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Review: Smart Company

Reviewed Work(s): iLearning: How to Create an Innovative Learning Organization by Mark Salisbury

Review by: Zane L. Berge

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that Johann Amos Comenius published the first illustrated textbook titled *Orbis Sensualium Pictus* (The World in Pictures).¹⁰ That was the year that changed everything. With this book, students were taught through multiple senses. Visual thinking became a part of the curriculum, coupled with text. That is, visual communication and textual communication co-existed. In addition, an implied lesson-planning model was introduced that focused on discrete content (the first “instructional designer”?). Finally, the text was an attempt at universal completeness, to teach everything that needed to be known. A tall order! In fact, the inside front cover of the English edition of 1659 called it “a picture and nomenclature of all the chief things that are in the world” (italics added).

Needless to say, Comenius’ book became a global success, with editions in many languages. Even today, both Slovakia and the Czech Republic every year celebrate Comenius’ birthday on March 28. They call it, appropriately, Teachers’ Day.

To repeat, and to conclude: 1658 is my choice for the year that educational technology began. □

Notes

¹Google and the Future of Books. *New York Review of Books*, Feb. 12, 2009, p. 9.

²ICT is a strange alphabet soup arrangement of letters, gaining popularity today—perhaps because it perpetuates a need to be obscure and obtuse. The initials, of course, stand for information and communication technology. One wonders about the and. For example, why couldn’t it be information communication technology? And is communication singular or plural? Should it be information and communications technology? Curiously, while ICT is gaining importance in education, that phrase itself has lost the word education. In contradistinction, AECT (since the 1970s) has called itself an “association for educational communications and technology.” Confusing, isn’t it?

³Attributed to W. F. Mavor, c. 1785 by Roy Harris (1986) in *The Origin of Writing*, Duckworth, UK.

⁴Marvin, C. (1990). *When Old Technologies Were New*, Oxford University Press, p. 3.

⁵<http://www.3quarksdaily.com/3quarksdaily/2005/04/page/3/>.

⁶Ferre, F. (1995). *Philosophy of Technology*, University of Georgia Press, p. 133.

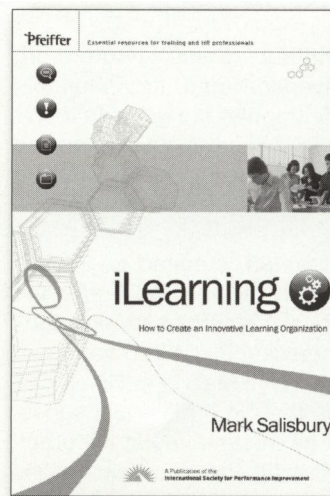
⁷The entire 100-page document and discussion is available online at <http://www.edge.org/documents/Invention.html>. Alternatively, the document has been published in book format titled *The Greatest Inventions of the Past 2000 Years* edited by John Brockman, and published in both the UK and USA.

⁸*ibid.*

⁹*ibid.*

¹⁰The frontispiece from the English version by Charles Hoole (1672) is available at: <http://www.iupui.edu/~engwft/slide20l.gif>.

Book Reviews



Smart Company

Book Review:
Mark Salisbury.
iLearning:
How to Create
an Innovative
Learning
Organization.
Pfeiffer; 288 pages;
2009; \$50.00.

Reviewed by Zane L. Berge

iLearning is written to help people understand the underlying performance objectives of what is known in their organizations, and to use those representations to solve new problems—to innovate—when facing novel challenges. Salisbury’s book, *iLearning*, stands above many books in that it uses a theoretical foundation to outline a systematic approach to organizational learning. The book will be of interest to practitioners in several areas, including instructional designers, human performance-improvement leaders, managers in most areas, and information technologists.

In *iLearning*, Mark Salisbury implores managers in all organizations to take a *systematic approach* to work. Moreover, since much of today’s work involves the creation, manipulation, and use of knowledge, he explains the benefits of systematically viewing learning in the organization. In many ways, *iLearning* is a book I wish I had written: mainly because of the interrelationships the author weaves throughout the book, emphasizing learning strategies, such as authentic learning experiences, the

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collaborative creation of new knowledge, the solving of real problems, and just-in-time learning.

These are important concepts to make sense of, and to link together, when designing education and training. But Salisbury's approach goes beyond this to describe the foundations, processes, methodologies, and technologies that constitute an iLearning organization. Combined with various learning strategies, these tactics form a systematic approach that guides improved individual, team, and organizational learning and improved performance.

By identifying organizational knowledge and the underlying performance objectives of knowledge work, Salisbury helps organizations *know what they know* when facing new problems to solve. Just as prior knowledge may be the most critical factor when an individual wants to learn new things, existing knowledge in the organization and how to access it is a critically important component of iLearning.

To the extent that learning is now part of work, and vice versa, and collaboration among individuals is how work and learning are accomplished in organizations, iLearning can function as a model for problem solving. Another way iLearning contributes is in the "expert advice" given throughout the book, which guides the practical implementation and application of concepts discussed.

Several concepts are thoroughly discussed in the book. Clearly, *collaborative learning* is an important underpinning of iLearning. The theoretical foundation for this is the Collaborative Cognition Model (Plass *et al.*, 2000; Plass & Salisbury, 2002; Salisbury & Plass, 2001). This model draws from, and in other cases extends, the work of several previous models and theories, including the Anderson *et al.* (1998) revision of Bloom's Taxonomy, cognitive flexibility theory (Spiro & Jehng, 1990), and the thesis of creating a knowledge spiral in an organization described by Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995). For a more extensive description of the Collaborative Cognition Model, the reader should see Salisbury (2003). While not specifically discussing these theories in this book, the author describes the foundations, processes, and methodologies leading to a successful learning environment for an iLearning organization, along with the technologies that support that environment.

The content of the book is organized into five themes or main parts. The first describes how to facilitate collaborative work. These chapters deal with such things as people agreeing on a workflow process, defining their roles, and uncovering the performance objectives that need to be met during the work being done, and how to measure them.

The second part follows by describing how to facilitate innovative learning. Why is it important for organizations to draw a distinction between explicit and tacit knowledge? Why do employees have different cognitive needs? How are knowledge assets developed to meet those different needs? These are some of the questions answered in these chapters.

Part three describes the organizational interventions for creating an iLearning organization. Finding expertise within the organization, creating incentives to tap into this expertise, and how to measure an individual's contribution to the knowledge of his or her team and organization are explored in this section.

Described in part four is how to apply the methodologies and technologies that support an iLearning organization.

Methods define the format of knowledge assets: their creation, storage, display, and updating. Also described is when to deploy technologies for managing collaboration, knowledge products, knowledge artifacts, role-based access, and learning and performance assessment in order to support an iLearning organization. Again, let me note that the emphasis is on an organizational approach to problem-solving, and not only a technological one.

Part five discusses why iLearning is changing our world and the global economy. The author predicts that iLearning will substantially alter K-12 and university education. Will this significant change occur due to iLearning, as Salisbury predicts? Perhaps. But don't count on that happening soon. The goals of these organizations are quite different from one another, and one should not confuse education and learning with performance improvement. Still, for now, it would be enough if many of the principles discussed in this book are implemented by organizations in the workplace.

In the opening pages of *iLearning*, Salisbury states that iLearning "simply describes learning that is facilitated during collaborative work" (p. xxii). Conceptually this may be true. But, in practice, I am not sure it is at all simple. Goals involving knowledge workers interwoven in this book include assets, processes, concepts, principles, and techniques, including instructional systems design, performance support systems, training and performance improvement, business process optimization, the identification and use of best practices, the implementing of knowledge management systems, and organizational learning. Put these things together in a coherent system and it becomes rather complex.

This is a well-organized book, well written and well edited, as are nearly all Pfeiffer/Wiley books. While this makes *iLearning* fairly easy to read, it does not mean implementation will be easy. In my opinion, it will take a quite experienced and knowledgeable leader or leadership team to guide the organization to *iLearning*. □

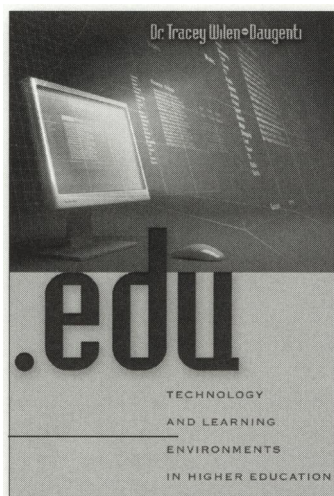
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Using Technology in Higher Education

Book Review:
Tracey Wilen-Daugenti.
.edu: Technology and Learning Environments in Higher Education.
Peter Lang Publishers;
214 pages; 2009;
\$32.95.

Reviewed by William D. Milheim

.edu: Technology and Learning Environments in Higher Education is a new book by Tracey Wilen-Daugenti (with several chapters written by other individuals), who heads the Higher Education IBSG Practice at Cisco Systems. The book focuses on strategies that can be implemented by higher education institutions for using the next generation of Internet technologies (Web 2.0, multimedia, etc.) to better enable student learning. The book includes an Introduction followed by 14 relatively brief chapters divided into four sections focused on technology trends, the increasing use of technology, learning environments, and the overall use of technology within higher education. There is also a short discussion at the end of the book related to future directions in this field and a glossary.

The first section, "Technology Trends Impacting Higher Education Today," focuses on new technologies—Web 2.0 and social networking, video, mobile devices, and gaming

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—currently utilized in higher education. Most of the chapters are ten pages or more in length with specific references to the original sources of the information presented. Each of the chapters includes up-to-date information and a wealth of examples to help explain the various topics.

The second section, "Increased Use of Technology and Its Implications for Higher Education," includes five chapters—credible Web content (by Patricia D. Wilen), technology and information literacy, students and technology, faculty and technology, and adaptive/assistive technology (this last chapter also by Patricia D. Wilen). These chapters are generally shorter than those in the first section, but include current information and appropriate examples. While all of the chapters are well written, the second one, focused on technology and information literacy, is particularly interesting and relevant, offering a discussion of significant problems and proposed solutions to a number of issues.

Section three, "Learning Environments," provides three chapters on this topic—a general description, a chapter related to distance learning, and a discussion of related centers of excellence. As with the previous sections, all of these chapters are quite current, with the "centers of excellence" chapter being particularly detailed and informative.

The final section, "Reflections on Technology and Its Growing Influence in Higher Education," includes two chapters—a discussion of the history and future of technology in higher education (by Joseph Cevetello) and an essay concerning the overall use of technology in higher education (by Lev S. Gonick). These are also generally effective chapters (also being somewhat longer than others) that provide concluding remarks for the book as well as discussions concerning future directions for this field. While the chapters in this section do provide a relevant discussion of future directions with regard to the use of technology in higher education (as does the final mini-chapter at the end of the regular sections), it would have been more interesting and appropriate for the book to provide additional details and predictions concerning the future of this field, particularly within the final essay, which does provide a relevant framework for this task.

Overall, the book is very well written and quite current in its descriptions of various forms of technology in higher education. In addition, there are numerous examples to help explain or support the points in each chapter as well as reference notes to direct readers to source material if needed.

The book would have benefited from further details concerning the potential future of various technologies (as noted above) as well as the inclusion of additional graphics or illustrations, since most of the chapters have no visual support for important points. In addition, there could have been a companion Website developed and referenced to provide additional related materials, particularly given the technological focus of the book.

In summary, this is an effective book that will be of benefit to researchers, practitioners, faculty, and graduate students with an interest in the use of technology in higher education. While the text would benefit from the use of additional visuals and further information concerning potential future directions, it provides current and useful information for a wide variety of potential readers interested in using technology in higher education or increasing their understanding of this growing field. □