

THE CAMBRIDGE HANDBOOK OF MULTIMEDIA LEARNING

Third Edition

Digital and online learning is more prevalent than ever, making multimedia learning a primary objective for many instructors. *The Cambridge Handbook of Multimedia Learning* examines cutting-edge research to guide creative teaching methods in online classrooms and training. Recognized as the field's major reference work, this research-based handbook helps define and shape this area of study. This third edition provides the latest progress report from the world's leading multimedia researchers, with 46 chapters on how to help people learn from words and pictures, particularly in computer-based environments. The chapters demonstrate what works best and establishes optimized practices. It systematically examines well-researched principles of effective multimedia instruction and pinpoints exactly why certain practices succeed by isolating the boundary conditions. The volume is founded upon research findings in learning theory, giving it an informed perspective in explaining precisely how effective teaching practices achieve their goals or fail to engage.

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THIRD EDITION

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Preface

As the first and only comprehensive research-based handbook on multimedia learning, *The Cambridge Handbook of Multimedia Learning* has helped define and shape the field, and has become recognized as its major reference work. Since the publication of the first edition in 2005 and the second edition in 2014, the field of multimedia learning has continued to grow as a coherent discipline with an accumulated research base worthy of being synthesized and organized in an updated handbook. Therefore, we are pleased to serve as editors for this third edition of *The Cambridge Handbook of Multimedia Learning*, which remains the most comprehensive and up-to-date volume summarizing research and theory in the field of multimedia learning.

This third edition of *The Cambridge Handbook of Multimedia Learning* constitutes the latest progress report from the world's leading multimedia researchers. As in previous editions, the focus of this volume is on how to help people learn from words and pictures, particularly in computer-based environments. For the purposes of the *Handbook*, multimedia learning is defined as learning from words (e.g., spoken or printed text) and pictures (e.g., illustrations, photos, maps, graphs, animation, or video). Multimedia environments include online instructional presentations, interactive lessons, e-courses, simulations, games, instructional video, virtual reality experiences, slideshows, and even textbooks. Overall, the major goal of this third edition of the *Handbook* is the same as the first edition – to establish what works (by systematically examining research-based principles of effective multimedia instruction), to pinpoint when it works (by isolating the boundary conditions), and to explain how it works (by grounding the research findings in learning theory). As noted in Chapter 1, compared to the first edition and second edition of the *Handbook*, this third edition reflects an increase in the number of evidence-based principles of multimedia instructional design, substantial growth in the research base underlying each principle, better understanding of the boundary conditions for each principle, broadening of underlying theories of multimedia learning, broadening of the media under study, increased interest in multimedia learning beyond the lab, and an increase in the arsenal of research tools.

There are many books providing advice on how to design multimedia learning environments, but the books are largely based on the practical experience and wisdom of the authors. Similarly, there are books reporting on the development of online instructional programs and websites, but the development efforts are generally based on best practices and informal case studies. Until recently, the lack of scientific research evidence in many multimedia learning books could be justified on the grounds that a solid research base did not yet exist. However, the quantity and quality of scientific research – conducted by researchers around the world – have reached a level warranting a revision of the field's first comprehensive research-based handbook of multimedia learning.

What distinguishes this book from some other books on distance learning or web-based instruction is our commitment to taking a scientific, evidence-based approach.

Our goal as editors is to make sure the *Handbook* provides a comprehensive and focused overview of the state of scientific research on multimedia learning. Each chapter is based on empirical research and grounded in cognitive theory, rather than offering unsubstantiated recommendations, describing best practices, or summarizing software development accomplishments. The chapter authors are research leaders from around the world, who have records of research publication in multimedia learning. As the most comprehensive research-based handbook on multimedia learning, *The Cambridge Handbook of Multimedia Learning: Third Edition* is intended to continue to define and shape the field for years to come.

As editors, we asked leading multimedia researchers to author chapters in areas in which they have contributed to the empirical research base. Because the field is largely international, the chapter authors span the globe, with more than half the chapters written by authors outside the United States – including authors from Australia, Canada, Chile, China, Denmark, Germany, France, Switzerland, The Netherlands, and the United Kingdom.

The *Handbook* consists of 46 chapters organized into eight parts. These chapters provide background (in Part I), explain a foundational theory of multimedia learning (in Part II), focus on basic cross-cutting principles of multimedia learning (Part III), focus on principles of multimedia learning for reducing extraneous processing (Part IV) or for managing essential processing (Part V), focus on principles of multimedia learning based on social and affective features (Part VI) or generative activity (Part VII), or examine multimedia learning with various computer-based media (Part VIII).

In order to provide a common structure among the chapters of the *Handbook*, we asked authors to organize their chapters around a common set of issues. In particular, we asked the authors of the theory chapters to provide a concise description of the theory or model with concrete examples, to summarize the theory's contributions to cognitive theory (i.e., to specify predictions that have been tested), to summarize the theory's contributions to instructional design (i.e., to specify recommendations for instruction), to describe any limitations of the theory, and to suggest future directions for research. We asked the authors of the multimedia design chapters to provide a clear definition and example of the principle or topic of the chapter, to review the relevant published research literature in sufficient detail, to assess the limitations of the research base, to summarize the implications for cognitive theory and for instructional design, and to suggest directions for future research.

We solicited chapters that were concise (i.e., containing no more than 25 double-spaced pages), focused (i.e., reviewing the research on a specified topic), well-referenced (i.e., containing a rich set of relevant references), evidence-based (i.e., providing an up-to-date review of the best empirical evidence), theory-based (i.e., relating the findings to testable predictions of theories when appropriate), and educationally relevant (i.e., drawing implications for educational practice when appropriate). In order to minimize confusion, we asked authors to clearly define jargon terms in the text. Each chapter was subjected to peer review and revision.

The intended audience includes anyone interested in how people learn from words and pictures in computer-based environments (or with traditional print media or in face-to-face learning environments). Although the *Handbook* summarizes the research base in multimedia learning, it is intended to be accessible to a general audience. On one hand, the *Handbook* is designed to support readers with practical interests in how to design or select multimedia learning environments that promote learning. On the other hand, the *Handbook* is designed to support readers who have academic interests in conducting or evaluating research in multimedia learning. The *Handbook* would be appropriate for courses related to cognitive science, educational psychology, instructional design, human factors, multimedia arts and technology, professional training, and interface design. It would also be useful for instructors interested in designing or improving multimedia lessons in school settings, job training contexts, and informal environments. In short, *The Cambridge Handbook of Multimedia Learning: Third Edition* belongs on the bookshelf of anyone who is interested in taking an evidence-based approach to web-based learning, e-learning,

multimedia, website design, distance learning, instructional technology, human-computer interaction, virtual environments, interactive instructional environments, or applied cognitive psychology.

As editors, we have tried to ensure that the *Handbook* reflects the values that we think are important for our field. In particular, we sought to produce a *Handbook* that is:

Research-based: The *Handbook* is intended to summarize the empirical research on multimedia learning, rather than describe untested best practices or software development projects. Although we have much respect for the craft knowledge of practitioners and designers, it is important to know if recommendations are supported by scientific evidence and under what conditions they are supported. Thus, we value a focus on scientific evidence as the key to progress in our field.

Theory-grounded: The *Handbook* is intended to relate empirical research to cognitive theories of how people learn. Our overriding premise is that multimedia learning environments should be designed in ways that are consistent with what is known about how people learn.

Educationally-relevant: The *Handbook* focuses on issues that are relevant to education, that is, to helping people learn. Thus, we sought chapters that offer research-based implications for instructional design.

Comprehensive: The *Handbook* offers a broad view of the field, including contributions from multimedia researchers around the world. We value the perspectives of researchers who have devoted so much of their energy to understanding multimedia learning.

Timely: The *Handbook* offers an up-to-date overview of the field. We value timeliness because the scientific study of multimedia learning is maturing at a rapid pace, and so are the practical demands for building multimedia learning environments – ranging from e-courses to in-class simulations.

Readable: In our role as editors we have tried to make sure that the chapters are clear and concise, with key terms defined and concrete examples provided. In a multidisciplinary field like this one, it is important that the chapters communicate what is known in a way that general readers can appreciate.

In short, our values have motivated us to seek chapters that are based on empirical research and grounded in cognitive theory rather than chapters that mainly describe development efforts or best practices.

Editing this book has been a treat for us, because we could commission chapters from the best researchers in the field and be the first to learn what they had to say. We are pleased to share the fruits of this enterprise with you in a timely fashion. Our hope is that you enjoy reading this *Handbook* as much as we have enjoyed editing it. We will consider this *Handbook* to be a success if it helps you to understand what is known about how people learn from words and pictures, gives you useful help in building or selecting effective multimedia learning environments, or encourages you to produce or investigate research that contributes to cognitive theory and educational practice. We hope that you will feel free to contact us at mayer@ucsb.edu or lfiorella@uga.edu to share your comments about the *Handbook*.

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