Overall control of ClubSpot is now vested in the Association of Computer Clubs' Communication Committee. This committee is responsible for a general overview of the database, the organisation of conferences to train new editors and running a ClubSpot stand at computer exhibitions.

The manager of ClubSpot is Len Stuart. Together with his deputy, Vernon Quaintance, and several assistant managers, it is his job to look after the day-to-day running of the database. The work of the managers is to create and delete frames, deal with all the messages sent to ClubSpot and perform certain other tasks, such as designing new parts of the database.

The people who actually do the work are the editors. Mostly computer club members, they use ordinary home micros to place information onto the system. Many ClubSpot editors use BBC Micros, though others use Spectrums, Apples and Commodore machines. ClubSpot editors like to boast that although they are amateurs producing a database with home micros, theirs is often better than that produced by professional companies.

Prestel is structured so that there are six GEC mainframe computers open to the public: two in Birmingham and four in London. 'Dickens' and 'Keats' are the Birmingham mainframes. 'Dryden', 'Derwent', and 'Enterprise' are their counterparts in the capital. Ninety-six per cent of the country can access one of these for a local phone call charge. To put information onto the system, Information Providers must phone up a seventh computer, situated in London, called 'Duke'.

When a ClubSpot editor has entered his ClubSpot identity and password, he then calls up page 910 and enters a further password to obtain the Prestel editing system. The two main commands available at this stage are 4 and 0: 3 allows a frame to be 'amended' while 0

('overwrite') allows the editor to define the 'routes' leading from the frame, as well as certain other details, such as whether the frame can be accessed by the general public.

Several editors have written programs that allow them to design whole frames on their home micro, which can then be 'uploaded'. This can turn a 10 minute phone call into a two minute one.

To qualify to become a ClubSpot editor you must prove that you are capable of using the system (usually by having attended an Editors' Training Conference) and have the authority to represent a club. Editors must undertake to keep their material within acceptable limits. At the present time there are over 30 editors actively updating the pages of ClubSpot

ClubSpot is not self-financing; all of its facilities are donated by Prestel. A Main Information Provider outside ClubSpot would have to pay over £5,000 for a three-digit front page, and meet the running charges and any extra facilities. By providing these facilities free of charge, Prestel clearly shows that it attaches considerable value to ClubSpot Micronet also makes a significant contribution to the running costs of the database.

The future of ClubSpot looks very bright. It has proved an excellent testing ground for new ideas and this is expected to continue. It can be seen as an example of what the enthusiastic amateur can do with a home micro. In many cases, the material in ClubSpot is better than that produced by professionals on much more expensive equipment.

In the not too distant future, people will be able to use their micro to do a multitude of tasks from the comfort of their own home. They will be able to work, shop and communicate over large distances. They should not be surprised to find that amateur input will provide a major influence on the development of computer communications.