Preface

If you are reading this book you may or may not be aware that there is a virtual sea of instruction and help documentation freely available online to assist a beginner straight through to seasoned guru build and/or improve a Web site, Web app, or native mobile device app. To be clear, this book is *not* one of those documents. If you need to know how to optimize your site for beautiful, responsiveness in a mobile environment, how to resize a jpg, or how to secure your site from SQL injections, the help you need is out there on the Web and often times in many forms, but this book is not one of those forms. This book talks about those things briefly because they are certainly integral parts of the anatomy of the existing Web ecosystem. But this book does not explain those technologies or techniques. It simply addresses them as part of the larger informational context. This book is not a how-to manual in any way, unless you consider ideas about how these technologies fit together and act on each other and their users to be "how-to." Of course, there would be nothing wrong with that approach. In fact, often times, I take that approach myself. However, in brief, this book goes further in working to establish an early, comprehensive view of the basic, important nodes of Web interface development within the greater context of real world human–computer interaction issues.

In this current beta release, this book's primary role is as a companion text to the IST250 course offered by the College of Information Sciences and Technology at The Pennsylvania State University, however, you certainly do not need to be enrolled in the class in order to find value in the book's message. The technologies mentioned above, along with many others, are the technical basis of a basic Web instance and are covered thoroughly in IST250 during the semester. This book does not duplicate that course material as much as it points to those technologies and illustrates how they work together, and work with us, the users. The roles that these technologies now play in our lives cause bigger questions to arise. This book is concerned with those questions. In *Image*, *Meaning*, *Text*, Roland Barthes points out the difference between a *denoted* message and a *connoted* message. Barthes showed us that when a photograph is shown to a viewer there is a signifier involved from which the viewer finds the signified, that is, the denoted message, the plain message, the simple message, the message that is contained within the image alone. In other words, when a person looks at a photograph, they may find

some meaning there. When the same person looks at the same photograph, but this time the image is within a context, that is, a newspaper page, for example, with a headline, a caption, story text, and maybe even an advertisement or two or three running adjacent to the image, a different meaning may come about for the viewer than when the image was seen on its own. This is what Barthes termed the connoted message. In our rich information landscape, connoted messages are everywhere. They are all over the Web causing high beta brain waves, waves associated with decision-making and high mental simulation. This is the condition of our world today and, for good or ill, it is only going to increase. So, we must be aware of it and do our best to understand it.

It is the aim of this book to broaden your view of what the Web really is. The hope is that perhaps in a slightly less immediate kind of way, this book will help you build, or at least contribute to, a better Web ecosystem. This book is just as important to shaping a healthy future as it is about what you can to right now toward that goal. If you are interested in taking part in the progression of a sustainable Web ecosystem, then please read on to find out how to become an active participant.