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## **GLOBE: Connecting the World and Unlocking the 'Deep' Web**

Organizations from Australia, Canada, Europe, Japan and the United States today announce a global alliance to make shared online learning resources available to educators and students around the world.

The Global Learning Objects Brokered Exchange (GLOBE) alliance has been established among the following founding members: the ARIADNE Foundation in Europe, Education Network Australia (EdNA Online) in Australia, eduSourceCanada in Canada, Multimedia Educational Resources for Learning and Online Teaching (MERLOT) in the U.S., and National Institute of Multimedia Education (NIME) in Japan. These organizations have committed to work collaboratively on a shared vision of ubiquitous access to quality educational content.

"We found that we were all trying to solve similar problems at the same time and in different parts of the world. It made great sense to form the alliance to collaborate on shared thinking, development and brokering access to educational content," said Gerry Hanley, executive director of MERLOT. Educational institutions, professional societies, and industry are rapidly developing searchable and specialized learning object collections. Simultaneously, users are faced with overwhelming challenges of learning about the collections, interacting with the different user interfaces, and finally finding the relevant resources. Enabling users to find relevant and attributed resources easily, independent of the collection of origin and enabling learning object collections to improve their outreach to users will be a key to GLOBE's success.

The first steps in the alliance are to develop use cases, specifications, business rules and technologies which will enable searches across the repositories that the current GLOBE partners have developed over the last 5 years. In this way, more resources will become more easily available to the communities involved. Moreover, other organizations in the world will be able to join and contribute to the global network. The GLOBE website will provide updates on GLOBE's progress. The alliance aims to create a critical mass of learning resources readily discoverable by leveraging the investment that governments around the world have made in publicly accessible content.

Within twelve months, users will be able to access learning resources across countries and regions. The network will use federated search technologies to search across multiple databases and libraries and will adopt a user centred approach to resource discovery.

The alliance recognizes that fundamental to the success of the project are technical standards which enable the distributed systems around the world to interact and interoperate. The alliance will work closely with international standards bodies to ensure a common standards approach where appropriate.

"The GLOBE alliance continues the trend among organizations to consolidate their efforts in order to deliver the benefits of interoperable learning technology to learners, teachers and researchers," said Edward Walker, Co-Chair of the MERLOT Advisory Board and CEO of the

IMS Global Learning Consortium. "The key characteristics of GLOBE are its focus on users, its international basis, and its commitment to applying standards and technology to serve educational needs. We look forward with the rest of the learning community to the success of GLOBE."

"GLOBE aims to connect the world and unlock the 'deep web' of quality online educational resources through brokering relationships with content providers. In the same way that Google© and other search engines enable users to zoom in on relevant content, GLOBE will enable users to find the high quality learning material that has been locked in the "deep web" said Garry Putland, general manager, *education.au* of Australia.

There is a convincing business case for such international collaboration as it will bring significant benefits into local communities of practice that each organization serves through shared experiences, development and cost avoidance. One of GLOBE's goals is to ensure that the burden of managing relationships among institutions, organizations, and corporations in the digital library world does not overwhelm the benefits of collaboration.

The alliance will meet twice yearly and establish a stewardship council to ensure the outcomes are achieved within an agreed timeframe. The next meeting will be in Japan in February 2005.

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