

Computerization to Improve The Gem

THE GEM YOU ARE HOLDING was typeset with the aid of TRACS, our new "Typesetting Retrieval And Computerization System". One of the biggest bottlenecks in printing The Gem has been typesetting; taking the crumpled, handwritten notes we get submitted as articles and turning them into nice print quality columns to put in the paper. This used to involve several trips downtown to the typesetters as each clump of copy came in, where everything had to be typed in by hand. It took more time and effort to get this job done than it took to actually print the paper, which explains why the paper was late some weeks. (See accompanying article this page.)

The search was on for a better way. Through the efforts of our advertising manager, Danny Mullen, we found an old TRS-80 Model II belonging to the Business School that could be used to eliminate all the running around we used to do. The kind efforts of business Professor Robert O'Rourke, Dave Cairns of the UPEI Computing Centre, and the UPEI School of Business resulted in the use of the computer being donated to The Gem, and we moved the grey wonder, and its immense collection of software (made available by Danny at the Radio Shack store), to our office in Main building.

Our resident computer gurus, James Connolly and Derrick Webber, set up a simplified account

on UPEI's VAX computer system that allowed anyone with at least two fingers type their articles into the VAX, instead of submitting them on paper. Danny worked on the actual transfer of the information and the whole setting up of the GEM's computer. VP Academic Paul Ledwell graciously OK'd the purchase of a modem (telephone interface) to link the two computer systems, and the TRACS system was born.

With the new system, everything to be published in The Gem is typed into the UPEI computer, checked for spelling and edited. Then, by transferring it all to a special format disk on the Model II computer, we can take everything, at once, downtown to Island Offset and have it typeset automatically. The disk is transferred via another machine to an AM 6400 VariTyper, and is typeset almost instantaneously using a special process that we did not have access to at our old typesetters. This will save us money in labour costs, but more importantly, it saves time and hassle.

With the new system in place we can look forward to no more late papers due to typesetting delays, and almost no typographical or spelling errors. We'll save enough on our typesetting costs to be able to pay for the cost of the system in about 2 months. The faster turnaround for typesetting means GEM staff members will have more time

to concentrate on WRITING the paper, rather than worrying about producing it.

Producing The Gem hasn't suddenly become a breeze; there are still articles to research, contributors to locate, and paste-up and printing to be done, but with TRACS, we can work harder to provide you with a more polished Gem.

Young Daniel Recalls the Bad Old Days At The Gem

By Danny Mullen

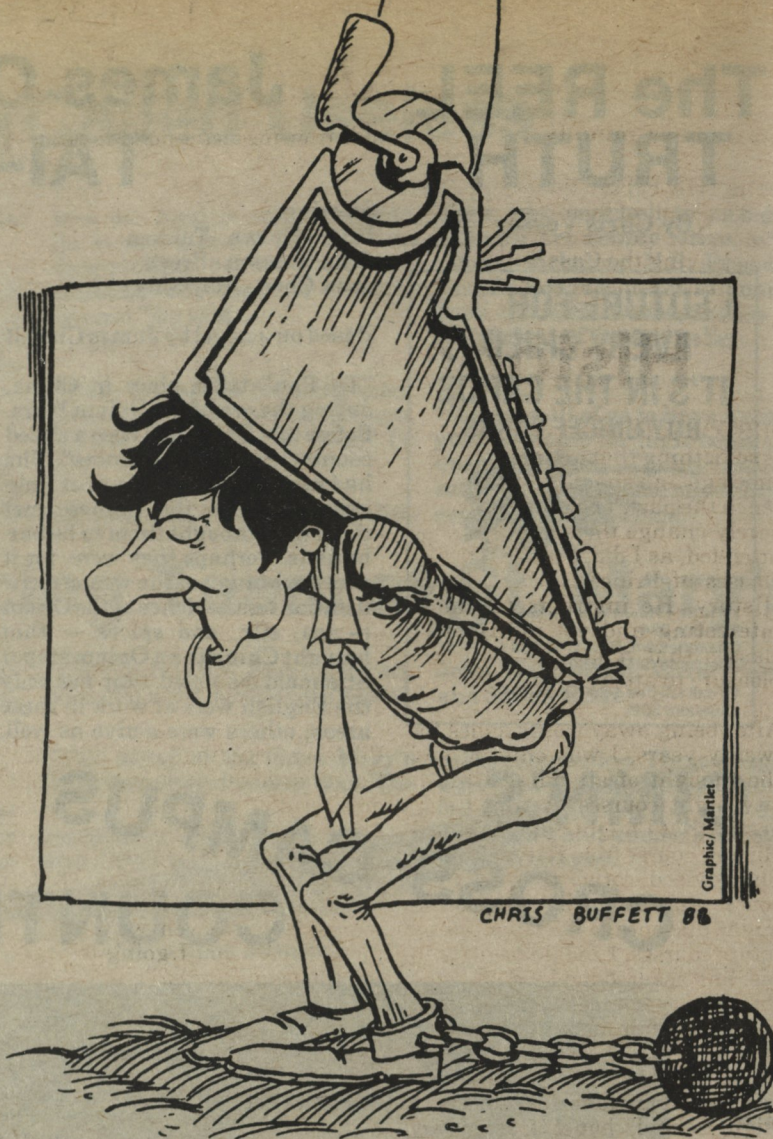
LAST THURSDAY AFTERNOON I found myself hurtling down University Avenue at my usual 88-in-a-50-zone speed, on the way to our long-delayed newspaper. As it laid on our layout boards on fourth floor of Main Building, I was putting the Tempo through its paces.

I had just gone through the lights at the corner of Belvedere and University (at my rate of 88 clicks), as I noticed that my brakes were a whole lot less than safe. I was attempting to get into UPEI through the "Entrance" on University Avenue, when my car and I went through the little game it subjects me to once in a blue moon. The car, which handles normally, and has perfectly flat cornering, sometimes gets me into high speed turns where either it, or I, have to chicken out and slow down. I chickened out. "Oh, great, the paper is late, and I am going to die. They can scrape me off of the side of Kelley Building in the morning."

But I survived. Leaping from my stopped car, I began my ascent up Mount Main, all four stories. Puffing my way to the familiar red door with the yellow hammer and sickle painted on it, I opened it and stumbled inside.

I hurriedly stuck a few pieces of paper over the blank spots and stuffed the remaining layout sheets into a battered cardboard box. I looked at my watch — 7:00 PM! I was going to have to take this paper to Summerside myself!

I grabbed to layout flats (the originals from which the GEM is printed), ran back to my car, threw the flats inside the trunk, and leapt into the car for a pleasant race to Summerside. (Anyone who has had the incredible misfortune to ride as a passenger in my car can tell you that I am a criminally insane driver). I tore off campus, and spun my way towards the Trans-Canada in West Royalty.



After a 113 Kmh trip through scenic Prince Edward Island, and a dangerous curve or two, I reached the almost-bustling town of Summerside. Since the printers were closed at this time of the evening, I had to leave the flats at a drop-off point, "ANN'S PLACE". Now, for those of you who are residents of Summerside or who have been there in the last three years, Ann's Place may be a cinch to find, but I could not find it anywhere.

I drove down Water Street, hung a right, and found myself heading along Central Street, looking for Ann's Place. All I found is this place called Sherbrooke. I thought I was really lost for sure! So, making a U-turn in front of the local RCMP station, I headed back to Water Street, made another right, and found myself in Ellerslie! "Just how big is this place, anyway?" I wondered, "If I drive a couple of blocks past McDonalds, I'm not even in the same town!"

Finally, I spotted a telephone booth and looked up Ann's Place. I searched frantically for some change and then pounded out the number on the phone.

"Hello, is this Ann's Place?"

"Yes, is there something I can do for you?", a female voice responded. For a moment, I thought I had the wrong Ann's Place... I wanted the restaurant, not the other place...

"Um, yes. I have a package for Williams and Crue. The guy there told us to drop it off at your restaurant, but I can't find you anywhere... can you explain how to get there?"

"Sure thing," she explained, "can you see McDonald's from where you are?"

Ho, boy, lady. You can see McDonald's from ANYWHERE in this place. "Um, yes, I can. I'm on Water Street, I think, and I'm facing it now."

"Good, that means you're in Summerside. Just head down Water Street towards McDonald's. You'll see us across the street from Dominion Square, it's just..."

"GREAT! Finally I can find you! I'll be there in five minutes!" I hung up the phone, jumped in to my car again, a began down (or is it up?) Water Street. Five minutes was plenty. I had only gone about fifty feet when I realized that I was in the middle of the street, and next to Dominion Square. I was standing a block away from this damn place, and I couldn't find it?!

Flushed red, I carried the flats into Anne's Place, set them down in the office, and ran out to the safety of my car. "Another one of Danny's negative life experiences..." I mumbled to myself as I started up the car and headed home. "Oh, well damn, I didn't go 'Rockin' at the Regent'. But, where would I find that place anyway?" I took my chances and headed home for another night of the Panther Lounge and Jim's. Better safe than sorry...

And so, that is the story of how last week's edition of The GEM found its way to you. I don't think that I'll miss the old way of doing things at The GEM. It will a lot easier for me to carry a disk downtown than a beat-up box of paper to Summerside. Now, if I could just get Much Music on this thing...

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