



OTTAWA PC NEWS

Volume 20, Number 7

September 2003

HARDWARE REVIEW

CD-Finder Pro: “a thing of beauty”

by Bob Gowan

We have a wide range of choices when it comes to storing our ever-growing collections of CDs and DVDs. I’ve tried a number of them: the “flipper” trays from the “dollar” store that hold about 20 CDs, a variety of plastic or wire racks and towers that hold 10, or 30, or 50, or more, and also several shelf units, crates, and even plain cardboard boxes, and I’m always looking for something better. Nonetheless, with my “thrifty” and practical nature, it has always shocked me to see CD storage units as sculptures, “objects of art”, and “fine furniture”, costing \$300 to \$500, even \$2000, in ads in in-flight shopping magazines or at furniture boutiques. As they say, “beauty is in the eye of the beholder”.



But then, I spotted something that I just had to have. The idea is simple enough – it starts with a carousel, much like the nearly-obsolete slide projector carousel, and a disk cataloguing software. Add a dust-proof and locking cover, a motor to spin the carousel and a USB cable to allow it to communicate with your computer. And it is just as simple to use: put a

disk in your CD drive, the software reads and saves its label and contents, spins the carousel to the next free slot, and prompts you to load the CD through the “window” in the cover. You can add full titles, categories and “notes” to describe the CD and contents. When you want to use a CD, or find a file on one of them, just search using the software, click on the disk or file you are want, and the carousel will spin to bring the CD to the opening and lift it so you can pick it out of the slot. No more flipping through stacks of CDs, fumbling with jewel cases, or wracking your brain to remember where you put that one you need right now!

*No more flipping
through stacks of
CDs, fumbling with
jewel cases*

The “CD-Finder” hardware is made in Taiwan, but the “package” is put together by Microforum Spa Inc., an Italian corporation with offices in Toronto. This means that the assembly instructions, the software and the manuals are straight-forward, complete and readable. The unit is distributed locally by CD production and duplication service provider, Media Replication Services. The “CD-Finder” is well-packaged, in a cardboard box a little larger than a mid-

tower case. The beige plastic unit base and clear plexiglass cover are nested in formed styrofoam, which also has pockets to hold the AC adaptor, software, manuals, cable, etc. Clear and well-illustrated instructions for assembling the hardware are provided in the manual, but also in cardboard insert that protects the CD slots. There is no trick to putting the unit together – just follow the illustrated steps in proper order. It is solid and well-made, and easily assembled as its parts fit perfectly. The unit can also be used separately from a computer, and a “records notebook” for manual entry is included.

As usual, I neglected the software installation instructions, and missed the differences in procedures for Windows flavours, so the drivers did not install properly on my Windows 2000 Pro system. The software would still scan and save CD labels and contents, and I could manually select the next slot in the carousel, but the computer was not

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Next Meeting: **WEDNESDAY, September 10th, 2003**

September Raffle



Did your computer get hit with the Blaster worm? The increase in the number of virus and worm threats to computers, and the increase in the speed with which these threats spread, underscores the absolute need to keep your computer patched and your anti-virus tools up to date and effective. Remember, if you are not part of the solution, you are most almost certain to become part of the problem.

Through the generosity of McAfee Canada, we have a copy of **McAfee VirusScan 7** available to raffle off at the September general meeting. This powerful and easy-to-use package, valued at approximately \$50 will help make your computer more secure. You can find out more about McAfee VirusScan 7 at <http://us.mcafee.com/root/product.asp?productid=vs7>. Tickets are \$1 for one, \$2 for three, or \$5 for ten.

Coming Up—September Speaker

Steven Totolo is president of **Total Voice Control**, a firm specializing in Home Automation (HA) technologies. Since 1995, he has been involved in the HA industry in developing electronic designs, protocols, and communication standards, as well as providing training, and consulting services. Total Voice Control provides expert advice on Home Automation products for consumer installation through personal consultation and retail sales.

As an active member of the Continental Automated Building Association (CABA) and its Standards Committee, Steven plays a key role in educating industry and consumers about evolving HA technologies. He has published numerous articles about protocols such as Residential Wiring, Internet Protocols, and Bluetooth.

Steven has participated along with Honeywell, Leviton Manufacturing, and Thomson Consumer Electronics in a number of industry-led initiatives such as CEBus User Interface Working Group, the CEBus Technical Steering Committee, and the CEBus Language Interoperability Protocol Working group.

This presentation will provide a background on Home Automation and show participants practical uses of Home Automation technology through hands-on demonstrations, utilizing Home Automation software and consumer oriented products.

<http://www.totalvoicecontrol.com/indexIE.html>

CALENDAR

Meetings	Date	Time and Venue
OPCUG General Meeting	Wednesday, September. 10 th	7:30 p.m. Auditorium of the Canada Museum of Science and Technology , 1867 St. Laurent Blvd. http://www.science-tech.nmstc.ca/english/index.cfm
Internet SIG (I-SIG)	Wednesday, September. 10 th	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting. Come and join our discussions!
Developers' SIG	Wednesday, September. 10 th	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting, and occasionally at other locations in the region.
Orphans' SIG (see article next page)	Wednesday, September. 10 th	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting.
Delphi User Group	TBA	TBA
PIG SIG (Wing SIG)	Wednesday, September. 10 th	10:00 p.m. (after all other SIGs) at Chances "R" restaurant, 1365 Woodroffe Ave., Shoppers' City West Mall

Please note that unless otherwise noted, SIGs meet at 9:00 p.m. (immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting).

OPHANS' SIG

Announcement:

It is with regret that we announce the resignation of Henry Sims as SIG coordinator of the OPCUG Orphans. Henry formed the group out of concern that a less savvy segment of our club was being overlooked in terms of activities and topics. We thank Henry for his thoughtfulness and wish him all the best.

*If you are interested in leading our Orphans out of virtual darkness, please send your application to the **Board of Directors** (opcug-webmaster@opcug.ca)*

*In the meantime, **Alan German** has kindly offered to act as interim coordinator.*

There will be a meeting of the Orphans' SIG following the club's regular monthly meeting on September 10. At the time of the newsletter going to press, the SIG meeting's agenda wasn't finalized; however, it looks like we will be discussing the alphabet soup of electronic mail, have a demonstration of a simple file encryption utility (*see article below*), and have time for a period for questions and -- hopefully - answers. So, come prepared with details of those computing issues which still confound you, and also some thoughts about topics that you would like the group to discuss over the coming months. As you now know, **the Orphans' SIG needs a new Coordinator**. If we can jointly come up with a list of topics that Orphans need to know about, it may be much easier for someone to take charge and identify knowledgeable individuals who can answer all those burning questions.

Alan

SOFTWARE REVIEW

PUB Crawl—Encryption Software by Alan German

I recently decided that it would be useful to be able to encrypt a number of files to, hopefully, protect the data they contain from being read by any unauthorized individuals. One thought was that the data source might be stolen, and encrypting the files would make the actual data useless to the casual thief. No doubt there are many similar applications for data encryption that may be of interest to others.

A search of the file library on PUB II identified a number of candidate programs and, after reading some of the associated documentation files, I settled on **Cryptext v3.21**, a freeware utility from Nick Payne of Australia.

The documentation for Cryptext indicates that it runs under Windows 95, 98 and NT4. I can confirm that the program also works just fine under Windows 2000. For those in the know, the program "performs strong file encryption using a combination of SHA-1 and RC4 with a 160-bit key". It certainly sounds impressive, and the files are definitely scrambled at the end of the process. So, it works for me! Versions are available in English, French, German, Spanish, and Portuguese.

Installing the program, adds "Encrypt" and "Decrypt" items to the context menu you get when right-clicking on files or directories in Windows Explorer. The first time you use the program it prompts for a password and a repeated version of this password for verification purposes. After that, encrypting a file is as simple as right clicking on a file or a sub-directory in Explorer, selecting the encrypt menu item, and entering the chosen password. The file is encrypted and the normal file icon changes to a key in a lock indicating the file's changed status. Decrypting the file requires basically the same sequence of actions but using decrypt from Explorer's menu. One really nice feature of the program is the ability to encrypt all the files in a sub-directory by selecting the directory rather than the individual files.

The program works fine with files and directories on hard drives and removable media (e.g. CD-RW). So, if you have an application for file encryption in mind, you may wish to give Cryptext a try, but don't forget your password!

Bottom Line:

Cryptext Version 3.21

Freeware from Nick Payne

<http://www.pcug.org.au/~njpayne>

CRYPTEXT.ZIP (1.32 KB) on PUB II

(PUB II, Area 68 - Miscellaneous Utilities)



CD-Finder Pro

(Continued from page 1)

communicating with the CD-Finder. A 1-800 call to Microforum in Toronto reached a voice mail box, but my call was returned in less than 10 minutes, my problem was diagnosed in a minute, and updated drivers and clear, step by step instructions, with screen captures, for removing existing drivers and installing the updates were e-mailed to me immediately. Software registration also requires a phone call with registered user name and a hardware-generated code to obtain a software key code, but this, too was quick and painless.

The software can be set to load on startup, and it “docks” behind a small “tab” located just below the top right corner of your desktop. One click on this tab launches a small CD-Finder dialog that can be used to locate a CD by label or title.



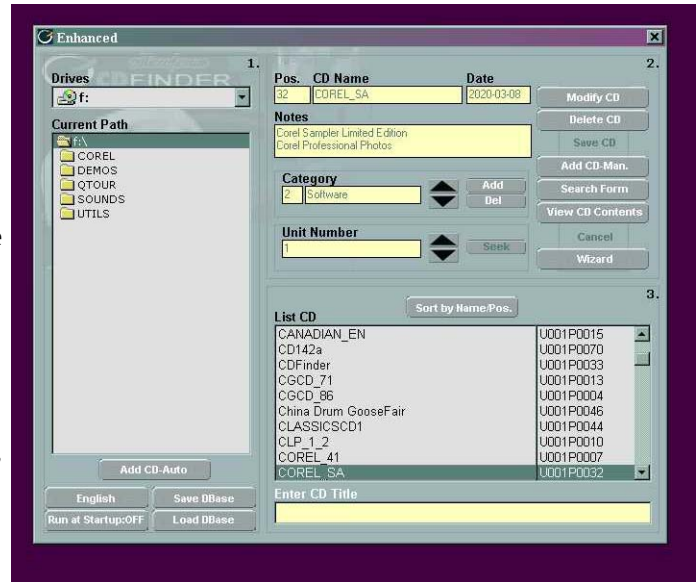
Highlighting the label and clicking on the “Get CD” button will rotate the carousel to the appropriate slot and lift the CD so it can be retrieved. The “Enhanced” button opens another dialog that reveals the full record for the CD.

This is essentially the “main” screen for data entry, viewing and editing operations. It includes buttons for viewing detailed contents, and a wiz-

ard for finding files or CDs and for adding CDs.

I gave the unit a good test run, with a variety of software CDs, audio CDs, shareware and clipart compilations, and my own backup and data CDs. It can also catalog DVDs and VCDs. I loaded the first 30 CDs in about an hour, but most of that time was spent typing in several lines of notes. The time to scan the CD contents depends, of course, on the number of folders and files to be read. In most cases, the scan was completed in seconds after CD-spin-up. Where autorun launched an installation program or CD browser, there would be some delay in scanning, but it was often helpful to read these screens while entering the catalog “notes” on the CD. Some of the compilations, containing 10,000 to over 30,000 files, were scanned in 30 to 45 seconds.

I have now loaded nearly 100 CDs and estimate this has taken in a little more than 3 hours. In most cases, I used the wizard which steps through the data fields and seems most convenient for scanning CD contents. There are two other data entry modes, Auto-CD and CD-Manual, which may be more convenient for cataloging CD titles only. There is also a lower priced unit with a “Lite” version of the software that scans only the CD title, and not the files it contains. Someone using the unit to store and retrieve pre-recorded CDs – commercial software and music, might find the Lite version



adequate, but anyone creating their own CDs (e.g. backups) would surely want the capability of finding individual files.

A single unit holds 150 disks and multiple units (up to 128) can be “chained” using USB hubs. They are designed to stack (but safely just 3 high) and their footprint is less than that of 2-20CD “flippers”. I expect that I will continue to refine the CD descriptions as I use the unit, but I found the initial cataloging to be efficient. From my experience to-date, this product does what its developers say it will. A minor irritation is the need for extra care in loading some CDs with relatively thick labels – they may have to be gently pushed down into the carousel slot, rather than dropping freely.

I have used disk catalog software in the past and in comparison, I find that the CD-Finder’s software is rather basic. More recent versions of most of the stand-alone disk catalog utilities I have examined now have the capabil-

(Continued on page 5)



CD-Finder Pro

(Continued from page 4)

ity to scan archives (zip) and cab files. Some also include internet CDDb searching that provides track lists for audio CDs. The current version of the CD-Finder Pro software identifies the number of tracks on an audio CD, but titles must be entered manually.

Although the latter is not critical to me, many users would appreciate this capability and I encourage the developers to incorporate these features in an upgrade. On my wish list, I would also add at least rudimentary (CSV, delimited) data import and export features. The data is currently stored in an MDB (MS Access database) format. I have not attempted to examine or manipulate the data outside of the provided software.

The main advantage of this system will of course be in its future use for locating CDs and archived data files. If your free time is as "challenged" as mine, and if you spend anywhere near the amount of time I have, searching for CDs and files, then you cannot afford NOT to get one of these beauties. I have since spotted a few similar carousel-type units, some with smaller storage capacity, but all with, I believe, similar software and comparable (per CD stored) costs. There's also a similarly priced tower with similar software that feeds you the requested CD on one of its stack of 75 motorized trays!!

But then, you might want to check the "Thunderbird - design is carved and painted on the door and top ... stained in golden oak" - holds 150 CDs - \$459 (on sale). Or how about the "African Media Cabinet: traditional Ghanaian mask on a contemporary CD holder - Curved sides with a carving make this a Swahili favorite" - holds 85 CDs - US\$149. Then there's my favourite: the "Aqua Tower: Triple clear acrylic 3" diameter columns transmit the internal flow of colored bubbles ... with interchangeable color filters" - holds 160 CDs - US\$479. All works of art, I'm sure; but the practical functionality and space efficiency of the CD-Finder makes it, to my eyes, a true "thing of beauty".

The Bottom Line:

Microforum CD-Finder

<http://www.cd-finder.com>

Holds 150 standard (5") CDs/CDRs/DVDs, etc

USB cable, AC adapter, 2 keys (for mechanical lock) included

CD-Finder Pro v.3.4 software for Windows 98 and later or Mac OS9.x or OS/X

P166 or Mac Power PC, 8MB RAM required

US\$168 (or US\$129 for Lite version)

Available locally from:

Media Replication Services
(contact Peter Bauer)

Phone: 819-647-5700

Fax: 819-647-6500

1-866-847-5700

peter.bauer@mediars.com



Before and after CD-Finder Pro

BITS & BYTES

June Prize Winners

Prize winners from the June 11th meeting included:

John Archibald, George Campbell, Irene Kwik, Ted May and Anthony Toscano who were all lucky enough to have their names pulled for the Microsoft supplied door prizes.

Stu Moxley took home the raffle prize, a copy of the Microsoft Flight Simulator Software.

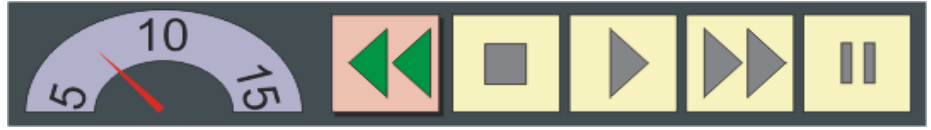
Many thanks to Microsoft for these prizes.



OPCUG History

Rewind...

by Ted May, OPCUG Historian



*Editor's Note: After some technical difficulties last spring, **Rewind** is finally back. Ted took on a big job in becoming the club's new historian and he has come through with the two articles that should have appeared in the May and June newsletters. We include both articles for you this month.*

10 Years ago

The lead article was about WordPerfect getting it right (**WordPerfect Gets it Right**), a tongue in cheek article. It talks about how difficult it was to use WordPerfect, DOS edition, version unknown.

The next article was about the **Disk of the decade** which contained goodies from previous disks-of-the-month (DOM) disks over the previous decade.

There was an item about a **Second annual garage sale** that took place on May 29th.

There were presentations by **Symantec** and **Fifth Dimension**. Symantec's presentation was about their product called **Norton Desktop**, a group of utility products all packaged in its own shell. Utilities like **backup**, **recovery**, **anti-virus**, and **Disk Doctor** are included in the desktop product which operates as a shell. Symantec offered OPCUG members an excellent deal on **Norton Desktop** and **Norton Utilities**. **Fifth Dimension** showed new presentation products and touching on colour output ranging from local bus technology to colour printers.

There is also an article on various **Screen-saver utilities** from **AMERICA.ZIP** to **IM19.ZIP**.

The next article is named **Going 100% Windows**, describing the various utilities and applications that promote going 100% windows and those that are only available for (or has a better version) for DOS.

An article under Fox SIG describing the **Distribution Kits** for FoxPro 2.5 DOS and Windows. Also mentions

the previous meeting and the next.

The final article is **Notes on memory**. About the various kinds of memory in a computer such as **conventional memory**, **Expanded memory**, And **Extended memory**. Also describes **Using upper memory**.

15 years ago

The lead article was **AUTOCAD: an electronic drafting table** describing the presentation of how AutoCAD works and named add-on programs to enhance its functionality.

The next article (on the front page) was **It was 50 disks ago today**. It says the first disk was released in March 1983. At the article time, the library consisted of the monthly disks, speciality disks and demo disks, contained more than 300 disks.

The next article was **Disk Technician has lots of bells and whistles**. It describes the program and its ins and outs as well as the fact that it is copy protected.

There is a small item mentioning a TV show called **Whole Bit** which aired on the third Tuesday of each month except July and August.

The next article: **Buying software: shop around for the best deal** described the wide range of prices for software among various computer stores.

There was an item describing the raffle and a demonstration by Nancy D'Amico of SirTech at the next meeting on June 29th.

There was a BBS listing for the Ottawa area.

The next page had a list of the **PC**

Club Executive and Special Interest Groups. The President at the time was Harry Gross and the Past President was Anne Moxley, Treasurer was Mike Luckham, and etc. (no slight intended by breaking off here.)

An item: **Paper deals...** describing paper costs.

An item: **IBM-AT priced to sell** described as: IBM-AT computer, 640K, 20-meg hard disk, 1.2 meg floppy drive, Hercules card, monochrome monitor, 2 serial and 3 parallel ports, Microsoft mouse. Also, DOS v3.2, IBM-AT Technical Reference manual, Basic manual, and much more - \$3,600. Also includes peripherals descriptions.

The next article: **More menus for WordPerfect** describes a couple of programs and a utility to add menus to WordPerfect 4.x and also to the upcoming version 5.0.

The next article: **Bulk purchasing: five years of excellent service** describes a small business that specializes in bulk purchases for the club on a voluntary basis.

Next is an article: **OPCUG continues to grow** describing the growth of the club to 342 paid members that year.

An item: **Coming up...** describing the topic for the May 25 meeting. Journalism and the computer given by Tom Hill of the Ottawa Citizen.

Next item: **Calendar...**, saying meetings are held at the National Research Council Auditorium, 100 Sussex Drive, on the last Wednesday of the month except in July and December.

An item: **High quality disks return** on the back page describes the availability of high quality disks (5 1/4" disks).

(Rewind... [Article 2 next page](#))

OPCUG History

Rewind... Article 2

5 years ago

There is no newsletter available for June 1998.

The issue available previous to that is for November 1997. This rewind is from the November 1997 issue.

The first article describes Microsoft's Knowledge Base. You can find the Knowledge Base at <http://support.microsoft.com/default.aspx?scid=FH;EN-US;KBHOWTO> (This is the current URL.)

It gave several examples of articles in the Knowledge Base, such as:

- Do you have problems shutting down Windows 95 and ending up with your computer hanging?
- Having problems browsing remote workgroup computers on your network?
- Article Q173310 (currently without the Q) describes how to completely remove Office 97 SR1 from your computer, should you ever want to do this.
- Do you get a Dr. Watson error in Iexplore when quitting Internet Explorer?

The next article **Show us the cool stuff** by Julie Dustin told about the presentation that was upcoming on November the 5th 1997 by Susan Finlay, Manager of Product Specialists, for Corel Corporation showing CorelDRAW 8.0 which included DRAW 8.0, PHOTO-PAINT 8.0 and DREAM.

The next article **Scanning the scanners** by Bert Schopf, told about the presentation on scanners at the upcoming November 11 meeting of the DTP SIG.

The article **October meeting review: Corel paints a great picture!** by Bert Schopf. It told about how the presentation by Corel PhotoPaint specialist Denis van Staalduinen wowed the

crowd on October 14 with the fantastic features of PhotoPaint 7. As an added bonus, DTP SIG was privileged to witness one of the very first showings of CorelDraw and PhotoPaint 8, which was due to be released in November 1997.

News and reviews by Nick Potter and John Ladds (Paradox SIG) **September in review.** A visit by five members of the Corel Paradox team, including Jeremy Oldland and Sylvain Charron (Corel Paradox Product Manager) at the September meeting of the Paradox SIG, gave a presentation on the newly released Corel Paradox 8.

October meeting. John Ladds presented a review of the 8th Annual Borland Conference.

The next article about the **Future of the newsletter** (by Chris Seal). Chris Seal, the then current editor would be handing over editing of the newsletter after the December 1997 issue.

The next article **Election notice: OPCUG Board of Directors** by David Reeves, secretary, was about the upcoming election to the Board of Directors.

An article **OPCUG annual swap meet** by Bob Walker tells about the swap meet that was to take place on November 19.

There was a product review, **Creative Labs Video Blaster WebCam** by Jerry Gault which gave a good description of the titled WebCam.

Another product review, **Hockey at it's best, NHL 98** by Jerry Gault describes the computer game for the readers of the newsletter.

10 years ago

There was no newsletter for June 1993. Instead the next newsletter was August 1993.

The article **Welcome to the 1993/94 season** by Lynda Simmons mentioned Symantec's User Group Purchase Program offering fully paid up members of the User Group Symantec software

at incredibly low prices and without a time limit. It also mentions that getting an order form involves going to any meeting or having a fellow member pickup a form for you. A list of meeting dates also is given. Meetings took place in the auditorium at the Sir Robert Borden High School.

The next article **DON'T, or how to care for your computer** by Eric Clyde mentions certain precautions to be taken such as non-portable models should be kept on solid tables. Also, proper ventilation is essential, that is, air intakes (and exits) must be kept clear. Likewise, the outlet that the computer is plugged into should not be on the same circuit as a major appliance.

Don't use the computer during thunder storms. Dust, smoke, pollution can cause problems. And last, but not least, keep coffee cups and so on away from the computer, keyboards and disks, etc.

It gave many do's and don'ts about floppy disks. For hard disks, it mentioned parking the heads before turning off the computer (something we don't have to worry about today!). It also mentioned making backup copies of new software before using it, storing the original in a safe place and using the backup only. It recommended frequently saving your work when making changes to your data (Letters, reports, spreadsheets, etc.) in case of a power bump which would kill the computer and lose all your changes since the last save. Another recommendation was not to shut off the computer in the middle of a program because the data file may be damaged (by loss of some of the changes not yet written to disk). Also, it recommended backing up any changed files from the hard disk to floppy disks (or from floppy to floppy in a floppy disk only system).

Rewind Article 2 continued...

(Continued on back page)

OTTAWA PC NEWS

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

Member participation is encouraged! If you would like to contribute an article to Ottawa PC News, please submit it to the newsletter editor (contact info below). Deadline for submissions is three Saturdays before the next General Meeting.

Group Meetings

OPCUG meets on the second Wednesday in the month, except July and August, at the Canada Science and Technology Museum, 1867 St. Laurent Blvd, Ottawa. Meetings are 7:30–9:00 p.m. and Special Interest Groups go until 10 p.m.

Fees: OPCUG annual membership: \$25 per year

Mailing Address: 3 Thatcher St., Nepean, Ontario, K2G 1S6

Web address: <http://opcug.ca>

Bulletin board — the PUB II (BBS) <http://opcug.ca/default.htm>

NOTE: As of June 16th, dial-up access to PUB II has been removed. Only access via the internet through your internet service provider (ISP) is available.

President and System Administrator

Chris Taylor chris.taylor@opcug.ca 727-5453

Meeting Coordinator

Bob Gowan bob.gowan@opcug.ca

Treasurer

Vince Pizzamiglio vince.pizzamiglio@opcug.ca

Webmaster

Brigitte Lord opcug-webmaster@opcug.ca

Secretary

(Mr.) Jocelyn Doire Jocelyn.Doire@opcug.ca

Membership Chairman

Mark Cayer Mark.Cayer@opcug.ca 823-0354

Newsletter

Brigitte Lord (editor) brigitte.lord@opcug.ca 232-8427

(Mr.) Jocelyn Doire
(e-mail distribution): Jocelyn.Doire@opcug.ca

Public Relations

Morris Turpin morris.turpin@opcug.ca 729-6955

Historian

Ted May tamay@rogers.com

Facilities

Bob Walker 489-2084

Beginners' and Windows SIG coordinator

Duncan Petrie gdpetr@hotmail.com 841-6119

Internet SIG coordinator

Norm Dafoe ndafoe@sirius.ca

Delphi SIG coordinator

Martin Pagnan mpagnan@cyberus.ca

Director without Portfolio and

Orphans' SIG Coordinator (Interim)

Alan German alan.german@opcug.ca

Developers' SIG

Bob Thomas bobthomas@msn.com

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The article **New season overture** by Lynda Simmons tells about the presentation of Campbell Douglas music keyboards at the September 7 meeting.

The last article **Disk 100 in review** by Norm Dafoe talks about the DISK-OF-THE-MONTH ONE HUNDRED! That is, the 100th disk-of-the-month. It also mentioned the next months DISK 101.

15 years ago

The first article **CHECKUP may solve 'virus' problem** by Mike Luckham discusses computer viruses. Jackson Hibler thought he had a solution, a 'CRC Check' program as the best general-purpose anti-virus defense.

WordPerfect v5.0 was **the new kid on the block** (by Mike Roy), discussed the word processor and its host of features and some problems along with their solutions.

The next item is an article **Micro-chip prices are on the increase** (by Terance P. Mahoney) which quoted the prices for memory chips and the fact that computer prices were going up by about 10 per cent. One popular EGA board with eight 256K chips on it had increased by almost 15 per cent.

The next article **Disk - 52 is fully packed** by Chris Taylor discussed the contents of the next Disk-of-the-month.

OPCUG library has interesting history by Chris Taylor discussed the history of the library and the changes over its existence up to June 1988. It had an inventory of 50 disks.

A Calendar... about the meetings of the IBM PC Users Group on the last Wednesday of the month in the National Research Council Auditorium, 100 Sussex Drive.

The next article **IBM, the PC and the computer marketplace** by Jackson Hibler discussed IBM, the PC and the effects of clones on the marketplace and other things.

A small item **Medicine for your computer** talks about a chemical called Stabilant 22 to improve the contacts in connectors and plugs in your computer.

The next item is the **1988 IBM - PC Club Executive**, listing the executives and the SIGs.

