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An unconventional approach to education

Come the Revolution

Online retailer looks to harness consumer loyalty to nonprofits

CWI's Summer WEST Institute on Service-Learning

\$2.9M deal gives species safe habitat near Salton Sea

Congratulations to Mitchell O'Daye and Willie Astor on their graduations from TMCC.

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From delanceyplace.com

In today's excerpt - **an unconventional approach to education:**

"In 1999 the Indian physicist Sugata Mitra got interested in education. He knew there were places in the world without schools and places in the world where good teachers didn't want to teach. What could be done for kids living in those spots was his question. Self-directed learning was one possible solution, but were kids living in slums capable of all that much self-direction?

"At the time, Mitra was head of research and development for NIIT Technologies, a top computer software and development company in New Delhi, India. His posh twenty-first-century office abutted an urban slum but was kept separate by a tall brick wall. So Mitra designed a simple experiment. He cut a hole in the wall and installed a computer and a track pad, with the screen and the pad facing into the slum. He did it in such a way that theft was not a problem, then connected the computer to the Internet, added a web browser, and walked away.

"The kids who lived in the slums could not speak English, did not know how to use a computer, and had no knowledge of the Internet, but they were curious. Within minutes, they'd figured out how to point and click. By the end of the first day, they were surfing the web and-even more importantly-teaching one another how to surf the web. These results raised more questions than they answered. Were they real? Did these kids really teach themselves how to use this computer, or did someone, perhaps out of sight of Mitra's hidden video camera, explain the technology to them?

"So Mitra moved the experiment to the slums of Shivpuri, where, as he says, 'I'd been assured no one had ever taught anybody anything.' He got similar results. Then he moved it to a rural village and found the same thing. Since then, this experiment has been replicated all over India, and all over the world, and always with the same outcome: kids, working in small, unsupervised groups, and without any formal training, could learn to use computers very quickly and with a great degree of proficiency.

"This led Mitra to an ever-expanding series of experiments about what else kids could learn on their own. One of the more ambitious of these was conducted in the small village of Kalikkuppam in southern India. This time Mitra decided to see if a bunch of impoverished Tamil-speaking, twelve-year-olds could learn to use the Internet, which they'd never seen before; to teach themselves biotechnology, a subject they'd never heard of; in English, a language none of them spoke. 'All I did was tell them that there was some very difficult information on this computer, they probably wouldn't understand any of it, and I'll be back to test them on it in a few months.'

"Two months later, he returned and asked the students if they'd understood the material. A young girl raised her hand. 'Other than the fact that improper replication of the DNA molecule causes genetic disease,' she said, 'we've understood nothing.'

In fact, this was not quite the case. When Mitra tested them, scores averaged around 30 percent. From 0 percent to 30 percent in two months with no formal instruction was a fairly remarkable result, but still not good enough to pass a standard exam.

So Mitra brought in help. He recruited a slightly older girl from the village to serve as a tutor. She didn't know any biotechnology, but was told to use the 'grandmother method': just stand behind the kids and provide encouragement. 'Wow, that's cool, that's fantastic, show me something else!' Two months later, Mitra came back. This time, when tested, average scores had jumped to 50 percent, which was the same average as high-school kids studying bio-tech at the best schools in New Delhi.

"Next Mitra started refining the method. He began installing computer terminals in schools. Rather than giving students a broad subject to learn—for example, biotechnology—he started asking directed questions such as 'Was World War II good or bad?' The students could use every available resource to answer the question, but schools were asked to restrict the number of Internet portals to one per every four students because, as Matt Ridley wrote in the Wall Street Journal, 'one child in front of a computer learns little; four discussing and debating learn a lot.' When they were tested on the subject matter afterward (without use of the computer), the mean score was 76 percent. That's pretty impressive on its own, but the question arose as to the real depth of learning. So Mitra came back two months later, retested the students, and got the exact same results. This wasn't just deep learning, this was an unprecedented retention of information. ...

"Taken together, this work reverses a bevy of educational practices. Instead of top-down instruction, [these 'self-organized learning environments'] are bottom up. Instead of making students learn on

their own, this work is collaborative. Instead of a formal in-school setting for instruction, the Hole-in-the-Wall method relies on a playground-like environment. Most importantly, minimally invasive education doesn't require teachers. Currently there's a projected global shortage of 18 million teachers over the next decade."

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Author: Peter H. Diamandis and Steven Kotler

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## **Come the Revolution**

By [THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN](#) NYT

Palo Alto, Calif.

Andrew Ng is an associate professor of computer science at Stanford, and he has a rather charming way of explaining how the new interactive online education company that he cofounded, Coursera, hopes to revolutionize higher education by allowing students from all over the world to not only hear his lectures, but to do homework assignments, be graded, receive a certificate for completing the course and use that to get a better job or gain admission to a better school.

"I normally teach 400 students," Ng explained, but last semester he taught 100,000 in an online course on machine learning. "To reach that many students before," he said, "I would have had to teach my normal Stanford class for 250 years."

Welcome to the college education revolution. Big breakthroughs happen when what is suddenly possible meets what is desperately necessary. The costs of getting a college degree have been rising faster than those of health care, so the need to provide low-cost, quality higher education is more acute than ever. At the same time, in a knowledge economy, getting a higher-education degree is more vital than ever. And thanks to the spread of high-speed wireless technology, high-speed Internet, smartphones, Facebook, the cloud and tablet computers, the world has gone from connected to hyperconnected in just seven years. Finally, a generation that has grown up on these technologies is increasingly comfortable learning and interacting with professors through online platforms.

The combination of all these factors gave birth to Coursera.org, which launched on April 18, with the backing of Silicon Valley venture funds, as my colleague John Markoff first reported.

Private companies, like Phoenix, have been offering online degrees for a fee for years. And schools like M.I.T. and Stanford have been offering lectures for free online. Coursera is the next step: building an interactive platform that will allow the best schools in the world to not only offer a wide range of free course lectures online, but also a system of testing, grading, student-to-student help and awarding certificates of completion of a course for under \$100. (Sounds like a good deal. Tuition at the real-life Stanford is over \$40,000 a year.) Coursera is starting with 40

courses online — from computing to the humanities — offered by professors from Stanford, Princeton, Michigan and the University of Pennsylvania.

“The universities produce and own the content, and we are the platform that hosts and streams it,” explained Daphne Koller, a Stanford computer science professor who founded Coursera with Ng after seeing tens of thousands of students following their free Stanford lectures online. “We will also be working with employers to connect students — only with their consent — with job opportunities that are appropriate to their newly acquired skills. So, for instance, a biomedical company looking for someone with programming and computational biology skills might ask us for students who did well in our courses on cloud computing and genomics. It is great for employers and employees — and it enables someone with a less traditional education to get the credentials to open up these opportunities.”

M.I.T., Harvard and private companies, like Udacity, are creating similar platforms. In five years this will be a huge industry.

While the lectures are in English, students have been forming study groups in their own countries to help one another. The biggest enrollments are from the United States, Britain, Russia, India and Brazil. “One Iranian student e-mailed to say he found a way to download the class videos and was burning them onto CDs and circulating them,” Ng said last Thursday. “We just broke a million enrollments.”

To make learning easier, Coursera chops up its lectures into short segments and offers online quizzes, which can be auto-graded, to cover each new idea. It operates on the honor system but is building tools to reduce cheating.

In each course, students post questions in an online forum for all to see and then vote questions and answers up and down. “So the most helpful questions bubble to the top and the bad ones get voted down,” Ng said. “With 100,000 students, you can log every single question. It is a huge data mine.” Also, if a student has a question about that day’s lecture and it’s morning in Cairo but 3 a.m. at Stanford, no problem. “There is always someone up somewhere to answer your question” after you post it, he said. The median response time is 22 minutes.

These top-quality learning platforms could enable budget-strained community colleges in America to “flip” their classrooms. That is, download the world’s best lecturers on any subject and let their own professors concentrate on working face-to-face with students. Says Koller: “It will allow people who lack access to world-class learning — because of financial, geographic or time constraints — to have an opportunity to make a better life for themselves and their families.”

When you consider how many problems around the world are attributable to the lack of education, that is very good news. Let the revolution begin.

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## **[Japan's Former Leader Condemns Nuclear Power](#)**

By MARTIN FACKLER

Naoto Kan, the prime minister during last year's nuclear crisis, testified before a parliamentary inquiry that the country should discard nuclear power.

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We are pleased to announce that a private funder has designated support for FIVE partial scholarships of \$500 each, for public school K-12 educators, to attend **CWI's Summer WEST Institute on Service-Learning**. CWI's Summer WEST Institute will be held in Los Angeles the week of July 30th through August 3rd, 2012. (additional event information below)

These FIVE scholarships will be awarded on a first come basis. They require online registration, with the balance of tuition (\$789) being paid by Friday, June 8th. (Purchase orders are accepted.) For additional information Please contact us at: [info@communityworksinstitute.org](mailto:info@communityworksinstitute.org)

To access scholarships and register go to: <http://cwiregistration.memberlodge.org> For registration type choose: Public K-12 Scholarship Limited. Use the special code: "cwi-public-ed" You will then be directed through the registration process.

PLEASE NOTE: Please be certain that you will be able to attend prior to registering and that the balance of tuition (\$789) will be paid by Friday, June 8th.

Additional information on CWI's Summer WEST Institute on Service-Learning is below.

Best Regards, Joe Brooks, CWI [jbrooks@communityworksinstitute.org](mailto:jbrooks@communityworksinstitute.org)

### **Place as the Context, Service-Learning as the Strategy,**

Sustainable Communities as the Goal

Community Works Institute (CWI) and partners present C Venice Beach WI's Summer WEST Institute on Service-Learning

July 30-August 3, 2012 at Loyola Marymount University Los Angeles, California  
register online | more information tel: 909-480-3966 | email: [info@communityworksinstitute.org](mailto:info@communityworksinstitute.org)

TRAINING CURRICULUM & PROGRAM PLANNING REFLECTION INSPIRATION CONNECTIONS

Join with colleagues from across North America and beyond, working to embrace service-learning and sustainability within their teaching practice. CWI Summer WEST takes place in a beautiful retreat like setting, adjacent to one of the world's most vibrant urban settings. This is a premier international event.

July 30-August 3, 2012 at Loyola Marymount University Los Angeles, California  
register online | more information tel: 909-480-3966 | email: [info@communityworksinstitute.org](mailto:info@communityworksinstitute.org)

Register Now, Space is Limited

More information is available at: [www.communityworksinstitute.org](http://www.communityworksinstitute.org)

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## **Online retailer looks to harness consumer loyalty to nonprofits**

John Seelmeyer, 5/28/2012

It's My Community Store LLC doesn't have much of a brand identity of its own yet.

Instead the young company headquartered in Sparks relies on the strong feelings that consumers have for their favorite charities, nonprofits and schools to help build the online retailer of technology, school and office supplies.

Jenifer Rose, a veteran of two decades in the technology and office-supplies business in northern Nevada, put together the business. On the face, It's My Community Store looks simple.

When consumers and business managers place an order on its Web site, [itsmycommunitystore.com](http://itsmycommunitystore.com), they are asked to choose a participating charitable organization that will receive an amount equal to as much 10 percent of the purchase amount.

By last week, about a dozen nonprofits in northern Nevada had signed up. The amount donated by It's My Community Store ranges from a low of 5 percent of the purchase price to the top of 10 percent.

Shoppers eager to help their favorite charitable cause or school are likely to spread the word about It's My Community Store to friends and family across the country.

The toughest part of developing the business, Rose says, came in selection of inventory.

Items need to appeal to a broad cross-section of people who are involved in nonprofits — everyone from school children to executives of industry associations — at the same time that the merchandise carries sufficient margins to allow It's My Community Store to peel off 5 or 10 percent of the revenues.

At the same time, Rose says the company's prices can't stray above those of competitors in an industry in which pens, binders and cell-phone cases generally are commodity items.

That demands close control of costs — starting with the founder's salary. "I need to make a comfortable living, but I don't need to be dripping in diamonds and furs," Rose says.

In the five years that Rose has been developing the business model, it's shifted in response to the desires of the nonprofits that provide much of its marketing muscle.

School officials who saw early versions of It's My Community Store, for instance, liked the idea well enough that they asked Rose to expand beyond simple listings of classroom supplies.

The company now is developing software that will allow parents to go to the site, click on the participating school and the grade attended by their child, get a recommended list of school supplies, revise it as necessary and place the order.

No more trips to the crowded school-supply section of a retailer, and the school will collect up to 10 percent of the sale.

As It's My Community Store rolls into new markets, it provides free marketing campaigns for nonprofits that choose to participate. The nonprofits, in turn, send flyers home to school parents or enlist their dedicated volunteers in the cause.

Starting from its base in northern Nevada, the company now is aligned with nonprofits in Idaho and California as well. A team of seven independent sales representatives works with the headquarters staff of five to open additional markets nationwide.

"We're scrambling to keep up," Rose says. "The response we have received has been amazing."

It's My Community Store doesn't operate its own fulfillment centers, but instead works with manufacturers and their distributors to ship directly to consumers.

And while Rose works 15-hour days to shape the company, she finds that the company and its work with nonprofits and schools is shaping her as well. "At first this was about creating a new business," she says. "This is not a a business for me any more. It's become a mission."

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### **[\\$2.9M deal gives species safe habitat near Salton Sea](#)**

Desert Ranch parcels near Salton Sea previously slated for development  
Keith Matheny, Desert Sun

More than 2,100 acres of land along the Santa Rosa Mountains once owned by timber billionaire and former Coachella Valley resident Tim Blixseth will now be preserved as open habitat for Peninsular bighorn sheep and other species.

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### **Winnemem Wintu Tribe gasps for air; members confront feds on ceremony, recognition**

[Joe Szydowski](#), Record Searchlight

**[LAKE SHASTA](#)** — David Martinez sits next to his trailer, looking through the evergreen pines at the placid emerald waters of the -McCloud River Arm of Lake Shasta.

"Imagine this is your life. Your father works in a timber mill. All you know is living in this area," he said.

For his mother and aunt, that was life — until they were taken to a school for American Indians, where they were beaten for speaking their native tongue.

“It’s like getting sent to juvenile hall for five years, where you don’t speak the language,” he said.

Martinez is a Winnemem Wintu American Indian. Being sent to the school was an attempt to drive the Indian out of the men in a fight that began with hunting Indians and then their children.

It’s the legacy of many broken promises and shattered dreams during the past 150 years that lie beneath the peaceful lake waters designed to drive out the American Indian culture, Martinez said.

It’s a legacy that, he and others say, has ripples today.

### **Lake gathering**

Martinez and around 60 others, many members of the small tribe, had gathered at a campsite near the McCloud Bridge. They want the U.S. Forest Service to shut down approximately 400 yards of the shoreline and adjacent lake so the Winnemem can hold a coming-of-age ceremony for their next chief, Marisa Sisk.

However, the Forest Service initially had refused more than a voluntary closure, essentially asking boaters to leave the Winnemem alone for their rite.

That prompted Caleen Sisk, leader of the Winnemem, to organize and practice a blockade this weekend at their sacred site: to keep any boaters from disturbing the ceremony with loud music, nudity and ethnic slurs, which had happened before. They say this year is their last chance to perform the coming-of-age ceremony using sacred rocks and routes, some of which lie submerged by the lake’s waters.

“We’re standing up,” she said.

John Hyle, spokesman for the U.S. Forest Service, said the regional office became aware of the tribe’s request only in mid-April.

“We’re looking at everything we possibly can,” he said. He declined to elaborate. “I don’t want to give any idea (as to what) may or may not be feasible. We understand their concerns.”

The Forest Service has maintained that it could shut down the area for religious ceremonies if the Winnemem were listed with the Bureau of Indian Affairs as an actual tribe. But because the tribe isn’t listed, federal law doesn’t allow the organization to treat them as a real tribe.

The federal government has recognized the tribe several times in the past, Sisk said. She said her tribe signed the Cottonwood Treaty of 1851. It also agreed to cede its land for the construction of Shasta Dam, which flooded many Winnemem sacred sites.

The tribe sued the Bureau of Indian Affairs for land that it had promised to the Winnemem, Sisk said, but had never been received.



After the tribe won, Martinez received a letter from the bureau, along with a \$500 check, that described Martinez as a “California Indian.”

“Every time we turn around: Now you’re Indians; now you’re not,” she said.

Virgil Akins, agency superintendent for the bureau in Redding, referred questions to Amy Dutschke, regional director in Sacramento. She did not return a call for comment.

### **Out of the mountains**

The Winnemem Wintu had lived for thousands of years on the banks of the McCloud River. They emerged from Mt. Shasta and settled along the waters that snaked between the mountains, according to their creation story.

“We went down the rivershed to take care of that,” Sisk said of the Winnemem, which means middle water people. “When our babies are born, they’re born in water.”

Estimates put their original population at around 14,000. By 1900, fewer than 400 were left.

The first California law regarding American Indians in California paid settlers for killing Indians, said Cindy La Marr, director of the Capitol Area Indian Resources Inc.

“There was a push to take away language, take away religious or spiritual beliefs,” she said. “And if Indian tribes couldn’t be decimated by loss of land and food sources, they took away the final most important part of who they are as people: the spiritual belief.”

The government set up boarding schools and forced many Indian children to move miles away to academies where they could only speak English, said La Marr, a Pit River Indian from Susanville.

Martinez’s mother fled to the Bay Area with him and his siblings — she didn’t want them to go to those institutions.

But she would take him back up to the north state, where his aunt lived, so she could teach him the Winnemem ways.

La Marr’s parents were taken to the boarding schools: Her mother, 4 then, went to one in Susanville, her father, 5, to one in Riverside.

“They were beaten. They weren’t allowed to go home during the summer. They had to learn how to become matrons and farmers, they were only allowed to speak English,” she said.

### **The dam**

According to the Winnemem creation story, the salmon saved mankind, Martinez said. They gave man his “voice.”

The Winnemem haven’t seen the salmon travel up their river in 70 years, Sisk said.

The flooding submerged many sacred sites, Martinez said.

Sawel Cave was a chamber for the Winnemem's medicine and doctors.

"Now for a couple bucks you can rent the key and go spelunking," he said. "Those caverns should not be open to anyone."

He said his aunt watched as workers tried to move the Winnemem cemetery.

"They broke the elbows, the knees off of people so they could fit in the box," he said. "Here's your 2 by 2 box. Go bury it."

But by 1985 the bureau cut off the Winnemem's support: they no longer received benefits from the federal government, such as college funds or health care.

Martinez left Shasta College and his dream of being a Forest Service worker, and instead went back to his work as a mechanic.

He said he didn't know what he would have done had he not had the tribal insurance when he was diagnosed with bladder cancer.

Sisk said the tribe's frustration stems from the vacillating federal government, which seems to recognize a tribe then ignore that recognition. It had recognized the Winnemem as Indians for years — then cut them off.

She said the Tolowa, in Crescent City, had been applying for years. The bureau recently denied them, leaving them few options.

"What if they lose their appeal?" she said. "They just applied themselves out of existence."

They had never received any replacement land for the acreage lost to Lake Shasta, just a settlement in the courts, Martinez said. His aunt, he said, would take him up and down the coast pointing out sacred sites and former villages buried under dirt or water.

"She cursed that dam," he said.

### **War dance**

On Saturday, the Winnemem pack of floats, kayaks and boats moved aside for a pair of boats, one belonging to the Forest Service.

Jack Krogstan, with the Forest Service, said to Sisk that the Winnemem had to take down a sign they'd hung by rope over the water, marking it closed.

She obliged.

The war dance is a ceremony used as a last-resort appeal by the Winnemem for divine guidance.

Tony Sivlaggio said he had come to support the Winnemem, even though he wasn't an Indian. He said he'd overheard one person manning a Coast Guard Auxiliary boat had told a boater to pass through the Winnemem flotilla.

"The Coast Guard guys said don't talk to them and go on through," said Sivlaggio, 43. "They're encouraging conflict. This is the classic case of the federal government creating conflict with the indigenous people."

Krogstan said he didn't know anything about the Coast Guard Auxiliary boaters, but said he'd relay the tribe's message to them.

The tribe has butted heads with the Forest Service during the past few years on a number of issues. The Forest Service opened trails leading to Dekkas, a sacred site near the McCloud bridge in 2005. The Forest Service also "accidentally" cut through several old sacred plants while trimming back brush, saying workers got off course because the wind had blown away ribbons marking the area to be cut.

In 2009 the Winnemem filed a complaint against several federal agencies, including the Forest Service, which is in the courts.

Sisk said she sees the rite of passage as a tremor of an upcoming fight — raising Shasta Dam. She said the full 19 feet would submerge most of the sacred sites. She said the federal agencies are averse to granting any type of recognition to the Winnemem because a registered tribe would have considerable influence over the discussion.

But the Winnemem Wintu will be given the same weight as any other public individual, said Pete Lucero, public affairs officer for the mid-Pacific region.

The proposal to raise the dam, he said, is still in the early stages and may be necessary to stave off increased water demand and decreasing supply.

For Martinez, his aunt's lessons about the river and the dam still ring true.

"This is it. The two sisters. The haunted mountain, the rocks, the water. This is all tied together," he said.

"We'd lose the last connection of who we are. We'd be gone."

for pics and more: <http://www.redding.com/news/2012/may/26/winnemem-wintu-tribe-gasps-air-members-confront-fe/> See all 37 photos at full size

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