Foreword

This book shares experiences from professionals who raise a number of significant issues regarding the use of technology in teaching, learning, and administration. It also shares challenges associated with cross-cultural interaction, such as culturally bound misunderstandings that often arise from the assumptions we unknowingly make about the use of technology. It is crucial to deal effectively with cross-cultural issues in the utilization of technology in teaching and learning, but the present struggles of addressing such cultural issues might actually help us to creatively reshape our own views about technologies and education itself.

In her book, *Digital Dead End* (2011), Virginia Eubanks tells us that the idea that technology would pave the road to prosperity has been promoted through both boom and bust. She goes on to say:

*Today we are told that universal broadband access, high-tech jobs, and cutting edge science will pull us out of our current economic downturn and move us toward social and economic equality. That social equality can be linked to capitalism. Capitalism is an economic system that is based on private ownership of capital goods and the means of production, and the creation of goods and services for profit. (Jenks, 1998)*

It refers to the increasing importance of information within capitalism under conditions of globalization and rapid technological development. The idea of “information capitalism” is closely related to similar concepts such as the knowledge economy, the postindustrial society, the information society, and the network society.

*The development of capitalism has taken a new dimension and has today succeeded in conquering everywhere and everything in the world. Today the world is seen as a global village, where everything and everybody can be reached from anywhere through the power of emerging technologies. Globalization has to do with processes by which different human communities and nations become integrated into one single system called [the] global village. Therefore, whether as a historical process or an ideological construct, globalization brings about greater interaction between countries and peoples all over the world. (Tomlinson, 1997)*

The Tomlinson Committee’s *Report on Inclusive Education* (1996) defines this phenomenon as “a rapidly developing process of complex interconnections between societies, cultures, institutions, and individuals worldwide.” It goes on to say, “It is a social process [that] involves compression of time and space, shrinking distances through a dramatic reduction in time taken—either physically or represen-
tationally—to cross them, so making the world seem smaller and, in a certain sense, bringing human beings ‘closer’ to one another” (Tomlinson, 1997).

This book explores issues concerning information capitalism and globalization and the challenges and solutions we all face in applying these ever-emerging technologies to teaching and learning. It also illustrates the different challenges we face when we utilize technology for teaching and learning in various cultural settings, and it provides first-hand experience of how those challenges are being resolved in several parts of the world. The book presents carefully researched examples of how globalization affects learning, and of how educational organizations can find, create, and adapt technology for use in other cultures.

The editors have woven many threads into a single fabric to meet the needs of a multiplicity of readers. However, the book is designed above all to help readers chart their own paths through the various contributions from many researchers that make up this book. Even if a reader browses the contents for material he or she finds of immediate interest, that person can find much that relates to his or her field or to the challenges he or she is facing in implementing advanced technologies in a learning setting.

This book offers the reader a perspective on education as a critical factor in and as closely related to economic and social policies, the environment, culture, political systems, economic development, and human physical well-being in societies around the world. It shares some of the current thinking about education as a separate factor of production, discussing its impact on human capital and the reciprocal interaction of technology and economic conditions.

One cannot overstate the importance of education as a means of fostering globalization. We would be hard pressed to find a knowledgeable person in the industrialized or developing world who would deny the importance of education to the economic health of any country. The same importance would apply to the effects of information, cross-cultural communication, and digital technology. Citizens of all nations need to understand how globalization works and the policy choices (particularly technology-related policy choices) facing them and their societies. At its most fundamental and rudimentary level, globalization is affected by shrinking geographically defined borders in an attempt to encourage the flow of goods and services, along with the people and culture, of nations around the world. Today more than ever before, people around the world are connected socially through the media and telecommunications, culturally through movements of people, economically through trade, environmentally through sharing one small planet, and politically through international relations and systems of regulation. This book explores the interrelationships and interdependence of our fellow human beings, as we all experience globalization through the increasing ubiquity of applied technology.

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Robert Loyal Siedenburg earned a diploma in Russian Language from the Defense Language Institute. He earned a great books AB (Bachelor of Arts degree) in the humanities from Shimer College, a BA (Bachelor of Arts degree) and an MA in history from Western Illinois University, and he did extensive additional graduate work in geography and education. Siedenburg set up several computer training labs for the Department of Defense, designed and taught the technology literacy program at the Lincoln’s Challenge Academy in Rantoul, Illinois, and also set up their computer labs. He later served as instructional technology consultant for projects at Publication Services, Inc., in Champaign, Illinois. He is the author of the Glossary of Publishing Terms. He teaches business writing and American culture at the Special Program for Administrators, China Executive Leadership Programs, University of Illinois, and is a special tutor at the English Center USA.
REFERENCES

