eviews: Historic Lessons
by Gary E. Bloom

Where in America's Past is Carmen Sandiego?
Where in Time is Carmen Sandiego?

Type:
Publisher: Broderbund (800/521-6263)
Retail Price: $
Street Price: $35.00
Requires: Where in Time? Requires Plus or better and 2 floppy drives, Color requires System 6.0.4, 2 Mb RAM; Where in America's Past? requires System 6.0.4 or higher, 2 Mb RAM, and a HD for B/W, System 6.0.7 or higher, 4 Mb RAM, and a HD for color, System 7 requires 4 Mb RAM
Protection: None

omeday Ms. Sandiego will be on the cover of People magazine. Inside will be a heartwarming tale of how the clever and comely thief met the nerdy, but equally elusive, Waldo. Of course, these kindred spirits will have fallen in love and, together, overcome their devious life-style with a 12-step recovery program. Until that time we can look forward to programs such as Where in America's Past is Carmen Sandiego? and Where in Time is Carmen Sandiego? and other software ending in question marks.

As a fledgling detective of the ACME agency, your job is to track down Carmen or one of her elusive V.I.L.E. gang. Carmen and her gang steal historically significant items such as the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia. What, in heaven's name, does Carmen do with this stuff? We can at least be thankful that she's not likely to covet anything you or I have. Anyway, if you catch the crook, the item is returned to its rightful place.

You're going to need some help against the clever Carmen. You'll be allotted time with a Chronoskimmer 450SL (not to be confused with the Mercedes Benz model), a combination computer/time travel machine. With its aid, you'll travel through time and place to gather clues and chase the V.I.L.E. gang.

At each destination, you will view an attractive still scene. These graphics are easily the best

aspect of Carmen software. Next, gather clues by interrogating witnesses and consulting with sources. If you want to decode the clues, you'll turn to the enclosed mini-encyclopedia. In fact, the Carmen series might be viewed as a means to get children to use the reference book.

You'll have to travel to several places to get sufficient evidence for an arrest warrant and, ultimately, find your prey.

There is no age recommendation. I'd say age nine and up.

till the best? The remaining four families who have yet to purchase any Where is Carmen…? software are wondering: "Are we really missing something terrific?" I hope not. Would we want a design as old as Carmen, especially in the educational sphere, to be the best? Is MacPaint—an authentic miracle in the mid-eighties—still the best paint software?

"Hey, son. Want to see this great old program?"

"Oh, sure Dad. Soon as I'm done with Kid Pix."

Compared to Headline Harry, Carmen holds many more facts and these facts are of greater historical significance. It uses less disk space by foregoing fancy animation and by using a paper data storage medium called a reference book. For most, it's probably less fun to play Carmen than Headline Harry.

Compared to Time Treks, it holds fancier graphics, more facts (in the encyclopedia), and is more of a game. While most children will probably find Carmen more entertaining, the designers of Time Treks base their software on the belief that history is interesting all by

itself.

Headline Harry and the Great Paper Race

Type:
Publisher: Davidson (800/545-7677)
Retail Price: $$49.95
Street Price: $35.00
Requires: System 6.0.7, color Macintosh, 3 MB RAM and a HD. System 7 requires 4 Mb RAM.
Protection: None

f you thought that one more detective game would compel you to toss your lunch (if not your Mac) you can breathe a sigh. In Headline Harry and the Great Paper Race (HH) you're a journalist for the Daily Star, traveling the country trying to capture a story rather than a bad guy or gal. Rest assured, bad guys are present as usual—in this case, as reporters working for a competing newspaper, The Diabolical Daily, who are legendary for grossly distorting their stories. You, naturally, adhere to the highest journalistic standards.

The events you'll cover occurred in the last four decades. There's a major story in each of twelve geographical regions as well as "lesser" stories that can lead you astray. Your task is to decipher which is the important story, get the facts, and publish before The Diabolical Daily does.
The regions are grouped in four levels of difficulty. Nevertheless, you can select any of the levels save the highest. Access to that level must be earned. Choose a region and hop a plane; your first destination is suggested when you get your assignment. Your boss (Harry), ace reporter Lazar Slate, your mother, and most of all, cab drivers, will point your way to successive stops.

You won't be lavishing your expense account on Hertz and Avis. Rather, you'll spend lots of time in cabs picking up hints and viewing the realistic QuickTime movies which depict your trip through a crowded city. Cabbies range from friendly to authentically sarcastic when visiting cities such as New York and Los Angeles.

here are various ways of gathering information. In each city you should listen to the radio, peruse the reference book, and conduct interviews in three locations.

Before you can file your story you must get the journalist's four "w's" of who, what, when and where. For example, the California story is about the Summer Olympics of 1984 which took place in Los Angeles. The "people" you are to identify include Greg Louganis, Carl Lewis, Mary Lou Retton, and Mary Decker. Key "words" include diving, running, gymnastics and gold medal.

Once you've filed stories in all 12 regions you can continue to explore, but the game is over.

In addition to the other information nuggets, there are 12 newsreels (QuickTime movies) that range from Elvis Presley reporting for duty, to the swearing in of U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Conner. Like a yuppie couple from California, all these QuickTime movies need their space. Hence, Headline Harry is the Tyrannosaurus Rex of history software, devouring 9.5 megabytes of your hard disk.

Recommended for those age 10 and up.

Last Year's Model. The publisher (Davidson) calls Headline Harry "U.S. History and Geography" software. That's a bit of a stretch. While we boomers are sure the dawn of history began with our births, not everyone sees it that way. Also, what Headline Harry calls historical events often are as timeless as Detroit's annual car rollout. The half-million dollar heist by D.B. Cooper? Garrison Keillor's retirement? More People magazine than Encyclopedia Britannica.

So is there anything good about Headline Harry? Oh yes. QuickTime movies and all that disk space have been used to good effect and Headline Harry is lots of fun. Far more fun, I believe, than chasing Carmen—especially for older kids. Also, it's a decent journalism simulation. If you're concerned about value, remember, after success in all 12 regions, Headline Harry turns into a pumpkin.

Time Treks

Type: Hypermedia
Publisher: Magic Quest (800/321-8925)
Retail Price: $39.95
Street Price: $
Requires: System 6.0.5, Mac Plus, 2 MB RAM and a HD; System 7 requires 2.5 Mb. RAM. HyperCard is included
Protection: None

t is in the nature of humans, as well as the rest of the animal kingdom, to explore and to search for the elusive. No doubt, those inclined to explore had an evolutionary advantage: they found more food, better lodging, and could fill their gas tanks. No wonder children like to play games such as hide and seek, go on scavenger hunts, and investigate the local cave. Grown ups like to do the same things, but they know bigger words. So scavenger hunts and cave explorations become "archeological digs."

Once we've found this cool stuff we want to organize it in such a way that we can easily find it again (although you'd never know it at my house). So we have books, shelves, museums, and computer databases.

Many computer games, such as Carmen and Headline Harry, take advantage of this love of search and exploration with just a nod toward the keeping track part. As with all Hypermedia software, Time Treks has a unique allure: information is linked in such a way that you can explore, get lost, and always find your way back. From an exploration standpoint, Carmen and Headline Harry feel as if you're on a leash, while Time Treks is akin to being in a huge yard with a fence around it.

Time Treks is a world history encyclopedia organized as a HyperCard stack. It works best for browsing and following anything that grabs your interest. The different ways you can dip into that information ensures that you'll find surprises, and the data is far more interesting and sophisticated than you'll find in Carmen or Headline Harry.

There is a game there, cleverly titled "Time Treks Game" (Time Treks veterans call it, simply, "The Game"), to encourage you to try out the various paths to the database. Unlike with Carmen or Headline Harry, if you get interested in following a reference deeper than the game compels you to go, you can save or even abandon the game and dive in.

he game itself? You're competing against Time Tyrants for the control of 30 Time Doors. Answer a question correctly and you close a door. If you fail to answer a question in the allotted time, the Tyrant gets through the door. To defeat a Tyrant, you must control at least 16 doors. Failure to do so allows tyrants to "destroy the past and threaten the future." You'll need a lot of imagination to be motivated by that generality.

For children, the most entertaining aspect of the game will likely be the Underground. On occasion, you'll be sent there to search for answers which typically are hidden in a "book" on the "bookshelf." Again, you can skip the game and visit the underground anytime.

Time Treks does not have an age recommendation. I would say it's suitable for those age eleven or so and up. While it's simple to navigate, the database itself is more appropriate for an older group.

Your Trek or Mine? Time Treks follows the natural terrain of its HyperCard foundation: great navigation, mediocre graphics. The main advantage of better graphics would be to catch the attention of children. What's left is a very pleasant way to explore the clear and informative prose. While the game isn't much, if you look closely at Carmen you won't find a lot of creativity imbedded in that design either.

Time Treks vs. Carmen vs. Headline Harry? They're not direct competitors in the sense that the time periods and geography they cover overlap, but are not the same. Nevertheless, they compete on a more important level: which program fosters a genuine appreciation of history? Carmen, by far, has the best graphics. Headline Harry is easily the best game. Time Treks is the program of the three that will most likely get you to think: I want to learn more history.