

## *From the Editor*

### **A Proposal for a Presence on the Web**

Technology Education needs to create a presence on the World Wide Web. For the uninitiated, the World Wide Web (WWW) is a network of file servers (generally just desktop computers with hard drives) connected to the Internet. Any file on one server can easily be linked to any file on any other server in such a way as to allow users to navigate—assuming they have the proper software—to one of these “links” with one click of the mouse on a word or graphic appearing on their computer screen. Files accessible in this manner may be text, graphics, audio, and/or video. Once one has Internet access and the software (known as a “World Wide Web browser”) very little know-how is required to navigate the “Web.” Moreover, anyone with a little interest and perhaps a half-dozen hours of spare time can learn to develop WWW “pages” (computer screens that contain the links just described). As a result, World Wide Web use and development is booming!

Although there are a handful of notable Technology Education sites now on the World Wide Web, we need to be more aggressive in this arena. The intent of this brief monologue is to help encourage and stimulate calculated World Wide Web development in our profession and to suggest the need for enhanced and ongoing support for the type of WWW resources herein proposed for development. In so doing, we would vastly enhance our visibility and stature both within and beyond the educational community.

While some believe the dilemma confronting Technology Education may be a matter of vision, I think it is more a problem of exposure. Exemplary practice in Technology Education is among the best in all of education. We teach the most innovative curriculum with the most innovative methods. Our content has shifted from the category of “nice to know” to “need to know.” Woodworking was “nice to know;” but the digital technologies and problem-solving methods that pepper our curriculum are now considered *essential* by most—the “new basic” as we like to say. It’s true; and when taught well, no school subject does it better than Technology Education.

Nevertheless, though our content and method have never been more timely or vital, many of our programs are in trouble—routinely being *shut down* and/or filled by unqualified persons. Our teacher education programs have dwindled to the point that there simply aren’t enough qualified new teachers to

fill the spots vacated by those retiring from our field. Most outside the profession have *no idea* what we are trying to accomplish in Technology Education.

We should ask ourselves why a school subject with as much potential as Technology Education wallows in such anonymity. By and large, it's a public relations dilemma. Few even know our name. We have generally done a poor job of communicating our work beyond the profession to the people who control our future—policy makers, parents, administrators, prospective students, and fellow educators.

The WWW provides us an unprecedented opportunity to make our case. As a profession, we need to leverage that opportunity *immediately* for all it is worth. To be sure, there is already far too much information floating around the ether, and one might argue that an effort to develop a presence on the Net would be pointless, as no one would ever find us among the cacophony that already exists out there. I would agree, were it not for one important detail—our name. Only a year or so ago, it was difficult to find *anything* on the Internet. But WWW browsers—the software applications used to “cruise” the Internet—have fantastic keyword search capabilities. To our great benefit, there are droves of people around the planet who are interested in either “technology” and/or “education.”

Shortly after the *Journal of Technology Education* went on-line in 1992, there were a handful of other scholarly journals established on the same server. From the beginning, however, the JTE has consistently had far more “hits” than the other journals on the server. That is, a great many more people are accessing the electronic version of the JTE than these other electronic journals. I believe this is because many people have discovered the JTE in searches containing either “technology” or “education” or both. This works to our great advantage on the World Wide Web.

We have a start. The “ITEA Technology Education Hub” on the WWW (<http://www.tmn.com/Organizations/Iris/ITEA.html>) already serves as a “switching station,” allowing those who land there to instantly link to key information about our field. But, the information *generated* by our field and available on-line is still very scarce. This is where we must beef up our efforts. We should strive to establish a body of information on the Web that would define our profession to the world. Once established, each and all of these documents/sites should have a link established on the Hub. Thus, an individual could quickly locate information on nearly any aspect of our field from the Hub.

The following is a brief annotated list of the type of resources I think our profession needs to develop on the Web. Though this list represents only a starting point, WWW sites such as these would capture the interest of the policy makers, parents, administrators, current and prospective students, and fellow

educators who are actively seeking to find information relating to “technology” and/or “education.”

- Technology Teacher Education Programs: Every teacher education program should establish a WWW site that includes faculty resumés/portfolios, curriculum, course offerings, program initiatives, graphic depictions of facilities, TECA activities, etc.
- Secondary and Elementary Technology Education Programs: Imagine if each outstanding Technology Education program developed a *graphic* WWW site/ description of their program! I can think of no better way for our field to showcase its work to the world. I am aware of a few such sites, but there are hundreds more out there that would make for wonderful public relations if they were also on-line and readily accessible.
- Teaching Opportunities: A place where any Technology Education teaching opportunity *in the world* could be posted. In addition to teaching vacancies, this might also include student teaching opportunities, faculty exchange information, internships, visiting professorships, consulting opportunities, etc.
- Recent Graduates: A place where those looking for work could post electronic portfolios—far more robust representations of their qualifications and work than the standard resumé. Prospective employers would find this to be an infinitely more efficient means of locating teachers than any current method.
- Curriculum Materials: A place where curriculum developers would post their materials for worldwide distribution. Some would be distributed freely, others commercially. Some would be refereed, perhaps others not. Reviews of and reactions to the materials could be posted here as well.
- General Information About the Profession: The ITEA has begun to develop this on the Hub, but there is much more work to be done in this area.
- The literature of the profession: The JTE has been on-line since early 1992, and is accessible from the Hub, but we should begin the process of putting most of our literature on-line. Obvious candidates include the CTTE Yearbooks, CTTE monographs, the *Journal of Technology Studies*, *The Technology Teacher*, and *Ties Magazine*. Again, some of these might be distributed freely, others commercially.
- The *ITE Directory*: This indispensable directory should be freely distributed on-line to everyone in the profession. Non-CTTE/NAITTE members could be charged for access, just as they are now.

Clearly the list of initiatives goes on, but the point here is not to generate a comprehensive outline, but rather to illustrate the potential the World Wide Web offers our field. Our profession needs to find the resources to support an

ongoing effort to first *establish* and then *maintain* (for years to come) WWW resources such as those described above. This is *not* a task for one of us to take on in addition to our already busy agendas. This task is too vital and time-consuming for this “service” approach. It is critical that our profession immediately begin to devote adequate resources to establish such a presence on the World Wide Web.

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