

OTTAWA IBM P.C. USERS' GROUP

NEWSLETTER

March 21st, 1985 - Issue 85(2)

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***** IMPORTANT NOTICE: CHANGE OF MEETING DATE *****

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* NEXT MEETING DATE IS: Thursday, March 28th at 8:00 p.m. *

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* MEETING LOCATION IS: NRC AUDITORIUM, 100 Sussex Drive *

* (Gothic Building opposite Ottawa City Hall - Parking in Rear) *

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Spring has arrived and love is in the air. However, don't let your spouse or girl/boy friend discover you warmly caressing that electronic marvel you treasure so deeply. I know it's hard to hide your feelings when you hear that warm BEEP and handle those perfectly formed floppies. But get a hold of yourself. Don't let your PC come between you and your other loved ones. Let them in on the joys of computing and bring them out to the next meeting.

Please note the date change. Unfortunately this was necessary due to booking problems with the NRC. The rest of the year is now booked and we can resume our normal "last Wednesday of the month" routine after this March meeting. We regret any inconvenience this change may have caused.

As usual, I am having great difficulty in finding material for the newsletter. Please let me hear from you. I know there are some great articles lurking out there somewhere. I will accept submissions in either hard-copy or electronic form. For hard-copy, please send your items to:

Gordon Hopkins
17-D Forester Crescent
Nepean, Ontario K2H 8Y1

HINDSIGHT

Report on the PC Users' Group Meeting, January 30th, 1985
By: Eric Clyde

This was the first meeting to be held in the auditorium of the National Research Council Building at 100 Sussex Drive.

Fees for 1985/86. It was announced, and passed by general consensus, that the membership fees for next year will be raised to \$20.

The speaker for the evening was Eugene Lewis, Canadian representative for Henco Software, who described and demonstrated a powerful relational database management and fourth generation software package called INFO. For the last ten years it has been running on various types of minicomputers, including the VAX and DEC 10. About twenty of these installations are in Ottawa, at DND, Medical Research Council, Fisheries & Oceans, Statistics Canada, Dept. of Insurance, etc.

On December 10th they released a version for the IBM PC or XT, or various compatibles including the Columbia, Compaq, Corona, Olivetti and Tandy 2000. It requires 512K RAM and a hard disk, and the software takes up 1.3 megabytes, including the help files. The single unit price is \$1,200 (U.S.). By the end of December over \$1 million worth had been sold, mostly to owners of the minicomputer version.

A great deal of interest was shown in the ease of setting up a new database and in the ease with which end users could develop programs to perform complicated searches. As the speaker claimed, this could indeed help eliminate the bottle necks caused by overworked data processing departments, enabling them to concentrate on their more professional tasks.

Report on the PC Users' Group Meeting, February 27th, 1985
By: Eric Clyde

The February meeting had two speakers -- Gord Hopkins and Mike Luckham. Mike spoke on the RS232 interface -- what is it, what can it be used for, how fast is it, and what does RS232 compatible mean? Some of the problems of errors of transmission and how they can be overcome, and also of connecting up serial equipment were described.

Gord spoke on a "natural language" interface called CLOUT, which has become available for the PC at \$250-\$350 (Canadian), and which can access files produced by 123 and dBASE II, as well as some other programs. There is a built-in dictionary and statements can be defined to specify, for example, which file to look in if question related to salaries is asked. Some of the advantages and disadvantages of CLOUT were covered, the biggest disadvantage being how easy it is to get a false impression of the intelligence of the machine! CLOUT is produced by Microrim and comes with a very good tutorial.

RS-232 MADE EASY

In response to the interest shown at last month's meeting to Mike Luckham's talk on the RS-232 interface, we have included some of the key tables and diagrams from Mike's talk for your future reference. They can be found on the last page of the newsletter.

SOFTWARE SIDE OF THE NEWS

*** Club Disk Subscriptions ***
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A new feature to be introduced into the club is Disk Subscriptions. Club members can get a subscription to the monthly club diskettes and have the convenience of automatically having a new diskette waiting for them at the next monthly meeting. This also allows members to miss a meeting and still be able to pick up the previous disk as well as the current disk at the next meeting they attend.

Another new feature to the Library is DISK-00! This disk will contain the text files that describe all the programs available on each monthly disk. Now there will be one place you can go to find out exactly what is in the Library and on which disk you can find it. Once obtained, the disk will have to be maintained by the member by copying the DISK-???.TXT file from the current disk to DISK-00. Periodically, listings of the Library's Specialty Diskettes will be published in the monthly diskettes and these too can be updated onto DISK-00.

The club disk subscriptions will start in March and will cost \$45.00 for 1 year. Subscriptions made during the year will be pro-rated to reflect the balance of the year's subscription. If you sign up for subscriptions in March, however, you'll not only receive the first diskette of your subscription, but you'll also get a freebie copy of DISK-00! (Not a bad deal, eh?)

Subscriptions will be accepted by any of the Library staff or can be obtained through Ann Moxley at the same time as your membership renewal. (It's that time of the year again!)

Happy Computing !!!

Chris Taylor
Michel Lemire
Mike Schupan

*** NEW DISKS ***
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The IBM PC User's Group of Ottawa is expanding it's library by adding a new line of "Specialty Disks"! These new disks are collections of programs that pertain to one theme or software package, and therefore do not suit themselves to being distributed as general library disks. They are available, for a nominal fee, just by asking.

Our current list of Specialty Disks includes:

- * R:BASE (DEMO): Demonstration disk of the R:BASE Database Management Program. (Also see the CLOUT Demo program.)
- * CLOUT (DEMO): A Natural Language interface program to query the contents of an R:BASE database. Talk in your language, not the computer's!
- * DESK MASTER: Personal Computing Magazine's solution to desk top management. Includes: Word Processing, List Management, Appointment Calender. All in BASIC for easy modification.
- * MICROSOFT WORD (DEMO): Try it before you buy it!

Specialty Disks Continued:

- * XYWRITE II+ (DEMO): Another program you can "Test Drive".
- * HARVARD PROJECT MANAGER (DEMO): PERT & GANTT charting at it's best for projects on time every time!
- * RATBAS: A RAtional BASic preprocessor to make your BASIC programs more structured and easier to maintain.
- * PC-FILE III: The latest update to the popular public domain database program.
- * EXTENDED BATCH: A PC-DOS utility that will give your batch processing new power and capabilities.
- * LETUS A-B-C: A database of magazine articles from 1982 on. The magazines included are: PC World, Byte, PC Magazine, Personal Computer Age, PC Technical Journal, & Softalk.
- * MVP FORTH: Now you can have the FORTH language on your PC.
- * EPISTAT 3.0: A general purpose collection of statistics routines to analyze your data.
- * PC PROFESSOR: Tired of reading books on how to use your computer? Let your computer show you the way!
- * ULTRA-UTILITIES: A great collection of programs to enhance the operation of your system.
- * GENEALOGY 2.0: Follow your family ties and discover your roots.
- * 3D GRAPHICS: Graphics utility to draw and display 3D objects.
- * PC-WRITE V2.1: A "Freeware" word processor to rival the \$300+ commercial packages.
- * GOLDEN GATE: Main frame to PC interface program that includes integrated features.
- * PC PICTURE GRAPHICS: Design graphics screens with an extensive library of predefined symbols.
- * BETTER BASIC: Demonstration of Summit Software's solutions to IBM's BASIC problems
- * I.B.MAGAZETTE: Electronic magazine on your favorite computer.
- * PC-TALK III: One of the best communications programs for your PC at one of the best prices around.
- * ASSEMBLY LANGUAGE TUTORIAL: Also includes several utilities including trend analysis macros for Lotus 123.

Specialty Disks Continued:

- * PC-MUSICIAN: Create a symphony or jingle by writing directly on a musical staff, using notes and rests.
- * PASCAL TOOLS (Vols. 1-3): Three disks full of useful routines and filters for Pascal programmer's, including editor/formatter.
- * C - UTILITIES: Collection of C routines for string searches, cross-referencing, and combining files.
- * FILTERS: Get rid of those tabs, carriage returns, or whatever; count words, and generate screens for dBase II.
- * BBS UTILITIES #14: Great adventure game (Castle), full-screen list program with 4-way scroll and search, plus RAM disk.
- * CONFIDANT: Encode that sensitive data using the national Data Encryption Standard (DES) for high security.
- * SPRITE: Create sprites (graphics characters made from sets of pixels) for use in your graphics and animation programs.

UPCOMING EVENTS

The 1985 San Francisco Computer Faire
By: Gary Finley

This year's West Coast Computer Faire in San Francisco is from March 30 to April 2. This is more of a hobbiest oriented show than Comdex, which is rather more business and professional oriented. Unlike Comdex, which has the commercial exhibits distributed in 'show suites' located in several hotels, the displays at the Faire are all together in one or two very large halls. It usually takes me two days just to walk past every booth, and a third to spend some time at the ones with products of special interest. The show is an exciting exposure to current and upcoming products, and I find it very useful.

Another issue about this conference that may interest some of you is the flea-market atmosphere. Mail-order and discount suppliers (i.e., Jade, California Digital, and that bunch) put on 'show specials', and some of their prices are very low. One can pick up a few bargains to help offset the cost of making the trip. Further, there are also specials on major items (up to whole systems) which could allow one to save quite a bit of money if you had such an item in mind for purchase in the near future. On the last day of the show, the discount houses try hard to sell off their show stock so as not to have to pack it up for shipment back home. The result of this policy is a sort of hour-by-hour 'Dutch Auction', in which things just keep getting cheaper and cheaper until the suppliers are sold out. In the heat of this flurry, Gordon Hopkins was able to buy some 64k ram chips for his IBM at \$3.00 (US) each. This was two years ago, mind you, when those chips were still around \$16 locally.

SUBMITTED ARTICLES

Thoughts and impressions of Microsoft Word
by Jim Walsh

I recently recieved a copy of Microsoft Word, and have spent a fair amount of time playing with it. This item contains my thoughts and opinions of the product. I recieved version 1.15, which is not the latest version. Apparently there is a version 2.00, which I will be getting soon from MS. No word on what's new.

I ordered my copy of Word with the mouse, as it's only about \$90 more. I'm not sure what the retail price is, as I got mine wholesale. You should be able to get Word with the mouse somewhere in the \$500 range. Word also comes with an excellent tutorial. Because my Word came with the mouse, the tutorial is designed to be run with the mouse - in fact, if you try running it without having the mouse driver installed, it tells you to install it before you can continue.

It took about 3 hours to run though the tutorial, which covers virtually all aspects of Word. I consider it to be an excellent tutorial - I have not once looked at the Word manual since finishing the tutorial.

Now on to the good stuff - my impressions of Word itself. It is INCREDIBLE. By far the best text editor or word processor I have ever used (and I've used a LOT). It's not incredibly well suited for tasks such as editing programs (I still use PE for that) but it is excellent for all word processing activities. The nicest thing about it is that it's a true WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get) Word processor. If you format a header to be bold italic underlined superscripts, that's what you see on the screen. If using a color graphics card, the resolution isn't too hot when you do things like bold italics and such, but it's still readable. I have recently added a Hercules board to my system, and it lets you display 40 lines and 93 characters, with much better resolution than the color card (bold italics, for example, are much more readable).

Although I use a mouse with Word (and it works quite a bit better with it), I have also tried using it without a mouse. It still works very well, although it takes a bit longer to get certain things done using the keyboard rather than the mouse. I can't think of too many features that I would want in a word processor that Word doesn't have. It has excellent formatting cababilities (ie. different headers on left and right pages, automatic footnoting, etc) but doesn't have such things as automatic index or table of content creation.

In relation to most other word processors, Word supports an incredible number of output devices, including the HP Thinkjet, HP Laserjet, and Xerox 2700 printer. Files can be saved in normal ASCII for interchange with other programs, but you lose, of course, all the fancy formatting and such. New device drivers are VERY simple to write, and there is in fact an entire section of the manual to help you. You simply create a file listing the specs of your device using certain keywords, parameters, etc. and run the file through a special (supplied) program, which will create the driver file which can be used directly by Word. Such things as multiple fonts and sizes, character width tables, etc. can all be handled with Word and the output drivers. If you have a specialized device that can't be specified in a device driver (for example, you might need interaction while setting up your device, loading character width tables, etc.) Word will allow you to print your file using a special device driver called MSPRINT. MSPRINT will output your file in a special format which can easily be read by a filter-type program and used to drive your

output device.

An awful lot of work went into making Word, and it shows - from the quality of the program (I have found no bugs), to the tutorial, to the well-written manual, to their concern that users be able to drive virtually any output device. One problem with many other word processing programs is that there is a limited number of output devices which can be used, and if yours isn't in the list, tough noogies. Word has an extensive list of available devices (over 20), and also allows you to create your own driver without having to code in assembler (or anything else, for that matter).

I would strongly suggest that anyone looking for a word processing program for an IBM PC type computer look at Word. In my opinion, nothing else that I have used comes close (WordStar, MultiMate, Easywriter II, and others).

HINT 1: Still cursing the IBM dual purpose numeric keypad and cursor cluster? If you are mainly entering numbers and yet occasionally want to cursor somewhere without constantly toggling the NUM LOCK key, simply leave it in NUM LOCK mode for easy number entry and then when you want to navigate with the cursor, use your left hand to hold down the shift key. This will momentarily convert the keypad to a cursor cluster. Releasing the shift key puts you back to entering numbers.

HINT 2: For those touch typists in the club; have you ever wished that your keyboard had tactile cues so you could determine if your fingers were in the right locations without having to look at the keyboard. Wish no longer. A one minute job, with some white glue can provide the keyboard you so desire. Take a tooth pick and put a small dab of white glue on it, then carefully apply a small dot of the glue to the F- and J-keys on the main keyboard, and to the 5-key on the numeric keypad. When the glue hardens, it provides an almost invisible bump on those keys needed for orienting your hands to the keyboard.

LATE NEWS FLASH >>>>>

We have two super meetings coming up. At the March meeting, Marty Habicht will be passing along his expertise in "Setting up Databases". I think many of us have learned the hard way that this is an endeavour that takes a lot of careful thought.

In April, John Nash (Contributing Editor to BYTE Magazine) will be making an encore presentation on the "History of Computers". With John's wealth of anecdotes, I'm sure this will be an interesting meeting for all of us.

Finally, don't forget that it is time to renew your membership. The fees have been raised to \$20 to accommodate our increased operating costs and to better serve you by enlarging our software library. Anne will be happy to relieve you of one of your crisp \$20 bills at the next meeting.

I look forward to seeing you at the next meeting so don't forget the CHANGE IN DATE.

That's all for now!!!
HAPPY COMPUTING

Gordon Hopkins
Editor

RS-232 Connection Summary

Terms

DCE (Data Communications Equipment)
- such as a modem

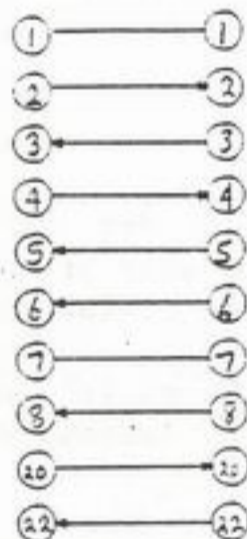
DTE (Data Terminal Equipment)
- such as a serial printer
or IBM-PC asynchronous
adaptor

Pin 1	PROT GND	- chassis/shield ground
Pin 7	SIG GND	- signal/reference ground
Pin 2	XMT DTA	- data sent
Pin 3	RCV DTA	- data received
Pin 4	RTS	- request-to-send
Pin 5	CTS	- clear-to-send
Pin 6	DSR	- data-set-ready
Pin 20	DTR	- data-terminal-ready
Pin 8	CD	- carrier detect
Pin 22	RI	- ring indicator

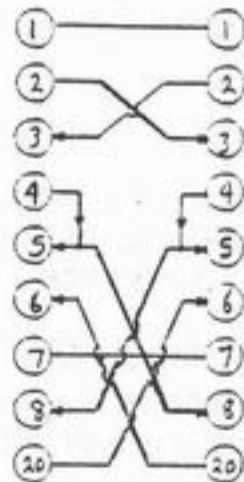
Caution...some devices require additional signals which may only be found by reading product documentation!

Common Connection Diagrams

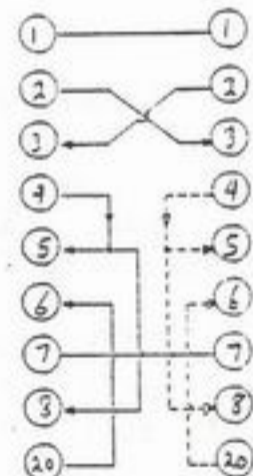
IBM-PC -- MODEM



IBM-PC -- SERIAL PRINTER



IBM-PC -- "DUMB" TERMINAL

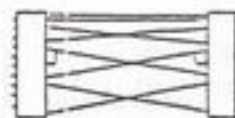


Useful Connection Jigs ("Universal Tool Set")

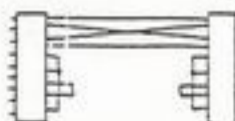
GENDER ADJUSTMENT



NULL MODEM



"DUMB" NULL MODEM



"DUMB" DTE-DCE

