Foreword

When I was first approached to write a foreword for the *Handbook of Research on E-Learning: Applications for Career and Technical Education*, I replied that, although I have taught online for several years, I was actually a scholar of adult education, not career and technical education, and I questioned my ability to introduce this handbook. However, when I began reading the chapters in this volume, I quickly came to realize that career and technical education is a part of adult education, and I began to feel more comfortable. I then thought about the research and writing I have done in relation to the more than 25 years I worked with tradespeople to help them become teachers of their trades, and I considered my early roots in adult education, which involved designing instruction in a practical and concrete fashion. My early work on planning instruction has informed people in fields such as military education, forestry, agriculture, health professions training, and, of course, the trades. This thinking brought me to a place where I could see my connection with career and technical education.

Adult education has a history of social reform, and today, critical theory remains a cornerstone of our field. If we look back, however, to those historical roots, we can quickly see how they relate to career and technical education. In Canada, in the 1920s, the Antigonish Movement was founded as a way to help ordinary people foster economic development through cooperatives and credit unions. Through kitchen meetings, study groups, and community-based courses, fishers, farmers, and workers worked toward economic independence, social reform, and democracy. Similarly, in the United States, in the 1930s, the Highland Folk School was founded to provide education for ordinary people as a way of effecting social change. Literacy skills, critical thinking, developing voice and confidence, and practical problem solving were fostered.

Career and technical education is education for work. It not only prepares people for work, but it also promotes opportunities for individuals to be more competitive in the labor force and encourages economic development by improving performance of workers and addressing the social significance of work. I am reminded of the work currently being done by adult educators on social sustainability in Australia. Social sustainability is described as a positive condition created by social institutions and policies including: equity of access to key services (health, education, and so forth), equity between generations (future generations will not be disadvantaged by current activities), a valuing and integration of disparate cultures, and participation of citizens in political activity. The interrelated nature of adult education and career and technical education is clear. Then, with the expansion of the use of technology in education in general, career and technical education has become increasingly reliant on e-learning. At the same time, practitioners and writers in the field maintain a focus on learners as adults and what we know about how adults learn.

In linking career and technical education with adult education and technology, this handbook addresses many diverse issues that touch on the intersection of the fields. For example, barriers to access to distance learning are discussed, both in terms of equipment, cost, resources, and technical support and in terms of learners' feelings of isolation, need for feedback, and need for support. Maintaining culturally sensitive practices in e-learning becomes increasingly important when people are seeking and receiving training across cultures. Issues of how power is viewed in different cultures, individualistic and collection perspectives, gender roles, and language become central to facilitating learning in a global environment. Fostering communities of practice is another key issue for career and technical education offered in an online environment. Communities of practice allow learners to gain multiple perspectives and collaborate with others in their learning. In addition, how educators move from physical spaces to e-learning spaces needs to be carefully considered; we cannot simply "transfer material" from one place to another, but rather we need to work out how the different form that space takes can be utilized fully.

These are just a few of the many facets of career and technical education discussed in this handbook. The comprehensive coverage of important issues and trends in the field goes a long way toward filling a significant gap in the literature. Practitioners, scholars, researchers, and administrators will all benefit from this volume. I know that I learned a lot from having the opportunity to prepare this foreword. I congratulate the editor and authors for bringing this material together for all of us.

Patricia Cranton
Visiting Professor of Adult Education
Penn State University, Harrisburg, USA

Patricia Cranton*'s primary research interests are in the areas of teaching and learning in higher education, transformative learning, and most recently, authenticity and individuation. She is currently a visiting professor of adult education at Penn State University in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Patricia Cranton's most recent books include a second edition of Planning Instruction for Adult Learners (2000), Becoming an Authentic Teacher (2001), Finding our Way: A Guide for Adult Educators (2003), and the second edition of Understanding and Promoting Transformative Learning (2006).*