



photo by Diana Sultenfuss

Personal and business computers are moving out of the business arena and into the home. The telephone is connected to a modem, which allows the computer to communicate with other computers.

dents, he said, who not only write dissertations on them, but also rent them to friends.

"They're making a fortune," Cahill said.

A computer that process and prints graphics in color is also popular, he said, especially among engineering students. This model uses a television screen, so students have the option of whether to buy a terminal.

Cahill and McDonald agreed that cassette memory computers are most practical for students. These systems don't have disc drives; that is, the memory is stored on cassette tapes by hooking a cassette recorder to the system. On disc drives, information is stored on magnetic discs that are inserted into the system.

McDonald said that although cassette memory is slower than disc (there's no way for the system to call up one program out of many without sifting through them all), it's reliable and inexpensive.

However, he added, most home systems tend to store information on floppy disks. Most programs also are written on discs, he said.

Cahill said one out of 10 computers he sells are personally oriented; many are home game systems, which have only a

4,000-character memory. These cost about \$400.

But Young said she can't predict how many of the computers she sells are intended purely for personal use; once customers get those systems home they begin to branch out and use them for other reasons.

"The next thing, the person is teaching himself how to work and function in the computerized world," she said.

Of course, Young said, the first function of a home system seems to be computing problems and word processing, "but the second one is entertainment."

Young, McDonald and Cahill said that home computers also are used for business and personal finance and record-keeping, letter-writing, and business and teaching aids.

The wide variety of software supports this.

Business software is management-oriented. Calculations are done by row and columns, meaning if one number in a calculation must be changed the computer will automatically compute the new total.

Cost of this type program ranges from \$100 to \$1,000.

Utility programs allow the operator to save on a disc the work or information he has gotten off another system. This is

appropriately called a data-capture, and costs between \$30 and \$100.

Graphics programs conjure three-dimensional graphics on the terminal, which can also move on screen.

And then there are game programs: chess, Galactic Attack, Gorgon. But surprisingly enough, Young said these don't outsell the other programs. They cost between \$15 and \$50.

The person who buys a home computer will probably be pleased with the variety of its functions and want to show off the new toy.

But overprotection could be a tendency when proud owners bring home their electronic baby.

By exercising common sense, the same needed to manipulate the computer's function, Young said, the computer owner can keep his system effectively inputting and outputting.

"You're in control of what you're doing," she stressed, adding that getting foreign matter, especially liquid, even water, in the system is the most damaging thing that can be done to a computer.

It's also advisable not to smoke around the system, she said, although smoke is a nebulous substance which probably wouldn't hurt it.

Temperature control is another factor which Cahill and Young said computer-owners shouldn't fret over; computers are comfortable in the same temperatures as people.

"If it's too hot for you, it's too hot for your micro-computer," Young said. "But keep the lettuce out of the keyboard, please."

Actually, most seemed to agree that home micro-computers are among the sturdiest features found in a home.

"I've seen those in places I wouldn't put my car," Cahill said.

Owners who have human babies also shouldn't worry, McDonald said, since the systems are practically indestructible and harmless to youngsters.

He said the 110 volts of electricity received from a wall socket for some systems is converted to about 5 within the computer.

And although he doesn't recommend it, McDonald said, "You could touch it with your tongue and it wouldn't hurt you."

In fact, he said, an Apple II caught in a house-fire only needed new casing afterward—the electronic structure was still usable.

But maybe kiddos with salads should be watched a little closely.