Tech News

Sharing Scratch programs

Kevin Karplus

The scratch team chose as a slogan "Imagine, Program, Share" and have made it a point to make sharing of programs easy for kids. Registering at their web site http://scratch.mit.edu, gives kids access to the source code for over 31,000 programs, most written by other kids. The web site is pretty safe (no private messages, no e-mail addresses or phone numbers, reporting mechanisms for rude comments or projects, diligent staff removing inappropriate content, …).

To make sense out of the huge pile of projects, there are three mechanisms: user pages, galleries, and tags. Each registered user gets a "my stuff" page which keeps track of any projects they have uploaded, as well as giving them a place to keep track of favorite projects, other users' pages, and galleries. The galleries are collections of projects that can be selected by the gallery owner, or that may be open galleries. I have created two such galleries:

http://scratch.mit.edu/galleries/view/293
The Names Projects gallery

Name projects are very good starter projects for animation. Most of these are simple programs that display the programmer's name in an interesting way.

http://scratch.mit.edu/galleries/view/290
The Spring Hill Tech Club gallery

This gallery is strictly for members of Tech Club.

Names Gallery

Spring Hill Tech Club

Scratch Comics

Grant Simmons

In addition to the galleries, individual projects can be tagged with arbitrary words, and the words can be searched for. The home page gives links to lists of some of the more popular tags.

I recommend that Tech Club students get accounts at scratch.mit.edu and download projects to look at how they are written. Writing programs, like other forms of writing, is greatly aided by reading what others have written.

Successful first meeting

The first meeting of the year had 12 kids show up—a very good turnout. Everyone had fun starting to program or draw with scratch, but we only have 7 computers, so we need to get some more. Some possibilities include having students bring laptops from home, getting a donation from Hewlett-Packard (we may be able to get a 75% discount), or having a non-computer project each week for the kids who don't get computers. This last option might work well once we start on soldering projects, since I'm a little nervous about supervising a dozen kids with soldering irons.

I took pictures of 11 of the 12 kids (one had left early), to help me learn their names. I have a terrible time with names, and it may take me most of the year to get even a dozen names straight. Please forgive me if I can't remember your name—I'm really doing the best I can.

Artwork and text needed

I want the Tech News to contain art, comics, and writing by the kids this year. No one will be forced to write or draw anything (except maybe Abe, who promised a column), but I'd welcome contributions. Please give them to me at Tech Club, so that I can put Tech News together over the weekend.