

Learning in Virtual Space

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Abstract: Virtual reality provides an unprecedented way to educate and train people of all ages. The ‘magic dust’ of VR is that it awakens and unlocks spatial memory by putting a ‘place’ inside of people by putting people into virtual places. Prof. Furness will discuss the progress of developing virtual reality technology and associated education and training applications with a look to how the technology can ultimately lead to a learning living room.

Bio: Tom Furness is an amalgam of Professor, Inventor and Entrepreneur in a professional career that spans 52 years. In addition to his contributions in photonics, electro-optics, human interface technology, he is an original pioneer of virtual and augmented reality technology and widely known as the ‘grandfather’ of virtual reality. A former Air Force officer and developer of virtual interfaces for military aircraft, Tom is currently a professor of Industrial and Systems Engineering with adjunct professorships in Electrical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering and Human Centered Design and Engineering at the University of Washington (UW), Seattle, Washington, USA. At UW he teaches courses in user interface design, virtual interface technology and technology-based entrepreneurship. Tom is the founder of the family of Human Interface Technology Laboratories at the University of Washington, Christchurch, New Zealand and Tasmania, Australia. He is the founder and chairman of the Virtual World Society, a non-profit for extending virtual reality as a learning system for families and other humanitarian applications. Tom and his students/colleagues have spun off 27 companies with an aggregate market capitalization of ~\$10B that have formed the core of the VR/AR industry. He is a Fellow of the IEEE.