NEWSLETTER: AUTUMN 99 ISSN 1467-9949

Introduction

Rhona Dick

In this newsletter I am delighted that there are contributions from so many members who have not written for us before. In addition there is something of a foreign flavour, with an email from Pat Minton (from Australia) and some photos from China. Those of you, who like me, are devotees of Roamer will be pleased to see that it has crossed the cultural divide and is now playing a part in helping young Chinese children cope with the concepts of space and distance, not to mention the difficulties of Arabic numerals!

Mike Matson has written for us again, this time explaining the potential of the web and at the same time demystifying some of the jargon. We have an article from Alison Niemira writing about the frustrations and rewards of helping out in a nursery. We can all empathise with so much of what she says.

Teachers, by the very nature of their jobs, often become quite isolated, and, dare I suggest, insular. It is refreshing to take a look at how other professions, without whom our jobs would be so much harder, make use of ICT. Sue Foster is a speech and language therapist who works with children and adults. She has a particular interest in the use of ICT to support speech and language development, and gives us two case examples. Liam McGurrin reports on a fascinating and worthwhile citizenship project involving his school.

West Midlands MAPE held a masterclass last term. Children and teachers were invited in to Newman College to try out some different ICT applications. A full report of that event is found in this newsletter, as are several reviews.

I hope you find plenty to interest you in these pages.

The Magic Returns

Mike Matson

I've never been one for looking back – the best is always yet to come – but occasionally, very occasionally, I find myself thinking back to the golden days of the eighties. Computers were new, many teachers were eager to investigate their potential, and I discovered that those machines with their limited capabilities could allow me to be far more creative than I'd ever been before in my life. What's more, teachers unencumbered by the handcuffs and leg chains of government dictates were enthusiastically able to make use of my creations. It seems ridiculous now, but I was actually invited to half a dozen different countries to talk about my work.

Golden days indeed. And many years have passed since I came to the reluctant conclusion that

those days were gone for ever. The magic that computers brought into many a classroom had evaporated to leave nothing more than memories. I resigned myself to either doing something other than developing software for a living, or writing the sort of material that was 'approved of' in the new age.

Then I discovered the Web. Just a few weeks after telling someone that there was nothing on the World Wide Web worth looking at I realised that we were in the 1983 situation again – an exciting medium with enormous potential, but only techie bods and home enthusiasts making use of it. Things have certainly changed during the last two years and just about every organisation from multinational companies to St. Joseph's Primary School now has its own website (not forgetting every headcase, political dissident and social misfit). But there is still a long way to go before the content makes full use of the potential of the medium. And it may take even longer to convince folk of its value.

I was brought down to earth with a bump a few months ago when I ran a 'Getting Acquainted with the Internet' course for adults. In my introduction I told my eager-to-get-started flock that it's the universality of the Web that intrigues and amazes me. For the first time in the history of the world, the leek grower and Tesco have equal opportunities to tell the world about themselves. With her 20 Mb of free web space, Auntie Hilda can display her thimble collection to as many people as Glaxo-Wellcome can show its pills and potions. And little Sarah can show off her finger painting to her grandparents on the other side of the world just as easily as the National Gallery can display its Rembrandts.

I wanted to believe that the blank expressions on the faces of my students were caused by the sheer profundity of my presentation but, more likely, they just couldn't see a reason for getting excited. (Most of them spent the rest of the first session checking out Oprah Winfrey sites.)

There is, of course, a downside to this publishing freedom. The Web is not only full of c**p but will become ever more so. In theory, it has the potential to be the most comprehensive and invaluable resource that any school could wish for but, and it's a big 'but', who is supposed to pay for the creation of all this material?

Traditionally, Web content is free to the end-user. There are some subscription-only educational services but, when virtually 100% of sites are free to access, it may well be that such services will be forced to cease. In order to keep costs down, the providers of subscription material tend to restrict their output to the electronic equivalent of printed material. Indeed, most web material is of this nature and the majority of web users are unaware of just how much more exciting, useful and interactive the medium can be. But sophisticated applications require far more time, effort and expertise than the simple displaying of words and pictures.

The majority of teachers are probably unaware of just what is possible, and there's a good reason for this. Although the latest browsers (*Internet Explorer* and *Netscape* versions 4 and 5) allow web authors to create really dynamic sites which come close to offering the sort of material which one expects in commercial CD ROMs, very few web authors either know this or they are technically unable to make use of the built-in facilities.

The problem which often confronts anyone hoping to exploit a new medium is that there are either no standards or too many. This certainly applies to the Web. In theory, anything which has been written properly will work with all browsers on all platforms. If only this were true. In reality, there are vast differences between browsers and platforms. Even the simplest page, consisting of nothing more than text and a few graphics, will look different according to the platform, the browser, screen resolution, and the user's own browser settings. If you've created something that looks good in a particular browser on your Acorn, it will probably look quite different in another browser on a Mac. And when you progress to doing 'clever stuff', there's every chance that it won't work at all with some combinations of platform and browser. I burned the midnight oil to prepare some material for the 1999 BETT Show and made sure that it worked perfectly with the main browsers on my Mac and PC. When I arrived at the Apple Xemplar stand I was horrified to discover that every machine had a just-released newer Mac version of *Internet Explorer*, and half of my material simply fell over. I began to wonder whether I would be spending the rest of my life updating all my old stuff every time a new version of a browser was released.

To overcome the problems of platform/browser differences, an increasing number of web authors are using plug-ins such as *Flash*, *Shockwave* and Apple *QuickTime*. These plug-ins are freely-available and, once installed, can be forgotten about. A website which makes use of a plug-in checks that you have it installed and, if you haven't, offers to download it for you. It can be a little off-putting to spend ages downloading a plug-in only to find that it is used to do nothing more than animate a menu but, as time goes on, plug-ins will become an increasingly essential tool for Web users. (Unfortunately, the chances of Acorn browsers supporting plug-ins are remote.)

In the early eighties many teachers tried their hand at writing educational software. A few of us

(the social inadequates?) managed to keep it up, find a market for our material, and eventually escape from the classroom. Due to the commercial realities of the Web, this is unlikely to happen again. If you can't 'sell' educational web stuff, who is going to buy it or pay for its development?

I've been lucky. In 1997 ArgoNet offered me a contract to develop 'ArgoSphere' (http://www.argosphere.net) and gave me a free hand to explore the medium and find out what was possible. The following year I was offered a similar contract by Apple Xemplar to develop 'Star Tower' "http://www.uk.euro.apple.com/education/schools/startower/index.html" www.uk.euro.apple.com/education). My brief is to develop innovative material which demonstrates the sorts of things that one might hope to find on the Web in the future. Initially I concentrated on pushing the built-in facilities of the browsers (*JavaScript* and *Dynamic* HTML) to their limits but became increasingly frustrated by the differences between the different browsers on different platforms which meant that every 'program' required up to four sets of code to cater for these differences.

I'm now exploring the possibilities offered by Apple's *QuickTime*. This plug-in (for both Mac and PC) was originally designed to play video clips but now has the capacity to allow the creation of interactive material which is little different from CD ROM software – sound, animation, drag and drop and so on. The real beauty of *QuickTime*, however, is that I don't have to worry about browser and platform differences. I can concentrate my efforts on the actual content.

The Web is still in its infancy but, for me, it has restored a little of the magic of the eighties. I confidently predict that anyone who thinks that the National Grid for Learning is what the Web is all about is in for a few pleasant surprises in the years to come.

Helping out in the nursery

Alison Niemira

Like many other mums I'm keen to do something extracurricular to the standard 'full time mum at home' role. First came the PTA where I was volunteered into being secretary. This however lacked a certain something despite being worthwhile, etc. Next came the opportunity to help out in my son's nursery class. This was great fun but I felt I could do more, so I offer my services to the ICT co-ordinator. The wheels turn slowly so I start pottering at home.

Christmas brings a shiny new digital camera. The 'ourselves' topic may have been done and dusted but I see an ideal way to extend it and set about designing a program to show and print the children's photos on the computer. They are already keenly learning to recognise their own and others' names so it seems a nice way to link their photos and their names.

Initially I started using *Word* and *Publisher* but didn't find it straightforward for all I needed to, including printing and making it easy for the children to use. Multimedia authoring was beckoning to me.

I escaped my 'mum at home' role for the day to attend BETT 99. Feeling a little inadequate and even more of an impostor I searched in vain for the perfect software for multimedia authoring and web authoring. It was there, of course, but out of my price range. *Illuminatus* seemed to fit the bill for multimedia so I went home clutching a copy. More of that later.

I thought, maybe naively, that I would buy a copy of *My World* and create screens. This all being out of my own pocket I opted for *My World* in a bundle with other software, seemingly good value. However with no manuals to speak of I could not manage this task. Since then I have discovered the impossibility of my task without a further purchase of *Oakdraw*. My husband may be understanding of my investments in educational software but it won't stretch the budget any further!

Also at BETT 99 I joined MAPE, partially because I was taken seriously as a non-teacher! Thus I ended up at the Easter Conference and at last had someone to discuss ICT and its use in primary schools.

Back to the main story – the nursery children's photos. I used *Illuminatus* and was generally very pleased. With a computing background it was fairly plain sailing but as with any computing project it took time and there were plenty of mistakes along the way. But it felt good to be doing something useful or felt useful because as much as I see my job as a mother as being the most important it doesn't have many tangible products on a day to day basis!

With dreams of rewriteable CD ROMs, I came down to earth and back to the dark ages with an

installation package for the program on nine floppy discs. Having tested it all thoroughly at home I went to my usual Tuesday afternoon slot in the nursery to set the program up. Of course like all good projects it failed to get off the starting blocks first time out. Had I forgotten what working with computers was really like? During installation, on disc number 7 I discovered why those floppies I bought were so cheap! I ran back home, copied a new disc and started again. All of this was of course watched by eager and impatient children. Luckily this time all went to plan and we were up and running before the end of the session (how my memory fails me! In fact I then battled with setting up the program on the RM box!). Best of all they liked it! Over the next few weeks the children went home with a picture of themselves printed out from the computer, proudly carried like everything they do on the computer.

New term meant new teacher to cover maternity leave. I was worried that all my work may be abandoned but fortunately the new teacher was keen to make more use of the computer, having it accessible to children for independent use as well. I recommended some of the *My World* screens on the machine already. Enter my new project to match the term's theme of transport. *Illuminatus* again but less ambitious. It was to be a program with a succession of screens where you click on a vehicle to hear a relevant sound – colourful and noisy – ideal for the children but we had to turn the volume down!

Like the photos program there was a back button but also a forward button. With hindsight I'd add an arrow to reinforce the word recognition.

Things have now evolved and over the Easter break I've been working on a new program using the nursery syllabus, this term's materials. I've added some audio for this, something previously avoided – who likes to hear their own voice repeated ad infinitum? I'm keen to get a more information packed version into the main school. But there is also the web site building project aided and abetted by as many pupils as possible. There's so much potential with ICT but so little time. On my side I'm busy looking after Josie, nearly 2, and Alex 4, and on the teacher's side there are the multiple demands of teaching.

Everyone involved in ICT in primary schools is a pioneer and at this seeming turning point (funding and recognition?) a lot depends on how we all work together. I see there being two major hurdles – the image of ICT and the image of the teacher. Both computers and teaching are difficult, scary and just for the professional. Community learning could be the way forward where everybody contributes their own skill and expertise without fear of ridicule and patronising attitudes. If we can conquer the fear of computers and the fear of teachers then parents can play a much greater role in ICT.

Site seekers

The following web sites may be of interest.

Topmarks

This is a site well worth a visit!

http://www.topmarks.co.uk

'I am a primary school teacher in Nottingham (Milford Primary School) and together with a Web Designer I have developed a site to help teachers find quality web sites in order to facilitate learning through the Internet. These sites are selected on a very stringent basis according to ease of navigation, good design and of course they must be related to the UK curriculum. There is also a 'Schools in Touch!' service to enable teachers to set up Internet links between schools.'

Work Sheets Online

I first came across this at BETT, it is a good idea, but there were some initial teething problems with the service, hopefully now all is well. To quote from the email I received:

'The service is up and running and can be found at www.schools.co.uk

Click on the ***WOL*** button to go to the site then click the ***JOIN HERE*** link and then ***open a credit account*** to register on line. You only pay for sheets you download. There is **NO** charge for downloading the samples or the catalogue. You will also get **10 FREE** worksheets and these will be credited to your account.

Len Hough, Worksheets On Line, The Green, Ravensthorpe, Northampton NN6 8EP;
Tel: 01604 770099; Fax: 01604 770702.

MAPE Focus Packs

Do you like the new-look Focus Packs?
Would you prefer the old-style magazines?
We will keep the new style of folders *unless* a substantial number of you object.
Please make your feelings known by

email: val@bethesda.demon.co.uk
or by fax: Val Siviter 01248 602655

Future publications

Next term members will receive the annual MAPE Magazine as well as MAPE Focus on History. This is positively bursting with ideas for using ICT to support and enhance teaching and learning History. It will also include a CD ROM looking mainly at Tudor history.

MAPE Focus on Science will follow. Edited by Heather Govier, this promises to be another first-class production.

Conference 2000

Don't forget Conference 2000.
When? 13–16 July 2000
Where? Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Education
More information? www.itnetwork.org.uk

Change of addresses

Please make sure you advise Val Siviter if any contact details change, or if you now have email.

Who are those children on the TV?

Angella Streluk
Teacher in Charge of History and Geography, Amington Heath Primary School, Tamworth, Staffordshire

Have you ever watched a TV program and wondered where the children were from? How much practice have they had and how were they chosen? Read on for a brief insight into some of the things which go on behind the scenes.

When checking the school's email pupils found the usual unwanted communications, but one of them looked interesting. It had the capital letters BBC on it. BBC Knowledge, the digital channel, was looking for young children who had taken part in constructing a web site, or pages for a web site. They wanted somebody to go to London to talk about their experiences.

The pupils immediately thought of our two pages for the Staffordshire Millennium Timeline. Staffordshire schools had each been given a 5-year time span to research. They then were going to submit two web pages on those years to be built into a Millennium Timeline which could be accessed round the world. Children left behind whilst others went on a field trip for a week had researched our school's allocated years. They had worked away, planning the pages, deciding on colours and colouring pictures to be scanned. They finally put all their work together using Microsoft *Publisher*. (Somehow the thought of making their history work available to the world really inspired them.) All of them understood what was going to happen to their work; surely one of them could talk about it on a TV programme.

Jacob Flower, a Year 5 pupil, was chosen to type a reply to the BBC. His note was chatty and showed that he knew what he was talking about. He even told them how we had sought permission to use a song from the BBC's *Time and Tune* program on our pages (has anybody ever waited long enough to hear the music on our second page?). The reply was despatched and almost forgotten about. Our chances of being chosen were bound to be slim.

Half-term came and we checked the mail after our week off. A BBC researcher wanted to speak to Jake's guardians, and if possible to Jake himself, to see if he would be suitable to go on the program. This was on Monday 7.6.99. After several ups and downs during the week, and numerous phone calls, on the Wednesday it was decided that Jake would be suitable to be interviewed on the *K CLUB* program which was to be filmed on 11.6.99, that very Friday.

On that Friday Jake and I travelled down to Euston, where we were met by the driver who was to take us to the BBC Knowledge studio in Marylebone High Street. Our education about making children's programmes then began!

Fifteen other children, from Oakwood School, Hawley, arrived to take part in the same programme. They too had only just found out during that week that they were to take part. The children were to be in a 'cyber café' with presenters Kirsten O'Brian and Mark Speight. They were to look at web sites on the topic of 'faces' whilst various set pieces happen. From 14.45 pm to the moment when the programme went out live at 17.30 pm the children underwent numerous briefings. These included;

What would you like to challenge a friend or relative to learn in an hour?
Make a funny face from a flour filled balloon.
Which of three pop videos is the best?
Questions to ask a face painter
How do you feel about racism?
What would you like to 'rant' about?

Mark Speight had other ideas besides these numerous items. The teachers, watching from the 'gallery' of the studio sighed as he asked the pupils what were their favourite hobbies! Kirsten proceeded to ask the face painter all of the questions which the pupils had prepared and then turned to the children to see if they had anything they wanted to ask! The flour-filled balloons had too much air in them and wouldn't keep their shapes. Somebody had to run to get oranges which had been forgotten, and then crawl on the floor to put then in place without getting in shot. Everyone cringed as sirens went by outside, and for once they were heard on the programme. For an hour the teachers, who were not even supposed to be in the studio, held their breath as the pupils underwent this ordeal.

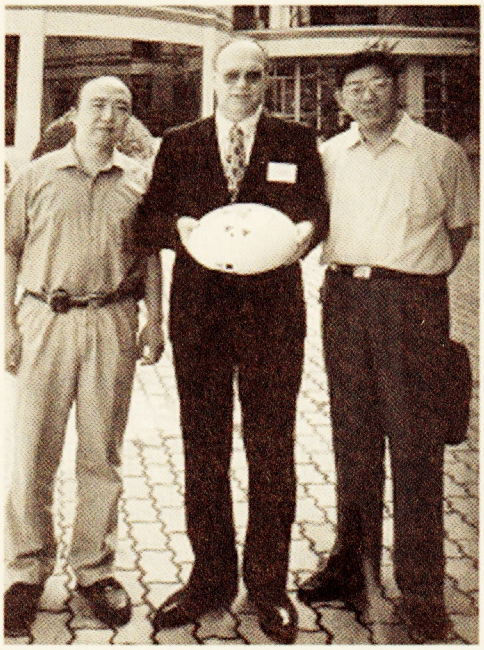
And what about Jake? He was the star of the show. Having had special notes made for Kirsten about the Millennium web site and his involvement he was to have a special interview. His only practice with Kirsten was in the 2 minutes before the event when a small, pre-recorded video clip was being shown during the mostly live programme! Even so, he was excellent. He showed Amington Heath Primary School's pages very well. All of the BBC personnel were in raptures over his part of the programme. The producer insisted on extending this part because he had spoken so well. It was clear why Kirsten O'Brian had this job, she was very skilled in giving children a chance to shine.

The stress of the live programme is incredible. After seeing it in action it may be appropriate to ask if children are suited to it. In the case of 'K Club' the idea was to set up the studio once, for a day, and record one programme in the morning for the following week, but also to do one live programme in the afternoon.

Arriving back in Tamworth at 9.40 pm saw the end of an exhausting but very, very interesting day. All we had to do now was wait for the tape which the BBC would send to the school. It will be interesting once in a while to wonder what sort of things are going on behind the scenes during the filming of other live programmes! Whenever I think that teaching requires us to achieve the impossible, juggle too many tasks at once, and work under acute stress I will remind myself about 'K Club'. I would not trade jobs with the people working to make digital television a success! I would never be able to cope with the uncertainty and variables of live TV. Thank heavens the pupils were a lot more resilient than the teachers!

Amington Heath Primary School's Page (http://rmplc.co.uk/sites/41242370a)

Roamer in China



Mr Jiang Ming-chu and Mr Boa Chang-fa of the SBE with Dave Catlin, from Valiant Technology, designer of Roamer

Mr Jiang Ming-chu and Mr Bao Chang-fa of the Shanghai Board of Education play with Roamer

A break from the norm

On Saturday 15 May 36 children from various schools in the West Midlands brought 18 of their teachers to Newman College for an ICT Masterclass, the mastermind of Roger Keeling.

Activities were many and various, and the children had an opportunity to try out three different activities during the course of the morning. For once the teachers could take more of a back seat and just watch.

There was a purposeful buzz around the room as some children attempted to complete an Internet Animal Quiz devised by Bob Fox and Barry Wake. The idea was that children and teachers could work on this together, the technical confidence of one working in combination with the literacy skills of the other. Elizabeth Furness used breaks between showers to take digital photos of the children which were then imported into various DTP programs.

Geoff Turrell fascinated the children by helping them to create animations using Plasticine models which the children made and subtly altered. Are there any budding successors to Nick Park there? Incidentally does anyone know how to remove Plasticine from carpet?

Alan Rodgers showed children how to create multimedia using the latest version of *Illuminatus*, and Stuart Duke demonstrated some of the ever popular DK software. Mick Harwood, resplendent in Gary Rhodes trousers, used a painting package which enabled children to design clock faces, masks or models of buildings. He was delighted to see how discriminating children have become; they would not be satisfied with less than the best.

Richard Blaize, again, used all his skills to teach groups of children how to create their own web pages.

Like other school days there was a break for drinks and a biscuit, and the morning ended with a story before children and teachers left with the fruits of their labours.

Thanks to everyone who contributed to such a stimulating and successful morning.

Technical information

- Animations were created using *Paintshop Pro 5*
- Multimedia was created using *Illuminatus 4* – An easy and low cost interactive multimedia authoring package.

Multimedia authoring
Alan Rodgers

Illuminatus
Manufacturer: Digital Workshop; Tel. 01295 258365
Cost: £176.19 for individuals, but for schools it is £89.97. They also offer a competitive upgrade for £29.24.
Platform: Windows 95, Windows 98 or NT4 (Pentium 200 MHz, 16 Mb RAM, 24 bit Video in at least 800 x 600 mode)

Illuminatus is a quick and easy to learn program. There are no royalties to worry about when you distribute stand-alone versions on discs or CD ROM to colleagues, pupils, friends or family. The program can even help in making simple Web designs.

Comments: It was a very enjoyable session. Both adults and children quickly grasped the innovative nature of the desktop and made several linked pages in their first presentations.

Adults took away floppy disc copies of their programs to complete at their own schools. The children took away printouts of their pages for their 'fridge doors'.

Creating web pages
Richard Blaize

Early one Saturday morning, hordes of excited children besieged the IT Centre at Newman College to experience the ups and downs of ICT. My role was to let the children discover for themselves how to create their own web pages. Armed with only Microsoft's *Front Page,* I envisaged the children creating pages and pages of beautifully set out pieces of text. What I got was even better. Although I had instructed the children to use the wizards available, they soon began experimenting with the other tools the programme had to offer. Testing ideas out with the coloured text that was available, for every kind of mixture possible, some too gruesome to mention. Also experimenting with the various different backdrops *Front Page* has to offer, the most memorable being the boy who chose a picture of a haunted house as the background for his web site, and calmly informed me that 'it looks just like our school'. Although time was limited the children instantly saw that through this medium of communication

there was a whole world to explore. The main question that the children asked was 'For whom was the web site designed?' If designing a web page for school, I often saw several conservative pages, but when the children designed web pages for themselves there was no boundary to their imagination. Having the children dip their toes in to the dangerous waters of web page design was extremely useful, both for myself and for the children, and let's hope that they take those initial ideas, develop and grow them into something worth publishing on the world wide web, for everybody.

Dorling Kindersley

After some initial problems with the installation of the CD ROMs we did get some children and adults looking at/playing with a variety of Dorling Kindersley CD ROMs. Some children stayed on one program for over half an hour; others flitted; others spent time going through the sampler CD (a copy of which was given to each school that attended the Masterclass). Software explored included: *I Love Science, I Love Maths, I Love Spelling, My First History Explorer, My First World Explorer, My First Science Explorer, My Amazing Human Body, Amazing Animals* and *Eyewitness Enyclopedia of Space and the Universe.*

There are hundreds (if not thousands) of DK Family Learning Advisers in the UK. If your school hasn't got its own you can contact DKFL by phone on 01403 833 200. Local (WM) schools can contact me, Stuart Duke on 0121 472 7245 ex 2572 (work) or evenings at home on 01384 377192 or email: s.duke@westhill.ac.uk.

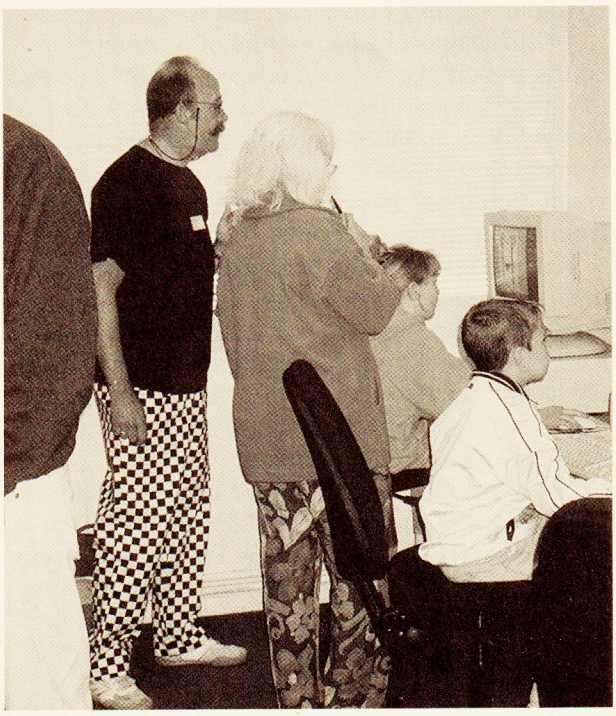
WWW Treasure Trail
Barry Wake

The pre-planning

At the committee meeting before the event, someone came up with the idea of including a World Wide Web Treasure Trail. This would be along the lines of the BECTa *Treasure Hunt* (which seemed to have disappeared from their web site, while they redesign it, apparently).

There could be prizes for the winners, and we discussed a few variations such as unravelling specified words from the web pages to form a sentence or an acrostic, or using specific words to give part of a URL to help answer the next question. There could be a few red herrings thrown in, too, for good measure. However, as my system, or my ISP, or my phone line was playing up for a few days while I was trying to prepare it all, I found those ideas taking far too long and they eventually defeated me.

Fortunately, some of the committee members had already sent me some of their 'useful and favourite' web sites, many of which I had not come across, and in surfing them and some of my own, I hit on the theme of Animals. This would hopefully be a topic that might interest the adults and children alike. It also was turning out to be a straight 'trivial pursuit' type quiz, with pretty closed factual questions. Eventually, having little idea of the experience or expertise of the anticipated audience, it seemed easier if I whittled the information down to fifteen questions that matched fifteen pre-selected web sites.



The rationale

The justification for this approach was that the adults and children would be working together.

The theory was that the adults' extra experience and expertise in spotting significant pointers (a skill which children need to acquire, especially when trying to access information on the Internet effectively) would be combined with children's own speedy IT skills and motivation to produce an efficient collaborative team.

The fifteen questions and the fifteen URLs that were given (see below) would need very close reading in order to spot the clues. This meant that the URLs themselves had to contain some information that would hint at the correct web site. For example, one of the mirror sites at Exeter is very helpful, viz.:

The sites themselves had to be 'safe' ones, from reputable sources, though it was still felt necessary to put a warning disclaimer on the hand-outs just in case. They were also selected as being 'educationally rich' sites that could be explored later, and could provide useful resources for teachers and children, though often the language and content of them tends to be pitched more at adults.

The activity itself

On the Saturday morning in question in the new IT room at Newman College, we had a row of four systems all on line using *Netscape 4*, though sadly without any sound facilities. At the same time other groups were designing web pages, making multimedia presentations, using digital cameras and making animations with a camcorder, and so on.

In this way we had a mixture of three or four adults and children, aged between 7 and 11, to each machine. One problem was making sure we erased all the URLs and web pages that were used before the next group started otherwise the complete URL would pop up as soon as you began typing. That would have given the game away entirely.

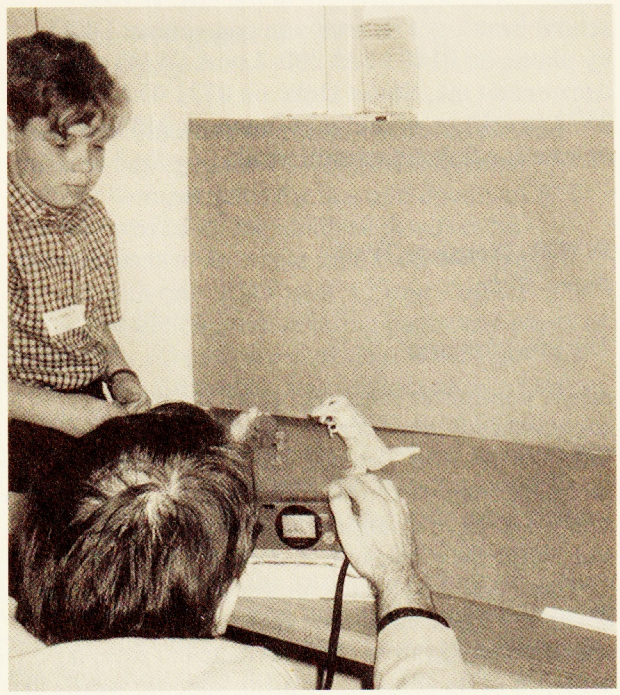
It was stressed at the beginning of the activity that it was meant to be fun: no time limit, no pressure, and no hassle. The important thing was really the process not the product, the journey not the destination. So they were at liberty to surf at any time or get side tracked into other information on the web site if they wanted.

In the event, no one finished all the questions even after 40 minutes, so perhaps ten might have been easier. However, it seemed to go down very well. The children enjoyed it, but sometimes the adults possibly helped too much and tended to give the answers rather than prompting the children.

Postscript

In hindsight, and with more time, it would have been better perhaps to include easier web sites where the language and content was more appropriate to younger children. We could possibly have used more sites that had their own internal search facilities too, as in TopMarks or BECTa.

On this occasion, it was decided not to use search engines as such, since we felt we were aiming more at beginners. The dynamic and provisional nature of the Web means you can't always guarantee that the sites will still be accessible or that the information will still be there from one day to the next. Using search engines effectively is clearly an essential skill, but that's a different activity – perhaps next time?



West Midlands MAPE - Family Day
Saturday, 15th May 1999, Newman College

A WWW Quiz

The theme is animals - alive or dead, fact or fiction. Below is a list of URLs (the 'addresses' to type in to get to the web page or site). Some will give you the answers quite quickly, and some you will need to search. The clues are in the questions and the URLs!!

If you finish, or get bored, or want to 'surf' some more, there are some very large web sites for education listed at the end.

The Questions:

1. At Nature Grid, what sort of animal is Sebastian ?
2. You can help the duck at StarTower count the digits, but how many ducklings are there?
3. Loughborough Infants School held a carnival in 1997 where the children dressed up as flowers, spiders, ants, ladybirds, snails, bees, centipedes - and what else?
4. What are the names of the new bears in Denver zoo?
5. Currumbin Park in Australia keeps some endangered animals such the koala. How many thumbs has a koala altogther?
6. What did Aesop's jackdaw want to be?
7. In Joe Tucciarone's dinosaur gallery a microceratops looks about as big as a mouse, rabbit, dog or lion?
8. On which island would you find birds of paradise and a St Lucia parrot?
9. 'Top marks' if you can you find how fast a tiger can run and hear a tiger growl!
10. One of the planets in our solar system has the same name as a famous Walt Disney cartoon character. About how many kilometres is its orbit?
11. In Ancient Egyptian hieroglyphic writing which of our letters were represented by the owl and the eagle?
12. Jenna-Eve (aged 11 from Park Place Primary School) won a prize in a competition for her picture of a famous animal film star. What was the animal?
13. Kate McCann, who is a student reading Maths and IT in the School of Science and Technology at Newman College, has some amazing facts about how coral is made beneath the waves. Which creatures make coral?
14. According to NickNacks, some children made spreadsheets and graphs in a project of their favourite pets. Which was the favourite?
15. What were the origins of the name 'Winnie the Pooh'? On which real animal did A.A.Milne base his famous character?

A WWW Quiz (2)

The URLs:

http://chaos.trxinc.com/jmilne/Pooh

http://eyelid.ukonline.co.uk/ancient/hiero1.htm

http://home.talkcity.com/academydr/nicknacks/

http://www.all-inclusive.com/lucia1.htm

http://www.cyberdata.com.au/currumbin/eindex.html

http://www.dinosauria.com/gallery/gallery.html

http://www.ex.ac.uk/Mirrors/nineplanets/

http://www.filmeducation.org/

http://www.naturegrid.org.uk/infant/

http://www.nature-net.com/bears/index.html

http://www.newman.ac.uk/

http://www.pacificnet.net/%7Ejohnr/aesop/

http://www.rmplc.co.uk/eduweb/sites/loughinf/index.html

http://www.topmarks.co.uk/

http://www.xemplar.co.uk/startower/index.html

Other useful sites:
http://www.argosphere.net/
http://www.bbc.co.uk/education/
http://www.becta.org.uk/
http://www.schoolzone.co.uk/
http://www.tesco.schoolnet2000.co.uk/

- ***NB Disclaimer** - although these sites are from reputable sources, we cannot guarantee the accuracy of the data, nor the suitability of every page on each site for young children.* ***West Mids MAPE***

Reviews

500 ICT Tips for Primary Teachers
S. Higgins, N. Packard and P. Race
Published 1999 by Kogan Page, London (www.kogan-page.co.uk)

An invigorating and informative read ! At last someone has managed to produce an off the shelf publication which is jargon free and helpful to the ordinary classroom teacher. The chapters are short and to the point. Attempts are made to address the major concerns of primary educators having to teach ICT amidst an ever-increasing and demanding wider curriculum.

My major concern is the lack of attention paid to the integration of ICT into the wider curriculum, especially the foundation subjects (only two pages). For example, there was no mention at all of how ICT can enrich countless aspects of the Music curriculum.

Nevertheless, this publication remains a must for any primary teacher who feels the need 'to fill the gaps' in their ICT knowledge bank.

Thoroughly recommended!

For more information contact Nick Packard nick@editsit.demon.co.uk

Trevor Owers
Courtwood Primary School, Croydon

Worksheet Maker Literacy Series (Y2)
Product development: Sparrowhawk & Heald Ltd and Cambridge Training and Development Ltd
Published 1998 by Cambridge Training and Development Ltd and Open Mind Learning

If you have ever been looking for a worksheet to reinforce a concept in an English lesson but thought 'it would be perfect if I just tippexed this bit out and added that . . .' then this CD ROM could be the answer. *Worksheet Maker* is a tool for editing and creating printed worksheets and includes a library of about 50 ready-made worksheets and blank templates. Not only that but there is one set for each Year group.

On getting to grips with it I was impressed with the clarity of the font, the uncluttered layout and the range of activities including picture – word matching, synonyms, punctuation and starting points for writing tasks. The cloze procedure tool is especially useful, offering the choice of removing every 5th, 7th or 10th word or to select your own. It then allows you to make a list of the words removed. Once you have created the text there is an option to remove capitals or punctuation from the text.

It is quite straightforward to use but as a fairly competent computer user I was interested to see how a relative novice got on. I'm sure my colleague would not mind me labelling her as such but she enjoyed using *Worksheet Maker* and found it easy enough, especially with the help of the on-screen tutor.

I do make quite a few worksheets so on the face of it this CD ROM would save me time. My main reservation is that I do like the children to be able to do the work at the computer, which is especially useful for SEN children, and this is not possible with *Worksheet Maker* as it is when creating a worksheet in Textease for instance. There is also the point that at £25 each, it might be difficult to justify the expense of buying a CD ROM for each year group from Year 1 to 6.

The big question is: how does it compare with a book of ready-to-use worksheets of which there are several on the market? Obviously they both rely on photocopying an original and the *Worksheet Maker* version has to be printed out first. However, with *Worksheet Maker* there is the possibility of fine tuning the worksheet to your class before you print it; it has an index so it is easy enough to find a relevant worksheet and it is linked to the National Literacy Strategy. A variety of layouts help the children get used to information presented in different ways and it is easy to add graphics (pictures, tables and graphs) to the worksheets. I can see that this series might prove very beneficial to teachers preparing material for Literacy Hour activities.

Broderbund School Editions
Price: £39.95
Available from: TAG Developments Ltd, 25 Pelham Road, Gravesend, KENT DA11 0HU; Tel: 01474 537886

Broderbund is an American company which produces edutainment software – programs which have been primarily written for the home market and which are designed to be entertaining and fun to use whilst still having educational value. Some of this software is already well known in British schools – *Just Grandma and Me, The Tortoise and the Hare, Kid Pix Studio. Print Shop Deluxe* – all these are familiar and well loved titles.

However, what is less well known is that, in association with TAG Developments Ltd, Broderbund also produce some excellent materials to support the classroom use of these programs in the form of Teacher's Guides. These are chunky A4 folders full of ideas for activities both at and away from the computer, which show how the software can be integrated into all areas of the curriculum. They are very browsable and well presented and contain pupil activity worksheets as well as a number of curriculum projects and a comprehensive rationale explaining the educational value of the programs. One set of these teachers' materials, that for *Maths Workshop*, won the 1997 BIMA Award for Education and many of the more recent materials have been modelled on this award winning formula.

Software which might be categorised as edutainment is underused in schools, partly because the curriculum is so crowded that teachers find it hard to fit in anything extra. With the slimming down of the National Curriculum perhaps it might be possible to re-inject some fun into the serious business of learning. The Broderbund School Editions could well have a part to play in this.

School Editions are available for the following titles at a cost of £39.95 each:

Maths Workshop
The Logical Journey of the Zoombinis
Kid Pix Studio
Print Shop Deluxe
Just Grandma and Me
Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego
Carmen Sandiego Junior Detective
The Tortoise and the Hare
Arthur's Birthday
Little Monster at School
ClickArt 40,000 Image Pack
Harry and the Haunted House
Sheila Rae, the Brave

Opportunities for Information and Communication Technology in the Primary School
Helen Smith
Published 1999 by Trentham Books; ISBN 185856106x
Price: £9.95

Aimed at Primary teachers undertaking professional development and students in initial teacher training, this is a timely book considering the current focus on ICT training for all teachers. The Introduction is a thoughtful essay on the place of ICT (including a section titled IT or ICT?) in teaching and learning, putting some emphasis on the legacy hardware and software most schools have and how this must not be swept aside. Indeed the whole book can be viewed as a celebration of what can be achieved with some fairly basic equipment. That said, it does have an up to date chapter on the Internet as well as references to wordprocessors with speech facility and other more recent innovations.

There are some omissions, which the author outlines, such as the use of Integrated Learning Systems and the enabling role of ICT in special education. Otherwise the coverage is fairly comprehensive, reflecting the QCA Scheme of Work and including ways in which activities have been differentiated. The author obviously has a great deal of experience using overlay keyboards; there is a whole chapter devoted to them and several references throughout other chapters.

Many teachers are concerned about the place of ICT in Numeracy and Literacy; this is well covered in several chapters giving insights into how children across both Key Stages can be challenged and supported in their learning. It also addresses the knotty problem of whole class teaching with a single computer by giving 'real life' examples of different ways of organising and managing the activities.

Interestingly, whilst most other publications concerning ICT bend over backwards to be 'platform independent' and to refer to 'generic software', Helen Smith talks about specific programs. This is not as limiting as it might seem as she makes points about the ways in which the application was used to enhance children's learning and, especially if you know your software well enough, it is possible to recognise how these may be applied in the context of your classroom.

For me as an IT Co-Ordinator/ICT Manager the book worked on several levels; it made me feel I am on the right track and using ICT for the right reasons; it has strengthened some of my arguments when faced with teachers who are less than enthusiastic when it comes to ICT; it has given me new ideas to try. The mix of well-documented references and verbatim classroom reports would certainly make it useful for those writing essays and assignments.

Elizabeth Furness
IT Coordinator at Park Lane Primary School, Nuneaton

Ideas for Integrating ICT into the Primary and Secondary Classroom
Published 1999 by Lewisham Education and Community Services

I was quite excited by the book title – at last, I thought, ideas for helping the non-specialist cope with ICT work in the classroom with one CD ROM machine and over 30 six- and seven-year-olds. Unfortunately, I was disappointed. I was unfamiliar with any of the applications apart from floor turtles so it was difficult to visualise most of the examples.

Assumptions were made about the level of classroom support available for some activities. I would have liked to see further suggestions for managing the integration of ICT into the class work. Some ideas, such as children sending Pixie across a circle to each other, showed how children could support each other's leaning and sending an email, a Year 3 task, seemed appropriate and manageable, providing, of course that there is an Internet or networked connection in several classrooms within the school! Similarly, Internet-based research (Year 5), creating web pages (Years 4 and 5), evaluating aspects of web sites (Year 5) and accessing information using the Internet (Year 6) all make an assumption of ready access to the web – which we do not yet have in many schools.

Some of the support materials or ICT proformas (notably the computer diaries, ICT activity planners and evaluation sheets) looked useful, and the layout of the book was user-friendly, with clearly stated learning objectives and task descriptions. I was expecting more guidance on the teaching approaches to be used and on managing the organisation of the individual or group so that no child would miss the vital literacy, numeracy or science input which now takes up so much of the school day.

This book was developed as part of a Lewisham-based project and has clearly been of great value within the project and more widely throughout the rest of the borough where the particular software is widely known and used. For schools beyond Lewisham, however, the book makes too many assumptions about availability of (and familiarity with) hardware, software and connections. The attractive design promises so much, but disappointingly few of the ideas are currently practicable in the average primary school.

Mary Sowerby
Courtwood Primary School, Croydon

Reply . . .

From Pat Minton
Computers in Education Consultancy, 165 Dalgetty Road Beaumaris 3193 Australia

Dear Editor,

With reference to the article by Tony Lyons about using high-end software with primary children I feel very strongly that such software does NOT help literacy as well as software like *Talking Textease*. I teach children with literacy difficulties and generally their knowledge of word processing, using software designed for work situations, is poor. They use such software in most schools in Victoria. They grasp *Talking Textease* more quickly and moreover it helps their literacy difficulties. One of the remarkable features of talking word processors is that a child who cannot see his mistakes begins correcting his own work because he can hear his mistakes. For me it is a wonderful moment to see a child who has struggled suddenly take this big step forward. It somehow helps them think and I find then that they begin to use their knowledge about word patterns. I have been teaching such children for about 30 years and the advent of talking word processors (and also speech on many other programs) has made such a difference to children's learning and success.

I also work in a residential setting of children with severe and moderate learning difficulties as well as challenging behaviours, where some of the careworkers have only recently left school. Most of them have no confidence in using computers and because of this have avoided them. They even find it difficult to use simple cause and effect programs with the children and so I have to spend a lot of time training the careworkers to use the computers with the children. Apparently at school they found it difficult learning to word process as well as thinking about the content of the work they were doing; it was all too daunting for them.

My 7 year old grandson has no literacy difficulties but prefers *Talking Textease*; for him he likes the ease with which it takes pictures and its ability to do fun things like rotating text easily. The pronunciation of words makes the children think about the letters. When my grandson was 5 he wrote a few sentences using a Concept Keyboard and *Talking Textease*. He wrote 'I went to Kinder'. It was pronounced with a long 'i' which made him roar with laughter but also led him to ask a lot of questions.

Yours,
Pat Minton

Screen Test

Sue Foster is a speech and language therapist working with both a paediatric and an adult caseload. She has specific responsibility for supporting children with speech and language difficulties in mainstream schools and is particularly interested in how computer software can be used to help children with speech and language problems.

Finding your way through the maze of available software can be difficult. Programs need to be interesting, motivating, easy to use and relevant to therapy. The Education Show at the NEC is an ideal place to trial software before purchasing it. After I attended last year, the speech and language therapy department purchased more software which is available for the multimedia computers in our community clinics.

Motivating and rewarding

My First Incredible Amazing Dictionary* (Dorling Kindersley, £29.99) is an extremely motivating and rewarding program. It takes the form of an animated dictionary and also includes a number of games. The animated dictionary is the most useful part and I have used it in several different areas of therapy:

i. Phonology (Case example 1)

When a child is able to produce a target word initial sound at single word level, the program can be used to practise short phrase /sentence level production.

Case example 1

Daniel (6), moderate-severe phonological disorder, target for therapy: /s/ in word initial position at sentence level.

Daniel had attended blocks of therapy for three years which had been successful but he was no longer motivated by a range of therapy reinforcers. The computer was used as an alternative way of facilitating speech practice:

1. Daniel selected 's' from the line of letters at the top of the screen.
2. A screen came up with pictures beginning with 's'. He said the word he wanted to look at, for example 'sea' and clicked on it.
3. A further screen came up including a written description of the word and a larger picture of the word.
4. He made a spoken sentence about the picture, for example, 'the boat is sailing on the sea'.
5. If he said it correctly he clicked on the picture for the animation. In this case, the boat sails across the sea and the water comes out of the whale, accompanied with a sound effect.
6. Sometimes he also read the description or played the description of the word to help him to make more spoken sentences with the same word.
7. At the end of the session he selected the 'backtrack' option which played back some of the words practised, and he printed one or two pictures for home practice.

Since Daniel enjoyed the program, he became interested again in therapy. He successfully achieved the therapy target by the end of the block and had already started work on another target.

One drawback with the program is that it can only be used for word initial sounds. It is also important to consider that the dictionary concentrates on letters not phonemes. For example, under the pages for 's' you will find words beginning with sh, s and s-blends (e.g. sp, sn, sl). The way to get around this is just to cover the words you do not want the child to practise with a piece of card.

ii. Spontaneous speech and language sample (Case example 2)

Usually by the end of a session therapists are able to use their skills and equipment to tempt even the most shy child to speak. However, last year I received a referral for a child who just would not talk.

Case example 2

Oliver (3;4 years) was referred by the health visitor due to parental concern over both speech and language. When he came to his initial assessment it was evident that he was painfully shy and never talked to strangers. I tried all the toys I had to coax him, all to no avail – he just hid his head in his mother's coat. So I tried the computer.

As I played with the computer, he gradually left his mother's knee and pulled her over to have a look. By the end of the session he started to exclaim and ask questions about the animations. I made a further appointment to see him and as he played with the computer, I gained a lengthy speech and language sample which truly was spontaneous.

This enabled me to make a diagnosis and when he commenced therapy, the program was used to reinforce phonological (speech sound) targets following listening work.

iii. Vocabulary development

A child can be given a category to brainstorm, for example 'animals' or 'vehicles' and then click on the category to see if they can beat the computer!

I would use *My First Incredible Amazing Dictionary* with children up to approximately nine years old. However Dorling Kindersley also produce a *Children's Dictionary* (£29.99)* for older children. The vocabulary in this program is much more complex, for example some of the words under 'l' are leopard, liberate and luminous. It also includes other games which include 'charades' (rather like the show 'Catchphrase'), 'spelling' and 'hangman'. Each activity is graded for difficulty. Dorling Kindersley material is widely available in High Street department stores, and can also be obtained directly. Many schools and libraries have this software. Often parents can be encouraged to practise with children on the library computer.

Special needs specialists

Inclusive Technology specialise in selling and producing special needs software. Many of their programs can be used with a touchscreen, switch or intellikeys instead of a mouse. They also allow purchasers twelve weeks to return goods if unsuitable. The most relevant packages I have found include:

*1. Speaking for Myself**: Encourages single word naming and simple two-to-three word stories. Also nursery rhymes, counting, matching, prepositions, colours and auditory discrimination of everyday sounds. For children with special needs, Makaton signs and symbols are included. (Windows: £45)

*2. On The Farm**:* The task is to build up farmyard pictures. This is useful for work on naming animals and giving and receiving instructions (especially using prepositions) on where to place the animals. Text can then be added to name the animals. (Windows 5-user copy: £39)

*3. Spider in the Kitchen**:* A suite of activities including work on prepositions and sequencing. (Windows or Mac 5-user copy: £57).

Computer programs do have a role in paediatric therapy, but should be used flexibly and as an additional tool to the therapist. Many software companies, including Inclusive Technology, are receptive to speech and language therapists' ideas for programs. Such input would mean even more programs becoming available which are directly relevant to our work.

Resources

Dorling Kindersley software catalogue; tel. 0870 010 0350

Inclusive Technology software catalogue; tel. 01457 819790; http:llwww.inclusive.co.uk

*This is available only on a CD ROM, for use with multimedia computers so would require a minimum of a Pentium processor.

**This is available only on floppy disc.

Primary Citizenship Internet project

Liam McGurrin

'Mr. Foreman, do you find the defendant Guilty or Not Guilty?'

The judge at Sheffield Crown Court peered over his glasses, his fingers drumming on the desk.

'Not guilty, m'lud', replied the foreman.

Pandemonium broke out. There was a chorus of cheers from the band of supporters, and a cry of 'Cheat! Fraud! Swindle!' from a group of young women at the back of the court.

'Silence!' bellowed the judge (otherwise known as Philip, aged 11 from St. John Fisher School, Sheffield). 'Was that okay?', he whispered as he turned to P.C. Trevor Buckingham who was standing on his left hand side.

And so ended the mock trial at Sheffield Crown Court where the Year 6 pupils from St. John Fisher School had enacted a courtroom drama as part of the Primary Citizenship Internet Project. The trial was instigated and coordinated by the school's community policemen – P.C. Trevor and P.C. Gary.

The project began two years ago when Superintendent Philip Carnall of the Derbyshire Police was given a brief by The Association of Chief Police Officers to find a method of using the Internet with primary school children as a power towards good, rather than the public perception of the net.

He joined forces with Liam McGurrin, Head teacher of St. John Fisher and together they worked on establishing the PCIP. Mr. McGurrin contacted St. Mary's in Sunderland, Bamford Primary in Lancashire, Ilfacombe School in Devon, Barlborough Hall School in Derbyshire, All Saint's in Hampshire, Wimbledon Infants in London and Harold's Girls' School in Dublin and they met at Police HQ in Derbyshire to discuss the way forward.

Each of the schools has a designated Police officer who liaises with them and they have also attended the meetings. It is the first time that the Education and the Police forces have combined in a National project, and Mr. Blair has endorsed their efforts.

His recent letter reads:

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER

I am delighted to give my support to this Internet Project. This website has an important role, bringing together different parts of the community to encourage more active communities and spread best practice in promoting citizenship in schools. I hope that it is a useful tool for everyone who uses it.

The Internet is changing people's lives and the pace of change is breathtaking. Creative projects like these exploit this potential, using new technology to share information, to debate new ideas and to improve people's lives. I hope that we see many more of them.

I particularly hope that this site will encourage people to get involved in issues affecting their local communities, and to take an interest in issues affecting our nations and the world, such as the environment.

The United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland have a long standing relationship based on trust and respect. Our two countries are closer together now than they have been for a long time. Projects such as these mean that we can look forward to even closer links in the future.

The official launch of the Web site, which is being constructed by the University of Central England, is on October 12th, and Mr. Blunkett, accompanied by Mr. Newing, the President of ACPO, and many other dignitaries will attend St. John Fisher to participate in the occasion. Video conference links, via Time Education, will be set up to link the Sheffield children with those in Devon, Hampshire, London and Dublin.

They will be using emails and talkboards, courtesy of RM. The first element was a discussion on 'What is your school like?', and this will lead onto a debate comparing and contrasting the various school rules. Each of the schools has elected a School Council, and they meet monthly for an intensive discussion period, before reporting back to their classmates.

The UCE and Sheffield Hallam University have been of tremendous assistance in setting up the Web site, and affording the school the use of first- class conferencing facilities. Frizzell's sponsored the growing pangs, and Zurich are financing this year to facilitate the termly conferences and further growth.

The project has expanded to include a school in North Wales, one in Scotland, four in Northern Ireland and three in the South. The Irish launch will be on the same date in Dublin, and the project there has received the approval of the Education Dept., the Garda Siochana and the RUC.

We are looking towards Europe in 2000/2001, as we have links with schools in Finland, Austria, Germany, Italy, Greece, Sicily Cyprus, Portugal and France.

If we can educate children to respect themselves, each other's values and beliefs, and property – therefore improving their understanding and mutual cooperation across the geographical boundaries – we will have accomplished a great deal.

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