

The History of the Instructional Technology Field

Information provided by Robert Reiser's article titled: A History of Instructional Design and Technology: Part II: A History of Instructional Design. The article was published in the Educational Technology Research and Development journal in 2001.

During World War II, psychologists and educators were asked to design, develop, and implement training materials to help new military recruits. Those same psychologists and educators, who were elemental in the success of American troops during World War II, continued to work on instructional problems even after the war had ended.

In the mid 1950's the programmed instruction movement began. Some scholars in the instructional technology field believed that the programmed instruction movement introduced the systems approach to education. B.F. Skinner started a revolution in the field when he explained that people can "increase human learning" through the use of "effective instructional materials" (Reiser, 2001).

Also during the 1950s, Benjamin Bloom and his colleagues published the book Taxonomy of Educational Objectives that classified different instructional activities based on the type of learning that occurs and how the learning can be tested. This led to Robert Glaser's indication that criterion-referenced measures "could assess student entry-level behaviors and determine the extent to which students had acquired the behaviors" (Reiser, 2001).

Robert Gagne made a huge impact on the field when he described the five domains of learning outcomes and the nine events of instruction. Gagne also utilized a hierarchical analysis process that identified subordinate skills of learning tasks. In 1962, Robert Mager wrote his first edition of the book Preparing Objectives for Programmed Instruction as a guide to how to write objectives that identified desired learner behaviors, conditions for the behaviors, and how the behaviors would be assessed.

During the 1960s, the earliest instructional design models were developed. Then the systems approach was developed based on early instructional design models and explained the way to systematically design instruction to ensure that learning occurs. Growth and redirection occurred in the 1980s when the "performance technology movement, with its emphasis on front-end analysis, on-the-job performance, business results, and non-instructional solutions to performance problems" began to make an impact (Reiser, 2001). Finally, in the 1990s the following developments resulted in the changing views and practices for the instructional technology field: the performance technology movement, constructivism, rapid prototyping, electronic performance support systems, the use of the internet, and knowledge management (Reiser, 2001). The field of instructional technology has been designed and developed by some of the brightest minds in history, but the field will always grow and change to best fit the needs of the learners and will continue to evolve over time.

Reference

Reiser, R.A. (2001). A history of instructional design and technology: Part II: A history of instructional design. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 49(2), pp. 57-67.