

Is global education and training over the Internet a reality? The answer is a resounding "yes!" Internet accessibility worldwide is increasing so that students of all ages who were previously excluded from the learning process due to cost or location now have a wealth of programs and institutions available to them cost-effectively and on-demand. As Harvard University President Neil Rudenstine said recently, "The Internet can provide access to essentially unlimited sources of information not conveniently obtainable through other means."

Providing a look into the future of on-line course delivery options for global learners is a unique course available via Internet called Goddesses in World Mythology. This course was created and is taught by Professor Lanier Graham, Director of the Art Information Center and Institute for Aesthetic Development (<http://www.art-information-center.com/iad>) for HSU. "Goddesses" was developed using what is called the "third wave" in Internet course construction based on RealAudio inclusion--delivery wave of the future. The "first wave" of Internet courses contained text only. The "second wave", with the WorldWide Web availability, added images but was still primarily text-based. The "third wave" with the advent of RealAudio allows students access to the professor prepared course work by reading, listening or a combination of both. Thus, an entire course potentially becomes an illustrated lecture with the presence of excellent images on any subject. Goddesses in World Mythology includes 13 modules each with its own sound file and, based on the writer's personal experience, is extremely worthwhile, well prepared and bodes well for the future of Internet course development and delivery. Student feedback ranged from "an extremely rich experience" to "best Internet course I could imagine."

Clearly the Internet as an effective means of delivering education and training programs based on the examples presented is just now being explored and implemented. However, the real power of the Internet is that it connects people who can share thoughts, experiences and expertise in ways not possible before this technology was introduced to the world. Somewhere in those exchanges, connections and collaborations may be the seeds of a better tomorrow and the bridges to a new economic reality or opportunity. Although there will always be scarcity, all rational choices are based on knowledge. So this then is why the Internet is a true case of the medium is the message with the capacity to reach beyond the borders of developed countries extending the frontiers of knowledge. The Internet is not a technology but rather a culture of collaboration and sharing, of outreach, of education requiring constant vigilance. As Stephen Hawking so aptly expressed the Internet's potential for global communications, "I may be stuck in this (wheel)chair, but with the Internet, my mind can go to the ends of the universe."