Creating Online Learning Experiences: A Brief Guide to Online Courses, from Small and Private to Massive and Open, 2018. By Matt Crosslin et al. Mavs Open Press. 214 pages. ISBN: 0989887812 (print version)

Créer des expériences d'apprentissage en ligne: un bref guide des cours en ligne, de petits et privés à massifs et ouverts, 2018. Par Matt Crosslin et al. Mavs Open Press. 214 pages. ISBN: 0989887812 (version imprimée)

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This book is an expanded version of a guide originally written by the lead author, Matt Crosslin, to serve as a resource for faculty. The book shares lessons learned as the author designed Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and other online courses for the now defunct LINK Research Lab at the University of Texas Arlington. At the time of writing the book, Crosslin worked as a Learning Innovation Researcher at the LINK Lab. This expanded version of the book is an Open Educational Resource (OER) (also available in print) with contributions from other authors or contributors that bring diverse perspectives to reach a wider audience. The information and advice in this book is firmly rooted in the experiences of the contributors developing successful online courses, and the ultimate goal is to "*provide clarity about many of the steps required to propose and design a course, describe the resources needed, and to explain the roles of stakeholders*" (p.1).

The intended audience for this book is mostly instructors, but there are significant details, examples, and resources that would also make this book useful for instructional designers or anyone developing an online course or MOOC.

Each chapter of the book addresses an important aspect of online course development. The authors state that they organized the chapters in a logical order for those who want to read from start to finish, but the chapters can also serve as stand-alone sections for those who are looking for information and guidance on specific topics. Depending on your role or the approach to the course, there may be chapters that are more relevant than others. It is worth noting that the first half of the book follows a fairly logical sequence in the planning of a course while some of the later chapters could be accessed on an as-needed basis. These include chapters on social media, marketing, and creating effective videos. The chapter on advanced online course design provides examples and food for thought on more innovative course structures, but the development of such courses is beyond the

scope of the book. Finally, the chapter on mindfulness in online courses is a thoughtful component not typically included in other books on this topic.

The authors begin by discussing the shift in thinking about the design of online instruction and courses into learning experiences, and one of the goals of the book is for readers to think in these terms if they have not already. The first couple of chapters introduce theories and research evidence to help inform the overall approach one would use in designing an online course while later chapters delve into the logistics of course design.

Because the orginal intent of the book was to serve as a guide for MOOCs in the pre-pandemic context, the main drawback of this book is that authors are working on the assumption that instructors creating courses will be working with a development team and – by extension – seeking to create a high production value course. For anyone designing a course without a team, they advise them to go out and assemble one on their own. This may not always be possible or practical, especially in the pandemic context and beyond, where instructors are often developing online courses on their own or with very little support.

The primary strength of this book is in taking the reader through the steps and major considerations when developing an online course with an emphasis on making the course learner-centered with flexible pathways to achieving the course objectives. It focuses less on the actual design of individual elements of the course (i.e. objectives, learning activities) and more on important considerations and big-picture thinking. In addition to providing a framework for designing a course, this book provides guiding questions, checklists, decision points, and timelines. These tools will be very useful in helping select the appropriate technologies, platforms, and assessment types and provide items to keep in mind when designing to meet the needs of learners.

Overall, anyone developing any kind of online course, including those working without a production team, could benefit immensely from the structure this book provides to ensure careful planning at all stages of the development process.

Reference

Crosslin, M., Dellinger, J. T., Benham, B., Usman, B., Patterson, A., Semingson, P., Spann, C. A., Watkins, H. (2018). *Creating Online Experiences: A Brief Guide to Online Courses, from Small to Private to Massive and Open*. Mavs Open Press.

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