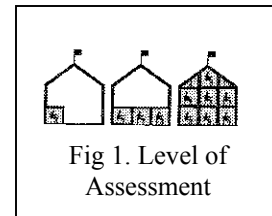


Radcliff, Carolyn J., Mary Lee Jensen, Joseph A. Salem Jr., Kenneth J. Burhanna, and Julie A. Gedeon. *A Practical Guide to Information Literacy Assessment for Academic Librarians*. Westport, Conn: Libraries Unlimited, 2007. 190 p. \$45.00 (ISBN: 1-59158-340-3)

As the title states, this book is practical – offering the reader a surplus of tangible advice, tips, recommendations, step-by-step instructions, examples, definitions, key characteristics, and required resources. The authors attempt to address everyone’s needs in all aspects of assessment, “It is aimed at practitioners and administrators who need or want to undertake assessment for an entire institution, or for a one-shot instructional session, or something in between (3).” Intent on being a one-size-fits-all solution can be considered this book’s greatest strength or weakness, depending on one’s perspective.

The book is organized into three parts: an overview of assessments in the context of information literacy and libraries; in-depth descriptions of nine different types of assessment techniques; and explanations on analyzing the data and communicating the results. The vast majority of the chapters are dedicated to “the Tools” – standard assessments in education, but potentially new to librarians. Specifically, they cover the following assessments: informal, classroom, surveys, interviewing, focus groups, knowledge tests, concept maps, performance assessments, and portfolios. This comprehensive approach is useful in introducing techniques that could be overlooked. I appreciate the authors’ efforts to describe the various issues that could be considered strengths or weaknesses in crystal clarity. So much so, they include a graphic representation for each factor. For example, the face of a clock represents time; three clocks represent a significant time commitment. Other icons are less than intuitive, slightly distracting, and just plain odd. For instance, the authors depict the level of assessment with one (classroom), three (programmatic), or nine (institutional) rooms inside of a building (see Figure 1).



While the authors can help readers select the most appropriate assessments based on their own situation, their explanations on analyzing data are less satisfying. Again, they give broad overviews and concrete procedures, but complex concepts like Analysis of Variance and Chi-square are defined in just a single paragraph. The reader would likely need to find another resource to explain how to implement these types of statistical analyses. Furthermore, only one section of the first chapter covers information literacy in any detail. The rest of the time, information literacy is a passing comment and there is virtually no mention of specific standards or outcomes. The authors seem to equate information literacy to library instruction in a very generic way. This is very disappointing. Considering that the book professes to be a “guide to information literacy assessments” in its title, one assumes that information literacy concepts would take a more prominent role. Despite this attempt to make their book sound more fashionable, librarians can find plenty of “practical” information on selecting and implementing assessments at their library.

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