In *Social Networking Communities and E-Dating Services*, editors Celia Romm-Livermore and Kristina Setzekorn have gathered a remarkably diverse group of researchers whose articles cover a wide range of topics. This book advances our thinking about how and why people meet and interact online within various contexts, settings or places. The framework is a typology of social networking communities, with e-dating services emerging as one thriving type of place within those communities, attracting members from around the world.

The book collects authors of different disciplines, both academic and more practically oriented, from fields including political science, psychology, linguistics, management, marketing, information systems, and media studies. Using various research methodologies from content analysis to ethnography, they reside in Australia, Canada, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States. While the authors work in countries with predominantly Western cultures, some of the chapters contain data sets from China, India, Japan and India to offer a more truly global perspective.

The chapters of the book’s first half address the motives for joining social networks and tell us methods that people employ to create a community within them. Authors describe how such varied constituents as learners and experts, workers and managers, gamers, and political activists collaborate in social networks to affect the social worlds they inhabit both online and off-line. This section of the book also highlights the interaction of young people, who currently dominate those who interact within the most popular social networking sites. Researchers go beyond the surfaces of MySpace and Facebook to analyze both the benefits and drawbacks of participation. For example, education of users can show them how older adults may use information gathered from social networking sites in their hiring decisions. An included chapter on the game play of animated avatars in the World of Warcraft describes how members often explore online territories alone, as well as by joining with others, adding to the understanding of virtual world dynamics.

With the e-dating chapters, this book builds upon the research up to now. Considering that Match.com started in 1994, the relative dearth of research-oriented publications on the topic is surprising. While scholarly books devoted solely to the area of online dating and intimate relationships in cyberspace have started to appear, this collection adds to those works about people who first meet through computer-mediated communication. The chapters here provide much needed elaboration upon the behaviors of daters in the online dating services, and outline theories to explain them. They explore dimensions such as the development of special markets for different types of e-daters and how e-dating may affect relationships off-line. A unique piece ties together the first section on “Social Networking Communities” to the “E-Dating Services” section that follows. It links the larger area of social networking sites and the online dating sites by classifying groups into two major categories of intent, the social and commercial.

In sum, this book engages the reader with practical and theoretical ideas about the processes of collaboration and competition among people forming work relationships and more playful, personal
connections in cyberspace. With the increase of mobile technologies, and growth of the number of relationships either started or developed online, the lines between online and “real-life” worlds have blurred. This book advances our knowledge of everyday happenings that are harbingers of our futures, both online and off-line.

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