PRODUCT REVIEW

# Finding Free Disk Space with BleachBit

by Alan German

A number of my presentations at recent Q&A sessions (https://opcug.ca/qa/) have focussed on creating free disk space by locating and removing temporary files using tools available from Microsoft. However, a suggestion was made that I should give BleachBit a try.

I have used this program previously, but only on my Linux systems, and I wasn't aware that a Windows version was available. BleachBit seemed to work reasonably well under Linux, although I found it to be a bit of a black box. So, I was curious to see how the Windows version would function.

First, a note of caution for anyone wanting to obtain BleachBit. The home page of the web site has a number of ads and download links, with most of the latter having nothing whatsoever to do with downloading BleachBit! I assume that the developer is using such links to generate revenue since BleachBit is a free, open-source offering.

Nevertheless, I find the huge blue *Download* button to be rather disingenuous as one would normally assume that this is the way to download the relevant software. It's not! And, even clicking on the *Download* item in the main menu doesn't make the situation any clearer. So, take a deep breath after loading this second page; ignore the continue and start-now buttons; scroll down the page and find the tiny link for *Windows* under the heading *Installation package*. Sure, the text is explicit, but it's buried among all the other garbage on the page. Not a good start.

Installation is simple. Running the program produces a window with a whole raft of software categories and file locations that can be checked for processing. A *Preview* button sets the program in action and the right-hand window is populated with the results for items that can be removed and an indication of the disk space that will be freed.
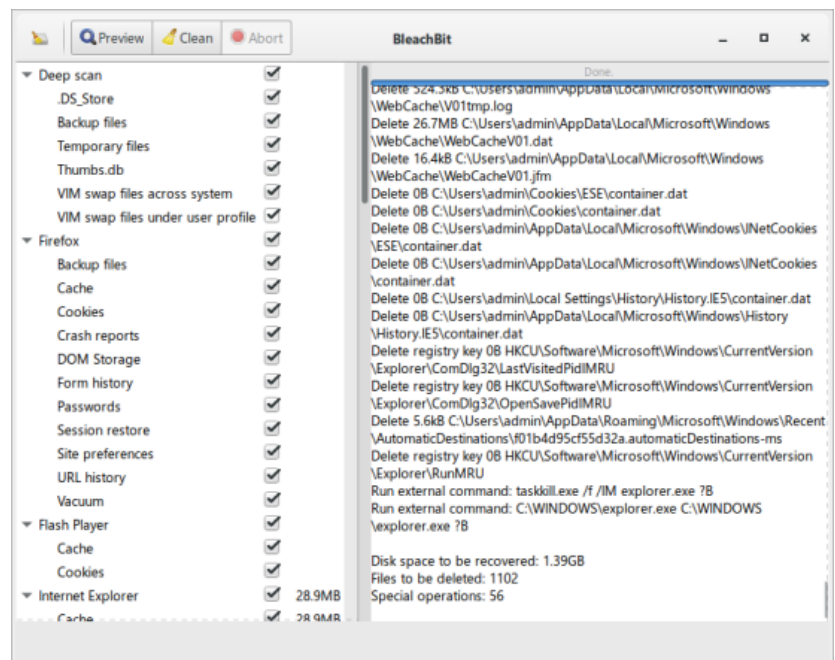
My first time running BleachBit, with all the available categories and sub-categories checked, showed that 1102 files could be deleted and 1.39 GB of disk space recovered. Note that 56 "Special operations" are indicated – whatever these are!

Collapsing the categories displayed the disk space to be recovered in the various sections. For example, the space available on my hard drive was 28.9 MB for Internet Explorer (a program that I don't use), 1.06 GB for System, 297.7 MB for Windows Defender, and 5.6 KB for Windows Explorer.

However, this action also revealed some additional items of concern. For example, with the Thunderbird category checked, BleachBit issued warnings that "Index - Deleting the index will reset the configuration of col-

Next Meeting: WEDNESDAY, October 11th, 2023

Next Meeting

Wednesday, Ocober 11th, 2023

Topic: Self-driving Cars
Speaker: Bob Walker (OPCUG)

In the last few years there has been a lot of news about autonomous vehicles, especially cars. We'll find out what's happened up to now and where it's likely to go in the future.

> Self-driving cars have remained perpetually "two decades away" since the 1930s, while over the past century, autonomous and semi-autonomous vehicles have conquered the air, sea, and roamed the edges of our solar system.
>
> – **Computer History Museum**,
>   Mountain View, California

Are we still 20 years away? Let's find out!

This meeting will be via Zoom video conference.

Join us at **https://tinyurl.com/opcug-meeting**. The Zoom link will be live at 7:15 pm. The meeting will begin at 7:30 pm.

Coming Up…

November 8
Topic: Celestial Shadows – Eclipses of the Sun and Moon
Speaker: Howard Simkover

December 13
Topic: YouTube – a User Perspective
Speaker: Bob Herres (OPCUG)
(details to follow)

January 10, 2024
Topic: Computer Fraud
Speaker: Sébastien Lemay (Ottawa Police Service)
(details to follow)

OPL Presentations are back!

The Ottawa Public Library has finally resumed in-person presentations. Visit **https://opcug.ca/opl-presentations/** to see what the OPCUG is presenting this Fall at a branch near you!

Call for Presentations
You can help fulfill our motto *Users helping users*. Do you know someone who could give a presentation to the OPCUG? Do you have an idea for an interesting topic? Send an email to meetings@opcug.ca with details.

Call for Newsletter Articles
The editor's inbox is almost empty. Could you write an article? It can be on computer hardware or software, or even smartphones. Do you have tips and fixes that are too involved for our weekly Q&A sessions? Then tickle your keyboard and send your article to brigittelord@opcug.ca.

2023 CALENDAR

Meetings	Date	Time and Venue
Regular Monthly Meeting	Wednesday, October 11th	7:30 pm via Zoom video conference: **https://tinyurl.com/opcug-meeting** To see all scheduled events, visit https://opcug.ca/#upcoming
Next Q&A Session	Wednesday, September 27th	Until further notice, Q&A sessions are no longer held after regular monthly meetings. Join us on all other Wednesdays for weekly Q&A.
Beer BOF (Wing SIG East)	Wednesday, October 11th	Enjoy a cold brew or other beverage in the comfort of your home during the video conference.

ARTICLE

Moving your File History to a new computer *by Chris Taylor*

One of the most critical security measures you can take is implementing an effective backup strategy. That way, you don't lose your data no matter what might fail. I have written many times about backups.

A wonderful utility that comes with Windows is File History (https://opcug.ca/Articles/2003NEWS.pdf). While it doesn't replace either a good image backup or an off-site backup, it provides two capabilities other means of backup usually lack: near-real-time backup and versioning.

Near-real-time backup means that even in a catastrophic failure, you need not lose a lot of work. File History can back up new and changed files as frequently as every 10 minutes.

Versioning provides access to potentially years of versions of your important data files. You can easily recover data files as they existed 15 minutes ago, two weeks ago, or a year ago last June.

But what about when you move to a new computer? If you simply move the drive being used for File History to the new computer and go through the normal steps to turn on File History, you will find that none of your previous versions of files show up when you right-click a file, choose *Properties*, and click the *Previous Versions* tab. The old versions of files are still on the drive used for File History; they are just not easily accessed.

Fortunately, with a couple of extra steps, you can have all the old versions show up on File Explorer's *Previous Versions* tab.

First, connect the drive used for File History on the old computer to the new computer. Don't use *Settings | Update & Security | Backup | Backup using File History* to configure File History. If you do, it will configure a new File History on the drive and you will lose your ability to recover the old versions of files through the normal means mentioned above.

Click the Start button and type *Control Panel*. When it appears at the top of the results pane, click it and choose *File History* (if Control Panel is in *Icon* view) or *Save backup copies of your files with File History* (if Control Panel is in *Category* view).

Click on *Configure File History settings*. Note: you may not see this initial dialogue box. It might go directly to the following:
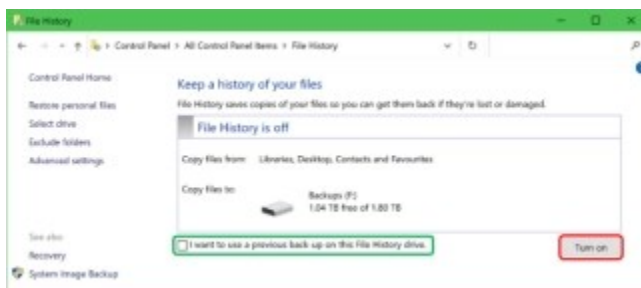
Don't click the *Turn on* button…yet. First put a checkmark in the box for *I want to use a previous back-up on this File History drive* and select your existing backup in the lower box. Then click the *Turn on* button.
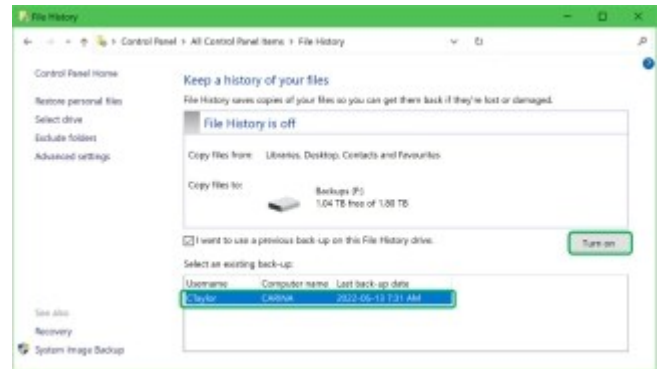
File History will probably run automagically, but you can click *Run now* if it doesn't.
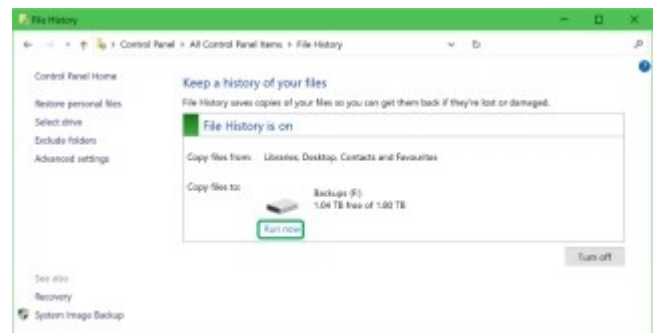
File History will run with the default set of folders to be backed up. Having selected the option earlier to *use a previous back-up*, this backup will be integrated into the existing File History set, rather than creating a fresh configuration.

Most people moving to a new computer probably restore their data files from a different restore regime, but if you have not done so, you can restore your files from the File History that was run on the old computer. Click on *Restore personal files*.
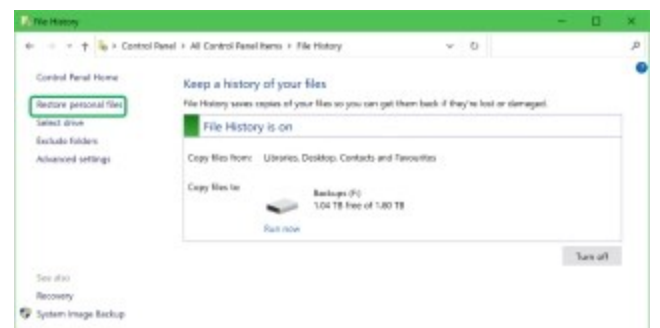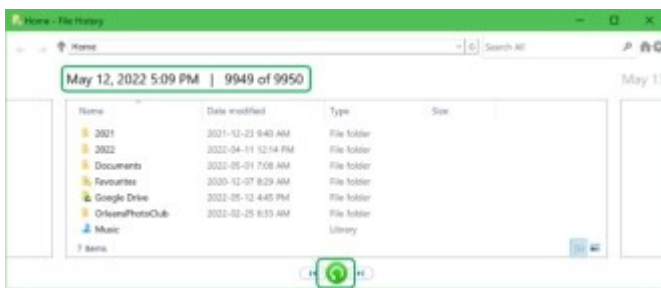
(Continued on next page)

File History *(Continued from previous page)*

File History will open and show the latest backup in the set, which will be the one you just ran on the new computer.



Click the *Previous version* button at the bottom. This will bring you to the last backup run on the old computer.

With nothing selected in the main window, click the *Restore to original location* button at the bottom. This will restore the latest version of all files to your new computer.

Fly in the ointment

The File History dialogue box does not have the option to restore files to a different location. If you were backing up files from Z:\Data on the old computer and you don't have a Z: drive on the new computer, you will get an error.
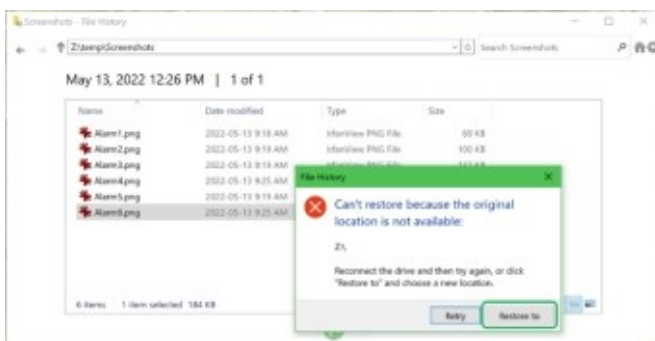
If this happens, you can click on the *Restore to* button and select a different location. Another option would be to connect an external drive, at least temporarily, and assign it the Z: drive letter.

Since File History on the new computer is in the default configuration, you should configure it now. Run *Settings | Update & Security | Backup | Backup using File History | More options*. Here you can tweak the frequency of backup, the period to keep backups, and the folders to backup/exclude.


Another fly in the ointment

And it is a big one! Microsoft has totally removed File History from the Settings app in Windows 11! For more info about this, you can watch & listen to my rant from the 2023-02-22 Q&A (https://opcug.ca/qa-2023/)session. Spoiler alert, I am not happy with Microsoft about this.

Fortunately, Microsoft purposefully breaking things is not a showstopper. They made things more difficult…but not impossible.

Any locations you had added to be backed up on your old computer will still allow you to recover old versions of files, but File History will not continue to back up these locations. It will only back up the locations listed in Control Panel: *Libraries, Desktop, Contacts and Favourites*.
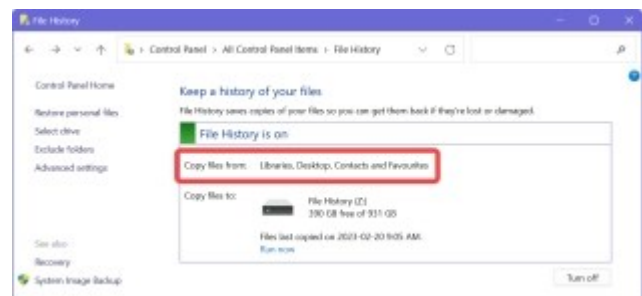
But what about if you want to add additional folders to be backed up? In Control Panel, there is an option to *Exclude folders*, but not *Add a folder* as in the Settings app. The solution lies in the fact that File History backs up Libraries.

You can either add folders to an existing library or—and I prefer this approach—create an additional library specifically for folders you want File History to back up and add the folders to that library.

For details on how to do that, watch and listen to the Q&A session from 2023-02-22 at https://opcug.ca/qa-2023/.

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Quick Tip 56: ElevenClock

by Chris Taylor

In Quick Tip 44 (https://opcug.ca/Articles/2205NEWS.pdf), I showed how to edit the Windows 10 registry to include seconds in the Taskbar clock. In Windows 11, this registry change didn't work. Then it worked. Then it didn't. Then Microsoft started A/B testing: *some* users found an option **Show seconds in system tray clock** in **Settings** > **Personalization** > **Taskbar** > **Taskbar behaviours**. Tired of this back-and-forth, I went looking for another solution to get seconds in the clock. *ElevenClock* is a free, open-source program which allows a huge number of customizations to the taskbar clock in Windows 11.

Scroll down the page at https://github.com/marticliment/ElevenClock/releases to **Assets** and click **Eleven-Clock.Installer.exe**. Once it downloads, run it to install the program.

Once it is running, you can right-click the clock on the system tray and choose **ElevenClock Settings** to access a plethora of options. *Each* section in this screenshot has many options!
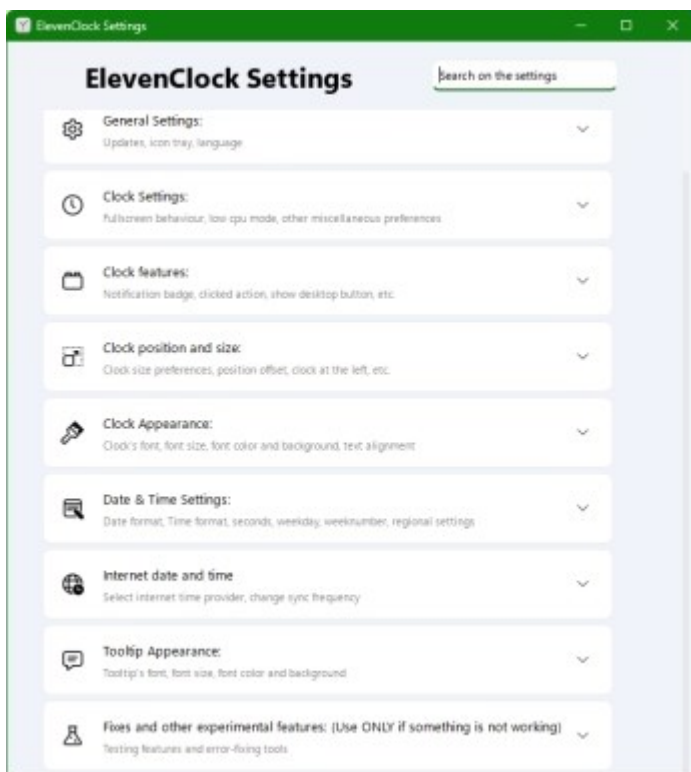
I am still experimenting with various options, but my current clock is set to display in yellow using Segoe UI Light typeface with seconds in the time, the weekday and the full date.

There are dozens of things you can change in behaviours and appearance, so be sure to explore the *Settings* configuration screen.

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THROUGH THE LENS

A guide to digital photography for computer enthusiasts. After the click of your camera, you're only half done!

Why I am a morning person!

by Lynda Buske

In a previous column, I wrote about taking photographs in the evening or nighttime. (https://opcug.ca/Photography/EveningPhotography_v3.pdf). My personal preference, however, is to shoot in the morning especially during the blue hour before the sun comes up. While not everyone wants to get up that early (often 4am in the summer) there are some definite advantages and photo opportunities that you don't get in the evening.

Technically, many of the tips are similar like compensating for low light by using a tripod, opening aperture wide (small f-stop number), bumping your ISO (sensitivity to light) or perhaps using a cell phone which tends to cope with low light situations well. When my phone is set to "night sight", it takes multiple short exposures and combines the images into a single, appropriately exposed photo.

But this column is going to be about the non-technical advantages of shooting pre-dawn rather than post-sunset (the two blue hours). These tips, however, apply mostly to landscape photography; obviously if you like to shoot the city night life, you are not going to find much going on in the morning. If someone is still partying then, they are probably not worth photographing!

Depending on the time of year, there is a good chance you can catch some interesting frost or mist during the morning blue hour. Both of these are often disappear shortly after dawn when the sun burns off fog or melts frost.
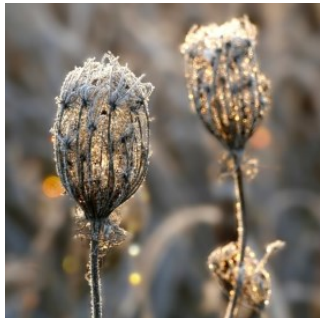
Birds get very active just after dawn. It is not just sheer luck catching migratory geese at dawn. You can hear them getting all excited in the dark and the minute the sun comes up, they take off.
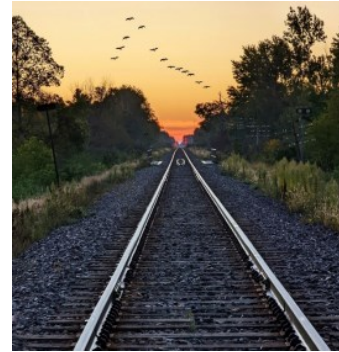
I find the early morning very relaxing. There is less city noise from traffic, especially in the summer when it is way before rush hour. Roads in the evening, regardless of the time of year, are busy both before and after sunset. Parking is a breeze in the morning and there is no competition for my favourite vantage points. If you are lakeside, the reflections are great in the morning before wind and boat traffic ruin them.

I like fewer people around but if you do want a lot of human interest in your photos, then evening might be better. I usually have just enough fishermen, joggers, bikers, or kayakers to add interest, if I want it. However, they seldom get in my way.

As a petite lady, I am nervous when strange men approach me in the evening. I am never sure of their intentions (innocent though they may be) and I end up concentrating more on picking up verbal or physical clues than on my photography. People can be distracting when asking questions about your gear (always the guys) just at a critical moment when I'm trying to shift from blue hour settings to dawn settings. If someone says a few words at 5am I do not feel threatened and conversations are usually short since perhaps neither of us have had a coffee! I could be wrong but I feel most of the baddies are simply not out at that hour.

So that's my pitch. Come join me at dawn…just don't talk!

Read as PDF at https://opcug.ca/digital-photography/. Visit https://opcug.ca/opl-presentations/ to see Lynda's presentations at the OPL.

BleachBit *(Continued from page 1)*

umns in the message list" and "Passwords - This option will delete your saved passwords". Similar warnings were generated for the listed web browsers. Clearly, disabling such items would be a wise course of action to prevent the loss of custom displays and stored passwords.

A detailed review of the options showed some more interesting features. For example, there were multiple listings for Firefox – even though Firefox is not installed on my computer! However, no disk space was listed to be recovered in this section, which seems reasonable given that Firefox isn't available. BleachBit wanted to "Vacuum" a number of files in Thunderbird's profile folder, including abook.sqlite which is the main address book (database) for my E-mail client. It said vacuum rather than delete but, there is no indication of what vacuum actually does. Many files from C:\WINDOWS were marked for deletion or vacuuming. These included a number of .log and .pf (pre-fetch) files, which are probably transient and would be rebuilt as necessary. However, the bulk of the proposed files were from the SoftwareDistribution\Download\ folder, mostly with names that I didn't recognize.

Given the level of uncertainty about the process, my preference for running BleachBit was first to make a full disk image of my system in order to facilitate rapid recovery should things go south with the disk cleaning operations. Next, I unchecked all of BleachBit's categories and then enabled them one by one, reviewing any warning messages as these were displayed. Deep Scan produced several such warnings; however, these merely indicated that some operations might be slow. Options that were declined (unchecked) were *Thunderbird – Index, Passwords and Vacuum* (at least until I could research what this latter option does!) – and *Windows Explorer – Shellbags* (a completely non-intuitive title for an option that would have reset the position of my carefully-arranged desktop icons).

Preview now told me that the 1.39 GB of space could be recovered by deleting just 1102 files, with only 47 special operations. With my backup disk image safely stored on an external USB drive, I was ready to press *Clean* and confirm that I wished to *Delete*.

A bunch of red text appeared in the right-hand window as processing continued. I think I saw several "Access denied" messages scroll past. But, then the display of listings in the window stalled. Perhaps those slow operations were taking place. Indeed, it appears that I had inadvertently left wipe free disk space set, a process that is time consuming but almost certainly provides no real benefit.

Time to try another of the control buttons – *Abort*. This time, with 487 MB of disk space still to be recovered, I unchecked *System – Free disk space* before restarting the program. More red text scrolled by and the display stalled once again. When the smoke cleared, only 84.1 of disk space had been freed and 20 error messages mostly indicated that access had been denied to various files associated with Windows Defender.

The final test was to turn off all the (slow) Deep Scan options; however, processing still took some considerable time and then things really went haywire. BleachBit didn't close down properly and sat unresponsive on the task bar. Closing down Windows was similarly unsuccessful, with rotating dots, rotating, seemingly forever – or at least until the power button was held down for ten seconds.

Do you remember that disk image backup? Time to use it!

So, the bottom line is that BleachBit is one open-source program that I can't recommend. It just has too many items that need tweaking in order to avoid unwanted consequences. But my main problem with this software is that it is too much of a black box – and a black box that seemingly doesn't always function as designed.

Bottom Line

BleachBit (Open-Source)
Andrew Ziem
https://www.bleachbit.org

Read as PDF at https://opcug.ca/reviews/.

Nominations for OPCUG Board for 2024

Once a year, the OPCUG holds elections for the 9-member Board of Directors. We are once again coming up to this annual event.

We encourage all members to consider running for a board position or getting involved in some other manner in the operations of the OPCUG.

We currently have two vacant positions: Meeting Coordinator and Public Relations. The most pressing position is Meeting Coordinator. If you like our monthly meetings, please participate in the nomination process (you can nominate yourself!).

If you want more information about what is involved, please contact me or any current or past Board member. Names are listed on the back page of this newsletter and on the web site at **https://opcug.ca/executives/.**

Nominations can be submitted by sending an email to: **nominations@opcug.ca.**

Nominations must be received by midnight, December 31, 2023.

Please get involved. Help the OPCUG continue in its role of *Users helping users.*

Bob Herres
Election Chair, 2024
Bob.Herres@opcug.ca
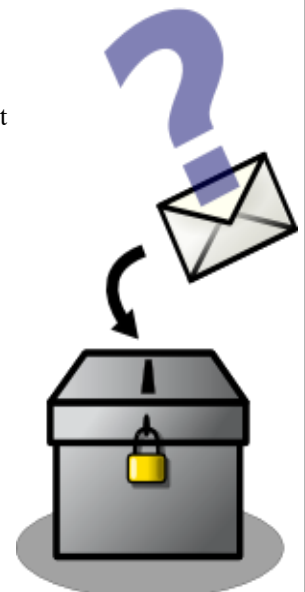
OTTAWA PC NEWS

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.

To receive the monthly newsletter by email, send an email to:
opcug-newsletter+subscribe@googlegroups.com (leave subject and body fields blank)
You do **not** need to create a Gmail or Google Groups account.

To subscribe to other OPCUG Google Groups member services, go to:
https://opcug.ca/google-groups-how-to/

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. OCTranspo bus #90 stops nearby. Details at https://opcug.ca/venue/.
(NOTE: Until further notice, all our events are via video conference. Details at https://opcug.ca/venue/)

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

OPCUG Membership Fees:	$20 per year
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Q&A HAS GONE ON-LINE! WEEKLY!

Because of the pandemic, the OPCUG is holding weekly Q&A sessions in Zoom video-conferences.

Join us every Wednesday (except on regular monthly meeting nights) at 7:30 pm to discuss computer issues. Questions (and answers) on any computer-related issue are welcome. Or, do you have a favourite computer program or topic that you would like to share with the group? Send your questions, answers, or the details of what you would like to share to:
SuggestionBox@opcug.ca

Everyone is welcome to attend Q&A sessions and to ask questions about their specific computer-related problems. Join us at: https://tinyurl.com/opcug-meeting (if you use the Zoom client, the meeting ID is **924 9556 0898** and the password is **opcug**).

OPCUG

Users helping users
for over 40 years