Global Knowledge '97
Conference Evaluation

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GLOBAL KNOWLEDGE ’97

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The World Bank
Washington, D.C.
We must close the gap between information haves and have nots.

Shirley Malcolm

With all the participants and organizers, let us make a human chain from Sheraton Ball Room to Colony Hotel Ballroom on the last day of the conference. The chain is to symbolize success of Global Knowledge 1997 and building new partnerships. This is a rare opportunity to make a link with people from 140 nations and transmitting the concept of building one world through sharing of knowledge and connectivity.

Participant, “IDEAS” form, Day Two

Sometimes useful, very good for contacts and networking, and very good for general understanding on what is going on in technology and development.

NGO leader
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Global Knowledge ’97

Conference Evaluation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A brave experiment.

(Participant)

Purpose of the Evaluation:
This evaluation emphasizes understanding the conference as an educational and networking experience, and seeks to provide a basis for improvement of similar future conferences. It does not evaluate the conference’s administrative structure. Conclusions and Suggestions for the Future can be found in Part VIII of the report.

I. OVERVIEW

Over 1,700 persons gathered at the Global Knowledge ’97 Conference in Toronto, June 22-25, 1997, to address issues surrounding the role of the “information revolution” in the development process. Attendees included government and planning officials from developing countries, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector, the media, conference organizers and sponsors, and many others. Thirty-one percent of the registrants were women; attendees came from over 100 countries. Conference registration began June 21 and the final plenary was held June 25, affording over three days of programming.

The World Bank and CIDA staffed the conference, but 46 organizations sponsored and participated in the event, including multilaterals, United Nations agencies, multilaterals, private companies, foundations, and NGOs. With little more than six months from conception to implementation, the conference represented a massive coordination effort that enhanced public-private participation and led to a rich program. The short planning time also contributed to some logistical difficulties reflected in participant ratings of the conference. Nonetheless, GK ‘97 offered a unique opportunity for “global dialogue” on urgent issues facing developing countries around the world.

Global Knowledge ’97 was organized around three core themes:

- Understanding the role of knowledge and information in economic and social development and the profound changes in the development process wrought by new technologies
- Sharing strategies, experiences, and tools in harnessing knowledge for development
- Building new partnerships that empower the poor with information and knowledge, foster international dialogue on development, and strengthen the knowledge and information resources of developing countries.

A variety of activities was supposed to stimulate interaction, and dialogue was intended to be the dominant mode of exchange. Three design principles were to bring the content themes to life by fostering interaction, networking across sectors, countries, and professional roles, partnership-building, and the exchange of ideas among key stakeholders in the development process:

Design principle #1: Have strong stakeholder involvement

Design principle #2: Avoid typical conference of plenaries ending with a final statement
Executive Summary: Global Knowledge ‘97

Design principle #3: Build a large base of sponsorship

II. KEY FINDINGS

1. Both sponsors and participants reported significant gains in learning, new information, and building partnerships.

2. Participants gave Global Knowledge ‘97 above average ratings for “overall effectiveness” (4.1 out of a possible 6 points on the End of Conference Evaluation Form; see Figure 1).\(^1\)

3. Respondents were convinced that the conference was “relevant” to their work responsibilities (with a mode of 6.00). The 4.00 modal response on conference “effectiveness” would undoubtedly have been higher if the conference structure had included more breathing room for dialogue and if it had facilitated informal partnership-building.

4. The conference was successful in producing some significant outcomes:
   - It succeeded in putting the question of the role of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) on the international development agenda.
   - It fostered some working relationships between public and private sector participants.
   - It laid the groundwork for concrete plans that can be monitored in a post-conference evaluation.
   - The “partnering” that played a central part in conference objectives began in the planning stages.
   - Specific learning and information sharing about ICT and development occurred for many.
   - The “GK partnership” that brought the conference to fruition continues to work together, according to the organizers, “developing activities to build knowledge capacity in developing countries.”

5. Many participants found the “virtual conference”—in particular the GKD97 Discussion List—very useful for learning, sharing ideas, and networking. This may be the greatest legacy of the conference, and the vehicle through which the conference ultimately addresses its core objectives. Follow-up evaluations should explore this phenomenon in greater detail.
   - The List contained meaningful discussions of real cases, practical aspects of implementing ICT, and identification of resources.
   - The List also involved considerable discussion of how and when ICT can enhance development and benefit the world’s poor.
   - The List involved people around the globe, including significant representation from developing countries.
   - The virtual conference continues, with the potential to build upon the initiative of the conference started in Toronto.

5. Although Design Principles #1 (stakeholder involvement) and #3 (broad sponsorship) were achieved to a high degree, weak realization of Principle #2 rendered the conference less effective than anticipated. Participants referred to a “talking heads” model that left little time for synergistic exchanges and constricted dialogue, participation, and building relationships. The open “call for content”—intended to maximize the participatory nature of GK ‘97—also caused “program overload,” because of partnership pressures on the conference design and the program itself. For these reasons, the following reduced the gathering’s impact:
   - “One-way communication,” which dominated both plenaries and working sessions
   - Overloaded plenaries and overstructured working sessions, which resulted in a lack of time for free discussion and dialogue.

5. Various logistical problems exacerbated the lack of discussion. These organizational weaknesses did not deal a fatal blow to the conference, however. Interviewees lamented the lack of discussion time.

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\(^1\) Out of 530 people who returned the end of conference evaluation forms (in English, French, or Spanish), approximately 408 answered these questions.
Executive Summary: Global Knowledge '97

and the logistical problems they encountered, but also marveled at the conference's diversity, size, scope, and mammoth organizational challenges. Virtually everyone agreed that this was a significant effort.

6. The conference did not devote significant attention to understanding the role of knowledge and information in development, one of the conference's three core themes.
   • Constituencies differed regarding the potential value and benefits of ICT for development.
   • Participants raised questions about the motivations of corporate community members (and others), who appeared to assume that the benefits of ICT would be universally positive.
   • Beyond seeing the potential benefits of ICT, some expressed concerns about disparities and dangers—they fear that ICT has the potential to widen the gap between the haves and the have-nots.
   • Some felt strongly that the conference did not provide sufficient opportunity to discuss or even acknowledge this countervailing (and critical) perspective.
   • Although competing perspectives are to be expected in a gathering of this nature and size, a forum was not provided early in the conference in which different assumptions and paradigms could be openly addressed and reconciled.

III. MAIN CONFERENCE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

A. Participant Views of Main Conference Strengths

1. The conference brought together an enormous diversity of participants from all over the globe and from all sectors. This helped reduce stereotypes and to foster mutual understanding between Part I and Part II countries and between the public and private sectors.

Participants were stimulated and favorably impressed by the high level of plenary speakers. Many expressed appreciation for being able to hear international leaders.

1. Working sessions were better than the plenary sessions in allowing time for dialogue and discussion, although they did not allow enough opportunity for interaction.

2. Having tracks helped participants make their way through the conference; tracks allowed participants to focus on topics of particular interest to them.

3. The Internet discussion List ("GKD97," which preceded, accompanied, and followed the conference) provided a highly positive experience for many participants and for those who could not attend the Toronto meeting.

6. The Knowledge and Technology Forum introduced the majority of participants to new ideas and technologies. Of those who responded to the evaluation form, 85 percent had participated in some kind of demonstration of equipment or materials during their visit to the Exhibition Hall. Almost 40 percent spent considerable time doing so, and about 25 percent spent a great deal of time interacting with the ICT available to them in the Forum.

7. Participants were generally enthusiastic about learning practical ideas that could find an applied use in their own country. Over two-thirds said they would be likely or very likely to take back practical ideas directly because of the Knowledge and Technology Forum.

8. The conference received enthusiastic support and involvement from a broad range of sponsors who continue to work together.

B. Participant Views of Main Conference Weaknesses

1. Some disequilibrium existed between the conference goals and its structure. For networking and partnership-building to occur, the conference needed either smaller numbers or a different structure (less academic, more "free spaces," and more structured opportunities for informal networking).
Executive Summary: Global Knowledge '97

2. Inadequate time for discussion during working sessions diminished the conference’s impact. The conference design called for a more creative process and methodology for discussing, integrating, and creating knowledge out of the wealth of experience and information available during the three days. Participants complained about the lack of opportunity to exchange ideas and apply new information to their own settings. Again, this apparently resulted from “program overload” caused by an open call for content. In the words of one organizer, “partnership pressures impinged on conference design.” A lesson learned for future conference planning is that while broadening partnership and participation is a laudable goal, pressure toward overload will emerge as a significant programmatic challenge.

3. Plenaries afforded no question-and-answer period or discussion. Too many plenaries that ran too long lent an overstructured air to the conference.

4. The quality of presentations, especially in the plenaries, was variable. Speakers did not always stay on the conference agenda or seemed to miss the point of the conference themes. Many spoke too long, eliminating chances for interchange among listeners, and some were simply “bad” speakers. Some sessions seemed only obliquely related to the topic. Many participants questioned the seemingly blind assumption expressed by some speakers that ICT is good for developing countries and that it will not increase the gap between the have-s and the have-nots.

5. Technology was underutilized. The conference attempted to integrate ICT into its own structure and processes, but the effort met limited success. Conferes characterized this as “an ironic situation” and “a missed opportunity.”

6. The conference seemed fragmented. Having sessions and Cybercafes in three close but disconnected hotels was confusing and annoying to many participants. In addition, because there were extremely few “natural” gathering places in corridors and lobbies, interaction between sessions was diminished. This, of course, is a perennial problem with large conferences. Finding meeting rooms and lodging for 2,000 participants and staff often means using multiple hotels (which contributes to fragmentation) or convention center/hotel facilities (which conferes usually find too large and “cold”).

7. Travel and lodging arrangements fell short. Especially for international travelers with lost luggage, searching for their hotel, or needing to change flights at the end of the program, conference secretariat support was inadequate or missing. Participants noted the absence of an on-site travel agency.

8. The conference did not adequately involve women, people from developing countries, and NGOs. Although the conference registration increased because of concerted efforts to include more women, participants felt that the unique contributions and needs of women and girls regarding ICT were not sufficiently integrated into the program content. Furthermore, women were not evenly involved in chairing or presenting during the sessions.

9. Regional focus was unbalanced. Some participants complained that the conference focused too much on Africa. They called for a more balanced attention to the world’s major regions.

IV. OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

1. Participants appreciated the opportunity to cross national and sectoral boundaries and would like to have future chances to strengthen existing bonds and create new ones.

2. Future efforts to organize similar conferences should try to enlist the advantages of the one-on-one “virtual interaction” that seemed so satisfying to List participants and the advantages of face-to-face “in-person interaction” that a physical conference affords.

3. Overstructuring and logistical problems hampered two major goals of the conference, networking and building partnerships. Some frustration arose over the schedule’s tightness and the limited discussion time in working sessions. Inclusiveness led to program overload.
4. However, many seeds were planted that will generate future interaction and collaboration on international development projects. This was true for sponsors, organizers, and participants.

5. Global Knowledge '97 was a successful conference that provided participants with new knowledge, practical information, and access to technologies they had never experienced. The vast majority of participants look forward to similar meetings—both actual and virtual—in the future.
Global Knowledge '97

Conference Evaluation

PART I: INTRODUCTION

We worry that technologies will simply be used to bolster existing inequities.

Gillian Marcelle

Over 1,700 persons gathered at the Global Knowledge '97 Conference in Toronto, June 22-25, 1997, to address issues surrounding the role of the "information revolution" in the development process. The conference, which spanned three and a half days of core activities after two days of registration, was unique in bringing together 46 public and private sector partners in a working relationship. Sponsors of this groundbreaking conference included public sector organizations, international agencies, nongovernmental organizations, private sector companies/agencies, and international development banks. The World Bank and the Government of Canada initiated the conference and held major organizing responsibility.

I have always known the World Bank as commercial. Their involvement in this conference indicates where things are moving. The Canadian government involvement is not surprising—it has been in the forefront with developing countries. Participant from Education sector

The conference was conducted in French and English (the official languages of Canada) and to some extent in Spanish. Simultaneous translation was provided for all sessions (in French, English, and Spanish unless otherwise posted). Open space events were not simultaneously translated. Other unique characteristics of Global Knowledge '97 included:
- Massive coordination of 46 sponsors around the globe
- Multiple, simultaneous seminars and activities following themes and tracks
- Plenaries featuring major figures in international relations and development
- $1,000,000 per day committed to the conference by sponsors/organizers
- Colombians, Malaysians, and others organized a parallel conference for those who could not travel to Toronto, linking opening and closing sessions
- A "virtual conference" before and during actual conference.

Attendees included government and planning officials, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector, the media, conference organizers and sponsors, and many others (see Part III). Thirty-one percent of the registrants were women.

This report evaluates the extent to which the Global Knowledge '97 Conference achieved its core objectives of facilitating public-private sector networking and partnership building. Evaluators used

1 This number excludes interpreters, conference aides, guests, nonparticipant media, and rapporteurs, but includes staff from the two hosting organizations and other participants from the World Bank and Canadian Government agencies (official conference registration data).

2 Full sponsors contributed $100,000 or more; co-sponsors $50,000 to $100,000; and associates $10,000 to $50,000.

3 Official conference registration data.
several methods to gather data on this complex gathering and to gauge participation in and satisfaction with conference activities: direct observation, participant observation, individual and group interviews, and a set of self-administered surveys given to participants and exhibitors. The team also monitored the “GKD97” Internet discussion (before and during the conference).

This evaluation emphasizes understanding the conference as an educational and networking experience and seeks to provide a basis for improvement of similar future conferences. It also highlights the critical role of the “virtual conference” in linking Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to the development process in a more systematic and integrated fashion.

The evaluation focuses on participant reaction to the conference, obtained from surveys and interviews administered on-site, rather than the conference administrative structure. The evaluation framework was derived from the goals and objectives stated in conference literature and in an interview with conference organizers. Virtually all conferees were made aware of the evaluation process and over 1,500 surveys were distributed. Over one-third of the participants returned the forms and approximately 100 were interviewed formally or informally.

**Part II: Global Knowledge '97 Conference Overview** outlines the history, goals, and structure of the conference. The evaluation methods are summarized in **Part III: The Evaluation Approach**. Observations and response patterns are discussed in **Part IV: General Findings** and **Part V: Detailed Findings**. **Part VI: The Virtual Conference**, **Part VII: Constituency Perspectives**, and **Part VIII: Conclusions and Suggestions for the Future** summarizes recommendations and ideas for improving future conferences such as this one.
PART II: GLOBAL KNOWLEDGE '97
CONFERENCE OVERVIEW

Knowledge matters in achieving sustainable human development, but perspective matters, too.

Shirley Malcolm

I. HISTORY
According to conference organizers, the conference had its origin in broad intersecting concerns within the World Bank and the Government of Canada. Both institutions experience a growing awareness of the global reach of the information revolution and of how Information and Communication Technology (ICT) affects the way lending agencies operate in a changing development paradigm.

The information revolution amplifies the realization that the World Bank (and other international development banks), governments, and NGOs cannot “do it all” in a changing development climate. For instance, private capital flows have outstripped the World Bank’s aid, and private companies exporting software also have an impact on development. This awareness raises the question, “What does the information revolution mean for the development process?” The answer implies creating a new potential for developing countries to serve as partners in the development process and requires permits development agencies to work in a much more open fashion than before. Increasingly, stress is placed on building networks and human capital rather than simply building infrastructure in developing countries.\(^4\)

In light of these factors, World Bank President James Wolfensohn and Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien generated the idea of a conference on partnerships in development in the information age that would bring together key players and stakeholders: Global Knowledge ‘97.

II. CONFERENCE GOALS
According to conference organizers and materials, the main goal of Global Knowledge ‘97 was to “explore the vital role of knowledge and information in sustainable development, and the ways in which the information revolution transforms the development process.” The Preliminary Program included the following language:

\[(The\ \text{conference})\ \text{will\ examine\ new\ opportunities\ for\ participation,\ partnership,\ and\ dialogue\ created\ by\ the}\ \text{information\ revolution;\ the\ equity\ and\ access\ challenges\ posed\ by\ new\ technologies;\ and\ the\ ways\ in\ which}\ \text{information\ and\ knowledge\ can\ serve\ as\ tools\ of\ economic\ and\ social\ empowerment.\ It\ will\ explore\ the\ ways}\ \text{in\ which\ the\ international\ development\ community\ must\ adapt\ to\ address\ these\ new\ challenges\ and}\ \text{opportunities.}\]

With an eye to facilitating participation and dialogue, the conference organizers said they planned activities and structure according to three major design principles:

- **Design principle #1: Have strong stakeholder involvement**
- **Design principle #2: Avoid typical conference of plenaries ending with a final statement**
  - Emphasize synergy building and relationship generating.
  - Energize a process of partnership building and formation of new networks (public-private).
  - Have as few plenaries as possible. Focus on a variety of workshops, panel discussions, demonstrations, and learning events in participatory groups.
  - Use thematic clusters to organize participation.
  - Emphasize dialogue and relationship building.
- **Design principle #3: Build a large base of sponsorship**
  - The list of sponsors in itself should be a substantive and intended consequence of the conference.

\(^4\) These factors have been emphasized in the “Maurice Strong Report” on Canadian internationalism in the 21st century, which emphasizes the ways that the information revolution changes the development paradigm.
- Involvement should foster long-term relationships among these organizations.
- The organizers should encourage sponsors to believe that partnership matters to development, and that new information technology creates new opportunities for the development community.

Operationally, these design principles meant that 46 organizations sponsored the vast majority of conference activities, according to common interests, with the Bank and CIDA staffing the secretariat. Organizers posed this as an exception to typical conference design in which there is much duplication of effort and little sharing: “This level of interagency collaboration is unprecedented, involving multilaterals, United Nations agencies, bilaterals, private companies, foundations, and NGOs.” According to organizers, the various public and private sector sponsors had to brainstorm in advance on how to coordinate their efforts for success in Toronto, so they had already built some working relationships before the conference opened.

The conference was unique also in having only six and a half months’ planning time from conception to delivery. This relatively short planning time, in conjunction with the large number of sponsors, complex program, and diversity of participants led to some logistical difficulties, but also a dramatic opportunity for “global dialogue” on urgent issues facing developing countries around the world.

III. CONFERENCE CONTENT: CORE THEMES AND TRACKS

The seven themes were good, relevant, important information transfer. Participant from Education sector

A. Core Themes

In order to achieve these broad objectives, the conference was organized around three core themes that also drove the evaluation framework:

1. Understanding the role of knowledge and information in economic and social development and the profound changes in the development process wrought by new technologies

2. Sharing strategies, experiences and tools in harnessing knowledge for development

3. Building new partnerships that empower the poor with information and knowledge, foster international dialogue on development, and strengthen the knowledge and information resources of developing countries.

Conference plenaries and panels will explore these core themes and set out the challenges facing the development community at the end of the 20th century. In addition, participants will pursue these three themes of understanding, sharing, and partnership building as they address a range of specific development challenges, clustered in seven conference tracks.

(Organizers)

B. Thematic Tracks

Beyond the core themes, conference organizers planned to achieve their goals by offering participants seven thematic tracks that interconnected plenaries, working sessions, and other activities according to substantive issues surrounding ICT and development. The conference content was provided by all sponsors plus 30 other organizations that responded to an open “call for content.” The tracks were:

1. Empowering the Poor with Information and Knowledge
   - General challenges and opportunities
   - Strategies, tools, partnership building; lessons of experience, success stories, and best practices

2. Role of the State: Policy and Regulatory Frameworks for the Information Economy
   - Policy and regulatory frameworks that encourage growth of the information economy, support learning organizations, build knowledge capital, and encourage private sector investment in information infrastructure
3. **Infrastructure and Capacity Building**
   - How can developing countries build and sustain infrastructure, institutions, and patterns of interaction for building and sharing knowledge?
   - How can they mobilize sustainable, appropriate technologies and knowledge strategies that ensure universal access to information and knowledge?

4. **Fostering Science and Technology in Developing Countries**
   - The role of science and technology in fostering sustainable development
   - Creating an environment that fosters research, local innovation, and openness to global innovations
   - The role of nongovernmental partners
   - Building effective, sustainable partnerships that foster science and technology.

5. **Knowledge Flows, Civic Dialogue, and the Informed Citizen**
   - The role of information, and access to information
   - The responsibility of information providers
   - Governance, good citizenship, and civic dialogue.

6. **Distance Education and Technology for Learning**
   - Life-long learning that supports economic change, social change, and technological innovation
   - New horizons for distance learning
   - Sharing knowledge globally
   - Learner-oriented learning.

7. **Partnerships**
   - Vital elements of a comprehensive strategy to enhance knowledge/information resources
   - Building and participating in new public-private partnerships to support knowledge for development.

**IV. CONFERENCE STRUCTURE**

In light of these goals and core themes, the conference structure included about 100 working sessions, 8 to 12 per time slot, as well as other activities appropriate to the overarching theme of Information and Communication Technology and global development:

1. **Plenaries** that set the discussion framework and articulated main challenges
2. **Working Sessions** including panel discussions, seminars, working groups, case demonstrations, on-site consultancies, best practice seminars, and demonstrations of new technologies and approaches
3. **Knowledge and Technology Forum**, an exhibition space
4. **“Cybercafes,”** on-site computer networks
5. **Knowledge for Development Video Festival**
6. **Open Spaces** for spontaneous meetings, consultations, videoconferences
7. **Interactive global links**, videoconferencing and an Internet discussion list, GKD97—see Annex C for relevant topics

The sheer size and complexity of the conference presented a formidable evaluation challenge, which required a multi-pronged approach as explained in the next sections and documented in the Annexes.
PART III: THE EVALUATION APPROACH

We always talk about information at the very highest level (for example, in the university). Here we talked about making information permeate the whole society.
( Participant from Education sector)

I. PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

It’s good that they are doing a systematic evaluation.
( Participant from Corporate sector)

The main purpose of the evaluation was to gauge overall participant satisfaction with, and key learning from, the conference. In this context, participants include conference participants, but also exhibitors, session organizers, and sponsors. The evaluation was not designed to assess the conference administrative structure or its cost effectiveness. Five evaluation team members carried out the evaluation with the occasional assistance of student aides. Every effort was made to ensure that all constituencies were involved in the evaluation.

A. Central Evaluation Questions

More specifically, the evaluation sought to ascertain lessons learned substantively and organizationally from this conference (and this type of conference) and to answer the following questions:

1. Conference Content: Were content and focus relevant to the conference goals?
   • Did participants gain access to information/knowledge resources they did not have before?

2. Conference Learning: Did participants learn what they hoped to learn?
   • How satisfied were they with the practical nature of their learning?

3. Integration of Information and Communication Technology: To what degree was ITC integrated into the conference experience?
   • In what ways was the Knowledge and Technology Forum effective?
   • In what ways were the Cybercafes effective?

4. Conference Structure: Was the conference structure commensurate with stated learning, networking, and partnering objectives?
   • To what extent and how were the Plenaries, Working Sessions, and Open Spaces effective?

5. Conference Organization: Was the overall conference organization supportive of its goals and objectives?

6. Post-Conference Impacts: Might the conference have any impacts beyond the three-day experience (as anticipated by participants)?
   • What might its legacy be? (This question could be addressed in a follow-up study.)
   • Did participants plan to enter any new partnerships related to conference goals?
   • Did participants initiate and/or plan to initiate any new programs, technological innovations, policies, or strategies for incorporating information and knowledge into the development process?

7. The Virtual Conference: What role did the “Virtual Conference” play?
   • What proportion of conference participants followed the on-line discussion?

8. Lessons Learned for Future Gatherings: What were the lessons learned substantively and organizationally for related future conferences or seminars?

The answers to questions 1 through 6 are addressed in Part IV: General Findings and Part V: Detailed Findings. Part VI: The Role of the Virtual Conference addresses question 7. Part VII offers The NGO Perspective on the conference.
Lessons learned (question 8) are explored in Part VIII: Conclusions and Suggestions for the Future.

II. SOURCES OF INFORMATION
A. Diversity of Methods
Several sources of information provided the basis for this evaluation, including:

- Participant observation by all five evaluation team members (at plenaries, dinners, breaks, working sessions, open space, and informal gatherings)
- Dozens of brief, informal interviews in English and French with people from all regions of the world and from all conference constituencies (individuals/dyads/triads)
- Eight formal focus group discussions (4 to 12 people per group)
- Forty formal individual interviews
- Questionnaires made available on site to all conference participants:
  - Conference entry forms
  - End of conference evaluation forms (including “Your Plans”)
  - “Ideas” forms
- Conference evaluation forms (for exhibitors and for session organizers).

Evaluators visited the Knowledge and Technology Forum ("exhibit hall") and the Cybercafes and conducted brief interviews with exhibitors and sponsors. These observations added another dimension to the survey data received from exhibitors and participants.

Pre- and post-conference evaluation forms assessed the extent of changes in participants' opinions stemming from participation in the Global Knowledge '97 Conference. The post-conference instruments allowed participants to describe other positive outcomes that they may have experienced as a result of the conference, but which may not have been anticipated in designing the pre-conference measures.

A “Your Plans” form collected information on where and under what conditions participants anticipate applying any new perspectives or information gained during the conference. Because the conference objectives included “synergy building and relationship generating,” this form asked participants to list any new types of partners (business, academic, educational, research and development, NGO, science and technology, etc.) that might be involved in their plans. The purpose of this instrument was not to assess whether specific funding arrangements had been made during GK '97 (not the conference’s goal), but to determine whether participants had been stimulated to formulate ideas to work on when they returned home. The ideas described in “Your Plans” and observational data helped put the “usefulness” of conference impacts in perspective and will establish a path for later impact studies.

III. INTEGRATION OF EVALUATION INTO THE CONFERENCE
A. Logistical Issues
Although the evaluation process was originally conceived as being an integral part of the conference, unfortunately this integration failed to occur. Initial negotiations between organizers and evaluators indicated that the evaluation would be included in the registration packet distributed to participants as they registered. Ultimately, the organizers rejected this arrangement. Instead, participants proceeded after registering to a nearby “evaluation desk” to pick up their pre-conference evaluation forms. This meant that many participants who bypassed the desk failed to pick up the pre-conference instrument. They had to return to the evaluation desk for the end of conference forms (which were also available outside session rooms and after the closing plenary).

Two factors facilitated the evaluation process:

- The assistance of student aides in picking up Idea forms (which participants could fill out at any time and leave in boxes outside session doors) and in distributing and collecting post-conference forms after the closing plenary.
- Announcements made in plenary sessions, encouraging participants to return their forms.
B. Sampling and Response Rates
Because of the diversity of conference registrants, and the conference location in officially bilingual Canada, conferees had the opportunity to respond on forms in English, French, or Spanish. Every effort was made to bring the evaluation process to the attention of conferees:

- All conferees received a one-page notice in their registration packet that stressed the "integral" role of evaluation in the conference, asked them to obtain and fill out pre- and post-conference forms, and invited them to submit their "Ideas" forms at any time.
- Over the conference period, approximately 1,500 end of conference evaluation forms were distributed in English, French, and Spanish.1
- One plenary announcement and reminders by evaluators and student aides throughout the conference supplemented other efforts to make virtually all participants aware of the evaluation process.
- Finally, a GK '97 poster was provided by conference organizers as an incentive for returning completed forms at the end of the conference.

After almost complete saturation of the registrants, 530 usable forms were returned for an acceptable response rate of over 35 percent.2 Figure 1 shows how respondents compare to registrants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REGION3</th>
<th>MALE4 # and %</th>
<th>FEMALE # and %</th>
<th>TOTAL # (1739)</th>
<th>TOTAL %</th>
<th>TOTAL %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Industrialized Democracies5</td>
<td>679 (64.9%)</td>
<td>367 (35.1%)</td>
<td>1046</td>
<td>60.2% Part I Countries</td>
<td>27.5% Part I Countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>192 (73.8%)</td>
<td>68 (26.2%)</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>14.95%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America</td>
<td>102 (76.1%)</td>
<td>32 (23.9%)</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>7.71%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe and Central Asia</td>
<td>64 (68.1%)</td>
<td>30 (31.9%)</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>5.41%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Asia and Pacific</td>
<td>63 (75.0%)</td>
<td>21 (25.0%)</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>4.83%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asia</td>
<td>53 (80.3%)</td>
<td>13 (19.7%)</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>3.80%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East and North Africa</td>
<td>46 (83.6%)</td>
<td>9 (16.4%)</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>3.16%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International/Global</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>39.7% Part II Countries</td>
<td>43% Part II Countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(n/a)</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Having an evaluation desk inadvertently made evaluation more visible in one sense, but having evaluation forms included in registration packets is usually preferable for ensuring that all conferees receive them.
2 The exact response rate for entry or exit forms is impossible to compute, given the fact that many participants lost their forms and took duplicate copies at the end of the closing plenary.
3 From the GK '97 Management Report (draft), November 9, 1997, p. 11.
4 Gender was not asked on evaluation forms.
5 Includes staff from Knowledge and Technology Forum and hosting organizations.
Figure 1: Participation by Region and Gender

The official conference registration data indicates that 700 participants (about 40 percent) were from developing ("Part II") countries. A review of evaluation survey forms indicates that 43 percent of the respondents were from Part II countries and 27.5 percent from Part I countries; 1.6 percent defined themselves as "global" or "international"; the other 28 percent declined to list their country. These figures suggest that the evaluation sample drew from developing countries in about the same proportion as conference registrants. Part I countries may be significantly underrepresented. However, although there is no way to determine which way the 28 percent "no answers" fell, the difference between Part I respondents and the registration profile might be less than it appears. Those who responded to the evaluation form listed their professional roles and settings in approximately the same order, but were slightly over-represented in the educator/academic, NGO, and donor agency categories (Figure 2).6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONFERENCE REGISTRATION</th>
<th>Respondent Distribution</th>
<th>Difference in percentage points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ROLE</td>
<td>TOTAL %</td>
<td>26.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator/academic</td>
<td>14.19%</td>
<td>17.31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multinational/NGO</td>
<td>3.68%+6.1%+7.53%</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister/senior policy position</td>
<td>2.42%+12.59%</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business/industry</td>
<td>9.37%+2.76%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donor agency (Multilateral)</td>
<td>1.32%+4.14%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information technology specialist</td>
<td>7.07%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional development program</td>
<td>0.86%+3.79%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>1.44%+1.32%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research and Development</td>
<td>4.43%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>(n/a)</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Participant Roles

Because of the logistical difficulties at the beginning of the conference, fewer conference entry forms (than exit forms) were distributed; 259 usable forms were returned by the noon deadline on Monday (the first full day of the conference). Participants were asked to use the same number assigned to their entry form (for anonymity) on their exit form. Unfortunately, only 120 conference exit forms were so marked, which reduced the number of "matched pairs" available for pre-post comparison. Therefore, the matched pair findings should be taken as suggestive rather than conclusive, even though only those items that were significant at the 0.02 level or better are reported here.

6 The official registration forms recorded professional roles slightly differently: Educator (14.49 percent), multinational agency (Northern, 6.1 percent; Southern, 7.53 percent), minister (Northern, 2.42 percent; Southern, 12.59 percent), business and industry (Northern, 9.37 percent; Southern, 2.76 percent), information technology specialist (7.07 percent), regional development manager (0.86 percent); media (Northern, 1.32 percent; Southern, 1.44 percent), research and development (4.43 percent), science and technology (4.14 percent), international NGO (3.68 percent), multilateral institution (16.68 percent), development administrator (3.79 percent), and other (1/52 percent).

7 From the GK '97 Management Report (draft), November 9, 1997, p. 13.
Individual and focus group interviews were conducted in English and in French and interviewers were selected for their facility in at least one of these languages. To ensure coverage of each constituency (e.g., NGOs, sponsors, the private sector, government, and academics), the five evaluators took responsibility for conducting eight to ten individual interviews, randomly selected, in one constituency. Every twentieth evaluation form in English and every tenth form in French or Spanish included an invitation to participate in a focus group in the appropriate language, thus ensuring all conferees an equal chance of taking part in that type of qualitative data collection. Quotations from the interviews, the open-ended survey questions, the “Ideas” forms, and “Your Plans” forms have been incorporated into this report. Their purpose is to illustrate important points of consensus or dissent, from the majority or the minority, and to contextualize the quantitative survey responses.

Further explication of the methodology can be found in Annex A, Evaluation Design, and Annex B, Evaluation Forms and Interview Guides.
PART IV: GENERAL FINDINGS

Perhaps this conference shows the diminishing human-to-human, flesh and blood communication in cyberspace dependent culture.

( Participant from Education sector)

I. OVERVIEW

A. The Time Was Right...
Generally, participants liked the idea of Global Knowledge '97 and felt that it was important to hold a major international conference at this time to discuss the role of ICT in development. As summarized earlier, the stated goal was to maximize networking and contacts, especially between developing and more developed countries, private and public sector participants, and participants and sponsors. This opportunity for synergistic interaction of people, ideas, and efforts was to result in building partnerships.

Participant expectations were in sync with stated conference objectives: When asked why they came to the conference and what they expected to gain, participants most often mentioned networking, sharing information, and making contacts.

Many participants gave the conference high marks for the sheer amount of information transmitted and the chance to hear leading political, corporate, and donor agency figures. Although various logistical and structural problems (or omissions) detracted from optimally achieving the interconnected goals of dialoguing, networking, and partnership-building, participants appreciated the presence of so many key players in development.

B. The Talking Stick Was Dropped
The conference began on a high note with the opening entertainment and statements. Of particular note was the First Nations presentation of a “talking stick” to the Governor General of Canada, Romeo LeBlanc. This gesture symbolized the need to share ideas equally and evenly throughout the ensuing days. To the dismay of the majority of participants, however, it appeared to them that the “talking stick was dropped” (as one participant put it). Overcrowded panels and long-winded panelists inadvertently squeezed the opportunities for sharing and interaction down to the barest minimum.

C. Attendance Fell Off
With few exceptions, the sessions were not full to capacity, although many had 60 or more people in attendance. Some sessions, at least on the first day, were overflowing. After that, attendance fell off. Many conference reported frustration with the one-way communication characteristic of most sessions—attendance may have suffered for this reason as the days progressed. In essence, participants voted with their feet.

- With over 1,700 participants, 12 simultaneous sessions on Monday, 15 on Tuesday and 16 on Wednesday, attendance across sessions should have averaged close to 150. Session averages did not reflect the number of registrants.
- Where did the others go? Shopping, baseball, and visiting local contacts may have accounted for some attrition, as did some formal and informal side meetings scheduled simultaneously with sessions. Few people were in the Exhibit Hall or Cybercafes during working sessions. Many participants chose not to attend working sessions.
- In addition, as with most conferences, not all registrants intended to stay for the duration. Unfortunately, fewer sessions were scheduled for Monday, with its maximum attendance; most sessions occurred on the last day of the conference, when attendance was much lighter.

The conference is ending weakly. They haven’t left the best for the end, and the expectation is that there will be fewer and fewer people until tomorrow.

( Participant from Corporate sector)
D. Gender Participation Was Uneven

1. Women Lacked Visibility. Some participants, both male and female, observed that women were not as visible in the conference as were men. This was reflected in the almost two to one male:female registration ratio (1,209 males to 543 females; see Figure 3).

![Figure 3. Registration by Gender](image)

Female participation increased after a special pre-conference committee was formed, eventually resulting in 31 percent of the total registrants. Some participants interpreted the initially lower involvement of women as evidence that females "are not present in technology worlds." One person commented that "cyberspace is where the big boys play." Others expressed disappointment that women were not yet treated as "full participants in the ICT revolution" or the conference:

*We had to lobby to participate in this conference.*

*We are to be "placed" on the Internet to shop. There is little talk about women making policy on the Net.*

*Women make the computers in sweatshop environments that pay little or threaten their health, but we are not involved in shaping technology or policy.*

2. Gender Issues Were Not Addressed Directly. Participants said that the gender dimensions of development decisions should be considered before a country implements its plans. Women and some men suggested that "women's reality, as well as men's" should be central to each country's vision of development. For development to proceed most effectively, women (like men) need access to the education and technologies that can facilitate development, including the Internet. They felt that the program did not address these issues directly.

*Those of us [women] in science and engineering are often on the margins of discussion on Internet development.*
II. KEY FINDINGS

The following important findings emerged from the evaluation data (observations, surveys, and interviews). They are explored in more detail in Part V: Detailed Findings.

A. The Conference Received Above Average Ratings

Participants who responded to the End of Conference Evaluation Form gave Global Knowledge '97 above average ratings out of a possible six points (Figure 4). Out of 530 people who returned the End of Conference Evaluation Forms (in English, French, or Spanish), approximately 408 answered these questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION</th>
<th>MEAN</th>
<th>MODE</th>
<th>MEDIAN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent was this Conference relevant to your present professional work?</td>
<td>4.81</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent do you think this Conference enhanced understanding of the role of knowledge and information in economic and social development?</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent do you think this Conference provided opportunities for sharing strategies, experiences, and tools in harnessing knowledge for development?</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent do you think this Conference fostered new partnerships that empower the poor with knowledge and information using new technologies?</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you rate the overall effectiveness of the Conference?</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4: Participant Ratings of Conference

B. The Conference Was Ambitious in Scope

Participants who were interviewed expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of discussion time and the logistical problems they encountered, but at the same time marveled at the conference’s diversity, size, scope, and mammoth organizational challenges.

1. The conference brought together an enormous diversity of participants from all over the globe and from all sectors. Participants thought this kind of gathering helps to reduce stereotypes and to foster mutual understanding between Part I and Part II countries and the public and private sectors.

C. The Conference Made an Impact

1. The conference was a qualified success resulting in some significant outcomes. Because sessions and events were co-sponsored by specific public and private sector organizations, the “partnering” that played a central part in conference objectives began in the planning stages. The conference also:
   - Put the question of ICT’s role on the international development agenda.
   - Fostered some working relationships between public and private sector participants.
   - Laid the groundwork for plans that could be monitored in a post-conference follow-up study.

2. Many participants reported learning and information sharing about ICT and development.
D. The Conference Was Relevant to Participants’ Responsibilities
Respondents were convinced that the conference was relevant to their work responsibilities (with a mode of 6.00). The 4.00 modal response on overall conference effectiveness would undoubtedly have been higher if the conference structure had included more breathing room for dialogue and if it had facilitated informal partnership building.

As Figure 5 shows, attending the conference slightly improved participants’ perceptions that Global Knowledge ‘97 was relevant to their professional responsibilities; on a scale of 6 points, the mean rose from 4.73 to 4.98 on a 6-point scale (t-value=-2.62, sig=.010). The gains came from those who initially perceived the conference as not very relevant or only moderately so. Some participants who thought it was very relevant, however, had changed their minds by the end of the gathering (a drop from 71 percent to 62 percent).

![Pre-Conference vs. Post-Conference](image)

Figure 5: Conference Relevance to Professional Work

E. Plenary Speakers Were Generally Well Received
1. Most participants were generally stimulated and favorably impressed by the high level of speakers at the plenaries. Many expressed appreciation for being able to hear international leaders.
2. The quality of presentations varied. Some speakers did not always stay on the conference agenda. Many speakers and presenters seemed to miss the point of conference themes. Many spoked too long, crowding out chances for interchange among listeners, and some were simply “bad” speakers. Some sessions seemed only obliquely related to the topic.
3. Plenary sessions carried “old messages” that felt condescending to one segment of conferees. Many participants, particularly those from NGOs and educational institutions, questioned the seemingly blind assumption expressed by some that ICT is good for developing countries and will not increase the gap between the haves and the have-nots.

F. Understanding Knowledge in Development Deserved More Attention
From the perspective of about one in ten conference participants, GK ‘97 did not devote significant attention to understanding the role of knowledge and information in development, one of the conference’s three core themes. NGOs and academics expressed this concern most strongly.
1. Specifically, various constituencies held very different views regarding the potential value and benefits of ICT for development. Questions were raised about corporate community members (and others) who
indicated that they viewed GK '97 as a major opportunity for them to expand their markets and who appeared to assume that the benefits of ICT would be universally positive. Those who are closely involved in development saw potential benefits of ICT, but also expressed concerns about disparities and dangers—they fear that ICT has the potential to widen the gap between the haves and the have-nots. Their comments ranged from cautionary to cynical to critical, but all called for a harder look at the possible negative effects of ICT.

2. Some felt strongly that the conference did not provide sufficient opportunity to discuss or even acknowledge this countervailing perspective. Although differing and conflicting perspectives are to be expected in a gathering of this nature, participants said that the conference did not provide an early forum in which different assumptions and paradigms could be openly addressed and reconciled. This is not necessarily a criticism of the conference, but suggests an important topic area for consideration in future conferences.

G. The Virtual Conference Received High Ratings
Perhaps because of the limitations of the physical conference, many participants found the “virtual conference”—in particular the GKD97 Discussion List—very useful for learning, sharing ideas, and networking. This may be the greatest legacy of the conference and the vehicle through which the conference ultimately addresses its core objectives. Follow-up evaluations could explore this phenomenon in greater detail.

1. On the List, meaningful, concentrated discussion of issues took place, involving concrete examples from people around the globe and including significant representation from developing countries. Education Development Corporation (EDC), the List managers, have prepared written summaries of the discussion.

2. The virtual conference continues, with the potential to build upon the initiative of the conference started in Toronto. Both the World Bank and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) plan to expand upon these virtual activities.

H. The Structure Promoted One-Way Communication
Design Principles #1 (stakeholder involvement) and #3 (broad sponsorship) were achieved to a very high degree, but weak realization of Principle #2 rendered the conference less effective than anticipated. Participants referred to a “talking heads” model that left little time for synergistic exchanges and constricted dialogue, participation, and building relationships. Although both sponsors and participants report some significant gains in learning, new information, and partnership-building, structural flaws reduced the gathering’s impact.

The open “call for content”—intended to maximize the participatory nature of GK ‘97—also caused “program overload,” because of partnership pressures on the conference design and the program itself. An organizer suggested that “partnership pressures impinged on conference design,” resulting in multiple presentations in each working session and the lack of time for dialogue. A lesson learned for future conference planning is that, while broadening partnership and participation is a laudable goal, pressure toward overload will emerge as a significant programmatic challenge. Participant comments and survey results indicated that:

1. The most commonly expressed observation related to the dominance of “one-way communication” in both plenaries and working sessions. Inadequate time for discussion during working sessions diminished the conference’s impact. The conference design called for a creative process and methodology for discussing, integrating, and creating knowledge out of the wealth of experience and information available during the three days. Participants complained about the lack of opportunity to dialogue, exchange ideas, and apply new information to their own settings.

2. Overloaded plenaries, overstructured working sessions, and lack of time for free discussion hampered opportunities for participants to learn, apply new information to their local situations, network, and form partnerships for future collaboration.

3. Working sessions were better than the plenary sessions in allowing time for dialogue and discussion, although they did not allow enough opportunity for interaction. Plenaries afforded no question-and-answer period and no discussion. Plenaries that ran too long lent an overstructured air to the conference.
4. Some disequilibrium existed between the conference goals and its structure. For networking and partnership building to occur, the conference needed either smaller numbers or a different structure (a less academic tone, more "free spaces," and more structured opportunities for informal networking).

I. Logistical Problems Hindered Interaction
Various logistical problems exacerbated the lack of discussion mentioned in H.
1. The conference seemed fragmented. Having sessions and Cybercafes in three close but disconnected hotels was confusing and annoying to many participants. In addition, the lack of natural gathering places in corridors and lobbies diminished chances for interaction between sessions.
2. Travel and lodging arrangements fell short. Especially for international travelers with lost luggage, searching for their hotel, or needing to change flights at the end of the program, conference secretariat support was inadequate or missing. The absence of an on-site travel agency wasted a great deal of time for international participants with re-booking problems.

J. Integration of Technology into the Conference Was Partially Successful
The conference attempted to integrate ICT into its own structure and processes, but the effort met with limited success. Conferees characterized this as "an ironic situation" and "a missed opportunity."

K. Participation Was Somewhat Skewed
1. Gender issues needed to be addressed more directly. Although the conference registration increased because of concerted efforts to include more women, participants felt that the unique contributions and needs of women and girls regarding ICT were not integrated into the program content. Furthermore, women were not evenly involved chairing or presenting during the sessions.
2. Regional focus was unbalanced. Some participants complained that the conference focused too much on Africa. They called for a more balanced attention to the world’s major regions.

III. OVERALL CONFERENCE EFFECTIVENESS
Networking and partnership building formed highlights of the conference but were hampered by overstructuring and logistical problems. Although these were two main goals of the conference, networking and partnership building had to occur in the narrow crevices between sessions and plenaries that ran over schedule, on the fly between hotels, or over meals that were cut short by plenary speeches. Frustration built up over the schedule’s tightness and the cramped discussion time.
1. Future efforts to organize similar conferences should enlist the advantages of the one-on-one “virtual interaction” that seems so satisfying to List members and the advantages of face-to-face “real interaction” that a physical conference affords.
2. Participants appreciated the opportunity to cross national and sectoral boundaries and would like to have future chances to strengthen existing bonds and create new ones.
PART V: DETAILED FINDINGS

Many people are satisfied and happy with both the logistics and the content of the conference.
( Participant from Government sector)

In this section, the eight central evaluation questions are addressed, using qualitative responses on the survey forms and interview data from all constituencies, as well as evaluator observations.

I. CONFERENCE CONTENT

Was the focus of the content appropriate to the conference goals?

>For the most part, participants thought it was, but the presentations were uneven in addressing important topics.

0A. Strengths

1. Plenaries were excellent, for the most part: James Wolfensohn and the two presidents (President of Uganda, His Excellency Yoweri K. Museveni, and President of Costa Rica, Jose Maria Figueres) “talked to the agenda.”

   All provided remarkable insights and touched people’s real needs. I learned more from those three than all the others.

   Plenary speakers talked with conviction. They gave me the idea and fear that we in developing countries will have to look at this seriously, not just pay lip service. I fear the seriousness of information. (Participant from Education sector)

2. Working sessions were better than the plenary sessions in providing time for discussion and questions. The panelists harmonized their discussion topics.

B. Weaknesses

1. Participants lamented what seemed a lack of sensitivity toward the gap between developed and developing countries.

   Most of the presentations didn’t talk to the agenda. It was as if people didn’t understand it. Example: The focus on hard infrastructure, rather than soft infrastructure. There was a bias to revert to hard structure. This is not what the conference was all about. (Participant from Corporate sector)

2. The quality of the presentations, especially in the plenaries, was variable and nonsubstantive. Too many plenaries and too many short speeches contributed to constant dull repetition rather than substantial insights. Participants thought that it was a waste to obtain “good speakers, then put them next to bad ones” just to appear representative. Overall, the quality of speakers was uneven, ranging from highly inspirational to boring.

   Ten minutes of Michael Dell? Why should he try to be interesting when he only has 10 minutes? What a waste of his and our time.

   I would rather have listened to more Shirley Malcolm than any Kate White. Forget political correctness when picking speakers and go for charisma and quality.

   Too many speakers used their time to describe their organizations rather than address the subject under discussion. It would have been better if the ideals content was higher.

   Knowledge was never addressed in terms of what we mean by knowledge.

3. Plenary sessions carried “old messages” that felt condescending. Participants said that the conference was too broad and therefore less engaging than it could have been. The world already suffers from overspecialization and compartmentalization in development, one person observed. Most experts need to learn about the role of other disciplines in an integrated approach, which in turn requires a very
holistic view. Participants thought that the conference suffered similarly in that some plenaries were overly general without being holistic. On the other hand, many working sessions—from which everyone could have benefited—occurred simultaneously.

Information technology and practitioners form the key to the development of applications that collect and disseminate information. Development workers have heard most of the content of presentations before, so they were looking for syntheses, integrated analyses, and new ideas. Although education holds a high priority in developing countries, presenters made little or no mention of quality of education or education standards.

We are about to experience a world shortage of ICT practitioners as we approach the new millennium, yet I heard no one address this at all. Developed countries are “poaching” ICT practitioners in training institutions of developing countries.

All I heard I already knew. I did not learn anything. That’s very disappointing when you travel such a big distance only to hear what has been said before. (Participant from Education sector)

4. Regional focus was unbalanced. An absence of critics of globalization, especially from the South, transformed what should have been a dialogue into a monologue. Africa received most of the conference focus. Participants suggested that, in the future, similar focus should be given to Southeast Asia.

The panels should have been more balanced—especially the one on Africa’s needs—with more Africans. There is an incredible untapped resource in the region.

The third plenary was all corporate speakers—"boosting optimists”—only one hedged on whether gaps would grow or not. (Participant from Education sector)

C. Other Concerns
1. Tracks overlapped. Considerable overlap occurred across the various tracks, which weakened their organizing influence. For example, sessions dealing with the virtual conference and NGOs were scattered across the various different tracks. In addition, participation of certain constituencies did not appear even across tracks: “We need more grassroots voices.”

2. Speakers received a mixed review. Participants thought some plenary speeches were better than others were, but generally they considered it a privilege to hear from such important personages (both public and private sector). Others were more critical and felt that some speeches tended to be low on content, condescending, and (like the working sessions) plagued by one-way communication.

One of the presenters in the Women’s Issues Breakfast did not take an appropriate tone. I felt embarrassed as a woman that she would represent me. I felt insulted in my intelligence. Men felt it was counterproductive. The Bank should ask for excerpts in advance. "Hardware/software" language is not the issue anymore. She said she was "tired of people asking me how big is my hard drive”—that’s offensive and counterproductive. She shouldn’t put Mr. Wolfensohn in that position. This is not the relevant discourse—it’s old stuff. (Participant from Media sector)

One corporate person talked as if he were superior to the rest of the world. (Participant from Corporate sector)

Nobel Laureates sometimes didn’t get the point. (Participant from Education sector)

3. False confidence was placed in the benefits of ICT. Some participants complained that the conference in its conceptualization (and most of its speakers) tended to assume that ICT is an unqualified benefit to developing countries: ICT is “good” and the Internet infrastructure should be facilitated everywhere. Many questioned that assumption. A significant segment, particularly academics, NGO leaders, and development workers, expressed concern that the conference organizers seemed to assume uncritically the value of ICT. They argued that some disparity of views exists regarding the benefits of ICT—as well as of the conference itself.
4. **The conference may have widened the North-South gap.** These same participants have real concerns about whether or not ICT will aid in development or serve to the detriment of the poor. Will it help bridge the gap between the haves and the have-nots, or simply increase that gap? They felt that the conference failed to address this quandary adequately and suggested that a highly technologized global knowledge revolution could actually widen the gap between the “haves and the have-nots” instead of narrowing it. They also criticized what they saw as a lack of consideration of what ICT means for poor people. The majority of people in the world do not have access to telephones and electricity, let alone computers or the Internet. Others noted that creative solutions to these problems are possible, but the conference did not afford sufficient opportunity to discuss them.

*If you level the rural areas, the urban areas will take care of themselves. We don’t have sufficient computers to be able to teach our students. We want to upgrade our computer labs for teaching and learning and employ people who are trained in hardware and software, who will then be the experts in development when they go out in the field.* (Participant from Education sector)

5. **Some resented private sector speakers but some welcomed them.** In light of these reactions, some participants were generally more critical of the private sector speakers for being self-serving. They thought private sector speakers viewed the conference as an opportunity to explore ways of expanding their markets (rather than helping poor countries and people). Others said that it was important to hear this perspective.

6. **Participants preferred targeted topics.** Participants mentioned that some sessions seemed only obliquely related to the conference topic. They would have preferred more direct attention to the question, “What constitutes knowledge?” Affinity discussion groups on specific development topics, such as youth programs and technology, or early childhood development and technology, would have received high marks from participants.

*The only session that was at all interesting was 1.18, which had real information about true empowerment of people. It focused on knowledge and development, not on hawking cybernetic technology.*

**II. CONFERENCE LEARNING**

Did participants learn what they hoped to learn? How satisfied were they with the practical nature of their learning?

➢ Undoubtedly a great deal of significant learning took place during this conference. Some of it was highly theoretical—for example, models and conceptualizations about how to integrate ICT into the development process. Some learning was very practical—for example, how to use radio in bringing ICT to rural villages. Many participants mentioned substantive learning in the area of distance learning as important. Even so, conference hoped for more practical learning than they ultimately experienced.

*I felt the absence of the conceptual level...the feeling sometimes of not getting the point across.*

**A. Strengths**

1. **The conference was a once in a lifetime opportunity.** Sponsors were pleased with the flow of participants through the Knowledge and Technology Forum, and conferees in general said they learned a great deal during the sessions.

*I have a greater understanding and awareness of the challenges faced by people all over the world.*

*I am keenly interested in sponsoring in 1998. This conference was bi-directional education for all involved.*

2. **Participants reported moderate gains in understanding the role of ICT in development.** Did the conference enhance participants’ understanding of the role of knowledge and information in economic and social development? For most, the answer was at least “to some extent,” and over 40 percent rated the conference as improving their knowledge a great deal, as Figure 6 illustrates.
Figure 6: Enhanced Participants' Knowledge

I gained awareness and deeper understanding of some of the problems. The potential solutions are not as far off as I had thought. (Participant from Education sector)

The most important gain for me was a new understanding of the Internet and the changing role of media. We have to change how we do things. There is a new role for us keeping people informed. (Participant from Media sector)

3. Participants learned more about the role of information/knowledge in development. Participants were asked to rate their level of understanding of the role of information and knowledge in economic/social development. On a scale of 6 points, the mean level rose from 4.20 at the beginning of the conference to 4.56 at the end, suggesting that the conference improved their understanding (t-value = -3.35, sig = .001). However, a drop of 12 percent in the “very much” category offset gains in the other two categories (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Understanding the Role of Information

4. Networking was the most important gain. In a similar vein, participants were asked to write on their conference entry form “the most important thing you hope to gain from the conference sessions that might help you in your professional work.” They were also invited to reflect on what they actually gained by meeting’s end. These responses are shown in Figure 8.

Most participants wanted to make contacts and to obtain information and new ideas. Few anticipated leaving Toronto with new plans or initiatives, although that was an important agenda for large development organizations, institutions, and governments. A few participants said in interviews that
they felt the greatest impact of the conference would be not what they themselves would do, but how the meeting would influence the World Bank and other large donor organizations. Almost 40 percent, however, were hoping to develop relationships that could lead to something concrete down the road, for example, new funding or support.

Participants also report having gained more than anticipated in general knowledge and conceptual models for using ICT in development.

Those who attended Global Knowledge '97 entered the conference with specific learning needs based upon the situation in their country or agency and their own knowledge of ICT. Their stress on "networking and partnership building" can be interpreted in two ways:
- They wanted to meet others to craft collaborative projects.
- They wanted to meet others selectively in order to enhance their learning.

The two goals are not mutually exclusive, of course, but in terms of learning theory, networking makes infinitely good sense. Regardless of one's level of knowledge, experience, and resources, a conference that facilitates plenty of focused interaction allows each participant to find those from whom they can learn on a one-to-one basis.

![Conference Entry vs Conference End](chart.png)

**Figure 8: Most Important Gain**

**B. Weaknesses**

1. **The conference lacked contextual preparative work.** Learning would have been even greater had conference been primed in advance with materials (readings, bibliographies, think pieces) that provided a context for the plenary speeches and for the working sessions.

   *It would have been nice to know what to expect. I felt like a passive listener.*

2. **Participants learning expectations were not entirely met.** Both the conference structure and the conference content affected what people learned. At the beginning of the meeting, participants were asked to describe in their own words "two topics they would most like to learn about." A similar question at the end of the conference asked what they actually learned most about during the conference. Figure 9 shows the responses to these questions (first choices only):
   - Participants learned less about access to the Internet, capacity building in their countries, substantive information (such as the role of ICT in education or health), networking and partnership building, and empowering the poor with ICT than they hoped they would.
Figure 9: Expected versus Actual Learning during Conference

- On the other hand, they learned more about specific ICT models and the general role of knowledge and information in development than anticipated.

C. Other Concerns
1. Not all learning can be applied to their settings. During the conference, participants learned much new information they could use in their work. Some but not all of it was directly related to best practices they could apply in their own country. At the same time, most rated learning “best practices” relevant to their field and to their country only as “moderately” or “not at all,” confirming interview comments that they sought more applied knowledge (Figure 10).
III. INTEGRATION OF ICT INTO THE CONFERENCE

Did the Knowledge and Technology Forum provide quality experiences? What about other ICT features?

The Knowledge and Technology Forum received relatively high praise from participants, exhibitors, and sponsors alike. Cybercafes offered a welcome practical experience for those who were interested. The presence of "trainers" or "resource people" to help people use the equipment would have made the learning experience even more beneficial. The Virtual Conference was successful; it is analyzed in Part VI.

A. Strengths

1. The technology exhibits were informative and well-attended. When asked in brief interviews how they felt about the conference, few participants mentioned the exhibits spontaneously, although the vast majority perused the hall at least once. Of those who responded to a question regarding the impacts of the Knowledge and Technology Forum, 85 percent had participated in a demonstration of equipment or materials during their visit to the Exhibition Hall. Almost 40 percent spent considerable time doing so, and about 25 percent spent a great deal of time interacting with the ICT available to them in the Forum. When queried directly, many said that the exhibits were very informative. As Figure 11 shows, the Knowledge and Technology Forum received higher "very effective" ratings from those who filled out the evaluation forms than did the Cybercafes or the Virtual Conference. The percentage of those who involved themselves in the Cybercafes or the Virtual Conference was much lower than those who visited the Forum, however, which may have artificially suppressed those ratings.
2. The Knowledge and Technology Forum served as a focal point for informal interaction and hands-on learning. Exhibitors and conference alike were generally pleased with this part of the conference. Respondents were asked to indicate the most important thing they hoped to gain from the Knowledge and Information Forum that might help them in their professional work and their actual gains at the end of the conference. As with the conference in general, respondents found networking and the chance of forming a partnership the most important gain from the Knowledge and Technology Forum (Figure 12). Accessing the Internet and finding concrete, practical information about setting up systems in their setting also ranked very high.

3. Participants were generally enthusiastic about learning practical ideas that could find an applied use in their own country. Over two-thirds said they would be likely or very likely to take back practical ideas directly because of the Forum (Figure 13).
Figure 13: Practical Impact of Knowledge and Technology Forum

4. The Knowledge and Technology Forum drew exhibitors. Fifty exhibitors set up display booths for hardware, software, resource materials, and other forms of information. Many of the exhibits included some form of interactive technology. Sponsors had booths; others were sold to interested companies. The Forum focused on technology resources for knowledge management.

B. Weaknesses

1. Technology was underutilized. Since the conference was supposed to emphasize “equal access to information,” participants should have been given speakers’ notes in hard copy. Not all have access to Internet when they return home, and they could not print files at the Cybercafes. Some participants said that technology offers an opportunity for input as well as reception of knowledge. This is its strength and its ultimate appeal. The conference did not sufficiently reflect that capability. For example, the virtual conference on-line could have been a plenary session projected on a large ballroom screen.

2. Follow-through on technology seemed minimal. For those to whom ICT is a new experience, how would they be able to transfer what they learned at the conference to their home environments? Would they receive any support in the form of advice, training, or equipment?

3. Some perceived an overemphasis on selling products. One NGO representative (who was also an exhibitor) indicated that there was a great deal of “selling” in the exhibit hall. He added that exhibits were most likely to benefit the northern service providers and businesses rather than the developing world. Some exhibitors interviewed confirmed that their primary motivation was to sell their services and products.

   I thought it would be even higher tech. Technology was not at a level I expected. The number of exhibitors was not that large. (Participant from Corporate sector)

   Will this ball keep on rolling to a greater momentum, and will people add to it as they return to their communities?

C. Other Concerns

1. The opening of the Knowledge and Technology Forum was mishandled. On the positive side, the official opening of the exhibit hall attracted a large number of participants, but tardiness and misunderstandings surrounding the event damaged the atmosphere from the perspective of many participants and exhibitors.

2. Exhibit fees were high. Discussions with exhibitors (and some nonexhibitors) elicited complaints about “very high” fees for exhibitors. They viewed the fees as effectively barring conference access to small businesses (versus larger corporations), with the exception of those funded by the World Bank or a government. This concerned some participants, who pointed out that many small businesses stand on the leading edge in ICT.
3. The Cybercafes seemed underutilized. Several respondents said the Cybercafes should have been larger, and others remarked with disappointment that the 800 number for E-mail did not work. The conference featured four Cybercafes—one in each of the three conference hotels, plus another one in the Exhibit Hall. Each Cybercafe consisted of four to six computers in individual workstations, which conference participants could use to access the World Wide Web. Direct observations during three of the Cybercafes and informal interviews with conference aides who supervised them revealed that participants did not heavily use this conference feature. At least one person was using a computer during site visits. The Cybercafes were not fully occupied, however, except for the one in the Exhibit Hall during its official opening. This main site also appeared to be the busiest of the four. Aides confirmed that the other three sites remained relatively quiet throughout the day.

Experienced “surfers” used the Cybercafes for the most part, and they represented only a small minority of conference participants. Aides, who were available to help if necessary, had not received specific training to provide assistance. The observer did not see any evidence of aides offering help in accessing the Net, nor pointing out lists that might be of particular interest to conference participants. This contrasts with the perspective presented in the Financial Post supplement, which suggested that up to half of the conference delegates—especially individuals without previous exposure to the World Wide Web—were expected to make use of the Cybercafe computers.

4. Lack of E-mail in Cybercafes. Participants identified lack of E-mail access in the Cybercafes as an irritation. They were not permitted to use the computers to send or to receive E-mail, including Telnetting into their own E-mail accounts. Signs posted in each Cybercafe stated that the computers were configured to prevent this (although one aide demonstrated to the observer how someone with technical expertise could do so anyway). The aides monitoring the Cybercafes said they were instructed to enforce the no E-mail rule. Conference grumbled, beginning Saturday afternoon when conference registration opened, asking how they could send E-mails home. Some wondered aloud how a conference on technology could not possibly make provision for this central communication feature. The reason for prohibiting use of the machines to access E-mail apparently was to prevent a small number of individuals from monopolizing the machines. As indicated, however, the machines were rarely in use.

IV. CONFERENCE STRUCTURE
Was the conference structure conducive to stated learning, networking, and partnering objectives?
➢ The conference brought together the right people at the right time, and challenged them to examine intellectually and experience practically the latest technologies that might be harnessed in the development process. The packed program fostered passive learning, however, and served as a barrier to active learning, networking, and partnering.

Of the three major types of activity featured in the conference structure, participants most often rated working sessions as either “moderately” or “very” effective. Plenaries received more “very effective” ratings, but were also more controversial, as Figure 14 shows.
Figure 14: Effectiveness of Conference Activities

None of the types received exceptionally high ratings, probably because of the issues enumerated below.

A. Strengths
1. The conference brought together an enormous diversity of participants from all over the globe and from all sectors and helped remove "some of the stereotypes we as nations have for each other."

   The two presidents did an excellent job of that. The Bank should continue doing this properly and consistently. Bring people from developing countries to people in developed countries—we all will be connected someday!

   The conference was excellent in bringing together people from all walks of life—NGOs and CEOs, etc.—to discuss a very important subject matter. It helped the developing world catch up and close the information gap between rural and urban people, as well as between first and third worlds.

   I met a banker from India!

   Strengths? The people behind the whole idea—the organizers and sponsors. (Participant from Education sector)

2. Some moderators used creative methods to keep panelists on time. One moderator used a beeping watch to time presentations by panelists. This very effective and neutral discipline source could be applied to dignitaries. The result was time in the session for enlightening input from attendees.

   Small group discussions helped illuminate some of the dark corners, especially participatory approaches to development and distance education. (Participant from Education sector)

B. Weaknesses
1. Panels contained too many presenters and too many sessions ran parallel to each other. Because of the wealth of material and presenters, the sessions were too full of lectures with little time for questions, debate, or discussion. Some participants said that this program "density," combined with the large number of conference registrants, diminished the conference’s impact. Participants complained that the program did not build in enough opportunity for people to express themselves. Most agreed that there were too many panelists at each session—as many as 12 or 15! Therefore, opportunity for dialogue was greatly diminished.

   General discussion groups with a few keynotes of an inspiring nature would have been much more useful.
Getting people from all over the world and not facilitating communication! One would have to restructure it from scratch.

They called them working groups, but they are just panels of speakers. (Participant from Corporate sector)

2. Working sessions lacked time for discussions. The conference structure failed to match its intended purpose and mandate. Rather than fostering interaction and networking, the structure minimized it. Panelists had been instructed not to use their panel time for “show and tell” (the Knowledge and Technology Forum was designed for that). Participants said that panelists left little or no time for freewheeling discussion and interaction. The emphasis was purported to be on relationship building, but with insufficient time or appropriate formats for dialogues, participants felt “talked at by experts” rather than engaged in a meaningful dialogue. Although some participants acknowledged that panel presenters tend to go over their allotted time in most conferences, they considered it very unfortunate in a meeting designed to foster the exchange of ideas. Conferees wanted more small discussion groups, fewer papers, and a focus on controversial, real issues.

Many presenters presumably didn’t know that they only had 10 minutes. We’ve always run out of time before we could ask any questions. (Participant from Education sector)

Slides went by too quickly as presenters rushed through their notes.

There has been a serious absence of confrontation or disagreement. Confrontation serves as a springboard for ideas and creative thinking. We need to expose disagreement in order to progress. I’ve had the impression that people are being too “polite” for whatever reason, not addressing the real lacks and/or desperation of their situations but trying to present them in the most positive light.

Stop lecturing! Share, exchange, and discuss (i.e., 30-minute presentations, 60-minute discussions).

People didn’t have time to interact in sessions—they were cut short. The chairmen always say there will be some time for questions/participation at the end, but there is never time for participants to participate. (Participant from Corporate sector)

3. Plenaries left no space for discussion. Many plenary speakers seemed unaware of the amount of time they could take to address the audience. Participants thought that this unbalanced, “one-way” communication frustrated many people and lent an “exclusionary” tone that directly countered the stated objectives in pre-conference materials:

Many of the presentations would have been better on the Net or in print. (Participant from Education sector)

One or two key speakers at plenaries would have had greater impact than four or five, especially at dinner.

Plenaries should have finished well before 10:00 P.M.

A guy from Pakistan stood up and said, “It’s typical of the World Bank that they have people talk to you and don’t allow you to speak.” (Participant from Education sector)

4. The format belied the promise. Inadvertently, the conference format of “talking to” rather than “talking with” underscored the negative light in which some constituencies view donor agencies. Although Mr. Wolfensohn said in his address that the World Bank is interested in dialogue rather than one-way communication, participants said that the conference format belied that promise. Their comments gave the impression that a few conference participants did not see stated intentions as sincere.

5. The conference was relatively expensive. In interviews and on surveys, participants complained about the “elitist” $750 registration fee, which they viewed as exclusionary and apt to attract only those with a particular development perspective (see also Annex C, GKD97 Discussion List Threads). Several comments critical of the cost suggested that many participants were not aware of the number of sponsored delegates (several hundred). Knowledge of the extent of sponsorship would have helped
counter the elitist label. The conference was expensive for academics, as a Canadian pointed out: “The $750 U.S. fee was prohibitive—the fee for most scientific conferences is $300-400 CDN. Some criticized the hotel room rate of $150 CDN per night as creating a hardship for NGOs, academics, and government agencies in many countries. It is difficult to estimate how many might have attended if the fee had been set lower in the first place. The result was that participation from certain sectors might have been lower than ideal in this type of conference. Participants also said that there seemed to have been little or no attempt to ensure participation and contribution by organized labor in the conference.

*I haven’t seen enough NGO advocacy in this conference.* (Participant from Education sector)

*Cost was a major obstacle in attending this conference. I received no support from my university. I paid it all myself. The Bank waived the heavy fee, but people should be aware of the lack of discretionary funds even in developed countries. Pockets of poverty still exist. Small NGOs are effectively shut out of a conference like this.* (Participant from NGO sector)

C. Other Concerns
1. Logistics hampered networking.
   a. *Lack of Message Board.* Lack of a message board early in the conference made connecting with others impossible except by chance. When a message board did materialize halfway through the conference, it was virtually too late, since few conferees knew about it. The program did not cross-reference presenters, which further hampered purposive networking.

   b. *Lack of Participant List.* A preliminary list of participants was not available before the conference, which exacerbated difficulties in connecting with people in the first two days. Toward the end of the conference, a participant list appeared, but contained only “snail mail” addresses—no telephone, fax, or E-mail addresses. Many participants commented during interviews and on the surveys about the irony and frustration of this happening at a conference on Information and Communication Technologies in a “global knowledge” context.

   c. *Lack of Social Events.* Participants ranked interaction and networking as the most important reason for attending the conference, and the most important gain, but noted the almost total absence of social events (except the opening reception) which could have facilitated informal networking. Conferees appreciated sit-down meals as good networking opportunities, but mealtimes were largely devoted to listening to speakers and announcements.

   *There was no attempt to organize conference entertainment other than plenaries to bring people together—dance, poetry, or icebreakers.* (Participant from Education sector)

   d. *Problems with Open Space Activities.* The Open Space mechanism provided opportunities for informal discussions on focused topics of discussion. Some participants said that the Open Space meetings were the best part of the conference (because they permitted interaction).

When sessions ran overtime, however, the Open Space sessions were short-changed. This limited random informal networking time as well as the opportunity to interact with others in a more focused informal way through the Open Space mechanism. Participants described confusion resulting from a lack of clarity regarding procedures for booking rooms for Open Space or spontaneous informal meetings. In at least one case, a participant reported that a room his group had booked for an Open Space discussion turned out to be in use for another purpose by the World Bank. Complaints were heard about lack of respect for procedures for booking open space meeting rooms.

*The conference organizers apparently had not yet thought about how to handle this situation.*

V. CONFERENCE ORGANIZATION

Was the overall conference organization supportive of its goals and objectives?

➢The organizational structure of the conference imposed significant limitations on how well these
conference objectives could be realized.

A. Strengths
1. Preparation and advance discussions allowed input from participants. The List played an especially important role in this process.
2. Participants thought that conference preparations started early, "at least two months" before the conference (in fact, preparation began six months in advance). They said that preparation included virtual meetings before coming to Toronto. The discussion list allowed conferees to keep informed and to make suggestions or comments on the program before it was finalized.
3. The Toronto venue and facilities were very satisfactory.
4. The staff generally were very helpful.

   Good points for the moderator and the participants!

B. Weaknesses
1. The conference seemed fragmented. Participants said that scheduling events in three hotels made the conference seem fragmented. Many people mentioned missing sessions because of the "travel time" from one hotel to another. The map of the various conference sites did not show sufficient detail for walkers. A more accurate map, with every street and pedestrian walkway marked, would have made things easier.

   Several panels at the Sheraton interested me, but I did not go because of time constraints and laziness.

2. Travel and lodging arrangements fell short. Participants complained about the lack of adequate assistance with travel and lodging arrangements. In many cases, conferees felt that "no help was forthcoming from the organizers." This was an issue both before the conference, as international travelers began to arrive for registration, and after the conference, when the conference information and assistance desk closed before everyone had departed.

   You have a lot to learn about looking after participants in trouble. You had every other service available, but everyone passed the buck on those who lost their suitcases to Air Canada for almost three days! One woman had left her traveler's checks in her suitcase. She had no money and had to borrow from friends because Air Canada, unlike other airlines, refused interim help. In similar situations at women's conferences, individual NGOs have always immediately come to the rescue.

3. Overstructuring and logistical problems hampered networking. Many participants thought that the conference's logistical problems worked against networking and building partnerships. They suspected that interaction with "new kinds of people" was hindered by an overstructured format. A few mentioned a lack of public/private sector interchange and, in general, the lack of private sector organizations at the conference.

   The logistics teetered on the edge of disaster.

C. Other Concerns
1. Pre-conference information arrived late and was minimal. Minimal information about the conference was sent out in advance, especially regarding the program contents, the cost and methods of getting around Toronto, hotel and other arrangements, and general conference information. One evaluator who lives in Toronto did not receive his confirmation letter and preliminary program until the Tuesday after the conference started (despite being dated 3 June). A Montreal-based participant did not receive her registration packet and program until Thursday, only two days before registration. Many others, further away, also did not receive their packages before the conference. Since many conferees traveled from the other side of the world, leaving several days in advance in order to reach Toronto by Sunday, there was no hope of their receiving appropriate materials in time. This meant that participants did not know the exact times for registration in advance. (Even at the conference, staff gave conflicting information).
   - The printed information on Saturday morning (first day of registration) was inaccurate, which led to
confusion among both delegates and those working the conference.

- One educator said he had difficulty getting information from World Bank when he called. They asked for his VISA number: “They just wanted my money.”

2. **Information systems were short-circuited.** The World Bank contracted with a company to prepare daily printed bulletins/summaries for participants during the conference. They were also requested to record the plenaries and send these out live via Real/Audio over the Internet and archive for later access. Instead, they reported being stymied in attempts to circulate the printed bulletins:

- The company said they were not allowed to place bulletins in the registration area for participants to pick up because “they would clutter up the registration area.”
- Not until 5:00 p.m. on Monday, the end of the first full day of the conference, did the company receive permission to place displays at the Information Booths and elsewhere.

3. **Conference boundaries were unclear.** The conference was officially closed to the public, which appeared to lead to some confusion. Attendance mushroomed from an expected 1,200 to 1,752, which contributed to various logistical problems referred to later. For example, evaluators overheard aides of high-level dignitaries having unnecessary problems in gaining admission to sessions.

4. **Registration processes were stressful for both staff and conferees.** The conference organizers expected a crush during registration. On the positive side, the crush never materialized—only rarely did someone need to wait for a registration wicket to become available. On the negative side, the impersonal, bank-style queuing ropes were unnecessary. Registration staff seemed stressed in anticipation of the crush, and tried to keep their tasks to a minimum; several problems were observed. For example:

- Registration staff sent anyone who did not appear correctly in the database or with the slightest difficulty to the problems desk, which meant that more registrants than necessary had to wait in line twice.
- Tempers flared among both staff and unhappy registrants.
- Registration staff declined to permit distribution of evaluation forms or the Bank-sanctioned conference IISD bulletins as part of the registration process.

5. **Logistical problems plagued the conference.** Minor problems with meeting rooms were mentioned by many participants, but did not seem to have an unduly negative impact on their experience. International travelers and sponsored participants especially encountered serious logistical problems that proved frustrating and time-consuming.

a. **Sponsored Participants.** The impression garnered by participants (including some corporate sponsors) was that the conference was put together in “too little time.” Logistical problems reflected the short lead time. Especially in the case of those who were sponsored, the logistical arrangements made them feel like second-class participants. Problems of accessibility to activities made it difficult to achieve the impression of an open and responsive World Bank and impeded the conference’s potential positive impact. (No respondents indicated similar impressions of the Government of Canada, although it was a co-sponsor of the conference.) For example:

- They were given wrong or confusing information about the conference in general, their registration status, and level of support (if any).
- Some expected to be supported in whole or in part, but were not.
- Some were told that they had been informed “in error” that they would be sponsored. In fact, they were supposed to pay their own way.
- They were asked for cash payments upon checking in at the hotel because proper arrangements had not been made on their behalf.
- The lack of hotel information led, at least in one case, to an individual without a visa essentially being held under arrest in a transit location until the conference secretariat was contacted and registration status confirmed.
- Scholarship participants had to go to three desks to register (registration desk, then problems desk, then back to the registration desk—then back to the hotel before they were allowed to check in).
This treatment made these participants feel like second-class citizens.

- Signs at the registration area were confusing, which compounded these problems, especially for people trying to communicate in a language other than their own and recovering from a long flight to Canada.

b. General Problems with Hotel and Transfer Logistics. A World Bank staff member reported that only 400 to 500 registrants knew which hotel they would be staying in before their arrival in Toronto. This created the insecurity of not knowing where or whether a bed would await them. It also made it impossible to leave word with relatives at home about where they would be staying or to make contact in advance with others they hoped to meet during the conference. In addition, bus transportation among the conference hotels was available in the evenings, but not mornings.

*I thought conference was good, but I had a few problems with hotel. My credit card is valid only in Kenya. They asked for $100 cash and I didn’t get a receipt; now they won’t give it back. They blocked our phone because we had $58 dollars on the bill.* (Participant from Media sector)

*On Saturday, I placed a complaint to the House Manager because I was told I wasn’t booked until the 22nd, when in fact I had booked for the 20th. I still haven’t heard from her; today is Tuesday.* (Participant from Corporate sector)

*The word “can’t” seems to be the most common term around.* (Participant from Corporate sector)

*The logistics disaster started way before the conference. A number of weeks ago I called the World Bank office number on the registration form. I asked the lady who picked up the phone if she was responsible for my registration. She said, “Yes, unfortunately.” The supervisor was better.* (Participant from Corporate sector)

c. Inadequate On-Site Support for International Travelers. Absence of on-site travel agency or clear information about where they could find one frustrated many participants.

- The troubleshooting desk closed mid-afternoon on the last day, leaving many international travelers stranded and in need of vital information.

*I had problems with flight changes and needed a delay/extension for hotel accommodations. I had a very difficult time getting help. I felt pushed around and totally mistreated. I will write a complaint letter to the World Bank.* (Participant from Education sector)

*Only the World Bank was a source of information. It was a big job of improvisation.*

d. Badge and Pass Problems. The registration desk ran out of badges before everyone had been registered. Because of the lack of a bulletin board, pre-conference participant list, and other problems, participants found it difficult to meet up with local nonparticipant colleagues and friends who had communicated with them before the conference.

- Complications arose regarding day passes versus session passes—staff would not give out badges admitting local contacts to specific sessions (often to meet someone) because that would have also admitted them to lunch or dinner.

e. Lack of Break Refreshments. In several cases, breaks between working sessions ran severely low in refreshments. Coffee setups for 30 could not possibly accommodate 100 to 200 people flowing out of two rooms. This situation inadvertently hampered networking, because many participants left the area to search for refreshments before the sessions reconvened.

*I’m surprised it came off so well organized especially in managing the much larger crowd. The facilities were stretched to breaking—like, don’t eat!* (Participant from Education sector)

f. Lack of Ventilation and Good Presentation Spaces. Some rooms were inadequately air-conditioned, especially the large ballrooms. Others seemed to be poorly arranged for presentations.
VI. EXPECTATIONS FOR PARTNERSHIPS

Did the conferees have any plans for engaging in new partnerships or collaborations upon returning home? Did the conference stimulate them to formulate plans, however tentative, for implementing ideas in their own country? What might be the conference’s legacy beyond the three-day experience?

Such impacts were anticipated on the “Your Plans” page attached to the end of conference evaluation form. Not all respondents chose to fill this page out, perhaps indicating that they had no specific plans, but those who did gave considerable detail about their intentions. Whether these plans will become a reality in their home countries could be determined by a post-conference tracer study.

A. Strengths

1. The seeds were planted for future collaboration. In all three sectoral categories (public, private, NGO), between 37 and 48 percent of respondents reported the possible formation of a new partnership. This indicates that the conference either planted the seeds or actually served as the crucible for generation of new partnerships for about 45 percent of respondents (in the case of private sector partnerships) and over 60 percent (in the case of NGO partnerships).

Not surprisingly, those who answered “yes” to whether the conference had stimulated ideas or plans for implementation upon their return home most often mentioned building partnerships with NGOs; fewer involved private sector organizations. Generally, percentages with concrete plans were very low (between 8 and 15 percent; see Figure 15). On the surface, this result might suggest that the conference did not fully achieve a major objective (the possibility of partnership building), but meaningful partnerships are difficult to build under the best of circumstances. Given more time for relationships to incubate, the figures for concrete plans might read a bit more optimistically. For example, one corporate participant said enthusiastically that he had “15 contacts” that were worth following up on, but would not have checked off a definite “yes” response to this question. Additionally, those who responded either “yes” or “possibly” ranged from 45.5 percent with the private sector to 60.5 percent with NGOs.

![Figure 15: Formation of Partnerships](image)

2. The conference will lead to information sharing and involving other sectors in development efforts. What do those plans look like? Because of participating in Global Knowledge ’97, the majority of participants say they will very likely:
   - Share new information received with others.
- Involve more people from other sectors in their work.
- Try to locate more information on how new information technologies can influence development.

Figure 16 displays these results. In the comments section of the questionnaire, participants described their plans for the future in some detail. Although creating the infrastructure necessary for ICT will present significant challenges in some countries, respondents were generally optimistic about the chances of long-range success.

_I don’t know if it will work. Money is a big restraint to communication in Africa. It requires political will._

_Many countries could have their economies completely transformed._

![Bar Chart](image)

**Figure 16: Practical Applications of ICT Information**
B. Specific Suggestions for Improving Future Conferences

The following suggestions were written under specific categories on the end of conference form:

1. **Provide Written Materials**
   - Comments on sessions
   - Abstracts of sessions
   - Copies of papers
   - Full programs sent to registrants well before conference
   - Speeches in hard copy form after conference.

2. **Improve ICT Resources**
   - Have more computers in Knowledge and Technology Forum.
   - Provide E-mail access during conference.
   - Invite more companies demonstrating technology.
   - Offer free telephone calls during conference.
   - Put more information on Web before event.

3. **Use ICT to Improve Conference**
   - Make participant list available with E-mail addresses, telephone, and fax numbers.
   - Send in advance and update during conference.
   - Use Internet for bulletin boards during conference.

4. **Have a Smaller Conference**
   - Invite fewer participants.
   - Hold regional follow-up conferences.

5. **Facilitate Networking and Building Partnerships**
6. **Shorten Sessions or Reduce Number of Panelists Per Session**
   - Shorten panel presentations.
   - Allow more time for discussion.
   - Reduce number of panelists per session.
   - Have “report-out sessions” to build participation.

7. **Reduce the Number of Sessions**
   - Reduce the number of panel and plenary sessions.

8. **Expand the Conference**
   - Add a day to the conference for dialoguing, networking, and more practical application of ideas.

9. **Improve General Expansion of Knowledge**
   - Make presentations more “down to earth” and less technical.
   - Have more case studies.
   - Have a better balance between content and technology.
   - Narrow the focus of each session.
   - Plan more cohesive themes.
   - Group participants according to interest and expertise *in advance*.
   - Offer more on policy issues.

10. **Logistics**
    - Incorporate better services, especially for travel and lodging problems.
    - Secure one hotel large enough for all sessions.
    - Have ample coffee, tea, etc., during breaks and meals.
    - Charge a lower registration fee.
    - Design a clearer scheduling matrix.
    - Improve timing and sequencing to avoid multiple parallel sessions.

11. **Other**
    - Involve developing countries, NGOs, and the private sector in planning.
    - Avoid commercialism.
    - Have systematic follow-up.
    - Be more gender inclusive.
    - Arrange for better media coverage.

**VII. THE VIRTUAL CONFERENCE**
What role did the “Virtual Conference” play? What proportion of conferees followed the on-line discussion?
➢ The Virtual Conference played an important role in Global Knowledge ’97 and perhaps embodied most clearly the underlying intentions of its organizers and sponsors. See Part VI for a detailed analysis.

**VIII. LESSONS LEARNED**
What were the lessons learned substantively and organizationally for related future conferences or seminars?
➢ The most important lesson from this conference is that people need breathing time to interact and share ideas. This is especially critical when the topics relate to new technology that may be less familiar to some participants, and that may involve complicated practical applications. The fact that so many participants talked about the need to build infrastructure in their countries, including telephone lines and electricity, serves as a reminder that what some take for granted others find problematic.
A parallel lesson is that modern technology can speed the transfer of information and new ideas for development to those who cannot attend a physical conference.

Future conferences or seminars should provide greater dialogue space, but perhaps as important, "clinics" for helping participants think through how they can utilize ICT in their own settings. Conference leaders made suggestions for improving future conferences. Figure 17 shows the distribution of responses across several categories that emerged from the open-ended question.

Interestingly, even when participants returned the conference entry forms on the first full day of the conference, they were asking for a participant list, a smaller conference, and more time for discussion in sessions.

IX. SPONSOR AND EXHIBITOR PERCEPTIONS
Were sponsors and exhibitors satisfied?

The conference laid a foundation for future meetings along similar lines and facilitated some meaningful partnerships; it was worth the staff and monetary outlay.

From the point of view of sponsors, the conference achieved something that was difficult for them to do on an individual basis.

For exhibitors, the conference afforded an important chance to talk face-to-face with people from all sectors in many developing countries. They report high satisfaction with the event, as discussed in Part VII.

Finally, Global Knowledge '97 represents a step forward in the integration of ICT into physical conferences on international development. Although problems emerged (as they tend to do with technology), participants found the concept of involving people off-site very useful.
PART VI: THE VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

The List has had several tangible and important impacts on the conference itself.

World Bank staff member

I. THE VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

A. Evaluating the Virtual Conference

According to the organizers of the GKD97 List, over 1,000 people in 79 countries have participated in the "virtual conference" discussion (see Annex D). Some also attended the "physical conference" in Toronto. Some respondents who experienced both the virtual and the physical conference said in interviews that the GKD97 List was better than being there in person. This section of the report addresses reactions to the conference of these two overlapping groups.

Specific evaluation questions regarding virtual conference activities include:
- Which types of virtual conference activities took place, how were they used, and who participated?
- To what extent did these involve individuals from developing countries?
- How did the virtual conference activities interrelate with the physical conference, and to what extent did they address the core themes of the conference?
- What type of impact did the virtual conference activities have—or potentially might have in the future—and what factors contributed to this?
- What are the implications for use of virtual conference approaches, both in the follow-up to the GK 97 Conference, and for future similar endeavors?

Information and conclusions in this section are based upon the following major sources of data:
- Searching relevant Web pages, including the official conference Web site, as well as review of other pertinent documentation
- Monitoring postings to the List, as well as review of summaries prepared by the List moderators
- Attendance at the two informal meetings with List participants at the physical conference
- Attendance at the live on-line discussion
- Attendance at one of the videoconferencing events
- Individual and group interviews with conference participants
- Monitoring of conference sessions where virtual activities were discussed
- Discussions and correspondence with the List moderators, as well as review of statistics and information supplied by them
- Interviews and correspondence with the official conference Web site manager, as well as review of statistics about use of the conference Web site
- Review of data regarding use of the RealAudio broadcast
- Relevant data from the evaluation questionnaires.

B. Participation in the Discussion List

1. Awareness of the List. A small number knew about the List and participated in both venues. Of the 218 participants who responded to this question on the conference entry form, 133 or 61 percent said they were aware of the pre-conference Internet discussion. Only 142 people responded to the next question, which asked whether—if they were aware of the discussion List—they participated in on-line conversations. Of those, only 42 people responded affirmatively. This means that the following participation rates in the GKD97 discussion List apply:
   - 19.3 percent of the 218 pre-conference respondents participated in the List.
   - 31 percent of the 133 respondents who said they were aware of it participated in the List.

2. Most important reasons for not participating in discussion. If they were aware of the List, why did respondents not participate in it? The primary reason given was "lack of time and the press of other work responsibilities" (22.9 percent). Lack of access to the Internet held some back, but lack of access to equipment accounted for less than 1 percent. Another small proportion found out too late about the list, and the majority gave a mixture of "other" reasons (Figure 18).
Figure 18: Reasons for Not Participating in Internet Discussion List

Again, these figures reflect only those who were able to come to Toronto. Annex D gives figures for the broader participation in GKD97. The following analysis of the Virtual Conference impact must be interpreted with these figures in mind.

II. THE PLACE OF THE VIRTUAL CONFERENCE IN GK '97

Why consider virtual conference activities as part of the evaluation of the GK '97 Conference? In keeping with its theme, the GK '97 Conference experimented with a variety of "virtual" (i.e., Internet-based) conference activities. These started in advance of the physical conference and continued afterwards.

A. Types of Virtual Activities

The major virtual conference activities include:

- The Global Knowledge 97 (GKD97) List ("the List")
- A real-time, on-line discussion during the physical conference, connecting "virtual" and "actual" conference participants
- The official conference Web site (www.globalknowledge.org)
- The CIDA Village Well Web site
- Three lists maintained by the Association for Progressive Communications (APC)
- Real-time videoconferencing
- Live and delayed broadcasts of plenary sessions and selective interviews.

B. The Importance of Virtual Activities

As the conference Web site indicates:

> Internet-based activities will be an essential conference component, and electronic dialogues will complement on-site activities. In this way, those who may not be physically present at the conference will be able to share in conference events and interact with conference participants. These activities will include electronic mail, Internet discussion groups, and virtual conference activities, beginning before and continuing after the Toronto event.

Statements in Toronto underscored the importance of virtual activities to the conference. For example, Mr. Wolfensohn made reference in a plenary address to continuing with the virtual conference, in particular the Web site, for a year following the conference.

During the on-line discussion and informal meetings with GKD97 List participants, World Bank and UNDP officials indicated:
The importance of the contributions made by virtual participants
The need for donors and their own organizations to hear these contributions and to take them into consideration in their planning
Plans to explore future use of the Internet for two-way information sharing.

Shortly following the conference, a World Bank representative posted a message to the GKD97 List. The message referred to “continued on-line dialogue and information sharing that we hope to encourage in the wake of the Toronto conference, under the rubric of an ongoing Global Knowledge Virtual Conference.” The message went on to say:

Our basic goal is to continue and expand our use of the Internet as a tool for increased information-sharing, dialogue, transparency, and honest debate about development issues and about the impact of information, knowledge and technology in development.... I look forward to exploring all of this with you in the weeks and months ahead. I welcome and look forward to the no-holds-barred, frank, tough-minded discussion in this list; I look forward to learning from you; and I look forward to your help.

III. THE GKD97 LIST ("THE LIST")
A. Defining the List
The purpose of the List is to facilitate broad discussion of the conference themes. It is intended to serve as a forum for the exchange of ideas as well as an important channel for input into the conference itself. The List is sponsored by the UNDP and administered and moderated by the Education Development Center (EDC). The List was started about three months before the physical conference.

As an Internet mailing list, messages posted are sent as E-mail messages to all List subscribers. GKD97 is a moderated list. The moderators help to frame the tone and discussion by suggesting topics for List subscribers to address in their postings. The moderators review all postings before distributing them. The moderator returns messages that are considered not relevant to the List topic, involve profanity, or include personal attacks with suggestions about improving the message.

Annex D contains an excerpt from a preliminary draft of the EDC report to UNDP on the GKD97 List. This report presents statistical information about subscribership, reflections by the moderators on the impact of the List, and their views about the success of the List.\(^1\)

B. Participation and Representation
Initially, the evaluators were skeptical about the value of the List. Our initial hypothesis was that it probably involved only a small number of atypical individuals, mainly from North America. Such a discussion list could be viewed as tangential to the actual conference. It quickly became apparent, as we started to monitor List discussions, that the List represents a large number of people from around the world, from developed and developing countries, representing many diverse viewpoints. It was clearly addressing the major themes of the conference, with many thoughtful interchanges, the provision of concrete examples, and consideration of the practical realities involving ICT and development.

As Annex D indicates, on July 3, 1997, there were 1,008 subscribers to the List, representing at least 79 countries. Of these, 42 are developing countries and nine emerging democracies in Eastern Europe. The Annex provides a breakdown of subscribers by region and country. The List membership fluctuates daily. For example, many members unsubscribe when they left for Toronto to attend the conference, with most resubscribing upon their return home. Thus, the total number of participants is greater than the number of current subscribers.

At least 20 percent of List participants sign on from developing countries (see Figure 17). These statistics are based upon Internet domain addresses. Country could not be determined for 334 domains, some of

\(^1\) This information is included with the consent of UNDP and EDC.
which are likely in developing countries. In addition, a number of citizens from developing countries temporarily live or study in the North. Thus, the representation of participants from developing countries may be considerably higher than the above figures indicate—perhaps in the 25 to 35 percent range. Diversity characterizes List members in other respects. Members include the general public ("ordinary people") as well as professionals, NGO and development workers, men and women, professors and students, media representatives, and others.

As EDC indicates, such geographic representation and diversity are extraordinary. In contrast to representation on the List, EDC indicates that 98 percent of Internet users are from the United States, Canada, or Western Europe (Figure 19). EDC attributes this broad representation to outreach activities designed to encourage diverse participation.

![Figure 19: List Subscribership by Region—Percentages](image)

The List has been and continues to be (at this writing) very active. Since its inception, members have posted more than 1,000 messages. The moderators indicate that at its peak they were receiving some 300 messages daily, 40 to 60 intended as postings. A major task for moderators was keeping the number of messages posted to about 20 per day; any more would overwhelm subscribers. As we observe later, even this number of postings has generated concern about information overload. Volume continued after the conference, with about 30 messages submitted daily for postings during early July.

C. The Moderation Process
EDC identifies the moderation process as one of the keys to the success of the List (Annex D). List participants strongly agree. Numerous individuals participating in the on-line discussion (and at the informal conference meetings) indicated that one of the major strengths of the list was its moderation. This created a climate and culture that enabled productive discussion to take place.

Essential moderation functions include:

- **Helping keep the discussion focused.** In addition to keeping individual postings on topic and screening out postings not related to the List's focus, the moderators occasionally suggest questions, raise issues, and post information in order to help stimulate productive discussion.

- **Creating a positive climate and a common culture.** Participants credit the moderators with helping to create a common culture on the List, uniting people from around the world and from many different backgrounds and perspectives. When List participants at the conference met each other face-to-face for the first time, they felt that they already knew each other and came from the same community with shared values and experiences.

- **Preparing summaries.** The volume of postings can prove overwhelming. As many participants have indicated, summaries prepared by the moderators constitute one of the most valuable and unique features of this List. They also recognize the level of effort required to prepare these summaries.

**Summaries include:**
- **Weekly summaries,** summarizing the discussion under threads and themes
A comprehensive summary of recommendations and cases identified on the List, organized by the major conference themes or tracks and prepared just before the conference. This document also pulled together relevant references and Web sites suggested by List participants (a valuable resource in and of itself).

Other summaries, such as a “digest” of messages contributed by List members in response to questions posed by the moderators about how to use the GKD97 List to proactively and effectively support development post-conference.

Representatives of UNDP and the World Bank, as well as others, noted that the above summaries—in particular the comprehensive summary of recommendations and cases—provides useful reading for donors.

EDC has indicated that the moderation function requires considerable work and effort, more than it might appear on the surface. This has implications for staffing and funding of similar activities in the future.

D. Content and Style of the Discussion
The List contains discussions of most topics raised in Toronto, generally involving more detail than at the actual conference. Discussions have reflected diverse perspectives and have considered the pros and cons of various development strategies. The List constitutes a rich database that complements and expands issues raised in Toronto. List participants interviewed at the Toronto conference agreed that its tone, and the nature and quality of its discussions, were quite different from that of the List. For example:

- In Toronto, the assumption that ICT expansion will produce unmitigated good dominated discussions, with little critical analysis of who benefits and who does not. On the List, many agreed with the positive potential of ICT, but also expressed concern about how ICT could retard development and increase the gap between the haves and the have-nots.
- The conference presentations tended to deal in generalities rather than with the practical aspects of implementing ICT advances in developing countries and rarely reflected a grassroots or development perspective. In contrast, the List discussion reflected a development perspective and provided many concrete examples of both successful and unsuccessful approaches.
- The style of presentation differed substantially. List participants said that the conference was “one monologue after another,” “from the podium,” with experts talking and little participation by conferees. The List, in contrast, involved discussion of issues.

Martha Davies, a List participant who was added to the final plenary at the last moment, indicated in her public remarks that the virtual conference was superior to the physical conference. On the List, when “you ask a question, you get an answer.” This did not occur to the same extent at the physical conference. The List was far more interesting, interviewees said, because it dealt with the real issues in depth and embodied a participative approach.

E. Interaction with the Physical Conference
As indicated earlier, conference objectives called for the List to complement and interact with the physical conference. To what extent did this happen? The evidence suggests mixed results. For example, EDC indicates (Annex D) that the List publicized the conference far more widely than would have been possible by other means, especially in the South. They suggest the List also helped convey a sense that conference organizers were concerned with participation and listening to the voices of those “on the ground.”

Bank contributors to the List identified other impacts. For example, List discussion indicated the need to consider gender issues related to ICT and development. An “Independent Committee on Women and Global Knowledge” was formed to work with Mr. Wolfensohn in planning better gender balance at the conference. Therefore, organizers added sessions dealing with gender to the conference program and invited a greater number of women than would have been the case otherwise. In addition, others present at the conference heard about it through the List. Some were specifically invited to attend the conference and were provided with full scholarships from the World Bank or UNDP to cover their costs. As Mr. Wolfensohn said, “You cannot have development without women. They are the key to bringing education to new generations of children...
Nevertheless, contrary to conference objectives, it was difficult to introduce information from the List into the physical conference. No formal opportunity existed, either through plenaries or working sessions, to present themes, case examples, and recommendations from the List. At the conference, List moderators saw as one of their major responsibilities to attend working sessions and to introduce relevant content from the List. They reported mixed success. In some cases they were able to do so and thought that participants in working sessions received this information very well. In other situations, however, the session chair (because of the minimal time allotted for questions or comments from the floor) did not recognize them.

F. Future Potential and Plans
The greatest impact of the List may be yet to come by helping to support conference follow-up. As indicated, the rich information on the List is not yet widely known. Both World Bank and UNDP representatives who are familiar with the List said at the conference that the List information should be shared more widely among donor organizations. The List also represents a network of people around the world—including those at the grassroots level in developing countries. It constitutes a valuable resource that can help publicize and act upon the implications of the conference.

One List strength lies in its use of basic E-mail, the “lowest tech” Internet application, for communication. Many people, especially in developing countries, have access to E-mail, even with uncertain telecommunications links and slow computers or modems; they find “higher tech” Internet applications such as the World Wide Web or teleconferencing difficult or impossible to use. These more advanced Internet applications are more expensive and require more sophisticated hardware and software, as well as local servers with more advanced capabilities and higher quality telecommunication links. These requirements are currently problematic for many developing nations.

The List will carry on for at least some months following the conference. The World Bank indicated that it is exploring how it can support expanded “use of the Internet as a tool for increased information-sharing, dialogue, transparency, and honest debate about development issues and about the impact of information, knowledge, and technology in development.”

The volume of message on the List continued to be high as of mid-July. It remains to be seen if this will continue. Some people have suggested that the List discussion needs to become even more concrete and linked to actual projects:

Many of us have been excited with the novelty of GK approach in many aspects. I doubt, however, that the pace and value of the dialogue could be kept over the long run if it is only a matter of talking. Participants should have a clear perception of the practical applications of what they discuss...the dialogue should be linked with actual projects...discussion groups could form...virtual advisory committees for programs.

G. Critique
The culture of the List emphasized interaction and participation. In this respect, its style was quite different from that of the physical conference, where one of the loudest complaints was the lack of opportunity for participation and discussion. Several points deserve emphasis:

• To an observer, the most significant aspect of the List, perhaps even more than its content, was the ambiance, excitement, and sense of community it generated. The List generated a culture and electricity that carried over to face-to-face gatherings of List participants at the conference. This was in contrast with most other gatherings at the conference.

• It is ironic that a virtual, faceless, interchange via computer over the Internet seemed to have created more emotion than the traditional, face-to-face conference.

• This List demonstrates that it is possible to use the Internet to bring people together in a very “human” way. This does not necessarily happen, however, and depends on strong moderation.

• The GKD97 List presents an opportunity to learn how the Internet can be used to bring people together in a meaningful, virtual community.

• Virtual and physical meetings are not mutually exclusive. People will continue to need to gather face-to-face, but in this case previous virtual contact meant that people already “knew” each other and were
part of a community before meeting for the first time. The usual preliminaries when strangers get together for the first time take on a new form, and subsequent discussions can be highly focused.

List participants occasionally wondered whether anyone cared about their views, noting the lack of comments from the World Bank or other donors. The tone changed considerably after a World Bank representative wrote that he had been quiet because of conference preparation pressures; he acknowledged the List's value and said the Bank would explore ways of furthering Internet communications.

The most common complaint about the List concerned the volume of postings, which made it difficult for people to absorb the information. In essence, the List has been a victim of its own success. Moderators have addressed this problem by preparing discussion summaries. Considerable discussion has targeted how the List could be made easier to use, for example by focusing discussions on specific topic areas.

Perhaps the best way of summarizing the value of the List is to cite the following member posting:

_The physical conference clearly had its limitations—it hugged a conventional format when a new mode of doing business was possible. The earth-shattering event lies in the virtual conferencing and on-line discussion that formed a major part of GK '97. In this virtual conferencing, there were bountiful high quality contributions made by participants from Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The African contributions were particularly focused, making many valuable practical development suggestions and paths to take—and the World Bank and the Canadian government would do well to show that they have both heard and taken on board these suggestions._

_Which takes us to the second earth-shattering quality of GK '97: The Bank and the Canadian government opened up an electronic feedback channel on their activities which has no counterpart—at least not to my knowledge. They clearly underestimated the level of resources and the level of attention that the management of such a body of information would take—but it is a new learning experience for all._

_The third earth-shattering event is that both agencies clearly listened to the feedback they received on gender at the early stages of the conference. At the beginning, there was a visible lack of gender awareness in the organization of the conference. This was acknowledged an an attempt was made to correct it. On this both agencies should be congratulated. This applause should only be maintained if we see gender balance addressed routinely in the organization of future conferences and other public meetings and activities by both agencies._

**IV. REAL-TIME ON-LINE DISCUSSION**

As an adjunct to the GKD97 List, the conference featured a live, on-line discussion of List members, enabling virtual conference participants to interact in real time with live participants at the physical conference. The on-line session at the conference was preceded by test sessions and followed by one on-line session to discuss the future of the List.

In order to participate in live discussion, participants needed to "meet" at a time and place (an Internet IP address) announced in advance. They needed to use the same "chat" software (CU-SeeMe), which was available free of charge. The software permitted discussion using audio, video, and text. Experimentation at the test sessions suggested that most people (from both developed and developing countries) did not have the hardware (sound and video cards, microphones, speakers, and video cameras) or the high-speed connection to support full CU-SeeMe functionality.

The moderators set a goal of the widest possible participation and the smoothest possible process. Because of the testing, they chose the lowest common denominator technology for use at the on-line session. This was text chat via CU-SeeMe: Whenever a participant typed something, all other participants immediately received it (versus audio, which did not work for most people, or IRC, which requires technical knowledge of command lines).

A member of the evaluation team monitored the on-line session at the conference and participated in one of the test sessions. Our experience at the test session gave us the preliminary impression that this might be a technology ahead of its time. About a dozen participants, primarily from the developed world, spent most
of the time experimenting with audio and video. Much of the discussion centered on the technology itself, rather than on substantive issues.

In contrast, the on-line session at the conference was particularly impressive. It brought together some 26 virtual participants, including developing countries on different continents, with about 15 live participants at the physical conference. A majority participated actively in the discussion, which lasted over one and a half hours. The session clearly built upon the lessons of the test sessions.

Participants described the experience as exhilarating; it left them with the feeling that something very special was taking place. As one person said at an informal meeting of List participants attending the conference: “The on-line session was the most interesting thing that happened to me at the conference. The rest was mainly boring.” Others expressed strong agreement with this sentiment: At the on-line session and on the List there was “two-way traffic [whereas] most here is one way with a few minutes for questions that were mainly dodged.”

The on-line discussion involved consideration of some of the conference themes and discussion about the List itself. The discussion also actively involved representatives of UNDP and World Bank, who indicated that over the coming months, they would be exploring ways of presenting ideas to the donor community.

In summary, the live, on-line discussion, combining virtual and actual conference participants:

- Formed one of the highlights of the conference.
- Demonstrated the potential for this medium, provided that:
  - On-line discussions are used strategically and planned carefully in advance.
  - Discussions are actively facilitated.
  - Participants receive support in advance to assist them in obtaining/using software.
  - The least sophisticated technology, identified through test sessions, is used.

Because of the success of the on-line discussion at the conference, organizers have planned subsequent on-line meetings following the conference. The major focus of these meetings is to discuss ideas about how the List can be used in the future.

V. OTHER LISTS AND SITES FOR ON-LINE DISCUSSIONS

In addition to the GKD97 List, the following also provided virtual opportunities for individuals to post and discuss views related to the conference:

- CIDA’s Village Well Gathering Site is a Web site intended as a “virtual space” for networking and sharing ideas and stories related to the main themes of the conference. The site provides a “guest book” in which individuals can contribute directly from the Web site, as well as via E-mail and fax; it also provides threaded dialogues on a variety of topics. The site is expected to continue beyond the conference.

- The APC (Association for Progressive Communications) Virtual Conference Project has been hosting three facilitated on-line discussions that will carry on, following the conference, until the end of September:
  - The Gender Conference focuses on the impact of the ICT revolution for women. By the time of the conference, it had over 100 subscribers and 30 active participants.
  - The Storyline Conference provides an opportunity for participants to discuss issues related to the impact of the information age for development, as well as for observations following the conference about its implications for development.
  - Information Technology and Development: Lessons Learned provides an opportunity for APC users of ICT, including network managers, about their ideas and strategies for maximizing their impact and the involvement of people who are not “wired.”

It is beyond the scope of this evaluation to monitor these virtual activities or to assess their impact in any detail.
VI. THE CONFERENCE WEB SITE

The conference initiated an official Web site (www.globalknowledge.org) about three and a half months before the conference began. Mr. Wolfensohn indicated in a plenary talk that the site would be kept active for at least a year after the conference. The site provided information about the conference, including a description of its objectives and themes, the preliminary program, a list of sponsors, and links to the various virtual conference activities.

As of July 2, over 149,000 page hits had been recorded. This number should be treated with caution, as most visitors would access multiple pages, and individuals make repeat visits. Over 36,000 of the total hits came from domains representing the conference sponsoring organizations or its service providers (Figure 20). The regional breakdown of the page hits is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNTRY</th>
<th># OF HITS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>74,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>24,934</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Europe</td>
<td>10,918</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing &amp; Eastern European countries</td>
<td>6,389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3,884</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>28,280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>149,205</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 20: Number of Web Site Hits by Country/Region

The low level of usage by people in developing countries, particularly in comparison to the GKD97 discussion List, may reflect the lack of availability of sophisticated hardware and software. In addition, the modem speed and infrastructure required to access the Web (in comparison with simple E-mail) may create problems. In addition, it appears that the Web site was not indexed on major search engines such as Yahoo.

Use of the site started to build about one month before the date of the conference. Usage was highest during the conference days, peaking on Tuesday, the middle day of the conference.

VII. BROADCASTS OF CONFERENCE EVENTS OVER THE INTERNET

Plenary speeches and selective interviews were broadcast live over the Internet and, for delayed access, using RealAudio. At least in theory, people anywhere in the world could listen to the speeches. To what extent did this take place? Summary statistics were not available, although we were able to review the access logs as of July 1 for live and delayed broadcasts, which list individual attempts at accessing any of the transmissions.

These logs are difficult to interpret. The only information provided about the caller is the IP identification number. The live log had approximately 220 entries and the delayed access log about 720 entries (85 percent during the days of the conference and 15 percent during the following week). Closer analysis suggests that these entries are misleading. Most entries represent multiple repeated accesses, or attempts at access, by a much smaller number of IP numbers (i.e., individuals). Either access was difficult or much of the recorded usage represents testing by system technicians. Closer examination of the live log suggests the latter explanation. For example, most of the accesses for live access were during times when there was nothing to broadcast (i.e., before the plenary speeches commenced), and could only represent system testing. For the Sunday evening opening plenary and the Monday morning plenary, only two accesses could be identified that appeared to represent IP addresses other than those used for testing. The pattern was similar for other days of the conference. Use of the RealAudio broadcasts, live and delayed, was negligible.

An evaluator made two unsuccessful attempts to access the RealAudio broadcasts from the conference, once using a Cybercafe computer and once using the computer of an exhibitor who was also responsible for
the conference Web site. Neither of these computers had the required RealAudio software installed to permit access. An access attempt after the conference using an evaluator's computer resulted in an error message, although the computer has the correct software installed.

The potential exists to use the Internet to broadcast speeches, live or delayed, but the conference experience suggests that the prospect is not so simple. Access to requisite hardware and software, and facility in using them, is not widespread. Targeted publicity might result in more users.

VIII. VIDEOCONFERENCES

The conference also featured a number of videoconferences, using the Internet to provide live video and audio links with participants in other sites around the world. An evaluator observed one of these sessions—a live hookup between a panel at the Toronto conference with a panel at the Internet Society Annual Conference in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. At this session, only seven observers were present.

Conference participants were located in a darkened room with two large screens, one displaying the Toronto panel, and the other the Malaysian panel. The Toronto panel was in an adjacent room, but from the perspective of conference participants, they might as well have been across the ocean. The session gave the impression of two groups of experts talking to one another. Evaluators were told that 150 members composed the audience in Kuala Lumpur, but there was no evidence of their existence or an opportunity for questions.

This session seemed to epitomize the one-way, top-down communication that was the most common complaint of the conference, where the audience was not even in the same room as the panelists, let alone given an opportunity to participate. This was in complete contrast to the GKD97 List, discussed earlier, in tone, style, and content.

Attendance at this and the other videoconferences may have been hampered by lack of publicity or information. The main program mentioned these sessions in very general terms, providing no information about the speakers or even the topic of each videoconference. The program Updates and Revisions did not mention these sessions at all. An information booth staffer told an evaluator that they did not know where these sessions were taking place, but that he should have found a notice on his chair in the Monday morning plenary session.

He was told that 25 people observed the first videoconference, in which Mr. Wolfensohn was linked with others in Mozambique. As this session took place before the conference's opening plenary and before the room notice was distributed to attendees, those in attendance may have been invited guests.

The conference experience suggests that videoconferencing has the potential to link small groups at remote sites, but that it may not be appropriate when the objective is to engage a large number of people.
PART VII: CONSTITUENCY PERSPECTIVES

The conference gave me an outrageous opportunity to get in touch with people of different organizations and countries that are actually implementing the very same things we are in our Central American country.

Conference participant

This part presents the unique perspectives of selected conference constituencies, including sponsors, NGOs, educators, private sector participants (nonsponsors) members of the media, francophones, and exhibitors. The evaluation team interviewed these participants either individually or in small groups. This section also includes a summary of unsolicited post-conference letters sent from sponsors and government officials to the World Bank President or conference organizers.

I. SPONSORS

The CBC is proud to have been associated with such an important event.

(Canada)

The seven sponsors represented an array of institutions affiliated with the conference. The seven included two international organizations, three national government organizations, one NGO, and one from the private sector. All were asked a common set of semi-structured, open-ended questions. As with all interviews, anonymity was guaranteed.

Across the four institutional sectors, strong consensus was found on several points (five or more of the respondents expressed the same view).

A. Points of Consensus

♦ The conference topic was important and needed this international forum.
♦ The many sponsors who participated strengthened the conference.
♦ The World Bank overshadowed all others in the design and implementation of the conference.
♦ The presence of persons from developing countries was essential.
♦ Too little was heard from persons from developing countries.
♦ The conference format hindered discussion and presentation of differing views.
♦ The plenaries were disconnected from the rest of the conference, as were other activities, especially the video presentations.
♦ There was a noticeable imbalance among groups represented, especially NGOs and the private sector.

B. Areas of Disagreement

No consensus among sponsors emerged in other areas, as follows:

♦ There was wide disagreement on the appropriateness of the intellectual content. Three thought it was appropriate, three thought it was shallow, and only one thought it was state of the art.
♦ There was disagreement on the emphasis on "high-end" technology. Three thought it appropriate and four thought it was overdone.
♦ Three thought persons from developing countries would leave with a balanced view of the costs and benefits of high-end technology and four thought they would not leave with a balanced view.
♦ Three thought the technology forum a success, three thought it inappropriate for persons from developing countries, and one thought it a "waste of time."

II. NGOS

A. The Information Gap

Participants representing NGOs voiced frustration with the tone of the conference. They were upset by the content of the discussion as well as the conference processes. They felt that the conference was dominated by a perspective that assumes uncritically that ICT is good and that expansion of ICT infrastructure around
the world is a given. In essence, the conference seemed to promote ICT as a "magic bullet," or as the "new panacea." In contrast, the general view of NGOs at the conference was much more pessimistic. While many people agree with the potential of ICT to aid in development, they are concerned that in practice the result may be the opposite; they are openly skeptical about the "trickle-down theory" of technology diffusion.

NGOs pointed out that most of the world's population does not have access to a telephone or electricity, let alone the Internet. A number of people stated that what was discussed at the conference had "absolutely no relevance to 95 percent of the world's population." Some took offense at speakers who said how "cheap" the technology is now—for example, a "mere" $2,000 for a computer. They indicated that this is still unaffordable for most people in the developing world and that equipment and access to the Internet tend to cost considerably more than in developed countries. They felt that there was little or no attention to the real issues of literacy and education, politics, and societal structures based upon a high level of disparity. These are much bigger blocks to knowledge and information than technological fixes or ICT infrastructure.

Several people noted with dismay the predominantly commercial view expressed by ICT corporation leaders in their presentations. They expressed surprise and disappointment that there was not more attention to social responsibility at a conference whose primary objective was to explore ways in which ICT could be used in development to benefit poor people around the world.

NGO representatives at the conference stressed that they are not opposed to the new technologies. Many note that they find the Internet indispensable in their own work. Most interviewees agree potential exists for ICT to aid in development, depending upon how it is used. It can also be a negative factor, however, serving to increase isolation of the world's poor. As one person stated: "A knife can be used to cut vegetables or to kill someone."

The major frustration with the conference from the NGO perspective, then, was its failure to give more attention to how ICT could be a positive factor in development. They felt that presentations tended to be general, rather than dealing with the practicalities of ICT at the grassroots level in developing countries. They acknowledged that some attention was paid to these concerns—"casual mentions here and there, the occasional anecdote"—but the conference was dominated by "101 places about how to put together the two wires to make the Web pages better." They would have preferred more exploration of what they view as the real issues. The conference gave short shrift to their fears and concerns.

As discussed in Part VI, The Virtual Conference, NGOs strongly felt that the GKD97 Internet discussion List provided extensive discussions of the real issues concerning how ICT can be a positive or negative force for development. The List, unlike the conference, provided a forum for the exchange of ideas, where, "if you ask a question, you get an answer." They were expecting the same level of discussion at the conference.

**B. The Conference Process**

NGO representatives were even more concerned than others were about the lack of opportunity for interaction and participation at the conference. This might have been because:

- NGOs may be more used to working in a participative mode than people from some other sectors.
- Speakers representing large institutions, government, and business seemed to dominate sessions, especially plenaries.

The program featured few speakers from NGOs or others reflecting their perspective. Martha Davies at the final plenary was a notable exception. They welcomed her addition to the program at the last minute, but they viewed the gesture as "too little, too late." There was limited representation of NGOs on panels. This lack of representation, coupled with very limited opportunity to engage in dialogue, made it difficult to articulate the NGO perspective. Some said that even when they did get an opportunity to raise questions, these were rarely taken seriously.
C. Impact and Value of the Conference

NGOs had mixed views about the potential impact of the conference. Some fear the conference may lead to the expansion of inappropriate ICT infrastructure, which will harm, rather than aid, the poor, and further widen the knowledge gap. Some fear the World Bank will move from “a big dam to a big ICT orientation” or that the conference will provide donors and other large organizations with the legitimacy to pursue technology investments.

Others were hopeful that one legacy of the conference will be more serious consideration of the manner in which ICT can be implemented so that it does, in fact, serve as a positive factor in development. Some donor statements encouraged them. For example, a World Bank official stated immediately after the conference that: “Our basic goal is to continue and expand our use of the Internet as a tool for increased information sharing, dialogue, transparency, and honest debate about development issues and about the impact of information, knowledge, and technology in development.”

Similarly, NGO representatives had mixed reviews about the impact of the conference on their plans. Some said that they may have picked up a few ideas or met some new people, but this would not lead to any significant change in what they are doing. Others, however, were much more positive: They made useful contacts, including some that might lead to future funding, and they obtained useful information they will apply in their own work. For example, a Guatemalan woman, soon after the conference, posted the following on the GKD97 List:

Through serious discussion of country-based interventions, we could contribute our experience of working with local governments, donors, NGOs, and civil society in specific projects. Now we are already exchanging technical advice between Ethiopia, Russia, Guatemala, and agencies such as USAID, UNDP, and WB, and got interest in our project for additional funding.

III. EDUCATORS

A. Impressions of the Global Knowledge ‘97 Conference

General comments

♦ Plenaries are a bit uneven.
  • Some plenary speakers very stimulating; opportunity to be updated on latest techniques and methods (forum and sessions)
  • Annan set the tone well and that was picked up by others.
  • Ugandan president was too long.
  • Second plenary was less stimulating—not chaired well.
  • Figueres was outstanding.
  • UNESCO superb: Motivational and inspired. Others should have been on for less time.
  • High profile of key speakers, e.g., U.N. and UNESCO, Labelle, Nobel Laureates. Didn’t have long enough.
  • Fifth plenary was the best. Major was great. Goldstein used it to promote UNILEVER. Labelle gave real cases. Zimbabwe raised debt and issue of cult-domination of the media.

♦ Working sessions: Some of more value than others.
  • Disappointing session on open distance learning. Too large, dubious lessons.
  • Disaster relief sessions very useful
  • Brain and learning. 20th Century Learning “provocative”
  • IFAD session excellent, coherent, example of pioneering work of a multilateral agency.

Strengths

♦ Large size and diversity
♦ Intriguing. Very wide range of topics and participants
♦ Basically well organized, considering size and short time frame
♦ Excellent panels with some interaction
♦ Networking—participation and representation of many countries
♦ Good translations
♦ The opening ceremony
M.C. was excellent and coherent.
First Nations presentations
Good venues and good meals
Synergy engendered—trying to pick my way through maze of developing technology
Gave us time to reflect on themes regarding the situation back home.

Highlights
Speakers, plenaries
Daily reports on conferences
Discussions, when available: “Not contributing but listening to experts talk was valuable, as opposed to compare and contrast.”

Weaknesses
Working groups and appropriateness of speakers were uneven.
  • Poor quality panels—too large, badly chaired, and little interaction
  • Too little interaction between speakers/audience and speakers/speakers.
Gender imbalance
Plenaries did not build on each other, functioned distinctly.
  • Synthesizer was needed.
  • Too many after dinner speeches
  • Speakers cannot develop their theme—overwhelming.
  • Plenary speakers were too superficial.
  • ICT is broad and the conference tried to do too much. Putting it all together is a gigantic task.
  • Absence of the conceptual level/feeling of sometimes not getting the point across (“I felt like a passive listener.”)
Lacked contextual preparative work. It would have been nice to know what to expect.
  • No time for networking
  • Received package very late and couldn’t give any suggestions.

B. The Conference’s Greatest Impact
Awareness of problems and connecting people
Would like it if government and corporate sponsors learned about the problems of developing countries in using ICT—a “reverse impact.”
It will differ from one person to another.
Little because of the lack of networking and dialoguing time
Development of ICT, especially in the African context.

C. Most Important Gains from the Conference
Awareness and deeper understanding of some of the problems (“The potential solutions are not as far off as I had thought.”)
Learning about techniques used in NGOs
Understanding of the Internet and the changing role of media (“We have to change how we do things. There is a new role for us keeping people informed.”)
Policymaking—ensuring policies are in place and are followed to promote reform.
Training is important.
Networking
Better understanding of people’s vision of the relationship between information and development.

D. Plans for New ideas, Initiatives, Projects, or Strategies
Collaborate with Dreyfus Health Foundation in NYC to get medical information to practitioners in Ghana (“They sponsored me to attend. In a way I have already started.”)
Some may not have plans because “people in the third world cannot afford computers.”
E. General Description of Ideas

- Implement contacts into GKD97 Web site.
- Link into IFAD (U.N.) and other databases for research and teaching purposes ("I’m anxious to upskill services to clients.")
- Need more information for professionals, who are on the front lines ("We’re using HEALTHNET in Ghana. Later, we'll expand to patient information delivery and to any health institution in Ghana that has a computer and telephone. Most will be sent via paper as brochures.")
- Looking for a way to shape applications to CIDA ("Big projects in Indonesia to develop science teaching in four eastern regions are coming to an end, so we’re looking for new things to do in developing linkages in developing countries around new technologies.")
- Continuation of existing programs
- Can move forward if they couch proposals more in electronic media.

F. Building Partnerships

- Will put links to government sessions found on Web site—educational only—with Costa Rica, Middle East, Peru, via contacts made at GK '97.
- Learned about corporations that are interested. Will look up their affiliates in New Zealand.
- Will partner with AIM: Action International in Medicine (on his panel).
- Develop further with Global Information Network.
- Public sector: Meeting with a U.S. university involved in a distance education project. ("Very exciting; to transplant that technology, would like donor funding in area of human resource/development; not much funding for the university level, but where do you get your trained experts otherwise?")
- Thinking about the World Bank, the British and German governments; will make contacts when they return home.
- A Dean of Applied Sciences might follow up with NORTEL.
- Met people from University of United Nations in Amsterdam.
- No new partnerships.

I sat with a group from NORTEL the first night. I was interested in Indonesia and their project. They are looking for a venue to try out projects, putting computers in schools relevant to science and agriculture. Who would pay for it?

(Conference participant)

G. Desired Outcomes

- By putting projects on a Web site, it would give more visibility and potential partnerships.
- Targeting corporations
- Continuous, current awareness, e.g., immunization information out of WHO—meant for paraprofessionals but not enough money to give paper copy to everyone.
- With a few computers, try to connect with the international community.

H. Minimum Expected Outcomes

- Expanding HEALTHNET facility should not be a problem ("I need to get an appointment with Minister of Health. About 60 nodes on it now. Dream is to have about another 60 in 6 to 9 months.")
- More information about sessions, speakers, and more notice: The program did not arrive until June 23.
- The best one can do with available resources is to make ICT issues embedded in subjects, building awareness for when these facilities become available. Education is a lifelong process.
- To continue networking and try to use information and technology in that network.
I. When Would Plans Begin?
- Most said that their work is continuous or would begin immediately; one person reported being on a "three-year plan."
- Two mentioned a six-month time frame of development, negotiations, and discussions. Paperwork would take one month.

J. When Would Results Be Evident?
- Six months.

IV. PRIVATE SECTOR

*I'm very impressed that the World Bank has taken this initiative. It's a very important move for them and for me—a very symbolic role in developing knowledge.*

(Conference participant)

Focus group with participants from Australia, USA, and Colombia; three males, two females:

A. Impressions of the Global Knowledge '97 Conference

*General comments:* Corporate interviewees found the conference generally educational and stimulating, well planned, and well organized. Those who have attended many conferences praised GK '97 for its diversity and excellent sessions. They also were struck by the diversity of the countries represented and the contacts they were able to make: "This is the most diverse of any high tech conference I have attended." They agreed that the conference was an important stage in the process of becoming more inclusive in their projects and encouraging them to focus more on developing countries.

*Strengths*
- Presentations on global projects
- Lively speakers
- Facilitator Jacqueline Pelletier was outstanding. ("She’s a true professional and has a real grasp of her job. Very impressive.")
- It brought people together to discuss distance education and learning.
- Exhibitors were excellent.

*Highlights*
- Ancillary events were extremely valuable.
- Entertainment at opening session
- Plenary speeches
- Extremely impressed with the personal interviews for evaluation
- Hospitality of the World Bank was excellent.

*Weaknesses*
- The conference was too crowded and needed more focus. ("Have a panel session for NGOs on making the Internet work for them. Recruit new members, etc.")
- Differentiate between speakers and attendees by badge.
- Not enough food hurt networking.
- Logistics were poor.
- Not enough time for dialogue during sessions
- Received all the information for the conference just the day before I left. Had to fax immediately. Little things like that add up. The Bank is not looking at all the process very well.
- Too many hotels, too many simultaneous sessions; hard to find people
- Topics were redundant.
- Could not get practical information on the role of foundations.
B. The Conference’s Greatest Impact
- Stimulating practical, pragmatic applications
- Raising the level of awareness of what can be done
- Networking
- Reducing stereotypes
- Information and knowledge was the aim. (“Knowledge is needed, and information is not enough. This conference proved this. More effort is needed to produce change.”)

C. Most Important Gains from the Conference
- Made personal and professional contacts. (“Still want more.”)
- Networking with other private sector corporations involved in similar projects
- Identified grants for programs.
- Adjusted stereotypes about Africa and Costa Rica.
- Underscored problems in getting funds for schools.

D. Plans for New Ideas, Initiatives, Projects, or Strategies
- All said yes.

E. General Description of Ideas
- How to modify Internet for local programs
- Include non-English speaking children in Internet projects (greater inclusivity).
- Try to get people of all ages, not just children.
- Target new countries. (“I found out Colombia and Costa Rica are very interested. I was disappointed that there were few officials from Middle East.”)
- Start a small project with a small community by introducing them to the Internet.

F. Building Partnerships
- Four out of five said they had established new partnerships:
  - Yes, for guests on our program
  - Yes, met with representative from UN and will work with them.
  - Yes, made a handful of contacts. That will help.
  - Yes, UNDP and World Bank are interested in the same work as my firm. They will help me target these countries. Have found people here through networking.
  - Not yet, but I’m looking for partnering.

G. Desired Outcomes
- Develop relations with other organizations.
- Build connective links between people and government to interchange information.
- Get services out to more schools.
- Find more clients (better idea of what they want).
- Find funding for projects.
- Open minds to the world markets about company’s products.

H. Minimum Expected Outcomes
- The plans will be successful.
- Contacts, information, and learning how others think about development issues.
- A dynamic project to identify these funds for education markets.
I. When Would Plans Begin?
- All said immediately or, at the latest, one month after the conference; one noted that the plans were already in progress.

J. When Would Results Be Evident?
- Most said they would see results within a week or two, or in less than one year; one said up to two years.

V. MEDIA
Many countries could have their economies completely transformed.
(Conference participant)

Dyadic interview with participants from Kenya and Canada; two females:

A. Impressions of the Global Knowledge ‘97 Conference

General comments: The conference was an “eye-opener” for media personnel from developing countries. It came at a good time “to alert world to technology” when so many changes are taking place.

Strengths
- The concept was a good one that was carried out well administratively.

Highlights
- They had not realized the wide range of applications of the Internet, such as using it to monitor sales and to market from Southeast Asia to North America. They also gave the example of an Arab woman who used E-mail to locate a home for a woman who had a child out of wedlock and a company in Morocco that is publishing in France.
- The plenaries were especially valuable.

Weaknesses
- Working sessions were not as useful to the media.
- People presented papers, not on their theme; those at the beginning were rushed.
- Little to no time for audience to interact or for dialoguing.
- Lack of time to synchronize ideas among panel members: “Nobody keeps to their time.”
- They did not have enough opportunity to use the Internet: “People are waiting to get onto a terminal.”
- Having sessions in different hotels cuts down mobility.

B. The Conference’s Greatest Impact
- The big organizations are looking at the issues of information and knowledge.
- Transformation of economies.

C. Most Important Gains from the Conference
- Networking
- Virtual initiatives
- “Summary of concerns—we can build from here on.”

D. Plans for New Ideas, Initiatives, Projects, or Strategies
- Nothing specific.
- “I will continue what I have been doing, but may draw on a contact made at conference.”
E. General Description of Ideas

- "Get on the Internet, but that is very expensive in Kenya because of taxes. Use it to distribute our feature articles. People have been asking how to get their articles on the Internet."

F. Building Partnerships

- U.N. support for communications: "We'll have to get the money."
- A woman at the conference from Senegal went to Kenya to help them get on E-mail.
- Not that we have not done already.

G. Desired Outcomes

- Broaden distribution of feature articles.
- Keep in touch with other journalists.
- Get examples of layout.
- Some are doing their publications on the Internet.

H. Minimum Expected Outcomes

- To increase distribution and gain information.

We need training in use even of E-mail and using the computer. We use only half the capacity. (Conference participant)

I. When Would Plans Begin?

- Ongoing.

J. When Would Results Be Evident?

- Ongoing.

VI. FRANCOPHONES

Individual interviews with participants from Benin, Burkina Faso, Gabon, and Canada; three women, one man:

A. Impressions of the Global Knowledge '97 Conference

Francophones interviewees expressed satisfaction with the conference and were positive about its possible outcomes. They described the gathering as timely, very well done, and successful.

Strengths
The conference brought together a large number of people, and allowed organizations to meet, share their experiences, and build partnerships. As one person explained, the conference was "a golden opportunity for networking and establishing partnerships and to be updated with knowledge and technology." The mix of private and public sectors, as well as other institutions, was also a great strength.

The conference was very well organized; speakers were excellent, high-profile personalities, and staff from the World Bank and CIDA were accessible. One woman said that it "was wonderful to see Canada take leadership along with the World Bank" and to see the President actively involved in the conference.

Highlights
Two participants from West Africa said that they learned that all knowledge acquisition in all sectors goes through the Internet. They also appreciated learning about the existence of many organizations that are working for development. More importantly, they said, "it allowed us to communicate with partners in the Northern countries" and to "make people in charge of technology aware of the existing needs in our
countries.” The conference will create synergy because the similarity of approaches and common goals will enable collaboration and savings.

One person emphasized the work done by the Independent Committee, which played an essential role in ensuring that the conference included women’s approach to technology. She was pleased that conference organizers recognized the committee’s work and added its recommendations to the program. The existence and participation of the committee added to the value and of the impact of the conference.

Weaknesses
The main weaknesses identified by these participants related to structure and organization. They felt that there was not enough time for questions and debates, and that too many interesting sessions ran at the same time. They were disappointed that no summaries were available for sessions they could not attend.

Despite the availability of translation devices, some participants said that all the speakers were anglophones. (“What about the francophony”? ) They said that even French people spoke English, which was “a real handicap.”

One participant said she had some concerns on the political level because the conference “often looked like publicity to sell something.” She said:

Technology is a way to do things. It should not be a transmission tool for standardization. We need to use technology while still respecting local, regional, and cultural differences and specific needs. Technology should not only be used from top to bottom, but should try to benefit ordinary people. Knowledge transmission from the roots is also very crucial.

B. The Conference’s Greatest Impact
When asked about what they thought the conference’s biggest impact would be, three participants said that it would be the formation of the new partnerships among different organizations. One participant said that for him it would be the willingness to get more information about how to use the Internet and to use the Internet more often. He also talked about the increase of energy and about bringing back very useful information to colleagues from different ministries.

C. Most Important Gains from the Conference
A Canadian woman said the conference would contribute to the awareness of the dangers involved in technology creating a bigger gap between those who have access to the Internet and those who do not. She hopes that this will encourage governments to develop strategies to prevent the “information gap,” and that the conference will make people realize that, despite a lack of technological tools, there is much knowledge in many developing countries. She also hopes that this GK ’97 will lead her own government to develop and articulate its visions and politics, making sure that technology is accessible to all cultures. Specifically, she thought that it would help development of rural francophone communities in Canada: “It should be technology to serve people, not people to serve technology.”

D. Case Studies of Plans Resulting from the Conference
Out of four francophone people interviewed, two said that they would start new projects because of their participation in GK ’97.

1. Burkina Faso
The participant said that the most important thing he has gained from the conference was learning about software on geography management systems. This will help him improve territory management and cartography in his country by helping the ministry with information and data analysis, cartography, map making, and geography translation. He plans to start putting information on a new software, which he says will improve his country’s database on socioeconomics, demography, and infrastructure and will allow better information distribution. This new software will allow them to manage data under two forms, textual and cartography, and will make data collection, delivery, storage, and analysis much easier. It will also afford a more global and comprehensive perspective on data and enable graphic representations of data.
This new project will be possible because of a new partnership established during the conference. The ministry already had computers, but the only contact he made during the conference will supply the necessary software. The outcomes of this plan will be better communication and distribution of information among different sectors. If the plan is not as successful as expected, it will still provide new energy, new knowledge about science and technology, better data collection, and a new cartography and management information system on software. The plan was to be set in motion as soon as the participant returned home from the conference; positive results will be immediate; and the participant will introduce the new software to 21 different sectors in a meeting in July of 1998.

2. Canada
The second participant (private sector in Canada) said that the most important thing she gained was enrichment from meeting people and women’s groups from all over the world. The conference also helped her develop partnerships. Because of her participation in GK ’97, she plans to start four new projects in partnerships with other Canadians (a private firm in Quebec) and with the International Francophone Organization. Projects will be about women and technology, and technology and community development. The new partnerships she has developed with organizations during the conference will help her with these projects.

This participant planned to put her ideas in motion as soon as she returned home from the conference, and expected positive results in the next two months for some projects, in six months for others, and some in the long term. This participant said she purposely missed many sessions to have more time to meet people and make partnerships. For this reason, she will be able to start four new projects. She said that if she attended the sessions, she would not have had time to do so.

3. Benin and Gabon
Two women from Africa, one from the Benin government and the other from a women’s NGO in Gabon, said that the most important thing they have gained from this conference was making contacts and getting people’s addresses. Significantly, since they do not yet have access to Internet tools and technology, they could not start any specific projects because of their participation in GK ’97. (One has a computer at work, but no Internet; the other has Internet lines, but no computer.) However, they planned to have information sessions to educate people and to try to make their governments interested in the Internet. They also planned to write reports and establish partnerships, which they said they did not have time to do during conference.

The outcome these women hope for most is to get onto the Internet. The minimum they hope to achieve is informing teachers about the benefits of technology and the Internet in teaching, or informing women about the Internet in rural and urban areas. They said they would start working toward their goals as soon they returned from the conference and hope to be able to get the Internet between 1998 and the year 2000.

All participants from Africa said that the Internet is very hard to access in their countries, because it is very expensive. They worry about the costs of accessing information, and they are not sure their countries will be able to afford all the new technology. They also would like:
♦ One year free membership to the Internet
♦ A report from the conference in French with a summary of the sessions (to assist in their requests to the government)
♦ An information network, which would allow participants to keep others informed on their progress
♦ To be informed of the next similar conference.

In Africa, women are the minority in decisionmaking positions. More women should be invited to these conferences. We would like to be informed and invited to all preliminary sessions for each conference, so that the needs and interests of our countries could be taken into consideration and be part of the conference agenda.

You should invite the person or a representative, so that if the person invited cannot go, someone else from the same organization can attend.

Focus group with participants from Burkina Faso, Benin, Guinea, Cameroon; five men, one woman:
A. Impressions of the Global Knowledge '97 Conference

*Strengths*
- The conference has reinforced information and understanding that they have developed on this subject through reading.
- Speakers have been able to articulate some of their concerns, insights, and hunches.
- The program featured a wide variety of choices.
- The discussion about women at the women’s breakfast!

*Weaknesses*
- Not enough time for discussion and dialogue during each session
- The “experts” talk too long and act as though only they have information and insights to share.

> Knowledge is created through teaching and learning, not in just one direction, but in both directions.

**VII. EXHIBITORS**

*We made a commitment that even if we aren’t the “solution,” we will assist these organizations in the technological arena. There is a desperate need to help them.*

*ICT represents a frontier of opportunity.*

(Conference participant)

Of the 50 exhibitors, 32 responded to a special end of exhibit questionnaire, for a response rate of 64 percent.

A. Types of Exhibitors
For the most part, the exhibitors consisted of governments and governmental or international organizations, large private sector businesses, and other large organizations. Exceptions occurred only when someone else paid the exhibit fee on a small organization’s behalf. This was the case for some of the smaller NGOs and at least one small Internet service provider. The available exhibit space was not completely sold.

B. Reaching the Audiences
Of those who responded, 62 percent of exhibitors said the conference met their expectations; another 19 percent said GK ‘97 exceeded their expectations.

C. Number Visiting Exhibit
Most exhibitors were relatively happy with the number of conferees who passed by their booths. A few in back corners were not as pleased, but most had several hundred visitors per day: 60 percent had between 100 and 500 visitors; 19 percent reported between 500 and 1,000 visitors; and 9 percent said they had over 1,000 visitors per day. In applicable cases, most of those who passed by the exhibit stopped to try some type of interactive demonstration of equipment, software, or materials.

D. Impact on Potential Areas of Future Exploration/New Products
The majority of exhibitors (72 percent) said they thought they had benefited by gaining leads for future product exploration. Those who responded affirmatively to this question mentioned several kinds of leads to new products, materials, or future exploration—most of them based on networking:
- Exploration possibilities of new partnerships—more visibility for our work—new ideas
- Exchange of ideas for future co-operation in knowledge management tools and multimedia/animation products
- Usage of software for our disaster management applications
- Variety of business opportunities with new partners and in different countries
- Future travel, expositions, presentations, and partnerships are now more possible than ever before!
E. Exhibitor Satisfaction

1. Logistical Arrangements
Exhibitors said they were very pleased with the logistical arrangements (54 percent were satisfied or very satisfied). They noted very few glitches.
- All the meals, coffee, and soda setups, etc., provided to the participants were greatly appreciated.
- Organizers should have advised about need for: (a) blue badge for all members of team; (b) visit by dignitaries. ("Some of our team were stuck outside!"")
- Insufficient number of exhibitor passes was available initially.
- Setup was behind schedule.
- Lack of contact person re setup.

2. Traffic (Number of Persons Visiting Exhibit)
Live demonstrations of CD application replace booklets or printed products, which makes this a desirable way to bring products to the public. Exhibitors were pleased with the fairly steady flow of visitors through the exhibit hall (41 percent). Volume dropped during other conference activities such as plenaries. A few of the exhibitors complained about low traffic in the hall (3 percent).

We were very disappointed with the location of our booth. It was squashed in behind other exhibits. Much time and effort went into our participation at this conference. Because of our location, we do not feel we reached our target audiences and obtained the visibility we hoped to achieve in an international context.

3. Space Arrangements
Exhibitors generally thought that the Sheraton Toronto was an excellent choice for this conference (37 percent were rated the arrangements with a 5 or 6 on a 6-point scale). Only 9 percent rated the arrangements at the lowest end of the scale. Reasons for dissatisfaction included:
- Exhibitors needed water.
- One day, air conditioning was off from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. ("Hall was too hot much of the time.")
- Inadequate space for displaying publications
- Internet line installed but not used unless they asked for it.

4. Opportunities for Interaction with Participants
On the positive side, 60 percent of exhibitors thought that conference participants had little problem speaking with exhibitors or obtaining demonstrations, where applicable. However, some logistical arrangements might have had a negative impact on traffic through the exhibit hall, as 30 percent of exhibitors rated the opportunities for interaction at the lowest end of a 6-point scale. Their comments included:
- Suggest that organizers reconsider the idea of serving food immediately after the opening of the forum. It resulted in distorted traffic—many people during the first hour and many fewer on subsequent days.
- Other than Monday from 12-2:30 (lunch), events were not regularly scheduled in the exhibit area.
- Because of conference working sessions, little free time was available for participants to wander through the forum.

Fantastic! This has changed my students, school, community, and my career in so many positive ways that the impact will not be known for some time to come!

5. Cost of Exhibit Space
Fees ($4,000-$5,000 for a booth, plus $600 for each computer provided with an Internet connection) seemed to affect participation and created a contentious issue. One private-sector service provider said, unprompted, that they and other small companies could not afford the fee to get into the exhibit area, although small companies carry out much innovative work in technology. This seemed to affect exhibitor responses to this item: 50 percent rated the cost of exhibit space 1 or 2, at the lowest end of a 6-point scale. Only 9 percent thought the cost was reasonable.

One NGO exhibitor hoped their presence in the Knowledge and Technology Forum would increase the organization’s visibility and help market its services. While this organization purchased exhibit space, the representative said that they could not afford the fee for an Internet connection, so were not able to demonstrate many of their relevant services. The representative questioned whether the exhibit was worth
the fee—perhaps they would have done just as well through informal networking during the conference.

6. Assistance from Conference Organizers/Staff/Aides
Exhibitors agreed that this was a well-organized conference, with good management response to the unexpected last minute surge in attendance (56 percent rated this item 5 or 6 on a 6-point scale and only 3 percent gave it a low-end 1 rating). Their reasons for satisfaction included:

- Staff members/convnetion management group were helpful.

   All contractor staff excellent, without exception went out of their way to help!

   I was genuinely impressed by the caliber of exhibit vendors who coordinated this conference.

There were reasons for dissatisfaction as well:

- Conference organizers/staff asked us to call for assistance rather than making the call themselves.
- Generally the staff did not go out of their way to assist.

F. Anticipated Gain for Participants
Above all, exhibitors wanted conference participants to become familiar with their company or organization. Exposure to technology within the context of the company/organizational purpose was paramount for exhibitors. On this item, 63 percent of exhibitors who responded rated gain for participants as a high-end 5 or 6 on a 6-point scale; 3 percent rated gain as 1; and another 22 percent rated gain as a moderate 2 or 3. Comments included these perspectives on what exhibitors wanted to achieve through their exhibits:

- We tried to provide a successful model for community access to the wonderful world of ICT.

- Availability of new tools for child development programming, life skills building for adolescents, and youth gender development.
- To see that economic and statistical information can be presented in a very powerful and colorful way on interactive CD-ROM.
- The awareness that Canada is a good source of quality learning materials, deliverable electronically.
- A better sense of UNDP and what we do in cyberspace—interest in collaborating with UNDP. Recognition that UNDP has become a major multicultural player in the InfoTech area.
- The knowledge of what is available on Eurostat CD’s. Knowledge of the work of the British Council through our display material and our Internet site.

Contacts, Contacts, CONTACTS !!!

I hope the participants will access our Internet address for more info.

An appreciation that anyone, and particularly any company, can and should be on the Web.

VIII. CONFERENCE ORGANIZERS
Seventeen conference organizers returned end of session surveys.

A. Attendance at Sessions
Organizers reported the following attendance patterns at their seminars:

- 35 percent—fewer than ten people
- 53 percent—10 to 30 people
- 12 percent—31 to 50 people.

Over 70 percent of their seminars ran over a two-day period.

B. Impact on Potential Areas of Future Exploration/New Products
Sixty-five percent of organizers who responded thought that their seminar or panel would result in future
exploration of innovative ideas or new technological products.

C. Extent of Networking Facilitated by Session
Organizers observed much apparent informal networking and partnership-building during, after, or because of their sessions. Fifty-nine percent responded 5 or 6 on a 6-point scale; another 41 percent rated networking and partnership at the moderate level (3 or 4). No one responded at the low end of the scale (1 or 2).

IX. UNSOLICITED LETTERS

We will eventually look back on GK '97 as a seminal event in the Bank's institutional development and its concomitant ability to affect positively the lives of billions of people.

(Sponsor/exhibitor)

A. Unsolicited Letters to World Bank President Wolfensohn and Organizers

Literally hundreds of letters and E-mail messages poured into the World Bank Headquarters after GK '97 closed. (This analysis covers those received during the first month.) Almost without exception, the letters praised the Bank and the Government of Canada for hosting a "wildly successful" meeting and gave kudos to the broad range of private sector sponsors who supported the gathering. A few selected comments sent by government leaders, students, sponsors, NGOs, ICT specialists, development managers, and many others, are summarized below.

B. Impressions of the Global Knowledge '97 Conference

The letters emphasized that the conference was a massive undertaking that was extremely well implemented. They praised the work of conference organizers and the hosting institutions.

♦ The work of the Independent Committee was critical to the meeting's success.
♦ The meeting "vastly exceeded" expectations of many sponsors.
♦ The organizers were an "amazingly talented group" who worked tirelessly to achieve a lofty goal.

I can only imagine the amount of time and dedication you and your colleagues went through to put this together in such record time. To have something of this magnitude, with such potential impact, pulled off in such a short period, is nothing short of a miracle! (U.S.A.)

The brilliant success this conference achieved is mainly due to the tremendous efforts exerted by the World Bank staff in charge. (Morocco)

C. The Conference's Greatest Impact

The letters stressed that the conference in and of itself made an important commitment to bringing ICT to the developing world in a responsible way. It indisputably placed ICT on the development agenda, but the aftermath of the meeting will be equally important in ensuring its long-range impacts.

♦ It was an impressive event, but the follow-up will be the test.
♦ The presence of Mr. Wolfensohn at the Women's Breakfast, which underscored the commitment to the principle of men and women's equal involvement in ICT.
♦ The development community needs to do all in its capacity to overcome the gap between rich and poor. (Italy)

D. Most Important Gains from the Conference

The conference provided a learning experience that both extended and reinforced knowledge. It also served as an inspiration for people from all sectors to take advantage of the power of ICT in building a more equitable, connected world.

This was a valuable learning experience for myself and colleagues...as we put broadcast and Internet technologies together for both human development and other purposes. (U.S.A.)
I came away absolutely fired up about the role and need of information and knowledge for development, with a suitcase full of new and stimulating ideas, insights, wisdom, project plans, and haven’t stopped talking about the conference since. I am determined and motivated to contribute in whichever small way I can.

E. Plans for New Ideas, Initiatives, Projects, or Strategies

Almost all letters expressed interest in being involved in follow-up projects or conferences. Some had concrete plans, others simply expressed hopes that they would be able to make the requisite connections in the very near future with others in their own country or internationally.

Even after the unavoidable technical problems, and attached stress, the videoconferences and the broadcast by the National TV have already produced two results: People all over the country attended the sessions and are locally discussing the issues; various public, academic, and private institutions are seriously considering the use of these tools to enhance the coverage and participation of their meetings and programs, including the broadcasting by local TV and the University networks. (Colombia)

Igalaaq was able to hire four local students to run the Rankin Inlet Access Centre this summer, thanks to a grant from Industry Canada’s Community Access Program. This has meant nearly $10,000 of support for our youth in their pursuit of technological empowerment and economic self-sufficiency. (Canada)

We have convened a group of scholars and educators to develop the thought that knowledge, broadly construed and properly framed, can become the organizing principle for society in the next century. (U.S.A.)

We would be interested in putting on an international conference on educational technology. (U.S.A.)

I would like to...confirm [our] willingness to promote cooperation with the World Bank for the benefit of Muslim countries in the educational, scientific, and cultural fields of common interest. (Morocco)

F. Building Partnerships

Some letters invited specific arrangements for World Bank cooperation. Almost all underscored the need to continue bridging the private sector/public sector gap and reducing the information gap.

Anything the World Bank could do to strengthen our own capacity to participate fully in rural and human development programmes will be most greatly appreciated. (Uganda)

Our successful collaboration marks an excellent first step in tackling these challenges...but we will need to carry forward the momentum of GK ’97. (Canada)
PART VIII: CONCLUSIONS  
AND SUGGESTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

I walk away with a positive feeling about this conference—and I go to many conferences! I give it an A.

I. CONCLUSIONS
This evaluation of Global Knowledge '97 was intended to provide general information relevant to planning future meetings and specific ideas for making such a meeting as successful as possible.

A. Information for future planners of possible follow-up meetings to the GK ‘97 concerning:
- The desire of participants to attend another such meeting.
- The people who might want to be involved in planning.
- The barriers to implementing another such meeting.
- The primary activities that would attract participants to future meetings.

1. The desire of participants to attend another such meeting is high.
Based upon the findings from this evaluation, it can safely be predicted that participants in Global Knowledge ‘97 (and people like them) would be very interested in similar meetings in the future. Some participants spoke of “Global Knowledge 2000” as a likely successor to the Toronto conference. The topic of how knowledge and information can be harnessed for development is enormously salient for these participants. Their need for conceptual understanding about information technologies matches their eagerness to learn about the practical experiences of various countries.

2. The people who might want to be involved in planning include all sectors.
Participants strongly suggested that planning for a future should occur far enough in advance to allow for even more meaningful involvement and input from all key players, especially NGOs, the private sector, and governments of developing countries.

3. The barriers to implement another such meeting center on the costs of travel and registration.
Participants considered the costs of Global Knowledge ’97 as too high for the average academic, NGO, government, or nonprofit organization to support. They worried that the registration fee, on top of the high costs of international travel, presented too heavy a burden for the very people who should attend. Although many participants were sponsored this time around, participants expressed concern that an expensive conference sends a message of elitism.

4. The primary activities that would attract participants to future meetings include more opportunities for dialogue and practical experience with technology.
Participants could not have been clearer in expressing their intense desire to have structured, planned, well-organized opportunities for dialogue and discussion on this topic with people facing similar challenges. A future conference planned to maximize such opportunities through smaller and fewer panels, shorter plenaries, and more “open space” activities would be very attractive. Similarly, people will be drawn to a conference that is built around interactive technologies and that gives participants a chance to learn about “best practices,” successful and failed experiments, and case studies. They will also attend a gathering in which open debate focuses on how to enter the ICT revolution in an equitable way.

B. Information for World Bank task managers in operations, country teams in operations, and other staff regarding:
- The types of development activities that may be relevant to pursue in the coming years
- The nature of present and potential information and knowledge technologies on global, regional, and local development processes
- Useful information for organizers, task managers, and other staff on how they can improve the quality of future conferences.

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The evaluation team assumes that task managers who attended Global Knowledge '97, participated in the GKD97 List, or read this report will draw their own conclusions on the first two items. The next section addresses the third item, useful information for improving future conferences.

II. TOWARD THE FUTURE: SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS

Participants offered dozens of suggestions for prospective conferences on global knowledge and the role of Information and Communication Technology in development. The following recommendations emerge from comments made by participants on the "IDEAS" Form and in the open-ended sections of participant, organizer, and exhibitor forms. Recommendations by the evaluation team members also appear in this section, as indicated.

A. Ideas/Recommendations for the Future: LANGUAGE

Conferees
1. Have English speakers keep and use the translation devices. Organizers should not assume that an international conference is a unilingual event. Emphasize that translation devices are for everyone, not just those who do not speak English. Some people felt they went unheard because they asked questions in French and Spanish, but many people did not pick up the translators.

B. Ideas/Recommendations for the Future: PARTICIPATION

Conferees
1. Integrate women into all facets of the conference. Participation of women and attention to gender issues in development should not be "add-ons" to the program. Participants thought that this conference clearly showed the lack of meaningful advanced planning and integration of gender into the program. Panels should be "less male."
2. Include sessions on women and technology.
3. Have more voices of people of the South, and not just government voices. Future conferences should involve more participants from developing countries, especially from Southeast Asia, where lessons can be successfully learned.
4. Highlight a few developing countries to demonstrate how they achieved "equitable access to information."
5. Involve librarians and archivists in the conference debate, intellectually and practically.
6. Send invitations to the "Director of International Development."

Have more space and time to think and share.

Evaluators
1. Invite country teams that include planning offices, development agencies, NGOs, academics, etc.
2. Well before the conference, ask participants from developing countries to draft plans and funding ideas for specific projects. Use these as the basis for "case study sessions."
3. Schedule meeting time for each country team at the beginning of the program (to fine-tune their draft plan) and at the end (to relate responses to country-specific situations).
4. Ensure that each case study session includes a variety of participants from the private sector, international development agencies, and from developing countries that have tried similar projects.

C. Ideas/Recommendations for the Future: NETWORK AND PARTNERSHIP BUILDING

Conferees
1. Reduce the number of participants. A smaller conference would make networking easier.
2. Limit the structured, scheduled part of the agenda. Participants suggested that sessions, plenaries, and even dinners should not be scheduled after 6:00 p.m. If the conference is overscheduled, participants
will interact informally by “running away during sessions.” The working time in Toronto (7:45 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.) was too long.

3. **Stick to the posted schedule.** In Toronto, many sessions ran over their allotted time, thereby crowding out the next session. A schedule with more flexibility and breathing space should be easier to follow.

4. **Hold “partner-finding sessions” for future cooperation on projects.** Participants thought that taking “the partnership approach, not working top-down,” would better serve the needs of conference: “This is not an inter-agency discussion, but bringing together different partners.”

5. **Provide an up-to-date database of participants and their specialized areas.** It would be most helpful to have a preliminary list before the conference (with registration confirmations) and a current list as the conference opens. Organizers could supply a final list on the last day or as follow-up to the conference.

6. **Construct the participant list alphabetically, by country,** including telephone/fax/E-mail, and put it on the Internet.

7. **Provide a list of speakers** in alphabetical order, giving their lodging information and topics.

8. **Provide a list of conference staff** with telephone numbers and responsibilities.

9. **Design a message system,** preferably an electronic one (“a pager for every participant”).

> There were many people here whom I knew, but I did not know that until the end.

**Evaluators**

1. **Use poster sessions to promote more mingling and exchange of ideas.** Poster sessions have more flexibility in time and location and encourage discussion.

2. **Hold a half-day orientation/seminar for student aides.** Identify learning objectives for them; arrange for them to meet country teams; hold two-hour debriefing after the conference. This is beyond the orientation for their support role.

3. **Assign students mentors** who will help them network at the conference.

**D. Ideas/Recommendations for the Future: LOGISTICS**

**Conferees**

1. **Provide more and better pre-conference information.**

2. **Hold all sessions in one hotel.**

3. **Have better distribution of vital information** to all hotels, i.e., daily summaries, airline information, etc.

4. **Have better dissemination of information on parallel meetings or working groups (sponsors, etc.) at the information booths.**

5. **Help developing country participants with air and baggage problems**

6. **Employ a system for recycling** (paper, cans, bottles, plastic name badges). Place recycling boxes beside trash cans for paper and drink containers.

7. **Improve food and beverages:**
   - Have bottled water available in addition to juice and pop. Canned drinks cannot be carried around as easily as bottled drinks.
   - Include vegetarian food choices at all meals. (“I was promised a vegetarian meal but never received it.”) Label food for vegetarians and those with other special dietary requirements. Do not mix meat with vegetables, etc.
   - Have box lunches on Monday, rather than a cafeteria-style lunch.
   - Do not have packaged “take-away” food, which people stockpile. (“I’ve had to buy my food elsewhere.”)

8. **Provide child care facilities and crèche.**

**Evaluators**

1. **Ensure greater clarity in advance regarding who can attend** to lessen confusion and contribute to a better conference experience.

2. **Carefully monitor the booking system for Open Space meetings.**

3. **Have separate pass types** (e.g., “[title] session only,” “day pass,” and “full conference”). This would solve problem of local people not being able to connect with international visitors.

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E. Ideas/Recommendations for the Future: STRUCTURE

Conferees
1. Have fewer concurrent sessions.
2. Structure more time spent working together during working sessions.
3. Allow more time for dialogue among participants. Allocate mandatory time at the end of each session for open discussion. ("This is crucial.")
4. Set minimum times for session discussion and maximum times for panel presentations.
5. Have many more interactive sessions. Allow for more debates with participants.
6. Have fewer formal speeches/presentations at working sessions so some dialogue could occur. Have fewer panelists.
7. Reduce substantially the number and length of official speeches; have shorter plenaries. Plenaries should provide time for at least five to ten questions.

Sessions must be more participatory if ideas are to progress.

More discussion! More time for reflection on issues.

Evaluators
1. Rethink the conference length. The structure was either too long or too short for many participants. Five days would have allowed for more networking and content depth; two days would have simply put the topic on the agenda and planted seeds.
2. Extend the conference day with informal dinners (without speeches), networking coffee hours in smaller rooms after dinner, and better organized open spaces in the later evening hours.

F. Ideas/Recommendations for the Future: PRESENTATION STYLE

Conferees
1. Find a mechanism to screen out poor presenters. For future conferences, develop a strict speaker qualification and briefing system. Even high-ranking people (e.g., chief economists of the World Bank or vice presidents of large corporations) should not read papers or present sales pitches.
2. Give training and advice to World Bank staff (and others) on how to make effective presentations. Speaking at double speed to cram in more information does not generate effective communication.
3. Explore ways to remove the "talking heads" model and ask presenters to model in their presentations the virtues of the technologies they espouse.

There were good presenters and poor presenters. There was also good content and poor or no content.

This kind of conference needs an innovative structure that allows for the interaction/sharing across cultures and experiences without the mediation of "official logorrhea."

Quantity does not necessarily translate into quality.

Evaluators
1. Allow more preparation time.
2. Facilitate consistency of good preparation by giving presenters written guidelines on how to make a good presentation and facilitate discussion.

G. Ideas/Recommendations for the Future: CONTENT

Conferees
1. Allow sufficient time for the participants to prepare. Send them the details of plenary and sessions to make the conference more results oriented.
2. Provide speakers' comments immediately after each session.
3. Devote more time to specific issues.
4. Have more plenaries with more specific presentations that can be applied universally.
5. Have fewer parallel working sessions so that others do not miss critical content.
6. Have fewer technology-led presentations.
7. Ask experts on knowledge management to hold workshops.
8. Include cultural, social, and funding issues.
9. Have more speakers who give examples.
10. End some sessions with action plans for the future and follow-up plans.

I would love to see more elaboration about alternative energy (solar/wind) for the poor and microfinanced. This could have a huge potential for huge numbers of poor people. (NGO)

We got many ideas, but from a company point of view, we needed information on how to get funds for projects—we didn’t get that information here. (Corporate)

Evaluators
1. If the track model is used, make sure that content areas overlap as little as possible.
2. Designate “hands-on,” technology-oriented sessions with an asterisk.
3. On first day of conference, include a plenary session that encourages participants to question assumptions about the “universal good” of technology. Explore the possible positive and negative impacts on “the haves and the have-nots.” Encourage critical thinking throughout the sessions.

H. Ideas/Recommendations for the Future: TECHNOLOGY

Conferees
1. Provide E-mail access for participants.
2. Pay more attention to other more traditional mass communication means, such as TV and radio. (“For the foreseeable future, radio is far better positioned to raise the knowledge base of the world’s poor, i.e., the majority.”)
3. Have a practical demonstration series for deep understanding of the subject of intermediate technology.
4. Pay more attention to intellectual property rights (IPR) protection.
5. Place more emphasis on content/software and not merely on infrastructure and high tech systems.
6. Start an Internet project. A compendium of Internet sites related to development would be most helpful. This is another way of stimulating learning and foster interactivity for distance education.
   - Open and maintain a permanent database of participants and experts in global knowledge.
   - Start an on-going “chat line” feedback on the Internet for those not able to attend in person.
7. Offer more hands-on experience with the new technologies.
8. Add a training/demonstration event on surfing the WWW, designing a web page, and accessing information.
9. Provide papers on diskette. The Internet is very expensive for many participants.

Developing countries are missing out on the intellectual property rights issue!

Evaluators
1. Have larger and better-equipped Cybercafes. Explore alternative approaches for maximizing availability and improving personal technical assistance.
2. Better incorporate off-site conferences by linking them in electronically and making them part of a plenary session.
3. Publicize the discussion list pre-conference in order to solicit ideas and help presenters prepare.
4. Enlarge the Knowledge and Technology Forum, not necessarily with more exhibitors but with more space in the aisles and for each exhibit.
5. For large sessions (such as plenaries or popular working sessions), institute a system of computer terminals placed strategically around the room for people to type in questions from the floor. Presenters in the closing sessions can initiate discussion of the questions or attempt to respond to some of them.
6. Integrate technology throughout the conference. Participants said they found the virtual medium more vigorous and interesting.

Exhibitors, regarding the Knowledge and Technology Forum
1. **Link exhibits to the program.** Refer to the various companies present at the booths during the working sessions if the company has related expertise in that area.
2. To enhance exhibit exposure, **have coffee setups inside the exhibit hall.**

   *For example, session #1 on June 23—Empowering the Poor—attendees may have been interested in visiting our booth to see a low-cost solution to their concerns.*

I. **Ideas/Recommendations for the Future: PUBLICITY AND MEDIA COVERAGE**

   **Conferees**
   Participants raised several questions about the extent of pre-conference publicity and media coverage of the Global Knowledge ‘97 Conference. Some observers believe that coverage was minimal (other than the *Financial Post* supplement prepared directly by the conference sponsor). They thought this was especially surprising given the size and stature of the conference, that it took place in Toronto, was co-hosted by the Canadian Government, and featured the Governor General and several Canadian ministers as speakers. Several people said that the organizers missed an opportunity to publicize essential messages from the conference regarding, for example, the Virtual Conference and the role of ICT in the development process. Participants raised these main questions: If there was a lower than normal rate of coverage for a conference of this type and size, was it due to lack of interest or lack of an effectively planned and implemented communications strategy?

   1. **Any future post-conference evaluation should examine publicity and media coverage,** because for a major conference it may have some bearing on its cost-effectiveness and on who attends.

   2. **Schedule future conferences so they do not compete with other major development events.** Participants noted that GK ‘97 overlapped with the G8 meeting in Denver and the Rio Earth Summit follow-up conference at the UN, both of which received significant coverage. Did the lack of media interest in GK ‘97 reflect that conflict?

   3. **Target selected, relevant media that routinely focuses on economic development.**

      *The World Bank has a leading role in shaping the opinions of the donor countries. It needs to focus on attitude before being able to raise money for poor countries. The Bank should not bother with the mass media. It should target the media outlets that need to be shaped, like The Economist, which do not carry a lot of baggage.* (Corporate)

J. **Ideas/Recommendations for the Future: FOLLOW-UP WITH PARTICIPANTS**

   **Conferees**
   Participants commented that the conference must be viewed as “a starting point,” not an end product. For that reason, they considered follow-up activities as important, if not more so, than the conference itself. Some had heard that the World Bank plans to coordinate a series of focused conferences as a follow-up to GK ‘97. They want to be involved in setting the agenda for such conferences.

   1. **Solicit ideas and needs from those who attended GK ‘97** before setting the future conference agendas.

   2. **Have workshops in each region** for five or six days on disseminating the technology.

   **Evaluators**

   1. **Review the “Your Plans” forms submitted as part of the GK ‘97 evaluation process** in order to identify concrete, practical topics for regional workshops.

   2. **Ensure that a list of participants is distributed via E-mail or postal mail to all who attended GK ‘97.**

III. **TECHNOLOGY AND GK ‘97: SOME LESSONS LEARNED**

In keeping with its theme, an integral part of the conference included experiments with a variety of “virtual conference” activities. Many participants indicated that they were the best part of the conference. In particular, the GKD97 discussion List generated a high level of participation and interaction from around the world. It identified a high number of specific case examples related to the conference themes, drawing upon the experience of List participants. Many conference attendees who were also List participants said that the latter was better than the actual conference, in terms of both content and process. It is noteworthy
that the List operated via E-mail, the "lowest tech" Internet function, and the most readily available and least expensive of Internet applications.

The conference also featured a live, on-line discussion, bringing together virtual participants from around the world with delegates in Toronto. This discussion created enormous excitement. Many of those in attendance described it as the highlight of the conference.

Other forms of virtual conferencing were tried, including RealAudio broadcasts of conference plenary speeches and videoconferencing that linked the conference in Toronto with events in other parts of the world. These were not as successful. The technology demonstrated its potential for the future, but most people still have very limited access to other Internet functions, even to the World Wide Web. These techniques require careful planning to enable meaningful interaction and application.

In summary, the conference demonstrated the potential of virtual conferencing. Indeed, the greatest benefit and legacy of the conference may be its virtual conference aspects, in particular the GKD97 discussion List. GKD97 continues beyond the formal conclusion of the physical conference and can provide many opportunities to act upon the implications of the conference.

A critical lesson learned is that these technologies do not work by themselves. People and ideas get lost in the clutter of cyberspace. In the late twentieth century, few people have access to advanced Internet functions. Human intervention, with careful planning and thoughtful moderation, is a prerequisite to widespread use and to effective impact of this new technology.

In conclusion, many seeds were planted by Global Knowledge '97. Some will generate future interaction, sharing of ideas with colleagues, and collaboration on international development projects. Despite its shortcomings, which are typical of such an ambitious undertaking, this conference successfully provided participants with new knowledge, practical information, and access to technologies that they had never experienced. The vast majority of participants look forward to similar meetings—both actual and virtual—in the future.

Will donors, policymakers make a statement or specific pledge of funds they will invest in marginalized groups, i.e., grassroots groups and women?

Global Knowledge '97 was an exploration. There is a big gap concerning information technology and learning between developed countries and developing countries. We need to close the gap, but key players—government ministers and parliamentarians—need to understand. We had our independence 17 years ago, so we require education and awareness before we will see a good change for all and reduction of telecom costs.

A very useful and enjoyable conference. Thank you!
ANNEX A
EVALUATION DESIGN

I. KEY ASPECTS OF THE EVALUATION
Several methods of data collection were used in order to improve the quality of analysis. Because of the unique ICT aspects of the conference, one evaluation consultant was tasked to observe the Cybercafe, monitor the pre-conference “GKD97” Internet discussions, and monitor the post-conference “virtual conference” discussions.

Because of the diversity of conference registrants, and the conference location in officially bilingual Canada, conferees had the opportunity to respond on forms in English, French, or Spanish. Individual and focus group interviews were conducted in English and in French and interviewers were selected for their facility in at least one of these languages.

Every effort was made to ensure that all constituencies were involved in the evaluation. Every twentieth evaluation form in English and every tenth form in French or Spanish included an invitation to participate in a focus group in the appropriate language. Virtually all conferees were made aware of the evaluation process and over 1,500 surveys were distributed. Over one-third of the participants returned the forms and approximately 100 were interviewed formally or informally (in focus groups or individually).

The evaluation collected baseline data on future plans and Internet access that can be used for follow-up studies of effectiveness and impact. Data collection took place through many different channels:

- Unobtrusive measures, such as analysis of the conference registration database, provided information about respondent demographics.
- Direct observation and participant observation monitored how many participants gravitated toward activities, especially the Knowledge and Technology Forum, but also Open Spaces, Plenaries, and other sessions.
- Individual and focus group interviews measured participant opinions, ideas, and satisfaction levels.
- A conference entry form tapped participant expectations and anticipated gains from the conference.
- An end of conference evaluation form permitted assessment of whether the Global Knowledge ‘97 Conference achieved its primary objectives and met participant expectations.
- A “Your Plans” form asked participants to elaborate on any partnerships that emerged from the conference and plans for the future that directly emanated from the conference.
- An end-of-session evaluation form asked session organizers to assess networking, interaction, and involvement, as well as how and whether key learning objectives were met in their session.;
- End-of-session counts by student aides estimated number of attendees.
- Idea forms could be submitted at any time during the conference by participants, organizers, and sponsors attendees.

The Activity Brief (page iii) presents an overview of the evaluation model including what data were collected, for what purpose, and using what method.

II. EVALUATION ASSESSMENT
Prior to the evaluation, the evaluators reviewed its design and potential outputs with potential users of the evaluation findings. Where feasible, the design and/or instruments were altered to meet their specific needs.

III. SCHEDULE AND RESOURCES
Managing forms on-site was coordinated by the evaluation consultants with the assistance of evaluation staff and student volunteers. After the conference, questionnaires were coded and entered into an SPSS database in Washington by a graduate student intern attached to EDI. Group Dimensions staff summarized
interview and observational data. The organizers provided conference registration data. All survey data were analyzed and implications drawn by evaluation consultants for this report.

Group Dimensions evaluators (Dr. Janet Mancini Billson and Dr. Norman T. London), contracted by EDI, arrived the afternoon the conference began; a local consultant (Mr. Burt Perrin) arranged pre-conference training of student volunteers slated to help distribute and recover evaluation forms and ensured that pre-conference evaluation forms were given to conference registrants as they registered. These evaluators plus EDI Evaluation Advisor Dr. Ray Rist and a Francophone evaluation assistant based in Toronto, Ms. Pascale Labrecque, conducted interviews and staffed an evaluation table to distribute and collect evaluation forms throughout the conference. In Washington, EDI intern Ms. Padma Karunaratne assisted with coding and took responsibility for data entry.

IV. RISKS AND COMPLICATIONS
A. Confidentiality
All data were gathered and reported according to prevailing standards of respondent protection and anonymity. To maintain confidentiality, but still allow matching of pre- and post-conference measures, each participant was asked to use a code number randomly assigned to evaluation forms. Participants were then asked to write that number on the conference entry form and the end of conference evaluation form. Compliance to this request was very low, allowing for comparison of only 120 paired forms. However, this number was sufficient to draw some basic conclusions about pre-post similarities, differences, and trends.

B. Action Plans
Requesting an action plan at the end of a conference often generates superficial and optimistic responses. This form encouraged participants to be specific about timelines, milestones, and other people in their organization who would be able to discuss the results of any activities arising from the conference. We expected about a 30 percent compliance rate, but over half of those who returned forms filled out the “Your Plans” section.

C. Multiple Interviewers
A locally hired staff assistant who is fluent in French aided four experienced interviewers (one from EDI and three consultants). In order to avoid inconsistency in interviewing style, interviewers followed the same guides and were briefed on-site by the lead evaluation consultant (Billson). All coding of qualitative data was done under her supervision in order to ensure consistency of interpretation.

D. Code Numbering Questionnaires
We expected to encounter some problems in getting participants to use code numbers on the pre-post questionnaires and on gaining session leader cooperation in permitting adequate time and motivation to complete the questionnaires. The extent of these problems was apparent on the first day of the first conference. The conference organizers, task managers, and session leaders were asked to encourage cooperation, and announcements were made during the plenary sessions. Post-conference forms were returned in greatest number after the closing plenary, when evaluation staff reminded participants to turn them in and offered conference posters as an incentive.

E. Use of Suggestion Boxes
Typically, people make little use of suggestion boxes unless they are strongly encouraged to do so by conference leaders. Everyone's registration packet included two “IDEA FORMS,” to be completed and deposited as desired. Extra copies of these forms were usually available from student aides at the door of each session, near a poster encouraging participation in the evaluation process and the Idea/Evaluation Form Box. Student aides and evaluation staff monitored the boxes. Most of these forms contained ideas for future conferences rather than for fine-tuning the present conference.
V. ACTIVITY BRIEF

A. Description
This activity involved (1) participative evaluation planning with task managers and the Global Knowledge '97 Conference organizers, (2) on-site interviewer training and data collection, (3) analysis and feedback of the findings to EDI. The evaluation plan was designed in such a way that short-term follow-up research can be conducted to assess specific evidence of implementation barriers and successes in the period following the conference.

B. Justification
The organizers hypothesized that the multi-audience, multi-sector nature of the Global Knowledge '97 Conference would create a synergy that cannot be assessed by single-conference evaluation methods. Social events, emphasis on partnership building, and plenaries would establish mutual interests that cut across the individual programs.

C. Objective
The objectives of coordinating and centralizing the evaluation plan were to:
♦ Assess evidence of the synergy which is thought to emerge in multi-audience, multi-sector sessions.
♦ Create a common basis for conducting follow-on research to assess immediate outcomes.

D. Evaluation Design
Six sources of data were used in the evaluation:
1. Observation
2. Registration forms
3. Pre- and post-conference questionnaires
4. Face-to-face interviews
5. Suggestion boxes
6. Monitoring of the GK '97 discussion list.

A pre-post method of data collection was used to assess shifts in participants’ opinions and knowledge. To preserve anonymity, participants were given a randomly selected code number at the time of registration. They were encouraged to use this number on all questionnaires. Communications emphasized the need to collect information to accurately identify participants' interests, expectations, and information needs and to ensure that follow-up conferences will focus on the necessary topics and issues.

Opinion leaders were personally interviewed on issues of special interest to the Global Knowledge '97 Conference organizers and task managers.

Suggestion box “idea” forms and other forms included space for open-ended comments.

E. Target Audiences
Global Knowledge '97 Conference organizers, World Bank task managers, the Government of Canada as co-sponsor, as well as EDI generally, will use these data to gain a better understanding of the extent to which this type of forum may or may not achieve the intended synergy. Operations task managers will use the data to help plan forthcoming assistance and studies. Certain information about perceived needs and interests at the local level will certainly be of interest to policymakers, academics, and civil society.

F. Outcomes
Government of Canada/CIDA personnel and World Bank task managers might use the data in the design of follow-up activities. The second phase of the evaluation to look at short- and long-term outcomes will be launched based on these data.

G. Schedule
The evaluation roughly followed this schedule:
♦ Instruments ready: June 10
♦ Interviewers trained on-site, June 22
Data collected: June 22-25
Analysis: June 25-July 31
Preliminary report: September 15
Draft report: October 31.

H. Resource Persons
Five interviewers, each with fluency in one of the primary languages (French, English) were required. One resource person from EDI was on-site. The evaluation advisor interviewed senior officials and sponsors, discussed early evaluation feedback with task managers and conference organizers, assessed opportunities for subsequent outcome studies, and provided administrative support for all data collection activities.

The lead evaluation consultant selected and trained a local Francophone interviewer; developed the interview team strategy and targets, interviewed governmental and academic participants, prepared forms for customized questionnaires, conducted analyses of preliminary evaluation results, and prepared the evaluation report. The three evaluation consultants interviewed NGOs, corporate participants, and Francophone participants from all constituents; monitored the GKD97 Internet discussion list; and helped with distribution and collection of survey forms. All staff engaged in direct and participant observation, and three conducted formal focus groups.

I. Analysis and Reports
The evaluators conferred on-site on the implications of the pre-conference data, met daily on the results of interviews and suggestion box data, and began to develop interpretive themes for the draft report. The basis for coding the open-ended questions was started on site.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE OF INFORMATION</th>
<th>METHOD</th>
<th>TIME OF DATA COLLECTION</th>
<th>PURPOSE SERVED</th>
<th>PERSON RESPONSIBLE</th>
<th>SOURCE OF DATA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expectations—prior to conference</td>
<td>Monitoring/summary of pre-conference discussion on Internet (GKD97)</td>
<td>Prior to conference</td>
<td>Explore perceptions of participants regarding conference purpose, structure, and processes</td>
<td>Perrin monitors and prepares summary statement</td>
<td>Internet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectations—at entry point</td>
<td>Pre-conference Questionnaire: in registration packets</td>
<td>Beginning of conference</td>
<td>Determine expectations for comparison to post-conference satisfaction and learning</td>
<td>Billson prepares for inclusion in packets; London, Perrin, and student volunteers collect from boxes after each session; Karunaratne codes, enters into SPSS</td>
<td>Sample of all participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinion change due to conference</td>
<td>Pre- and post-conference questionnaires: in registration packets</td>
<td>Beginning and end of conference</td>
<td>Determine if conference objectives are achieved</td>
<td>Billson prepares for inclusion in packets; London, Perrin, and student volunteers collect from boxes after each session; Karunaratne codes, enters into SPSS</td>
<td>Sample of all participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning due to conference</td>
<td>Pre- and post-conference questionnaires: in registration packets</td>
<td>Beginning and end of conference</td>
<td>Determine if conference objectives are achieved</td>
<td>Billson prepares for inclusion in packets; London, Perrin, and student volunteers collect from boxes after each session; Karunaratne codes, enters into SPSS</td>
<td>Sample of all participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived value of conference</td>
<td>Interviews: * Some individual * Some focus groups</td>
<td>During and at end of conference</td>
<td>Determine if conference objectives are achieved</td>
<td>Interviews by Rist, Billson, Perrin, London, LaBrecque</td>
<td>Sample of all participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived value of “open space” or ad hoc meetings</td>
<td>Interviews: * Some individual * Some focus groups</td>
<td>During and at end of conference</td>
<td>Determine contribution these add to conference design</td>
<td>Interviews by Rist, Billson, Perrin, London, LaBrecque</td>
<td>Identified by task managers and interviewers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TYPE OF INFORMATION</td>
<td>METHOD</td>
<td>TIME OF DATA COLLECTION</td>
<td>PURPOSE SERVED</td>
<td>PERSON RESPONSIBLE</td>
<td>SOURCE OF DATA</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived value of interactive technology sessions</td>
<td>Interviews: • Some individual • Some focus groups</td>
<td>During and at end of conference</td>
<td>Determine the contribution these add to conference design</td>
<td>Interviews by Rist, Billson, Perrin, London, LaBrecque</td>
<td>Sample of all participants exposed to sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of management and materials</td>
<td>Post-conference questionnaire</td>
<td>At end of conference</td>
<td>Determine quality of materials, resource people, administration</td>
<td>Billson prepares for inclusion in packets; London, Perrin, and student volunteers collect from boxes after each session; Karunarathne codes, enters into SPSS</td>
<td>Sample of all participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synergy among participants</td>
<td>Idea forms</td>
<td>Open space, plenary seating, social events</td>
<td>Determine if interaction plans are achieving objective of facilitating increased participant interaction</td>
<td>Billson prepares for inclusion in packets; London distributes extras to sessions; London, Perrin, and student volunteers collect from boxes after each session; Karunarathne codes, enters into SPSS</td>
<td>Periodic observations of selected events, to be determined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant demographics</td>
<td>Registration forms</td>
<td>At registration</td>
<td>Assess participants' perceptions of the demographic mix against real data</td>
<td>Rist obtains from Middleton; Billson analyzes</td>
<td>All participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plans to use new learning, contacts</td>
<td>“Your Plans” questionnaire (part of post-conference form); interviews</td>
<td>End of conference; after final plenary</td>
<td>Provide for follow-up baseline data</td>
<td>Billson prepares for inclusion in packets; London, Perrin, and student volunteers collect from boxes after each session; Karunarathne codes, enters into SPSS; Interviews by Rist, Billson, Perrin, London, LaBrecque</td>
<td>All participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TYPE OF INFORMATION</td>
<td>METHOD</td>
<td>TIME OF DATA COLLECTION</td>
<td>PURPOSE SERVED</td>
<td>PERSON RESPONSIBLE</td>
<td>SOURCE OF DATA</td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall evaluation of conference</td>
<td>Questionnaire; interviews</td>
<td>End of conference</td>
<td>Determine if conference met objectives; assess partnering and networking opportunities; gather ideas for future</td>
<td>Billson prepares for inclusion in packets; London, Perrin, and student volunteers collect from boxes after each session; Karunaratne codes, enters into SPSS; Interviews by Rist, Billson, Perrin, London, LaBrecque</td>
<td>Identified by task managers and interviewers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Session evaluations</td>
<td>Participants use idea forms; session leaders/organizers use end of session forms</td>
<td>End of session</td>
<td>Determine if session met objectives; assess partnering and networking opportunities; gather ideas for future</td>
<td>London, Perrin, Billson distribute to session leaders; London, Perrin, and student volunteers collect from leaders after each session</td>
<td>All session organizers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsor views</td>
<td>Participant observation in sponsor meeting series</td>
<td>Throughout conference</td>
<td>Determine if conference met objectives; assess partnering and networking opportunities; gather ideas for future</td>
<td>Rist</td>
<td>Sponsors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender-related issues</td>
<td>Participant observation in &quot;Women’s Breakfast&quot;</td>
<td>Tuesday morning</td>
<td>Determine if conference met objectives; assess partnering and networking opportunities; gather ideas for future; listen for gender-related issues</td>
<td>Billson</td>
<td>All interested participants/leaders</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ANNEX B
EVALUATION FORMS AND INTERVIEW GUIDES

1. Enclosure with Pre-Conference Forms

Evaluation is an integral part of any learning experience....

For that reason, we encourage you to fill out the Conference Entry Questionnaire and the End of Conference Evaluation Form that you will find in this registration packet.¹

To assure effective conference follow-up, please also submit your suggestions, ideas, and insights on the “IDEAS” forms enclosed.

If you need additional "idea" forms, you will be able to find them at the door of each session.

You may drop your forms in one of the evaluation/idea boxes that can be found near the door of any Global Knowledge ‘97 session room or in the Conference registration area.

With your input and feedback, we will be able to gauge the effectiveness of Global Knowledge ‘97 and to plan for future conferences.

Participating in the evaluation process is another way of being a partner in the Global Knowledge ‘97 Conference.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation!

¹ After this was printed and placed in the packet, it was decided by the organizers not to include the forms.
2. Conference Entry Questionnaire

As part of the evaluation process for *Global Knowledge '97*, we would like to know your expectations for this Conference. **PLEASE SUBMIT THIS QUESTIONNAIRE BY 12 NOON ON MONDAY, JUNE 23.**

Please write here the number you chose when you picked up this evaluation packet. It enables us to follow your responses through the Conference while maintaining your anonymity:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marking Instructions:</th>
<th>Fill in only one circle for questions 1 through 4 with solid marks that fill the circle completely: ☐ Fill in the remaining questions in writing. Please answer every question.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1. To what extent do you think this Conference will be relevant to your present professional work?

2. To what extent do you think this Conference will enhance understanding of the role of knowledge and information in economic and social development?

3. To what extent do you expect this Conference to provide opportunities for sharing strategies, experiences, and tools in harnessing knowledge for development?

4. To what extent do you expect this Conference to foster new partnerships that empower the poor with knowledge and information using new technologies?

5. Were you aware of the Internet discussion that preceded this Conference? Yes_____ No_____
   If YES, Did you participate in the Internet discussion? Yes_____ No_____
   If you did NOT participate, please list the most important reasons here:

6. Please write here the two topics that you hope to learn about most during this Conference:
   a. 
   b. 

7. Please write here the most important thing you hope to gain from the Conference sessions that might help you in your professional work:

8. Please write here the most important thing you hope to gain from the Knowledge and Information Forum (exhibition hall) that might help you in your professional work:

9. Other comments:

Your Region/Country: __________________________ Your work focus:
Minister/Senior Policy Maker_____ Educator/Academic_____
Business/Industry/Enterprise_____ Donor Agency_____ R&D_____
Multilateral/NGO_____ Media_____ Regional Development Program_____
Information Technology Specialist_____ Other_____________________

Thank you for completing this form. Please drop it in one of the evaluation/idea boxes that can be found near the door of any GK '97 session room or in the registration area **BY 12 NOON ON MONDAY, JUNE 23.**

3. End of Conference Evaluation Form
We would like to know your opinion of the entire Global Knowledge '97 Conference, including the working sessions, plenaries, interactive global links, “cyber cafe,” Knowledge and Information Forum, and Knowledge for Development Video Festival. PLEASE RETURN FORM BY 6 P.M., WEDNESDAY, JUNE 25.

Please write here the number you chose when you picked up this evaluation packet. It enables us to follow your responses through the Conference while maintaining your anonymity:

Marking Instructions:
- For questions #1 to 11 and #17, please indicate your response to each question by filling in the corresponding circle on the right.
- Fill in only one circle per statement or question with solid marks that fill the circle completely: ●
- Fill in the remaining questions in writing.
- Please answer every question.

1. To what extent was this Conference relevant to your present professional work?
   
   ▼
   Not at all ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥
   Very much ⑦ ⑧ ⑨ ⑩ 

2. To what extent do you think this Conference enhanced understanding of the role of knowledge and information in economic and social development?
   
   ▼
   ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥

3. To what extent do you think this Conference provided opportunities for sharing strategies, experiences, and tools in harnessing knowledge for development?
   
   ▼
   ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥

4. To what extent do you think this Conference fostered new partnerships that empower the poor with knowledge and information using new technologies?
   
   ▼
   ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥

5. In my current work situation:
   a. I have access to the Internet.
      If YES,
      a. I use the Internet one or more times on most days.
      b. I use it for acquiring/discussing development information.
      If NO,
      a. I will likely have access to the Internet by the year 2000.
      b. I will likely use it for acquiring/discussing development information.

   ▼
   Not at all ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥
   Very much ⑦ ⑧ ⑨ ⑩ 

6. During the Conference:
   a. I learned new information about best practices in my field.
b. I learned ways that these best practices could be applied in my country.
c. I learned new information in other fields that I will use in my work.
d. I met new acquaintances whom I will definitely contact for my work.
e. I had enough time to discuss my projects and ideas with other participants.

7. Because of the Conference:
   a. I am entering into a new partnership with a public sector agency or organization that I did not have before the Conference.
   b. I am entering into a new partnership with a private sector company that I did not have before the Conference.
   c. I am entering into a new partnership with a non-governmental organization that I did not have before the Conference.

8. How effective were the following types of Conference activities?
   a. Plenary Sessions
   b. Working Sessions (panel discussions, seminars, working groups, case demonstrations, on-site consultancies, practice seminars, demonstrations of new technologies)
   c. The “Cyber Cafe”
   d. Interactive Global Links (videoconferencing, Internet)
   e. The Knowledge and Technology Forum (exhibition hall)
   f. Open Space sessions

9. Specifically in relationship to the Knowledge and Technology Forum:
   a. I personally spent time interacting with the information technologies, equipment, materials demonstrated at the Forum.
   b. I learned new ideas about knowledge/information technologies.
   c. I am taking back practical ideas to my country/agency directly because of the Forum.

continued on next page

10. As a result of participating in this Conference:
    a. I will share new information I received with others.
    b. I will involve more people from other sectors in my work.
c. I will follow up to locate more information on how new information technologies can impact development.

\[ \n\]

11. How well did the Conference meet its objectives?
   a. Understanding the role of knowledge and information in economic and social development.
   b. Understanding the profound changes in the development process created by new technologies.
   c. Sharing strategies, experiences and tools in harnessing knowledge for development.
   d. Building new partnerships that empower the poor with information and knowledge.
   e. Fostering international dialogue on development.
   f. Strengthening the knowledge and information resources of developing countries.

12. Please write here the two topics that you learned most about during this Conference:
   a. __________________________________________
   b. __________________________________________

13. Please write here the most important thing gained from the Conference sessions that might help you in your professional work:

   __________________________________________

14. Please write here the most important thing you gained from the Knowledge and Information Forum (exhibition hall) that might help you in your professional work:

   __________________________________________

15. What is the one most important thing that could be done to improve this Conference? [Be specific.]

   __________________________________________

16. What is the one most important thing that has been accomplished by this Conference? [Be specific.]

   __________________________________________

17. How would you rate the overall effectiveness of the Conference?

\[ \n\]
4. Your Plans

Please answer the following questions now in as much detail as possible, so we will understand the potential impacts of the Global Knowledge '97 Conference on you in the short and long term. Your responses will remain strictly confidential. They will help us plan a follow-up study of the Conference. The Economic Development Institute (EDI) of the World Bank may contact you to discuss your plans a few months after you return home. Thank you for your assistance. PLEASE RETURN BY 6 P.M., WEDNESDAY, JUNE 25.

As a result of your participation in Global Knowledge '97, do you have any plans to start any new initiatives, projects, or strategies when you return home? Yes______ No______

If you checked "No," please place this form in any questionnaire/idea box. Thank you.

If you checked "Yes," please answer the following questions:

1. Please describe your ideas in general terms.

2. Please describe the outcomes you would like to achieve:

3. Please list any new types of partners (business, academic, educational, research and development, NGO, science and technology, etc.) that you hope to involve in this plan. How would they be involved?

4. What obstacles, risks, or difficulties might interfere with accomplishing your plans and how could you overcome them?

5. Even if your plans are not fully successful, what are the minimum outcomes you think you could still achieve?

6. Who would see the results of your plans after the Conference?

7. When would you most likely set your plans in motion? (Month, year:__________________)

8. When might you most likely see results of your plan? (Month, year:__________________)

9. Will you participate in the post-Conference Internet discussion? Yes______ No______
   If NO, please list most important reasons:__________________________________________

10. What would be the most useful kind of Conference follow-up for you? ________________________

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Please drop it in one of the evaluation/idea boxes that can be found near the door of any session room or in the registration area by 6 P.M., Wednesday, June 25.
5. Enclosure with Focus Group Invitation

Dear Global Knowledge '97 Participant:

As part of our efforts to conduct a broad-based evaluation of this conference, we are inviting you to participate in a focus group discussion. Your name was selected randomly from the list of participants.

The focus groups will be held in the York Room of the Toronto Hilton. You may attend at any of the following times:

**Tuesday, June 24**
- Group 1: 12:30 p.m. to 1 p.m.
- Group 2: 1 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.
- Group 3: 1:30 p.m. to 2 p.m.
- Group 4: 2:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.

**Wednesday, June 25**
- Group 5: 12:30 p.m. to 1 p.m.
- Group 6: 1 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.
- Group 7: 1:30 p.m. to 2 p.m.
- Group 8: 2:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.

The focus groups will be conducted by trained moderators who are part of the conference’s official evaluation team. The discussions will center on your views of the conference’s highlights and its potential impact on your work. All data will be summarized in anonymous fashion in our final evaluation report.

Thank you for placing this important event on your personal conference agenda. We look forward to learning from you.

Sincerely,

Ray Rist, Evaluation Advisor
Economic Development Institute
The World Bank Group
6. End of Session Questionnaire

You have organized a session for the Global Knowledge '97 Conference. Please take a few minutes to tell us what happened at your session. It is very important for us to have this information for future planning. Thank you for your cooperation. PLEASE RETURN BY 6 P.M., WEDNESDAY, JUNE 25.

1. Please check off the type of session you organized:
   a. Plenary session: ______
   b. Working session: ______
       panel ______ working group ______ on-site consultancy ______
       seminar ______ demonstration ______ best practice seminar ______
   c. Open Space session: ______
       describe: ____________________________
   d. Interactive global links: ______
       videoconferencing ______ Internet discussion ______
   e. On-site computer network: ______
   f. Cyber Cafe: ______
   g. Knowledge for Development Video Festival: ______
   h. Other: ______
       describe: ____________________________

2. General information on the session you organized:
   a. Title: ____________________________
   b. Approximate attendance (including the organizers):
      ☐ fewer than 50 people ☐ 50 to 99 people
      ☐ 100 to 499 people ☐ 500 people or more
   c. If applicable, what percentage (approximately) of attendees tried an interactive technological demonstration of equipment, software, or materials? ______ %

3. Did your session result in suggestions for potential areas of exploration and/or new products? If yes, please describe:

4. Please write here the two topics for your session that you hope participants learned about most:
   a. ____________________________
   b. ____________________________

5. Please write here the most important thing you hope participants gained from your session that might help them in their professional work:

6. How would you rate the informal networking and partnership building that occurred during, after, or because of your session? Please circle that number that best describes your session:

   1 No apparent networking or partnership building
   2
   3
   4
   5
   6 Much apparent networking or partnership building

7. Other comments?

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Please give it to one of the student volunteers at the end of your session, or you can drop it in one of the evaluation/idea boxes that can be found near the door of any Global Knowledge '97 session room. PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM BY 6 P.M., WEDNESDAY, JUNE 25.
ANNEX C

GKD97 DISCUSSION THREADS

This section briefly summarizes the major discussion points made on the GKD97 Discussion List.²

Thread: GKD97 Conference Information and Announcements

A three-hour discussion panel on “radio for development” will be held at the Conference, Tuesday, June 24 from 0900 to 1230 at the Hilton Hotel. The results of the session will be posted at http://www.villagewell.gk97.gc.ca>. The session will be chaired by Mr. Pierre Juneau, President of the World Radio and Television Council and the panelists will be: Mr. Abdul Khan, Commonwealth of Learning; Mr. Ron Robbins, Wantok Enterprises; Ms. Nancy Bennett, Developing Countries Farm Radio Network; Ms. Usha Bhasin, All India Radio; Ms. Sophie Ly, World Association of Community Radios; Ms. Jenny Stevens, BBC World Service; Mr. Don Norland, Worldspace. The President of Mali, Mr. Alpha Oumar Konare, has indicated interest in participating in the session.

Also on Tuesday, June 24, at the Toronto conference, a breakfast will be hosted by an independent committee on women and global knowledge. Specifically, issues pertaining to telematics policy, information technology, and knowledge content, all from a gender perspective, will be covered and encouraged in discussion throughout the day. APC (Association for Progressive Communications) has launched another listserv: gk97-lessons. This listserv is devoted to discussing examples of how APC networks are being used around the world.

The Table, a Swiss multimedia collective that deals with electronic culture and arts, invites members of GKD97 to contribute to a new forum found at <http://www.tinet.ch/table>. Click on the “communication and development” section. The forum is concerned with questions such as Does the investment in communication infrastructures represent a viable development strategy for the so-called “poor” countries?

A List member, who has offered to host a MOO for List members, put together an information page on how to set up software for online participation in the MOO. This can be found at: <http://www.corecom.net/~beccaapu/mud2.html>. Further details regarding dates and times of the meeting will follow.

Thread: Suggestions for GK ‘97 List and Conference

In response to anthropological questions about use of the Internet and ICT, a List member recommended that strong research and evaluation be conducted prior to riding further on the “freight train of high-tech development.” Specifically, what evidence is there that technology can narrow gaps between “haves” and “have-nots”? Does technology actually widen gaps between the literate and illiterate, the rich and the poor, the professional and vocational? Further, what effect does the introduction of ICT have on social and cultural elements in developing communities? Defining a new paradigm for development, including the use of technology, may be one of the tasks or outcomes of the GK ‘97 List.

A List member reminded the List of the core themes around which discussion might be centered, encouraging List members to share successful strategies and experiences in using technology for development. Further questions were posed to the List for discussion, including: What special challenges and opportunities does the information revolution pose for the world’s poor? How can the information revolution help empower the world’s economically and socially disadvantaged?

Thread: Information Flow: Technology for Economic and Social Development

Major elements of the new UNDP program, IT for Development, were presented. The primary goal of the program is to build awareness among development partners of the myriad changes brought by Information Technology (IT). IT for Development will also offer policy advice, conduct pilot projects using technology to address poverty problems, and forge new partnerships with governments, the private sector, NGOs, academia, and the media to make technology

² Fuller summaries can be found on <http://www.globalknowledge.org/mailarchives in HyperMail format, which groups messages by thread (subject) and also allows full-text searches of all the List messages. For those without WWW access, the digest version (a plain text compilation of each week’s messages) can be retrieved via anonymous FTP from tristram.edc.org. The path is pub/gkd97/digest.

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available for development objectives. For more information, see <http://www.undp.org> and click on “UNDP and the communications revolution.”

It was suggested that libraries be regarded as essential institutional tools in organizing, “sifting,” and disseminating information, both in traditional print and in digital form. Libraries can play an especially important role in exchanging global and local information, as local librarians become more familiar with network tools and can both access global information and disseminate local information globally.

The transition from traditional print to electronic publishing was discussed as another example of how information technology may actually widen the gaps between North and South. Some concerns about electronic publishing include: infrastructure deficiencies in developing countries that preclude people from receiving information published electronically; the likelihood that developing country businesses will dominate scarce network technologies, while scientists and scholars will lack access to academic materials published electronically as well as to online communications within the scientific and academic communities; online journals and databases are largely produced in Northern countries and are difficult to access due to price and language; mastery of technology in industrialized countries may permit them to exploit and commercialize Southern natural resources, e.g., plant medicine, while the South never benefits from those resources. To rebut these concerns, however, one List member’s experience indicates that electronic publishing does not contribute to marginalizing developing countries. Members from developing countries are encouraged to share their experiences in this regard.

It was noted that the $750 registration fee is prohibitively expensive for many people, even in “developed countries.” A concern was raised that people in developing countries, for whom physical attendance at the conference is impossible, will not be adequately represented at the conference in Toronto. To help address this problem, List moderators are organizing an on-line working session to take place during the conference, which will allow List members, and hopefully their communities, to participate virtually in the conference. More information about the online working session will be provided soon. List moderators will also be posting messages to the List daily about Conference events and proceedings.

In addition, a List member from the South indicated that there will be several participants from Africa attending the conference and that NGOs will also be there to represent the interests of women, peasants, and other traditionally underrepresented groups. Further, several scholarships have been awarded by UNDP, World Bank, and other conference organizers and sponsors to people from developing countries in Africa, Asia, and South America, ensuring that there will be at least some participation in the conference by people from the South.

In Cameroon, the high cost of Internet connection service is one of the primary obstacles to expanding access to E-mail and the WWW. However, there are ways to overcome this problem, which the UN Sustainable Development Network Programme (SDNP) is trying. Among them are: having networks of local journalists report to communities re the discussions and decisions of on-line gatherings such as the GKD97 List; providing women’s NGOs with information that SDNP gathers about projects involving women and development; exchanging information with international correspondents to send news of Cameroon to the rest of the world and receive international news more quickly; developing databases to organize information about peacekeeping, ethnic violence, and human rights. Finally, SDNP is providing free technical assistance to other E-mail service providers in Cameroon.

**Thread: Sustainability**

Technology can support both traditional approaches to development, which inherently exhaust natural resources, as well as new “sustainable development” approaches. Technology can support the latter by helping create new social and cultural patterns that are less resource intensive and more information centered than those now driving the industrialized world. The new knowledge industry generates a need for new skills in understanding how best to organize and present information. Mastery of this skill may be the imperative for technology-supported sustainable development.

In contrast, science and technology (S&T) could perpetuate the stratification between developed and industrialized countries by helping Northern countries to enter the new markets of developing economies and exploit labor forces without building communities or providing any means for sustainable development. See <http://wn.apc.org/ntif/saaddev.htm> for more information. Yet industrialized nations are not the only source of damage to the ecosystem; many communities in developing countries are accustomed to unsustainable practices such as slash-and-burn land clearing. S&T could help these communities find better ways to support themselves on the land. A solution is to strike a balance between too much and not enough use of technology, depending on the needs of each unique community. This will require significant restraint of profit-seeking urges coupled with improvements in science and technology. Thus, the solution to achieving sustainable development is not merely economic or technical, but political.
Thread: Listener-Supported Community Radio
UNESCO has many community radio projects scattered throughout Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Arab States, and Central Europe, with the purpose of strengthening local communication capacity in developing countries. For more information, see <http://www.unesco.org/cii/com>.

An example of a publicly owned national radio and television station can be found in Greenland. KNR (Kalaallit Nunaat Radioa) broadcasts news in Greenlandic and Danish, in addition to a variety of programs, 80 percent of which are broadcast in the Inuit language. Many of the programs include local music, entertainment, education, even parliamentary sessions. A media fund was established in Greenland to ensure that electronic communication remains free from state control.

One concern regarding community radio is that many such projects, especially in Africa, are controlled by the central government, defeating the goal of broadcasting programs of local interest in a local language. In many countries, local radio programs must be approved by the government prior to broadcasting. In Central and South America, state control is not as severe a problem and community radio is a means of broadcasting cultural and educational programs that are relevant to local communities.

Another problem radio encounters is as an educational tool administered on a large scale. The Nonformal Primary Education program in Bangladesh developed over 200 Interactive Radio Instruction lessons to primary students in over 35,000 one-class schools in rural villages. Due to centralized government control and fluctuating needs of different communities, however, coordination was difficult. The programs are now distributed by cassette tape rather than radio.

Thread: Indigenous Knowledge
In South Africa, where there are stark imbalances for historical reasons in distribution of telecommunications services and access, the Universal Service Agency has been established to regulate the redress of those imbalances. However, even if more people in rural areas have access to network tools, a cultural imbalance still remains between the developed and developing worlds because of the “cultural imperialism” that the Internet or television promotes. The concept of an Information Community, focusing on the social aspects of the information society, e.g., needs and rights of communities and social groups, may best meet the needs of developing communities. See <http://www.apc.org/nitf/pptoc.htm> for more information. It was recommended, therefore, that social equity and content issues be discussed at the conference and on the List to augment discussions on the technology itself.

It was noted that the concept of COREs (Community Organizational Resource Elements) is similar to the idea of “social capital,” which has emerged from academic circles as a potential solution to development problems. Social capital includes organizations, networks, informal institutions, as well as such customs and practices as reciprocity, property ownership, kinship rules, and sometimes formal institutions. Some of the problems evident in Africa today, e.g., food shortages, indicate that certain elements of the CORE are not functioning properly or are absent altogether.

Supporting the full function of COREs, including elements such as collective responsible reciprocity, and an indigenous rotational credit system, is an initial step in establishing conditions for sustainable development.

It is the institutions that make up COREs, such as village councils, rather than centrally administered governments, that may be most instrumental in making technology work for sustainable development. Many models of development to this point have ignored the already existing organizational structures in Africa—and perhaps throughout the developing world—a fact that may explain the overall failure of such schemes to result in sustainable development.

The Center for Telecommunication Studies in the Philippines <http://www.sequel.net/~ck> is an example of a local organization that influences policy decisions, developmental operations, and management of the national telecommunications sector in the Philippines through the study of local needs and practices. The Center for Telecommunication Studies designs and provides training and use of communications technology to students and faculty and serves as a clearinghouse for publications of studies pertaining to telecommunications in the Philippines.

Thread: Gender and IT
Addressing the gender issues inherent in IT is critical to ensure both men and women in developing countries are empowered by having access to information and communications technology. Making broad generalizations about either gender, or excluding any one group from the information revolution, can only impede the goals of sustainable development.

An article was posted that dispelled one of the generalizations often made of women by stating that in the U.S., women are “embracing technology as a business ally” rather than being afraid of technology. Technology is a “way to get into
traditionally male-dominated fields," as well as a means to "achieve professional goals [women] would not have reached otherwise." See <http://www.nando.net/newsroom/ntu/info/052997/info24798.html>.

WINGS, the Women's International News Gathering Service <http://www.wings.org>, features women's radio news stories on their Web page. The technology used is Real Audio and WINGS solicited assistance from other women who are using audio on the WWW. Contact Frieda Werden directly at <wings@igc.apc.org>.

**Thread: Upcoming Related Conferences**
- Rural Development Technology Africa ’98, May 27 - 30, 1998, in Johannesburg, South Africa. See <http://www.4africa.com/rdt> for more information or contact <specialx@icon.co.za>.
- Second International Electronic Communications and Information Technology Exhibition and Conference (Communications Africa ’97) July 8-12, 1997, in Johannesburg, South Africa. See <http://www.4africa.com/rdt> for more information or contact <specialx@icon.co.za>.

**Thread: Solicitations for Journal Articles**
CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency) is seeking article references for a bibliography on knowledge and development. It was suggested that this bibliography should include articles on Freenet experiences in Canada and the USA. All replies should be made directly to Louis Lessard at <louis_lessard@cida.gc.ca>.

**Thread: Websites and Book References**
Useful information about Telecommunications and Third World Countries:
Http://som.csudh.edu/cis/lpress/devnat/

Community Broadcasting Association of Australia
http://www.scu.edu.au/cbaa

A multilingual glossary of Internet terminology

Online searchable Dictionary of PC Hardware and Data Communications Terms
http://www.ora.com/reference/dictionary

Network Startup Resource Center (NSRC) General Terminology References
http://www.nsrs.org/general.html

International Society of Ecological Economics
http://www.islandpress.com

The Internet Society
http://www.isoc.org

International Email Accessibility
http://www.ee.ic.ac.uk/misc/country-codes.html

Papers on data object structure
http://www.ultranet.com/~eslowrv

Parable of a rural village
http://www.soline.org/THIRDWORLD/obet1.htm

How to Access Internet Services by Email (Also available in 33 other languages)
http://www.activesol.com/www/dbobfram.htm

National Institute of Research Advancement (Japan) (Basic information on over 250 policy organizations in over 65 countries)
http://www.nira.go.jp/ice/tt-info/nwdtt96/
The National Indigenous Media Association of Australia
P.O. Box 5035
West End QLD 4101
Australia

On Social Capital:


ANNEX D

REPORT ON THE GKD97 LIST
(Prepared by EDC)

Following is a brief report on the GKD97 List that includes statistical information about subscribership; some reflections on the impact of the List; and reasons why we believe the List has been successful. This is an excerpt from a preliminary draft of a report by EDC to UNDP, the funder and sponsor of the GKD97 List. It is provided with the consent of both EDC and UNDP. If there are any questions regarding the List, please don't hesitate to contact Janice Brodman (x2620), Leslie Hazle (x2642), or Stuart Klein (x2650) at (617) 969-7100.

1. STATISTICS

Statistics from the subscriber lists to GKD97 and GKD97-digest vary from day to day. The statistics presented here reflect List subscribership as of Thursday, July 3 (note that most members who went to the conference unsubscribed while they were away from home and resubscribed when they returned, so some of them were not on the List on July 3).

A total of 1,008 members represent 79 countries, according to domain names in E-mail addresses. Of those countries, 42 are developing countries, 9 are emerging democracies of Eastern Europe. This is an astounding representation! Furthermore, there may be even more than 79 countries because we can't tell where list members with .com and .net addresses are located. In addition, there appears to be a very large number of members who, like Kofi Anan from Ghana, are citizens of developing countries but are temporarily living in the North.

These numbers indicate that about 20 percent of the List members (and probably more, depending again on the location of the many members with .com and .net addresses) are from the South. Given the fact that it is generally estimated that 90 percent of Internet users are in the U.S. and Canada, and at least another 8 percent in Europe, the representation from the South is again exceptional.

We've included the basic statistics below:

**GKD97 List Subscribership**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caribbean</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central/South America</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Europe</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North America</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Pacific</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,008</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1A: Subscribership by Region—Numbers
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AFRICA = 53</th>
<th>EASTERN EUROPE = 14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senegal 4</td>
<td>Hungary 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda 2</td>
<td>Slovenia 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya 2</td>
<td>Macedonia 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana 3</td>
<td>Croatia 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt 7</td>
<td>USSR 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madagascar 1</td>
<td>Russian Federation 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zambia 2</td>
<td>Czech Republic 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa 26</td>
<td>Latvia 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Namibia 1</td>
<td>Ukraine 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Botswana 1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Morocco 1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Benin 1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mozambique 1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethiopia 1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>ASIA = 35</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Philippines 9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mongolia 1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Japan 4</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Thailand 6</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Indonesia 2</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Nepal 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Singapore 1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Korea 1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>India 6</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka 1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Malaysia 1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Taiwan 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CARIBBEAN = 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trinidad and Tobago 4</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Jamaica 1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>St. Lucia 1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>CENTRAL &amp; SOUTH AMERICA = 82</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Guatemala 5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Brazil 12</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Costa Rica 3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Peru 14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Colombia 10</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Venezuela 23</td>
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<td>Ecuador 4</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Honduras 2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Paraguay 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>El Salvador 1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>GLOBAL = 334</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>.com 111</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.org 160</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.net 63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2A: Subscribership by Region and Country
2. SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT LIST IMPACT

One of the most important and most visible contributions the List made to the conference was to raise the issue of gender representation, helping to improve the gender balance among speakers and participants. In addition, though, we believe there are many other contributions the List has made. It publicized the conference far more widely than would have been possible by other means that were used, especially in the South. It is safe to say that most of the 1,000+ members on the List would not have heard about the conference—and certainly would not have been able to participate in discussions about the conference issues—without the List. The List also helped to convey the sense that the conference organizers were concerned with participation and were listening to the voices of those “on the ground.”

The List also helped people from the South network with one another as well as with those in the North. Many members have indicated that the List has provided access to important contacts that would otherwise not have been possible. It appears that many of these links will continue after the conference.

The List also provided an enormous treasure of information, ranging from information about successful ICT projects to hundreds of Web sites carrying valuable information. Some of this information was provided at the Conference either via the recommendations document or at sessions in which a moderator was on the panel. Our sense is that this contribution could be greatly strengthened in future conferences.

We’ve attached a short digest of messages at the bottom of this E-mail. These were either directed to the moderators or posted to the List and give a sense of how the GKD97 List has made an impact either on the conference, individual list members, or development generally. While these messages speak for themselves, it is important to note the broad range of experience and background that even this small sample represents: women, men, students, professors, professionals, developing and developed countries. We believe the greatest rewards and full impact of this List are yet to come. It is in the post-conference stage that the List can play a unique and exceptional role. Particularly exciting is the potential for the on-line working sessions and action-oriented sub-groups to work toward some tangible contribution toward development.

3. SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO LIST SUCCESS
A few words on why we think this List has been successful, both in terms of scope and substance.

*Outreach*

GKD97 List moderators devoted an enormous amount of time and effort to reaching out to NGOs and others in the South. We sent invitations electronically, by phone and by mail to individuals, NGOs, universities, and other organizations that might be interested in joining the List. This outreach effort was essential to expanding the number of countries represented on the List and was particularly important in gaining members in the South. The GKD97 outreach also generated worldwide exposure of the Toronto conference, no doubt contributing to the number of conference attendees from the South.

*Responsiveness*

The second important activity has been an extremely responsive and service-oriented approach by List moderators. Each day, we respond to numerous requests for information or assistance. This was particularly important before the conference and continues to be important in conveying the strong sense of commitment from List moderators to members and made it clear that the List was there to serve its members.

In addition, we receive messages to be posted and administrative messages. At the peak of activity, the number of daily messages processed was easily 300, although the percentage of those that were submissions for posting was probably about 15 to 20 percent; that is, at peak activity, the number of messages contributed for posting was between 40 and 60 a day. The List continues to have comparatively high levels of traffic, with about 30 messages for posting a day (plus other messages requesting information and help). Some percentage of those are returned to the author because they are not relevant or are otherwise inappropriate. Every message we return includes an explanation of why it was returned and how it could be made relevant.

Every request for information receives a response, and moderators track down information, give technical advice and assistance, and help disseminate special information. For example, some List members had trouble with their computers or communications lines, particularly when setting up for the CU-SeeMe conference session. Any List member with such questions was walked through the process of installing and configuring the software in order to increase the participation in the Online Working Session on June 24 in Toronto.

During the pre-Conference registration period, we received an enormous number of requests for information and help, e.g., questions from people in the South and North—but particularly in the South—who had "heard of" the Conference but wanted information, who didn't know how to apply, who had E-mailed or written the Secretariat but hadn't gotten a response, who wanted to find out about possible support, even those who had heard that they were to be sponsored but hadn't received information about logistics! We made calls, searched the Web, and responded to every request for help. Hundreds of requests like these were fielded by moderators. This responsiveness provided tangible services to List members (and, we believe, to the conference), services that were otherwise unobtainable.

*Careful Moderation*

We also fulfilled a number of other more typical moderation roles, but with added service. First, we reviewed every List message before it was posted. This activity was crucial to maintaining high quality discussion, which was particularly important to the members from Southern countries, who pay for every byte they receive.

We would estimate that about 5 percent of the messages received are not posted because they are irrelevant, use profanity, or "flame" (personally insulted) other List members. In such cases, we return the message to the sender and suggest ways in which the message can be modified to make it "postable." The importance of this moderation task cannot be overestimated. Those observing other Lists have noted that they easily degenerate into irrelevance or name-calling, and it was clear that the GKD97 could have suffered that fate.
without careful moderation--a very tiny number of voices could have undermined the value of the List for the vast majority. While long, irrelevant messages are more easily tolerated by those in the North, for whom List messages are largely free, they could quickly become onerous for those in Southern countries, who pay to receive messages and probably would have dropped off the List. Yet, by returning the message to the sender along with suggestions for changes and an explanation of why it wasn’t posted, moderators also avoided alienating the authors.

Another important role of moderators was to help keep discussions productive. We summarized arguments that had been made in the past, provided documentation that helped resolve different viewpoints, and ensured that messages were not redundant. Given the large number of messages, many List members indicated that the weekly summaries were an invaluable tool for navigating the enormous flow of information.

A third role undertaken by moderators was to stimulate discussion. Moderators posed questions, raised issues, and posted information that generated productive discussion. In doing so, we’ve helped to maintain high interest in the List, drawing increasing numbers of members—we’re still getting new subscriptions every day!. Much of this role depended on "behind the scenes" research to identify documents and facts that would stimulate discussion.

******

EXCERPTS FROM SAMPLE MESSAGES ABOUT THE IMPACT OF THE LIST

*From Andrew Morrison <natcco@wtouch.com.ph> in the Philippines:
Dear Moderators: I would also like to thank you for your efforts in running the list server. Not only did I enjoy following the discussion, I also made some useful contacts. The forum has no doubt contributed to ensuring that IT initiatives for development will help to bring about 'genuine' development.

*From David Radcliffe <E-mail address not available>.
I have not been active in this particular field, being quite a neophyte on the internet and www myself, so I have not been contributing to the discussion. But my interest is in adult and non-formal education in "third world" countries, with a personal background of work in Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Nigeria, and Guyana. I have been raving about this fascinating discussion to colleagues and to my grad. students.

*From Hansruedi Mueller <samd@bluewin.ch> in Switzerland:
Joining your [online CU-SeeMe] conference yesterday was a great experience for my students and myself...High School Davos is a school with 350 students, our students graduate with the Swiss Matura after 13 years at age 20. Our main objective is to get into a one-to-one student-to-student contact with students in developing countries. These contacts should be established before or during the conference and kept alive for some months or years to come. [Note that during the conference online session, Davos offered to host a student from the South, cover room, board, and tuition, and train him/her in IT skills.]

*From Chandran Owen <c.owen@notcity3.demon.co.uk> from India in the UK, in response to Kerry McNamara:
thanks for coming online. i attended the toronto conf and i was getting a bit worried as when i came back i realised i had not chatted to anyone from the bank! i was wondering why the bank staff did not make more effort to talk to ngos and other non dignatories. anyway i am sure we will make up for it now.

*From Ching Cabanatan <CHING@innotech.ph> in the Philippines:
I am Priscilla G. Cabanatan, an educational technology specialist from SEAMEO INNOTECH (Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Regional Center for Educational Innovation and Technology). My work includes designing and conducting technology-oriented training courses for participants from nine member countries: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, Singapore and Vietnam. I also plan and implement information technology projects. An area I am interested in exploring for future projects is on the utilization of technology for and by women.
As a participant of the GKD97 list (as Ching Cabanatan), I have found the discussions most interesting and informative. I hope to attend the conference in Toronto with help from the Education Development Center. I am looking forward to being at the conference, as I know it will be an invaluable learning and networking experience.

*From Garrett Reynolds <garrett@indigo.ie> in Ireland:
My name is Garrett Reynolds. I work as a volunteer for an Irish aid organisation, GOAL, with projects operating in nine countries. We just got word that our Angolan office has come on line (ebonet.net) and this has prompted me to appeal to any of you who may recommend ISP's in the following countries where we are not currently on-line: India: New Delhi and Calcutta; Bosnia: Sarajevo; Sudan: Khartoum; Ethiopia: Addis Ababa; Mozambique: Maputo. I would also like to say hi as I have been lurking for some time now. The information that I have received from this list has been outstanding- many thanks.

*From Don deSilva <dondes@mihikata.demon.co.uk> in the UK:
Whatever the drawbacks of GKD 97, the event is a positive one. For the first time, over 1,500 people from all walks of life will come together to take action to use new information technologies for the benefit of the disadvantaged communities and to promote sustainable development. This is an opportunity that should not be missed.

One of the key areas facing the conference is the fact that information has political and social implications. The conference could consider the example of Xanom, the newspaper produced by a women's group in Iran, which played a unique role in the recent elections in the country clarifying social and political issues. If they wish, how can Xanom for instance, be connected to the Net? How can the paper interact with other similar groups freely without fear or favour? How can GKD 97 support similar ventures elsewhere?

*From Angela Isael Zamaere in Malawi <through the E-mail gateway on www.globalknowledge.org—she has no email access in Malawi>:
I WORK WITH THE COUNCIL FOR NGOS IN MALAWI (CONGOMA). We have several basic problems, one of which is access to computers. We only have 2 computers to share between eight professional members of staff. One of our responsibilities as a secretariat and an umbrella body for NGOs is to keep a fully computerised database of our membership. This is obviously extremely difficult without the necessary hardware. Further we are trying to promote the use of video in Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and need training materials such as video recorders. We are therefore seeking support in the provision of this, from those who may have equipment which they no longer need. Because of your access to GK '97 participants I would like to ask whether you might place this request in your mails as you communicate with participants.