



Interactive Open Educational Resources: A Guide to Finding, Choosing, and Using What's Out There to Transform College Teaching

Shank, John D.
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Book Review

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Shank's *Interactive Open Educational Resources* is a welcome resource for any educator needing guidance as to how best to employ interactive learning materials (ILMs) in their classroom. The author's style throughout is that of an encourager. He wants instructors to understand that ILMs are something more than using an online book or PowerPoint presentation. He claims that ILMs have the potential to address "significant modern-day learning challenges such as student preparedness, student engagement, and attentiveness" (7).

The book is divided into three sections. The first provides an introduction, answering the question "What are Interactive Learning Materials (ILMs)." The second is devoted to "Finding ILMs." And the last section concerns "Choosing and Using ILMs."

In the opening section, Shank defines ILMs and their relationship to open educational resources (OERs). He writes that ILMs are not easily defined because they have no universally accepted design and structure. Readers discover that ILMs should be interactive, online, and teach a specific objective or set of objectives. They should also contain one or more of the following processes - "applying, analyzing, and problem solving" (13).

The second part of this book is a resource guide to locate specific ILMs. The author claims that by using specific search strategies, and key digital repositories and libraries, the process of locating ILMs is made easier. A common thread found throughout this section is that of "accessibility." The author gives priority to sites freely available and user friendly.

Shank identifies specific collections of ILMs - including online educational repositories, media sites, museums, educational institutions, and professional organizations, as well as government and nongovernment agencies. In essence, “knowing where to look will save a lot of time and bring us closer to acquiring the right kinds of resources” (23). For example, the author asserts that MERLOT is a general repository containing thousands of free, peer-reviewed, high-quality ILMs covering most disciplines.

The OER Commons is a similar repository that “functions as a portal for teaching and learning materials around the world” (46). Educators are encouraged to be contributors to the repository’s resources.

Beyond North America, readers are introduced to ARIADNE, a European-based repository committed to the development and exchange of learning resources, and JORUM, a British-based repository.

Universities are another source of high quality ILMs. However, because of their vast numbers, the author suggests starting with institutions with known collections, or where the educator has a personal connection. Shank also expounds on a number of other educational repositories including the North Carolina Learning Object Repository (NCLOR).

The author also encourages educators to give consideration to non-profit organizations like museums, professional organizations, and governmental as well as non-government agencies - groups that have “increasingly integrating interactive learning materials into their online resource offerings to educationists at all levels” (95). Among those highlighted is the Smithsonian Institution that offers innumerable educational resources.

Shank encourages educators to remember the “three main areas of selection criteria - content, engagement, and design (CED) - to evaluate the quality of the identified ILMs” (31). Nonetheless, the overriding consideration should be given to content and accuracy.

In the third part, the author offers suggestions for choosing and using ILMs. He encourages educators to find ILMs that are appealing and address different learning styles. He writes that students will be more likely to spend time concentrating on and engaged with ILMs if their environment is more immersive with materials, entertaining, or compelling (144). ILMs can be incorporated as course blogs, wikis, social networking sites (such as Facebook) and learning management systems (LMS). Instructors could also link ILMs to their online course syllabus.

Shank contends that ILMs provide valuable feedback concerning student performance. Assessment is critical since it shows instructors whether course learning objectives are being

achieved and makes the student more accountable for work they do (144). ILMs can also help struggling students to review or come to understand key concepts at their own pace (133). As the author indicates, “the more learning activities engage students, the more likely it is that the ILMs will have robust feedback” (122-123)

Interactive Open Educational Resources is a cutting-edge book that provides transformative approaches to education. It is also a valuable resource guide. It will assist instructors to make a new kind of education possible in the classroom.

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