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# *Keeping Pace with Development Information: the 2000 Meeting of the EADI Information Management Working Group*

Sarah Cummings

## *INTRODUCTION*

The Information Management Working Group held its 25th consecutive annual meeting at the Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI) in Bergen, Norway, during 2000. This meeting, with the theme 'Keeping Pace With Development Information', was attended by some fifty information professionals who had travelled from all over Europe, and beyond, to discuss the current issues most affecting information for development. The Information Management Working Group, a working group of the European Association of Development Research and Training Institutes (EADI) is the European forum for discussing information for development.

## *GLOBAL COOPERATION AND GLOBAL DIALOGUE*

Introduced by Klaus-Peter Kalinowski-Jagau of the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), the keynote speaker was Anriette Esterhuysen, Executive Director of the Association for Progressive Communications (APC), and representative of SANGONET in South Africa. In her presentation, 'Global Cooperation and Global Dialogue in Development Research and Information', she argued that the nature of the research relations between North and South poses a dilemma. Many development actors in the South feel they are being used as 'research subjects' or 'case studies' rather than setting the agenda for international development finance and discourse. The way the research agenda is set, the dominance of Northern-trained researchers and paradigms, and the manner in which the research results are distributed effectively exclude the Southern researchers from the dialogue on development. Although information and communication technologies (ICTs) can facilitate horizontal dialogue, they are often used to extract knowledge which is then distributed on some Northern database, inaccessible to those in the South.

Anriette concluded by arguing that this process should be changed. Information cannot be static: it should be linked to

action to become knowledge. It is important to maintain critical thinking. The North and the South should set agendas together and build local content. In addition, capacity building should be based on work on the ground. Finally, small local collections, evaluated critically, are more important than giant gateways.

A second keynote speaker, Daniel Baudin, Executive Director of IBISCUS, provided a European view on these issues. He argued that attitudes need to be changed. Internet-based global networking should move away from centralized gateways and institutionalized hierarchies to networks of equal partners. To illustrate this, Daniel provided the example of the IBISCUS network, focusing on its research dissemination and capacity building activities.

## *KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT I*

On the second day, the programme started with the session 'What is Knowledge Management and What is it Not?' Svend Erik Lindberg-Hansen of the Centre for Development Research (CDR), Denmark, introduced the session, arguing that 20 percent of knowledge is in documents and 80 percent in the expertise of people. Does knowledge management represent a truly new approach or is it 'old wine in new bottles'?

Karl Kalseth, partner in NSI Konsult of Oslo and past Director of Information and Knowledge Management at Norsk Hydro, provided an overview of knowledge management. Karl Kalseth is a consultant, advisor, and coach for top management and librarians. Introducing himself as a 'knowledge gardener', he defined knowledge management as the principles and the processes that manage internal and external, explicit and tacit information in a business strategic perspective or to serve a specific purpose. One of the most significant characteristics is that a knowledge management strategy needs to come from top management. It is also strongly linked to the concept of a learning organization, namely an organization skilled at creating, acquiring and transferring knowledge and modifying its behaviour to reflect new knowledge and insights. Knowledge management calls for a new organizational design based on networks rather than hierarchies.

This presentation sparked a vigorous debate about whether knowledge management is a fashion with little content, whether it is the same as what has been done before but with more attractive packaging (old wine in new bottles), or whether it represents a real revolution in approach. The general consensus was that convincing top management of the value of knowledge management can only lead to the placing of higher value on the skills of individuals and on information itself, the building block of knowledge. Just as James Deane of Panos, at last year's meeting, had recommended that developing countries should increasingly value the 'knowledge in people's heads', so Karl outlined a way that this approach can be used to inform our work.

## *KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT II*

The second knowledge management session was moderated by Karl Kalseth. In it, two members of the Information Man-

agement Working Group outlined their institutions' approaches to knowledge management.

### *DANIDA*

Winnie Kongshaug of the Danish development agency, DANIDA, reviewed the experience of implementing a knowledge management strategy. The objective of the knowledge management strategy was to make practical use of knowledge through sharing and managing staff knowledge. It was designed to help overcome the problem faced by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs when all staff are moved to new posts at the beginning of September, aiming to exploit the knowledge they have acquired to allow the new appointees to continue their work without a difficult period when they are trying to get to grips with their new jobs and the facilities of the Ministry. A working group was established, comprising librarians, IT-staff, the head of the archiving department, a representative of the financial department, and others. The group started this September and aims to have drawn up its plans by December. The project components comprise: a one-day seminar to present knowledge management to the group running the project; identifying fields of activity; identifying which offices are working on the same issue in order to encourage cross fertilization; and the identification of 'communities of practice'. The working group will have completed the preparation in December with a discussion of knowledge sharing; how to encourage cooperation between individuals rather than competition; and development of a reward system for sharing knowledge. The knowledge management project itself will start at the beginning of next year (2001).

### *Oxfam*

June Stephen, Information Services Manager at Oxfam, made a presentation on knowledge management in Oxfam. Oxfam is a major UK development and relief charity with 120 offices around the world. In 1998, a Fundamental Review of Strategic Intent recognized the increasing importance of effective knowledge management. A Knowledge Management Programme was established in May 2000 and the Strategic Plan defined Oxfam as a 'learning organization'. For Oxfam, knowledge management is defined as creating, managing, applying and sharing (internally and externally) both explicit and tacit knowledge in order to 'make a difference' in overcoming poverty and suffering. The Knowledge Management Project is sponsored by a Director. There is a core group accountable for programme delivery with a larger reference group which acts as a 'community of practice'. Knowledge management is a priority at corporate management level with a budget of GBP 200,000 allocated over a three year period. It has been established as a 'core competency'. In addition, research has been commissioned on sharing knowledge with the South.

Three knowledge management activities are planned for the future as part of the Oxfam programme: analysis of the impact and scalability of existing initiatives as regards HIV/AIDS and land rights; knowledge mapping in humanitarian response work; and developing a knowledge management

strategy for Oxfam shop managers. June concluded that knowledge management takes time and energy. It must be integrated into daily work practice and performance. Senior managers must provide the example of a new culture.

### *XML/IDML*

Chris Addison, Director of OneWorld Europe, presented and discussed the new development of HTML (hypertext markup language) to XML (extended markup language). As a core member of the IDML (International Development Markup Language) initiative, he described its evolution. The presentation is available at 'News' on the website of the Working Group at <http://www.eadi.org/wg/information.htm>.

### *ELAND*

Johannes Kleinschmidt of the German Foundation for Development (DSE) and Daniel Baudin of IBISCUS, members of the core group behind the European Library Network for Development (ELAND), presented the initiative as it stands today, including the bibliographic search facility as it has been developed over the summer of 2000. The session also considered the plans to further develop ELAND, covering users, data types, and the position of the initiative in the evolving landscape of development information. Their presentation on ELAND 2000 is also available at 'News' on the website of the Working Group at <http://www.eadi.org/wg/information.htm>.

### *RETRIEVAL STRATEGIES*

This session was chaired by Sheila Allcock, Librarian and Information Services Manager at the International Development Centre, Queen Elizabeth House, at the University of Oxford, UK. Sheila is the editor of the Bowker-Saur guide to development information, published in 1999. She introduced the speakers who presented key resources in different subject areas.

Sarah Cummings of the International Federation for Information and Documentation (FID) reviewed electronic resources on women and gender. An overview of these resources had been made available to the meeting by Minke Valk and Henk van Dam of the Gender Resource Unit of the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT). Such a list is needed because a web search on 'women and gender' yields 21 million websites. Gateway sites, such as ELDIS, are very useful in this regard. Relevant websites can be divided into those concerned with women and those by women with an emancipatory or empowerment purpose.

Håkan Gidloff, Documentalist and System Librarian at the Nordic Africa Institute, Sweden, made a presentation on Africa-related Internet resources. Only a few years ago, most of the sources with information on African countries and topics were, with the exception of South Africa, situated in the North. During the last couple of years, a growing number of African countries have been connected to the Internet with many active Internet Service Providers enriching the Web with indigenous,

African produced information. Library and documentation professionals are playing an increasing role in developing tools for selecting and evaluating Internet resources in particular disciplines and subject areas. These tools and directories can be found at *A Guide to Africa on the Internet*, edited and maintained by Håkan.

Finally, Karen Lise Thylstrup of the Danish Centre for Human Rights presented websites on the topic of human rights.

### *EADI AND INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES*

This session featured a presentation by Thomas Lawo, the new Secretary General of EADI. He reviewed the current position of EADI since the move of the Secretariat from Geneva to Bonn at the end of 1999. Three persons currently work at the Secretariat, supported by a grant from the German government which is barely enough to support the core team. EADI currently has 350-360 members, evenly split between individuals and institutions.

The Information Management Working Group is the most active working group. Most of the other working groups only meet once every three years at the General Conference, although the Aid Policy and the Industrialization Working Groups are active in terms of publication. To listen to the views of the group convenors, a workshop is being convened on 1 December in Bonn to examine ways of revitalizing the working groups. All convenors are being invited to this.

To present the European view on the international development agenda, EADI has become involved in the World Bank's Global Development Network (GDN) and Global Development Gateway (GDG) initiatives. Thomas has also been an active participant in ELAND. At present, EADI has two pillars: Eland and the working groups. It was concluded that ICTs represent a key to EADI's future in the 21st century. Finally, Thomas thanked Chris Addison for support during his first year.

During the discussion, Thomas Lawo's presence at the meeting was welcomed. In previous years, Elaine Petitat-Coté was EADI's representative at these meetings and she had greatly supported the Working Group's activities. However, it was very welcome that the Executive Secretary should attend in person. From what he said, it was clear that the EADI Secretariat is pleased to learn from this Working Group and it may be possible to convince researchers in the other working groups of the value of information and information professionals. Finally, it was felt that EADI might have a structural weakness in that the most active individuals are the convenors of the working groups but that the Executive Committee makes the decisions. EADI should look for a way to integrate the active convenors into the management of the association in a structural way, otherwise, at a time of crisis, EADI may not be able to function effectively.

### *FROM INFORMATION TO IMPACT*

This session was chaired by Kate Toft Madsen of the Centre for Development Research (CDR).

### *The Impact of Social Science Research*

This paper was presented by Inge Tvedten of the Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI). He argued that social scientists and documentalists working on development issues produce and manage large quantities of written material every year. 'Does what we do matter?' Inge considered this rhetorical question by reflecting on the important relationship between producers and users of knowledge. The power of knowledge is closely related to the power of the individuals and institutions having access to it. He considered the challenge of making our work relevant and accessible to decision makers in the South. Using his own experience from Angola, where relevant social science information is practically inaccessible, and Namibia, where such information is in abundance, he argued for the importance of institutional cooperation between South and North. The closer the research output is to the people concerned, the more likely it is that the voices of those in the South will be heard.

### *ID21*

Isabel Vogel of ID21 at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), UK, presented some preliminary ideas on the design of an online feedback methodology modelled on focus groups, with the aim of eliciting feedback and comments from colleagues. ID21 has been communicating development research to a global audience of policymakers for over three years. However, despite the increasing uptake of ID21 and similar services, evaluating the ways in which this type of information feeds into policy processes remains elusive. Isabel first discussed the background to assessing the impact of information projects, followed by a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of the focus group approach. Finally, some of the methodological challenges involved in designing an online feedback tool were outlined. Information services, researchers and funders alike need to find ways to assess the impact of research on the policy process; validate research by assessing how research findings have been applied; and identify gaps in research knowledge from a decision maker's point of view.

### *KEEPING UP WITH NEW DEVELOPMENTS*

This session, chaired by Sarah Cummings, covered changes which have been taking place within the Working Group's own organizations and networks, with an extra focus on the host region, Scandinavia. It was completed by a Open Forum in which informal presentations were made of the situation in a few countries.

Helle Leth Moller of the Danish MS (NGO) Library made a short presentation on NorDoc, the informal and unstructured Nordic Countries Development Librarian Network. She was followed by Anja Møller Rasmussen of the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who reviewed the activities of the new Danish international committee just started to investigate development research, particularly the DANIDA-funded parts, as follow-up to the newly drafted Danish strategy called Partnership 2000.

Next, Gerard van Westrienen of the Centre for International Research and Advisory Networks (CIRAN), part of the Netherlands Organization for International Cooperation in Higher Education (NUFFIC), presented the Indigenous Knowledge Network and PRISMA, the Netherlands gateway to development related research and higher education. He was followed by Håkan Gidloff, who described the new initiative 'Africanists in the Nordic countries'. He was then complemented by Gerard who explained the role of the 'Africanists in Europe' directory and possible cooperation with the Information Management Working Group.

These formal presentations were then followed by short reviews of the situation in Ireland (Sally Corcoran of the Development Studies Library, Dublin), the UK (June Stephen), the Netherlands (Sarah Cummings), and France (Danielle Bouhajib).

## THE BUSINESS MEETING

### Goodbyes

Svend Erik Lindberg-Hansen began this part of the meeting by asking for recognition of Sheila Allcock as this may be her last attendance at the Information Management Working Group Meeting. Sheila was a past convenor and had been a regular participant. The participants all wished her well and hoped to see her again sometime in the future.

### The Convenorship

Two of the co-convenors, Klaus-Peter Kalinowski-Jagau and Sarah Cummings, had resigned with immediate effect although they would still be active participants in the reporting of the meeting. During the conference dinner on Thursday evening, Svend Erik Lindberg-Hansen thanked them for their work during the past years and offered a farewell present. June Stephen and Daniel Baudin are going to fill their places. Daniel will become the Convenor, and Svend Erik Lindberg-Hansen and June Stephen will be co-convenors.

### Next Year's Venue and Timing

Possible venues for next year's meeting included Dublin, Oxford and Bordeaux. Bordeaux was the preferred venue as it would mark the creation of an Aquitaine Group on Development Information and would recognize the growing participation of the Francophone members of the Working Group. There was a general preference for next year's meeting to take place in the second week of September before the return of students from the summer holidays for those working in university libraries. A pre-meeting seminar was not felt to be desirable. The meeting should last three days as this one had done and not two which was also considered.

### Reporting

This year's proceedings would be published in the journal *Information Development* as happened in previous years. Other journals would be approached to publish the short ver-

sion of the report. An electronic version would appear on Euforic as happened in previous years. Sarah Cummings would be coordinating the reporting.

Somewhat belatedly, the 1999 proceedings would appear as a special issue of *Information Development* (December 2000). Short reports had already appeared in the *INASP Newsletter* and *FID Review*.

### Thanks

Svend Erik Lindberg-Hansen thanked Kirsti Hagen Andersen and all members of the CMI Library for the organization of the meeting. All agreed that the meeting had been superbly organized with excellent facilities and smooth logistics. Not only had the meeting been well organized but all members of the Library had been very friendly and welcoming, responding positively to all requests for access to e-mails, telephones and faxes. Social highlights included the wonderful conference dinner and the tour of the fjords after the closure of the meeting. CMI was also thanked for hosting the meeting. Klaus-Peter Kalinowski-Jagau added thanks to CMI and Kirsti Hagen Andersen, in particular, for funding and help in organizing the attendance of the excellent keynote speaker from South Africa. Thanks, too, in this regard to the Norwegian Embassy in South Africa. Finally, Daniel Baudin asked for a vote of thanks for Svend Erik Lindberg-Hansen in recognition of his convenorship of the group over the past three years.

### Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Svend Erik Lindberg-Hansen, Klaus-Peter Kalinowski-Jagau, Kirsti Hagen Andersen and Winnie Konshaug for their contribution to the final version of this report. She would also like to thank Svend Erik Lindberg-Hansen and Klaus-Peter Kalinowski-Jagau for their friendly and fruitful cooperation over the past three years. In particular, she would like to thank Bowker-Saur, publishers of *Information Development*, for providing financial support for her participation in the meeting.

### Abstract

Provides an overview of the proceedings of annual meeting of the Information Management Working Group of the European Association of Development Research and Training Institutes (EADI), which took place on 6-9 September 2000 in Bergen, Norway. The theme of the meeting was 'Keeping Pace with Development Information'. The sessions covered: global cooperation and global dialogue; knowledge management in theory and in development institutions; XML/IDML; ELAND; retrieval strategies; EADI and international initiatives; information impact; and new developments. Includes a personal view of the proceedings by Sheila Allcock, Librarian and Information Services Manager, International Development Centre Library, UK.

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### *A PERSONAL VIEW*

*Sheila Allcock*

I have been asked to write an unofficial report of this meeting to complement the official rapporteur's account. This is a subjective view of one person's reactions to the event. I have been involved with the EADI Information Working Group since 1979 and this will probably be the last meeting that I am able to attend.

Highlights of the first day for me were the welcome from CMI's Director, Gunnar Sorbo, who really seemed to be aware of the role of the Library both in the Institute and in its partnerships and the thought-provoking address from the South given by Anriette Esterhuysen from South Africa. She is the Executive Director of APC 2 – South Africa and gave us an analysis of the key problems as she sees them of dominance by researchers and academics from the North. Local knowledge is used as 'raw material' to fit into pre-conceived theoretical paradigms, and even South-South dialogue is often mediated by northern institutions.

In my opinion the theoretical session on knowledge management on the morning of the second day was not as relevant to the participants as the concrete case studies given by Winnie Kongshaug of DANIDA and June Stephen of Oxfam. In the afternoon there were some useful practical sessions, given by members of the Working Group, but I began to feel a sense of *dejá vu* during some of the discussions about information retrieval, keywords and thesauri. Svend-Erik Lindberg-Hansen's phrase of 'old wine in new bottles' seemed particularly apposite.

On the third day it was good to hear from the new EADI Executive Secretary, Thomas Lawo, that the Working Groups and Convenors will have a greater impact on the decision making process in EADI, and I was pleased that he was an active participant in all our sessions. The 'holy grail' of proving that information has an impact on successful development was pursued later that morning, but it remains remarkably difficult to prove the existence of such an impact to potential funding organizations. In the afternoon we had descriptions of new developments in different countries, and a remarkably expeditious business meeting.

I shall remember Bergen for the contrast between the elements (i.e. the driving rain) outside and the welcome inside. The programme ran like clockwork, and the shuttle bus between the hotels and the CMI was always on time, as were the sessions. I suspect that the knowledge that we had to get a bus at a certain time concentrated the minds of contributors to debates, and I recommend this policy to those planning future conferences! The coffee breaks had the best choice of food of any EADI conference I can remember, including fresh fruit, often in short supply at conferences. The conference dinner, with Norwegian food including reindeer, very tender, was a highlight. The return through the Bergen monsoon to the hotels certainly sobered us up after the drinks we had consumed!

We mistakenly thought that this weather was exceptional, but the following evening the monsoon was repeated, and the excursion Norway in a nutshell, which many of us took on the Saturday, was also very wet. Despite this, we were able to appreciate the grandeur of the mountains and fjords, although some people found the bus trip to a vantage point up a winding road with a sheer drop on one side to be rather too exciting.

As regards the conference itself, I think that the relevance of most of the sessions was because we had speakers from amongst our ranks – people who actually work in libraries and information centres. I hope those planning future conferences will look to home-grown talent for speakers in 'how-to' sessions, as well as outsiders to stimulate debate. I am pleased to go out on a high note, and especially happy to know that the baton can be passed to the safe hands of new, young, enthusiastic convenors for at least the next 25 years.

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