



future of
learning
2014

WHAT EXTREME LEARNERS CAN TEACH US

INSTITUTE FOR THE FUTURE

New technologies, work patterns, and practices are disrupting how we learn, where we learn, and what we need to learn. The definitions of teacher and student are becoming fluid, and education itself is moving out of episodic experiences in traditional institutions and their classrooms, into learning flows that course through our daily lives. People of all ages dip in and out of these flows, engaging in continuous learning channels that are contextually relevant and always available. Opportunities and resources for learners are no longer scarce but abundant; they are pervasive rather than localized. In 2013, IFTF's Future of Learning program published a forecast on the emerging nature of this new learning environment. This year, we are going directly to the learners.

There is a cohort of "extreme learners" who are the trailblazers of the new learning landscape. For them, it's not about a particular degree—the process is the product. Extreme learners seek out mentors both online and off who can guide them, helping locate and curate wisdom and resources. They are the people who join community laboratories and hackerspaces where they can get their hands dirty in ways not possible inside traditional lecture halls. They design their own curricula from the massive open online course offerings of top universities. They apply novel feedback mechanisms and the lessons of neuroscience to optimize their learning experiences. Extreme learners have learned how to learn.

Last summer, IFTF convened a small group of these learners to begin to understand their lives, their motivations, the resources they use, and their communities. Results and responses were eye-opening and we created a website—extremelearners.iftf.org—to share their stories. In the year ahead, we will dive deeper into their world. We will conduct ethnographies of a wide range of extreme learners to understand their relationships, activities, tools, and inspirations. And we will develop insights that policymakers, learners, innovators, teachers, and administrators can use to help prepare for the future.

Extreme learners are currently at the fringes of the educational landscape. But they are illuminating the path for the rest of us. What they do, and how they do it, will challenge and reshape the future of education. Join us as we explore the future of learning and help create a new ecology of learning in which everyone can be an extreme learner.

Program Deliverables:

- › **ECOLOGIES OF EXTREME LEARNING MAP**—a synthesis of our ethnographic research on this cohort at the avant-garde of education
- › **EXTREME LEARNER PROFILES**—a summary of tools, resources, pathways, and practices each of the learners is using to share their learning journey
- › **EXTREME LEARNING SUMMIT**—based on the success of our previous learning workshops, we'll meet with an array of extreme learners, share innovative approaches and projects, and engage in a Foresight to Insight to Action exercise to convert future visions into actionable strategies

BECOME A SPONSOR TODAY

To find out more about IFTF's Future of Learning program and for details on Extreme Learners project sponsorship, contact:
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ABOUT THE INSTITUTE FOR THE FUTURE

IFTF is an independent, non-profit research organization based in Silicon Valley, California with a 45-year track record of pioneering tools and methods for building foresight. We work with a broad range of organizations to help them make better, more informed decisions about the future by providing the foresight to create insights that lead to action.

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