

Foreword

I have the pleasure of writing some words for this timely and thought-provoking collection. The field of mobile learning is somewhat different from many other technological advancements of the past. The rapid growth of mobile learning has its roots as much in the educational and pedagogical needs of flexibility and the anytime anywhere demand for learning as it does in the readily available mass market of tiny devices that almost everyone seems to have. “Technology first, pedagogy later” is not new when it comes to technology adoption in education. However, effective mobile learning has evolved not so much from the over-enthusiasm of early technology adopters but rather due to the high penetration of technology already available for application penetration. This is perhaps also the reason why it did not take long before researchers started to focus on getting pedagogy right, rather than letting technology dominate it (which has all too often been the case in the past).

The danger of such readily available technology is the possibility of succumbing to the desire of using it as a fancy replacement for every possible existing solution. On the other hand, with tiny screens, low and unreliable bandwidth, small memory, and other similar limitations, one could easily argue against using such technology where far richer technological solutions already exist. Therefore, caution needs to be exercised when deciding where mobile technology would be most effective in the learning process and whom it would best serve.

With the marriage of multimedia-rich content on mobile devices and the design of appropriate learning tasks, mobile learning has the potential to provide a learning experience that is of a far higher quality than present day classrooms are able to provide. Mix it with the latest generation of technologies, such as iPods, Wii, and smart chips, add all those multiple input and output capabilities that are available on most mobile devices in the market, such as freehand annotations, audio, photo snapshots and video, and you have learning experience that knows no bounds!

It is very refreshing to see these issues appropriately discussed in this collection. The editors have done a superb job of eliciting chapters from pioneering authors and put them together in a sequence that moves the reader to increasing levels of understanding. Both editors come from Massey University where I worked for seven years and it is ironic that I first knew about them not by a meeting of any sort but through their research papers! It is an honor for me to be able to contribute to this important volume. The list of authors boasts the same tradition of high quality researchers who are engaged in state-of-the-art yet down-to-earth research on mobile learning.

The book contains a good balance between the enthusiastic uses of emerging innovations and finding appropriate pedagogy that would ensure that benefits are in fact achieved in terms of improved and omnipresent flexibility, interactivity, learner engagement, learning opportunities, and in-context learning through collaboration. Technology is not used just for technology’s sake but appropriate assessment methods are used to ensure the educational effectiveness of these technologies. Readers, whether they are new to the mobile learning world or are seasoned players, would find the book equally interesting.

Individual chapters of this collection would guide today's educators in deciding how to use different mobile technologies in the most effective ways. The whole book would also serve as a referential archive for future generations of researchers by helping them to better understand the systematic uptake of mobile technology that is guided by the educational paradigms.

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