Preface

Information and communication technologies (ICT) are pervading society to an extent which many would not have even dreamt about as recently as a decade back. Practically, no aspect of societal endeavor has been left untouched by the relentless march of ICT. The ossified enclaves of many aspects of society have been rendered permeable by the osmotic gradients engendered by the forces of ICT!

One area that ICT is continuing to impact vigorously is education. The paradigms of traditional pedagogy are being reframed to the extent that purists set in the classical mould would not even have believed. These developments pose challenges for teachers and students. Policy makers and administrators will also have to increasingly grapple with the ICT dimensions of initiatives in the educational space.

The K-12 school setting has seen the influx of a diversity of ICT tools which aim to augment teaching and learning by capitalizing on the potentialities of ICT. For example, e-learning, multimedia, Web quests, electronic portfolios, automated scoring systems, video games, mobile devices, learning objects, 3-D virtual environments and Web 2.0 technologies are some of the ICT tools that have pervaded the educational scene. The K-12 setting has also been a laboratory for the trialing of new technologies for teaching and learning by educational researchers, and this has generated a wealth of findings.

The Handbook of Research on New Media Literacy at the K-12 Level: Issues and Challenges aims to explore the multi-faceted dimensions related to the use of ICT in teaching and learning in schools. By bringing together a wealth of educational studies on various aspects of ICT, we aim to address the need for practitioners to have a one-stop reference book for ideas on the latest thinking in the field.

A novel feature of the Handbook is that all contributions were commissioned from recently published, journal authors working in the field of ICT. This ensures the contemporary nature of the ideas explored in the chapters as well as helps to ensure a desired level of scholarship in the chapters. It was made clear to all contributors that their submissions must also pass the additional test of peer scrutiny. A Call for Chapters was thus not posted in the web, as is normally done for a project of this undertaking. Almost all chapters benefitted from the reviews by other contributors. A few chapters required a second round of revisions. Despite the 2-tier mechanism (commissioning contributions from published authors and peer review) to ensure a high quality of submissions, a handful of chapters had to be rejected — either because the referees’ comments were not favorable or because the authors decided not to revise their chapters on the basis of the major revisions recommended by the referees.

In all, there are 52 chapters contributed by 91 authors from 51 institutions in 15 countries for this Handbook — a truly multinational effort! An international collaboration is indispensable when undertaking an ambitious project of this nature as well as for the strategic positioning of the Handbook as a definitive source of reference in the field of new media literacy.

For convenience, the 52 chapters have been broadly placed in one of five sections — Issues in new media literacy, ICT tools, Case studies, Assessment, and Professional development. This classification
allows interested readers to access materials in an area of interest. The classification is guided by our own reading of the chapters and it is possible that a chapter would also be suitable for placement in another section. There may be some duplication of content as judged from the titles of a few chapters – our stand is that different authors approach similar topics from the lens of their own experience and it is necessary to capture diverse perspectives as this can help to consolidate thinking in particular directions.

The target audiences for the Handbook include school teachers, educational administrators, policy makers, educational researchers, ICT specialists, and university academics – copies in public and university libraries would help to enhance the outreach effectiveness of the ideas in the Handbook. Rarely has an opportunity been provided to bring together a wealth of ideas in new media literacy from an array of experts under one platform.

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