

A taste of Espresso

Could a resource that offers speed of delivery, a multitude of support materials and inspiration for students be the future for teaching in the classroom? Gillian Blatherwick suspects that it can



How frustrating when a planned Web-based lesson goes belly up as the Internet crashes, strolls along at a snail's pace, or that page you found so carefully has mysteriously moved without trace. Many schools are yet to be equipped with broadband access to the Internet – and with the state of many budgets it may well be some time before schools feel the need to invest in updating their existing connection. Even when schools do have broadband connectivity the available bandwidth may still be insufficient to support rich content.

Espresso has devised a cunning way of consistently delivering broadband quality by circumventing the Internet with an innovative satellite delivered system. The dedicated *Espresso* Server is updated weekly; no download delays, it's as instant as a cup of coffee!

Espresso is vast – about 16 gigabytes of information – and continues to grow, helping to make excellent use of the

computers in school – even when the Internet connection is down.

Most exciting of all is the high-quality, super-fast, streamed video. This is the most revolutionary aspect, having the greatest impact on classroom teaching and learning. The videos use age-appropriate commentary narrated by well-known actors. Because they are not subject to the vagaries of the Internet connection they are of a superb quality unseen on school computers – their clarity and smoothness of delivery need to be seen to be believed. They are easily enlarged to full screen, can be paused at any point and are even better when used with data projection methods.

Espresso facilitates literacy across the entire age range providing both fiction and non-fiction resources. The news materials are an excellent stimulus for developing non-fiction genre, persuasion, explanations and report writing texts in particular. There is already a wealth of resources available and many further modules are planned.

A module example

Each module of *Espresso* is a self-contained feast. Forget the coffee and savour the delights of a banquet! Materials available for literacy in Key Stage 1 are easy to navigate and are supported by helpful graphics and narration. Alphabet stimulates the development of phonetic knowledge through a visually exciting and narrated selection of differentiated on-screen activities. They cover key areas such as word making, rhymes and letter formation for every letter of the alphabet.

Story starts features four different genres: scary, adventure, funny and amazing, and within each there are different starts each featuring its own high-quality video to whet the appetite. Each has photos that can be printed off to illustrate work and printable worksheets support classroom activities – such as finger puppets – useful for oral work to enrich storytelling. The on-screen games have a clear educational purpose. *Screen test* for example reinforces children's comprehension skills of a shared story such as *Lucy and Tom at the Seaside*.

My First Newspaper is quite superb! It brings non-fiction straight into the classroom at an interest level and reading age appropriate for the younger learners. Fully narrated and packed with pictures, it includes material on popular topics and national events like space travel and the last general election, historical characters like Florence Nightingale and cross-cultural events such as Diwali and Ramadan. Topics introduce issues of interest at a child-friendly level stimulating reading and writing activities and could also be used to initiate role-play and drama.

Both Key Stages 1 and 2 have a fantastic Authors module. Choose from some of the most popular living authors and illustrators: JK Rowling, Allan Ahlberg, Anne Fine, Dick King Smith and Jeremy Strong for Key Stage 2 and for Key Stage 1 Laurence and Catherine Anholt and Shirley Hughes. Each module includes video interviews where children can find out about why and how authors write. The Key Stage 2 module links to excellent NLS-based activities such as comparing the portrayal of characters in books and films, and script writing. As with the parallel modules in Key Stage 1 there are excellent graphics from the featured novels to be downloaded and inserted into



↪ children's work. *Espresso* doesn't rely solely on video for its content. The materials feature text-based information too – I particularly like the explanation in the JK Rowling section of how to play Quidditch. It cross references to a comprehensive glossary of terms that are used in the *Harry Potter* books – perfect for those desperately trying to keep up with the children! What a wonderful incentive for instruction writing with a purpose – how to adapt and play Quidditch in your school, and enliven games lessons!

Coffee cup, the teacher support area, makes links between *Espresso* and current curriculum documentation to aid planning. It outlines the content and makes lesson suggestions to support teachers' own ideas. One of the major benefits of *Espresso* is its ease of use and accessibility for less confident teachers. *Coffee cup* also answers frequently asked technical questions and is the gateway to further support.

Espresso is closely linked to National Curriculum and numeracy/literacy objectives. Is this the future of teaching and delivery of materials in the classroom? Is this the way we need to address our teaching faced with the competition of fast-moving graphics, video and animation? Just think about the slick delivery

of children's television. The news items in *Espresso* are like a purpose built *Newsround* feature, there at the fingertips. No more wishing you'd had the foresight to video that bit on the news last month about flooding because now you're doing rivers and flood plains in the classroom.

So what will *Espresso* do for your school? Well the plethora of resources contained within *Espresso* give immediate access to information and activities carefully chosen for their suitability and relevance to the primary curriculum. The speed of delivery and supporting materials enable teachers to demonstrate and explain key learning points to children in a modern bite-sized, fast-moving format. *Espresso* is supported by the long experience of publishers such as Channel 4 Education, Puffin books and established news media.

Making enquiries

Children are undoubtedly inspired by *Espresso*. They are able to take risks in their learning, becoming more inquisitive in their approach to research. *Espresso* supports enquiry and encourages children to ask plenty of questions because answering them is so well supported with this resource. *Espresso* makes information retrieval, data analysis and



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modelling easier – all vital 21st-Century skills.

I love *Espresso*! High-quality graphics, well-chosen activities and a plethora of resources that can be easily mixed and matched. It is easy to see how *Espresso* can be used to supplement existing schemes of work to stimulate children's learning in a highly motivational and 21st-Century way. A school resource designed for the new millennium!

Compared with the cost of alternatives needed to provide such a spectrum of materials *Espresso* works out as a cost-effective whole-school resource.

The complete network service brings the entire range of *Espresso* materials and is updated weekly. Contact *Espresso* for specific pricing information for your school.

