

## Preface

Welcome to E-Learn 2002 in exciting Montreal, Quebec, CANADA. The first E-Learn conference organized by the Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education (AAACE) comes at an auspicious time. The past two years have been quite sobering for anyone interested in the topics encompassed in this inaugural E-Learn conference.

First, the downturn in the economy that began to affect North America two years ago (and even earlier in Asia and other parts of the world) has prompted many enterprises to take a hard look at their education and training initiatives, including those that might be described as e-learning, m-learning, virtual learning, Web-based learning, and so forth. As a result, these enterprises are, more than ever, looking to education and training programs as investments that must show a return.

Second, the shocking events of September 11, 2001, awoke many of us in North America and Europe to a vulnerability that others in less fortunate countries have lived with for decades. In the wake of these tragic events, managers and workers alike are considering e-learning in its many variants as an increasingly attractive alternative to traditional face-to-face education and training events that require people to travel great distances and/or be away from loved ones for long periods of time.

So what do the recent economic downturn and global terrorism have to do with E-Learn 2002? The answer is the importance of diverse professionals sharing research and development papers, tutorials, workshops, posters, demonstrations, panels, showcases and other events. E-Learn, like the other AAACE conferences, is all about high quality research and development efforts. Unlike most commercial conferences, E-Learn presentations have been rigorously refereed by people who are the leaders in their respective fields. Thus, the quality of the sharing that goes on at this conference, and continues through the dissemination of these proceedings, becomes crucial to the realization of the return-on-investment we all seek, and the extension of learning and professional development opportunities beyond specific times and places.

In 2002, and in the wake of the aforementioned calamities, some might question the value of holding face-to-face conferences for which the submissions are due months in advance. After all, changes in technologies occur at an ever faster pace, and last month's cutting-edge development is sometimes this month's e-flop. Nevertheless, most of us recognize that as conference participants, we are not so much interested in technologies as ideas: ideas that are best shared, critiqued, and reshaped through personal dialogue and group discussion. While this could occur online, we recognize that many of the most important exchanges at conferences take place informally away from the formal sessions. Indeed, the face-to-face interactions are often the most valued and long-remembered aspects of any conference we attend, and we look forward to sharing these with you in Montreal.

E-Learn 2002 would not exist without the efforts of scores of volunteers, and so we would like to express our gratitude to the members of the Conference Steering and Program Committees as well as the local volunteers in Montreal who have made this event possible. Further appreciation is due to the highly professional staff at AACE who have worked tirelessly to ensure that this professional event is among the best of its kind. Finally, and most importantly, we wish to thank all of the researchers, developers, and others whose outstanding work is reported in these proceedings. Without you, there would be no quality to celebrate.

The more than 600 papers in this volume and on the accompanying CD-ROM come from contributors representing more than 50 countries. This is truly an international event. A year of preparation will soon be over, and E-Learn will be a pleasant memory. It is our hope that this memory will be refreshed each time you open this volume or access the conference CD-ROM, providing the wisdom and inspiration you seek. Further evidence of that living memory will be your continued participation in E-Learn conferences, and toward that end, we look forward to seeing you again next year at E-Learn 2003 in Phoenix, Arizona, USA; Nov. 7-11th (<http://www.aace.org/conf/elearn>).

E-Learn 2002 Program Chairs:

- Margaret Driscoll

*IBM Mindspan Solutions, USA*

- Thomas C. Reeves,

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