

Mattson, J., Lemmons, D. X., Linsinbigler, V., & Lowder, C.

(2025). *Instructional Design for Teaching Information Literacy Online: A Student-Centered Approach*. Association of College and Research Libraries.

ISBN: 979-8892556231; \$70; 272 pages

Penny Hecker, Southeastern Louisiana University



My personal instruction history attracted me to *Instructional Design for Teaching Information Literacy Online: A Student-Centered Approach*, a softcover book I discovered in the ALA store. In *Instructional Design*, the authors use the ADDIE instructional design model to structure the process as they discuss scalable, student-centered information literacy design. ADDIE stands for Analyze, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation. I remember discovering the ADDIE model, as well as the concept of User Experience (UX) design, during my early days of teaching an information literacy credit course at Southeastern Louisiana University. Instructional design approaches like ADDIE, whether for credit or one-shot academic library instruction, have long been utilized to teach information literacy.

Instructional Design comprises six main parts. Part I is titled “Foundational Knowledge” and the remaining five parts are named using the words of the ADDIE acronym (e.g., Part II is Analyze, Part III is Design, etc.). The six parts contain 18 chapters that provide learning activities and recommended resources included in the main text.

Although it doesn't have an index, which this reviewer would have appreciated, it does include appendices that provide a glossary, various design worksheets, and a lesson plan template.

To provide the missing pieces of the ADDIE model that may not address the diversity of online learners, the book covers the following design approaches:

- Universal Design for Learning (UDL) calls for multiple means of engagement, expression, and action in the learning environment.
- Community of Inquiry Model (COI) strives for deep, blended, collaborative learning experiences using the following elements: (a) Cognitive Presence, an instructor-facilitated motivation to engage learners cognitively via ongoing communication; (b) Social Presence which involves instructors and students learning more about each other as real people; and (c) Teaching Presence, a designing instruction and fostering learner-centered teaching.
- Asset-Based Pedagogy (ABP) embraces education that considers learners' diverse backgrounds and identities as assets or strengths in the classroom.
- Rapid Instructional Design (RID) attempts faster techniques when designing learning environments so that learners master knowledge and skills more swiftly and effectively.

In this book, RID is expressed in chapter insets called "Rapid ID" that offer suggestions on how to abbreviate certain steps in the process. In addition to the various RID insets, the authors also provide sidebars titled "Why This Matters." I found these two supplemental devices useful to complement the reader's understanding of the main

text with related content.

Instructional Design examines the learning theories of behaviorism, cognitivism, and constructivism to foster inclusive and supportive virtual classrooms. Further, the main benefit of these particular learning theories is their focus on learner engagement through centered teaching. An instructor-focused benefit of the theories is that they help you to recognize both intentional and unintentional teaching decisions that you make and how it may impact your students.

I appreciate that the authors bookend each chapter with learning outcomes and a “Prep Talk” (chapter introduction) as well as a “Post Talk” followed by “Critical Instruction Design Questions” (chapter wrap-up) which serves to close the chapter’s material and assist readers with *Instructional Design*’s learning activities. These are potentially useful to all types of librarian instructors, especially newer instructors.

Further, I connected with the following statements in Chapter 7’s “Student Learning Assessment” introduction because I know them to be true from my teaching perspective:

- “Student learning assessment is loved, hated, or completely ignored by instructors no matter the learning environment” (Mattson et al., 2025, p. 73).
- “Some instructors may have had negative experiences with assessment of student learning, whether it was used as a performance evaluation tool, felt like a quote to hit, or a task assigned by a supervisor without support” (p. 73).
- “Assessment as a routine instructional tool can ease the mental burden surrounding it as a task. It is only as complex as you make it” (p. 74).

- “Each learner grows at their own pace and being able to accomplish or pick up on a task faster than others does not always demonstrate higher levels of understanding of a topic” (p. 74).

Chapter 8 looks at how and when to present information for both synchronous and asynchronous courses by suggesting how to sequence instruction. Based on Robert Gagné’s educational theory, Nine Events of Instruction, the authors have trimmed the event to a total of four steps:

1. **Attracting the Learner’s Attention** by using an icebreaker (pre-test or class discussion) for synchronous courses and discussion forums for asynchronous courses.
2. **Guiding the Lesson** will be different depending on synchronous or asynchronous format. For synchronous courses, one suggestion is to outline the content to prepare learners for activities, as well as how to succeed in your course. For asynchronous courses, sequencing is also important due to the lack of real-time engagement, although the authors don’t offer any specific suggestions about lesson sequencing in the asynchronous environment. In my experience of information literacy teaching, many aspects of successful synchronous teaching may also be transferred to asynchronous teaching.
3. **Practice and Assessment** is an important step. Instructors need to be flexible and allow different learners to practice their exercises in different ways. The book suggests this because some students will want to practice throughout the module, or practice the lesson at the end, or maybe a combination of both.

4. **Providing Feedback** is most crucial because “True learning only happens when learners are able to improve” (Mattson et al., 2025, p. 90). Learners can improve if the feedback emphasizes good work as well as error correction. Take it from this reviewer who also instructs—feedback is vital, especially with an online asynchronous course!

Chapter 14 is one of my favorites because it discusses finding out who you are as an instructor and building your own online teaching style. This includes creating a teaching checklist:

Checklist for synchronous instructors

1. Double-check technology including sharing settings which allows students access or viewing or editing capabilities.
2. It’s a best practice to have documents and files already open before the session begins to save time. If something malfunctions, like a poll or quiz, have questions handy. The instructor asks the questions and learners type their answers in chat or a digital whiteboard.
3. Have an agenda or prepared script before leading the session so that you will know what to say but refrain from actually reading a script.
4. Wear comfortable clothes or clothing that enhances your confidence and have a beverage on hand to aid with speaking or to give you something to do while learners work on activities.
5. Don’t forget pen and paper for notes. The authors say physical note-taking for follow-up is easier than a notes app.

Checklist for asynchronous instructors

1. Check that your video content, especially embedded items, work.
2. Be sure to include necessary accessibility information like alt text, captions, transcripts.
3. Double-check that your links are all correct and working.
4. If you're settled in for a lengthy time of very focused feedback on discussion boards or student submissions, be sure to schedule yourself consistent breaks.

The authors suggest alternating twenty minutes of work time with a five-minute break. The brief breaks will serve to keep up the quality and relevance of the feedback for each unique learner.
5. Have items on hand for your comfort (sweater, beverage, snacks) so that you don't become distracted and lose focus.

Finally, remember that not knowing how to answer a student's question is okay because no instructor, student, or learning environment is perfect. A quality response may require more time or investigation. Explain this to the student and set a time when you will answer their question, perhaps via email, and follow through to be consistent for the student. Modeling consistency, clarity, and empathy in your instruction to undergraduates helps them to grow as learners and global citizens.

I will close out this review with a list of items I gathered from Chapter 15 that cover the importance of instructor empathy for learners:

- *Instructional Design* defines empathy as “the ability to understand that learners bring feelings, ideas, and knowledge to the classroom that help or hinder their

ability to learn” (Mattson et al., 2025, p. 182). When instructors recognize the lived experience of others, even if it challenges one’s ideas of how they should behave, it may also allow students to facilitate learning among their peers in the class because of the emotional resonance demonstrated by the instructor. Peer teaching, whether it happens naturally among students or orchestrated by a teacher, can be an effective method of instruction because they become active participants in their own learning.

- “Acknowledge how the skills learners already have can transfer to what is being taught. For example, researching products by reading consumer reviews can be compared to evaluating sources” (p. 184).
- Creating examples of correct responses is useful to help students privately gauge their own comprehension of the content during activities or assignments.
- Learners may not behave as expected or desired. Establishing rules of engagement for class discussions or discussion forum posts can help prevent such issues. In addition, assuming that mistaken behaviors arise from a place of lack of experience, misunderstanding, miscommunication, or some external issue or distraction can help mitigate frustration with negative behavior. (p. 189)

This reviewer recommends *Instructional Design for Teaching Information Literacy Online: A Student-Centered Approach* as a worthy addition to an academic library's LIS collection. Although its focus is the online classroom, it provides information that can benefit librarians in physical classrooms as well. Most of all, it can enhance the professional growth of both new and seasoned teaching librarians.