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The EADI Information Management Working Group: the state of the art

The Information Management Working Group of the European Association of Development Research and Training Institutes (EADI) is the only European meeting place for information professionals concerned with international cooperation and development research.

Svend Erik Lindberg-Hansen and Sarah Cummings

INTRODUCTION

The Information Management Working Group is the European forum for reflection, discussion and action on development information. Its members comprise librarians, information managers, documentalists and other professionals concerned with development information. Since the mid-1970s it has held annual meetings to discuss important issues in this field, to network with each other, and to engage in joint projects and other activities. It is one of the constituent working groups of the European Association of Development Research and Training Institutes (EADI), an independent, European-wide, non-governmental organization concerned with development research and training. This article will review the nature of the Information Management Working Group to serve as a background document for newcomers to the group and for existing members. After describing the members, annual meetings, themes and projects, the parent association, EADI, is briefly examined, together with the status of the Information Management Working Group within EADI. Finally, other networks focusing on development information are briefly listed.

The 1999 *Human Development Report* from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has a table in which it describes the 'flow of information'. The so-called knowledge society is represented by indicators, comprising the number of telephones, personal computers and Web-connected computers. No statistics on data, information and knowledge are given, probably because such things are more difficult to collect. The 1998 *World Development Report* from the World Bank also focused on knowledge and information. Both of these reports are indicative of the way that these issues are now at the top of the international development agenda. For members of the Information Management Working Group this offers a new opportunity to influence researchers and policy-makers concerned with development.

THE WORKING GROUP

The Information Management Working Group is one of EADI's constituent Working Groups and the most active, as it holds

regular annual meetings. These are organized by the convenors in cooperation with other members of the group. When EADI, the parent association, is holding a General Conference, as it does once every 3 years, the group arranges sessions there. In between the General Conferences, the group also holds 3 days of meetings, hosted by one of the member institutions. At these meetings, important issues facing development information in Europe are discussed and addressed.

The Members

A revolving group of some 50–100 information professionals attend working group meetings. These individuals are key to the continuing success of the group. The amount of regional and national representation at annual meetings varies considerably depending on where the meeting is being held. In total, there are some 120 professionals who are sent an invitation to the meeting. News of the annual meeting and its proceedings are also circulated to encourage others to participate. Many of the regular members are not themselves members of EADI but all are welcome. One of the reasons for this is that some regular participants are not from specifically 'development research' or 'development training' institutions. Instead, they come from development aid donors and development NGOs, making it more difficult for them to join an association with the official pure 'development research' focus. However, all participants, whatever their affiliation in terms of EADI membership, are welcome in the Information Management Working Group.

Members of the group are information professionals. They are generally documentalists, librarians and information managers from smaller, specialized institutions. In fact, many *are* libraries in the sense that they represent one-woman and one-man libraries. Others are employed by large development institutions with substantial collections. Despite these differences, all these institutions are operating in a general environment of the explosive growth of online accessible information. The rapid growth in information and communication technologies (ICTs) has not only affected the way library collections are documented and accessed but also affect the ability of these professionals to make contact with user groups and fellow professionals in the South.

A library represents a controlled collection of documents but it is necessary to consider who is in control. In the long-term, it is the librarian who is in control and not everything has changed: the traditional virtues of the profession of librarian still exist. A survey undertaken by Sarah Cummings (1998) indicates that some librarians, particularly in those countries where funding is in short and changing supply, do feel under pressure. The comments 'when you start enjoying the chaos, go to therapy' and 'pass the Prozac' were light-hearted comments on serious difficulties of adapting to the new environment.

Despite the difficulties facing certain sectors in certain countries, it is important to remember the resources that members of this group have at their disposal. Together, the group's collections contain more than 1 million bibliographic records, 20,000 organizational profiles, more than 10,000 project profiles and more than 100,000 web pages. These figures represent the joint collections, based on 1998 estimates. Since 1998, these

four datasets, particularly the last one dealing with web pages, have grown explosively. These statistics underline that the Information Management Working Group is much more together than just the mere addition of its joint collections, even if these figures do represent a large number of duplicate records.

It is important to bear in mind that the Information Management Working Group is a 'working group' and needs to 'work'. Once a year, the group meets professionally and socially. This is a good opportunity to get a first-hand impression of the various libraries, collections and the local environment. In between the meetings, the ELDIS discussion list (see below) is used to keep in touch, and the various communications are also placed on the EADI Bulletin Board. In many ways, the group is very informal. As part of EADI, the group is also part of the wider European community of researchers and institutions concerned with development. As an example of the group's working style, participants changed its name at the 1997 meeting from 'Information and Documentation' to 'Information Management'. This started much discussion of democracy within the group.

Annual Meetings

The Information Management Working Group has held consecutive annual meetings for more than 20 years. The 1999 meeting in Paris was the 24th. Paris is the favourite location for the annual meetings: the group has been there 3 times. A summary of the meetings held in the past 14 years is as follows:

- 1999 Paris, France, General Conference
- 1998 Geneva, Switzerland, hosted by the University Institute for Development Studies (IUED)
- 1997 Paris, France, hosted by IBISCUS
- 1996 Vienna, Austria, General Conference
- 1995 Brighton, UK, hosted by the Institute of Development Studies (IDS)
- 1994 Barcelona, Spain, hosted by the Centre of International Relations and International Cooperation (CIDOB)
- 1993 Berlin, Germany, General Conference
- 1992 Tilburg, the Netherlands, hosted by Tilburg Development Research Institute
- 1991 Paris, France, hosted by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)
- 1990 Oslo, Norway, General Conference
- 1989 Ljubljana, hosted by CICD
- 1988 Geneva, Switzerland, hosted by IUED
- 1987 Amsterdam, the Netherlands, General Conference
- 1986 Brighton, UK, hosted by IDS.

As the list shows, in this period IUED and IDS appear twice as hosts of the annual meetings.

Themes

Over this 14-year period, many of the same subjects have been discussed. Seminar themes have been reflected in changing titles from year to year. The titles tend to be smart and flashy but, looking back through the proceedings, it is possible to get more of a sense of what was going on. First of all, the thesaurus

theme has recurred through the years and this is not surprising given the international group. It has been an 'enfant terrible' and it is still with us. Computerization of libraries and information work has not changed this. On the contrary, the need is even greater than ever.

The information cycle, often in disguise, has been with the group in one form or another for many years, since its introduction by Jean Tiffet in Barcelona (with probably the most complicated overhead presentation which has ever been seen). In fact, at the 1999 meeting, it was again being discussed in the session on the 'impact and dissemination of information and knowledge' in which Anja Møller Rasmussen and Carol Priestley made presentations.

The need for cooperation and the difficulties intrinsic in this cooperation are other recurrent themes. We have all now realized that we cannot go it alone and that we, as information professionals, need each other, but cooperation has many hazards attached. Related to this, a further recurrent theme has been cooperation with the South which was also discussed again at the 1999 meeting. Both the cooperation and information cycle themes were embedded in the Semi-Plenary session which took the World Bank's *World Development Report* as its starting point.

Each meeting aims to have a workshop component that provides training and the opportunity to network and develop links. There are also more formal, conference-style sessions which promote information and opinions in a more traditional manner. The aim of such sessions can also be to encourage members to start new initiatives: to create a 'force' to do the 'task' which has been identified. It is important here to remember the statement in *The Economist*, namely that the Internet is not a 'dominant technology but a network of people'. The 'community' aspect is important to remember when looking at the Working Group, too.

The Convenors and Others

The convenors are important to the group. The present team comprises Svend Erik Lindberg-Hansen of the Centre for Development Research (CDR), Denmark as convenor. He is complemented by three co-convenors, namely Sarah Cummings of the International Federation for Information and Documentation (FID), Klaus-Peter Kalinowski-Jagau of German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) and Christian Lalonde of IBISCUS, France. Christiane was added to the team to help in the coordination of this meeting because she is located in Paris, and she does not plan to continue after this meeting at the EADI 1999 General Conference has taken place. The team of convenors currently comprises four persons, representing or trying to represent members in different geographically regions: Svend Erik for Scandinavia, Sarah for the UK and the Netherlands, Klaus-Peter for the German-speaking countries, and Christiane for Francophone and Southern Europe. This representation is rather informal and mainly consists of encouraging input from these areas when canvassing themes to be examined at the meetings and also trying to ensure sufficient representation of the group among speakers and chairs of sessions. Despite the existence of one 'convenor' and three 'co-convenors' or 'co-cos',

the actual difference between these roles is more of a formality than a strong distinction.

For the convenors, Information Management Working Group activities do not take place only at the annual meeting. Instead there is an annual cycle of activities, culminating in the annual meeting. For the group of convenors, the support of their institutions is necessary, not only for the travel budget but also for the time it takes to organize and run the annual meeting. In the autumn, after the meeting has taken place, a preliminary report of the meeting is placed on ELDIS and on the EADI Bulletin Board. Full reporting, including publication of the various papers, is also a continuing process. In the spring, a meeting is held to plan the following year's meeting. From the spring to the summer, there is continual email traffic trying to beg, urge, force, and cajole speakers and presenters into 'being part of it' (incidentally the title of the 1998 meeting in Geneva). In addition, the convenors have a host of practical jobs to do, including nursing people and projects and keeping in touch with the EADI Secretariat. This working group has long been seen as a key group to the EADI organization as a whole as it is the most active and the only one to hold regular annual meeting in between the general conferences. As a result of this, Elaine Petitot-Coté, Deputy General Secretary while the Secretariat was based in Geneva, was a frequent and committed participant at the group's meeting.

The current team of convenors took over in 1997, although Svend-Erik was a co-convenor before this date. Other past convenors who remain crucial to the group include Kirsti Hagen Andersen of the Christian Michelsen Institute (CMI), Norway, who was convenor for the decade 1984–94 and Jacques van Laar of the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM), the Netherlands, who was convenor during 1994–98. Sheila Allcock of Queen Elizabeth House, Oxford University, and Anna Borrull of CIDOB, Spain, are also past convenors and influential members of the Group. In addition, Chris Addison of OneWorld Europe, a key participant of the Working Group, has been a member of the EADI Executive Council since 1998.

PROJECTS

In addition to the activities of the convenors, task forces have occasionally been established in order to undertake certain projects. These projects have involved cooperation with the Working Group as well as those which have involved other agencies. Some example of these are presented below.

IDIN

The International Development Information Network (IDIN) was started in 1976 as an initiative of the Inter-Regional Coordinating Committee of Development Associations (ICCDA) to stimulate the circulation of social science information between regions and to promote regional and inter-regional cooperative research in support of the development process. Members of the Working Group were very much involved in this project.

From 1976–86 the OECD, in close cooperation with ICCDA

members, undertook the updating of global databases on research institutes, ongoing research, and publications. As a result, several directories have been jointly published and training provided to information officers from ICCDA member associations. After a first evaluation of results done in 1984, it was decided to initiate the decentralization of IDIN activities. Phase I (1988–1991), sponsored by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) of Canada and the OECD, was geared to support strengthening of regional capacity in information management and to facilitate regional access to IDIN information. At the end of that phase IDIN was acknowledged by Julio Cubillo, the external consultant who evaluated the project, to be a

particularly crucial inter-regional mechanism for promoting and enhancing the circulation of information within the development community.

Support for a second phase (1992–1995) was approved by IDRC to allow each IDIN partner to undertake complementary inter-regional responsibilities within this decentralized network. The second phase of the network sought to decentralize the structure and define a division of labour between the regional organizations. This proved to be extremely difficult and activities ceased in 1994–95. Lack of funding forced the closure of this project. At the same time, new opportunities were opening up. Fortunately, the idea and the activity live on in several places. One of these is the International Development Information Exchange (INDIX) which contains much more than research projects and is available on the Web and the Development Activity Information CD-ROM. INDIX comprises a coalition of development aid organizations, including bilateral, multilateral and non-governmental agencies.

ELDIS

The next project which should be mentioned is the Electronic Development and Environment Information System (ELDIS), 'a gateway to online information on development'. This was started when staff at the British Library for Development Studies (BLDS) at the Institute for Development Studies (IDS) in Brighton, UK, began to organize systematically the rising number of electronically available resources about development and international cooperation on diskette, CD-ROMs, and mapping of discussion lists and bulletin boards. A yellow A4 format guide was prepared and proudly presented to our meeting in Barcelona in 1994, followed by a pilot project. For many, it became 'ELDIS the thing', an unforgettable phrase coined by John Lindsey which is still regularly used by Anna Borrull of CIDOB, a past convenor of the group. The service and its financing is still very much in place and to many it represents *the* global gateway on development. However, despite its success, it proved very difficult to get the work decentralized, but the project has been a success thanks to Peter Ferguson and his colleagues' central role.

ELDIS is now a knowledge-based gateway to online and print materials in the field of development and the environment, aimed at policy-makers, development workers in non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and academics. ELDIS is constructed

from four basic elements or types of data, currently (January 2000) comprising: 5,900 manually selected online documents; 3,300 organizational descriptions; 51,000 pages collected automatically from 100 selected WWW sites; and 120,000 book/article records.

ELDIS offers two main routes for finding information: issues guides and searching. In addition, 'today's highlights' offers a selection of materials on currently newsworthy subjects. These guides are useful if you want a general picture of a subject, or are not sure what you are looking for. Browsing these subject guides may also be a necessary complement to a search since the success of any search depends upon chosen search terms matching the terms used in the database.

There are four types of subject/geographical guides:

- Research themes comprise searches of the database for documents and organizations related to popular research topics, using search terms selected by the Editor.
- Research stories are guides to popular research topics, offering the Editor's selection of important documents and organizations, linked by explanatory text.
- Sectoral guides cover some sixty broad subjects including a list of major organizational level sources on the subject, simplifying the search for full text online documents. These guides are linked to a search page simplifying the search for print documents held in the IDS Library on the subject.
- Continent/country guides.

ELAND

The group's most recent initiative, the European Libraries Network for Development (ELAND), was for some time called 'Phase 2', based on the unstated and extremely confusing idea of ELDIS as 'Phase 1'. It aims to present and make available the joint collections of development information in Europe, and to link up with the rest of the world, particularly the South. Chris Addison is the coordinator of this project.

The ELAND project has four focus points, known as pillars. The first pillar is the common access point with a user interface. A pilot module for this already exists and a bid for funding has been submitted to the European Union by a consortium of ten partners of different sizes and from different countries. The second pillar comprises shared management of journals indexing. The Scandinavian information for development group, NorDoc, has been working on this and has a bid pending with DANIDA. Pillar three comprises the multilingual thesaurus which is in preparation. The fourth pillar is concerned with universal access or the 'Gateway to the South'. This pillar is at an earlier stage than the others and still requires much work. The activities for this project comprise an embryonic 'ELAND community', a broad group of data providers and information brokers to diverse development information needs.

The Task Group members met at the IDS in Brighton on 11th and 12th December 1997 and produced a project framework and initial programme of activities. A second meeting was held in Maastricht on 18 May 1998, producing a preliminary progress report and a note on future activities. Work in progress was demonstrated at the meeting, including:

- *Macrothesaurus* search interface
- joint serials/articles database
- standardized search screen
- multiple search tool bar
- report on document delivery
- power bar.

Subsequent meetings were held 1999 in Geneva and Amsterdam, leading to a clearer project vision. An outline plan for the thesaurus element of the project has been prepared by IBISCUS and geographical thesaurus by IUED. In 1999, ELAND was officially recognized as a project of EADI.

EADI

The Information Management Working Group's parent association, EADI, is an independent and non-profit making international NGO, founded in 1975. Its Secretariat has been based in Bonn, Germany, since February 2000. It is financed by its members' contributions and a grant from the German government. Membership presently includes approximately 200 institutions and 190 individuals in twenty-seven European countries.

EADI aims to promote development research and training activities in economic, social, cultural, technological, institutional and environmental areas. Its objectives are:

1. to generate and stimulate exchange of information between European scientists and researchers concerned with development issues
2. to promote interdisciplinary studies on specific themes, and encourage cooperation between researchers and institute members
3. to develop contacts with researchers from other regions of the world.

To meet these aims, members and non-members take part in thematic working groups (twenty-four groups in all) which organize conferences, seminars, research projects, and publish their results in the 'EADI Book Series'. Other publications include its academic journal, the *European Journal of Development Research (EJDR)*, and its *Newsletter* which are both published twice yearly (June and December).

Every 3 years, an EADI General Conference assembles more than 500 participants on global topics concerning development issues. EADI's 8th General Conference took place in Vienna, Austria, in September 1996. The 1999 Conference is taking place in Paris in September 1999 on 'Europe and the South in the 21st Century: challenges for renewed cooperation'.

The Wider International Network

EADI is part of ICCDA. ICCDA is composed of regional entities: the Association of Development Research and Training Institutes of Asia and the Pacific (ADIPA); the Association of Arab Institutes and Centre for Economic and Social Development Research (AICARDES); the Latin American Social Science Council (CLACSO); the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA); and the Organization for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa (OSSREA). In addition to strong links with its

ICCDAs partners, EADI works in close partnership with several electronic networks and forums, such as ELDIS, EUFORIC (Europe's Forum on International Cooperation), and OneWorld Online. In addition, EADI members and partners have been collaborating within EADI's working group on Information Management, to develop the project of a European virtual library specialized in development issues: ELAND.

The Information Management Working Group

It is probably fair to say that, despite being the most active EADI working group, the Information Management Working Group has often felt as a poor relation because it has been composed of librarians and information professionals and not researchers. This is in spite of the fact that the EADI Secretariat has increasingly recognized the importance of the group, symbolised by Elaine Petitot-Coté's work with the group for some years. One symptom of this poor relation status was the Information Working Group's difficulty in getting their speakers and ideas integrated into the main General Conference programme. Two factors, however, make it possible to be optimistic about the group's status in EADI: firstly, the group organized a successful semi-plenary on information at the 1999 conference, illustrating the EADI programme's willingness to accept input from the group; and secondly, two members of the group are now present on the Executive Council of EADI, Chris Addison as has been mentioned above but also Sally Corcoran of the Centre for Development Studies, Ireland. These individuals do not exactly represent the group on the Executive Council but they do ensure that the attitudes and approaches of the information professional will now be integrated into the EADI Executive Committee's deliberations. This trend, the acceptance if you like of information management perspectives into the EADI development research mainstream, is partly the result of the group's dynamism over a period of years but also of the increasing importance of information and knowledge to the development agenda as a whole.

Other Networks

The EADI network is not the only European network dealing with development. For example, the Development Studies Association in the UK is another, largely UK-based network but with some members in other European countries. The Development Studies Association was created in September 1977, 2 years later than the creation of EADI, at a foundation conference held at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London. As the website states:

Although the members of DSA Council are mainly based in the UK, a large proportion of our subscribers are from overseas and we do therefore regard ourselves as an international association.

The DSA's aims are to promote the advancement of knowledge on international development, disseminate information on development research and training, and encourage interdisciplinary exchange and cooperation.

The DSA hosts an annual conference early in September. The

venue changes each year; in 1999 it was held at the University of Bath and in 2000 it will be at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London. Also similar to EADI, it supports active study groups which cover a wide range of areas. Groups usually hold twice yearly meetings: once for a small conference or workshop, and then more informally at the annual conference. Related to the Information Management Workshop, with many common interests, is the Science, Technology and Development Study Group, chaired by Dr Richard Heeks of the Institute for Development Policy Management of the University of Manchester. This group covers all aspects of the relationship between science, technology and the development process, including appropriate/intermediate technology; technological innovation, transfer and impacts; new technologies; science and technology education and training; and science and technology policy. In the 1980s there was a specific group dealing with information and documentation but this has, at some point, been disbanded.

There are a number of other regional and national networks dealing with information management for development. These include the Informationsverbund Entwicklungspolitik (IVEP), an association for information on development policies in the German speaking countries of Germany, Austria and Switzerland. Another similar network is the Nordic Working Group for Documentation on the Third World (NORDOC), an informal group of Scandinavian professionals. At the national level, there is the Dutch Association for Information and International Development (VIIO) and the Information for Development Coordinating Committee (IDCC) and its related Information for Development Forum in the UK. Many of these groups have common members with the Information Management Working Group. Some of these as, for example is the case with VIIO and the IDCC, consider themselves to be the national wing of the Working Group, despite the lack of a formal link. There are a number of other European-wide groups, generally dealing with specific geographical regions. These include: the Network of Centres for African Studies (AEGIS), the Network on Latin American Information (REDIAL), and the South East Asia Libraries Group (SEALG).

CONCLUSIONS

The Information Management Working Group has been an active forum for European networking and deliberation on the subject of information for development. One of its key objectives for the future should be to enlarge and consolidate participation. As part of this, it is crucial to build the ELAND community, with more of the group's member institutions participating in this project. In addition, the group needs to reduce the barriers between research and information management so that the Working Group can be seen as a valuable and active participant in the EADI network. To date, the Information Management Working Group has been seen as the poor relation of EADI, despite the fact that it is by far the most active working group. Through the excellence of its programme and the dynamism of its members, the group needs to make it clear that it has a role to play within the association as a whole. There is no doubt that this role is increasingly being recog-

nized within EADI, aided by the increasing recognition of the importance of knowledge and information to the international development agenda, but it should be one of the Working Group's objectives to accelerate this trend. Finally, the group should remember the importance of face to face meetings and that virtual activity is not enough if a healthy group is to be maintained.

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Abstract

The Information Management Working Group of the European Association of Development Research and Training Institutes (EADI) is an important European forum for reflection, discussion and action on development information. Its members comprise librarians, information managers, documentalists and other professionals working with development information. Since the mid-1970s, it has held annual meetings to discuss important issues in this field, to network, and to engage in joint projects and other activities. It is one of the constituent working groups of EADI, an independent, European-wide, NGO concerned with development

research and training. This article reviews the nature of the Information Management Working Group to serve as a background document for newcomers to the group and for existing members. After describing the members, annual meetings, themes and projects, the parent association, EADI, is briefly examined, together with the status of the Information Management Working Group within it. Finally, other networks focusing on development information are briefly listed.

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MORE ON THE INFORMATION MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP

Europe looks south: meeting of the EADI Working Group on Information and Documentation, 10th-14th October, 1983 in Berlin.

Andrea Siemsen. *Focus on International & Comparative Librarianship*, 15 (1) 1984, 3-4.

Summarises events at a European Association of Development Research and Training Institutes (EADI) meeting held 10-14 Oct 83 in Berlin by the EADI Working Group on Information and Documentation (WG IandD). The WG IandD was established in 1975 to act as a task force on problems of documentation and information and to enable information exchange within EADI and also between the 4 regional associations: the Council for the Development of Economic and Social Research in Africa (CODESRIA); the Association of Development Research and Training Institutes of Asia and the Pacific (ADIPA); the Association des Instituts et Centres Arabes de Recherche pour le developpement economique et social (AICARDES); and the Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales (CLACSO).

Special issue on Information for development: the EADI Dossier.

E. Petitot-Cote. *FID Bulletin for Information & Communication*, 48 (3/4) May/Jun-Jul/Aug 1998, pp. 66-67.

Contribution to a special issue on 'Information for Development: the EADI Dossier'. The European Association of Development Research and Training Institutes (EADI) is an independent and non-profit international non-governmental organization founded in 1975 and based in Geneva, Switzerland. Discusses its membership, purpose and the activities of its Information Management Working Group.

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