Tallman and Joyce’s *Making the Writing and Research Connection with the I-Search Process*, second edition, is a useful book designed to guide teachers, librarians and others through the process of fostering research and writing skills. With a name that sounds like it was developed for the iPod generation, I-Search has a much longer history – it was developed in the 1980’s by American college professor Ken Macrorie as a new, student-centered way to connect writing and research. Macrorie’s central purpose was to actively engage students in asking and pursuing research questions in which they had a personal interest. In 1997 Tallman and Joyce adapted Macrorie’s model for use in K-12, providing a solid, practical framework for implementing his strategies. This second edition builds upon the first, drawing new insights and ideas from a decade of application. In so doing, Tallman and Joyce demonstrate that I-Search is as useful and relevant today as it was two decades ago.

As a volume from Neal-Schuman’s *How-To-Do-It* series, it is probably not surprising that this book adopts a practical focus, concentrating on application and process and offering a variety of suggestions, tips, and problem-solving strategies to help readers implement the framework. The accompanying CD-ROM includes electronic copies of many of the samples, handouts and planning documents discussed in the text, which can be adapted for use by readers. However, it is notable that the book begins with a concise but informative overview of the principles and ideas that form the basis of I-Search; readers unfamiliar with this model will quickly gain an understanding of the nature of the I-Search process.

Tallman and Joyce build their framework around key learning principles such as reflection, inquiry, and higher-order questioning. These form the basis of the I-Search process and together help students develop meaningful, self-directed research strategies. The framework begins by introducing methods – e.g. thought webbing, pre-notetaking, background reading – to help students tackle one of the first and hardest stages of the research process: discovering a relevant, higher-order question. Subsequent strategies, such as double-entry note taking and learning logs, help students reflect on and interact critically with information while building their final paper. Throughout the book, Tallman and Joyce stress the need for scaffolding, recommending strategies to direct and support students while allowing them to retain control of the learning process.

There are several features of Tallman and Joyce’s framework that are particularly noteworthy. One is its flexibility. Although it offers a cohesive model that can be wholly implemented as-is, individual strategies could easily be used to meet specific learning goals, making it particularly useful for librarians with limited class time. Also, although the book focuses primarily on K-12 instruction, it can be adapted for post-secondary use.
as well. As Tallman and Joyce point out, “[o]ne pleasure of the I-Search is its adaptability for use at multiple levels…for first graders up to graduate students” (88). In particular, the book will be of interest to those involved in first year research and writing instruction. Finally, although the original framework was designed to help students develop questions from their day-to-day experience, it can be adapted for use with subject-area content. This is essential in order for the model to function in a variety of contexts, particularly at the post-secondary level. In the second edition Tallman and Joyce acknowledge that need and have developed a new chapter entitled, “Linking I-Search and Curriculum Content Areas” (113-135).

Also notable are some of the unique “added benefits” of this model. For example, the iterative process of assessment, collaboration and support is a key tool for plagiarism prevention, as is the student engagement that is intrinsic to the I-Search. The framework also fosters a third skill that is often overlooked in the literature on information literacy: critical and reflective reading. Tallman and Joyce have placed new emphasis on this benefit in the second edition with the introduction of a new chapter, “Connecting the I-Search to Reading” (137-152). Here they discuss how I-Search effectively integrates reading with research and writing, and how I-Search questions guide readers by “focus[ing] students’ attention on what they are to learn” (141). In so doing, they “provide a purpose for reading and facilitate comprehension” (142).

One disappointment is that the authors have omitted a chapter from the second edition entitled “Connections to Information Literacy” (Tallman and Joyce, 1997, 97-104). Information literacy is a fundamental outcome of the I-Search, which helps students acquire the very skills that define it: the ability to “recognize when information is needed and…to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information” (American Library Association, par. 3). Tallman and Joyce’s framework not only demonstrates how to foster those skills, but also stresses that it is a collective responsibility – not just the role of the librarian, but also course instructors and others involved in the teaching of writing and research. It is therefore surprising that the authors have reduced their emphasis on the I-Search / Information Literacy connection in the second edition.

Despite this omission, however, Making the Writing and Research Connection with the I-Search Process, 2nd ed. is a valuable resource that presents a straight-forward and adaptable model for teaching research and writing skills. The independent, student-driven focus supports information literacy and fosters lifelong learning, by helping students acquire the skills necessary to articulate, research and address questions that are meaningful in their lives. The strategies developed by Tallman and Joyce can be easily implemented in a variety of situations, and will provide inspiration to those teaching at a range of educational levels. This book is recommended for librarians and educators teaching in both K-12 and in post-secondary institutions.
Works Cited


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