

BOOK REVIEW / CRITIQUE DE LIVRE

The Accidental Technology Trainer: A Guide for Libraries. By Stephanie Gerding. Medford, N.J.: Information Today, Inc., 2007. 272 pages (soft cover). ISBN 978-1-57387-269-0.

The title for Stephanie Gerding's second book, *The Accidental Technology Trainer: A Guide for Libraries* conveys a great deal about the book's content. By starting with the words "accidental" and "technology", Gerding immediately points to the library field's ambivalent relationship with information technology. Upon adding "trainer", we know that the book is written for librarians who have unexpectedly been given the job of integrating technology instruction into their role and are likely lacking formal training. Next are the words "guide" and "libraries", where the interested reader discovers that what they should expect from this book is a how-to manual for librarians in a variety of contexts. Gerding's book does not disappoint and, in fact, should also prove to be of use to the "intentional" library instructor, whether he or she is new to the role or a seasoned professional wanting to keep their workshops fresh and up-to-date.

Gerding can be considered an authority on the subject of technology instruction, and she draws on her extensive professional experience as a trainer in various library contexts. She also believes that "it takes a village" to inform her readers and adds commentaries and tips from a panel of experts that she surveyed specifically for her book. Despite spending some time in or next door to the business sector (Sirsi/Dynix, the Gates Foundation), Gerding's values remain planted in the library field. She writes from a community-building and social-inclusion perspective in light of the fact that libraries themselves are not businesses. The book itself is organized in such a way that it can be read progressively from beginning to end or dipped into as a reference for those needing fresh ideas. It is an accessible and succinct read at 230 pages (plus an index) and well worth the investment of US\$29.50.

Gerding handles the "why should we teach technology instruction?" question up front in the first chapter. She notes computer literacy skills are vital for meaningful participation in today's society and that libraries exist to support democratic participation. Gerding then devotes the bulk of the book's content to providing an overview of instructional principles, theory, and techniques.

For the instructional guide, Gerding covers a broad array of topics. They range from foundational topics, such as principles for instruction, educational and social theory, and learning styles, to practical tips that include creating interest

and maintaining motivation, the actual workshop planning process, responding to difficult situations, and keeping current. Gerding also includes tools that put her suggestions into practice, such as a self-assessment checklist for instructional skills, a workshop planning template, and examples for promotional flyers, all of which are located in the appendices. Those looking primarily for a technological resource will find treatment of that topic in the final chapter, where numerous resources for staying current with technological advances in the field are listed (these can also be found on her Web site). Philosophically, Gerding advocates for the "guide on the side" over the "sage of the stage", arguing that instructors, particularly when focused on adult learning, are facilitators rather than dispensers of knowledge.

A particular strength of the book is the depth of the treatment of the topic. It would have been simple enough to write a book with a list of techniques, but Gerding goes a step further by grounding her suggestions in learning models and theory. Librarians unfamiliar with Keller's ARCS (attention, relevance, confidence, satisfaction) Motivational Model or Bloom's Taxonomy will find a text that puts them into a meaningful context. For example, Bloom's Taxonomy is suggested as a tool for forming learning objectives. The key message behind the inclusion of theory is that every learner is different, and library instructors must have a flexible teaching style.

One topic that was not discussed that would address meeting the needs of a diverse set of learners is that of Universal Instructional Design (UID), a model that originated in the field of architecture. Including an overview and tips for implementing UID would complement Gerding's inclusive philosophy. Instructional librarians operating under accessibility mandates would benefit most from its inclusion, but universal access to education is, no doubt, a concern for all library instructors.

Health librarians should not expect to find examples specific to the health context, but they will find a generalist text containing a myriad of suggestions that they can adapt to their own library environment. Overall this book is recommended for library sciences collections, staff development resource shelves, or personal collections in need of an instructional manual.

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