



OTTAWA

PC NEWS

Volume 35, Number 7

September 2018

PRODUCT REVIEW

“Farewell past, happy dreams of days gone by”

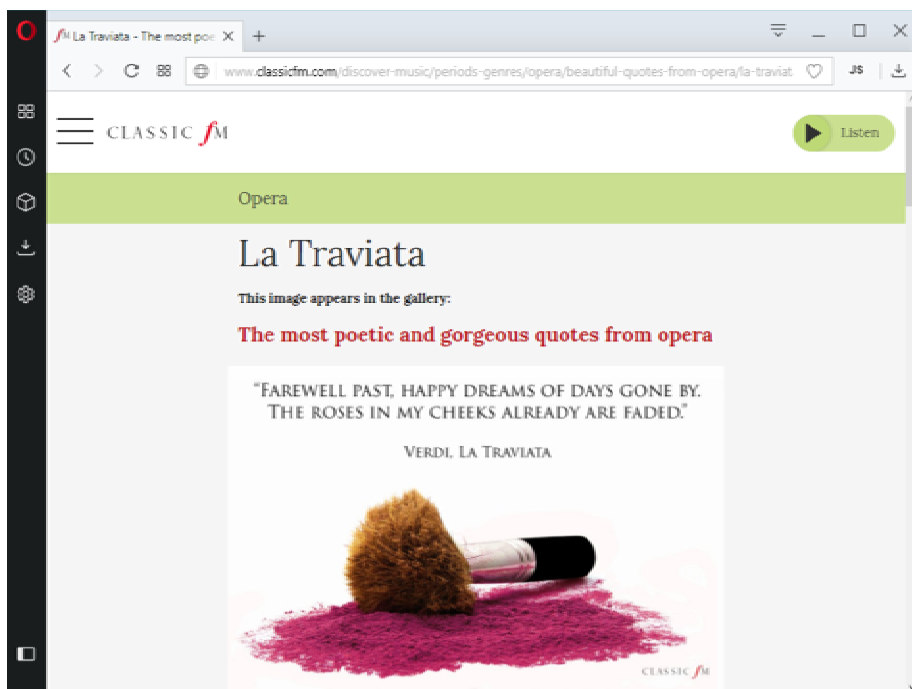
by Alan German

The title (with apologies to Giuseppe Verdi) more or less says it all. After many years happily using Firefox on both the Linux and Windows platforms, I may have said goodbye to my web browser of choice. The latest update to Firefox (Firefox Quantum, Version 57.0) has killed my three favourite add-ons and, consequently, the browser no longer functions in the manner that I desire, nor indeed as I require.

I don't want much from a web browser. I want to be able to set the homepage, and I also want to be able to specify that my homepage opens in any new browser tab. The latter requirement is because I use a local HTML page, with links to all the web sites that I regularly visit, as a custom menu to the Internet, and I set this as my home page. After that, I want to be able to toggle JavaScript on and off, and I want to see a progress bar that readily identifies the course of file downloads.

Of course, almost all browsers will allow specifying a specific address for the homepage, where the address can be the URL of a web site, or the location of a local file. Similarly, some browsers will allow the address to be specified for any new tab that is opened but, more often this has to be achieved with a browser plug-in. Many browsers allow JavaScript to be disabled completely, but toggling this scripting system usually requires a plug-in to be installed. The difficulty is finding a single browser that will provide all of these features.

Before the update to Quantum, I was using three add-ons for the Firefox



Opera displaying opera

[Continued on page 6](#)

browser. New Tab Homepage let me set my menu page to be opened in each new tab. Downloads Window displayed a pop-up window, with an indication of any file being downloaded, and an associated progress bar. And, JSOff provided a button with which to toggle JavaScript on and off. Quantum effectively broke all of these plug-ins and rendered the new version of Firefox useless for my purposes. This may change at some point in the future as developers produce modified code but, at present, a bug report submitted on the API changes required for New Tab Homepage is flagged as “wontfix”, which doesn't look very promising.

Inside this issue:

Calendar / Coming Up / Raffle	2
Review: Opera browser	1, 6
We have moved!	3
2018 Fall Workshop	3
Saving and Restoring the Desktop	4
XMeters	5
OPCUG Free Software Guide—Part 82	7
Contact Information	8

Next Meeting: **WEDNESDAY, September 12th, 2018**

September Raffle

The September raffle prize is an **X-DRAGON Solar Power Bank with Cigarette Lighter**

This nifty gadget is a USB power pack that you can charge up with any USB charger or leave in the sun (e.g. on a picnic table) and the sun will charge it. It will power any USB toy including smart phones, tablets, notebooks, etc. for hours. While NOT being waterproof (i.e. submersible) it can be left out in the rain. It has a flashlight with three modes: steady light, SOS and strobe. There is a cigarette lighter that can ignite paper, leaves or grass. Tickets are \$1 for one, \$2 for three, or \$5 for ten.



June Prize Winners

Our raffle prize, an iCan laptop Trolley Backpack, was won by **Sheena Pritchard** while our door prize for the evening, a cedar plank BBQ cleaner, went home with **Danielle McKenney**.

Coming Up...

→Wednesday, September 12, 2018

Topic: Renewable Energy
Speaker: Bob Walker, OPCUG

All of our computers, tablets, smart phones, big screen TV's and so many other things in our life have one thing in common: they all need electricity to work. Whether it's used to run the devices directly or to charge their batteries, almost all of this electricity comes from the grid. Find out where it really comes from and what all this 'Renewable Energy' talk is all about.

Bob is on the Board of the Burritts Rapids Renewable Energy Association (BRREA). BRREA's focus is on the development of a small hydro project, generating energy from the Rideau River water flow at the dam site upstream from the village, and using all income (after covering costs) to fund community projects and initiatives.

Wednesday, October 10, 2018

Topic: Mass Marketing Fraud and Cybercrime Awareness For Seniors

Speaker: Brock Godfrey, Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre, North Bay

A presentation developed by the RCMP and the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre covering Mass Marketing Fraud, Identity Theft, Romance and other scams – and how to avoid them. Nearly 80 percent of mass marketing fraud is conducted by organized crime groups and is currently the second most common criminal activity funding terrorist activities.

Brock took early retirement in 1993 from the Ontario Ministry of Education, after 30 years in education. He joined Phone-Busters in 1997 as a Volunteer SeniorBuster. Now residing in the Barrie area, he does most, if not all, the presentations in Southern Ontario.

For meeting updates and additional details, visit <http://opcug.ca/meetings>.

2018 CALENDAR

Meetings	Date	Time and Venue
OPCUG General Meeting	Wednesday, September 12 th	7:30 p.m. at the Riverside United Church, 3191 Riverside Drive, Ottawa. Parking is free. OC Transpo bus #87 stops nearby. Visit http://opcug.ca/meetings for directions.
Q&A Session	Wednesday, September 12 th	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting.
Beer BOF (Wing SIG East)	Wednesday, September 12 th	10:00 p.m. (after the Q&A) at the Riverside Pub, 3673 Riverside Drive. Turn left onto Riverside Dr. from the Church.

CLUB LIFE

We have moved!

Last year we started searching for a new venue for our meetings. We finally found a place with bus service and free parking that is more centrally located. The **Riverside United Church** is located on Riverside Drive near Mooney's Bay. It is on the east side of Riverside Dr. and just south of Walkley Road.

Hooray! There is OC Transpo bus service to the church. Route #87 stops nearby. You can plan your bus route [here](#).

Hooray again! There is free parking at the church.

The Aviation and Space Museum (CASM) has served us well over the last few years after the Science and Tech Museum (CSTM) had to shut down for mould cleanup and renovations. However, CASM is in a remote location with no bus service and we did not want to stay there permanently. We had hoped to move back to CSTM but the main auditorium is now more expensive and other available rooms were not a good fit.

Make sure to set a reminder in your calendar to attend the September meeting at Riverside United Church. Meeting hours are the same. Details and a link to Google maps can be found in the sidebar at right and on our [Meetings](#) page.



[Click for directions](#)



Photo courtesy of Chris Taylor, OPCUG



[Click for larger view](#)

2018 Fall Workshop – Computer Tune-up

Does your computer need a tune-up – or perhaps replacement?! We have the information that you need to decide and the expertise to show you how. Members of the Ottawa PC Users' Group will explain things like the difference between GB and GHz, the types of processors currently available, display screen resolutions and other features that will help you select the new computer or component that will suit your needs. One of the most effective means of speeding up a computer is to upgrade the hard drive with a solid state drive (SSD). Sure, you can have a computer shop install an SSD for you, but we will show you just how easy it is to do yourself. Having trouble getting that new Wi-Fi printer connected to your system? We can show you how to make this happen. And, finally, any computer system can benefit from a tune-up of its operating system. We have all the tips, tricks and traps that will let you optimize Windows to run efficiently on your machine. Our Fall 2018 workshop will be held at the Beaverbrook branch of the Ottawa Public Library on Saturday, November 3, 2018. Stay tuned to up-coming issues of the newsletter and the club's web site (<http://opcug.ca>) for full details.

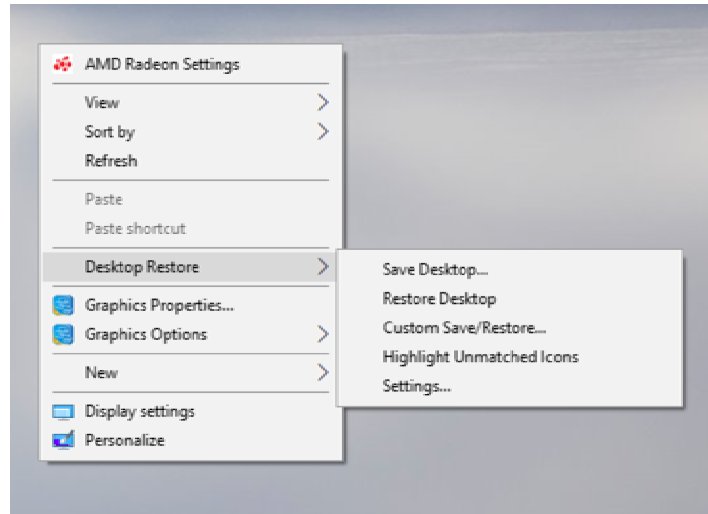


PRODUCT REVIEW

Saving and Restoring the Desktop

by Alan German

In the past I have used the IconRestorer utility (see [Keeping Your Icons Straight](#)) to save snapshots of the icon layout on my desktop, and to restore my preferred layout when this became disrupted. However, under Windows 10, I found that IconRestorer didn't necessarily restore the precise layout that I had spent time carefully arranging. So, it was time to seek out a new program to accomplish the desired effect.



Enter Desktop Restore, a simple utility that hooks into Windows and provides an entry in the context menu when right-clicking on the desktop (see screenshot).

The basic use of the utility couldn't be much simpler. Select "Save Desktop..." to store a snapshot of the current icon layout, or "Restore Desktop" to reinstate the icon layout in accordance with the saved settings. Confirm taking the snapshot, by clicking OK, and the rest of the "magic" occurs in the background, requiring no further thought on the part of the user. And, the utility certainly seems to work as advertised.

There are more flexible modes of use. For example, the "Custom Layout Save/Restore" option provides the ability to manage multiple snapshots. An individual layout may be saved to a Desktop Restore (.dtr) file, and saved layouts may be restored or deleted.

There are a couple of additional features. The "Highlight Unmatched Icons" menu entry will identify icons that have been added to the desktop layout subsequent to the restored snapshot having been taken. And, several settings may be customized, but their features (i.e. host in the cascade or main menu) do not appear to be documented.

However, the basic usage of save a layout and restore the layout seem perfectly adequate in my case.

Bottom Line:

Desktop Restore (Freeware)

Jamie O'Connell

Version 1.7.0

<http://www.midiox.com/desktoprestore.htm>



PRODUCT REVIEW

XMeters

by Chris Taylor

I keep track of my computer's performance. I almost always have the Task Manager icon in the System Tray. At a glance, I can see if my CPU is being taxed to the extent it will slow down everything I am doing.

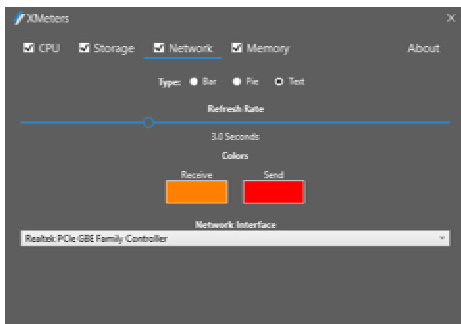
But what about other important performance metrics?

If a download from the Internet is slow, is it because my bandwidth is maxed out or is it because the server at the other end is slow?

When I hear my hard disk chugging away, it might just be some small, low priority background task. Or it might be something bigger that can slow me down when I am trying to load a 600MB Photoshop file for editing.

How do I know if memory is over 95% in use? That could certainly cause major slowdowns when I load a big program.

XMeters from Entropy6 is a great little free program that monitors four metrics; *CPU*, *Storage*, *Network*, and *Memory*. It loads into the system tray on the taskbar where you can see the status at a glance.



Right-click on the XMeters section of the taskbar to customize the configuration. You can turn off any of the 4 metrics you don't want to monitor. Each metric can be displayed as text or a chart (bar or pie). Colours are customizable. Additionally, the metrics have some further customizations.

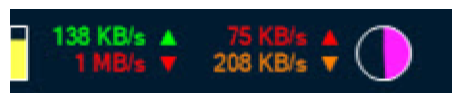
CPU can display either total utilization or it can separate out *system* and *user* processes. You can opt for separate displays for each processor core and even each logical core.

Storage shows *read* separate from *write*. You can have it display a combination of all disks or a single physical drive.

Network splits out *send* from *receive*. If you have multiple network interfaces, you can choose which one you want to monitor.

Memory simply displays the percentage of memory used.

Following is the explanation of the tray icons.



To the left is *CPU*, shown here as an aggregate of all cores in a single yellow bar chart. It is showing over 80% utilization. If I saw this constantly, it would be cause for concern.

Next is *Storage*, which I set to display as text. It is showing 138 KB/sec *read* in green and 1 MB/sec *write* in red.

Third is *Network*, also set to display as text. It is showing 75 KB/sec *send* in red and 208 KB/sec *receive* in orange.

Finally, *Memory* is set to a pie chart and is showing about 50% in use in purple.

XMeters is great to let you know when you have an issue, but it won't help fix it. If you want to dig deeper into what is causing a bottleneck, left-click on any part of the XMeters section of the system tray and Task Manager will load, which provides a wealth of information on performance metrics.

Entropy6 says "XMeters is designed to be as lightweight and battery-friendly as possible." It doesn't show up in Task Manager, so it is hard to quantify memory and CPU usage. Even Mark Russinovich's *Autoruns* and *Process Explorer* are unable to find it. The author of XMeters told me XMeters is an out-of-process COM server loaded by Windows Explorer and therefore the CPU and memory usage are a portion of what is reported for Windows Explorer. I can happily report that XMeters uses a trivial amount of CPU and memory.

The free version of XMeters only supports refresh rates between 3 and 10 seconds. If you want a version that you can set to refresh more frequently, it is a mere US\$5.

XMeters is a v1 program and is impressive as-is. But I can see some possible enhancements that would be nice.

It would be handy to have user-configurable thresholds. If a threshold is passed, change the display colour or make it flash to draw your attention. For example, if CPU utilization exceeds 80%, display it in flashing red.

As shown in the screen shot of the tray icons, with *Storage* displayed as text, an up-pointing triangle indicates *read* and a down-pointing triangle indicates *write*. With *Network* displayed as text, an up-pointing triangle indicates *send* and a down-pointing triangle indicates *receive*. Both *Storage* and *Network* are similar in appearance, making it difficult to know what you are looking at. It would be nice if, rather than using triangles, XMeters used R and W to indicate *read* and *write*, and S and R to indicate *send* and *receive*.

No word (yet) from the author as to whether he agrees that these changes are worthwhile.

But that is nit-picking! I think XMeters is a very useful addition to my computer that enables me to monitor its performance. As long as its usefulness holds up, I will be sending in my \$5. Not because I need the capability of adjusting the refresh rate to faster than 3 seconds, but because it is a great program that deserves to be supported.

Bottom line:

XMeters

Version 1.0.101.0

Free version: max update every 3 seconds

\$5 version: allows more frequent updates

System requirements: Windows 7

through 10

<https://entropy6.com/xmeters/>

Opera browser *(Continued from page 1)*

My immediate workaround to the above-note issues was to roll back Firefox to Version 56.0 since all of the “legacy” plug-ins are functional in the prior release of the browser. However, this really wasn’t a viable solution for the long term, as Firefox was continually nagging me to upgrade, and not upgrading might well result in my having an insecure browser. So, the only real course of action was to find a new browser.

My search led me to Opera - the browser, not the musical genre (although the rather appropriate title of this article is taken from Verdi’s *La Traviata*). Opera lets me open a specific page on startup, and I can readily set my local menu file as the browser’s homepage. By default, Opera has a very nice pop-up window that indicates file downloads, and their progress, so no plug-in is necessary for this task.

However, setting the target for a new tab, and toggling JavaScript, both require using plug-ins. Opera has a good range of plug-ins available, and I quickly found modules that fulfilled my requirements. First, I installed Custom Tab New Page. Opening a new tab in the browser displayed a window requesting the URL that I wanted to be opened when a new tab is created. I entered the location for my menu file and this was then used in all subsequent new tabs. Next, I installed JavaScript Toggle On and Off. This resulted in a “JS” button being displayed on the toolbar. Clicking on this button toggles JavaScript off and adds a red “X” to the JS icon to give a visual indication of JavaScript’s disabled status. Perfect!

Opera has some very nice additional features. The sidebar down the left edge of the program’s window can be easily customized (Settings – Sidebar – Manage Sidebar). I unchecked a bunch of boxes for icons on the sidebar that I would never use (e.g. Facebook, WhatsApp) and checked some other options (e.g. Extensions, Downloads and Settings) to give ready access to these features while I explored the use of the browser.

Other features that I haven’t really explored yet include a built-in ad-blocker; an unlimited, free VPN option; and a brand-new battery-saver that promises to extend laptop battery life by up to 50%.

Another item that some people might find useful is the “Speed Dial” button. By default, new tabs open in Opera’s Speed Dial, and the sidebar also contains a button to call up this page. As the name suggests, the function is akin to the speed dialing function on a telephone where, typically, pressing a specific digit causes a particular telephone number to be dialed. In Opera’s case, the “digits” are thumbnail images of individual web pages that can be set to the user’s preference. One click on a thumbnail launches the associated web site.

The one thing I have found that doesn’t work is the advanced setting for web sites that is labelled “Open PDF files in the default PDF viewer application.” The downloads window shows “Download complete”, but no file is loaded into PDF-Xchange Viewer, which is my PDF reader of choice. Fortunately, double-clicking on the name of the PDF file in the downloads window does cause the file to be displayed in the viewer. And, it appears that the file is loaded from temporary storage so there is no need to delete it from the main downloads directory once it has been viewed.

There is also a (perhaps) minor annoyance with the current version of Opera. Most browsers have an option to display a “File, Edit, View” toolbar. This is not the case for the current version of Opera. Somebody seems to have decided that such a toolbar isn’t necessary and, rather than making the toolbar optional, just junked the feature entirely. So, how does one print a web page (File – Print or Print Preview), or search for a text string on the current page (Edit – Find)? One way to access the print function is to use Opera’s menu (from the icon at the top-left of the page) and navigate to Menu – Page – Print. This brings up a print preview page with the ability to set print options and activate a Print button. Similarly, finding a text string can be achieved through Menu – Find.

It’s also possible to access some of these features through keyboard shortcuts, e.g. Ctrl-P = Print, Ctrl-F = Find. However, this may not be such a

welcome solution for users of touch-enabled devices. And, it may also not be too useful for those of us who don’t remember a list of shortcuts, especially since the help file notes that: “...more than half of Opera’s shortcuts are unique to the browser.” The good news is that at least one plug-in addresses the printing issue. A “Print” plug-in places a printer icon on the browser’s task bar and, clicking on this icon, transfers control to the print-preview page.

For now, at least, Opera – and a few plug-ins – are providing all the functionality that I require of a web browser. However, it appears that I will need to learn a few new techniques to perform frequently-used tasks (i.e. printing and searching). The good news is that Opera is multi-platform so I can use the same browser – and, hopefully, the same tricks! – in both Linux and Windows. Time will tell if Opera remains my browser of choice.

Bottom Line:

Opera (Freeware)
Opera Software AS
<http://www.opera.com>



OPCUG Free Software Guide—Part 82

Compiled by Alan German,
Chris Taylor, and
Jeff Dubois

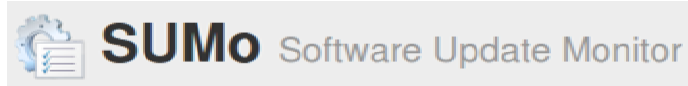
This guide features an annotated list of free computer programs. The software mentioned has not been reviewed (except where noted) nor have any tests necessarily been conducted. Consequently, no guarantees are provided that the individual programs will perform as described. Rather the list of available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

SUMo

Software Update Monitor (SUMo), from KC Softwares, keeps your PC up-to-date and safe by using the most recent version of your favorite software! Unlike built-in auto update features, SUMo lets you know if updates are available before you need to use your applications.

Current Release: Version 5.5.7.388

Web Site: <http://www.kcsoftwares.com/index.php?sumo>



Homedale::Wi-Fi / WLAN Monitor

Use this Wi-Fi analyzer to search for Wi-Fi/WLAN access points. See an overview of available access points with their signal strength, encryption, speed and channel. Record signal strength in a graph over the time, log to a text file, or create a screenshot. Connect and disconnect from any access point.

Available for Windows or MacOS.

Current Release: Version 1.76

Web Site: <http://www.the-sz.com/products/homedale/>

Image Composite Editor

This panoramic image stitcher has been created by Microsoft Research's Interactive Visual Media Group. Using a set of overlapping photographs of a scene shot from a single camera location, the app creates a high-resolution panorama that seamlessly combines the original images. The program can also create a panorama from a panning video. Finished panoramas can be saved in a wide variety of image formats, including JPEG and TIFF.

Web Site: <https://tinyurl.com/ydbufn83>

SSuite Office

Need an office suite that runs really fast? The developers of this package say that their applications have the smallest system footprint possible. And, there are no trial versions, nothing to pay, and no need to register.

Current Release: Version 4.4.1

Web Site: <https://www.ssuitesoft.com/>

File Shredder

A fast, safe and reliable tool to completely and securely shred your files. File Shredder is a simple but powerful program that surpasses many similar commercial utilities. File Shredder also has an integrated disk-wiper option which uses a shredding algorithm to wipe unused disk space.

Previously Reviewed: Electronic File Shredding; Alan German; <http://www.opcug.ca/public/Reviews/FileShredder.htm>

Current Release: Version 2.5

Web Site: <http://www.files shredder.org/>

The logo for Free File Shredder features the words "Free File Shredder" in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The word "Free" is in red, while "File Shredder" is in white. The text is set against a dark red, textured background.

Visual CD

Are you archiving documents, pictures, music, videos, and other files to optical media? If so, you know that it can be difficult to find that file you are looking for once you've moved it from your computer. Visual CD is a disk cataloging tool that will index the contents of all your external media storage (e.g. CDs, DVDs, USB disks) and allow searching the contents at a later date. You can index the files from the media by name, date, ID3 tag data, audio-video and picture information, generate thumbnails from picture and video files, and even catalog files which are contained in Zip/Cab/Rar/7-Zip archives.

Current Release: Version 4.2

Web Site: <http://www.boozet.org/visualcd.htm>

GO Launcher

Need more "home" screens for your Android smartphone or tablet? Go Launcher will give you as many as you wish. The app will also provide a choice from more than 10,000 themes, wallpapers, transition effects and widgets.

Web Site: <https://tinyurl.com/7tlovll>



Kodi

Kodi is an award-winning free and open source cross-platform software media player and entertainment hub for digital media home theater PCs. Its graphical user interface allows the user to easily browse and view videos, photos, podcasts, and music from a hard drive, optical disc, local network, and the internet using only a few buttons. Kodi can be used to play almost all popular audio and video format files. Available for Windows, Linux, Android, Mac OS X, and iOS.

Current Release: Version 17.6 (Krypton)

Web Site: <https://kodi.tv/>



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 Riverside United Church, 3191 Riverside Drive, Ottawa. Parking is free at the church. OC Transpo bus #87 stops nearby. Details at <http://opcug.ca/meetings>.

Meetings are 7:30–9:00 p.m. followed by a Q&A Session until 10 p.m.

OPCUG Membership Fees: \$25 per year
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How to get the OTTAWA PC NEWS by e-mail



Here's how to get the OPCUG newsletter by email:

Create a Google Account

Any valid email address can be used as a Google Account. Pick an email address you want to use and browse to <https://accounts.google.com>. Click *Create account* and follow the instructions.

Make sure your new Google Account is functioning properly by going to <https://accounts.google.com> and signing in.

Sign up for the OPCUG Google Groups

Browse to <https://groups.google.com>. If you are not signed into your Google Account, click the *Sign in* button at the top.

1. In *Search for groups or messages*, type *OPCUG*. The top of the search results will show Groups matching OPCUG. Click on *See all 3*.

2. Click on *OPCUG-Newsletter*, then click the *Join group* button. In the resulting dialog box, you can opt to change some preferences, such as;

- If *My display name* shows as your email address you can change this to something like *firstname lastname*
- Email preferences can be changed to only send daily summaries or not email you at all when new postings are made (meaning you must manually check at the web site to see if there are any new postings)

3. Click the *Join this group* button.

4. You will then see the list of postings that have been made to the group. Click on any entry to see the actual posting.

More detailed instructions on how to join this and other OPCUG Google Groups are found here:

<http://opcug.ca/public/GoogleGroups.html>

There are no issues of the newsletter published in July or August.