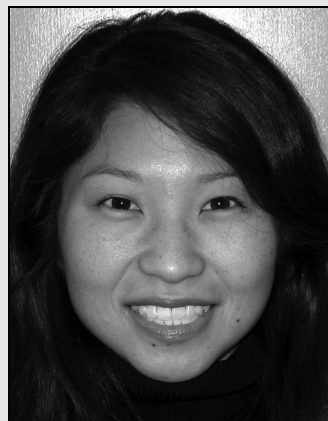


An Interview With Evgeny Patarakin

Kimberly Kon

The tools for training have shifted significantly in the past several years, changing the way training is conducted on a global scale. New training environments have adapted to a more technology-oriented society and trainers have found ways to use the technology to connect people and facilitate collaboration. To gain some insight into the changes that are taking place, I conducted an e-mail interview with Evgeny Patarakin, an associate professor at Nizhny Novgorod Pedagogical University. Patarakin has explored training in collaborative online environments, and he currently teaches courses on collaborative actions in the network, social

services in pedagogical practice, building of professional network communities, multi-agent models in science education, and making websites. He also works on creating e-learning media in collaborative and interactive software including Moodle, MediaWiki, and elgg. In addition to his teaching appointment, Patarakin serves as head of the Learning Communication Laboratory (Uchcom), Program System Institute Russian Academy of Science. His experience with Uchcom has included coordinating the Summer School Network, teaching classes on Internet technology at elementary schools, and organizing the IMUTE, RAT-1, and RAT-2 international projects between arts, sciences, and education.



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TRAINING HIGHLIGHTS

When asked about formative moments in his training experience, Patarakin described his role as coordinator for the educational network, Letopsi.ru, because Letopsi is a huge project with more than 30,000 participants. He also referred to his experience organizing a Russian branch of the Scratch project, which originally started as a collaboration between the Life-long Kindergarten research group at the MIT Media Lab and the KIDS research group at the UCLA Graduate School of Education & Information Studies. Scratch is a new programming language that makes it easy for kids to create interactive media and share their creations on the web. Patarakin has continued his involve-

ment with Scratch and played an active role in a One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) deployment project in Russia using Scratch. In August 2008, Patarakin, along with a team of professors from his university, participated in a summer camp where they taught teachers and students to use the XO computers. In particular, Patarakin led training on how to use Scratch and LegoLogo. Examples of the students' animated cartoons can be seen on the web at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EYFBoK45fLc>

REFLECTIONS ON TRAINING

As one who has been in the field of training for many years, Patarakin has seen and experienced the evolution of training and its growing integration of technology. One role of technology in training that is evident to him is the "wiki approach" to collaboration, which he utilizes to address a challenge he has often faced in training situations: how to change our individual behavior. Patarakin believes the wiki approach dramatically changes training as we all accept new rules of behavior inside the wikis. He explains that the participants respond to the difference between Power-

Point and wiki ideology. He says, "It is very unusual for them that we can share and collaborate with each other and our students."

Alongside collaboration, technology plays another role in training as a means of collecting and combining resources. Patarakin explained that another challenge in training is "how to collect a huge diversity of projects in one media." One way he has addressed this issue is through the use of MediaWiki, a free web-based software application that is used to run and manage wikis.

Increased access to and effective use of technology has influenced the evolution of training over the last decade. Patarakin commented that he has seen more collaborative activities and more connected with the Internet, as evidenced by the various training projects using wikis, online communities, and other methods of sharing works and ideas. "We can use more complex media—not only text and images, but video and programming blocks." On the evolution of training in the foreseeable future, Patarakin said, "I think that this trend of complexity and richness of our collaboration will be increased in the next few years."

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