

## The Field of Instructional Design: A Definition

The Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AECT) is an international group of professionals who share the common interest of helping individuals by utilizing media and technology to improve learning. Beginning in 1923, it is the oldest association of its kind and serves to promote high standards for its members, in addition to providing the most widely accepted definition and terminology for the field (AECT, 2001a). In 1994, after three years of deliberation by the Association's Definition and Terminology Committee, a newly updated definition based on research, theory and practice was published by two of its members, Barbara Seels and Rita Richey.

The official definition of Instructional Technology (IT), as endorsed by the AECT (2001a), is "the theory and practice of design, development, utilization, management and evaluation of processes and resources for learning.". This definition recognizes the established traditions and trends within the field and is based upon several assumptions:

- The terms "Instructional Technology" and "Educational Technology" are considered synonymous within the field.
- Instructional Technology is a profession with an established [knowledge base](#), which involves both practice and the pursuit of academic study.
- All research and practices conform to the profession's established ethical norms.
- Practices must yield effective, efficient and economical results.
- Principal areas of concern to scholars and practitioners, in regards to a knowledge base and performed functions, comprise the domains of the field (design, development, utilization, management, evaluation).
- Focus on both process and product is necessitated by the field.
- Elements of the definition which are not recognized or plainly understood by IT professionals should be removed (Seels & Richey, 1994).

The discipline of Instructional Technology is devoted to employing techniques with a broad theoretical base rooted in learning theories, instructional theories, general systems theory and communication theories from the fields of psychology, engineering, communication, computer science, business and education. The five domains within the field, as shown in Figure 1, are the synergistic embodiment of the interrelation between theory and practice with each consisting of a unique knowledge base (Seels & Richey, 1994; AECT, 2001a).

For more information regarding the History of the Field, click [here](#) (AECT, 2001b).

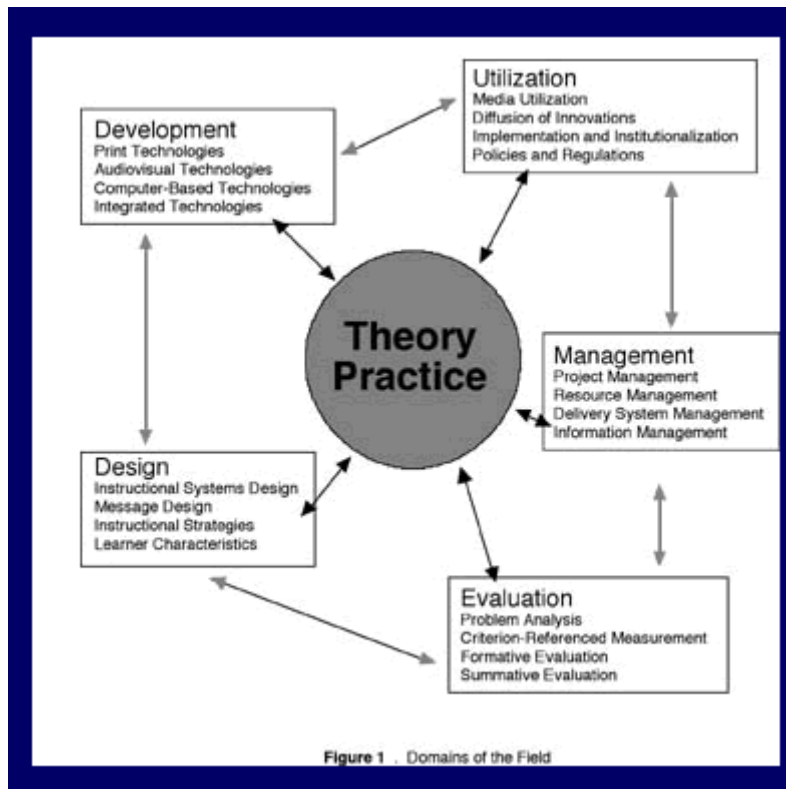


Figure 1. Domains of the Field (Figure adopted from Seels, B. & Richey, R.C. (1994). Instructional technology: The definitions and domains of the field. Washington, D.C.: Association for Educational Communications and Technology).