

Chris Drage and Mark Sealey  
examine six software titles worthy of  
your attention, whatever age group  
you work with or type of learning and

## Education: Software round-up

### key stage 3

### PARLEZ VOUS FRAN' AIS?

CD Fran ais, produced by the Leeds EdIT Centre with support from the National Council for Educational Technology (NCET), is for use at key stages 3 and 4 with pupils learning French. Based on Tricolore Book 4 (published by Thomas Nelson), the package presents a very wide variety of situations and environments likely to be encountered in France. The level of fluency expected and the grades of difficulties make the package suitable for both beginners and more advanced learners of the language.

The pupils are offered the opportunity to hear spoken French (on the CD-ROM) and increase their facility with the language by completing tasks on screen as a result of what they hear - an obvious, yet reasonably well-executed application of multimedia. Well over fifty such activities are included in the package, which consists of two floppy discs as well as the CD; the application uses Oak's Genesis.

These activities include finding your way to the sites where the tasks take place (having chosen which town to visit), using a none too friendly turn-left/turn-right/straight ahead system - you cannot go

backwards. Once you have found your feet there, you are asked to complete a set of tasks in French, such as adding up the cost of a meal or choosing items to cook from a market, putting advertisements together based on radio announcements of the products, or filling in the correct times on an airport departure board.

Icons are used consistently to give instructions and feedback wherever these do not come from the CD. There is also ample opportunity to use the graphics (as Drawfiles) and text (in Edit) away from the computer as reinforcement and revision activities. The idea of hearing the instructions on CD and linking the response directly via the computer is an obvious one that surely must become more common as usage of CDs increases in schools.

Although some teachers will welcome the way in which the pupils are by and large presented with (usually self-contained) tasks to complete, more imaginative schools will feel the lack of a greater degree of open-endedness in CD Fran ais.

Although an instruction sheet sets out clearly how the software is to be installed for your machine and reminds you of the

#### PRODUCT INFO

CD Fran ais (£80.85 ex. VAT) and Goldilocks (£39.95 ex. VAT) are available from Cumana at Pines Trading Estate,

### key stage 1

### STIRRED BUT NOT SHAKEN

Who's been eating my porridge? Whoever it is, the team responsible for CD Fran ais has produced a CD-ROM of the Goldilocks story with a similar funding arrangement.

Suitable for pupils in key stages 1 and perhaps 2, as well as some of those with special needs, Goldilocks has been designed to encourage exploratory learning using language, mathematical and IT skills.

Again, there is an audio CD and a Genesis application on two high density discs. A series of simple screens contains graphics and text. These

invite you to click and perform some screen-based task - discovering where the bears are hiding, placing the plates in order of size or assigning a face to a description (of rage or surprise, for instance) when the bears get in to discover the mayhem. There is not usually any indication whether the response is acceptable, but progress is straightforward.

Goldilocks can be used with an overlay keyboard and there is a crib in the small instruction booklet that comes with the CD. There is also a huge selection of A4 sheets to extend and reinforce the material covered in the program.

There is nothing earth-shattering about Goldilocks,

key stage 1

## RINGING THE CHANGES?

Maths Circus from 4Mation is in parts an inspired piece of software that will keep pupils (and adults) of all ages involved for a long time - and mostly to good purpose. The software consists of a set of games which all follow the circus theme, with clowns, trapezes, seals and tickets etc. Each game can have five levels, though there is some inconsistency throughout the suite as to when these can be set, some requiring you to restart that particular game if you wish to change.

The areas of maths which are practised are what you would expect: number, shape, space, logic, time, grids and co-ordinates, data-logging, angles

and measures with a fair amount of problem-solving along the way.

Some of the games are old favourites (pouring liquids from one container to another to get the exact amount of medicine required for the elephant, for example). Others are new, or old concepts newly presented (getting past the traffic lights and across the ring on trapezes). All work well.

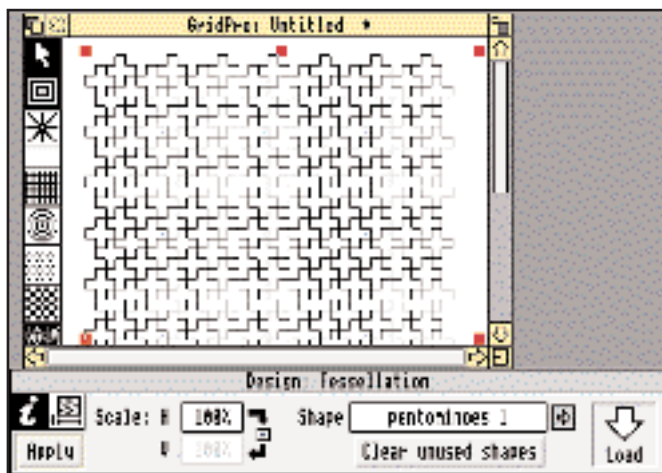
The software can be used imaginatively, giving pupils scope for much meaningful work away from the computer and a chance to reason with themselves as to likely solutions and strategies - always to be preferred to merely completing a task in which they have had scant involvement.

The documentation is excellent and the myriad of

## AT THE FRONT OF THE GRID

GridPro is another novel and sophisticated utility in a

can vary from the very simple to the extremely complex with no limit on the number of grids which can be created on a single sheet of paper; as the handbook points out, this can range from a diminutive A5 to a huge 12A0!!



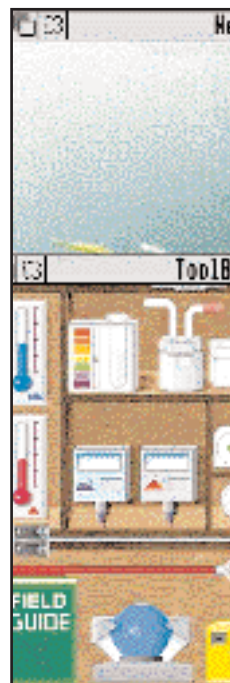
Creating a tessellated grid

similar vein to the successful Hatchback. This time 4Mation have come up with a comprehensive grid creating/printing program which will find many a use in schools and in the home. Essentially, GridPro allows you to create a wide variety of different sorts of grids and patterns quite simply. Grids can be linear, polar or with logarithmic scales and include dot lattices and tessellated patterns. In fact, virtually any type of grid is possible. Various elements in a grid can have colour added for emphasis or the line thickness altered, and the final creation can be exported into other applications documents. Grids

GridPro is likely to appeal to primary teachers who wish to create grids and patterns to assist with children's mathematical investigations, and pupils in secondary schools and higher education who require grid sheets tailor-made to suit their specific requirements. So why not purchase commercially printed grid sheets? Well, not only can GridPro assist you in making customised grids, but it will permit them to be printed on any size of paper, in any colour and with specific features selected. Commercially produced grids of this nature are likely to cost an

### PRODUCT INFO

GridPro (£37.50 ex. VAT or £75 for site licence) and Maths Circus (£27.50 ex. VAT or £55 for site licence) are available from 4Mation Educational Resources,

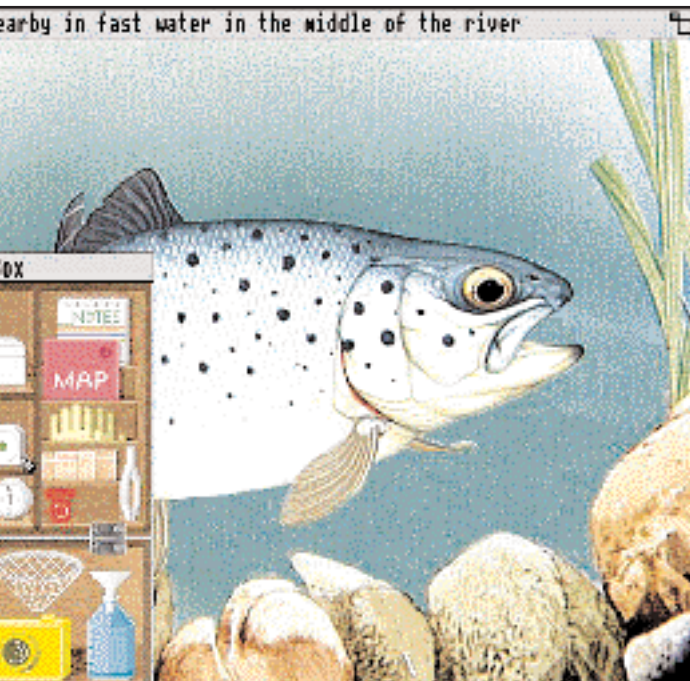
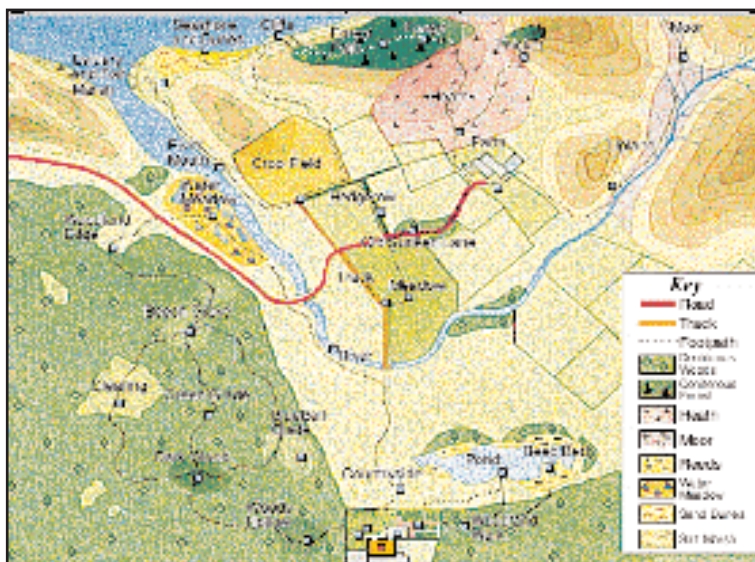


## EXPLORING NATURE THE USBORNE WAY

The Usborne Exploring Nature CD-ROM aims to provide learning experiences involving exploring a range of natural habitats to discover hundreds of different species of flora and fauna by looking, thinking and doing. The CD-ROM depicts an area of mixed topography in which native flora and fauna can be found in their natural habitats. The discovery of primary evidence is achieved by the use of a Naturalist's Toolbox with which the child can take all manner of measurements of the environment and its inhabitants, even to the extent of collecting specimens, taking photographs and making notes in a notebook.

The package comprises a CD-ROM and an A4 ringbinder containing instructions, ideas, cross curricular links and uses in a classroom situation. The CD is, in essence, a vast collection of visual and textual data which is accessed via a superbly child-oriented front end. You start in the study of a country house.

From here clicking on a doorway, window or painting will set you off exploring the countryside. However, inside the room certain hot areas provide access to interactive help, a scrapbook of travels, themes to explore and a word processor for reporting. The countryside can be explored in many ways although initially it is fun to follow the paths and tracks exploring the area. The toolbox is always available, from which all manner of measuring/collecting equipment is accessible. Opening the O.S. map reveals the whole region within which specific



locations can be visited. At each location there are hidden hot spots which reveal close-ups of individual species and hidden signposts which lead you on.

The designers have done an excellent job in creating a colourful and inviting scenario which positively invites exploration. The background information is there in abundance as is the opportunity to export all data to children's own presentations. There is only one major omission: sound.

### PRODUCT INFO

Usborne Exploring Nature CD-ROM is available from  
Hampshire Microtechnology Centre,  
Connault Lane, Paulsgrove,  
Portsmouth, PO6 4SJ,  
tel. 0705 378266.



## WHAT'S IN STORE FOR VERSION 4?

Nstore in its fourth generation has a number of very important additions and improvements which many teachers will appreciate. Those readers familiar with H.S. Software's earlier version of this National Curriculum record keeping program, are well aware of its shortcomings - especially when operating under RISC OS 3. Although the new version is still only RISC OS coexistent, it does now cope better with RISC OS 3; for example, it can now communicate much better with other packages and it loads and quits correctly from the icon bar.

### PRODUCT INFO

Nstore is available from  
H.S. Software,  
56 Hendrefoilan Avenue, Sketty,  
Swansea, SA2 9ZZ,  
tel. 0792 204519.

The program has improvements in its content, not least of which being the ability to type in a pupil's first name, surname and gender, and includes a sort routine to deal with each of these. Similarly,

Nstore now includes all the statements of attainment for levels 1 to 10 in all relevant subjects, and includes screens for RE and general comments. The program follows Acom's philosophy of having stand-alone, single-purpose packages and exporting data to appropriate software for laying out and printing. In Nstore's case this includes improved export facilities for text and CSV files which can now be sent to either Impression or Ovation. Nstore also contains a range of print options for setting your own format, headings etc. Any combination of subjects can be printed or exported in any order. Similarly, version 4.0 can import existing version 3.0 files for conversion to the new format although you will need to enter genders before being able to use the file.

Undoubtedly, Nstore 4.0's major improvement is its report writing facility containing a comprehensive bank of comments, all of which can be individually edited, altered or amended. Reports now include additional data in the form of attendance figures, exam (percentage), classwork (percentage) and SATs results for each subject. Nstore 4.0 does take a lot of the pain and labour out



If YOU are thinking seriously about

## STATISTICS

Then "FIRST"

1st and 1st Jr have enhanced specifications.

RISC OS 2 and 3 compliant. Structured Menu System. "Spreadsheet" data entry.

Simple access to UNMATCHED STATISTICAL FACILITIES. Drawfile output of Graphics. Ultra-easy import and export of CSV files giving smooth data interfaces to other software. Automatic, context sensitive Manual.

Mouse driven with optional keyboard shortcuts

Statistical content of 1stJr is highly relevant to Educational requirements

Upgrade paths from single tasking versions are available.

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Serious Statistical Software