

and the usefulness of such a tool for instruction is obvious. Clearly, multimedia can be seen as an important aid in designing future instruction and not the reverse, as has been the case in the early years.

In this reviewer's opinion, the only shortcoming of this book can be attributed to the organization of the chapters. A careful examination of the Table of Contents may be required in order to plan the sequence in which the various topics and perspectives will be addressed. As a swimming instructor might warn: "Don't attempt to get in too deep, too early!" Specifically some of the later chapters could be rearranged to follow a more logical progression. Related topics sometimes seem to be separated by unrelated topics.

In conclusion, Multimedia for Learning is certainly a must for those unfamiliar with multimedia and the latest computer hardware/software, but because of its broad coverage and up-to-datedness it will suit pioneers as well.

REVIEWER

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Distance Education: A Practical Guide. Barry Willis (138 p). New Jersey: Educational Technology Publications, 1993. ISBN 0-87778-255-5 (\$29.95 USA).

Reviewed by Mary F. Kennedy

The Preface of Barry Willis' latest book on distance education emphasizes its practical nature, and its direction at two particular audiences - faculty and administrators. *Distance Education: A Practical Guide* is certainly not intended for educational technologists, or for those with considerable experience working in a distance education setting. This slim book is written at a very basic, extremely practical level.

That being said, *Distance Education: A Practical Guide* is well done. It uses clear and non-jargonistic language, and definitions of new or ambivalent terms are included in the text, as well as in the Glossary at the back. It is attractively laid out with an uncluttered, non-threatening appearance, achieved by the insertion of numerous sub-headings and many sections of prose in list form. It makes frequent use of subheadings in question form, which, despite mixed research findings regarding specific learning results, seem to be very appealing to readers.

Distance Education: A Practical Guide has eight sections or chapters. Section 1 is the introduction and overview, presenting a definition of

distance education and arguments for using distance education, with a very brief summary of its historical roots. Section 2 gives a brief overview of research in distance education, which focuses on the areas commonly studied but is scant on findings. Commonly investigated areas such as attrition rates, student motivation, achievement rates, cost-effectiveness, and cognitive styles are summarized. The latter half of this section emphasizes that there is no one best means in terms of distance education, emphasizing that content presentation, or instructional design, rather than delivery system is the key variable. Willis states "Effective distance learning is more the result of preparation than innovation" (p. 22).

Section 3 identifies the key players in distance education and describes very briefly their roles: the students, the faculty, the facilitators, the support staff, and the administrators. There is one proviso worthy of note here -Willis warns that administrators should remain involved, so that growth in the technical infrastructure does not weaken the academic focus.

Sections 4 and 5 focus on faculty development and the instructional development process. He takes a typical approach to inservice for faculty, intimating that in the case of distance education, it should lead to a change in the way the instructor sees the learner. Also noted is the need for institutions to recognize the legitimacy of distance education teaching and reward such efforts. This I perceive as wishful thinking, having worked in a university setting for the past fourteen years, where despite lip service not even face-to-face teaching is valued in terms of the reward system. Section 5 uses a generic instructional development model to emphasize the process of designing instruction from start to finish. One interesting subsection is the focus on qualitative methods in evaluating instruction.

Section 6 deals in a very non-technological way with the tools and technologies of distance education. Willis categorizes these under the headings of voice tools (audio), video tools, data tools (computers), and print tools, and warns throughout against selecting these tools prematurely. He also emphasizes the technological incompatibility of computer hardware/software and ensuing problems.

Sections 7 and 8 are very brief, and they give the impression of not quite knowing where to go from here. Section 7 presents, in five pages, a summary of generalized teaching strategies. There is nothing new, or nothing particularly applicable to distance education in the list. Section 8 looks briefly at the future of distance education and suggests we look to the twenty-five year paper trail at the Open University and Athabasca University to learn from the experience of others.

I found it very difficult to review this book. I was a reader with approximately thirty years of experience in developing instruction, with graduate degrees in educational technology, and with considerable experience working in the distance education milieu. I tried to determine its value to my students as I read (they are mostly experienced teachers enrolled in a Master of Education Program in Educational Technology).

I'm sure that it is too basic to be of any value to them. I therefore must assume that the audience for this book is the novice distance educator with no background in educational technology and not much background in general education/teaching studies. Given that many who eventually work in distance education management and/or course design fit that description, I know there are readers who would find this book worthwhile.

REVIEWER

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