

# DEALER REPORT

## Experimental art gallery authorized to sell Apple

by Paul Weinberg  
CDN Staff

At the edge of Toronto's Bohemian Queen St. West district, Cultural Software is out to win the hearts and minds of writers, artists, graphic designers, interior designers, and architects over to the creative possibilities of personal computers.

Perhaps the only non-profit organization in Canada that is also an authorized Apple dealer, Cultural Software provides a range of community-oriented art and technology services, says director Derek Dowden.

Enter a storefront with the acronym ARC (Artculture Resource Centre) emblazoned at the top and you discover both an experimental art gallery and a packed little office that serves both the art displays and Cultural Software.

Cultural Software, which is two years old, is a major departure for the six-year-old ARC. It took a year for the dealership to receive Apple's authorization.

"We had to convince Apple that we had a clearly defined market, that we knew the people (i.e. in the arts community)," recalls Dowden.

"We are a VAR. Our vertical market is the creative community."

Cultural Software sells its own package, Arts Information Management System, which is customized to fit the creative needs of the individual customer.

AIM covers such fields as design, creative writing, graphics, image processing, illustration, typography, page layout and desktop publishing.

Prices for AIM vary from \$200 for individuals and nonprofit groups with budgets under \$100,000 to \$500 for corporations earning over a \$1 million in annual revenues.

Cultural Software's range of services are structured to introduce the computer on a gradual basis to either the technophobe or the artist/writer who is too poor to purchase a system at the moment.

Novices can rent computer time at \$5 an hour. They also can pay between \$30 to \$40 to attend any of the monthly workshops on the use of the Apple Macintosh or Commodore's Amiga.

Subjects include: "An Introduction to Apple Macintosh; Macintosh Databases: Using Overview; Desktop Publishing; Introduction to Pagemaker; and Amiga Graphic Software: An Introduction."

Cultural Software also has its own bulletin board system, Artnet, which for a fee provides a host of services for its clientele, including messaging, special-interest conferencing, electronic mail and electronic publishing. There are about 300 registered users.

The non-profit operation originally focused upon hardcore writers and artists but its clientele has since broadened to include advertising and marketing companies.

"We now cater to the creative needs of business," says Dowden. (Continued Page 17)



Derek Dowden directs Cultural Software which shares facilities and premises with the Artculture Resource Centre (ARC) in Toronto.

## Cultural Software client base small, out of the ordinary

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is quite happy with. "We prefer to keep our base small so we can service it."

One such client in the city is Manifest Communications Inc. which provides social marketing information for health promotion campaigns such as the federal government's Participation.

Cultural Software recently sold Manifest a network of eight Macintoshes, one Laserwriter and a Imagewriter.

Contrast this with one of Cultural Software's more offbeat customers, a designer of murals who goes by the name of AOI. A walking art piece, he wears a coat made of astro turf, as well as a decoration on his back depicting some animals crawling on a lawn.

One thousand people have come through Cultural Software's workshops where Zen Buddhists and United Church people rub shoulders with representatives from Bell Canada and York University, according to Dowden.

The client base for Cultural Software's complete systems is under 50, a figure that Dowden

There are a dozen people employed with both ARC and Cultural Software, the numbers split between the two sections. Combined they operate on a \$500,000 budget. Cultural Software, which has become the larger of the two, had sales of \$350,000 in its latest fiscal year.

Both receive subsidies from such traditional sources as arts councils, Wintario and the federal Department of Communications.

In February of next year a trans-Atlantic conference, Interactivity '88, is being planned simultaneously at Innis College at the University of Toronto and at University of Nice in France. Cultural Software and the McLuhan Program on Culture and Technology at the University of Toronto are the Toronto co-sponsors.

The conference will feature trans-Atlantic discussions and entertainment as well as a display of communications products.