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Concepts, Methods, and Cases**
[by Greg Hearn, Jo Tacchi, Marcus Foth, and June Lennie]

Review by: Robert Sanders

No Abstract

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Action Research and New Media: Concepts, Methods, and Cases

Greg Hearn, Jo Tacchi, Marcus Foth, and June Lennie

Reviewed by Robert L. Sanders

I had the pleasure of reviewing *Action Research and New Media* (Hearn, G., Tacchi, J., Foth, M., & Lennie, J., 2009) and found it to provide a timely discussion of how action research methodology can be integrated into the exploration, development, and application of today's new media. I found this text to be both relevant to my own research interests around the use of action research to better understand and inform my own efforts in providing access to and creation of media, and appropriate for use with my graduate students in library science who are emergent researchers in both new media and action research methodology. This book is available from Hampton Press at <<http://www.hamptonpress.com>>

As the title suggests, this book provides an in-depth discussion of concepts, methods, and cases related to the praxis of action research and new media. According to the authors, "action learning was seen as particularly appropriate to new media initiatives because they involve constant innovation and change, have unpredictable outcomes, and require flexibility, creativity, and an inclusive, user-centred approach" (p. 20). Beginning with section one, which addresses key concepts, methods, and tools related to both title themes, the authors guide the reader through a well-organized, logically sequenced analysis and explication in the second section of advanced approaches to the use of action learning in the context of new media, including, Ethnographic Action Research, Network Action Research, and Anticipatory Action Research. Section three follows with a series of case studies to provide examples of how action research and new media have been studied in four different research settings. The book concludes with a summary of the concepts addressed throughout the title and a discussion of future directions for this emerging field of study. The book is enhanced by an extensive list of abbreviations used throughout the text and the inclusion of boxes of supplementary text for elaboration on a particular term, concept, or method. Figures and tables are used throughout the text to clarify, expand on, or illustrate each chapter, thus bringing added value through visual representations of data and processes discussed. Also included are an extensive list of references, an author index, and a subject index.

The authors of this book have provided a thought-provoking discussion of how action research can be used as an effective and ethical means of exploring the “communicative ecology” of new media. By this, the authors suggest that researchers should take a more holistic perspective by considering the impact of new media technologies “within a broader understanding of the whole structure of communication and information in people’s lives” (p. 31). They argue that, “action research is an especially appropriate methodology for developing, researching, evaluating, and managing new media project” (p. 209). This argument is supported through a balanced discussion of theory and practice, written in a way that takes the reader through a logical transition from the theoretical underpinnings of a concept, to practical strategies and techniques, to case studies in which the theories presented are put into action. I found these case studies included in section three particularly useful in providing detailed examples that I can share with my own students interested in exploring ways to give voice to the lived experiences of stakeholders who may be disenfranchised or living on the fringes of our society.

While certain portions of this text may be challenging for those new to action research and new media, it generally provides a straightforward and approachable coverage of issues related to new media action research that can be of great use to intermediate and expert readers, in particular, who are interested in exploring this emerging field of research.