Replacing Place

By Eva Kaplan-Leiserson

Once upon a time, long long ago, there was a concept called place. If you wanted to see your mother, learn from your teacher, or talk to your friend, you had to be in the same place as they were. Any distance, whether meters or miles, yards or kilometers, was a major obstacle to communication, collaboration, and learning.

Then came the telegraph and the telephone, fax machines and email, and place became steadily more irrelevant. Now, with the advent of videoconferencing, collaboration software, the Internet2, and other technologies, the idea of place is being replaced. We can not only talk to, see, work with, and learn from people who are a far distance from us, but we can even listen to their heartbeats, dance with them, and feel their touch. Skeptical? Read on. These innovative at-a-distant technologies and programs range from *Wow!* to way out there.

E-internships. Cost-cutting companies are hiring students for virtual internships, in which they work on short-term assignments from afar. For example, college students in Arkansas worked for Cardinal Health in Ohio, doing data warehousing and other Internet projects. The students

Be anywhere, do anything.

used school computers and were paired with a mentor.

Virtual medical school. Students who don't have access to a traditional medical school will now be able to study medicine at the International Virtual Medical School, created by more than 50 institutions in 16 countries.

The school, opening in summer 2004, will mix online classes and activities, virtual practice using computerized medical records, and real-time practice in students' home countries. Learners will even be able to "listen" to a patient's heartbeat through vibrations in a computer mouse.

Dances With Video. Last October, the Cleveland Institute of Music put on a ground-breaking show: For six performances, three dancers and three musicians in Cleveland joined up via streaming audio and video with three dancers and two musicians in Los Angeles. The collaborative dance, *Cultivating Communities: Dance in the Digital Age*, demonstrated the capabilities of Internet2 technology, which streams audio and video up to 5000 times faster than a typical PC. Project administrators say this type of collaboration in the arts opens the door to revolutionary multisensory learning.

Touch technology. Imagine learning how to operate a piece of machinery when you're hundreds or thousands of miles away from it. Sound far-fetched? A team of researchers at Massachusetts Institute of Technology and University College London have performed the first transatlantic touch, via a robotic arm attached to a computer screen.

News Flash: Work for All

According to the U.S. Labor Department, the unemployment rate for people with disabilities in the United States is about 70 percent. The department's new Website **www.disabilityinfo.gov** aims to help reduce that number. A plethora of information for people with disabilities includes career-oriented articles, tools, and links. The site also offers information for employers.

Source/ CCH Net News

Bizz

the buzz about small business

Small companies are often at a disadvantage when it comes to training, not having pockets as deep as larger corporations. A recent study by the Research Institute for Small and Emerging Business (RISEbusiness) examined training trends and needs for small companies. Key findings, as reported by the National Commission on Entrepreneurship:

- More than half—62 percent—of respondents said that training is important for recruitment and retention, but 56 percent of the firms provide fewer than 20 hours of training annually for each employee.
- The most-common training tools are handbooks or manuals; less than 30 percent of training is provided by such external sources as suppliers, unions, or associations.
- The most-needed training, respondents said, is in profit enhancement and sales skills, but most small companies don't provide training on those topics. The most-common training among small businesses is job-specific technical skills (71 percent) and computer applications (51 percent).

The National Commission concludes that small businesses want to implement more training but are dissatisfied with the availability and affordability of current offerings.

www.riseb.org for an executive summary of the study; click on Research

More

- E-internships
  www.usatoday.com/money/companies/management/2002-10-21-virtual_x.htm
- Virtual medical school
  http://chronicle.com, search on "virtual medical" (must be a subscriber)
- Dances With Video
  www.internet2.edu

GO TO "E-News" NYCU (August 2002 *T+D*) for another use of the Internet2.

- Touch technology
  http://web.mit.edu/newsoffice/nr/2002/touchlab3.html

The arm exerts a precise amount of force back on the user. In the test, far-apart users worked together to pick up a virtual box. The demonstration was so real to one reporter that he jumped backward when he felt the touch of the arm.

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Policy News

A snapshot of U.S. federal legislation and policy affecting workforce development and the HRD profession.

Human Capital Legislation Included in Homeland Security Bill

Legislation creating the new Department of Homeland Security passed both the Senate and the House in lame-duck sessions following the midterm elections. The Cabinet-level department will combine 22 agencies and employ 170,000 workers. Included in the bill is a provision establishing a chief human capital officer (CHCO) in each federal agency.

Each CHCO will assist and advise the agency head and other agency officials in selecting, developing, training, and managing a high-quality workforce. The specific functions of each CHCO will include

- setting the workforce development strategy of the agency
- assessing workforce characteristics and future needs
- aligning the agency's human resources policies and programs with the organization's mission, strategic goals, and performance outcomes
- developing and advocating a culture of continuous learning to attract and retain employees with superior abilities
- identifying best practices and benchmarking studies
- applying methods for measuring intellectual capital.

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