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Book Review: Designing Information Literacy Instruction: The Teaching Tripod Approach

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DESIGNING INFORMATION
LITERACY INSTRUCTION: THE
TEACHING TRIPOD
APPROACH

by Joan R. Kaplowitz

Reviewed by
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In Joan Kaplowitz's newest book for instruction librarians, she explores several instructional design (ID) approaches and relates them to designing information literacy instruction through her *Teaching Tripod* approach. In keeping with sound ID practices, she begins with a chapter about why ID should be important to librarian instructors. She goes on to describe her Teaching Tripod approach and related ID practices: conducting needs assessments, developing expected learning outcomes, selecting instructional methods, assessment, and sequencing instruction. As a bonus, Kaplowitz concludes with a chapter about planning marketing, preparing instructional materials, designing instructional space, and ideas to help librarians prepare to teach. Important ID models are infused throughout the book, along with ample opportunity for the reader to reflect on their own practice and their intentions for future instruction. It is

important to note that while Kaplowitz briefly mentions considerations for delivering instruction in online or blended environments, the focus of this book is on designing in-person instruction.

At the heart of the book is Kaplowitz's Teaching Tripod approach (chapters 3-7), which offers a framework to help instruction librarians incorporate ID practices into their workshop or course design. The Teaching Tripod "concentrates on the link between expected learning outcomes (ELOs), learning activities, and assessment" (p. 32). Kaplowitz describes each of these components in detail and demonstrates how they work together to support effective workshops or courses. She presents this information in a practical way, providing just enough instructional design background for librarians to use in planning without feeling overwhelmed. For example, Kaplowitz suggests conducting needs assessment and gap analysis before writing ELOs. While these practices may seem difficult, she includes real-world ideas for how instruction librarians can use these strategies in their work. To write ELOs, Kaplowitz turns to a popular ID model called the *ABCD* formula for writing objectives. This model helps instructors craft an ELO that considers their learner *audience*, the *behavior(s)* that the instructor wishes to observe in learners as a result of instruction, the *conditions* that must be in place, and to what *degree* a learner must accomplish the behavior in order for the

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outcome to be achieved. Kaplowitz also discusses considerations when selecting various types of learning activities, including lecture or demonstration, structured question and answer, discussion, hands-on practice, collaborative group work, and reflection. In addition to addressing assessment theories and practices with which seasoned instruction librarians may already be familiar (e.g. formative and summative assessment, types of assessment tools, and types of survey questions), Kaplowitz draws the reader's attention to the Kirkpatrick Model, which is well-regarded among instructional designers in all types of organizational settings. This model challenges instructors to evaluate or assess at four levels: reaction, learning, behavior, and results.

In chapter 8, Kaplowitz brings together the ideas that she presents throughout the book, with a brief discussion of additional important ID considerations. These include the impact of prior knowledge (what the learner knows *before* instruction) and cognitive load (how short and long-term memory impact how much learners can remember); the chunking and pacing of information; capturing learner motivation using the *ARCS* model (gain the learner's *attention*, establish *relevance*, and inspire learner *confidence* and *satisfaction*); sequencing instruction with Gagne's Nine Events of Instruction; and ideas for organizing learning activities.

The book might benefit from the addition of a more comprehensive graphic to illustrate the Teaching Tripod. The existing graphic (Figure 5.1, p. 61) shows the relationship between the major Tripod elements, however, it would be useful to include in

this diagram an indication of where within the Tripod approach an instructor would use specific ID practices and models (for example, the ELOs element of the diagram could also include a reminder of the ABCD model). While Kaplowitz discusses throughout the book how various ID models and approaches are integrated into the Tripod, an expanded illustration would provide an easy reference tool for readers to consult when they are using the Tripod in their own practice.

This title adds to the relatively small but growing literature that connects the well-established field of ID with the work of instruction librarians. Many instruction librarians lack formal training in teaching and must rely on professional development opportunities and on-the-job training to acquire the skills and knowledge they need to design and deliver instruction effectively. This book will support their learning and Kaplowitz's conversational tone makes this text especially accessible to readers new to ID. Worksheets throughout provide a refreshing opportunity for reflection and planning (and will be appreciated by instruction coordinators). A short bibliography at the end of each chapter points to relevant resources and a concluding, annotated bibliography, organized by topic, gives suggestions for additional reading. *Designing Information Literacy Instruction: The Teaching Tripod Approach* provides an excellent primer for instruction librarians, novice and experienced, on incorporating instructional design theories and approaches into instruction and planning.

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