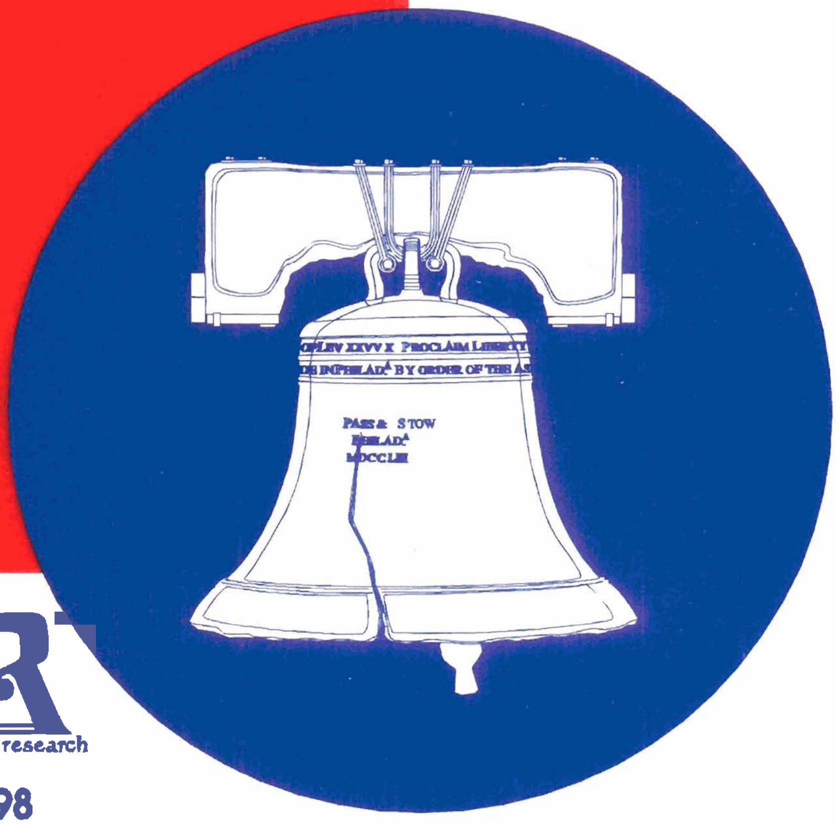
25th Anniversary Conference



NEAIR

north east association for institutional research

November 14-17, 1998

Celebrating the past
Preparing for the future

Contents

Foreword

Celebrating the past, Preparing for the future was produced for distribution at the 25^{th} Anniversary Conference of the North East Association for Institutional Research, held at the Sheraton Society Hill Hotel in Philadelphia. The conference, with three general sessions and over 60 concurrent sessions, was the largest in NEAIR's 25-year history. Program Chair Helen Schneider and Local Arrangements Chair Steve Thorpe were responsible for planning and hosting the anniversary meeting.

The volume begins with four feature articles by preeminent scholars of institutional research. Pat Terenzini, Jack Dunn, Fred Volkwein, and Frank Schmidtlein graciously accepted the editor's requests to be included in this commemorative publication. Collectively, the four articles offer a comprehensive, insightful, and invaluable guide to doing effective institutional research. Christine Scarince follows with an article tracing the history of NEAIR, based on the Association archives and personal interviews with selected NEAIR luminaries. Next, two charter members and 11 former NEAIR presidents share their favorite memories and reflect on the evolution of our profession. The volume closes with an appendix of reference material, including a collage of NEAIR logos and conference icons graphically summarizing the Association's history.

It has been an honor to serve as NEAIR president during the Association's 25^{th} anniversary year. I want to thank the members of the 1997-98 Steering Committee for their guidance, support, thoughtful ideas, and good humor: Kelli Armstrong, Karen Bauer, Marilyn Blaustein, Becky Brodigan, Jennifer Brown, Corby Coperthwaite, Jim Fergerson, Richard Heck, Denise Krallman, Helen

Schneider, Eleanor Swanson, Steve Thorpe, and Jim Trainer. A special thanks to Brenda Bretz, the NEAIR membership secretary, and her Dickinson College intern Christine Scarince, for their efforts in documenting the first 25 years of the North East Association for Institutional Research.

Pat Diehl of Prince George's Community College designed and produced ***Celebrating the past, Preparing for the future***. Designer of the current NEAIR logo, two conference program covers, and the first true multimedia NEAIR conference presentation, Pat's contributions over the years to NEAIR have been substantial and enduring. It has been my privilege and good fortune to have had Pat as a colleague the past 18 years.

Craig A. Clagett, Editor

On the Nature of Institutional Research and the Knowledge and Skills It Requires

Patrick T. Terenzini

Overview

Institutional research can be conceptualized as comprising three tiers of "organizational intelligence." The first tier, "technical and analytical intelligence," requires familiarity with the basic analytical processes of institutional research. The second tier, "issues intelligence," requires knowledge of substantive institutional management issues in four areas: students, faculty, finances, and facilities. The third tier, or "contextual intelligence," requires understanding of the history and culture of higher education in general and of the particular campus on which one works. The kinds of knowledge and skills required at each level differ, as do the ways in which each form of intelligence is acquired.

Definitions of Institutional Research

During the 1978 Association for Institutional Research (AIR) Forum in Houston, a hotel guest who was not part of the conference stepped into an elevator crowded with AIR members, including at least two past presidents. The guest looked at the organizational name tags and asked: "What's institutional research?" The question was followed first by silence, then by nervous laughter. A dozen or so floors later, the doors opened to let the guest out and there still had been no serious answer to the question.

One might reasonably argue that a dozen or so floors really does not afford sufficient time to answer the question seriously. The history of the question, of course, spans nearly a third of a century! One view, articulated by Nevitt Sanford (1962), saw institutional research (although he didn't use that label) as a series of long-term, theoretically-based studies of institutional functioning and educational outcomes. John Dale Russell conceived of institutional researchers as having "specific responsibility for carrying on studies needed for the making of important decisions about policy and procedure; and . . . work[ing] toward the primary goal of finding out how to save money that can be used to better advantage" (in Dyer, 1966, pp. 453-454). For his part, Dyer predicted that if institutional research was to have any meaningful and enduring impact on institutional quality, "it must somehow integrate *both* of these points of view in a common attack on institutional problems" (p. 454).

Others conceive of institutional research differently. Dressel (1971, p.23) asserted that "The basic purpose of institutional research is to probe deeply into the workings of an institution for evidence of weaknesses or flaws which interfere with the attainment of its purposes or which utilize an undue amount or resources in so doing". A decade later, Dressel (1981, p. 237) wrote that "Institutional research has to do with what decision makers need to know about an institution, its educational objectives, goals and purposes, environmental factors, processes, and structures to more wisely use its resources, more successfully attain its objectives and goals, and to demonstrate integrity and accountability in so doing". Saupe (1981, 1990) defined institutional research as "research conducted within an institution of higher education in order to provide information which supports institutional planning, policy formulation, and decisionmaking" (p. 1). Saupe, like Fincher (1977) differentiated institutional research from research on higher education in that the latter focuses on the advancement of theory and knowledge of higher education generally, while the former is concerned with knowledge about a specific institution or system of institutions and the generalizability of findings to other settings is not a primary concern. To the higher educational researcher, knowledge of some aspect of a specific institution holds interest only to the extent that it is (or might be) generalizable to some larger set of individuals or institutions. To the institutional researcher, such knowledge is inherently interesting. Indeed, it is the raison d'etre for institutional research.

Various chapters in Jedamus, Peterson, and Associates (1980) and Fincher (1985) offer other useful, if varying, definitions or descriptions of institutional research. Fincher, for example, explored the question of whether institutional research was a science, an art, or a little of both. McKinney and Hindera (1991) suggested some of the commonalities institutional research shared with science, but also pointed out where and how the two enterprises differed. Peterson (1985) traced the evolution of institutional research and AIR since their emergence in the early 1960s and concluded that both the definitions and activities of institutional research were to some extent dynamic over time.

Thus, the definitional problem persists, as these authors and several recent forum sessions demonstrate. Moreover, the nature of institutional research and the role it plays on most campuses, as Peterson (1985) notes, continues to evolve as a consequence of state and federal policy decisions, the changing student clientele, advances in computing and telecommunications, the shifting budgetary climate, the growing internationalization of higher education, the increasing complexity and sophistication of decisionmaking, and the growing number and volume of calls for increased institutional effectiveness.

This article offers a conception of institutional research that grows out of existing definitions but is broad enough to accommodate the many changes taking place in the functions institutional researchers are asked to perform and the tools they use. The underlying view of institutional research taken here comes from Wilensky (1969) and Fincher (1978), who view institutional research as "organizational intelligence," as "a professional, technical specialty with strong resources and capabilities for policy-related research in institutions of higher education" (Fincher, 1985, p. 34). Here, however, the metaphor of "organizational intelligence" is construed somewhat more broadly to refer to the data gathered about an institution, to its analysis and transformation into information, and to the insight and informed sense of the organization that a competent institutional researcher brings to the interpretation of that information. This conception of institutional research implies three forms of personal competence and institutional understanding that are required.

Forms of Organizational Intelligence

Three different but equally important and interdependent kinds of organizational intelligence are identifiable: technical/analytical intelligence, issues intelligence, and contextual intelligence. The ability to apply one's "intelligence" in a higher tier implies possession of the intelligence characteristic of lower tiers. For example, the capacity to function well in the "issues" tier implies possession of the appropriate technical/analytical intelligence.

Tier 1: Technical/Analytical Intelligence

Technical/analytical intelligence is of two kinds: factual knowledge or information, and analytical and methodological skills and competencies. The factual knowledge characteristic of technical/analytical intelligence consists of familiarity with the counting units for the basic building blocks of institutional research (i.e., students, faculty, finances, and facilities). Intelligence at this level requires familiarity with the standard categories and definitions of basic terms (e.g., part- or full-time, first-time, credit hours, contact hours, class status, race/ethnicity, personnel and salary grades). It also includes knowledge of basic counting rules and formulae (e.g., for calculating the number of FTE students and faculty members, a building's net assignable square feet, student grade-point averages, student/faculty ratios, and costs per credit hour). Factual technical knowledge also includes familiarity with the structures, variable names, definitions, coding conventions, and creation and maintenance schedules of basic institutional data files (e.g., admissions, registration, personnel, facilities).

Technical/analytical intelligence also refers to a broad array of methodological skills. Such skills include research design (e.g., experimental, quasi-experimental, factorial, ex post facto, survey research designs), sampling (e.g., opportunity, purposive, simple random, stratified random, area, cluster sampling designs), statistics (e.g., bivariate procedures, factor analysis, multiple regression, structural modeling), measurement (e.g., scaling, scale development, estimation of reliability and validity), and qualitative research methods (e.g., interviewing, focus groups, participant observation, ethnography). Other research skills are also involved, including various techniques for enrollment projections and forecasting, faculty workload analysis, staffing analyses, student flow modeling, and assessment and program evaluation techniques. This category also includes library research skills, synthesizing abilities, oral and written communication skills, and knowledge of the institution's basic formal organizational and governance structures.

This category also consists of a wide variety of technical mainframe and personal computer skills. Mainframe skills include large database management and the use of resident applications programs such as statistical packages (e.g., SPSS, SAS), graphics packages, and electronic mail and file transfer. Personal computing skills include wordprocessing, electronic spreadsheets, graphics, database management, and decision and executive support system applications.

Tier 1 organizational intelligence is fundamental and foundational. Without the higher level forms of intelligence, however, it has little utility or value. By itself, it consists of data without information, processes without purposes, analyses without problems, and answers without questions.

Tier 2: Issues Intelligence

Issues intelligence involves most of the substantive problems on which technical and analytical intelligence is brought to bear. As with Tier 1 intelligence, it has both substantive and procedural dimensions. Substantive Tier 2 intelligence comprises knowledge of the major issues or decision areas that face institutions and the people who manage them. Such issues include the importance of, and rationale for, such managerial activities as enrollment goal setting; faculty workload analysis; resource allocation and reallocation; physical facilities planning, management, and maintenance; pricing; salary determination and equity issues; program and institutional planning; assessment, program evaluation, and institutional self-study; budget development and execution; and faculty evaluation. Issues-intelligent institutional researchers understand the major categories of problems confronting middle- and upper-level administrators in various parts of the institution (although the individual may not fully understand the complexity of those problems). For example, issues-intelligent institutional researchers are familiar not only with the technical procedures for developing enrollment projections, but also with the processes and issues involved in enrollment target setting. They know not only how to read an account balance sheet and how to move funds around, but also the budget development process and how it relates to annual and strategic planning activities.

Issues intelligence also involves an understanding of how institutions function and how decisions are made. Perhaps most important is an understanding and appreciation of the essentially political character of the decision areas listed above. If the technically/methodologically intelligent institutional researcher understands the formal organizational and governance structures, the issues intelligent institutional researcher also has a textbook-like understanding of informal power structures and reward systems and how to operate successfully within them. This form of generalized intelligence is reflected in one's knowledge of the importance and role of political persuasion, of compromise, of prior consultation with important opinion makers and organizational and governance units, and personal and professional courtesy. It is a knowledge of how to work successfully with other people (both individually and in groups) to accomplish some goal.

It is important to note that these are general organizational and interpersonal skills. They are portable across institutional settings. They are necessary to the effective functioning of an institutional researcher, but they are not sufficient. Tier 3 intelligence, discussed below, is also necessary.

If technical/analytical intelligence by itself consists of processes without content and answers without questions, then issues intelligence, by itself, is content without processes and questions without the tools to answer them. It should be noted, however, that while Tier 2 intelligence implies the availability or presence of Tier 1 intelligence, the reverse is not the case. In the typical development of the institutional researcher, Tier 1 intelligence precedes Tier 2 intelligence, although such is not invariably the case.

Tier 3: Contextual Intelligence

Contextual intelligence involves understanding the culture both of higher education in general and of the particular campus where the institutional researcher works. It is what Robert Pace has referred to as "the knowledge of what a college is and where it has come from." It includes an understanding of the institution's historical and philosophical evolution, faculty and organizational cultures, informal as well as formal campus political structures and codes, governance, decisionmaking processes, and customs. It includes knowledge of how business is done in *this* particular college or university and who the "key players" are in both organizational and governance units. It requires understanding of the values and attitudes of the people with whom one works at all levels of the organization, and an appreciation of and respect for the perspectives of students, faculty, administrators, trustees, parents, legislators, and governors. In this regard, contextual intelligence also entails a knowledge of the local, state, national, and international environments within which the institution must function and which both present it with opportunities and constrain what it can hope to accomplish or become.

This category of intelligence reflects organizational savvy and wisdom. It is the crowning form of organizational intelligence, dependent upon the other two tiers but lifting them out of a preoccupation with topically relevant data and specific analytical tools. It makes possible the prudent, intelligent, and illuminating application of technical and methodological intelligence to locally meaningful versions of general issues. It represents both content and methodologies tailored to a specific institutional setting where real people are preparing to make real decisions. It is the form of intelligence that earns institutional research and researchers legitimacy, trust, and respect.

The Nature of the Preparation Implied

Each of the three kinds of organizational intelligence described here implies particular and different kinds of preparation. Some of this preparation may involve formal (most likely) graduate coursework, while some of the necessary preparation probably must be experiential.

Some kinds of Tier 1 (technical/analytical) intelligence can be acquired on-the-job, while other kinds will require formal training. Certain kinds of substantive Tier 1 intelligence (e.g., that having to do with local terms, definitions, counting rules, formulae, and knowledge of institutional databases) is probably best gained through experience at an institution, but such learning will be institution-specific, and the breadth of the learning is likely to be dependent upon the quality of the institutional research operation in which it is learned. If on-the-job training is received at the hands of individuals who, themselves, learned on-the-job, the training is likely to be limited and parochial.

Other forms of substantive technical and analytical intelligence are probably best acquired in a formal course in institutional research and planning offered by most graduate programs in higher education. Such training can provide exposure to, and explanation of, various models and approaches to such standard institutional research practices as enrollment projections, student flow modeling, workload analysis, resource allocation, faculty evaluation, program evaluation, assessment, institutional self-study, budget development and analysis, academic program planning, and institutional strategic planning.

Methodological and analytical skills *can* be learned through self-instruction or experience, but such learning, again, is likely to be incomplete, limited to the knowledge of the teacher, and potentially inaccurate or misleading depending upon the level of the instructor's analytical competence. Such preparation is more likely to be sound and complete when received in formal coursework in such areas as research design, measurement, sampling, statistics, and qualitative research methods, provided by coursework in a department of educational psychology, statistics, psychology, political science, sociology, public administration, or anthropology.

Skill in oral and written expression must be developed through practice and over time, but courses in speech and technical writing can help and are available at many colleges and most universities. Computer skills are most likely to be learned through self-instruction (often with the aid of a computerized tutorial that accompanies many software applications), short courses offered by computing centers, trial and error, and through the assistance of accomplished users of the software application one is trying to learn.

Coursework in all these areas, however, can take one only so far. The highest levels of research or analytical competence come only through experience in the application and adaptation of these methodological and technical tools.

If technical and analytical intelligence is developed primarily and most surely through formal coursework, issues intelligence (Tier 2) can probably be developed through either coursework or experience, or a mix of the two, although coursework is more likely to provide comprehensive coverage of the various issue areas as well as more formal examination and analysis of each. Issues intelligence might be acquired through a survey course (such as the institutional research and planning course outlined above), but the completeness of the coverage and the depth of analysis are unlikely to be totally satisfactory. Additional coursework would be advisable in such areas as the history and philosophy of higher education, curriculum design and change, program development, organizational analysis (including governance issues), financing higher education, legal issues, and students and the impact of college on them. The essence of this type of intelligence is an understanding of the content and processes of higher education in America. It means, for example, an understanding that budget development is not simply a set of steps one follows mechanically to produce an estimate of the human, financial, and material resources an institution is likely to need in each fund category for the coming year. It means understanding that budget development is a highly political process, involving a wide variety of stakeholders, each with an agenda and degree of influence on institutional functioning. It means understanding that there are informal as well as formal power structures, and that colleges and universities are neither collegial, bureaucratic, nor political organizations, but a shifting mix of all three (Baldridge, 1971). Familiarity with such issues (although not necessarily a full understanding and respect for them) is more likely to be acquired through formal coursework than through on-the-job training.

Tier 3 (contextual) intelligence can be acquired *only* through on-the-job training. One cannot learn the culture and context of the institution in which one works from a book. There are, however, two exceptions to this rule: First, a strong case can be made for the value of reading a good history of one's institution as a means of coming to understand its historical origins, organizational and curricular evolution, its customs and traditions, and much else that defines the institution and gives it a distinctive context and identity. Second, reading the institution's most recent reaccreditation self-study report can also be highly informative. More likely, however, contextual knowledge comes from working on a campus for a number of years. Understanding the context and culture of one's institution may be advanced by the kinds of coursework recommended for developing Tier 2 intelligence, but such coursework will be useful only insofar as it suggests the general kinds of issues and dynamics that one should look for and analyze as one comes to know and understand a particular institution. For example, a good, general history of higher education (e.g, Rudolph, 1962; Brubacher & Rudy, 1968) will tell one little about a particular institution, but having read it, one can then examine the historical evolution of one's own college or university against the general historical backdrop of American higher education. Similarly, any of a hundred books on organizational theory and analysis in higher education will identify faculty members as critically important players in the organizational functioning of a college or university, but having read all of them, one will still know nothing of the local faculty and its culture.

Such contextual knowledge can be acquired passively simply through employment on a campus for several years. A good institutional researcher, however, will actively seek to acquire it. Developing a high level of contextual intelligence means not only reading the history of one's institution, but also reading newspapers (local, institutional, and student), as well as the minutes of important governance bodies. It means engaging people who are long-time employees (the people with the institutional memories) in on-going conversations about what the institution was and is becoming. It means clearly understanding the formal organizational and governance structures of the institution, identifying individuals and groups who wield significant formal or informal power. It means identifying opinion-shapers, those who, by virtue of their rank, tenure, professional stature, or personality, are listened to when they speak. It means purposefully seeking regular contact and conversation with deans, department heads, and faculty members, as well as administrators in key offices (particularly the staff to senior administrators if one is not already close to those administrators themselves) as a means of staying on top of what is happening in the various quarters of the institution, keeping communication channels open, understanding the institution from their perspective, developing and maintaining a sensitivity to the problems others are facing, and building good interpersonal working relationships with the people who depend on institutional research and upon whom the institutional research function depends.

Summary and Conclusions

Institutional research may be conceived of as institutional intelligence in three, mutually dependent but distinct forms. The first form (Tier 1) consists of a technical/analytical competence that is both substantive (e.g., familiarity with terms, definitions, counting rules) and methodological (e.g., research designs, sampling, statistics, measurement, computing, and qualitative methods, as well as enrollment forecasting, workload analysis, instructional and program evaluation). This form of intelligence is foundational. By itself, however, it is of little value.

A second form (Tier 2) of organizational intelligence, issues intelligence, requires an understanding of the substantive problems confronting administrators and upon which the technical/analytical intelligence is brought to bear. Such intelligence is also both substantive and procedural. Substantive intelligence in this tier involves familiarity with the major categories of institutional decisionmaking (e.g., enrollment goal setting, resource allocation, physical facilities planning and management, program and institutional planning and assessment). Procedural competence includes knowledge of such activities as the budget development process and its linkages with academic and facilities planning, varying models for faculty workload analysis, faculty resource allocation, and faculty evaluation. But the procedural knowledge in this tier is not merely technical, but rather is conditioned by an appreciation of the essentially political character of these activities and an understanding of how they can be completed successfully with the least amount of internal institutional friction.

Tier 3, or contextual intelligence, requires an understanding not only of the culture and customs of higher education in general, but also of the particular institution in which the institutional researcher serves. It is a "sense of the place," of what it has been, what it is, and what it is becoming or can become. At base, it is a form of institutional wisdom, the crowning form of institutional intelligence, transcending both technical competence and general administrative understanding. Contextual intelligence gives both Tier 1 and Tier 2 intelligence particular value by marrying them in the service of a particular institution facing specific and occasionally idiosyncratic problems.

Finally, these three forms of organizational intelligence are mutually dependent and supportive. Only in the presence of the other two is the value of any specific form of organizational intelligence fully realized. Moreover, all three forms of organizational intelligence are found in truly effective institutional research offices, and occasionally they are found in the same individual. More such offices and individuals are needed.

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This article originally appeared in Research in Higher Education 34(1), 1993. NEAIR thanks Human Sciences Press, Inc. for permission to reprint the article in this commemorative volume.

Institutional Strategy and the I.R. Role: Perspective of a College President

John A. Dunn, Jr.

A college president's job resembles that of an architectural planner whose important contribution to a major building project takes place before the architects can begin design. Beginning with a general idea of what is wanted, the architectural planner looks at possible sites for the new facility, defines its appropriate mass and relationships to other structures, describes how it will function, and works out its budget with the client. Similarly, a president begins with his or her own sense of direction for the institution, identifies the major problems or opportunities, and selects the approaches that have the best chance of moving the institution forward. A president may appoint a constituency-based committee to recommend plans, but should do so only if that is the best strategy for achieving the desired result. The institutional researcher can understand and support both the initial conceptual work and any resulting planning process.

The President as Architectural Planner

Some of you may have had the pleasure of working closely with a good architectural planner. He or she is a qualified architect who specializes in helping a client think through all of the major questions which need answers before architectural design of a major new facility can begin. These questions include the choice of site; how the building should relate to other buildings and spaces in the area; how massive it should appear; what the contents of the building are to be, and how people should be able to move into and through the building; what its character should be; and how all this can best be accommodated within the proposed budget. The central metaphor of this article is that of the president as architectural planner for the future of the institution.

Preliminary Conceptual Work

The best way to understand the president's role is to imagine what you would do if you had just been appointed president of a college or university. Lots of people will be eager to give you advice on what to do and what not to do, but *you will want to make up your own mind how to move the institution in the directions you think are important.* The institution chose you as its leader just as a client chooses an architectural planner, because it believes that your professional skill and personal values are a good match with what the institution needs.

Your job as president is to identify and make progress on the big problem(s). Even at the outset, you probably have a good sense of what they are. The board of trustees (and the state coordinating commission or system head, if any) may help define the issues, but the real job is the president's. Typically, the big issues are not complex or hard to see.

You have worked in higher education administration for some time and know that there are certain "people principles" which must be observed.

- A college or university is a collection of people — smart people by and large, but with all the human virtues and failings.
- Changing an institution means changing the expectations and behavior of the people who constitute it.
- Individuals (and institutions) change behavior patterns only in response to lust or fear. Age usually weakens the former and strengthens the latter.

- People in colleges and universities see themselves as being rational. They need data on the basis of which they can perceive and articulate the need for change. All data will be used for political ends.
- Individuals are much more apt to change their expectations or behavior if they think the change was their idea in the first place. Then they have a stake in it. If the change is someone else's idea, then there has to be something in it for them if they are going to do it.
- Significant change in institutions almost always comes in response to outside pressures (sometimes articulated by new leaders) rather than from internally generated initiatives.
- There are limits to the extent to which a given institution can change. The history and culture of an institution shape its future. Significant change in the higher education enterprise in this country almost always comes about by invention of new kinds of institutions, not by major change in existing institutions.
- There is a trade-off between time spent doing real work and time spent changing the process for that work. Moreover, people have only a limited tolerance for change. In practice, this means there is only so much change that an institution can accomplish in a given period of time, only so many projects it can work on at once.
- You can't ever say any of this out loud on your campus.

These principles and the fact that you are new may tempt you early on to bring together the relevant constituencies in a formal planning process to identify the problems and opportunities and to agree on the steps needed. *I would strenuously argue that this is premature.* Look at what happens to the institution that skips the architectural planning phase and immediately hires architects to begin design. The architects may be very talented, but if the preliminary architectural design questions are not thought through, the institution will wind up with an unsuitable or unaffordable facility. *You should never engage in a participatory constituency-based planning process until you have defined the problem you are trying to solve, and have convinced yourself that this is the approach best suited to obtain the results you want.*

You should start with your sense of direction for the institution, your general sense of what you would like it to be. If you insist on a fancy term, articulate *to yourself* your "strategic vision." Then identify the one or two most important problems to be solved or changes to be made. Usually they can be expressed in one sentence each. For instance, your institution may:

- have a clear and valid mission but need more resources to accomplish it better
- have a valid mission but need to weed out some programs and vitalize others
- have difficulty attracting enough good students in the local area and need to recruit more widely, becoming a residential institution
- be located in and draw from an area whose needs are changing rapidly
- have difficulty attracting enough good students because its mission has been taken over by others
- have a useful mission but demoralized personnel
- have a clear and valid mission but not be very effective in achieving it
- be financially out of control
- be about to receive a new mission assignment from the state system

Thus far the thinking process is your own, and does not represent a public commitment. If you are fortunate enough to have a good board chairman or a friend who is an experienced president at another institution, you may wish to share some of your thinking, asking the other person to be constructively critical. Don't go public yet.

The next step is to outline in broad strokes the conceivable ways of dealing with the key problem or opportunity. List all you can, as a way of being sure you have understood the problem. For instance, if the problem is that your institution has a valid mission but is not very effective, there could be a number of possible approaches:

- develop ways of measuring program effectiveness
- appoint new academic leadership in the school or department or program
- hire new key faculty
- change the reward system, including more love and attention
- change the standards for faculty appointment and promotion
- acquire better technology or other relevant resources
- revise the programs based on careful attention to their aims, process, and success
- drop some marginal programs to concentrate resources on central ones
- expose the faculty to sources of comparison, such as faculty from other institutions, faculty from graduate schools the students later attend, employers
- or any combination of the above.

As you evaluate each alternative or combination in terms of political costs, dollar costs, time involved, likelihood of success, etc., you can select the approaches you think will be feasible and effective.

Moving Ahead with Implementation

So far, all of this process has taken place in your head. Once you have gone through these conceptual steps—articulating a strategic vision, articulating the key problems or opportunities, defining the possible approaches, and deciding on what you think will be most effective—you are in a better position to proceed with implementation. You have completed the conceptual architectural planning work, and can now proceed to choose the architects to do the actual design.

You have many options for implementation, depending on the problem(s) you have defined and the approach(es) you have selected. Among these are the following:

- appointing people who share your views to key positions. After they have learned the lay of the land, you may want to ask them to participate in or lead planning efforts in their areas
- changing the organizational structure to clarify responsibility for achieving the desired results, to give someone the organizational resources to deal with the situation, or to signal to the community a shift in priorities
- changing people's job descriptions or titles
- seeking better information on some programs or functions or people, using experts from inside or outside the institution to study the area and make recommendations
- developing or strengthening certain procedures or policies
- providing incentives or disincentives (promotions, salary increases, better offices, staff assistance, larger budgets, etc.) to help people move in the desired directions
- allocating additional resources to the desired activities

- and plain old-fashioned jaw-boning. (You should never underestimate the effect of your visible continued attention to an area.)

Or you may feel it is now time to organize a formal committee planning exercise. If so, you can now choose its members more astutely, and can specify the committee's charge more precisely. The community will be watching the committee process very closely for clues as to what your intentions are. You can use each of the aspects of its functioning to give the signals you want. This sounds Machiavellian. You can't outsmart faculty; they're smarter than you are and trained at critical analysis. Don't try to be overly-subtle. Just be conscious of and thoughtful about the signals that each of your actions sends. Pay attention to:

- the charge
- the leadership
- membership (Board members? Faculty? Staff? Students? Administrators? Community members? Legislators? Alumni/ae? Donors?) No committee is better than its members. Sometimes the most important outcome of a planning committee is the overview it gives the members of the operations of the institution as a whole and of its strategic position; this training can be invaluable for future institutional leaders.
- subcommittee structure
- support for the process. (What information does the committee have access to? Who can it ask for help? What budget does it have?)
- timetable
- relationship to the budget process and other institutional decision processes
- the desired outcome (A planning document? A proposed budget? A series of discussion documents?)

While you as president clearly want the advice and counsel of the committee, you may also want to use the planning process to educate the community about the problems or opportunities you see, and to work toward a consensus on the steps needed.

A Sense of Direction

As president, you want to become involved in the details of the planning, or you may be concerned about developing too detailed a plan. You are eager to move ahead, but you know that conditions change over time. Remember that your job is like that of the architectural planner. You need to think about the character of the institution as it evolves over the long term, as the architectural planner thinks about the evolving appearance of the campus over decades.

If you want to move to a spot in the clear air of the mountainous West, which you'll recognize when you get there, a detailed road map of metropolitan Boston won't help you for long. Your sense of direction is critical; you must find your way as you move ahead. Norris and Poulton, in *A Guide for New Planners* (1991), describe the reality of good planning as resembling a Lewis and Clark expedition more than a Cook's Tour. You will be wise to leave decisions as to pacing and specific routes until you see the ground before you — unlike the planned tour which can tell you where you will be on Thursday afternoon eighteen months from now. Abraham Lincoln is said to have likened his style as president to that of the Mississippi riverboat pilots who just set the course as far as they can see, from point to point, not trying to anticipate conditions too far down the river.

In another wise metaphor, Harvey Mintzberg, in the *Harvard Business Review* (1987), talked about *crafting* strategy rather than intellectually planning it. Productive strategy emerges from the interaction over time between the leader's expertise and the changing events, people and conditions of the institution, much as the artistic pottery emerges from the interaction over time of the potter's skill and the character of the clay.

It has seemed to me over three decades of working in higher education planning that the most difficult part of the job is not that of identifying the major questions, or that of figuring out what the strategy is, but instead that of persisting over long periods of time and through multiple distractions to assure that what is important gets accomplished.

Tying Planning to the Institution's Decision Processes

Under most circumstances, you will want to assure that the planning process is integrated into the institution's on-going decision processes and basic operating policies. The point of planning is to change the way people think and the decisions they make, not just to create planning documents. To complete the basic metaphor of this article, it is important that the architects designing the building be guided by the conceptual work of the architectural planner, and it is important that the construction crew be guided by the drawings.

Institutional decision processes to be tied to planning include:

- annual operating budget process
- capital budget process and capital project approvals
- campus physical planning
- admissions and financial aid decisions
- faculty and administrative appointments — especially key personnel appointments
- fund-raising objectives and campaigns

Key policy areas to be shaped by planning include:

- endowment investment and payout
- debt and capitalization

- personnel recruitment, compensation, development and promotion
- enrollment levels
- pricing and financial aid
- information technology
- outcomes assessment

There are two exceptions to this rule of tying plans to operating decisions. Sometimes a president wants a "blue-sky" dream about future possibilities, untrammeled by day-to-day difficulties. On other occasions a president may want the planning process to be a wheel-spinning exercise without influence. This can happen if a planning process is externally mandated at a time when the president does not want it, or if the president intentionally commissions a planning exercise to divert attention or to relieve other pressures.

Role of Institutional Research

Now that you've enjoyed the exhilarating life of a president for a while, let's switch back to your current role, that of institutional researcher. How can you be most helpful to your president and to the institution as a whole?

First, find out as much as you can about planning in general, and about planning at institutions like your own. Join the Society for College and University Planning. Read Don Norris and Nick Poulton's *A Guide for New Planners.* Enroll in a planning workshop at NEAIR or at a regional or national SCUP conference. Read up on the relevant literature. Call a half dozen of your colleagues at similar institutions and talk carefully with them about how planning is done on their campuses.

Second, talk to the president, key administrators and "movers and shakers" at your institution and find out what they want to accomplish. Recognize that you are in a sensitive area here and that they may not be fully open with you; however even a partial understanding is better than none. Try to understand their "strategic vision," their architectural plan; in particular, try to identify the problem or opportunity with which they are trying to deal. The information you can make available about the institution's recent history, current situation and comparative status may be quite helpful to these leaders as they develop the "architectural plan." You can help them test and shape that vision.

Third, collect and make available information on the institution's current situation, recent past, and likely future. Assemble trend data and comparative data on the key variables in factbooks, reports, or other easily accessible forms. Join data-sharing groups if there are relevant ones, and take advantage of their resources. Examine your institution's history, looking for values, key incidents and anecdotes, and the history of other efforts at change. Search for useful ancestors. You don't have unlimited resources; search out and distribute the information you think will be most helpful given the nature of the problem the institution is trying to solve.

Data alone never make people change their values. However, data can prepare the ground for change by creating cognitive dissonance, showing people that what they thought was true is not. Data can also help people justify new positions, providing quotable evidence of the need for change. Remember, however, that you are dealing with human beings who aspire to rationality but respond to emotion and self-interest; one memorable anecdote (a useful historic precedent or insightful story about an individual) can be worth a thousand data points.

Fourth and finally, take on whatever role the president wants you to in the planning process. You may be asked to support the committee and its leadership with information gathering, data analyses, to develop "what-if" scenarios or models, and even to provide logistical support. If you are asked to provide minutes of the meetings and initial drafts of reports, be careful to be sure that they reflect the committee's deliberations and not your own preferences. You should not duck that role; it is an important opportunity for positive contributions and for your own growth. The person who writes the minutes is the one who determines what really happened at the meeting. The person who writes the first draft has more to do with the shape of the final report than does anyone else.

One especially important role is that of linking the planning process to other institutional decision processes, especially to the development of operating and capital budgets. If the opportunity presents itself, take on this responsiblity or at least participate in it as much as you can. All too often institutional research is held at arm's length from the budget processes; this is your opportunity to be involved. Remember: if you do not understand where the money comes from and where the money goes, you do not understand the institution.

In summary, the basic principles for planning in this environment, and possibly in others, seems clear: Get to know the values, history, and relevant dimensions of the institution. Get to know those individuals who really make a difference and find out what they want to accomplish. Then find ways to help them evaluate the feasibility of their dreams and ways to help them make the dreams come true.

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Accountability and Assessment: Role Conflict for Institutional Researchers

James Fredericks Volkwein

What does accountability mean to me? It means role conflict!

The ancient Roman god Janus was the God of Doors and Gateways. Like the two sides of a door, Janus has two faces—one looking outward and one looking inward. While Janus encourages us to consider both the external and the internal aspects of our endeavors, Janusian thinking also reminds us that when we pass through a door we are simultaneously entering and leaving. Thus, one action viewed in opposite ways recognizes the dual nature of almost everything we do.

Presidents and vice presidents direct much time and energy toward internal management. But they also interact with key people in the external environment, and attempt to shape that environment, in order to maximize institutional resources. Clark Kerr complained that his faculty expected him to be a mouse at home, but a lion abroad. In my own office of institutional research, and I suspect in yours, we now divide our time almost equally between the external and the internal. Our internal role includes providing data and analysis and survey research to assist managerial policy making, enrollment management, and student outcomes assessment, among others. Our externally focused responsibilities include forecasting admissions applications and enrollment yield, acquiring and analyzing national databases, and transmitting official numbers to government agencies and guidebooks.

Universities are fascinating organizations because we house two strong cultures within the same organizational structure. One is the administrative culture—the bureaucracy, where authority and responsibility are based largely on one's position. The other culture, of course, is the faculty's academic or professional culture, where authority is based not so much on one's position as it is on one's knowledge or expertise. Moreover, the organization's goal activities (teaching, research, service) are carried out by the academic culture which places a high value on quality and effectiveness. On the other hand, the administrative bureaucracy supplies the supporting services; this culture is much more cost conscious and values efficiency. There are many other differences between the two cultures as well—differences in time frame, in problem solving methods, in the required rigor of evidence, tolerance for ambiguity, and cosmopolitan versus local orientation. Thus, faculty and administrators live in cultures that are importantly different. Their variable approaches and values often produce organizational tension.

Institutional research operates in both these contrasting cultures. Thus, IR can be thought of as a Halfway House. Our efforts and analytical work are administratively directed because our data inform managerial decisionmaking—and we know who signs our paychecks. But some of our work, like faculty workload analysis and assessment, takes us into the academic culture. We serve at times as a home for theory-driven social science research, but more often as a practice-oriented detective agency. We are trained as researchers, and some of us hire graduate assistants or draw upon faculty expertise to help us with our research in the same way that an academic department does. But unlike the academic department, our research sometimes is for the president's inner circle only.

Scholars in most universities experience tension between their institutional role (teaching) and their professional role (research).

For the most part, faculty are hired to teach particular subjects, but they are trained and rewarded, at least in universities, for their research and scholarship. Only occasionally do university faculty receive formal training for the role they are hired for—teaching students. Moreover, the products of teaching are generally less visible than the products of research, so most faculty are given promotion and tenure (and professional mobility) based largely on their research and scholarship.

Institutional researchers may face a similar role tension when they are hired to produce accurate numbers and descriptive statistics about the campus (the institutional role), but are trained for and find fulfillment in the challenges of research and analysis (the professional role).

An array of public policy issues challenge all of us in higher education. I want to share with you my thoughts about a few of them, and summarize how they intersect on the campus. The first is a concern about the **high cost** of a college education—a concern expressed by parents, college students, and taxpayers alike. Since 1970, tuition and fees on public and private campuses alike have risen on average at a rate that is double the increase in the Consumer Price Index.

A second policy concern is the almost universal need for management efficiency and **increased productivity**. Public concern about high cost magnifies concern about low productivity. Virtually every sector of the nation's economy has made substantial gains in productivity in the past 30 years; while in higher education, salaries and cost per student have been rising at rates well above inflation. We use *more* resources in relation to outputs than before, and economists call that *declining* productivity. Many trustees and state legislators have business backgrounds, and for them, the idea of restructuring and becoming more productive is accepted as a familiar necessity. Few faculty, however, see it this way.

The third public concern focuses on our **effectiveness**. Most customers are willing to pay more for higher quality and better service, but it is not clear that our higher tuition prices translate into higher quality. In fact, there is ample evidence from employers and researchers alike that many college graduates are not as well educated, nor as employable, as they were in the past and as they need to be in the future. For example, the National Adult Literacy Survey found that large numbers of two-year and four-year college graduates are unable in everyday situations to use basic skills involving reading, writing, arithmetic computation, and elementary problem solving. The "Wingspread Group" of governors concluded that a college degree seems to be a credential without content.

A fourth policy issue is **equity and access**. In public higher education, student access is a significant if not controlling mission, but many independent institutions also view themselves as participating in the nation's educational opportunity, and practicing equity in hiring personnel.

The fifth policy issue is **accountability**. Public and private institutions alike have stakeholders who do not necessarily agree that campus autonomy is a good thing. At the very least, they believe that campuses need to be held accountable for fulfilling their educational missions. In the extreme, they believe that campuses need to be micro-managed in order to ensure efficient operation and the attainment of strategic goals. Such views are in plentiful supply, not only at the trustee and local level, but also at the state and national levels as well.

When these five competing concerns about cost, productivity, access, effectiveness, and accountability all collide at the campus level, they create a turbulent and challenging environment, at least outside the classroom.

Two years ago, the State University of New York Trustees issued a document called "Rethinking SUNY." This report, aimed at re-structuring the SUNY System, lowering its cost, and increasing its productivity, struck many of us as over-emphasizing indicators of cost and efficiency, and under-emphasizing indicators of quality and effectiveness. It is easier for centralized authority to count the number of students in the classroom than to measure what they are learning. It is easier to count the square feet of campus space in use than to know how well the space is being used.

Another interesting development occurred in 1995 when the New York State Comptroller's Division of Management Audit issued its report on the State University's performance indicators. The scope of the audit included not only an assessment of the extent to which SUNY's measures reflected progress toward its goals described in its planning document SUNY 2000, but also the extent to which the State University measures were consistent with those contained in the *Performance Reporting Model* of the national Government Accounting Standards Board.

Surprisingly, this model developed by government accountants, contains measures of performance that we might have designed ourselves (ratings by students and alumni, retention and graduation rates, student performance on academic tests and professional examinations, rates of employment and graduate school attendance, employer satisfaction). This, at least, is a refreshing change from legislative and trustee attention to things like class size, faculty productivity, and student time to degree completion, which focus on means rather than ends — on the cost of the educational process, rather than upon the results.

The classic Janusian challenge for most of us is resolving the tension between the internal and the external uses of assessment and performance. As one writer puts it, "The spirit of assessment requires a diligent search for bad news, but accountability encourages the opposite" (Roger Peters, 1994). In public and private institutions alike, we face the need to improve ourselves and to become better teachers, learners, scholars, and administrators. To accomplish this, we need to expose our weaknesses and identify what needs to be changed. However, the very act of such openness runs the danger of reducing our market appeal and our resources, especially in an atmosphere of fierce competition and performance funding.

Last year the Middle States Association attempted to resolve this tension by proposing a policy requiring each Middle States campus to present evidence of student learning and growth as a key component in demonstrating the institution's effectiveness. Thus, to be accredited, each college will be expected to gather and present evidence that it is accomplishing its educational goals. This Middle States proposal is congruent with those already implemented by the Southern and North Central accrediting bodies.

Thus, the action by Middle States properly calls our attention to the Janusian uses of assessment—improvement and accountability. These twin purposes seem to offer a constructive path. They provide a foundation for our internal development, at the same time recognizing the need to demonstrate our effectiveness to stakeholders. The challenge for IR is to undertake studies and develop measures that can serve these dual purposes.

At NEAIR conferences we have discussed a variety of campus dualities, tensions, and policy collisions—internal versus external, academic versus administrative, professional versus institutional, access versus excellence, efficiency versus effectiveness, and assessing for improvement versus for accountability. These contradictory pressures produce a variety of challenges for institutional researchers and force us to play a medley of roles.

My own experience in coping with these dualities led me to the framework shown in the following chart. In our endeavors, we pursue a number of different purposes. I identify four IR types:

The Purposes and Roles of Institutional Research in Evaluation, Accreditation, and Assessment		
	Purposes of Evaluation/Assessment	
Organizational Culture/Values	**Formative/Internal For Improvement**	**Summative/External For Accountability**
Administrative and Institutional	To Describe the Institution **IR as Information Authority**	To Present a Positive Image **IR as Spin Doctor**
Academic and Professional	To Analyze the Institution **IR as Policy Analyst**	To Supply Evidence of Effectiveness **IR as Scholar/Researcher**

First, on the top of the boxes I distinguish between those IR purposes, roles and activities that are more internal, formative, and improvement-oriented versus those that are more external, summative and accountability-oriented. On the left side, I characterize the organizational culture and value system in two ways: academic/professional versus administrative/institutional. This produces a typology of four overlapping yet distinguishable types of IR purposes and roles. These are not pure types but they reflect dominant tendencies, and can be applied either to the office as a whole, or to the separate individuals and functions within.

IR as Information Authority

The internal and more administrative purpose and support role is to describe the shape and size of the institution and its activities. Here the institutional researcher educates the campus community about itself in terms of data on admissions, enrollment, faculty, and degrees awarded. Generating most of the information in the campus factbook falls into this category. In this role the institutional researcher compiles and packages descriptive statistics for campus audiences. Of the many challenging IR tasks, this one probably requires the least preparation in the form of education and experience. The role requirements roughly correspond to Terenzini's technical intelligence.

IR as Policy Analyst

The internal and more professional purpose is to study and analyze the institution. In this role the institutional researcher works with top management as an analyst or consultant by providing support for planning and budget allocation decisions, policy revision, administrative restructuring, or other needed change. Here the institutional researcher is the policy analyst who educates the management team. Many of us are especially likely to assume this role when we conduct studies for our colleagues in academic affairs, budgeting, and student services. Falling into this category are studies that give alternative enrollment scenarios and revenue projections based upon different assumptions about inputs. Comparative cost analysis, student opinion research, and studies of salary equity are other examples. This role requires relatively high levels of education and training, as well as both analytical and issues intelligence.

IR as Spin Doctor

Of the two external types, the more administrative style is visible when IR assembles descriptive statistics that reflect favorably upon the institution. Many of us are called upon to play this advocate role frequently, and we need to protect against carrying this style to an unethical extreme. Here, the IR staff presents the "best case" for the campus, describing the glass as half full rather than half empty. Some would put our responses to guidebooks in this category, but we certainly perform this role when we assist campus fund raisers and government relations staff in presenting a positive image. Some experience on the job and knowledge of the institution is usually needed for success in this role.

IR as Scholar/Researcher

The more professionally oriented and analytic version of the external/accountability role is that of the impartial researcher and scholar who investigates and produces evidence so that institutional effectiveness, legal compliance, and goal attainment can be judged. Conducting outcomes studies and performance reports when the primary audience is external to the campus falls into this category. Support for the accreditation self-study might be another example. This is a sophisticated role that requires advanced training and years of experience.

Some IR activities are difficult to classify because they overlap several categories. The factbook has both internal and external audiences. Compliance reporting has both descriptive and analytical aspects. When we score and report student ratings, we act as the information authority, but we become the research analyst when we carry out studies based on student ratings data. Faculty workload and instructional analysis can appear in all four boxes, depending on the audience and the complexity of the task.

Nevertheless, most of what we do forces us to play one or another of these roles, sometimes simultaneously. While the lines among these roles may blur from time to time, and the transition from one role to the other can be as rapid as a telephone call, I'm convinced that my institution needs IR to play all four roles effectively. I suspect that yours does too.

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Organizational Behavior Theories: Institutional Research Implications

Frank A. Schmidtlein

Introduction

Institutional researchers frequently are perplexed by institutional leaders' behavior. Officials frequently ignore data and analyses they receive and often do not support potentially useful data systems and studies. They may not rely on available data when planning and budgeting. This behavior is sometimes attributed to a lack of managerial competence, especially since many campus officials do not have professional management training. Yet many have considerable administrative experience. Consequently, their failure to utilize data and analysis more fully may be explained as some type of human irrationality that afflicts organizations in general and, perhaps, institutions of higher education in particular.

Institutional researchers, like other administrators and faculty, operate on the basis of implicit or explicit theories about organizational behavior. The extent to which their advice is heeded, and their efforts contribute to policy and decisions, largely depends on whether the assumptions behind their research and conclusions correspond to institutional realities and to institutional leaders' organizational assumptions. If institutional research staffs' theoretical assumptions differ significantly from those of campus leaders, then these leaders will tend to ignore their advice, even if it has intrinsic value. Consequently, the continuing success of institutional researchers requires a sensitivity to the theories and assumptions about institutional behavior held by those they serve, and to the theories in the literature based on scholarship, research and practical experience.

The emerging organizational theories described in this article suggest some limitations on the use of data and analysis in decision processes. These limitations always have been present though not always explicitly recognized. Explicit recognition of these limitations does not suggest a lesser role for institutional research. The capacity to accumulate and use data efficiently is increasing and there is some evidence that the importance of data in decisionmaking is increasing. New conceptions of organizational behavior merely help clarify one's view of the role of data and analysis in decisionmaking and, especially, the context in which they are used.

Emerging Views on the Character of Organizations

Kuhn (1962), in a highly influential book, described how changes in theoretical assumptions, or paradigms underlying scientific research had revolutionized various fields of inquiry. Similarly, as new theories on organizational behavior have emerged, new management concepts, techniques and processes based on these theories have gained popularity. Concepts of "rational decisionmaking" and "bureaucracy," for example, led, in the past, to processes such as Program, Planning and Budgeting Systems (PPBS), Program Evaluation and Review Techniques (PERT), Quality Circles, Strategic Planning, and Total Quality Management (TQM).

This chapter examines several theoretical perspectives on organizational behavior that have some empirical support but which challenge the validity of some commonly held assumptions. A critique will be presented of notions of organizational rationality that are based on: 1) a primary reliance on data and analysis in decisionmaking, 2) an emphasis on economic criteria when analyzing efficiency, 3) an assumption that organizations pursue goals, and 4) a problem-solving approach for dealing with organizational issues.

Some common assumptions about the nature of "rational" organizational behavior include the following:

- Organizations, or units within organizations, commonly are viewed as acting rationally when they rely heavily on intelligence derived from research and analysis when making decisions. When modern quantitative techniques for research and analysis are not given prominence, the administrators responsible often are labeled as acting irrationally. This labeling of such administrative behavior as irrational is particularly congenial to institutional researchers. After all, their major function is providing formal research and analysis to aid in decisionmaking. Giving legitimacy to other sources of organizational intelligence risks down-grading their own importance.
- The effectiveness of decisions often is evaluated on the basis of economic standards of rationality. Institutional research staffs frequently have training in financial analysis. In addition, economic variables in organizations typically are more susceptible to quantification than non-economic variables. Therefore, institutional researchers frequently have a tendency to emphasize economic efficiency and effectiveness as the rational basis for decisionmaking.
- Organizational goals commonly are viewed as necessary to guide decisions. When institutional administrators do not specify clear goals and develop plans to reach them, institutional researchers may question the rationality of their decision processes.

- Issues confronted by institutions frequently are conceived of as problems. These problems are viewed as having solutions. Once solutions are discovered they are assumed to be applicable in similar situations. An effective organization is one that discovers problems at an early stage and has the ability to design creative solutions. The data and analyses of institutional researchers help define problems and provide a basis for evaluating solutions.

Current organizational theories raise questions about the accuracy and utility of each of these assumptions. They are not necessarily the "rational" way to view organizational behavior. The nature of these limitations is described below.

Sources of Organizational Intelligence

Contemporary theories of organizational behavior suggest that there are a number of constraints on using data and analysis in decisionmaking and, additionally, that there are crucial non-quantitative sources of intelligence. Open systems theory (Katz and Kahn, 1966) views institutions as obtaining resources (inputs) which are transformed through some process into products or services (outputs). If an institution is to survive over time, its products and/or services must have sufficient value in the marketplace for it to exchange them for the resources needed to maintain its production processes. This exchange of products and services for resources is accomplished through bargaining and salesmanship which determine relative values and create markets. The actors in such exchange cycles attempt to portray their products in the best possible light and to bargain for the most favorable exchange ratios.

Given this conception of organizational behavior, the information participants need to assess changes in the marketplace, and in the performance of organizational processes, comes from informal feedback from participants, according to cybernetic principles (Birnbaum, 1988), as they assess past actions, as well as from formal data gathering and analysis.

However, the less structured, non-quantitative intelligence gained through feedback during exchange processes tends to be viewed as "unscientific" and irrational. Using informal feedback from past actions to take limited initiatives, and then to make corrections based on consequences, is seen as a wasteful process when analysis undertaken prior to implementing initiatives might reveal proper courses of action and justify bolder decisions. However, data and analysis are expensive and often time-consuming, predictions are uncertain, and many variables are difficult to quantify. Consequently, organizations often acquire information from informal sources such as newspapers, conferences, friends and associates, and by evaluating reactions to past actions. Therefore, given the costs and limitations of formal data collection and analyses, an administrator should not be considered irrational when placing considerable weight on informal feedback from the "marketplace."

This recognition of the role of informal information in decisionmaking should not be interpreted as downgrading the role of institutional research. It merely clarifies the environment within which valuable data gathering and analysis take place. A sensitivity to the various types and sources of information can give an institutional researcher a better appreciation of the broader intelligence administrators obtain from their daily interactions and from feedback regarding past actions. Institutional research can be viewed as supplementing but not supplanting other important sources of institutional intelligence.

Institutional researchers cannot be expected to be most helpful if they cannot construct their analyses in the context of the non-quantitative intelligence on issues possessed by senior policy makers. Institutional administrators should share with institutional researchers the intelligence they get from other sources that is relevant to issues institutional research staff are addressing.

Resources Involved in Organizational Exchange Processes

Frequently economic variables and standards of rationality are emphasized when evaluating organizational decisions. However, there are at least four classes of resources exchanged in the organizational marketplace (Schmidtlein, 1977): *economic goods and services*, *social assets*, *human qualities and skills*, and *information*. The value placed on particular resources when making decisions varies with circumstances.

Economic Goods and Services. The first of these resources, economic goods and services, is the most common focus of policy making. The rules of exchange for economic resources are more highly formulated than those for exchanges of other kinds of resources. Economic data generally are more readily available for analysis than are data on other kinds of resources.

Social Assets. Social assets, such as status, legitimacy, authority, political power, association with core cultural values, and constituent trust are hard to measure and often are ignored. Yet they are extremely important in perceptive administrators' calculations and typically are given significant, if not always explicit, weight when making decisions.

Human Qualities and Skills. These resources also are difficult to analyze and quantify but experienced administrators know their organizations can be no better than the people they employ. Difficult choices are required when determining how much an outstanding person is worth to an organization in terms of salary because a salary based on pure merit, or on market conditions for an occupation, can raise equity concerns among other employees and create off-setting organizational morale costs. Budget actions based solely on economic considerations sometimes cause the more competent persons to leave an organization, costing it more in overall terms than the benefits realized from the budgetary savings. Often, purely financial decisions can have a negative affect on employee morale and may lower productivity.

Information. People often fail to realize that information is a resource that can be exchanged and employed in ways designed to enhance the net advantages of persons and institutions. A common phenomenon is the bureaucrat who protects his or her position from ambitious subordinates by not allowing them to obtain a full view of unit or organizational operations. Individuals often do not share information because of exchange process considerations.

The decisions organizations make during exchange processes typically seek to maintain a balance among a total set of resources. In these circumstances, a decision is irrational only if it does not balance off various classes of resources in a way that betters the overall, long-range competitive position of the organization. Too narrow a focus on economic resources seldom produces the most satisfactory set of overall results.

Institutional researchers must be sensitive to this full range of resources when performing analyses to support decisionmaking. Failure to take a broader view of relevant variables, no doubt, is a frequent reason why policy makers sometimes ignore their analyses and recommendations. This broader view of resources may not only sensitize institutional researchers to factors which administrators also may be only dimly aware of, but also may suggest new areas and approaches to their research.

Utility of the Organizational Goal Concept

The conception of organizations as "goal seeking" is broadly accepted in the popular literature on management and undoubtedly shapes many institutional researcher's notions about management. Gross (1969, p.227) noted that:

> Whatever else authors have to say on the general subject, there seems general agreement... that it is the dominating presence of a goal that marks off an 'organization' from all other kinds of systems.

This conception of organizations, however, has been questioned by some scholars (e.g., Vickers, 1965). Georgiou (1973) produced one of the most thorough critiques of what he termed the "goal paradigm" and suggested a "counter paradigm" he believed better described organizational behavior. He viewed organizations as composed of individuals and groups all striving to increase, maintain, or exchange the rewards (resources) they get from the organization in return for their contributions to it. The pursuit and reconciliation of individual and group interests are the primary determinants of organizational behavior, not the pursuit of some explicit or implicit organizational goals. Organizational decisions and courses of action consequently are based, not on some a priori goals, but on perceptions of the implications of complex sets of exchange relationships and mutual accommodations among affected parties residing within and outside of the organization. Parties to these transactions all possess power derived from a variety of sources and seek various outcomes. Therefore, the power of top administrators, and others, is delimited to varying degrees, depending on the issues and surrounding circumstances.

From this perspective, institutions of higher education can be viewed as a metal board dotted with moveable magnet pegs, all connected in complex patterns with rubber bands of varying lengths and strengths. Each peg represents one role or variable. As each is shifted, tensions change among the other rubber bands resulting in complex readjustments of their positions, thus achieving a new configuration that is in equilibrium. A few of the bands connect pegs within the board's boundaries to pegs on adjoining boards; representing external agencies and actors with which the institution has relationships. Thus shifts of pegs on any of several boards have reciprocal effects. Given this model, one can visualize that changing one variable, or group of variables, in an organization has complex effects on other variables. Consequently, what one seeks in making organizational changes is a favorable set of new relationships among the variables, or pegs.

Frequently, goals are stated in terms of the "locations" of one or a few pegs (or the state of a few variables). Typically, little recognition is given to the effects that achieving narrowly defined goals might have on the full set of inter-connected variables. Such a narrow focus on goals leads to sub-optimizing behavior, maximizing one value at too great a cost to others. Thus the notion of goals can lead to oversimplified views about appropriate courses of action, resulting in serious unintended consequences. Consequently, an institutional researcher seeking clear statements of consistent, stable organizational goals will be disappointed in this environment. Participants can be expected to state their interests in ways that enhance their bargaining positions and maintain their flexibility to accommodate new intelligence on various parties' positions and power relationships. They also will resist attempts to set goals that create sub-optimizing behaviors and that do not recognize complex interactions among the variables involved in decisions.

Concept of "Problems" When Analyzing Institutional Behavior

Unsatisfactory situations in institutions frequently are termed "problems." Institutional problems often are viewed as analogous to mathematical problems. They are assumed to have a best solution which, once discovered, can be applied to similar future problems with similar results. This "problem solving" perspective, when seeking to improve organizational performance, misrepresents the actual nature of institutional decisionmaking.

The open systems view of organizations, described earlier, suggests that most decisions deal with reconciling conflicting values and perceptions. The substantive ends sought by various parties differ and these differences must be resolved sufficiently to permit the collective enterprise to function. Resolving value conflicts resulting from particular decisions generally does not alter underlying basic interests of the involved parties. It only temporarily subordinates some of their interests in order to preserve other, perhaps broader, interests. Basic interests remain and, as new opportunities arise, tend to reemerge periodically to reopen discussion. Thus, conflicts, or "problems," do not go away. They remain more or less submerged, awaiting a favorable opportunity to resurface. Over time organizational attention shifts from one to another of these value and/or perceptual conflict issues as changing conditions or perspectives give priority to various concerns (Cohen, March, and Olsen, 1972).

One implication of this perspective, that "problems" are never solved but only temporarily accommodated, is that there are few if any general prescriptions for dealing with organizational issues that can be applied across a wide variety of settings. Actual solutions to specific conflicts, in particular settings, depend on the complex interactions among the participants. Their interests, of course, include preserving the collective benefits provided by the organization, not just their more personal rewards. Perhaps the term "issues" more accurately describes the actual nature of the circumstances higher education decisionmakers address. The word "problem" conveys an inaccurate sense of replicable and lasting solutions to organizational conflicts.

The slowness and "politics" with which decisions get made in higher education institutions, as a result of the factors described above, are apt to frustrate an institutional researcher who views problems as technical questions that are solvable, and that should not reoccur once solved.

Conclusion

To be effective, institutional researchers must be aware of current theoretical perspectives on organizational behavior and, perhaps more importantly, of the theories and normative assumptions held by institutional administrators and policy makers. Institutional research performs a critical function by providing data and analyses to decision processes. However, these data and analyses are interpreted and employed in an organizational context that may differ from the provider's assumptions. Researchers must recognize their data are only one ingredient in policy discussions and do not point unambiguously toward acceptable decisions. Furthermore, participants may misunderstand the significance of the data and analyses and misuse them for partisan advantage. Indeed, part of the dynamics in decision situations is educating participants about the value and uses of data and analyses. However, unless institutional researchers accurately perceive the context in which the data are used, their efforts to make them relevant, and to gain recognition of their value, are apt to be somewhat unsuccessful.

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NEAIR's 25-Year History

Christine Scarince

The North East Association for Institutional Research began in 1974 with a humble membership of 33 individuals. Today, NEAIR has over 300 members and remains committed to the casual, friendly atmosphere which has drawn new members and motivated northeasterners in the profession to participate in conferences year after year. The organization functions to encourage the exchange of information between "oldtimers" and "newcomers" and provide opportunities for professional development within NEAIR and beyond. The last 25 years have created new leaders to respond to the increasing demands on institutional researchers. The supportive environment provided by NEAIR has helped to facilitate assistance, debate and camaraderie....not to mention a lot of good laughs!

Charter Members

The first meeting of NEAIR was held in Williamstown, Massachusetts in 1974. The following 33 people were in attendance:

Tommy Annas, SUNY-System Admin.
Ernest Beals, College Entrance Exam Board
George Beatty, UMass/Amherst
Susan Belonis, UMass/Amherst
Ken Berger, LaGuardia CC
Molly Broad, Syracuse Univ.
Susan Burkett, Westfield State College
Susan Dean, SUNY-System Admin.
Carla Drije, Brooklyn College
Stephen Elllis, LaGuardia CC
Hiram Evans, Curry College
Loren Gould, Worcester State College
Robert Grose, Amherst College
Warren Gulko, UMass/Amherst
Marilyn Harris, Brooklyn College
Richard Heck, Colgate University
Robert Henderson, Univ. of Hartford
Hans Hopf, NYU
Sherwin Iverson, SUNY-System Admin.
Norman Kaufman, Syracuse Univ.
Wendell Lorang, SUNY-Albany
Jane McKenzie, UMass/Amherst
Clifton Mayfield, Southern CT State College
Robert Melican, New England Bd. of Higher Ed.
Elliot Mininberg, NYU
Gordon Napier, Univ. of Rhode Island
Karl Neidlein, Rutgers
Eldon Park, Educational Testing Service
Samuel Phillips, Syracuse Univ.
Ray Rothermel, Boston State College
Dwight Smith Jr., SUNY-Albany
Lois Torrence, Univ. of Connecticut
Jeffrey Weinstein, New England Bd. of Higher Ed.

NEAIR Leadership

George Beatty, Jr. and Molly Broad provided the initial impetus and encouragement for the formation of NEAIR. They also established the sense of informality and collegiality that NEAIR has tried to maintain despite its growth in membership, resources, and scope of activities.

The first two NEAIR by-laws by Cliff Mayfield were adopted at the first general session of 1974, at which Wendell Lorang and Dick Heck (current and active members) were both in attendance. At the inaugural conference the decision was made to hold two formal meetings each year, one in the fall and one in the spring. The officers of the nascent organization were installed: George Beatty, Jr. as Chairperson, Molly Broad as Secretary-Treasurer and Elliot Mininberg as Publications Chair.

Initially, the office of NEAIR President did not formally exist; instead, the head position was Program Coordinator or Chairperson until the 1979-1980 Steering Committee in which Robert Grose served as the first formally titled "President." Other position descriptions have undergone evolution as well. In the beginning, the offices of Secretary and Treasurer were held by one person. In 1978, the duties were split into two offices, at which time the Secretary also took on the responsibilities of Publications Chair. It wasn't until 1983 that Secretary and Publications Chair became two separate positions as they are today. Committees have been added and metamorphisized as the Steering Committee continuously strove to meet the needs of the organization.

The most common progression of a Steering Committee officer has been from Member-At-Large to Conference Chairperson to President. Among those who have taken this path: Eric Brown, Judith Hackman, Robert Lay, Michael McGuire, Patrick Terenzini, and Paul Wing. Most Steering Committee officers began as Members-At-Large, although

Local Arrangements Chairperson is also another popular entrance into NEAIR's leadership.

Although the SUNY system has contributed the most leaders to NEAIR, the University of Massachusetts at Amherst has been the most represented institution (in a single location) in Steering Committees since 1974, thanks to the services and leadership of George Beatty, Jr., Larry Benedict, Marilyn Blaustein, Bill Fenstemacher, William Laurousche, and David Rumpf.

Brenda Bretz has spent the past 10 years as Membership Secretary, contributing an enormous amount to the organization through her work. She has also served once as Local Arrangements Chair and two years as a Member-At-Large. Ellen Kanarek's introduction to the 1996 Proceedings proposed that Brenda deserved to win both Congeniality and Talent Awards AND the running suit competition. Her presence in NEAIR and good sense of humor have welcomed many new members and helped the organization to run smoothly. Rumor has it that her term as Membership Secretary shall never expire.

Nancy Neville has had the second longest consecutive presence in the Steering Committee: six years, from 1981 to 1986, including one term as Conference Chair, three times as a Member-At-Large, one term as President, and one as Publications Chair. She represents the volunteer with the greatest length of continuous service.

Another dedicated leader, Wendell Lorang was involved with the NEAIR Steering Committee for over ten nonconsecutive years. His legacy includes:

1976-77: Member-At-Large
1979-80: Conference Chair
1981-82: Member-At-Large
1983-84: Local Arrangements Chair
1987-89: Member-At-Large
1989-90: Local Arrangements Chair
1992-96: Treasurer

Members who have remained in NEAIR for many years are exceptionally committed to newcomers. Many have volunteered much of their time and energy, each dedicated to making NEAIR a worthwhile, friendly organization. In recognition of their commitment, Emeritus Membership has been granted to Libby Knapp (1984), Bill Laurousche (1984), Diana Green (1989), Robert Grose (1989), Lois Torrence (1993), Michael Schiltz (1993), Jack Dunn (1997), John Jacobson (1997), and Stuart Rich (1997). More recently, the Steering Committee created the Distinguished Service Award to be given to members who have made substantial and sustained contributions to NEAIR and to the field of institutional research. The first Distinguished Service Award will be presented in Philadelphia in 1998. Many NEAIR officers and members have gone on to accept leadership positions in national AIR as well as to bring IR to a new level in their own institution. A listing of all Steering Committee Members is appended.

Conference Locations and Themes

NEAIR conferences have been held throughout the northeast region, covering a variety of pertinent issues. The organization is committed to rotating the conference site within the region to provide easy access for as many members each year as possible. The most common locations have been Princeton, chosen three times, and Albany, Hartford and Philadelphia, all chosen twice. New York, the most central location, has been the host most often among the states—five times. The highest attendance in NEAIR history was at the 1987 conference in Rochester, with 260 participants.

Year	Location	Theme	Attd.
1974	Williamstown, MA	Inaugural Meeting and Conference	33
1975	New Haven, CT	Coping in the 1970's	71
1976	Princeton, NJ	Rational Decision Making and Political Realities	125
1977	Durham, NH	Does IR = Institutional Retrenchment?	99
1978	University Park, PA	IR: New Responses to New Demands	125
1979	Cooperstown, NY	IR and Creative Change	139
1980	Amherst, MA	IR in the Decade Ahead: Enhancing Performance	137
1981	Princeton, NJ	Planning for Quality	158
1982	Durham, NH	Doing IR: A Focus on Professional Development	167
1983	Hershey, PA	IR and Planning in the Next Decade	179
1984	Albany, NY	IR: At the Core of Strategic Planning	211
1985	Hartford, CT	IR: Getting to the Core	223
1986	Philadelphia, PA	IR: New Challenges to an Evolving Role	237
1987	Rochester, NY	Assessment: Fad or Fact of Life?	260
1988	Providence, RI	Strategic Choice: Making Better Decisions Through Better Understanding of Institutions and Their Environments	223
1989	Pittsburgh, PA	Bringing Technology to the Issues	199
1990	Albany, NY	IR: Its Place in the 1990's	213
1991	Cambridge, MA	IR In a Changing Society	181
1992	Washington, DC	Defining a Quality Education	176
1993	Bolton Landing, NY	20 Years: Putting It All Together	140
1994	Baltimore, MD	Informing Higher Education Policy	187
1995	Burlington, VT	Comparative and Longitudinal Studies of Higher Education	162
1996	Princeton, NJ	Thoughts of One's Own: Innovative Leadership in IR	179
1997	Hartford, CT	Accountability and IR	186
1998	Philadelphia, PA	The Future is Now: The Role of IR in Campus Transformation	NA

Presentations

Only three studies were presented at the first meeting in Williamstown, 1974; however, a year and a half later, the 1975 *Proceedings* included 13 papers plus excerpts from a keynote address and two training sessions. Conference planners have gradually incorporated into the program more means for proposing ideas and encouraging the involvement of its members. The 1997 conference in Hartford was composed of 10 workshops, 15 workshares, one panel, six special interest groups, and four table topics, in addition to 22 paper presentations. A fifth of the presenters were first-timers presenting on their own.

Many members have presented again and again, appearing many times in the *Proceedings*. Jack Dunn has contributed the most papers (14) to the *Proceedings*. The most prolific authors published in the *Proceedings* include:

Authors with Most Papers in NEAIR *Proceedings*	
14	Jack Dunn
12	Louis Spiro
11	Michael Middaugh
10	Dawn Terkla
9	Jean Kibler, John Maguire
8	David Costello, Anne Marie Delaney, Fred Volkwein
7	Craig Clagett, Diana Green
6	Karen Bauer, Jill Campbell, Robert Grose, Robert Karp, Yuko Mulugetta, David Rumpf

These veterans serve as examples; they encourage the newcomers through their quality presentations.

Special Events

NEAIR has increasingly provided for the networking and social development of its members through structured receptions and events. In a January 1985 Steering Committee meeting, "there was discussion regarding the possibility of a planned special event...to provide conferees the opportunity to meet away from professional settings. This might allow new members to meet some of the 'old hands.'"

NEAIR Conference Special Events	
1985	New England Clambake, Sunset Tour of Hartford
1986	City Tavern in Independence National Historical Park
1987	Fall Festival Celebration and Bus Tour
1988	A Sunday Excursion to Newport: The City by the Sea/Yo-Yo's
1989	Dinner and Riverboat Cruise "The Captain's Charter"
1990	Murder Mystery Buffet Dinner
1991	An Evening at the Museum of Science
1992	Evening Dinner at the Old Ebbit Grill
1993	Dinner and Karaoke in the Sagamore Dining Room
1994	An Evening with Edgar Allan Poe and Friends at Westminster Hall
1995	Ghouls and Goblins Vermont Theme Party
1996	Marc Abrahams, editor of "The Annals of Improbable Research"
1997	Banquet and Entertainment

Many of these special events have been memorable...for better or for worse. In 1987, the bus tour around Rochester had been planned earlier in the year, not anticipating the darkness of autumn that would make a tour impossible by the time of the conference. Responses to the question in the 1987 Conference Evaluation "If you could have made one change in this year's NEAIR conference format, it would have been to" included:

> Cut short the Franz Kafka memorial bus tour of Rochester in the dark!!
>
> Eliminate the two-hour tour in the darkness of nowhere.

Past-Presidents Dawn Terkla and Jennifer Brown remember it well. Dawn recalls, "It was *disastrous*. It was also hysterical! We were like a bunch of little kids, really misbehaving...oh, we were bad. We kept asking 'Are we *there* yet?'" Jennifer Brown has also declared (with much pride), "I am a long-term survivor of the bus ride in the dark." The good-natured ribbing given to the organizers has continued to the present, proving that institutional researchers do have a sense of humor!

However, NEAIR members can also vouch for the fact that Special Events have been an enjoyable aspect of the conference in the vast majority of cases. The walk home after the 1988 Special Event was particularly safe since no one in their right mind would disturb a group of people who were odd enough to be yo-yoing in the middle of the night.

The Fall 1993 Newsletter encouraged the participation in one of the most talked-about Special Events:

> You're trapped on an island with two hundred institutional researchers. Your left hemisphere has been churning all day, neural connections madly reforming to assimilate the knowledge you've been exposed to in paper sessions, presentations, and your case study team. How do you restore the balance to your life, regain your harmony, sate both *yin* and *yan*? If you're at NEAIR, you use:
>
> **KARAOKE!**
>
> SEE: Past, present and future presidents perform, before your very eyes, amazing feats of vocal musicality!

> HEAR: Your respected colleagues crooning their favorite pop tunes and old standards!
>
> FEEL: The thrill of singing before a warm, accepting and (hopefully) inebriated audience!
>
> LEARN: Why Mark Eckstein must never quit his day job!

In 1994, the Edgar Allan Poe evening also received excellent reviews, save one mention in the conference evaluation reflecting distaste with the door prizes some people won: "no more rats." It seems that software was a much more popular prize than fake rodents from the table decorations. The Westminster Hall event featured Poe readings (original and revised) by Pat Diehl, Mike McGuire, Alan Sturtz, John Jacobsen, and Mark Eckstein. And who could resist the menu at the "Ghouls and Goblins Vermont Theme Party" of 1995: "lobsters, oysters, clams, Vermont Maple Cured Ham, pastas, covered bridges, spiders and other guests!" In 1996, the entertainment provided by Marc Abrahams, editor of "The Annals of Improbable Research" and father of the Ignobel Prize added a lot of laughs to the conference. This other AIR included the Taxonomy of Barney, a Spectographic Comparison of Apples and Oranges, Tabletop Fusion, and Feline Reactions to Bearded Men. The efforts of the Steering Committee to develop fun, relaxing programs for stressed IRers has proven highly effective, thanks to the good-natured participation of the membership. A lot of first-timers only fully begin to realize the character of the group after seeing their fellow colleagues engaged in nonsensical hysteria.

Newcomers and the Mentor Program

NEAIR members have had a kind of love/hate relationship with name tags and the indication of newcomers on those name tags. Some veterans like to have the blue dot to identify newer members; however, not everyone likes this designation. The Steering Committee has realized these dual needs of recognition and informality. The June 1993 minutes noted that "We need to pay close attention to, and nurture, our newcomers, but blue dots shall not be imposed!"

Jennifer Brown coordinated the Mentor Program in 1993, creating the opportunity for more structured contact between new members and the more experienced. About 24 people became involved that year, after some trouble getting the word out. Jennifer remembers one unfortunate glitch in the beginning: there was an excess of mentors but these members were never told they did not all have mentees. All who have volunteered have provided a wonderful service to their fellow members and are definitely appreciated. In 1997, some mentees had to be hunted for in the Reception but the matches were made and proved beneficial. The Mentor Program was reviewed and improved in 1998, so that newcomers and experienced researchers will continue to benefit from their participation.

The NEAIR Experience

Jennifer Brown describes NEAIR as "a professional organization that has fed my spirits and need for professional contact...a great place to find your feet." The people are helpful, nice, and have a great sense of humor. She considers joining NEAIR to be one of her best professional decisions.

When Jennifer entered the IR field in 1983, she asked the late Lois Torrence, IR director at UConn, "What do I do now?" She was immediately pointed towards NEAIR. Since then she has experienced many positive moments, including Karaoke night with the sweet sounds of the extraordinarily talented Ellen Kanarek and Darryl Bullock. In Burlington, Vermont she handed Craig Clagett the keys to her *brand new car* so that he and other friends could go into town, since very few people had cars. She feels that this represents the trust amongst the members of the organization.

Dawn Terkla also describes NEAIR as a group of incredibly supportive people, noting that many members are extremely committed to the profession, the organization and to one another. As time goes by and some people move on from the organization, new leaders have emerged to create smooth transitions and continuity for the group.

Fun Run/Walks

Some of Dawn's most memorable interactions have been with the morning walking groups, which she describes as a "wonderful, wonderful, wonderful experience." The First Annual Running Race was held in 1979, but since then NEAIR members have incorporated a more informal and less speed-emphasized group of fitness-aware participants to run or walk. The 5:30 or 6 a.m. departure time has not deterred participation. Anywhere from 5 to 25 people are known to trek off to explore the conference area. This is one of the best times to catch up on the news amongst colleagues for the year that has passed since the last conference. They have climbed hills at the Sagamore, crossed the academic quad at Princeton and had a tremendous amount of fun everywhere. All those who participate in the Fun Run/Walk receive a Fun Run/Walk button. But the truth is that one "need only show up in the lobby. No locomotion beyond that is required." (Annual Meeting Minutes, 11/18/91). However, the excitement and friendliness of the group is so contagious, no one has ever failed to join in the morning excursion once making it to the lobby. Even normally sedentary members look forward to morning walks followed by hot, steaming cups of coffee.

Keynote Addresses

Keynote speakers have been a regular feature of the annual conference. They are listed below. In 1997, a panel discussion replaced the tradition of having a single address from one perspective. That year's Closing Plenary Session also included the same question with a different panel to respond: Jennifer Brown, Anne Marie Delaney and Fred Volkwein provided views from campus perspectives.

Year	Keynote Speakers	Presentation
1974	Lois Torrence	The Role of IR in Higher Education
1975	Stephen Dresch	A Curmudgeon's View of the Future of Academe
1976	Dorothy Goodwin	The Role of IR
1977	Marilyn Gittell	Does IR Equal Institutional Retrenchment?
1978	Edward C. McGuire	Politics and Education: The Odd Couple
1979	Benjamin DeMott	Creative Changes Ahead in Higher Learning
1980	Hugh Hawkins	The American University and Its Publics: A Historian's View
1981	Thomas Green	Concepts of Educational Quality
1982	John McCredie	Strategies for Campus Computing
1983	T.E. Holnader	Will Higher Education Reemerge as a High Priority?
1984	Robert Zemsky	IR at the Core of Strategic Planning
1985	Stephen Trachtenberg	Uses of IR from the Viewpoint of a University President
1986	Helen O'Bannon	IR: New Challenges to an Evolving Role
1987	Peter Ewell	Assessing the State of Assessment
1988	Richard Hall	Make Better Decisions Through A Better Understanding of the Organization and Its Environment
1989	William Elliot	Welcoming Address

1990	Bruce Johnstone	Determining a Positive Future During Difficult Times
1991	Elizabeth Cook	Marketing Higher Education in a Changing Society: Framing Our Question for the 1990s
1992	Clifford Adelman	Judgments in the Window: Standards of Content and Standards of Performance
1993	Robert Culver	Rightsizing - A Practical Approach to Cost Reduction and Productivity Enhancement
1994	Roberta Spalter-Roth	The Institute for Women's Policy Research
1995	Sue Shaman	Harvesting the Findings
1996	George Gallup, Jr.	Taking Survey Research to the Next Step: Empowering Social Change
1997	Andrew DeRocco, John Doyle, William Dyson, Merle Harris, and Mike Middaugh	What Does Higher Education Mean to You? (panel discussion)

Best Paper Awards

The Best Paper Award recognizes the best effort and encourages quality among all submissions. Traditionally, winners have received a monetary award, a waiver of the following year's registration fee, and (recently) recognition in the AIR program. Mike McGuire's concern for the quality of the papers at the January Steering Committee of 1988 during Paige Ireland's presidency led to the suggestion by Dale Trusheim to create such a recognition. The Best Paper Award has been given for a variety of topics and to people from various types of institutions and perspectives:

NEAIR Best Paper Awards		
Year	**Recipient**	**Paper**
1988	Ellen Kanarek	Gender Differences in Freshmen Performance and Their Relationship to Use of the SAT in Admissions
1989	No award given	
1990	Jane Price	The Use of Structured Interviews in a Qualitative Study of Admissions Publications
1991	Craig Clagett and Helen Schneider	An Information Infrastructure for Enrollment Management: Tracking and Understanding Your Students
1992	Jennifer Brown	Risky Practices, Gender and Power: A Study of Heterosexual College Students
1993	Fred Volkwein and Bruce Szelest	The Relationship of Campus Crime to Campus and Community Characteristics
1994	Barbara Palmer	Lesjes van de nederlanders: Little Lessons from the Dutch to Promote Educational quality
1995	Anne Marie Delaney	Comparative Perspective on the Role of Institutional Research: Variation by Institutional Characteristics
1996	Robert Toutkoushian, Halil Dundar, and William Becker	What Do the NRC Graduate Program Ratings Measure?
1997	Karl Boughan	New Approaches to the Analysis of Academic Outcomes: Modeling Student Performance at a Community College

In 1998, NEAIR will introduce the Exemplary First Paper Award, which will recognize the winning author with a waiver of the next year's conference fee. This new award is intended to motivate and recognize first-time presenters.

Responding to a New Technological and Social Landscape

Many changes in technology, as well as society, have occurred over the years NEAIR has been active. In 1981, it was reported that 69 percent of responding institutional researchers had student records computerized. By 1984, the overwhelming interest of NEAIR members was in the area of microcomputers. Computer systems were becoming more commonplace but also more advanced, and support was needed to cope with their continuing metamorphosis. Technology has been included in NEAIR's priorities continuously, reflecting dramatic changes in methods of research and correspondence. Ten years ago, the Steering Committee was looking into setting up a NEAIR bulletin board on BITNET. 1989's conference focused on "Bringing Technology to the Issues." Yet even in 1992, less than one-third of the membership was connected to external networks. Today, almost every institution has e-mail and Internet access.

In 1995, Fred Cohen began the electronic mailing list, NEAIR-L, and has worked ever since to maintain the service; his dedication to provide NEAIR members with an electronic forum has proved extremely successful in improving the ease with which researchers may establish contact with one another. The Steering Committee has also benefited from the work of Jim Trainer in creating a Steering Committee list. In setting up and then updating the list as positions are filled by other members, Jim provided an avenue through which communication becomes much easier for the leadership of NEAIR, especially between Steering Committee meetings when contact is an important part of planning the annual conference and other membership benefits to the organization.

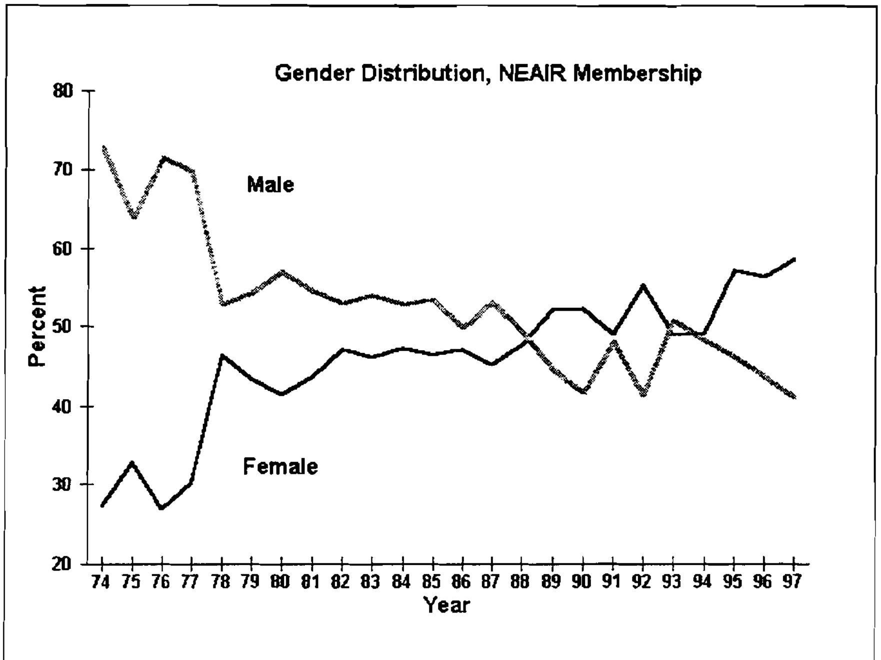
With Web guidelines approved in 1998, the NEAIR Website is now an established Association resource. NEAIR's first (and current) web editor is Jim Fergerson who developed NEAIR's site at Bates College <http://www.bates.edu/IR/NEAIR/> and continues to play a major role in taking advantage of the available technology to reach current and potential membership with information about NEAIR. The organization continues to pursue ways to provide information to members via technology including the possibility of posting the *Proceedings* instead of printing them. As Ellen Kanarek stated in the introduction to the 1997 volume, the *Proceedings*..."may soon be a collector's item." The Website contains the 1997 *Proceedings* and the organizations' newsletters, as well as IR-related links, last year's conference evaluation, and the current year's conference program and local arrangements. Technology became a focus for presentation topics in 1998, with the conference theme focused on campus transformations driven by advancing technology. The presenters were encouraged and supported to use technology in their presentations as well.

In addition to this focus on technology throughout the past 25 years, NEAIR has also seen the inclusion of many studies addressing the necessity of institutions to become more conscious of social issues. An awareness of gender, race, ethnicity and class within NEAIR presentations has marked changes in the national dialogue on diversity. Worksharing between nations also has occurred through the organization. While not the size of AIR, the North East Association has certainly made its mark upon many institutional researchers as a cutting-edge organization.

Characteristics of the Membership

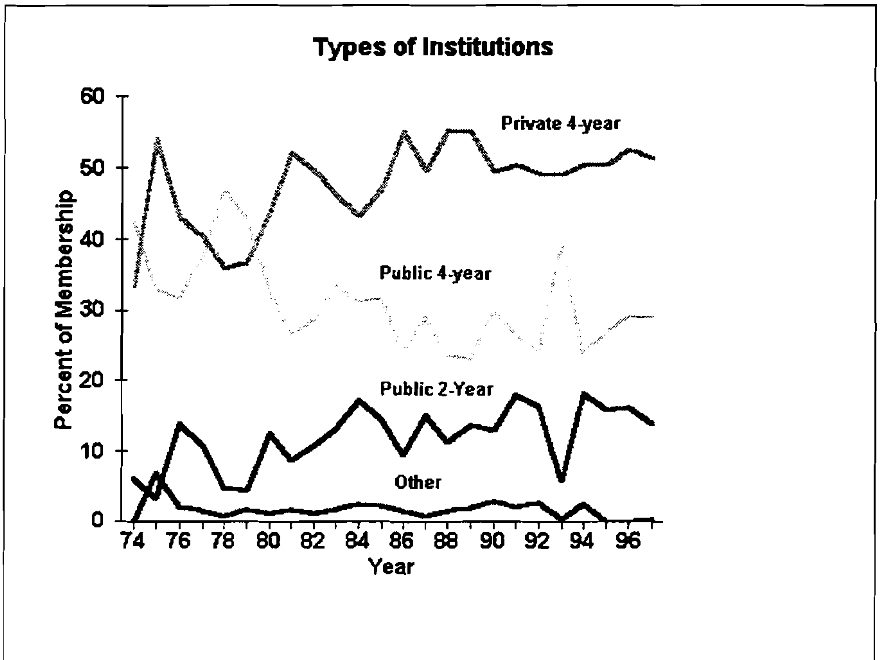
In the beginning, NEAIR was focused solely on the conference. Originally, two meetings were proposed, and although only one per year has ever taken place, the annual event was initially the defining element of the organization. Over the years, fresh leadership has changed the nature of the organization and brought more benefits to the membership. While a great conference contributes to the worth of membership in NEAIR, the programs and opportunities offered for professional development go far beyond the four days a year when the members actually convene.

The demographics of the membership have changed over the years. NEAIR was rather male-dominated in number of members in the beginning, but today the gender distribution has shifted so that women outnumber the men.

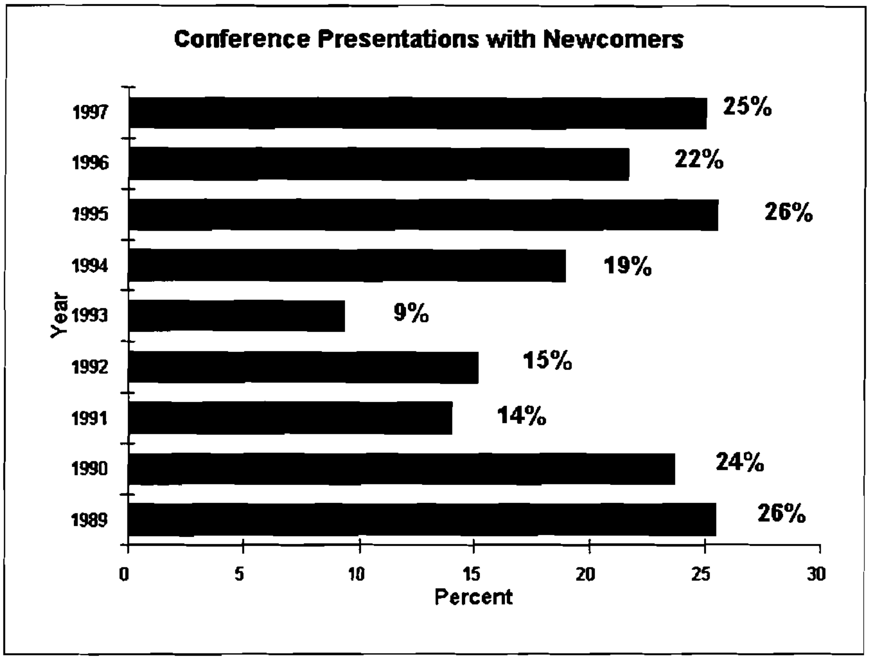


New York has consistently provided the largest state share of members, with Massachusetts and Pennsylvania the next most represented states. Together, these three states have accounted for approximately three-fifths of total NEAIR membership in recent years. As might be expected, the geographic distribution of members somewhat reflects the location of the annual conference.

NEAIR invites and includes members from all types of institutions, recognizing both the similarities and the differences between institutional researchers at two-year or four-year institutions, public or private.



Informing all of its members from different areas and levels of experience is a challenge which NEAIR accepted a long time ago. A workshop on I.R. Fundamentals for "Freshmen and Sophomores in the Field" offered at the 1978 conference in University Park, Pennsylvania began a tradition of recognizing and welcoming newer members. The following year, NEAIR began a Newcomer's Reception, providing first-timers with the opportunity to get acquainted with the Steering Committee officers. In order to meet the expectations of such a diverse group of people, NEAIR has become committed to both individual innovation and friendly leadership and instruction. Workshops geared toward first-timers have continued throughout the past two decades. In 1998, even more efforts were made to make the conference a great experience for first-timers, with Saturday being designated "Newcomers' Day" featuring workshops, an orientation to NEAIR, a reception, dinner groups, and an introduction to the Mentor Program.



Research Grants Program

One program which has encouraged individual studies and innovation is the Research Grants Program, created out of the hard work of Jack Dunn, Tom Flaherty, Mike McGuire, and Leah Smith in 1991 during the presidency of Larry Metzger. Grant proposals are accepted from any member with a well-planned proposal to attend an international IR conference or perform a new study that will contribute to the organization. They are not reserved for the most experienced members, but are given based on the merit of the proposal and its potential benefits to the field of institutional research.

Research Grant Recipients		
Year	**Recipient**	**Description**
1993	Karen Bauer	A Five-Year Longitudinal Assessment of Undergraduate Students
1993	Barbara Palmer	Quality Assurance Programs in the Netherlands
1995	Fred Volkwein	A Study of State Regulation and Administrative Flexibility at Public Institutions
1996	Mike McGuire	Attendance at the Annual Meeting of the Britain and Ireland AIR
1998	Anne Marie Delaney	Investigating Women's Leadership Roles in Institutional Research
1998	John Pryor	A Diversity Needs Assessment for Student Affairs Staff

IRIS

The Institutional Research Information Series (IRIS) was developed to create a means of publication of proven NEAIR workshop material. The first monograph was Linda A. Suskie's "Survey Research: What Works for the Institutional Researcher." Mike Middaugh contributed the monograph "Newcomers to Institutional Research." Both have disseminated helpful instruction to their colleagues and fostered the development of NEAIR's relationship to AIR, negotiating issues concerning publication and joint cooperation. Both IRIS publications became nationally distributed via AIR publication, benefiting both organizations, the contributing authors and those who use the valuable information from IRIS.

The NEAIR Newsletter

Another means of publishing through NEAIR has been the newsletter. More informal and spontaneous than the *Proceedings* or IRIS, it provides pertinent and timely information. The NEAIR Info Corner began in the Fall 1992 issue with Craig Clagett's "Focus Group Research for Enrollment Management." Since then, the newsletter has offered various outlets for NEAIR members to publish their ideas and more recently to help others negotiate the pitfalls of the Web. The Internet Corner feature of the newsletter has allowed Jim Fergerson to share his wealth of knowledge regarding the resources available on the Information Superhighway. One of the Secretary's many duties is compiling this wealth of information for the members. Through the Secretary's hard work at gathering material from NEAIR colleagues, the membership is updated on the conference arrangements, the happenings of members (moves, promotions, babies) and all sorts of IR-related details. The newsletter is a microcosm of the personality of the organization - friendly, personal, and dedicated to providing opportunities for newcomers to write on issues, posing work in progress for feedback and for the publication of professionally polished articles by veterans.

Documentation of Policies and Revisions to the Constitution

In order to continue to improve the organization, documentation of policy decisions and constitutional changes have been included in a Policies and Procedures Manual. Policies and Procedures Manuals have recently taken the form of descriptive explanations of current policies *based* on Steering Committee decisions, whereas previous P&P Manuals were compilations of exact quotes from Steering Committee and Annual Business Meeting Minutes. The 1998 manual documents NEAIR policies with quotations of the Minutes in the form of these earlier histories, with appendices describing particular programs and awards in detail. The goal of those working on the document is to educate NEAIR members about the process through which decisions are made and from where certain ideas came.

A review of the Constitution has also helped to clarify what has been altered over the years. The constitutional review accounts for the changes made to the Constitution by providing dated indications of each amendment and deletion. For instance, in 1991, Article III of the Constitution was revised to include 'sexual orientation' in its non-discriminatory policy: "There shall be no discrimination in membership on the basis of sex, race, religion, handicap, sexual orientation or age." This addition recognized an essential issue; the date reflects the time period in which NEAIR responded to this particular social debate by asserting its acceptance of diversity. These detail-oriented efforts of revising the Policies and Procedures Manuals and documenting changes to the Constitution serve an important part in accounting for NEAIR's current approach to its members and help future leadership to make appropriate changes based on sufficient knowledge of the past.

And here's to 25 more...

At the 2nd Annual NEAIR Conference in 1975, Richard Heck presented what he called a "little question posing session" in which he asked all sorts of questions regarding what was happening inside and outside institutions and what the listening researchers knew about their own capabilities. He ended his talk by stating: "Now that I've asked all the questions I'll respond to any answers you have." Such is the nature of being involved in NEAIR: sharing questions, answers, ideas and a little entertainment. The past 25 years have brought institutional, technological and societal changes unanticipated when NEAIR first began. The organization has stepped up to the challenge of filling in the gaps which are inevitably left as the field of IR is reframed each year. Dick's last question in his training session was "Why are you here? What will your folder marked "NEAIR

November 6, 1975" mean to you one week after you file it away next Monday? After one year? After five years?" After 25 years, we must still ask this same question, except that now it is November 1998 and rather than filing away conference notes, we will probably be downloading this year's conference *Proceedings* in a few months from the Web.

Through the organization's annual conference, members have benefited professionally, intellectually and socially, in ways that have helped form a stronger association and a stronger group of researchers. The work shared as a result of combined efforts has provided some answers, but has also raised new questions; the studies done by colleagues affect how we approach future projects. NEAIR members have become a network of support for each other, particularly for those who are new to the field. As a long-time presenter, a Steering Committee officer, or a first-time attendee, each member has made a contribution to the history of this organization.

There are countless people who have worked behind the scenes, all of whom deserve recognition and appreciation. Each year presenters, leadership and attendees come through to produce an enjoyable, beneficial conference in which institutional researchers can learn, mentor, debate, and form lasting professional contacts and friendships. The Association's history provides evidence of NEAIR's ability to confront a number of issues from a diverse range of perspectives. Today NEAIR is looking forward to a future which continues to provide its members with the opportunities and support that have marked its past.

Christine Scarince was an intern at Dickinson College when she prepared this history from the NEAIR archives maintained by Brenda Bretz.

Personal Reflections

Charter members and past presidents of NEAIR were invited to share memories of the Association, to reflect on their experiences as institutional researchers, and to speculate about the future of the profession. We thank the 13 NEAIR veterans for contributing the following essays and helping celebrate NEAIR's 25th Anniversary.

Access and Inclusion

Norman Kaufman
Charter Member

At the time of NEAIR's inception I was just starting out in the field of institutional research, policy analysis, and planning. What I recall was that there was a lot of fomentation in higher education—the Viet Nam-era demonstrations were subsiding and there was a lot of emphasis on the restructuring of higher education governance and finance. In New York State, we paid a lot of attention to the role of private, "independent" institutions in accommodating the increasing numbers of college attendees. NEAIR seemed to reflect the mix of actors and institutions as they sorted out their scope and functions in an expanding system of access. In NEAIR, the conflicts inherent in the competition for state subsidies were usually set aside in favor of good colleagueship and intellectual challenge. Issues of student access and finance dominated the policy agenda and the emergence of computer-based management tools and acronyms were coming to the fore. (Who can forget HEGIS and PPBS, for example?) As a professional organization, NEAIR proved to be a way to include many more individuals in the emerging profession of institutional research than was possible solely under the umbrella of a national organization. And, they met in some really nice locations!

Thanks for providing this opportunity to say hello to my former colleagues and to offer all NEAIR members my best wishes on the occasion of NEAIR's 25th anniversary.

Building Bridges

Dwight Smith
Charter Member

IR came to SUNY campuses in the sixties, following establishment of the present three-tier structure of university centers, university colleges and community colleges. Its first head, Chancellor Gould, came from the California University system. He brought several administrators with him, and California became the model for SUNY to follow. That model generated a series of assumptions and expectations on all sides, not all of them useful. It was a challenging environment for us. Time and space are insufficient to detail all of those challenges; in retrospect,the three most significant concern the **scope** and **perspective** of IR and the manner in which **advocacy** is handled.

In theory, IR's **scope** covers a spectrum from the institution itself to the individuals who make it what it is. From the IR director's perspective, the spectrum ranges from management analysis to psychological testing. Few directors, or their staffs, are likely to be skilled in both, and the IR office will be stronger at one end of the spectrum than the other. But an institution's needs vary over time. An office may become skilled at finding answers to questions like "What are our class sizes?" "What are faculty workloads?" "How do we utilize space?" — only to find new questions emerging that call on different skills: "What about student outcomes?" "What is the quality of student life?" The forward-looking IR director will design procedures to address the focus of the day so that when it changes, earlier questions can still be answered even though different expertise is now required.

Regardless of focus, the critical question of **perspective** is paramount. To whom am I loyal? Every organization is plagued by the spectre of an "us v. them" division. It can occur at any level. A departmental faculty may be suspicious of its dean; the faculty, under the leadership of its dean, may be suspicious of "the administration." In the SUNY system, campuses can be suspicious of the central office; perhaps SUNY-Central is suspicious of the governor or the legislature's education and finance committees. Such divisions are not necessarily bad, but they can easily become unhealthy. IR can be a healing entity by building bridges. Successful bridges depend upon perceptions on both sides of a divide that IR possesses objectivity and integrity. The faculty must be persuaded that IR is not the tool of a ...(fill in your own adjectives) administration. Higher entities must be persuaded that IR is not hiding significant qualifications to its reports to protect lower levels with a good "spin."

But what really defines perspective is the question of **advocacy**. The IR office cannot dodge it. Neutral facts may be important, but without interpretation they are empty. Yet interpretations convey values that all audiences may not want to hear. How IR interprets - and by this I mean both content and style - has a lot to do with how the facts are accepted. The moral that history teaches me is that the IR office stands or falls on its ability to be a successful advocate.

NEAIR's Contributions to IR

Patrick T. Terenzini
NEAIR President, 1980-81

Thanks for the opportunity to reflect on NEAIR and its evolution over the years. Having a 25th Anniversary celebration and involving past presidents in it are both wonderful ideas!

Thinking back on my involvement with NEAIR brings a collage of memories. I still recall my first conference (New Haven, 1975, with 70 other participants) and the opportunity it afforded to meet some of the heavy-hitters in IR, all of whom became career-long colleagues and friends. I recall in particular the 1980 conference at the UMass—Amherst Conference Center. Upon entering the building, we saw a TV room *packed* with students. Thinking only a national crisis could draw such a crowd (another presidential assassination?), I went to discover the crisis. It was "General Hospital." That weekend included Halloween, and at dinner at an area restaurant that night (Amherst being a college town full of creative people) Charlie Chaplin tended bar, Raggedy Ann waited tables, and our server was a Christmas tree.

But I've also watched with great satisfaction and admiration how NEAIR has evolved over the years. It's quite clear to me how much the Association has grown, how much it has contributed to the development of institutional research in the northeast and nationally, how selfless its members have been in advancing the Association and the field, how much NEAIR has contributed to my and others' learning and to the fun of institutional research. Happy 25th NEAIR, and very best wishes for many more to come!

NEAIR is the Best Regional

Robert S. Lay
NEAIR President, 1982-83

This year I cleared my schedule far in advance so that I could attend the 25th Anniversary NEAIR Conference. Receiving encouragement at my first meeting from Bob Grose at Amherst, presenting my first paper with Dick Heck smiling broadly the whole time, trekking out to Cooperstown with a carload of coworkers to present "The BC Story," getting sick on some chocolate mint drink in Hershey PA, piecing together the program for the Princeton conference, and driving back and forth to Albany for a year to serve as President with a bunch of dedicated professionals are all memories that make me wish that I could attend NEAIR every year as I did for ten years. Somehow I got into this enrollment management thing, so I have to choose from too many conferences and as a consequence feel spread pretty thin.

I used to tell the AIR folks that NEAIR is the best regional organization in AIR, and our conference is probably a lot more valuable to most attendees than AIR's. There was even some nervousness at the national level that we would further depress attendance at the national forum by better meeting the needs of IR folks in the Northeast!

I'm proud to see NEAIR continuing the established traditions of sharing planning approaches informally and providing low-pressure opportunities for professional development. I am consistently impressed with the high quality of papers published in the *Proceedings*, and the research is often groundbreaking. I look forward to meeting a lot of new folks and seeing many of my old colleagues again. . .

The need for research continues to grow and the skills required for doing successful planning and analysis are still rare. Fortunately, many new tools for doing on-line analysis are becoming available, making research more interactive between policy makers and researchers. I find myself doing more and more of my own analysis (with lots of help) using these new tools, and feeling better connected to my roots in institutional research and NEAIR.

Happy 25th everyone!

Access and Opportunity

Paul Wing
NEAIR President, 1983-84

It's been so long since I attended an NEAIR meeting, I remember few details and even fewer faces. I do, however, remember that we were starting to make a difference in a time of major change. The baby bust was just beginning, and enrollment forecasting was very challenging. We in the New York State Education Department were wrong (low) every year, even after incorporating accelerating increases in college participation rates. Although I applauded the efforts to increase access to higher education, I continue to believe that many colleges did not adequately adjust their programs to serve the greater needs of the lower ability students that were admitted in the Eighties. And I am equally uncomfortable about the current dismantling of affirmative action programs that seems to be gaining momentum. As I see it, the issues of equal access and opportunity have lost little of their urgency over the past twenty years.

When I left the New York State Education Department in 1984, I took a position at Albany Medical College—out of the frying pan and into the fire. I never lacked interesting and challenging projects to work on.

In 1991 I took the big leap to set up my own consulting firm. Despite one or two lean years, which seemed even leaner due to college tuition bills for my sons, this turned out to be a good decision. It takes several years to learn the ropes of independent operation, but the flexibility and latitude is very satisfying. It is interesting that very little of my work has been related to higher education. My years at Albany Med slanted my interests and contacts much more toward health than education.

I am sorry that I will not be able to attend the 25th anniversary celebration in Philadelphia. I had hoped as recently as the end of August to be able to make it, and had even lined up an unusually low airfare from Albany to the city of brotherly love. But I just negotiated a new contract with a deadline in mid-November, and that must take precedence-at least until my youngest son completes college. Please accept my best wishes for the continued success of NEAIR and all its members. And a special wish to all of you who were members back in the Seventies and Eighties when I was active and had the pleasure and privilege of serving as President. I have many more gray hairs now, but none are associated with NEAIR.

Unsought Advice

John A. Dunn, Jr.
NEAIR President 1986-87

Good research is indispensable. Seventy percent of the time it gives you evidence to bolster what you already knew. But 25 percent of the time it shows that you can't prove your idea with the facts available and, most importantly, 5 percent of the time it shows that what you knew to be true is flat out wrong.

Remember that though the methodology and data in a study may be fascinating to you, what is important to your boss is being able to make a better decision. Spend a day or two figuring out what the decision is he or she needs to make before you spend weeks collecting and analyzing the data.

If you can figure out what the real issues are (that is, the decisions the leaders need to make), work on them and you'll make a contribution. These issues may or may not be amenable to your statistical skills— more often than not they are issues about people— but they are real and important. Other issues, however intellectually interesting, you pursue largely for your own pleasure, and they have little or no impact on the organization.

Never confuse analysis with persuasion. Facts don't change people's behavior; stories and emotions do, and then people can use the facts to make their new view sound rational. That isn't cynical, it's real. Understand it. Then use stories and emotions in addition to your facts.

Not every boss is admirable, but many of them really do try hard and need your help. If you can manage it, never work for a jerk.

In sum, get involved. IR can be vital to an organization, or it can be peripheral. Get involved in the real issues. Get involved with your regional and national colleagues to broaden your understanding. Write for publication, not third-decimal-place stuff but grappling with real issues. Make a difference!

Nurturing Leadership

Michael F. Middaugh
NEAIR President, 1989-90

I remember the first NEAIR meeting I ever attended. I was fresh out of graduate school in 1979, had just taken a job as Assistant Director of Institutional Research at the State University of New York College at New Paltz, and had virtually no clue what "institutional research" really was. My colleague, John Mandryk (who was as new to institutional research as I was) and I stumbled on a brochure for an NEAIR meeting at the Otesaga Hotel in Cooperstown, New York. (NEAIR is far too large to meet there now - clear evidence of the growth of our profession!) At that meeting, I met and became friends with folks like Pat Terenzini, Bob Grose, Jack Dunn, and Lois Torrence, among others. These wonderful people, many of whom were and are giants in our field, gave me their time, wisdom, and friendship, and contributed more to my professional growth and development than they'll ever know. What a wonderful network NEAIR is! To this day, when I'm perplexed with a research issue or problem, a phone call to an NEAIR colleague is a sure resource.

NEAIR's capacity to nurture professional growth and leadership potential has expanded exponentially since 1979. Consider the workshops offered at NEAIR's annual meetings. Linda Suskie's Survey Research Workshop, Marianne Pagano and Mary Ann Coughlin's Statistics Workshops, Fred Volkwein's Assessment Workshop, and the Newcomer's Workshop which we developed here at the University of Delaware, all began as NEAIR projects, and have moved on to become national AIR staples. Linda Suskie and I both began our writing careers with monographs in NEAIR's IRIS Project, and along with Marian Pagano and Mary Ann Coughlin, have expanded those monographs to national publications. (Happily, I was joined in my later efforts by my Delaware colleagues, Dale Trusheim and Karen Bauer, who significantly strengthened the work).

NEAIR's capacity to produce leaders was never more clear to me than at an AIR Advanced Institute for the Practice of Institutional Research, held at the University of California at Berkeley a couple of summers ago. Half of the faculty and the Institute Director were NEAIR members. And the 1997 and 1998 AIR Forum Chairs were both former NEAIR Program Chairs and Past-Presidents.

Yes, NEAIR provides an annual opportunity to present papers detailing our current research activity. But more than that - at least to this Past President - NEAIR has been the one constant that has consistently provided me with support, encouragement, and opportunity to grow professionally and to take on leadership responsibilities. It is my earnest hope that newcomers to institutional research who are reading these musings of Past Presidents, will take full advantage of the very special people and resources that we know as the North East Association for Institutional Research.

An Annual Family Reunion

Dawn Geronimo Terkla
NEAIR President, 1992-1993

In 1985, I became Tufts' Director of Analytic Studies and my job was to do "institutional research." I have to admit that at the time I had no idea what that actually meant. In retrospect, it is incredulous that during my four years at a graduate school of education I never learned of higher education's best kept secret.

So, when I was asked what I did at Tufts I delivered the following line: "My office provides senior administrators, deans, directors, and other members of the university community with information so that they can make informed decisions."

Thirteen years later, I still deliver the same line. However, there are many things that have changed—how information is delivered, what information is delivered, to whom information is delivered, and ultimately, the purpose for the collection and dissemination of data. Assessment, accreditation, accountability, institutional effectiveness measures, benchmarks, value added, re-engineering, and the World Wide Web are terms that were not part of our daily conversations in the mid-1980's. As we approach the millennium, these are not only part of our daily vernacular but very real concepts that we as institutional researchers have had to define, redefine, translate, create, shape to conform to the special characteristics of our institutions, and cogently explain to our constituencies.

Last November, I was unable to attend the NEAIR conference in Hartford because of another professional commitment. It was the first conference I had missed since joining your ranks. This saddened me and I paused for a moment to reflect on why this occurred. I concluded that it was not just because I was unable to attend an excellent professional conference but that I was really missing something akin to an annual family reunion. I realized that my colleagues in the organization had become more than just colleagues. Yes, I did want to hear about all the innovative things that they were implementing and to share war-stories about the "best disaster" of the year. However, I also wanted to hear about the antics of children and pets; see new baby, wedding and graduation pictures; discuss the books we'd read over the summer; join the infamous morning walkers; reminisce about past NEAIR events; laugh about the ill-fated Rochester bus tour; greet old friends and make new ones.

Personally, I have found institutional researchers to be a very rare and cherished breed of professionals—a collective group of thoughtful, insightful individuals willing to help, to share ideas, information, survey instruments, strategic plans, and lend moral support. How fortunate I have been to stumble upon this profession!

Fellowship is NEAIR's Greatest Gift

Michael McGuire
NEAIR President, 1993-94

For lack of anything profound to say about institutional research, I will comment briefly on the nature of NEAIR, the association that has served us and our colleagues and predecessors so well for 25 years now. Just as higher education itself is fundamentally a human enterprise, so too does NEAIR serve an essentially human purpose. Arguably, much of the "substance" of what we gain from our NEAIR membership could be gotten through other means, principally reading (now facilitated by the harvesting efficiencies of the Web and other technologies). And although—or perhaps because—institutional research like scholarship itself is often a lonely undertaking, the act of sharing our craft with others, both newcomers and old-timers alike, is immensely more gratifying when done personally. The fellowship created and sustained by NEAIR is its greatest gift. The skill development is definitely nice too, but the opportunity to congratulate and commiserate and connect is really what keeps many of us coming back. Obvious, maybe, but worthwhile to keep in mind as NEAIR begins its next quarter century of aiding and abetting.

Beyond that, here are three favorite inspirational quotes for toiling in the institutional research vineyards:

Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted, counts.

Albert Einstein

Every normal man must be tempted at times to spit on his hands, hoist the black flag, and begin slitting throats.

H.L. Mencken

Human sacrifice! Dogs and cats living together! Mass hysteria!

Bill Murray

How I Learned About Institutional Research

Marian Pagano
NEAIR President, 1994-95

Like most of my colleagues, I never intended to have a career as an institutional researcher. It certainly wasn't my major in college. Actually, I was just visiting my boyfriend Ray who was a pastry chef in Providence, Rhode Island in the fall of 1988. I got lost downtown after getting a new bun-like hairstyle on a rainy night. I have absolutely no sense of direction, so I just tried to make my way through the streets by depending on intuition and the kindness of strangers. It was very foggy, so I was relieved to see this peculiar swirling glow, about the size of a baseball, which I followed for several blocks. There seemed to be a man walking just behind this strange glow. I followed the man and the glow down the seemingly abandoned streets of downtown Providence into the Turk's Head Club. I was happy to be out of the rain and the fog. As he walked into the building he asked me what I was doing and I said I was intuitionally Ray searching. He said, "Great! Then you're with the group I'm entertaining tonight!" OK, whatever! This sounded better to me than staying outside in the weather. We went up to the top floor of the building—me, drenched from the rain and a man that I later came to learn was a world class cellist (Mr. Yo-Yo Ma—funny, he looks much different on PBS and dresses much better now than he did in 1988). He went straight to work entertaining this odd group of people. One of them approached me and said, "Where are you from? C'mon in—your hair is drenched." I replied, "Yes, my new tufts!" She said, "Oh, right this way!" So I followed her and was seated next to a very nice man with a military style crew cut and a jovial woman who giggled and described her salad as "icky ooky." Meanwhile, Yo-Yo was doing glow-in-the-dark tricks. The rest of the evening was equally weird. This group was sitting around telling jokes such as: Two statistics walk into a bar. After a few drinks one tries to put a move on the other one, who rebuffs the advance by saying, "Sorry, but I have a significant other!" I didn't get it, but everyone else was howling. Another told of doing some research for her music department. She wanted to present the results visually, but her college had a policy against graphic violins on campus. Another had just written a book about overreliance on statistics as a crutch to deal with reality and was passing out copies of the book which was titled "Coefficient No Longer." Everyone was very nice to me. They asked me what I knew about piecharts, vertical bars, and freq distributions, so I talked about Ray's baking, my social life, and my family. Somehow I impressed them and the crew cut guy and giggly woman offered me a job. I left Ray, moved to Boston, and the rest is IR history. Or legend. Or lore.

NEAIR Friendship

Ellen Kanarek
NEAIR President, 1995-96

When NEAIR started I was just entering graduate school at the University of Michigan. I went there intending to be some kind of dean when I finished, and having no idea that institutional research existed. My advisor told me that there were some required statistics courses that "everybody hates," and I might as well get them over with the first year. I loved them, and the rest is history. I am glad, however, that I don't have to calculate multiple regressions by hand any more.

I think my first NEAIR conference was in 1985. I had been in IR for several years before then, but 1985 was the first year I had any travel money at my disposal. The conference was in Hartford: Judith Dozier Hackman was Program Chair, and Ed Delaney did the local arrangements. According to the *Proceedings*, I had already mastered the use of the colon (:) in presentation titles. Mostly what I remember about that conference and all succeeding ones was the tremendous level of support and — dare I say it? — friendship I experienced, much more than in any other professional group of which I have been a part.

Sometimes it seems like those were the "good old days" of institutional research. No one had a right to know, no one was accountable, the process was more important than the outcomes, and some IR offices actually had time to do research! Of course, in my office we only had three computers in a central room, and my hard-copy SPSS output was delivered the next day. The Internet was probably only a gleam in someone's eye, and I actually had to walk to the library to do lit reviews.

When I left Rutgers University what I missed most of all was having a dynamic student database to play with. I used to say that I knew the students from birth (college choice surveys) to death (alumni surveys). I would tell people that my new job was institutional research in breadth, rather than depth. Now I have much more interaction with institutions across the country, and I find myself eagerly anticipating working with those contacts who are institutional researchers. My colleagues understand the practice as well as the theory of response rates!

I have no idea what the future holds for institutional research — or even whether institutions to research will still exist. I do expect that I will try to remember Dawn Terkla's birthday on March 31 every year, and always appreciate that Jennifer Brown asks how my kids are doing, and that Mike Middaugh asked me to join a small group for a drink after I won the first Best Paper award at my second or third NEAIR conference, and the Edgar Allan Poe readings in Baltimore, and so on and so on. NEAIR is always my favorite conference. Thanks, friends.

Reflections on Accountability

Jennifer A. Brown
NEAIR President, 1996-97

The opening panel of the 1997 Hartford conference prompted several reflections on our profession. We heard from a representative of the Connecticut state legislature, the Connecticut Commissioner of Higher Education, a member of the Board of Trustees of Connecticut State University, and a college president. After hearing their perspectives on accountability in higher education, I had six sharable thoughts:

> **Whatever the state and whatever the sector of higher education (public or private), we do in fact exist in the environments the panelists represented.** Whether we like it or not, whether we disagree with their perspectives or not, whether we think they ought to think as we do or not, they do frame the reality in which we live and work and they are the people to whom we are accountable. It would be a good thing if we were prepared to go part way to meet them.

> **Often, what folks in these positions need is much simpler than we imagine.** While using sophisticated statistics is fun and debating the fine points of methodology is fulfilling, those to whom we are accountable would often be happier with a few clear, simple-to-understand numbers and a little text. This does not mean that all the other work is not important. It is and we need to do it. We just need to accept that non-IR people may not want to hear about it!

> **We must not forget to repeat ourselves, repeatedly!** I realized after the business meeting that I had been so concerned with getting through the agenda and not forgetting

anything that I forgot that for many of the newcomers in the room, the governance of the organization was a mystery. It would have been helpful to have explained that a little before launching into all the business. I think that many of us do this in our professional lives. We forget that not everyone remembers what we do and when we did it last and what the results were! We forget the rapidity of changes in staffing, the shortness of memory and the limited capacity all of us have for retaining information in the face of constantly competing demands.

NO ONE understands that data analysis and policy recommendations require data gathering and data maintenance and that this is very time consuming and it cannot be pushed aside if questions are to be answered. There is nowhere to go with this comment, it is just the way it is. It is like housework, one of those time consuming processes that is invisible. It is one of those things IR folks will probably always complain about, like farmers and the weather.

One should continue to ask one's customers what they want-even though they may not know what it is they want until they see it. I was reminded of this by the Trustee who spoke on the opening panel. I have staffed the committee on which he serves as long as he has been on the Board. I was interested, therefore, to hear him say that he wished there was a more predictable schedule to the progress of that committee's work. This is certainly something we can work on but—who knew?

We must not forget that IR is a bridge/translator/connector within our institutions. We need to recognize and talk about that part of who we are so that we can do it better! I am constantly reminded of how many things we have to know a bit about and how few offices within our institutions for which this is the case. It is a strength of our profession and our positions that we can help facilitate the communication across the 'languages' of the different administrative and academic divisions. It is easy to think that this is not 'real IR work' as it is often intangible, with no physical product. It is, however, an important contribution to our organizations.

From Assessment to Advocacy

Craig A. Clagett
NEAIR President 1997-98

The most obvious change in how we do institutional research is in our use of information technologies. The microprocessor, LANs, e-mail, Internet, and Web have profoundly altered our profession. An early memory of this was my introduction to spreadsheets in the early 1980s. I borrowed (stole) the only PC on campus from a budget analyst who was still mired in paper and pencil accounting. I taught myself spreadsheet basics in one day, constructing a part-time faculty demand model until late in the night. It was after midnight before I left the college, but I was having so much fun amazing myself with the power of electronic spreadsheets that I wasn't aware of the time. I hadn't even stopped for dinner! For the next year or so, I was able to astound the vice presidents with my brilliance, all because of the power of spreadsheets.

But equally important to our profession is our conception of it. A historical perspective suggests that the focus of institutional research has evolved through three stages: (1) description, using simple quantitative methods; (2) understanding and assessment, adding multivariate and qualitative techniques; and (3) advocacy, requiring political savvy and other contextual awareness. While few research offices are still in the descriptive (factbook production) stage, most are heavily into assessment and accountability activities. In the future, I see a much greater role for institutional research as institutional advocate. Intranet query systems will allow distributed access to basic data. Our role will be to select and format data into information useful for governmental and public relations. We will need to be proactive in this role.

The value of institutional research to a college or university varies greatly with the practitioner's willingness to understand the challenges facing the institution and its decision makers and to work efficiently and effectively toward their solutions. The importance of having a thorough knowledge of the context in which an institution operates, and an understanding of the culture of the institution, cannot be overstated. Colleges and universities are political institutions; institutional researchers are immersed in a political environment. Effective institutional researchers understand this, and within the constraints of personal and professional ethics, embrace their role as institutional advocates.

In all you do, ask how you can further the goals of your institution and its top management. Be informed; be savvy; be bold; and be important.

> Far better it is to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs, even though checkered with failure, than to take rank with those poor spirits who neither enjoy much nor suffer much, because they live in the great twilight that knows neither victory nor defeat.
>
> *Theodore Roosevelt, 1899*

Appendix

NEAIR Membership by State

	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Connecticut	2	13	7	9	9	3	7	10	9	14	12	21
Delaware	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
D.C.	0	0	0	1	1	3	2	4	6	8	6	4
Maine	0	0	1	1	1	1	4	1	3	3	0	1
Maryland	0	0	0	0	3	1	4	5	2	5	16	16
Massachusetts	10	15	15	28	28	20	25	41	38	45	35	46
New Hampshire	0	2	8	6	6	5	5	2	9	9	3	4
New Jersey	2	10	31	19	18	8	13	11	11	17	15	13
New York	15	16	37	31	29	42	49	62	76	90	75	115
Ohio	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	2	3
Pennsylvania	0	2	14	15	14	48	14	17	16	27	28	34
Rhode Island	1	3	1	5	5	5	5	6	10	11	1	5
Vermont	0	0	0	5	5	1	0	3	2	4	6	1
Other U.S. states	0	0	1	4	4	2	0	1	0	1	0	3
Canada	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
Others/unknown	3	0	0	5	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Total	33	61	116	129	125	139	128	163	185	237	199	269

NEAIR Membership by State

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Connecticut	34	19	14	21	19	8	18	18	17	21	20	30
Delaware	1	6	8	7	6	3	6	3	3	5	4	6
D.C.	5	1	1	3	1	4	9	9	10	10	12	13
Maine	0	2	3	2	3	2	0	7	6	3	1	2
Maryland	7	12	10	10	6	6	22	18	17	19	13	15
Massachusetts	52	40	54	55	46	24	40	54	57	47	41	38
New Hampshire	4	1	3	2	0	3	2	8	6	9	8	8
New Jersey	14	21	17	19	19	9	21	24	26	26	31	37
New York	95	76	138	76	101	48	61	82	91	67	75	78
Ohio	1	0	2	1	3	1	2	8	8	3	2	8
Pennsylvania	35	65	70	48	43	27	51	66	66	68	60	60
Rhode Island	7	6	9	13	8	2	6	5	5	6	14	12
Vermont	5	1	4	3	1	1	3	5	3	5	4	4
Other U.S. states	3	3	7	3	3	1	8	3	3	5	5	4
Canada	1	0	13	7	3	0	3	3	3	4	1	0
Others/unknown	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1
Total	265	253	353	270	262	139	252	314	321	298	292	316

NEAIR Steering Committees

	1975-76	1976-77	1977-78	1978-79	1979-1980
President	George Beatty, Jr.	Molly Broad	David Smith	Eric Brown	Robert Grose
President-elect					
Past President					
Secretary	Molly Broad	Robert Grose		Helen Wyant	Lois Torrence
Membership Secretary	Marilyn Harris Richard Heck	Sr. Ann Luciano Marilyn Harris Richard Heck			
Treasurer	Molly Broad	Robert Grose		Larry Benedict	Sr. Ann Luciano
Conference Program Chair	George Beatty, Jr.	Bill Fenstemacher	Eric Brown	Robert Grose	Patrick Terenzini Wendell Lorang
Local Arrangements Chair	Eldon Park Scott McDonald	Eric Brown Albert Alwell	Paul Kenepp	Sr. Ann Luciano	William Laurousche
Publications Chair	Robert Grose Daniel Kegan	Daniel Kegan John Wittstruck Larry Benedict	Larry Benedict	Helen Wyant	Lois Torrence
Members-at-Large	Eric Brown Albert Alwell	George Beatty, Jr. Wendell Lorang Dale Marchand Scott McDonald Eldon Park	George Beatty, Jr. Molly Broad Arthur Doyle Marilyn Harris Richard Heck James Seigas	Arthur Doyle Loren Gould Patrick Terenzini Lois Torrence	Roger Andersen Elizabeth Knapp David Rumpf Patrick Terenzini

NEAIR Steering Committees

	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85
President	Patrick Terenzini	Helen Wyant	Robert Lay	Paul Wing	Nancy Neville
President-elect				Nancy Neville	Judith Hackman
Past President					
Secretary	Diane Green			Darryl Bullock	
Membership Secretary					
Treasurer	Sr. Ann Luciano	Richard Heck		John Kraus	
Conference Program Chair	Nancy Neville	Robert Lay	Paul Wing	John Dunn, Jr.	Judith Hackman
Local Arrangements Chair	Carl Feigenbaum Ed Delaney	John Kraus	Marilyn Draxl	Wendell Lorang	Ed Delaney
Publications Chair	Diane Green			Marjorie Raab	Michael Middaugh
Members-at-Large	Carl Feigenbaum Paul Wing Roger Anderson Robert Lay	Peter Farago Nancy Neville Carl Feigenbaum Wendell Lorang Lloyd Suttle Paul Wing	Ed Delaney Marilyn Draxl Nancy Neville Marjorie Raab	Ed Delaney Marilyn Draxl Judith Hackman Larry Litten Kathleen Kopf Jeremiah Ryan	John Dunn, Jr. Paige Ireland Larry Kojaku Larry Litten Kathleen Kopf Jeremiah Ryan

NEAIR Steering Committees

	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-1990
President	Judith Hackman	John Dunn, Jr.	Paige Ireland	Ronald Doernbach	Michael Middaugh
President-elect	John Dunn, Jr.	Paige Ireland	Ronald Doernbach	Michael Middaugh	Jennifer Presley
Past President					
Secretary	Jill Campbell		Larry Metzger		Jennifer Brown
Membership Secretary	Brenda Bretz				
Treasurer	John Kraus	Peter Farago	Thomas Wickenden	Linda Suskie Peter Farago	Linda Suskie
Conference Program Chair	Ed Delaney	Jennifer Presley	Michael Middaugh	Louis Spiro	Dawn Terkla
Local Arrangements Chair	Susan Shaman	Larry Metzger	Lenore DeLucia	Brenda Bretz	Wendell Lorang
Publications Chair	Nancy Neville	Bayard Baylis	Jennifer Presley		Alan Sturtz
Members-at-Large	John Dunn, Jr. Paige Ireland Larry Kojaku Bayard Baylis Ronald Doernbach Webster Trammell	Michael Middaugh Richard Rugen Susan Shaman Bayard Baylis Ronald Doernbach Webster Trammell	Michael Middaugh Richard Rugen Susan Shaman Althea Beck Wendell Lorang Jennifer Presley	Lenore DeLucia Elizabeth Johnson Alan Sturtz Althea Beck Wendell Lorang Jennifer Presley	Lenore DeLucia Elizabeth Johnson Alan Sturtz Ellen Kanarek Michael McGuire Stuart Rich

NEAIR Steering Committees

	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94	1994-1995
President	Michael Middaugh/ Larry Metzger	Larry Metzger	Dawn Terkla	Michael McGuire	Marian Pagano
President-elect		Dawn Terkla	Michael McGuire	Marian Pagano	Ellen Kanarek
Past President		Michael Middaugh	Larry Metzger	Dawn Terkla	Michael McGuire
Secretary	Jennifer Brown	Mark Eckstein		Jane Price	Phyllis Fitzpatrick
Membership Secretary	Brenda Bretz				
Treasurer	Tom Flaherty		Wendell Lorang		Bayard Baylis
Conference Program Chair	Michael McGuire	Ellen Kanarek	Marjorie Wiseman	Jennifer Brown	Dan Shapiro
Local Arrangements Chair	Susan Forti	Stuart Rich	Diane Cuneo	Craig Clagett	Becky Brodigan
Publications Chair	Albert Lefevbre	Karen Bauer	Jane Price		Anne Marie Delaney
Members-at-Large	Dawn Terkla Toms Gusler Leah Smith Ellen Kanarek Michael McGuire Stuart Rich	Craig Clagett Tom Gusler Leah Smith Jennifer Brown Albert Lefevbre Marian Pagano	Karen Bauer Jim Fergerson James Ritchie Jennifer Brown Albert Lefevbre Marian Pagano	Karen Bauer Jim Fergerson James Ritchie Darryl Bullock Diane Cuneo Stuart Rich	Barbara Erdsneker Phyllis Fitzpatrick John Jacobsen Darryl Bullock Diane Cuneo Stuart Rich

NEAIR Steering Committees

	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98
President	Ellen Kanarek	Jennifer Brown	Craig Clagett
President-elect	Jennifer Brown	Craig Clagett	Karen Bauer
Past President	Marian Pagano	Ellen Kanarek	Jennifer Brown
Secretary	Fred Cohen		Denise Krallman
Membership Secretary	Brenda Bretz		
Treasurer	Wendell Lorang	Rebecca Brodigan	
Conference Program Chair	Barbara Palmer	Denise Krallman	Helen Schneider
Local Arrangements Chair	Eleanor Swanson	Bob Yanckello	Stephen Thorpe
Publications Chair	Corby Coperthwaite		
Members-at-Large	Barbara Erdsneker Phyllis Fitzpatrick John Jacobsen Peter Murray James Ritchie Marjorie Wiseman	Marilyn Blaustein Jim Fergerson Jim Trainer Peter Murray James Ritchie Marjorie Wiseman	Marilyn Blaustein Jim Fergerson Jim Trainer Kelli Armstrong Richard Heck Eleanor Swanson

IR Man

performed by
Mark Eckstein, 1993

He's a real IR Man,
Sitting in his IR land,
Making his enrollment plans for nobody.

Doesn't have a point of view,
Knows not when the survey's due.
Isn't he a bit like you and me?

IR Man, please listen,
You don't know what you're missin'.
IR Man, your President needs plans.

He's as scared as he can be,
Don't know where the Freshmen be.
IR Man, your IR plan's all wrong.

He just sent the questionnaire,
Transfer students go—where?
IR Man, can you find them at all?

IR Man, don't hurry,
It's too late. Don't worry,
IR Man, your IR plan
Is in the can.

He's a real IR Man,
Sitting in his IR land,
Making his enrollment plans for nobody.
Making his enrollment plans for nobody.
Making his enrollment plans for nobody.

Nevermore

performed by
John Jacobsen, 1994

Once upon a midnight dreary, fingers cramped and vision bleary,
System manuals piled high and wasted paper on the floor,
Longing for the warmth of bed sheets,
Still I sat there, doing spreadsheets:
Having reached the bottom line,
I took a floppy from the drawer.
Typing with a steady hand, I then invoked the SAVE command
But got instead a reprimand: it read "Abort, Retry, Ignore."

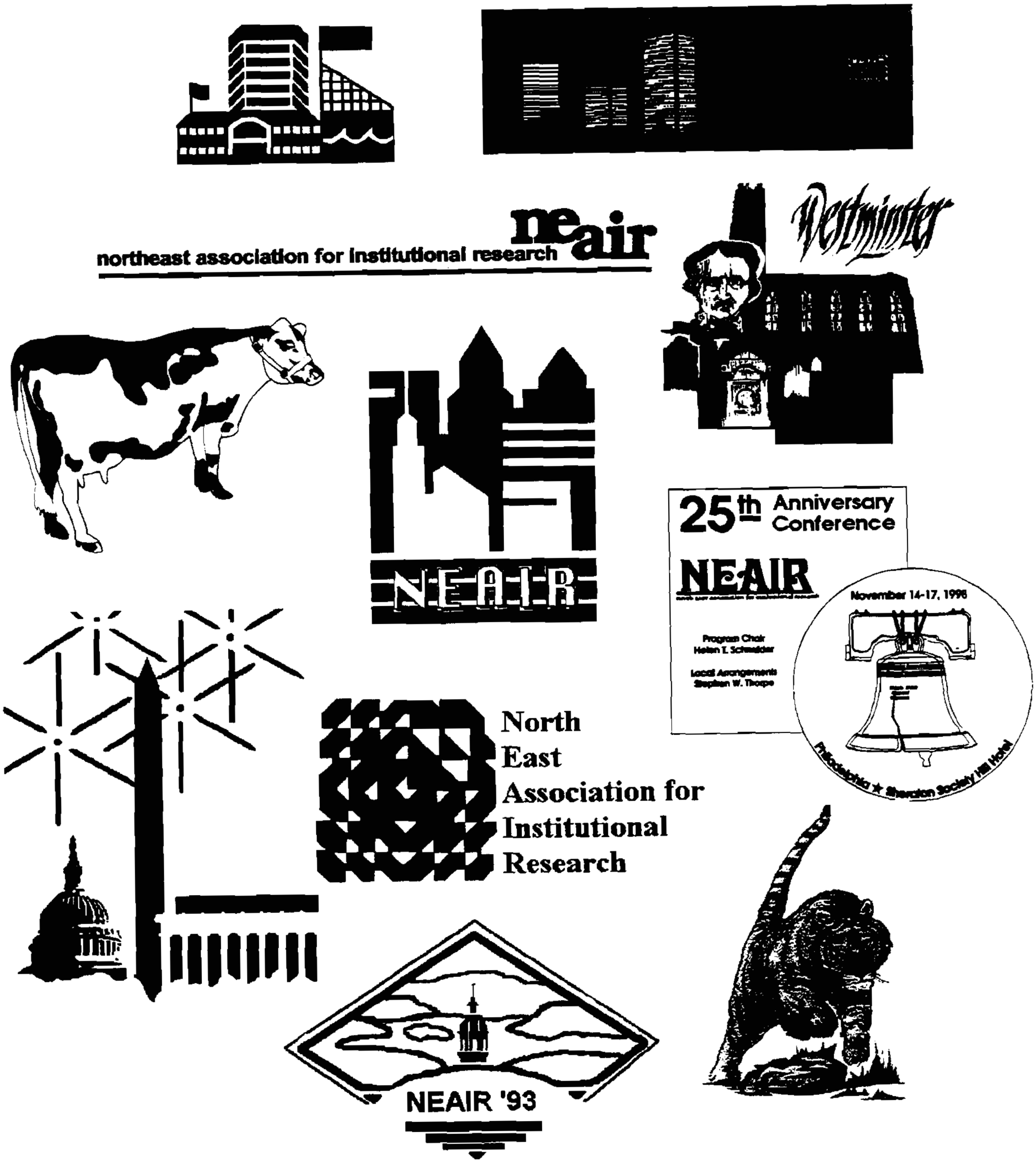
Was this some occult illusion? Some maniacal intrusion?
These were choices Solomon himself had never faced before.
Carefully, I weighed my options.
These three seemed to be the top ones.
Clearly, I must now adopt one:
Choose Abort, Retry, Ignore.

With fingers pale and trembling,
Slowly toward the keyboard bending,
Longing to a happy ending, hoping all would be restored,
Praying to some guarantee
Finally I pressed a key
But on the screen what did I see?
Again: "Abort, Retry, Ignore."

I tried to catch the chips off-guard,
I pressed again, but twice as hard.
Luck was just not in the cards.
I saw what I had seen before.
Now I typed in desperation
Trying random combinations
Still there came the incantation:
Choose: Abort, Retry, Ignore.

There I sat, distraught, exhausted, by my own machine accosted
Getting up I turned away and paced across the office floor.
And then I saw an awful sight:
A bold and blinding flash of light -
A lightning bolt had cut the night and shook me to my very core.
I saw the screen collapse and die,
"Oh no - my database," I cried
I thought I heard a voice reply,
"You'll see your data Nevermore."

To this day I do not know
The place to which lost data goes
I bet it goes to heaven where the angels have it stored.
But as for productivity, well
I fear that it goes straight to hell
And that's the tale I have to tell
Your choice: Abort, Retry, Ignore.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