Virtual Professional Development and Informal Learning via Social Networks

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People are increasingly engaged in profession-related learning via social networks supported by Web 2.0 tools. Some of these informal online learners are already actively engaged in a profession, whereas others are preparing to enter a profession. Their online interactions enhance their formal education and face-to-face professional experiences.

Virtual Professional Development and Informal Learning via Social Networks will examine how individuals and organizations are using Web 2.0 tools to create informal learning and professional development opportunities. Informal learning is learning which occurs outside of a formal educational context, typically driven by a personal question or an immediate need. In other instances, informal learning may occur as a by-product of other social interactions. In this context, we focus on informal learning that occurs through online social networks on a voluntary basis. Professional development, then, is defined as learning that will enhance one's job-related knowledge or career growth. This book is perfectly suited for academics and practitioners as it is written in a manner that is clearly accessible and includes implications for practice.

Topics Covered:

- Pedagogical frameworks for informal online professional development
- Social networking frameworks for informal online professional development
- Technology support for informal online professional development
- How professional development networks are designed and developed
- How norms and practices develop in professional development networks
- Technologies used for professional development networks
- Case studies of social network development
- Evaluations of online professional development networks
- Empirical research on network interactions in professional development networks
- Case studies of cognitive apprenticeship, mentoring, and knowledge brokering through online social networks.

Market: This premier publication is essential for all academic and research library reference collections. It is a crucial tool for academics, researchers, and practitioners and is ideal for classroom use.

Vanessa P. Dennen is an Associate Professor of Instructional Systems at Florida State University. She earned a Ph.D. in Instructional Systems Technology from Indiana University. Her research investigates the nexus of cognitive, motivational, and social elements in computer-mediated communication, concentrating on two major issues: learner participation in online activities, and interactions, norm development, and informal learning within online communities of practice. Vanessa’s publications, which have been well cited, have appeared in Instructional Science; Distance Education; Computers in Human Behavior; The Handbook of Distance Education; The Handbook of Research on Educational Communications and Technology; and The International Handbook of Collaborative Learning among others. Additionally, she recently co-edited (with Stefan Hrastinski) a special issue of The Internet and Higher Education on Social Media in Higher Education.