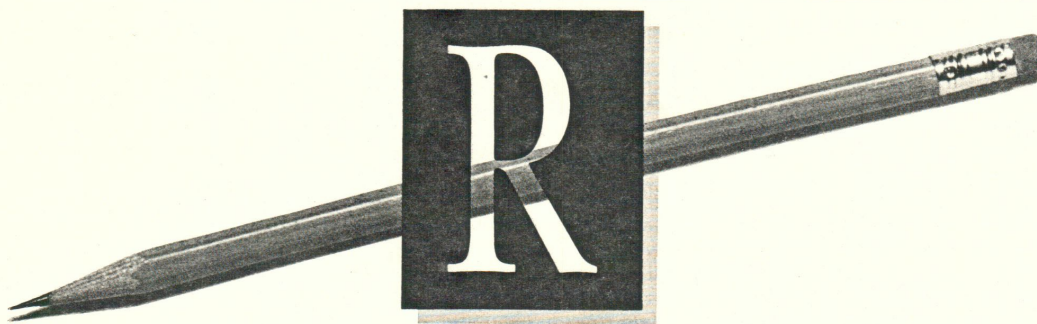


THE RESOURCE CENTER



By MARGARET MORABITO

There are still new developments in educational software for Commodore owners, despite the slowing trend in the industry as a whole. A noteworthy move by Commodore is its decision to package a third-party educational program with each new Commodore 64C.

The first company to join in these efforts, MECC, is well-known in the schools. It's refreshing to see a company like this throwing its support toward the Commodore home computer market.

MECC and Commodore

The first MECC program to be bundled with the 64C is called *Odell Lake*. Others will be bundled on a rotating basis. *Odell Lake*, for ages 8 and up, is a wildlife simulation that teaches survival strategies of creatures in a freshwater lake.

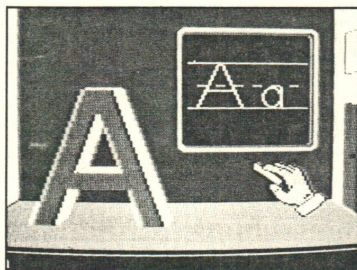
Each student takes on the role of a fish, one of six different kinds. As the fish swims about, it confronts various obstacles and predators. The objective is to make decisions that will enable the fish to survive in its underwater world.

The documentation accompanying the program encourages further study of ecology. It suggests additional topics to be researched, and it provides a chart on which students can record the results of their fish's interaction with other creatures.

There are eight other MECC programs you can buy directly from Commodore for \$19 each:

Path Tactics: a basic math skills program for ages 5-12 that provides 92 / RUN SEPTEMBER 1986

Underwater ecology, a talking teacher, a certificate printer and an idea book highlight this month's Resource Center smorgasbord.



practice in whole numbers and problem solving.

Spelling Bee: a drill program for ages 8-13 that introduces and provides practice in spelling and vocabulary skills. It follows a fill-in-the-

blank format, with three possible answers displayed.

Adventures with Fractions: a program for ages 10-14 that provides practice in placing fractions in order according to size. Both the common denominator and cross-product methods are used.

Expeditions: a simulation for ages 10-15, in which students play the roles of American frontiersmen during three historical periods.

Pre-Reading: a program for ages 3-7 providing practice in reading-readiness skills such as upper- and lower-case letters, alphabetical ordering, problem solving and correspondence of letters and sounds.

The Glass Computer: a simulation for ages 12 to adult that demonstrates the internal workings of a computer. Students get a vivid picture of how a computer functions as it interprets Basic programming statements.

The Friendly Computer: a program intended to teach students of ages 5-8 keyboarding skills, the components of their computer system and how to save to disk.

The Market Place: a program for ages 8-14 that illustrates through graphics the basic concepts of economics. It includes simulations of business ventures in which students make decisions and test their business acumen.

All these programs can be ordered from Commodore at 1200 Wilson Drive, C2655, West Chester, PA 19380.

Talking Teacher

Firebird Software is known for selling top British game programs here

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in the States. The company has introduced a new educational program, called Talking Teacher, which I find quite good.

Aimed at pre-schoolers through grade 1, Talking Teacher has remarkable speech synthesis built into its software, alleviating the need for a compatible hardware speech module. It talks to the young student as it provides tutoring and practice in recognizing the letters of the alphabet and learning vocabulary words associated with the letters.

Talking Teacher is uncanny at times. For example, in one mode it shows a classroom with a blackboard on the wall. A hand appears and prints a letter both in upper- and lowercase on the board. Then a voice says the letter sound and asks the child to find the letter on the keyboard and press it.

The speech is clear, with inflections that effectively simulate true human speech. Moreover, as the child tries to

locate a letter on the keyboard, the Talking Teacher gives spoken hints along the way. For instance, if the child presses an R instead of a B, the computer says, "Try a little lower." The first time this happened with my 3½-year-old son, he really was perplexed because he wasn't accustomed to our computer "understanding" what he was doing.

Each of Talking Teacher's three learning modes offers colorful graphics and sound as children practice their alphabet and keyboarding skills. This is one program that parents and kids alike will enjoy.

Contact Firebird Licensees, Inc., PO Box 49, Ramsey, NJ 07446, or call 201-934-7373 for more information.

Certificate Maker

Coming on the heels of the huge success of Newsroom, Springboard Software recently announced a new program called Certificate Maker. I

saw the Apple II version at the Consumer Electronics Show last June, and was told the Commodore version would be out this fall.

Certificate Maker, which lets you create customized certificates to print out and distribute to award winners, should become an instant hit in schools. It offers over 200 pre-designed award certificates, diplomas, licenses and other documents.

The categories include sports, academic achievement, families, children, religion and business. You select the kind of certificate you want to make, choose a border and type in a customized message in one of several type fonts and sizes. You also provide the details for a signature line and enter the date.

Certificate Maker creates a fine-resolution printout that makes the product usable for serious work. Also included are gold-foil seals and colored stickers to adorn your certificates. Furthermore, you can create a name database file that enables you to automatically print any certificate for all names in your file.

I spoke with John Paulson, Chairman of Springboard Software, about the educational programs from his company. Paulson is a former teacher and has strong opinions about what makes good educational software.

In his view, the underlying goal of educators is to provide their students with access to ideas of others and with the ability to communicate effectively. Springboard's educational programs are designed to achieve this goal by providing compelling incentives.

A program such as Newsroom earns its worth as an educational program by providing an alternate route to learning English. It first gets students interested in making a newspaper; then it stimulates them to craft better sentence structure and paragraph development during the editing process.

Those skills that are drudgery to some students become valued in the context of a project that has a physical end product to be spread among friends and the rest of the school community. Paulson is all for giving students the tools to harness the computer to achieve meaningful, real-world results.

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environment, as well as provide an easy way to channel creativity. Programs that are easy to use and have printout capabilities, such as Springboard's Newsroom, Certificate Maker and Mask Parade, follow this theme. With hardcopy options, children who have computers can share the results of their activities with friends who don't, giving the computer a more functional social element.

Springboard Software offers a noteworthy product guarantee. If, within a 30-day period, you decide the program isn't really achieving what you had anticipated, you may send it back to Springboard for a full refund.

Contact Springboard Software at 7808 Creekridge Circle, Minneapolis, MN 55435, or call 612-944-3915 for further information.

Grolier's Curriculum Guide

Teachers will be interested in Grolier Electronic Publishing's curriculum guide, which is called *Across the Curriculum*. This 189-page book costs \$12 and contains 100 lesson plans for use in the classroom. While it's designed to show teachers how to incorporate the various Grolier educational programs into their classes, I see the guide as useful to teachers who have other brands of educational software.

Across the Curriculum is an idea book. The major subject areas covered are mathematics, language arts, science, special education, social studies and library science. Each lesson plan includes a stated learning objective, appropriate grade levels, how to prepare for the lesson, the actual components of the activity, special notes and instructions for modifying the lesson.

There are also worksheets in the book that you can photocopy for distribution to the class. Answers are provided, and there's a list of resources to consult for additional assistance in your efforts to teach with computers.


This type of support for schools is needed on a larger scale. I'd like to see more educational software companies providing such idea books for parents and teachers.

For more information, contact Grolier Electronic Publishing, Inc., Sherman Turnpike, Danbury, CT 06816, or call 800-858-8858.

Free Educational Program Disk

The Resource Center's readers have been very generous in donating their educational programs to the Center. By mid-June I had already received several dozen programs of high quality, covering a variety of subject areas. This spirit of commitment and sharing is inspiring.

As I mentioned in the June column, these programs will be placed on-line in The Resource Center special-interest group on QuantumLink. In addition, for those of you who aren't on Q-Link, I've collected these programs on a disk you can get for free from me here at *RUN*.

To get The Resource Center Educational Disk, just send me a blank disk and your name and address. I'll make a copy and get it off to you as quickly as I can. 

If you're using Commodore computers for educational purposes (at home or in school) and would like to share your experiences through The Resource Center, write me a letter detailing the equipment you're using, subject areas being taught, grade level or age of your students, software that you are using and any other information you feel like including.

Also, if you'd like to donate public-domain educational programs to The Resource Center for sharing with other educators and parents, please send along a disk with a brief description of the programs. Send correspondence and disks to:

Margaret Morabito
The Resource Center
c/o *RUN* Editorial
80 Pine St.
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You can also leave mail in my on-line mail boxes: CompuServe (70616,714) and Q-Link (MARGM).

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Note new prices: Commodore-64/128: \$29.95, Apple II (min. 64K): \$39.95, and IBM-PC, compatibles & expanded PCjr: \$49.95.

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