



OTTAWA

PC NEWS

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BOOK REVIEW

Excel 2007—The Missing Manual

by Alan German

Another of those O'Reilly books "that should have been in the box", this one is written by Matthew MacDonald for Pogue Press, and offers insight into the mysteries of the latest version of Microsoft's Excel spreadsheet program.

The introduction suggests that users of prior versions of the software (notably Excel 2002 or 2003) should seek help from "Excel 2003: The Missing Manual". However, I would suggest that the basics, and many of the advanced features of Excel, are adequately covered in the current work. The main thing in Excel 2007 that's different is a set of features of the user interface (e.g. the Ribbon, Office Menu, Quick Access Toolbar, and Save-as-PDF), many of which are just icing on the cake rather than must-have functions. So, if you use Excel (or, like me, a clone such as Open Office Calc), you will find lots of extremely useful how-to information in this book.

The text consists of a substantial 831 pages plus a colophon (a new word for me - "a tail-piece in old books... giving information now placed on the title-page" - The Concise Oxford Dictionary). Excel 2007 is organized in eight parts – Worksheet Basics, Formulas and Functions, Organizing Worksheets, Charts and Graphics, Advanced Data Analysis, Sharing Data with the Rest of the World, Programming Excel, and an Appendix.

Each part is subsequently divided into chapters so that Worksheet Basics consists of the first seven chapters of the book and includes basic information on "Creating and Navigating Worksheets", to more advanced features such as "Smart Formatting Tricks" that will, for example, illustrate the magic behind conditional formatting of specific cells. The chapter on "Viewing and Printing Worksheets" provides information on the very useful Window-Freeze command that is often used to keep the column titles at the top of the screen while the data below can be scrolled up and down, and there are several pages of must-know information on print settings in order to produce sophisticated printouts of your spreadsheets.

There must be something that you don't know about Excel in over 800 pages of text!

The section on formulas and functions includes details of how to specify an individual cell or a range of cells in a calculation, including absolute and partially fixed cell references that are frequently useful when copying formulae within a worksheet or even between spreadsheets. This part of the book is worth the price of admission by itself since it provides a valuable reference to the capabilities of the myriad of func-

tions contained in Excel. This is information that is quite difficult to obtain from the program's help system, especially if you don't know that a specific function exists!

So, here you will find details of the COUNTA function that will, for example, help you total the number of non-blank cells in a column, or the COUNTIF function that you could use to count the number of cells containing a particular value. And, who could survive without the ATANH trigonometrical function; being able to use IRR to calculate the internal rate of return based on the cash flow of your business; or combining text strings with CONCATENATE? If your formula produces an outrageous result, did you know that you can use the Evaluate Formula tool to do some troubleshoot-

(Continued on page 5)

Inside this issue:

<i>Calendar / Coming Up / Raffle</i>	2
<i>Book Review: Excel 2007 Manual</i>	1, 5
<i>2007 OPCUG Beginners' Workshop</i>	3
<i>Article: Upgrade Envy—Part 4</i>	4, 7
<i>Review: Better Disk Defragging (Auslogics Disk Defrag)</i>	6-7
<i>2008 OPCUG Elections</i>	7
<i>Contact Information</i>	6

Next Meeting: **WEDNESDAY, October 10th, 2007**

October Raffle

This month, thanks to Microsoft, we have **Digital Image Suite Anniversary Edition** for the raffle.

Product Features (for more details, visit <http://www.amazon.com>):

- Retrieve any picture by searching your collection by date, subject, size, keyword, 5-star rating and more
- Keep your memories safe on CD, DVD or other formats -- you'll always know exactly where to find the shots you want
- Digital Image Library makes finding pictures and videos fast and easy
- Use Flags to easily highlight pictures for later printing, sharing, or editing at your convenience
- Easy one-click Auto-Fixes correct exposure, color and issues common to digital and phone cameras



Tickets are \$1 for one, \$2 for three, or \$5 for ten.

Coming Up...

► **October 10:** John Selwyn, Executive Director, National Capital Freenet (NCF)
Topic: Overview of NCF

November 14: Rick Claus, IT Pro Advisor, Microsoft Canada
Topic: Windows Home Server

September Prize Winners

The raffle prize of a copy of Microsoft Streets & Trips with GPS was won by **Frank Rogers**.

The door prize winners were:

John Cocklin who took home a copy of Norton SystemWorks and **Norman Dafoe** who won a copy of McAfee VirusScan.

Thanks to Microsoft, Symantec, and McAfee.

2007 CALENDAR

Meetings	Date	Time and Venue
OPCUG General Meeting	Wednesday, October 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, October 10 th	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting.
IT-Pro SIG	Wednesday, October 10 th	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting.
Linux SIG	Wednesday, October 10 th	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting.
PIG SIG (Wing SIG West)	Wednesday, October 10 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, October 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).

2007 OPCUG BEGINNERS' WORKSHOP

The Ottawa PC Users' Group's motto is "Users Helping Users" and, this fall, we are going back to our roots in offering a Beginners' Workshop. A group of knowledgeable and experienced members of the club will provide sessions on a number of topics that will be of interest to the new computer user, and even those not-so-new users who need to know a little more about their hardware and software.

Our Beginners' Workshop is scheduled to run from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Saturday, November 17th, at the Heron Road Community Centre (1480 Heron Road), and will consist of four sessions:

Hardware Solutions

Our hardware expert will discuss the latest technologies in chips and what you may wish to consider if purchasing a new computer or are thinking about upgrading an existing machine. Topics included will be memory choices, hard disks and optical drives (DVD's), monitors and video cards, input devices (keyboard, mouse, etc.) and networking options.

Operating Systems

There is lots of buzz these days about Vista and Linux, two choices for your computer's operating system. But, do you need to choose between them? Is your current operating system good enough? In this session, we will find out what Vista has to offer over and above Windows XP. We will also take a look at Ubuntu Linux and see how it can be dual-booted with Vista – to give the best of both worlds?

Open Source Applications

Another hot-button topic – open source software. A "believer" will discuss the concept of the open-source movement, and provide examples of applications that look-and-feel pretty much like the "other guy's" software. Open-source software provides the same functionality, but at zero cost! What more could you ask for?

Security Issues

Computer life just keeps getting more complex and the black-hat guys are trying to take advantage of you at every turn. Viruses, worms, Spam, phishing schemes seem to be everywhere. Are you protected? Our expert will discuss the various security concerns and offer a wide range of easy-to-implement solutions.

The cost to attend the entire day's workshop sessions is just \$50.00. This includes a catered lunch and coffee breaks; a complimentary one-year membership in OPCUG (a \$25.00 value by itself); a CD-ROM containing all of the presentations, speakers' notes, and associated information.

Plus, we will be holding a draw amongst workshop participants for various prizes including computer software and books on workshop-related topics. We have over \$2000 in giveaways!

Tell all your friends - who are not yet OPCUG members – about our workshop. This is a not-to-be-missed event. Not only will they obtain lots of great information, and become members of the club, for just \$50, they will also have a great chance to walk away with one of our fabulous door prizes. Check the web site for details. And, don't forget that, if you are already an OPCUG member, your workshop registration will extend your membership for a further year.

Space at the workshop venue is limited and participation will be limited to the first 60 registrants. So, register today by visiting <http://opcug.ca> and clicking on the "Workshop" link.

A registration form can be found on the website and on page 8 of this issue.



ARTICLE

Upgrade Envy—Part 4 *by Peter Hawkins*

Finally I have arrived at the big moment. The point in time at which all the fruits of my seemingly increasingly heavy burden will come into full blossom. I have a complete computer ready to work. Two monitors are hooked up and properly functioning. The 128 Mb AGP video card has been replaced and it works. The new Asrock motherboard with the new pentium D805 chip are just waiting to "rock-and-roll"! Overlooking for just a moment the undeniable fact that I have already spent \$370, which is a wee bit over budget, I am psyched to begin. So here I go...

I reboot my computer and await the inevitable prompt that informs me that I have to press F2 to enter Setup. Which I get and which I do. Glory be! I get to the screen that will actually let me get to overclock the CPU. This is a relatively straightforward adjustment. For the Pentium D805 has a fixed multiplier of 20x. That means that the CPU clock speed is set at 133MHz and when multiplied by the fixed multiplier (of 20x) the chip runs at 2.66 GHz. This is the factory setting as it comes right from the bluish box that Intel packs the chips in. BUT...I can change it right there in Setup. So, being a rather cautious person, I opt to set the clock speed at 140 MHz, then "Save and Exit". This means that the computer reboots immediately to take advantage of the new settings I have just imposed on it. The logic of the boot process is such that I am presented with the option to press F2 to enter Setup just in case I feel I might have overdone it! I refrain from such a craven impulse and allow the boot up process to continue.

Do you recall that when you turn your computer on it beeps once to let you know that everything went according to plan and that the initial bootup sequence has been successfully concluded? Well...that's just what I heard! Sweet music to my ears! I even have

the program Everest Home Edition that Alan German reviewed earlier this year. And it informed me that I had a D805 chip that was running at 2.8 GHz. It also told me that my chip was a little hotter (only by 1 or 2 degrees Celsius) than before, but nothing to be concerned about. And I had achieved the initial step on my journey to one HOT SCREAMING OVER-CLOCKED CHIP!

Well...in a nutshell, my computer wouldn't boot! Zilch! Zero! Nada!

This was no time to stop. Strike while the iron is hot, so to speak. So I rebooted and went through the process outlined above to enter into Setup and make changes. However, not wanting to overburden my CPU in these early stages of my grand experiment, I settled on a new clock speed of 145 MHz. And away it went, working through the bootup process, providing a quite satisfactory BEEP to let me know that all was well. Everest showed a new (and higher) speed of 2.9 GHz and while the chip temperature had crept up another degree or two, all was well!

What to do next? The answer was blindingly obvious...add another 5 MHz to the clock speed! I would be well on my way to achieving my goal. As a small aside, please remember that this entire process was started by my son's Christmas purchase of a new and much faster computer, and dear old Dad succumbed to that old devil of "Upgrade Envy". So I'd just like to say that my original goal was just to wring a modest improvement (and at quite minimal cost) to my old computer.

Alright then, firmly secure in the knowledge of my simple modest aim, I rebooted and added that 5 Mhz to my

clock speed for a total of 150 MHz which would translate into a 3.00 GHz chip speed. Another step up the ladder to a competitive position. After the mandatory "Save and Exit" I waited expectantly for the bootup sequence to finish. And I waited. And I waited. During this moderately long anxiety-filled period, there was NO and I mean absolutely NO BEEP!

What did this mean? Well...in a nutshell, my computer wouldn't boot! Zilch! Zero! Nada! It just sat there like a very expensive door-stop. My heart sank. Surely I had not in some unfathomable manner damaged my PRECIOUS? Well, I knew that it worked at 145MHz (i.e. 2.9 GHz) so I went back to that setting. And offered serious prayers that it would still boot. Oh Happy Days, that's just what it did. Exactly like before. Ran like a clock, spun like a top! Life could go on if not quite as speedily as I had hoped. And surely there was some space between 145 MHz and that ever-to-be-cursed 150 MHz. I would try incrementally.

Incrementalism is a philosophy of doing things in small stages to see what happens. If the results are successful, repeat the increment. Though cautious I must admit that it galls me to have to take this approach. None other, however, presented itself to me at that time, so I began. Would 146 MHz work? Yes! How about 147? OK. 148? Yes. 149? Yes, although I felt that the CPU thought about it for a while. But Yes, it did boot at that level. Try 150 again, now that I had progressed to it? Same result...just nothing! So I was stuck. I could overclock by just 12%. Big Woop! All this effort, patience, practice, research, knowledge acquisition, and what did I get? A lousy 12% overclock! At 2.98 GHz, not even 3.0GHz!

Was this to be my ignominious end? A paltry result not worth wasting my time (or yours) on such an effort. Was there

(Continued on page 7)

Excel 2007—The Missing Manual *(Continued from page 1)*

ing by processing the formula one step at a time, or perhaps using Excel's tracing feature to graphically show how certain cells are linked?

Part three of the book looks at tables and list management, with such topics as searching, sorting, filtering and grouping data, while part four shows how to create and modify various types of charts to pictorially represent the information in your spreadsheet, how to add clip art and even photographs to provide additional customization. Advanced Data Analysis, in part five of the book, shows how to create summary reports of complex spreadsheet data, how to perform goal seeking calculations, or how to use Solver for iterative computations in situations where a simple formula cannot provide the solution being sought. A particularly powerful analytical technique, where summary information is required on large datasets, is the use of pivot tables which the book's author describes as "a hidden gem in Excel". Technically known as cross-tabulation, this technique provides a means summarizing complex data where multiple relationships exist.

As an example, after reading this section of the book, it was evident to me that a pivot table would readily produce a breakdown of the number of members of a national organization by geographic location. While this could be (and was previously!) obtained by using a set of COUNTIF functions, one for each jurisdiction, this is a cumbersome process when applied to thirteen provinces and territories across Canada, plus a number of foreign countries. Using a pivot table, it's simply a matter of creating a new column where, for each membership record, the cell in the new column contains the number "1". The pivot table is then created using a wizard, detailed instructions for which, including a series of screen shots, are provided in the book. It's merely necessary to specify cross-tabulation of the column of data containing the geographical location of the members with the new column of 1's. The resulting pivot table instantly shows the total number of members in each geographical location by automatically summing the number of members in Ontario, Quebec, etc. Easy!

Part six of the book, Sharing Data with the Rest of the World, has information on data protection, working collaboratively with other users, issuing queries from Excel to database files, using XML, and exchanging data over the Internet. The discussion includes how to protect individual cells against invalid data entry, such as locking a specific cell that contains a fixed numerical value, and even how to create pop-up warning messages if things go awry. There are also details of the means to move data across various applications, such as embedding objects in Windows' programs, and creating comma-delimited text files for data transfer.

Macro programming forms the topic for part seven, everything from automatically recording a set of keystrokes as a macro, to the essentials of Visual Basic for Applications (VBA) programming. The text explains how to play back a stored macro, and even how to assign the macro to a graphical button on the spreadsheet to provide easy access any time the same set of commands is required to be applied to the spreadsheet.

Twenty-five pages are dedicated to VBA, including use of the editor, coding, program objects, and debugging. It's probably enough to get you started in Excel, but if you are serious about VBA, I suspect that you will need a whole manual on just this topic (and, of course, O'Reilly provides a choice between several such texts!)

The final part of the book is an appendix discussing customization of the Quick Access Toolbar (QAT). This is a topic that is specific to Excel 2007. The author notes that, in contrast to earlier versions of the program, Excel 2007 restricts the end user's options to modify the menu structures to just making changes to the QAT. So, if you use Excel 2007, and are desperate to customize the system, this chapter is for you.

If you are new to Excel, and especially to Excel 2007, this book will provide a lot of basic information to help you get to know the wonders of spreadsheet use. For intermediate users, there is a host of tips and tricks to be found between the covers. And, even advanced users may find some gems of interest. There must be something that you don't know about Excel in over 800 pages of text!



Bottom Line

Excel 2007 – The Missing Manual

Matthew MacDonald

Pogue Press and O'Reilly Media Inc.

First Edition - December, 2006

Book US \$39.99;
PDF US \$19.99

Available at O'Reilly Media website:
<http://www.oreilly.com/catalog/9780596527594/>

35% member discount available, see:
<http://www.opcug.ca/public/promos.htm>

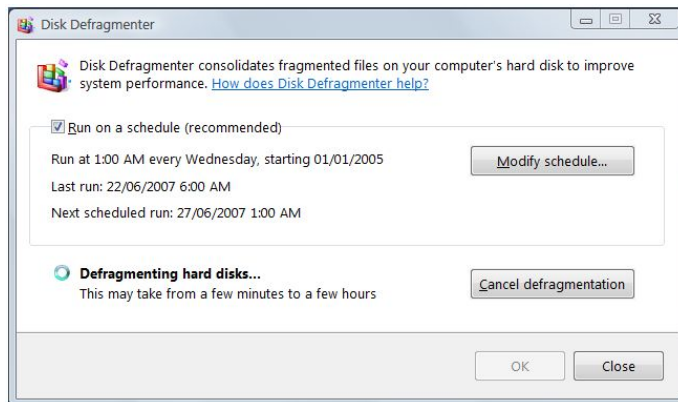
PRODUCT REVIEW

Better Disk Defragging—Upside Down? by Alan German

Microsoft's Vista looks pretty and has some useful new features, but a change in the user interface for an old friend just doesn't cut it. I'm talking about Accessories – System Tools - Disk Defragmenter, a program that I use fairly frequently, both to make me feel good about the neatness of my hard disks, and to ensure that backup images made of these drives take minimal space for storage and shorter times to write.

The new version of Disk Defragmenter that comes with Vista is evidently designed to work on an assigned schedule, performing its magic in the background. Gone are the brightly-coloured displays of bad disk sectors with files that are scrambled, good sectors where information is packed tightly together, and hopeless sectors that are reserved for system use. No more blinking lights as the program reads and writes sectors, pulling together like-minded bits and bytes. No feeling of satisfaction when comparing the rainbow of disk sectors before the defragging operation, to the neat columns of solid colours afterwards. In fact, running a manual disk defrag under Vista yields only the soul-less message: "This may take from a few minutes to a few hours".

Vista's Disk Defragmenter – a few minutes or a few hours!



But, what about those of us who don't work on schedules, and don't wish our computers to do so either? Is this message all we can hope for? And, how many minutes or hours are we going to have to stare at this message until the defragging process is complete? There must be a better way! Let's turn our computer upside down!

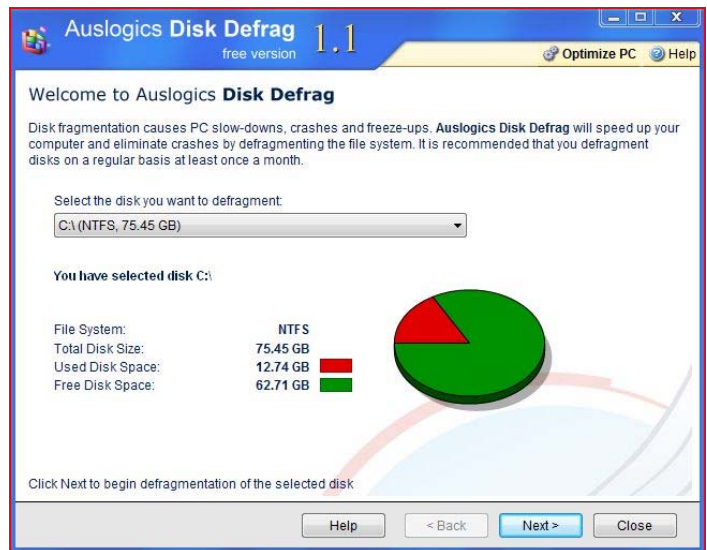
Well, no. Not really. But, we might want to turn to a company from down-under for a solution. Auslogics Disk Defrag comes from a company based in Sydney, Australia. This utility supports FAT16, FAT32 and NTFS formats. The makers say that their program was designed specifically for

Windows XP, Windows 2000, Windows 2003 and Windows Vista and "for fast optimization of today's modern hard disks."

While I haven't performed any real side-by-side testing with Vista's Disk Defragmenter, it seems to me that Auslogics Disk Defrag does run much faster. And, Disk Defrag has a nice display with lots of pretty, coloured boxes showing that it is really doing something. What more could you want?

Well, a nice user interface would be good for a start. And Auslogics comes through in spades. The interface is clean, good looking, and couldn't be simpler to use. A drop-down menu lists the available drives that could be defragged. The disk format of the pre-selected drive (usually c:) is shown, and the disk space (total, used and free) are displayed both in a table and on a pie-chart. Select a drive from the drop-down list, press the Next button, and lights start blinking as the disk defragmentation is in progress.

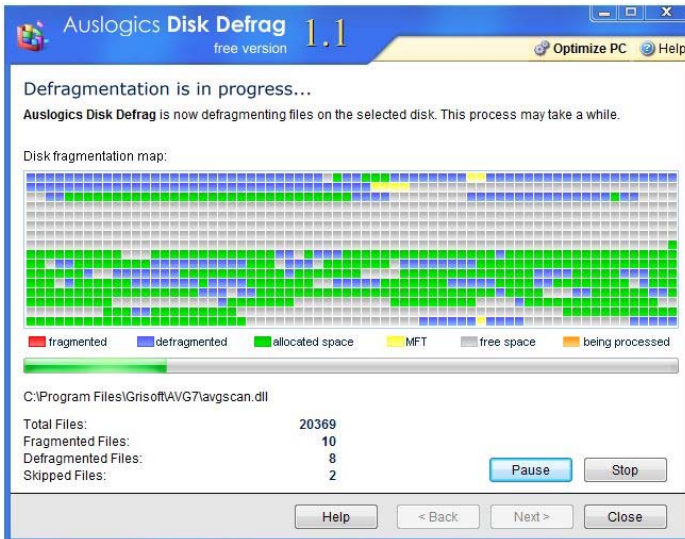
Auslogics Disk Defrag – Main screen



Soon, the window changes to announce "Defragmentation of disk C:\ is finished". A summary table provides information on the total number of files and directories processed, the number of files fragmented, defragmented, and/or skipped, plus the percentage fragmentation both before and after the operation. A "Display Report" button provides the option of viewing an HTML report with the summary information and the details of the individual files processed.

It's quick, it's easy, it's colourful – and it's free. My kind of utility program (even if, now, I have to stand on my head to defrag my disks!)

(Continued on page 7)

Better Disk Defragging (Continued from previous page)**Auslogics Disk Defrag – Defragmentation in progress****Bottom Line**

Auslogics Disk Defrag (Freeware) Auslogics Pty Ltd,
Sydney, New South Wales, Australia
<http://www.auslogics.com/disk-defrag/index.php>

Upgrade Envy—Part 4 (Continued from page 4)

nothing else I could do? Well there is (usually) always something else to do or at least I truly deeply sincerely cling to that belief. Using the web to see if there were other suffering addicts such as myself I discovered (in time) that the glorious motherboard I had chosen, the one to take me to the Promised Land of SERIOUS OVERCLOCKING had a tiny little flaw...there was NO way to change to voltage flowing to the CPU! What an oversight! What were they thinking? So I emailed Asrock to complain about this issue. Their response was basically "so sorry, not our problem!"

On the other hand, a number of disappointed Asrock motherboard owners had discovered a way around this trivial problem, and in their desire to help their fellow sufferers, had posted the WAY FORWARD. It was called "modding a chip" and was a way to jump start my stalled effort to achieve greatness. I will give this really serious thought as it only took a \$20 conductive ink pen and a few small non-conductive patches strategically placed on the chip's pads.

Maintain FORWARD MOMENTUM!!!



2008 OPCUG Elections

Once a year, the OPCUG holds elections for the 9-member Board of Directors. We are once again coming up to this annual event.

We encourage all members to consider running for a board position or getting involved in some other manner in the operations of the OPCUG.

If you want more information about what is involved, please talk to any current or past board member.

Nominations can be submitted to Bob Herres in person at the October, November, and December club meetings.

An e-mail address for nominations will be provided in the November newsletter.

**Correction from the Editor**

I omitted a line in last month's article "Exploring Linux - Part 6". The line (in bold below) should have appeared after the following sentence on p. 7:

And, let's add the following new line to the end of this file to specify a permanent entry for the Windows data partition:

```
/dev/hda5 /mnt/windows_data vfat iocharset=utf8,umask=000 0 0
```

OTTAWA PC NEWS

OPCUG Workshop 2007

Saturday, November 17, 2007
9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Heron Road Community Centre
1480 Heron Road, Ottawa, ON

Registration Form (Please print neatly)

Name:

Address
(complete address, please):

Tel :

E-mail:

I wish to register for this workshop which includes lunch, the presentations and associated material on a CD-ROM, and a one-year membership in OPCUG.

Please find enclosed my cheque in the amount of \$50.00, made payable to: OPCUG.

Mail the completed registration form and your cheque to:

OPCUG Workshop 2007
3 Thatcher Street
Ottawa, ON, K2G 1S6

The OPCUG has established a Privacy Policy in compliance with government legislation. The purpose of the policy is to safeguard your personal information. Your workshop application constitutes your acceptance of this policy:
<http://opcug.ca/public/privacy.htm>.

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
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