Foreword

One of the more demanding challenges of educational and library administrators and practitioners is the selection of the right combination of technology for multiple educational objectives. Every place is different. Every student has his or her individual needs and interests. Various curricula will require different technological approaches. Faculty members bring their own strengths and weaknesses. Institutions often have their limitations, whether they are budgetary or visionary.

The two authors are well qualified to address educational technology as the means to enhance learning opportunities in this digital age with careful attention to factors that are particularly important within traditional cultural contexts. They several voices to highlight multicultural educational technology experiences in teaching and to depict the need for selectivity and judgment in keeping pace with technological change in areas with limited resources.

Some years back, in a conversation with the director of the newly created Institute of Museum and Library Services, I stressed that many of the institutions most in need of technological grants were the least likely to produce a workable five-year technology plan. What is needed, I said, are individuals knowledgeable about the many innovative educational technologies available who could advise and assist local educators and librarians in integrating a practical technology plan with local conditions and objectives. I believe this publication could serve such a purpose by enabling educators and librarians to determine the technology alternatives and applications that hold the most promise for their communities.
Resistance to change is also discussed. However, as a parenthetical aside, I believe it is often not the fear of change itself, but the concern about the appropriateness of the concept or even the agenda, motives, and qualifications of the people proposing the change. Fair-minded administrators know that it is important to build trust and to distinguish between legitimate opposition to what may be perceived as a poor idea and actual hostility to technological change. It is wise to prudently listen and evaluate opposing views, because you may discover that they are right.

The authors frankly discuss the proliferation of technology and future demands for the increasing levels of digital competency, as well as need for administrative skills to justify institutional monetary and political investment in technical infrastructure and personnel. I add my own recommendation for step-by-step incremental technological change, as it offers the opportunity to test as you go, make adjustments, seek feedback, and fine-tune each application with an eye toward sustainability (including provision for maintenance and spare parts). I remember well that the first personal computer installed in the joint College-Public Library on the island of Tinian was short-circuited by an exploring but ill-fated gecko that caused a delay of more than a month.

Educational and informational technology is a vital tool for educational specialists as the Internet and communication revolution expands to unforeseen horizons and we attempt to keep watch over our educational ramparts. As the book depicts, the deft application of educational technology repeatedly involves the art of interpersonal relations as well as the science of cyberspace. I emphasize that these educational and information technology tools will further transform all our lives—students, faculty, librarians, administrators and systems managers. We are asking people to take on new tasks, break old habits, and give up ownership of local programs to become a collaborative partner in a larger interconnected and ever-changing world. In most cases, this means relinquishing local authority and that enters the realm of politics. This is not mere change; this is truly transformational. Yet, the potential educational results in overcoming time, distance, learning disparities and jurisdictional boundaries are well worth the daunting challenge.

Fortunately, Yukiko Inoue and Suzanne Bell, an educator and a librarian, respectively, have made the task easier with this remarkable study of educational technology applications in the Asia-Pacific. The two University of Guam academics have, quite logically, based their research on Micronesia, but their publication is also a timely text that I recommend for anyone involved in educational technology at colleges and universities—especially for those faced
with difficult geographic, demographic, and societal challenges throughout the world.

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