Foreword

Online learning has come a long way from the 1990s when instructors used their own server space, basic HTML software, and free listservs to teach their classes. The World Wide Web was the new frontier for education, and pioneers fought for the legitimacy of this emergent learning environment.

Fast-forward 20 years, and online education, or E-learning, is so commonplace that people of all ages around the world are taking classes and completing self-paced tutorials online. Ubiquitous E-learning, or U-E-learning, is disrupting traditional educational systems at a rapid pace, evident in the recent rise of MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) offered by for-profit and not-for-profit organizations such as Coursera, Udacity, and edX, typically in partnership with universities. Khan Academy, which hosts thousands of video tutorials on a multitude of topics, provides another example of the disruptive capabilities ubiquitous and free access to content can have on educational practices and institutions.

But how well are these new pedagogical approaches working? What theoretical perspectives best explain the complexities of online education? Which U-E-learning models offer the most promise in their practical applications? How does U-E-learning vary across cultures, institutions, teachers, and students? These are the questions the contributors to *E-Learning 2.0 Technologies and Web Applications in Higher Education* address.

What makes this book so intriguing, timely, and essential is its truly international perspective on E-learning. This edited volume fills a glaring gap in the literature on E-learning by examining the ubiquity of the online learning environment around the globe. Open and pervasive Internet access—while not complete—has internationalized the online classroom. In *E-learning 2.0 Technologies and Web Applications in Higher Education*, scholars working in a wide range of locations, including France, Germany, India, Nigeria, Portugal, Romania, Spain, South Africa, and Tunisia, provide key insights into the new age of anywhere, anytime E-learning. Contributors address critical topics such as the influence of culture on acceptance and use of E-learning tools, social media and E-learning, the role of emotion in online learners’ engagement with the course, integrating E-learning and knowledge management, students’ use and perceptions of mobile technology for E-learning, and the contributions of E-librarians to E-learning. A global perspective provides the framework for understanding these complexities associated with E-learning.

Contributors provide refreshing insights into how social media such as Facebook and Twitter bring the power of collaborative Web applications to online learning. No longer confined to the restrictions of learning management systems, the online classroom has in a sense gone back to its earlier innovative roots in which instructors leveraged the online communication technologies available to them at the time. This volume explores those creative advances in online learning communities and how they are transforming the E-learning landscape.
Pervasive computing—the ubiquitous part of U-E-learning—also has altered the physical environments in which students and instructors alike participate in their online classes. The book’s contributors address mobile education, with the move away from individuals accessing their online classes via traditional desktops or laptops and instead dropping in on their classes at any time from any place using tablets and smartphones. Google’s wearable computer, Glass, that looks like futuristic glasses without lenses, offers another alternative for a mobile classroom interface that will change how and when individuals engage in E-learning.

Although the volume focuses on higher education, the lessons gained from each chapter are applicable to any learning environment, whether training employees in the workplace or teaching children basic math skills. In addition, the book addresses the cultural, social, structural, institutional, professional, and individual affordances and constraints associated with E-learning. Students, educators, and practitioners will find this book invaluable as they learn, create, and implement online classes.

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