

OTTAWA PC NEWS

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The Newsletter of the Ottawa PC Users' Group (OPCUG)

January 1994

Review of December's meeting

Multimedia, Minasi, and movin' on...

by Jackson Hibler

Animated graphics swirled silently across the screen while the seats were filling for last month's meeting. Sound came with the introduction as Greg Philliban of Computer Aided Design Systems (CADS), Nepean and Glenn Wilson of Autodesk Canada explained that the pc-based presentation introducing CADS' product line had been created on a PC by a Grade 9 student. The figures had been built of 3-D wire frame shapes, which were then "rendered" as 3-D solids and animated.

"A PC with CD-ROM and graphics card are not enough for a multimedia workstation. It is how they are put together that makes it...or not." To get into this work, VGA with 256 colours is the key in the lock. The door is the software.

The best introduction is Autodesk's Multimedia Explorer (list \$300), originally introduced in 1989 as Autodesk Animator. "This was one of the first true animation/paint programs for the PC," said Greg. "It produces images in 320 by 240 and 8-bit (256) colour. The next level is Animator Pro, a two-dimensional animation program with 1024 by 768 and 8-bit colour. Then comes 3D Studio, a three-dimensional high-resolu-

tion animation program with 24-bit colour."

3D Studio does 3D modelling, photo-realistic stills, VGA animations, and broadcast quality video. You can scan in artwork or images, or capture camcorder frames for use by 3D Studio. Once rendered, the output can go straight to NTSC Videotape.

Greg showed us a 10-second animated "intro" done for the Canadian Ski Patrol. Three hundred frames had to be built to support 30 frame/second display rate. "Rendering" those 300 frames took 5 hours. This is not beyond the PC for short clips, but for longer films a new system of "distributed rendering" will allow this work to be spread among several networked PCs, making the process much less time consuming through multi-processing.

As Glenn led us through some of the features of 3D Studio, I began to realize how fortunate we are to learn about competent local firms like Campbell Douglas Keyboards (MIDI music) and Computer Aided Design Systems (animations). They can provide the invaluable support to all who begin to expand their computing into multimedia production.

Minasi

Mark Minasi came to us wearing his "Cassandra" cloak last month...warning of the looming "Twilight of the PC". "Things are too quiet," he complained. "Tech-

INSIDE

Coming up

The Lotus position 3

The PUB

What's new at The PUB 4

The PUB in review 4

Elections '94

1994 nominations and elections to the executive 5

Ottawa PC User's Group Ballot 5

Paradox SIG

The Ottawa Paradox User's Group 6

Internet SIG 6

Software library

December 1993 shareware 6

Learning how

Understanding your system: part 5: CONFIG.SYS 7

Upcoming events 7

Treasurer's preliminary report 8

nodweebs now have the same computers that Grandmother has! You can't spend \$15,000 on a PC now...the big dog is under \$4,000."

As Mark sees it, the name-vendors are worried. The mainstream hardware is really becoming a true commodity, unlike the PS/2s, Compaqs, and Dells. No one wants to buy machines that tie you in to one vendor's non-stand-

Continued on page 2

NEXT MEETING : TUESDAY, January 25, 1994 details on p. 3

ard disk or mother-board mounts, proprietary busses, odd SIPP's, or weird SIMMS. "What is IBM's hottest selling line? AMBRA...a commodity machine!" The only happy spot for proprietary hardware seems to be in notebooks...for now.

But... "have you noticed how slowly PCs are getting faster? For three years there has been no real increase in speed. And every single improvement offers you a little less increased productivity than the last improvement. You won't see a 200 MHz computer until after the turn of the century." Why?

First, "DOS has gotta die, right? I mean, the BIOS won't support disks bigger than 500 Meg. It has lousy device support, serial I/O...but users just won't throw DOS away! Windows claims to multitask, but it doesn't really. It claims to protect memory, but it doesn't really." Mark says that NT runs sweet on a RISC machine IF you run RISC-aware applications, not DOS applications...and to get the full NT speedup you'll need about 24 Meg RAM!

What about RISC? "I think it's a plot—and we have to stop it! RISC can be really fast inside, but outside...RISC doesn't run DOS...no, emulation runs it, and down goes the speed. The 120-MHz RISC machines can do a good job of emulating a 16-MHz 386SX! The DEC Alpha is a 215 MHz machine inside, but it's 33 MHz on the mother-board! Right now, RISC is more status than substance."

Well how about the Pentium? "This is the machine that can do your accounts [in the CPU] and cook your eggs [on the CPU] at the same time!"

Is there a software solution? Mark thinks so. "It's time for software to be fine-tuned...not for more hardware." As Mark

see it, if your (top three:Ed) applications are not native to the operating system, don't waste your money on that operating system: OS/2, NT, any of them. Look for improvements in applications software to yield the best productivity gains for the next while.

That fits with my own suspicions that Microsoft's OLE 2.0 is more important to the user than NT will ever be. And that a \$300 local bus video/mother-board upgrade will give us more speed per dollar than any CPU change right now.

Movin' on...

I hope I will be reading the work of a new author for our meeting

reports next month. I have been writing these reports off and on (mostly on) for the past several years, but my present job is just taking too much of my days, nights, and weekends to permit me to continue. There are many honours and privileges to be enjoyed...free parking at the back parking lot...a guaranteed seat, if you come early...you didn't know about those? But mostly there is the writer's challenge in making our meetings live again in the newsletter. I'm sure there are several of you out there! Contact Chris Seal on the PUB or at 831-0280.

Cheers!

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The main presentation on the use of Autodesk Animator Pro and Autodesk 3D

Studio was followed by a presentation from Mark Minasi, who is a consultant and educator in the fields of advanced PC operating platforms and PC technology, and is also a contributing editor for Compute and Byte magazines, as well as an author of several books.

The animation presentation was opened to the sights and sounds of a video that showed a variety of professionally-made corporate and public advertising animations produced with Autodesk 3D Studio. The introduction was made by Mr Greg Philliban of Computer Aided Design Systems (on Merivale Road). Greg then introduced Mr Glenn Wilson, who is Autodesk Canada's Multimedia Sales Manager.

By using 3D Studio on a Compaq 486/66 that was equipped with 16 Mb of ram and a 340 Mb hard disk, Glenn demonstrated the basic principles of creating a 3D animated presentation. The example was the creation of a butterfly that flew around, flapping its wings as it did so. The butterfly was started from a graphic that looked like a folded strip of paper (folded along

its length). The image was tapered, and copied many times. Each copy was joined to the others at 'the sharp end', and the result looked like a fan, and which became one of the wings. A copy was made of this to make the second wing.

Glenn then demonstrated how 3D Studio can map textures and colours onto an image, which he did to give the wings a texture and colour. Then he revealed how to animate the image by using the technique of creating start and end frames, and having the computer fill in the between frames. Glenn then showed how one can draw a route and have the animated image follow the route.

The 3D Studio screen in which most of the work is done is divided into four windows. Three windows show the top, side, and front views of the image. The fourth window shows a three-quarter view. The tools include the ability to view the image as if was illuminated from a variety of lights. These lights can be selected according to type, quantity, spread, location, and intensity. And your view is as determined through a 'camera' which you can specify ac-

continued on back page

The Lotus position

by Julie Dustin

Come get "lotusized" at the next OPCUG meeting on January 25. Jean Montminy, Senior Systems Engineer from Lotus Development Corporation and Kim Adams, National Marketing Manager for Approach, also from Lotus, will be giving us all the technical details about Lotus SmartSuite 2.1.

Windows application would be the first to allow us to cut and paste more than one object at a time through Clipboard.

Lotus has tried to enhance and add unique features to some of their products. "The Application Tiler, available first in Ami Pro, is an icon which will allow you to tile any two Lotus Windows applications horizontally or vertically," Montminy explains. "The Application Manager allows users to switch between Lotus applications by clicking on its product icon."

Calendar *(subject to change)*

General Meeting Location: Sir Robert Borden HS
131 Greenbank Road

General Meeting Time: 7:30 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Date and Time	Topic and Location
Tuesday, 25 January	See this page.
Monday, 21 February	WordPerfect
Monday, 28 March	Borland

Approach 2.1

Approach 2.1 is a end user database tool being offered to OPCUG members at a great price and is a recent outside purchase by Lotus. It is also included in the SmartSuite. Montminy adds, "This product doesn't have its own file format because it uses dBase file format structure as its default. Smart icons and right-mouse button menus are standard but you will also see some new integration techniques including graphic support and phonetic searches. For example, you can search for a name such as "Philippe" by entering "feleep".

Working together

This presentation, entitled "Working Together", will consist of short demonstrations of all of the products offered in the suite. Yes, in less than two hours you will see **Ami Pro 3.01**, **Lotus 1-2-3 4.01**, **Freelance Graphics 2.01**, **Approach 2.1**, and **Organizer 1.1**. Lotus hopes to prove to you that "while Microsoft is trying to catch up to Lotus in eliminating the boundaries between applications, Lotus has moved on to eliminating the boundaries between people working together" (quote from Lotus brochure). The SmartSuite set is currently available for about the same price as buying only one of the products. Sounds like a deal to me if you don't have to worry about disk space (the 5 applications take a minimum of 27 Mb to a maximum of 62 Mb).

Montminy asserts, "Lotus products are OLE-compliant and, in fact, we feel we take better advantage of the operating system than Microsoft. For example, the Collect and Copy function brings multiple spreadsheet ranges to your word processor in one step by highlighting all the scattered ranges while in Lotus then pasting them into Ami Pro." I often wondered whose

Special offer

Lotus Development Canada is pleased to offer OPCUG members special pricing for a limited time period on Lotus Approach. An order form is included with each mailed copy of this newsletter.

Organizer 1.1

The time management product, Organizer 1.1, has been available for a year. It uses double-clicking as its prime mechanism for adding information in any field, has lots of blank pages for notes and even brings incomplete items forward automatically. Montminy notes, "It works with cc:Mail as well. You put in times and dates with Organizer and it will check with cc:Mail's mailbox names for existence and availability." Now, if only Lotus could promise me that Organizer would tell me (in a nice voice) to buy my mother's birthday present...and nag me until I did!

Continued on back page

What's new at The PUB

by Chris Taylor

If you've visited The PUB recently, you may have noticed some renovations designed to make it easier for you to get on and get the files you want.

Six lines, one number

By the time you read this we will have expanded to 6 lines, all with high speed (v.32bis, 14.4 kbps) modems. All modems now have the same capabilities and since all lines are in a hunt group, you can maximize your chances of getting on by using only the main number (228-0665). Set your communications parameters to 8 data bits, one stop bit, no parity. Set your speed to the highest speed supported by your modem. Note that if you have a v.32bis modem, you should set your speed to 38,400 to get maximum throughput.

Downloads now unaffected by time limit

Another recent change at The PUB deals with time limits. While all users get 60 minutes per day access, there are a growing number of files that cannot be downloaded in 60 minutes at 1200bps or even at 2400bps. We even have a file that would be tight at 14.4 kbps a Windows NT patch file over 6 Mb!

As a result, the configuration on The PUB now doesn't check to see if you have enough time left before starting a file transfer. And once the bulletin board software (TBBS) starts a file transfer, it lets you finish it. If you are downloading multiple files using a batch protocol such as ZMODEM, your time is checked between each file. Once you run out of time, you will be logged off automatically.

One problem can arise from this new configuration. Each day at 4:00 a.m., The PUB shuts down automatically to do about 2-minutes worth of maintenance. If someone is downloading a file at this time, all free lines are shut down and then TBBS waits for the file transfer to finish. After

the file transfer is done, TBBS shuts down the board, does it's maintenance tasks and then brings the board back up. The result is that anyone who starts a download that goes past 4:00 a.m. causes all other lines to be unavailable for as long as it takes past 4:00 a.m. for the download to complete.

If you do late night downloads, please be sure to verify that your download will not go past 4:00 a.m. Short of going back to checking time limits before starting downloads, there is currently no way around this problem.

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The PUB in review

by Chris Taylor

The year was a busy one for The PUB. We had 48,979 calls, 7,725 messages posted, and 57,098 downloads during the year.

And 21 programs or information files were downloaded more than 100 times during 1993.

The top ten downloads for the year were:

- PKZIP 204C and 204G (859)
- ALLFILES.ZIP (725)
- RECENT.ZIP (539)
- BBS listings (387)
- PUB30NFO.ZIP (207)
- Visual Basic 2.0 runtime (183)
- LHA213.EXE (177)
- Solar Winds (173)
- DOS 6.2 StepUp (149)
- ELVIRAB4.GIF (145).

With the expansion to 6 lines (all high speed) I expect 1994 will be even busier! My thanks to everyone who visited The PUB. And an especially warm thanks to those who contributed by uploading files and participating in the message areas.

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The following is the presentation from Jack Stekelenburg

We can't always say "NO"

When my friend phoned me up and asked me if I would run for the position of convenor, it would have been easy to say "No". To say yes would mean coming early to each meeting and making sure everything is in order. It would mean making sure the rooms for SIG's are open. It would mean putting up the banner. It would mean getting the coffee ready for everyone to enjoy during the break. It would mean doing other things which I'm not even sure of yet.

It took no coaxing from my caller. I said "YES".

My friend saw in me that I had the desire to help out the group in some way. He saw that I had the skills necessary to perform the tasks required of convenor.

Now I ask you to give me a chance to help out the group by voting for me as convenor.

Jack Stekelenburg

1994 nominations and elections to the executive

by Doug Poulter, Past Chairman

For the 4 elected executive positions other than *Convenor*, only one nomination per position was received. Thus winners by acclamation are:

- Chairman, Harald Freise
- Treasurer, Stan McRoberts
- Secretary, Lynda Simons
- Membership Chairman, Mark Cayer

For the position of Convenor, two candidates came forward: Brian Lungergan and Jack Stekelenburg. To introduce their platforms, both were given 4 weeks to prepare and submit a presentation to appear as a printed column of the January newsletter. Only Jack Stekelenburg has made a submission. At the beginning of the January 25th meeting, both candidates will also have the opportunity to make a verbal presentation of their platform to the membership. A short question and answer period will follow, followed by collection of completed ballots.

To assure fairness, (ie: one vote per member and the opportunity for mail-in-balloting), ballots are being distributed solely with the newsletter. The newsletter is being mailed out early to assure every member of record an equal opportunity to vote. Please bring your ballot and your current (non expired) membership card to the January 25th meeting. To prevent possible voting irregularities, and keep administration to a minimum:

- Newsletter (and thus ballot) printing and mailing are being done as usual by an independent commercial printer.
- Only members registered as paid up for at the time of the creation of the January newsletter mailing labels will receive a ballot and be entitled to vote.
- No ballots reported missing will be replaced.

The ballots are expected to be counted and the winner declared by the end of the January 25th meeting. Good luck to both candidates!

Ottawa PC User's Group Ballot

Cut out this ballot. Please place an X in the box beside the candidate of your choice for the 1994 executive position of CONVENOR.

Brian Lunergan

Jack Stekelenburg

The Ottawa Paradox Users' Group

by Larry Chop

The Ottawa Paradox Users' Group (OPUG) is made up of people in the National Capital Area who are interested in Paradox in both versions: **Paradox for DOS** and **Paradox for Windows**. The meetings are attended by all types of users, from novices to information systems professionals. The meetings generally consist of presentations related to Paradox followed by a business meeting and a question-and-answer forum. We also offer a portable lending library.

January 19th meeting

The next meeting of the OPUG will be held at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, January 19, 1994 at

the Museum of Science and Technology (Yellow Room) located on St. Laurent Boulevard. The agenda (tentative) is as follows:

- discussion of connectivity and data exchange between Paradox for Windows, Quattro Pro and WordPerfect by Steve Finner (from Borland Canada)
- illustration and example of the "action event model" in Paradox for Windows by Richard Brousseau
- tips, tricks, and techniques (TTTs)
- open forum for discussion and questions

February's meeting will cover "organizational generic code" by Nick Potter. For further information about OPUG, please contact Larry Chop at 2368761 or on CompuServe at 73700,2317.

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Internet SIG

by Jerry Gault

The next Internet SIG meeting is on 25 January after the regular meeting. The topics to be discussed include: why the SIG was formed, problems the SIG is having, why surf the net, what's out there, how-to gain access to the Internet, and a question and answer period. There will **not** be an online session at this meeting. Bring along your questions and your ideas of what you would like to see at future SIG meetings.

January 1994 OPCUG Executive Elections Ballot

This ballot may be:

- deposited before the break in a ballot box at the 25 January general meeting
- delivered before 25 January, 5 p.m. to: OPCUG ballot, 3 Thatcher St, Nepean, Ontario, K2G 1S6

Photocopies of ballots are not admissible.

December 1993 shareware

by Norman Dafoe

Another year of great shareware software is promised for 1994, but first we must review the items presented at the **December 1993** meeting. In keeping with the holiday season, a number of popular games were offered. The exciting sequel to Apogee's success of last year arrived with **Duke Nukem II**, a mindless game involving lots of violent graphics and sound (1.2 MB diskette). Another huge action/arcade game called **Halloween Harry** followed in the same tradition, also with superb 256 colour graphics and Sound Blaster sound (1.44 MB diskette). The intellectuals were not forgotten with a trio of strategy/logic games from William Soleau—**FaceTrex**, **IolCap**, and **Robix**, on **Soleau Games # 2**.

A new version of a popular communications program from a few years ago was offered in **Boyan Communications v5.1**, and the latest version of that great VOC file editor for Sound Blaster cars, **Blaster Master v5.95**, was also offered. Lastly, a disk containing various (unknown source) **Print Shop Graphics** rounded out the month's set.

Disk of the Month # 104 included two PC Magazine utilities—**AEDIT**, **DRVLOAD**, as well as several Windows' utilities—**EXECUTOR**, **FONTER**, **FONTNAME**, and **SmartFont**.

There are already a number of exciting games in the queue for January, and as usual, I will be looking for all sorts of good shareware. Drop by the software table at the January meeting to exchange New Year's greetings.

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Understanding your system: part 5: CONFIG.SYS

by Eric Cyde

The IBM family of personal computer systems is designed to be flexible—you can choose from a wide variety of different types of components—different monitors, printers, mice (mice?), CD-ROM drives, communications cards, audio cards, etc. Microsoft designed the Disk Operating System (DOS) to make use of two special files, Config.sys and Autoexec.bat, which are checked as soon as the system is booted (switched on). To make best use of the components in your system, these files should be customized to suit your hardware and your needs.

The Config.sys file controls how your computer uses memory, and how it communicates with hardware components (devices) such as the keyboard, the mouse, cd-rom drive, audio card, etc. If you have MSDOS version 5.0 or later and a 386 or better computer with extended memory, a simple Config.sys file may have the following lines (without the comment lines):

```
device=c:\dos\himem.sys
    Rem: the computer is to use the DOS high
    Rem: memory manager
dos=high,umb
    Rem: load most of the operating system
    Rem: into high memory the "umb" enables
    Rem: suitable device drivers to use high
    Rem: memory
device=c:\dos\emm386.exe noems
    Rem: emm386 is a program that allows
    Rem: extended memory to use UMBs for
    Rem: loading programs and device drivers
devicehigh=c:\dos\ansi.sys
    Rem: ansi.sys enables many programs to
    Rem: control the keyboard
    Rem: screen display more effectively
files=50
buffers=30
```

```
Rem: programs vary in the number of files
Rem: and buffers which have to be open
Rem: simultaneously
```

It would be nice if one **config.sys** file would meet all of your needs optimally. Frequently, the one best suited to running, say, Windows, causes another program, e.g., a game, to run poorly or not at all. Prior to DOS 6.0, one way to get around this problem was to have a number of bootable floppy disks, each with a different Config.sys file optimized to a particular application. Starting with DOS 6.0, a menu type of config.sys is possible, e.g.,

```
[menu]
menuitem=Clean
menuitem=Normal
menuitem=Windows
menudefault=Windows,5
```

```
[Clean]
    (the appropriate lines for a Clean boot
    appear here)
[Normal]
    (the appropriate lines for a Normal boot
    appear here)
[Windows]
    (the appropriate lines for a Windows boot
    appear here)
```

On booting up, the menu appears. If no decision is made within 5 seconds, the line "menudefault=Windows,5" causes the default choice of Windows to be selected.

A detailed discussion of this topic would require much more space than is available here. Further discussion will occur at the Beginner's SIG meeting. In the meantime, if you have any questions on this, or on any other topic, phone me at 749-2387.

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Upcoming events

compiled by Jerry Gault

Computer Fest '94

28-30 January 1994, Exhibition Hall, Lansdowne Park, Ottawa.

Canada's largest computer show and sale.

For more information call 613-239-4997, 416-730-1293.

Power Up North America

1-2 February '94, Toronto

Sponsored by the Information Technology Assoc of Canada.

Discussion: The Information Highway

For More Information call 416-862-9067

Mobile Computing

17 February '94, Suite #2106, Two Bloor Street West, Toronto.

Learn how notebooks, pen based computing and other technologies are helping mobile professionals.

Seminar hours: 2-4:30 PM, free.

For More Information call 416-925-8111 Tony Alderson.

Ottawa PC News

Ottawa PC News is the newsletter of the Ottawa PC Users' Group (OPCUG), and is published monthly except in June and July. The opinions expressed in this newsletter may not necessarily represent the views of the club or its members.

Deadline

Deadline for submissions is the last day of the month prior to publication.

Mailing Address

3 Thatcher St., Nepean, Ontario, K2G 1S6
Telephone answering machine 723-1329

Bulletin board—the PUB (BBS)

Up to 14.4 kbps v.32bis 228-0665 (6 lines)

Chairman

Harald Freise 828-3411

Past Chairman

Doug Poulter 745-8768

Treasurer

Stan McRoberts 722-0849

Secretary

Claude G. Jarry (temporary) 521-3366

Membership Chairman

Mark Cayer 224-8031

Convenor

Lynda Simons 739-9318

Software Librarian

Norman Dafoe 723-1909

BBS Sysop

Chris Taylor 723-1329

Hardware/Software Broker

No appointment

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Chris Seal 831-0280

Assistant Editors

Julie Dustin 823-1552
Lynda Simons 739-9318

Newsletter Mail Coordinator

Herb Kelland 733-4259

Beginners' Corner

Eric Clyde 749-2387

DTP SIG coordinator

To be announced

Fox SIG coordinator

Andrew Ross MacNeill (voice/fax) 596-3313

Internet SIG coordinator

Jerry Gault 224-5453

Paradox SIG coordinator

Larry Chop 236-8761 (days)

Windows SIG coordinator

Philip Baker 247-9555

Group Meetings

OPCUG meets monthly except in June and July. Check the answering machine, the PUB and the newsletter for the date and place. Meeting times are 7:30 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Membership fees

\$25 per year

Disk-of-the-Month

\$25 for 5.25 in. diskettes and \$35 per year for 3.5 in. (for 10 diskettes)

Coming up *continued from page 3*

Lotus Notes

Though Lotus Notes is not the feature presentation on January 25, be sure to ask the Lotus staff about the product. "The product is a database for storing any documents, and has security enhancements and BOOLEAN search capabilities. It is the best OLE receptacle container available," Montminy says. "Document sharing is only one application. The others include work flow for approvals or purchase requisitions. It can even help roll out your applications with its replication fea-

ture; you can copy an application to other servers automatically."

Lotus has always been a company to watch especially in comparison to Microsoft (something like watching 2 triceratops clash in Jurassic Park, version 2.1). It should be an informative presentation.

Note: For more information on working together concepts, check out the conference, GroupWare '94, in Boston in February 1994 where Lotus' chief technical officer, John Landry is a featured speaker

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continued from page 2

cording to location, angle of view, and 'focal length'.

The completed animations are rendered, which requires lots of computing power, a big hard disk, and something else to do while the rendering is underway.

Pricing

Autodesk Multimedia Explorer, list price \$300

Autodesk Animator Pro v1.3, list price \$800

Autodesk 3D Studio v3.0, list price \$2995

For students, Autodesk 3D Studio v2.0 is available for \$300.

Treasurer's preliminary report

The preliminary financial summary for the club follows:

Revenues

Dues	19,950.00
Net disk sales	2,850.33
Other	100.32
Total	22,900.65

Expenses

Bank Costs	24.45
Bell	4,713.10
Hall Rental	713.60
Newsletter	7,547.72
Other	1,993.15
Total	14,992.02

Net Revenue 7,908.63

Disk Sales

DOMs	1,625.00
Meetings	2,695.00
Total	4,320.00
Expenses	1,469.67
Net	2,850.33

Bank Balance

Opening	10,094.61
Inflows	23,079.14
Outflows	-15,170.51
Closing	18,003.24

The treasurer's final report is to be presented in next month's newsletter.