**Definition of Instructional Technology**

Scholars recognize that the dynamic, emerging field of instructional technology is still seeking and clarifying its definition (Gentry, 1991; Ritchie 1994). Much of this confusion is the result of the term: "technology" as a descriptor in the field. As far back as the 17th century B.C., when printed texts were first used to help teach, there has been confusion between instructional technology as a process and instructional technology as a medium (Caplan, 1998). The word technology comes from the Latin word "texere" which means to weave or construct. Members of the general public often define the term as electronic hardware (TV, computer, VCR, etc.) that assists with a task. Because both instructional technology and information technology share an abbreviation, IT, these fields are often confused. As it applies to instructional technology, technology can be defined as the application of scientific inquiry to solve problems and improve upon the existing tools of a generation.

The field of instructional technology (IT) is the synthesis of a number of disciplines including: cognitive psychology, communications, and systems theory. IT draws upon the field of psychology when defining the process of learning. Communications research is used when designing the delivery of instruction whether it is for computer or instructor-delivered content. Finally, instructional technology uses a systemic orientation when tackling a learning issue because it is understood that everything within a learning system is interrelated.

There have been a number of definitions for the field which have come into prominence over the past century. In 1977 the Association of Educational Communication and Technology (AECT) made a distinction between instructional technology and educational technology (Seals and Richey, 1994). Educational technology was defined as a subset of education which uses processes to solve human learning problems. Management systems and learning through mass media were cited as examples of educational technology. Instructional technology was seen as a subset of educational technology because instruction is a subset of education. These days these two terms are used interchangeably and the term instructional technology has come to encompass five domains: design, development, management, utilization,and evaluation.

Shrock (1995, p. 12) uses the term instructional development to define the field. She defined instructional development as "a self-correcting, systems approach that seeks to apply scientifically derived principles to the planning, design, creation, implementation, and evaluation of effective and efficient instruction." Other definitions (Reiser, 2001) describe the field as an analysis of learning and performance problems and the design, development, implementation, evaluation, and management of instructional processes. There are many similarities in these definitions, however the definition that seems to be accepted by most professionals in the field is AECT's definition published by Seals and Richy (1994). AECT defines the field as: "the theory and practice of design, development, utilization, management, and evaluation of processes and resources for learning."