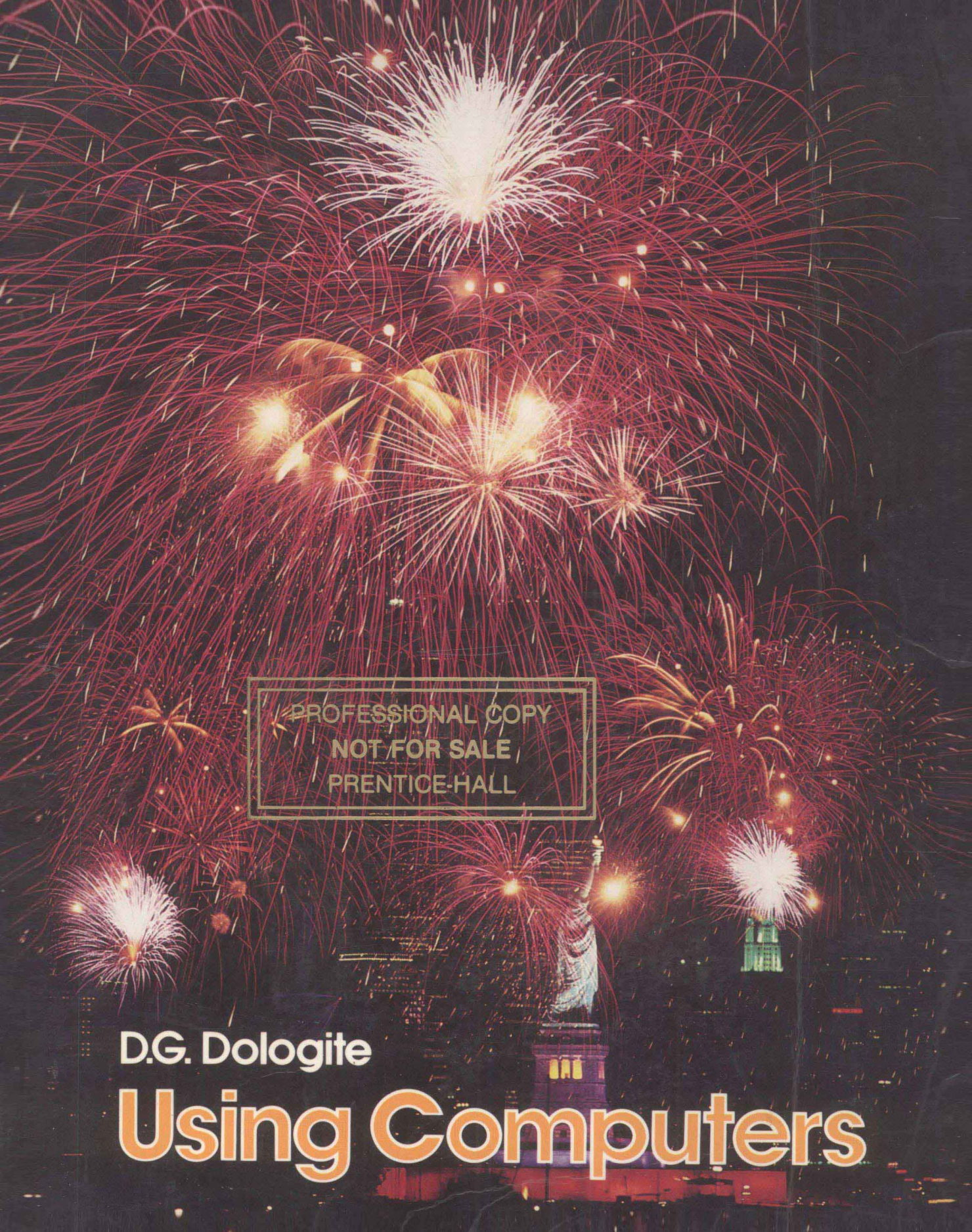

D.G. Dologite

Using Computers

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Overview

Letter to the Instructor

Dear Instructor:

This text and supplementary package are designed to give you the support you need for teaching an introduction to computers course.

The presentation of material in this textbook may seem, at first, to be a little different from what you are accustomed to. It speaks from the novice computer user's point of view, since that is who will be reading this text.

It shows people learning to use computers in much the same way your students will be. This helps students to realize that their learning experience is a commonly shared one. It intentionally avoids an approach that threatens the student with a feeling of computer ignorance.

Students like to read about *people* going through experiences with which they can identify. The text is designed to hold reader interest by showing how many different types of people—such as a film writer, a real estate agent, a stock broker, a journalist, a lawyer, an accountant, a farmer, a marketing manager, a teacher, a personnel manager, and a part-time worker for a food catering service—learn to use and actually do use their computers in order to become more productive. The approach provides a basis to cover the learning difficulties experienced by all types of computer users.

Consistently throughout the book, new topics begin from a microcomputer perspective, since most students today can easily relate directly to computers at this level. The text then goes on to fully cover mainframe and other types of computers and computer systems in an integrated discussion of every topic important to students at the introductory level.

Where full topic coverage requires it, microcomputer and mainframe discussions are given separate chapters, as in Chapter 2 on "Personal Computer Hardware" and in Chapter 3 on "Mainframe and Other Hardware." At different times, for example in the Chapter 4 coverage of operating systems, the microcomputer and mainframe discussions are integrated within a single chapter. In all cases, problems are analyzed, and solutions recommended, whatever the size of computer. Throughout, an effort is made to avoid detail superfluous to introductory course objectives.

The book concentrates on the application of computers to user tasks. It explores five main application areas:

- Using personal productivity software (like spreadsheet, word processing, and graphic packages) (Chapters 5-6)

- Using database software (Chapters 7-8)
- Using data processing, management information, and decision support systems (Chapters 9-12)
- Using communications systems, including local area networks (Chapter 13)
- Using advanced (artificial intelligence-based) systems, including robot and expert systems (Chapter 14)

The overriding theme, as the title of the book suggests, is to show people actually *using* these applications on their computers, or on terminals connected to a central computer. It provides students with a simulated "hands-on" experience. They are left with a feeling of having used software in all the major application categories. A similar approach is used in my earlier book, *Using Small Business Computers*, which has been adopted by over 150 schools.

The book is written to be independent of a particular brand of software. This approach allows an instructor to choose among alternative microcomputer lab software offerings.

Woven throughout the text are two major, and numerous minor, case studies. One major case study concerns a mainframe-oriented organization, while the other concerns a microcomputer-oriented organization. All case studies are designed to integrate the material in a natural way. They are drawn from real-life examples, including those recast into hypothetical companies or situations.

At the end of chapters, separate case studies are presented as chapter "highlights." They add an entirely new dimension to chapter material, or show a familiar topic from a new perspective. They include questions designed to encourage discussion of case and chapter material. These questions are in addition to the more detailed review questions, which conclude every chapter along with a chapter summary and a list of key terms.

For courses that include BASIC programming, a chapter is included that can be used as a tutorial. It is organized into three parts of increasing difficulty. Only Part 1 is necessary to learn how to execute simple BASIC programs. Parts 2 and 3 challenge students who have advanced beyond the fundamentals.

Many instructors have a preferred way to teach the introduction to computer courses. This text has been organized so that you can mold it to fit your personal preferences. After the first chapter, you can progress into hardware (Chapter 2), or you may want to prepare students for microcomputer lab work on a spreadsheet (Chapter 5) or a word processing package (Chapter 6), or you may want your students to explore BASIC (Chapter 17). If you prefer, the book's modular structure enables you to even skip Chapter 1 to begin with a review of the history and social impact of computing (Chapter 15).

Finally, a complete set of supplementary materials has been assembled to support the text. They include:

- *Instructor's Guide* (which includes recommended and alternate outlines for various course emphases)
- *Student Study Guide and Workbook*

- Microcomputer lab software with tutorial guides
- Transparency masters and color transparencies
- Computerized test bank
- Floppy disk of programs in the BASIC chapter (which is offered as a convenience to instructors to explore the programs in the chapter without having to key them in)

If you would like to offer your comments on the text, supplementary package, or the introductory computer course they support, please write to me at:

Box 513
Baruch College—CUNY
17 Lexington Avenue
New York, NY 10010

I would like to hear from you.

Best regards,
D. G. Dologite

Letter to the Student

Dear Student:

This book was written for you. It is designed to help you learn about computers.

As the title suggests, you are especially encouraged to *use* computers. That is the best way to know them well. They are sturdy machines that will let you experiment as long as you like. (If your school has a computer lab, you will probably have restrictions about how long you can use a computer at any one sitting.)

There are so many ways that a computer can help you accomplish current and future tasks. Examples include producing written assignments, like term papers (using word processing), to preparing a company's annual budget (using an electronic spreadsheet).

Be open-minded about exploring the rich storehouse of programs available. Programs are also called "software" or "applications." They make the computer perform useful tasks, such as word processing. There is an endless variety of software available to support school, work, home, and even entertainment purposes.

Hopefully you will be motivated to pursue a study of computers beyond this book. Chapter 1 offers some ideas about how to do this.

If there is any topic concerning this book that you would like to express an opinion about, you are invited to write to me. I would like to hear from you. You can write to me at:

Box 513
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Best regards,
D. G. Dologite

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