payroll, financial reporting (including job costing accounting with work-in-process sub-ledger), plus a suite of add-on (additional cost) products.

Apr. 23, 2005

Known to its users as "CLS," Client Ledger System is written to run under MS-DOS and is compatible with all versions of Microsoft Windows. The Client Ledger System features general ledger, fully integrated after-the-fact payroll, financial reporting (including job costing accounting with work-in-process sub-ledger), plus a suite of add-on (additional cost) products. Add-on products include Tax Package Interface, W-2/10099 Magnetic Media, XML for Form 941, Unemployment Plus, and SUTA Magnetic Media. Also available is a CheckWriter w/MICR Option as well as a Remote Entry program.

CLS was originally programmed for the MS-DOS 6.22 operating system that most of us said our (final) good-byes to years ago. (Yes, MS-DOS 6.22 is still fully supported.) However, the company noted that it runs well in the Windows environment. The company tells us they have 1,800 supported users updating annually, while another 1,200 to 1,400 users update less often than annually, as they use payroll programs from other vendors or have no need to update as often. That's 3,000+ users and proof positive that a minority viewpoint exists among

professional accounting ranks –

Any purchase includes 90 days of free warranty support. One year of priority support for unlimited calls with access to an 800-number costs $150 for a single-user and $300 for a network user.

LEARNING CURVE & EASE OF USE – 3.5 Stars
Setup of special Windows icons is required to run this non-native application on a Windows system. Adequate instructions are provided in the User Manual. CLS requires a non-Windows-only, HP-compatible laser printer with a parallel port. BubbleJet, InkJet, DeskJet, USB-supported, or non-HP compatible laser printers will not operate with this program. A comprehensive list of supported printers is available and updated regularly on the company's web site.

Platform issue aside, the learning curve is fast. After all, it wasn't that long ago that the screen interface like the one provided with CLS was the status quo. The menus and sub-menus, though a bit crowded at times, are

quick to learn and navigate. Users

is easy. Strong consolidation ability is provided together with a wide array of "canned" standard and departmental reports that are easily modified – just about every variety a user could ask for.

INTEGRATION, IMPORT/EXPORT & PRODUCTION PROCESSING – 3 Stars
Import integration is available through the Accounting Transfer module, allowing integration with other accounting programs. Supported programs include Peachtree, Quicken, QuickBooks, One-Write Plus and the CLS CheckWriter, a companion program available for use by the accountant's clients. Export to tax products is accomplished via the Tax Package Interface add-on module, allowing for transfer of tax data to ProSeries, Lacerte, UltraTax, ATB, ProSystem fx Tax, and others. Generic transfer is accomplished through export of trial balance amounts to an ASCII file. Production processing is available within each client only.

SCALABILITY & PORTABILITY – 3 Stars

Portability is an issue. The future

and provides fixes and updates for download.

INTERVIEWS – WHAT USERS HAD TO SAY

Users were positive about their (continued) use of Client Ledger System.

2004 OVERALL RATING: 3

The choice of a write-up program should be based in large part on identifiable attributes of the write-up program that best fits the sum of the individual needs of the practice. In no particular order, factors that lead to the sum include **setup & learning curve; training & support; program pricing & cost of updates; data conversion, maintenance & storage; efficiency & flexibility; and integration with a practitioner's other programs** (tax, payroll, analysis, word processing, etc.). Finally, throw in a wild card ' the practitioner's overall dedication to technology.

Technology