How to win friends and influence people
Perspectives, lessons & suggestions from IR Newcomers

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AIR – San Diego, CA
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Background

- “Newcomers” in IR make up a significant proportion of AIR members
- From 1981-1998, approximately one-third of members had five or fewer years of experience
- Our focus: on newcomers in established offices (i.e. research analysts, etc.)
Little research has been conducted on institutional research, especially professional development.

Between 1974-1997, 16 out of 280 AIR publications were about “Theory, Practice, and Ethics” of Institutional Research.

Only three of these were about career development—mostly about IR Directors.
Methodology

- On-line survey, collect data for the month of October (10/1-10/29)
- E-mail invitation, one reminder
- Requested forwarding to target audience
- 287 Initial Responses
- Data cleaned – 216 final responses

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### Respondents

**How long in IR?**
- One year or less: 47%
- 2 - 3 years: 33%
- 4 - 5 years: 20%

**Size of Institution**
- 0-2,000: 12%
- 2,000-5,000: 16%
- 5,000-10,000: 16%
- 10,000-20,000: 22%
- 20,000+: 33%
- Does not apply: 1%

**Public/Private**
- Public: 69%
- Private: 31%

**Type of Institution**
- Two-year college (non-profit): 25%
- Four-year college or university (non-profit): 65%
- Gov't/state agency: 3%
- Other: 6%
- For-profit institution: 1%
Pathways to IR

- 25% “answered a job description”
  - Over half of these answered ad because the description fit their skills/experience
- 21% entered field because it specifically related to their degree or background
  - Another 5% were just “interested” in the field
- 16% were introduced to IR as undergraduate/graduate research assistants in IR offices
  - Another 4% exposed to the field through grad. programs
- 13% transferred to IR from a different department at the institution
- 2% wanted to work in higher education and not in the private sector

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Job Satisfaction

- 84% of respondents are satisfied/very satisfied professionally in IR
  - Just 8% are dissatisfied/very dissatisfied
- 83% would choose Institutional Research again if they had to re-start their career in higher education
Job Responsibilities

Please indicate your THREE primary job responsibilities:

- Responding to information requests: 51%
- Fact book creation/reporting: 30%
- IPEDS/government reporting: 30%
- Completing external data requests: 27%
- Writing reports: 27%
- Creating home-grown surveys: 20%
- Accountability & performance indicators: 15%
- Outcomes assessment: 13%
- Data warehouse management: 13%
- Administering national surveys: 11%
- Peer comparisons: 11%
- Program evaluation: 10%
- Enrollment management: 10%
Job Responsibilities
Differences between groups

Administering National Survey Instruments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Private</th>
<th>Public</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20.9%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Overall: 11.1%

Peer Comparisons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4-Year</th>
<th>2-Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15.2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall: 10.6%

Administering National Survey Instruments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 year or less in IR</th>
<th>2-5 years in IR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15.7%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Overall: 11.1%

Accountability & performance indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 year or less in IR</th>
<th>2-5 years in IR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14.8%</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
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</table>

Overall: 22.1%
Interaction on Campus

How familiar are you with the following "cast of characters" from your institution:

- Computer Services: 81%
- Registrar's Office: 79%
- Provost & Vice Presidents: 77%
- Admissions Office: 71%
- Student Services Office: 70%
- Academic Deans: 68%
- President: 63%

Greatly – “I have met and worked with them”
Moderately – “I have met them”

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### Interaction on Campus

**How familiar are you with the following "cast of characters" from your institution?**

% Responding “Greatly” or “Moderately”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Private</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>4-year</th>
<th>2-year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Registrar's Office</td>
<td>87.9%</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Deans</td>
<td>77.6%</td>
<td>63.9%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Services</td>
<td>89.4%</td>
<td>76.8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Deans</td>
<td>61.8%</td>
<td>82.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Services</td>
<td>76.6%</td>
<td>63.8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admissions</td>
<td>77.7%</td>
<td>65.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Deans</td>
<td>78.8%</td>
<td>59.4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Services</td>
<td>86.2%</td>
<td>76.1%</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Small = 10,000 or fewer students; Large = 10,001+ students

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Attendance at Professional Development Events
Approximate Percentage of those employed in IR in each year who attended:

- AIR Annual Forum
- Regional AIR Annual Forum
- Drive-in Workshops in local area
- AIR Foundations Institute

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Transitions

Please rate your level of difficulty making the following adjustments during your time at your institution:

- Understanding your role in the campus politics
- Discovering your role in the larger administrative structure
- Getting to know the upper-level administrative personnel
- Establishing yourself in the campus climate
- Feeling comfortable in your office

![Bar chart showing ratings]

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Do/did you have a mentor in the IR field?  

Yes 47%

How helpful has your mentor been in helping you understand IR?  

- Very helpful: 84%
- Somewhat helpful: 16%
- Not helpful: 0%

How did you meet your mentor?  

- Current institution: 73%
- Previous institution: 14%
- Professional association: 7%
- Other: 6%  

How did you develop your mentoring relationship?  

- Mentor is supervisor: 66%
- Mentor is co-worker: 12%
- Through student/advisor relationship with mentor: 10%
- Assigned to mentor through NEAIR conference: 6%  

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Mentoring

How easy was it for you to feeling comfortable in your office?
% Very or Somewhat Easy

![Bar chart showing easy to comfortable feelings in the office for mentors and non-mentors.]

Overall, how satisfied professionally have you been with your time in Institutional Research?

![Bar chart showing satisfaction levels for mentors and non-mentors.]

If you could start your career in higher education over again, would you enter the IR field?

![Pie charts showing responses for mentors and non-mentors.]

- **Mentor**
  - No, definitely: 1%
  - Probably no: 8%
  - Probably yes: 42%
  - Yes, definitely: 49%

- **No Mentor**
  - No, definitely: 5%
  - Probably no: 20%
  - Probably yes: 22%
  - Yes, definitely: 53%
In Retrospect

Looking back, what do you wish you had known about IR before entering the field?

- Better data analysis/statistics skills, software for analyzing data, computer skills
- Better understanding of campus politics
  - *I didn't realize the amount of political maneuvering that takes place inside the University, much more so than in the private sector.*
- How the institution works, what IR’s role in the institution is
  - *More about the basic workings of institutions, especially since I did not have any Higher Ed experience. I really didn't understand the nature of the business and it has taken me a lot of time to learn this by experience.*
- Terminology (“slang,” “lingo”)
- How IR’s duties/focus varies among institutions, what IR does at their institution
  - *The extensiveness of the types of work the IR office is expected to take charge of and complete.*
Advice

- Ask Questions!
- Get involved in AIR/Regional Chapters; Go to conferences & institutes
- Make sure you have a solid research/stats background
- Before you take the job—consider the kind of work you will do, the type of institution you will work at, etc.
- Make sure you like working with data and computers!
- Be patient; Always be willing/eager to learn
- Make sure you know how your institution works, where you fit into the politics, etc. Don’t make assumptions.
- Network; Make friends in the right places.

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Overall

- Minimal problems in adjusting to daily IR work
  - Newcomers charged with complex tasks (survey development, report writing, fact book creation, program evaluation)
  - Many acquired with ease a familiarity with personnel on campus, including upper-level administrators
  - Learned many skills on the job

- Harder time: Making more “intangible” transitions:
  - Making contacts and networking
  - Establishing oneself in the campus politics
  - Understanding where office fits in larger structure of institution

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Areas for improvement

- Mentoring
- Professional Development
- Networking