Social Work with Digital Technology

Why have a peer-reviewed blog in social work?

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Turning to the internet to search and find information is increasingly common among social workers. Often, academic journals and eBooks are either unavailable, unaffordable, or limited to those with institutional access. Vast amounts of information can be obtained through the web; however, the quality of the information presented may be questionable, especially without further critical examination of the sources. Information shared through websites and social media channels may have goals that affect what is shared. For instance, a business may have the goal of generating traffic to pages to sell a service or product. A peer-reviewed blog can fill a void in providing credible information. While peer-reviewed blogs are already established in many disciplines and professions (e.g., health, medicine, sciences, humanities), social work has much room to expand in this area. The [iHeartTech](#) “Social Work and Digital Technology” peer-reviewed blog aims to address this gap in our own profession by providing trustworthy emerging information at the intersection of social work and technology.

Social work values outlined in the National Association of Social Workers (2017) “[Code of Ethics](#)” such as service, social justice, integrity, and competence connect and align with social work peer-reviewed blogs. The goals of this blog launch include sharing social work practice information at no-cost, as a service to the profession. Access to information and resources is a social justice issue. We seek to bridge research-to-practice and practice-to-research gaps in the fast-moving area of best practices with technology in social work. Our hope is to inform social work efforts that contribute to human resilience and healthy engagement with technology in areas of practice, research, training, and education.

Who has access to peer-reviewed journal articles or book chapters?

In most cases, journal articles are only available to those who have a college or university affiliation, such as faculty and students, or those who are able to pay journal article access fees. Therefore, traditional publishing methods, such as peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapters, limit access and adoption of latest and best practices. The paywalls make information unobtainable for many social workers, including those currently practicing directly in the field ([Bowen et al., 2013](#)). Additionally, journal articles and book chapters are often published a year or more after the data has been collected. This delay in publishing may lead to information that is outdated. Further, authors who publish in traditional peer-reviewed methods might reach a smaller audience than hoped. Only one third of all journal articles are ever

cited ([Williams, 2014](#)) and some published works are not read or shared. Peer-reviewed blogs speed timeliness, access, and dissemination, and contribute to the social work professions' commitment to life-long learning and competence in social work education (NASW, 2017).

The timely launch of this blog responds to a growing need given that more information than ever is accessed digitally due to the [COVID-19 pandemic](#). [Greenhow et al. \(2019\)](#) suggest that academic scholarship needs to evolve to better align with the new technologies available to professionals in the current world. The discipline of social work can utilize technology and grow to meet the needs of those practicing social work in this current and future world, with peer-reviewed scholarship in blogs being one example of this expansion.

Increasing availability of up-to-date social work information to a wider global audience is an important goal. There has been, for example, a movement towards [Open Educational Resources](#) (OER) to increase access to no-cost social work educational resources. For scholars concerned with demonstrating the impact of their contributions, [Shema et al. \(2015\)](#) discuss that research-based blog posts can increase “scholarly impact” and are “potential sources of alternative metrics or altmetrics” (p. 1139). Peer-reviewed blog posts serve as a way to reach and engage with a public audience, through blog comments that may share insights, support the author's conclusions, provide counterarguments, and/or establish new network connections. This blog also offers the opportunity for contributions from those who may not be typically involved in peer-review processes, such as social work practitioners who are using innovative technology in practice.

A Call to Action

Our call to action for social workers includes submitting to peer-reviewed blogs like this one, and to other sources of openly available information for global public audiences. As [Morrison](#) (2010) suggests, “we can do something different: we could perform a new kind of scholarship...” (p. 20). There are several ways to participate. Please consider submitting your work to this blog or volunteering as a reviewer, and reading, commenting, sharing this blog with your networks. Through these offerings, you can contribute to our collective understanding of social work and technology.

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