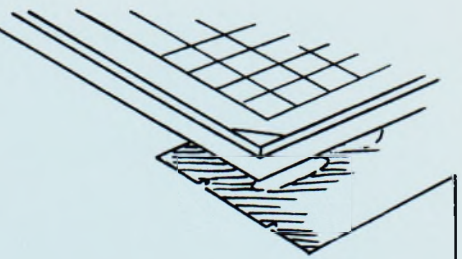# S E M E R C

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"THE TOP THIRTY"
A survival kit of the programs
most often used by sixty-three
local authority special needs/IT coordinators

The Special Needs "Top Thirty"

The "top thirty" computer programs used by children with special needs is a survival kit for advisory teachers and for schools. The list shows how computer use in special needs parallels (or leads) mainstream use in content free programs. It also shows how successful a unique LEA/DES partnership has been in harnessing information technology for special educational needs.

The list was compiled from the responses of local education authority special needs/microelectronics coordinators in sixty English and Welsh LEAs and in the five Northern Ireland Boards. These coordinators are normally advisory teachers who act as a focus for information, software and INSET within their authorities and form part of a regional and national network of expertise. Each was asked to list the twelve programs most useful to them in their authority. Between them they listed one hundred and sixty three packages.

Seven of the top fifteen were wordprocessors: Prompt/Writer, Folio, Pendown, Prompt 3 all work with a concept keyboard (Wordwise can be easily adapted to do so) so that children with special needs can press pictures to write words or phrases from a conceptual age of five. Wordwise is available in a "talking" version and Prompt/Writer will drive a speech synthesiser to help children with a visual or conceptual handicap to hear what they have written. Folio and the Prompt programs can have a large clear screen display to help young or visually handicapped children, while Folio, Prompt/Writer and Pendown produce clear attractive printed output so important for many children with special needs.

Eight of the top ten programs are content free "framework programs": they provide a framework; the teacher provides the content to meet the needs and abilities of particular children. Framework programs normally support language work. However our top thirty also includes four simple databases and content free programs such as AMX Superart and Image to enhance art and design and Compose to give new scope to work with music. Most of these programs have alternative forms of access to the computer such as concept keyboards, mice, or trackerballs so that children who cannot manage or understand the computer keyboard can join in too.

Computer keyboards are not normally the best or the first form of access for children with special educational needs and this is reflected in the top thirty. Besides the seventeen programs designed for use with a concept keyboard there are five packages which work with a touch screen. Programs in four of the packages can be operated by shouting into a microphone.

Any child who can make a voluntary movement or sound can now operate a computer. Nine of the packages allow children with a severe physical, communication or conceptual handicap to tackle learning experiences from the simple (to us) linking of cause and effect using switches or joysticks.

Fifteen of the top packages are "blue file" programs. Blue file
programs are the result of a productive partnership between central
government, LEAs and classroom teachers. The DES set up regional
resource centres (the SEMERCs) in 1982. Each SEMERC soon built up a
network of LEA coordinators who developed software and curriculum
approaches in the classroom, fed ideas back to the SEMERCs and
disseminated everyone else's ideas. In 1985 the Special Needs
Software Centre was formed in Manchester to translate ideas from or
via the SEMERCs into the growing body of framework programs which are
now proving so useful to those working with children with special
needs.

The Special Needs Top Thirty

1) Prompt/Writer (MEP/SNSC/Manchester SEMERC)

Two simple wordprocessors in one. Clear attractive printed output.
Uses concept keyboard. Will drive speech synthesiser.
Blue File - available from MESU at £3.00

2) Touch Explorer   (SNSC/Manchester SEMERC)

Pupils explore a concept keyboard overlay to discover the text
beneath. Needs concept keyboard and will drive a speech synthesiser.
Blue File - available from LEA coordinator.

3) Folio

Children can write and print their work in nine striking print fonts
in three sizes and a variety of layouts. Ideal for cut-and-paste
publishing. Can be used with a concept keyboard. Will accept Prompt
concept keyboard files. Screen can be changed to yellow on black to
help some children with a visual handicap.
Tedimen Software - £15.00 or LEA licence

4) Moving In (Mushroom Software/SNSC/Manchester SEMERC)

Fill an empty house with furniture...make it rain.....make Jim play
the piano. Works with concept keyboard.
Blue File - available from Special Needs Software Centre £3.50

5) Front Page Extra

Children can produce a simple newspaper with headlines and spaces for
illustrations.
Free to members of MAPE

6) Lists (Alan Nixon/SNSC/Manchester SEMERC)

A simple jargon free database.
Blue File - available from LEA coordinator

7) Podd

Cartoon character performs over a hundred actions on demand. Won't
work with concept keyboard however hard we try. Welsh version "Pod"
available from MEU Cymru.
Best Four Language, esm - £19.50

8) Window (SNSC/Manchester SEMERC)

Uses almost any input device to explore hidden picture in a variety of
ways. Can use concept keyboard, single or double switches, touch
screen, mouse, trackerball, lightpen, photonic wand, joysticks or
electronic books.
Blue File - available from MESU at £4.50

9) Tray 2 and Intro Tray (MEP/Redbridge SEMERC)

A development of cloze procedure where the learner builds up a passage
of text by predicting letters and words. Teachers can supply
appropriate text and set difficulty level.
Blue File - available from LEA coordinator

10) Pen Down

A sophisticated word processing package which accepts a concept
keyboard input. Overlay files not compatible with Folio or Prompt.
Logotron - £34.00

11) Picture Play (Manchester SEMERC/SNSC)

A language and concept development program involving flexible use of a
library of pictures.
Blue File - available from LEA coordinator

12) Compact (Derek Harrison/Manchester SEMERC)

Huge set of stimulus materials for language development on twelve
disks. Uses concept keyboard, single or double switches and
Micromike.
Blue File - available from LEA coordinator

13) Blob 1 & Blob 2

Single switch programs with very simple beginnings and clear goals.
Best of the single switch software.
Widgit Software - £12.00 per package

14) Prompt 3 (Manchester SEMERC/SNSC)

This program was still valued by our coordinators because it uses
fewer disks than Prompt/Writer.
Blue File - available from LEA coordinator. Documentation with
teaching ideas available from BIMH at £2.00

15) Granny's Garden

Enjoyable adventure game involving witches and lost children.
4Mation Educational Resources - £12.00

16) Wordwise or Wordwise Plus

Sophisticated wordprocessor for older children. Gradually being
replaced by Interword from the same firm.
"Talking Wordwise" from RCEVH for those with a visual handicap.
Computer Concepts - £36.80

17) Microspecial Pack (SMDP)

A box of 25 life skills packages selling at £17.50 each or £250 the
lot. "Bank" and "Coins" were mentioned by coordinators.
Collins Educational

18) List Explorer (SNSC)

An innovative introductory database which is simple to use and easy to
understand. Concept keyboard essential.
Blue File - shortly to be available from MESU for about £5.00.

19) Single Input Programs (Alan Nixon)

Ten simple programs which require only a single input from a switch,
micromike or the keyboard.
Blue File - available from LEA coordinator.

20) Dress Boy/Girl   (MEP/Manchester SEMERC)

Dress a child putting clothes on in the right order. Works from
concept keyboard.
Blue File - available from LEA coordinator.

21) RCEVH touch screen programs

Six packages of relatively simple work involving the touch screen.
Available from the RCEVH at low cost.

22) Early Fingers (Spastics Society)

Programs encourage finger tracking, matching, target touching,
sequencing and counting. Touch screen or switches.
Blue File - available from LEA coordinator.

23) Using Rebus and Using Rebus II (Haringey/Redbridge SEMERC)

A flexible communication program using text or stylised pictures
produced by SEMERC contact Robin Beste. Phrases which have been built
up can be printed or spoken. Works with concept keyboard, switches
and printer and/or speech synthesiser.
Blue File - available from LEA coordinator.

24) AMX Super Art

The more sophisticated of the two graphics packages mentioned. Works
with a variety of "mice" or a trackerball.
AMS - £50.00

25) Albert's House   (HUMMEC)

Simple adventure game at infant level.
RESOURCE - £14.00

26) Compose

Choose musical phrases represented by pictures to compose your own
tune. Supplied with many sets of phrases and pictures and you can
make your own. "Special Needs Version" works with concept keyboard or
switches.
ITMA/Shell Centre - £12.00, special needs version £17.00

27) Going Places

Six disks of single or dual switch games around a central theme of "a day out"
Widgit Software - £35.00

28) Image (MEP/Homerton College)

Graphics package, slightly less sophisticated than AMX Superart.
Input devices include trackerball, mice, graphpad and concept keyboard.
Cambridge Microsoftware (C.U.P.) - £40.00

29) Grass (Newman College)

Easy to use database from Newman College. Wide range of graphs can be shown on screen or printed out.
Newman College - £25.00 . Welsh version available from MEU Cymru.

30) Micromike (John Tabberer/Manchester SEMERC)

An adapted microphone supplied together with voice/volume controlled software. Encourages vocalisation and lots of fun.
Magpie Systems - £30.00

Addresses of Suppliers

AMS Ltd, 166-170 Wilderspool Causeway, Warrington WA4 6QA. (0222 733485)

Collins Educational/Hill MacGibbon, 8 Grafton Street, London W1X 3LA. (01 493 7070)

Computer Concepts, Gaddesden Place, Hemel Hempstead, Herts HP2 6EX. (0442 63933)

C.U.P., The Edinburgh Building, Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 2RU. (0223 312393)

4Mation, "Linden Lea", Rock Park, Barnstaple, Devon EX32 9AQ. (0271 45566)

esm, Duke Street, Wisbech, Cambs PE13 2AE. (0945 63441)

ITMA/Shell Centre, University of Nottingham NG7 2RD. (0602 506101 ex 2961)

Logotron Ltd, Dales Brewery, Gwydir St, Cambridge CB1 2LJ. (0223 323656)

Magpie Systems, 45 Runcorn Road, Moore, Warrington, Cheshire. (0925 74707)

MAPE, 76 Sudbrooke Holme Drive, Sudbrooke, Lincs LN2 2SF. (0522 754408)

MESU, Unit 6, Sir William Lyons Road, University of Warwick, Coventry CV4 7EZ. (0203 416994)

MEU Cymru, 245 Western Avenue, Cardiff CF5 2YX. (0222 561231 ex 260)

Newman College, Bartley Green, Birmingham B32 3NT. (021 4761181)

RCEVH, Selly Wick House, 59 Selly Wick Road, Birmingham B29 7JE. (021 471 1303)

RESOURCE, Exeter Road, off Coventry Grove, Doncaster DN2 4PY. (0302 63800)

Special Needs Software Centre, Manchester Polytechnic, Elizabeth Gaskell Site, Hathersage Road, Manchester M13 0JA. (061 225 9054 ex 284)

Tedimen Software, P.O. Box 23, Southampton SO9 7BD. (0703 473774)

Widgit Software Ltd, I The Ryde, Hatfield, Herts AL9 5DQ. (07072 64780)

Blue File Software - Details of your L.E.A. contact from:

Bristol SEMERC, Bristol Polytechnic, Redland Hill, Bristol B56 6UZ. (0272 733141)

Manchester SEMERC, Manchester Polytechnic, Elizabeth Gaskell Site, Hathersage Road, Manchester M13 0JA. (061 225 9054 ex 289)

Newcastle SEMERC, Newcastle Polytechnic, Coach Lane Campus, Newcastle upon Tyne NE7 7XA.)091 266 5057)

Redbridge SEMERC, Dane Centre, Melbourne Road, Ilford, Essex. (01 478 6363)