



Book Review

Review of *Universal Design for Learning in Academic Libraries: Theory into Practice*

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ABSTRACT

Review of *Universal Design for Learning in Academic Libraries: Theory into Practice*, edited by Danielle Skaggs and Rachel M. McMullin. Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, 2024. Pp viii, 286. \$78. ISBN 9798892555494.

KEYWORDS

Universal Design for Learning, academic libraries, instruction, accessibility

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In *Universal Design for Learning in Academic Libraries*, editors Danielle Skaggs and Rachel M. McMullin have sought to create a resource for academic librarians hoping to implement Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles in their own institutional contexts, and they have also aimed to stimulate conversation about the relevance of the UDL framework to functional areas other than reference and instruction. UDL, which grew out of the universal design movement in architecture, targets the design phase of an instructional unit, urging instructors to prioritize building an inclusive learning experience from the ground up rather than relying primarily on ad hoc accommodations to meet students' individualized needs. UDL emphasizes the importance of providing multiple means of "engagement," "representation," and "action and expression," corresponding to the "why," "what," and "how" of learning, respectively.

The volume's nineteen chapters are organized into four parts. The three chapters in the first part, "UDL Theory and Background," introduce the genealogy of UDL, its relation to US federal laws and regulations, and its potential contributions to best practices for conducting reference interviews. Part 2, "UDL in Instruction and Reference," is the longest and consists of eight chapters, including several chapters on online learning, as well as reflections on accessible research consultations, information literacy, liaison librarianship, and LibGuide remediation. In part 3, "UDL Behind the Scenes," open educational resources (OERs) feature prominently; three of the six chapters in this section discuss the implications of UDL principles for OER design, adoption, and promotion. The remaining three chapters describe a set of materials for training novice catalogers, outline one institution's procedures for vendor negotiation and e-reserve remediation, and address the application of UDL principles to leadership. Part 4, "UDL Beyond the Library," rounds out the volume with a chapter about partnering with faculty on research assignment design, followed by a chapter on the role of library staff in catalyzing support for UDL across campus.

Contributors to the volume represent a variety of institutions, including R1 universities, medium-sized public and private universities, small liberal arts colleges, and a community college. All the contributors appear to be based in the US or Canada, with the exception of one author who teaches at University College Dublin. A number of authors are library directors, deans, or university librarians; others are reference and instruction or liaison librarians, while still others hold positions related to student success, OERs, online learning, user experience, accessibility, technical services, and collection development. A few authors currently work as independent consultants. About half of the chapters are case studies or otherwise reflections on projects with which the author(s) was/were personally involved. The remaining chapters primarily aim to make theoretical contributions, often by relating the principles and guidelines of UDL to those of other models and frameworks, including the *RUSA Guidelines for Behavioral Performance of Reference and Information Service Providers* (Loewen et al.), the *ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* (Hervieux), W3C's Web Content

Accessibility Guidelines (White), open pedagogy (Peter and Baribeau), and various theories of effective leadership (Trott).

The book in full is most likely to be useful to reference and instruction librarians, as well as library leadership. That said, select chapters, particularly in the book's third section, will be of interest to those working in other areas of academic libraries. Library workers involved in OER or course affordability initiatives may wish to read chapter 12 (Peter and Baribeau), chapter 13 (Chee and Weaver), and chapter 14 (Davis). Staff who engage in vendor negotiation can consult the first half of chapter 16 (Eastes et al.), while those who are responsible for training new catalogers (or teach related courses in an LIS program) may be inspired by the project described in chapter 15 (Kirkland and Gordon). Chapter 11 (Kehoe and Bierlein), written by two members of a user experience department who managed a large library-wide LibGuide remediation project, is notable as a model for successful project management across functional areas, while chapter 19 (Kirsch and Sabelko) is also broadly applicable in its demonstration of a campus library's ability to catalyze support and community for UDL on campus. Many of the chapters undertake their own overviews of the background and fundamentals of UDL. While this can begin to feel repetitive when the chapters are read in sequence, it also means that individual contributions stand fairly well on their own.

The book benefits from the variety of institutional contexts represented and is strong in its coverage of several different topics, such as OER and online learning. Multiple chapters discuss challenges related to the transition from in-person to online teaching during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic; while these accounts stem from a specific public health situation that necessitated a rapid pivot, many readers will still find the lessons applicable due to the continuing popularity of online learning in higher education. The volume is at its best when authors demonstrate UDL by example in the writing and organization of their chapters, as Shotick does by providing an aside on "Recommendations on How to Read This Chapter" (recognizing that readers may come to the volume with varying levels of bandwidth and familiarity), as well as summaries of key takeaways. A few contributions, including the editors' introductory chapter, take care to acknowledge compelling critiques of UDL, most notably the model's reticence about racism and white supremacy. Given that the volume was published by ACRL, it is not surprising that its geographical scope is largely confined to North America; however, considering that Canadian institutions are amply represented among the authors' affiliations, it might have been fruitful, at a minimum, to complement Havelka's chapter on US policy with a similar perspective on Canadian law.

Although UDL is far from the only framework that addresses inclusive teaching, it is an influential model, especially in conversations about accessible pedagogy. It is therefore surprising that, as Skaggs and McMullin observe, literature about the specifics of implementing UDL in academic library settings has been sparse. The chapters in this volume constitute a robust contribution to LIS scholarship on this topic. Academic librarians and administrators

with an interest in making their libraries' teaching activities more accessible to a wider range of learners will find useful takeaways here.