Foreword

Distance learning means different things to different people. For some, distance learning is in sharp contrast to the traditional face-to-face classroom, integrating little more than interactive video between geographically separated campuses of training locations. To others, distance learning is an entirely new medium for instruction; it is a new instructional strategy distinct from the typical "bricks and mortar" classroom setting where students and professors interact over Internet-delivered video and audio conferencing, share collaborative projects among students, or participate in synchronous or asynchronous instruction opportunities.

Regardless of your individual bent toward this newest instructional delivery vehicle, distance learning has matured as a viable, effective, and efficient training medium for a number of reasons. The geometric rise in the amount and quality of information available to individuals continues to explode. The global community has evolved to the point where rapid change is the rule, not the exception. Professional and educational training opportunities have broadened opportunities for advancement even for those located in remote or dispersed locations. In any environment where people need improved access to information, need to share resources, or where learners, teachers, administrators, and subject matter specialists must travel to remote locations in order to communicate with one another, distance learning is preordained for consideration.

Whether its implementation is a success or a failure (and, in either case, what makes for that distinction) is the fodder for researchers and investigators like Solomon Negash and his team of editors and contributing authors, many of whom I have had the pleasure of involving in other projects related to teaching and learning with technology. Several of the contributors have provided their expertise in publications of my own, such as the *International Journal of Information Communication and Technology Education* (*IJICTE*) and *Online and Distance Learning* reference source.

The *Handbook of Distance Learning for Real-Time and Asynchronous Information Technology Education* offers a rich resource that combines the pedagogical foundations for teaching online with practical considerations that promote successful learning. Of particular note is the dual classification format used in the text to create an atmosphere focusing on the importance of the individual while simultaneously suggesting ways to overcome learning barriers via collaboration. Synchronous and asynchronous tools are the crux of effective online learning, yet few publications infuse pedagogy and best practice into a common core of tools for effective implementation of technology for teaching at a distance. This text does exactly that and, as such, has assured itself a place in the ready-reference library of online educators.

Too, the *Handbook* addresses critical areas of research and practice related to adult learners, collaborative technologies, teaching and learning, and best practice. The editorial team has discovered contributors steeped in investigation and implementation who make their stories a must-read for educational technologists and distance educators alike. Divided into learning environments, effectiveness and motivation, collaboration and interaction, teaching in the classroom, and adoption and economic analysis, the text provides a broad brush scrutiny of 17 of the most up-to-the-minute topics in this rapidly changing medium.

The *Handbook of Distance Learning for Real-Time and Asynchronous Information Technology Education* is destined to take its rightful place with other similar contributions to the advancement of online and distance education.

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Lawrence A. Tomei is the associate vice president for academic affairs and associate professor of education, Robert Morris University. He earned a BSBA from the University of Akron (1972) and entered the U.S. Air Force, serving until his retirement as a Lieutenant Colonel in 1994. Dr. Tomei completed his MPA and MEd at the University of Oklahoma (1975, 1978) and EdD from USC (1983). His articles and books on instructional technology include Online and Distance Learning (2008), Integrating ICT Into the Classroom (2007), Taxonomy for the Technology Domain (2005), Challenges of Teaching with Technology Across the Curriculum (2003), Technology Facade (2002), Teaching Digitally: Integrating Technology Into the Classroom (2001), Professional Portfolios for Teachers (1999), and Technology Literacy Applications in Learning Environments (Chapter 1, Defining Instructional Technology Literacy) (2004).