



## Remembering

As I sit down to write this newsletter, we are solemnly marking the 20th anniversary of the Challenger explosion that killed seven brave astronauts, a group that included a determined and decidedly bubbly school teacher named Christa McAuliff.



It was unprecedented...a school teacher joining an elite group of scientists. And it was a wonderful honor that made all school teachers walk just a little taller. But it also made our hearts ache even more as we watched the launch, many of

us in classrooms with our students, and realized all together that something had gone horribly wrong.

Technology failed us that day, in the form of a seemingly minor part, something called an O-ring. But technology taught a valuable lesson, too. There are no minor parts either in a space shuttle or in the larger world. When we introduce technology into the classroom, if we are going to do it effectively, we must examine how it interacts with all the other elements including curriculum, pedagogy and classroom management.

Technology also brings us together in the face of great tragedy. Time and again in this newsletter, I have pointed to horrific events such as the London bombings and Hurricane Katrina and showed how technology provided a place to share stories...and grief.

Be sure to [visit the NASA website](#) and view their day of remembrance presentation that commemorates not just the Challenger disaster but also the more recent Columbia explosion and, from the past, the Apollo 1 fire that claimed the lives of three astronauts.

The multimedia presentation is quite moving, and we experience the events and the lives of these brave men and women differently, I think, than if we read a book about them. We are engaged emotionally. And if you click on the link to the NASA history office, you can also be engaged intellectually with large amounts of reports, original transcripts and videos available for free.

### **Don't Forget the Katrina Kids...**

[Schools and teachers in the devastated Gulf Coast area still need help...take a minute to visit the US Department of Education's website to see what you can do to provide school supplies and other aid to individuals and schools.](#)



# Conference Calendar

## Upcoming Conferences

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.

**[Virginia Society for Technology and Education Annual Conference:](#)** Hotel Roanoke Conference Center, March 12-14, 2006. This gathering of educators just keeps getting bigger every year and is perfect for classroom teachers. Plan on sending a team!

**[Society for Education Technology and Teacher Education:](#)** Orlando, FL, March 20-24, 2006. While the primary audience for this conference is higher education, many of the sessions would be of interest to K-12 educators as well. Besides, it is the same time as FETC so you could get two conferences at the same time...that's what I'm doing!

**[Florida Educational Technology Conference:](#)** Orange County Convention Center, Orlando, FL, March 22-24, 2006. This state conference has become something of a national and international celebration. I'll be doing a presentation so why not come?

**[National Educational Computing Conference:](#)** San Diego, July 4 - 7, 2006. Thousands of educators come together once a year to talk about technology. Just amazing!

## Technology + Sunshine = FETC

One of the largest, most successful conferences in the United States devoted to educational technology, the Florida Educational Technology Conference attracts teachers, principals and deans, district administrators, curriculum designers, media specialists, technology directors and various other educators. FETC 2005 drew 8,500 attendees, 41 percent of whom were K-12 administrators.

The conference program is designed so educators and administrators have an opportunity to learn how to integrate different technologies across the curriculum - from kindergarten to college - while being exposed to the latest hardware, software and successful strategies on student technology use.

FETC is coordinated by the Florida Educational Technology Corporation. FETC, Inc. was established in 1996 with a mission to advocate and support the use of technology in education by providing an annual, world-class conference and other initiatives for the education community. The FETC, Inc. Board of Directors is composed of ten at-large representatives.

# Heavens and Earth

The nights have been clear and I find myself looking up a lot...Orion is splashed across the winter sky while planets shine on the horizon. I know that I will probably never break the bonds of earth beyond the cabin of a 747, but I love looking out at the cosmos. And the web helps brings the cosmos to me as well...

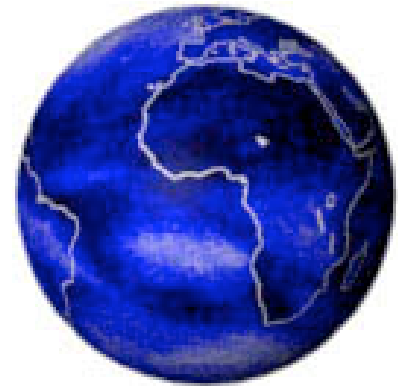
## Astronomy Picture of the Day

This [NASA-sponsored website](#) is one of the originals and takes advantage of the Internet in a simple but powerful way: each day they post a picture related to astronomy. On the day I stopped by, the photo was an amazing image of an Icelandic volcano erupting under a sky filled with auroras. The description is hyperlinked so viewers who might be interested are directed to sites with additional information. The site has been online since 1995 and is published by two professional astronomers. The photos are archived so you can return to browse again and again. NASA also sponsors an [image of the day website](#), too. (A

quick note: I discovered that most images on the NASA website are in the public domain so they can be used pretty freely. You can [read the copyright notice online](#).)

## Google Does the Earth

Thanks for Meg and Joanie--two [Virginia Community of Learning](#)--volunteers for this review. You can read more at the website. [Google Earth](#) updates Keyhole with a whole new wardrobe! Possibly the most interesting free download that I've ever used with students, Google Earth wraps satellite images around a three-dimensional model of the earth. Students experience "bird's eye" view first hand as they drop from space and zoom in on a selected location. The control panel allows you to zoom in and out, tilt, and rotate alá flight simulator. The Google Earth website offers frequent updates. Just days after Hurricane Katrina hit the gulf coast, NOAA overlays of the affected areas were available. Updated images of the areas affected by the earthquake in Pakistan are a button-click away. A [free download and information](#) about system requirements is available.



## Tuning in to Astronomy

[Earth and Sky](#) is a daily radio program devoted to astronomy. The website is filled with information from nightly viewing charts, tips for sky viewing, and a podcast. You can also listen to the radio programs and find out where they air in your area. In addition, the site serves as a portal with links to other web-based astronomy resources.

## Good Reads



We can't be good technology ambassadors if we aren't well-informed. And with the Internet, keeping up to date has never been easier. Each month, I'll be highlighting interesting, relevant sources from research projects to government reports and ezines to bloggers. This month, a free online book about Universal Design for Learning, a framework for understanding how to help all students learn.

### Teaching Every Student

[Teaching Every Student in the Digital Age: Universal Design for Learning](#), by David Rose and Anne Meyer, introduces readers to the Universal Design for

Learning framework, a new way of thinking about teaching and learning that takes into account current brain research and what it means for how students learn. In particular, Rose and Meyer focus on the use of the new media technologies because of their flexibility in meeting the needs of various learners. The book itself demonstrates this multi-access philosophy by providing various ways of interacting with the text from a more traditional text-based format to a version called the Universal Learning Edition that includes tools for highlighting and notetaking.

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## Just for Fun

### Virtual Tours of Britain

"Britain's most useful role is somewhere between bee and dinosaur."

-- Harold MacMillan

I've always longed to go to the United Kingdom...remember, I was an English major in college and have read all the great British writers. I want to wander the moors, visit the Tower of London and look for King Arthur. But, for now, I'm stuck in the United States. That's why I love the [Virtual Tours at British Tours Ltd](#). I can take a 360 view of places like Abbey Road (made famous by the Beatles) and Christ Church, Oxford (made famous by Harry Potter). Of course, you can visit Stonehenge, and there is a nice view of the Roman baths in Bath. Have fun...a quick visit across the Pond might be just what you need to fight the February doldrums.

