

# MAPE Newsletter

- ▶ Internet revision
- ▶ *Textease* and *Dazzle*
- ▶ Webawards
- ▶ Early Years websites

Autumn Term 2001

Newman College with MAPE

## News from BECTa

### *Primary on-line*

This is a new publication from Becta.

The World Wide Web is not only the biggest library in the world, it's an interactive resource, and although there are a growing number of high-quality Web sites to support pupils' learning, finding them can take up precious time. Primary On-line is designed to save teachers' time by providing 'off the shelf' lessons. We have located some of the best sites,

and developed worthwhile activities around them, aimed at Key Stage 1 and 2 pupils, and covering Literacy, Numeracy, Science, History and Geography. Each activity is mapped against the new national curriculum and the schemes of work for Key Stage 1 and 2 and is accompanied by teachers' notes describing how the Web can be used in lessons. It is available through the Becta bookshop, priced £9.95.

### *Using calculators in the daily mathematics lesson*

With a much greater emphasis now on whole-class teaching and the use of suitable hardware or software to address specific objectives, the question many teachers are asking is 'How can I make the most effective use of ICT in my Mathematics lessons?' Practicality is the issue, ensuring that all pupils can see the display clearly. This can be achieved by using special calculators developed for use with an overhead projector.

BECTa has posted a number of classroom activities on the Virtual Teachers Centre which have been developed by teachers for use in their daily mathematics lesson. With some of the activities the task is undertaken by the whole class with the teacher managing or modelling the activity using an overhead calculator. With the others, groups of children undertake an investigation or play a game

which involves the use of a calculator for carrying out a calculation or checking an answer. These activities can be found at the following URL:

<http://curriculum.becta.org.uk/docserver.php?docid=2685>

### *Learning with ICT at the Foundation Stage*

The QCA Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage states the following:

#### *Early learning goals for information and communication technology*

All children from the age of three should begin to show an interest in ICT.

Practitioners need to encourage both boys and girls to:

- use construction equipment
- engage in role play
- use ICT or undertake investigation and design tasks.

Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities need to be provided with access to appropriate resources.

Practitioners should:

- Give opportunities for the use of ICT to develop skills across the areas of learning.
- Encourage children to observe and talk about the use of ICT in the environment.
- Encourage children to show each other how to use ICT equipment.

With this in mind, BECTa has worked with teachers of early years children to develop materials which provide a framework to help nurseries plan for integrated use of ICT across all subjects of the curriculum and throughout the Foundation Stage.

These materials can be found at:

<http://curriculum.becta.org.uk/docserver.php?docid=2666>

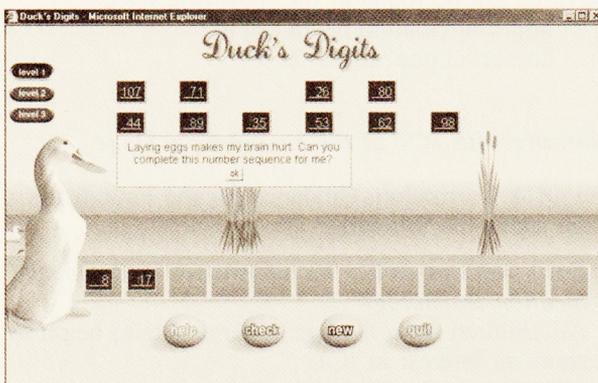
# Have you seen the latest additions to the MAPE website?

If you've visited the site at all recently you can't have failed to notice the link to Star Tower on our home page.

The Star Tower activities, created by Mike Matson who maintains our site to such a high standard, were generously donated to MAPE by Apple Computer UK.

Some of the activities should be familiar to you; UNIT the Robot was included on the NNS CD-ROM. The others cover a wide range of curriculum activities. Here are just a few to whet your appetite:

- Scribblers aims to provide imaginative ideas for stories.
- Orderly Owl, which has three levels of difficulty, requires children to order items in different ways.
- Ducks digits is a numerical sequencing activity, again with three levels of difficulty.



- Word drop contains lots of pieces of text which have had certain words removed.
- Star Punc contains lots of pieces of text from which the punctuation marks are missing. Children have to replace them correctly.

Apart from these there are regular updates of articles within the Curriculum Support section. Within the new-look KidsMAPE section, reflecting the growing number of resources, the latest additions are Discloze and a Random Number Generator, including some useful activities for use with it.

Type in the minimum and maximum numbers; these can be positive/negative and/or contain decimals (to more places than is required at primary level)

Type in the number you want to create. It could be up to 999, but do you really want so many?

Random Number Generator

min | 1 | max | 99 |

how many? | 1 |

unique

allow duplicates

go

font size | 90 |

Decide whether you want to allow numbers to be duplicated or if each must be unique.

Type in the font size – see the table for guidance on display. Now click GO!

The following table gives *an idea* of how many digits or numbers show on the screen without scrolling using different font sizes.

#### How many digits or numbers can be displayed on the screen?

Font size	How many numbers of digits are displayed horizontally?	How many numbers are displayed vertically?
255	3 digit numbers	2 numbers
190	4 digit numbers	2 numbers
150	5 digit numbers	3 numbers
120	6 digit numbers	4 numbers
105	7 digit numbers	5 numbers
90	8 digit numbers	4 numbers
80	9 digit numbers	6 numbers
70	10 digit numbers	7 numbers

## Revising using the Internet

### Shirley Shephard

*Year 6 Teacher, Courtwood Primary School*

There is a certain amount of pressure on Year 6 teachers at the beginning of the Summer Term to spend as much class time as possible revising for the SATs. The pupils are in danger of being bored or overloaded. I always try to vary the style of revision; for example, holding quizzes is quite popular with my class.

With our new computer suite installed, I have been able to improve the children's overall ICT skills a great deal. The revision question – how much, how often? – was answered by BBC's *Revisewise*. My class quickly learnt to access the site and thoroughly enjoyed the activities provided. Each day I stipulated a particular area of revision and they were happy to keep to it. There was plenty to occupy them. Many of them used it at home too, once they were familiar with it in school.

Here are some of their opinions:

'We went on *Revisewise*, a site which makes revising quite fun. It had activities to do, fact sheets to memorise and tests to finish. I found this useful because I remembered the activities like mnemonics. . . . I found I could go on the Internet at home with no problems.'

*Charlotte*

' . . . even though I always moan about homework, I was quite ecstatic about going on the website. To me

it made learning fun and having a coach was a good idea. I liked the way it had funny cartoons and the super sound effects. . . . the best thing of all had to be when I went on it at home, wrote a letter to the BBC and the very next day found it on the list with only *selected* letters on it!!'

*David*

' . . . I am not one of its critics. However, although the tests were helpful, most of the questions were multiple choice, the opposite of the SATs.'

*James*

'Just as something big comes up (the dreaded SATs week), it can help you learn a lot very quickly which is something books can't do.'

*Lewis*

'Most revising can be boring but on *Revisewise* it animates things and puts cartoons on it . . . at the same time helps you learn!'

*Joshua*

'We used it so much that we had to put it on the *Favourites!*'

*Annie*

What more can I say? Thank you!

### Moving house?

I always know when a MAPE mailing has recently gone out, not just because I receive my own copy, but inevitably I also find the postman staggering to the door under the weight of envelopes returned to me because the addressee has moved.

If you are moving house please remember to send a change of address card to MAPE.

### Changed email address?

I am as guilty as anyone of regularly changing my email address to get the benefit of latest deals from ISPs. Please put MAPE (val@bethesda.demon.co.uk) in your address book so that when you notify people of your new email we can update our records.

# Children creating websites using *Textease* and *Dazzle*

**Rosemary Gledhill**

*ICT Co-ordinator, Jessie Younghusband School, Chichester*

Children in our Year 4, 5 and 6 classes have just had their first attempt at creating a website. I was very keen that they used *Textease* and *Dazzle*, as these are the programs with which they were already familiar. We used *Textease* version 5.47 and *Dazzle Plus*. (We had upgraded both of these programs from earlier versions.)

They have achieved some very pleasing results, as you will see if you visit our website at <http://www.jessieyounghusband.w-sussex.sch.uk>.

## Preparation

First of all I set up shared files on our peer-to-peer network. A file called 'Web Pages' was set up on one machine. The children have quickly become used to sending work across the network to be stored here. Any work in the future being done in lessons can easily be sent here for uploading to our website.

## Planning

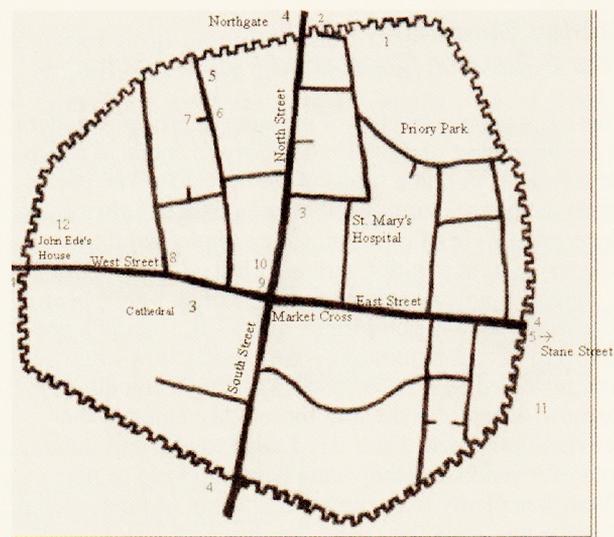
The first task for the children was to plan out their pages and where the links would go. This is really important, to ensure there are no muddles or lost links later on. Next, they decided which work they would include and scanned in images of their artwork, or took photos with the digital camera if the material was too large for the scanner.

## Images

The children had already researched a variety of sites on the Internet when working on the various topics and had saved a number of images on to disk. Next, they re-sized the images as necessary, using either *Dazzle* or a photo editor.

Note – check carefully that there are no copyright restrictions – this is usually mentioned on the website if there are such restrictions. For this reason, we didn't scan any work from books. We thought that the map the children had used for their fieldwork in Chichester would

be subject to copyright. In any case, it is difficult to read scanned text on the screen unless you choose high resolution, which makes the resultant image too large for the Internet. One child, therefore, drew her own map and scanned this. She imported the image into *Textease* and then put all the street names outside her image and dragged them onto it. (You can't type directly on to the image.) She even managed to turn some of the street names sideways. This was quite tricky, but she was very pleased with the results.



To make the photo with the diffuse edges shown on the Home Page of the Romans site, the children first cut out the part of the photo they wanted, using the irregular Area tool. They then saved this to the clipboard, which turned it into a stamp. A new page was selected and this cut image stamped on to it. They worked around the edge with the diffuser brush. The image was then saved as a Jpeg.

## Buttons

To make the buttons, the children scanned in the images, imported them into *Dazzle* and then used the Area and Scale tools to resize the images. It was then necessary to make a new



What are we doing? Click on us to find out more!

These web pages were created by:  
Alex, Nadine, Corrado, Emma, Helena, Katherine,  
Year 5, Jessie Younghusband School.

picture size otherwise the browser would still consider the image to be large. It is easy to do this in *Dazzle* – just click New Picture and change. You can give specifications in mm, cm or pixels. The children were happy with mm. The picture they had scanned was then imported from the clipboard and stamped. (Note – the old version of *Dazzle* will not allow irregular cutting or saving as Jpegs.)

The next task was to import all the images onto a word bank in *Textease*. It is very easy to do but you need to go into *Looks* and set the paper size to *Poster*. This gives you a continuous page.

### Text

The children were then all set to write their pages. When they wanted to insert a picture, all that was necessary was to click on the word bank and drag the required image on to their page. No fussy tables – just click where you want on the page: Magic!

It is important that all editing is done in *Textease* before converting to html. One problem the children had was that when they did convert their *Textease* pages to html, lots of the pages looked different – many of the fonts were in different sizes, although they had selected the same size.

After a phone call to Softease, (manufacturers of *Textease*) who have an excellent technical back-up team – very friendly and helpful – I discovered what the problem was. When converting to html, boxes are put round all images. If these boxes overlap, both text and image are saved as an image and thus have a different appearance.

The solution is to click on CTRL and A. (CTRL and Z undoes this.) This will show you where all the boxes are and the children then found it quite simple to move them around.

Unfortunately, we did not discover this until the Tudor site was saved and working, so there are still some anomalies on this site.

### Linking it all together

When all the pages had been checked – the children printed out copies and laid them all out so that they were sure where all the links would be.

It is a good idea to make a temporary site and just save each page as html (no links) so that you can check what it looks like in a browser. This saves messing about after the children have made the links.

Next, they were ready to make the links. This is easily done in *Textease*. When this has been done and all is working, you can save each page as html. Create a folder for your website and save everything into it. There is no need to worry about the images – *Textease* saves them automatically.

### The Year 6 Earth in Space site

The Year 6 Earth in Space site was constructed rather differently. The main pages were made in *Textease* but the Home page was constructed in *Front Page* because the children wanted to use Dynamic HTML (planets zooming in etc.!) The children saved each individual page made in *Textease* to html and then imported the pages into *Front Page*. They then made the links and bookmarks in *Front Page*. This seemed to be a very good compromise.

### Note

Many web servers are case sensitive to file names. Make sure, therefore, all your file names are exactly the same case structure, no commas, spaces etc. I hadn't realised this and it caused problems when importing the sites into *Front Page* and uploading them. From now on, all files are going to be saved entirely in lower case – no room for error then! (Sorry Literacy Co-ordinators.)

The children's work can then be uploaded into your school website. We are using Microsoft *Front Page* for the main site. (Although *Textease* is wonderful for the children's pages, it really isn't suitable for managing a large, complex site.)

The children are really proud of their results.

The most satisfying thing was the fact that the children could do everything themselves. They were already familiar with the software and readily understood how the links etc. worked.

# Using the Internet to enhance your professional development

**Yvonne Burbanks**

*Early Years and Education Consultant*

There was a time when the early years were perceived by some (hopefully a small minority) to be the 'Cinderella' of education. Whilst these perceptions were not well founded, there were situations where fellow colleagues in the 'main' school were somewhat dismissive of what happened in the local playgroup, the nursery and to some extent the reception class. Over the last few years however there has been a tremendous focus on early years provision and those that work with our youngest children. Increasingly colleagues have come to recognise just how very important those early years are both in terms of developing positive attitudes and in harnessing a real interest in learning.

Initially the emphasis of the government's Childcare Strategy was very much on expanding the range and number of early years and childcare places available and providing choice for parents and carers, but the focus is now very much on quality – quality in terms of the opportunities provided for young children and quality in terms of those practitioners that support and work with these very children. The early years and childcare professional of today needs to be highly-skilled, well-informed, up-to-date on practice and the latest developments, but just how does one do this amidst all the challenges and pressures of the working day?

Practitioners still very much welcome the opportunity to extend their professional development through attendance at training events. Such events provide really valuable opportunities to network with fellow colleagues as well as to gain useful information and ideas. The development of Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships (EYDCPs) has in many areas of the country greatly extended the range of training events available to early years and childcare practitioners. Another benefit of these events is that you often get the chance to work alongside other early years and childcare practitioners who work in different types of setting, be it a playgroup, private day nursery or pre-school. Some practitioners manage to network with other local providers regularly giving them a chance to share ideas and discuss the latest developments and

new initiatives. Securing release time during the day to attend a training event or raising the energy at the end of a busy working day to meet up with colleagues is not always easy to do though. So what are the alternatives?

The Internet is a terrifically powerful tool that can support new and established practitioners in their continuing professional development. It is like having an unimaginably large library in your own workplace or home. Many established early years organisations have now got well-developed websites where you can access valuable information. Try sites such as [www.daycaretrust.org.uk](http://www.daycaretrust.org.uk); the website of the National Children's Bureau at [www.ncb.org.uk](http://www.ncb.org.uk); the British Association for Early Childhood Education (Early Education) site at [www.early-education.org.uk](http://www.early-education.org.uk). I also find lots to interest me at [www.ngflscotland.gov.uk/earlyyears/](http://www.ngflscotland.gov.uk/earlyyears/).

If you are interested in gaining an international perspective on early years and childcare try [www.nncc.org](http://www.nncc.org); [www.ecwebguide.com](http://www.ecwebguide.com); and [www.naeyc.org](http://www.naeyc.org) to name but a few and if searching for the latest research try the ERIC Educational Research Information Centre at [www.accesseric.org](http://www.accesseric.org) and TACTYC (The Professional Association of Early Childhood Educators) site at [www.anglia.ac.uk/tactyc](http://www.anglia.ac.uk/tactyc). Then there are the official sites of statutory organisations such as the Qualifications and Assessment Authority (QCA) at [www.qca.gov.uk](http://www.qca.gov.uk); OfSTED at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk) and the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) at [www.dfes.gov.uk](http://www.dfes.gov.uk). Certainly if you are looking for information on the recently published National Care Standards, the new arrangements for the regulation and inspection of early years and childcare or on developments relating to Baseline assessment then these are the sites to connect to. Another benefit of these sites is that you can often download important documents immediately that you would otherwise have to order through their publication centres. Furthermore you can get sight of the latest news and developments rather than wait for that paper-based information to filter through the system by other means.

Early years qualifications and training is yet another facet of early years and childcare provision that is ever evolving. With the recently published National Qualifications Framework and ever increasing and diverse opportunities in the field of early years and childcare, it is important that you keep up-to-date with the latest on this. To do so, visit [www.early-years-nto.org.uk](http://www.early-years-nto.org.uk) and [www.qca.org.uk/nq/subjects/childcare.accred.asp](http://www.qca.org.uk/nq/subjects/childcare.accred.asp) as well as the websites of awarding bodies. If you are thinking of changing directions in your career remember that there are a number of websites that offer a job seeker facility. Many provide an email alert service when a job matching your specification becomes available.

With such a massive amount of information available on the Internet, one of the biggest issues is managing all this information and your access to such an array of sites. Do bookmark those that you find useful and want to return to as this will save much time and ensure easier access to those favourite sites. Get in to the habit of saving or printing off articles of key interest so that you can readily refer to these again and also share them with colleagues and friends. After all one of the key aspects of professional development is that essential dialogue that you have with fellow colleagues, often fuelled by something you have seen, heard or read.

Of course with the Internet that dialogue can be even greater with opportunities to join newsgroups and chatlines. Here you can discuss common interests and exchange views with colleagues throughout the country or indeed worldwide. Some newsgroups and online forums give you access to key national people

in the early years and childcare sector and you can receive swift responses to those nagging early years questions and queries. Maintain regular contact with those who you link up with through newsgroups by email. Think of all the materials and ideas you might exchange, saving precious development time. Email is an excellent tool for anyone who enjoys being in touch with people or who needs quick and easy contact for their work or study.

There is no doubt that whether you are an experienced practitioner seeking information to enhance your practice or someone studying for a qualification the Internet can be a most effective way of supporting your professional development. Gradually we are seeing an increase in the field of e-learning, indeed many see e-learning as the training of the future though others would argue that this cannot and should not replace the face-to-face training events that we have all come to love. With suitably interactive materials there are however many benefits to this type of distance learning, not least the opportunity to learn at your own pace, select the times most convenient for you to study and no travelling to the training centre. Starts to sound somewhat attractive does it not?

Whatever your views on e-learning, we can not escape the fact that if we are going to maintain a quality workforce in our early years and childcare settings then practitioners have to be well informed and in tune with current developments, the latest initiatives and research in the sector. Continuing professional development is absolutely vital and the Internet offers endless learning opportunities, inspiration and information to help practitioners develop their practice.

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## The ICT Roadshow

Many of you will have previously visited the ICT Roadshow Exhibitions organised by CSH. Two more are being held in November.

Wednesday 28th November 2001  
*The ICT Roadshow*  
Gateshead International Stadium

Thursday 29th November 2001  
*The ICT Roadshow*  
Eastergate Hall, Dumfries

Brian Richardson writes:

Both Shows will have between 30 and 40 Exhibitors and will be supported by a series of Seminars.

As the Roadshow has been moving around the UK, we have been asking visitors to vote for the Company that they considered was the most 'friendly, helpful and informative' at each Show.

We have put up a prize of £250.00 to be sent to a Charity of the winner's choice and at the time of writing it is neck and neck between Sherston and 2 Simple. Needless to say, as we are the organisers of these events, visitors cannot vote for us.

## 2Simple Infant Video Toolbox: have you noticed . . .

Stuart Duke Westhill College, Birmingham University  
S.D.DUKE@bham.ac.uk

Having purchased the *2simple* suite this term, I was interested to read Barry Wake's review.

As soon as I had run through the various tools in the suite I made a list of recommended changes/improvements and sent them to 2simple. They said they would pass them on to the developer – so you never know – there may be upgrades in future.

Barry mentions changing colour of graph blocks in 2graph, BUT!!! I wonder if he spotted a very 'intelligent' aspect of this tool? The perennial problem of graphing packages not displaying the desired colours when trying to

present data about 'Our Favourite Colours' is a classic. If you type a list of data into 2graph such as

blue – 3, red – 6, yellow – 4 and even pink – 10 . . .

SURPRISE, surprise! The colours on the graph are the colours we NAMED in the data table!! "WOW", was my reaction (and that of the group of early years PGCE students to whom I was demonstrating the software only a couple of months ago). Even colours like 'cream' and 'brown' are rendered in a close hue. Very clever – a nice touch, I'm sure you will agree!

## UK School and College Website Awards

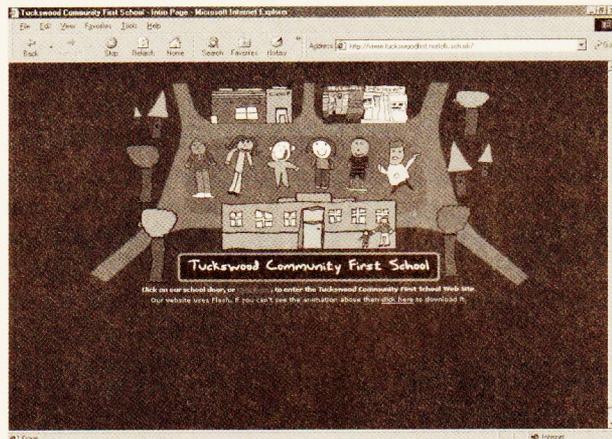
Rhona Dick  
rhona.dick@blueyonder.co.uk

On Wednesday July 11th I found myself at the new British Library in Euston Road, London to attend the UK School and College Website Awards presentation.

The celebration of school achievements began with a buffet lunch in the impressive atrium of the conference centre before we were ushered into the auditorium where Niel McLean and Helen Walker, both of Becta, compered the proceedings. Niel commented on the evidence of real relationships developing between schools and home, but also that the Internet provides a potential audience of 470 million people, (WOW!) ensuring that introspection is no longer a real option.

There were four categories of awards, with prize winners in primary, secondary and post 16 age groups. The entries and winners were representative of schools of all sizes from all parts of the UK.

In the first category, **The Whole School/College Website** the primary winner was *Tuckswood Community First School* from Norwich. This website showed that pupils were clearly

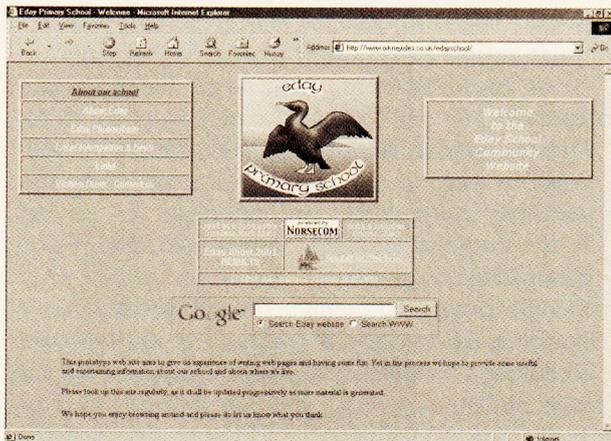


valued, the content was always appropriate to the audience and involved the whole community in the site. Apart from the structure and content being of a very high standard, this site has the most enchanting and welcoming home page with some charming animation. You can find it at:

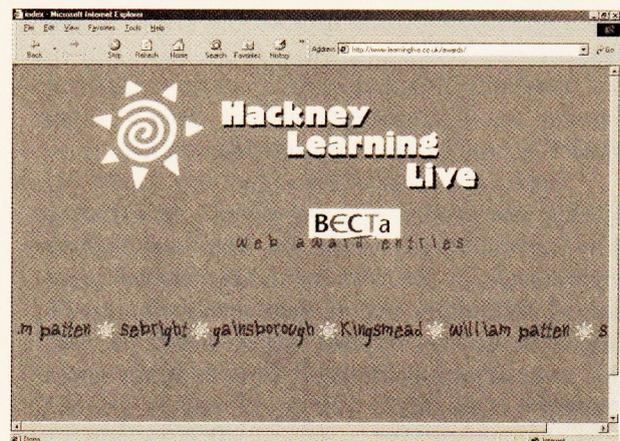
<http://www.tuckswoodfirst.norfolk.sch.uk/>

The entry from *Eday Primary School*, Orkney (<http://www.eday.org.uk>) was commended. As

Eday School has only eight pupils some people may think that the content of the site would be severely restricted, but take a look.



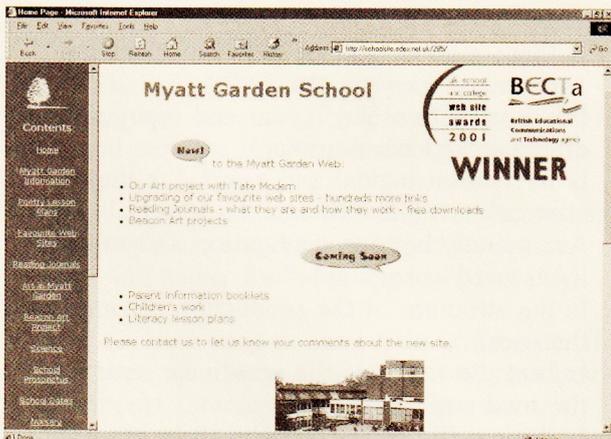
it provides ideas and stimulation for teachers within Hackney and elsewhere. Take a look:  
<http://www.learninglive.co.uk/awards/>



Incidentally the secondary school winner, Wood Green School, Witney in Oxfordshire, has a site comprising over 3000 pages!

The second category was **Teaching Resources**. The primary winner here was *Myatt Garden School* in Lewisham. The judges particularly liked the Reading Records and Poetry Lesson Plans that could be used or adapted by other schools.

<http://schools.edex.net.uk/285>

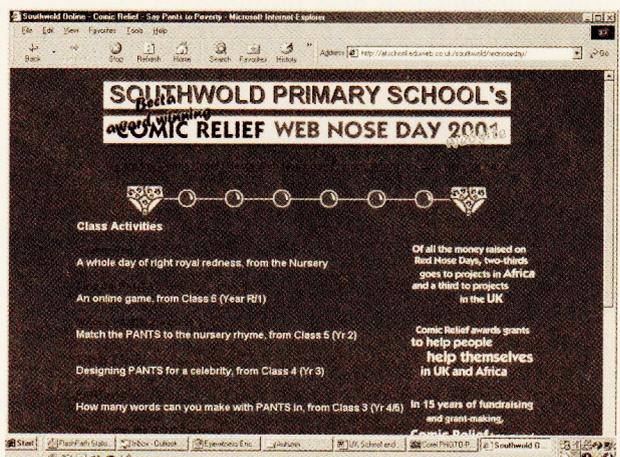


In second place was Jessie Younghusband School, Chichester. You can read more about the creation of this website elsewhere in this publication.

<http://www.jessieyounghusband.w-sussex.sch.uk/>

A further category this year was the Web Nose Day Award; this was designed to raise awareness and money for Comic Relief. Schools were asked to create not more than six pages demonstrating their Red Nose Day efforts and put these on line. In the primary age group every child in Southwold Primary School, Radford, was involved. You can see the evidence of their efforts at:

<http://atschool.eduweb.co.uk/southwold/rednoseday/>



The runner-up was *Snaith Primary School* East Yorkshire:

<http://www.eurotales.eril.net>

*Frenchwood Community School* (<http://www.frenchwood.co.uk>) was commended.

In the third category, the **Learners' category**, the site judged best at showcasing pupils' work was *Hackney Learning Live*. This site demonstrated a collaboration between several primary schools in Hackney. The judges stressed that they were impressed by the fact that the site was content driven; technology did not dominate. Not only does this site give value to pupils' work, but

Perton First School, Wolverhampton was the runner up:

<http://atschool.eduweb.co.uk/georgiesavage/comic/index.html>

These awards were given by TV presenter Kate Thornton, who offered a job to all six

students involved in the secondary winners' school. The drawback was that there was no money to pay them!

A big well done to all schools that entered and special congratulations to the winners and runners up.

### MAPE's role in the competition

MAPE was invited to send a panel of judges to draw up the shortlists for the first three categories of entries; the Web Nose Day entries were judged separately. In all there were about 140 entries to be viewed and assessed and we did this over a period of three days, judging one category each day.

### Judging criteria

The sites were marked under four headings. The criteria can be read in full at:

<http://www.becta.org.uk/schools/websiteawards/criteria.html>

#### Functionality

- Do pages and graphics load and view correctly in *Internet Explorer* and *Netscape*?
- Do all elements perform as expected – e.g. textual, visual and audio, interactive features, links, pages that users might wish to print?
- Do feedback facilities work? e.g. email, forms, etc.
- If additional plug-ins and software are needed (e.g. pdf, audio players), are links to downloading sites and help provided?
- Is technology used as an effective means to an end?

#### Audience awareness

- Do the pages demonstrate a promotion of inclusive approaches, ensuring accessibility for all?
- Do the pages show an understanding of target audiences?
- Do the pages engage and hold the users' attention and interest?
- Do the pages demonstrate some evidence of an outward-looking institution in genuine partnership with parents, other schools, organisations and employers?
- Does the entry get its message across and communicate a positive impression about the institution behind it?
- Would you wish to return to these pages?
- Do the authors show an appreciation for the needs of the user, including the need to keep down their telephone bill?

- Would a teacher want to use and adapt these materials in lessons? (Teaching Resources Award)
- Where pages are primarily intended for public consumption, is sufficient contextual information provided?

#### Content

- Do the pages provide materials others would want to use?
- Are they easy to use and adapt?
- Is the content accurate, up to date and complete?
- Do the pages support current issues (e.g. National Numeracy Strategy, key skills, inclusion, National Literacy Strategy, Curriculum 2000)
- Is the use of language, style and tone appropriate to the subject matter and intended audience?
- Are there features to involve the user?
- Is there evidence of creativity and flair?
- Are the resources relevant to the National Curriculum? Do they enhance/extend materials otherwise available? (Teaching Resources Award)
- Does the site facilitate and can it be used for enquiries and other communications by parents, employers, etc.?

#### Design

- Is there a good balance between elements? Are screens easy on the eye?
- Is the use of colour, layout and typography effective and harmonious?
- Is navigation logical and easy? Are there alternative routes through the material?
- Are menus, buttons, navigation and other icons used consistently?
- Is the structure of the production obvious to the user?
- Is best use made of the non-linear nature of the medium?
- Is there sufficient material to make the visit worth while?
- Does the design of the site, pages, graphics, sound, video, etc. assist user comprehension?
- Is the language used appropriate to the target audience?

### How were the sites judged?

The three or four judges shared out the entries, spending as much time as possible looking at, marking and providing feedback on every site. Each of the judges then short-listed the three sites that they felt were the most outstanding.

Finally all judges viewed these, discussed their relative merits, and whittled them down to just three that went on to the final.

Looking at all these websites was hard work, there's no denying that, but at the same time it was immensely interesting. From time to time little gasps of admiration could be heard as judges lit upon some aspect of the site that was truly outstanding. Judging took longer than anticipated as not only did we want to ensure that we did each entry justice, but we were keen to share our finds with fellow judges.

As judges we were impressed with the quality of the sites we saw. Technically most of them worked well. It was easy to tell which sites saw children as their principal audience. Most sites are now making increasingly good use of the potential offered by technology and are appreciating the importance to the user of having a non-linear structure.

It was extremely difficult to reduce the entries to just three finalists, and there was considerable discussion as the judges outlined the merits of their chosen sites. Eventually, however, the sites that went through to the final were the outstandingly good ones. If your school entered but didn't get to the final have a look at those that did, reflect upon your own site and enter again next year.

#### *Some words of caution*

As we studied all the entries there were a few problems that seemed to be common to several sites, and perhaps it's worth noting those here.

- Some schools entered their sites in the wrong category. Do read the judging criteria carefully and select the most appropriate category.
- It is not necessary to enter your entire site. If you have an outstanding section of resources to support Literacy Hour, but have not yet had time to develop as many Numeracy

resources enter the Teaching resources category and specify that you wish to be judged only on your literacy resources.

- Some schools entered all three categories; that is not a problem as long as the contents of your site are equally applicable to all three.
- For safety reasons do not identify children by name. Check the latest guidelines and ensure your site complies.
- Do beware of copyright issues. We came across a few examples of pupils' work that included images scanned from books and some schools used music clips. Most people are not very clued up on copyright law, but to give you an example MAPE has had to pay a reproduction fee to the National Portrait Gallery to use the picture of Sir Henry Unton on our website.
- Check for spelling and grammatical errors.

#### **Some tips to improve your school website**

- Decide upon your audience and design your site accordingly.
- Try to develop a 'house style' that ensures a consistency of design.
- Make your site easy on the eye. Choose your colour scheme and font size with care, not everyone has 20/20 vision!
- Avoid pages of unbroken text.
- Make sure navigation is straightforward and avoid a linear structure.
- If you take visitors to another site can they return with ease?
- If someone from outside the school (even a willing parent) designs and maintains the site is there someone else who can take over the role if necessary?

For further advice on creating a successful website for your school see <http://www.becta.org.uk/schools/websiteawards/effectivedesign.html>

#### **Can you help Paul?**

I am the ICT co-ordinator for Navigation Primary School, Altrincham, Greater Manchester.

I would like to set up an email exchange between my school and another school, preferably in another country. So far, all my enquiries have hit a blank. Are you aware of any organisations that may be able to help me out or have you any information that may help me. I would be grateful for anything that would point me in the right direction.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours,

Paul Quirk [p.quirk@lineone.net](mailto:p.quirk@lineone.net) [p.quirk@navigation-primary.trafford.sch.uk](mailto:p.quirk@navigation-primary.trafford.sch.uk)

## Book review

*ICT and Literacy,*

Edited by Nikki Gamble and Nick Easingwood

Published by Continuum

This subject is highly relevant for us as teachers now. The collection introduces a wealth of viewpoints including those of teachers and librarians, and as all contributors differ in terms of their own thinking, experience and development their viewpoints also differ considerably. It is a useful book to have on your shelf but you may want to pick and choose which chapters suit you at your point of experience. The book's particular strength lies, I think, in its ability to encourage positive debate as it offers material for discussion on forms of literacy/literacies as well as current methodology. It is not prescriptive.

Steve Heppel is an exceptionally shrewd commentator and emphasises the importance of making our assessment and tasks fit the computer (not the other way round). He claims that we often have 'a deficiency model of children' and need to encourage their creativity to keep our place in 'the league table of world economies'. Nikki Gamble describes how she is drawn into CD-ROMs and computer games, for example, *Myst*, because they have the same effects on readers as other narratives do. She dislikes the way 'literacy' and 'technology' are often used rhetorically in terms of training for employment and deplores curricula that emphasise key skills at the expense of knowledge and creativity.

Sue Brindley coolly considers how we define literacy in a post-print society. She outlines the elaborate networks we have constructed to ratify these definitions. She believes there is a gap which exists between 'school literacy' and hypertext; we therefore need some literacy requirement in relation to screen-based texts. Angela McFarlane is outspoken and stimulating: 'Current school culture is one which attaches great importance to neat handwriting and spelling, reading "good" books and poetry and generally valuing the work of dead white men'. She distinguishes between skills children use at school and those at home where they watch TV and video, use phones and computers. Skills such as 'classifying information, building categories and developing connections' are not present in the formal assessment criteria currently driving the school system. She also states it is 'impossible to find a universally accepted definition of visual literacy.' I wonder if that's why the traditional, centuries-old definition of literacy is so narrow; at least everyone can agree it is concerned with reading and writing.

Richard Millwood wants a mental model of learning which would give us a principle for ICT use rather than relying on examples of 'good practice'. He believes 'the editing process is what makes a film' and makes the revolutionary suggestion that video could be a choice for expression rather than writing. Nick Easingwood finds there is now more emphasis on communication and less on receiving information passively. He believes email is a medium which motivates writing. 'Samples of email illustrate clearly how the act of writing has been fundamentally changed. The content of the message and the medium become important, often to the detriment of traditionally important elements such as grammar, punctuation and spelling.'

Becky Jones encourages teachers to be more resourceful in stimulating pupils to read longer narratives as generally children are accustomed only to short sound bites of information. She reviews historical computer games which motivate children to explore a given information context by encouraging them to explore data from particular viewpoints such as those of spies. Sarah Mears explains how librarians can help with homework clubs particularly when children are using ICT. 'Modern children have a need for literacy skills which go beyond the book'. She includes good reviews of two useful websites. However, I would have liked some figures as to how many children go to libraries; the current position about library closure and whether children can join 'online' libraries.

Marilyn Foreman's chapter appealed to me (my point of development presumably). She claims '... probably the most effective learning emanates from the teacher being only a few levels above that of the learner.' That agrees with my experience. She includes Margaret Meek's thought-provoking quotation that new literacies create new illiterates. However, she follows this by presenting an example of a child who found a set of literacies all at once. Angela McGlasn believes ICT actually allows children with special educational needs to reveal their capabilities. This chapter is an excellent introduction for those who don't know the range of existing ICT for SEN. The concluding chapter is rather disappointing, as although the writers are discussing an innovative course developed at Anglia University, the material does not add very much more to the concepts already discussed. They sensibly steer clear of what the technological future holds: 'The future is about ethics and values as much as it is about what the technology will be able to do and achieve.' I am sure you will find your own specific ICT and literacy interests promoted in this collection.

*Moiria Monteith*

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