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Guzzetti, Barbara; Elliott, Kate and Welsch, Diana (2010). *DIY Media in the Classroom: New Literacies Across Content Areas*. NY: Teachers College Press.

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Reviewed by Jill Denner

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The book title, Do-It-Yourself media, refers to the far-reaching use of technology by today's youth to create original or modified products. While most educators recognize that their students are creating with technology, many have not kept up with the different kinds of media use, and the learning potential of each one. This book is for those educators who still wonder how a blog or web comics can be useful in the classroom.

The authors begin with a definition of DIY media as "those tools and practices that facilitate creating new media texts, such as a song, an online journal entry, or a video game" (p. xvii). Then each author goes on to situate herself in the realm of DYI media, a personal touch that will quell the fears of readers whose own knowledge and use of new technologies is minimal. The book is coauthored by two young women who were not long ago

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adolescents themselves and whose own DIY media practices were part of the inspiration for the book. These young authors bring a unique voice that is often not found in academic books on youth and technology. One of the authors (Welsch) works in an after school program for teens in a large urban public library and does DIY media with them every day thereby keeping her in touch with today's youth. The authors also acknowledge the inevitable challenges that are faced when trying to balance youth initiative with the requirements of an academic classroom.

The first chapter provides a general introduction to DIY literacies, and how they connect with learning. Unlike many books on youth and technology, the authors situate this review of existing theory and research in a developmental and social justice framework. They acknowledge that while adolescence is a time of identity exploration, the nature of that exploration varies across socioeconomic status and gender. The program examples are useful for illustrating how theory can be put into practice, however the utility of this section would have been enhanced by selecting more established programs with research data, and presenting a more comprehensive description of why and how those programs have been effective. However, as the authors point out, there remains a gap in published research studies on programs that use these innovative strategies.

The next seven chapters provide a basic introduction to each genre of DIY media, and then offer suggestions for incorporating them into instruction. The genres are: blogs, social networking/ social media sites, video games/machinima/virtual worlds, you tube/video sharing sites, informational wikis/online resources, fan fiction/fan art/web comics, and zines/indie music. Each chapter describes how youth use the genre outside of school, and why it is motivating for them. The authors then present strategies and challenges for incorporating that genre into the classroom, including links to more detailed and real-world descriptions. Each chapter also includes a summary of the literacy skills and abilities that could be nurtured by each genre. While the authors attempt to summarize research on each genre, it is limited, and the critical reader will want to seek out the original studies for more detail about "how much" and "how" to implement something

like blogging in order to improve students' writing abilities. More detail is also needed to understand what type of writing abilities might be fostered by what type of blogging, and how much instruction is needed.

The final chapter makes a call for new strategies to assess the learning potential of DIY media. While they do not offer specific assessment strategies, they raise the big questions in the field, including the importance of monitoring ethical use of DIY media. They also provide a link to their weblog, a place for educators to learn about and share their own DIY media experiences. Readers can visit the weblog at <http://www.adolescentsdiy.blogspot.com/>

The book is short, and intended to be an introduction and source of encouragement for instructors who are considering incorporating DIY media into their classroom. While this is not a how-to book, the authors do provide links throughout the chapter, as well as an appendix with some resources on these topics. This strategy makes sense, and suggests that the authors recognize that book publishing is a slow process, so the best resources for the latest tips on DIY media can be found online. What might be the most useful part of the book, even for those who are already familiar with most of the DIY media genres, is the appendix with a detailed list of literacy skills (e.g., writing hybrid texts, and integrating graphics). This table aims to link each genre to the specific literacy skills it supports. The list is useful, although the lack of research on the use of DIY media means that the evidence for each link is weak. However, this list provides a useful map of where research needs to move, and quickly, before the next genre of DIY media arrives.

Overall, this is a worthwhile read for educators and researchers who are interested in incorporating technology into the classroom in a way that empowers and engages youth. For those of us who still read books, the content is long overdue.

About the Reviewer

Jill Denner is a Senior Research Scientist at Education, Training, Research (ETR) Associates. She does applied research, with a focus on increasing the number of women

and underrepresented minorities in computing. She has developed and studied several after school programs focused on youth leadership, building youth-adult partnerships, increasing girls' confidence and capacity to produce technology, and engaging girls in information technology. Her current focus is on how middle school students learn while creating computer games, and the development of computational thinking. Dr. Denner has been PI on several NSF grants, written numerous peer-reviewed articles, and co-edited two books: *Beyond Barbie and Mortal Kombat: New Perspectives on Gender and Gaming*, published by MIT Press in 2008, and *Latina Girls: Voices of Adolescent Strength in the US*, published by NYU Press in 2006. Dr. Denner has a PhD in Developmental Psychology from Teachers College, Columbia University, and a B.A in Psychology from the University of California, Santa Cruz.

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