

Foreword: A Note about the Writing of This Book during the Pandemic

As social scientists, it is easy to get lost in the day-to-day phenomena of what we study and to miss the bigger picture of how and why these things matter. This was supposed to be a book about technology and literacy, but as the pandemic forced us to engage in new and digitally intimate ways, it also became a book about connection and the ways that we could choose to use digital technologies to mediate that connection inclusively. As we reflected on our uses of digital technologies, both before and during the pandemic, we couldn't help but extrapolate the broader impact social uses of digital technologies have had on people's access and inclusion in this historical moment in time.

Nor could we ignore how the need for interdependent collaboration and engagement, always relevant, had magnified. As a result, the events of the past four years have illuminated the importance of working together and the disastrous effects of not doing so. Our handling of crises, including how we choose to engage—or not engage—with the digital technologies at our disposal, bears direct consequence on our ability to mitigate impact.

What the past four years have taught us, more than anything, is that the problems of the future will continue to be of a global, and interdependent nature. This means that solutions must come forth from a place of interconnection. Our increasingly digitized lives will center more and more on the ways that we can use technology to engage collaboratively in both problem solving and communication. Global problems require an interdependent framing to generate global solutions.

The physical isolation precipitated by the pandemic afforded a unique window in time to experience technology's potential to bring people together, whether it be to share a meal together virtually, say a final FaceTime

goodbye, or to teach a Zoom class of fourth graders how to use a protractor. Through various digital technologies, we came together to celebrate and mourn both the quotidian and the extraordinary moments of our lives. If there was ever a time to understand and to act upon the power of digital technologies to amplify or to minimize our interconnection, that time is now.

As countries and states across the world reflect on their responses to the pandemic, the transition of educational programs to collaborative hybrid environments for teaching, learning, and working has created a context entirely distinct from what came before. Acknowledging this reality entails not shying away from examining how digital technologies can be used to cultivate and maintain inclusive communities that make learning maximally accessible for the diversity of students in today's schools.

Alongside extraordinary challenges, the pandemic has presented an opportunity of sorts: a forced revisioning of the role of digital technologies in inclusive education. Of particular concern in this context are those students most likely to face significant barriers to meaningful learning opportunities: young students, students with learning differences and disabilities, students who are linguistically and culturally diverse, and students living in poverty. By centering the needs of these students in the adaptation of digital technologies for inclusive education, this book aims to support educators and policymakers in the pursuit of maximizing the integration and engagement of *all* students across diverse learning contexts.

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Voices on the Margins

Inclusive Education at the Intersection of Language, Literacy, and Technology

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