

Shop carefully when buying home computer

The market in home microcomputers is flooded with dozens of different models and confusing talk about memory capacity, disk drives and display options. How do you sort out the hard-sell from the hardware?

A microcomputer is a major consumer purchase and should be approached with the same kind of forethought and care used to buy new home appliances or a car. The job of computer sales people, who may or may not be knowledgeable about their product, is to sell hardware and software. Potential buyers must beware.

You should know your family's needs and as many facts about microcomputer systems as you can gather before you enter the store. A good first question to ask is why your family needs a computer. Compare what computers do best with jobs you have trouble handling.

Software packages (computer programs) are available that can:

- make family financial plans and records;
- monitor investments;
- do household inventories;
- monitor security systems;
- compose and edit correspondence;
- compute nutrients in specific foods or diet plans;
- enlarge or reduce sizes of recipes;
- compute alternative costs of loans and mortgages;

—analyze home energy costs; and;
—become part of preschool or school children's educational programs.

For a subscriber's fee you can also connect your computer with information networks that provide commercial advertising, electronic mail, stock market information and other services.

Microcomputers do have advantages, but they have drawbacks too. For example, it takes time to learn how to use one. In some cases 40-70 hours may be required just for learning routine operating procedures. Inputting and updating information takes additional time.

One the other hand, the need for, or desire to have, remedial or accelerated educational programs for your child may be worth any price. If you think you want to buy a computer, call a family conference to consider the trade-offs you'll have to make. Basic microcomputer models vary in cost, but none are cheap.

Adding several software packages can greatly increase the cost. Is your family willing to forego other purchases in order to join the computer revolution?

Before you let hype on the salesroom floor hypnotize you, arm yourself with a long list of

questions. Judging from experience of first-time computer owners, the most important questions concern service and instruction for use. If you buy from a dealer in Portland and live in eastern Oregon, you may be in big trouble if something goes wrong. And this is not a remote possibility. Some of the systems don't have all the bugs worked out.

In addition, instruction books are often hastily and poorly written and leave out points crucial to your understanding. Check out exactly what the warranty covers. Can the computer be tested in your home? Can it be returned? You should understand all the costs involved, including financing.

Be sure that the software programs you are considering are compatible with your brand of computer. They aren't all interchangeable. Also, investigate whether the program is based on sound principles and tested information. Is it "user friendly?" Some programs are more helpful than others in telling you exactly how to input information and call up the results. Could you make slight changes in the program to tailor it for your specific use?

After you get your new microcomputer home, you could be in for further surprises. It might alter family life. Families may want to think about this potential as they prepare to bring electronic technology into the home.

Extension Notes



From Lee Hamilton and Molly Driscoll



Spillyay Tymoo photo by Behrend

New OSU staff

There are two new faces in the OSU Extension office these days. Eraina Palmer, left, a familiar face in Warm Springs, began working in the Extension office in May. Mollie Driscoll, right, is the new 4-H, Home Economics agent and began working in September.

New club to meet Dec. 5

The 4-H Computer Club held its first meeting Monday, November 21st at the Community Center Arts and Craft Room. Twenty-one students and ten parents attended.

Myrna Bobb, Tom Wright and Harry Phillips are the club leaders.

During the meeting Mr. Wright discussed the types and costs of computers available for beginners. He also reviewed and described the disk, printer

and computer.

The club's next meeting is planned for December 5th, 7-8 p.m. in the 4-H Room. At this meeting, each member will be able to experience computer operation and programming.

For those students who were not able to attend the first meeting they may attend the December 5th meeting and become enrolled in 4-H.

If you have any questions feel free to call the Extension office 553-1161 ext. 238, or one of the leaders.

Heat loss through ducts

When furnace ducts run through attics, garages or other unheated areas, some heat gets away before reaching its destination. Homeowners can save on energy expenses by insulating these ducts.

It's an easy and profitable do-it-yourself job. The necessary supplies are two-inch-thick insulation with an attached vapor barrier and duct tape. Both can be purchased at a home supply store.

Some insulation, such as glass fiber or rock wool, can irritate the skin, eyes and lungs, so prepare for the job by donning a long-sleeve shirt, gloves, eye protection, and a

disposable dust mask.

Seal any leaks in the duct joints with duct tape. Then cut insulation into lengths that will wrap around the duct.

Wrap the sections of insulation around the duct, vapor barrier side out, and tape. Or if the duct is recessed, staple the insulation to the joints bordering the duct.

Also wrap insulation around the ends of the ducts. Seal all seams between insulation sections with duct tape.

For more information on how to insulate ducts, see the Oregon State University Extension Service publication "Home Insulation." ED931, available at the Warm Springs Extension Office.

Workshops to be held

Two evening workshops are being planned for expectant mothers in December by the Extension office. December 6th, 7-9 p.m., an Inexpensive and Safe Toy Workshop will introduce mothers to safety considerations to look for when buying or making toys at

home. Mothers will also be able to construct a safe toy from everyday materials.

December 13th, 7-9 p.m. a workshop on inexpensive and nutritious baby and toddler foods will help mothers select and prepare foods and snacks for their children.

Holidays are lonely for some

Not everyone feels the joy and love of family togetherness during the holidays. Many people are never lonelier than at this time of the year. Loneliness gets a lot of attention in songs and media stories during the holiday season. Many people feel they'd like to hide until it's over. Although people will often talk about intimate details of their lives, they may find it hard to admit loneliness to others or even to themselves.

Psychologists suggest that the best way of handling loneliness at any time is to talk about it. Explain to someone why you don't like it and some solutions may emerge. Loneliness is defined as missing someone, nothing more, nothing less. It may be special people or just missing the human contact that comes from friends and acquaintances. Since feelings of missing someone cannot be blamed on others, we are responsible for dealing with the situation ourselves.

Feeling of loneliness are quite natural, often stemming from temporary situations. Someone who has just moved, had a change in marriage status, is unemployed, a minority, poor, or living alone without choice may be struck with loneliness.

Several signals indicate loneliness in others. "Busy-work" serves to keep us from

ourselves. It's a safe-guard often used by students who put studying or reading ahead of friends. It continues in adulthood in the form of the "workaholic."

These symptoms often go unrecognized because society is proud of hard workers. Non-stop talkers may also be basically lonely. Talking gets attention and the steady flow of conversation is used to control situations and keep people at attention.

Even in marriage, partners may be lonely due to inadequate communication. When a wife or husband becomes obsessed with work or a spotless house, they may be signalling loneliness as they use excessive activity to fill their time.

Spouses who constantly watch TV, or dull the pain of loneliness with alcohol may be trying to escape themselves. Television sells happiness and family warmth.

Others fight loneliness with overeating, telephoning, sleeping, impulsive shopping or anonymous sexual encounters.

Contrary to what people think, the elderly are less lonely than others. Research indicates they have higher self-esteem, more close friends, feel more independent and complain less about physical and psychological symptoms of loneliness than young people.

Adolescence and young adulthood are often the

loneliest times of life. Growth and change in adolescence separates youth from parents and peers at times. Adolescents worry more about being unattached or not belonging than do younger children or adults.

Since relief from loneliness rests with the individual, direct action is necessary. Why you are lonely is less important than what action can be taken to resolve the feeling.

Resist the temptation to lose yourself in TV. It tells you that everything important and fun is happening elsewhere and that being alone is bad. But, do not confuse loneliness with being alone. People who are never alone can still feel lonely. Everyone needs some time alone to refresh the mind and spirit; feeling lonely is a signal that more human contact is needed.

The elderly, who are the least lonely, are also the ones who do most of the volunteer service. That might be an example to follow.

To combat loneliness, elevate people above material concerns. Go out and do something nice for someone. That may sound corny, but it works. Loneliness is less frequent when life is arranged so human contacts are more important than mechanical inanimate objects. The holidays are a good time to begin to cultivate natural talents for being with others.