



**Collison, George; Elbaum, Bonnie; Haavind, Sarah & Tinker, Robert (2000) *Facilitating Online Learning: Effective Strategies for Moderators*. Madison, WI: Atwood Publishing.**

Pages: 216 Price: \$24.95 ISBN: 1-891859-33-1

**Hanna, Donald E.; Glowacki-Dudka, Michelle & Conceição-Runlee, Simone (2000) *147 Practical Tips for Teaching Online Groups: Essentials of Web-based Education*. Madison, WI: Atwood Publishing.**

Pages: 74 Price: \$12.50 ISBN: 1-891859-34-X

**Horton, Sarah (2000) *Web Teaching Guide: A Practical Approach to Creating Course Web Sites*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.**

Pages: 176 Price: \$35.00 (hard) \$15.95 (paper) ISBN: 0-300-08726-8 (hard) 0-300-08727-6 (paper)

**Mann, Bruce L., ed. (2000) *Perspectives in Web Course Management*. Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholars' Press.**

Pages: 291 Price: \$29.95 ISBN: 1-55130-143-1

Depending on which source you believe, James A. Garfield either said, "The ideal college is Mark Hopkins on one end of a log and a student on the other." or "I am not willing that this discussion should close without the mention of the value of a true teacher. Give me a log hut, with only a simple bench, Mark Hopkins on one end and I on the other, and you may have all the buildings, apparatus and libraries without him." Either way, education has not become any simpler since that statement in 1871. Substitute the Internet for the log and you have the makings of a popular educational paradigm. These four books, each in its own way, accept this paradigm and attempt to instruct the reader in its intricacies .

In *147 Practical Tips for Teaching Online Groups*, Hanna, et al. are enthusiastic proponents of online learning who say "In this book, we refer to online learning as an entirely Internet-based activity." They build a framework for online courses beginning with the advice to "#1. Know Yourself" and "#2. Determine Your Philosophy of Teaching and

Learning" and ending with "#147. Enjoy Yourself!" Would that their enthusiasm had put a bit more meat on the bones of their frame. Few of their 147 tips amounts to much more than two or three very short paragraphs. What could have made a really interesting web site, is on paper only moderately interesting. A web site could have made use of hyperlinks to connect to related tips and more detailed explanations of the authors' points.

For example: Tip "#42, Establish a contingency plan." has three short paragraphs. The first says you need one; the second recommends the use of a help line, published in the course syllabus, and buddying up students with more experienced online students; and the third advocates alternative methods whereby learners can reach the teacher and that the teacher "test the technology often, back up your files, and make friends with the technical support personnel in your organization." (p. 22) All good advice. But, since there is no index, the reader will have to read the entire book (fortunately very short) or scan the three page table of contents to know this subject is covered at all. If the reader is interested in the other recommended contents of the syllabus for an online course, the same methods will eventually lead to tip #77, "Develop a Flexible Syllabus." One paragraph and a parenthetical note. The true neophyte to computers and online learning may find this thin frame useful to identify ideas for consideration. Others can skip right to more weighty volumes.

Horton's book has a major philosophical difference with Hanna, et al. In her *Web Teaching Guide*, Horton proceeds from the premise that online learning "sites are designed to assist face-to-face teaching." (p. x) Her approach is a very practically oriented one. "The first step in developing a course Web site is to conduct a thorough means assessment." (p. 1) By knowing what is (and maybe more importantly what is not) possible in the local environment, many issues regarding building a course Web site are resolved for you. The book is divided into five chapters:

1. Planning
2. Developing Content
3. Creating the Site
4. Using the Site
5. Site assessment

Chapter three gets the most attention and on this subject Horton shines. It is not a "how-to" of HTML coding, rather the reader is given a lengthy, thorough, and lucid discussion of many of the issues that go into designing a useable web page. Screen design, text layout, images and their manipulation, video and audio are just a few of the topics covered. This chapter alone is worth the price of the book. Each chapter includes a two page "case study" interview with experienced online site creators, a list of references and further reading, and numerous useful illustrations. There is a comprehensive index. The only quibble is that this book's design (uneven right hand margins with

excessive hyphenation) should have received the same careful treatment her web sites obviously do. She warns of excessive hyphenation on page 141.

In *Facilitating Online Learning*, Collison, et al. assume an online environment with a significant interactive component already exists. Their focus is on the role of the teacher/moderator within that environment. They advocate three principles:

1. Moderating Takes Place in Both a Professional and a Social Context.
2. The Style of "Guide on the Side" (vs. "Sage on the Stage") is Most Appropriate for Leading a Virtual Learning Community
3. Online Moderating is a Craft That Has General Principles and Strategies—That Can Be Learned

The authors have developed a palette of voices, tones and critical thinking strategies that a moderator can employ to improve the on-line learning experience. There are chapters on each of these subjects as well as the characteristics of a healthy on-line community and potential roadblocks and how to overcome them. Each section is illustrated by examples drawn from the authors' experiences with the Concord Consortium Educational Technology Lab and its two major projects: The Virtual Highschool Cooperative and the International Netcourse Teacher Enhancement Coalition.

This book is clearly written and well organized, which is just as well since there is no index. Still, this book is a valuable tool for anyone presenting an interactive on-line course.

*Perspectives in Web Course Management* is a collection of individual papers, written by Canadian, Australian, and U.S. academics (mostly) for academics. These papers are arranged to 5 sections:

- A. Theories and Models of Web Course Management
- B. Web Course Ownership
- C. Web Course Tools
- D. Web Course Assessment
- E. Applications of Web Course Management

There are no connections between one paper and the next; each stands, or falls, on its own. As a volume, it fails to gel into a cohesive whole. There are a few bright spots; one such is an interesting examination of Canadian Copyright issues in Chapter 6, "Legal Perspectives in Web Course Management." Others are of the "how we did it here" variety, such as Chapter 12, "Managing Large Classes in WebCT" or trivial like Chapter 11, "Adding Digitized Speech to Web Courses," which is essentially two short snippets of HTML code and a few marginally useful screen shots.

The World Wide Web is still less than 10 years old; its

popular adoption is only about 5 years old; and its significant use as educational medium even less. That the better books in this grouping are those of a wholly practical nature is probably indicative of the state of the art. As that progresses, we should see more complete theoretical frameworks and research into the efficacy of teaching in this new medium. Only then will we know if the Web is as good as that log and Mark Hopkins.

**Reviewed by Arie C. Koelewyn**



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