



The What and Why of xAPI with Megan Torrance

Leading Learning Podcast
Transcript for Episode 319

Megan Torrance: [00:00:00] The magic of xAPI isn't the technology. The technology is relatively boring. The magic of xAPI is the agreement of an entire global community to talk about learning and performance experiences in the same way.

Celisa Steele: [00:00:16] I'm Celisa Steele.

Jeff Cobb: [00:00:18] I'm Jeff Cobb, and this is the Leading Learning Podcast.

Jeff Cobb: [00:00:27] Welcome to episode 319, which features a conversation with Megan Torrance. Megan is CEO—chief energy officer—at TorranceLearning, a full-stack learning services firm that does everything from learning strategy to instructional design and content development to software design and deployment.

Jeff Cobb: [00:00:45] TorranceLearning also provides professional development for the learning and development industry, one example being the free xAPI Learning Cohort, which they ran before handing that baton to the Learning Guild. Megan is an evangelist for xAPI, so she and Celisa focused their conversation on xAPI—what it is, what it promises above and beyond SCORM, and some real-world examples of xAPI in action.

Jeff Cobb: [00:01:10] They also talk about cmi5 and why most learning business professionals should care about it but not too much, what can be done with data and analytics, human learning versus adult learning, and much more. Megan and Celisa spoke in June 2022.

Celisa Steele: [00:01:32] Would you explain what xAPI is, and how it got its start?

Megan Torrance: [00:01:37] Sure thing. So, at its simplest level, the x stands for "experience," which means it's not just about learning. It's about learning and performing all sorts of experiences that people have, although it is specifically really for the learning industry, and API

*This transcript accompanies the episode of the Leading Learning Podcast
available at www.leadinglearning.com/episode319.*

stands for “application programming interface,” and that, effectively, is an agreement between two systems on how they’re going to share data.

Megan Torrance: [00:02:03] What’s interesting about xAPI is that it’s not just an agreement between two systems, or one-to-one, but rather an agreement of an entire industry for how we’re going to talk about these learning and performance experiences. So if you think, “Wow, we have SCORM. That’s what SCORM does,” actually, yes, SCORM is an open API for an open agreement for how we’re all going to, industry-wide, talk about learning experiences that happen to have been in e-learning launched from an LMS, one at a time, while you’re logged into that e-learning, when that e-learning is on the same server as the learning management system.

Megan Torrance: [00:02:42] Hence why we need something different. But xAPI was brought to us by the same organization, the Advanced Distributed Learning Group, out of the federal government in the U.S., that brought us SCORM. So the two of them are highly aligned in their thinking.

Celisa Steele: [00:02:58] And so I believe you began to get into it when you were talking about the limitations of SCORM there, but when you think about the real value of or potential for xAPI what comes to mind?

Megan Torrance: [00:03:13] Well, and this is kind of my business model wonkiness and my side hobby, I guess. So interestingly, I’m not down on SCORM. SCORM actually did amazing things for our industry that many other industries don’t have. We have a single—and I say single—there are a couple of ancillary specs also.

Megan Torrance: [00:03:39] But we have a single, assessable, free specification that is used globally by companies, by academic institutions, by associations, by militaries and governments to talk about and exchange data about what we do. It means that I can put my content in any LMS on the planet, any corporate workplace LMS on the planet, and organizations, those buying organizations can then swap out any vendor, any services provider, any authoring platform, and it all just works in their system. And nobody has to think much about SCORM except for the fine people who make sure SCORM stays up and running. So that means there’s almost no barriers to entry.

Megan Torrance: [00:04:28] There’s a very fluid vendor market. There’s also a very fluid employment market. Our tools are all designed to do this. So SCORM makes our industry

*This transcript accompanies the episode of the Leading Learning Podcast
available at www.leadinglearning.com/episode319.*

really, really interesting and very, very fluid. xAPI has all that same promise of that interoperable global marketplace for content, people, platforms but also gives us a lot richer data set and a lot more flexibility than SCORM did.

Megan Torrance: [00:04:56] So that richer data set we can use for analytics. We can use it for workflow triggers. We can also use it for really pedestrian things like gating and locking content, personalization, and remembering if you said something in one course. If you say in one course, you really like purple, and you take the next course in the series, you don't have to say, "I really like purple" again.

Megan Torrance: [00:05:19] You can tie that data across, which you can't do with SCORM right now. There's a huge amount of value there. It's also harder to agree upon a shared set of ways of talking around this data than it was with SCORM because SCORM is relatively shallow, and xAPI lets you say almost anything about any kind of learning or performance experience.

Celisa Steele: [00:05:43] And maybe now might be a good time to talk a little bit about structure. I had the good fortune of sitting in on a session where you were talking about the core xAPI, and I'm thinking about the actor, verb, that sort of thing. Will you explain that a little bit for folks who may not be familiar with it?

Megan Torrance: [00:06:00] Yeah, absolutely. So I like to contrast SCORM and xAPI. And SCORM, I think of it as a vocabulary. I can talk about some relatively consistent but shallow pieces of data across everything: your launch date and your completion date and your current status and what was the score on the test (but only one test), how did you answer the questions (but only if you use the fancier SCORM 2004). So there's some relatively limited data I can get out of SCORM. And xAPI, like you mentioned, it's a sentence. It reminds us all of third-grade language arts. I have an actor, which is generally a person, but can be a group or a thing.

Megan Torrance: [00:06:46] And when I say a thing, like a thing, like a conference room or a piece of software or a piece of equipment in a factory floor. All of those can be actors or agents. I have a verb. What did I do? And that verb is really, really important. And the verbs generally exist in a profile which says, "Whenever we're talking about things that look like e-learning, these are the verbs we're going to use and how we're going to use it.

Megan Torrance: [00:07:12] "Whenever we talk about a thing that looks like video, these are the verbs. Whenever I'm looking at a thing that looks like a conference, these are the verbs we're

*This transcript accompanies the episode of the Leading Learning Podcast
available at www.leadinglearning.com/episode319.*

going to use.” And then I have objects or activities. What did I do it on or in? And then after that is where, personally, I think it gets super interesting, and it’s that context.

Megan Torrance: [00:07:32] It’s your results and your context data. Was that the correct thing to do? What did I score on that? Not only when was it, but where was it? What comments did I offer about that? We can put in free text entry if you want. We can tag it with, “I was on this piece of equipment in this particular conference,” all sorts of different things. How I rated something. Who was the instructor in that case? All that can be possible within this xAPI statement, which then allows me to use any of those data elements to then extract meaning and insight and data out of it later on.

Celisa Steele: [00:08:10] Thank you. I think that’s very helpful to make sure that listeners understand some of the core differences between SCORM and xAPI, which obviously just enables so many more situations to be recorded in a database. So that’s the mechanics of it. When you think about where things stand with xAPI, how would you talk about the acceptance of and implementation of xAPI today?

Megan Torrance: [00:08:36] Oh, gosh, that one, it depends. It depends on the day. So there are days when I will say it is slower than anybody wants it to be. I mean, really the community of people—and I was not in the earliest of the adopter and developer community here, but they’ve been at this for a very long time.

Megan Torrance: [00:08:55] I arrived on the scene about 2012, and so I’ve been at this for about a decade. And the thing here, right, is that, yes, it’s slower than anybody wants it, in part because it is an open spec, and we’re trying to tackle it. The magic of xAPI isn’t the technology. The technology is relatively boring.

Megan Torrance: [00:09:17] The magic of xAPI is the agreement of an entire global community to talk about learning and performance experiences in the same way. And, yes, there’s been some technical challenges, and I don’t want to at all diminish the amazing work that’s being done on the technical side as well as just the huge—I think part of why this is going slower than anybody wants, all this is being developed by committees, which is awesome because the committees are bringing a very well-rounded perspective. From government, from industry, from academia. And that’s really, really important. It’s just also a shockingly slow way to move. But what’s exciting is that it’s actually picking up.

*This transcript accompanies the episode of the Leading Learning Podcast
available at www.leadinglearning.com/episode319.*

Megan Torrance: [00:09:56] I have long said that xAPI needs to be geek-free in order to really be able to get traction in the marketplace. And it is getting geek-free. At a very basic level, in most people's e-learning authoring packages, before you hit Publish, you can click a button that says, "I want to publish to xAPI." And what you're probably going to get out of there, for most packages, not all of them, is pretty dry stuff, but it requires zero programming, and that's important. There are tools that are not e-learning tools that are using xAPI. It's one thing to say like, "I've got this little SCORM package, and I want to make that xAPI," and that seems like a really logical way to go.

Megan Torrance: [00:10:41] And if you're a vendor or a producer of that software, it makes total sense. Like SCORM, xAPI will replace it. I want to have both. They also have AICC and a few other different things that are all similar. But it's when it's the mobile reminder tools or chatbots or video-streaming tools or survey tools that are using xAPI that they previously didn't have their data in the mix in a learning management system because all the SCORM-like stuff wasn't relevant. And I'm including virtual reality and augmented reality. Software companies are talking to me about, "How do we get in? How do we get our data in with all the rest of the data?" It's super, super cool. And I did in 2019 and 2022 Learning Guild research on the state of adoption in the space, and it's just really exciting to see things moving forward.

Jeff Cobb: [00:11:41] At Tagoras, we're experts in the global business of lifelong learning, and we use our expertise to help clients better understand their markets, connect with new customers, make the right investment decisions, and grow their learning businesses. We achieve these goals through expert market assessment, strategy formulation, and platform selection services. If you're looking for a partner to help your learning business achieve greater reach, revenue, and impact, learn more at tagoras.com/services.

Celisa Steele: [00:12:12] So let's talk about cmi5. Would you maybe explain what that is?

Megan Torrance: [00:12:18] Yes. Yes. And so I will start by saying I'm not an expert in cmi5. I'll also start by saying—and this might be a little bit of a provocative statement—the average instructional design services provider, training provider doesn't need to know a whole lot about it, so much they really would like it to happen.

Megan Torrance: [00:12:42] Kind of like I don't know a whole lot about the nuts and bolts of SCORM, like at the colons-and-brackets kind of level about SCORM. I just really want it to work. Same thing with cmi5. Okay, so here's what cmi5 is. cmi5 covers all of the SCORM-like stuff in xAPI.

*This transcript accompanies the episode of the Leading Learning Podcast
available at www.leadinglearning.com/episode319.*

Megan Torrance: [00:13:03] So cmi5 is the data profile within xAPI that says, “Here’s how e-learning courses and learning management systems will track what they used to track in SCORM in xAPI.” It is all the same things you’re used to seeing—attempt, launch, initialize. It’s got page views. It’s got question, answers.

Megan Torrance: [00:13:26] It’s got things like completion and pass and fail and succeed and fail. It’s got all complete, incomplete, and pass and fail and all those rules, all that e-learning stuff. It’s how to do it properly in xAPI. And cmi5 covers both the how does the software that sends that data, how should that be sent properly?

Megan Torrance: [00:13:47] And there’s a test suite for that. And then there’s an emerging test suite on the LMS side to make sure that the LMS is reading that properly. My basic thing is that people—you want it to be there, and you don’t want to have to think about it. That’s pretty much the bottom line.

Megan Torrance: [00:14:02] Don’t get wrapped around the axle about cmi5. It’s, actually, as we’re in 2022, it is highly unlikely that you will find tools on both sides of that equation that use cmi5. They’re making it work right now. If this were 2024—I’m going to get in so much trouble here—if this were 2024, then you probably would be able to say, “Yes, I actually want to see your cmi5 conformance,” and then you could do that.

Celisa Steele: [00:14:29] Thank you for explaining that, explaining why we care but don’t care too much. We don’t care about the mechanics.

Megan Torrance: [00:14:35] Yes, yes, you care but not too much.

Celisa Steele: [00:14:39] And so when you think about it, our listeners representing learning businesses, working in learning businesses, when they’re thinking about, “Okay, what does xAPI mean for me at this point?,” how would you answer that question? What should they be thinking about or perhaps doing to further their own adoption of xAPI or their own understanding of it?

Megan Torrance: [00:14:59] So there’s a few things. If you’ve got developers on your team, you can point them at the xAPI specification, and there are gobs and gobs of resources for coding that and supporting that from scratch. For the rest of us, having a basic working understanding of xAPI is sufficient.

*This transcript accompanies the episode of the Leading Learning Podcast
available at www.leadinglearning.com/episode319.*

Megan Torrance: [00:15:18] I try to—in all of my conference sessions, I do flash, like I have two screens that actually have code displayed, mostly so it's like, "Look. Here's what it is. Poof. Let's keep moving, I promise, because you don't need to know the colons and brackets to be able to use it." If you want to, you absolutely can, but there are a couple of ways.

Megan Torrance: [00:15:39] So the xAPI Learning Cohort, which my team founded and hosted for seven years. It's now being supported by the Learning Guild as of the fall of 2022, and that's a great place to get in and learn. So the xAPI Cohort is a 12-week, free, virtual, learning-by-doing experience. You can show up every week for weekly Webinars.

Megan Torrance: [00:16:03] We talk about what is xAPI, and how do I send data, and what do I do with data, and how to take care of the data, and then there's examples and demos. And, at the same time, there's a Slack community for people to form projects and try it out themselves. You can join somebody else's project. You can just watch a project happen.

Megan Torrance: [00:16:24] And so that's a way that people have been really getting their feet wet with that. And, more and more, your software tools and your services providers are getting up to speed and doing this. It used to be a couple of years ago, I would have other services providers come to me and say, "Hey, we've got a client who wants to do this, and we'll do this part, but can you take care of the xAPI part of things?" I'm like, "Okay. We can do that." But more and more services providers can do that on their own, which is also pretty awesome.

Celisa Steele: [00:16:55] You mentioned in that xAPI Learning Cohort that you can do projects. And so I'm thinking it might be great if you have some examples of what xAPI looks like in the wild. Maybe a case study or something you can share to give us a little bit more meat on the bone.

Megan Torrance: [00:17:12] Yeah, absolutely. So I've got three projects in mind, just to give you little short descriptions of them. We can dive into deeply if you want. We had one project—we code-named all of our projects—so codenamed Waterproof. And Waterproof, it was a multi-part learning experience.

Megan Torrance: [00:17:29] So there was a self-assessment, and there was an e-learning course. There's three learning courses. There was a face-to-face course. There was a mobile performance support app. There was coaching guides for managers to take this and extend it with their team. They're all the things that you should do for great training.

*This transcript accompanies the episode of the Leading Learning Podcast
available at www.leadinglearning.com/episode319.*

Megan Torrance: [00:17:44] It's not just an event. It's like all the things. And their LMS didn't track all of the things, so we used xAPI to track all of the things so we could keep track of what people were doing. But even within the e-learning part of the experience, we used xAPI to look more deeply at how people were engaging.

Megan Torrance: [00:18:05] So, in this experience, if there was a learning activity where you listen to six conversations, and you rated or gave answers to those six conversations, we know did you listen to the conversations? What did you actually choose once you got what the right answer was? Did you change your answer back?

Megan Torrance: [00:18:25] We know, if there were six things on a screen, how many people clicked all six? And how many clicked only five? And how many clicked four? How many people clicked the Hint button that we had kind of grayed out in the upper right-hand corner of the screen. And, if they clicked the Hint, did that help them perform in the course?

Megan Torrance: [00:18:43] We also have this really great interaction where you're asked to provide just a free text paragraph of your thoughts. And, while the course doesn't grade it, xAPI is at least sending that data out, so we could read all of those answers and see the depth and the quality with which people took that. So that was super cool.

Megan Torrance: [00:19:00] So we're looking like—I call it the extreme navel gazing. We're also using an xAPI for some like really—I mentioned it earlier—some of the real utilitarian kinds of purposes that SCORM just doesn't support. So we have one course. It's like a four hour e-learning experience of eight different components.

Megan Torrance: [00:19:24] But those eight components are all run by a layer that uses xAPI to talk to each of the eight. So the presentation layer knows which of the eight you've taken, where exactly you are. It's a highly, highly gated course, so it's really, really locked down. You can't go ahead until you've done certain things. You have to look at all the things.

Megan Torrance: [00:19:46] But we also can keep track of, if you told us in the beginning of the course that you do a little self-assessment or personalization tidbit. We can remember that information and use that further on in the course, which is super cool. And we have a project we call Artemis. It's actually for a medical association, and we're doing very, very complex question-type assessments, case-based assessments.

*This transcript accompanies the episode of the Leading Learning Podcast
available at www.leadinglearning.com/episode319.*

Megan Torrance: [00:20:12] And we're using xAPI simply to lock it down and to ask and get really detailed insight into how people answer complex question types. So it's really, really, really interesting, just from an educational provider perspective to be able to do some things that are much more than I could otherwise do in SCORM.

Megan Torrance: [00:20:36] But, by doing this in xAPI, any of these projects, each of these organizations can bring in other vendors and other pieces of the learning experience, and it all speaks the same data language rather than building all this within a proprietary system that doesn't share its data out and doesn't easily ingest other data.

Celisa Steele: [00:20:58] In what you are sharing with those examples, I'm just thinking about that's a lot of data that's being generated in these experiences with it, which in many ways is wonderful. But I think it probably speaks to the need to have some idea of what you want to do with the data. How are you going to either use that to improve the product, the learning experience in the future, or how are you going to use it to improve or personalize the experience for the learner currently?

Megan Torrance: [00:21:26] Absolutely. And so we're looking at data strategy. We start thinking about what are some of the pedestrian things that you're going to want? And I say "pedestrian" like it's a bad thing. You've got to have a certain amount of data to just run your organization. You need to know where people are. You need to know how they score.

Megan Torrance: [00:21:44] You need to know what they're complete on, basically, so you can give that information back to them. And then what we start doing is we ask, "What questions do you have? What questions are out there?" We did this with a training provider a couple of years ago as they were starting their data journey.

Megan Torrance: [00:21:59] And we just said, "What questions are there?" And we pooled them, and we had dozens of questions. And then we said, "Well, who cares about the answers?" And that was really, really interesting because there were some things that really the learners really wanted to know about their own performance, but, at scale, nobody else really cared about as much.

Megan Torrance: [00:22:18] I mean, other than that it made the learners happy, and they gave them what they needed. There are some things that the client organizations needed. There's some things that the provider organization needed. There's some things that the learning team cared about, but nobody else really did.

*This transcript accompanies the episode of the Leading Learning Podcast
available at www.leadinglearning.com/episode319.*

Megan Torrance: [00:22:30] And so, by being able to parse those out, that was really insightful, and we could prioritize some things. And then we looked at what's the data required to answer those questions? What are the indicators either way? How does that manifest itself in the world, and what data could we get out of that? And only then are we then saying, "How do we instrument the learning experience to capture that data?"

Celisa Steele: [00:22:57] That's great to take it back to strategy, of course, and give the thought upfront around what questions do you have? How are you going to answer them? And then you collect the data.

Megan Torrance: [00:23:09] Yes. Although I'm a huge fan—this also gets me in trouble. We're getting in trouble today. I also am a huge fan of, where you can, and where it's ethical to do so, having data that you might explore. And you might find new questions based on what you see there. So I'm all for that too.

Celisa Steele: [00:23:29] I appreciate that added insight. If it gets you in trouble, I might be in trouble with you then because I think sometimes you don't know what you don't know, and maybe the data shows you something that you didn't even know to ask or look for in the first place.

Megan Torrance: [00:23:43] Totally. So I recommend, when we're doing this, taking an iterative approach because your first questions, they're great questions, but, once you answer them, then you have much better questions because then you know what you really want to look at. So, yeah, that second round is usually the magic.

Celisa Steele: [00:24:06] So we've been focusing on xAPI, but I know you're just deeply involved in learning more broadly. And so I want to ask, how do you think about your own learning philosophy? How would you describe that?

Megan Torrance: [00:24:20] You know, it's funny because—and especially just coming off a conference I attended recently—learning is what people do. Like we just do all the time. And so I've been thinking lately, like, people say, "I'm a lifelong learner." I'm like, "Well, aren't we all?" Like we all learn something, and we're all inventors.

Megan Torrance: [00:24:42] I mean, it's part of what it is to be human at some level. But some of it's formal. Some of it's informal. I'm interested in—and one of the things I want to do is kind of

*This transcript accompanies the episode of the Leading Learning Podcast
available at www.leadinglearning.com/episode319.*

like go around, connect with older people. Like how do you learn? I spent the first half of my life with a lot of younger people, either being a younger person or raising younger people and coaching younger people and stuff. And so I'm interested in that just out of academic curiosity, I guess.

Megan Torrance: [00:25:08] But I think the other thing that's interesting is that, in order to learn, you have to confess that you don't know something, and that can be really intimidating. And so, if you're learning something within your own industry, to then say, "I don't really know about this" is sometimes scary for people because, well, you're an instructional designer. We thought you knew about these things.

Megan Torrance: [00:25:33] So that's always interesting and can be either a help or hindrance in that learning process. Where learning something outside your field, like I'm a beginner at pickleball. Honestly, I don't even know what pickleball is. So I'm okay with being a complete beginner at pickleball.

Megan Torrance: [00:25:51] And I can be okay with that because I'm not a particularly athletic person, so I don't have any credibility or anything to prove. So that's some of the things I've been—it's not really my learning philosophy. It's just things I'm thinking about learning these days.

Celisa Steele: [00:26:06] I appreciate that idea of to learn is human. And so, instead of saying, "I'm a lifelong learner," it's more about, on the spectrum of reluctant or eager, where do you fall on the lifelong learning spectrum?

Celisa Steele: [00:26:20] So, again, you've been involved in a lot of different learning experiences, participating in them as a learner, designing them, developing them, so if you had to think about key ingredients in effective adult learning, what would you point to? What have you seen as being critical for effective learning over the span of your career?

Megan Torrance: [00:26:45] Yeah. Yeah. This one gets me in trouble also because I look at the list of adult learning principles and kids would buy into this too. It's just that what they consider relevant is totally different than what adults might consider relevant. And we can force kids to do something. Adults are different.

Megan Torrance: [00:27:01] But one of the things that I find really, really valuable is when we're talking about adult workplace learning is that relevance factor. Is it relevant to me? Is it relevant

*This transcript accompanies the episode of the Leading Learning Podcast
available at www.leadinglearning.com/episode319.*

to my role? Is it relevant to where I want to go? Otherwise, I'm just kind of doing it to make somebody else happy.

Megan Torrance: [00:27:19] And so I'm a huge fan of really, really relevant practice. I'm a big fan of action planning. Like, here's a topic—even if it's just an informational topic, the only reason you would choose to consume it is because you need that information to do something. Let's, at the very least, help you plan that action going forward or reflect on what you're learning and how that applies to you personally.

Megan Torrance: [00:27:45] It helps you get started. When I do my professional development courses, all the activities are the learners' own work. It's not a fake case. I used to bring a fake case. Like, here's a case, and we're going to make a training course about this. And it was, like, yeah, great, but now I've got to apply this to my stuff.

Megan Torrance: [00:28:02] And so now I have them bring their own work, and, when they do that, then they actually are creating their own first step and their own reminder and cheat sheet afterwards. So I think that's really, really huge. I'm also a big fan in whatever context around personalization and adaptation.

Megan Torrance: [00:28:24] Whether the personalization is doing the action planning that's personal to you, or here are three articles, four videos, and a haiku—I'm making something up—but pick four of these that are interesting for you rather than making you take all the content or the concept of cafeteria learning. Even in an instructor-led situation, if you can mix up the activities so that people can gravitate to an activity that's meaningful to them, I think that's huge.

Celisa Steele: [00:28:53] I like that emphasis on relevance. And I will say too, when I look at some of Knowles's principles, yeah, I'm like I don't know why this is adult versus just human.

Megan Torrance: [00:29:04] Human, yes, human learning—we've just done a thing here. Yes.

Celisa Steele: [00:29:09] Yeah.

Megan Torrance: [00:29:09] Human learning principles.

Celisa Steele: [00:29:10] I think, you're a lifelong learner—I think you're an enthusiastic lifelong learner, on that end of the spectrum. So would you share with us how you do and think about

*This transcript accompanies the episode of the Leading Learning Podcast
available at www.leadinglearning.com/episode319.*

your own development and your own lifelong learning? Are there specific habits or sources or practices that you engage in yourself to develop professionally or personally if you'd like to share that too?

Megan Torrance: [00:29:35] Yeah, I'm flattered that you think I have that much discipline about it. I go down rabbit holes on the Internet. But a few things. So I sign up for a bunch of newsletters, most of which I don't read, but I do scan the headlines. And so I am just getting into the practice of carving out enough time to attend conferences that aren't directly related to my industry but kind of adjacent.

Megan Torrance: [00:30:05] That's been something I've been interested in. There's tons of the things I tend to be interested in lately professionally around like data and statistics, and there are a ton of really interesting, easy, and enjoyable-to-read books. *The New York Times* Best Seller list is full of books about statistics.

Megan Torrance: [00:30:26] You have to dig a little bit deeper down in the list, but it's about statistics, and I find that very interesting. So that's a piece. I like to take notes because taking notes as I go, it helps me contextualize it and just cement it in my brain a different way. I have a firm belief, and it's also a running joke around TorranceLearning, that instructional designers ruin everything.

Megan Torrance: [00:30:51] Like people in the learning profession, we see things differently in the world. We consume the directions to assemble furniture in a different way than the average bear. We look at signage and process that differently because half the time the stuff that we build could be signage.

Megan Torrance: [00:31:11] We go to museums in a different way than other people go to the museum. I think that we're also just kind of constantly evaluating and scanning and picking up good ideas and whatnot in our world.

Celisa Steele: [00:31:23] I appreciate that idea that it can be everything from a rabbit hole on the Internet to just walking into a museum, that all of those are opportunities for learning. And, in some ways, probably because they get you out of what you might choose to study formally, they can lead to some interesting ideas and begin to see some connections.

*This transcript accompanies the episode of the Leading Learning Podcast
available at www.leadinglearning.com/episode319.*

Celisa Steele: [00:31:44] So thank you for sharing that. You've been involved in learning a long time, so I'm curious, when you think about the future of learning, what excites you? Are there trends or developments that you have your eye on?

Megan Torrance: [00:31:57] I happen to be spending a lot of time, not surprisingly, on data and statistics, and so I have a certain biased lens. I will totally fess up to that. But I think what's interesting about that kind of data-driven trend in our industry, I mean, for the most part, most functions of most large organizations have better data than the learning function has.

Megan Torrance: [00:32:23] I think in higher ed, I think they tend to have better data sometimes about what's going on in a student perspective. I think, as we start looking at workplace learning and the ability to use data and statistics to start informing how we design, how we tailor, how we personalize what we even do, I think that's really, really powerful.

Megan Torrance: [00:32:47] And one of the downsides of SCORM is that because it's been so limited, our industry is kind of—there's a certain, it's the wrong term for it, but it's kind of like learned helplessness. We don't know what we don't have. We have never had it, depending on the platforms we use.

Megan Torrance: [00:33:06] So we tend not to—I mean, if you want to empty a conference room, if you start saying, "We're going to talk about statistics now." And so that tends to put people off. I think that bringing that into our space is a really exciting time for us.

Celisa Steele: [00:33:24] Wonderful. Thank you. That was the last of the official questions that I have for you. Is there anything else that comes to mind that you want to have a chance to say?

Megan Torrance: [00:33:33] One of the things that I love about the xAPI Learning Cohort was that we created it to be inclusive and welcoming. So I welcome all your listeners to join us, if for no other reason than to take the instructional designers lens and say, like, "How did they build that? How does that operate?"

Megan Torrance: [00:33:55] Because we've had 14 semesters when TorranceLearning was running it, and then the Learning Guild is taking that on, and taking from there to really hone that as a learning experience, and to really think very carefully about how do we onboard new people into that community.

*This transcript accompanies the episode of the Leading Learning Podcast
available at www.leadinglearning.com/episode319.*

Megan Torrance: [00:34:12] There's 4,000 people in the Slack, and we're talking about something technical. And I'll tell you, lately, there's a lot of former teachers who are like, "Hi, I'm new to instructional design, and I don't know anything. And somebody told me I should know about xAPI." And I'm thinking, "That's a big, steep learning curve that you're signing yourself up for."

Megan Torrance: [00:34:31] How do we make people feel comfortable and excited about that? So that kind of individual level, comfort level and inclusion. We also spend a lot of time making sure that the speaker base, that the people that are lifted up in that space are also as diverse as possible. And so we have done a lot of work around making sure that we have a blend of women and men talking about learning technology, that we have U.S. (we've been U.S.-centric) but we bring in some non-U.S. voices as we go. We bring in people of different races, people of different backgrounds and perspectives. And that's been intentional all along to really reflect back all of what our industry has to offer.

Jeff Cobb: [00:35:28] Megan Torrance is CEO at TorranceLearning and founder of the xAPI Learning Cohort. She's the author of *Agile for Instructional Designers: Iterative Project Management to Achieve Results* and *Making Sense of xAPI*. You'll find links to the TorranceLearning Web site along with a variety of xAPI resources in the show notes for this episode at leadinglearning.com/episode319.

Celisa Steele: [00:35:55] At leadinglearning.com/episode319, you'll also see options for subscribing to the podcast. We would be grateful if you would subscribe if you haven't yet, as subscriptions give Jeff and me some data on the impact of the podcast.

Jeff Cobb: [00:36:10] And we'd also be grateful if you take a minute to rate us on Apple Podcasts or wherever you listen, especially if you enjoy the show. Celisa and I personally appreciate reviews and ratings, and they help the podcast show up when people search for content on leading a learning business.

Celisa Steele: [00:36:26] Lastly, please spread the word about Leading Learning. At leadinglearning.com/episode319, there are links to find us on Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook.

Jeff Cobb: [00:36:36] Thanks again, and see you next time on the Leading Learning Podcast.

[music for this episode by DanoSongs, www.danosongs.com]

*This transcript accompanies the episode of the Leading Learning Podcast
available at www.leadinglearning.com/episode319.*