

Press Room

From **The Salt Lake Tribune**, October 15, 2001

KnowledgeBox® Will Provide Multimedia World for Utah Students

by *Vince Horiuchi*

KNOWLEDGE BOX: A CLASSROOM IN A COMPUTER

The KnowledgeBox® is more like a school-in-a-box. It is an electronic device full of educational video and sound clips, articles and interactive lessons that elementary students can access through their school computers. Four Utah schools will begin a yearlong test of the box starting this month.

“It stores digital media in a small, easy-to-install network appliance that connects directly to the school’s network,” said Vicky Dahn, director of curriculum and educational technology for the Utah State Office of Education. “Through that box, it provides access to an education library.”

The KnowledgeBox, built by Scottsdale, Ariz.-based Pearson Broadband, is a network appliance made up only of processors, a hard drive and a speedy data connection. There is no monitor or keyboard. Only one box is hooked up to the school’s server and can send out media to any school computer connected to the network.

Loaded on the hard drive are more than 6,000 educational videos, articles, games and interactive slide presentations about subjects ranging from the environment to mathematics to cultures and traditions. Those educational items can be accessed by subject or theme, and there is a built-in search engine to find specific clips.

A student logs into the KnowledgeBox and can access any of the content from a school PC by clicking through a Web-based interface. The device uses the Web browser and movie player on the student’s computer to display its content but is designed so the child cannot secretly jump on the Internet during the session.

Teachers use the device to assemble lessons by mixing and matching any of the video clips, articles or interactive software. A teacher can create an assignment with instructions for the student on what to do, include the clips that need to be seen and save it in the KnowledgeBox. Those new lessons, as well as premade lessons produced by Pearson, can then be used by any teacher in the school.

“There is a great sharing of the work that’s created,” said Adam Heesch, area director for Electronic Education, a subsidiary of Pearson that is marketing and selling the



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Updated 1/17/03

(1 of 2)

KnowledgeBox. “What you end up having is this rich library of resources that you can quickly go to.”

The advantage of the KnowledgeBox is it can bring up the multimedia clips in just a few seconds since the data resides on the box, as opposed to streaming it from the Internet, which can tie up precious bandwidth and take longer to play. Pearson says every student in the school can view the same movie from the box at the same time and only take about 8 seconds to download the clip to each computer.

Pearson Broadband, a subsidiary of London-based Pearson Education (the largest textbook publisher in the world), created the KnowledgeBox this year after a failed project to deliver educational video via satellite left a mountain of unused multimedia content.

Today, Pearson uses those clips and articles to make up the student lessons for the KnowledgeBox. Those lessons also are tailored to the curriculum of each state that uses the device.

“We have a team of about 50 people making content,” said Electronic Education spokeswoman Tammy Searles. “We have chosen key educational researchers to do this for all over the country.”

The box’s makers expect to upload new content every month with two large updates a year.

“The KnowledgeBox wants to be the delivery system for all of the best multimedia content for schools,” Heesch said. “It’s a living, breathing product. There is always new content being added.”

So far, four other states, including California, Arizona, Florida and Texas have signed on to use KnowledgeBoxes in schools. The Utah State Office of Education is spending \$72,000 for the project, Dahn said, which starts the middle of this month. The schools, which have not been picked, will each be in the Salt Lake, Granite, Jordan and Rich school districts.

“It’ll be a one-year project to see how it unfolds,” she said. “I loved the rich content. This box just seemed like a solution worth looking at.”