

# Research Notes

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## **The Role of Technology in Early Childhood Program Administration: Results of the 2000 Illinois Directors' Technology Survey**

Technology continues to impact the way early childhood directors conduct business. In an effort to produce current data about the role technology plays in program administration, the Center for Early Childhood Leadership recently conducted a study of 150 directors of center-based early childhood programs in Illinois. These directors represented a cross-section of different types of programs in the state including Head Start, corporate and independent for-profit, and agency-based and independent nonprofit programs. Geographically, respondents represented urban, suburban, and rural communities from as far north as Antioch, as far west as Quincy, and as far south as Marion. Data from the 2000 survey were compared to results from a 1997 study conducted on the same topic.

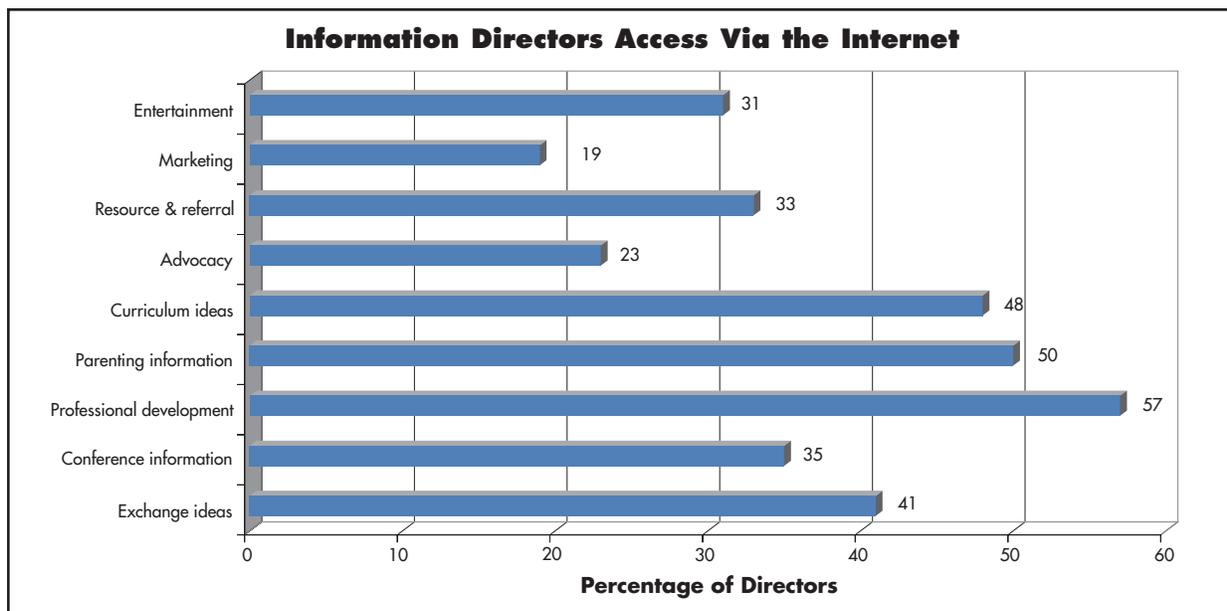
### **Directors' Use of Computers**

The majority of directors participating in this study (65%) reported that they had a computer that was adequate for their needs. This is a dramatic change since 1997 when only 12% of directors indicated they had a computer that was adequate for their needs. Twenty-nine percent of the directors expressed an interest in upgrading their hardware or software. Seven percent did not have a computer at the present time, but hoped to acquire one in the near future.

### **Use of E-mail and the Internet**

Directors' knowledge of e-mail and the Internet varied widely. While many directors (47%) use e-mail on a daily basis, there are a great many directors (30%) who never use it or only use it monthly. Even though use of e-mail is still not universal among directors, it has become far more commonplace than it was in 1997 when less than 10% of directors indicated they used e-mail on a daily basis.

Only one-third of the directors participating in this study log onto the Internet on a daily basis. As many (33%) never log on or only do so on a monthly basis. Only one-fourth of directors (26%) feel competent in their use of the Internet. Two-thirds of all respondents expressed an interest in wanting to improve their use of the Internet or learn more about it. Only 6% have no plans to use the Internet. The following graph summarizes the percentage of directors who access different types of information via the Internet.



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## Business Applications

Directors were asked to rate how computerized their administrative activities were in four areas: word processing, spreadsheet applications, presentation graphics, and database management. As in the 1997 study, directors described word processing applications as the most computerized of the four areas although the extent to which they relied on word processing for the daily management of their centers had increased. The table below illustrates the percentage of respondents who indicated that they relied on the use of a computer to complete different administrative tasks.

### Percentage of Respondents Indicating Administrative Task is Computerized

ADMINISTRATIVE TASKS	PERCENTAGE
<b>Word Processing Applications</b>	
Newsletters and brochures	79
Memos and letters	60
Calendars and schedules	69
Proposals and reports	65
Mailing labels and form letters	75
Menus	58
<b>Spreadsheet Applications</b>	
Billing and accounts receivable	59
Payroll	55
General ledger	62
Cash flow forecasting	63
General budget planning	59
Purchasing and accounts payable	60
<b>Presentation Graphics Applications</b>	
Training materials	37
Presentation materials	53
<b>Database Management Applications</b>	
Names, addresses, and phone numbers	53
Employee benefits	30
Medical records	38

*“I don’t know how to use it. No training, no money, no time. But, if computer training was available, I’d find the time.”*

While many directors reported that spreadsheet and database functions were outsourced or performed by other departments within their organizations, they expressed an interest in learning how to perform these functions for themselves.

### Directors’ Computer Needs

Directors listed time, money, and training as the biggest barriers to their effective use of technology. Directors said they need assistance in many areas to become better administrators. Of the 150 directors who participated in this study, 46% indicated they needed hardware, 45% expressed a need for updated software, 58% indicated they needed more training, and 33% wanted technical assistance. While the need for additional support is still acute, these results show that the state of the field has improved somewhat since 1997 when 67% indicated they needed hardware and fully 94% of respondents expressed a need for training.

The results of this study confirm a strong need for upgrading the technological support directors receive. While directors have made great strides during the past three years in increasing their technological knowledge and skill to upgrade the administrative functions of their organizations, the lack of adequate hardware, software, training, and technical assistance continue to serve as obstacles to effective program management.

For more information about research conducted by the Center for Early Childhood Leadership, call (800) 443-5522, ext. 7703 or visit the Center’s Web site ([www.nl.edu/cecl](http://www.nl.edu/cecl)).

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