Handbook of Literacy and Technology
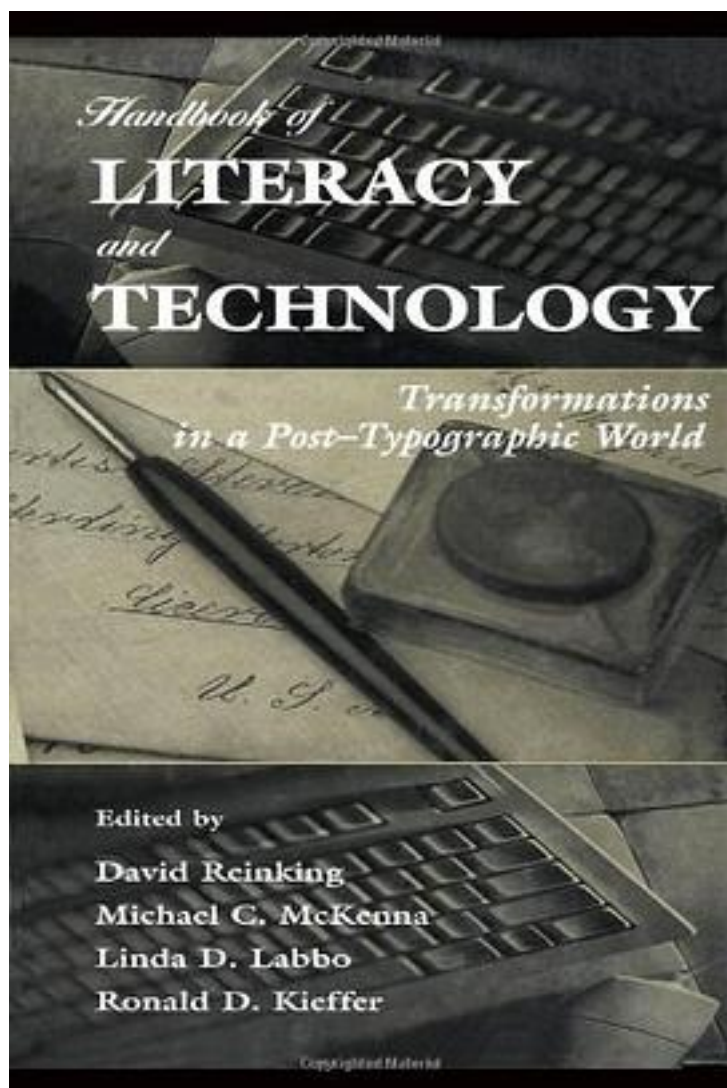
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出版者:

出版时间:1998-4

装帧:

isbn:9780805826425

This volume explains how electronic forms of reading and writing may be transforming conceptions of literacy as the world moves into the 21st century. Its rationale is founded to some extent on the belief that we are heading toward a post-typographic world - one in which printed texts are no longer dominant. Like many edited books, the birth of this volume is linked to a scholarly conference. However, unlike other edited books that are often proceedings or selected papers assembled after a conference, the chapters in this volume - from the beginning - were the focal point for planning and holding the conference to which they are related. The integral connection between the two is explained by the fact that they were proposed jointly as a synthesis and dissemination project in the final year of the National Reading Research Centre's five-year funding. This project proposed bringing together a group of scholars and educators to explore the relation between technology and literacy and the extent, if any, to which that relation was transforming literacy. Each individual invited to participate in the project agreed to author or co-author a chapter related to one of the "transformation" themes that comprise the sections of this book. Literacy in the modern era has always been recognized as playing a key role in promoting and shaping technological development. Technology and its relation to literacy have also been commonly viewed as components interacting with a broad range of socio-cultural and historical trends. However, what we are coming to know and appreciate more consciously now is that literacy and technology cannot be divorced from one another. Literacy can essentially be viewed as a technology - the psycho-social dimensions of literacy cannot be fully separated from the materials and processes for creating texts. That more integrated view of literacy and technology as essentially inseparable clearly underlies the contents of this book and the word "transformations" in its title. The appearance of distinctly new technologies that transform the tangible means by which people read and write implies at least the potential for producing a cascade of socio-cultural transformations. While this volume cannot offer definitive predictions about what the ultimate results of such transformations might be, it does heighten awareness about the intimate relation between literacy and technology, and should serve as a guidepost in the evolution of whatever literacy will become in the first century of the new millennium.

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目录:

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