OTTAWA PC NEWS

Review of the September meeting

ROLLIN' YOUR OWN — ObjectVision and Visual Basic

by Jackson Hibler

One of the quintessential features of early microcomputing was forcing end users to be programmers. The first machines had to — there were no programs at all back then. So you "rolled your own".

When the first BASIC for microcomputers emerged and carried its authors to glory, it also carried microcomputers further afield. With BASIC, even tyros — most everyone back then — could create functional, useful programs to solve their problems and to suit their needs. Sure, there were more powerful ways to program, and some of them, like Assembler, gave us applications like Lotus 123 that are programming tools in their own right. Many of us started programming through our spreadsheets.

User-made programs

And despite the flood of professional applications, festooned with bells, fully equipped with the latest whistles, the need is still there for user-made programs. Little things, some of them. Pretty big, complex things, others! The whole field of "vertical applications" is rife with user-made programs, some of them grown into monsters...sometimes monstrosities.

The tools have changed

Basic is now a compiled, structured language trying to recapture the spotlight that presently shines on C ... and the professional programmer. Assembler is a niche tool. And

Object-Oriented Programming languages loom on the horizon — a swelling horde of 'em!

Detail work critical

Also swarming down the programming slopes are a crowd of programmer's tools that have grown up from the "Fourth Generation Languages" that mostly let users program the front end of their databases. The idea is to have as much of the "detail work" — the screens, the user interface design, input and output — done "automatically" so that the user-programmer can concentrate on design and specialized function. "Buy yer pull-down menus right out of the can! Sixteen versions! Just $99!" Still a daunting task with most of these tools, mind you, but a helpful leg up, no doubt. The trouble is that the "detail work" is often critical to the useability of the program. That "interface design" needs to be a good one, professionally designed.

What's ahead for users?

Has it all got beyond us? Is programming only for the pros now? How do you program for Windows ... for OS/2? Just learning the API for Windows has spawned an industry of training seminars. Are user-programmers about to be squeezed out? Hardly!

Two programming systems

Last month's meeting was a bit of serendipity. At the main presentation, Borland's Steve Finner gave us a look at ObjectVision. And at the Windows SIG later, Frederic Dahm

gave us an overview of Visual Basic. These two programming systems have taken a professionally designed user interface (Windows) and integrated much of its API into tools that let the user-programmer concentrate on logic and process.

ObjectVision: point and click

Somewhat like Actor (now in version 4.1), ObjectVision has its roots in database forms design, and hasn't forgotten how to do "front-end"

NEXT MEETING : **TUESDAY, October 27, 1992** *details on p. 3*

Rollin' your own *continued from page 1*

work in this field. ObjectVision makes forms design a point and click process. You link your data graphically. "Event trees" even help you build the logic of the program. You can create interactive Windows applications, and an unlimited runtime module lets you distribute the applications you make. You have direct access to almost any database, including dBase, Paradox, and most functions of Fox. SQL/ObjectVision links can be created. "An OS/2 version is on the market now."

Visual Basic: works first time

Visual Basic is closer to the programming language side of the equation. It's a complete BASIC implementation built into an object-oriented structure. You have full access to DLLs and DDE. You draw your visual interface within the Windows environment, but you don't control the Windows environment. The benefit of this loss of control is that your user interface works first time! You can focus on what happens between the screens. The programs you create will be slow, relative to C, but they should work with minimal debugging, also relative to C. And they can be converted into C later!

New levels in user programming

For full-blown applications that manipulate data, ObjectVision points to the future for the user-programmer. For prototyping and quick and dirty solutions that work, look to Visual Basic. Either way, Borland and Microsoft have not just brought things back full circle...they've built a spiral. User programming is making a comeback, and it's coming back at a whole new level!

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Corel responds to Jackson Hibler's review

It's not often we get a "Letter to the editor". In fact, in the year-and-a-half I have been editing our newsletter this is the first one. I hope it's the beginning of a trend.

The response cards that Debra refers to in her letter use words such as "excellent", "superb", "good", "nice", "fine", "great", "dynamic", "neat" and "informative" to describe Brenda Collins' presentation. The only reservations were for the poor audio/visual equipment for which Brenda can hardly be blamed. So, perhaps, Jackson didn't represent all of us in his article.

In the letter, you'll notice that Debra mentions Brenda's offer to give a tailored presentation for those who agreed with Jackson's point of view. I haven't had much feedback although, at the last meeting, at least a dozen people raised their hands to show they agreed with Jackson. Please let me know what you would like to see in another presentation by Brenda that she would prepare specially for the more advanced CorelDRAW user.

Here's Debra's letter (edited for brevity and clarity).

October 9, 1992

Dear Lynda:

We received about 110 User Group Questionnaire Cards at the September meeting featuring Brenda Collins of Corel Corporation. Two-thirds of these had no comment but the remaining third wrote nothing but positive remarks and praise for Brenda's presentation.

I share Brenda's concern about the impression that could be left by Jackson Hibler's personal commentary about the demo. Reviews certainly have opinions included in them, but the full thrust of Mr. Hibler's article seemed a bit antagonistic to me. I enclose photocopies of the response cards so you can see for yourself the impression that Brenda left on a full one-third of her audience.

Brenda tells me she has offered to do another, more specifically-tailored demonstration for your group. I certainly know that Corel's relationship with the Ottawa PC Users' Group will continue to be a positive, sharing relationship and we wish to support your members however we can.

With best regards,
Debra Wynter
User Group Coordinator, Corel Corporation

Three outstanding Windows products

by Lynda Simons

Software company representatives are coming from far away California and Arizona to present, not one, but three important Windows products at our October 27th meeting. This three-for-the-price-of-one show is brought to us courtesy of OPCUG member Glenn McCormack of Computique, The PC Pro's.

Two of the three products, Professional Draw for Windows and FrameMaker, compete effectively with other players already prominent in the fields of desktop publishing and graphics. The third product, WindowPhone, may well be the only player in its field.

Professional Draw for Windows

Glenn claims that, as a draw package, Professional Draw for Windows offers CorelDRAW some stiff competition. Made by Gold Disk of Torrance, California, Professional Draw can display several pages and allow you to arrange a drawing across these pages. This ability to work with more than one page at a time applies when handling text too. You can flow text from one frame to another both on the same page and on other pages. CorelDRAW's text handling capability was greatly enhanced in Version 3.0, but it still doesn't use frames or allow you to work on more than one page at a time. Kevin Connor of Gold Disk who is flying in from California to show us Professional Draw, is also bringing with him at least one of these $595 (recommended retail)

packages to give away at the meeting.

FrameMaker

FrameMaker is a document publishing product that has been around for a while on the Mac, NeXT and Unix platforms. It differs from many other PC desktop publishing pro-

grams in that it integrates the entire publishing process into one package: word processing, layout, graphics, book building, tables, math editing and hypertext links. Most of these features are available in other DTP packages one way or another, but not the hypertext feature. It will be interest-

ing to see how this online document feature is implemented in Frame-Maker.

If you don't win Professional Draw you can hope to win a copy of FrameMaker (value $950 recommended retail). At least one copy will be given away as a door prize.
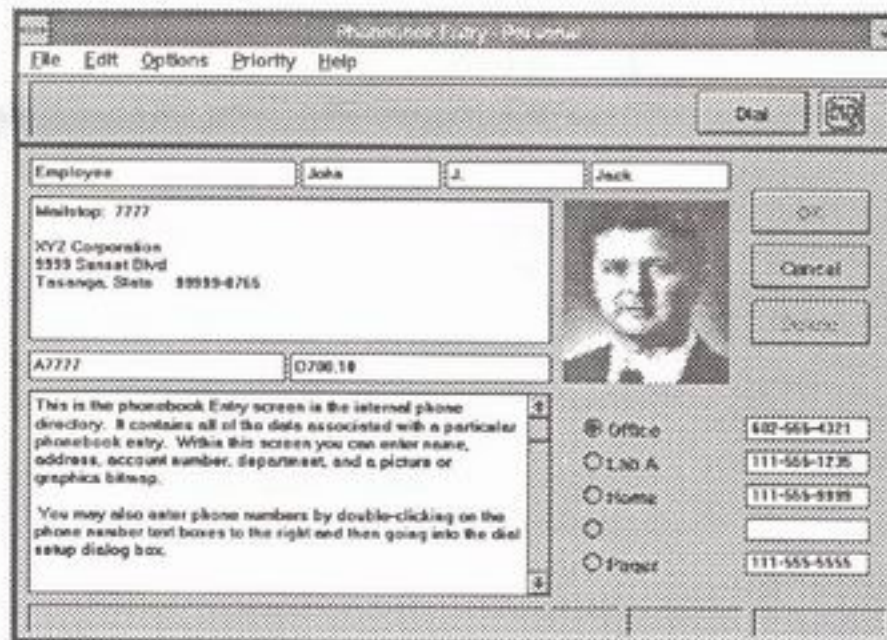
WindowPhone

Possibly unique, Window-Phone allows you to take advantage of current telephone technology, and combine it with your computer so that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. WindowPhone is both hardware and software, so you need a spare slot in your computer for the card. You also need to subscribe to Bell's Call Display service. With these things in place and Window-Phone installed, when the phone rings a window pops up on your screen with information about the caller. You can store caller information including names, address and up to five phone numbers notes and photos. At least one of these $695 (recommended retail) products will be given away too.

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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, October 27	See this page
Tuesday, November 24	Swap Meet (in Cafeteria at SRB)
Tuesday, December 15	Microsoft

How to use MOVIE *(for contestants and potential contestants)*

by Susan Phillips

Download MOVIE.ZIP from the PUB and UnZip it. You can install it in Windows by just copying the files and then setting up the program icon, a tiny movie projector, onto your Windows desktop. You start MOVIE by double clicking on the icon. This gives you another tiny projector at the foot of your screen, this one labelled "untitled".

How MOVIE works — an overview

You can create the individual frames for MOVIE with whatever graphics package or combination of tools you prefer. For example, CorelDRAW lends itself to animations of text that could either be quite simple morphing or very complex extrusions and colour changes. The fractal program FRACTINT for Windows is also ideal for producing variable images. These are just some ideas: use any paint or draw program.

Side by side

Running MOVIE and a graphics application simultaneously, side by side, you move back and forth between the two windows, creating each frame in sequence in the graphics program and saving it frame by frame, with MOVIE. It's a good idea to shrink both windows so that they share the space on your screen without overlapping. It's also a good idea to minimize the Program Manager window so that the screen doesn't get too confusing.

Designing your movie

Before you start, plan out the sequence of your frames, storyboard-style. Suppose you have clipart of a PC, and you want to blow it up (as in destroy): think about the sequence of events. For example: Frame 1: Computer has long fuse attached to it. Frame 2: Fuse starts to burn down.

Frame 3: Fuse burns shorter, frame by frame by frame until the computer explodes.... You might then use a number of frames to show the computer flying apart and then a few at the end for a cloud of smoke. The fifty frames could be built around three key frames for this movie: 1) Computer with burning fuse; 2) Computer exploding 3) Pile of pieces and puff of smoke

How to make movies

Step 1: Activate MOVIE by clicking on the "untitled" icon at the foot of your screen. Reduce the MOVIE window to half screen. Clicking anywhere in the black MOVIE window will pop up your main MOVIE menu.

Step 2: Load your graphics program, reduce it to the other half of the screen, and retrieve or create the first picture of your movie (in the example, the clipart of a PC).

Step 3: From the MOVIE menu select File, **Record**, which will prompt you for the name of your new movie. Let's call it BLOWUP.MOV. When this is entered, the cursor arrow changes to a clapboard with its arm up. Move this across to your drawing screen, and drag it to cover the area that contains your picture, and click. An outline will appear around the picture on your graphics screen. This is called the capture area.

Capture area default

The clapboard marks the upper corner of the capture area. If you don't select an area MOVIE will default on an area equal to the closest window, which it defines as any area enclosed by a solid line. You could end up with the drawing screen or the entire window from your graphics program, tool buttons and all.

Step 4. From the MOVIE menu select Control, Remote. This gives you a mini control panel, with options Play, Stop, Snap, Rec...etc. (You can move this Remote control out of the way of both windows.)

Step 5: Click on Snap. You'll notice that the capture area outline flashes, and the number 1 appears on the remote control to indicate that your first frame is saved.

Step 6: Move to the graphics window, and either select the next picture or modify the existing one to the next frame in the series.

Step 7: Return to the remote control and Snap the second frame.

Step 8: Continue to alternate between the two windows, changing the picture on one and snapping the frame on the other. When you have reached the end of your series, click on Stop on the remote control. Click on Play to see your movie.

Safety tips

You may want to save important scenes within your graphic program, in case you need to edit or redraw a picture. You cannot redraw the frames that you have saved in MOVIE, but you can edit and add new ones.

Editing movies

If you need to edit the movie, perhaps to add frames or to change a picture, you have to create a separate file with the corrected frames in it, and then open both .MOV files at once. Then in effect you copy one movie, frame by frame, to a new file, adding in the frames from the second.

File size

Manage the size of your .MOV file by adjusting the size of the capture area or the number of frames: the more frames, the smaller the area and vice versa. As well, rapid movement, or radical changes in the picture from frame to frame will increase the size of your .MOV file.

These are basic instructions. MOVIE has other animation abilities, such as continuous play, automatic recording, and a script language. See the Help screens for further details.

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Windows, Camera, Action!!

by John McManus

Several months ago I uploaded to the PUB MOVIE.ZIP, a shareware animation utility for Windows 3.X by Lantern Corporation (Clayton, MO, USA). This utility can capture a sequence of frames and then replay them as a simple animation. There are several examples of this included in the ZIP file.Or take a look at the October 27 issue of PC Magazine which has a short review of the program, illustrated with a typical screen. I have also uploaded a few movies which I have made myself using FRACTINT for Windows or other fractal programs.

The OPCUG Challenge

Now I have a challenge to the User Group. Make a movie, upload it to the PUB and members of the OP-CUG newsletter team will pick a winner. The winner will receive a free one-year membership to the User Group. The winning movie and its creator will be profiled in the January issue of the Ottawa PC News. Norm Dafoe, our software librarian, has agreed to make a specialty high-density diskette of a few of the top movies submitted.

The rules

Some rules are necessary to keep files compatible and a reasonable size, but I have tried to keep them few and simple.

1. Video mode: VGAx16 colours (palette may be changed from Windows default).
2. Format: a maximum of 320x240 pixels (one quarter screen).
3. Length: Your movie can have no more than 50 frames.

(These three rules will assist in keeping the final .MOV file to around 2MB.)

4. Limit of one movie entry per member, so pick your best one to submit to the challenge.
5. Cast of actors: the main characters, i.e. O P C U G (ha ha).
6: Plot: that's the challenge. Your movie can consist of anything so long as the OPCUG characters are in it.

Submitting your entry

Include a short description in ASCII of how the movie was made. Submit both .MOV and .TXT file as a .ZIP file to the PUB. Put it in the Newsletter Upload area (press FSN and please add a message saying "Movie contest entry" and your name.). If you are not a PUB user please contact Andrew Clyde at 744-4668. Closing date: November 30, 1992.

About MOVIE

MOVIE is a shareware program, and meeting this OPCUG challenge would be an excellent way for you to decide whether to register as a user. Registering will give you upgrades, including a scripting feature that lets you organize movie files into longer and more complicated movies, docuametnation on how to use MOVIE with other applications, for example, fractal programs, and tips on creating presentations and slide shows. And in case there are any concerns, other than registering as a user, I have no connection whatsoever with Lantern Corporation.

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You and your printer

by Julie Dustin

So you've worked hard at producing an aesthetically pleasing well-written newsletter, pamphlet or brochure on your computer. Now you must produce enough copies to send to your target audience, but what is the best way to do this? To find some answers to this question, our DTP SIG has been in touch with various printing bureaus across Ottawa.

Two of our OPCUG members, John Clark (owner/manager of two local Zippy Print operations) and Mark Baker (Lowe-Martin Group) gave us some insight at the last DTP SIG meeting.

Change in print jobs

Both speakers agreed that the types of print jobs have changed over the last few years. Clark has noted three principal changes: "We see more newsletters, more colour jobs and better quality overall. Previously, we received a lot of work that had been cut and pasted from typewriters."

DTP'ers try harder now

"DTP'ers are trying harder to impress their audience. They use colour to do that despite the added expense.If they have a tight budget they choose quality over quantity and run

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less copies so the total production costs are the same " he adds.

Printers can help

The printing bureaus do more than just run the presses. Where advice is welcome, they may suggest design changes to make the piece more attractive. As Clark says, "Clients may not think to use larger, more effective banners, screens or boxes or they may use too many effects."

How you can help the printer

So what do the printers expect you to hand over when you rush in the door panicking over your deadline? It's nothing complicated. Use offset or laser paper with a nice smooth finish for your laser-printed original ("camera-ready"). You'll also get better results if this paper is a bright white. Avoid porous bond paper because laser printing produces a light layer of ink across the entire page, like a 10% screen.

Colour separations

If you need colour, you might be able to submit everything on one page for the printer to separate for you. You can do this when the elements to be in a different colours are not too close to each other. You will have to mark clearly (not on the camera-ready copy, but on another copy you make for the purpose) which items are to be in which colour.

If the objects that are of a different colour are too close together, you will need to provide the printer with colour separations. This means printing out all the items (text and graphics) of the same colour on their own pages. Some software, like Ventura, can do this for you. Otherwise, you can do it yourself by making a copy of the page and then deleting everything on the page that isn't in the colour for which you are preparing the separation. You then repeat this process for each colour you are using. (Be careful to keep a complete original as you go through this process.)

Print bureaus, like Zippy Print, are often used for, but not restricted to, smaller quantity jobs of 5,000 or less. Printing plants, like Lowe-Martin, are better for larger jobs. More information on the latter will be appearing after our plant tour of Oct. 20th.

We hope to hand out guidelines, which will offer tips and guidance from your friendly printers, to DTP SIG attendees in the near future.

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DTP SIG report

FotoMan flounders

by Julie Dustin

For all those photographers-turned-computer buffs, now you can indulge in both activities at the same time. With FotoMan, you can snap your own pictures, download them to your computer and use them as you would any other graphic image.

FotoMan demonstration

Terry Mahoney, OPCUG Hardware/Software Broker, demonstrated FotoMan, the least expensive digital camera available today, at the last DTP SIG on Oct.6th. This camera, a product of Logitech Inc., lists for $799. It weighs only 10 ounces, and measures approximately 7" by 3" by 1.5" and includes a built-in flash and nickel cadmium battery. The images are captured, up to 32 at a time, and downloaded via cable to a serial port. A contact sheet with the images can be viewed, in thumbnail size, then saved in common format such as .BMP, .PCX or .TIF formats.

Retouch and use photos

You can then "retouch" the photos with PhotoTouch or other third-party products, such as InkWare Photo (from Ink Development Corp.) and use the photos as you would any other graphic image. PhotoTouch's "Equalize" command rescues the underexposed pictures while the "Darken" or "Lighten" commands will enhance or soften pictures

Easier said than done

Our DTP SIG group noted both the slowness and the graininess of the product and were not overly impressed. Even Terry noted that the camera's quality was more like that of the old Brownie camera. The product literature claims the camera has a f4.5 lens which is similar to a 55mm lens on a 35mm camera — are you impressed? I only have only point-and-shoot camera expertise.

Various reviews have suggested ways of improving the picture quality from avoiding indoor pictures to setting up Windows for 256 colours (not standard VGA), however, one might wish to wait for the next model of Fotoman before buying.

The price is right

Note, however, that your alternatives are expensive. Flat-bed scanners start at over a thousand dollars and professional quality digital cameras such as the new camera from Cardinal Technologies, list at around $9,000. Print bureaus will insert pictures at press-time for you at $25 each but beware; indoor and/or colour pictures (without definite dark/light contrasts) do not reproduce well.

Good luck, Logitech! We are looking forward to your next model. Just think of how great all those Christmas family newsletters are going to look next year.

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Making your computer suit your needs, part 6: DOSKEY Macros

by Eric Clyde

Last month's article introduced the benefits of using DOSKEY. This month we look at DOSKEY macros, how to make them and how they are different from batch files.

Macros & batch files compared

Although a DOSKEY macro is like a batch file, there are several important differences:

- A batch file is stored on disk. Since each line is read into memory before being executed it runs relatively slow. A DOSKEY macro is stored in memory, rather than on disk, and so runs much more quickly.
- Since DOSKEY macros exist only in memory, they disappear as soon as you switch your computer off, unless you take steps to save them, as explained below.
- A batch file, at least in theory, can be any number of lines, limited only by the amount of space on your disk. A DOSKEY macro consists of one line of commands, up to a total of 127 characters.
- You can run a batch file from within a macro, but you cannot run a macro from within a batch file. However, you can include a command to create a macro within a batch file.
- You can start a batch program from inside another batch program, but you can't start a macro from within another macro.
- You can use conditional statements (if ... goto ...) in a batch file, but not in a DOSKEY macro.

Macro syntax

The syntax (rules for proper sequence of commands and parameters) of a DOSKEY macro is

```
doskey[mname]=[command sequence]
```

where "mname" is the name of the macro. For example, in the macro,

```
doskey dir=dir /on $b more,
```

the name assigned to the macro is "dir". This macro gives an alphabetical list of files in the current directory, one screen at a time. This is equivalent to issuing the DOS command **dir /on more**. (The "$b" is used in DOSKEY macros instead of the vertical bar "|".).

Order DOS executes commands

Because of the sequence in which DOS looks for files a DOSKEY macro called "dir" will be executed rather than the internal DOS command DIR. The order in which DOS executes commands is

1. doskey commands or macros,
2. other internal commands,
3. .COM files, then .EXE files, then .BAT files in the current directory or subdirectory.

Macro command separators

When there are two or more commands included in one macro, they must be separated by "$t'" (or "$T"). For example in this macro

```
doskey mdcd=md $1 $t cd $1,
```

"$t" separates the two commands "md $1" and "cd $1". With one set of keystrokes this macro combines two separate DOS operations: making a new directory and then changing to that new directory. This example does not save much typing, but in more complicated examples, a significant amount of time can be saved, especially if you are not an expert typist.

Macro replaceable parameters

Macros can also use symbols called "replaceable parameters." For example, in the above macro, the "$1" is a replaceable parameter, that will be replaced by the name of the new directory when you run the macro as follows:

```
mdcd newname
```

Saving macros

To save macros for use in future sessions, type the DOSKEY command followed by the switch /macros, a greater than sign (>) , and a filename, as follows:

```
doskey /macros > macros.bat
```

This will save all the macros you have currently in memory, to a file, called MACROS.BAT.

Reloading saved macros

You can edit MACROS.BAT with a word processor or ASCII editor. You may want to delete the macros you don't want to save. More importantly, so you can load your saved macros into memory when you next turn on your computer, add the command DOSKEY to the beginning of each macro. You can then load the macros into memory by running MACROS.BAT.

Saving DOSKEY commands

To save all of your previously issued DOSKEY commands (this saves the macros as well), type the DOSKEY command followed by the switch /history (or the short form "/h"), the greater than sign (>), and a filename, as follows:

```
doskey/h > comms.bat
```

More on constructing and using macros next time.

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Eric Clyde holds beginners' sessions at the same time as the SIGs at 9.00 p.m. after the main presentation. The location will be announced at the meeting.

Eric is always happy to answer questions arising from his articles. You can reach him at 749-2387.

Election notice

Call for nominations for 1993 executive

Nominations for the election of new OPCUG officers must be in to Past Chairman, Doug Poulter, by November 30. There are five elected positions: Chairman, Treasurer, Secretary, Membership Chairman and Convenor. The Sysop, Software Librarian, Hardware/Software Broker and Newsletter Editor are appointed positions. All elected positions are open for nomination.

All of the current executive are willing to stand again. Please note that there has been a recent reshuffle. Paul Green has been forced to resign for personal reasons: he has been replaced by Mark Cayer. Lynda Simons has taken on the duties of the long-vacant post of Convenor, anticipating handing over the Newsletter editor's job.

Examiners needed

Doug Poulter needs two club members who are not members of the executive to review the club's financial records before they are published in the January 1993 newsletter. If you wish to volunteer to do this, or would like to nominate someone to the executive, please contact Doug Poulter at 745-8768.

If you would like to know more about what is involved in being an OPCUG officer, please contact any member of the executive.

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Reserve your Swap Meet table now

Eric Clyde is taking reservations for members who will need space on a table at the Swap Meet in November. If you have items you would like to bring to the Swap Meet, please contact Eric at 749-2387 to reserve a space.

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