

Booth, Char. *Reflective Teaching, Effective Learning: Instructional Literacy for Library Educators*. Chicago: American Library Association, 2011. 180 pp. ISBN 9780838910528. Softcover, \$60.00

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I attended Immersion, ACRL's famous crash course of instructional design for academic librarians, in the summer of 2009. Char Booth, E-Learning librarian at the University of California, Berkeley, was one of the information literacy gurus cited in many spirited sessions about learning theory, instructional design, and personal authenticity, all designed to embolden us and fire our synapses as we re-tooled our instructional repertoires. When I saw her latest book, *Reflective Teaching, Effective Learning: Instructional Literacy for Library Educators* was available through the American Library Association e-Store, I recommended we purchase it for the Sims Library collection at Southeastern Louisiana University, and we now own a copy. No stranger to the world of publishing, Booth has produced quite a few worthy titles: *Informing Innovation: Tracking Student Interest in Emerging Library Technologies at Ohio University* (ACRL Digital Publications, 2009) and *Hope, Hype and VoIP: Riding the Library Technology Cycle* (ALA TechSource, 2010). Booth also writes about Library 2.0, instructional design, and technology in her popular blog, *info-mational*, at <http://www.infomational.com>.

In her introduction to *Reflective Teaching, Effective Learning*, aptly titled "In the Trenches," Booth describes what is probably a near universal situation for many

academic librarian-instructors, especially for those fresh out of library school: they are expected to take on a heavy instruction load with little to no public speaking experience, and not much knowledge, if any, of instructional theory or curriculum design. They know what they want students to learn, but are unsure how to successfully transfer their knowledge to bored undergraduates. Librarian-instructors may know much about information literacy, but most lack *instructional* literacy because as a group, we are not as systematically trained as other educators. If this situation sounds painfully familiar to you as you read this, you will value Booth's work. She had me at her introduction's opening sentence, "If I was called to librarianship, I was thrown into teaching."

Reflective Teaching, Effective Learning is divided into two parts. Part I, "Instructional Literacy," contains seven chapters exploring Booth's approaches to instructor development, reflective practice, collaboration, learning theories, instruction theories, teaching technologies, and instructional design. She delivers her ample knowledge of instructional design theory using uncluttered prose to assist readers in absorbing the heavier concepts of pedagogy. For example, Chapter 2, "Metacognition and Reflective Practice," despite its pedantic title, is a beneficial resource of strategies and observations to help instructors rethink shopworn teaching. Booth is artful in writing about instructional literacy but never tosses around technical jargon or buzzwords glibly. She writes of intentionality, a constructive self-awareness in teaching, and it is evident throughout her accessible approach to her subject.

In Chapter 5, "A Correction Course in Instructional Theory," Booth deftly grounds her audience in weighty instructional approaches such as constructivism, behaviorism, and cognitive theory. At the same time, she wryly acknowledges the

conventional wisdom among educators that some students know it all (or think they do); a portion of students know a fair amount but could stand to know more and some students know very little (or fear they do), while a number of students know nothing at all and are bored or frustrated. Regarding the diversity of student attitudes toward learning, Booth connects her readers to the underlying truth of how educators perceive what students know or think they know. She asks readers a complex question we're not always ready to explore: "How do I balance my instructional message between the know-it-alls and the know-next-to-nothings while engaging the know-somethings and resuscitating the don't-cares?" This is the hard work of teaching and learning.

The answer can be found in Part II, which is composed of five chapters to provide the reader with Booth's USER (Understand Structure Engage Reflect) method, her framework for library instructional design that is flexible and scalable. USER should be implemented in the following way: The **Understand** phase consists of (a) identifying a problem that instruction can solve and (b) analyzing the scenario to determine an effective solution. **Structure** is the step of creating targets in the form of goals, objectives, and outcomes. **Engage** is the point where an instructor designs the materials of learning and delivers the instruction product. **Reflect** is the final stage where one assesses the impact of the scenario by evaluating targets from the structure phase and how they might be revised or reused.

Booth describes USER as a streamlined version of ADDIE (Analyze Design Develop Implement Evaluate), a commonplace design thinking method of unknown origins among instructional designers. To understand this, think of USER as instructional scaffolding, a learner-focused framework for library instructional design that allows

instructors to adapt to diverse instructional scenarios. USER can help detailed-oriented librarians avoid over planning by creating reliable strategies and template objects that can be adjusted to each scenario. Thus, USER is suitable when librarian-instructors must quickly put together a relevant one-shot session for a discipline with which they are largely unfamiliar, or USER can assist in developing bigger, long-term instruction efforts like credit courses. Booth notes that USER is so multifaceted it was applied in the planning and writing of *Reflective Teaching, Effective Learning*.

Booth also mentions her admiration of a poster created by Nathan Sherman in 1937, for the Works Progress Administration, because she feels that its message, “Work with Care,” best reflects the design mindset of instructional literacy. Carefully and mindfully, Booth provides goals, summaries, reflection points, and graphics in all of the engaging chapters of *Reflective Teaching, Effective Learning*. Her Recommended Reading section is organized by topic headings, and she includes two appendices: Appendix A contains templates and learning documents, and Appendix B offers a portion of the verbatim responses Booth received from her 2009 Instructor Development Survey. Readers may find the survey fascinating because the responses probably echo their teaching experiences. Finally, she includes a glossary to consult if certain concepts are unclear in the text.

Booth closes her work by writing, “Developing instructional literacy is about bridging the distance between the motivation to teach and the motivation to learn, an ongoing challenge that moves you steadily toward greater instructional effectiveness.” If you are a librarian-instructor looking to revitalize your teaching, Booth’s intelligence, creativity, curiosity, and humanity will refresh and inspire you. I enthusiastically

recommend *Reflective Teaching, Effective Learning: Instructional Literacy for Library Educators* as a fundamental addition to an academic library's instructional design collection.