Instructional Design in the Real World: A View from the Trenches
(Book Review)

Reviewer:
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Textbook Details:

This book is an anthology of thirteen articles examining the subject of instructional design from the viewpoint of real-world practitioners. The book provides an insight into the successes and failures of commercial instructional design projects, and gives practical advice to those who are interested in designing courses for commercial clients.

The book is loosely structured around the ADDIE (Analyse, Design, Develop, Implement and Evaluate) instructional design process. Relevant articles that include business world case studies, learning theories, systems theory, and management theories and practices in a variety of commercial environments illustrate the steps within the process. The book concludes with a section entitled New Methodologies and System Integration, which deals with new ideas and methodologies and provides additional resources, strategies and lessons for real world instructional design.

Analysis

The first chapter "Concern Matrix: Analyzing Learners' Needs" by Dr James A. Pershing and Hee Kap Lee, addresses the traditional learner analysis stage of the ADDIE process. They emphasize the need for active communication with the learner and introduce a learner analysis matrix that incorporates learner's levels of concerns and perceptions.

Chapter II, "Responding to the Learner: Instructional Design of Custom Built E-Learning" by Nick Carrick an instructional design and e-learning consultant, builds on the learner needs theme and presents a case study concerning the identification of learning aids for a hi-tech microchip manufacturing company. The case study reveals that the true value of instructional design lies in a learner-centered approach that prioritizes ease of use and learner control.

Design, Development and Implementation

Elizabeth Hanlis from the University of Alberta in her article entitled "Application of an Instructional Design Model for Industry Training: From Theory to Practice", examines the problems encountered when attempting to apply an instructional design model. Two case studies, one involving a health company and the other a chemical company, provide examples of the need for prompt and effective action within a development environment dominated by limited budgets and high client expectations.

Chapter IV, "Cultural Wisdom and Hindsight: Instructional Design and Delivery on the Run" by Jillian Rickett a technical designer from Sydney continues the design and develop theme, discussing the need for flexibility and adaptability in a cross-cultural environment.

John Cox and Terry Armstrong, in their article "Combining Technology, Theory and Practice: A Finnish Experience", stay with the design and develop theme when they describe their experiences of providing an undergraduate Strategic Management course in a remote Finnish location. The success of this case study relied on an approach, which integrated the Internet in both a traditional classroom setting and a remote location setting.

In chapter VI, "Applying Contextual Design to Educational Software Development", Mark Notess considers how contextual design can be applied to educational software development. The case study describes the design of an online tool for music listening and analysis.

The final design, develop and implement chapter is written by the books author Ann-Marie Armstrong. In her article "What You See is All That You Get! A Practical Guide to Incorporating Cognitive Strategies into the Design of Electronic Instruction", compliments that previous chapter and describes how cognitive strategies can be incorporated into the electronic learning environment.

Evaluation

There are three chapters dedicated to the evaluation phase of the ADDIE process. In the first, a group from the Belgium Center for Instructional Psychology and Technology, present a case study based on the evaluation of KABISA a computer based training program. Their article "KABISA: Evaluation of an Open Learning Environment" suggests that a systematic approach to instructional design remains highly valuable.

The second evaluation chapter, "Guerilla Evaluation: Adapting to the Terrain and Situation" by Tad Waddington, Bruce Aaron and Rachael Sheldrick considers the impact of shifting focus from a training for activity approach to a training for results approach. It presents a model that links training to business goals while supporting continuous performance improvement.

The final evaluation chapter "Standards for Online Courses: Can We Do It? Yes We Can!" by Noel Estabrook and Peter Arashiro of Michigan Virtual University, proposes various standards to be used for evaluating instruction. The chapter establishes the need for standards, describes the standards and explains how the standards can be used to effectively evaluate on-line courses.

Methodologies and system integration

The final three chapters introduce reusable learning objects and propose modifications to the ADDIE process model. The first chapter of the final section, written by Pam Northrup, Karen Rasmussen and David Dawson of the University of West Florida, introduces the concepts of Reusable learning Objects and Reusable Information Objects as tools that could facilitate quick and, systematic design and development of Web-based instructional materials.

Chapter X11, "Integrating ICT in Universities: Some Actual Problems and Solutions" by Vassilios Dagdilelis of the University of Macedonia presents some of the problems arising when Information Communications Technology systems are integrated into universities and provides suggestions of how to deal with the problems.

The final chapter of the book, "Integrated Training Requires Integrated Design and Business Models" by Arthur B. Jeffery from the Naval Education and Training Command and Mary F. Bratton-Jeffery from the University of South Alabama, introduces an implementation strategy called Quality Function Development. They endorse the feelings of the previous authors by suggesting that the ADDIE process should be expanded rather than replaced.

Overall the book successfully uses the experiences of instructional design practitioners to support the requirement for a methodical approach to the design, development and implementation of instructional systems. The real-world case studies provide examples of how theory can be applied in practice and the tips and suggestions provide a valuable guide to all those involved in instructional system design.

The author has done an excellent job in bringing together the experiences of a wide variety of instructional designers and presenting a cohesive book that covers all aspects of the instructional design process. The book offers an excellent reference to students, researchers and practitioners in terms of the application of instructional design processes, learning and management theories and communication tools and practices in a wide variety of different environments.