



Keynote speaker Dan Gardner stressed the need for training 'soft power' skills.
Image credit: US DoD.

Alive, Well and Growing

It was pretty well all good news at the 2008 ADL Implementation Fest. Chuck Weirauch reports.

The global growth of Advanced Distributed Learning (ADL) as a major educational force was the focus of the 2008 Joint ADL Co-Lab Implementation Fest held August 25-28 in Orlando. More than 300 national and international representatives from military, government, industry and academic stakeholders attended the three-day event that reviewed the last year's developments and ongoing research, and addressed the future.

Dan Gardner, Director of Readiness and Training, Policy and Programs for the Office of the Secretary of Defense, kicked off the conference in his keynote presentation stressing the need for training new skill sets in the "Soft Power" areas; language, cultural, interpersonal and negotiation skills, in order to improve partnerships for integrated operations. He also called for improved training in civil affairs, psychological operations and information operations.

He stressed the need to immerse

armed forces personnel in realistic training environments to help improve their decision-making skills under the stress of an environment that replicates the real world as closely as possible. In addition, he told the audience that there is a vital need to develop training materials for such organizations as the US Agency for International Development and the US Department of State, as well as for the Department of Defense (DoD).

Dr. Robert Wisher, Director of the ADL Initiative, gave an overview of the program's progress over the past year. He noted observed improvements in training effectiveness as ADL has become widely employed for training purposes throughout all the US services. He described how the ADL organization continues to grow with the establishment of a new Co-Lab in Memphis, TN; initiatives that are leading to a new ADL Partnership Lab in Norway; and increased partnership efforts with NATO, Latin American and Pacific Rim nations.

SCORM

Wisher noted that a new test version of the Sharable Content Object Reference Model (SCORM) 2004 was due out in December 2008, and that the next-generation SCORM 2.0 is scheduled to be released in October 2009. He also pointed out that, due to the widespread worldwide implementation of SCORM, that standard has outgrown its founding agency, the US DoD and has become the defacto international standard for digital learning content. Gardner added that moving responsibility for the SCORM standard to an international body has always been the goal. The proposed international steward for SCORM is the Learning, Education Training Systems Interoperability (LETSI) organization who will, in due course, take responsibility for it from the DoD. In the meantime, the LETSI group is working to coordinate SCORM 2.0 development.

Atsusi Hinumi of the University of Central Florida discussed the rationale for the development of SCORM 2.0 in his presentation and it was also the topic of the LETSI breakout session. SCORM 2.0 is being advocated as a means to make use of next-generation technologies in Web 2.0 and simulation and gaming.

Participation and Effectiveness

The managers of several US services' ADL programs reported significant increases both in the number of enrollments in the respective services' Web-based ADL learning systems and the number of online courses completed. For example, Terrence Kerrigan, Director of the Marine Corps College of Continuing Education, told conference attendees that the number of MarineNet enrollments has risen to 550,000, with more than 350,000 online course completions during fiscal year 2007.

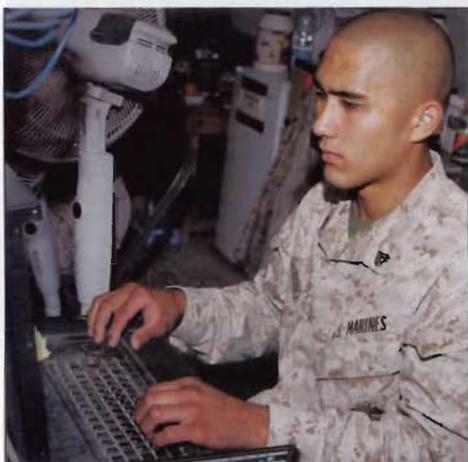
Along with the rise in enrollments and course completions, Traci Sitzmann of the Alexandria, VA, Co-Lab Hub provided some hard data on the effectiveness of Web-based training. In one training effectiveness study, it was found that the average time required for students to complete a self-paced online course was 45 days, a 48 percent reduction in the time from the 86 days required in a traditional classroom setting. In spite of the reduced time, the study also revealed that the students' knowledge levels were not reduced. Sitzmann summed

up saying these results indicate that with online self-paced instruction, students can train at their own pace and still master the materials.

Gaming

It seemed that this year, there was more emphasis on gaming than in past Implementation Fests. The increasing focus may be the result of a better understanding of how to incorporate games into ADL curricula, as well as more data on the effectiveness of gaming as a learning tool.

Joe Camacho, Director of the US Joint Forces Command (USJFCOM)'s Joint Knowledge Development and Distribution Capability (JKDDC), provided an overview of two new advanced ADL gaming programs due to be prototyped in 2009 that will be employed to help close training gaps. The Virtual Cultural Awareness Training (VCAT) program will showcase a Web-enabled game that is designed to train various joint and international personnel deployed to the US Africa Command operating area in cultural awareness. The Immersive Learning Environments (ILES) effort will employ gaming technology into the joint exercise program to provide collective



MarineNet enrollments has risen to 550,000, with more than 350,000 online course completions during 2007. Image credit: USMC.

training for Joint Task Force individuals and small groups.

Rick Blunt, Chief Game Scientist for the ADL Initiative, provided data that indicated students who completed college-level courses that incorporated games had significantly higher scores than those students who took the courses without it. He also recommended that the military community work with the

principal commercial gaming industry association to find ways to infuse gaming industry DNA into military gaming and simulation efforts. Blunt also said that better integration between instructional and game design is needed.

Tim Warsbury, representing the US Army Research Development and Engineering Command (RDECOM)'s Simulation and Training Technology Center (STTC), provided the audience with an overview of his agency's gaming technology-based Distribution Management Cognitive Training Initiative. This effort is designed to train Army logistics personnel. Kim Gill, Program Manager for Forterra Systems, described his company's investigations into how SCORM-based learning can be infused into game-based massively multiplayer online training environments. Gill's research indicates that such online environments can promote learning and fill training gaps. One area where this technology can be employed effectively is in improvised explosive device (IED) training, Gill said. [ms&t](#)

Editor's Note

Presentations are available for download at www.adlnet.gov.

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