



PRODUCT REVIEW

File Encryption with AxCrypt by Alan German

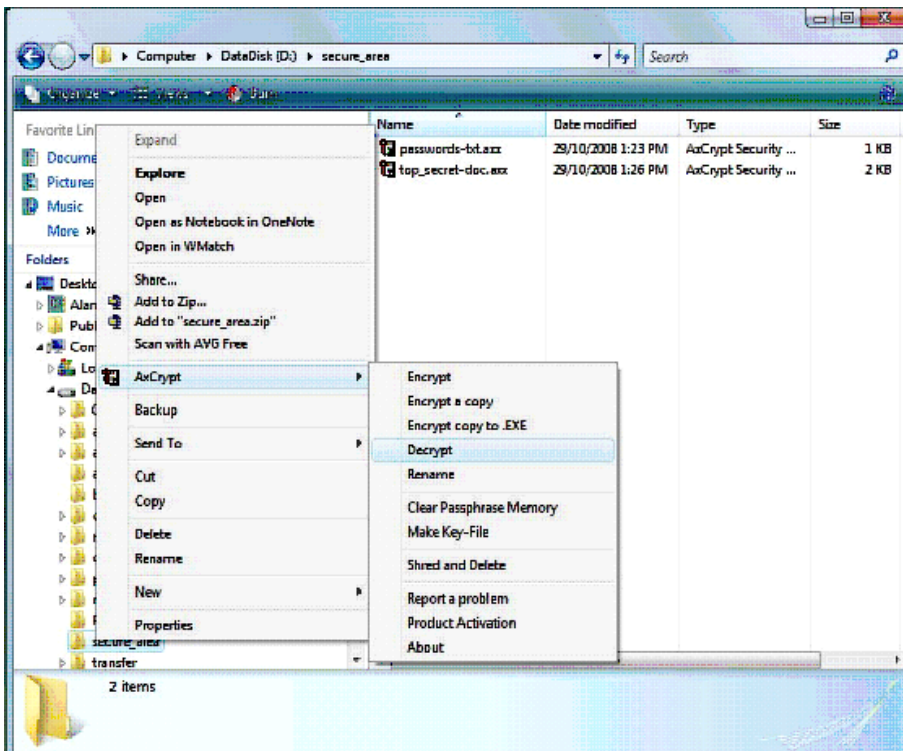
There is an enormous wealth of free software available from the open-source community so, when you are looking for a specific utility, it's not hard to find something that will readily do the job at hand. When it comes to file encryption, one of the simpler open-source programs you can use is AxCrypt from Axantum Software AB in Sweden.

AxCrypt integrates directly into Windows Explorer and, when you right click on a file, the program provides a context-sensitive menu. If the file is not encrypted, the primary option is to encrypt it. Conversely, if the selected item is encrypted, then the first menu choice is to decrypt the file. So you can very easily encrypt or decrypt an individual file. You just need to enter a password (or a pass-phrase) and remember what you entered! By default, the program adds a .axx extension to each encrypted file. AxCrypt will also operate on a specified folder, to encrypt or decrypt all of the files contained in the folder.

When encrypting a file, AxCrypt demands that you enter the desired password twice in order to ensure that the two entries are consistent. The same password must be entered before the file will be decrypted. If you don't like always having to enter passwords, you can have AxCrypt remember the password for encryption and/or decryption. There is an option to clear the password from memory, but the cache is also cleared automatically when you either logoff or reboot. For even greater security, you can have AxCrypt generate a random string of characters for use as a pass-phrase, and store this as a file on a removable drive for subsequent use.

An interesting option is to create a self-decrypting file using the "Copy to an EXE file" option. The resulting executable file can be sent to an individual who does not have AxCrypt installed on their computer. Obviously, you also have to send them the password to decrypt the file (presumably in a separate E-mail message). Then they just run the EXE file, give the password, and

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Coming Up...

► January 14

Speaker: TBA
Topic: TBA

February 11

Speaker: TBA Topic: Tax Software

May 13

Speaker: Chris Taylor, OPCUG Topic: "How the Web Works"

June 10

Pizza night and speaker Roger Wambolt, Corel Corporation Topic: Video Editing



December Prize Winners

The big prize winner at the December General meeting was **Wayne Houston** who won a portable DVD player. But Wayne wasn't the only winner that night as Harley Bloom from Bloom Microtek was spreading the Christmas cheer to a lot of the attendees.

Optical Mice, DVD's to record and DVD wallets for storing same, Computer books, Wireless network cards, USB sticks, an MP3 Player, flashlights, IPOD cases & speakers, even Floppy disks (remember those ☺ ??). There was something to suit just about every taste and computer knowledge level.

Why Harley even passed out a few "applause assistance devices" ... it was quite a haul.

Many thanks to Bloom Microtek for the prizes and don't forget to check out Harley's "cash and carry" sale coming up in the new year. \$20 buys you a basket of goodies of your choosing.

O yeah... we had a door prize drawing as well. **Bob Walker** took home a copy of Windows Live OneCare courtesy of Microsoft Canada.

2009 CALENDAR

Meetings	Date	Time and Venue
OPCUG General Meeting	Wednesday, January 14 th	7:30 p.m. Auditorium of the Canada Museum of Science and Technology , 1867 St. Laurent Blvd. http://www.science-tech.nmstc.ca/english/index.cfm
Beginners' SIG	Wednesday, January 14 th	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting.
Linux SIG	Wednesday, January 14 th	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting.
PIG SIG (Wing SIG West)	Wednesday, January 14 th	10:00 p.m. (after all other SIGs) at Chances "R" restaurant, Baseline Rd. at Woodroffe Ave. (College Square Shopping Centre)
Beer BOF (Wing SIG East)	Wednesday, January 14 th	10:00 p.m. (after all other SIGs) at Liam Maguire's, St. Laurent Blvd. at Innes Rd.

Please note that unless otherwise noted, SIGs meet at 9:00 p.m. (immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting).

OPCUG Free Software Guide—Part 2 Compiled by Alan German

This guide features an annotated list of free computer programs. The software mentioned has not been reviewed (except where noted) nor have any tests necessarily been conducted. Consequently, no guarantees are provided that the individual programs will perform as described. Rather the list of available programs is provided for the information of our members who may find one or more of the programs useful. If you try one of the listed items, you are encouraged to share your experience, good or bad, by providing a brief review of the program for a future issue of the newsletter.

DoubleKiller

DoubleKiller searches single or multiple directories for duplicate files by comparing any combination of file name, size, modification date and content. When the scan is finished a list containing all duplicates found is displayed and you can manually or automatically select the files to be removed. DoubleKiller does not need to be installed, just extracted from the downloaded ZIP file and run. It does not alter the system in any way without the user's prior permission. The basic version of the program is free for private use.

Current Release: Version 1.6.2.82

Web Site: <http://www.bigbangenterprises.de/en/doublekiller/>

OpenOffice.org

This open-source office software suite includes word processing, spreadsheets, presentations, graphics, databases and more. It is available in many languages. It stores data files in an international open standard format, but can also read and write files from other common office software packages. For example, the current version supports the new docx file format used by Microsoft Word 2007. OpenOffice can be downloaded and used completely free of charge for any purpose.

Current Release: OpenOffice.org 3

Web Site: <http://www.openoffice.org>

Previous Reviews: Another Day at the Office (Review of OpenOffice 2.0), Alan German, <http://www.opcug.ca/public/Reviews/openoffice20.htm>

CCleaner

CCleaner is a freeware system optimization, privacy and cleaning tool. It removes unused files from your system -

allowing Windows to run faster and freeing up valuable hard disk space. It also cleans traces of your on-line activities such as your Internet history, and contains a fully featured registry cleaner. But the best part is that it's fast (normally taking less than a second to run) and contains no spyware or adware.

Current Release: Version v2.14.763

Web Site: <http://www.ccleaner.com/>

Previous Reviews: CCleaner, Jocelyn Doire, <http://opcug.ca/public/Reviews/ccleaner.htm>



Gimpshop

Do you need a powerful photo-editor? Would you like it to work just like Adobe Photoshop? But, do you want the program to be free? Look no further. GIMPshop is a modification of the free/open source GNU Image Manipulation Program (GIMP), and is intended to replicate the feel of Adobe Photoshop. Due to the changes to the interface, many Photoshop tutorials can be followed in GIMPshop unchanged, and most others can be adapted with minimal effort. GIMPshop is available for many different operating systems, including Mac OS X, Windows, Linux, and Solaris.

Current Release: Version 2.2.8 (Windows)

Web Site: <http://www.gimpshop.com/>

Edison

Produced by Verdiem, this utility is billed as the PC energy management tool for everyone. Edison will let you choose the level of energy savings you want to achieve from your PC, implement appropriate power management policies, and calculate your estimated savings in electricity costs. The program runs under Windows XP or Vista.

Web Site: <http://www.verdiem.com/edison/>



PDF ReDirect

This free PDF writer from EXP Systems lets you create universal, standard, reliable and secure PDF files from any Windows application by simply selecting "Print" and choosing the PDF reDirect virtual printer. You can optimize quality and file size, extract pages from existing PDF files, merge PDF files, encrypt your files, create clickable hyperlinks, set permissions to lock a PDF file, and much more.

Current Release: Version 2.2.8

Web Site: <http://www.exp-systems.com/>

Vista Transformation Pack

Are you running Windows XP but wish you had the new look of Vista? You need the Vista Transformation Pack. Cnet.com says that this program "has loads of little details that can make your XP computer look as if it's running Vista, without the hassle (or cost) of upgrading."

Current Release: Version 9.0.1

Web Site: <http://www.windowxlive.net/>

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Free Software Guide—Part 2 (Continued from page 3)**Gspace**

Do you use Firefox? Do you have a G-mail account? If you have unused storage capacity in your G-mail account, Gspace will turn the available 2GB of disk space in your Gmail account into free on-line storage. Gspace is a free Firefox extension, and is available for use with Windows, Linux and OS X. With this web-based utility, you can transfer files between your computer and Gspace at any time and from anywhere!

Web Site: <http://www.getgspace.com/>

Image Resizer

This Windows XP PowerToy, free from Microsoft, enables you to resize image files. Select a single image, or a group of image files, click on the right mouse button, and specify one of four sizes (from 240 by 320 pixels to 1024 by 768 pixels). The program will make copies of your pictures in the new size, leaving the originals intact.

Web Site: <http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/downloads/powertoys/xppowertoys.msp>

**FileZilla**

Both a client and a server version of this free FTP utility are available for multiple platforms. FileZilla is open source software distributed under the terms of the GNU General Public License.

Current Release: Version 3.1.6

Web Site: <http://filezilla-project.org/>

Previous Reviews: FileZilla - Open Source FTP, Alan German, <http://opcug.ca/public/Reviews/filezilla.htm>

Process Explorer

Is your system slowing to a crawl? Do you wonder what your computer is doing - when nothing seems to be happening - except for a lot of disk activity? Process Explorer from Windows Sysinternals can provide some of the answers by showing you information about the handles, DLLs and processes that are running.

Current Release: v11.3

Web Site: <http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/sysinternals/bb896653.aspx>

**AxCrypt** (Continued from page 1)

the unencrypted original file is produced on their system.

AxCrypt users have some other tricks they can use. Double-clicking on an encrypted file prompts for the password, and then opens the file in its native application. This gives you the possibility of modifying an encrypted file “on the fly”. For example, you could double click on an encrypted text file containing a set of userids and passwords. Respond to the prompt for the AxCrypt password, and the file opens in Notepad, displaying the plain text. You can then edit the file in order to change one of the userid/password combinations. When you save the file in Notepad, the encrypted file appears back on your hard disk. You just changed the data contents without having to specifically decrypt and re-encrypt the file. Neat!

AxCrypt also has a “Shred and Delete” option that will securely remove any file from your system by overwriting the file with random data prior to permanently removing it.

The program is released under the GNU General Public License (GPL), and uses the Advanced Encryption Standard (AES) with 128-bit keys. Axantum’s web site indicates that AxCrypt will run under most versions of Windows, from Windows 95 through XP; however, I can confirm that it will also run just fine under Vista.

So, using AxCrypt, you can easily encrypt and decrypt your sensitive files. Just don't forget your password. There is no undo function!

Bottom Line

AxCrypt Version 1.6.4.4 (Open source)
Svante Seleborg
Axantum Software AB
<http://www.axantum.com/AxCrypt/>



OTTAWA PC NEWS

Ottawa PC News is the newsletter of the Ottawa PC Users' Group (OPCUG), and is published monthly except in July and August. The opinions expressed in this newsletter may not necessarily represent the views of the club or its members.

Member participation is encouraged. If you would like to contribute an article to Ottawa PC News, please submit it to the newsletter editor (contact info below). Deadline for submissions is three Sundays before the next General Meeting.

Group Meetings

OPCUG meets on the second Wednesday in the month, except July and August, at the Canada Museum of Science and Technology, 1867 St. Laurent Blvd, Ottawa. Meetings are 7:30–9:00 p.m. and Special Interest Groups go until 10 p.m.

Fees:	OPCUG membership:	\$25 per year
Mailing Address:	3 Thatcher St., Nepean, Ontario, K2G 1S6	
Web address:	http://opcug.ca	
Bulletin board — PUB II (BBS)	http://opcug.ca/default.htm	
President and System Administrator		
Chris Taylor	chris.taylor@opcug.ca	613-727-5453
Meeting Coordinator		
Bob Gowan	bob.gowan@opcug.ca	
Treasurer		
Alan German	alan.german@opcug.ca	
Secretary		
Gail Eagen	gail.eagen@opcug.ca	
Membership Chairman		
Mark Cayer	mark.cayer@opcug.ca	613-823-0354
Newsletter		
Brigitte Lord (editor/layout)	brigitte.lord@opcug.ca	
(Mr.) Jocelyn Doire (e-mail distribution)	jocelyn.doire@opcug.ca	
Public Relations		
Morris Turpin	PR@opcug.ca	613-729-6955
Facilities		
Bob Walker		613-489-2084
Webmaster		
Brigitte Lord	opcug-webmaster@opcug.ca	
Privacy Director		
Wayne Houston	privacy@opcug.ca	
Director without Portfolio		
Don Chiasson		
Beginners' SIG		
Chris Taylor	chris.taylor@opcug.ca	613-727-5453
IT-Pro SIG		
Vacant		
Linux / Open-Source Software SIG		
Don Chiasson		
Special Events Coordinator		
Don Chiasson		

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