Eastern Illinois University

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Successful Strategies for Teaching Undergraduate Research

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SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH. Deyrup, Marta and Beth Bloom, eds. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013, x+192 pp., \$65.00 978-0-8108-8716-9.

Although this slim volume is somewhat compact at only 192 pages, Deyrup and Bloom have managed to bring together several cogent, insightful and well-researched articles that demonstrate a strong historical foundation of library science inquiry into the pedagogy of information literacy. Additionally, the editors have identified four distinct strategies to teaching critical thinking and information literacy in undergraduate classrooms that are proven to be successful, but also show the reader that the much-sought-after faculty collaboration on library assignments can be an enriching experience for librarian and professor alike.

“Successful strategies for teaching undergraduate research” is divided into two sections. It also contains an index primarily directed at names, theories and standards, but at only 2 pages long, it might be considered inadequate to the level of scholarship collected in the book. Thankfully each essay is thoroughly researched and includes lists of works cited. Section one encompasses seven of the eleven essays in the book and focuses on undergraduate teaching, information literacy theory, composition theory and the relationships between them. Section two presents four articles that are the strategies referred to in the volume’s title.

A brief introductory essay entitled “Undergraduates and Library Research: What’s Changed, What Hasn’t, What Now?” written by Mary George contextualizes the first section which the pedagogical issues and implications of undergraduate writing assignments that involve library research. In this section the editors ask us to step back and examine what is being valued by teaching research skills in Heidi Jacobs article: “Research Questions and the Research Question: What Are We Teaching When We Teach Research” (p.1). Then the ideas presented bring together the goals information literacy theory and composition theory and attempt to express their relationship. Next is an interesting juxtaposition of the interpretation of a “good research assignment” as seen through the librarian’s eyes and then through the eyes of a professor of History. Other essays in section one address teaching new media as a form of academic writing, teaching information ethics, and the “whys” and “hows” of assessment for teaching the research process with detailed information on assessment methods and practices.

Section two: “The Strategies In Action: Four Ideas That Work” present four thoroughly researched teaching techniques with documented success in the undergraduate classroom and in first year writing programs. Although each strategy is too sophisticated to adequately summarize here, they can be abbreviated to a few terms that are descriptive and familiar to the academic librarian. The strategies include methods of scaffolding research assignments with some content provided prior to any information seeking; teaching information literacy through the analysis of the domain or disciplinary context of assigned texts; using Wikipedia authorship to teach critical analysis and provenance; and finally, strategies for librarians to

design workshops for faculty with the goal of incorporating information literacy learning goals into course content.

This is an erudite and sophisticated collection despite its pragmatic title. It has a place in any college or university collection. It has value for scholars of writing pedagogy as well as for librarians who need a refreshing dip into the scholarship and theory of teaching research after dealing with the trying daily realities of students who need five scholarly articles NOW. This volume would also be valuable in graduate library programs as an introduction to the practice of information literacy theory and instruction in an academic library.

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