

nouncement of new software, we will be providing more of that type of information. I encourage any readers who have software they have developed either to distribute themselves or for public domain to send me an announcement of the program. I will be glad to list it in the column.

There were many comments asking for information about software on specific topics (marine biology, evolution, genetics, population dynamics, test generators). Such information will be developed as such software is reviewed. I found those comments encouraging because they demonstrate there are people who are interested in finding software to use.

Some comments asked for more information about general software such as word processors, data bases and spreadsheets, and how they can be used. As I wrote last month, I intend at least one column along those lines.

Finally, there was one negative comment to the effect that biology is the study of life and not computers. That comment indicates to me that we still have some work to do to educate some teachers as to the ways in which the study of life can be facilitated by using computers. A computer is a tool, just like a microscope, balance, spectrophotometer, calculator or text book. If such tools are used well, they can greatly increase our students' appreciation of life around them.

New Software (and Hardware)

Thornton Associates, Inc., (1432 Main Street (RTE. 117), Waltham, MA 02154) has announced a new product called the SPI™ System. It is described as "an intelligent sensor processor interface for data acquisition and analysis." It is intended for use on the IBM PC and Apple IIe. The system includes an interface unit which is priced starting at \$950 (including host software), probes which range from \$35 to \$75, and probe specific software starting at \$89.

The American Heart Association is distributing two diskettes. The first, called "Heart Anatomy and Physiology," is intended for secondary level students. The second is called "Heart Medley," intended for primary level students. We have received versions written for Apple II series computers which currently are being reviewed. No information about price or other computer versions was supplied, but the documentation referred people to their local heart associations for information.

AV Reviews

Rachel Hays
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Critical thinking. 1986. Educational Dimensions Group, Stamford, CT. 2-part sound-filmstrip. 29 min. Purchase \$80, video \$89.95.

A hot-and-cold collection of loosely associated photographs begins Part I of *Critical Thinking*. Don't give up, for the taped portion carries you through rather nicely into a strong presentation that would be most appropriate for middle and junior high schools and into the lower high school grades. With proper teacher preparation utilizing the well prepared Teacher's Guide, upper elementary schools also could benefit.

The examples and explanations of critical thinking approaches to problem solving are excellent and well presented. They stimulate interest in problem-solving that can be further pursued as a follow-up. Each of the selected examples were new and presented fresh problems to solve rather than the same old puzzles we are used to seeing. Again though, I found myself distracted by much of the photo-association near the end.

The audio portion might be suitable by itself if the user encounters student disinterest or straying concentration.

There is very little audio-visual material available for rent or purchase on this important topic. *Critical Thinking* is certainly a worthwhile selection, especially for the middle grades.

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Insects are amazing. 1987. National Geographic Society. Washington, D.C. 2 sound filmstrips. 28 min. Purchase: \$62.95.

What is an Insect? and *Helpful and Harmful Insects* are excellent materials for use in grades K-3 though some older children may also benefit from them. The helpful guide for the first filmstrip suggests a finding field trip as preparation for the filmstrip. There is no follow-up suggested for that activity. Perhaps, you could guide a col-

lection and use it in another of the suggested preparation activities—listing things your students know about insects. Then, after the filmstrip, have them sort the insects and noninsects before returning them to the collection area. Students will have seen characteristics that all insects share, different kinds of mouth parts and how they work, details of insect eyes, insect communication and protection from enemies. The silk worm is used to illustrate life stages.

Another field trip following the second filmstrip will give your students an opportunity to practice recognizing insect damage and harmful and helpful insects. Pollinating, honey making, and breaking down large organic debris are helpful roles insects play. That last role leads into a discussion of the judgment that goes into discerning between helpful and harmful. This discussion is appropriate to the concluding topic of chemical sprays to control insects.

This set will make a great addition to any elementary school resource center. Most suggestions in the guide are complete enough that even those teachers who are not science oriented can create fun science classes.

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The dragon and the damsel. 1985. London Scientific Films. London, England (available from Pennsylvania State University). Video. 24 min. Purchase: 1/2" \$129, 3/4" 198; rental \$16.50.

This is an excellent program on the order Odonata of the class Insecta, which is not apparent by the title.

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