Chapter 15

A Step by Step Guide to Design and Delivery of Mobile Learning Content

Serge Gabarre
University Putra Malaysia, Malaysia

Cécile Gabarre
University Putra Malaysia, Malaysia

ABSTRACT

Mobile learning is more than a trend that follows today’s lifestyle. Learning on the go with mobile internet offers advantages that were not even thought of a few years ago. Current literature on the topic has demonstrated its usefulness as well as its limitations. In a context where learners do not have access to mobile internet it is still possible to deliver course notes in a mobile format. The authors created portable lecture notes that were distributed to their students via the multimedia messaging service (MMS). With these notes, the students were able to take advantage of the ubiquitous nature of their mobile devices and thus started to learn anywhere and anytime. This chapter proposes a simple method to create lecture notes for mobile devices and suggests several methods of delivery.

INTRODUCTION

Mobile learning, more commonly referred to as m-learning, is no longer an obscure subject. Indeed, there is now a rich literature on this novel form of learning (see Kukulska-Hulme, 2006; Naismith, Lonsdale, Vavoula, & Sharpes, 2004; Traxler & Kukulska-Hulme, 2005). The benefits of using mobile devices to learn such as the ability to learn anywhere and anytime surpass the disadvantages that come primarily from the diminutive size of the displays.

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BACKGROUND

Definition of m-Learning

Mobile learning commonly referred to as m-learning, is intrinsically related to mobile devices. These are generally cell phones but also comprise PDAs, advanced MP3 players such as the iPod Touch and even portable video games player. Since the technology involved is related to information and communication (ICT), using mobile devices to teach can be interpreted as an evolution from e-learning (Holzinger, Nischelwitzer, & Meisenberger, 2005).

More precisely, Sharples, Corlett and Westmancott (2002) defined eight requirements for the design of a mobile learning resource. They should be “highly portable, individual, unobtrusive, available, adaptable, persistent, useful and easy to use” (Sharples, Corlett, & Westmancott, 2002, p. 223). These requirements were completed by Ally (2005) who suggested that the content should be adapted to the small size of the device, make use of multimedia, allow ease of navigation, and put a minimal load on the devices’ processing resource.

At the turn of the century, Judith Boettcher (2001) envisioned that through future development in teaching technology, learning could happen anywhere and everywhere. Today, m-learning fulfills this forecast. It is interesting to point out that, using cell phones in the class rooms is conventionally considered inappropriate (Campbell & Russo, 2003). Yet, with mobile learning, the situation is paradoxically opposite where students are required to use their cell phones to learn.

Learning Anywhere and Anytime

The ubiquity nature of mobile devices fits a fast paced lifestyle where one has several short lapses of idle time. This down time could happen in urban commuting, or while waiting for something such as an appointment or even while queuing for any sort of service. It is an educator’s dream come true to have learners retrieve material at any moment. Although this is possible with the use of a computer in any e-learning setup, the ability to be free from grounded infrastructures and to engage in nomadic learning is an added advantage. This is particularly true when fieldwork is required (Sato, Ohshika, & Ikeda, 2004) or even in specific domains such as medical studies where learners are mobile (Holzinger et al., 2005).

Several Ways of Delivering Mobile Content

Three main channels may be used to deliver lecture notes to the students’ mobile devices: mobile internet, SMS and MMS. These can be divided into two categories: pull and push, in regard to who initiates the request for information. Mobile internet fits in both categories, as it may be used by the learners to retrieve information or by the lecturers to send emails. Internet on mobile devices offers more possibilities than the other two channels which are more restrictive. SMSs and MMSs...
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