

“A MONUMENTAL PIECE OF WORK”

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A review of *A-V Instruction Materials and Methods*, by James W. Brown, Richard B. Lewis, and Fred F. Harclerod (McGraw-Hill, 554 p., \$7.95).

THE AUDIOVISUAL FIELD is a rapidly developing area where new philosophies and directions are evident. The authors, who have attempted to give attention and meaning to these developments, furnish a clear and succinct picture of the purpose of their book in the preface from which these three paragraphs are quoted:

“This book was written to help prospective and practicing teachers become better acquainted with the broad range and interrelated uses of audiovisual instructional materials and techniques. Throughout the text the term ‘audiovisual instructional materials’ is broadly interpreted to comprise the many substances and sounds which play important roles in learning. The continued preoccupation of our schools with things verbal has tended to obscure adequate recognition of the principle that learning is most effective when generalizations and abstract concepts are developed on

the basis of rich experiences with concrete realities. These are the realities of things that are heard, seen, felt, smelled, manipulated, organized, assembled, or taken apart during learning; they are the things that are ultimately named, labeled, talked about, evaluated, criticized, read about, or thought about during learning; and they are the things remembered or recalled for pleasure or for use after learning.

“It is to be remembered, however, that there can be no guarantee that students will grow or change desirable ways simply because learning experiences are conducted at a concrete level, nor is there a magic formula for insuring desired educational results through mere use of instructional materials. The key and the ultimate responsibility for creating a favorable learning environment and achieving desired educational goals rest squarely with the classroom teacher. There is no substitute for the teacher’s

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ability to plan and organize learning experiences and to select, adapt, and relate instructional materials appropriately in learning experiences. Teacher guidance and insight, coupled with student effort, are needed at every step of the way.

"A major and consistent emphasis of the text is the principle that instructional materials are used not in isolation but interrelatedly. Multipurpose uses of materials are stressed: Charts are useful in demonstrations; tape recordings of discussions afford opportunities for further discussion and later analysis; field trips stimulate interest in making collections; films or filmstrips can provide necessary background to help students determine what is important to observe on such trips; encyclopedias, reference books, textbooks, pamphlets, and supplementary books provide essential data in organized forms which students need to solve problems growing out of still other learning activities. When teachers use varied approaches to learning problems and use materials which strengthen and build upon each other rather than compete, classroom learning activities become more interesting and understandable to the student."

A-V Instruction Materials and Methods places emphasis on the communications point of view. The authors develop the theme that the problem of communication is the basic problem in education. Because of technological and sociological changes in our society it is imperative that a wide variety of experiences be made available to the individual learner in order that the purposes of his education be fulfilled.

In harmony with this theory the authors develop the concept of instructional materials rather than simply audiovisual

materials. As evidence are the chapters on "Resources for Learning" and "Printed Text and Reference Materials." These chapters along with others are designed to show that the modern teacher uses a wide variety of experiences provided by printed materials as well as audiovisual materials and that these collectively are thought of as being instructional materials. A good case is made for having them all in the same center or at least in close proximity.

The book is developed into rather unique divisions of "ready-made" materials and "creating" instructional materials. These divisions are helpful from several points of view. The first is a philosophical one that educators must take into account. It is the question as to whether or not classroom teachers and school systems generally have the time, energy, and/or skill to develop their own teaching materials. There are many people who feel that the expansion of new knowledge along with the other complexities of teaching make it necessary to rely more on commercially prepared materials and less on local production. The way the authors have divided their material draws attention to this question.

A second purpose served by the division is simply the convenience of using the book. One finds all of the how-to-do-it suggestions in roughly the last 300 pages.

The chapters have a rather standard format. The first section generally deals with the advantages and disadvantages of the material under discussion. The second section pertains to the use of these materials in instruction, and the final part of the chapter identifies the sources for the materials as well as evaluative procedures. This format

seems to the reviewer to be basically sound methodologically.

In looking at the book as a whole there are four major observations the reviewer would like to make. First, the book contains a mass of material which has been carefully boiled down to the bare essentials required for understanding. In some ways the book contains too many facts for anyone to assimilate and yet the material specialists, curriculum supervisors, teachers and others who use it will find all parts useful at sometime or another. The authors have performed a herculean task in gathering together and reporting so many facts about the instructional materials field.

A second observation is that the authors have developed a tremendous list of resources to which classroom teachers and others in education can write for additional materials. This listing, which should make the book invaluable, is found in practically all chapters, but the chapter on "Free and Inexpensive Materials" is an outstanding example. A third noteworthy point is the great number of helps on "how-to-do-it." All of the chapters dealing with "Creating Instructional Materials" are examples, but the chapters on "Constructing" and "Real Things and Their Models" are excellent. The book goes further than most in describing the specifics of construction and development of materials.

The fourth point deals with the reference section on the operation and maintenance of standard pieces of audio-

visual equipment which is unusually comprehensive. The section on duplicating processes and equipment is not found in most audiovisual texts. The glossary is one of the first ambitious attempts to define terms frequently used in the audiovisual field and should prove to be helpful in a number of contexts.

As is true with every volume there are certain aspects of the book which are less desirable than others. One of these is the great mass of material which, in the opinion of the reviewer, is not a serious matter. By careful selection and emphasis those who use the book will quickly learn how to concentrate on the aspects most helpful to them and to give less attention to the multitude of details not immediately useful.

The second problem pertains not to the content but to the way in which the book was put together. The outside column on each page never carries the basic text but only illustrative and reference material to which it is related. One finds himself, therefore, either reading only the text and forgetting the illustrations or taking more time than should be necessary to relate the illustrations to the text. It seems unfortunate to the reviewer that these technicalities of book-making should have interfered with the readability and the clarity of the text.

All in all, *A-V Instruction Materials and Methods* is a monumental piece of work and will no doubt find increasing acceptance among instructors of AV classes, as a reference work for administrators and supervisors, and as a handbook to the classroom teacher.