

# THE INTERNET AND THE UNIVERSITY: 2002 FORUM

Published as a joint project of the Forum for the Future of Higher Education and EDUCAUSE, *The Internet and the University: 2002 Forum* "includes the papers presented and discussed at the Forum on the Internet and the University, held during the Forum's 2002 Aspen Symposium. The Internet Forum seeks to understand how the Internet and new learning media can improve the quality and condition of learning, as well as the opportunities and risks created by rapid technological innovation and economic change. Scholars include Elizabeth Daley, Ira Fuchs, Shirley Jackson, Rosabeth Moss Kanter, Clifford Lynch, Deanna Marcum, James Utterback, and William Wulf." The volume can be ordered from the EDUCAUSE library or downloaded at: <http://www.educause.edu/forum/ffpiu02w.asp>

In "Higher Education Alert," William Wulf notes that colleges and universities are in the information business, and the information railroad has arrived. Just as the railroad transformed American industry, the Internet will have unforeseen consequences for higher education. "Can universities, which have existed for millennia—which are indeed icons of our social fabric—disappear in a few decades because of technology? If you doubt it, check on the state of the family farm" (31). Posing questions about the shape of the university-to-be, Wulf notes that the reduced importance of place does not imply that the physical university will disappear, but that its business will be at least as profoundly transformed by the internet as the cottage industry was transformed by the railroad.

"Can Higher Education 'Evolve'? Mastering the Challenges of Change," by Rosabeth Moss Kanter, makes the persuasive claim that "the most successful institutions will be those that emphasize the human skills that build meaningful community out of mere connections as they strive to adapt and undergo systemic change." In a discussion of "laggards," Kanter explains that a legacy of success blinds some organizations to the need for change; denial is a lack of curiosity that precedes anger and blame, and too often, merely cosmetic change. Pacesetters, on the other hand, are characterized by dialogue and widespread conversations in which partners form to accomplish what they could not do alone:

Pacesetters have no hard and fast strategic plan for change. Rather, I compare their strategy to improvisational theater: It's very disciplined, but there's no script. They start with a theme and a talented group of actors who know how to interact with each other, and then keep reshaping and refining their experiments and projects, which keep getting better and better. In the high-technology world, this process is called *rapid prototyping* (43).

Pacesetters create an array of experimental prototypes or incremental innovations which hold transformative potential they are willing to embrace. Turf protection is one of the greatest barriers to change, and pacesetters treat relationships as the basis of commitment and connectedness:

The essence of motivation and morale can be captured by what I call the 3Ms: mastery, membership, and meaning (55).

For higher education, the three worries are maintaining the social graces, intellectual development, and social responsibility—these worries are resolvable.

In "The Dynamics of Innovation," James Utterback analyzes how innovations changes enterprises as a destructive and creative forces—for higher education to play a meaningful

role in the education of the world, “education must be made more widely available, more reasonably priced, and more tailored to learners (101).”

In “Institutional Transformation,” Shirley Ann Jackson recounts the development of the “evergreen” Rensselaer Plan; its 147 “we will” statements have thus far been remarkably successful. Jackson attributes successful change management to assiduous metrics, providing for altering performance plan that reflect changing realities, and extending performance plan concepts to individual faculty and staff.

In “Creating a Collaborative Information Technology Environment for Higher Education,” Ira Fuchs points out that we are “wired to cooperate”— the strongest brain activity arises as a consequence of cooperative alliance and “in areas of the brain known to respond to positive stimuli such as desserts and pictures of pretty faces. (129). Thus, citing examples of cooperation, Fuchs promises that collaborative middleware is the lever that will enable higher education to share affordable infrastructures and learning resources.

Elizabeth Daley makes the case in “Expanding the Concept of Literacy” that “the multimedia language of the screen has become the current vernacular (170),” and the literate of the twenty-first century are those who can both read and write in this language.

Deanna B. Marcum in “The Preservation of Scholarship: The Digital Dilemma,” and Clifford A. Lynch in “Preserving Digital Information to Support Scholarship,” discuss the challenge of understanding how scholars and librarians can preserve today’s resources for tomorrow’s scholars.

**Maureen Devlin, Richard Larson, and Joel Meyerson, eds.** *The Internet and the University: 2002 Forum*. Forum for the Future of Higher Education and EDUCAUSE. <http://www.educause.edu/forum/ffpiu02w.asp>.