



Branching database programs

A branching database is a special kind of database. We use it to classify things and build up a key. It helps us sort out sets of animals, plants and almost anything else. Like ordinary database programs, the branching database stores data. Unlike them, the data is stored as a branching key as in the example here,

1. Does it live in water?
If yes go to 5 If no go to 2
2. Does it live in the jungle?
If yes go to 4 If no go to 3
3. ...
4. Does it have a long neck?
If yes go to 9 If no go to 8
5. ...
8. Is it a lion?
9. Is it a giraffe?
10. ...

The value of using a branching database comes from getting the children to build up a key for themselves. With many activities in this book we use technology because it helps us produce some end-product or that the product is better or even that it saves time. However, we use a branching database because it provides a surprisingly strong focus for getting children to think about the things they classify. They will use and develop a variety of science skills - they observe, question, discuss and classify. For this reason branching database activities can be good science and even a cornerstone of the best.

Projects with a branching database can be improved with a little structuring. The next page shows the general plan, while the one following sets this out more formally.