



Timeline of the Evolution of Online Learning



1700

1799

1700s

The Parcel Post Era of Education Begins

Mar 20, 1728

Boston Gazette Ad in Parcel Post



The earliest known reference to correspondence education was on March 20, 1728, when Caleb Phillips placed an advertisement in the Boston Gazette offering shorthand lessons for any "Person in the Country desirous to Learn this Art, may be having several Lessons sent Weekly to them, be as perfectly as those that live in Boston" (Philipps, 1728, as cited in Kentnor, 2015).

1800

1899

1800s

The Parcel Post Era Continues & the Educational Broadcasting Era Begins

1840

Isaac Pitman: Distance Education



Isaac Pitman, recognized as the pioneer of distance education, used back-and-forth post correspondence (mail) to teach shorthand in 1840 in Bath, England, by mailing postcards to students to transcribe bible passages (Verduin & Clark, 1991, as cited in Kentnor, 2015). Sir Isaac Pitman (1813-1897) was an English educator and inventor of the shorthand system (Encyclopedia Britannica, 1998).

1858



Correspondence Courses Established

The business model of distance learning was pioneered in 1858 by Britain's London University, which established a system by which students could obtain a degree by correspondence courses (Wolfe, 2014).

1874



First "In Absentia" Degrees

Illinois Wesleyan College became the first academic institution to offer degree programs "in absentia" (Emmerson, 2004, as cited in Kentnor, 2015).

1874



The Chautauqua Movement of the 1870s

In 1874, Lewis Miller and John Heyl Vincent heralded the "Chautauqua Movement" in New York, by beginning an adult correspondence education (Kentnor, 2015). According to Kentnor, a summer training program for Sunday school teachers expanded to include general education and the arts. Studies were then completed at home through postal correspondence. Several "chautauquas" developed across the country that they offered four-year certificate programs of reading.

1894



Invention of the Spark Transmitter

In 1894, Guglielmo Marconi invented the spark transmitter enabling University of Wisconsin professors to begin the first federally licensed radio station dedicated to educational broadcasting (Engel, 1936, as cited in Kentnor, 2015). As a result, according to Kentnor, 176 educational institutions had their own broadcast licenses by the 1920s.

1900

1999

1900s

Advances in communication technology led to the inventions of the Internet and the World Wide Web.

Apr 9, 1927



First Long-Distance Video & Voice Transmission

Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover and Bell Laboratories held the first long-distance live video and voice transmission, which impacted the evolution of using visual media as a medium for education (Kentnor, 2015).

1932



Pioneers of Educational Television

Five universities recognized the potential of educational television early on: the University of Iowa, Iowa State University, Kansas State University, the University of Michigan, and American University (Koenig & Hill, 1967, as cited in Kentnor, 2015). According to Kentnor, they were considered the pioneers of educational television. For example, the University of Iowa first used television broadcasting for education between 1932 and 1937 (Koenig & Hill, 1967, as cited in Kentnor, 2015).

1951



Credit Courses Offered Through Television

The Public Broadcasting System (PBS) joined forces with about 500 participating colleges and universities to offer credits through television programming to 20,000 students across the United States (Walther, 1981) in 1951 (Wolfe, 2014).

1968



Classrooms Began Using TVs in Classrooms

According to Kentnor (2015), by the late 1960s and early 1970s, educators began using televisions in classrooms as a tool to illustrate concepts, and families were tuning in at home to educational broadcasts (i.e., cable television, Public Broadcasting Service, and National Public Radio). However, instructors on the TV screen were shown reading notes, which made it difficult to keep viewers' attention, as indicated by low viewership.

1975



Computers for Educational Delivery

By the mid to late 1970s, the use of computers as a medium for delivering education was implemented, but most educators were not yet willing to embrace the new technology (Kentnor, 2015).

1980



Computer-Based Corporate Training

In the 1980s, organizations began using computer-based training (CBT) to provide instruction to new employees (Kentnor, 2015).

1989



University of Phoenix Online

Online educational programs emerged in 1989, when the University of Phoenix began using CompuServe, one of the first consumer online services (The University of Phoenix, n.d., as cited in Kentnor, 2015). According to Kentnor, the University of Phoenix later became one of the first to offer online education programs when the Internet arrived a few years later, in 1991.

1991

The World Wide Web Arrived

In 1991, the World Wide Web arrived (Kentnor, 2015).



1997

Florida Virtual School Opens

In 1997, the state of Florida approved the creation of the Florida Virtual School (Pearcy, 2014). This was the first and largest online public school in the U.S. at the time. According to Percy (2014), it provided online learning for almost 150,000 students.



1998

NYU Initiates For-Profit Online Education

In October 1998, New York University (NYU) became the first large nonprofit university to create a for-profit online education subsidiary called NYU Online, even though it closed its doors in October 2001 (Kentnor, 2015).



2000

2023

2000s

Asynchronous Learning, OpenCourseWare, LMS', and Online Learning are ubiquitous in education.

2004

Asynchronous Learning Prevalant in U.S.

By 2004, at least two million higher-education students in the U.S. were engaged in distance education using various asynchronous learning networks (ALN) (Hiltz & Turoff, 2005).



2008

The Term "MOOC" Was Coined

The term "MOOC" (massive open online course) was coined in 2008 in response to an open online course called *Connectivism and Connective Knowledge*, which was presented to 25 tuition fee-paying



students at the University of Manitoba in addition to 2,300 other students from the general public who took the online class free of charge (NSUFL, 2020).

2009

Khan Academy is Created

In 2009, Salman Khan created the Khan Academy, an online educational platform (Pearcy, 2014) whose tagline states, "Our mission is to provide a free, world-class education for anyone, anywhere" (Khan Academy, n.d.).



2015

LMS' Usage Surge

Research shows a rapidly growing knowledge base on Learning Management Systems (LMS) in higher education, especially from 2015-2020, and primarily in developed societies (Thi Phan et al., 2022).



Apr 20, 2020

COVID-19: Global Online Learning

By April 20, 2020, one month after the COVID-19 pandemic's first activity restrictions were issued on March 12, 2020 (Jacobsen & Jacobsen, 2020), school closures impacted approximately 151 countries and 1,437,412,547 students, causing Internet-based learning with a variety of virtual tools to be the only method of learning (Jiang et al., 2022).

