

EDUCOM Press Conference

Introduction

It was 25 years ago here at the U of M

that EDUCOM was formed, as an unusual collaboration among America's research universities and industry to develop and implement the computer technology necessary for teaching and research.

Hence it is particularly appropriate that we should

host once again this important organization, this time celebrating its 25th Anniversary.

University of Michigan

At Michigan we have been convinced

for some time that the computer has evolved far beyond simply a tool for scientific computation or information process.

It is now a robust technology absolutely

essential for the support of all knowledge-based activities...and knowledge-based organizations such as universities, corporations, government, ...even the American household!

Under the leadership of Dr. Van Houweling,

our campus has become a gigantic experiment--a laboratory--in the development of information technology.

You can see it everywhere you turn...

...from the presence on our campus of NSFnet, the primary computer network linking together the research universities and research laboratories of our nation...
...to the largest collection of computers on

any American campus (now numbering
in excess of 30,000)
...to high-speed networks linking our faculty,
students, and staff with our libraries,
laboratories, administrators,...
...and even your hotels...

Themes of Change

Yet, we have only begun to scratch the surface
in the development and application of this
incredible technology.

Over the past decade, information technology
has evolved from central “mainframe” computing--
so-called “time-sharing” to personal computing,
with the introduction of the microcomputer.

Today it is evolving once again to what might be
termed “interpersonal” computing with the rapid
spread of computer networks.

Hence, the computer has become...
...not only a lever for the mind,
a device to extend our intellectual span
...but as well a tool of interaction and collaboration
of cooperation and community.

One of the hats I wear these days
is as a member of the National Science Board,
our nation’s principal body for science policy.

As a member of the Board, I have sensed
the extraordinary increase in the pace of change
as we approach the end of this century.

Earlier this morning I spoke of the extraordinary
changes occurring in our society...
...as we evolve from the rather homogeneous,

domestic, industrial nation of the 20th Century
...into a highly pluralistic, knowledge-intensive
world nation of the 21st Century.

These themes of change...

...the growing pluralism of our people
...our ever stronger linkages to other nations
and other peoples
...and our shift to a knowledge-based
economy in which educated people and
their ideas become the key strategic
commodities

Are just the themes most directly addressed by
this extraordinary new technology.

In a world of rapid change, this ability
of information technology to facilitate linkages
is becoming all important.

One final comment and observation...

Many view the computer as a symbol of
the de-personalizing nature of modern science and technology.

Yet, if ever there was a tool for empowering
the individual, it is information technology.

This is truly a liberating force in our society,
not only freeing us from the mental drudgery of routine tasks
but linking us together in ways we never dreamed possible
...overcoming the constraints of space and time.

In part, it is our challenge, collectively, as
journalists, scientists, educators, leaders of business
...to build greater public understanding and support
for this extraordinary tool...
...so key to our nation and the world as we
prepare to enter the "Age of Knowledge"

that is our future.