

## Reviews

We apologise for giving the wrong w-address, in issue 39(5), September 2008, for Routledge, the publisher of **Stefani, Lorraine et al** (2007) *The educational potential of e-portfolios*. The correct address is [www.routledge.com](http://www.routledge.com).

However, this error reminds us to try a new way to show publishers' w-addresses—within the headers of the reviews of their titles rather than below those. Please let us know your view on this change—[ericdeeson@aol.com](mailto:ericdeeson@aol.com).

**de Boers, David** (2007) *History of American education* Peter Lang (New York [www.peterlang.net](http://www.peterlang.net)) ISBN 978-1-4331-0036-9 152 pp £9.50

Have you ever wondered why the outcomes of educational research often seem to have a limited influence on school systems' organisation? This thin historical book can help you understand that.

Looking back over USA's educational history from the seventeenth century to the present, de Boers highlights how the development of American education was strongly influenced by religious, social, economic and political factors—and only in more limited measure by distinct philosophical factors (ie, theory). The historical story leads us to understand the roots of trends and movements in education that developed and alternated in the past under the influence of ideological managers and often still affect at least the US educational system now.

de Boers's book is very well structured in a chronological and logical way. To help us notice and fix the main concepts, he highlights key terms in the text and collects them in a glossary. Moreover, he ends each chapter with a number of review questions, as well as with a list of selected topics for further study. This makes it an excellent book for students of education and related subjects.

*History of American education* is not simply a text book, however, but a pleasant and thought-provoking read that I recommend to anyone

involved in our field—policy-makers first of all, but also teacher educators, scholars and teachers. Nor is it just for Americans—for schools mirror society everywhere, and becoming aware of the educational history of a country can well stimulate all of us to reflect on the roots and development of education where we are.

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**Bramble, William & Panda, Santosh** (2008) *Economics of distance and online learning* Routledge (London & New York [www.routledge.com](http://www.routledge.com)) ISBN 978-0-415-96389-3 296 pp £22.99

Economics is highly significant in globalisation. It influences almost all fields of human endeavour. But, distance learning practitioners are concerned about costs and economics from the very beginning—in order to establish distance education as a cost-effective mode of delivery. Largely, they are successful in influencing political leaders in both developed and developing countries. However, the situation is changing fast with the emergence of information and communication technologies and the issues associated with quality and accreditation.

Thus, a book covering issues of cost and economics in distance and online learning is most welcome. But—contrary to expectations—this book delivers little in terms of new under-

standing and critical reflections. Presented through fifteen chapters written by acclaimed scholars in the field, the book falls short of giving us a smooth, coherent perspective. However, Bramble and Panda try to stitch together some of the dis-jointed contributions through a concluding chapter that identifies some of the common themes of the book and gives a ten-point summary of the lessons learned.

The initial five chapters of *Economics of distance and online learning* have little relevance to the book's main theme—except that these present some of the emerging models of distance and online learning. (Also, Chapter 1 provides an overview through a definitional approach.)

Chapter 6 presents a descriptive account of funding patterns in American higher distance education, while in the next chapter Panda and Gaba do the same from an Asian perspective. It is interesting to note that distance institutions and programmes are managed mostly through student fees, though most Governments make noise about increasing access and “reaching the unreached”. Greater Governmental funding of distance learning would definitely improve access by cutting course fees—but this is not done in most of the examples in this book. Distance and online learning have now become resource-generating profit centres!

There is another thread here that shows a “red signal” for the e-learning enthusiasts. The more synchronous activities an online programme use, the higher the cost; and, as the fixed cost of initial investments in technology are higher in e-learning it is hard to reach economies of scale.

Significant chapters of the book are Chapters 8, 9, 10, and, most important of all, Chapter 14. In Chapter 9, Insung Jung dissects the cost structure of a virtual university, and in Chapter 10, Ormond Simpson brings in four difficult issues in cost-benefit analysis—return on investment, resale value, willingness to pay, and educational investment risk. Thomas Hülsman in Chapter 14 re-visits the methodological issues in costing Fordist [= mass production] and IT-based distance education—

and concludes that the latter could provide cost efficiency *if* cooperation is exploited effectively and re-usable learning objects are used for content development.

In spite of the lack of critical reflection, the main contribution of the book is the warning it gives to policy-makers and instructional designers who are moving towards synchronous distance education, through the use of technology, without considering the economics. In essence, to be cost-effective, it is important to use less sophisticated technology and to have many students and a high learner-teacher ratio (low learner-teacher interaction). Questions of quality and the measure of effectiveness still remain un-answered, and there is need to have more research in this area of study.

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**Bruns, Axel** (2008) *Blogs, Wikipedia, Second life, and beyond* Peter Lang (New York & Washington [www.peterlang.net](http://www.peterlang.net)) ISBN 978-0-8204-8866-0 418 pp £17.50

Since coming to prominence in late 2006, Web 2.0 has had an impact on educational research, as a browse through any recent conference abstracts on e-learning shows. In the UK, a number of recent JISC and BECTa reports have described the potential of Web 2.0—charting the transition from the read-only Web to the read/write Web, and examining the potential of online social networking communities, podcasting, wikis and blogs. Bruns's book joins Peter Lang's “Digital formations” series; this considers digital technologies and modern life, and offers a much more sustained study than the entry-level practical books that have appeared lately. Running to a substantial 418 pages, Bruns's is one of the most in-depth studies of Web 2.0 literacy to date; however, it does cover familiar territory, often (I must say) rather repetitively. Unlike some of the other recent studies, though, it does not depend on any empirical research, and many of its rather

idealistic claims about Web 2.0's re-alignment of the information society remain untested.

The central concept of the book is "produsage"—a rather ungainly word which Bruns prefers to "prosuming".<sup>1</sup> Whichever the word, we now deal with the same transformation of "consumers" or "end-users" into a collaborative community of "content-creators". He relates the turn towards a new "model of user-led, collaborative content-creators" (p 337)—otherwise described in terms of a new "renaissance of information, knowledge, and creative work"—to the possibility of a "fundamental reconfiguration of our cultural and intellectual life, and thus of society and democracy itself" (p 34). These are grand claims ... and the book's fifteen chapters set out to explore this "renaissance". Its focus is such familiar areas of Web 2.0 as open source software development, blogging and citizen journalism, wikis, folksonomies [social tagging systems like Delicious and Flickr], the media and creative industries, social networking spaces, and Web 2.0 and democracy. It ends in the bathos of the final chapter, which explores "Production, produsage, and the future of humanity".

Chapter 13, with the rather awkward title of "Educating producers, producing education: produsage and the academy", is of most direct interest to us—in particular with its call for a new pedagogy based on "the five Cs" (which calls for teachers and learners to be more creative, collaborative, critical, combinatory and communicative). The role of educators is actively to enhance learners' digital literacy skills; this allows them to exploit their new social networking opportunities and to reconfigure the existing hierarchies of teacher/learner, staff/student, and institution/client. These, of course, are familiar themes of constructivism—and, though they here have a wider role in relation to society than merely the classroom, Bruns gives us few practical examples or strategies about how to manage this change.

<sup>1</sup>Both terms mean the creation of shared content in a networked, participatory environment which breaks down the boundaries between producers and consumers (from [produsage.org/produsage—Ed](http://produsage.org/produsage—Ed))

As in many existing discussions of Web 2.0 at the moment, Bruns is rather too easily carried along by the potential. He does not seem very aware of the resistance and apathy that often exist toward using technology in the classroom, and of the fact that learners are far more likely to possess fairly crude digital literacy skills than Prensky's headline grabbing notion of "digital natives" implies. He pays little attention to the dangers of an increasingly ambient and networked world (in which identity theft, cybercrime, and sophisticated viruses may threaten the realisation of a Web 2.0 participatory democracy). Given, ironically perhaps, the over-reliance on Web-based journalism to help fuel the Web 2.0 movement, Bruns's book is still one of the more sustained and coherent places to begin to examine the potential of Web 2.0 and its implications for the information society, as well as the role of educational IT policy in helping to transform it.

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**Connolly, Paul** (2007) *Quantitative data analysis in education* Routledge (Abingdon UK & New York [www.routledge.com](http://www.routledge.com)) ISBN 978-0-415-37298-5 268 pp £19.99

Research methods courses are more and more an integral part of university studies, especially for masters and doctoral students. This SPSS book provides a stimulating and user-friendly point of entry into what people often think of as the "dry and turgid" area of quantitative data analysis. Its novel approach opens up the field to students and researchers with little or no prior experience; that rests on the author's introductory guide to SPSS, which lets the reader draw on real-life datasets found on the book's support website of supplementary resources. The other most appealing aspect of the book is its rather personal tone, and the feeling that thus it aims at encouraging students to enjoy and develop an enthusiasm for the subject. Connolly's stated aim is to help readers reach the point at which they have the "competence not only to undertake simple but effective statistical analysis, but also

to be able to interpret the findings appropriately and to write them up to a standard fit for publication" (p 243). In this respect, the book may also appeal to those post-doctoral researchers who have also rather ignored the importance of quantitative data analysis.

The book consists of seven chapters set up by a short introduction covering the key areas of SPSS, (from getting started to running statistical tests). Chapter 1 provides a surprisingly accessible introduction to the main menus and features of the software, letting the reader gain immediate hands-on experience and, importantly, start analysing data from the start. This practical approach and the clear style of writing combine to counteract the inhibitions that students often find on dealing with quantitative approaches, and provides a strong binding between the other chapters.

Five further chapters progressively deepen the reader's knowledge and confidence with SPSS, introducing some of the most useful and significant areas of statistics that should appeal to upper level undergraduates and postgraduates in particular. These address exploring, displaying and summarizing data (Chapter 2); analysing relationships between variables (Chapter 3); good practice in presenting findings (Chapter 4); confidence intervals and statistical significance (Chapter 5); and conducting statistical tests and calculating effect size (Chapter 6). Each includes short self-assessment exercises that allow readers to check their progress against the answers (also on the website).

Finally, chapter 7 recaps the main themes of the book and discusses the next step—toward more advanced forms of statistical analysis using three or more variables. This short final chapter is especially useful as it locates the book as one step on a longer journey aimed at demystifying quantitative research while also introducing the serious researcher to further reading and new directions. The book's accessible style and evident depth make it a very useful addition to reading lists for research methods courses across the educational spectrum.

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**Corder, Nicholas** (2008) *Learning to teach adults* Routledge (Abingdon UK & New York [www.routledge.com](http://www.routledge.com)) ISBN 978-0-415-42363-2 159 pp £19.99

Learning doesn't end with school leaving. Learning is more than just education and training beyond formal schooling. Learning takes place throughout the human life cycle, from before birth to the grave—although in a number of learning environments.

People think of teaching adults as a difficult, tiresome and stressful job. This is not only because adults are aware of what they are doing, but also because they use cognitive strategies more effectively. However, we can also think of these features as advantages: we need to make use of adult learning styles for effective teaching. In this respect, this book is helpful as an introduction to the field by giving plenty of ideas on the process of teaching adults.

The first chapter—which explains the term "adult"—is of value for two reasons. It outlines the life-stages that adults go through—such as "age 30 transition", the settling down phase, and so on; this is important as they may have different needs and behaviours when learning. Second, the characteristics of adults that mark them from children are also worth knowing—as we can create effective learning environments and activities. The characteristics are (briefly) knowledge, experience, and commitment to their learning. The next chapter, on adult learning, is necessary for new teachers, if they don't have enough training. Of course, the problems mentioned here (as elsewhere in the book)—such as dyslexia—apply to all learners, not just adults.

Third, we come to "learning in groups"; this includes valuable information on how to create effective peer tutoring. Also, here are useful tips for effective classroom management. Next we have "teaching and learning methods"; this includes teacher centred and learner centred methods. After that come resources for teaching and learning (such things as audio, chalkboard / whiteboard, computers and internet, flipchart, games, and so on). Though we are used to such things, it is

good that Corder reminds us that adults may not be so willing to use them or so clear how to use them.

The final chapters cover assessment and evaluation; planning; a professional approach; the first sessions and some traps to avoid; over to you; and useful contacts.

Thus, as well as telling us about the methods of and approaches to teaching adults, Corder manages to share his experience and show how adult learners differ from school-age ones. His book is a good introduction for new teachers planning to work with adults.

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**Dron, Jon** (2007) *Control and constraint in e-learning: Choosing when to choose* IGI Publishing (Hershey PA & London www.igi-pub.com) ISBN 978-159904390-6 340 pp \$94.95

This major book concentrates squarely on one of the central issues of education—how to control learning events and opportunities. It is possible to plot the various shades of educational philosophy and practice along a line, with teacher control at one end and learner control at the other: not much is as close to our hearts in the educational technology arena. As Dron's book's title suggests, this is just one axis though: everyone in education faces constraints which act to limit the range of available choices.

Dron's learner-centred ideal in all this is particularly clear: it is for each learners to pick his/her own path along a learning trajectory, choosing "whether to take control or to relinquish it" (p 311). For me, the clearest exposition of what he means is a description of how one might become a doctor in "a few years time" (p 323). Here, the decision to embark on medical studies is far from the first and last one those learners make. A number of small

hurdles help them evaluate their progress as they travel towards entry into the profession. "The system" provides history, or feedback-informed options, for further learning, while a community of experts and fellow apprentices is just a question away. (For instance, in social software, even individualistic use of something like del.icio.us leaves evidence of my participation for other users and may well influence them.) Although current web technologies hold genuine potential for this kind of future, the systems described in the latter parts of the book are still not well tried and tested—so this is not (and never pretends to be) a "ten-step guide to e-learning Nirvana".

The book has three sections. The first begins by introducing some basic concepts—in particular Moore's transactional distance (important to design in distance learning), which is a primary source for Dron's own model of transactional control. I found some material in this section quite challenging and let myself skate over it in the hope that it would fall into place later ... which it mostly did. But I have to mention that some scholars will cringe at the rather limited (although popular) interpretation of Vygotsky's zone of proximal development, which pops up six times.

Having analysed traditional institutional learning (for instance, in higher education) from a perspective of transactional control, Section II does that for the normal range of e-learning options, such as online discussion. It may come as no surprise that what is the norm for many shows up poorly in Dron's account. This is a happy hunting ground for anyone looking to argue against over-enthusiasm for institutional virtual learning environments (vles)—if there are any such enthusiasts left ... The author, clearly feeling that the chance of success is too low, decides not to waste time trying to force good learning into monolithic vles.

Section III is about social software and learner control. Although blogs and wikis within vles are a promising development, Dron is fairly dismissive: he sees "self-organising learning environments" as the future. Meanwhile, many of us are stuck in the "now", trying to imagine how a wiki might improve vle-based learning. So I would have liked a more posi-

tive slant (perhaps a celebration of the good things done in spite of the constraints of vles). Those of us fortunate enough to have blog and wiki tools in our vles can still draw usefully upon Dron's eight "Design principles for social software", although these are really for developers who can build software from the ground up.

Thus, while gazing at the horizon, Dron remains realistic about the prospects of reaching there. Referring to the "Edinburgh scenarios", he admits e-learning could yet "die stillborn". He reminds us that e-learning, and especially using social software for it, is still very young—and, in the real world (where e-learning platforms have to serve the organisation's wider needs, such as for resilient systems, administration of courses, and so on), the imagined future may remain that way for longer than we expect. Even so, my lasting impression is just how awkward and stilted these "early years" of e-learning will seem compared to a situation in which learners *can* choose, in large measure, when to choose.

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**Gibson, David** *et al* ed (2007) *Games and simulations in online learning* Information Science (Hershey PA [www.igi-pub.com](http://www.igi-pub.com)) ISBN 159-04304-1 402 pp \$99.95 (e-book \$71.96)

This is a heavyweight contribution to the games in education debate with "guru" Marc Prensky as a co-editor but not a contributor. There are sections on games and simulations in education; social analyses of games; pre-service teacher education using games; using real space in game design; and embedding assessment. The contributors give examples mainly from the USA but also from Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Switzerland, and the UK.

The book demands that we play it rather than read it: so why is it not on offer online? and with playable demonstrations? Instead, the screenshots of games are always too small and hard to grasp, and for few of the games dis-

cussed are there w-links with access to them. It is therefore hard to gain a "feel" for how these games can aid learning or even can be played. Also, the language is a barrier to the learning processes involved:

"The game helps players build a collective academic and spatiotemporal identity whilst being immersed in a sentient environment" (p 237) is from one of the abstracts—but there are many other such unclear sentences:

"Hidden Markov Modeling then develops learning trajectories across sequences of performances and results in stochastic models of problem solving progress across sequential strategic stages in the learning process." (p 349)

The contributors tend to assume too much reader knowledge of their projects. Some of them ground their theories with real life examples whilst talking about their particular game—Schrier's "Reliving the revolution" is one such. Galarneau and Zibit have interesting ideas on thriving on chaos and "smelling" their way through the digital world. They suggest that the dissonance between our expectations of school and the realities of the digital life boils down to the puritanical notion that learning must involve hard work and certainly no fun (p 74). Van Eck's chapter blends theory with practice seamlessly. He stresses the importance of narrative as among the most effective learning strategies. But he sums up (p 272) the thread that runs through the book—that educational establishments are not taking up gaming as expected:

"One reason for the dearth of these games [in schools] may be that the dominant paradigms in education and the gaming industry are too different to allow for good synergies."

This book certainly contributes to this debate but is the real battle taking place elsewhere?

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**de Haan, Erik** (2008) *Relational coaching* Wiley (Chichester UK & Hoboken NJ [www.wiley.co.uk](http://www.wiley.co.uk)) ISBN 978-0-470-7248-6 334 pp £24.99

All summer I have been picking this book up, opening to any page and getting completely

engrossed. It's that sort of book: well written and easy to access, it's full of information about executive coaching, and its structure and clear contents pages make it easy to dip in and out, and to use as a manual. These features are particularly useful if you teach coaching skills.

Yet, whilst primarily aimed at coaches, *Relational coaching's* focus is the relationship between the learner and the helper. This is something familiar to all of us, the "helping conversations" that teachers and tutors use the whole time. The book explores the questions often asked by the coach "in the moment"—about what to do next that will be best for the client (called coachee by de Haan)—but argues that we should take less notice of the structure and tools we use, and more more of the style and approach we use to build the relationship.

De Haan's book is in three parts. Part 1 covers "The ways of coaching", giving an explanation of the whats, and whys of coaching today. Part 2, "The ways of research", is where de Haan explores the effectiveness of coaching using qualitative and quantitative evidence and "critical moments" from experienced and inexperienced coaches. Last, "The ways of excellence" covers the professionalism of coaching, the skills and knowledge required for effective coaching, and how to become accredited—and has aids and activities for professional development.

Each part starts with some personal narrative, giving an insight into de Haan which provides a relationship with the author that adds an intimacy and a desire to want to read on. Then we have case studies, the latest research in executive coaching, and explanations of how coaching fits amongst other forms of support. It explores the heart of coaching from the client's perspective, giving insightful examples from coaches with all levels of experience. Many of these "critical moments" resonate with my experiences of one to one tutoring, and I found the book as interesting to read in relation to my coaching role as in my teaching role. Teachers and teacher trainers who recognise the use of coaching in the develop-

ment of learning will find this book really interesting and helpful.

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**Hongladarom, Soraj & Ess, Charles** (2007)  
*Information technology ethics* Idea Group (Hershey PA www.igi-pub.com) ISBN 1-59904310-6 222 pp \$165

Learners, often carrying their laptops, move freely across national and cultural frontiers. IT hardware and software are in use in every country on earth. But whilst IT hardware and software are natural products of the cultures of the societies within which they grew, they may affect recipient cultures in unexpected and sometimes negative ways.

Hongladarom & Ess (I'll call them, with respect, H & E) offer us a diverse and instructive collection of essays which explore issues of this kind. Their edited volume consists of a lengthy (21 pages) Introduction, eight essays dealing with "Theoretical concerns", and a further six exploring "Specific viewpoints". The contributors are in Austria (3), Italy (1), Norway (2), UK (3), US (5), South Africa (1), Thailand (4), and Turkey (2). The absence of voices from (for instance) Russia, China, South America, India, and other parts of Africa is surely a matter of some regret in view of that thesis.

The editors see the volume as a contribution to an emerging discipline called "intercultural information ethics", the focus of various conferences and journal special issues for several years now. You should be aware, however, that the sense of "ethics" in this new field may be a somewhat novel one. The traditional meaning is what is right and wrong, good and bad, what rational agents ought to do. Here the word also covers what is culturally valuable (aesthetics?); resource distribution issues (political philosophy?); privacy and the state (jurisprudence?); intellectual property protection (law); and linkage of beliefs and values to social groups (anthropology?).

The difficulty is that, in its usual sense, “ethics” makes sense only when applied to agents who are aware of the effects of their decisions, and who are open to some kind of censure or sanction. How can we transfer ethical notions to a case (for example) in which someone in one culture designs an IT product then used by people in a second culture, the nature of which is unknown to the designer? What sanctions could, or should, the world apply to the designer? And how can we devise a code of blame for indirect and remote effects of actions taken in one culture upon another—when we lack coherent rules and sanctions for direct interventions such as sales of armaments or military invasion? Advocates of an intercultural ethical system seem to be groping towards something like the Starfleet Prime Directive of non-intervention in other cultures that features in *Star Trek*. But, in the real world, there is no “Federation” and no Starfleet, and without them, directives would be idle.

H & E’s book is of interest as much for what it exemplifies as for what it says. The book straddles boundaries—between cultures, between disciplines, between belief systems, and between ideas and actions—and in so doing it draws attention, if sometimes not on purpose, to the arbitrary or culturally loaded placing of these boundaries.

Perhaps in tacit acknowledgement of the doubtful role of ethics as a unifying construct, some of the essays H & E include (for example Magnani’s contribution on human hybridisation) hardly touch on ethics at all. The book is really about the interaction between the cultural values implicit in human products, and the values embedded in beliefs explicitly held in various “local” cultures in which those products appear, through commerce and the processes of globalisation. How does a Buddhist culture (which rejects the notion of a private self), for example, deal with the threat posed by surveillance technologies?

Here we see another example of a problem created by boundaries, this time between disciplines. A few decades ago, people in the West would have seen this book as a contribution to anthropology. But anthropology depends on the assumption that other cultures are no more than curiosities, to be explored within a Euro-

American framework. (*That* culture, of course, is the study of sociologists.) Yet globalisation has empowered commentators from other cultures to join the game, and they cannot be expected to view their own belief systems as exotic. So if anthropology is out, what comes in its place? Maybe ethical issues are involved, but the central focus of the phenomena dealt with here is conflict between beliefs. (Some philosophers use the term “doxology” to refer to the study of beliefs; Pierre Bourdieu has used “doxa” to mean whatever is taken for granted in a particular society. Both terms are arguably more appropriate than ethics.)

Whilst the contributory essays raise some interesting issues, I am not convinced that they make up a coherent package. The Introduction tells us what the essays are about—but does little to provide a seamless conceptual framework. There is an index, but it is pretty basic. Also, invisibility appears as “invisibility” in the Contents entry for Chapter 6, for 34 pence per page, one might expect the editors of a book on IT to use a spelling checker.

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**Hue Ming-tak & Li Wai-Shing** (2008) *Classroom management* Hong Kong University Press (www.hkupress.org) ISBN 978-962-209-888-6 210 pp £10.95

As part of a series for Hong Kong teacher education, this textbook for trainee teachers succeeds in fusing eastern and western ideas of behaviour management. Each chapter starts with a synopsis and objectives list, and ends with a summary, “Questions for discussion”, and “Resources and reading”. (The book will also appear in Chinese.)

*Classroom management’s* approach is interactive, but the book also outlines the influence of Chinese culture inside Hong Kong classrooms. It very succinctly explains the various theoretical approaches—including those of the West’s Cantor, Dreikurs, Johns *et al.*, and Lewis. But it also includes discussion of balancing *yin* and *yang* as well as the Confucian concepts of *li*, *yi*



and *ren*. There are chapters too on managing misbehaviour as well as on the more proactive ways to enhance communication and strengthen teacher-learner relationships. The discussion ranges from instant messages through goals of misbehaviour to the efficacy of punishment. The clear and helpful tables on various theories are well chosen—Gordon’s “Roadblocks to communication” is one example of this. The chapters don’t stray off topic and the writing is clear.

The website references are current and useful links, though readers would perhaps prefer tinyURLs. The reference sections are full without being daunting. The activities and scenarios in each chapter are a little weak in that they outline problems without suggesting any solutions. The chapters towards the end on working with parents and colleagues become a little vague and obvious. There are no great surprises here, no scintillating insights.

However as a sturdy, digestible book on managing behaviour, *Classroom management* succeeds in combining eastern traditions with western approaches. If you want to look for models of change, for revolution rather than evolution, then this would not be a good choice. But for students new to thinking about classroom behaviour and management, this will provide an ideal introduction. The incorporation of ideas from Chinese culture could also enrich teacher education in the west (p 41):

“Teachers who are unable to balance yin and yang may experience difficulties and conflicts, whereas those who can keep this balance can play their various roles in classroom management in a confident, harmonious and effective manner.”

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**Moss, David M et al** ed (2008) *Interdisciplinary education in the age of assessment* Routledge (Abingdon UK & New York www.routledge.com) ISBN 0-8058-5378-2 205 pp £22.99

A reaction against the rise of “standardised testing” and the “age of assessment” lies near

the heart of this edited collection of eleven chapters. While the direct context is the US educational system, specifically K-12 (schools: kindergarten to age 18), the findings and arguments will interest teachers and policy makers around the world, where similar trends have emerged in recent years. Thus one author suggests that “test” has become another four-letter word that has little to do with promoting the individualised process of learning and more to do with controlling students and teachers and identifying failing schools. Testing has become a “high stakes” business, which clearly has wider implications due to the effect of published test scores on house prices and school fees.

Building on the authors’ previous research (in their 2003 study *Beyond boundaries*), the focus of this book is to position assessment at the centre of the learning process rather than on the margins, and to question the notion that assessment takes place only *after* learning has ended. Based on the largely successful reception of the authors’ first book on the subject, the focus of their new collection is developing “interdisciplinary” or “transdisciplinary” curricula and adequate modes of assessment for them—acknowledging that at present it is rather difficult to find sufficient examples to guide teachers in these endeavours. The current system of official summative testing (one that too often relies on unimaginative multiple-choice formats and short-item responses) is based on a rather narrow understanding of discrete disciplines and a style of fact-based exams. The authors argue that one way of remedying this short-sightedness is to develop interdisciplinary education that emphasises critical thinking and problem solving skills, and that does not “teach to test items” as much as being led by the learning goals of the curriculum. We need to develop assessment formats that depend on problem based learning, portfolios, independent study and longitudinal projects, in order to find “assessment strategies to promote learning” (p 190) rather than testing that can act as a “disincentive” to learning (p 119).

Based on this infrastructure, the book discusses the development of interdisciplinary styles of assessment in a number of subject and skill areas, including writing (Chapter 3),

science (Chapter 4), mathematics (Chapter 5), citizenship education (Chapter 6), language learning (Chapter 7), reading (Chapter 8) and bilingual education (Chapter 9). Additional chapters provide more thorough discussion of a rationale for interdisciplinary education across the educational spectrum (Chapters 1 and 2) as well as detailed ideas about appropriate new forms of assessment that balance quantitative and qualitative methods in this context (Chapters 10 and 11).

A short case study of a K-6 (primary school) teacher called Maura Kennedy nicely stands for the often-repeated main argument of the book. Kennedy works in an urban school with a group of multi-cultural and disadvantaged learners. While she has developed a classroom approach based on designing appropriate assessments to promote critical thinking and independent learning skills, she is forced to revise them in the face of matching performance criteria determined by standardised tests. Her own individualised assessments set realistic learning goals that can aid further learning and motivate a wide range of learners, the standardised state tests often alienate hers, casting them as failures, and are not published for up to a year after the tests took place.

The story does much to encapsulate the book, especially the need for the right balance to be struck between process-oriented and content-based testing throughout the educational system.

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**Raya, Manuel Jiménez & Sercu, Lies**  
(2007) *Challenges in teacher development: Learner autonomy and intercultural competence*  
Peter Lang (Frankfurt & New York www.peterlang.net) ISBN 978-3-631-55806-5 236 pp £24.90

This multi-author book concerns the potential of action research, self-reflection and self-report activities to increase teachers' professionalism and empower them to cope with the

educational reform agenda. It presents theoretical reflections, case studies and reports on a number of teacher education projects focused on learner autonomy, intercultural competence and computer-assisted learning. In education, action research is a systematic enquiry into one's teaching practice in collaboration with others; it aims to improve practice rather than to generate knowledge. In this view, professional development is something done by teachers, not done to them.

Society demands that young people be educated for life-long learning in a rapidly changing, multicultural, international and digital world. It is therefore necessary that they become able to address new questions and new situations independently, integrate new information with that already held, and autonomously create new understanding. In this context, learners' autonomy is an important educational goal. It is not just a matter of permitting choice in learning situations or making pupils responsible for activities undertaken, but encouraging them to express who they are and what they think. Hence we can link autonomy to reflection, self-transformation and personal development.

Because of this, the changes expected in the educational system are substantial and can not be limited to adding a few new subjects or teaching techniques. They require a fundamental re-thinking of teacher education and training, which should give careful attention to what conditions ensure a fruitful interaction of practice and theory and of action and reflection, and support the development of a professional identity. They require, also, that teachers change their beliefs about good teaching and learning. All this means:

- develop teachers' awareness of their preconceptions;
- set up transformative experiences;
- encourage teachers to make choices;
- organise participation in developmental activities; and
- support teachers in recognising and overcoming resistances.

The book is addressed to language teachers, but eleven of its twelve chapters concern subject-independent issues and are therefore of interest for all teachers. I found it pleasant and

stimulating reading, suitable for teachers of secondary and higher education, teacher educators and researchers.

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**Reeves, Thomas C & Hedberg, John G**  
 (2003) *Interactive learning systems evaluation*  
 Educational Technology Publications (Engle-  
 wood Cliffs NJ [www.BooksToRead.com/etp](http://www.BooksToRead.com/etp))  
 ISBN 0-87778-304-7 295 pp \$59.95

Reeves and Hedberg offer us a book that is clearly set out, interesting to read and of great practical help. If you are not certain what “evaluation” means, there are here many different ways in which to carry it out and many different aims you can achieve with an evaluation.

*Interactive learning systems evaluation* starts with a description of interactive learning, what is meant by the expression, a bit about the psychology of learning, the media involved, and types of delivery. Following this firm foundation the writers explore the conflicting paradigms around evaluation, what evaluation is meant to achieve, and the debates that exist between those favouring evaluation from a “measurement perspective to a completely constructivist perspective” (and all the viewpoints in between). They also discuss various evaluation models, including the Tylerian model (common in training) that firmly links evaluation to objectives. That is, if evaluation takes place at all—another problem discussed well throughout the book.

The third chapter explores evaluation functions and links different evaluations to stages in the instructional design process used to create an interactive learning product. This was the point at which the language became interesting for me—there is no universally accepted set of terms that define the particular activities and processes within educational technology and interactive learning systems. The writers, in fact, use many useful and instructive examples to explain their evalua-

tion functions; this makes their content clear and also makes the book very interesting to read. So even if you are familiar with different terms for the evaluation functions they describe, you are not left confused.

The third chapter lists, with an overview, the six evaluation functions that later have a chapter each: Review, Needs assessment, Formative evaluation, Effectiveness evaluation, Impact evaluation and Maintenance evaluation. The individual chapters offer many ideas and guidelines and checklists. Each starts with a table giving the decisions you are likely to need to make at this point in a project, with sample questions to ask in order to be able to make them. Having set the scene each chapter then explores the purposes, likely hazards (including possible resistance) and tools that can help you achieve the given outcome.

Most of the six evaluation functions described have different types of evaluation within them. The chapter on formative evaluation, for example, covers expert review, user review, usability testing and alpha, beta and field trials. It includes discussion on the software industry and on why there is resistance to formative evaluation—and gives some excellent reasons why formative evaluations can be so useful.

There is a planning template in Chapter 4 that you can tailor to your particular situation (and a note that in order to be a successful evaluator you need good negotiating skills). The next to last chapter offers a good evaluation report template, and the final one has an interesting discussion about evaluation in general and how it can improve research into applications of educational technology.

This book is both practically useful and thought provoking. It covers a wide variety of evaluation applications of use in both academic and business environments; this is not always the case.

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**Savin-Baden, Maggi** (2007) *Practical guide to problem-based learning online* Routledge (Abingdon UK & New York www.routledge.com) ISBN 978-0-415-43788-2 151 pp £22.99 (boards £75)

This book is just what its title suggests—and more. This latest offering by Maggi Savin-Baden combines a wealth of knowledge and experience of problem-based learning (pbl) with emerging trends in online learning, all in a very useful format that assists the reader to gain both pedagogical and technology knowledge. It will appeal to educators with an interest in online learning and curriculum design, regardless of their context: school, technical and further education, or higher education. Importantly, design considerations are based solidly in current theory and practice that provide great confidence in the approach. In addition, the book forecasts future applications which have great promise—such as simulations, avatars and other evolving media.

The book is easy to read and begins with a useful and informative chronology of the development of problem-based learning systems; this provides a solid context for the discussion that follows. An holistic approach to pedagogy is based on a clear definition of problem-based learning, a focus on the centrality of the student in the pedagogy, and a clear explanation of the various technologies which combine to support effective online learning design. The author's practical approach to learning design will interest any educator looking for straight forward advice about effective research-based learning design applicable across many discipline areas and contexts. Throughout the book planners, charts and matrices summarise key approaches to learning design; these will allow you to dip in and out of the text as needed.

The exemplars depend on well known theory embedded into recent innovation and experience that illustrate core design perspectives and models. In particular, the constellation model scaffolds decisions concerning online forms of pbl according to the learning need, context and discipline. The resource pages provide a great source of guidance on building on-line teams, assessing and evaluating online learning—and, more, do so in a clear, succinct style. The glossary and Frequently Asked Questions list

are particularly useful as are the references and the proprietary names sprinkled through the text. A wonderful surprise was the implementation plan, something often overlooked in discussion of new and emerging learning design.

If I have a concern, it is that there is not enough treatment of assessment and evaluation.

Any educators using this book will find it to be a useful, practical guide to designing for problem-based learning in the online environment—they can also be sure that it is based firmly in accepted practice and theory about teaching and learning with technology.

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**Schoonmaker, Michael** (2007) *Cameras in the classroom* Rowman & Littlefield (Lanham MD & Plymouth UK www.rowmanlittlefield.com) ISBN 978-1-57886-506-2 186 pp £12.99

In the interest of full disclosure, you should know that I have been making movies in the classroom since 1973. Not every day, as this author has, but from time to time. This caused me to reflect a few times while reading *Cameras in the classroom* that I had experienced similar things to him—but without thinking about them with such insight.

As the author says in the introduction, this is not a “how-to” book but a “why-to” book. You will find much in the category of how-to—but the author moves easily from how-to into brief discussions of some of the most controversial media topics. While I was working on my degree in instructional design at Indiana University I remember discussions of these topics devolving to heated arguments with no resolution. My first instructional design teacher was not keen on the idea of tv's being cool ...

Schoonmaker looks at those topics only briefly—but he puts each in context with the experiences he shares with us. The short coverage of these complex topics caused me to set

the book aside often, to ponder their meaning to the post-tv generation and to myself—so that the book took about twice as long to read as I would have guessed given its page count.

Schoonmaker often seems to be telling us that we meet all we need to know in kindergarten or at least in the early grades. He does not make that point well, and I wonder about his post-graduate education. That aside, if you are looking for a well crafted narrative style—look elsewhere: he often jumps us into the middle of a video extract and then leaves us to make sense of it alone. (The technique sometimes works well but often raises the cognitive load unnecessarily.)

Schoonmaker often has us thinking about such good questions as “what are we going to do with media literacy once we have it?” or “what next, now we have the power to alter the truth in a video?” On the other hand, he is unfairly critical of the pre-tv generation—referring to us as the “blind” trying to lead the “intensely visual”. Many of us are not natives to the “intensely visual” world, but we are spending our time there quite nicely, thank you!

For me, one of the most compelling parts of the book is at the end. Here we meet an account of “inventive video” (the name coined by analogy with inventive spelling). This is a technique that could be applied in many fields—it involves the tutor’s letting the learners learn by experience by giving them no formal guidance at all.

All in all, this is a thought provoking and useful book.

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**Seiter, Ellen** (2007) *The internet playground* Peter Lang (Frankfurt & New York [www.peterlang.net](http://www.peterlang.net)) ISBN 978-0-8204-7124-2 121 pp £13.40

This book looks at the benefits and costs of sending primary school children online. Is the

experience worth the cost? What kind of teaching and critical thinking skills do children need in order to navigate the Internet with profit?

Based on a longitudinal study on teaching IT to 8-12 year olds, carried out in two schools in one wealthy and one poor neighbourhoods in California, Ellen Seiter’s practical advice is on how children should be guided when approaching the Internet.

Bearing on mind Freire’s concept of critical consciousness, she designed several different experiences to highlight the diverse forms of knowledge present in every classroom but rarely acknowledged in traditional pedagogy. She also paid attention to gender differences in IT use and to the internet’s contribution to children’s personal interests.

Seiter concludes that children can acquire internet skills at speed, even if they have low access. The internet has the potential to empower them by letting them research topics of interest not often covered at school. This gives them greater independence and self-determination on their own education. Working with computers is for them a source of enjoyment and a means of social inclusion. Using the internet as a source of information on children’s interests is often an effective way to mediate the acquisition of school-related skills.

She points out, however, that teaching well with computers is not easy. Internet access does not automatically produce educational benefits—it needs proper guidance, as well as a number of basic skills. It is crucial, for instance, to master reading and writing, since the net is mainly a linguistic medium (despite the abundance of graphics and animations). What is at stake is not being able to access IT, but to use it for personally or socially meaningful ends.

Moreover, the net at present resembles more a shopping mall than a library. In particular, websites that children like to visit (the ones that offer games, music, networks, fan clubs, and so on) are full of ads (often disguised as information). Though most children enjoy finding advertising (as a sort of game), they

need to know from the start that online space is for sale and that what they see first often has been paid for.

These concerns about the Internet as a faulty educational tool do not concern only primary school children. All teachers should place the critical evaluation of information at the centre of their work with the net.

This book very much follows the cultural situation where the study was carried out, but for sure it has much to offer to teachers and parents in other countries than the US. I find it interesting reading, stimulating reflection on aspects of learning with computers and the internet that we often overlook or take for granted.

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**Westbury, Ian & Milburn, Geoffrey** ed  
 (2007) *Rethinking schooling* Routledge (Abingdon UK & New York www.routledge.com) ISBN 978-0-415-40744-1 347 pp £85

*Rethinking schooling* consists of a selection of articles from 1980 to 2004 from the *Journal of Curriculum Studies (JCS)*. The contributors are mainly from the USA but also include Europe, Canada and New Zealand. Most are, or were, professors of education. The book therefore demands a lot from its readers (and that includes some knowledge of the philosophy of education). The book's editors see three distinctive features in the way that the *JCS* presented its content: first as a focus for schools and school systems, for process rather than ideals; second by choosing what was thought best at the time; and third for cross-cultural dialogue.

The first part discusses schools and the curriculum with some interesting historical views on the schoolroom's development into the classroom. Here too is work on Adam Smith and the moral economy of the classroom system: "Educational practice lies at the intersection of economic history and the history of

ideas ... . The pedagogical practices of an epoch are expressions of both material and ideological resources." (p 27)

This section ends with a study of Swedish lesson design.

The second part concerns pedagogy, looking at reflectivity, didactic analysis, and the effect of questions. Here Max van Manen reflects: "Nothing that teachers say or do (or not say or do) in their interactions with children or students falls outside the boundaries of the pedagogy of teaching." (p 81)

Part 3 looks at curriculum change with reference to reforming maths teaching and views on leadership practice.

The final part looks to the future, to globalisation, meta-scientific criticism, network-based learning, and the lessons we can learn from fractals. The discussion, as would be expected from the *JCS*, is academic and full of references. Indeed, the editors drag you out of your comfort zone and treat you to an historical as well as a geographic view. Thus, Joan Solomon's chapter makes the point that science education must depend on cultural arguments rather than technical know-how as there is no longer a special case to be made for its economic importance. She says that ultimately this change is a function of democracy.

All chapters end with long reference lists for those who wish to dig deeper. Yet there appear gaping holes: computers and the information age are notable largely by their omission. There is no reference to the place of technology other than, indirectly, through the changing relationships of teacher and learner. And the ages of the learners do not figure in the discussions—they should. So, although the articles cover a lot of ground, there is too much historical review at the expense of the future.

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#### **Also received**

Note that mention here does not preclude later, fuller review.

**Dubber, Geoff** (2008) *Cultivating curiosity* School Library Association (Swindon UK www.sla.org.uk) ISBN 978-1-903446-42-3 62 pp £7.50

**Dubber, Geoff** (2008) *A primary school information skills toolkit* School Library Association (Swindon UK www.sla.org.uk) ISBN 978-1-903446-44-7 77 pp £12

Yes, Geoff Dubber, as well as being Britain's School Library Association's editor, is its most prolific author. His thin A4 books are reliable, comprehensive and up-to-date, as well as being easy to read and work with (though some are *too* thin and the prices are quite high). By SLA standards, these are quite thick books, but the other comments stand.

*Cultivating curiosity's* sub-title—"Information literacy skills and the primary school library"—is much less exciting, even if more informative, than *Cultivating curiosity*. Indeed, cultivating information literacy skills in primary school children (Years 0-6 in most of the UK) ought to be very well embedded—except that in this country an adequate library resource centre is not common in these schools. To have someone responsible for information literacy, and given enough time to address it effectively, is even less common.

To mangle one of the book's leading quotes, from a 2004 talk by Abdelaziz Abid (then of UNESCO): "To be 'information literate' you need to know why, when and how to use the whole range of information sources and formats and to think critically about the information they provide." The area includes information technology and computer literacy, but is more than that. There is plenty of information literacy in the primary school National Curriculum of England and Wales and associated strategic guidance.

In this second edition of a 1999 book, Dubber takes full account of recent developments in the area and bemoans the continued lack of any requirement for schools to have a good library and appropriate staff. The rest of the book looks at how staff in a school with suitable information literacy resources can meet the national expectations—the best way, of course, is indeed to "cultivate curiosity" and channel the curious learners through the resources so that

they become effective lifelong learners. The approach taken is a mix of thoughtful theory and case studies and includes such crucial (but often missed) aspects like assessment. Various appendices list the National Curriculum standards and relevant activities that cultivate curiosity on the road to meeting the standards and provide planning resources.

What about the second book—*A primary school information skills toolkit*—which follows on very well from the first (though there is quite a lot of overlap in places)? Myself, I don't like books called "toolkits" (for the same reason as I don't like meetings called "workshops")—and this one is not a "toolkit" in any real sense of the word. Its aim is to provide guidance, ideas and resources for primary school teachers and library staff (yes, if any) as they try to deliver the information literacy (knowledge, understanding and skill) our National Curriculum expects. Schools can copy the resources if they buy the book.

The "toolkit" starts with a very pleasing little poster called "The rights of the young researcher"; as just noted, schools owning the book can copy this for display. Don't, though—this list derives from a rather similar French product and is *not* in primary school child language. Choose a number between 1 and 10—OK, 6: "The right to have an opportunity to gather various and varied resources on my research question and the time to assess their validity". Yes, this is an information literacy right, even for such young people, but staff need to do better than that to help children learn the subject.

Fortunately, the rest of the book is more realistic. It deals in turn with each major aspect of working on a research question—planning, finding resources, choosing and appraising them, organising and recording, communicating the answer, and (this is rare!) evaluating the answer. Each section offers plenty of guidance and ideas for the staff, some useful worksheets (though with some confusion between first and second person for the young user) and a lot of activity plans.

In theory, primary school staff should teach information literacy through all parts of the

curriculum. In practice, as well as not having specialist knowledge to hand and a library resource centre to use, most teachers will not have the time to do this properly even just once a term.

So, these are both good little books, but will as many schools benefit as should do, even if they could afford them?

**Epstein, Debbie** *et al* (2007) *Geographies of knowledge, geometries of power* Routledge (Abingdon UK & New York [www.routledge.com](http://www.routledge.com)) ISBN 0-415-96378-8 395 pp £80

Here we have the 2008 “World yearbook of education” (which series is ancient and highly regarded; the price is high as these books are always hard covered, for libraries). As you can tell from the title, the book is about “Framing the future of higher education” (yes, we are lucky that there is a sub-title to break the news!). The starting point is, of course, the problems higher education faces in a world of globalised information technology (in the strict sense) at the same time as almost explosive growth in demand from learners and society in general. As we move towards “the global university” we have to face some very significant issues.

Epstein and her four co-editors and 26 writers—academics and researchers, two thirds of whom are based in UK and the rest of the European Union—describe and face the issues very well. It seems clear that the writers were all well briefed and monitored—almost all deal firmly and generically with a small aspect of the whole without much sinking into using small local experience as case study material. Because of that discipline, if you like, this book is not a collection of disparate tales but a single well developed text book that should be of lasting value. It is also good that most of the 21 chapters have just one author (and all have good clear introductions and conclusions as well as a page or two of further reading). The book itself opens with brief but very thorough and helpful introductions from the series editors and Epstein herself and closes with an excellent index.

The main chapters come in four sections:

- “Producing and reproducing the university”—essential scene setting and consideration of the major issues
- “Supplying knowledge”—such matters as human resources and their mobility
- “Demanding knowledge”—the longest section, with six chapters—local solutions to the demand and its growth, marketing and choice
- “Transnational academic flows”—academic mobility and such that help move us towards the “global university”

A very good book, as is the case for most of those in this great series. But it is time to allow us much cheaper paper covered versions ...

**Hewitt, Des** (2008) *Understanding effective learning* McGraw-Hill (Maidenhead, UK [www.mcgraw-hill.co.uk](http://www.mcgraw-hill.co.uk)) ISBN 978-033522237-7 179 pp £19.99

This is a most interesting book, though part of the interest is the tension between its title (which sounds as if it is a theory book) and its sub-title: “Strategies for the classroom” seems to tell us that here we shall find plenty to put into practice at once.

In a sense, the tension remains to the last page, the end of a very thorough index whose contents are, for sure, well inside the theory part of that spectrum. In a second sense, not—Hewitt does very well, in his text for trainee and newly qualified teachers, in laying out the theory in detail, but readably, and then in using it to lead to classroom guidance and tips. In Hewitt’s first three chapters the theory covers the nature and types of learning, related issues, and its social settings, and in the next three we find various classroom and whole school models as ways of starting to apply the ideas. Though those last three chapters all include “learning strategies” in their titles, they still involve a theory-style approach. On the whole, the real practice ideas come in a range of boxes throughout the book—holding case studies (often with a discussion question or two), “reflections” (which are in effect more open-ended questions), and “strategies for the classroom”. These last—which can be a page or two



in length—are *really* about how to put the text's ideas into practice.

There are not many boxes of that last kind, but almost all are very good. There's even one which invites readers to find out from the learners about the quality of their teaching; it notes that it is worth accepting the risks of having the learners feed back anonymously ... and also reports that teachers' blogs can be a great way to obtain this quality information.

This very good book also offers thorough but readable summaries to close each chapter, useful introductory and closing chapters, a brief (too brief—only two pages) glossary, and a long bibliography / references list.

**Lock, Dennis** (2007) *The essentials of project management* Gower (Aldershot UK [www.gowerpub.com](http://www.gowerpub.com)) ISBN 978-0-566-08805-6 204 pp £19.50

Why should we draw to your attention the third edition of a well known, concise guide to a subject like project management? In fact, the process of modern project management is a prime example of the problem solving process that is the basis of all technology, including educational technology. We can even support the "modern" there by noting that between the second and third editions of his book, Lock has moved even more closely to the life cycle concept that many of us use as the basis of developments in educational technology (and that all in information technology development have had to use for decades).

Agreed, Lock does not write for educational technologists. Yet we need spend little time and effort to apply his concepts to our projects. The word "project" in "project management" does *not* apply solely to physical developments (a new campus, say, or cabling an old campus for broadband—though educational technologists can turn their hands even to such things). We can include comparatively abstract "projects" in this approach—things like setting up a new academic programme, resource centre, or department, and moving to online working for the bulk of a course.

Also, it is important to note that Lock does not write for project managers (this is a job title in

many sectors)—his much more solid *Project management* is for them (and that has reached its ninth edition). This book is for business students and for serving managers with just an occasional project to steer. Steering any project will be much less rouble with this book to hand.

**Macdonald, Janet** (2008) *Blended learning and online tutoring* Gower (Aldershot UK [www.gowerpub.com](http://www.gowerpub.com)) ISBN 978-0-566-08841-4 203 pp £25

This is the second edition, sub-titled "Planning learner support and activity design", of an important book that first appeared as long ago as 2006 (reviewed in *BJET*, 37(6), October 2006, its sub-title then being "A good practice guide"). We spoke highly of the book then—applauding the writer's attempts to clarify what blended learning is and is not, and her very thoughtful approach to the theory and practice of being an online tutor. The applause now is just as great—she needs a second edition, but has not cut much of value from the first.

Macdonald needs a second edition because of the advent of Web 2.0 and the already wide use with blended and online learners of wikis and blogs, and collaborative learning activities and their design. We do not forget that Web 2.0 aims to increase creativity and collaborative working. Such use for teaching and learning is indeed already wide because of that—but too often it is a waste of the learners' (and tutors') time and effort as it is not focussed enough and those concerned (teachers as well as learners) do not step back enough to see all the potential.

Macdonald does a great job in helping to provide that focus and encouragement to step back, by her still thoughtful approach to the theory and practice of being an online tutor. The first edition was very good value as well as being important—this one is even better (not least as the price is unchanged).

But Web 2.0 has also led to a huge educational growth in the use of collaborative tagging and social networking—we must wonder how the third edition of *Blended learning and online tutoring* is coming along ... .

**Tomei, Lawrence** (2007) ed *Integrating information and communications technologies into the classroom* Information Science (Hershey PA www.igi-pub.com) ISBN 1-59904258-4 360 pp \$94.95

Information Science, or InfoSci, is an imprint of IGI, a major US academic publisher that often appears in these pages and seems to specialise in highly priced, lightly edited, heavy hardbacks with large sets of authors.

All that fully matches this volume, though this has (to add to the strengths) a highly experienced editor and (as far as one could say) no chapter copied from an earlier book. In other words, *Integrating information and communications technologies into the classroom* should be particularly authoritative and quite up-to-date. There are twenty chapters, each with abstract and introduction at the start and a lengthy reference list (and sometimes a summary) at the end, and there are 39 authors listed just before the book's index. (The bases of most of the authors—and the editor—are in the US, though there are also seven each in Europe and Australasia and one in China.)

Perhaps the key phrase in the first paragraph above is “lightly edited”. This means that even

if the book's theme is integration of IT into the classroom, the contents of the book are not integrated and show no overview, and the index is er thin. The twenty papers come in four sections, and the titles of none of those sections and no more than one of the chapters relate to that of the book. Please also note that the “classroom” of the title is in the widest sense *and* in higher education (though the cover photo implies otherwise).

Tomei's book is not a complete disappointment, of course. While we must look elsewhere for a treatment of the subject of his title, he does offer some good papers between these covers. Everyone would, doubtless, choose a different set of two or three favourites. Even so, for what it is worth, mine are Sherry Chen's “The effects of human factors on the use of web-based instruction”; “Using a blended model to improve delivery of teacher education curriculum in global settings” by three people from the southern US; and “Addressing the cultural dimensions of e-learning” by Andrea Edmundson, who has recently set up eWorld Learning Inc to try to globalise e-learning (much as does the long established Commonwealth of Learning).

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