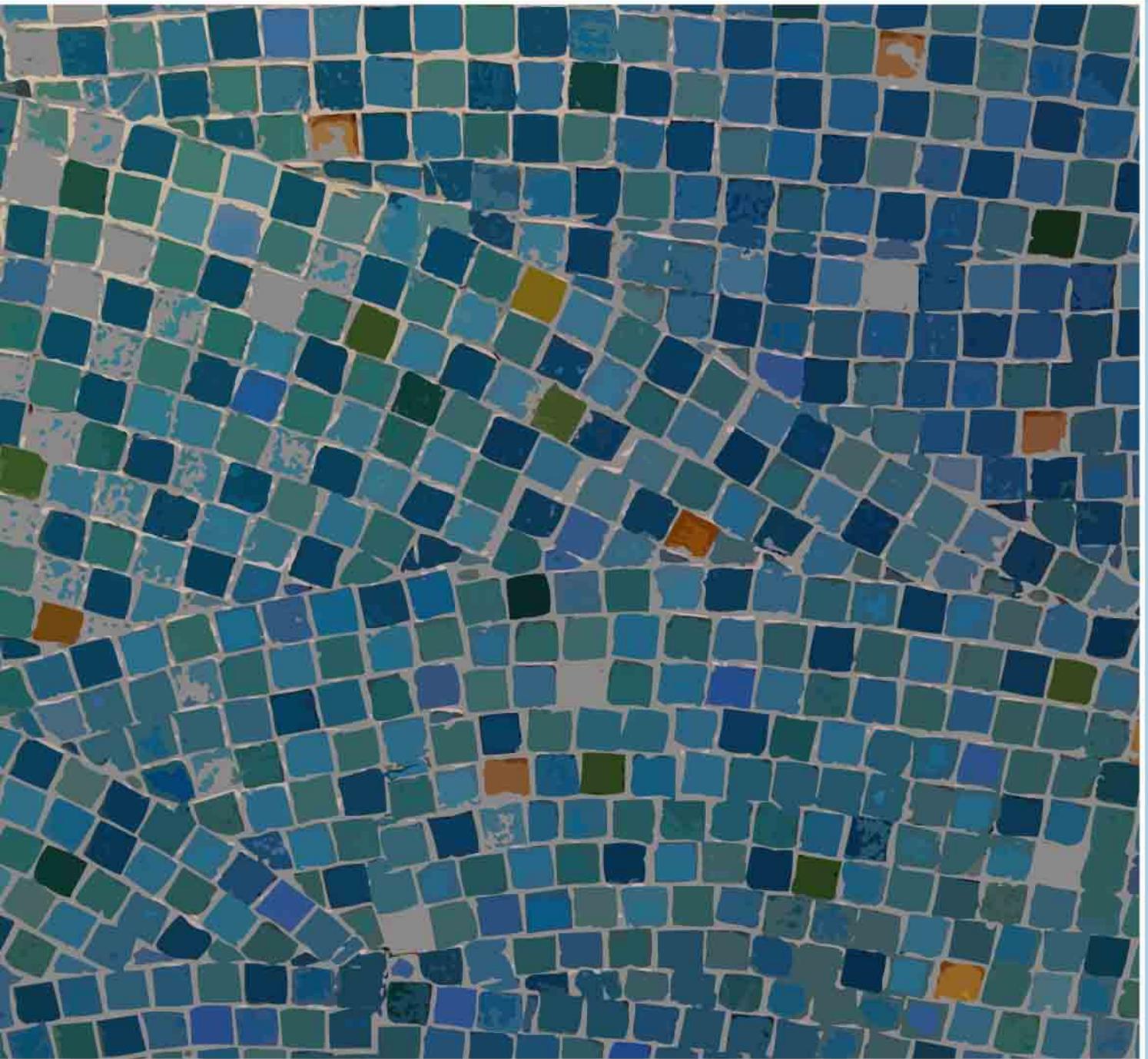


REFLECTIVE TEACHING EFFECTIVE LEARNING

INSTRUCTIONAL LITERACY
FOR LIBRARY EDUCATORS



CHAR BOOTH

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REFLECTIVE TEACHING, EFFECTIVE LEARNING

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CHAR BOOTH

American Library Association
Chicago 2011

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Printed in the United States of America
15 14 13 12 11 5 4 3 2 1

While extensive effort has gone into ensuring the reliability of the information in this book, the publisher makes no warranty, express or implied, with respect to the material contained herein.

ISBN: 978-0-8389-1052-8

Booth, Char.

Reflective teaching, effective learning : instructional literacy for library educators / Char Booth.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-8389-1052-8 (alk. paper)

1. Library orientation. 2. Information literacy--Study and teaching. 3. Information services--User education. 4. Library employees--Training of. 5. Teacher-librarians--Training of. 6. Teaching--Methodology. 7. Effective teaching. 8. Reflective teaching. 9. Learning, Psychology of. I. Title.

Z711.2.B66 2011

028.7071--dc22

2010014026

Text design in Minion Pro and Union by Casey Bayer.

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Foreword

WE ALL LEARN—every day. Each day, some new part of our mystically infinitely moldable brains rearranges itself to cope with the new data and performance requirements of our lives. If that sounds a bit like the way your laptop works, you're not far off. Our minds take in vast amounts of information, mash it around a bit using the processes we've learned, and mix it with all of the other data already in there from experiences past. The result is that we function day to day, completing tasks, interacting with others, and laying our own personal stamp on this earth.

In this world of constant information, learning, and change, the tradition of the teacher goes back to the earliest human records. We have an intrinsic desire to learn and to teach others what we know. I can think of no other human institution more dedicated to the process of learning and sharing than the library. Libraries are the knowledge centers of our communities. As a result, the responsibility falls to us librarians to engage both our users and ourselves in continuous learning, so that we might remain a crucial resource in our communities' pursuit of learning. Remember that all of this change, all of this rearranging of data in our computer brains, is for the purpose of making life simpler and better. It's all about ease and contentment, and every single class we teach as librarians, every single tutorial we create, every recommended web tool we message about, is all in pursuit of that simple dream for our users—a content, informed, and easy life.

The riddle of how we learn is ever present in the minds of teachers, trainers, and instructors. How can we best help our little computer brains absorb new information? What can we do to allow ourselves the best opportunity to produce something of value with the data we've been given? How do we learn? How do we teach others, using what we know about learning styles and approaches? How do we train successfully? Each of us knows what we do and don't respond to as learners, but it's difficult to translate those ideas into effective instruction.

As one of the many librarians thrust into the teaching limelight early on and without any preparation, I have always been wary of books of instructional

models and seminars on learning theory and practice. My brain screams, “Too academic, too theoretical!” and I turn away. I have always been skeptical of the nonpractical. I’ve learned to train from others in the trenches, those who have been doing it much longer than I have and who have proven track records of a positive impact on learners’ lives. Admittedly, I’ve always wanted to learn about the theory and practice, but in a way that makes sense to those of us who actually have to *use* it.

This is a book for all instructors and trainers. If you teach in any setting and with any group, this book will create a confidence in your abilities and approach that you are unlikely to find anywhere else. Char Booth is one of the most amazing minds in our profession, and her expertise in the area of instructional design will benefit all of us who take the time to listen to her. She has asked and answered questions about how we learn effectively and, equally, how we teach effectively. Her user-centered focus is what sets her apart from many other instructional designers and experts. The text that follows has numerous techniques that other books just gloss over without any explanation of how to do them well—such as how to develop the confidence you need to be an effective instructor, or how to actually design, conduct, and evaluate effective sessions and learning objects.

Many will assume that this type of book is aimed primarily at the academic audience, but they’re wrong. Char has effectively bridged the long-standing divide between the two groups who study learning—the academics on one side looking at the theory, and everyone else on the other side teaching and training away endlessly in the trenches with barely enough time to devote thought to the process. She focuses on engaging the learner and following up on learning outcomes in a way that is accessible for everyone. My thirst for practical theory has finally been quenched with Char’s approach to instructional literacy and design. If you want to make your life easier when developing learning and training projects, then you need *Reflective Teaching, Effective Learning*.

Commit yourself to reading this book, but don’t worry about memorizing every step or idea it contains. Because Char knows what she’s doing, you will absorb the information and approaches she presents and integrate them into your future learning designs. Any volume that takes a lot of the hard work out of developing a training style or learning system is well worth its salt, and Char’s USER method measures up. Be ready to have your computer brain mashed around in a good way.

Sarah Houghton-Jan
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Preface

INSPIRATION

Librarians of all stripes design and deliver instruction every day, yet we rarely receive the training, mentorship, and experience it takes to hit the ground teaching. For many of us, instruction becomes the most challenging aspect of what we do; I felt this when I began my career. The notion of teaching anything to anyone in any format was paralyzing, my pedagogical knowledge was limited, and learning technologies mystified me. The extreme discomfort this created gave rise to a personal vendetta: *improve, or else*. Through experimentation, observation, collaboration, research, continuing education, and more trial and error than I care to recall, I have come to understand more about how and why people learn in information-focused contexts, and how librarians can become indispensable knowledge facilitators among the learners and organizations they support. As I build instructional confidence, I find myself more able to connect with users, students, faculty, and colleagues. *Reflective Teaching, Effective Learning* springs from my love of the moments of real insight and skill-building that occur during this process, and the conviction that they neither need be few nor far between. If you engage with this text and reflect on your practice, my hope is that you will face less anxiety, integrate more fully and with greater impact into your communities of practice, and enjoy a more flexible and gratifying teaching experience overall.

CHALLENGE

Being an educator is about laying yourself on the line, opening up to criticism, and accepting vulnerability so that others may gain knowledge; every learning interaction becomes an opportunity to either stretch or flinch. The strongest instructors and trainers use this challenge to consciously adapt to the situations they engage in and create strategic, personalized learning experiences, rather than becoming discouraged or falling back on routine. If teaching is hard, learning to

teach well is harder (and, if the past two years of my life are any indication, writing about learning to teach well may be the hardest of all). This book is for anyone who wants to develop stronger design and delivery skills, become more dynamic and self-aware in their instructional approach, and adapt to the changing library, literacy, and information technology landscape. Building our capacity to contribute actively to the knowledge society is paramount, and developing as instructors and designers is integral to demonstrating our evolving value.

APPLICATION

To frame the instructor development process, in part I of this book I present the concept of *instructional literacy*, which consists of reflective practice,

educational theory, teaching technologies, and instructional design, to focus less on *what* you should teach than on *how* to engage your learners. Embedded in instructional literacy are transferable strategies that help you choose technologies and activities that support real outcomes, cultivate your instructor identity, and build a personal learning environment for current pedagogical awareness. To guide you from concept to application, in part II I present the USER method, an instructional design approach that steps through *understanding* a learning scenario; *structuring* educational content; *engaging* learners; and *reflecting* on the knowledge that is built. This method can be used to facilitate any type of instruction in any medium. USER provides strategies for rapidly, reliably, and systematically producing teaching tools and information services that make more impact.

Introduction

In the Trenches

IF I WAS called to librarianship, I was thrown into teaching. When I started my first job in the field, I was asked (as so many are) to assume a heavy instructional load fresh out of graduate school. I had taken one information literacy class, was almost totally inexperienced at public speaking, and knew next to nothing about learning theory or curriculum design. I understood what I wanted to get across, but when facing a room of twenty-five bored undergraduates, my nervousness made it all but impossible. My hope was to present relevant and interesting information strategies to my students, but I could barely hold their attention while I tried. I stuttered, stammered, rambled, and was confident only in the fact that I led overloaded workshops that resulted in little if any transferable knowledge.

Left with the sobering realization that I knew very little about how to do a large part of my job, I sought help from those with more experience. My coworkers came through generously with planning support and practical tips, but following their skillful advice quickly taught me a lesson: When it comes to instruction, one size most certainly does not fit all. Scripts seemed to play out differently in each class, and exercises and handouts that worked beautifully for others fell flat for me. As time passed, more challenges arose; online tutorials, staff training, conference presentations, and more were all teaching moments I felt unprepared for, and emulation was never a reliable escape hatch. I was consistently vexed by the same questions: *Where am I supposed to begin? What strategies are appropriate in this case versus another? How can I tell if my audience is learning?*

Mounting uncertainties motivated me to learn how to educate without relying solely on trial, error, and terror. To feel more in control I needed to develop my own approach to effective instruction, from an overall aim of becoming more engaging down to the way I established rapport with students as they walked in the door. I wanted confidence that I could facilitate learning not only in a live environment but in any setting, using emerging technologies or traditional methods. I wanted to make better use of limited preparation time, shore up

short classes, reduce my nervousness, and ultimately come to enjoy what was literally the only aspect of my chosen profession that I dreaded.

While working full time as a librarian at Ohio University, I enrolled in a master's degree program in educational technology. My fellow students were local K–12 instructors facing budget cuts and strict expectations that they “teach to the test,” thanks largely to the accreditation and funding strictures created by No Child Left Behind. Studying with seasoned teachers who shared their on-the-ground insights made me realize that I had never considered my convictions and interests as an educator the way I had as a librarian. I experienced a growing awareness that I needed to cultivate all sides of my teaching self if I was going to improve. It was in this context that I first encountered ideas of reflective practice and instructional design, which have helped me become more assured in the knowledge that I can create learning experiences that are not only pedagogically sound, but authentic reflections of my teacher identity.

LEARNING TO TEACH

My story probably sounds familiar. Despite how often information professionals teach, we are not as systematically trained as other types of educators. The integration of information literacy into LIS practice has been ongoing for decades, yet revised 2008 ALA accreditation standards reveal a continued lack of pedagogical emphasis: “The curriculum of library and information studies encompasses information and knowledge creation, communication, identification, selection, acquisition, organization and description, storage and retrieval, preservation, analysis, interpretation, evaluation, synthesis, dissemination, and management.”¹ Most of these elements are central to the educational mission of libraries, yet instruction itself is absent from this list. According to survey research I conducted in 2009, (n=398), only about a third of those who regularly teach and train in libraries completed education-related coursework during their MLS studies, only 16 percent of which was required. Strikingly, over two-thirds of these instruction librarians felt that their LIS education underprepared them to teach—less than 5 percent felt strongly that it had. Seventy percent of those in my study indicated that their employers provide some sort of professional development support, but that their development opportunities remain limited. The result

is not surprising: anxiety is common among new and experienced library instructors, a third of my respondents indicated that they always or frequently experience feelings of anxiety in live teaching scenarios, and another third reported that they sometimes did.

INSTRUCTOR DEVELOPMENT (AND DEVELOPMENT, AND DEVELOPMENT...)

Library instruction occurs constantly via a bewildering number of formats and technologies. Whether online or on the ground, staff trainings, workshops, tutorials, one-on-one interactions, and other learning scenarios and objects are ubiquitous in our organizations. Systematic instructor development is a fundamentally recognized aspect of teaching effectiveness, yet it remains comparatively inaccessible to librarians. Other educators follow a standards-based accreditation process or pursue ongoing training for purposes of certification; we rely on personal initiative and external professional engagement for preparation. All of these can be effective skill builders, but they can also be highly subject to availability.

With limited time and resources, we face the daunting task of not only teaching concrete skills but encouraging a mindset of information and technology self-sufficiency in learner populations ranging from patrons, students, researchers, and faculty to ourselves and our colleagues. Many things, therefore, may have brought you to this book. You could be looking for ways to combat your trepidation in the classroom, activities to motivate audiences, perspective on instructional design and technology, or insight into learning itself. Many of us view any teaching scenario—whether large or small, face-to-face, or online—as unfamiliar and intimidating, not unlike a proverbial dark and unfamiliar forest, full of hidden pitfalls. When you first enter a classroom or start planning a digital learning interaction, it is sometimes like being pushed into the trees blindfolded. My goal is simple: to help you find your way using the survival strategies that constitute *instructional literacy*.

INSTRUCTIONAL LITERACY

Instructional literacy is essentially what I wish I had more of when I started teaching: the combination of skills and knowledge that facilitates effective,

self-aware, and learner-focused educational practice. To extend the terrible metaphor, to find your way through the instructional forest you need moxie (reflective practice), a compass (educational theory), a flashlight (teaching technologies), and a large machete to hack at obstacles (instructional design). Instructional literacy balances these four elements:

Reflective practice is a process of understanding and shaping your skills and abilities as you teach, not just assessing your performance at the end of an interaction.

Educational theory is research-based insight into instruction. It consists of learning theory (principles of how people synthesize information and build knowledge), instructional theory (the concepts and methods of instruction), and curriculum theory (content knowledge specific to fields, subjects, and audiences).

Teaching technologies are the tools and media that encourage effective learning in face-to-face, online, and blended instruction as well as methods for evaluating and using them effectively.

Instructional design is a systematic and learner-focused method of integrating reflection, theory, and technology as you plan, deliver, and assess learning scenarios and materials.

Working toward an understanding of each component allows you to make stronger and more informed connections between *pedagogy*, the theory of instruction, and *praxis*, its practical application. For the duration of these pages, you are (I hope) signing up to develop skills that will help you confront the challenges inherent to teaching, training, and designing learning materials. That said, no matter what your goals are or how I address them, like any learner (or traveler) you are ultimately responsible for what you take away from this book (or making it out alive). Instructional literacy is an ongoing process; if you find that you don't learn enough this time around, the next step is always to take another step.

CHAPTER BREAKDOWN

Reflective Teaching, Effective Learning is divided into two sections. Part I examines the components of instructional literacy:

Chapter 1 considers instructor development and the qualities of effective educators.

Chapter 2 explores reflective practice, metacognition, and message design.

Chapter 3 suggests approaches to collaboration and cultivating communities of practice.

Chapter 4 presents theories of learning that offer insight into how people process information and form knowledge.

Chapter 5 outlines theories of instruction that can help learning design become more targeted and effective.

Chapter 6 reflects on strategies for integrating teaching technologies in library instruction.

Chapter 7 investigates the process and applications of instructional design.

Part II provides a framework for library instructional design through the USER method:

Chapter 8 outlines the steps and phases of USER.

Chapter 9, "Understand," describes strategies for understanding your audience and analyzing needs around a learning scenario.

Chapter 10, "Structure," presents practical approaches to organizing and developing any type of instructional material.

Chapter 11, "Engage," explores visual literacy and universal principles of design as well as engaging instructional delivery strategies.

Chapter 12, "Reflect," suggests techniques to help you assess learning and revise your approach based on learner feedback, and reuse instructional objects.

Appendix A provides templates for planning instruction and evaluating technology; appendix B lists responses from library educators to the survey on teaching effectiveness mentioned above.

FLEXIBLE INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN

Library instruction often consists of either a) entering an established learning community, productivity context, or instructional scenario in order to impart practical skills and support research practice (e.g.,

course-integrated instruction, staff training), or, b) determining an existing performance or information need and addressing it with just-in-time learning objects or opportunities (e.g., drop-in workshops, embedded learning objects in an online catalog). Both require the ability to identify how each scenario is unique in order to create more responsive learning experiences.

Unique learning contexts are not the only variable in this equation; every educator has strengths and weaknesses. You may feel more confident in your ability to design online materials than presenting live, whereas I might excel at classroom management but feel less equipped to assess students. No matter where your comfort zone falls, you can benefit from a methodical approach to instructional planning that builds on your strengths at the same time that it identifies unique learner needs. Instructional design

reduces guesswork by helping you systematically focus on both the techniques and characteristics of each new learning scenario. The USER method is a four-phase template for designing reflective and outcomes-focused instruction in a library context (figure 0.1).

A friend and colleague of mine observed that USER could be applied “either as a thought or action model or a hybrid of both.” This is an excellent summary of the method’s intent. Think of USER not as a rigid, drawn-out process of formal planning, but a strategy for creating adaptable and reusable library instruction that you can draw from to the degree that your educational context requires. The steps and phases of USER help you think through, design, evaluate, and revise any type of learning interaction or object, from the largest curriculum-integrated information literacy program down to the smallest research guide, on the fly or in painstaking detail.

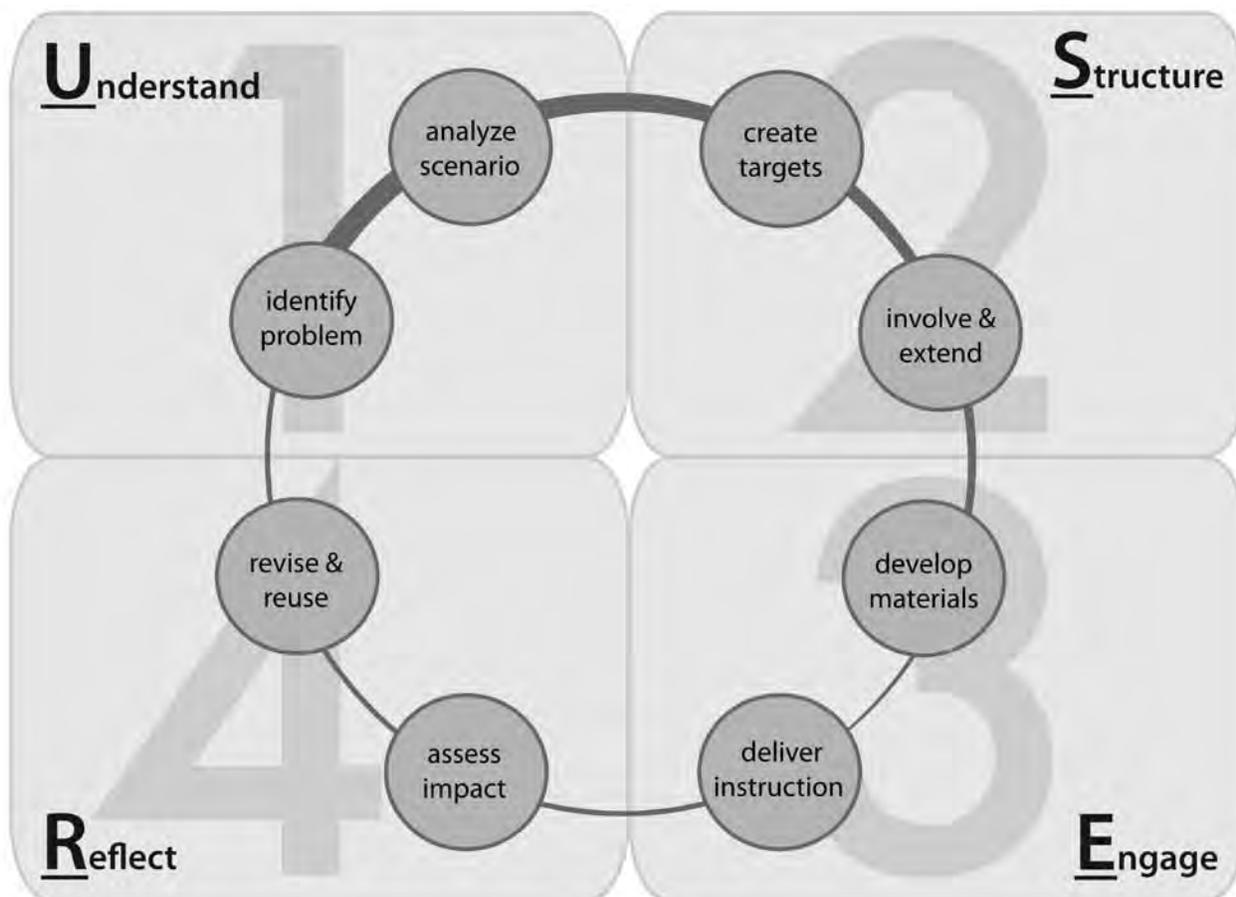


Figure 0.1
USER method

TEACHING TECHNOLOGY: SEEKING STRATEGIES

Pedagogy and praxis are shifting with the information technology climate. Social, mobile, and dynamic tools are expanding active learning and presentation methods, and web-based communication has opened new avenues for interacting and collaborating with audiences. Some librarians deliver instruction using exclusively online platforms; others bring together live and digital teaching methods to create “blended” or “hybrid” learning.² Whereas several years ago a static web page was the only means of online instruction, now there are countless alternatives. When it comes to teaching technologies, most instructors are faced with a two-part question: *How can I become familiar with new tools and applications, and how do I use them to enhance learning?*

Because local resources differ and comfort levels range widely, it is important to develop current awareness that helps you experiment with, evaluate, and integrate technology into instruction using a practical, solutions-oriented mentality. Sorting through the options can be difficult, and a common challenge for educators is how to use teaching tools not based on their hype potential, but on their practical affordances—the specific functional qualities they provide that can make a learning interaction more collaborative, active, interesting, and so forth. In *Keeping the User in Mind*, Valeda Dent-Goodman introduces the concept of the “instructional mashup”—combining a variety of tools and approaches to create engaging learning experiences.³ Throughout this book, I suggest strategies for familiarizing yourself with your options in order to mash together the best applications.

ANTICIPATING YOUR QUESTIONS

Now, to head off a few potential questions at the pass:

Who will benefit from this book?

Any librarian, information professional, or library/information studies student who teaches, trains, or designs can use *Reflective Teaching*, *Effective Learning*. Librarians in general are being motivated (or forced, depending on your perspective) to change the way we operate and focus more intently on the user experience. In this climate, patron, staff, and self-education

are critical to the continued relevance of our organizations. This book invites you to form your own ideas about how to make the learning process more lasting and transferable based on your context and the needs of your community. Some of the concepts I discuss are likely familiar to many readers, such as the importance of appealing to different learning styles and using multimedia presentation formats or social software to increase learner engagement in face-to-face instruction. Other ideas, such as elements of visual literacy and metacognition, may present new ways to think through common problems. The strategies outlined in this book are most directly applicable to those involved in library instruction and staff training, as well as early-career educators. They can also be useful for readers developing online content and applications, creating marketing materials, and deploying public services, all of which have didactic elements. Similarly, anyone who blogs, speaks, writes, or consults in the professional community should understand how to design engaging and learner-centered instructional messages and experiences.

Is instructional design required knowledge?

No, but it is a sound strategy for improving your teaching and gaining a stronger foothold in library practice. Several excellent volumes can supplement your knowledge in this area, such as Bell and Shank’s *Academic Librarianship by Design*, Dent-Goodman’s *Keeping the User in Mind*, Jerilyn Veldof’s *Creating a One-Shot Library Workshop*, and Brian Mathews’s experience design-focused *Marketing Today’s Academic Library*.⁴ I believe that instructional effectiveness is as rooted in cultivating enjoyment of your teaching practice as it is in systematic planning, so my approach to this conversation blends the concept of instructional literacy with the USER design method. Neither approach is about following rules lockstep; each is intended to remind you of important considerations and motivate you to pay attention to areas you might otherwise gloss over.

Instructional design discourages some people because they think it will make their planning process cumbersome. As you read, it is crucial to remember that USER is flexible and scalable, and easily adjustable to suit your needs. I have found that reflecting on design becomes second nature and fosters an attitude of adaptability that keeps the critical elements of engaged learning at the forefront. In my experience,

Activity 0.1 Targets for Reflective Teaching, Effective Learning	
Goals (instructor-focused end results)	While reading this book, I will <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenge myself to _____ • Explore ideas around _____ • Discover useful strategies for _____
Objectives (specific skills acquired)	To reach these goals, I will develop my skills in the following specific areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • _____ • _____ • _____
Outcomes (learner-focused change)	These goals and objectives will result in the following learner changes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • _____ • _____ • _____

this mindset tends to reduce the anxiety-producing sensation that you, the instructor, are the center of attention. It helps the content, context, and community of instruction—guiding elements in any learning interaction—move into the limelight. In any scenario, instructional design and reflective practice are tools for situating, structuring, presenting, and evaluating information based on how and why people learn best.

How should I use *Reflective Teaching, Effective Learning*?

Cookbooks are without a doubt my favorite type of learning object. The best communicate not only ratios and ingredients but also the gestalt of each dish and the philosophy of the author. They easily fit the needs of different types of people—more experienced cooks may only need recipes to confirm assumptions about measurements or help themselves improvise, whereas novices tend to follow instructions to the letter. I hope that you will use this book in the same way, as a collection of techniques and gestalt you can use to fit your needs and inspire you to try something new. I also hope that it challenges you to think in a different way about what you are teaching. Although education is at least as unpredictable as cooking, my desire is to create a set of theories and rules of thumb that help you confront instruction more confidently.

It helps to read with a pencil in hand and practical goals in mind. The key to learning is personal engagement, and I have tried to practice what I preach by

making *Reflective Teaching, Effective Learning* as interactive as possible. I embed activities in the text and include reflection points at the close of each chapter to help you transfer ideas and engage in discussion with other practitioners. Chapter activities, reflection points, and appendices can also be downloaded from the ALA Editions web extras at www.alaeditions.org/webextras/. I define key terms throughout as well as in the glossary. I encourage you to project your experience onto every page, in order to transfer strategies to your own context. It is useful to have one or several instructional scenarios in mind, such as a class, training session, presentation, or series of tutorials you want to create or revise. Try to challenge yourself to evaluate your own teaching critically, and above all else, reflect as you read—jot down notes, think about your dilemmas and strengths, and record any ideas or questions that come up. Make the content of this book personally meaningful so that you can apply it toward the instructional problems you actually face.

SETTING TARGETS

One way to achieve this is by defining *targets* in the form of goals, objectives, and outcomes. Targets improve the impact of instruction, particularly when participants have had a hand in defining them. During an interaction, clearly communicated targets also double as “advance organizers” that allow participants to understand and prepare for their own learning

experience.⁵ With this in mind, each chapter begins with a set of goals that provide a template for reflecting on personal outcomes as you finish each chapter.

Take a moment to define a series of targets to help you engage with this text (activity 0.1). At their simplest, goals are your overarching aims, objectives are concrete strategies, and outcomes are the changes that endure after a learning interaction. We haven't delved far into specific theories or approaches, so you should keep your targets broad. In the goals row, you might specify that you want to "challenge myself to gain more confidence in face-to-face instruction." In objectives, you might be interested in "selecting teaching technologies based on learning outcomes." In outcomes, you might imagine any concrete changes in your teaching, such as "more confidence in my teaching persona," "increased collaboration with coworkers," or "a more systematic approach to planning." Don't agonize over phrasing at this point; there is more discussion of targets in chapter 10.

SUMMARY

- **Instructional literacy** consists of four areas that focus your instructor development: **reflective practice, educational theory, teaching technology, and instructional design.**
- **Instructional design** and the **USER method** are flexible and systematic approaches to conceptualizing and creating learner-focused education.
- **Targets** are the goals, objectives, and outcomes that allow you to structure measurable learning interactions.

REFLECTION POINTS

1. Think about the four components of instructional literacy—reflective practice, educational theory, teaching technologies, and instructional design—in terms of personal strengths and areas of potential improvement. How would you characterize your relationship (e.g., understanding, experience, comfort level) to each component? Do you already use reflective techniques? Have you only recently heard of instructional design? Try to identify specific high and low points in your own knowledgebase.

2. Take another look at the USER model. Can you identify one phase or step that causes you difficulty during the instructional process, and another that comes more naturally?

NOTES

1. American Library Association, *Standards for Accreditation of Master's Programs in Library and Information Studies* (Chicago: American Library Association, 2008), 12.
2. Hyo-Jeong So, "Designing Interactive and Collaborative E-Learning Environments," in Terry T. Kidd and Holim Song (eds.), *Handbook of Research on Instructional Systems and Technology* (Hershey, PA: Information Science Reference, 2008), 596–613.
3. Valeda Dent-Goodman, *Keeping the User in Mind: Instructional Design and the Modern Library* (Oxford: Chandos, 2009).
4. Steven Bell and John Shank, *Academic Librarianship by Design: A Blended Librarian's Guide to the Tools and Techniques* (Chicago: American Library Association, 2007), quote from p. 9; Brian Mathews, *Marketing Today's Academic Library: A Bold New Approach to Communicating with Students* (Chicago: American Library Association, 2009); Jerilyn Veldof, *Creating a One-Shot Library Workshop: A Step-by-Step Guide* (Chicago: American Library Association, 2006).
5. David Ausubel, *The Psychology of Meaningful Verbal Learning* (New York: Grune and Stratton), 1963.

Teaching Effectiveness

GOALS

- Discuss the “Curse of Knowledge” and the **SUCCEs approach** to creating streamlined messages.
- Explore the qualities of **effective** (and ineffective) **educators**.
- Develop the concepts of **teacher identity** and **instructional philosophy**.
- Describe the **WIIFM principle** (“What’s in it for me?”) and how it guides the learning process.
- Describe maintaining current awareness with a **personal learning environment** (PLE).

In this chapter, I explore the qualities of effective instructors, and start things off with a brief note on terminology. Throughout *Reflective Teaching, Effective Learning*, I use several similar-sounding terms to describe different aspects of instruction:

- A *learning object* is any item, lesson, tutorial, text, website, or course created with the purpose of teaching or explaining something.
- An *educational scenario* is the context and environment in which instruction occurs.
- *Instructional messages* engage learners with content and communicate teacher identity.
- *Targets* are the goals, objectives, and outcomes that provide the foundation for objects, scenarios, and messages.
- These elements form a *learning interaction*—the in-person, media-based, or technology-assisted communication between student, instructor, and learning object.

In sum: This book is a learning object, and by reading it you are engaging in an educational scenario. I use instructional messages to focus your attention

on a series of targets, all of which combine to create a learning interaction between you, the reader, and me, the author. Ideally, the interplay of these factors results in the formation of useful knowledge by the learner and the accumulation of meaningful experience by the educator. Less ideally, if either party is unable, unmotivated, incapable, or unwilling to create meaning from the interaction, surface-level learning and something that resembles post-traumatic stress occurs instead.

LIBRARIES, NERDS, AND THE “CURSE OF KNOWLEDGE”

If you are currently staring at this learning object, chances are good that you are, like myself, something of a nerd. There are many kinds of nerds: band nerds, book nerds, Twitter nerds, metal nerds, gaming nerds. Under the cat sweaters, Wii controllers, pocket protectors, Androids, or band uniforms, at the core of any nerd you will find an individual with enough passion to let something that interests them take over a bit of their personality. Nerd passion is fueled by a desire to *know*—to be expert, to specialize, and to understand. Since time out of mind, libraries have been sanctuaries for hobbyists, geeks, and nerds, or anyone else who is okay with the fact that they are self-motivated learners. As librarians, we are nerds for knowledge. By making information more findable, usable, and interpretable, we help others in their quest for specialization. This makes us nerd enablers—and therefore more accurately described as *uber-* or *meta-*nerds. Libraries are created for nerds by meta-nerds, so it is not surprising that library educators tend to suffer from an acute case of the “Curse of Knowledge” as we go about instruction.¹ The Curse of Knowledge is the state of being so expert that you have forgotten what it is like to not know something—or, in our case, to not know how to find or evaluate something.

The problem with libraries is that the people who use them are usually not experts, yet we tend to orient ourselves toward expert users. Non-, semi-, and anti-nerds actually make up the vast majority of our patrons. Most people use libraries because they need to do something—finish their taxes, write a paper, research a health problem, or find a quiet place to study. They are there by information necessity and may have much less of a burning desire to know than their nerdier counterparts. I would estimate that, in any given library, four out of five people are on the

path of least resistance, yet our learning objects, information products, and buildings are often directed toward the one remaining self-directed learner—the one who most closely resembles us. This has a way of muddying the waters for typical patrons and preventing them from perceiving how they can use information and productivity technologies more functionally. This is why building our own instructional literacy is important: Every learner could use a few straightforward lessons from us, not only about how to accomplish their information goals with insight and critical thinking, but on what exactly, libraries and librarians can help them *do*.

SINK OR SWIM

Because I was well mentored, my introduction to teaching was relatively painless compared to that of others I know. A few worst-case-scenario examples: After being hired at a public library, one decidedly monolingual friend of mine with no teaching experience found herself tossed into a classroom with thirty nonnative English speakers, many of whom had little experience using a computer. Another was “volunteered” to teach a semester-long, for-credit information literacy class at a large research university on her first day, with only a week to prepare and virtually no guidance. A third began teaching an online course at a community college midsemester, only to discover that half of her students were blithely plagiarizing their assignments the week after a module on information responsibility.

All managed to meet their challenges, but each remembers the sensation of feeling totally unprepared and scrambling for strategies. These examples may be extreme, but they describe a common situation—a librarian staring down an unfamiliar instructional scenario confused, intimidated, or both. Like any other traumatic experience, rushing headlong into teaching can leave lasting scars. Most of us have had “sink or swim” moments as educators, which can occur in any teaching scenario—not just the unfamiliar ones, and not just when you are starting out. Some experience fear or nervousness every time they face a classroom; for others, instructional confidence comes naturally. Although jumping in feet first is an excellent motivator, it can also lead to a situation wherein decisions are made defensively rather than intentionally.

While there are recognized qualities common to strong educators, what makes one teacher “good” is

not necessarily universal. Individuality is more important than conforming to a mandated *modus operandi*, and it is useful to examine how audience and context influences instructional impact. One way of finding common denominators for pedagogical effectiveness among library instructors is to consider our shared challenges:

Many library educators are involved in instruction on a part-time basis and therefore lack the immersive challenge that allows other educators to develop skills quickly and keep current and engaged.

Teaching librarians tend to have more limited interactions with learners, meaning that it can be difficult to see immediate or long-term evidence of our interventions.

Materials and lessons are often repeated, which can generate a sense of redundancy or malaise.

Library instructors don't follow a mandated program of certification or continuing education, meaning our instructor development is largely self-regulated and context-specific.

Instructional technologies are constantly changing, and in order to stay current and informed, a strategic evaluation of our own knowledge and abilities is key.

Our educational contexts and institutional resources vary, making mandated curriculum nearly impossible to achieve (and consequently difficult to train around shared content).

WHAT MAKES A GOOD TEACHER?

Learning is a central aspect of human existence in all but the most dire of situations, and people tend to experience instructor upon instructor throughout their lifetimes. In each phase of my own life as a student, a few educators stand out. In high school I had a garrulous history teacher who would get so lost in his own cowboy yarns that he sometimes forgot to lecture, but who designed such creative assignments that I remember them perfectly. One of my professors at Reed College verged on depression when our papers weren't up to par and would jump on the table and sing show tunes if conversation lagged in seminar.

Another, feared and adored for her telepathic tendency to call on those who hadn't finished the reading, refused to let an idea go before it was fully explored and would rake us over the coals with hilarious, sadistic joy if we didn't talk points through to their logical conclusion. If I put my mind to it I could fill the chapter with mini-profiles of excellent teachers, whom I still meet with wonderful regularity.

What do these individuals have in common, and what inspires me to remember them? Their methods and content differed, but one thing is common: each derived obvious satisfaction from teaching and had high expectations of their students. All went about their jobs with a palpable self-awareness that allowed them to engage, and a personal investment that helped them devote intellectual and emotional energy to their trade. Similar characteristics are true of excellent presenters and designers, who invest in content and engage with audiences to the point that their interest becomes contagious. This is the desired effect: in the case of my best teachers, their motivation made me want to show them what I was made of. Some library educators may feel that our interactions with learners are too limited to achieve this dynamic, which so often requires the time to build real relationships. However, even in the briefest or most virtual of interactions it is possible to channel a sincere enthusiasm and sense of personality that helps participants engage with you and the material more meaningfully. Instructional literacy is in part a process of coming to believe in the value of your own contributions and your ability to be memorable, which simply helps you be more *there*.

Instructors You Remember

Think back on the teachers in your life that stand out. Why do you remember them? Were they exceptionally knowledgeable, funny, or odd? Did they take humdrum subjects and make them interesting, or use unexpected examples or analogies to help you think about things from a different angle? They probably found ways to draw you in no matter how dry their subject matter, or gave you personal attention that made you more interested in performing well. In activity 1.1, list the three strongest instructors or presenters from your own learner experience and identify three characteristics that made them personally effective.

When I create my own list, I notice that each of my bests has variations on the themes of humor, intelligence, and personality. Not surprisingly, there is a

Activity 1.1 Your Best Teachers			
Example: Professor X	challenging	insightful	well-spoken
1)			
2)			
3)			

mirror effect in the qualities I strive for in my own instruction and design. Think hard about your own list and draw a lesson from what this signifies that you value in other educators; it is probable that these are the qualities you would most like to possess. Let these characteristics act as benchmarks in the ongoing process of shaping your teaching identity.

Instructors You Have Tried to Forget

By no means do I encourage negativity, but face it—some teachers are worse than others. Imagine my vexation at needing to call out another undergraduate professor for dropping an inconceivably biased remark during class, then dealing with his retaliatory fallout for the rest of the semester. Needless to say, I withdrew from the learning scenario: I retained next to nothing from that point on and resented even having to show up. The flip side of developing an instructional effectiveness strategy is thinking about teacher attributes that have prevented you from learning. From the above experience I came to perceive that it is crucial to strive for cultural sensitivity in speech and action, and to never punish a student for legitimately and respectfully challenging me. In activity 1.2, list three less-than-effective educators (give them code names if this makes you feel guilty) and describe their negative teaching attributes.

Memorable Informal Learning

Because learning takes many forms, teaching effectiveness has to do with more than the traits of individuals. As the information environment becomes increasingly digital, mobile, and social, instructional spaces become more fluid; this expands the potential to apply innovative pedagogies and create less structured learning interactions. Part of what I hope to do in this book is inspire you to think about how effective learning happens outside of the strictures of “traditional” education. Think about it: Maybe you

spent a year obsessing over *Dungeons and Dragons* as a teenager or saw a nature documentary as a child that you’ve never forgotten. An example from my own recent experience is Common Craft (www.commoncraft.com), which has the motto “Our Product Is Explanation.” They create simple animated tutorials that translate confusing technological concepts into plain language, some of which I use in training and research education.

Considering what makes nontraditional or informal objects and scenarios hit home can provide some of the best strategic fodder for improving your day-to-day praxis. Examples do not have to be “next-generation” or even contemporary: I personally love the public television children’s show *Electric Company*, in both its wildly successful 1970s form and its more recent incarnation (www.pbskids.org/electriccompany/). This interactive mix of music, dialogue, quick vignettes, and problem-based strategies aligns its message to the needs and characteristics of its audience: You can barely tell that you are learning, which makes you want to keep watching. Another example from public media is WNYC’s *RadioLab* (www.wnyc.org/shows/radiolab), which breaks down complex scientific topics using quirky audio production and accessible language. In activity 1.3, list three effective informal instructional objects, interactions, or environments you have experienced and identify the characteristics that made them memorable.

Turning It Around

By reflecting on what makes individual educators and informal learning effective or ineffective, you are creating a mental bank of qualities you either value or want to avoid. For example, while I believe that I am an engaging presenter with a defined design style and sense of personal conviction that I communicate as I teach, I also know that I often rush, experience visible nervousness, and am sometimes less than able to adapt quickly to a situation that requires a major

Activity 1.2 Your Worst Teachers			
Example: Instructor Y	arrogant	reactionary	biased
1)			
2)			
3)			

change of plans. Use the previous three activities to consider your own teaching characteristics; be conscious of the positive traits you possess, the concrete ways you would like to improve, and how your learning materials might have more impact. The goal is not to tear yourself down, but to identify things of value you bring to an instructional scenario as well methods for improvement.

DEVELOPING A TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

I am first and foremost a Texan, which means I rely on mottos, slogans, and truisms of all kinds to keep my chin up in the face of adversity. For this reason, some time ago I wrote out my “teaching philosophy” as a way of focusing on what it is that motivates me to help people learn:

I want to redefine the way people think about librarians, inspire as much critical thought as I do laughter, make sure they come away with something they can actually use, and most important, to never, ever, ever bore anyone to tears.

Learning from other library educators is a ceaselessly useful strategy. I was curious about the teaching philosophies of others, so I asked a number of individuals I personally know to have considerable impact on library education to engage in the same exercise. All I specified was a word limit (75 or less) and the request that they describe “what motivates you to (or as you) teach or present, the characteristics that you aspire to as an instructor or educator, and/or what informs how you encourage learning in others.” Here are the responses I received, in no particular order:

The very first step in learning is simply exposure. Focus on exposure first, find your students’ motiva-

tion and encourage discovery, and you have a recipe for learning. (Helene Blowers, creator and architect of Learning 2.0: 23 Things)

I want to engage people by challenging their underlying assumptions and then inspire them by providing examples of existing innovative programs. I hope to encourage them to critically assess their current priorities and practices and consider whether they should reconceive their role, taking into account both their professional values and the imperatives of the current technology-oriented environment. (Joan Lippincott, Director, Coalition for Networked Information)

Working in an institution where the students are well prepared and highly motivated, my main goal is to convince them that librarians are 1) welcoming and 2) that we know some stuff. My approach, as it has evolved over the last year or so, is to, believe it or not, throw library jargon at them, thus demystifying advanced research techniques and, by giving a hands-on assignment, helping them put the techniques into practice. (Jenna Freedman, Coordinator of Reference Services and Zine Librarian, Barnard College. www.jenna.openflows.com)

If I am perceived to be a teacher then I have failed. My objective first and foremost is to challenge my students’ imaginations and creative capabilities. Real learning is bold and intoxicating and nonlinear. It should be slightly subversive with a tad of radical. I see it as an ongoing transformation that occurs as a series of personal epiphanies. Instruction should flow serendipitously. (Brian Mathews, Assistant University Librarian, Outreach and Academic Services, University of California, Santa Barbara)

I believe that teaching is really about discovery and learning; one of the greatest joys of teaching is the unique story of learning that unfolds for me and

Activity 1.3 **Memorable Learning Objects**

Example: Electric Company	fast-paced, story-based narrative	visually engaging	contemporary and informal
1)			
2)			
3)			

my students as we explore and experiment together side by side. I try to cultivate a participatory climate that values risk taking and learning experiences that are organic. It is in the messiness and stickiness of learning where real meaning is constructed. (Buffy Hamilton, Media Specialist/Teacher-Librarian, Creekview High School, Canton, Georgia)

My goal in presenting is to help participants create meaning by sharing information clearly, logically, and as simply as possible (but no simpler). Stories, analogies, a “beginner mind,” and a nonjudgmental outlook help me foster learning, which happens at that magical intersection between the information being presented and the life experiences and unique perspectives of each learner. My ultimate goal is always to empower participants to make more effective choices. (Peter Bromberg, Assistant Director, South Jersey Regional Library Cooperative, and contributor to www.librarygarden.net)

I strive to convey enthusiasm and passion, to communicate relevance in a way that is both engaging and useful, and to achieve at least one genuine “light bulb” moment. If learners—even a few—have been encouraged to think about something in a way they haven’t before, if I have enabled them to become active participants in their own learning, I have succeeded. (Catherine Fraser Riehle, Instructional Outreach Librarian and Assistant Professor of Library Science, Purdue University Libraries)

I strive to always be a student of good pedagogy, to discover and experiment with the latest theory and best practice, and to push myself to be a better teacher. To teach well is to create a permanent change of behavior in the learner. My constant goal is to deliver an outstanding and memorable learning experience, one that leaves students permanently changed for the better even if only in some small way. (Steven

Bell, Associate University Librarian for Research and Instruction, Temple University)

You know what gets me excited? Information. Finding it, thinking about it, critiquing it, wrestling with it, arguing about it, producing it. And I believe every student in my classroom feels the same way, even if they don’t know it yet. (Emily Drabinski, Electronic Resources and Instruction Librarian, Long Island University, Brooklyn)

Technology instruction should give everyone a chance to succeed and solve their own real-world problems in a setting that is safe yet challenging. A good instructor facilitates the student’s own learning objectives and helps them figure out what their questions are. Learning can be fun and painless. (Jessamyn West, rural librarian, MetaFilter moderator, and owner of www.librarian.net)

Libraries and librarians are faced with a technological and societal wave of change that is ever increasing as we move farther into the 21st century. Preparing new graduates to deal with constant change, use current and emerging technological tools to further the mission of their institutions, and meet the needs of communities of library users while never losing sight of our foundational values and principles is of utmost importance to me as an LIS educator. (Michael Stephens, Assistant Professor, Graduate School of Library and Information Science, Dominican University, River Forest, Illinois)

I want to always remember that when I’m teaching, I’m learning. Part of my job is to embrace the vulnerability inherent in learning something new, critically examine my “authority” and realize what that vulnerability looks and feels like to those in my classrooms. I also think it’s my responsibility to point out the flaws and bias inherent in information, both

in the ways we gather it and the ways it's presented. (Lia Friedman, Instruction and Outreach Librarian, Head of Public Services, Arts Library, University of California, San Diego)

My role is to help create a community of learners who are responsible and responsive to each other as they build on contextual foundations and extend themselves to acquire new knowledge and skills through innovative connections with communities like those they will serve throughout their profession. (Loriene Roy, ALA past president, and Professor, School of Information, University of Texas, Austin)

I seek to make possible an environment in which inquiry and hands-on learning are encouraged, where information is accessible and usable, and where students learn how to manage the obstacles inherent in the information search process. It is the place of struggle where learning takes root, and fostering an environment that makes it safe for students to struggle productively is a critical part of my teaching practice. (Maria Accardi, Assistant Librarian and Coordinator of Instruction, Indiana University Southeast, New Albany)

My goal is to make students not need me. I was one of those stubborn learners who never asked for help, so I want to help students develop the skills that will allow them to independently find and evaluate information. While I try to show them that the librarians are friendly and useful, I ultimately want them to be able to think critically about how to find information and about what they find without us. (Meredith Farkas, Head of Instructional Initiatives at Norwich University, Vermont, adjunct faculty member at San Jose State University School of Library and Information Science)

What I love about these philosophies is that, in addition to expressing personal conviction and an appropriately fierce learner focus, each pinpoints almost exactly how their authors have motivated me and countless others to become stronger educators and librarians. Not only that, every one contains one or more instructional best practices well worth re-iterating:

Me—try not to be boring.

Helene—focus on motivation and discovery.

Joan—challenge assumptions and use real examples.

Jenna—demystify jargon and make things hands-on.

Brian—defy expectations and invite creativity.

Buffy—let learning be organic, even if it's messy.

Peter—teach simply and empower participants.

Catherine—engage people with their own process.

Steven—push yourself to improve.

Emily—be stoked, because it's contagious.

Jessamyn—invite questioning and let learners define their own goals.

Michael—be prepared to adapt.

Lia—question authority in information and in yourself.

Loriene—create a community of learners.

Maria—foster a safe learning environment.

Meredith— make students not need you.

ACHIEVING AUTHENTICITY

Many of the teaching characteristics I identify in this chapter are confirmed by research to be common among successful educators, such as reflectiveness, personal investment, humor, organization, and theoretical knowledge.² One quality in particular comes through in every teaching philosophy I received: *authenticity*. Authenticity is the capacity to communicate your self—your personality and sense of identity—during instruction, an overarching concept that covers many qualities of instructional effectiveness. Per Laursen lists seven qualities of authentic teachers,³ who

- have personal intentions concerning their teaching
- embody their intentions
- have realistic intentions
- relate to students as fellow human beings
- work in contexts fruitful to their intentions
- cooperate intensely with colleagues
- are able to take care of their personal-professional development

Goal orientation, interpersonal connection, and genuine enthusiasm for the task at hand are all aspects

of authenticity. In an *In the Library with the Lead Pipe* post, Carrie Donovan gives a convincing defense of authenticity and identity in library education: “A shift in expectations calls for teacher behavior that is purposeful, mindful, and rooted in the self. . . . For those in search of a true teacher identity, authenticity will serve as the best guide.”⁴ I address the role of authenticity in developing your teaching identity in the next two chapters as well as in chapter 11.

FINDING YOUR SOAPBOX

One of the most important lessons I have learned about authenticity came from Lia Friedman of UC San Diego’s Arts Library, who shared her instructional philosophy earlier in the chapter. She is a true example of a teacher-advocate, someone who can captivate an audience and make them care about basically anything. When we discuss presentations we’ve given or sessions we’ve taught, she always seems to mention people that approach her afterward with questions or just wanting to chat. In my mind, this is evidence of an ability to first make content interesting enough that it raises questions, and second being approachable enough to generate the equivalent of fans at a library session.

Her strategy is simple. According to Lia, “When I’m up on my soapbox, their eyes get wider.” She is describing the infectious interest you can create by communicating with conviction on any topic in which you have knowledge or expertise. Intensity of expression is a key factor in how effectively something captivates our attention, which in turn significantly affects memory and retention of detail.⁵ Your soapbox becomes a place of informed sincerity that helps you speak convincingly, a necessary aspect of cultivating a voice or persona you can call upon to engage an audience (an idea I revisit in chapter 11). Your soapbox may be most useful during live teaching interactions, but it can also permeate digital learning objects through a combination of creative visual design and interactivity.

Even content that appears superficially dull can come to life when pitched from a soapbox. What’s more, your soapbox can help you challenge, dispel, or leverage learner preconceptions based on your perceived profession, age, gender, ethnicity, and so forth. An example: A subject like integrative biology is not one that would typically stop me in my tracks, yet when I stumbled across an online lecture by renowned UC Berkeley anatomy professor Marian

Diamond, I was riveted. Because she communicates with extraordinary conviction, defies countless stereotypes, and uses unconventional strategies to enliven a traditional delivery format, her lectures are among the top instructional videos in YouTube and have been viewed millions of times.

I had the chance fortune to run into Professor Diamond on the Berkeley campus as I was writing this chapter; I introduced myself and asked if she would mind if I used her as an example of teaching effectiveness. After complimenting me on my handshake—hers was a boncrusher, by the way—she graciously said that she would be delighted, image and all. Even in this brief interaction she communicated infectious enthusiasm and a willingness to engage. While teaching, Professor Diamond constantly drops pithy insights on pedagogy and learning she has picked up from decades of experience, many of which are described in physiological terms that connect deftly to the subject of instruction. Hundreds of comments on my favorite lecture (in which she spends a good five minutes holding a human brain pulled with a flourish from a hat box; see figure 1.1) explode the perennial myth that contemporary students cannot be interested in learning, such as, “This woman is a great teacher, hope my lecturer next sem is half as good as this. . . . she is cool” and “That is a kickass teacher. i need to get her.”

Marian Diamond is an individual who has used her soapbox to turn the Curse of Knowledge on its head; she understands exactly how to communicate just enough of what she knows to make people want to learn more. I highly encourage you to watch her unforgettable lectures at www.youtube.com/user/UCBerkeley. For additional examples of the power of the instructional soapbox, view any of the presentations at the Technology, Entertainment, and Design website (www.ted.com), an online mini-lecture clearinghouse that offers “riveting talks from remarkable people, free to the world.” Topics with the potential to come across as arcane or esoteric are made captivating and understandable by TED lecturers, such as Hans Rosling’s fascinating and visually engaging treatment of international economic development or Oliver Sacks discussing blindness and neural imaging.

BUILD YOUR OWN SOAPBOX

How do you locate the source of infectious interest in yourself? I find that persuasion in general is more natural when you actually believe that the content you

share, including your own expertise, is worthwhile and significant. Think about what engages you in what you do; I regularly thank my lucky stars that I belong to a profession that does so much productive good, that gives me insight into the interests and abilities of so many. Do you have similar convictions about being a librarian? If this question draws a blank, think about something you care enough about to soapbox about it. Maybe it's mahjong, or quantum physics, or the Halloween costumes you just made for your three precious ferrets. When you teach, try to channel the enthusiasm you feel for something, *anything* to the task at hand. If you find that the ferrets aren't doing it for you, at least try to convince yourself of the time you can save your students, or how you can be a useful and productive agent in their working and thinking lives. Words of wisdom: if you can't make it, at least try to fake it.

One never-fail strategy is to bring more of who you are into what you teach and design. Half of your soapbox consists of sharing your expertise, but the other half consists of sharing your self; you cannot and will not catalyze knowledge-building if you bleed individuality out of every learning interaction. It pays to show at least some of who you are if you expect people to care, because it is much more difficult to write someone off who is connecting with you personally or who has humanized their own participation in the

process that led them there. Too often, the instruction we encounter is dull and humorless—in Lia's words, "dead words to dead people." An essential aspect of making your content engaging involves making yourself engaging, an *affective* technique that helps create a positive emotional backdrop for your learners (I discuss affective strategies in chapters 4 and 5).⁶ The more of myself I put into these pages, the more I invite you to stay with the ideas and approaches as though they were communicated in conversation rather than via a manual or textbook. Consider, for example, figure 1.2. Now that you know I wrote half of this book in a hammock, you might be less likely to dismiss me as a faceless, theory-spitting automaton.

Exposing your self during instruction can also sometimes backfire: you might take me less seriously because of my informal tone or the personal insights I share. That said, this is a strategic pedagogical decision on my part; sacrificing a modicum of my "authority" in order to create a more accessible tone is a risk I have consciously considered and accepted. Some respond well to informality in learning, others find it off-putting (if the latter is your current experience, you might consider detouring to the more abstract and instructional design-oriented chapter 7, or the research-focused chapters 4 and 5). As this parenthetical suggestion implies, it is useful to anticipate as many learner orientations as possible and connect with a



Figure 1.1
Professor Marian Diamond on her soapbox: "I want you to appreciate what you carry in the top of your heads."

broad range of participants by strategy-switching, processes I explore in greater depth in later chapters.

FINDING THE CORE: YOUR INSTRUCTIONAL MESSAGE

Your soapbox consists of identity and authenticity, but sharing a compelling message is the heart of effective instruction. I mentioned earlier in the chapter that Professor Diamond manages to turn the Curse of Knowledge on its head, encapsulating her content in interesting, accessible terms. Effective educators have an intuitive sense of what captures people’s attention and holds it; they find what about their subject matter sparks interest and makes people actually want to learn (known as *intrinsic motivation*; see chapters 4 and 5). In their 2007 best seller *Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die*, authors Chip and Dan Heath investigated decades of research in education, business, rhetoric, advertising, and psychology to figure out what makes some ideas last and others fade. According to them, “sticky” ideas are those that are “understandable, memorable, and effective at changing thought or behavior.”⁷ They argue that how you encapsulate an idea or message is more important than the technology or media you use to convey it; in other words, it is how you get at the “core” of your message that really matters. At the core of any idea that makes people listen, care, and remember are six

factors, which they summarize with a simple acronym: SUCCEsS (Simple Unexpected Concrete Credible Emotional Stories).⁸ Each letter is a concrete step that helps you communicate messages that “stand on their own merits”:

Simple—Find the Core. Share the Core.

Unexpected—Get attention: surprise. Hold attention: interest.

Concrete—Help people understand and remember. Help people coordinate.

Credible—Help people believe. Internal credibility.

Emotional—Make people care. Use the power of association. Appeal to self-interest (and not just base self-interest). Appeal to identity.

Stories—Get people to act. Stories as simulation (tell people how to act). Stories as inspiration (give people energy to act).

These factors are how myths, urban legends, jingles, commercials, parables, and slogans become so persistent. As in marketing, streamlined instructional messages can make the content and purpose of learning clearer and more memorable, both of which are essential for helping participants perceive the value of an interaction and build usable knowledge. Part of my goal in this book is to suggest strategies that help you



Figure 1.2
The author at her “desk”

drill down to the core of any presentation, class, training, tutorial, collaboration, or subject to communicate what is really important about it, why it *matters*, in order to make the most impact.

LEARNER SELF-INTEREST: THE WIIFM PRINCIPLE

Typically, what matters most to people is themselves. When creating an instructional message, it is useful to understand that learners pay more attention, try harder, and understand more clearly when they see the personal benefit of an instructional scenario or object. This is sometimes described as the “What’s in it for me?” (WIIFM) principle.⁹ Effective educators appeal to the self-interest of their learners by identifying and explicitly communicating this benefit in practical terms during instruction. With any type of teaching, helping your audience see the advantage of an instructional scenario is crucial to encouraging the knowledge they build to become “actionable” in the future.¹⁰

Maintaining awareness of WIIFM is critical to understanding your audience’s needs and motivations. For example, as an author I try to use WIIFM thinking to make sure this book is worth your attention and energy. By engaging with perceived participants as though I am in a learning interaction, I am better able to imagine the self-interest of my reader base. To maintain this awareness, I try to constantly ask, *Why, and for whom, I am writing this? What do I want my readers to gain from this experience?* Reflecting on these targets keeps me focused on the all-important question: *What’s in it for you as a reader/learner?* Think about your own self-interest in this learning scenario: Why are you reading this book? What do you want to gain from this experience? Thinking in this way as you plan and deliver instruction will prepare you to make a more convincing *pitch*, or the act of delivering your instructional message in a way that engages your audience and helps them understand the benefit of instruction (see chapter 11).

SHAPING YOUR AWARENESS: PERSONAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Effective teaching is about more than philosophy, soapboxes, and streamlined messages; it is also important to stay invested in your own learning process.

Maintaining current awareness of emerging instructional topics and technologies is supported by creating a robust *personal learning environment* (PLE)—the combination of applications and resources that “explicitly support one’s social, professional, learning, and other activities.”¹¹ You already have a PLE, even if you’ve never thought about it quite so formally—whatever resources, interfaces, or services you use to keep up with what you do or what interests you. There are many information conduits you can combine to create a viable, pedagogical PLE: books like this, journals, social networking and bookmarking sites, Twitter lists and topics, RSS feeds, search and table of contents alerts, online learning communities, brick-and-mortar or virtual conferences. It’s all about managing your own approach to learning about teaching and technology.

Customizing a viable PLE is a highly personal process. Your preferences and interests come into play immediately, down to the level of whether you want to browse current journal issues in print or online. Like the research process, creating a PLE is serendipitously iterative, meaning that it informs itself as one thing unexpectedly leads to another: you bookmark a blog entry that recommends teaching students about Zotero as a citation manager, which inspires you to track down more information on the project to learn how to use it better, during which you discover another blog that has useful technology information on another topic, and so forth. Your PLE should help you stay in a rhythm of keeping track of these connections. We are all busy, and it is almost impossible to follow so many information inputs at once. That said, if you set up your learning environment in a stable and nonintrusive way, you can check in on different resources related to specific projects or areas of professional interest when you have the time and inclination. Your PLE can do wonders for combating overload by narrowing the information deluge to a manageable stream, and by no means do you have to monitor everything religiously. While I rely on the tools in my personal environment of learning, I ignore them just as regularly. Consistency is more my goal, and knowing where and how to find out about something in a time-effective way when the need arises.

A description of my own PLE: I use e-mail alerts and RSS feeds to follow journal tables of contents, and Google Reader to organize various blog feeds into a series of folders tagged with labels like “design” and “instructional tech.” I save drafts of presentations and PDF articles on Google Docs and Dropbox and share items with colleagues via both. I bookmark links in

Firefox and synchronize these between my home and work computers. I use Google Scholar and article databases to search for specific citations, and save them in Zotero. I network with colleagues to learn about interesting projects and new exercises. I monitor Twitter profiles and lists of educators, organizations, and librarians and use TweetDeck to search trending topics like “#OER” (open educational resources) and “shareable.” I have database alerts set up for phrases like “library education” and automatically receive e-mail from organizations such as EDUCAUSE and the Pew/Internet American Life project when new articles and white papers on technology and learning are published. I browse the education and technology sections and blogs of major news outlets such as the *New York Times*, *Slate*, and *Wired*. I use my iPhone for accessing all of the above, as well as a tool for providing context when I run across a new topic or application on the fly. I belong to online learning communities such as LearningTimes, and attend their webcasts whenever possible. Finally, I keep my eyes and ears open in the analog world.

A few blogs I find consistently useful are *ResourceShelf*, *In the Library with the Lead Pipe*, the *Unquiet Librarian*, and the *Distant Librarian* for library instruction and technology; *Mashable* and *TechCrunch* for gadgets and social media; *ProfHacker* for instructional technology in higher education; and the *Centre for Learning and Performance Technologies* blog for regular teaching technology product lists such as the “Top 100 Tools for Learning.” Other essential sources are the annual *Horizon Report* and *ECAR Study of Undergraduate Students and Information Technology*, both of which track game-changing technological trends within higher education, and other publications issued by research institutes such as the UK-based Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) and professional organizations such as the EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative (ELI). URLs are provided for these and other resources in the Recommended Reading section.

Taken together, all of these sources provide a steady flow of current information on teaching, libraries, and various aspects of technology. The very act of assembling useful information sources into a PLE becomes a lesson in information literacy; by locating the tools that help you become successful at using and understanding a given technology, you begin to discover new resources and build your confidence in that area. For example, learning to set up a Yahoo Pipe Reader or NetVibes account that brings in teaching

and library-related blog feeds helps you see the function and benefit of RSS and drag-and-drop interfaces.

SUMMARY

- The “**Curse of Knowledge**” afflicts experts and should be challenged by a learner-focused approach to library instruction.
- Developing an **instructional philosophy** can help focus your teacher identity.
- Your **instructional soapbox** is a method of communicating your teaching philosophy and identity.
- The **SUCCESS** model can help you find the core of an instructional message.
- The **WIIFM principle** is a way to speak to a learner’s self-interest.
- You can build current and experiential awareness of instructional technologies and strategies through a robust **personal learning environment** (PLE).

REFLECTION POINTS

1. Take a stab at writing your own teaching philosophy in three sentences or less.
2. Is instruction an integral part of your professional identity, or do you consider it a secondary aspect of what you do? Do you see this role changing in the future if you transition between jobs, or as a potential result of shifts within your organization?
3. Would you say that you have an instructional soapbox? Why or why not?

NOTES

1. Chip Heath and Dan Heath, *Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die* (New York: Random House, 2007).
2. James Stronge, *Qualities of Effective Teachers*, 2nd ed. (Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2007).
3. Per Laursen, “The Authentic Teacher,” in D. Beijaard et al. (eds.), *Teacher Professional Development in Changing Conditions* (New York: Springer, 2005), 206–210.
4. Carrie Donovan, “Sense of Self: Embracing Your Teacher Identity,” *In the Library with the Lead Pipe*, 2009. inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org.
5. Sam Wang, *Talk of The Nation*, July 22, 2009, National Public Radio. See also Sandra Aamodt and Sam Wang, *Welcome to Your Brain: Why You Lose Your Car Keys but Never Forget How to Drive and Other Puzzles of Everyday Life* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2008).

6. Claire Weinstein and Richard Mayer, "The Teaching of Learning Strategies," in M. Whitlock (ed.), *Handbook of Research on Teaching*, 3rd ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1986), 315–327.
7. Heath and Heath, *Made to Stick*, 253.
8. *Ibid.*, 252–257.
9. Steven Bell and John Shank, *Academic Librarianship by Design: A Blended Librarian's Guide to the Tools and Techniques* (Chicago: American Library Association, 2007), 62. See also Heath and Heath, *Made to Stick*.
10. George Siemens, *Connectivism: A Learning Theory for the Digital Age*, elearnspace, December 12, 2004. www.elearnspace.org/Articles/connectivism.htm.
11. Larry Johnson, Alan Levine, and Rachel Smith. *The 2009 Horizon Report* (Austin: New Media Consortium, 2009), 4.

USER and Library Instructional Design

GOALS

- Present an overview of the **USER** instructional design method (Understand, Structure, Engage, and Reflect).
- Discuss **scaffolding** as a means of extending the continuum of learning.

Design models and instructional acronyms can seem like a trite approach to any subject, and have in the past led to a fair amount of eye-rolling on my part. As much as they oversimplify, they also provide reflective, learner-focused frameworks for approaching the complex, nuanced processes of pedagogy and praxis. No book on instructional design would be complete without its own acronym, so it is with only a small amount of irony that I present the USER method (figure 8.1).

When you consider the demands of your day-to-day practice, it might seem like I am advocating for the exact thing I warned against in the introduction: overkill. When I started learning about ID methods, the teaching I was engaged in hardly seemed likely to benefit from such a drawn-out planning process. The first project for which I used a formal design method felt cumbersome, but each time I approached a learning experience systematically I learned to focus more intently on the elements that were productive and less on those that weren't. After several years of experimentation, mashing and changing other models, and gathering feedback from colleagues, USER is the result.

The beauty of an ID model is that it acts as a roadmap rather than a ball and chain; it should point you in the right direction rather than drag you down. I have described USER as either a thought or an action model, able to be flexibly applied to the depth called for in a specific scenario or used to provide metacognitive guidance during an in-progress interaction. Design models outline the elements necessary for effective student-focused instruction and provide a rough guideline for implementation and reflection, and I don't recommend that you follow USER to the letter for every class, tutorial,

or subject guide you create. USER is a mental or procedural way to approach the four stages of effective instructional planning—*Understand*, *Structure*, *Engage*, and *Reflect*—on your own terms. More than anything, it should remind you to teach simply, reflectively, and with the learner at the center.

USER and Communities of Practice

Libraries are increasingly called on to pursue innovative educational initiatives in order to remain engaged with a user base that is beginning to expect more personalized, mobile, digital, and responsive information services. In this climate, effective library instruction requires embedded, strategic, and situated participation in local communities of practice. Creatively integrating into the pedagogical or learning structure of a

campus or community can provide a means of redefining information education and adapting to change. This requires looking beyond the library classroom, anticipating emerging learning needs, and engaging in the productive life of an organization or institution in order to become a more integral pedagogical resource.

USER is both a means of perceiving how you can contribute useful knowledge to local communities of practice, and a method for structuring your response. By engaging productively in the discourse and activities of your user community (a process that conflates embedding and outreach) you become better equipped to discern local educational opportunities when they arise and generate high-impact products. In public librarianship, this can involve keeping tabs on current knowledge areas such as technology literacy training, assistance navigating the growing

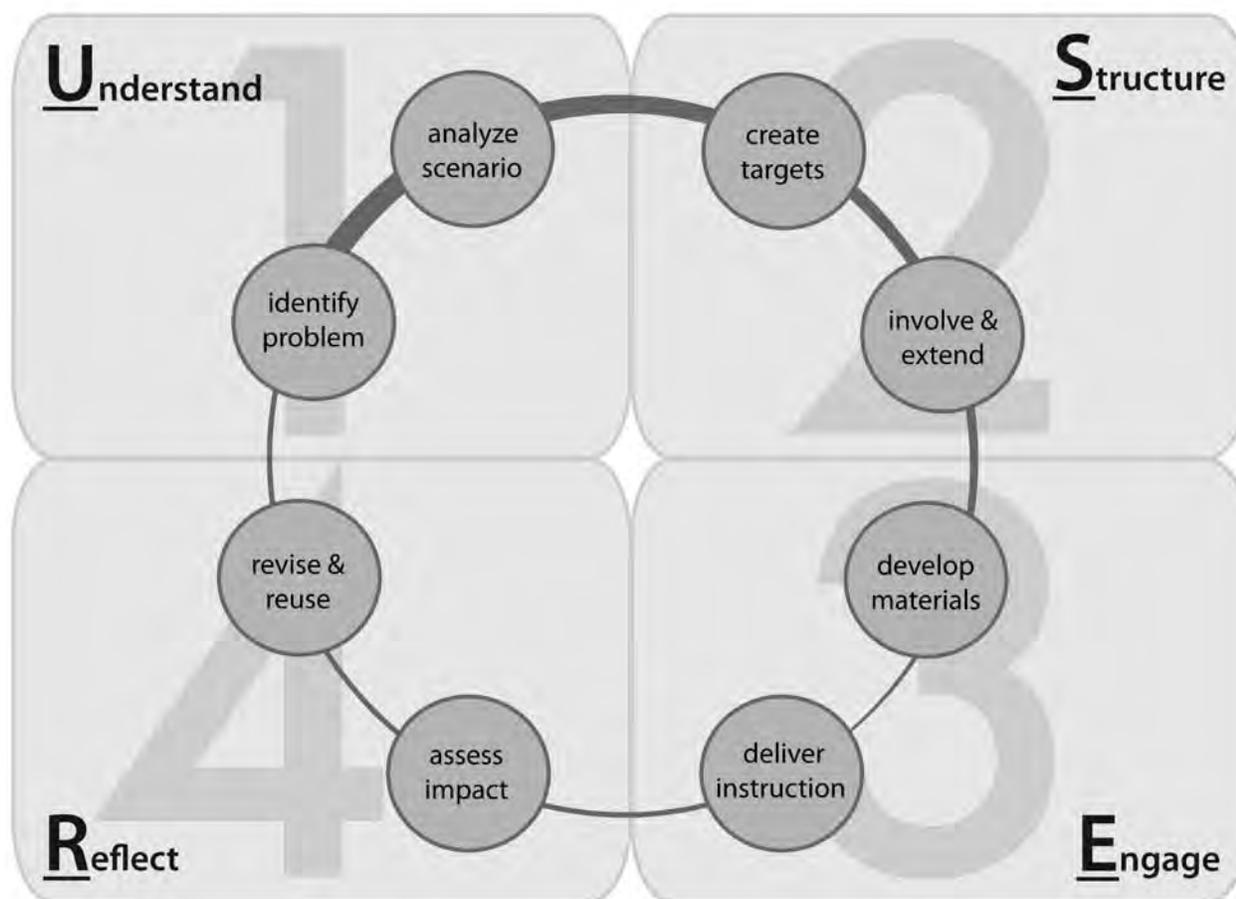


Figure 8.1
USER method

number of e-government sites, or collaborating with community groups to support existing learning initiatives. In higher education, it can involve anything from participating in faculty e-mail discussion lists related to teaching to seeking out campus committees, initiatives, or task forces that deal with topics such as scholarly communication, technology, privacy, literacy, and continuing education. Integrating into the social, working, and learning life of a community or organization is far more productive than expecting it to intuit the value of instructional content that is divorced from its authentic application and sequestered within a library building or site.

An example: As a result of participating in a textbook affordability task force that dealt with open educational content, I perceived campus confusion about digital copyright, and a lack of outreach to faculty about how to provide online course readings from licensed library collections to support fair use and reduce student costs. I created a programmatic “eReadings” initiative in collaboration with the campus educational technology office that sought to raise awareness of making maximum instructional use of digital collections via web-based information, face-to-face education and discussion, “clickable syllabus” review, and train-the-trainer components for library staff, all of which benefited from USER-supported planning. I might have perceived these learning needs without participating in the task force, but I would not have been as connected to stakeholders or the communication infrastructure that allowed me to reach a wider audience.

EXPLORING USER

Speaking from experience, some ID approaches can create unreasonable time and resource demands when applied in the context of library education. In response, the USER method is a streamlined interpretation of ADDIE (Analysis, Development, Design, Implementation, and Evaluation) that focuses on instructional messages, motivation, and the learner/instructor experience while maintaining a realistic concept of constraints and local needs. The acronym is a pedagogical reflection of what I consider to be a central motivation of librarianship: catering to the personal learning needs of a diverse community of patrons with information insight, support, and strategy. Beyond breaking instructional planning into manageable pieces and focusing on

the learner experience, USER is an instructional literacy framework that encourages you to reflect on your process in order to become a “student of learning” as you teach.¹ It can function as a template for design thinking in new scenarios or a benchmark to evaluate your current strategies. You don’t have to start from scratch to bring a methodical approach to instructional planning; you can apply USER as a mental checklist as you teach, train, or create learning objects.

USER: STAGES AND STEPS

The following is a description of the four broad phases and eight substeps that comprise the USER method. Although the method is sequential, USER’s elements often overlap in practice. For example, as you create targets, you are also thinking through activities and assessment strategies, whereas reflection occurs throughout. You can progress through the model step by step, focus on one area in particular, or jump around to some degree to suit your needs. The most important factor is that each phase and step is considered before a learning interaction occurs. As you read through this brief USER description, think about an instructional scenario or object you are in the process of planning or have recently participated in as a learner. Consider whether you or it progressed through a similar cycle organically, independent of an intentionally design-minded approach.

1. Understand.

In the first phase, investigate the learning scenario.

- a. Start by **identifying the problem** that instruction can solve by asking, *What is the challenge learners face, and how can I help them meet it?*
- b. Follow up by **analyzing the scenario**, or characterizing the qualities and confronting the challenges of each element of instruction: *learner, content, context, and educator*. Listing these specifics provides insight into the learning community and how the instructional environment can be shaped to facilitate a positive experience.

2. Structure.

In the second phase, define what you want participants to accomplish and outline the strategies you will use to facilitate learning.

- c. Begin by **creating targets**—*goals, objectives, and outcomes*—that help you organize content and interaction and evaluate the impact of instruction.
- d. Identify methods to **involve** learners using delivery techniques, technologies, and activities, and **extend** the interaction by supporting students along the continuum of learning.

3. Engage.

In the third phase, create your instructional products and implement the learning interaction.

- e. **Develop the materials** of instruction. This involves developing an instructional message, then creating and revising learning objects (e.g., syllabus, handout, or course guide in a face-to-face interaction, or a storyboard, video, or tutorial in a web-based interaction) using a prototyping process.
- f. **Deliver instruction** by developing an implementation plan, then capturing and sustaining learner attention throughout the interaction.

4. Reflect.

In the fourth phase, consider whether targets have been met and how you might improve and repurpose your instructional product.

- g. **Assess the impact** of instruction by investigating the evidence of learning.
- h. Finally, consider how you can **revise** and **reuse** content, materials, and strategies in the future.

ON SCALABILITY

Like many librarians, I tend to plan things into the ground. We are a detail-oriented, leave-no-stone-unturned sort of people, often much too thorough for our own good. Instead of making preparing for instruction yet another interminable process, USER actually helps you avoid overplanning by creating reliable strategies and template objects that you can adjust to each scenario. Introducing a new element into your teaching practice can feel like a trial, but after referring to USER on a project or two you will likely start noticing that the process becomes more familiar and that you have more resources to draw from. A fairly simple rule of thumb is this: the more demanding or unfamiliar the scenario, the more detailed a design approach is called for. For example, if you have three

months to plan a large-scale tutorial or credit class, methodical planning and documentation of each step will yield better results. On the other hand, if you have three hours to pull together a workshop you've never taught because a coworker called in sick, USER can serve as an on-the-fly reminder to ask, *Have I identified a central problem that instruction can solve? Does my message speak to the WIIFM principle? Have I included any engaging activities?*

Another aspect of the depth to which you apply USER may be based on your own instructional confidence and familiarity: the newer you are to instruction or the less confident you feel about teaching in general, the more a systematic design method will likely prove beneficial. Experience will help you determine how much energy you devote to different scenarios, and a consistently useful reflective strategy is to maintain awareness of whether scaling back or speeding up might be appropriate. Appendix A provides a template you can use to focus on USER in more rapid planning situations or to help you reflect in longer projects. You can also download this template at www.alaeditions.org/webextras/.

Scaffolding and Extending Learning

The true test of instruction is whether it creates knowledge that can be applied in the future. Intrinsic motivation is higher when learners see that a learning opportunity is immediately useful, but it is not always possible to reach people at this opportune moment. In chapter 6 I discussed extending the learning interaction using instructional technologies, which provide scaffolding opportunities such as recording workshops to distribute online or offering one-on-one chat assistance to students interested in additional help. Instead of confining yourself to a one-off session, tutorial, or training, USER encourages you to be strategic about when and how you engage with learners before, during, and after a face-to-face or virtual interaction, either by building ongoing relationships and ties to a learning community or simply providing avenues for additional assistance.

You probably already support and extend the interaction without thinking about it; you might share your contact information with a class before instruction, join in online discussions or comment on a course blog, or suggest additional sites or resources that a requesting instructor can share with students to prepare them on a given topic. After a session, you might

Table 8.1 **JournalTOCs Workshop USER Design Process**

1. UNDERSTAND

a. Identify Problem

There are journal table of contents (TOC) feeds and alert services on publisher websites but until JournalTOCs (www.journaltoCs.hw.ac.uk) there was no authoritative “clearinghouse” of TOC RSS feeds and associated API. Library staff could benefit from its potential for current awareness, faculty/student outreach, and creating OPAC and other types of mashups.

b. Analyze Scenario:

Learner

Characterize: Any library staff can attend, but selectors/liaisons/tech-savvy collections people are more likely to be interested. A quick audience poll during the previous presentation indicated few attendees were familiar with JournalTOCs predecessor, ticTOCs. Turnout and motivation is likely to be relatively high due to expressed interest and timing.

Confront: Prior knowledge of the subject will be minimal, and participants will represent a wide range of technological skills. Content will need to be pitched generally and simply with plenty of time for independent exploration, questions, and one-on-one support.

Context

Characterize: The f2f workshop will be taught solo and will occur in an 18-seat computer classroom equipped with speakers and a projector. Visibility and audibility in the room are decent, and it is a common training space that will not be difficult to book or locate.

Confront: Request RSVPs in advance to determine if two sessions are needed and to issue a reminder before the session.

Content

Characterize: The session will be straightforward and will communicate that the purpose of the class is for attendees to become familiar enough with JournalTOCs to use it comfortably.

Confront: Make sure not to privilege one discipline or journal type over another; jump around subject areas to draw in multiple perspectives.

Educator

Characterize: Speak authoritatively on JournalTOCs due based on experience/research from the prior 6-minute Lightning Talks presentation.

Confront: Locate more examples of libraries using it for faculty/student outreach and to create current TOC journal listings in OPACs. Research local recording and video hosting options as time permits.

2. STRUCTURE

c. Create Targets

Goal: Orient participants to the JournalTOCs journal table of contents service so that they are confidently able and motivated to use it.

Objective: Learners will discover and track pertinent TOC feeds using their JournalTOCs account.

Outcome: Attendees will leave the session with fully configured personal JournalTOCs accounts tracking several journals and will be able to name specific ways the service could be used in outreach and OPACs.

Table 8.1 JournalTOCs Workshop USER Design Process cont.

2. STRUCTURE (CONT.)	
d. Involve and Extend	<i>Involve:</i> Allow participants to work in JournalTOCs to set up accounts, locate journal feeds, and more, and will create structured activities to work through each step.
	<i>Extend:</i> Present myself as a JournalTOCs resource in the future, and encourage participants to indicate whether they would like me to contact them after the session for a follow-up. For future reference and those unable to attend the f2f workshop, post slides to Tech Training site and/or links to supplementary tutorials and follow-up information.
3. ENGAGE	
e. Design Materials	<i>Message:</i> JournalTOCs is the best method available for discovering and monitoring interdisciplinary scholarly journal TOC feeds, which helps builds current awareness and provides outreach material for faculty and graduate students.
	<i>Objects:</i> Sketch a rough session outline based on learning targets and exercises, and note prerequisite concepts that require explanation (RSS feeds, APIs, email alerts). Design new PowerPoint presentation and handout from existing workshop template handout structured around selection of 3 in-class activities.
f. Deliver Instruction	<i>Implement:</i> Publicize session via word-of-mouth, the Tech Training blog, Google Cal, and all-staff announcement.
	<i>Capture & Sustain:</i> Capture learner attention with group introductions and questions and media-rich visuals, sustain attention using a comfortable, conversational tone throughout, hands-on individual and group exercises, and critical dialogue throughout.
4. REFLECT	
g. Assess Impact	<i>Formative:</i> Monitor attendees during the session through questioning techniques, reading body language and other cues, and observing performance during activities. I will complete a three-question reflection immediately after the session ends to help me remember specific points and observations.
	<i>Summative:</i> Participants will complete a short web evaluation form during the last 5 minutes of class with a few closed- and open-ended questions. After the session, informally checking in with someone within my instructor community of practice will give me an honest opinion of the workshop's effectiveness. If I record the workshop or create a narrated screencast post-facto, I will monitor views, comments, and website analytics to understand its ongoing impact.
h. Revise and Reuse	<i>Revise:</i> After reviewing participant feedback and coworker input, make notes of how to adjust the exercises, learning objects, and instructional messages to align with learner expectations for a future class as well as follow up with attendees who indicated their desire for additional one-on-one contact.
	<i>Reuse:</i> Archive the presentation, handout template, and any other instructional objects on my computer and to Google Docs in order to reuse them in the future as the basis for repeat or related classes.

Table 8.2 **Example Instructional Scenarios**

SCENARIO	1. ONE-SHOT SESSION	2. LMS TRAINING INITIATIVE	3. REVISED CITATION TUTORIAL
Summary	Rapid design process for a face-to-face, course-related research skills one-shot session	In-depth design process for a large-scale faculty and library staff training initiative for the campus learning management system (LMS)	In-depth design process for first creating an interactive Flash tutorial on citation style, and later reviewing it for revision and reuse in another instructional context
Details	<p>I teach many “one-shot” undergraduate course-related workshops in various disciplines. These classes focus on nonstandardized topics and texts, and each research assignment and library session is unique. My planning time for a typical session is about 2–4 hours, depending on course details and my familiarity with the subject matter. This scenario explores a typical 90-minute, 20-student workshop and an online research assignment and guide I developed to accompany it.</p>	<p>I also provide instruction related to the campus learning management and collaboration system, which includes programming face-to-face staff workshops, faculty trainings and online learning interactions/ objects designed to teach instructors and staff to use the system for library and research purposes. This scenario explores the planning process for several learning interactions and objects associated with this initiative.</p>	<p>I hand-coded a large-scale Flash tutorial on citation style as a project for my instructional technology master’s degree at Ohio University. This tutorial remained in a relatively rough state and never went live in a professional context, but an ongoing learning need for citation style instruction among undergraduates motivated me to consider the project it for potential updating and repurposing at my current institution. This scenario explores the original tutorial planning process as well as the revision/reuse review.</p>

share the link to a customized online course guide that features content and suggestions or post links to supplementary tutorials to a course management system. Library instruction is often difficult to deploy exactly at the time of need, so this type of supplementary learning support allows the skills and tools you share to be more practically accessible to learners in the future. This strategy mitigates the constraints of teaching in the library world as much as it supports the ongoing, nonlinear nature of information-related and situated learning.

PUTTING USER TO WORK

I consistently relied on USER as I planned and wrote this book, which should indicate its adaptability: broadly speaking, throughout RTEL I try to *understand* my audience and support their practical interests, *structure* my content in a consistent and accessible way, *engage* readers via my ideas and tone as well as my prose, and *reflect* on my impact in order to improve the end product. To demonstrate a more traditional USER experience, consider how I applied it in connection with the Emerging Technology Lightning Talks Pecha Kucha forum I mentioned in chapter 5. At the event's conclusion, attendees evaluated which talks they wanted to follow up on as a means of identifying useful topics for staff training. Several expressed interest in my topic, ticTOCs, a grant-funded free online journal table of contents tracking service and API created by the UK-based Joint Information Systems Committee (now available as JournalTOCs, www.journaltocs.hw.ac.uk). Table 8.1 explains how I applied USER to create a follow-up hands-on workshop.

REAL-WORLD SCENARIOS

Outlining cases like this is a critical aspect of my strategy to encourage you to bring your own actionable insight to instructional design. Because I cannot tell you exactly how to approach USER in every educational setting, considering your own context transforms the process of learning about the method from passive to productive. The reflection points at the end of chapter 7 encouraged you to keep one or several realistic instructional scenarios in mind as you read through each phase and step of the process—this

might be a current or future teaching project, a not-so-successful workshop or course that merits revising, an outreach strategy you hope to refine, or an existing instructional object that should be evaluated. In the final four chapters I outline each USER step in detail. In order to offer the broadest perspective on how design thinking can scalably affect practice, I use examples and vignettes from my own and others' experiences. Rather than give an unbroken and detached narrative of USER's components, I outline the methodology behind each step and point to its application in a variety of common, real-world library education contexts: rapid/in-depth, small-scale/programmatic, face-to-face/digital. The three main scenarios I use are summarized in table 8.2.

At times I compare all three to provide a big-picture view of scalability in action; otherwise I focus on one to examine an issue with more granularity or use another example altogether. To stimulate your thinking about scenarios you might reflect on as you read, consider how the above examples relate to and differ from your own experience. Use the planning template in appendix A to note reflections on how each step might inform your own planning and execution. And now, on to phase 1: *Understand*.

SUMMARY

- The **USER** method (Understand, Structure, Engage, Reflect) is a rapid, scalable, and learner-focused approach to library instructional design.
- USER is a way to **embed, extend, and scaffold** a learning interaction.

REFLECTION POINTS

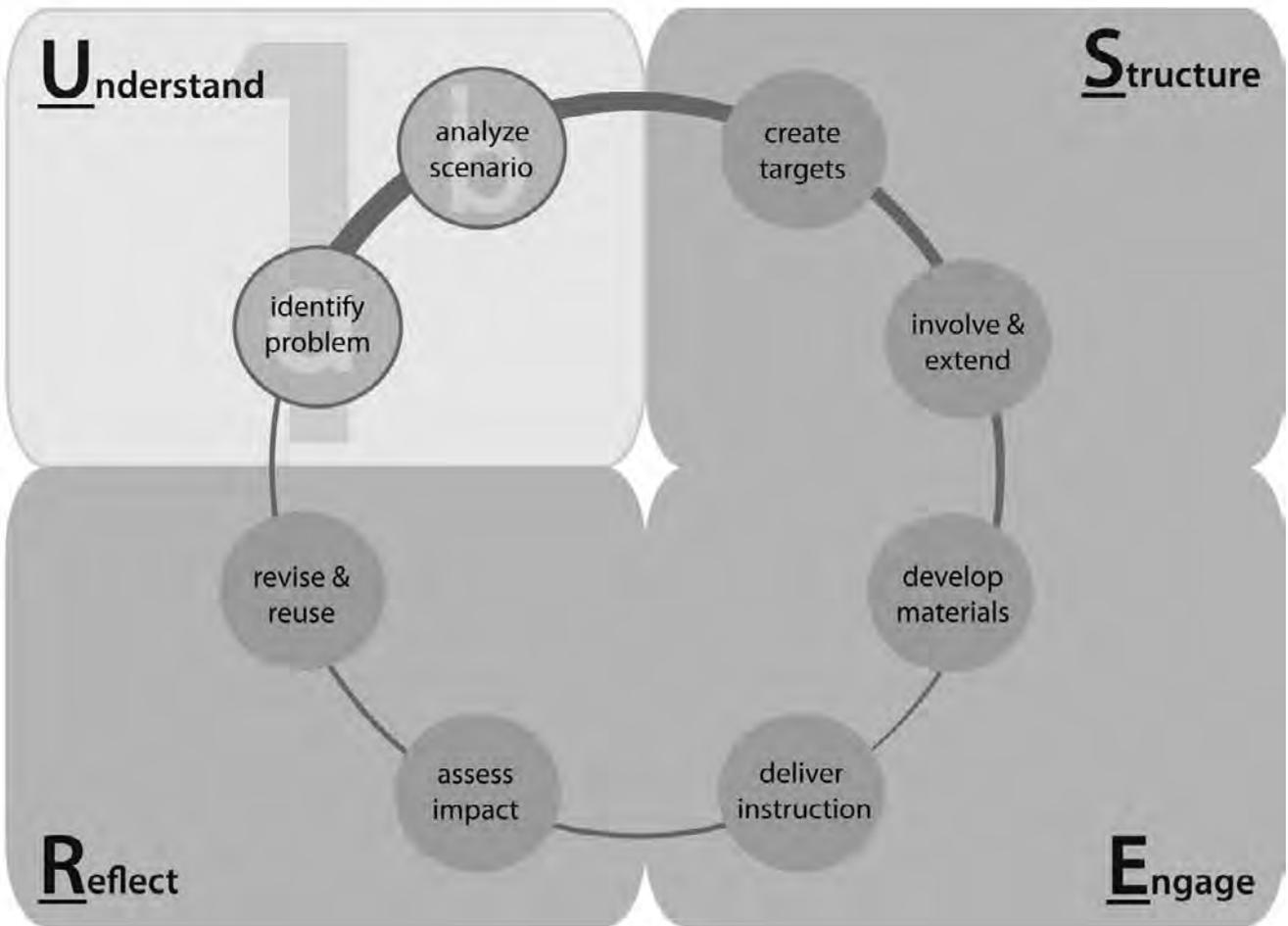
1. Imagine a specific instructional scenario that you will soon be planning or would like to revise. Keep this and potentially a few other scenarios in mind as you read through the final four chapters.

2. Examine the scenario you have identified in relation to the USER method. Walk through how you might approach each phase and step by referring to the brief description on pages 95–96 and table 8.1. Refer to the USER Planning/Reflection Template in appendix A or online at www.alaeditions.org/webextras/ and note what about your current approach

seems to reflect or diverge from USER. Do you already follow a similar process when you plan and deliver instruction? If so, are there areas you privilege more than others? What might you do to balance your efforts?

NOTE

1. James Stronge, *Qualities of Effective Teachers* (Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2007).



Recommended Reading

Assessment

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- Tufte, Edward. *Beautiful Evidence*. Cheshire, CT: Graphics Press, 2006.
- Tufte, Edward. *Envisioning Information*. Cheshire, CT: Graphics Press, 1990.
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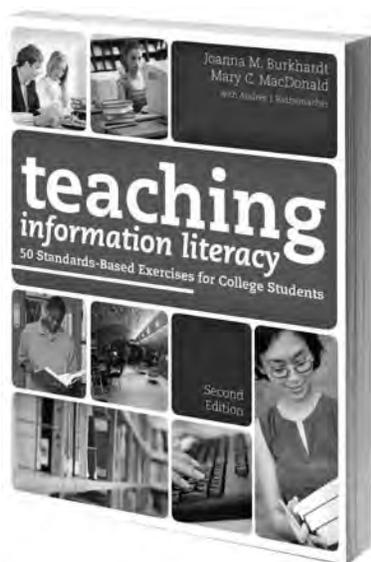
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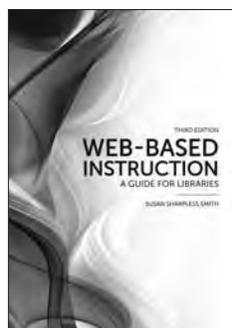


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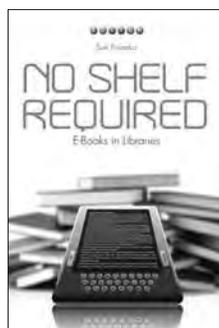
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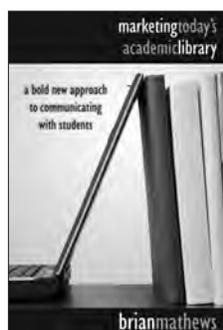
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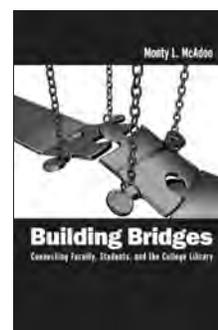
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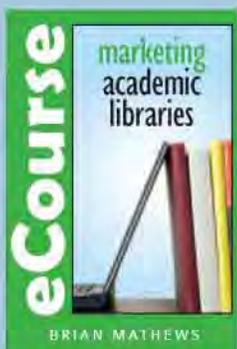
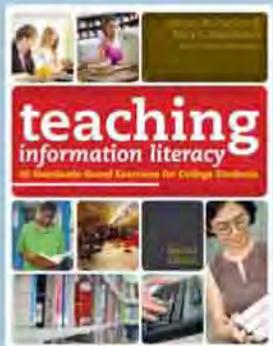
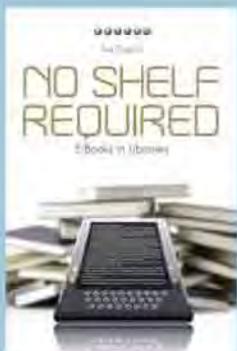
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