

CLENEExchange

December 2005

“School ends, but education doesn’t.”

Volume 22, Number 2

Learning 2005: Personal and Virtual Perspectives

by Gail McGovern, Planning and Training Wizard (gmcgovern@macnexus.org)

My first introduction to Elliot Masie was at an American Society for Training and Development conference in 1987. Even though the second edition of his *Computer Training Handbook: Strategies for Helping People to Learn* published in 1997 needs updating re technological changes, it is still a must have for those who do computer training and useful for anyone involved in training. Over the years, I have eagerly kept up with Elliot’s projects through his free email newsletter, *Learning TRENDS*—see his blog <http://trends.masie.com/>

Elliot announced that he would convene Learning 2005, a new global conference; I wanted to attend, but had a date conflict—so I began my virtual experience. Beginning July 15, each week, I was drawn back to the conference website, www.learning2005.com/ for video, audio and text segments posted at the website “to trigger conversations and dialogues in the learning field.”

The first two items were a 20 minute thought provoking video by Elliott entitled *Learning Velocity* and the second, a 15 minute podcast, *Informal Content & Conversations in Learning*, changed my way of thinking about preparing people for training events. As a result, I rethought the process I planned to use for an event I am coordinating in April 2006, the Better Together Conference www.btconference.info/ and have included both a preconference blog and a podcast using the service Elliott introduced—www.audioblog.com

On July 22, I made a connection with a librarian registered for Learning 2005—Gail Griffith from Carroll County (MD) Public Library—that also changed my thinking—this time about gaming and learning. I found Gail as a result of a list of organizations sending representatives to Learning 2005. She and I have since become fast friends—her new

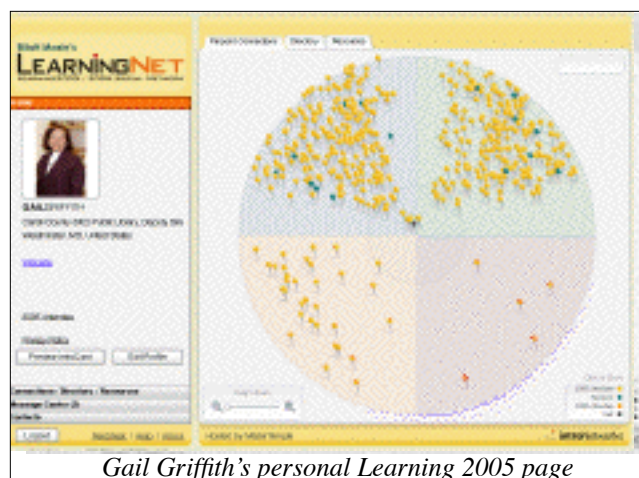


member profile is featured on page 4. I continued to keep up with Learning 2005 virtually and Gail prepared to attend both virtually and in person.

We both got the opportunity to give input for a set of 120 phrases that each conference attendee would use for the online social networking system—to indicate interest in four areas:

- work context
- learning methods/issues
- solutions or knowledge areas
- professional or personal

Details on the social networking system are at introNetwork’s website, <http://intronetworks.com/>



Gail Griffith’s personal Learning 2005 page

Another feature of the conference was the wiki (a collaborative website set up to allow user editing and adding of content) www.learningwiki.com/ Check it out for in-depth information on all aspects of the conference. I found the Trip Report section of particular interest since it shows what partici-

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Upcoming Conferences

ALA Midwinter

January 20-25, 2006 - San Antonio
January 19-24, 2007 - Seattle
January 11-16, 2008 - Philadelphia

ALA Annual

June 22-June 28, 2006 - New Orleans
June 21-June 27, 2007 - Washington, D.C.
June 26-July 2, 2008 - Anaheim

Public Library Association

March 20-25, 2006 - Boston
March 25-29, 2008 - Minneapolis

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New Member Profile: Gail Griffith

by Gail McGovern, Planning and Training Wizard (gmcgovern@macnexus.org)

Name: Gail Griffith

Organization and your position there:

Carroll County (MD) Public Library [CCPL].
I'm the Deputy Director.

How long have you had that job? Twenty-three years! I can't believe it's been that long!

Describe your typical work responsibilities:

I'm responsible for public services and staff development. I do just about all the management and supervisory things you'd expect of a deputy director. But my organization uses a great deal of teamwork, so I find myself acting as an internal consultant to a variety of system teams, as well as ensuring that teams are chartered, staffed, and get the resources they need—including training resources. I work with our staff to develop in-house training and look for a variety of ways to meet staff training needs.

Maryland is a small state with a great deal of interlibrary cooperation, so I have the opportunity to work on lots of interesting statewide projects. For example, I worked with Maryland's Learning Libraries project for about three years, and helped train children's librarians statewide to align storytimes with the Maryland Model for School Readiness. Currently I'm helping to develop an e-learning product called Excellent Customer Service that's based on the face-to-face reference interview training that's been in use for twenty years. In addition to my job with CCPL, I frequently work on consulting projects for other libraries—either alone or with other consulting colleagues. Typically I facilitate strategic planning processes or work on staffing and structure studies.

What was your most interesting library-related job before your present position? Why?

I've had three professional library jobs in two public library systems. My first job was as a children's librarian. I enjoyed children's programming so much that I left to become a freelance storyteller for a couple of years.

When I came back to libraries, it was to CCPL. I was hired here in 1978 to drive an early-childhood bookmobile that serviced licensed family child care providers. That job was so much fun—and it was a valuable resource for young children and their caregivers. I've had the opportunity to help the library design a variety of services for young children and their parents and caregivers—a really important niche for our library, and for public libraries in general.

Where did you earn your MLS?

I received my MLS from the University of Maryland in 1974. Later I went back to school and completed the Master's program in Applied Behavioral Science (organization and human resources development) at the Johns Hopkins University. I've always been interested in organizational learning as well as in staff development.

What is the most helpful training resource that you use on a regular basis?

One particular resource? I look at a variety of things, but I think the activity that has helped me the most over the years has been to seek out and attend conferences that are not aimed specifically at librarians, but have to do with broader trends, either in technology or in the learning field.

For example, I recently attended Elliot Masie's Learning 2005 conference and also spent three days at his Xtreme Learning Lab. Learning 2005 exposed me to 1500 corporate learning officers who have similar issues to mine, but a somewhat different perspective. The Xtreme Learning Lab gave me the opportunity to have hands-on experience with gaming, PC video conferencing, podcasting, and simulation design. It gave me the confidence to know that we could completely redesign our staff onboarding process to leverage new learning technologies without a big investment of funds.

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Describe your best training idea to share with CLENE members.

I try never to forget that the ‘e’ in e-learning stands for the experience that you create for your learners, and that technology is just a tool to help create something experiential for them.

What is your favorite place that you have traveled and why?

It has been way, way too long since I traveled anywhere that wasn’t to attend a conference or do some work for a client!! I love New York City—there’s always something new to discover there. I enjoy theatre, museums, galleries, restaurants, and discovering unusual or offbeat things—of which the city has plenty. On the other hand, I’ve also enjoyed every trip I’ve made to the southwest US. Arizona’s red rock country and the Grand Canyon in particular awed me—I could only be still and take it all in.

What is your favorite thing to do when you attend library conferences?

I no longer try to attend every program, but I do look for programs or speakers to meet my own learning needs. I always make time to catch up with colleagues who work in other parts of the country. I try to make time to see at least one interesting thing in the conference city. And I manage to have one shopping experience.

What is the biggest training disaster you have ever experienced? What did you learn from it?

Many years ago, I was responsible for organizing our annual staff in-service day. Our committee worked with a very reputable consulting firm to develop a full-day session around change management, with a terrific consultant. The day before our session, the firm called to say they’d made a terrible mistake and double-booked our consultant, but had someone else who could step in. We talked to him and were satisfied he could do the job. But when he showed up, we knew it was a big mistake. His opening remarks were jokes that were offensive to women—about 95% of the audience. It went downhill from there. Long story short—the library director fired

him at lunchtime (although he argued with her and wanted to be allowed to finish the day!). We retooled the afternoon, and worked with the staff in small groups to identify and begin to address their issues about change. The staff sent the director flowers the next day, and for several years I heard people say it was the best staff day we ever had! I learned at least two lessons: always have a Plan B, and never be afraid to change gears in order to meet the needs of your learners! Maybe a third lesson, too—when the group is unhappy or restless they will cheer you if you take action to change things.

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**See the public AMA Website at
<http://www.amanet.org/index.htm>
Contact Barbara Ritinger
at brittinger@arlington.va.us
for the CLENE member number and
members access website.**

pants thought was most useful for them. See it at www.learningwiki.com/tripreport/

After the conference, I asked Gail for a synopsis of her reactions. The two things she felt were the most important in terms of what she could adapt for use at her library were:

- 1) thinking about all the ways/opportunities there are for making learning experiences more interactive both for staff and customers e.g. reinventing the library's orientation process for new staff (she learned a new phrase—the onboarding experience), using interactive methods to recruit new staff such as having a hands on lab session for those who design staff orientation sessions
- 2) the role games can play in how staff are trained e.g. buying Sony PlayStation Portables and challenging staff to find ways to use them such as putting a tour of the library on them

Other Learning 2005 elements that stood out were:

- all of the general session speakers were interviewed on stage by Elliot—as if Eliot were Oprah and attendees were the audience
- a virtual reality techie avatar named Avery Lerner livened up the general sessions
- key points Elliot made in his “rants” e.g. course designers spend months designing courses before content is available for people who need it now, not in 18 months when it is already out of date
- discussion about when it is more appropriate to use a specific method of learning e.g. ranging from giving someone quick information using cell phone text messaging to hooking someone up with a personal mentor for a face-to-face session
- there was a Learning Land instead of the traditional conference exhibit hall—it featured a new technology learning lab open from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m., a climbing wall experience reminding attendees that the best way is often just to let go, visual documenters highlighting key concepts, mind maps, communities based on social networking and partitions covered with chart paper for people to write, draw, connect,

make dates, etc.

- attendees were frequently polled on key issues using a wireless polling system
- major emphasis was placed on informal networking among the 1,500 attendees e.g. use of online social network profiles to set up meetings with each other and facilitated group sessions rather than formal programs
- the opportunity to compete in a challenge like that on the Food Network's Iron Chef using a piece of elearning content for staff as the “secret ingredient.” Everyone was to use “how to teach your employees to be better searchers” as their secret ingredient. Gail and her teammates produced a seven minute podcast parody of NPR's *Car Talk*; they called it *Click and Search* featuring the Searchit Sisters. They helped a caller find a piece of music on the Internet and won second prize—tuition to Learning 2006!
- informal networking with people from a wide variety of different backgrounds
- people could choose whatever/however they wanted to learn in different environments
- books and reading were looked upon as a learning technology e.g. in one small group, people from large corporations ended up suggesting an inhouse book club was as a method for getting people excited about professional reading
- emphasis was placed on getting attendees to think about meeting learners where they are and getting them where they need to go
- the conference was a great learning model, especially because Elliot was willing to experiment—attendees got to see that some things worked and others didn't
- Elliot added a way of giving back by auctioning off inflatable furniture purchased for the conference and giving the proceeds to charities such as those providing free elearning for kids

Learning 2006 will be November 5-8 in Orlando; info is at www.learning2005.com/register/

Hot Topics in Learning

Editor's Note

Hot Topics in Learning is a new feature of the CLENExchange; it will include emerging trends and hot issues from learning-related fields.

Mystery shopping for evaluating training

In his blog post Godfrey Parkin discusses the use of mystery/secret shopping for evaluating customer contact skills training.

“It gives us unbiased feedback, from the perspective of a customer, on how well desired behavior patterns or skills are adopted. It can also tell us a lot about the environmental and systemic obstacles to application of the learning.”

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/bws6w>

Learning should parallel creativity

In his post on the Learning Circuits Blog, Donald Clark explains why he feels that “Learning needs to follow a similar process as Csikszentmihalyi’s Five Steps of Creativity.”

Clark’s premise is that change is needed because “traditional learning systems have typically been centralized and operate on the principle that learners are unable to decide what they need to learn, thus the system does it for them, which in turn creates a vicious cycle — puts the learners in a system that does very little to encourage critical thinking, formal reasoning, or meta-learning; then tell them they are unable to decide what they need to learn, thus others will have to do it for them.”

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/b8bhv>

Course casting

A November 28 Newsweek article entitled, *Professor In Your Pocket*, introduces the latest learning controversy — the use of course casting — professors make podcasts of lectures available for students to download from the university’s website.

Converts say that “technology makes it easier for professors to enliven lectures with guest speakers and primary-source material” while detractors are concerned that “it makes it a little too easy not to have the classroom experience.”

The trend has already spawned interesting new

learning strategies. For example, “an American University professor plans to make his international-relations lectures and supplemental audio material required listening. Then he’ll dispense with what he calls being ‘the sage on the stage’ altogether and use his lecture periods to guide mandatory group discussion instead.”

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/dmjf8>

Online education annual report

Growing by Degrees: Online Education in the United States, 2005 the third annual report on the state of online education in U.S. Higher Education is available online. The study is “aimed at answering some of the fundamental questions about the nature and extent of online education.” Over 1,000 colleges and universities provided information showing that online education is now part of the mainstream of higher education.

Download the report at <http://tinyurl.com/7orh2>

Peer production of educational materials

This 32 page PDF is available free if you sign up at Lulu.com, a website that offers independent publishers free access to tools for publishing and distributing books, music and other digital content.

“The networked environment seems to have successfully released enormous creative energy in domains ranging from software design to encyclopedia writing. It has come, in many cases, to compete with and outperform traditional proprietary, market-based production. The question we face is whether the basic economics and organizational strategy that have proved so successful in other areas are equally applicable to learning objects and other educational resources. The answer seems to be: it depends.”

Download the book at <http://tinyurl.com/an5kj>

Organizing Blogs

Structured blogging is a proposed format for blog entries to insure that whatever data is published on an individual blog will look like a normal entry, but will also be published in a machine-readable format other services can read and understand.

Read more at <http://structuredblogging.org/>

Your Invitation to CLENE Events at Midwinter

ALA Midwinter Conference January 20-25, 2006, San Antonio **CLENE Meetings**

| | | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------|
| Friday, January 20 | 3:30 p.m. - 5:30 p.m. | Strategic Planning Meeting I | HCB Room 005 |
| Saturday, January 21 | 8:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. | Strategic Planning Meeting II | MAN Veramendi |
| Sunday, January 22 | 1:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m. | Showcase Planning Meeting | HCB Room 212B |
| Monday, January 23 | 2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. | Staff Development Group | HCB Room 206A |

For more information from ALA about the conference, see the website at
<http://www.ala.org/ala/eventsandconferencesb/midwinter/2006/home.htm>

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