

Editorial: Electronic Learning

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Here's a sweeping, generalized statement good to start out an editorial: If you can teach it in the classroom, you can teach it online. That statement is buttressed by another broad generalization: All teaching involves communication. Since the first dots and dashes were sent out over the wires, we have been increasingly offering complex communications over long distances. This has progressed sufficiently to the point we can state in broad terms that any teaching commonly occurring in physical classroom settings can be adequately replicated in an electronic setting. This is particularly true as voice and graphics technology merge into cohesive educational products that can run on students' home computers.

This issue of JAET will focus on electronic learning. Over the years, learning through electronic-assisted communications has progressed from the telegraph and early radio days, through the nascent educational television period, and into the computer age. Although e-learning has largely come to be understood as encompassing computers and distance technologies, other computerized components also fall under the umbrella, most notably educational video games or their brethren, "serious games."

This year, the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) will hold dual conferences, of a sort. The real life version, involving participation in the flesh, will take place in Atlanta. The virtual version, involving digitized representations of participants, will occur in the online environment of Second Life. The buzz ISTE has created through this effort has been tremendous, as educators heretofore unfamiliar with serious games and their combination with distance learning have been widely exposed to the idea. Netizens of Second Life, presumably, are likewise gaining at least a modicum of exposure to ISTE.

And so, with all the developments in this continuously progressing field, we present to you an issue dedicated to electronic learning. Great strides have been made in the field, as educators and instructional designers have increasingly grasped the concepts of providing electronic, learner-centered environments that facilitate the transmission of important concepts to students. Executive Editor Chris Calvin starts us out with a recap of how constructivist principles are alive and well in online education. Morris Coose and Michael Barbour investigate learning styles in the K-12 arena. Finally, Mary Jo Dondlinger offers a review of the literature in educational video game design.

So enjoy this latest issue. I hope to see you online.