

The Current and Creative Use of Technology in Art Therapy

by

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A Culminating Project and Contextual Essay

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Abstract

The use of technology in art therapy has increased within the art studio as well as in office and organizational functions. Given this growth, a need exists for updated investigation surrounding current creative, practical, and ethical use. This contextual essay and research study presents a literature review in which details surrounding the historical, ethical, and creative use of technology in art therapy are explored. This paper also presents a study with two separate components: a Delphi study examining current ethical practices of art therapists who have fully integrated technology into practice, and a series of interviews focusing on the creative engagement and practice of those utilizing technology within clinical work. The findings from these two concurrent studies may inform current practices of art therapists who regularly utilize technology in practice and administration. Culminating data from the Delphi study will be reviewed within this paper. Data from the interview-based study will be briefly reviewed within this essay and posted in the content of Electricpalette.net. Electricpalette.net will host all research results as well as serve as a base for art therapists who are exploring and connecting through digital media use.

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“Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven’t found it yet, keep looking. Don’t settle. As with all matters of the heart, you’ll know when you find it.”

– Steve Jobs

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The use of technology in art therapy has increased within the art studio as well as in office and organizational functions. Although professional codes of conduct, as well as some scholarly writings, discuss technology and digital media use in art therapy, there remains a deficit in information surrounding practical use, education, and current creative applications. This deficiency in resources, coupled with the pace at which technology is adopted, has created an undeniable obligation for the field of art therapy and its practitioners to engage in a fresh and continuous discourse on this topic. I identified these needs and transformed them into the following objectives for the research study:

- Identify current uses of technology within clinical art therapy practice.
- Collect current best practices employed by art therapists who identify as “heavy” users of technology.
- Publish the resulting data from both studies on an accessible Internet forum (and peer-reviewed journal) to encourage consistent discussion and collaboration surrounding digital media and technology.
- Provide a consistent, up-to-date resource for art therapists engaging with digital technology and media. This resource will function to disseminate current publications, blogs, and digital art, and will allow live and continuous conversation on the topic.

Over the past 10 years, technology has become increasingly present in the daily lives of clients and practitioners. From purchasing bus passes online to using email and word processing or simply owning a phone, technology has been integrated into the daily lives of all citizens in some capacity. In an article published by the *New York Times*, Leary (2010) collected data that suggested that over one-third of Americans own a tablet device. The most telling portion of this

study lies in the demographics: one-third of the U.S. population owns and uses these devices regardless of gender, age, race, or socioeconomic status. Therapists who choose to operate using the minimum amount of technology must still use a phone or fax machine in communication with clientele and insurance companies. The above figure indicates that a great deal of the general population is engaging with technology in a manner that is far from basic. This questions the stereotype that technology is largely accessed by the affluent, the young, and those required to use it by virtue of their professional vocations.

Art therapists are also beginning to explore the creative benefits of integrating technology devices and programs into their creative studio work. Video creation and editing, paint programs, creative journal software, and animation are just a few methods in which technology can be used as a medium in studio practice. Affirming this increase of use, the Art Therapy Credentials Board (2012) revised and added to the Code of Professional Practice surrounding technology usage. The American Art Therapy Association formed a technology committee, and annual conferences have provided an increasing number of presentations on technology use. The revised code of practice covers areas of greater use, such as distance therapy. Section 3.9.2 states that “When art therapists are providing technology assisted distance services, the therapist must determine that clients are intellectually, emotionally, and physically capable of using the application and that the application is appropriate for the needs of the client” (Art Therapy Credentials Board, 2013).

Although revisions such as the one above are progressive and provide direction, many details not covered in the code allow a great deal of latitude for individual interpretation. How is one to determine if a client is fit to receive services via distance therapy? At what point during telehealth or distance treatment should assessment occur to provide safety for both the therapist

and client? Such specific questions are beyond the scope of what an ethical code can provide. However, increased writing and online resources, combined with experience sharing and conversation, could begin to create and sustain for art therapists a detailed knowledge and reference base on this subject.

Online forums for discourse exist on the topic of the ethical use of technology in art therapy; however, chat rooms often become stagnant or diverge from the original topic. I have observed these phenomena personally, as these forums often go as long as one month between users' posts. This lack of consistency, ultimately, does not provide an updated forum or resource for those seeking support in addressing ethical questions or creative use of technology.

Generating conversation and finding answers to specific questions can be difficult. Scholarly articles published in peer-reviewed journals such as *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association* can help build knowledge, but cannot keep pace with a format such as a website as a place for evolving conversation. It is also logical that those heavily engaging in technology use might prefer a web-based platform as an information source. However, the lack of information available in this subtopic of art therapy makes it difficult to access direct data regarding use and preference.

Focus of Study

This research study surveyed practitioners who were identified as heavy users of technology in art therapy in order to catalog the methods through which they interact with digital media. I also surveyed art therapists who have integrated technology and digital media into their own clinical practices. The purpose of this study was to gather a collective portrait of both use and current practices, as well as to promote cross conversation between professionals who are accessing technology and other art therapists. All data collected was posted as content for the

website Electricpalette.net to bring these conversations to the larger population and, I hope, to encourage open sharing and discussion regarding art therapists' engagement with technology and digital media.

Literature Review

Art therapists have been attempting to define their relationship to “technology” for years, which can be challenging due to the quickly expanding choices. Malchiodi (2000a) used the term “electronic arts” (p. 19) to describe any art image made through the use of electronic devices. Throughout the process of seeking out and comparing existing definitions of technology in art therapy it became clear that, due to the evolution of technology, Malchiodi’s term is no longer current. New devices and software programs are released daily, creating an uptake rate that far exceeds operational definitions of the time. For example, tablets and Mp3 players were not being marketed to the general public at the time of Malchiodi’s article. The current study includes but is not limited to electronic devices such as cellular phones, landline-based telephones, software, computers, tablets, the Internet, as well as recording and storage devices such as cameras, external hard drives, and servers.

Ethical Issues

According to Van Allen and Roberts (2011), even practitioners who identify themselves as frequent users of technology are as apt to engage in ethical breaches as those who were classified as beginning or new technology users. The authors argued that a level of familiarity might even negate the sense of caution held by those who are less technologically experienced. Thus, there is a need for consistent ethical updates, research, trainings, and conscientious use in practice, regardless of the familiarity or skill level of the practitioner.

Ultimately, our duty as therapists is to practice in the most ethical manner possible. B. Moon (2006) wrote:

In order for art therapists to practice in an ethical manner, we must be aware of our responsibilities toward our clients. In the simplest of terms, this means art therapists endeavor to do no harm, promote the welfare of all clients, respect the rights of clients, and make every effort to see that our professional services are used properly. (p. 19)

The above statement is an apt reminder to practitioners to remain aware of evolving ethical issues. Whether the practitioner is engaging with a new medium or addressing the digital demands in the lives of our clients, both the practical and ethical use of technology requires written and academic attention within the field of art therapy. Goodheart (2011) emphasized that technology in the counseling field does not provide a connection just between therapist and patient, but also between clinicians. Clinicians are now able to access PsychLINK, a forum that has been created by the American Psychological Association (APA) that is devoted to providing diverse opportunities for members of the APA's online community, such as continuing education credits and resources and access to scholarly journals, job opportunities, and more. This movement to promote online access and connection is clearly a symptom of technology-increased presence in the counseling and art therapy fields.

A research study conducted by Peterson, Stovall, Elkins, and Parker-Bell (2005) indicated that over 99% of art therapists own and use computers and other technology devices. Thus, it should be no surprise that concerns such as privacy, data keeping, and communication are issues that are now more frequently published in the art therapy and counseling literature. Clinicians are urged to be mindful of maintaining boundaries in their own use of social media, and to remain up to date in their knowledge of current social media (Belkofer & McNutt, 2011).

Another consideration highlighted by Kolmes (2012) is the frequency of blogging and posting photos of children online through a variety of social media sites. Photos can be difficult to maintain as truly private once published online, and users are often unaware that a site may retain rights to images once uploaded. Because of these facts Kolmes examined the serious consideration that it is possible for these images to be permanently downloaded and even tracked by those who prey on children.

Current Uses of Technology in Art Therapy and Counseling

Due to its widespread familiarity and comfort from users, the telephone is perhaps the most common device used in the counseling and art therapy fields (Van Allen & Roberts, 2011). Although seemingly uncomplicated, conducting health services over the telephone (telehealth) can present a distinct set of ethical challenges. Therapy also may be provided by telephone and more recently, via computer programs such as Skype, which allows the users to both hear and see each other through video and audio programs (McMinn, Buchanan, Ellens, & Ryan, 1999).

Brenes, Ingram, and Danhauer (2011) directly examined the benefits and challenges of technology and teletherapy, or therapy services that are provided via telephone. They also predicted that teletherapy holds promising benefits for those who require alternate therapy settings or those who cannot commute to a therapy site. They listed as beneficial applications of teletherapy instances such as crisis intervention, cognitive behavioral therapy, and provision of therapy services to rural areas. Detriments and ethical cautions discussed by the authors include: privacy (not being alone in a room during a session or breaching a mobile line), possible difficulty in developing rapport, and the difficulty in assessment without body cues or eye contact. However, the study did not evaluate the benefits and risk reduction that could possibly be attained through the use of a combined video and audio program such as Skype.

Baker and Bufka (2011) discussed telehealth therapy and its provision as well as ethics. The authors stated that discrepancies in care and use appeared from the very beginning. The term “telehealth” can be used to describe not only the provisions of mental health services via telephone but also the support for services rendered such as billing and administration. Informed consent was also discussed as an ethical issue. Because regulations differ by various states and licensure boards, yet another inconsistency may appear in the delivery of services. They concluded that:

Until the APA develops guidance for the psychology community, practicing psychologists must cobble together an understanding about the relevant laws regarding informed consent, patient confidentiality, privacy and security, and reimbursement to evaluate the benefits and risks both to the psychologist and patient that telehealth might pose. This in addition to the competency that the psychologist ought to attain in using the technology itself and in understanding when and for whom electronic- based interventions would be appropriate. (p. 410)

I found that the reality of therapists’ having to cobble together their own ethical protocols illustrates my hypothesis that a dearth exists in the evolution of training and communication surrounding the use of technology in art therapy. The pace of technology has continued to accelerate, whereas the counseling and art therapy fields maintain an inconsistent demonstration of engagement in technology.

As mentioned in the above discussion of teletherapy, other issues arise when providing services via telephone or audio/video systems, such as the inability to interpret client emotion due to no visibility of body language or verbal inflection (in the case of online or chat-based therapy sessions). To address this problem, Collie and Cubranic (1999) devised a system in

which their clients could actively engage in drawing while taking part in a telehealth session. Not only were the clients drawing, but the computer system that the two authors created was able to show each participant what other group members were drawing in real time, thus eliminating a possible sense of isolation. This program paired the art making process with the narrative, and thus provided members who would have been physically unable to be in a group setting the opportunity to create in community.

While the same techno-ethical issues remain (security of connection and breach of confidentiality), this program remains a good illustration of the healing and connection that utilizing technology can provide for art therapy clients. Although this study was published in 1999, it remains a prime example of art therapist experimentation and communication in technology use. Since that time, technology use has only increased with little solid ongoing conversation on technology use in art therapy or the development of a written cohesive ethical code. This observation supports the need for continued contribution on the use of technology in the art therapy field.

Although telehealth is the most commonly reported integration of technology and therapy practice, art therapists have been using technology in their studios in many different ways, as a means of communication and for the purpose of assessment. Kim and Hameed (2009), for example, developed a computer-based expert system that is used to measure the variety of color within a drawing as part of a mental health assessment. The intent was to transfer to a computer the task of assessment to remove human subjectivity and therefore increase accuracy. While an expert system is undoubtedly one of the more unique applications of technology, its direct application so as to clients could be questioned. What happens to this system in the case of computer failure? What is the protocol if the exercise triggers a client crisis? How is it

determined that this program is appropriate for each client to use? Are all clients treated the same within this software, regardless of their reasons for seeking therapy? This is an example of a situation in which collaboration and conversation within the art therapy/technology community could potentially provide enhanced safety and services.

McNiff (1999) discussed how the multidimensionality of computers could enhance the relationship between art, therapist, and client.

Within the context of an art therapy practice, digital art making can be most easily introduced in one on one sessions where client and therapist sit comfortably before a monitor and experiment with possibilities. The computer, with its intelligence, memory, and interactive powers, takes the threefold relationship among client, art therapist, and image to a new dimension (p. 199).

McNiff (1999) further praised the diversity that can be brought to the studio with the variety of tools present in painting, drawing, and other art-based computer programs. While he considered computer-made art to be neither better nor worse than art with traditional media, he noted that there are additional opportunities for those with disabilities to participate in adaptive ways. His hope was that the art therapy professional might progress along with the pace of technology and embrace these changes. I posit that the two key factors in keeping pace are an increased level of research and publication, and enhanced communication amongst professionals accessing and exploring technology.

Another use of technology in the studio can actually be witnessed outside of the physical studio on the Internet. Many artists and art therapists have begun to experiment with creating online art communities and art exchanges via electronic display and exchange of artworks. Art “shows” now take place frequently in avatar-based programs such as Second Life. The blending

and intertwining of the real and virtual art world are both creatively inspiring and practical, allowing communication through art over distance. One group of art therapists who have taken their art practice into the virtual realm are Chilton, Gerity, Lavorgna-Smith, and MacMichael (2009) who created and populated an entirely online art group. This community includes over 150 participants with the goal to “help inspire all things artistic through the Internet” (Chilton et al., p. 66). Art-based exchanges are greatly increasing as sites such as Yahoo and Google create programs that are adept at providing forums for display, transfer, and conversation. Chilton et al. (2009) discovered that when displaying artworks in this manner, all artists are equal, because there are no identifying characteristics on the Internet. Yet this form of exchange can be inclusive only to those who have a computer or Internet access. Despite some limitations, these examples of creativity can certainly connect those who access this technology.

Another art therapist who has discovered and harnessed the creative potential of software and digital media is Brian Austin, who is the creator and director of The Animation Project (TAP) in New York City. TAP utilizes computer animation and other technologies in therapeutic services offered to court-involved youth. According to Austin (2009) art therapists are ideally trained to be imaginative and flexible, and thus should do well in the continuous evolution of technology. Although Austin continues to use technology extensively within his own creative work, he questioned whether the field would embrace the use of technology as a legitimately creative tool and art medium. One has only to hear stories of the youth who have engaged with technology in Austin’s program to hope that art therapists do indeed harness the innate flexibility of technology and proceed onward with this expressive medium. C. Moon (2010) has worked with and catalogued other art therapists’ use of diverse creative materials, including technology.

She has explored working with video and the widespread range of creativity that film production can play in the art therapy studio, such as storytelling and stop motion animation.

Video and film production can be used to address the various needs of different populations. In a publication collaboratively written by Alders, Beck, Allen, and Mosinski (2011) art therapists assisted pediatric clients and their families in creating video diaries, poems, documentaries, and educational videos to record and convey their firsthand experiences and knowledge gained throughout their lifetimes (p. 35). These video diaries served as an accessible and permanent record for the families and have remained a testament to the healing use of video in art therapy. Mosinsky (2011) described an art therapy client who told his story through the creation of a video. Upon completing his video project, the client was so proud of his work that he then posted this video to the video sharing site, YouTube. The speed in which this therapeutic work can be posted to the Internet raises a host of ethical questions. What is the therapist's obligation when advising the client about posting on Youtube? How much control does the therapist have, or should the therapist have, over client digital art? While an outstanding example of the creative and cathartic use of technology, Mosinski offered an excellent example of the ever-present ethical questioning that takes places when using these tools.

Communication, Education, and Publication

From my exploration of current literature in the fields of art therapy and counseling, I realized that scholarly communication about use of technology in practice is mostly focused on specific uses, its benefits and detriments. Other considerations such as cost, further creative and administrative use, and security may be offered and a few ethical cautions. However, very little information is conveyed in a specific, usable way that might illuminate a starting place or provide resources for therapists seeking to fully integrate digital media into their own practices.

Kapitan (2011) questioned whether a lack of more specific ethical guidelines is creating a culture of fear and individual ethics.

Could there be an “ethics deficit” in our profession? Or, at least, have we accumulated a set of assumptions that encourage formulaic reactions to ethical questioning? When no rule seems to apply, is the answer simply to run it past the “culture of opinion” as a substitute for needed reflexivity and informed knowledge? When opinions are not fairly offered, when we have no clear ground on which to resolve an ethical problem, we may up doing or saying nothing out of fear of judgment or controversy. (p. 150)

Peterson, Stovall, Elkins, and Parker-Bell (2005) concurred with the notion that art therapists require a more specific ethical framework in which to operate, especially in the form of written academic material. They also found that current ethical guidelines offer little assistance in “navigating through the seas of appropriate and inappropriate uses of such technology” (p. 146). The authors predicted that the integration of technology into most practices will continue to varying degrees, and they emphasized the need for research and publication to ethically advance as a community.

An area of technology growth that will likely always require a great deal of continued conversation is that of social media. Social media sites such as LinkedIn, Facebook, MySpace, and others are often accessed for social, professional, and creative purposes. Unfortunately, this new realm of communication has also churned stories of bullying, fraud, and ethical breaches into the education and counseling communities. Kolmes (2012) addressed these different facets of use and warned of overlap and ethical breaches that bar more extensive clinical training.

While not vilifying technology and social media use, Kolmes raised the suggestion that it might be appropriate for professional associations to develop guidelines for the self-

representation of therapists in social media. Kolmes (2012) also utilized the terms “digital natives” and “digital immigrants” within this article to differentiate between those who were born into the technological age and those who have had to adapt and assimilate into digital culture (p. 606). One implication of the existence of these two groups is the possibility that varying levels of education and comfort may create very different methods of interacting with and using technology items in studio and clinical practice. This, in turn, may be a barrier that keeps the art therapy field from developing consistent education and development when using technology and digital media because of generational differences among art therapists.

Belkofer and McNutt (2011) described another facet of social media use that is pertinent to clients as well as practitioners: the permanence of the Internet. Once an art image has been posted to the Internet in any capacity, the image can never be truly erased. For example, if an image is uploaded to Reddit (a public content sharing website), the image may then be copied, saved to any user’s computer, and disseminated at will from that point forward. This entire process could potentially take place in seconds, resulting in the true owner of the image losing all rights and control. Oftentimes, one does not retain the rights to images once they have been posted to popular websites, or there is danger of an image being redistributed due to poor security. For example, some sites request a password and email based login. If such sites do not maintain security precautions such as software updates in order to address current programming inconsistencies, all users may be vulnerable to their account content becoming visible or shared with all Internet users. These considerations are relevant not only when discussing repercussions and Internet safety with clients, but also in the display of images that are made in art therapy sessions. Therapists must have a firm and evolving understanding of these issues to process the

display and storage of images within art therapy treatment; thus, the pressing need for continued publications and exploration.

Whether operating from a digital native, or digital immigrant perspective, the use of the Internet can raise boundary-related ethical issues. For example, what is the proper ethical response in the case of clients “friending” their therapists on Facebook? “Friending” may offer access to personal photos, written thoughts, and other materials and is not specifically covered in the art therapy code of practice. Lannin and Scott (2013) claimed that an increasing knowledge of professional boundaries is needed as well as greater transparency with clients. They suggested the possibility of creating a policy specifically addressing social networking to be used in practice. This policy would potentially be shared with clients upon admission and signed along with other primary paperwork. While such a document and discussion are an important first step in addressing digital ethical concerns, what is the next step? I believe that the best solution to these questions would simply be an increase in communication, which could possibly decrease trepidation amongst therapists as they continue to navigate the integration of technology into clinical and creative practice.

In an exploration of art therapists’ reaction to technology, Asawa (2009) investigated the emotional reactions of art therapists at the time to the demands of technology and also discovered a dearth of information in this area until recently, one that has spanned nearly two decades of art therapy literature. Asawa’s sample of 13 art therapists indicated that the greatest barrier to use was the prohibitive emotion of anxiety. Although Asawa’s study focused entirely on a small sample of therapists’ basic emotional reactions to technology, her conclusions reflect this researcher’s observations of hesitancy to publish individual ethical decision-making.

Research that is conducted to address this gap should perhaps provide anonymity for responders to ensure uncensored data that is not connected to anxiety or fear of judgment.

Hinz (2011) discussed a positive, rather than fear-based, approach to ethical decision-making. Hinz advised the rethinking of ethical guidelines as positive statements rather than warnings. She used the example of rethinking ethical dictates such as “do not discriminate” to “embrace diversity” (Hinz, 2011, p. 185). This author recommended that an ethical framework presented in an accessible and positive manner could reduce trepidation and anxiety for therapists making an effort to adhere to ethical codes. This suggests a research approach that emphasizes positive examples of ethics used by current practitioners.

Another barrier that could potentially hinder ethical and safe technology adoption for therapists and clients alike is the ever-changing terminology and procedure that accompanies digital media and devices. For example, what percentage of therapists is familiar with the process of completely deleting a hard drive? Malchiodi (2000b) noted that it is possible for a hard drive to retain encoded information, even after it has technically been erased. This fact emphasizes the specificity of knowledge that accompanies technology use in art therapy. A computer’s hard drive might change hands once it is believed to be erased, which could potentially result in a breach of ethics if client information was stored on the hard drive. Ethical breaches, such as the above example, can be committed by a lack of awareness, which again highlights the need for a constant source of conversation and specific publication surrounding technology and digital media use in art therapy.

Malchiodi (2000b) addressed ethical standards as set forth by the British Columbia Art Therapy Association for the ethical use of technology. She included a comprehensive list of possible safeguards, such as encryption, password protection, possible risks, and time concerns.

Although this protocol is comprehensive, 14 years have passed since its publication. Parker-Bell (1999) urged art therapists to stay up-to-date with their clients and overcome anxiety surrounding the adoption of technology as a medium in order to maintain best ethical practices.

Research Design

Because a portion of this study required participants to disclose and discuss material related to personal ethical decision-making, it stood to reason that providing the security of anonymity would yield the most authentic and accurate data. To that end, I chose to incorporate the Delphi method of data collection and analysis. The Delphi method offers a structure for “group communication process so that the process is effective in allowing a group of individuals, as a whole, to deal with a complex problem” (Okoli & Pawlowski, 2004, p. 2).

As described later in this essay, a panel of experts was selected from across the country prior to the administration of the first survey. The Delphi method served as a controlled interaction in which the participants were anonymous to each other, although they were known to the researcher. I created an initial survey prior to beginning the study. The purpose of this survey was to initiate a conversation amongst the panel regarding their own methods of accessing technology and digital media, while adhering to ethical and safety codes of the profession of art therapy. Skulmosky, Hartman, and Krahn (2007) explained:

The questionnaires are designed to focus on problems, opportunities, solutions or forecasts. Each subsequent questionnaire is developed based on the results of the previous questionnaire. The process stops when the research question is answered: for example, when consensus is reached, theoretical saturation has been achieved, or when sufficient information has been achieved. (p. 2)

Hsu and Sandford (2007) described the basic format for these rounds of questioning. Round one is typically open-ended and allows the participants to form the basis of the discussion by presenting questions in a format that encourages discussion and multiple answers. From information gathered during the first round, the researcher creates a second and more precisely detailed questionnaire. Following the submission of the second round of questions, the participants may be asked to rank their responses if there is a lack of consensus amongst the group. For example, if one participant states that hard drives must be plugged in at all times, and another disagrees, the participants might be asked to explain their stance and rank in order of importance. Ranking can assist in allowing the best possible answer to surface when participants submit disparate answers. Finally, in the third and fourth rounds of feedback (or more if needed), participants are asked to make final clarifications on their responses, as well as those of the other participants.

Selection criteria were that the participants had to have a demonstrated record of publication and were working with electronic media in art therapy. Thus, all participants could be classified as “heavy” users. Technology, as referred to in this research proposal, encompassed devices, such as computers, tablets, video and voice recording, landline telephones, smartphones and digital cameras, as well as the applications and software that accompany these materials. Finally, participants also had to demonstrate a commitment to ethical practices by possessing professional credentials in good standing.

This Delphi design provides a substantial opportunity for candid feedback given the anonymity of participants, as well as multiple rounds of discussion to come to consensus. Participants were able to revise their answers in light of ongoing dialogue, as well as clarify answers with the primary researcher, which are options not typically available when using

traditional survey methods. Okoli and Pawlowski (2004) observed that the Delphi method of data gathering has a much higher return than traditional surveys because the professionals involved are typically active members of the surveyed field who have given prior consent to participate with full knowledge of the study requirements.

The qualitative data of this study were gathered on the current and creative use of technology in art therapy and was conducted via a structured ethnographic interview, which intended to capture the culture and essence of the topic (Kapitan, 2010). Qualitative interviews allowed for the greater individuality of the responses from the participants to be explored.

As a final component of my study, I traveled to the location of several art therapy studios and recorded video footage in the form of interviews and brief studio tours. The criteria for both the interviews and art therapy studio selection were that the practitioner had consistently utilized digital and electronic devices as a creative medium with their chosen client population. I asked the same basic questions at each studio visit in order to provide continuity and a consistent format for later presentation. These interview questions are attached at the end of this document (see Appendix A) and can also be found along with the interviews and other data at Electricpallette.net (see Chapter 3).

The final edited videos are no longer than 5 to 10 minutes in length and provide a “portrait” of the studio or art therapist to be featured on the resulting website. Although ethnographic survey is often conducted over an extended period of time (Kapitan, 2010), the intent of this research was to present an easily applicable portion of data to the general public. These imposed video time limits allow technology users to peruse the resulting website and access the studio portraits in a manner that is user friendly and does not consume a great deal of time.

Prior to collecting data from the Delphi study, I created a list of precautions and protocols that were administered throughout the research process to organize and protect the collected data. Communication and data that were collected through the Delphi process took place through the Mount Mary University's secure and encrypted email server. All emails were printed and then subsequently deleted after the conclusion of the study. The "reply all" function was not used at any time in order to protect the identity of those participating in the survey. Any information removed from the email server was placed in a Microsoft Word document and then uploaded to a password-protected external hard drive. Data were managed on my personal laptop with a password protection specific to that user only.

All participants within the proposed Delphi and studio study were given the option of withdrawing their responses/information at any time and were made aware of this option in release forms. Art therapists who participated in the studio tours for the website were asked to review their video tour/portrait and approve the content prior to publishing on the culminating website. This process and these precautions were reviewed and approved by the internal review board at Mount Mary University.

CHAPTER 2: SCHOLARLY ARTICLE

“Current Practices: A Delphi Study Concerned With Current Technology Use in Art Therapy”

Abstract

Technology use in art therapy has increased within therapeutic and agency and organizational needs. Given this increased uptake, updated data on current use of technology is needed. This article describes a pilot Delphi study of art therapy practitioners [$N = 6$] who identified as “heavy users” of technology to distill their basic best practices in technology use and offer recommendations to the profession. Participants highlighted the need for professional contribution and ongoing discourse on the use of digital media and technology in art therapy practice and emphasized the need for information sharing, self-education, and advocacy for technology-related education. Exploration, mindfulness, and a willingness to reduce trepidation through knowledge were also recommended.

Introduction

Technology use in art therapy has increased within therapeutic use as well as in the practitioner’s work functions (Peterson, Stovall, Elkins, & Parker-Bell, 2005). Thong (2007) observed the growth of technology within art communities, noting the frequency with which schools and galleries are creating and displaying digital art. In light of the rapid growth of technology, updated information on current uses that are creative, practical, and ethical are needed. Over the past 10 years, technology has become increasingly present in the daily lives of clients and practitioners. From purchasing bus passes online to using email and word processing or simply the need to own a phone for employment, technology has been integrated into the daily lives of all U. S. citizens in some capacity. One-third of the US population owns and uses these devices regardless of gender, age, race, or socioeconomic status (Leary, 2013). Even those

therapists who choose to work with a minimum amount of technology must still use a phone to communicate with clientele and insurance companies; current demographics indicate that the general population is engaging much more. Kapitan (2007) also noted that younger generations of art therapists have a more naturalized experience with technology, as this generation was likely raised with a greater exposure to technology. It is also likely, then, to posit that new generations will expect a current and ongoing discourse surrounding the topic of technology and digital media in art therapy (p. 51).

Although the increase in societal uses of technology served as the main impetus for the current study, the concept of “discriminatory resistance,” or avoidance due to fear or lack of knowledge, also presented itself during a review of literature on the topic. Carlont (2014) explained, “whether informed or not, discriminatory resistance to digital media use in art therapy could deny a collective responsibility for discerning the complex cultural forces of the new media and the lived experience of digital natives” (p. 31). Discriminatory resistance may be at least partially due to a lack of practical research and discourse surrounding the use of digital media in art therapy. This perceived gap in practical knowledge was a main impetus for the undertaking of this study.

Literature Review

Although art therapists would benefit from more directly practical information, there is a history of scholarship appraising the uses and integration of technology into the fields of art therapy and counseling. Perhaps first to begin engaging with technology in practice, the counseling field has been practicing, teletherapy, or therapy services delivered via the phone since the 1990’s. Most widely utilized to reach individuals that are unable to physically travel to clinical offices, therapy via telephone provides opportunity for care where otherwise there might

be none (Brenes, Ingram, & Danhauer, 2011). Counselors have been utilizing technology in the form of telehealth; however, there still are great differences in usage, terminology, and protocols. Most states have addressed the use of telehealth; however, few share the same regulations and some have little-to-no education or privacy guidelines surrounding the provision of telehealth services (Baker & Bufka, 2011).

In an effort to categorize some of the many uses of technology and also to examine how counselors were adhering to ethical codes, McMinn, Bearse, Heyne, Smothberger, and Erb (2011) conducted a general survey surrounding technology use in counseling practice. Their findings indicated that a majority of therapists surveyed were using items such as telephones, fax machines, and social media to some extent as part of their practice. However, these therapists conclusively felt uncertain about how to proceed ethically when using technology (p. 180). Van Allen and Roberts (2011) also posited a general lack of communication among therapists and their governing associations/states may lead to personal interpretations of ethical code. The authors observed that the American Psychological Association (APA) has noted that “general ethical standards apply to the provision of psychological services in all contexts, psychology’s governing body has not provided explicit standards associated with the advancing and permutating hi-tech world” (Van Allen & Roberts, p. 435). These examples of a need for greater operational certainty illuminate the shortage of education and published discourse in the counseling and art therapy fields on the topic of technology use in therapeutic practice.

Goodheart (2011) emphasized that technology does not only help to connect therapists and patients, but also can promote interaction between clinicians. Clinicians are now able to access PsychLINK, a forum created by the APA that is devoted to providing a diversity of opportunities for members of its online community, such as continuing education credits,

resources, and access to scholarly journals, job opportunities, and more. This movement to promote online access and connection is clearly a symptom of the increased presence of technology in the fields of counseling and art therapy.

A research study conducted by Peterson et al. (2005) indicated that over 99% of art therapists own and use computers and other technology devices. Thus, it should be no surprise that concerns such as privacy, data keeping, and communication are issues that are now frequently addressed in the literature. For example, clinicians are urged to be mindful of maintaining boundaries in their own use of social media and to remain up to date in their knowledge of current social media (Belkofer & McNutt, 2011). Another concern highlighted by Kolmes (2012) is the impact of blogging and posting photographs of children online through social media sites. Photographs posted online can be difficult to maintain as truly private once they are published online, and users are often unaware that a site may retain rights to images once uploaded. Kolmes reminded therapists of the danger for clients and that it is possible for these images to be permanently downloaded and even tracked by those who prey on children.

Although art therapists are raising many salient points regarding potential outcomes when using social media and the Internet in therapeutic settings, there is still a great deal of need for practical and applicable information related to client education or data security. Dombrowski, LeMasney, Ahia, and Dikson (2004) questioned the ability of therapists who lack technological education to protect vulnerable children seeking treatment. They urged practitioners to discuss Internet safety with their clients in order to promote safe and developmentally appropriate behavior, as well as the ability to identify potential predators. Moreover, the authors encouraged therapists working with convicted predators to stay current with computer technology in order to

promote the most effective treatment, as well as prevent the potential endangerment of minors (p. 70).

The use of technology devices and software has also made an impact on administrative procedures and data storage. Storage that can be categorized as “off-site” may encompass a storage unit (holding paper files or external storage devices) or cloud storage (Devereaux & Gottlieb, 2012). Cloud storage is a method of managing data or files through an online file storage service. This service may be entirely online or have a physical off-site location. Although this may seem like an efficient method of data storage, it is still perhaps not as secure from hacking and accidental breaches as traditional methods of paper-based storage. Therefore, it is advised “if a practitioner chooses to store information on the cloud, s/he is well advised to disclose information to patients as a matter of informed consent” (Deveraux & Gottlieb, p. 629).

Methods

Because a portion of this study required participants to disclose and discuss material related to personal ethical decision-making, it stood to reason that providing the security of anonymity would yield the most authentic and accurate data. To that end, the research design utilized the Delphi method of data collection and analysis. The Delphi method structures group communication so that “the process is effective in allowing a group of individuals, as a whole, to deal with a complex problem” (Okoli & Pawlowski, 2004, p. 2). The researcher controls the interactions among the participants so that they remain anonymous to each other if not to the researcher.

Prior to beginning the study, I created a survey that inquired into practitioner methods of accessing technology and digital media while adhering to the ethical and safety codes of the profession of art therapy. Skulmosky, Hartman, and Krahn (2007) explained that subsequent

questionnaires are developed from the results of the previous questionnaire, and that the “process stops when the research question is answered: for example, when consensus is reached, theoretical saturation has been achieved, or when sufficient information has been achieved” (p. 2). The first round of questioning is typically open-ended and allows the participants to form the basis of the discussion. Following the return of information from the first round, the researcher will create a second and more detailed questionnaire (Hsu & Sandford, 2007). After the second round of questions, participants may be asked to rank an order to their responses if there is a lack of consensus amongst the group. Ranking can assist in allowing the best possible answer to surface when participants submit disparate answers. Finally, in the third and fourth rounds of feedback (or more if needed) participants are asked to continue ranking their responses, while making clarifications as necessary.

This type of research design provides a substantial opportunity for candid feedback given the anonymity of participants in addition to multiple rounds of discussion to come to consensus. Participants may revise their answers in light of ongoing dialogue, as well as clarify answers with the primary researcher, which are options not typically available when using traditional survey methods. Okoli and Pawlowski (2004) observed that the Delphi method of data gathering has a much higher return than traditional surveys because the professionals involved are typically active members of the surveyed field that have given prior consent to participate with full knowledge of the study requirements.

Participants

A panel of experts was selected from across the country prior to the administration of the first survey. Selection criteria was that the participant had to have demonstrated a record of publication, was working with electronic media in art therapy; thus, all participants could be

identified as “heavy” users. Electronic media in this study referred to devices such as computers, tablets, video and voice recording, landline telephones, smartphones and digital cameras, as well as the applications and software that accompany these materials. Finally, participants also had to demonstrate a commitment toward ethical practices by possessing professional credentials in good standing.

Procedures

The institutional review board of Mount Mary University reviewed and approved the proposed Delphi study. Six art therapists who met the selection criteria as “heavy” users of technology were emailed the study parameters and description of procedures with a consent form. All six agreed to take part in the study and signed the necessary release forms. Participants were then sent an initial list of questions and were asked to respond and email their information directly back to this researcher. The items on the questionnaire were as follows:

1. Rank your top four ethical considerations regarding the use of technology in studio practice. Please provide a brief explanation for your ranking by each listing;
2. Identify at least three protocols or methods that you have developed or would apply to safeguard clients from these identified concerns;
3. Name at least two areas in which the Art Therapy Credentials Board Code of Ethics might further elaborate in order to standardize ethical decision making when using technology;
4. Do you believe that more specific ethical guidelines from the ATCB would be beneficial in relation to technology use in art therapy? Why or why not? Could more concrete guidelines encourage use (increased ethical surety) or hamper creativity?

Respondents were given a time frame of approximately 10 days in which to respond; however, this request was subject to change as the study took place during the holiday months. Following the receipt of responses from each round of conversation, data was combined into a new and separate word document. Details, such as the order of responses and any identifying characteristics were randomly shuffled and removed in order to maintain anonymity. Responses were organized by answer to Questions 1 through 4 and labeled A–Z by response. This allowed participants in the next round of conversation to respond to a particular answer such as, “ I disagree with Question 3, Answer C, because...” A main benefit of utilizing the Delphi Method of research is the freedom of flexibility provided when working with a small group of dedicated participants. The expert participants in this study all responded with a volume of data that were both clearly and efficiently written. Due to the participants’ clarity and detailed responses, only three rounds of structured communication were necessary to reach consensus.

Results

The resulting data from this study have been divided into three categories below as a result of the natural progression of these topics within the three rounds of expert responses. Given the emphasis placed on these categories by the participating experts, it seems likely that these categories also provide the most insight for art therapists seeking information on the topic of ethical and creative uses of technology.

Education

One key element embraced by all participants who utilize technology was that they are committed to continuing education. In addition to following mandated requirements to maintain their credentials, these professionals seek out and remain current on what is happening

now with digital media and technology use in art therapy. They frequently referenced professional codes of practice and all are active in organizations that promote the ongoing updating of these codes. All of the participants offer continuing education to others regarding technology and digital media use through scholarly writing and research. The majority of these participants also maintain Facebook, LinkedIn, or webpages that provide resources, as well as detailed personal and clinical experiences on this topic.

Various methods of access were emphasized by participants. First, they are accessing education through multiple formats. These sources include online programs, as well as local sources such as universities. Second, they emphasized the value of collaboration in information sharing within digital media and technology subgroups of art therapy. Participants warned of isolation and discussed the importance of participating in chat rooms and forums as a way to maintain connection to other professionals and to remain current on use and ethical practices. Participation in these forms of communication also allowed these users to overcome the gap between the rapid growth and adoption of technology and the slower dissemination of research. Access to information in online formats is nearly instantaneous, which allows information seekers to find the most current experiences of others.

Participants also noted the unique educational opportunity provided by the Internet and audio-visual technology, which is that of observation. For example, rather than travel to another country, a U.S. art therapist can potentially Skype with another therapist and thereby gain knowledge through direct observation. Participants also noted that such outreach and observation also serves to further advocate for healthcare provider legislation. For example, a group of therapists might connect across state lines to lobby for consistent insurance coverage in distance

therapy. Participants also recognized that observation and enhanced therapist-to-therapist connections can potentially promote ethical decision-making through increased consultation.

Yet another important facet of education was self-evaluation and acknowledgement when further education is needed. Participants noted that oftentimes in the area of technology and digital media, a lack of knowledge or current education might present itself as a fear, which may paralyze and hinder the uptake of digital media by art therapists. This panel of experts concurred that there is a need to conquer the fear of the unknown and for the art therapy profession to utilize education as empowerment. As quickly as technology is changing, there will always be an area in need of an update; thus, the emphasis is on therapists mastering a comfort level in seeking new information, community support, and an investment in remaining as current as possible in ethical and technical knowledge.

Communication

Although communication is vital to introducing any new material to art therapy practice, it can be especially important when introducing technology-related materials. Factors such as access to training, lack of value for technology and art making, as well as economic opportunity, may play a role in whether or not technology is used by art therapists (Orr, 2006). Unfortunately, in this study the art therapists who participated indicated that they generally use some form of technology within their studio practice despite that they had little-to-no training with the devices or software used (Orr, 2006). This difference between use and education illustrates a lack of communication amongst practitioners.

Many of the recommendations from the Delphi panel focused on communication and emphasized the need for therapist preparation and discussion that takes place within a client's initial therapy session. It was recommended that art therapists should create and maintain a social

media policy. Considerations when creating such a policy focused on the therapists' Internet presence and comfort levels, as well as those of the client. For example, is it appropriate for a therapist to be "friends" with a client on the popular social networking site Facebook? What are safe or effective clinical boundaries in the virtual realm? Will posting artwork directly from art therapy sessions to the Internet or social networking sites be part of the therapist's own therapeutic practice? Participants in this study recommended that that therapists examine their own answers to these questions and develop written policies in order to maintain consistency and appropriate practice.

Other considerations that arose from the participants' responses that advocated for the importance of therapist-client discussions encompassing Internet use and privacy. It was suggested that those who engage with Internet-connected devices and programs in therapy sessions review with clients the concept of image permanence. For example, once a file has been uploaded to the Internet, it can never truly be erased. One should never assume that images are completely private. This idea might also be received very differently by each client, depending on his or her own unique relationship with technology. Users who have been regularly uploading art images or communicating via the Internet might not consider this to be an issue at all, while others might have very different opinions. The experts on this Delphi panel recommended that the concept of privacy be revisited frequently throughout the course of therapy as it might be either beneficial or detrimental to engage with Internet sharing, depending on the client and the forum in which the Internet is being used.

Next, in connection to the initial and exploratory conversations, the experts endorsed an ongoing discussion focused on access, openness, and comfort. Experts urged the need for therapists to "check-in" frequently regarding the client's level of access to technology and

whether or not home, socioeconomic, or cultural barriers may affect their experiences in therapy with technology-based materials. Frequency of discourse was recommended, as these are not static or unchanging issues. For example, when working with a client and a tablet, it may be important to discuss such factors as device ownership, access, and whether or not clients wish to be able to continue artwork from home in between sessions. The importance of not ignoring potential barriers to access was noted, as this could inhibit open conversation and detrimentally affect the therapeutic relationship.

The following is a vignette that illustrates some of the study recommendations. An art therapist is preparing for the first (intake) session with a first-time client. The new client is a 24-year-old woman who is presenting symptoms of depression. As the therapist reviews typical intake forms, such as client history and insurance documents, there now is an additional form that addresses social media preferences. This prompts a discussion in which the therapist and client are able to examine each other's comfort levels with technology, the client's ability to access devices at home or in the community, and communication preferences. During this time the therapist discusses her own preferences and boundaries as well.

Now, imagine meeting the same young woman six months into her successful treatment for depression. She is attending regular therapy, doing well in her college courses, and reporting that she feels "like herself" once more. One day, the art therapist notices that she has a friend request from this client on the therapist's personal Facebook page. Because she initiated this conversation openly in the first session, they have an open channel of communication to be established. The art therapist is able to gently remind the client of the policy during the next session and without appearing to reject the young woman or damage therapeutic rapport because of having a clear, written, and long-established policy. This vignette is just one example of the

many situations that can be handled as professionally as possible through education, planning, and clear communication regarding digital media and technology.

Technical Considerations

Rather than respond to the questions of ethical safeguards with concrete and potentially limiting dictates, the participants of this study preferred to discuss procedures and considerations that they routinely follow in order to maintain safety and security when engaging with technology. Many of their recommendations returned to the core consideration of remaining mindful when utilizing technology, just as with any medium or tool. An unanimously mentioned consideration was the permanence of files once uploaded to the Internet. Variations of the phrase, “there is no such thing as ‘delete’” were described by nearly all participants as a cautionary reminder to therapists as well as to clients.

The most frequently emphasized considerations resulting from this portion of data were those surrounding planning and security. Again, the importance placed on having protocols and policies in place to deal with digital media use was prevalent among members of the expert panel. For example, an action as simple as disconnecting computers and hard drives from the Internet after use can be a large step in preventing virus and hacking. Although a portion of art therapy practitioners are likely skilled in various aspects of technology usage, it may be wise to contract with a professional information technology specialist (IT). IT professionals can also assist in creating and maintaining firewalls, and anti-virus software, and consulting with practitioners on methods for secure data storage, such as utilizing an individual thumb drive for each client. Another aspect of security considered security and privacy when conducting online individual or group art therapy sessions. It may be advisable to discuss issues, such as having password-protected session login, as well as the location and connection of individual

participants. For example, if clients are joining a distance art therapy group from their own homes, how can the therapist and other group members be assured of their identity, and thus maintain the privacy of the group? Although the responses collected from the various rounds of Delhi conversations emphasized communication and education, consultation also was prevalent as a strategy for utilizing technology and digital media in the safest and most secure manner.

The following is a brief example of an art therapist utilizing the above guidelines. An art therapist has been working with a male adolescent client for six months. The client communicated during the intake session that he is interested in working with digital media during their art therapy sessions. He is familiar with technology and regularly creates art using an iPad at home. During the initial session, the art therapist discussed social media boundaries and Internet use with this client, as well as with this client's guardians. The client agreed to review with the therapist the posting of all work created in session prior to uploading online, and has reviewed privacy and Internet safety guidelines as well. He will use an iPad in studio for therapeutic purposes and will save each project to his own assigned memory stick at the end of each session. All saved work on the communally shared iPad will be deleted at the end of each session. The art therapist has also reviewed software and application use with the client, and has determined that a mutual exploration of applications will take place before utilizing such software in therapy. If the client wishes to continue work at home, his art will be transferred to and from the studio via secure means, such as his own device or thumb drive, rather than through unsecure email accounts such as Gmail or Yahoo.

Creating a scenario, such as the one above, can provide multiple benefits. First, having such a vignette as a protocol or policy will allow the art therapist to visualize the integration of digital media into the art studio prior to actual client introduction. Second, the therapist is free to

explore and plan needed conversations, procedures, scenarios, software, and devices without the pressure of working with an actual client. Deliberating upon such scenarios can also provide pertinent questions for professional consultation. For example, a review of the above scenario with an IT professional may produce additional security or safety considerations only apparent to an expert in the IT field.

Discussion

As a whole, the study results highlight the very basic need for professional contribution and ongoing discourse surrounding the use of digital media and technology in art therapy practice. The experts who participated in this study repeatedly emphasized the need for information sharing, self-education, and advocacy for growth in technology-related education for students and working professionals. These needs, paired with education, continued awareness of materials, and all aspects of engagement, surfaced repeatedly in feedback. Collectively the contributors encouraged exploration coupled with mindfulness and a willingness to reduce trepidation through knowledge.

One possible limitation of this study is that the initial questionnaire yielded points of discussion that evolved into a practical list of general operations, rather than concrete and concise data. Although this study flaw is a limitation due to its deviation from the initial questionnaire, the resulting lack of “yes/no” answers created depth in the participants’ responses. Other limitations of this study include those typical of most research conducted via the Delphi method. Due to the small size of the panel and its selection by one researcher’s decision regarding a participant’s “expert” status, results might vary with the selection of new members. Delphi studies also typically are conducted via email or written correspondence, which can result

in the misinterpretation of data if the facilitator does not seek clarification as needed (Okoli & Pawlowski, 2004).

Given the frequency and speed with which U.S. society is utilizing technology and integrating all things digital into both practical and recreational aspects of life, it is imperative that art therapists become conversant on the topic. We must at the very least maintain a familiarity with technology in order to best serve the clients with whom we work, as well as create a network of conversation, education, and support within which we can evolve. For example, in her examination of the many positive and negative aspects of engagement with technology in children, Klorer(2009) identified such risks as overstimulation, inappropriate contact, and poor social skills possibly resulting from too much time spent with computers, tablets, and video games. Alternately, Austin (2009) accepted computers and digital media as simply another tool to facilitate expression, much the same as paint and a paintbrush. As Carlton (2013) pointed out,

Art therapists can study, develop, and use digital media as viable choices for expanded art and therapeutic palettes, but we bear responsibility to comprehend the evolving meanings of these media and to tend to the conscious shaping of technology and its uses for ourselves and for the well-being of our clients. (p. 45)

This comprehension and willingness to most effectively adapt to the evolution of technology and digital media will allow art therapists to best serve clients in the years to come. Ultimately, it will be up to us to seek the education, skills, and support in order to support our clients, who are likely also in the position of defining their own relationships with technology.

In an effort to promote connection, education, and support of art therapists who are exploring technology and digital media, data from this article will be made available on the

website Electricpalette.net to continue this conversation within the community at large. A forum will be available, as well as other resources that feature art therapists engaging with technology and digital media. The primary intention of e-publishing this material is to enable art therapist users, regardless of whether they are just beginning, proficient in technology use, or attempting to lessen isolation, to connect with other art therapists and learn from collective experiences within the digital realm.

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CHAPTER 3: CREATIVE PORTFOLIO: ELECTRICPALETTE.NET

Introduction

To fulfill the creative portfolio component of the culminating project, I have developed a website entitled Electricpalette.net. Electric Palette will serve as a platform for an informative discussion and sharing space intended for art therapists who are exploring digital media. Electric Palette is conceived as a safe and enjoyable virtual environment in which users may gather information, contribute, and connect with other practitioners. The words “hub” and “community” were constantly within my mind when creating this site, and guided the layout and aesthetics. The resulting website is easily navigable with widespread points of information that are presented in readily digestible formats.

Electricpalette.net also hosts some of the data collected during my research process. The data include both video and written interviews featuring art therapists who are heavy users of digital media, as well as two virtual tours of art therapists’ personal studios. These videos and interviews are intentionally short to help users efficiently connect to real and current applications of digital media use in art therapy, as well as to “meet” the therapists who are functioning as practitioners within digitally integrated studios and practices. The following sections will describe potential user profiles and vignettes depicting the potential target audience for which the site was created, policies that have been written surrounding use, privacy and content selection for Electricpalette.net, and a written “tour” of the various site sections.

Audience

The primary intended audience for Electricpalette.net is art therapists. I have no speculation as to a specific age range, culture, or other demographics of potential visitors, as the main specification is simply an interest in art therapy and digital media. While the majority of

the site will be focused entirely on art therapy and digital media, there will be spaces for non-digital art and art therapy related posts to be featured. Potential visitors need only have a general interest in this topic as the purpose of the site is to engage, entertain, educate, and connect users.

When creating Electricpalette.net, I envisioned a secondary audience of those who are either interested in art therapy themselves or are in a related health care or mental health field and are seeking information and perhaps personal connection with an art therapy professional. I believe that Electricpalette.net will capture the interest of non-art therapists through its engaging and easily navigated interface. The data and links to articles posted will also represent a wide range of information and provide accessible information even to those that are not specifically trained as art therapists. It is certainly not my intention to teach this secondary audience how to *do* art therapy but rather educate other professionals and perhaps provide a point for connection and collaboration. It has been my observation that technology and an interest within this niche spans many disciplines and that there could be benefits to sharing and learning alongside similarly related disciplines, such as counseling and social work.

Profiles of Potential Users

Target User: Ann

Ann is a 32-year-old board certified art therapist. Ann works at a large hospital, primarily with children, and has been in this position for the five years following her master's degree. The hospital has just received a grant for several of their programs that work with children who have been diagnosed with cancer or other terminal illnesses. Ann's supervisor has asked her to create a presentation in which they will present a potential art therapy program that could serve this population in way that the hospital is not already able to. Ann and her supervisor have devised a plan in which she will present current research on existing hospital programs that utilize iPads

and tablets to provide art therapy with patients who have suppressed immune systems.. Ann would also like to contact an art therapist who has experience with these devices in order to gather more information surrounding program use, device brand, practical application, and gather leads on other relevant resources and studies for her presentation. Ann is concerned that she will not be able to find all of this information on her own within the short timeline provided.

Through visiting Electricpalette.net, Ann is able to post her story and presentation goals in the user forum. Ann receives several replies through which she is led to a group of written publications surrounding tablet and digital media use in hospital settings. Ann also discovers a description and link directing her to a site dedicated to user reviews of various tablets and another that leads to an article about the benefits and drawbacks of refurbished devices. Due to Electricpalette's easily navigable style, its variety of available information, and its capability to connect and chat with other digital media enthusiasts, Ann is able to gather the needed information, data, and support in order to secure the desired grant.

Target User: Matthew

Matthew is a 65-year-old retired social worker. Matthew has always had an interest in technology, and often helps out with the audiovisual equipment that is used to manage sound, music, and images within his church community. One day, Matthew is browsing therapy related blogs and discovers a connection to Electricpalette.net. Although Matthew is currently retired and no longer practices as a social worker, he returns to the site frequently out of interest in newly posted art images, links to articles, and to read featured blogs.

Matthew's church has recently become affiliated with an art and music program that runs after-school hours. This program is volunteer based and does not employ any music or art therapists. Matthew joins the program as a volunteer and offers to supervise groups that wish to

work in the church's computer lab. Several of the children have begun exploring music programs and applications, and they express frustration with the complexity of the programs available for use. Matthew attempts an Internet search surrounding music and art programs but has difficulty distinguishing its appropriateness or potential ease of use. He is hesitant to make an uninformed purchase, as it is not possible to return most software programs.

Matthew recalls that he observed a forum during his casual browsing on Electricpalette.net and posts a query seeking appropriate software that will run on a personal computer, for 8-10-year-old children. Matthew receives a lead on potential software from a forum response and discovers the address of a website on which he can also check consumer reviews (CNET) on Electricpalette's blog.

Description

The following descriptions outline the basic setup and functions of Electricpalette.net, rather than describe exact images and the most current posts. (To explore the site as it is in real time, please visit: <http://electricpalette.keystoneclick.com/>)

The aesthetic and intention of Electric Palette's (EP) home page is one of simplicity and ease-of-use, with an up-to-date and modern feel. Although the primary audience of this site is that of art therapists, all who have an interest in art and digital media are welcome to explore. As with all of the individual screens, the EP Twitter feed is displayed on the bottom and can be clicked for instant access to the EP Twitter page. This will allow users a constant view of the most recent links and site-relevant Tweets. Also carried continuously throughout the site are icons that provide direct links to EP's YouTube, Facebook, Pinterest, and Google Plus accounts, as well as a continuation of the top menu bar. The intention of this design is to provide ease of

use and clarity to the site: One is always able to quickly access the next point of information without returning to the home page.

The newest blogs and a section with a clear statement of purpose is also accessible from the front page, with the option to expand directly from the dialogue box itself. Next on the drop-down menu bar is the “About” page. The “About” section also contains two other menu choices: “Meet Noel” and “Electric Palette in MKE.” These sections will contain brief bios and updates on my own personal projects and practices. Note that even though users have entered an interior page, the “join the conversation” image is on the right-hand side of the page. This image will continue throughout the inside of the site with the hopes of encouraging users to join the forum and engage with other visitors. Since “About” is a drop-down menu, the other points of selection are available on the right-hand side of the screen, as well as from the top menu bar.

Following the “About” section is a page titled “Starting Out.” The purpose of this page is to house permanent links to the Art Therapy Credentials Board, the American Art Therapy Association, the Art Therapy Technology Committee, and the HIPPA websites. This information is important as ElectricPalette.net might well be the first stop in an art therapist’s exploratory journey into digital media. This page places emphasis on building a solid, practical foundation that is based on professional codes of conduct. Permission to place links to these sites has been emailed to appropriate personal within each agency. This website will not be launched with such material until approval has been granted for posting.

The “Blog” section on Electricpalette.net will be used for a variety of purposes. Throughout my research, I found that many blog spots limit themselves to one genre—typically those of personal blogging or information sharing. EP will utilize a more varied format in order to highlight new interviews, “coming soon” features on art therapy projects and videos that are in

production, and to quickly share any other relevant piece of information. The simple and engaging format was designed to highlight a selection of such posts, while not appearing cluttered or overwhelming. Comments will be allowed on a selection of the blog posts, although they will be monitored. The “Explore” tab on the menu bar may be accessed in two ways. When users click directly on “Explore,” this navigation page will be reached. Users may also activate the drop-down menu and choose to go directly to one of the above four options.

Much like all previously discussed pages, the forum on EP has been designed with the purpose of being easily accessible and user-friendly. Questions are limited to 100 characters in order to maintain simplicity. Answers are automatically sorted and displayed separately to prevent long and potentially confusing conversation “strings” from forming. To use the forum or comment on the website, users must login with a valid email address. This will allow me, the site manager, to block spam and manage users who are not maintaining respectful behavior. Policies on privacy, conduct, posting, and content for a more detailed examination of procedure and expectations of use are described later in this chapter.

The “News” section of Electricpalette.net will house an eclectic collection of current events, articles from a variety of sources, and any other art therapy and counseling specific posts as chosen by the manager of the site. The “Tools” section is a resource page designed solely for the purpose of linking users to new digital media, reviews, and user videos. Note that the navigation is available again on two sections of the page: the overhead menu bar, as well as the bar on the right. The conversation icon is also present to remind and encourage site users that they are welcome to engage in the forum at any time.

The “Digital Art” page provides a designated area in which to highlight specific digital artists and techniques. I would eventually like to host art created by art therapists, as well as

programs that would like to display a variety of digitally created work. This page allows for large images to be posted and viewed. All images and links have been placed on one open page to provide inspiration and stimulus without the necessity of having to navigate through separate posts and text boxes. The “Resources” page provides a space for three specific topics: videos, current research, and interviews. This page contains my own video and written interviews, as well as the work of others. A key convenience feature of this page is that the videos play immediately from the site when clicked upon, rather than sending the user to YouTube. This feature not only provides a smooth transition from browsing to watching, but will encourage users to remain on the site when they are finished viewing.

This contact form allows users to directly contact the site manager without the placement of personal phone or email information on the site. As with many features of Electricpalette, aspects of the design were created with the hopes of increasing user contact and encouraging explorative conversation and collaboration. The “Contact Us” page was placed intentionally on the main menu bar, as well as at the bottom of each page to avoid frustration and promote interaction.

Policies for Electricpalette.net

Policy on Website, Blog, and Forum Posting

Electricpalette.com has created this guideline for administrators and also for members of the general public who wish to know how decisions are made on posting/removing comments and other content from this website.

- Electricpalette has complete discretion over what is published on its website.

- At the same time, Electricpalette believes in the importance of displaying a variety of viewpoints and appropriate debate, so not all comments posted on the website will necessarily be reflective of the views of Electricpalette.
- In keeping with the core values of Electricpalette, we will not publish comments or articles that:
 - Support or promote discrimination of any kind
 - Contain derogatory, insulting, or threatening comments about individuals or groups
 - Contain foul language
 - Posts that are purely for self-promotion, product sales, or are suspected spam. If you, your research, or your business, would like to be represented on Electricpalette.net, please message us with this request through the “Contact Us” section on the website
 - Links or images that lead to another site. Exceptions are links or images pertinent to forum or blog topics with the appropriate citation or permission from linked third parties
 - Requests for information—these will also be responded to individually
 - Offer comments with personal contact details in them—because the Electricpalette.net website is open, this could potentially expose users to unwanted contact or use of their information
 - The only exception to the above is the forum on Electricpalette.net, which requires a secure email login. Users should continue to remain wary of the fact

that any personal information posted will still be visible to other “logged in” participants and are sharing information at their own risk

- Any person who has not had their article or comment posted or has had a comment removed and would like an explanation as to why, should send a message through the “Contact Us” page on Electricpalette.net for an individual response.

Privacy Policies

At Electricpalette.net, we are committed to safeguarding and preserving the privacy of our visitors. This Privacy Policy explains what happens to any personal data that you provide to us or that we collect from you while you visit our site. We do update this policy from time to time so please regularly review it.

Information We Collect. In running and maintaining our website, we collect and process the following data about you:

- i. Information provided voluntarily by you (for example, when you register to use our forum).
- ii. Information that you provide when you communicate with us by any means.

Use of Cookies. Cookies provide information regarding the computer used by a visitor. We may use cookies where appropriate to gather information about your computer in order to assist us in improving our website. When used, these cookies are downloaded to your computer and stored on the computer’s hard drive. Such information will not identify you personally. It is statistical data, which does not identify any personal details whatsoever.

You can adjust the settings on your computer to decline any cookies if you wish. This can easily be done by activating the “reject cookies” setting on your computer.

Use of Your Information. We use the information that we collect from you to provide our services to you. In addition to this, we may use the information for one or more of the following purposes:

- i. To inform you of any changes to our website
- ii. To notify you of a status change due to forum use or any other action that can include, but is not limited to, blocking inappropriate conduct or the posting of plagiarized material
- iii. To respond personally to any communication submitted via the “Contact Us” form on Electricpalette.net

Disclosing Your Information. We will not disclose your personal information to any other party other than in accordance with this Privacy Policy and in the circumstances detailed below:

- i. Where we are legally required by law to disclose your personal information.
- ii. Email addresses provided for forum registration and other site contact will never be sold or disclosed to third parties.

Third-party Links. Providing a link does not mean that we endorse or approve that site’s policy regarding visitor privacy. It also does not indicate that we support the entirety of work upon said site. You should review their privacy policy prior to sending them any personal data or forwarding them information.

Access to Information. Electricpalette.net will maintain your right to access any information that we hold that relates to you. Any information or presence on our site may be deleted at your request by sending us an email through the “Contact Us” page.

Contacting Us. Please do not hesitate to contact us regarding any matter relating to this Privacy Policy.

This form has been adapted to suit the needs of Electricpalette.net with permission from diylegals.co.uk.

Guidelines for Content Management

This series of guidelines assists Electricpalette.net in maintaining a consistent level of quality and standards in what we post and link to on our site. Content that does not meet these basic requirements will not be featured on the site. If you would like to submit your own content with a request for publication on Electricpalette.net, please make sure that your information conforms to the standards below:

- **Relevance**—Our audience at Electricpalette consists of those who are interested in digital media and art therapy. These two larger topics also connect to a matrix of related subcategories, such as materials, programming (both computer and mental health related programs), ethics, devices, blogs, reviews, applications, and so on. We welcome related content and will gladly review suggestions for relevant future posts. Conversely, if you feel that a piece of our content does not align with our mission, please contact Electricpalette with your feedback.

- **Accountability**—Electricpalette will only post links to sites that openly display contact information, such as email addresses (minimum requirement), biographies, and other clear, source-related information.
- **Professionalism**—Articles must be clearly written, with accurate spelling, grammar, and formatting.
- **Respect**—Content posted on Electricpalette.net will display respect for all individuals and groups. Written or other material featuring derogatory material toward any individual or group will not be posted.
- **Integrity**—Electricpalette.net will not review or promote products or services for financial recompense.
- **Safety**—Electricpalette.net will not post links that utilize URL redirects or other suspicious re-routing tactics.
- **Ethics**—Electricpalette.net will not post second-party content without permission from the original creators. Brief descriptions of content with links to original work will be accepted.
- **Diversity**—Electricpalette.net was designed to host a diverse range of information pertaining to art therapy and digital media in a variety of formats. We pledge to maintain this selection and refresh content consistently (minimum one content addition/change per week).
- **Rights**—All subjects or authors of content posted to Electricpalette.com will retain full rights to their work. All work requested to be removed from the site will be done so within a 24-hour time period at the request of the original content creator. Content that contains more than a link reference will require the author or association's permission to

appear on Electricpalette.com. Consent will be obtained and saved in an email format.

Photos used on Electricpalette.net that are not sourced through original or purchased means will cite image rights within the displayed area.

Research—While Electricpalette is a source for conversation, connection, and education, it is also an access point to the latest research. Any links, articles, or other content will either be sourced from original content or will demonstrate quality through peer review, university affiliation, or professional journal publication in order to be featured within that section. These works will demonstrate scholarship and adherence to ethical guidelines and may require subscription or payment in order to access (for example, a research article written for *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*).

General Guidelines for Forum Participation

Below are some guidelines to keep in mind when participating in forum discussions on Electricpalette.net. For more detailed information, please see our Privacy Policy and Policy on Website, Blog, and Forum Posting.

- Electricpalette will never share emails or login information with third parties or other distributors. A login is purely to provide an extra layer of security to users.
- Please converse with others in this format as you would in person. Disrespectful language or messages in any form will not be tolerated, and such content will be removed at the discretion of the administrator.
- Follow the outline of the forum. Join conversations if they are pertinent to your topic and begin another thread if you wish to change the subject. Keeping these conversations organized will provide faster and more pertinent responses.

- If you observe a visitor who is not abiding by the Posting Policy or care to bring a post to the attention of the administrator, please send a message through the “Contact Us” option on Electricpalette.net.
- Be mindful of tone. Wording can often be read in a manner different than how it was intended. Please do not directly attack anyone for anything in this forum. Take issue with ideas, not personalities.
- Take advantage of emoticons and other symbols for clarity (☺). Proofreading messages before posting is always appreciated. However, please do not point out other members’ grammatical, spelling, or usage errors.
- Please refrain from expressing political, religious, or cultural opinions. Other forums are designed for these kinds of debates; they are not appropriate for this professional community.
- Please refrain from posting ads in any form.

Most importantly, learn, share, and have fun. Invite others. Provide support and be a helpful member of this community. Let’s work together to make Electricpalette.net a productive and beneficial gathering place!

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

Upon review of the value and prospective contribution created by my research and final project, I discovered that the greatest merit can be found in the connection and conversation that have resulted from my work. Conducting the Delphi study supplied the art therapy field with a glimpse into how practitioners working with digital media and technology function. Perhaps more importantly—and as unintended consequences—the Delphi study illuminated the importance that the expert participants place on community and connection. These two broad themes appeared throughout the three main data points of communication, technical considerations, and education.

When reflecting on this research process, it becomes clear that connection is what I was seeking when I embarked upon a review of the past, present, and current literature and practical uses of digital media in art therapy. My review of literature written by art therapists revealed a general discussion of potential use, but not a great deal of information surrounding practical application to art therapy studios and practice administration. A similar review of literature from the counseling field contained insight into the practical implementation of telehealth counseling or the provision of counseling services over the telephone. Although this discussion informed some insight into implementation concerns (e.g., security), I continued to feel the need for a more comprehensive, frank, and applicable discussion of the basic and practical considerations surrounding the studio use of digital media and technology that could potentially provide a greater contribution.

Although collecting data from the expert panel yielded a great deal of information surrounding practical methods of working with technology, such as maintaining a separate thumb drive for each client, I continued to feel the need for further connection. Thus, the

inspiration for the second portion of this research and the series of interviews in which I met with art therapy practitioners who work regularly with digital media. Perhaps a limitation of this study is the fact that I traveled to meet these practitioners in person. It is possible that setting up a video conference would have been in greater congruence with my topic. Ultimately, however, I factored in commentary from the art therapy practitioners whom I was visiting. The consensus amongst these art therapists was that they regard digital media as a tool within their studios, not as their primary method of functioning as an art therapist.

The interviews and studio visits went largely as planned, and I was able to observe the spaces, devices, and methods in which the participating art therapists were using their own protocols in order to promote secure, creative, and therapeutic experiences for their clients through digital media and technology. I did not, however, anticipate the frequency with which the theme of connection would continue to emerge, nor did I anticipate how I would be affected by the combination of “knowing” these art therapists digitally and the powerful impact of meeting them in person. Our shared digital interest formed an introduction, and the in-person meeting cemented this bond into a more personal relationship. Following the completion of this portion of my research, I have found myself frequently in contact with these participants, and I believe that I have formed a network of support and education as suggested in the data from my Delphi study.

It is my hope that the resulting products of this research study—an article to be submitted for publication and a website devoted to digital media and art therapy that will display my video interviews from the studio visit—will continue to spread personal connection and increase communication regarding digital media use in art therapy.

I would like to conclude with a quote from a fellow researcher of technology and digital media use in art therapy, Natalie Carlton. As Carlton (2014) so aptly stated:

Whether or not one is engaged with digital culture, these developing technologies are becoming an operational consciousness through the ubiquity of digital instruments and everyday computerized systems that form an integrative presence of languages, modes, and system interfaces in the world around us. (p. 45)

Carlton points out that the evolution of digital culture begs the art therapy field to remain engaged in conversation regarding the adaptation and use of technology in order to best understand and fully connect with those we serve. One does not necessarily have to adopt technology as new media; however, the ability to connect with our clients and other therapists on this topic may become a necessity in the future. Although the results of this research are not an exhaustive protocol for precise use, I believe they may provide inspiration and spark connection between art therapists seeking new and supportive experiences with digital media and technology.

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Appendix A

Initial Questionnaire for the Delphi Study

1. Rank your top four ethical considerations regarding the use of technology in studio practice. Please provide a brief explanation for your ranking by each listing.
2. Identify at least three protocols or methods that you have developed or would apply to safeguard clients from these identified concerns.
3. Name at least two areas in which the Art Therapy Credentials Board Code of Ethics might further elaborate to standardize ethical decision making when using technology.
4. Do you believe that more specific ethical guidelines from the ATCB would be beneficial in relation to technology use in art therapy? Why or why not? Could more concrete guidelines encourage use (increased ethical surety) or hamper creativity?

Appendix B

Interview Questions

Interview of Natalie Carlton, ATR-BC

1. Was there a specific moment that drew you into using digital media?
2. Can you share another story about a client successfully connecting with digital media?

Do your clients observe tech items in your studio and independently choose to create using digital media?
3. What advice would you give to an art therapist who is just beginning to integrate technology into practice?

Interview of Gretchen Miller, ATR-BC, CTC-S

1. When was the first time that you took notice of the interpersonal connections that can be formed through the use of technology?
2. What kind of feedback did you receive?
3. Tell us more about how you have continued to use technology to build relationships and creativity in practice?
4. What advice would you give to a therapist beginning to delve into social and digital media?

Appendix C

Authorization for Release of Information

I _____ authorize Noel L'Esperance, MS ATR LPC,
[address redacted] to record and utilize written material collected through the methods of a
Delphi Research study from the dates of _____ 2013 to _____ 2014.

Any data gathered will be used exclusively for educational purposes and may be presented at the American Art Therapy Association events or conferences, or for submission to clinical journals and writing. The outcomes of this research will also be featured on the website Electricpalette.org in order to promote ethical decision making when using technology in art therapy practice. I understand that any data collected will be anonymous to all but the researcher. Any data discussed or displayed at the conclusion of the study will also be presented in a manner that preserves the anonymity of all participants.

I understand that I have the right to revoke this authorization, in writing, at any time by sending notice to Noel L'Esperance, at the address listed above.

It has been explained to me that if I refuse to consent to this release of information, the following are the consequences: data collected from my participation will not at any time be utilized during this study or in subsequent writing.

A copy of this release shall have the same force and effect as the original.

(Interviewee)

(Date)

Authorization for Release of Information

I/We _____ authorize Noel L'Esperance, MS ATR LPC,
[address redacted] to record/utilize video footage, audio, and art material that was filmed
during the interview and studio tour on _____.

(Date of tour)

Any video footage, images, or data gathered will be used exclusively for educational purposes and may be presented at the American Art Therapy Association events or conferences, or for submission to clinical journals and writing, as well as featured on the website Electricpalette.org to display various uses of technology in art therapy.

Final edited material will be presented to the above art therapist/interviewee for approval before web posting.

I understand that I/we have the right to revoke this authorization, in writing, at any time by sending notice to Noel L'Esperance, at the address listed above.

It has been explained to me that if I refuse to consent to this release of information, the following are the consequences: no video footage, likeness or art product will be utilized at any time during this study or in subsequent writing.

A copy of this release shall have the same force and effect as the original.

(Interviewee)

(Date)