Preface

Online information and communication is changing the way we interact and learn. Today, the online sphere is no longer just an information repository or a place to search for resources; instead, it has become a far more personal, social, and flexible learning network where instructors and trainers can empower learners and create exciting new learning opportunities. In addition, learners can interact with other learners, gain from their experiences, and construct their own knowledge within these online communication mediums. In order to foster a better understanding of the ongoing transformation of online learning communities and related issues, we edited this book *Cases on Online Learning Communities and Beyond: Investigations and Applications*.

Cases on Online Learning Communities and Beyond: Investigations and Applications includes a wide range of case studies, best practices, personal experiences, pedagogical approaches and strategies, and related resources and projects. The content covers focal points of online communities: people, technologies, design, and activities. Specifically, *Cases on Online Learning Communities and Beyond: Investigations and Applications* is organized into three sections of online learning communities and related issues: (1) participants (Chapters 1-6), (2) communication and collaboration technologies (Chapters 7-13), and (3) pedagogical design and practices (Chapters 14-20).

Cases on Online Learning Communities and Beyond: Investigations and Applications is written for the broad audience. These individuals include educators, trainers, administrators, and researchers working in the areas of e-learning or distance learning in various disciplines such as education, corporate training, instructional technology, computer science, library information science, information technology, and workforce development. We hope readers will benefit from the work of authors who range from cutting-edge researchers to experienced practitioners regarding the research and practices in online learning communities.

Cases on Online Learning Communities and Beyond: Investigations and Applications provides not only the advanced and latest developments and implementation of online learning communities for experienced professionals, but also provides

clear and detailed practices/projects for novice readers. The content can be used in a flexible manner. Cases inside this book can easily adapt to suit a variety of information and communications technology related courses/workshops and for specific needs of students, instructors, professionals, and administrators. For instructors and trainers to utilize these studies in their courses and workshops, an additional set of support materials for each case is available, which includes: (a) a list of questions and answers for the case, (b) an epilogue and a list of lessons learned, and (c) a list of resources for further study. The book can be used as a research reference, pedagogical and professional guide/textbook, or educational resource in the area of online learning communities.

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