

From the IMCL2006 Chair

It is a great honor for me to have been invited by Professor Michael Auer to present before you the opening editorial remarks for the first issue of the “International Journal of Emerging Technologies in Learning (iJET). The journal aims at the exchange of research results and practical experiences in technology enhanced learning. It will provide online open access of its content to make research papers freely available to all in order to support a greater global exchange of knowledge. In fact, this is the second consecutive online journal which has been established by Professor Auer, after the recent launching of the International Journal of Online Engineering (JOE), which has the objective to publish and discuss fundamentals, applications and experiences in the field of remote engineering and virtual instrumentation since the use of virtual and remote controlled devices, distributed remote laboratories and online simulations is one of the future directions for advanced eLearning environments.

The first iJET issue is mainly dedicated to selected papers already presented in the first international conference on “Interactive Mobile and Computer aided Learning”, IMCL2006, which was hosted by Princess Sumaya University for Technology (PSUT), Jordan, in the period 19-21 April 2006. The conference was organised in collaboration with Carinthia University of Applied Sciences, (CUAS), Austria and the Royal Institute of Technology, (KTH), Sweden. I am really delighted that I have been able to collaborate virtually with Professor Auer to organise the very first conference of its kind in the Middle East and may be outside Europe. The conference comes at a time when many share the vision that learning would soon become possible “anywhere anytime”, particularly with the advancement of wireless technology which provides natural access to services for all. Consequently, mobile learning (mLearning) is starting to contribute to the realization of this vision. The conference was a very convenient forum to investigate how this type of technology-enhanced learning can facilitate learning process in different learning situations for diverse groups of learners. In fact, researchers from over 40 countries have met during IMCL2006 and exchanged results, findings, tools and ideas that may contribute to knowledge and growth in this new and fast evolving field. The conference was indeed a truly lively international forum for mLearning developers, researchers and enthusiasts in the Middle East to meet and exchange experiences with leading European and international experts and to encourage the study and implementation of mobile applications in teaching and learning. The conference presented an opportunity for educators from Jordan and the region to develop new skills and to stimulate critical debate on theories, approaches, principles and applications of mLearning, hence facilitate dialogue, sharing and networking between diverse cultures with regard to the optimal use of emerging technologies. The participants were provided with the newest state of the art on portable devices and their role in university education and potential benefits for learning purposes. Examples of the implementation by laptops, palmtops, mobile phones, PDA, smartphones, WAPs, GPS and a navigational system, WWW-access via Bluetooth, WLAN or GPRS were presented, accompanied by experimentations to demonstrate their coherence and feasibility. The conference has therefore hosted a number of international workshops and demonstrations of the latest technologies, systems and exciting new learning materials.

Five keynote speeches have also contributed a great deal to the success of the conference:

1. **Richard Larson**, Massachusetts Institute of Technology Cambridge, USA:
MIT: E-Reaching Out via LINC, OCW, MIT World and iLabs.
2. **Natasa Milic-Frayling**, Microsoft Research, Cambridge, UK:
Towards Context Rich Communication and Information Access.
3. **Nicola Hence**, Semantic Web Group and Research Center L3S Hanover, Germany:
Personalized e-Learning in the Semantic Web.
4. **Noel Kirkaldy**, Director of Wireless Broadband, Motorola, UAE:
Impact of Broadband Wireless Access (BWA) Technology on Education.
5. **Torsten Fransson**, KTH, Sweden:
Experiences with and Critical Examination of an Interactive Learning Media.

IMCL2006 was actually built on the success of the international conference on “Interactive Computer aided Learning” - ICL, which is organised annually in Villach, Austria, by CUAS. It is hoped that IMCL will also be established as an annual international event as IMCL2007 will be held again in the period 18-20 April 2007 in Amman, Jordan. The upcoming conference should attract scientists from all-over-the-world to present state-of-the-art research in mLearning and to act as a forum for international and national corporations to present their latest technology and products in the field. The conference, we hope, will promote Jordan as the eCountry of the Middle East and promote PSUT as an ICT Centre of Excellence.

This iJET special issue contains a number of papers which detail results and findings of worldwide mLearning research that aims to further develop suitable materials and systems. It is hoped that this first issue is interesting, informative and inspiring to all.

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