What should be the goals of Career and Technical Education (CTE)? The question lies at the heart of the field of career and technical education, which parallels the efforts of humanity from the Stone Age to modern civilization. A satisfactory answer requires a thorough examination of historical, philosophical, practical and theoretical issues. Almost every community college offers CTE programs in the United States; over two hundred universities offer degree programs in CTE in the nation. Does everyone who practices in this particular field understand the goals of CTE? What about those who make important decisions that will impact those who practice in this field?

CTE has come a long way. Prior to 6000 years ago, there were unorganized CTE programs. Vocational skills were learned from watching one’s elders either at the campsite or in a worksite. Learning could be considered an act to gain knowledge or skill by observation. Trial and error could be the best learning method. Then, there were organized programs in Egypt 6000 years ago where scribes were required to copy documentation from documentation so that training and learning would be more effective. It is believed that the ancient Egyptians began to develop a civilization based on scientific knowledge, government, and religion in the valleys of the Nile, the Tigris, and the Euphrates rivers. Prior to the Industrial Revolution, CTE was called manual training. Later at the turn of the 20th century, it was called manual arts. A year later, it was called industrial arts. Scholars and practitioners used the term vocational education for decades. Eventually, in the 1990s, most programs started to call the field Career and Technical Education to distance the field from being closely associated with blue collar workers because the image of a skilled craftsman may not appeal to our high school students. In fact, we also have a large number of CTE learners preparing for careers requiring a baccalaureate or higher level degree. Therefore, the name “vocational education” no longer reflects what we do and practice in the field. Career and technical education is a vivid name that truly reflects the nature of the field in the 21st Century.

From the cotton mills in 1803 to modern factories, principles, philosophies, theories and practice of CTE by leading individuals have helped shape the field. As the ancient nations focused on apprenticeship systems, the Industrial Revolution put a strain on the apprenticeship programs in the then developing nations, including the United States. In this information age, CTE has become a multibillion dollar training enterprise. To make our students more competitive in the labor force and to make our nation economically strong and firms internationally competitive, we have to depend on CTE to train today’s workers of various kinds. Without a doubt, CTE has become a vibrant source of workforce development across the globe. It has matured into a sound and meaningful program for high school and post-secondary students across interest areas and abilities. After the first passage of the Morrill Act, CTE programs became available at land grant universities. As our nation’s leaders provide more federal funding to this strong field of study, CTE will definitely fulfill its number one objective, that is, to meet the manpower needs of society.
This volume brings together definitive writings on CTE by leading figures and by contemporary thinkers in the History, Philosophy, Practice and Theories of the field. In the past, we had great texts written by prominent figures such as Roy Roberts, Rupert Evans and Edwin Herr. Philosophies and principles advanced by Prosser and Miller reflected the cultural needs of the people in the past. As our society changes, we realize how pervasive technology and information skills are needed to meet the manpower needs of society. At the same time, what we lack is a definitive book on the History, Philosophy, Practice and Theories to prepare people, young and old, for the world of work in the 21st Century. No where can we find a volume like this one. This book has filled a much needed void in the literature and it will equip our scholars and practitioners with knowledge, skills, and attitudes to succeed in the field of CTE.

*Victor C. X. Wang, Ed.D.*
*Associate Professor of CTE and Adult Education*
*California State University, Long Beach*
*Long Beach, California, USA*

*May 29, 2009*