

Preface

As information technology has spread to all corners of the world and to all aspects of personal and work life, so too, has grown an interest in understanding more about the diverse characteristics of those who use, develop, and are affected by information technology (IT). This is a significant development because understanding the diverse characteristics of both developers and users has ramifications for the way in which work is done, user requirements for systems are understood, and interaction with computer-based tools is accomplished. One important aspect of this human diversity is gender. What has accompanied this increased interest in the role of gender diversity in understanding IT development and use, in recent years, has been heightened research interest in the influence of gender on information systems and technology.

As a result, a large and diffuse body of research related to the role of gender in human interactions with information technology has emerged in recent years. This body of research spans a number of disciplines including: information science and technology; information systems; computer science; engineering; education; women's studies; gender studies; labor studies; human resource management; and science, technology, and society. The focus of this research has been on issues such as similarities and differences between women's and men's use of information technology, variation in relationship to IT among members of each gender group, the effect of gender combined with other diversity characteristics (such as race or ethnicity) on IT use, and the underrepresentation of women in the IT profession. The audience for this research includes parents, educators, managers, policy makers, and other researchers. However, because this literature is located in so many different disciplines a number of problems have arisen. First, for students and scholars, it is difficult to locate the corpus of relevant gender research literature when one wants to learn about or is engaged in gender and IT research. Second, it is difficult for educators, policy makers, managers, and other consumers of this literature to find the relevant material. Consequently, there is a need to bring this research literature together into a single reference source.

The idea for a compilation of research on the topic of gender and information technology originated in 2001. While attending a panel on women and IT at an information systems conference in Australia, several of us who are engaged in gender and IT research bemoaned the lack of coherence in the research. The problem, as we saw it, was that too little research is informed by the existing literature. Instead, too much research appears to be informed by anecdotal data or personal bias. Hence, current research on gender and IT is making less of a contribution to cumulative knowledge about this topic and less of an impact in addressing the issues than it could. At that gathering, we began to talk about the need for a book that would bring together this disparate body of research literature. The opportunity to produce such a book came three years later when Dr. Mehdi Khosrow-Pour of Idea Group Inc. asked me to edit an encyclopedia on the topic of gender and IT. In accepting this invitation, my goal for this book was: (1) to bring together the research literature from all the different disciplines that are producing research about gender and information technology; (2) to bring together the gender and IT research from around the world; and (3) to produce a comprehensive resource that could be the first source to which people would turn to learn about the current state of research on gender and information technology.

What has resulted is this two-volume *Encyclopedia of Gender and Information Technology*. It is an international compilation of research on the topic of gender and information technology, representing a broad

range of perspectives. Contributions to this important publication have been made by scholars throughout the world with notable research portfolios and expertise, as well as by emerging investigators. This encyclopedia provides comprehensive coverage and definitions of the most important issues, concepts, trends, and research devoted to the topic of gender and IT. It contains more than 200 articles highlighting this state-of-the-art research. These articles are written by scholars from around the world who are engaged with research into the influence of gender on the development and use of information technology as well as the impact of information technology on men and women. These articles include extensive bibliographies that, taken together, represent an exhaustive reference source for both the interested reader and the scholar engaged in research in the area of gender and IT.

In order to ensure that this encyclopedia has both geographical and disciplinary breadth, an international Advisory Board was established. The members of this Advisory Board introduce this volume by presenting overviews of their research programs in order to illustrate the ways in which the topic of gender and IT is being addressed in different countries.

To assist readers in navigating and identifying needed information, this two-volume encyclopedia has been organized by listing all entries in alphabetical order by title throughout the two volumes, and by including the title in the "Table of Contents" in the beginning of each volume. This important new publication is being distributed worldwide among academic and professional institutions and will be instrumental in providing researchers, scholars, students, and professionals with access to the latest knowledge related to research on women and men with respect to information technology.

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