

**Evaluation of**  
**UNESCO's Information Services in**  
**Social and Human Sciences**

by

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# **Evaluation of UNESCO's Information Services in Social and Human Sciences**

## **1 Executive Summary**

### **1.1 Overall Statements and Observations**

1. The evaluation was carried out within the framework of UNESCO's biennial evaluation plan (2000-2001) with the purpose of assessing the quality of the information and documentation services, as well as the publications of the Social and Human Sciences Sector. It was conducted from March to June 2001 by an external evaluator, recognized for his expertise in the fields of social and human sciences and information science. The main findings are summarized as follows:

2. The sector is characterised by a prolific output of information services (documentation and publication, print and electronic, retrieval and dissemination). There is a great variety of information channels and media: formal databases, academic papers, popular media like film and video and even multimedia CD-ROM. Most of the products analysed show a high degree of quality in terms of content. Yet, with respect to its presentation and information processing aspects quality varies considerably. It can be observed that professional skills of information management are not always applied. In terms of regional impact, there is a good outreach with emphasis, in some programmes, on least developed countries.

3. There is a certain fragmentation of the supporting infrastructure of documentation centres and publication responsibilities – as well as a lack of resources for the information service oriented infrastructure. A (sector-wide) re-integration and streamlining of editorial and information processing knowledge seems necessary. The information professionals should be seen more as a key asset in the emerging knowledge society. Concentrating all information and publication relevant activities like documentation units, webmasters, editorial responsibilities etc. in one organisational structure – an “information task force” – would increase effectiveness and would create synergies.

4. In some cases, there seems to be a lack of understanding of the mission as to the product and the target groups. There is little user orientation and no formal methodology for controlling successful attainment of information objectives. This general lack of user orientation is parallel to reduced knowledge of external information structures and information behaviour of potential users. The analysis of the communicational structures (information input, needs and possible impact) for each product should be intensified by paying more attention to user orientation. Furthermore, there is a need for explicit policy statements concerning activities which cannot be derived directly from the Medium Term Strategy like information infrastructure and public relation tasks.

5. Target groups as they are perceived by many professionals in the sector remain very closely related to inner circle UNESCO bodies (National Commissions, permanent delegations, field offices IGC etc.). There is a tendency to self-sufficiency whereas internal and external interviews and responses in user surveys show an increasing need for high-quality publications for a wider public. A concentration of publication resources on endeavours with high visibility either in the academic community or for a wider public seems necessary.

6. The Social and Human Sciences sector has a tradition of serving the global scientific community in respect to knowledge sharing, networking and capacity building. Its achievements like the *International Bibliography of the Social Sciences* (the “UNESCO Bibliography” now living on its own at the London School of Economics) or the “DARE Social Science Databank” and its *World Directories* seem to have moved a bit away from the focus of attention in UNESCO’s programming. A higher commitment to these strengths of the sector would be advisable because they are well known and used products. A tradition in information service and production is certainly a strength in times of emerging new structures, but it implies also the challenge of assuring necessary innovation and adaptation to a changing environment.

7. UNESCO has an important role to play as global knowledge aggregator and at the same time has to pay attention to counterbalancing the global digital divide in social and human science information. The *International Social Science Journal*, one of the flagships among the information services in the sector, fulfils this role perfectly.

8. The wide variety of topics and disciplines dealt with in the sector and the changing organizational structure at the moment of the evaluation may be the cause of the invisibility of some activities of the sector and the lack of a sectoral corporate identity. The mere identification of sector related activities from outside is difficult. However there are activities to increase the programmes' visibility such as the publication of newsletters, press kits, and contributions to the UNESCO periodicals (*Sources*, *Courier*) and academic journals. These publicity channels are to be further streamlined given the results of the user survey according to which most of the NGOs keep themselves up-to-date using these channels.

9. Also related to visibility, the sector's publications and documents have formal identification problems. This is a well-known phenomenon in the specialised information business in what concerns intergovernmental organizations. Even if a certain product produced by the sector is known, it is not always easy to pinpoint it for purchase or inter-library loan, unless the user addresses UNESCO units directly. There are either extremely complicated numbering systems for UNESCO's documents, hardly understood by externals, or there are no identification practices and codes at all. There are cases of books that do not have an ISBN or it is inconsistent or incorrect.

10. Most of the strengths and opportunities for the sector lie in the institutional character of UNESCO and the specific way the sector contributes to the achievement of the organization's mission by promoting the social sciences for human development and human security. Its interdisciplinary character and the intellectual capital built over years of experience by professionals, represent considerable advantages given that they are harvested with the appropriate knowledge management tools.

11. The opportunity and the obligation for UNESCO lies in the ongoing revolution of the worldwide publication and information structures. New co-operative publication models are emerging and the Social and Human Sciences need guidance in this process. Taking actively part in these developments and staying at the forefront of technological and organisational changes could easily be taken into account at the sector’s day to day information practice. The cross-cutting theme “contribution of the ICTs to the development of [...] science” should not remain just a programmatic catch word but should be integrated in the ordinary information and publication activities thus combining the own infrastructure with intersectoral programming.

## **1.2 General Recommendations**

### **1.2.1 In-house Knowledge Management**

12. As one of the most prolific information producers in the social and human sciences world-wide, UNESCO has a significant responsibility in supporting the re-design of the information flows in favour of those who are the main target groups of its programme activities.

13. The sector should become a living example of an international body which takes the knowledge society seriously. The internal knowledge management should become a model for comparable units of this size and worldwide outreach. Capacity building, information and knowledge sharing on a global scale has to be supported by an excellent information culture and knowledge management at home. The recent organisational changes in the structure of the sector can be seen as an opportunity to improve (internal) informational support.

14. This requires for a high commitment of the management to change structures, procedures, and corporate cultures. One preliminary condition would be to describe a corporate identity for the sector and to try to overcome further fragmentation. Fragmentation of course is due to a strong programme orientation within UNESCO. Increasing organisational stability and at least clear commitment to matrix organisation should counterbalance pure programme orientation in order to improve overall effectiveness.

15. Clarification of the relationship between programme and management based structures also means increasing consciousness about the important role of programme supporting activities like internal information services and knowledge management. In the light of this evaluation, future policy should take more into account that skills and capacities of information professionals are recognised and para-professionalism is avoided

16. Increased awareness for internal knowledge management is not possible without a clear commitment to user orientation and basic marketing approaches. Quality management in service oriented businesses (even in non-profit organisations) always starts with a very far-reaching conception of user or client relationship. Scientific knowledge production and dissemination has a lot of internal and external clients: colleagues, stakeholders, actual “users”. Defining them, profiling the main targets and still serving the overall mission of a whole organisational unit should be a priority for management and for everybody in the sector.

17. Basic tools for internal and external knowledge management are classic public relation instruments like newsletters (print or online) and websites. They should evolve to focal points for internal and external information flows. From an organisational point of view they also require to be streamlined and integrated with other information activities: they should become an integral part of the best practice scheme for information management of the sector.

### **1.2.2 Information Services and Publishing**

18. The existing external information services like the DARE database, its offsprings, and the MOST clearinghouse are an achieved capital of the sector which should not be neglected. Here too, inner-organisational streamlining of all existing services and products will coincide with the overall mission of becoming a “best practice” example for information management within UNESCO. A lot of synergies for increased professionalism can certainly be found. Even more opportunities lie in the rapid developments of ICTs which should be used for the information services. This not only is a challenge for the learning organisation but also the possibility for ap-

plying the new technologies in a way of serving as an example for the emerging knowledge societies. It is the best moment to invest the existing strengths in the ongoing revolution of scientific information flow in the world. The historic situation is not very far from the situation which lead UNESCO to “invent” the IBSS half a century ago.

19. The policy should be to continue an overall information service which serves global social sciences as a whole. A service which is a natural part in the programme of UNESCO for the topic of global social science knowledge sharing and improving knowledge access. This is a double challenge: understanding and implementing new internet technologies will not be a easy task and cannot be done without intersectoral support; to explain the advantages of an information service which is at the forefront of the technological development to stakeholders has always been a difficult venture but it should be possible in the light of UNESCO’s cross cutting theme.

20. Publishing in general is at a historical turning point. Here, too, the opportunities are obvious: electronic publishing will be the basis of future scientific communication. A lot of synergies are to be expected because publishing will be less static and independent and more increasingly integrated in technology-based co-operative structures. A close co-operation of most publishing activities with the documentation centre and all other information technology centred activities in the sector is therefore unavoidable. There is already a close relationship in all activities concerning the dissemination of information (database-, journal-, book-publishing) and there will be a continuous merging of tasks and increased requirements concerning information processing (structuring, metadata etc.).

21. The sector’s ‘best practice’ should therefore be to decrease paper-like grey literature production and to shift more to database structured dynamic publishing for all texts which are research oriented working papers. UNESCO should in this field continue to assume its role of an adopter of new technologies which was successful with the MOST clearinghouse. The clearinghouse concept with static html-pages has now evolved to the concept of portals for dynamic and heterogeneous database systems. UNESCO is in the position of setting standards in social scientific publishing with new technologies. The multitude of co-operative publishing partners and research networks UNESCO has would quickly spread the idea of a social science e-print archive established by the sector. This would bear the invaluable advantage of establishing a model and a centralised information service which is not threatened by commercialisation; instead it could remain the independent source the social science research needs. In other words: the abundant grey literature publication activities of the sector should become the global e-print archive for the social sciences. At least the sector’s publications should take part in every possible new Open Archive Initiative for the social sciences – if it does not establish a central service on its own.

11. Other publishing not directly addressing the academic community should gain an even higher profile in co-operation with professional publishers. This asks for concentration and specific target definitions for a small number of priority publications. Additionally, publications should generally address a wider public.

## **2 The Evaluation**

### **2.1 The Terms of Reference**

22. The terms of reference for this study indicate: “This evaluation is carried out in the framework of the biennial evaluation plan of UNESCO for 2000-2001, and in accordance with an Ex-

ecutive Board decision and a subsequent recommendation to the General Conference. The purpose of the evaluation is to assess the quality of the information and documentation services provided in Social and Human Sciences and provide a basis for further streamlining and developing the Organisation's information and documentation services in the social and human sciences. The evaluation covers the documentation services and resources in the social and human sciences, including the MOST Programme, the Social Sciences Documentation Centre, the Division of Human Rights, Democracy, Peace and Tolerance, the Division of Ethics, the website, and the publication policy and activities of SHS/SRP. (...)

*Main issues to be addressed are:*

- *Assessment of internal functioning of the social and human science information and publication services.*
- *Assessment of information and documentation services provided as perceived by the internal and external user.*
- *Assessment of impact of UNESCO's social and human science information services.”*

23. The evaluation is therefore aiming more at the infrastructural and support side of UNESCO's activities than at its programmes. It has been modelled in parts on the comparable “Evaluation of publications and documents in the Education Sector” undertaken by Fägerlind, MacGregor and Clayson in 1999.<sup>1</sup>

## **2.2 The Evaluation Process**

24. The evaluation was carried out from March to June 2001 by an external evaluator<sup>2</sup>. It involved two several days' visits to the UNESCO headquarters during which the evaluator had discussions with different groups of people at the secretariat. His assistant in Paris was carrying out many internal interviews. Several lengthy interviews were conducted by the evaluator via telephone and some information gathering took place via e-mail. Most of the staff and persons in charge were helpful in providing basic information and specimen of print and online publications. Most of the internal interviewees welcomed the evaluation and the evaluators had the impression that high expectations were linked to its outcome. Almost everyone we were able to talk to stressed the great need for such a study.

25. Right from the beginning, the scope of the evaluation was not quite clear to everybody. For some programme activities of the sector it turned out to be very difficult to get relevant information because the professionals did not think that the evaluation concerns them. Some argued that

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<sup>1</sup> Fägerlind, Ingemar; MacGregor, Karen; Clayson, Alison: Evaluation of publications and documents in the Education Sector. What UNESCO has to say about education, How it is said and to whom. March 1999 (156 EX/INF.10)

<sup>2</sup> Prof. Dr. Hans-Christoph Hobohm, was selected as evaluator because of his experience and expertise in the fields of social and human sciences as well as information science. He has been teaching Library and Information science at the University of Applied Sciences in Potsdam, Germany, since 1995, and is a member of the professional board of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA). At present, he is secretary of its Social Sciences Libraries Section and has held its chair since 1995. He is author of the chapter “Social Science Information and Documentation” in the UNESCO *World Social Science Report*<sup>2</sup> and is known nationally as well as internationally through substantive publications in social history, social science information and library management. At the Paris site of UNESCO, Ximena Castro-Sardi, a young social scientist with practical experience in documentation, has assisted the evaluator. She has worked for the evaluation on a half-time temporary contract within UNESCO. The principal contacts accompanying the evaluation process in Paris were the Evaluation Unit (Vincent Defourny) and the SHS/SRP division (Paul de Guchteneire). Both provided helpful comments and guidance at all stages of the study.



they have only been working in this sector for a short period of time, finding difficult to link their activities to the disciplinary domain of the Social and Human Sciences.

26. Many specific elements of this study have already been dealt with in previous documents: especially the “Evaluation of UNESCO Periodicals” (1993)<sup>3</sup> and the “Mid-Term Evaluation of the Management of Social Transformations (MOST) Programme” (1999)<sup>4</sup>. The “Comprehensive Strategy devised to raise the visibility of UNESCO’s action through strengthening the coordination of information and dissemination activities within the secretariat” (cf. 161 EX/43, May 2001) was very important for this study, also because of the similar approach. At the time this paper was released the present study was relatively advanced.

### **2.3 The Object**

27. As observed in many other evaluations, most often the basic understanding of the object in question needed clarification. When the evaluators of the UNESCO education publication activities point out problems in the common understanding of the term ‘publication’, it does not surprise that there is an even more vague understanding of the term ‘information service’.

28. An information service, as commonly understood by information scientists, is a ‘product’ created by a ‘producer’ or an authoring entity (agent) with the aim to actively communicate a message (or specific data, information or knowledge) to a predetermined target audience. In this sense, it is an important *active* part of a communication policy which is the expression of the overall mission of the information-producing agent (cf. doc. 161 EX/43). On the other hand, an information service may be an internal intermediary unit like a library or an information research service. In this case, it is a *passive* expression of the same configuration of the active information service or product. This kind of service depends on its domain-specific data collections or research skills enabling it to answer a particular information request or to satisfy expressed or understood information needs. By definition, “domain-specific data collections or information research skills” are built on the basis of formulated or implicit missions – in accordance with those of its funding agency. In both understandings, the same specific methodologies and techniques for information processing like information storage and retrieval techniques are necessary (e.g. needs analysis, collection development, cataloguing, indexing, target group oriented dissemination etc.).

29. Therefore, ‘information service’ as it is understood throughout this study encompasses a wide range of items from the internal research services and formal databases to publications in monographic or serial form in any kind of media provided they want to convey a message. Simple public relations materials such as leaflets or brochures on the institution itself were not object of the evaluation.

### **2.4 Methodology**

30. The heterogeneous and dynamic character of the sector made a systematic approach very difficult. Due to the quantity of items in question, a systematic analysis of documents had to be restricted to the most prominent examples. An overall SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses –

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<sup>3</sup> cf. 142 EX/10, August 1993

<sup>4</sup> Kruijt, Dirk; Koonings, Kees: Mid-Term Evaluation of the UNESCO Programme *Management of Social Transformations* (MOST), April 1999 (cf. 156 EX/12) and Report on the Refocusing of the management of Social Transformations (MOST) Programme, August 2000 (160 EX/12)

opportunities and threats) was undertaken at several stages of the evaluation. It was only possible to apply in-depth content analysis, an analysis of the communicational structures and other quality management techniques to some representative examples. Other marketing oriented methods as the gap analysis were initially planned but were not used mainly because of sampling and object-inherent problems that will be treated further on in this paper. To carry out satisfactory empirical research would have gone far beyond the possibilities of a single evaluator.

31. Since a quantitative user satisfaction survey focusing on different types of users of all divisions and on every single activity was not possible, we carried out a survey with one potential user group. A short questionnaire asking for the degree of knowledge and usage of the sector's products was distributed to the complete population of one international body which has been in close relationship with the sector's activities and therefore inherently interested in its publications and information services. Because of its broad scope the International Social Science Council - ISSC (with 50 member organizations and associated members) was selected for this purpose. Random samples for the same questionnaire were taken from ICPSH, IFHR, and HPE partners. Their responses were included in overall statistics. Although intensive follow-up took place and the complete population was quite small, the response rate was rather low. Only the sub-sample of ISSC members attained a return rate of 44% (=22 responses).

32. Thus, the main sources of information supporting the arguments of the evaluation were the semi-structured in-depth interviews with people involved in the analysed processes (staff on site and in field offices, people from other sectors and UNESCO units, members of governing bodies, members of national commissions). These resulted in "thick descriptions" of the analysed field. Document analysis for print publications, usability tests for websites, database- and citation-analysis for publications and analytical web searches as well as analyses of the main specialised web directories are examples of the variety of methods used. As to some parts of the websites, it was possible to make use of the recent online survey undertaken by the Société Médiamétrie on the usage of the UNESCO websites.<sup>5</sup>

33. The evaluation is therefore based on abundant but somewhat heterogeneous material reflecting the great variety and quantity of information services. Nevertheless, the combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches to the complex situation provides a solid basis for the study's recommendations. A draft version distributed among the sector's staff produced a variety of remarks and comments which reflected a general consensus on most of the topics mentioned.

## **2.5 Results and Importance of the Study**

34. The terms of reference state: "The evaluation is also meant to provide valuable input to improve the definition of the coming SHS mid-term strategy (2002-2007). Thus, the evaluation results will be integrated in the planning of the subsequent C5 documents for the coming 6 years." Finally, the evaluation undertook a slightly broader approach and wants to draw attention to some specific examples for possible information services that might go beyond the specific formulations of a necessarily general "midterm" strategy of over 6 years. In the light of the revolution in publication and communication habits throughout the world due to the ongoing dramatic changes of ICT possibilities ("information and communication technologies") it would be rather daring to recommend concrete strategies which claim to be valid for such a long period of time. Insofar the evaluation has been commissioned just at the right moment in order to increase vigilance to innovative structures in the information services around the world.

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<sup>5</sup> « Enquête en ligne concernant les utilisateurs du site web de l'UNESCO ». Etude Médiamétrie janvier 2001

35. Some of these concerns have already been expressed by other UNESCO activities such as the project for the “World Report on Building Knowledge Societies”. UNESCO should not only deal with the upcoming new modes of the Knowledge Society in terms of programme activity but should become a living example and a trustful guide in the new infrastructures by means of its own information services and also by its worldwide impact and the quantity of its production. As one of the most prolific information producers in the social and human sciences worldwide, UNESCO has a significant responsibility in supporting the re-design of the information flows in favour of those who are the main target groups of its programme activities.

### **3 Information and Publication in the Sector of Social and Human Sciences (SHS)**

#### **3.1 General Standing of the Information and Publication Services**

##### **3.1.1 Characteristics of UNESCO Information**

36. UNESCO is not only considered a trustful source of information but has always been a model and an initiator for balanced information channelling in the world – long time before the term of the digital divide has been coined. One should remember the role UNESCO played after World War II in successfully (re-)establishing basic information and documentation services in the Social and Human Sciences with the so-called *UNESCO Bibliography of the Social Sciences* (“IBSS”, the biggest and the one with the broadest scope to date) or the so-called *UNESCO Thesaurus*.<sup>6</sup> In times of contested globalisation, UNESCO again has an important role to play as an impartial and objective global institution. One of the main driving forces for globalisation is, in fact, information. In this respect, UNESCO activities and attitudes with regard to its own information activities are of crucial importance. This must not be limited to a specific programme dealing with the topic of knowledge society but has to be integrated in UNESCO’s own information behaviour – otherwise every participation in the knowledge society discussion would only be a “fig leaf”.

37. By definition, UNESCO as a global intergovernmental institution has a worldwide overview on activities, projects, institutions, information, and publication in its domains. It should be able either to produce state-of-the art reports (successfully done with the *World Reports*) or to provide overall information services with global impact (achieved by products like *Study Abroad* in the Education sector or by the *World Directories* and DARE in the sector SHS or as achieved in the past with the IBSS).

38. By definition, UNESCO also has a good outreach to communities which normally do not have access to the Social and Human Sciences (Africa, Latin America, Arabia, China...). With regard to the effects of globalisation it has always acted as a counterbalancing force. Due to the ongoing commercialisation of information flows, this is getting increasingly important. The worldwide imbalance of information distribution and access is especially high in the Social and Human Sciences because of its “non-profitable” character. Therefore, the sector has a double mission for contributing to peace in the world: with respect to its programmes and its information

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<sup>6</sup> cf. Webb, William et al.: *Sources of Information in the Social Sciences. A Guide to the Literature*, 3rd. ed., Chicago: ALA, 1986. „Introduction“

behaviour; i. e. how the programme results are disseminated and how it uses its information role for the benefit of peace.

39. Its independent or at least its 'intersubjective' global position prepares UNESCO for networking and facilitating worldwide synergies in its fields. Actively creating networks is apparently successful as the MOST networks and the UNESCO Chairs programmes have shown. Since UNESCO plays this central information role it could do even more for individual social or human scientists by enabling them to create their own independent networks. It is not by chance that the term clearinghouse and related activities in conjunction with the emerging new technologies are to be found first at UNESCO (UNESCO clearinghouse, MOST clearing house, the portals etc.). In times of increasing interconnectivity of the internet, central organising authorities become more important because there are too many individual initiatives that risk not to be tied up anymore.

40. The same applies with regard to the disciplines; UNESCO has the unique position of being able to join forces between areas which are normally strictly divided such as the natural sciences, social and human sciences, culture, development, and politics. Its transdisciplinarity is one of its main strengths. As a basis it should have a broad spectrum of information and knowledge management activities – as this was the case with IBSS and still is with DARE to a limited extent. Singularised information products with a narrow scope ought to be left to the individual searchers around the world.

41. UNESCO has high credibility in the domain of library and information professionals due to the fact that it is developing standards and guidelines with world-wide impact jointly with the International Standards Organization (ISO) and the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) and other NGO's of the domain. It has also one of the largest systems of sales agents of any IGO and it has a well functioning deposit library system. Through the means of UNESBIB and UNESDOC, centralized bibliographic control is facilitated as well as the access to documents in electronic format. However, UNESCO's document codes and symbols are unnecessarily complex and general current awareness tools are lacking (see below).

### **3.1.2 General Impression**

42. The sector is characterised by a high-level output of information services, documents, and publications in terms of quantity and of quality. Most of the documents analysed are highly professional and seem to be well integrated in the discourse of their specific communities. In terms of regional impact, one can observe a good outreach in all continents with emphasis, in some programmes, on least developed countries. There is a great variety of information channels and media. Matched to the specific topic of the respective programme activity, the range of applied media comprises formal databases and highly academic papers, popular media like video and film and even multimedia CD-ROM.

43. There are several documentation and information activities sui generis like the "Social and Human Sciences Documentation Centre" which can be considered not only as a database producer for its renowned database DARE but also as a library, document supply centre and archive for the whole sector despite its administrative dependence of the division Social Science, Research and Policy (SRP). Quite often it is also used by external users which is astonishing because the centre does not really provide facilities for in-house use (or at least only with limited space). Besides the Documentation Centre, there are several other ongoing documentation activities in the sector. Every division has its own small 'unit' because it is felt that the documents and information requests addressed to them from outside are always quite special. Every division and

even some of the former programme units have their own clearinghouse in the form of a website. At least every division has its own part-time webmaster.

44. Publication and information dissemination activities are separated in terms of media: there are staff responsible for print and/or monographic publication whereas others are involved in serial publication (in journals or newsletters) and finally there are activities in the domain of grey literature (“documents”) in print or electronic form. Apart from these activities, there are more public relation oriented documentation services which sometimes have a division of labour in the production of print and electronic material, i. e. they make a distinction between the print and the electronic world. As a last category of information activities, we find a traditional collection oriented documentation centre providing internal and external information service.

45. Purely print oriented publications are produced in a great variety of formats and procedures. In some cases, an intense cooperation exists with UNESCO publications (UPO) or documents department (CLD). In other situations, staff prefer cooperation with commercial publishers. Although the output is quite high, no real attention is given to organising or streamlining procedures for the whole sector or even within the same division. Due to insufficient qualified personnel in the sector's publications unit, there is no possibility of creating synergies and raising effectiveness of the sector's publication activities in terms of quality or visibility.

46. The quality of the publications and information services in the sector varies considerably. Flagship publications that are widely known and accepted by a wide range of possible users are the two academic journals (*International Social Science Journal* and *Diogenes*) and state-of-the-art or standard setting publications (*World Social Science Report*, *Human Rights Standard Setting Instruments*). Quality (in terms of user satisfaction) seems high concerning the products of the SHS documentation centre. In most cases, there is no formal (external) reviewing system. Quality assurance is mainly limited to the choice of “prominent authors” who are mostly attracted by variable rate fee contracts. There is neither a formal editorial committee nor a written policy about print publications. Projects for publication or information collection and dissemination are mainly left to project staff. Considering the high visibility of the main websites, an integration of editorial policies in all web-based activities seems necessary. As the internet is still mainly used as an instrument for public relations, it must therefore be used especially from this perspective.

47. There seems to be a lack of consensus or at least of consciousness about the overall mission and the specific target groups of each service or product. The evaluators gained the impression that there is no real user orientation. Specific known users identified by the staff were mainly ‘inner-system’ users within larger UNESCO networks. The target groups mentioned were most of the time UNESCO itself, “the National Commissions and permanent delegations“, “UNESCO related NGOs”, “other NGOs”, “Academic community”, “governmental bodies”, without precisising the concrete target like a specific Ministry, NGOs working in a specific theme, etc. often without an accompanying distribution action (central and thematic mailing lists and actual mailing). **There is no methodology for controlling if and how these target groups have been reached and apparently a relatively large quantity of material even does not seem to be distributed all<sup>7</sup>.**

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<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately this cannot really be proven especially because of missing monitoring data – it remains an impression the evaluators gained through eye-sight.

48. It was, for instance, not possible to receive sufficient in-house figures measuring the success of reaching users for each product. We were not able to obtain clear statistics on the distribution of publications, neither UNESCO publications nor publications produced with commercial publishers. There seem to be some deficiencies in the general management *culture*: no user and marketing orientation, no real quality management or controlling. Management instruments like mission statements or target definitions appear on official documents but they are not always integrated in the daily routines of everybody.

49. If there is any stated mission orientation, there is fairly no instrument for controlling successful attainment of information objectives. Neither informal channelling of information within the professional communities (academics, politics or general public) nor formal channelling by means of information systems like abstracting and indexing services within the academic quality control system are observed systematically. UNESCO's role of being at the forefront of technical and organisational developments for global information flow could easily be taken into account at the sectors level and day to day information practice.

50. Although most of the products show a high degree of editorial and / or documentary expertise, professional skills in information processing and information management (for documentation purposes as well as for publication activities) are not always fully utilised by everybody due to constraints of time and resource problems. Knowledge transfer from specialists within the sector or acquisition of new specialised skills "on the job" is common but it is not always successful. This is a generalised phenomenon in the information society known as para-professionalism. In view of the rapidity of the transformation process towards the knowledge society during the past 10 to 20 years this is a problem which should not be underestimated. It is, in fact, a question of sustainability (i.e. survival) of an institution which has been described as the necessity for organisational learning<sup>8</sup>. The question is how to keep oneself updated with respect to the dramatically shifting professional practices in a fast changing world.

### 3.1.3 Visibility

51. UNESCO as a whole is a very prominent institution. Almost everyone in the world knows it – at least those who are interested in its topics. Some of the sectors activities are also widely known – even if those who know them do not always use them. However, knowledge of the existence of publications or information products does not necessarily mean there is an understanding of their usefulness. This is especially the case for complex information products like databases (e.g. DARE) because a database is often perceived as a black box<sup>9</sup>. The natural visibility of UNESCO's activities apparently leads to a certain lack of concern about the visibility of some parts of the sector. Combined with the complex character of both the social and human sciences and information products this may result in unexpected "invisibility".

52. Sometimes, even the mere identification of sector related activities from outside is not easy. In some cases, there is no perceivable culture of developing a visible identity or image of the different activities – or at least the existing efforts have not been streamlined sufficiently. For example, the MOST logo appears quite often on a great variety of products but the mission re-

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<sup>8</sup> Senge, Peter: *The Fifth Discipline. The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*, New York: Doubleday, 1990.

<sup>9</sup> In addition to this, products like these ask for considerable information literacy (search skills e.g.). When a user does not have a certain proficiency in dealing with information products, his inability to find the required information is always explained by the bad quality of the product. Information is a product which demands explanation and guidance.

mains vague for the non-informed. There should be more efforts for creating a corporate image by establishing a book series with a renowned publisher, for instance, or by unifying the corporate design of the sector.

53. The fact that the sector had experienced some fundamental structural changes at the moment of the evaluation might be one reason for the perceived missing visibility or for some difficulties in identifying the sector's activities from outside. The staff do not always identify with the sector or sector's activities as a whole. The perceived "corporate identity" is sometimes limited to the very small organisational unit of one's own topics. Yet, the sector is not big enough to justify fragmentation. This is also a problem which is at the heart of a general user orientation in quality management: real user satisfaction cannot be achieved unless the staff is committed to the whole.

54. Enhancing the visibility of the sector's activities would, of course, begin by talking aloud about what has been done – in newsletters, by means of articles placed in UNESCO journals or by staff participating in academic discussions and publishing activities (outside the internal networks). Some units have undertaken these activities, sometimes even with a "press oriented" approach (Bioethics Press Kits). Some units have neglected the public relation activities in recent times due to resource constraints (e.g. the Newsletters). Most sector's activities contribute to UNESCO periodicals like *Sources* or the *UNESCO Courier*. There are mailing list activities (electronic fora, listserv, majordomo lists) at several levels of organisational aggregation. Depending on the own academic standing or experience, most staff publish articles about their projects or about the sector's programmes in academic journals. But this publicity channel has still not been used often enough especially when one considers the results of the survey according to which most of the NGO's keep themselves up-to-date using these channels (see fig. 3 below). In particular, the existing academic UNESCO journals, including the ISSJ, could be used more often for reporting.

55. There is a great need of getting known in wider circles. Quite often sector's professionals complained in the interviews that they are missing basic information material to be distributed to participants of conferences. Some activities have promotional material but it is unclear how it is distributed and updated. Sometimes promotional marketing activities are left to the publishers but especially commercial publishers not always take care that the promotion is target oriented. It is a generally observed problem in specialised publication which one should always keep in mind when dealing with publishers and distributors. To a certain extent, traditional promotion should be made by the professionals themselves.

56. In a more information-scientific perspective there is a similar problem well known in the specialised information business. As it is true for most IGO's, there are formal identification problems concerning the publications and documents<sup>10</sup>. Even if a certain information product is known, it is not always easy to pinpoint to it for purchase or inter-library loan, unless the user addresses UNESCO units directly. There are either very complicated numbering systems for UNESCO's documents which are not easily understood by externals or there are no identification codes or practices at all. Sometimes "normal" books do not even have an ISBN, or worse, their ISBNs are inconsistent or incorrect<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> Schaaf, Robert W.: Information Policies of International Organizations. In: *Government Publications Review*, 17 (1990), 49-61.

<sup>11</sup> As a result of the problems of missing user orientation and information skills "acquisition and collection of IGO publications" has evolved as a distinct sub-discipline of Library Science cf. *Reference service for publications of*

57. Furthermore, there is practically no concern and/or knowledge about the content description of the published items or about guiding the search process for potentially interested users. Only two of the different websites use metadata describing the content and only the academic journals consistently publish abstracts for the articles but do not produce any other form of metadata like keywords or assignment of classification groups. The consequence is that someone who does not already know about UNESCO activities will only accidentally encounter information from the sector during unstructured navigation through the web. This does not apply to the websites alone but to all information and publication activities. The general lack of user orientation is parallel with a lack of concern and/or knowledge about external information structures and behaviours of potential users.

58. This problem is even more serious when looking at other information-distribution channels than the Internet. There is no clear concern about being mentioned in big general information systems like the ISSN registers, guides on information products or even databases. The journals are indexed in some databases but for the bigger part of the information distribution it is quite difficult to find them by means of professional formal information searches. This is due to the problems as mentioned above: lack of identification and lack of concern about metadata.

59. The general policy of UNESCO often mentions a specific target group orientation. The majority of UNESCO activities is aimed at non-academics, policy makers, mediators (like teachers) or professionals on a more practical level like “city professionals” as stated by the city projects in MOST. It is nearly first-sight evidence that this goal is not reached. Even papers with a clear mediatorial objective like training materials show that not much consideration has been devoted to target group needs. Policy papers should be more in the language of politicians, training materials must have more didactical components and give didactical advice on how to treat the topic in an active learning environment, and papers aimed at a greater public should make more use of visual components. **Here again, the message is quite obvious: user-oriented information processing asks for very specific professionalism – even if the task as such is outsourced.**

### **3.2 Strengths and Weaknesses – Opportunities and Threats**

60. Most of the strengths lie in the tradition and the institutional character of UNESCO itself. The sector’s specific strengths are: the topic of the sector itself and its mode to deal with the domain within UNESCO: namely the importance of the social and human sciences especially for human development and human security as it has been coined by the concept of “social sustainability”<sup>12</sup> by important studies of the sector itself. The new mode of dealing with its programme topics has also been conceptualised by the sector: “transdisciplinarity”<sup>13</sup>. Both aspects are in fact also “opportunities”.

61. Another important strength is, of course the “intellectual capital” of the sector, the knowledge and experience accumulated over years and decades by the professionals. One of the key concepts of the emerging “knowledge society” is “knowledge management” – the theory and practice of how to harvest the knowledge and information which is carried – more or less “tac-

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*intergovernmental organizations: papers from an IFLA workshop, Paris, August 24, 1989*, ed. by v.A. Kagan 1991. (IFLA Publications; 56)

<sup>12</sup> Becker, Egon; Jahn, Thomas (eds): *Sustainability and the Social Sciences. A Cross-disciplinary Approach to Integrating Environmental Considerations into Theoretical Reorientation*. London etc.: Zed Books, 1999

<sup>13</sup> *Transdisciplinarity – „Stimulating Synergies, Integrating Knowledge“* Report from a symposium at Royaumont Abbey, May 1998, text prepared by M. Lattanzi. UNESCO: Division of Philosophy and Ethics, 1998 [DRG-98/WS/05]



itly” – by the humans of one’s organisation<sup>14</sup> or in a ‘corporate network’<sup>15</sup>. Therefore, this is not only a strength but also the threat of losing or wasting an enormous intellectual capital. The challenge to a knowledge producing institution at such a prominent and visible position, as it is UNESCO, is quite high.

62. The speed of the changes in the information world represents a considerable advantage for information producers that have invested in their products on a long-term basis and can now enjoy the return on this investment. UNESCO has several of these products which are well known and established in their respective community. A tradition in information service and production is certainly a strength in times of emerging new structures but it bears also the challenge of assuring necessary innovation and adaptation to a changing environment.

63. Some of the main weaknesses observed by the evaluator have already been pinpointed by UNESCO-wide initiatives. Namely a certain lack of management and monitoring culture or the initiative for enhancing overall visibility (161 EX/43). Most of the problems detailed by the evaluation could be attributed to some aspects of internal management problems. However, this is beyond the scope of the terms of reference for the evaluation.

64. A more general weakness lies in the well-known fact that knowledge and skills in the information and publication business are often underestimated. **Status and image of information professionals are not adequate to the service they provide and to the role they play in the information society.** The personal computer on everybody's desk and hundreds of terabytes of data readily available via the internet, everybody believes he or she can do without information professionals. The most problematic point is that mostly the negative outcome of self-made information activities or publications remains unnoticed. The one-term search in an internet search engine always generates hits and the users believes that he or she has got what was needed but, in fact, misses the most important part of the so-called “deep web” (i.e. the traditional databases). The desktop-book will certainly come out of press and will no doubt make a satisfactory ‘impression’ but the difference a professionally edited and designed book would have made is not easily perceived nor explained to such a person. This is what is meant by “missing information culture” and “missing recognition of infrastructure” under weaknesses in table 1.

65. Para-professionalism naturally leads to the threat that resources and energies are wasted by ineffectiveness or at least inefficiency. Muddling through new emerging information structures (like websites, portals, PHP-databases, Z39.50 gateways, Dublin Core, XML, or Open archives etc.) is possible but very resource-intensive. Some other UN agencies (FAO e.g.) are successfully investing in the new information and communication technology (ICT) structures and in knowledge building in these domains in order to keep pace with the technological development. The sector should do this, too.

66. The tendency to “self-sufficiency” within UNESCO (by defining UNESCO National Commissions or UNESCO related NGO’s as the main target groups) has been rendered by some external interviewees as “the old-boys- or mandarin-like” network.

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<sup>14</sup> cf. Davenport, Thomas H.: *Information Ecology: Mastering the Information and Knowledge Environment*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

<sup>15</sup> Swan, William; Langford, Nigel; Watson, Ian; Varey, Richard J.: Viewing the Corporate Community as a Knowledge Network. In: *Corporate Communications*, 5, 2 (2000), 97-106

67. By definition, the opportunities lie outside the organisation in the changing informational environment. As said above there are many fascinating changes in the information world and the opportunities of playing an important role by shaping it and serving as a model for the world are tremendous. New informational structures and mainly new co-operative publishing models are implemented worldwide. For the social sciences there is an urgent need for a global organising initiative as this is the case in most other disciplines from physics<sup>16</sup> to economics<sup>17</sup>. UNESCO had already been an initiator for social science information at times of global change. The emerging

Table 1: SWOT portfolio

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Credibility</li> <li>• Global reach</li> <li>• Oversight</li> <li>• Tradition (= image and goodwill)</li> <li>• Networking</li> <li>• Prolific scientific production</li> <li>• SHS = „hot topic“</li> <li>• Renowned and well known products</li> <li>• Stock of knowledge / intellectual capital</li> <li>• Transdisciplinarity</li> <li>• UNESCO's library and sales agents system</li> <li>• Cooperation with library and information domain</li> </ul>                                   | <p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of knowledge society</li> <li>• Rapidly changing information markets</li> <li>• New positioning of information intermediaries</li> <li>• Internet asks for 'authorities' and focal points</li> <li>• New cooperative publishing models</li> <li>• New informational structures</li> <li>• New markets</li> <li>• Appropriate and relevant topics</li> <li>• Globalisation asks for trustful partners</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Missing information culture</li> <li>• Missing recognition of information infrastructure (internal and external)</li> <li>• Not present in traditional information channels</li> <li>• Para-professionalism</li> <li>• Low visibility</li> <li>• Management / co-ordination / controlling</li> <li>• Lack of resources</li> <li>• Unclear user definition, lack of user orientation</li> <li>• Self sufficiency (just serving UNESCO itself)</li> <li>• Self referential language</li> </ul> | <p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technological development</li> <li>• Speed of changes in information behaviour</li> <li>• Commercialisation</li> <li>• Knowledge wasted</li> <li>• Muddling through → getting lost</li> <li>• Being 'forgotten'</li> <li>• Losing image – invisibility</li> <li>• Disconnected from UN system</li> <li>• Disconnected from information channels</li> <li>• Old boys network (closed groups / mandarins)</li> </ul>                |

structures of the knowledge society ask for global initiatives again. Internet communication on its own will remain chaotic to a certain extent and at some point a more centralised organisation is needed. **Under the threat of further global divide especially in the social sciences it would be a good opportunity for UNESCO to take a lead in developing these new structures for global knowledge sharing in the social sciences.**

<sup>16</sup> <http://arXiv.org>

<sup>17</sup> <http://repec.org/>

## 4 Suggestions for an Information, Documentation, and Publication Policy

### 4.1 Information Culture and Organisation

68. The sector should become a living example of an international body which takes the knowledge society seriously. The internal knowledge management should become a model for comparable units of this size and worldwide outreach. Capacity building, information and knowledge sharing on a global scale has to be supported by an excellent information culture and knowledge management at home<sup>18</sup>. The tradition of the sector, its “soft” topics and its existing strengths and achievements position the sector for an internal mission to establish a “best practice” in knowledge management which might serve as an example for the entire UNESCO. The recent organisational changes in the structure of the sector can be seen as an opportunity to go on with change management in order to improve (internal) informational support.

69. 31 C/4 § 35 reads *“In an effort to become a learning organization, UNESCO will move speedily to design, introduce and internalize knowledge management [...]”*. There is no better moment for the sector to fulfil this mission statement now. One could imagine new tools for internal communication and information sharing like special sector-wide meetings or an increased participation in systems like FABS or SISTER – or even institutionalised small talk could overcome some existing information barriers within the sector.

70. This asks for a high commitment of the management to change structures, procedures, and corporate cultures. One preliminary condition would be to describe a corporate identity for the sector and to try to overcome further fragmentation. Fragmentation of course is due to a strong programme orientation within UNESCO. Increasing organisational stability and at least clear commitment to matrix organisation should counterbalance pure programme orientation in order to improve overall effectiveness.

71. Clarification of the relationship between programme and management based structures also means increasing consciousness about the important role of programme supporting activities like internal information services and knowledge management. In the light of this evaluation, future policy should take more into account that skills and capacities of information professionals are recognised and para-professionalism is avoided (cf. § 54-55).

72. Increased awareness for internal knowledge management is not possible without a clear commitment to user orientation and basic marketing approaches. Quality management in service oriented businesses (even in non-profit organisations) always starts with a very far-reaching conception of user or client relationship. The first client is not outside the premises but, in fact, the colleague next door. Scientific knowledge production and dissemination has a lot of internal and external clients: colleagues, stakeholders, actual “users”. Defining them, profiling the main targets and still serving the overall mission of a whole organisational unit is a big challenge for management and for everybody in the sector.

73. Basic tools for internal and external knowledge management are classic public relation instruments like newsletters (print or online) and websites. These cannot be neglected in the light of the above-mentioned mission statement in 31 C/4 § 34. Instead they will evolve to focal points

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<sup>18</sup> The chapter 31 C/4 § 33 a) – c) on “Excellence and Innovation” gives the exact wording for this argument.

for internal and external information flows. From an organisational point of view they also require to be streamlined and integrated with other information activities: they will be an integral part of the best practice scheme for information management of the sector.

## 4.2 Information Services

74. The cross-cutting theme of 31 C/4 § 34 “*the contribution of the information and communication technologies to the development of education, science and culture and the construction of a knowledge society*” should be the programmatic basis for fostering the sector’s genuine information activities. As explained here (§§ 26 – 31 and 50 – 52), the sector has a tradition and a positive image with its information services. Further reducing the role of UNESCO in the field of global social science information services would be difficult to justify to the scientific community and the stakeholders. The moving of the *International Bibliography of the Social Sciences* to a national (English speaking) institution may already represent a harm to a global social science information management which tries to overcome digital divide.

75. 31 C/5 § 03300 (a) ii reads: “*strengthen the knowledge base, professional infrastructure, and policy relevance of the social sciences by improving access to the results of social science research, by networking and capacity building [...]*”. This sentence should be read not only with the specific plan of action (03302) in mind; it should be taken more seriously (and more literally) in the light of the above-mentioned cross-cutting theme. “*Improving access to the results of social science research*” should not only point to the *International Social Science Journal* despite its good performances. The role of the sector for global social science information management should be recognised by strengthening a system like DARE in its role as a global monopoly for counterbalancing information divide for the social sciences as a whole. Further specialising DARE to some specific sub topics of the social sciences (hardly explainable to the potential user, cf. § 115) would destroy its customer base and possible impact. (If the phrasing in 31 C/5 03302 “*the further development of the DARE data bank also focussing on the Organization’s priorities*” is supposed to mean “reducing it further just to its sub-specialisations or database-offsprings recently mounted on the website” one should better close it down right away.<sup>19</sup>)

76. The existing external information services like the DARE database, its offsprings, and the MOST clearinghouses are an achieved capital of the sector which should not be neglected. Here too, inner-organisational streamlining of all existing services and products will coincide with the overall mission of becoming a “best practice” example for information management within UNESCO. A lot of synergies for increased professionalism can certainly be found. Even more opportunities lie in the rapid developments of ICTs which should be used for the information services. This not only is a challenge for the learning organisation but also the possibility for applying the new technologies in a way of serving as an example for the emerging knowledge societies. It is the best moment to invest the existing strengths in the ongoing revolution of scientific information flow in the world. The historic situation is not very far from the situation which lead UNESCO to “invent” the IBSS half a century ago.

77. The policy should be to continue an overall information service which serves global social sciences as a whole. A service which is a natural part in the programme of UNESCO for the topic of global social science knowledge sharing and improving knowledge access. This is a double

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<sup>19</sup> in 31 C/5 T03302, p. 35 the Documentation Centre does not exist anymore either, although DARE is mentioned in the preceding text. In T03301 the tiniest publication on the MOST website is mentioned. This is symptomatic for the misunderstanding of information work.

challenge: understanding and implementing new internet technologies will not be a easy task and cannot be done without intersectoral support; to explain the advantages of an information service which is at the forefront of the technological development to stakeholders has always been a difficult venture but it should be possible in the light of UNESCO's cross cutting theme.

### 4.3 Publications

78. Publishing in general is at a historical turning point. Here, too, the opportunities are obvious: **electronic publishing will be the basis of future scientific communication.** A lot of synergies are to be expected with the general information services because publishing will be less static and independent but increasingly integrated in technology-based co-operative structures. A close co-operation of most publishing activities with the documentation centre and all other information technology centred activities in the sector is therefore unavoidable. There is already a close relationship in all activities concerning the dissemination of information (database-, journal-, book-publishing) and there will be a continuous merging of tasks and increased requirements concerning information processing (structuring, metadata etc.).

79. The sector's 'best practice' will therefore be to decrease paper-like grey literature production and to shift more to database structured dynamic publishing for all texts which are research oriented working papers. UNESCO should in this field continue to assume its role of an adopter of new technologies which was successful with the MOST clearinghouse. The clearinghouse concept with static html-pages has now evolved to the concept of portals for dynamic and heterogeneous database systems. UNESCO is in the position of setting standards in social scientific publishing with new technologies. The multitude of co-operative publishing partners and research networks UNESCO has would quickly spread the idea of a social science e-print archive established by the sector. This would bear the invaluable advantage of establishing a model and a centralised information service which is not threatened by commercialisation; instead it could remain the independent source the social science research needs. In other words: the abundant grey literature publication activities of the sector should become the global e-print archive for the social sciences which is missed badly. At least the sector's publications should take part in every possible new Open Archive Initiative<sup>20</sup> for the social sciences – if it does not establish a central service on its own.<sup>21</sup>

80. On the one hand, the policy should go to establishing a new model for e-print publication and, on the other hand, all other publishing not directly addressing the academic community should gain an even higher profile in co-operation with professional publishers. This asks for concentration and specific target definitions for a small number of priority publications. The percentage figures in the "Modalities of action" (31 C/5 Technical details) should be read more qualitatively (e.g. T03201 "Publications 21%). Some of the divisions already follow this policy.

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<sup>20</sup> <http://www.openarchives.org>. The "SSRN Electronic Library" system for instance (<http://papers.ssrn.com>) could evolve to a good service for social scientists if it would remain free-of-charge. Examples from related disciplines are "RePEc – Research Papers in Economics" (<http://repec.org/>) or "GetCited – The online academic database" (<http://www.getcited.org>).

<sup>21</sup> One example for an electronic web-based publication offered by an IGO is *SourceOECD* ensuring a high standard service for its documents. For this service, OECD has chosen to co-operate with a private partner because "its information should be properly published and indexed, i.e. searchable, to be truly useful and that providing access though an aggregator service [...] provides the level of access required": cf. Sheehy, Helen M.; Severson, Andrea: *Source OECD: a new model for Delivering IGO information to libraries*. In: *Journal of Government Information*, 27 (2000), 491-494, 492,

MOST and SRP are about to adopt this strategy, too. When UNESCO sets as its objective to be policy relevant, bridging the gap between research and policy is even more important<sup>22</sup>.

81. Publications should generally address a wider public. The observed self orientation of publishing is at least not efficient. Good publications with wide impact will have their influence on the direct stakeholders, too – if not more – than publications just aiming at them (Nat. Commissions, ADG, IGC etc.).

## 5 Practical Recommendations

### 5.1 Organization and Management

82. Concentrate information, documentation, and publication activities in one organisational unit as “information task force” reporting directly to the ADG. By this means avoid to give information processing tasks to non-professionals and improve commitment and recognition of people working in the information support.

83. Best solution would be to even concentrate this task force in terms of space.

84. Use more professional information skills (editorial work, information channels, professional metadata, knowledge management etc.).

85. Use this task force to streamline production procedures and presentation of all publications (print and electronic) of the sector (e.g. create a web entry page for the sector).

86. Implement a knowledge management strategy for the whole sector with the support of the information task force – inside the sector as well as in relation to outside partners (field offices, networks etc.).

87. Guarantee internal knowledge transfer and organisational learning.

### 5.2 User Orientation

88. For each product or service (internal or external), consider establishing a basic marketing strategy (product definition, market segmentation, distribution channels etc.)

89. Adopt a clear strategy of target orientation. Set priorities concerning user groups and how to reach them. Adopt a mediatorial strategy (concentrate on target oriented presentation styles).

90. Develop an overall corporate design for the sector in order to increase identification of staff with the sector, foster recognition of its products, and enhance its image.

91. Take public relation more seriously (more visible print- or e-newsletters in an attractive outfit and write more *about* your own achievements in professional channels).

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<sup>22</sup> Weiss, Carol Hirschon: Research-policy linkages: how much influence does social science research have? In: *World Social Science Report 1999*, hrsg. v. Ali Kazancigil und David Makinson, Paris: UNESCO, 1999, pp. 194-205

92. Serve more systematically the traditional information channels like libraries, databases, gateways, library service providers (like OCLC, Ingenta etc.).
93. Give DARE a new name and visible profile.

### **5.3 Technology**

94. Integrate more new information methodologies used by the scientific communities (listserv, Open Source publishing, Open Archives Initiative (OAI)).
95. Use “deep web” technologies in order to automate information collection and dissemination: concentrate on internet publication for databases – with internet technology (XML, PHP, etc.).
96. Create a social science information portal which integrates the “knowledge transfer and networking tool DARE” and the e-print archive of the sector in a dynamic way using XML/RDF, Z39.50 and the OAI protocol.

### **5.4 Production**

97. DARE: use self-input and update procedures for data collection.
98. Produce print or other static media only “on demand” and concentrate on web delivery.
99. Establish distinctive book series with long term perspectives and high profile editorial board instead of multiple grey literature production.
100. Establish a model e-print archive for social and human sciences or develop existing ones co-operatively so as to prevent further global divide.

# Annexes

## 1 Detailed Analysis of Different Kinds of Products and Services (with Material Taken From the Analysis of Information Gathered)

### 1.1 Documentation and Information Services

#### 1.1.1 The SHS Documentation Centre

101. The “Social and Human Science Documentation Centre” has witnessed a varied and very substantive history since it was involved in the production of the *International Bibliography of the Social Science* (IBSS) together with the “International Committee for Social Science Documentation” (ICSSD)<sup>23</sup>. At the beginning (1952), the Documentation Centre was even called “Unesco Social Science Clearing House” and one should consider the important role it had for the development of the social sciences in the World after World War II. The IBSS can also look back on a very turbulent history but fortunately it has found its place for over 10 years now at the London School of Economics. Its continuing role for the Social Sciences cannot be better documented than by the following statement made by a user during the recent IBSS evaluation<sup>24</sup>:

*I think that you [i.e. IBSS] are a very important complement to the ISI SSCI. Given that it has a US bias - it is very important to have you working on covering the material that they do not cover - although the overlap is important also. As a librarian my instincts would be to go to SSCI for US material - and IBSS for everything else. It is also very useful that you have coverage for much older material. Having got used to using online databases it is very hard work to go back to using printed bibliographies for older material [...]*<sup>25</sup>.

The Documentation Centre must still be seen in this tradition. Unlike other UNESCO documentation centres, it has its roots in a distinct programmatic mission of fostering global exchange of social scientific knowledge beyond Anglo-American dominance in the information business.

102. Despite its designation, the “Social and Human Science Documentation Centre” depends administratively on one division (SRP) but actually serves the whole sector. Its main activity is, besides general information and documentation services, the production of the database DARE created in 1974. DARE served at its beginnings as a “typesetting tool” for a great variety of reports and directories and since 1992 it has been accessible as an online database. Apart from this, the documentation centre conserves its function as the sector’s clearinghouse which gives it the opportunity to produce the internal bibliography called *SHS/DC Information Note* as from 1975.

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<sup>23</sup> There is still a close relationship between ICSSD and the sector, especially the MOST programme. The ICSSD webpage states: “The Committee’s endeavours tie in logically with the aims of UNESCO’s MOST Programme.” (<http://www.unesco.org/most/icssd.htm>). Why this is the case and where this has been accomplished is not mentioned.

<sup>24</sup> undertaken by the IBSS Editorial Office in March 2001, cf. [http://www.lse.ac.uk/IBSS/IBSS\\_User\\_Survey\\_Report.pdf](http://www.lse.ac.uk/IBSS/IBSS_User_Survey_Report.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> The “ISI SSCI” is the *Social Science Citation Index* produced by the Philadelphia based Institute of Scientific Information and is by far the world biggest and most important database for the social sciences. The fact that this user (an information professional) compares IBSS directly to this quasi monopoly is quite remarkable.



The collection of documents for and from the sector makes the centre evolve to a library and even an archive with all its components. As early as 1984 it started to develop research skills for information retrieval in international databases and to provide service to the divisions and programmes of the sector in terms of database production. It is used internally and externally and suffers quite substantially from continuous resource reductions. As it serves as a library and archive especially its facilities would need more consideration – it desperately needs more space. It has a systematic cooperation with other information units within UNESCO but insists on its uniqueness concerning the exhaustiveness of UNESCO social science documents since its beginnings.

103. Its traditional standing, its reputation among outside users and its positive image among most internal professionals contrast sharply with its managerial possibilities and responsibilities. Although it is a distinguishable independent unit, it apparently does not have any impact on mission definitions as per C4 and C5 concerning its own activities, cannot discuss monitoring criteria for its performance measurement and does not even have real impact on marketing for its own products<sup>26</sup>.

104. In former times, one of the Centre's primary tasks was to support the organisation of meetings. Nowadays the division does not require this support any more because the nature of conference organising has changed with the new tools of the internet. As a consequence, the Documentation Centre concentrated on the invention of new products like the “*Social Science Periodicals Online*” or new database extracts for other units. The Documentation Centre apparently tries to adapt to the changing environment. The problem is mainly a lack of consciousness about its mission and its possibilities within the sector, within UNESCO and within the Social Sciences. (And it could do more if its achievements were recognised.)

105. The support for global or regional networking between social science information professionals was at times one of its most prominent tasks accomplished in conjunction with ICSSD. Due to several circumstances, this is not done anymore. Nevertheless, there are still regional information oriented networks in several parts of the world (e.g. the former APINESS in the Asia-Pacific, CLACSO activities in Latin-America etc.) which should either be supported by UNESCO and/or used as resource for the central services. Perhaps for similar reasons the cooperation with regional centres or offices has been lost over the years. In this respect, the strategic position of a clearinghouse in the midst of a global network is not fulfilled anymore.

106. The documentation Centre provides a small promotional leaflet which gives an overview of its activities. Neither the leaflet nor the URL or web page reveal the implementation of the Centre in the SRP division or any connection with the sector.

### **1.1.2 Other Documentation Services**

107. There are several other documentation activities within the sector which are done mostly part-time by young non-information professionals – but there is a great willingness to co-operate with the Documentation Centre “if the management structure was clearer” (internal statement). The information related activities are not considered “professional” enough. They are mostly

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<sup>26</sup> A guide for this “new“ thinking could be: Muet, Florence; Salaün, Jean-Michel: *Stratégie marketing des services d'information : bibliothèques et centres de documentation*, Paris: Electre - Editions du Cercle de la Librairie, 2001 and of course the classic: Kotler, Philip; Andreasen, Alan R.: *Strategic Marketing for Nonprofit Organizations*. 1996. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. - Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1996.

delegated to new staff and responsibilities change too often as this kind of involvement in the sector's activities are not rewarding enough. It would be important to develop better incentives for people working for documentation and information because this is the basis of the UNESCO work. The respect and esteem for these activities should rise internally.

108. Documentation is most often understood as “service for collecting and delivering the own documents” and answering telephone or e-mail requests for specific documents for instance. In this respect it is indeed more a secretarial job. The division of Ethics, for example, has a lot of requests from a larger public: position papers and reports of specific topics. More fundamental questions from outside are relayed to the professionals of the division which is a good division of labour. Nevertheless, the importance of record management and professional track keeping of documents is underestimated. Some (internal) professionals complain about a lack of systematic overview on the documents produced by their units because of a lack of time for doing their own proper archiving and records management. Some documents are stored in quite amazing places (such as corridors, book shelves in an office of some other professional etc.). Obviously, there is a problem with space to properly stock and organise the documents.

109. There have been several attempts of “knowledge transfer” (technical advice and training) by the professionals of the Documentation Centre to documentation units of other divisions supporting them, for example, in the production of their own databases. In most cases, this did not reveal as very successful or efficient due to a lack of basic understanding and support or because of changing responsibilities.

### **1.1.3 Information services**

110. The Documentation Centre itself provides information services for internal and external users. External users are specialists (e.g. PhD students) working on topics covered by the sector. The users do not make a difference in the divisions' topics and mostly they go to the Documentation Centre directly. Usage is quite high. There are several users a day who work on the premises for more than an hour. They use the collection of specialised documents, books, and reference works which they do not find in the central library. Onsite usage by people coming into to the documentation centre as well as remote service (via e-mail or telephone) are time consuming for the staff. Users need professional assistance in their own information gathering or they ask for information searches in internal or external databases done by the documentalists.

111. Programme specialists from the sector also perceive the information services very positively although not everyone uses them. Database searches, bibliographic listings, expert search, website references, referral to external databases, press reviews (Ethics division) are quite frequently asked and most of the interviewees we could talk to were very satisfied with the service received. Some professionals let their assistants do the searches. One problem seems to be that some are not quite aware of the possibilities the Documentation Centre has got and sometimes they do not even know about concrete existing offers (database on mission reports, on MOST documents e.g.). The internal service orientation is not quite clear and internal communication about their products and services should be increased. It was suggested by an interviewee that the documentation centre should do more training in information searching for the professionals. Quote: “[like in university libraries where] *they help the researcher to formulate the question; in the sector's documentation centre, one has to formulate a very focused and precise question*“. The most important task libraries and information centres assume in the information society now is indeed

user training and assistance of users in their own information retrieval activities and the sector's information professionals should not stay behind this general trend<sup>27</sup>.

### 1.1.4 Databases

112. Many databases are produced within the sector. Unfortunately the term database itself leads to a certain confusion: a very vague notion about databases can be observed. Some just call mailing address lists a database, others an HTML listing on a website. A database as a means of information gathering and distribution should also include the operational aspect of the information management like the collection development policies, supervised field structures and indexing guidelines, active choice of distribution media and varied distribution channels. An internal collection of data (in MS Access e.g.) used as an instrument for other internal management activities should not be called a database otherwise one might call every collection of files on a hard disk a database.

#### 1.1.4.1 "DARE Social Science Databank"

113. DARE is the flagship among the databases. Apart from the two 'internal' databases UNESBIB, UNESDOC and the enormous *Index Translationum* produced on an international co-operative basis, DARE is considered as one of the four big databases of the entire UNESCO organisation. In view of the fact that the other three are some kind of "by-products" of other activities

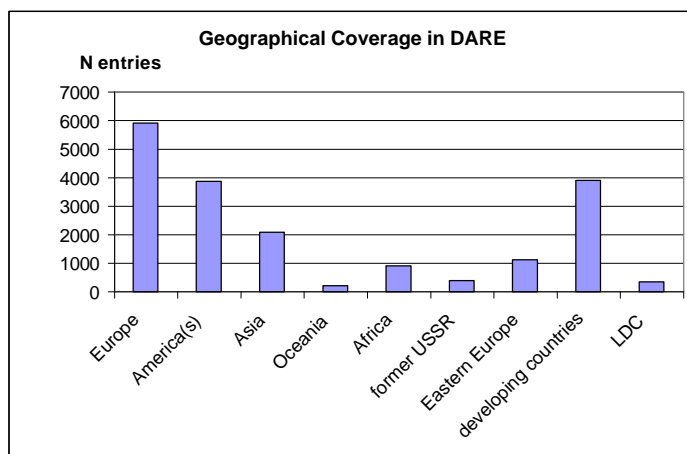


Figure 1: Regions represented in DARE  
(any field = CY, CD-ROM version)

one may see DARE as UNESCO's most important stand-alone database<sup>28</sup>. This database comprises more than 12,000 records on social science institutions, organisations, experts, and periodicals worldwide. The combination of these somewhat different types of records makes DARE unique in the World, especially in the Social Sciences. Like its former counterpart IBSS it has a large disciplinary coverage ranging from philosophy to human rights, international law, peace research, and sociology etc. Its geographical coverage is also unique and it can claim to be a global information service.

114. The database not only has a high quality content but also a sophisticated structure providing an enormous wealth of information for every item: it is a rich database in terms of content (and quantity) and in terms of informational depth. The database is fed by questionnaires and by intellectual updating from external sources (like websites). Random checks in comparable directories like *World of Learning*, *Ulrichs International Periodicals Directory* or the *Gale Directory of Special Libraries* show an acceptable coverage and a high quality of the information (in terms of

<sup>27</sup> cf. Simpson, Antony E.: Information-Finding and the Education of Scholars: Teaching Electronic Access in Disciplinary Context. In: *Behavioral & Social Sciences Librarian*, 16, 2 (1998), 1-17.

<sup>28</sup> There are, of course, HEDBIB, ICOMMOS, the statistical databases etc. but they are generated in different organisational settings or are sometimes just library catalogues. The vagueness of the term "database" is already reflected in UNESDATA: the "Directory of UNESCO Databases" (DIT-99/WS/5).

correctness). The fact that it is a “referral database” (i.e. referring to information producing entities and not to information packages themselves, like books or articles) explains its comparable small size and slow growth – compared to IBSS, for instance, which has passed the 1 million records line. Unlike bibliographical databases the main characteristics of this kind of database is not growth but currency. A tremendous quantity of resources goes into updating, correcting, and checking the records and to inputting from revised questionnaires. DARE serves as an example and as a model for this kind of referral database. Its structure and its mode of operation are actually copied to other newly created databases like the Database of Bioethics Institutions.

115. The database is running in a Winisis environment and is distributed by means of print-outs (the “Directories” which in fact could be produced “on-demand”), on diskette, on the CD-ROM “UNESCO Databases”, and on the web. (For a long time it has also been distributed via the Database provider ECHO, the “European Union Host Organisation”, which does not exist anymore). Therefore it has always been at the technological forefront in terms of distribution. Access and input to it is free (at least in the internet version). Real usage statistics for DARE were not available but the “Related Links” page on the MOST web pages generated about 2942 hits for “./most/dare.htm” in 2000<sup>29</sup> (a page with general information about DARE and a link to it) which is an indication for a high level of interest – but not yet usage.

116. Figures 1 and 2 reveal an acceptable awareness of the database but a rather astonishingly low usage by respondents of the questionnaire. This is underlined by some comments from interviews with external users which state that they know DARE but, in fact, do not know how to use it properly, or worse: have used it sometimes and were disappointed of not finding what they sought. In fact, this is a major problem which should not be underestimated. An information service may be of highest quality and importance but when the user does not understand its high-quality features or even cannot use them it will not reach its purpose.

117. This definitely is a marketing problem which cannot be discussed in the required depth here. Let me just mention some points: the product definition as such is not quite clear to the new user. It starts with the brand name: an international database which does not have a self-explaining name is very unusual. A potential user should easily recognise its content as soon as s/he sees its name: like “Social Science Citation Index” or “International Bibliography of the Social Sciences”; the first dealing with “Citations” the other being “International”. This deficiency could be compensated by verbal explanations at the database interfaces. But this is not done either: the database remains a black box for potential users who do not use it on a regular basis. In fact, the scope and content of DARE is not easily explained because of its roots, i. e. the mere production of specialised print directories. More attention should be paid to explaining the content, scope and uses of DARE to the targeted users.

118. For example, there are 166 “political science specialists”, 167 “sociology specialists” and 36 “philosophers” to be found in DARE, yet it is not clear on which basis they have been selected. Any ordinary user could remark that s/he knows some other specialist of worldwide importance in his field that needed to be included. Therefore, a clear and detailed statement of a collection development policy would be of great help.

119. The interfaces also lack marketing and user-orientation. (Yet again, this can unfortunately not be dealt with in detail here.) The CD-ROM version and the Internet version are anything but user-friendly. From a technical point of view, the CD-ROM version is not stable (at least not un-

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<sup>29</sup> DIT : Consultation externe des pages du Web. Répartition par URLs [most] 2000, p. 13

der MS Windows) and the Internet version has rather long response times. For end users who have some experience in information retrieval on the internet, error tolerance of both interfaces is far below standard expectations. “Smelser”, e.g., is not retrieved unless truncated “Smelser\*” (which is fine in traditional database setting on a host but not in the internet environment). The assisted search mode (non expert search) as well as the internet interface do not allow “basic index” / “free text” searching but only pre-defined, field oriented searches that are not easily understandable and rather complicated to manipulate. On the other hand, for the expert, a really field oriented search mode with the total wealth of its information depth is not possible either. Another problem is the presentation of the results (hit lists). Their user friendliness (usability, readability) could – and should – easily be increased with a little bit of screen layout.

120. Some comments from external users indicated a deception in terms of currency that prevented them from re-using DARE: “*If I have found something, it says: ‘last updated 1995’*”. Apparently, over the years DARE has gained the image of not being current which is not quite true but user expectations and user satisfaction are more based on feelings than on reality. Updating is a time-consuming process and in the last months much effort has been put into increasing the currency of the database. It should be explicitly explained to internal and external users what level of currency the database has reached and why some parts of the database seem to be old.

121. At the same time, more efforts should go into facilitating and automating the updating process. The distribution of the questionnaire via the web is a first step to a procedure which is quite common with other similar databases<sup>30</sup>: the model of self-input and online-update by the recorded institutions or persons themselves. This procedure may sensibly alleviate the input and information gathering process, however, it does not relieve staff of the chores of correcting, checking and indexing. The integrity of data is sufficiently guaranteed by distributing a password for writing into the database and by keeping separate files for updating and for external information retrieval<sup>31</sup>.

122. The success of the print-outs in specialised directories shows that there is a need and an acceptance of the kind of information service DARE offers. The World Directories have essentially the same information but, by definition, they avoid the two major problems of a database like DARE: they tell directly what their content is – by means of the title: *World Directory of Peace Research and Training Institutions* e.g., and they are more or less self-explanatory in their usage because of the traditional format as a book that everybody can manipulate because of centuries-old conventions of structure and design. A database is always a black box which needs a lot of explanation and guidance for the user. The always complicated relationship between a producer and a client of a product needs even more attention when it is an information product on new media. The central problem of quality management in general is the gap between expectations of potential users or clients and the actual realisation of a product or service. DARE should concentrate on this aspect more thoroughly.

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<sup>30</sup> Examples for this procedure for data collection may be the IFDO templates, HoPEC (<http://netec.mcc.ac.uk/HoPEc/>) or the German Forschungsinformationssystem Sozialwissenschaften FORIS (German speaking social science research projects: <http://www.gesis.org/Information/FORIS/Erhebung/index.htm>) part of ERGO the European Research project databases network.

<sup>31</sup> The practice of co-operative database production has had a successful tradition with the library union catalogues for several decades now.

123. First steps in this direction are made by the new strategy of separately publishing parts of the database like the *Human Rights Institutes Database*<sup>32</sup> and the *Peace Institutes Database*<sup>33</sup> recently mounted on the websites. Here, the database is presented in a more specific form with an identifiable content and also with a better interface. This strategy of sub-specialisations comparable to the print issues should be developed further while paying attention to the overall coherence of the whole database. Every other export or offspring (as the *Database of Bioethics Institutions* recently started by the division HPE) should be kept in close connection to DARE in order to guarantee overall integrity of the data.

124. But there are more possibilities of synergy and cooperation. Just some examples: DARE is recording the UNESCO chairs which are already documented in the UNITWIN database: here could be a wider co-operation or just a link to this other database; DARE sometimes gives bibliographical indications to publications from authors within the UNESCO context that are mentioned in the UNESBIB/UNESDOC databases and/or have their full text online here or at another UNESCO server like MOST discussion papers etc. The integration of WWW-addresses in the database is already a good feature but the general innovation trends in database business go to even more networking and to full text offer as a standard. For DARE too, there are still opportunities for enhancement in this sense.

#### **1.1.4.2 Other Databases**

125. *Social Science Online Periodicals* (SSOP): in a strict sense this is not a database but a structured listing of links. Dynamically generated web pages from a php-database, in fact, would make production, presentation, or navigation of this information collection much easier. I am not sure if the good scores in fig. 1 and 2 really mean this product (despite the observed correlation with the DARE scores). Nobody I asked personally (external to the secretariat) knew about this special collection of social science electronic journals, most pointed to several other listings of this kind (SOSIG, WWW VL, SocioGuide etc.). Nearly every specialised gateway has a listing of more or less free electronic journals and most of the bigger library services which mention journals now integrate direct access links in their catalogues (OCLC, Ingenta, EZB Regensburg etc.). On the other hand, the collected data are not to be found in DARE despite the fact that a specific record type for periodicals exists in this database.

126. The MOST Databases<sup>34</sup> on *Religious Rights*, on *Linguistics Rights*, and on *Best Practices on indigenous knowledge* and on *poverty alleviation* are no databases either although their information collection is based in parts on structured questionnaires. They are very informative data collections thoroughly prepared in conjunction with specific MOST projects. They are linked by approximately 50 other webpages in the world<sup>35</sup> and get about 3000-6000 hits a year on their main webpage. The traffic statistics of the specific records are quite low. Nevertheless, some substantive links point to them like those coming from Yahoo or the Scout Report. The most visited item in the collection of *Linguistic Rights* is a long HTML full-text document, an article by Fernand de Varennes (To speak or not to speak. The Rights of Persons Belonging to Linguis-

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<sup>32</sup> also called: "Database on Human Rights Research and Training Institutions" located at:  
<http://intranet2.unesco.org/fileh/HRWEBintro.shtml>

<sup>33</sup> <http://intranet2.unesco.org/peace/PeaceWEBintro.shtml>

<sup>34</sup> They are sometimes called "clearinghouse" sometimes "register" which indicates already an uncertainty of the term "database".

<sup>35</sup> Google "link: search". A lot of them are internal to UNESCO. DARE in comparison shows ca. 170 and SSOP ca. 80; MOST ca. 1540.

tic Minorities<sup>36</sup>). A fact which indicates that the web is mostly used for full-text searches and less for sophisticated searches in structured data collections. Structured data collections and databases must be marketed much more actively – and still need to be integrated in formal information structures like database hosts or library systems.

127. Some other SHS databases (mission reports, stock of docs etc.) are for internal information management and are not part of the scope of this evaluation.

## **1.2 Information, Communication, and Knowledge Sharing**

128. A general question in information science is whether informal information networking (knowledge sharing, capacity building) or formalised information services (documentation, databases etc.) are more effective for information and knowledge transfer. Official UNESCO policy developments give the impression that the former is preferred. The irregularity of the newsletters' appearance may be another symptom for that. More and more information related activities rely on less structured processes and settings. But this corresponds only in parts with the actual user behaviour (fig. 7). It has often been said that in times of information overflow more information guidance is necessary. The concept of a (paper-based) clearinghouse was an answer to this need of information structures in former times but the question is whether this can be totally replaced by the websites, nowadays also referred to as clearinghouses. The sector's websites in general are not very structured and show only little information processing like cataloguing, classifying, indexing. Yet, more return on investment (ROI) may be reached by formalising the information process. This is especially the case for an organisation with worldwide impact and outreach: informal channels of information and knowledge distribution are effective in smaller organisational units – the wider and the more heterogeneous the target audience, the more the information services have to be formalised. This is not a contradiction to the observation that especially in the social and human sciences, the information habits of the individuals rely more on personal and informal contacts. For an information-producing agency, however, it is more effective to provide the infrastructure for independent networking than to do networking on its own.

### **1.2.1 UNESCO Chairs**

129. Networking and capacity building is one of the key topics of UNESCO programmes. It is remarkable in this context to observe a continuous reduction of information products and activities mentioned in the respective paragraphs in the C/5 documents where under the topic of "knowledge sharing" information activities had been mentioned. However, the chairs are known for using DARE, they do their own publications with their universities or even contribute to clearinghouse or database activities at the Paris site. They provide important knowledge input for the sector and they do their own networking in the form of meetings or conferences. There is still a great deal of unused potential for professional knowledge management and a lot of information synergies to explore. Collecting information from them and defining them more explicitly as a central user group for the information services would be very useful.

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<sup>36</sup> <http://www.unesco.org/most/ln2pol3.htm> – generating 4472 hits.

### 1.2.2 Clearinghouses

130. In the age of the internet one of the most important image building instruments is the institution's website. The website is either visited directly through a known or decipherable URL like "unesco.org" or "unesco.org/philosophy/" or it is found "by chance" through internet search engines. Another possibility is to come through a link on another webpage which might lead you either to a homepage (main- or index-page) or directly to a special item concerned by the other page. In this latter case there is at least some guidance about quality or contents of the linked page. The other two possibilities of contact with the institutions webpages are more problematic. Especially the encounter by means of a search engine has the problem that it is practically uncontrollable by the webpage producer. Most searches in a search engine are not for finding an institution ("UNESCO" or "MOST") but searches for topics or names of persons. Therefore the first encounter with an SHS webpage will be some specific file in the depth of the site and normally not the entrance page. The chance to encounter a file from one of the SHS websites through a search engine is the higher, the more text it contains because search engines are solely text-oriented. Catalogues, portals, or gateways in contrast are concept-based and therefore bear a greater chance of finding quality information. In addition, these concepts result from intellectual information processing which makes them even more reliable.

131. This has to be kept in mind when one reads the website usage study carried out by Médiamétrie<sup>37</sup>. Their results – in my opinion – underline the importance of professional information services especially in the SHS sector. They found out that:

- Most of the website visitors come for the first time (being rather new to the web in general) and most of them come by the means of search engines. (This means that they are normally lost when they come just on one page without navigation tool and identification on the page.)
- Most users from Africa are becoming aware of the UNESCO Websites via UNESCO Publications (I assume mostly by *Sources* – South American users are informed about UNESCO via television and publicity to a greater extent than others. This stresses the importance of general public relations and visibility to the greater public.)
- Most users use the sites rarely – once a month or less. (How are they informed about news?)
- The information sought on UNESCO sites is mainly "education" with 57% of the respondents who want info in this domain, 38% in culture and 34% in social and human sciences. Among nine possible answers – the rest mentioned less frequently – African and Latino-American users are quite pronounced in this opinion – but Africans prefer by far Communication and Information in addition. (It is interesting to note that the online questionnaire was *not* placed on SHS pages but only on pages from other sectors. This means that there is a big demand for SHS information.)
- 24% of the visitors are searching for documentation services and 40% are searching for official documents. 30% for news, 28% for statistics – the first four places from 13 possible answers – the others less frequent - African and Latino-American users are quite pronounced in this statement. (The web is used for information gathering!)
- 59% of the respondents see "contributing to peace and human development" as the main role to be played by UNESCO. 51% see the "promotion of basic education" as an important role, and still 47% "improving access to information and knowledge" as an important task for UNESCO. The first three places from 8 possible answers but mainly place 3 is

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<sup>37</sup> « Enquête en ligne concernant les utilisateurs du site web de l'UNESCO ». Etude Médiamétrie janvier 2001



coming from European respondents – the first two are expressed mainly by African and Latino-American users! (The possible product would be: “social science information products”, especially remarkable the high score of place 3.)

- Internet users consider UNESCO useful for promoting ethical standards and values (41%) and in a second dimension they find it useful as a centre for exchanging information and experiences. Position no. 2 from 7 possible answers – but this again is more an opinion from the western world.
- The users would like to have more interactivity via the web and via bulletin boards. Expressed mainly by African and Latino-American users.

132. Missing internet connectivity has been described as one of the main problems of the global digital divide (besides commercialisation and copyright restrictions). Empirical data does not necessarily confirm this. Practice of other IGOs shows confidence in reaching even people which normally are not integrated in academic communities. FAO e.g. uses the web for grassroots communication programmes that are supposed to reach rural people directly. All IGOs in a recent survey undertaken by Helen Sheehy and Andrea Severson see the web as “one method of reaching a broader cross-section of their primary users in a timely manner. Most hope to reap some economies in their publications programs, and to ease internal communications.”<sup>38</sup> This is the case with the websites within the sector and one can observe a very intense activity of website building and information gathering for the webpages.

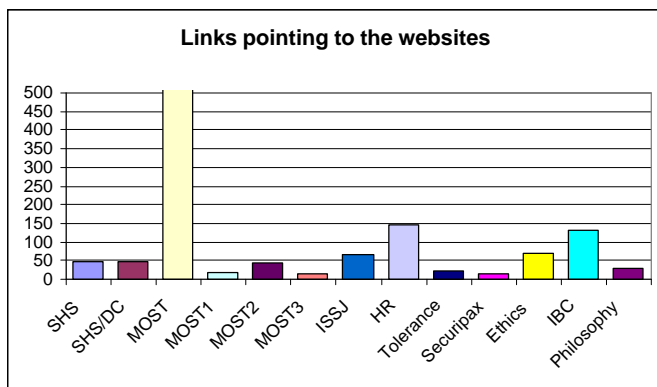


Figure 2: Web links from other sites pointing the SHS websites (“link: search” in Google). MOST has 1540 links but with a high proportion of internal links)

133. Nearly every “topic” or unit in the sector has its own website but there is no real central entry point for the sector. At least none which is maintained under the sector’s editorial responsibility<sup>39</sup>. Some websites have reached a considerable size like the MOST website which consists of over 2500 files. The sites vary considerably in their design and even in the technical approach: some use frames, some use more graphics than others do, some are just listings. The problematic dimension of a lacking consciousness about visibility and corporate identity is reflected by the websites in a very practical

sense: there is a multitude of webpages which are not interrelated and do not bear any mention of belonging to the sector even if there are possible synergies to be expected for instance by linking to the documentation centre as a central information spot. When a user (mostly by chance) finds a specific homepage of one activity, most of the times it is not clear where he or she has stranded. Sometimes the only indication for the location is the URL which is, as mentioned above, not always self-explaining.

<sup>38</sup> Sheehy, Helen M.; Severson, Andrea: IGO Information Policy and The WWW. A Comparison of Five Organizations. In: *Journal of Government Information*, 26, 4 (1999), 413-418

<sup>39</sup> “SHS” in fig. 2: <http://www.unesco.org/general/eng/programmes/social/> does not mention APS, STS, DEM, the publications unit and certainly other sectors’ activities I do not know of.

134. A related problem is the navigation within the webpages themselves: there is a clear lack of concern about user orientation and navigational tools on the webpages. In terms of web usability there is definitely too much quantity- and not enough quality-concern. Every division has its own webmaster and some professionals who mount their own sites. Most webmasters we spoke to expressed their concern about missing streamlining and integrating efforts but said they would not have enough time to do more website management. One gets the impression that files are just “dumped on the net”<sup>40</sup> as some internet specialists state, and that this holds true for many websites of the sector. Of course, this does not apply to all of them but it is a fact that all files are static HTML or pdf-files and most of the time information structuring (indexing with metadata e.g.) is very limited.

135. Most of the webmasters do their website building on a part time basis so that time for editorial or cooperative work is quite limited. There is some cooperation with the central services – apparently more than within the sector. Here we found the same situation as for the different documentation services in the sector: fragmentation and missing cooperation – at least at the level of the organisational structures and the overall management. At the moment one gains the impression that people are just “muddling through” despite some very good performances. Yet, it is time to take “internet public relations” and “internet publishing” more seriously by establishing a sector-wide webteam composed of technical specialists, editorial specialists and a manager.

136. Some webmasters take monitoring and user orientation seriously (e.g. the MOST sites have counters and mention quite often their awards from global internet evaluation services like the Scout Reports). Some webmasters explicitly are not concerned about their users: “*not my responsibility nor the division’s to develop visibility and impact of our activities. This should be done by the Public Relations department*” (This, in fact, is a misunderstanding of the basic function of the internet as a communications’ media compared to a mere information tool.) Some webpages do not even make simple tests by means of different browsers or screen resolutions checking their technical usability.

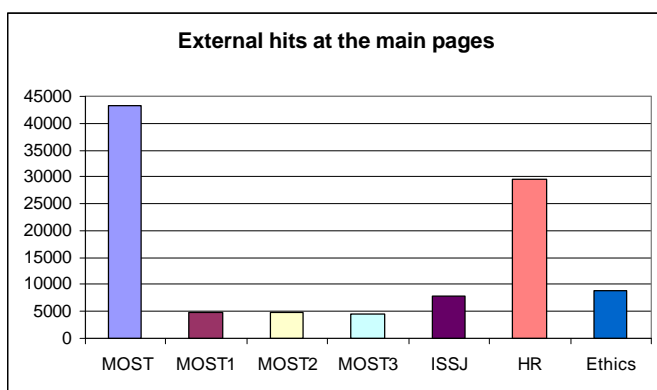


Figure 3: Traffic on the “index”, “main” or “welcome” pages of the websites: total number of hits in 2000 (statistics provided by DIT)

137. Two consistently striking elements shall be mentioned here in detail. Quite rightfully one often finds a button called “home” on a webpage – at some depth of the intellectual structure of a website. By clicking this button the user would expect to be taken “home” to the entrance page of the site from where s/he came. Instead s/he is relatively often guided to UNESCO’s main page. The other element is the “contact-page” which is also correctly present in some websites. But instead of guiding the interested user to the person who could solve her or his special request

s/he just finds a list of names with their e-mails and telephone numbers without indication of their field of competence or responsibility. So, the user must know beforehand whom to contact.

<sup>40</sup> A concern which was expressed as early as 1995 by Clifford Stoll in his famous *Silicon Snake Oil. Second Thoughts on the Information Highway*, New York, Doubleday. The situation has not changed fundamentally since then.

The visitors UNESCO seem to expect on their websites apparently know everybody: no first-time users, no interested professionals or policy makers, just UNESCO related people. Both aspects, as tiny as they might look, are – in my point of view – symptomatically for the missing user orientation observed many times and already mentioned above.

Table 2: Website Evaluation<sup>41</sup>:

| Web-Site        | Identification<br>(URL, colophon, about, contact) | Metadada<br>(title, subject, rights etc.) | Navigation, positioning<br>("you are here indicator", "back home", search engine) | Content overview<br>(sections, guidance, user orientation) | Currency<br>(actual currency, "last update" indicated) | Readability<br>(layout, visuals, typo, screen length) | Accessibility<br>(technical, browser, bandwidth) |
|-----------------|---|---|---|--|--|---|--|
| SHS             | 0   | -   | +   | +  | -  | +   | +  |
| SHS-DC          | +   | -   | 0   | +  | +  | 0   | +  |
| MOST            | +   | +   | +   | +  | +  | +   | 0  |
| MOST1           | -   | 0   | 0   | +  | 0  | +   | +  |
| MOST2           | 0   | 0   | 0   | +  | -  | 0   | 0  |
| MOST3           | +   | 0   | 0   | +  | +  | 0   | -  |
| BP              | 0   | 0   | -   | +  | -  | +   | +  |
| GUIC            | +   | +   | +   | +  | 0  | +   | 0  |
| Women           | -   | -   | -   | 0  | -  | 0   | +  |
| HR*             | + (-)   | -   | 0 (-)   | +  | + (-)  | 0   | 0  |
| Tolerance       | 0   | -   | -   | 0  | 0  | -   | +  |
| Peace (old one) | +   | +   | 0   | +  | +  | 0   | +  |
| Securipax       | +   | 0   | 0   | +  | +  | 0   | +  |
| Philosophy      | 0   | -   | +   | 0  | -  | +   | 0  |
| Ethics of life  | 0   | -   | -   | -  | -  | +   | +  |
| Ethics          | 0   | -   | +   | 0  | -  | +   | 0  |
| IBC             | 0   | -   | +   | -  | -  | -   | 0  |
| COMEST          | 0   | -   | +   | +  | -  | +   | 0  |

\* Human Rights Websites: there are two main entries, the second one with no return to the first frame  
 MOST1 = "multicultural societies", MOST2 = "urban studies", MOST3 = "governance"

### 1.2.3 Newsletters

138. In some parts the functions of a newsletter are similar to the those of websites: information for a wider public with no specific information need, current awareness, networking, co-operation and public relation. The main difference between the two is the direction of information transfer: the website waits for the user to come, expects the user to pull out information, whereas a newsletter type of information services pushes the information to the user. Both aspects are necessary and not interchangeable – they correspond to different kinds of user behaviour and information needs.

139. Another important function of push orientated information services is public relation *and* internal communications. Yet, communication is the basis of knowledge management within the organisation – for staff and intersectoral co-operation as well as for the outside world. It contributes to the corporate identity and the identification of collaborators with the organisation and at

<sup>41</sup> based in part on the classic: Nielsen, Jakob: *Designing Web Usability. The Practice of Simplicity*, Indianapolis: New Riders, 2000.

the same time it plays an important role in image building. In this respect, a newsletter is an effective and very low cost media especially in its electronic form (e.g. the pdf-version of the typesetting master) with a great variety of functions.

140. Both the print and the electronic versions involve challenges which have sometimes been neglected<sup>42</sup>. As both are conveying the institution's image they have to be excellent. The print version asks for attractive typography and professional design, interesting content as well as currency and regularity. The electronic version on a listserv e.g. needs attention to netiquette and the special characteristics involved in this communication channel. The electronic version, however, cannot replace the print medium. The effect of holding something in your hands cannot be compared to reading information on a screen in between hundreds of unimportant mails. Print still has – and will always have more impact.

141. Finally, its production can be based largely on co-operative organisation and on synergies with other information processing procedures in the sector. Most of the information presented in a newsletter comes more or less from existing material:

- it will re-use the news section from the websites or
- parts from other more specialised newsletters (mailings) issued in specific project contexts,
- it will copy the existing press releases,
- it will have the (amended) executive summaries of mission reports,
- printouts from existing data collections,
- announcements or call for papers for workshops and conference which are already placed on the web
- and so forth.

A newsletter is not a sumptuous product to make: it just asks for a collaborative effort and management commitment. Its effects for corporate identity, image building, and knowledge management are invaluable.

### **1.2.3.1 Philosophy Newsletter**

142. In the beginning, the *Philosophy* newsletter was published twice a year (4 pages) to inform the Executive Board (!) about the activities of this division. Later it was sent to readers outside UNESCO and it became more substantial and longer (22 pages). Since 1998, it appears only once a year. There are 5,000 printed issues (2,500 in English; 2,500 in French). It is a relatively low-cost publication (approx. 8000 FF per issue) that provides a good means of publicity for the division since readers come asking for more information on the division's activities after reading the newsletter. Nearly a quarter of the respondents in the questionnaire know it exists.

143. It is planned to change the profile of the newsletter to match the topics of the entire division: Human Science, Philosophy and Ethics of Science and Technology – which makes sense. With respect to its content it could be more interesting and more informative. A newsletter should not be used to print lengthy texts or statements but news and short features. One can hardly believe that for over one year there have not enough interesting topics come up to report on. Finally, issuing once a year is not an adequate frequency for a *newsletter*.

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<sup>42</sup> For example both should bear an ISSN to assure visibility in ordinary information channels and to carry the message of being a trustful source.

### 1.2.3.2 MOST Newsletter

144. The last issue of the *MOST Newsletter* appeared in 1998. Before, periodicity has been irregular although the colophon states “The Newsletter is published quarterly in English, Spanish and French” In the beginning, it was made as an attractively looking multicolour print with interesting news on the full spectrum of MOST projects. Like the *Philosophy* newsletter, it definitely has a wider function as just to inform the official stakeholders (IGC, Commissions etc.). It was a perfect instrument for image building and visibility enhancement, for networking, knowledge sharing and capacity building within the MOST context. The evaluations of the MOST programme repeatedly recommended to continue issuing the newsletter.

145. Similar to the *Philosophy* newsletter its broad thematic coverage is a good counterbalance to the observed fragmentation in projects and sub-units in the division. **It could therefore be considered as an internal knowledge management tool** – if periodicity would really be at least biannual. It should also integrate periodic updates from the annual *Information Note* which is a kind of bibliographic “newsletter” concerning the sectors print output and selective printouts from other databases produced by the documentation centres.

146. The question of the institutional level of a newsletter remains a complicated one. Since MOST is “just” a programme the external professional might ask about its implementation in the division SRP and about news from the division itself. This seems to me a general organisational problem of whether the division itself still has or needs to have a corporate identity on its own. Looking at it from outside, one gains the impression that the division *is* MOST. It would at least not be recommendable to start another newsletter for the “rest” but better to integrate information about the division in the well known *MOST Newsletter*.

147. During the evaluation it has been suggested by some interviewees to use the newsletter for official monitoring and reporting and to use the newsletter more as an annual report. Bearing in mind that it appears only once a year, this idea seems obvious<sup>43</sup>. Nevertheless, this would mingle very different functions of two distinguishable information products. The opposite would be more effective: when stakeholders have already been well informed by attractive newsletters over the year, the annual reporting could entail less time and money. In this case, editorial policy should clearly define (in writing) the mission, objectives and goals of both of them.

### 1.2.3.3 Other Newsletters

148. Naturally, in the context of project oriented networks there are a lot of other newsletters which have the function of merely keeping the members of the network informed on project progress<sup>44</sup>. But there are also different ones like the *UNESCO chairs on Human Rights Bulletin* which actually is a quite voluminous book or as an example: the *UNITWIN/UNESCO Forced Migration Network Newsletter*<sup>45</sup> which also gathers news from the network participants but only in electronic form. Synergies between the multitude of newsletters should be further explored by documenting (and archiving) them at the clearinghouse or the documentation centre in Paris.

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<sup>43</sup> The IOC Annual Reports Series may serve an attractive and efficient example.

<sup>44</sup> e.g. APMRN, AAPR, MMPC, CAPP etc.

<sup>45</sup> <http://unesco-netfm.yu.edu.jo/news1.htm>

#### **1.2.4 Listservs/Majordomo-Lists, Electronic Bulletins, Electronic Fora**

149. The borderline between printed newsletters and listserv-like mailing lists is not very sharp. They can either serve primarily as news distributors replacing the print version, as it is the case for the *most-list*, or they can be enhanced by interactivity in the form of a forum like the Securi-pax-Forum and others. Fortunately there is a multitude of initiatives of this kind in the sector which shows that the importance of this means of information service is well received and understood. In both the push- (list) and the pull-version (forum/list-archive) it has gained wide acceptance - not only in the academic community. The awareness and acceptance of lists and fora from the sector is surprisingly low (fig. 6). A detailed analysis of each of them would be beyond the scope of the space and time of the evaluation. Just two observations may be detailed here.

150. In most of these services traffic is, in fact, too low which is surprising bearing in mind the quantity of projects, people and possible news exchange. Instead, the listener of a list receives long listings of news items every month or two. The result is not only that s/he has lost attention meanwhile but also that most of the time s/he will not read the whole newsletter. It is acquired knowledge that on-screen publications must not exceed one screen length<sup>46</sup>, otherwise they lose their character of direct communication and should preferably be designed for printing. In this case the majordomo-list is just a less expensive means of distribution which should better transport a pdf-file of a well designed printed newsletter. It is better to send shorter messages more often. In addition, in order to incite traffic and interactivity the lists and fora need active moderators who should stimulate and guide discussions.

151. The services use very different kinds of technical implementation at different locations. In some cases, the technology used is very cumbersome and complicated (in some cases it does not even work at all). In order to use these media properly, an easy-to-use server software should be implemented centrally and maintained by technical specialists.

### **1.3 Publications**

152. As discussed above, the notion of a publication is quite vague. Yet, its function is always the same. In most cases, publishing something means distributing information to a more or less restricted target group of readers (listeners etc.). This is why publications are included in this evaluation.

#### **1.3.1 Text-like Monographic Publications (Print or Online)**

153. The sector's output of publications is prolific. A high quantity adds to several publications of great importance and quality.

154. Yet, for the evaluators it has been extremely difficult to identify all products due to missing overviews of activities – but perhaps also due to the dynamic character of the organisational structure of the sector. In particular, it was impossible to do an analysis of the cost effectiveness. The only stable instrument for monitoring the overall production are the so-called *Information Notes* compiled by the SHS Documentation Centre in March every year. Other detailed information we received was too specific and not suitable for any comparisons. The three subsequent *Information Notes* issued between 1998 and 2000 indicated 218 published items. The size of the items mentioned here varied extremely, ranging from 3 to over 900 pages, but unfortunately the number of pages was not always specified. Sometimes the electronic version was indicated.

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<sup>46</sup> This is true for e-mail publication as well as for html pages on websites!

Some items were published in several languages at the same time while others appeared later in another language published as a separate edition. The *Information Note* did for example not mention publications produced in conjunction with MOST projects but not financed by UNESCO, or the second editions of publications like *UNESCO and Human Rights* (UNESCO, 1999). Some other very specific items like *Diogenes* (not “published” by the sector but by ICPSH) or the *Enciclopedia Multimediale delle Scienze Filosofiche* (published by RAI and now available online and on CD-ROM) did not appear in the *Information Note* either.

155. The number of copies produced and distributed varies considerably ranging from under 100 to several thousand. Exact figures were only available for very few examples and systematic data on production compared to sales distribution was not possible to receive either. It was not possible to do a cost-benefit analysis of the publications, since there are no monitoring data available in the sector's publication unit and UPO did not provide printing nor sales figures. Concerning the target audience, the staff interviewed remained quite vague and the response rate to the questionnaire was extremely low. When asked to describe a publication and dissemination policy, they referred mainly to the lack of it and the need to define and communicate one. There is, however, a publication policy but it remains implicit to the publication process. Yet, some publications have an explicit target orientation by nature: policy papers, training materials, videos etc.

156. The *Information Note* classifies 30% as “B” (books), 3 as videos/CD-ROMs, the rest as either “P” = “Periodicals” or as “D” = “Documents and Online Publications”, in this last category there are, however, a lot of publications in series which could be considered as “periodicals”. This classification apparently reflects the internal production process which is either done in conjunction with UPO (for Books) or with CLD for document production on the basis of a quota system. However, with the CLD quota the production of books is possible, too.

157. Another classification (fig. 4, independent from the internal one) shows that over 50% of the production consists of books but only parts of it (perhaps 10 to 15%) can be considered as *not* being “grey literature”. Only a rather small proportion of books is published solely or in conjunction with UNESCO by commercial publishers like Blackwell, Elsevier or Zed Books addressing an international market. The larger proportion of the publications is done in conjunction with external partners within networks or with specific project partners. Even UNESCO publishing and mainly what is published with non-publisher funding (in fig. 4 classified as “other books”) belong to the category of publications which is difficult to obtain through ordinary information channels.

Table 3: Publications in sector SHS  
(mentioned in *Information Note* = IN)

|          | IN n° 77<br>(= ~1998) | IN n° 78<br>(= ~1999) | IN n° 79<br>(= ~2000) |
|----------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| SRP      | 53                    | 54                    | 33                    |
| HRS      | 10                    | -                     | 9                     |
| PHD      | -                     | 14                    | -                     |
| ETH      | -                     | 4                     | -                     |
| PHE      | 3                     | 3                     | -                     |
| HPE      | -                     | -                     | 9                     |
| APS      | -                     | -                     | 1                     |
| Regional | 9                     | 11                    | 4                     |
| CFD      | -                     | 1                     | -                     |

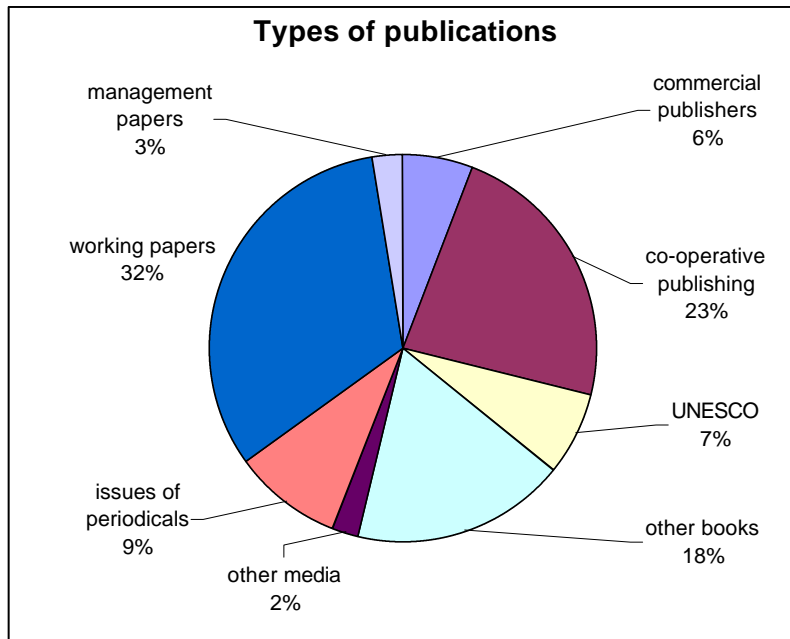


Figure 4: Types of publications 1998 - 2000

158. A striking example for a publication in the grey market is a book I would classify among the flagship publications of the HRS division: the above mentioned *UNESCO and Human Rights. Standard Setting Instruments, Major Meetings Publications*. In 1999, it appeared in its enlarged second edition (537 pages, over 5000 copies) and as online version it is one of the items with most hits on the website “../human\_rights/” (1081 in 2000). It is one of the sector's most requested books. Nevertheless, it is produced without ISBN and with very low bibliographic control as UNESCO

“document” SHS-99/WS/16. For this reason it does not find its entry in big bibliographical databases. The only recent entries of the sector's publications I found in IBSS were the 9<sup>th</sup> edition of the *World Directory of Peace Research and Training Institutions* mentioning a wrong publisher (Blackwell) and the *World Social Science Report* cited in a review.

159. While the production of the publications is something to be measured very easily their reception, i. e. their impact on the intended target groups, can only be observed indirectly. The overall awareness as studied by means of a questionnaire is just one possibility. Another possibility of analysing the impact of publications is its usage by the recipients. While politicians and others working in the field use publications in a very practical way, academics “use” publications by citing them. Intensive searches in *Web of Science* (i.e. the *Social Science Citation Index*) only reveal 4 citations of the *World Social Science Report* (1 review, 1 self-citation Laiferova, 1 for Weiss and 1 for Hobohm) and 3 citations of prominent sector's authors in the *International Social Science Journal* (1x Auriat + 2x Genov) in the last 2.5 years. Some other authors related to the sector are cited but not with their production with UNESCO. And, what was most surprising to me: not even Egon Becker; Thomas Jahn: *Sustainability and the Social Sciences*, Zed Books 1999 nor their “MOST policy paper”, n° 6: *Sustainability: A Cross-Disciplinary Concept for Social Transformations* (Becker, Egon; Jahn, Thomas; Stiess, Immanuel, 1997) are cited by any author despite the impression that these papers form a new paradigm.

160. Nearly a third of the publications produced in the sector is available in the form of discussion or working papers. This type of publication is still less accessible than document-like books. The biggest proportion of these are the *MOST discussion paper* series and some other publications appearing more or less in series in the context of MOST projects like the “On the Model of Ethnological Monitoring” series which have a big part in the MOST production counted in *Information Note* 78, March 2000. Consequently, these papers as well as most of the “documents” are now available free-of-charge on the internet – in an html- or pdf-format. They are very similar to what the physical sciences have known for several years under the concept of “e-prints”. To be-



come visible in more prominent information channels they should have been published in an academic journal at least in an amended version. In the context of the MOST clearinghouse e.g. they now form a basic e-print archive<sup>47</sup> but unfortunately without its information processing features. They will largely remain invisible without metadata or any sort of indexing or clear policy of pushing these papers to potential users directly by explicit publicity through newsletters and specialised journals (*Information Development* e.g.) or traditional information channels like libraries or abstracting & indexing services. They have the same low impact as the more book-like grey literature of the sector.

161. Whereas most of the professionals (who could make some target groups explicit) mentioned internal UNESCO related targets for the publications this is no problem. Considering the important findings reported in the papers and books, it is difficult to understand. Figure 9 (with results from the user survey below) shows that a great preference is given to reaching a wider audience as a role for UNESCO. Publishing in the sector should therefore not only remain in the inner circle. A bigger proportion of the publishing should therefore be done by professional publishers like commercial publishers with worldwide impact or at least by UPO. Less should be produced in the grey literature domain (mostly in the categories ‘other books’, ‘co-operative publishing’ and ‘working papers’ in fig. 4).

162. It would certainly not be a problem of the quality of the publications because most of them I could see seemed to have an outstanding level of scientific discourse; this impression was confirmed by the majority of the external interviewees. Some of the publications even have reviewing procedures although this is not systematically the case. Nevertheless, some external interviewees suggested to involve more scientific board members in the quality management process of the publications.

163. Most of the publications of the sector are co-ordinated by the publications unit. Unlike the documentation centre, it is a service for the whole sector which is used by every division. Officially it only plays a secondary role in the publication process. There is no influence on publication or information policy. The activities are restricted to being the link to UPO and CLD. Especially when dealing with external publishers the unit does not always have a full overview of the publication process. When cooperation with the programme specialists is close, the work of the unit is described as very effective and fruitful. The advice and active help of the publications unit is always very welcome by almost everybody who ever used its service.

164. Publishing with UPO is considered as slowing down the process and as making the publishing complicated. Especially an impact on corporate design and the look-and-feel of the sector's publications are apparently not always possible. There are long waiting lists for publications. This is one of the reasons why many professionals prefer to work with outside partners assuming that co-publication with professional publishers will ensure more visibility. However, publishing with UPO also gives a visibility<sup>48</sup> on the basis of the own institutional image and furthermore guarantees a certain publishing quality. In both cases, the role of the publication and information unit should be to look after the official distribution via formal or informal channels by sending out review copies to journals, providing the professional press with small release notes or by placing them into electronic mailing lists. This sort of primary public relations is something

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<sup>47</sup> cf. Paul Ginsparg: “<http://arXiv.org>”

<sup>48</sup> By its publicity through the general catalogue, for instance. Yet, UPO seems to hold a certain monopoly for selling only UNESCO publications in the UNESCO book shops: a hint received from a professional we were not able to verify.

which is normally underestimated or left completely to the publisher. Even (or especially) big publishing houses are often not doing enough publicity for a specific publication<sup>49</sup>. The *World Social Science Report* was cited several times as an example of a book which was distributed by UPO more widely than by Elsevier. Smaller, specialised publishing houses like Zed publishing, Éditions MSH, Odile Jacob etc. may do a more adequate job (for these types of publications). Anyway when choosing a partner more importance should be attached to the fact that it must be a commercial publishing house with an excellent reputation rather than a publisher embedded in a mere academic context as is the publishing department of an institute like the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, for example.

165. Co-operation with CLD seems to be uncomplicated. It is surprising that the quota for translation, composition and printing was seemingly not fully used, this especially applies to the translation quota. One advantage of co-operating with CLD is the simultaneous (electronic) publication of most of the material within UNESDOC, a well functioning fulltext database.

### **1.3.2 Academic Journals**

166. The sector's flagship par excellence is the *International Social Science Journal*. Its strength is its intellectual independence and its outreach to regions in the world with less established academic social sciences by means of its 6 languages versions. It is more understood as a multiplier instrument than as an academic forum. In fact, its thematic issues are intended for consultation by issue and not as a print archive like most of the other high standing journals. Its production figures are impressive. Depending on the specific language, it has a circulation of 1500 - 4000 copies for every issue. An annual volume comprises about 560 pages and every issue has between 10 and 20 articles.

167. As there is no editorial board, unsolicited manuscripts are reviewed in a specific reviewing process involving different persons in every case. There is, however, an editorial advisor from outside UNESCO for every thematic issue. This person is internationally recognised in the specific field. S/he refines the theme, defines the number of articles, and proposes authors. Eventually s/he writes an editorial and perhaps an article. On three occasions, this procedure has even served as a basis for a book on the State of the Art of the respective discipline.

168. There are few individual subscribers for the English and French versions (less than 10% of the total), compared to the institutional subscriptions. The journal is mainly aiming at the academic world as well as at "the public administrators and civil servants with a social science background". In the *Social Science Citation Index* the journal has recently improved its "impact factor" from rank 36 to 32 among 54 interdisciplinary journals. It is indexed by all leading social science abstracts & indexing services (ISSC, IBSS, FRANCIS, Sociological Abstracts, ERIC, PAIS etc.) Its English version is also now well represented in library service provider systems like *Ingenta* or OCLC and can easily be retrieved electronically on a pay per view basis.

169. It is very well known and used in the social science community in a strict sense (ISSC sample in fig. 5<sup>50</sup>) but also in wider contexts (fig. 6) although it could be more disseminated. A certain lack of impact and academic reputation may be due to its policy of being a multiplier and translator of social science concepts to a wider audience. In this respect, its performance is very

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<sup>49</sup> I have often seen UPO at exhibitions on the occasion of professional conferences: they have too many titles to really do publicity for a specific one, sometimes they even do not know it.

<sup>50</sup> It should be 100% because it is distributed to ISSC members.

good and especially the English language version proves yet again that co-operation with a professional publisher is fruitful.

170. *Diogenes* is a journal not published by the sector but by ICPSH which has a close relationship to the HPE division. Nevertheless, the international reputation and the academic tradition of this journal still reflects on the division's image. As fig. 6 shows it is the most "used" item from the sector.

171. The *MOST Electronic Journal on Multicultural Societies* is another academic journal with totally different characteristics. Although still very 'young', it is already considered a highly esteemed forum for its specific topic and shows that a completely electronic journal is a good solution for academic publishing.

### **1.3.3 Audio-visual Material**

172. It was not possible to evaluate the sector's videos and CD-ROMs.

### **1.3.4 Educational Material**

173. A rather new type of publication has a very specific kind of target group. These are the Training materials: Globalization and Sustainable Development. What Regulators Are Needed? (12 fact sheets for Comprehension, Anticipation and Debate). Montpellier : Solagral ; Paris : MOST, 1999, and : OGM. Le champ des incertitudes. 5 fiches pour comprendre, anticiper, débattre, Montpellier : Solagral ; Paris : UNESCO (MOST, MAB), 2000. With this material UNESCO essentially plays the role of a 'translator' of knowledge to a broader public by means of intermediaries who normally would not participate in academic discussions. The topic is treated such that the publication can support an educational process, i.e. a training for groups which are even further away from the scientific discussions. Figure 9 shows that although this role is still relatively new it is widely accepted. Several interviewees agreed with this approach stating that this is one of UNESCO's finest roles. The material could even be treated more didactically and give more ready-to-use teaching support (by means of PowerPoint slides, for instance) but the first steps are impressive. With regard to the SWOT analysis described at the beginning I would say that this represents an opportunity for UNESCO. There is a market for this kind of material and UNESCO's strengths can be concentrated here.

## **2 A User Survey**

### **2.1 Results and Figures**

174. Since most of the time the internal interviewees have described NGO's as one of the principal target groups, I decided to select the population of the International Social Science Council (ISSC), the main cooperating NGO, for an empirical study. Its 50 members and associated members represent a great variety of topics, scientific domains, and institutional range. Its scope ranges from international organisations to national academies of science and comprises disciplines ranging from Sociology, Geography, and Anthropology to Law or Future Studies. As mentioned above, the response rate was quite high (N=22) but the total sample especially with regard to the divisions of the sector which are less embedded in social science remained small. In a quota sampling ICPSH members, Human Rights, and Bioethics organisations were added in a proportion of ca. 10 each so that the total number of the sample reached 41. (By accident the

questionnaire was also distributed via an external listserv discussion list to the Global Human rights Education listserv in Cambridge, MA; from where we received about a dozen responses. These answers have not been counted but they show that the approach of choosing associated NGO's was fruitful. Very often the returned questionnaires from the listserv remained almost blank although a lot of PhD students responded.)

175. The questionnaire asked for the awareness of products and services from the sector and wanted to explore some aspects of the information behaviour of the respondents as well as some attitudes concerning the role of UNESCO. It has been distributed mainly via e-mail and fax and especially for the ISSC sample there was an intensive follow-up. Most of the times the secretary-generals or some other persons in charge of the organisation responded in a sincere way. Only few respondents used the possibility of replying to open questions. In some cases, it is apparent that "senior" management (i.e. older people with more experience and perhaps more conservative views) responded. Sometimes the answers are quite personal and less institution-oriented. The questionnaire is by no means standardised and has not even been tested due to the lack of time. Nevertheless, the results generally confirm what I would have expected.

176. The general awareness of social science information and publication services from the sector is quite high. With regard to the principal products of the SRP division which is the most adequate partner for ISSC members, the respondents - in fact, more than 50%, in one variable more than 90% - declare that they are familiar with them or at least know they exist. Mainly the

"older" products which have been available for several years or even more than a decade like the "World Directories" or the ISSJ are well known. The World Report, the so-called flagship production, reaches very good scores, too. Although the productions of the other divisions are less

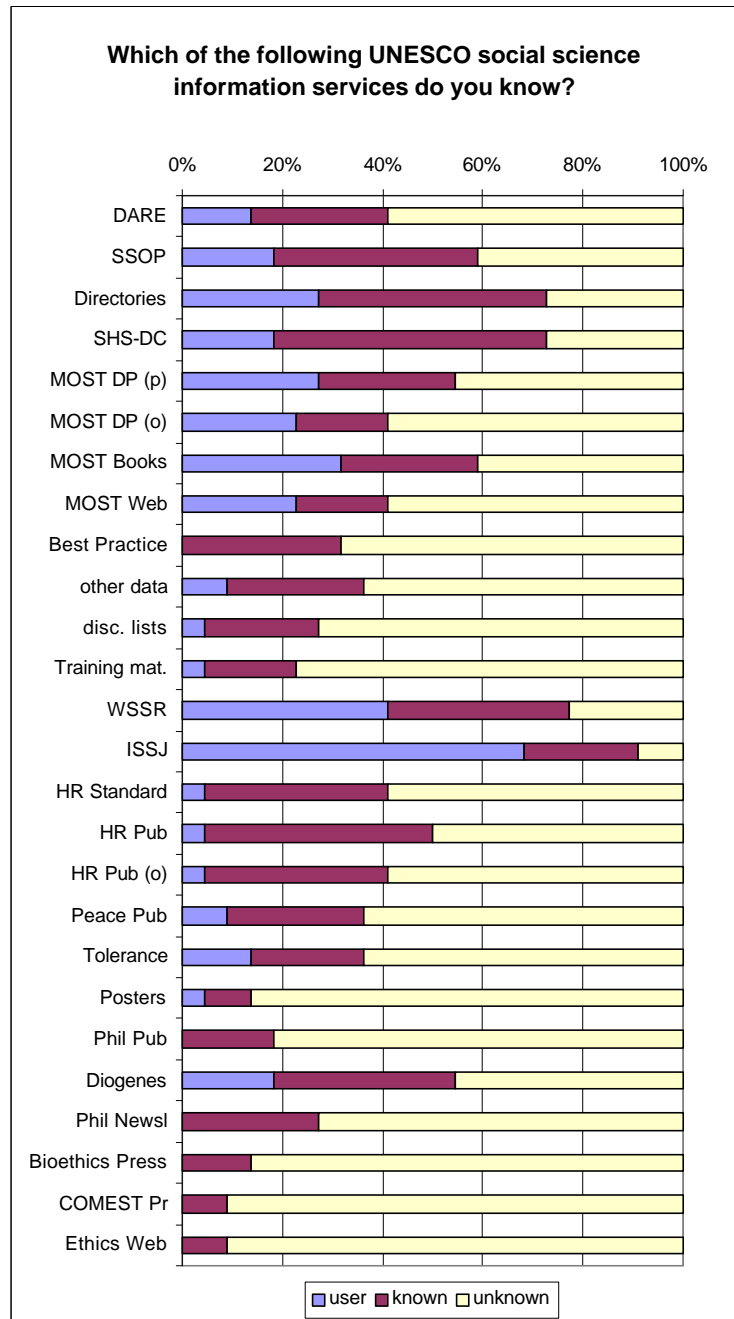


Figure 5: Awareness of UNESCO social science information services and products (ISSC sample (N=22)) (p) = print; (o) = online

known, the respondents, however, seem also very familiar with their established flagships (see figure 5).

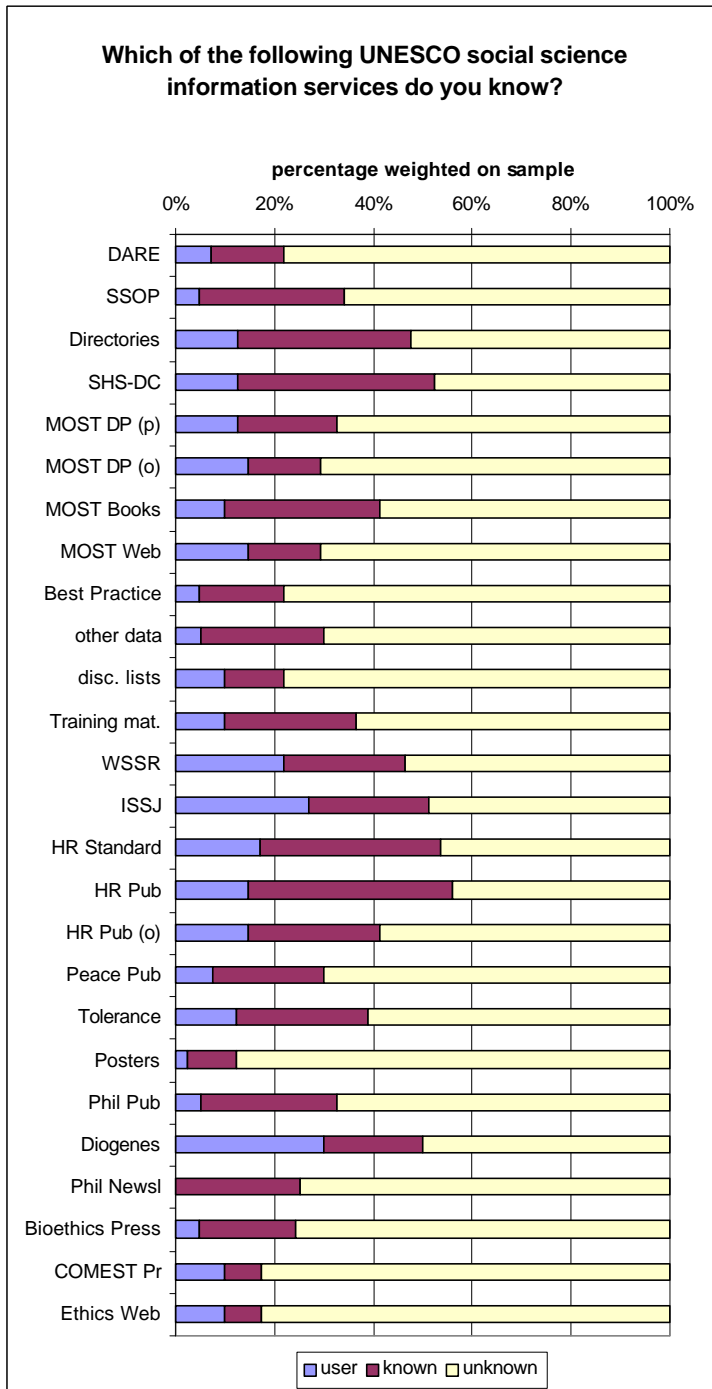


Figure 6: Awareness of UNESCO social science information services and products (weighted on samples (N=41))

177. The graph as per figure 6 shows the overall awareness for the products and services of each division, calculated by weighting the different samples. Respondents from other disciplines knew quite well the main products of the other divisions. It is remarkable that the Human Rights publications reach the widest market penetration and seem even better known to the respondents than the academic journals. It is also surprising that the general awareness of the SHS documentation centre is relatively high although its usage (as well as its specific product DARE) is astonishingly low. (In my view the high scores of the relatively new product “Social science Online Periodicals” is a misunderstanding of the question and a survey artefact.) The products “used” most are, in fact, the two journals and the *World Social Science Report* (WSSR). Only the smaller units and the more recent activities do not yet reach sufficient awareness in the samples.

178. Asked by which means the NGO representatives keep themselves updated on recent information from the sector, some answered just “no” indicating that they were not interested in receiving news from UNESCO. Nevertheless, most of them answered very thoughtfully (cf. figure 7). Nearly 30% use internet search engines on a regular basis and a further 30% keep themselves informed by academic journals. Only 25% “use” UNESCO produced newsletters for this purpose. (Looking at this last figure, one must keep in mind that the *MOST Newsletter* did not appear for quite some time.) From an information scientist’s point of view, the combined value “often” and “sometimes” of question 2: “I meet UNESCO people” and “colleagues

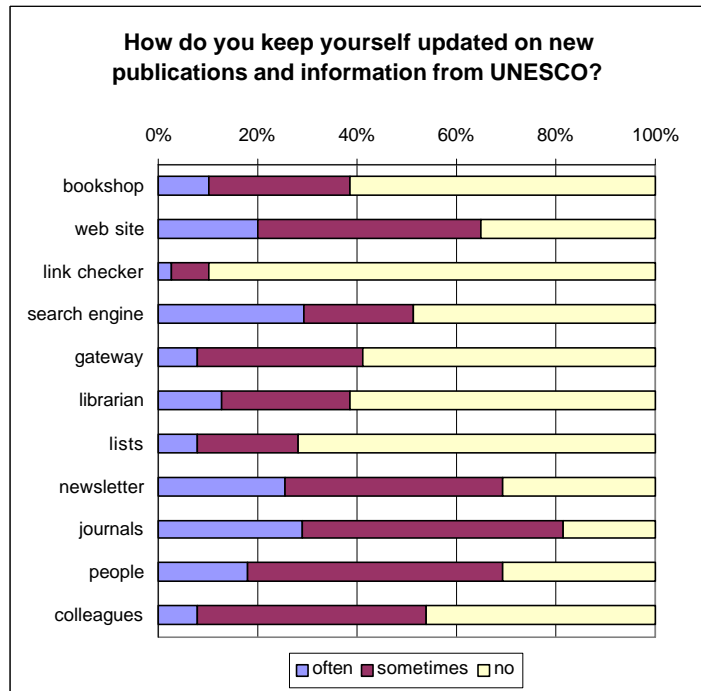


Figure 7: Information habits (N=41)

give me a hint” is even more interesting because it shows that some of the main sources for information gathering are informal contacts with people which confirms other empirical research in information sciences. The traditional “push technologies” nevertheless reach the two highest scores: communication by academic journals and by PR newsletters. The next important categories are the newer pull technologies like visiting the website and arbitrary searches in the internet (search engines). The fact that the websites are used at least “sometimes” (by 65% of the respondents) can be considered a success for the UNESCO clearinghouse concept. The use of information professionals (“I let my librarian do the job” and “I visit internet portals or gateways (like SOSIG) from time to time”) for current awareness is remarkably high although still underestimated. More technology driven means like being informed about changes on a specific web page by a software robot (“I let a link checker device tell me about changes on their website”) or subscribing to the listserv mailing lists are not very familiar to the respondents. This may be considered to a certain extent as a problem of information (or: internet) literacy. Astonishingly high is the score for one source of information that supports the long-standing argument of the importance of serendipity in information behaviour: 38.5% say “I go to my bookshop and/or visit an internet bookshop”. In summary: information behaviour of social and human scientists still relays on very traditional information channels: personal contacts and quite formal publication structures like academic journals and books you may find in a book shop. (It might be interesting

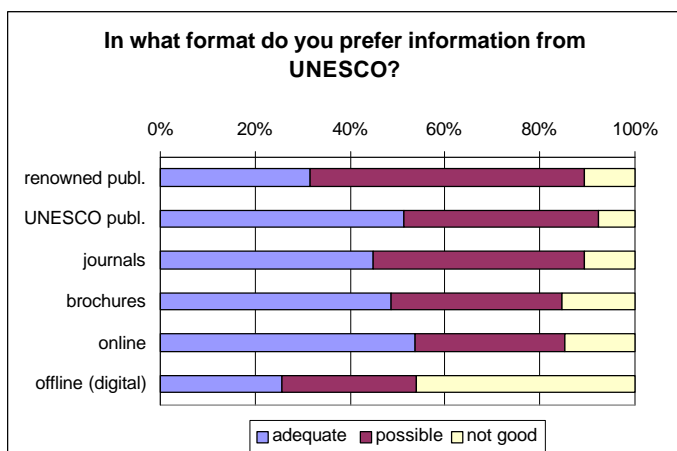


Figure 8: Preferred information media (N=41)

considered to a certain extent as a problem of information (or: internet) literacy. Astonishingly high is the score for one source of information that supports the long-standing argument of the importance of serendipity in information behaviour: 38.5% say “I go to my bookshop and/or visit an internet bookshop”. In summary: information behaviour of social and human scientists still relays on very traditional information channels: personal contacts and quite formal publication structures like academic journals and books you may find in a book shop. (It might be interesting

to note that there is no difference between the samples: philosophers, political scientists, or Human Rights PhD students behave alike according to this survey.)

179. The results from the last two questions of the survey also confirm some general trends. People definitely prefer online to digital offline publishing (CD-ROM)<sup>51</sup> and UNESCO publishing to commercial publishing, which may contradict slightly the argument mentioned last about information behaviour (figure 8). There seems to be some preference for monographic publication formats like books or brochures in contrast to publications in periodicals. However, the differences are too small to really draw conclusions from these findings. An underlying factor for this trend may be the presumption of costs involved when publishing through “renowned publishers” and “via articles or news in academic journals”.

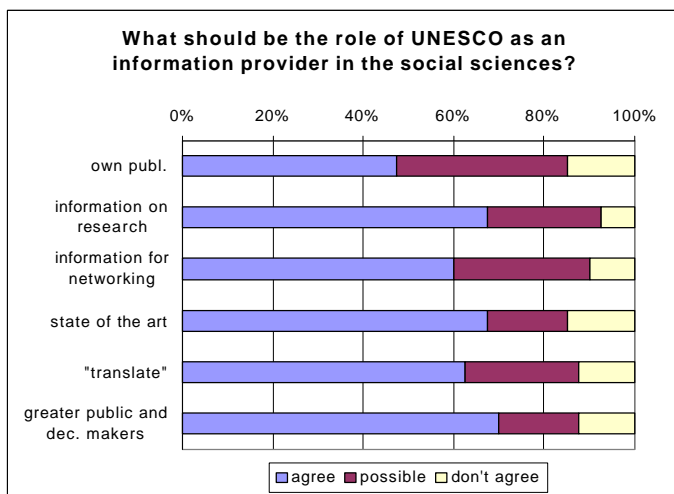


Figure 9: UNESCO's role (N=41)

ing “to reach the greater public and the decision makers”. It seems that the more complex concepts about networking and mediation were not very well understood by some respondents.

181. Some deeper analysis was done although it must be admitted that the small size of the sample and the improvised methodology of the survey does not permit higher-level statistics. However, it did not reveal more insight anyway. The only observable correlations (Pearsons' corr with significance on level  $<0.01$ ) can be found in the block of questions regarding the awareness of different products. It does not surprise that someone who is aware of the MOST clearinghouse knows the online versions of the MOST discussion papers (.855) Someone who is aware of the World Report knows the ISSJ (.836) and someone who knows the Documentation Centre knows its directories (.713) but knows surprisingly less DARE (.336!). Yet, those who do know DARE know the collection of Social Science Online Periodicals (.711). Correlations between the samples, within or between the other question blocks, cannot be observed.

<sup>51</sup> This question has mainly been asked because of the re-occurring argument that internet connections still do not reach large parts of the world whereas CD-ROM drives are quite widespread nowadays. In fact, the two African respondents confirm this: they feel offline digital publications are more „adequate“ than online ones.

180. The question concerning the role of UNESCO as a social science information provider did not generate very distinguishable answers (figure 9). For the NGO's almost everything is at least “possible”. The only apparent trend (in terms of explicit agreement) is that it is felt less that UNESCO should “do its own up-to-date publications (statements, research) on key issues”. UNESCO is more accepted in the intermediary role of an information provider for social science research and for a synthesis of this knowledge in order to “issue state-of-the art reports” which could have the function of trying

## 2.2 The Questionnaire

### EVALUATION OF UNESCO'S INFORMATION SERVICES IN SOCIAL AND HUMAN SCIENCES

Within the framework of the evaluation of the UNESCO Social Science information and documentation services, we are conducting a survey with external users and potential users.

We have selected your organization as a member of the International Social Science Council. Your opinion on the information services provided by UNESCO is highly important for our future developments.

Please answer the following questions on your screen and send them by e-mail to [X.Castro-Sardi@unesco.org](mailto:X.Castro-Sardi@unesco.org) or print and send by fax it to Ximena Castro-Sardi (at UNESCO, SHS/SRP) ++ 331-45685724

#### 1. Which of the following UNESCO social science information services do you know?

Please mark :

- 0 I don't know it – never heard of it
- 1 I have heard of it but I have never really used it
- 2 I'm a regular user

- DARE DataBase (on social science institutions and experts world wide)
- Social Science Online Periodicals
- World Directories of social science Research and Training Institutions
- Social and Human Sciences Documentation Centre (library and information services)
  
- MOST Discussion Papers in print
- MOST Discussion Papers online
- MOST Books
- MOST Clearinghouse (Website)
- Databases on Best Practice (Linguistic Rights, Religious Rights)
- Other data collections at the web site
- mailings lists from MOST
- Training materials
- World Social Science Report
- International Social Science Journal
  
- Human Rights Standard Setting Instruments
- Human Rights, democracy, peace and tolerance publications  
(which one? do you have a keyword/author in mind?)
  
- Human Rights online publications
  
- Peace and Human Security Publications  
(which one? do you have a keyword/author in mind?)
  
- Democracy and Tolerance Publications  
(which one? do you have a keyword/author in mind?)
  
- Tolerance Posters
  
- Philosophy publications  
(which one? do you have a keyword/author in mind?)
  
- Diogenes
- Philosophy Newsletter



- Bioethics press kits or brochures
- COMEST proceedings/ publications
- Philosophy and Ethics of Science and Technology Website

Other (Please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**2. How do you keep yourself updated on new publications and information from UNESCO**

Please mark:

- 0 no
- 1 sometimes
- 2 yes, quite often

- I go to my bookshop and/or visit an internet bookshop
- I visit the web site from time to time
- I let a link checker device tell me about changes on their website
- I regularly use search engines (e.g. GOOGLE) for my topics of interest
- I visit Internet portals or gateways (like SOSIG) from time to time
- I let my librarian do the job
- I listen to their mailing lists
- I prefer receiving / reading newsletter
- I find reference to them in my readings in academic journals
- I meet UNESCO people directly (at conferences or by phone etc.)
- colleagues give me a hint

Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**3. In what format do you prefer information from UNESCO?**

Please mark:

- 0 not good – would not use it
- 1 possible
- 2 adequate – would use it this way

- in print coming from renowned publishers
- print or electronic from UNESCO publishing
- via articles or news in academic journals
- brochures or papers in print for free
- online (digital) e.g. via the Internet
- offline digital (e.g. CD-ROM)

Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**4. In your opinion, what should be the role of UNESCO as an information provider in the social sciences?**

Please mark:

- 0 don't agree
- 1 possible
- 2 agree

UNESCO should:

- do its own up to date publications (statements, research) on key issues
- provide information about social science research
- provide an overview on research partners for networking
- give state of the art reports
- "translate" social sciences results in appropriate language and media for local policy and action worldwide
- try to reach the greater public and the decision makers

Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**5. Do you have a library and information service in your organization?**

YES       NO

6. Name of the ISSC member for which your are responding  
(organization/ institution where you work): \_\_\_\_\_

7. Your position in the organization: \_\_\_\_\_

*Thank you for your cooperation!*