

## Book Review

### ***Enhancing Learning Through the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning: The Challenges and Joys of Juggling.***

Kathleen McKinney (Anker Publishing, 2007)

Review by

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At last, here is the book many have been asking for: a practical, concise introduction to doing the scholarship of teaching and learning. If Huber and Hutchings's *The Advancement of Learning: Building the Teaching Commons* "leaves the reader wanting more," as [John Tagg](#) wrote in the first issue of *IJ-SoTL* (2007), this small book answers that desire. Written as a "how to" guide, its structure is logical and user-friendly, its prose easy and accessible, and (perhaps most strikingly) its general points consistently grounded in specifics and examples. It just may be the perfect book for SoTL newbies and faculty development programs. Even SoTL veterans will also appreciate it as a resource for the latest advice on doing SoTL lit reviews, ideas for mentoring newbies, responses to persistent questions about SoTL, and thoughtful predictions about SoTL's future.

McKinney is honest about what she can achieve in a 200-page book:

In a book of this length for a general academic audience with widely varying expertise and experience, it is impossible to claim to offer all that you need to know.... I believe, however, I offer you much information and inspiration for a good start as well as strategies and resources to find out more of what you need to know. (p. 55)

Indeed, she does offer more information, inspiration, strategies, and resources than one might expect in such a short book. For instance, there are plenty of insights about the essentials. McKinney acknowledges the range in definitions of SoTL, offers useful distinctions between assessment and SoTL, explores why one would do SoTL, guides readers through the beginning of a project, discusses balancing SoTL with other professional work, describes different methodologies, and includes a solid list of publication outlets.

However, the book is no simple *SoTL for Dummies*. It also addresses just as clearly the more complex issues, such as advice on integrating theory into a project, considerations of the ethical dimensions, ideas for gaining institutional and financial support, an overview of the status of SoTL in different disciplines, and the applications of SoTL work. Additionally, while its goal is conciseness, the book's many citations offer avenues for further reading when more than a concise but detailed introduction is needed.

As the book jacket states, McKinney is professor of sociology and Cross Endowed Chair in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning at Illinois State University, but the jacket doesn't mention how active she is in various professional organizations related to SoTL (including [ISSOTL](#) [International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning] and [POD](#)

[Professional and Organizational Development Network]), how frequently she contributes to *Teaching Sociology*, or how familiar her face is at SoTL workshops. As active as she is in the SoTL scene (from the spotlight to the trenches), it's no wonder that her book avoids the somewhat familiar tones of light-hearted optimism. Instead, her advice, practicality, and information is grounded in the seriousness of someone who wants good SoTL.

Ultimately, there's a depth here that goes beyond the fundamentals, particularly through some cautions—both explicit and implicit—about the quality of the work: know some history, include theory, be ethical, consider impact or application, and know the debates about quality. As promised in the book title, she also includes many of the challenges of SoTL, and not just the familiar fears of increased workload, making the classroom public, using unfamiliar methodologies, and confronting institutional barriers. Her final chapter on the applications and future of SoTL offers, for example, a brief but unromanticized look at SoTL applications in her own field, followed by encouragement for further studies in others—again, not the tone of a cheerleader but instead the tone of a scholar who cares about the field's quality and sustainability.