

# Preface

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## E-Learn Las Vegas

Hello and welcome to E-Learn 2008 in Las Vegas, Nevada. When you think about it, the lights, glamour, media, and perpetual aliveness of this city parallels the field of e-learning. E-learning may have only hit the big-time a little over a decade ago, but it is quickly becoming the show to see and recommend to others. When thoughtfully planned and implemented, it is definitely worth the price of admission. For many, it is the shining star that has saved departments, programs, institutions, and organizations. For others, it is a cheap and soon forgotten sideshow. The media acclaim continues to roll in with each new Web-based learning technology that is announced. Thanks to iTunes, YouTube, podcasting, and other Web 2.0 technologies, there are now education celebrities whose images and ideas are shared with and recognizable by millions of people around the planet. It has become quite cool to be an online teacher. As with Las Vegas, the lights never go out on an e-learning class or event. You should all feel quite at home here.

## What a Line-Up!

**AACE is the Place.** We are delighted to have worked with Dr. Gary Marks, CEO of the Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education (AACE), which is coordinating this wonderful conference. With his timely support and coordination, a pallet of amazing speakers, events, and resources was accumulated for the conference program! There are dozens of invited speakers who will enlighten and entertain you about the new directions in e-learning during this five-day event.

**E-Learning Asia Style.** As with this city, the conference, or should we say, pre-conference, starts out with an array of activities for you to select from. In addition to the excellent E-Learn pre-conference tutorials and workshops, this year, E-Learn is trying something new. We all know that e-learning is not restricted to the U.S. or North America. To highlight this fact, we have arranged a special pre-conference symposium related to e-learning in Asia. Did you know that some 70 institutions within Asia are now dedicated to open access to education? And 7 of those are among the 11 largest universities in the world. These gargantuan institutions each now enroll more than 100,000 students, with at least one well over the million mark.

E-learning leaders are coming to the E-Learn pre-conference symposium from East Asian countries such as China, the Philippines, Korea, Taiwan, and Japan. They are also coming from South and Southeast Asia locations including India, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore. We are fortunate to have a dozen education leaders from 12 different countries for the all-day event on Monday November 17th. In addition, many of the pre-conference presenters will offer their unique perspectives during the scheduled conference sessions throughout the week. They will offer the conference a unique perspective.

**The Handbook of E-Learning.** During the conference presentations, invited speaker sessions, and keynote addresses, you will hear about innovations in mobile learning, open educational resources, learning objects, Web 2.0 technologies, online language learning, and participatory learning. If that is not enough, there is a special panel consisting of authors of the new *Handbook of E-Learning*. They promise to cut through the hype of e-learning and illuminate many of the present realities of the field as well as future challenges and possibilities.

- 1. Open Educational Resources.** A key theme among the invited speakers is in the area of open educational resources (OER). This is one of the most significant trends to ever impact education. The world of learning continues to open up. No longer is MIT the sole player in providing free course content online. Now hundreds of universities and educational consortia around the globe are following and extending the lead of MIT. And these initiatives extend beyond higher education settings to K-12 education as well as government, military, and non-profit settings.

Many of our conference presenters have their footprints squarely placed in the OER movement. One of the featured speakers, in fact, has spearheaded efforts to translate MIT course content and resources to traditional and simplified Chinese using his own financial resources, educational connections, and creativity. In his invited address, he will discuss the linkage between the entertainment industry and OER. Another presenter is the first Chief Openness Officer of a new e-book company. He will discuss the opportunities for large scale, collaborative networks that can now form around OER. Among the conference keynotes is an individual from Rice University who was the driving force behind the highly popular and fast-growing repository, Connexions. He will help us understand the historical path of the OER movement as well as its future. Yet another presenter helped push ahead the OER movement to free language learning with resources he spearheaded such as ChinesePod, SpanishPod, EnglishPod, FrenchPod, and most recently, ItalianPod. His efforts help provide free language learning podcasts for hundreds of hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of learners each month.

OER has morphed to the open access movement that might soon become a revolution in learning. The presenters will help us understand the next phase of OER. They will provide interesting stories of how organizations and people deploy such resources and end up using them.

- 2. The Web 2.0 and Participatory Learning.** A second theme across the invited talks and keynotes relates to the participatory learning power of Web 2.0 technologies. You might notice this trend toward learner-generated content when using resources such as Second Life, YouTube, blogs, and wikis, as well as various social networking

technologies. In an ambitious teaching move, one of our invited speakers required her students to do all their work in YouTube. She also posted all of her lectures and class sessions there as well. Her stories of success and failure with YouTube as a course delivery platform should prove both interesting and highly informative. Another invited speaker has created a popular theory that helps us understand how to use such Web 2.0 tools. His theory is called "Connectivism." Such a theory has emerged as we transform from an educational world of scarcity to one of abundance. Based on this shift to a world of plentiful educational resources and materials, our final invited speaker team will have us imagine the 6.7 billion members of this little planet as snowflakes. If the ideas of connectivism hold true, there are far reaching forms of learning customization and individualization now possible. Let's hope those highly connected snowflakes don't melt anytime soon!

- 3. Mobile Learning.** A third theme relates to mobile learning. To see mobile learning in action, we plan to have one of our invited speakers present to us from a boat in the ocean. Several other invited speakers will discuss how mobile learning is a disruptive device in education. You will hear why that is the case and where this is headed. We are now highly mobile with our iPods, iPhones, smartpens, James Bond watches, Flip video cameras, and wearable technologies; not to mention the explosion of laptops across all educational sectors. When combined or converged, these technologies significantly disrupt the traditional teacher-centered classroom. Attending such talks will place you in a more prominent position when mobile learning issues come up. And they will come up!
- 4. The Future.** A final theme concerns the future. After a decade of significant use of the Web as an instructional tool, many speakers at the E-Learn conference really want to know what happens next. It is time to make sense of the ceaseless waves of Web-based learning technologies and envision what can be done with what already exists to impact student learning. We must keep in mind that exciting technological developments are not always cost justifiable or helpful for learning. Some discussion will take place about the next generation of students who come to education as well as work settings with many technology-related experiences. One of our presenters is from IBM Global Services. She will inform us of the evolution of instructional design models and raise questions about the skill-base now required for success in a global enterprise. She also will shed some light on the implications of this new age for teaching and learning. Of course, globalization, both in formal schooling as well as in informal workplace learning settings, has huge implications for online learning and for all of those attending this conference.

This is just a brief overview of the coming week to highlight some sessions you may want to consider. You will hear about dozens of other topics and issues at E-Learn 2008. Be sure to review the online program and attempt to personalize the conference experience. There is so much choice for you here. Please take advantage of it!

### **Some Conference Numbers and Salutes**

As you can see, we predict that E-Learn 2008 will be an extremely exciting event. Not only will you have energy packed shows at the local hotels and resorts each night, you will find much of the same energy during the day at the conference. You should realize that a total of 987 proposals were submitted, of which 391 were accepted. These are included in the accompanying CD-ROM of the conference proceedings. Contributors from the proceedings come from some 65 countries. From the accepted papers, 21 papers were nominated as outstanding papers for this conference. These submissions received an additional round of reviews by the Steering Committee and eight of these papers were selected as the Outstanding Papers of E-learn 2008. Congratulations to all those considered as well as to those who won!

We look forward to meeting you during the conference. If you have any questions about the conference schedule or events, just ask us or one of the AACE conference staff. There are always people on duty at the conference reception area to answer your questions. That is what makes AACE conferences so great—the people! On that note, we hope that you will make many new friends during the week and that some of these new friends become research team members, grant collaborators, or project partners. Of course, we expect to hear about the results of those new collaborations at the E-Learn Conference 2009 in Vancouver, October 26-30, 2009. But for now spend your time enjoying this e-learning conference in this electrifying city. In closing, we, as Co-Chairs, would like to thank all the AACE staff and volunteers on the various E-Learn committees who have worked countless hours preparing for and delivering such an excellent conference experience.

#### *E-Learn 2008 Program Chairs*

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