



# Rensselaer

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS AND  
EXTERNAL RELATIONS

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## **The Future of the Web: An Old-Fashioned Debate With a Social Media Twist**

*Debate is part of celebration to launch Tetherless World Constellation at Rensselaer*

Troy, N.Y. – On June 11, leading authorities on the World Wide Web will gather at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute for an old-fashioned debate with a social media twist. The questions for discussion will be shaped and selected by the collective wisdom of Web users from around the world.

After delivering a keynote address, Tim Berners-Lee, inventor of the Web, will join a panel of experts from academia and industry for a public discussion about the Web's future. The content of the debate will be collaboratively created by Web users, who can submit questions and promote them through a user-based ranking system, similar to the community-based news site Digg. The most popular questions will drive the discussion at the June 11 debate.

The public debate, which will be streamed live via an interactive Webcast, is part of a daylong event to celebrate the launch of the Tetherless World Constellation at Rensselaer — a new academic center devoted to the emerging field of Web Science.

A wide range of issues are up for discussion, from sustaining the usefulness of the current Web to creating a next-generation Semantic Web, as well as the role of politics, education, and sociological factors in the Web's continued evolution. Following introductory remarks by Rensselaer President Shirley Ann Jackson, participants in the panel will be:

- **Tim Berners-Lee**, inventor of the Web and director of the World Wide Web Consortium
- **Wendy Hall**, vice president of the Association for Computing Machinery and senior vice president of the Royal Academy of Engineering
- **Nigel Shadbolt**, former president of the British Computer Society and chief technology officer of Garlik
- **Nova Spivack**, high-tech entrepreneur and founder of Radar Networks
- **Deborah McGuinness**, Web language expert and Rensselaer Constellation Professor of the Tetherless World Constellation
- **James Hendler**, one of the inventors of the Semantic Web and Rensselaer Constellation Professor of the Tetherless World Constellation (moderator)

Members of the public are invited to submit and vote on questions until the day of the debate. During the discussion, viewers will be able to interact with the panelists by submitting follow-up questions and comments in real time. For details about this innovative event and how you can participate in the discussion, go to: <http://tw.rpi.edu/launch>.

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## **The Future of the Web: An Old-Fashioned Debate With a Social Media Twist**

### **Page 2**

Since its inception, the Web has changed the ways people work, play, communicate, collaborate, and educate, according to James Hendler, Constellation Professor of the Tetherless World Constellation at Rensselaer. There is, however, a growing realization among researchers across a number of disciplines that without new research aimed at understanding the current, evolving, and potential Web, opportunities for new and revolutionary capabilities may be missed or delayed.

“If we want to be able to model the Web, if we want to understand the architectural principles that have provided for its growth, and if we want to be sure that it supports the basic social values of trustworthiness, personal control over information, and respect for social boundaries, then we must pursue a research agenda that targets the Web and its use as a primary focus of attention,” Hendler said.

The Tetherless World Constellation will address this emerging area of Web Science, focusing on the Web and its future use. Faculty in the constellation will explore the research and engineering principles that underlie the Web, will enhance the Web’s reach beyond the desktop and laptop computer, and will develop new technologies and languages that expand the capabilities of the Web. They will use powerful scientific and mathematical techniques from many disciplines to explore the modeling of the Web from network- and information-centric views.

“Our goals will include making the next generation Web natural to use while being responsive to the growing variety of policy and social needs, whether in the area of privacy, intellectual property, general compliance, or provenance,” Hendler said. For more information about the Tetherless World Constellation, go to: <http://tw.rpi.edu>.

*[NOTE TO EDITORS: Credentialed reporters and bloggers are invited to participate in a call-in roundtable with the panelists to be held prior to the opening remarks. For details, contact Gabrielle DeMarco at (518) 276-6542 or [demarg@rpi.edu](mailto:demarg@rpi.edu).]*

### **About Rensselaer**

Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, founded in 1824, is the nation’s oldest technological university. The university offers bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral degrees in engineering, the sciences, information technology, architecture, management, and the humanities and social sciences. Institute programs serve undergraduates, graduate students, and working professionals around the world. Rensselaer faculty are known for pre-eminence in research conducted in a wide range of fields, with particular emphasis in biotechnology, nanotechnology, information technology, and the media arts and technology. The Institute is well known for its success in the transfer of technology from the laboratory to the marketplace so that new discoveries and inventions benefit human life, protect the environment, and strengthen economic development.

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