



# OTTAWA

# PC NEWS

Volume 41, Number 2

February 2024

## 2023 PRESIDENT'S REPORT

by Chris Taylor

The 42<sup>nd</sup> year of operations was a relatively calm and consistent year for the OPCUG.

We continued to use Zoom for general meetings and Q&A—except for the June pizza party, of course.

Membership continues to climb. We finished the year with 170 members, up from 159 members at the end of 2022: a healthy 7% increase. Given the good shape of the Group's finances, the board decided to extend the membership expiry date for all members in good standing by an additional year. This is the 4<sup>th</sup> year we have done this.

We had a couple of external speakers at monthly meetings: Maria & Paul Middleveen from The Trailing Edge with *Tales from the workbench* and Howard Simkover with *Celestial Shadows - Eclipses of the Sun and Moon*.

Other meetings saw internal speakers: Alan German and myself (*How to Buy a PC*), Serge-Érik Thériault (*How to get paid software for free daily... totally legally!* and *Directory Opus: the Ultimate Windows Explorer Replacement*), Stéphane Richard (*Computers – It is all about the bits!*), Tom Trottier (*PortableApps*), Stewart Bruce (*Google Wallet*), Alan German (*Computer Programming Using Artificial Intelligence*), myself (*Microsoft Quick Assist*), Bob Walker (*Update on self-driving cars*), and Bob Herres (*Efficient YouTube Viewing: Tips & Shortcuts*).

I would like to extend my thanks, on behalf of all members, to all presenters. I hope everyone found value in the presentations. Material from past meetings is archived at <https://opcug.ca/past-presentations/>.

Attendance at monthly meetings remained strong, with an average of 47. Weekly Q&A sessions had an average attendance of 38.

The June pizza party was popular with 31 in attendance. The new venue—Britannia Park—was great and we will be returning there in 2024.

In 2023 Stewart Bruce joined the other writers contributing to the newsletter: Alan German, Lynda Buske, Bob Walker, and Gail Eagen. Thanks to all, especially our intrepid editor, Brigitte. All the newsletters are available at <https://opcug.ca/newsletters/>. Don't forget, you can sign up to get them delivered to you automatically. See <https://opcug.ca/google-groups-how-to/>.

The board was one short of its full complement throughout 2023. If you can help in the running of *your* users' group, please let any current board member know.

I would like to thank all members of the Board of Directors, Mark Cayer (membership), Richard Aylesworth (financial review), Bob Herres (election chair), all of whom keep the OPCUG running. And finally, thanks to all members and guests, without whom our meetings would have been really boring!



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Next Meeting: **WEDNESDAY, February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024**

# Next Meeting

**Wednesday, February 14**

[Using ChatGPT to program in Python](#)

**Speaker:** Tom Trottier (OPCUG)

Python is an easy-to-learn (so they say) interpretive “scripting” language to manipulate all kinds of data. Follow Tom as he tries to cajole ChatGPT into creating a python program to combine chat and caption transcripts together by time. This will be Tom’s first Python program.

Tom Trottier first started programming with the APL language in 1971 and switched from Photo Arts to Computer Science. He’s worked for a variety of private and government organisations as employee and consultant, ending up as an Information Architect. Aside from Excel and batch files, this is his first dip into programming in years.

This meeting will be via Zoom video conference.

Join us at <https://tinyurl.com/opcug-meeting>. The Zoom link will be live at 7:15 pm. The meeting will begin at 7:30 pm.

The above link includes the meeting ID and password. However, if you are prompted for the information, use:

Meeting ID: **924 9556 0898**

Password: **opcug**



All our scheduled events are posted on our [Home page](#) and also by category: [Regular Monthly Meetings](#), [Weekly Q&A Sessions](#), and [OPL Presentations](#). All events are via video conference until further notice.

# Coming Up...

**March 13**

[Building a Website – No Coding Required!](#)

**Speaker:** Alan German (OPCUG)

In this presentation we will see how to create a website from scratch and make our content available on the Internet, no HTML coding required

**April 10**

*TBA*

**May 8**

[Free Software: What Can It Do For You?](#)

**Speaker:** Adam Hunt (writer, Full Circle Magazine)

This presentation will cover some interesting free software applications you could be using today, plus a quick look at Linux on the desktop in 2024.

## OPL Presentations:

Jan 22 2024

[PROTECTING YOUR PC \(OTTAWA PUBLIC LIBRARY\)](#)

Carlingwood Branch

Jan 27 2024

[HOW TO BUY A PC \(OTTAWA PUBLIC LIBRARY\)](#)

Centennial Branch

Jan 29 2024

[KEEPING PASSWORDS SAFE \(OTTAWA PUBLIC LIBRARY\)](#) Rosemount Branch

Visit <https://opcug.ca/mec-category/opl-presentations/> for the complete lineup.

## 2024 CALENDAR

Meetings	Date	Time and Venue
Regular Monthly Meeting	Wednesday, February 14 <sup>th</sup>	7:30 pm via Zoom video conference: <a href="https://tinyurl.com/opcug-meeting">https://tinyurl.com/opcug-meeting</a> To see upcoming events, visit <a href="https://opcug.ca/#upcoming">https://opcug.ca/#upcoming</a>
Next Q&A Session	<a href="#">Wednesday, January 24<sup>th</sup></a>	Until further notice, Q&A sessions are no longer held after regular monthly meetings. Join us on all other Wednesdays for <a href="#">weekly Q&amp;A</a> .
Next OPL Presentation	Monday, January 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Visit <a href="https://opcug.ca/mec-category/opl-presentations/">https://opcug.ca/mec-category/opl-presentations/</a> for the full list of presentations. There are no presentations in July and August.

# TREASURER'S REPORT - 2023

by Alan German

As indicated in the balance sheet shown below, while the club had a deficit of \$1,052.67 in fiscal year 2023, we retained total capital assets of \$14,892.82, placing us in a sound financial situation going forward.

ASSETS			
Current Assets			
1000	Cash	4,900.86	
1100	Investment Account	9,927.24	
1200	Membership Float	40.00	
1210	Petty Cash Float	5.60	
1300	PayPal Account	19.12	
Total Assets		14,892.82	
LIABILITIES AND OWNER EQUITY			
Owner Equity			
OPCUG, Capital			
December 31, 2022		15,945.49	
Total revenue		534.74	
Total expense		1,587.41	
Net income		-1,052.67	
OPCUG, Capital			
December 31, 2023		14,892.82	

Revenue			
2100	Bank Interest	274.74	
2200	Membership Income	260.00	
2400	Merchandise Income	0.00	
2500	Workshop Income	0.00	
2900	Miscellaneous Income	0.00	
2910	Donation Income	0.00	
2920	Coffee Income	0.00	
Total revenue		534.74	
3100	Internet Expense	280.23	
3200	Newsletter Expense	0.00	
3300	Office Supplies Expense	42.08	
3400	Bank Charges	23.40	
3500	Barbecue Expense	377.58	
3600	Meeting Expense	857.96	
3700	Workshop Expense	0.00	
3800	Merchandise Expense	0.00	
3900	Miscellaneous Expense	0.00	
3910	Donation Expense	0.00	
3920	Membership Expense	6.16	
3940	Door Prize Expense	0.00	
3950	Coffee Expense	0.00	
Total expenses		1,587.41	
Net income		-1,052.67	

Balance Sheet and Income Statement for 2023

Due to continuing limitations imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, we were unable to hold any in-person meetings during the 2023 fiscal year. This meant that, once again, we had no expenses for the facility rental with the church and, instead, we renewed our Zoom account to facilitate our meetings over video conferences, including both the regular monthly meetings and the weekly Q&A sessions.

The Board of Directors opted to continue the suspension of membership fees for existing members as of March 31, 2023. This also allowed us to repeat the “two-for-one” membership offer for new members joining the club before the March 31st deadline, where their payment of a single year’s fees effectively provided a two-year membership. The special membership offer did result in a number of individuals joining the club, and this is reflected in the membership fees received. Additional income was generated by increased interest rates and the purchase of a number of interest-bearing GIC’s.

Expenses for our in-person, “Pizza-Q” in June were controlled by a requirement for pre-registration as a means of determining attendance numbers, and the selection of a less-expensive, city-owned facility as the venue. Other major expenses were for the purchase of Amazon gift cards for external speakers and non-Board members who gave presentations at our regular monthly meetings, and hosting charges with regard to the club’s website.

The Board of Directors had projected a deficit for the financial year that was inline with the actual amount. The decision to proceed on this basis was judged to be in complete accord with the club’s financial plan that is aimed at reducing the accumulated assets over a number of years in a manner that provides benefits to club members.

# THROUGH THE LENS

*A guide to digital photography for computer enthusiasts. After the click of your camera, you're only half done!*

## High dynamic range (HDR)

by Lynda Buske

There are many situations both indoors and outdoors where there can be a wide range of brightness and darkness. Our human eye copes with this easily and in fact can see about 20 stops of dynamic range. The best digital camera sensors see about 15 stops. So, while our eye may see detail/texture in a dark area, the camera may well interpret it as pure black. Likewise, if our eye sees a bright area with detail/texture, the camera may process it as pure white. This results in a high dynamic range or HDR situation. Most photographers consider it undesirable to have a lot of pure black and pure white areas in a single photo.

To remedy this situation while shooting, the photographer can capture multiple images where some are exposed for dark areas while others are exposed for bright areas. The images can then be combined using specialized software to capture the entire brightness range from the darkest shadows to the brightest highlights. However, it is not usually a feature in free editing packages and requires that you notice an HDR situation while shooting which I rarely do because my eye does such a good job of handling light and dark extremes!

You can use the histogram built into most modern cameras to turn on what is known as "blinkies". It will show areas where the highlights are blown (or burnt), with no detail. You can then lower the exposure and take another shot, with the high-light detail preserved. This is where the phrase "expose to the right" comes from. You expose so the histogram is close to, but not past, the right (bright) side. This is because there is a better chance of rescuing a dark image than a very bright one. As a rule of thumb, if it's a sunny day, I try to have no significant part of my image in the shade. If I'm inside, I try not have people in front of a bright window where the camera may meter on the bright light instead of the human faces.

I have found most cell phones do a much better job of processing a good JPEG in an HDR situation. Many use face detection to expose what it assumes is important to you. But as usual, it decides what it wants to do rather than you. If instead, you have taken the photo with a traditional digital camera, the image could be adjusted in post processing using a photo editing software like Lightroom, Photoshop or the free Photoscape X.

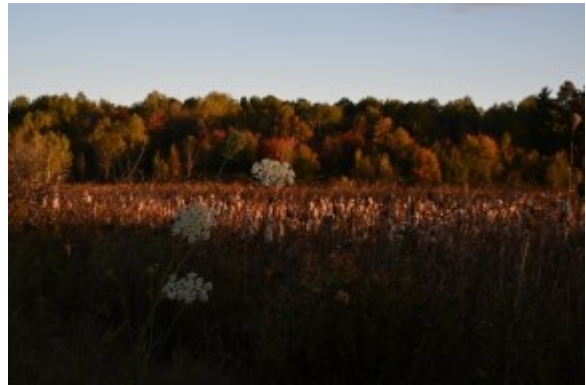
In Photoscape X there is a button on the home screen labelled *HDR* and it does a wonderful job of levelling out the tones (see example). You can then add a bit of contrast from there if you wish under the *Colour* tab.

As well, you can isolate light/dark areas of a photo and then lighten/darken these selected areas accordingly. This will, hopefully, reveal the details that were visible to the naked eye.

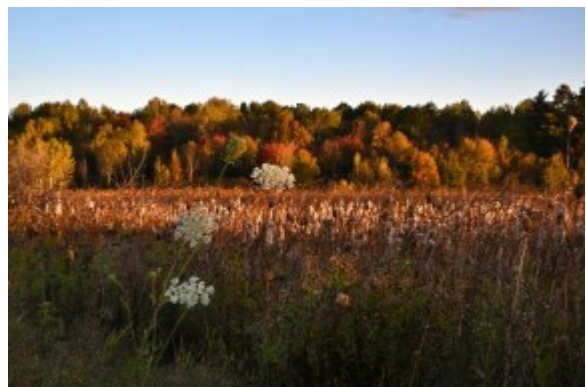
In Photoscape X, use the *Mask* function within the *Colour* tab to paint and then adjust the lighting for just those areas. In some circumstances, you can rescue more detail from dark images taken in RAW rather than JPG format. Personally, I always shoot with both formats just in case I need the RAW for adjustments such as these. If your PC is low on storage, simply leave the RAW images on your camera until you have completed your photo editing. You may only need to copy a few of these much larger files onto your computer.

Depending on the scene and your camera settings at the time, you may not be able to fully recover details in shadows, highlights or both. If an image has areas that are completely under/overexposed, it may not be possible to adjust so that detail is visible.

Before adjustments



After adjustments





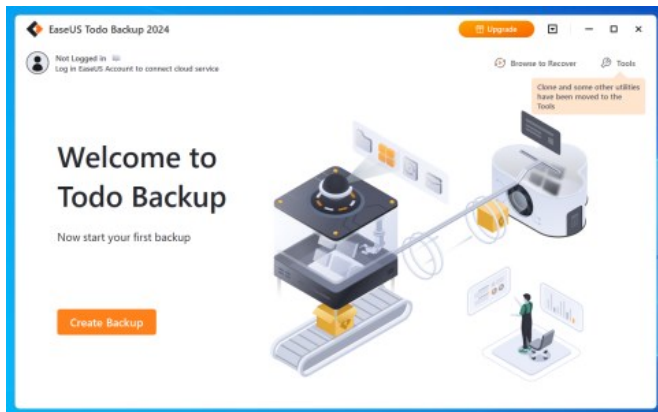
# PRODUCT REVIEW

## Not Another Backup Utility? *by Alan German*

**W**ith the demise of Macrium Reflect Free Edition, I moved on to using Rescuezilla as my preferred disk imaging solution. While this program works well from a bootable USB drive, it has two disadvantages. Firstly, there is no installable version so it is necessary to reboot the computer, using the USB drive, to run a backup. Secondly, the option to browse stored disk images and extract individual files and folders has not yet been implemented for compressed images. Consequently, I have been trying other disk imaging software packages to fill these specific needs. In particular, I wanted a program that would create on-demand incremental backups of my dedicated data partition.

Some years ago, Chris Taylor went through the process of researching Windows-based disk imaging programs (see Finding a Backup Program in the February, 2016 newsletter). His preferred selection, after reviewing a number of similar packages, was EaseUS Todo Backup so I decided to follow the master's lead.

My version of choice was EaseUS Todo Backup Free, the free-release of the software. This has the most limited feature set when compared to its commercial siblings. Nevertheless, it will still backup and restore disks, partitions, files and folders, with disk images being made using a full, differential or incremental backup process. The image files so produced can be stored either locally or in the cloud.



The available features are more than sufficient for my purposes, and I suspect they would be suitable for most users. However, the present review will only consider the differential backup process as this is the specific requirement that led me to look at yet another backup program.

Todo Backup's graphical user interface has a really clean and crisp feel, with a wizard-like process to construct a backup task. The basic process is extremely simple – select the data source that is to be backed up, the target destination for the image file, and start the backup process. Of course, there are a number of options that can be implemented as part of this process, including image encryption, the level of image compression, and scheduling of the backup task. As my needs were simple, I selected Local Drive as the data source, and was then

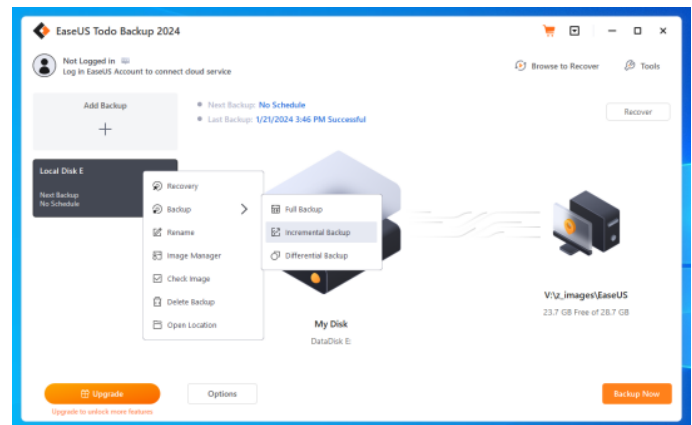
able to specify that I only wanted to backup DataDisk E:, my dedicated data partition. Similarly, my choice for the target destination was a folder (V:\z\_images\EaseUS), on another local drive, a 32 GB micro-USB thumb drive.

I initially struggled to find how to tell Todo backup that I wished to create incremental backups of my data disk; however, I eventually realized that the software was first going to produce a full disk backup and the call for incremental backups would be made when the backup task was run subsequently.

Once the backup process is started, the degree of completion is indicated with a circular progress bar and text showing the amount of data that has been processed, the percentage completion, and the approximate time remaining. A Backup completed! pop-up notification indicates when the backup process is finished.

An unexpected result was that the disk image files were stored in a sub-folder, Local Disk E, of the specified target folder. Furthermore, the disk image files themselves contained this same descriptor. So, the path to the main disk image was found to be: V:\z\_images\EaseUS\Local Disk E\Local Disk E\_20240119\_Full\_v1.pbd. I find this “doubling-up” of file-folder names rather unnecessary, but this appears to be a (non-configurable) “feature” of Todo backup.

Once the backup task has been established, running an incremental backup process manually involves right-clicking on the backup task button, selecting Backup, then Incremental Backup. In general, incremental backups complete much faster than the initial backup process, and the time saving is accompanied by a saving in disk storage space, these being the very nature of the partial backup process.



Recovery of files or folders from a stored disk image can be done using Tools – Mount/Unmount to mount an image file from the backup folder (V:\z\_images\EaseUS\Local Disk E) as a virtual disk. A drop-down menu for History Version allows selection of a specific backup image by date and time. The image is mounted as virtual disk drive Z: and the files contained in the backup can then be accessed using File Explorer.

*(Continued on page 6)*

## ARTICLE

# OPCUG's Great Little Fraud Watch Page

by Brigitte Lord

In light of Cst. Lemay's recent presentation: [Fraud 101: Beware of Scammers!](#), and as the club's webmaster, I thought I should remind everyone of our club's [Fraud Watch page](#). What started as a simple page to hold Lawrence Patterson's [Baddies Update](#) (which he had to discontinue due to time constraints), has grown into a notable online cybersecurity resource. There are now numerous links to websites that will help you test and secure your devices and passwords, and websites that describe all types of scams and how to avoid them. There are also examples of real scams received by our members, and security topics discussed at monthly meetings, Q&A sessions, or written by our members and security experts.

One item that caught my attention is [CIRA Canadian Shield](#). This site provides a free and secure DNS resolver (read this informative [article](#) by PC Magazine) as well as optional (and free) cybersecurity while browsing the web (note that these are **not a replacement** for a firewall or antivirus software on your device).

CIRA provides instructions for configuring many device types (across several platforms) including cell phones, game boxes, routers, and computers.

Another good resource on the Fraud Watch page is the [Gibson Research Corporation \(GRC\)](#). It has been providing free security advice, software, and testing for computers for decades. I have used its [Shields UP!!!](#) service to check for open ports (i.e. open to attack) on all my computers since the 1990s.

There is also a link to [Consumer Reports Security Planner](#) (submitted by Stewart Bruce at a Q&A session) that will give you step-by-step instructions for all your devices to protect you online.

So check it out and share our [Fraud Watch page](#) with friends and family. It's chock full of resources to help everyone stay safe on the Net.

## Three options for your DNS

1. **Private:** Offering DNS resolution only
2. **Protected:** Adds malware, phishing, botnet and scam protection
3. **Family:** Adds pornographic content to the block list

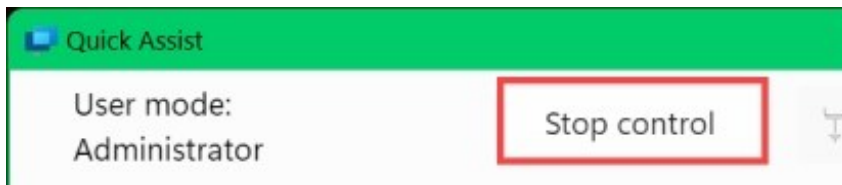
### Quick Tip 60: Quick Assist and mice

by Chris Taylor

**Q**uick Assist is a great Windows utility that allows you to help others by connecting to their computer over the Internet. You can see their screen and control their mouse and keyboard. It's as if you are sitting in front of their computer (<https://opcug.ca/Reviews/QuickAssist.htm>).

I found that periodically, even if I wasn't moving *my* mouse, the mouse on the computer of the person I was helping would jump to a different position on the screen. This can make it very difficult for them if they are trying to show me something, they go to move their mouse to click on something, and their mouse jumps to a different position!

There are two solutions for this that I have found. One is to relinquish control of the remote desktop by clicking the *Stop control* button on the Quick Access toolbar. Your mouse will no longer have any control over the other person's mouse position.



The second way is to click on the taskbar on your computer to take away the focus from Quick Assist. As long as Quick Assist on your computer does not have the focus, the mouse position will not be transmitted to the remote computer.

### Todo Backup (Continued from page 5)

So, Chris is once again proven correct. EaseUS Todo Backup is very well suited to the task of disk image backups. While, in this review, we only considered the use of the incremental backup and recovery process, it seems reasonable to assume that the program's other components will function just as efficiently. So, if you need a backup solution, give EaseUS Todo Backup Free a try. It's a no-cost option that you will find easy to use and, most likely, will have sufficient features to accommodate all your backup needs.

#### Bottom Line

EaseUS Todo Backup Free (Freeware)  
Version 16.0.0  
EaseUS, Chengdu, Sichuan Province, China  
<https://www.easeus.com/backup-software/tb-free.html>

(PDF available at <https://opcug.ca/reviews/>)

# 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.

**To receive the monthly newsletter by email, send an email to:**

[opcug-newsletter+subscribe@googlegroups.com](mailto:opcug-newsletter+subscribe@googlegroups.com) (leave subject and body fields blank)

You do **not** need to create a Gmail or Google Groups account.

To subscribe to other OPCUG Google Groups member services, go to:

<https://opcug.ca/google-groups-how-to/>

## Group Meetings

OPCUG meets on the second Wednesday in the month, except July and August, at the Riverside United Church, 3191 Riverside Drive, Ottawa. Parking is free at the church. OCTranspo bus #90 stops nearby. Details at <https://opcug.ca/venue/>.

(NOTE: Until further notice, all our events are via video conference. Details at <https://opcug.ca/venue/>)

Meetings are 7:30–9:00 p.m. followed by a Q&A Session until 10 p.m.

**OPCUG Membership Fees:** \$20 per year  
**Mailing Address:** 3 Thatcher St., Nepean, Ontario, K2G 1S6  
**Web address:** <https://opcug.ca>  
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## Q&A HAS GONE ON-LINE! WEEKLY!

Because of the pandemic, the OPCUG is holding weekly Q&A sessions in Zoom video-conferences.

Join us every Wednesday (except on regular monthly meeting nights) at 7:30 pm to discuss computer issues. Questions (and answers) on any computer-related issue are welcome. Or, do you have a favourite computer program or topic that you would like to share with the group? Send your questions, answers, or the details of what you would like to share to: [SuggestionBox@opcug.ca](mailto:SuggestionBox@opcug.ca)

Everyone is welcome to attend Q&A sessions and to ask questions about their specific computer-related problems. Join us at: <https://tinyurl.com/opcug-meeting> (if you use the Zoom client, the meeting ID is 924 9556 0898 and the password is **opcug**).

# OPCUG



*Users helping users*  
for over 40 years