OTTAWA PC NEWS

Review of September's meeting

The future according to Stentor...

by Paul Blakely

As National Director, Social Policy, for Stentor Telecom Policy Inc., Brian Milton is a spokesman for the nine major Canadian telephone companies that form Stentor. The Stentor consortium was formed in response to the fast-paced telecommunications revolution we are only beginning to experience. Brian offered the group a brief history of data communication in Canada, defined three models of the future of broadband content represented by the telephone companies (telcos), the internet, and cable companies. He then briefly summarized Stentor's vision of Canada shifting to a higher gear in the infobahn race.

While dial-up data was available in the mid-1970s, that's ancient history in the telecommunications business. The data comms inventory of equipment and services has moved from digital switches with 1200-baud modems to datapac, frame relay, ATM (asynchronous transfer mode), high speed private lines, CaNet, and Freenets. Brian noted that by the end of 1994, ISDN (integrated services digital network) would be almost universally available in Canada. ISDN can broaden the two-way bandwidth into your home or business over traditional copper lines and provide internet access at 64 kilobits per second. But there is plenty of competition for telcos, with the internet and cable companies offering different applications, networks, and competing goals. It's a high risk business with huge stakes and no guaranteed returns.

Brian characterized the Telcos as having traditionally specialized in voice communications, the internet in e-mail, and the cable industry in TV channels. These are the three competitors for bandwidth on the infobahn. Recent mergers and acquisitions in North America reflect the fact that each industry has

its strength. For capacity, cable companies have the inside track, but the hitch is that the bandwidth volume travels only one way. The telcos have ubiquity and switching expertise. The internet uses an intelligent appliance and has incredible flexibility in adapting to a diversity of applications.

Goals are different as well. The telephone companies now have a goal of offering a wide range of information services, the internet a goal of universal peer-to-peer networking, and cable channels a 500 channel universe. At this stage nobody can say with any degree of certainty whose goal will gain predominance.

Brian summarized the Stentor vision as communication of any type, any time, anywhere. (That pretty much says it all, doesn't it?). By this, he elaborated, Stentor means a national interactive, multimedia hiway that is open, interconnected, and accessible to all, a "network of networks". There would be different service providers competing to supply a variety of applications.

The Stentor alliance has put its money where its mouth was when it announced the Beacon Initiative earlier this year. An $8 billion investment would be made to invest in upgrading the local networks infrastructure to broadband within the next 8–10 years. $500 million is to be spent on investment in ATM switches and other broadband systems in the national fibre network over the next 6 years to provide continuity for multimedia. And the creation of a new company, MMI, is to develop multimedia products services and applications in healthcare , education, and entertainment. MMI was launched in 1994 with a commitment to invest $250 million over 5 years. It includes a venture capital fund to help small business to develop and market applications ($50 million targeted).

Implications of the Stentor vision for the PC Users include the use of multimedia terminals, smart agents, proliferation of content, and significant price/power gains in communications.

The telecommunications revolution puts into the hands of individuals the creative capacity to make professional movies, orchestral works, major art, and other unimaginable social and cultural contributions. After listening to Brian describe the ongoing and impending changes in telecommunications, one got the palpable feeling that we are truly entering another renaissance period in history.

...the future according to Rogers

by Murray Wiens

Carol Ring, regional manager for Rogers Communications, presented an outline of Rogers' plans for cable. If the Canadian Radio-Television Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) approves the Maclean Hunter (M/H) acquisition, as proposed, Rogers will by far be the most dominant cable market player in Canada, with substantial holdings in other media undertakings.

In Ms. Ring's view, the information highway has already arrived. While cable plant to the home is currently limited by one way communication, two way is coming. The existing cable 'tree' architecture has been replaced with 'ring/tree' technology developed by Cable Labs (cable research/development consortium—ftp.cablelabs.com). Rogers has been deploying fibre since 1980 and the main trunks are now two-way. High speed cable modems are under development with transmission speeds of 10 Mbps (1000 times faster) anticipated. Coupled with the current transmission capability of coax cable to the home, bandwidth-intensive multimedia applications will be possible.

While the TV and PC will have a shared role in cable-delivered services, TV will be limited to a lower level of interactivity, with PC applications providing the more sophisticated interactive applications.

At home with Microsoft

by Julie Dustin

So there I was minding my own business one day (my computer consulting business, that is) when my 6-year-old godson, Eric, wandered into the office. He asked brightly, "Would you like me to show you the great stuff on that PC you're sitting in front of?" I was at a friend's home office working on her computer which was loaded with a CD and a sound system and wondered, "Hey, this could be fun." Wow, was I amazed and jealous! He handled the mouse and the game without a problem (even telling me to reboot the PC when, at first, the CD drive wouldn't register). The software was great and it made me realize how boring our office applications are.

Microsoft knows how much fun can be had (and money too) in the home market. On October 25, the Microsoft Home Team will be showing all the products and services which are part of their newly-formed Home Division.

As Bob Scowcroft of Microsoft says, "We want to have fun at the presentation as well as demonstrate the products that are meeting end-user requirements. We will be showing what's new for the Christmas season."

Let us entertain you

The products on the demo list include samples from the CD-Edutainment Division [*ed: no , that's not a spelling mistake....it's from the Microsoft "dictionary"*] such as New Encarta, children's titles such as Ancient Lands, Dangerous Creatures, and Magic SchoolBus from the Scholastic series. Bob, father of four, informed me that this last title is the series which airs on PBS on Sundays mornings when I, mother of none, am usually sleeping soundly. In addition, MS Money and Works will also be presented that night.

Bob estimates that Microsoft will be releasing over 100 new CD titles over the next 12 months. I wonder if baseball or hockey games will be released anytime soon? Then again, maybe they're working on simulated labour negotiation games instead.

Microsoft is planning for a fun night and great giveaways—a cornucopia of electronic delights. Perhaps Bob (did I mention he was the father of four?) will run the special SIG afterwards on "Parenting issues and computers". You know the issues. This SIG has also been called "If I shut down the home file server too soon, will my children have nightmares?" and "Should we get a better mouse or just a hamster?" and "Should I feel guilty for letting the PC read bedtime stories to my kids?". I'm just kidding about the SIG—I must have thought I was Dave Barry for a minute there.

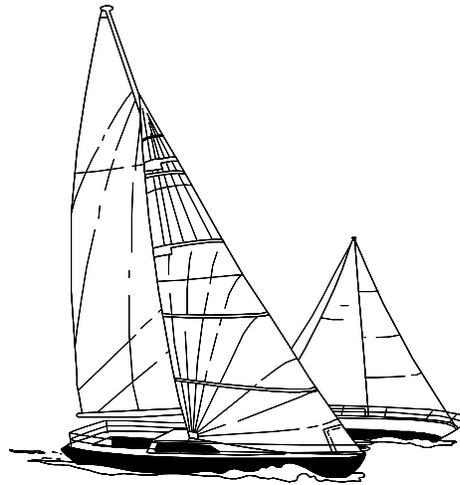Come out and start your Christmas list.

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Sailing the Net hassle free

by Jerry Gault
jgault@fox.nstn.ca

You see it every time you logon and read your mail, check your newsgroups and surf the Net. People flaming people, telling them in a rude way the rules of the Net as seen by them. Many of us have been flamed to some extent. The Net is growing by leaps and bounds, new users are appearing everywhere. With this flood of newbies brings new concerns and problems. The Internet community has long standing rules of the road, proper ways of conducting yourself on the Net.

Experienced users are increasingly becoming more agitated and are replying to other users' usenet posts angerly. Simple mistakes such as including the entire text of a previous message in a reply, sending unsubscribe commands for a listserv to the wrong address, and not sticking to the subject of the newsgroup. The worst sin of all, a new user giving advice on how to use the Net to other new users, mistakes and all. On a newsgroup I read regularly I witnessed one of the most aggressive flames of all time. Someone suggested to a user that he ignored the so called rules of posting to a newsgroup. This flame war carried on for close to three months. It was a complete waste of time downloading these postings, as all people involved ignored the very rules they flamed to uphold.

Users will always make mistakes: we are human. Instead of lashing out and flaming someone, try to help, explain what was wrong, point them to some new-user documents on the Net. If you choose to help, send private e-mail to the person: do not post your criticism to the newsgroup. If you are flamed, put out the fire by not replying to the individual. If you choose to reply you are simply carrying the flame to a higher plateau, not helping anything.

When replying to e-mail, quote only the required lines of the original message: cut out all else including taglines and signatures. If you belong to a listserv and you want to signoff, un-

Internet access for OPCUG members

by Jerry Gault

Two area Internet service providers offer discounts to members of the Ottawa PC Users' Group. If you're in the market for Internet access take a look at the file net-prov.zip in the 'new uploads' file section. After the file shuffle it should be found in the 'Internet SIG' file area. Information on the user group deals from NSTN and Magi are in the file as well as general information on all area providers. For immediate information contact:

- Anthony Doyle at Magi Data Inc.: 225-3354
- Bonnie Larose at NSTN Inc.: 231-4900

Don't forget to mention you would like the Ottawa PC Users' Group Offer.

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Sailing *continued from page 4*

subscribe to the same address you subscribed to, not to the list itself for the whole world to see. Try to keep to a newsgroups main topic. You wouldn't want to talk about Bart Simpson in the alt.winsock newsgroup. The rules of the road are not that difficult to follow, remember your manners.

There are numerous netiquette documents available on the Internet and in the OPCUG Internet SIG files on the Pub. It takes only a few minutes to browse through them and become a good Internet citizen.

Explanation of words in this article

- Newbies: A new user of the Internet.
- Flame: An angry response to another user: usually regretted after sending it.
- Netiquette: A generally accepted set of guidelines to exist peacefully on the Net.

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September meeting winners

The prizes won at the September meeting were:

Pair of Tickets for the Ottawa Senators, donated by Rogers Cable

–Peter Ellison

TSN Sports Bag, donated by Rogers Cable

–Richard Renaud

A "Grab Bag" that included a T-shirt and a copy of MS-Project, donated by Phaselock Systems

–Mauro Tomietto
–Walter Treml
–Aileen West

The Ottawa PC Users' Group thanks the companies that donated these prizes.

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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).

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Rogers *continued from page 2*

On the TV side, video file servers at the head-end will feed smart (programmable) set-top boxes with signals for such services as interactive video and program guides. Microsoft is currently developing the software for these and other offerings.

The increased role of the PC in cable-delivered services was briefly outlined. Currently, 30% of all Canadian homes have a PC. This level will increase to 70% by the year 2000. There will be more PCs than cars and more computers in homes than offices. High speed cable is ideal for multimedia. Internet access at the head-end was mentioned but few details were provided. During the question period, it was confirmed that PC services are not contingent upon approval of the M/H application.

Under their "Schoolinks" initiative, technical trials have been undertaken to test cable services to schools. As part of their benefit package in the M/H purchase application, Rogers will hook-up over 600 schools (121 in the Ottawa area) with free modems for a two year period. They are working with content providers and licensees (YTV, TVO, and Global) to develop programming. Their Head-end in the Sky (HITS) consortium was mentioned briefly during the question period. This is cable's response to the perceived threat from US DBS (Death Stars). It will be used to provide duplicate cable services to remote areas in Canada.

With both Telco and Cable entry into the "unclaimed territory" of content, there should be lots of neat new bells and whistles in the PC users' future.

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See back page for Rogers Communications e-mail addresses

My how you've grown

by Mark Cayer

Due to an error by the newsletter editor, this article did not come out as intended in the September Ottawa PC News.

The OPCUG continues to grow. From its 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	382
August	412
December	443

1992

April	450
August	488
December	569

1993

April	676
August	715
December	796

1994

April	858
August	916
December	???

As seen by these numbers a large proportion of the club's membership has its 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 *Ottawa PC News*, or by 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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Finding help and other information using your modem: using Freenet (part 2)

by Eric Clyde

First of all, an apology. In part 1, I inadvertenly gave an incorrect telephone number for Freenet. The correct numbers are 564-3600 (for up to 2400 baud) and 564-0808 (for faster modems).

As stated last month, there is a bewildering number of discussion and information groups available on Freenet. Some of these can be accessed directly by using the "go" command. For example, "go wine" takes you to the wine and beer SIG area. A complete listing of the groups available in this way can be obtained by typing "go".

Once you have found an area of interest, a numbered list of messages appears, each with a brief descripion. Some of them start "Re:" and are replies to a previous entry. If there is one entry of interest, type the corresponding number. To see other items in the same "thread" (replies), type "s". "R" before the number means that you have marked this item as read. Some of the more important commands are:

- n Display the next item that you have not previously read, pausing when the screen is full
- N as n, but don't pause. This is useful if you are saving or printing the message.

- v View the next item, whether previously read or not
- s Read the next response in this thread
- b Back up one message
- = or + Go to the next screenful of messages
- - Go to the preceding screenful of messages
- k "kill" (mark as read) all messages up to and including this one
- e Position the cursor at the last message in this area
- / Do a keyword search in the title. For example, search for messages with the letters "compu" in the title. This command is especially useful in some of the more prolific message areas in Usenet, where there can be hundreds of unread messages
- c Post a reply to the current article
- f Contribute a new article

If you want to save to disk or print out a sequence of message, there is a special sequence:

- # Indicates that you want to issue a command covering sequence of messages T/L. T indicates that you want to get the whole message, L just the titles. Then type the first and last numbers in the sequence. Note that "." denotes the current record number, and you can type "end" if

you want to get all the messages. For example:

- .-123   All messages from the current pointer position to number 123
- 123-end All messages from 123 to the end of the list inclusive
- 123,126,129   Messages numbered 123, 126, and 129

For a complete list of the help commands, type "h".

The other major use of Freenet is to send email anywhere in the world quickly and cheaply. To do this, type "go mail" or, from the main menu, go to 3 (Post Office), then 3 (Send mail). You are asked for the email address of the person you wish to send mail to. If this is someone with a Freenet email address, you see the person's name and are asked to confirm this; otherwise you are simply presented with what you type and asked to check it. (If the latter address is incorrect, the message is sent back to you as undeliverable). You are then asked to enter the subject, then you can start to type the message. If you want to, try it out by sending me a message. My Freenet email address is ac486 (the complete address is ac486@freenet.carle-

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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)

ton.ca, but only the first part is needed from within Freenet).

Check the next *Ottawa PC News* for more details on using Freenet. Come to the Beginner's SIG meeting for further discussion. In the meantime, if you have any questions on this, or on any other topic, phone me at 749-2387.

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Rogers Communications E-mail addresses

Carol Ring of Rogers Cable has provided the following e-mail addresses where club members can ask additional questions relating to Rogers, or pick up information about Rogers Communications activities relating to the information highway.

- www.rogers.com
- cring@rci.rogers.com

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