E-Learning by Design

2nd Edition

By

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Preface

What's new in the 2nd edition?

I must confess that I am the kind of reader who skips over prefaces, acknowledgements, and other throat warming found at the fronts of books. If you are that kind of reader also, go ahead and jump to Chapter 1. It won't hurt my feelings as an author. There are no great revelations here or secret confessions, only a brief description of what's new in this edition and why.

What's different about e-learning?

Since the first edition of *E-learning by Design*, e-learning has evolved rapidly and fringe techniques have moved into the mainstream. Revolutionaries have become bankers.

Underlying and underwriting these changes in e-learning are advances in technology and changes in society.

For one thing, learning games and simulations have gone from being treated as noisy children at a formal dinner to being the life of the party. Proven successes have earned games and simulations serious consideration by even the most conservative designers.

Our ability to search vast information repositories has become universal and commonplace. Many e-book outsell their paper counterparts. Public and private libraries and encyclopedias have grown in number and size. More reliable search engines have made online search a part of technological culture. Google is a verb.

Mechanisms for online collaboration have advanced as well. Name a subject and there is a discussion forum, blog, podcast, or news feed dedicated to it. Global conversations, enabled by social media, arise spontaneously and carom wildly. Politicians tap into these ad hoc discussions to sample the *vox populi*.

Out of this burst of online collaboration burst social networking. Its popularity has given us new technologies, new terminology, and new modes of learning. Well, not really. The technologies and terminology are new, but learning from others is among the most ancient and thoroughly proven modes of learning.

Mobile phones have taken on the functions previously offered by separate personal digital assistants and media players. They are as powerful as many of the laptop computers used for e-learning when the first edition premiered. Today's smart phones are easy to use, rugged, and reliable. And potential learners have one with them all the time.

Some early forms of e-learning, such as virtual-classroom courses, Webinars, and software demonstrations (screencasts) have stabilized. Though they have not advanced in basic capabilities, they have become easier to produce and more predictable to take. They have entered the mainstream and are now helping to define it.

What's new in this book?

To track the changes in technology and society, several sections have been promoted to full chapters. Please congratulate "Games and simulations," "Social learning," and "Mobile learning" on their expanded coverage and much-deserved emphasis. I have tried to avoid the common tendency to trivialize these subjects. I promise you that I do not define mobile learning as dumping desktop courses onto mobile devices or suggest that social learning is nothing more than telling students to ask their social network instead of asking the teacher.

As requested by readers of the first edition, I have fleshed out the instructional design scheme in the first chapter. I was glad to do so because my experience as a consultant, since the first edition, has taught me that most failures of e-learning projects can be traced back to flawed instructional design. I have added an appendix detailing a simple technique to determine what to teach and what to leave out.

Some chapters have moved online at horton.com/eld/. Chapters on designing lessons, strategic decisions that affect the whole course, visual design, and navigation are now online. That allows the paper portion to focus on issues of vital interest to all designers, especially first-line designers with direct responsibility for accomplishing specific learning objectives. The online chapters offer advanced skills and techniques for issues usually dealt with by senior designers and project leaders.

What else? Oh, I have put in new typos to replace the old ones, or at least to keep them company.

So, go on and start reading, skimming, scanning, or however you like to consume books. If you are reading this in a bookstore, go ahead and buy this book. Better still, buy two copies and give one to your boss.

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