

Book Review

Turner, K. J., & Sheckels, T. F. (2015). *Communication Centers: A Theory-Based Guide to Training and Management*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books. (242 pp., hardcover \$89.00; e-copy \$84.50).

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In their book, *Communication Centers: A Theory-Based Guide to Training and Management*, Turner and Sheckels (2015), along with contributing authors Love, Preston, and Hobgood, have created a guide for new communication center administrators, as questions will be inevitable during the process of transitioning into a new role or forging the way for a new center. The authors explain they wanted to maintain a balance between “practical advice and an acknowledgement of the theory and scholarship undergirding the communication center effort” (p. vii). Turner and Sheckels provide a comprehensive look at the formative theories behind the emergence of communication centers across college campuses. As a result, this book is positioned to provide insight for any newly appointed center director, faculty member, or administrator motivated to know more about leading and managing a communication center.

Turner and Sheckels take a chronological approach to answering questions which may arise when developing a communication center. The introduction begins with a brief explanation of communication centers, which they define as “on-campus facilities where students receive individualized assistance and feedback from trained peer tutors, and/or where faculty members receive assistance with communication-oriented curricular planning and course design” (p. xi).

Additionally, the introduction provides a strong argument for why communication centers are valuable on campus, for future careers, and in their local communities. Chapter One provides the reader with a clear and concise explanation of the early developments of communication centers and the initial leadership and scholarship within the discipline. Chapter Two, “Starting a Communication Center,” can also be referred to as a novice communication center administrator’s new best friend. Being entrusted to form a communication center could be daunting; however, this chapter provides details that could potentially ease some initial questions and concerns. The chapter describes major factors a new director must consider for his or her own center, which include publicity, policies, personnel, and the physical space of the center.

Tying into the publicity section in Chapter Two, Chapter Three explains successful marketing strategies for communication centers. Love, the contributing author for this chapter, describes different marketing plans for a center. With the various ways to promote an academic resource center, this chapter is brief due to the necessity for brevity. A communication center director seeking more in-depth details for marketing campaigns will have to look elsewhere for more specific information. This chapter, however, will be useful for center personnel, especially when wanting to brainstorm and

revamp their center's outreach methods. While Chapter Two was written to be a great resource for a budding communication center director, Chapter Four is its equivalent for a rookie peer tutor. Chapter Four is a helpful guide as it explains what it takes to become, or to train, a peer tutor. This chapter should be required reading for any newly hired peer tutor, or anyone training staff members for that matter. Within the next several chapters, Turner and Sheckels are effective at highlighting the working knowledge tutors need to acquire to best serve their peers. Chapters Five through Seven focus on the Five Canons of Rhetoric: invention, disposition, style, memory, and delivery. These chapters give a thorough examination of the different components to consider when working on a presentation with students. Next, Chapter Eight describes different presentation aids tutors need to be familiar with when working with students. Even though directors will have to devise training and development protocols in order for future tutors to fully grasp these concepts, these chapters do provide a comprehensive overview for tutoring in a communication center.

The last section of the book describes special circumstances peer tutors may encounter. Chapter Nine describes diverse assignments and students that tutors may work with in the communication center. This chapter provides helpful information about how tutors will have to adapt to the presentation, the appointment, and of course, the student. While the chapter does mention working with non-native speakers or mobility, hearing, or visually impaired students, it fails to mention how to accommodate students with social and learning disabilities. An explanation of how to conduct those appointments could be beneficial for both directors and peer tutors. Chapter Ten focuses on the different roles communication centers will play depending

on their organizational culture and overall culture of the college. Of course, the possibilities for centers will differ based on whether its focus is to serve the basic public speaking course, communication across the curriculum, international or first year students, or the larger surrounding community. The final chapter by Preston pertains to the assessment of a communication center. This chapter, while brief in nature, provides an ample introduction to assessment for a director who has a limited background in such an area. An administrator might find it useful to obtain other resources on the subject. The book ends with a thoughtful afterword by Hobgood on the rhetorical roots of communication centers. Lastly, the appendices include evaluation and tutor certification for communication centers which will be useful for directors to have moving forward.

This book is necessary for anyone leading a communication center. While the book is well-written and effortlessly lays out advice and information, it may have been beneficial to have more practical explanations in certain sections of the book. For instance, when explaining the canons of rhetoric, some readers, particularly novice peer-tutors, may have benefited from a more explicit connection between the theory and the practical application. Examples such as appointment scenarios and activities used to train the tutors would benefit both new communication center directors and new peer tutors. Nevertheless, taken as a whole, Turner and Sheckels' piece is a great resource for both administrators and peer tutors.

Overall, *Communication Centers: A Theory-Based Guide to Training and Management* provides a wealth of substantial information to the literature on communication centers. Just as speaking is a "complex, dynamic, ongoing, challenging,

frustrating, rewarding process” (p. xiv), so is the necessary training and management to effectively direct a communication center. Turner and Sheckels’ information on how to develop a communication center, train peer tutors, and advance your center’s mission would be beneficial for both novice directors and veteran administrators, alike. Communication centers do important work and Turner and Sheckels offer the foundation to make that work easier for emerging and growing centers.