Our Raspberry Pi Summer

When I first told my wife that I had bought a Raspberry Pi and it was going to be deliveredin 10 weeks she thought I had gone mad.

After some explanation that this was in fact another computer for home I was met with even more disbelief and comments about where would another computer go - we haven't got room.

After exactly 8 weeks the Pi arrived and my seven year old son and I were both really excited by the credit card sized circuit we unboxed.

As a teacher and a bit of a geek I was excited at the prospect of giving my son a chance to write some simple games and a project to work on over the summer holidays. Being a child of the 80s I spent many a happy hour writing simple and eventually more complicatedgames in BASIC on my Acorn Electron and wondered if Philip would catch the programming bug.

Following the initial excitement of booting a LINUX machine (thanks again for the many happy memories from Uni) we started up SCRATCH and began to explore. With very few instructions we were in at the deep end.

Within an hour Philip had discovered how to add a piece of graphics (a Sprite) and make it say simple messages. Next came motion and control of the Sprite.

After a few more hours programming and experimenting with different ideas Philip's first game was written.

We decided to make a short video of the game and of using
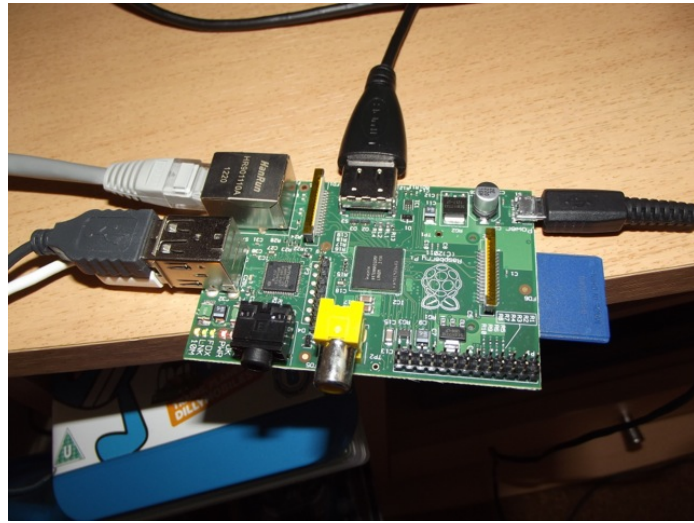
Plugged in and ready to go!

Boxing our Raspberry Pi

Philip in action

the Pi and uploaded it to YouTube. We could't believe the response - within a few days we had passed 20,000 views and with loads of positive comments flowing in Philip was encouraged to write his second and third games.

Over the next few weeks two more games were written. Philip developed quickly his understanding of the different commands and operations in Scratch mostly through a process of trial and error. There were a number of times he asked me for help and then decided that his code was better and I was making it more complicated.

People have asked me many times what is the point of a Pi? As a teacher I can see amazing potential in this cheap little device that can be simply plugged into a TV and used by anyone. I don't think that my son will become a computer programmer or a game designer - but this amazing summer with the Pi has shown us both what can be achieved with determination and perseverance.

As someone who has recently taught GCSE ICT and had students designing Business Cards or one of the other (banal) activities which make up the GCSE course I thoroughly believe in the call to change teaching ICT back to basics such as programming. The skills that my son has been developing this summer through programming will be invaluable as he moves into Junior school and then beyond. We live in a culture of instant gratification and success and programming has never been like this. Things often don't work and to succeed we need perseverance and a willingness to look at the problem from a different angle. As a parent and a teacher seeing these skills
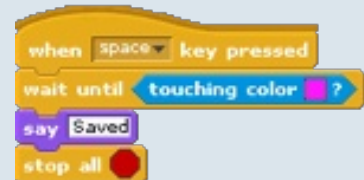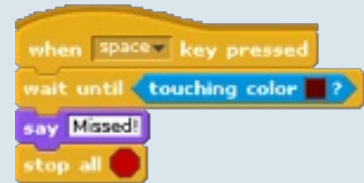
The Game

To start the game:

The frog:

The starfish:

The ball:

developing is really exciting, a huge change from the "I can't do it so I give up".

Here's to another slice of Pi.

Spencer Organ is a seasoned Secondary School teacher from the West Midlands. In his spare time, he runs a tech website (home.uktechreviews.com). He is passionate about bringing creativity into teaching and learning and about uisng ICT and multimedia as facilitators for this.