



# Alternative Futures

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**IAF** Institute for Alternative Futures

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### **IAF Explores the Future of the Interpretive Experience**

[IAF Explores the Future of the Interpretive Experience](#)

IAF Futurist Craig Bettles explored the future of public gardens at the [Longwood Garden Graduate Program Symposium](#) on *Technology's Influence on the Interpretive Experience* on March 9<sup>th</sup> in Kennet Square, PA.

[Learning Alliance Considers Schools as Learning Portals for Global Collaboration](#)

"There are a range of new technologies that can transform the interpretive experiences at public gardens, museums, zoos and other public places," remarked Bettles. "The real question is if the public will embrace public gardens that are transformed by technological change."

[IAF Identifies Mass-Scrutiny as the New Business Environment - Little Brother is Watching You!](#)

In the future, public gardens and other public spaces will be able to create visual overlays that provide information on the plants, animals and art displayed. Wireless broadband will blanket most urban areas and will be cheaper to install in rural areas. Visitors will be able to access the internet from their phones, personal digital assistants or other devices, and will be able to view the internet using a variety of mobile displays. Physical hyperlinks will be able to pull up a specially designed webpage or video clip based on the physical location of a visitor. The end result will be public spaces that contain areas of great physical beauty overlaid with rich online content.

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In many cases, these visual overlays will be able to create a less obtrusive and less expensive display than a traditional kiosk. Virtual displays will enable the managers of public spaces to provide rich educational content without disrupting the experience of visitors only interested in the physical beauty of the plants, animals and art being displayed. Outdoor public gardens and parks would not need to worry about the weather degrading kiosk displays. In museums, art galleries and other indoor areas, this will enable curators to provide more educational content without overwhelming the visual experience of the displays. Hybrid displays that combine digital video overlaid on the physical art or nature can also create new ways for artists to express themselves. Visitors could also upload their own user generated content and "mash-up" their own digital videos and photos to contribute to the artistic process.

## **Upcoming Events:**

*Consumer Access to Advances in Biomonitoring and Health Coaching*, IAF Founder and Chairman of the Board Clem Bezold will present at the conference on Consumers Direct Access to Health and Retailization on May 1 in Las Vegas,

The technology tools for a change in the interpretive experience either exist or are currently in development. WiMax and next generation cell phone networks will enable inexpensive mobile broadband throughout cities and most rural areas. New cell phones, such as the Apple iPhone, will allow easier, more intuitive access to the internet. New visual displays will also make it easier to create a virtual experience in public places. Mobile sunglasses and monacles for mobile viewing of video have already been developed for the video iPod. Telecom Italia will also be releasing a "cellular book" this year that has internet connectivity and a rollout thin film display that can display email, news, e-books, location sensitive maps and other content. Leading companies such as NTT DoCoMo and Google are exploring ways to create hyperlinks to the internet based in the physical world. Examples include hyperlinks based on taking pictures using a cell phone's camera, hyperlinks embedded in music and other ambient sound and hyperlinks based on physical location.

*Wiser Futures: Using Futures Tools to Understand and Create the Future*, IAF Founder and Chairman of the Board Clem Bezold along with Futurists Craig Bettles and Devin Fidler will conduct this workshop at the [2007 World Futures Society Annual Conference](#) on July 29<sup>th</sup> in Minneapolis, MN.

"The main advantage of these technologies is the ability to showcase both nature and art in its pure form and to create a fully immersive digital experience in the same physical space," observes Bettles. "Many visitors will look for more meditative experiences where they can reconnect with nature, experience art or examine a museum display. Younger visitors will want and expect immersive interactive experiences that blend technology with the natural beauty of a public garden, a art display or a museum piece. With these technologies, public gardens have the opportunity to create experiences that meet the demands of both types of visitors."

Slides from the presentation are available at the IAF website [here](#).

*The Future of the Meetings Industry: Impact and Actions*, Marsha Rhea and Joan Eisenstodt in a plenary session for [HSMAl's Affordable Meetings Conference](#) April 11, at 2:45 p.m. at the Navy Pier in Chicago.

### **Learning Alliance Considers Schools as Learning Portals for Global Collaboration**

IAF Futurist Marsha Rhea challenged representatives of 17 major national education organizations at the Learning First Alliance Summit on March 10 in Washington, D.C. to see public schools as a learning portal to a global workplace and society that values collaboration more than competition.

Rhea drew this future image of schools from the futures research and forecasts for Vision 2021, an initiative of the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP). Principals will become chief learning officers who are responsible for leading learning communities that extend beyond the schools into the community. In the process, principals will extend learning communities into new relationships with businesses as well as with students and schools in other countries. Digital learning technologies will connect students and staff, linking them with deep and meaningful resources and opening tremendous opportunities for collaborative learning.

*Imaging's Surprising Success*, the 2006 Caldwell Lecture by IAF President Jonathan Peck is available [here](#) as a webcast on the American Roentgen Ray Society website.

Many people fear that America's public schools are not preparing students to compete in a global economy. However, Rhea is proud that the NAESP principals are not paralyzed by the fear of competition. "Principals find it challenging to educate students for a world they cannot yet imagine, but they see that what is most important is preparing students to be global citizens capable of collaborating for a sustainable world," she said.

"No one can create a preferred future without learning first how to do it," Rhea said. "For millions of Americans, learning first occurs in public schools. What they learn about the world as it is; what they decide to believe about the world; whether they challenge their fears and live up to their aspirations" will depend on the decisions public school leaders make.

IAF forecasts that all the accountability data in No Child Left Behind and other standards will demonstrate that students will need more than basic skills to hit the desired levels of achievement their future requires. "Today's current standards movement will evolve into an appreciation for more holistic standards that hold schools accountable for educating the whole child. Are public schools prepared to be responsible for making every child whole?" Rhea challenged.

She delved into the changing social and cultural demographics of a nation moving rapidly toward majority minority schools. She asked if schools will truly be open to learning from people with different language, cultural and generational experiences. In the Vision 2021 research, IAF forecast that free market forces would continue to favor school choice over educational equity. She asked the Learning First Alliance participants if they are ready to assume responsibility for providing every child a choice in life and doing the hard political work to make it possible.

## IAF Identifies Mass-Scrutiny as the New Business Environment - Little Brother is Watching You!

Mass-Scrutiny is about to change the nature of the relationship between businesses and consumers. A lot of attention has been given to user generated content, created online by the general public rather than paid professionals. But other aspects of emerging mass collaboration technologies are still not well understood. Mass-Scrutiny, for example, will allow individuals to monitor business activity in a way that few companies currently are prepared for.

"The meteoric rise of Wikipedia, YouTube and Facebook have broadly advertised the potential for mass creativity, but the further implications of this trend are only dimly understood," IAF Futurist Devin Fidler said. "To see some of the other impacts of mass creativity, just look at the political sphere where user generated oversight has already proved its power."

This trend grew markedly after the strength of MoveOn.org in the 2004 presidential election. MoveOn was founded specifically to bring collaborative technology to bear on national politics. Other early examples include the impromptu coalition of online activities who successfully refuted the authenticity of documents used in a 2004 CBS news story on President Bush's National Guard Service, the rise and fall of Howard Dean's Presidential campaign and Senator George Allen's failed reelection bid. Next generation collaboration technologies are expanding the scope of this kind of activity, and raising the stakes considerably.

"When one information source emerges as dominant, a tipping point is likely," observes Fidler. "Ultimately, this is not about a developing trend, but a new operating environment for business. The tools for next generation consumer information and activism promise to give much greater weight to public concerns at all levels of business operation."

Ordinary businesses are beginning to feel the focus of mass-scrutiny on their business operations. YouTube and similar outlets have already started to distribute what amounts to corporate intelligence. This year, for example, multiple video reports on a rodent infestation in a New York fast food restaurant have been uploaded and viewed by millions. Meanwhile, hundreds of portals allow users to rate and review their experiences with individual hotels and businesses.

"Now is the time for organizations to think about the changes they will need to make," says Fidler. "Imagine a time, not too long from now, when collaborative technologies have created what amounts to a 'permanent record' cataloging how individual companies treat their employees, do business internationally and impact the environment - complete with video. There will be no part of a business that is not customer-facing. Organizations that fail to see the full implications of this shift will experience the growing clout of mass collaboration first hand. "

In his futurist novel 1984, George Orwell saw that emerging centralized bureaucratic surveillance and monitoring capabilities had the potential to dramatically change the relationship between institutions and individuals. As collaboration becomes central to technological applications, the message to both organizations and governments is clear: "Little Brother is Watching You."

## IAF Looks at Health Reform - Will the Next Presidential Election Lead to Healthcare Reform?

MHealth care is the top concern of middle class Americans besides the Iraq War, and their anxiety is setting the stage for health care reform to be "a grand political battle" in the upcoming presidential election, according to IAF Senior Futurist Bill Rowley.

A recent poll shows a majority of Americans feel every American should have access to affordable health care, even if they have to pay an extra \$500 per year to achieve it. This year, Congress must reauthorize the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) that insures millions of low income children. It has become a major component in several proposals to dramatically reduce the 46.6 million uninsured. Since there is great pressure to expand the program, the health care industry is preparing to lobby against any cuts that would affect their particular sectors. Congress is expected to offset increased costs of any expanded programs with "pay-for" cuts elsewhere in the federal budget.

The presidential field is rapidly filling with politicians with Presidential ambitions for 2008. Almost all of them are declaring that every American should have access to affordable, high quality health care. A few have listed some general principles for reform. Only one, former Senator John Edwards, has laid out a comprehensive plan. His plan lays out several initiatives for insuring all Americans, improving quality and slowing health inflation.

"Clearly the opportunity is here for a major effort at health care reform," observed Rowley. "Hopefully this campaign will go beyond empty promises and promote an open debate so that the public can understand the underlying issues and then clarify American values that can guide policy makers in creating workable solutions. The current system is financially unsustainable and many are beginning to understand that future generations will pay a drastic price for continued inaction."

IAF will be carefully monitoring the public debate and looking for ways to contribute to creating realistic solutions for a future health system that is worth creating. The time may be right for a transformational change in how society creates health for all.

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