

Community locations are equipped with technologies to create, deliver and receive educational products. Typically, high-end technology is not required to accommodate most of the needs of learners and staff in community learning settings. At any given time, learner audiences at community learning centres tend to be small in number, and their learning requirements varied. Therefore, the centres employ both synchronous and asynchronous learning technologies, varying from small video conferencing studios to stand alone computer terminals.

Home

Home locations are single and family dwellings. As part of the virtual learning system, home-based locations are the most flexible and geographically dispersed locations and potentially serve the widest educational market. They expand quality educational access into peoples' houses, thus potentially extending the reach of any educational system to every person within a service area. The proliferation of home computer technology and increased access to the Internet has prompted a steady rise in home-based locations.

Home-based locations are suited to the independent developer and deliverer of content and instruction. The management for these locations is usually the responsibility of the resident. However, the resident may be employed or contracted to a larger organization. Products produced or delivered from home sites are generally distributed to many other locations, such as homes, community learning centres, institutions and workplaces.

Support services may be provided from home locations. There is potential for an increase in support services originating from homes, especially with the advent of powerful home-based information technology and the opportunity for entrepreneurial opportunities.

Home locations can provide access to individuals who wish to engage in independent or group learning activities. Learners selecting, either by choice or circumstance, home-based educational services require a wider selection of educational products and services than is currently available. Many home-based learners, use the home to receive only a portion of the educational services they require. Design and management of the learners educational environment and access to learning resources is usually managed by the learner.

Technologies at residence locations may be used to facilitate both synchronous and asynchronous interactions. They are often of the desktop variety and accommodate a variety of learning and teaching mediums such as print-based packages, telephone tutoring, television and radio, audio teleconferencing, computer-mediated conferencing, and desktop videoconferencing. Indications are that the home market is a growth market for telephone and cable television providers, especially with improvements in the capability of these companies to provide integrated, interactive services.

Workplace

Workplace locations are centres of learning financed and managed by an employer. The educational and training resources housed in workplace locations are generally dedicated to increasing the job performance of employees. However, in some instances, workplace sites may be used by the general community, when not required by the owner company. Workplace locations play a unique, but increasing role in adult virtual learning systems. When connected to other locations in the virtual system, they can provide the all-important link between theoretical knowledge and the practical realities of employment.

Workplace locations are settings where content and instruction are both created and imported. Many companies house training production facilities or have outside agencies and institutions produce customized materials and instruction. In either case, the virtual learning system may be utilized to distribute content and instruction to employees on or off the work site. In some cases, companies have found it profitable to produce and distribute training to other companies.

Support services, at workplace sites are also customized to employee performance improvement objectives. As such, they tend to be as elaborate or as sparse as deemed necessary to cost-effectively assist the employee in gaining the knowledge and skills required to attain a given competency.

Learners at workplace sites may receive content and instruction from multiple sources. They may study at a desk in their office or designated workspace or access training in a specified area such as a training room. Although the learner may experience substantial freedom in both the selection of study time and material, the goals and objectives of the study program are usually outlined and managed by the employer.

Generally, both synchronous and asynchronous learning technologies are available in order to accommodate both group and independent learning. The teaching and learning technologies used at workplace sites varies greatly, ranging from desktop platforms to sophisticated full-motion video conferencing. These technologies may be used to facilitate the delivery of content and instruction between locations at one worksite, to multiple worksites, or from the worksite to the worker's home. In some instances workplace locations provide high-end technologies that other areas of the virtual system are able to use, either through charitable contribution or through partnering.

Transit

Transit locations are the most varied of the locations in the distance and alternate learning enterprise. They are the newest components to the virtual learning system. They increase the mobility of the users of the system and contribute to maximizing time efficiencies. In some sense, instruction and learning activities conducted at transit locations are ambassadors of the virtual learning system. They illustrate the viability of transcending both distance and/or time by providing numerous examples of the ease with which information and knowledge can be transported to and from anywhere on the globe.

These locations are suited to individuals and groups who must produce content or deliver instruction from wherever they happen to be while away from the locations described above. Operational management at transit locations is usually characterized as flexible and inventive, since individuals and groups producing or delivering content and instruction may as often as not be at locations where supplies and telecommunications connectivity may be limited and/or of poor quality.

Like any of the other locations described, transit settings are able to receive support services from a host provider.

Learners at transit locations are by choice, directive, or circumstance away from a common location. As an individual or member of a group, these learners have the necessary materials and equipment with them or must have access to these from their location.

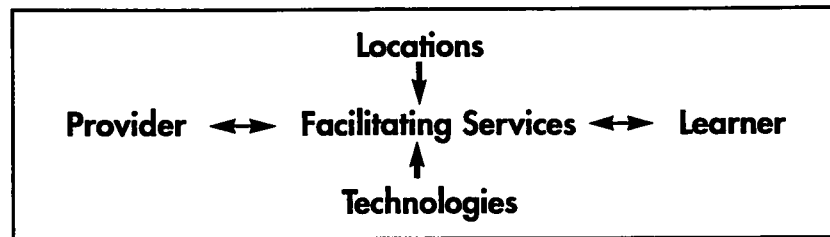
The technologies utilized in transit locations are generally portable or within easy access of the user, including such items as laptop computers with modems, cellular phones, and compact portable printers. As technologies in the virtual learning system they are able to facilitate access to larger, more permanent information systems and databases, which are impossible or not convenient to relocate.

SYSTEM INTEGRITY

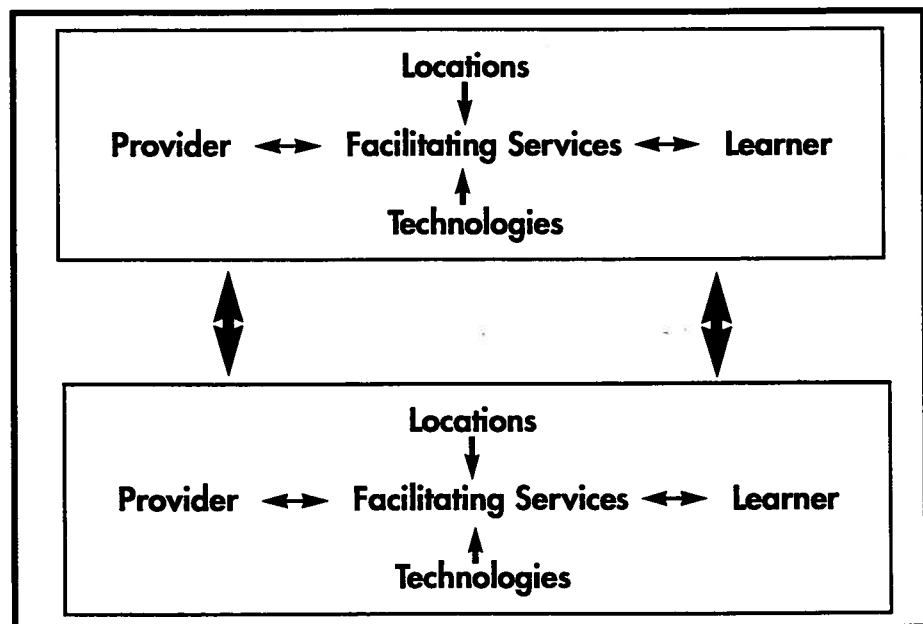
A virtual learning system's efficiency and effectiveness is only as good as its weakest component. This is referred to this as system integrity, which means that when all the component parts are functioning properly, the learner has the best possible chance for success. For example, content and instruction providers may have exemplary educational products and services, however services such as learner support or information and learning resources may be poorly facilitated. In this instance critical student information and resources may not be adequately available to the learner, and the learner is at best inconvenienced or at worst penalized. The same scenario may occur when sending and receiving technologies at either provider or learner sites do not function properly or do not conform to agreed standards. In other words, take any component of the system and weaken it through lack of quality or facility, and student success may be jeopardized.

Lateral and Vertical Integrity

Lateral Integrity. Lateral integrity refers to the functioning of each of the component parts within a single virtual learning environment. When each part is functioning appropriately and smoothly, the system is most effective.



Vertical Integrity. Vertical integrity refers to the degree to which multiple virtual learning initiatives are able to work together. For example, when one learning environment, such as a video conferencing system and associated learning support developed by one institution, wishes to interact with a learning system developed by another institution, the two systems must be interoperable. The learners affiliated with either system should experience a virtual learning environment created as if the systems were one. In other words quality and consistency of educational services should not be compromised through an integration of systems.



While lateral and vertical integrity improve the performance of the system, they also improve the ability of providers and learners to interface with the system. Thus both are motivated to use the system. Providers are more willing to invest in product development and delivery and learners are more comfortable because they perceive fewer barriers to access and have greater expectation for success.