

**April 23, 2006**

Here's this week's roundup of recent news with regards to what's up and what matters in technology, education, and culture.

This week was one of reports and trends. The biggest topic in the gaming world was that of the rapidly growing MMORPGs like *World of Warcraft* and *Second Life*. In particular, environments like *Second Life* are spawning numerous business opportunities for developers who can construct avatars, virtual buildings, and other artifacts for use in the games. These games are also attracting lots of attention from team building and e-learning groups eager to explore how these virtual environments can be used in training and the facilitation of improved communication.

Other items of note in the gaming world this week included Sony's decision to lower the price of its aging PS2 console, and an interview with Xbox 360 architect Kevin Bachus on the next wave of console wars due up this fall. Also, if you're looking for some news that all the time kids spend playing video games may not be a total waste, there are a couple of new studies out showing 1) playing video games does result in real calorie burning, and 2) playing video games may help kids perform better than their peers in some mental tests.

This week was also a big one for reports on blogging and podcasting. Technorati released its quarterly assessment of the blogosphere and provided some interesting statistics. They are currently tracking 35.3 million weblogs, and the number of blogs continues to double about every 6 months. In addition, 75,000 new weblogs are being created every day, and 19.4 million bloggers (55%) are still posting 3 months after their blogs are created. Feedburner also released statistics this week about the podcast feeds it is supporting. Among their findings: 1) FeedBurner alone manages more podcasts than there are radio stations worldwide; 2) while radio audience is declining, podcast circulation is consistently *growing* nearly 20% per month; 3) podcast directories are growing, and driving activity back to podcasters' originating Web sites. Corroborating the Feedburner numbers is a report from Arbitron revealing that 11% of all Americans have listened to audio podcasts. Finally, the Pew Internet and American Life project released new survey results that showed 45% of internet users, or about 60 million Americans, say that the Internet helped them make big decisions or negotiate their way through major episodes in their lives in the previous two years.

And speaking of growth trends, Ipsos Insight's 2005 "The Face of the Web" study shows significant increases in mobile phone ownership, mobile surfing by mainstream users, and the adoption of wireless mobile technology by adults aged 35 and older. This study is leading some to predict that the cell phone will become the dominant platform for Web browsing within the next decade. Also, Nokia and Sony Ericsson both reported good news for their products. Nokia's unit sales increased 40% in the first quarter, growing the company's global share from 32% to 35%, and Sony Ericsson's first-quarter profit more than tripled, helped by demand for phones featuring Walkman music players and cameras. Finally, Samsung announced this week that it's launching its first Origami product, the Q1, on May 1. The handheld is powered by an Intel Celeron M ULV running at 900 MHz, with Intel 915 integrated graphics running a 7-inch 800x480 display. The unit has a single SO-DIMM memory socket with 512 MB of RAM, and runs Windows XP Tablet PC Edition.

In other news, social networking continued to attract significant attention. For starters, Facebook garnered an additional \$25 million in funding and dowsed many of the rumor flames related to its inevitable sale. We're also seeing an increased number of mashup-type sites although some, like Om Malik, are suggesting that MySpace is too hard to beat at their own game so startups should focus

instead on building services for that megasite. AOL, has its own ideas regarding how to play with MySpace, however, and appears to be preparing to launch a new social networking portal site of its own.

In the edublogging world, the biggest meme of the week had to do with censorship and the institutional filtering of blogs and other Web sites. Wesley Fryer kicked it all off with a post in Techlearning about his blog being filtered within some Texas school districts because he has blogged extensively about MySpace. Evidently, district Internet filters were blocking outgoing links to MySpace pages along with every Web page that mentioned the social networking site. This news was picked up by Miguel Guhlin, Mark Ahlness, Tom Hoffman, and Will Richardson (among others) and sparked a lively discussion about how bloggers should respond.

Other edublogging topics that gained traction were David Warlick's concept of Flat Classrooms and George Siemens podcast on restructuring information structures. Finally the powerful Telling the New Story meme continues to gain momentum and David Warlick and Clarence Fisher had insightful posts on the topic this week.

Well, that's this week's roundup. That's what's up and that's what really matters! Don't forget to check out our daily updates posted each morning on *XplanaZine*.

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