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Cal State Los Angeles
Social Work 411
Fall 2000

COMPUTERS IN SOCIAL WORK: Applications & Issues

Syllabus

Course Description

The first objective of SW 411, Computers in Social Work, is to give students an introduction to the most common hardware and software likely to be encountered in social work practice. Second, the course is designed to review the current uses of information technology in social work and to examine some of the related issues of privacy, confidentiality, and security. Whenever possible, the class will also attempt give the more advanced student opportunities to broaden and deepen knowledge and skills.

Grading will *not* be based on memorization and testing for comprehension. Instead, grades will be given primarily on your ability to use hardware and software documentation, and to integrate information and knowledge in practice situations.

It is assumed that social workers will rely increasingly on information technology—specifically: computers, networks, and telecommunications. It is assumed also that regardless of what area of social work or related fields (e.g., criminology, gerontology, etc.) within which you come to practice, in the course of your life's work you will serve "on the line," as a supervisor, and probably in management too. Thus it's likely that you will need not only to *use* computer hardware and software, you may also come to *design and install* simple networked systems, and even *solicit and manage* much more elaborate contracted hardware and software systems and their maintenance. You may also be called upon to lend vision and practice to help people deal with the problems they experience because of the new social and cultural patterns generated by the widespread use of information technology.

A portion of each class meeting—the exact amount of time will vary according to the subject matter—will be devoted to lecture/discussion, with the remainder of the class time spent in use of personal computers in a school lab.

Recommended & Required Texts

The texts listed below, from the "Dummy" series, are only recommended—not required. You may choose instead to use any comparable or superior documentation for the hardware and software to be covered in the course.

The general text by David A. Patterson is required.

General Text (required)

David A. Patterson, *Personal Computer Applications in the Social Services* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2000).

Windows 98

Andy Rathbone, *Dummies 101: Windows 98* (IDG Books Worldwide, 1998) [ISBN 0764502085]

Microsoft Office Applications

Wallace Wang (ed.), *Microsoft Office 2000 for Dummies Premium Edition* (IDG Books Worldwide, 1999). [ISBN 076450519X]

Bibliography

REQUIRED READINGS ARE INDICATED BY ">>". Readings marked "[ONLINE]" at the end of their entry are available online as Adobe Acrobat (pdf) files at <http://www.gatherthepeople.org/Pages/CSULA-Comp.htm>. Others marked "[RES]" at the end of their entry are available on a reserve basis at the Kennedy Library.

Course Outline

Class One

Lecture/Discussion

Topic: Getting acquainted—backgrounds, interests, and future practice plans.

Reading: None

Questions:

See "Assessment of Computer Experience" questionnaire.

Lab

Become familiar with the lab computers and inventory their software.

Class Two

Lecture/Discussion

Topic: Computer hardware and peripherals

Reading:

>> David A. Patterson, "Hardware: The Basics and Beyond," in *Personal Computer Applications in the Social Services* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2000), pp. 20-48.

Questions:

What are the major components of a personal computer? What are the most common peripheral devices used with personal computers? What is RAM? How does RAM differ from hard drive memory? What are some of the hardware options for backing up files?

Class Three

Lecture/Discussion

Topic(s): Anecdotal perspectives on the use of computers in social services and the basic software

Reading:

>> David A. Patterson, "Software: Basic Tools," in *Personal Computer Applications in the Social Services* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2000), pp. 49-70. [RES]

Dick Schoech, "Personal Views of Human Service Technology," in *Human Services Technology: Understanding, Designing, and Implementing Computer and Internet Applications in the Social Services* (New York: Haworth Press, 1999), pp. 11-30. [RES]

Questions:

What are the most common basic software applications for personal computers and what are their functions? How do the different perspectives of IT correspond and how do they differ? What's been your *personal* experience of using computers in the workplace?

Lab

Getting acquainted (or better acquainted) with Windows and getting an overview of the Microsoft Office applications.

Class Four

Lecture/Discussion

Topic: Web browsers, Internet search engines, and downloading

Reading:

>> David A. Patterson, "The Internet as a Tool of Practice," in *Personal Computer Applications in the Social Services* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2000), pp. 267-97.

Questions:

What is an ISP? How do the services of a basic ISP differ from those of more elaborate providers such as American Online, CompuServe, and Microsoft Network?

In class, do the second part (“ethical considerations” and “impediments to getting and using e-mail”) of exercise 1 on p. 297 in *Personal Computer Applications in the Social Services*.

Lab

Explore Netscape functions and capabilities. Do exercise 2 on p. 297 in *Personal Computer Applications in the Social Services*.

Class Five & Class Six

Lecture/Discussion

Topic: Impact of computers in the work world.

Reading:

Barbara Garson, “The Automated Social Worker,” in *The Electronic Sweatshop: How Computers Are Transforming the Office of the Future Into the Factory of the Past* (New York: Penguin Books, 1988), pp. 73-114. [RES]

Joan Greenbaum, “The 1990s: Reengineering the Office,” in *Windows on the Workplace: Computers, Jobs, and the Organization of Office Work in the Late Twentieth Century* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1995), pp. 91-116. [RES]

Charley Richardson, “Computers Don’t Kill Jobs, People Do: Technology and Power in the Workplace,” in (Alan W. Heston, ed.) *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 544:167-79 (March 1996). [RES]

Juliet Webster, “Revolution in the Office? Implications for Women’s Paid Work,” in (William H. Dutton, ed.) *Information and Communication Technologies: Visions and Realities* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 143-57. [RES]

Questions:

Has there been a computer-driven revolution in the American workplace? In what respects? With what effect on the power of management? And what effect on workers? To what extent does computerizing necessarily “clericalize” social work? How has the office been “reengineered” in the 1990s according to Greenbaum? What does “broad banding” mean and how does it work? What are the pros and cons of this reengineering? What has been the impact of ICT on women in office occupations? To what extent, according to Webster, does ICT lead to new patterns of “de-skilling” and “work intensification”? What has been the effect of ICT on women’s work? What has been the effect of ICT on the *location* of women’s work?

Lab

Examine Windows 98 operations and features.

Class Seven & Class Eight**Lecture/Discussion**

Topic(s): Computer-based social work methodologies.

Reading:

Raymond W. Carlson, "Capturing Expertise in Clinical Information Processing," in (Ram A. Cnaan and Phyllida Parsloe, eds.) *The Impact of Information Technology on Social Work Practice* (New York: Haworth Press, 1989), pp. 37-52. [RES]

J.W. Drisko, "Using Qualitative Data Analysis Software," *Computers in Human Services*, 15(1):1-19 (1998). [RES]

Diane S. Falk, "The Virtual Community: Computer Conferencing for Teaching and Learning in Social Work Practice," in (J Ann R. Coe and Goutham M. Menon, eds.) *Computers and Information Technology in Social Work* (New York: Haworth Press, 1999), pp. 127-43. [RES]

Bryan Glastonbury, "Computerising Social Care," in (Fred E. Yates, ed.) *Creative Computing in Health and Social Care* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1996), pp. 21-38. [RES]

Hannah Goodman, Wallace J. Gingerich, and Steve de Shazer, "BRIEFER: An Expert System for Clinical Practice," in (Ram A. Cnaan and Phyllida Parsloe, eds.) *The Impact of Information Technology on Social Work Practice* (New York: Haworth Press, 1989), pp. 53-68. [RES]

J.T. Pardeck, "Computer Technology in Clinical Practice: A Critical Analysis," *Social Work and Social Sciences Review*, 7(2):101-11 (1997). [RES]

Dich Schoech, "Human Services IT Applications," in *Human Services Technology: Understanding, Designing, and Implementing Computer and Internet Applications in the Social Services* (New York: Haworth Press, 1999), pp. 113-42. [RES]

Dick Schoech, "Management Applications," in *Human Services Technology: Understanding, Designing, and Implementing Computer and Internet Applications in the Social Services* (New York: Haworth Press, 1999), pp. 83-112. [RES]

J.D. Weinberg, J.D. Schmale, J. Uken, and K. Wessel, "Computer-Mediated Support Groups," *Social Work with Groups*, 17(4):43-54 (1995). [RES]

Questions:

What do you see as the main agency functions that can and should be computerized? Where do you think that computerizing would do the most and

least good? What do you think of the idea of a “web caucus”—as a supplement to regular class discussions or as a replacement for regular class discussions? What do you see as the assets and liabilities? What do you see as the potential uses for yourself as a social worker? If you were hired as a clinical social worker in a family service agency that did not use a computerized “expert system” to aid clinical practice, would you support the introduction of such a system? If yes, why? If no, why not? What do you see as the advantages and disadvantages? If you would support its introduction, what operational policies and procedures would you apply to its use?

Lab

Become more familiar with Microsoft Word through the program’s demonstrations and tutorials.

Using Word, prepare an annotated bibliography of at least five articles from social and human services journals pertaining to computers and a social problem area of your choice (e.g., concerning mental health, racism, sexism, minority powerlessness, community breakdown, etc.). For each article, include the full reference, a one-paragraph summary (*in your own words*), and implications for social work practice. ***Due at the end of Class Nine on disk.***

Class Nine & Class Ten

Lecture/Discussion

Topic: Issues of ethics, confidentiality, and privacy in the use of computers in social work.

Reading

Stacey L. Edgar, “Responsibility, Liability, and Professional Ethics,” in *Morality and Machines* (Sudbury, Mass.: Jones and Bartlett Publishers, 1997), pp. 327-44. [RES]

Tom Forester and Perry Morrison, “Software Theft,” in *Computer Ethics, Cautionary Tales and Ethical Dilemmas in Computing* (Cambridge, Mass.: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1990), pp. 27-39. [RES]

S.R. Gelman, D. Pollack, and A. Weiner, “Confidentiality of Social Work Records in the Computer Age,” *Social Work*, 44(3):243-52 (May 1999). [RES]

Calvin C. Gotlieb, “Privacy: A Concept Whose Time Has Come and Gone,” in (David Lyon and Elia Zureik, eds.) *Computers, Surveillance, and Privacy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), pp. 156-71. [RES]

K. Milstein, “Confidentiality in Direct Social Work Practice: Inevitable Challenges and Ethical Dilemmas,” *Families in Society*, 81(3):270-82 (May-June 2000). [RES]

Robert Vernon and Darlene Lynch, "Security and Confidentiality," in *Social Work and the Web* (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth/Thomas Learning, 2000), pp. 51-82. [RES]

Questions:

What are the differences between privacy, confidentiality, and security? How do you assess the state of privacy in the United States today? What are some of the potential ethical issues when social workers use the Internet as part of a treatment plan for clients? How might a client's privacy be compromised by a social worker's use of a computer? How can confidentiality and privacy be protected? What does it mean to be "responsible" when it comes to the ethical liabilities associated with the professional use of computers? What does liability refer to? What are the legal elements of "liability"? Should you be liable if you advise a client to use a database that results in his or her being subjected to malpractice? To what extent are you bound by the NASW ethics, even if you're not a member, when you hold yourself out to the public as a "social worker"? If you create a database for your agency, are you bound by the computer professionals' code of ethics? What would you do if you saw that your immediate supervisor in your workplace was using pirated software? What would you do if you learned that your agency's unwritten policy was to buy only one copy of a program and then make illicit copies for its staff? What if the agency was operating on a shoestring and needed multiple copies but didn't have funds budgeted to cover the costs?

Lab

Continue working with Word and complete annotated bibliography assignment and turn it in on disk at the end of the Class Nine lab.

Class Eleven

Lecture/Discussion

Topic: Developing and implementing computer systems.

Reading:

Moshe ben Asher, "From Paper-Driven to Paperless" (unpublished, 1998). [ONLINE]

M.H. Grishman, "Development of a Computer Information Management System," *Social Work in Health Care*, 22(2):73-86 (1995). [RES]

Paula S. Nurius and Walter W. Hudson, "Paperwork in Practice: The Understated Backbone," in *Human Services Practice, Evaluation, and Computers* (Pacific Grove, Calif.: Brooks/Cole Publishing, 1993), pp. 53-93. [RES]

Dick Schoech, "Management Applications" and "Human Services IT Applications," in *Human Services Technology: Understanding, Designing, and Implement-*

ing Computer and Internet Applications in the Social Services (New York: Haworth Press, 1999), pp. 83-111 and 113-39. [RES]

Questions:

How would you explain the potential benefits and burdens of computerizing a social service agency's administrative and casework functions to the staff of the agency?

Lab

Become familiar with Microsoft Publisher through the program's demonstrations and tutorials.

Class Twelve

Lecture/Discussion

Topic: Using Publisher to publicize social service programs

Reading: None

Questions: What kind of printed documents could be used to publicize a social service agency's programs? What kinds of information would be included in such documents? What information would you emphasize the most?

Lab

Using Publisher, design a flyer that would be circulated and posted throughout a large agency to publicize an orientation meeting in which staff would learn about a planned computerization of the agency's operations. ***Due at the beginning of Class Thirteen on disk.***

Class Thirteen

Lecture/Discussion

Topic: Spreadsheets

Reading:

>> David A. Patterson, "Spreadsheets: Multipurpose Tools," in *Personal Computer Applications in the Social Services* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2000), pp. 71-83 and 115-120. Read this material for general understanding rather than specific details.

Questions:

What's the difference between random and systematic sampling? What are the advantages of using a spreadsheet rather than a database application to record survey data? What is "data cleaning"?

Lab

Become familiar with Microsoft Excel through the program's demonstrations and tutorials. Do Exercise 1 on p. 120 in *Personal Computer Applications in the Social Services*.

Class Fourteen**Lecture/Discussion**

Topic: Introduction to databases and their development in agencies

Reading:

Moshe ben Asher, "From Paper-Driven to Paperless: A Simple Outline to Computerize a Criminal Justice Diversion Project" (Gather the People, 2000). [ONLINE]

>> David A. Patterson, "Databases, Information When and How You Want It," in *Personal Computer Applications in the Social Services* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2000), pp. 122-32.

Dick Schoech, "Database Management Influences on IT Development," in *Human Services Technology: Understanding, Designing, and Implementing Computer and Internet Applications in the Social Services* (New York: Haworth Press, 1999), pp. 273-303. [RES]

Questions:

What's a field? What's a record? What's a file? What's a database? What's the difference between a "flat file" and a "relational" database? What might databases be used for in social service agencies?

Lab

Become familiar with Microsoft Access through the program's demonstrations and tutorials.

Class Fifteen**Lecture/Discussion**

Topic: Introduction to flat-file databases

Reading:

>> David A. Patterson, "Databases, Information When and How You Want It," in *Personal Computer Applications in the Social Services* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2000), pp. 133-59. [RES]

Questions:

What are some examples of flat-file databases? If you were creating a form for a flat-file of referral agencies, what fields would you include in the form?

Lab

Continue becoming familiar with Microsoft Access through the program's demonstrations and tutorials. Do Exercise 3 on p. 159 in *Personal Computer Applications in the Social Service*.

Class Sixteen

Lecture/Discussion

Topic: Introduction to relational databases

Reading: None

Questions:

What are the different kinds of fields that can be created in a database?

Lab

Begin first *on paper*, then using Access, design a flat-file database for maintaining a list of referral agencies *or* that solves another agency administrative information problem—such as equipment inventory record-keeping, volunteer management, etc. When the database has been created, enter a dozen “dummy” records that will allow its operations to be demonstrated. ***This assignment is due on diskette at the end of Class Seventeen.***

Class Seventeen

Lecture/Discussion

Topic: Types of relational databases

Reading: None

Questions:

What fields of your database require entering data that are unique to each individual record (e.g., Social Security number) and what fields require entering data that to a greater or lesser degree are not unique?

Lab

Begin first *on paper*, then using Access, to add a second “table” to the database you have already created.

Class Eighteen

Lecture/Discussion

Topic: Presentation software

Reading:

>> David A. Patterson, "Presentation Software: Beyond Magic Markers and Poster Boards," in *Personal Computer Applications in the Social Services* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2000), pp. 229-47.

Questions:

What are the basic, common capabilities of presentation software?

Lab

Become familiar with Microsoft PowerPoint through the program's demonstrations and tutorials.

Class Nineteen

Lecture/Discussion

Topic: Converting presentations to web pages

Reading:

>> David A. Patterson, "Presentation Software: Beyond Magic Markers and Poster Boards," in *Personal Computer Applications in the Social Services* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2000), pp. 247-49.

Questions: TBA

Lab

Beginning first *on paper*, then using PowerPoint, develop the *content* for a presentation of at least ten slides on a topic or service related to your interests in social work. Convert your presentation to web pages. ***This assignment is due on diskette at the beginning of Class Twenty.***

Class Twenty

Lecture/Discussion

Topic: HTML and web page design

Reading: TBA

Questions: TBA

Lab

10/19/00

Become familiar with Microsoft Front Page through the program's demonstrations and tutorials. Create a two-page web site with at least two hypertext links. ***This assignment is due on diskette at the end of Class Twenty.***