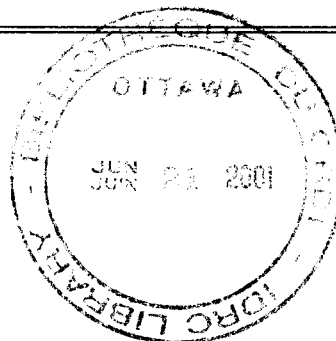


***WORKSHOP ON INFORMATION IMPACT  
ASSESSMENT AND PERFORMANCE  
MEASUREMENT***

***FOUR SEASONS HOTEL,  
KINGSTON, JAMAICA  
JANUARY 9-11, 1994***

**"THE ROLE OF IDRC  
IN DEVELOPING APPROACHES  
TO MEASURING THE IMPACT  
OF INFORMATION ON DEVELOPMENT"**

FAY DURRANT



**THE ROLE OF IDRC IN DEVELOPING APPROACHES  
TO MEASURING THE IMPACT OF INFORMATION  
ON DEVELOPMENT**

*Fay Durrant  
Senior Program Specialist  
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The question of impact assessment , and measuring the impact of information on development, has been increasingly of concern to IDRC, as a means of making the final linkages in the *information transfer cycle*. The support which has been provided to the *development information systems* has ensured the effective development of a series of signposts which can now be used as test beds for the related research question - *What has been the impact of information on development?*

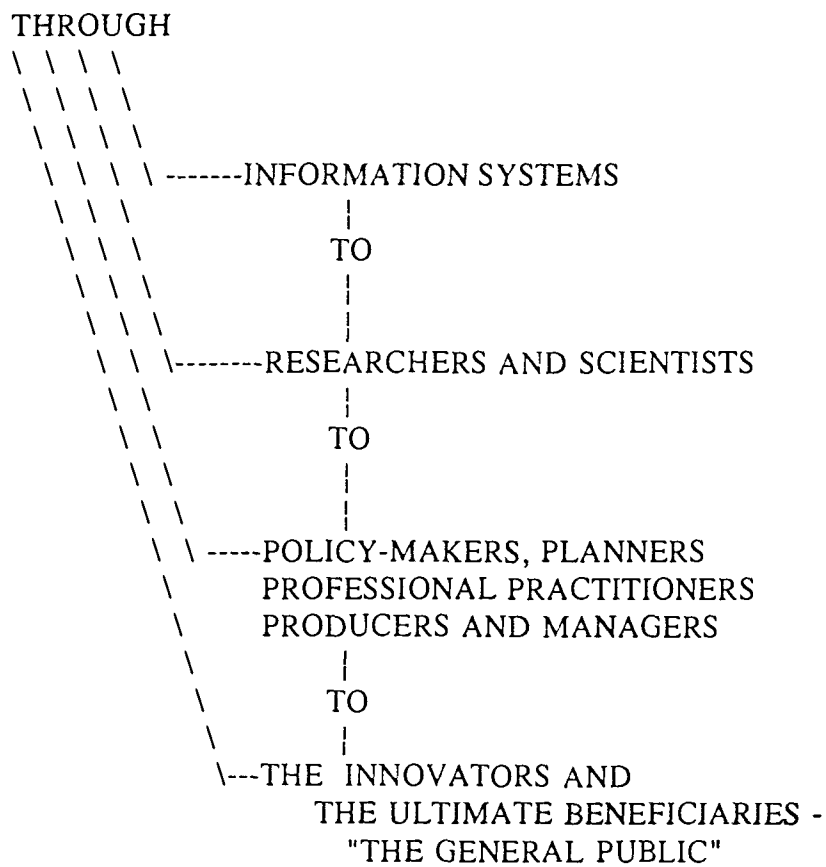
*What have been the underlying assumptions of all these developments?*

The Information Sciences Program has, over the past 20 years, identified necessary elements for the collection , organization and dissemination of information to researchers, and more recently to development practitioners - policy makers, planners and technical personnel involved in the implementation of research results, and in the formulation of policies.

As information is not an end in itself, the ultimate goal of these information handling activities must be the harnessing of the resources of the information systems into outputs which advance the development process. A variety of means have been used to establish this process. These have involved a fair concentration on the supply side, on the collection and analysis of information known to be of priority interest, and the use of data processing, and computer networks for faster storage and more clearly defined retrieval. Efforts have also been made to use the communications media to disseminate the information to a wider audience than could be expected to visit any of the existing information centers.

The next stage has been making the link between the systems, the needs of users with a variety of concerns, the final utilization of the information and the corresponding impact assessment. The feedback of the impact assessment research into policy making at all levels of information management we see as the logical next step in closing the information chain.

TRANSMITTING THE RESULTS OF RESEARCH  
AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES TO IMPLEMENTATION



The questions of impact assessment which have been raised in the Information Sciences and Systems Division of IDRC , have also been related to the questions of IDRC 's strategy, which as outlined in the documents *Empowerment through knowledge*, and *Meeting the Global Challenge* is focussed on four main areas:

- \* *working on global or interregional problems;*
- \* *using research capacity more effectively (a commitment to utilization and to "what works" in development research);*
- \* *working in collaboration and partnerships with Canadian organizations, other donor agencies, and the United Nations system in support of developing countries;*
- \* *acting as a knowledge broker.*

In this context, the mission of the Information Sciences and Systems Division is :

"to stimulate measurable socio-economic advancement by providing equitable, timely, and efficient access to scientific, technical, and other knowledge, and by promoting its effective application to the problems of development."

The first part of the mission statement has been measurable and measured from the point of view of effectiveness and efficiency, but the current thrust which has been underway in IDRC since late 1991, has been the definition of the ways in which the effective application of information to the problems of development are being promoted.

Martha Stone in presenting the Keynote address to the Canadian Association for Information Science Conference in July 1993, explained the initiative of the Information Sciences and Systems Division of IDRC which seeks to determine the possibility of establishing indicators that would concretely measure the relevance of information to decision-making processes.

The process which consisted of the initial computer conference, global consultations and the post-conference workshop, has been justifiably complex, and has resulted in some consensus as to methodologies for indicators and assessment methods, and a preliminary framework for impact assessment.

The publication *Measuring the impact of information on development* also outlines the context in which the process of consultation and definition has been evolving, and indicates some directions for the third phase - the field testing of the indicators.

*What will be IDRC's role in the field testing?*

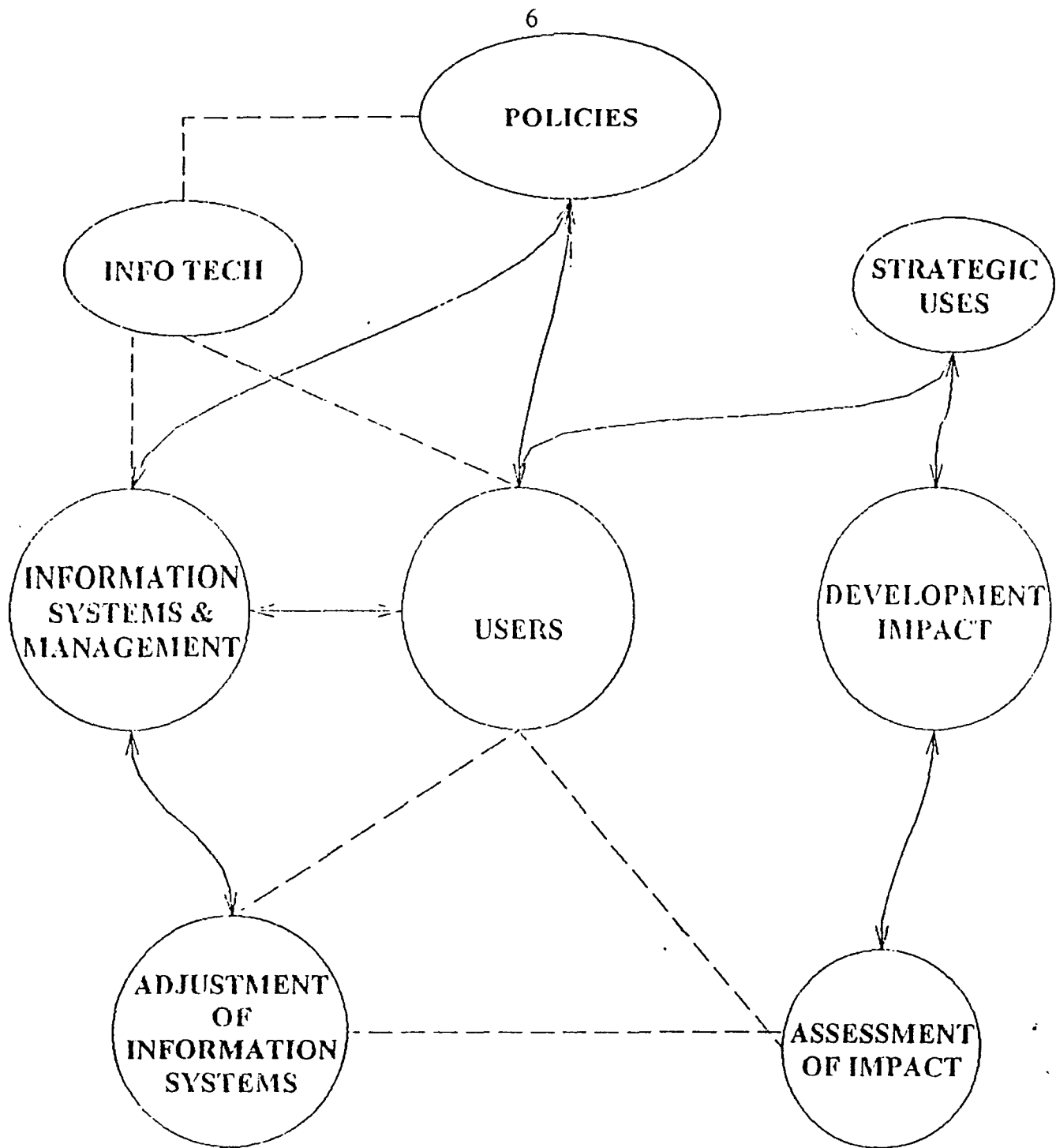
A first task is the dissemination of the results of this exercise to a wider audience, and particularly to people such as yourselves who are responsible for the development and evaluation of information systems, and projects such as *Information for Decision Making in the Caribbean Community* in which you are all participating. This seminar will therefore provide an opportunity for all participants to discuss the Preliminary Framework for Impact Assessment, and to examine these in relation to the relevant aspects of the project.

This and other projects will be used as case studies to test the validity of the approach developed, and it is expected that other national and donor agencies will use this approach to assess the impact of their activities. At the same time there are still several elements of research which need to be carried forward. Harmonization of approaches, combination of respective efforts for wider coverage of the problem areas, exchange of research findings and results, and collaborative research efforts will be supported by IDRC in relation to the regions in which we work.

*The relationship to information policy research, and policy formulation*

The emphasis on information policy research is a new direction for IDRC. Our direction has been the support to the development of innovative information systems, and now there is evidently the need to bring together the framework for impact assessment with the future assessment of the relationship between information systems and policy formulation. The project proposal which the University of the West Indies Institute for Social and Economic Research is preparing seeks to examine the relationship between research results, information systems and policy formulation, and this is an example of the type of project which is expected to provide some measures of the impact of information on development.

*Operational policies*



## EFFECTIVE INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

F.Durrant Jan'94

The area of Information technology policy research is also expected to provide some measurable results. Our emphasis in Latin America and the Caribbean is currently on the policies which are related to Small and Medium sized enterprises. The definition of information technology policies which can be expected to encourage productivity is another question of global importance which is only beginning to establish some measures of productivity.

These are the two main research problem areas in which IDRC expects to be working on in the region, all with a view of contributing to the global debate, and to the increased impact of information on development.

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