CREATING MULTIMEDIA PRESENTATIONS WITH *KID PIX STUDIO*

Norman C. Borg

One of the good things about the introduction of computers in Primary Schools is the easy access to multimedia apparatus in the classroom. By *multimedia*, we mean the use of text, pictures, animation and sound organised in a way to produce a single project. It is the *variety* of the media that draws the children's attention (*anyone's* attention, for that matter) towards the particular message that is to be conveyed, so using *moving* pictures rather than still graphics and adding *sound* rather than just sticking to plain, written text will definitely appeal more to the senses.

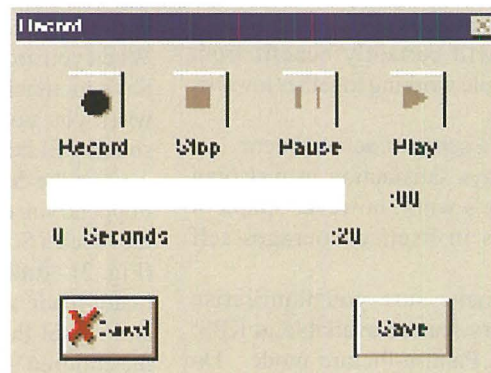> **"It is the *variety* of the media that draws the children's attention"**

Fig 1 (above): The Record a Sound interface available in the Kid Pix Paint-a-Picture mode. Click on Save to attach the recorded sound to the picture.

NORMAN C. BORG, B. A., B. Ed. (Hons), Dip. Ed. (Adm. & Man.) is an Assistant Headteacher at Birzebbuga Primary A. He currently teaches I.T. in the Primary Classroom to B. Ed. and P.G.C.E. students at the Faculty of Education, University of Malta. He is also working on his M.Ed.

This of course is not a new concept for teachers, as the use of radio, cassette recorders and video tape in the classrooms has already shown. However the advantage of the computer is that it has the power to manipulate all these different kinds of media simultaneously, producing instantaneous results which the children can see there and then, in real time. If this potential inherent in the classroom computers is used to the maximum, the concept behind the word *project* in the classroom is bound to change forever.

This should not be a far-fetched prospect for Year 1 and Year 2 teachers, simply because *all* the apparatus necessary for producing multimedia projects is already there, in the classrooms. There is no additional equipment or software required for such activities. What makes it all possible is *Kid Pix Studio*, perhaps the most popular classroom software so far, if Year 1 teachers' comments over the last scholastic year are anything to go by. *Kid Pix Studio* appeals to the children because it offers them the possibility to use the computer to enhance their self expression through creativity, especially building pictures out of ready-made blocks, patterns, picture stamps and the lot. Teachers have also found it excellent for producing work sheets quickly and easily. But *Kid Pix Studio*'s real potential lies deep within its other features, especially the Moopies, the Stampimator and the SlideShow activities when these are used in conjunction with the main Paint-A-Picture mode.

In Chapter VI of the User's Manual, there is a good example with Andrew's Story and the way it is put together with the Slideshow feature. You can see the working example for
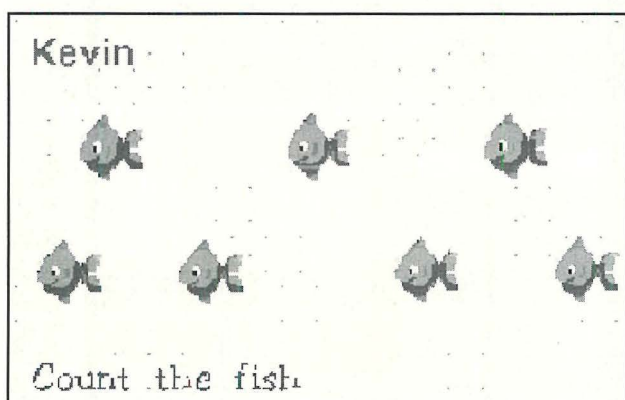
Fig. 2 (below): The Pick a Sound requester available in the Goodies menu for Moopies, Stampimator and Digital Puppets. The "record a sound" button enables you to record your own sounds.

yourself by loading it as a slide show from the *galaxy* drawer on the CD. With the necessary preparation from the teacher's part, even children in Years 1 and 2 will be able to create something of their own on these same lines. What is missing in that example is a feature which may be even more attractive to the children: the ability to record their own speech. This is in the main Paint-a-Picture mode Goodies menu (more about this later). *Kid Pix Studio* can therefore produce multimedia presentations made up of still and moving pictures, music and recorded commentaries.

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Why do it?

Creating a multimedia presentation in class has a number of advantages. The following are but a few.

·It enhances enthusiasm in creativity

·The children are more eager to express themselves through a combination of pictures, colour and sounds.

·It gives an immediate, tangible purpose - an audience

·The project will definitely be more interesting if it is intended to be shown to the whole class, to another class, or perhaps to parents.

·It encourages group work

·Individuals will certainly benefit from reciprocal help while working together towards one common aim.

·It guarantees a sense of achievement

·There is always satisfaction in watching others admire one's work, however simple it may be; and this in itself encourages self confidence.

First of all make sure you familiarise yourself with every feature available in KPS; not just the main Paint-a-Picture mode. Do this by reading the manual thoroughly and by experimenting with the software itself. This article assumes that you are familiar with all the features and with saving files on floppy.

Decide on a subject theme or themes. The Kid Pix project itself may be just part of a larger project involving other non-computer activities, after all. Arrange the children in small groups, with more than three but definitely not more than six. Remember, the presentation you will create will contain at least one screen per pupil, and perhaps an opening and a closing screen as well. For the work on the presentation take one group at a time.

You will need to monitor closely the group's work and progress. The work may not necessarily have to be done at one go during one session; perhaps, say, throughout one week. Let each child in the group create a picture using any of the Kid Pix, Moopies, Stampimator or Digital Puppets features. Make sure to save their finished work on disk.

Note that when using Moopies, Stampimator and Digital Puppets, you may use the "Save a ..." option to save and subsequently reload the files for editing. When the editing is complete (sound included), you should use the "Save for SlideShow" option. Otherwise the files will not be properly loaded into the SlideShow (Manual, page 75).

Now here is the interesting part. Once all the files are complete, sound can be added to each. Unfortunately no microphones are available with the classroom computer consoles as yet, but the built-in microphone on the teacher's laptop is quite adequate for the purpose. Load the files from floppy into the laptop to use this feature.
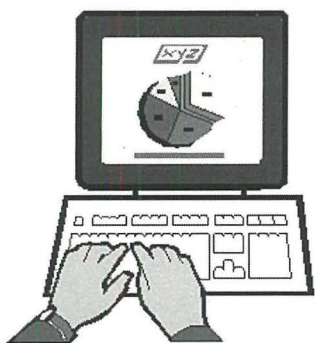
To record a sound onto a Kid Pix .bmp file, load the picture and select "record a sound" from the Goodies menu. The function gives you up to thirty seconds' time for recording, which should be sufficient. Click on the Record button to record (Fig. 1). You can over-write any previous sound by clicking the Record button again, so mistakes can be corrected. When you are satisfied with the sound click on Save to attach the sound to the picture. Now when you save the picture back to floppy, the sound will be saved too.

For the Moopies, Stampimator or Digital Puppets, you can access the same function from the "Pick a Sound" option in the Goodies menu (Fig. 2). Rather than importing or selecting a ready-made sound, click on "record a sound" and repeat the same steps as above to record the children's original speech. In this case you will be asked to give a name to the sound, and it will be added to the list on display.

Encourage the children to say something which is relevant to the picture's topic. One short sentence per picture should suffice. Have them write the sentence before reading it aloud for recording. This will give you and them the chance to discuss and iron out any grammatical mistakes.

Order in the classroom

The recording session will definitely be a great challenge both for you and the children. It may take some time before they understand that there must be perfect silence during the recording (the laptop microphone will pick up any background noise or speech). But once they start seeing (or should we say hearing) the results, they will gradually be able to appreciate more the need for silence. It will be a new classroom experience they will have to learn to adapt to. The teacher may opt to let the rest of the class watch and listen to the group's recording

Fig. 3: An example of an activity using recorded sound. The child counts the objects aloud and the sound recorded is attached to the picture file.

Kevin

Count the fish

One of the good things about the introduction of computers in Primary Schools is the easy access to multimedia apparatus in the classroom.

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session. This may be more fruitful than having the other children carry on different tasks away from the group.

Putting it all together

Once all the screens and recordings are finished and properly saved on disk, it should not take the teacher long to load each file in its proper order into the SlideShow (Manual, page 59 ff.). Make sure you use the various transition effects available (Manual, page 64) in order to spruce up the presentation. Alternatively, you may ask the group to select their own transition effects. Save the SlideShow on the same floppy with the rest of the group's files, and show it to the whole class on the large monitor. The other groups in the class will definitely look forward to creating their own shows.

What to do with the presentations

There is a number of ways of showing off the completed projects, too many to list here, but these include:

·Exhibitions during open days and parents' days.

·Copies for home (on diskettes) for those children who may have *Kid Pix Studio* at home. Actually it is possible to make standalone versions of the projects (which can run even if KPS is not installed on a PC), but some features are restricted in these versions.

·Project exchanges between classes within the same school or even between different schools. This possibility may look even more exciting when Internet connection is eventually established across the schools.

Conclusion

Experimentation is important for such projects to work. In this case you will be using KPS virtually up to its fullest potential, so it is important that you are familiar with all the features before committing yourself to the class. Preferably, you should make yourself a model slide show to test all the software's features. Once you get the knack of it, it should not present any serious problems.

Eventually, you will find that the record function can be put to many other uses, even when working with individual pupils rather than groups. The teacher may produce screens for word recognition, phrases, sentences or perhaps even counting. The child is presented the picture and instructed to read the contents aloud (Fig. 3). The recording, when saved to disk with others, will be a helpful record of the child's progress. This is just one idea. I am sure that as professional teachers you will be able to come up with many other practical uses for the multimedia features of *Kid Pix Studio*.