

Reprinted from

OPERATIONAL RESEARCH '90

*Selected Papers from the Twelfth IFORS International Conference on
Operational Research*

*Actes de la Douzième Conférence Internationale de Recherche
Opérationnelle de l'IFORS*

Athens, Greece, 25–29 June 1990

Edited by

HUGH E. BRADLEY

Vice President and Chief Information Officer
Shaklee U.S., Inc., San Francisco, California, U.S.A.



PERGAMON PRESS PLC

Member of Maxwell Macmillan Pergamon Publishing Corporation

OXFORD · NEW YORK · FRANKFURT · SEOUL

SYDNEY · TOKYO

STRATEGIES FOR O.R. SOCIETIES AND IFORS

WILLIAM P. PIERSKALLA

President, IFORS
The Wharton School
University of Pennsylvania
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, U.S.A.

BACKGROUND

William Pierskalla described the background for this workshop by first noting the goals of IFORS and then asking what IFORS can and should be doing in this decade. The goals of IFORS are:

1. Sponsoring of international conferences and meetings.
2. Providing other means for the exchange of information on operational research among other nations.
3. Encouraging the establishment of national operational research societies.
4. Maintaining standards of competence in operations research.
5. Encouraging the teaching of operational research.
6. Promoting the development of specific parts of operational research and encouraging the development of new fields.

For more than thirty years, IFORS, as an organization of 38 member societies, has strived to achieve these goals. In some instances, there have been major successes such as IAOR and the Triennial Conferences and the many individual initiatives in specific countries. On the other hand, IFORS' record is not as strong regarding the promotion of OR in the LDCs or in developing new fields.

At present, IFORS has significant financial problems, but through some changes in dues, publications and meetings, the shortfall should be corrected in the next two to three years. Now is an appropriate time to begin thinking strategically and operationally about IFORS' future. This workshop was designed to ask: "What should IFORS be doing?" Traditionally IFORS has taken a largely reactive role in seeking to achieve its goals. Indeed, few OR practitioners and researchers know what IFORS is. IFORS can and should be doing much more to communicate and to promote OR to the world.

With this introduction, the workshop was opened for discussion of an agenda for IFORS.

AN AGENDA FOR IFORS

The discussion touched on many topics - ranging from publications to meetings to services for member societies.

- a. An international informational publication to disseminate a synopsis of the "best work of OR" in the world, summaries of software and of content areas in OR, information about what members and member societies are doing and planning to do, information on worldwide employment opportunities, etc.

- b. Specialized conferences on timely topics of emerging interest to members of the worldwide OR community and related communities.
- c. Circulation of the membership directories of member societies to the other member societies for their dissemination and use. The idea was that IFORS would be a clearinghouse of about 50 copies of membership lists to be distributed to the IFORS representatives, who would then make the lists available to their own societies' members.
- d. Compose available lists of retired OR persons who would be willing to act as consultants or researchers to persons, firms or governments from LDCs or elsewhere. It was felt that these retired persons were a great resource for further promotion and development of OR in the world.
- e. Establish a directory of OR educational programs in the world. It was mentioned that the Operations Research Society of America publishes such a directory for North America. Also, Luis Tavares is beginning a study for IFORS of educational programs in OR in the world.
- f. Be a catalyst for initiating student exchange programs in the world. The idea was that IFORS could be an initial broker between and/or among colleagues and universities around the world to help establish exchanges.
- g. Write to and/or visit political figures and other non-OR leaders in LDCs to promote the importance and use of OR on timely problems in their countries. It was pointed out that the initiative for such letters for visits must come from some OR persons in the LDCs, so that the proper persons were contacted, the proper problem addressed, and the proper OR person doing the writing and/or visiting.
- h. Help to ameliorate stresses among various OR groupings. The example cited was the decades-long, dynamic tensions among theorists, methodologists, practitioners and users of OR. It was pointed out that all these groups need each other to advance, not only the work in their own groups (to keep it timely, up-to-date and advancing), but also the field of operations research.
- i. Provide funds for travel scholarships to persons from LDCs to the Triennial IFORS conferences. It is the hope of the IFORS Administrative Committee that when IFORS finances are strong enough, some funds will be made available for this purpose.
- j. Be a catalyst between a developed country member society and a developing country member society with the focus on building a "twinning" relationship to do many of the activities mentioned in the above paragraphs.

CONCLUSION

William Pierskalla thanked all of the participants for their ideas and support of IFORS. He pointed out that many of these agenda items can and are being initiated, and that the other issues could be addressed in the near future as finances are improved. He also asked everyone who has any additional agenda suggestions to send them to him. He noted that OR is heading for dynamic new growth in the world. By working with our member societies together in this international forum of IFORS, we can achieve economies of performance and significant growth.

KEYWORDS

Developing Countries, IFORS, OR Societies