

Book Review

The Technology Toolbelt for Teaching

Dave Morgan¹

Citation: Manning, S., & Johnson, K.E. (2011). *The Technology Toolbelt for Teaching*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. ISBN: 978-0-470-63424-0

Publisher's Description: Instructors are pressured to integrate technology into their traditional or online instruction. This book offers a hands-on resource that shows how to integrate technology into lessons and offers information about common technologies, categorizing by groups, and explains the purposes they serve pedagogically as well as how they can be most effectively used in online or face-to-face classrooms. In addition to examples, each chapter will feature a decision making matrix to help instructors decide on whether or not a tool is really needed based on curriculum objectives or a specific organizational or curricular problem.

If you're a senior level faculty member and have been teaching at the college level for some time, you have either come to appreciate, or perhaps lament, the speed with which technology has altered the way we do business, especially in the classroom. Most of us who began our careers with chalk and non-virtual blackboards find ourselves now immersed in a world dominated by YouTube, PowerPoint, and course management systems. This ship has long since set sail and we're all on board now, so the important question for most of us becomes 'to what end can technology actually help me be a more effective or efficient instructor?' Susan Manning and Kevin Johnson go a long way toward answering this question with their book, *Technology Toolbelt for Teaching*, which contains an impressive collection of descriptions and recommended uses for a growing population of web-based tools for the classroom instructor.

The instructional technology landscape is a moving target, and to their credit, the authors strongly encourage faculty to make decisions about technology usage based on the overall instructional design and the specific learning objectives of their courses, not simply out of a desire to incorporate the latest "bells and whistles" into their classrooms. Consequently, Part One of the book entails not only an argument that technology adoption should serve explicit pedagogical functions, but also a thoughtful description of several instructional design models and a decision matrix for adopting web-based tools.

Subsequent sections are devoted to descriptions of specific tools for handling such varied tasks as course organization, communication and collaboration, content presentation, assessment, and social networking. Each chapter contains a general rationale for the specific category of tool (e.g., course organization), specific teaching related problems that can be solved by the particular tool, examples of applications in both K-12 and higher education settings, and a wealth of information about the tool itself. Not overlooked are such important practical matters that impact adoption decisions, such as cost of the tool, amount of time necessary for both faculty and students to learn how to use the tool, and access and compatibility issues. Of particular

¹ Department of Psychology, Spalding University, Louisville, KY, dmorgan@spalding.edu

usefulness, the authors provide URL addresses for the various tools, making it easy for anyone to visit the site to learn more about the tool and its potential instructional value in his or her class. This is easily the book's greatest strength.

It's hard to imagine a more user-friendly introduction to web-based instructional tools for a faculty member looking to enhance his or her use of technology in the classroom. In fact, the book may be particularly valuable to those of an "old school" bent reluctant to embrace such innovations in their teaching. Manning and Johnson strike the right balance in describing both the reasons for and against adopting these tools, and you get the sense that they would adamantly recommend against using a tool that offers no more contribution to an explicit instructional objective than methods already in place. This is indeed a breath of fresh air in a contemporary climate that too frequently advocates for blind adoption of the latest cyber-developments, irrespective of their instructional value. *The Technology Toolbelt for Teaching* is an important resource for college faculty, whether you wish merely to test the instructional technology water, or immerse yourself completely.