

# The Personal Computer Club of Toronto



# READ ME

FEATURING ARTICLES BY COMPUTER CLUB MEMBERS

"GETTING MORE OUT OF YOUR COMPUTER"

## The Five Horsemen...

By Trev Beard PCCT

It's my ambition to become a good video maker and at 73 I figure I've still got lots of time to make it big in our local club. For several years I have gone through blood, sweat and tears (amid thoughts of jumping off the Bloor Street viaduct), evaluating the computer scene. After jostling with many capture boards and non-linear editing programs, I've finally got it right. At least my system is running 90% bullet proof which is good in the computer business.

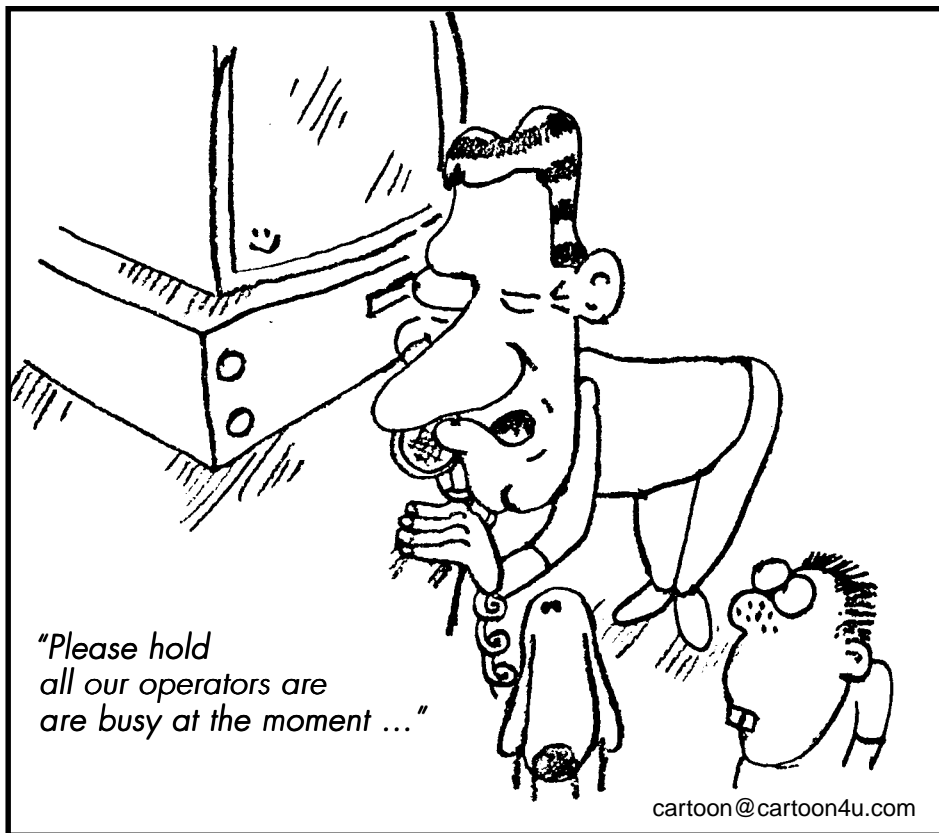
I've gone digital of course and am pleased as Punch with the results. Despite the alarming costs, I've settled on buying good stuff and started with a Sony DC7 camcorder. It's compact enough to slip in a pocket. I also own the Panasonic EZ30U (which made it to Mount Everest but not with me). Both are superb machines but not the only choices. The sharpness on each camera is fantastic. But on with the Five Horsemen, excluding the cameras.

These five items give an amateur like me the capability of producing professional work or very close to it. Let's look at each one.

**1. THE DECK.** This now sits on top of the Hi-8 deck (Sony EVC-200) and the two VHS decks (Sony SLV-900 and SLV-750). It's called the Sony VHR-1000 and takes the miniature DV tape plus the larger two hour tape. Without reading too much like a catalogue, I'll mention it does all the usual things plus much more. It inputs and outputs digital video (of course) but in addition it inputs and outputs both S-Video and Composite. This means that I can transfer all my old 8 mm, my Hi-8 tapes and my VHS tapes to digital. That's a very big deal! Once on digital tape, gone is the problem of losing quality each time I transfer. Reproduction quality is 100% whether 5 transfers or 5,000. From any Sony store. Price around \$3000 US.

**2. THE SOFTWARE.** My choice is Adobe Premier 5.1 and although it takes a bit of learning (I could have earned a Ph.D. in the time), it allows so much creativity in editing that together with the many Plug-ins made by others, it's a virtual studio. There are other excellent nonlinear editing programs of course and this is merely my choice. From any computer store. Price around \$500 US.

**3. THE CAPTURE HARDWARE.** My battles with hardware make



Omaha Beach pale in comparison. The big problem lies in the manufacturers being desperate to get their product out in the market before the competition. The bugs can be addressed later. And there are many bugs. An even bigger problem is ensuring that all the software programs also being rushed to market are compatible with the hardware. Picture men running around, with incomplete bodies seeking women with the same shortcoming. The chances of a good marriage are slim. Right now I'm running Pinnacle's DV300 (\$600 US) and since getting the latest drivers, I'm having good results. Each problem that has developed has been my own fault. For instance, I've found out that the leader on any clip must be clean i.e. no blips, spikes or bad black sections. But that's a subject all by itself. I've learned to check that the audio is acceptable before proceeding with

editing. Sorry, I've started to ramble a bit.

In addition to straight capturing, the board will make a 'contact sheet' of each tape and if you have a colour printer, the results are beautiful. Now you can see the first frame of each clip on your tape. It will also do a snapshot and make a BMP file. It will top and tail each clip before capturing to the hard drive which saves a lot of space. When using the board for printing (recording) back to tape, it will create an endless show by piecing all the captured clips into one item. I was delighted to find that this works flawlessly with no discernible joints in between clips. From Pinnacle at 650 526-1600. Note that the DV300 comes with Adobe Premiere.

**4. AN EXTERNAL HARD DRIVE.** You need something fast and you

*Five Horsemen concluded on page 7*

## MARCH MEETING

**Y2K—HEAD FOR THE HILLS OR HEAD OFF THE HYPE?**

**Richard Morochove will give his view of the Year 2000 crisis and how to survive it.**

**He'll also let us know what he thinks about a number of new computing developments ranging from Intel's Pentium III processor and the Palm IIIx hand-held organizer to the Linux operating system.**

**Richard promises tales of his travels to computer events including "How the Airport burger conquered Xerox Research," "Lear jetting to Vegas, the hard way" and "Bill Gates and the glass of beer."**

**APRIL ... Mr. Brian Hentschel, Public Relations for ATI Technologies will be the featured speaker. ATI Technologies is one of those Canadian companies in our own 'back yard' that have become a world leader in it's field, video display card technology. Don't miss this exciting update!**

MAR 1999 Volume 17  
Number 3



Join us at the PCCT  
on March 16th. See  
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Coupon!

**3 Make  
It Personal**  
*Editorial*

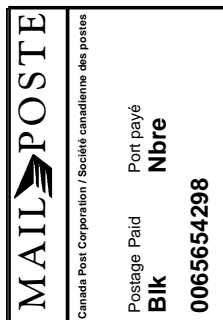
**4 Removable  
Storage**  
*by Dunc Petrie*

**5 Introducing  
Linux**  
*by Dick Mayback*

**5 Partition  
Magic ver. 4**  
*by Clive Apps*

**6 Norton 2000**  
*by Joan Latchford*

**7 What On  
Earth?**  
*by Bernard Nottage*



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## General Meeting Tuesday, March 16th, 1999

Admission for non-members – \$5.00

**6:30pm: Meet and discuss** - your ideas for PCCT with some of our Board members and volunteers.

**7:00pm: General Meeting** - starts with a Question & Answer session.

**PCCT thanks these vendors for donating equipment to the club:**

**Adaptec – SCSI controller**

## The Personal Computer Club of Toronto



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The Personal Computer Club Of Toronto (**PCCT**) is an independent, not-for-profit association for people who use PC microcomputers. Our philosophy: *Users helping Users.*

"read.me" is the newsletter of the PCCT, published 11 times a year, featuring articles by club members and members of other user groups from around the world. Opinions expressed are those of the writers and not necessarily of the PCCT.

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**Please note:** Fees, dates, and specifications are subject to change without notice.

The PCCT does not assume responsibility for damages arising from the publication or non-publication of any advertisement in this newsletter. Acceptance of advertising does not imply endorsement by the club.

## Special Interest Groups

### The Basics SIG

SIG Leader: Frank Latchford (416) 340-0999

Learning Windows 95/98 SIG. This SIG is intended for those who are new to Windows 95/98. We will discuss how Windows works and how to use it on a daily basis. The intention of this SIG is to teach — not to entertain. We will start at the beginning and go to the end. You should have learned to use some aspect of Windows by the end of the evening.

### Daytime SIG

SIG Leader: Bob Matheson (416) 222-4628

This is a discussion group that covers a wide range of topics relating to IBM and compatible computers. It is for novice, intermediate and advanced users.

### Digital Imaging SIG

SIG Leader: Ron Caine (ron\_caine@msn.com)

Interested in scanners, photography, digital cameras and the software to run all that? Then this SIG is for you. We will go over all facets of manipulating pixels to give you the results you want.

### Genealogy SIG

SIG Leader: John Mahler (jmahler@globalserve.net)

The Genealogy SIG is for anyone who is interested in the search of the past. We delve into the family tree and cover the tools, means and resources available to those who search. If you have an interest in your past and want to learn more, come on by and sit a spell.

### Hardware SIG

SIG Leader: Clive Apps (416) 510-0020

Installing and fixing your computer hardware can be fun, a learning experience and can save you money. Find out what goes on under the hood and what you can do about it. Bring your machine and do it there.

### Internet SIG

SIG Leader: Avnish Kashyap (905) 671-1736 kash@softhome.com

This SIG concentrates on how to access and utilize the various resources of the Internet. If you are having difficulties using the Internet or simply wish to learn more, then this SIG is for you. The first 15 minutes of the SIG are used to answer general communications issues.

### Investment SIG

SIG Leader: Ken Morgan (416) 491-1932

Analytical techniques, use of spreadsheets, graphical display of investment analysis all play an important part in these meetings. Also, considerable use is made of video training tapes on investment subjects.

### Microsoft Office SIG

SIG Leader: Jonathan Hines simple@ibm.net

Learn how to use the Microsoft Office suite of programs: Word, Excel, Access and Powerpoint. A SIG geared to helping small business make effective use of this software.

### New User SIG

SIG Leader: Henry Crane (905) 884-5443

This is a group arranged specifically for novice computer users. It holds informal friendly discussions on the essentials of personal computing. You will get clear concise explanations of computer terms on your personal level of understanding, help with what to learn and how to learn it quickly and cheaply, purchasing, upgrading and problem solving advice that can save you many hours and dollars.

### Visual Basic SIG

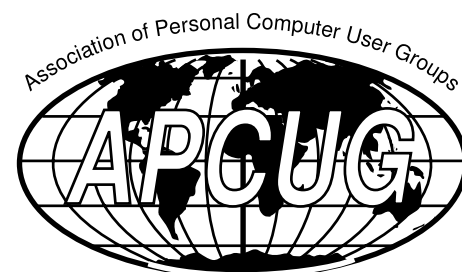
SIG Leaders: Trevor Pedley & Jim McIntosh

Learn Visual Basic, a popular programming language. This group follows a beginners level text with a structured learning environment. Easily learn sophisticated ways to program applications in the Windows environment by attending this group.

### Windows / Win95 SIG

SIG Leader: Karl Stanley 1-905-836-5222

Here is where you can learn how to get and use the maximum from MS Windows. You will enjoy an information-packed, entertaining evening while you learn how to use all the Windows tools, and make Windows run more efficiently on your machine. You can participate in the monthly training session and become an expert user in less than a year. You will learn tips and tricks that will save you hours. You will meet many power users, see the latest Windows products and perhaps win a valuable door prize.



# Make It Personal

Speaking with Ray Ostrander's daughter Stephanie today, I was struck by how important the "Personal" in our organization's title is, because as a group we are about far more than computers.

For example, she told me that it was a club member by the name of "Henry" who used to pick Ray up and take him to the hospital for treatment when his children were not able to do so. This often took five or six hours and included a shared lunch. This friendship which had arisen through the club meant a great deal to Ray over the last year.

Now I don't know who this Henry was and he may very well want to remain anonymous but I do know there are a lot of other "Henrys" out there in our General Meeting audience who make a great difference to individual club members.

My Henry was founding member Henry Crane, who, in my neophyte days thought nothing of jumping into his car and coming all the way down from Richmond Hill to rescue me when my initial attempts to install peripherals resulted in a daunting black screen with no C: prompt.

Another "Henry" was actually named David. He is a programmer and an Anglican Minister who rolled up his sleeves and helped Frank and I pack and clear walls of books when we sold our house and moved downtown. His presence eased a very troubled time for us.

I'm sure each one of you can think of your own "Henry."

Computer people tend to be "loners" because we do have a way of going on and on about our burning interest without noticing the glaze that comes over the eyes of those who refer to themselves as techno-peasants. So as semi-isolates, the "Personal" is probably even more important for us to cultivate.

It is no accident that these friendships occur around an absorbing common interest—the club is still predominantly male and men are often more comfortable bonding around activities than around ideas. This is one of the inherent values of being a volunteer as Ray was for so many years.

It's also one of the reasons why it's important to *recognize* our volunteers. This shouldn't be left to the Board (who are also volunteers, and could use it too)—it means even more when someone from the general membership spontaneously comes up to me and says something nice about *read.me* (I'm not fishing here—you're very good about doing so).

Lately, we have all been concerned about our dwindling numbers and increasing expenses. If the numbers fall, how can we pay the rent? On the other hand perhaps we would not need so much space. The SIGS are an example that small can be beautiful.

When we try to recruit new members to the club how do we present ourselves? Do we emphasize the prestige of our presenters? The dollar value of the prizes we have won or the bargains we have picked up at Martin Moss' bargoen table? Nothing wrong with that but do we stress and demonstrate that the PCCT is first and foremost a friendly club?

Perhaps, if we give more thought to fostering these *personal* aspects of our club we will find the numbers take care of themselves. *J.L.*

## PCCT SPECIAL PRESENTATION

**Speaker: Mr. Evan Leibovitch, Toronto LINUX User Group**

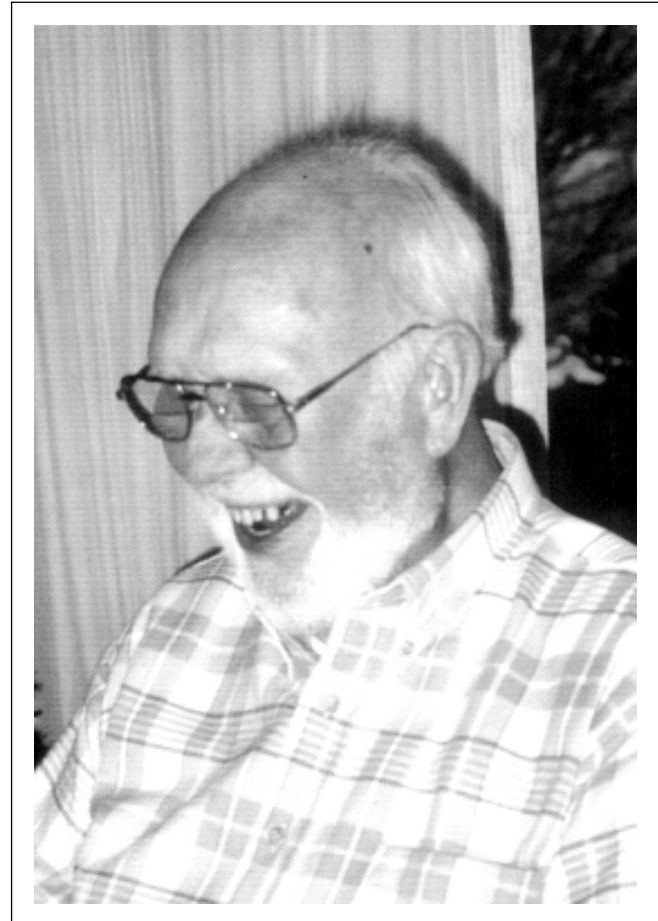
Topic: An Introduction to LINUX

Date: Wednesday, March 31st

Time : 7:30 p.m.

Location: York Public Library (Auditorium), 1745 Eglinton Ave. W.

You've heard the scuttlebut about this 'freeware' operating system but don't know much about it. This is your chance to find out more and to ask questions about the latest LINUX developments!



## Ray Ostrander

Ray Ostrander passed away at the Markham—Stouffville Hospital on February 12, in his 77<sup>th</sup> year.

Ray joined the PCCT in May 1990 and was active in the Software Library until overtaken by illness early in 1997.

During World War II he served in small ships of the Royal Canadian Navy in the North Atlantic. He lived in Markham and, before retirement, was General Manager of the Emerson Electric plant. He was active in community affairs, including serving as a Director of the Markham-Stouffville Hospital for many years.

Ray joined the Software Library team in early 1991, when he volunteered to take over the critical disk copying task. He was soon very busy, especially one month in which there were sales of over \$700. Those of us who were with the PCCT before 1997 will remember Ray at the monthly meetings, where he helped set up the Library table at the back of the meeting room, and participated in the sale of disks. He was always available to give advice to members, as well as to assist others involved in the work of the Software Library. After each meeting he worked at home replenishing the stock of disks and copying new disks for the next meeting. He was most diligent in ensuring that the disks were free from defects and viruses. While the Software Library catalogue was still being distributed, he had the additional responsibility for processing mail orders.

At the December 1996 monthly meeting, Ray Ostrander was honoured by the Board and the members for his contribution to the PCCT.

He will be missed particularly by those of us who worked closely with him, and who came to know and respect him as a person and a friend.

*Bernard Nottage, Software Librarian 1990-1995*



# Removable Storage?

By Dunc Petrie, *Ottawa PC User's Group*

Despite the recent demise of Syquest and Avatar in the removable media arena, the competition has heated up and other choices are in the works. Let's look at high capacity (hard drive replacements) and floppy drive upgrades separately.

**HIGH CAPACITY** Although the Syquest SparQ (1.0 GB) and the SyJet (1.5 GB) are gone (Resurrection is always possible: suitors are rumoured.), some potentially serious competition has appeared on the horizon. Iomega was a pioneer and the head-start provided a lot of momentum; however, will it remain? Iomega's 1GB Jaz drive and media are considerably more costly than those of its defunct competitor. Syquest's Sparq media was about one-third the cost for equal capacity (1 GB); its SyJet 1.5 GB media cost about the same but had 50% greater capacity. Syquest had also announced (but was not in production) a "monster" 4+ GB capacity drive that died with the company's demise.

Iomega also offers a 2GB variant of the Jaz. It doubles the capacity and offers increased data transfer rates although it extracts a hefty price: both the drive and media are significantly more expensive than the 1 GB format.

Castlewood Systems' (www.castlewood.com). Orb is the "new kid on the block" and could increase the pressure considerably: the drives should have shipped by end-98, sell for \$200 (US) and store 2.16 GB on a \$30 (US) cartridge. The company's founder is a veteran from Syquest and Seagate. The drive will be offered in SCSI, EIDE and parallel port variants: no USB version as yet.

**HIGH CAPACITY FLOPPIES**—Iomega's Zip. I just finished revisiting Iomega's (www.iomega.com) Zip drive. Unfortunately, that issue went to press too early to report Iomega's newest variant: a 250 MB capacity unit. It will provide backwards compatibility with the current 100 MB media. Currently, the 100 MB media is \$16-20 (Cdn) and depends upon the manufacturer: Iomega's and Sony's are usually more expensive than media from other suppliers (Maxell or Fuji). A few system manufacturers are installing these drives (EIDE/ATAPI variants) as original equipment manufacturer (OEM) drives; given proper BIOS support, the Zip drive is bootable. The 250 MB drive and media would presumably be more expensive (drive about \$200 US; media unknown but a 30% premium (US) has been rumoured).

Iomega has also announced a 100 MB capacity USB version (no word as yet about a 250 MB capacity unit although this should be a mere formality). For users with USB ports on their computers and no SCSI adapter, this approach is faster and less trouble-prone than a parallel port unit. A hint for those lacking USB: a PCI bus expansion card is \$55-70 (Cdn) and offers a painless upgrade if your system can support it. The company has also announced the Zip Built-In that enables connecting directly compatible scanners, printers and audio devices to the Zip without the need of an intervening computer. Although the Syquest EZ 135 (135 MB), Syquest Flyer (230 MB) and Avatar Shark (250 MB) have ceased production, Iomega must still be feeling the heat of competition. Iomega has had the marketing advantages of: "first off the mark," an enormous installed user-base and model variants for every scenario (SCSI, EIDE, parallel, USB). The recently announced capacity increase will also help it to meet the competition. However, Iomega does have its detractors. First, it lacks backwards floppy compatibility, Iomega also stumbled with its handling of the "click of death" syndrome: initially by dismissing it and subsequently by taking a hard-line approach (recently rescinded) to warranty obligations. The bottom line: it is arguably the one to beat—for the moment.

The Zip's competition Sony's (www.sony.ca) new High Capacity Floppy Disk (HiFD)—200 MB capacity and backwards compatibility with the 1.44 MB 3.5 inch floppy: not only read/write but also format—will begin to appear in the retail chain, by end-98, after two years of vapourware status. This unit is fast (both native and 1.44 floppy format) due to a blend of floppy and Winchester (hard drive) technology; the latter is the rationale for the 3600 rpm spindle speed and is a major contributor to the transfer rates. Media should cost about \$15 (US) each. Initial production will be an external drive that uses the parallel port connection (here, throughput is limited by this port's capacity) followed shortly by an internal EIDE drive (presumably bootable). Surprisingly there is no mention of SCSI or USB variants. Sony merits the high speed medal but its hardware is certainly the most expensive (about \$200 US). The Imation (www.imation.com) L5120 (also called SuperDisk) uses laser technology to position the drive heads but the data storage is magnetic. Compared to the Zip 100 it has greater capacity (120 MB) and backwards compatibility with the 3.5 inch floppy (read and write but not format). Unfortunately this floppy compatibility mode is slow; however, a recently announced upgrade is expected to improve this aspect significantly (It is unclear if this upgrade would also apply to existing units.) Parallel port and EIDE variants (the latter presumably bootable) will be available.

The Caleb Technology (www.caleb-bldr.com) UHD 144 will offer 144 MB capacity and backward compatibility with the standard floppy. This EIDE/ATAPI device is bootable. Caleb has staked out the low-end: the internal drive is expected to cost only \$80 (US) and the disks are about \$5 US each. To date, this drive has only recently had mention in the media. Although it was scheduled for shipping in the second quarter of last year, PC World noted, in its November 98 issue, that its evaluation model remained pre-production.

## CONCLUSIONS

- For speed, Sony is fastest, followed by Zip, updated SuperDisk and Caleb. These rankings are commensurate with the rotational speed of same interface.
- For capacity 250 Zip, Sony Caleb, SuperDisk, Zip 100: note that the specifications usually refer to unformatted capacities.
- Media cost is expected to be least for the Caleb unit; next would be the Zip 100 and SuperDisk; finally the Sony and Zip 250 are expected to be at the high end.
- For floppy compatibility the Zips must be excluded. While all the others are 3.5 inch floppy read/write compatible, the Sony alone has format capability
- Boot capability: most drives have this ability if the support is present in the system BIOS.

**BUYERS' CONSIDERATIONS:** The relative ability to share data among computers is related to market penetration. Since the Sony and Caleb units are not yet in the retail market, they are effectively excluded. To date, the Zip 100 has the largest installed user-base—primarily after-market. The majority of these drives are not installed as a bootable device but simply as an after-market add-on to provide a large capacity replacement for the generic floppy disk. A few OEMs (including, for example, Dell) do offer internal (presumably IDE) installations. This drive, due to its huge installed base, is the most common choice for those who routinely send large data files to service bureaus. Zips are the contemporary replacement for those old service bureau standards: Syquest and Bernoulli. That the Zip 100 will not be eclipsed is a foregone conclusion since files continue to increase in size. The Zip 250 may broker a respite for Iomega but the "Gig capable" (or larger) magnetic or optical media are the inevitable future. The Imation has achieved significant OEM support: many large suppliers offer a SuperDrive as standard or as a low-cost upgrade. Given the head-start of the Zip 100 and (to a lesser extent) the SuperDrive, the newcomers must score significant market presence quickly or risk niche status. None of these units are cross-compatible: they cannot read media created on any other device—excepting, where applicable, standard floppy disk media. Which one will win? The answer may well be moot: the price point may move rapidly to favour larger capacity drives. As a long-time owner of a Zip I will continue to utilize the media; however, I would have to consider "long and hard" before committing to this route from scratch today.

Any discussion of high-capacity removable media storage must acknowledge optical media. The prices of CD-Recordable (CD-R) and CD-Rewritable (CD-RW) hardware have dropped significantly. While the hardware remains more expensive (for the moment?) than these "floppy drives" the optical drives quickly recoup the difference in media costs—particularly for heavy users. The cost of CD-R blank media approaches the ridiculous (under \$2 each locally) but offers three to six times the capacity! Rewritable media, while more expensive, has also recently dropped ("name brand" blanks can be found locally for \$15-18). While slower in read and write modes than all the magnetic storage devices, they are useful for archiving or transferring large amounts of data inexpensively.

Consider: CD-R rationalizes the "throw-away" model. Given the cost, if CD-R were to achieve a significant foothold (perhaps only a "toehold?") in service bureaus then—strictly from a practical perspective—retrieving data-containing CD-R media (unlike Zip or Jaz disks) would be passé. On any computer more recent than a 286, a CD-ROM reader is a "given." The availability of a CD-ROM reader, for reading user-created CD-R disks (reading CD-RW disks presently has a few caveats), is more entrenched than the Zip. Examine your needs carefully and purchase accordingly.

If these capacities are too restrictive then consider the current summit: removable media hard drives are increasing their capacity and speed while the prices are falling. Shortly, 2 GB drives will become the norm. Given the market pressures, higher capacity, even faster drives, are merely over the horizon. Of course, once DVD matures and standardizes its (re)writable formats much of this essay would become obsolete. Indeed, from one perspective, the recent flurry of activity in floppy replacement drives almost seems, "too little, too late." Why purchase a "floppy"—for example, Sony's HiFD—with one-tenth the capacity of an Orb but at the same price (for the hardware)? Even the media costs are converging: while Orb media costs twice that of the Sony HiFD the former has ten times the capacity. Conventional floppy drives were, historically, the only boot option if the hard drive were to become disabled. Today, they are joined by this new crop of floppies, the CD-ROM and (some of) the removable media hard drives. Beware: many of these endeavours might be destined to join the ranks, surprisingly quickly—of the eight inch floppy.

*Ottawa PC User's Group January 1999*

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# Introducing Linux

## By Dick Maybach (BCUG BYTES)

You may have seen some of the recent articles on the rising popularity of Linux. In this article I'll try to explain what Linux is, how it relates to DOS and Windows, and why you might (or might not) be interested in using it.

**WHAT IS LINUX?** Linux is a UNIX-like operating system that runs on Intel x86 (and clones), Motorola 68K, Digital Alpha, Sparc, Mips and Motorola PowerPC machines. It uses no code from AT&T or any other proprietary source, and it and much of the software available for it is free over the Internet or at moderate cost on CD-ROM. Once you have a copy of Linux, you are free to use it on as many machines as you like and to share it.

Linux began as a personal project of Linus Torvalds, a student at the University of Helsinki in Finland. In 1991 he announced, over the Internet, the first official version of Linux. Many computer professionals are passionate about Unix, and the prospect of running it on inexpensive PC hardware generated intense interest. Linus soon had hundreds of collaborators on his project, and this cadre continues to grow. As a result, Linux has rapidly developed into a commercial grade product.

An important Linux predecessor was the Free Software Foundation that Richard Stallman at MIT began in 1983. A major project of the FSF is GNU (GNU's Not Unix), which is a collection of freely distributable Unix utilities. These are protected by the GNU Public License (GPL), commonly called the "copyleft", that says you have three specific freedoms in using GNU software:

1. the freedom to copy the program and give it away or sell it to anyone,
2. the freedom to change the program as you wish, by having full access to source code, and
3. the freedom to distribute an improved version and thus help build the community.

In return you agree that if you distribute the original or your improvements, you will include the source code with the same freedoms. For more information on the FSF, see their Web site <http://www.gnu.org/>. Linux is now distributed under the GNU copyleft.

**HOW DOES LINUX COMPARE TO DOS/WINDOWS?** Your first impression will be that the Linux interface is closer to DOS than to Windows. When you first log in, as with DOS and Windows 3.1, Linux presents you with a DOS-like command line prompt, and from here you can launch a graphical user interface (GUI). Linux's GUI does not have the slick appearance of Windows, although you do have more complete control over it. There is almost always a command line window open on a Linux GUI, and even graphics oriented programs are frequently launched from the command line. This means that you can add arguments to the command and avoid the lengthy dialog that sometimes results when you can launch a program only with a mouse click. As a result, it is more difficult for new users to learn than Windows, but experienced users find it faster and more versatile.

Once you get past first impressions, you will find Linux is much more sophisticated than DOS/Windows. It is a true multi-user operating system, where each user has their own set of files, and they can't read or write to those belonging to any other user without special permission. Similarly, ordinary users can't change operating system files. This means that no matter how horrible a mistake you make, you can't damage anything but your own private files, and the same restriction applies to programs you run. One result is viruses can't cause the problems on Linux that they do on Windows. Also, you can share the PC with your kids and not worry about them erasing your checking account and tax records.

Linux is more robust than any version of Windows. It isn't uncommon for a Linux machine to stay up for a year or more without needing a reboot. It is estimated that about half the Web sites on the Internet are running on Linux. The professional community is beginning to recognize this, with the result that such critical applications as LAN and database servers are being moved from Unix to Linux. Because the source code is available, it is subject to close scrutiny for errors. When bugs are found, anybody can fix them; we don't have to convince a vendor that he should spend the resources to fix bugs rather than add features.

**WHO SHOULD USE LINUX?** While Linux is more powerful than Windows, it requires more knowledge from its users. If you are new to computing, you should probably stay with DOS and Windows for a while. Although Linux can run many DOS and Windows 3.1 programs, it can't run them all, nor can it run any Windows 95 or 98 software. This means that most Linux users will also keep Windows running. Why would you want to go to the trouble of adding Linux? If you are a computer professional or student, experience with Unix is

essential, and Linux offers the only way to get this at home. Linux is open and accessible; you can learn as much about it and how it works as you have the time and interest for it. You can write programs in a dozen languages, set up a local network or a Web site, or develop your own graphical user interface without buying additional software. Linux comes with hundreds of software tools, and its users often prefer to build the applications they need from these rather than purchasing commercial software.

Next month, I'll discuss how to obtain Linux and what hardware it requires and describe some of the software that comes with it. If you can't wait until then, you can check the Web site, <http://www.linuxresources.com/> ♦

*Best Tech Column, The Intergalactic User Group Conference.*

# Partition Magic version 4

## By Clive Apps (PCCT)

I have been using Partition Magic for about five years now, ever since the first release. I had and used version 2 for a long time until I needed to get version 3 to handle VFAT and FAT32 partitions. I got the version 3 on a deal for a \$15 US rebate (the rebate check did not arrive until long after it had expired and I was not impressed with this at all). I now have version 4 to review and I recently tried it out. I tested the software on a recent model, name brand (international company), reliable, Pentium laptop.

This version is very similar to version 3 except for the ability to convert FAT versions to FAT 32 and back again, and slightly better handling Linux partitions on a drive. The interface remains practical and works fine. The DOS based version now includes a graphic interface similar to the Windows version. Performance is about the same as version 3 with speed and results also about the same. I did find errors in the manual that also complicated using the product, as at least one file in the book was described with an incorrect name.

I also tried the Boot Magic software that now comes with the latest version of Partition Magic. Although Powerquest claims it works better than the IBM Boot Manager that was previously included, I tend to disagree. In fact, I would actually go as far as to say that unless you are a very experienced user I would not recommend installing this software in your system.

The software would not accept the serial number that came with it as a valid number (instructions were to use the same number that Partition Magic was using). Most users would have given up at this point and returned the software as a defective product. To get around this I loaded the files from the DOS version on a small test partition that I use to install from and figured out how to make it work.

There is a bug in the window that names partitions as it finds them: when back spacing to change characters in the partition name menu the cursor position was off by at least one character in some cases, this would leave extra undeleted characters in the name when it was saved.

No properly designed boot sector software should sit in a partition with an operating system. This is exactly what Boot Magic does. I simulated a corrupted file system by installing Boot Magic in a small partition by itself and then deleted the partition. The machine would not boot, it hung looking for a file required by Boot Magic that was no longer there. We could not reinstall the Boot Magic software because it thought that it was still installed in the machine, even though we had deleted the partition that it was living in.

It took myself and a friend (who between us have more than 40 years experience with computers) more than half an hour to figure out how to get rid of the vector stub, and even then it was only by a fluke that we figured it out.

The software did locate all bootable partitions on the machine, install them to a menu, and allow them to boot, but I would not take a chance using this when I know that the IBM Boot Manager is more stable and cannot be corrupted by a bad operating system, since it lives in its own partition safe from harm.

I like the Partition Magic software itself, but the Boot Magic product definitely needs more work. ♦

*PowerQuest,  
Partition Magic ver. 4  
\$74.99*

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# Norton 2000

By Joan Latchford (PCCT)

As I get older, I become increasingly lazy about putting on my thinking cap to track down the solutions to obscure problems identified by computer generated messages. If I can find a piece of software to do it for me I am only too happy to let it "do its own thing." Recently a blown neighbourhood transformer marooned us in the lobby of our high-rise. As I sat over a candlelit beer in the Rex, I decided at the very least, it was time to check my own system for year 2000 compliance.

Enter Norton 2000. By, and not so large, its requirements are fairly modest:

**386 or greater**  
**16 MB or more of installed memory**  
**48 MB or more of available swap space**  
**10 MB or more of available hard drive space.**

Installation is guided by the usual wizard and upon completion logs onto the Symantec site to install any updates or patches. In my case it immediately found and installed one. You are then asked to re-boot.

You will then find Norton 2000 on your Start Menu and the opening screen lets you choose whether you want to be guided by a wizard or to operate hands on. I chose hands on.

Besides the usual File, Edit, View, on the menu bar you get "Scan" "Tools" and "Help." Scan gives you an alternative to the familiar VCR commands of "Start, Resume, Skip File" and "Stop" which you will also find on the icon bar below. "Find" on Tools offers "Make BIOS Re-boot Test Disk", and "Live Update."

Below the task bar your screen is divided into three horizontal rectangles containing traffic light icons. They comprise System Date Test, Application Scan and Data File Scan.

Select the test you want to run, click on the VCR "Start" button (a shamrock green arrow) and wait while Norton 2000 runs a series of scans and analyses. The results are reported in detail below in the third portion of the screen.

For instance, on first running of the system date test my traffic light gave me a yellow light. An explanatory message told me "The Microsoft short date dialogue box you reach via date/time from control panel showed "mm/dd/yy." Changing this to "mm/dd/yyyy" and clicking on "apply" corrected the problem so that the second time the test was run I got a green light. This solution remained stable after a re-boot.

Norton 2000 recommended going to the "Tools" menu and choosing to create a BIOS Boot disk an easy automatic task. Re-booting my system after putting it into the A: drive I waited while it checked that my BIOS would function and correctly identify leap years up to the year 2015. (As I'll be pushing 90, I hope the same functionality will apply to myself.)

Norton 2000 gives you remedial tips for these errors and even provides an icon of a lightning bolt to connect you to a manufacturer's Internet site for a necessary patch. One alert was for a missing .dll file available in Office 97 SR-2. Since the only portion of Office I am using currently is Word 97, I had not bothered to download and install SR-1, a prerequisite to the installation of SR-2, (downloading on my main system even as I type this on my trusty laptop). Another alert concerned WinFax version 9.

The manual for Norton 2000 indicates levels of error severity which may show up when you run the Application Scan by rainbow colour coding. These levels are:

Severity 1—Known Application but no compliance information.

Severity 2—Unknown Application, unknown date issue. No compliance information available.

Severity 3—Minor date issue—application is known to have a date issue—however, a work around is available.

Severity 4—Major date issue—The application has a date issue with no easy work around

Severity 5—Unusable—a major function of the program does not operate at all after 1999, i.e., inability to sort accurately. Must be replaced. (I have abbreviated these descriptions somewhat.)

All alerts can be clicked to expand their information into greater detail which you can print out for further study.

## THE BALLAD OF THE Y2K (sing to the tune of "Gilligan's Island")

Just sit right back and you'll hear a tale  
Of the doom that is our fate.  
That started when programmers used  
Two digits for a date  
Two digits for a date

RAM memory was smaller then;  
Hard drives were tiny, too.  
"Four digits are extravagant,  
So let's get by with two.  
So let's get by with two."

"This works through 1999,"  
The programmers did say.  
"Unless we write new code by then  
The data goes away.  
The data goes away."

But management had not a clue;  
"It works fine now, you bet!  
Rewriting code costs money,  
We won't do it just yet.  
We won't do it just yet."

Now when 2000 rolls around  
It all goes straight to hell,  
For zero less then ninety-nine,  
As anyone can tell.  
As anyone can tell.

The mail won't bring your pension check;  
It won't be sent to you  
When you're no longer sixty-eight  
But minus thirty-two.  
But minus thirty-two.

The problems we're about to face  
Are frightening, for sure.  
And reading every line of code's  
The only certain cure.  
The only certain cure.

[ key change, the big finish coming]

There's not much time, there's too much code,  
And COBOL-coders, few.  
When the century is finished,  
We may be finished, too.

---

Thanks to Colleen Cameron!

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### Norton concluded from previous column

Since I am not a database or spreadsheet user, my data scan gave me a welcome green light. I would have to say that users of such programs could make even better usage of this program than I.

To sum up. Norton 2000 appears to have been well thought out and executed. The manual is slender but adequate. It provides you with information, advice, and leaves you to make the choice whether to act on its recommendations or not. ❖

Symantec, Norton 2000, \$79.99

# What on earth?

## are these downloaded files ...

### By Bernard Nottage (PCCT)

How many times have I said that over the years, as I evaluated files for the Software Library and I bet many of you have said the same thing. The trouble really began when the good old compressed ZIP files, which I could at least take a peek at the description of, slowly started being replaced with self-extracting compressed EXE installation files. I had to install these files to see what the program was all about and then uninstall it.

Most of the file names did not give a clue to the content and so many files never got any further than my download folder. I decided a better organized approach was needed and studied several download managers before selecting Download Wonder as my choice.

After having installed it, I checked out the various options and indicated where my anti-virus programme was (so the files would be automatically checked whilst downloading), and also where my UNZIP utility was located, so I could take a look at zipped files. Another option I decided to set up at this time was to choose various categories of downloaded files, such as multimedia, internet tools, graphics etc., although categories can be added even when you are downloading. It is also important to select a folder for your downloads. I also selected for Download Wonder to be loaded automatically, when I booted up my computer.

After a few experiments, this is how I now keep track of my downloads. When I am at a download site, I first of all highlight any descriptive text on the programme and then copy it to the clipboard (right mouse click, click on copy or

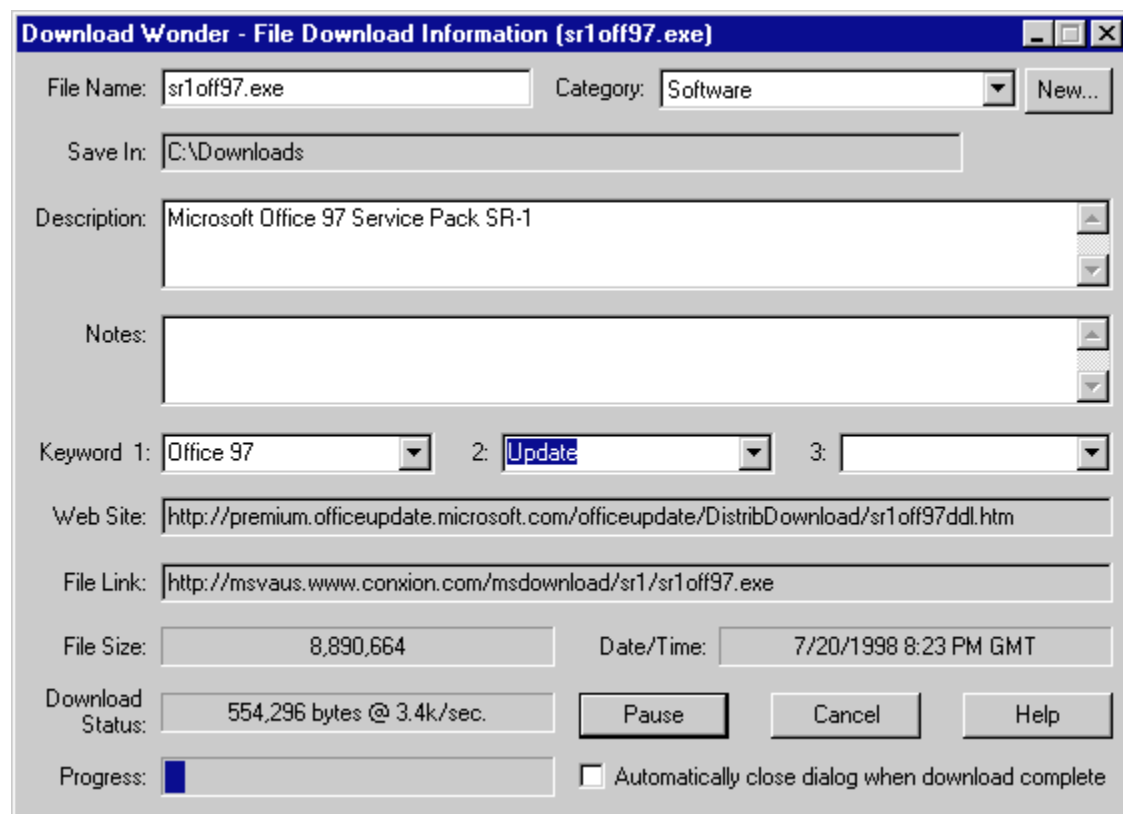


Figure 1

All you have to do is choose a category the file belongs to from your previously selected list, or choose a new one. If for some reason your downloading is interrupted from an HTTP site that has a resume facility, you can revisit the site and resume where you left off; no more having to start from the beginning again..

This programme works with Netscape Navigator, Microsoft Internet Explorer (even v5.0 beta 2) or other Mosaic based browsers. Built-in HTTP and FTP support. It will run on Windows 95/98 and NT.

Don't download without this programme. ❖

The latest fully functional evaluation version will be available in the Software Library.

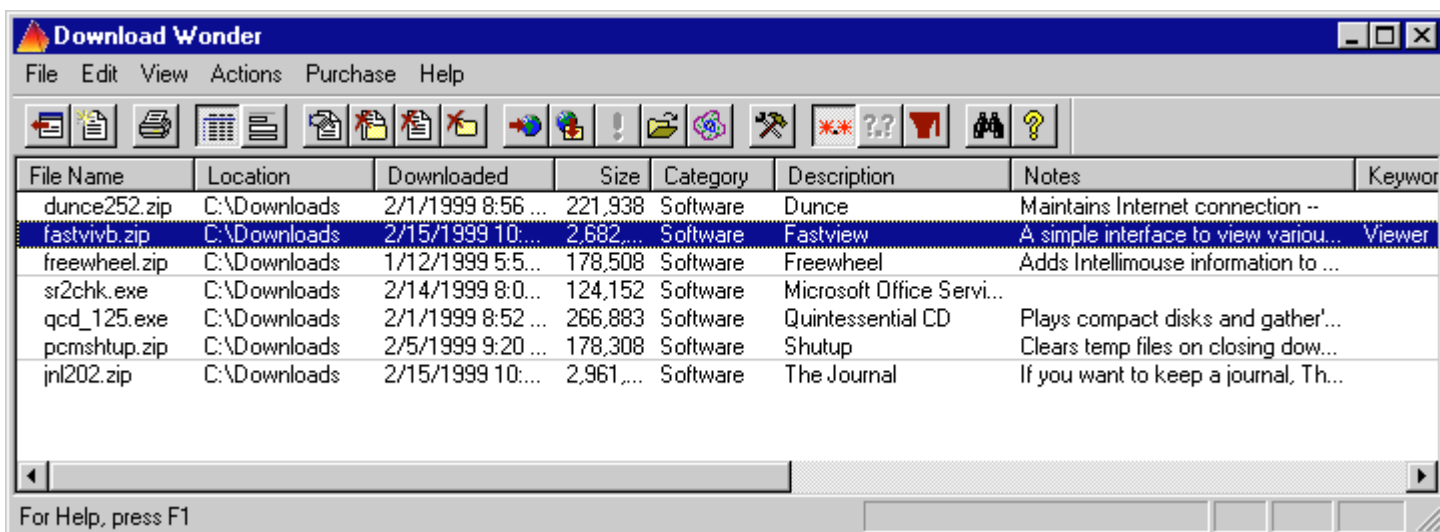


Figure 2

*Five Horsemen concluded from page 1*

need something big for video storage. I found that 4 GB is useless so went to a 20 GB external VideoRaid by Medea Corporation. It's the size of a Shredded Wheat box which means it must have substantial bearings. My model is the 4/20 pci drive at \$2200 US. Never have I had so little trouble with a device and I take my hat off to the folks at Medea. This is non-SCSI and is very fast. I am tending to leave SCSI, in favour of EIDE drives which now compete in speed and are easier to fiddle with if I have to. Their number is 818 597-7645.

**5. TRAINING TAPES.** It was a lucky day that I happened on a company that sells a set of training tapes for Adobe Premier 5. These make you an expert in no time and at about \$400 US for five tapes are the way to go if you have the money. I find myself going back to each one time and again. From Total Training at 760 944-3900.

You can use Windows 98 on any of the above although I have just gone to NT and am happy with it. There are many animation programs that only come in NT, hence the move. I thank God for my gett video—there's nothing creative and challengi



### A Dr. Tips Prescription Steve Rakus (PCCT)

**For Windows 95, 98 & NT4.**

If you have about 30 MB of hard drive space to spare, you may wish to copy the Windows 95 CAB files from the installation CD to your local drive. That way, you won't need to insert the CD when you make changes (such as installing a component). However, without sacrificing much more space on your hard drive—32.2 MB, as opposed to 29.6 MB—you can copy the entire Win95 folder, including the setup files, from the CD to a local drive. It's best to do this on computers that have multiple drives, storing the Win95 folder on a drive other than the one where Windows is installed (in most cases, C:\). Then, any reinstallation of Windows is a breeze. Just 'format /s' the C drive and run setup.exe from the Win95 folder (on the other drive). No CD-ROM is necessary, and the installation is really fast. (For best performance, try to keep your C drive as clean as possible—install programs and store data on drives other than C.) This technique can be used on other operating systems, for example Windows 98 or NT4. Note: This tip is intended for advanced users only. It is not recommend to use this reinstallation technique unless you really know what you're doing! ❖

# PCCT Family Membership Application Form



**SEND TO**  
**The Personal Computer Club of Toronto**  
**Membership Director**  
**P.O. Box 5429, Station A,**  
**Toronto, Ontario,**  
**Canada M5W 1N6**

Annual Family Membership Fees:  
 \$65/year (per household)

Fax/Voice: (416) 633-6971  
 BBS: (416) 636-6394

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Street: \_\_\_\_\_ Apt/Suite: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City: \_\_\_\_\_ Prov./State: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Country: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal/Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Res. Ph: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ Bus. Ph: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_  
 Fax: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Profession: \_\_\_\_\_ Company: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Cheque enclosed:  Amount: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ **I WANT MORE INFO:**   
 VISA  VISA Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiry Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Where did you pick up this copy of read.me? \_\_\_\_\_

## PCCT Family Membership Benefits

**With your family membership you get:**

- Expert help from knowledgeable computer users;
- Special deals on Internet service, software and hardware;
- A monthly draw and an auction for great products;
- Demonstrations by leading software and hardware companies;
- 11 monthly Special Interest Groups (SIG) meetings;
- Access to a software library with the best of shareware and freeware programs; communications software;
- Access to the club BBS (for a one-time set up fee of \$20);
- Monthly issues of the club newsletter you're holding right now!

### FREE ADMISSION . . . the night is on us!!!

**SAVE:** \$5 with this coupon at a PCCT general meeting.

**WHERE:** North York Memorial Centre, 5110 Yonge Street, one floor below the Central Library.

**TIME:** 7 p.m.

**WHEN:** Third Tuesday of the month. see the calendar below.

Where did you pick up this copy of read.me? \_\_\_\_\_

### ADMIT ONE



# Calendar of Events

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
<b>MARCH</b>	1	2 <b>Windows SIG</b> YPL at 7:30 pm	3 <b>Investment SIG</b> YPL at 7:00 pm	4 <b>The WIN Basics SIG</b> YPL at 7:00 pm
	8 <b>Hardware SIG</b> St. A. at 7:30 pm	9 <b>Daytime SIG</b> St. A. at 1:00 pm	10 <b>Digital Imaging SIG</b> YPL at 7:30 pm	11 <b>Visual Basic SIG</b> YPL at 7:00 pm
	15	16 <b>General Meeting</b> NYC at 7:00 pm	17 <b>New User SIG</b> YPL at 7:30 pm	18 <b>MS Office SIG</b> YPL at 7:00 pm
	22	23 <b>Daytime SIG</b> St. A. at 1:00 pm <b>Internet SIG</b> YPL at 7:30 pm	24	25 <b>Genealogy SIG</b> YPL at 7:30 pm

## INFO LINE!



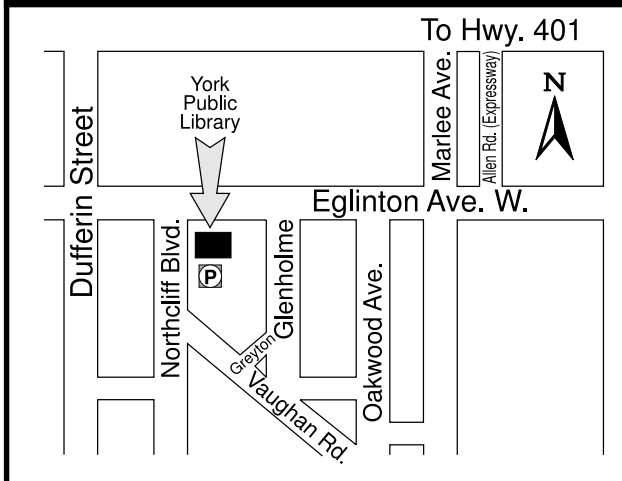
Find out what is going on at the PCCT each week by calling the club hotline at (416) 633-6971 for the latest news on meetings.

Check for last minute changes. If there is a last minute cancellation of a SIG meeting, the message should be on our phone line or BBS.

## NYC North York Memorial Comm. Hall, 5110 Yonge St.



## YPL York Public Library 1745 Eglinton Ave., West



	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
<b>APRIL</b>				1 <b>Win Basics SIG</b> YPL 7:00 pm
	5	6 <b>Windows SIG</b> YPL at 7:30 pm	7 <b>Investment SIG</b> YPL 7:30 pm	8 <b>Visual Basic SIG</b> YPL at 7:30 pm
	12 <b>Hardware SIG</b> St. A at 7:30 pm	13 <b>Daytime SIG</b> St. A at 1:00 pm <b>Internet SIG</b> YPL 7:30	14 <b>Digital Imaging SIG</b> YPL 7:30 pm	15 <b>MS Office SIG</b> YPL 7:00
	19	20 <b>General Meeting</b> NYC at 7:00	21 <b>New User Group</b> YPL at 7:30	22 <b>Genealogy SIG</b> YPL 7:30pm
	26	27 <b>DayTime SIG</b> St. A at 1:00 pm <b>Internet SIG</b> YPL at 7:30 pm	28	29

### SPECIAL EVENT ON MARCH 31ST

**Linux Meeting at York Public Library 7:30 pm**

## St. A Church of St. Andrew 2333 Victoria Park Ave.

