Acknowledgment

This book is the result of a collaborative project called Digital libraries in support of innovative approaches to learning and teaching in geography funded by the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) over the period February 1, 2003 to January 31, 2008, as part of the Digital Libraries in the Classroom Programme. At the University of Leeds and the University of Southampton we are very grateful for JISC’s support over that period and for their commitment to the development of e-learning and the use of the rich digital library resources, which they have built up. Equivalent support for researchers at Penn State University and the University of California at Santa Barbara was provided by the National Science Foundation.

The project was called DialogPLUS to recognize that it was a partnership between Pennsylvania State University, the University of Leeds, the University of California at Santa Barbara and the University of Southampton. The project was supported fully by our respective universities. All of the book’s authors participated in the project, at one stage or another. The editors are very appreciative of the efforts and support, in particular, of Hugh Davies who led the British team and to David DiBiase who provided intellectual leadership for the American team. Our thanks are also due to our project manager at JISC, Susan Eales, who helped steer the project through at times choppy waters and organized relations with the other projects in the Digital Libraries programme.

There were other staff who contributed to the project who are not authors. At Penn State, David DiBiase was assisted by Steven Weaver, Khusro Kidwai, and Mark Wherley. At Leeds these include: Andy Nelson, who did a super job preparing our academic integrity nugget; Andrew Booth, author of the Virtual Learning Environment, Bodington, which we used throughout the project, who was always encouraging and knew the answers to technical questions well beyond our competences; Jon Maber, principal software engineer for the Bodington VLE who provided valuable technical advice; Richard Hardy, who worked on the physical geography exemplar, Upland Catchment Management, and delivered an online course to Leeds geography undergraduates; Stuart Lane, who guided the development of the physical geography exemplar and who invented the DialogPLUS acronym on a flight to Penn State for our first project meeting; and Anthony Lowe of the Learning Development Unit who gave valuable advice on the academic integrity nugget. At the University of California at Santa Barbara Mike Freeston and Linda Rose set up and maintained the project Web site and swiki for the majority of the project. At Southampton all DialogPLUS project staff members are represented among the book’s authors.

We are very appreciative of the skilled attention to converting the figures into a clear and common format that James Heggie of the Graphics Unit (Geography, University of Leeds) provided. We are also grateful for the work of the numerous referees who reviewed the chapters of the book, often to short deadlines, and gave valuable advice on improving the texts.

The book reports on the use of extensive digital library resources which are cited in the relevant chapters with the appropriate acknowledgements of copyright. The effort that goes into building up these
digital resources is rarely recognized but without it e-learning would be rather empty of content. In the UK both JISC and ESRC (the Economic and Social Research Council) have supported the development of digital libraries such as the ESRC Census Programme. In the USA the NSF has funded major activity in the digital library field.

We have also received much valuable help from the information technology services at our universities, for example, in setting up federated access management for our online programs. We should not take for granted the skills and expertise that are employed everyday to keep us academics always connected.

So, this book is about collaboration in e-learning made possible through investment by two national funding bodies in both a major project and the supporting infrastructure. We hope our largely positive experience encourages others to take up the challenge of e-learning, connected to digital libraries of information and knowledge.

REFERENCES

JISC Programme and Project details are provided at: http://www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/programme_dltc/project_dialogplus.aspx.

The DialogPLUS Project website can be found at http://www.dialogplus.org/.

The ESRC Census Programme resources can be accessed at: http://www.census.ac.uk.