



Paradigm Shift?

I just finished reading Thomas Kuhn's classic treatise on scientific change, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, and have been thinking about its implications for education. Certainly, educational technologists have promised a similar kind of revolutions a paradigm shift that changes everything about education. Education is in crisis, and technology is going to fix it.



It does seem that technology is changing everything. And technology itself is changing. On January 27, 2006, Western Union stopped sending telegrams. For over 100 years, Americans learned about births, deaths, tragedies and celebrations

through the telegram. But with the advent of email and cell phones, this technology is just not needed.

Is this part of a paradigm shift? Communication, a fundamental building block of education, is now ubiquitous. We can literally be online all the time, and increasingly that experience is verbal, visual and textual all at the same time. Education is available 24/7 from "classrooms" all over the world. In May 2005, [The Christian Science Monitor](#) reported that many tutoring companies in the United States were tapping into the huge population of math and engineering graduates in India. So, a teacher may be in the same room or on the other side of the world or even in outer space.

The fundamental beliefs and values haven't changed: educators are still concerned with helping

their students learn. But the definition of teacher and student is rapidly changing, and an education system that was once reserved for only certain segments of the population is now open for all.

There are still barriers, though, that range from access to censorship to technical skills. It's our job to chip away at those barriers for all our students, making sure that the education they need is available to them whether it be in a face-to-face or virtual classroom.

Community Colleges and Distance Learning

Virginia embraced distance education in the mid-80s when the first state technology plan was drafted. That commitment continues in a variety of ways, including as part of the community college system. Want to see if there's a course for you? You can search all online courses across the state at [the Virginia Community College website](#).



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!

Getting the Most Out of Conferences

Conferences are great professional development opportunities. We have a chance to network, to learn, and to even have a little fun. Here are a couple tips for making the most of conference attendance:

Send a Team: While one goal is to meet new people, it's also nice to have familiar faces with whom to share the conference experience. Teams can divide and conquer to attend as many sessions and talk to as many vendors as possible.

Before and After: Many conferences now offer online planners that attendees can access prior to the conference. Teams can develop their plan of attack before they even leave school. Once they return, attendees should share their learning throughout the school and division. In addition, they should sort through the vendor information and do additional research into those items that seem to have potential.

Network: Much of the conference takes place outside the formal sessions. There are often receptions, dinners, and special events that offer both fun and the opportunity to meet new people.

Web 2.0

I pride myself on being up-to-date with technology. But I missed Web 2.0. I've been using the tools--blogs, wikis, flickr, RSS--but missed the movement. What is Web 2.0? There doesn't seem to be an exact definition, but it seems to embody social software and online storage and sharing. You can learn more at [Wikipedia](#). We're going to define it by sharing some of our favorite examples of Web 2.0 applications.

Listible and Remember the Milk



I love lists. Books to read, places to see, favorite websites. [Listible](#) is an online application that allows the community to create annotated lists of websites. Lists are tagged with keywords that allow users to search for lists of interest and lists generate RSS feeds that allows users to subscribe to the list with a news aggregator like Bloglines. By taking advantage of all these different technologies, Listible makes it easier and

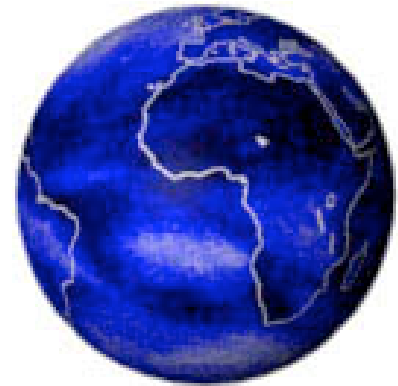
more efficient to locate quality websites. And you are encouraged to add your own sites to the lists along with creating your own. I had to try it out so started a list called [Math Websites for Teachers](#). Check it out and add some of your favorite math links. This would be an excellent collaborative tool for both teachers and students.

Remember the Milk: Another list website, [Remember the Milk](#) allows users to create online to do lists. Just perfect for students working in groups on either face to face or online projects.

Lib.Rario.Us

In the past, I've highlighted two book cataloging websites: BookCrossing and LibraryThing. Here's a new one (courtesy of Chris O'Neal).

[Lib.Rario.Us](#) allows users to catalog all their media collections including books, DVDs, games and CDs. Just like most Web 2.0 applications, the glue that hold the site together are the tags. Search on a keyword to see a list of all the items that have been tagged that way.



Librivox

What a great idea! Using volunteers to record chapters of public domain books and then releasing them back to the web. That's the goal of [Librivox](#): to make all public domain books available in audio format. This would be a wonderful project for students! The site has instructions for how to do the recording, which utilizes free sound software. It's easy...why not give it a try to liven up the winter doldrums? And, if you don't want to read, you can certainly find something to listen to from novels to poems to short stores. There are resources in other languages as well, just perfect for the foreign language classroom.

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 website devoted to the idea of ubiquitous education.

Towards Ubiquitous Education

Personal digital assistants are one type of hardware that schools are exploring for use by their students. One project at the University of Glasgow is studying the use of handhelds to further ubiquitous education. [Their website](#) includes a description of the project, a bibliography, and an extensive list of website related to PDAs in education. If you're thinking about including handhelds in your school, start here to learn more.

Just for Fun

Classic 80s Arcade Games

"Video games are bad for you? That's what they said about rock and roll."

-- Shigeru Miyamoto, Nintendo General Manager

'Video games are a waste of time for men with nothing else to do.'

-- Ray Bradbury, Salon.com, Aug. 29, 2001

Of course, you are a professional who would never consider playing a computer game at work. But, you have to relax sometime, and [this website](#), with links to pretty good versions of those classic original games--Donkey Kong, Pong, and Asteroids--will help. Simon and Space Invaders, two of my favorites, are there as well. Besides, they're good for your hand-eye coordination, right. By the way, be sure to turn the volume down during school board meetings ;-)