

## Instructional Telecommunications

*DeLayne R. Hudspeth and Ronald S. Brey*  
*New York: Praeger Publishing, 1986, 240 pages.*

This book, as its authors state in their preface, is designed to show adult educators and others interested in extending educational opportunities "how the potential of electronic communications of all kinds can be used for distant learners," (p. vii). More important it makes clear that the delivery capabilities of media themselves are just a first step in solving the problem of serving the distant learner. As the authors put it, the "solution is a system of instruction," (ibid.). The "system" they single out and describe in detail is the "telecourse," which, as all involved in technology-based instruction are well aware, stands as the United States' major contribution to distance education within the past twenty-five years.

As for "electronic communications," the authors review the media now available for use by distance educators. Their descriptions are clear and understandable, for which the adult educator unacquainted with such arcana as "videotex," "teletext," "I-Nets," and so forth will be grateful. In addition, there is a glossary of telecommunications terms. Such information alone makes the book valuable for the adult educator, especially for one whose career will extend over the next decade or beyond and who will have to come to terms with telecommunications realities, whether he wants to or not.

As for a "system of instruction," Hudspeth and Brey, both experienced in its use, extensively describe the telecourse as an effective instructional system for students studying both on and off campus. After looking at the system as a whole, they look at its complementary components, which include indispensable ones like video programs, study guides, student syllabi, and test items, as well as additional ones like microcomputer exercises, audio programs, and so on. They also describe the instructional support a telecourse student must have access to, including a live instructor or tutor, counseling service *via* telephone, and other sources. There is also an informative section that reports on what researchers have learned and are learning about telecourse effectiveness. In short, this is a handy manual that tells administrators and faculty what they should know before they adopt and employ telecourses.

Some readers of the book may object that the authors seem overly enamoured of video media. Indeed, they quite frankly admit that they are working on the assumption that television is an effective instructional method. In their own words, its "blend of systematic instructional design and creative imagery...can provide outstanding instruction" (p.53). But it should be noted that they are

insistent that telecourse components, video and others, must complement each other. Interestingly, their attitudes toward video finds confirmation from an unlikely quarter. Reviewing much-heralded TV series *The Story of English* in the *Times Literary Supplement* of September 26, 1986, distinguished linguist Roy Harris points to a "compositional format which is becoming increasingly common in the video recording age." That is, material is explored both in book and video form, but neither form duplicates the other. The video programs are not merely a "film of the book"; rather, their "relationship is symbiotic." Thus, an instructional problem is solved not by "an absolute division of informational labour but in a calculated complementarity." It is this "complementarity" that Hudspeth and Brey find so attractive in a video-related or video-based system of instruction.

This book is highly recommended for adult and distance educators, students of instructional telecommunications, and anyone concerned with bringing education and training to adults unable to take advantage of conventional programs.

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