

Understanding Instructional Design Collaboration

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The papers in this special issue are part of an important conversation. Contemporary instructional design is a collaborative enterprise, and especially with the growth in the technologies available for learning, instructional designers cannot complete high-quality designs on their own (Gibbons, 2013). Although team members, stakeholders, and subject matter experts all provide input into both the form and quality of instructional designs, research literature predominantly credits the efforts of designers as being the primary influence, if not the deciding factor, of whatever learning or project outcomes are achieved. While the collaborative nature of the field is frequently acknowledged, research tends to treat others involved as secondary, sometimes little more than ancillary appendages to what instructional designers are doing (cf. Chen & Carliner, 2021). Thus, the articles in this special issue represent an advancement in our discourse as a field, because they foreground the role of collaboration in designing great instruction, while also exploring ways that such collaborations can be of higher quality.

Research was sought for this special issue that would address topics related to (a) aspects of the collaborative relationships involved in instructional design, (b) a broadened viewpoint on how to carry out effective collaborations, (c) illustrations of both effective and ineffective collaborative practices, (d) reports of the points of view held by collaborators in the design process, or (e) research that highlighted the complexities that can accompany meaningful collaboration. Collectively and individually, I believe the contributors to this issue have succeeded in these aims.

The issue begins with Lee et al., who report a case study focused on how to take advantage of what differing parties in an educational project bring to the table during the practice of co-design. Next, Gronseth et al. report a design case of the collaborations involved in designing an IDT internship program. Continuing, Stefaniak and Gilstrap review how instructional designer-faculty collaborations reflect the practices of coaching, along with how designers can better apply coaching principles in their collaborative work. McNeil et al. also offer a design case focusing on an industry-academic partnership in healthcare. Wehr et al. provide

insights into collaborations among the instructional design community itself, specifically focused on the important design justice movement. Carliner and Chen follow, and address an important issue: what, exactly, do we mean when we talk about instructional designer collaborations? And if we understand collaboration, does that affect whether we consider instructional design a collaborative enterprise? Wehr's paper then offers a detailed case study of co-design and participatory research practices in an instructional design context. Following her work, Strang provides a look into practical techniques that can be used to encourage meaningful collaborations between designers and university faculty. Next, Piña and Muller offer their insights into the important, but often neglected, issue of assessing the effectiveness of instructional design teams. Bevins and Howard studied the collaborative discourse in instructional design, and report here their analysis of what discourse patterns reveal about design relationships. Dolowitz and Collier report another co-design case study, theirs focused on collaborative instructional design practice between the Association for Educational Communications and Technology, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Finally, Allman and Leary conclude the issue with an article focused on using the practices of self-study to assess the nature and effectiveness of collaborative design relationships.

These articles offer important advancements in the field's understanding of its central practices of collaboration. Researchers and practitioners alike can implement, remix, or extend their findings in a variety of contexts to improve the practice and study of collaborative design in educational settings.

References

- Chen, Y., & Carliner, S. (2021). A special SME: An integrative literature review of the relationship between instructional designers and faculty in the design of online courses for higher education. *Performance Improvement Quarterly*, 33(4), 471–495. <https://doi.org/10.1002/piq.21339>
- Gibbons, A. S. (2013). *An architectural approach to instructional design*. Routledge.

