NEEDS OF A MEMBER COUNTRY

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1. Introduction

A member of the IRRD scheme is constantly confronted with the
following problems:
- The necessary funds have to be available
- Personnel who are qualified to prepare the input and to disseminate
the output
- Sufficient users have to be recruited for a break even point.

The paper outlines what a member country could have done in the past
and could consider doing in the near future, taking The Netherlands
as an example.

2. Computerization and communication

Starting from the thesis that the amount of the output of the IRRD
of ca. 12000 items a year requires a more sophisticated method than
a peek-a-boo system can provide, computerization of the processing
of the IRRD has to be considered. This became a practical possibili-
ty in 1972, when the communication format tape (cft) was introduced
as an exchange medium in IRRD, if the necessary equipment and
finances were available.

In the Netherlands centres, as in many IRRD centres, no computer was
available on the premises and on-line connection for several hours
a day was too expensive.
A computer programme was therefore chosen by SWOV offering the
following batch processing facilities: SDI, retrospective search,
indexes (cumulative) of authors, affiliations, keywords and subject
classifications. Early in 1976 SWOV reached an agreement with the
Scandinavian IRRD-partners allowing on line access to the data base
in Sweden for two hours a day.

An IRRD member using the IRRD data base is likely to discover that
some of his requirements will not be met by IRRD. Partly because

some of his requirements are not within the scope of IRRD and
desired search terms are therefore not in the IRRD thesaurus and
partly because in some parts the working rules are not specific
enough and the cft, being a transfer format, does not always meet
the requirements of an available retrieval programme. An example
of experience of the limitations of the subject scope of IRRD in
The Netherlands is in the field of the post-crash phase of accidents.
As a result IRRD keywords in the medical field are not sufficiently
comprehensive. In addition, the Working Rules are such that they
do not fulfil SWOV's requirements regarding indexes and output
formats. Therefore in The Netherlands it was decided to concentrate
on the development of the working tools. In order to feel entitled
to suggest modifications, the first step was to increase the input
of Dutch material into the IRRD scheme. The willingness of the
coordinating centres to give IRRD members such as The Netherlands
the opportunity to explain the problems and suggest satisfactory
solutions is appreciated.

A centre such as SWOV needs:
- to create a reasonable input procedure
- to modify slighly, scope and tools to its own needs
- to create a usable retrieval system which will more or less auto-
matically attract users.

3. Speculation: future needs

Looking at the future, an IRRD centre should try to keep improving
and increasing input to IRRD but, since international cooperation on
the input side of the system has been so successful, international
cooperation on the output side as well could be particulary benefi-
cial to an IRRD member. Looking at the development on the retrieval
side, IRRD realized some years ago that the only way to retrieve
in an efficient way from such a large data base is by using a
computer; this resulted in the use of a communication format tape
for the transfer of material.

Many members have created, bought or leased computer programmes enabling them to work with this cft, some using advanced programmes enabling on-line interactive searching. Although a few of the large IRRD centres have raised the necessary funds to acquire such pro- grammes and to store the IRRD data base on-line, it is unlikely that the majority of the members individually will be able to follow this example. Sweden, Norway and Denmark have managed to establish to- gether an on-line system, The Netherlands are fortunate to have joined this system in 1976. Although the costs for data transmission between Sweden and The Netherlands are considerable, the cost of creating a separate on-line data base in The Netherlands would be much greater.

In view of this, and the fact that the IRRD data base will only increase,. probably every year at a faster rate, IRRD members' needs might be met by a cooperatively maintained on-line IRRD data base or data bases on (at least) an European level. Creating such a data base would also open the way to related activities for smaller countries such as SDI possibilities and facilities for on-line ordering publications similar to those offered by some existing commercial information search services. Since cooperation means less duplication of activities, an additional advantage might be extra capacity of personnel and probably extra financial capacity at the input centres. This resulting capacity could be used to increase and improve input, although the new users who will certain- ly be attracted by such a powerful information source will absorb some of this extra capacity.
The quality of the input could also be affected by the existence of an on-line IRRD data base in still another way; for example a 'new word to data base'-signalling could be used to find punching errors, mis-spellings of authors affiliations and journal names etc and would facilitate amendments needed as a result of thesaurus changes, something which is now quite a problem for some members. This problem might be solved at present by the introduction of a 'historical thesaurus' in which the introduction date of each term is mentioned and, where possible, the term or combination of terms formerly used for that concept is given.

The aspects mentioned in this paper are related to each other. By
improving the system the output is more adapted to the demands
of our users. As a result they will be more prepared to keep IRRD
centres informed about newly published material and make available
their expertise to help improve the quality of IRRD input.