

Foreword

The success of any media depends on the ease of cutting and pasting. How easily can *your work* borrow from *my work*?

First, there is the *raison d'être*. Does it make sense for someone to create a type of experience and does it make sense for a group to consume it? This was initially true of so much we take for granted today. The case had to be made, often by courageous fanatics, for plays, opera, novels, and Facebook. As a result of preceding work, Stephen Spielberg did not have to say, “Wouldn’t it be great if a lot of people would pay to sit in a dark room looking at moving pictures and sound?”

Then, media expands when techniques and processes are shared. Professionals need to know about the successful practices of the people who came before us. For example, over the years, various innovators have developed and refined such scaffolding as chapters in books, laugh tracks in sitcoms, and titles and credits for movies.

Finally, there comes the democratising inflection point in the success of media when actual raw content can be swapped around. Today for example, almost anyone can use a word processor to cut and paste text and photographs and formatting. Lawyers use boilerplate passages all of the time. Meanwhile a high schooler may use a pop-music track for laying out a music video, while an amateur movie director may use footage from another movie to work out pacing issues.

Which brings us to e-simulations, and the book you have in front of you. There is the very burning question, where are we now?

First, there is the good news. Because of the work of the fanatics who came before us, we know that simulations are necessary for the effectiveness of eLearning (and therefore distance learning), and increasingly all education. We have crossed that threshold, even if some haven’t noticed it yet. The methodology to support the most life-and-death applications of education, necessarily driving *competence*, *conviction*, and *comfort* in students aiming to be doctors and pilots, have long demanded and evolved the use of sims. But now almost all new programs in any discipline are employing e-simulations at different levels of sophistication.

But the bad news is that we aren’t yet at the moment that you can cut and paste from someone else’s work. The creation of e-simulations has not been democratised. We can’t easily play around with someone else’s sim. We can’t make a few changes, and then a few more, until we have something of our own. There is no multi-genre sim equivalent of a word processor.

This places us right in the middle. Leading professionals are, well, leading. They are pioneering new approaches, almost inevitably the hard way. And it is up to the rest of us members of the education field to learn everything we can from them. We must absorb techniques and research and genuine lessons. It is too hard and inefficient to start from scratch each time, and it is irresponsible to ignore progress all together.

And that's where Holt's, Segrave's, and Cybulski's "Professional Education Using e-Simulations: Benefits of Blended Learning Design" comes in. This book is state of the art. And I don't mean Star Trek style holodecks (which are coming) or Matrix style knowledge-downloads (good luck with that). Rather, this is where the pioneers of the industry really are. The papers gathered here honestly and thoroughly show today's risk taking, brainstorming, and realistic compromises. Here are the processes that others will be following shortly, and likely the techniques that will get formalised in the authoring tools of the future.

There is a final and critically important best practice to consider, however. We focus on the roles and scale of the individual and design teams. Their actions are critical and are the foundation of the value delivered. But the more strategic and thus perhaps even more important process to emulate is Deakin University's approach to the sim space.

We are at a time when there are three major innovations shaping higher ed.: Virtual/non-face-to-face engagement, social networking, and sims. But as powerful as the first two innovations are, they are akin to retail organisations outsourcing the manufacturing process offshore, or newspapers replacing staff reporters with AP or other centralised news feeds. These approaches are useful in the short term to scale up and boost the bottom line. But if the two are the sole foci, they also lead to non-differentiation and even disintermediation in the long term.

It may well be that the hard, innovative work of sim design, construction, and deployment remains the area of highest, real, and even differentiating value. This means that other universities have a choice. They can follow this strategic path to higher value today, or risk irrelevance within the decade.

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Clark Aldrich is a global education thought leader; labeled a guru by Fortune Magazine. As well as being an award-winning analyst and speaker, Clark Aldrich has designed simulations that have been patent winning, generated millions in revenues, are market leaders in their categories, have been rigorously proven to drive long term desired changes in behavior, and have been translated and deployed in dozens of countries and languages. Aldrich is also the author of five books, including his new book *Unschooling Rules*. Clark Aldrich founded and serves as the Managing Partner of Clark Aldrich Designs, which works with corporate, military, government, and academic organizations balancing both board-level and hands-on work. Aldrich's work has been featured in hundreds of sources, including CBS, ABC, The New York Times, Wall Street Journal, CNN, NPR, CNET, Business 2.0, BusinessWeek, U.S. News and World Reports. Previously, Aldrich was the founder and former director of research for Gartner's e-learning coverage. He graduated from Brown University with a degree in Cognitive Science, and earlier in his career worked on special projects for Xerox' executive team.