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McLuhan Global Village Demo Room: A New Kind of Showcase

Unpublished Vision Statement, Toronto, McLuhan Program, 1992.

See: <http://www.sumscorp.com/sums/vision/vision5.html>

Annual technology exhibitions, fairs and shows no longer offer an adequate means of keeping informed. In the past, to keep in touch with the frontiers of graphics, one went to Siggraph once a year. To keep informed about computers one went to Cebit. Special exhibitions such as the G7 Exhibition on the Information Society in Brussels introduced a global dimension to this approach. Meanwhile, the Internet has introduced the potential of instant news about developments, with the drawbacks of being a) too slow, because it lacks bandwidth and b) unwieldy, because it lacks proper access methods.

Today all fields relating to high technology are advancing so rapidly that annual showcases are effectively outdated. We need a new kind of ongoing exhibition that offers a continuous showcase of new developments. This showcase will function locally, nationally and internationally. Locally, every major technology firm (e.g. Alias, IMAX, SGI, IBM), has already recognized the advertising potentials of using the Internet to show off their latest products. The showcase is different because it offers them access to ATM connectivity and explores the role of OC-12 (622 megabits) for this purpose. The showcase is non-profit. Vendors will provide samples of their latest hardware or software and only pay a fee to cover basic costs of the facility (rent, electricity, heating, insurance, receptionist). Self interest will ensure that each vendor keeps the display updated, thus informing everyone of the latest developments.

Nationally this same principle can be extended to the various ATM nodes that are emerging (e.g. Worknet, OCRInet, RISQ, ACORN). It is again be in the interests of each regional network to display the best examples available. This same principle can be extended internationally to include the efforts of the G7 partners. Again it is in the interests of each member state to show the latest products from their country.

The first of these showcases could be linked with a new McLuhan Centre at the University of Toronto. It will be connected to other sites nationally and internationally through ATM (at 35 megabits/second). There will be local connections to the Bell Centre for Creative Communication and CBC at OC12 (622 megabits/second). This showroom will have several uses. It will serve as:

- a) a new form of advertising for the high tech community,
- b) a test bed for experiments in interoperability,
- c) a means of informing decision makers, business executives, teachers and students about the frontiers of the field thus keeping them from re-inventing the wheel, and saving money.

In spirit, this new showcase will reflect the aims of the bootcamps of the Systems Engineering Society (SES), which are constantly striving to push back the envelope of what is possible. The ongoing showcase can function as one of their core development labs. Given a link to CBC, future bootcamps can offer regular public updates on the latest developments, highlighting major issues, which persons will then explore in more detail at the showroom. It will provide persons with a practical way of keeping informed about the frontiers of the field. It will also offer them a new kind of demonstration of what is becoming available, a dynamic version of the innovations associated with an MIT or an Epcot Centre. Such a model lends itself ideally to the aims of the G7 global inventory project. The model room in Toronto could have "mirror" sites in the other G7 countries and gradually elsewhere in the world. The new McLuhan Centre can thus offer a model for the world.
