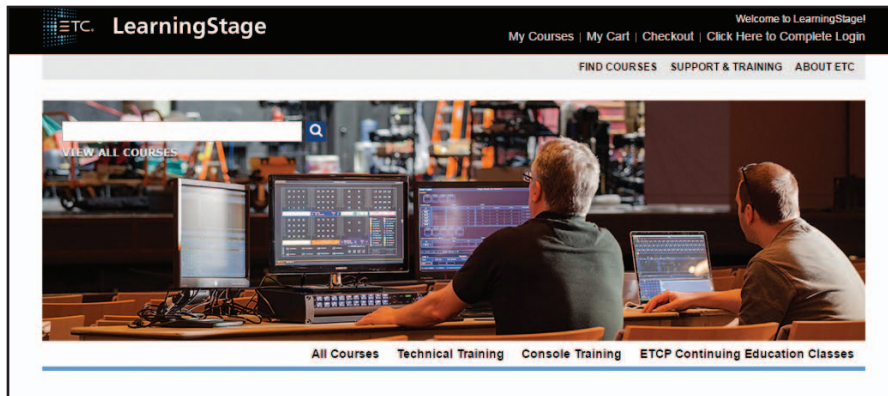BY **DAVID FOX AND KATHY WILLIAMS**

The history of end-user training at ETC

ETC partners with ETCP to bring training that provides ETCP Renewal credits to their customers.

ETC's LearningStage online resource library

> ❝ **ETC's Education Center also recently launched a learning management system, or LMS. This online resource library [is] called LearningStage . . .** ❞

certificate that can be used as a prerequisite for future testing and advanced courses. Since its launch, users from 40 countries have logged on to take advantage of the mostly free resources ETC offers.

The first game changer

While LearningStage was one of the biggest game-changers for the Education Center, it wasn't the first. Back in 2009 ETC became part of ETCP's Certification Renewal program, a program that requires at least 10 points of continuing education credits for members to maintain their ETCP status.

ETC IS A COMPANY THAT UNDERSTANDS the value of training. They haven't stopped growing in 40 years, so the number of dealers, reps, and service technicians working to promote the company, their products, and their brand verges on overwhelming. This world-wide organization depends on this extended family to maintain the integrity of the company; a task they've taken seriously since day one.

The headquarters building in Middleton, WI, has always been the hub for live training events. Since 2005 however, ETC has opened six additional training outposts. There are three in the US, located in New York, Los Angeles, and Orlando, and three more in Europe. The first is in Germany, a second in the Netherlands, and the third in London where over 2,000 people have been trained on ETC consoles alone.

In addition to the training outposts,

ETC's Education Center also recently launched a learning management system, or LMS. This online resource library called LearningStage, opened to the public in January of 2016. "While live training events will always be an essential part of our continuing-education programs, it's great to have additional resources available for those who may not have the time or money to travel," says ETC's training program coordinator, Sophie Pierronnet. "This new library mimics live training offerings for an audience that wouldn't otherwise be able to attend a live event."

LearningStage offers the same materials online as someone would receive at an in-person training session. Courses include downloadable workbooks, visualizer and offline software packages, and training videos. For many of the courses, users are quizzed on their understanding of the course material and receive a completion

Kathy Williams, who has been with ETC since 1998, had transferred to her current position as training and documentation specialist just a few years earlier, in 2005. At the time, ETC's end-user training was getting a big push both domestically and internationally. She watched as the increase in training attendees and product offerings, and growth in technology impacted the types of training ETC was able to successfully offer.

"Partnering with ETCP enabled us to offer our live-event attendees the added bonus of gaining most—if not all—of their required continuing-education credits in a single, weeklong session. While we offer
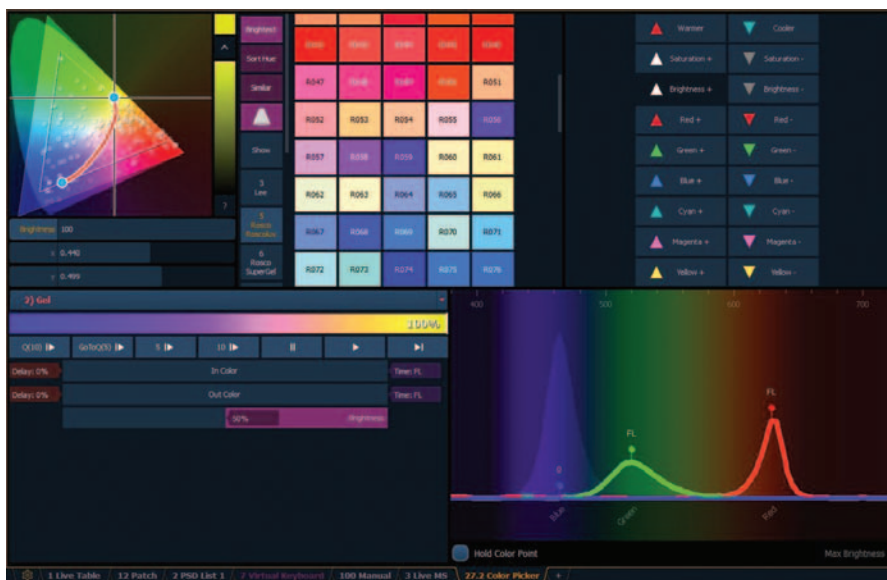
ETC EOS family color tools screenshot

both electrical and rigging ETCP Renewal-credited sessions for our dealer network, many have commented that they would've come to the session even without gaining the credits. Now, we've made it so much easier for them. By attending one ETC Electrical New Technician Training program for five days, they gain their 40 hours of renewal credits. How cool is that?" says Williams.

> **Since we began our involvement with ETCP, we've had 301 people earn 5,414 renewal credits.**

ETC offers four main training events as part of the renewal credit program. On the Electrical side there is the New Technician Training and recertification training—each 40 hours of class time and worth 30 points. On the Rigging side there is a 16-hour New Technician Training, and the eight-hour recertification training worth 16 and eight points respectively.

"Since we began our involvement with ETCP, we've had 301 people earn 5,414 renewal credits. The training session that

has garnered the most credits is our Rigging Training. We had 244 people earn over 3,218 credit hours. For recertification training, 44 people were able to acquire 1,676 credit hours. Since we have people come back on a two-year cycle, many of our technicians gain additional credits each time they return," comments Williams.

How has this affected curriculum?

"The focus on workplace safety has grown significantly in the past decade," says Williams. In response to this, ETC has added several general discussion topics to trainings to give everyone a chance to voice their questions and concerns.

"As a manufacturer, we unfortunately cannot tell them what the safety requirements will be for specific job sites. Local codes vary too much for us to keep up with the differences, but we can offer general advice and situational examples to consider—hopefully, things everyone can put into practice," says Williams. "More focus is spent on jobsite safety in all forms. After all, this can be a dangerous job if proper safety is not at

the forefront of the work."

Training courses are offered in a variety of formats, including workbooks and video tutorials, but up until recently, ETC only offered interactive trainings live and in person. That is, until David Fox started to take a serious look at online training options.

Online training—a modern technology

David Fox, like Kathy, is also a training and documentation specialist at ETC. He develops curriculum, provides training, and administrates online learning. "Our industry requires specialized knowledge, practiced artistry, and technical skills. I believe that everyone who calls themselves a technician bears a level of responsibility to keep learning and to share what they know."

While David acknowledges that in-person classroom training is the best way for adults to learn, the realities of the industry make attending live classes expensive and difficult. There simply aren't enough opportunities around the country to make in-person training a viable continuing-education option for many customers.

> **In 2013, Fox met with ETCP's Provider Recognition Committee and proposed a series of online classes that would be eligible for ETCP renewal credits.**

For this reason, ETC began experimenting with interactive online options. "We quickly discovered we could provide a high-quality learning experience and train more people per session," says Fox. "We started a series of prerequisite classes for people coming to new-technician training and found that two hours of online classes reduced eight hours of in-class training. At that point we knew we had something worth exploring and building on."

In 2013, Fox met with ETCP's Provider Recognition Committee and proposed a series of online classes that would be eligible for ETCP renewal credits. The idea was to create something trainees could sign into with a MyETC account and take whenever they wanted; something that tracks progress and offers a transcript of classes.

"To say the idea was well received is an understatement. What we wanted to do was precisely the thing they, and the ETCP community at large, were encouraging. So, we rolled up our sleeves and got started," says Fox.

In the summer of 2012, Fox was interviewed for an article in *Protocol*, "ETCP: Building a better industry through knowledge." In regards to ETC's live classes becoming certified for credits, he said, "I look forward to the future of training at ETC and a continued collaboration with ETCP. You can expect us to offer more classes and additional opportunities for certified electricians and riggers, as well expanding our offerings to the industry at large… and I look forward to whatever part I can play in continuing to promote education, safety, and professionalism throughout the industry."

After three years of curriculum research, course development, and testing with hundreds of users, ETC believes they have the right combination of interesting topics on a site that is easy to use. In November, they proudly launched four classes, each worth one point of ETCP recertification credit.

- DMX Theory Operation and Troubleshooting
- Networking Fundamentals
- Troubleshooting Technique
- System Maintenance

"We see these first classes as the start of a series of continuing-education classes and look forward to the comments of students and fellow educators alike," says Fox. "I know I said this four years ago, but now I am fully aware of what I am getting us into. Believe me when I say this is only the beginning!"

The future of ETC's training

So what's next for this growing company? "We'll continue to pursue additional ETCP Renewal credit opportunities based on the feedback we receive on these first four," ETC's training program coordinator, Sophie Pierronnet, says. "But there are so many other things in the works as well. We have a great library of training videos that continues to grow, many of which have been translated into, or will soon be translated into additional languages so we can continue to reach our customers around the globe. Same with the downloadable workbooks and tutorials, they continue to expand and additional language translations are coming. And of course, LearningStage has proven itself as a great training tool, not only in the US, but also around the world. We'll continue to build the content library we've been working so hard on this past year."

Interested in learning more with ETC? Go to https://www.etcconnect.com/myetc/ to access LearningStage and the Education Center Library or visit their YouTube channel at https://www.youtube.com/user/ETCVideoLibrary. ■

David Fox is a training and documentation specialist at ETC, where he develops curriculum, provides training, and administrates online learning. He's been with ETC since 1998 and has worked in technical theater for more years than he cares to admit!

Kathy Williams joined ETC in May of 1998 and transferred to the role of training and documentation specialist in June 2005. She coordinates technical training events, develops classes, provides the occasional console training session, and is the "Hostest with the Mostest" for live training events.