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Rev. of *Practical Pedagogy for Library Instructors: 17 Innovative Strategies to Improve Student Learning*, eds. Douglas Cook and Ryan Sittler

Kelly Rhodes McBride

REVIEW

Practical Pedagogy for Library Instructors: 17 Innovative Strategies to Improve Student Learning. Eds. Douglas Cook and Ryan L. Sittler for the Association of College and Research Libraries. Chicago: American Library Association, 2008. 184 p. alk. paper, \$32 (ISBN 9780838984581). LC 2008-8219.

For instruction librarians, teaching is a major part of what we do as professionals. Unfortunately, educational theory and pedagogical practice is not a mainstay of the library science school curriculum. How then are librarians compensating for this gap in the knowledge base? Why should librarians care about pedagogy? What is the relationship between educational philosophy and instructional strategy? How can a fundamental grasp of educational theories and pedagogy result in improved teaching?

Editors Douglas Cook and Ryan L. Sittler, both academic librarians, pose these questions and many more in *Practical Pedagogy for Library Instructors: 17 Innovative Strategies to Improve Student Learning*. Cook and Sittler have put together a practical guide for librarians interested in examining the correlation between pedagogy, instructional strategy, and student learning. Librarians understand the importance of

providing quality information literacy instruction to students. A core element of designing an effective session is the identification and incorporation of appropriate student learning outcomes. The refrain “begin at the end” is a familiar one designed to remind librarians to keep in mind the end result of the session (that is, what we ultimately want students to learn). How many of us then spend time thinking about *how* the instructional strategy we choose impacts the success of the student learning outcomes we have *designed*?

The opening chapter of *Practical Pedagogy*, written by Cook, provides food for thought on *why* librarians should be concerned about pedagogy. Beginning with a very brief history of modern educational theory, Cook lays a foundation that is easy to understand. By way of introduction, the two learning models of direct instruction and student-centered learning are outlined as follows: 1) purpose of education; 2) basic principles of learning; 3) role of the student; 4) role of the educator; 5) types of instruction strategies; 6) examples for each learning model. By focusing on two learning models that represent two broad categories of pedagogy—Objectivist (direct instruction) and Constructivist (student-centered learning)—Cook keeps it simple. He states, “My primary emphasis is on providing a philosophical basis for you to reflect on the type of pedagogical strategy you would like to use in a particular teaching situation.” The inclusion of a table outlining the two learning models allows a quick orientation and is useful as a reference point for the rest of the book.

The remaining 17 chapters provide case studies exemplifying the two learning models—Direct Instruction (chapters 2–8) and Student-Centered Instruction (chapters 9–18). The chapters, all written by academic or community college librarians, present tried and true instructional methodologies built on a foundation of pedagogical theory. The instructional contexts run the gamut from one-shot sessions to the semester length for credit courses. The audience for these case studies reflects

the diversity of students that professional librarians often encounter, ranging from first-semester freshman, to international students, to graduate students.

What is most notable about *Practical Pedagogy* is the inclusion of both realistic and relevant information that can be immediately put into practice. Cook and Sittler have incorporated humor and produced a work that is actually fun and easy to read. Each chapter begins with a brief author abstract providing an overview of the instructional situation. The chapter outlines cover: 1) introduction; 2) instructional goals; 3) instructional strategy; 4) match of goals and strategy; 5) description of instruction session—*what actually happened*; 6) reflection on the instruction session—*lessons learned*; 7) application to other instructional sessions; 8) bibliography.

As a result of the chapter structuring, the reader can compare direct instruction cases and student-centered instruction cases and clearly see how these two very different educational theories have been incorporated in a variety of library instruction situations. The inclusion of the session description (in other words, what actually happened) and reflection (that is to say, lessons learned) is a reminder that *all* instructional sessions, even if they do not go as planned, offer an opportunity for growth and learning.

Although written for librarians, *Practical Pedagogy* is an excellent tool that provides a framework for how the deliberate incorporation of education theory and pedagogy can inform us on how our teaching impacts what students learn. Each of the instructional case studies discusses setting goals, learning outcomes, and designing assessment—all crucial elements in planning effective instruction. Written in a manner that is easy to read, the methods, ideas, and strategies included in *Practical Pedagogy* work and can be incorporated into your own instruction with little or no modifications.—*Kelly R. McBride, Appalachian State University.*