

## **Notes on Vensim and/or Stella Software for System Dynamics Modeling when Using Modeling the Environment**

Both Vensim and Stella allow for icon-based simulation of system dynamics models. These programs make model building and testing convenient and fun. My previous students in environmental science classes can select either software. A typical group of science students might end up with 40% choosing Vensim and 60% choosing Stella.

### **Stella (also called Ithink)**

In my opinion, Ithink is easier to learn for a new student with no previous exposure to simulation modeling. The help features are extremely well done, and the student using Modeling the Environment can see a one-to-one correspondence between their work and the results in the book. Ithink also makes “conveyor stocks” easy to use. These are used in some of the popular models of my book (i.e., Chapter 14, 20).

Stella (Ithink) is available from isee systems, at <http://www.iseesystems.com>

As of March 4, 2006, Stella was available to students for:

\$ 59 for a six month student license,

\$129 for a regular student copy.

It is available for both Windows and Mac computers.

### **Vensim**

In my opinion, Vensim is somewhat more difficult to learn. The help features are not as convenient as in Ithink, and students learning from the examples in Modeling the Environment will need to make a few notes on the Vensim version of what they see in the book. However, Vensim provides a wide variety of features that students find particularly useful when they become accustomed to system dynamics simulation. (In my opinion, these features contribute partly to the extra time to learn the Vensim software.) I normally recommend Vensim for students interested in business systems or for students who plan to continue their learning beyond an initial course.

Vensim is available from Ventana Systems, Inc. They provide a Personal Learning Edition (PLE) for free at <http://www.vensim.com/>.

From my experience, students who learn the software with the PLE version often wish to “graduate” to the PLE Plus version of the software. As of March 2006, the commercial version of PLE Plus was available for \$129.

Vensim is available for both Macs and Windows. I have heard of problems with the Mac operating system, but I have no personal experience with these problems. The advice I have heard from Vensim users with Mac computers is that the operating system should be run in the “classic mode” with the “extensions” turned off.