Increasingly, the use of technology in facilitating learning, has become a necessity. *Compressed Video Learning: Creating Active Learners* is one of the many publications in the Lifelong Learning on the Information Highway series that attempts to provide basic information on video conferencing in a non-technical style. A *Workbook for Workshop Facilitators* containing a 3.5" floppy and the companion VHS format videotape, serve as supplementary materials to the main book.

The author provides a straightforward approach to the ‘when, why, what and how’ of compressed video learning (CVL). The first section, containing three chapters, provides some basic information on the meaning, costs, need, appropriateness, efficacy and relevance of using CVL. Subsequent chapters attempt to address issues surrounding the technical aspects of hardware, software, personnel, and peripheral equipment. Section two provides 15 case studies on the experiences of institutions that have used CVL. These ‘success stories’ are taken from various situations such as the workplace, formal education, minority culture, and special needs applications. The case studies include samples from corporations, schools, colleges, universities, and non-profit organizations although no clear description is provided as to how ‘success’ is being defined or measured. While the success stories describe the possibilities of implementing CVL, the equally important limitations appear to be hidden in the long descriptions of various case studies. With the current reverence for adopting technology, it would be helpful if one could draw special attention to some of the critical questions surrounding the use of compressed video learning.

In spite of the potentially high costs involved, the author makes a strong case for CVL by offering comparisons between on-site delivery and other learning technologies. With cautious observations on the limitations, the author rightly emphasizes the need to identify specific needs before adopting CVL. The presentation is reasonably clear and concise, without any protracted descriptions, although Roberts seems unable to shake off the tendency to belabour how her writing is simple, straightforward, and “jargon-free.” Certain long references to what other chapters contain make reading disjunctive; one might indeed want to relegate some of the parenthetical clarifications to the footnotes. The selected quotes and comments in the sidebars, do offer good snapshots, however. Case studies provide good insights into some of the promises and limitations of implementing CVL, though information on actual experience within schools is limited and cursory. Besides offering insights into corporate contexts, the case studies also include post-secondary institutions.

The last section deals with principles of use, design and planning, presentation techniques, evaluation, and the logistics of setting up CVL. Focusing on
experiential rather than traditional research-based findings, this book provides insights into what Roberts calls “people’s experiences” in using CVL. Hence the writing is more anecdotal with narratives, and perhaps fortuitously, less pedantic. Roberts is cognizant of learner needs and styles and remains committed to meaningful learning. With some resemblance to constructivism, the learner-initiated and participant-controlled learning activities, reflect sound pedagogical practice. Along with a number of checklists, itemized tables, and evaluation forms, section three offers highlights and summaries of relevant research. Compressed Video Learning does not purport to provide answers to all questions nor, does it claim to be exhaustive. Functioning as a resource guide, it presents good help towards understanding and implementing CVL.

It is commendable that Roberts has managed to be concise with less than 99 pages of main content material. The references at the end of each chapter serve as resources for further reading. With the sample evaluation forms and visual materials in the appendix, this book is a hands-on guide offering quick and clear steps to the implementation of CVL. Roberts has done an excellent job in both using space and sparing the reader any labourious reading. The Further Reading Lists, Glossary, List of Contact Names, mailing and even email addresses make this book an excellent resource guide. Though section three deals with the pedagogy and the basics of active learners and the learning process, this is not a book for educators primarily interested in the theoretical discourse of using compressed video learning.

The multi-authored workbook contains five modules, with modules one to three covering planning, delivery and evaluation of workshops on using CVL. Modules four and five contain eight templates formatted as print handouts that correspond to twenty PowerPoint slides (electronic copies on the floppy disk that is included).

Overall, Compressed Video Learning is a good resource guide for teachers engaged in an adult learning environment. That being said, this book may serve only as a primer for those who need to analyse specific classroom situations for youth or for teachers interested in comprehensive methods and methodologies in relation to CVL. While the author may not have intended to include countries other than those in North America, Europe and Australia, it might be helpful to expand the case studies to other continents. Finally, given the numerous books that offer U.S. case studies, it is commendable that Roberts has taken the extra effort to seek and describe Canadian experiences.

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