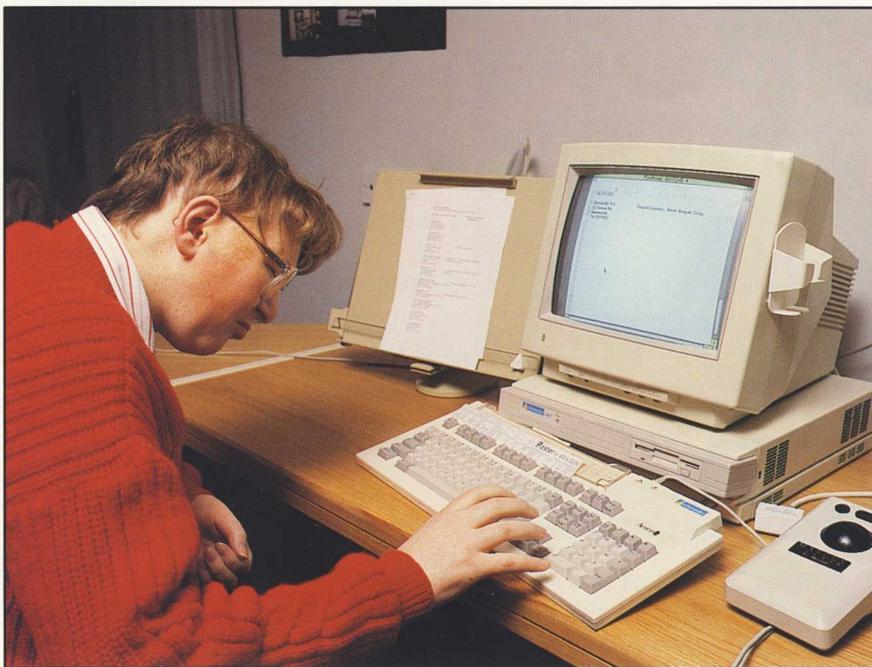# SPECIAL SOLUTIONS NEWS

INSIDE:

Acorn computers at day centre

A special centre in the West Midlands is helping adults with special needs to learn useful skills with Acorn computers.

The day centre is open to people from the local area with congenital physical disabilities or with injuries caused by accident or disease. They include stroke victims, amputees and people with cerebral palsy and multiple sclerosis. Clients of the centre range in age from teenagers to senior citizens.

The centre, run by the Social Services, has a well-equipped computer room with six Acorn computers, a Hawk V9 digitiser and a laser printer. Clients use these to run desktop publishing and text processing software and art packages Artisan, Atelier and Poster. Generally, they use the computers without adaptation, though a

Acorn

keyguard and trackerball are available for those who need them.

The computer room is a particularly popular part of the centre; its popularity has surprised and pleased staff. Instructor Stuart Aston, who has worked with computers for ten years, says "We didn't imagine that the new technology would be as readily embraced by our clients as it has been. Almost all those who have used the computers have now got the 'computer bug'!".

Clients use Acorn Desktop Publisher to produce a newsletter and the centre's brochure, and use the art packages to produce illustrations for their publications. Many clients had never used a computer before coming to the day centre. They are helped by staff to fulfil their potential, developing new skills and building their confidence, and many are able to return to work after attending the centre.

NEW FROM HONORMEAD

Honormead Software Solutions (0332 510951) is a new company producing colourful programs to help develop visual and shape-matching skills and simple tutorial material to help users learn about the Acorn Archimedes range of computers and the desktop.

Most of the packages display a reward in the form of a simple animation on the successful completion of a sequence.

Amazing animals is a colour, number and animal identification game. The user has to identify the requested animal or combination of animals, colours and numbers from four images shown on screen (eg 'three green elephants').
£12·95 + VAT

People match allows the user to build up pictures of people. There are three components to each person: head, body and legs. The components of different

characters are jumbled and the user must match them together.
£14·95 + VAT

Switch patterns displays simple, colourful geometric patterns, built up by the user pressing a switch or key. There is a choice of one, three or five steps to build up the pattern.
£10·95 + VAT

Complete the picture displays two images, a complete one to copy and an incomplete one. Missing parts appear at the bottom of the screen, and the user has to move them to the right spot on the incomplete image using the mouse.
£14·95 + VAT

Puzzle shows either three parts of a picture jumbled up, or half a picture and two possible other halves. The user has to piece the right bits together. They snap into place once they are identified approximately.
£14·95 + VAT

Learning how to use the Archimedes (in two parts) is a very simple interactive tutorial on using the Archimedes series computers. Each part runs for about 15 minutes. The tutorial covers use of the keyboard, mouse and discs.
£14·95 + VAT for each part

Learning to use the desktop (in two parts) is an equivalent tutorial on the RISC OS desktop.
£14·95 + VAT for each part

Signs with Splodge is a simple sign recognition game featuring an alien character, Splodge. It needs a Contact Keyboard.
£12·95 + VAT

Paint with Splodge is a simple colour discovery program.

HARDWARE UPDATE

A new intelligent switch interface device for Archimedes series computers from SRS Systems (021 643 2877) allows a variety of input devices to be attached. Called **Matchmaker**, it can be used with single switches, mice, tracker balls, Concept Keyboards or with an infra-red remote control unit to give complete control of the computer to users with various types of physical disability. Single switch input devices can be programmed to emulate the mouse.

Matchmaker plugs directly into the keyboard input port, leaving the IO expansion slot free for other uses. It works with any type of switch input, and any standard input plug can be used to connect a device to Matchmaker. It allows any standard software package to be run without special tailoring for individual ability.
Price: £850 + VAT

The Oldham SEMERC Overlay Keyboard is a new input device for the BBC range of computers. It is an A3 touch-sensitive keyboard with 128 programmable keys onto which an overlay sheet is placed. It can be used with the wide variety of existing overlay software, ranging from colour and shape matching tasks to English and science packages. A single switch access interface is built into the keyboard so that users with special needs can operate suitable software with a switch instead of by using the overlay. When the switch is plugged in, the keyboard is disabled automatically. The Overlay Keyboard is made of robust plastic with rounded edges and a wipe-clean keypad. It is available from iibit Education Products Limited (081-540 2333). Price: £199.95 inc VAT; discounts available

CJ Computing (0454 615905) offer an extended mouse/trackerball which can be operated by foot or by hand. It has large switches which can be mapped to the mouse buttons in any sequence. Each switch has a 3 mm jack socket so that it can take any standard switched device. The extended mouse/trackerball is made to order for each client, and the sensitivity and angle of the switches are tailored to suit the client's needs. It plugs directly into the mouse connector socket on A5000, BBC A3000, and Archimedes computers.

The Overlay Keyboard in use

FUTURE EVENTS

12 February: Dundee, Strathmartine Hospital

3 April: Keele University, Special Solutions '92

10–11 April: Washington, Disability and Mobility '92

22–24 April: Manchester, Parkers Hotel, NASEN Conference.

SOFTWARE UPDATE

Resource (0302 340331) has made the popular Touch Explorer available on RISC OS computers. **Touch Explorer Plus**, the version for Archimedes, A5000 and BBC A3000 computers, offers longer messages and more levels than the original BBC program, and comes with four additional explorations. As before, the program allows users to explore an environment on the screen, displaying linked and layered messages in response to input from the keyboard, mouse or Concept Keyboard. Users can link a word-processing program to Touch Explorer Plus and use it as a 'notepad' to record their progress through the environment. Price: £27·50 for site licence; discount for bulk orders.

!Sparkle from Morley Electronics Ltd (091 257 6355) allows you to use LEGO Interface A with a RISC OS computer. It comes with two manuals, one explaining how to use the software, and the other showing how to link it with LEGO Interface A and LEGO Technic Control 0 set. A user port upgrade is needed; a BBC A3000 will also need a serial port upgrade fitted. It is suitable for key stages 2 and 3. Price: £59 + VAT (site licence £200 + VAT)

GridIT from Widgit Software (0926 885303) is a flexible program for RISC OS computers to help users develop spatial, logical and mathematical skills. It is based on

Continued overleaf

movement around the screen, from simple directional tasks (from right to left across the screen, for example) to complex movement through a maze or to cover an area. GridIT can help to develop skills demanded by the National Curriculum up to stage 2.
Price: £30 + VAT

My First Words from Cambridgeshire Software House (0480 67945) is a program for RISC OS computers to aid reading development. The user chooses words from a screen display to create sentences. New word libraries can be built to tailor the package to the user's capabilities or interests. It comes with sample files from the GINN READING 360 scheme used by many primary schools.
Price: 29·95 + VAT

NEW FROM KEYBOARD TECHNOLOGY

One new hardware and one software product from Keyboard Technology (0509 610706/610708) are designed for special needs users. Also, Contact Keyboard is now available for Archimedes series computers.

1stPaint is a simple painting program which can be configured to meet the user's needs and capabilities. It makes minimal use of desktop conventions such as menus and windows, using screen icons for everything from painting tools and colours to routines like saving and printing files. Intuitive and easy to use, 1stPaint brings desktop painting to users of all abilities.
Price: £29·50 + VAT

1stPaint and any other desktop application can be used with **Touch Window**, a touch-sensitive screen overlay that removes the need for the mouse. Touch Window is a robust acrylic overlay made of two membranes. After a simple calibration routine, it accepts positions on the screen indicated by pressure on the overlay. Drags and double-clicks can be indicated by pressing first on a menu pad on the overlay. Touch Window fixes to the monitor with Velcro fastening, or can be used flat on the desk with a transparent overlay to indicate the positions on screen of icons and fixed objects. Touch Window can be used with any Acorn computer, using the appropriate linking software. A serial port upgrade may be needed.
Price: £244 + VAT;
link kit: £20 for Master, £25 for Archimedes series and BBC A3000 computers

Contact Keyboards are brightly coloured keyboard overlays that offer a few large keys programmed to special functions. Intended for small children and for any user who has difficulty with delicate movements or seeing small keys, contact keyboards clip over the keyboard but leave the numeric keypad exposed. There are Contact Keyboards for Archimedes and BBC series machines.
Price: from £29·95 + VAT;
adaptor: £8·95 + VAT

For your free subscription to *Special Solutions News*, please fill in the coupon below and send to: Vorn Hancock, Special Needs Support Coordinator, Acorn Computers Limited. Spread the *News* by photocopying this coupon for completion by interested colleagues.

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