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# Preface to the Third Edition

**I**t's been over four years since the first edition of this book was published and now, over 50,000 copies later, it's feeling like the world is a bit of a different place. Whereas blogs and RSS feeds and wikis were still just blips on the radar back in 2006, today, social Web media and online networks are a part of the mainstream conversation when it comes to politics, media, and business. And, yes, to some extent, education. Not that schools are rushing to embrace these tools in any systemic way . . . yet. However, there's no doubt that more teachers, more administrators, more parents, and more students are beginning to understand how learning is changing because of the connections we can make on the Web. That's the good news.

The not-so-good news is that those numbers are still nowhere near large enough. Just like we did four years ago, we live in a world where the following condition still exists: A growing majority of students are immersed in social networks and technologies outside of school, and most have no adults in their lives who are teaching them how to use those connections to learn. At a time when our access to information, people, and ideas is exploding online, that reality is simply unacceptable. Our collective inability to recognize a “tectonic shift” in the way we learn stems, I believe, from one fundamental fact—not enough of us have experienced that shift for ourselves. These shifts will not come under the guise of “twenty-first-century skills” reforms which are actually nineteenth-century skills being remarketed for a new day. They will only come when enough educators fully understand the open connections, open conversations, open content, and open learning that come as a part of a community of learners who are invested in their own passions.

The tools that are discussed in this book are simply that: tools. And as the chapters herein illustrate, learning how to use the tools is not difficult. If

you're looking for complex code, you won't find it here. But just because learning the tools is easy, learning *with* the tools is more nuanced. While each one of these technologies allow us to publish easily to the Web, simple publishing does not guarantee connection and network building. While a great many teachers have taken steps to use these tools to publish student work to the Web, far too often those pieces reflect work that we used to do with pen and paper simply published in a different way. None of the pedagogies have changed to reflect the fact that the real learning takes places *after* we publish, through the connections we make with others to extend the meaning of what we publish in new and profound ways. That's the real power of "The Read/Write Web."

And so, this remains the central message of this book: In order for us to prepare our students for what is without question a future filled with networked learning spaces, we must first experience those environments for ourselves. We must become connected and engaged in learning in these new ways if we are to fully understand the pedagogies of using these tools with our students. We cannot honestly discuss twenty-first-century learning skills for our students until we make sense of them for ourselves. So while this is a book about tools, I have made more of an effort to contextualize all of these technologies in ways that will help you grow your own connections, your own networks, and, in the process, your own learning. Read this book for yourself first, for your classroom second.

What continues to amaze me is the way my own learning deepens and evolves, due in large measure to my personal passion as a parent to understand these shifts for my own kids, and due also to the incredible people in my personal learning network who contribute so much to the conversation, push my thinking at every turn, and sustain me with their own passions for their students and classrooms. In particular, I'd like to acknowledge my friend and Powerful Learning Practice partner Sheryl Nussbaum-Beach whose infectious "change-the-world" attitude continually motivates my thinking and my work, and my friend Chris Lehmann, whose work as principal at the Science Leadership Academy in Philadelphia serves as a model for any educator seeking excellence in a fast-changing world. In addition, I'd like to thank the likes of Bruce Dixon, Alec Couros, David Jakes, Gary Stager, Sylvia Martinez, Dean Shareski, Karl Fisch, Bud Hunt, Clarence Fisher, John Pederson, George Siemens, Stephen Downes, Jay Rosen, Jeff Jarvis, Warren Buckleitner, Rob Mancabelli, and the hundreds of others of generous people who share their learning with me on a regular basis.

It's an amazing time to be a learner. My sincerest hope is that the ideas and examples captured here will bring you a sense of just how amazing this moment could be in your own learning life.