

Rainy Monday: A Day in the Life of an e-Academic

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Abstract

e-Academics - fact or fiction? How wonderful would be a day in the life of an e-academic? Or horrible? Days full of e-lectures to e-students and e-meetings with e-bosses and e-teachers. Coming back home to your e-family. Present or future? Perhaps very soon... Perhaps on the next rainy Monday!

Keywords

E-Education

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Morning. It's gloomy, cold and raining - a really awful day to start the week. "Bye daddy", the door slammed. My daughter has just left for school. Why does she always have to leave such a mess behind? Do all high school kids do that? I don't envy those parents who have to work from home. I glance at the clock. Well, it's time to go to the Uni. I am still finishing my breakfast - really slow now. Munch, munch, munch. The morning TV show is dreary. To make it worse, my email insists on taking over the whole TV screen. There is some urgent mail sitting in the mailbox. I have to struggle with my remote control to get rid of "urgent mail" notices every few minutes! What an idiot decided to integrate TV with the Internet? You can't even have quiet breakfast. Munch, munch, munch. I finish, and then pick up my bag, papers and toys - go!

I walk to my nearest work centre. John from NEC and Mary from IBM are already there. They must be coming to work very very early. No pity, they've got what they wanted taking a job with a big mob! I wave to them, they smile and I sneak into my University office. My PC monitor looks at me and frowns, there is no smile this morning. "You are late again, Jonathan will not like it," it says and flicks the Scheduler on, probably to annoy me even more. The scheduler shows a long list of student bookings, lectures and meetings. I remember they said that this would be a meetingless office, so much for honesty!

I sit. The first three students are already waiting on the screen. Clearly they are not happy with my lateness. "I know, I know, I had this important meeting with the NEC and IBM people next door," I lie. I catch a glimpse of understanding in their eyes. "In any case, I wanted to talk with the three of you together," I lie again. I can see two other students want to videoconference with me as well. "I though we could also invite some more students to our discussion", I add. No reaction. "Five birds with one shot," I smile. The meeting goes on with the lightning speed. I give them some prac and reading material. Halfway through, I see with the corner of my eye, that my lecture auto-started. Wow, 6500 students, what an attendance. Lectures on demand are the best thing since sliced bread! "No more questions?" I ask the five in front of me. And before they could answer, "well, in this case, I'll see you next week", I say and with a sweep of my palm I close their windows. I chuckle! I glance at my lecture control window - 431 questions pending, my tutors will be busy. The lecture goes on. It's time for coffee.

In the staff room I greet Paul from the competing university. "I've seen your lecture on human-to-human interfaces," he says. "Not bad, do you mind if I grab a few frames for my students?", he queries. "Feel free, the more you take, the more brownie points I get!", I reply. The times of academic competition are long over. The lecture material is now distributed on a free-to-cut-and-paste basis. We talk about a joint project with NEC and IBM. We donate the students. They will supervise and assess them. We get some research points. Clever! I look at the microwave oven, my email light is flashing again. Why did they have to put the comms and Java on all appliances? Do I really have to know I've got unread email, everywhere I go? Lucky, I do not have to wear an ear-top. It took me five years to convince the bureaucrats that I have a medical ear-condition, which prevents me from using one. Well, I'd better go and check the wretched mailbox before the Monday staff meeting. I am back at my office. The lecture is finished - good ratings, the feedback is so-so. The Far East University students complained that half of my lecture was missing. Well, it is their censorship problem, isn't it? I should probably add a topic on human-through-censor interfaces - that will keep the big brother happy.

Lunch. Munch, munch, munch. The staff video meeting is in progress. The usual faces, old discussions, reused plans. Jonathan, our head of department, has forgotten to switch his video off. He sits with his back to the camera and reads a book. The meeting-chairman-program is doing all the work. Video start, video stop, video start, video stop, animate his mouth, synthesise his voice. You would not say he is actually wagging the meeting and reading a book! I have to spend some of my research money and buy the meeting-attendee-package, I am sure it will do the trick! I suspect some of the people in the department have already been using it. Perhaps that is why Lance, our deputy head, hasn't spoken for the last two years at any of the meetings. Is he real or is he only a 3D simulation? Finished...

Now, I have some time for research. I launch my research assistant program and start up a few research wizards. The times of real research people are over. They even limit the number of wizard licenses. The economy is going down the drain! The assistants report my research progress to day. I distribute some work and quit! I finish the paper on the freedom from email communication and then I send it for a review to a number of web conferences. It is time for another coffee. When I come back, the paper has been accepted and already presented at three conferences. Some guys even included it in their book as a chapter. Good, I may even reach my publishing targets this year!

I yawn - time to go home! I pack up my bag. John from NEC and Mary from IBM are still in their offices. They must be leaving very very late. No pity, they've got what they wanted taking a job with a big mob! I wave my hand at them and smile. They try to smile too. Tomorrow, I'll try my new no-forward mailbox assistant. Apparently it stops all email at work! That will be really something...

Finally I am back home. "Aim, kill, dead" - my son greets me with his laser blazer. "Hi killer", I must have another serious talk with him. He is only in kindergarten, but already uncontrollable, he even puts viruses in his teacher's picture books. The TV's at full blast! "Daddy?", my daughter's head does not even turn, her eyes are glued to the screen, not even a blink. "Hi honey", I reply. I have to do something about this TV habit of hers and get rid of the stupid box. But then again I can't live without the fridge the TV comes with, can I?

The bloody integrators!