PRODUCT REVIEW

Looking a gift horse in the mouth? *by Alan German*

At the December meeting, the club held its (now) annual silent auction in aid of The Ottawa Food Bank. As in the previous year, O'Reilly (http://www.oreilly.com/) were munificent in providing hundreds of dollars worth of computer books for us to include in the auction. Even better, this year, they provided a web-link for those attending the auction to download a complimentary E-book.

I had a specific one of their products in mind when I went to the web site but, regrettably, my book of choice wasn't in the list of many dozens of titles that were on offer. Consequently, I scanned through the books that were available and selected "Excel Programming with VBA Starter" by Robert Martin (Packt Publishing, October 2012).

The tag line for this book was "Get started with programming in Excel using Visual Basic for Applications (VBA)" which sounded ideal for my purposes. I have used VBA to develop a number of Excel macros, but have never had any real idea of what I was doing. I just used the macro recorder to give me some code to start with, and then checked on Google for specific insights into various VBA commands.

Clearly, a get-started guide was precisely what I needed. Furthermore, my past experience with O'Reilly's how-to guides – primarily aimed at various aspects of Linux – had been very positive. As a result of the latter, I was somewhat disappointed with this particular Excel macro offering.
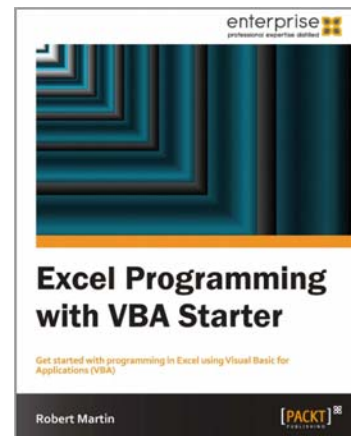
It was almost as if the author had a Jekyll-and-Hyde persona. In one section of the book there was an excellent outline of the use of loop-programming techniques (e.g. for-next, do-while and do-until) and then a fairly obscure section dealing with enumeration, classes, and external libraries. For me, the latter are quite advanced topics and a little out of place without some much more basic information about the macro programming system.

I found the really odd part of the book to be that there was never any specific indication of how to read from or write a value to a cell. Sure, some relevant commands were present in some of the examples, but the author didn't actually explain things like cell referencing and ranges, which are pretty important if you hope to be able to use the values of data elements in a worksheet.

There is a useful section on using Excel's macro recorder, the visual basic editor, and the file (module) management system. But, there is also a large section on how to categorize user-defined functions which, once again, I would consider an advanced topic since it is entirely possible to use functions without using this feature.

One of the problems that I have with this book is that it is quite short. One can't really hope to do justice to VBA programming in 61 pages. And, this is certainly the case if one chooses to discuss fairly advanced techniques at the expense of more basic concepts.

So, for once, O'Reilly get a failing grade from me on one of their user guides.

Excel Programming with VBA Starter

Get started with programming in Excel using Visual Basic for Applications (VBA)

Robert Martin

[PACKT]

However, anyone interested in learning about Excel macro programming, shouldn't be discouraged. A search for "Excel VBA" in O'Reilly's catalogue lists 21 other titles.

But, for my part, perhaps I will seek a review copy of the book I was initially looking for. It doesn't relate to VBA in any way – but it does have 744 pages!

◆◆◆

Inside this issue:

Next Meeting: WEDNESDAY, April 8th, 2015

April Raffle

After Jeff Dubois's presentation on media streaming, did you try it out? Are you a die-hard gamer who likes to play on the big screen in the living room? Do you have a smart TV? If so, you might have found the difficulties using a full-sized keyboard in the living room.

The Logitech K400 offers a solution. Small, wireless, sleek, and featuring a built-in touchpad, this keyboard is ready to handle any situation. Not too small to be used for normal productivity, yet not too large to be used on a couch with a home theater, streaming media, or gaming computer.

Tickets are, as always, a good deal at $1 for one, a great deal at $2 for three or the unbelievable bargain of $5 for ten!

March Prize Winner

Tim Hillock has the winner of our raffle at the March 2015 monthly meeting.

Tim is now the proud owner of a CD Stock Piggy!!

Coming Up…

➢**Wednesday, April 8th, 2015**
Speaker: Brian White, VTSP, VCP-DCV, Senior Systems Engineer, VMWare Canada
Topic: End User Computing: Access at the Speed of Life
   • From datacenter to device.
   • Cloud mobility.

With over 25 years experience in IT systems, 14 of those dedicated to the architecture, design and implementation of VMWare based systems, Brian will discuss various aspects of virtualization.

May 13th, 2015
Speaker: Jeff Dubois (OPCUG) and Fred Ennis
Topic: VoIP (Voice over IP)

Today's internet has transform the telecommunications industry. Reasonable quality internet connections have served to facilitate the effective use of VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) as an alternative to the traditional landline telephone. Jeff Dubois and Fred Ennis of the OPCUG examine a number of free and low-cost options to replace or augment your existing telephone service.

June 10th, 2015
Annual Pizza Night, eWaste collection event, and Presentation on Cybersecurity Issues
Speaker: Eric Jacksch
Topic: Cybersecurity for Individuals

Eric is a leading cybersecurity analyst with over 20 years of practical security experience. He has consulted to some of the world's largest banks, governments, automakers, insurance companies and postal organizations. Eric writes a weekly security column for IT in Canada, was a regular columnist for Monitor Magazine, and has contributed to several other publications.

Eric will survey the cybersecurity landscape with an emphasis on how it impacts individuals. Topics will include common attack vectors, advanced threats, and protecting yourself at home. Time will be reserved for questions and answers.

For the third year in a row, the OPCUG will have an **eWaste collection event** at its June 10th meeting, in partnership with Evolu-TIC Outaouais and in association with Ontario Electronic Stewardship (OES). *(details next page)*

2015 CALENDAR

Meetings	Date	Time and Venue
OPCUG General Meeting	Wednesday, April 8th	7:30 p.m. **Auditorium of the Canada Aviation and Space Museum**, 11 Aviation Parkway. http://casmuseum.techno-science.ca/en/index.php
Beginners' SIG	Wednesday, April 8th	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting.
Linux / Open Source SIG	Wednesday, April 8th	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting.
Beer BOF (Wing SIG East)	Wednesday, April 8th	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).
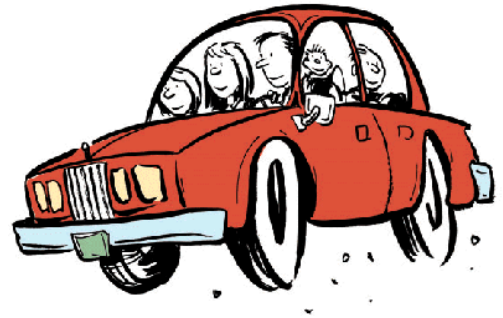
CLUB LIFE

Need A Ride?

A few members have expressed concern that our temporary location at the Canadian Aviation Museum (CASM) is not served well by public transit. It's accessibility is not an issue for anyone who uses ParaTranspo however for those who may simply wish to rely on public transit, and are not otherwise eligible for the Para service, its remoteness does pose a problem.

To address this issue, a few members have volunteered to provide transportation to any member who relies on public transit to attend the general meetings and otherwise may not be able to attend because of the poor transit service to the CASM. Though it may not necessarily be door-to-door service, it would certainly be from the CASM to a major transit station.

If you find yourself impacted by our temporary relocation to the CASM, and would like to make contact with a volunteer who may be located in your area and capable for providing transportation, please send an email request to needaride@opcug.ca . Alternatively, if you are able to provide a ride to a member in need, please send an email to the same email address and indicate from what area of town you would be able to pick someone up.

Technology Rescue Initiative

F or the past few years, the OPCUG has held a December Silent Auction through which donated computer and electronic items were "auctioned off" with ALL proceeds from the event going to the Ottawa Food Bank. One member has kindly donated a substantial number of used computer items with the objective of finding some of them a new home through our Silent Auction and, in the process, perhaps raising a few shekels for a good cause.

At the last meeting of the OPCUG's board, it was suggested that we provide a mechanism through which items ultimately destined for the auction (or sadly even the eWaste event) might be purchased much in the same way one rescues a puppy or kitten facing an uncertain future. As such, the "Technology Rescue Initiative" was borne.

A selection of used donated items have been posted to the OPCUG website at http://opcug.ca/public/history/Auction/2015/rescue.html where each item is listed with a special "Pre-Auction Rescue Price". Anyone interested in purchasing any of these items may do so by simply clicking on the link beside each item and emailing the contact person listed for the item. All monies from the sale of these items will still go to the Ottawa Food Bank; they will just be held in trust until our regular Silent Auction event scheduled for December. If you have any used items you wish to donate and have included in the "Rescue Initiative", please send a photo and description to rescue@opcug.ca so they may be added to the webpage.

Looking for a video card? Need a spare network adapter? Something in a KVM? Need a few extra parts to build that Linux box you've wanted to tinker with? Rescue a piece of technology today! Be sure to check the "Technology Rescue Initiative" webpage at http://opcug.ca/public/history/Auction/2015/rescue.html and remember: these items have been donated so ALL monies will be given directly to the Food Bank in our December drive.

eWaste Collection Event

F or the third year in a row, the OPCUG will have an eWaste collection event at its June 10th meeting, in partnership with Evolu-TIC Outaouais and in association with Ontario Electronic Stewardship (OES). Items that can be reused will be retained and refurbished, while all other older or not-useful electronic items will be taken to the processing plant and properly disposed of safely and responsibly with respect to OES guidelines. Everyone is invited to rid their homes of items no longer required. The eWaste event will be June 10th from 5:30pm to 7pm near the big tent at the Canada Aviation and Space Museum, 11 Aviation Parkway. For more information please check our web page at http://opcug.ca/public/history/eWaste/2015/eWaste.html.

Secretary's Report 2014/2015

The 2014/2015 OPCUG Board was as follows:

Chris Taylor	President and SysAdmin
Jocelyn Doire	Meeting Co-ordinator
Jeff Dubois	Publicity
Gail Eagen	Secretary
Bob Gowan	Special Events Co-ordinator
Alan German	Treasurer
Wayne Houston	Privacy
Brigitte Lord	Web Master and Newsletter Editor
Bob Walker	Facilities Co-ordinator

There were 11 meetings of the OPCUG Board of Directors. The minutes of these meetings are posted in area 59 of the PUB.

Meetings focused on Program, raffle and door prizes, newsletter contents, finances and publicity to increase membership.

Over and above usual business, there were four motions passed by the Board.

> MOTION – Chris moved to book the North Gloucester Library meeting room at $25 as a backup while Bob W pursues the Canada Aviation and Space Museum option. Moved by Chris and seconded Wayne. All in Favour
>
> MOTION – Jeff moved that we proceed with Seasonal Fashion (Snow Swag) at a price of $15 each. Moved by Jeff and seconded by Alan. All in Favour
>
> MOTION – Given the electricity costs had been overestimated, Alan moved that the Board not ask Chris to repav overestimates of electrical costs in the past. Instead, the Board would not reimburse Chris's costs of power for the foreseeable future. Moved by Alan and seconded by Jocelyn. All in Favour. Chris abstained.
>
> MOTION – Chris moved to give free membership for one year to the new 2015/2016 Board and to Mark Cayer for his membership duties and to Bert for offering his office for the OPCUG Board meetings and to Richard Aylesworth for his financial reviewer duties. Moved by Chris and seconded by Bob Gowan.. All in Favour.

Annual General Meeting 2015
The Annual General Meeting (AGM) was held on February 11, 2015.

1. **Election Results** - Chris Taylor, President, announced that they were exactly nine nominations and thus the Board was acclaimed.

The newly elected Board was announced. Board Members for 2015/16 were:

> Jocelyn Doire
> Jeff Dubois
> Gail Eagen
> Alan German
> Mark Giovannetti
> Wayne Houston
> Brigitte Lord
> Chris Taylor
> Bob Walker

Chris thanked Bob Herres for once again carrying out the duties of Election Chair.

Chris then thanked outgoing Board member, Bob Gowan, for his 15 years of service as a Board member. Chris also noted that previous to that, Bob had served as a SIG co-ordinator. Jeff Dubois presented Bob with a gift on behalf of the OPCUG Board and membership.

2. **President's Report** - Chris said the President's Report was published in the February 2015 Newsletter.

3. **Treasurer's Report** - The Treasurer's Report for the calendar year 2014 was prepared by Treasurer, Alan German, and published in the February 2015 Newsletter. In Alan's absence, Wayne Houston presented the report at the AGM.

He reported that the OPCUG is in good financial shape in fiscal year 2014 however expenses exceeded revenue by $1112.04. This was more than 2013 partially because the donation expense for the Ottawa Food Bank for 2013 of $504 was reported in 2014. The Silent Auction held in December 2014 for the Ottawa Food Bank raised $429 including cash donations.

There was an increase in Miscellaneous Expenses of almost $600 largely resulted from replenishing our stock of speaker gifts (USB drives and Bluetooth speakers), and the purchase of a number of raffle prizes (Ubislate tablets and wireless keyboards).

Newsletter expenses were reduced by over $600 (28%) due the Board making the electronic newsletter available to library branches, and a number of members switching from hard copy to the E-newsletter. The result was a reduction of the print run for the hard-copy newsletter and consequent savings in both printing and mailing costs. This change occurred part way through fiscal year 2014. It is anticipated that even more savings will result in the full 2015 fiscal year.

Wayne reminded members who were still receiving a hard-copy newsletter that they could help the cause by subscribing to the PDF version and telling Mark to remove their name from the postal-mail distribution list.

Secretary's Report 2014/2015 *(Continued from page 4)*

It was also noted that there were three new accounts, a petty cash account, a PayPal membership account and a membership account.

Chris asked if there were any questions from members. There were none.

Chris thanked Richard Aylesworth for scrutinizing the Treasurer's financial records in 2014 stating his recommendations had been considered and implemented by the Board.

4. **Secretary's Report** - Chris said the Secretary's Report would be published in an upcoming Newsletter, including notes from the AGM.

5. **Facilities** – Bob Walker discussed the meeting location situation. Due to the presence of mould in the building, the Canadian Science and Technology Museum (CSTM) was shut down until further notice. He noted that the CSTM required a massive overhaul and would not reopen for at least 2 years. The CSTM found the OPCUG a new meeting location at the Canadian Aviation and Space museum (CASM) at the same cost as the CSTM.
Bob noted that the CASM location has the disadvantages that it is crowded and not accessible by OC Transpo. He said other options had been explored. The Agriculture Museum at Carling and Prince of Wales had a bigger room and was accessible by bus. However, it cost $100 per night to cover the cost of a security guard. Several other options were explored, each costing about $100 to $200 per night. He had looked at the central Ottawa Public Library but parking was an issue as well as cost of the room. A member had suggested talking to the Catholic School Board and Bob said he would do that. In general, he was looking for a location with sufficient space for our members, accessible by bus, with low cost parking and with an Internet connection and a projector.
Chris noted that he had looked at the Nepean Sportsplex but it had no Internet connectivity or audiovisual equipment and it cost $200 per night. He had also looked at other library locations but there were issues of closing times which were too early.
A member asked if the OPCUG could invest in a projector, which then would permit more locations to be considered. Bob responded that he always brought his personal projector as a backup. He said the OPCUG could consider purchasing a projector if it found a location that met the other criteria of low cost, accessible by bus and with low cost parking. The issue was the cost of a sufficient quality projector as well as its maintenance. Also some locations do not permit use of outside equipment.

6. **Other** - Chris thanked all the Board members for their contributions.   He also thanked Jocelyn Doire for the electronic distribution of the Newsletter and for maintaining the history pages on the web site; Mark Cayer for his work on membership and mailing the Newsletter; and Bert Schopf for offering his office space for OPCUG Board meetings. He also thanked the membership.

7. **Questions and Comments** - Chris opened the floor to questions or comments:

a) A member asked how many members the OPCUG had at present.

Answer: Mark responded that the membership was approximately 130-140 but was trending down.

b) A member thanked the Board members who gave Library presentations and asked if this was affecting membership.

Answer: Mark said that Library presentation attendees are offered a free three month membership. He added that some of these are then becoming members so it seemed to be working.

c) A member asked if the new location and lack of bus service was affecting membership.

Answer. Jeff said that there had been an article in the October Newsletter asking if people needed a ride to the meeting. No one had taken up the offer. He suggested that a Newsletter article could be published asking people to post if they need a ride or could offer a ride.

d) A member asked if the OPCUG could Skype the meetings so that members who cannot make it to the new location could still see the meeting.

Answer: Jeff said he could look into that. Chris commented that we want attendees in the room for speakers.

e) A member asked if the Pizza-Q was still on for the June meeting.

Answer: Bob Walker responded that he was clearing this with the CASM and that we expected the Pizza-Q to proceed.

f) A member asked if we were planning to have the eWaste event at the June meeting again this year.

Answer: Chris said that we were looking into this and were expecting to have this event. We would confirm with members at a future meeting and in the Newsletter.

8. The Meeting was adjourned at 7:55 PM.

Submitted by Gail Eagen,
Secretary, OPCUG

Saving JPG files in GIMP   *by Alan German*

One of my favourite public-domain software tools is the GNU Image Manipulation Program (GIMP). This free digital image editor is extremely powerful (having been compared to Photoshop), yet can be very simple to use, and has a wide range of web-based how-to's and video tutorials.

I mainly use it for simple cropping and resizing of digital photographs and screenshots but, on occasion, have used some of the more obscure tools, such as the "magic scissors" to extract part of an image from its background. One of the reasons that I use this software is that it is available on multiple platforms so I can use essentially the same procedures on both Windows and Linux. However, this isn't always so.

For some inexplicable (to me) reason, the developers of the Windows' version chose to "update" the program's features so that, by default, saving an image results in a .XCF file. This doesn't work for me since, if I load and edit a JPG file, I generally want to save the result as a JPG file, and usually the same JPG file.

The official solution is to "export" the edited file and specify the extension as .JPG; however, this requires: (a) remembering to use the Export command, and (b) completing a number of dialogue boxes before the file is actually stored. Oh, for those simpler days of File-Edit-Save!

But, all is not lost. One of the powerful features of GIMP is its ability to accept plug-ins. And, wouldn't you know, a very kind user - a somewhat modest Paul Sherman* - has created and made available a Python script that plugs into the File menu and provides a "Save as JPG" option.

Now editing and saving a JPG file is simple. Open the file, make the edits, and select File – Save as JPG. A single dialogue box asks what output quality (file compression) is required and the edited file is saved with its original name – and its original JPG extension!

So, thanks Paul. This little utility is a really useful adjunct to a really useful program.

Bottom Line

Script to save as JPG, more easily... (save_as_jpg.py)
Version 1.1
Paul Sherman
http://www.gimphelp.org/python_save_as_jpg.shtml

GNU Image Manipulation Program (Open-source)
Version 2.8
http://www.gimp.org/

* "Paul" doesn't include authorship details on his web site, but his E-mail address is psherman@gmail.com

OPCUG Free Software Guide – Part 56
Compiled by
Alan German

This guide features an annotated list of free computer programs. The software mentioned has not been reviewed (except where noted) nor have any tests necessarily been conducted. Consequently, no guarantees are provided that the individual programs will perform as described. Rather the list of available software is provided for the information of our members who may find one or more of the programs useful.

DiskCheckup
Monitor the SMART attributes of a hard disk with this utility. Reports include elements of possible long term drive failure, such as spin-up time, the number of start and stops, hours powered on, and the hard disk temperature.
Current Release: Version 3.2
Web Site: http://preview.tinyurl.com/beonk

WinPatrol
Detect and prevent changes to important Windows settings. Obtain notification if unwanted programs are set to run automatically. Check if a toolbar is to be added to your browser, or if there is a change to your home page or search provider. WinPatrol is on guard against all such activities.
Current Release: Version 32.0.2014.5
Web Site: http://www.winpatrol.com/

Internet Traffic Report
This GUI tool, from AnalogX, gives you quick access to all the normal tools used to diagnose network problems, from ping to traceroute. But ITR takes it one step further, giving clean, graphical displays of the data, as well as additional information to help you track down and identify where problems originate.
Current Release: Version 1.02
Web Site: http://preview.tinyurl.com/8byfy

Oak Outliner
Oak is a plain text outliner that works in your web browser. Type your ideas and indent them with tabs to create your outline. The outline is stored in your web browser's local storage and can only be seen from your computer. Uses include making to-do lists, taking notes, planning events, tracking projects, and organizing your writing.
Web Site: http://oakoutliner.com/

Gotham City Impostors
This download-only, multi-player, first-person shooter game pits violent vigilantes dressed up like Batman against craven criminals dressed up like the Joker in open warfare on the streets of Gotham City.
Web Site: http://www.gothamcityimpostors.com/

Lightworks Free
A video editor with support for many import formats, plus titling options and multiple special effects. Export your creations to MPEG-4 (Web, YouTube and Vimeo).
Current Release: Version 12
Web Site: http://www.lwks.com/

Boxcryptor
Want to store files in the cloud but still keep them safe from prying eyes? Use Boxcryptor to securely encrypt your files before uploading them to Dropbox, Google Drive, Microsoft OneDrive, SugarSync, Box.net, or any other major cloud storage provider.
Web Site: https://www.boxcryptor.com/

Nimi Visuals
Add eye-candy to your display with special effects like "jel-ly windows" that makes a moved window wiggle. Or, use a generous helping of pixie dust to leave a twinkling trail as you move a window across the screen.
Current Release: Version 20140826
Web Site: http://preview.tinyurl.com/mxjn3vx

PicMonkey
PicMonkey is a free photo editor that works in your browser; there is nothing to download or install. Fix your photos and add beautiful filters and text. Touch up facial features or create outstanding graphics. Ridiculously easy, staggeringly gorgeous.
Web Site: http://www.picmonkey.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 7:30 p.m. **Auditorium of the Canada Aviation and Space Museum**, 11 Aviation Parkway, Ottawa. Meetings are 7:30–9:00 p.m. and Special Interest Groups (SIGs) go until 10 p.m.

Parking is available at the museum for a flat fee of $3 after 5pm. Limited street parking is available for free. Details at http://opcug.ca/public/regmtg.htm

OPCUG Membership Fees:	$25 per year
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Web address:	**http://opcug.ca**
Bulletin board—The PUB (BBS)	**http://opcug.ca/default.htm**
Follow us on Twitter:	**http://twitter.com/opcug**

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Beginners' SIG
    Chris Taylor   **chris.taylor@opcug.ca**   613-727-5453
Linux / Open-Source SIG
    (vacant)

OPCUG Treasurer, Alan German, received the following letter of appreciation from his brother-in-law in London, ON:

"Thanks Alan for the latest copy of the newsletter [March 2015]. I really enjoyed the article on "Rich Copy". That might come in handy one day. I must say that Brigitte does an excellent job on your newsletter. I got a bit of a chuckle with you describing the installation of the ssd drive. I bet you were sweating bullets?"

Reduce, Reuse, 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 under two years.

You may TAKE AWAY any items of use to you.

Any items left over at the end of the meeting have to be taken back home by those who brought them in.