Honored guests:

Good morning. It is a great pleasure to welcome you here today to the Lewy Global Education Technology Forum. My name is Don Steinberg and I’m CEO of World Learning.

I came to this organization four years ago, and, from the first day, one my highest priorities has been to ensure that our School for International Training and our Global Development and Exchange programs are taking full advantage of new technologies, new social innovation, and new ways of thinking as we empower the next generation of global citizens to build peace, prosperity, social justice, and inclusive institutions.

Our program today and tomorrow will address the role of new technologies and innovation in helping us fulfill our educational mission in areas of learning, collaboration, inclusion, and administration. We will ask ourselves tough questions.

- What does it mean for our work in international education, cross-cultural management, conflict transformation, and global development—and that of our partners throughout the education community—that you can now build and send a micro-satellite into space for $57,000?

- How can we take advantage in our distance learning, study abroad, and youth exchange programs of the existence in the world of more than 7 billion advanced digital educational devices—otherwise known as cell phones?

- What uses are there for digital fabrication laboratories, 3-D printers, and Star Trek–like tricorders that can instantaneously diagnose malaria, test the purity of water and medicines, and predict natural disasters like tsunamis and earthquakes?

- How have things changed since techniques like hack-a-thons, datapaloozas, and crowd sourcing have entered our educational toolkit and lexicon?

One of the most successful early cases of crowd sourcing came in the 19th century, when the publishers of the Oxford English Dictionary asked people from around the world to send them English language words and their definitions.

Over the next 70 years, an average of 250 words arrived every day, a total of six million—and the dictionary was born.

Today, produce the right video—people dumping ice buckets over their heads, Taylor Swift shaking it off, or a kitten doing pull-ups—and you can get six million viewers in a single day.

Equally important, the nature of successful educational institutions has changed forever.
Gone are the days when we viewed students as passive recipients of accumulated wisdom, sought to slot them into existing positions in the labor market, and asked them to perform repetitive tasks day after day, year after year.

Today’s most successful institutions cannot be elitist, hierarchical, or repetitive. They must be democratic and innovative meritocracies, where the ability to put a hard problem at the center of the table and draw from our collective experience and skills to address it is more important than individual genius.

At World Learning, this isn’t just part of our mission statement: it’s part of our history and our DNA. Indeed, we at World Learning have lived the concepts of experiential and participatory learning every day for 85 years. The five tenets that have formed the core of our mission since 1932 are ever more relevant in today’s high-tech world.

They are:

- Expect the unexpected.
- Turn a crisis into an adventure.
- Learn to live together by living together.
- Be quick to observe and slow to judge.
- Go to learn and not to teach.

This week’s forum builds on a similar forum held in Washington two years ago, where World Learning looked at the technology we needed to employ in our global development programs.

As a result of that forum, we learned how to more effectively introduce high school kids in Ethiopia to the advantages of mobile banking, empower Iraqi exchange students to coordinate humanitarian relief work for displaced persons through Facebook, train professors in El Salvador to catch up technologically with their computer-savvy students, and introduce Egyptian high school students to use STEM education to address challenges of urbanization, clean water, and desertification in their country.

It is indeed a brand new world.

Today, we as global citizens have the opportunity, the moral obligation, and even the enlightened self-interest to replicate this result in the SIT education sector and, by so doing, further address the challenges of poverty, illiteracy, disease, and conflict.

The Lewy Tech Forum is designed to inspire and challenge all of us, take us out of our comfort zones, and lay the groundwork for new partnerships to achieve this goal. Many thanks to all of you for your participation here today, and let the fun begin.

It is now my pleasure to introduce the inspiration for today’s work, Cheryl and Glen Lewy. Thank you.