

Preface

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Editors

INTRODUCTION

The role of a Preface is to introduce the nature of the publication. The book that emerges from an IFIP Technical Committee World Conference on Computers in Education is complex, and this complexity lies in the nature of the event from which it emerges. Unlike a number of other major international conferences, those organised within the IFIP education community are active events. A WCCE is unique among major international conferences for the structure that deliberately ensures that all attendees are active participants in the development of the debate. In addition to the major paper presentations and discussion, from international authors, there are panel sessions and professional working groups who debate particular themes throughout the event.

There is no doubt that this was not a dry academic conference – teachers, lecturers and experts, policy makers and researchers, learners and manufacturers mingled and worked together to explore, reflect, discuss and plan for the future. The added value of this event was that we know that it will have an impact on future practice; networks will be formed, both virtual and real - ideas will change and new ones will emerge.

Capturing the essence of this event is a challenge – this post-conference book has three parts. The first is the substantial number of theme papers. These represent a proportion of the total number of papers presented at WCCE 2001. All conference presentations are selected after an international refereeing panel has reviewed their value. A further review then takes place to select those papers that should be identified as *theme papers* for the conference and publication in this book. So this book is not a full conference proceedings, but rather a selection to capture the range, essence and excellence. In addition there are two further parts. The *reports from the*

discussion panels, from which the flavour of the debates and active issues emerge. And then the substantial *Professional Group reports*. These cover key topics of current interest within our community, and report the deliberations, ideas and key issues that emerged.

Keynotes hold a particular place in all major conferences, and they are no exception in WCCE 2001. But true to the nature of our field, no keynote address has a printed paper version, as they all were interactive presentations using the full facilities of the media. A synopsis of their content will however be referred to in the Editorial which follows. But this preface does contain the Welcoming and Opening addresses. Firstly because in the IFIP education community we feel that our post-conference books should reflect as many aspects of the nature of the event itself – and the tone and content of the welcoming addresses contribute to this. And secondly, we are always privileged to attract serious Opening Speakers, whose thoughts and ideas set the tone for the complex issues that we will be discussing for the week. The Danish Minister for Education Margrethe Vestager and Deputy Assistant Director-General for Education, UNESCO, Aicha Bah Diallo presented the formal opening speeches. Not only their presence but also the content of their speeches are evidence that this conference is not just an issue for educators and students. IT, Informations Technology is just as much a political project in both the western world and in the developing countries. And so we are proud to include our opening addresses in the Preface. And finally this is where we can acknowledge the contribution of so many colleagues who made the event, and thus this book, possible.

Six years since the last World Conference on Computers in Education, this IFIP meeting, entitled *Networking the Learner*, promises to be another milestone in the on-going development, progress and reflection on the relationship between Information Technologies and Education.

Networking the Learner

Computers in Education

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