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Section I. Fundamental Concepts and Theories

This section serves as the foundation for this exhaustive reference tool by addressing crucial theories essential to the understanding of virtual communities. Chapters found within these pages provide an excellent framework in which to position virtual communities within the field of information science and technology. Individual contributions provide overviews on the history of virtual communities, their impact on organizations, and overviews on various phenomena such as social computing and communities of practice. Within this introductory section, the reader can learn and choose from a compendium of expert research on the elemental theories underscoring virtual communities.

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Section III. Tools and Technologies

This section presents extensive coverage of the technology that informs and impacts virtual communities. These chapters provide an in-depth analysis of the use and development of innumerable devices and tools, while also providing insight into new and upcoming technologies, theories, and instruments that will soon be commonplace. Within these rigorously researched chapters, readers are presented with examples of the tools that facilitate and support the emergence and advancement of virtual communities. In addition, the successful implementation and resulting impact of these various tools and technologies are discussed within this collection of chapters.

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This section presents contemporary coverage of the managerial implications of virtual communities. Particular contributions explore fostering creativity in virtual teams and e-commerce, while others discuss the virtual leadership and electronic business relationships. The managerial research provided in this section allows administrators, practitioners, and researchers to gain a better sense of how virtual communities can inform their practices and behavior.

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This section addresses conceptual and theoretical issues related to virtual communities, which include issues related to customer relationship management, critical success factors, and business strategies. Within these chapters, the reader is presented with analysis of the most current and relevant conceptual inquiries within this growing field of study. Particular chapters address the socio-technical challenges of the semantic web, and the impact of communications technology on trust. Overall, contributions within this section ask unique, often theoretical questions related to the study of virtual communities and, more often than not, conclude that solutions are both numerous and contradictory.

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