CLUB LIFE

OPCUG's History   *by Joc Doire*

This is the history of the Ottawa PC User's Group as best as we could piece it together. A lot is still missing, so if you have more information and/or corrections, please send them to history@opcug.ca.

Apr 1982
Birth of the Club, founded with 20 charter members, among them Harry Gross and Tim Mahoney. Early members also included David Théroux, Stu & Ann Moxley, Claude G. Jarry, and Harry Gross. We were called the Ottawa IBM PC Users Club, then, but after a while, IBM "asked" to take its name back and we became the OPCUG.

?   Microsoft presents DOS 5, and attracts the largest crowd ever.

Mar 1995
OPCUG is incorporated.

Sep 1995
We have 823 members, this is the first year with a membership decline.

?   David Polich creates the OS/2 SIG.

Oct 1996
The club moves from Sir Robert Borden Secondary School to the Museum of Science and Technology.

Feb 1997
After a gradual and serious decline of the membership, the club seriously question its future, and decide to form a "OPCUG Core Strategy Development Committee" to study what should be done to improve the situation and what direction it should take in the future.

Richard Bazinet facilitates a brainstorming session to gauge members' feelings about the current club and what we should do in the future.

Apr 1997
Jocelyn Doire starts to e-mail the newsletter as a free service, to save some money and some trees, and for the convenience of those interested.

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INSIDE

Next meeting: **WEDNESDAY, September 11ᵗʰ, 2002**

Future Meeting Dates

Please note that the Museum of Science and Technology has confirmed our meeting dates for the coming season. We will continue to have our general meetings on the second Wednesday of each month through June 2003 with the normal exception of February, when there is a conflict with Scouts Canada. The February meeting will be on the second Monday, February 10th.

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CLUB NEWS

Coming Up
by Tim Mahoney

The September 11 meeting will tentatively have a presentation on "Modern Software Development" by OPCUG member Bob Walker.

Topic details will be posted to the OPCUG Website soon. Please check often.

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CLUB NEWS

June Prizes
by Mark Cayer

At our June 12 OPCUG Picnic, Herb Kelland won our raffle for a copy of the Alpha 5 database software.

Our "Bring a Guest" membership drive ended with Warren Sleeman, Cornel Bierman, and Roger Wainright taking home the "goodies".

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CALENDAR

Meetings	Date	Time and venue
OPCUG General Meeting	Wednesday, Sept. 11th	7:30 p.m. Auditorium of the National Museum of Science and Technology, 1867 St. Laurent Blvd.
Internet SIG (I-SIG)	Wednesday, Sept. 11th	Come and join our discussions!
Developers SIG	Wednesday, Sept. 11th	Immediately following the main OPCUG presentation, and occasionally at other locations in the region.
Delphi User Group	TBA	8:00 p.m. at Chapters Store in the Pinecrest Mall (at the Queensway)
Ottawa Paradox Users Group	3rd Thursday each month	6:00-8:00 p.m. — Corel Bldg 1600 Carling Ave

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

Oct 1997

David Reeves on the behalf of the "Pub II Committee" posts a report that recommends among other things: the creation of a web site, a mailing list system, use of the PUB as a file and bulletin repository and to have a permanent connection to the internet. A survey indicated that 90% of members have access to the Internet, but the committee recommends maintaining the dial access at the same time.

? Jocelyn Doire starts a committee to evaluate an OS/2 solution to implement a web server and an e-mailing system.

? Devid Reeves proposes using a Windows program called WildCat that would provides BBS, web site, and mailing services all in one package.

Feb 2000

New BOD: Terry Mahoney (Chairperson), James Fridrich (Treasurer), Jocelyn Doire (Secretary), Chris Taylor (System Administrator), Chris Seal (Publicity), Bob Walker (Meeting Co-ordinator), Bert Schopf (Past President), David Reeves (Webmaster), Bob Gowan (Director without portfolio).

Mar 2000

We start to raffle prizes at every meeting, which successfully stabilizes the revenue of the club. We also remove the second phone line.

Jun 2000

John Keys with the help of Brigitte Lord starts to maintain an index of the newsletter's articles on our web site.

Jan 2001

We start to sell mugs, multi-tools and pens with the club's logo.

Feb 2001

End of the OS/2 SIG, they transfer $415.27 to our club.

End of other Ottawa users' group HUGO; they donate $600 for one-year OPCUG memberships for all their former members.

New BOD: Chris Taylor (Chairperson and System Admin.), Bob Gowan (Director without portfolio), Morris Turpin (Public Relations), Tim Mahoney (Meeting Co-ordinator), Jocelyn Doire (Secretary), Brigitte Lord (Web Master), Bob Walker (Facilities Co-ordinator), Vince Pizzamiglio (Treasurer), Henry Sims (Director without portfolio).

Henry Sims creates the Orphan SIG.

Oct 2001

The club changes its web address from ottawa.opcug.com to opcug.ca.

Jan 2002

Pub's software is updated, now offers a newsgroup interface.

Feb 2002

New BOD: Chris Taylor (Chairperson and SysAdmin), Vince Pizzamiglio (Treasurer), Morris Turpin (Public Relations), Brigitte Lord (Web Master), Jocelyn Doire (Secretary), Tim Mahoney (Meeting Co-ordinator), Bob Gowan (Director without portfolio), Bob Walker (Facilities Co-ordinator), Ted May (Director without portfolio)

Mar 2002

Claude G. Jarry reminds us that the 20th anniversary of the club is fast approaching.

Jun 2002

First OPCUG BBQ with free hamburgers, hot dogs and soft drinks.

Aug 2002

The history of the OPCUG club starts to be documented.

Oct 2002

New 5$ incentive offered to any sponsor who brings a new member.

Apr 2003

20th anniversary of the club.

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HTML link:	http://opcug.ca/history.htm
Word Link:	http://opcug.ca/history.doc

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InkSaver *by Chris Taylor*

I was sceptical. But I am also cheap. So when I saw InkSaver, and it promised to "Save money every time you print", I just had to take a look. I use an Epson Stylus Color 640 printer and, while I use third party inks, they are still expensive. As most people come to realize after buying their first ink jet printer – the cost of the printer itself is a very minor portion of the overall cost of printing. Over the lifespan of an ink jet printer, the cost of ink can easily be 10 or 20 times the cost of the printer.

InkSaver v1.0 is a software product from Strydent Software, of Burnaby, B.C. It is designed to battle the high cost of ink for many models of HP, Epson, and Canon ink jet printers by allowing a fine degree of control over the amount of ink used, while maintaining print quality. While most printers switch to a lower resolution when printing in draft mode, InkSaver allows you to continue printing at high resolution yet reduce the volume of ink laid down on the page.

Installation from the CD-ROM was simple and straight-forward. When the program loads for the first time, it offers to print a sample sheet. It was at this point that any scepticism I had evaporated. What came out of the printer was nothing short of impressive and conclusive.

Two pages were printed out. There was a short passage of black text and a small colour graphic repeated 9 times at varying levels of ink savings. It starts with the printer default setting and then progresses through to 75% ink savings.

Now I would be the first to admit that the 75% savings setting don't look terribly great, especially for colour. But modest savings, such as 24% or 30% for colour and up to 50% on black provide remarkably good quality printing.
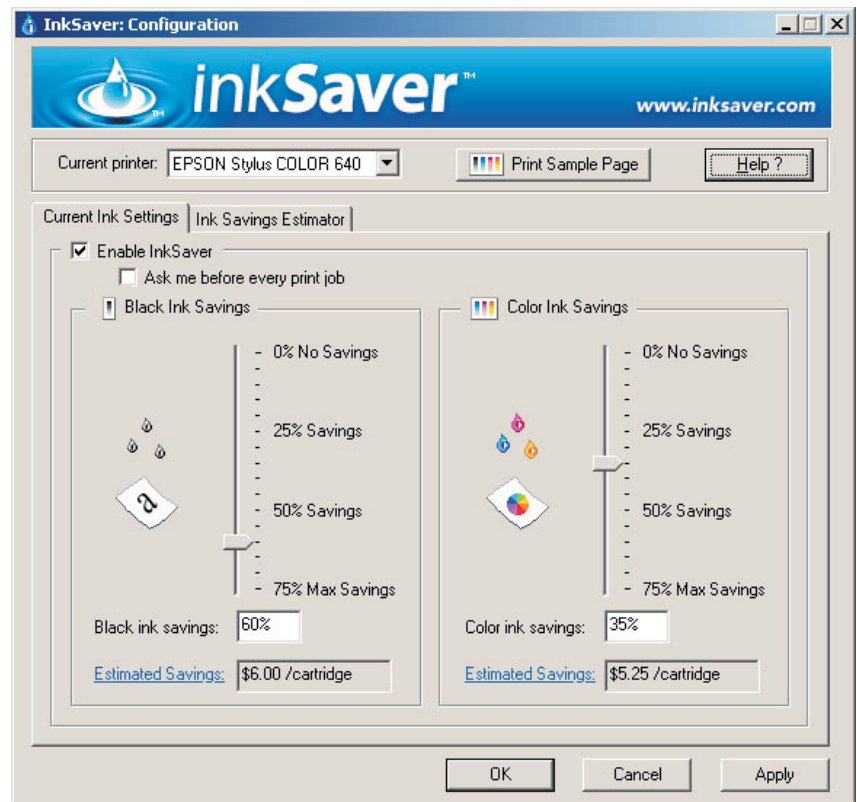
From the main InkSaver dialog box, you can adjust the ink savings from 0% to 75% in 1% increments.

It is important to note that the savings are based on the default settings for the printer. If you already have the printer set to an "economy" mode, the printout will be barely legible at the 75% savings setting. I recommend you set the printer defaults in Windows to the highest quality and then use InkSaver to control print quality.

Without InkSaver, adjustments to printer settings are typically buried deep in dialog boxes. Even checking to see the current settings requires a spelunking adventure. InkSaver provides a system tray icon. Hover the mouse over it and a tool-tip tells you your current settings. Right-clicking lets you easily adjust the settings from a pop-up menu, or you can double-click the icon to bring up the full dialog box. When

it is that easy to check and adjust your settings, you are much more likely to adjust your printer settings for different print jobs.

From the main InkSaver dialog box, you can adjust the ink savings from 0% to 75% in 1% increments. One of the things I really appreciate is the ability to control ink saving separately for colour and B&W. For example, when I print from web sites, I often want the print quality to be pretty good, but I don't care so much about the colour graphics, which are frequently advertisements. With InkSaver, I can leave the black ink savings at about 35% and crank up the colour savings to 60% or even higher.

On my wish list for InkSaver would be the ability to set a default for my ink savings and then adjust for a single print job, with InkSaver reverting to my selected defaults when the print job ends.

All in all, InkSaver is a very impressive package. Highly recommended!

InkSaver works with the following printers; HP Deskjet 600, 800 (except 820), and 900 series printers, Epson Sylus Color/Color II, Stylus C20, C40, C60, C70, C80, Stylus Color 400, 500, 600, 700, 800, and 900 series, and Canon S100, S200, S300, S400 and S500 series (except S520), BJC 2000, 2200, and 4000 series (except BJC 4450 and BJC 4650). As they may have added additional printers, check out the web site at www.strydent.com for the currently supported printer list.

Supported printer connections are USB, parallel, serial, and TCP/IP. Due to the way a printer driver interacts with networking, networked printers will only work with InkSaver if they have an IP address. It won't work with a printer shared out from another computer.

InkSaver requires Windows 98, ME, 2K, or XP and 20MB hard disk space.

My only other gripe was the fact that this *Canadian* company's web site is geared to US customers. The price is only listed in US dollars. You can buy the program and download it from their web site for US$34.95. If you want them to ship you a physical package, the shipping charges are US$16.95 for Purolator or a whopping US$27.95 for FedEx! Ouch!

Fortunately, I found out that there are cheaper options. First, if you call Strydent at 1-800-443-2122, you can order it for CAN$34.99. Shipping and handling via Express Post for up to 3 packages is CAN$8.00. Also, by September, Future Shop should be carrying it.

All in all, InkSaver is a very impressive package. Highly recommended!

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September Raffle

Strydent Software has donated 5 copies of InkSaver to the OPCUG. At the September meeting, we will be raffling off three of those copies.

Ticket prices remain the same - $1 for one, $2 for three, or $5 for ten. But rather than having just one chance at this prize, we will be drawing three tickets.

Triple your chances!

If the high cost of ink for ink jet printers has been getting you down, read the review of InkSaver in this issue. Then buy some tickets on the September raffle.

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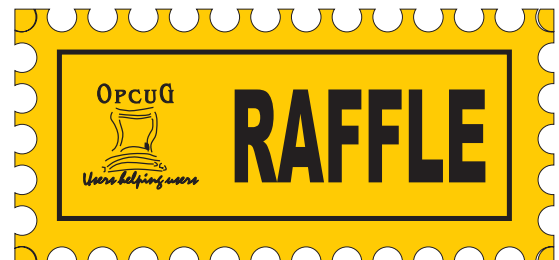
Reverse DNS Lookups *by Chris Taylor*

Morris Turpin presented me with an interesting problem recently. For the previous 2 weeks, whenever he used Outlook Express to check for private e-mail on PUB II, he had a 5-second delay in the processing, even if there was no new mail for him. His regular ISP account did not have a similar delay and it never used to take so long with PUB II.

I checked for problems with his account. I checked for corruption in the PUB II message databases. I ran a repair utility that checks all the index files. I had him run ping and tracert to see if there were unusual delays in the path between his computer and PUB II. Fortunately, the 5-second delays were very consistent. It makes it a lot harder to diagnose and fix problems when they're intermittent.

It took about a week to track down what the problem was – failed reverse DNS lookups. This discovery has enabled us to provide better service to others who might not have realized there was a problem.

Normally, DNS lookups are done in a forward direction. Say you want to open a connection to opcug.ca. Your machine can't do that directly. It needs the IP address associated with opcug.ca. To obtain this, it does a DNS lookup on opcug.ca. DNS returns the IP address 206.47.37.30. Your computer then establishes a connection to 206.47.36.30.

When a connection is established with PUB II, the server logs it. But wouldn't it be nice if the log could show the friendly host name making the connection, rather than just the IP address? It can, but to do so, it needs to do a reverse DNS lookup. It sends the IP address to the DNS server and asks what the host name is for that address.

If an IP address is registered in DNS, there is no problem. A reverse lookup is done at the same speed as a forward lookup, generally well under a second. But it seems like there is a problem if the IP address is not registered for reverse lookups. Morris was experiencing a 5-second delay while the PUB II computer tried, and failed, to do a reverse lookup.

The problem is even worse when we consider web server connections. When you connect to a web server, you request something be sent to you. As soon as that something is sent, the connection is closed. When you request something else, a new connection is established. Every web page and every graphic on those pages requires a separate connection. And, at least in the case of WinServer, it appears that each connection is causing a reverse lookup to take place.

Once again, if the address is registered for reverse lookups, there is very little delay. You should not even notice it at all. But if the address is not registered for reverse lookups, it can cause up to a 5-second delay on each connection. I have no idea if WinServer or Windows could be modified so they could cache information about reverse lookups and not continue trying if a reverse lookup failed before.

How do you know if your computer is registered for reverse lookups? You can try a reverse lookup yourself.

Reverse DNS lookups are an option in WinServer, so I have turned them off on PUB II. This will dramatically improve connection performance for those not registered for reverse DNS lookups and provide a very minor boost in connection performance for others.

How do you know if your computer is registered for reverse lookups? You can try a reverse lookup yourself. If you are running WinNT/2K/XP, run **CMD** and type in **nslookup 206.47.37.30** and it should report that the host name is **cpu1799.adsl.bellglobal.com**, which is how the PUB II IP address is registered for reverse lookup. Get your own IP address by typing in **ipconfig** (**winipcfg** in other versions of Windows will give your IP address) and then use the **nslookup** command with your IP address. If you get an error such as **can't find xxx.xxx.xxx.xxx: Server failed**, you know your IP address is not registered for reverse lookups.

You can also do reverse lookups at various web sites. One is **remote.12dt.com/rns**, but there are others. A Google search turns up many.

What can you do if your IP address is not registered for reverse lookups? Probably not a whole lot. You can ask your ISP, but they probably think they have a good reason for not registering all their addresses for reverse lookup or it would already have been done. In Morris's case, Rogers had his address registered for reverse lookup until around the end of June. Why they decided to remove it is for others to guess.

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Spam *by Chris Taylor*

Monty Python's Spam sketch (Vikings at left)

I n a Monty Python skit, a group of Vikings sing "Spam, Spam, Spam, Spam" at ever increasing volumes, drowning out all other conversation. "Unsolicited Commercial E-mail" takes its moniker "spam" from its similar ability to drown out normal e-mails with the ever-increasing volume of unwanted junk.

To shamelessly steal a famous song, "Spam! What is it good for? Absolutely nothing!" It fills my Inbox, offering everything from low-interest mortgages to Internet gambling sites to highly questionable products designed to enhance certain body parts. Why the spammers seem to think I want larger breasts is beyond me.

Almost everyone gets spam. Everyone wants to be rid of it. Everyone wishes it would simply go away. But it won't. At least not without some serious help.

Why do you get spam?

If you ever posted to a public newsgroup or listserver, there is a good chance your e-mail address has been picked up by a spammer. If your e-mail address was ever posted on a web site anywhere, there is a good chance it was picked up by a spammer. If you ever sent a friend a joke and they forwarded it on, there is a chance your e-mail address ended up somewhere that a spammer could harvest it. If you ever looked sideways … no, but sometimes it feels like that's all that's necessary to have your e-mail address picked up and start a spam avalanche.

Did you ever check Google to see if your e-mail address is listed? Be sure to check Google's "web" and "groups". If it is listed, you can bet the spammers can harvest your address. Try some other search engines.

How can you stop it?

Not by clicking on the "Click here to be removed from my mailing list" link in a spam e-mail, that's for sure! You will confirm that a real, live body exists at the end of that e-mail address. Worse, it proves you actually read the spam. This is the mother-lode for a spammer! You can expect your

e-mail address to appear on some premium spam lists after that! Actually, there is an exception to that rule. If you get some e-mail you don't want, but you know the sender is reputable, it is safe to click on that link to unsubscribe. If you want *The Daily Dilbert* to stop coming into your mailbox – although why anyone would want this to stop is a mystery to me – you can safely click on the unsubscribe link. But an unsubscribe link in a spam advertising a porno site? Never!

OK, so you can't unsubscribe. Now what?

Frankly, the best thing you can probably do is just hit the delete key and move on. Life is too short to get too worried about this sort of stuff. But, if you really want to try and do something about it, there are things you can do. First, you can use the free services of a site such as spamcop.net. This is a really nifty site. Once you sign up (it's free), you can paste the contents of a spam into a form there. SpamCop will trace the true origin of the e-mail and any web links or e-mail addresses in the body of the message. It will then allow you to send a complaint to the administrators of those systems. You could also do-it-yourself at a site such as samspade.org.Frankly, I don't think it does much good. Most of the spam seems to come from spam-friendly ISPs who don't care, as long as the spammer pays their bills. But every now and then I hear back that someone had their account cancelled for violating terms-of-service. And just thinking there is a *chance* that a spammer might get nailed gives me a warm fuzzy feeling!

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 Saturdays 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 go until 10 p.m.

Fees
OPCUG annual membership: $25 per year.

Mailing Address
3 Thatcher St., Nepean, Ontario, K2G 1S6

Web address
http://opcug.ca

Bulletin board — the PUB II (BBS)
Up to 33.6 kbps V.34. 228-8951

Chairman and System Administrator
Chris Taylor   ctaylor@nrcan.gc.ca 727-5453

Meeting Coordinator
Tim Mahoney   timothyr@cyberus.ca 225-2630

Treasurer
Vince Pizzamiglio   vince@monisys.ca

Webmaster
Brigitte Lord   opcug@iname.com

Secretary
(Mr.) Jocelyn Doire   Jocelyn.Doire@opcug.ca

Membership Chairman
Mark Cayer   Mark.Cayer@StatCan.Ca 823-0354

Newsletter
Bert Schopf (editor)   bert@blackbirdpcd.com . . . 232-8427
(Mr.) Jocelyn Doire (distributor, electronic version): Jocelyn.Doire@opcug.ca

Public Relations
Morris Turpin   morris.turpin@rogers.com 729-6955

Directors without portfolio
Bob Gowan   gowanb@inac.gc.ca
Ted May   tamay@rogers.com

Facilities
Bob Walker   skywalk@iname.com 489-2084

Beginners' and Windows SIG coordinator
Duncan Petrie   gdpetr@hotmail.com 841-6119

Internet SIG coordinator
Norm Dafoe   ndafoe@sirius.ca

Paradox SIG coordinator
John Ladds   laddsj@statcan.ca 951-4581

Delphi SIG coordinator
Stan Isbrandt   isbrandt@trytel.com . . 992-8141 / 729-7793

Orphan SIG coordinator
Henry Sims   ha4326@rogers.com

Developers' SIG
Bob Thomas   bobthomas@msn.com

Spam *...continued from page 7*

"Why the spammers seem to think I want larger breasts is beyond me."

Another thing you can do is install some software on your PC that will analyse inbound e-mail and try to determine if it is spam or not. Over the next couple of months, I will be reviewing three different packages designed to deal with spam. Deersoft's SpamAssassin Pro is a Windows-based, commercial implementation of the wildly popular open source, UNIX-based anti-spam program SpamAssassin. CloudMark's SpamNet is a free program that allows users to vote whether particular e-mails are spam or not. Once users have identified a particular e-mail as spam, if you receive a copy, SpamNet will treat is as such. Sunbelt Software's iHateSpam takes a more traditional approach. It is an interesting-looking commercial program with its own built-in rules to identify spam.

I will tell you right now, there is no magic bullet. The only guaranteed way to avoid the problem with spam is to not have an e-mail address. But these programs might reduce the frustration level if you decide you would rather keep your e-mail address. Stay tuned!

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