Virtual Image News

Issue 3
July 2005

Welcome to your third Virtual Image newsletter. In response to feedback from our customers, we began sending out bi-monthly newsletters back in March and we hope you are finding them useful and informative. Each of the newsletters contains ideas that you can use in the classroom, articles on issues of current interest and the opportunity to win some of our market-leading software.

This issue looks at the following topics:
1. From the classroom
2. Educational Board Games from Playbreak
3. Mind Sports Olympiad
4. What's new
5. Comte de Buffon competition
6. Updated website

We hope you like it!

1. From the classroom

Sam Holyman is a Science teacher at Swanshurst School, an all girls Comprehensive School in Birmingham, and was formerly Head of Chemistry at a Grammar School. Sam has written interactive whiteboard materials for several publishers including: Cambridge-Hitachi, Curriculum Press and Nelson Thornes. You may have seen her articles about revision and science teaching in the Times Educational Supplement.
www.tes.co.uk/search/story/?story_id=2063496

Sam also trains teachers in the effective use of interactive whiteboards and ICT in the classroom. Anyone who would like further information about Sam's courses can email us at: jules@virtualimage.co.uk

Virtual Image has been working closely with Sam to develop the new Physics Key Stage 3 Lesson Starters CD-ROM. We have taken advantage of Sam's experience with interactive whiteboards and data projectors to design a disk that will stimulate science classes and save teachers huge amounts of preparation time.

In Sam's words, "The activities have been written to follow the QCA scheme of work and there are up to three activities per topic area. The simplest activities start at level 3, but the disk also includes opportunities to extend gifted and talented students. Each starter can be used with the whole class, small groups or volunteers. The software has been designed to provide an attractive presentation of key ideas, to stimulate a general interest in physics and also to address common misconceptions. The CD-ROM includes a Teacher Guide that provides brief suggestions about how to make the most of

the software in the classroom."

The **Physics Key Stage 3 Lesson Starters** CD-ROM is available now.

2. Educational Board Games from Playbreak

Playbreak has been producing and supplying educational games for school age children for over seven years. Many of the games can be played in mixed age and ability groups. All the games are manufactured in the UK to ensure that their construction is of the highest quality and durability. Playbreak's games have been created by Ania Bhandari, a schoolteacher with almost twenty years of experience working in primary and secondary schools. Ania has been using games in the classroom for many years to promote social interaction and combine fun with learning. More information about the board games is available on the Playbreak website at: www.playbreak.co.uk

One of Ania's most successful creations is the mathematical board game Trilemma. Parents and Kids magazine www.parentsandkids.co.uk has this to say about Trilemma:

"This is a maths game – it's great value for such an educational game. Being educational doesn't take away its fun aspect though - we had 4 kids absolutely screaming with laughter! The game involves questions being read from a card - we found that the kids (age at least 7) loved that. The trouble with Trivial Pursuit and such games is that the children can't answer the questions - with this one they can, and actually the questions are very good. Not too hard, but not too easy either - the testers found that they were having to think a bit to get the answers right. They have questions about times-tables; prime numbers; factors; odd and even numbers; square numbers and square roots. They also do a simple level for those only familiar with 2, 5 and 10x table, which was great for the 6-7 yr olds at our test. We, the adults, were embarrassed to note that we had to think harder than the children on some of the questions! Ask me about html, web design, anything - but don't ask me about square roots! This game is very good for reluctant mathematicians - it really makes it fun, without being too simple."

Earlier this year, Ania invited Virtual Image to develop a software version of Trilemma. The collaboration has proved to be very successful and the Trilemma CD-ROM is now available.

3. Mind Sports Olympiad

Nubble!, the award-winning maths game that is transforming the way that pupils hone their arithmetic skills, returns to the Mind Sports Olympiad (MSO) www.msoworld.com/Olympiad/ this year with a free-to-enter competition for school pupils aged 7 and over.

Schools can enter their pupils for the competition by e-mailing: nubble@btinternet.com

E-mails should include the following information:

1. School name, address and phone number.

2. The latest date for contact before school closes for summer holidays.

3. Name and home/mobile phone number of the competition contact.

4. Parents names and contact details for use by the organisers, since the arrangements will be made with parents during the summer holidays.

Up to four entries per school are allowed and must be received by Friday 8th July 2005. Participants (and parents if necessary) must be available to travel to the MSO in Manchester, at their own cost, for the 26th-27th August 2005.

Virtual Image software and Nubble! board games will be awarded to prize-winners.

There will be a Virtual Image stand at the Mind Sports Olympiad from 24th-27th August, so come along and see us there.

4. What's new

- Following the enormous success of **Nubble!**, we have released the software version of another popular mathematical board game **Trilemma**, which is featured above. Up to 4 players can choose from three bands of questions according to their age and ability. **Trilemma** is suitable for Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 or Levels A, B, C and D in the Scottish Curriculum.

- **Polyomino** is designed to help pupils develop their shape and space skills. There are 12 different pentomino tiles. **Polyomino** consists of a multitude of puzzles in which the pentominoes must be fitted together to form different shapes. The tiles are dragged and dropped into place, they can also be rotated or reflected. Solving the puzzles develops an intuition for reflection and rotation. **Polyomino** is suitable for Key Stages 3 and 4 or Level E in the Scottish Curriculum.

- The **Biology KS3 Lesson Starters** CD-ROM includes 25 stimulating lesson starters that have been written by science teacher Debbie Nightingale following the phenomenal success of her **Chemistry KS3 Lesson Starters** CD-ROM.

- The **Physics KS3 Lesson Starters** CD-ROM, written by science teacher Sam Holyman featured above, also includes 25 captivating new lesson starters and completes the series of Key Stage 3 Science Lesson Starters CD-ROMs.

- We have also released a new multi-lingual version of **Nubble!** The CD-ROM now offers the facility to select from a range of languages: Welsh,

English, Dutch, French, German, Spanish and Italian.

5. Comte de Buffon competition

Each issue of the Virtual Image Newsletter will offer you the chance to win some of our market-leading software.

When you have solved this problem, then please email: jules@virtualimage.co.uk

The winner will be selected from all correct entries on 31st August 2005 and will receive a Virtual Image CD-ROM of their choice.

A new Virtual Image CD-ROM, called simply **Numbers**, is due to be released in September 2005. The CD-ROM is the latest work from David Benjamin and Justin Dodd, the UK's leading developers of Maths educational software. It is an interactive survey of some of the most engaging areas of mathematics: the golden ratio, Fibonacci numbers, pi, prime numbers, irrational numbers and complex numbers, and includes numerous interactive puzzles. Our competition gives a taste of the material covered on the CD-ROM.

Georges Louis Leclerc was born into a wealthy family that inherited the estate and title of Lord of Buffon and Montbard. He is usually remembered by his title the Comte de Buffon. A leading 18th century mathematician, he used his mathematical skills to enhance his already considerable fortune. In 1794, during the Reign of Terror, Buffon was sent to the guillotine at the age of 87.

The Comte de Buffon is known today for his needle. Buffon's Needle experiment, first posed in 1777, is the origin of the question that you must answer to win our competition. Take an infinite sheet of lined paper and drop a very narrow needle, whose length equals the spacing between the lines, onto the paper. What is the probability that the needle will cross one of the lines on the paper?

6. Updated website

The Virtual Image website has undergone some changes. You can now download a demonstration version for any (or all) of our software direct from the website. Of course, we still offer a free demonstration CD-ROM profiling our software, which you can obtain by emailing email@virtualimage.co.uk but for ease of access and speed you can just visit www.virtualimage.co.uk and pinpoint exactly which piece of software you would like to evaluate.

We have also set up a forum for teachers. You don’t have to be a Virtual Image customer to use the forum and we would really like to see a healthy level of debate going on within this section of the website. So if you have questions or concerns why not visit the website and add your message? We would love to hear from you and all Virtual Image authors, contributors and experts now visit this forum to join in with debates.

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Please do not reply to this email as it will not reach us. Please email jules@virtualimage.co.uk or go via the website www.virtualimage.co.uk and click the contact button.

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Virtual Image publishes software to support the teaching and learning of mathematics, biology, chemistry, physics, geography, history, literacy and French. For general enquiries about the software please visit www.virtualimage.co.uk or contact us on 0161 480 1915.