

# MAPE Newsletter

Summer Term 1999

Newman College with MAPE

- ▶ BETT 99 Seminar
- ▶ Generic software
- ▶ Espresso
- ▶ Computer efficiency

## BETT 99 Seminar

**Heather Govier**

*hgovier@argonet.co.uk*

One feature of every BETT show is the extensive programme of seminars and lectures. This is undoubtedly the best free INSET available, involving presenters with strong track records in the use of IT in education and covering a wide range of areas from basic skills teaching to management. Actually, if you book your seats in advance, there is a charge for each session but if there are spaces available you can get in free by just turning up at the time.

Each day there are four keynote lectures held in the largest hall. On the Wednesday I attended one given by Gabriel Goldstein, Senior HMI for IT, entitled 'IT in schools and initial teacher education: some issues'. This was an analysis of evidence collected, during the past 2 years, through OFSTED and HMI inspections, and of data gathered in DfEE surveys of schools. The aim was to provide a general picture of pupils' progress in IT capability and pinpoint some strengths and weaknesses in schools' work. Although the lecture covered the full range from KS1 to KS4 as well as initial teacher education, I shall just report what was said about the primary sector.

The strongest message, which will come as no surprise, is that there continues to be very patchy provision. There is increasingly sophisticated work in some well resourced schools but, in contrast, there is also a lot of very trivial work done with modern powerful facilities, which compares poorly with what was done with more limited software. In other words – having posh kit can be valuable but it is not enough – it is what you do with it that

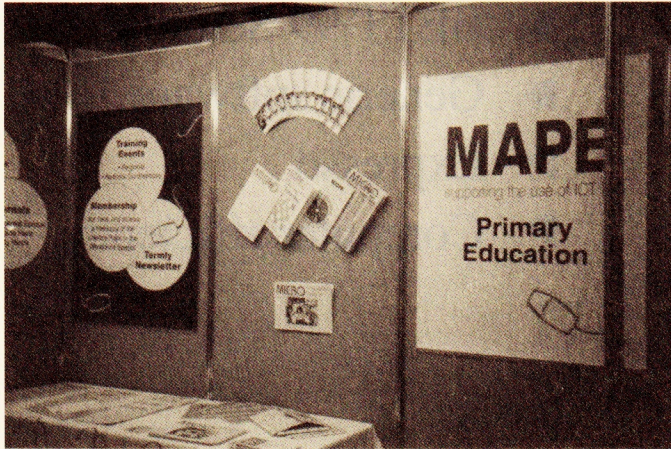
matters. Using a history CD-ROM to collect information in order to produce a newspaper of the day is very different to being sent to use a general CD-ROM encyclopaedia with the instruction: find out something about light. Mr Goldstein did not specify which of the two he was commending!

Commonly pupils produce the most outstanding work when they 'have access to computers at home and do not have to rely on the school's provision alone. However, a high proportion of pupils have insufficient access to IT, and standards are therefore often uneven within schools. Consequently pupils' progress in IT is good in only one sixth of primary schools and poor in around one third, a higher proportion than in any other subject.'

We should take this matter very seriously as it concerns children's entitlement. A substantial number of schools are still failing to provide adequately for those pupils who do not have access to computers at home, such that the gulf between the haves and have-nots is ever widening. Policies for IT use which allow children to opt to use equipment when they feel the need will result in the most capable getting the most access and the least capable using IT hardly at all. MAPE would be very interested to hear from schools which have a clear strategy to address this problem.

'The overall quality of IT teaching is good in only one fifth of schools. Unsatisfactory teaching of IT results from teachers' lack of knowledge of the subject and their modest expectations of pupils in relation to the organisation and content of IT based tasks. As in previous years, too few staff are





MAPE's stand at BETT.

sufficiently qualified in IT, and a quarter of schools have insufficient staff with suitable qualifications and experience to teach the subject. This is a much higher proportion than for any other subject.' The massive training programme which comes on stream in April using NOF lottery money (see MAPE magazine) should address this problem. Watch this space for next year's analysis.

On a more positive note there have been developments in primary IT pedagogy over the past 2 years. There is more teaching of IT to larger groups, with a focus on skills and knowledge, and this is followed up with practical work and opportunities for extension. The DfEE/QCA Scheme of Work for IT has been welcomed. It will be interesting to see, in 12 months' time, how widely this is being followed and with what result.

Another strong finding, which echoes the

situation with pupils, is that teachers who have access to computers at home have greater confidence not only with regard to their own IT capability but also in curriculum use of IT. These teachers have also made greatest progress in their use of IT in school over the past 12 months as compared to the previous year. Again this is perhaps unsurprising but there is a strong message here for the powers-that-be – teachers need computers at home, so how about some tax breaks or a major input of cash for portables?

Although I have focused on the problems, Mr Goldstein's lecture had a more upbeat feel. He congratulated teachers on the progress which has been made in schools which take the IT Programme of Study seriously and have

high expectations of all their pupils. He stressed the need for dissemination of good practice and that is where you and MAPE can play a part. If you feel that you are doing IT right, then please share it with us and with other MAPE members. Case studies need not be long or eloquent. If you wish we will even write up yours from a taped report – we know how busy you are. There has always been a sharing ethos in education and it would be a tragedy if this got lost in the pressure and stress of teaching.

Quotes are from:

*Standards in Primary Information Technology*, OFSTED 1998. Copies may be obtained from the OFSTED Publications Centre, tel. 0171 510 0180.

(Ironically, the report does not seem to be available online. If anyone finds it, please let us know!)

## The MAPE Conference 1999

The MAPE Conference this year was held at Newman College, Birmingham. As it was to be a low-key affair numbers were limited to 60. All places were filled.

Delegates came from as far away as Scotland, Northern Ireland, Cornwall and London. It was good to see old friends, and make some new ones too.

The conference was opened by Heather Govier, Chair of MAPE, who clarified the history of IT in schools and looked briefly at the future of MAPE before delegates went to their chosen theme. Mick Harwood led an excellent session on DTP. Pat McLean and Nick Tumber took us deeper into the

world of *Hyperstudio* and a group of delegates explored the idea of Control with Roger Keeling.

The largest group wanted to learn about creating a web page. This session was to have been led by Steve Dixon of Newman College; unfortunately Steve phoned from hospital sending his apologies. His place was ably taken by Richard Blaize, a second-year IT student. All credit must go to Richard, who admitted to being very nervous. Faced with a room full of experienced and enthusiastic teachers he took us gently and patiently through all the technicalities of creating a school web page. I imagine the www is fairly bursting with new Home Pages this morning!



The Chris Robson Memorial Prize was presented this year to Sally Smith whose article 'Getting the Roamers out of the Cupboard' was published in *MICRO-SCOPE* 50. Sally has agreed to join the Publications Group.



The keynote address was given by Mike Rumble, who explained to members what is meant by NOF, the New Opportunities Fund, and its implications for schools. Mike's presentation was just the right mix of entertainment and information giving us all plenty to laugh at and lots to think about.

Dinner as usual was followed by the famous MAPE Barn dance, which I'm sure everyone enjoyed.

Accommodation was at a (fairly) nearby hotel, and a minibus ran regular journeys to ferry members back at the end of a long day.



Sunday morning was taken up with various presentations, including one by Geoff Turrell on video-conferencing (see Geoff's article in the MAPE Focus on Communications), and another by Brian Richardson who demonstrated the new piece of software from CSH, *Language in Evidence*, which is available to MAPE members at a substantially reduced price.

Although this was, essentially, a low-key conference, there was no exhibition, and numbers were small, it was none the less a most enjoyable weekend. MAPE conferences are friendly affairs; if you haven't been to one yet make a note to give it a go next time, you'll have lots of fun.

Thanks must go to Dave Siviter who organised this conference in conjunction with Roger Keeling and other members of the West Midlands MAPE committee.

## Espresso abolishes the world-wide-wait for UK schools

**David Summers**

*Editor, Espresso for Schools*

Anyone who has received the internet via telephone lines will know there can be long waits for pages to be downloaded, especially those rich in graphics, animations and, in particular, video.

A broadband technology, i.e. one that is capable of downloading data at very high speeds, is needed to deliver these kinds of packages quickly and consistently.

Delivering full-screen video and internet news to the classroom that would regularly refresh and add meaning and relevance to the school curriculum was the initial concept that Espresso Productions had for

their broadband service to schools.

The idea soon expanded to include the creation of video-rich multimedia educational modules supported by interactive activities and by a fat information resource culled largely from the Internet. The best, educationally-relevant websites would be available to view within a web browser to save teachers the online time involved in researching sites and children waiting for them to be downloaded. The service was intended to meet the expectations of an audience used to high-quality television and sophisticated software.



## The technology

Espresso uses a new low-cost broadband technology of broadcasting data by satellite. Satellite data broadcasting allows complex computer files containing the information for TV clips, CD-ROMs, and the internet to arrive on pupils' desktops hundreds of times faster than by conventional telephone line delivery.

Delivery to the school's computers is via the use of a 60-cm satellite dish and a low-cost satellite card installed into a computer hard drive. The packages are essentially broadcast as a series of web pages, which are stored on the PC's hard disk. Schools need quite powerful desktop computers – all those in the current trials have at least a Pentium 166 processor, 32 Mb of RAM, 4 Gb of memory and good quality multimedia sound and video cards.

## Backing for broadband technology

The potential and uses of broadband technology in education is recognised by those at the forefront of ICT development in schools. In a speech at the Research Machines Secondary Seminar on Improving Schools with ICT in March 1998, Lord Puttnam said:

... it's clear that [the National Grid for Learning] forms a fundamental plank of this Government's express desire to realise its full vision of a Learning Society.

Keynote speaker at the National Association of Advisers for Computers in Education (NAACE) Conference in Liverpool in February this year was Education Under-Secretary of State, Charles Clarke, MP. Mr. Clarke signalled a shift in government policy when he said, 'My inclination is that we should be staking our future on broadband communications.'

## Broadband trials in schools

Initially, Espresso received a grant from the British National Space Centre to test the satellite delivery concept. This was done successfully in the first trial conducted weekly from January to March 1998. Barley Hill County Primary School and Lord Williams's Comprehensive School, both in Thame, Oxfordshire, used Espresso modules in Geography and Science.

It was extremely well received by both teachers and pupils. Pupils had total control of the video through easy-to-use video control buttons and it was used by children working alone, in small groups or in whole-class teaching. The navigation

through the whole site was designed to be intuitive in its use.

Pam Counsell, IT adviser for Oxfordshire LEA, who helped develop and appraise the service, commented:

I think we'll get more out of it than by being given [access to] the Internet, because it links to the curriculum. Just letting children search [the Internet] doesn't give them what they want for the curriculum, whereas this actually tailors it.

## Trial evaluations

After just weeks of testing, the first formal evaluations showed that the Espresso service fostered focused discussions about the curriculum and that previously IT-phobic teachers seemed happy to use and explore a system that so closely resembled TV and video. Pat O'Shea, Head of Lord Williams School, commented:

First of all, it's extremely motivating for pupils because it's practically immediate, it's extremely user-friendly, very interactive, and they're really motivated to explore the information that's on there. The second thing is the quality of the images. I've seen [video] on CD-ROMS and it's better than that, and they've done very well with the navigation system. It's just 'point and click' – it's easy, even.

At the moment, there's a lot of information there, but the teachers have to construct the tasks to guide the pupils into it. Another option for it would be to have more of the assignments built into the material.

Espresso has now written in-depth support materials for using Espresso which are available on the 'Staffroom' site found on the web ([www.espresso.co.uk/efs/smallstaff/index.html](http://www.espresso.co.uk/efs/smallstaff/index.html)).

After a visit to Barley Hill to watch children using it, Pam Counsell has high expectations of the service. She says:

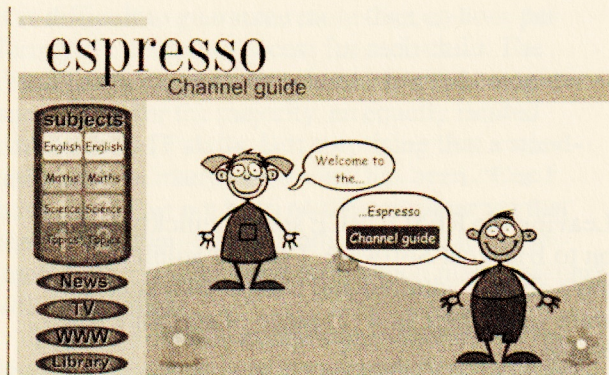
I was given two children of average ability and they interfaced with the system into areas they'd never been because I asked them to find things. They also explained it all to me. Then we went into one of the more questioning type models and they got answers very easily by looking at video and sound and text.

Her verdict? 'Amazing. That visit really sold it to me,' she says.

## What does Espresso offer?

There are five channels to choose from:





- SUBJECTS
- NEWS
- TV
- WWW
- LIBRARY

Perhaps the most useful for primary schools are:

### *Subjects*

*Channel* including video-enriched literacy, numeracy, science and cross-curricular modules delivered through a 'Subject' channel with interactive activities and web-based materials built alongside.

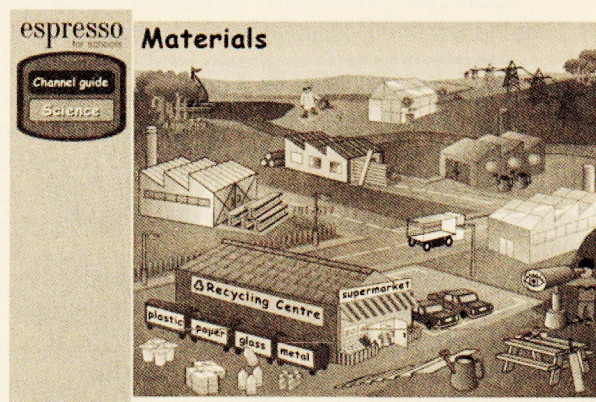
In each module there are:

- |                |  |
|----------------|--|
| Video:         | Educational television from many sources, including specially shot Espresso material.  |
| Activities:    | Interactive activities related to the video.   |
| Word game:     | Reinforces vocabulary from the video.  |
| Find out more: | Video: supplementary video clips to those in the module;<br>Pictures: graphics taken from the activities that can be printed.<br>Photos: stills taken from the modular video.<br>Things to do: further classroom activities.<br>Internet: graphics or pictures/pages taken from the Web. |

### *WWW channel*

This provides quick access to the best education pages from the World Wide Web arranged for ease of access by curriculum subject. There is a special section for the Early Years. Typical sites include 'Big Books' from Infant Explorer produced by Kent

NGfL in the 'English' section and 'Cool Science for Curious Kids' from The Howard Hughes Medical Institute.



### **The future**

One disadvantage of the current satellite service is that communication is only one way and you still require a telephone line to make the communication two way.

Espresso is planning to offer its services via fast cable modems and ADSL, a quicker form of ISDN being tested by BT. Later this year, Espresso hopes to test a satellite-based return path which would eliminate the need for a phone line to send e-mail or website requests.

The full commercial service will begin in September at the beginning of the new academic year. Tony Bowden says:

We aim to make Espresso fairly restricted in terms of the number of subjects we are covering, but to make that coverage very good. We see our service as an extremely efficient way of supplementing the National Grid for Learning.

Since it costs approximately the same to satellite deliver content to one school as it does to five thousand, clearly the economies of scale will benefit the customer.

Espresso expects to charge around £1.50 per pupil per term, a cost which Espresso expects even the smallest primary school can afford.

If you are interested in joining the trial or require further details, please contact:

cmason@espresso.co.uk or tel: 0181 237 1206.

The Espresso website is at

<http://www.espresso.co.uk>



## BETT 99

For me BETT 99 proved to be a bit of an anti-climax. Perhaps I missed some things but on the whole there was very little to get me excited, particularly in the hardware line. In the software line there were two software companies that did grab my attention.

To help support the Literacy Hour, apologies for mentioning it, RESOURCE have produced a simple but very effective program called *I Can Write*. It provides structures or frameworks to help the children produce a piece of writing. It can be used for fiction or non-fiction writing from year R to year 6. New topics can be added quickly and simply. The topics can also be supported by their own word banks. The screen, a simple word processor, is clear and simple to use.

Single Licence User for PC & Acorn is £35.

Leaving the RESOURCE stand I quickly moved on to Blackcat Software. I should admit that I have always admired and bought Blackcat Software since their first (?) piece of software *Clipboard*.

It is hard to know where to begin with all their software. They produce both an infant and junior toolboxes on CD-ROM. The infant one contains five new pieces of software: *Counting Pictures 2* (graphing), *Writer* (simple word processor), *Pick a Picture* (data handling), *Painter* (simple graphics program) and *Stickers!* (create literacy and numeracy activities on screen).

All these programs are also available separately, but the CD-ROM is excellent value for money. A 10 user licence is £300. £30 per machine!! Superb!

*Have you got an email address?*

So far only 10% of members admit to having an email address; we can't believe there are not more of you!

Sometimes it would be useful to be able to contact our members electronically.

If you are on email, but have not yet sent us your address please email Val Siviter at [val@bethesda.demon.co.uk](mailto:val@bethesda.demon.co.uk), entering **MAPE email address** as the subject.

## 'I've not been on the computer yet this term!'

### A look at generic software in the age of the NGfL

**Dr Tony Lyons**

The quality of software used in primary schools has improved over the last 10 years, but some generalisations can be made about how the potential has been, by and large, underused. This has not been because of a lack of willingness on the part of teachers, but rather, the lack of hardware or the lack of opportunity. The situation looks like being resolved with the advent of the NGfL.

Teachers who have a good working knowledge of packages such as *Ovation Pro*, *Lotus 123*, *Impressions*, *Squirrel*, *Art Works*, *Corel Draw* . . . will have seen the potential of such powerful software packages. But for any aspects of such software to be used effectively by classes of children would

have required the teacher finding lots of time, quite a challenging prospect with other curricular demands and with curricular reorganisations taking so much time. On top of that, in spite of the potential, the reality, in many schools, has probably been an average of an hour of computer access per half term for each pupil. This is no loose comment: even in a well-planned school, with an IT friendly teacher, freed from the demands of other curricular expectations, the opportunity for a structured programme of study has been difficult. With, say, 30 children in the class, and 27½ hours' contact time per week – less the time used for PE, Games, Assembly, Drama or other 'whole class' activities –



it is difficult to guarantee more than an hour per fortnight's computer access for each child. The result has been, in many schools, limited computer access and, for the majority, an equally limited education in IT skills. Is it surprising that a standard phrase in many classrooms has been, 'Can I have a go? I've not been on the computer yet this term!' Whether it is the truth, or a ruse to 'have another go', it is a phrase with which many teachers will be familiar.

There are notable exceptions to this stereotype, but the IT teachers at many secondary schools have often felt justified in starting from a low base-line of IT skills when their new charges reach them. Indeed, it has been said that primary schools would have been better to spend their time teaching basic writing skills rather than giving the children a dabble at computing.

In spite of such cynicism, there has been plenty of good practice in promoting computer use in the primary school. It has included encouraging the children to load and save their own work, to print their work and knowing how to handle/store discs, as well as accessing appropriate information from various sources. Word crunching, generally, has been a popular activity: better routines have included teaching basic WP skills, such as text manipulation and editing, the use of graphics alongside text, and arranging the page to suit the needs . . . all this on top of using IT as a cross-curricular tool.

Not surprisingly, the time limit for hands-on experience has had a bearing on the value of the software used in the primary school. Generic software has often been limited to the primary school-oriented programs, which have been easy to master, yet which still offered the potential to communicate or handle information in a variety of ways. Such software is sound and has its place, especially as entry level software. This has been more than adequate for many schools up to now, and it has enabled children to make good progress. However, they can have shortcomings: limited user-friendly tools, word processors with limited text manipulation potential, data handling packages which only allow single field interrogation or which have very limited fields or format adjustment facilities. . . . In contrast, business standard packages can offer broader potential, they can enhance skills traditionally taught in schools, and can be more closely tailored to the needs of a topic or a skill. However, they are more difficult for the teacher to master, and often are too powerful for the machines used in the primary classroom. They could also have a front end which is unappealing to a child of primary school age. Nevertheless, such software has always offered the chance to meet broader curricular needs more effectively than the

simpler packages. Now the time has come for primary schools to consider investing in such business standard software.

With help from the NGfL, many schools are now expanding the number of workstations in each classroom, or are developing ICT rooms. These 'computer suites' may have four or five workstations, or even 20 or so. The reality is that there is now the opportunity for schools to give a more structured timetable for ICT skills, therefore enabling children to enjoy a steady progression of skills and experience. So, in the place of rationed and variable IT experience, the potential access of all children to use the computer on a regular basis has improved.

With this change, pupils can potentially have an hour or more each week of 'hands-on' IT. In those schools that have not been at the forefront of promoting comprehensive and structured IT training for all pupils, changes will be inevitable. Very soon in the junior school the 'regular practitioners' of Year 3 will have had more hands on experience than their predecessors. They will need a programme of study which will be structured to improve their skill base over the following years, and which will give them a better and more confident use of user-friendly software tools. It would be a travesty to continue with one-field interrogation of databases and lessons of copy typing with limited skill expectations. It would be an injustice not to teach basic computer skills. The time has come when a primary school can realistically expect to offer a structured programme that will be followed throughout the school.

Hence, schools have to consider moving away from entry-level packages and to invest in some business standard software. This is for four reasons. First, and most important, with each child having more potential for computer access each week, children need the opportunity to be stretched and to build on their experience constructively, during their four years of study in the junior school. Many standard primary school packages do not offer such a potential. Secondly, it is more likely that the children who have access to computers at home will have business standard software to use. It is sensible to ensure that the skills they develop in school can enhance and develop experiences at home. (Indeed, learning about software which is similar to that on the 'domestic machine' could encourage the children to use the computer for something other than games!) Thirdly, it gives a school's staff access to software through which they can develop their own skills and through which they can produce professional quality products, when required. Finally, it is a good decision for PR: having the children using what is perceived as 'proper computer programs' is a positive move in letting parents realise the value of our work.



Today, the case for schools investing in business standard generic software has arrived. Schools should try to promote good practice that can be exercised at home as well as at school. This is not to advocate one particular make or format; many powerful packages are very similar to use, with similar icons, whether they are on Apples, Acorns or PCs and made by company X or company Y. . . . Learning to use one package well is often a gateway to using a different powerful package in a similar way.

The expansion of ICT through the NGfL has led to the considerations as to how to extend children with a structured programme in the primary school. This will become more visible year on year as the 'more experienced' youngsters move through the primary school. Alongside the use of the Internet,

simulation/adventure software, and modelling, schools do need to think carefully about the generic software that is used. And if and when business standard generic software is used there can be a wider potential in terms of meeting the needs of the curriculum and in tailoring the use of the software to the needs of the children.

With the NGfL we can look to a future teaching staff who are not only adept at using IT as an aid to teaching across the curriculum, but who will actually enjoy doing so. With ICT being a 'core curriculum subject', pupil skills should develop more comprehensively than they have in the past. And we can also look forward to the day when the claim that 'I've not been on the computer all term' will be confined to the history books.

---

## Using your computer efficiently?

**John Kenney**

*Volunteer, Alban Wood Junior School, Watford, Herts.*

### Introduction

I have been involved in education for all but 5 years of my life, for the last 12 years as a volunteer. My primary education was completed some years before the first programmable electronic computer was invented and the first one I met (which used thermionic valves) was used by a colleague for early experiments in, and the first short courses on, computer typesetting.

I became a volunteer at AWJS a year or two after the first BBC microcomputer arrived in School (it is still going strong – I used it earlier this term) and used it to run a computer club after school. Over the years I have met many Primary teachers, lots of children, and worked with several schools. As a volunteer I am answerable only to my own sense of responsibility and duty.

### What do I mean by efficiency?

A good starting point is to ask 'What advantage to the child, if any, is gained by using a computer for this particular task?'

### Basic skills

Any user new to a tool needs instruction on how to use it. This instruction will include exercises of

increasing complexity; some of these exercises may well have intrinsic value in addition to contributing to learning the use of the tool. For example, I was *taught* to use a pencil and later a pen. Does this still happen in schools?

A computer is a tool; but how many schools have any scheme of teaching basic keyboarding and manipulating a mouse? Have you ever watched a child waste time, one finger on the hover, while he/she searches for a particular letter key? So, if computers are to be used by Primary school children, the teaching of keyboarding *to every child* must be included somewhere in the Primary curriculum. This leaves three questions: to what degree of skill, at what age, and who is to do the teaching?

In an overcrowded syllabus do schools have the time to teach touch-typing? – although this would be the ideal for the use of a computer in later life. The second best that I know, the whole-class method using paper keyboards (which already has been described in *MAPE* 2, Spring 1999) occupies a relatively small amount of class time, and leaves the individual child in a position to improve his/her skills without adult supervision.

The minimum age depends on the individual child. My experimental evidence satisfies me that Year 4 children gain as much benefit as Years 5 and 6. (How many of you can type the alphabet in under 4 seconds and *backwards* in under 7 seconds? I know Year 4 children who can!) I still await proof that the method is appropriate for Year 3 classes.



The unmeasured benefit of teaching keyboarding is the visible increase in self-confidence when the children appreciate that *they* are now in control of the computer.

I take it as self-evident that the use of a word-processor or desktop publisher is (and should be) part of every Primary child's experience; this is a major reason for teaching keyboarding and gives further practice in using a computer in a real situation. It follows that basic instruction in the use of the particular WP or DTP package has to be given individually to every child; more than one suitable syllabus has been published. This is a time consuming one-to-one task for a classroom assistant and/or a volunteer. And please train your children how to use the mouse one-handed, and *not* to use the Caps Lock key to insert a single capital!

### Software

I would be content if children left Primary school with no more IT skills than the ones described in the previous paragraph provided they really knew them. And I would defend that position if it was challenged by Inspectors. There is a lot of appropriate good software to support other activities. However one of my concerns is that many of the programs take a substantial time to complete.

The enthusiasm generated in, as far as I can tell, all children by the very short test program specially written to measure the time taken by a child to key the alphabet has surprised me. Each run takes only seconds or, at most, a minute or two and they clamour to use their free time to improve their previous performance. I was encouraged to produce several others, in keyboarding, the four rules of arithmetic, and the words listed in the National Curriculum for Literacy. Taking only a couple of minutes for each run means that an individual can have several attempts and/or several children can use the computer in relatively short time.

### Personnel 1 – technicians

Practically all my salaried life was spent in Further Education where classroom assistants and volunteers did not exist. However working in, and for, Science, Engineering and Technology Departments I was always supported by able technicians. When computers arrived in College they and we learned together and, in the course of time, some technicians specialised in computer support. Of the Primary schools that I visit, only one has anybody akin to a technician: it is surely obvious that a part time (at the very least) computer technician is a *necessity* in every Primary school.

### Personnel 2 – Teachers

In theory, the teacher responsible for IT takes the lead in determining the academic content of IT in the school. This frequently involves fielding all the other problems pertaining to computers: all those sentences which begin 'I can't . . .' and often end '. . . won't work.' I know one (wise) lady who only accepted the IT responsibility if it excluded these technicians' duties. I know another lady whose ceaseless hard work is simply taken for granted by her colleagues; they just expect more!

#### Training

All teachers must be trained (*trained* rather than *educated* is the correct word) so that they have the necessary skills to use both the computer in their classrooms and the software they expect their pupils to use. It would be a great help if new entrants to the profession received all this training *before* they arrived in school!

Over the years too much time has been wasted by teachers being released one day a week to follow a course of instruction on some aspect of computing, the content of which they are then expected to pass on to their colleagues. If only the providers knew how often I have heard the phrase *the person running the course assumed too much about what we knew*.

So, existing and future teachers have to be trained. But even after the training is completed the Primary school teacher is far too busy to do personally much of what has to be done with the pupils.

### Personnel 3 – classroom assistants

The maids of all work (*maids* – are there any male classroom assistants?) all who are willing (and, if necessary, arms should be gently twisted) should be taken through basic computer training which includes familiarisation with the machine, keyboarding and the word processor or desk-top publisher used in the classroom. I have run INSET courses consisting of three 1½-hour sessions in schools to do just this; the cost and time spent in following such a course is repaid many times over by their increased value as part of the teaching team in the classroom even if the school can't find a volunteer to run the course without payment! Such a course also produces a marked increase in their self-esteem.

### Personnel 4 – volunteers

The majority of volunteers in Primary schools are mothers of children in the school and tend to be a



transient population, moving on as their child moves on. Some of these volunteers will arrive with keyboard skills, some not. Should these volunteers not be trained too as a matter of course? It has given me considerable satisfaction to see some of my old students from volunteer classes become classroom assistants.

### Personnel 5 – children

Many children have an innate desire to help which can be used (with training of course) when they are sufficiently mature to deal with all the day-to-day tasks, for example to shut down and switch off the printer and computer (in that order!) properly and to cover them with a dust sheet. In my childhood such a person would have been called a monitor; today the title might be Computer Custodian.

### Manuals

The growing practice of supplying computers without manuals or with a manual supplied on hard disc as a series of pseudo-Internet pages is to be deplored. The training advocated above must be supported by appropriate documentation written by a user in language appropriate for the learner. Producing this will take much longer than the course itself. I know; I did just this myself for the first delivery of courses involving particular desktop publishers. I do the same for my own software and have done for some commercial software. A

copy of a straightforward manual should be available near any computer that is to use a piece of software.

### Saving

A lot of time can be wasted in saving and subsequently finding (*where on earth is it?* and *what did I call the file?*) and reloading student work. You must have a system; the children must know it and use it.

### Finale

Any head who has read as far as this may be saying that the school does not have the time, the staff and the finance (and is not likely to have) to implement what has been described. I do hope that such a head is not proposing to install an Internet terminal in the school for this could well consume even more staff and pupil time, and cost more in the long run, than all that I have suggested.

There is an alternative for any Primary school unwilling to undertake serious basic computer training for its staff and students. Continue to collect the supermarket computer vouchers and exchange them for machines. Then sell all the computer equipment for the best price obtainable; use the money to buy class sets of books. And concentrate on the true purpose of Primary education: to provide the best solid grounding in numeracy, literacy, ethics and religion within the individual capability of each child in the school.

### Interesting business opportunity

We have learned about a business opportunity that may be of interest to members. It involves advising a software company that wishes to customise a CD-ROM for the UK market. The current version sells well in France – but reflects French curriculum needs. The content is about 90% maths and English; it also includes some science, history and general knowledge. The material is aimed at Y3, through to Y7.

The software is currently in French, but the scripts are being translated into English. The company will do the re-programming but is looking for someone with a good understanding of the National Curriculum to undertake the rewrite of the content.

Anyone interested in finding out more should contact Helen Osborne of Barrington Harvey, who is acting for the producers. She can be contacted on 01462 456780, or by email: [helen@bhpr.co.uk](mailto:helen@bhpr.co.uk)



# Using Information Technology in . . .

*Reviewed by Geoff Turrell*

## **A series of six Teachers' Resource books of photocopiable worksheets**

*Sue Neale*

Published by Evans Brother Limited – ISBN  
0237518139

Considering that ICT is reported to be the 'fourth core subject', practical lesson content for teachers is rather thin on the ground at the moment. There is a great need for a core of example lessons, plans and example ICT materials to use in the classroom. Hopefully the revised National Curriculum will supply plenty of the former, and no doubt a queue of publishers will form armed with lesson worksheets for teachers. This series of six booklets (each 32 pages long) represents a good start in this direction.

The six booklets cover Using Information Technology in Maths, English, Science, Design Technology, Geography and History. They are all well laid out, with easy-to-understand instructions and content.

Each booklet contains two pages of teachers' notes including sections about organisation, software, assessment, the National Curriculum and tips on how to use the worksheets. There is also a useful Information Technology Skills checklist which shows exactly which IT skills are covered in each booklet, and by which activity. For example, when children complete the worksheet relating to Averages, they will have had the opportunity to practice their skills of creating a spreadsheet, inserting a formula into spreadsheets, amending information, saving and loading work and they will have solved a problem using IT.

The rest of each booklet contains worksheets for children (primarily at KS2). At the end of each booklet is a Pupil Record Sheet where individual children can describe an activity, the software they used, what they did and most importantly, what they learnt.

The Maths booklet contains activities that include: using a floor turtle, locating spreadsheet cells, Logo, creating a database and a spreadsheet, spellchecking, tessellation, producing graphs, computer errors, area, volume, averages and money. The activities vary in 'difficulty' although most are sufficiently open-ended to ensure they are accessible to most pupils in KS2.

One of the big pluses of the series is that the activities are not dependent on specific software packages. Most of them relate to software now readily available in schools . . . databases, word processors, art packages, spreadsheets, desktop publishers, Logo, CD-ROMs etc. So even if your school uses old, odd, quirky, or esoteric bits of generic software, you should still be able to make good use of the materials here.

There is very little to fault with the material contained in the booklets. The activities are well structured and paced. Most can be used straight from the book and provide children and teachers with rich ICT experiences. Used in combination with teachers' existing planning, they can provide a valuable conduit for enhancing conventional curriculum content by the use of ICT. One or two of the activities could be criticised for not being convincingly worthwhile (word searches in particular), but this is more than compensated for by the range and quality of the vast majority of the material. It would have been nice to have seen a little more in the Teachers' notes relating to Numeracy and Literacy within the National Curriculum, but on the other hand, it is easy enough to see where the links can be made.

When the series of six booklets are combined, they provide a wealth of material for the classroom teacher. The booklets contain a wide range of activities, most of them open-ended, and provide teachers and children with clear and worthwhile lesson content. At around £66 for the set, every school with pupils in KS2 should have a set.



# Internet theme series

*Reviewed by Bob Eckhard*

## **Endangered Species, The Sea, and The Solar System**

Published by Prim-Ed

Price: £12 each (approx.)

While wandering around the BETT Exhibition in a dazed state (normally associated with that last hour of a long hard day at Olympia!), I happened by chance to find rest at the Prim-Ed stand. Here, as I aimlessly surveyed the multitude of books before me, my eye was curiously drawn to something on the carousel display rack at my side. On closer inspection of the item, a sense of discovery began to dawn on me as I realised that the photocopiable workbook was no ordinary product but rather an innovative resource to be used in conjunction with the Internet! Was this the answer to the literacy coordinator's ICT dilemma? Read on . . .

Armed with the three books, I arrived at school the next day ready for action with my year 6 class who would play guinea pig to the new materials in the computer room. The worksheet having been explained to the class, the pupils quickly accessed the Prim-Ed website ([www.prim-ed.com/netschool](http://www.prim-ed.com/netschool)) and began searching through the text for the relevant information that would provide answers for the questions on their sheets. This worksheet was well set out with helpful instructions and simple icons to inform the reader as to what questions would require searching of the screen text as opposed to other more conventional methods that could be carried out back in the classroom. All pupils seemed to understand this and set about the task with great relish.

In the period that followed, I observed pupils (in

pairs) using a variety of different reading strategies, scaffolding one another, offering counter argument, reaching consensus, rephrasing answers, and much more. As the lesson was essentially intended as one to do with literacy, the workbooks (all of which have their emphasis on skills such as using alliteration, similes, etc.) seemed to achieve their main objective of providing a genuine opportunity for the core subject to be delivered using ICT.

From use of these materials in class, I concluded that although these resources do not always fit succinctly with a rigid following of the Literacy Hour, they do however provide an excellent opportunity for schools linked to the Internet to develop a range of language skills. Indeed, as the content of these books centres on texts and comprehension activities related to non-fiction, it is quite possible to see the appeal that this resource might have for boys who are often reluctant readers of fiction. However, a cautionary note must be given here as the level of reading required for some of the texts meant that at times they had to be confined to year 5/6 top set literacy groups.

In summary, the Internet Theme Series by Prim-Ed is a useful resource in any school's ICT development plan. The innovation of its easy-to-use website and resource book is a great asset for teachers who nowadays spend much of their time before school running around trying to find and photocopy texts for use with literacy. Of course, not all of the texts are appropriate, though this criticism might be levelled against any scheme of work. In short, the Prim-ed Internet Theme series is a useful resource collection and well worth the £30 (special offer) I paid late in the day on a tiring afternoon in January.

### *Correspondence to the Editor:*

Rhona Dick, MAPE Publications, 121 Fitz Roy Avenue, Harborne, Birmingham B17 8RG.

Published for MAPE by The Castlefield Press, Northamptonshire.