

VITALNews

Virginia Initiative for Technology and Administrative Leadership



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Virginia Initiative for
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The Perfect Match

I just released three more books into the wild today. That brings my total to four, and the one I released last week has been adopted so now I'm just waiting for the new owner to contact me...What am I talking about? [BookCrossing](#), an odd sort of book club with a little random acts of kindness thrown in.

Essentially, members of BookCrossing leave books around where others will find them like hospitals, waiting rooms, or park benches. But before they release them, they register the books at the Book Crossing website where each book is assigned an identification number. This number, along with a short explanation, is taped inside the book in hopes that the person who finds it will add their comments to the book's entry at the website.

I love books, and I find it very difficult to part with them. But now, I have the chance to follow my book to others and through that book make connections with

people I might not otherwise ever know.

So, why am I telling you this? For one, I think it would be a fun way for kids to share books in their school or community.

But, secondly, I think BookCrossing is an example of how the Internet merges old and new technologies. The members are swapping *books*, those old-fashioned paper things that, according to some, will soon be obsolete. But they are doing the swapping in cyberspace, using sophisticated technologies to share the printed word in a way that Gutenberg could never have imagined as he labored at his printing press.

And in the process of that swapping, they are building a virtual community of users who may never meet face to face, yet together are weaving a world out of their love of reading. Are these real relationships despite their virtual nature? That question is slowly being answered affirmatively as communities like BookCrossing flourish on the web.

*Happy surfing,
Karen*

Book Review

Teaching and Learning in a Flat World

Tom Friedman's latest book, *The World Is Flat*, is, according to the subtitle, a brief history of the twenty-first century. And since the 21st century is only five years old, it should be brief. Yet, according to Friedman, a lot has been going on while many of us have been sleeping.

Mainly, Friedman says, the world has been getting flatter. By that he means with the advent of continuous connectivity across the globe, work can be done by anyone, anytime, anywhere. So, your call to Dell support takes you to India. Or your CAT scan is read by a doctor in Australia. Or your JetBlue reservation is made by a housewife in Utah. These are just a few examples of the way "hierarchies are being challenged from below and transforming themselves from top-down structures into more horizontal and collaborative ones" (p. 45). Friedman calls this era, Globalization 3.0. The world is going from small to tiny, and "the dynamic force...is the

The best place to look for educational technology conferences is at [T.H.E. Journal](#). Their [searchable calendar](#) is a comprehensive guide to national and international conferences. In this space, we'll be featuring conferences of particular interest to Virginia educators.

[Educational Technology Leadership Conference](#)

Sponsored by the Virginia Department of Education and held at the Hotel Roanoke Conference Center in Roanoke, VA, December 5-7, 2005. This conference caters to school division leaders and provides lots of opportunities to network with administrators from across the state.

[Virginia Society for Technology and Education Annual Conference](#)

Hotel Roanoke Conference Center, March 12, 13, and 14, 2006. This gathering of educators just keeps getting bigger every year and is perfect for classroom teachers. Plan on sending a team!

[National Educational Computing Conference](#)

San Diego, July 4 - 7, 2006. Thousands of educators come together once a year to talk about technology. Just amazing!

newfound power for individuals to collaborate and compete globally" (p. 10).

This is the world in which our students will spend the majority of their

lives. Friedman does not spend a lot of time on the role of education but suggests that the primary preparation needed to function during the

Friedman, continued

Globalization 3.0 era is the ability to learn and re-learn. While we can longer guarantee people a job for life, we can give them the possibility of lifetime employment: “What government can and must guarantee people is the chance to make themselves employable” (p. 283). As low-level jobs are outsourced to other countries, Americans need to concentrate on creating knowledge workers. He recommends that tertiary education become an expectation for every student: “Everyone should have a chance to be educated beyond high school...JFK wanted to put a man on the moon. My vision is to put every American man or woman on a campus” (p. 290).

And, Friedman lays the responsibility for preparing children for this new era squarely on the shoulders of parents: “Put simply, we need a generation of parents ready to administer tough love. There comes a time when you’ve got to put away the Game Boys, turn off the television set, put away the iPod, and get your kids down to work” (p. 303). I must admit to cheering a bit when I read that. Preparing

our children for a future that is much different from the world in which most of us grew up requires everyone from parents to teachers to administrators to community leaders to government officials to take a role. The message from all parties must be that education is important, education is worth a little delayed gratification, and education is what will keep us in the forefront of Globalization 3.0.

I absorbed Friedman’s book in a few days and now am going back to reread sections of it. I assigned the pages about blogs and Wikis to my preservice teachers at William and Mary. And, I would highly recommend it to each of you. But, if you really can’t imagine getting through almost 500 pages just as the school year is beginning, there’s still hope. You can [view a video](#) of Friedman addressing a group at MIT. Or if Comedy Central is more your speed, you can watch his appearance on [The Daily Show](#).

Read the Blog... For regular news updates and links to items of interest to the VITAL community, be sure to visit the VITALNews online at <http://vcol..blogspot.com>

Blogging About the Weather

Recently, during a workshop in which we were locating resources related to weather, I stumbled upon [this weblog](#), hosted at Weather Underground. The blogger posts every day from Grand Maman, an island off the coast of Maine. The posts seem mundane, but they are also charming and paint a picture of life on an island.

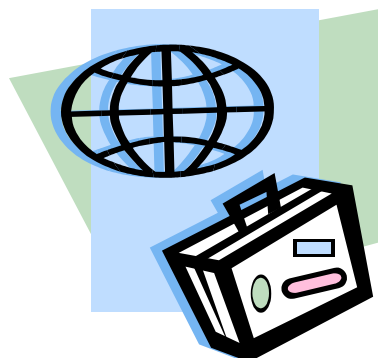
Weather

Underground hosts a long list of weather-related blogs including several written by meteorologists. Right now, as I type this newsletter, they have set up a special discussion area for those people affected by Hurricane Katrina, which is coming onshore in Florida. Weather becomes more than simply a subject to be studied when we can listen in on the voices of those in the path of the storm.

In addition, they allow users to create free accounts. Now, students can keep track of the weather using their own blog along with the typical classroom chart.

The education section of Weather Underground has articles about weather-related topics like lightning and tornadoes.

Selected Surfing: Helpful Sites for Educators



Going Places?

[GOING PLACES Online](#), the Web companion to the series, features interactive maps giving more information about places seen in the television series; personalized electronic postcards from the program destinations; interviews with everyday travelers; slide shows for each program; a feature article detailing how to plan a trip using the Web; and more.

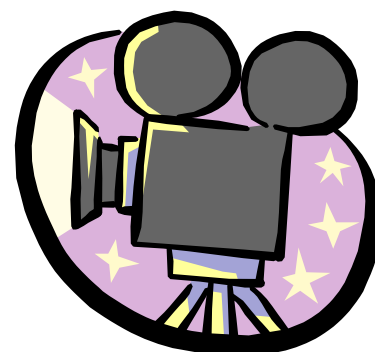
Geography comes alive as we visit places like Turkey, Bali, Yellowstone in Winter, New York City, Madrid, and Santa Fe as well as Sydney, Miami Beach, and South Africa. One program focuses on [the battle of Antietam](#).

While the program was originally shown in 1998, PBS stations often repeat it so check your ITV schedule. You can also order video tapes of shows from the website.

Good Going, Virginia!

Just in case you hadn't heard, eighty percent of Virginia's public schools met or exceeded No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) achievement objectives during the 2004-2005 school year, according to preliminary information released today by the Virginia Department of Education. Of the 1,821 schools that earned Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) ratings during 2004-2005, 1,460, or 80 percent, met the federal education law's requirements for increased student achievement, compared with 74 percent during the previous year. Virginia's objectives for achievement in reading and writing during 2004-2005 were four points higher than in 2003-2004.

You can read the [entire news release online](#) or download data for schools and school divisions.



Science Videos Available

[Teachers' Domain](#) is a multimedia digital library for K-12 teachers and students. You'll find an extensive collection of classroom-ready resources, as well as media-rich lesson plans and professional development resources. Each resource is catalogued by grade level and correlated to national and state standards.

The collection focuses mainly on science including engineering, life science and physical science. In addition, the site includes a special Civil Rights section with historical videos, biographies of movement leaders, and oral histories of participants. There are documents, photographs, and interactive presentations as well.