Book Reviews / Revue de Livres

David E. Francis is Academic Director, Virtual Campus for SIAST (The Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) in Saskatoon, SK. He is currently completing a Master of Education degree at Memorial University. He may be reached at francis@siast.sk.ca Online Collaborative Learning: Theory and Practice, , 2004. Tim S. Roberts. Hershey, PA: Information Science Publishing, 336 pages. ISBN: 1-59140-227-1 (pbk.), 1-59140-175-5 (ebook) Reviewed by David E. Francis Tim S. Roberts is a senior lecturer with the Faculty of Informatics and Communication at the Bundaberg campus of Central Queensland University, Australia. He is an accomplished researcher in both informatics and collaborative learning. He has also gained a strong practitioner’s perspective in this area via developing and delivering online courses in computer science to a wide variety of students in Australia and abroad. In support of these interests, he manages the Online Collaborative Learning in Higher Education web site found at: http://clp.cqu.edu.au intended for both researchers and practitioners, and features content contributed from well-known authors in the field. In a recent web site editorial, Roberts wonders why more books are not available on computer-supported collaborative learning (CSCL), noting that his own Amazon.com search provided over 700 titles, many of which were out of print or focused only on K-12 environments. His latest work in this area, Online Collaborative Learning: Theory and Practice, serves as an excellent starting point for researchers and practitioners interested in CSCL, providing a wide range of topics and domain-specific studies for practitioners. The book is not divided into titled sections; instead, by necessity, the topics wander somewhat. However, it is easy to quickly determine which chapters are most applicable to your interests by reading the brief descriptions found in the preface. In order to save a possible Amazonian search of your own, see below for a list of abridged chapter titles:

• Supporting Collaborative Project Teams Using Computer-Based Technologies
• Computer-Mediated Progressive Inquiry in Higher Education
• Moderating Learner-Centred E-Learning: Problems and Solutions, Benefits and Implications
• Supporting Distributed PBL: The Use of Feedback Mechanisms in Online Learning
• Online Collaborative Learning in Mathematics: Some Necessary Innovations
• Learning to Learn in Online Collaborative Groups
• A New Taxonomy for Evaluation Studies of Online Collaborative Learning
• Computer-Mediated Learning Groups: Benefits and Challenges to Using Groupwork in Online Learning Environments
• Collaborative or Cooperative Learning?
In this volume, neophytes will be able to focus on strong introductory works detailing the benefits and rules of engagement for CSCL (Bonk et al.) as well as the differences between collaborative learning and cooperative learning (McInerney & Roberts). Design of CSCL environments as well as their related (and complex) evaluation issues is covered by multiple chapters. Behaviours of CSCL communities are examined with interesting postulates and results (e.g., is there a zone of proximal development (ZPD) for groups as well as individuals?). Issues of support (and self-support, where possible) are addressed, as well as social and workflow trends in groupwork. Domain-specific teaching approaches and results are provided. The breadth of research and ideas in one volume is encouraging, and shows how much work remains in this fascinating area. A follow-up publication is planned for release in 2005 from the same publisher, focusing on CSCL in higher education environments (Computer-Supported Collaborative Learning in Higher Education).

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