The formulation of an educational package Windows on a Workplace, by the Royal Melbourne Zoo, Education Service, was developed using HyperCard and attempts to provide an accessible answer to specific issues arising from the new Victorian Certificate of Education, Australian studies area of study, through the use of the stack.

The project was innovative on two levels:

- the Zoo responded to an organisational problem by initiating the development of contemporary, locally based software
- the development of the stack by two classroom teachers.

The Project involved and the Zoo Education service staff in the development of the aims and objectives two classroom teachers in the design and programming of the stack. For educators interested in the use of computers this is innovative. Given considerable time, support and commitment it has proven possible for contemporary based curriculum material to be developed at the local level, using a program such as HyperCard.

The Australian studies area of study relies on inquiry learning, the drafting of hypotheses, researching and reporting on the findings. Primary source material is of utmost importance. Units 1 and 2 examine the Australian workplace and require school/industry contact.

Put yourself in the students' shoes. Have you ever battled through the red tape of telephone calls and mazes to finally get to the person to whom you wish to talk? And that assumes you know to whom it is you want to speak and what it is you want to ask.

Students studying Australian Studies Units 1 and 2 are constantly faced with these types of situations as they attempt to come to an understanding of the Australian workplace. As teachers, how can we help make the student/workplace contact effective? Will the students find answers to their inquiries or simply be unable to frame appropriate questions when they do locate a suitable workplace to investigate?

Some workplaces are showing little positive support for industry/school links, while others are keen to provide meaningful contact. Effective contacts, after all, are not only determined by teacher/student preparation.

The Royal Melbourne Zoo, a pilot workplace during 1989, endeavoured to provide an innovative response to the sheer volume of information and time required by students. During 1989, 210 Years 10 and 11 students were involved in work experience and about 700 research passes were issued to Year 11 and 12 students for free admittance over varying periods.

These were in addition to the requests for information coming from the Australian studies pilot schools. Management of these inquiries was a major concern, with the Victorian Computers in Education not yet underway.

As a workplace the Zoo employs a large number of employees in a variety of jobs. There are approximately 150 full time staff, ranging from the high profile keepers and vets, through to teachers, graphic artists, gardeners, carpenters, sales staff and cleaners. In many ways it is a microcosm of society, providing a complex decision-making process, financing and resourcing structure. It has a clear framework and is enclosed in a definable area, thus offering a 'window' on its workplace.

Along with other workplaces, they have tried to address some of the issues raised by their experiences as a pilot in this area of study e.g. how to rationalise access to their staff; ensuring informed questions are asked that cannot be answered by material already available through other sources; and knowing with whom the students want to talk and what they want to find out, before they actually get to the interview situation.

The Education Service decided the computer would be an effective means of making their information accessible and meaningful. Being keen conservationists, they saw
The second screen is accessed by choosing any of the Profile or Document icons that then take you to that particular employee's details. This screen gives access to the printer, notepad and save to disk functions.

The Stack contains three types of contemporary material:

1. Interviews with over 60 staff, who were asked questions that fitted with the area of study. For example, amongst other things they were asked about their qualifications, prior experience, requirements of the job, opinions on unionism, equal opportunity and decision making within their workplace.
2. 40 job descriptions. These are the original descriptions that employees read and responded to when they applied for their jobs.
3. Material on the history of the Zoo, the way technology is used, the wages structure and the decision making process and communications links.

The package being distributed by the Zoo Education Service and being supported by in-service training contains a master disk and a manual giving computer support and ideas for using the stack in the classroom.

The primary source material contained in the stack is able to be used in a number of ways. One avenue for a teacher wishing to provide preliminary information to their students, before a workplace visit, is to use Windows on a Workplace to allow students to search through the information, isolating their areas of interest and from these, formulate the hypotheses they wish to investigate when they reach the Zoo.

After using the stack, the students would be able to approach the Zoo in a more organised way — knowing to whom they wished to talk and what questions they wished to ask. This approach may take the form of a telephone query, letter or site visit.

Another way of using the stack is in a thematic manner. Students undertaking thematic studies such as the importance and role of unions, the status of women in the workplace or job satisfaction across a variety of occupations would find valuable, primary material and opinions, expressed in the stack.

This gives the stack a wider application than just a preliminary investigation before a Zoo visit. In many cases it will probably take the place of a site visit altogether. Primarily, it serves the purpose of disseminating a large amount of material, to schools throughout Victoria and beyond, and takes the pressure of teachers and students when quick, meaningful access to information is required.

The new Victorian Certificate of Education Australian studies curriculum emphasises the use of primary source materials. For many organisations this will mean an increase in requests from Victorian students for suitable materials. The Royal Melbourne Zoo has undertaken the development of software using HyperCard to address this need.