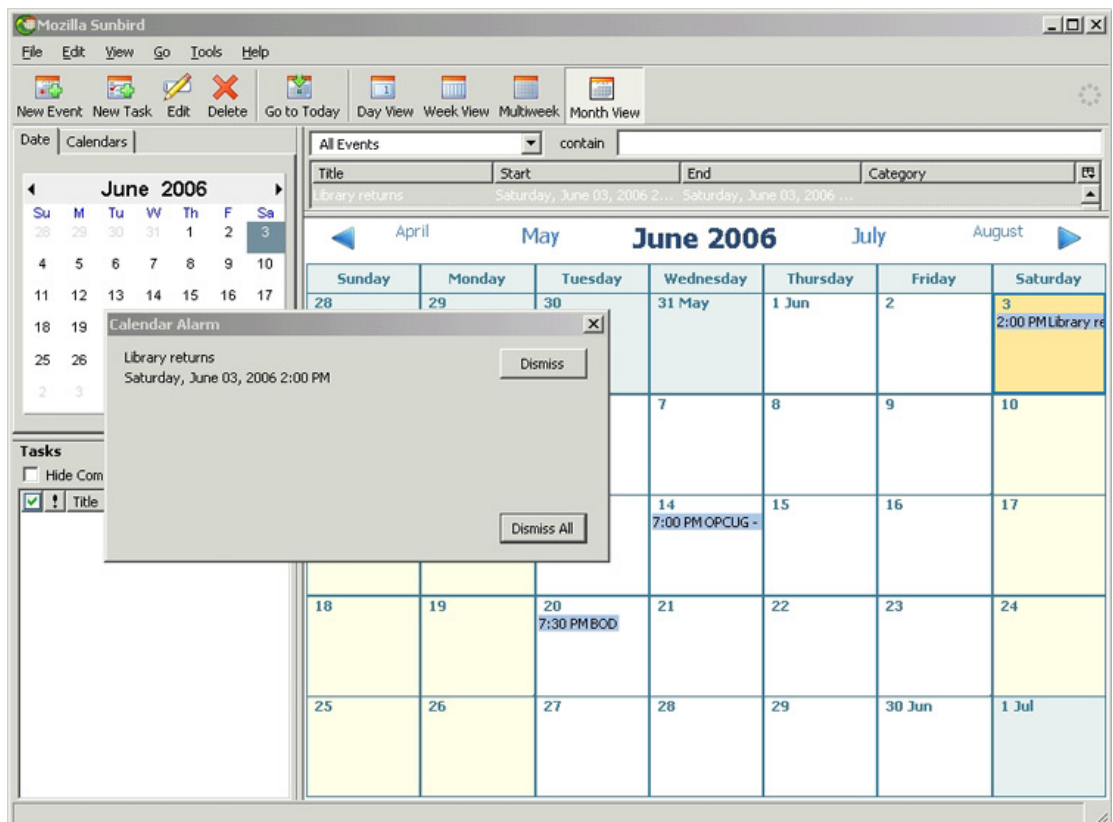
Of course, the downside of this software is that your partner may discover the to-do list feature, so perhaps a free copy of Sunbird isn't such a great idea after all?

Bottom Line

Sunbird 0.3 alpha2

(Open Source)

<http://www.mozilla.org/projects/calendar/sunbird/index.html>



PRODUCT REVIEW

Lost your digital photographs? - You need ImageRecall 3 *by Alan German*

You carefully framed the shot. You squeezed the shutter gently, and watched for the green light, to ensure that the auto-focus had captured the subject. You viewed the resulting image on your digital camera's tiny screen to ensure that you had obtained a perfect result. Finally, after taking a series of award-winning photographs, you packed up the camera, drove home, and loaded the flash memory card into the reader slot of your desktop computer. Everything is perfect – except for the on-screen message – “The card contains no images” – and your response - *&#!@!!!

Looks like you are in need of a little help in the data recovery department – and ImageRecall3 may be just what you are looking for. This little utility package has a one-track mind when it comes to such recovery operations, scanning through the “unreadable” memory device, finding the missing files, and recovering them to your computer's hard disk.

The program can be purchased and downloaded on-line, or ordered on CD-ROM together with a full-colour, installation and user manual. The instructions in the latter are clear and precise, and require just ten pages in a miniature handbook, that includes detailed screenshots illustrating the various steps in the file recovery process and the associated options.

The software is very versatile and can be used on any media, including digital camera memory cards, USB memory keys, and even computer hard drives! Installation is quick and easy. Running the program produces a simple menu panel with the main program controls and a number of optional command icons.

The basic file recovery option merely requires selecting the drive letter of the memory card from a drop-down list, and pressing the “Recover lost files” button. The program goes into

a turbo-scan mode, displays a preview of each image as it is retrieved, and lists the total number of files that have been recovered. If you don't think that all of the files have been successfully recovered, there is a further option to run a deep-scan mode.

The program will let you view the recovered files and builds a set of thumbnails for display in an on-screen viewer. While the program will recover all types of files, only image files can be displayed in the thumbnail viewer. For other recovered items, a number of icons are used to denote various types of sound, movie and data files.

By default, the recovered files are stored in My Documents\My Recovered Files\ in the sub-directories TurboScan and DeepScan; however, the output directory can be customized through one of the program's options. Additional options allow you to burn the recovered files to a CD, or to clear the directory of recovered files prior to re-running the program. There is also an option to securely erase a memory card by writing zeros to every location.

Since the deep-scanning process is very thorough, and because the program can be run on large hard drives, one of the options allows you to limit the types of files that are to be recovered so that, for example, only .JPG images would be retrieved.

Another option allows you to backup a memory card by taking a snapshot of its contents, this being stored as a .IR3 file in the Program Files\FlashFixers\ImageRecall 3\ directory. An associated option allows this file to be written back to the memory card so restoring the card's contents. The user's manual suggests that this would allow the card to be reformatted for immediate further use, with file recovery to be conducted at a later time.

The software can be purchased on-line from the FlashFixers' web site; however, an even better offer is to download the free trial version. The latter is a fully-functional version of the program with the limitation that it will only recover the first ten images from a memory card. Purchasing the full version allows unlimited image and data recoveries. And, if this still doesn't work, FlashFixers offer their extensive laboratory recovery services, and will discount the cost by the price of the software.

Bottom Line:

ImageRecall 3
Proprietary (US\$ 39.95)

FlashFixers LLC

<http://www.flashfixers.com/>



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 Sundays before the next General Meeting.

Group Meetings

OPCUG meets on the second Wednesday in the month, except July and August, at the Canada Museum of Science and Technology, 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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