

finding new and meaningful goals might contribute to a deeper understanding of goal striving and positive development. Indeed, some researchers working in the area of life goals, not part of this publication, have already started addressing issues involved in adaptive goal reprioritisation (e.g., Brandtstädter; Carver & Scheier; Heckhausen & Schulz).

In sum, although preliminary in some ways, *Life goals and well-being* provides relevant insights into the adaptive value of people's goal orientations. It is an international publication and covers a lot of ground. It contributes to the growing body of literature in the area of life goals and points to some promising new avenues for future research.

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Morrell, Roger W. (Ed.) (2002). **Older adults, health information, and the World Wide Web.** Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc. ISBN 0805838414. 208pp. \$49.95 (hbk)

This 14-chapter book is based on talks at the same-named first national conference (which explains a part of the kaleidoscopic nature of the volume) held 1999 in Bethesda, Maryland, and hosted by the SPRY Foundation. The title already conveys the book's aims: reporting on the target group (older adults), the content (health information), and the medium (the World Wide Web, WWW).

Conceptually, the book is divided into four sections. The first section provides an overview of elders' WWW usage. The first two chapters come closest to the theme of the book title: Wetle elucidates the need for accessible and quality health information for senior citizens (Chapter 1). It describes how the National Institute on Aging (NIA) zooms in on the topic and supports it, with its emphases on elderly individuals' computer learning for extending employability, reducing social isolation, providing health information, modifying health behaviours, and conducting consumer activities. This is illustrated by several of NIA's initiatives. Lindberg outlines the projects of the National Library of Medicine for health information access (Chapter 2). Morrell, Mayhorn, and Bennett provide an in-depth view on older adults' WWW usage, including short discussions on the potentials and privacy concerns of technology, the digital divide ("the socioeconomic and demographic division that exists between individuals who use computers and those who do not", p. 51), and miscellaneous barriers to PC use and Internet access (Chapter 4). McConatha, in Chapter 3, contributes in a way quite different to other writings in the book: in a first strand he discusses models of and evidence about personal control, social isolation and support, well-being, person-environment fit, technology, and life-long learning theories. As a second strand, distance learning modalities and open learning systems are scrutinised. In a synthesis of these building blocks, McConatha offers a new "E-quality theory" and ways to evaluate it. The

theory basically states that successful ageing can be promoted by incorporating e-learning; the potentials of technology transcend age-related boundaries on control, social support, and the like.

The second—and most homogeneous—section of the book focuses on age-specific web design issues. Echt presents a review of empirical evidence meant to aid the construction of screen-based visual presentations, followed by concrete guidelines to achieve age-adequacy on the web (Chapter 5). Whereas Echt's chapter focuses on vision, Mead, Lamson, and Rogers employ a human-factors approach in Chapter 6. Their *user-centred design* procedures involve organisational goal setting with the assessment of user profiles (regarding age, they mainly discuss cognition, perception, and movement control) and user tasks, prototype construction, evaluation, and final re-design(s). Mead et al. also offer a number of useful web design principles. Holt and Morrell concentrate on the cognitive aspects of WWW usage in Chapter 7. All three chapters of this section have been thoroughly researched. They make up a useful threesome for website construction at both the novice and the advanced web-builder level.

This practical section with empirically well-grounded advice for web design is followed by a third section on current real-life examples of Internet usage by older adults. Lansdale describes the Northern Californian Linking Ages programme, with its aims and theoretical underpinnings (Chapter 8). Participants were from different subgroups on the continuum of help: assisted living facility residents, a continuing care community (with both assisted and independent living, and a health care unit), and older adults living independently. The device used in all instances was a set-top box hooked up with a TV set. Training for both e-mail use and web navigation was conducted either by volunteers or in a train-the-trainer format. The chapter adds value by interspersed brief narratives from the programme participants and descriptions of past events, which are illustrative and enliven both the chapter and the section. An observation that deserves further exploration is conveyed in the statement that the "... benefit of the Linking Ages program is not only for those who become effective adopters and hands-on users of the technology, ..." (p. 143), but also for those with whom the social/communicational experience could be shared. The short Chapter 9 by Wooten, on the website of the American Association of Retired People (AARP), explains the decision-making process of what is being considered for WWW publication and how the quality assurance measures work, in line with AARP's policies. Even shorter, Chapter 10 by Benjamin on the Environmental Alliance for Senior Involvement offers a rough overview of its website and, especially, how senior volunteer opportunities are provided. The next chapter on service access features profiles of six Internet ventures by the Community Service & Outreach Unit of the West Virginia University Center on Aging. Holt also introduces a helpful categorisation scheme for long-term-care websites in Chapter 11. Hsu and Deering describe healthfinder.gov and ways of website evaluation in Chapter 12. The precise procedures of evaluation become quite transparent because they depict the healthfinder.gov evaluation process by four modalities (focus groups, think-aloud interviews, an expert review, and bounceback forms). Hsu and Deering conclude with a number of data-driven recommendations for website design, derived from these findings. Finally, Baum and Yoder

present "Senior Support OnLine" (Chapter 13). This venture started as an attempt "to establish a network of "virtual long-term care" to serve the needs of the frail elderly ..." (p. 189). To provide support and services such as transportation, health care access, or entertainment to frail-but-independently-living elderly, three advisory groups were formed (professionals, seniors, web designers). After hardware testing, a web TV device similar to the one used in the LinkAges programme was selected as most appropriate; some participants were also equipped with videoconferencing capabilities. Hard data are not yet available, but the first lessons learned coincide with observations made in other projects that started from scratch and involved modern communication technology with inexperienced elderly, particularly the high degree of labour intensiveness.

The book concludes with a single-chapter fourth section, authored by R.E. Morgan, Jr., the president of the SPRY Foundation (Chapter 14). Subtitled a "conference retrospective", the chapter provides essential information about the conference on which the book is based.

The title *Older adults, health information, and the World Wide Web* seems to be somewhat of a misnomer: (1) Health information, health information access, and the control of health information quality are not as much a focus of the book as one would anticipate from its cover; rather, the problems and potentials for older adults that are discussed pertain to the Internet itself, to its contents, and its accessibility. (2) It is not just the web that is being examined—various chapters, particularly noticeable in the third section, involve other communication technologies, particularly e-mail, as well as some usenet newsgroup or videoconferencing use. Written at a time when WWW is highly fashionable and the term "World Wide Web" is used synonymously with "Internet", it is sometimes hard to discern the differences.

Humans are biopsychosocial beings. This statement applies to computer-human interactions just as much as to human-human interactions. Some of the biological and psychological

issues have been discussed, but the very helpful guidelines on age-appropriate design are overshadowed by some thorough and well-meant scholarship that cannot fully evade the impression of focusing on mechanistic search-and-read phenomena in web usage, spreading out in an inductive fashion—and hence setting its own boundaries that compromise the realities of a multi-complex world. And where is the *social* side of things ...? There is a schism between the basic-to-applied applications in the area of web design in section 2, and the current usage of modern information and communication technologies that also involve a strong social component.

How long will it take until the book becomes obsolete? After all, why would chapter authors even mention the rapid pace of technological developments that drastically change the picture of what is presented today? In this regard, there seem to be few problems regarding the usefulness of the book into the mid-ranged future. Even if all the technology-based examples should become outdated, there still exists a critical mass of evidence derived from year- and decade-long basic research that will not disappear quickly.

Despite the heterogeneity of the different contributions, given its breadth of coverage, one does not get the impression of overly high fragmentation. Additionally, predictions are that this will not be a book that people peruse, but rather that readers will skim and select those chapters that fit their needs and interests best. For instance, the information an engineer might find useful is probably very different from the affinities of a cognitive psychologist. Overall, the book is not a "must-read", but a strong "should-look-into" for everyone interested in the topic of elders and their Internet usage. It will also be useful reading for web designers at any skill level, and for practitioners in all ageing-related disciplines that intersect with technology.

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