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eLearning in Africa 2009 in Dakar, Senegal

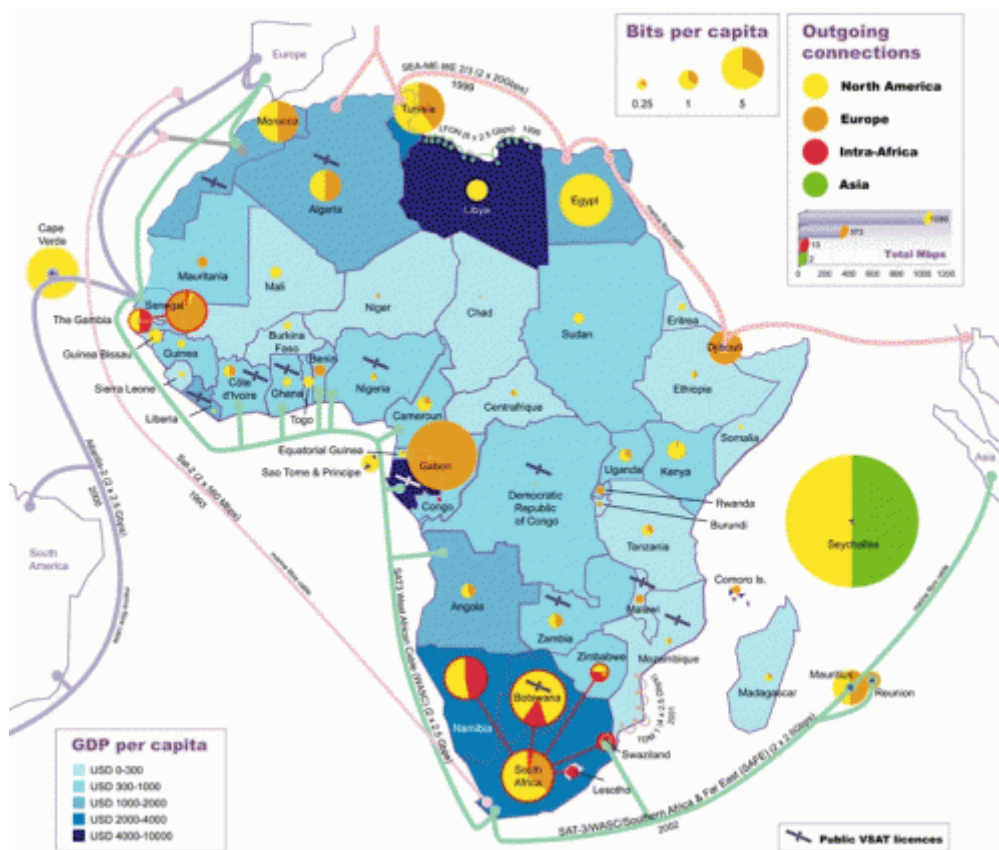
By Michael Gallagher, USA

Are you interested in either in Africa or eLearning or preferably both? Then [eLearning Africa](#) 2009 in Dakar, Senegal is just the right event for you.

This is quite simply my favorite and most productive conference of all time. A few of us went last year in Accra, Ghana and had a wonderful time meeting all kinds of different educators in Africa and beyond interested in networking the continent in educational circles. I imagine this year's will be just as productive in Dakar, Senegal. Unfortunately, I won't personally be going but [Dr. Siro Masinde](#), my friend and colleague, will be presenting something we co-authored on capacity building in Africa. Capacity building is sort of a hazy term, but basically in this context it refers to providing both education and infrastructure.

Early on, we went to various African countries and established digitization labs with scanners and supporting equipment in order to promote the digitization of African cultural heritage (maps, books, manuscripts), history (revolutionary papers, letters, constitutions), and biodiversity (300,000 botanical specimens from throughout Africa). We also provided training on how to operate the machinery and transfer the objects to servers. When the completed digital library was complete, we then provide education and training on the system itself for users. In my mind at least, it represents the life cycle of digital content from creation to use.

Well, that is the subject of the talk that Siro will give at eLearning Africa in Dakar. Many others will be discussing the challenges, successes and failures occurring in Africa right now in regards to eLearning. There are many successes that we never hear about, including the networking of Rwanda (major infrastructural investment) as well as the new cables that are operational in Senegal (dedicated cables lower cost (hopefully once government deregulation occurs) and proves less taxing than routing everything through Europe or the States. This is a quite illuminating, if slightly dated, [map of the internet connections](#) coming into Africa.



Then there are North African examples, with Egyptian university libraries being on par with anything I had experienced in North America. Exciting developments are happening everywhere on the continent, but you might never hear that unless you dig fairly deep through the media.