

GUEST EDITORIAL PREFACE

# Special Issue from the mLearn 2010 Conference

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The 9<sup>th</sup> World Conference on Mobile and Contextual Learning, which was held in Malta in 2010, was characterised by projects and research primarily centred around the user. In a world in which people are spending an average of 20 hours per week using digital representations of themselves (Bailenson & Blascovich, 2011) primarily networked through social connections in a web of ties, (Christakis & Fowler, 2011), mobile technology becomes the essence of communication. People want to be connected anytime, anywhere, to share their thoughts and information, in a myriad of data-exchange mechanisms and processes.

Whereas a couple of decades ago, the only access to information which people had was the media, which was controlled or owned by a specific person or organization, nowadays there is an overload of information controlled by 'everyone'. This information now belongs to everyone because it is a product of everyone. 'Crowdsourcing', a term coined by Jeff Howe in 2006, implies that everyone is now a producer and consumer of information; ev-

eryone has become a teacher and a learner in his/her own way.

That is one of the primary reasons why mobile learning is such a fundamental field of study in today's changing world. The paradigm of learning has shifted and even though some categories of society might be resisting this change, the reality of today's world is showing that that we are indeed building our own learning networks using the *just-in-time* approach. Learning is triggered by need in the context of our everyday life activities. The papers in this issue all highlight the importance of context and design vis-à-vis the user, in adapting technology to education and the learner and not vice versa.

The fundamental question we need to ask ourselves is *what kind of Education system will drive a society to success that can thrive on creativity and innovation, in response to the dynamic and complex needs of the world we inhabit?*

This research domain is exciting because the ubiquity of the technology has indeed

made ventures possible which a few years ago would have been considered *futuristic*. At this point in time, the main limitation to creating a world which presents fewer barriers to a global mobile Education system is, ultimately, our imagination.

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