

6-25-2015

Book Review: The One-Shot Library Instruction Survival Guide

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Recommended Citation

Canzoneri, B. R. (2015). Book Review: The One-Shot Library Instruction Survival Guide. *Communications in Information Literacy*, 9 (1), 99-100. <https://doi.org/10.15760/comminfolit.2015.9.1.182>

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THE ONE-SHOT LIBRARY INSTRUCTION SURVIVAL GUIDE

by Heidi E. Buchanan & Beth A.
McDonough

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The One-Shot Library Instruction Survival Guide is a useful handbook that addresses how academic librarians may thrive—and not just survive—when charged with teaching a stand-alone library instruction session, commonly referred to as the *one-shot*. Authors Heidi Buchanan and Beth McDonough bring more than 30 years of combined experience and knowledge to this seven-chapter book that is filled with practical advice for delivering effective instruction within the constraints of a single session. “We wrote the book that we wish we had read in our first year of teaching,” (p. 4) say the authors in the first chapter, “They Never Told Me This in Library School.” With that purpose in mind, Buchanan and McDonough provide recommendations for tackling common issues, such as how to communicate and collaborate effectively with faculty; how to achieve success regardless of whether your class takes place online, or in a large

auditorium, or without student access to computers; how to create engaging activities that meet students at their point of need; and how to design, conduct, and utilize effective assessments.

The One-Shot Library Instruction Survival Guide is a compact 136 pages, organized to facilitate a quick, easy read. The authors employ sidebars throughout, which highlight key ideas and provide useful tips to help you get started or reignite your teaching. You’ll find examples of documented successes and failures from one-shot instruction sessions, talking points for connecting with faculty, and resources for instructional strategies and techniques. In the chapter, “How Will I Cover Everything,” the authors caution against trying to fit too much information into a one-shot session. They emphasize that for library instruction to facilitate an authentic learning experience, teaching librarians must “ditch the demo,” (p. 23) “lose the script,” (p. 28) and focus on concepts rather than tools. In other words, it’s not *what* resources can you demonstrate in an hour but rather which essential concepts you can impart and students can grasp. Buchanan and McDonough also address typical stumbling blocks in the provision of effective library instruction, such as how to teach Web as compared to database searching, information formats, and authority.

Librarians will find in this *Guide* numerous strategies for engaging students in active

Communications in INFORMATION LITERACY

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learning. The chapter, “How Do I Get Them to Pay Attention” explores activities ranging from the quick and easy fishbowl and think-pair-share exercises, to the more complex role-play and jigsaw techniques. Buchanan and McDonough also offer strategies to employ in the event that all does not go as planned, suggesting ideas for working through common classroom mishaps such as running out of time or handling a disruptive student.

Published: Chicago, IL: ALA Editions, 2014.

The book closes with suggestions for honestly reflecting on your personal instructional style and ways through which to grow your overall approach to teaching information literacy. As time constraints can be a major obstacle to effective teaching and learning within the one-shot format, the authors list ways for librarians to go beyond this format and work to integrate library instruction into curricula. Rounding out the book is a wonderful bibliography that lists more than 100 additional resources for improving various aspects of information literacy instruction.

Although *The One-Shot Library Instruction Survival Guide* offers little to actually advance the practice of library instruction, I highly recommended this title as a solid text for any academic librarian who is working with faculty and looking for better ways to address information literacy concepts within the constraints of a single instruction session. The book is a valuable guide to meeting the challenges inherent in teaching the one-shot, addressing all of the basics and pointing the reader to additional resources. Buchanan and McDonough have authored a must-read for rookie instruction librarians and a good refresher text for one-shot veterans.