Foreword

It is a pleasure to be able to contribute a foreword to this edited collection *Information Systems and Technology for Organizations in a Networked Society*. There is a plethora of useful books about new technologies and the learning designs they afford. This literature is a rich resource for teachers at all levels wanting to design learning environments for their students, or for professions wanting to provide focused training in a wide range of contexts. All this is excellent. However, this is what I call the 'micro level' of technology-enhanced systems for supporting learning.

It is much harder to find really useful ideas and models that can inform thinking at an organizational level. Seeing the big picture of how technology can add value to all facets of modern life is something that deserves much more attention. This is the aim of this volume, and an aim that is admirably achieved.

The book traverses the learning needs of people of all ages for appropriate information and communication, and for building the wider range of digital literacies that are needed in the 21st century. Quite rightly, there is a strong emphasis on the importance of technologies in negotiating power relationships in this complex globalized world, and also on understanding the dynamics of various professions and cultural contexts.

I was really pleased to see the section on e-Governance juxtaposed with chapters on schools, universities and professional training. All people deserve fair and reasonable rights in society. This morning I signed a petition to stop female gendercide in India that came to me via Facebook. I would not have learnt or thought about this issue today without the technology in which I am constantly immersed. This is a tiny example but illustrates the immediacy of access to information and associated action that technology can bring us.

The final section is on e-Health. Let me relate another personal example to show how important an understanding of health issues are. This morning I read a headline "SARS strain related to Asian bats virus" (http://tinyurl.com/rthk21Nov12). This brought back to me the experience of living in Hong Kong in 2003 when the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak erupted. SARS eventually caused hundreds of deaths in some 30 countries; it seems more good luck than good science that it has subsided for the time being. We need to use all the tools we have to monitor health trends, disseminate information rapidly and educate all people wherever they live about public health matters.

The editors have done a great job of bringing together this rich, balanced, and satisfying smorgasbord of chapters from many nations and perspectives. It is indeed a timely and valuable collection.

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