

OTTAWA PC NEWS

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

September 1994

Coming up

A roadmap of the information highway

by Julie Dustin

Our president, Harald Freise, echoing the thoughts of many OPCUG members, wants to know what all this information highway talk means in terms of real deliverables. What type of carrier (phone, cable, or satellite) will be in our homes? What kind of hardware and software will we need? What applications will be available in the near future and when?

At our next meeting on Tuesday, September 27, representatives from Stentor Canadian Network Management, Rogers Communications, and Industry Canada will try to help us see the future more clearly. [*speakers were not confirmed at press time. Ed*].

Industry Canada has a number of people assigned to the SchoolNet project and will be demonstrating the use of the World Wide Web and Mosaic for SchoolNet purposes at the meeting. One of the program officers from Industry Canada said, "There are 3,000 schools already involved with School-

Net and we hope to have all the schools linked in the next few years."

Who wants to know?

Canadians at large are asking the same questions. The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission is beginning public hearings into the Rogers' takeover of Maclean Hunter. The Citizen (Sept. 8/94) wrote that "David

Ellis, a Toronto communications consultant, argues that "we are entering a marketplace that will be controlled by ... consumer demand. If telephone companies and others are allowed to compete openly against cable, transmission costs will fall dramatically."

Schools' view

Frank Wiley, Head of Student Services at Laurentian High School, shed some light from the schools' perspective. He noted, "SchoolNet is just in the "pupa" stage. The Ottawa area school boards are still trying to plan out the use of SchoolNet. Presently most Ottawa educators are using Internet services through FreeNet or other private carriers." Wiley estimates that there are about 200 users of the networks in eastern Ontario.

The teachers are or will be using Internet services for staff development purposes, school assessments, and to aid in curriculum development. As for the students, Wiley explains, "They will be able to use

Continued on page 7

INSIDE

Internet	
<i>How to choose an Internet service provider</i>	<i>2</i>
Membership news	
<i>My how you've grown</i>	<i>3</i>
Ottawa Paradox User's Group (OPUG)	
<i>Review of September's meeting</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Comings and goings</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Meeting prize winners</i>	<i>5</i>
Internet SIG	
<i>October Internet SIG meeting</i>	<i>5</i>
Understanding your system	
<i>Finding help and other information through your modem: using Freenet ...</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Learning opportunities in the club</i>	<i>8</i>

NEXT MEETING : Tuesday, September 27, 1994 details on this page

How to choose an Internet service provider

by Jerry Gault (jgault@fox.nstn.ca)

Area Internet service providers seem to pop out of the woodwork over the last six months or so. The more the better, for it keeps costs down and competition alive, but how do you choose which Internet company is best for you.

First thing you need to do is ask yourself why you want access to the Internet. Is it for personal or business use, do you need a full Internet account, or will e-mail be all you use. Once you have figured out what it is you want from an account it is time to shop around. Just like shopping for a new TV, you need to compare each service provider for quality of service and good price.

Email only

If all you want is Internet email, a reasonably-priced way of accessing email and newsgroups would be a UUCP (Unix-to-Unix Copy Protocol) account. Some local BBS's offer Internet email and a limited number of newsgroups for free or a small yearly fee. UUCP is a store and forward system, so you are not directly connected to the Internet. A BBS offering UUCP email connects to an Internet service provider at set

times to retrieve and send e-mail and newsgroup postings.

More versatile connections

There are other ways to connect to the Internet. Hardwired-permanent connection from speeds of 19,200bps – 56kbps, SLIP/PPP modem connections, and shell accounts. A hardwired connection is expensive and is not discussed here: contact a service provider for more information.

SLIP (Serial Line Interface Protocol) and PPP (Point-to-Point Protocol) accounts are a reasonably priced method of accessing the Net. They offer full TCP/IP (Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol) connectivity via a dialup modem at speeds up to 19.2kbps. Internet providers usually offer a pre-configured software package for DOS and Windows: some configuration is required on your part and a basic understanding of TCP/IP is helpful. Another method of access is called a shell account, where you access Internet from another service. The NCFreenet can be considered a shell account. If you use a shell account you are using terminal emulation, which results in a

number of limitations on how you can use the Internet.

Research

Some questions you should ask when comparing providers are:

- What kind of accounts do they offer? Personal or business?
- What are the costs involved with each type of account?
- How many hours are included and costs per hour if you exceed the included hours?
- Is your billing based on the closest minute or hour? You don't want to logon for 46 minutes and be charged for one hour.
- What methods of payment are accepted? Credit card, bank debit, pay in advance?
- Who provides their connection, for example, CA*Net, Sprint, Uunet?
- What dial-up speeds are offered, and what are the line/subscriber ratios? (For example, one modem to 15 users)?
- Do they offer a full range of Internet services such as FTP (File Transfer Protocol), email, newsgroups, and telnet (Terminal Networking)?
- Do they maintain local file archives with new-user information available for downloading?

continued on page 3

My how you've grown

by Mark Cayer

The OPCUG continues to grow. From it's modest beginnings the club membership has blossomed to over 900 members.

The following is a list of the membership strength at certain points in time:

1991
April
August
December

1992
April
August
December

1993
April
August
December

1994
April 858
August 16
December ???

As seen by these numbers a large proportion of the club's membership has it's renewal dates in March and October. All club members are reminded to feel free to renew their membership at any time by sending in a renewal by mail to the club address listed on the back of the monthly newsletter, or filling out a membership renewal at any general meeting. All renewals are for a year and simply extend the membership expiry date by twelve months.

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from page 2

- How long have they been in business, who runs the company, and is this their main business? If they sell toilet bowl cleaner as their main business it might give you an idea what level of service to expect.
- Do they offer technical assistance and other customer support services by email or by phone? If by phone, is there a local number to call?
- Do they have an acceptable-use policy? If so, read it first to ensure that you agree with it.
- If it's important for you to have your name as part of your email address, check to ensure you can have this with no further charges.

Compare the companies with care—ask around. Many OPCUG members have accounts with various providers in the area. You may like the idea of cheap access, but will they be around next month? I hope this has given you some idea as to what to ask. If you have any questions on this or any other Internet-related topic, come and visit the Internet SIG at the OPCUG. For a list of area Internet service providers please see the file named provider.zip at the Pub/OPCUG BBS.

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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, 27 September	See front page
Tuesday, 25 October	Microsoft
Tuesday, 29 November	Swapmeet
Tuesday, 20 December	Your suggestions to Harald Freise, please
Tuesday, 31 January	Stacker & Micrografx - tentative

Review of September's OPUG meeting

by Larry Chop

The September meeting of the Ottawa Paradox User's Group was held at Inly's store. It was a real challenge to have everyone stop browsing at all the goodies on display at Inly's and convene for the meeting.

Larry Chop demonstrated the built-in diagnostic and debugging tools available in Paradox for Windows, including:

- set breakpoints so you can execute instructions up to a certain point, then stop and see what has happened
- inspect or watch variables to make sure values are being manipulated as you intended
- execute a method one line at a time (called single-stepping), or step over methods and procedures that you know are bug-free
- list, and optionally view, the methods and procedures on the call stack; that is, those called since your form started running

All the news from Borland was covered by Steve Finner with focus on Paradox 5.0.

We saw the next stage of a case study in developing a Paradox for Windows application with Rick Morrison. Just through the design of the files with built-in Referential Integ-

rity and look-ups, the screens, QBE's (Query by Example), and Reports, it was shown how the complex application was run without one line of code.

Then the last challenge—getting everyone to quit shopping and out of the store at the end of the evening.

Potential future meeting topics

- Multi-window applications
- ODAPI/IDAPI: cross database connectivity
- Paradox 5.0: new stuff
- Table-driven menus
- Demo of an application—in a few months when available
- The trials and tribulations of a new OPAL program
- Query by Examples (QBEs)
- Outside speakers (possible RISE Consulting from Toronto)

The next meeting is to be held on October 5, 1994, 7:00 pm, at Inly's store, 1221A Cyrville road, Gloucester. Inly's will stay open until 9:30 for your browsing and purchasing pleasure.

Looking forward to seeing you there.

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Comings and goings

Due to pressure of work or health reasons, some members of the executive and the Computers for Charity Coordinator have regrettably resigned their position. We thank Norman Dafoe (Software Librarian), Stan McRoberts (Treasurer), and Lynda Simons (Secretary), for the many hours over many years of dedicated service to the club.

Performing these duties now, we welcome:

Jorgen Rasmussen and Judy Tomlin (Software Librarians), David Reeves (Secretary), and Tony Frith (Treasurer). Tony, you may have noticed, has stood in as Treasurer for a while.

Pat Paterson has recently left the position of Coordinator of the Computer Recycling for Charities project. We thank him for the many hours of picking up, storing, fixing, sourcing, swapping, trading, ... Many non-profit organizations have benefitted from the coordination efforts of Pat. Taking over from Pat as coordinator is Cornel Bierman, who has also been involved, from the start, with the club's efforts to recycle computers to organizations in need.

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Meeting prize winners

by Mark Cayer

The prizes, and the lucky people who won them at the June meeting were:

Lotus Approach, supplied by Lotus

- Keith Campbell
- Brenda Campbell

FoxPro, supplied by Microsoft

- David Clark
- Xuetao Yu

Dbase/Windows (when released) and T-shirt for now, supplied by Borland

- Thomas Gsell
- Benoit Paquette

DataEase, supplied by DataEase International

- Tom Somerton

Corel CDs, supplied by Corel (from a previous meeting)

- Tom Somerton
- Kim Lauzon
- Phil McGuire

Corel Art Show Books, supplied by Corel (from a previous meeting)

- Frank Novak
- Charles Stanton

As well there were numerous Borland T-shirts "Flying about" and a few DataEase mouse pads given out.

Regrets to Harald Freise, who had his name drawn while holding the draw bucket and was "shamed" into returning his prize... although he did get a T-shirt.

The August meeting prizes and the lucky people who won them were:

Corel 4 Demo, supplied by Phaselock Systems

- Frank Novak
- Bill Rothwell

Crosswords Software, supplied by Carribean Software Co.

- Ranald MacDonald

Proshare Software in an Intel Bag, supplied by Intel

- Cliff Hayes
- Frank Anglin
- Jean-Jacques Dromard
- Matt Godin
- Rene Goyette
- Michael Hogan
- William Moore
- Christopher Porter
- Dale Sexton
- Charles Stanton
- Willem Van Dijk

OrgPlus, supplied by Intel

- Peter Heinermann

An Overdrive processor, supplied by Intel

- David Curling

A SatisFaction 14.4 modem, supplied by Intel

- Gus Labecki

The Ottawa PC Users' Group thanks the companies who donated these prizes for our members.

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October Internet SIG meeting

The next meeting of the OP-CUG Internet SIG is to be held on Thursday, 7 pm, October 13th, in the Champlain room at 111 Lisgar. This is the old Teachers College, now belonging to the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton, and is near the junction of Elgin and Lisgar streets.

For more details, see the Internet SIG area of the PUB, or phone Paul Mahood (820-8266), Jerry Gault (224-5453), or Eric Clyde (749-2387).

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Finding help and other information through your modem: using Freenet

by Eric Clyde

If you have a modem, help on most technical and many other types of problem, plus information on a bewildering array of topics, is available to you via your telephone line.

One place to mine is the PUB (the club's bulletin board). The expertise of other club members can be brought to bear on computer-related problems. In addition, many excellent freeware, shareware, and demonstration programs can be downloaded from the file areas.

But if that is the limit of your modem use, you owe it to yourself to do some exploring.

One source you should check is the national capital Freenet (NCFreenet), indisputably the most popular locally-available online information system. With over 23,000 registered users, its biggest problem is its popularity—more than 10,000 calls per day. Despite having 160 telephone lines for calls, it can be difficult to get connected, but with automatic redial and some patience, it will happen!

To access NCFreenet, if you have a 14.4k modem, dial 564-0808; otherwise dial 564-3800. The other parameters to use are n,8,1 (just as for the PUB).

Changing the default setup to VT100 is recommended.

There are so many areas of potential interest in NCFreenet that it can be difficult to know where to start. I'll limit my discussion to the following topics:

- general areas
- electronic mail (email)
- list servers
- Gopher

General areas

The general areas include access to:

- public discussion area (with a general discussion area, and an area for articles to buy or for sale)
- Newsstand (Ottawa Citizen, The Hill Times, Ottawa X Press, Capital Xtra!, CJOH TV, CBC). The Ottawa Citizen's area includes letters to the editor, movie reviews, and a dining guide.
- Special Interest Groups (from business discussions to science fiction, from photography to religion, and of course computer related topics)
- Community Associations' area

Electronic mail (email)

Apart from access to the general areas, there are a number of other advantages in using NCFreenet. Through its connection with the Internet, you can send and receive electronic

mail (email) to or from any other email address anywhere in the world almost instantaneously and at no cost. Recently I sent a message to someone in Germany at the beginning of one NCFreenet session; I had a reply before I had ended the session, that is, in less than an hour. Several people I know use email on NCFreenet to keep in touch with friends and relatives in other parts of the world. While getting a message to another person through email is not as fast as a telephone call (if the person you want to talk to is available), it is faster than letter mail (which is known as snailmail to the nerds).

List servers

Email can also be used to subscribe to one or more "list servers"—electronic journals or discussion areas. There are over a thousand such lists, including topics such as "bagpipes", "ferrets", "hockey", and the "Toronto Blue Jays". When you subscribe, you automatically receive all new postings to the topic(s) you choose. And the price is right—there is no charge.

continued on page 7

from page 6

Gopher

Gopher, a pun for “go for”, is an Internet service on NCFreenet that enables you to go into “GopherSpace” and search for interesting information on practically any topic, such as “cooking”, “countries in the world”, and “the complete works of Shakespeare”.

An item in the Gopher menu called “Veronica” allows you to search the GopherSpace using keywords. The “Master” menu item connects you to the “mother Gopher”, and lets you explore all the known Gopher servers in the world.

And finally, you can connect to other Freenets in Canada and elsewhere. More details on some of these topics will appear in the next issue, and 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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Roadmap from front page

SchoolNet for school research and communications—what you might call the modern version of a pen pal. A student in London, Ontario working on a geography assignment on mining could gather his/her information by communicating with another student or company in Sudbury through SchoolNet. The potential for exposing the students to multicultural diversity across Canada is incredible.”

I hope our members will have the same potential and access at an affordable cost. Come to the next OPCUG meeting and voice your questions or concerns directly to the service providers.

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**ONTARIO
COMPUTER
FAIRS**

\$1.00 Off
regular
Admission
Price

**October
15 and 16**

Nepean Sportsplex
1701 Woodroffe Ave

**Ottawa PC
Users' Group**

This coupon MAY be photo-copied

**ONTARIO
COMPUTER
FAIRS**

\$1.00 Off
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Price

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15 and 16**

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**Ottawa PC
Users' Group**

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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

Tony Frith 995-4727

Secretary

David Reeves 723-9658

Membership Chairman

Mark Cayer 224-8031

Convenor

Jack Stekelenburg 838-5985

Software Librarians

Jorgen Rasmussen 821-3040

Judy Tomlin 821-3040

BBS Sysop

Chris Taylor 723-1329

Hardware/Software Broker

No appointment

Newsletter Editor

Chris Seal 831-0280

Assistant Editors

Julie Dustin 823-1552

Lynda Simons 739-9318

Beginners' Corner

Eric Clyde 749-2387

DTP SIG coordinator

Paul Svetkoff 733-5177

Fox SIG coordinator

Andrew Ross MacNeill (voice/fax) 596-3313

Internet SIG coordinator

Paul Mahood 820-8266

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)

Learning opportunities in the club

Writing skills

We are seeking club members to help prepare articles for the club's monthly newsletter. Don't worry if you think that your writing skills are not good enough, as we have some great editors who will gladly help you to improve them, and to get your articles into the newsletter. If you are already proficient, better still.

There is an immediate need for writers to help report on the club's general meetings. For more information, please call the newsletter editor, Chris Seal, at (613) 831-0280 (7 pm to 9 pm only).

