



The Assistant Lighting Designer's Toolkit (The Focal Press Toolkit Series) 2nd Edition

By Anne E. McMills
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Reviewed by Vickie J. Scott

The first edition of this landmark text by Anne E. McMills changed the understanding of the role of the assistant lighting designer and the profession of lighting design by providing an organized, comprehensive approach. Until 2014 when the first edition was published, this information could only be learned in the trenches as a young assistant lighting designer, and these resources only existed piecemeal, or not at all, in the myriad lighting textbooks students might encounter in a lighting class. As Michael Lincoln, who reviewed the first edition of this text for *TD&T*, commented, “*The Assistant Lighting Designer's Toolkit* is now on my short list of the two or three most important books for aspiring professional lighting designers.” With the release of the 2nd edition, of *The Assistant Lighting Designer's Toolkit (The Focal Press Toolkit Series)*, Anne E. McMills has topped herself. Every lighting person should purchase this must-have book.

With this new edition, McMills has created a text that is for the here and now, unlocking even more insider secrets and proven, time-tested methods of how to succeed as a professional assistant lighting designer. The 2nd edition not only

reflects the technological advances that have occurred since the first edition was published in 2014, but it also reflects the cultural and social changes of the world in which we now live.

This exhaustive text is broken down into five distinct parts with each part building upon and interweaving with the others. Part I: The Profession includes the chapters Understanding Assisting, The Tools Required, Production Personnel, and Unions. Part II: The Process takes the reader through Design Prep, Load-in, Tech, and Previews and Performances. Part III: Pre-production Paperwork and Tech Process Paperwork, includes not only the how, but also the why of the different types of paperwork. Part IV: The Industry includes U.S.-based Employment Opportunities, Working Internationally, and Working in Related Industries. And finally, Part V: The Life discusses Working as an Independent Contractor, which delves into everything from resumes and cover letters to marketing yourself, meeting other designers, and paying your bills.

Throughout the book, McMills meticulously outlines the process of the assistant lighting designer, addressing in detail the daily challenges assistant lighting designers face during every phase of production, and offers concrete solutions for handling and overcoming the often moment-to-moment challenges and stresses of the process. In the new edition, McMills includes updated information on industry practices, with many new examples of paperwork, and the use of cutting-edge technology, like the use of remote follow spots and pre-visualization software. The icing on this fully updated 2nd edition proverbial cake are the all-new, real-world stories and advice from top industry professionals who reveal their battle-earned tips for success in this challenging career.

The Assistant Lighting Designer's Toolkit is, without a doubt, the most trusted authority on the duties and responsibilities of assisting in lighting design. It remains the only text on the market to comprehensively discuss assisting in the lighting

world, and fully equips students studying lighting design and young assistant lighting designers with the specific, accurate, and painstaking knowledge they need to be successful as a working, assistant lighting designer, and offers a roadmap toward becoming a professional lighting designer. From those just starting out, to the seasoned professional, every lighting designer will learn from this text. Once again, Anne E. McMills delivers us a masterpiece.

Vickie J. Scott is a designer for dance, theatre, and themed entertainment, and is the founding producer of the Initiative for New and Imagined Work at the University of California Santa Barbara, where she teaches lighting design, designs lights and sometimes scenery, and serves as mentor to the next generation of designers, technicians, and theatre-makers. Scott is a proud member of United Artists Local 829.

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