



OTTAWA

PC NEWS

Volume 25, Number 9

November 2008

PRODUCT REVIEW

GParted – A little open-source “partition magic”

by Alan German

Historically, Windows hasn't provided a graphical tool for modifying hard disk partitions, and users have generally had to purchase third-party software for this purpose. Vista does offer such a tool, in the form of its Disk Management utility, but this disk partitioning program is rudimentary at best. So, if you want to resize or delete an existing partition, or create a new disk partition, what can the open-source movement offer to facilitate the process? One answer is GParted, the Gnome Partition Editor.

While GParted is really a Linux application, both Windows' and Linux users can obtain the utility in the form of a bootable CD-ROM. The “live-CD” can be downloaded as an image (.iso) file and burnt to a CD-R to create a bootable disk. Note that you don't simply want to copy the .iso file to a CD, you need a disk-authoring software package that understands the .iso format, and can create a bootable disk from the image file. For example, in Roxio's Easy Media Creator, you would select “Copy Data Disk”, check the data source as “Disk Image or DVD-Video Folder”, browse to the .iso file, and click on “Copy” to create the bootable CD.

Once you have a bootable CD-ROM, the next task is to boot from it. So, put the disk in the drive and restart the machine. If your machine's BIOS is set to boot from the CD, the initial menu screen for Gnome Partition Editor will

have “GParted Live (Default Settings)” highlighted. Press the Enter key to accept this option and start the boot process. You will soon see lines of text flowing rapidly down the screen. This is the underlying Linux operating system loading. But, you can just sit back and ignore this stuff. We aren't going to use Linux directly; we will just make use of the resulting GParted application. So, be patient until the text flow stops and you are presented with options to proceed.

The vast majority of users will find that the default settings provided will work just fine. For every option you should hit Enter to continue. So, on the package configuration screens, accept “Don't touch keymap” for “Configuring console-data” and “[0]” (beginner mode) for “Which mode do you want when configuring X?”. The video mode suggested for “Configuring xserver-xorg” (1920x1440 in my case) will almost certainly be correct for your monitor, and you will doubtless wish to accept “[33]” (US English) in response to the question “Which language do you prefer?”

If you held steadfast through the above-noted loading sequence, your video monitor is now displaying the main window of the GParted program (see figure). This window is headed by a main menu, each selection on which (GParted, Edit, etc.) gives rise to a series of drop-down options. In addition, several large icons provide ready ac-

cess to the most frequently used program features (e.g. New partition, Apply changes).

Below the action items, a graphical view of the hard drive shows the individual disk partitions, designated as to name and size, as white boxes outlined in green. Any unallocated space is greyed out.

The table in the lower portion of the main window indicates specific properties of each partition, such as the file system in use (e.g. NTFS).

Clicking the mouse on any particular partition in either the graphical display or in the table causes a context-sensitive set of options to be highlighted. For an existing partition, the Delete, Resize/Move and Copy icons become active while, for unallocated space, only the New icon is activated.

(Continued on page 5)

Inside this issue:

<i>Calendar / Coming Up / Raffle</i>	2
<i>Review: GParted</i>	1, 5
<i>2009 OPCUG Elections</i>	3
<i>Review: NotePad++</i>	3, 4
<i>E-mailing Photos</i>	4, 5
<i>OPCUG Vacuum Flasks Available</i>	6
<i>Contact Information</i>	6

Next Meeting: **WEDNESDAY, November 12th, 2008**

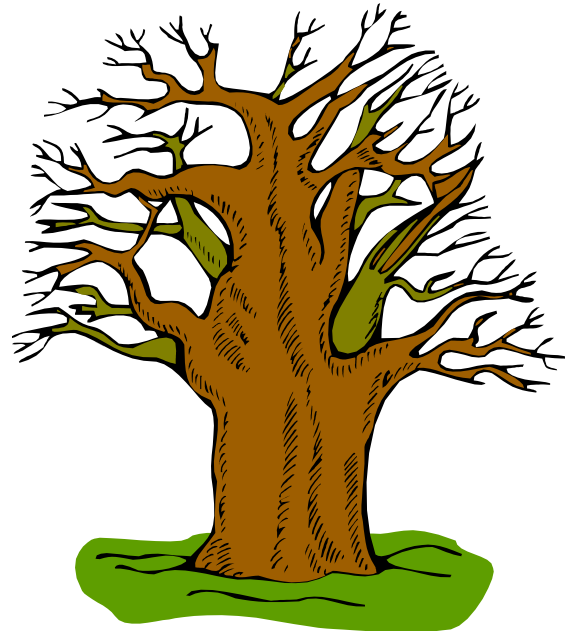
Coming Up...

► 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.

Doug Gray recently retired as a Senior Systems Engineering Specialist at Telesat Canada and is a graduate of the University of Waterloo. Doug caught the Genealogical Bug in the late 1980's and it took a good hold on him in the mid 1990s. He is a member of the Ottawa Branch, OGS, Co-ordinator of the OGS Ottawa Computer Special Interest Group and a member of the Manitoba Genealogy Society. Doug has given presentations on Computer Genealogy to the Ottawa Branch as well as to the British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa. There has been a significant change on where you can do the research. There is a lot of information that is now available On-Line and a lot more to come. A significant portion can be accessed free of charge. Doug's presentation will go over some of the basics for genealogy, the computer tools and the key internet sites he uses for his research. His research has involved Ontario, Manitoba, New Brunswick, England, Scotland and parts of the United States



December 10th:

Speaker: Harley Bloom / BMT MicroTech
(to be confirmed)

Topic: Christmas Product Presentation

January 14:

Speaker: Rick Claus / Microsoft Canada

Topic: PhotoSynth

June 10:

Annual BBQ and speaker Roger Wambolt of Corel Corporation

Prize Winners

Our September 3rd meeting featured one of our more original prizes: **Mike Charette** went home the proud owner of a Helium Balloon Kit (complete with mini helium tank and a collection of colorful balloons) courtesy of our speaker Gord Graham from Wrapped Apps Corporation.

At the October general meeting, two winners each took home a copy of the McAfee Security Suite. Congratulations to **Ken Franklin** and **Frank Rogers**.

The night's big winner was **Don Chiasson** who won the raffle copy of Microsoft Office Ultimate 2007. Now Don can compare it to all that open source and Linux software he keeps showing us at the OPCUG!

2008 CALENDAR

Meetings	Date	Time and Venue
OPCUG General Meeting	Wednesday, November 12 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, November 12 th	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting.
Linux SIG	Wednesday, November 12 th	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting.
PIG SIG (Wing SIG West)	Wednesday, November 12 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, November 12 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. Names are listed on the [back page](#) of this newsletter and on the web site.

Nominations can be submitted to Bob Herres, 2009 Election Chair, in person at the November and December club meetings or by sending an email to nominations2009@opcug.ca.

Nominations must be received by midnight, December 31, 2008.

Help the OPCUG continue in its role of Users Helping Users!

Bob Herres
2009 Election Chair

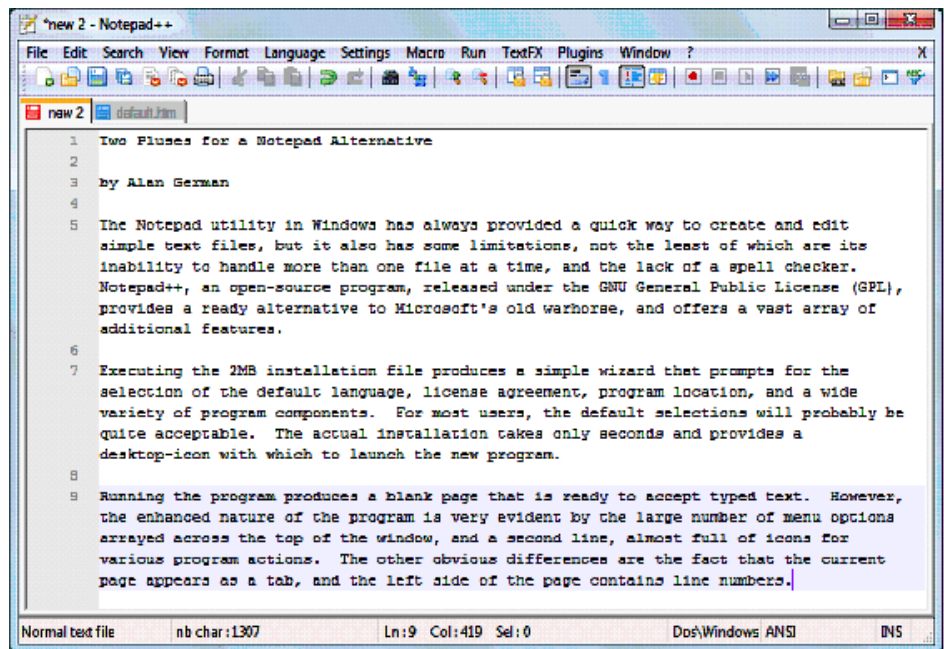
PRODUCT REVIEW

Two Pluses for a Notepad Alternative by Alan German

The Notepad utility in Windows has always provided a quick way to create and edit simple text files, but it also has some limitations, not the least of which are its inability to handle more than one file at a time, and the lack of a spell checker. Notepad++, an open-source program, released under the GNU General Public License (GPL), provides a ready alternative to Microsoft's old warhorse, and offers a vast array of additional features.

Executing the 2MB installation file produces a simple wizard that prompts for the selection of the default language, license agreement, program location, and a wide variety of program components. For most users, the default selections will probably be quite acceptable. The actual installation takes only seconds, and provides a desktop-icon with which to launch the new program.

Running the program produces a blank page that is ready to accept typed text. However, the enhanced nature of the program is very evident by the large number of menu options arrayed across the top of the window and a second line, almost full of icons, for various program actions. The other obvious differences are the fact that the current page appears as a tab, and the left side of the page contains line numbers.



Some of the menu options, such as File, Edit and View, are standard items in Windows' programs, but others, such as TextFX and Plugins, are specific to Notepad++. Similarly, the well-known icons for actions such as New File, Open and Save, are accompanied by a variety of unfamiliar items. Hovering the mouse over any individual icon pops up an explanatory text box, so icons such as Synchronize Vertical Scrolling, and Light Explorer, can be readily identified. But, even so, the precise purpose of such icons is not necessarily apparent.

And, here is one minor drawback of Notepad++. While many of the program's operations are quite intuitive, the information relating to unfamiliar features is only avail-

(Continued on page 4)

NotePad++ (Continued from page 3)

able over the Internet, through a series of links provided in the Help menu. Furthermore, the help files on the web, while containing some very useful information, are not particularly well structured. One has to look through a number of sections of material to locate a specific item of interest, rather than having a well-defined and orderly series of pages aligned specifically to each of the program's menu items.

Nevertheless, the basic program operations are very intuitive. Start typing on the blank page and text accumulates, just as if you were using Notepad, wrapping around onto the next line automatically. In this simple text entry mode, the "line numbers" actually refer to individual paragraphs rather than the lines of text themselves. The line numbers come into their own when using Notepad++ as a program editor. The Language menu has options for about four dozen programming languages including C++, Fortran and Visual Basic. Also included are web tools such as HTML, Javascript and PHP. Notepad++ understands the syntax of these languages and assists the programmer by, for example, providing numbers for the individual lines of code, handy for finding and fixing compilation errors, and by highlighting specific code structures (e.g. HTML tags) in different colours.

As noted previously, there are many menu items and, in turn, each menu item has a large number of options. Given that Notepad++ is a multi-file text editor, such features as File – Save All (open files), Close All, and Close All But Active Document are very useful. The Edit menu includes an extensive series of find and replace commands, and some unusual options such as Trim Trailing Spaces. Similarly the View menu has an option to Show End of Line that results in CR LF being displayed at the end of each paragraph of text.

Some of the more obscure items that you may not find in other editors are in the Run menu. Launch in Firefox, or Launch in IE, displays an HTML file in

a web browser; and Google Search launches the well-known search engine to seek hits based on a word or phrase highlighted in the text. Other useful commands include TextFX Tools – Clean Email > Quoting which can be used to strip the quotation characters out of E-mail messages, and PlugIns – Light Explorer that provides a disk directory tree in a column to the left of the text page.

It is also possible to display two open files in side-by-side windows, but, the process for doing this is not intuitive. The help system indicates that you need to right click on one of the file tabs and select Go to another View. You can then use Plugins – Compare to visually highlight any differences between the two files in their respective display windows. Here is where clicking on the icon to Synchronize Vertical Scrolling becomes useful. Scrolling down one file's contents now causes the contents of the file in the second window to scroll in unison, so that similarities, and differences, in the files become very apparent.

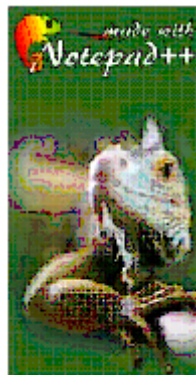
On a basic level, Notepad++ functions just as simply as its Windows' cousin, but it has many more available features. All you have to do is dig around the menu system to identify the different options and, occasionally, consult the web-based help system to figure out how specific aspects of the program work. But, if you find any deficiency in the Windows' original, it is quite likely that Notepad++ will provide the tool(s) that you need. And, it costs nothing to find out.

Bottom Line

Notepad++
Version 5.0.3
(Open source)

Don Ho

<http://notepad-plus.sourceforge.net>

**E-mailing Photos**

by Don Chiasson

Recently I received an e-mail from a friend with an attached photo, a good one of a grizzly bear he saw walking in the woods. The picture was about 2.65MB, and he sent the JPG as the camera took it. There were two issues: first, the picture would have taken over six minutes to send over a 56kb dial line (yes, I have friends who still use dial-in); and second many mail programs such as Outlook Express do not attempt to scale photos resulting in images too big for the screen. And that is for one photo. Another friend sent a record of his vacation with 12MB of photos.

A better option for these cases is to reduce the photos. In the case of the bear, reducing it to a 67.2KB JPG - a factor of about 40:1 - resulted in something quicker to send and easier to view. This does result in a decrease in quality, but it is still adequate for viewing on a monitor. If you want the good photo, ask for the original. I am sure the photographer would be flattered by the request.

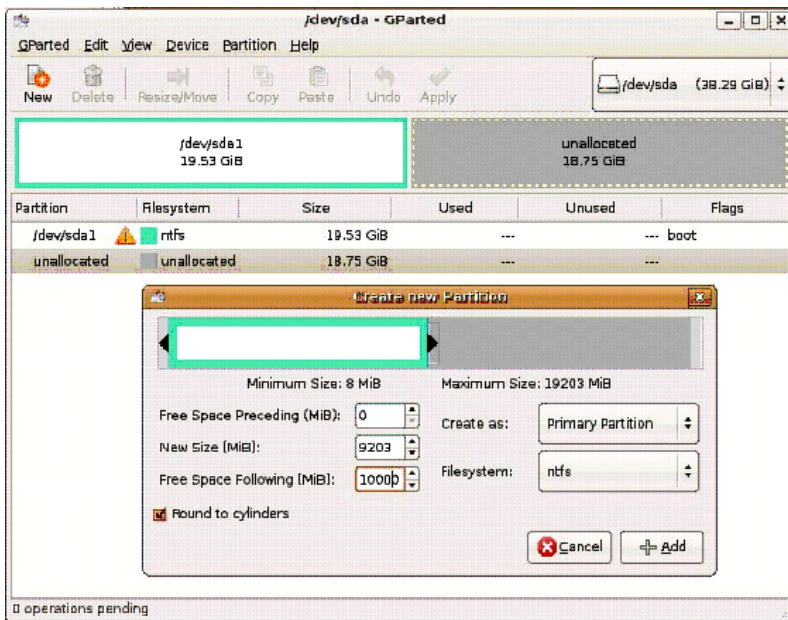
Most photo programs, e.g. Adobe PhotoShop, Corel Paint Shop Pro (I won a copy at the PC club!), and others have editing capabilities including the ability to reduce photos. This computer came with a free program HP Image Zone Plus. I also bought a program called Nero that I use for video editing, that also has photo editing.

One of my computers runs Windows XP, and if you right click on a JPG (photo), one of the options is "Resize Pictures" with several different sizing possibilities. For e-mails, the small (640x480) works. It does not change the original but makes a copy labeled small. I cannot remember if this came with the original XP or if it is part of the Powertoyo add-ons available free

(Continued on next page)

GParted *(Continued from page 1)*

Selecting the New command for currently unallocated disk space brings up a sub-menu where the desired size of a new partition can be selected. This may be done by sliding the end points of a display bar indicating the full amount of space. Alternatively, the size and location of the partition may be selected by specifying the free space preceding the new partition, the size of the new partition itself, and the amount of free space following the new partition. These three variables (and the slide bars) are linked so that changing one parameter automatically adjusts the other dependent variables. A check box is available to, optionally, round out the disk space used to a number of complete cylinders. A drop-down menu allows for the selection of the new partition as either Primary, Logical or Extended. Similarly, the file system to be used may be selected from a menu of options including FAT16, FAT32, or NTFS (for Windows) or ext3 (for Linux).



It should be noted that even after making all of the desired selections, and pressing the Add button, no changes are actually made to the hard drive. Rather the command is stored in a queue of such commands for processing once you confirm the actions by pressing the Apply button.

A sequence of pending operations may be further modified by using the Undo button to cancel the most recent operation, or by selecting Edit – Clear All Operations to allow you to start afresh.

A final check on your intentions is made when the Apply button is selected. A warning message - “Are you sure you wish to apply the pending operations?” - requires a second Apply button to be pressed before the changes to the disk structure are made. Alternatively, you may cancel the scheduled operations at this point.

Now, playing around with disk partitions, especially those used for booting operating systems, is not for the faint of heart. It's all too easy for the system to refuse to boot at all after the disk structure has been modified. One web source suggests that this will be the case for Windows Vista (see: <http://www.howtogeek.com/howto/windows-vista/using-gparted-to-resize-your-windows-vista-partition/>) so make sure you have

your bootable installation DVD handy so that you can “Repair and restart” your machine. Even Windows XP with NTFS is reported to want to reboot and check the file system for consistency. But, none of these potential problems gives you any cause for concern do they? After all, you backed up your operating system and data partitions before you started – didn't you?

Actually, I can report that no major disasters should occur. I tried re-sizing various partitions on a machine, set to dual-boot into either Vista or Linux. Changing the size of an NTFS data partition, and of both the Linux boot and swap partitions had no effect on booting Linux. Similarly, Vista didn't mind me modifying the Linux partitions. But, after changing the size of either the data partition or the Vista boot partition, rebooting the machine into Windows was interrupted by a file system check, with corrections being applied automatically.

So, it would seem that the worst that will happen is that the system may run chkdsk after using GParted, and that seems a small price to pay for such a useful little utility.

Bottom Line

GParted (Open source)
<http://gparted.sourceforge.net/>



E-mailing Photos *(Continued from page 4)*

from Microsoft,

<http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/downloads/powertoys/default.mspx>

I find this Microsoft capability works well for me, and it does not require starting another program.

A Google search turned up,

<http://www.rideau-info.com/photos/changesize.html>

that talks about a number of issues including cropping, enlarging, and size changing with a number of tools. The other sections of this site on digital photos are also worth reading, including printing, DPI, label and so on.

The Internet is a wonderful way to share photos with family and friends. A few simple tricks will improve the process. You can verify the improvements by e-mailing yourself a few photos, both originals and reduced. I think you will be pleased at the results.



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 jocelyn.doire@opcug.ca
 (e-mail distribution)

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

© OPCUG 2008.

Reprint permission is granted* to non-profit organizations, provided credit is given to the author and *The Ottawa PC News*. OPCUG requests a copy of the newsletter in which reprints appear.

*Permission is granted only for articles written by OPCUG members, and which are not copyrighted by the author.

OPCUG VACUUM FLASKS

Perfect for a cold winter, this handsome and durable stainless vacuum flask can help keep your hot drinks hot. Not only that, the stylish OPCUG logo and web address proudly proclaims to all who see you toting it around that you are a member of our user group!

For only \$15 – yes, for that price you even get the handy carrying case with strap! – you too can own one. And we still have combination clock/calculators available for \$20.

See Mark at the membership table.

