

## Audio-Visual Technology at Kierstead Hall

Five shots ring out in rapid succession. Five small, dark spots appear on the white bull's-eye target. You can almost smell the cordite.

But the gunshots are sound effects generated by a computer, and the target is a digital graphic on a screen. The firing range is a computer lab, and the marksman is a forestry student, trigger finger on the mouse button, using a Macintosh computer to learn about accuracy in the measuring of trees.

If you think that sounds a little far-fetched, think again. This kind of application of computer technology to the teaching process is exactly what the University of New Brunswick's new Centre for the Promotion of Instructional Technology (CPIT) is all about. CPIT is a multidisciplinary project of four people on the UNB Fredericton campus. Glen Jordan of the forest resources department, Jane Fritz, computer science, John McLaughlin, surveying engineering, and John Webster, audio-visual services, have joined forces to offer both equipment and expertise to help faculty and students at UNB make more and better use of computers in the

education process. With \$32,000 from The Futures Fund at UNB and about \$26,000 in equipment support from the Apple Canada Education Foundation, the centre is becoming the focus of a new wave of interest in the microcomputer as an aid to classroom presentation and individual tutelage.

John Webster, director of UNB's audio-visual services, believes the microcomputer's versatility and speed in handling complex information have never been fully exploited for instructional aid in the classroom. "What interests us is the idea of illustrating concepts and materials characterized by theory and relationships that are normally very hard to illustrate," Mr. Webster explained. The software used by the sharpshooting forestry student was authored by Prof. Jordan and Mr. Webster, using the Macintosh program HyperCard. "Ten years of teaching forest mensuration to freshmen made me realize that the concepts of accuracy, precision and bias of measurements are often difficult for students to grasp," Prof. Jordan explained. "I put together a little program that allowed me to deliver that stuff in

class in a more effective way - no>

Using a liquid crystal video interface and an overhead projector, the computer's display of images can be seen by the whole class. Targets, tape measures and tree trunk cross-sections combine with text and the spoken lecture to bring complex relationships into sharper focus. After class, individual students can use a designated computer to review the lecture material in the software package.

Located in the Keirstead Hall media lab of audio-visual services, CPIT has an impressive array of equipment. Five Macintosh SE computers, each equipped with a large-capacity hard disk drive, have been set up for students and faculty to use. A digitizing scanner for graphics is also in place and two Mac II computers and equipment in the media lab are also available for use by the centre.

Though CPIT has just begun to operate, interest is high and people have already begun using the equipment and expanding their instructional arsenals. A series of introductory workshops in December and January dealt with

"fairly elementary things in support of classroom delivery," Prof. Jordan explained. "We were teaching people how to use a Macintosh -- or any computer for that matter -- to prepare illustrations for use in class, to

keep track of grades and compile them at the end of a course, simple course administrative things, and we've had good response to that."

Students and instructors from a number of faculties have approached the centre with specific projects or problems in presentation. A geology professor is interested in using a videodisk player, controlled by a computer, for classroom presentations. "One large videodisk will hold 54,000 pictures, a daunting organizational task for a teacher who wants to use only a dozen specific images," Mr. Webster said. "But a microcomputer can make sense of all those pictures. It lets you organize them in various ways and compose your own presentation, mixing still and moving pictures from the same disk."

"Instead of overlaying paper maps on a light table to see how things

correlate, you can do it electronically on a computer screen. It's faster and it opens up analytical possibilities you might never think of otherwise because of the computer's ability to manage data easily in various ways," he explained. Second-year physical education student Kim Umbach has only three to five per cent of normal vision. In December she wrote three exams using one of CPIT's computers equipped with special software to magnify the screen image electronically and a magnifying window in front of the screen for even more enlargement. Ms Umbach, who has to take most of her exams orally, said, "It's a time-consuming process, but it's the first time I've really been able to think as carefully as I want to about the questions, write my answers down and check and revise them before the professor gets them."

Glen Jordan says Kim Umbach's experience with CPIT illustrates the key purpose for which the centre was established: to find ways of using technology to improve and enhance the education process.

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