

# **MUESLI NEWS**

## **October 1984**

---

**Editor**

David Eastment

---

### **Contents**

Networking (DE)  
Software Reviews  
Farm  
Mallory  
Facemaker  
Fun with words  
Beeb Hints  
Storyboard - Integrating Computers

# Muesli News

Issue Number I: October 1984

This is the first issue of MUESLI NEWS, which is planned to appear at intervals through the academic year. Just how often it does appear is largely dependent upon you, the readers! (For details of MUESLI, and how to contribute, please see the end of this Newsletter).

It is hoped that the Newsletter will provide a record of the proceedings of our sessions, disseminate information to a wider audience and go some way to putting an end to the massive duplication of effort which seems to be dogging us at the moment.

We aim to be printing inter alia short articles, programming hints, listings and reviews of hardware, firmware and above all software.

In this first issue, we have an article on networking from David Eastment, plus one from Tony Hopwood on how he has used Storyboard within his teaching programme. In addition, there are four software reviews, brief notes on the last MUESLI meeting, hints on Beeb keys and a general information section.

.....

## REM

Have you seen Rex Last's new book on teaching with the micro from Blackwell? Not specifically written for EFL, but a sane, urbane and eminently practical introduction to CALL.....Sorry to hear that CALNews has stopped publication from July 84 .....If you missed the ESU Seminar on 'The Computer and ELT' in June you can sleep soundly in your beds. There were a few interesting speakers, but almost none of them had anything to say to the teacher working in the classroom.....TESOL France NEWS (Autumn '84) has a special section on EFL applications of CALL: not many Beebs out there, of course, but plenty of enthusiasm....!

.....

## NETWORKING

A problem familiar to any teacher who has used micros with a class is that of access to the keyboard: A large part of the computer's appeal lies in the immediate interaction between the machine and its users,, and as soon as this interaction is curtailed or restricted, student interest can rapidly flag. It seems to me that four students to each machine is the maximum one could work with.

Given, then, that the average class will need at least three or four machines, what is the best way to configure them? Some institutions have gone for free-standing machines, each with its own disk drive. Here in Saffron Walden we have opted for networking.

Our reasons for this decision were threefold, Firstly, it is much more cost-effective for several machines to share such expensive peripherals as disk-drives and printers. Secondly, it allows a very large number of programs to be stored centrally. And thirdly, it means that students and teachers have much less need actually to handle the disks, and are therefore much less likely to corrupt them. The big advantage here is that we are able to have a machine permanently available for student

self-access, without having to worry about disk security.

Our present network is an Acorn Econet Level Two. We have six BBC Bs linked in the main classroom, and an additional micro in the Self Study Centre. The network is left on twenty-four hours a day, and over the last six months has stood up to some very intensive use. Normally, there are some 150 programs available, divided into such categories as science, English, games, computeracy etc. Further disks are available for the teacher to put over the network: one for simulations, one for tests, another for various vocabulary activities etc.

The network is, in fact much more complex than we normally require. It permits hierarchies of directories, passwords, logging on, message transmission etc. Its great advantage, however, is that it can be made to run very simply. All our software is now menu-driven, and the student can learn how to use the system satisfactorily in minutes, rather than several periods our older system required.

Are there any drawbacks with the network? Well, it is complex to manage effectively (although, as I have suggested, very easy to use) and requires

a major investment in time for the network manager to become familiar with it. There can be some problems if more than five users try to access the same text-files simultaneously. And there is a significant loss of speed in file-handling. (This is a software rather than a hardware problem, however, and a simple utility program can compensate for it ) The most important problem is that disks formatted for the network cannot be read by a Disk Filing system (and vice versa). This can certainly be a nuisance but has not so far caused us any major problems. All in all, it seems to me that the advantages of networking far outweigh the disadvantages. (D.E).

## **SOFTWARE REVIEWS**

### **"FARM": Primary Programs.**

One of the most interesting areas of CALL is that of computer simulations. There is no shortage of them, either. As far as the EFL teacher is concerned, however, the problem is to find simulations which are neither so simple as to be rapidly exhausted ('KINGDOM', for example, on the BBC Welcome Pack) nor so realistic and complex as to require digesting a special manual before the program can be run.

One simulation that seems to fall into neither of these categories is FARM. Although written for primary school children, it lends itself readily to exploitation in the EFL classroom. The aim of the simulation is to manage a five-field arable farm for a year, making decisions about what crops to plant, when to fertilise etc. Regrettably, no documentation comes with the program, but the on-screen instructions are relatively clear and concise, and advice and information is available as the program runs.

The program itself is professionally written, robust and visually attractive, if sometimes a little on the slow side. Recommended.

(T.N.)

(FARM is produced by Primary Programs Walden, Essex. It is on cassette and Claypits, Debden Road, Saffron Walden, Essex. It is on cassette and 80-t disk' BBC only.)

### **"MALLORY" (Anita Straker/MEP):**

This is a computer-based version of the popular boardgame 'CLUEDO', (Some readers may be familiar with John Higgins' "Murder" on the ZX-81.) The scenario is simple. A murder has been committed, and the students' task is to find the murderer. The students can visit various parts of the

house (there are 25 rooms), and are given clues by the characters (twelve of them).

Unfortunately, it is not possible to interrogate the computer on even the simplest level, but the process of tracking down the murderer can be quite fun, and it does force the students to make notes! There are no graphics. A map might have been useful, but I have found it an interesting challenge to get the different groups of students to prepare their own, and at the end of the game to discuss similarities and differences. The on-screen presentation is excellent, as we have come to expect from Anita Straker. A useful feature for those who have problems with the keyboard is that it is only necessary to input the first three letters of his choice.

VERDICT. A limited, rather simple program, but one which can be profitably used as a stimulus for oral work. (E.M.)

(M , MALLORY is available from MUSE, P.O.Box 43, Hull) on disk or cassette. BBC only. )

## **"FACEMAKER" (A.S.K.)**

Since there is very little chance of a great deal of purpose-written EFL software coming on to the market, why not try exploiting the primary school market? Lots of goodies'. A favourite of mine (and of my students) is FACEMAKER.

The students get together and think of the face of a person they all know, and then try to construct it with the help of the machine. They are prompted with a series of simple questions to help them in the drawing, and the finished product can be surprisingly faithful. The whole exercise can be great fun; lots of reading, lots of new vocabulary painlessly acquired and and lots of discussion. Thoroughly recommended, in spite of the painfully long time it takes to load. (TS)

(Editor's note: FACEMAKER is now on disk, but not networkable (yet).

Primary Programs (see above) to a much less ambitious (and much cheaper' program called 'FACES' . )

(FACEMAKER is available from Applied Systems Knowledge, London House, 6B Upper Richmond Road, London.)

## **"FUN WITH WORDS" (GOLEM)**

This is a software package of five vocabulary programs, aimed squarely at the primary market. The program writer clearly espouses the philosophy that CALL should be fun. All the programs ask you who you are each time you run them, and say hello to you politely. They are full of bright and tinkling sound, and of amusing little figures jumping up and down in delight at a right answer and slumping dejectedly at a wrong one. They are a right pain in the neck. .

Most of the programs are trivial and unoriginal: yet another version of Hangman, for example, with rather ugly Mode 7 graphics, and a program to test rather than teach, the difference between 'they're', 'there' and 'their'.

The only one my students have found of any use is 'SUFFIX', which gives (as well as tests) spelling rules for doubling consonants, dropping 'e's etc, But at £8.00, I wouldn't buy the package just for that. Thumbs truly down. (A.E. )

(FUN WITH WORDS is from Golem Ltd, 77 Qualitas, Bracknell, Berks. BBC cassette only.)

## BEEB HINTS

One of the first things most of us want to do when we have written our first software masterpiece is to stop it crashing. Once the program itself is proof, our next requirement will probably be to disable all those keys which the enquiring student might use to create havoc!

1) The BREAK key is readily cured by \*KEY10 OLD||M RUN||M. Although this stops the program from being lost, it does have the disadvantage of making it return to the beginning. Does anyone have any other ideas?

2) The Escape key is most often trapped with 'ON ERROR RUN', with the same results as above, but can be completely disabled with \*FX220.

3) The cursor and copy keys can often be used to wreck a screen display. \*FX4,1 will turn the off, and \*FX4,0 will re-activate them.

4) Another problem can be the automatic repeat when a key is held down for more than a fraction of a second. \*FX11,0 will turn off this facility.

5) And in deeper desperation, remember that VDU21 will disable the entire keyboard!

(D.E)

.....

## STORYBOARD (\*) INTEGRATING COMPUTERS

"How can you use these things in the classroom?" they all cry. And so you give them the usual spiel about programmed grammar units, speed reading skills programs, discussion-initiating problem-solving programs, etc., and they say, "No, not that. I know all that. What I want to know is how you integrate computers into a regular teaching programme." And then your eye brightens and your brow clears and you reach for your 'Storyboard' disk.

Here is a basic lesson plan for using the 'Storyboard' program as part of a larger teaching unit. It can be used at elementary and intermediate levels. Students have generally responded well to it and teacher trainer groups have told me that it has helped them to understand the potential of CALL.

### STAGE 1

Take a picture story and cut it up. Put the students in groups of three and get them to reassemble the pictures in the correct sequence. Use an OHP transparency of the picture story to check that they're got it right.

### STAGE 2

Elicit the story. Don't worry about accuracy but note key vocabulary on the board.

### STAGE 3

Reconstruct the story on the board sentence by sentence by eliciting from the students. User peer correction as much as possible. Ask the students to copy it down and then copy it down yourself.

## STAGE 4

Rehearse reading the story aloud. Each student takes a sentence. Correct pronunciation, stress and intonation until each student is reasonably happy with their rendition. Record them reading, sentence by sentence, until you have the whole story on tape.

## STAGE 5

Write the text into the Storyboard program, using the authoring option. It should only take about five minutes.

## STAGE 6

The students use Storyboard to reconstruct the original text.

## STAGE 7

As a review exercise, use the recorded version of the story as a dictation. With a very low level group, give them a gapped text to complete while listening to the tape.

(The version of Storyboard I have been using is by Graham Davies, published by Wida).  
(T.H.)

.....

## NOTES FROM THE LAST MEETING

Tim Johns (University of Birmingham) started up the day with a talk on "future developments". He outlined the future as he saw it in terms of hardware: the disappearance of memory as a constraint; laser rather than magnetic disks; touch screens and mice; computer to computer communication along the lines of Micronet 800; interfacing with videodisc. Over all these, he suggested, we have no control; but where we can make our voices heard is in the area of software. He addressed himself in particular to CALL writers everywhere: stop re-inventing the wheel, cut down on the endless manipulative programs, and settle down seriously to the business of standardisation. We ought at least, he maintained, to be able to establish a common standard for text storage on our various machines. It was up to groups such as ours, he said, to demonstrate to publishers that there was a healthy interest in CALL, to tell them the sort of software wanted and to put pressure on them to produce software integrated with courses.

After lunch Arthur Rope (Bell, Norwich) chaired an interesting session on practical programming, covering such issues as file handling, logical operations on strings, mode selection, etc. Unfortunately, however, the participants ranged from highly literate to near beginners, with backgrounds on at least three different machines. It was agreed that nevertheless such sessions were extremely useful as long as they remained machine specific and limited to a strictly limited number of areas of programming.

Paul Davies (Davies' Cambridge) led a discussion on 'actually using software with a real class'. His sheet of fourteen hints gave rise to some lively debate, especially the more contentious suggestions such as 'Put all the boys in one group' and 'Remind the students that the computer is STUPID and NEUTRAL'. Unfortunately time constraints prevented a fuller discussion of the issues he raised!

.....

## ABOUT MUESLI

MUESLI (Micro Users in ESL Institutions) was founded in December 1983 by a group of teachers in the south and east of England. It aims to foster and promote the user of microcomputers in the

EFL classroom. Our most common machine is undoubtedly the BBC Model 'B', although some members use Spectrums and Apples. MUESLI normally meets four or five times a year for seminars talks and workshops, and aims to exchange information and ideas as well as to achieve some kind of standardisation in what is a diverse and rapidly changing field.

Membership of MUESLI is £5 per annum to cover secretarial and postage costs. Membership includes a subscription to MUESLI NEWS. Cheques made payable to MUESLI should be sent to:

David Eastment  
MUESLI Secretary  
BELL College  
South road  
Saffron Walden  
Essex CB11 3EN.

Contributions to the Newsletter are invited, especially from overseas and from members unable to get to the meetings, and should be sent to the Secretary. Contributions prepared on Wordwise on 80-track disks will be especially welcome.