

Learning content industry's future under discussion at DECOM 2008, a key European event in Italy

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The future of the learning content industry – in particular, its ability to adapt to, and exploit fully, a new generation of educational content production, management, sharing and distribution models – is the subject of a top level conference, hosted jointly by Giunti Labs, one of the leading learning and mobile content management solution providers, and the European Learning Industry Group (ELIG). The conference, on Digital Educational Content Marketplaces (DECOM 2008, www.decom2008.com), is being held at Giunti Labs' headquarters in Sestri Levante, on 23rd October.

Delegates comprise top level executives from the learning content industry, international publishing firms, corporate training providers and academic stakeholders engaged in both publishing and open courseware initiatives in schools, universities and corporate training, together with Government policy makers throughout Europe.

The results of delegates' deliberations will be summarised in a shared document – 'The Sestri DECOM Declaration'. This will be presented to the EU Commission as a set of suggested policy actions to support a transition towards digital content marketplaces for educational publishing in Europe.

The event is sponsored by Cegos, Plateau, Cisco, IBM, AxMediaTech - AXMEDIS and SIF Association.

"Today's streamlined publishing and distribution models for educational textbooks and learning materials, conceived in the age of non-digital broadcasting and mass distribution, are coming of age," commented Fabrizio Cardinali, CEO of Giunti Labs and joint chair of ELIG.

"After a time where online learning contents had to be produced bundled within limited delivery options - determined by the few LMS and VLE platforms in the market - the advent of open standards and architectures have unleashed learning contents. De facto, this has allowed the 'un-bundling' of content production from the delivery platform of choice.

"Today, powerful digital repositories and learning content management architectures can be added seamlessly, interoperating with existing Open Source - such as Sakai and Moodle - or vendor delivery solutions. This either supports platform migration options or adds rich, virtual and mobile media to existing corporate or academic learning infrastructures - making learning experiences much more personalised and engaging," he added.

Cardinali believes that contemporary educational publishing needs to adopt such open and standard architectures, formats and distribution models - effectively blending free and published content offerings through innovative business models - so as not to leave anybody behind in the global need for more accessible and sustainable educational resources.

"This represents a generational opportunity for educational content producers," he said. "It will reward those who are smart enough to catch the innovation wave, reshape their models and, so, result in sustainable business paradigms and models.

"Publishers and content producers who fail to evolve in the new digital content marketplace risk emulating many of their former colleagues in the music publishing industry. That industry has seen many stakeholders lose their copyrights and legacy products, while struggling to adapt their business models to the tunes-orientated distribution paradigms which hit the music industry during the digital revolution of the late '90s."

"The European Learning Industry Group has made the transformation of educational publishing one of its key focus areas in 2008," said Richard Straub, Secretary General of ELIG. "ELIG is uniquely positioned to bring together all aspects of the value-net with players from the infrastructure, architecture, software and content sectors to facilitate the envisioning of new

models of value creation for the industry.”

After keynote speeches and ‘best practice’ presentations by leading international publishing companies McGrawHill, Elsevier, Bertlesmann and Pearson, and key OpenCourseware Initiatives from MIT, the Open University UK and Delft University, DECOM 2008 will include a series of open discussion tables on key needs and objectives for Europe’s educational publishing sector.

Participation in the DECOM Workshop is by invitation only. To request an invitation, please contact the event manager, Minna Leikas (m.leikas@giuntilabs.com). Requests must indicate your affiliation with, and engagement in, this topic. Places will be allocated on a ‘first come, first served’ basis.

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About Giunti Labs

Giunti Group (www.giunti.it/giunti_eng.html) is unique in the international publishing industry. Giunti history goes back to 1841; since then the group has become one of the largest publishers in Italy. Over the years Giunti has built a catalogue of huge dimensions (over 7.000 titles) and acquired new brands in Italy and worldwide.

Giunti Labs (www.giuntilabs.com), which has its global headquarters in Italy and offices in London (UK), Frankfurt (Germany), Lund (Sweden), Boston (US), as well as Sydney and Perth (Australia), provides a wide range of solutions, in response to any content, learning and knowledge management need, covering:

- Content production
- Technological solutions for content, learning & knowledge management
- Delivery solutions for mobile & wireless
- Consulting and professional services

In 2008, Giunti Labs acquired the HarvestRoad Hive digital repository system, which manages any form of content used in online learning, corporate training and knowledge management initiatives. HarvestRoad Hive can interface with practically any ERP, Learning or Course Management System and is already integrated with several commonly used course management systems, authoring and content assembly tools.

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