Mediaware Review

D/'no *Pork Tycoon*

L, F. (Len) Proctor, Editor

Reviewed by Michael Thorsen

System Information and Requirements
DinoPark Tycoon ™
MECC
6160 Summit Drive North
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55430-4003
Phone 1-800-685MECC, ext 540
In Canada, the program is available from:
Software Plus
#1 12760 Bathgate Way
Richmond, B.C. V6V 1Z4
Phone: 1-800-663-7731

Cost: Stand alone retail version $90.00

Macintosh System Requirements:
- 68030 or faster recommended
- 1 MB of RAM memory for B&W, 2 MB for Color, 4 MB for system 7
- Hard disk drive
- System 6.0.7 or greater , but system 7 or later advisable

MS-DOS System Requirements
- 386 of higher required
- 1 MB RAM
- DOS 5.0 or higher
- Hard drive
- Microsoft-compatible mouse
- VGA or SVGA monitor and adapter

"Cool graphics! Neat sounds! This is rad!" These are just a few of the comments I have heard from my students about the new program from MECC called, DinoPark Tycoon. It is not very often that you get Grade 6, 7, or 8 students showing up an hour before school starts to use the computers for something other than games. Dino Park Tycoon has had this effect on my students.

Dino Park Tycoon is a theme park simulation. In the simulation you purchase, build, operate and continually maintain a roadside dinosaur park. For direct business applications most of the factors, events and problems are very realistic and practical. For math applications Dino Park includes estimation, percentages, averages, decimals, graphing, problem solving, and all of the basic math operations. There are also direct science and social studies applications with respect to the history, habitat, diet, and eras of the 19 dinosaurs who can inhabit the DinoPark.

Installing Dino Park on your computer is very simple because the disk it comes on is equipped with an installer program. The installation process for both the Mac and MS-DOS formats is quite similar. As with other MECC products, the documentation is extensive and thorough. Upon opening the binder the first item encountered is a product overview section which contains the background information on the program, then there is a getting started section for those who are impatient to "get going", a detailed product description with many screen displays for reference and an extensive classroom resources section containing both teacher support materials and student handouts.

I found that the students enjoyed working out the everyday problems they encountered in Dino Park Tycoon. As a result, taking the concepts they had learned back to the classroom for discussion was made easy. I liked the fact that when students worked through the program they found success in steps. While it would take them some time to get by the $100 000 revenue mark, at the $300 000 (and others) they were faced with, not only more problems, but more difficult and complex problems. In this way, the areas of forecasting and decision-making became much more relative. Second, the successes and failures of the students were shared equally. This enabled students to comprehend why they did or didn't find success. For me, the bottom line is that this program is effective and fun to use. The kids learn facts and concepts without agonizing over which is which. They are able to develop their information processing skills and not even know they are doing it.

Dino Park Tycoon is recommended for use in Grades 3-12. From what I have seen, it is best suited for Middle Years i.e.. Grades 5-9 students. The concepts are a bit above most of the younger ones, and the older students often find the program too simple, too quick. Like all students, as they used the program, my students found tricks to being successful. However, most of the tricks were realistic and appropriate. For example, one trick everyone finds sooner or later, is that if they hire the maximum number of security guards possible, their income will begin to increase dramatically and unrealistically.

Watch out for that one as it immediately takes the challenge, and most importantly, the fun out of the program. Even with this minor bug, the program is certainly worth considering when looking for math, science and social studies oriented interactive learning resources to integrate into classroom instruction.

REVIEWER

Michael Thorsen is a Grade 7 Teacher at St. John School in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.