

## **Design for How People Learn, 2d**

By Julie Dirksen. San Francisco: New Riders. (2016), 296 pages, ISBN: 978-0-134-21128-2.

An understanding of good teaching necessarily begins with a thorough understanding of what learners bring to the classroom. No, this is nothing so simple as the presence or absence of laptops or smartphones, but rather it means considering the contextual and cognitive challenges that students show up to class carrying. Julie Dirksen's *Design for How People Learn*, takes this notion as paramount, and points toward a path of learner-based instructional design – that is, how we as teachers construct a learning experience that will most benefit our students.

Dirksen designs training modules and online courses primarily for adult learners in a professional setting, and her experience resonates with a legal research or legal writing instructor. Like Dirksen, we often struggle to figure out what kind of information we'd like to impart – for instance, is legal research a skill, a type of knowledge, a habit, or a bit of all three? And, once we've answered that, how do we go about planning lectures, discussions, exercises, and formal assessments in a way that best meets our students' needs?

The book offers a succinct, clear, and often entertaining overview of pedagogical theory and recent cognitive and behavioral research findings. It is perhaps unsurprising that the book is well-designed (plenty of white space!) and structured, with cheeky illustrations and bulleted lists that help impart the material effectively and enjoyably. It will be of particular use to librarians who create and maintain training materials as well as to instructors whose slide decks could use some sprucing up. But the book also does a good job of tackling weightier matters that instructors face, including finding ways to motivate students and to conduct classes when mastery of the material necessarily involves a good bit of interaction with a digital interface. Above all, it is a quick and thought-provoking book, and a fine palate cleanser before undertaking a new semester's challenges.

Reviewed by Aaron S. Kirschenfeld, Reference & Digital Initiatives Law Librarian, UNC School of Law, in 2016.