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### **Book Reviews / Revue de Livres**

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**E-Moderating: The Key to Teaching and Learning Online, 2000. Gilly Salmon  
London: Kogan Page, 180 pages. ISBN: 0749431105. 180 pp.**

Review by Lorraine Chiarelli

As computer technology continues to improve and develop, learning through computer-mediated communication (CMC) will most likely remain an important tool for both educational institutions and corporations. However, learning via CMC, especially learning collaboratively, requires some degree of direction and structure in order for learners to benefit from the online learning experience. This makes the e-moderator's role within an instructional setting an essential component to learning through CMC.

Gilly Salmon's book *E-Moderating: The Key to Teaching and Learning Online* addresses this need by providing guidelines, suggestions and an instructional model for training e-moderators. This book is based on the moderator-training model developed by Salmon and her associates at Open University (OU) and it is designed as a guide for institutions wishing to develop e-moderator training. This is not a technical book on how to set up a CMC system, but rather Salmon focuses on the 'soft' skills needed by e-moderators to effectively facilitate learning online.

The book is divided into two parts.

Part 1 \_ Concepts and Cases - consists of six chapters as follows:

- What is E-moderating?
- A Model for CMC in Education and Training;
- E-moderating Qualities and Roles;
- Training E-moderators;
- E-moderators and the Participants' Experience;
- E-moderating: The Key to the Future of Online Teaching and Learning.

## **Part 2 - Resources for Practitioners - is comprised of 22 Appendices.**

In Chapter 2 - A Model for CMC in Education and Training, the author discusses the methodology used to develop the OU e-moderator training model. This model is based on many years of research at OU, in both the assessment of learning as well as moderator online practices. The result is the development of a five-step model which moderators can apply when facilitating student collaborative learning through CMC. Each stage is discussed, describing learners' needs, and the process that takes place when people collaborate online. Salmon points out in Chapter 4 -Training E-moderators, how essential it is for organisations to design a training program to better prepare e-moderators for their role. The author uses the training program at the Open University Business School (OUBS) as an example, and relates it to the model presented in Chapter 2. Salmon also examines the various roles and specific skills an e-moderator must demonstrate in order to effectively facilitate learning through CMC (Chapter 3), as well as issues from the learner's perspective (Chapter 5).

The Appendices in Part 2 are designed to provide information for institutions developing collaborative e-learning environments. For example, Appendix 11 - Techniques for CMC Structures - is comprised of a table of various techniques moderators can utilise. Appendix 18 - Communicating Online - covers netiquette and other important communication issues. In addition, throughout the book, Salmon uses case studies of various institutions to demonstrate the pros and cons of online moderating.

Gilly Salmon has been an instructor at the OUBS since 1989, and brings to this book vast experience in the teaching and training of e-moderators. The book is a worthy supplement to a library devoted to online teaching and learning. The book is part of an Open and Distance Learning Series published by Kogan Page Limited, London.

**Teaching for Learning: Designing RBL Courses for the Digital Age, 2001. Mark Nichols. Palmerston North, NZ: TrainInc.co.nz/Books, published in e-book format. Available online at: <http://www.traininc.co.nz/books.htm>. ISBN 0-473-07967-4.**

Review by Oriel Kelly

Nichols says of his book, in the preface, that it is more "a synthesis than a genesis" and it is indeed a romp through best practice in instructional design. His e-book is sprinkled with references to the work of Bates, Laurillard, Lockwood, Soloman, Knowles, Rowntree, Kolb, Salmon and the like. He draws together the principles of flexible/distance and face-to-face teaching into his model for the design of resource- based

learning (RBL) which matches the "activities of educators and tertiary institutions to the changing needs of the student marketplace using pedagogically sound techniques and well-established technologies such as the Internet."

As such, it is an excellent volume for those starting off in the area designing for technology-supported or resource-based learning, with some useful best practice reminders for those already immersed. Each chapter begins with a pair of anecdotes, scenarios of good and bad student experiences drawn in part from his experiences, which Nichols uses to illustrate the point of the chapter.

Part One (Chapters 1-3) establishes the need for effective teaching, learning and assessment with technology. There is little new here, as it draws on the works already in the public domain. It is followed though, by the explanation of his VARIES model in detail:

V - using a variety of media

A - access and communication

R - reflection by ensuring students think about material in depth

I - interaction by giving students as many possible opportunities to actually do things

E - making course outcomes explicit

S - providing timely support and feedback

There is also a useful discussion of the five levels of e-learning application, from e-administration to e-interaction, and the relationship between actual use and added value graphically indicated. The model illustrates the tendency of institutions to "invest in what is cost-effective or easily implemented over what is educationally effective."

Part Two puts the VARIES principles to work, a chapter for each, with an evaluation of the available technologies in relation to the particular aspect. This section offers varied examples of use, and strategies to encourage deeper learning and foster higher order thinking skills via the use of appropriate technologies. It ends each chapter with summaries of value to both the novice and the established instructional design practitioner. Reference is also made to an integrated example, found in the appendix, which shows how the VARIES model has been applied in an actual course.

The chapter on Interactivity has some particularly good examples, suggestions on how to incorporate this aspect of the web, highlighting the advantages of web elements over the traditional RBL media choices. The chapter on Support also points out the need for a new set of skills for RBL teachers, the creation of "some form of educational mentor" - adding that although administrators see RBL as a cost-saving, or space-saving measure, it requires at least the same level of tutor effort as traditional teaching, and support is generally the most expensive element of course delivery. His model differentiates between subject expert (design) role and tutor (support) role.

Part Three provides a practical means of integrating the VARIES components into a course design that makes appropriate use of technology. Chapter 10 stresses the importance of evaluation in RBL while Chapter 11 explores the role of educational managers and the infrastructure of support and financing for RBL.

What makes this e-book stand apart from other writings in the field, is the breadth of material the book encompasses. The fact that it comes as an e-book makes the navigation dynamic and the associated websites directly accessible. For those interested in taking a look, the first two chapters of this e-book are online (at <http://www.traininc.co.nz/TFL/sample.htm>). In a sense, Nichols practises what he preaches \_ a resource for learning that is accessible and adaptable in the digital age.

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