

12-15-2022

## Review: Online Instruction: A Practical Guide for Librarians by Emily Mroczek

Monica Babaian

Houston Community College System, monica.babaian@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/comminfolit>



Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#), and the [Information Literacy Commons](#)

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

---

### Recommended Citation

Babaian, M. (2022). Review: Online Instruction: A Practical Guide for Librarians by Emily Mroczek. *Communications in Information Literacy*, 16 (2), 204-208. <https://doi.org/10.15760/comminfolit.2022.16.2.7>

This open access Book Review is distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License \(CC BY-NC-SA 4.0\)](#). All documents in PDXScholar should meet [accessibility standards](#). If we can make this document more accessible to you, [contact our team](#).

## **Review: *Online Instruction: A Practical Guide for Librarians,* by Emily Mroczek**

Reviewed by Monica Babaian, Houston Community College System

### Abstract

Review of Mroczek, E. (2022). *Online instruction: A practical guide for librarians*. Rowman & Littlefield.

*Keywords:* book review, online instruction, Online Instruction: A Practical Guide for Librarians (book)

### ***Book Reviews* edited by Jennifer Joe**

Babaian, M. (2022). Review of the book *Online instruction: A practical guide for librarians*, by Emily Mroczek. *Communications in Information Literacy*, 16(2), 204–208

Copyright for articles published in *Communications in Information Literacy* is retained by the author(s). Author(s) also extend to *Communications in Information Literacy* the right to redistribute this article via other scholarly resources and bibliographic databases. This extension allows the authors' copyrighted content to be included in some databases that are distributed and maintained by for-profit companies. All other rights of redistribution are licensed by *Communications in Information Literacy* under Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0).

## **Review: *Online Instruction: A Practical Guide for Librarians*, by Emily Mroczek**

The COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact on educational practices, as it required educational institutions, including libraries, to pivot from face-to-face interactions to online instruction practically overnight. Emily Mroczek, a freelance children's librarian in the Chicago area, wrote *Online Instruction: A Practical Guide for Librarians* to help librarians navigate the recent changes in instruction. Mroczek's authority on the topic stems from her work as a technical assistant for online classes as a graduate student and her experiences as an online student. As a children's librarian, Mroczek was responsible for incorporating technology into children's services programming by using iPads and Early Literacy Stations™.

What separates Mroczek's book from others on the same topic is that her book takes a broad approach to online instruction, intending to help librarians regardless of the nature of their library. Mroczek explains that online instruction can range from formal instruction, online office hours on Zoom or Microsoft Teams, to a story time program streamed on YouTube, and perhaps even reference services via online chat. With this broad definition in mind, one could argue that many librarians have been engaged in online instruction well before the pandemic without even knowing it. Throughout the book, Mroczek uses tables and illustrations to emphasize her arguments, highlights case studies in gray boxes, outlines the key points at the end of each chapter, and provides suggestions for further reading. The author encourages readers to take a practical approach to the book by skimming and taking what they need from it rather than reading it in order from start to finish, thus saving time and reducing stress for many busy librarians.

Mroczek starts the book by highlighting how the changes that came about during the pandemic are not temporary, and indeed, librarians from all types of institutions must accept that the changes in how librarians provide services are likely to stay. The book has eleven chapters with the first four laying the groundwork for online instruction, covering its history, resources for getting started in online instruction, pedagogy, setting policies and behavior expectations for online instruction, and the intricacies of running a digital learning program. Chapters 5 through 8 cover building community through online instruction while

the remaining chapters discuss legal concerns, accessibility issues, and steps for getting started with online instruction.

Chapter 1 introduces readers to several key terms used in relation to online instruction and lists several ways in which libraries engage in online instruction like online degrees and continuing education opportunities, online K-12 public schools, preschool programs, and conferences. Mroczek then goes on to discuss benefits and challenges to virtual instruction. The benefits include saving time, materials, and physical space. It should be noted that while online instruction can save librarians time by storing materials in one central location via a Learning Management System (LMS), like Canvas or Blackboard, there is a substantial investment of one's time getting the tools and content sorted at the beginning. Some of the challenges involved with online instruction include connectivity issues, how quickly technology evolves, lower completion rates, and a lack of student focus and engagement. Mroczek recommends librarians pick one platform for all lessons rather than require patrons or students to learn how to navigate several websites.

In the second chapter, Mroczek briefly focuses on traditional pedagogies, such as Bloom's taxonomy, Maslow's hierarchy of needs, and constructivism, and the three types of classroom presence—social, teaching, and cognitive—within the context of digital instruction. The author closes the chapter with the key point that librarians are already versed in these pedagogies and are now learning to transfer these skills to an online environment.

Chapter 3 addresses establishing policies and procedures to help create “a sense of calm and community” (p. 25). The author states that these policies and procedures should be in one easily accessible location for all learners to refer to. Any set of policies and procedures needs to take security into consideration, especially if the participants are children. For example, librarians should make sure participants know to turn off the video camera if there is some sort of distraction happening in the background. In addition, librarians should be comfortable with cutting off the mic of anyone who creates a distraction in the virtual learning space, as many learned during the “Zoom bombing” trend that internet trolls engaged in early in the pandemic.

Chapter 4 explores various types of online programs that librarians can provide, such as book clubs, webinars, story times and early childhood programs, demonstrations, meetings, school-age programs, recorded videos, one-on-one instruction, and social media learning networks. The author recommends addressing technical issues at the start of an online

program so that participants can be prepared to deal with any issues that might arise during the lesson or program. The rest of the chapter discusses online instruction methods including asynchronous and synchronous learning (which were briefly discussed in Chapter 1), the flipped classroom model, and various aspects of online courses such as posting syllabi, taking attendance, and limiting distractions.

Chapter 5 focuses on building communities, noting that people are more likely to participate in a welcoming environment. Librarians should pay particular attention to building and maintaining a sense of community in the online world. Some of the activities suggested for building communities are using polls and choice boards, surveys to gauge patron background knowledge, and simply getting to know attendees by talking to them.

Finding the right tools for online instruction can be intimidating, especially if a librarian is new to this practice. Chapter 6 describes several popular learning management systems (LMS) that librarians can use to engage patrons. Some librarians at public schools and colleges might not have a choice of LMS as their institution has made that decision for them already. Nonetheless, this chapter provides a succinct introduction to various platforms such as Canvas, Google Classroom, Moodle, and Blackboard. Screenshots of several LMS dashboards accompany the text in this chapter. Cisco Webex, Microsoft Teams, GoTo Meetings, and several other video conferencing tools are also addressed in this chapter. The information in this chapter prepares librarians to participate in discussions about which video conferencing tool is most appropriate for their programming needs.

Chapter 7 focuses specifically on Zoom because it has emerged as one of the most trusted platforms for videoconferencing, despite Zoom bombing. The chapter gives a detailed introduction to Zoom's tools, explaining how to create or join a meeting, how to change the meeting settings, how to record a meeting, and how to send public and private messages using the chat feature.

In the next chapter, Mroczek outlines various types of digital tools available to supplement instruction and reminds librarians to evaluate tools for their usefulness. Digital resources should enhance online instruction, not make it confusing for patrons to navigate. Some of the resources Mroczek recommends are Chrome extensions, screen readers, content curation websites, and form builders. In Chapter 9, the author explains the difference between Fair Use and Public Domain as well as Creative Commons and Open Educational

Resources. The author has included a list of legal terms and definitions at the end of the chapter to help librarians understand copyright laws.

Chapter 10 tackles the importance of accessibility for patrons. When planning for online instruction, librarians must consider how patrons with visual, auditory, mobility, and/or cognitive disabilities experience the online environment. The author lists four websites that can help evaluate the accessibility of websites and digital tools.

Finally, in Chapter 11, Mroczek closes the book with a reminder that librarians need to stay relevant by keeping up with changes in technology. In addition, the chapter includes a list of actionable steps for librarians who are new to online instruction and need some direction on where to get started.

While Mroczek succeeds in providing a practical and comprehensive guide to online instruction, the book does have one important limitation. Most of the case studies in the book are from public librarians; there are very few stories from librarians working in K-12 institutions, colleges and universities, and special collections libraries. A wider variety of institutions represented in the case studies would support the claim that this book is not just for one or two types of libraries. Nevertheless, this book is beneficial to any librarian who wants to provide online instruction for patrons but is not sure where to start.