Professional Statement

Instructional Technology

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Defining Instructional Technology

When I began my program in Instructional Technology at the University of Tennessee, I believed that instructional technology related specifically to the use of technology in the classroom. I have since learned that the field encompasses so much more. Initially, pinning down a concrete definition was difficult. The difficulty lay in the fact that "the field is constantly changing" (Reiser, 2011a, p.1). My experiences in this program and my need for challenging work led me to embrace the definition provided by the Association for Educational Communications and Technology ([AECT]). AECT states instructional technology "is the study and ethical practice of facilitating learning and improving performance by creating, using, and managing appropriate technological processes and resources" (AECT, 2008). To me, instructional technology is about teaching and learning, and I see this demonstrated in AECT's wording - facilitating, improving, creating, using, and managing - as both instructor and learners are actively involved in the processes.

While my program experiences have served as the foundation for my idea and beliefs regarding instructional technology, there were several things that inspired me to enter the field and have helped to guide my interests as I have navigated my coursework. As a community college writing instructor of five years, I have witnessed firsthand the constraints that have lead to the waning of interests in the mediums introduced as tools for instructional practices during the technological advancements of the 21st century. While new technologies have allowed for more authentic, complex, and interactive learning experiences, teacher resistance to change, little guidance on how to integrate technology resources into the curriculum, and lack of training in operating the available technology are but a few of the constraints that demonstrate why

instructional media has previously failed to affect change in the field of education (Reiser, 2011b). It was my frustration with these constraints that led me to this particular degree path and influenced the role I wanted to fill within the field of instructional design and technology.

My Role in Instructional Design and Technology

While AECT has managed to encapsulate my definition of instructional technology, I find that I am more drawn to the professional term *instructional design and technology* (or IDT). I feel like IDT helps bring "design" to the forefront and showcases the "two practices [that] continue to be central to the field: the use of systematic instructional design procedures and the use of media for instructional purposes" (Larson, p.4). In *Streamlined ID,* Larson and Lockee mention that "the field [of IDT] has broadened to emphasize both 'hard skills' (technical competencies) and 'soft' skills (design skills, effective communication, analysis skills, change management, etc)" (p.4) and I couldn't agree more. During my coursework at UT, I have had to exercise all these skills and more in order to successfully complete both individual and collaborative projects. Skills that will serve me well in my future role as an instructional designer.

The development of these skills led me to new interests in the field of instructional design and technology. While my passion for teaching and my abiding interest in technology may have directed me to IDT, it was my experiences and the knowledge gained over the course of this program that have guided me to focus my interests on three particular areas: adult education, online course design and development, and professional development and training in higher ed or corporate settings. I have completed several projects, both individual and collaborative, that have strengthened my interests and skills in each of these areas.

In *The Seniors' Guide to Social Media*, an instructional unit completed for Instructional Systems Design, my target learners were senior citizens interested in learning how to navigate and utilize social media. I combined my understanding of adult learning theory with my interest in digital literacy and skills in course development to create a two-part workshop – delivered both face-to-face and online. Because there was no budget for this endeavor, I used free educational technology tools (i.e. [Edmodo](#)) and relevant open educational resources. I also had to be both subject-matter expert, designer, and developer, which gave me a deeper appreciation for each role. When suitable instructional material could not be located, I created my own using the tools at my disposal (i.e. [Camtasia](#)) and the aforementioned free edtech tools.

In Instructional Media Development, I collaborated with classmates to design, develop, and implement the design plan *Emergency Action Plan Training for Roane State Community College and Pellissippi State Community College*. Again, my knowledge of adult learning theory was absolutely essential as were my skills in developing and implementing online content, as the course management tool was initially unfamiliar to my team members. This project constantly tested our team's soft and hard skills as we worked collaboratively with each other and with staff from Roane State and Pellissippi State.

During Understanding Online Interaction, I participated in a team project creating an assessment plan titled *Online Corporate Training in Sexual Harassment*. The focus of the training was sexual harassment in the workplace while the focus of the assessment plan was how to determine if the objects of the training session were met. I was able to use my knowledge of adult learning theory while researching professional training strategies to aid in developing

instructional content and appropriate assessment methods. The experience gained designing for

such a broad range of learners in the corporate setting was invaluable.

My role in instructional design and technology has been shaped by my coursework, my

collaborative experience, and my research. These things have served to make me into an

attentive, knowledgeable instructional designer committed to providing accessible curriculum

and content based on well researched theory and strategy. A designer who is focused on her

areas of interest, but who also enjoys working outside her comfort zone with people of varied

backgrounds and opinions. A designer who will take advantage of every opportunity to learn, to

grow, and to give back to the community. It was with these things in mind that I was able to

determine the goals I wanted to set for myself professionally and academically.

My Goals

My instructional design goals, academically and professionally, were developed as a

result of both my teaching and graduate experience. Five years as a community college writing

instructor showed me that adult education was an area I wanted to continue to grow in. Five

years as an adjunct taught me to make the most of the tools at my disposal; in turn, I used those

tools to make my course material more accessible and more engaging. It was also during this

time that I became an advocate of those same tools to my coworkers and office mates. Since I

had championed some of these new tools, my coworkers gravitated towards me for questions and

tips on how to use them. This is when I discovered how much I enjoyed working with faculty

and staff in a training capacity. My graduate work reinforced these interests while introducing

me to the possibilities in online teaching and learning. These experiences, coupled with my

developing understanding of instructional design and technology, have encouraged me to follow

my interests and work on building an IDT career in either a higher education or corporate setting.

Specifically, I am interested in working with faculty, staff, and administration in designing and

developing online course curriculum and content as well as in professional development and

training.

As my academic goals are similar to my professional goals, I intend to pursue my

interests through research, through participation in professional organizations, and through

continued education. While plans for a PhD in IDT has crossed my mind for the future, right

now I am most interested in continuing my education in adult learning and organizational

training by earning graduate certificates for both. Furthering my education in these two areas will

strengthen my foundational knowledge and, hopefully, will help make me a valuable asset to

colleges and to corporate America. Besides professional and academic goals, I also have a desire

to be involved in community service projects that allow me to utilize my instructional design and

teaching skills to help promote, support, and provide quality education and educational training.

Because I feel that all people deserve a chance at higher education, I am committed to

projects that look to empower all learners. As someone who has grown up in a poverty-stricken

area of northeast Tennessee, I am well aware of the digital divide and the difference it can make

in determining who succeeds and who does not. This awareness was yet another reason for my

interest in adult literacy, and led to my involvement with the [Literacy Council of Kingsport](#) (or

LCK). Together, Council staff and I have been diligently working to redesign the LCK website

and convert existing face-to-face tutor training into an online format. As the work is being

completed outside my graduate program and full time job, the task has been long and arduous;

however, it has provided me with the chance to hone my soft skills as most of our

communication is done remotely via email, online team meetings, and form feedback. I have also become well versed in working with an extremely limited budget. The redesigned site for the LCK will go live June 1, 2016.

Recently, I have also become involved with [Designers for Learning](#), whose "purpose is to provide nonprofit and social enterprises with performance improvement consultation, instructional products, and related services" by connecting them to "[v]olunteer college students … for service-learning projects work pro bono" (About Us). The upcoming project focuses on creating open educational resources for use in adult education. I will gain experience working with open educational resources (or OER) and become more familiar with creative commons usage. I can use this knowledge for faculty training in a higher ed setting or as resource for my own course development strategies. A huge benefit of this project has been the opportunity to network with others in the IDT and education field.

Both projects allow me to work in my areas of interest while strengthening my design skills and providing vital experience in collaborative projects. While these experiences will help me achieve my goals, I must also be mindful of my professional competencies and continue to work to strengthen my skills and knowledge base in the field of IDT. Besides being useful experience professionally, these projects also help me make a positive contribution to my community.

Looking to the Future

Instructional design and technology is a broad field, and for that reason, effective designers must be knowledgeable, versatile, flexible, and tech-savvy. No matter my career goals, as an instructional designer, I must possess good communication skills, must be comfortable

working with a variety of people, and must be committed to being a lifelong learner as the field of IDT is constantly evolving. Because the field is evolving, it's also essential that I adhere to the professional standards set forth by AECT. AECT provides a list of standards focused on the following categories: content knowledge, content pedagogy, learning environments, professional knowledge and skills, and research (2012). These standards clearly outline what is expected of a professional in the field and, for me, this list will serve as a guide for professional development.

While I am confident in my strengths, I am also well aware that I will always have areas I need to continue to develop in order to be the best practitioner I can be. To ensure I continue to grow and learn as an instructional designer, there are innumerable steps I can take. As I feel it is vital to be a part of professional organizations, I have recently become a member of both AECT and the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE). Being a member of these organizations will give me access to resources, research, and networking opportunities that will enable me to stay current in trends and issues in the field of IDT. I also actively seek out and attend webinars or face-to-face training related to topics in the field of IDT.

Recently, I completed the Tennessee Board of Regent's online Accessibility Training course which focused on universal and accessible design in online courses. After completing the course, I collaborated with a doctoral student in the development of online training for two-year composition instructors working with ESL students. We presented "Assisting Faculty with ESL Instruction: A D2L-based Approach to Professional Development" at the TYCA-SE conference in Knoxville, Tennessee in February 2016. She developed content while I assembled the course training. Using our employer's learning management system, Desire2Learn, I developed the web-based training to be fully accessible and WCAG compliant.

As I have progressed through the graduate program, I have become more confident in my decision to become an instructional designer. It is a field that will allow me to work in the things that I am most passionate about - teaching, learning, and technology. In order to achieve my professional and academic goals, I will successfully complete the program UT has set forth, and I will continue to strengthen and develop my skills and expertise in areas outlined by AECT standards.

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