

## Computer Products Inc. addresses office printing needs

by Jeffrey S. Barnes

A Lincoln firm has been established to serve what its owner perceives as a need in office automation printing.

Karen Dunning, president of Computer Products Inc. (CPI), has geared her firm's product line to automated printing needs. In Nebraska and Iowa, CPI sells continuous feed paper, fax paper and copier paper; business forms, including pin-fed custom letterhead, snap-apart envelopes and checks; copier supplies for 10 major brands; Hewlett Packard hardware and computer furnishings.

She said her favorite product, however, is an image projection device. The user can attach the unit to a computer and place it on an overhead projector, which projects the computer's screen onto an overhead screen. Dunning said

hers is considered the most advanced in the industry with 16-color generation and a universal prism, allowing it to be attached to any computer.

Dunning has also opened a Kansas City office that will serve the Kansas market and sell all varieties of computer supplies (the firm is known as Business Media Inc. in Kansas).

Dunning is a University of Nebraska-Lincoln graduate with a degree in finance. After working for IBM for six years, she became president and owner of Data Source Media in Lincoln, a vendor of computer supplies since 1984. "When I started with the company in 1984, it was losing money and turning out maybe two invoices a day," she said. "By the time I left, it had been on the INC. 500 list (of



Karen Dunning displays projection device at recent infotec trade show in Omaha. Firm also carries computer paper, copier supplies, computer hardware and finishings.

fastest-growing companies) two years in a row."

Dunning lost the company in November 1988, however, in a divorce settlement. Under Nebraska law, the company was divided in half and she was unable to obtain a bank loan to pay for her half.

Despite what would seem to be a painful experience in business, Dunning decided to start her own company. "Business to me is fun," she said. "I like building things. I did interview with several companies, but I didn't feel I'd be able to clock in from 8 to 5 every day with someone else being my manager."

A native of Lincoln, she decided to start a company selling items that would not compete with her former company's.

"I think I can expect some results, too," Dunning said. "I learned a lot of

things from having my own company. I learned it's smarter to hire excellent people and pay them for their skills, rather than lower-wage people to train them on the job. When I first started, I hired people right out of college; I don't closely supervise, however, and people right out of college aren't very practical. You need people that can take on a lot more responsibility."

Dunning said her biggest challenge is in establishing her new markets. "In Nebraska and Iowa, I'm selling products I don't know about to people who have been buying them from others; outside the two states, I know the products but not the people I'm trying to sell them to. Starting small, I'm finding I have to juggle making the sales and buying the inventory."

She said her pluses make up for the minuses, however. "I'm pretty driven, very persistent in the way I do business. If I call on someone, I'm sincerely interested in what they do and what their needs are."

Dunning said she presently sees her best potential in the Kansas City market, and expects to hire a sales representative for that office first.



Dunning