

A survey of members' access to information technology

Ian Pullen

In the autumn of 1995 the College set up an Information Technology (IT) Working Group to consider how the College could benefit from the major technological developments, such as the internet, to improve the service to members and outside bodies, as well as the day to day functioning of the College. At an early stage the Group decided to circulate a questionnaire to a cross-section of the membership to assess current and predicted access to IT hardware, communications facilities such as e-mail, as well as CD-ROM products and the dissemination of College materials.

Findings

A 7% (603) sample of members were sent the IT survey form in December 1995 and 253 (42%) replied. Table 1 shows the responses to the questions asked.

Comment

This short paper reports the results of the first College IT Survey. The low response rate may

Table 1. The questionnaire and results

1. Do you have access to a personal computer for academic work?	Yes	199 (79%)
	No, but I expect to in the next year	9 (4%)
	No, but I am networked to a mainframe computer	4 (2%)
	No, nor do I have access to any other form of computer	41 (16%)
<i>The following figures (except for question 7) are based on those who have access</i>		
2. What kind of operating system does it have?	MS DOS	115 (57%)
	Windows	161 (79%)
	Macintosh	29 (14%)
	Unix	6 (3%)
	Other	5 (2%)
3. Where do you use your PC?	Office	128 (63%)
	Clinic	15 (7%)
	Library	42 (21%)
	Home	171 (84%)
	Other	12 (6%)
4. Which of the following does your machine have?	Hard drive	200 (99%)
	CD-ROM drive	89 (44%)
	Colour monitor	166 (82%)
	Printer	189 (93%)
	Modem	73 (36%)
<i>Communications facilities</i>		
5. Which of the following do you (a) have; (b) expect; (c) use regularly	Internal e-mail (i.e. within your organisation)	
	Have	54 (27%)
	Will have	39 (19%)
	Use	23 (11%)
	External e-mail	
	Have	59 (29%)
	Will have	50 (25%)
	Use	30 (15%)

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

5. (continued) Which of the following do you (a) have; (b) expect; (c) use regularly	Bulletin boards	
	Have	32 (16%)
	Will have	19 (9%)
	Use	13 (6%)
	On-line services such as Medline	
	Have	71 (35%)
	Will have	23 (11%)
	Use	42 (21%)
	Full Internet access (ftp, Gopher, etc.)	
	Have	42 (21%)
	Will have	32 (16%)
	Use	21 (10%)
6. If you have access to these facilities but do not use them, is this because of:	World Wide Web	
	Have	36 (18%)
	Will have	26 (13%)
	Use	20 (10%)
6. If you have access to these facilities but do not use them, is this because of:	Lack of training	47 (23%)
	Not yet clear what the benefits might be	31 (15%)
	They are not yet developed enough to be of use	17 (8%)
	Other	15 (7%)
7. If you have access to and use e-mail, how frequently do you check your mail?	At least daily	24 (38%)
	Every few days	22 (35%)
	Weekly	11 (17%)
	Other	10 (16%)
<i>CD-ROM</i>		
8. If you use CD-ROMs, please indicate for what purpose	Literature searches	103 (51%)
	Medical reference	43 (21%)
	Education	42 (21%)
	Software source	37 (18%)
	Other	9 (4%)
9. Would you use a CD-ROM product:	In preference to the equivalent printed version	56 (28%)
	In addition to the printed version	85 (42%)
	Only when no printed version is available	22 (11%)
10. If the College were to publish CD-ROMs for sale to members, in which of the following would you be interested?	British Journal of Psychiatry	102 (50%)
	Psychiatric Bulletin	70 (34%)
	Advances in Psychiatric Treatment	96 (47%)
	Gaskell books	46 (23%)
	College Seminars series of books	56 (28%)
	Abstracts of meetings	76 (37%)
	Other*	17 (8%)
*Including American Journals, College policy documents, abstracts, reference works, information on psychiatric drugs, teaching aids, protocols and audits		
<i>Possible future developments</i>		
11. The College is considering e-mail to cut the cost of sending information to members. Would you be prepared to receive mailings from the College in this form?	Instead of ordinary postal mailings	103 (51%)
	Only if the postal mailings were also continued	78 (38%)
12. What kind of information would you like to receive in this way?	Meeting programmes and information	140 (69%)
	Reports on College activities	131 (65%)
	Papers for College Committees on which you sit	62 (31%)
	Other*	17 (8%)
	*Including new research facilities, conduct surveys/questionnaires, Section newsletter, election of members, educational reviews, Special Interest Group contacts/information, College Policy statements	

have biased the results. If there has been a disproportionately high response from those interested in IT, then the proportion of members with access to a PC and the Internet may be inflated. Nevertheless a significant and growing number of College members would be able and willing to benefit from College IT developments.

The full report of the Working Party will be published after it has received Council's approval.

In the meantime, with the approval of the Executive and Finance Committee, the Publications Department has set up a trial Web site that can be viewed at

<http://www.demon.co.uk/rcpsych>.

Ian Pullen, *Honorary Librarian and Chair of the IT Working Party*

Miscellany

Honours

Members of the College will be delighted to know that Fiona Caldicott, who has recently retired as our President was honoured by Her Majesty the Queen in the recent Birthday Honours. She is now Dame Fiona Caldicott, Dame Commander of the Most Excellent Order of The British Empire (DBE).

The National Counselling and Welfare Service for Sick Doctors

The National Counselling and Welfare Service for Sick Doctors is totally independent and has the full support and backing of the Royal Colleges and Faculties, the Joint Consultants' Committee, the British Medical Association and other professional bodies. It is controlled by a National Management Committee with representatives from all these organisations, but which is autonomous. A doctor concerned about the effect of illness or the fitness to practise of a sick colleague may telephone the national contact point on 0171 935 5982. He will be given the name of a national adviser who will be a senior doctor in the same branch of medicine as the doctor-patient. He may contact the national adviser, and it is not until this stage that he need disclose the name of his sick colleague. The adviser may personally approach the sick doctor, or may arrange for another specialist to do so. No permanent records incorporating names will be kept of these transactions. The sick doctor is perfectly entitled to refuse the offer, in which case the original referring colleague is informed and the matter closed so far as the National Counselling Service is concerned.

To activate the Service for a particular problem, telephone 0171 935 5982 as above. For further information about the scope and working of the scheme write to: Chairman, National Management Committee, National Counselling and Welfare Service for Sick Doctors, 1 Park Square West, London NW1 4LJ.

New publications

Interpersonal Factors in Origin and Course of Affective Disorders edited by Ch. Mundt, M. J. Goldstein, K. Hahlweg and P. Fiedler, with the assistance of H. Freeman, is the latest publication in the Gaskell Academic Series. It is available in hardback for £30 from bookshops and the Publications Dept of The Royal College of Psychiatrists, 17 Belgrave Square, London SW1X 8PG (Telephone: 0171 235 2351, ext. 146).

The first issue of a new journal, entitled *Mortality* has recently been published. This is the only academic journal in Europe devoted to the study of death, dying and disposal. It is edited by Dr Glennys Howarth and Revd Dr Peter C. Jupp. Further details: CARFAX Publishing Company, PO Box 25, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, OX14 3UE (Fax: +44 (0) 1235 401550).

A History of Clinical Psychiatry - The Origin and History of Psychiatric Disorders edited by German Berrios and Roy Porter has recently been published and is available for £60 (hb) and £19.95 (pb) from The Athlone Press, 1 Park Drive, London NW11 7SG.

150 Years of Psychiatry 1841-1991, Vol. II: The Aftermath edited by Hugh Freeman and German Berrios has also been recently published by The Athlone Press (address as above) and is available for £45 (hb).