

Guest Editor's Introduction Mobile Learning

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The emergent field of mobile learning has generated much interest and discussion among researchers and yielded substantial research results. In particular, financial, logistical, and technical factors, such as the ever-increasing availability of wireless networks and portable devices, have provided a rich environment for the proliferation of mobile applications. Wireless portable technologies have revolutionized perceptions of time and place and have contributed to the widespread notion of anytime, anywhere learning.

Although mobile technologies can potentially support and enable teaching and learning, the mere availability of information and tools is no guarantee that learning will occur. So, a major consideration in mobile learning is to design and develop with learners and learning principles in mind.

Mobile learning experiences have been classified according to their learning objectives,¹ the activities they support,² and the learning theories they're built on.³ A more recent functional framework classifies mobile learning applications into categories according to their use and learning principles:⁴

- administrative, referential, interactive, and microworld, and
- data collection, location aware, and collaborative.

The applications in the first group either don't have learning principles as underpinnings or fall under instructional and behaviorist approaches. They support learning activities already possible with desktop or laptop computers. The second group for the most part adheres to constructivist, constructionist, collaborative, and contextual learning principles and banks on mobile technologies' distinctive attributes to create learning events not viable without them.⁴

The June issue of *IEEE Distributed Systems Online* features a revised version of the best paper from the IADIS (International Association for the Development of the Information Society) Mobile Learning 2006 International Conference. "Comparing Presentation Methods for Reading on Mobile Phones" by Björn Hedin and Erik Lindgren describes a prototype for displaying text using scroll and RSVP (Rapid Serial Visual Presentation, a method that displays words sequentially) on mobile phones. Hedin and Lindgren's results focus on students' reading comprehension, efficiency, and preference rating when using the prototype. The July issue will feature short work-in-progress pieces based on selected papers presented at the conference. They will provide an overview of the diverse research being conducted in mobile learning.

References

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