



OTTAWA PC NEWS

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The newsletter of the Ottawa PC Users' Group

September 1999

Club News

OPCUG presence at Computer fairs

Club members are needed to represent OPCUG at two upcoming computer events.

The first is the **Ottawa Business Technology Show** on Friday/Saturday September 17–18 at Lansdowne Park. This show is co-located with the **Ottawa Internet Expo**. Over 100 exhibitors are expected and the seminar topics look very interesting! Check out more details at www.business technologyshow.com.

The second is the **Canadian Computer Fair** at the Nepean Sportsplex on Saturday and Sunday October 2–3. Last year the event was well-attended and it provided the club with an opportunity to attract new



members and make the community aware of our presence.

Please contact Bert Schopf (Chairman) or Dunc Petrie at the September General Meeting or call Dunc Petrie at home (see the last page of any newsletter) to volunteer to staff our booths.

Of course, your entry will be free to either show you “work the booth” for OPCUG. Your support is necessary for our club’s participation.



Back to School

Help for Johnny's Math

by Dunc Petrie

Well, it is “Back to School” time once more. Parents have mixed emotions — they are happy to see their children in school but may dread the inevitable: “Dad/Mom, can you help me with my math homework?”

Now, any number of software packages are available to tutor children [*Editor's aside: and their parents*] in math and most other subjects. However, most of these teach the principles but studiously ignore the practical application of this knowledge to problem-solving. To the rescue: www.webmath.com offers real-time help with math homework. Upload the mind-stumper and this site will show all the necessary logical steps to solving the problem. The disciplines are surprisingly well-represented: simple math, fractions, algebra, geometry, trigonometry and calculus.

If mom and dad keep this site to themselves, they can become real heroes for their children. I won't tell.



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Next meeting:

WEDNESDAY, September 1st, 1999

Coming Up

CorelDraw 9

by Bert Schopf

Welcome back from the lazy days of summer!

Corel Corporation will be our feature presenter to kick off the September 1st meeting. The CorelDRAW9 Graphics Suite offers industry-leading features for graphics design and image manipulation.

Sally Reijerse, one of Corel's design experts, will present CorelDraw 9 Tips and Tricks. She will demonstrate design shortcuts and techniques using CorelDraw while highlighting the new features found in version 9.



Board member needed

The club *immediately* requires a club member to accept the position of either Secretary or Treasurer.

Please volunteer your time to assist the club, other members and yourself. The responsibilities are relatively simple but important to the club.

Please contact any board member (see the listings on the back page) or speak with OPCUG Chairman Bert Schopf at the September 1st meeting.

Software Alert

Satori Paint XL

by Dunc Petrie

Previous newsletters offered legitimate sources for full, non-time-limited, image editing software for minimal cost. Any one of these programs, although not "bleeding edge" technology, is quite competent and could provide a more powerful or feature-rich application than the one you presently own. The latest is Satori Paint XL, from www.satoripaint.com. Although it is an earlier version (2.2x versus the presently shipping 3.2x) it appears to offer a wide range of desirable features. I have not tested this software but reviews have rated it positively; unfortunately, its name is obscure. It is included on the CD-ROM that accompanies at least two of the British computer magazines. While not free (variously \$16-20 plus taxes), this appears to be a bargain for a fully functional application.



Calendar

Meetings	Date	Time and venue
OPCUG General Meeting	September 1 st : CorelDraw 9 Tips and tricks. See above for details.	7:30 p.m. - National Museum of Science and Technology, 1867 St. Laurent Blvd.
Ottawa Paradox Users Group	Third Thursday of each month (Sept. 16)	6:15 pm - Inly Systems, 1221a Cyrville Rd.
FOX Pro/Developers SIG	To be announced	7:15 pm - Sir Jean Talon Building Conference room, Tunney's Pasture, Holland Ave. (north of Scott St.)
PIG SIG (WING SIG?)	September 1 st , after all the other SIG's - All questions, be they serious or not	"Good Times" Cafe at Shoppers City West, Baseline and Woodroffe

Freebies Alert!

Vorton Technologies, who presented a number of their software products (including Home Soft Karaoke) at our April meeting, announce these free downloads and offers available at their new web site:

www.eatsleepmusic.com

- ✦ A “light” version of Soft Karaoke
- ✦ A utility to convert WAV files to MS Audio 4 format
- ✦ A selection of MP 3 titles.

Free clipart & web images!

To celebrate the re-opening of ClipArtDownload.com, Corel Corporation is offering 10,000 clipart images and 100,000 web images for free!

Simply click on New User and enter your name and e-mail address. You will then be e-mailed a password that will give you access to 110,000 of the best looking clipart and web images available. The site employs a keyword search feature to help you find your images quickly and easily.

Fly West

The “Good Times” Cafe at Shoppers City West, Baseline and Woodroffe, for chicken wings and a drink after the General meeting — it may be the best and most informative SIG meeting of the evening. See you there!



Newsletter Online

To receive the newsletter by e-mail, send the message “subscribe Newslettertxt” or “subscribe NewsletterPDF” (without quotes) to listserve@opcug.ottawa.com. Subscribe to the Colour Supplement!

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... recycle bin.



Seagate Analysis and Info 7 *by Dunc Petrie*

I went surfing to Seagate to ask questions about... forget it.

Instead, to my surprise, I found a totally free business application. Although you can download it (www.seagate.com and follow the buttons), Seagate will send it to you on CD-ROM at no cost (surface mail only). A 50-user license is included.

These programs analyze business data and allow you to identify trends. This data can be distributed to colleagues over a network or imported into other programs (for example, Excel) to allow further refinement. Seagate claims that the program is suitable for novices and includes a Query Assistant to link database tables and format the output.

I assume that many small business users would have to employ Excel. No mention was made of compatibility with the spreadsheets in the other major office suites (Corel’s Quattro Pro and IBM’s Lotus 123).

For enterprises Seagate supports (among others) its own Crystal Reports, Microsoft’s Back Office, Lotus Notes, most high-end relational databases and multi-dimensional OLAP cubes.

This short article is intended as a wake-up call for interested persons and not as an in-depth review. I expect that success with this software requires more than mere possession. To wring out secrets requires the expertise to select the correct data to create meaningful reports; otherwise it is strictly GIGO (garbage in, garbage out).



I-SIG's new season *by Bob Gowan*

The Internet SIG (I-SIG) returns again this fall to provide a forum for discussion and exchange of information on issues related to the Internet. I-SIG holds monthly meetings, normally the evening of the first Wednesday of the month, immediately following OPCUG's general meetings. Everyone with an interest in the use of the Internet is welcome to attend.

One of our achievements last season, was the development of an HTML Course by I-SIG members for OPCUG members. Of course, this course provides a "virtual" training environment, with the club's listserver being used to post tutorial sessions, coding exercises, and to provide a mechanism for problem-solving amongst course participants.

Although we did not meet over the summer, our members have continued to discuss current Internet issues and to help other members through our dedicated message area on PUB II (OPCUG's messaging and file transfer system) and by subscription to our listserver. Our members recently

exchanged references to Internet solutions for problems with dial-up passwords and web site performance. Other items discussed by the group include: E-mail utilities, bookmark management, browsers, file transfer utilities, smart agents and metasearch engines.

Recent meeting topics, on-line discussions, and access to the HTML course are shown on I-SIG's web page. The URLs for some of the web sites related to useful software products which have been discussed by I-SIG are also listed in I-SIG's Software Archive on the above web site.

With the constant growth and change in the Internet, there is always something to discuss. We encourage you to join us, at a meeting or on-line, to share your experiences.



Internet News

Don't fall for this hoax!

This article was excerpted from an online site that addresses questions from end-users with system problems.

Someone surfing Russian newspapers found a listing for a St. Petersburg newspaper. One frame said: "We know who you are." As proof, it listed the surfer's IP address, domain and browser data. Well, that's not too hard to get. BUT at the bottom it said: "We also well know contents of your computer and we can quietly up to him reach." [*Translation: We know, and can quickly access, the contents of your computer.*] A button above had this caption: "Do not trust?" [*Meaning: You don't believe us?*] The surfer thought "oh yeah, sure"; however, when he pressed the button the contents of his hard drive appeared on-screen!

After the initial panic he had the presence of mind to log off and check for viruses — nothing! As a precaution, he deleted all files downloaded at that site and flushed out the browser cache and cookie file.

Relax — take a deep breath. It is a clever and harmless hoax. The button issues a local "file://c:/" (less the quotation marks) command to the browser; in turn, it displays your hard drive contents in the browser window on your own monitor. This is the equivalent of typing "file://c:/" (less the quotation marks) in the address bar of your browser.

No data was actually sent across the Internet; the contents of this surfer's hard drive was invisible to the Russians. Real cute!



What's New

Web radio with a twist! *by Dunc Petrie*

Now, radio on the Internet is nothing new. For those whose interests extend beyond the local deejay offerings, here is a unique product.

TenTec

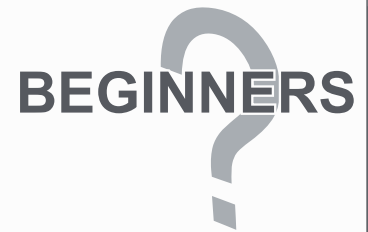
(www.tentec.com) has produced a black box — 6 by 6 by 3 inches and slightly over one Kg — that changes your desktop or portable computer into a high-end amateur or communications radio receiver. All the mechanical controls are reproduced in proprietary software that runs in the Windows environment. I don't pretend to understand the significance of all the controls but it certainly looks like a winner at \$300 (US). I expect that similar capabilities from a "real" receiver would cost many times this price. If you are intrigued, try out a working model of the radio at www.ralabs.com/sw1440/.





WINDOWS

DUNC PETRIE'S CORNER



BEGINNERS

Windows tip

Alternate file associations *by Dunc Petrie*

By default, double-clicking a file in Explorer causes it to launch the sole application associated with it. How could you open that file with another program? Windows itself plays this game; for example, if a text file is too large for Notepad then Windows opens a dialog box to ask if it is acceptable to open it using WordPad. However, you don't have to accept Windows wisdom. Modify it to do your bidding.

Windows 9x:

In Windows Explorer choose View, Options or View, Folder Options. Click the File Types tab; select the type of file that you want to open in multiple programs. Click Edit. Under the Actions list, click New; this will open the New Action dialog box. In that box, type the command you want in the context menu. For example, if you also want to open .txt files in WordPad, for instance, you could type: "Edit in WordPad".

In the "Application used to perform action" box, either type the full path for the program that you'll use to edit this file type or use the Browse button to locate it. If you use the latter then be certain to click the app once it has been located. (Place quotation marks around any path that contains spaces or long filenames. Some applications (WordPad, for example), also need a space followed by "%1" (including the quotation marks after the path name). For WordPad the line should read: "c:\program files\accessories\wordpad.exe" "%1". Click OK. Click Close until all dialog boxes are closed.

To open the file in the alternate associated application right-click the file icon and choose your new command. To create a keyboard shortcut to speed the process put an ampersand (&) in front of the letter that you want to designate as the shortcut hotkey. Again, using WordPad as the example, "W" will be the hotkey. (*Note:* you can't use keys that are already displayed in the Menus with an underscore; they are already committed.) Select the text file in Windows Explorer, press Shift-F10 to display the context menu and type W to open the file in WordPad.

Windows 3.x

Start File Manager and select a file as above. Start Recorder; choose Macro, Record. Type a name for your macro and designate a shortcut key. Set Playback to Same Application, Speed to Fast, and check the box to Enable Shortcut Keys. Under Record Mouse, choose Ignore Mouse.

Click Start. If File Manager is not the active window, activate it by mouse (this step won't be recorded) to activate it. Open the Run dialog box with the selected file listed on the command line. Press Home to

move the cursor to the beginning of the Command Line box. Type the path and name of your application followed by a space. Press Enter.

The file should open in your designated application. Click the flashing Recorder icon (or use Alt + Tab until Recorder is selected). Leave Save Macro selected and click OK.

Finally, restore the Recorder window; use File, Save to save your file. Whenever you need to open a file in your alternate app, run Recorder with your macros file open; select the file in File Manager, and press the shortcut key.



Windows Tip

View properties of all hard drives

by Dunc Petrie

The default setting in My Computer allows you to select and view the properties of each disk drive individually. This tip will allow you to view the properties for multiple drives simultaneously; this includes floppy, removable and mapped network drives.

Open My Computer and select all your hard drives (optionally include others) by holding down the Ctrl key and clicking on each drive. Next, right-click on any one of the drives; from the Context menu that appears choose Properties.

Windows will create a single dialog box with tabs for each drive.

Out of disk space

Microsoft has acknowledged that under certain circumstances an “out of disk space” error message can occur while installing new software. Invariably, unused drive capacity is not the real issue. Microsoft associates the problem with its Internet Explorer, version 4.01; however, keep this tip in mind if you experience false error messages about a lack of hard drive capacity. The full report is found on Microsoft’s Knowledge Base at: <http://support.microsoft.com/support/kb/articles/q189/7/87.asp>.

The problem, according to Microsoft: The problem can occur due to the way the value for free space on your hard disk is calculated. Information about the amount of free space on your hard disk is stored in a dword value in the registry. If this amount exceeds 4 GB of free disk space, the amount over 4 GB is moved into another dword value, and it is this new value that Setup examines to verify the amount of free space on your hard disk. For example, if this new dword value is 50 MB (because the amount over 4 GB is 50 MB), but Setup requires 100 MB, Setup incorrectly interprets the amount of free space on your hard disk to be 50 MB, and then generates the error message listed earlier in this article. Note that this problem can occur with large hard disks where the amount of free space on your hard disk is slightly above a multiple of 4 GB. For example, this problem could also occur if you have 4.05 GB free, 8.05 GB free, 12.05 GB free.

Workaround

Either reduce the amount of free space on your hard disk to a value that is slightly below a multiple of 4 GB, or increase the amount of free space on your hard disk to be at least 100 MB above a multiple of 4 GB.



Genuine Intel Inside

Right-click on My Computer and select Properties. If you have an Intel Pentium, the General tab reports that your computer is a GenuineIntel (no space) Pentium(r) Processor (or very similar). To obtain greater detail run the Registry editor (Regedit.exe) and navigate to:

HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\Hardware\Description\System\CentralProcessor\0

Double-click VendorIdentifier.

Insert a space between “Genuine” and “Intel.” Close the Registry.

When you repeat the steps at the beginning of this tip you will receive additional information about your “Genuine Intel processor.”

Strangely, this Registry tweak does not survive a reboot.



Corel WordPerfect Tips and Tricks

Back-to-school must cause many new users to shriek: “How do I...?”

Courtesy of Corel Corporation, here are some keyboard shortcuts to access various File Menu commands. For multiple keystroke shortcuts, press and hold down the first (and second) key(s) before pressing the last one.

- ✦ CTRL + SHIFT + N — Create a new document
- ✦ CTRL + O — Open an existing document
- ✦ CTRL + F4 — Close the active document
- ✦ CTRL + S — Save the active document
- ✦ F3 — Save the active document with a different name or file format
- ✦ CTRL + F8 — Open the Page Setup dialog box (change the page size, margins and other options)
- ✦ CTRL + P — Specify how you want to print the active document
- ✦ ALT + F4 — Exit Corel WordPerfect

Make It Fit

You can make selected text or all text in a document fit a specified number of pages. For example, if you have a nine-page document with only a few lines of text on the ninth page, use the Make It Fit command (under Format) to condense the document to eight pages.

Reveal Codes

“Why does this #*%\$ text look like this?” Use ALT + F3 to display all the formatting codes in a window at the bottom of the screen. Backspacing will remove the offending code(s). Incidentally, you can alter the default settings for the Reveal Codes window by going to: Tools... Settings... and clicking on the Reveal Codes tab.

Symbols Applet

Activated by CTRL + W, it offers a vast array of typographic, scientific and foreign language characters with a few keystrokes.



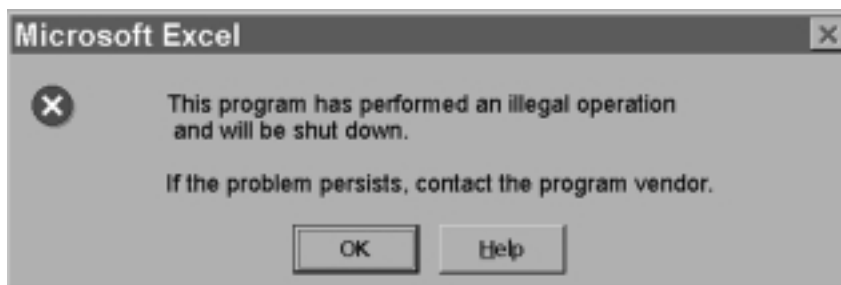
Recovering data from a corrupted Excel file

by Bill Bailey, HAL-PC

Recently a friend brought me a problem to solve. He was keeping his checkbook as an Excel spreadsheet but the file would not open! He asked me if I could recover his data. The remainder of this article sketches the exact problem and its solution.

The Exact Problem

I copied the file [*Editor's note: always work on a copy, never the original!*] to my hard drive, launched Excel, and tried to open the file. A message appeared: "This program has performed an illegal operation and will be shut down. If the problem persists, contact the program vendor." The message box offered two buttons: (1) Close and (2) Details. I clicked on the Details button and was informed that: "Excel caused an invalid page fault in module MS097.DLL at 015f:307333ca." Following that statement was a dump of the registers' contents. When I closed that window, Excel terminated. The problem was a fatal page-fault error, about which I knew nothing.



The Solution

Examining the index in my Excel 97 booklet for an entry for "page fault", "invalid page fault" or "errors" offered nothing. Contrarily, Microsoft's web site offered several options: one was entitled "Support." I clicked on it and was asked to enter my e-mail address, personal information and a password. Another screen appeared that enabled me to search Microsoft's entire knowledge base. A search requires three pieces of information:

- select a Microsoft product (I chose "Excel for Windows."),
- type of search (I chose "Keywords"), and
- enter the keywords that I wished to search. (I entered "Invalid page fault.")

The search returned 120 hits. I read through a brief description of the various errors. Several mentioned page-fault errors occurring after a file is open; contrarily, I could not open the file. Finally, one stated: "An Invalid page fault error appears when opening the file". That text was underlined (indicating a link). I clicked on it and was asked to select from a list of problems. One option said: "An Invalid Page Fault message appears immediately on opening a file." I marked that question and

clicked on the "Next" button. Then I responded to three questions:

Microsoft Excel starts without a problem,
the lack of disk space is not the problem,
and

I am not opening a Quattro Pro file.

Another screen appeared with a list of seven links. I clicked on the link entitled "Summary of Methods to Recover Data from Corrupted Files (Q142117)." A screen appeared listing seven methods of recovering data from corrupted files. The first method was to "Use external references to link to the corrupted file." That section contained links to two articles (depending on Excel version). Choosing the more recent version linked me to a screen offering two methods of recovering data from a corrupted file. Method 1 is simpler; I tried it first and it worked.



On the File menu, click Open. Change the current folder to the folder that contains the damaged file. Click Cancel.

For Excel 7 (for Windows 95) or Excel 97: click New on the File menu, click Workbook, and then click OK. (For Excel 5: click New on the File menu, and then click OK. If the New dialog is displayed, click Workbook, and then click OK.)

Type "`= <File Name>!A1`" (without the quotation marks) in cell A1 of the new workbook, where `<File Name>` is the name of the damaged workbook. If the Select Sheet dialog box appears, select the appropriate sheet, and click OK.

Select cell A1 and click Copy on the Edit menu. Then, select an area that is approximately the same size as the range of cells that contain data in the damaged file, and then click Paste on the Edit menu.

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. 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 National 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.

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... continued from *Recovering Excel Data*

With this range of cells still selected, click Copy on the Edit menu.

On the Edit menu, click Paste Special. Select Values and click OK. This step removes links to the damaged file and leaves only the data.

My first attempt was to select (in step 4) an area consisting of columns A-Z and 30 rows. It worked, and columns H-Z contained nothing but zeroes; hence, it appeared that my friend was using only columns A-G. I asked him to estimate the number of rows in his spreadsheet. He estimated 3,000 rows; on the second attempt, I chose an area spanning columns A-G and rows 1-3,000. This attempt produced the same fatal page-fault error that prompted this exercise. From the success of the first trial and the failure of the second trial, the problem must have occurred after row 30 in the source file. I examined each of the steps in the recovery algorithm in an effort to understand the logic. Step 1 sets the current directory (or folder), thereby telling the program where to look for the source file. Step 2 opens a new workbook where the source file's data will be imported. Steps 4, 5 and 6 copy data from the source file to the clipboard and then paste from the clipboard into the worksheet opened in step 2. Step 3 names the source file and (I assumed) tells the program the cell location to start the copying. If I could locate the problem, perhaps I could skip over it. I discovered that the problem was in row 135 of the source file. I could salvage an area consisting of columns A-G and rows 1-134; however, if I extended the area to include row 135, I got the fatal error that caused Excel to terminate. I started again, but this time I modified step 3 slightly. Instead of starting step 3 in cell A1, I started it in cell A136. In cell A136, I typed “=mscheck1!A136”. In step 4, I chose an area spanning columns A-G and rows 136-3,000. It worked, and I discovered that my neighbour's data ran only through row 1242 (higher rows held only zeroes). Therefore, of 1,242 rows of data, I recovered all but one row (row 135).

Conclusion

I use Excel, but I am no Excel guru. Nevertheless, I recovered all of the data in a corrupted Excel file that would not open. This story has two lessons for those who may confront a problem with a file created by a Microsoft product.

First, if the user's manual does not address the problem, then go to Microsoft's web site and use its on-line support. Second, do not blindly follow their instructions to solve a problem. Try to understand the logic of their proposed solution. Such an understanding may enable you to adapt their solution just enough to solve your specific problem.

[Editor's Note: Remember to backup!]

[Bill Bailey is a member of The Houston Area League of PC Users (HAL-PC), <http://hal-pc.org>. This article appeared originally in the March 1999 issue.]