EDITORIAL

The future is always beginning now. *Mark Strand (1934- 2014)*

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Welcome to the special issue on Technology and Social Work Practice. This issue represents a broad array of thinking and scholarship on Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) for social work education and practice. This thematic issue of *Advances in Social Work* examines how social work and social work education is meeting the challenges of the digital revolution. Our contributors represent an international array of thinkers and scholars on a broad range of issues critical to social work education and practice. The authors we highlight here have focused on areas of traditional interest to social work practitioners including ethics and social justice as well as areas that may be new to social workers and social work educators such as Geographic Information Systems (mapping) and gaming for service delivery. It is undeniable that technology is changing the ways in which we function at all levels of society both professionally and personally. Similarly, it is undeniable that social work has been slower to infuse technology in practice than might be given our sensitivity to environmental forces and contextualized changes. Our initial concerns regarding the possible lack of adequate material to complete an entire special issue on technology and social work practice proved to be unfounded. In total we received over *35* high quality studies, concept papers, and research notes covering topics ranging from Massive Open Online Courses for Social Work Education to a comprehensive model of ICT paradigms for integration into social work practice. One problem editors wish for are too many submissions to choose from. Here we present a range of work that echoes the diversity of social work practice itself. Beginning broadly with the larger themes of technology integration in practice, we move to ethical issues in using social media with vulnerable populations and in classroom settings. We survey some of the evolving technology-enhanced practices in the field being used with familiar populations such as juvenile delinquents and adolescent fathers and move on to papers focusing on the macro and administrative dimensions of social work practice. We close with a look at Massive Open Online Courses and whether they are a direction that social work should pursue.

The first articles in the issue focus on the broad issues in play around technology in social work practice – we start with **Bullock and Colvin's** article "Communication Technology Integration Into Social Work Practice." They explore the infusion of ICT from the Technology Acceptance Model, a theoretical framework commonly used to explore questions of innovation diffusion. Next follows **Fitch's** article "A Conceptual Framework for Information Technology in Social Work Practice." He argues that information systems research in the human services can be facilitated with a conceptual framework that addresses the fundamental and interlocking roles of data, information, and knowledge to understanding organizational information systems. Finally, a complementary article,

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"Electronic Information Systems and Social Work: Principles of Participatory Design for Social Workers," by **Gillingham** reflects on how to support front line social workers to be active participants in the robust design of information management systems at the agency level and how the well-designed data management systems can be key to the efficacy of front line social work.

Another broad thematic dimension attendant to ICT implementation is ethical implications. **Brady, McLeod, and Young** use two theoretical approaches, social constructivist theory and the Competing Values framework, to guide the development of an ethical decision-making framework for social work educators to use in order to create dynamic classroom policies related to social media technology. While Brady, McLeod, and Young focus inward on our work with students, **Dolinksy and Helbig** urge us to consider applying ethical standards to the use of social media with vulnerable populations.

The next five papers in our issue look at Internet-based and mobile applications (Apps), which are used to support and enhance traditional social work practices with a range of populations. **Mackrill, Ebsen, and Antczak** document the development of a youth support mobile app from the client and worker perspective. **Anderson and Cook** describe the implementation of a web-based intervention for traumatized young people. **Evans-Chase** uses a mixed methods approach to investigate the effectiveness of mindfulness training for delinquent youth delivered via the Internet. **Lee and Walsh** present early findings from a smartphone app developed to augment existing social work practices by providing a father-friendly tool to help new fathers learn about and engage with their infants and toddlers. Lastly, **Sorbring, Bolin, and Ryding** describe a game-based intervention to prevent adolescent dating violence. These are the traditional populations and interventions focused on by social workers, yet here technology is being used to enhance traditional practices and possibly create more accessible practices for a greater number of clients and community members than ever before.

The third section of this issue focuses on macro and administrative social work practice. **Felke's** case study on the use of geographic information systems (GIS) to assess community needs is an overview of both the tools of GIS and the process for using this innovation for a traditional social work practice. **Saxton, Niyirora, Guo, and Waters** explore the use of hashtags for policy advocacy and remind us of this important community organizing tool. **Bosco-Ruggiero, Kollar, Strand, and Leake** focus on technology for training and staff development in the child welfare setting.

We close this issue with a look by **Gates and Walters** at the future of social work education, the efficacy of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) for social work, and the opportunities and challenges such courses might present. We hope you find this collection of scholarship as compelling as we do and extend you good wishes for a great and productive summer.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank the new editor Margaret Adamek for her incredible patience and support in the assistance and production of this issue. She inherited our idea and production schedule and has served as a graceful leader on the project. Valerie Decker, the tremendous copy editor and behind-the-scenes glue of *Advances in Social Work,* has also been a great supporter of this enterprise along with

assistance from Christina Schneider. However, a mountain of gratitude must be extended to William Barton, the editor emeritus of *Advances in Social Work*. In the winter of 2013, Dr. Barton approved the Spring issue, but how little we understood the herculean role of editor. Since that time we have come to appreciate his and Dr. Adamek's work and input on shaping an issue of *Advances in Social Work*. We will not soon forget the editorial impression left by Dr. Barton.