



National  
Capital  
**FreeNet**

**Libertel**  
de la Capitale  
Nationale

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# WELCOME

We think it's fitting to write this together, since together we represent a solid chunk of National Capital FreeNet's past, its present, and at least some part of its future.

Since the beginning, FreeNet has identified its members with an ID that includes two letters followed by three numbers. So the founding members of FreeNet are: aa001 (Dave Sutherland) aa002 (Jay Weston), and aa003 (George Frajkor).

Even today, some people still identify themselves to us, online and in real life, with their member IDs before they ever say their names. And this past June, we were excited to move out of the f-series, fa001 to fz999, after nearly 10 years. In our 25 year history we've had 154,845 members and sign-ups, now moving to ga001 and beyond.

So who is this aa000 we're celebrating in the book's title? It's the member ID for NCF itself.

Sifting through this material has helped underscore a number of important lessons: that passionate people coming together to do something for themselves are a nearly unstoppable force, that times change and it's important to change with them, that you can do wondrous things, then make mistakes, then do both at the same time and just keep going, that a solid foundation means you're more likely to survive, and that there is still a lot of work to do. We're happy to take it on.

Thanks to everyone who has brought us to this point: from Board members, to staff and volunteers, and of course to our members. If your ID is an older one, we love that you've been with us since the beginning. And newer member IDs show we still have lots to offer.


And if you have ideas for the future you'd like to share, feel free to email. The email [xx174@ncf.ca](mailto:xx174@ncf.ca) has served every NCF Executive Director since the dawn of time (well, since 1993) so you can rest assured it will land in the right inbox.

Thanks to ga047 (Alex Parsons) for his amazing work in pulling everything together and documenting why FreeNet mattered so much, and matters still.

Take care and talk soon,



bz787 (Chris Cope)  
Chair, NCF Board of Directors,



xx174 (Shelley Robinson)  
Executive Director

## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Three months ago I'd never heard of National Capital FreeNet but I knew going right from graduation to editing a book was super dope. While I thought I knew what I was getting into, I quickly learned that NCF is not an ordinary internet service provider.

After what seemed like endless amounts of research and scanning, I've concluded that the reason FreeNet has persisted for 25 years is because beneath all the wires and modems and screens is a big-hearted community bound by a common philosophy.

Getting to work with the wildly competent and hilariously sarcastic staff and volunteers was a treat. The rest of the time I was diving into a trove of tattered newspaper clippings, yellowed letters, random photographs, and other artifacts (like a signed NCF propeller beanie). It's been a trip.

I've glimpsed the ways NCF has changed from birth until now and met many of the people who have come and gone throughout the years. FreeNet changed them and I'd like to think it has already changed me too.

Amidst the warm glow of nostalgia, I've also found a few fascinating but disturbing dead-ends in our history. From accusations of censorship and fascism, to the supposed debauchery of NCF's most popular chatrooms, the organization has seen it all.

But no matter how scandalous, no bad vibes were strong enough to kill the drive that's kept FreeNet going for all this time.

Three months later, this project has been one of the best experiences of my life. I'm honoured to have played my part in NCF's wonderful story.

Sincerely,



Alex Parsons  
Editor

A new computer system being tested at Carleton University will put the world . . .

# at your (keyboard) command

By DOMINIQUE LACASSE  
CITIZEN-HIGH-TECHNOLOGY WRITER

Even Marshall McLuhan would have been impressed. It's a hot medium. It's a cool medium. It's got the memory of an elephant, and can travel at the speed of light. It can take any question thrown at it, and go almost anywhere in the world to find the answer. But unlike conventional communications media, you're at the controls. And it could soon be free.

A "community computing" system being tested on a Carleton University computer will put Ottawa at the forefront of what is perhaps the most innovative and promising development in the world of computers today, a development that could forever change communications.

If the project stays on track, by Christmas Ottawans will have instant telephone access through a personal computer and modem from home, office or school, to thousands, potentially millions of databases, across town or across the globe. . . at no cost to the user.

"We're plowing ahead," says David Sutherland, Carleton University's director of Computing and information services and chairman of the National Capital FreeNet. "This is a very enabling technology . . . a new medium, and we're not charging anything."

Sutherland is leading the project — modelled on successful community computer networks in the U.S. — which he and a handful of professors from Carleton's journalism and psychology departments launched.

Most of the elements for the Ottawa network are in place, Sutherland says. A corporate donor has pledged a powerful Unix-based computer and Nepean's Gandalf Technologies has donated 14 modems.

Carleton has bought the software, so the only real hurdles left are telephone lines and money to pay one employee to manage the network. The information that would go on the network is either already available free or would be volunteered by government and social agencies, businesses, schools or community groups.

And just this week, Sutherland says he received

**By tapping into National Capital FreeNet, users will be able to check an Ottawa City bylaw, receive electronic mail from overseas, or review the flight schedule for NASA space shuttles — all for free**



— John Meier, Citizen  
David Sutherland, Carleton University's director of computing and information services, is chairman of the National Capital FreeNet. The local computer system promises to offer a huge array of services — for free.

two pledges totalling \$20,000 from public sources. Even if no further commitments or sponsors are found between now and launch date, however, Sutherland says the project will "go ahead regardless."

But sponsors and support will certainly come, Sutherland says, given the interest shown so far and the phenomenal success of the FreeNets launched in even tiny centres such as Peoria, Ill., in recent years.

"FreeNet has been proven to work," says Alex Cullen, an Ottawa councillor who has taken an interest in the project. "It's a wonderful idea, the wave of the future."

Cullen says the network could help the city cut costs by delivering its services and information electronically. He says the network could be used in almost every aspect of the city's operations, from disseminating health bulletins — something that would have been especially useful during last year's meningitis outbreak — to licensing hot dog vendors.

"I'm hot to trot on this," Cullen says. "FreeNet moves us toward a paperless society. . . It will make it easier for people to cut through the jungle that city hall is."

"We have a whole law library here, for instance. All our bylaws are already on line. We have all the information here, it makes sense to put it on line."

The possible uses for such a network "blow one's mind," says Nepean Coun. Les Casey, who is on the FreeNet's fundraising committee. "There's lots and lots of potential," says Casey, adding he has already received electronic mail from Argentina and Germany responding to questions he had placed on the network.

Though there are lots of computer-based information services around, commercial systems such as Compuserve, Prodigy or America Online, tend to be far too expensive for wide public use. And small, local bulletin board services (BBS) tend to cater to computer technophiles, or are very limited in the scope and quality of the information they provide.

FreeNets, on the other hand, don't cost a penny to use — not even a long-distance charge for connections to computers in other cities — and can be as rich and vast as public libraries. Indeed, one of the services FreeNets typically offer, including Ottawa's, is on line access to municipal and university libraries.

Sutherland says the FreeNet won't take business away from commercial databases any more than public libraries did from publishers. If anything, he says, the FreeNet will foster a "technology literacy" that may actually stimulate demand for commercial services.

"We will never replace commercial services, and we'll never look as flashy," he says referring to the graphics features of some of the more advanced systems. For now at least, the FreeNet will be a text-based system.

Despite any technical disadvantage, however, the National Capital FreeNet will likely be far more relevant to the daily lives of people here than any commercial service. It will offer information and dialogue on anything from legal and medical issues to recreational events and business opportunities.

And through Internet — a global network used primarily by university, government and business researchers — users will be able to tap into more exotic databases offering anything from flight schedules for NASA space shuttles to an "Electronic Koran."

Kathy Crabbe, an adviser to Carlington Community and Health Services, has been using the trial network for about six months and attends monthly organizing meetings. "Every meeting we get more and different people out. There's a lot of interest," Crabbe says.

"The only way this won't happen is if the 20 key people all died of heart attacks."

The network's founding committee first met in November last year and had its first public meeting in March. The group planned to offer the service to the public in 1994, but progress has been so good Sutherland says the network will be offered to the public — with a starting configuration of about 10 telephone lines — some time in December.

The trial network has about 150 registered users and an unknown number of "guests" use it every day.

Groups experimenting with the Ottawa network include Statistics Canada, the Federal Communications Research Centre, the Ottawa Chinese Community Service Centre, the Catholic Immigration Service, the Manordale-Woodvale Community Association and Epilepsy Ottawa-Carleton.

Carleton University's information service and library also are available on the system, as is the Ottawa Public Library.

The network can be a conduit for information as basic as the Manordale association's June newsletter in which one learns that a used stove and fridge is required for the Manordale Community Building, and that volunteers were needed to handle horses during community day activities.

On the other hand, the network has one of the most sophisticated computer applications imaginable: an experimental "artificial intelligence" program run by the Communications Research Centre.

Users who select this option are connected directly to the centre's computer where an interactive "expert system" about epilepsy is running. The program

allows callers to ask questions about epilepsy in plain language, rather than selecting choices from a pre-defined menu. Asking the computer "What is epilepsy?" for example, one learns the word means nothing more than the tendency to have seizures. One also learns that epilepsy was once believed to be caused by a demon, and came to be known as the "sacred disease."

Ottawa's FreeNet is modelled on pioneering projects in the U.S. that have enjoyed remarkable success, creating for computer users what public libraries did for readers early this century.

The first and the biggest is the Cleveland FreeNet, which has more than 35,000 registered users and offers a remarkable array of services, from electronic dialogue with the mayor's office and daily news summaries from *U.S.A. Today* to job postings and a "teleport" connecting users to other computers around the world through the Internet network.

The network evolved from a single-line reference service offered by a professor in the medicine faculty at Case Western Reserve University into a diversified community network that handles more than 10,000 calls a day on 88 phone lines.

Sutherland says there are now about 35 FreeNets in various stages of development from Akron, Ohio, and Orange County, Calif., to Helsinki, Finland, and Wellington, New Zealand. In Canada, the only other city currently organizing one is Victoria, B.C., though Ottawa's is further along in its development.

About one in five Canadian households is equipped with a PC, according to a Statistics Canada survey conducted in May '91.

StatsCan says there were nearly 800,000 computers in Ontario alone a year and a half ago. Given the huge volume of PC sales in the last year, however, the number in Ontario is probably close to one million now, and given the region's high proportion of affluent managers and technical workers, it is likely the Ottawa-area counts 100,000 or more home computers.

**The Ottawa system will be based on one in Cleveland that offers services such as an electronic dialogue with the mayor's office, job postings and a 'teleport' connecting users to other computers around the world**

# CHAPTER ONE PIONEERS OF THE DIGITAL FRONTIER

Modern society and the internet are joined at the hip – especially given the fact that most people live and work surrounded by wifi, and you can harness the net with a phone holstered in your pocket. But it wasn't always this easy.



Kyla Huckerby (aa309), NCF's first Office Manager

After the internet but before the World Wide Web, there was the idea of the FreeNet – a community network dedicated to local online portals for newsgroups, community information and building digital skills.

The first FreeNet of its kind was in 1986 in Cleveland, developed by Case Western University.

From an endless surge of volunteers, staff, members and supporters that have ebbed and flowed throughout the years, this region has three folks from Carleton to thank for the birth of National Capital FreeNet.

A Proposal to Establish the NATIONAL CAPITAL FreeNet Community Computing Demonstration Project

Summary: The National Capital FreeNet will be a computer based information service designed to meet the present information needs of the people and public agencies in the region, and to prepare the community for full and broadly based participation in rapidly changing communication environments.

The National Capital FreeNet will be an incorporated, non-profit community utility that is free to everyone in the community, and will neither charge nor pay for any information or other services it provides.

By dialing into a single number, members of the community will have a free, twenty-four hour connection to information and interaction with any of the participating organizations. The FreeNet will also provide other contemporary communication services for information access and exchange. The FreeNet is an electronic community centre, public square, and information fair.

Rather than each community agency trying to develop and maintain its own expensive, undersubscribed, single-service telecommunication service, each will be part of a single, cost effective, sophisticated, multi-line computer facility. The FreeNet is, then, a shared platform with each organization having a large, dedicated space on the system and autonomously determining how it is used.

The costs associated with building and maintaining this community service are relatively modest. It is confidently expected that these costs will be covered through public and private grants and donation, and the other fund raising methods that have been successful in other communities.

A successful National Capital Freenet could provide an architecture for public access communication services in other parts of the country. Linked together, this community-of-communities would, in time, form a 'Canadian community network', with the potential for enhancing the life of all communities.

The NATIONAL CAPITAL FREENET Organizing Committee  
Ottawa, Canada  
March, 1992

Approximate Timeline of FreeNet Activities

June 1992 - May 1994: Demonstration project

June 1994 - : Maturation

1992: Planning and Preparation

Apr-May

Incorporation complete. FreeNet software installed at Carleton University. Beginning of information needs assessment.

Jun-Jul

Installation of 50 modems and phone lines with associated hardware, and 5 gigabyte hard disk. Development of information bases for public access. Solicitation of information bases from community organizations. Workshops conducted for information providers.

Aug-Sep

Preparation and unloading of first bilingual information bases from community organizations.

Oct-Dec

Development of administrative procedures for full public access. FreeNet offered to selected community organizations and the first public preliminary trials and evaluation of usage begun.

1993: Transition to Full Public Access

Jan-Mar

Needs assessment and evaluation completed. Modification of FreeNet, including development of user feedback. Additional modems, phone lines, disks and software installed as needed.

Apr-May

Second round of information needs assessment. Workshops conducted for new information providers. Preparation and unloading of new information bases.

Jun-Aug

Evaluation research continued. FreeNet promotional campaign begun. FreeNet officially launched.

**“I REMEMBER...TRYING TO DESCRIBE WHAT FREENET WAS AND WHY PEOPLE SHOULD BE INTERESTED. OUR BROCHURES HAD TO EXPLAIN WHAT THE INTERNET WAS, AND THE VALUE OF EMAILS FOR KEEPING IN TOUCH.**

**THE INTERNET WAS A VERY DIFFICULT PLACE TO NAVIGATE.”**

**JEAN WILMOT (aa145)**

**“I SAID SOMETHING LIKE ‘HEY, COME LOOK AT THIS.’ HE DID. HE SAW THE POTENTIAL IMMEDIATELY”.**

One day in the fall of 1991 George Frajkor, a Carleton journalism professor, came across the Cleveland FreeNet just as his colleague Jay Weston walked by.

“I said something like ‘Hey, come look at this.’ He did. He saw the potential immediately,” he said. “It would be something everybody could use – cheap and fast, on every subject. A huge town hall discussion on anything of interest and importance.”

Weston already had some experience with computers as he had introduced them to his students as a research tool in one of his communications classes. While he and Frajkor had originally planned to get their students on the Cleveland FreeNet, they instead thought why not start their own?

Images from top  
 1: Dave Sutherland  
 2: Early founders and well-wishers  
 3: FreeNet staff, volunteers and collaborators



*Nous vous prions  
 de nous honorer de votre présence au  
 lancement officiel  
 du FreeNet de la Capitale nationale,  
 premier réseau électronique de renseignements communautaires  
 de l'est canadien*

*Lundi, le 1er février 1993  
 11 h à 12 h 30*

*dans la rotonde  
 du Centre de la Municipalité régionale d'Ottawa-Carleton  
 111, rue Lisgar  
 Ottawa (Ontario)*

*You are cordially invited to attend the  
 Official Launch  
 of the  
 National Capital FreeNet  
 the first electronic community information service  
 in Eastern Canada*

*Monday, February 1, 1993  
 11:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.*

*in the rotunda  
 Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton  
 111 Lisgar Street  
 Ottawa, Ontario*

*R.S.V.P.  
 788-3947*

**THE OTTAWA Citizen**

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 1992\*\* 50 cents (+GST)

**WEATHER**  
 Today High 24 Low 12  
 Wed. High 24 Low 12  
 Details D1

**UV RISK**  
 6.0 Moderate

**INFORMATION**

## KEY TO THE WIRED CITY

Free community computer network puts world at your fingertips

By Dominique Lacasse  
 Citizen high-technology writer

Got a problem with City Hall? A rash that's getting under your skin? A question about the sex lives of fish? Who you gonna call?

How about the region's very own "community computer network?"

The national capital is about to become the first region in Canada, and one of only a few handfuls in the world, to offer a non-profit community computer network that will put mountains of information, electronic mail, even "artificial intelligence" at the fingertips of anyone with a computer and modem — free!

As early as this Christmas, the answer to just about any question you might have could come via the National Capital FreeNet, Ottawa's answer to a phenomenon that is sweeping the U.S., doing for the computer generation what the public library did for readers early this century.

A phone call to a single Ottawa number will plug users into a network of databases and information providers from around the region, across the U.S., and ultimately, around the world. Virtually unlimited information — at no cost.

■ **FREENET:** How the system will work, E1

— Dalyn Lynde, Citizen

"The president of Carleton at the time was a communitarian sort of guy," Weston said. "He liked the idea...and they were looking for PR. One thing led to another."

Next came finding a computer ace and getting access to the hardware they would need to launch the system. Those two hurdles were jumped by one person – Dave Sutherland, director of Carleton's computer department.

"Jay said that I was the technical wizard behind all of it but I just organized people. I knew which questions to ask."

NCF faced a period of rigorous testing and public demonstrations. People from all backgrounds were wowed by FreeNet's many possibilities, such as using the Ottawa Public Library's resources from a computer, getting their own email accounts and having access to information once reserved for governments and universities.

Press coverage came in a landslide. On September 15, the front page of the Ottawa Citizen featured a "Key to the Wired City" banner promoting a full-page article about FreeNet. Lots of early members and core volunteers credit this coverage for their involvement.

Two weeks later, on September 29, 1992 the organization was registered and the first Board was established.

"The meeting, held at what is now Ottawa's city hall, attracted so many people that we had to move it to bigger rooms twice," said Jim Elder, a longtime NCF volunteer and former Board member. "We recruited a lot of very skilled people at that meeting."

## ON FEBRUARY 1, 1993, FREENET OFFICIALLY LAUNCHED ITS ONLINE SERVICES, PROPELLING THE REGION INTO CYBERSPACE.



Our HelpDesk is as old as NCF itself.



Echoing its earlier enthusiasm, the Citizen published another long article about the network. "FreeNet plugs Ottawa in" included detailed instructions on how to get online: all you needed was a computer, modem and a phone line and you were good to go.

Newsgroups quickly became popular, lots of it was positive and some of it was questionable – variety was the spice of online life.

In only one year, NCF's membership grew faster than a dial-up connection (which was considered fast back then).

"By the end of '93, or maybe the beginning of '94, we had 60,000 members," Sutherland says. "That was huge, we were the biggest ISP in the country by a wide margin."

**"I REMEMBER THAT FIRST CHRISTMAS, RADIOSHACK JUST WENT NUTS, THEY DIDN'T KNOW WHY EVERYONE WAS OUT BUYING 300 BAUD MODEMS."**

**JAY WESTON (aa002)**



Volunteers "Dan the Dude" (top) and David Millman (Bottom).

# FreeNet plugs Ottawa in <sup>Ottawa</sup> <sup>Citizen</sup>

By Dominique Lacasse  
Citizen business writer

**T**urn on, boot up and dial out. "Community computing" is here. As of today, Ottawa becomes one of only about a dozen cities anywhere in the world to have a non-profit, community computing network. A phone call to a single Ottawa number will plug anyone with a computer and modem into a network of databases and information providers from around the region, across the U.S., and ultimately, the world. Virtually unlimited, two-way information — free.

The National Capital FreeNet was to make its public debut today with a ceremony at regional government headquarters this morning.

It may not exactly be an "electronic highway," but Ottawa's FreeNet is a crucial fork in the road to the Electronic Village, an interactive public library for the computer generation.

Ottawa's network is modelled on successful experiments in community computing in the U.S. It was spearheaded by a group of Carleton University professors and the school's director of computing and information services and is run entirely by volunteers.

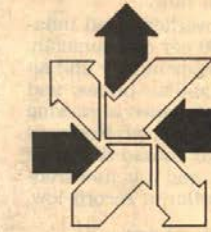
After more than a year of planning, fundraising and scrounging, Ottawa's FreeNet is now a reality, with a powerful host computer and 20 telephone lines to handle the expected rush. There are an estimated 100,000 PCs in households in the greater Ottawa region, and likely just as many in business and government offices.

The network has already been running experimentally at Carleton for several months and has met with wide acceptance. Ottawa's FreeNet has about 1,000 registered users now and about 100 new applications are received every day, according to David Sutherland, National Capital FreeNet chairman and director of computing and information services at Carleton.

"This thing has gained critical mass," says Sutherland, who only recently decided to double the number of phone lines in time for today's launch as donations and inquiries poured in. "It's had an overwhelmingly positive public response."

Sutherland says he expects registrations to mushroom following today's invitation to the public to join the network.

Starting today, anyone with a computer and modem can connect with a network of databases — free



## Logging on to FreeNet

You need a computer and a modem to gain access to FreeNet.

Use these settings to connect:

**Phone:** 780-3733

### Modem settings:

- **Baud rate:** 2400, 1200 or 300
- **Data bits:** 8
- **Parity:** None
- **Stop bits:** 1

**Important note:** Once connection has been established, you may have to hit the return or enter key up to FIVE times.

Log on as "guest" the first time. You can become a registered user by following the instructions available online under the "Administration" menu.

He says he expects the FreeNet will have at least 10,000 registered users by the end of its first year. In Cleveland, Ohio, where the first FreeNet was launched in the mid-'80s, there are more than 35,000 registered FreeNet users and tens of thousands more who occasionally use the system as "guests."

"We keep hearing we're in the infor-

*Monday / Feb 1993 page 1*  
mation age," says Sutherland. "These (networks) are the windows that will allow it to come into people's lives."

Ottawa's FreeNet, which runs on equipment donated by Sun Microsystems and Nepean-based Gandalf Data, already has a mix of databases, from regional government agendas and tender documents and community group bulletins, to exotic items such as news reports from Radio Free Europe and an "artificial intelligence" program on epilepsy from the federal Communications Research Centre.

And only recently, the Citizen joined a growing number of local information providers experimenting with the system. The Citizen's FreeNet offerings include brief guides to local sports, entertainment and community events, as well as capsule reviews of movies, restaurants and wines.

The Ottawa Public Library's catalogue is also available online through FreeNet and the library has also installed three terminals at its main branch that will allow people without computers at home or work to explore FreeNet. Discussions are also under way to put terminals in schools throughout the region.

Ottawa's FreeNet also provides a gateway to other FreeNets, including Cleveland's and a new one in Victoria, the only other one in Canada. Using Internet, a network that links researchers around the world, FreeNet users can visit distant computer systems without incurring long-distance charges.

Being free has its price, however. Because the network only has 20 telephone lines, users may find logging onto the system frustrating, even impossible, at peak times. Sutherland says new lines will be added if demand warrants and sufficient funds can be found.

Some government funding has been received and more is expected, says Sutherland. The goal is to eventually have one full-time, paid administrator to manage the network, as several large U.S. FreeNets have done.

Sutherland says he hopes the FreeNet will "make the community work better" by promoting the free exchange of information and ideas. He says he hopes the network will make the use of information technology "part of the country's culture, something people are comfortable with for the rest of their lives."

JUL 17 1992

20 July 1992

Dave Sutherland  
Carleton University  
Administration Building  
1125 Colonel By Drive  
Ottawa, Ontario K1S 5B6

Dear Dave:

Re:

I write to you to offer my support and encourage you to continue your effort.

As I am anticipating quick growth of and I will be amazed at how large, must be planned in advance to ensure with the enthusiasm of the volunteer success. I look forward to attending involvement.

Sincerely,  
*Les Casey*  
LES CASEY

JUL 17 1992

Sir Wilfrid Laurier Secondary School  
1515 Tenth Line Road, Orleans, Ontario K1E 3E8  
Tel. (613) 834-4500 Fax (613) 834-4511  
Guidance Dept. Tel. (613) 834-4508

July 15, 1992

Dear Sir/Madam

I would like to invite you to support in anyway possible the efforts of the Ottawa-Carleton Freenet organizing committee. As an educator, the idea of a community based electronic information and communication system is very exciting. The notion is made all the more powerful by the capacity of the network to link with the rest of the world through Internet, a global, electronic communications system.

Such a system would enable students and colleagues throughout the community and operatively work on research projects with

1992 03 09

league:

With the convergence of the telephone, cable and computer network systems rapidly emerging, Canadian communities need and want to be active participants in shaping the world of the next century.

Toward this end, the possibility of a Capital Free-Net offers us an exciting opportunity to create an innovative, co-operative network. By coming together to build a platform, our organizations, with their diverse mandates, can accomplish together what no single organization reasonably expect to achieve alone.

The spirit of a public access information system requires that it be a community endeavour. It will be designed for the community by the community. I am very pleased that Carleton University is an enthusiastic participant in creating this public utility.

OTTAWA PUBLIC LIBRARY  
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120 Metcalfe, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5M2 (613) 236-0301 ENVOY: ILL.OOC  
Fax/Télé. (613) 567-4013

Gilles Frappier  
Chief Librarian  
Bibliothécaire en chef

Margaret M. Main  
Deputy Chief Librarian  
Bibliothécaire en chef adjoint

July 15, 1992

Mr. David Sutherland  
Director, Computing & Communication Services  
Carleton University  
Ottawa, Ontario K1S 5B6

Dear Mr. Sutherland,

I am writing on behalf of the Ottawa Public Library board, administration and staff to express my support for the initiative taken by the National Capital Freenet Organizing Committee in attempting to develop a community-based computing network in this area. The popularity of existing North American Freenets shows that such networks can play a vital rôle in making the

July 16, 1992

To whom it may concern,

We are writing in support of the National Capital Freenet Organizing Committee's effort to set up a community information communication network in the national capital region.

We are an immigrant service agency serving Chinese-speaking immigrants and refugees. In order to adequately serve our clients,

JUL 17 1992

加京華僑服務處  
OTTAWA CHINESE COMMUNITY  
Service Centre

July 16, 1992

To whom it may concern,

We are writing in support of the National Capital Freenet Organizing Committee's effort to set up a community information communication network in the national capital region.

We are an immigrant service agency serving Chinese-speaking immigrants and refugees. In order to adequately serve our clients,

multiple appl for same service  
- financial - open bank acct, signing authority  
- allowable to sponsor list - this area sponsored by list of dealers who provide 10% discount

upload 'bee'

Access Issue

getting terminals in libraries, govt offices  
Garth Graham  
Electronic Democracy  
ON-LINE LIST  
- of volunteers needed

**"TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, THROUGH THE ENTIRE ARC OF MY CAREER - AND I'VE DONE SOME PRETTY COOL STUFF - THAT WAS MY MOST MEANINGFUL AND FAVOURITE EXPERIENCE, HELPING TO BE A PART OF THE BIRTH OF THE NATIONAL CAPITAL FREENET."**

LISA DONNELLY (am412)

Promotion to opening  
- prepare list  
- community newspaper  
- translate brochures  
- distribute brochures  
libraries

to prepare  
- Dominique Lacasse

1000  
Prepare list Promotion for launch  
Board Mtg Dec 10 Regional HQ

Jan 9, + 10<sup>th</sup>

OPPOSITE: Letters of support from Ottawa Public Library, Carleton University, Nepean City Council, Sir Wilfred Laurier Secondary School and Ottawa Chinese Community, 1992

2nd week December  
- contact Warren  
- invitation  
- Tambræ to fax out invitations (us to give her org address)

for our P.I.P group - in eve of Saturday

With so many people trying to connect at once, members often had to dial multiple times before getting online. This led to some frustration, which in turn led to calls for help.

"There's 50,000 people in the system, and there's me," says Ian Allen, NCF's first System Administrator. "With even just one percent of 50,000 that's a lot of phone calls!"

Jay Weston remembers feeling like FreeNet was invincible.

"When it got started I thought it would be around forever because it was such a wonderful thing," he said. "I didn't see the competition coming."

When the World Wide Web came into play and larger internet service providers started to offer more and faster access, NCF coasted with what it had from the beginning. Some members went off in search of something faster down the information superhighway.

Those who stuck around, stayed for the community spirit as much as the technology.

**"I PICKED UP THE NEWSPAPER THAT DAY AND THERE WAS AN ARTICLE ABOUT THE NATIONAL CAPITAL FREENET... I NEVER COULD SEE THE POINT OF HAVING A COMPUTER IN MY HOME UNTIL THAT DAY."**  
**PAT DRUMMOND (ad995)**

# This Week at Carleton

Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

January 28, 1993 Volume 14 Number 4

## National Capital region to benefit from community computer network started at Carleton

February 1 is a very significant day for computer users in the Ottawa region. Why? Because that's the day the National Capital FreeNet (NCF) ends its testing phase, and officially comes 'on-line' for the public.

What is National Capital FreeNet? Basically, it's a computer information service; one your computer can talk to over the telephone line.

Now, in themselves, bulletin board services, or BBSs are not unique. In fact, there are hundreds of them in Ottawa. Most are small amateur-run databases focusing on games and technical information, while a few commercial operations offer a range of services on a national or international basis. However, a FreeNet is different - radically different, for two reasons.

First, it is literally a 'library on-line'; one where you can find information on government services, community associations, school boards, conservation groups, and public library collections - in short, information not found on conventional BBSs.

Secondly, as the names implies, FreeNet is entirely FREE, even though the range of services it offers - and its linkage to other computer networks worldwide - makes it as powerful as many of the big commercial operations.

In fact, through its connection to the INTERNET global network, the NCF is linked "to 1.3 million computers worldwide, in 138 countries," says David Sutherland, Carleton's Director of Computing and Communications Services, and a person who's been very busy setting the system up. He started the project with a group of interested colleagues from Carleton just over a year ago, although

now it has grown into a community-based project with the participation and direction of many different people and organizations, representing many sectors of the community.

Surprisingly, although FreeNet will be providing a wealth of information to anyone whose computer phones up, the organization itself is relatively modest. In fact, it's essentially volunteer-run, with most of the donations received going to pay for phone lines (which run \$500 a year a piece). The system itself is being run on a SparcStation 10 computer donated by Sun Micro Systems; the 'modems' which link it to the phone network have been provided by Gandalf.

But is such a system really worth the effort? Well, similar FreeNets established in the U.S. have proven extremely popular with computer users. One in Cleveland, for instance, averages 4,000 calls a day!

That's why David Sutherland expects the NCF "to have 10,000 (free) subscribers by the end of '93, and 50,000 by the end of '95." He adds, "We expect also to have several hundred organizations involved providing information to the system."

Obviously, what makes the NCF so uniquely valuable to computer users is its emphasis on the community; a community that is both local and global.

In the local context, for instance, Sutherland plans to conduct 'all candidates' meetings through FreeNet during elections. In other words, just call up and type in a question, and the politicians have to answer you.

Globally, the 'conferences' available on FreeNet (where people can discuss

*(continued on page three)*



A demonstration of the National Capital FreeNet last October draws eager participants.

## Provincial grant tops up funding for major renovations in Herzberg Building and Dunton Tower

Evelyn Gigantes, MPP for Ottawa Centre made the formal announcement on Friday, January 22 that Carleton will receive \$2.7 million towards campus construction projects. The grant is part of the \$2.3 billion dollar jobsOntarioCapital program, a five-year project to support jobs and economic restructuring, and promoting community and social progress.

In a press conference held at the University of Ottawa, Ms. Gigantes made the announcement on behalf of Richard Allen, Minister of Colleges and Universities, that a total of \$12.1 million dollars will be given to Ottawa-area post-secondary institutions.

As well as the \$2.7 million earmarked for renovations and expansion of the Herzberg Building and Dunton Tower, Carleton will receive an additional \$372,800 for other projects

that fall under the program guidelines. President Robin Farquhar thanked Ms. Gigantes for the grant, and jokingly remarked that it was the largest "gift" the University has ever received from an alumna.

The University of Ottawa will receive \$7,202,500 over the next two years, Algonquin College will receive \$1,700,100, and La Cite collegial will receive \$78,000 in addition to the \$7 million it shared with St. Lawrence College in Cornwall last July.

Carleton's grant from the province will be coupled with money raised by the successful Challenge Fund campaign in order to meet the \$9.7 cost of the Herzberg/Dunton project.

The Herzberg Building is the main focus of the construction project, with three floors being added to the research wing of the building, and one floor and a basement added to the

annex which houses the Centre for Research in Particle Physics.

The new space will be used by the School of Computer Science and the Physics department which are already housed in the building, and to create room for the Department of Mathematics and Statistics, which will move from the Dunton Tower into the Herzberg Building.

The decisions as to the use of the 'freed up' space in the Dunton Tower are still not final, but there will be some construction to reconfigure the floor space. The other aspect of the project is the major upgrading of the elevators and fire alarm system in the building.

A memo went out from project coordinator Bill Radway to all occupants of the Dunton Tower on January 14 to advise them that work

*(continued on page two)*

The Ottawa Citizen, Tuesday, May 11, 1993 F7

## FreeNet growing every day

By Louise Rachlis  
 Citizen advertising features writer

The National Capital FreeNet, a non-profit community computing network, is attracting about 50 to 100 new users every day. Ottawa is one of only about a dozen cities anywhere in the world to have such a network.

"We receive about 15,000 calls a week," says David Sutherland, National Capital FreeNet chairman and director of computing and information services at Carleton University.

"We started with 20 modems on opening day February 1st, and now have 40," says Sutherland. "We had about 600 users when we went formally public. Now we have over 4,000 and are growing every day."

The subjects vary from recreational topics like cycling and sailing to medical issues like epilepsy and asthma to environmental concerns.

FreeNet runs on equipment donated by Sun Microsystems and Nepean-based Gandalf Data.

There's a wide mix of databases from local information providers including The Ottawa Citizen.

There are special interest groups for users of Atari, Macin-



tosh, Amiga, PCs, MIDI, multimedia, DOS, Windows, programming in C and C++ and Small Talk.

"Beyond that, we have access to the Usenet News news groups, with over 100 discussion groups of interest to computer users, with participants from all over the world."

For information, call 788-3947, or use logging on information: Logging on to FreeNet

You need a computer and modem to gain access to FreeNet. Use these settings to connect: Phone: 780-3733

Modem settings: Baud rate: 2400, 1200 or 300 Data bits: 8 Parity: None Stop bits: 1

Important Note: Once connection has been established, you may have to hit the return or enter key up to FIVE times.

Log on as "guest" the first time. You can become a registered user by following the instructions available on-line under the "Administration" menu.

THE VISION OF A NATIONAL PROGRAM

FreeNets should not stand alone. We envision that before the end of this decade, scores of communities across Canada will have a FreeNet facility. All will be linked together, providing a national network of community information services and improving on the FreeNet network now being developed in the United States.

A national network of FreeNets can provide the infrastructure for a community-of-communities, and a mechanism by which institutions with a mandate to provide information uniformly across a province, a region or the country can do so economically and efficiently. The network of FreeNets would provide a useful vehicle to permit national roundtable discussions on the key issues of the day. People from St. Johns to Victoria, for example, can find out first hand what others are saying about topics of national importance simply by selecting the appropriate computer-menu item on their local FreeNet facility. A networked community of electronic communities will focus and enrich the debate on the distinctions between the public and private information spheres and other telecommunication policy issues.

End of File, Press RETURN to quit

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE NATIONAL CAPITAL FREENET PROJECT  
(as of February 1993)

The National Capital Freenet project was started in November 1991 when George Frajkor and Jay Weston of the Carleton University School of Journalism approached Dave Sutherland, Director of Carleton's Computing and Communications Services with information about the Cleveland FreeNet.

The founding National Capital Freenet Organizing Committee was comprised of: Dave Sutherland, June Hacker, Tamrae Knapp, George Frajkor, Jay Weston, Warren Thorngate, Ross Mutton, Robin Allardyce of Carleton University and Richard Mount of Mount, Yemensky, Daigle, Barristers and Solicitors.

The committee met almost weekly throughout the remainder of 1991 and the first half of 1992, planning the project. The first public meeting in March of 1992 at Carleton University brought another 100 people from 50 organizations into the project. Software was acquired from Case Western Reserve University and installed on a system at Carleton at the end of April.

Monthly meetings of the extended organizing committee were held throughout 1992. Gandalf Technologies donated modems and the communications equipment for connecting the Ottawa Public Library in September. In October the FreeNet was moved to a SparcStation 10 provided by Sun Microsystems in cooperation with Industry Science and Technology Canada.

A formal public opening of the system was held on February 1, 1993 at the Regional Municipality of Ottawa Carleton headquarters. Invited speakers included Tom Hockin, Minister for Science; Dr. Tom Grundner, President of the National Public Telecomputing Network and founder of the Cleveland Free-Net; Peter Clark, Regional Chair and Dr. Robin Farquhar, President of Carleton University.

End of File, Press RETURN to quit

FreePlace - NCF Internet services

CONTENTS:

- What is FreePlace?
- List of Internet services
- Getting connected to the Modem Lines
- Differences between Modem Lines
- Getting Internet Software
- Public Access to NCF
- Members connected to an ISP
- History of NCF Internet access
- Links

What is FreePlace?

FreePlace is the name for all National Capital FreeNet's Internet and World Wide Web services ("go freeplace"). All NCF modem lines now provide Internet connections using PPP protocol ("go ppp").

You must be a member to use NCF's Internet services. Membership can be done online ("go register"). Members on a PPP connection will be able to use special Internet software on their own computer to read e-mail and newsgroups, telnet to anywhere, surf the Web, do online banking, online purchasing, etc.

Connections are limited to one hour and member time limits normally 2 hours a day (60 hours a month). The 520 series lines have flexible time limits - you could have your session extended as long as there are modems not in use. As soon as the modems become full, your session will end in the normal manner. ("go policy" and "go time-limit")

You do not need a telnet connection to use most NCF services any longer. Most are available using an Internet connection. Internet users should read the information about this at: <http://www.ncf.ca/ncf/freeplace/telnet.html>.

NCF hosts free Web sites for community groups, businesses, as well as "personal home pages" for individual members ("go freepages"). All information on FreeNet can be viewed using a Web browser as well as from a text or telnet connection using the Lynx web browser ("go www").

NOTE: NCF translates menus into web pages automatically. For several years this service was donated by Davin Technical Services owner Matthew Darwin (aa673). Notice that menu addresses beginning with "ncf.davin.ottawa.on.ca" are no longer valid. all Web page addresses should begin with "http://www.ncf.ca/".

Internet services List

Simply follow the menus to find help for these services, and for getting and setting up software.

PPP PPP is a protocol used to connect to NCF's dial-up modem lines. It allows members to use graphical web browsers, mailreaders, newsreaders, etc. to access NCF and the Internet. [DNS: 134.117.137.1 Secondary DNS: 134.117.136.24]



Picnics were a rare opportunity for FreeNet fanatics to meet in person.



# CHAPTER TWO

## WARM AND FUZZYNET

In its early days, NCF members scrambled to connect in ways that seem either quaint or second nature today. They sourced recipes online, found love and caterpillars and managed the world's first online auction. And they couldn't stop talking about it.

The story of two members in 1993 created a bit of buzz in the media.

Shannon MacRae, a 19-year-old from Kanata, and Chris Hawley, a 25-year-old from Cleveland, met after MacRae logged onto NCF one night to get out of doing the dishes at her parent's home. She ended up connecting with the Cleveland FreeNet and received a message from Hawley asking if she needed help.

One thing led to another, and the two eventually found a minister – conveniently a fellow FreeNet member – to marry them. *The Ottawa Citizen* wrote that prior to the internet, the two would have been referred to as pen pals, but in modern technology, they became e-mail users, which the author made sure to notify readers was “electronic mail”.



### Love bytes couple caught in FreeNet

Shannon MacRae of Kanata followed the *Citizen's* directions to get into the National Capital FreeNet computer network last Easter and became connected to a similar system in Cleveland. Chris Hawley answered her request for guidance and they struck up an electronic relationship. Today they are setting up their own apartment in Ottawa. They found the minister to marry them Sept. 11 through FreeNet, too. **Dave Brown, B3**

## Of FreeNet, modems and love

Cupid has given up his arrows and their sting for a computer and its bytes.

### COMMENT



**Dave Brown**

Shannon MacRae, 19, got the Cupid computer bite after Easter dinner at her parents'

Kanata home. "I wanted to avoid helping with the dishes," she admits, explaining why she decided to try out her computer modem. Until that point, she had only used her system as a word processor. The modem allowed her to interact with other computers through telephone lines.

That escape from dish duty led her to love, marriage and her own pile of dishes. No dishwasher.

Shannon and husband Chris Hawley are now setting up their own apartment in Ottawa.

On that fateful Sunday, MacRae used information from a copy of the *Citizen* to get into the National Capital FreeNet computer network. She followed prompts and found herself connected to a similar system in Cleveland.

MacRae was stumbling around in that system when she connected with another user. A message appeared on her computer screen asking if she needed help. She did, and asked for guidance.

She identified herself as S. MacRae. The Cleveland connection was Chris Hawley. Neither knew the sex of the other, but MacRae knew her contact was a computer whiz and a good teacher.

Hawley and MacRae became what would have been called a few decades ago, penpals. In today's technology, they became e-mail users. (The 'e' stands for electronic.)

When MacRae needed help getting deeper into the networks, she left a note for Chris in e-mail. He replied. Sometimes they were in the system at the same time and could "talk" through their keyboards.

MacRae learned so much so fast. She wanted to say thanks, so she called Cleveland. Girl meets boy. A few weeks later, Hawley, 25, found a reason to come to Ottawa, and a meeting was arranged. Boy meets girl.

They wanted to get married quickly and wondered how



Staff and volunteers have a merry time at the Annual Friends of FreeNet dinner

“FREENETS WERE HITTING A CRITICAL MASS AND WE HAD THIS BIG MEETING AT CARLETON.... WE LOCKED OURSELVES IN A ROOM AND WE SPENT A WHOLE DAY TO COME UP WITH THIS BROADER VISION OF WHAT CANADIAN FREENETS WERE DOING. THIS WAS A VERY FORMATIVE WILD WEST KIND OF EXPERIENCE, BUT WE WERE ALL JUST ON FIRE TO REALLY BUILD THIS AND MAKE THIS SOMETHING FOR THE PEOPLE, FOR OUR COMMUNITY AND FOR CANADA.”

LISA DONNELLY (am412)

Lisa Donnelly at the first International Free-Net Conference

tobacco tax cuts are essential. Inflation was only a modest 1.6 per cent in June.

8-26-97

# FreeNet faces first growing pains

**COMING OF AGE:** Ottawa's head start into cyberspace has given the city a preview of the perks — and pitfalls — of community computer networks.



— Wayne Cuddington, Citizen

**NET ACTIVISTS:** Shaun Yerxa and Marita Moll want to protect public cyberspace

**By Alana Kainz**  
Citizen high-technology writer

At 18-months-old, Ottawa's FreeNet is a virtual veteran. The community computer network of 23,000 users has grown to be the world's second largest — coming of age with a vengeance.

It's one of the first to face a libel suit, to talk about commercializing to make ends meet and to deal with users who post hate literature, like one man who has been putting up neo-Nazi messages.

So when 200 organizers of freenets from around the world gathered in Ottawa this week for a conference on the subject, many looked to the National Capital FreeNet as a digital pioneer writing the textbook on networking dos and don'ts.

The Canadian Community Networks Conference, which wrapped up this week at Carleton University, probed the future of freenets in a world that is increasingly going multimedia and interactive, where consumers of information are also the producers. Building an industry from scratch has opened a new frontier of issues that freenets have decided to tackle each year together.

"The battle is just beginning," Marita Moll told the conference. Moll and Shaun Yerxa, both Ottawa residents, have set up an electronic lobbying group for public space on the information highway, under [can.infohighway](mailto:can.infohighway). "Let's get out there and make sure what we get is what we want."

Freenets are being formed across Canada to ensure that few will be bypassed on the information highway.

Unexpectedly, they're going several steps further and are evolving into self-sustaining electronic ecosystems. There's elections, endless talk of net politics, lobbying, interest groups, policing, enforcement and spin-off business. They've grown from curious meeting places to institutions with clout. Politicians and industry leaders are beginning to listen.

The challenge is sustainable

**Update**

**The issue:** Community computer networks, known as freenets, are popping up all over the country. They are getting so popular that problems are outpacing solutions.

**What's new:** Representatives from 30 freenets met in Ottawa this week at the Canadian Community Networks Conference and formed a national organization to pool resources, expertise and force to become a voice on the information highway.

**Network activists to contact:** Marita Moll ([aa319@freenet.carleton.ca](mailto:aa319@freenet.carleton.ca)), Sam Sternberg ([samsam@vml.yorku.ca](mailto:samsam@vml.yorku.ca)), Mark Surman ([msurman@io.org](mailto:msurman@io.org)) and David Sutherland ([aa001@freenet.carleton.ca](mailto:aa001@freenet.carleton.ca)).

development. By this time next year, more than one per cent of Canadians, or 300,000 people, will be net users. That doesn't sound like much, but it's the growth rate that's staggering.

Three years ago, there were no freenets in Canada. Now there are seven, with 45 others planned. The Ottawa FreeNet is the fastest growing at a rate of 100 new accounts a day. It has grown 340 per cent in a year.

FreeNet just passed another milestone, moving into a new generation of account holders from the aa001-az999 set to the Bs, starting with ba001. If the growth

rate continues, there will be 60,000 users within a year.

Other freenets are feeling the popularity pinch, even before they start running. The Toronto FreeNet is delayed because organizers are expecting such a high demand that they fear the system will collapse under the weight of interest. So they are recruiting more volunteers and equipment.

The appeal of freenets is that they are exactly what the name implies — totally free. It's an information shopping spree. They are set up by volunteers, schools and libraries and allow for access to electronic mail, community

databases and bulletin boards. Users can use freenet computers as a gateway to Internet — the world's largest network of 30 million users.

Without freenets, many people would only be wired together if they had the capability at their workplace or if they paid for it themselves.

"This isn't just business people, or academics, this is just anybody solving their problems together," said Garth Graham, an Ottawa consultant and one of the conference's organizers.

The forum doubled as a founding meeting for a national organization, Telecommunities Canada, that will work as a voice for freenets as they stake out their territory on the information highway.

André Laurendeau of Montreal's in-the-works freenet was appointed president. Ottawa FreeNet chairman David Sutherland is also on the board. Telecommunities will act as a focus for sharing expertise and experiences.

"Things are happening really, really fast," said Graham, adding that freenets need to pool their resources to keep up with the change.

But NCF wasn't just a way for singles to meet each other through the wonders of the newfound electronic superhighway, as some articles called it.

During NCF's first year, the *Citizen* also became part of what they called the FreeNet experiment, enabling NCF members to send letters to the editor and read reviews. They wrote, "further down the road, the newspaper could be delivered right to a subscriber's computer screen."

Later that year, drawing from members' recipes, NCF published a cookbook, *From the Kitchens of The National Capital FreeNet*. The book's recipes included "100 MHZ Crab Soup" (canned crab meat combined with a variety of canned soups), beer bread (pretty much how it sounds and described as "out of this world"), and Gerry's Salad #3 (we're not sure what happened to Gerry's first two salads as they weren't included.)

A new local cookbook for FreeNet junkies is now available. *From the Kitchens of National Capital FreeNet* costs \$15.70 and has over 200 recipes from FreeNet members for things like salt-free lentil soup and southwestern Indian fry bread. Proceeds go to support that on-line community.





**BREADS**

**BASIC BISCUITS** Sara Ouellette  
bk230

2 cups sifted all-purpose flour    1/4 cup shortening  
4 tsp baking powder                1 cup milk  
1 tsp salt

Sift flour, baking powder and salt. Cut in shortening; blend. Stir in milk. Turn out onto a floured board; knead gently about 20 times. Roll dough to 1/2 inch thickness. Cut into biscuits; put on ungreased cookie sheet. Bake at 450°F for 10 to 12 minutes. Serve hot.

**BISMARCKS** Fran Wright  
ak616

We eat this for breakfast in the summer when there are fresh berries to pile on top. In winter, fried apples are a great topping.

1/4 cup unsalted butter                1/2 cup flour  
1/2 cup milk                                2 eggs

Heat oven to 425°F. Place butter in heavy frying pan; place in oven. Mix other ingredients to form smooth batter. When pan is very hot and butter has melted, add batter. Bake for 10 to 15 minutes. Remove from pan; cover with cut strawberries or other fruit. Serve hot.

**BEER BREAD** Phyllis M. Evans  
bk234

Simple, but out of this world. Add raisins, nuts or whatever suits your fancy.

3 cups self rising flour                2 Tbsp sugar  
12 oz beer                                 Dash salt

Mix dry ingredients. Add beer; mix thoroughly. Pour into greased pan (not floured). Bake for 1 hour at 400°F.

*The essence of genius is to know what to overlook.*

BREADS 61



# Enter cyberspace to discover recipes, restaurants or repasts

## BUSY FREENET LINES:

You'll find people who exchange information on food, wine, beer and wild mushrooms. Some people will post questions and others will answer.

By Daniel Drolet  
Citizen staff writer

Even people who hack away on computers all day stop to have a "byte" to eat now and then.

And one of the fascinating things about the new electronic superhighway — the Infobahn, some wags have named it — is that it offers a number of pitstops for people interested in eating.

At the flick of a modem, you can search for recipes in databases around the world; you can ask for information on restaurants in other cities; you can find out where people think the best coffee in Ottawa can be found (and vote on the matter yourself); or you can check out the Citizen's current dining guide, electronically.

To those unfamiliar with either computers or the Internet, all this may seem strange. Roaming cyberspace in search of edible tidbits is admittedly an acquired taste.

food is recipes.

From my home computer, I have been able, for example, to dip into a database in Tallahassee, Florida, search chicken recipes, download them into my computer, and print them out.

As a concept, I find that pretty wild.

What's even wilder is the range of what's out there.

In FreeNet, there are at least two ways to find recipes: through Libraries and through Communications.

From the main menu, press 11 (for Libraries); then press 9, to get onto the Gopher Electronic Library Service. Then press 17, which logs you onto Recipes.

When that happens, you get a list of categories from appetizers through to veggies. The second item on the list is simply called "balls."

The title got me wondering. Was this a list of recipes for prairie oysters? Nope. It turns out it's recipes for things like rum balls and tofu balls, the latter being from the famous vegetarian *Moosewood Cookbook*.

Further sniffing around in the Gopher Electronic Library Service led me to Usenet recipes, which is a whole other subset from beef to ovo-lacto vegetarian to vegan. Here, for example, you will find the reci-

sions among people who share an interest.

In FreeNet, you'll find people who exchange on food, wine, beer and wild mushrooms. People will post questions and others will answer.

For example, recently someone posted a question in the cooking and eating SIG saying he was about to go to Vancouver and did anybody out there know any good restaurants in Vancouver? People posted replies.

Other recent discussions have involved the merits of pasta makers and a search for tiramisu recipes.

To get to the Cooking and Eating SIG, hit 12 from the main menu (Special Interest Groups). Then hit 8, which logs you into Hobbies. The 10, for Cooking and Eating.

One other service you can get through FreeNet is the *Citizen's 1993-94 dining guide*.

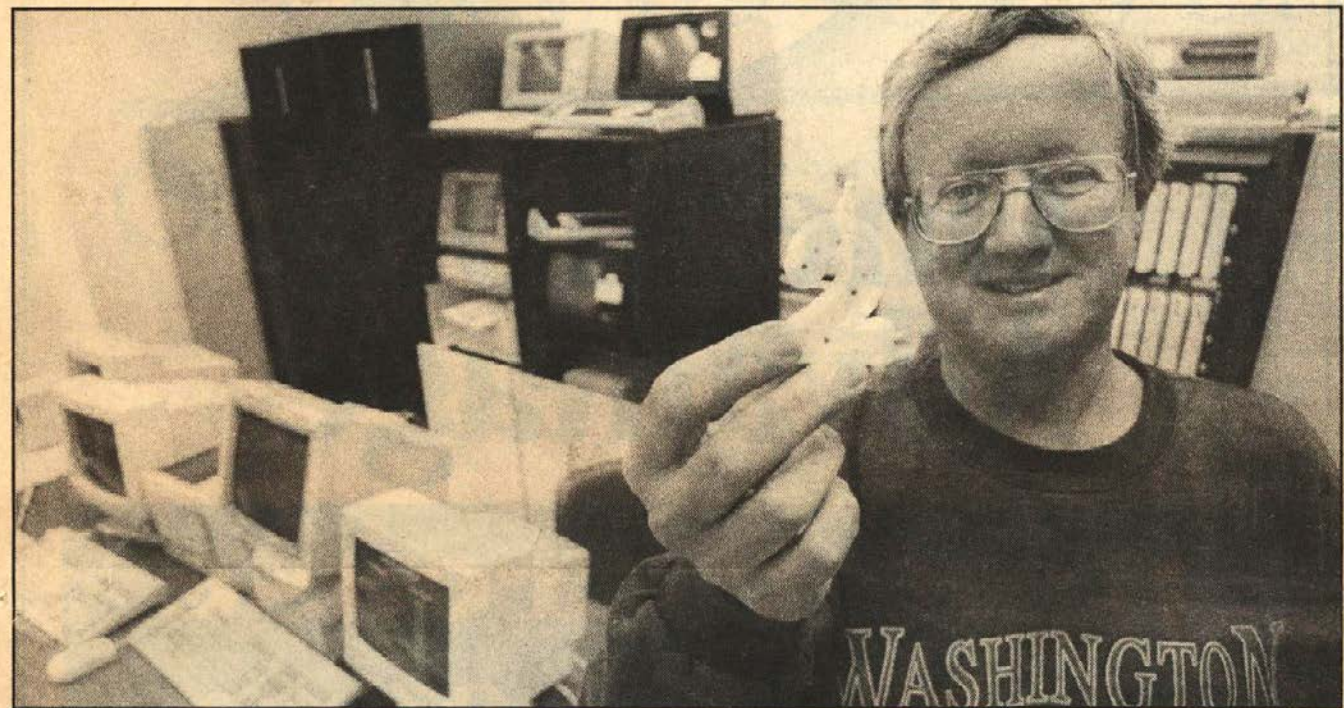
This is simply an electronic version of the compendium of restaurant reviews we publish annually. A word of caution: The guide was published last September and is updated on an annual basis.

The *Citizen's* annual wine guide is also available.

To find either, hit 10 (The Newsstand) from the main FreeNet menu.

In 1993, FreeNet organized the first international conference on community networking. The next year, they helped organize another one, that focused more directly on "the spirit of the Internet as a sociological experiment and to mirror the grassroots spirit of the Free-Nets."

Marita Moll spoke at both events. "It was the first place where NCF kind of flexed its muscle in the public sphere. Getting people together talking about this new technology was very exciting. There was just that general excitement in the air where you knew something big was happening."



-BILL LOUIE, SUN

■ FreeNet Chairman David Sutherland is the proud father of a two-year-old computer network.

# THIS WEEK

## AT CARLETON

### It's certainly big for its age Happy Birthday! The National Capital FreeNet celebrates two years of operation

It started as a cyberglean in the eyes of a group of community-minded people at Carleton University at the beginning of in 1993. Now, two years later, the National Capital FreeNet (NCF) is the second largest freenet in the world, with over 36,000 registered users from Ottawa-Carleton to Vancouver to Yellowknife, and as far away as Japan, South Africa and Slovenia.

FreeNet also has over 250 Information Providers on-line, ranging from the Alzheimer Society to the Rideau River Conservation Project to the Mediation Centre to the Geological Survey of Canada, as well as foreign embassies, the federal, provincial, regional and municipal governments, and educational institutions including, of course, Carleton.

This experiment in community telecomputing has become the model for freenets across Canada, and has developed a

strong reputation for its diverse and interesting special interest groups and discussion groups. Throughout the past two years of growth, FreeNet has continued to make its home at Carleton.

To celebrate, NCF is throwing a birthday party Tuesday January 31 in the Cafeteria of City Hall, 111 Sussex Drive, from 7:00 to 10:00 pm. The public is invited to attend and help FreeNet mark this significant moment in its history, share some birthday cake and meet the volunteers, board members and staff responsible for its operation. The cake cutting and brief speeches will take place at 8:00 pm. The FreeNet birthday cake is being generously donated by Councillor Karin Howard.

"FreeNet's growth has been very satisfying," said NCF president Dave Sutherland, one of the original founders and the Director of Computing and

Communication Services at Carleton. "We never would have predicted this rate of progress — our original projections were to have 50,000 users by April 1996. We are currently at 35,000 registered users. People have discovered FreeNet to be a valuable community resource, and I think this is the main reason for our success."

FreeNet enters its third year with an average of 75 new users a day and over 12,000 calls a day being handled by 170 phone lines. Unlike many non-profit organizations, FreeNet carries no debt load, and has user donations as the base of its \$330,000 1995 budget. Due to its phenomenal growth, FreeNet is searching for new methods of funding to increase

access to its 170 lines, ranging from line sponsorships to the successful on-line auction of November, 1994, to support from all levels of government.

"We hope to keep up our level of service to the community by providing easy access to FreeNet," said NCF Executive Director Lisa Donnelly, "and this means using innovative approaches to raising the necessary funds."

FreeNet is run by a dedicated corps of over 200 volunteers, handling everything from office tasks and help desks to programming to public access. Volunteers are the heart of FreeNet and make it a truly community-based resource.

JANUARY 19, 1995

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### THIS WEEK

AT CARLETON

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Carleton University

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605 Robertson Hall  
1125 Colonel By Drive  
Ottawa, Ontario.

### Wacky weather no match for Buildings and Grounds

**IN 1993, FREENET ORGANIZED THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON COMMUNITY NETWORKING. THE NEXT YEAR, THEY HELPED ORGANIZE ANOTHER ONE, THAT FOCUSED MORE DIRECTLY ON "THE SPIRIT OF THE INTERNET AS A SOCIOLOGICAL EXPERIMENT AND TO MIRROR THE GRASSROOTS SPIRIT OF THE FREE-NETS."**

In 1995, NCF held "The Great FreeNet On-Line Auction." It was – as many pointed out at the time – the world's first online auction.

Its purpose was to raise money for 40 new phone lines and modems to help support the growing number of NCF members, which was a whopping 25,000 in 1995.

Items were described by text only, and NCF put the winners in touch with the organization selling the item. There were a variety of prizes to choose from, including art, local dinner packages, and an antique teddy bear from the 1920s.

Another article about the things members used the internet for featured Melissa Schur, who asked NCF newsgroup members to help her find monarch butterfly caterpillars. She had success when someone told her she should check out a Vanier garden.

# 'Going once...'

## FreeNet on-line auction a world first



**ALEX ANDERSON**  
Tech Talk



**■ FREENET'S BethAnn Burton shows the list of goodies up for the techno-auction.**

**"MORE LINES."**  
It's a drone in the air, a quiet, almost unnoticeable prayer on the lips of every National Capital FreeNet official and user. All 25,000 of them.

"More phone lines."  
It's also the motivation behind the Great FreeNet On-Line Auction, which kicked off Saturday and runs until Nov. 12.

Ideally the auction will raise money for 40 new phone lines and modems, says Gordon Pearson, NCF director of development. "(But) we'll take as many as we can get. We need more."

"Whatever we get we'll spend it all on improving community access."

FreeNet, a non-profit community information network, is now receiving about 72,000 calls a week from more than 25,000 users on only 160 phone lines.

"We should have over 200 lines to handle that kind of traffic," said Pearson.

"This is the first time this has been done," said NCF Chairman David Sutherland, who called the event a "unique" and "exciting way to raise money."

"It gets people involved. It should be a lot of fun."

Auction-goers won't hear the drone of the auctioneer, nor the rap of the gavel, but in every other way it's as real as any other auction you might attend.

To take part in the auction just log-in in the normal way, says Pearson.

Type "go auction" then "1" and you'll find yourself in the auction area. There, you'll find a menu that will give you access to the browsing and bidding tools you'll need.

Due to NCF technical limitations descriptions of the items are text-only, but include all the necessary information for the prospective buyer.

So far more than 100 items have been donated in a variety of areas.

Corel Corp. has donated everything from CorelDraw software packages to a ride in the Corel balloon; Bell Canada has donated Home and Home Office service packages; there are dinner and art packages, a priceless 1920s antique teddy bear and even a chance to join CHRO *Star Trek* guy Bob Cowan on "Bob's couch."

FreeNet will put the winning bidders in touch with people or organizations donating the item.

Sutherland says he's not too worried about people "skipping out" after jacking up the bids.

"There's an element of faith here," he said. "If the highest bidder fails to show then we'll offer it to the next highest bidder."

Only registered NCF users can take part in the auction, says Pearson.

To complete the on-line registration dial-in to 560-3600 (2400 baud modems), or 560-0808 (14,400 baud modems), log-in as "guest" and follow the prompts.

# It's a butterfly net and more . . .

With a computer and Ottawa's booming FreeNet, you can capture almost anything

BY ALANA KAINZ  
CITIZEN HIGH-TECHNOLOGY WRITER


**M**elissa Schur once scoured milkweed to find monarch butterfly caterpillars until she discovered the bugs are as close as her home computer terminal.

With the click of a keyboard recently, Schur asked about the insects on the National Capital FreeNet — the electronic bulletin board thousands of area residents are using to communicate with each other, personal computer users around the world and the databases of thousands of agencies.

A local woman read Schur's question and immediately posted a note about a Vanier garden full of the caterpillars. "I was sure there was someone, somewhere out there who could help," says Schur, a 24-year-old biology student with a passion for watching caterpillars hatch into butterflies.

Whether you're looking for bugs or tips on buying a bed, wondering how to start a business, debating abortion, sending a letter to mom, lamenting the Toronto Maple Leafs or just saying what's on your mind, FreeNet has become Ottawa's all-purpose electronic open-line talk show and on-line library.

Since starting Feb. 1, 7,000 people have become registered users, with as many as 25 new people getting account numbers



— Wayne Hiebert, Citizen

Melissa Schur got quick results after posting message on FreeNet's bulletin board

each day. The biggest draw is that, true to the name, it's free.

FreeNet is Canada's second community network, but has grown quickly to be the largest. Victoria, which started in November, has 1,900 users. About 10 other cities

are in various stages of setting up. Communities such as Edmonton, Saskatoon, St. Catharines, Montreal, Vancouver, Sudbury, Fredericton and Toronto are using Ottawa's system as a model.

FreeNet supplies the "cars" for a

**Update**

■ **What is FreeNet:** The National Capital FreeNet is a computer network available free to area residents. It's part of Internet, an international network that connects 135 countries.

■ **What's in it:** FreeNet members can exchange electronic mail or send messages to Internet. They also have access to worldwide databases, computer bulletin boards and special interest groups.

■ **How to use it:** You need a computer, a modem and a telephone line. Users can log on by dialling 780-3733. Log on as a guest at first and follow instructions to get an account. Guests can browse, but can't post messages or send and receive electronic mail.

Please see **FREENET / A2**

**“THERE WAS A PUBLIC ACCESS CHANNEL AND THERE WERE THESE TWO COOL TECH GUYS, I THINK IT WAS CALLED “CYBERPUNK CAFE”. WE WOULD GO DOWN TO WHERE THEY FILMED IT AND DO THESE LITTLER INTERNET NCF PITCHES MAYBE ONCE EVERY TWO MONTHS. IT ILLUSTRATES HOW NCF WAS EXCITING TO THE WHOLE COMMUNITY, BECAUSE IT WAS A GENERAL ‘WHAT’S HOT IN TECH IN OTTAWA RIGHT NOW’ AND WE WERE REGULARS.”**

**LISA DONNELLY (am412)**

Lisa Donnelly and Rick Taylor of NCF join Rick Kaulbars and Mark Bell, hosts of the Ottawa tech talkshow Cyberpunk.Live



**Anne Taylor** ak906. I can't forget mine.. I was about age 11 when I signed up, and soon after my teacher organized my whole class to sign up (they all got "al---" numbers). I spent many hours in the chat rooms, and I remember browsing webpages in just text and then downloading images separately.. veeery slowly.

Like · Reply · 2 · August 6 at 1:03am



**Frances Tanner** aa816. We had the devil of a time coaxing municipal candidates to join an online Q&A and post their platforms on NCF in 1994. "This Internet thing is not where you can reach voters... My time is better spent doorknocking."

Like · Reply · 2 · August 6 at 7:55pm

**“PEOPLE JUST ASSUMED I WAS A GUY BECAUSE MY NAME WAS PAT AND I KNEW ALL ABOUT COMPUTERS. STEREOTYPES NEVER DIE... SO THEY HAD A POLL ON THE PC USER GROUP: ‘IS PAT A MAN OR A WOMAN?’ WE ALL GOT A BIG LAUGH OUT OF IT.”**

**PAT DRUMMOND (ad995)**

In 1998, to keep up with member demand, NCF revamped its homepage and added a feature called “Chat Street,” which was essentially a series of themed chat rooms, each with a distinct style.

“Ye Olde Taverne” was a place to discuss anything in particular, “The Hot Tub” was intended for sexual discussion, “The Blue Oyster” was targeted towards the LGBTQ+ community, “Nike Temple” was a youth discussion board, and “Area 51” was described by *Monitor* magazine as a place for “Trekkies, X-Fileers and others trying to get in touch with their home planet.”

Despite all NCF members needing to have a verified ID, Chat Street allowed them to post anonymously using a custom nickname.

With so few staff available to moderate all the activity, Ian! Allen, one of NCF’s friendly neighbourhood SysAdmins, could be seen all over the chatrooms and newsgroups.

“I was watching everything, making comments everywhere, and one person tried to start up an Ian! Allen fan club,” he says. “The board turned it down because they didn’t want any special people. It’s another thing that made working for FreeNet cool, people were thinking more egalitarian, community-oriented.”

Theresa Jamone, a longtime NCF member has been around since that era.

"NCF has been an important part of my online life, of connecting with family and friends through email, setting up my personal web pages and even creating and managing a few Discussion Groups. We've come a long way since the days of plain text web browsers."

Aven McMaster's family loved connecting through NCF so much they immortalized their emails in a bound booklet.

"When my friends went away to university, the contacts I'd made from first having email through NCF became the way we stayed in touch. Many of the people on that list are still my closest friends today."

## Two good basic guides to FreeNet

**The National Capital FreeNet Navigator**  
By Ken and Bonni Evans  
Imagicians Artware Inc., Manotick;  
412 pages; \$29.95

**The Official FreeNet Survival Guide**  
(Revised and updated)  
National Capital FreeNet, Ottawa;  
143 pages; \$13.95 retail, (\$10 direct)

**Reviewed by Peter Calamai**

Both these books will do a good job of getting you started on the National Capital FreeNet and on those parts of the Internet that NCF lets you reach. The Evans book, however, keeps on going and is well worth the extra money for anyone wanting to progress beyond the novice stage. Yet both books also demonstrate why a printed manual is always a compromise in dealing with something as fast-moving as FreeNet. Missing from both are NCF features added since spring; other key information is

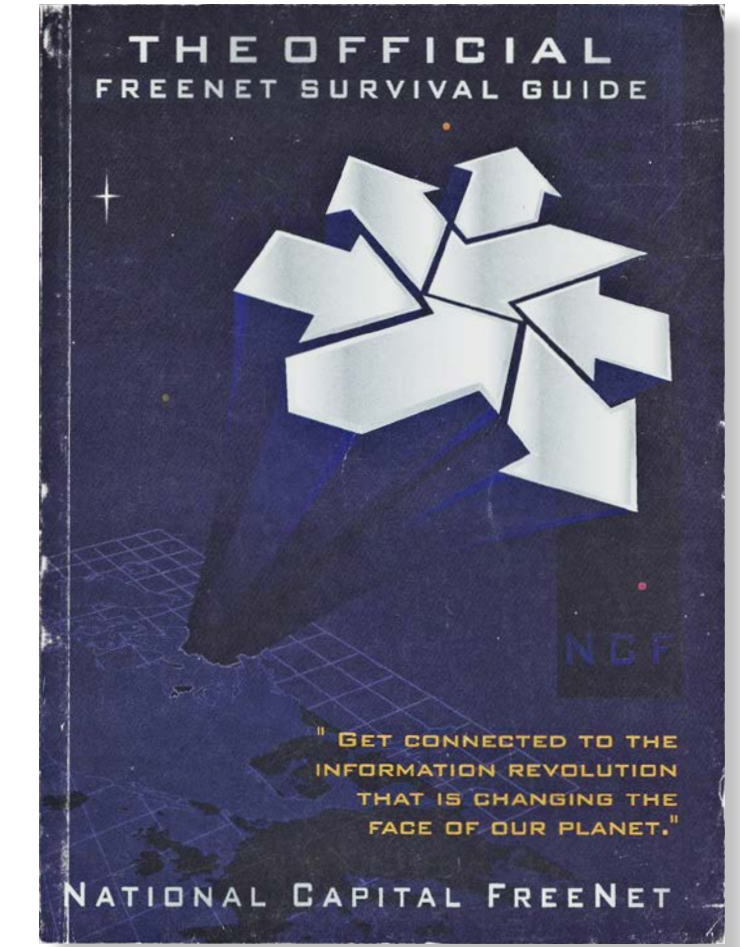
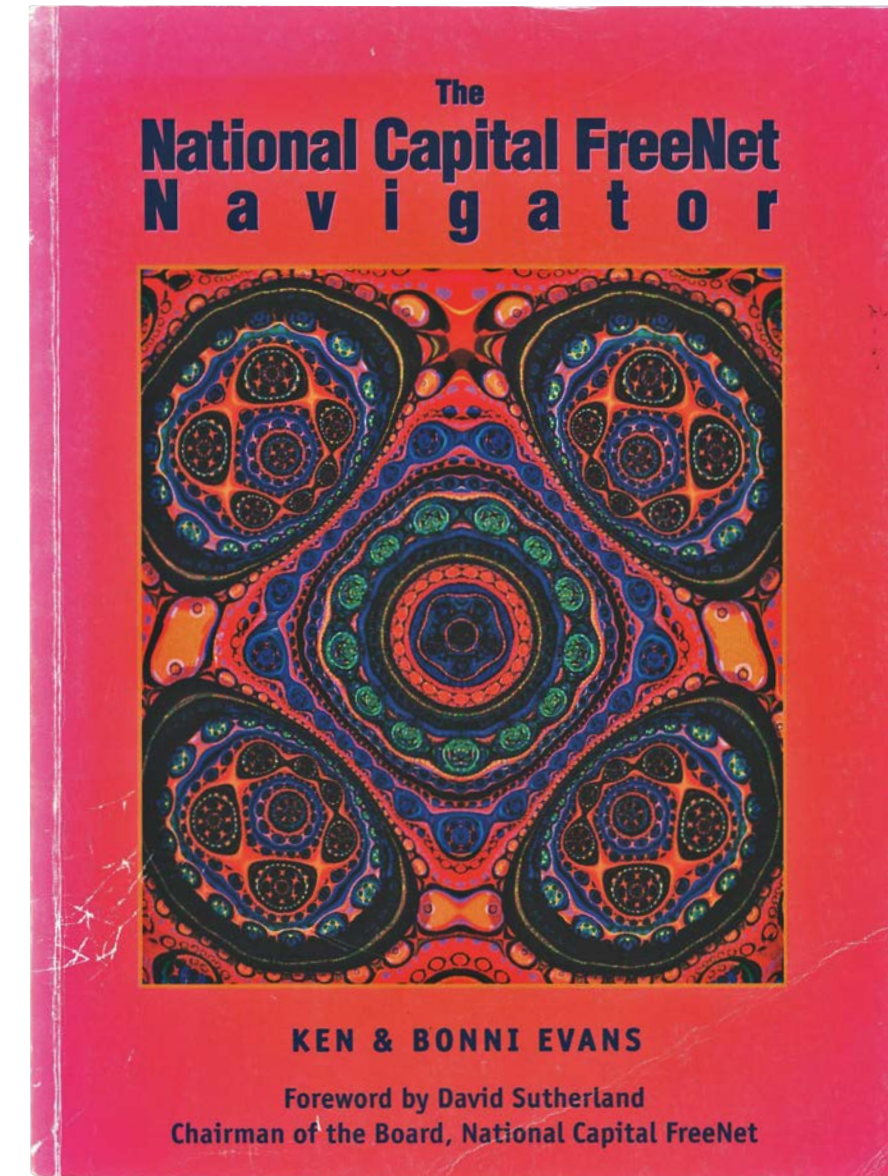
already outdated, such as the main FreeNet menu. Here the *Survival Guide* has an edge, since a continually updated electronic version is also available online for free and on disk (\$10) from the NCF. Being smaller and thinner, the *Survival Guide* is easier to handle than the bulky *Navigator*; because of a larger size of body type, it's also easier to read for cybernetters of mature years. But that's about the end to the advantages. On almost every other front, the *Navigator* comes out ahead. It has both content and context, providing the history of the NCF (largest in the country) and the philosophy of free-nets. The content demonstrates that Ken and Bonni Evans know the NCF well, yet haven't forgotten how intimidating the whole experience can be for a beginner. Their most creative innovation is a "simulator" reproducing 140 pages of NCF menus; thus the newcomer can grasp the essentials of moving around the NCF without using limited online time. Unfortunately, the evolving nature

of the NCF means that parts of the simulator are also already outdated. But the concept is a valuable one and I hope the Evanses retain it in any revised edition. Other omissions that could be tackled include some advice about organizing alias files into categories (for the user's benefit, not that of the mainframe), about leaving subject lines blank when sending to list servers, about editing the duplicated address block in forwarded messages and about the cryptic "load average" information given when a user signs on to the NCF. But these are quibbles. As an early and heavy user of the NCF, I still profited from reading the *Navigator* volume. The tips on finding e-mail addresses are alone worth the publication price and, until now, I hadn't appreciated that some long-distance faxes could be sent free via the Internet. A final observation. I suspect the authors of both volumes used the indexing features in their software to generate their indexes. That in the *Survival Guide* is so bare-bones and compressed as to be useless. The *Navigator's* index, on the other hand, is



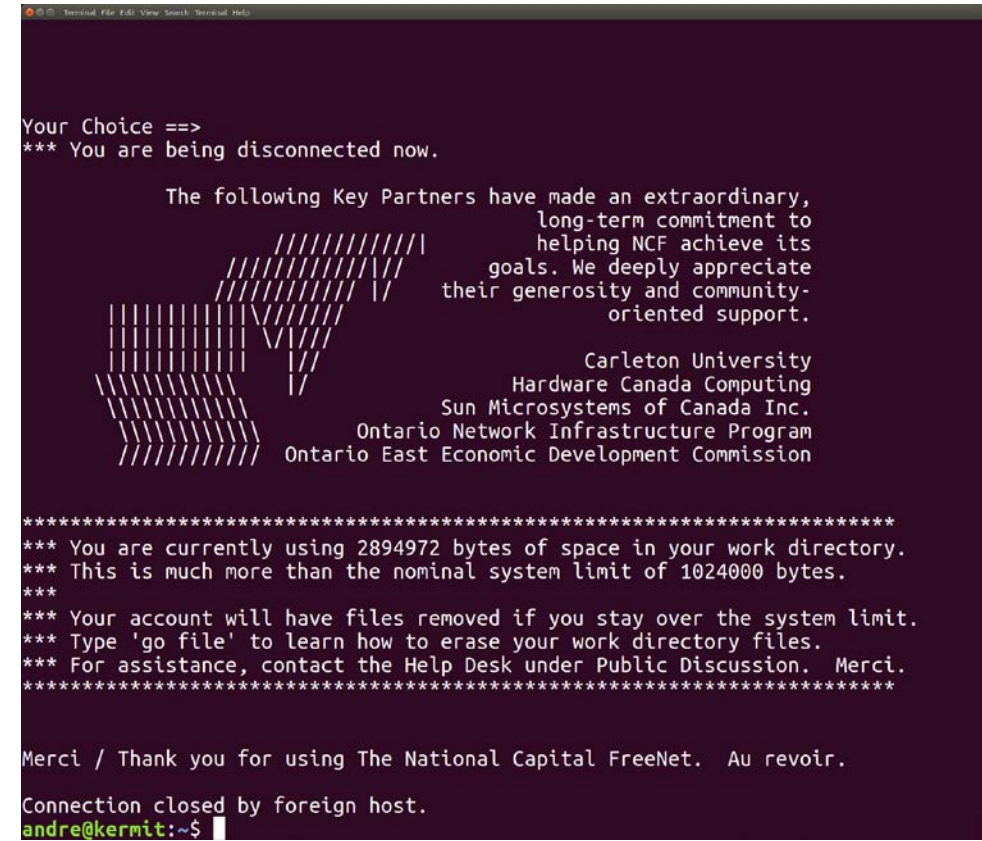
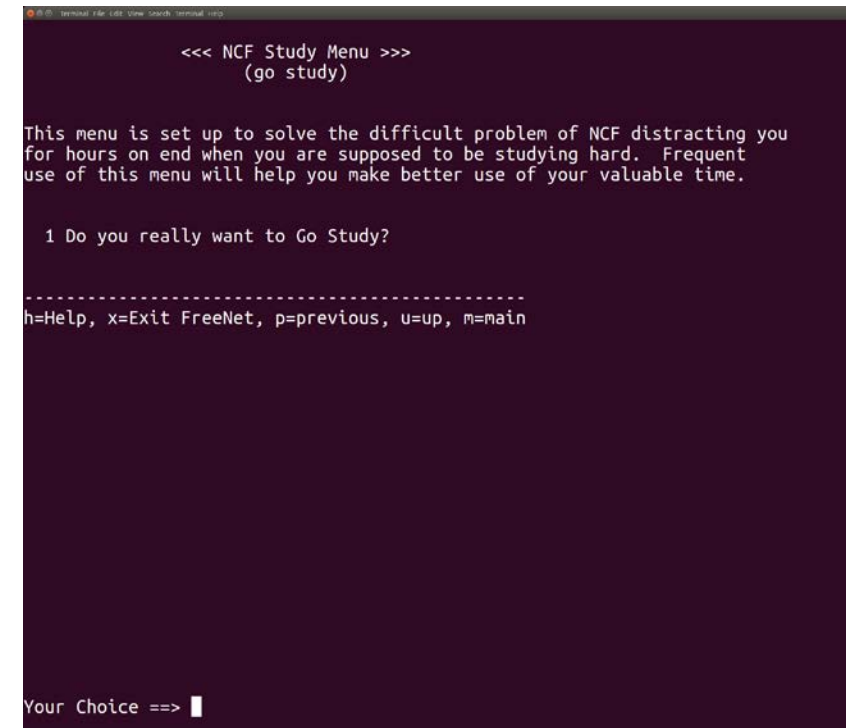
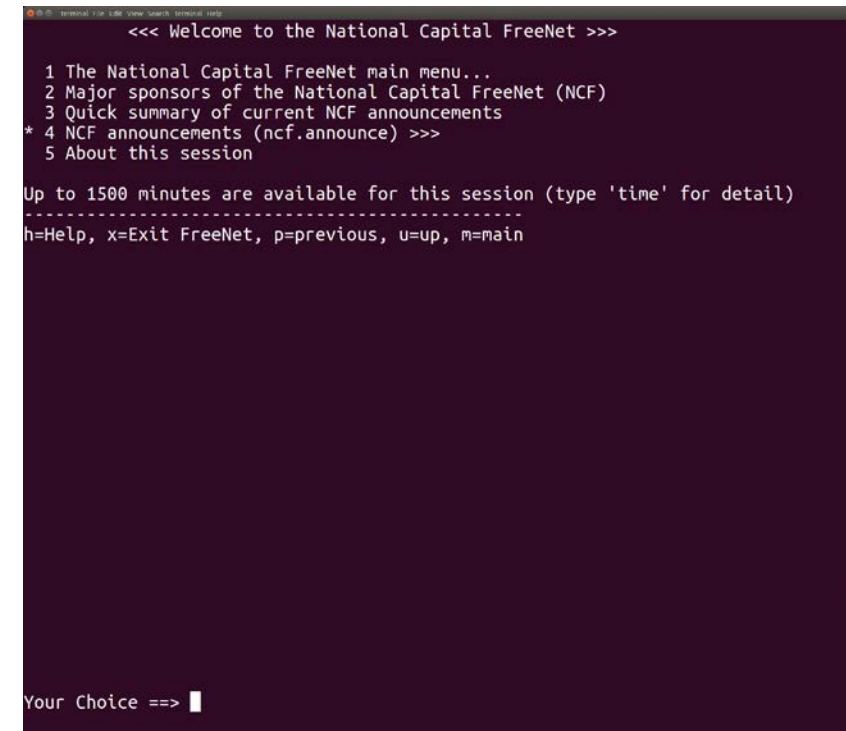
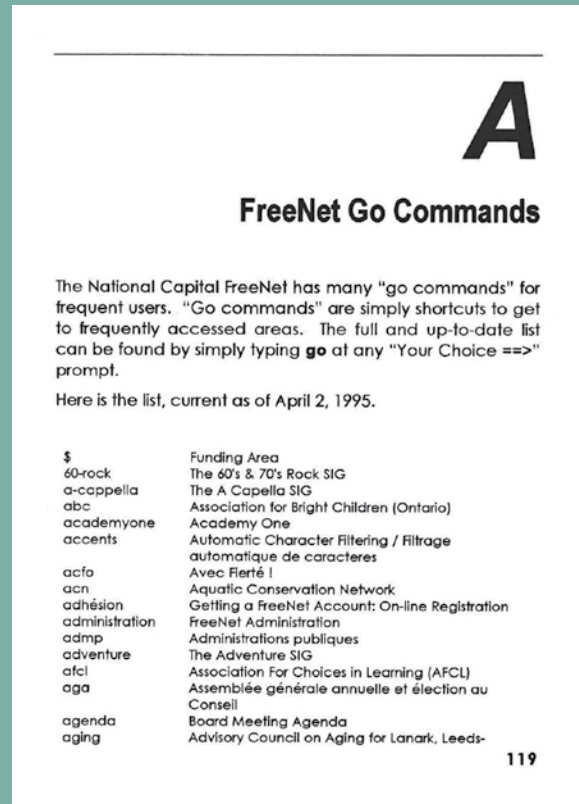
**Our reviewer preferred the context and content of *The National Capital FreeNet Navigator***

more detailed but sends users off to pages that are themselves internal references to the real substantive section, which is not in the index (check out encryption). Both are good arguments for the services of an experienced indexer. There are still things humans do better than computers. Where to find them: For the computer-friendly, log on to the NCF and type **go shopping** to order the *Survival Guide* and, possibly soon, the *Navigator*. Or phone the NCF office at 788-3947 between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. The *Navigator* is now available locally in most bookstores with decent sections of computer books. The *Survival Guide* can also be consulted for free at any NCF public access site (try your library). Peter Calamai is the Citizen's Editorial Page editor.



“PEOPLE WERE COMPLAINING ABOUT NOT DOING WELL IN THEIR COURSES BECAUSE THEY WERE ALWAYS USING INTERNET RELAY CHAT.

IAN ALLEN, OUR FIRST SYSADMIN, BECAME A PROFESSOR AT ALGONQUIN, HE WAS SENSITIVE TO STUDENTS NOT DOING THEIR WORK. SO HE SAID ‘IF YOU’RE HAVING PROBLEMS STUDYING, I PROGRAMMED A NEAT NEW FEATURE FOR YOU’. AND WHEN ANYONE ENTERED THE ‘GO STUDY’ COMMAND, THEY’D BE KICKED OFF THE SYSTEM.”  
 ANDRÉ DALLE (al178)



If members followed the Go Study menu's simple instruction, they would receive a message saying they would be logged out in five minutes. At a time when FreeNet access was limited to only an hour or two per day, this would have been quite a nasty shock.

## NCF HAS ALSO CELEBRATED SEVERAL MILESTONES OVER THE YEARS.

By its second anniversary, NCF was considered the world's fastest growing FreeNet.

Dave Sutherland, NCF's first Board president, said he had only expected to get about 5,000 members but by year two, we had amassed at least 23,000.

On its fourth anniversary, NCF was awarded the first ever *Monitor* magazine Computing Community Achievement Award. Prizes were given to artists tasked with designing illustrations for NCF's website and posters.

In the years since, the internet has changed dramatically and what makes headlines has changed with it. But we know our members had fun offline based on the pictures they left behind:

pool parties and picnics, Christmas get-togethers, award ceremonies, office bake-offs and pizza-fueled Lunch and Learns.

Stephen Darbyshire attended many of FreeNet's early gatherings.

"The social get-togethers were always fun whether at Carleton, City Hall, a pub, or a big party at Vincent Massey Park," he said.

"One year there was a fund-raiser where Ian! [Allen, NCF's original SysAdmin] auctioned off a supper cooked by him at his place. I bid quite high and then demanded that I bring someone else. The person I brought was an old friend he hadn't seen in years. Dinner turned out to be a big surprise."



**FreeNet plugs into B**

More than 23,000 people have hooked up to the National Capital FreeNet, reaching a milestone in its two-year history.

Congratulations to the National Capital FreeNet, a non-profit organization of volunteers, for plugging more than 23,000 people in this region into the mixed blessings of the electronic highway.

FreeNet passed one milestone recently when it assigned the user identification number ba001 to Jack Fagan, having exhausted all the combinations between aa001 and az999.

Those of a mathematical bent will have calculated the total as 25,974. In reality, it's closer to 23,200, for various arcane reasons.

But that's still a passel, considering that FreeNet started with hope and a few phone lines less than two years ago.

It now handles 10,000 calls a day.

And next week, these folk at Carleton host a conference that will found a national group representing FreeNet and similar community networks across the country. Congratulations again.

**Happy birthday**

National Capital FreeNet recently celebrated its fourth birthday at the **Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton** and NCF board president **Dave Sutherland** was presented with the first ever *Monitor Magazine* Computing Community Achievement Award. Since its inception, FreeNet has grown to be the second largest of its kind in the world with 60,000 registered members. Three prizes were given out to artists for creating posters to illustrate the NCF. The top choice will be used on posters and the NCF's Website.

The Ottawa Sun, Thursday, February 5, 1998

## FreeNet celebrates 5 years

By **SIMON TUCK**  
Ottawa Sun



The National Capital FreeNet celebrated its fifth anniversary in style yesterday by adding an extra 20% capacity.

The boost is the result of about \$50,000 of donated equipment from Mitel and Cisco Systems, which will mean the area's free Internet provider will now be able to offer a faster service to more people — at least at nights and on weekends.

Mitel donated 32 of its telephone lines to FreeNet for use during non-business hours and Cisco chipped in a computer with 48 high-speed modem ports to act as a server. The free service now has 201 lines between 6 p.m. and 8 a.m.

With about 22,000 users, FreeNet is Canada's oldest community-provided Net service and an important link in the area's cyber-growth.

"FreeNet is providing a very important role in public education," said David Sutherland, FreeNet's chairman and president, during a press conference yesterday at Mitel headquarters in Kanata.

Organizers say the service shouldn't be hurting private Net providers because FreeNet doesn't offer the same speed and quality.

FreeNet can be reached at 271-9768.

**FASTER SERVICE:** Mitel's Ken Anderson, Cisco Systems' Dick Bakker and FreeNet chairman David Sutherland celebrate the launch of the enhanced services.

Nick Detre, HelpDesk Analyst and former volunteer says it's the office environment that pulled him in.

"Sarcasm and puns are a frequent occurrence," he says. "We approach work in a fun way, in a way that it doesn't have to feel like work."

André Dalle, the current SysAdmin, has an example of this. We recently bought a fancy gong to celebrate good work around the office, especially on the HelpDesk.

"One day I didn't leave until 10pm and when I got home, I wasn't upset that I stayed late. I was upset that I forgot to play with the gong. And I forgot to play with the gong because I was too wrapped up in my work – that's a good problem to have."



Shirt design by Michael Zahab, 1994



Nick Detre



Adam Godlewski



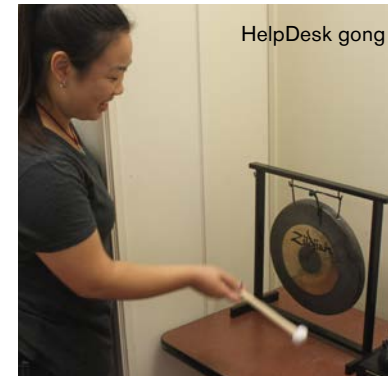
Jessica Dahanayake

**National Capital FreeNet** at **National Capital FreeNet**  
March 8, 2016 · 🌐  
Happy International Women's Day! (From all of us at NCF, but showcasing two women from our office staff, Billing Manager Nathalie Dolbeck and Executive Director Shelley Robinson). #communityisp #womenintech



Shelley and Nathalie celebrate International Women's Day

Board members Pete de Lepper and Lauren Gardner at the 2016 AGM meet and greet.





# Dissenters challenge FreeNet for abandoning mandate

**Opinions differ:** Is the National Capital FreeNet a good idea gone bad? That all depends on who you talk to.

BY MIKE SHAHIN  
The Ottawa Citizen

Four years ago, Ottawa's National Capital FreeNet was conceived by three Carleton University employees looking to provide the region with an online forum for information-sharing, debate and discussion of ideas.

The debate usually focused on outside issues, in the community and across the world.

But the NCF has been experiencing some inward-looking discussion, a clash of ideas that calls into question the very vision and future of the community computer network.

A small group of people is speaking out and criticizing the NCF for abandoning its original mission. They

Web to fill what he saw as a gap in service. Like the NCF, Flora is a space where community groups and individuals can communicate and organize. (Most of its volunteers left NCF to work with Flora.)

Because it is a World Wide Web site rather than a freenet, though, Flora does not provide the free access that NCF provides.

The key difference is that Flora is open to the vast Internet world, rather than being a closed, "proprietary" place like the NCF, Mr. McOrmond said.

NCF has an estimated 700 newsgroups (sites where people can post messages in a virtual conversation) that are not accessible through the Internet.

NCF president and board member David Sutherland said critics, including Mr. McOrmond, want NCF to dis-

**'They want people in Sandy Hill to speak to people in Orléans and that's it.'**

port hole to the Internet, Mr. Gilbert said, NCF needs to focus on its community roots.

Mr. Gilbert, a 15-year-old web-page designer with his own company, said NCF also does not seem to be open enough to attracting volunteers, which are the backbone of the system. Mr. Gilbert tried to volunteer, and FreeNet staff members "were not terribly receptive."

"I didn't feel like I was wanted," said Mr. Gilbert, adding that his young age might have been a factor.

Ms. Donnelly explains any criticism as a result of "ideological differences" on the part of very few people.

"You can't please everybody," Ms. Donnelly said, adding that NCF has 157 "happy" volunteers.

Along with Mr. Sutherland and Carleton Prof. Jay Weston, George Frajkor was one of the three enthusiastic and dedicated founders of the FreeNet concept.

He is not on the board anymore, but still uses the pronoun "we" when talking about NCF.

Mr. Frajkor, a journalism professor at Carleton, believes NCF has stayed

## CHAPTER THREE CONTROVERSIES

Many of the problems National Capital FreeNet has faced over its first 25 years parallel concerns with the internet in general: online harassment, privacy, censorship, and competing ideas about who and what the internet is for.

Andrew Martey Asare, NCF's Business Analyst, says it's par for the course.

“THERE'S A LOT TO LEARN ABOUT HOW TO BE ONLINE, TO BE SAFE, TO BE PRODUCTIVE, TO BE KIND – AND THAT'S JUST AS AN INDIVIDUAL. ORGANIZATIONS THAT HAVE BEEN FOSTERING COMMUNITIES ONLINE FOR 25 YEARS, THERE'S GOING TO BE FRUSTRATIONS.”

Right from the get-go, success came with challenges: within its first year of operation, with more than 11,000 members, people were complaining about long waits to get online. One article said “getting into FreeNet is like getting out of the Civic Centre after a Senators game.”

Once thousands of people got connected, the issue became what they were doing online.

In 1994, the Board consulted the Human Rights Commission about how to deal with racism and hate speech on some of its discussion groups.

SECTION B

\* \* Thursday, November 4, 1993

FreeNet caught in information traffic jam

It's always rush hour on the National Capital FreeNet, the local computer network for sending electronic mail, posting messages on bulletin boards or snagging information on a variety of topics from Shakespeare to nudism.

So much so that FreeNet, based at Carleton University, is now recognized as the fastest-growing and second-largest community computer network in the world, next to Cleveland, Ohio. Ottawa's Linda Clippingdale recently became the 11,000th account holder.

FreeNet and other networks hooked into the larger Internet are considered the cow paths to the super information highway of the future. The last mile will stretch into homes where televisions, computers and phones will be shoehorned into one infotainment unit.

But these trail-blazing networks are beginning to collapse under the weight of usage, leaving many to question how long this freebie info-shopping spree can continue. Getting into FreeNet is like getting out of the Civic Centre after a Senators' game. Logging on is half the battle.

Urban planners will tell you that the best solutions for packed highways are toll roads and expansion. Apply that to digital expressways and you have to start charging user fees and adding bandwidth, or lanes of capacity to carry all this information.



ALANA KAINZ

Chasing demand

FreeNet's supply of phone lines into the computer is continuously chasing demand. It has had to grow to 69 from 20 phone lines in its first seven months with another 14 on order. By Christmas there should be 115, says FreeNet chairman David Sutherland, who also has a day job of heading information technology at Carleton.

To keep up, the FreeNet board estimated it will be forced to spend money it doesn't have. Bankruptcy is forecasted for March. Board members now spend most of their time trying to raise survival donation money, their only source of cash. Users are faced with a plea for more money that seems to last forever every time they log on. One out of three gives.

Smelling profits, entrepreneurs abound. Service providers are jumping on the coat tails of community computing in other jurisdictions, charging fees, for instance, for the telephone lines that connect to Internet. They offer instant access and added services like the ability to download software. At the same time telephone and cable types are plotting how they will commercialize more sophisticated interactive knowledge.

With all this commercial potential, and modem gridlock, why doesn't FreeNet start thinking FreeNet? Not our mandate, says Sutherland. Unless there is an unlikely larger policy change, FreeNet pledges to be free. “We'll just keep telling people how badly we need the money.”

Donators can call 788-3947 or send a cheque to Carleton University, 1409 Dunton Tower, 1125 Colonel By Dr., K1P 5B6.

Briefly

CANARIE Inc., the non-profit private and public alliance that is building the backbone to Canada's information highway, will match investments of up to \$1 million in research and development on advanced networking products, services and applications. More information can be received through the Canadian Advanced Technology Association at 236-6550.

Cognos Inc. has raided the “circle of influence” and hired Neal Hill away from industry think-tank Forrester Research Inc. of Cambridge Massachusetts. Hill, a senior analyst in the computing strategy service, becomes Cognos's vice-president of corporate marketing.

Gandalf Technologies Inc.'s latest public offering of 12 million common shares is scheduled to close tomorrow. The company raised \$48 million, mostly to pay down debt.

Karla and the New World Order

by James Hrynshyn

Karla Homolka murder trial gossip is still available on Ottawa's public computer network, regardless of what you might have heard, read, or downloaded.

How National Capital FreeNet members and officials are handling it, however, is much more interesting than any of the rumors of mutilation (tendon-slicing) or conspiracy theories (Justice Czar Marion Boyd ordered the ban out of sympathy for Karla because both are lesbians).

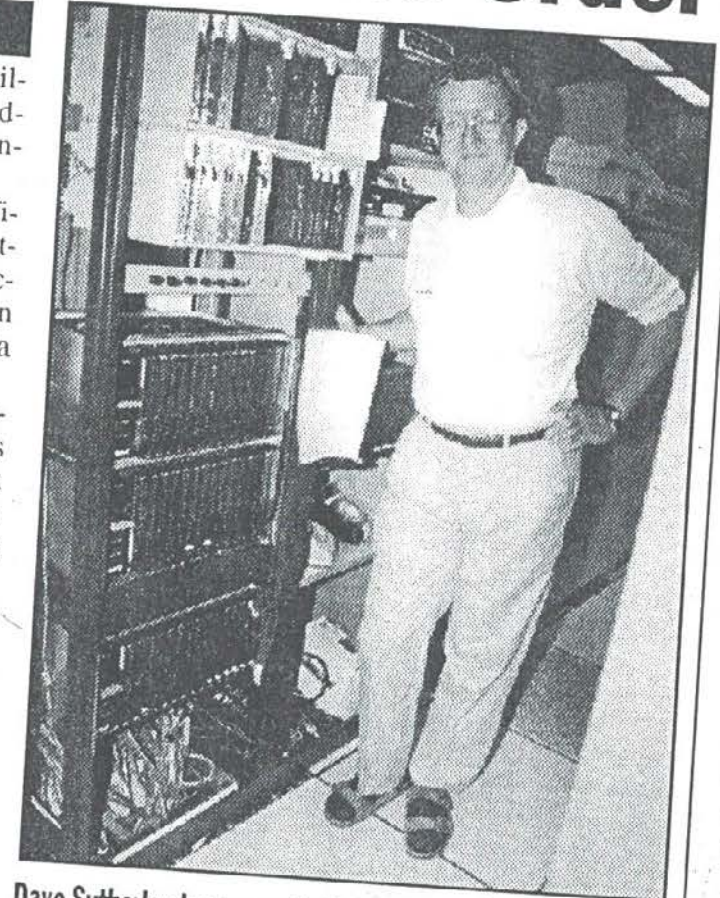
Juicy and disgusting trial details of varying reliability have been available since Judge Kovacs slapped a publication ban on Homolka's trial six months ago. But when a Washington Post story on the case popped up on FreeNet discussion groups a week ago, the shit hit the fan.

National Capital FreeNet chairman Dave Sutherland threatened to remove access privileges to anyone who posted the article and he cut off everyone's access to the most popular source of the ban-busting material.

Lesser minds went wild. A few called Sutherland a fascist. Some even cancelled their donations to the financially-precarious FreeNet.

Within hours, however, discussions that used to take place on the banned group moved to — and came to dominate — general FreeNet and Canadian groups. And, more importantly, the subject matter changed.

Most discussions now involve more than just which part of whose body was mangled. “My Canada includes Karla Homolka” signoffs have been replaced with often thoughtful arguments over freedom of the press, Charter rights and legal jurisdictions.



Dave Sutherland: some called him a fascist.

Those angered by Sutherland's allegedly gutless decision missed the point. His actions were not aimed at the FreeNet community, which is now so interconnected as to be invulnerable to anachronisms like censorship. Instead, he was just trying to make it look like he was complying with the ban for the benefit of the folks at the justice ministry who haven't figured out how powerless they really are.

The unavoidable conclusion: a ban imposed by one nation-state is now next to useless. Anyone who still thinks free trade is the biggest threat to national sovereignty should spend a few hours on the Internet.

NEWS COMMENT

Creed closes

OTTAWA BY DEREK

News of the club will be closed a minor facility.

In the meantime, booked in the works for the nothing has been Telephone li

year-old club Entertainment M of setting the record

The club is a Rose's restaurant Grace Mulvey. a cozier spot with more attention to the club was becoming

liking. The Downstairs and Creeque All league, but not m room when the the

The chair of the McInnes, resigned by two acting co-board settles on a

McInnes has b separately from the focussing his en Kemptville.

**“I REMEMBER THAT IN THE EARLY DIAL-UP DAYS I WOULD BE ANNOYING NEXT DOOR OFFICE PEOPLE WITH THE CONSTANT DEE-DUH-DEE-DUH-DEE-DUH-DEET-DEET. YOU HAD TO KEEP DIALING TO CATCH THE TIME WHEN SOMEONE ELSE WOULD HANG UP AND PROVIDE AN OPENING TO GET ONLINE.”**  
**RANDAL MARLIN (ac022)**

Wednesday, October 5, 1994

## Pervnet battles an image problem

Sex is the most popular buzz on the community computer network, a National Capital FreeNet survey revealed last week. Almost half of the Top 20 most popular discussion groups are suited for adults-only. That revelation had the digital city taking inventory.

Sex wasn't exactly what freenet organizers here and elsewhere had in mind.

Freenets were formed with the intention of building a resource centre, post office and virtual meeting place all in one — like a Public Broadcasting System where the users are also the producers of content.

Some questioned whether freenets and electronic networks in general have evolved into a haven for deviants to be deviants, stunting the growth potential. Need more be said than alt.sex.nasalthair?

Internet, the worldwide web of computer networks, is fighting a reputation as Pervnet, with ever increasing stories about young children being seduced by on-line stalkers.

FreeNet users can tap into the discussion groups within Internet known as Usenet. That's where the sex groups are found.

The issues raised by the FreeNet survey go beyond net sex.

How can public networks have the enormous social and political implications in the future that many envision, when they aren't being used as originally planned.

That's just perception, says Marita Moll, who co-founded this year an electronic community lobby group called the Public Advisory Council on Information Highway Policy.

COMMENT



High-tech

ALANA KAINZ

**Fighting a bum rap**

Freenets, she says, are getting a bum rap. The reality is that "the vast majority see FreeNet as a useful resource." Although specific discussion groups don't attract the numbers that the sex groups do, when you add up the number of people looking for information on, say, education topics, they eclipse sex, says Moll.

Debate over the future raged on FreeNet's General Discussion area.

Ron Battiston was the most provocative. FreeNet is like the hula hoop and 3-D glasses — a fad that will soon fade.

"What did we do with the medium when we got our hands on it? Some of us (self included) posted goofy messages and got embroiled in flame wars. It was sort of fun for a while. But there was that overpowering thought that something was missing."

Daniel Gallant counters: "We are coming to mirror society more and more every day. We have people from all walks of life on FreeNet."

John Angus summed it up nicely: "The idea behind Usenet is that people should be able to talk about absolutely anything... So if people want to talk about obscure computer languages, there are groups devoted to that. If they want to talk about sexual problems or thrills, there are groups for that, too."

Only a handful of areas are devoted to sex, he added. There are thousands of others on many other topics.

A Bell Canada executive once called freenets a subculture that hasn't made an impact.

He's probably right, for now. Only one per cent of the Canadian population is served by community networks.

Freenets must become more useful to grab a 30-per-cent share, users agree.

However, few say the answer is censorship. Gatekeeping is not the freenet way.

There is something refreshingly pure about the world's first unregulated, uncensored mass medium.

Community self-censorship is best. Users shame other users from postings that don't comply with a community standard of values.

That same year, an internal survey found that almost half of FreeNet's top 20 newsgroups were restricted to adults and dealt with sex and sexuality.

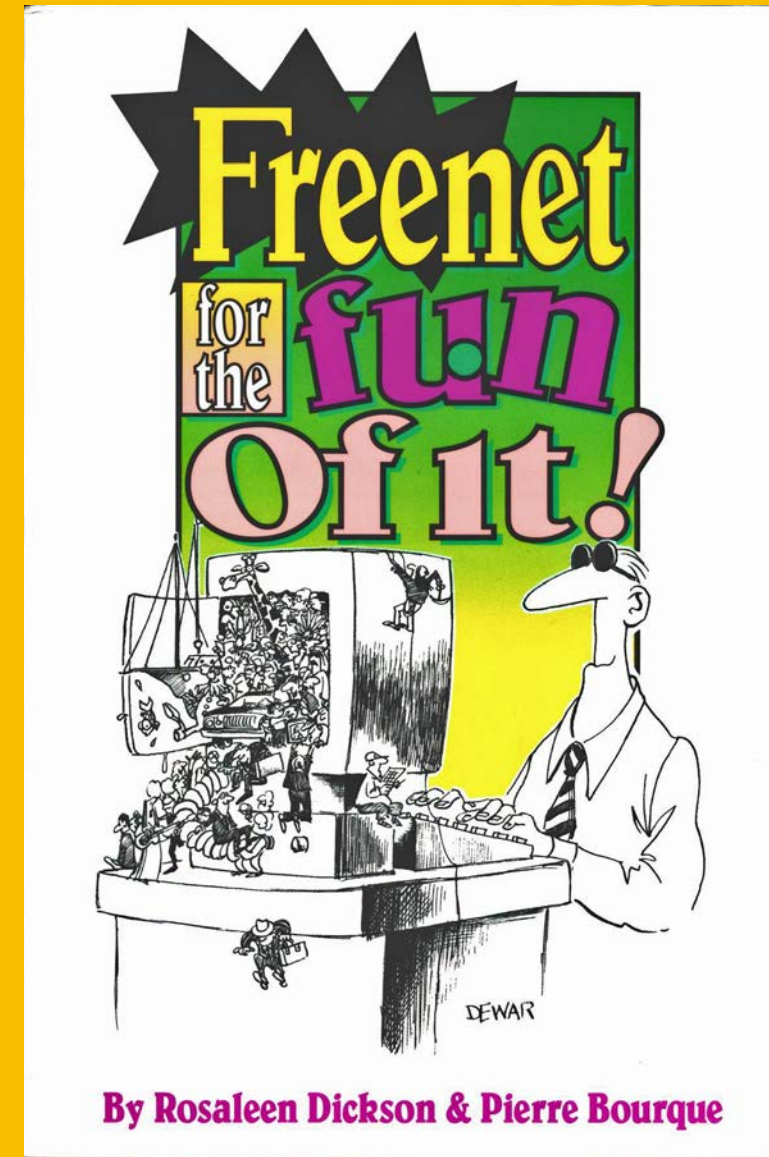
An article in the *Ottawa Citizen* around this time pre-dated online click-bait with the headline "Pervnet battles an image problem".

It asked "how can public networks have the enormous social and political implications in the future that many envision, when they aren't being used as originally planned?"

Also in 1994, during Karla Homolka's sexual assault and murder trial, some NCF users were subverting a publication ban about the case by accessing information posted through a Usenet feed.

Once people complained, NCF blocked access to the board.

An article from the *Ottawa Xpress* stated that some members quit over this decision. But it also described discussions that turned from name-calling to "thoughtful arguments over freedom of the press, Charter rights, and legal jurisdictions."



**Freenet For the Fun of it**

**NETIQUETTE MEANS DECENCY**

Those who've been communicating by computer over the years have built up a number of traditions called Netiquette, not to be trivialized. Most Net troubles result from someone's disregard for Netiquette. Take pride in following these dos, don'ts and safety measures.

**DO**

Always be polite and considerate. Use the best language, grammar, spelling etc. you can. Think before you write; write what you mean - clearly. Smile while you write to keep a good attitude. Make your paragraphs short, never more than six lines. Leave a blank line between all your paragraphs. Edit out all but the part to which you reply in email. Edit out headers and signatures when you're replying. Lurk before you post. (i.e. test the waters)

**DON'T**

Write anything you wouldn't say to a person's face. Pick apart someone's message, bicker or aggravate. Make noise i.e. send one message to many newsgroups. Post personal messages to newsgroups. Forward or post personal mail you receive. Include the entire previous posting in a reply.

**To avoid the consequences of anger:**

If angry, don't post. Use smileys :- ) so they'll smile too. People can't hear your tone of voice so sarcasm is out. SHOUTING (using all capital letters) is rude. Don't try to start a war on the Net. It could spill over. Flaming means being offensive. Don't.

# Suicide info on local network

By LAURA BOBAK  
Ottawa Sun

**LOCAL computer users can read about suicide methods on the National Capital FreeNet, and the network has no plans to block access to such material.**

FreeNet chairman David Sutherland said yesterday the network does not have a policy on accepting sponsors.

"We haven't discussed that," he said. "We can certainly imagine conditions where we might feel a need to develop a policy."

By logging on to FreeNet, the Sun found it could access DeathNet, a Victoria-based computer bulletin board service that has been offering suicide information since Jan. 10.

DeathNet, run by the Right to Die Society in Victoria, has been distributing manuals on how to kill yourself using barbiturates, gassing and suffocation through plastic bags.

The service is available through the To-

ronto FreeNet, which can be accessed by Ottawa FreeNet users.

Computer users must buy a temporary membership in the Right to Die Society to gain access to the information. The society sponsors a National Capital FreeNet phone line, Sutherland confirmed.

The FreeNet has 170 phone lines, of which 30 are sponsored by groups at a cost of \$700 per year.

Information on the Right to Die Society and DeathNet is also available through the "lastrights" special-interest discussion group on the FreeNet.

Sutherland said FreeNet may look at blocking access to some material, such as hate literature, if it appeared on the network. But he questioned whether banning access to the suicide information made sense, given that such material is available in libraries and bookstores.

"I don't see a difference, especially if you have to buy a membership (to get the manual)," Sutherland said.

Right to Die Society president John Hofsess has estimated about 4,500 people have already logged on to DeathNet.

Although "Restricted" and "Adults Only" signs are posted throughout DeathNet, anybody with a networked computer can read such passages as:

"Ending your life with a plastic bag is the most effective way unless you possess — and carefully use — fast-acting barbiturates."

Calgary's world-renowned suicide prevention library, outraged over the DeathNet material, is vowing to fight back.

Officials at the Suicide Information and Education Centre are planning to establish their own site on the information highway by April to provide suicide prevention support nationally and internationally.

"It's to counteract DeathNet," said executive director Gerry Harrington.

SIEC has the largest collection of publicly accessible material on suicidal behavior and related topics in the English-speaking world, Harrington said.

An RCMP spokesman said police are investigating DeathNet but there is likely nothing illegal about the service.

- With files from Steven Chase

*Byward Market in desperate need of a quick-fix solution*

## Team play of council refreshing

**B**reak out the champagne. For a change, Ottawa council is ready to play as a team. Both the left and right wings of the often-bickering council are poised to cast aside their political differences and vote for an ambitious new plan that will help breathe life into the Byward Market.

The plan received unanimous consent at a city committee meeting this past week and is ready to get the same overwhelming support when it comes up for discussion at a full council meeting Wednesday.

But don't think for one moment this means that the more liberal lefties and the fiscally conservative righties are now getting along. The celebrations could end up being short-lived. The two sides are voting together on this issue because they have little choice.

Although the market might look healthy, it's really dying. And the councillors are in desperate need of a quick-fix



## Information highway ride lands parolee in Ottawa jail

By Leonard Stern  
Citizen police reporter

**W**hen two police officers showed up Jan. 24 at Donnelly's Ottawa Ford, Ken Scott-Humphry, a newly employed car salesman, had no idea they were coming for him. Later, because his colleagues were looking on, Scott-Humphry, 49, thanked the officers for not using handcuffs when they took him away.

"I must be the only person ever to have gone to jail for posting a notice on Free-Net," he says, still bewildered over an ordeal which included three weeks in jail and the loss of his job.

A few days earlier, he had posted a question through National Capital Free-Net, a computer network offering discussion groups on issues from poetry to politics. Scott-Humphry e-mailed his message to a discussion group for antique gun collectors who don costumes on weekends and fire old-fashioned black powder weapons. His question asked where to buy a particular kind of gun powder and bullets.

The arresting officers told

Scott-Humphry only that his parole had been suspended. Two years ago, the former OC Transpo bus driver was convicted of conspiracy to import hashish into Canada.

The RCMP, he was told the next day, saw his query about gun powder and, because the message mentioned a gun show in Syracuse, mistakenly inferred that Scott-Humphry had visited the United States, a parole violation.

"I stayed awake all night wondering what have I done?" he said, recalling the first night in jail. "When they finally told me it was because of what I had written to the (computer group), it was like I had been knocked into left field." Waiting for him when he got out of jail three weeks later was a letter of dismissal from his employer.

Scott-Humphry bought the computer as a Christmas gift to

himself. "It's wonderful. I live here alone and it can get pretty lonely, so I talk to people all over the world on the computer. I talk to a fellow in South Africa and another in Germany."

He is a trained pilot and normally spends his computer time participating in a group that discusses aviation. He posted the question to the gun-enthusiast group on behalf of his best friend, a collector of old weapons.

"I figured it was all my fault Ken got into trouble," said the friend, a 62-year-old retired bus driver who did not want to be identified because, as a gun collector, he worries his home would be targeted by thieves. A few days after the arrest, two parole officers showed up at the friend's house to verify Scott-Humphry's story.

FREE-NET continued page A2



Within the next year, censorship came up again when a newsgroup discussed ways people could kill themselves, and one of NCF's 170 phone lines was sponsored by the Right to Die Society, based in Victoria, BC.

A year later, a man asked a discussion group about where to find bullets and gun powder for antique guns on behalf of his friend. The RCMP saw the post and cross-checked it with his name. Based on the discussion thread, they assumed he had travelled to the US, a clear parole violation. As a result, he was jailed for three weeks.

"I must be the only person ever to have gone to jail for posting a notice on FreeNet," he said.

Then in 1997, the first person in Ottawa to be charged with uttering threats online was an NCF member, who had threatened another member.

Within two years, concerned members called the police to report an ad on the For Sale bulletin board that said it was looking to purchase a girl between 8 and 12-years old for "overseas shipment". Turned out it was a hoax, based on a reference to the Blues Brothers movie: the name given was "Seulb Serhtorb" - Blues Brothers spelled backwards.

Though Twitter and Reddit were years away, these issues have continued throughout the life of the Internet.

But content wasn't the only sticking point. From a high of 50-100 new sign-ups a day, FreeNet's membership growth slowed down, with fears that the organization was less relevant and less responsive to its members.

Page 6

# Hoaxster posts sex slave ad

A want ad posted on a local web page Monday has sparked an urgent investigation by Ottawa police.

The posting on the "ott.forsale.other" bulletin board — usually used to buy, sell or swap things like bikes or concert tickets — was an advertisement for a child sex slave.

It read: "Hello, I am posting for a foreign friend. He is interested in purchasing a little girl, preferably between eight and 12 years of age.

"She should be blond and attractive and available for overseas shipment before the end of June. Price is negotiable based on quality. Medical and dental reports will be required, as well as a variety of pictures. Please phone Seulb Serhtorb ..."

Sexual assault unit computer crime specialist Staff Sgt. Keith Daniels, alerted to the posting by a number of concerned callers, tells me it appears the ad was someone's idea of a humorous hoax, a takeoff of an obscure Blues Brothers line.

The phone number given in the advertisement was to a library and the name given is Blues Brothers spelled backwards.

The anonymous sender, after being warned that police were investi-

gating and trying to determine who he is, has e-mailed Daniels a note, still withholding his name and saying: "That was soooooo funny. Man you people have to get your heads out of your a--- and enjoy a good joke."

### VALUABLE TIME WASTED

"We have to thoroughly investigate anything like this, and I congratulate the Freenet users who were concerned enough to call us," says the detective, who is not amused.

"We've put several hours and valuable police resources into checking this out, only to be told by the sender that we need to get a sense of humour.

"The fact the person still isn't giving us his or her name voluntarily means we're still investigating. We obviously must interview this person to make absolutely certain there's nothing to the ad," explains Daniels, whose specialty includes investigating "kiddy porn" on the Internet.

I would suggest whoever posted the ad, whether they think it was a joke or not, immediately contact Daniels at 236-1222, ext. 5461.



Steve MADELY PAGE SIX

A public mischief charge is highly likely if the sender doesn't quickly come forward and co-operate.

### WHO'S IN, WHO'S OUT

Area Liberals are muttering about another four to five years in opposition and whether to dump Dalton McGuinty.

They are quietly debating whether they should put the blame for losing the election on the leader or his advisors, including the party executive.

For his part, Dalton has been making one-on-one contacts, shoring up support in what has already been dubbed "Operation Next Time" — a reference to the next election.

The fact Dalton had a close call in his own riding from virtually unknown Conservative candidate Mike Nicholson is not lost on the Liberals, or the Tories.

"Can you imagine if Garry Guzzo had run against McGuinty in Ottawa South, rather than moving over to Ottawa West Nepean to run against Rick Chiarelli (Liberal) and Alex Cullen (NDP)?"

"With the kind of support Garry received he'd have defeated Dalton," one Liberal insider suggested to me this week as he acknowledged the TV debate was the deciding point in the election.

### JOY JOBBED BY LEFTY STAFF?

Still with politics, The Page has learned former Olympian Greg Joy's departure as executive director of the Ottawa Food Bank was prompted by complaints from some unhappy staff.

Joy grated some staff members when he ran for the provincial Conservatives in the 1995 election, and supported welfare reform.

The wounds have apparently never healed. The split in the board — which led to the resignation of six directors — seems to have developed over a disagreement on how to react to a series of letters from a few disgruntled staff members, all with vaguely familiar wording critical of Joy's "leadership."

The directors who quit saw the 20% annual increase in donations to the food bank as proof Joy was doing his job, those who stayed were less impressed with the numbers than with the letters of discontent.

Steve Madely can be heard weekdays from 6 to 9 a.m. on CFRA's Madely in the Morning. You can leave Steve a message at the Sun by calling 739-5133, ext. 412, by faxing him at 591-3691, or e-mail Steve at smadely@cfra.com.



MCGUINITY Close call

The Ottawa Sun, Thursday, June 17, 1999

# Teen sues parents

CALGARY (CP) — A 16-year-old girl who moved away from home won the first round yesterday in suing her parents for financial support.

Her parents agreed to pay their daughter \$400 a month until the matter is settled. The teenager is asking for \$750.

"There's some really interesting legal issues here," said the girl's lawyer, Diann Castle. "The real test is going to be: Is this child dependent?"

The Grade 11 student moved from her parents' home last December alleging abuse. She has since lived with a friend's parents, who have given her room and board as well as bus and spending cash.

The nature of the alleged abuse was never specified.

The girl, who can't be identified, was not in court yesterday. She was writing an exam.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 28, 1997 D11

# Freenet blocks servers

'Vile' kiddie porn prompts local company to request investigation

By JEREMY MERCER The Ottawa Citizen

After several Ottawa computer users received a grotesquely pornographic e-mail message, the National Capital Freenet has decided to block all messages from several servers.

At least four Freenet users have recently received a message titled "A Very Lucrative Deal."

"It's a kiddie porn story complete with torture and other nasty stuff and then it gives details on where to buy more stories just like it," says Chris Cope, the executive director of the National Capital Freenet.

"It's quite disgusting." With at least 25,000 active users, Mr. Cope and the rest of the Freenet's board of directors decided to immediately block all mail from the addresses that sent the message.

"Usually we are quite democratic and have a meeting to discuss whether we will block server access, but in this case we acted immediately ... We were worried children might stumble across it."

Mr. Cope says the message appears to be a practical joke aimed at an innocent Internet user. When a person tries to contact the web site that supposedly sells the child pornography, they come across a quite inoffensive web site with a message saying the owner has nothing to do with the pornography messages.

Although the messages seem to have originated in Hong Kong, Mr. Cope says he has contacted Ottawa-Carleton police and asked them to look into the pornographic e-mails.

As Internet traffic increases, there is more junk e-mail being sent to people. But Mr. Cope says it is rarely as vile as the "A Very Lucrative Deal" message.

## news racism & technology

# E-hate heat

Racists have found the Internet, but Net watchers are divided over the appropriate response.

Matthew Friedman

It was only a matter of time before the uglier realities of life off-line began to intrude on the civil environs of the Internet. White supremacist, neo-Nazi, and racist groups have begun to take advantage of the infobahn to disseminate propaganda and recruit members. The question of how the on-line community should respond to the white supremacist presence, however, is becoming a divisive and controversial issue on the Net.

Recent incidents at the National Capital Freenet, an Ottawa-based public access provider, has its administration scrambling to find a response to the growing presence of racists on their system. NCF board member David Sutherland is hesitant to comment, but says the Freenet is consulting the Human Rights Commission in order to develop a plan of action.

movement is taking a back seat to the younger generation," says Smith. "I realized the potential of the Internet both for its networking capabilities and for its information distribution potential. The Net provides an audience that I can't ignore... it's a good tool for propaganda."

"It's a new approach. It has a lot to do with our generation," says University of Minnesota student Milton Kleim, Smith's principal US colleague. "The main factor in this move toward new technologies is a certain elite which is filtering out the social conditions in America degenerate and as Generation X individuals like myself and Jason [Smith] move into the mainstream."

Aryan anonymity But Electronic Frontier Canada representative David Jones points out that potential



system [like NCF] should have the same protections as a library and should also be extremely reluctant to tread on the rights of Canadians to express themselves freely."

The vast majority of skinhead traffic originates in Europe and the US — whose hate-literature laws are considerably less strict than in Canada — making any enforcement extremely difficult. Access providers have already shown a willingness to ban newsgroups like alt.fan.karlhomolka from their systems, and there is a danger that overreaction to the presence of racist users on the Net may provide a pretext for outside regulation.

"Freedom of speech has its limits, because speech affects action," says Toombs. "However, we have to be very careful to identify the point where activities on-line begin to extend to life off-line. I wouldn't want to create an atmosphere of fear and outright censorship, but conversely, Net users have to be prepared to accept the fact that real life takes precedence over life on-line."

Whether the Net's white supremacist traffic has any effect on society as a whole remains to be seen. Jones is quick to point out that there are more racists off-line than on the Net. Indeed, the

ephemeral nature of the medium, where e-mail can be consigned to a kill file, and where Usenet posts scroll off the system in very few days, may make the Net racists far less threatening than they at first appear.

Even the skinheads themselves can't say if their on-line propaganda and recruiting efforts have had any real effect. Smith says he's received some "encouraging e-mail," but concedes he often merely preaches to the converted while those who disagree with his opinions ignore him.

Kleim, however, is confident that white supremacist propaganda on the Net is bearing fruit, even if only modestly. "Just because we have a presence there is fruit enough for our efforts. Since I don't know how many people are reading each newsgroup, I can't judge how effective we've been," he says. "But if I can cause one person to open his eyes and just question what the establishment issues, then I have succeeded and my efforts are justified." ♦



In its heyday, the **National Capital FreeNet** was Online Cool, the place where thousands of Ottawans became acquainted with the Internet. But 10 years later, in a hugely different world, its membership has plummeted, and its relevancy is increasingly being questioned. The challenge today is to make it into something more than an anachronism from a heady past.

# FreeNet, Free Fall



says. "Unlike private companies, when you leave the FreeNet and get another e-mail address, you can leave behind a FreeNet forwarding entry. Private companies and ISPs just delete you. With FreeNet, you're family."

But for all its good intentions, FreeNet has life-threatening problems. Many believe the non-profit organization is a dinosaur from the altruistic early days of the Internet, when computers were going to do more than just make it easier to communicate — they were going to save the world. The story of FreeNet's rise and fall is, to some extent, the story of the rise and fall of that same tech-based altruism.

Today, FreeNet continues to survive on member donations and corporate and government grants, and it's never had the capital to compete with commercial service providers. As early as 1994, members were inquiring about the possibility of high-speed modems. (Even now, FreeNet's maximum modem speed is 33.6 mbps, creakingly slow by today's standards.) Its membership is alienated, and marked by apathy. Between 400 and 500 members voted in the most recent elections for directors, out of a membership pool of 7,000. Its equipment is out of date, prone to breakdown, and membership has been falling since the mid-'90s — active users of the system declined 16 per cent between September 2001 and the year before. "The people running NCF have been very insensitive to members over the years," wrote one user recently on the organization's bulletin boards. "I guess some voted with their feet." Realisti-

In a 1997 *Citizen* article, one member said they didn't like that NCF maintained member-only newsgroups, rather than being open to anyone from around the world with an internet connection. "They want people in Sandy Hill to speak to people in Orleans and that's it."

Another went on to form a similar service to NCF. "The vision I saw from the founders is no longer there," he said.

In 2001, the *Ottawa Citizen* wrote a two-page article called "FreeNet, Free Fall" describing current membership as "alienated, and marked by apathy," going on to say "many believe the non-profit organization is a dinosaur from the altruistic early days of the Internet."

A few years later when NCF moved to a annual donation model with required account renewals, some people felt the organization was prioritizing money over members.

"FreeNet was limited by scarce resources and no obvious precedents," says Jim Elder, former Board member, website developer and long-time volunteer.

"There was a tension between keeping costs down — to keep the economic 'free' in FreeNet — and having the resources to get things done. FreeNet's continuance was at risk several times, and surviving 25 years is a feat for any tech-based organization."

But, he adds, survival comes at a cost. "Over time, FreeNet's relationship with its members

has drifted, from members being treated like, and expected to behave like, governors in the mid-1990s, to more like customers in the late 2000s, to more like clients recently."

Looking back at the early days, Andre Vellino, a former Board member and volunteer, has mixed feelings.

"I'm actually surprised that the NCF is still alive and well, a pleasant surprise, but...does NCF matter?"

He says in the internet age, seven years is a generation. By that math, FreeNet has been around, and been changing, for relative eons and he thinks that may be what saves FreeNet. Again.

**"NCF IS ALIVE TODAY. IT'S GOT AN OFFICE, IT'S GOT A HELPDESK, IT'S STILL SERVING PEOPLE. THE PEOPLE CORE OF IT IS STILL IMPORTANT. WHO KNOWS WHERE NCF IS GOING TO BE SEVEN YEARS FROM NOW, BUT A PRUNED TREE GROWS A BETTER TREE SO LET'S HOPE THAT NCF IS ABLE TO REINVENT ITSELF."**

The Ottawa Citizen, Monday, March 20, 1995 B5

## CITYLIFE

### Free-Net democracy has 'rough edges'

By Pat Brethour  
Citizen correspondent

On-line democracy in Ottawa could be a model for community computer networks across Canada, says the election returning officer for National Capital Free-Net.

But that model has rough edges that need smoothing, says Garth Graham, who oversaw Free-Net's second annual on-line election this month.

More than 4,000 people cast ballots with computers and modems during the two weeks of on-line debating and voting that ended a week ago.

That is only 10 per cent of Free-Net's 40,000 members. The low turnout isn't a cause for concern,

said Graham. "Some people have said that's horrible. But what do you compare it with?"

Ottawa's Free-Net is the largest and one of the oldest community computer networks in the country. Few, if any, other networks have developed to the point of holding on-line elections and annual meetings.

Graham said he's more concerned about the silence of the nine incumbent board members in the two weeks of on-line debates.

"That's an area of this on-line democracy that needs some work."

That work has already started, said Lisa Donnelly, Free-Net's executive director. The board will decide Tuesday whether to set up a

rotating schedule that would oblige directors to monitor and respond to members' comments.

Adjusting to the "more raw and intense" nature of electronic political debate is the real challenge, she added.

Three measures approved at a February board meeting are intended to ease access to the crowded Free-Net system:

- rationing users to two hours of computer time each day.
- introducing an express lane that will allow users to access their electronic mail for 10 minutes.
- requiring proof of identification for new users, so that more than one account is not issued to the same person.

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\$2.78  
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## CHAPTER FOUR TRANSITIONS

By the year 2000, NCF had taken steps to survive the Y2K crash that never came, but was losing members to commercial Internet Service Providers.

The new standard in dial-up access at the time was 56 kbps and NCF struggled with whether we should take the step or not. The largest impediment was the cost of upgrading telephone lines from analogue to digital.

Chris Cope, then Executive Director, wanted NCF to phase out text-only browsing and move everything to web-based services. Otherwise, he feared NCF members would be left on the wrong side of the growing digital divide.

"There wasn't general understanding of what might happen in the world as the internet was becoming a reality in our lives. So we missed that change," he remembers.

In 2001, revitalized by member donations, corporate sponsorships, and a large multi-year government grant called Smart Capital, FreeNet launched locally-hosted email and software on an early version of the cloud.

**"THE IDEA OF BEING ESSENTIALLY A LOCAL PORTAL HAD BEGUN TO LOSE SOME OF ITS CURRENCY...THERE WERE SOME TIMES WHEN JUST MAKING IT THROUGH WAS THE REWARD."**

**GARY EIKENBERRY (aa353)**

# The evolution of FreeNet

What began as a communications incubator has now become even more of a valuable tool for members. **Marlene Orton explains.**

This year, when Ottawa's FreeNet had its summer picnic, Bill Lusby of Maryland headed up north as he occasionally does, bringing a huge pot of his homemade beans and some great stories to share with his Canadian e-mail pals.

Mr. Lusby is actually one of hundreds of American and international members of National Capital FreeNet, the city's earliest Internet service, which began in 1991 at Carleton University as a communications incubator.

The service was put into operation a year later when the World Wide Web was barely out of the nursery, as FreeNet president Christopher Cope puts it. FreeNet served 35,000 members at its peak. Today about 8,000 members are active, although some 80,000 have come and gone, dropping off to join commercial Internet Service Providers.

Now a partner with OCRI and part of SmartCapital, National Capital FreeNet (NCF) symbolizes the altruistic spirit that binds Ottawa's high-tech community, bringing business, education and government together in so many community projects. FreeNet may not have big bandwidth, but it's got big



ROD MACIVOR, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

FreeNet systems administrator André Dalle, left, and president Christopher Cope are busy working on a couple of new projects that will enhance member services.

As an incubator, FreeNet is still a comparatively slow system, running on modems mainly at 28.8 Kb in the huge pack of 169 modems still in its site at Carleton University on the fourth floor of the Administration Building. Even its location — a fully sealed, air-conditioned

identity to get an account so there is always a trace. The product we will offer and make available to places like Millennium Learning Centres and Community Access Sites will continue to adhere to that. So you won't be able to get a FreeNet mail account unless

changed over the years from the early users who were primarily young, university-educated males. The biggest chunk of membership is in the 28-35 age range with 55 per cent being male. The number of seniors is small but starting to grow, owing mainly to SmartSite activity in senior centres.

also a place we think the Web-Mail will be an interesting tool because it will make it that much more convenient to access their own personal account from another machine." FreeNet asks for \$60 a year as a donation but donors will contribute \$100 or \$200 to cap significant gifts of products and

ment. They donated a \$10,000 server two years ago. And that's not unusual." (Rebel.com has since gone into receivership.) What has also helped FreeNet stay alive are community projects that were eligible for public funding such as the VolNet, a delivery service to volunteer groups, financed by



**National Capital FreeNet**  
**The Smart Way to Get Connected.**

National Capital FreeNet, Ottawa's donation-based Internet service, just got a whole lot more powerful, thanks to support from SmartCapital. Now FreeNet users can access Web and email services plus iDesk — Web-based access to powerful software including tools from Corel and Microsoft!

So what are you waiting for?  
 Get connected today.

Visit National Capital FreeNet today  
[www.ncf.ca](http://www.ncf.ca)

**Sm@rtCapital**  
 Building the World's Most Connected City

**OCRI**

OTTAWA CITIZEN

“Smart Capital was huge,” says André Dalle, Systems Administrator then and now. “We would have been dead without it.”

The work was also trumpeted in a full-page article in the Citizen titled “The evolution of FreeNet”.

John Selwyn began as Executive Director toward the end of 2002, after launching local telecom start-up CrossKeys Systems, and growing it to more than \$40M in annual sales.

He wrote that NCF's focus for the coming year should be to “provide members with reliable low-cost dial-up access to basic Internet services, extend the range of NCF's services to members and the community, and to organize help for people new to using the Internet.”

He did this by making the switch to digital lines and 56kb modems, adding more lines, and launching a new website with e-commerce applications, so that members could donate online. Membership started to increase again.

A year later, the Citizen published what it called “Selwyn's mandate: arrest the slide at the original Net community”. The article concluded that, “in many ways, Selwyn is the ideal man for the job. He has a deep understanding of the technologies and an abiding faith that what he is doing will make Ottawa a better place.”

The air conditioning in the cramped, fourth-floor room in Carleton University's Dunton Tower cut out hours ago. A solicitous John Selwyn suggests we meet somewhere upstairs instead.

The executive director of the National Capital FreeNet has changed little in demeanor or appearance since the late 1990s, when he was running Kanata-based CrossKeys Systems, a hotshot telecom software startup that made him, briefly, a paper millionaire.

Selwyn launched CrossKeys in 1992; seven years later it employed nearly 300 and was generating annual sales of \$44 million. He stepped down as CEO in 1999, then left for a sabbatical in New Zealand — the home country of his wife. By the time Selwyn and his family returned to Ottawa in the spring of 2002, CrossKeys had disappeared.

Selwyn's company had begun losing money in 1999, but by 2001 CrossKeys was hemorrhaging. CrossKeys was acquired that year by U.K.-based Orchestream, which promptly ran into financial difficulties of its own. Orchestream was sold for a relative pittance late last year to MetaSolv, a Texas-based competitor.

The Kanata headquarters that once housed a thriving network of CrossKeys engineers today sits nearly empty.

“It rips my heart out to see what's happened,” says Selwyn, whose attachment to his former startup is obvious. He still keeps uses a CrossKeys day-timer and wears a T-shirt with his company's logo. His fondest memories are of the startup's earliest days.

“Crosskeys was built from an engineer's point of view,” says Selwyn. “It was neat when we were starting from scratch and had to scrounge for equipment and chairs.”

Which perhaps explains why he seems so at peace with things on Carleton University's campus. Selwyn's role as NCF executive director — which he took on a year ago this month — compels him to be a champion scrounger.

Selwyn is in charge of one of the country's oddest Internet service providers — a not-for-profit organization that relies on volunteers, federal grants and corporate sponsors to oper-

## SELWYN'S MANDATE: Arrest the slide at the original Net community

ate and pay for equipment. In addition, subscribers are encouraged to donate \$5 monthly to cover telecommunications fees and other expenses. But NCF will also provide free Internet access to those who can't afford it.

Despite the low entry cost, NCF has been losing members steadily. There are about 7,000 now — compared to a peak of 35,000 in 1996. On the surface, the decline is easy to explain. The NCF was launched in 1991 with a view to introducing people to the Internet. By the mid-1990s, hundreds of commercial Internet service providers had sprung up, offering instant Web access through attractive monthly packages.

Selwyn is certainly aware of the perception that NCF is an anachronism. “FreeNet's reputation is that it's out of date,” he says. “Some people even ask me if it still exists.”

However, Selwyn contends NCF still has an important role to play — not least because its infrastructure, far from sliding into obsolescence, has just undergone a significant makeover.

Until July, NCF's system had been anchored by a bank of 200 modems operating at a comparatively slow 33 kilobits per second. Thanks in part to special funding provided by Industry Canada, NCF recently upgraded its system from analog to digital, which means the vast majority of its lines now operate at 56 kilobits per second.

NCF is also able to offer its members reasonably sophisticated e-mail, along with thin-client software such as word processing programs.

“This is still a modern Internet services provider,” says Selwyn.

Selwyn is careful not to call it state-

of-the-art. NCF keeps expenses down by deliberately staying two or three years behind the technology curve.

It's a tricky balancing act. NCF has to keep close enough to the edge to avoid being considered stodgy, yet far enough away to avoid providing a direct challenge to commercial Internet service providers such as Magma Communications or Sympatico.

NCF reckons the ideal membership total should be somewhere between 12,000 and 20,000 — suggesting the organization needs to double or triple the number of users.

The key to the NCF's health is the level of donations, which last year reached \$162,400 — up marginally from the year before.

In the first six months of 2003, though, donations slipped about four per cent to \$78,240 compared to the same period in 2002. The decline stems from two rather surprising developments — one good, the other, not so good.

On the plus side, new members are contributing considerably more than NCF budgeted for in the first half of 2003. Unfortunately, those renewing their membership donated much less than expected.

The latter trend may be due to existing members being less than impressed with the level of service during the first half. If that's true, Selwyn is hopeful that this pattern will reverse itself quickly once word spreads of NCF's physical upgrades.

But Selwyn wants to do more than create a vehicle for introducing low-income people to the Internet. He would like to see NCF serve as a genuine community of interests focused on Ottawa. “As the web took over, it became more and more global,” he says. “But where's the local content?”

NCF.ca offers myriad links to Ottawa websites, news groups and chat rooms. It's also guided by an almost quaint paternalism — members must certify they are who they say there; if anyone seriously disrupts a chat group or exhibits inappropriate behaviour, NCF's administrators or chat group moderators will take action. “They have the power to cut them off,” says Selwyn.

In many ways, Selwyn is the ideal man for the job. He has a deep understanding of the technologies and an abiding faith that what he is doing will make Ottawa a better place.

He is also a family man, swearing off startups at least until his young children are in high school. “Running a public company is exhilarating,” he says, “but it's all-consuming as well.”

His battle to reverse the slide of NCF's membership rolls may prove to be the same.

James Bagnall can be reached at [jbagnall@thecitizen.canwest.com](mailto:jbagnall@thecitizen.canwest.com)

Long-time volunteer Jim Elder, who helped build the new website, agrees.

"I'm pretty sure I would have drifted away in the late 1990s had I not been called upon...as part of John Selwyn's rejuvenating presence and the Smart Capital project."

The two were then heralded for their work developing a custom spam filter for NCF email users. In a Citizen article titled "A colour-coded answer for FreeNet", they noted that 600 new members signed up in the three months after the new tool was developed.

Then in 2005, John oversaw one of NCF's biggest transitions to date: adding 3mbps high-speed DSL service in addition to dial-up.

In an email to members announcing the change, he wrote "I wish that more members knew that NCF is an alternative to commercial internet suppliers, because more people would make NCF better (and less expensive) for everyone."

**" I THINK FREENET'S UNCONVENTIONAL ORGANIZATIONAL MODEL SURVIVED AS LONG AS IT DID, BECAUSE IT WAS POSSIBLE, IN OTTAWA, TO FIND TALENTED, EXPERIENCED, GENEROUS TECH PEOPLE. OPENNESS AND TRANSPARENCY TAKES STRENGTH AND HONESTY, AND JOHN SELWYN, WHO SERVED AS FREENET'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR IN THE MID-2000s, HAS THOSE TRAITS IN SPADES. HE'S NOTABLE FOR BRINGING DSL TO FREENET, SPEAKING ON PARLIAMENT HILL DURING A RALLY FOR NET NEUTRALITY, AND FOR HIS SIMPLE YET INNOVATIVE WAY OF SOLVING RESOURCE-SHARING ISSUES."**

**JIM ELDER (aa456)**

# A colour-coded answer for FreeNet

## When looking for spam solution, developers focused on human angle

BY KEITH WOOLHOUSE

The last few years have not been good ones for National Capital FreeNet. The number of subscribers has fallen 70 per cent from 30,000 to 9,000. The departed may remember FreeNet for darkened monitors and grainy coding, a jumbled string of letters and numbers, meaningless to all but the most knowledgeable, which flitted across their screens as they fumbled their way across the nascent Internet.

It was a painful and, very often, unsuccessful exploration, largely because actually getting a connection was in itself an exercise in futility. Still, there were always those able to recount a previous night's trolling when they hooked up online with someone in California or accessed a book in a library in South America. Was it true? Who cared! The stories stirred the imagination with a whiff of excitement that seagoing explorers likely felt when a sliver of land appeared on the horizon. Then along came a slew of commercial Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and Windows — graphics, graphics, graphics — and FreeNet fell off the map.

Now, spurred by a spam filter that lives up to its advance billing, a National Capital FreeNet duo is trying to restore to health Ottawa's first Internet medium.

Most of those who have tried to stem the flood of spam have looked at it as a technology problem, says Jim Elder of the NCF development team. That is true to a point. But he saw it as more of a human interface problem. "For me, e-mail is like living in a house where anybody in any part of the world can just walk in, sit down and start talking. That might be fun — it would be fun to have some people come in uninvited — but it could get out of control," says Mr. Elder, explaining the approach he took when he set out to produce the ultimate spam blocker. And with e-mail it is out of control with all the advertising and promotional stuff, and if people like that were coming to your house, it would be very annoying.

"The way we deal with that in every aspect of our lives is that we let people in if they're invited. So I thought we should flip that paradigm around for the mailbox. Rather than just letting anyone send mail, why

don't we just start off by stipulating that only locals can send e-mail to me. I looked at where the spam was coming from and none of it is coming from Ottawa. So, as far as I was concerned, all one million people in Ottawa, plus everyone I specify, have access to my inbox. But no one else gets in."

And so was born the NCF's green, yellow and red lists. That simple idea took Mr. Elder one week last fall to ascertain if it would work, and then another two months to make it function.

This is how it works: On the 'For me, e-mail is like living in a house where anybody in any part of the world can just walk in, sit down and start talking.'

JIM ELDER  
NCF development team

green list he included the names of his friends and colleagues from whom he wanted to receive mail, plus the names of regional ISPs such as Cybersurf, Magma, Sympatico, Rogers, Bellnet and others. "Canadians aren't the ones sending spam so it's fair to assume that any message that comes from one of those ISPs is from someone I know," says Mr. Elder. Working on the example of

the visitors to his home, the mail that reaches his inbox is always mail he has invited in.

But couldn't that cause him to lose mail sent from long-lost friends or from colleagues sending from out of the country?

That could happen were it not for the yellow list. Mail that is considered legitimate but arrives from a new or unknown e-mail address is directed onto the yellow list. Some, or all of it, might be spam. But what isn't spam can be redirected with one click of the mouse to the green list and, thereafter, all mail coming from that address will automatically be placed there.

The red list will unquestionably be 100-per-cent spam.

Working in the background with Mr. Elder's NCF Spam-Filter is SpamAssassin, an open-source software program that controls e-mail by adjusting a cutoff value to determine whether or not a particular message should be blocked. But SpamAssassin is by no means perfect. Adjusting the filter to be overly aggressive will eliminate more spam, but it also traps legitimate e-mail.

But together the two anti-spam programs work.

"For a new user it takes a few weeks to get this running perfectly," says NCF executive director John Selwyn. "In the first couple of weeks a new user will



John Selwyn, executive director of National Capital FreeNet, and spam-filter developer Jim Elder hope the filter system will help rebuild the service provider into the popular community it used to be.

have to set up their green list. But that's no big deal. It just means clicking on those e-mails that find their way into the yellow mailbox and establishing that from now on, e-mails from that address should be placed in the green mailbox. Once a user has done that for a few weeks, the green list is well established."

The outcome is a pure feed of e-mail on the green list that users know is good and that, more importantly, they want. And a secondary feed of mail on the yellow list that is questionable, but that can be occa-

sionally looked at.

For Mr. Selwyn and Mr. Elder, resurrecting the National Capital FreeNet has become a personal crusade. "The NCF was the very first means for many to access the Internet," points out Mr. Selwyn, who has held executive positions with CrossKeys Systems, Domus and Gandalf.

"It was a hugely popular and really alive place as far as communities go. Everyone who was interested in new technology and the Internet could try it out.

See NCF on PAGE G8

G8 THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

THURSDAY, MARCH 11, 2004

## HIGH TECH

### NCF: 'It's been a battle of technologies' against spammers

Continued from PAGE G6

"They could try e-mail, discussion groups, newsgroups, or post their own information. It was a very cool space."

The NCF was built as an experimental network and staffed by volunteers, who used donated equipment that was jerry-rigged together. "It was almost a joke at times," he says. It could take 30 attempts in the early days to get on line. Some never got online.

The two men joined forces in 2002 and with a \$300,000 grant from Industry Canada's Smart-Capital set out to rejuvenate the FreeNet.

"This is a good thing for Ottawa," asserts Mr. Elder. "There was a sense of community that was lost when we went from the Internet to the World Wide Web and everyone disap-

peared. That sense of community was so tangible in the early days, and that's when we wondered what we could do to help rejuvenate the NCF. We see it as a means to help create vibrant communities in Ottawa or take existing communities and help make them more vibrant through some good working tools."

There was little question that to achieve this meant revamping the e-mail system and eradicating spam.

"That's the most important of the Internet applications," agrees Mr. Selwyn. "With e-mail the clear threat was spam. Not only is too much of it garbage, but it has become fairly pernicious. It's stuff that I don't want to see, and I certainly don't my children to see. There are lots of people out there trying to win the battle,

and, no doubt, it's been a battle of technologies where one makes an advance that gets quickly overtaken by the spammers."

About 600 e-mail subscribers have signed on since NCF launched its service three months ago.

How good is it? André Vellino, who was on the verge of cancelling his NCF subscription, is full of praise. "NCF may well have found the silver bullet that slays the vampire of spam," he enthuses. "Like many ground-breaking inventions it is a simple, almost obvious idea. The mail from people I know or the mail I want to read goes onto my green list. If I don't know the sender it goes onto the yellow list, my holding tank, which I can look at whenever I feel like it. The obvious advertisement and spam

stuff goes straight onto the red list, and I never have to look at it."

Those who remember FreeNet only for its murky image should revisit its new look.

It is clean, crisp and highly professional.

It would be strange if the thousands who defected from the National Capital FreeNet over the years returned be-

cause the e-mail freedom they found with commercial providers was too much to take.

Some things don't change, though. The NCF is still dependent on its members' donations, a suggested fee of \$5 per month. Subscribers can sign on at www.ncf.ca.

## ALGONQUIN COLLEGE

Wired FOR EDUCATION



John Selwyn spoke at a Net Neutrality Rally on Parliament Hill in 2008. He was joined by a handful of FreeNet staff and volunteers.



From the beginning, there were no contracts and the service was priced to be as affordable as possible, while still being sustainable.

The growing number of staff meant NCF made its first move from Carleton's Dunton Tower, where it had been since the beginning, to the Trailhead building on Scott Street.

And just as our technology and office space was changing, so were political conditions. In 2007, Selwyn and a number of other NCF staff and volunteers attended a net neutrality rally on Parliament Hill. It sought to preserve the rules that protected the equal treatment of internet traffic.

DSL member growth continued over the next few years, through the tenure of Rowland Few, the next Executive Director, and there was even a brief resurgence in dial-up users as commercial ISPs stopped offering the service. Speeds jumped to 6mbps.

By 2011, NCF had more than 4000 active dial-up users, more than 2500 high-speed DSL subscribers, and a few thousand members who relied on the service for their email addresses.

And yet, there were issues. Ross Kouhi faced more than a few when he became Executive Director in late 2011.

**“IN TECH YOU CAN BE VERY ISOLATED, WORKING IN THIS HERMETICALLY-SEALED ENVIRONMENT. THE THING ABOUT NCF IS YOU GET TO MEET REAL PEOPLE. IT’S LIKE TECHNOLOGY ACHIEVING A GOOD SOCIAL END RATHER THAN TECHNOLOGY FOR THE SAKE OF TECHNOLOGY.”**  
**NICK OUZAS (fx167)**

“Just before I joined, I was shocked to see that things weren’t looking very good. The reserves were almost depleted and they weren’t going to keep NCF going much longer unless someone made some dramatic changes,” he remembers.

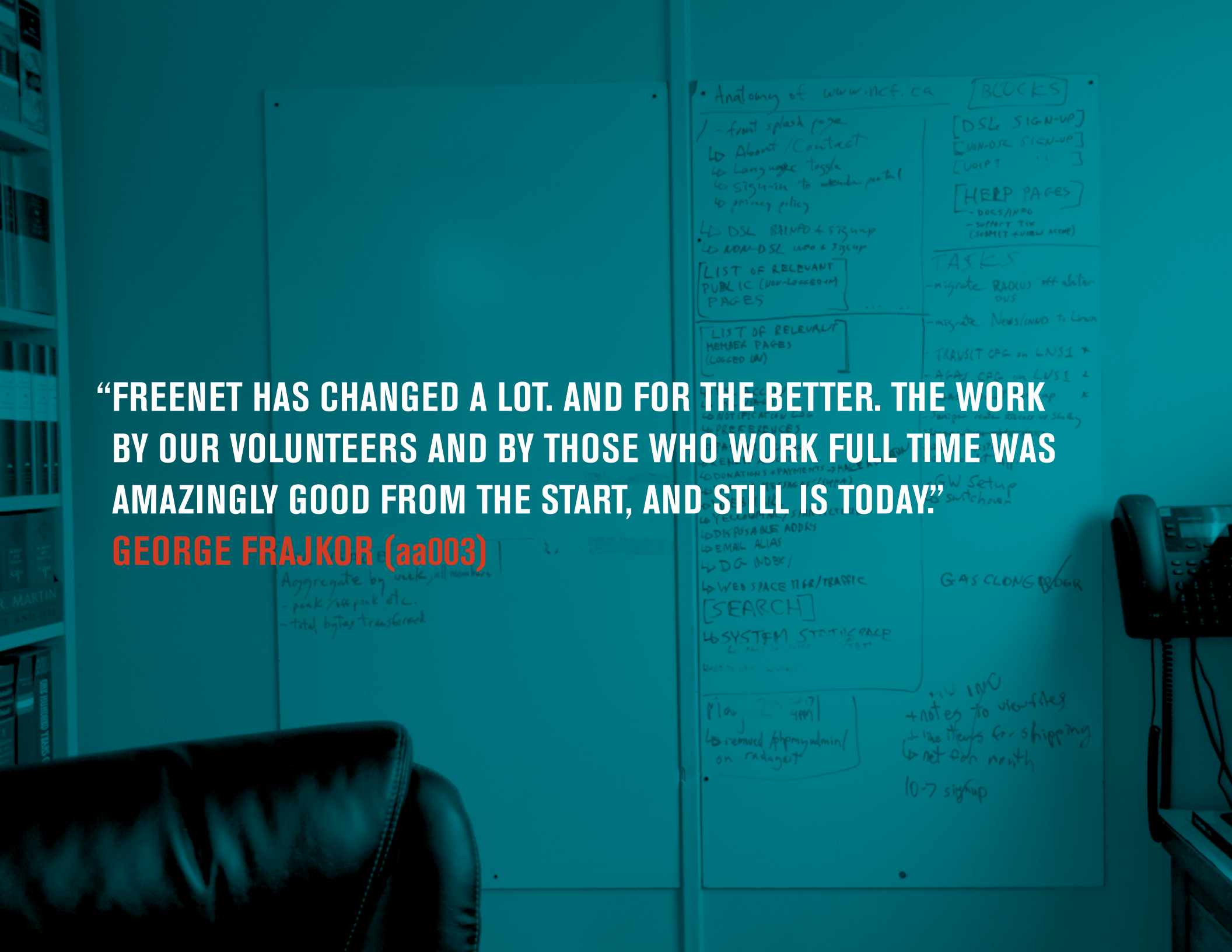
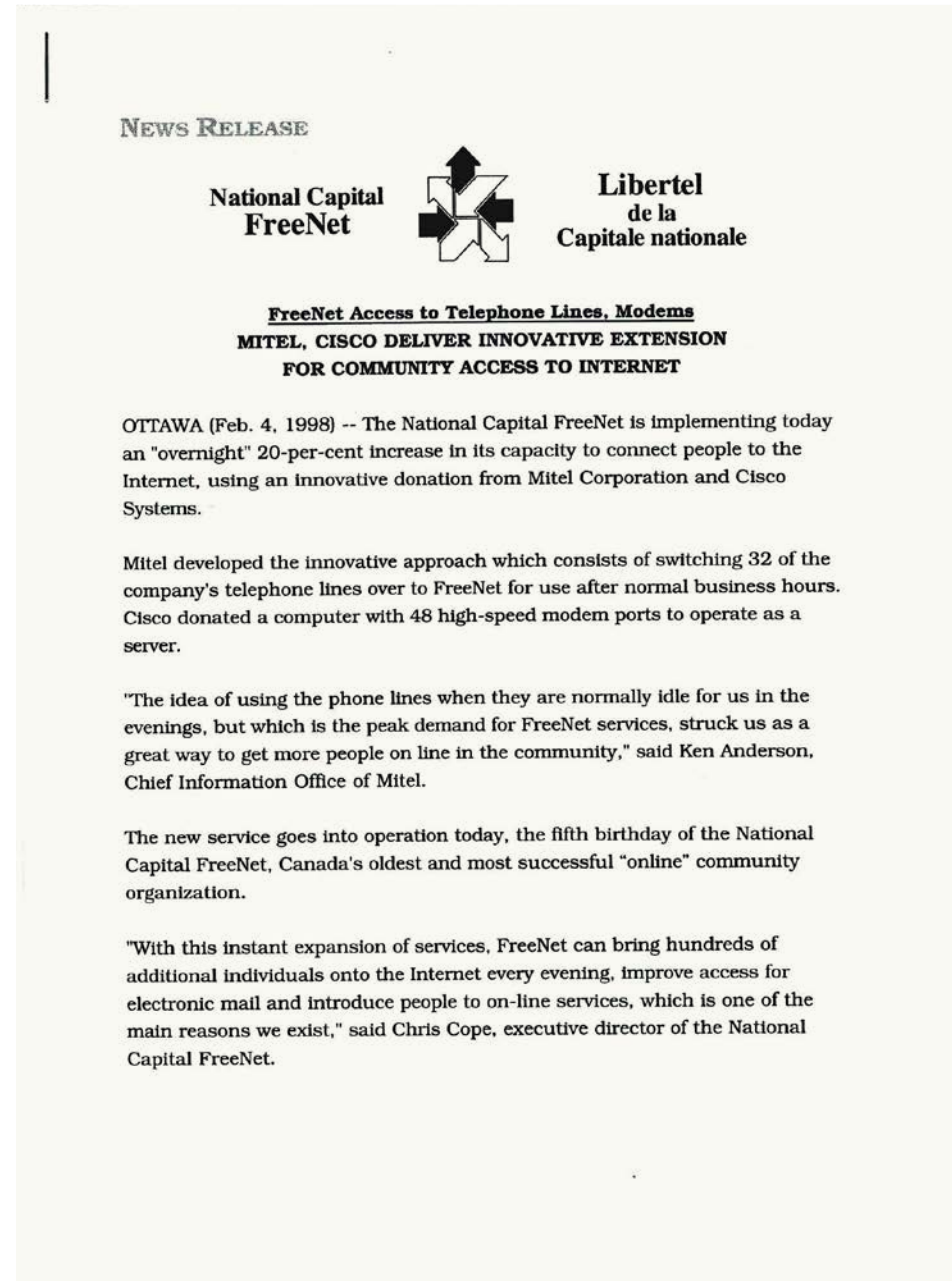
In a move to make the organization more sustainable and technologically independent, Kouhi undertook moving from TekSavvy to Bell as NCF’s wholesale DSL provider. This required investing in 1GB routers to handle internet traffic directly, and dealing more directly with line quality issues on the HelpDesk.

Meanwhile, an office in the eaves of the giant wood chalet at Trailhead was charming, but limited the number of staff and volunteers. So Kouhi also started the move west to NCF’s current location on Richmond Road.

Mike Kelly, Board Chair at the time, agreed that the organization needed room to grow.

“Sitting around the board table we recognized there is a lot of benefit to having higher membership levels because it means staff levels can increase... we reduce the risk of being such a small organization.”

Executive Director Nick Ouzas oversaw the actual office move in 2013. At that time, NCF also began offering speeds up to 15mbps. Dial-up use was on a steep decline, and Nick offered a 2mbps speed plan for those who wanted to transition to higher speeds.



“FREENET HAS CHANGED A LOT. AND FOR THE BETTER. THE WORK BY OUR VOLUNTEERS AND BY THOSE WHO WORK FULL TIME WAS AMAZINGLY GOOD FROM THE START, AND STILL IS TODAY.”

GEORGE FRAJKOR (aa003)

Nick also lived through another major transition: the rise of online video and the corresponding rise in usage.

"I left at the end of October 2013 and came back in May 2014, and in the intervening period, the amount of traffic increased dramatically. The main driver was the switch from traditional web browsing to video streaming," he said.

"We had to negotiate with Bell to get a better deal and get the facilities installed. We ended up doing it in the middle of the day because that's when you get a lull in traffic. The difference in how well everything started to work was night and day. We got twice as much capacity for less than we were paying before."

This change helped set the stage for speeds up to 50mbps in 2014.

One of the biggest challenges NCF faces these days is people saying 'I thought you died in the nineties!' Getting back up to speed (literally) throughout the 2000s helped us climb back into the hearts, minds, and laptops of people across the region.

**"THE PROGRESS THAT I SAW OVER  
THE COURSE OF THOSE FIVE YEARS:  
WE IMPROVED THEM"  
MIKE KELLY (fm342)**

### NCF Message of the Month (September 2005)

#### DSL from NCF is now ready! (2005-Sep-17)

Pour une copie française de ce texte, S.V.P. en faire la demande électronique à: [office@ncf.ca](mailto:office@ncf.ca)

Dear NCF members,

I'm very pleased to announce that residents of the National Capital region now have a not-for-profit alternative to commercial DSL providers.

NCF's high-speed DSL internet access has a couple of advantages over our existing dial-up access:

1. DSL does not block your telephone calls (you can make or receive phone calls any time, even while using the internet)
2. DSL is fast, up to 3Mb/sec, about 60 times faster than 56Kb/sec dial-up
3. With DSL, you can be connected all day, it doesn't matter -- the circuit is dedicated to you
4. You can connect multiple computers, using a home network (wired or wireless).

The DSL offered by NCF is provided by Bellnexxia, the company that provides all DSL in Ontario and Quebec -- so NCF's DSL is the same as that provided by others, eg., Sympatico (but without the marketing costs, etc).

As a not-for-profit member-owned organization, NCF can offer DSL at the best rates in town, at \$29.95 per month. Members interested in DSL will also need a DSL modem and line filter. If you don't own one already, NCF can supply members with a high quality DSL modem-router for \$100 and a line filter for \$5. Families/households with many NCF members can be served by one DSL connection (one DSL member and the others as regular NCF members).

You can learn more about DSL and, if you like, sign up, by going to <http://www.ncf.ca/ncf/registration/dsl>

Now NCF members have two choices of internet access: traditional dial-up at up to 56Kb/s, or DSL at up to 3Mb/s.

I am proud of the services that the NCF team has brought to the nation's capital. I wish more people knew that NCF is a not-for-profit alternative to commercial internet suppliers, because more members would make NCF better (and less expensive) for everyone. We have placed posters about NCF in branches of the Ottawa Public Library and around the campus at Carleton and Ottawa University. Here's what our latest poster looks like: <http://web.ncf.ca/xx174/poster2005.png>. If you would like to post some locally, give me a call at 520-2600 ext 8371.

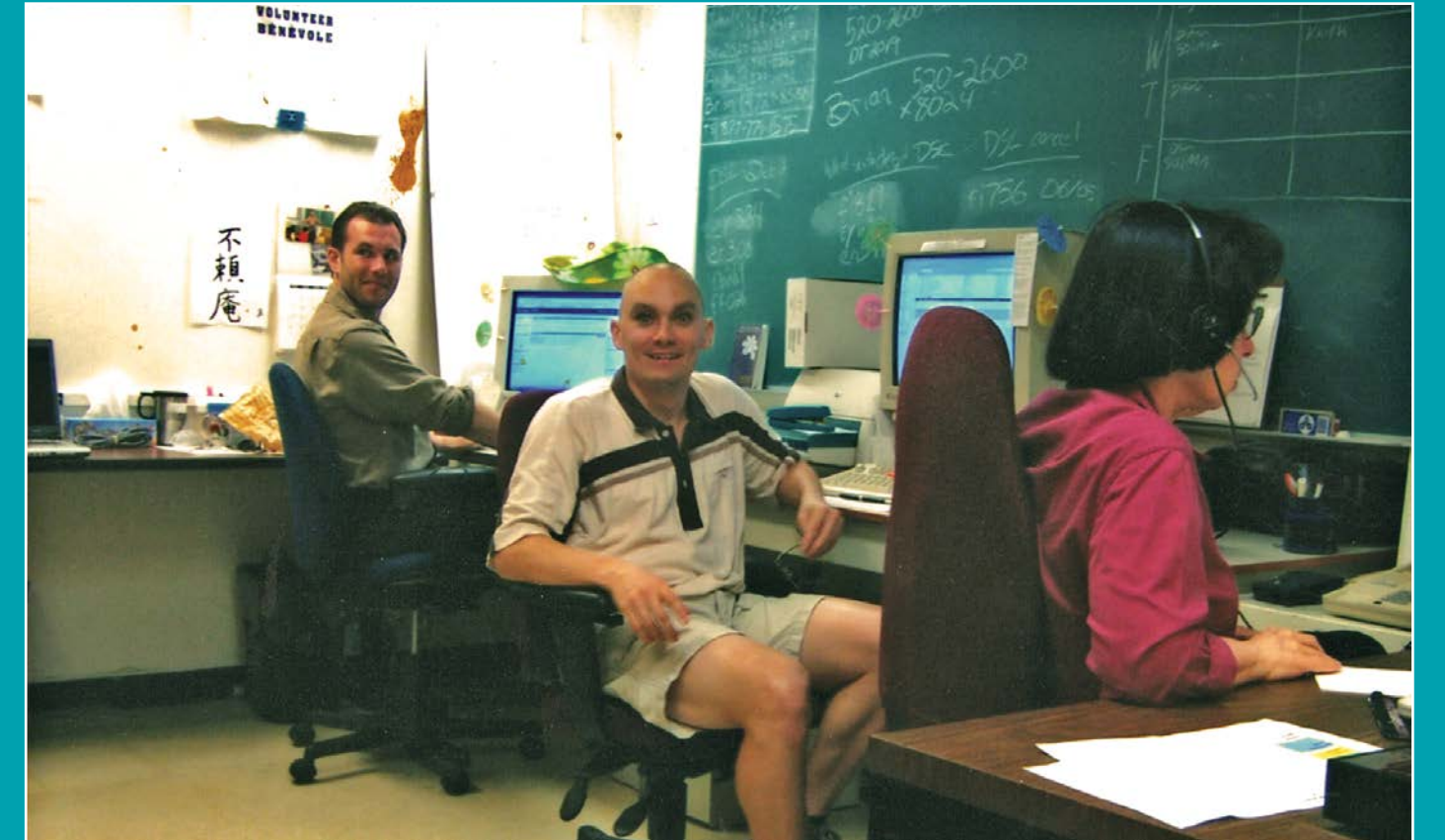
NCF helps make our region a better place to live. Please tell your friends about NCF.

For DSL, check the web page at <http://www.ncf.ca/ncf/registration/dsl> and give us a call at the NCF office if you have any questions, at 520-5777.

Cheers,

John

John Selwyn  
Executive Director  
NCF Internet  
520-2600 ext 8371



Office volunteers Brian Shouldice (ew361), Daniel Brousseau (fh511) and Lyn Shouldice (ah940)

**“AN OLDER FELLOW CAME IN WHO HAD BEEN REALLY ANNOYED WITH SPAM. HE WOULD TRY A HUMAN APPROACH, LIKE TRYING TO CONTACT THE PEOPLE SENDING HIM SPAM AND TELLING THEM HE DIDN'T WANT ANY MORE OF THEIR MESSAGES. IT GOT SO UNMANAGEABLE THAT HE DEMANDED HE GET A DIFFERENT EMAIL ADDRESS.**

**HE CAME IN ONE DAY WITH A BIG STACK OF PAPER AND HE SAYS ‘THE SPAM STOPPED ON THE ACCOUNT BUT I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE A GOOD IDEA IF I SENT EMAILS TO THE PEOPLE SENDING ME SPAM AND TELL THEM THAT I GOT A NEW EMAIL ADDRESS SO THEY DON'T START SENDING ME SPAM AT THIS ONE.’ I EXPLAINED THAT HE CAN'T HAVE ANY CONTACT WITH THE SPAMMERS AT ALL, AND WE TAUGHT HIM HOW TO USE THE SPAM FILTER”**

**ROSS KOUHI (ah455)**



# CHAPTER FIVE

## COMMUNITY CONNECTION



**Andrée Boucher** Best support staff ever! ai151

Like · Reply · 5 · August 2 at 6:33am



**Andrée Boucher** Whenever there was a problem, which was rare, the staff and volunteers did not quit or lose patience until it was solved 😊

Like · Reply · 1 · August 3 at 1:54pm

While I was working on this chapter, a woman came into the NCF office. She was noticeably upset about her modem not working. One of our summer HelpDesk Analysts invited her in, made her feel at home and even put her ice cream in our freezer while she toiled away on the hardware.

In less than 10 minutes, the problem was solved, and the member left with a smile on her face. “You guys saved my life today!”



This is what National Capital FreeNet has been doing for decades. FreeNet was built on the idea that with us, you're not a customer, you're a member.

In the papers filed to federally incorporate NCF on September 29, 1992 the Mission and Mandate stated that:

**“NATIONAL CAPITAL FREENET IS A FREE, COMPUTER-BASED INFORMATION SHARING NETWORK. IT LINKS THE PEOPLE AND ORGANIZATIONS OF THIS REGION, PROVIDES USEFUL INFORMATION, AND ENABLES AN OPEN EXCHANGE OF IDEAS WITH THE WORLD.**

**COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT MAKES FREENET AN IMPORTANT AND ACCESSIBLE MEETING PLACE, AND PREPARES PEOPLE FOR FULL PARTICIPATION IN A RAPIDLY CHANGING COMMUNICATIONS ENVIRONMENT.”**

Here's what that means for NCF these days. We believe everyone in the national capital region should have access to the internet. And for us, access means they can afford a high quality connection, understand how to use it, and feel safe online.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 29, 1998

# Freenet continues to be a vital local link

Once a friendly, non-commercial hangout for researchers, academics and nerds, the Internet has long since evolved into a bustling commercial centre, complete with enough flashing signs to make it feel a lot like Disneyland or mainstreet Las Vegas.

The model has been turned on its head. Such is life in the free world.

Five years ago, when the Internet — then largely unknown — started to hit the headlines, commercialism and business were dirty words. Community and co-operation were king, and entrepreneurs were mere specks on the map, often the victims of electronic flames and other nasty comments from the core of puritan users. Today, it's the other way around; big business has seen the opportunities, and has long since taken over.

Still, pockets of friendly, helpful, co-operative activities remain, although today, they are the specks on the commercial Internet landscape.

One of those pockets is our own National Capital Freenet, a local Internet trailblazer that has stayed true to its ideals five years after its birth in 1993.

While the Internet and the world have changed a lot in five years, the NCF has hardly changed at all. It operates with much the same philosophy and mandate — in a nutshell, it's people helping people tap in to all the good things the Internet has to offer, including access to information, communication, community and friendships.

The most important reason the NCF exists is provide access to the Internet to thousands of people who simply wouldn't be able to get it otherwise.

“There's a whole bunch of people out there who need Freenet because it's their only way to get on the Internet,” says Chris Cope, the NCF's executive director.

“They have no other means either because they don't have the money to buy a computer; or they might have a computer at home, but it's modest by today's standards, say a 286, and most (commercial) Internet providers can't support that.”

Mr. Cope oversees the NCF operation from a tiny office at Carleton University. He is one of just three full-time, paid employees. There are hundreds of other people who work for the NCF, but they're all volunteers, pitching in simply because they have a community spirit, believe in the Internet and want to help the freenet and its members.



SEYMOUR DIENER  
INTERNET

While the “suggested” donation is \$50 a year, the average donation is about \$25, which is considerably less than the \$100 to \$350 a year that most consumer pay for commercial services such as Sympatico or AOL.

Fortunately for the NCF, most members do donate. Otherwise, the NCF simply wouldn't stay afloat, for it doesn't take a single penny in handouts from government.

There's some assistance from Carleton, which houses the hardware and supports the network infrastructure, among other things, and a handful of business sponsorships, but the hard operating dollars come from members.

While membership is cheap or free, and members can get access to colour graphics, the overall quality of the Internet access isn't up to par with the commercial services. Modem speeds max out at 28.8 Kbps (commercial providers are also offering 36.6 Kbps and even 56 Kbps connections), and service is rationed to allow as many users as possible to take advantage of the limited resources.

Members are limited to two hours of online time a day, maximum one hour per session. And most lines will allow only limited Internet connections, preventing users from downloading software programs.

Like everything else, you get what you pay for. If members don't like it, and can afford better, they're free to move up to a commercial service. The NCF won't be upset. As long as you're connected, the NCF's operators are happy.

Still other volunteers work on the advisory board; on various committees; handling such issues as Net abuse or spam; or on special projects such as the NCF website.

The NCF was Canada's first community network and remains the largest in the country, and second largest in the world.

As you might have guessed from its name, it's all free to members, although they are encouraged, by friendly persuasion, to make a donation.

The annual budget runs between \$300,000 and \$400,000. Even with a good response from members — 50 per cent make a donation when they first sign up, 70 per cent donate on renewal — every penny has to be watched carefully, and the operators have to be extremely creative to achieve their objectives.

Take the “extended access” setup arranged with Mitel earlier this year that extended the number of lines and quality of service the freenet could offer its members.

It works like this: When the lights go out at Mitel and most employees go home for the night or the weekend, 32 Mitel phone lines and Mitel's connection to the Internet becoming accessible to NCF members.

So from 6 p.m. to 8 a.m. weekdays

and throughout the weekend, NCF members can dial up at speeds up to 28.8 Kbps and log on to the Internet through a server donated by Cisco.

“Those (phone) lines are paid for, and the bandwidth is paid for. Apart from the hardware to make it work and some pretty interesting ingenuity by Mitel and Bell Canada to set it up, there's no additional cost.

Another initiative is the upcoming membership drive. Member-Get-A-Member will encourage existing members to take friends by the hand and guide them onto the Internet via the NCF.

An series of easy-install startup disks, an install-a-thon, an online treasure hunt and a prominent promotion with Myers Motors are just a few pieces of the membership drive, which aims to bring 5,000 new users into the NCF family. Achieving that would bring the service to capacity.

“That would be easily handled by existing system, filling in the blanks in the additional capacity we got through the extended access program,” says Mr. Cope.

Of course, if the membership drive is successful, the NCF will once again be scrambling for more hardware, and for more line-sharing partnerships. And just as it has for the past five years, the NCF will continue to help thousands more people get online for the first time, and continue to be an important local onramp on the information superhighway.

“With a flick of a switch, we added 20 per cent to our dialup capacity,” says Mr. Cope. “The neat thing is that it doesn't really cost Mitel anything.”

“We think this extended access scheme is a really winner. We're already talking to three other corporations in the hopes we can get a duplication elsewhere.”

“There's no additional cost.”



# National Capital Freenet

by Sheila C. Alder

Five years ago, a small group of people with a wonderful vision of the future founded the first Canadian freenet. The National Capital FreeNet has grown to become the second largest in the world, after the first in Cleveland, Ohio.

Today, we have registered almost 65,000 members, and still have over 20,000 active users.

The vision of the founders has been maintained, that of free community access to the Internet. We ask for, and encourage, donations as we do have to pay for our phone lines, administration, and internet link, but no one receives lesser treatment if they don't choose to, or can't, donate.

With 51 public access terminals in libraries and other public buildings in the city and surrounding communities, there is no barrier to being part of the NCF. No one need own a computer, and I am pleased to be able to offer homeless people their one permanent address to allow them to stay in touch with family and friends.

**Training is an integral part of being online.**

**Women need to help other women learn.**

I'd like to share with you my personal story of what FreeNet offered me.

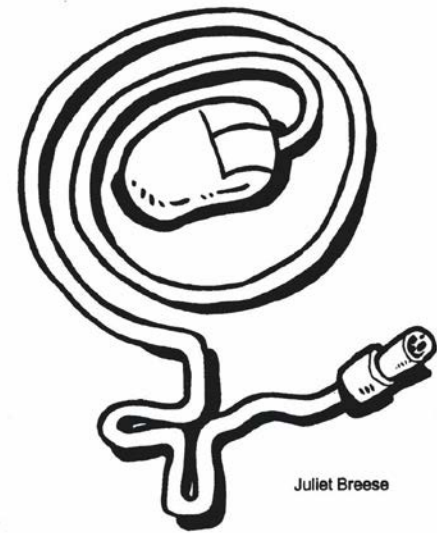
Over two years ago, I was diagnosed with Fibromyalgia. I had never heard of this illness, and the doctor told me to go away and "get educated," then return to decide on my treatment with her. She advised me to enroll in a special class given at a large teaching hospital, but it would be weeks before I could attend. I realized as I was driving home that I didn't even know if this was something terminal — I hadn't even thought to ask her!

As soon as I got home, I checked my 20 year old medical text books, and could find nothing. I then turned to the FreeNet, which I had only begun using a short time before, logged on, and began my search.

Within thirty minutes of entering the word "fibromyalgia," I had the diagnostic criteria (established in 1990), the declaration of this as a real illness by the UN (in 1992), the name of a Usenet newsgroup, and the wonderful news that it is not life threatening.

I opened the newsgroup, read a little, and posted a question. The next day I got several answers, the first of which was from another member of the NCF, welcoming me to the group, and offering assistance and local information, which was sorely lacking in my previous search.

NCF provided me with the information and reassurance I needed so desperately.



Juliet Breese

I have never forgotten how lost I felt when I turned here for help and information. I later established an Information Provider area on the NCF about

**I found information about Fibromyalgia, & started an online support group so no one else would have to feel that lost again.**

Fibromyalgia, and the local support group I founded, so no one else would have to feel that lost again.

Since then, I have been expanding the area as more and more information becomes available. I have been so pleased by the response to this area, as many new members have come to the NCF to get the information provided here. One woman called me last summer, desperate for support. I was

able to have her register as a member, get the information she needed, and receive the online support that was, and continues to be, so important to me.

Training is an important and integral part of being online. Women need to help other women learn.

A man I know who works in technical support was called to Montreal over and over to check the new computer system installed there. The manager was getting reports from one of his female staff that her terminal was losing files. The system was checked again and again, showing nothing wrong. Finally the tech support asked the woman to show him exactly what was happening at her terminal. She pulled out her instructions, and followed them exactly. When it said "Type 'filename' here," she typed 'filename.' The men laughed.

A man from WordPerfect technical support wrote about a call he received. The woman was unable to see anything on the screen of her new computer. He asked her to follow the cords to make sure the monitor was plugged in. She said she couldn't tell, as the power was out due to a storm. He then told her to pack up the computer and take it back to the store. When she asked if it was a serious problem, he answered "Yes. Tell them you're too stupid to own a computer."

No one had taken the time to give these women the basic level of training. Computers have been seen as a part of a "man's world" for too long. I live in Kanata, a small city west of Ottawa, known as Silicon Valley North due to the prevalence of the high tech industry.

The other wives of 'computer wizards' I've encountered here almost universally tell me the same thing — their husbands are too impatient to teach them anything, as they can't 'come down' to the level of the new user. These men have spent their whole lives in the computer world, and can't seem to grasp that those who haven't are not less intelligent or less able, just less experienced. There is a world of difference!

At the NCF, we offer training, free of charge, at various branches of the public libraries in the area. Through both group presentations and one-to-one training sessions, we are trying to ensure our members do not find themselves in these situations, meaning more women members, more disabled members, and more multicultural, including francophone, members.

We are working towards that goal, but we have to deliver the message that the NCF is here, and waiting with open arms to welcome more members.

I was speaking with a bank officer last week, and he asked me what freenet was. When I explained, he asked "Do you really do this for just a donation or free?" I said it was true and he exclaimed, "Then why doesn't everyone join?"

That's my question, too.

**We offer homeless people their one permanent address to allow them to stay in touch with family and friends**

S.C. Alder  
Administrative Coordinator, National Capital FreeNet  
scalders@freenet.carleton.ca  
scalders@freenet.carleton.ca  
National Capital FreeNet:  
<http://www.ncf.carleton.ca/~bw306/>  
Fibromyalgia page:  
<http://www.ncf.carleton.ca/fibromyalgia/>

## TRUE CONNECTION

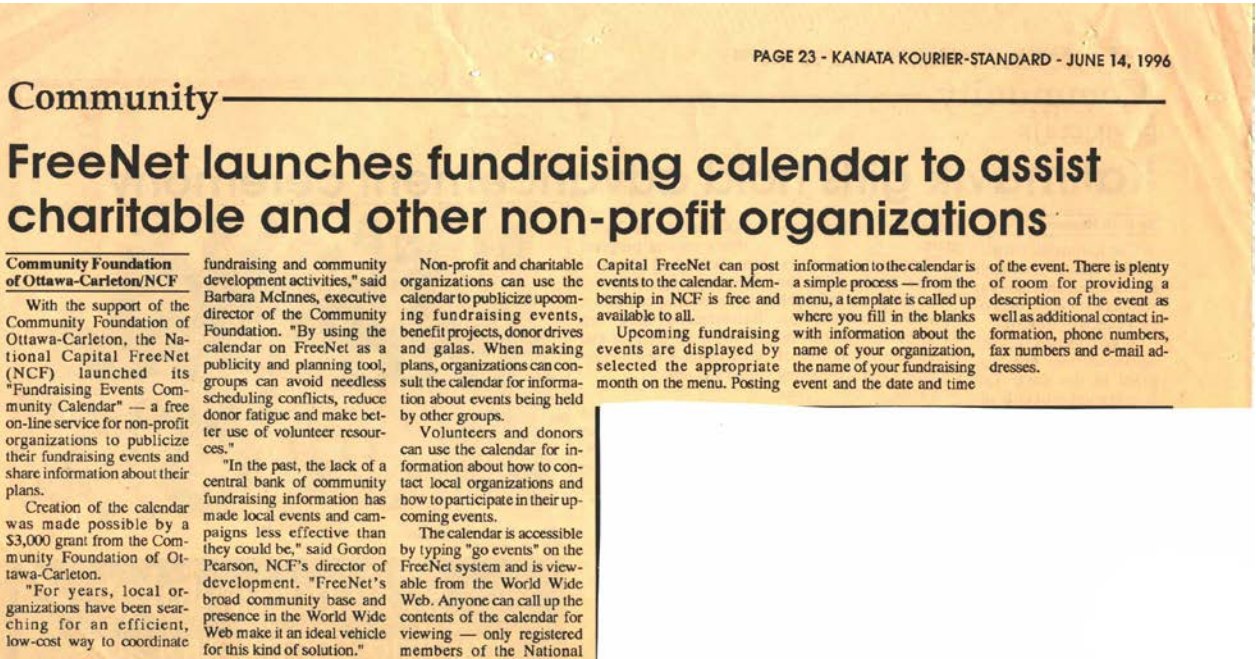
Originally NCF was a community portal, connecting members with each other as much as the outside world. We offered it free of charge for as long as we could, but the 'free' in 'FreeNet' has always meant more.

"Really, it was the concept of free speech, or the ability to freely communicate with others, unfettered," says Chris Cope, former Executive Director and current Chair of the Board of Directors.

Sheila Alder, a former Administrative Coordinator at NCF, discovered this side of FreeNet in 1998 when she used it after her doctor dismissed her health symptoms.

"I found information about Fibromyalgia and started an online support group so no one else would have to feel that lost again."

**“WE’RE ALL ABOUT GIVING PEOPLE THE INTERNET, AND I KNOW A LOT OF PEOPLE ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THAT AS A HUMAN RIGHT SO I LIKE THAT WE’RE PUSHING THAT FORWARD”**  
**JAMES OUZAS (fx447)**



**Community**  
**FreeNet launches fundraising calendar to assist charitable and other non-profit organizations**

**Community Foundation of Ottawa-Carleton/NCF**

With the support of the Community Foundation of Ottawa-Carleton, the National Capital FreeNet (NCF) launched its "Fundraising Events Community Calendar" — a free on-line service for non-profit organizations to publicize their fundraising events and share information about their plans.

Creation of the calendar was made possible by a \$3,000 grant from the Community Foundation of Ottawa-Carleton.

"For years, local organizations have been searching for an efficient, low-cost way to coordinate

fundraising and community development activities," said Barbara McInnes, executive director of the Community Foundation. "By using the calendar on FreeNet as a publicity and planning tool, groups can avoid needless scheduling conflicts, reduce donor fatigue and make better use of volunteer resources."

"In the past, the lack of a central bank of community fundraising information has made local events and campaigns less effective than they could be," said Gordon Pearson, NCF's director of development. "FreeNet's broad community base and presence in the World Wide Web make it an ideal vehicle for this kind of solution."

Non-profit and charitable organizations can use the calendar to publicize upcoming fundraising events, benefit projects, donor drives and galas. When making plans, organizations can consult the calendar for information about events being held by other groups.

Volunteers and donors can use the calendar for information about how to contact local organizations and how to participate in their upcoming events.

The calendar is accessible by typing "go events" on the FreeNet system and is viewable from the World Wide Web. Anyone can call up the contents of the calendar for viewing — only registered members of the National

Capital FreeNet can post events to the calendar. Membership in NCF is free and available to all.

Upcoming fundraising events are displayed by selected the appropriate month on the menu. Posting

information to the calendar is a simple process — from the menu, a template is called up where you fill in the blanks with information about the event, the name of your fundraising event and the date and time

of the event. There is plenty of room for providing a description of the event as well as additional contact information, phone numbers, fax numbers and e-mail addresses.

PAGE 23 - KANATA KOURIER-STANDARD - JUNE 14, 1996

Much of NCF's work throughout the years has made it easier for people and organizations to connect, literally and figuratively.

In 1996, NCF used a grant from the Community Foundation of Ottawa-Carleton to launch an online calendar designed to help charities and other not-for-profits promote their fundraising activities.

Three years later, FreeNet expanded its seniors' workshops to two additional care centres. The 2015 WiseNet program, which offered a series of hands-on digital literacy workshops for seniors, continued this tradition.

"Members loved it," said Shelley Robinson, current NCF Executive Director. "The curriculum was organized by four of our volunteers, who are all seniors themselves. They did these insanely well done hands-on presentations that went from the basics up to pretty sophisticated digital security training."

**"I JUST LIKE THE IDEA OF NCF. I LIKE THE IDEA THAT IT'S A NOT-FOR-PROFIT, THAT ITS GOAL IS REALLY TO HELP PEOPLE GET CONNECTED TO THE INTERNET AND WHEN THEY DEAL WITH US TO FEEL THAT THEY ARE MORE THAN AN ACCOUNT NUMBER, THAT THEY ARE ACTUALLY MEMBERS OF SOMETHING RATHER THAN CUSTOMERS."**  
**DAVE EHMAN (fx479)**



Photo by Denise Fung

**Computer buff, Jules Lafrance, 68, says he has been computer-savvy since the early '80s. Now, he teaches other seniors basic computer skills such as word processing, e-mail and the Internet.**

# Seniors welcome challenge of computers

By Lindsey Parry

## Computers at any age

**The issue:** Seniors and the Internet.

**What's new:** A number of computer courses are now being offered exclusively to local seniors' centres, through the National Capital Freenet.

**What it means:** No matter what age, anyone can learn how to use, and enjoy, the fruits of the World Wide Web.

**What's next:** More courses are to be offered starting this spring.

Some senior citizens avoid computerized banking machines at all costs, opting instead to do their banking through an actual person.

But not everyone over age 60 is intimidated by computers. In fact, many are now welcoming the technology into their homes and activity centres.

Jules Lafrance, 68, says seniors may not have grown up using computers like today's youth, but they have evolved at the same rate as today's technology.

"We're only newcomers to the personal computer," he explains. "(So)

began as a pilot project last August, when the organization advertised at the Kiwanian Alex Dayton Seniors Activity Centre.

pass off the students' lack of knowledge as something else. But they're super, super eager (to learn)."

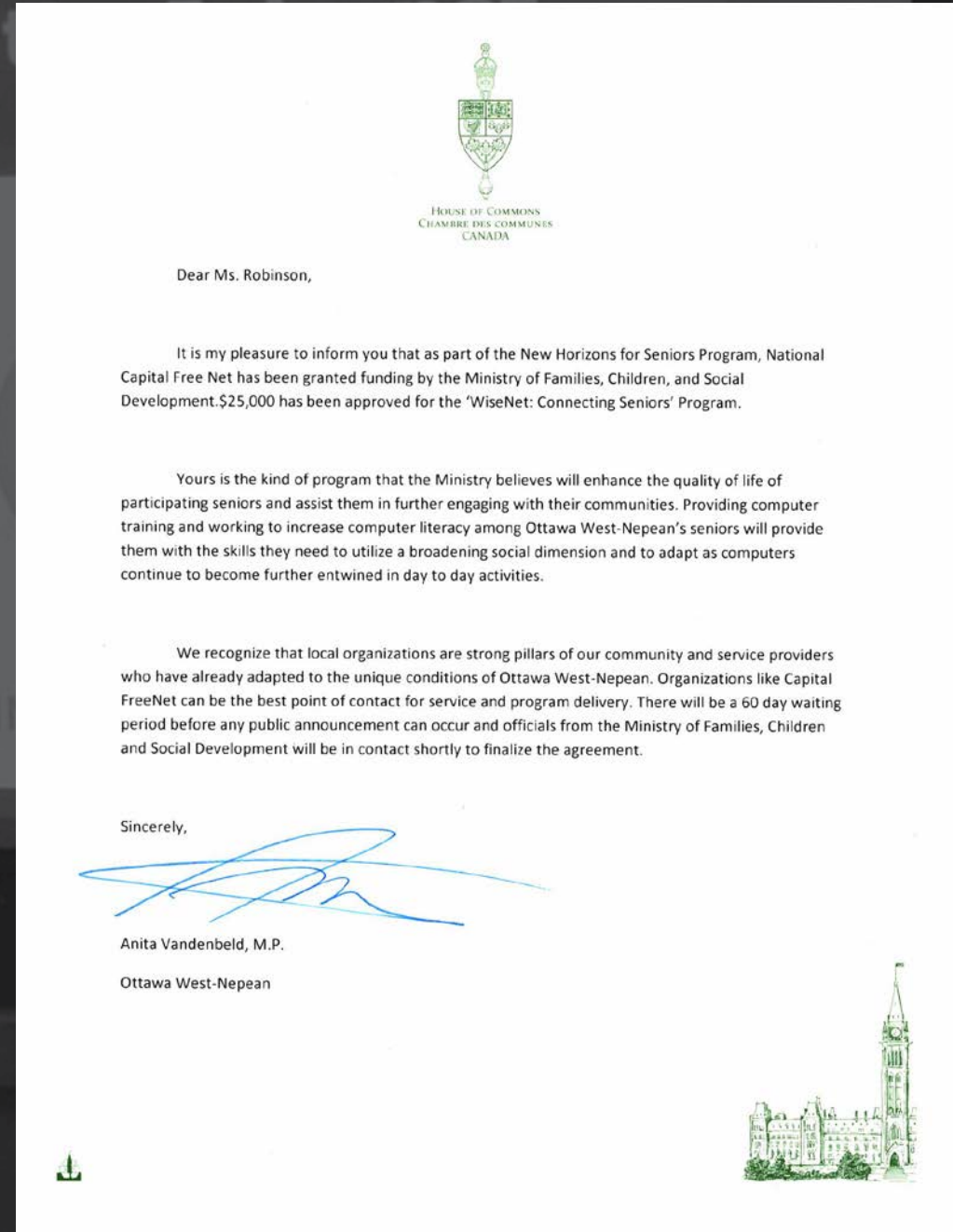
Director Sandra Presley, of the

more about the Internet.

"Some want to communicate with their grandchildren across the country, some want to find and exchange recipes, and others want to look at pictures of the Louvre in Paris," she says. "It's a new and interesting way to communicate that opens up a whole new world."

Jarvis admits that initially the centre was reluctant to offer a computer course. There was some fear that seniors would isolate themselves in their homes if they became too Net-savvy.

"We're a recreational centre, and it's hard to be social when you're on the Internet," she says. "But now, we've



THE INTERNET

A HELPFUL VENUE

Chris Taylor, OPCUG President, giving a social media workshop



Shelley went on to list two new projects that tackle community connection and the digital divide that limits it.

A recent Ontario Trillium Foundation grant is funding NCF's *Low Income Services Handbook* and accompanying workshops to help those living on low incomes apply online for government subsidies. NCF is partnering with the Ottawa branch of the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) for the work.

"The desire to give better access to people doesn't just exist in the mission statement," says Adam Godlewski, one of two summer students who is producing the book. "It also exists in practice."

And coming in 2018, NCF is thrilled to launch Digital Access Day, in partnership with local tech charity CompuCorps, and the Internet Society Canada Chapter. The work is funded by the Canadian Internet Registration Authority.

Digital Access Day will expand the national conversation about the digital divide in Canada, showcase the work already being done to bring digital access to those who need it most, measure progress, and chart the way forward.

"We've been working on these issues for twenty-five years," Shelley said. "We have a lot to bring to a broader discussion. But we're also keen to band together with others doing this kind of work across the country."

**"MY DREAM IS TO ENHANCE THE \*FREE\* OF FREENET – TO CONTINUE MAKING ACCESS AFFORDABLE AND AVAILABLE, YES, BUT ALSO TO MAKE FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AVAILABLE. TO BE AN ORGANIZATION NOT DRIVEN BY PROFITS, NOT BEHOLDEN TO BIG TELECOMMUNICATIONS, BUT RATHER ONE THAT IS COMMITTED TO HEARING AND TRANSMITTING INDIVIDUAL VOICES AND IDEAS."**

**JENN BARRIGAR (bc839)**

## COMMUNITY INTERNET

From the beginning, NCF has also been an internet service provider. The growth of this part of our mandate has made us a successful social enterprise, with the opportunity to offer free or lower-cost community internet.

This included VolNet, a partnership with the Volunteer Centre of Ottawa-Carleton that in 1999 offered 250 not-for-profits and charities a year's worth of free internet, along with training and a discounted computer, if needed.

During this time, *The Ottawa Citizen* wrote that NCF "continues to be a vital local link". It continued: "while the Internet and the world have changed a lot in five years, the NCF has hardly changed at all. It operates with much the same philosophy and mandate – in a nutshell, it's people helping people tap in to all the good things the Internet has to offer."

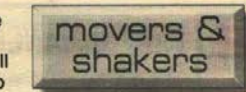


The Ottawa Sun, April 27, 1999

## VolNet connects charity, launch

Non-profit and charitable groups can get wired for free. The Volunteer Centre of Ottawa-Carleton and National Capital Freenet are offering free Internet services as part of the launch of Capital Region VolNet. Up to 250 groups will get Internet connection at no cost for one year, basic instruction and a computer at subsidized cost if needed. Workshops, on-line discussion groups and other services will also be offered to volunteer groups in the region.

■ ■ ■  
A fast-track training program for hi-tech



students run by universities and the National Research Council has won the Chrysler Canada Post-Secondary Award from the Conference Board of Canada. Earlier this month, Vitesse Canada Inc. received \$1.5 million from the province for expansion.

■ ■ ■  
Hull firm Hemera Technologies Inc. has won the Excelcia '99 Award from the Outaouais Economic Diversification Corp. The award, which recognizes hi-tech successes, went to the graphics software firm for revenue and staffing growth

and staking a market position.

■ ■ ■  
TimeStep Corp.'s PERMIT Enterprise has won *Network* magazine's 1999 Product of the Year award in the Virtual Private Network category. The Newbridge affiliate's technology earlier won recognition with InfoWorld's Golden Guardian Award, Network Computing's Well Connected Award, and Data Communications' Hot Product of the Year Award. PERMIT Enterprise lets corporations save money by securely using the Internet for business communications.

— Sun staff

“THE DESIRE TO GIVE BETTER ACCESS TO PEOPLE DOESN'T JUST EXIST IN THE MISSION STATEMENT, IT ALSO EXISTS IN PRACTICE”  
ADAM GODLEWSKI (ga043)

INTERNET ACCESS

# FreeNet offers deal to public housing tenants

ANDREW DUFFY

Public housing tenants now have access to \$25 a month unlimited data Internet plan thanks to a new partnership with one of Ottawa's original Internet service providers.

The plan is being offered by National Capital FreeNet (NCF), a not-for-profit Internet provider launched in 1992 by a small group of tech enthusiasts at Carleton University. FreeNet today operates like a co-operative and provides Internet service to about 3,000 subscribers.

The recently announced service became available to Ottawa Community Housing tenants on Tuesday morning.

"We've had a lot of calls already today," said Shelley Robinson, FreeNet's executive director.

Robinson said FreeNet has been able to offer the unlimited, low-cost service to Ottawa Community Housing residents in part because of a recent gift from the estate of one of its founding members. The same service offered to FreeNet's existing members

"It's our 25th anniversary so we decided, 'Let's do something big,'" she said. "We believe everyone in the National Capital Region should have access to an affordable, high quality Internet service. We do not want people trading off food for Internet service."

In December, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission declared high-speed Internet a basic service in this country.

As a result, the CRTC now requires telecom firms to contribute to a \$750 million fund that will be used to improve broadband Internet services in rural and remote parts of the country during the next five years.

Robinson said high-speed Internet service is now a required tool for anyone doing homework, searching for a job, or trying to connect to larger communities. FreeNet, she said, intends to expand its low-cost Internet plan to more underserved groups in Ottawa if the partnership with Ottawa Community Housing proves sustainable.

In a news release, Mayor Jim Watson said securing affordable Internet access for community housing tenants is an important step in bridging Ottawa's digital divide. "Digital literacy is key in creating more opportunities for our residents both now and for the future," he said.

Ottawa Community Housing manages 15,000 homes — about two-thirds of the city's social housing portfolio. Its households have an average monthly income of about \$1300, and about 90 per cent of tenants receive a rent subsidy.

FreeNet's plan for community housing tenants features a six megabits per second digital subscriber line with unlimited usage and no fixed contract.

"A lot of lower-cost plans have (data) caps on users and we very intentionally made this unlimited," Robinson said.

"The idea of caps stresses people out and limits what they can do."

Yvonne Falardeau reviewed National Capital FreeNet — 5★  
May 26 · 🌐

I'm an OCH tenant and on ODSP. In January of this year, I found out about NCF's partnership to provide unlimited internet service to OCH tenants for \$25/mth. I was very excited but a bit skeptical. I contacted your NCF office for more information and not a question was left unanswered. You laid it all out as clear as day. I cancelled my other internet and their TV service and signed up with NCF. I'm soooo happy I did!! Never looked back. The internet service is just as good as any I've had previously and your customer support is wonderful. Thank you! BTW, I'm saving \$130 per month! Life got much easier. 😊

A few years later, we also provided free internet to single mothers on income assistance — a program the City recognized with an awarded in 2005.

Most recently, at the end of 2016, NCF launched a lower-cost unlimited internet package for 32,000 Ottawa Community Housing tenants.

One new member, Yvonne Falardeau has been vocal in her support for the program on Facebook.

"I was very excited, but a bit skeptical. The internet service is just as good as any I've had previously and your customer support is wonderful. Thank you! BTW, I'm saving \$130 per month! Life got much easier."

She wasn't alone.

"I would like to personally thank National Capital FreeNet for showing leadership and for being a positive example for others," wrote Jean-Pierre Blais, former CRTC Chair, in a letter.



Conseil de la radiodiffusion et des télécommunications canadiennes

Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission

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Edifice central  
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J8X 4B1

1 promenade du Portage  
Les Terrasses de la Chaudière  
Central Building  
Gatineau, Quebec  
J8X 4B1

Président et premier dirigeant

Chairman and Chief Executive Officer

JAN 19 2017

Our Reference: 761114

Ms. Shelley Robinson  
Executive Director  
National Capital FreeNet  
1305 Richmond Road  
Ottawa, Ontario, K2B 7Y4  
E-mail: [shelley@ncf.ca](mailto:shelley@ncf.ca)

RE: FreeNet offers public housing tenants \$25 Internet plan

Dear Ms. Robinson,

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate National Capital FreeNet on celebrating its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary and offering Ottawa Community Housing tenants access to a \$25/month unlimited data Internet plan.

Broadband Internet access services are necessary to the quality of life for Canadians. During the CRTC's recent proceeding on basic telecommunications services, we heard testimony from diverse Canadians detailing the difficulties they encounter because they find broadband Internet access services unaffordable. These vulnerable individuals, burdened by social and economic insecurity, came to testify that connectivity is essential to their lives — to schedule medical appointments, ensure success in school, facilitate job searches and do many of the online activities others may take for granted.

Initiatives that make broadband Internet access service more affordable for these Canadians is of considerable importance and requires concerted efforts from a variety of stakeholders. The Commission supports these efforts, which are essential to making progress in this area.

I would like to personally thank National Capital FreeNet for showing leadership and for being a positive example for others.

Sincerely,

Jean-Pierre Blais





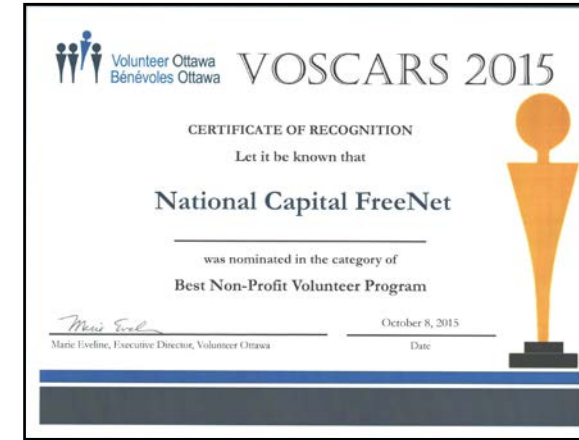
## MEMBERS AND VOLUNTEERS AND STAFF, OH MY

Finally, a lasting part of NCF's mandate has been about mutual help or members helping members, as we often call it.

“Most people come here with a sense of commitment,” says Naftali Shani, an NCF jack of all trades currently working here part-time. “They develop a certain pride in what they do, so it’s good to work in the same environment.”

Moving offices, first from Carleton University’s Dunton Tower, to a perch in the former Trailhead building on Scott Street, to the current space on Richmond Road, has made room for more volunteers, who answer questions that come in through the door, the phone, and by email.

“Everyone helps everybody else learn,” says James Ouzas, a full-time HelpDesk Analyst. “We all have different backgrounds...so we’re knit together of all these different pieces of cloth and we make this interesting quilt of skills.”



In 2015, NCF volunteers won a Volunteer Ottawa “VOscar” for this work.

Bill Robson, who started as a volunteer before becoming the Internet Services Manager, says what he has always loved about working on the NCF HelpDesk, is giving back.

“At the end of the day you leave feeling happy that you’ve helped somebody, that you’ve done something that they would never get anywhere else. They’re ahead of the game and you just feel good about it.”

**“THE FOCUS FOR A LOT OF MEMBERS IS ON DOWNLOAD SPEED, BUT IT’S REALLY JUST AS IMPORTANT THAT THEY HAVE ACCESS TO GET THEIR VIEWS OUT THERE. UPLOADING. PARTICIPATING AS CITIZENS. I LIKE THAT PEOPLE GET TO TALK TO THEIR NEIGHBOURS ABOUT THEIR NEIGHBOURHOOD THROUGH MODERN COMMUNICATIONS.”**  
**SHELLEY ROBINSON (xx174)**

**“I THINK THE KEY TO RELEVANCE FOR US IS THAT WE PROVIDE SOMETHING THAT NO ONE ELSE IS PROVIDING, LIKE MEMBERS HELPING MEMBERS PROVIDING WHERE THERE’S A DIGITAL DIVIDE STILL, AND WE HELP THERE. SOME OF THE PROGRAMS WE’RE DOING NOW, OUR SENIORS PROGRAMS, OUR LUNCH AND LEARNS, AND OUR LECTURES AND THOSE KINDS OF THINGS ALL HELP PEOPLE USE THE INTERNET, AND THERE’S MORE TO COME.”**

**CHRIS COPE (bz787)**

COLUMN

# Internet provides the best cyber-things in life

**KATHERINE ALLEN**  
SPECIAL TO NEPEAN THIS WEEK

Three years ago I knew as much about computers and the Internet as I did about nuclear physics.

To me, a Macintosh was something you put in a lunch bag and a hard drive was the one-hour back-roads trip to my friend's cottage.

Today I can operate "cross-platform" (Macs and PC's), I have several e-mail addresses, personal and business web sites, I can install internal software and receive weekly w-mail inquiries and orders from business customers in places like New Zealand, Japan and Russia. Did I mention I got all this for free?

With a tight budget and no computer, I decided to take my first baby-steps into cyberspace with the help of the Ottawa Public Library and the National Capital FreeNet, (www.ncf.ca) in 1996. NCF provides people with free computer training, an online community network, free e-mail and access to the colourful, animated, information-packed internet. It's the second largest FreeNet in the world, operated by volunteers.

This non-profit organization boasts 13,000 active members and exists largely on members' donations, time and money. Hardware, software and technical support is donated by major high tech companies such as Mitel, Newbridge Networks, Rebel.com and Netscape.

NCF members can take advantage of the services of FreeNet technical consultants who offer free, trouble-shooting advice on the operation of computers and accessories, the Internet, web page design and also give one-on-one training sessions to newcomers interested in learning how to use computers and dive into the ever-

expanding world of e-mail, e-commerce, and e-shopping.

"FreeNet is all about a bunch of people who help each other and make sure the Internet is available to everybody," says Christopher Cope, Executive Director of the NCF. "Beyond just being a great place to meet people, we work hard at breaking down the barriers to Internet use that often prevent small and emerging businesses from fully participating in today's world."

I decided to check out computers and the Internet before I spent any money on them. My home-based business wasn't in a financial position to throw away \$2000 in a Mac or a PC and a monthly charge with an Internet service provider only to discover I'd only be sending e-cards to relatives in their birthdays.

I booked a free info session at the Carlingwood branch of the Ottawa Public Library, equipped to provide the public with access to the FreeNet and the World Wide Web. In an hour I was savvy in the bare basics of the computer, FreeNet, e-mail and surfing the Internet search engines.

Subsequent visits allowed me to learn what I wanted to know, on my own time, at my own pace, with the advantage of my own personal FreeNet account.

I decided getting a computer would be a good business move. Then a friend started up an Internet home-page for me and scanned some photos of my work to use on the page to promote my consulting business. Once my business was on the WWW, I taught myself HTML (hyper-text markup language) the codes that allow you to put text and images on the web, and now I maintain total control over my own site, leaving me free to determine my own e-marketing strategy according to my budget.

It originally cost me nothing to join

although donations are eagerly and gratefully accepted, and so I sent NCF a cheque I could easily afford. Since then I've donated my art and lithographs annually in lieu of a cash membership donation. I pay no monthly service provider fees, I have no long-distance telephone charges and no additional cable charges.

Everything is free, managed by NCF, including communication with family and business associates anywhere on the planet - any day, any place, anytime - and for way less than ten cents a minute. You just can't beat free!

Algonquin College furthered my computer education, in fact, if I had gone there in the first place, or had taken some other form of training I would have been online in less than half the time.

Algonquin's New Media Centre on Woodroffe Avenue in Nepean offers courses in Macintosh for beginners, graphic design and CorelDraw, public relations and the Web, designing a web page and much more, using state-of-the-art equipment.

"We're working on our new Winter '99 schedule of courses," says Matt Wheatley, New Media Officer for New Media Corporate Training. Those interested in learning how to get online quicker call Matt at 727-4723, x 7133.

Since June 1997, with the help of the Internet's dozens of free advertising

venues, one of my web sires has had over 3400 visitors. These were people searching for services around the globe that I provide.

From an entire world of choices, these customers clicked into my "web-studio" and gave me the opportunity to show them what I do and sell. I never would have made contact with them through expensive, conventional advertising campaigns alone.

In terms of cost-productivity, the FreeNet had been one of the best marketing strategies I've ever undertaken. I benefited by taking advantage of the Library's free computers, NCF's free e-mail and Internet access, and Algonquin's courses and top of the line equipment.

Now I go online for about four hours every day, weekends too. It's a labour of love.

"Knowledge and affordability are key issues," adds Christopher Cope when asked about the advantage of people and business-owners getting computer-literate. "You have to know how (to get on the Internet) or you miss out and regardless of cash flow, organizations shouldn't be denied access to the market opportunities that are available on the Net."

All in all, I haven't had one regret since jumping on the FreeNet hay-ride. Now if I could only find a free, easy way to get to my friend's cottage.



## CHAPTER SIX

# NOW AND FOREVER

By the start of 2015, NCF's membership was on a steady climb, healthy once again, and we were adding even more bandwidth to keep up with demand.



That Spring, the Canadian Radio-television Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) reviewed internet services and what “Canadians require to participate meaningfully in the digital economy.”

Shelley Robinson, the latest Executive Director, wrote a submission and later presented at the hearing along with Peter Chapman and Peter MacKinnon, NCF Board members.

Shelley described the ways in which NCF was both an independent Internet Service Provider and a community-based organization. She noted that the experience of NCF members showed that high-speed internet was an essential service for all Canadians and that one of the biggest barriers to people getting connected was price.

But in order to stay sustainable, we needed to change our pricing structure – for only the second time in 11 years. Monthly line costs went up, while the dry line rate dropped to \$7.00 for everyone.

Following the announcement, Robinson said she was pleasantly surprised at the response.

**“MANY WROTE TO SAY ‘KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK!’ THEY TRUSTED THAT WE WOULDN’T RAISE PRICES UNLESS WE NEEDED TO. IT WAS A HUGE RELIEF AND IT WAS THEN THAT I KNEW THEN THAT THE FOUNDING SPIRIT OF NCF WAS ALIVE AND WELL.”**

And while NCF’s volunteer base was strong, we hired James Ouzas and Andrew Martey Asare as full-time HelpDesk Analysts to keep up with member support. Later we added Michael Cayer as a System and Network Administrator Support, to bolster the work of longtime SysAdmin André Dalle.

With a bigger team came more time to tweak operations and expand NCF’s mandate-driven work, from formalizing our volunteer HelpDesk training to offering community workshops with our partners the Ottawa PC Users’ Group.

In 2016, an early member left NCF money in his will which we used to launch the Community Access Fund, known as CAF. The first project of the fund was a lower cost internet package for 32,000 Ottawa Community Housing tenants.

Nathalie Dolbeck, Billing Manager can see the difference it’s already made.

“I’m hoping we’re going to go a lot further but we’ve actually done amazing since I started. It’s grown a lot, and I swear it has a lot to do with CAF. I’m hoping it’ll get bigger.”

Later that year, the CRTC mandated a drop in the cost of wholesale bandwidth. We passed the benefits on to members by lowering some prices, and making all our regular packages unlimited usage for the same price.

Echoing a message from the early days of the organization, Shelley introduced the news to members by writing “this is part of our mission to keep things simple.”

Nathalie Dolbeck, Billing Manager,  
in her natural habitat

# NINETEEN YEARS AND COUNTING



**Surrounded by books and boxes, André Dalle turns back to his computer and types quickly to confirm when he first joined National Capital FreeNet: it was October 29, 1993. He was 15. The answer was at his fingertips because he is NCF's Systems and Network Administrator, and has been since 1998 – when he was 20.**

The question is: what can a man who's grown up with FreeNet tell us about where it's going?

André joined because his Dad, who worked for high-tech firm Mitel, told him about it. Later, his father was also part of a program at Mitel that gave NCF after-hours access to their phone lines, a crucial resource during our dial-up days, when we had 150 lines for 40,000 members trying to reach them.

He describes that era as a lot of fun, but money was tight and all the hardware was donated. "Shoestrings would look down on us," he says. "It was pick your crisis. If things weren't falling apart they were coming apart at the seams because of so many users."

But though he was the only SysAdmin on the payroll, "there's no way I could have done everything without help." He credits his SysAdmin predecessors Ian! Allen, Roy Hooper and Yannick Gravel with getting him through it. Later, longtime volunteer Jim Elder filled this role.

André says he was attracted to the job and has stuck with it because "I hate not knowing how stuff works." He says he likes being a generalist, seeing the connections between systems, being able to make decisions based on having a finger in every pie. "Don't eat at that bakery," he jokes.

But it's true that if you've been an NCF member during the last 19 years, André has directly affected your life.

One of the technical changes he's most proud of is migrating NCF's email to Zimbra, an open source software. We did it over a year to ensure that members had lots of time to make suggestions, and adapt.

He also mentions the work he did with former Executive Director Ross Kouhi to move to our own network, rather than relying entirely on an outside supplier. "That changed our fortunes and empowered us to take much better care of our members. I consider it a twin miracle that Ross and I could do it."

But as cool as it has been to poke around with all the technology, André cites another reason he has stayed, sometimes working long hours fiddling with gear at the Carleton Data Centre. "I like what we're trying to do, it's positive. We're helping people."

Now he says he's looking forward to another technical jump: NCF has recently purchased two 10GB routers and is upgrading its network again. He's more excited than nervous, something the job has taught him.

"If the SysAdmin is fearful, everyone else is 10 times more fearful. I've reached the point where I'm like 'I can do this!'"

Now, after 25 years, we're taking stock. What are the best parts of our history, and what can we learn from past mistakes? How do we continue to evolve, while staying true to our founding principles?

We know we are committed to providing access: working to keep internet affordable, high quality, helping people understand how to use it and feel safe online.

We know that the more members we serve, the more sustainable we become, and the more support and new services we can offer, the lower our prices can be.

We know that technology is moving faster all the time, and we want to keep pace.

This is why we're going to continue offering workshops for all our members, especially for seniors, those living on low incomes, new Canadians and other groups facing barriers to access.

It's also why we're launching Digital Access Day in 2018, to keep the conversation going and share lessons from the field.

**“IT IS AN EXCITING TIME TO BE ALIVE – THE INTERNET HAS REVOLUTIONIZED SO MANY ASPECTS OF OUR LIVES AND OPENED UP WORLDS OF POSSIBILITIES. CULTURE AND COMMERCE. ART AND INFORMATION. COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY. WE ARE ONLY JUST BEGINNING TO SEE THE RANGE AND EXTENT OF POSITIVE IMPACTS THAT CONNECTIVITY CAN HAVE.**

**I’M PROUD OF THE WORK NCF HAS DONE AND CONTINUES TO DO TO PROVIDE QUALITY, AFFORDABLE INTERNET ACCESS. I’M PROUD OF OUR FOCUS ON CUSTOMER SERVICE, SECURITY, AND PROTECTING USERS’ PRIVACY. I’M PROUD TO BE A PART OF THE NCF COMMUNITY AND I’M LOOKING FORWARD TO THE NEXT 25 YEARS.”**

**DIANA CANTU (fz160)**

“Even though it’s 2017 and the internet is ubiquitous, it still doesn’t reach everyone,” says André, who’s been working at NCF since 1998.

“Part of what I see NCF doing in the future is what we’re doing now. We’ve actually really shifted over just the past two years. For the longest time we were struggling just to survive, then we were doing a little bit better, now we’re actually doing well enough that we can afford to do more things.”

His tech brother-in-arms Michael agrees. He says he’s excited about a major equipment upgrade on the horizon that will take NCF another step forward, but also sees the bigger picture.

“There’s some stuff that’s not NCF specific, but internet specific, like the CRTC’s announcement earlier this year that everybody in Canada should have 50/10mbps speed.”

He adds, “it remains to be seen how that will play out, but it will be interesting to see what happens.”

Christina Eng, Summer HelpDesk Analyst, sees a role for NCF in filling the gap not just for those in the city, but beyond.

“I’m hoping we can expand further in the country because Ottawa is growing, and also more places in Quebec.”

Which ties back into what made NCF special at the beginning. There’s something signifiant about serving one community. You can see it in the buy local movemet and the re-emergence of farmers’ markets and other makers. We have often joked that NCF makes “artisanal internet”.

“The whole idea of the physical connectedness of a community is under siege right now,” says NCF co-founder Jay Weston. “I think FreeNet could bring it back.”

Chris Cope, current NCF Chair and past Executive Director has the advantage of liking where we came from, while also being excited about where we’re going.

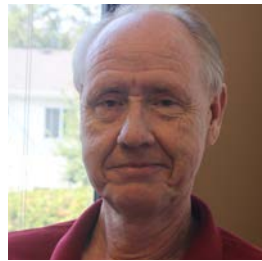
“The last 25 years brought us from community networking to the world wide web, from huge desktops to pocket-sized systems. The amount of change we’ve lived through is dizzying so who knows what’s next. We just know we want NCF to be there to help make it happen.”

**“NCF TO ME, MEANS ACCESS; ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITY, CONNECTIVITY, EDUCATION AND SUPPORT FOR EVERYONE IN THE REGION, REGARDLESS OF INCOME LEVEL.”**

**LAUREN GARDNER (fy923)**

# GIVING BACK

Over the years, NCF has relied on hundreds of volunteers and we appreciate them all. Here's some of the people who are helping out lately:



## AL RICHMAN (bd622)

HelpDesk and WiseNet

Al comes in almost every Wednesday afternoon. He's a digital security expert and in addition to his work on the HelpDesk, he offered a workshop during WiseNet that was truly terrifying – until he told members how to protect themselves online. They loved it.

**“I’VE BEEN A MEMBER OF NCF FOR WELL OVER 20 YEARS. SO WHEN I RETIRED I THOUGHT I’D GIVE SOMETHING BACK, SOME OPPORTUNITY, KEEP MY FINGERS IN.”**

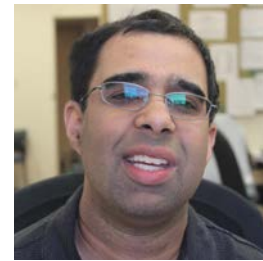


## ADAM HUNT (fn352)

Software Distribution Program, Wiki Support, Oral History Editor

Every few weeks, Adam shows up on his bike with a new batch of DVDs containing a range of free software for members to take home. He's happy to spread the word on the value of Open Source Operating Systems like Ubuntu, but there are options for Windows users too. And every December he reviews the Help Wiki, proving his ongoing commitment to members helping members. He also bakes a mean cookie.

**“OUR JOB IS TO GET OUR MEMBERS ONTO THE INTERNET, SO THAT THEY CAN DO WHATEVER THEY NEED TO DO IN LIFE... I’LL DO WHATEVER HAS TO BE DONE TO HELP THEM. I DON’T WANT THEM MISSING OPPORTUNITIES WHEN WE CAN DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT.”**



## NADER HUSSAIN (fx874)

HelpDesk Support

Twice a week Nader turns his keen eye on what can be improved for members. These days he's been compiling a general ISP database, helping review the wikis and the website, and making suggestions about how to firm up volunteer training materials.

**“IT IS AN INTERESTING JOB. SOME OF THE THINGS I LIKE DOING HERE ARE THE DATABASE WORK AND OTHER TASKS THAT JUST NEED TO BE DONE.”**



## DAVID EHMAN (fx479)

HelpDesk and WiseNet

Dave is famous in the office for being able to explain everything in the perfect amount of detail, whether during a workshop or on a phone call. All in a perfect radio voice. A self-taught techie, when he's not swapping novels with SysAdmin André Dalle, he's digging into every ticket he can get his hands on.

**“I JUST LIKE THE IDEA OF THE NCF. I LIKE THAT IT’S A NOT-FOR-PROFIT, THAT ITS GOAL IS REALLY TO HELP PEOPLE GET CONNECTED TO THE INTERNET AND WHEN THEY DEAL WITH US, TO FEEL THAT THEY ARE ACTUALLY MEMBERS OF SOMETHING.”**



## IAN GORMAN (am125)

HelpDesk and WiseNet

A relentless cracker of puns, Ian also puts in many hours helping our remaining dial-up members keep their service working. Given his background in statistics, he's also been working on some data analysis projects for us, and is keen to let loose a fleet of small and low-cost Raspberry Pi mini-computers to collect information directly from members.

**“AFTER I RETIRED FROM THE GOVERNMENT AND DECIDED TO LAY LOW FOR A FEW YEARS, I CAME AND VOLUNTEERED HERE AT FREENET. I LIKE THE WORK THAT’S INVOLVED, I LIKE DEALING WITH MEMBERS AND I LIKE WORKING WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE GOOD.”**



## BEVERLEY BROOKES (dk990)

Office Support

Bev has been working with NCF since she retired: 20 years ago! Fastidious in the best way, she helps ensure our bank deposits keep up with everyone's payments and attends our Lunch and Learn nearly every month.

**“EVERYONE WANTS TO BE HERE, AND BECAUSE THEY WANT TO BE HERE THEY’RE HAPPY AND HELP OTHER PEOPLE, AND IT GIVES ME SOMETHING TO DO.”**

# OUR STAFF



**MICHAEL CAYER**

System and Network Administrator Support



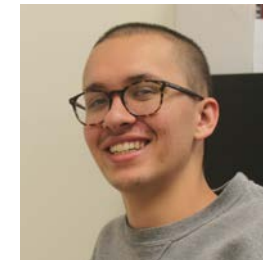
**JESSICA DAHANAYAKE**

Summer HelpDesk Analyst



**ANDRÉ DALLE**

System and Network Administrator



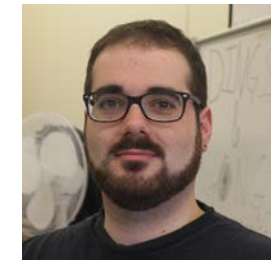
**ADAM GODLEWSKI**

Summer Low Income Support Handbook Co-Editor



**ANDREW MARLEY ASARE**

Business Analyst



**JAMES OUZAS**

HelpDesk Analyst



**NICK DETRE**

HelpDesk Analyst



**NATHALIE DOLBECK**

Billing Manager



**CHRISTINA ENG**

Summer HelpDesk Analyst



**ALEX PARSONS**

Anniversary Book Editor



**SHELLEY ROBINSON**

Executive Director



**BILL ROBSON**

Internet Services Manager



**NAFTALI SHANI**

HelpDesk Analyst



**RUMYA SIVA**

Summer HelpDesk Analyst

Not pictured:

**KHADRA ALI**

Summer Low Income Support Handbook Co-Editor



## ALL THE THANK YOUS

**Thank you to all National Capital FreeNet's members, past and present. Without you, this book wouldn't exist. Then again, neither would NCF!**

This book was built on the solid foundation (including many quotes from) *In Their Own Words: the Story of National Capital FreeNet* that Adam Hunt compiled for our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Thank you Shelley Robinson and Ryley White for editorial support and to David Kawai for his awesome shots of the office and data centre, including the image used for the front cover.

Thanks to everyone who shared your memories of NCF through the ages with me, whether over the phone or in person. This includes: Ian! Allen, Andrew Martey Asare, Beverley Brookes, Sheila Alder-Brown, Michael Cayer, Chris Cope, Jessica Dahanayake, André Dalle, Nick Detre,

Nathalie Dolbeck, Lisa Donnelly, Pat Drummond, David Ehman, Gary Eikenberry, Christina Eng, Adam Godlewski, Ian Gorman, Kyla Huckerby, Nader Hussain, Mike Kelly, Ross Kouhi, Aven McMaster, Marita Moll, James Ouzas, Nick Ouzas, Al Richman, Shelley Robinson, Bill Robson, Santpal Sandhu, Naftali Shani, Rumya Siva, Dave Sutherland, André Vellino, Jay Weston, and Michael Wong.

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Thanks to those who donated FreeNet memorabilia and memories, including Pat Drummond, Ian! Allen, Dave Sutherland, Lyn Shouldice, Jay Weston, Marita Moll and Susan McMaster for donating her daughter's NCF email memory book *Reality Bits*.

Thanks to Character Creative, who designed the book: we love it. We also love the patience with which they put up with our numerous special requests and last-minute changes.

Thanks Allegra Printing for turning digital into analogue.

Thank you to all the newspapers, magazines and broadcasters who covered FreeNet so extensively and allowed us to republish their articles. Journalism is the first draft of history and these articles are central to the book.

This includes *The Ottawa Citizen* and *The Ottawa Sun*, as well as *Centretown News*, *Hour Magazine*, *Kanata Courier Standard*, *MONiTOR Magazine*, *Nepean This Week*, *Ottawa Xpress*, *Silicon Valley North Magazine* and *This Week at Carleton*. And CBC radio, CJOH, and CTV.

## 2016/2017 NCF Board Members

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Peter Chapman, *1st Vice Chair*

Peter MacKinnon, *2nd Vice Chair*

Carole Charest, *Treasurer*

Graeme Beckett, *Secretary*

Jenn Barrigar, *Director*

Diana Cantu, *Director*

Pete de Lepper, *Director*

Martin Dubois, *Director*

Lauren Gardner, *Director*

George Muñoz, *Director*

Thank you to our current Board members for supporting us through the long process of pulling this book together and all those who have served on past Boards.

Thanks to the rest of NCF's staff and volunteers for your wisdom and advice and especially to NCF SysAdmins André Dalle and Michael Cayer for making sure the online archive behind this book has a home.

Thanks to my fellow summer students for your camaraderie and keeping me sane through our conversations, lunches and hijinks.

Thank you to the three most amazing women in my life: my girlfriend Emily, my Mom Carol, and my cat Mari.

Thank you to Carleton University for being our first nest and continuing to host our data centre.

Finally, thanks to the authors of NCF's previous books:

Al Seaman, Matthew Darwin, Colin Dickson, Pat Drummond, Miranda Grey, Ben Kennedy, Heather MacFadyen and Don McCallum for *The Official FreeNet Survival Guide* (1994);

André Ouellette and all the individual recipe contributors for *From the Kitchens of the National Capital FreeNet* (1995);

Rosaleen Dickson and Pierre Bourque for *FreeNet for the Fun of It* (1995);

Ken and Bonni Evans for *The National Capital FreeNet Navigator* (1995).



You can check out our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary archive at [www.ncf.ca/archive](http://www.ncf.ca/archive) to view some of our collected newspaper clippings, pictures, founding documents, interviews and anything else we've scraped together.



You can find *In Their Own Words: the Story of National Capital FreeNet* on Adam Hunt's personal website at <http://web.ncf.ca/fn352/InTheirOwnWords.pdf>

“SO MANY PROBLEMS CAN BE SOLVED WHEN PEOPLE CAN JUST CONNECT WITH EACH OTHER, OR ACCESS THE INFORMATION THEY NEED, AND THE NATIONAL CAPITAL FREENET IS ON THE FOREFRONT OF CONTINUING TO MAKE THIS POSSIBLE..”

**MICHAEL GOGUEN (fs289)**



