Foreword

Dominic and I met as doctoral students at Columbia University pursuing dissertation topics in mobile learning. A concept that were deemed heretical and ludicrous at the time by a few skeptics. As we fortuitously met while walking through a park near our campus to our own separate destinations, we spoke of the multitude of examples and numerous possibilities of mobile learning. The more we defended our position through literature, trade journals and real world examples, we sprouted the idea of organizing our collective research on mobile learning into a formal graduate class that we would coteach. The words of detractors were replaced by the enthusiasm and words from people from various disciplines saying “finally, somebody is doing something about leveraging the abundant mobile devices for educational benefit”. Through frequent follow-up conversations, text messages, mobile emails, white board sessions, and virtual document collaboration, we also thought that surely if we and a few others are interested in this emerging field of using mobile devices to help learn and perform better, many others would be interested as well, right?” Fortunately for us, we were right. After more than two years’ worth of work, we ended up launching the nation’s first course on mobile learning at Columbia in 2009. It also didn’t hurt that the first iPhone had come out the year before, so mobile technologies were at the top of many minds. The course was not only our way of teaching what we thought was an extremely important subject, hitting the many different disciplines and arenas, but a tangible way for us to harness and cultivate the eagerness in others to research, experiment and grow the body of existing knowledge surrounding mobile learning.

We have a great many takeaways from creating and teaching the course, however the one that remains vastly critical is the importance of the autonomy that mobile technologies hand individuals in their learning experiences. You can bring your tablet to the kitchen, where you can learn how to cook or to the museum, where you can use an app to give you greater insights into the artifacts in front of you. You can also sit on a train and play a mobile game that has meditative qualities while mastering a language on the go. We both operated from the philosophy that learning is everywhere, but Dominic’s strong understanding and application of what such a contemporary classroom entails is the essence of why he’s the editor of this handbook.

I worked on a multitude of mobile learning initiatives with leading technological multinational corporations, entrepreneurial enterprises, financial and businesses corporations, as well as researching and writing with other leading figures in the mobile learning world. All the while, the mobile learning graduate course still stayed a central part of informing my m-learning work.

Since the beginning of our journey many years ago, Dominic has been making waves in the mobile learning space. His involvement in a variety of projects has given him a vast breadth of knowledge and application. Dominic understands not only the field of mobile technologies, but learning as a whole.
He believes that learning is truly a very personal process. Not because it is done in silo, but because of the decisions we make on what to learn, where to learn, who to learn with, and how exactly to learn are critical decisions that help us grow in some capacity or another. He recognizes that learning is also a balance between introspective and reflective practices, a collective play on understanding and unraveling how to best learn and a journey that mobile technologies help us navigate.

Dominic has over twenty-four years of teaching and leadership experience and has been instrumental in evolving the use of mobile learning technologies in various organizations. At a national talent development non-profit, Dominic has worked tremendously hard to convert their program from predominantly paper-based models to an engaging multimodal and mobile digital environment. At the NY Mayors’ Office of Adult Education, he leveraged mobile media to help previously incarcerated women obtain employment while reducing recidivism. These are only a few of Dominic’s surmountable applications of mobile learning in the field.

Dominic has proposed this handbook to report on research and engage in conversations that outlines the importance of many mobile learning topics ranging from mobile first e-learning design, assessments, augmented technologies, to many more specialized topics. At the heart of the conversation, it becomes evident that all of the spaces where we engage with our mobile phones are opportunities for learning. Once the importance and prevalence of mobile learning have been largely understood, it then becomes a matter of how we can further harness the potential of mobile technologies for teaching, learning, personal, group or organizational development and transformation. Your takeaways from this book should not only be a comprehensive overview of mobile learning, but thought processes and practical methods to help apply mobile learning in contemporary classrooms.

After you finish reading this handbook, be sure to take a walk in the park with your mobile device in hand, and think about the next minor or major impactful thought or action you are going to think about, capture or perform. Chances are, you’ll use your mobile phone to do it.

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