

OTTAWA

Happy New Year!

PC NEWS

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PRODUCT REVIEW

Recording Directly from a Sound Card *by Alan German*

Some years ago, I described a method for copying tracks from vinyl records (remember those?) to a CD (remember those too?) using a cable to connect a stereo system to a computer's sound card. Well, time and technology have marched along and now music is readily available through the Internet and we can save individual tracks to audio files. At least, we can if we can access the input from our computer's sound card, and we have some suitable software.

One would think that having paid good money for a sound card, either as a plug-in device or as a module built into the computer motherboard, we would readily be able to use the device to its full potential. However, it turns out that Microsoft, in some versions of Windows (notably my version of Vista!), has disabled access to the sound card's line-in through the use of a restrictive driver. Nor, in my case, is it obvious how to switch the driver for a more permissive version.

It appears, from various postings on the web, that this issue results from concerns over potential copyright infringements should certain music be downloaded and stored. But what about individuals who wish to record non-copyrighted material (some of which is available on the web), or Skype sessions with their grandchildren in Australia? Clearly, restricting access to certain features of the sound card was a poorly thought-out choice.

However, the good news is that, as with all technological problems, there are work-arounds. One solution is to dual-boot Linux since, as you might imagine, this free (as in free-speech) operating system has no qualms about allowing full use of the capabilities of the sound card. An alternative approach, which I was also able to adopt, is to use a newer computer, running Windows 7, with a Realtek sound card, and a driver that allowed setting the "Stereo Mix" feature on the sound card as the default recording device.

The second piece in the sound recording puzzle is the recording software. Audacity is an open-source software package that is available in versions for both Windows and Linux. The program is very powerful, both as a recorder and as a sound file editor, but can be quite simple to use.

But, first, we need to check that we can use the computer's sound card. Navigate to Control Panel – Hardware & Sound – Sound – Manage audio devices – Recording. If the sound gods are smiling on you, something like "Stereo Mix" (or "Line In") will be displayed with a green check mark designating this as the "Default Device". If you don't see a suitable input, try right-clicking in the window and check "Show Disabled Devices" and "Show Disconnected Devices". If your sound input is either disabled or disconnected you should enable/connect it. If there is no sound card input shown, then you may be subject to the dubious whims of the Evil Empire as noted above – but, Linux awaits!

Let's assume that your computer's operating system is working as it should and you have the sound card configured as a default recording device. Now, it's just a matter of running Audacity and setting up the sound card as the software's recording device of choice.

From the program's menu, navigate to Edit – Preferences – Devices. Use the drop-down menu for the Recording Device field and select your sound card's input. In my case this was listed as "Stereo Mix (Realtek High Definit". Finally, in the Channels field, select "2 (Stereo)". There are lots of other settings in the various tabs of the Preferences menu; however, it is quite likely that the default values will be appropriate. So we can hit the "OK" button and move on to make an actual recording.

Firstly, we need some music to record and, as indicated above, we can find material that is free of copyright on the Internet. For example, how about a flugelhorn rendition of "I dreamed a dream"

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Next Meeting: **WEDNESDAY, January 14th, 2015**

January Raffle

For the January raffle, we have a really special prize – a 7” Android tablet computer!

The **UbiSlate 7Ci Android tablet** runs Android 4.2.2 (Jelly Bean) and weighs only 320 grams. It boasts a 7" TFT touchscreen, a 1.0 Ghz Cortex A8 processor with HD video co-processor, 512MB memory and 4GB internal storage (expandable with a micro-SD card to 32GB). Equipped with WLAN WiFi 802.11b/g/n connectivity, miniUSB, built-in microphone, headphone jack, built-in speaker and a front-facing camera. The UbiSlate 7Ci will meet the average user's needs in mobile connectivity.

For details see <http://ubislate.ca/product.php?prodid=1>

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. Don't miss out on your chance to win this terrific raffle prize!

OPCUG Photo Contest

Last September we announced that we would have a photo contest to replace the old graphic from the museum of science and technology that is used on our home page with a photograph or an image created by one of our members, but unfortunately the museum has closed its door for repairs, so for now we will postpone the contest and try again later.

Coming Up...

➤ **Wednesday, January 14th, 2015**

Speaker: *TBA*

Topic: *TBA*

Please check the OPCUG website at <http://opcug.ca> for updates.

May 13th, 2015

Speaker: Jeff Dubois (OPCUG) and Fred Ennis

Topic: VoIP (Voice over IP)

June 10, 2015

Annual Pizza Night and Speaker (*TBA*)

December Prize Winner

Our December raffle prize, a Microsoft Wireless 800 Desktop, was won by **Gail Eagen**.

2015 CALENDAR

Meetings	Date	Time and Venue
OPCUG General Meeting	Wednesday, January 14 th	7:30 p.m. Auditorium of the Canada Museum of Science and Technology , 1867 St. Laurent Blvd. http://www.sciencetech.technomuses.ca/english/index.cfm
Beginners' SIG	Wednesday, January 14 th	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting.
Linux / Open Source SIG	Wednesday, January 14 th	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting.
Beer BOF (Wing SIG East)	Wednesday, January 14 th	10:00 p.m. (after all other SIGs) at Liam Maguire's, St. Laurent Blvd. at Innes Rd.

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

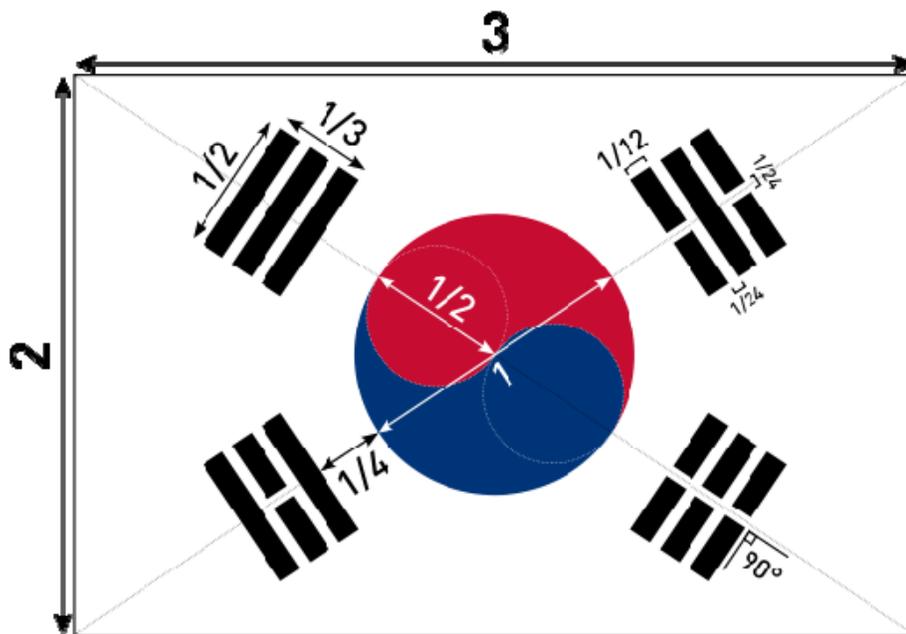
ARTICLE

Monitor Calibration

by Jocelyn Doire

As I was working on the OPCUG's SWAG's web page, I became suspicious that the colours on my monitor were not quite right, because some of the blue on the t-shirts didn't quite make sense, they were so black, but at the same time I had seen thousand of pictures that were just fine, so I was not sure. Then I came across the description of the South Korean flag, which has the middle circle half red and half blue, but what I was seeing was red and black, so I knew my monitor needed some calibration.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flag_of_South_Korea



I read about standardised charts and electronics instruments, but I had none of those, but I little search on on the internet revealed a black and white chart with various tones of grey. Now you may wonder how a black and white chart can help to calibrate the colours of my monitors, well it can actually help quite a bit as I found out.

If your monitor is properly calibrated, the top part of the chart will show 26 shades of grey, from pure black, labelled "A", to pure white, labelled "Z". The left side shows two graphics, one graphic made of 3 concentric circles labelled A, B, and C, where A is pure black followed by the next two shades of dark greys, and the second graphic made many small dark grey rectangles surrounded by a black rectangle, labelled A and B. The right side has the same graphics but made of shades of white. Finally the middle part has the instructions.

To calibrate your monitor, open the chart at the following address, and with the buttons on your monitor, adjust the "brightness" and the "contrast" until you can see all the 26 shades of greys, evenly distributed.

Once I had done the calibration on my monitor, I checked again the South Korean flag, and sure enough, I could now see the red and blue circle and the black bars around it.

<http://www.photofriday.com/calibrate.php>

PHOTO FRIDAY
MONITOR CALIBRATION TOOL

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

One goal of monitor calibration is to make sure that tones immediately lighter than true black are clearly distinguishable from true black, at the same time that tones immediately darker than true white remain clearly distinguishable from true white.

Above shows a range of grayscale tones, equally spaced from true black through true white.

On either side are shapes rendered with tones at either end of this range.

CALIBRATE YOUR MONITOR
Dim the room lights and position your head perpendicular to the center of your monitor at a normal viewing distance.

Adjust the **brightness** and **contrast** of your monitor until you just start to see the shapes within **both sets** of grouped tones.

REMEMBER
After calibration, true black should still look black, not gray.

HOW EFFECTIVE IS THIS? Try it and see. We've found it works quite well, and you can't beat the price!

Brought to you by PhotoFriday.com - Enjoy!

ARTICLE

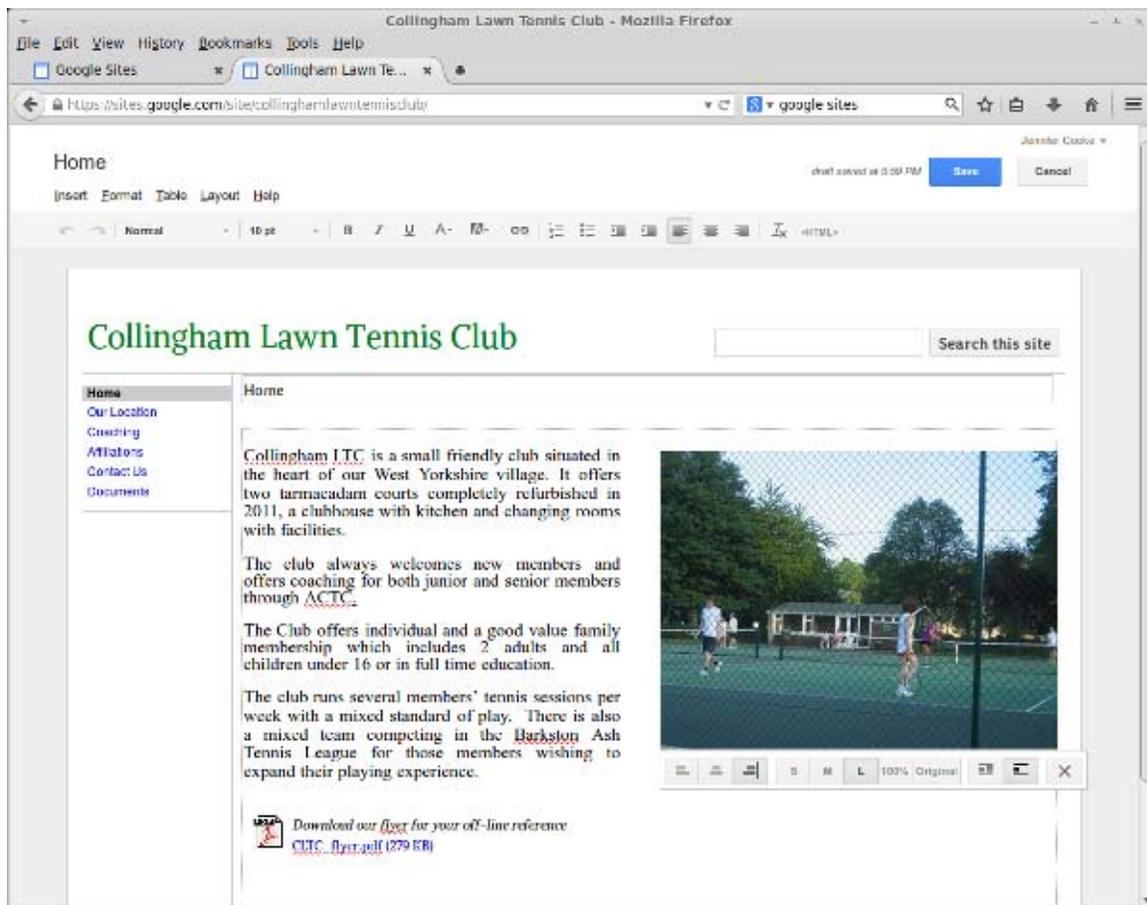
Google Sites by Alan German

Would you like to create a web site, but you don't know anything about HTML coding? A couple of my friends have recently asked me about this possibility and, rather than teach them HTML, my solution has been for them to try Google Sites.

To use this facility, all you need is a G-mail account. Then, go to <https://sites.google.com/>, login with your G-mail username and password, and you are instantly ready to create a web site.

The first order of business is to choose a template. You can select the default blank template (this can be changed later) or browse, by category, through dozens of pre-built templates in the gallery. But, the main issues will be (a) to find a name for your site that isn't already in use (not easy!), and (b) to decipher the text of the captcha that you need to enter in order to complete the registration process (also not always easy!)

The final trick is to locate the “Create” button in order to set up the site and obtain access to the home page. Although you have been filling in data fields, normally, by going down the form, you will actually find the create button at the top of the page – rather than at the bottom!



Once you have overcome all of these hurdles, actually creating content for your web site is simple. Click on the pencil icon in the top-right corner of the page to switch the display to edit mode. Boxes will now appear that define various areas into which material may be entered (see screenshot). Click on a box and type some text. You will find a “Save” button more or less where the pencil icon used to be. Click on this button and your brand new web page will be displayed in all its glory.

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Google Sites *(Continued from page 4)*

When you were in edit mode, you may have noticed a line of drop-down menu items and icons (Normal, 10 pt, B, I, U...) at the top of the page. If you find that these remind you of the commands in your favourite word processor, you would be absolutely right. The editor has a whole range of built-in features for selecting fonts, bold facing, centering, etc. Above the icons, you will also find a menu (Insert, Format, Table...) The options here provide the means to do things like insert images onto the web page, use different headings, add tables, and set multiple columns.

A “Help” menu entry provides the capability to use any search term to identify how to accomplish a given task, but simply using Google and searching for “google sites tutorial” produces a huge list of hits for extremely useful how-to sites and videos.

Adding more pages to your site is simple enough. Just click on the add page icon (next to the pencil), give your new page a name, enter some text, and save it. The location of the page in the site menu system will be dependent on the format of the template that you selected. Typically, the page will appear in an alphabetical list in a sidebar; however, as with most things in Google Sites, the order in which pages are listed can be customized. Check out the help systems to discover how to do so. [Hint, look for: “Custom ordering of pages rather than alphabetical order”.]

Inserting an image onto the page is also pretty easy. In edit-mode, navigate to Insert – Image and a dialogue box will ask you to specify an image file to be uploaded. It is usually better to size the image appropriately before you upload it to Google; however, left-clicking on an image in edit mode will provide some options to change the display size, in addition to indicating various options for alignment and text wrapping.

Adding links to external web sites is also readily accommodated. Simply highlight the text to which the link is to be added, click on the link icon, select “Web Address” and enter the URL of the page you want to link to in the box marked “Link to this URL”.

While you don't really need to know anything about HTML coding to use Google Sites, there is a facility to edit the code underlying any given page. Clicking on the <HTML> icon in edit mode opens a window in which the HTML tags are displayed and can readily be changed. This can prove useful for some of the pre-defined page elements. For example, by default, inserting a table includes a border="1" attribute. Manually editing the HTML code to change the border width from 1 to 0 eliminates the lines around the cells in the table for a cleaner looking page display.

One of the items that I find odd in Google Sites is that, by default, users browsing the web site are allowed to post comments, and even add attached files! Personally, I don't want people to be able to do either. Fortunately, this behaviour is easy to change by clicking on the “More Actions” icon (the “gear wheel”), selecting “Page settings”, and unchecking both “Allow attachments” and “Allow comments”.

The more-actions menu also has another very useful entry, namely “Manage site”. This provides access to some rarely required items such as changing the name of the site, or even deleting the site entirely. However, this is also where you can change the site's theme, or modify things like the font, colour and/or size of titles, headers, and general text using the “Themes, Colors, and Fonts” sub-menu.

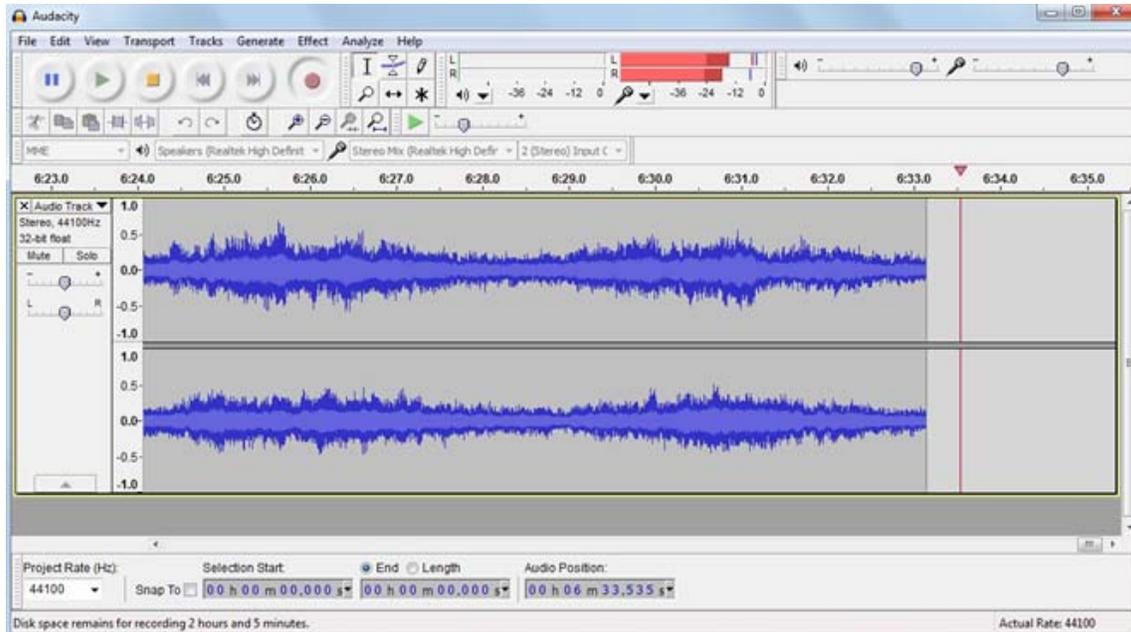
While you don't need to know anything about HTML coding, Google Sites still has a fairly steep learning curve if you are to make good use of its power and flexibility. Fortunately, simple web pages are easily produced and, for more complex requirements, there is a huge volume of information available on the web, all of it searchable through Google!

So, give Google Sites a try and create your very own web presence.

Bottom Line:

Google Sites
<https://sites.google.com/>

Recording... (Continued from page 1)



from Les Miserables? We're in luck. "TheLellefix" has voluntarily posted such a rendition on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jDUW07nHpVY>). The guy is actually playing the flugelhorn and, since on other tracks he is also seen playing the piano, it seems likely that he is playing the accompaniment here too. Thus, this truly is a web-based recording that is free of any copyright (take that Microsoft!)

Finding the material was the tough part. Making the recording is pretty simple. In Audacity, press the large round button with the red circle (Record). In the browser, click on YouTube's play icon.

The red level indicators at the top of Audacity's window should be moving left and right in accordance with the sound intensity, and the blue stereo traces at the bottom of the window should be scrolling to the right as the track continues. If the sound levels aren't high enough, move the slider with the microphone icon to the right. If you need an even higher level, turn up the volume on the YouTube playback as the recording level is dependent on the level of the output from the source.

When the track has finished playing, press the third button from the left, the one with a brown square (Stop). The traces will stop scrolling and Audacity has recorded your chosen track.

To save the recording to disk, you could choose File – Save Project. This saves the recording in a series of files that can be subsequently opened in Audacity in order to edit the track. However, if you wish to simply have a version that you can play, select File – Export. Browse to a folder on your hard drive, give your audio file a name, and select a file format (such as MP3, Ogg or WAV). The next window allows you to enter metadata for the file including such items as artist's name, track and album titles. The simplest thing is to leave all the data elements blank and press "OK" to store the recording as an audio file (e.g. d:\music\dream.mp3)

Audacity has way more features than can be described in detail here. Suffice it to say that a recording can be made with multiple components, e.g. a symphony with four movements. The start of each track can be marked, labeled, and individual tracks can then be stored. Simply click on the trace to add a marked location. Then, select Tracks – Add Label at Selection. Finally, choose File – Export Multiple. Another handy feature is the ability to de-

lete long spaces between tracks. Left click at the start of the region of silence, drag the mouse to the right, and release the mouse button. The selected region is now highlighted. Deleting this selection is simply a matter of clicking on the scissors icon (Cut).

A very detailed manual is available on line and can be readily accessed through the Help – Manual menu item. There is quick help for those just getting started, details (Foundations/Editing) of how to use the program's many features, a number of tutorials, and information on advanced topics.

Audacity has a multitude of features and options, and has a fairly steep learning curve. But, there is a tremendous amount of detailed information available on using the program and, because it's free – as in open-source – it won't cost you a cent to give it a try!

Bottom Line:

Audacity (Open-Source)
 Dominic Mazzoni and Roger Dannenberg
 Version 2.0.5
<http://audacity.sourceforge.net>

OPCUG Free Software Guide—Part 53 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.

Path of Exile

This on-line action-packed role paying game is set in the fantasy world of Wraeclast. This is a dark, brutal continent, scarred by mysterious catastrophes of the past and inhabited by creatures of nightmare. The very environment challenges exiles who dare explore it. Are you brave enough to play? If so, just create an account.

Web Site: <https://www.pathofexile.com/>



SpaceSniffer

Use this utility, and its “Treemap visualization layout”, to see where large folders and files are located on your hard disk. The bigger the elements in the view, the bigger are folders and files.

Current Release: Version 1.1.4.0

Web Site: <http://preview.tinyurl.com/34lclguo>

DropIt

Drop a group of different files and folders onto the floating program image and it automatically sorts them into specific destination folders or takes some other pre-defined action. You define how to filter your files (by name, directory, size, date, properties, content, regular expressions) and can associate file types with one of twenty available actions.

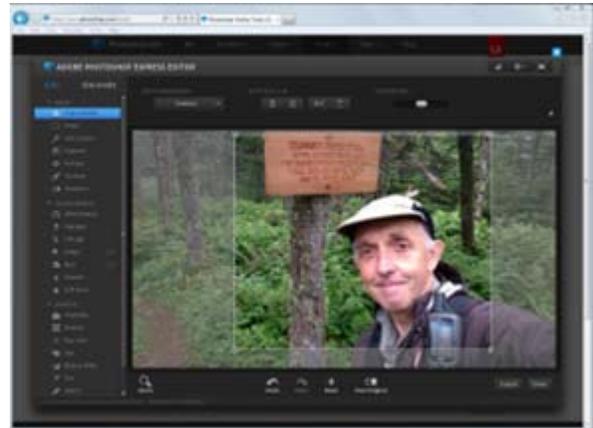
Current Release: Version 8.0

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

Adobe Photoshop Express Editor

Make your snapshots look amazing with this on-line editor. There are easy options for quick fixes (e.g. cropping and straightening), lighting and colour adjustments, plus many creative enhancements using artistic image modes, borders and frames. Take your digital images, add Photoshop Express, and have endless fun.

Web Site: <http://www.photoshop.com/tools>



JetBoost

Download JetBoost and get your PC running super-fast! The program will shut down all unnecessary processes and services with a single click. It will remove distractions from irrelevant applications, allowing you to get the maximum benefit from your computer.

Current Release: Version 2.0.0

Web Site: <http://www.bluespring.com/jetboost.html>

Solid State Doctor

Do you have a solid state drive (SSD)? This tool provides performance enhancement, optimization, disk cloning capability, data security and firmware management for SSD's. The software is designed to enable maximum performance, and optimize the lifespan of your drive.

Current Release: Version 3.1

Web Site: <http://www.lc-tech.com/pc/solid-state-doctor/>



PrimoPDF

Working as a virtual printer, PrimoPDF lets you produce a PDF file any time you “print” a document from an application. Various settings will let you protect the contents of the PDF file, including the ability to create secure PDF's using strong encryption.

Current Release: Version 5.1.0.2

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

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 Science and Technology Museum, 1867 St. Laurent Blvd, Ottawa. Meetings are 7:30–9:00 p.m. and Special Interest Groups (SIGs) go until 10 p.m.

Parking is available at the museum for a flat fee of \$3 after 5pm. Limited street parking is available for free. Details at <http://opcug.ca/public/regmtg.htm>

OPCUG Membership Fees: \$25 per year
Mailing Address: 3 Thatcher St., Nepean, Ontario, K2G 1S6
Web address: <http://opcug.ca>
Bulletin board—The PUB (BBS) <http://opcug.ca/default.htm>
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President and System Administrator		
Chris Taylor	chris.taylor@opcug.ca	613-727-5453
Meeting Coordinator		
(Mr.) Jocelyn Doire	jocelyn.doire@opcug.ca	
Treasurer		
Alan German	alan.german@opcug.ca	
Secretary		
Gail Eagen	gail.eagen@opcug.ca	
Membership Chairman		
Mark Cayer	mark.cayer@opcug.ca	613-823-0354
Newsletter		
Brigitte Lord (editor/layout)	brigitte lord@opcug.ca	
(Mr.) Jocelyn Doire (e-mail distribution)	jocelyn.doire@opcug.ca	
Public Relations		
Jeff Dubois	PR@opcug.ca	613-366-7936
Facilities		
Bob Walker		613-489-2084
Webmaster		
Brigitte Lord	opcug-webmaster2@opcug.ca	
Privacy Director		
Wayne Houston	privacy2@opcug.ca	
Special Events Coordinator		
Bob Gowan	bob.gowan@opcug.ca	
Beginners' SIG		
Chris Taylor	chris.taylor@opcug.ca	613-727-5453
Linux / Open-Source SIG (vacant)		

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subscribe newslettertxt
(to get the plain text version).

or:

subscribe newsletterpdf
(to get the Adobe Acrobat PDF version).

And if you decide you do not need the printed version mailed to you anymore, simply let Mark Cayer (membership chairman) know. He can be reached at general meetings, as well as by e-mail at Mark.Cayer@opcug.ca. You might want to wait until you have successfully received at least one issue electronically before opting out from the printed version.

To subscribe to the Announcements List, e-mail listserv@opcug.ca. Leave the subject blank and in the body of the message, type:

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Within a couple of minutes you will receive a confirmation message from the listserver.

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