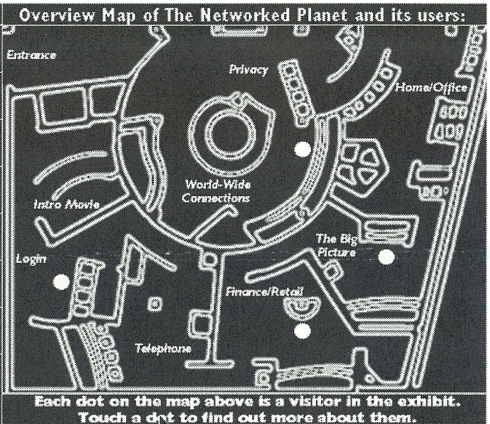# The Networked Planet
Traveling the Information Highway

Millions of people use computer networks to communicate, collaborate, and perform a wide range of transactions, from taking money out of a bank at any hour to sending electronic mail around the world. Vice President Al Gore has called this "information highway" formed by the converging television, telephone, and computer technologies the "most important marketplace of the 21st century." Yet most people can't figure out what it is, or when it touches them.

Visitors who elect to share information can touch an interactive map to see where other visitors are.

The Networked Planet: Traveling the Information Highway (working title), a $1.5 million exhibit opening November 12, brings this invisible infrastructure into view. It will let visitors "test-drive" the information highway by logging into real and simulated networks, such as a data feed showing up-to-the-minute locations of all planes in the sky.

Electronic "Network Guides" will lead visitors from one station to another. The guides—four characters on video with varied backgrounds—will offer different opinions about each networking application and its implications for privacy, security, censorship, and access. As visitors "log in" and select a guide, they may choose if their guide's speech will be subtitled in English or Spanish. They also decide if they want to share information about themselves with other visitors—which allows them to "peek" at others—or keep it private. If they elect to share, they can touch an interactive map to see where other visitors are. Each person will get a print-out of the record of their interactions throughout the exhibit, and will confront living in a society where networks facilitate data collection but may compromise individual privacy.

The role of the telecommunications infrastructure in computer networking is highlighted in a simulated telephone control center. At four networked stations, visitors can see what actually happens when they make a phone call—how their voice is digitized and travels over a network, going through a series of switching stations to connect within seconds to a receiver on the other end. They will also see how networks facilitate voice recognition and caller ID and will manipulate different media (copper, twisted pair, fiber optic) to see how "bandwidth" impacts the quality of data flow.

In the retail and finance area, an ILX system provides up-to-the-second purchases and sales of over a hundred stocks via a live feed from the New York Stock Exchange. As green and red lights flash on the screen signaling price fluctuations, visitors will be caught up in the frenetic pace. They can experiment with buying or selling stock in a simulated stock market, using $100,000 given them when they log in. As they buy or sell, an animation will show how the electronic transaction occurred.

Our Human "Network" Grows

It gives me great pleasure to announce the addition of two highly energetic and qualified people to the Museum staff. Marilyn Gardner, our new Director of Education, joins us from the Boston Public Schools where, as Director of Technology for over ten years, she became a nationally recognized force behind the introduction and exploitation of technology to support K-12 education. Marilyn is no stranger to the Museum, having served on our Education Committee for the past five years. Her experience fits perfectly with the Museum's expanded educational initiatives to serve children, including those from underserved communities, with innovative programs that inspire them to develop an interest in and a sense of empowerment with computing.

John Marchiony, who fills our Director of Marketing position, comes to the Museum from Liberty Science Center in New Jersey, where he marketed and directed operations of the world's largest OMNIMAX theater. His experience in partnerships and promotions

Photograph: Keith Quenzel/FAYFOTO

Director of Education Marilyn Gardner and Director of Marketing John Marchiony plan the Museum's new summer camp program, which begins August 8 (see story, page 6).

is already being applied to our goal of expanding the number of people and constituencies served by the Museum locally, nationally, and abroad.

In response to the growing interest in the Museum from Silicon Valley, I'm also delighted to announce the opening of a West Coast office in Menlo Park. The California office will manage The Computer Bowl® and the Internet Auction (see stories, page 3), and will provide a local interface to the many Silicon Valley corporations and individuals who support the Museum. Directing the West Coast office is none other than our extremely able former Director of Marketing, Carol Welsh. You can reach Carol at (415)323-1909 or by e-mail at *"welsh@tcm.org"*.

[signature: Oliver Strimpel]

Oliver Strimpel
Executive Director
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To Reach Us

General Information	(617)423-6758
Group Visits	1-800-370-CHIP
West Coast Office	(415)323-1909
The Computer Bowl	(415)323-1909
Museum Offices	(617)426-2800
Collections	x342
The Computer Clubhouse	x347
Functions	x340
Membership	x376
Museum Store	x306
Public Relations	x341
Volunteer Program	x411
Fax	(617)426-2943

For Museum staff, e-mail: *lastname@tcm.org*
For general Museum information, e-mail:
computer_info@tcm.org with *request* in subject line and *send help instructions* as the body of the message.

Summer Hours: Open daily, 10am-6pm through Labor Day.

Winter: Open Tuesday-Sunday, 10am-5pm. Closed Mondays, except Boston school holidays and vacations. Closed Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day.

Admission: Adults $7.00, students, children five and up, and seniors $5.00. Half price Sunday 3-5pm. Free to Museum members and children four and under.

The Networked Planet *(continued from P.1)*

To illustrate large-scale distributed networks, the Museum is recreating an air traffic control station with FAA screens projecting up-to-the-minute air traffic for the entire United States. Thousands of black dots will show where all the commercial flights in the sky are at that moment. Visitors can zero in on an airport anywhere in the US. If, for example, a blizzard occurred over Colorado, they could see the resulting relocation of activity.

Other stations will offer first-hand experiences with telecommuting and long-distance collaboration. In one example, visitors play the role of medical specialist and general practitioner, using a video conferencing link to examine and diagnose a patient with an unusual illness.

In the "hub of the network," a Stratus fault-tolerant computer will provide the Museum's link out to the world's largest computer

network, the Internet. An Internet "Sampler" will offer a taste of the information and services, such as Gopher, the World Wide Web, and the huge community of users, through samples of select Usenet groups. A variety of commercial on-line services, such as America Online, Compuserve, and Ziffnet, will be available for people to explore.

More than $800,000 in cash and in-kind support for the exhibit has been raised from Cisco Systems, Inc., The Fannie Cox Foundation, Harvard Community Health Plan Foundation, Hewlett-Packard Company, Macromedia, Inc., The Morgridge Family Foundation, National Endowment for the Humanities, Network General, Novell Inc., NYNEX, Sun Microsystems, Paul and Kathleen Severino, Stratus Computer Inc., S.W.I.F.T., and Wellfleet Communications, Inc.