

## Thoughts about the modelling activity

Looking through the session products, the most interesting distinction is between those which are **models** and those which are not.

See for example spreadsheet D which includes the warning "The model is only applicable to these 4 users'. A similar comment could be made about almost all of the other spreadsheets - see for example A, B, G and H, where, in different ways and with varying degrees of elegance, one selects the type of user and is presented with a best buy - but cannot vary any of the input conditions.

Contrast this with C where, in addition to allowing one to select the user, one can vary some of the parameters. (F appears to allow some variation also but I am not sure about how well it works.)

The first group of 'models' are not models in any real sense of the word - they are (sometimes very elegant) lookup tables for pre-selected sets of values.

(However, all the 'models' do meet the requirements to give a 'best buy' although this is much easier to see in come than others. )

This distinction is really important to keep in mind if you plan a similar activity with children. Do you want them to pre-calculate a set of results which are looked up on demand - or do you wish them to explore the range and limits of a model?

For further reading see the book 'Learning with Artificial Worlds' (Mellar et al.) In particular you could look at the first chapters in parts 1, 2 and 5.