Contemporary Social Work in Digital Era
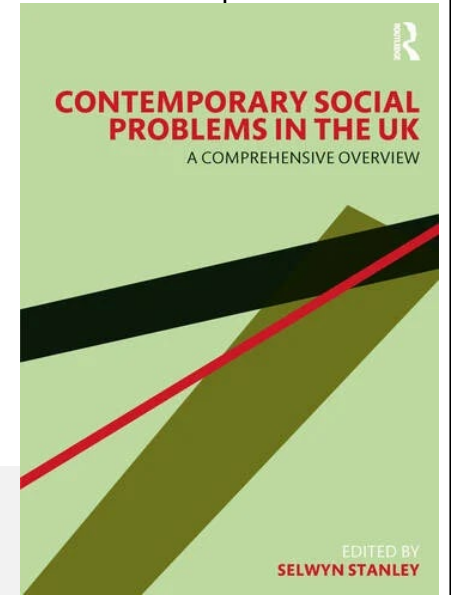
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Contemporary Issues in the Digital Era

- **Comtemporary Issues** – refer to current and relevnt topics or challenges that societies, individuals, or the world face in the present time. These issues are subject to ongoing debate, analysis, and action as they have a significant impact on people's lives and the overall state of the world.

- **COVID-19 pandemic crisis** – intensification and amplification of social problems. (Casquilho-Martins, Belchior-Rocha, & Moro, 2022)

- **Web 3.0 Technology Revolution** - characterized by decentralization, ubiquity and artificial intelligence.

Contemporary Social Work Context

Micro Level
Individual Wellbeing
(OECD, 2020; WHO, 2020)

Physical Well-being -unhealthy life habits, lesser physical activity, longer computer screen time, more irregular sleep patterns and less healthy diets

Mental health issues: the risk of an exacerbation of substance abuse and addictions, prevalence of anxiety, depression and PTSD

Financial Wellbeing: unemployment, low-paid and insecure work, new forms of work, homeless

Meso Level
Issues in Families
(UNICEF, 2022)

59% of parents struggling with mental health

66% have been negatively affected by the rising cost of living

1 in 3 struggling to see a health care professional as services are stretched

1 in 5 parents on low incomes are skipping meals to pay for childcare

Half have already cut back on their electricity and gas usage with 1 in 10 unable to properly heat their home as winter approaches

Macro Level
Issues facing Britain
(Statista Research Department, 2024)

2019 - Present
Brexit

2020 - Present
COVID-19 Pandemic

2022 - Present
Russian invasion of Ukraine
Energy Crisis

2024
Economy/Cost of Living Crisis
Health & Social Services
Immigration

The Root of Social Work

Social work aims to promote social development, attending to human rights and social justice, supported by ethical principles, theoretical frameworks, specific practice environments and indigenous knowledge (IFSW, 2014)

Evidence-Based Practice

- Impact Evaluation
- Welfare Economics
- Cross-Disciplinary Collaboration

Emancipatory Practice

- Knowledge of communities
- Cultural Humility
- Co-design solutions

Values & Ethics

- Anti-Oppressive & Anti-discriminatory Practice
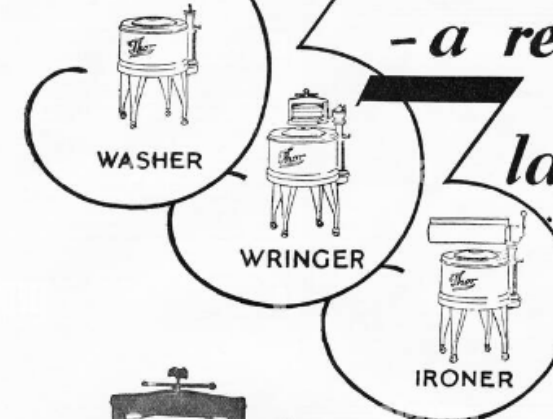- Professional Integrity
- Empowerment & Justice

Confusion & Anxiety about
New Technologies are
Part of the Process of Change

Emancipatory innovation for housewives and mothers

1920s Ad

Digital Practice in Social Work

Nature Of Social Work Practice

To address compelling social justice issues and enhance leadership

To enhance social work education and training via online course and innovative pedagogy

Reinforce relationship-based practice: new ways to interact and communicate

Use of encrypted electronic records: to search, gather, and manage information about clients

(Mupedziswa et al., 2021)

Expand Social Work's Ability

Communication

- Screening
- Communication via text/email
- Video conferencing

Assessment

- Self-guided assessment
- Automated assessment

Intervention

- Web-based interventions
- Sourcing and signposting
- Evaluation and monitoring

Practitioner Competence & Professionalism

Technology Adoption

- Technology adoption is the process by whic people or organizations accept and use new technologies. It involves learning and adapting to new technologies. Technology adoption is affected by performance expectancy, effort expectancy, facilitating conditions, and social influence.

Five Stages of The Adoption Process

Awareness
First exposed to an innovation but lacks information about the innovation.

Persuasion
interested in the innovation and actively seeks related information/details.

Decision
takes the concept of the change and weighs the advantages/ disadvantages of using the innovation and decides whether to adopt or reject the innovation.

Implementation
employs the innovation to a varying degree. determines the usefulness of the innovation and may search for further information about it.

Confirmation
finalizes their decision to continue using the innovation. to seek reassurance that the decision and implementation are beneficial.

- Everett Rogers's book Diffusion of Innovations (1962) dives into the characteristics of each of the five adopter categories within the technology adoption life cycle:
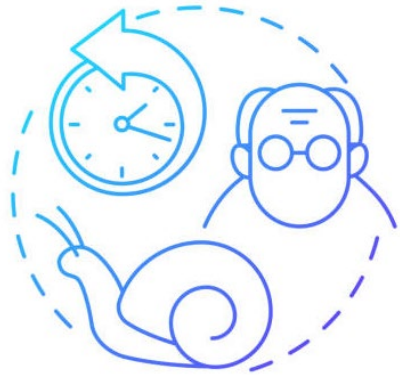
| Laggards	Late Majority	Early majority	Early adopters	Innovators
• Tend to be focused on "traditions", the last to adopt an innovation • Show little to no opinion leadership; • Limited financial liquidity/resources	• Approach an innovation with a high degree of scepticism and after most of the society has adopted the innovation. • Little opinion leadership; little financial liquidity/resources	• Adopt an innovation after a varying degree of time that is significantly longer than the innovators and early adopters. • Seldom hold positions of opinion leadership in a system	• Use a judicious choice of adoption to help them maintain a central communication position. • Have the highest degree of opinion leadership among the adopter categories.	• Willing to take risks, • Risk tolerance allows them to adopt technologies that may ultimately fail. • Have financial liquidity, are social and have the closest contact with scientific sources

The technology adoption curve is a bell curve model that describes how different people react to, adopt, and accept new innovative products and technologies.

2.5%
Innovators

Early
Adopters
13.5%

Early Majority
34%

Late Majority
34%

Laggards
16%
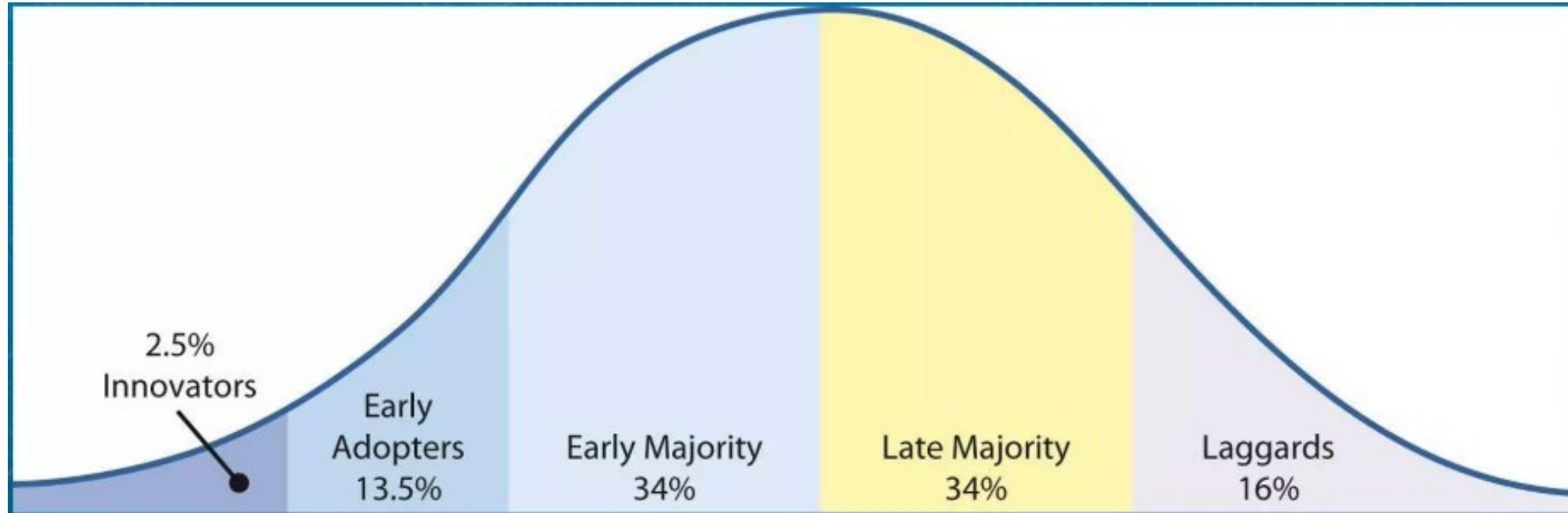
AI & Robotics in Social Care

Physical assistance robots (PAR)

- Some PARs have been designed to operate independently from the care workforce and others to support them to undertake physical tasks associated with performing their care role.

Socially assistive robotics

- Companion robots have the ability to help people through individual non-contact assistance in convalescence, rehabilitation, training and education.

Cognitive assistance robots (CARs)

- These can support users in performing cognitive tasks with the potential to support people with dementia, Alzheimer's disease and other cognitive impairments.
- Chatbots -as part of their customer interface, to aid carers in monitoring and managing care services, identify at an early-stage signs for professional intervention and support.
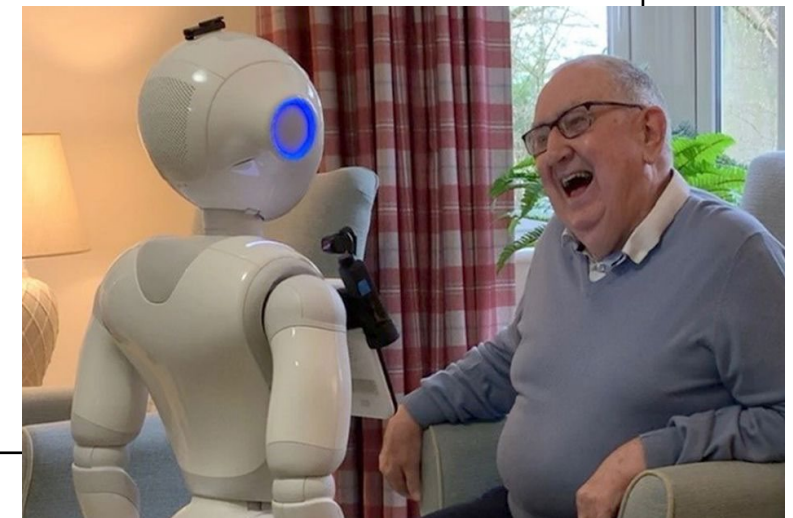
The history of Artificial Intelligence (AI) can be traced back to the 1950s, when a group of researchers, including John McCarthy, Marvin Minsky, and Claude Shannon, started exploring the concept of creating machines that could think and make decisions like humans. The term "Artificial Intelligence" was first coined by John McCarthy in 1955.

- ChatGPT is an artificial intelligence (AI) chatbot that uses natural language processing to create humanlike conversational dialogue. The language model can respond to questions and compose various written content, including articles, social media posts, essays, code and emails.
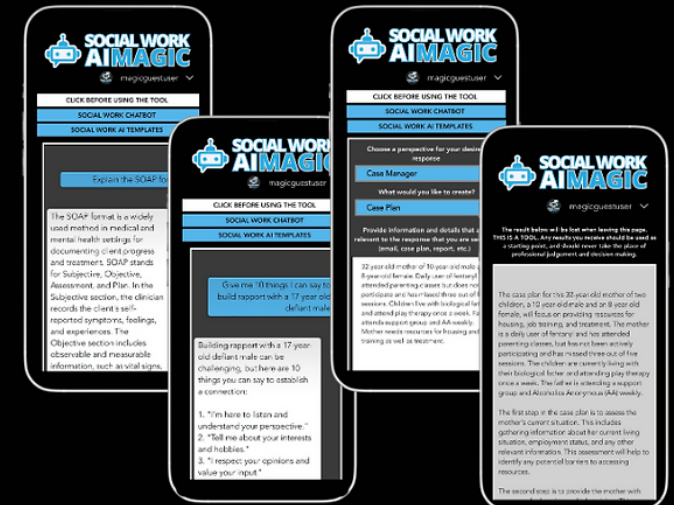
Generative
Pre-trained
Transformer

A Social Work Tool powered by AI and trained specifically with social work expertise!

SOCIAL WORK AI MAGIC

Fully customizable to meet your everyday needs.

How Social Workers Use ChatGPT To Help With Report Writing

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RhquZ1HJxgY (5 mins)

Speech and Interview Coach: Yoodli

AI Coaching on Social Work & Communication Skills

- Working with target groups in the social domain requires a lot of knowledge and experience. You are constantly in conversation with people in difficult situations, where there is a lack of overview.

- You advise, listen, guide, and direct, while constantly keeping an eye on the relationship, to trust and set boundaries where necessary.

- All simulations from the Social Work domain have been developed and validated with experts from the field. This ensures that theory is applied in practice.
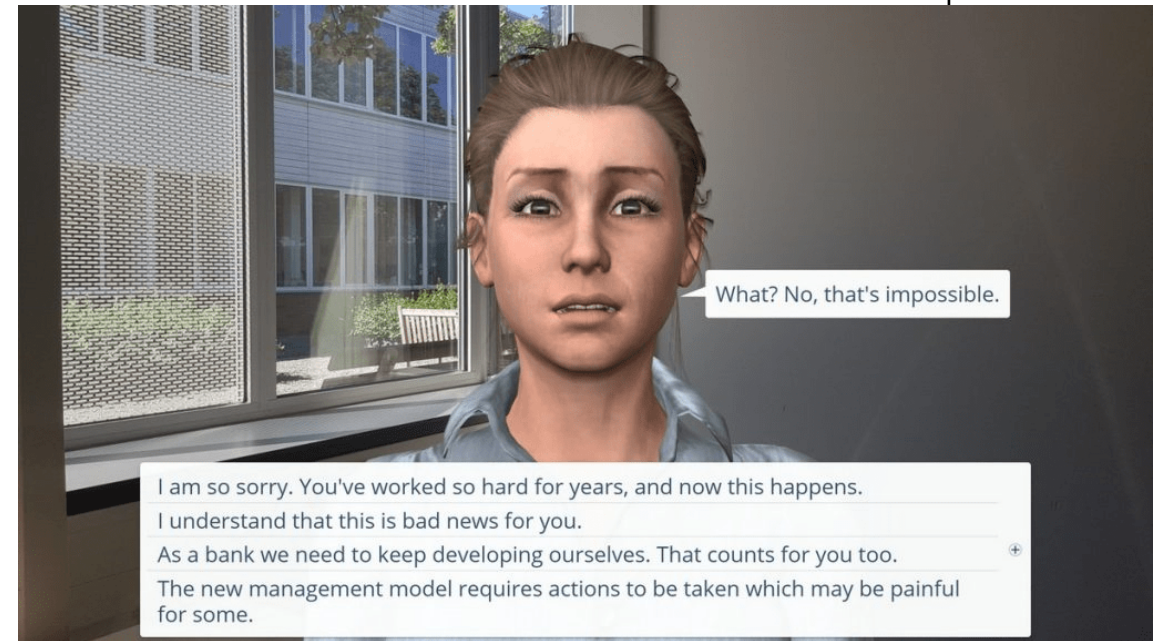
Themes
- Leadership & Management
- Human Resources
- Collaboration
- Coordination
- Diversity & Inclusion
- Shared decision making
- Motivational Interviewing
- Social Work

Community-Based Robot Design for People with Dementia & their Caregivers

- Based on the results of the six-month long community design process, the researchers identified a number of characteristics and design guidelines for robots to support dementia caregivers and people with dementia:

Robots should help redirect conversations when repetitive questioning becomes burdensome

Robots should be integrated into everyday objects that the people with dementia are already familiar with.

Robots should be able to adapt to new situations and to the behaviour of the person with dementia.

Robots should be able to learn from end-users, and customize and personalize their interaction and responses.

Robots should have human-like features that would help build trust.

Robots should interact with humans via voice activation --much like a smart speaker.

Core Ethical Challenges and Solutions
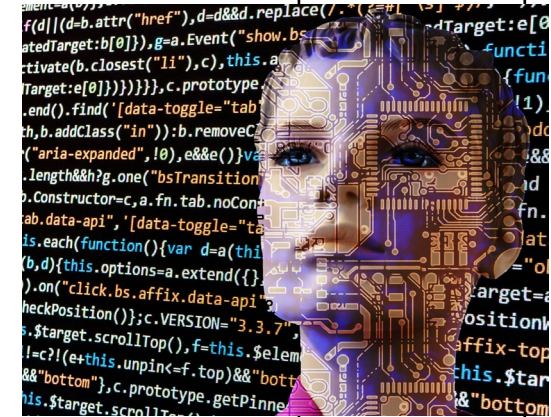
Informed consent and client autonomy

Duty to explain the potential benefits and risks of services as part of the informed consent process

Social workers should assess clients' capacity to provide informed consent and, when using technology to communicate, verify the identity and location of clients

Confidentiality & Transparency

Duty to ensure that the AI software they are using is properly encrypted and protected from data breaches

Use applicable safeguards (such as encryption, firewalls, and passwords) when using electronic communications

Develop policies and procedures detailing how they would inform clients regarding breaches of confidentiality

Client Misdiagnosis/ Abandonment

Supplement their ai-generated assessments with their own independent assessments and judgment

To respond to their messages and postings in a timely fashion

Plagiarism and Algorithmic bias

Use chatgpt to produce content that may be useful in grant applications, program evaluations, advocacy efforts, and fundraising appeals.

Algorithms used to assess clients and develop interventions and treatment plans will incorporate significant bias

Q&A

"Some people call this
artificial intelligence,
but the reality is
this technology will enhance us.
So instead of artificial intelligence,
I think **we'll augment our intelligence**."

—Ginni Rometty

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Reference

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Contemporary Social Work in Digital Era

Dr Carmen Yau

Abstract

The talk starts with an overview of challenges facing social workers and helping professionals in the post-covid, fast-changing, digital-saturated context. A transformative shift in professional education and practice is vital to addressing the key issues effectively and reinforcing social justice and societal success. In this talk, we explore an intersectional approach and the use of digital tools as key components of contemporary social work. Digital literacy and the use of technology should be integral to practitioner competence and professionalism in the future. The talk concludes with recommendations on tackling complex risks, ethics and practical challenges in contemporary social work.