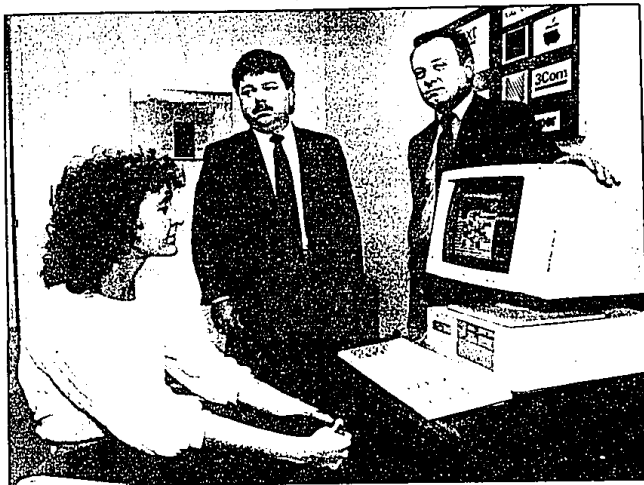




Thursday, November 12, 1987 O&E



photos by BILL DRESLER/staff photographer

CText President Larry Moore of Plymouth and CEO Darryl Tjaden check on Amy Ballou's progress at the screen.

## Computer firm on solid ground after shaky start

By Philip A. Shorman  
staff writer

A publishing-software company that was almost ground out of business 18 months ago closed its 1986 fiscal year with \$6 million in sales. It is better than halfway to doubling that figure for fiscal '87.

"We burned through so much money during our first two years you wouldn't believe it," said Larry Moore, the Plymouth resident who is president of CText. The company takes its name from the programming language it uses — "C" — and what they use the language for, creating applications software to process text.

With partner and chief executive officer Darryl Tjaden, CText was built in 1983 on the idea that newspapers and others that need editorial and classified advertising publishing systems don't have to use dedicated, or as Tjaden says, "proprietary" hardware. CText has more than 135 systems worldwide in service today.

Moore and Tjaden are renegades from Hastech, a Manchester, N.H., company that makes and sells electronic typesetting equipment.

They started with three employees in the basement of Moore's Plymouth home, but that lasted just two months. Then they moved to Tjaden's basement for a month and finally secured office space (now 3,000 square feet) off Eisenhower Parkway on Ann Arbor's south side.

It was hard to convince customers they were a growing company while they were sharing a room with a hot water heater, he said.

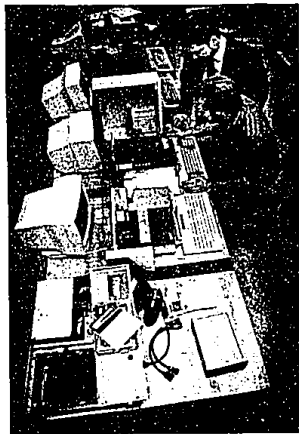
CText's success stems from its use of off-the-shelf personal computer equipment. The company is a value-added dealer for IBM, a value-added reseller for Apple and a big user of IBM compatibles.

A small engineering staff recalibrates hardware to fit a client's needs or uses the client's existing compatible system to run CText-licensed software packages.

MOORE and Tjaden say the "open architecture" (which allows users to skip over one-company service technicians and perform their own system modifica-

tions) of personal computers guards against obsolescence and allows PCs to be updated as needed.

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Pat Putman, manager of material control, and Kevin Smith, production supervisor, perform diagnostic testing on a piece of hardware before shipment.

## Computer technology boosts in-home equipment business

By Carolyn Carman  
special writer

Home-operated businesses are on the increase, and part of the reason may be the rapidly improving technology of personal computers.

"People are becoming very successful in establishing their own in-home businesses," said Jerry Gabriel, owner of Rainbow Computers of Troy. "The cost is minimal for the types of computers now available."

Computer systems on the market today would have been out of reach of the average buyer just a few years ago, Gabriel said.

"It is opening up new avenues for a whole lot of people," Gabriel sees two or three people a month who are interested in equipping an in-home office.

The first step in helping a client establish an office in his home is to find out exactly what a client's needs are before recommending a computer system, he said.

"We attempt to work with them and find out their needs and recommend equipment and software that will do the job they need."

Equipping an in-home office with a computer system costs \$3,000 to \$5,000, he said. Rainbow also sells

**'A work station should run \$400 or \$500, and you don't need much more space than an ordinary secretarial desk for an adequately equipped home office.'**

— Jerry Gabriel  
Rainbow Computers

computer supplies and work stations.

"A work station should run \$400 or \$500, and you don't need much more space than an ordinary secretarial desk for an adequately equipped home office."

STEWART WASSON, officer manager of Computerland in Livonia, said he has seen the number of customers inquiring about home office computers increase over the past two years.

"I see about three or four a week now where two years ago it was not nearly that — maybe one inquiry a week," Wasson said.

His store sells computer supplies,

but furniture must be ordered. "We get a lot of furniture, but it is not a big seller for us."

Diane Easton of Incomp Computer Services of Birmingham concurs on the rising popularity of home offices.

"The numbers have increased in the past year," she said. "It is not just large corporations any more." The first step is to identify the customer's needs because there are more than 10,000 types of software, Easton said.

"Do they want to use it for word processing or accounting, or do they require a data base? You need to know this before you can recommend a system."

Another element is the price and attempting to get customers into a system they can afford that will meet their needs.

Incomp carries a furniture line, Easton said, and they do see some one-stop shoppers who set up their entire home offices from purchases at Incomp.

"We have clients who come in and buy it all here."

Incomp's Birmingham location has experienced dramatic growth in

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## Expertise

### Appraisers develop specialties as profession moves toward licensing

By Mary Rodrigue  
staff writer



Barbara Seichter household furnishings



Ruth Rattner fine arts

Barbara Seichter knows household furnishings. Holding a copy of a gold-plated 17th-century candlestick that could be worth up to \$1,600 if it were genuine, she slips it over to reveal the \$15 price tag from K mart.

"This explains why you can't look at a photograph to make an appraisal," said Seichter, a Bloomfield Township interior designer. Seichter is part of the recently formed Michigan Appraisers, a branch of the International Society of Appraisers.

"We believe that ethics is part of our profession. Licensing will come. It's already before the state Legislature in Texas," she said.

Seichter and Ruth Rattner, a fine arts appraiser from Birmingham, would like to see Michigan apply a higher standard to the process of appraising personal property. While ISA is a decade old, the Michigan chapter was formed only last spring.

The two, with several colleagues — each specializing in a particular area — have taken several courses offered by the ISA in conjunction with the University of Indiana working toward certification. ISA focuses on personal property only, not real estate.

Classes have focused on ethics, types of appraisals and tax appraisals, which follow strict Internal Revenue Service guidelines and are considered legal documents.

"It's grueling classwork," said Rattner, who has traveled as far as Texas for courses. "And if you don't pass the exams, you're not considered qualified."

THE TWO ARE still working toward certification, which will come upon successful completion of a comprehensive examination.

"Everyone sets themselves up as an appraiser," added Seichter, noting that many consumers simply seek an insurance appraisal from the shop where they purchase their specialty goods, like fine jewelry.

"Insurance companies are beginning to get fussy, asking for qualified appraisals," she said.

"If they accept your appraisal, they are liable. They want authentication because of claims they have to pay."

Rattner and Seichter, both freelance appraisers, think that the day is coming when all insurance companies will demand appraisals by qualified professionals.

Rattner, formerly on the curatorial staff of the Detroit Institute of Arts and an art historian, gets referrals through local galleries, museums and schools.

"It's a marvelous field for young people to get into," she said. "No matter what I know, it's not enough. I've been in the art world 30 years. The decisions you make carry a great deal of weight. You are responsible."

HOLDING UP a limited edition lithograph by American artist Larry Rivers, Rattner describes the process of appraisal. She notes the artist's signature, where it appears, color, that it's sixth of 16 in the series, and any visible damage.

"We do appraisals only from the object," she added. Insurance and tax appraisals can vary tremendously on the same piece. Tax appraisal is required by the government when a person claims a charitable donation more than \$5,000.

"For a tax appraisal, we check records of comparable recent sales. For insurance appraisal, we consider the replacement value," Rattner said, noting that such work often entails exhaustive research.

Rattner is neither an art dealer nor a collector.

"I have no vested interest, nothing to gain," she said. Her fee is based on the amount of time she spends with her client and on research. A common, less savory tactic is for an appraiser to charge a percentage of the value of the item, often artificially inflating the worth to collect a higher fee, she said.

"CLIENTS USUALLY have art collections ranging from three to 60 pieces," she said. "Most need an insurance appraisal. But I also get referrals from galleries on clients who donate a work of art to a museum or a hospital and need a tax appraisal. "It's very common for a general appraiser to appraise art in an estate," she said. "Often they're not qualified. They don't have the expertise. We can only specialize in one area. No one can know everything about everything."

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