



OTTAWA

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PRODUCT REVIEW

Two Views - One Vista by Alan German

OpenReilly Media, Inc. have provided the club with two reference texts on Windows Vista. These are *Windows Vista - The Definitive Guide* by William R. Stanek, and *Windows Vista - The Missing Manual* by David Pogue. Neither book is a lightweight. *The Missing Manual* is an inch and a half thick, with 827 pages, while *The Definitive Guide* is even bigger, being two inches thick with 922 pages. Clearly, one review cannot do complete justice to two such weighty tomes, so here we will just take a peek into various sections of the two books and see how they compare.

For new Vista users, i.e. those migrating from Windows XP, the introduction of *The Missing Manual* describes the new features in Vista (with an interesting section on "Version Hell" - the different features offered by the various versions of Vista). In addition, the final section of the book is entitled "Where'd It Go?" and indicates features of XP that are no longer available in Vista, or aren't where XP users think they should be. For example, XP's Clipbook Viewer is no longer available, and to remove an installed program, previously part of "Add and remove programs" on XP's Control Panel, you now need to look under Start - Control Panel - Programs - Programs and Features.

Apart from the above, both books essentially kick off with descriptions of how to navigate through Vista's menus and configure various options. One of the major new features of Vista is the Aero (glass) user interface and both books go into considerable detail on how to customize the look and feel of the display. Even if you have the horsepower to run Aero, there may be specific features that you don't particularly like, so it's good to know that the interface is highly customizable. For example, I used the books' instructions to turn off the transparent window edges (Control Panel - Appearance and Personalization - Personalization - Windows Color and Appearance), and to increase the font size (Right-click on the desktop - Personalize - Adjust font size (DPI) - Custom DPI). Both books have screenshots of the controls to modify the colour and appearance of the on-screen windows. However, *The Missing Manual* seems to more readily hit the highlights of the things I want to do. For example, a sidebar, entitled "Frequently Asked Questions" (FAQ), outlines "The Solution to Tiny Type", noting that with smaller pixels on modern displays, text can be difficult to read, and providing the means to access the DPI scaling box.

One of the features promoted in Vista is an enhanced search capability. Both books devote about twenty pages to search techniques, from entering text

into the Search Box on the Start menu, to using filters in Windows Explorer. Once again, my preference is for the descriptions and diagrams provided by *The Missing Manual* as these are laid out such that the information can be readily assimilated. In fact, when considering advanced search filters to look for files over a certain size, *The Definitive Guide* suggests the need to use "is greater than" while *The Missing Manual* indicates that the more intuitive, and much shorter, > symbol is valid.

In discussing Internet Explorer 7 (IE7), the version of Microsoft's browser distributed with Vista, both books provide the basics of things like tabbed browsing and custom printing of web pages. But, the larger size of *The Definitive Guide* allows this text to shine when it comes to details of IE7's security settings. By default, the browser will prevent you accessing certain sites, for

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Next Meeting: **WEDNESDAY, October 8th, 2008**

October Raffle

At the October general meeting, thanks to the generosity of Microsoft Canada's Ottawa office, we will be raffling off a copy of **Microsoft Office Ultimate 2007**. The version of Office is absolutely packed with tools to cover a huge variety of tasks. It includes Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook with Business Contact Manager, Access, Publisher, Groove, OneNote, and InfoPath. For details on this power-pack suite of tools, see <http://office.microsoft.com/en-gb/suites/FX101674121033.aspx>. The going price of Microsoft Office Ultimate 2007 is \$900.

Tickets are still only \$1 for one, \$2 for three, or \$5 for ten. What a bargain!



Coming Up...

► **October 8th:** Harald Freise / OPCUG - Changes in Storage (Hard Drive) Technology

November 12, 2008

Speaker: Doug Gray, Co-ordinator of the Computer Genealogy SIG of Ontario Genealogical Society (Ottawa Branch)
Topic: computer based tools for the popular hobby of genealogy.

December 10th: Harley Bloom / BMT MicroTech - Christmas Product Presentation (to be confirmed)

January 14: Rick Claus, IT Pro Advisor, Microsoft Canada - PhotoSynth

2008 CALENDAR

Meetings	Date	Time and Venue
OPCUG General Meeting	Wednesday, October 8 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 8 th	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting.
Linux / Open-Source SIG	Wednesday, October 8 th	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting.
PIG SIG (Wing SIG West)	Wednesday, October 8 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 8 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).

2009 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.

Gail Eagen
OPCUG Secretary



QUESTION PERIOD

Many members will be aware of The PUB's Conference Areas, our club's on-line messaging system. The conference areas are frequently used to pose questions and obtain answers on a variety of topics. However, quite a large percentage of members don't set up accounts on The PUB, and so don't take advantage of the messaging service. But, everyone gets the newsletter, either in electronic form or as hard copy, so there is an opportunity for members to help members via this medium.

Hence this proposal for a "question period" section of the newsletter. Send us your computer-related query via electronic mail to: q&a@opcug.ca. We will try to find an expert to answer your question.

The response, when obtained, will be sent to you directly by electronic mail so that you can put the advice to good use immediately. Some of the questions, and the associated answers, will be published in the newsletter so that everyone can benefit from the information.

"Question Period" is just a proposal at this point so nobody has had the chance to submit any questions. But, two questions that may have been raised in the above already have answers!

Q. How do I set up an account on the PUB?

A. Full details for setting up a PUB account are provided in Chris Taylor's article "Accessing PUB II" that appeared in the October, 2003 newsletter (<http://opcug.ca/public/Articles/0310.pdf>)

Q. How can I receive the newsletter by E-mail?

A. The "Top Ten" reasons for subscribing to the electronic newsletter, and the detailed instructions by which to enter your subscription, and cancel the mailing of the hard copy newsletter, were given in the November, 2005 issue of Ottawa PC News (<http://opcug.ca/public/Articles/0511.PDF>). (Editor's note: You can also check the back page of this issue).



COMPUTER TIPS

Vista Fun *by Chris Taylor*

If you are getting tired of your wallpaper and want something a little more lively, you can run a screensaver as your wallpaper. As I write this, I have the flowing code from The Matrix as my background.

Open a CMD prompt by clicking on the Start button, typing in **cmd.exe** and pressing Enter. In the CMD window that opens, type in the name of your screensaver's file, including the .scr file extension followed by a space and /p65552 and press the enter key. For example, to run the Mystify screensaver as your wallpaper, in the box you would type;

```
mystify.scr /p65552
```

The screensaver will start running on top of your existing wallpaper. Unfortunately, it hides the desktop icons, but otherwise, everything is fully functional. The screensaver will add a button on the task bar. To end the screensaver, right-click on the screen saver's button on the taskbar. The screensaver will take over the space used by the taskbar and the sidebar. You can then press Alt-F4 to end the screensaver. Or you can press the Windows key on your keyboard to have the taskbar and sidebar re-appear.

The screensavers that come with Vista are as follows;

- Aurora.scr
- Bubbles.scr
- logon.scr
- Mystify.scr
- PhotoScreensaver.scr
- Ribbons.scr
- scrnsave.scr
- ssBranded.scr
- ssText3d.scr

You can also look in your **Windows** and **Windows\System32** folders for any other files with the file extension **.scr**

It is worth noting that many screensavers take a considerable percentage of your processor's horsepower, so you might find your machine sluggish while the screensaver is running as wallpaper. The ones that come with Vista use a minimal amount of CPU.



Quick Tip for Vista – Fast Loading Applications *by Chris Taylor*

The windows Quick Launch toolbar has been around for a long time. With Vista, Microsoft added a handy capability for those who love to keep their hands on the keyboard – automatic shortcut keys!

First, if your Quick Launch toolbar is not visible, right-clicking an empty area of the Taskbar (where you get buttons showing your running programs), hover over Toolbars, and click on Quick Launch. You can then arrange the layout of the Taskbar. Right-click the Taskbar and, if there is a check mark beside Lock the Taskbar, click on Lock the Taskbar to remove the check mark and unlock it. You can then hover over the dividers between sections of the Taskbar, click and drag them to change the layout. When you are happy with the layout, right-click an empty space on the Taskbar and click on Lock the Taskbar so you won't accidentally mess up your new layout.

Now that the Quick Launch toolbar is visible, you can activate any program on it by single-clicking its icon. But Windows automatically assigns keyboard shortcuts to the first ten icons on the Quick Launch toolbar – Windows-Logo-Key+1 through Windows-Logo-Key+0. (i.e. hold down the Windows logo key

and press a number). No more need to move your hand from the keyboard to the mouse just to load a program!

If you don't have the programs or documents you want on the Quick Launch Toolbar, they are easy to add. Desktop icons can be dragged and dropped onto the Quick Launch toolbar. You can drag program shortcuts and even documents from Windows Explorer and drop them on the Quick Launch toolbar.

But don't drag and drop using the left mouse button. Windows has a hard-to-remember decision tree about whether a drag and drop to the Quick Launch toolbar results in copying the icon, moving the icon, or creating a shortcut to the item. Instead, when you select the item, use the right mouse button and drag to the Quick Launch toolbar. When you release the mouse button, you will get a pop-up menu that allows you to choose whether you want to copy, move, or create shortcut.

Finally, if you have items on the Quick Launch toolbar you don't need, get rid of them to regain the real estate for things you do use. Just right-click the icon in question and choose Delete from the pop-up menu.



Two Views... (Continued from page 1)

example because of pop-ups, and may even stop you from accessing files on your local hard drive or CD's due to included "active content". *The Definitive Guide* provides lots of help in navigating through the browser's various security levels to customize the program to work in the way that you desire.

Now that we almost all possess digital cameras, Vista includes Photo Gallery, a combined image management and image editing package. Both books devote about thirty-six pages to describing the various features of Photo Gallery such as importing pictures from a camera; including files in disk directories other than the default "Pictures"; adjusting brightness, contrast and colour levels; cropping, fixing red eye; using image tags; and the slideshow controls. *The Missing Manual*, in an FAQ sidebar, points out one of the program's shortcomings in that Photo Gallery doesn't allow you to drag images around to create a customized sort order, a feature offered by many other image management programs.

One of the changes made in Vista is that Disk Defragmenter is set to run automatically but, as *The Definitive Guide* points out, the default start time is 4:00 am on Sunday morning, which may not be terribly appropriate if your machine is normally powered off at this time. Both books provide instructions on how to modify the defragmenter's schedule, and how to run the program manually. However, neither indicates that, because the process is supposed to be undertaken in the background, the program no longer provides any feedback on its progress. Fortunately, there are free, third-party solutions that are both fast and informative (e.g. <http://opcug.ca/public/Reviews/auslogics.htm>).

One of Vista's most contentious features is User Account Control (UAC). This has been widely described as an

exceedingly intrusive security system, popping up warnings and confirmation requests almost incessantly. *The Definitive Guide* discusses this system in three pages, while *The Missing Manual* condenses the information into a single table. The bottom line is that the extra security is well worth the effort. UAC only kicks in when you try to perform an "administrative task", such as installing new software, or trying to modify a system file. The UAC dialogue box pops up, and the surrounding screen is dimmed, to indicate that Vista has entered a secure desktop mode. Pressing return, if you are logged on as an Administrator, or entering the Administrator's password for normal users, allows the process to continue. In practice, such warnings are very infrequent and little effort is required to comply with the security requirements. Since the process is designed to prevent rogue software from being able to load without your direct intervention, the additional effort is well worth it.

At the beginning of this review, I noted that *The Missing Manual* contained a couple of sections (new Vista features and Where'd It Go?) that are not present in *The Definitive Guide*. Of course, the same is true in reverse. One unique section contained in the latter book is "Exploring the Windows Boot Environment". Many users may not be aware that Vista now uses a boot configuration data (BCD) store to specify how the machine may be bootstrapped, and provides a BCD editor by which you may manage the boot process. Well, that is if you can deal with contents such as "default {d7909ee9-7166-11dd-9349-98516989298b}". Obviously, this is not a system for the faint hearted!

But, if you are so inclined, you will be pleased to learn that *The Definitive Guide* devotes fourteen pages to the intricacies of BCD.

In general, both books contain very similar information, covering the same major topics, with lots of details, as

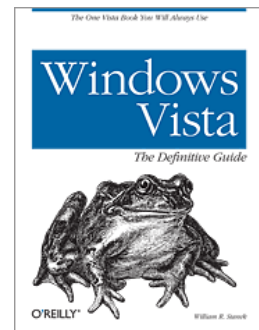
might be expected in books of several hundred pages. My preference is for *The Missing Manual*. I like the many sidebar items that provide insights into various features, tips on how to efficiently use the operating system, and general information about different aspects of computers and computing. In particular, I think that the figures are sharper and better defined in this book, which makes it much easier to assimilate the information being provided. Anyway, that's my view!

Bottom Line:

Windows Vista: The Definitive Guide
(Book US \$ 49.99, PDF US \$39.99)
William R. Stanek

O'Reilly Media, Inc., February 2007
ISBN 10: 0-596-52800-0 | ISBN 13:
9780596528003

<http://oreilly.com/catalog/9780596528003>



Windows Vista: The Missing Manual

(Book US \$ 34.99, PDF US \$27.99)

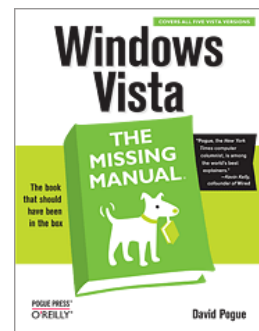
David Pogue

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OTTAWA PC NEWS

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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.

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