## Staying Afloat in the E-Learning Sea

By Brooke Broadbent

The waves of change are reshaping training and education. E-learning is a tidal wave, offering an interesting ride to surfers who stay on the crest.

Two recent volumes aspire to be your surf report. *Delivering Digitally* by Inglis, Ling, and Joosten and *Technology-Based Training* by Kruse and Keil treat e-learning from different perspectives. The first emphasizes thoughtfully planning e-learning, while the second emphasizes doing—thoughtfully crafting e-learning.

First, a comment about the e-word. Used here, *e-learning* refers to education, training, and structured information delivered by computers—through the Internet, over the Web, from the hard drive of a computer, or from an organization's network. Education, training, and structured information overlap. The boundaries are unclear because the same materials are used for education, training, and information dissemination. Convergence in the e-learning world, like mergers in the corporate world, is everywhere.
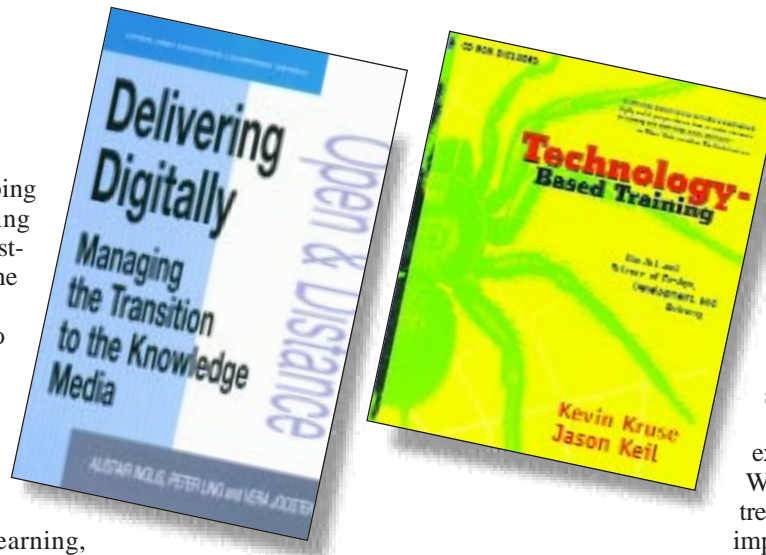
By the way, you won't find the term *e-learning* in either of these books; it became popular after they were written.

The two tomes tackle e-learning differently. *Technology-Based Training* is concerned largely with the use of CBT and WBT in the training tradition. *Delivering Digitally* deals with Web-based online learning in an education environment. The binding similarities are learning and technology: Both books advise you on how to foster learning using computer-based technology. The two groups of stakeholders represented by the books, educators and trainers, wade into the e-learning sea. They face similar challenges and have much to learn from each other. Doers and thinkers — and we need both in training and education—will sink or swim due to their decisions and actions.

Delivering Digitally explains the origin of the World Wide Web, current trends in education, and the implication of those trends for policy makers. The authors explain new terminology in detail and cover topics of interest to leaders such as the costs of e-learning, reengineering technological infrastructure, reskilling and supporting staff, re-orienting the teaching program, redesigning learner support services, developing an evaluation strategy, and managing the transition. Further, the authors discuss the implications of quality and e-learning. The book ends with a few pertinent thoughts on the future of e-learning.

The full title of Inglis, Ling, and Joosten's book is *Delivering Digitally: Managing the Transition to the Knowledge Media*. Don't be confused: Knowledge media does not mean knowledge management. Rather, it refers to digital delivery media, principally the Web and CD-ROM. The term *knowledge media* is attributed to Marc Eisenstadt, director of the Knowledge Institute of the Open University—the UK's huge distance education university that introduced e-learning in the late 1980s under the label *computer conferencing*. To make matters more global, the authors are professors of education and quality in Australia, and their pronouncements on e-learning reflect an international perspective. Some of the vocabulary is new but not unintelligible to my North American ears. Exposure to new terminology and approaches for e-learning is a good thing, in my opinion, and helps learning professionals gain new insight into our personal lexicons and biases.

An editor of a major publishing house once told me that a book is a success if readers come away with one or two solid ideas. My nomination for one of the framing thoughts in *Delivering Digitally* is this:

It is unfortunately the case that many

What Do Training Events *Do*?

Instructional Events	Internal Process Within the Learner
Gain attention.	Stimuli activate perceptions.
Inform learners of objectives.	Create level of expectation for learning.
Stimulate recall of prior learning.	Retrieve and activate short-term memory.
Present the content.	Engage selective perception of content.
Provide learning guide.	Symantecally encode for storage in long-term memory.
Elicit performance (practice).	Responds to questions to enhance encoding and verification.
Provide feedback.	Reinforcement and assessment of correct performance.
Assess performance.	Retrieval and reinforcement of content as final evaluation.
Enhance retention and transfer to the job.	Retrieval and generalization of learned skills to new situation.

From *Technology-Based Training*, by Kevin Kruse and Jason Keil (Jossey-Bass)

educational multimedia programs do not conform to sound pedagogical principles. Many do little more than present large volumes of information—much of it textual. There is little reason to believe that students are motivated more strongly or learn more effectively by reading information from a screen than by reading information from print....

However, the fact that many productions do little more than transmit information should not be regarded as a limitation of the medium itself. Rather, it is a matter of an inappropriate use of the medium.

The full title of *TBT* is *Technology-Based Training: The Art and Science of Design, Development, and Delivery*. The emphasis is not on managing, as it is in the other book. Rather, it's about how to develop TBT successfully. It's not about using specific software, although the book does contain some general information about software on the market. Rather it's about high-level e-learning design strategies, with practical examples.

One of the book's key take-away lessons is the "nine events" of Robert Gagné. This is a checklist of the elements of successful training, in the order they should be followed to facilitate learning. Kruse and Keil capture the essence of Gagné's sequence in a table (see the box).

Technology-Based Training is quintessentially American, preoccupied with how to do things better. It contains plenty of models, examples, and tips. The three main sections of the book deal with designing, managing, and case studies. The chapters give an overview of technology-based training, how to choose the right technology, how to use a systematic design process, how to design for adult learners,

secrets of user-interface design, how to measure costs and benefits, how to work with vendors, and how to sell your projects internally. In addition, the authors detail specific e-learning projects they've developed.

Delivering Digitally: Managing the Transition to the Knowledge Media, by Alistair Inglis, Vera Joosten, and Peter Ling. 192 pp. London: Kogan Page, www.kogan-page.co.uk. £35
Circle 290 on reader service card.

Technology-Based Training: The Art and Science of Design, Development, and Delivery, by Kevin Kruse and Jason Keil. 393 pp. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Available through ASTD Press, 800.628.2783. ASTD member price US$37.95, nonmember price US$39.95
Circle 291 on reader service card.

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Additional Reading

E-learning is the hottest topic in education and training today. An array of new books is available to help you fathom the depths of this subject. A few examples:

❑ *ASTD Models for Learning Technologies,* by George Piskurich and Ethan Sanders (ASTD)
❑ *A Trainer's Guide to Web-Based Instruction,* by Jay Alden (ASTD)
❑ *Managing Web-Based Training,* by Alan Ellis, Ellen Wagner, and Warren Longmire (ASTD)
❑ *How to Design Self-Directed and Distance Learning Programs,* by Nigel Harrison (McGraw-Hill)
❑ *The McGraw-Hill Handbook of Distance Learning,* by Alan Chute (McGraw-Hill)
❑ *The Web Learning Fieldbook: Using the World Wide Web to Build Workplace Learning Environments*, by Valorie Beer (Jossey-Bass)
❑ *Web-Based Training*, by Margaret Driscoll (Jossey-Bass)
❑ *Distance Training,* by Deborah Schreiber and Zane Berge (Jossey-Bass)
❑ *Implementing Computer Supported Co-operative Learning,* by David McConnell (Kogan Page)
❑ *Changing University Teaching,* by Daryl Nation (Kogan Page)
❑ *The Knowledge Web,* by Marc Eisenstadt and Tom Vincent (Kogan Page)
❑ *Mega-Universities and Knowledge Media* by John Daniel, the vice chancellor of the UK's Open University (Kogan Page).