



Global
CMIW
Community of Mission Information Workers

“Correct Me If I'm Wrong”

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What is a Mission Information Worker?

Chris Maynard

That is a good question. And here is another one: What is Mission Information Work?

When I came into this area in about 2005, I told people about my skills and experience with data and information. A few minutes later they called me a “researcher” and thought that I worked in “research”. I was surprised. I never worked in research in my 28-year career in computing and information!

Why does it matter? It is only a name! Yes, but I have a feeling that Mission Information Work needs more clarity. How many times have you found it difficult to explain what you do? Or to justify what you do? What unifies us? What separates us?



I have started a little project to create a “taxonomy” – a classification of mission information work and workers. At this point I am not sure how far I will get or exactly what will come out of it. But I have a feeling that it will be useful for ourselves to talk about what we do and to be confident of our value to the Church. God has prepared for each of us a unique life of good works for us to walk in (see Ephesians 2:10). What good works has God prepared for us in mission information?

In my secular work I often classified “Customers” or “Products”, but I think that Mission Information Work is a much more complex area. To help me explore it I have created a list of “dimensions of mission information” (17 so far), “types of mission information worker” (12) and “purposes of mission information work” (11).

Here are five of the “dimensions” that may make your work different from mine: “language focus”, “information approach”, “part of the information chain”, “churchmanship” and “security”. Maybe one of us deals with information about all languages, takes a technology approach to information, sits at the end of the information chain integrating data and analysing it, considers all Trinitarians to be Christian so includes Catholics and Orthodox in the data, and takes the security approach of the apostle Paul, rejecting underhand methods and sharing freely with everyone. But here is another information worker who is dealing with information about Arabic speakers only, thinks that people solve information problems (not computers), sits at the beginning of the information chain, gathering information first-hand on the field, is suspicious of anyone not born again by the Spirit of God and takes the security approach of the apostle John, writing very little, preferring to talk face to face and using code-words instead of actual names. Both are genuine mission information workers. They may need each other’s work, but are separated along five “dimensions”. Will they understand each other?

What about the “types” of worker? Are you the “global gatherer”, the “journalist”, the “librarian” or the “expert in your field”?

Is there a “purpose” to your work? Is it “matching resources to needs”, “scoping the task” or “inspiring action”?

These are only some examples. You can find out more by looking at my working document at http://www.globalcmiw.org/resources/taxonomy_of_mission_information_work_2013-10-14.pdf. Where do you work along each “dimension”? Have I missed you out?! And what are the “purposes” that God has stirred you to engage with? And (if you think it might be useful) can you help me improve on this?

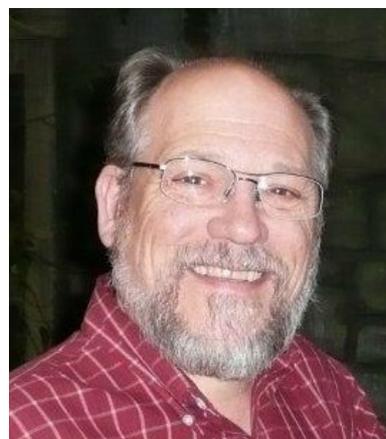
Shall we Dance?

Stephanie Kraft

Part II in an Exploration of the relationship between Information Workers and Media Ministries

In our July 2013 edition of the CMIW, we began a discussion about the connection between Christian media and missions information. We had noted that many names on our bulletin distribution list were associated with outreach through old (i.e. print, radio, TV) and new (Internet-based) media. We wondered why this might be, and what future good might come of it.

We took a next step and asked Rich Lackey, worker with Pioneers and involved in the Media Working Group of the North Africa Partnership, some questions about his perception of this relationship and how it might be developed for mutual benefit.



1. [CMIW] **Rich, can you tell us about your experiences with information workers in your ministry?** [RL] I know a few people who identify themselves as information workers, and I may know others who have not identified themselves specifically in this way. I have used information provided by people who do research on unreached and unengaged people groups, (IMB and Vision 5:9). When I make a strategic decision, I may consult with people who have data and with whom I have a personal relationship.

2. [CMIW] **Reflecting on these experiences, what were some positive outcomes? Some frustrations?** [RL] I haven't had frustrations. I have benefited from things information workers outside my organization are doing.

With members of our own media department, or people we partner with, we occasionally do internal surveys of our different constituents. For example, we recently surveyed all the media workers in our department, workers in the region, mobilization base staff and some external partners such as donors. It was good to get viewpoints other than just our own. Having a broader base of input adds different perspectives and insights.

3. [CMIW] **If you could influence information workers in some way, how would you do it?** [RL] I would say to them, please share what you're doing in case what you're doing is influential to future strategies and scenarios, or if we can be helpful to you.

4. [CMIW] **If you could influence your media colleagues to partner with information workers, what would you say?** [RL] This is a broad question. So very often it feels like we're shooting in the dark to hit a target. We repeatedly try to tell media people that everything we do needs to have a response mechanism but, particularly with old media, we often don't have a clue as to who takes in what or how to follow them up. I'm sure there are things we can do to gather information that we don't do. Our work is potentially less effective than it could be. Media people are always trying to do something new. We innovate, send out a report, and then we're done with that idea. Perhaps information workers could help us improve our impact. In fact, we could use their help from the start, assisting us to set things up the right way so that evaluation can happen.

Also, there's the whole qualitative thing that we don't really invest time in. I think we often measure the wrong things. What and how we measure need to be built into what we're doing. We have few standards in our media measurements and interpretation. Yes, there are industry

standards, but they are not totally applicable. For example, there are the Barcelona principles, which are applied to public relations measurements, but the principles for ministry may or may not be the same.

5. [CMIW] **Is there anything you'd like to say to our community?** [RL] You can help us in the interpretation of industry standards for media activity, or help us create a re-statement of industry guidelines. Some of this would mean re-purposing current standards. In the ministry world it can be a free-for-all, which makes it impossible to compare things. It might also mean the creation of new standards. For example, what counts as a "contact?" An individual? An event? A bi-directional event? Or is what one group calls a "bi-directional event" called "two contacts" by another? Missed phone calls? SMS messages? What are we/they counting? Media people potentially resist this standardization, but eventually people could partner with information workers to do this in a helpful way.

It would also be beneficial to receive assistance to be able to do our own research. Currently it's just doing the best with what we do. Then there's the question "How do we apply it?" "What does it mean?" How do we draw the relevant conclusions? We could use help with the analysis of data we gather about our work.

Does anyone resonate with what Rich has said? Let's get out on the dance floor and take a turn with some of these ideas.

See you there

Budgets, carbon footprints, and our families all encourage us to travel less. Our CMIW vision statement recognizes that most of the functioning of our community will happen remotely. We also recognize that there is nothing like a face-to-face meeting to strengthen a relationship and create the opportunity for a spark of a good idea to ignite.

A member of our task force will be present at the following meetings*:

NEI (November 2013)
APC (November 2013)
GMC2013 (December 2013)
NAP (January 2014)
MEMPP (January 2014)

If you too plan to attend and would like to share a meal or just chat over coffee with someone from our community, please drop us a note at cmiw@worksmail.net. We'll arrange a face-to-face get together, if we can.

** Please forgive the cryptic nature of this invitation. Many meeting organizers prefer as little public exposure as possible. We trust that if you are going, you will know the details.*

Who's Who in Missions Information

Special Profile: Chris Maynard

1. [CMIW] **Please tell us about yourself and your family.** [CM] My godly parents gave me a good start in life and praise God they are alive to this day. But I had to be rescued by Jesus Christ from a useless and irresponsible life at age 20. I have no education beyond high school and I was open to God sending me anywhere. I was certainly not looking for a career. But a good Christian woman called Judy became my best friend and eventually I asked her to marry me. God was still at work in me to get rid of that spirit of irresponsibility. So he made it very clear to me that I should take my new responsibilities seriously. I should provide for my family's



financial needs. This led me into a long career in Information Technology and Information Management. With his grace and his guidance I HAVE provided for my wife and for two lovely daughters who are now both in their late 20s.

2. [CMIW] **What is your current ministry?** [CM] In 1996 as my daughters moved towards independence (and with Judy's permission) I began to pray that God would send me. I made plans and God was gracious. In 2005 he sent me into global church information. What I learned in my career is now being put to direct use in the Kingdom. How wonderful is that! I have done some significant work with unreached people group lists and contributed (in a small way) to the books "Operation World" and "From Seed to Fruit". I have some current assignments with Global Church Planting Network and the Center for Mission Mobilization as well as long-term commitments to help on the taskforce of this Community of Mission Information Workers and with Operation World.

3. [CMIW] **What are the contributions you have made to world missions that have brought you the greatest satisfaction?** [CM] That is a hard question because, after 8 years, I feel I have only just started. The best satisfaction comes from seeing the fruit, and in information work the fruit takes time to mature and is difficult to see. When I was in Information Technology, success or failure would come within 2 to 6 months. When I moved to Information Management I found that success or failure would come in 2 to 6 YEARS. If my Master greets me with, "Well done, good and faithful servant" that will be satisfaction enough. And he will be able to show me the few little mustard seeds which I hardly noticed that grew into great trees. In the short term I get satisfaction from "pushing the data further". I believe I am beginning to show that we can get more help from existing data than we think, especially when deciding where to deploy global church resources. But maybe my greatest success has been in a kindness shown to another mission information worker. Maybe my greatest success is in representing OMCRS, a small Indian mission agency. God knows.

4. [CMIW] **What dreams do you have for your next ten years of ministry?** [CM] Where do I start? My life with God can be measured by my gradually increasing ambitions. When He rescued me I had none. Now I dream that the Lord of the harvest will send out many more mission information workers. I dream that we will work together better in mission information. I dream that we support the global church with good enough information to stimulate excellent deployment decisions. I dream that we use information to break down barriers in the Church. I dream that the world will be better evangelised and the Church better express the righteousness of God here on earth. I dream that I will have wisdom to perceive God, diligence to seek Him, patience to wait for Him, eyes to behold Him, a heart to meditate upon Him, and a life to proclaim Him through the power of the Spirit of Jesus Christ our Lord.

5. [CMIW] **Is there some way you'd be willing to help the CMIW community?** [CM] By God's grace I think I am doing what I can. If you think there is something else, you can email me at cmiw@worksmail.net.

Information from the Word

When the Pharisees were confused by what Jesus was doing he said to them, "Go and learn what this means" (Matt 9:13). God doesn't give us every answer easily. Sometimes He wants us to "go and learn" - to use our minds. We may have to go back to the Bible, or we may have to learn more about the real world situation. Sometimes we just need to think about it and pray. It may take some time. Is there something confusing you? Is God asking you to "go and learn" what something means?

Final Details:

- This bulletin is produced by the Community of Mission Information Workers Task Force comprised of Larry Kraft, Stephanie Kraft and Chris Maynard. Please send any suggestions of issues to discuss or any other ideas to "cmiw@worksmail.net".
- Editorial team: Stephanie and Chris; layout and distribution: Larry.