



Virtual Professional Development and Informal Learning via Social Networks

By Vanessa P. Dennen

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People are increasingly engaged in profession-related learning via social networks supported by Web 2.0 tools. Some of these informal online learners are already actively engaged in a profession, whereas others are preparing to enter a profession. Their online interactions enhance their formal education and face-to-face professional experiences. *Virtual Professional Development and Informal Learning via Social Networks* will examine how individuals and organizations are using Web 2.0 tools to create informal learning and professional development opportunities. Informal learning is learning which occurs outside of a formal educational context, typically driven by a personal question or an immediate need. In other instances, informal learning may occur as a by-product of other social interactions. In this context, we focus on informal learning that occurs through online social networks on a voluntary basis. Professional development, then, is defined as learning that will enhance one's job-related knowledge or career growth. This book is perfectly suited for academics and practitioners as it is written in a manner that is clearly accessible and includes implications for practice.

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Virtual Professional Development and Informal Learning via Social Networks By Vanessa P. Dennen Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #6693274 in Books
- Brand: Brand: IGI Global
- Published on: 2012-06-30
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 11.02" h x .81" w x 8.50" l, 2.45 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 364 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

Overall this is a stimulating, detailed and well-researched volume that provides ideas for further discussion in the area of professional development and learning in an online environment utilizing Web 2.0 tools. I recommend this book as a worthwhile purchase for tertiary education libraries, particularly those with a teaching faculty. --*Kay Neville, TAFE New South Wales, Online Information Review, Vol. 37, No. 2*

About the Author

Vanessa P. Dennen is an Associate Professor of Instructional Systems at Florida State University. She earned a Ph.D. in Instructional Systems Technology from Indiana University. Her research investigates the nexus of cognitive, motivational, and social elements in computer-mediated communication, concentrating on two major issues: learner participation in online activities, and interactions, norm development, and informal learning within online communities of practice. Vanessa's publications, which have been well cited, have appeared in *Instructional Science*; *Distance Education*; *Computers in Human Behavior*; *The Handbook of Distance Education*; *The Handbook of Research on Educational Communications and Technology*; and *The International Handbook of Collaborative Learning* among others. Additionally, she recently co-edited (with Stefan Hrastinski) a special issue of *The Internet and Higher Education on Social Media in Higher Education*.

Jennifer B. Myers is the ASSIST Project Director and an instructional designer and consultant at Orangeburg-Calhoun Technical College in South Carolina. Additionally, she is a Ph.D. candidate at Florida State University in the Instructional Systems program under the College of Education. Previously, Myers worked as a middle school teacher in North Carolina and earned her Master's degree in Instructional Systems at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. She has designed and developed a number of instructional courses and materials for a variety of organizations and audiences in the K-12, higher education, and non-profit sectors and has taught graduate and undergraduate level courses in addition to her experiences teaching in K-12. She has presented her research at various professional conferences. Additionally, she is working on her dissertation examining self-regulated learning within an informal online community of practice. More broadly, her research interests surround informal learning, professional development, mentoring, self-regulated learning, social learning, knowledge brokering, and online communities of practice.

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