

The authors of this resource pack are Dr David Gatley, who runs the Victorian Census Project, and Dr Paul Ell, the Director of the Centre for Data Digitisation and Analysis at Queen's University. Together they have put together a package which provides a wealth of resources that can be used in teaching in schools and further education.

The resource pack includes three sources of material. The first is a CD-ROM which provides nineteenth century census datasets, Poor Law data, Vital Statistics (Births, marriages, deaths), the 1851 Education Census and Trade Directories. Also on the CD-ROM are three topographies of England and Wales, Scotland and Ireland compiled by James Pigot and Isaac Slater in the 1830s and 1840s. The CD-ROM also provides the SECOS data handling, graph and mapping program which can be used to investigate the datasets so that students can practice ICT skills while carrying out historical investigations. Student worksheets, templates for transposing CEB data and instructions for using SECOS are also included. The second item in the package is a Teacher's Guide which provides suggestions for using the materials and worksheets. These are mainly for school students, but some of the worksheets could be used in a tertiary setting. The third item included is an informative illustrated book, Counting Heads: an Introduction to the Census, Poor Law data and vital registration. The book introduces the history of census taking and vital registration in the British Isles, explains the SECOS database and introduces the topographies.

This package is a fine resource providing an array of primary and secondary material. A great deal of labour has clearly been devoted to making these sources very much more accessible. Suggestions are also provided about how the material could be used to match subject benchmarks in schools. The worksheets in particular are excellent and I imagine that a teacher wishing incorporate materials into their teaching would start by choosing some of these and matching them with relevant datasets, background information and instructions for using the software.

However, the authors do expect quite a lot of the teacher using this resource. This may be a strength, as suites of educational material which presume to teach teachers how to teach are often left sitting on the shelf. Nonetheless, the package might have been enhanced by the inclusion of case studies in which teachers could be given more specific ideas about how particular datasets could be used alongside other materials to achieve learning objectives, together with estimates about the amount of time needed. These would have been helpful in providing a more concrete picture of just how the resources could actually be used in the classroom.

The resource pack also does not offer much advice for teachers working in further education. There is only one paragraph on this subject in the Teacher's Guide, which states that many further education students "will be sufficiently advanced to take full advantage of the program and to use all of its functions". This statement reinforces an impression that the package is mainly targeted at teachers and students who already use datasets and data handlers. Yet most students entering further and higher education have no experience of database manipulation and history students are often intimidated by the prospect.

Dealing with "data-phobia" is an important issue for history teachers using this kind of material and the CD-ROM and Teacher's Guide could go further in providing bridges for those who are new to teaching and learning with these kinds of resources. I had some difficulty deciding where to begin and the CD-ROM in particular needs more introductory explanation, more careful proof-reading and more user-friendly navigational aids. Nonetheless, this is a valuable new resource and will be welcomed by teachers.

The pack is designed for IBM compatible micros only, running Windows 3.x or Windows 95/98/2000/NT. It costs £35 for the school edition as well as £75 for the network/site license and £25 for the personal edition (without the Teacher's Guide), plus post and packing.