



OTTAWA

PC NEWS

Volume 24, Number 4

April 2007

PRODUCT REVIEW

What's inside the box? *by Alan German*

So, what processor is running in there? How much memory do you have? What graphics card do you use? What speed does your CD/DVD burner run at?

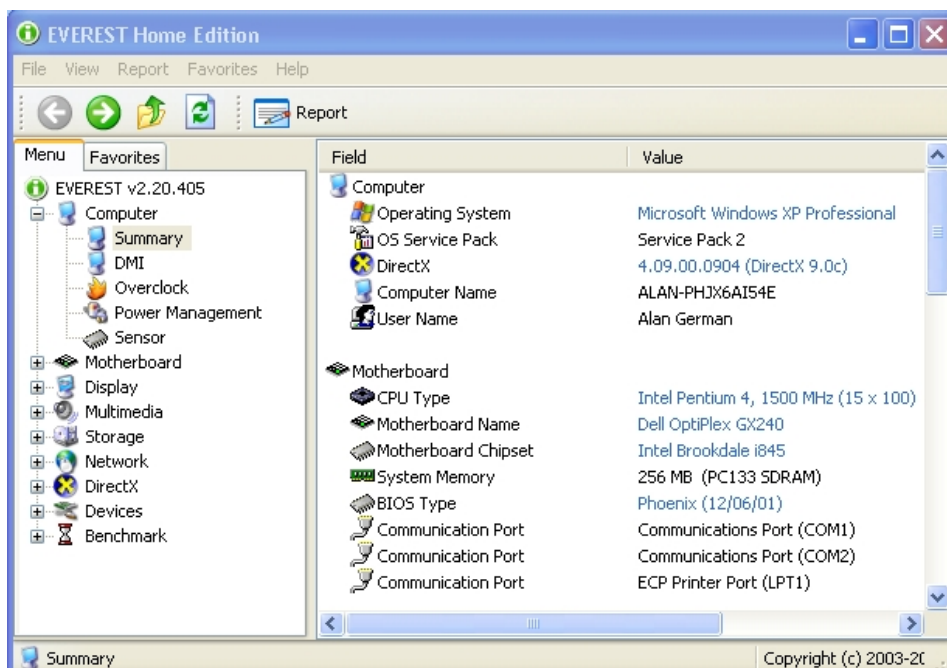
After a while the answers to these questions from friends and relatives become obscure as the memory of your new computer purchase becomes - well - just a memory. You could use a Windows utility to find out about your hardware, if you could remember which Windows program it was! Or you could turn to a third-party product, such as Everest Home Edition, to obtain a detailed inventory of your computer's hardware components.

Everest is pretty much single-minded in that its major task is to report on the hardware, and related stuff such as drivers, that it finds in your machine, but it does that job really well. A menu provides options to look at listings for the Computer, Motherboard, Display, Multimedia, Storage, Network, Direct X, Devices and Benchmark. Drilling down to a specific item, such as Motherboard - Memory, provides a list of components and related information. The program even offers suggestions, e.g. "Install more system memory to improve applications performance". [Hey! I knew that. Don't nag!] You can view the details on screen, or use a wizard to develop a printed report as

either plain text or in HTML format.

The product has its roots in Hungary, having been initially developed by Tamás Miklós, as a program named AIDA32. Subsequently, Miklós partnered with Lavalys, a Montreal-based company (<http://www.lavalys.com>), to produce a commercial version.

Corporate and Ultimate Editions of the program are now available for business and high-powered users who wish to be able to readily inventory machines. Development of Everest Home Edition was stopped by at the end of 2005, but the freeware version is still available on the Internet with support being provided through an on-line discussion forum. So, it's not too late to give the freeware version a try. It's highly recommended if you just want to know what's inside your box.



Bottom Line

EVEREST Home Edition,
Version 2.20 (freeware)

<http://www.majorgeeks.com/download4181.html>

Inside this issue:

Calendar / Coming Up / Raffle	2
Review: EVEREST Home Edition	1
OPCUG June BBQ!	3
Review: Exploring Linux—Part 5	4-5
Contest for Best Newsletter Article	6
Coming Up in May...	6
Linux SIG: Linux Software	7
Contact Information	8

Next Meeting: **WEDNESDAY, April 11th, 2007**

Raffle Prize

The April raffle prize is a **Vista Launch Kit** that came courtesy of *Mindshare* - the group within Microsoft supporting user groups. It contains:

- a book "Windows Vista Product Guide" which appears to be a not bad intro manual for Vista
- a Vista mousepad
- a DVD with info on 3rd party Vista solutions
- an Easy Transfer Cable, which, with supplied software, makes it easy to move from a computer running XP to a computer running Vista - transferring all the settings, documents, etc. Made by Belkin
- Windows Live USB key - to access all the Windows Live services
- a SanDisk Cruzer Micro - a 2GB USB memory stick certified ReadyBoost capable
- T-Mobile Day Pass - good for 24 continuous hours of wireless Internet access through T-Mobile (where available)
- Windows Vista Magazine
- a copy of Zoo Tycoon 2 (http://opcug.ca/public/Reviews/zoo_tycoon2.htm)

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



March Prize Winners

Mike Charette won a copy of *Microsoft One Care* as did **Wayne Houston** and **Anthony Toscano**.

The raffle prize, a copy of *MS Streets & Trips 2007 with GPS Locator*, went to **Peter Hecht**.

Thanks to Microsoft for the prizes.

April Speaker

April 11, 2007

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

Topic: "An Update on Network Threats & Risks and the Dangers of the Internet Today"

Our speaker will discuss the who/what/when/where and how an attacker may attempt to compromise a corporate network or a home user network. The presentation will also include a discussion of generic techniques for attack prevention.

For over 25 years Chris Ellis has been involved in the networking industry. Initially involved in the engineering of networking products he has spent the past 15 years working as an independent network security consultant until a year ago when he was hired by McAfee as a Security SE (Systems Engineer). Chris is a Certified Information Systems Security Professional (CISSP) and brings real world experience and knowledge to his seminars where he weighs the pros and cons of various secure networking designs against the myriad of attacks and vulnerabilities they may face in today's networks.

CALENDAR

Meetings	Date	Time and Venue
OPCUG General Meeting	Wednesday, April 11 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, April 11 th	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting.
IT-Pro SIG	Wednesday, April 11 th	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting.
Linux SIG	Wednesday, April 11 th	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting.
PIG SIG (Wing SIG West)	Wednesday, April 11 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, April 11 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).		

SPECIAL EVENT

Coming Up in June...

June 13, 2007

OPCUG Annual BBQ

This year we are doing something a little different for the OPCUG Annual BBQ in June - **we are having it catered by The Lone Star!**

As in the past, you can bring guests. However, unlike in the past, we need to insist that all who want to eat pre-register by June 8th with their menu choices. **Those who do not pre-register will not get any food.**

Visit the OPCUG website at <http://opcug.ca> for details, menu choices, and instructions on how to pre-register. Click on the MEETINGS button and follow the linked BBQ entry for June 13.

The BBQ will be followed by **speaker** Paul Leroux, Public Relations Manager and Technology Analyst at QNX Software Systems. The **topic** will be "QNX - the company, its technology and applications you use every day".

QNX Software Systems, founded in 1980 with headquarters here in Ottawa (Kanata), is the industry leader in realtime, embedded operating system technology. QNX technology has been used in almost everything from nuclear power plants to Acuras. They distribute products for network routers, medical instruments, vehicle telematics units, security and defense systems, industrial robotics, and other mission- or life-critical applications in over 100 countries and to global leaders such as Cisco, Daimler-Chrysler, General Electric, Lockheed Martin, Acura and Siemens. Our speaker will describe how we "use" QNX every day, making a credit card purchase, driving a car, or using the Internet. In short, how technology developed here in Ottawa has made such a large impact worldwide.

Paul Leroux is a longtime employee of QNX familiar with the company's history and QNX technology, as an author or co-author of articles for technical trade publications. He currently has dual roles with QNX, as Public Relations Manager and Technology Analyst.



PRODUCT REVIEW

Exploring Linux—Part 5 *by Alan German*

In the last article (November 2006, http://opcug.ca/public/Reviews/linux_part4.htm), we made a start on customizing the Ubuntu 6.06 (Dapper Drake) distribution of Linux by editing the boot-up command file so that Windows started by default, with a pause allowing us to select Linux if desired. Now, it's time to move on and see what else we can do to Linux, and what else Linux can do for us!

One of the obvious things that we will need is the ability to add new software. For example, there's really nothing wrong with the Evolution mail client that comes with the Ubuntu distro, but I am used to the features offered by Mozilla Thunderbird and, since there is a Linux version of this program, I would like to locate and install it.

My first thought was to go the Mozilla web site and download the Linux version of Thunderbird. No problem here, except that it comes as the compressed "tar" file *thunderbird-1.5.0.4.tar.gz*. To use the latter, we would need to know all about "tarballs". Note that the file has two extensions – .gz, showing that it is compressed with the gzip utility program – and .tar indicating a file in Tape ARchive format. The net result is a file that is similar to the familiar (to Windows users) ZIP archive. Unpacking the archive requires finding out how to issue a tar command, with a gz option, in a terminal window. We then need to identify a suitable shell command file to run the Thunderbird program which, it turns out, is complicated by a broken link in the help file! Now, all this seems fairly complicated, and modern Linux systems really should be easier to use. Perhaps what we need is a different source of helpful information.

System – Help on the main menu provides links to a variety of help files. Online Documentation, Community Support, and Commercial Support all

require an Internet connection for access. But, both System Information and Ubuntu Book Excerpt are available on the local hard disk. The System Information menu option opens a browser-type window (actually a program called Yelp) with further options that include access to the Ubuntu Desktop User Guide which, in turn, provides a link to "Adding, Removing and Updating Applications". This describes a number of ways to access new software in an automated fashion using various package managers. However, the Ubuntu Book Excerpt (actually selected chapters from The Official Ubuntu Book) probably has the best information on this subject in the section entitled "How Do I Install a Package?"

With this information at hand, we find out that it's actually really easy to install new software in Ubuntu, because the support community maintains a whole raft of stuff in on-line file repositories. Using the menu sequence – **Applications – Add/Remove** – provides access to one such repository. A considerable number of available applications are displayed, broken out by category (such as Internet, Office, Games, etc.) The applications that were included as part of the installation of Ubuntu are already checked. Selecting a new application for installation is as simple as checking one of the boxes, while unchecking a box marks that application to be uninstalled.

Looking through the list, we find "Thunderbird Mail" in the Internet section. Installing the program is now as simple as checking the associated box and clicking on the Apply button. A dialogue box confirms the pending file operations. The system then asks for the logon password, goes out to the web, downloads the software, installs it on the local hard drive, and even adds it as an option for use on the **Applications – Internet menu**.

Note that the installation routine modifies the menu system to include a link to the newly added software, but it doesn't enable the new program. We accomplish the latter by modifying the menu system with the Alacarte Menu Editor (Applications – Accessories – Alacarte Menu Editor). Calling up this utility program, and highlighting the Internet tab, we can see all the installed packages and the checkboxes that denote their operational status. We can disable Evolution Mail by unchecking its box, and then check the box for Thunderbird Mail in order to enable our new program. Click on Apply, and we have switched our default mail client from Evolution to Thunderbird.

The Install and Remove Applications program noted above provides a mechanism for simple addition and removal of software packages. The generic engine underlying this and other package managers is the Advanced Package Tool (APT) whose primary task is search for, download and install additional Linux software. One important aspect to this is that the tool ensures that any necessary libraries and support files are obtained to provide a total package and making for a trouble-free installation process.

The Advanced tab on Add/Remove Applications calls up Synaptic, the program's more powerful cousin. Synaptic is part of the distro and can also be located as the menu item – **System – Administration – Synaptic Package Manager**. Synaptic provides the ability to add other web-based software repositories (Settings – Repositories), providing access to a much larger range of additional software. For example, we can select Ubuntu 6.06 LTS (Binary) to give us access to the community-maintained repository named Universe. The list of packages with **All** selected is rather daunting, so hit the Sections but-

(Continued on next page)

Linux—Part 5 *(Continued from page 4)*

ton to categorize the offerings and make the process more manageable. Now, with very little effort, we can find software of interest to use under Linux.

There are also ways to change the user interface to make Linux look-and-feel precisely the way we want. For example, we can add icons to menu bars, and to the desktop, if we so desire.

One useful way to run a program is through an icon located in the Panel (the menu bar along the top of the screen). We can customize the panel by right clicking on it at a location where we wish to position a new icon. Select Add to Panel and then Custom Application Launcher. We can now enter Thunderbird into the Name field, and browse for an executable Thunderbird file as the entry in the Command field. Which file to choose, and where to locate it, is not intuitive. To fully understand the process we need to explore the Linux file system. But, life is too short. Let's take a wild guess and see what happens! (Actually, there is a much easier way to establish a new icon in the panel – but bear with me for a moment.) The file we seem to need is *mozilla-thunderbird* in */usr/bin*, so we browse to that directory and select the file. We can also specify an icon for Thunderbird by clicking on the Icon box, browsing to the *usr/share/pixmaps* directory, and selecting the *mozilla-thunderbird-pm-menu.png* image file. This places the Thunderbird icon on the panel. Clicking once on this icon launches the program.

In Linux, there always seems to be multiple ways of doing things and so, it shouldn't come as any surprise that there is a much easier way to create an entry in the panel. It's actually as simple as going through the initial stages of the menu system to call up Thunderbird (Applications – Internet – Thunderbird Mail) but, rather than left-clicking on the final menu item to launch the program, right-click instead to launch a sub-menu. The first item on this menu is "Add this launcher to

panel" – which does exactly what it says – without having to locate obscurely-named executable files and images. Easy!

One of Ubuntu's claims to fame is its "clean" interface. It doesn't have a lot of icons on the desktop when it starts up. In fact, it doesn't have any icons on the desktop! Nor is it easy to find out how to create such icons; the information isn't readily located in any of the help files. However, the above trick provides one clue. The second item in the sub-menu is "Add this launcher to desktop" which, if selected, produces an icon for Thunderbird on the display screen.

In Linux, there always seems to be multiple ways of doing things

As mentioned, there are other ways to create icons on the desktop. For example, we can open up the Nautilus file manager and browse to – **File System – usr – bin** – where we can locate the editor *gedit*. Right-clicking on the program's icon provides a menu item to copy the file. Moving the mouse cursor to the desktop, we can right click once more and paste a copy of the *gedit* icon onto the desktop. As you might guess, using Control left-click and dragging the icon to the desktop has the same effect. So now, we ex-Windows users can create desktop icons to our heart's content. But, of course, we wouldn't do that because, now, we are "real" Linux users!

After simply installing Ubuntu and its associated applications from the distribution CD, we have gone on to explore how to tailor the system to work the way that we want. We have also seen that a much bigger world of applications programs is open to us, and that a really nice feature is that the Ubuntu

user community packages many desirable applications and makes them available for easy download. In addition, we have the ability to customize how we launch all of this stuff, and we can choose from a number of different methods. So, there's no longer any excuse to download, install, customize and use a copy of Ubuntu – Linux for human beings!

Bottom Line:

Ubuntu 6.06 LTS (Open Source)
<http://www.ubuntu.com/>

Bibliography:

Documentation for Ubuntu 6.06 LTS (Dapper Drake)
<https://help.ubuntu.com/>

Unofficial Ubuntu 6.06 (Dapper Drake) Starter Guide
<http://ubuntuguide.org/wiki/Dapper>

Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Linux>



2006/2007 CONTEST for BEST NEWSLETTER ARTICLE

Last chance - deadline for entries fast approaching

The 2006/2007 contest for best newsletter article is about to wrap up. **The deadline for entries is April 22, 2007.** Members of the BOD cannot participate.

Computer related topics are preferable, but not mandatory. Articles will be published in the Ottawa PC News between September 2006 and May 2007 (inclusive) and in the order they are received. If a large number of articles is received, some may not be published due to space restrictions as we approach the April deadline. And in that case, in order to have as many contestants as possible, an article submitted by a new participant will be published over one submitted by a returning participant. Participants will be offered a choice of having unused articles published after the contest period or having them destroyed. Only those articles published during the contest period will be eligible for the contest. Articles from members not interested in participating in the contest will also be ac-

cepted (these members should mention that they are not interested in participating).

All articles must be original and written by the participant. There is no word limit. Lengthy articles will be made available online from the OPCUG website and two or three pages will be published in the newsletter. If an article can be broken into two parts of two or three pages each, then it may be published in two subsequent monthly issues, space permitting. Only members of the OPCUG may participate (BOD members are excluded). The BOD reserves the right to refuse an article because of improper or questionable content and the article will be returned to the author for revision or retraction. Individual participants may submit more than one article over the contest period.

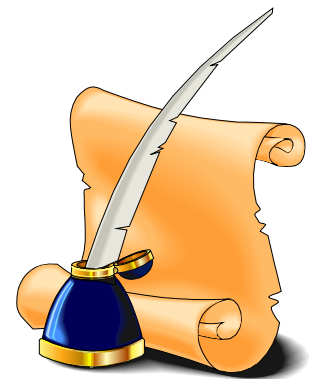
Voting will take place online at the OPCUG website. Instructions will follow once the system is in place and voting time approaches (May-June).

The winner will be presented with a prize at the June meeting of the OPCUG (prize to be determined).

Send your article(s) to **brigitte.lord@opcug.ca** between June 1, 2006 and April 22, 2007. Articles may be written in any basic text editor, MS Word, or Corel WordPerfect.

Good luck and good writing!

Brigitte Lord
Editor, Ottawa PC News



Coming Up in May...

May 9, 2007

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.

Dr. Michael Geist is the Canada Research Chair of Internet and E-commerce Law at the University of Ottawa. Prof. Geist is a prolific writer on topics such as privacy and copyright and other technology law issues, with columns that regularly appear in media outlets around the globe. He serves on the director and advisory boards of several Internet and IT law organizations including the Canadian Internet Registration Authority and his work has been recognized with several important awards and grants including a Scholarly Paper Award, major research grants, the Public Leadership Award from Canarie for his contribution to the Internet in Canada, and he was named one of Canada Top 40 Under 40.

LINUX SIG

Finding out about Linux software *by Don Chiasson*

At last month's meeting...

The question is the most common event when people get together to discuss Linux, and its family of open source software. This presentation is not to answer any questions, but rather to point to places on the Internet where you can find your own answers. For the most part, I have tried to keep URLs simple. The first part is to answer questions about Linux programs you may wish to run. The second part is how to get information about Linux the operating system. If you are generally curious, try Wikipedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Linux>

When you install Linux, a great many options are offered, and the default install often sees a great many program names flash by. What are these programs? Are there others I should install? We'll look at a couple of approaches (aside from spending money on a book, which might not be a bad idea).

If you are lazy, writers do often suggest what you can use. For example in the January 2007 issue of Monitor, Paul Godin had the following list:

- Linux: Ubuntu or Kubuntu.
- Office suite: Open Office.
- Desktop environment: KDE.
- Web browser: Firefox.
- Mail client: Evolution.
- Database server: MySQL.
- Web server: Apache.
- Print server: CUPS.
- Web tool development: Bluefish.
- Audio editor: Audacity or Re-zound.
- Video editor: Kino.
- Slideshow creation: ManDVD.
- CD/DVD Burner: K3B.

- Photo cataloguing: F-Spot.
- Graphics: Gimp.
- Animations: Blender.

A couple of items not in this list:

- File sharing: Samba.
- Software development: Eclipse, <http://www.jboss.org> (Red Hat sponsored).
- Video player: Kaffeine, Democracy video player, <http://www.getdemocracy.com>

There is a site that attempts to map from Windows programs to Linux programs, the Linux equivalency project, <http://www.linuxeq.com>. (To save money, I did not print out this four page list.

Issues do arise with Linux, and I will mention four. First is that of CODECs, or coder / decoder software needed for reading / writing data such as MP3 files. Second is the issue of documentation: writing code is cool, writing docs and help files about how to use it is not. Third is that of determining quality: if a product in a store is inferior, it does not sell and will be removed from the shelf. This may not happen with open source software. Finally there is the issue for dual boot systems of reading and writing the Microsoft NTFS file systems. (Microsoft does not document how the file system works.) There is a web site for the people working on the project, <http://www.ntfs-3g.org/index.html> and some recent magazines have had articles on the topic. This one will be resolved. For now, the easiest solution for dual boot systems is to create a FAT partition.

IBM has a Windows to Linux roadmap <http://www-128.ibm.com/developerworks/linux/library/l-roadmap.html>

A major source of information is The Linux Documentation Project, TLDP, <http://tldp.net>. Other sources include <http://www.psychocats.net/ubuntu> and <http://www.tuxfiles.org/linuxhelp>

Which distribution of Linux should you use? I prefer using a major distribution. The current most popular one may be Ubuntu, <http://www.ubuntu.com>. Others are Suse, <http://en.opensuse.org> or Red Hat Fedora <http://fedora.redhat.com>. The major distros generally are integrated with all sorts of useful programs rather than to manually download them. If my list is not big enough, try looking at <http://distrowatch.com>.

Finally a note on windowing. Early versions of Linux were command line only; then installing a GUI became an option. Now the default is windowed. Note that the GUI environments of Microsoft and Apple are different based on different design philosophies. Linux has two major options for its GUI, Gnome and KDE. Again, Wikipedia has some comments, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Desktop_environment Linus Torvalds prefers KDE but the choice is almost a religious issue.

Finally, don't forget our local Linux group, OCLUG, <http://www.oclug.on.ca>

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.

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Reduce, Re-use, Recycle

Bring your old computer books, software, hardware, and paraphernalia you want to GIVE AWAY to the General Meetings, and leave them at the table near the auditorium's entrance. Please limit magazines to publication dates of less than two years old.

You may TAKE AWAY any items of use to you. Stuff left over at the end of the meeting will be sent to... the recycle bin.

