

The DECOM Declaration.

Towards a Digital Educational Content Economy for Europe's Knowledge Society

Output Recommendations from the DECOM 2008 event

Sestri Levante (Italy) - October 2008

Summary Version

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Credits

This document summarises the outcomes and guidelines discussed at the Building Digital Educational Content Marketplaces (DECOM) event held in Sestri Levante, Italy, on October 2008 by the European learning Industry Group (ELIG, www.elig.org) and jointly approved by its members as a position paper suggesting actions and support lines for the definition of a “Digital Educational Content Economy for Europe’s Knowledge Society”.

An editorial group which worked to consolidate the views of those attending the DECOM event included:

Fabrizio Cardinali (Giunti Labs)

David Warlock (Outsell Inc)

Richard Straub (ELIG)

Alessandro Lorenzelli (Giunti labs)

Tim Hawkins (Elsevier)

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Introduction

This paper summarizes the outcomes of an open consultation organized by ELIG (the European Learning Industry Group, www.elig.org) with the support of one of its core member, Giunti Labs (a leading provider of online and mobile learning content management solutions, www.giuntilabs.com) to investigate the opportunities and challenges faced by Europe's learning content publishing industry in a market that is undergoing huge and continuous changes.

The intention of the consultation is to provide a shared understanding among the ELIG member organizations – representing a significant group of major players from the European learning technology and educational publishing industry – in order to contribute with a single industry voice to the many national and international public policy debates that members of ELIG are called to join in. This includes EU expert consultation groups to help the European Commission frame development and funding lines for its next generation R&D and educational programs.

Why a DECOM Declaration

Trustworthy quality material for Europe's learners is more important now than it has ever been; the more inconsistent information proliferates on the internet, the more the need to encourage and support the sustainable production and dissemination of high quality authoritative learning content. Generating and delivering such material has a cost, both in time and money, whether it originates from public or private resource. How that cost is covered is the subject of ongoing debate and experimentation. Throughout that discussion, the central objective for EU policymakers remains the viable delivery of effective educational content to all European citizens.

The DECOM initiative was conceived during 2008 by ELIG, to help progress its understanding of the needs and challenges raised by the production of new generation digital learning content. In doing so ELIG sought to better support its sector members with suggested action lines and to possibly inspire national and international public policies with the objective of better positioning Europe's educational publishing industry at this dawn of a new digital economy of learning materials.

This document summarizes the delegates' ideas and suggestions coming from the consultation exercise leading into the 10 discussion tables held at the DECOM 2008 event. ELIG professionals will be able to use this shared position paper, approved by its core members, in order to inform discussions, proposals and requests during the consensus building forums that ELIG is regularly called into at both national, international and EU Commission levels.

Participation in such events will support the generation of policy actions and public-private partnership programs to enable the transition towards digital content marketplaces for Europe's publishing industry and ensure its most advantageous positioning in the emerging digital marketplaces for online learning content.

The main recommendations

The following recommendations have emerged during the discussions both within the ELIG membership and across a wider community of expertise.

New Opportunities & Business Models

- Ensure educational publishers are allocated a key role in the development of the learning process since these publishers have the knowledge and technical expertise to develop the basic content that is required and the services needed to ensure they work effectively in support of pedagogical activity.
- Encourage business model experimentation for free and published content so as to continue to increase usage whilst ensuring quality and sustainability. ELIG and the EU Commission should promote experimentation but avoid regulation; users and customers must remain free to choose how they wish to fund and pay for content and platforms.
- Support experimentation in new business models for accessing and downloading learning materials for mobile devices. ELIG and the EU Commission should promote experimentation in mobile business models to help meet consumers evolving needs.
- Revise teacher training programmes, on both technical and pedagogical levels, to enable teachers to make maximum use of classroom technologies such as Digital Boards, eBooks and all other e-educational tools and to take on an enhanced role as both ‘master instructor’ as well as creator of learning materials.
- Encourage partnerships between educational publishers, learning system providers and all stakeholders in the education and learning processes, in which the emphasis is placed on the learning process
- Education and workforce up-skilling are major issues to be addressed actively and within a short time horizon. The financial crisis is leading to shifting policy factors – with great challenges arising for social cohesion in Europe and the preservation of competitiveness. The European learning technology and educational publishing industry needs to be a driving force in this process and should engage with European policy makers to agree on lines for action. Close collaboration between industry and public institutions is needed for this purpose.
- ELIG expects the shifting market to have implications on all its members. Collaboration is central to enabling each member organisation to adapt to the new drivers and remain competitive in the European marketplace and beyond.

Learning Research Priorities

- Funding to support R&D into device-specific content delivery is needed, in particular content aimed at maximizing the different characteristics of mobile devices and classroom devices such as Digital Boards, eBooks and all other e-educational tools. That content should enable student engagement, allow teachers to act as facilitators, coaches and mentors as well as instructors as and when necessary, and be delivered at a cost level that ensures wide adoption.

- Support for research into adaptation of content to enable educational publishers to maximize the possibilities and capabilities of Web 2.0 technology and to engage in mutually sustainable relationships with the learning communities they support. Such relationships have to be based on trust and to acknowledge user expectations of innovation, creativity, wealth creation and workplace activity.
- Support for research into pedagogical needs for new platforms. ELIG should work with the EU Commission to promote research aimed at improving our understanding of how learning through technology occurs and thus leading into the optimal pedagogical approaches for new e-education approaches and platforms.
- Support for research into the use of technology as a major enabler for new ways of skill building and personal development. Business success is increasingly seen as being reliant on innovation and workers' abilities to innovate. Although 'innovation' cannot be taught formally in schools, technology can help to encourage the development of innovation-related skills.

Learning Technology & Standards

- Facilitation and promotion of learning technologies and learning standards must become a concerted effort of the learning and publishing industry, the official de-jure European (CEN) and international (ISO) standardization bodies and global standards consortia (e.g. IMS, AICC & OASIS). The current fragmentation of standardization activities and the partial disconnection from real business and education applications needs to be overcome and the focus of activities needs to shift from a technology orientation to a learner, application and business perspective. The publishing industry needs to facilitate this transition.
- Standardization work must be better adapted to fast technological evolution and ensure inclusion of learning technologies both in current use and emerging, through use of established technology road-mapping vehicles such as the annual Horizon Reports. European regulators and public institutions from the educational sector as well as the EU are called on to support this process – e.g. by promoting open standards in public procurement and actively supporting standardization consortium activities.
- Harmonization between American and European standards leading to international consensus is critical and should not only extend to include new EU member states but should also enable other (mostly Eastern) European countries to adopt harmonized standards. The EU can and should play a central role in this global harmonization due to the unique European multi-cultural and multi-lingual background and expertise in standardization (CEN).
- Standard contractual terms for downloads and managing institutional content acquisition is essential in order to preserve the business interests of educational publishers at a time when the development of technology is challenging and changing traditional educational publishing business models.
- Learning content should become independent from the specific channels that are used to access or deliver it. The adoption and use of XML-related standards in the creation of

learning content should be more widely encouraged. Current adoption hurdles need to be researched and better understood.

The consultation process.

The format of the consultation process has been based on a set of webinar calls during Q3 2008 involving key stakeholders from the Open Courseware and Publishing members of ELIG. During these calls the broad themes of educational content publishing were debated and a set of 10 'hot topics' identified. These were then addressed in a face-to-face event held on 23rd October 2008, in Sestri Levante, Italy, and named DECOM 2008 (Building **D**igital **E**ducational **C**ontent **M**arketplaces). Also contributing to the discussions were a number of invited external stakeholders recognized for their world renowned activities in the target area of educational publishing and open courseware initiatives and forming the DECOM Panel.

The DECOM 2008 event saw the participation by almost 150 invited stakeholders from more than 15 countries worldwide and consisted of morning plenary sessions, presenting world leading open courseware and publishing initiatives, leading into the 10 discussion tables in the afternoon to which invited stakeholders were free to enrol based on their interests and priorities. "Start up abstracts", were provided in advance to enable informed selection.

Each table had at least one moderator whose role it was to guide discussions amongst participants. In addition there was a reporter identified for each group whose task it was to summarize and feedback key points to the general audience.

This document resulted from the DECOM open consultation exercise. It represents a positioning paper available to ELIG members and other professionals engaging with national and EU wide actions aimed at supporting Europe's publishing industry as it seeks to ensure the most advantageous position in the emerging global marketplace for online educational resources.

Feedback and comments informed a revision process in which DECOM Moderators, DECOM Panel Members and ELIG Open Courseware and Publishing Working Group provided input leading to the document being finalized.

Conclusion

The recommendations summarised in this Declaration represent an industry perspective on some of the most pressing issues facing the learning content publishing industry today. They highlight actions that need to be taken now, across a spectrum of challenges, in order to ensure equitable access to highquality learning opportunities for the citizens of Europe. In doing so the DECOM Declaration calls on all stakeholders in the learning process; the learning industry itself, regulators and policy makers, to consider urgently those actions they might take as a response to the recommendations. ELIG will be working within its Public Policy Group, to begin this process which will include a call upon the European Commission for stronger content-related policy actions to promote high quality learning resources for Europe.

Appendix 1: Participants:

Name	Organisation	Role at table
Adam R. S. Black	Pearson Education	Moderator
Alessandro Campi	Giunti Labs Italy	Participant
Alessandro Lorenzelli	Giunti Labs	Moderator
Alistair Morrison	Echelon	Reporter
Allyn Radford	Learnlities	Moderator
Andreas Åman	Scania Academy	Participant
Andy Vallely	Cisco	Reporter
Avron Barr	LETSI	Moderator
Bernd Simon		Moderator
Bob Bolick	MC Graw Hill	Participant
Bob Godwin-Jones	SoftChalk	Participant
Bouwe Koopal	KvG	Participant
Bryan Eldrdige	Giunti Labs NA	Moderator
Carin Martell	Giunti Labs	Moderator
Carla Milani	IBM	Participant
Carlos A Garcia	UKS	Participant
Christian M. Stracke	ISO and CEN	Moderator & Reporter
Clementina Marinoni	Fondazione Politecnico di Milano	Reporter
Cristina Mussinelli	Associazione Italiana Editori	Participant
Daniela Cipollone	McGraw-Hill	Participant
David Dickinson	Unlike Minds	Participant
David Dickinson	Unlike Minds	Reporter
Deniz Saral	Webster University	Participant
Derrick Sambo	Delft University of Technology	Participant
Dino Baldi	Giunti Labs Italy	Moderator
Dr. Narimane Hadj Hamou	e-TQM College	Participant
Eleonora Panto	CSP - ICT Innovation	Participant
Elisabetta Gola	Università degli Studi di Cagliari	Participant
Eric Baber	Cambridge University Press	Participant
Eva Patricia Gil	Universitat Oberta de Catalunya	Participant

Name	Organisation	Role at table
	(UOC)	
Ewa Moberg	Scania HC	Participant
Fabrizio Giorgini	Giunti Labs	Moderator
Fernando Pinto	Sinfic	Participant
Ganesh K Raghupathy	Edutech USA Inc	Participant
Georg Ranhoff	Fronter International	Participant
Georgi Dimitrov	European Commission	Moderator
Giorgio Dossi	Edizioni Erickson	Participant
Hans Gruber	Ericsson AB	Participant
Ilse Straub	linkSpace Management Services Ges.mBH.	Participant
Italo Raimondi	MC Graw Hill	Moderator
Jacques Dang	HEC	Participant
Jan Pawlowski	University of Jyväskylä	Moderator
Jeffrey Earp	Istituto per le Tecnologie Didattiche Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche	Participant
Jerry Cashman	Giunti Labs APAC	Participant
Joel Greenberg	The Open University	Participant
John Peters	Emerald Group Publishing	Participant
Jonathan Taylor	Cisco	Participant
Judy Brown	Wisconsin University	Moderator
Kurt Rollin	Capturator S.r.l.	Participant
Lars Jansson	Ericsson	Participant
Laurent Flory	Universite de Lyon	Reporter
Lucia Oneto	Giunti Labs	Participant
Marc A. Boutet	De Marque inc.	Participant
Marco Bergometti	€-Fundings	Participant
Mark Taverner	Promethean	Moderator
Marta Bonell	Epise	Participant
Matty Smith	ELIG	Participant
Michela Bruzzo	Cideb-Blackcat Publishing	Participant

Name	Organisation	Role at table
Nick Fowler	Elsevier	Participant
Panos Loullis	Allospos	Participant
Paolo Nesi	University of Florence	Moderator/Reporter
Patrizia Zanon		Participant
Paul Coyne	Emerald Group Publishing	Reporter
Pierfrancesco Bellini	Axmedis Project, AXMEDIATECH	Participant
Richard Straub	ELIG	Moderator
Rob Abel	IMS	Moderator
Rob Gillam	Giunti Labs UK	Participant
Shirley Tessler	Aldo Ventures, Inc.	Participant
Simona Franzoni	ELI SRL - PIGINI Group S.p.a.	Reporter
Sophie Touze	Veterinary School (TBC)	Participant
Spyridon Pilos	European Commission	Moderator
Stefania Cantini	Giunti Labs	Participant
Stefano Federici	Università degli Studi di Cagliari	Participant
Steve Curtis	Plateau	Moderator
Thekla Materne	Elsevier	Participant
Tim Hawkins	Elsevier	Moderator
Tsuneo Yamada	National Institute of Multimedia Education (NIME)	Participant
Tullia Colombo	Giunti Scuola	Participant
Valerio Eletti	Sapienza Università di Roma	Moderator
Vijay Kumar	MIT	Participant
Willem van Valkenburg	Delft University of Technology	Participant