

Book Reviews



Thomas, M., ed.
Digital Education: Opportunities for Social Collaboration.
New York:
Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.
ISBN 978-0-2301-1158-5 262. \$95.
Reviewed by Barbie Keiser

This expertly edited volume of essays is founded in solid research and exquisite writing by a group of well-chosen and thoughtful individuals from around the world. The authors approach the role of Web 2.0 in education from a range of perspectives, examining studies of implementation that are cited in extensive reference lists of carefully selected texts at the close of each chapter. As Mark Warschauer points out in his brief forward that sets the stage for this slim volume, the authors make their case that “students’ access to, participation with, and fluency in the use of new technologies do not in themselves guarantee that any serious learning is taking place.” The twelve chapters that follow give the reader insight into what teachers and administrators must do to assure that concern with using the technology does not overwhelm our efforts to develop critical thinkers among Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants, youth or adults.

The book is divided into two parts, Theoretical Perspectives and Applying Digital Education, with an introduction by the editor and an insightful concluding chapter by Stephen Bax of the Centre for Research in English Language Learning and Assessment (CRELLA) at the University of

Bedfordshire, UK. Michael Thomas, (University of Central Lancashire, UK), who serves as editor of the *International Journal of Virtual and Personal Learning Environments*, begins this volume explaining the purpose of the book: “an attempt to address many of the important questions, contradictions, and opportunities related to digital education and to consider them from the perspective of different learning contexts... in order that instructors, learners, and policymakers can learn from, rather than merely repeat, the mistakes of the past.”

Mark Pegrum, assistant professor in the Graduate School of Education at the University of Western Australia, focuses on digital literacy, reminding the reader that the “digital generation... is far less homogenous than the term implies... Because kids are using technology for social and entertainment purposes, it does not mean they are acquiring the critical literacies necessary to use it for educational or professional purposes, or that they fully understand its affordances and pitfalls.” He reminds us that kids may be “tech-comfy,” while not being particularly “tech-savvy.” The chapter “maps out some of the key, often overlapping, areas we must consider in preparing students at all levels to make the most of their potential in a Web 2.0 world.”

Chaka Chaka, senior lecturer and coordinator of the English Unit within the Department of Humanities Education at Walter Sisulu University (South Africa), examines existing research studies on Web 2.0 in education. Chapter 3 explores why “there is yet to be a widespread adoption of these technologies in the higher education sector worldwide.” The conclusion: “Web 2.0 technologies should be mainstreamed and harnessed to blur the classical divide between informal and formal learning. “

Rita Kop and Paul Bouchard, both of Canada, make similar discoveries as they explore the role of Web 2.0 as it applies to the adult learner. They recognize

that the technology allows the learner to take ownership of what they will learn, why, when, at what cost, with whom, and how. The authors focus on critical engagement online and the importance of the educator as expert, responsible for making people aware of alternative points of view. For them, the notion of learning and knowledge are being redefined, and “there will be a need for learners to have access to a trusted “knowledgeable other” in order to negotiate the complex tasks of epistemic growth.” They recognize that self-directed learning “liberates” knowledge from its traditional institutional guardians and will have an impact on academic credentials.

Educational networking is the theme of Christina Costa’s chapter. The author, a member of the central research team at Salford University (UK), recognizes the emergence of the participatory Web and discusses the various types of learning communities that are benefitting both learners and educators. Part I closes with a chapter by Thomas Berger (director of the Institute of Interdisciplinary Research, Fulda, Germany) and Michael Thomas who address the potential opportunities of integrating learning technologies in educational institutions, “as well as significant points of resistance.” The chapter is addressed to instructors and administrators, introducing “an approach to change management... that attempts to resignify resistance as a productive rather than destructive force.”

Part II of the book addresses particular research-based or practical applications of digital technologies through case studies:

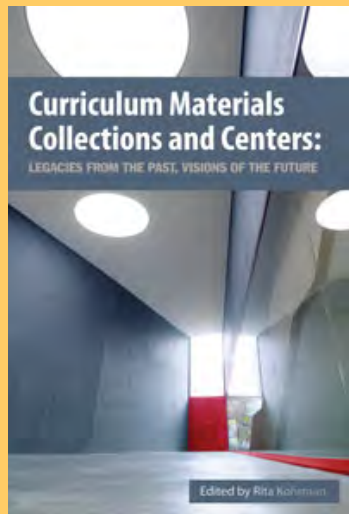
- Virtual and personal learning environment (VLE): Authors Philip Banyard, Jean Underwood, Lianne Kerlin, and James Stiller address the need for a personalized education system that encourages “children, from an early age and across all backgrounds, to become more involved in making decisions about what they would like to learn and how.” They stress the need for VLEs ‘to work with and not against current pedagogic practice.’ When

children’s experience of technology in formal education settings is different from that in their homes “there are increasing indications that learners’ expectations of technology, and, as a result, of learning, are not being met.”

- Virtual worlds: Authors Dafne Gonzalez, Christina Palomeque, and Paul Sweeney use teaching Spanish in Second Life as their case study.
- Web 2.0 in an Asian context: Mary Burns and Petra Wiyakti Bodrogini’s community-building tool is a case study located in Indonesia.
- Social media: Kelli S. Burns’ case is one of teaching research methods using social media. Her research methodology—an ethnography project, interview project, and survey—are described in detail and the results presented may surprise some readers.
- Social networking: Joannah Portman Daley deconstructs formal and informal learning.

Stephen Bax’s concluding chapter” presents a critical appraisal of many of the assumptions of digital education and looks forward to its future prospects.” You can find out more about each of the contributors to this text in the editor’s Notes on Contributors, followed by a handy index to the volume. That, along with the extensive references at the close of each chapter, will provide me with additional reading for months to come.

Barbie E. Keiser is an information resources management consultant located in the metro-Washington, DC, area. barbie.keiser@gmail.com



Kohrman, R.
***Curriculum
Materials
Collections and
Centers: Legacies
from the Past,
Visions of the
Future.*** Chicago:
**Association of
College and
Research
Libraries, 2012.**
978-0-8389-8602-8.
**\$48. Reviewed by
Amy Catalano.**

This volume, a compilation of chapters written by some of the most experienced and knowledgeable curriculum librarians in the United States, reviews the history of curriculum materials within the context of the commencement of formal education, present issues in developing and maintaining curriculum and future directions for curriculum materials centers (CMCs).

The early chapters focus on the history of classroom teaching and the evolution of curricula used. From the clear need for places to keep and manage curriculum materials and textbooks comes the inception of the Curriculum Materials Center. Allowing students to become familiar with curriculum materials and gain practical experience with developing materials is an integral component to teacher education.

Brownson's chapter on the role of children literature in the CMC serves as both a primer on literacy strategies as well as a guide to helping pre-service teachers select literature for lessons. For example the author discusses how librarians can help pre-service teachers develop cross-curricular themes and lessons using children's literature. Additionally, suggestions are made as to how staff can promote the collection.

Strategies for collaboration are outlined in chapter 4, but are also discussed in later chapters. Service-learning projects and children's literature events are examples of sample collaborations with teaching faculty. Because many CMCs are located within the school of education rather than the campus library, librarians have unique opportunities to collaborate with education faculty. Another successful example is recruiting education faculty into relationships that focus on teaching and emphasizing information literacy. For example, the authors describe their experience of embedding librarians into children's literature and curriculum courses.

Nadean Meyer's chapter on how to "stretch dollars" when building a collection will be a useful selection for many CMC librarians. The chapter also serves as a guide to the types of materials that are commonly collected in curriculum centers. Additionally she discusses how to make the case for more funding based upon circulation statistics and how to create learner centered collections.

Chapter 6 outlines the steps for staffing the CMC with well-trained staff. Linda Teel emphasizes that curriculum librarians should not be expected to cover dual jobs for other subject areas in the library, as service to patrons will be compromised and the development of the collection will suffer. Tips for hiring CMC staff are offered as well.

Chapter 8 discusses the change in uses of textbooks in classrooms. A history of textbooks such as Hornbooks and the McGuffey's Readers is presented. Suggestions on how curriculum librarians can handle the move by many school districts, to e-book versions of their texts are offered as well. Managing such collections will prove challenging with respect to providing access and following copyright law.

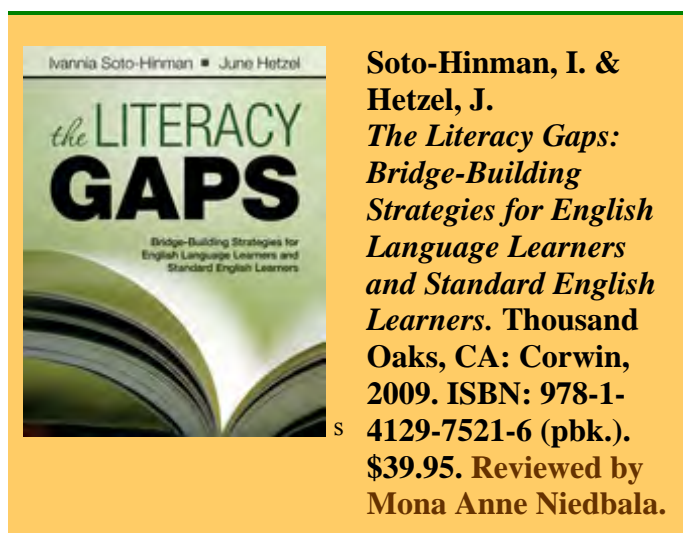
In the latter chapters that refer to the future of CMCs, emphasis is placed on the need for supporting and leading teaching with technology, as well as facilitating outreach and collaboration within and without the institution. In order for curriculum librarians to remain relevant they must show the value of the center to the institution. For

example, in chapter 10 Shonda Brisco discusses how academic librarians can form collaborations not only with students and education faculty, but around campus, and within the community (at neighboring high schools for example). By showing prospective teachers what a model school library looks like, within the CMC, librarians can prepare these teachers to collaborate with their school librarians to create meaningful projects that will help students become information literate.

Throughout the book, case studies provide examples of well-thought out and successful CMCs. For example, in the last chapter Linda Scott describes how she visited multiple model CMCs and built the CMC at her own intuition from scratch with little funding.

In sum this book is an updated and much needed volume not only on managing and building CMCs and collections, but also on how to engage faculty and students into a collaborative relationship where the emphasis is on information literacy. This volume should be required reading for all new and seasoned curriculum librarians. The one criticism this reviewer would like to make is that a couple of chapters could have done with more careful editing with respect to grammar and typos.

Amy Catalano is Assistant Professor, Education Librarian, Director of the Curriculum Materials Center, at Hofstra University.
Amy.Catalano@hofstra.edu



This book attempts to provide solutions to the crisis caused by the underachievement of English Language Learners (ELLs) and Standard English Learners (SELs) and the growing gap between ELLs and SELs and their native English-speaking peers. The authors offer a research-based rationale for a new teaching model that will assist teachers to bridge the gaps between ELLs/SELs and the text, ELLs/SELs and their teachers, and ELLs/SELs and their peers.

After discussing demographic patterns, languages spoken and socioeconomic factors, ELL achievement, and findings from the National Literacy Panel, the authors introduce the concept of Standard English Learners (SELs). SELs are students who grew up speaking variations of Standard English or who live in isolated rural settings where they rarely hear Standard English spoken in their communities.

In the Literacy Gaps Model, the authors propose a conceptual structure around which conversations can occur in professional communities, observations can be made, gaps can be identified, and bridges can be built, especially for the English Language Learner and the Standard English Learner, in order to help each child succeed.

Chapters two through five deal with the gap between the student and the text. In the second chapter, Decoding: Word Recognition Strategies

and Fluency, the authors examine the importance of teaching ELLs and SELs phonemic awareness, phonics, sight words, and automaticity as a critical foundation for developing word recognition and reading fluency.

Chapter three covers background knowledge and experience, also named *schema*, which enable students to connect with, visualize, and experience the story in the text and become effective readers. Effective readers are code breakers, text participants, text users, and text analysts.

In focusing on comprehension, language, and vocabulary, the authors examine meaning-making strategies and demonstrate how academic language, including vocabulary, syntax, and text structure, impact comprehension for ELLs and SETs. Strategies such as comprehension monitoring and (re)organization of text (oral, written, artistic, and combination bridge-building strategies) are described.

Chapter five on English language development and academic English provides a step-by-step guide for teachers through the process of sensitive language mentorship for ELLs and SELs. The specialized language needs of ELL and SEL students are analyzed and solutions for meeting these needs are offered. The effective instructional practices section includes an “Academic Language Development” lesson plan.

Chapters six to eight focus on The Gap Between the Student and the Teacher. In perceptions and expectations, the authors discuss the impact that teachers’ perceptions and beliefs can have on working with ELLs and SELs, as these can hinder educational progress. A theoretical framework and practical, bridge-building strategies for closing the gap between student and teacher are provided.

Chapter seven on cultural differences offers solutions for connecting the literacy domains, speaking to writing and listening to reading, in a culturally responsive learning environment. Empowerment, transformative learning, and

emancipatory education are among the culturally responsive teaching approaches presented.

In socioeconomic differences which constitute another gap between the student and the teacher, the authors discuss teaching strategies for providing literacy instruction to varied language registers in order to bridge socioeconomic differences. The classroom inclusion model becomes a goal for a pluralistic society.

In language proficiency levels, the concept of academic language competence including grammatical, discourse/textual, sociolinguistics, and pragmatic competencies, the authors offer practical techniques to maximize language acquisition by using the first language to assist the second language acquisition process.

Chapter ten discusses practical grouping strategies based on language proficiency levels. Some examples are creating micro-structures in the classroom, such as homogeneous and heterogeneous groupings, coupled with open-ended, flexible, tiered assignments and broad-span teaching, and macro structures across grade levels and school-wide programs.

In conclusion, the authors explore opportunities for teachers to provide socio-cultural learning environments that would support ELL and SEL students move beyond the achievement gap and prepare for successful futures.

This work contributes to the education of English Language Learners and provides powerful strategies, activities, suggestions, and practical examples for bridging the gaps between English as a Second Language and Standard English learners and their peers and teachers. Given its strengths and subject matter, the book is highly recommended for academic library collections supporting undergraduate and graduate programs in teacher education and school librarianship.

Mona Anne Niedbala is Education & Curriculum Materials Librarian at University of Rhode Island Libraries. mflorea@mail.uri.edu