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**MEDIA  
PLANET**

June 2011

# THE MODERN SCHOLAR



## A NEW APPROACH TO EDUCATION

**Danica McKellar** from “The Wonder Years” sheds  
light on the educational opportunities of the future

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## CHALLENGES

There was a time when the notion of being called a “geek” wasn’t meant as a compliment.

## Smart is the new cool

The “geek” was perceived as the loner who was passionate about his studies, his grades, perhaps even comics or science fiction, all of which didn’t leave much time for social interaction. There were the computer geeks, the science geeks, the gaming geeks, the SciFi/Trekkie geeks, and any of a dozen other labels.

Those days are long gone.

**Stand out from the pack**

It wasn’t an overnight transition, but with the widespread use of the Internet and wide-ranging social media tools amongst individuals of all ages and backgrounds, being tech savvy, educated, top of your class, and “geeky” is not only a recipe for future success, it’s now respected and admired.

The modern scholar uses tech-

nology to improve their grades, to advance their careers, and to stand out from the pack. The modern scholar is eager to learn, whether it’s algebra in grade school, additional foreign languages outside of their typical school curriculum, or an advanced degree later in life. The modern scholar is no longer concerned with being perceived as a “geek” or as too smart, because he or she knows it will lead to a higher quality of life.

Take Hollywood as an example. If you stop and think about the biggest blockbuster movies, and the characters that have permeated every level of entertainment culture, it’s the guys like Joss Whedon, Kevin Smith, and JJ Abrams who grew up as “geeks” that have made this huge impact across all demographics. Who would have thought, even five years ago, that 30 million people would go see a Star Trek movie? But Abrams made it cool for the masses.



Gareb Shamus  
CEO, Wizard World

“The modern scholar uses technology to improve their grades, to advance their careers, and to stand out from the pack.”

And it’s not just movies and TV that have been imbued with this culture. Everyone needs to have the latest gadgets and technology, whether it’s for education, improved business techniques, or gaming and other pursuits. It’s as much a matter of style as it is substance.

**The pioneers**

Today, it is very encouraging to see that more and more individuals are identifying themselves with geek culture, and proudly so. We feel strongly that, at Wizard World, we are the pioneers of geek culture and have helped shape the changes we’ve witnessed over the past 20 years.

In the pages that follow, you will read about some of those changes, which technologies are in, which are out, and what’s next.

GAREB SHAMUS

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FACT

1

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INSIGHT

**The future of professional audio education** is being reborn on a daily basis in colleges and independent schools across the country.

# Audio education for the 21st century

**A**t a time when every sector of the industry has been wracked by the endless tsunami of new technology, students and educators need to determine which emerging and which established skills are essential to insure their survival.

The issues and options are intense. Traditional proficiencies in recording, mixing and mastering music have been rocked by an unparalleled shift in recording methodology. More complex than the shift from analog tape to digital recording or the seismic downloading revolution, laptop recording and mixing, coupled with the dramatic drop in technology costs and equipment size, and the shift to small, personal “vest-pocket” studios has radically changed our world. On the plus side, this metamorphosis, has introduced a new order of job categories and opportunities. Next generation students will build careers in: perceptual audio coding, virtual acoustics, forensic audio reconstruction, audio streaming, music informa-

tion retrieval, 3D audio research and video game sound development. These and other emerging audio-related occupations are rapidly being added to the long-standing career goals of traditional recording mixing and mastering. A degree is a prerequisite for any serious job applicant. Most studios won't consider an intern candidate without a BM, BA or BS. Knowledge is essential in our rapidly evolving industry. As a lecturer at universities around the country, and having designed teaching facilities for many leading schools, I've been a first-hand witness to this upheaval.

**Having the right tools**

To equip students for this new job market, schools are dramatically reformatting their curriculums and their teaching environments. NYU's new \$6.5 million, Steinhart Center, a 7500 sq. ft. teaching and research complex, is focused on fields that simply didn't exist ten years ago, such as Computer Music Cognition, Music Informatics, Immersive Audio, Recording & Production Theory, and 3D Audio Research. What might appear as a traditionally designed audio teach-



**John Storyk**  
Architect/  
Acoustician/  
Co-principal,  
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Design Group

“To equip students for this new job market, schools are dramatically reformatting their curriculums and their teaching environments.”

ing control room is already 10.1 surround ready. Not so much because the world has 10.1 surround sound content, but because immersive and experimental audio warrants these types of tools.

At the other end of the spectrum we've been involved in an on-going design/construction program for many of The Arts Institutes educational institutions. We recently completed a new 995 sq. ft. teaching studio for the Illinois Institute Of Art—Chicago. A customized version of the dozen+ AI studios we've designed over the past few years, this new facility is already providing students with an optimal learning environment.

Teaching facilities require exactly the same level of acoustic and technical design excellence as professional recording studios. The primary design differences are those of scale. Teaching studios need to accommodate between ten and 25 students, all of whom require a line of site to the instructor as well as production equipment. Video cameras and large screen monitors have largely resolved that issue, but every installation presents its own unique set of design idiosyncrasies. The studios these students are studying in today require the same acoustic characteristics of professional studios with the added complexities of teaching configurations.

**Continuing to flourish**

A decade ago we began seeing the decline of the large-scale audio recording studio. This sad trend was manifested by the sale of NY's Sony Studios and Hit Factory, two historically significant mega-studios in New York City. At the time we were concerned about the long-term viability of our company, but over the past ten years we've been too busy to worry about it. Instead of viewing this trend as sad, we elected to view it as a long awaited metamorphous to a new content creation system. Environments to do work in fact, did not stop being needed, they simply changed their requirements. We have seen tremendous growth in the vest-pocket studio trend described above; we have upgraded many broadcast audio facilities to 5.1, and this past January we actually completed a \$6 million 'destination' studio in NYC. The studios and the projects continue to flourish. But today, more than ever, education is the key to employment.

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## INSPIRATION

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INTERACTIVE  
LEARNING  
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RETENTION

**Question:** How did a former child star bring math, fun, and learning together to help give children and parents a path to conquering math challenges and future life puzzles?

**Answer:** By using her math degree from UCLA, Danica McKellar has written three books thus far to make math relatable, practical and exciting.

# Danica McKellar makes math fun and accessible

## LEADER TO LEADER

After wrapping up her career as Winnie Cooper on the hit television show "The Wonder Years" and beginning college, Danica McKellar was unsure as to what she wanted to define her. After she had excelled at a math class her freshman year, it was clear that math would have a role in this future distinction.

McKellar had struggled with math until seventh grade when a new teacher helped to lend a fun and exciting approach to open her eyes to the world of

math. "I had always assumed I was just stupid when it came to math until my teacher made it fun and exciting."

### Lending confidence to others

Once graduating with a degree in mathematics, McKellar knew she wanted to put her performance abilities to good use and what better way than writing a book to encourage middle schoolers, and especially girls, to shine in math. "My real mission is to give girls the confidence to think of themselves as smart...this will help them have self



Danica McKellar

respect and will lead to better choices in life," says McKellar.

### Hope for the future

Through her three books, McKellar has added additional features to make math more fun and hopefully, to inspire self confidence and empowerment in a generation of up and coming women. "There are things like math horoscopes and math puzzles to make it seem friendlier and more accessible, we need to show these everyday situations to our children."

McKellar adds, "Parents need to point out math in everyday life and do activities with their children to encourage their children that math is fun, be it at the grocery store when showing them unit price or anything else like that." McKellar is currently working on a fourth book to further increase awareness of how math can be entertaining.

TIM RADWAY

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INSIGHT



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# When considering a career transition, online learning can help

## Considering a career transition—or having one thrust upon you by a pink slip heading your way?

Then now may be the perfect time to freshen up your career skills and credentials with an online course, certificate or even degree.

Perhaps you're a parent returning to the workforce after taking several years off with young ones and need to update your skills. Or you're someone who started off in one career direction, but belatedly realized you'd much rather be following a different path. Maybe you love what you're doing, but you're ready to take it to the next level professionally—and you'll need more schooling to do so. Or you've watched one too many co-workers get laid off, and you're ready to make the leap from a dying industry into one with growth potential.

### Updating your skills

When you're at a career-transition point, one of the best ways to turn change into opportunity is by



**Kim Dority**  
Career coach and adjunct faculty member, University of Denver, Colorado

updating your professional skills. And one of the most popular and effective ways to do that is through online learning.

Why has online learning become the go-to option for so many in the midst of shifting career directions? For starters, adults who are pursuing college courses or credentials are often juggling full-time jobs and family commitments along with classes and coursework. Time is critical to these students, and for many, online programs have been what made further education possible.

Now, however, there's an equally compelling benefit to online learning: the increasing focus among

schools on market-driven courses and degrees. As they shift their offerings to better meet the needs of adult students, colleges and universities are now offering online courses, certificates and degrees that reflect the realities of career transition.

"We've seen a substantial shift toward career-driven educational offerings—and a corresponding surge in student interest," says Jason Steele from eLearners.com, a web resource that connects prospective students with information about online education.

More schools now offer single courses for alumni needing to update their knowledge, certificates in new skill areas or cutting-edge degrees in fields that promise to be tomorrow's job hot-spots, such as medical information, green technologies and cyber security. Given today's unpredictable workplace, this may be the perfect time to get started on that career transition.

**KIM DORITY**

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# 5

## CRITICAL QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE ENROLLING IN AN ONLINE DEGREE PROGRAM

**Enrollment in online learning increased 21 percent, according to the 2010 Sloan Survey of Online Learning, vastly outpacing the two percent growth in the overall higher education population.**

While many factors exist, there are five critical questions every student should ask before enrolling in an online program.

### Am I ready?

**1** Prospective students should honestly assess their study habits and the time availability required to be successful in an online degree program. There is often a misconception that an online degree program is easy. This is not the case. Self-paced online programs require a great deal of self-motivation, discipline and organization from the student.

### What are the school's qualifications?

**2** First and foremost students should check to make sure the school they are considering is accredited by an accrediting body recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. Additionally, students should look for any degree-specific requirements from professional associations for the field they are interested in to ensure future employers will accept their degree. Information about the qualifications of the faculty, graduation rates and job placement rates within their field of study are also important.

### How much student support is provided?

**3** Just because online education is self-driven and self-paced doesn't mean students should be without support. "Quality programs have rich student

support offerings, including a full staff dedicated to academic support and tutoring," says Eric Juhlin, CEO of Stevens-Henager College. "Size is also a factor. Just as with campus-based degree programs, online classes can be big or small; smaller classes tend to offer more support."

### Is there a "campus tour?"

**4** Just like enrolling in a campus-based program, students who want to enroll online should take a tour of the campus, virtually of course. Students should find out if they can explore the "campus," prior to enrolling. An easily navigable virtual library, accessible help desk and user-friendly software, tools and resources are key.

### Are alternatives available?

**5** Some students may need to experience an online class before enrolling in a full degree program. Those students should find out if it is possible to take classes in a hybrid format. Many campus-based classes are starting to have online components through online discussion boards, class wikis or even eTextbooks. Seeking out classes such as these will provide students a sneak peek at online education.

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## NEWS



## FUN LEARNING TIP



Gogo's Crazy Bones are the colorful, collectible kids toy, not only used for their endless gaming possibilities, but also their ability to improve kids' learning and essential skills. Created for kids ages four to 13, Gogo's Crazy Bones can become a key component to developing skills.

Research suggests that play is important in promoting healthy child development. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), play is vital in developing the whole child because it contributes to one's cognitive, physical, and emotional well-being.

Gogo's Crazy Bones make learning fun both in-person and online ([gogoscrazybones.com](http://gogoscrazybones.com)). While playing Gogo's games such as knock-out and bowling, kids are continually practicing math skills and strategizing as well as developing spatial and kinesthetic awareness. While collecting Gogo's and trading with friends, kids develop negotiation, social and language skills.

Gogo's Crazy Bones are a great way for kids to stay sharp this summer, all while having a great time!

# EXPAND YOUR VOCABULARY, EXPAND YOUR HORIZONS

**In this age of instant global communication, worldwide economic competitiveness, and challenges to our national security, it is critical that we rethink how important it is for Americans to be able to communicate with and understand the cultures of the people around the world.**

While other nations are producing a citizenry that can communicate with others in their languages, the U.S. remains largely monolingual in its approach to education, as well as its approach to business, national security and international relations.

As the only country that routinely graduates students from high school with the knowledge of only one language, it is imperative that the U.S. begin to look at a systemic way to make language education a central part of the American education system as it is in other countries that consistently outscore us on international benchmarks in math and science. The place to begin is in the early years of a child's education. If learning another language at an early age has positive effects on students' academic achievement in math and reading, why would we hesitate to make this part of every child's academic career?

## Perspective through language learning

Launching our students into the



**FUTURE COMMUNICATORS.** If learning another language at an early age has positive effects on students' academic achievement in math and reading, why would we hesitate to make this part of every child's academic career? PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO.COM

global arena as monolinguals will only handicap them in their ability to interact with workers from other countries. To be successful in international business, we need to speak the language of our customers—and understand their perspectives on the world. This can only be accomplished by learning their language. With the changing demographics in the U.S., this becomes just as much a domestic need as an international one. We have an obligation to our children to prepare them for a world that is markedly different from the one in which we grew up—it is our challenge and our responsibility to provide them with multilingual capabilities.

Unlike the language classes many

Americans experienced in past decades, language learning in the U.S. has changed dramatically in the past twenty years. With the introduction of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) proficiency guidelines, along with the language profession's national student standards, language educators have redefined the goals of language programs across the U.S. Instead of focusing primarily on the grammatical structures of the language, teachers are now focusing on building students' communicative competence.

## Maximize your contribution in the global arena

Clear benchmarks define what stu-

dents should know and be able to do in their linguistic and cultural capabilities. Local school districts as well as state education agencies are beginning to switch "seat time" for proficiency measures as indicators of student success and progress in their language learning. It's a new era in language education and all of our students deserve an opportunity to develop communicative abilities in languages beyond English.

Research shows that while younger students have a greater facility at acquiring the pronunciation and intonation of a new language, older learners can benefit from this experience as well. Especially if a learner has acquired a second language at an early age, learning a third or fourth language becomes easier. Our senior citizens can benefit from learning a new language as well since exercising the brain is important to ward off degenerative illnesses such as Alzheimer's.

It is critical that the U.S. develop a strategic plan and national language policies to ensure that all Americans have the opportunity to maximize their contributions in the global arena by learning languages beyond just English.

BARBARA MONDLOCH

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INSIGHT

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**FACT**  
**3**  
**KNOWING OTHER LANGUAGES IMPROVES JOB PROSPECTS**

# Social media in language learning has the power to motivate

**Can social media affect the way we learn languages? It can in a powerful way, but it won't substitute proven teaching techniques.**

High-quality and reliable learning material created by teaching and didactic experts and keeping motivated are the key factors.

That does not mean students have to sit in a classroom to learn a language. Self-directed learning works. Even more so using modern technology that make self-directed learning e.g. in an interactive online lesson fun and fruitful.

**New approaches**

From experience we know that it takes multiple platforms and

approaches to make learning a success. We started out with an online language learning product that put as much focus on community learning—users teach users as in self-directed interactive learning—online lessons that are professional and engaging. We learned quickly that our users need structure. They want help from experts. So we decided to put most of our focus on interactive expert learning material and use community features purely as motivation booster.

And this is where the true social media power is—it helps motivate and engage. When people learn a language by themselves they hardly ever manage to follow through. It's like working out. Most people find themselves not going to the gym

anymore after the novelty wears off. The greatest learning material cannot provide continued motivation. What can?

**Staying connected and motivated**

In sports, teaming up with others, competition or working on a common goal, such as a marathon, helps to stay motivated. Motivation in language learning works the same way.

Creating a study group, competition or common goal environment has been hard to mirror in self-directed learning, so far! There is a vast potential in social media to create this and boost motivation. Social media components integrated in modern learning platforms can let people publicly take on challenges

for example via Language apps, let them alert each other if they fall behind or let them share their learning successes for example via a Facebook or Twitter status.

So, integrating social media in a useful way is way more complicated than just connecting people and telling them to share. We need to find out how to tap into the incredible resources of involvement and motivation from the social networking point of view and we need to find out which tools work best. It is still a challenge but once we built a real social media learning environment, it will be a major breakthrough.

**MARKUS WITTE**

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**DON'T MISS!**

■ Everyone who graduates from college in this country should have a basic understanding of the world beyond our shores and be proficient in a foreign language.

■ At least one million American college students—four times the current number—should study abroad each year in high quality programs around the globe and for academic credit.

■ International students and scholars who wish to pursue their academic objectives in our country should be able to do so, and we should ensure that they feel welcome in our midst.

■ International exchange and volunteer-service programs should be significantly increased, and Americans should be challenged by renewed calls to international service for the sake of their country and the world, as President Kennedy did nearly 50 years ago.

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