



“Correct Me If I'm Wrong”

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Community of Mission Information Workers

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You are the Data

by Stephanie Kraft

Before becoming a missionary, my husband was a chemist. We routinely got phone calls asking detailed questions about what kind of paint to put on copper downspouts, what was the best winter ratio of water to coolant for antifreeze, what adhesives were most suitable for bicycle tire patches, etc. etc. He was our area “expert.”



When we took our first assignment in São Paulo, our research department received inquiries from pastors, seminarians, and Haggai Institute candidates, among others, for contextual and institutional information on the Brazilian church to present in sermons, term papers, and country profiles. Even newspapers would call for our “authoritative” opinions. In these instances, especially for the secular press, we recognized that, along with the data, we were presenting ourselves as representatives of the truth about these issues.

We normally found these contacts to be enjoyable and affirming (although being asked to give a data dump to a procrastinating Bible School student did feel a bit conflictual 😞). They gave us opportunities to connect with old friends and make new ones. We were able to present facts and factors in nuanced ways, highlighting caveats, identifying underlying assumptions, and confessing uncertainty when we just weren't sure. These interactions often developed into the fibers of networks of information exchange that became more and more vital to us as we grew in our roles as missions researchers. They also made us feel pretty special, like we were in-the-know and that our opinions mattered. We became associated with the information we had collected and interpreted. In the minds of some, we (our characters, competence, convictions) had become the data.

We know that relationships in the Church are not unique in their capacity to serve as conduits of information exchange. After all, TIME magazine's 2006 Person of the Year was “You,” by which it meant to communicate that the informed contributions of ordinary folks everywhere, shared through social media and many other websites, had become a significant source of authority in the world. Data flows from individuals to and through networks all around us.

Daniel Dow of visionSynergy, in a recent KSKI (Knowledge Stewardship for Kingdom Impact)* post wrote:

So often, the missionary / agency model is to think about what we individually can do to advance the gospel. It is easy to take a solo "expert" view of the world. But this is changing. More and more, knowledge brokers and stewards simply don't have the reach or capacity to know and stay current with the flow of change, new information, shifting contexts etc. What we are seeing is the rise of the network and a growing reality that a knowledge steward is only as good / effective / relevant as their network.

In the light of these observations, in what ways might we grow as a community in our ability to deliver the best information into the hearts, heads and hands of those most able to transform it into action?

1. Is it good, or bad, that the acquisition of missions information is frequently tied to the ability to access a single person or organization? Is this a bottleneck? Or the reflection of a healthy preference to process data through relationships?
2. Is the age of the expert over? Will networks replace him or her? If so, what will the entry points to these networks be?
3. What can be done to nurture the call and equipping of gifted knowledge stewards, be they

subject-matter experts or big-picture generalists?

Please share your thoughts. We'd like to publish them for discussion in future bulletins.

Stephanie Kraft is a member of the Global Research Team of One Challenge and part of the CMIW Task Force.

* Note: To register for the KSKI community, please email nelson.jennings@gmi.org

Coming Soon!!! A Global Classroom on Research

by Larry Kraft

The Lausanne Movement has launched its Global Classroom Initiative, which is “a new tool designed to connect emerging evangelical leaders to key issues and ideas in global mission today.” This initiative is being led by Brent Burdick. Each episode includes video interviews with key people in a subject area as well as a study guide to go deeper. The material can be used in an academic setting, a mission-minded small group, or individually.

The first episode, on Diaspora Ministries, is already on line. The second will be about Research in Missions, and is due to go live shortly.

Where did Brent and his team find “key people” to talk about research? Those of you who participated in the 2015 Lausanne International Researcher's Conference in Kuala Lumpur may remember a crew of audio-videographers who were tucked away here and there, in corners, in meeting rooms, even in elevator lobbies, asking questions and recording responses of some of the researchers who presented papers. After the recordings were finished, editors poured through the transcribed responses and the Lausanne Classroom team identified central themes and current topics.

Why is the Community of Mission Information Workers excited about the Global Classroom on Research? We believe that good research can reveal things about the heart of God and the nature of man (a God who asks questions, and a creation that exudes order). We appreciate the relational foundations of research (listening before telling). We are convinced that research helps us to frame the past in order to plot a better way forward. Research reminds us that good data is important for wise decision-making. We see this Global Classroom initiative as a way to help the broader church better understand what information ministries are all about: what types of information can be/need to be gathered, by whom, and why it's important to do so.

As I preview the Classroom outlines, I believe that we can all learn a thing or two from these clips and texts. As we hear other mission information workers from around the world share their hearts, and as we study through the material prepared by the Classroom team, I think we may be surprised by how affirmed we feel in our work. The material will also be something we can share with our friends, prayer warriors and supporters to help them better understand the nature and value of what we are about in our day-to-day work.

I have enjoyed participating with the team working on the Classroom on Research. Please pray for the final selection of clips and the team doing the illustrations and video editing. There is so much material to choose from. To learn more, or to watch the first episode on Diaspora, go to:

<https://www.lausanne.org/lausanne-global-classroom/global-classroom>



We'll be sure to keep you posted as things move along.

A Frank Word about Languages

As you can see in our vision statement (www.globalcmiw.org/vision), we desire to be "a multi-cultural community... working to include non-English speakers." We hope not only to have great English-language research materials made available to speakers of other languages, but we wish to have speakers of other languages write great missions information material for all other members of our community.

We thank Word2All (www.word2all.in) for reaching out to us recently. They say, "We are a team of young motivated, theologically trained and dedicated persons who are using their skills to glorify the name of Jesus Christ... if you are looking for a translation agency to make your materials available in Indian languages, please feel free to contact us."

Might you be, or know of someone who is, interested in helping expand our community to include more speakers of other languages? Might you have the time to translate one or more of our bulletin articles into your mother tongue? Might you be willing to contribute articles to this bulletin about mission information ministries in your context and in your mother tongue?

If so, please get in touch (info@globalcmiw.org). We would love have your help as well as enhance your voice as you speak and write about what the Lord is doing in your context.

See you there!

Coming back again to our vision statement, we see ourselves as a community that "functions well remotely, including those who cannot travel, reducing travel of those who can, and supporting some face-to-face meetings."

It would be a delight if each of the 567 people on this distribution list could have regular, live conversations with the others. Recognizing the limitations of budgets, health and family needs, however, we imagine that will not easily happen this side of heaven. We can, though, encourage this to happen on a small scale as we purposefully make opportunities to catch each other as we travel. Here are two events* in the next twelve weeks at which some CMIW folks will be present:

- The GACX European Forum for Church Multiplication in Barcelona, Spain
- The (CEEAMS) Central and Eastern European Association for Mission Studies annual conference: Love, Live, and Delight – Conversations in Central and Eastern Europe on Present Day Documents and Commitments on Mission, Osijek, Croatia

Might either of these meetings also be in your plans? Would you enjoy a meal or coffee with another MIW while you're there? If so, drop us a line at info@globalcmiw.org and we'll connect you with others who write in.

** 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: Jason Mandryk

1. [CMIW] **Please tell us about yourself and your family.** [JM] I grew up in a fairly typical suburban Canadian family and home. I'm a textbook Canadian ethnic mongrel, with parents who both grew up on farms and became educators. Actually, both of my sisters became professors, and they both married professors. I am sort of the black sheep of the family in that sense!

I became a believer as I was finishing secondary school. That led to a sudden and unexpected transition to Bible College and subsequently seminary. During that time, God led me from simply wanting to learn about my faith to a calling to full time ministry, to a calling specifically to serve with Operation World. That was over 20 years ago now....

2. [CMIW] **What is your current ministry?** [JM] I'm still with Operation World! I have had a couple of opportunities to serve elsewhere during furloughs. I spent 2 years on OM's MV Doulos over ten years ago, and a year in OM's international office in Singapore more recently. This was a great experience, not just for the ministry exposure, but also to see how another agency functioned - Operation World has been docked with WEC International since 1979, so it has helped me see the contrasts and similarities between two wonderful organisations.

Although Operation World is in the midst of some major transitions, it is the ministry of the foreseeable



future for me.

3. [CMIW] **What are the contributions you have made to world missions that have brought you the greatest satisfaction?** [JM] Well, it is harder to outdo the contribution of Operation World to world missions! When I was searching for a ministry to be a part of, I hoped I might be called to some far flung corner of the earth among some unreached people group. That didn't happen, but I have had the chance to be a part of something that I believe HAS made a difference in the world. Virtually every conference, speaking engagement, etc., that I go to, I meet someone who was called into mission through reading or praying through Operation World. It's hard to beat that feeling if you talk about satisfaction; not many researchers get the chance to meet in person the positive outcomes of one's work. It is a joyful (but also sobering) privilege to be a part of that kind of mobilisation.



4. [CMIW] **What dreams do you have for your next ten years of ministry?** [JM] It is past due for Operation World to make a more pronounced shift into 21st century patterns and platforms. One of the challenges is that nobody – not in ministry nor in publishing nor in other media – has got this all figured it out. Additionally, accelerating technological and social change means that we are aiming at a very rapidly moving target. All we want to be able to do is find a sustainable way to keep informing, inspiring and mobilising God's people. Things like the OW app – coming out later this month, God willing – keep us moving forward in that direction.

It is rather intimidating to try to make these transitions while at the same time losing our base of operations (which was sold a month ago), while being severely understaffed, and while operating all the while out of a faith mission context in which we don't solicit funds, don't employ people, etc. But it is also an adventure of faith, and we serve a faithful God! The next ten years will certainly be interesting, and I believe Operation World can emerge as a more dynamic, more useful, more impactful ministry than ever.

5. [CMIW] **Is there some way you'd be willing to help the CMIW community?** [JM] I believe that doing the work of Operation World is in itself a significant contribution to the CMIW. It not only provides a lot of useful information, but raises the profile of information workers and research within the mission and prayer community. That being said, we would love to be able to draw upon the shared resources and knowledge of the CMIW to produce better data for OW, even while serving the CMIW by making available better information than ever. It seems like a win-win if we can serve one another – we do share the same overarching goals. So, the best way OW can serve CMIW is to be the best OW it can be – and vice versa.

Information from the Word

Three times the book of Proverbs praises the benefits of multiple counsellors and advisers: *"In an abundance of counsellors there is safety"* (11:14) and *"victory"* (24:6); *"with many advisers [plans] succeed"* (15:22). In conducting research for missions planning and decision-making, multiple people and organizations are important and even necessary. In addition to the Lausanne Global Classroom featured in this newsletter, what concrete examples do you know of *"multiple counsellors and advisers"* collaborating in mission research? How are you involved in such networks? As also described in this newsletter, how are you data for others, and who are data for you?

Final Details:

- This bulletin is produced by the Community of Mission Information Workers Task Force comprised of Larry Kraft, Stephanie Kraft, Chris Maynard & Nelson Jennings. Please send any suggestions of issues to discuss or any other ideas to ["info@globalcmiw.org"](mailto:info@globalcmiw.org).
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