Quality and Ethics in Web-Based Guidance: Coping With Change and Stability

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Organization of the Presentation

- Evolution of ICT in Guidance
- Participants in Web-Based Guidance
- Participants’ Potential Contributions to Quality
  - Funding Agents
  - Policy Makers
  - Developers
  - Practitioners
  - Users
  - Researchers and Evaluators
- Participants’ Potential Contributions to Ethical Practice
- Conclusion
Evolution of ICT in Guidance

• Since 1985 some things have changed (e.g., technology) and some things have stayed the same (e.g., the need to explore options)

• Web-based guidance applications – provide unprecedented access to assessment and information

• How can we make appropriate use of this new technology to meet existing needs?
Defining Quality and Ethics

• **Quality** - the demonstrated achievement of standards adopted by our profession for the creation of resources and delivery of services.

• **Ethics** - principles that guide the behavior of developers and practitioners that help ensure no harm occurs to the people they serve as a result of their actions or their failure to act.
Web-Based Guidance Applications

- **Stand-alone** applications offer a single guidance function, e.g., assessment, information, resume/CV preparation, or job banking.

- **Integrated** applications combine two or more guidance functions, making it easy to share data among applications.

- Stand-alone systems - similar to mini systems

- Integrated systems - similar to maxi systems
Participants in Web-Based Guidance

- Funding agents
- Policy makers
- Developers
- Practitioners
- Users, and
- Researchers and evaluators
Participants' Potential Contributions to Quality Web-Based Guidance
Funding Agents

• Provide adequate funding that allows developers to meet professional standards
  – Under funding a common problem – making it difficult to meet professional standards
  – Better to fund fewer projects that meet standards, than to fund many mediocre projects
  – Importance of funding Web-based applications – public perception Internet resources should be free of charge even though resource development and maintenance is expensive
Funding Agents

- Provide systematic funding that allows attention to implementation
  - Too much attention to development – too little attention to implementation
  - Development funding should include implementation resources for practitioners
  - Service delivery funding should include staff time, training, and evaluation costs, as well as counseling for those who need it
  - Funding could be contingent upon completion of an implementation plan
Funding Agents

• Provide funding for innovation in the use of ICT in guidance
  – A portion of funding needs to be reserved for innovation
Policy Makers

• Develop and refine standards for the career development of individuals
  – Outcomes of guidance
  – Foundation for other standards
  – Context for software development and service delivery
Policy Makers

• Develop and refine software standards
  – There has been a proliferation of developers and applications as a result of the Internet
  – Most Web sites provide no data on the quality of assessments or information
  – Without software standards, developers cannot be held accountable for their systems
  – Standards need to be economically realistic, yet strive toward increased quality over time
Policy Makers

• Develop and refine standards of practice
  – Quality software, badly used, can result in poor guidance outcomes
  – Standards of practice help practitioners to make the best use of available software

• Develop and refine standards for practitioner training
  – Generic standards plus exposure to above professional standards
Developers

- Use standards of practice created by policy makers in developing Web-based guidance applications
  - Problems exist in the quality of assessments, information, and external links of existing sites
  - Standards should be incorporated into site design
  - Costs for standards compliance should be estimated and priorities set
  - Plan established for increasing standards compliance over time
Developers

- Document adherence to professional standards to aid users and practitioners in selecting applications
  - Poor documentation of existing standards compliance
    - Untrained developers unaware of standards importance
    - Too little development time and funds available
    - Practitioners perceived as disinterested in standards
  - One solution is to require standards compliance in order to receive funds
  - Another solution is to train practitioners not to purchase or use undocumented software
Developers

- Create practitioner-training resources as an element of system development
  - Creation of training resources is a key element of success
  - Changes in training should mirror software changes
  - Training content should include the system itself and the implementation of the system in practice
  - Best practices can be encouraged with examples
  - Developer Web sites can be used to deliver training and promote interaction among practitioners
Practitioners

- Recommend Web-based guidance applications that are appropriate for user needs
  - An overwhelming number of guidance applications are available for users
  - Practitioner knowledge of Web sites and user needs can be used in making informed recommendations
  - Establishing a collaborative working relationship increases user motivation to follow through with recommendations
Practitioners

• Provide counseling and guidance for those individuals who need support to make effective use of applications
  – While high-readiness individuals tend to need little assistance, low-readiness individuals need assistance in order to benefit from applications
  – 3 steps: screening, orientation, and follow-up
  – Another opportunity is the “teachable moment” when users access telephone or videoconference support while using an application
  – Work with users “in the moment” as learning occurs
Practitioners

- Create organizational Web sites to facilitate practitioner-supported and self-help use of Web-based guidance applications
  - Help users locate resources that meet their needs by incorporating staff expertise in linking typical user needs with available resources ("need-based" approach)
  - Increases the likelihood that users will locate appropriate resources without being overwhelmed
  - Viewing potential needs helps inform users about needs that can be addressed in the future
Practitioners

- Successfully implement Web-based guidance applications within their organization
  - Practitioners can guide the implementation process
  - The steps in the implementation process include: program evaluation, software selection, software integration, staff training, trial use, operation, and evaluation
Users

• Select self-help Web-based guidance applications that have evidence of quality
  – Need to choose wisely from available applications
  – Individuals must be responsible for their choices
  – The use of gateway sites with applications selected on the basis of quality helps
  – Promote consumer education through career education programs in schools and higher education (Offer & Watts, 1997)
Users

• Follow-through with practitioner recommendations for selecting Web-based guidance applications
  – Obligation to follow recommendations to use quality applications and avoid being distracted by surfing the Web

• Follow-through with the counseling support available for using Web-based guidance applications
  – Obligation to follow through with collaborative decision to complete counseling
Researchers and Evaluators

• Provide policy makers, developers, and practitioners with feedback on the functioning of applications
  – Evaluation is standards in action - Without documentation, assertions of quality are meaningless
  – User and practitioner surveys, focus groups of users and practitioners, participant observations, usage tracking, and outcome measures can lead to improvements in the software and the strategies used for implementing the software
  – Clearinghouses and developer Web sites can disseminate what has been learned
Researchers and Evaluators

- Provide accountability for funds expended for Web-based guidance applications
  - Provides evidence of return on investment
  - Funding agents can make more informed judgments about allocating scarce resources
  - Also may lead to improved specifications for system development and use, ultimately leading to improved quality
Participants' Potential Contributions to Ethical Practice in Web-Based Guidance
Ethical Issues

- Invalid assessments and information
- Confidentiality of data stored on remote servers
- Insecure data transmitted over the Internet
- Services provided by unqualified practitioners
- Lack of practitioner intervention for low readiness individuals when guidance is needed
Ethical Issues

- Lack of awareness of location-specific information by remote practitioners
- Limited access to the Internet due to limited financial resources (The digital divide)
- Limited visual and auditory privacy for counseling in remote locations
Contributions to Ethical Practice

• Funding agents
  – Require that developers and practitioners show how relevant ethical issues are to be dealt with in order to receive funding

• Policy makers
  – Ensure that software standards and standards of practice reflect relevant ethical issues
Contributions to Ethical Practice

• Developers
  – Ensure that their designs do not create any ethical problems
  – Create practitioner training resources that show how ethical problems can be minimized in practice

• Practitioners
  – Complete ethics-related training offered by developers and other providers
  – Develop resources and service delivery procedures that minimize ethical concerns
Contributions to Ethical Practice

• **Users**
  – Be informed consumers, reporting potentially unethical practice to appropriate authorities

• **Researchers and Evaluators**
  – include ethics as one of the elements of research and evaluations
Conclusion

- ICT in guidance - change and stability
  - Technology changing, while fundamental career development needs constant
- Synergy among guidance participants – best way to cope with change & stability
- Working individually and working together, participants can achieve the synergy necessary to delivery quality services in an ethically responsible manner
For Additional Information

www.career.fsu.edu/techcenter/

Thank You