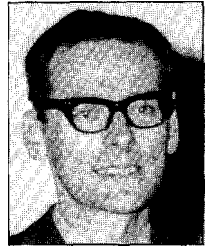


# BOOKS

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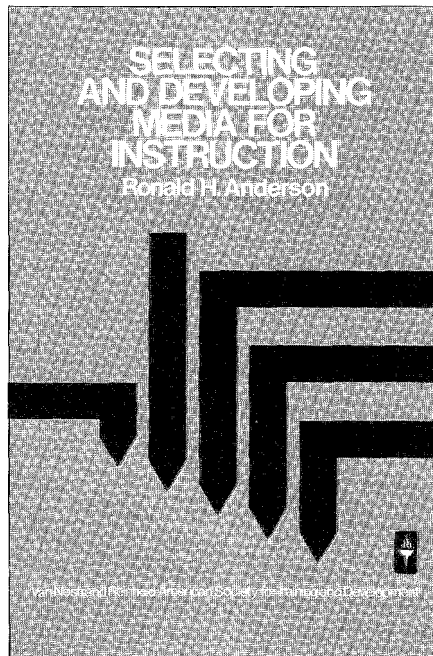
## SELECTING AND DEVELOPING MEDIA FOR INSTRUCTION

By **IVOR K. DAVIES**  
INDIANA  
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AUDIO/VISUAL CENTER

Kevin O'Sullivan, executive director of ASTD, points out in his foreword to this new book that "although we live in a world of media . . . up to this time, there has only been limited professional literature on the subject of media evaluation and selection for teaching and training. Many authors have provided detailed descriptions of the *characteristics* of various audio-visual/video presentation systems; but when faced with the question of *which* to use *when*, most fall back to the empirical (but not very helpful) concept that the 'best medium' is simply the 'least expensive one that works'." This book bravely tackles the gap between the professional literature and the professional's everyday need. It sets out to give readers a practical guide for selecting, preparing and evaluating the right media for the right occasion.

The author is currently an instructional technologist for the Bell System Center for Technical Education in Lisle, Ill. Among his responsibilities is the training of course developers who prepare lesson materials for his company. Anderson, however, also meets and advises a wider and more varied clientele outside Bell Telephone, often at conferences and workshops like the National Audio-Visual Association Institute for Effective Communication. The book reflects this fund of experience and know-how. This is no in-company manual printed and published for wider dissemination. There is nothing myopic in its viewpoint and application. Its advice and content are far richer than that. Indeed, the list of people

to whom the author acknowledges a special note of gratitude (Rudy Bretz, Rand Corp.; Jerry Kemp, San Jose State University; Sue Markle and Philip Tiemann, University of Illinois; and Dick Lewis, humane citizen of the world) bears testimony to the expertise and breadth of view that the author



has attempted to utilize. This book will certainly not be the last word on the subject, but it is very useful and provocative.

The book consists of 10 chapters of varying lengths. An introduction examines the problem of media selection, looks at some necessary assumptions, and presents a brief case example of the instructional development process. Chapter two gets to the heart of the problem by looking at media from the viewpoint of the selection process, while chapter three examines developmental testing of

lesson materials so selected.

Chapter four puts forward some guidelines to consider when designing visuals for instruction.

The next six chapters look, in turn, at the various classes of materials, viz.: still visuals (overhead transparencies, slides and filmstrips), motion visuals (film and video), audio, printed materials, physical objects or realia, and all too briefly computers (computer-assisted instruction and computer-managed instruction). An appendix consisting of two charts of media-selection information, a diagram suggesting classroom seating for screen legibility, a table giving lens focal-length data in relation to screen width and projection distance, and diagrams for common cassette-table formats complete the body of the text. A four-page bibliography, and rather short index complete the book.

The glory of the book, however, and probably its most useful and controversial feature is to be found in a simple flaw. Ron Anderson actually practices what he teaches. The ideas presented in chapter eight, for instance, which is on printed materials, have actually been followed in the production of the book. The text suggestions for page layout seem to have been followed, although (surprisingly) what Anderson calls a "formal" rather than "informal" balance for the page layout seems to have been used. Nevertheless, the final result is one of simplicity and good design.

The book, however, has one additional noteworthy characteristic. It contains 14 pages of decision tables, 11 of which are in color. Nine of these pages are to

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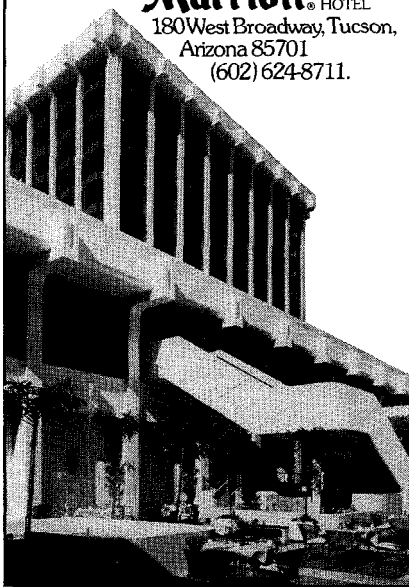
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be found in chapter two, which deals with the selection process. This chapter, which really contains much of the real meat of the book, presents a highly systematic series of steps for choosing media.

Anderson claims that the actual process of media selection which he details, is not cumbersome, and that, with experience, continual reference to the questions in the decision tables will become less necessary.

Naturally enough, any such systematic presentation of the highly complex process that goes into choosing media for a wide range of individual circumstances is open to argument and debate. "Can it be done?" "Is not the selection process a highly personal and creative thing?" "Are the variables that Anderson has built into his decision tables the critical ones?" In other words, "Is it really as simple and procedural as the author makes it appear?" Personally, I think the answer is a resounding "No!" But I still like what he has done. First, it is useful, practical and down to earth. Secondly, I can always disagree with the selection routes that the decision tables take me through; nowhere does the author suggest that I must follow the text blindly. Thirdly, the tables make me sufficiently irritated, if not upset, with the consequences of my answers to the questions built into the table, that I ultimately end up (at least for my circumstances) with a "better choice." Thank you Ron Anderson, for that alone.

In attempting to write a practical book, Anderson has had to limit his sights. Inevitably, the argument and the content highlight this limitation. In attempting to be practical he has also oversimplified. His description of one of the approaches to "the procedure of instructional development" as consisting of five basic steps (analyze the task; prepare objectives and tests; refine objectives, select media and prepare materials; test the materials and revise as necessary; present the training) beautifully illustrates the problem. Is it really necessary to start off by

always analyzing the task and preparing objectives? Does the selection and preparation of media have to be but one step in a fivefold process? But more important, where is the humanity of it all? Don't people matter? Don't people needs vary?

The book appears to treat people as objects. For instance the question "Is sound necessary?" is followed by the question "Is it practical to have students interact with the real thing (consider distribution, cost, safety, etc.)?" to which there is a yes/no answer for all students regardless of age, experience, ability, aptitude, motivation, interest, attitude, time, task, situation, etc. People do matter, people are usually central to any task, and nowhere is this more important than in media selection. This point might have been more strongly made and dealt with in the text.

The final test of any book, however, is whether it is worth purchasing. Do I recommend purchasing the book? "Yes." Buy one for your library, but make sure that you also buy one for yourself. You can then get mad with the text (and so make better decisions by disagreeing with the author) either at home or in the privacy of your own office. That's the trouble with down-to-earth, practical books. Whoever heard of anyone getting mad with one of those dull, academic volumes that are so often written for the practitioner market? Yes, this book is different, *is infuriating*, and *is a useful tool for anyone who wants to work with media.* . . . *Ivor K. Davies*

*Selecting and Developing Media for instruction* by Ronald H. Anderson — ASTD and Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., 450 West 33rd St., New York, NY 10001; 138 pp., index; \$10.95 ASTD member price; \$14.50 nonmember price.

### **ABOUT THE REVIEWER**

Dr. Ivor K. Davies is professor of education and assistant executive director of the Audio/Visual Center, Indiana University, Bloomington. He is a consultant to consultants as well as to international companies and organizations. He serves as a consultant to the corporate staffs of Allied Chemical and General Electric.