

President's Corner

By *Léo Lefebvre*,
President, Toronto Users Group for Midrange Systems

Here we are, a few days after the Fall 2004 COMMON Conference. As you know, this one was presented in Toronto, after an absence of sixteen years.

How does TUG relate to COMMON? Comparing TEC with a COMMON Conference would be like comparing a professional hockey team (like the Toronto Maple Leafs) with a Junior A hockey team. Both are presenting an excellent game of hockey for a different audience. The games are similar but the backup team is quite different. TEC presents six tracks during two days, COMMON about 30 each of the 4 regular days of sessions (not counting the Sunday events at COMMON). TEC relies on about 12 volunteers, COMMON has a multitude of volunteers (over 300) plus about fifteen people on staff. TEC is presented once a year, COMMON twice. TEC will have between 200 - 300 attendees, mostly from the Greater Toronto Area. The current attendance at COMMON is about 2,000 people (per conference) from all over North America. So, for TUG people, COMMON is like the model to follow.

The COMMON Conference promised to be a great place for TUG to promote



its own TEC. And TUG did not miss the occasion. TUG was all over the place, especially with the “flashing butterflies!” They were everywhere and they were the “talk of the town.”

TUG was the main “occupant” of the LUG booth (LUG = Local Users Groups) and TUG set a new standard in running a LUG booth at COMMON. At previous conferences the LUG booth was simply a table with two back panels and a couple of maps (a map of the USA and a map of the world) and one or two people to greet the visitors. With TUG, the LUG area had two tables, the same two back panels plus a complete pop-up booth! Most of the time, the place was staffed with two people and quite often three or four. Normally, the LUG booth barely opens during the COMMON Expo hours (i.e., two and half days.) TUG opened the booth early Sunday morning and kept it open until the end of the conference on Thursday afternoon. If you were at the conference, you could not miss the TUG booth. It was right at the center of the place and quite visible. Four volunteers were the core group of greeters: **Wende Boddy**, **Ed Jowett**, **Vaughn Dragland**, and **Glenn Gundermann**. Many others came to help – too many to enumerate. Along with TUG, two other area Users Groups were present at the booth: COiN (Central Ontario iSeries Network – Kitchener, ON) and MUGWNY (Midrange Users Group of Western New York – Buffalo).

What should we think of COMMON? To all of the Local Users Groups like TUG, COiN, MUGWNY and others, COMMON is a big brother, an example to follow, and a source ideas when needed. Many of the COMMON features have been replicated and adapted to local needs. Even TEC has borrowed ideas from COMMON. Many times we



Léo Lefebvre

refer to TEC as being a mini-COMMON (mind that once in a while we would like to call COMMON a TEC on steroids.) For LUGs, COMMON can also be a testing ground for speakers and topics. We check them out at COMMON: if the topic is popular, it should be a good topic to present at LUG meetings. Many good things can be said about COMMON but I would need lot more space. Let's just leave it here for now.

Unfortunately (or fortunately for our own TEC) it is unlikely that COMMON will be back in our territory in the foreseeable future. There are too many elements against a quick comeback. If you would like to discuss that, e-mail me at leo@tug.ca.

The coming of COMMON to Toronto was also marked by an unprecedented event. Two years ago, when I presented **Beverly Russell** to the TUG members as a newly elected COMMON board member, I challenged her to be the COMMON President when COMMON comes to Toronto. The good news is: she did it! Congratulations Beverly! The TUG Board and I, as well as the whole TUG membership are behind you. I knew you could do it! Bev is the second woman to be President of COMMON and the first Canadian ever!

As we close the book fondly on the events of October 2004, we now turn our eyes to the November MoM (once again at Woodbine) and an exciting year ahead in 2005...

