Reviews

International Standard Book Numbers, ISBNs
Since January 1, 2007, the ISBN-13 has become the "ISBN"; and publishers should no longer use ISBN-10. ISBN-13 starts with 978-, has the first nine digits of the old ISBN-10 next, and ends with a new check digit. You can *not* remove the 978- to obtain the ISBN-10, as the check digits differ.

As far as we can, *BJET* uses the new form of ISBN.

Adams, Anthony & **Brindley, Sue** (2007) *Teaching secondary English with ICT* Open University (Maidenhead, & McGraw-Hill, New York) ISBN 0-335-21444-4 144 pp £19.99 *www.openup.co.uk*

Technology has become an indispensable part of our lives. Although without considering and evaluating thoroughly whether it enhances learner centred activities, the transfer of technology into schools in its various forms is a major goal in most parts of the world. This book explores the main uses of IT for English learning, especially in secondary schools.

The first chapter looks at two uses of IT in developing children's awareness of and capabilities with language. The first use is to enable learners to engage in "think together" activities using carefully chosen software. Doing this encourages "linking the learners' minds". The second is to build the teacher's instructions for communicative tasks. This is achieved through explanatory talk and directing students to productive discussions. Also, students improve their writing in order to communicate well in such contexts. As a result, the teacher becomes the facilitator who builds the language skills needed.

The second chapter—"Writing and other language matters"—deals with ways to teach writing using IT. The main way is to let learners focus on the content of what they write and only later to have them check the form using software. A second is to use the interactive white board for word processing and other such tasks. Next, the authors focus on reading as part of literature studies—and they see the e in "e-learning" as the main enhancement. Using the multiple features of IT such as graphics, audio and video makes it unique for better teaching reading.

The authors then turn to the opportunities of IT for practical literacy and deep literacy. For the former, case studies show three possible implementations. First, a religious education teacher sets up an e-mail group that enables rapid, surprisingly useful composition responses, while saving time. The next approach involves accessing, managing and evaluating knowledge and information with regard to the possible literature hypertext. Last is a literature study through a storyboard program that lets learners select combinations of images of the central person of a Shakespeare play from a range of stored aspects (such as background, character and character posture). The authors say these lead to cognitive, motivational, and interaction gains. (The last is to achieve deep literacy.) Of course, you can also enhance concentration, taking yourself deep inside your own head, in front of the screen by writing and reading.

The next study concerns the narrative feature of literature and the databases used. For instance, you can try to link tradition (which refers to the narrative style in the literature passages) and database (which forms the libraries of the new technology).

Another chapter depicts one possibly advantageous use of hypertext for both reading and

writing. This study and its findings show us another good use of IT for teaching literature. First year undergraduates manipulate a short story using hypertext. They read and comment on the jumbled parts of the story. Their responses form four categories:

1 story and structure;
2 interpretation and observation;
3 imagery and visualisation; and
4 style.

Chapter 7 identifies the appropriate time, material and other considerations in the use of IT with learners and gives some more examples on how to make the most use of IT. The types of classroom activities looked at here—digital busy work, digital pretend work, and digital conserving work—serve as good markers to help you decide what to teach and how, by observing the outcomes.

Last, the authors describe major studies on teaching English through IT and their implications. They try to overcome common problems of adopting IT by giving considerable evidence on activities that have been tried and therefore spread good practice.

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Ashburn, Elizabeth A & **Floden, Robert E** (2006) *Meaningful learning using technology* Teachers College Press (New York, & Eurospan London) ISBN 0-8077-4684-3 232 pp £29.95
www.teacherscollegepress.com

Meaningful learning using technology is based on the outcomes of a meeting organised in the context of a big US project on the challenge of technology innovation. It includes nine chapters by fourteen different authors. Its aim is to discuss what teachers need to know, believe, and be able to do to teach for "Meaningful Learning using Technology" (MLT), as well as what school leaders need to know, do and believe to support them suitably.

MLT aims to increase learners' ability to understand complex ideas and learn challenging content using technology. It involves knowledge at the intersection of technology and pedagogy. Six interdependent features characterise it:

- *intentionality*—setting clear learning goals to guide the activity and its assessment;
- *construction of mental models*—design of learning tasks so as to foster the construction of cognitive models of content knowledge;
- *content centrality*—supporting learning goals and tasks with essential questions and methods that make the big ideas clear;
- *authentic work*—setting learning tasks related to problems and entailing thinking skills that are meaningful in learners' lives;
- *active inquiry*—using a structured inquiry process that helps learners develop mental habits fostering high levels of thinking; and
- *collaborative work*—designing well linked tasks that challenge learners both to develop their own potential and to create synergies with others.

What kind of professional development do teachers need in order to become involved in MLT? To answer this question, the writers discuss strategies that contribute to the promotion of MLT from various perspectives, focusing on what teachers and students can do and on how we may use technology to this end. Teachers need to expand their understanding of what makes learning experiences meaningful, to know how to embed inquiry into learning tasks, and to acquire the belief that the use of technology for meaningful learning may be effective and worth the perceived cost, as long as its use is thoughtfully planned and guided. They point out and discuss possible support granted by technology to different aspects of meaningful learning—such as generating content, understanding goals, supporting performance, and assessment. They include general reflections and also contributions related with some school subjects, in particular science and history.

The book is concise and pleasant to read. It is interesting and rich with hints for reflection. It makes for stimulating reading for

teachers, school leaders and researchers interested in improving teaching and learning with technology.

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Bogost, Ian (2007) *Persuasive games: The expressive power of videogames* MIT Press (Cambridge MA, & London) ISBN 978-0-262-02614-7 450 pp £21.95
www.mitpress.mit.edu

In *Persuasive games* Ian Bogost looks in some detail at the way we can use game mechanics and story lines to construct an argument (or "procedural rhetoric") with persuasive potential.

The book begins with a detailed introduction in which Bogost rather laboriously introduces the term "procedural rhetoric" and how that relates to the concept of persuasive games. This amounts to how the game's mechanics (= how the player interacts with the game) and the game's story line work together to present an environment with which the player interacts. Through his/her interaction with the environment the player (the game's user) experiences the workings of a system—and through this interaction the game constructs an argument in relation to that system.

Following the introduction Bogost discusses the applications for procedural games in politics, marketing and education. In each of these sections he uses numerous real-life examples to illustrate the use of procedural rhetoric to provide persuasion and the way in which the game's mechanics and storyline have achieved that rhetoric. Throughout the educational section he places the procedural rhetoric in the context of educational theories and indicates how educational outcomes are achieved.

While the content of this book does have an educational bearing, its main focus would seem to be that of academics and professionals working within the field of video games. This, coupled with the book's difficult writing style, mean that *Persuasive games* is certainly not an easy introduction to the field of educational games. Of course, the core messages relating to the importance of selecting the right game mechanics and storyline would be useful to anyone involved in creating educational games. The real life examples also provide some very interesting and eye-opening case studies.

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Dawley, Lisa (2007) *The tools for successful online teaching* Information Science (Hershey PA & Eurospan, London) ISBN 978-159140956-4 244 pp $94.95 (internet $63.96)
www.igi-pub.com

Globally, online teaching (and learning, of course) has gained immense significance. Educators at all levels of education have adopted e-learning (as a methodology and as a tool), thereby adding a new dimension to the process of teaching/learning. Many educational institutions and individuals use online teaching/learning to achieve their educational objectives. As I have been associated with e-learning for years, this book attracted my attention—to find out what is new. Therefore I was particularly interested in learning what unique this book can offer and how it stands apart from the crowd.

The ten chapters highlight strengths and weaknesses of different tools for online teaching. Dawley starts by explaining what is successful online teaching and how to ensure success by designing online activities by matching outcome verbs to online tools. She then moves to various learning management systems and some likely future trends in online learning.

After thus setting the base tone, the real meat comes in the next chapters; here we explore different tools—like content areas, email, discussion forums, small group learning, chat and instant messaging, the e-whiteboard, audio and video conferring, assessment and survey tools, blogs and wikis.

What is unique about this book? There is a lot of literature on e-learning tools already available. There has been much research on different dimensions of online teaching. As I kept on reading, Dawley impressed me more and more. I recall the famous saying that "achievers do not do different things; they do the things differently." This author does that.

I agree with her that proper understanding of e-learning materials and tools contributes to the success of an online teacher. Her book has served its purpose—to enable a teacher or a trainer to be successful when working online. She explains different technology tools in simple and understandable language. Power tips, extra resources and examples enrich the content. The last chapter of the book deals with the integration of different tools into teaching. It also looks at inappropriate behaviour in the online setting, and discusses certain ethical issues. This chapter further offers guidance on creating a teaching style, on understanding the powers of a learning management system from the teacher's viewpoint, and on how to locate suitable resources online.

Given the richness of this resource for the intended audience, I happily ignore small editing slips (such as, in the Contents list, "About the authors", although this book has only one). The consistent format of the chapters—explaining the concepts, comparing strengths and weaknesses, giving advice on how to structure a tool for success, sample uses for success, and sample lesson plans and resources—definitely add to the quality of the book as an excellent resource. Another welcome feature is that a reader can go to any tool as soon as s/he is interested in learning and using it.

Overall I find this book succeeds in being an impressive and a useful guide for those who wish to be involved in online teaching and learn how to use and integrate different online tools successfully.

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Dean, Joan (2006) *Meeting the needs of all children* Routledge (Abingdon UK & New York) ISBN 0-415-39427-9 90 pp £16.99
www.routledge.com

Despite their young age, children who enter primary school already have a number of different experiences, with, as a result, different behaviours, attitudes towards school, and levels of self-esteem. They have, moreover, different interests, strengths and weaknesses. How can teachers possibly cope with such a complex situation, matching learning to the needs of each individual child? Discussing feasible ways to personalise learning is the aim of this thin but dense book addressed to primary school teachers, head teachers and classroom assistants.

Personalising learning does *not* mean teaching each child individually; rather it involves organising teaching so as to suit in different ways the individual features of each child. This involves getting to know the pupils well, and assessing their learning needs and styles. It implies carefully planning work and keeping track of progress. Personalised learning aims to help pupils become sensitive and balanced individuals with a positive view of themselves, as well as acquire learning and thinking skills (such as reasoning; logical, analytical and creative thinking; problem solving; seeking and processing information; evaluating work done; and learning to work together). It builds on individual strengths and tries to improve areas of weakness.

The book gives suggestions for how to set up personalised learning in a variety of different situations—such as working with children with disabilities or the very gifted, or coping with differences of gender, culture or social background. A number of concise examples make the presentation more concrete—they describe problems met by different teachers and the successful solutions they worked out.

The development of a personalised learning programme can better take place if framed within a whole school approach. Hence, this book discusses how to create a supportive school culture and climate, and how to plan for school improvement, taking care of staff devel-

opment and evaluating outcomes. Interaction with parents is also considered.

Many experienced teachers will certainly recognise in this description that personalised learning is very close to what they have always aimed for in their practice. This is not surprising, since the purpose of this book is not so much to propose a new approach to teaching, but to give a systematic picture of the complex issue of meeting the learning needs of all children. The book succeeds in that—no little merit, especially since it does so in a clear and pleasant way.

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Fischer, Frank *et al* ed (2007) *Scripting computer-supported collaborative learning* Springer (Heidelberg) ISBN 978-0-387-36947-3 342 pp €92.95/£71.50/$119
www.springer.de

Productive collaborative learning is a high and worthy target but it is tricky to accomplish; learners, left to themselves, may fall far short of the ideal. Is it possible to intervene, to model, guide or constrain collaboration, to let us achieve the best outcomes? These researchers in computer-supported collaborative learning (cscl) are trying to find out.

Their book follows the fact that three contributing disciplines to the cscl literature—psychology, education, and computer science—use the word "script" in important ways. Carmien *et al* (Chapter 17) tell us that the common denominator is that scripts are "structures guiding sequences of activities … . How these approaches differ is in the question of where this guiding structure resides (in the mind of an individual vs. in the mind of the designer of an externally provided script vs. in the design of an artefact)." The book splits neatly along these lines with sets of chapters on cognitive, computational and educational perspectives, leading to a very clear-headed interdisciplinary section.

Without a background in one of the three camps, readers will struggle to benefit from everything in the book. Some chapters are more accessible than others; some are more practical—although the titles are no indication of this. For example, Alison King's chapter, "Scripting collaborative learning processes: a cognitive perspective" may sound a bit austere but would be very useful to anyone planning an episode of problem based learning.

As I read the book I felt that the authors were struggling with greater or lesser success at something of extreme complexity. In the face of such a challenge, we can skate over the surface and hope no-one asks any awkward questions OR admit it and walk away OR do the best we can with the tools at hand. Most of the authors take the last option. One of the tensions they grapple with is whether scripting collaboration, however well intended (say, to lighten a learner's cognitive load), negates the dynamism of human interaction. How much of what kind of scripting is enough? Carmien *et al* try to elucidate script "factors" (p 304): "These factors are comprised of the technological device, the target individual herself, as well as the context in which the individual uses a particular technology." This is explaining a complex concept with another three complex concepts!

On the other hand, there are important contributions to wider and enduring learning technology debates. For example, there is the debate between technologists who build a system "because they can" and others who wonder whether life was better without the intervention. It is very hard to design a system that maintains an optimal balance between constraint and freedom in guiding collaborators to produce an artefact. Learners may do as well by merely witnessing someone model collaboration (as in Rummel & Spada's Chapter 3).

But having "learned" an optimal procedure for collaboration, can students continue to apply the script thereafter? Not without "a combination of observation, participation, repetition, identification of the sequencing, understanding of the purposes of steps in the sequencing, and experience with and understanding of variations in the classroom scripts that promote discourse" (Janet Kolodner's Chapter 14, p 260). Computer mediated communica-

tion struggles to facilitate this, of course. In contrast, Kolodner allows us to breath the invigorating fresh air of a well designed face-to-face classroom method unfettered by communication delays and skimpy interfaces.

This is an excellent book, even if some key issues around computer-supported aspects are still work-in-progress. What lets it down is the high price, so that, with no sign of a paperback version, this is one for the library.

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Goldman, Ricki *et al* ed (2007) *Video research in the learning sciences* Erlbaum (Mahwah, NJ & Taylor & Francis, London) ISBN 978-0805-85360-5 603 pp £36.95
www.erlbaum.com

Video research in the learning sciences is a comprehensive book that requires serious reading. It deals primarily with video-as-data in research on teaching, learning, and educational processes. With 35 chapters in over 600 pages, the editors have done a commendable job to put together a community of (mostly American) scholars involved in using video to enhance our understanding about learning at informal level and in the classroom. The editors in their preface (p xi) clarify the purpose of the book as "to contribute both to the science of learning through in-depth video studies of human interaction in learning environments—whether in classrooms or other contexts—and [to] the uses of video for creating descriptive, explanatory or expository accounts of learning and teaching."

The book has four parts: theoretical frameworks; peer, family and informal learning; classroom and teacher learning; and video collaboration technologies. The first three parts all start with a "Cornerstone chapter" that provides an overview to the later chapters in the section, while the first chapter of the fourth part is an overview about video technologies in practice. Part I, with ten chapters, invites readers to think about video research from the methodological frameworks of ethnography, semiotics, conversational analysis, phenomenography, ethics, and so on. The use of video for case study presentation and reflection appears in Chapter 3, where the author emphasises that, in improving learning, video could play a better role than declarative texts. Chapter 5 presents an interesting video ethnography study of a preschool environment. The use of video to promote deep learning in complex and ill-structured domains comes in chapter six.

Part II has eight chapters on the use of video research on peer, family and other informal learning contexts. The range of papers here covers family settings and learning at museums, and the nature of interactions therein. These chapters also highlight a range of challenges of video as a research tool: issues related to capturing video—time, contexts, place; camera and cameraperson as distracter; issues of audio quality; and informed consent. These chapters also highlight the importance of video coding, analysis and reporting issues related to transcripts and management of masses of video data. In Part III, eight more chapters focus on the use of video in classroom situations and indicate the need for teacher professional development. In particular, assessment of effectiveness of video use through true experiments is a matter of methodological concern. In the "cornerstone chapter" of this part, Sharon J Derry emphasises the need for standardisation in video research. In Chapter 21, Schwart and Hartman present a very useful framework for designed video for learning that includes four key indicators: (i) classes of outcomes (seeing, doing, engaging, and saying); (ii) learning targets; (iii) assessments; and (iv) genres. Training teachers to use digital video as designers and reflective practitioners requires different engagements, and some of these chapters provide examples in this respect.

The last part of the book is about new technologies and collaboration in video research. Its first chapter gives an overview of video production technologies: standards, storage, servers, display, editing, indexing, analysis, and sharing. Here the authors also outline the video publishing technologies and video collaboration tools. This chapter is excellent reading for any beginner on video technology. However, the field is fast growing with newer technolo-

gies coming in all the time. Chapters in this part cover such things as ePresence interactive media, videopaper (multimedia with video), ORION™, Integrated Temporal Multimedia Data System, and transcript video database. As an emerging technology, these chapters show what can be done with video both for education and for research in education.

There is an associated website—which provides no information other than the book's content page. Why does it not show some of the book's techniques and provide links to enhance our understanding? Still, this comprehensive book is a testimony to video popularity in the USA and should be a recommended text in educational technology courses—it has much to offer in terms of ideas and innovation.

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Illeris, Knud (2007) *How we learn* Routledge (Abingdon UK & New York) ISBN 978-0-415-43847-6 289 pp £19.99
James, Mary *et al* (2007) *Improving learning how to learn* Routledge (Abingdon UK & New York) ISBN 978-0-415-40427-3 249 pp £21.99
www.routledge.com
Price, Geraldine & **Maier, Pat** (2007) *Effective study skills* Pearson (Harlow, UK) ISBN 978-1-4058-4073-6 348 pp £13.99
McMillan, Kathleen & **Weyers, Jonathan** (2007) *How to succeed in exams and assessments* Pearson (Harlow, UK) ISBN 978-0-273-71359-3 191 pp £8.99
www.pearsonhighered.com

Wouldn't it be nice if these four books together form a seamless quartet on (first pair, Routledge talking to teachers) the theory and practice of making learning more effective, and (second pair, Pearson to learners) what learners should do to make the most of that theory and practice? Wouldn't it be nice if forty years of educational technology let us speak in all such contexts with a single voice?

Routledge is well known to *BJET* readers as a good, steady publisher of works in our fields. Knud Illeris's *How we learn*, whose sub-title is "Learning and non-learning in school and beyond", is a very well written and up-to-date survey of what we might call the educational science that lies behind our educational technology. He looks at theories, models, types and processes of learning, and at the barriers to learning that drop out of those theories. He applies all this to learning at all levels and in all contexts and makes no artificial distinction between school and post-school education, vocational training and workplace learning, or adult and lifelong learning. Good—there should be no such artificial distinction and, moreover, Illeris is a hallowed professor of lifelong learning with a very solid background in all aspects of the book.

Indeed, he views *How we learn* as the second edition of his best selling *The three dimensions of learning*; this first appeared nearly a decade ago almost as a trial for the current distillation of forty years of practice, thought and research. Personally, I find the "dimensionality" of his major theory of learning dimensions overdone, but it remains very useful. (It takes up just four pages of *this* book, note.)

How we learn is quite excellent—very well designed and very readable. It has a good index and almost twenty pages of references ... and there is a website with many more references.

It would be too much to hope that Mary James and co based their book, *Improving learning how to learn*, on as definitive a text as Illeris's. The authorship here is a strange one, however, so we can come to no conclusion about authority at all. This authorship consists of thirteen people, named on the cover in alpha order other than starting with Mary James and Robert ("Bob") McCormick; there is no evidence that either or both of these are editors in the usual sense. Sub-titled "Classrooms, schools and networks", this is a book in a series, though, and the editor of that offers a very brief preface about the series (but says nothing about this book).

Routledge's "Improving learning" series in fact comes out of what they claim is the UK's largest ever educational research and development project, the "Teaching and learning research programme" (www.tlrp.org), 2001–

2005; Mary James was its deputy director. Explicitly, this book does not follow any such "educational science" approach as set out by Illeris. When one reaches eleven pages in, the start of the first chapter, it is to find that the project's research on learning how to learn was explicitly "using assessment for learning as a starting point". Agreed, learning is a complex skill (in all our contexts) and some form of assessment is crucial for learning any such skill. But there's too much implication in this first chapter—and explicitly or implicitly in much of the whole book—that formal teacher-based assessment is the key and that assessment must be the starting point of learning. It is *not* the key—not even for learning how to learn traditional school subjects, let alone what learners will need in later life, and formal assessment need *not* be the starting point. There's not much over a page, for instance, on peer- and self-assessment, and that is in an information box rather than the main text.

Improving learning how to learn: Classrooms, schools and networks is a disappointment from the standpoint of this focussed review, then, and implies that that largest ever UK educational project was not able to step far enough back to obtain a broader and more forward-looking base. Even so, this is a very useful book, with some excellent chapters, a useful appendix on methodology, many good references and a strong index.

So now, what about Pearson's *Effective study skills* and *How to succeed in exams and assessments?* With the hope that these two books make a pair rather than having no shared message, there is logic in looking at them in this order. One could hope that *Effective study skills* (whose sub-title is "Unlock your potential") is more generic or theoretical, with *How to succeed in exams and so on* applying the general principles and skills to this major learning context. This latter book is part of a series aimed at university students whose core study skills guide is *The smarter student*. In their general guide, Price and Maier also write for learners at university but try to cover the whole range of relevant skills; those include handling exams and other assessment tasks as well as many other aspects (such as reading critically, using your voice well in oral presentations, and avoiding plagiarism). The only crucial area I found the very detailed index not to cover is the portfolio (or e-portfolio). Their highly comprehensive book is readable and beautifully presented.

Effective study skills has a very reasonable price for 350 pages of well packed but attractive text with plenty of pictures, tables and boxes. Price and Maier well, but not threateningly, cover their huge area; as well as doing that, it is good to see at least *some* educational technology. This, though, is rarely explicit or the practical basis for all that good advice. Thus, they look at learning styles and types but do not make it clear how an individual learner can apply that knowledge in practice.

Last, we have McMillan and Weyers on *How to succeed in exams and assessments*—"instant answers to your most pressing university skills problems". This too is more than just a checklist of relevant techniques; in other words, the "how to succeed tips" appear in thoughtful text form. Also, the book offers at least some study theory to support the tips. Again, though, that theory is not applied: for instance, here too is quite a lot on learning styles, including this time the Myers-Briggs spectra. But there is nothing to answer the questions "What MBTI type are *you?*" and "So what as regards how best you can learn?"

McMillan and Weyers clearly go deeper into their subject than do Price and Maier, but they do not actually say much more than the others of what a learner wants. This book too seems to say nothing about portfolios (there is no index, so the good glossary must be our guide in that). If the comparatively large size of *Effective study skills* doesn't put learners off, there is little point in paying so much money for *How to succeed in exams and assessments*—although it is a pleasant and detailed account, it deals with just a small field.

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Irons, Alastair (2008) *Enhancing learning through formative assessment and feedback* Routledge (Abingdon UK & New York) ISBN 978-0-415-39781-0 158 pp £15.99
www.routledge.com

This practical little book on formative assessment (which surely *must* include feedback) is part of a series on effective teaching in higher education. (Indeed, Irons consistently uses the terms "formative assessment" and "formative feedback", which is confusing as feedback—by definition—is formative.) Its aim is to have teachers think about what it is they are trying to achieve in providing formative assessment, and how this serves to enhance learning. The book makes use of relevant theories and principles in assessment and uses scientific literature to create a pragmatic framework and a set of tools for teachers. The theory appears at a general level, while case studies and examples provide the necessary practical context.

The main theoretical principles on formative assessment and feedback come in the first six chapters. Although the chapter titles seem to provide a logical division into different themes, the titles do not always exactly cover the content of the chapters, and the same information often appears in different chapters. This makes it difficult for the reader to gain an overview of all the principles of formative assessment and to find specific information. The first chapter introduces the main ideas of formative assessment and feedback and the problems of summative assessment. The second chapter considers the learning environment in which formative assessment (and feedback!) takes place. The emphasis is on a learning culture that summative assessment practices influence—assessment activities that actually engage students and motivate them to learn should replace these. Students' motivations and drivers for assessment are discussed, and tips are given to make the process more effective. The third chapter looks at methods and techniques for using formative assessment and specifically encourages a dialogue between students and teachers. The fourth chapter's concern is the practical issue of workload; it presents some examples of good and not-so-good practice. Here we find different kinds of assessment: for example, having students think about feedback in advance, and comments on draft coursework. The fifth chapter explicitly focuses on the use of IT, and introduces aspects like virtual learning environments, feedback by email, and personal response systems. Last, the sixth chapter emphasises the benefits for academic staff, or how *teachers* can learn from assessment. Topics such as motivation, feedback on teaching practice, peer observation, and external review appear here.

The book ends with a number of interesting case studies to illustrate different approaches to formative assessment in practice. All the case studies depend on theoretical principles, and provide interesting tables and figures. A particularly interesting one introduces an electronic tool to give high-quality feedback to large numbers of students, a useful application in many higher education institutions facing increased student numbers.

Altogether, this book seems to be useful for teachers interested in formative assessment (and feedback). There are many practical examples and all chapters include "time out sessions" with questions prompting us to reflect on our own practice. Still, although all relevant principles are here, the theoretical part of the book is not clearly enough structured.

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Janesick, Valerie J (2006) *Authentic assessment* Peter Lang (Frankfurt & New York) ISBN 0-8204-7648-X 125 pp £11.10
www.peterlang.net

[Editor: "Authentic assessment" is "a form of assessment in which students are asked to perform real-world tasks that demonstrate meaningful application of essential knowledge and skills." Thus Jon Mueller in his useful website on the subject, http://jonathan.mueller.faculty.noctrl.edu/toolbox/whatisit.htm.]

This rather simplistic primer, designed for the US market, is not likely to be of great interest to readers elsewhere. However, it probably should

be, for it gives a very good account of "authentic assessment" in its varied forms, and makes an excellent case on educational grounds for the use of the system.

Janesick's book is equally good in its arguments against what it calls "standard testing", with its stress on correct answers.

What the book totally fails to do is explain how an examiner should allocate grades (or marks) fairly in the process of authentic assessment. It is this aspect that ought to be of universal interest—because the clear implication is that there may be here a fundamental and insoluble problem in this regard.

Indeed, we may then be driven to the conclusion that the best we can do is to use highly experienced examiners—the kind that Eisner called "connoisseurs"—whose judgment can transcend fitting marks to prepared schemes. This is not a wholly satisfactory solution, but it would appear to be one that is acceptable in the more fraught circumstances of the assessment of the voluntary part of Olympic skating.

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Lambropoulos, Niki & **Zaphiris, Panayiotis** (2007) *User-centered design of online learning communities* Information Science (Hershey PA) ISBN 1-59904358-0 403 pp $94.95
www.igi-pub.com

Although published with US spelling, this is a thoroughly international compilation, edited by Niki Lambropoulos (London South Bank University) and Panayiotis Zaphiris (City University, London). As befits a book on online communities, the authors are researchers from Australia, Canada, Greece, Hong Kong, Iceland, Ireland, Japan, Poland, Switzerland and Thailand, as well as the UK and the US. Only one is from a developing country, doubtless because this kind of research is concentrated in industrialised and emerging nations.

Some of the authors focus on user-centred design, in keeping with the title and current trends away from teacher-centred design. But almost all the authors are intent on designing systems for learners to use, rather than having learners design the systems. At best, their designs are influenced by evaluative feedback from learners.

The best instance of grounding the research in theory is in Chapter 4, where the authors review six socio-cognitive theoretical models underpinning the design of online learning community systems. These models range from Dewey's pragmatic social behaviourism to Salomon's distributed cognition.

This book offers much to researchers looking for examples and case studies. Some of the latter involve hundreds of learners, though many involve much smaller groups. Most chapters devote space to design, selection and trials of evaluation methods. Some of these are highly technical; others depend on survey research techniques of dubious value. The tone of these examples and case studies is descriptive rather than critical. One or two studies were still in progress at the time of writing.

Among the sixteen chapters there is a good deal of overlap, with very little indication that authors had a chance to read each other's drafts before publication. While it isn't surprising that most authors refer to seminal works like Jenny Preece's 2000 book *Online communities: Designing usability and supporting sociability* (New York: John Wiley), frequent repetition of concepts and arguments reduces the value of this book as a reference. Perhaps the "community of practice" among the authors could have been closer and better knit or woven?

Unfortunately, considering its price, the book has a dated feel: much had been published in this field before this volume appeared in 2007. The individual chapters depend heavily on research done and already reported and/or published somewhere else in the last ten years, but studies from 2003, or even 2005, seem almost obsolete in such a rapidly changing arena. The time it takes to bring such a book to press militates against its being right up to date! Should there be more than the very occasional reference to 3-D multi-user virtual environments? What about *Second life* online learning communities, for example? By

comparison, videoconferencing communities seem like old hat.

If you're a researcher in online learning it might be worth asking your university library to order this volume, because it does contain much to provoke thought and inform action. You probably won't need your own personal copy, though: I'm giving my review copy to a research centre.

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Lamy, Marie-Noëlle & **Hampel, Regine** (2007) *Online communication in language learning and teaching* Palgrave Macmillan (Basingstoke, UK & New York) ISBN 978-0-230-00127-5 260 pp £18.99
www.palgrave.com

This book is a theoretical and practical guide for teachers and scholars who wish to use IT to support online communication in language education. It comes in four parts, respectively devoted to: Key concepts and issues, Research and practice, Practitioner research, and Resources.

In Part I, the theoretical framework of the field is analysed (historical background, learning theories, pedagogical developments), together with the concepts of mediation, literacy and affordances of technology-mediated learning situations. The currently active lines of enquiry into Computer-Mediated Communication for Language learning (CMCL) are discussed: comparative research, conversational analysis, new perspectives and emergent notions related to identity formation, and expression in online learning. Teachers' roles and skills, assessment, and learners' experience in technological setting (such as social presence, participation, anxiety, motivation, control and autonomy) are addressed as well. Part II analyses the relationship between research and practice through the discussion of a few case studies, each of which looks at two projects involving similar technological tools (forum, chat, multiple object-oriented environments, audiographic environments, virtual worlds, using videoconferences, mobile working, and emerging technologies). The criteria that guide the analysis are: learning outcomes, type and amount of interaction, participation, and kind of tasks proposed.

Part III provides a practical guide to practitioner research; after discussing its nature and structure, the practical conditions under which projects should take place are analysed, such as: technical competences required, ethical framework, learning conditions, data to analyse. Six templates for small-scale research projects on CMCL are also presented, providing an overview of suitable methods and tools. Last, online resources (mainly web-based ones), for online communication in language learning are presented in Part IV.

This book is very clear and easy to read. It is rich in reflections on the value and possibilities of communication in online language education, in relation to learning, teaching and research. Despite its small size, it offers a good appraisal of the potential benefits and challenges of learning and teaching with the mediation of current IT tools. Its main merit is to open up a variety of research perspectives, not only by informing on the state of the art of the research in CMCL, but also by giving suggestions on how to engage in new experiences and innovative practices. In conclusion, *Online communication in language learning and teaching* is up-to-date, interesting and stimulating reading for researchers, teachers and teacher trainers working in online language education.

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Mishra, Sanjaya (2007) *Staff training and development in open and distance learning* IGNOU (New Delhi) ISBN 978-81-266-2932-9 137 pp gratis
www.ignou.ac.in/institute/trainingmaterials.html

Asian governments give high priority to open and distance learning and there are more adult

open and distance learners in this region of the world than in any other. Asia can claim to have seven of the world's eleven mega-universities (serving about six million students) and over seventy dedicated open universities (India alone has fifteen). Also a growing number of conventional institutions offer programmes through distance mode, virtual or cyber institutions are being created, and educators and trainers are increasingly turning to e-learning and even m-learning.

However, in Asia staff development in support of these developments is either limited or non-existent, few institutions have dedicated staff development centres or personnel, and there is little research or scholarship in this field.

A notable exception is the Staff Training and Research Institute of Distance Education (STRIDE) at India's Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), the world's largest mega-university with 1.4 million students on its rolls. STRIDE provides two formal programmes—a post-graduate diploma in distance education (PGDDE), and a Master of Arts in Distance Education (MADE). It also acts as a training institute and provider of training information and materials, not only for IGNOU, but for other distance education providers in India, across Asia and in Africa and the Caribbean.

Among its many publications, STRIDE offers a series of handbooks on open and distance learning. Their topics range from planning and management to cost analysis and evaluation. Handbook 15 in the series concerns staff training and development. The choice of words "training" and "development" in the title of this book is significant. The author is at pains to make a clear distinction between the former—which he characterises as short-term, task-specific and primarily aimed at groups—and the latter, the gradual growth of knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours arising from individual reflection and learning from a variety of experiences. He argues that both of these needs must be met.

This book packs many useful information and ideas into its 140 pages. It starts with an overview of the complexities and issues in staff development. It contains sections on identifying needs, the various strategies we can employ, how to develop training materials, and managing and evaluating staff development. It also includes a comprehensive listing of resources available from STRIDE, the Commonwealth of Learning, and other sources. It is clearly structured and simply written, it includes reflective exercises and examples, and it invites readers to make their own summaries. Its combination of research-based advocacy and down-to-earth suggestions makes this a very useful guide for anyone interested in providing effective staff development and training in distance teaching contexts.

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Osborne, Michael *et al* ed (2007) *Researching widening access to lifelong learning* Routledge (Abingdon UK & New York) ISBN 978-0-415-40964-3 239 pp £23.99
Osborne, Michael *et al* ed (2007) *The pedagogy of lifelong learning* Routledge (Abingdon UK & New York) ISBN 978-0-415-42495-0 232 pp £23.99
www.routledge.com

These two volumes are in many ways complementary. *The pedagogy of lifelong learning* (let's call it *PLL*) follows a selection of sixteen presentations made at the third Centre for Research in Lifelong Learning conference held in June 2005. *Researching widening access* (*RWA*) first appeared in 2004; it brings together contributions from an international panel of leading researchers into wider access and lifelong learning. Together the books provide a valuable source of insights into a developing field of educational research and a diverse range of examples of pedagogies for lifelong learning.

The contributions to *PLL* come in three sections: Learner careers and identities, Pedagogy and learner cultures, and Learning beyond institutions. The emphasis is on non-formal post-compulsory education, although (perhaps inevitably in a collection of chapters based on a conference programme) there is some uneven-

ness and some chapters draw their material and examples from more conventional formal institutional contexts.

RWA has two parts. The first is an attempt to define the current frontiers of research, with contributions from a range of international perspectives including South Africa, Scotland, Australia and the US. The second's concern is with methodological issues. A chapter by Peter Scott provides a very helpful overview of research into widening access. Scott notes that widening access is an emerging research field but shows how issues of access and lifelong learning interact with mainstream higher education in an age of mass participation. He argues that one of the successes of the field has been the extent to which its language and concepts have entered everyday discourse in formal as well as in non-formal post-compulsory education.

The first section of *PLL*, on learner identities, highlights the wide range of issues that any discussion of student diversity and lifelong learning raises. Chapters cover the making of academic identities, dyslexia, making meaning in workplace settings, older learners in New Zealand, and the cognitive, social and emotional dimension of learning. The final contribution, by Malcolm and Field, provides an interesting historical frame through their exploration of a generational approach to understanding learner identities. Key to this approach is an understanding of the construction of learner identity through lived experience. The final section of the book includes several studies of learning in the workplace.

Dimmock's chapter in *PLL*, on learning in small rural communities, notes the impact of funding for lifelong learning and resonates with some of the comments in *RWA* on the development of mass higher education. Scott notes the relatively high age participation rate in higher education in Scotland. However, four years on, and after some significant changes in funding mechanisms the rate seems to be falling. The drivers here are complex but connect to funding, policy and practice.

Many of the contributions to *RWA* challenge current approaches to conceptualising and describing lifelong learning. Boud makes an eloquent case for the importance of refocusing on what happens after individuals have gained access to formal education. Flecha and Gomez describe participatory paradigms for research which involves learners. Forsyth and Furlong pose serious questions about the interpretation of quantitative data, and Crossan and Osborne consider contributions from qualitative research.

Disappointingly for readers of *BJET*, only four contributions between the two volumes consider the impact of new technology and IT on lifelong learning and wider access. Kop's consideration of blogs and wikis in *PLL* is rather institutionally based and perhaps inevitably a little dated. An earlier chapter deriving from a "Literacies for learning in further education" project gives an example of the development of literacy practice involving personal use of IT outside the college context. This suggests there may be real strengths in developing pedagogies to link the formal and informal domains. Ferlander in *RWA* describes the use of a mixed method study to investigate the extent IT can assist in the development of social capital.

These two volumes are too important to leave to wider access specialists—they deserve a place on the shelves of practitioners and researchers alike.

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Passmore, Jonathan ed (2008) *Psychometrics in coaching*. Kogan Page (London & Philadelphia) ISBN 978-0-7494-5080-9 350 pp £24.95
www.kogan-page.co.uk

Psychometrics in coaching's target is coaches, consultants, and human resource managers, but I am certain the book will attract a much wider readership outside its title. It is relevant to anyone interested in the development of potential and the effective use of everyone's ability.

Passmore aims to improve the use of psychometrics in coaching—to broaden the understanding of what a given questionnaire measures, what it predicts, where you can effectively apply it, and how reliable it is. The layout of his book allows you to dip in and out. Despite a sometimes academic bias around theories and models, a uniform structure within each chapter expertly balances that, and the many figures and tables (more than seventy) add further visual clarity.

For readers new to psychometrics, the first two chapters give overviews of psychometrics and psychological tools, and of giving feedback in coaching. They will find Figure 0.1—The potential of psychometrics at work—very helpful, as they will the section on giving feedback. There is also a psychometrics glossary at the back of the book.

Part 2 looks at a wide range of psychometric models, fifteen in fact. Passmore presents a new questionnaire in each new chapter and explains the theory, research and development that has shaped it. He follows this with an overview of that questionnaire, guidance on how to use it to deepen self-awareness with the coach, and last, how to use it as a tool with coachees. There is a brief survey of twenty more questionnaires at the end of the book—names, publishers, websites and brief descriptions. Thus, in total, he features 35 psychometric instruments in this book—and there are more than 370 further reading entries with references.

The notes about the professional lives of all the 34 expert contributors to this book bear witness to their commitment to ongoing research in their field of expertise, particularly to best practice. This message runs through the book loud and clear. *Psychometrics in coaching* is a valuable resource for anyone in the Educational Technologies.

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Stefani, Lorraine *et al* (2007) *The educational potential of e-portfolios* Routledge (Abingdon UK & New York) ISBN 978-0-415-41214-8 186 pp £17.99
www.kogan-page.co.uk

I must confess to *not* keeping an e-portfolio. While I subscribe to the notion that I should, the pressures on my time relegate the task of building a structured record of my learning activities to the bottom of the list where the "good but not yet" tasks gather dust and occasionally tweak my conscience. That is not to say that the support systems are not available to me. At least two of the professional institutions to which I belong exhort their members to maintain a record of continuous professional development (cpd) and provide an e-portfolio system to help them do it. I have the necessary IT skills (as I started in IT over forty years ago there is no excuse) and in fact the material is there. For the last 25 years almost everything I have done is in electronic format in a database that now exceeds 30GB. Perhaps, I thought, this book would make me mend my ways. Alas, I remain unconvinced.

At least Lorraine Stefani made me think about how I would record the experience of reading it and reflecting on it—as if it were an entry in my e-portfolio.

The time between receiving the book and writing this entry was longer than I (or our reviews editor) intended. I finished by reading much of it again so that I could remember what is contained. At the time it was published there was a disproportionate number of submissions to *BJET* on the topic of e-portfolios. The authors of the book note that they wrote it at a time when the concept and the literature were developing. Inevitably therefore, it is a description of work in progress rather than a considered summation of the topic.

Although there are some sections looking at the role of e-portfolios in cpd, the context is firmly in education—as befits a book published within a series devoted to higher and further education. Readers from commercial and industrial education need to bear this in mind,

for the context is almost entirely implicit and some statements—such as the assertion that "constructivism does seem to be the approach most evident in e-learning courses" (p 11)—apply only to education. Very little of the (larger) body of e-learning material found in industry is constructivist in nature! Perhaps this is something to address should the book go into a second edition ... .

What did I learn? First, although there is a great deal of interest in e-portfolios, there is a long way to go in terms of interoperability, in organisational development, and in wider changes to curricula and assessment within higher and further education. We are looking at the stages of an innovation where e-portfolios are being explored by the early adopters but where the conservative majority are still on the far side of the chasm (see Moore, 1998).

Second, the way in which e-portfolios will integrate with other learning technologies to maximise their effectiveness is still developing. The authors briefly describe blogs, wikis and podcasting but fail to make very convincing links on the way forward.

I was surprised not to find a discussion on the intellectual property implications of e-portfolios. The legal implications of ownership are complex and stimulated much reflection on my part. Perhaps those reflections will take form at a later date.

The scenarios in the closing chapter were, for me, the most interesting and helpful part of the book. Scenarios are a good way to discuss the future—and it is a pity that the authors did not have time (or perhaps space) to expand on the assumptions and implications presented briefly here.

In summary, this is a reasonable primer on e-portfolios in higher and further education. It did not set my blood racing but it would be a helpful introduction for someone exploring the subject for the first time. It is not, perhaps, for your personal bookshelf but a possible library purchase.

Moore, Geoffrey (1998) *Crossing the chasm: Marketing and selling technology products to mainstream customers* New York: HarperCollins

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Tomei, Lawrence ed (2007) *Online and distance learning* Information Science Reference (Hershey PA & Eurospan, London) ISBN 978-1-59904-935-9 4197 pp $1750
www.igi-pub.com

I write this several months after receiving this great "book". As someone who spends much time and effort on online and distance learning, I would have liked to say that the delay is because every day I was digging more and more deeply into, and learning from, this "premier reference source".

Not so.

Sub-titled "Concepts, methodologies, tools and applications", this massive (ten kilogram) six-volume work has been sitting right next to my desk, smirking at me: I have just not known where to start. Every so often—maybe once a week or two—I have dived in with determination and concentration, either to browse or to find some answers to a given question. Each such session has never lasted longer than about half an hour, and, while I have always stumbled on something of interest, I have rarely found answers to my questions.

This is not, I believe, my fault.

Let me quote from the Preface (which starts nearly forty pages into Volume 1 and includes maybe five or six useful paragraphs)—take a deep breath and suspend grammar. "In order to provide the most comprehensive, in-depth, and recent coverage of all issues related to web-based education and online distance learning, as well as to offer a single reference source on all conceptual, methodological, technical and managerial issues, as well as the opportunities, future challenges and emerging trends related to distance learning, [the pub-

lisher] is pleased to offer a six-volume reference collection on this rapidly growing discipline, in order to empower students, researchers, academicians, and practitioners with a comprehensive understanding of the most critical areas within this field of study." There is not the space here to study that sentence; its *biggest* problem for us is that it lists three different fields as its concern, and the work's title gives a fourth. Further, deeper study of the "reference source" does not make it clear which of those four distinct subjects it hopes to deal with—in other words, the editor, his four assistants and his five hundred writers suffer from lack of focus, at least in the helicopter view.

Perhaps as some kind of overview, after that barely useful preface, editor Tomei provides a very useful chapter called "Contemporary research in distance learning"; this implies that the book's quest is to prove that distance learning (sic) is effective. The rest of the text comes in eight sections, the titles of all of which take care to mention "online and distance learning"—but none mention anything to do with effectiveness (or quality). In this list I use OnDL for online and distance learning—but please do not infer that I believe online learning and distance learning are either the same or so distinct we need to mention both by name. Here are the eight sections:

1 Fundamental concepts and theories in OnDL (the "foundation" of 61 chapters, as if there are anywhere near as many fundamental concepts and theories—here is, rather, a lot about individual technologies, including e-learning, and individual management aspects, such as accessibility and retention)
2 OnDL development and design methodologies (architectures and distance learning frameworks in 45 chapters, with some mentions of online learning and also of online education)
3 OnDL tools and technologies (40 chapters, quite a few of which are specific case studies rather than guides to given tools and technologies)
4 Utilisation and application of OnDL (43—some of which *do* attempt to evaluate effectiveness in their given contexts)
5 Organisational and social implications of OnDL (31, again with a tendency to be case studies, but some with an attempt to highlight accessibility)
6 Managerial impact on OnDL (27, with the same tendency)
7 Critical issues in OnDL (30, with some more on accessibility and just a little on evaluation)
8 Emerging trends in OnDL (24, some of which address the section title)

Most of those chapters, if not all (who would wish to check well over 200?), are reprints from this publisher's other books, including their multi-volume 2005 *Encyclopedia of distance learning*. There is no sign that there has been any attempt to update those early texts—thus this is for sure not a "recent coverage" as described in the preface, there being no recent references for instance. Further, we now see why the helicopter's lack of focus on a clear single theme in a clear single domain does not improve as the helicopter reaches the ground. One result is that the index is poor and of little help (though a copy appears at the end of each volume); worse, it is not fully in alpha order, so searching becomes harder. Also—tragedy—there is no glossary, though some chapters close with lists of defined "key terms".

There is much of value in this great publication—but it is almost impossible to find what one needs. (My three main needs, by the way, were teacher education and training by distance learning, including online; portfolios and e-portfolios; and how to ensure the effective learning and assessment of practical vocational skills in a distance context. The chapter titles and the index entries help very little and I gained almost nothing in those contexts.) The thing will look impressive in a higher education library, but will be of no other value there if the education staff do not all take it on themselves to add a good few chapters to their relevant reading lists.

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