

OTTAWA PC NEWS

The Newsletter of the Ottawa PC Users' Group (OPCUG)

Opening Windows

Optimizing VCache

by Chris Taylor, Sysop

Under Windows[®] 3.1, disk caching was provided by SmartDrive, which did a pretty decent job of speeding disk accesses. Windows[®] 95 replaces SmartDrive with VCache, which does an even better job.

One of the nice things about VCache is that its size is dynamic. If memory is not being used for other things, Windows[®] 95 will hand the memory over to VCache to improve disk performance. When Windows95 decides that the memory can be better used by other processes, it takes the memory back from VCache.

You can determine how Windows[®] 95 is using VCache on your system by loading System Monitor (Start | Programs | Accessories | System Tools | System Monitor).

Note: If System Monitor does not appear there, and you installed Windows[®] 95 from the CD-ROM version, run Control Panel | Add/Remove Programs, click on the Windows Setup tab and check under the Accessories section. If you installed Windows[®] 95 from floppies, you can get the System Monitor as SYSMN.EXE in the Windows Utilities file area on The PUB.

Once you have System Monitor loaded, click the Add button and select three options from the Memory Manager group — Maximum disk size cache, Minimum disk cache size, and Disk cache size. Try loading up a bunch of applications and see the effect. Try unloading all the extra applications and see what happens.

Unfortunately, Windows[®] 95 does not always know what is best. For the most part it does a decent job, but some people have found that sometimes the cache size is left too large and they end up hitting the swap file for applications. They have found that when the maximum

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Software library

Disk of the month # 1227

INSIDE

Change of venue



All general meetings will now be held at the

Museum of Science and Technology

See map on back page

size of VCache is limited to something around 1/4 to 1/2 of available RAM, more of their programs remain in memory rather than being swapped out to disk, and performance is significantly enhanced.

Now Microsoft allows you to change the size for VCache but they obviously thought they had done such a good job of handling VCache that they neglected to give you a nice and easy way to modify the settings. They did not even make this

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Modem auction

by Chris Taylor, Sysop

The upgrading of the modems on The PUB has been a long and sorry story. First, the modems had a firmware bug that caused them to report incorrect connect speeds, generally far lower than the actual connect speed. When we finally got the firmware upgrade from USRobotics, they fixed that bug, but added a new one that caused the modems to stop sending and receiving data for 20 to 30 seconds, and then resume. This would generally cause a disconnect. I put the old firmware back in. USRobotics has finally admitted to this latest problem with the updated firmware, and a further firmware upgrade is supposed to fix this problem. We wait with baited breath...

Meanwhile we have had one of the Sportster 28.8 modems in place for several months with the old firmware with no reported problems other than the incorrect connect speed reports, so I have switched all lines to the Sportster 28.8 models.

14.4 modems to be auctioned

We will be auctioning off the old 14.4 modems. These are solid workhorses that have never caused us any problem. We have five USRobotics Sportster 14.4 and one Practical Peripherals PM14400 FXSA. All are external modems with no FAX capabilities.

Sealed bids may be made, up until 5:00 p.m. October 2nd, either by:

- phone to the Group's answering machine
- in a message to the Sysop on The PUB
- by mail to the Group's mailing address

We will also accept written bids at the general meeting on October 2nd up until the start of the general meeting. Please include

your name, address, phone number, and membership number with your bid.

Winning bids will be announced at the beginning of the break at the general meeting. Any winning bidders not present at the meeting will be contacted by phone.

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Optimizing VCache
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part of the registry. To modify the minimum and maximum values for VCache, you have to edit SYSTEM.INI.

Load up SYSTEM.INI in a plain text editor such as Notepad. Add the following lines;

```
[vcache]
MinFileCache=xx
MaxFileCache=yy
```

where xx and yy are the minimum and maximum cache sizes in kilobytes. For a minimum, you might

want to try 512 on systems with up to 16MB RAM or 1024 for systems with over 16MB. For the maximum, try starting with a value about 1/4 of total RAM.

After saving the file, restart Windows. Run System Monitor and verify your VCache settings are in effect. Then experiment with various applications and see if performance is better. Try modifying the settings for VCache—in particular the setting for MaxFileCache.

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How suite is it?

by Harald Freise, Chairman

With all the hoopla in town about which desktop suite is better and slices, dices, juliennes, and... well you know the story, I wanted to find out a just little more.

The contenders for this review are Lotus SmartSuite '96, Microsoft Office '96, and the new kid on the block, Corel Office 7. Each bundles a wordprocessor, spreadsheet, presentation, and PIM (Personal Information Manager/scheduler) application. If you purchase the 'professional' version, a database is thrown into the mix.

With the promise of faster performance using Windows '95 32-bit code (the only newly-released suite to run in 16-bit Windows 3.x is Lotus SmartSuite), be advised that they are not going to be speedy on a 486SX-25 with 4Mb of memory. The minimum requirements (on the box) for each is hefty—an entry system Pentium 100 processor, lots of memory (16Mb+) and a large hard disk (1Gb+) are a good starting point. Lotus and Microsoft run well on faster 486s with 16Mb of memory, but Corel feels a little sluggish at the best of times with rather longish response times with any processor.

Installation is a breeze if installing from a CD-ROM drive. Otherwise be prepared to shuffle a LOT of disks (if available, at extra cost) and wait a long time for the installation to happen. The default setup of each takes a big bite out of any hard disk

and 50Mb+ installations aren't unheard of. Should you opt for the default installation then be prepared to have a lot of things added to your desktop.

- Lotus adds a useful file-drawer type 'SmartCenter' quick access to programs and files while installing its application icons in the space normally reserved in the task bar for the clock and volume control.
- Microsoft installs MOM (Microsoft Office Manager) task bar on the right side of your screen and new task and document icons in your task-bar start menu.
- Corel inserts DAD (Desktop Application Director).

Both MOM and DAD icons are located in C:\Windows\Start Menu\Programs\StartUp and can be deleted or moved to disable loading this feature. If you try really hard you can add

enough icons and toolbars to effectively minimise the space left over for getting any actual work done in.

All the wordprocessors share a similar feature set. Actually, all the applications do; more or less. Remember that 90% of users end up using 10% of the features 90% of the time. There are more features here than you can shake a stick at. For example, they all have an integrated 'spell as you go' spell checker which places a squiggly line under each misspelled or unrecognized word. All applications are fully featured and very powerful.

However, its too bad that the Microsoft and Corel suites do not have import filters for Lotus' native file formats. You can't open a WordPro file in Word or WordPerfect!

Continued on page 4

Calendar

General Meeting Location: Museum of Science and Technology - 1867 St. Laurent
General Meeting Time: 7:30 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Date	Topic
Wednesday, 2 October	To be announced
Wednesday, 6 November	To be announced
Wednesday, 4 December	To be announced

Next meeting subject will be announced on the PUB.

Please note: meetings will now be held on the first Wednesday of each month.

Lotus SmartSuite '96

The real benefits of the new Lotus applications are the addition of what was missing before. WordPro is now a completely new application, rewritten from the ground up. Productivity tools, common menu structures, natural language-based help tool, internet integration, and collaborative work-group features have been integrated into WordPro, Freelance, and Approach. Organizer is still one of the easiest to use PIMs in the marketplace.

The suite could be improved if Lotus did not insist on using its proprietary WordPro and Approach file formats. For example, if one opens and edits a Word file, and then chooses to save it, it is be saved as a WordPro file: the option to save as a Word file is not presented.

WordPro had difficulty when manipulating OLE links from the 16-bit version of Lotus 123, crashing the system. Tech support solution was to include the full path of Lotus 123 in the AUTOEXEC.BAT file.

32-bit versions of Lotus 123 and Lotus Organizer were to have shipped this summer but I have no experience with these products.

Microsoft Office '96

Microsoft was the first to have ported their 16-bit apps to a 32-bit office suite. Although Office '97 is about to be released, there isn't a whole lot broken in Office '96. Ease of accessibility to user functions, and tight integration between Word, Excel, Powerpoint, and Access with OLE that works across these applications, are what sets this suite apart from the rest. Then again the integration with the internet isn't all that it could be, compared to that of the other suites. Microsoft has fine tuned the user interface to the extent that what were 'advanced' functions can be readily accessed by anyone. For example, a numbered list can easily be initiated by typing a number followed with a period. Word's Autoformat automat-

ically inserts the next number after the user hits return and starts a new paragraph.

Corel Office 7

Corel bought its suite from Novell and had a minimum of development time to add its new interface and functions, and integrate it with the Internet. The good news is that it works, and works well. The suite, comprising WordPerfect 7, Quattro Pro 7, Presentations 7, and Borland's Paradox 7 does not seem to be that well integrated as each program has it's own specific user nuances. In my inexperience with the suite, I found myself hunting through the menus more than I would have liked. OLE functions well between applications. WordPerfect, Quattro Pro, and Presentations are Internet aware and can publish to the Java language using Corel's Barista technology to publish directly to a web site. (Somehow, Microsoft Exchange stopped working after trying to access the Internet using WordPerfect 7.) The bad news is that Office 7 is a little slow and resource hungry. When importing text and graphics, the fonts displayed on screen are simply awful (but print well) and graphics are not handled as well as the other two suites. While WordPerfect was running I opened Word, and WordPerfect completely disappeared from both the document window and the taskbar! I restarted WordPerfect from the start button, and it resumed where I had left off—the document reappeared, with the cursor where it was before!

One of the best new features of WordPerfect is the visible guidelines that make adjusting page margins a snap by simply clicking and dragging them to the desired location. WordPerfect still has a great user interface, complete with reveal codes. As usual Corel bundles in a whack of things which include fonts, clipart, a cut off at the knees version of CorelFlow (with documentation for the full version only), Sidekick 95, InfoCentral 7, Dashboard 95, and a copy of IBM's VoiceType Control so that you can try to tell your computer to do something.

Which one is best?

It depends on what your are doing and which platforms you intend to use. For collaborative team computing and the best simple-to-use PIM—Lotus SmartSuite '96. For long multi-chapter text documents, good file management tools, tight internet functionality, and a whack of additional stuff in the box—Corel Office 7. For all round ease of use, power, and functionality—Microsoft Office '96. Some of these suite are being offered at very attractive prices, often at less than for a stand alone version of their wordprocessor.

Having experienced all three suites, which one do I use? Well, for this article—WP 5.1 for DOS on an ancient 286 laptop at the cottage. So there!

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Fox SIG

FoxPro SIG meetings

Date: **September 23**

Time: 7-10 PM

Location: Jean Talon Bldg., Tunney's Pasture, Holland Avenue, north of Scott St.

Topic: Visual FoxPro 5

Date: **November 12**

Time: 7-10 PM

Location: Jean Talon Bldg., Tunney's Pasture, Holland Avenue (north of Scott St.)

Topic: To be established



OS/2: next generation

by Jocelyn Doire, OPCUG OS/2
SIG Coordinator, Team OS/2
jdoire@cslo.consultronics.on.ca

Did you know that the next version of one of the most powerful operating systems is about to be released? You did not know? Well, it's no big surprise, it's one of the best kept secrets at IBM.

This OS can run many DOS programs at the same time, each with their own settings. You want expanded memory, or extended, or high, or DPMI memory, or all of them? No problem. You want to turn off the sound, set the keyboard rate, run various DOS version, set session priorities, set the video mode and many other setup? No problem.

This OS can run Windows programs, each in its own session, and if one of them gets the infamous GPF, simply close it, without interfering with any of the other programs. Like DOS programs, you can set each session with its own settings, giving you an amazing amount of flexibility.

Common actions

This OS is fully object oriented. "So what?" you may ask. Well, it means that when you know something about an object, you know it for all objects. For example: to get the properties of the printer, you simply press the right button of the mouse on the printer's icon; to get the properties for a program, again, you press the again the same right mouse button on the program's icon. Now, can you guess what

you need to do to get the properties of a folder? What about the desktop? As I said, once you know it for one, you know it for all of them.

Internetworking

This OS includes a web browser, an FTP program, a gopher, a finger program, various types of telnet, many tools including one to trace the route, an FTP and telnet daemons, and lots of documentation. Java support will be part of operating system, and a native Netscape should be ready to download.

Networking

With this OS you can connect to Novell networks, Netbios networks, LanManager networks. With it you can connect to a remote computer and see everything on the desktop as if you were there. You can get and put files, or even remotely print or send a fax.

Packaged apps

This OS includes a word processor, a spreadsheet, a PIM, a calendar, and many more applications. With this OS you can view multimedia files including video and audio.

"Computer!"

Are you tired of typing? What about if you had a personal secretary to who you could dictate your text? Well, now you can talk to your computer, as Scottie did on Earth in one of the Star Trek movies, except that it would work. With it you can navigate across the desktop by

giving vocal commands or you can dictate a letter into a word processor. No special hardware is required, just a regular sound card, a microphone, and a Pentium machine. This is a first at that level; to do this used to cost hundreds or thousands of dollars.

I have barely scratched the surface here, given that it includes hundreds of programs covering a very large array of use, but for more details you can check:

- <http://www.austin.ibm.com/pspsinfo/betamer2.htm#dic>
- <http://www.austin.ibm.com/pspsinfo/os2.html>

If everything goes as planned, we should have a demo at one of our general meeting this fall, and an in-store demo at the end of October.

Oh, I forgot, it's called OS/2 Merlin.

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Club news

Reuse, recycle

Bring your old computer magazines, books, or any other computer paraphernalia you want to GIVE AWAY to the general meetings, and leave them in the area specified. If you don't bring something, you may want to TAKE AWAY something of interest, so look in on this area. Any item left over at the end of the meeting will be sent to the dumpster.

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Work Like a PROTM with Word for Windows[®] 95*

reviewed by Harald Freise,
Chairman

Purporting itself to be a book that is faster to use than asking someone for help, this book has an interesting twist on the conventional self-help book format. It claims to focus on the 30% of Word that the best professional business users use 95% of the time!

Of the 349 pages, 68 are devoted to a 'crash course' of Windows[®] 95. I imagine that the next 33 pages would be of benefit of those who had never used a word processor before. These pages provide basic skills required to use menus, and to enter, cut, copy, paste, delete, file, and print text. All chapters include brief exercises that deal with their respective subject matter, as well as a short editorial perspective of what has been covered, and a summary of the chapter.

The book illustrates each Word function to show everything that you need to know about that function. There are many screen captures and dialogue boxes to illustrate the feature they are using at the time. The step-by-step text is clear and to the point with little excess verbiage. The explanatory text associated with each function is brief and to the point, sometimes giving very good insight into why and where the function can be best used. Additional Information sections highlight pertinent information related to the task being featured, often saving frustration when a specific task might not work.

If you are upgrading from Word 6, Appendix A lists the new and changed features in version 7 described in this book. Appendix B lists the features omitted in this book. Oddly, indexing, master and le-



gal documents, and forms are omitted along with commands enabling hyphenation, language, envelopes and labels, revision options, and customization of toolbars and menus. At least all of the omitted commands and features are listed so that you won't have to waste time looking.

I found this book to be clear and very well laid out. Its text is curt and to the point. If you ever forget how to mail merge, this book can be of use to you.

Bonus for club members

This book as well as others in the series is available to OPCUG members at 40% discount. Please see the vendors area of the PUB for details.

*by Mike Murach, ISBN
0-911625-91-7
♦♦♦

DTP SIG

DTP SIG meetings



by Bert Schopf, DTP SIG
Coordinator

After many phone calls and runarounds, here are the details of the next few DTP SIG meetings.

Future meetings will be held at Lemmex Computer Training Centre, 275 Slater Street (near Kent), Suite 340. Parking is available on nearby streets or

wherever you can find it. This building (Standard Life) is heavily serviced by OC Transpo. Call them for bus schedules/routes.

All meetings commence at 7:30 p.m. and will finish no later than 10:00.

- OCTOBER 1st: First DTP SIG meeting of the season — topic TBA. Location: Lemmex (see above)

- NOVEMBER 5th: Adobe will demonstrate Acrobat 3.0 and Adobe PageMill for the PC.
- DECEMBER 3rd: Tektronix demystifies desktop colour printer technologies.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 232-8427 or by email at blackbird@cyberus.ca
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Disk of the Month #122

by John Rasmussen, Software librarian

The contents of the June DOM is:

CHKFILES

A program that creates a special file in every directory that you select, that contains the name, time, date, size, and checksum of every file in that directory. On subsequent runs, all files are checked and the special file is updated.

Free 965b

List of the best freeware programs for DOS and Windows 3.1x, with references to FTP sites. This version last updated on 19 May 1996. Freeware.

Fund manager for Windows

A portfolio management application to help investors monitor and analyze their investments with a wide variety of easy to use graphs and reports. FM accepts as input: price, investment, and distribution information. Prices may be entered manually, or imported from AOL, Prodigy, CompuServe, or Quicken.

IRQINFO v1.6

An IRQ system snooper, using most devices to force IRQs for accurate detection. Tests for drives, networks, sound cards, Com ports, printers, modems, scanners, SCSI...everything that uses an IRQ.

Leap

An Extendable Relational Algebra Processor, providing basic relational database management system functionality with a relational algebra-based command interpreter. Current version is freely available under GNU General Public License.

Nutrigenie weight shedders 4.6 for Windows95 and NT

From winner of Home PC Top 100 Products of the Year. Latest generation of nutrition software, excellent interface, huge database of foods, extensive activity data. Has unique graphic food pyramid analysis and sophisticated menu generator. Perfect for weight watchers. Tons of tools for weight control. Based on U.S. Surgeon General's guidelines for avoiding obesity.

Pro pick

An NFL Football fans' guide. Generates predictions, schedules, ratings, and other information for professional football fans. This version is ready for the '96 season. VBRUN300.DLL required.

Rap sheet for Windows, v1.42

The first release of Rap Sheet for Windows, a program that helps you keep track of how much time you spend doing various tasks. It can be used to break down your time spent doing various things on your computer, which is useful (and required) for those who plan on deducting some of their computer expenses on their

taxes. It can also be used to keep track of any other time-based activities.

The Bank v1.0

This program supplies numerous users with their own savings accounts. Make deposits & withdrawals. Just enter the money you have (quarters, dimes, nickels, pennies, & dollars). Will even print a receipt of transactions to the screen or the printer! By Kewldog Software.

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Club news

June's winners

by Mark Cayer, Membership Chairman

The Ottawa PC Users Group thanks TeleVitesse for donating the following door prizes at the June general meeting:

Glass mugs

Won by John Cocklin, Ben Conn, Richard Keeler, William & M.A Moore, Duncan Petrie, Frank Rogers, and Chris Seal.

T shirts

Won by Peter Hartmann and John Walsh.

Golf shirts

Won by Ben Heaps, Yvon Pelland, Brian Wollenschlager, and Xuetao Yu.

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Ottawa PC News

Ottawa PC News is the newsletter of the Ottawa PC Users' Group (OPCUG), and is published monthly except in July. The opinions expressed in this newsletter may not necessarily represent the views of the club or its members. Deadline for submissions is four Saturdays before the general meeting.

Group Meetings

OPCUG normally meets on the first Wednesday in the month, except in July and August, at the Museum of Science and Technology, 1867 St Laurent Blvd, Ottawa. Meeting times are 7:30 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Fees

Membership: \$25 per year.
Disk-of-the Month: \$25 for either 5.25-in or 3.5-inch diskettes (10 diskettes).

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St. Laurent
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Orléans

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St. Laurent
Exit (South)

417

St. Laurent (South)

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Innes

Museum

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Smyth

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