E-Learning Glossary

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E-learning is hot. Everyone has something to say about it, but are we communicating in the same language? Below you'll find a collection of terms and their definitions to help you "speak" e-learning.

A

Accessibility: A characteristic of Website design. Accessible sites can be navigated and understood by people with disabilities.

ADL (Advanced Distributed Learning): Initiative by the U.S. Department of Defense to achieve interoperability across computer and Internet-based learning courseware through the development of a common technical framework, which contains content in the form of reusable learning objects. See also SCORM and the ADL Website.

ADSL (Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line): A type of DSL that uses the majority of the bandwidth to transmit information to the user and a small part to receive from the user.

AICC: Aviation Industry Computer-Based Training Committee, an international association of technology-based training professionals that develops training guidelines for the aviation industry. AICC is developing standards for interoperability of computer-based and computer managed training products across multiple industries. See the AICC Website.

Amplitude: The amount of variety in a signal. Commonly thought of as the height of a wave.

Analog: A signal that is received in the same form in which it is transmitted, although the amplitude and frequency may vary.

AoD (audio on demand): See CoD.

API (application program interface): Operating system services made available to programs that run under the operating system.

Applet: A small application. See also Java applet.

Application: Software a user activates to work on a computer; also called a *program.* There are many types of software that fit into the category of application. Application software is distinct from other forms of software, such as operating system and utility software.

ASCII (American Standard Code for Information Interexchange): A computer language used to convert letters, numbers, and control codes into a digital code understood by most computers.

ASP (Active Server Pages): A programming environment that combines elements of HTML and scripting. Webpages built with ASP can change dynamically based on user input.

ASP (application service provider): Third-party organizations that supply software applications and/or software-related services over the Internet. ASPs allow companies to save money, time, and resources by outsourcing some or all of their information technology needs.

Assessment: The process used to systematically evaluate a learner's skill or knowledge level.

Assessment item: A question or measurable activity used to determine if the learner has mastered a learning objective.

Asynchronous learning: Learning in which interaction between teachers and students occurs intermittently with a time delay. Examples are self-paced courses taken via the Internet or CD-ROM, Q&A mentoring, online discussion groups, and email.

ATM (asynchronous transfer mode): A network technology for high-speed transfer of data. Packets of information are relayed in fixed sizes, enabling smooth transmission. ATM supports real-time voice and video as well as data and can reach speeds of up to 10 Gbps.

Audio bridge: A device used in audioconferencing that connects multiple telephone lines.

Audioconferencing: Voice-only connection of more than two sites using standard telephone lines.

Audiographics: Computer-based technology that permits simultaneous transmission of voice and data communication and graphic images across local telephone lines in a way that is interactive between the instructor and all participants.

Authoring tool: A software application or program that allows people to create their own e-learning courseware. Types of authoring tools include instructionally focused authoring tools, Web authoring and programming tools, template-focused authoring tools, knowledge capture systems, and text and file creation.

B

Backbone: A primary communication path connecting multiple users.

Band: A range of frequencies between defined upper and lower limits.

Bandwidth: Information carrying capacity of a communication channel.

Baud: A measure of data transmission speed. At low speeds, baud is equal to the bits transmitted per second (bps). At higher speeds, one baud can represent more than one bit.

Binary code: A coding system made up of numbers expressed in base-2 notation, using only the digits 0 and 1.

Bit: The most basic unit of information on a computer. In accordance with binary code, each bit is designated as either a 1 or a 0; all other information stored on the computer is composed of combinations of bits.

Blended learning: Learning events that combine aspects of online and face-to-face instruction.

Bookmark: A saved link to a Webpage that's stored in a browser for quick and easy retrieval.

Bps (bits per second): Measurement of data transmission speed in a communications system. The number of bits transmitted or received each second.

Bridge: A device linking two or more sections of a network.

Broadband: High-speed transmission. The specific speed used to define broadband is subjective; the word often implies any speed above what is commonly used at the current time. See also narrowband.

Broadcast: (noun) Television and radio signals designed to reach a mass audience. Some Websites offer original or redistributed broadcasts. (verb) To email or fax a message to multiple recipients simultaneously. In networking, to transmit information simultaneously to everyone on a network. Also see multicasting and unicasting.

Browser: Software that allows users to find and view information on the Internet. Internet Explorer and Netscape Navigator are two commonly used browsers.

Business requirements: Conditions an e-learning solution should meet to align with needs of such stakeholders as content developer, subject matter expert, learner, manager, and training administrator.

Byte: A combination of 8 bits.

C

Cable modem: A modem that uses cable television's coaxial cables to transmit data at faster speeds than modems using telephone lines.

CAI (computer-assisted instruction): The use of a computer as a medium of instruction, for tutorial, drill and practice, simulation, or games. CAI is used for both initial and remedial training, and typically does not require that a computer be connected to a network or provide links to learning resources outside of the course. See also CBT.

CBL (computer-based learning): See CBT.

CBT (computer-based training): An umbrella term for the use of computers in both instruction and management of the teaching and learning process. CAI (computer-assisted instruction) and CMI (computer-managed instruction) are included under the heading of CBT. Some people use the terms CBT and CAI interchangeably.

CD-ROM (compact disc read-only memory) or (**compact disc read-only media):** A computer storage medium similar to the audio CD that can hold more than 600 megabytes of read-only digital information.

Certification: Professional certification is a screening tool and a measurement of skills and knowledge. Certification credentials give employees and clients proof of an individual's level of specialization in his or her field of work.

Chat: Communication between members of an online service using text. The messages are sent between members in real-time as in a conversation by typing in short statements.

Classroom training: See instructor-led training.

C-learning: See instructor-led training.

CMI (computer managed instruction): The use of a computer to manage the learning process, including testing and record keeping. See also LMS and LCMS.

CMS (content management system): Software application that streamlines the process of designing, testing, approving, and posting content on Webpages.

CoD (Content on demand): Delivery of an offering, packaged in a media format, anywhere, anytime via a network. Variants include audio on demand (AoD) and video on demand (VoD).

Codec (coder/decoder): Device used to convert analog signals to digital signals for transmission and reconvert signals upon reception at the remote site, while allowing for the signal to be compressed for less expensive transmission.

Collaborative tools: Allow learners to work with others via email, threaded discussions, or chats.

Common carrier: A government-regulated private company that furnishes the public with telecommunications services (for example, phone companies).

Community: See online community.

Competency management: A system used to identify skills, knowledge, and performance within an organization. Enables an organization to spot gaps and introduce training, compensation, and recruiting programs based on current or future needs.

Compressed file: A computer file that has been reduced in size by a compression software program. The user must decompress these files before they can be viewed or used.

Compressed video: Video signals downsized to allow travel along a smaller carrier.

Connect time: The amount of time that a terminal or computer has been logged on to a computer or server for a particular session.

Content: The intellectual property and knowledge to be imparted. Different formats for e-learning content include text, audio, video, animation, and simulation content.

Convergence: A result of the digital era in which various types of digital information, such as text, voice, and video, and their delivery mechanisms--television, telecommunications, and consumer electronics--are combined together in new, more closely-tied forms. WebTV is an example of convergence between televisions and computers.

Cookie: Information stored on a user's computer after visiting a Website. Tracks data about that user, can be disabled in the browser.

Courseware: Any type of instructional or educational course delivered via a software program or over the Web.

CPU (central processing unit): Part of the computer that contains the microprocessor, power supply, hard drive, and disk drives.

CRM (customer relationship management): Methodologies, software, and Internet capabilities that help a company manage and organize customer relationships. Helps identify and categorize customers.

Customer-focused e-learning: Web-based learning programs targeted at current and prospective customers. By training customers online, companies attract new business and make people more comfortable with e-transactions.

Cyberspace: The nebulous "place" where humans interact over computer networks. Term coined by William Gibson in *Neuromancer*.

D

Default: A setting that the computer system uses automatically, unless it is changed by the user.

Delivery: Any method of transferring offerings to learners. Variants are instructor-led training, Web-based distance learning, online laboratory, CD-ROM, and books.

Desktop videoconferencing: Videoconferencing on a personal computer.

Dial up: To open a connection between a user's computer and another computer via a modem.

Digital: An electrical signal that varies in discrete steps in voltage, frequency, amplitude, locations, and so forth. Digital signals can be transmitted faster and more accurately than analog signals.

Digital Divide: The gap that exists between those who can afford technology and those who cannot.

Discussion boards: On the Internet or an intranet, forums where users can post messages for other users to read.

Distance education: Educational situation in which the instructor and students are separated by time, location, or both. Education or training courses are delivered to remote locations via synchronous or asynchronous means of instruction, including written correspondence, text, graphics, audio- and videotape, CD-ROM, online learning, audio- and videoconferencing, interactive TV, and facsimile. Distance learning does not preclude the use of the traditional classroom. The definition of distance education is broader than and entails the definition of e-learning.

Distance learning: The desired outcome of distance education. The two terms are often used interchangeably.

Download: The electronic transferring or copying of a file from one computer to another. Files may be downloaded from another connected individual computer, a computer network, a commercial online service, or the Internet.

DS (Digital Signal): Rate and format of digital signal, for example, DS-1 or DS-3. Often used synonymously with *T,* as in T1 or T3, although the *T* technically refers to the type of equipment. See T1 and T3.

DSL (digital subscriber line): Broadband Internet access method that sends data over standard phone lines at speeds up to 7 Mbps. DSL is available to subscribers who live within a certain distance of the necessary router.

DVD (digital versatile disc): Optical disks that are the same size as CDs, but are double-sided and have larger storage capacities.

DVI (digital video interactive): A format for recording digital video onto compact disk allowing for compression and full-motion video.

E

Echo cancellation: The process of eliminating the acoustic echo in a videoconferencing room.

E-learning: Covers a wide set of applications and processes such as Web-based learning, computer-based learning, virtual classrooms, and digital collaboration. It includes the delivery of content via

Internet, intranet/extranet (LAN/WAN), audio- and videotape, satellite broadcast, interactive TV, and CD-ROM.

Email (electronic mail): Messages sent from one computer user to another.

End-to-end solution: A marketing term used by large e-learning suppliers. Meant to imply that their products and services will handle all aspects of e-learning.

Enterprise-wide e-learning: E-learning that is intended for all or most employees within a company. Often part of a strategic change of direction with a very short timeline. Also used to support a core process such as sales.

EPSS (electronic performance support system): A computer application that is linked directly to another application so that when it is accessed, it trains or guides workers through steps they need to complete a task in the target application. Or, more generally, a computer or other device that enables workers to access information or resources to help them achieve a task or performance requirements.

Ergonomics: Design principles relating to the comfort, efficiency, and safety of users.

ERP (enterprise resource planning): A set of activities supported by application software that helps a company manage such core parts of its business as product planning, parts purchasing, inventory management, order tracking, and customer service. Can also include modules for finance and HR activities. The deployment of an ERP system can involve considerable business process analysis, employee retraining, and new work procedures.

Ethernet: A type of local area network, originally developed at Xerox, in which computers communicate through radio frequency signals sent over coaxial cable.

E-training: See TBT.

Evaluation: Any systematic method for gathering information about the impact and effectiveness of a learning event. Results of the measurements can be used to improve the learning offering, determine whether the learning objectives have been achieved, and assess the value of the learning event to the organization.

Extranet: A local-area network (LAN) or wide-area network (WAN) using TCP/IP, HTML, SMTP, and other open Internet-based standards to transport information. An extranet is only available to people inside and certain people outside an organization, as determined by the organization.

F

F2F (face-to-face): Used to describe the traditional classroom environment. Also see ILT.

Facilitative tools: Electronic applications used in online courses as part of course delivery. Examples are mailing lists, chat programs, streaming audio, streaming video, and Webpages.

Facilitator: The online course instructor who aids learning in the online, student-centered environment.

FAQ (frequently asked questions): A file established for public discussion groups containing questions and answers new users often ask.

Fax (facsimile): System used to transmit textual or graphical images over standard telephone lines.

Feedback: Communication between the instructor or system and the learner resulting from an action or process.

Fiber-optic cable: Glass fiber that is used for laser transmission of video, audio, and/or data. This technology has much greater bandwidth capacity than conventional cable or copper wire.

File server: Computer with a large storage device on a network, used for storing files and software that can be shared by users on the network.

Firewall: Method to give users access to the Internet while retaining internal network security.

Footprint: The region on the earth to which a communications satellite can transmit. Also, the floor or desk surface space occupied by a piece of computer equipment.

Frequency: The space between waves in a signal. The amount of time between waves passing a stationary point.

FTP (File Transfer Protocol): A protocol that allows a user to move files from a distant computer to a local computer using a network like the Internet.

Full-motion video: Signal that allows transmission of complete action taking place at the origination site.

Fully interactive video (two-way interactive video): Two sites interact with audio and video as if they were colocated.

G

GB (gigabyte): Just over one billion bytes. 1,000 megabytes.

GIF (Graphics Interchange Format): File format developed by CompuServe to store images. GIFs support 256 colors and are often used for Web images because they compress well.

Globalization: The tailoring of an offering to include clear, grammatically correct text that eliminates slang, gender references, and cultural or generational idioms.

Grok: To reach total understanding of a subject. From Robert Heinlein's *Stranger in a Strange Land*.

GUI (graphical user interface): Computer interface using icons or pictures. For example, Macintosh, Windows, and graphical simulations.

H

Hard skills: Technical skills. See also soft skills.

HDTV (high-definition TV): Television that has over five times the resolution of standard television. Requires extraordinary bandwidth.

Homepage: A document with an address (URL) on the World Wide Web. Maintained by a person or an organization, it contains pointers to other pieces of information.

Host: A network computer that can receive information from other computers.

Hosting: Outsourcing of the technology and commerce parts of a company's Internet-based learning system to an outside organization.

HTML (Hypertext Markup Language): The code used to create a homepage and to access documents over the Web.

HTTP (Hypertext Transfer Protocol): The protocol used to signify that an Internet site is a World Wide Web (WWW) site.

Hub: A network device that connects communication lines together.

Hypermedia: A program that contains dynamic links to other media, such as audio, video, or graphics files.

Hypertext: A system for retrieving information from servers on the Internet using World Wide Web client software. Hypertext consists of key words or phrases in a WWW page that are linked electronically to other Websites or pages on the Internet.

I

IEEE: The Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers. Their Learning Technology Standards Committee is working to develop technical standards, recommended practices, and guides for computer implementations of education and training systems.

ILS (integrated learning system): A complete software, hardware, and network system used for instruction. In addition to providing curriculum and lessons organized by level, an ILS usually includes a number of tools such as assessments, record keeping, report writing, and user information files that help to identify learning needs, monitor progress, and maintain student records.

ILT (instructor-led training): Usually refers to traditional classroom training, in which an instructor teaches a class to a room of students. The term is used synonymously with on-site training and classroom training (c-learning).

IMS (Instructional Management System) Global Learning Consortium: Coalition of government organizations dedicated to defining and distributing open architecture interoperability specifications for e-learning products. See the IMS Website.

Information architect: See information architecture.

Information architecture: A description or design specification for how information should be treated and organized. In Web design, the term relates to the organization of online content into categories and the creation of an interface for displaying those categories.

Infrastructure: The underlying mechanism or system by means of which voice, video, and data can be transferred from one site to another and be processed.

Instant messenger: Software that lists users' selected "buddies" (friends, family, co-workers, and so forth) who are online, and enables users to send short text messages back and forth to them. Some instant messenger programs also include voice chat, file transfer, and other applications.

Instructional designer (ID): An individual who applies a systematic methodology based on instructional theory to create content for learning events.

Interactive media: Allows for a two-way interaction or exchange of information.

Internet: An international network first used to connect education and research networks, begun by the US government. The Internet now provides communication and application services to an international base of businesses, consumers, educational institutions, governments, and research organizations.

Internet-based training: Training delivered primarily by TCP/IP network technologies such as email, newsgroups, proprietary applications, and so forth. Although the term is often used synonymously with Web-based training, Internet-based training is not necessarily delivered over the Web, and may not use the HTTP and HTML technologies that make Web-based training possible.

Internet Explorer: An example of browser software that allows users to view Webpages.

Interoperability: The ability of hardware or software components to work together effectively.

Intranet: A LAN or WAN that transports information. An intranet is owned by a company and is only accessible to people working internally. It is protected from outside intrusion by a combination of firewalls and other security measures.

IP (Internet Protocol): The international standard for addressing and sending data via the Internet.

IP multicast: Using the Internet Protocol, delivery of a learning event over a network from a single source to multiple participants.

ISDN (Integrated Services Digital Network): A telecommunications standard allowing communications channels to carry voice, video, and data simultaneously.

ISO: International Organization for Standardization, an international federation of national standards bodies. See the ISO Website.

ISP (Internet service provider): A reseller of Internet access services.

IT (information technology): Computers and their information processing capabilities.

ITFS (Instructional Television Fixed Service): Microwave-based, high-frequency television used in educational program delivery.

IT training: Combination of desktop training and information systems and technical training. Includes training in areas such as system infrastructure software, application software, and application development tools.

J

Java: An object-oriented programming language developed by Sun Microsystems. Java isn't dependent on specific hardware and can be launched from within an HTML document or stand alone.

Java applet: A small Java program launched through a browser.

JavaScript: A scripting language that is simpler than Java and can add interactivity to Webpages. JavaScript commands allow tasks to be completed by the Web browser when a user views a Webpage. (For example, making a graphic change when a user moves the cursor over it.)

JDBC (Java Database Connectivity): An application program interface used to connect programs written in Java to the data in popular databases.

JPEG (Joint Photographic Experts Group): A standard for compressing digital photographic images.

Just-in-time: Characteristic of e-learning in which learners are able to access the information they need exactly when they need it.

K

KB (kilobyte): 1,024 bytes, often generically applied to 1,000 bytes as well.

Kbps (Kilobits per second): Measurement of data transmission speed in a communication system. The number of kilobits transmitted or received each second.

KMS (knowledge management system): See knowledge management.

Knowledge management: Capturing, organizing, and storing knowledge and experiences of individual workers and groups within an organization and making it available to others in the organization. The information is stored in a special database called a knowledge base.

L

LAN (local-area network): A group of personal computers and/or other devices, such as printers or servers, that are located in a relatively limited area, such as an office, and can communicate and share information with each other.

LCMS (learning content management system): A software application that allows trainers and training directors to manage both the administrative and content-related functions of training. An LCMS combines the course management capabilities of an LMS (learning management system) with the content creation and storage capabilities of a CMS (content management system).

Learning environment: Software designed as an all-in-one solution that can facilitate online learning for an organization. Courses created within the learning environment can be tracked with the same capabilities of a learning management system (LMS), but the learning environment may not be able to track courses created outside of its system. Most learning environments also include an authoring capability for creating additional courses.

Learning object: A reusable, media-independent chunk of information used as a modular building block for e-learning content. Learning objects are most effective when organized by a meta data classification system and stored in a data repository such as an LCMS.

Learning objective: A statement establishing a measurable behavioral outcome, used as an advanced organizer to indicate how the learner's acquisition of skills and knowledge is being measured.

Learning platforms: Internal or external sites often organized around tightly focused topics, which contain technologies (ranging from chat rooms to groupware) that enable users to submit and retrieve information.

Learning portal: Any Website that offers learners or organizations consolidated access to learning and training resources from multiple sources. Operators of learning portals are also called content aggregators, distributors, or hosts.

Learning space: An imaginary geography in which the learning enterprise flourishes. Mapped by market analysts and mined by consultants, this territory is a recent annexation to the business landscape.

Link: The result of HTML markup, a link signifies to a browser that data within a document will automatically connect with either nested data or an outside source. Used in the design of hypertext.

Listserv: A software program for combining and automating mailing lists and discussion groups on a computer network over the Internet. A form of one-to-many communication using email.

LMS (learning management system): Software that automates the administration of training events. The LMS registers users, tracks courses in a catalog, and records data from learners; it also provides reports to management. An LMS is typically designed to handle courses by multiple publishers and providers. It usually doesn't include its own authoring capabilities; instead, it focuses on managing courses created by a variety of other sources.

Localization: The tailoring of an offering to meet the specific needs of a geographic area, product, or target audience.

Log in/Log on: The process of establishing a connection over a network or modem with a remote computer to retrieve or exchange information.

Log off: The process of terminating a connection to a computer or network.

LRN: Microsoft's Learning Resource Interchange, a format that gives content creators a standard way to identify, share, update, and create online content and courseware. LRN is the first commercial application of the IMS Content Packaging Specification.

LSP (learning service provider): A specialized ASP offering learning management and training delivery software on a hosted or rental basis.

Lurking: Reading the postings in a discussion forum but not contributing to the discussion.

M

Markup: Text or codes added to a document to convey information about it. Usually used to formulate a document's layout or create links to other documents or information servers. HTML is a common form of markup.

MB (megabyte): 1,048,576 bytes, often generically applied to 1,000,000 bytes as well.

Mbps (megabits per second): Measurement of data transmission speed in a communication system. The number of megabits transmitted or received each second.

Meta data: Information about content that allows it to be stored in and retrieved from a database.

Metatag: An HTML tag identifying the contents of a Website. Information commonly found in the metatag includes copyright info, key words for search engines, and formatting descriptions of the page.

Microwave: Electromagnetic waves that travel in a straight line and are used to and from satellites and for short distances up to 30 miles.

Modem: Computer equipment that allows computers to interact with each other via telephone lines by converting digital signals to analog for transmitting and back to digital for receiving.

MPEG (Moving Picture Experts Group): A standard for compressing digital video images.

MP3: A format for music file compression that allows users to download music over the Internet.

Multicasting: The transmission of information to more than one recipient. For example, sending an email message to a list of people. Teleconferencing and videoconferencing can also use multicasting. See also broadcasting and unicasting.

Multimedia: Encompasses interactive text, images, sound, and color. Multimedia can be anything from a simple PowerPoint slide slow to a complex interactive simulation.

N

Narrowband: In data transmission, speeds from 50 Bps to 64 Kbps. See also broadband.

Navigation: Finding your way from page to page on the World Wide Web.

Nesting: Placing documents within other documents. Allows a user to access material in a nonlinear fashion, the primary requirement for developing hypertext.

Netiquette: Online "manners." The rules of conduct for online or Internet users.

Netscape Navigator: An example of browser software that allows users to view Webpages.

Network: Two or more computers that are connected so users can share files and devices (for example, printers, servers, and storage devices).

O

ODBC (Open Database Connectivity): An application program interface to access information from numerous types of databases, including Access, dbase, DB2, and so forth.

Onground environment: The traditional classroom environment, also known as face-to-face (F2F). Also see ILT.

Online: The state in which a computer is connected to another computer or server via a network. A computer communicating with another computer.

Online community: Meeting place for learners on the Internet. Designed to facilitate interaction and collaboration among people who share common interests and needs.

Online learning: Learning delivered by Web-based or Internet-based technologies. See Web-based training and Internet-based training.

Online training: Web- or Internet-based training.

Open platform: A computer and network design concept that dictates that all users will have the ability to access, create, and publish information, as well as understand each other's information.

Origination site: The location from which a teleconference originates.

P

Packet: A bundle of data transmitted over a network. Packets have no set size; they can range from one character to hundreds of characters.

PDA (personal digital assistant): Handheld computer device used to organize personal information such as contacts, schedules, and so forth. Data can usually be transferred to a desktop computer by cable or wireless transmission.

Personalization: Tailoring Web content to an individual user. Can be accomplished by a user entering preferences or by a computer guessing about the user's preferences.

Plug-in: An accessory program that adds capabilities to the main program. Used on Webpages to display multimedia content.

PNG (Portable Network Graphics): Patent-free graphics compression format developed by Macromedia expected to replace GIF. PNG offers advanced graphics features such as 48-bit color.

Point-to-multipoint: Transmission between multiple locations using a bridge.

Point-to-point: Transmission between two locations.

POP (point of presence): The geographic location of a particular switch or service.

Portal: A Website that acts as a "doorway" to the Internet or a portion of the Internet, targeted towards one particular subject. Also see learning portal.

Post: To place a message in a public message forum. Also, to place an HTML page on the World Wide Web.

PPP: A software package that allows a user to have a direct connection to the Internet over a telephone line.

Practice item: A question or learning activity that allows learners to test whether they can apply the skills and knowledge just learned.

Practices: Reinforcement activities that give the learner an opportunity to apply skills and knowledge. Often the system provides mentoring and feedback. Variants are case study, learning activity, practice quizzes, practice test, testing quiz, and practice labs.

Prescriptive learning: A process through which the learner's knowledge and skill gaps are matched with appropriate offerings.

Private communication: Electronic communication (email) sent to the personal email mailboxes of one or more individuals as opposed to a public conferencing forum.

Projection system: A device for showing video, television, or computer images on a large screen.

Protocol: A formal set of standards, rules, or formats for exchanging data that assures uniformity between computers and applications.

Public communication: Electronic communication sent to a public conferencing forum, listserv, or mailing list where one message is distributed to all list members.

Publishing tool: A software application or program that allows people to publish their own e-learning courseware to a specific location, such as an Internet server.

Pull technology: In reference to the Internet or other online services, the technology whereby people use software such as a Web browser to locate and "pull down" information for themselves. Also see push technology.

Push technology: In reference to the Internet or other online services, the technology whereby information is sent directly to a user's computer.

R

RAM (random-access memory): Temporary storage for data and program instructions.

Real-time communication: Communication in which information is received at (or nearly at) the instant it is sent. Real-time is a characteristic of synchronous communication.

Receive site: A location that can receive transmissions from another site for distance learning.

Resolution: The clarity of the image on the video display screen.

RFP (request for proposal): A document produced by a company seeking goods or services and distributed to prospective suppliers. Suppliers then provide proposals based on the criteria specified within the RFP.

RIO (reusable information object): A collection of content, practice, and assessment items assembled around a single learning objective. RIOs are built from templates based on whether the goal is to communicate a concept, fact, process, principle, or procedure. (Pronounced "REE-O")

RLO (reusable learning object): A collection of RIOs, overview, summary, and assessments that supports a specific learning objective. (Pronounced "R-L-O")

S

Satellite TV: Video and audio signals relayed via a communication device that orbits around the earth.

Scalability: The degree to which a computer application or component can be expanded in size, volume, or number of users served and continue to function properly.

Scanner: A device that converts a printed page or image into an electronic representation that can be viewed and manipulated on a computer.

SCORM (Sharable Content Object Reference Model): A set of standards that, when applied to course content, produces small, reusable learning objects. A result of the Department of Defense's Advance Distributed Learning (ADL) initiative, SCORM-compliant courseware elements can be easily merged with other compliant elements to produce a highly modular repository of training materials.

Screen reader: Computer software that speaks text on the screen. Often used by individuals who are visually impaired.

Script: A program or set of instructions not carried out by the computer processor but by another program. Code is interpreted at run time rather than being stored in executable format.

Scripting language: See Script.

Scroll: To move text and images on a computer screen in a constant direction--down, up, right, or left.

Seamless technology: Technology that is easy to use, intuitive in nature, and is not the focus of the learning experience. Also called transparent technology.

Self-assessment: Process by which the learner determines his or her personal level of knowledge and skills.

Self-paced learning: Offering in which the learner determines the pace and timing of content delivery.

Server: A computer with a special service function on a network, generally to receive and connect incoming information traffic.

Simulations: Highly interactive applications that allow the learner to model or role-play in a scenario. Simulations enable the learner to practice skills or behaviors in a risk-free environment.

Skill gap analysis: Compares a person's skills to the skills required for the job to which they have been, or will be, assigned. A simple skill gap analysis consists of a list of skills required along with a rating of the employee's level for each skill. Ratings below a predetermined level identify a skill gap.

SLIP (Serial Line Internet Protocol): A means of allowing a user to connect to the Internet directly over a high-speed modem. Also see PPP. SLIP is older and used less frequently than PPP.

Slow scan converter: Transmitter or receiver of still video over narrowband channels. In real time, camera subjects must remain still for highest resolution.

SME (subject matter expert): An individual who is recognized as having proficient knowledge about and skills in a particular topic or subject area.

Soft skills: Business skills such as communication and presentation, leadership and management, human resources, sales and marketing, professional development, project and time management, customer service, team building, administration, accounting and finance, purchasing, and personal development.

Software: A set of instructions that tell a computer what to do; a program.

SQL: Language for accessing information in a database and updating entries.

Streaming media (streaming audio or video): Audio or video files played as they are being downloaded over the Internet instead of users having to wait for the entire file to download first. Requires a media player program.

Synchronous learning: A real-time, instructor-led online learning event in which all participants are logged on at the same time and communicate directly with each other. In a virtual classroom, the instructor maintains control of the class, with the ability to "call on" participants who raise their electronic hands from a distant location. Students and teachers use a whiteboard to see work in progress and share knowledge. Content can also be delivered using audio- or videoconferencing, Internet telephony, and two-way live broadcasts of lectures to students in a classroom.

Synergy: The dynamic energetic atmosphere created in an online class when participants interact and productively communicate with each other.

System requirements: The technological conditions required to run a software application. Includes the operating system, programming language, database, hardware configuration, bandwidth, processing power, and so forth.

T

T-1 (DS-1): High-speed digital data channel that is a high-volume carrier of voice and/or data. Often used for compressed video teleconferencing. T-1 has 24 voice channels.

T-3 (DS-3): A digital channel that communicates at a significantly faster rate than T-1.

TBT (technology-based training): The delivery of content via Internet, LAN or WAN (intranet or extranet), satellite broadcast, audio or video tape, interactive TV, or CD-ROM. Includes CBT and WBT.

TCP (Transmission Control Protocol): A protocol that ensures that packets of data are shipped and received in the intended order.

Telecommunication: The science of information transport using wire, radio, optical, or electromagnetic channels to transmit and receive signals for voice or data communications.

Telecommuting: Working at home but connecting to one's office by way of a computer network.

Teleconferencing: Two-way electronic communication between two or more groups in separate locations via audio, video, and/or computer systems.

Template: A predefined set of tools or forms that establishes the structure and settings necessary to quickly create content.

Text-based training: The delivery of content through books and manuals.

Thin client: 1) A network computer without hard- or diskette drives that accesses programs and data from a server instead of storing them locally. 2) Software that performs the majority of its operations on a server rather than the local computer, thus requiring less memory and fewer plug-ins.

Thread: A series of messages on a particular topic posted in a discussion forum.

Touch screen: Input device used to simplify user input and response. The user touches the screen to control the output, working with menus or multiple-choice decision points. Allows some simulation of hands-on training; for example, pointing to parts on a machine.

Training management system: See LMS.

Transparent technology: Technology that is easy to use, intuitive in nature, and not the focus of the learning experience. Also called seamless technology.

Transponder: Satellite transmitter and receiver that receives and amplifies a signal prior to retransmission to an earth station.

24/7: Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. In e-learning, used to describe the hours of operation of a virtual classroom or how often technical support should be available for online students and instructors.

U

Unicasting: Communication between a sender and a single receiver over a network. For example, an email message sent from one person to one person.

Uplink: The communication link from a transmitting earth station to a satellite.

Upload: To send a file from one computer or server to another.

URL (Uniform Resource Locator): The address of a homepage on the World Wide Web. For example, http://www.learningcircuits.org.

Usability: The measure of how effectively, efficiently, and easily a person can navigate an interface, find information on it, and achieve his or her goals.

V

Value-added services: In the context of the e-learning industry, value-added services include custom training needs assessment and skill-gap analysis, curriculum design and development, pre- and posttraining mentoring and support, training effectiveness analysis, reporting and tracking tools, advisor services and implementation consulting, hosting and management of Internet- or intranet-based learning systems, integration of enterprise training delivery systems, and other services.

Videoconferencing: Using video and audio signals to link participants at different and remote locations.

Virtual classroom: The online learning space where students and instructors interact.

Virtual community: See online community.

Virus: A destructive type of computer program that attempts to disrupt the normal operation of a computer, rewrite or delete information from storage devices, and in some cases, cause physical damage to the computer.

Virus detection program: A software program to detect, diagnose, and destroy computer viruses.

VoD (video on demand): See CoD

VoIP (voice over IP): Voice transmitted digitally using the Internet Protocol. Avoids fees charged by telephone companies.

Vortal: Vertical portal; a portal that targets a niche audience.

VPN (virtual private network): A private network configured inside a public network. Offers the security of private networks with the economies of scale and built-in management capabilities of public networks.

W

W3C: World Wide Web Consortium, an organization developing interoperable specifications, software, and tools for the WWW. See the W3C Website.

WAN (wide-area network): A computer network that spans a relatively large area. Usually made up of two or more local area networks. The Internet is a WAN.

WAP (wireless application protocol): Specification that allows Internet content to be read by wireless devices.

WBT (Web-based training): Delivery of educational content via a Web browser over the public Internet, a private intranet, or an extranet. Web-based training often provides links to other learning resources such as references, email, bulletin boards, and discussion groups. WBT also may include a facilitator who can provide course guidelines, manage discussion boards, deliver lectures, and so forth. When used with a facilitator, WBT offers some advantages of instructor-led training while also retaining the advantages of computer-based training.

Web-based learning: See Web-based training.

Webpage: A document on the World Wide Web that's viewed with a browser such as Internet Explorer or Netscape Navigator.

Website: A set of files stored on the World Wide Web and viewed with a browser such as Internet Explorer or Netscape Navigator. A Website may consist of one or more Webpages.

Whiteboard: An electronic version of a dry-erase board that enables learners in a virtual classroom to view what an instructor, presenter, or fellow learner writes or draws. Also called a smartboard or electronic whiteboard.

WML (Wireless Markup Language): XML-based language that allows a reduced version of Webpages' text to be displayed on cellular phones and personal digital assistants.

Workstation: A device, often a microcomputer, that serves as an interface between a user and a file server or host computer. A computer or a computer terminal.

WWW (World Wide Web): A graphical hypertext-based Internet tool that provides access to homepages created by individuals, businesses, and other organizations.

X

XML (Extensible Markup Language): The next-generation Webpage coding language that allows site designers to program their own markup commands, which can then be used as if they were standard HTML commands.