ParkBench Public-Access Web Kiosks

ParkBench kiosks address the problem of elitism in cyberspace. The Internet's information and connectivity resources seem to promise universal access. Our aim is to reach out to those who lack the prerequisites for getting online.

Worldwide, it has become obvious how technology widens the gap between haves and have-nots. From our experience introducing disadvantaged students to digital graphics, audio, and Web authoring programs, we are convinced of technology's power to unlock creativity and enhance self esteem. The Internet reflects a dynamic portrait of its creators. If it is to evolve to represent our global culture, we all have a responsibility: public art must become the public's art.

ParkBench kiosks are currently under development at 14 public schools, where we are training teachers and students in visual and Web literacy. Their first project is to create a journal of Visual Poetry. These artworks will serve as the catalyst for discussion among sites. The kiosks, located in school libraries and computer labs, will be open at selected times to family, friends, and other community members. Students will serve as turnkey instructors, passing on their own knowledge. We will complement this network with kiosks at other accessible sites in New York, including museums, libraries, public atriums, and transit stations. Student-teachers will serve as hosts at these kiosks, introducing the public to Web literacy, showing their work, and demonstrating their knowledge to a public beyond their own communities.

Alice Sat Here
We collaborated with a team of New York University computer scientists and engineers to equip a wheelchair with a wireless telerobotic camera. The result, Alice Sat Here, was shown in November 1995 in CODE, at Soho's Ricco/Maresca Gallery. With gallery visitors steering Alice's Throne and remote participants controlling camera direction, Alice Sat Here was a passage between the physical world and cyberspace. Participants converged from Web-side and street-side, explored parallel spaces separated by glass, and peered through the membrane at each other's representations.

Design Engineer Fred Hansen designed and manufactured LabCam's Spherical Pointing Motor. When we began experimenting with Richard S. Wallace's telerobotic camera in 1994, it was one of the first on the Web, and it inspired our performance series. Fred Hansen designed and manufactured LabCam's Spherical Pointing Motor.