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Preface

Amongst the aims of the Information Technology in Education Research Programme* is the stimulation of interaction between researchers and practitioners who are concerned with the uses of information technology in support of learning. A successful mechanism for this has been found to be the organisation, on key themes, of workshops and seminars to which are invited a small number of experts in various fields who have a common interest in the theme and who bring with them different skills and experiences.

One such seminar was held on the theme of Screen Design and amongst those who attended were those experienced in the creation of educational software, art and design specialists, and researchers into the issues of the human-computer interface. The group of about fifteen experts divided into small teams to focus their discussion on: design planning; layout; text; graphics; and screen interaction. Subsequently the teams worked on initial drafts of texts which they had produced and the whole, after lengthy editing and consultation, now forms the guidelines contained in this book.

It was felt essential to avoid being directive in indicating the characteristics of screen displays. Throughout the book *issues* are identified and guidelines are suggested concerning their treatment. Support for the guidelines is provided in a rationale for each one. The layout of the text has been designed with the intention of providing easy access to specific aspects of screen design. The illustrations exemplify the guidelines and the references provide further evidence in support of the guidelines.

Whilst the book focuses mainly on the screen design of software to support learning, it is anticipated that many of the principles examined will apply to all forms of interactive software. Acknowledgement must be made to the Educational Computing Unit at King's College London, whose early work in this field we tried to build upon with their help.

The team members who contributed to each chapter are listed within that chapter. On behalf of the ESRC, in particular the InTER Programme, I wish to acknowledge the support that each provided. Enormous assistance was given to the Editors by King's College London, by Mentor Interactive Learning Ltd., by Dean Associates and by Steven Scrivener in preparing the illustrations. The Editors are also grateful to the publishers for their readiness to accept the proposed form of book design and to Robin Arnfield for his help. Much work in the background on drafts of the text has been done by the Editors' colleagues, in particular by Dorothy Callis and Mark Bryson of the InTER Programme, and by Mary Johnston. Valuable administrative help was provided by Maureen Boots of the InTER Programme.

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