



OTTAWA

PC NEWS



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Association of Technology
& Computer User Groups

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ARTICLE

Trading Up To Linux – Part 6

by Alan German

We have seen that one of the good things about installing Linux is that the operating system comes bundled with a whole host of useful software, such as office applications, a web browser, an E-mail client, and media players for audio and video files. However, how do we install other applications to replace or supplement those that are provided by default? In Linux, this can be really easy since there are many curated applications available in web-based repositories and accessible directly through the Software Manager.

The Software Manager can be loaded from one of the icons (a circular green “waffle”) in the favourites section along the left side of the menu, or by navigating through the menu to *Administration > Software Manager*. The program’s main screen (Figure 1) provides a variety of ways to access individual applications.

The most obvious entry point is the colourful banner across the top of the window. This does allow access to the listed application but the banner changes through a series of five different applications, so this is more in the way of software promotion rather than a serious method of installation. A number of featured programs are displayed as individual tiles, such that double-clicking on any individual tile will load that program’s information. A series of software categories appears at bottom of the window and can be

used to access a further series of tiles for relevant packages. Finally, a search bar at the top of the window can be used to enter the name, or the partial name, of a specific application which then results in a series of tiles being displayed from which the desired software can be selected.



Figure 1. Software Manager’s Main Screen

When a specific program has been selected, a new window provides information about the software such as the version number, the size of the file to be download, and a chart of user reviews using a 1-5 star rating system. An *Install* button in the top-right corner of the window is used to start the installation process. In some instances, a secondary, pop-up dialogue indicates additional packages that are required to fulfill any software dependencies for

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Next Meeting: **WEDNESDAY, March 12th, 2025**

Next Meeting

Wednesday, March 12th

[Smartphone Essentials](#)

Presenters: various OPCUG members

***Presenters needed!** It's not too late to sign up at SuggestionBox@opcug.ca with the name of your app.*

All the Best Apps for your Smartphone

- Useful apps for smartphones and tablets
- Android or iPhone/iPad
- Showcase your favourite app
- Send the name of the app to: SuggestionBox@opcug.ca
- First come – first served
- No duplicates!

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.

SMARTPHONE ESSENTIALS
All the Best Apps for your Smartphone

- March 12, 2025 monthly meeting
- Useful apps for smartphones and tablets
- Android or iPhone/iPad
- Showcase your favourite app
- Send the name of the app to: SuggestionBox@opcug.ca
- First come – first served
- No duplicates!

Presenters needed!



Coming Up...

26 February

[Weekly Q&A session](#)

09 April

[CIRA, the phonebook of the internet \(for .CA\)](#)

Speaker: Arfi Hagi-Yusuf (CIRA)

23 April

[Special hybrid Q&A session](#) (see [page 3](#))

14 May

[Computers to the Moon](#)

Speaker: Mark Schulman (Central Florida Computer Society)

11 June

[Annual Pizza Night](#) (see [page 3](#))

Britannia Park

10 September

[Windows 10 End of Life – What Next?](#)

Speaker: Alan German (OPCUG)

Visit <https://opcug.ca/#upcoming> to see all scheduled events.

OPCUG Presentations at the OPL:

Thursday, 27 Feb, 6:00 pm - 7:00 pm

Armchair travel: the Baltics (Lynda Buske)

Rockcliffe Park Branch

Monday, 03 Mar, 6:00 pm - 7:30 pm

Quick PC Tips: Enhancing Capabilities and Performance with Free Tools (Chris Taylor)

Rosemount Branch

Monday, 03 Mar, 6:00 pm - 7:00 pm

Armchair travel: the Baltics (Lynda Buske)

Carlingwood Branch

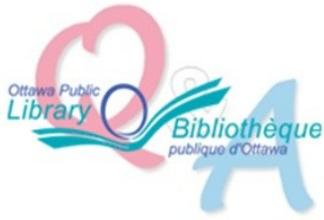
Visit <https://opcug.ca/mec-category/opl-presentations/> for the full list of presentations with links to the OPL.

2025 CALENDAR

Event	Date	Time and Venue
Next Monthly Meeting	Wednesday, March 12th	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, February 26th	Until further notice, Q&A sessions are no longer held after regular monthly meetings. Join us on all other Wednesdays at 7:30 pm for weekly Q&A .
Next OPL Presentation	(see Upcoming Events)	Visit https://opcug.ca/mec-category/opl-presentations/ for the full list of OPCUG presentations at the OPL.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Special Hybrid Q&A Session



Wednesday, April 23, 7 PM

Ottawa Public Library, **Emerald Plaza, 1547 Merivale Rd.**, Traszha Macdowall Room

The OPCUG has planned a [hybrid Q&A session](#) at the Ottawa Public Library (OPL).

You are invited to attend in person (or via Zoom) at **7 PM** at the **Emerald Plaza branch** in Nepean (address above).

You do not have to be an OPCUG or OPL member to attend. There is no charge. Everyone is welcome to join us and ask questions about their specific computer-related problems.

If you cannot attend in person, you can still join us via Zoom at <https://tinyurl.com/opcug-meeting>.

The Zoom link will be live at 6:50 pm. The meeting will begin at 7 pm and end at 8 pm.

Annual Pizza Party

Wednesday, June 11, 6 PM

Britannia Park Trolley Station (see [event psage](#) for more info)

We are once again approaching the end of an OPCUG season and once again we'll celebrate with pizza, drinks and desserts. This event is free for OPCUG members and their guests.

The event will be on June 11 at **6 PM**. It will be at the **Britannia Park Trolley Station** which is sheltered in case of rain and has free parking in an adjacent lot. Unfortunately, for those who like beer or wine with their pizza, **alcohol is not permitted** in the park. Pop and water will be provided.

To help with planning, we're asking you to **register by email** at pizzaparty@opcug.ca. Tell us if you are bringing guests and how many, your pizza preference (e.g. combo, special, vegetarian, gluten free, etc.), and if you need a ride or can offer a ride. OPCUG members in attendance can win one of three flexible keyboards:

Pizza, Prizes, and Portable Keyboards!

Hey **Ottawa PC Users Group**—get ready to type in style (and maybe with a slice in hand)! We're giving away **three ultra-durable, roll-up keyboards** at the party!

✓ **109 keys**—because who wants a keyboard missing the important ones?

✓ **USB-A connection**—plug it in and start clacking!

✓ **Water & dust resistant**—because spills happen, especially around pizza.

✓ **Rolls up**—take it anywhere... even on those top-secret hacker missions.

 type in the rain, the shower , or during your next kitchen disaster! 

 **Perfect for tablets, laptops, and computers**—or as a conversation starter with your tech-savvy friends.

Win one and become the proud owner of the most flexible keyboard in town (literally)!

We look forward to seeing you and your guests!



THROUGH THE LENS

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

Organizing your photos – Part 2

by Lynda Buske

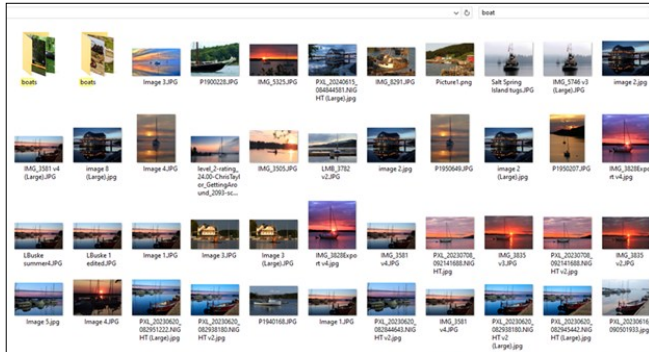
Last month, I wrote about using **File Explorer** to organize your photos on your PC:

<https://opcug.ca/Photography/OrganizingPhotosPart1.pdf>.

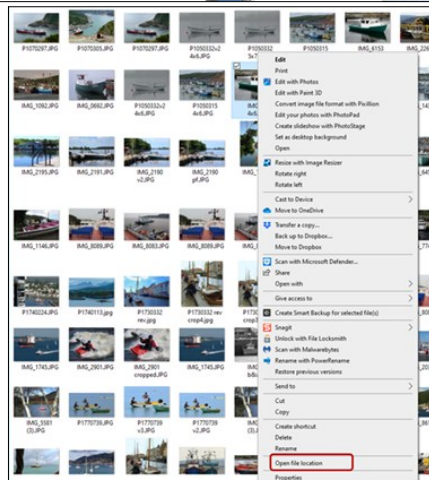
This month, I am going to show you how to find photos that you have not tagged or renamed and how to assign stars to your best ones.

To search for an image using **File Explorer**, I first make sure I am in the **Pictures** folder (by default, Windows only indexes a few personal folders such as *Pictures*, *Documents*, *Downloads*, *Desktop*, etc.) and then I enter whatever text I want in the search box in the upper right corner. If I know the image name or number, I can certainly search for it here but most of the time I do not. Even with well-named folders, there are times when I don't remember when and where I took a photo if it is a common subject like a boat or a bird. Alternatively, I may wish to see all my images of a particular topic such as boats displayed together as a collection so I can then select the best one.

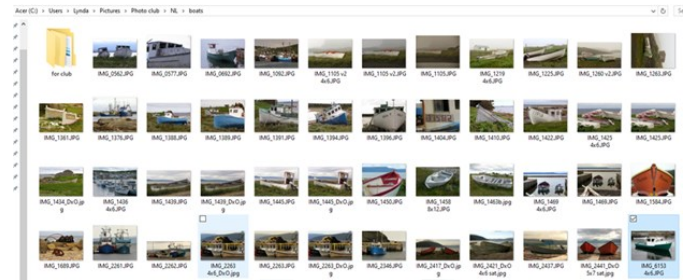
Note that when I search on the word **Boat**, it also shows any folders or file names where the word boat is included, regardless of their content. If I named a photo of a rose as **Boat**, it would appear in the search results.



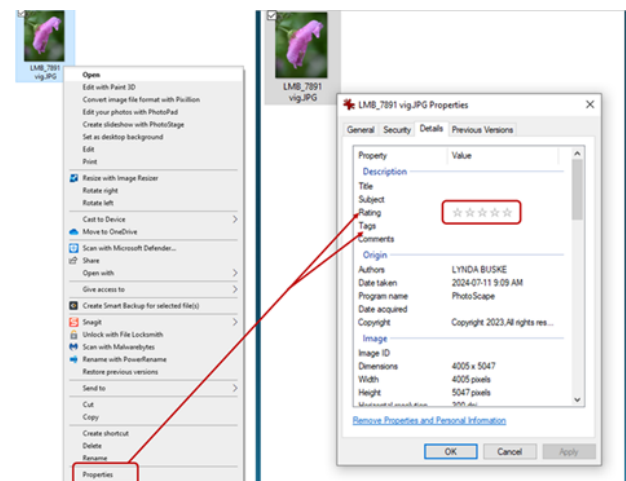
The more specific your search words are, the less likely the search will be successful so keep your terms broad. For instance, it will find **Birds** but not necessarily specific species. To find out where a particular file is located, right click on the photo and go to **Open file location**.



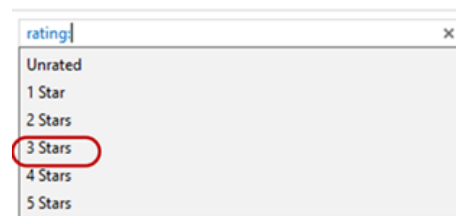
It will then show you the exact route to your image.



To tag an image or assign a star rating, right click on the photo and go to **Properties/Details**. From there you can click on the number of stars you wish to give it or type in a tag.



Later on, if you want to search by the number of stars, just put the word **Rating** in the search box and a star selection drop down list will appear. You can then select the number of stars and it will display only those photos where you have assigned that level of star rating.



Read all of Lynda's articles [here](#). See her [presentations](#) at the Ottawa Public Library (select **Lynda Buske** as **Organizer**).

PRODUCT REVIEW

Melding Files

by Alan German

For many years I have synchronized files between the hard drive folder that I use for downloads and a folder on a USB flash drive where I maintain an archive of the installation packages of software that I currently use or have found useful in the past. In the past I have used PC Magazine's WMatch32 utility for this purpose; however, this software is old and no longer supported. In addition, it takes an age to read and display a list of the archived files stored on my 64 GB flash drive. But, once the list is populated, the two-pane user interface allows me to view all the files in both folders or to select only those that are the same, or only those that are different. I can then easily select and copy, move, or delete one or more individual files from one of the panes.

When I mentioned that I was looking for a more modern replacement program, Chris Taylor suggested Total Commander (<https://www.ghisler.com>), his long-standing, favourite file manager. The menu item *Commands > Synchronize Dirs...* provides the desired functionality with options to display equal or unequal files, or files to be copied from either the left or right panels. However, for me, the downside of this software is that it is shareware, with a one-month trial period, and then requiring purchase for €42 (\$63). Now, while this isn't a fortune, and it does essentially purchase a perpetual licence with all future updates being free, I have very limited uses for the software so I find the paid option to be too much of a good thing.

A free alternative is Meld (<https://meld.app>). Originally, Meld was a Gnome utility built as an aid to GNU/Linux software developers to compare files, directories, and version controlled projects. It is now available for Windows and can be downloaded as an installable (msi) file. It is open-source software, licensed under the GNU General Public License Version 2.0.

I found the user interface to be a little strange. Three icons are labelled as *File*, *Folder*, and *Version Control*. Selecting *Folder* highlights this option and displays a series of drop-down menus (Figure 1). The left-hand icon allows selection of the first folder to be included in the comparison. The initial choices that are displayed are disk drives, e.g. DataDisk (D:); however, this results in selection of the entire drive and does not allow drilling down to a sub-folder. Instead, we can select *Other...* which loads a standard File Explorer dialogue box and, for example, allows D:\original to be specified as the source folder. Similarly, we can use the second drop-down menu to select E:\original as the target folder for the comparison.

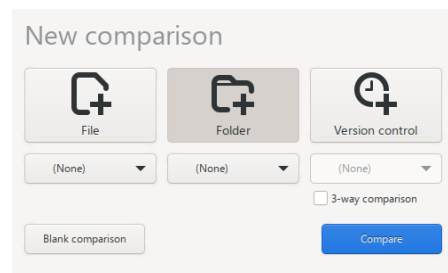


Figure 1. Initial menu with drop-down options activated

Once the two desired folders have been selected, pressing the *Compare* button causes the comparison of the file listings to be displayed (Figure 2). In find the display to be quite cluttered as it shows files that are present on one panel but not in the other. For example, files such as HDDScan.zip, LibreOffice-removeduplicatesfast-1-0-6.oxt and LibreOffice_24.8.1_Win_x86-64.msi are software packages that have been previously installed and are being retained on the archive drive should they need to be reinstalled. On the other hand, Meld-3.22.2-mingw.msi has only recently been downloaded and installed for testing and so has not (yet) been transferred to the archive.

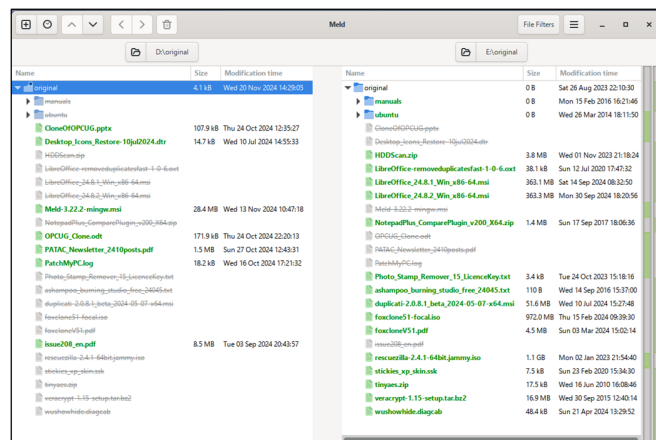


Figure 2. Display of folder comparison

(Continued on next page)

Melding Files *(Continued from previous page)*

There are also non-executable files present in the source folder, such as CloneOfOPCUG.pptx and OPCUG_Clone.odt, that are temporary files for items under development, and files like issue208_en.pdf and PATAAC_Newsletter_2410posts.pdf that are newsletters that have not yet been read, and that will subsequently be discarded.

This default view can be modified by accessing the File Filters button on the menu bar. This provides options to view files that are the same, new (i.e. present in one folder but not in the other), or modified (i.e. different). Certain file types such as binary and media (e.g. exe, png) can be excluded from the comparison. In addition, the comparison can be set to use case-insensitive file names.

A useful setting for processing new and modified files is, therefore, to uncheck *Same* in the *File Filters*. Navigating to a specific file and taking action on that file are then accomplished by using the arrows on the menu bar. The down-arrow moves the focus to the next item in the left pane. Selecting the right-arrow causes the file to be copied to the target folder, while selecting the trash can icon results in the source file being deleted. It's also possible to select multiple files in the left pane and then activate copy or delete for all of the selected files by a single press on the appropriate control button.

The hamburger icon in the menu bar provides additional settings to control such things as the default display of file types, the file attributes that are listed, and the comparison method (e.g. file size and time/date stamp). There is also a link to an on-line *Help* file (<https://meld.app/help/>) that documents the program's operations.

A really-useful feature is that the program maintains a list of recently-conducted comparisons. So, rather than having to establish the folder pair each time the program is run, one can simply press the clock icon on the menu bar and double-click on a previous entry.

So, while there may be a short learning curve to fully understand the user interface, once this has been achieved the utility is useful in situations where there is a need to copy certain files and delete others while synchronizing files between two folders. The user interface would benefit by having more options to filter the files that are displayed but perhaps such features will be added in subsequent versions of the software. In the meantime, the program is open source and so is available free of any charge and, as such, it's well worth the cost!

Bottom Line:

Meld (Open source)

Version 3.22.2

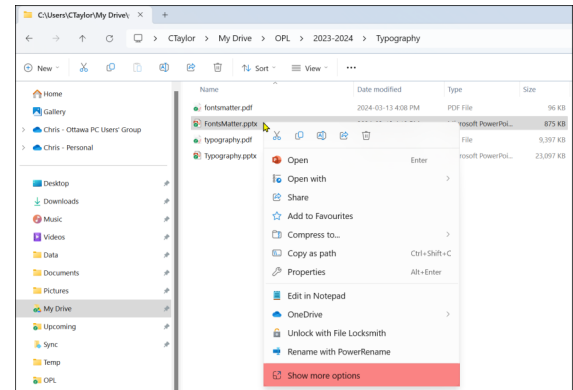
<https://meld.app>



(read all OPCUG reviews [here](#))

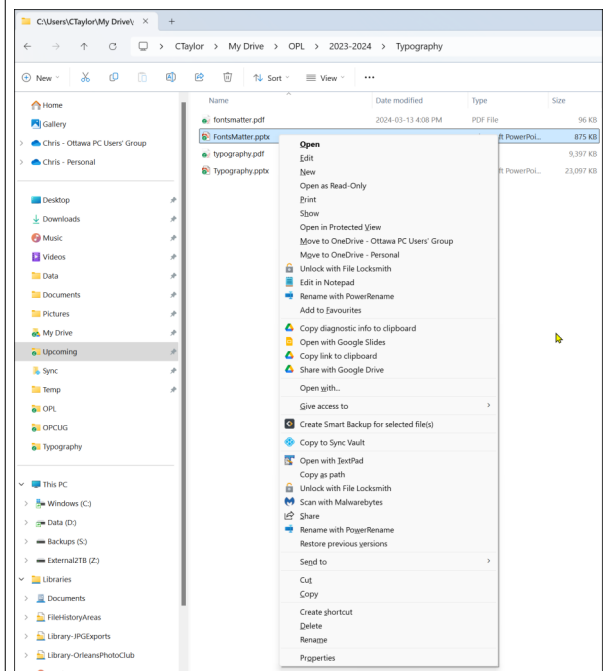
Quick Tip 71: Full context menus in File Explorer *by Chris Taylor*

One of the things that bugs me about Windows 11 is the abbreviated context menus when right-clicking a file in File Explorer. Microsoft, in its infinite wisdom, decided to display only what it considered to be the most important options. They never asked me what I thought were the most important options.



If the option you want does not appear, you must click on the *Show more options* at the bottom of the menu to show the complete context menu.

But if you hold down the shift key and right-click a file, File Explorer will immediately display the full context menu.



Linux - Part 6 *(Continued from page 1)*

the chosen application. In this case, it is simply necessary to press the *Continue* button in the dialogue box to allow the installation to proceed.

A progress bar indicates the degree of completion for the installation and, once the process is finished, the progress bar is replaced by *Launch* and *Remove* control buttons. Typically, an installed program will be automatically added to the menu system. For example, installing the VLC media player results in this app being added to the *Sound & Video* category in the main menu. Should an application no longer be required, it can be easily uninstalled by launching Software Manager, selecting the application, and clicking on the *Remove* button.

When an application is not available in the software repositories and hence not listed by Software Manager, or the available version isn't the latest release, the developer may have provided an installation package that can be utilized. In particular, Linux Mint is based on Debian and uses a special type of archive file (i.e. a .deb file) to distribute installation packages. These can be downloaded from the developer's web site.

For example, at the time of writing, the current Linux release of the Vivaldi web browser is available as the file `vivaldi-stable_7.1.3570.47-1_amd64.deb`. Linux Mint has a built-in installer, named Gdebi, that will unpack such deb files and initiate the installation process.

A third method for installing software uses Terminal commands. This is generally a last resort when no method using a GUI is available. A developer will provide the required commands which may include links to software files on the Internet or instructions to install a Personal Package Archive (PPA) which is a type of on-line repository. Since these third-party systems are not directly supported by the developers of specific Linux distros they should only be used when deemed to be safe.

An example of establishing a PPA and using a set of terminal commands to install a software package is Grub Customizer (<https://launchpad.net/grub-customizer>). This package and its associated PPA have been maintained by Daniel Richter for many years. As the name suggests, Grub Customizer, allows a user to modify the grub menu. The program features a GUI and provides the abilities to add, edit, or remove individual menu items. The instructions for use, including those for adding the PPA and installing Grub Customizer, are best obtained from a secondary source, e.g. <https://go.lightnode.com/tech/install-grub-customizer>

Further examples of the use of terminal commands and scripts will be provided in the next part of our series where we look at how to install and run Windows applications on our Linux system.

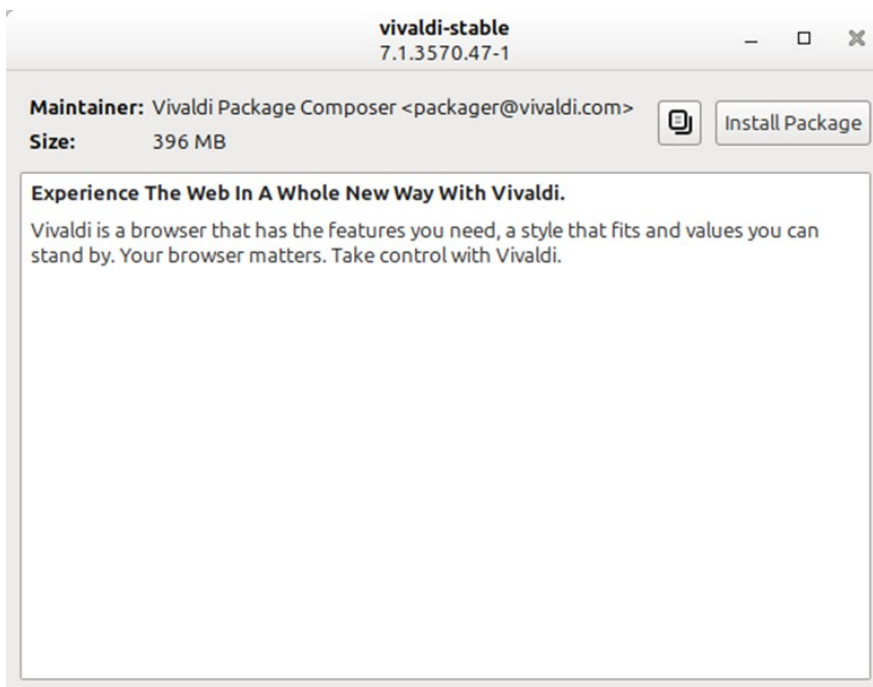


Figure 2. Installation of Vivaldi using a .deb Package

Double-clicking on the Vivaldi installation file loads Gdebi (Figure 2). Clicking on the *Install Package* button results in a request for root authorization. The installation of the software proceeds with a final pop-up message indicating that *The installation was successful*.

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APCUG

President's Corner

Wyzedom - The Wisdom of Battery-Powered Products

Greg Skalka, President, Under the Computer Hood User Group
www.uchug.org

Batteries are the new normal. Throughout history, humans have found different ways to power their devices. Humans initially provided the power but soon enlisted animals to plow, power mills, and pull wagons. The industrial age was powered by burning fuels like coal and oil, which brought significant progress but released a lot of carbon dioxide into the Earth's atmosphere. We must transition to low- or carbon-free energy to reduce climate change. Electricity is the best medium to distribute that energy, and batteries are the primary way to store it. As we move into an all-electric world, we will need more electricity, batteries, and some good strategies for charging and disposing of those batteries.

When I look around my house, I see many things that are now powered, or now powered by electricity, but were not when originally invented. Toothbrushes, razors, can openers, cork-screws, safes, clocks, clothes washers – all these things were originally human or mechanically powered but now have electrically-powered versions.



Stoves cooked by chemical processes (burning fuel) and clothes were dried by natural processes (outdoor air on a clothesline). Still, these tasks are predominantly accomplished by using electricity (or soon will be, with the eventual elimination of residential natural gas). Automobiles, trucks, trains, and planes were all powered by burning fuels but are now on the path to eventual electrification. Many of these things are mobile, or at least would be hindered in use by being tethered by a cord, and so will need batteries to operate.

My house now has several electric items it didn't have before. My wife has bought some electric soap dispensers for the kitchen and bathroom. Instead of pressing down on the top of the bottle to dispense some liquid hand soap, you put your hand under the nozzle, and a sensor detects it and squirts some in your hand. It is more hygienic, but it has batteries that require replacement or recharging periodically, and it is just another device that can break. Do we really need it?

How many battery-powered devices do you think you have in your home? Ten? Twenty? Fifty? One hundred or more? I don't know how many I have, but it could well be that last guess. I pondered this question recently as I sat on the only seat in our master bathroom. From that vantage point, I could see nine devices that contained a battery, with another two that I knew were nearby in cabinets. Multiply 11 by the number of "rooms" in our house, and we would have over one hundred batteries to deal with.

These bathroom devices I found are probably a fairly representative sample of the types of battery-powered devices we own and fall into two classes, depending on if the batteries can be removed. Six of them (two electric toothbrushes, a shaver, a Bluetooth speaker, a face scrubber, and one hair trimmer) have rechargeable batteries that can't be removed. The other five

(wall clock, clock/thermometer, flashlight, another hair trimmer, and a bathroom scale) have replaceable batteries. These five typically use disposable single-use batteries, though all but the wall clock (which is powered by a coin cell battery) use AA or AAA batteries, which would allow the use of rechargeables.



Being powered by batteries does not limit the usefulness of any of these bathroom devices. The toothbrushes are charged inductively through their holders and can stay charged constantly; their charging is transparent to the user. The other four devices that don't have removable batteries must be plugged into a wall outlet to recharge, but since a full charge typically provides many uses, we are seldom caught with a dead battery. My shaver, for example, can go for well over a week of normal use on one charge, so I typically plug it in to charge after I have used it on Sunday mornings. It charges fully in an hour or so before I need it again. Like the hair trimmer and face scrubber, it also can be used in a pinch while charging; having a cord does not significantly degrade its usability. The remaining devices with removable batteries either have a long battery life (typically years for the clocks and scale) or rely on a quick battery change to keep going.



(Continued on next page)

Wyzedom *(Continued from prev. page)*

Moving from the bathroom into the bedroom, I find only slightly fewer battery-powered devices. There are remote controls for the TV, cable box, DVD player, ceiling fan, and window air conditioning unit. A couple of flashlights, a clock, and a cordless phone are in its charging base. These fall into the same two battery categories and present no particular problems to the user by being powered by batteries (other than having some replacement batteries on hand when needed).

Moving from the bedroom to the hall, I see one of my favorite battery-powered devices, the Wyze night light. These small stick-on lights can be used to illuminate your path at night. They detect your motion and turn on, and can be linked to turning on a series of them when triggered. I have a set of three on my stairs (top, middle, and bottom) to keep me from falling and breaking my neck in the morning when it is dark, and I don't want to wake my wife by turning on the ceiling light fixtures.

I love my Wyze lights, but keeping them charged can be problematic. In normal use in my stairs location, they run for about three weeks on a charge. I have come to rely on them to light my way, and so I do not want to wait until they are discharged. I initially tried charging them on a two-week schedule, taking them down (they are magnetically attached and easily removed) every other Sunday. They must be charged during the day when not needed and take about 2 hours to charge fully from a USB charging source. The Wyze lights have a USB-C connector, and to protect that connector, I use USB magnetic charging cables and adapters.

The problem in charging the Wyze lights came from having to charge each one separately. I initially used one USB AC charger and cable and had to charge the three lights sequen-

tially. This took at least six hours, and I had to be around most of the day on Sunday to swap them on the charger. Occasionally I was not, so I sometimes had problems getting all three lights charged before dark.

I celebrated with the First Lady most of the day on Mother's Day and did not get my Wyze lights charged before dark. I decided to find a better way to charge these lights. Possible solutions to my problem included:

1. Faster charging – The process would not take all day if each light could charge faster. This would require some investigation to determine if this would be possible.
2. Parallel charging – If I could charge all three lights simultaneously, it would take 1/3 of the time, and I would not have to hang around to swap lights on the one charging station. It would require buying a three-output USB charging station and two more USB charging cables.
3. Have an alternate set of lights – If I bought a second set of Wyze lights, I could charge the alternate set over the two weeks and then swap them all out at once. This would be the fastest and most versatile but requires buying another set of lights.



USB cables and to monitor USB charging. Connected between a USB

charging source and a device to be charged, it can display the voltage, current, power, charging mode, and other things.

I used the USB 3.0 tester while trying to charge a Wyze light with several different power sources (USB AC charging cubes and USB power source batteries) and several other USB cables. No matter what combination of source and cable I used, the power into the Wyze light remained between 0.951 W and 0.976 W. A higher power into the light would be needed to charge faster, so it appears speeding up charging is not possible.

I found another dual-output USB charging block and a couple more cables in my household stock and set them up in the spare bathroom I use for charging. This method worked well, and I could set them up and walk away, knowing they would all be charged when I remembered and returned.

Using another set of Wyze lights as a charging spare might be slightly easier, as I could charge them sequentially at my leisure over the two-week operating period. It would, however, require buying another \$26 set of lights, and I'd still have to keep track of which lights are charged and which are not.

Ultimately, I've found the parallel charging method works the best for me. It gets the lights all charged at once and has the benefit of having the "charging station" set out for less time, which makes my wife happier. I've now adopted this charging method for my bike lights and switched to charging my front and rear rechargeable safety lights simultaneously rather than sequentially.



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).

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/>

OPCUG Membership Fees: \$20 per year
Mailing Address: 3 Thatcher St., Nepean, Ontario, K2G 1S6
Web address: <https://opcug.ca>
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Follow us on X: <https://x.com/opcug>

President and System Administrator

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Q&A IS ON-LINE! Weekly!

Since the pandemic, the OPCUG has been 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**).

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