to an accumulation of undeleted work files within the directory holding the software (I had to delete these manually).

However, despite the bugs and the inaccuracies in the documentation, I still think that at £64-63 (including VAT, packing and delivery), this fascinating educational product is good value for money.

Philip Barker, University of Teesside


This book began for me promisingly. First, the title itself, coming from an author at an institute highly active in both traditional and innovative design and delivery of distance education, suggested an up-to-date book that would reflect issues central to the field and also the considerable work going on in distance and open learning in Europe overall. Then, the author’s introduction, giving an overview of different perspectives on open and distance learning, their shared as well as their distinct characteristics, was well written and conceptually helpful. I hoped the book could become a useful resource.

However, two warning signs soon arose. The first was the lack of an index or any kind of overview of the content, no indication of the descriptors used for entries, and no sort of conceptual grouping of the entries. Only alphabetical order (and bold-faced terms within entries, for cross-referencing) were there to guide me. The first term was access devices followed by a page and a half of discussion with cross-indexed terms: content lists, summary, overview, objectives, index, glossary, headings, cross-references, advance organizers, pre-tests, and concept structure diagram. Once I read the entry, I could see the logic of calling these access devices, but I never would have thought to go to an entry entitled access devices if I had wished to find out more about key issues with, say, concept structure diagrams being used in open learning.

The second warning sign came when I then tried to look up, via alphabetical order, various key issues that appear frequently in discussions about distance and open learning, issues such as (among many) how to facilitate co-operative work among learners at a distance or how to design just-in-time open learning and the implications of this kind of flexibility for traditional distance education. I could find nothing that seemed to relate to these and a number of other key issues.

Perhaps it was the lack of an index or overview that was preventing me from finding what was in the book. I decided to read it from cover to cover, and coded the content. I found four major orientations that together left me disappointed and frustrated.

My general impressions, after my analysis, were that (a) this book was most focused on the design of highly structured print materials for distance delivery where the assumption was that learners would generally work in isolation; (b) the little of what I see and hear as key issues in open and distance learning in Europe circa 1993 are not represented in this book; (c) most of the entries for communication and information technologies as tools and channels of distance and open learning are unsatisfying; and (d) the book is unbalanced in its choice of topics.

The first point is the most far-reaching. The book appears to be written primarily from the perspective of the designer of structured print materials for distance delivery, where it is assumed that the designer, not the learner, is in essential control - that is, ‘activities [...] are things you ask the learner to do ...’ (p. 19); ‘an overview thus tells the learners where they have been, where they are now, and not only where they are going but why they are going there’ (p. 88); and so on. Although this approach is certainly relevant
for some learning situations, it reflects nothing of the major discussion now occurring about constructivist approaches to learning or learner control. Also, the book seems frequently to assume a model of the learner working in isolation, generally only with the print materials (‘since learners usually have no one to turn to for clarification’, p. 22). The awareness of the importance of human interaction within the distance and open-learning paradigm, and the many strategies being used to include interaction as a key part of the distance-learning situation, does not seem to be a key issue relative to this book, while I think it is one in practice and research.

The coverage of key terms and issues with respect to the use of and impact of communications and information technologies in distance and open learning is particularly unsatisfying. Sometimes what is included is rather odd in its expression compared to general practice. For example, teleconferencing is described in a two-line entry as ‘a system for linking individuals to telephones. Very useful for telephone tutorials’ (p. 118). Audio conferencing, for which the above definition would be more accurate although still strange, and audiographic conferencing, have no entries at all, although they are important channels for adding interaction to distance learning in countries throughout the world. Instead of audio conferencing or audiographic conferencing there are two strange entries, audio letter and audiovision, that describe techniques I have not seen in current practice, nor certainly would call key issues. Similarly, video conferencing does not merit an entry although something called radiovision does.

In addition to somewhat odd definitions, others relating to communication and information technologies seem not only out of date but uninformed. Computer drill and practice is described as ‘seldom giving feedback to learners who make mistakes’ (p. 26). Computer-marked assignments are introduced by saying: ‘all that is needed is a template that can be placed over a standardized answer form to reveal whether the learner’s coded responses are in the right place’ (p. 28).

Icons are described with an explanation that makes little sense: ‘they [...] can signal, at a glance, the necessity for having to hand your audio-cassette player or that you will be expected to write something before the end of this particular section’ (p. 59). Television is dismissed in 10 lines as an ‘expensive medium’ (p. 119), despite its strategic and extensive use in distance education in many countries, for example China and Turkey.

And it is not only media-related terminology that sometimes surprised me. How many people would look up the terms reflective action guide, student stoppers or transformers? Agro-botany evaluation is a highlighted term - who is going to look for that as a key issue, especially when genuinely key issues such as criteria for cost-effectiveness evaluation are not mentioned? Without an index, how will the reader know that people with disabilities has been chosen as a heading?

The impression of imbalance I obtained related not only to content but also to implicit frames of reference. While some key issues are represented minimally or not at all, others are over-represented. For example, entries relating to learner evaluation predominate, with major headings that include: assessment, assignments, competence, computer-marked testing, evaluation, examinations, formative evaluation, in-text questions, marking, norm-referenced assessment, objective tests, post-tests, pre-tests, self-assessment, and summative evaluation. Most of these are written in a introductory way, such as one would expect in a reader for general pre-service teacher training.

With regard to frames of reference, those of many actors in the overall distance and open-learning setting are not represented at all. For instance, key issues facing administrators
in distance teaching organizations are not represented, neither are issues such as those relating to broadening access while maintaining quality or transferability of experience and accreditation, nor issues relating to the training of instructors to support the addition of distance and open-learning options to their teaching. Some specifically British references occur (for example, National Vocational Qualifications), but no hint is given of the extensive experiences relating to open and flexible learning that are happening at the European or other international level, such as the DELTA Project, nor the issues being discussed relative to those experiences.

On reflection, if the book had been titled differently, clearly indicating its orientation, and if it had provided an index or overview, my reaction would have been less negative. The book could more accurately be described as 'An Introduction to the Design and Validation of (Predominately) Print Materials for Structured Lesson Sequences Offered Via Distance Education Institutions' than by its actual title. With this forewarning, I would have looked for different things and at a different level than the current title required of me. Then I could have appreciated the detail about the construction of such print materials. The three pages, for example, under the heading *in-text questions* include very useful guidelines if one is not waiting for key issues to emerge somewhere. The discussions about learner characteristics and learner profiles are good, if one is not expecting also to find something about key issues relating to group interaction at a distance.

In summary, and in my opinion, the writing in this book about the instructional design aspects of (predominately) print materials for structured lessons delivered at a distance is clear and good and helpful. In contrast, again in my opinion, the overall coverage of key terms and issues in open and distance learning is weak and unbalanced in selection.

I would suggest an editing to take out the generally poor entries relating to media and communications and information technologies, a revision of the title, the addition of an index, and a re-presentation of the book as a reference text for print-materials design for structured lessons delivered at a distance. This latter topic is important, and the many entries related to it in this book are relevant and helpful.

_Betty Collis, University of Twente, The Netherlands_


Diana Laurillard begins her book with an account of her attendance at her very first lecture as a student, one which will ring familiar bells for many of us:

'With 199 other students I counted myself lucky that I was in the main lecture theatre and not in the overspill room receiving closed circuit television. The lecturer was talking formulae as he came in, and for fifty minutes he scribbled them on the board as he talked and we all scribbled more in a desperate attempt to keep up with his dictation.'

She then goes on to recount what happened in the first lecture she herself gave as a teacher: more or less the same thing. But this time, a student asked a question at the end of the lecture which showed that nothing of it had really been understood, either by that student or, it soon emerged, by any of the others listening and scribbling furiously.

Laurillard says that she learned a great deal more from that lecture than did the students. Thus she came to believe that university teachers must take the main responsibility for what and how students learn. Now, given what I say in partial defence of the tradi-