Preface

Communities of Practice are currently attracting much interest among academics, consultants and in commercial organisations. Academic researchers are undertaking research into how CoPs can be supported, the relationships within them and how this can help support the generation of new knowledge. Similarly, consultants in the field are developing tools and techniques for supporting, coaching and facilitating CoPs, advising organisations as to how they can identify and nurture CoPs and seeking to demonstrate how organisations can benefit from them.

Meanwhile, outside the Universities and Consultancies, Communities and Networks of Practice continue to grow and spread: both online through e-mail, bulletin boards and newsgroups and offline through meetings, lunches and workshops.

The network of relationships that develop in a CoP, the inner motivation that drives them and the knowledge they produce, lead to the creation of an environment that is rich in creativity and innovation. CoPs can help in finding and sharing best practices and serve as engines for the development of social capital. Many organisations now regard CoPs as a vital component in their KM strategy. We hope that this book will help the reader to unlock the secrets of CoPs in his or her own organisation.

There have been a large number of academic papers about Communities of Practice but, so far, only a few books. Most of the books have, by necessity, taken a rather theoretical approach. This book, however, will examine CoPs from a practical viewpoint; it is directed at the general reader rather than a specialist audience. Our aim is to draw on the experience of people who have researched and worked with CoPs in the real world and to present their views in a form that is accessible to a broad audience.

In this book you will find a blend of the best of current academic research in the field of Communities of Practice, observations from groundbreaking consultancy in the field of Knowledge Management and the accumulated wisdom of practitioners working at the cutting edge of Knowledge Networks. It is presented in a series of chapters, each of which seeks to offer pertinent and practical guidance for those involved with building or managing knowledge networks in their day to day work.

OVERVIEW

The current environment for organisations is one that is characterised by uncertainty and continuous change. This rapid and dynamic pace of change is forcing organisations that were accustomed to structure and routine to become ones that must improvise solutions quickly and correctly. To respond to this changed environment, organisations are moving away from the structures of the past that are based on hierarchies, discrete groups and teams and moving towards those based on more fluid and emergent organisational forms such as networks and communities. In addition to the pace of change, globalisation is another pressure that is brought to bear on modern organisations. Although some argue that the increased internationalisation should bring about an increased need for knowledge sharing (Kimble, Li & Barlow, 2000), many organisations have responded to this development by restructuring through outsourcing and downsizing, which paradoxically can result in a loss of knowledge as staff leave the organisation.

In the mid-1990s, a new approach called Knowledge Management (KM) began to emerge (Ponzi & Koenig, 2002). KM was seen as a new and innovative solution to many of these problems; however, in practice, much of what was called Knowledge Management was often little more than Information Management re-badged and simply dealt with structured data using a capture, codify and store approach (Wilson, 2002). More recently, there has been recognition of the importance of more subtle, softer types of knowledge that need to be shared. This raises the question as to how this sort of knowledge might be 'managed'. A certain type of community, the Community of Practice (CoP), has been identified as being a group where such types of knowledge are nurtured, shared and sustained (Hildreth & Kimble, 2002).

COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE: A HISTORICAL VIEW

Communities of Practice (CoPs) as a phenomenon have been around for many years but the term itself was not coined until 1991 when Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger used it in their exploration of Situated Learning (Lave & Wenger,

1991). Situated learning is learning that takes place through working practices; for example, an apprenticeship where an employee learns skills 'on the job'. The five examples that Lave and Wenger looked at in their book were Vai and Goa tailors, meat cutters, non-drinking alcoholics, Yucatan midwives and US Navy quartermasters. However, although all their examples were based around an apprenticeship model, they emphasised that CoPs are not restricted to apprenticeships.

Lave and Wenger (1991) saw the acquisition of knowledge as a social process where people can participate in communal learning at different levels depending on their level of authority or seniority in the group, i.e., whether they are a newcomer to the group or have been a member for a long time. Central to their notion of a CoP as a means of acquiring knowledge is the process by which a newcomer learns from the group; they term this process Legitimate Peripheral Participation (LPP).

LPP is both complex and composite and although Lave and Wenger saw LPP as an inseparable whole, it is helpful to consider the three aspects—legitimation, peripherality and participation—separately. Legitimation refers to the power and the authority relations in the community. Peripherality refers to the individual's social rather than physical peripherality in relation to the community. This in turn is dependent on their history of participation in the group and the expectation of their future participation in and interaction with the community.

Thus, a new member of the community moves from peripheral to full participation in the community. Initially their activities may be restricted to simply gathering domain knowledge. Later the newcomer may become involved with gaining knowledge associated with the specific work practices of the community; for example, in the case of tailors, it might be cutting basic shapes out of cloth. Gradually, as the newcomer learns, the tasks will become more complicated and the newcomer becomes an old-timer and is recognised as a source of authority by its members.

COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE TODAY

Lave and Wenger's (1991) CoPs attracted a lot of attention and gradually other researchers and practitioners extended the notion of a CoP and applied it in a Knowledge Management (KM) context in commercial settings. Since then much work has been undertaken to observe CoPs, how they work and what sort of defining characteristics there are. Many definitions have been put forward—indeed, in this book you will find a number of definitions in the chapters.

In this Introduction, we do not intend to try to create a single definition that will cover the whole book. Rather we prefer to note some of the characteristics that might be found in a CoP:

What Is It About?

This represents the particular area around which the CoP has organised itself. It is a joint enterprise in as much as it is understood and continually renegotiated by its members (Wenger, 1998).

How Does It Function?

People become members of a CoP through shared practices; they are linked to each other through their involvement in certain common activities. It is mutual engagement that binds members of a CoP together as a social entity (Wenger, 1998).

What Has It Produced?

The members of a CoP build up an agreed set of communal resources over time. This "shared repertoire" of resources represents the material traces of the community. Written files can constitute a more explicit aspect of this common repository, although more intangible aspects such as procedures, policies, rituals and specific idioms may also be included (Wenger, 1998).

Common Ground

The term Common Ground is taken from the work of Clark and Brennan (1991). For communication to take place, certain information must be shared; this information is called common ground. Similarly, for a CoP to function the members need to be sympathetic to the ideas around which the group is based and will probably have a common background or share common a common interest.

Common Purpose/Motivation

The CoP members will have some sort of common goal or common purpose and it is often the case that the CoP is internally motivated, i.e., driven by the members themselves as opposed to some external driver.

Evolution

There is often some sort of evolution in a CoP. It may be that the CoP has developed because of a common interest of a group of people. On the other hand, it may be that the CoP was a formally constituted group that has evolved into a CoP because of the relationships that have developed amongst the members.

Relationships

This is a key part of a CoP and is what makes it possible for a team to become a CoP—as the informal relationships develop, the source of legitima-

tion in the group shifts in emphasis. These relationships are key to the issues of trust and identity in a CoP.

Narration

Narration (story telling) is very useful in both knowledge sharing and knowledge generation. In Lave and Wenger (1991), stories featured heavily. In particular, a central part of the journey undertaken by the non-drinking alcoholics involved the telling of the story. The quality of the story became the mark of an old timer and therefore the source of the legitimation in the community.

Formal or Informal?

In many cases, a CoP is not a formally constituted group and membership is entirely voluntary. In some cases, the organisation might not even be aware of its existence. In Lave and Wenger (1991), legitimacy was gained by being accepted and gaining informal authority through consensus within the group. This notion often sits uncomfortably with the more formal view of a CoP where simple domain knowledge or rank due to organisational hierarchy is seen as a source of authority.

BEYOND COPS

CoPs are now attracting an immense amount of interest. The growing internationalisation of business means that many organisations now work in a geographically and temporally distributed international environment. This raises the question: Can CoPs continue to operate in such an environment (Kimble, Hildreth & Wright, 2000)? Can a CoP be virtual? For example, can stories be exchanged over the Internet? Similarly, how might LPP translate to a geographically distributed environment when LPP is situated, as some of the knowledge is created during problem solving? If co-location is necessary simply because members need to share resources then it should be easy. However, if the learning is situated because the face-to-face meetings are essential then "going virtual" will have more impact.

As the debate about the nature of "virtual" CoPs got under way, the rapid diffusion of Internet-based networking technologies was accelerating the development of new forms of community. The Internet and Intranets provide a single convenient and flexible platform to support groups and networks of groups within larger communities. Because the underlying Internet standards are open and public, organisations can seamlessly connect their Intranet with those of clients and partners. However, while the pervasiveness of Internet technologies has enabled the creation of networked communities, they have also made it increasingly difficult for people to know the scope and range of their "virtual" social networks.

In exploring these wider networks, Brown and Duguid (2000) examine the role of documents—from newspapers to mailing lists—and their ability to generate a common language or practice.

"The 25,000 reps at Xerox theoretically make up, in theory such a network. They could in principle by linked through such things as ... 'an advice database or corporate newsletters aimed at reps.' Their common practice makes these links viable, allowing them to assimilate these communications in more less similar ways" (Brown and Duguid, 2000).

The strength of the Network of Practice (NoP) model is that these networks can extend beyond the organisation where the individual is situated. Brown and Duguid (2000) propose that the network of reps could be extended to include technicians in other companies, though they suggest that these links may be weaker, with less ground for common understanding. These links reflect the flow of knowledge that exists through the surrounding knowledge ecology (Brown & Duguid, 2000).

Wenger (1998) proposes a view of the organisation not as a single social community but as a constellation of interrelated CoPs. This reflects how membership of CoPs overlaps with each other within organisations and allows the transfer of knowledge and the facilitation of learning through a social link. This combines the strength of Brown and Duguid's Networks of Practice (NoPs) as a model for fast knowledge diffusion and assimilation over a wide network and the CoP model for the creation of new knowledge and meaning. The CoP model also provides a home for the identities of the members through the engagement in the combination of new types of knowledge and the maintenance of a stored body of collective knowledge.

ORGANISATION OF THE BOOK

This book is organised into four sections and contains 24 individual chapters. A brief description of each section and each chapter follows.

Section I: Communities of Practice

This section consists of four chapters and forms an introductory section to the book that looks at the importance of CoPs from the perspective of business and commerce.

In Chapter 1, *Understanding the Benefits and Impact of Communities of Practice,* Michael A. Fontaine and David R. Millen write from a consultant's perspective. They argue that organisations provide CoPs with resources in order to improve the flow of knowledge within the organisation. However, as with any investment, managers are interested in the impact on the bottom line.

Michael and David present a cost benefits analysis based on the results of their work with thirteen CoPs. They argue that the greatest impact that communities have is on time use in knowledge work activities. The general focus of the chapter is on organisations in the private sector, and in particular, it highlights how managers can collect useful data through "serious anecdotes". The chapter concludes with a set of recommendations for assessing the benefits and impact of a CoP.

Chapter 2, *Overcoming Knowledge Barriers with Communities of Practice: Lessons Learned Through Practical Experience*, by Eric L. Lesser and Michael Fontaine looks at a specific benefit of CoPs: overcoming knowledge barriers. Its general focus is on organisations in the private sector and its specific focus is on KM. It considers communities and groups that are virtual and formal. From their work with knowledge-based organisations, the authors identify four main barriers that prevent two parties from coming together and sharing knowledge: awareness, access, application and perception. Based on their research and experience as consultants, they describe how CoPs can be an important vehicle for breaking through each of these barriers and enabling knowledge to flow more effectively within organisations. The chapter concludes with a set of guidelines for overcoming the barriers.

Continuing the theme of using CoPs to overcome barriers, Valerie A. Martin, Tally Hatzakis and Mark Lycett present Chapter 3, *Cultivating a Community of Practice Between Business and IT.* Writing from more of an academic perspective, this chapter describes the efforts that were made to bridge the perceived gap between the "IT" and the "Business" wings of a large financial services company through the establishment of a Relationship Management Community of Practice. Arguing against what they describe as the dominant, tool-driven, IT-based paradigm of Knowledge Management, the chapter illustrates how cultivating a Community of Practice can provide a holistic way of managing the dynamics of knowledge sharing across the different communities that exist within an organisation. The chapter concludes with some guidelines on cultivating a CoP through relationship management.

Following on from the previous chapter, Donald Hislop continues the theme of cross community relations in Chapter 4, *The Paradox of Communities of Practice: Knowledge Sharing Between Communities.* Donald explores knowledge sharing between, as opposed to within, communities. The general focus of the chapter is on organisations in the private sector and it considers communities and groups that are distributed, global and formal. This chapter is also written from an academic perspective and suggests that knowledge sharing between communities is likely to prove more complex than knowledge sharing within them. Three brief case studies are presented to illustrate the arguments made. Two main conclusions are drawn from the case studies. Firstly, inter-community knowledge sharing requires social relationship and trust between

the communities. Secondly, organisations need to balance their efforts at building CoPs with supporting inter-community interactions.

Section II: Communities of Practice and Knowledge Management

The chapters in Section 2 illustrate the importance of CoPs in the field of Knowledge Management (KM). The chapters in this section fall into two broad categories. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 look at the role that CoPs play in learning in organisations and Chapters 8, 9 and 10 concentrate on CoPs as sources of new ideas and innovation.

In Chapter 5, *Investigating the Influence that Media Richness has on Learning in a Community of Practice: A Case Study at Øresund Bridge*, Andrew Schenkel also writes from an academic perspective and considers formal communities and groups that are both co-located and distributed. Through a case study, Andrew explores the influence that rich media have on learning in a CoP at a large multi-billion dollar infrastructure project, the bridge between Sweden and Denmark. He argues that rich media are essential for effective learning in CoPs. Andrew hopes that the understanding of how communication influences learning will assist managers through providing an understanding of the central role that communication has on learning and researchers, and through introducing the concept of equivocality and media richness into the domain of CoPs.

Chapter 6, *CoPs for Cops: Managing and Creating Knowledge through Networked Expertise*, is written by Maarten de Laat and Wim Broer who write from an academic and a practitioner perspective, respectively. Presenting a wide-ranging case study from a public sector organisation—the Dutch Police Force—they consider both formal and informal communities that are both co-located and distributed. In the chapter, Maarten and Wim discuss how KM within the Dutch police is an integral part of the organisation and how explicit and tacit knowledge is shared to create new corporate knowledge. They present examples of how CoPs within the Dutch police play a role in both sustaining and developing their own practice and how these communities are crucial to the learning organisation.

Chapter 7, *Communities of Practice in the Royal National Lifeboat Institution*, by Roger Kolbotn, is also written from an academic perspective. It focuses on the role of volunteers in the public sector through a case study of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution. It looks at communities and groups that are both co-located and informal and concentrates on CoPs in the relationship between the managers and the volunteers in the organisation. Altruism and trust are vital elements for sharing and creating knowledge among volunteers in the organisation. Roger argues that overlapping CoPs are needed to deal with unstructured practices at sea and that managers should learn to foster CoPs

among the volunteers. He hopes this chapter will provide a practical understanding of CoPs and that the discussion of a volunteer organisation will bring some new insights into the concept of CoPs.

Chapter 8, *Innoversity in Communities of Practice,* is an introduction to Innovation in CoPs. Susanne Justesen writes from a consultant's perspective and focuses on organisations in the private sector, considering communities and groups that are co-located and formal. Susanne introduces the term innoversity (hence the title of the chapter: Innoversity in Communities of Practice), which describes the role of diversity in fostering innovation. In this chapter, she sets out to discuss when and under what circumstances of innovative practice diversity should be encouraged, as opposed to similarity. She explores three specific questions: 1) What is innovation? 2) How does innovation take place in CoPs? 3) Why is diversity in CoPs important in fostering innovative practice? The chapter concludes with some guidelines about how to foster innovation within and among CoPs.

In Chapter 9, *User Networks as Sources of Innovation,* Anders Lundkvist continues the theme of innovation. Writing from an academic's perspective, he considers communities and groups that are both virtual and informal. In this chapter, Anders observes that it is not uncommon for users to become involved in problem solving and sharing of experiences, not only as the customers of a company but also as member of a group of users. He suggests that user groups could be useful as a source of innovation as well as for solving specific problems. The case study that he presents is based around the Cisco newsgroup and this indicates that user networks are vital sites of innovation. The chapter concludes that such communities are powerful tools for creating an understanding of how innovation, work and learning are interrelated.

Continuing the theme from Anders Lundkvist, Brook Manville, in Chapter 10, *Building Customer Communities of Practice for Business Value: Success Factors Profiled from Saba Software and Other Case Studies,* writes from a practitioner's perspective and explores how CoPs can bring benefits for both organisations and customers. Brook points out that CoPs can be applied across the entire value chain of an organisation - including the company's customers. He explores the strategic value of building Customer Communities of Practice (CCoPs): learning networks of customers whose win-win value proposition is that customers gain valuable insights from peers while the sponsoring company gains new ideas, loyalty and a deeper insight into the markets they serve. He concludes the discussion with several lessons learned and practical guidelines for building successful CCoPs in any industry.

Section III: Community of Practice Development

This section is intended to be of practical help to CoP practitioners and covers two areas. Chapters 11, 12, 13 and 14 examine the problems of building and sustaining a CoP, while Chapters 15, 16, 17 and 18 look at the issues of IT

support for CoPs.

Chapter 11, *Creating a Multi-Company Community of Practice for Chief Information Officers,* is written by John Moran and Lee Weimer from a practitioner's perspective. It is a first-hand account of the creation and evolution of a fee-based, multi-company CoP for Chief Information Officers in Silicon Valley. In the chapter, they describe how the community has grown over a six-year period and outline the principles, processes and practices needed to build and maintain a trust-based, face-to face, learning community where members can share their accumulated knowledge. In addition, the chapter outlines some of the benefits to individuals and the Information Technology industry in general that have resulted from participation in the community. John and Lee hope that this chapter will foster the same sense of excitement for would-be practitioners that they still clearly feel.

In Chapter 12, *Viable Communities within Organizational Contexts: Creating and Sustaining Viability in Communities of Practice at Siemens AG,* Benjamin Frost and Stefan Schoen also write from a practitioner's perspective of their experiences with CoPs in Siemens. The focus is clearly on CoPs in the private sector. Stefan and Benjamin highlight five factors that they argue are necessary for a CoP to be viable, that is, active, alive and creating benefit in an organisation. They introduce and explain each of the five factors in turn and claim that together they represent an approach that can be used to analyse and improve CoPs. The chapter also serves as a set of guidelines for CoP members and moderators to maintain viability in their own CoPs.

Another set of guidelines with a strong practical orientation can be found in Chapter 13, *Best Practices: Developing Communities that Provide Business Value,* by Wesley C. Vestal and Kimberley Lopez. Writing from a perspective that is one of both a practitioner and a consultant, Kimberley and Wesley consider a range of communities and groups selected from several best-practice organisations. The chapter examines the key factors involved in cultivating CoPs: the selection of a community, gaining support and establishing resources, roles and development, ongoing facilitation and technology support. The chapter concludes with a list of nine critical success factors that can help community leaders, central support groups, KM practitioners and management to build functioning, strategic CoPs.

Bronwyn Stuckey and John D. Smith, in Chapter 14, *Building Sustainable Communities of Practice,* explore the importance of stories in CoPs. They write from a practitioner perspective and present seven case studies that illustrate the range and diversity of the CoPs they have been involved with. The chapter covers both co-located and virtual groups, as well as formal and informal groups. Bronwyn and John argue that stories play a crucial role in motivation and learning in a community. Within communities, the swapping of stories is a means by which local theories of cause and effect are developed and contextualised. These stories provide powerful ways of invoking context,

of framing choices and actions and of constructing identity. The chapter concludes with four key lessons learnt about effective strategies for community building.

Having looked at developing and sustaining CoPs, we now turn to how Information Technology can be used to support the work of a CoP.

In Chapter 15, *How Information Technologies Can Help Build and Sustain an Organization's CoP: Spanning the Socio-Technical Divide?*, Laurence Lock Lee and Mark Neff write as consultants and practitioners and use detailed case studies of two large, but quite different, global private sector organisations to explore the role of Information Technology (IT) in supporting CoPs activities. In this case, both organisations could be considered to be early adopters of the CoP concept and this chapter tracks their evolution and highlights the lessons that were learned along the way. The chapter concludes with the identification of five common themes and challenges for organisations of a global nature with a commitment to using CoPs as a primary vehicle for knowledge sharing across their operations.

This is followed by Pete Bradshaw, Stephen Powell and Ian Terrell, who, in Chapter 16, *Building a Community of Practice: Technological and Social Implications for a Distributed Team*, provide a set of guidelines for building commitment, ownership, engagement and focus in a distributed CoP. In their chapter, they focus on the way in which a remote and distributed team can be transformed into a CoP. This, they argue, is a process that takes time and can be aided by the use of appropriate media and platforms. They look at the work of a team of approximately 20 remote workers and examine how they gradually developed into a CoP. They explore the roles that technology and communication methods had on the formation and development of the community and conclude with a detailed set of guidelines.

In Chapter 17, *Facilitator Toolkit for Building and Sustaining Virtual Communities of Practice*, Lisa Kimball and Amy Ladd observe that as organisations become more distributed, the relationships that exist between the people inside an organisation and those previously considered to be outside have become increasingly important. In addition, they argue that organisations have now begun to recognise the value of Knowledge Management and the ability to work in virtual groups to the organisation as a whole. In this chapter, they offer a lively selection of ideas, and examples of best practice, tips and illustrations from their work of training leaders to launch and sustain virtual CoPs. The "facilitator's toolkit" includes tips for chartering the community, defining roles and creating a culture that will help build a sustainable community.

Chapter 18, *The Use of Intranets: The Missing Link Between Communities of Practice and Networks of Practice?*, by Emmanuelle Vaast, is written from an academic perspective and presents the results of longitudinal case studies based in four different organisations. The chapter examines how the

use of intranet systems by members of local CoPs begins to change the way the CoP functions and how it sees itself in relation to other CoPs. It also shows how the use of intranets in an organisation contributes to the emergence of broadly based Networks of Practice (NoPs). The chapter concludes with a discussion of the issues that managers should consider when implementing an intranet to support a CoP. To be successful Emmanuelle suggests that managers need to maintain a delicate balance in three key areas: 1) Initiative vs. Control, 2) Communitarian Principles vs. Competition, and 3) Official vs. Emergent Processes.

Section IV: Moving CoPs Forward

This is the final section in the book and it concentrates on looking at future developments and areas of interest.

Taking up the theme of NoPs, Robin Teigland and Molly McLure Wasko start this section with Chapter 19, *Extending Richness with Reach: Participation and Knowledge Exchange in Electronic Networks of Practice.* This chapter is also written from an academic perspective. Robin and Molly report on an empirical study at Cap Gemini. They explain that in an effort to replicate CoPs online, organisations are investing in information technologies that create intra-organizational networks, or Electronic Networks of Practice (ENoPs). These networks create electronic "bridging ties" between geographically dispersed organisational members and provide a space in which individuals can communicate with each other. In this chapter Robin and Molly compare the dynamics of knowledge exchange between ENoPs and traditional CoPs. They examine why people participate in the network, as well as examining whether participation in ENoPs has an impact on knowledge outcomes and individual performance.

In Chapter 20, *Trusting the Knowledge of Large Online Communities: Strategies for Leading from Behind,* John S. Storck and Lauren E. Storck take an academic perspective on a case study. The case study is of an online community of about 400 professionals, which is simply called "LG" (Large Group), and they use this to illustrate how a leader can develop the capacity to trust the group. Recognising that groups can be trusted is difficult for a leader. Modern managers, who are taught the value of using teams to achieve specific objectives, often find the idea of dispersed groups of people making decisions an anathema. Learning to trust in the knowledge of groups takes training, practice and courage. Using archives of discussions among community members, John and Lauren develop the leadership principles that support the approach of "leading from behind".

In Chapter 21, *Double Agents: Visible and Invisible Work in an Online Community of Practice,* Elisabeth Davenport moves us into looking at IT support for online CoPs. Elisabeth also writes from an academic perspective and reports on an ethnographic study of novice computer users (a loose association

of small traders) in the tourism sector. In this chapter, Elisabeth draws on work by Paul Dourish in which he makes a case for an approach to design that takes account of both 'embodiment' and 'embeddedness'. An online knowledge network is embedded in a given domain, but it is also embodied in physical interactors working with machines. Novices who interact in this environment are thus double agents, working in a domain but also working with artefacts. The chapter concludes with some of the lessons that have been learned from this work.

Shawn Callahan, in Chapter 22, *Cultivating a Public Sector Knowledge Management Community of Practice*, gives us a practitioner's viewpoint of the history of an online CoP by charting the growth of Act-KM, an online CoP for practitioners in the public sector, from an initial meeting in 1998 to the present day online community of more than 550 people. Utilising the four domains of the Cynefin sense-making framework, Shawn analyses the ActKM community and provides a practical account of its history, purpose, guiding principles, goals, characteristics and dynamics. He concludes with a summary of the lessons learnt from the ActKM experience that others might find useful in cultivating a vibrant CoP of this type.

In Chapter 23, *Click Connect and Coalesce for NGOs: Exploring the Intersection Between Online Networks, CoPs, and Events*, Nancy White reflects in a lively and engaging manner on her experiences as a consultant and president of Full Circle Associates. She notes the shift of focus from "online communities" to more purposeful and focused online groups, including distributed CoPs, and provides a number of examples of how groups and individuals can "Click, Connect and Coalesce" in the online world. In particular, Nancy identifies the value of CoPs for Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and suggests that the catalysts of people and time-delimited events both stimulate the formation and growth of CoPs and help to capture and focus attention and resources around them. The chapter concludes with a list of factors to consider in the design of an online interaction space.

Perhaps appropriately, the final chapter in this book addresses an area that is frequently overlooked in the literature on CoPs: how to end them. In In Chapter 24, *Where Did That Community Go? Communities of Practice that "Disappear"*, Patricia Gongla and Christine R. Rizzuto deal with what happens to CoPs when they reach the end of their natural lives. Patricia and Christine write as practitioners and draw on their experience at IBM to address the question as to why a CoP might disappear. They discuss the factors related to the ending of individual communities and address three basic questions: 1) In what ways do CoPs disappear? 2) Why do they disappear? and 3) What are ways to help a community make that transition? In this chapter, Patricia and Christine walk the reader through the steps in a guide they have developed to aid easing a community's transition.

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