

Foreword

It is with great honor and pleasure that I compose a foreword for this publication. It has been my ambition that the scope and contents of the handbook should provide commercial, educational, and public enterprises with the necessary and sufficient tools for designing, implementing, managing, and evaluating information and communication technologies (ICT). Geographically this ambition has been met as the contributors reside in Asia, Australia, Europe, and North America. The included chapters describe a global perspective on technical-software and social-human cases associated with a variety of approaches to learning management systems, language labs, children's drawings and business applications. The integrative cross-curricular and cross-disciplinary quality of the handbook is welcome and useful. Taken together the chapters form a comprehensive whole suited to a number of settings.

Digital information technologies play a vital role in assisting communities of practice with the complex control required to design, manage, and maintain virtual and situated exchanges. The new technology harbors important elements for collective and individual learning, human resource management, systems thinking, and change processes. The technology also supports routines for dealing with communicative dynamics and structural stability. Therefore the authors' approaches underpin continuous development of educational, social services, and business strategies.

In my role as editor of this publication, I have had the fortune of first hand contact with academics and practitioners. Today people seek professional guidance on the implementation of digital information technologies. I believe that for a number of reasons many categories of people will value the extensive analysis of requirements, application of designs, pieces of advice, and evaluation of results.

The handbook integrates a special kind of academic and practitioner knowledge, assisting individuals and organizations in their attempts at gaining benefits from theoretical and empirical perspectives. The handbook offers the reader useful knowledge derived from the implementation of a variety of technologies and contexts. It contains a display of wide-ranging project management and extensive academic research performed by authors of many disciplines, businesses, and cultures.

This book will help theorists and practitioners equally to separate between *technics* and *techniques* in modern media. The former approach signifies the actual tool for producing artifacts or artificial items like computer machines, software, or screwdrivers. The latter approach signifies human knowledge and skills about the methods for sharing knowledge about how to produce artifacts. It is a natural thing that in a society where technological innovation has contributed to so much progress, people should adopt a socio-technical way of thinking. We tend to confuse physical-technics with socio-technical manipulation, and we believe that such a way of thinking would be void of ethics, compassion, empathy, or brotherhood.

This handbook, however, suggests that new forms of reasoning, sense-making, and spiritual life form a trademark of the technology. New sources of inspiration and cultural values will emerge. But it is hardly

possible to hold a view about how a new moral of life could build on a discussion of the conditions for human co-existence and fulfillment of individual ambitions. Such aspects emerge regardless of how the socio-technical perspective of man-machine interactions develops. Historically, however, philosophers have defined an ethics independent of technology. Therefore, it is reasonable to believe that before a new ICT-ethics can develop, people will form their own view of values, upbringing, goals, and attitudes.

It is my ambition that the handbook will play the role of a vital primer for organizations that wish to embark on the implementation of digital information technologies related to for example conflict resolution, digital competence, epistemologies, storytelling, e-learning effectiveness, ethical issues, internet simulations, language labs, learning management systems, mobile learning devices, multimedia, multi-user virtual learning environments, social software, online focus groups, readability, technology enhanced corporate learning, reflective learning, systems thinking, self-construction, philosophy, Web-based mediation, socio-technical dilemmas, teacher education, trust enabling functions, virtual scientific conferences, networks, Web-course designs, and science teaching. These approaches will help individuals and organizations to plan, implement, and manage the next generation of virtual systems.

I am pleased to recommend this book, regardless if the readers are looking for strategies, management procedures, software materials, information management clues, Web content or learning management systems. I wish you all the best success with the planning, implementation, and management of your social and technical systems.

Thomas Hansson

University of Southern Denmark / Blekinge Institute of Technology, Sweden
December 2007