

Computers join library's literacy arsenal.

PAMPHLET

Huntington branch adds software as tutoring supplement

By Scott Thomsen

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 HUNTINGTON BEACH — Volunteers and students at the city library have a new set of tools to build language and reading skills.

The library today will open a new computer center with five Apple computers and about 15 software packages designed to improve reading comprehension, spelling, use of phonics, writing, critical thinking and typing.

"It doesn't replace tutoring — it's a supplement," said Anne Schwartz, the computer center director. The computer supplement to literacy training provides a different approach that can be used by a student alone or with a tutor, Schwartz said, adding that work-

ing with the computer can provide the students with new job skills.

To help students overcome computerphobia, the program has assembled a "C Team" of 33 volunteers with computer skills to explain how the machines operate. A volunteer is scheduled to be on hand to answer questions when the computer center is open.

Art Hemphill, a tutor and member of the C Team, said the computers allow his student partner to study alone.

Using the programs can reinforce material the two have covered, Hemphill said. "Hopefully, it generates questions," he said.

Schwartz said she hopes the computers attract more students to the program. About 200 students and about 200 tutors participate, she said.

"It's very difficult for people to admit they have trouble (reading)," Schwartz said. The computers might attract some students who otherwise might avoid a liter-

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One student who is excited about the chance to use the center is Susan Young, 39, of Huntington Beach.

"I've always been interested in learning to use a computer," Young said. "I think computers are great."

Young said she hopes the literacy program and computer center will help her improve her reading skills and help with the computer skills she will need to become a

veterinarian's assistant or a veterinarian.

Other students use the center to improve their English-language skills.

Sue Kuo, a Taiwanese student, has been taking English as a Second Language courses at Coastline Community College. The computer center and literacy program help with assignments and increase her vocabulary, she said.

Kuo's tutor, Donald Alder, said she and Kuo try to use computers

once a week. "You can see what you're doing," she said, adding that the programs give visual responses to exercises and show a student's progress.

Schwartz said she did not know how many people the center might be able to accommodate, but additions are planned. IBM has donated two computers and corresponding software that has not arrived, and the literacy group continues to look for new software and donations, she said.

The computer center and equipment was paid for by more than \$13,000 in state and federal grants and donations from McDonnell-Douglas-West Personnel Community Service Inc., IBM, the state library's literacy campaign, the United Way and private donors, Schwartz said.

Hemphill said those efforts and the volunteer work are worth the time and money. "Helping somebody else out is very satisfying," he said.

