

Book Reviews

Diane P. Janes, Editor

Preparing Instructional Text — Document Design Using Desktop Publishing by Earl Misanchuk. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Educational Technology Publications, 1992. ISBN 0-87778-241-5 (US \$32.95; CDN \$42.18)

Reviewed by William R. Hanson

Earl Misanchuk has crafted a useful guidebook for those who are serious about designing and producing printed instructional materials. Misanchuk states up front that this book is for you, if you are an educator who has primary responsibility for the preparation of instructional materials using desk-top publishing techniques, and if you want to produce effective instructional materials, not necessarily win awards. This book is for a very specific audience, but for the right person it is a valuable resource.

In setting a context for the semi-technical guidance to come, Misanchuk makes two very important points. The first is, that this book was necessary because of the importance of established research to document design. He distinguishes between intuitive, "trusting your tummy" design and research-based design. The book has extensive reference to research that says something works and something else doesn't work as well. He also points out design issues that are unresolved by research and open for further investigation.

Misanchuk's second point is the distinction between desk-top publishing (DTP) and desk-top publishing for instruction. DTP for instruction is different from DTP for advertisements, magazines or newsletters. This book focuses on instruction.

The operating system platform that Misanchuk uses for illustration or examples is Macintosh, but his instructions translate easily into other operating systems and applications. Chapter 3, "Using the Computer Wisely," is a useful treatment of items like dashes, quotation marks and word wraps,

and utilities like scrapbooks, style sheets and outliners. This chapter is made interesting by contrasting how it was with the typewriter to how it is now, with the computer.

Any competent graphic designer would not need Chapter 4, "Initial Design Considerations," but the average teacher, instructor or professor venturing into this field will benefit from this research-based advice. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 deal with techniques like access structure (pagination, headings and indexes, orienting devices) and the obligatory fonts, type, leading and kerning. Misanchuk provides clear explanations of what these are and how to use them effectively in instructional materials.

Chapter 8 tackles a primary issue in graphic design, the principles of page layout. The author handles this potentially huge issue clearly and concisely. He uses the words simplicity, consistency, balance, symmetry, unity, harmony and rhythm, to give page layout life and meaning to the reader. Chapter 9 (Tables) and Chapter 10 (Data Graphics) offer solid, research based advice on what works and what works better.

The final Chapter 11, "Illustrations and Other Graphics," was the most fascinating and frustrating to this reviewer. It was fascinating because of Misanchuk's connection between illustrations and different types of learning. This heavily referenced section is a strong blend of instruction, visual literacy and the subtle impact of document design. This chapter was frustrating because of the absence of graphic examples in what is a rich opportunity to save a thousand words. This omission perhaps reflects Misanchuk's understanding of his audience. Educators who have hands-on access to DTP for instruction do not have access to sophisticated illustration applications. Well illustrated, this chapter could have saved several thousand words, but then it would only whet the appetite of a reader who does not have, or who could not operate, Adobe Illustrator on a Mac. The audience this book is published for is a selective, but important group of educators.

Earl Misanchuk practices what he professes. *Preparing Instructional Text* is a book that demonstrates the principles, techniques and technology application the author is advocating. When you read it, you notice that the presentation is what you are reading about. (It is Bookman font, ragged right justification and easy to read and refer to.) The research emphasis is strongly supported by extensive author references at the end of each chapter and the book. It also includes an author and subject index.

REVIEWER

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