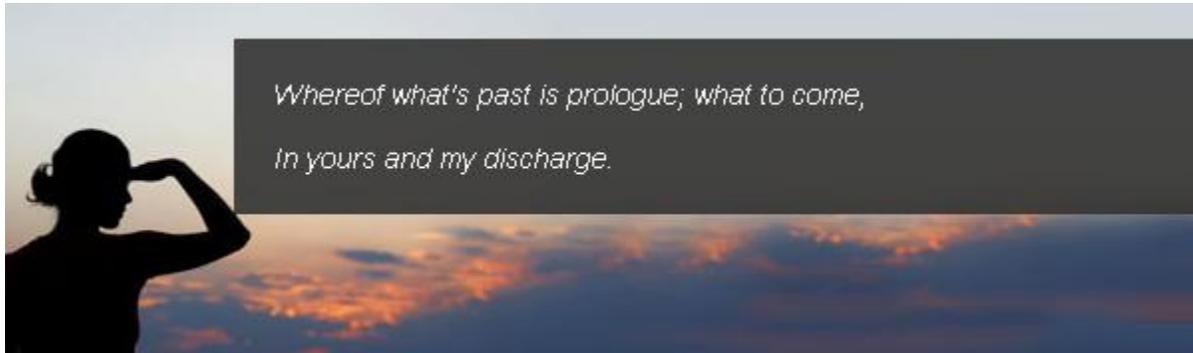


# Looking Back, Looking Forward (Dec 10)

By Bill Brandon  
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Just about every year that we have published this magazine and its predecessor, the transition from one year to the next has been my chance to play [Carnac the Magnificent](#). Most of the time, my results are about as lame as Carson's were. But still I try.

This year is a little unusual, in that what happened in 2010 points pretty clearly to what we can expect in 2011. In fact, 2010 was a good year for practitioners of technology-supported learning, and it looks like 2011 will be just as good or better.

## **Notable events and developments (among many others) in 2010**

A lot happened during 2010, although it may be more obvious when we look back than it was during the year itself.

The iPad launched and Android devices began to appear in significant number and variety, along with other mobile devices and apps. Instructional designers and developers began almost immediately thinking about ways to put these to work supporting learning, performance support, and online reference. The iPad also sparked controversy because it became clear that Apple has completely ruled out ever supporting Flash on the iPad, the iPod Touch, and the iPhone.

HTML5 got a big boost from the iPad launch, and some believe that this also marks the beginning of the decline of Flash. (I am not so sure about that last part.) In the meantime, late in the year Microsoft shifted its strategy for Silverlight, from a cross-platform runtime to Windows Phone, media, and line of business (LOB) applications. Exactly what this means for mobile applications is not yet clear, but it may not matter – Microsoft has also announced commitment to HTML5, building support for it into coming generations of Internet Explorer. Ultimately, at least, it probably means one less environment for which developers will have to create learning applications.

More e-Learning software, from authoring tools to Learning Management Systems, moved to cloud computing and Software as a Service (SaaS) models in 2010. In addition to providing storage and access "anywhere, any time," these environments can save money and support improved business processes, including learning. This is a trend that will only continue.

The partnership between mobile computing and social media grew stronger this year, moving everyone closer to truly ubiquitous computing and availability of personal networks of human and information resources. It means something when Facebook gets more traffic than Google Search, as happened in the

United States this year, and that fact should not be lost on designers, developers, and managers of instruction.

Open Source software, following Moodle's lead, continues to gain support from e-Learning developers and managers. Elgg, in particular, was of great interest to organizations looking for a platform for in-house social networking and personal learning environments, but so were a number of tools used for media creation and editing.

ADL announced that it is launching a new initiative that will focus on the design of learning experiences (social and mobile learning, augmented reality, and forms to come) rather than on the architecture. While this does not mean the end of SCORM, it does mean that innovation in community-oriented technology is going to experience new emphasis.

Video is gaining wider use as a learning support technology. While video has always been important, lower prices for hardware, better delivery machines on learner desktops and laptops, and new online services beyond YouTube have made the technology more available and practical for more organizations. Increased interest in video showed up among Learning Solutions readers, as articles on video editing and production were among the most-read and most-appreciated all year.

With the appearance of *Zombie Apocalypse* at *The eLearning Guild's DevLearn Conference and Expo 2009*, and Dr. Strangelearn's Learning Laboratory at the 2010 event, Augmented Reality Games (ARGs) began to offer a new channel for collaborative learning. Social games, such as the ones on Facebook, also opened up the thinking of designers, developers, and managers to new possibilities for learning.

Augmented reality (AR), the blend of real views of physical environments with virtual reality, piqued the interest of many in the e-Learning development community. Along with proofs of concept, initial uses were mainly for performance support and gaming, but by the end of the year Volkswagen in Germany introduced AR to train service personnel worldwide on maintenance and repair of its new model vehicles.

In a surprisingly short space of time, the innovative collaboration platform Google Wave rose and fell. But the idea and technology will survive in other forms, as part of the Apache Project, including uses for instruction and performance support. This will be an incredibly significant Open Source, community-supported project in coming years.

With changes in management and philosophy, Second Life is fading from the scene as an important learning environment. However, Virtual Worlds continue to capture the imagination of instructional managers, developers, and designers as venues for real-time events, simulations, and collaborative possibilities.

Finally, throughout the year, mergers and acquisitions (M&A) activity continued to reshape the supplier landscape. Under an "interesting" economy worldwide, the strong got stronger and the weak got bought. So it goes.

### **What we could see in 2011**

Given what happened in 2010, it's easy to make these predictions for the coming 12 months:

- Social media will continue to grow as a source of content and verification, and even more so for subject matter experts, instructional designers, and individual learners who understand how to use social media purposefully.
- Collaboration will increase in significance as a model for learning and performance support, including incorporation into ARGs.

- Crowdsourcing will emerge as a mainstream strategy for knowledge acquisition, particularly for individuals with strong and extensive [social graphs](#).
- The combination of mobile and social technology will become the catalyst for new, more powerful, strategies for learning and performance.
- Philosophy around use of mobile devices for learning and performance support, distinct from e-Learning and EPSS, will continue to mature. Mobile learning requires its own design and development treatment, and cannot be thought of simply as e-Learning moved from the desktop to the smartphone.
- Collaborative curation will become a new model for knowledge management.

These possibilities lead me to wonder, philosophically, about what happens to talent management in a collaborative, connected world. Will we evaluate and develop the individual alone and try to manage talent as corporate property, or will we evaluate and develop individuals *and* their networks, supporting such cohorts even across organizational lines? What happens to the individual and to individual worth and value? We will probably have to wait until 2012, or even longer, to find these answers.

### **What we still need**

In spite of the progress in 2010 and the expected developments in 2011, there are still some items on the wish list for many of us. Here are the things I'd most like to be surprised by in the coming year.

- An update or successor to ADDIE, and tools to make it manifest;
- Better understanding of how the brain learns, and tested, proven strategies to apply that understanding in a world where individuals are extended through technology, always connected to information sources, and in possession of (potentially) a global network of others, including experts;
- An effective, meaningful way to evaluate the true return on our investment in learning, at all levels from the individual to the global;
- Standards for implementation and delivery of online instruction and support;
- Tools to support all of these.

All of us in The eLearning Guild – the founders and principals, the Conference and On Line Event program managers, member services and support team, our research and publications crew, the rest of the headquarters staff, and myself and the editorial and production staff – are looking forward to 2011. We especially look forward to continuing to serve you with services, information, ideas, and news you can use!

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