

## BOOK REVIEWS

**To use a database that has a keyword facility. To become familiar with the keyword option.**

†† Individuals and pairs.

⌚ 15 minutes at the computer; 15 minutes discussion.

### Previous skills/knowledge needed

The children will need to know how to enter information into database software.

### Key background information

Some databases have a keyword facility. This feature plays an important part in the categorising and retrieval of information in the outside world, particularly when large amounts of data need to be sorted. The process of using keywords is simple. For example, if you wished to sort the children in your class according to particular characteristics or 'categories', such as blue-eyed, left-handed, dark-haired, and so on, you would enter all their names into the database, together with the appropriate characteristics which act as keywords. You could then use these keywords to search the database for the names of those children who are blue-eyed, left-handed and so on. (However, the number of keywords used should not be too large otherwise it defeats the purpose.)

This activity is necessarily a small-scale project but it will show the children how keywords can help to sort database information according to various categories.

### Vocabulary

Keyword, category, attribute.

### Preparation

You should explain that this activity involves the children in setting up a database of class library books to help them choose their books in the future. If you wish, you can share the database among children from several classes, perhaps including the intended age range of the readers as an additional keyword.

Book Title: *Asterix the Gaul*

Author(s):

Comments:

- John Dee  
*I specially liked the funny bits*
- Mary Jones  
*I really like the pictures most*

Keywords:

fiction, illustrated, humorous, cartoon, history

To enable children to collect data you will need to produce a comment sheet for each book in the class library which the children must fill in when they finish reading a book. A possible format is suggested below which also lists the keywords appropriate for the particular book.



# Handling information



You will also need to set up a suitable database in which the children can enter the various book details and keywords. This database can follow the same structure as the comment sheet.

## Resources needed

Database software with keyword facility, *Data Card* from Datasweet 3 (Archimedes and PC).

## What to do

You should discuss with your children what attributes are going to be useful and which will act as fields and keywords. Hold up examples of a range of books and decide on some basic categories (keywords), such as fiction, non-fiction, humorous, illustrated, adventure, crime, travel and historical. Show them the comment sheets (see Preparation) and ask them to fill in the appropriate one with a short 'review' whenever they finish a book. Once there are a sufficient number of comments for each book, ask the children to work in pairs to enter the details in the library database. Each database entry will contain the agreed keywords in the form of basic categories such as fiction, history and so on, and brief comments or 'reviews' to guide the children in choosing a suitable book. When this is complete, demonstrate how to use the keyword facility to search for the type of books that the children are interested in. The children can then use the keywords to search for information on the type of books in which they are interested. Repeated searches each time the children wish to find out about a new book will help to reinforce the idea of using keywords.

As the children will need to read the books before writing their reviews, building up the database will be an ongoing activity. However, it is the process rather than the finished product which is important.

## Suggestion(s) for extension

More able children may like to extend their IT skills by seeking out keywords for different collections of objects and setting up an additional database.

## Suggestion(s) for support

Make sure that less confident children are given adult support in writing the correct information on the comment sheet, and are supervised when entering the data into the computer.

## Assessment opportunities

This activity will enable you to assess how well the children use IT to prepare, classify and organise information on their reading books for carrying out database searches using keywords. Look to see how well they can access information from the completed database by using the keyword search facility within the software.

## Display ideas

Use enlarged database printouts to create a display close to your class library or in the school library. Such display material will help the children to learn about the processes involved in handling information and how routines, such as the use of keywords, allow us to access particular information.