

# Book Reviews

*Interactive Video* by R. Schwier, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Educational Technology Publications, 1987.

*Reviewed by Som Naidu*

Interactive video (IV) is a fairly recent application of educational communications technology and currently only a handful of instructional developers seem to know exactly where and how to begin its development. This book is a guide and reference for the majority of such instructional developers, and especially the self-styled ones, who are interested in developing an IV application.

As such it is a book for practitioners. It is an attempt to pull together in one place, and in an easily accessible form, the basics that need to be known by anyone venturing into the development of IV software (*cf.* Laurillard, 1987; Parsloe, 1983; Floyd & Floyd, 1982). With this it offers, as 'tidbits' (p.169-202), a small list of useful references organised under the following categories:

- a) general interest (p. 175);
- b) designing interactive video (p. 178);
- c) hardware, software and production (p. 180); and
- d) applications, case studies and research (p. 181).

Another useful 'tidbit' is a list of providers of videodisc manufacturing services along with addresses of their representatives (p. 186-88). These will be handy as it is certain, that in order to be able to get on with their task, most instructional designers, video producers, editors and computer programmers will be looking for more beyond that which this book is able to offer.

The author, a practising instructional developer, writes with concern and empathy for the needs of both the novice instructional developer as well as the seasoned veteran. To the novice he offers a holding hand and a willingness to walk him from the initial design stage through to the final review. The seasoned instructional developer is left on his own, free to wander about and

use the material as necessary — as the blurb says — "to leap over unwanted material, take brief excursions into peripheral areas and review notions which were previously missed." Each chapter in the book begins with a topic menu with appropriate page numbers. Within the text the reader encounters suitable branches to different parts of the book with advice on their relevance and use as necessary. Frequently along the way there are also suitable reminders to the reader of the current topic and the next topic menu. This facility is perhaps the most interesting feature in the presentation of the book. Not only does it impress upon its reader the usefulness of designing interactive instruction, be it printed or other (to cater for differences in readership capability and interests), but also the need to 'think interactively' (p. ix) as well as the look of things (literally) to come in their own IV treatments.

Interactivity in instructional environments then, is the main message of the medium and the epitome of its treatment in this book. With it is the recognition of the need to individualise instruction and, for both the designer/developer and the learner/client to think interactively, that is non-linearly (p. 29). In addition to this is the message that, as an instructional application, IV offers tremendous design opportunities for eliciting the best effort from each individual irrespective of his level of capability, something not as easily achievable through most other instructional means.

This book is about harnessing that powerful and impressive technology, and harnessing it for people, a point which the author himself belabours. His purpose is to answer the most basic of the designer's questions—questions such as where does one start, with what, whom, and how? How does an instructional developer take an idea/problem and turn it into an interactive video treatment? What are the processes, likely hazards, and requirements?

In pursuing these very basic concerns and questions the volume may seem, to some of us, rather too simplistic a treatment and more so now than two years ago when the book first appeared. However, this ought not to be seen as a weakness of the treatment of the subject in the book as readers need not dwell on sections of the book already familiar to them. Be assured that the book is a lot more than a cook book. For instance there is, in several of its chapters, a very thorough and detailed coverage of content, procedures and relevant technical terminology. These include chapters 6, 7, and 8 in particular, which deal with:

- a) preparing for mastering: Where production meets post-production;
- b) premaster/Edit master, and;
- c) submission, review and approval.

This is a book intended for use by instructional designers who are, more often than not, generalists by training, and unskilled in the development of an IV treatment. Its strength lies in the coverage of the whole developmental process, from the identification of a training problem worthy of IV treatment, the collection of source media, design of computer-assisted instruction through

to premastering and mastering—the whole works—a rather large task for any volume of its size (202 pages). As a result some instructional developers may find 30 pages of text on preparing for premastering and 15 pages on premastering and editing master rather skimpy. It is certain, however, that most will find themselves a lot more knowledgeable than before reading this book on the relevant processes, and definitely much better placed to relate more meaningfully with other members of their team.

That then, is the other not so hidden message of the discussion in this book—that the development of an IV treatment is a team effort, requiring the co-existence of at least three fairly specialised skills. These are video production and editing skills, computer programming skills and instructional design skills. This volume does not pretend to have the last word on any one of these integral components of IV development. And, neither does it pontificate about the suitability of particular instructional design models.

#### REFERENCES

- Floyd, S., & Floyd, B. (eds.). (1982). *Handbook for interactive video*. White Plains, NY: Knowledge Industry Publications, Inc.
- Laurillard, D. (1987). *Interactive media: Working methods and practical applications*. Chichester, West Sussex: Ellis Horwood Limited.
- Parsloe, E. (1983). *Interactive video*. Sigma Technical Press.

#### REVIEWER

Som Naidu is a Ph.D. candidate in Educational Technology at Concordia University, Montreal, Quebec.

*Using Video: Interactive and Linear Designs* by Joseph W. Arwady and Diane M. Gayeski, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Educational Technology Publications, 1989.

*Reviewed by E. Lynn Oliver*

"Lights, camera, action!" Television, as a medium for delivering instruction, is alluring. Yet, developing strategies that incorporate video can be perilous. That's why this book will be a boon. It offers the instructional designer a hefty grab-bag of field-tested techniques intended to maximize the benefits of the video medium.