

Foreword

Just a few short decades ago, scholarly books outlining best practices and research perspectives in educational technology began to shape how we think about and teach using educational technology tools. Since that time, many volumes have appeared (and some might be in press) with each release contributing something new or innovative to our overall understanding of how technology tools can support teaching and learning. This edited volume is no exception – the book provides three fundamentally meaningful ways to consider the instructional technologies and learning issues shaping the education field today.

First, contributions presented here offer readers authentic strategies from practice illustrating the varied approaches educators around the world are taking to solve the problem of how best to use technology to support teaching and learning. While educational technology is a maturing field, every time we think we have figured something out new technologies, such as those addressed here (i.e., social media, digital simulations and games, clickers, etc.), emerge and must be considered. And as new technologies acquire social validity among educators, they quickly make their way into learning environments around the globe. Thus causing us to reconsider not only how we teach, but also how our teaching can be adapted to effectively integrate emerging technologies into instruction. This volume facilitates that process as well as provides readers interesting topics for consideration along with articulated opportunities to refine our understanding of how technology supports thinking and learning.

And because reports of best practices from the field have limited practical significance by themselves, this volume also provides concrete examples of exploratory research undertaken around the world so that readers may reflect on what is currently known even as we consider whether to experiment with those technologies within our own practices. In our rapidly evolving field, we must be ever mindful of our opportunities-and obligations-as researchers. In particular, our shared interest in how technology tools support teaching and learning compels us to look beyond issues of social validity to ask ourselves whether a particular innovation is really needed, appropriate, and effective to support learning. As a part of that process of reflection and inquiry, this volume informs readers where we are as a field.

Lastly, this volume effectively integrates best practices and research reports so that readers may carry forward the effort of determining the practical significance of these and other emerging technologies. In fact, using this volume, readers can first consider, use, and then reflect on these technologies within their own practice preliminary to beginning the process of systematically examining these emerging technologies within their own and other instructional settings. As such, this volume inspires readers to actively participate in the vetting of these technologies via future research, research that will shape our evolving understanding of how these-and future-technologies continue to shape the nature of learning around the globe.

In conclusion, this volume assists readers to identify what we currently know both in terms of what we think will support learning and what emerging research suggests may actually work. It is impressive that this volume identifies many varied and authentic examples of best practices that we can consider for our own teaching, while doing a credible job of allowing an international readership to consider whether what works in the United States, Turkey, Australia, or Saudi Arabia could also work in settings closer to home.

I find this volume timely and instructive especially for those educators who are interested in improving their professional practices. And reflecting on my own professional practice, I find this volume a useful tool for sparking familiar and new ideas of what I want to implement into classroom instruction as well as what I want to closely examine within my field of research.

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Beverly B. Ray specializes in the use of current and emerging technologies to promote thinking and learning. Recent publications have focused on the use of digital and online games and simulations as teaching and learning tools. She has served as an instructional design consultant for several colleges in the United States and as an online and distance educator since 1990. In addition, she has taught undergraduate and graduate learning theory and technology integration courses for teachers and instructional designers for a number of years at universities in the northwest and southeastern United States. She is a member of the graduate faculty at Idaho State University in Pocatello, ID.