OTTAWA PC NEWS

Welcome to the 1993/94 season

by Lynda Simons, Convenor

Normally this space in the newsletter is devoted to a recap and review of what happened at the last meeting. However, more than three months have passed since Symantec and Fifth Dimension presented to us on May 25: in the world of computers three month old news is very old indeed. But, there is a Symantec sequel.

Symantec's User Group Purchase Program

At the May meeting, Symantec presented their User Group Purchase Program. This program offers Symantec software to fully paid-up members of the user group at incredibly low prices. So low, in fact, that many of us wrinkled our brows and wondered what the catch was or if someone had made some sort of mistake—especially as the offer had no time limit on it. Well, it turns out, that there was no catch, and no mistake either. According to Blair Canavan, who made the May presentation to us, this is a "win-win squared" situation. "The User Group program is one of the smartest things we've ever done," he says. He went on to explain the

> **Check the envelope in case it contains other material such as a new membership card.**

program as a sort of amnesty. As members of CAST (Canadian Alliance Against Software Theft), Symantec is taking the realistic approach, based on goodwill towards software users, of offering software at affordable prices. The idea is that if you can afford to buy software you won't steal it. I think, in fact, that most OPCUG members manage with shareware or build applications themselves if they cannot afford to buy commercial packages. (I hope this is true, anyway!)

Whatever the motivation, it's a great offer of which we have, apparently, taken advantage in large numbers: OPCUG members have bought more than any other group in the program. And the offer continues! At the next meeting you will be able to pick up an updated price list and order form which includes ACT!, the then newly-acquired contact management program, that didn't make it on to the May list.

How do I get an order form?

Although the offer is available to any fully paid-up member of the group (that is, you don't have to attend any specific meeting to participate) the only mechanism for distributing forms currently in place is for members to pick up forms at a meeting. We may be able to arrange for a form to be made available on the bulletin board, but for the moment if you would like a form, please come and get one or arrange with a fellow member to get one for you.

1993/94 meeting dates

To help you get organized for the upcoming 1993-94 session here are the meeting dates:

- Tuesday, September 7 1993 (see page 3 for program details)
- Tuesday, September 28 (project management software)
- Tuesday, October 26
- Tuesday, November 30 (Swap Meet in Cafeteria, no SIGs)
- Tuesday, December 14

NEXT MEETING : **TUESDAY, September 7, 1993** *details on p. 3*

DON'T, or how to care for your computer

by Eric Clyde

ff DON'T, or how to care for your computer" was the title of a book published a few years ago. While the contents are mostly familiar to experienced microcomputer users, the ideas are worth repeating for new users, who may also want to consult the book at one of the local public libraries.

General Points

Microcomputers are in general, surprisingly reliable if certain precautions are taken:

- Non-portable models should be kept on solid tables (not card tables), since mechanical shock and vibration can damage components and loosen boards, chips, etc., causing erratic operation
- Proper ventilation is essential. Make sure that air intakes are kept clean and are not blocked. Overheating causes chips to fail early. As a general rule, if it is uncomfortably hot for you, it is too hot to be using the computer. Be especially careful if you are lucky enough to have a 486DX2 computer—they tend to run very hot.
- The electrical outlet you plug your computer into should not be on the same circuit as any major appliances. When the refrigerator for example turns on, an electrical surge can come down the line and cause problems. If you live in the country or suspect that you may have problems with the power lines, you would be advised to get a good surge protector. It's good insurance, wherever you live.

- Don't use your computer during a thunderstorm—electrical surges can cause loss of data and worse. It is advisable to disconnect your modem from the phone line as well.
- Dust, smoke, pollution can cause problems to many components
- Keep coffee cups and so on away from the computer, keyboard, disks, etc.

Floppy Disks

- Handle floppy disks with respect for the data on them. Don't touch the disk surface, or fold the disk.
- Don't expose them to dust (or young children, or smoke, or spilled coffee, etc.)
- Label the disks clearly, but don't use hard-tipped pens to write on the label
- Don't leave the disks lying around—store them in a closed box
- Avoid exposure to stray magnetic fields—valuable data can easily be accidentally erased
- From time to time, check the alignment of your drive, either by using special software or by checking that disks you produce are readable on someone else's machine

Hard Disks

- Park the heads before switching off the machine
- Avoid mechanical shock—don't drop the computer and don't move the machine without parking the heads
- For emergencies, make several bootable floppy disks. Then, if something horrible happens and you can't boot from your hard disk, you have a partial safety net.

- For safety, give your COMMAND.COM the read-only attribute. Then if you copy a bootable disk to your machine, you won't accidentally overwrite it.
- If you use software from other sources, be careful of your source and use virus protection software

Software

- Make backup copies of new software before you start to use it. Put the original in a safe place and use the backup.

Data (Letters, reports, spreadsheets, etc.)

- If you are making changes to your files, save your work frequently—if the power should go off even for a millisecond, all your work since the last time you saved will be lost
- If you have made more than minor changes, save the changed file before you print it out or do extensive data manipulation
- Try not to shut off or reset the microcomputer in the middle of a program. Some of your files may be damaged.
- At the end of each session, backup at least the changed files from your hard disk to floppy disks (or, on floppy-disk-based systems, make a backup copy of your floppy disk).

I hope I haven't alarmed you unduly. If you treat your microcomputer well, it should be reliable for a long time. Happy computing.

❖❖❖

New season overture

by Lynda Simons

Music to your ears: that's what Hugh Chatsfield promises for our first evening back after the summer break. "A fun way to start the season," says Hugh who has entertained us before with his keyboards and computer. But this time he's bringing us something new. Campbell Douglas Keyboards are going to demonstrate for us the state-of-the-art equipment that Hugh would like to own, but until recently could only dream of owning. However, in the last couple of months professional quality sound equipment has become available at prices that amateur musicians can afford. What used to cost tens of thousands of dollars now costs thousands and, in some cases, hundreds. Music arranging software is now available for as little as $75.

What we will see are three or four systems, including a high-end facility for music scoring and music notation recording, and a direct-to-disk recorder which allows you to record your own voice, or from a CD, or whatever you

want directly to a hard-drive. And we'll be able to hear the difference between what is normally a computer industry music card (such as the Sound Blaster) and a real music industry card.

We'll also learn about standard MIDI files which are available on diskette and which you can edit and use in many different ways.

❖❖❖

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, 7 September	See this page.
Tuesday, 28 September	Project management
Tuesday, 26 October	To be announced

New plans *continued from page 1*

- Tuesday, January 25 1994 (no SIGs)
- Monday, February 21
- Monday, March 28
- Monday, April 25 Monday, May 30

All meetings are scheduled to take place in the auditorium (except that in November), at Sir Robert Borden High School, starting at 7:30 p.m. Following the main presentation, Special Interest Groups and new member orientation (more on that below) begin at 9 p.m. in separate classrooms. Meetings from September, 1993 through January, 1994 will take place

on the last Tuesday of the month (except December because of Christmas). From February 1994 the meeting moves from Tuesday to the last **Monday** of the month. We realise that the day change may cause some of you problems, but we have no choice as this is the only day we can get the auditorium and classrooms at the school. Any changes to these arrangements will be published in the newsletter and on the bulletin board.

New member orientation

In response to member feedback and in the spirit of trying to provide better service, we are introducing a New

Member Orientation session. This will take place at most meetings in a classroom at 9 p. m. As the name implies, these sessions are designed to introduce new members to all the services of the group. However, you don't have to be a new member to come to this session: old but still mystified members are also most welcome. As convenor, I will host the sessions. Chris Taylor, Pub Sysop, will be on hand on September 7 to explain the Pub (our electronic bulletin board) to members.

❖❖❖

Software Library

Disk 100 in review

by Norm Dafoe

It's been three months since our last OPCUG meeting (May) and the unveiling of DISK-OF-THE-MONTH ONE HUNDRED! Although it was a long time ago, I am still recovering from putting together the high-density disk full of favourite utilities for DOS. Sales were remarkable; almost 100 sold at $5 each, a good boost for the club's finances and encouragement for myself. We also had some new specialty disks:

- BOXER Text Editor v5.0a
- CLASSIC GOLFER v1.5 (handicapping)
- NEOPAINT v2.1, another paint program for DOS
- SHARESPELL v2.4B, a new version of the shareware spell-checker.

Due to summertime laziness, I have not yet uploaded DISK 100 to the PUB. I hope to do this shortly. Otherwise, those who didn't get it at the May meeting can purchase it at our Sept 7 meeting.

Problems found and resolved

DISK 100 had some problems. One of the self-extracting archives found a chink in PKZIP v2.04g's armour (in the junior self-extracting archive routine). The problem caused PRINT.EXE to report falsely that DMP205.ZIP had failed the CRC check. DMP205.ZIP then went into loops, filling up member's hard-disks while extracting ONSIDE.ZIP. This occurred when running A:PRINT as per the instructions. However the archive extracted properly when used with PKUNZIP (version 2) or PKUNZJR.COM on the disk itself. I have fixed the problem on the new copies of DISK 100 and the copy to be uploaded. Many apologies.

Next month's disk

There have been many new and revised programs released during the summer. I am now making the final selection. Most likely we will have in addition to DISK 101 some exciting new games, a collection of PC Magazine utilities, and other goodies. Drop by the Software Librarian's table and say hello!

❖❖❖

COMING TO THE NEXT
OPCUG MEETING

Campbell Douglas Keyboards

Presents a display of a wide array of
music-oriented products
from Soundblaster to Roland

When and Where!

Tuesday, September 7th 1993
7:30 pm
Sir Robert Borden H.S.
131 Greenbank Rd.
Nepean

OTTAWA PC USERS' GROUP

The Ottawa PC Users' Group

3 Thatcher Street
Nepean, Ontario
K2G 1S6

Membership Application

(renewal)

VOICE (613) 723-1329
BBS (N,8,1)(613) 228-0665

Please Print

Last Name:	First Name:

Address:

City:	Province:

Postal Code	Country:

Telephone:
Home: _____ Office: _____ Fax: _____

Are You: ❑ A New Member? ❑ Renewing your membership?	Membership I.D.# _____	MEMBERSHIP FEE $25.00
Do you wish to subscribe to the Disk of the Month and/or Software Library disks? (10 disks per subscription regular price $3.00 per disk)	❑ Yes ❑ No	Disk Format: ❑ 5.25" @ $25.00 yr. $. ❑ 3.50" @ $35.00 yr. $.

Total:
❑ Cheque ❑ Cash $.

Can you help in Group Activities? Check those that apply.

		Hardware Used:	
❑ Programming Instruction	❑ Hardware Techniques		
❑ Newsletter Input	❑ Meeting Locations		Modem?
❑ Memberships	❑ Agendas & Speakers	❑ XT	❑ Yes
❑ Software Library	❑ Advertising	❑ AT - 286	Baud:
❑ Promotion/Publicity	❑ Bulletin Board	❑ 386	❑ 300
	❑ Other _____	❑ 486	❑ 1200
			❑ 2400
			❑ 9600

What in particular interests you in the Group?

Date Rec'd:	db Entry:	Membership Card:	❑ CASH
By:			❑ Cheque
Notes:			No. _____

HHF/rev.05/05/92