CJLT RCAT
Canadian Journal of Learning and Technology
La Revue canadienne de l'apprentissage et de la technologie

Volume 40(2) Spring/printemps 2014

Handbook of Mobile Learning. 2013. Edited by Zane L. Berge & Lin Muilenberg. Routledge, Publisher. 638 pages. ISBN 978-0-415-50369-3

Reviewed by Mohamed Ally

Introduction

The chapters in this handbook are written by recognized world experts in the area of mobile learning. It is good to see the global expertise in mobile learning in one book. The handbook has 53 chapters and is 638 pages long which is on the longer side for a book at this time in history. However, the book is organized into 5 sections (Foundations and Future, Learning and Learner Support, Teaching and Instructional Design, Policies, Administration, and Management, and Cases and Perspectives) making it manageable for the readers. This book informs readers on what is happening in mobile learning around the world and why it is important to use mobile learning as a delivery option in education and training. Also, since the use of mobile technologies is new to many in education, the book provides suggestions on how to design and implement mobile learning.

Potential Audience

As the names of the sections indicate, the book will be of interest to a variety of educators, researchers, and professionals. Teachers, instructors, instructional designers, and professors will find the sections "Learning and learner support" and "Teaching and instructional design" very helpful to design mobile learning materials and to provide support in the learning processes. The chapters under the section on "Policies, administration, and management" will be of interest to managers and administrators. Researchers will be interested in all of the chapters in the book. Hence, this book will be of interest to everyone involved in mobile learning which is the main purpose of a handbook.

Content Organization

Section one on Foundations and Future provides a historical background of mobile learning and looks into the future of mobile learning. Chapters one and two traced the history of technology in education by starting at electronic learning to the use of mobile technology in learning. Chapter eight on the future of mobile learning looks at how mobile learning can benefit education and how future educators can benefit from mobile learning. Chapter twelve explores the importance of mobile learning in developing countries and looks at projects that are making a difference in the developing world to narrow the digital divide. It may have benefited the reader to have divided Section into two sections with Foundations of Mobile learning as the first section and Future of Mobile Learning as the last section in the book. Such a format would have taken the reader the journey from past to present to the future.

Section two on Learning and Learner Support covers the learners and the importance of designing quality mobile learning and providing learner support for learner success. Chapter 13 analyzed past papers to identify who the learners were in these studies and to identify the missing target learners for mobile learning. Chapter 16 explores mobile pedagogy for learners and educators so that quality mobile learning materials can be developed and the authors suggest there should be a more learner-centric model for mobile learning.

Section three on Teaching and Instructional Design covers how to design effective mobile learning to promote students' success. Chapter 24 explores team and community building in mobile learning with the authors discussing how mobile devices can be used to build community of learners using different delivery modes including classroom, classroom and online (blended), and online. Chapter 25 is one of the few chapters in the book that looks at mobile learning in the K-12 school system. The chapter describes some mobile learning projects in K-12 and lessons learned from these projects. This information will be helpful for teachers who are planning to implement mobile learning in K-12. Chapter 27 is an important chapter on the use of Apps in mobile learning. The use of Apps in learning is important for students who do not always have connectivity to access learning materials from servers. The students can download the apps and complete their learning activities offline. This chapter goes one step further by describing how to design customizable Apps and what research is needed to enhance the design and implementation of such Apps. The emerging delivery method of using mobile technologies in Massive Open Online Course (mMOOC) is covered in Chapter 31. The author describes how to design effective mMOOC for learning in the cloud. This chapter will be of interest to educators who are planning to design and deliver MOOCs in developing countries where most citizens use mobile technologies.

Section four on Policies, Administration, and Management addresses how to make the transition to mobile learning and how to implement successful mobile learning. Chapter 32 describes one university experience in the implementation of mobile technology in the university where they use the 1 to 1 implementation of one mobile device for each student. The authors use their experience with the 1 to 1 implementation to suggest strategies other organizations should use to make sure 1 to 1 implementations are successful. This chapter will benefit organizations and countries that are planning to distribute large number of mobile devices to students and citizens. Chapter 33 also provides information and lessons learned from a project to implement mobile learning in a university. Potential implementers of mobile learning will also benefit from this chapter. Chapter 34 addresses an area that many organizations are struggling with, how to successfully implement a system where students bring their own device (Bring Your Own Device - BYOD). Decreasing cost of mobile devices and increasing numbers of students already have mobile devices, is leading organizations to implement BYOD. This chapter describes the benefits of BYOD and suggests that a major benefit of a BYOD system is teachers spend more time on students learning rather than arranging to provide technologies to students. Chapter 37 explores how mobile learning can be used for equal access providing everyone with equal opportunity to learn. This chapter is important for those who are involved in achieving the goal of "Education for All" put forward by UNESCO and governments around the world. This chapter makes recommendations on how to achieve equal access using mobile learning.

Section five on Cases and Perspectives describes a variety of mobile implementations from across the globe. These include mobile learning in K-12, the military, mobile learning for language learning, mobile learning games to motivate students, use of mobile learning in developing countries, mobile learning in different subject areas, and mobile learning in a variety of contexts. This section will be of interest to anyone who is interested in exploring how mobile learning is used around the world and in different disciplines and contexts.

Summary

The chapters in this book are written by mobile learning experts from around the world allowing it to be utilized globally. The book will be of interest to people in developed as well as developing countries; however, the people who will benefit more from this book are those in developing countries since mobile learning is expanding at a very fast rate in such areas. As mobile devices are the preferred technological devices (over computers) in developing countries, those working in these areas will benefit tremendously from this book. To make the book more affordable to people in developing countries it should be available in soft cover format and as an E-book for flexible access.

Author

Mohamed Ally is a faculty member in the Centre for Distance Education at Athabasca University with interests in the use of mobile technologies in education and training and in achieving the goal of “Education for All”.