

OCTM Membership: Twenty-five Years and Counting—An Insider’s View

Sister Mary Theresa Sharp S.N.D., OCTM Membership Secretary

The goal of the historical perspective presented in this article is to explore in some detail the evolution of OCTM membership processing during the twenty-five years Sister Mary Theresa Sharp, S.N.D. has been privileged to serve as Membership Secretary of the Ohio Council of Teachers of Mathematics since her appointment by OCTM President, Bill Hunt, on December 6, 1985. The article describes advancements in the areas of (1) backups, (2) hardware and software, (3) communications, and (4) membership numbers and total membership income. For example, backups were performed using increasingly efficient media, advancing from taking approximately one hour in 1985; hardware and software sophistication improved beginning with using the DB Master software on the Apple IIe in 1985; and communication limited to phone calls and OCTM’s standard communication through the United States Postal Service, in recent years included email as a third way to communicate with members. Membership numbers during the past twenty-five years are presented in a bar graph. Total membership income approaching one million dollars for the past twenty-five years is reported, thus providing evidence of the professional commitment to mathematics education, as well as the sustained dedication, of dues-paying OCTM members.

Backups

“Ten seconds remaining,” the prompt read, immediately after I clicked and dragged Math Master 20090330 icon on the desktop over the Zip Drive icon and released the mouse. After ten seconds of quiet whirring, thanks to the wonders of 2009 technology, I clicked on “Eject” and the zip disk storing the most recent backed up version of the OCTM membership database was ejected into my welcoming hand and secured in a safe place for backup copies. That was yesterday’s brief backup procedure. Today’s 2011 near silent backup on a *Centon DataStick Pro* with an 8GB storage capacity takes less than one second for the entire 6 MB file.

The first backups in 1986 took considerably longer and were noisier, generally taking upwards of one hour of listening to the churning of the 5 1/4-inch floppy disks, common storage devices twenty-five years ago. In that first year I used two external floppy drives connected externally by cables to the initial hardware, an *Apple IIe* computer,

in the backup process: the floppy in the A-drive for reading the data, and the floppy in the B-drive for storing the data.

Hardware and Software

Because very early on I needed more than one floppy for storing the membership data, Bill Hunt, OCTM president from 1984 through 1986, decided in March of 1986 to purchase new hardware. President Hunt’s purchase of an external hard drive started a trend for managing membership data more efficiently. In fact, as the membership numbers increased over time from the late eighties through the nineties, the hardware and the software that OCTM purchased allowed me to spend less time managing each membership record.

Various hardware and software improvements followed the 1986 purchase of the 20 Meg external hard drive. In September of 1987 a wide-carriage tractor-feed *Epson EX-1000* was purchased. I used it to print out membership cards to the rat-a-tat of

the tractor-fed dot matrix printer. Until the middle of 1998 I used various versions of software, *DB Master* by *Stoneware*, with the *Apple IIe* hardware. In July of 1998 John Gedeon of *Basic Computer Learning* based in Cleveland gave me the OCTM membership file he had converted from a *DB Master* file used on the *Apple IIe* to a file used with new software, *FileMaker Pro 4.0*. A laser printer and a *Power Macintosh 5200/75LC* completed the 1998 upgrade.

This banner year for membership, 1998, saw other improvements. Gone was any use of tractor fed medium. The laser printer provided materials with a more professional look: (1) membership cards, (2) renewal-notice letters, and (3) any other written communication from me about official OCTM business. Today a *Power Mac G5* computer with a 17-inch flat screen display invoiced in March 2004 helps me manage OCTM membership data using software, *File Maker Pro 7.0*.

Communications

OCTM has had a treasured history of communicating with its members. Of course, email is so much more common today. Many members email me their membership questions that I can efficiently answer via email. Although renewal notices are currently sent by way of the United States Postal Service, I am hopeful that by the time I have had the privilege to serve as OCTM's Membership Secretary for twenty-six years, membership renewal notices can be sent to the majority of OCTM's members by way of their email. Even at this point in OCTM's sixty-year history, there are a few OCTM members who do not have an email address. I am hopeful that future upgrades to our membership processing procedures will significantly reduce that number. The content of the renewal notice, whether it be sent by email or through the USPS, will probably not vary

much from the letter that was sent in 1999 when Duane Bollenbacher was president (See Figure 1).

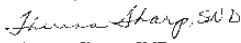
June 1, 1999

Dear OCTM Member,

The purpose of this communication is to make a **renewal notice announcement to you.** Your OCTM membership will expire in **July, 1999.**

As you know, the OCTM dues are currently \$40.00 for five years and \$10.00 for one year. When you decide to renew your membership, please complete the form below.

I look forward to hearing from you so that OCTM will be able to continue to serve you in meeting your professional mathematics education needs.

Sincerely,

 Theresa Sharp, SND
 OCTM Membership Committee Chair

OCTM DUES RENEWAL FORM

Name _____ Male Female
 Address _____
 City _____
 State _____ Zip+4 _____
 SS# _____
 Home Phone (____) _____
 Work Phone (____) _____
 e-mail _____
 Employed by _____
 Position _____
 Grade Levels _____

Check one:
 ___ \$40.00 - 5 years
 ___ \$10.00 - 1 year
 ___ \$ 2.00 - student

Send me Patron Life Membership Information

Make check payable to **OCTM** and mail with this form to:
7/98 Theresa Sharp, SND
 OCTM Membership Committee Chair
 PO Box 24457
 Cleveland, OH 44124-0457

Fig 1 Membership form (1999 version)

OCTM has had a treasured history of communicating with its members.

Membership and Income to Date

Membership numbers were particularly high as of March 1st of 1997, 2000, and 2001. The chart in Figure 2 summarizes the OCTM membership numbers as of March 1st of each year. March 1st was selected for a number of reasons. First of all, the OCTM Board meets in March. I prepare a membership report for that meeting. Secondly, by that March meeting I have processed the memberships from the annual OCTM fall conference that I have received from the person in charge of registration for that particular conference. Thirdly, by January 1st I have received the updated list of members for that academic year from the Ohio Education Association and thus, by the March Board Meeting, I

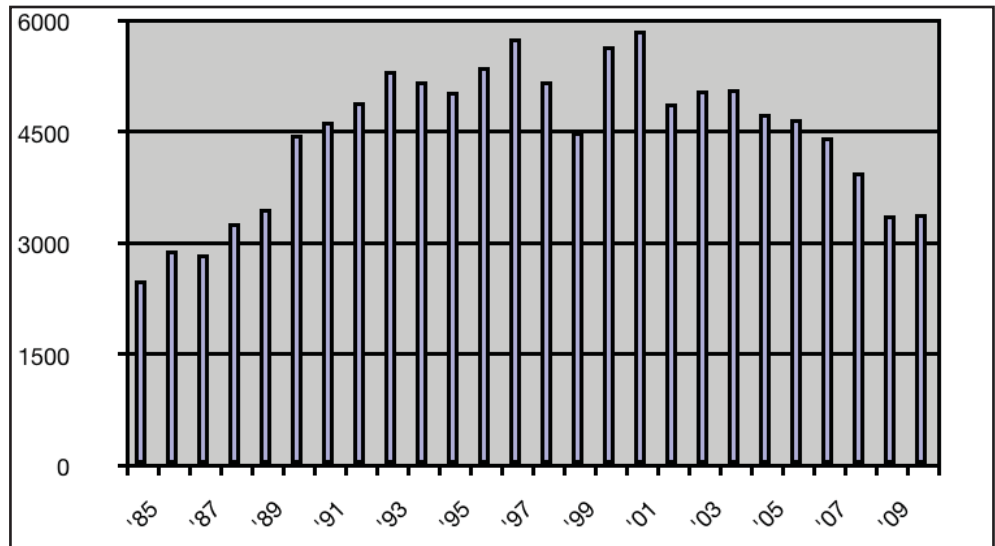


Fig 2 OCTM Membership as of March 1st

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have processed the OCTM memberships for that particular academic year that have come through OEA.

Total income from membership dues to OCTM from December 6, 1985 when I was appointed OCTM Membership Secretary until January 1, 2011 stands at \$946,172.15 according to my records. This approaching-one-million-dollars income amount testifies to the value so many mathematics teachers and others connected with mathematics education place on the learning of mathematics by students in Ohio and beyond.

Conclusion

In the twenty-five years and counting since December of 1985, the humming of the *Apple IIe*, the by-comparison sluggish churning of the 5 1/4" floppy disks, and the slow rat-a-tat of the dot matrix printer have evolved into the humming of the G5 *Macintosh* computer, the ultra quiet workings of a data stick, and the almost immediate swish of the *Laser Writer 8500* printer. As this insider into the workings of the OCTM membership data processing reflects on the noises associated with the office, it is my hope that the progress made in efficiency rises to the consciousness of those who have taken the time to read this historical perspective on

OCTM's membership processing over the past twenty-five years and counting.



SISTER MARY THERESA SHARP S.N.D., tsharp@ndec.org, was appointed OCTM Membership Secretary by OCTM President, Bill Hunt, in 1985. At the time, she was a high school mathematics teacher and a member of OCTM.



She continues her uninterrupted service as OCTM Membership Secretary. She is a Lecturer in the Mathematical Sciences Department of Kent State University. Her major area of research interest is proportional reasoning. She has presented at numerous local and state mathematics conferences. She is doctoral student in the Curriculum and Instruction Program in the School of Teaching, Learning and Curriculum Studies in the College of Education, Health, and Human Services at Kent State University.