



# THE BEHAVIORAL VISION PROJECT

## A Computer Bulletin Board For Behavioral Optometry

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### **ABSTRACT**

*With the help and encouragement of OEP a bulletin board has been established to meet the needs of behavioral optometry. The BBS is capable of distributing organizational announcements as well as allowing direct communications between participating optometrists. This article provides basic information about the hardware and software necessary to connect to the system. The structure of the bulletin board is discussed to acquaint new users with the workings of the system and some of the basic commands.*

### **KEY WORDS**

*computer bulletin boards, BBS, modem, communications software, shareware, capture file, ASCII, Bulletin section, Message section, Files section, electronic mail*

One of the major goals of OEP has been to facilitate communication among its Clinical Associates. In 1991, through modern technology, OEP is providing another major link in the communication network. Using computers and modems operating over regular phone lines it is now possible to connect to a central, electronic bulletin board devoted to the issues of behavioral optometry. As with many computer bulletin boards, the conversations and materials available will be defined by the users. OEP is exploring the possibilities of making transcripts and other information available through the bulletin board. Ongoing conversations related to clinical practice and research are open to any interested optometrist. "Logging on" to the system is relatively simple for anyone with a properly equipped computer system.

The BBS (Bulletin Board System) works like a community bulletin board. Anyone can upload a message to be read by other users. Messages concerning similar topics are grouped together in message areas devoted to that topic. Anyone reading the message has an opportunity to respond. Messages are limited to a page or two, but by using the FILES section of the BBS, longer documents can be accessed. Communications from OEP Clinical Associates to OEP headquarters are picked up regularly. Conversations between colleagues are facilitated by the ability to receive a message and deliver a response in a very short time.

The bulletin board can be used with any type of computer system. An internal or external modem must be connected

through one of the serial communications ports of your computer. Modems are rated by speed of transmission and this bulletin board is equipped to handle modems up to 14,400 Baud. Most users prefer 2400 Baud because it provides reasonable speed at a very reasonable price. Slower modems are usable, but the slower rate will mean longer time and higher phone bills. Follow the directions provided with the modem for connecting it to your computer and any regular phone line. Once you are hooked up you will need communications software to control the transmissions through the modem to and from your computer.

Software is specific for each type of computer and several programs are commercially available for each type of computer system. Another alternative is shareware. Many shareware products are every bit as good as commercial products and are more economical. They also provide you the opportunity to try the product before paying a licensing fee. TELIX is an excellent communications program available for IBM compatible systems. The OEP has made arrangements to distribute this program to optometrists interested in logging-on (see New Products, page 79). TELIX is simple to use and has all the features of much more expensive programs. The most frequently used features are: the dialing directory (which stores phone numbers, connection parameters, and passwords), automatic dialing and connection (through script files), a capture file which allows for fast downloading of messages, and several transmission protocols for sending and receiving files.

Every effort is made to minimize "on-line" time for long distance callers. The capture file and Z-modem transmission protocol, available with TELIX, allow fast and accurate downloading of messages and files which can then be read after the phone call has been ended. Experienced users can transfer many pages of messages and replies in a one- or two-minute phone call.

In order to be compatible with different types of computers the bulletin board requires that all messages be in ASCII format. ASCII is an international convention for computer text. It contains no extra formatting codes that word processing programs add to a file. ASCII is readable by ALL word processing programs, and the compatibility problem is avoided. MacIntosh users with the proper software can log on and read the ASCII messages as easily as IBM users.

QEDIT is a shareware ASCII editor which is compatible with bulletin boards and will be available through the OEP in the package with TELIX (see New Products, page 79). QEDIT is a powerful and "friendly" program for creating ASCII text files. Although callers may leave messages using the bulletin board's built-in editor, this necessitates staying on the phone line while the message is entered. QEDIT allows you to type messages into individual files which you save until you log on. Then you can quickly upload them into the appropriate message areas on the bulletin board.

If a lot of this sounds like a whole new vocabulary, don't go into future shock. The hardware and the software take care of most of the technicalities. Your computer supplier can usually assist you in setting up your hardware and software. You'll also find that there are a large number of user groups and computer enthusiasts who will gladly help you in getting set up.

The information that must be specified in the communication software is:

Parity	none
BITS	8
STOP BITS	1
Com Port	(specific to your computer)
Baud Rate	(specific to your modem)

Don't worry about what these mean, they simply tell the modem how to connect to the BBS, and must be part of the setup.

## CALLING THE BULLETIN BOARD

The phone number of the Behavioral Vision Project bulletin board is:  
1-412-247-4610

The number is dialed by the computer just as it would be by a person making a long distance call. The dashes "-" are not necessary for the computer, but they make the phone number more readable. This phone number can be put into the communication software's dialing directory, for easier access.

When the computer dials the number, the phone will ring once or twice and then you will hear an audible squealing and loud static noise as the computers connect to each other. An identifying message will appear on your screen, and the program will then prompt you to type in your first name, then your last name. Enter the form of your name that you plan to use on the BBS. This information is being stored EXACTLY to identify you each time you log on and it will be used to identify your messages.

You will be prompted to type in a password. Passwords should be at least six characters long and must be entered each time you log on. The program will check to make sure that it has correctly identified the caller. After completing this, you will find yourself at the MAIN MENU (see Figure 1).

The bulletin board has three main functions:

The B)ULLETIN SECTIONS carry various informational messages about current OEP meetings, an Editorial and some information about the system. The M)ESSAGE SECTION serves as a mail drop for sending and receiving messages. In the message section there are different areas for different topics. Some areas allow for either public or private messages, while other areas allow public messages only. Some areas are primarily for general messages, while others are set aside for discussions of specific issues or for particular projects.

The third section is the F)ILES SECTION. It allows for the uploading and

downloading of files or documents which are too long for the message section. While a message uploaded into a message area can be no longer than 3K (about two pages, typewritten) a text file can be almost any length. The different file areas also offer programs that are utilities, games or interesting text files. For instance, there is an area for different MSDOS utilities which make using one's computer easier. OEP has also made available a transcript of a two-day lecture by A.M. Skeffington at the 1966 Northwest Congress.

From the MAIN MENU, you will be able to enter the B)ulletin section, the F)ile section and the M)essage section. The MAIN MENU will also display other choices which allow you to C)hange your setup, A)nsWER the questionnaire, get help [?)Help], read the E)ditorial, and other things.

On your first call you will only be permitted access to the system for a short period of time. Take this time to register on the system by using the A)nsWER Questions option on the MAIN MENU. This bulletin board is devoted specifically to behavioral optometry and is set up mainly for optometrists, but there will be areas available to the general public. Access to the system is controlled by the SYSOP (system operator). The information from the questionnaire allows the SYSOP to arrange for you to access more message and file areas. After the SYSOP updates the computer files, you will have sufficient time on each call to upload and download messages and files.

If you choose the OEP Bulletin Section you will be confronted with several choices (see Figure 2). In this section is the C)alendar of events, information about the R)eprint of the Month, a L)isting of reprints available through OEP, the E)ditorial, a list of the Clinical Associates that are participants in the bulletin board, International news, and information about VisionExtension (new items etc.)

You can also choose the M)essage Section (see Figure 3) from the MAIN MENU. This will place you in one of the

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MAIN:
B)ulletin  M)essage Area  F)ile Area  O)EP Bulletin Area  ?)HELP  N)ew BBS News
E)ditorial  A)nsWER Questions  G)oodbye (logoff)  S)tatistics  C)hange setup  P)ersonal
Stats      Q)uick Time      X)press mail
Select:

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Figure 1. MAIN MENU

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OEP USERS MENU
Please select one of the following
information files:

C)alendar of OEP events
R)eprint of the Month from OEP
L)isting of Reprints Available
E)ditorial
P)articipants in the BBS
O)n the International Front
T)he Latest from VisionExtension
Q)uit to the Main Menu

Select: (C,R,L,E,P,O,T or Q): q

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Figure 2. OEP Bulletin Area Menu

specific message areas. Using the A)rea Change option will allow you to choose one of several message areas that are set up for participation. Once you have chosen a message area, you can choose any of the messages to read by looking at a L)ist of the messages. You then type the number of the message you wish to read. Using the capture file setup in TELIX and pressing "=" allows all the messages to scroll continuously so that you can read them once you have hung up. You can also E)nter a message, R)eply to a message you just read or U)pload a message from a previously written text file.

In the F)ILE SECTION (see Figure 4.) , you can obtain files from several different areas (See Figure 5). There is an area for Text files from OEP (See Figure 6). This will include transcriptions of previous lectures, as well as the possibility of receiving some OEP papers through the

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[27] Highest: 27 Msg.area #1 ..General Messages (Stay on this board)
A)rea Change  M)AIN MENU  N)ext read msg  P)rior msg  C)urrent  E)nter message
R)eply        =)read non-stop  -)read original  +)read reply  L)ist (brief)  S)can
I)nquire      G)oodbye (logoff)  U)pload        ?)HELP
Message number or SELECT:

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Figure 3. MESSAGE AREA

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The FILES Section. File area # 7 ... News From OEP
A)rea Change  L)ocate File  F)ile titles  T)ype (show)  G)oodbye
U)pload       D)ownload    M)ain menu    C)ontents    ?)HELP
Select:

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Figure 4. FILES SECTION

OEP Information & Text Files:			
BVP.TXT	6016	03-06-90	How To Upload and Download Messages quickly
LECTURE.ZIP	34397	09-12-90	Complete 1966 NW Cong Skeffington 2-day lecture
LECTURE1.ZIP	10427	09-12-90	Part I of Skeffington 1966 NW Cong Lecture
LECTURE2.ZIP	15387	09-12-90	Part II of Skeffington 1966 NW Cong Lecture
LECTURE3.ZIP	11103	09-12-90	Part III of Skeffington 1966 NW Cong Lecture
SKEFSTAR.ZIP	35205	09-12-90	Wordstar Version of Skeffington 1966 Lecture

Figure 5. OEP Information and Text Files

bulletin board. You can list the F)iles or L)ocate a file if you don't know what file area it is in. Files can be U)pload or D)ownloaded. With a little practice, you will realize that it is a simple and quick process.

It will take a few calls to the Bulletin Board for you to become familiar with the various areas and the commands which allow you to fully utilize the various sections. It is a good idea to practice by calling and using a local bulletin board.

The commands are always listed on a menu each time you are required to make a choice. The command explanations may seem a little cryptic for the new user, but on-line help is available by pressing "?" at any of the menus. If you still have difficulty, leave a message for the SYSOP describing your difficulty. You can leave a message as you end your session. He'll get back to you with a helpful message as soon as possible. The bulletin board program is called OPUS and is one of the commonly used BBS programs. Patients and friends who communicate by modem may also be able to give you a hand.

Many people working in large companies now take electronic mail and computer communications for granted. Meetings are arranged, documents developed and edited, and announcements distributed entirely through the computer network. In our individual offices there is probably little need for electronic mail for keeping in touch with our staff. However, in the extended national and international

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Listing of File Areas
1] New Files
2] Archiving Files for Compression &
  Decompression
3] Telecommunication Programs
4] ASCII Editing Programs
5] Killer Files
7] News From OEP
8] MSDOS Utilities
13] The Burning Questions File Center
14] Book Reviews

File area [Area #, N)ext, P)rior, ?)list]: 7

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Figure 6. Listing of File Areas

community of behavioral optometry, electronic mail can allow communications which simply were not possible a few years ago. Whether asking for an opinion on patient care, continuing a discussion on testing procedures, or simply asking for a hotel recommendation from a colleague in a distant city, the BBS provides a new and developing means of communication.

Behavioral optometry developed from the clinical experience of practicing optometrists. From Skeffington's journeys from city to city by train, the monthly OEP papers, the development of congresses and seminars, through the more recent *Journal of Behavioral Optometry*, the growth of behavioral optometry has depended upon the sharing of these experiences and the combined efforts of many practitioners. The BBS provides a new avenue for this growth and development.

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Disconnect [Y,n,?=help]? y

Leave a note to Barry Cohen
[y,N,?=help]? n

Thanks for utilizing the Behavioral
Vision Project Bulletin Board!

Bye, thanks for calling. Please hang up
now.

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