

Supporting a Community of Practice in Occupational Therapy through Digital Archive



DISABILITY AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT COLLEGE OF APPLIED HEALTH SCIENCES



Jillian Hazlett

Department of Occupational Therapy

Background

The Illinois EI / Schools OT Community of Practice (CoP) is a group of occupational therapy practitioners, working in Illinois Early Intervention and school-based practice, founded in 2015. Members connect via monthly group telephone calls, a Google Sites website, a Google Group email listserv, and meet-up opportunities. Goals of the group, topics of interest, and projects arise from the group in a grassroots fashion, rather than from leaders.

My project focused on maximizing potential of the CoP website as a digital archive and information repository, as the site had not been updated since 2015 and was the most underutilized element of the CoP.

Project Goals

- Assess goals of CoP members for the website
- Organize current website materials
- Add archived CoP resources to the site
- Maintain the website with updates and new content
- Publicize the site

Methods

- Participated in the community's group phone calls to stay up-to-date on its activities
- Administered informal surveys to gauge CoP members' awareness of, use of, and goals for the site
- Used Google Sites to reorganize and consistently update the website
- Produced the CoP's newsletter, distributed via the group email listserv and website
- Designed a flyer for members on how to access the site
- Designed a timeline diagram for the site and AOTA conference, displaying the CoP's accomplishments

Progress

An initial survey of CoP members (n = 31) yielded several results:

- When asked which parts of the CoP they used, only 25.9% checked the website, 38.7% the newsletter, and 96.8% the listserv.
- 2 respondents commented they were unaware of the CoP site.
- 38.7% requested information on how to navigate the site.
- 71% requested web access to back issues of the newsletter.

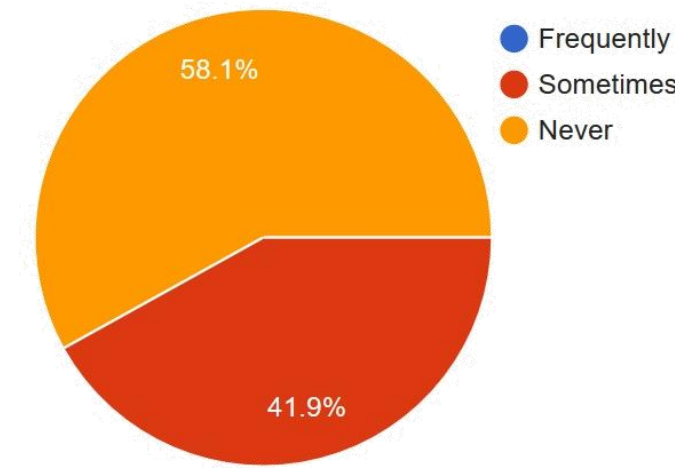


Figure 1. Initial survey response (n = 31) to "How often do you use the CoP Google website?"

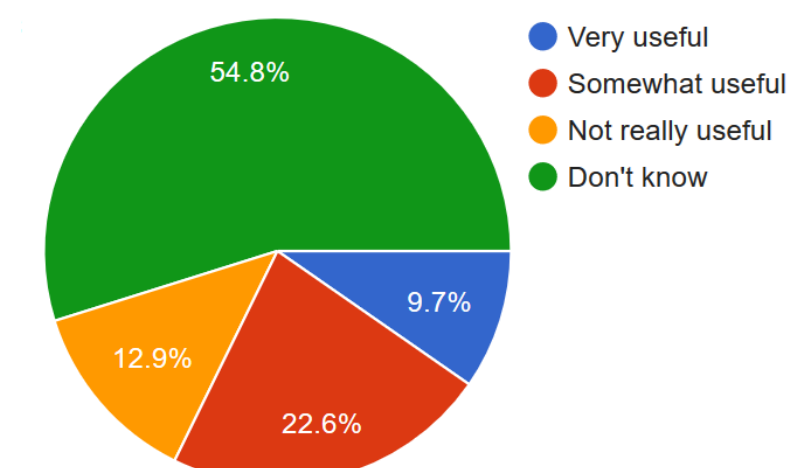


Figure 2. Initial survey response (n = 31) to "How useful do you find the CoP Google website?"

- Website updates, incorporating CoP members' suggestions, were completed throughout the year.
 - New web content included new newsletters and a visual timeline group activity since 2015 (Figure 3).
 - A summary of site updates, compiled in a digital flyer, was distributed via the CoP listserv (Figure 4).
- A follow-up survey yielded fewer responses (n = 11).
- The percentage of members who found the website "very useful" increased from 9.7% to 30%; the site is used by 45.5% of respondents.
 - Members who reported reading the newsletter increased from 38.7% to 72.7%. The newsletter is the most frequently used part of the CoP, after the group email listserv (used by 81.8% of members).



Figure 3. New site content: newsletters and a timeline.

IL EI & Schools
CoP
Website

Visit the Site

<https://sites.google.com/site/illinoisotcommunity/home>

New Features

- Upcoming events featured on the homepage
- Newsletter archive
- Podcast archive
- Chronological call notes archive
- Completed projects archive
- Previously uploaded practice resources now organized by topic
- New pages: "Upcoming Events" and "Join our Roundtable"

We want your input!

- The link may prompt you to "request access" to visit the site. All requests are granted.
- Add your name to our "Meet the OTs" page
- Upload resources to our "Practice Resources" page, or share titles and links on our page for "Recommendations"
- Email jhazle3@uic.edu with suggestions or questions!

Figure 4. Website informational flyer.

Conclusion

Communication and storage of information within a CoP facilitates growth of the group, even when members are distant geographically. Online information is a critical component of the Illinois EI / Schools CoP.

Efforts to expand this online presence through the CoP's website and newsletter appear promising. The site functions primarily as an archive of information at this time, documenting past and future activities of the CoP. Though the group's activity primarily occurs elsewhere, the site records this activity and makes it easily accessible, through chronologically organized call notes, newsletters, podcasts, and project records, as requested by CoP members. Among these archived areas, the digital newsletter is growing in rate of usage.

Future Directions

- Continue updating the CoP website and newsletter
- Work with future trainees on sustainability of digital information archival for the CoP
- Regularly reassess members' utilization of and interest in CoP projects, and incorporate their suggestions
- Look toward the CoP's strongest and fastest-growing elements for future outreach – the listserv, newsletter, phone calls, and in-person meet-up opportunities.

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