

The Systematic Design of Instruction, 8th

By Walter Dick, Lou Carey & James O. Carey. Boston, MA: Pearson (2015), 420 pages, ISBN: 9780132824859.

If you teach legal research and you create your own course, *The Systematic Design of Instruction* will likely interest you. Walter Dick and Lou Carey first created this “model for designing instruction” several decades ago, and have modified and updated it based on new research since its publication. It describes, in sometimes exhausting detail, a step-by-step process for creating a class or training system. Librarians at my law school design the entirety of the legal research course, so the content of the book did help me in reformatting and planning my course. But even I, a person who enjoys instructional design methods, at times found the detailed, nitty-gritty elements of instructional design in this book tedious overkill.

Despite the detail, the book provides an excellent structure and discussion of the authors’ instructional design process. The twelve-step process, based on education theory, research into learning, and practical experience, should ultimately create a successful course. The authors pepper their discussions of each step with diagrams explaining the theory or concepts behind the step. They also use the same two examples at the end of each chapter, to demonstrate the practical application of the step, and provide a third example of a school class in the appendix, the example most relevant to law librarians. Each chapter ends with detailed tables that overview the step through the lens of the example, as well as a summary, rubrics, practice questions to test comprehension of the step discussed in the chapter, and additional references related to that step.

The Systematic Design of Instruction oddly arrives in a loose-leaf format, along with access to both the ebook (for 180 days) and the online instructors’ manual, which provides detailed course management plans that can be copied and pasted into a course management system. I ultimately enjoyed the loose-leaf format, as it allowed me to remove the pages most relevant to my own instructional design and to focus on the information in those pages in a way impossible with a typical monograph.

For law librarians who rarely or never teach, this book will not be useful. For law librarians who have control over the design of their course, this book may be a welcome learning tool for creating a better legal research course. Because the book goes into so much detail, however, and because using the model to recreate a course will involve a substantial amount of time, particularly if done in the detail suggested by the authors, implementing any changes that may come from following the book’s system will take several months, if not longer. Overall, if you want to get down into the weeds of instructional design and apply those concepts to your course over a period of time, read this book and use its method for your class. Anyone else should skip it.

Reviewed by Taryn Marks, Faculty Services Librarian, University of Florida, in 2016.