

## [WWW.CYBERCAREERS.ORG](http://WWW.CYBERCAREERS.ORG): CAREER EDUCATION RESOURCES FOR EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS

Peter Saflund<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract** <sup>3/4</sup> *Abstract-What are the best tools for introducing students to the wide world of IT? How do you develop and deliver a course or class on IT career education? What resources can students use to take a self-guided tour of the careers in IT?*

*In the presentation, Peter Saflund, Associate Director of the National Workforce Center for Emerging Technologies (NWCET) will introduce the audience to [www.cybercareers.org](http://www.cybercareers.org). This career education website features tools and information for both educators and students. On this website, teachers will find lesson plans and ideas for activities. Students can learn how to prepare for a career in the world of IT, what salaries to expect, and how to best match their interests and personalities to careers in IT.*

### THE CYBERCAREERS STORY

Despite the recent slowdown in the economy and the much publicized failure of dot.com companies, the IT industry continues to grow and the IT workforce shortage increases every day. Despite extensive advancements in addressing the nation's need for qualified IT technicians, U.S. educational institutions continue to lag in meeting this need. According to a recent study from the Information Technology Association of America's (ITAA), "While the current economic slowdown has diminished demand, such demand for new talent persists. Indeed, this new study by the Information Technology Association of America (ITAA) finds a national IT workforce of 10.4 million. Add to this total an additional 900,000 workers that companies say they hope to hire this year. Of this total, 425,000 positions will go unfilled because of a lack of applicants with the requisite technical and non-technical skills."<sup>1</sup>

To address this growing need and to encourage women and minorities to consider IT careers, the NWCET began an ambitious project entitled *CyberCareers for the Net Generation*. The NWCET received grants from the National Science Foundation, the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, Inc (IEEE), the IEEE Computer Society, and the Technology Access Foundation to fund this project in 1998.

To design a career education video for students, the NWCET conducted three sets of nation-wide focus groups with middle and high school students, teachers, counselors,

and parents. The focus groups covered a broad range of socio-economic and ethnic groups. The resulting data indicated two important findings: 1) students need a compelling, fast-paced video to introduce them to the wide-diversity of opportunities in IT that suit students with a variety of different interests and (2) teachers and counselors need classroom materials that enable them to serve as competent guides for their students. To serve the needs of both students and educators, the NWCET developed [www.cybercareers.org](http://www.cybercareers.org)

The *CyberCareers* video focuses on emphasizing the appeal of IT and projecting a positive image of IT careers like technical writing, programming, networking, and web-authoring/multimedia. For teachers, [www.cybercareers.org](http://www.cybercareers.org), includes lesson plans, learning activities, student worksheets, suggested evaluations and tips on finding and using local resources. The website also serves students. Students can find a comprehensive orientation to IT careers, familiarize themselves with the IT virtual job finder, take a quiz to help find the ideal IT job, get a glimpse in to the lives of IT professionals, and take a tour of IT work conducted by recent graduates.

In September 1999, the NWCET received a second grant from the National Science Foundation to fund the development of pre-service and in-service teacher training materials, a website to help teachers become quickly able to guide students in IT career exploration, and teacher preparation workshops. This companion product to the video gives teachers and counselors the tools they need to quickly educate themselves about emerging IT careers and to then pass on that information to their students using the *CyberCareers* student materials.

The centerpiece of the *CyberCareers* project is the classroom video that profiles a diverse range of IT professionals at companies across the US. The video was filmed on location at Microsoft Corporation, REI, Loudeye Technologies, Doubleclick, Merck and Expedia Inc.

### REFERENCES

[1] Information Technology Association of America (ITAA). *When Can You Start? Building Better Information Technology Skills and Careers*. April 2001. Executive Summary.

<sup>1</sup> Peter Saflund, National Workforce Center for Emerging Technologies, 3000 Landerholm Circle SE, N258. Bellevue, WA 98007 [psaflund@bcc.ctc.edu](mailto:psaflund@bcc.ctc.edu)