Read up on computers

"In 1978 there were about 5,000 desk-top computers in the United States. In 1982, there were 5 million. By 1990, it is estimated there will be 80 million."

lion." So stated Michael Crichton, Yes, Michael Crichton, the best-selling novelist who wrote "The Antomeda Strain," "The Terminal Man" and "The Great Train Robbery." Crichton, recently published a layman's guide to computers. His book, "Electronic Life," subtitled "How to Think About Computers" (Alfred A Knopf), is the latest in a flood of new books on computers to

Flow to Think About Computers' (Alfred A Knopf), is the latest in a flood of new books on computers to hit the market.

His message is fairly simple: Don't be afraid of them. They're only machines. They're here to make your life easier and what's more, they can be a lot a continuous or the same and the

ANOTHER HOT-SELLING book that has been around for a year is "The Personal Computer Book" by Peter A. McWilliams (Random House, 1982). A good introduction to personal computers, this book includes a very helpful brand name buying guide. For \$9.95 it is one of the best buys in your local

includes a very helpful brand name buying guldeFor \$9.95 it is one of the best buys in your local
bookstore.

Two other paperbacks published by Random
House I also found useful. The first is "Computerwise" by Henry Horenstein and Ellot Tarlin, and
the second is "The Random House Book of Computer
reliteracy" by Ellen Richman. Both were published
this year, and each costs \$9.95.

Basically they describe in simple terms how to
understand, buy and use personal computers. As
with all the books reviewed, both have excellent
glossaries to help the novice overcome the jargon.

A number of specific publications address the
need to become familiar and comfortable with
computer burzwords. Barron's Educational Services Inc. publishes the "Encyclopedia of Computer
Terms" by Douglas Downing. This book sells for
\$6.95 and includes "400 essential terms. Published by Bantam Books in 1983, this is an excellent
reference book for only \$4.35.

Random House, which has several computer related books on the shelf, also published "The Random House Dictionary of New Information Technolgy. Don't let the title mistead you. It is another
book of terms and definitions. This paperback was
also published this year and sells for \$7.95.

TWO MORE books the novice may find useful

also published this year and sells for \$7.95.

TWO MORE books the novice may find useful are published by lesser-known houses.

"Computers for Everybody" by Willis and Meri Miller takes sort of a populist approach and explains the world of computers in very down-to-earth non-threatening terms. (Published by Dillithum Press, 1983, \$7.95).

The second book "A Practical Guide to Small Computers" by Robert M. Rinder, was published in 1983 by Monarch Press and sells for \$11.95. Similar to the other, this book would be especially useful for beginners.

An inexpensive (\$2.95) and helpful guide is "Flersonal Computer Buyer's Guide" by Murray Bowes, Published by Clarkson N. Potter Inc. (1993, this guide describes, compares and prices the 40 tdp personal computers.

FOR VOUNGER readers, some of the books

FOR YOUNGER readers, some of the books mentioned may be appropriate. However, Daniel and Susan Cohen have written a book specifically gared to children. "The Kids Guide to Home Computers" (Pocket Books, 1983) costs only 81.55 and is well worth it. It is only 118 pages, so you might even be able to stuff one in a stocking on the 25th.

The last book to be reviewed is very timely. "The Hacker's Dictionary" is for the computer whiz kid or the curious spouse at home punching away on a personal computer. Subtitled "A Guide to the World of Computer Wizards," this book will not teach the

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user to play "War Games," nor how to change grades on a school transcript.
Guy Steele, Donald R. Woods, et al. contributed to this book in an effort to better understand and communicate with "backers." (Hackers are hobby-ists who attempt and sometimes succeed in entering on-line computer systems illegally, or without author/taxino.] Published by Harper & Row in 1983, this fun book costs \$5.95.

YOU WILL NOT find any of these books on the New York Times best seller list. However, all local book stores carry most, if not all of these titles.

A Troy resident, Watcke is dean of liberal arts at Wayne County Community College.

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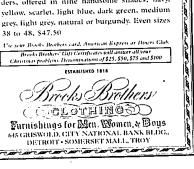
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