
Editorial

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Biographical notes: Piet Kommers is an Associate Professor at the University of Twente at the Department of Media, Communication and Organization. He chairs the IADIS conferences and the e-society conference and web-based communities conference in particular. In his work for UNESCO, he brings forward the blend between the nature and the culture of learning. He distinguishes the 'new' media as catalytic to communication and awareness. In his view, learning gradually embeds in every aspect of life pertaining to the delicate question if learning can be orchestrated essentially. Similarly, we may question if communication can be 'arranged' as we ought to believe at the dawn of the social web.

Margriet Simmerling is Peer Consultant/Senior Manager for R&D projects in the area of e-society and web-based communities. She participated in the advisory board for the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs and is active as a Reviewer for the European Commission. She designs and moderates e-learning modules and workshops' e-learning modules and workshops in the domain of education technology and psychology at the PhD level.

Loyalty, flaming, reputation and symmetry in communities of practice; these are the parameters addressed in this special issue. Like in any of the societal domains as education, care and governance, the merit of social gathering is a matter of multidimensional values.

Essentially social media and web-communities in particular, they benefit from the flexibility and ubiquity of ICT; interlinkage based on contiguity in time and location, shared interest and higher-order relationships like friends-of-friends etc. Flexibility has the power of bridging locations, organisational borders and even overcome cultural islands as we meet in professional genres like for instance medical-ethical etiquette that may differ among countries, regions, hospitals and even departments.

The price of flexibility, connectivism and virtuality is threatening privacy, intruding and stalking. Currently we see that 'trust' is a major issue in the instigation and moderation of web communities. Identity, authenticity, anonymity and trust have a

delicate relationship. From the perspective of sharing expertise, anonymity may look attractive for the sake of not breaching patient integrity. The sense of community however demands a more or less personal ‘feeling’; Writing to a colleague who you recently met feels more safe than publicising your best practice case to a larger anonymous audience. Reputation can only emerge when community members are stimulated to reflect upon mutual achievements and flaws as well. In this special issue 13 authors coming from Ireland, Australia, UK, India, Jordan, Taiwan and Malaysia inform us interesting research, studies and experience reports. They will help you to feel acquainted with trade-offs and compromises in the arena of sharing expertise.

- 1 In the article ‘Developing a loyal community: an empirical analysis evaluating antecedents to loyalty in social networking’ by Aaron M. French, J.P. Shim, Robert F. Otondo and Jeremy R. Porter. They focus on the aspects of trust and loyalty in social network sites. From an academic perspective, their research provides a theoretical understanding of loyalty and its antecedents in the context of SNS. From a practical perspective, their research adds value to SNS administrators by describing antecedents that influence loyalty to their community.
- 2 Michael Nycyk presents an interesting study with the title ‘Enforcing community guidelines in web-based communities: the case of flame comments on YouTube’. The concerns his study raises are relevant to persons and organisations working on and responsible for managing ‘flaming’ and other negative behaviours in web based communities. The term ‘acceptability of language use’ is relevant, acceptable, reasoned, substantiated and consistently applied.
- 3 The article ‘Engagement in a newly launched online support community for complex regional pain syndrome: membership growth, header analysis and introductory messages’ details engagement in a newly formed online support community. Richard M. Smedley, Neil S. Coulson, Jeff Gavin, Karen Rodham and Leon Watts clearly define the rationale for the study with the gap in the literature well presented. Being able to examine a community from the very beginning is an exciting possibility and one that has much potential.
- 4 Pradip Swarnakar, Ajay Kumar and Manak Wadhwa present an original and interesting research. The aim of the article ‘Investigating preferred relationship through fuzzy sets in social networking sites’ is to identify the strength of socio-demographic factors that motivate a user to send friend request on social networks. The surface plots inferred that number of mutual friends and college are the factors that had a high positive impact on the output, i.e., friend request. It has also been found that if a person is giving more importance to relationship status, age and gender, he/she is more likely to send friend request to an unknown person.
- 5 The article ‘Virtual health communities of practice success factors: towards taxonomy and a framework; address an interesting issue: the scope of virtual health communities of practice affects current and future students, instructors and developers from different fields. Haitham Alali and Juhana Salim recommend to conduct studies evaluating the success of VCoPs using quantitative or mixed research methods within the healthcare sector rather than purely qualitative and descriptive research.

- 6 In 'Exploring cognitive processing and behavioural patterns in a seamless online learning integrated discussion environment: a progressive sequential analysis' Sheng-Yi Wu, Huei-Tse Hou and Mei-Jen Audrey Shih present the results of a case study. They integrated synchronous and asynchronous discussions in online communities through the SOLID system.

We wish you inspiration in the linkage between prior and your own professional circles.