

PREFACE TO THE PROCEEDINGS

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«πάντα χωρεῖ καὶ οὐδὲν μένει»
“All things change and nothing remains still”
(Heraclitus as quoted by Plato in “Cratylus”)

Long before digital technology, the ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus identified change as a fundamental characteristic of the universe. Approximately 2,500 years later, as we gather for the 19th annual International Conference on Information Communication Technologies in Education (ICICTE), we can both embrace his pronouncement and also enhance it by insisting that there is one principle that, for us, will never change: a deep-rooted belief in the value of education to transform lives and make the world a better place.

We are here because we believe in education and we believe that information communication technologies can help us “do” education better.

The process of producing these proceedings is a case in point. I am writing from my home in North Canton, OH, and in the past few weeks, from work and home, have exchanged countless e-mails across multiple time zones with Ġorġ Mallia in Malta (whose name, which includes characters that do not appear on my English-language keyboard, I have copied from his e-mail signature), with Nancy Pyrini in Greece, and with conference participants on five continents. These e-mails have included: my requests for revisions and pleas for more time; from Ġorġ, guidance and requests for deliverables (and he will achieve sainthood, I’m sure, based upon my pleas for more time); and from Nancy, reminders and requests for schedule adjustments based upon the personal situations of specific participants (her heart is as big as her intellect). It is difficult to imagine how this process operated nineteen years ago when ICICTE began; it is impossible to imagine how this communication would have taken place 2,500 years ago.

Just as advances in technology help us communicate more efficiently and more rapidly, they can help us teach and learn more successfully. The principles of Universal Design for Learning are especially relevant: 1) Multiple Means of Representation, e.g., instructional materials in multiple formats that can be accessed anytime, anywhere, on different devices; 2) Multiple Means of Expression, e.g., ways for learners to demonstrate their achievement of learning objectives, including videos, podcasts, presentations, debates, visual art, wikis, discussion forums, and more traditional methods of writing; 3) Multiple Means of Engagement, e.g., enhanced engagement and communication, including research-based projects, social media, collaboration tools, peer assessment, and virtual events. How do we know whether specific strategies have been effective? ICT allows us multiple means to evaluate the success of our pedagogical strategies, through both formal controlled studies and also analysis of student access to materials and activities via learning analytics. Finally, how do educators learn about the resources, strategies, and methods of evaluation that

will work for them? When “all things change”—and technology will always be a moving target—professional development (PD) becomes especially critical. Even the means of PD is changing: in addition to academic publications and conferences such as this one, educators can benefit from educamps, simulations, and experiential learning. All of these resources, strategies, methods of evaluation, and innovative PD opportunities are touched upon by papers in these proceedings.

But technology can also create barriers. Sharing content in a multimedia format might make information inaccessible to certain groups, as can utilizing text that is not optimized for accessibility. In closely reviewing APA style (6th edition, dating from 2009) before updating the manuscript guidelines for our conference, I discovered that APA style is not fully accessible. It appears to be based upon the capacity of a basic manual typewriter, on which it would be impossible to change font size, create vertical lines on a table, or select a different color, let alone provide metadata for an image. Therefore, this year’s guidelines departed from strict APA format. I salute the authors who sought to comply with the new guidelines and sincerely hope authors and readers alike will strive to create accessible documents and help grow a culture of accessibility in the future.

Aside from potential barriers, technology can also bring risks. A growing concern is the need to educate digital natives about information literacy so that they are discerning about the information they access and the individuals they interact with online. We can teach them how to use devices. Can we teach them how to stop using devices? Can we guide them to use technology mindfully, being mindful both of what they are doing and also of what they are not doing because they are too caught up having their heads down? And, can we teach them to protect themselves against “the dark side” of the cyberworld just as they need to protect themselves against dark elements in the real world?

That is why this conference exists. It brings together kindred spirits who are passionate about education, excited about technology, daring enough to take risks, and generous enough to freely share successes, failures, and ideas with others. Because all of us want to “do” education better, and all things change.