

Technology

Professor, Course Offer Insight on Virtual Worlds

Fifteen years ago, John Artz started an experimental course on a very young, undeveloped World Wide Web. The course introduced Web-based business applications to an audience extremely skeptical about what practical use the Web could possibly have for business, says Artz, associate professor of information systems and technology management at The George Washington University School of Business in Washington, D.C.

With that early skepticism quelled, Artz is turning to another emergent technology that he believes holds promise equal to, if not greater than, the Web: virtual worlds. His new summer course, “Web-based Systems Development,” will require students to analyze a virtual business operating in Second Life.

BizEd asked Artz about the course’s objectives and the implications virtual worlds have for business.

What kinds of virtual businesses will your students study?

The majority of businesses in Second Life sell products that can be used only in the virtual world, like clothing, animations, weapons, and vehicles. Some real-world businesses are dabbling in Second Life, such as Dell and Barnes & Noble, but they are an extremely small percentage.

I will have students choose a virtual business—say a clothing store—and develop a business model that includes revenue and expenses to determine if the business is viable or just a hobby. In addition, they’ll offer recommendations to make the business more viable, such as finding ways to attract more traffic, increase sales, or better display products.

What unique challenges will students face?

Few people would run a real-life business that is losing money just because it’s fun. However, a business owner in Second Life might lose a couple hundred dollars a month and dismiss it as entertainment. Most people there are engaging in fantasy to some extent, which becomes a problem for researchers. You don’t know if you’re getting truthful reporting or some version of their fantasies.

What potential does Second Life have for business?

Imagine asking this question 15 years ago, replacing the words “Second Life” with “World Wide Web.” In the 1990s, businesses began to realize that they had to have Web sites for a variety of purposes, from e-commerce to customer service.

Virtual worlds will likely follow this model. Web technologies made the question “Where is the information located?” irrelevant to the seekers of that information.

Virtual worlds may make the question “Where is the user located?” irrelevant.

What do you want students to learn from your course?

Business students will soon find themselves designing or using virtual worlds for serious business applications. Product decisions, personnel decisions, reorganizations, mergers all can be simulated in virtual environments. They need to be aware of and understand this technology.



Professor John Artz will teach his summer course on virtual-world businesses face-to-face and via his Second Life avatar, “Dr. Cosmos.”



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■ Building a Knowledge Network

The Kelley School of Business at the Indiana University in Bloomington will use technology to bring a worldwide network of business leaders and experts straight into its classrooms—at the click of a mouse. The school has created its Global Leaders Network (GLN), initially implemented through Kelley Direct, the school’s online MBA program.

The GLN will make available online simulations, podcasts, real-time interactive discussions, and team-based projects. It also will include uploaded video from students and alumni throughout the world, who can share their experiences and perspectives.

“Business executives who are part of the GLN can have discussions and contribute content to the network at anytime from anywhere,” says Richard Magjuka, chair of Kelley

Direct. “GLN will allow our students to receive input about current, real-world business situations from anywhere in the world by the people who are living them every day.”

An explanation of GLN and its instructional model is available at kd.iu.edu/GLN/default.htm.

■ Site for Sustainable Campuses

The National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO) recently launched CampusERC (www.campuserc.org), an online environmental resource center, in collaboration with several higher education associations. The site, funded by the Environmental Protection Agency, is designed to help colleges and universities keep up with latest news and information on environmental issues, study best practices on environmental management, and view case studies.

U.S. school administrators can log

on to the site to learn what higher educational institutions must do to comply with environmental regulations issued by the EPA.

CampusERC offers institutions the resources to manage responsibly the many aspects of their operations, including transportation services, food services, landscaping, laboratories, and power plants, notes NACUBO president and CEO John Walda. He says, “Colleges and universities have enormous potential to achieve significant reductions in energy use, water consumption, and solid waste disposal.”

The site was developed by NACUBO in partnership with the Campus Safety, Health, and Environmental Management Association; the Campus Consortium for Environmental Excellence; and the APPA, an organization for managers of higher education campuses and facilities. The EPA provided funding for CampusERC, as well as many of its informational resources.

Technology

Tribeca Films and the Digital Revolution

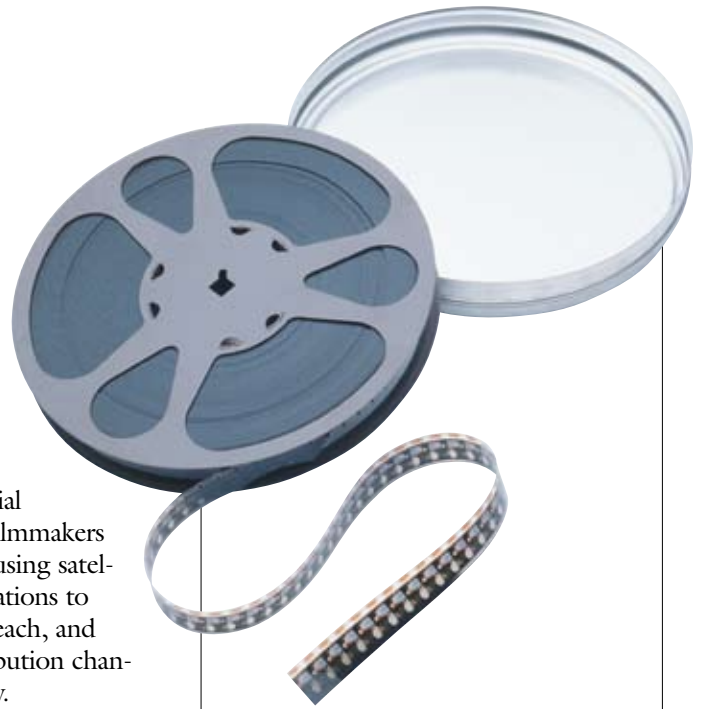
New York University Stern School of Business recently partnered with New York City's Tribeca Film Festival to offer the undergraduate business course "Convergence and Cinema at the Tribeca Film Festival." The course, offered through Stern's Entertainment, Media and Technology department, began February 19 and concluded just after the 12-day festival ended on May 4.

After the festival, students talked to the event's executives about the effects that the digital revolution—including mobile platforms, the Internet, and other technological advances—has had on the entertain-

ment industry. In addition, students pitched their ideas to festival management on the opportunities and challenges the digital revolution presents.

Their suggestions included building social networking sites for filmmakers and film enthusiasts, using satellite feeds and cable stations to extend the festival's reach, and creating tighter distribution channels to decrease piracy.

The aim of the course was to provide students with a deeper understanding of the impact multimedia and new distribution channels will



have on filmmaking, as well as how the Tribeca Festival itself impacts major industry trends.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Site Streamlines the B-School Search

AACSB International introduces Web site for prospective students at BestBizSchools.com

To provide prospective business students with a comprehensive resource on AACSB-accredited business schools, AACSB International has introduced BestBizSchools.com. Launched this summer, the site provides information for students planning to enter programs at the undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral levels.

The site features an online search tool linked to AACSB's Business School Questionnaire results and Data Direct, the association's database of business school information. It also includes a Flash-based world map that allows students to locate AACSB-accredited schools by country, region, state or province, and city.

BestBizSchools.com offers explanations of accreditation and media rankings, guidance on admissions and

financial aid, and information on business careers. In addition, AACSB representatives note that BestBizSchools.com is the only online source for information about doctorate programs in business.

"Students can search for an AACSB school by a

multitude of criteria, such as business program, ratio of faculty to students, price, location, or private-versus-public," says Brenda Lovell, AACSB's chief education officer. "The site provides a comprehensive, single source of information that allows students to compare schools and select the program that best fits their needs. It's a great resource for counselors as well."

Visit the site at www.bestbizschools.com or www.aacsb.edu/students.



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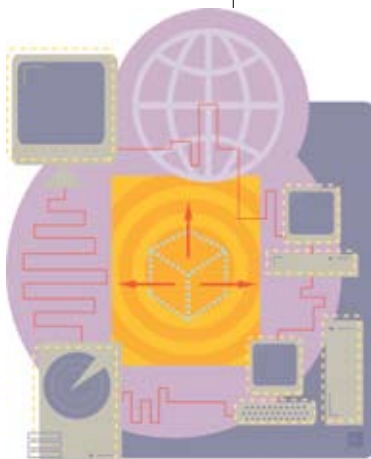
Registration is limited to business school deans and others who head higher education units with three or more years of experience.



NEWSBYTES

■ GIANT 'GEANT' NETWORK

The European Commission has announced that GEANT, the world's highest-speed computer network, will be linking with other computers worldwide to create a global research network. Currently funded by the EC through 2012, GEANT now serves 30 million users at more than 3,500 universities and research centers. The goal, say project representatives, is to connect the world's best minds to solve the world's most challenging problems.



■ BLOG@SIMON

The Simon Graduate School of Business at the University of Rochester in New York is launching a new blog for women entrepreneurs. The Women Entrepreneurs Blog @ Simon, found at www.webatsimon.com, will provide an online forum featuring advice from successful women entrepreneurs across western New York state.

■ HR GOES VIRTUAL

Tulane University's Freeman School of Business in New Orleans, Louisiana, recently launched a master's certificate in business and human resources management in partnership with the University Alliance, a Tampa-based online education provider. The

24-week curriculum, which began in May, will be delivered online via streaming video; virtual classrooms with real-time instructor interaction; message boards; and e-mail. In addition to core business disciplines, the curriculum will include HR topics such as organizational change, training, leadership development, right-sizing, staffing, compensation, retention, labor relations, and ethics.

■ NEW JOURNAL ON THE WEB

The Institute of Management Accountants has introduced the *IMA Educational Case Journal (IECJ)*, an online resource for management accounting education. IECJ features teaching cases and research pertaining to case writing in management accounting and related fields. Published on a quarterly basis, the IECJ is free to IMA members and is available at www.imanet.org/IECJ. ■