

Foreword

By now, we've all heard, read, or said enough about the rapid pace of technological change for it to become cliché. We may have grown numb to the recitation of Moore's law and the sweeping social and economic impact of technological advances. Continuous, rapid, technology-based change, along with persistent, simultaneous efforts within the academy to both embrace and combat it, has become an assumed feature of our universe—like the existence of the university.

However, in *The Tower and the Cloud*, Richard Katz and his fellow authors remind us that the emergence of this technology “cloud” and its ever-increasing impact on us—individually and collectively—has significant implications for higher education as we know it. Only by looking past the cliché and carefully reflecting on the truth behind it can we appreciate the potential shape and direction of the change colleges and universities face. *The Tower and the Cloud* tackles questions such as “How are ‘cloud’ technologies and applications already affecting us?” “What does that say about how they are likely to evolve and impact us in the future?” “What might colleges, universities, and higher education overall look like as a result?”

The book explores a wide range of topics, beginning with the interplay of history, tradition, and technology that defines the modern academy—the “tower.” Authors address what the academy must do to maintain the coherence of its mission—if not necessarily all of the forms through which it pursues that mission—as it moves forward. Given the geographically unbounded nature of the cloud, the discussion turns to the promise and challenge of the truly global higher education community—and market—which the network increasingly makes possible.

In the face of these trends, institutions must also cope with rising demands for accountability, even as the cloud affects the nature and meaning of the relationships among institutions, faculty, students, alumni, and government. *The Tower and the Cloud* looks at those issues in light of institutional capacities and asks, “What role should technology play in meeting these shifting demands?” It posits at least part of the answer through essays that take a fresh look at institutional governance of IT and encourage realignment of those structures with the reality of a networked world (and institution).

The collection then turns to the heart of the academy—scholarship and teaching, and the principle of openness that underlies them both. The open source and open educational resources movements are examined to illustrate how higher education's core commitment to the free exchange

of ideas and information is finding renewed expression in the cloud environment. By leveraging the ease of collaboration, publication, and distribution that digital networks make possible, these movements are allowing communities of scholars, technology professionals, and institutions to come together to more effectively meet their needs and the needs of their students while contributing to the greater good.

The concluding essays highlight a diverse array of ways in which teaching, learning, and scholarship might evolve as a result of the cloud's impact. For example, digital media and broadband networks continue to change the form and amount of knowledge institutions can store and share, as well as who they can share them with. Yet the rapid evolution of digital media raises concerns about sustaining access—and the cost of doing so—over the long term. The cloud raises other questions, such as what impact the breathtaking rise of online social networking will have for building and sustaining community in higher education. As teaching, learning, and scholarship come to increasingly rely on networked services and resources beyond the institution's physical (and virtual) walls, how must IT leadership change to guide institutions through new realities while safeguarding the community's varied (and sometimes conflicting) interests?

These are just some of the major issues *The Tower and the Cloud* addresses as it illustrates the promise, pitfalls, and potential evolution of the academy in a network-based world. While not offering a crystal ball, it does provide a series of reasoned, analytical perspectives on how current trends may unfold, altering our institutions and the higher education landscape in a future that may arrive faster than we expect. In reading it, we are all challenged to move beyond acknowledging the pace of technological change to envisioning all that the tower can be if we embrace the cloud.

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