



QUEEN OF THE HACKERS

Cut and paste

The new National Curriculum requires schoolchildren to be familiar with computers: word processing, database and spreadsheet management and so on.

Now the Government cuts spending on information technology education by £5 million - by nearly a half.

This will reduce the number of advisory IT teachers by a similar margin, thus putting more pressure on already overworked teachers who will presumably be expected to take more of the computer teaching responsibility themselves.

Learning to use a computer is far more complicated than learning to drive. Few people would want their children to be taught to drive by someone just learning to drive themselves, yet it seems that computing is to be taught by people who are just picking up the subject on their own (probably in their own time too).

Computers can be an invaluable time and tedium-saving tool - any micro owner can tell you that. They can be a legitimate leisure tool. But they can also degenerate into a glorified toy. If children don't get the right impression first off they will treat computers as a mystical box of tricks that can play nice games which are far more interesting than the patchily taught and boring 'proper' uses being demonstrated in lessons.

Time and again Britain has lost out because of insufficient investment in education and technology. If cuts like this are made at such a grass roots level it is difficult to see how any amount of training investment made later by trade and industry is going to remedy things.

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A Chicago based woman faces ten years in jail after allegedly recruiting impressionable youngsters to defraud large companies by computer hacking.

Lynn Doucett has been accused of setting up a network of 60 teenagers throughout the US who were employed to hack into computers and obtain people's credit numbers which they then used to access services. Doucett, 35, then pocketed some \$1.5 million raised by the teenagers, some of whom were as young as 14.

She is currently being detained in Chicago charged with computer fraud - her trial is pencilled in for early August. Some of the young hackers are also being charged although they will not be incarcerated.

Like Charles Dickens' devious Fagin she set about exploiting the dubious talents of youngsters for her own

ends, say US secret service agents. Doucett made contact with the teenagers by logging onto bulletin boards around the country. She then taught them how to hack into computers and told them which networks to break into.

US Secret Service agent James Huse - who helped track Doucett down - told Express: "She was the leader of a national conspiracy which at one time consisted of about 60 young hackers. This is the largest hacking network I've ever come across."

He said: "She got them intrigued by the prospect of gaining access over telephone lines to forbidden places. For them it wasn't defrauding anybody. It was just playing a game."

Secret Service agents (who are responsible for tackling computer crime in the US) were alerted to the operation when various companies found they had been defraud-

ed. They followed Doucett because she is well known as "an old hand at white collar crime". She was previously convicted of computer fraud in Toronto.

"When we began our investigation we assumed that we

would find adults sending out the phoney orders," said Huse. "We were jolted to discover the kids were 14 year-olds. This woman was exploiting their fascination in a new medium. We all hate to see kids getting involved in something like this."

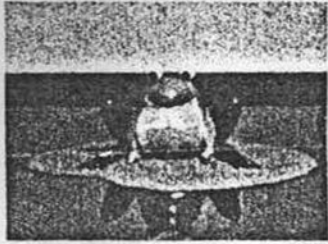
Leading the case was Chicago-based secret agent Mike Cleary. He told Express: "We tracked back some of the hackers after they had penetrated various systems and found her to be at the centre of the operation. We arrested her last April and she's now being detained at the Metropolitan Correction Centre in Chicago.

"We call her the Queen of the Hackers."

Arting around

Budding Amiga artists now have the chance to show off and win some exciting prizes by entering the Edinburgh International Festival 2nd Computer Animation Competition.

Leading Commodore hardware and software distributor Amiga Centre Scotland is again organising the competition, with the finalists entries due for display at the Computer Animation Exhibition.



Closing date for the entries - which can be on disk or PAL VHS videotape - is 24th August. Further details from Amiga Centre Scotland on 031 5574242.

• Spawning a masterpiece: Can you beat this?

Amstrad the benevolent

Amstrad's first venture into charity sponsorship has raised a tasty £165,000 for the Muscular Dystrophy Group.

Boss Alan Sugar was in the thick of the Amstrad Pro-Celebrity tennis tournament. Indeed, the tough tycoon managed to win along with Vijay Amritraj stuffing Terry Wogan and John Lloyd in the process.

Other names on hand included Frank Bruno, Jimmy

Tarback, Janet Street-Porter and Nigel Dempster. Sir Richard Attenborough - who is president of the MDG - presented the silverware to the winners.

Although Sugar is said to be extremely generous in private to worthwhile causes this is the first time his usually surly company has openly backed a charity. ■



• Sir Richard, Amritraj, and Sugar - winning for charity

SNIPPETS ● SNIPPETS ● SNIPPETS

● A new monthly magazine is to be published concentrating on the virus problem. Virus Bulletin will be full of editorial and will include contributions from various experts. More on 0844 290396...

● Tandy tells us that all the unsavoury hacks covering this year's Wimbledon are using its special computer support service. The journoes are basically doing their thing on Tandy portables and then wiring it through to the sports desk.

● Business software firm Lifetree has undergone a simultaneous management buy out in the UK and its US offices...

● Clares has just finished a sequence of animations for HTV Wales put together on the Archimedes. The work was done for a new Welsh language quiz show. It features aeroplanes flying around and scrolling background. Clares was responsible for work on kiddies show Going Live...

This is the modem world

Portable PC owners can now send and receive data on the move via cellular telephone and the latest cellular modem from Rascal-Vodafa.

Weighing in at 710g (1.5lbs), the £600 modem allows you to communicate with other modem users and access networks like Micronet and Prestel. Even in severe reception conditions, data throughput is claimed to be sharp.

With full autodial/ autoanswer facilities, the modem has a low power consumption, minimising any reduction of "talk-time" on battery-powered Vodafones. According to Rascal-Vodafa, the CDLC modem brings the "portable office" one step closer - the unit is itself certainly small enough to make little difference to anyone already carrying a portable computer and Vodafone.

Versions of the modem compatible with the the NEC 11A and Panasonic C series of cellular telephones are available now, and others for the Autoline and new Talkman ranges from Nokia Mobira and the MCR40 from Philips are on the way. An NEC 9A version is also under development, and the modems will thus cover nearly 40% of the total Vodafone subscriber base.

Nomadic executives can find out more on 0635 33251. ■