

# Distance Education Glossary

This glossary is provided for those who are new to distance education. Many of the terms listed below are used in this issue. For additional information and source material, please refer to the following site on the World Wide Web: <http://www.avln.org/jae/>.

**Asynchronous** – A type of two-way communication, often between teachers and students, or between students in an online class, which occurs with time delay, allowing participants to respond in their own time frame.

**Blended learning/WebCentric** – Courses that combine online and face-to-face instruction.

**Cyberspace** – The nebulous “place” where humans interact over computer networks. Term coined by William Gibson in *Neuromancer*.

**Desktop videoconferencing** – Videoconferencing that uses a personal computer equipped with a fast Internet connection (with at least a 28.8 Kbps speed modem), a microphone, and a video camera. It may incorporate two-way or multi-way video and audio and is most appropriate for use with small groups or individuals.

**Distance education** – An educational situation in which the instructor and students are separated by time, location, or both. Education or training courses are delivered to remote locations via **synchronous** or **asynchronous** means of instruction, including written correspondence, text, graphics, audiotape and videotape, CD-ROM, on-line learning (using the World Wide Web), audio- and videoconferencing, interactive TV, and facsimile (fax). Distance learning does not preclude the use of the traditional classroom. The definition of distance education includes but is broader than E-learning.

**Distance learning** – The desired outcome of **distance education**. The two terms are often used interchangeably.

**E-learning** – Covers a wide set of applications and processes, such as Web-based learning, computer-based learning, **virtual classrooms**, and digital collaboration. It includes the delivery

of content via Internet, **intranet/extranet (LAN/WAN)**, audio- and videotape, satellite broadcast, interactive TV, and CD-ROM.

**Hybrid courses** – Approximately half of the normal classroom hours are scheduled on campus, while students do the remainder of their work online using discussion lists, E-mail, and chat rooms.

**LAN/WAN – Local-Area Network:** A group of personal computers and/or other devices, such as printers or servers, that are located in a relatively limited area, such as an office, and can communicate and share information with one another. **Wide-Area Network:** A computer network that spans a relatively large area. Usually made up of two or more local area networks. The Internet is a WAN.

**Listserv** – A software program for combining and automating mailing lists and discussion groups on a computer network over the Internet. A form of one-to-many communication using E-mail.

**Synchronous** – A type of two-way communication that occurs with virtually no time delay, allowing participants to respond in real time.

**URL – Uniform Resource Locator**, or World Wide Web address.

**Virtual classroom** – The online learning space where students and instructors interact. It is the space in cyberspace where all the typical activities of a classroom take place (readings, discussions, teacher comments, assessment, and thinking). This space may be structured using online learning platform software such as WebCT or Blackboard, which incorporate features such as bulletin board, chat, whiteboard, assessment tools, and so on.

**Web-enhanced courses** – Face-to-face courses that include Web resources and links; they may also use E-mail and an online discussion forum.

**Web-based or online courses** – Courses are entirely taught on the World Wide Web; students and teacher never meet in a physical classroom.✍