

## 2. Management Issues

### Introduction

Even a small local documentation service needs to be well managed to meet the needs of its users. This involves decisions and actions with regard to:

- diagnosing the existing situation
- formulating policy
- planning the development of the service
- establishing an organisational structure
- co-operating with other institutions

Policies and plans may determine the nature of any new organisational structure, but they will need to be formulated within the existing organisational structure. The policy and planning process will therefore need to be initiated by the existing management, preferably in consultation with representatives of other stakeholders (including information users and documentation service staff). An interim planning committee should be formed. This can later be replaced by a permanent advisory committee (See 2.6).

### Diagnosing the existing situation

Advice to planners from one economic development planner:

*..survey things as they are, observe what needs to be done, study the means you have to do it with, and then work out practical ways of going about it.*

M.G. Ionides, quoted in: Waterston, Albert. Development planning: lessons of experience. London, OUP, 1966. p. 6.

'Survey things as they are' implies that the starting point for successful planning is a careful diagnosis of the existing situation. The diagnosis should be done before policy statements and plans are finalised. At the same time, the decision to undertake diagnosis is itself a policy decision which needs to be taken by the existing management in consultation with the interim planning committee.

Diagnosis involves:

- observing the existing situation
- identifying problems or weaknesses
- assessing the potential for improvement

The ability of a local documentation service to meet the information needs of its users will depend very much on the extent to which its information resources are relevant to their needs. The service's success in developing relevant information resources will in turn depend to a large extent on how successful it is in identifying potential users and their

information needs. The diagnosis should begin with a consideration of the two essential preconditions for the effective operation of such a service:

- existing and potential information users, and their information needs
- the kinds of information sources available to meet those needs

The diagnosis should go on to examine:

- existing policies, aims and objectives, plans and proposals for the creation or improvement of documentation services
- the existing organisational structure
- existing administrative regulations and procedures of the parent organisation
- existing arrangements for planning, monitoring and evaluation
- the nature and extent of existing document collections
- existing arrangements for access to external sources of information
- existing resources of staff, accommodation and equipment, finance
- existing technical operations
- existing information products and services
- existing arrangements for co-operation with other institutions

### Identifying information users and their needs

Documentation service staff need to know how many people are likely to use the service and what kinds of information they need, so that they can develop useful document collections, information products and services to meet their needs. It is essential to:

- identify the people who already use, or are likely to want to use the service
- find out what kinds of information they need

The potential users of the service might include people from any or all of the professions or occupations listed in Box 2C.

Although all members of such groups in the locality may need or want to use the documentation service, it may not be either practical or desirable to allow all of them to do so. For example, local schools or colleges may want to use the service for study projects on water and sanitation, but visits to the service by large numbers of students may need to be organised or rationed to avoid disturbing other users or overwhelming services. However, the long term benefits of introducing young people to this material and to the documentation service should also be considered.

Whatever groups of users the documentation service intends to serve, the staff of the service need to collect information about the numbers of people in the different groups and, if appropriate, the different institutions to which they belong. This information may be used to:

- provide a basis for selecting a sample of potential information users, whose information needs and ways of using information may be studied in more detail in a needs assessment (see below)

- find out where most potential users in different groups are located, to help in planning the future development of the service and deciding on the kinds of information services it should provide

#### *Information needs assessments*

The information needs of potential users may be identified in general terms by studying documents produced by the organisations to which they belong, such as

- annual reports
- development plans
- mission statements
- newsletters
- publicity brochures, etc.

It will be necessary to carry out an assessment of information needs and information use to discover:

- the kinds of information potential users need
- how they try to find this information
- where they normally obtain it from
- how they use it

A needs assessment can be carried out through:

- individual interviews
- focus group discussions
- a formal questionnaire survey

Interviews and focus group discussions provide better opportunities for open-ended discussion of people's information needs. Advice on how to conduct a questionnaire survey is provided in Appendix A.

**See also: Healthlink Worldwide Resource Centre Manual**

- 1.1 Assessing information needs
- 1.4 Interviewing tips and sample questionnaires
  - 1.4.1 Information needs assessment questionnaire (example)
  - 1.4.2 Questionnaire for other organisations that provide information

Having obtained a clear idea of the kinds of people who will use the service and the kinds of information they need, it will be necessary to:

- identify the main sources from which this information may be obtained
- find out how to obtain it
- take steps to obtain the information

These activities are dealt with in Chapters 6 and 7.

## Formulating policy

### *Policy statement*

Based on the results of the diagnosis, the interim planning committee, in co-operation with the management and staff of the documentation service, should formulate a preliminary policy statement for the development and operation of the service. This statement should be reviewed by any permanent advisory committee which may be established.

The policy statement should define:

- the aims and objectives of the service
- its organisational structure
- the kinds of users it should serve
- the kinds of information resources to which it should provide access, including
  - documents
  - external information sources and services
- the kinds of information products and services it should provide
- the conditions under which users may use the service, including:
  - opening hours of the service
  - rules for lending or photocopying documents
  - arrangements for access to external information sources and services
  - charges for the use of the service

One of the first steps in setting up a local documentation service should be to decide whether or not it will serve users from other organisations or only those belonging to its parent institution.

Policy proposals may be constrained by existing policies at higher levels – for example, within the parent organisation or in the government as a whole – or in other fields – for example, national information policy.

### *Regulations*

The work of even a small documentation service will be made much easier, and possible conflicts and misunderstandings about its role and functions avoided, if its aims, objectives and principal functions are set down in writing and officially endorsed by the management of its parent institution.

If the service aims to serve many users from outside the parent institution, it should prepare written regulations for the use of its facilities based on the policy statement. Internal regulations for the administration of the service, e.g. for maintaining records of the receipt and withdrawal of documents, will need to be formulated in accordance with the existing administrative regulations and procedures of the parent organisation.

### *Ongoing policy formulation*

The advisory committee should also participate in policy formulation on an ongoing basis, in terms of:

- planning the development of the service
- implementing the service's aims and objectives
- setting budgets
- selecting new information resources
- selecting staff
- monitoring and evaluating the service
- generally ensuring that the needs of the service and its users are met

### Planning the development of the service

'To plan is to choose' – Julius Nyerere

Planning is a means of attaining objectives within a certain period of time. Policy determines WHY we are going to create or improve a documentation service. It may also indicate or dictate

- WHAT we intend to do - acceptable objectives
- WHEN we intend to do it - duration of the plan period
- HOW we are going to do it - viable strategies for achieving the objectives.

The establishment of valid planning objectives depends upon the accuracy of the diagnosis of the existing situation. All planning should take place within a framework of policy which, in turn, may be shaped by the requirements or results of planning.

### *Planning process in outline*

1. Establish objectives  
Objectives should be as precise and explicit as possible; where appropriate, they should be expressed in terms of quantitative targets.
2. Assess available resources in relation to the objectives  
Can the objectives be achieved within available resources (physical facilities, staff, finance, etc.)? A possible planning objective could be to increase the available resources, or to make better use of those which are already available.
3. Examine possible alternative courses of action and select the most suitable  
Develop a strategy for attaining each of the objectives.
4. Set out the actions needed to implement the strategy in logical sequence, indicating the resources required at each stage  
Develop a programme or action plan, including specific project proposals where appropriate.

**See also: Healthlink Worldwide Resource Centre Manual**

- 1.2 Strategic planning
  - 1.2.1 How to develop a strategic plan
  - 1.2.2 Key questions for planning a resource centre
- 1.3 Developing an action plan
  - 1.3.1 How to develop an action plan
- 9 Monitoring and evaluation
  - 9.1 Why monitor and evaluate?
  - 9.2 Monitoring
    - 9.2.1 What to monitor
    - 9.2.2 Sample monitoring form
  - 9.3 Evaluation
    - 9.3.1 Collecting qualitative data
    - 9.3.2 Using the data
    - 9.3.3 Using the results of an evaluation

*Approval, acceptance and adoption*

Plans must be:

- approved by those who will be affected by them
- accepted by those who will have to implement them
- adopted by those responsible for financing and authorising them

*Implementation*

Effective implementation of plans depends upon:

- approval, acceptance and adoption
- establishment of priorities within the programme
- realistic budgeting, adequate financing and effective budgetary control
- adequate performance checks and procedures for monitoring and evaluation
- adequate administrative support
- translation of objectives into specific projects

*Flexibility*

Plans must be flexible enough to take account of changes in the situation without having to be abandoned. It must be possible to substitute new or modified objectives without having to write off the effort already expended.

Establishing an organisational structure

Even if a local documentation service is small in size and serves a limited number of users, it is worth taking the trouble to ensure that it is located in the best possible place within its parent organisation and that basic policies for the operation of the service -- particularly with regard to co-operation with other institutions -- are defined at the outset. This will help

to ensure the effectiveness of the service. These are not activities to be carried out only when the service is being set up; they should form part of a continuous process which must be maintained throughout the life of the documentation service.

#### *A single documentation unit*

If a new documentation service is a single unit, its internal organisational structure can be very simple. In most cases it will be supervised on a part-time basis by a member of the managerial or technical staff of the institution, and operated -- again, often on a part-time basis -- by a member of the clerical or secretarial staff. In such cases, the internal organisational structure simply reflects these relationships and its establishment presents no problems.

Choosing the right place for the service in the organisational structure of its parent institution is sometimes difficult. There is no one place which is best for all documentation services in all situations. It is particularly important to make the right choice if the service is going to serve users from other local institutions. In general, it is better to attach the service either:

- to the office of the director of the parent institution, or
- to a department or section whose staff are likely to make good use of it and so to support its development

In an organisation with both a research and a field operations function, for example, it may be advisable to attach the documentation service to the research unit, since research workers are often more familiar with the use of documentary sources of information, and rely on them more in their daily work, than field workers.

#### *Several units in the same institution*

If a new documentation service will comprise a number of existing documentation units within the same parent institution, these individual units will already have their own internal organisational structures and form part of the organisational structures of their parent departments, which control their budgets and employ their staff. The development of the various units needs to be co-ordinated.

#### *Several units in different institutions*

If a new documentation service will comprise a number of existing documentation units in different parent institutions, they will need to be brought together in a co-operative network. Management aspects of co-operating with other institutions are discussed below.

#### *Advisory committee*

A permanent advisory committee, representing the interests of the main groups of users and the management, should be established to advise on the development of the documentation service. This committee should replace the interim planning committee

referred to in the introduction above. The appointment of such a committee is particularly important in cases where the service comprises a number of separate documentation units, and where it plans to serve other institutions. In such cases, the committee should include users of these other units or representatives of these other institutions.

**See also: Healthlink Worldwide Resource Centre Manual**

2.2 Advisory committees

2.2.1 Sample responsibilities of a resource centre advisory committee

*Staff co-ordinating team*

Where the documentation service comprises a number of separate units, either within the same institution or in different institutions, a co-ordinating team comprising members of staff of the various units will be needed to ensure the effective implementation of the policies and plans developed on the advice of the advisory committee and approved by the management.

The membership of such a team may change from time to time in accordance with the needs of the moment; more than one team may be established to deal with different issues, e.g. co-operative collection policy, staff training, standardisation of cataloguing procedures, establishment of databases, etc.

Co-operating with other institutions

No documentation service can meet all the information needs of all its users all the time from its own resources. Services with access to the Internet can now obtain large amounts of information from many different sources around the world, but still need to co-operate with other services and other institutions at the local, national and international levels in order to

- meet the information needs of their own users
- help other documentation services meet the needs of their users.

Co-operation may be

- informal, with services exchanging documents and information on an ad hoc basis
- formal, through participation in an information network

*Co-operation with other libraries and services*

A documentation service should co-operate with other libraries and documentation services at the local, national and international levels in such activities as:

- identifying and acquiring locally-produced documents
- developing document collections
- exchanging information and documents
- providing information products and services to each other's users

- forming consortia to get discounts on subscriptions to information media and information management software
- benchmarking – comparing and learning from best practices, comparing information service costs, etc.
- organising training courses for staff and users
- building online communities (see Box 3A).

**Box 3A ItrainOnline: building online communities**

Whether the goal is an online meeting or the creation of a global network, the resources collected here will help groups to choose appropriate collaboration tools, develop facilitation techniques, and plan a strategy for working together online.

- Introduction
- Building virtual communities
- Collaborative workspace tools
- Fax and telephone
- Chat and instant messaging
- Blogging
- Multilingual online communities
- General

<http://www.itrainonline.org/itrainonline/english/communication.shtml>

*Local, national and international co-operation*

In most places, there are many institutions involved in water supply and sanitation, all of whom need information on water supply and sanitation. Many of these institutions will already have collections of documents relevant to the needs of their own users and of potential interest to people working in other institutions in the locality, or to members of the community. In addition to the co-operative activities mentioned above, the documentation service may:

- develop a central document collection to serve several water and sanitation institutions in the local area
- create a central catalogue or database of documents held by these institutions
- co-operate in the creation and maintenance of a co-operative catalogue or database of such documents

The possibilities of co-operation at local level are limited only by the willingness of those involved to co-operate fully. For example, a central catalogue of several local documentation services will be useful only if these services are willing to allow users from other institutions to use the documents in their collections.

Documentation services can also co-operate with other services in other parts of the country. The local service will often be able to identify locally-produced documents which

are not known to these other services, but which they would like to add to their collections. The local service may be able to enter into agreements with other services whereby it collects such documents on their behalf and receives useful information materials, products and services from them in return.

Similar arrangements may be possible with international and regional information services. These services can also offer assistance and advice to both national and local documentation services in such areas as

- the production of newsletters
- the provision of abstracting services
- training of staff and users
- translations
- development of guides to information sources

#### *Information networks*

There are many existing local, national and international information networks in the water and sanitation sector. The management of a local documentation service may decide to

- participate in one or more existing networks
- establish a new network – normally at the local level

In either case, to obtain the benefits of participating in a network, the service must also contribute to network activities. Participating in more than one network, each of which may use different procedures and have different requirements, can place a heavy burden on the staff of the documentation service.

**See also: Healthlink Worldwide Resource Centre Manual**

- 8.3 Networks and networking
- 8.3.1 Developing a network
- 8.3.2 Successful networking

In establishing a new network, clear and consistent policies regarding participation are critical to its efficient operation and development. An organisational structure should be created which defines the responsibilities, obligations and rights of each member in

- providing and disseminating information
- collaborating in the management and administration of the network

Information Management in the Water and Sanitation Sector: lessons learned from field assignments in Africa and Asia, by J. Stephen Parker (The Hague: IRC, 1993. Occasional Paper 19).

A detailed analysis and evaluation of the functioning of a number of national and regional information networks in the water and sanitation sector is provided in this IRC publication.

**Box 3B: Some existing information networks in the water and sanitation sector**

**GARNET: Global Applied Research Network**

<http://www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/cv/wedc/garnet/index.html>

WEDC, Loughborough University, Leicestershire LE11 3TU, UK.

E-mail: [wedc@lboro.ac.uk](mailto:wedc@lboro.ac.uk).

Tel. + 44 (0) 1509 222885. Fax: + 44 (0) 1509 211079. <http://www.lboro.ac.uk/wedc/>

**GWA: Gender and Water Alliance**

<http://www.genderandwateralliance.org/>

GWA Secretariat, c/o IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre,

PO Box 2869, 2601 CW Delft, The Netherlands. Tel. +31-15-219 2943.

Fax: +31-15-219 0955. E-mail: [arce@irc.nl](mailto:arce@irc.nl)

**EURASLIC: European Association of Aquatic Sciences Libraries and Information Centres**

<http://193.191.129.135/>

Snejina Bacheva, EURASLIC Executive Secretary, Institute of Oceanology,

PO Box 152, 9000 Varna, Bulgaria. Tel. +359 52 37 04 84.

Fax: +359 52 37 04 83. E-mail: [library@io-bas.bg](mailto:library@io-bas.bg)

**GLOBWINET: Global Water Information Network**

<http://www.globwinet.org/default.asp>

**SAWINET: Southern African Water Information Network**

<http://www.globwinet.org/sawinet.asp>

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH,

Dag-Hammarskjöld-Weg 1-5, 65760 Eschborn, Germany. Phone: +39 6196 79-0.

Fax: +39 6196 79-1115.

E-mail: [globwinet@globwinet.org](mailto:globwinet@globwinet.org). E-mail: [sawinet@gwpsatac.org.zw](mailto:sawinet@gwpsatac.org.zw)

**IAMSLIC: International Association of Aquatic and Marine Science Libraries and Information Centers**

<http://www.iamslic.org/index.html>

Kristen L. Metzger, Librarian Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institution, 5600 US 1

North Ft. Pierce, 34946 Florida, USA. Tel. +1 561 46 52 400. Fax: +1 561 46 52 446.

E-mail: [metzger@hboi.edu](mailto:metzger@hboi.edu)

**Inter-American Water Resources Network (IWRN)**

<http://www.iwrn.net/>

Unit of Sustainable Development and Environment, Organisation of American States

1889 F St. NW, DC 20006 Washington, USA. Tel. +1 202 458 3556

Fax: +1 202 458 3560. E-mail: [iwrn@oas.org](mailto:iwrn@oas.org)

**REPIDISCA: Red Panamericana de Información en Salud Ambiental**

<http://www.cepis.ops-oms.org/bvsair/e/home.htm>

Centro Panamericano de Ingeniería Sanitaria y Ciencias del Ambiente, CEPIS, Los Pinos 259, Urbanización Camacho, La Molina, Lima 12, Casilla Postal: 4337, Lima 100, Peru. Tel. +51 (1) 437-1077. Fax: +51 (1) 437-8289.

E-mail: [cepis@cepis.ops-oms.org](mailto:cepis@cepis.ops-oms.org)

**STREAMS: Streams of Knowledge**

<http://www.streamsofknowledge.net/>

Streams Secretariat, Philippine Centre for Water and Sanitation, The ITN Foundation, P3 Minnesota Mansion, 267 Ermin Garcia Street, Cubao, Quezon City, Philippines 1109. Tel. +632 912-0531 or +632 421-9470. Fax: +632 911-5783.

E-mail: [itnphil@compass.com.ph](mailto:itnphil@compass.com.ph)

**UWASNET: Uganda Water and Sanitation NGO Network**

PO Box 33396, Kampala, Uganda. Tel: +256-41-222922/256-77-617710.

Fax: +256-41-220893.

E-mail: [ngocoord@uwasnet.org](mailto:ngocoord@uwasnet.org)

**Water News Services Yahoo Group**

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/waterNewsServices/> [Internet only]

**Waterweb Consortium**

<http://www.waterweb.org> [Internet only]