



OTTAWA

PC NEWS

Volume 27, Number 3

March 2010

PRODUCT REVIEW

MenuMaid—Right-Clicks in a New Context *by Alan German*

Those of you who follow the postings in The Pub's general conference area will know that I recently had a problem with the display of the context menu that appears when you right-click on a disk or file folder in the tree directory pane of Windows Explorer. The spacing had suddenly changed, so that the icons on the left were separated by a huge blank space from the associated text on the right, and the text was truncated so as to be almost unreadable (see screenshot).

I eventually tracked down the culprit as a recent upgrade to my AVG virus scanner and, in particular, to AVG's entry on the right-click menu to scan the selected item.

Initially, I thought I would remove AVG and replace it with Microsoft Security Essentials, a combined virus and adware scanner (http://www.microsoft.com/Security_Essentials/) that has had good reviews since its release in September. However, while searching the web for a solution to the right-click menu issue, I came across a number of links to techniques to edit the registry to add, remove and modify entries on this menu.

One particular product that sparked my interest was MenuMaid, a free program that offered "a fast and easy way to clean up your Window Explorer and Internet Explorer right-click (context) menu." MenuMaid allows you to just uncheck any items you don't want to show up, and lets you restore them at any later time.

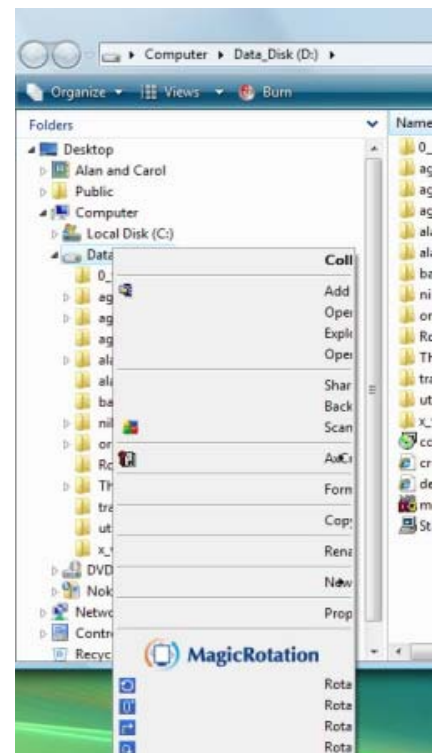
The download is only 124 KB and the program installs very quickly. MenuMaid modifies the registry so, in Vista, one has to right-click (very ironic!) on the execu-

table file and select the "Run as administrator" option. Running the program, with an administrator's authorization, brings up a dialogue box with tabs for both Internet Explorer and Windows Explorer. A number of applications are listed under the Windows Explorer tab, with check boxes indicating that entries for these programs are included in the right-click context menu. Solving my problem was then simply a matter of deselecting two items marked as "AVG Shell Extension Class" and pressing the "Close" button. Once AVG no longer appeared on the context menu, the menu's display returned to normal. "Fast and easy" – as advertised! So, while you may not run into the same glitch that I did, if every application you own adds an entry to the right-click context menu of Windows Explorer, MenuMaid will certainly help you clean up the mess – and without you having to deal directly with the registry settings.

Users who look no further into the source of this fine little utility may be taken aback if they click on the "Free Book" button in MenuMaid's dialogue box. This offers a free copy of "Even The Demons Believe" by Timothy Williams of SD Software, the distributor of MenuMaid and a number of other freeware packages, and a member of a Christian faith group known as the Sound Doctrine Ministries.

Bottom Line

MenuMaid Version 1.0 (Freeware)
SD Software
<http://www.sdsoftware.org/default.asp?id=11403>



Context menu woes

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Next Meeting: **WEDNESDAY, March 10th, 2010**

March Raffle

Courtesy of the Microsoft MVP program, we have a copy of **Windows 7 Ultimate** for the March raffle. This is the full version (not the "upgrade only" version) that can be installed on any PC. Valued at \$350.

If you have not yet moved to Windows 7, this is your chance to start using what is widely perceived to be Microsoft's best ever operating system.

Tickets are, as always, a good deal at \$1 for one, a great deal at \$2 for three or the unbelievable bargain of \$5 for ten!

Coming Up...

► March 10, 2010

Speaker: David Skoll, President and CEO of [Roaring Penguin Software](#)
Topic: The State of Spam and Spam-Fighting:

We all hate spam. In the never-ending game of cat and mouse, the bad guys try to get spam through to your mailbox and anti-spam tools evolve to eradicate it.

David Skoll, President and CEO of Roaring Penguin Software based here in Ottawa, will cover the economics and technology of spam-sending, and then talk about the technology of spam-fighting. He will go over some of the sneaky tricks spammers use to get their messages out, and then talk about technical means to fight them. He will also talk briefly about some features of Roaring Penguin's commercial anti-spam solution, CanIt.

April 14

Speaker: Richard Brisson
Topic: Codebreaking Enigma - The World War II challenge then and today

May 12

Speaker: Bert Schopf (Blackbird PCD)
Topic: PhotoShop editing

June 9 (Pizza night)

Speaker: Evelyn Watts (Corel Corporation)
Topic: (TBA)

Prize Winners

January Prize Winners

Through the generosity of Corel Corp. we were able to raffle of a copy of their DVD Movie Factory software at our January 2010 meeting. **Tim Hillock** was the lucky winner.

And in the club spirit of *Users Helping Users* member **Don Chiasson** donated a few books related to Linux and open source software for use as our door prizes. **Bob Herres** and **Eldon Gaw** got to leave the meeting with some new reading material.

February Prize Winners

Eldon Gaw and **Harry Gross** were the lucky winners of our door prize of an OPCUG clock/calendar and the raffle prize of a copy of the Easeus Disk Utility software respectively.

Thanks to Corel and Easeus for donating the raffle prizes.

2010 CALENDAR

Meetings	Date	Time and Venue
OPCUG General Meeting	Wednesday, March 10 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, March 10 th	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting.
Linux SIG	Wednesday, March 10 th	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting.
Beer BOF (Wing SIG East)	Wednesday, March 10 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).

SECRETARY'S REPORT FOR 2009/2010

Board Members

The Board of Directors was announced on February 11, 2009 at the Annual General Meeting. The Board selected positions resulting in the following slate of officers:

- Chris Taylor, President and Systems Administrator
- Don Chiasson, Special Events Coordinator, later changed to Program
- Gail Eagen, Secretary
- Alan German, Treasurer
- Bob Gowan, Program later changed to Director without Portfolio
- Wayne Houston, Privacy
- Brigitte Lord, Webmaster and Newsletter
- Morris Turpin, Publicity
- Bob Walker, Facilities

Board Meetings

The Board met 12 times on Feb 17, Mar 17, Apr 14, May 19, June 16, Aug 18, Sept 15, Oct 20, Nov 17, Dec 15, 2009 and Jan 18 and Feb 16, 2010.

Topics discussed included:

- Meeting Co-ordinator
Program
Raffle and door prizes
- Facilities Co-ordinator
- Treasurer's Report
- System Administrator
- Webmaster
- Newsletter
Reviews and Articles
- Membership
- Public Relations
- Secretary
- President
- Privacy
- Special Events Coordinator
- New Business

Major decisions made:

- to continue to give presentations at various Ottawa Public Libraries
- not to accept electronic funds transfer payments after investigation of security risks
- to limit access to the constitution to Members only
- to approve Andrew MacLeod as Board members to replace Don Chiasson who resigned from the Board for personal reasons.
- to approve free membership for incoming Board members, Mark Cayer who is responsible for Membership, Jocelyn Doire who handles Newsletter posting and Web History pages, Bert Schopf who provides space for Board meetings and to Andrea Wells who is leading the Linux and Open Source SIG.

Other Discussions

- to create more formal guidelines for speakers
- to name a replacement for the Program Chair. Role was covered by Bob Gowan, and then Don Chiasson and then was shared.

Election

Bob Herres agreed for a third year to be Election Chair. Calls for nominations were done in the Newsletter and at meetings through the fall. Nine nominations were received by the due date of December 31, 2009. Since there were only nine nominations, no election was required. Thanks again to Bob Herres for taking on this role.

Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting was held on February 16, 2010.

1. The President's report was published in the February Newsletter.

2. The Treasurer's Report was prepared by Alan German and published in the February newsletter. The report was also presented at the meeting by Andrew MacLeod in Alan German's absence. It was well received. Andrew thanked Alan for his great work as Treasurer. Andrew thanked Morris Turpin for handling the raffle and Wayne Houston for handling the door prize tickets. Andrew asked if a member would volunteer to review the financial books and explained that no financial experience was needed.

Questions/Comments:

- Why does the OPCUG have over \$20,000 in the bank?

Chris Taylor responded that this gave the club a contingency in case meeting space rents were raised. In the past, rents were much higher than \$200 per year.

- It was noted by the Membership Chair that postage was going up by 3 cents.

3. The Election Chair, Bob Herres, announced that they were only nine nominations and thus the Board was acclaimed. The newly elected Board was announced. Board Members are:

- Gail Eagen
- Alan German
- Bob Gowan
- Wayne Houston
- Brigitte Lord
- Andrew MacLeod
- Chris Taylor
- Morris Turpin
- Bob Walker

Bob Herres was thanked for taking on this role.

There were no other questions or issues raised.

*Submitted by Gail Eagen,
Secretary, OPCUG*

ARTICLE

Windows Problem Steps Recorder by Chris Taylor

Once it's known you belong to a computer user group, you are probably asked for help with computer problems on a frequent basis. This can be difficult if someone is calling you on the phone or sending you an email asking for assistance. The trouble is – if you can't see what the person is doing, and you can't see what happens on the screen, it can be very difficult to determine exactly what is happening and come up with a solution.

Picture the following phone conversation.

“Hi Sam, it's Tom. Microsoft just released Windows 7 and you know their programmers can't even do simple arithmetic?”

“Well, Tom, I don't know for sure, but I suspect they actually can.”

“I just loaded Windows Calculator. I had it calculate 19 plus 7. It tells me the result is 20. What losers! I swear I am going to go buy a Mac.”

All those with their hands up saying, “I know! I know!” please put your hands down. Even though you may know the answer to this problem, I know I could easily stump you with something else. This is all just for illustration. Let's pretend we don't know what's wrong.

We really don't want Tom to buy a Mac just because Calculator is wrong. And, truthfully, I really don't think Calculator is doing anything wrong. Tom must be pressing wrong keys. But how to prove it without going over to Tom's house?

We could start with asking him to do some other calculation. We ask him to do 10+10 and it returns 20. Hmmm, is it actually possible that Calculator has a bug that returns the wrong result under certain circumstances? Excel has been known to do this before.

You fire up Windows 7's Calculator on your computer and add 19+7. You get 26.

Maybe Tom is using a 3rd party calculator that's a joke program that sometimes returns wrong results. You could ask how he loaded the Calculator program. Then check the properties of the shortcut he used and see if it is pointing to a file with the same date stamp and size as the *calc.exe* in your copy of Windows.

All this just points out how difficult it can be sometimes to help someone when you are not at their computer.

In Windows 7, Microsoft included a wonderful, but little known program called *Problem Steps Recorder*. Microsoft thought so little of this program that they didn't even create a Start menu shortcut to it! But it is a real gem. Let's return to our scenario.

“Tom, close Calculator and then click the start button. Type *problem steps*. By the time you have typed that in, at the top of the start menu, you should see *Record steps to reproduce a problem*. Click it.”

“Okay Sam. I did that and I have a little box on the screen titled *Problem Steps Recorder*.”

“Click the *Start Record* button. Load calculator and perform the calculation 19+7. When you have done that and you get the wrong results, click the *Stop Record* button in the *Problem Steps Recorder*. You will be prompted to save a ZIP file. Email it to me.”

Once Tom emails you the file, you open it up and find an MHT file inside. You double click the file to load it into Internet Explorer. It describes each action taken by Tom, followed by a screenshot.

[\(see screenshots next page\)](#)

Problem Step 1: (2009-12-29 10:57:25 PM) User left click on "Start (push button)" in "Start"

Problem Step 2: (2009-12-29 10:57:27 PM) User left click on "All Programs (menu item)" in "Start menu"

As you can see, *Problem Steps Recorder* states what Tom did, shows what was on-screen, and highlights (with a green box) the area where Tom performed actions – in this case clicking on *All Programs*.

We skip ahead a couple of steps...

Problem Step 5: (2009-12-29 10:57:49 PM) User left click on "Hexadecimal (radio button)" in "Calculator"

“Tom, why did you click on Hex after loading calculator?”

“My calculations were for a Halloween costume and I was entertaining my daughter by casting spells while doing them.”

After explaining base 16 hexadecimal numbering to Tom, and having him use the *View* menu to switch to a more appropriate calculator, he now is assured of getting base 10 answers from Calculator.

By default, *Problem Steps Recorder* will capture the last 25 screenshots. If you need more than that, click the triangle at the right edge of *Problem Steps Recorder* and choose *Settings*. While viewing the MHT file, you can click on any image to see it in the original resolution. You can also use a link at the top to view the problem as a slide show. And finally, at the bottom of the page, there are additional details about each step that might help you in diagnosing the problem.

I think you can see just how valuable this program can be for troubleshooting problems.

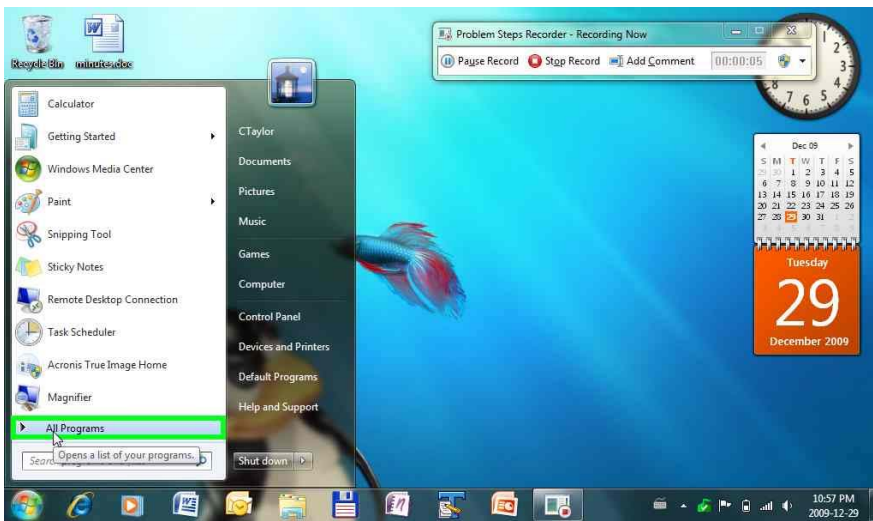
[\(screenshots next page\)](#)

Problem Steps Recorder (continued from previous page)

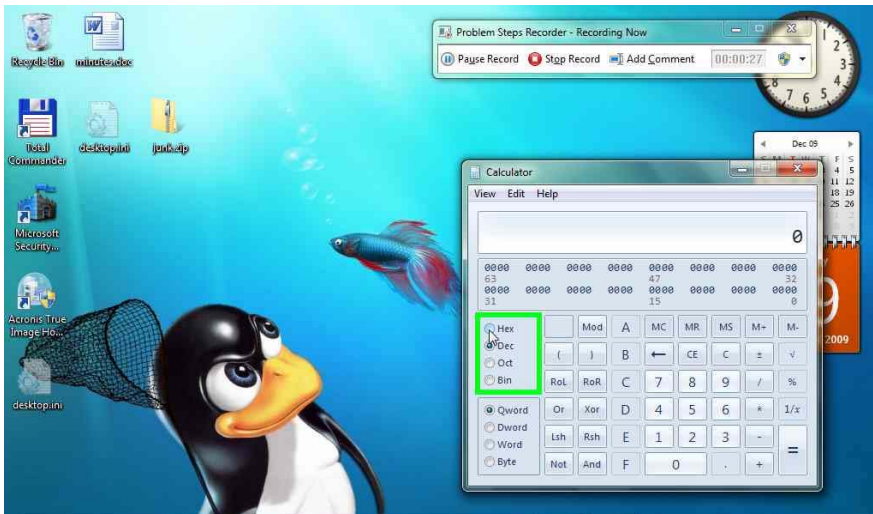
Problem Step 1: (2009-12-29 10:57:25 PM) User left click on "Start (push button)" in "Start"



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Problem Step 5: (2009-12-29 10:57:49 PM) User left click on "Hexadecimal (radio button)" in "Calculator"



ARTICLE

Windows 7 on a Netbook

by Chris Taylor

I have an Acer Aspire One netbook. While I don't think a netbook can be the only computer for most people, it is a terrific additional computer for someone with a standard desktop computer. I reported on the Acer Aspire One last year – <http://opcug.ca/public/Reviews/AcerAspireOne.htm>

The Aspire One is pretty standard hardware for a netbook – 1 GB RAM, 160 GB hard drive, 1.6 GHz Atom processor, 1024×600 screen... and it came with Windows XP Home. I don't put heavy demands on it – Microsoft Office 2007 and web browsing make up about 95% of my use. The Aspire One keeps up with that load quite easily.

A couple of months ago, I put Windows 7 Ultimate on it and I was happy and surprised to see it performing about the same as with Windows XP! This is a real change for Microsoft. I was used to every version of Windows requiring significantly more RAM and processor power than the previous release. I swear – for me – this has been true from Windows 286 (the first version of Windows I used) through Windows Vista.

But Windows 7 reversed the trend. Even with all the Aero eye candy turned on, I am really happy with the performance of Windows 7 on the Aspire One.

I am close to saying that I think Windows 7 could replace Windows XP on any hardware. Close but no cigar. There is one area that Windows XP will, I think, outperform Windows 7; any machine with less than 1 GB of RAM. I think Windows 7 really needs at least 1 GB, whereas Windows XP can run okay in 512 MB.

I will close out with a couple of hints at getting the most out of a netbook.

The main annoyance for me is dealing with the cramped screen real estate. Most netbooks have a screen resolution of 1024×600. This is because Microsoft has rules for some maximums in order to qualify for an inexpensive Windows li-

cense. For screen resolution, the maximum is 1024×600. I don't mind the 1024 horizontal resolution, but the 600 vertical pixels is a little on the short side. There is a lot of software out there that really thinks it will have at least 768 vertical pixels.

Setting the taskbar to auto-hide helps a little. Right click on any blank part of the taskbar and choose Properties from the context menu that pops up. On the Taskbar tab, put a check mark in the box Auto-hide the taskbar, and click the OK button. The taskbar will slide out of view, giving more room on the screen for your programs. To access the taskbar, just move the mouse cursor to the bottom of the screen and the taskbar will slide up into view.

If you use Internet Explorer or Firefox as your web browser, you can give more room for the web pages by switching to Full Screen mode. In this mode, all menus, toolbars, the address bar, etc disappear and the window maximizes, giving maximum room on screen for the web page. Hit F11 (or press Alt-V, F) to switch between normal and Full Screen mode. While in Full Screen mode, you can access the toolbars by moving the mouse to the top of the screen and they will slide into view. Move your mouse away from the top of the screen and they will slide back out of view.

If you use Office 2007, you know just how much room is taken up by the Ribbon. You can easily make them disappear, leaving just the tabs visible. Double-click on the active tab or double-click twice on an in-active tab and Ribbon will disappear. To temporarily access the Ribbon, click once on any tab and the Ribbon will appear. When you choose an action, the Ribbon will disappear again. To get the Ribbon back and have it stay, double-click on any tab.

The other major issue I have with my Aspire One, as with any battery operated computer, is battery life. It is not great to find your battery drained and you are

nowhere near a power outlet.

Find out the hotkey that will immediately blank your screen and use it. Even though you should tune the screen timeout in Control Panel's Power Options to turn off the screen quite quickly while on battery, I find it very handy to use this keystroke to turn it off immediately if I am not going to be reading the screen or typing for a bit. The screen is a big power consumer in a portable computer.

Another thing you can do to conserve battery life is to find out what programs and hardware are using power. For example, if you have a wireless adapter turned on but are not connected to a wireless network, you are simply wasting power. Likewise if you have a program keeping the CPU running at a high rate, your CPU is being prevented from dropping into a low-power state.

Windows 7 comes with a terrific utility to analyse power consumption.

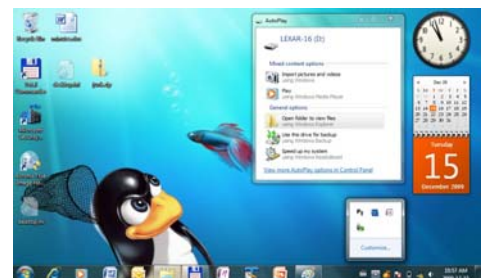
Click on Start and type in cmd. Wait a second and in the Programs section, you will see cmd.exe. Right click on it and choose Run As Administrator.

When the Command Prompt opens, type in;

```
powercfg -energy
```

Windows will check the current power consumption for 60 seconds and write a report. Load that file into your web browser and it will provide some information about power consumption.

I hope this helps to make a netbook more useable for you.



OPCUG Free Software Guide—Part 13 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 software 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.

Ninite.com

This web-based software installer lets you select programs from a number of categories. Lots of familiar packages are available, including Skype, OpenOffice, AVG, and Google Earth. You download and run a customized installer and -bingo! - each of the selected packages is automatically downloaded and installed on your system. A great way to obtain new software!

Web Site: <http://ninite.com/>

Allway Sync

Allway Sync is free file and folder synchronization software for Windows. The program uses innovative algorithms to synchronize your data between desktop PCs, laptops, USB drives and more. Allway Sync combines bullet-proof reliability with an extremely easy-to-use interface.

Current Release: Version 10.0.5

Web Site: <http://allwaysync.com/>



Support Details

Imulus, a web-design company, built Support Details to simplify the process of gathering information about a client's personal computer. Their tool is available for public use so you, or someone you support, can easily determine items such as the operating system in use, the screen resolution, the Flash version installed, and whether Javascript or cookies are enabled.

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

Auslogics Disk Defrag

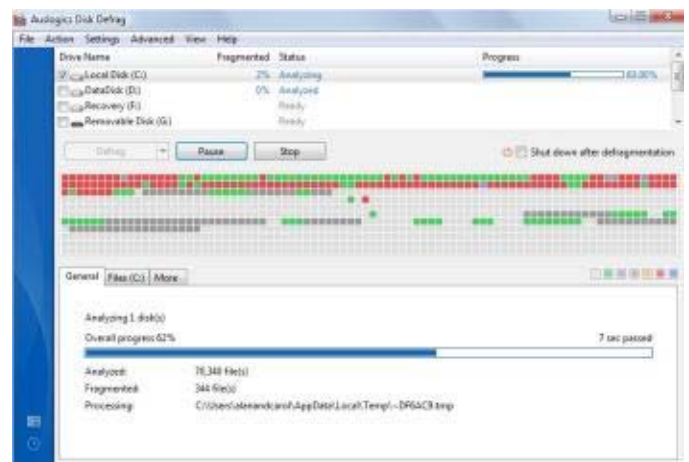
Disk fragmentation leads to system slowdowns, PC crashes, slow startups and shutdowns. Auslogics Disk Defrag is designed for fast defragmentation of modern hard disks. The new version can also consolidate free space and optimize system files placement.

Current Release: Version 3.1.2.90

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

Previous Reviews: Better Disk Defragging – Upside Down? (by Alan German);

<http://www.opcug.ca/public/Reviews/auslogics.htm>



PixRenamer

PixRenamer is a small file renaming utility for the most common renaming tasks. Its basic features include the automatic pre-selection of different graphic file-formats and numbering options. This is a handy tool for renaming lots of photographs imported from digital cameras.

Current Release: Version 2.0

Web Site: <http://www.the-nightowl.net/computing/software-free/nightowl-freeware-page.htm#pixrenamer>

MenuMaid

Do your Windows Explorer and Internet Explorer right-click (context) menus contain too many items? Need a quick and easy way to clean these up? Look no further - MenuMaid makes it simple! Just uncheck the items you don't want to show up. You can restore them at any time.

Current Release: Version 1.0

Web Site: <http://www.sdsoftware.org/default.asp?id=11403>

Reviews: MenuMaid—Right-Clicks in a New Context (by Alan German) (*see page 1, this issue*)

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 (SIGs) go until 10 p.m.

OPCUG Membership Fees:	\$25 per year	
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Within a couple of minutes you will receive a confirmation message from the listserver.

“Announcements” is a low volume list that the Board of Directors uses to get in touch with the membership. Subscribers can expect at least one message per month – the meeting reminder that goes out a few days in advance of the general meeting. Other than that, the only time it is used is when the Board feels there is some important news that should be brought to the attention of all members.