

BOOK REVIEW / CRITIQUE DE LIVRE

How to Teach: A Practical Guide for Librarians. B.E. Crane. Rowman & Littlefield; 2014. Softcover: 198 p. Price: USD 65.00. ISBN 978-0-8108-9105-0. Available from: <https://rowman.com/ISBN/9780810891050/How-to-Teach-A-Practical-Guide-for-Librarians>.

Teaching methods and instructional design are important skills to possess as a health information professional. However, as Beverley E. Crane points out in *How to Teach: A Practical Guide for Librarians*, these are skills that are not often taught as part of the core curriculum in an MLIS or MIS program. As a recent MLIS graduate, I can attest to this. Being relatively new to the field and having limited teaching experience, this book was a valuable guide as I prepared for my first instructional sessions. It helped me develop and organize a lesson plan that I was confident in presenting my first time at the front of a classroom.

How to Teach: A Practical Guide for Librarians is an introduction to teaching in libraries no matter the format, audience, or allotted time. In less than 200 pages, Crane has written a comprehensive, concise, and current book. Each of the nine chapters is organized as an instructional session including learning objectives, core content, handouts, reminders of the key points, and each chapter ends with an assignment. It is a practical guide for novice instructors in all types of library settings including post-secondary, school, special, and public libraries. All information professionals, no matter their work setting, will find something to relate to in this book.

The book begins, as any lesson would, by introducing the basics. The first section of the book presents instructional design theories, advice on creating lesson plans, and key teaching strategies. The remaining chapters examine how to use these strategies in four different types of instruction: face-to-face, online, synchronous, and asynchronous.

Crane does an excellent job of setting the tone of the book as a practical application to instruction rather than as a comprehensive discourse. One of the first chapters includes an overview of the major instructional theories that is so well written and concise, even as a novice, these complex theories were easy to understand. For readers who would like more information on the different instructional theories, Crane included a list of additional references.

Although Crane is not a librarian, she is an educator who has spent 24 years as a Dialog instructor to other librarians. She is, therefore, well versed in the library profession. She has a clear understanding of the type of instruction that occurs in all libraries, which is reflected in the book. The strength in *How to Teach: A Practical Guide for Librarians* is the acknowledgement that library instruction differs from day-to-day depending on the subject

matter, the amount of allotted time, the number of participants, and the method of delivery. Sometimes a change in just one of these components can completely alter a lesson plan. To demonstrate how different libraries can approach the challenges, Crane provides lesson plan models. In one example, Crane presents a lesson plan for a small group instructional session on evaluating web sources to public library patrons and then, subsequently, how the lesson plan would differ in an academic library. Each lesson plan model includes specific step-by-step instructions to help overcome possible challenges, building confidence in any beginner.

The inclusion of handouts is another valuable resource for a novice instructor. The handouts help to highlight the lesson plan models and can be modified and used in practice. I especially appreciated the handouts on developing appropriate evaluations. As a new librarian, having learners evaluate an instructional session can be daunting. Crane stresses that evaluations are not so much about evaluating the teacher, rather they ensure that the content is current and clear.

Each chapter in *How to Teach: A Practical Guide for Librarians* builds on the previous, incorporating terms previously defined. Consequently, the reader needs to flip back and forth for reminders of definitions. This is especially the case when Crane discusses the differences between asynchronous and synchronous teaching. Crane defines these terms multiple times throughout the book. An inclusion of a glossary would be helpful to limit this repetition. However, this oversight cannot take away from the overall success of the book.

Readers may note some parallels between *Creating the One-Shot Library Workshop: A step-by-step guide* by Jerilyn Veldof [1] and this book. Both books use similar instructional design strategies to develop lesson plans in a step-by-step format. However, *Creating the One-Shot Library Workshop* is intended for librarians at all skill levels and relies heavily on the ADDIE (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, Evaluation) model of instruction. Crane's concise overview of instructional theories at the beginning of the book allows a reader to decide how he or she would like to approach the lesson, rather than recommending one model of instruction. Both books complement each other, but because of the introductory material in *How to Teach: A Practical Guide for Librarians*, beginners would be best served by reading it first.

Planning and creating instructional sessions is an important skill for all information professionals to possess; yet, many depend on previous experience to develop their abilities and plan new sessions. New librarians do not have this luxury. *How to Teach: A Practical Guide for Librarians* is recommended for new graduates who feel unprepared to lead a classroom. More experienced and skilled informational instructors may find this book too simple. However,

it is a book that all librarians can reference as new instructional challenges occur.

Reference

1. Veldof J. *Creating the One-Shot Library Workshop*. Chicago: American Library Association, 2006.

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