

The M-Learning Explosion: The Next Super App?

**Eugene J. Monaco, Executive Director and Public Service Professor,
Professional Development Program**

Today, as we produce more information than ever, the shelf life of knowledge and skills continues to shorten. The new generation workforce, having grown up with Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 has experienced information, and access to it, differently from earlier generations. With the rapid growth of mobile technology, their expectation for access to knowledge is to get it and have it now—in a nanosecond!

The way in which mobile technology has transformed the way we communicate and live is astonishing. The Nielsen Company estimates that 29.6% of the current mobile devices in the United States are Smartphones and that the number of Smartphone users is up 60% versus a year ago. This number is projected to keep growing as Smartphones become more affordable. Morgan Stanley reports that by 2013 mobile devices are expected to be used more often than PCs for access to the Web. There is no doubt about it—the future is in mobile technology. How wisely we use it is still an open question that has generated considerable discussion.

One interesting result of this growing use is the way in which the development of mobile wireless technologies has garnered excitement and discussion among practitioners, trainers, and academics in the education and training fields. A primary reason for this interest is that predications for the use of mobile technology foresee the potential to dramatically shift the environment from traditional classroom settings to mobile learning settings. The rapid advances being made by the mobile technology industry, particularly with 3G and 4G, have hastened the emergence of the M-Learning phenomena which opens up numerous opportunities for using this technology for training purposes. The huge advantage of mobile technology is that the flexibility and ease of use allow employees to obtain training while on the job. Mobile technology has made just-in-time learning more of a reality. With mobile technology, learning can happen in the context where it is needed and when it is needed on the work topic at hand. As a consequence, learning is more meaningful, and the employee applies the information, knowledge, and skills more quickly. M-Learning provides the opportunity to access lessons, video clips, and audio libraries from anywhere and at anytime, as well as the possibility to interact and share information with fellow trainees and instructors in real time rather than after the learning event.

Continued on page 5

An Interview with Graeme Newman	Pg. 2
Peter-Paul Koch (ppk).....	Pg. 3
News and Views	Pg. 4
Did You Know?	Pg. 5

A Newsletter from the
Professional
Development Program,
Rockefeller College



**UNIVERSITY
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State University of New York



Quick Response (QR) codes provide instant access to web content when scanned by smartphones.

An Interview with Graeme Newman, UAlbany, School of Criminal Justice

Tell us a little about your website... its audience, content, goals.

The Center for Problem-Oriented Policing website (www.popcenter.org) was set up to provide a one-stop place for police officers and police executives to get information on how to respond to crime and disorder problems. Our main mission is to translate the complicated research that has been done on many crime issues into language that ordinary people and police officers can understand and use. The core of the website is our POP guides, a series of short, problem-specific guides on particular crime problems. They are available free in hard copy, but the main distribution outlet is through our website, which has grown tremendously over the seven or so years since its launch. There are now over 3500 full text documents available for download.

What motivated you to pursue making your website mobile friendly?

We've been led to make our website more and more user-friendly and accessible. And in the past year or so we've become aware that many police officers now have BlackBerries and other mobile devices. We know that demand will only increase in this area and we want to keep ahead of it. Police departments have always been a little obsessed with technology, including communication technologies, so maybe we should have thought of it long ago. I've been working with Jennifer Kang, a PDP programmer, to determine the best way for users to access the site using mobile devices.

What challenges have you encountered along the way?

The challenges have been mainly Jennifer's. And perhaps one of her biggest challenges is my demands. We spent a great deal of time trying to decide whether it would be better to rework the site itself to make it mobile friendly, or build a series of apps that could be downloaded, which would have been expensive, since it would mean programming different apps for several devices. I was skeptical about whether we could make the website look good enough on a mobile phone, given how tiny the screens are, but Jen has



www.popcenter.org

persevered. It's taken a few months and we still have a ways to go, especially because some parts of the website are very interactive, but the site looks terrific. It's actually resulted in a huge improvement to the site overall. In my opinion, we've made huge progress and this puts us and, hopefully, PDP ahead of the game.

From January 1, 2011 to August 31, 2011, mobile visits increased 58% and mobile page views increased 125%. The trajectory of this trend is on a noticeable and remarkable upward slope. Mobile usage has been increasing rapidly over the last few months.

Have you seen any change in how people are accessing the site? Have you had any feedback from users?

I don't know the statistics off hand, but mobile usage has been increasing rapidly over the last few months.

Have your own personal browsing habits changed with the advent of mobile?

Absolutely. Before I had a smart phone I had a Kindle, which I was really proud of, and I read several magazine subscriptions on it. But I've since quit my Kindle subscriptions because it's so much easier for me to read using my phone. There is something about smartphones that makes text really easy to read and the phones really easy to use. You see it around you everyday... everyone is constantly using their phones. I resisted getting one initially, but now I'm glued to mine, too.

What is next for the site in terms of mobile delivery?

Social networks are probably the next thing that we need to look into. I'm not sure whether there will be a connection with the mobile, but we definitely need to explore them. **PDP**

Peter-Paul Koch

Mobile Platform Strategist

On April 14, PDP and the NYS Forum jointly hosted The Mobile Browser World, a talk by Peter-Paul Koch, who is universally known as ppk. Based in the Netherlands, ppk won international renown with his research on browser compatibility. As desktop browsers became more standardized, he shifted his attention to the mobile web and was delighted to find that the range of mobile devices and the score of browsers they use presented a fascinating challenge for developers who need their applications to work on multiple platforms. He set himself to mapping their capabilities, and has since become one of the world's foremost authorities on mobile browsers. In a presentation aimed at both webmasters and a more general audience, ppk shared some of his research findings and introduced us to some of the challenges and opportunities facing mobile web developers. He explained that a large portion of the world's population accesses the web from their phones, the vast majority of which are older models. Although browsers are improving quickly across devices, building content that can be accessed from a wide variety of phones requires working and testing in a variety of browsers. ppk shared strategies and tools and even some code snippets aimed at helping local webmasters optimize existing sites for mobile delivery.

PDP programmer Jennifer Kang was instrumental in organizing ppk's visit. According to NYS Forum Interim Director, Deborah Buck, the presentation received a record number of advance registrations upon its announcement. His presentation is available at: http://www.nysforum.org/events/4_14_2011_The_Mobile_Browser_World/. For more information about ppk, please visit <http://quirksmode.org> or follow him on twitter at <http://twitter.com/ppk> **PDP**



Peter-Paul Koch, a.k.a. ppk

PATRICK H. LAUIKE

News and Views

David Rousseau Appointed Interim Dean of Rockefeller College

David Rousseau was appointed Interim Dean of Rockefeller College in July 2011 replacing Jeffrey Straussman, who is on leave from the University and is currently a Visiting Professor & Faculty Director (Executive Education) at Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy National University of Singapore.



David Rousseau

MARK SCHMIDT

Professor Rousseau's research interests focus on military conflict, shared identity, political development, and foreign policy. He has authored two books, *Democracy and War: Institutions, Norms, and the Evolution of International Conflict* (Stanford University Press, 2005) and *Identifying Threats and Threatening Identities: The Social Construction of Realism and Liberalism* (Stanford University Press, 2006). In addition to his book publications, Professor Rousseau has published articles in the *American Political Science Review*, the *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, and the *Journal of Peace Research*. Professor Rousseau received his MPP from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University and his PhD in Political Science from the University of Michigan. Prior to arriving at the University at Albany, Professor Rousseau taught at Korea University, the University of Pennsylvania, and the University at Buffalo (SUNY). **PDP**

PDP Wins Second USDLA Award

For the second straight year, PDP has won a US Distance Learning Association award for Best Practice in Distance Learning Programming. This year's award, at the gold level, was given for the e-learning course *Preventing Shaken Baby Syndrome*, which PDP created under contract to the New York Office of Children and Family Services. The one-hour, fully narrated course employs rich graphics and video to drive home the message "Never, ever shake a baby". It is one of a growing suite of e-learning courses available on the Early Childhood Education and Training Program website (www.ecetp.pdp.albany.edu). **PDP**

News and Views continued on page 4



PDP Wins Best of NY Award



For the third time in recent years, the PDP Department of Computer Training Services (DCTS) has been recognized as a key participant in a “Best of New York Award” from the Center for Digital Government—this time, for participation in the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) Child Care Time and Attendance (CCTA) project. CCTA is a new computer system for tracking the time and attendance of children in subsidized child care programs, and is now available in 57 local departments of social services across the state. As part of training responsibilities on the project, DCTS staff developed the curriculum and delivered classroom training for three role-specific courses to 1,116 staff across 37 different training locations over the course of six and a half months. DCTS also designed two online training modules aimed at daycare providers and parents of children in daycare. In addition to developing full-scale manuals and quick reference cards, DCTS also created course-specific evaluation instruments that were used to inform the instructional design changes from the pilot through the regular training phase. The project was truly a group effort; with staff in centralized PDP areas such as administration, finance, and information systems providing invaluable assistance and support.

In the Most Innovative Use of Technology category, the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) will receive an award for its mobile-optimized website. PDP staff member, Jason Morris, serves as webmaster for OTDA’s Internet and Intranet sites. With his understanding of mobile browsers and ability to adapt the style sheets that display web content to accommodate a variety of screen sizes, Mr. Morris recoded the OTDA website to the delight of the sponsor. This is the third award that PDP has won for web-based projects. **PDP**



Peter Miraglia

Peter Miraglia Receives PDP’s 2010 Distinguished Continuing Professional Education Leadership Award of Excellence

The 27th Annual Rockefeller College Alumni & Awards Ceremony honored the 2010 Distinguished Continuing Professional Education Leadership Award of Excellence Peter D. Miraglia, former Director of Training at the New York Office of Children and Family Services.

For the past 35 years, Peter Miraglia enthusiastically promoted the importance of public workforce education and training to advance the principles of good government. Peter continually added value to what it means to practice good public administration.

Noteworthy of Peter’s many accomplishments was the instrumental role he played in establishing the NYS Child Welfare BSW Scholarship Program to recruit high achieving undergraduate social work students into the field of public child welfare. The program offered up to a \$10,000 scholarship to senior year students who would take academic courses to prepare them for public social work practice while they completed their field work in a local DSS office. These students would then be hired by the local district agreeing to a 2 year work commitment. Always forward thinking, this program walks the line between linking education with training and uses the best of both. The results produced by the BSW Scholarship Program and countless others that Peter influenced have had a direct impact on improving the quality of life for children and families throughout NYS. **PDP**

MARK SCHMIDT

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Continued from page 1

These changes are made possible by the advances of mobile technology, and have the potential to truly redefine the meaning of distance learning. As more mobile apps become available, mobile technology will be seen as a trusted assistant to employees in the workplace. Materials accessed via M-Learning will replace manuals, reference tools (such as job aids), charts, technical support, policy documents, and more. As these apps become more ubiquitous in support of the workplace, we may have to consider using a different training strategy that encompasses the features of mobile technology as its foundation. At the same time, a word of caution must be made as we drive down the M-Learning road. There is a large audience of potential learners familiar with mobile devices, quite eager to speedily travel this path, and it may be easy to overlook the challenges that M-Learning creates. There are some bumps in the road that need patching, and we in higher education must address these before M-Learning precipitately becomes the panacea for workforce training. Equally important is that learners can learn at their own pace.

Raytheon Professional Services, a leader in global learning solutions and training, has identified some stumbling blocks that may hinder the full adoption of M-Learning as the preferred next generation training. In a recent analysis of M-Learning, they made the following points. Currently M-Learning is positioned to deliver informal content quite easily, but to be successful it must be able to deliver formal training by adding content management, automated content

Continued on page 6

Did You Know?

- ▶ eMarketer reports that Smartphone penetration will increase from 31% of handsets in 2010 to 50% in 2014 (*Learn Magazine, Fall 2011*).
- ▶ The fall 2011 *Learn Magazine* reports that the latest big breaking news is that mobiles are the new frontier in the field of continuing education and lifelong learning.
- ▶ 17% of the workforce used mobile learning in 2009.
- ▶ 55% of US mobile web users go online from their handheld devices daily.
- ▶ According to *Mobile Commerce* in the next two to three years mobile will move to the core of all brand communications. The transformation will be swift and fast as the next wave of consumers start to spend more time with their mobile devices rather than their computers or television sets (*Learn Magazine, Fall 2011*).
- ▶ Of the 1.9 billion global mobile cellular phone subscriptions added between 2006-2009 more than 1.6 billion of them were from developing nations. (*Pace, A. (2011). At last: M-learning going mainstream.T+D, 65(6), 18-18.*)

PHOTO COURTESY OF MOTOROLA INC.



- ▶ In 1983, the world's first portable cellular telephone, the Motorola DynaTAC 8000X, was commercially available at a cost of \$3995. It weighed 2 pounds, measured more than a foot long, and could store 30 phone numbers. (http://www.pcworld.com/article/131450/in_pictures_a_history_of_cell_phones.html)



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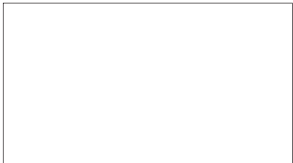
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Continued from page 5

distribution, content interaction tracking, and a reporting system comparable to the Learning Management System that we find being used for other types of distributive learning. It's a moment of déjà vu to realize that these were the same challenges that E-Learning faced, as well, in its early development.

M-Learning has been commonly used in developed and developing countries to provide generic learning for adults—education that can be implemented in training courses for various professions, such as health care. For example, India and the United States have established a partnership through Tufts University to deliver clinical training to remote sites across India in order to facilitate clinical education for health care workers. M-Learning has also caught on in K-12 education in the United States. An example is its use by the Gilbert Arizona Unified School District to assist children with special needs by using mobile apps for autism, speech language pathology, and behavior modeling.

Unquestionably, mobile wireless technologies have become a very interesting recent addition to the education and training field and have produced great excitement, as well as considerable concern.

For some, the use of mobile wireless technologies has the power to change the way we train today's workforce, which can be mind boggling. For others, mobile wireless technologies are still far from being practical in everyday life. To employ these technologies successfully, educators will need to think critically and determine how to best achieve their education and training goals using these devices. M-Learning still has a ways to go before it becomes the universally favored solution in the training arena. **PDP**



Eugene J. Monaco

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