Technology is Here to Stay in (Online) Higher Education
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Taking a quote directly from the author, the title of this review clearly states what many of us have seen for years. Facing the reality that technology is truly here to stay in higher education is not the main problem for faculty today; rather, it is how they will adapt to meet technology in a way that is effective for all students of all abilities. It is currently estimated that nearly 7 million students are taking at least one course with an online component (1). To meet this consumer demand, faculty have rapidly begun tackling the development of courses delivered through distance learning. However, recent surveys show that only 30% of faculty truly believe that teaching with technology is effective. Dr. Miller addresses this discrepancy, and shows how technology can enhance the educational experience of any student regardless of the mode of course delivery.
In the opening chapters, the author presents an overview of the history of online learning and a summary of current distance learning models. Most notably included are the review of common themes in distance education today (i.e., academic dishonesty, measured learning gains, massive open online courses [MOOCs]) and a research-based rubric for quality higher education practices. Miller uses the next chapters to cover the historical theories of learning and intersperses the cutting-edge neuroscience and cognitive psychology research that is triggering new strategies that maximize attention, memory, and thinking in order to transform education in our classrooms—both face-to-face and online (2).

Dr. Miller saves the final chapters for the “how-to” portion of the book. An entire chapter is devoted to examples of technology that have been successfully used to enhance student learning. I quickly had to Google “Sniffy the Virtual Rat” (http://wadsworth.cengage.com/psychology_d/special_features/sniffy.html) and eLucy (http://elucy.org/compan.html) to learn more. She also ventures into the role of student motivation in learning and memory and presents methods to tailor course activities to enhance student engagement and their desire to succeed. Miller explains her creation of the FYLI (First-Year Learning Initiative) and its goal to set standards for developing low-level college courses meeting all components of effective learning (http://nau.edu/University-College/Your-First-Year/Learning-Initiative/). The concept of “gamification” was also touched upon in these final pages. Marc Prensky was a pioneer who first introduced us to digital game-based learning, and many faculty who use digital learning materials from textbook publishers now see that if you build a good game, learning will come.

For someone who is new to online education or is an administrator seeking justification for creating online programs, this book is a must read. In 200 short pages, Miller provides what a week-long seminar on the topic would cover. She even provides a detailed “cognitively optimized” syllabus for an introductory psychology course. It provides the scaffolding for the delivery of any quality course and includes effective methods for capturing the learning gains of students based upon the practices detailed throughout the book. The bountiful references provided, along with examples of technology available free or at low cost to faculty, make this book a valuable resource to even seasoned online educators. As someone who has taught with technology since 2002, I did find myself skimming at times through the first sections of the book. However, the end portion of the book reinforced that my courses are aligned with the qualities and characteristics of effective online teaching methods. The author provides an invaluable tool here, especially for instructors who have not used the Quality Matters rubric (www.qualitymatters.org/rubric).

Jennifer A. Herzog
Herkimer College, Herkimer, NY
E-mail: herzogja@herkimer.edu

REFERENCES