Information Communication Technology for Human Services Education and Delivery: Concepts and Cases is published at a time of exponential increases in the use of information communication technology in health and human services. It draws upon the expertise of authors from around the world, human services educators and practitioners developing and applying the latest technological advancements.

I began talking and writing about the Information Revolution nearly forty years ago. Back in 1999, Al Gore made the mistake of seeming to claim on a television interview – in a joking way – that he had invented the Internet. I don’t want to fall into that trap and appear to claim that I invented the Information Revolution, but I can safely assert that I was the first Australian politician to talk about the information society, or post-industrialism.


In Sleepers, Wake!, I ended my chapter ‘The Information Explosion and its Threats’, with a quotation from T. S. Eliot, part of a chorus from ‘The Rock’:

Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?
Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?

I am intensely conscious of the hierarchy: data > information > knowledge > wisdom.

I thought, indeed hoped, that the Information Revolution would be profoundly liberating and would lead to an explosive increase in creativity and a vast improvement in what I call ‘labour/time-use value’. I am still waiting.

Through Google and other powerful search engines we have instant access to what would have seemed like unimaginable richness to earlier generations – but I am not sure that the promise has been delivered.

Paradoxically, the age of the Information Revolution, which should have been an instrument of personal liberation and an explosion of creativity, has been characterized by domination of public policy by managerialism, replacement of ‘the public good’ by ‘private benefit,’ the decline of sustained critical debate on issues leading to gross oversimplification, the relentless ‘dumbing down’ of mass media, linked with the cult of celebrity, substance abuse and retreat into the realm of the personal, and the rise of fundamentalism and an assault on reason. The Knowledge Revolution ought to have been a countervailing force: in practice it has been the vector of change.

When writing Sleepers, Wake!, I worried about the implications of adopting economics as the dominant intellectual paradigm, and its impact on non-material values, as if nothing else mattered. Inevitably,
as the public domain contracted, education, health and child care were regarded as commodities to be traded rather than elements of the public good, universities fell into the hands of accountants and auditors, research was judged by the potential for economic return and in the arts best sellers displaced the masterpiece. Language became deformed. Citizens, passengers, patients, patrons, audiences, taxpayers, even students, all became ‘customers’ or ‘clients’, as if the trading nexus was the most important defining element in life. Values were commercialized, all with a dollar equivalent. Essentially, the ‘nation-state’ was transformed into a ‘market-state’.

I see this book as a very valuable instrument for improving quality of life, a countervailing force to ‘dumbing down’.

The human services area inevitably depends upon human interaction for communicating and transmitting information in educational and workplace settings. This book explores innovative ways academics and practitioners have developed and applied ICT to enhance human services education and practice.

I applaud the outstanding efforts of the authors who have contributed to this seminal text. The diverse backgrounds of the contributors bring together global knowledge and understandings of the potential of ICT in the human services from a range of countries. They range from the use of ICT by indigenous communities in the Kelabit Highlands of Malaysian Borneo to the Australia’s Commonwealth Government using ICT to manage its income security system. The range of topics covers all of the main areas of practice in the human services across rural, remote and urban areas; thus providing a comprehensive text for an international human services audience. The editors should be congratulated for sourcing these authors from around the world – no doubt with the assistance of ICT, the breadth and depth of the material and the manner in which it has been organized and presented.

This book provides relevant theoretical frameworks and the latest empirical research findings in information communication technology. It is written for professionals, educators and students who want to improve their understanding of the strategic role of ICT in improving the human services, with practical instruction on how to apply these technologies. The ideas presented are grounded in evidence based research and practice. All chapters have a theory and practice component with a case study demonstrating and discussing the technological applications to either human services education, or practice, or both. The reader not only learns about new technologies but is also equipped with knowledge of the processes and skills required to apply these.

The book is divided into the two main sections of education and practice. It concludes with a chapter on the future of ICT in the human services forecasting how human services’ educators and practitioners might further utilize the potential of ICT.

The text will be valuable not only to human services professionals who want to improve their understanding of the potential and strategic role of ICT, but also to the many other workers and researchers in the field of ICT and human computer interaction from various disciplines. For an international readership this book contains many helpful ideas and strategies on how to develop and apply ICT in human services education and practice. It draws upon the successful experiences of experts in this field from around the world.

I hope that Information Communication Technology for Human Services Education and Delivery: Concepts and Cases will contribute to the development of a global workforce that ensures ICT is used to develop more equitable and accessible human services.
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