

## Simulations and the Future of Learning: An Innovative (and Perhaps Revolutionary) Approach to e-Learning (Book Review)

### **Reviewer:**

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### **Textbook Details:**

Simulations and the Future of Learning: An Innovative (and Perhaps Revolutionary) Approach to e-Learning

Clark Aldrich

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The Clark Aldrich's book: "Simulations and the Future of Learning : An Innovative (and Perhaps Revolutionary) Approach to e-Learning" is about new educational ways that are tightly connected to computer games and simulations. Clark Aldrich has created a detailed study how to design and realize an e-learning simulation that is both educative and similar to a modern computer game.

The book describes the author's new software package, called "The Virtual Leader". Although it does not seem so at the first glance (because of the rather formal cover design), this book attracts you like a good novel and as you start to read it then you read it every evening till you are through. In the book after the description of his earlier professional functions the author describes his way of thinking (and of course the contributions of his working team) that led him to the idea and the project described in the book. This is especially interesting for us, who are working on similar topics. You can compare his experience with your own and often they are strikingly similar in spite of the fact that we live in different parts of the world.

After you have nearly expected that such a demanding and sophisticated project like the Virtual Leader would terminate unfinished, you are almost surprised to see at the end that the work has been done successfully and the Virtual Leader now lives and tries to get more world attention. Here are described the difficulties one meets when he presents something really new. Many of us tend to accept well known things we are familiar with, but if there is really something definitely new, it often gets rejected by us at the first glance. One instantly thinks here of great music composers or other artists that were in their time much less popular as nowadays (at that time there were no computer simulation programs so I couldn't mention them). The author says: "there is needed a lot of hand holding" - before his Virtual leader gets the attention it deserves.

The Virtual leader is a simulation computer "game" that deals with virtual meetings. I have only read the book and I had not have the opportunity to test the program itself – when I do, there comes another review... There are several persons modeled in the virtual reality worlds that show a couple of meeting places and you can interact with the actors during the game. The persons are employees of different ranks and functions and they were very carefully animated in order not only to talk, but to show also their body language. After you have finished the game session the program tells you how successful you were in this "community".

In order to produce such a simulation, there was needed to develop a whole new philosophy and know- how about the relations among the people. So this book is also in its first third a very interesting and educative description of the laws that govern the social relations in a company. When you want to understand some process, then the final step of understanding is to make a computer simulation about it. If it works, then – congratulations – you really understand the topics! Because computer algorithms are unforgiving – they let you no freedom. The opinions of a philosopher or social scientist in his book remain his opinions, but if such opinions are followed by the related computer simulation, like it is the case in this book, then the opinions get a very convincing proof of the theories.

There is a lot of very straightforward and detailed descriptions of the logical structure of the program package. Very nice, but it I missed here also some technical descriptions – what were the software tools used, how were technically optimized difficult scenes etc. This would give to these chapters more weight and interest. And finally, I found in the book no internet links to the product the book tells about. I think that this was deliberately omitted and if one performs a simple web search, he soon finds it.

Summary: If you are interested in modern ways of computer aided education, or if you just want to have some interesting reading about somebody who has made a demanding software project, then this is the book for you!