

Cscl: Theory and Practice of An Emerging Paradigm (Computers, Cognition, and Work)



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This book, about a newly emerging area of research in instructional technology, has as its title the acronym "CSCL." Initially, CSCL was chosen as an acronym for Computer-Supported Collaborative Learning. However, some would argue that "collaborative" is often not a descriptive term for what learners do in instructional settings; further, as the field develops, the technology used to support collaboration may not always involve computers, at least not in the direct ways they have been used to support instruction in the past. To avoid getting bogged down in this terminological debate, this book uses CSCL as a designation in its own right, leaving open to interpretation precisely what words it stands for.

The authors talk a great deal about the theory underlying their work. In part, this is because that is what they were asked to do, but it is also an indication of the state of the field. In an established paradigm in which the theories and methods are well agreed upon, such discussion is less central. CSCL, however, has not yet reached the stage of "normal" science. There is much to be worked out yet. This book is offered with the hope that it will help to define a direction for future work in this field.

The chapters appear in alphabetical order (except for the introductory chapter and the afterword) -- not for lack of a better way to organize the chapters, but rather because the organizational possibilities are too numerous and this order does not privilege one over another. By not imposing a topical organizing structure on this collection, it is hoped that readers will feel freer to explore the chapters in a way that best suits their needs.

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