

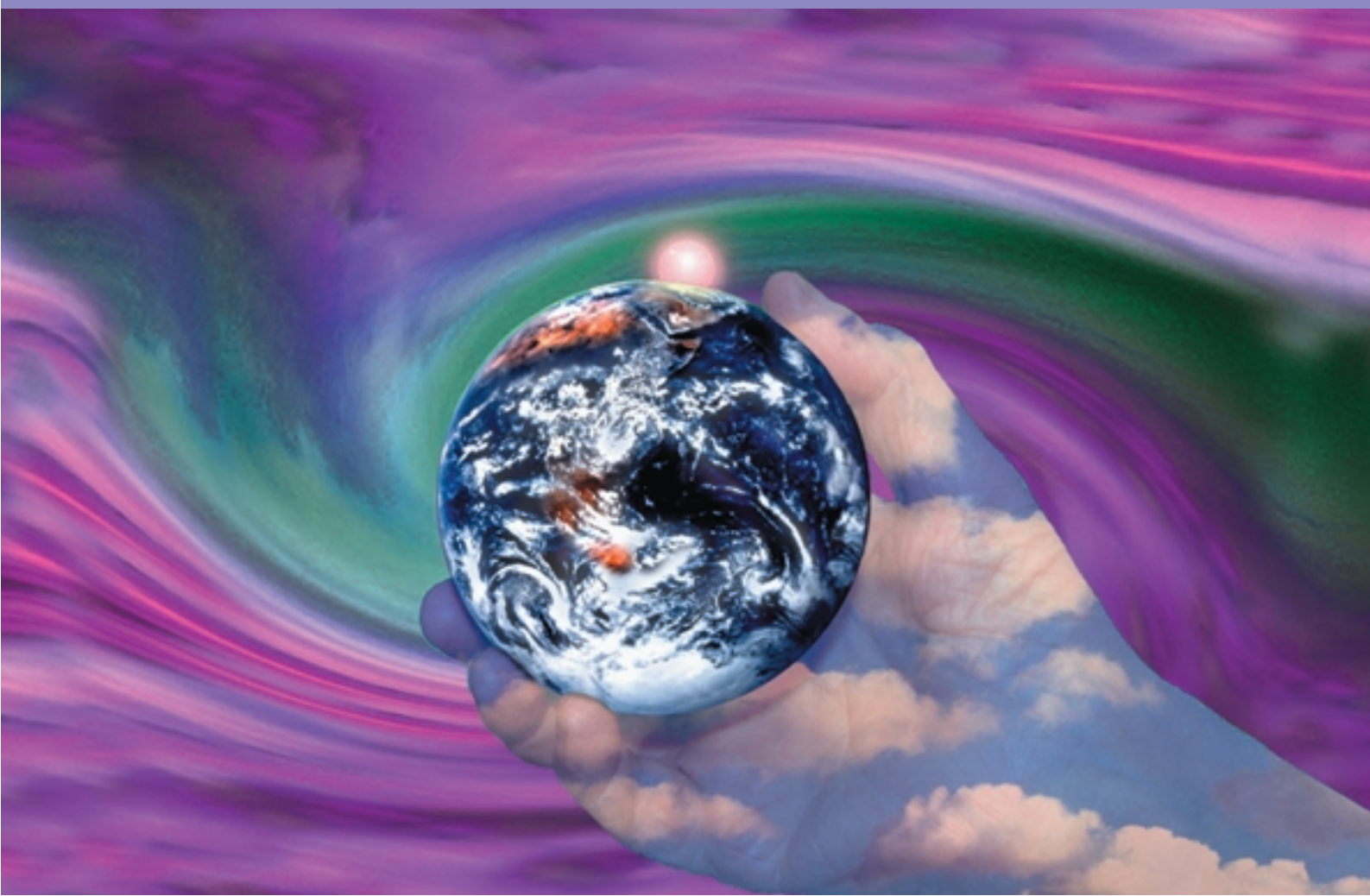


eLearn²⁰⁰⁴INTERNATIONAL
World Summit Edinburgh 2004



The Edinburgh Scenarios

Global scenarios for the future of eLearning



Scenario planning



**By Mark Bell and Charlie Stewart,
Scottish Enterprise**

The largest scale Scenario Planning exercise ever seen in the eLearning community kicked off last September, and will culminate in February this year at eLearninternational in Edinburgh. This interesting and extremely valuable exercise is now in full swing and will help all of us in eLearning circles make better informed, and longer lasting, decisions for the future.

Scottish Enterprise, the main economic development body for Scotland, has teamed up with a world leading scenario planning organisation and key figures in the international eLearning community to help the 'industry' explore the key uncertainties of the future, and how the future might impact upon us all. Each one of us, no matter whether we are a Chief Learning Officer for a large Corporate, an MD of a small technology supplier, a University Principal, or a Government policy maker, must make decisions today which will still make sense in 5, 10, or even 15 years time. Scenario Planning helps us do just that.

We must make decisions today which will still make sense in 5, 10, maybe 15 years time

For those of you unfamiliar with Scenario Planning, it's a tool which has helped large corporates

such as Shell Oil avoid disaster, following unforeseen but quick shocks in oil prices. Through the Mont Fleur scenario exercise between 1990 and 1994 it helped bring together a diverse group of 22 prominent South Africans to stimulate debate on how to shape the next 10 years of a new South Africa.

The real benefits of scenario planning allow us to learn from the future and by doing so, inform today's decision making. The process encourages you to imagine a future in 5, 10, 15 years hence and think about the questions you should be asking yourself should any of those futures become reality.

It is accepted that it is impossible to predict the future, but it is possible to paint challenging but plausible scenarios – different "caricatures" of what the world could be like in the future. If these scenarios can be convincingly communicated, then it is possible to open up peoples' minds...and if we can envisage the implications of different future scenarios, then it is likely to impact on our thinking and behaviour in the present.

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eLearninternational process involves exploring key uncertainties which will be important to eLearning in

the future. When we talk about future uncertainties, we are not simply talking about the ones we will cover in our day to day working environment (the ones we know are there, and as long as we keep an eye on them we have a chance of dealing with them when they work themselves out). Crucially we are also talking about the uncertainties that don't normally appear on our day to day radar.

What if, lets say, there was a general frustration with and reluctance to use technology in the future?

What if the workplace of the future threw up a completely different relationship between the employer and the employee?

What if people developed a complete lack of trust in Western Politicians?

What if there was a desire to reverse the trend of globalisation?

What would the world look like if these "what ifs" became reality, and how would you respond to that reality?

It is the "what ifs", the evidence of the "what ifs" becoming reality, and how we respond, that are at the centre of discussion before, during, and undoubtedly after, eLearninternational in February.

A cross representation from, and around, the international eLearning Community have engaged in the process so far to develop a series of what are called "scratch scenarios". Four 'scratch scenario' have been developed on an axis of what the scenario panel thought were the two most uncertain, and most important, issues facing eLearning in the future

Acceptance and adoption of technology in society – for example, how fast will technology advance over the next decades? Will we experience real breakthroughs in our understanding of how we learn? Will technology allow greater interaction and connectivity? Will scientific and technological progress move in a direction that is mostly comfortable (aligned with fundamental human needs), or will it accelerate in a way that seems discomfiting (running counter to many of our deepest requirements and behaviors)?

Sources of power, influence and new ideas – for example, who has control over and mediates access to learning? Who is learning for, the individual or the institution? Who creates new content that allows learning to happen? How influential will new players and new countries be in changing the global landscape of eLearning? To what extent will attitudes, motivations, and learning styles change as the environment changes?

These four scenarios, collectively known as the Edinburgh scenarios, paint what are thought to be challenging and plausible future Worlds, which will

Edinburgh Scenarios

Virtually Vanilla

This is a world where technology advances create the potential to access all kinds of information and new learning opportunities. Power is centralised within established institutions, so access and use is mostly governed by large corporations, governments and global universities.

Back to the future

This is a world where the confusion, fear and complexity of technology results in a loss of trust in the integrity of on-line learning. Powerful established institutions return to the more "traditional" values and methods of teaching and learning, seeking low-risk predictability in a turbulent world.

Web of Confidence

This is an increasingly connected world where we see powerful, effective advances in technology, where individuals are able to work and learn together in new ways. Power shifts away from large organisations and, as a result, new ideas come from various unlikely sources.

U Choose

This is a world where people are frustrated by new technology, yet find new ways to challenge authority and gain greater influence over many aspects of their lives, including learning. This results in a world where the focus of attention moves away from technology and big institutions, towards issues of local importance.

now be opened up for discussion by the wider eLearning community in the lead up to February. At eLearninternational, delegates will be taken through structured, facilitated, and challenging Discuss and Capture workshops to build a common framework for future decisions to be made.

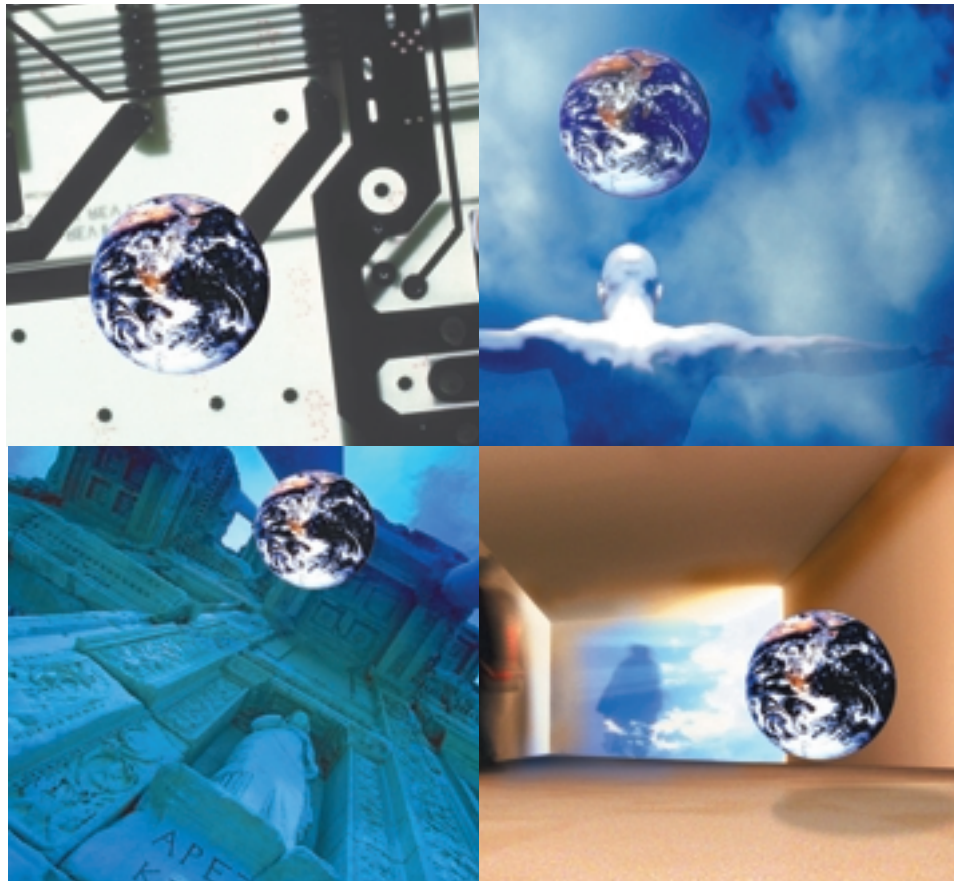
Some members of the international "Scenario Panel" provide some early thoughts on the Worlds and the process later in this article, but in the meantime the box opposite provides a first insight into each World.

The Edinburgh Scenarios are not perfect. They will not exist in isolation. They will undoubtedly change as something totally unexpected hits us (like the internet !!!!!) But what they should do is help us all think with a much more open mind about the possibilities of the future and how we act within it.

What would the world look like if the "what ifs" became reality, and how would you respond to that reality?

The Edinburgh Scenarios have been developed and discussed by developing collaboration between a panel of international experts and the leading figures within the Scottish eLearning community. Many of these international figures will be stimulating further discussion before and during the event in February. If you would like to engage in this challenging exercise why not join the debate. You can do this by participating on-line, and if you feel the investment would be worthwhile, join your peers at eLearninternational in Edinburgh in February.

Mark Bell and Charlie Stewart, Scottish Enterprise have devised and developed the Edinburgh Scenarios idea as part of the work in helping Scotland better understand the opportunities eLearning might afford the Scottish economy.



Virtually vanilla



Jane Massy has been reading Susan Greenfield's book *Tomorrow People* which looks at the potential that in a digital world, a non-real, virtual world, we will increasingly become passive consumers. Greenfield is not saying that will happen but if it does it would lead us to become increasingly homogenised. And that scenario fits in with the virtually vanilla world.

My understanding of virtually vanilla is of a world in which there is an increasing move towards commoditisation, where learning is driven by a very real aspiration to open up access to learning to everyone. You can see this in the context of life-long learning.

You can see this notion of commoditisation in the idea of bite-sized learning. You take learning a bit like you pop a pill and it does something for you. And that's how I see this scenario. It is part of a continuum that sees technology as a means to increase efficiency. Or eLearning is seen as a process which can be reduced to make more efficient learning. The process drives learning into the component parts which we consume like little tablets.

Look at some of the features of the world: ubiquitous access does suggest that component parts [of learning] are easy to get at. It also raises the issue of making learning as affordable as possible. All the time we see corporations trying to drive down the cost of learning and this clearly links to commoditisation.

On the other hand, you see the idea of rich content and the interactive experience being ushered in by broadband and rich media. However we should not get confused: the content may be rich and exciting because of the visual dimension. But I'm not sure it's rich if we are all playing the same games,

looking at the same images and using a limited number of icons. You may achieve a richness but that richness is more to do with media than with the culture. And that makes it less about where we have come from (in the cultural sense) and more to do with where the media drives us and is highly directed and about control.

With bigger organisations, there is a danger that it all becomes interchangeable whether you are in Durban or Delhi. You can see that for government policy makers – with an objective of greater access – commoditisation is an attractive policy, certainly in the short term, because it is easier to manage. We have to get away from the idea that by making access easier we will make learning easier. We can't do that through commoditisation. However there has been some fantastic and interesting work done on how to make areas such as algebra and calculus more interesting and more accessible in a cognitive sense. How technology can help people gain a better conceptual understanding is a million miles away from all this five minute manager stuff which is all rubbish. We know in our hearts it's rubbish but we think it will do for now.

Such a world could happen but there are barriers: the technology has allowed us to create different kinds of communities that are not under the control of corporations. In a way we are seeing a digital uprising and within that a sense that people want to

protect their own cultures. We saw that at the end of the 1980s with the protests by educated people in East Europe and the growth of anti-globalisation and environment protestors. Look at web sites such as corporations-suck.com.

On the other hand, we see few people who are being creative with technology in the sense of creating adaptive systems and personalisation.

This is what is interesting about the Summit. It is not a pile of experts but a democratic exercise including consulting children. It is looking at the past, present and future and looking at broader issues to see where things will go.

Jane Massy is an independent consultant based in Cambridge in the UK and working in the field of enterprise development, e-knowledge and technology supported learning. She lectures and gives workshops across Europe on the current state of the art in technology supported learning and enterprise support tools, demonstrating applications and analysing industry and investment trends in the development of supply and demand for e-knowledge both within the education systems and the corporate market.

Jane Massy was interviewed by Peter Williams

The worst enemy of innovation is incrementalism, says Cross, and that is why scenario planning can work so well – because it divorces us from the day-to-day, enabling us to concentrate on the future in a way which we find hard most of the time. He points to users such as Shell Oil, an organisation that thought the unthinkable through its use of scenario planning and therefore managed to envisage some of the shocks such as rapid and unexpected movements in oil prices which badly caught out many other companies in the industry.

Cross is unsure of the title of this particular scenario – a remark which has been echoed by others. He sees the Back to the Future world as the least credible and, describing himself as an optimist, he added that he found it a stretch to come up with a future quite as bleak as the one that was portrayed. Back to the Future sees technology as a major source of frustration and Cross says that there are one or two current signs that we may be heading that way.

He points to the way that major IT consultancies promise much and then find themselves subject to aggressive law suits when they fail to deliver. Cross says that if such shortfalls happened in the world of education and training then it would 'be a nightmare'.

According to Cross, this scenario paints the world in a Newtonian fashion as a world that works like a clockwork mechanism. Cross says we make a massive mistake in treating learning as a totally rational process and he condemns the emphasis on learning objects. If we chopped the film *Citizen Kane* up into small bite size bits and then tried to put it back together you would not recreate the movie. In the same way learning chopped up into small objects does not necessarily constitute a learning experience.

Part of the idea that sold eLearning at first was the thought that we could remove people from the learning equation. Instead, we could rely on software and increased capacity. However doubts have surfaced over that way ahead because of the lack of emotional draw. He also questions whether it is possible, or even right, to track every piece of learning both in terms of testing and keeping a record of those scores. He likens that, in its extreme form, to some kind of totalitarian state trying to track the behaviour and thinking of its citizens.

Cross points to the work of John Taylor Gatto, a former New York City Teacher of the Year, scriptwriter and taxi driver who currently works on education reform issues around the globe. Much of Gatto's work tackles the same issues: where our failing



Jay Cross – outspoken, engaging and thought provoking – is a big fan of scenario planning calling it one of the few ways that people can think about the future and leave aside the protection of the present world.

schools have gone wrong and what can be done to fix them. He also claims that most schooling has been bent to the needs of big business.

One worry is that children are told at an early age that they are stupid or wrong and that switches them off learning for life. The fear for Cross is that technology-based learning can re-emphasise that message: you're bad, you're bad, you're bad.

However while for Cross there is a lot of learning which is failing, there are also some marvellous ideas which are worth hanging onto and exploring. He says that there are wonderful visions

of how learning could be. He is also an optimist believing it is possible to overcome the screw ups of the past. Something that the Summit could help to achieve.

Jay Cross is founder of Internet Time Group, and is CEO of the eLearning Forum, a non-commercial, global community of people who make decisions at the intersection of learning, technology, business, and design.

Jay Cross was interviewed by Peter Williams



The web of confidence

What **Professor Gareth Morgan** finds exciting about the Summit is the fact that keynote speakers are not being asked to attend and give the usual old speeches. Instead the work that has happened prior to the Summit has been hands-on-thinking, looking at the paradoxes and challenges that eLearning faces.

Learning for several years has offered great promise, according to Morgan. But so far the results - especially among training and development in the area of soft skills – has been disappointing. Part of the disappointment rests in various paradoxes embedded in the use of new technology and the new learning and institutional barriers.

The world that Morgan was allocated in the initial interviews– the Web of Confidence– is addressing many of these issues and the challenges. The journey into eLearning will be a rocky road, but according to Morgan, the pay-off would be huge – a revolutionary, empowering force.

The work preceding the Summit has helped this journey by creating a community among all the participants, addressing emerging eLearning issues. By being involved with the scenarios and with their development, participants are able to think about the road ahead.

While tapping into that potential, there has to be an awareness of institutional blocks. For instance, one of the institutional blocks is that learning institutions are trying to use the new and emerging technology in an old way. Trying to deliver old learning products through new methods is a paradox, but this cuts to the current power-base of many

existing educational institutions and establishments.

Another institutional barrier identified by Morgan is the promulgation of the learning management systems (LMS). He describes the LMS as trying to impose a mindset that recreates a authoritarian, bureaucratic mentality rather than allowing the technology to enable and empower learning to be untrammelled and free flowing. The standard question for the organisation – and the subtext for

standards and that, says Morgan 'is a sure recipe for disaster'.

Morgan says that all innovation 'happens on the periphery'. The Summit is one opportunity where perhaps the periphery can move more to the centre stage.

Professor Gareth Morgan is a much acclaimed international best-selling author and consultant on the challenges of managing

“The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new lands but in seeing with new eyes”

Marcel Proust

the need for an LMS – is to ask how we can share and administer eLearning for the maximum efficiency of the organisation. That question rides roughshod over the real learning requirement of the individual learner.

Morgan also questions the Holy Grail of the quest for seeking standards for the emerging world of eLearning. He says that the standards which are presently being promulgated are technical standards concerned with technology. They are not learning

change. He is Distinguished Research Professor at York University where he teaches at the Schulich School of Business. His books include *Images of Organisation*, *Riding the Waves of Change* and *Imagination: New ways of seeing, organising and managing*. He is also chair of NewMindsets, a second generation of eLearning company. He is looking forward to bringing all his eLearning experience to bear at the Summit.



Dave Snowden is experienced at working with scenario planning. He sees the strength of mapping out the range of possibilities that we can forecast based on conventional thinking. However, be warned, the future is nearly always different.

You should not think that one of those four scenarios will be the future. Rather you should see them as four perspectives that will inform the future. Snowden looks at this from an academic angle of 'complexity perspective'. From the academic view point complexity is understood to mean the intricate inter-relationships that arise from the interaction of 'agents', which are able to adapt to and evolve with a changing environment. A theoretical framework is being developed by various academics and others based on work in the natural sciences (in physics, chemistry, biology, mathematics, and computer simulation) studying complex adaptive systems (CAS). Organisations are studied as complex social systems in their own right, not as metaphors or analogies of physical, chemical or biological CASs. We can see how this impacts on the thinking behind the Summit.

Elements of the different worlds are not mutually exclusive or incompatible. Overall it is possible to say that technology is becoming all pervasive. If technology is pervasive then perhaps we should forget terms such as eLearning; rather we should look to a much wider range of ways – books, journals, colleges, meeting people – to see how people work. We are in danger of becoming too obsessed by technology. We should see it as a

supporting tool rather than revel in its fetishistic qualities.

It is inherently impossible to define a desired future state and how we might get there. Instead Snowden talks about how boundaries – permeable (can be crossed, but you know you have crossed it), rigid (cannot be crossed but when it breaks it shatters) or elastic (bends to accommodate change, but reaches rigidity at a certain point) – and attractors – single point (e.g. sole leader) multi-point (e.g. oscillation between co-ordinating nodes; more stable than a single point) and strange attractors (e.g. the weather) – can be created, modified or removed to intervene in complex social systems in order to make desired outcomes more likely. In many ways the planning paradigm of government and management thinking may have reached the limit of its utility and needs to move on.

Dave Snowden talked to Peter Williams about the thinking behind creating the four worlds

Dave Snowden is Director of the newly formed IBM Cynefin Centre which focuses on using human networks to enable the emergence of new meaning in organisational complexity.

Who asked the digital natives?

An often heard example of a potential future for eLearning cites the movie *The Matrix*, writes **Mark Bell**, where the main character downloads the "how to fly a helicopter" instruction manual direct into the brain within a matter of seconds. Cool if you are being chased by the bad guys, but a seemingly horrific thought if you are a 15 year old student being asked about the future of eLearning.

That's just one example of comments coming out of a project which is running parallel to, and enhancing, eLearninternational 2004.

What we think technology enhanced learning will allow us to do in the future might not actually sit too comfortably with the very future learners we need to consider. **Just because we can do doesn't mean we should do.**

The Space Unlimited project, a new approach to assisting young people build confidence in their own ideas and talents, is collaborating with the Summit to help us understand better what we **should** do.

Young people (you may have heard Prensky's term Digital Natives) have been given the freedom to explore their own views about the future of eLearning, with their own perceptions on technology.

Donald Clark, CEO of the Epic Group, key player in the development of the Edinburgh Scenarios, and father of twin Digital Natives, suggests the pitfalls of not engaging with these Future Learners. He says: "You'll learn far more about web-based learning by watching the next generation use the technology. Show me a schoolchild and I'll show you someone who's an e-learner. They use the BBC bitesize and revision sites in their hundreds of thousands. Show me a student and I'll show you someone who uses Google and more than likely plagiarises content from the web. They're all e-learners. We have more to learn from them than we have from the 'experts on pedagogy'."

The young people involved in Space Unlimited have complete freedom to design their own ways of thinking about possible future worlds, and also of presenting their conclusions to eLearninternational delegates before and during the Summit in February.

Heather Sim runs the Space Unlimited project with support from Scottish Enterprise. She says: "Space Unlimited works by giving young people freedom and support to express their own creativity and insight and I am confident that eLearninternational delegates will find real value in the fresh mind sets brought to this Summit by young people."



eLearninternational 2004

Day 1

08.50 – 09.00	Welcome and Introduction	
09.00 – 09.15	Introduction to Scenario Planning	Jonathan Star , Global Business Network
09.00 – 09.45	eLearning: a Philosophical Enquiry	Gordon Graham , University of Aberdeen
09.45 – 10.45	eLearning: Existing Rules Stream	
	Plenary – recent success in eLearning implementation	Donald Clark , Epic Group
	Discuss and Capture Groupwork	
11.15 – 13.00	What are the success factors for Public Private Partnerships in Education?	Michelle Selinger , Cisco Academy
11.15 – 13.00	Sharing (e)-learning Resources across the Scottish Public Sector	Liz Kelly , eNHS Scotland
11.15 – 13.00	tbc	Jay Cross CEO of eLearning forum
13.00 – 14.15	Lunch	
	eLearning: New Rules	
14.15 – 15.15	Plenary – Human Augmentation of eLearning	Dave Snowden , IBM Cynefin Centre
	Discuss and Capture Groupwork	
15.45 – 17.30	Creating new rules for learning, research and knowledge production	Martin Bayton , Convera
15.45 – 17.30	Communities of Practice and eLearning	Etienne Wenger
15.45 – 17.30	Towards a unified eLearning Strategy	Diana Laurillard , Head of eLearning Strategy Unit, Department for Education and Skills
	Gala Dinner	

Day 2

08.35 – 08.45	Introduction to Day 2 activities	
08.45 – 09.45	Insight into The Edinburgh Scenarios	Jonathan Star , Global Business Network
09.45 – 10.45	Response to The Edinburgh Scenarios	Etienne Wenger
	eLearning: New Game	
	Discuss and Capture Groupwork	
11.15 – 13.00	The Future of eLearning in Higher Education: Lessons from Australia	Alan Smith , University of South Queensland
11.15 – 13.00	Standards for eLearning: Is there a future?	Jon Mason , Strategic Initiatives
11.15 – 13.00	eGovernment and eLearning	Donald Norris , Strategic Initiatives
13.00 – 14.00	Lunch	
	Moving from Existing Rules to New Game	
14.00 – 14.45	Views from the Future: an insight from Schoolchildren	
14.45 – 15.30	Developing New Mindsets for Change	Gareth Morgan , New Mindsets
15.30 – 16.30	Expert Panel	
16.30 – 16.40	Closing Remarks	

Running in conjunction with the Summit is an exhibition where the very latest solutions in eLearning will be presented. Suppliers from across Scotland and the UK are taking part in the exhibition adding real value to the hundreds of international delegates attending eLearninternational – it's a world away from the larger impersonal trade shows. For attendee information for both Summit and Exhibition please visit <http://www.elearninternational.co.uk>

Get Involved!

Please visit www.elearninternational.co.uk to register for the Summit. The usual delegate price is £650 + vat, but we're offering a £100 discount to all e.learning age readers. To qualify for the special price of £550 + vat please quote AGE