

Ceri Matthews

As a one-time schoolmaster, age 70, now retired for nearly 15 years, I am still fascinated with the computer. Its strengths of rapid communication and provision of the ability to seek out knowledge is undeniable - but at this time threatened by the scourge of SPAM.

Beginning with the one time ubiquitous Sinclair machine in the early 1980's, I introduced it to my pupils and strove to show how this clever machine could control things outside its flat screen presentations. Providing controllable mini buggies which could draw an on-screen image onto a sheet of paper, was a start. This urge of mine to show the computer's power beyond its screen eventually led to the introduction of controlled small lathes; plotting/drawing machines - producing quality engineering drawing and even excellent graphic school posters; - sewing machines, where the design was planned 'on screen', and so on.

I believe that these 'external' applications are as important - perhaps more so - than what can be achieved only on screen. An excellent example is the growth of digital photography, where the computer produces a finished product, out into the real world, from behind its glass screen and bringing with it scores of photographers who had previously never looked at a computer. If many more 'external' applications were encouraged, made easily available, then many more would become interested in becoming computer literate - even if it only meant 'shopping at Tesco'!