

THE NETWORKED PLANET Opens

Since *The Networked Planet* opened in November, attendance is 50 percent higher than it was last year. Excitement over the \$2 million exhibit was sparked by widespread media coverage and the Museum's first-ever television ad campaign. A series of Boston Globe stories culminated opening day in a front page "Living/Arts" feature. A two-day visit from Gerd Meissner of the German news magazine, *Der Spiegel*, produced two features. The AP, NPR, *BusinessWeek*, and local TV also covered the exhibit. With donations from WBZ-TV and the sponsorship of Lotus Development Corporation, a brilliant 30-second TV spot took viewers down a futuristic Information Highway, composed of screen images from the exhibit.

The exhibit, a microcosm of global networks, is linked via Novell's NetWare. After visitors log in, choose a Network Guide, and decide to share their information with other visitors or keep it private, their activities are tracked throughout the exhibit and a report is given at the end. Live data feeds of the FAA, an ILX system and NEXRAD provide instant access to large-scale networks used to manage air traffic, track transactions on the New York Stock Exchange, and forecast the weather. The exhibit also offers an introduction to the Internet and on-line services through first-hand experiences. The critical link onto the Internet is maintained by a Stratus fault-tolerant computer via Sprint T-1 lines.

For Harvard Community Health Plan's Dr. Bob Kupsc, the exhibit's interactivity is its strongest suit. "Visitors actually experience and learn more than if I just tell them." In January during a special weekend of hands-on demonstrations, Dr. Kupsc showed Jerry Kutcher of Tewksbury, MA, how to design a healthier work environment, using the exhibit's model office area. "I knew what I was doing was wrong. But I didn't know how wrong," said Kutcher, who can now relieve his neck pain by simply adjusting his terminal.

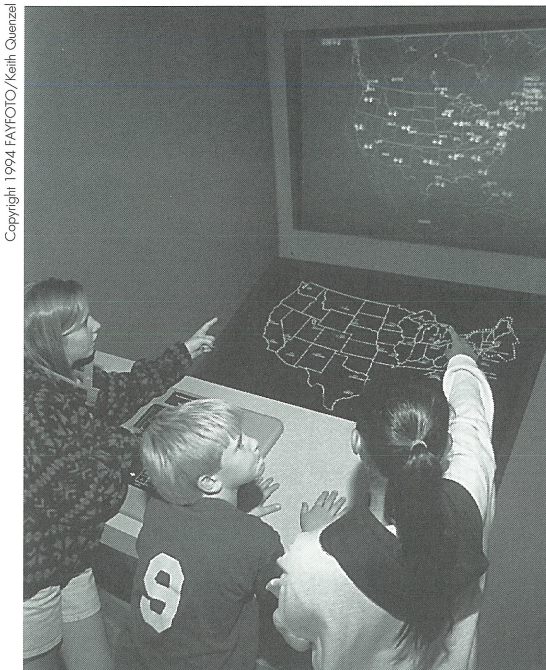
The Networked Planet meets an educational need of school groups. Seekonk High Computer Literacy teacher Peg Cassels explained that her school had just put in a computer lab. "This exhibit is the most interesting, informative thing I've seen on networks. It gives kids a real taste. Next time, I'll plan a three-hour visit, not two."

The Networked Planet gives people the opportunity to understand what the information highway really is. This exhibit is the cutting-edge example.

—US Rep. Edward Markey (D-Malden)



In December, Congressman Markey, outgoing Chairman of the Subcommittee on Telecommunications and Finance, joined students for a tour of the Information Highway. The exhibit's treatment of privacy prompted a spirited discussion. Markey noted that the real world does not give the same choice of privacy as the exhibit. From the left: Executive Director Oliver Strimpel and US Rep. Markey explore the Internet Sampler with students.



Young people discover how the FAA uses computer networks to manage air traffic across the United States. An up-to-the-minute feed provides access to the actual data used to resolve congestion. A screen display shows all of the commercial flights in the sky at that moment. Visitors can zero in on one airport to see what is landing.



Visitors use a Key Card to log onto the exhibit's network. After deciding if their Network Guide's speech will be captioned in English or Spanish, they type in their name. They choose to share this information with other visitors—which allows them to "peek" at others—or keep it private. Those who share can press the "Who's Out There?" button to see where other visitors are and read their personal information. The Guides discuss the societal impact of networking.



Using a program that simulates the S.W.I.F.T. global banking network, visitors discover how rapidly and safely \$1 million can be transferred from Holland to Boston. They also experience the volatility of global markets by seeing how rapidly prices fluctuate as they try to invest \$1 million in stocks and art.