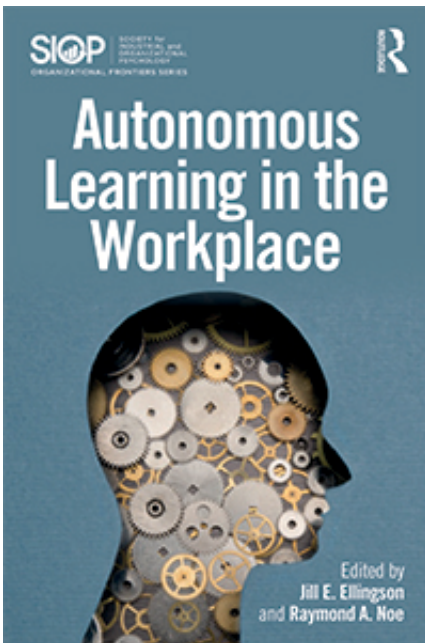


Book explores how technology has transformed learning in the workplace

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For several years, businesses have invested in formal training and development programs to ensure their employees had the proper knowledge, skills and experience to adequately perform their jobs and perhaps future career opportunities.

While these structured training avenues have not gone away, in recent years, employees have begun to develop their skills and acquire knowledge outside of this formal environment, according to a University

of Kansas researcher who is co-editor of a new book, "Autonomous Learning in the Workplace," as part of the prestigious SIOP Organizational Frontiers Series.

"Technology has really transformed when people work and how they work. That relaxing of boundaries has made it possible for work to happen anywhere and at any time," said Jill Ellingson, professor of [human resource management](#) in the School of Business. "Jobs are changing more quickly. Employees are being asked to do more, learn more and learn faster."

Those developments have made it harder for the formal training model to keep up, especially as employees tend to change jobs on average of eight or nine times in their careers, she said. According to one estimate, informal learning accounts for as much as 75 percent of learning within organizations. Budget constraints and other factors likely have played a role in this.

The edited volume takes a deeper look at various aspects of voluntary autonomous learning to understand how workers develop themselves on their own. Contributors to the book are experts in the field of training and development who examine the topic from different perspectives in the hope of spurring continued research on how autonomous learning happens and its effectiveness, said Ellingson, who is also a Dana Anderson Faculty Fellow.

With technology, e-learning, online learning and mobile learning are all growing, giving employees a greater deal of control over what and when they learn. These methods can often encourage continuous learning that is not required or mandated, Ellingson said.

Many job skills that organizations ask employees to use and develop tend to be much more fluid than in past decades.

"Instead of the organization coming to you and assessing and discerning that you need more training on a particular competency, the employee is often now making that decision," Ellingson said. "Then the [employee](#) would seek out a way to access that type of [training](#)."

A key topic to explore among human resources practitioners, she said, is how to capture the economic value from autonomous learning, especially because it is more informal.

"If it helps meet productivity goals, an employer may invest in encouraging these methods," Ellingson said. "At the same time, the question is, 'Will they recoup that investment?'"

Provided by University of Kansas

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