

Computer literacy becoming a necessity

Several sources teach Aggies

By BONNIE LANGFORD
Reporter

"OK class; your formal lab report will be due next week, and I want it done on a word processor."

The class listened to the lab instructor, and one disbeliever questioned him.

"Do we have to do it on a word processor?"

"Yes," the reply came. "It'll build character."

The poor girl was stuck. She didn't own a word processor; she didn't know how to operate the department's computer; she didn't even own a floppy. And she only had a week to learn. She was lucky: a friend did it for her, but you can't always count on friends.

She found out the hard way that the ability to use technology is now a prerequisite for modern survival. Computers are in, and if you can't compute you're out. However, the poor untechnical college student here has several choices for help, besides generous friends.

For learning to write computer programs — those that average numbers, alphabetize names or calculate means — a computer science course or a business analysis course can help. But you'll need at least a semester, not just seven days. Several classes are offered to make you fluent in any computer language you ever dreamed of. BASIC, FORTRAN, COBOL, are just some of the tantalizing courses available.

If you still have a semester to learn, but want something less than programming and more than word processing, like computer graphics, then your help may come from the Data Processing Center. They offer short courses every semester. The courses are free, but for most of them no hands-on training is provided. You are provided with computers accounts so you can practice on terminals at the DPC remote centers, such as the Academic Computing Center.

Courses include WYLBUR Demonstration, which can bring the Texas A&M computer system to a level of you can understand. This course will help for later courses, because most later courses require a basic knowledge of WYLBUR.

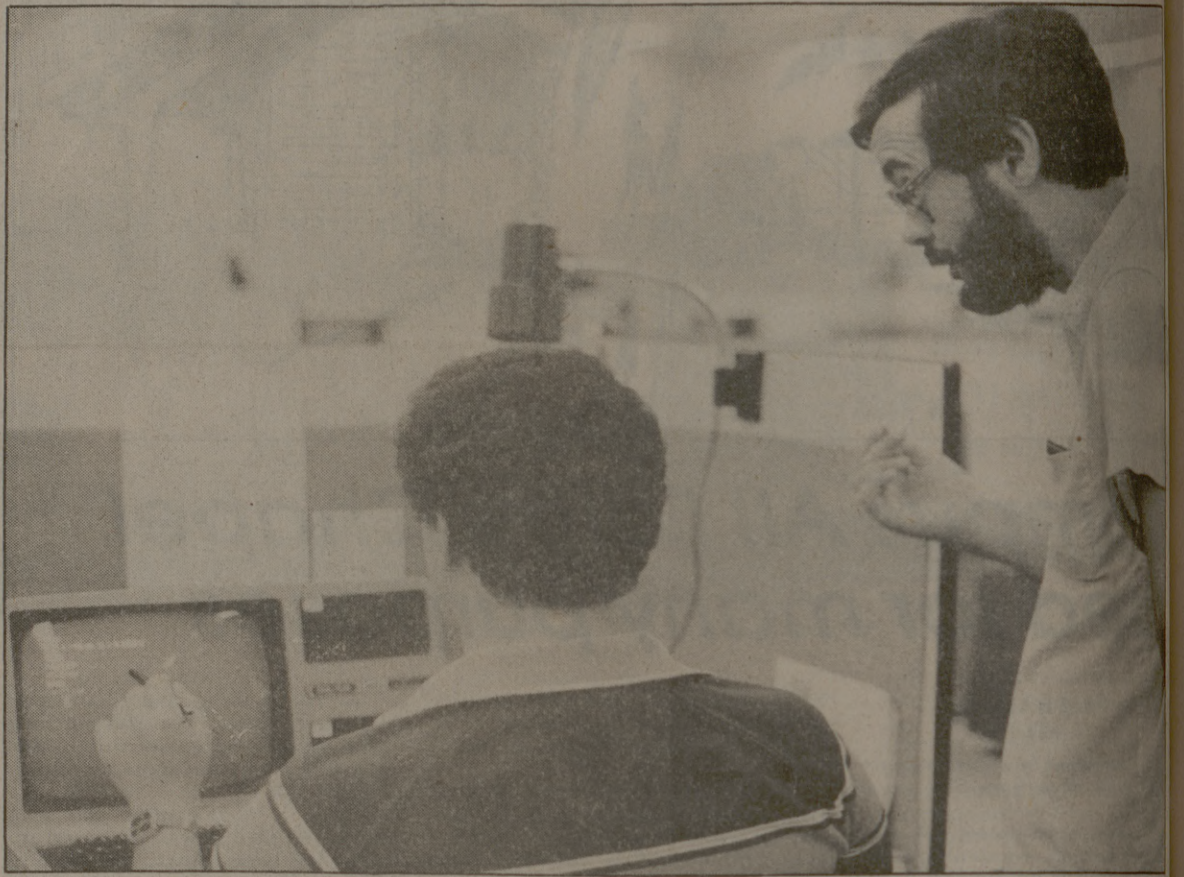
Word-processing programs, such as SCRIPT are also offered. Or if fancy graphics is what you need, you can get that from the overview of computer graphics course. The course covers the graphics software and hardware systems available here. One such graphics packet is DISSPLAY. With DISSPLAY you can get two- and three-dimensional graphs, geographic maps and business charts.

If all you want is processed words, or if time is important, then the Learning Resources Department in the Sterling C. Evans Library is what

you need. For just the price of a diskette (about \$4), you can have the world of WordStar, Word Handler, Easy Writer II and more. The LRD provides the word processing software, or canned programs. It takes from four to eight hours to learn to use a word processing system, unless you use something like the Peachtext. It has a training program built in that teaches you how to use the computer as you are on the computer, (for people who hate to read computer manuals) and takes only a couple of hours to learn to use. But with either method, after you learn how, you're able to write those nasty term papers in less time.

The LRD has dot-matrix printers (the computer-looking type that WYLBUR gives you), as well as letter quality printers, (those that make the output look like it was done on a normal typewriter.) In addition, some of the personal computers can be used to create FORTRAN, COBOL or PASCAL source codes files, but they are complicated to use.

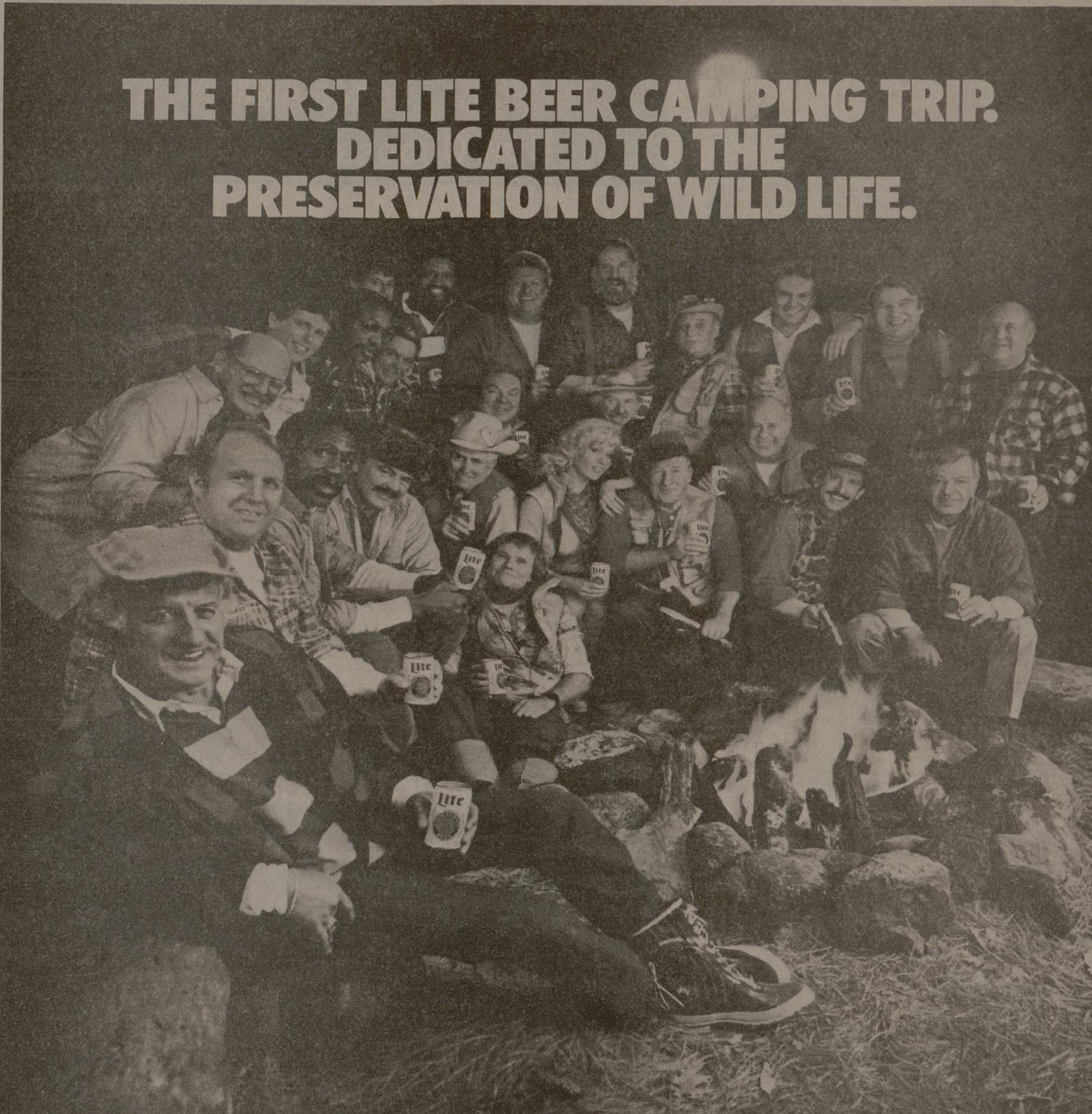
If it looks like a computer could be appearing in your future — get prepared now. It takes at least a semester to take a college credit or short course. And even though you can become familiar with one of the programs in the LRD in a few hours, there are other students trying to finish their labs, too.



David McLellan, a clerk in the learning resources department of Sterling C. Evans Library, offers some tips on one of the LRD's

Apple II microcomputers. The LRD also has microcomputers especially for word processing. (See related story page 3).

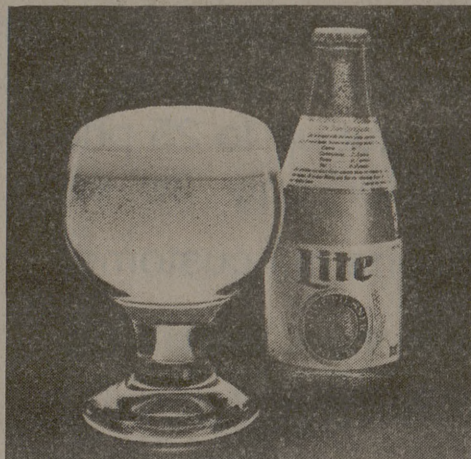
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