Who Is Your Green Shoot?

Your task force was recently re-reading the CMIW vision statement. We aim to do this every year because we like to check our actions against our vision and our vision against what the Spirit is saying to us today. The vision reminded us to do more to include non-English speakers in the community. (If you can help us in that, please let us know.)

We were very surprised, however, that our vision did not mention new mission information workers. This seems like a huge omission. If mission information workers fail to reproduce themselves, what will happen to the work of God? We felt led by Him to add to the vision, "A community that works together … reproducing and multiplying itself in the younger generations to ensure continuity" (see http://www.globalcmiw.org/vision.html).

We then wrote to some of our colleagues who have experience in mission information. **Darrell Jackson** (DJ) is Senior Lecturer in Missiology at Morling College Australia. In that capacity he supervises research of postgraduate students. He is also chair of the Lausanne Researchers Network. Previously he was a lecturer at Redcliffe College, UK and director of Nova Research Centre. **Bob Waymire** (BW) has been a leader in mission information for many years having founded Global Mapping International, USA, and led research efforts for DAWN and AD2000 among others. **Jim Haney** (JH) is director of global research at International Missions Board, USA and coordinator of the Harvest Information System. We asked them four questions about the raising up and discipling of the next generation of mission information workers. Here are their responses:

[CMIW]: Could your organization, as well as mission work in general, benefit from the existence of more information workers?

[DJ]: Coming from a research role, but now wholly immersed in the academic environment, I am more aware of students engaged in research projects featuring aspects of Christian practice and mission practice with little or no empirical research. Problems are sometimes identified and solutions offered with no reference to empirical observation or human subject research. If a research student, active in the human or social sciences, counts as an "information worker" then "yes" we need more.

[BW]: About "mission work in general" the answer is a resounding "Yes!"   But there is a more urgent need for planning to reveal the "who, where, what, why and when" these workers are needed. We need both global category stewards (such as Joshua Project) and well-staffed national research functions.

[JH]: Our organization is blessed with information workers. Today's missionary makes strategic decisions based on information, whilst not always eager to take part in information gathering. We have roughly 1,000 IMB missionaries involved in information gathering from Team Leaders engaging a people group up to our Strategy Research Associates. We long to see the same folks analysing the strategic information they gather to help decision making – their own decisions and the wider organization. In other words information workers should gather, analyze, and report for the purpose of making strategic decisions. Too often they look for information to support decisions

that have already been made. So, more information workers is not what we want. We want information strategists.

[CMIW]: What types of functions could use more information workers (that is, what do you envisage those new information workers would be doing)?

[DJ]: I would like to see far more information workers assisting mission agencies and development agencies to measure the spiritual outcomes of their programmes. I think outcome analysis is a yet-to-be-discovered aspect of information for mission.

[BW] There are many "types of functions" which will need to be filled in: organizational and geographical, field and library, researching and surveying, data management and data analysis, publishing work, etc.

[JH]: Faith without works is dead and information without obedience is a folly. We have a lot of information and a lot of research available in the missions community. I remember speaking at Tokyo 2000, having co-chaired the Global Consultation Task Force. After I showed the gap between today's reality and Revelation 7:9, a participant stood up and protested, "More obedience, less research." While I don't think he was attacking information workers, his point is important. We need the right kind of research, not just more. Our research must inform the specific mission that is before us. And what front-liners need is very different from what we track on the global level. For example, while we keep track of people groups in countries, the front-liner wants to know what's happening in churches and towns. So functions are determined by the need, and workers determine the new information that they need. So it is prudent to find out the information which is important to front-line workers and why it is important. And those workers need to be part of defining and collecting the information that is useful to them. Only then will they "own" the information and use it well.

[CMIW]: Please describe the types of people you think will be most suited to this task (training, qualifications, age and experience, national and ethnic origin, etc.).

[DJ]: I think aptitude is a more fundamental measure of how effective somebody can be. They need the ability to empathetically observe, accurately record, acknowledge personal bias, be sensitive, humble, etc. Beyond this, the qualifications and ethnicity will depend upon the context being observed.

[BW]: This is somewhat subjective. In general, experienced persons are desired, or at least well trained, and some organizations do their own training. Also, for some information worker tasks it would be an advantage to be of local ethnic origin. This certainly applies to field surveys. It is advantageous where possible to have nationals, or those well versed in the culture and language, to do the training for computerized mapping as well. For most aspects relating to information workers there is training available, "in house" or by other organizations. The requirements for skill and experience vary significantly. A data entry person can have minimal experience. Those involved in data management or data analysis should have some years of experience directly related to this task. Those designing surveys and survey forms should be experienced, or have someone highly qualified to review their work. In general "information workers" are a technical bunch. Training and experience should be of high quality.

[JH]: Good question. I was a church planter. I came into missions research only because I was an information consumer taking part in country research in Ghana and Nigeria with Ross Campbell. Information workers share what they think with others whom they feel can benefit from what they have discovered. Perhaps we should look for missionaries who have been involved in planting effective churches. What information do they feel is important, and what ideas do they have for helping others to gather that kind of information? Then we could ask them if they would be willing to share how they gather and use strategic information. No one is interested in training to use information if they cannot apply it to their task. IMB missionaries who are successful hate meetings about research but are fearless information gatherers and ruthless evaluators. If that is an irony, we need to understand it and adjust to meet their needs.

[CMIW]: What do you consider hindrances to the growth of the corps of mission information workers and how might they be overcome?

[DJ]: Information workers are under-appreciated in the task-focused, unreflective church and

mission agency world. Therefore they are under-utilised even by those agencies where there are existing trained information workers. They are under-resourced by agencies that are used to getting knowledge for free via the Internet. Seminaries, Bible Colleges and Theological Colleges have traditionally preferred information gathered via library research. This is slowly changing but it underlines the limited number of graduating students with a commitment to empirical research. **[JH]**: For me, as an information outsider, the greatest hindrance was when I wrote to the holders of people group lists with first-hand information and they ignored my feedback. This is still a huge problem. On the other side, as one who now holds a global list, the greatest problem is evaluating and coordinating the use of such feedback. I believe the corps of mission information workers will grow as information projects are seen as important to our consumers.

These are three voices. What do you think? What should and can be done to promote the development of younger IW's, especially those outside the predominately English-speaking world who represent under-churched ethnicities? Are you having any success in nurturing a green shoot? Please email us and let us know: cmiw@worksmail.net.

See you there

Our last issue (www.globalcmiw.org/resources/cmiw-bulletin-v3n4-2013-10.pdf) generated some feedback regarding events being hosted by members of our community that were not featured in our "See You There." We're sorry that our mention of these events appeared to minimize the importance of others.

Please know that we would love for there to be both planned and spontaneous face-to-face meetings among information workers at all national, regional and international venues. The more we're with each other, the more we will grow in love, capacity, and concern for one another and for the work the Lord has given each of us to do.

Here, then, is the list of events that one or more members of our task force will be attending in the upcoming quarter.*

> NAP (January 2014)
> MEMPP (January 2014)
> CAC (February-March 2014)
> GACX Forum (April 2014)

If you too plan to attend one of these gatherings 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.

If you are hosting or attending a function in April 2014 or onwards at which you expect other information workers may be present, and are willing to be involved in a face-to-face meeting with them, please also let us know. We'll feature your event in our next bulletin.

* 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.
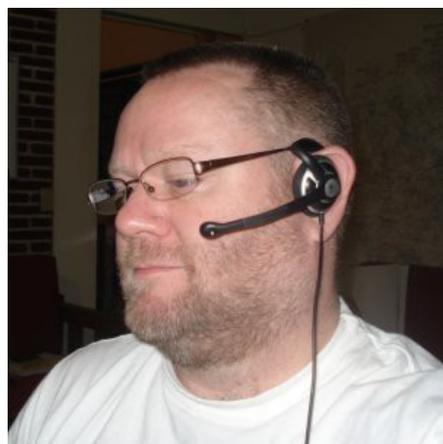

Who's Who in Missions Information
Special Profile: David Markham

1. [CMIW] **Please tell us about yourself and your family**. [CM] My Name is David Markham, I have worked in mission information since 1985. My wife Addy and I live in Oaxaca Mexico, home to over 170 different ethno-linguistic people groups.

2. [CMIW] **What is your current ministry?** [CM] My current ministry is Etnopedia.org, a community of information workers translating unreached people profiles in different languages.

3. [CMIW] **What are the contributions you have made to world missions that have brought you the greatest satisfaction?** [CM] The structure and model of Etnopedia has to be the largest contribution I have made. It resolves many problems when gathering unreached people information.

- Etnopedia opens up the research process to any Christian wanting to create mobilization materials in his or her own language on a free to use website.
- Etnopedia solves the issue of status of Christianity, using a color which can represent many different research efforts' complicated scales.
- Etnopedia also allows research workers to map their people groups online eliminating the need for costly mapping software and high end computers.

What has given me the most satisfaction has been resolving many problems in the research of unreached peoples.

- For example Etnopedia is able to show ethno-linguistic groups with all their ethnic divisions indented.
- We can also add unclassified or unclear research. We can add people groups thought to exist or possible duplicate names without the limitations of added registries in traditional database systems.

All these things have taken thousands of hours of problem solving to get where we are today. The resolving of the problems has been the fun part. We just recently resolved the problem with mapping India. In India many people groups have more than one missionary sending need. For example they are Muslim and Hindu as well as upper and lower caste. Now we have to solve the problem of coding the mapping system to reflect those needs, which is the hard part. The satisfying part was resolving the problem, the work comes now getting it to work on the Internet!

4. [CMIW] **What dreams do you have for your next ten years of ministry?** [CM] Complete the people lists for every country in the world with the help of the team. If you visit http://en.etnopedia.org/wiki/index.php/Countries you will see a grey icon to the right of every country with a complete (known) people list. These lists reflect all the people groups found on other major research efforts lists.

5. [CMIW] **Is there some way you'd be willing to help the CMIW community?** [CM] Our team will gladly train anyone wanting to gather information on unreached people groups, either on Etnopedia or their own system. There is a huge lack of information from the field. We do training on how to gather info from the field as well.

The most important piece of information on people groups is the status of Christianity, that is, after you have a fairly good people list to work with.

So we provide a multi-lingual system that easily allows field researchers to update the Christian status. Now we need to train people to update that information.

Information can be gathered on 3x5 cards in the field. You don't need elaborate databases on webservers to gather it. Once gathered, anyone can update the Internet database. This helps the entire mission movement know that a missionary is still needed among that particular unreached people group.

All of us on the Etnopedia community are blessed to be a part of CMIW!

Information from the Word

In Luke 8:17 Jesus said, *"For nothing is hidden that will not be made manifest, nor is anything secret that will not be known and come to light."* Do we mission information workers have a hand in this ministry? What does God want you to bring to the light today, this month, this year? How will you get it onto the lampstand so that everyone can see it (see 8:16)?