

Emerging Issues in m-Learning

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The benefit of plugging mobile technology into e-learning is its potential for increasing productivity within the scope of the new m-learning paradigm: “anytime, anywhere (e)learning”. This makes learning truly “just-in-time” and lets training (=network services) be accessed at the precise place and time of need.

The “m” in m-learning stands for “mobile”, representing the backstage mobile delivery technology. It should be considered a subset of “e-learning”, a term which generically describes learning supported by electronic media. E-learning focuses on electronic information/content, and thus extends beyond the internet - a widely used description of e-learning as “internet-enabled learning” is therefore not completely correct. A number of varieties of mobile technologies suitable for training and education may be recognized: interaction with learning materials via a detached device (such as a laptop or PDI) physically connected to the network, wireless WANs (Wide Area Networks), PANs (Personal Area Networks) and WAP (Wireless Application Protocol) phones, pocket PCs, palmtops and other devices. The specific type of device which is used for m-learning services is basically irrelevant as long as it is wireless. However, wireless in this case does not necessarily mean, that a constant connection to a server or network is required.

Several aspects of m-Learning can be considered, from technological issues and didactic themes through to human factors that can influence the m-learning process and its effectivity. This article gives an objective view of the advantages and disadvantages of m-learning, describes a number of issues from various points of view and suggests an outlook for the application of the technology in the near future. The very promising combination of m-learning with augmented reality is discussed.

Curriculum vitae: Dr.-Ing. Robert J. Wierzbicki, www.wierzbicki.org, is a specialist in the field of multimedia design, internet, e-learning, virtual reality and digital art. He is independent consultant in computer technology and owner of WIERZBICKI.ORG eLearning Solutions, a virtually structured company providing multimedia, training and consulting services worldwide.