A number of recent books have been concerned with the techno-evangelism of the so-called "digital education revolution," principally in relation to "Web 2.0 tools" and the "digital literacy" skills required by today’s learners (Lankshear & Knobel, 2009; Wankel & Kinglsey, 2009). The title of this book suggested a similarly exciting volume of collective papers all referenced and relevant to a developing social and technologically enabled community of Twenty-First Century learners. The introduction, albeit brief, by John Seely Brown succinctly and insightfully summarized where we were and why, and where we might be or possibly could be. The first chapter highlighted the structure of the book and anecdotal evidence was introduced almost as the rationale for such a publication. This initial chapter considered the role of technology within an increasingly flexible educational environment and the requisite needs of a “knowledge” society.

The chapters then followed a route of technological skepticism mixed with advocacy. The first substantive chapter probably did not tell us anything new or revelatory; however it did focus the thoughts and mind into a few words—including communities of learners, change within society which is affected by technology and its effect on learning domains and the whole area or rationale of teaching and learning within education in the widest sense. Whilst not explicit the inference was on the empowerment of learning via technological intervention supported by the technologically enthusiastic teacher. The converse argument

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was then proposed and referenced many evangelical proponents of technology and why their predictions or future technological based classroom practices failed. Sadly, it included many of the known, highly used and not addressed reasons for limited technological progression in the classroom or learning experience. These included cost, access, management, administration, teaching tools, authority and assessment. It presented quite a compelling argument, but did not consider the current Web 2.0 tools and students skills which often circumvent the traditional learning and teaching process and procedures. The use of technology is not about technological use per say. It is about the application of this technology in a meaningful and constructive way which aligns to the curriculum and assessment objectives.

This led us into an “analysis” of America schooling which at first disappointed me as a UK reader. Certainly to enlist a wider international audience the limited parochialism of a US based system will deter many readers. However many of the chapter’s contents whilst referenced against historical aspects of American education, are transferable to other countries and sectors. This cannot be said for the next chapter on the seeds of a new educational system. The subtitles promised much but delivered a perspective of what has happening in the context of an American education system. These titles are equally relevant in other countries—home based, work based, distance based, adult learning as well as the development of learning centers. The content then veered into technology territory i.e., television, videos, computer based learning, Internet cafes and lifelong learning. Whilst these topics are not purely technological developments, aspects of each section did highlight the use of technology and certainly considered where it might be a proponent. Many assumptions about technology use i.e., computers in homes, not just games machines.

Chapter 6 showed considerable promise as it examined responsibilities, expectations, content, pedagogy, assessment, location, culture, relationship and critical translations. It is a very powerful chapter which could have provided the substantive content for the whole book. Chapter 7 presented an interesting perspective on what may be lost and gained when technology is introduced into the educational process. It considered individual learning and potential isolation when technology is utilized within the learning process. Chapters 8 and 9 looked at the school perspective and where and how the curriculum needs to be aligned to reflect the changing nature and engagement of students within the learning process. This means new curriculum design, assessment to reflect individual learning patterns, collaborative activity as well as appropriate technological intervention. It also considered children learning from technology, which will reinforce those that feel they are being replaced by computer based teaching devices! The chapter was actually more about what children are learning by utilizing technology in a meaningful way. This included access outside the formal educational setting.

The final chapter was effectively a summary of process or rethinking education within the context of a Twenty First Century technologically enabled world or society. It touched upon learning which happens increasingly outside school. Motivation, learning content, career development and the transition or incorporation of lifelong learning within the workplace were most insightful. Clearly no such book could avoid the consideration of educational leadership or the role of governments and a possible vision for the future in developing educational paradigms in this age of technology, this was presented within the final chapter. Overall this book shows considerable “promise.” It considers the role of technology within the learning process without delving too deeply into concepts of learning theory, curriculum alignment or motivational theory. There are many cultural idiosyncrasies within the text, i.e., the presentation is very US based, and biased. This is reflected within the notes and references and indeed the title “The digital revolution and schooling in America”. Nevertheless, I personally feel that many aspects can be generalized from a learning perspective without the risk of diluting the substantive context.
REFERENCES


*John O’Donoghue’s background covered a range of educational experiences, from teaching in a social priority area school, to postgraduate lecturing, advising and consultancy for both initial teaching training and education. He has held the position of Chair and President of the Association of Learning Technologies in the UK. He held until recently the Chair in Learning Technology at the University of Central Lancashire as well as a visiting research fellowship in Australia. His role embraced academic and pedagogical aspects of learning and teaching technologies, research, development, implementation and evaluation. His specialist area was technology use as a medium for student/pupil services and delivery, learning, teaching and engagement. John passed away in January 2011.*