Preface

In 1991, the World Wide Web (WWW) was conceptualized at the European Particle Physics Laboratory (CERN) in Geneva, Switzerland, with the sole purpose of making research findings and scientific materials available to the academic and scientific community on a global network. Since then, the Internet has become an important communications medium for both giant corporations as well as individuals, and lately, as an innovative instructional and distance learning tool for academic institutions. Actually, distance learning was pioneered at Stanford University more than 30 years ago to meet the increasing demand for high-tech engineers and computer scientists at Silicon Valley. Today, nontraditional bachelor and master’s distance learning programs are offered by more than 150 accredited academic institutions in this country. According to the United States Distance Learning Association (USDLA), an organization committed to promoting and developing distance learning, there were no significant differences in effectiveness between distance learning and the traditional learning techniques. Hence, this book was written to provide both academicians and practitioners with a body of knowledge and understanding regarding the distance learning technologies.

This book is divided into three sections. The first four chapters provide the theoretical foundation of distance learning, commencing with Valerie Morphew’s proposed constructivist approach to Web-based learning and instruction, followed by Rita Purcell-Robertson and Daniel Purcell’s descriptive analysis of interactive distance learning. While Dat-Dao Nguyen and Dennis Kira summarize and evaluate the effectiveness of Internet-based teaching, Zane Berge and Donna Smith focus on implementing corporate distance training using change management, strategic planning, and project management.

The second section describes the conceptual aspect of distance learning in seven chapters. William Rayburn and Arkalgud Ramaprasad
introduce three strategies for using distance learning technology in higher education, and also describe the alliances of distance learning in higher education. While Lore Peyton introduces eight elements that will contribute to the success of a distributed/distance learning program, Lynne Schrum describes several issues that will contribute to the design of successful on-line instruction. Mitchell Adrian, on the other hand, develops a learning environment that is capable of applying technology and TQM to Distance Learning. Digital video is often utilized as an important tool in the education system; hence, Major Todd Smith and Captain Scot Ransbottom discuss the use of digital video in the modern classroom, with a focus of learning. Finally, Caroline Howard and Richard Discenza conclude this section with an empirical study of a group decision support system typology.

The final section of the book provides five cases of practical implementation of distance learning. Eric Adams and Christopher Freeman describes the commuting of distance learning at Pepperdine University, while Sherif Kamel illustrates a successful Internet endeavor in Egypt. Jens Liegle and Peter Meso attempt to examine the Web-Based Instruction Systems (WBIS) from the systems’ perspective, describing its components and interfacing technologies, critical problems, issues, and a taxonomy for classifying the various types of WBIS. Ira Yermish, on the other hand, describes a case study via video-conferencing at St. Joseph’s University. Finally, Janet Hugli and David Wright evaluate the training requirements of the network marketing industry, based upon the industry needs and availability of training resources.

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