Preface

Instructional designers play a significant role in enhancing teaching and learning in cross-cultural international settings, universities, faculties, departments and school settings. Instructional designers enter these communities of practice and attempt to understand the context and achieve legitimate participation in each community. This book examines how instructional designers work across these diverse communities of practice, and illustrates the different methods with a range of heuristic, communication, and other unique strategies. This book consists of a number of peer-reviewed chapters that document real-world cases of instructional designers who work in diverse communities of practice.

Introduction

This book will be useful for instructional designers who want to improve their understanding of the knowledge, skills, strategies, heuristics and principles that are required to complete projects in challenging contexts and content areas. Instructional designers who work in universities, teaching and learning centres, educational technology centres, distance education providers, multimedia and online learning centres and business corporations will find this book useful for their professional practice. Moreover, this book will provide insights and principles to support instructional design departments who teach undergraduate and postgraduate students to become instructional designers. Other professionals, such as academic staff developers, human resource consultants, psychologists and knowledge management coordinators, will also benefit from this book.

The Target Audience
How This Book is Organised

This book is divided into five sections: Section I. Professional Practice; Section II. Cross-Cultural Context; Section III. University-Wide Context; Section IV. Faculty and Departmental Context; and Section V. School Context.

Section I: Professional Practice

Section I examines general perspectives in relation to professional practice of instructional designers, educational designers and academic developers. The first four chapters examine the role of the instructional designer in organizational change as social change agents, challenges to the profession, heuristics for designers and how designers translate across communities of practice.

In Chapter I, Richard A. Schwier, Katy Campbell and Richard F. Kenny suggest that instructional designers act as social change agents in the design and development of instruction. They draw on the stories of instructional designers to develop a model of change agency that includes interpersonal, professional, institutional and societal dimensions. The model provides guidance for the development of new skills in instructional design, for serious reflection by instructional designers about their own influence as agents, and for graduate programs in instructional design to address agency.

In Chapter II, Jenny Bird, Chris Morgan and Meg O’Reilly continue the theme by presenting some of the major challenges faced by the profession. They explore the tensions arising when current practices are pushed by institutional agendas including quality assurance, technology and flexible learning imperatives, student demographics and the emerging models of educational design practice across national contexts. The chapter also discusses the current status of the profession itself, debates and trends towards professionalisation and accreditation, and the manner in which designers and developers operate as a community of practice.

In Chapter III, Min Liu, Coco Kishi and Suzanne Rhodes suggest that universities increasingly expect faculty to integrate technology in their teaching in innovative ways. In this chapter, they describe the development process they have used in training and working with student developers and guiding faculty-student project development teams. They outline critical issues instructional designers face when working with faculty content experts, and provide suggestions for becoming effective designers and overcoming the challenges in this academic setting.

In Chapter IV, Michael J. Keppell suggests that instructional designers broker across communities and provide new possibilities for innovative practice in professional settings. By acting as brokers, instructional designers translate between different communities of practice similar to a language translator, and coordinate multi-disciplinary projects and collaborations that foster connections across and within communities of practice. The unique vantage point of being on the borderline between communities of practice allows new possibilities for innovative design and professional development. This chapter provides insights into the nature of instructional designers as brokers.
Section II: Cross-Cultural Context

Section II examines a number of cross-cultural contexts. The first two chapters in this section examine the way that unique contexts in China and Papua New Guinea influence instructional design. The third chapter examines cross-cultural communication across professional cultures or academic tribes.

In Chapter V, Susan Crichton suggests that designers working on international development projects require culturally sensitive ways to create resources and provide training for individuals who have different cultural backgrounds. The “western” assumptions of instructional design are not universal principles and may pose particular challenges as project participants work together to find solutions to teaching and learning problems. This chapter provides a number of insights about the field of instructional design within a Chinese context.

In Chapter VI, Lalen Simeon, Gwyn Brickell and Brian Ferry suggest that the increasing emphasis on the use of ICT for research and teaching can be threatening for lecturers in the academic community. They suggest that these fears can be eased if professional development is supportive and ongoing, and provided in flexible, appropriate and adaptable ways. This chapter focuses on the results of two case studies and describes the roles that the two instructional designers played in facilitating the professional development of lecturers that were constructing e-learning environments. This study developed a team collaboration model for planning and designing e-learning resources that will be piloted in tertiary institutions in Papua New Guinea.

In Chapter VII, Cathy Gunn and Beth Cavallari suggest that the work of instructional designers in the current higher educational context is part of a complex process that traverses a range of professional relationships and communities of practice. The requisite professional skills include the ability to operate and communicate effectively across these different professional cultures. The term “culture” is used in a novel way to reflect the “academic tribes” concept described in Becher and Trowler (1989), and to highlight the complexity of working relationships in teams that are often transitory. This chapter presents a model that situates the instructional designer’s role within the process of educational design and development.

Section III: University-Wide Context

Section III examines a number of university-wide contexts. These five chapters examine educational design practice, social constructivist approaches to instructional design, online professional development, the fostering of educational technology champions and a learning designer community.

In Chapter VIII, Chris Morgan, Jenny Bird and Meg O’Reilly describe a case study that provides an overview of educational design practice in a relatively small regional Australian university. In its 15-year history at Southern Cross University, educational design practice has been significantly shaped by its context, and has evolved continuously to meet the changing needs of the University and its student profile. This case study charts educational design evolution over the 15 years, the impact of online learning upon roles and practice, the current institutional “footprint” of the educational designers, the convergence of roles with academic staff development, and its current research agendas.
In Chapter IX, Jacquelíné McDonald and Terry Mayes present a case study that reflects on the changing approach of an instructional designer at an Australian university. The designer moved from one-to-one interactions with subject matter experts in the design of traditional print-based distance learning courses, to adopting a pedagogical framework that guides the use of technology in hybrid course design. This encourages the subject matter experts to design their courses in a way that emphasises what Wenger (2005) has called the “horizontalisation” of learning. The study contrasts the traditional approach to design with a social constructivist framework.

In Chapter X, Stephen Quinton describes two strategies for delivering educational design expertise and online professional development via the Internet. The issues and difficulties pertaining to the design and application of online staff development are examined in terms of the factors and needs that were observed during the implementation phases. The professional development initiative focuses on staff development Web sites. These sites aim to inspire instructional design staff to understand the implicit teaching and learning goals used by lecturers, and to assist lecturing staff to increase their awareness of instructional design methodologies. This approach allows participants engaged in online developments to share a common pool of understanding and expertise.

In Chapter XI, Samuel Ng Hong Kok, Tang Buay Choo and Myint Swe Khine examine an initiative to create Educational Technology (ET) Champions and leaders within a higher education institution in Singapore. It examines how the concept of communities of practice was applied to an initiative for transforming teaching and learning through educational technology. Instructional designers coached ET Champions in the principles of creating learning objects. The ET Champions later returned to their respective colleges to work with other lecturers. ET Champions progressed through five stages, which included peripheral, legitimate, core, strategic and transformational membership. Each stage required support and guidance within the community.

In Chapter XII, Sarah Lambert and Christine Brown highlight the importance of developing and sustaining a knowledge base among designers to enable the collective sharing of strategies and tools for communication within project teams. This chapter identifies and discusses the need to capture collective wisdom of designers who work in close proximity within the same university. It examines a case study of a project that illustrates changes in the design context in relation to types of projects (CD-ROM, Web-based, learning management systems), and discusses these trends through the eyes of two designers. It also discusses the trend away from large stand-alone projects to networked learning objects. It examines these trends in relation to a number of strategies that support the learning design community and its work.

**Section IV: Faculty and Departmental Context**

Section IV examines a number of faculty and departmental contexts. These four chapters examine a discipline-specific instructional design unit, the introduction of e-learning to a group of language teacher-educators in a traditional Chinese context, the advantages and disadvantages of a team approach to instructional design and the need for effective communication in the management of a project.

In Chapter XIII, Len Webster and Patricie Mertova tell a story of a discipline-specific instructional design unit located in a Faculty of Law of a large university. This unit is engaged in
the instructional design and development of a variety of units/subjects, courses and projects for undergraduate, postgraduate and professional practice programs, and also a Graduate Certificate in Law Teaching. Other activities in this specific community of practice include assisting staff with new approaches to their teaching, developing longer-term relationships with teaching staff and fostering reflective practice.

In Chapter XIV, Pamela Pui Wan Leung describes how she introduced e-learning to a group of language teacher-educators in a traditional Chinese context. This chapter reports the strategies adopted in a one-year teaching development project, responses of participants, typical instructional designs generated and the causes for innovation-decision. It argues that, even in a context with a strong transmission tradition, an ordinary academic staff member can still function as a change-agent by diffusing innovative teaching. By revealing the process and results of the attempt, the author hopes that practitioners in the same field can continue to explore feasible ways of stimulating active learning in both teachers and students.

In Chapter XV, Sue Bennett examines how instructional designers work together in teams to solve problems. It examines the advantages and disadvantages of a team approach to instructional design. This case explores how a team of instructional designers worked together to create “Exploring the Nardoo,” a multi-award winning CD-ROM developed by the University of Wollongong’s Educational Media Laboratory (emLab). The case describes key issues related to the design and development of the package from the perspective of a faculty-based multimedia unit, which was established with a strong emphasis on advancing research through innovations in design.

In Chapter XVI, Elspeth McKay and Jennifer Martin suggest that project management is a pivotal tool that underpins the successful design of information systems. The authors argue that the strength of the human-dimension of human-computer interaction (HCI) is often omitted by system designers. It discusses some of the issues that arise when dealing with a multi-disciplined project team. These include: dealing with a non-conventional learning context, the challenge of designing an appropriate learning design and instructional architecture.

Section V: School Context

Section V examines a number of school-based contexts. These three chapters examine the development of a physical and health educators’ community of practice, an online classroom simulation for pre-service and in-service teachers, and the design and development of an e-learning management system in Hong Kong.

In Chapter XVII, Lori Lockyer, John Patterson, Gregg Rowland and Doug Hearne explore the perspectives of an instructional design team that designed and developed an online environment to facilitate the Australian physical and health educators’ community of practice. The objective of the multidisciplinary design team was to determine the activities and supporting technologies that would help invigorate senior members, and to initiate novice members to this well-established community. The chapter describes the community and the particular challenges it faces; details the design, development and implementation processes for the online environment and activities; identifies the issues addressed during the design and implementation process; and analyses the experiences of the initial implementation.

In Chapter XVIII, Brian Ferry and Lisa Kervin report on the research associated with the development and implementation of prototype versions of an online classroom simulation.
It examines how the simulation assisted in the development of a community of practice among pre-service teachers. In addition, this chapter examines how a team of researchers, an instructional designer, programmers and graphic artists worked within a community of practice as the simulation software was created.

In Chapter XIX, Kar-Tin Lee reports on a case study that examines the process of implementing an e-learning management system (ELMS) for learning science in secondary schools in Hong Kong. It describes the challenges, issues and problems associated with creating science content and then integrating it with both a diagnostic and an open-content marking tool. To achieve its purpose, a team of instructional designers worked closely with content and technology experts to digitise science content for online delivery. It is argued that when teachers are actively involved in an implementation of a technology rich environment, they begin to see the benefits of teaching science differently. Given the opportunity to use the online system, students also tend to take more responsibility for their own learning.