REPORT OF INFORMATION / RESEARCH DEVELOPMENTS

Prepared on the occasion of the UIA Council Meeting, 18-19 May 2000
(as a supplement to the report to the General Assembly in 1998)

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I. PUBLICATION ON PAPER (current)

A. **Yearbook of International Organizations**: Editorial work on the Yearbook of International Organizations continued according to the regular annual production cycle and despite the consequences of reorganization following the earlier departure of key personnel. No major structural changes were made. Continuing efforts have been made to improve the bibliographical coverage of studies of international organization in Volume 4. It was decided, in consultation with SAUR, to append a subtitle to the long-standing title “Yearbook of International Organizations”. The title appended was “Guide to Global Civil Society Networks”. This was done primarily to position the Yearbook in relation to the emerging market for “civil society” publications, especially for users who have difficulty in relating the phrase “international organizations” to the associations active in civil society.

B. **Encyclopedia of World Problems and Human Potential**: Work on the electronic version of some databases in this publication continued under contract, as described below. No paper version was foreseen.

C. **Who’s Who in International Organizations**: Editorial work on the new edition of Whos Who in International Organizations was completed in 1999 and the publication was produced in December 1999. Portions of the revised text appeared in the 1999 version of the Yearbook Plus CD-ROM (see below).

D. **International Congress Calendar**: This is the subject of a separate report.

E. **Transnational Associations**: This is the subject of a separate report.

II. PUBLICATION ON CD-ROM (current)

A. **Yearbook Plus: International Organizations and Biographies**: The annual edition was produced as planned in the normal manner in October 1999. It included part of the revised text from the Whos Who in International Organizations.

B. **Encyclopedia Plus: Encyclopedia of World Problems and Human Potential**: The production of a CD version within the context of the contract through which some Encyclopedia databases were currently being developed was excluded in preference to web publication.

III. PUBLICATION ON THE WORLD WIDE WEB (current): A distinction should be made between the ca. 11,000 static pages placed by the UIA on the server of the non-UIA service provider and the UIA databases accessible dynamically on the UIA NT server connected to that service. The period July-October 1999 saw the relatively traumatic demise of the Agora service provider (a cooperative of which the UIA was a founding member) and a switch to a commercial service provider that has itself since been absorbed into a multinational service provider.

A. **Static pages**: These continue to be maintained on a relatively low priority basis. They generate a significant amount of feedback and serve a major marketing function. A major shift was made during 1999 from access offered to demo version of the
databases to dynamic access. Many static pages were downgraded to point through to the dynamic pages.

B. **Dynamic pages**: Most UIA databases are now “accessible” on the web. However the only databases freely accessible to “Guests” are those relating to the current development contracts of the Encyclopedia, namely the Problems and Strategies databases. The other databases are only accessible for test purposes. However SAUR has now agreed to a system whereby the UIA will allow access to the Organizations database under subscription that will be integrated into the marketing of the book and CD versions.

It is worth noting the understandable explosion in activity of international organizations on the Web. Some 14,863 organizations now have websites. 17,390 have e-mail at their main offices, and 1,679 have e-mail at their regional offices.

Statistics on access to UIA websites are presented in **Annex 1.** The UIA dynamic site currently has over 8,500 registered users.

### IV. NEW AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

A. **CD and Paper publications**

Following a visit to SAUR in March, it has been tentatively agreed to initiate a **historical series** of publications on CD and/or paper. This is currently in process of evaluation. In addition to an earlier proposal for profiles of defunct organizations no longer published in the current Yearbook, these might include scanned versions of the following early UIA publications:

- #2: *Actes du congrès mondial des associations internationales. vol I: 830p, vol II: 415p (1912)*
- #3: *Annuaire de la vie internationale. Tome I (1908) 1370p.*
- #46: *Actes du Congres mondial des associations internationales (1914) 1264p.*
- #47: *Annuaire de la vie Internationale 1910-1911 (1911) 2652 p.*
- #104: *Code des voeux internationaux: codification generale des voeux et resolutions des organismes internationaux (1923) 940p.*

Possibilities of a future edition of the Encyclopedia of World Problems and Human Potential on CD have been discussed with SAUR.

B. **Future publication on the World Wide Web**

The UIA is still in process of shifting from focus on the static server to a hybrid focus in which users of the static pages are referred to databases accessible from the dynamic server. This involves:

- User authentication (password, etc) through which access to particular databases will be restricted according to a wide range of marketing, partnership, sponsorship and editorial needs.
- Ability of a distant user to correct, supplement or criticize entries as a whole in any database, or any field in that entry.
• Ability to display back to the user all comments already received on an entry, by field (with the possibility of e-mail contact with other users supplying comments)
• Ability to redisplay the entry with comments incorporated into the body of the description by field to provide an overview of the amended entry
• Ability to qualify comments (eg "5-star", "3-star", "0-star") according to a system of accreditation
• Ability for distant editors to edit particular entries.

Further work is required on this facility but it is currently being tested through open access to numerous users (see statistics in Annex 1).

As indicated above, SAUR has now agreed to subscription access to the Organizations database over the web. It is expected that this will be implemented in June 2000, possibly in conjunction with access to the Calendar database. These subscriptions will both be handled in a minimal e-commerce mode, namely by traditional invoicing for a password, rather than via credit card transactions.

For all databases, experiments will continue on the degree of access offered to “Guests” vs to various categories of users (at various rates).

Other sources of web income from database use:

• **Click-through revenue:** Dynamic pages can be generated offering access to users to other web sites by clicking through. Where the facility then accessed by user offers revenue for such referral, the UIA can earn income from passing users on in this way. Typically this would be appropriate in the case bibliographical information (amazon.com) or web search engines (google.com). This is more appropriate when the facility does not require the use of special logos.

• **Banner advertising:** A small experiment is being conducted with the use of banner advertising on a single static page. This is designed to generate income from advertisers when users access the page on which the advertisement is running. The issue here is the obtrusive nature of the banner and the relevance of the advertising.

C. **European Commission contract: Information Context for Biodiversity Conservation**

Work on this DG-XIII contract (January 1998-December 1999) proceeded satisfactorily with respect to development of the Problems and Strategies databases (see Annex 1 for further details). The contract was extended through to 30 April 2000 to permit completion of certain tasks and to enable use of unspent funds.

Work on the web access facilities is proceeding satisfactorily, as noted above.

A special web access address has been registered at [www.ecolynx.org](http://www.ecolynx.org) for this project.

Work on the multi-media dimensions of this project is proceeding less rapidly, but the test interfaces already suggest dramatic new approaches to access to UIA data (see demo).
D. Interactive Health Ecology Access Links (IHEAL) Project

The UIA was a subconsultant to the NGO UNED-UK, which had been funded by the European Commission (DG-XI) to support work in preparation for the June 1999 Conference of European Environment and Health Ministers. The UIA was responsible for the text content of a participative web database (extension of the Encyclopedia); others were responsible for a GIS (mapping) component and organization database. This was a pilot project solely to provide a demonstration at the Healthy Planet Forum, the NGO event which ran parallel to the Conference of Ministers in June 1999. The estimated total budget for the project is 63,888 EUR (£42,938), of which the 23,526 EUR was allocated to the development of UIA databases. No further funds were obtained for further development of the project.

V. CURRENT UIA FUND-RAISING AND PROJECT INITIATIVES

- **infoDev:** Work on this project proposal to the World Bank was completed and submitted under the title: Interactive Contextual Environmental Planning Tool (InterCEPT) for developing countries. Amount requested: $250,000. After evaluation, the project was accepted in June 1999 as a “highly ranked proposal awaiting funding” and so listed on the Bank’s website. It was removed from the poll of such projects in March 2000 since no funds had been made available.

- **Fifth Framework Call for Proposals:** This new call was put out by the European Commission in March 1999:

  - A number of possibilities, complementary to the UIA’s INFO2000, infoDev and IHEAL initiatives, were considered for submission.

  - **FET Open Short Proposals (EU Future and Emerging Technologies section of the Information Society Technologies programme of the EU Fifth Framework):** Cultivating Knowledge Ecosystems, in collaboration with 1 NGO and 2 SMEs; submitted 15 September 1999. Amount requested: 100,000 euros. This was rejected in April 2000.

- **Rural Development Information:** The UIA has continued its discussion with various groups associated with rural and community development projects (in Scotland, Palestine, India and Australia) concerning linkage (and distance learning) between a virtual community (Internet) and “real” local communities, using the development of one to support the development of another. This would be a further extension of the INFO2000 / infoDev initiatives. Less emphasis was given to these possibilities since June 1999.

- **EU-India Economic Cross-Cultural Programme:** A project under this programme has been drafted together with Development Alternatives and offices of the Programme’s offices in Brussels and New Delhi. The call for proposals on this matter has been postponed by the Commission.

- **MyTown:** During her last visit to Australia, Nadia McLaren initiated discussions with the MyTown consortium based in Melbourne. MyTown is an online empowerment resource for local community development. It is currently in pilot planning phase,
under the support of major corporate sponsors. Provisional access to the UIA databases is offered through the MyTown website.

- **TRACC**: Tentative negotiations are underway to determine the feasibility of an Encyclopedia of Transnational Criminal Organization. This is a project of the Transnational Crime and Corruption Center (American University, Washington DC) introduced by UIA to SAUR, but which may offer the possibilities for a partnership using materials from the UIA Encyclopedia.

VI. PUBLISHING AND MARKETING

A. Contractual relationships with SAUR

These continue to be satisfactory.

As indicated above, discussions are underway with regard to a Historical Series.

Agreement has been tentatively reached on offering access to Yearbook information over the web through subscription from June 2000. The subscription invoicing would be handled by SAUR but the password control/administration would be handled by UIA. The data would remain on UIA servers.

B. Sales and marketing

Reported sales levels have been maintained in a difficult market, possibly due to the web marketing effectively undertaken through the UIA static pages.

C. Internet marketing

The UIA staff have built up considerable in-house familiarity with internet marketing skills. These have yet to be applied systematically. They represent a considerable advantage over conventional paper-based marketing in terms of cost and distribution.

A discussion paper on the issues facing UIA was prepared by William Martin, a Scottish colleague with experience in this area, following his visit to the UIA (see Annex 2).

D. Web “launch”

The UIA has committed to “launching” its website in one form or another. To date this has been done through various gradualist techniques. However much of the organization data on the web quickly becomes stale, either due to loss of funding or lack of initiative. Thus UIA does need to "promote" / launch when it is ready to do so in order to make its authoritative presence known and felt in the internet environment. "Start up's" in this area are able to garner attention / success because they promote widely and loudly.

E. Unsold copies

The pulping by Saur of the unsold copies of the regular publications continues to be a source of regret.
VII. COMPUTER FACILITIES AND SERVICES

A. In-house

The UIA computers continue to require replacement or upgrading, notably to provide web and e-mail access from workstations. This upgrading process was also a response to problems potentially associated with the Y2K issue. Only minor problems resulted at the time.

Despatch of e-mail proofs to organizations has been successfully undertaken in large quantities (2100 organizations) for the first time. This will significantly reduce postal and handling costs and appears in some cases to generate a better response rate. It will also ensure more direct and continuing contact with organizations.

The possibility of making partial use of Linux-based systems has been successfully tested and a Linux server will be installed operationally to take the load off the dynamic NT-based server. “Obsolete” machines are also being adapted for this purpose.

A sophisticated workstation was donated (as a long-term loan) to UIA by HP-Belgium following solicitation to several computer manufacturers.

B. Dynamic server

The NT server operations have raised issues about back-up facilities should the system crash in response to an excessive number of queries. This is linked directly to the external server through which its use is charged. A back-up server has been acquired to handle such crashes.

C. External / Static server

This facility has proved remarkably successful with an average of over 10,000 hits per day.

The UIA web and e-mail facilities survived the bankruptcy (in July-September 1999) of the Agora cooperative (of which the UIA was a founding member). The facility was taken over by XS4ALL (in turn taken over by KPN), and transferred to computers in Amsterdam -- all in a four month period. Whilst service has been maintained throughout (not without moments of anxiety), communications with the new service provider are “technical” rather than “commercial”. This means that the basis on which UIA is to be invoiced for the past 8 months of service has not been established. Essentially, over that time, usage has been free of charge. In principle the charges should only be at the rate the cooperative was charging – rates that were themselves unclear (and the cause of its bankruptcy). A worst case scenario suggests an invoice for 1999 of 300,000 BF. Efforts to gain clarity on this have been unsuccessful and are essentially against the UIA’s immediate best interests.

VIII. RESEARCH-RELATED ISSUES

Research reports developed by UIA staff continue to be placed on the static web page facility.

The Bettati report has been placed on the web, in the same manner, as a means of inviting further comment and initiative.
The Info2000 media-focused contract has permitted significant breakthroughs in the visualization of relationship information (see Annex 3) that offer the possibility of new products. An “Atlas of International Relationships” was discussed once again with SAUR.

In response to a call for proposals by InfoDev (World Bank) : Challenges and Opportunities of the Networking Revolution (1990-2010), a study proposal in response to the call was prepared but only submitted for information purposes to demonstrate relevance to the INTERCEPT project awaiting funding. The study was subsequently developed and submitted as:

Coherent Policy-making beyond the Information Barrier
(in response to an invitation from the Nautilus Institute for Security and Sustainable Development in preparation for a workshop in San Francisco, December 1999)

IX. ORGANIZATIONAL AND PERSONNEL ISSUES

A decision was made to reduce the archive holdings of organizational descriptions that were occupying much space, were of relatively low value, and necessitated unjustified staff time.

Work on publications is increasingly undertaken with much greater reliance on:

• work away from the Brussels secretariat: the logo project was largely undertaken from Leuven (home of a former UIA staff member), as was the recent Who's Who project, contributions to the Encyclopedia databases, and Yearbook commentary materials; major editing of the Yearbook is now done very successfully in London; development and production of the CD-ROM, previously done in Montreal, has been switched to Paris, and now to London with little disruption (following the movements of the person responsible).

• electronic mail and file transfer: with editors working at a distance, the UIA has effectively been experimenting with a form of "tele-working"; international organizations increasingly communicate with the UIA by e-mail, notably concerning the Yearbook; much information is obtained from the Web. It is planned to further experiment with this mode of operating in the light of new developments with dynamic Web publishing on the NT server.

• flexible working arrangements: volunteers made some contributions to the Encyclopedia (and hopefully will continue to do so in the future) and to the preparatory work for the French translation of the Yearbook; stagiaires have been used for translation work. In some cases this has been converted into paid work, even in the form of contracts.

These developments are partly in response to budgetary constraints, to the needs of individuals, or to the desire to benefit, or continue to benefit, from known expertise with UIA data and programs. It is expected that the UIA involvement with the Web will further change the balance and nature of secretariat operations.

In response to the electronic environment, UIA staff continue to achieve unusual breakthroughs using in-house tools and resources; support and purchase of such resources are undertaken frugally. The electronic environment is causing rapid changes in the: internal modes of work; the way information flows to and from the UIA; as well as...
between personnel.

Salaries remain a regular concern of staff; due both to the Belgian system in general and the high rate of tax. Staff are now acquiring skill sets (e.g. broader computing and internet specific) which would make them extremely attractive in the commercial sector. Additionally, non-Belgian staff are at a distinct disadvantage when it comes to residency and taxation issues.

Under staffing: UIA continues to face challenges of identifying relevant candidates for open positions. Additionally, while more continues to be achieved with less, there are concerns about what elements might be lost as the Yearbook operation adjusts to a smaller staff, a larger share of information available through the internet, and increased electronic contact with organizations.

X. STRATEGIC ISSUES

The long-term strategic issues were discussed in a report to an earlier Council meeting (Reflections on a Possible UIA Information Strategy). What follows is an updated checklist:

A. Positive features

1. Healthy financial position, with prudent reserves
2. Maintaining sales level (surprisingly good, according to Saur) in a declining reference market
3. Good relations with principal distributor (Saur)
4. Solid core of dedicated personnel of proven capacity in producing complex information products of a professional quality on a continuing basis under improbable conditions
5. Solid well-financed, contracted projects (with others in the pipeline)
6. Strategically well-positioned for the emerging knowledge society
7. Solid computer base: paid-up hardware base (workstations, etc); appropriate software; good in-house expertise
8. Respected image amongst information users, web document readers, and participants at conferences where UIA personnel make presentations (often by invitation)
9. Respected relationship to professionals in the highly competitive meeting industry (Associate Members)
10. Substantial (11,000 pages), appreciated, well-visited (5,000 hits/day) website -- strategically designed in relation to dynamic page serving in test mode
11. Ready to roll on innovative interactive, participative relationship with user-suppliers of information over the web
12. Good track record of de-centralized computer work (significantly positioned for any transition to editorial teleworking)

13. Credible, cutting edge opportunities (consonant with EU Fifth Framework for Research and Technology Development now shifting to “research which focuses on the social and economic problems which face society today”, and the like)

14. Operational implementation of innovative visual interfaces to respond the crises of meaning, overview and information overload characteristic of the information society and the UIA’s information in particular

15. Core preoccupation with highlighting and enabling relationships (hyperlinks) between initiatives crossing category boundaries, and the manner in which such patterns can be more meaningfully comprehended, that is remarkably consistent with a 21st century interpretation of what might otherwise be understood as a completely outdated name: Union of International Associations.

16. Demonstrated continuing ability to sustain the above, despite the challenges identified below

B. Challenging features

The UIA is in good shape. There are indeed challenging features to its current strategic opportunities. These have been articulated in Annex 4. However a distinction should be made between:
- challenges to which a healthy organization should be expected to respond in a turbulent environment;
- challenges which are cause for reflection on the appropriateness of the current response; and
- challenges which call for a serious revision in the current approach.

Making these distinctions is itself a challenge to which reference is made in the American adage: “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.”

C. Evaluating future options

Within the above context, with its various positive and negative dimensions, the question is how to evaluate future proposals and projects. The response is strongly dependent on an understanding, or reframing, of the complex of roles through which the UIA is defined (as articulated in Annex 5 and its accompanying table).

A tentative framework, entitled Degrees of fulfilment of UIA operational and strategic objectives was prepared for an earlier discussion (see the two tables of Annex 6). In that Annex, Table 1 identifies a set of 11 criteria and 4 levels of achievement. In Table 2 these criteria are applied experimentally to a range of products and services.

Partly in the light of this document (Annex 6), a separate document on UIA Initiatives and services (Annex 7) has been prepared. This endeavours to highlight the essential strategic dilemmas to be faced in responding to new opportunities.

Implicit in all these documents is the challenge to the UIA of determining:
(a) what constitutes effective action in terms of its mandate;
(b) the nature of its future unique significant contribution, in the light of its mandate;
(c) when to avoid competing with other bodies that are motivated to provide services the UIA is able to supply;
(d) what financial concessions it wishes to make, at what cost, to those it deems in need of information services or other assistance;
(e) what posture to adopt with respect to sponsorship arrangements which run the risk of detracting from the UIA’s image;
(f) what effort to put into interacting with essentially indifferent IGOs operating short-term strategies insensitive to duplication of effort and wastage of scarce resources;
(g) how to make best use of personnel, or to pay for additional personnel, in the light of a new pattern of requests.

As has been previously argued, it would seem that a prime clue to an appropriate response for the 21st century lies in a reinterpretation of the title of the “Union of International Associations”. Implicit in this title is a focus that the UIA has explored throughout its history.

- Union: In logic this term denotes a combination, or joining, of elements, or sets, in the most abstract and general sense. In its work, the UIA has traditionally emphasized the social and organizational interpretation of such combinations -- namely how organizations can coordinate and integrate their activities. However the work of the UIA has extensively covered unions of subjects, problems, disciplines, strategies, values and understandings of human development, in various explorations of the possibility of more fundamental integrative dimensions. This work therefore implies a deep and long-standing commitment to a much subtler and more abstract approach to union as a form of conceptual "keystone". The conceptual challenge of the nature of any such union, and of how it is to be understood and given form, is therefore a continuing one, rather than already determined and thus readily definable. The social or institutional emphasis is merely one specific and important aspect of this. It should emerge from new understandings of how seemingly incompatible perspectives and functions can be provided with a more dynamic integrative framework. This challenge is central to the problem of governance at this time -- namely coherence in policy-making

- International: The UIA has long been sensitive to the many variant interpretations of "international", including possible contrasts between "transnational" and "international". Much emphasis has been placed on international as including inter-cultural, namely that which crosses not only geopolitical boundaries but also belief systems of different kinds. In effect the UIA has responded to the challenge of relationships between psycho-social territories or fiefdoms, seen as representing legitimate differences of perspective. Recognizing relationships and complementarities between such functional territories is essential to any response to social fragmentation. In understanding the challenge of international through its own historical development, UIA explorations have included: emphasizing internationally-constituted bodies; recognizing internationally-oriented bodies; the nature of transnational and transdisciplinary bodies; multi-sectoral entities (crossing boundaries of category or culture); functional complementarity; to understandings of how local is integrated into global, whether from a territorial or conceptual perspective. This may be summarized as transcendence of boundaries.

- Associations: In any discipline concerned with relationships, this term emphasizes patterns of relationships. In psychology and humanistic studies, an association is
indicative of connectedness going beyond any more obvious direct linkage. In its work, the UIA has invested heavily in documenting networks, namely **the many types of relationship** between organizations, between subjects, between values, between problems, between strategies, and the like – increasingly represented in an electronic environment by hyperlinks. It is also unique in exploring ways to document the linkages between such distinct classes of conceptual entities. The pattern of relationships between social groupings, which constitute an "association" or organization, is merely a specific social manifestation of such association. Recognizing such patterns is central to the problem of sustainable development. In understanding the challenge of associations, through its own historical development, UIA explorations have focused on: formal organization membership; organization activities; collective concerns and initiatives; mutual relevance; relationships; transfunctional linkages; patterns of relevance; to an understanding of relationships in their most general sense.

The uniquely significant contribution of the UIA for the future might therefore be described in terms of deriving coherence from patterns of transboundary associations. This focus is consistent with its long-established documentation function -- but provides the vital context that is relevant to the new need of many for coherence in a turbulent world. It distances the UIA from the tunnel vision preoccupation of many well-resourced emerging information initiatives -- with which the UIA would be foolish to compete. The art for the UIA is to strike a balance between provision of coherence, for which there is little funding, and facilitating specialized uses of its information at appropriate rates in order to sustain its activity.
Defining the UIA in relation to its Strategic Dilemmas
(Development of Annex 4, UIA Council, Montecatini, 2000)

UIA AIMS

Reinterpreted for the 21st Century

This is an exercise in reinterpreting UIA’s aims in language relevant to the 21st century:

• Sustain efforts towards superordinate meaning through union of transboundary associations, whether in their social, virtual or conceptual forms

• Through rigorous representation of diversity and patterns of relationship, sustain the “pattern that connects” that is supportive of future understandings of fundamental order and harmony that are meaningful across cultures and ideologies

• Explore the nature and relationship of more fundamental values sustaining individual and collective action

• Facilitate identification of strategic relevance amongst complex patterns of collective initiative in response to their perceived challenges

• Facilitate meaningful organization, whether through social, virtual or conceptual forms

• Ensure long-term sustainability through vigilant use of resources, notably in the case of the organization itself

• Emphasize action in consonance with values of members and personnel, where these are consistent with those of the organization

Current statutory aims (Article 3)

The UAI is a non-profit making international non-governmental organization having a scientific aim, operating as an institute for research, study, information, consultation, promotion and service.

Its aims are:

• to contribute to a universal order based on principles of human dignity, solidarity of peoples and freedom of communication;
• to undertake and promote research and study on transnational associative networks, considered as essential components of contemporary society;
• to collect and distribute the most comprehensive documentation possible on international organizations and associations, both governmental and non-governmental, and on new forms of transnational co-operation;
• to collect and distribute data on the various meetings organized by international bodies;
• to encourage and undertake all activity aimed at promoting the development and efficiency of non-governmental networks, as well as intercommunication between people working in the international framework and in interassociative co-operation;
• to study, categorize, analyze, compare and illuminate world problems as perceived by international organizations.

Statutory aims (1910)
The Union has as its aim the establishment of permanent relations between associations and international institutions and thus to support their action and their work. It notably has as its aim:

- joint study of all questions relative to the organization, the coordination of effort, and the unification of methods, with respect to that which are held in common, or are of analogous nature, between diverse associations or institutions
- cooperation between them for study, information, documentation and the extension of relations.

Through realization of its aim, the Union intends to contribute to the progress of pacific international and the organization of international life.
DILEMMAS

Despite its strategic “nimbleness” and operational adaptability, the UIA is faced with a number of awkward challenges in making policy decisions. The challenges are outlined in what follows, but underlying any response is the question of exactly what is the UIA and what “business” is it in.

Information (Database) services: With most categories of UIA information, the emerging information society provides examples of encroachment on areas in which the UIA previously had a unique advantage.

The nature of the UIA’s advantage is now shifting to the degree of **interlinkage** within and between the databases, to their **comprehensiveness**, and to their **interactivity**. It continues to hold an advantage in its ability to ensure database maintenance on a long-term basis at relatively low costs compared to those that are possible for commercial or intergovernmental agencies – but this advantage is tied to its dilemmas over personnel salaries. However this advantage does not automatically translate into a ready ability to solicit funds since most, if not all, funding sources are focused on sectoral subsets of the database (health, energy, etc) or particular kinds of information (eg addresses).

- **Organizations**: There are an increasing number of international “organization” database facilities, notably on the web. These include those offered as services to other organizations by particular organizations or consortia. Increasingly they take the form of websites. They may well focus on NGOs or “civil society” organizations, possibly with a particular issue focus. UN agencies are increasingly active in establishing such databases, as are “umbrella” organizations. An increasing percentage of international bodies now have their own websites containing the kinds of descriptive information the UIA provides in its own publications (or on the web) – or possibly much more, as in the case of large intergovernmental bodies.

  The UIA’s advantage remains its selection, formatting and breadth of coverage, as well as the considerable hyperlinking to other bodies within the database (and from the other UIA databases). Its weakness from a user’s perspective may be the exclusion of national bodies and the lack of up-to-the-minute information on some bodies, or the absence of any entry at all. Strategically the weakness of the UIA in placing such information on the web is the ease with which competitors can gain access to higher quality information – notably if their own service is subsidized (and offered free of charge).

  The UIA needs to develop selective access strategies to pre-empt further development of certain kinds of database. However it must necessarily recognize that its real advantage can only come from making available kinds of information that others are less inclined to provide. Hence the importance of hyperlinks between entries, to other web resources, and to non-organization UIA databases that increase the richness of the UIA site.

  The recent sale of the UIA publisher K G Saur Verlag (Munich) to Gale Research (Chicago) will prove to be an interesting challenge. Gale has traditionally been the publisher of a significant competitor to the Yearbook in the North American market. Gale derives considerable income from online sale of reference information through the Dialog system. This shift may have considerable marketing advantages for the UIA as well as real challenges, especially if a case is made to absorb UIA products into the Gale context and thus dilute their identity.

- **Meetings**: There are an increasing number of international “calendar” database facilities on the web. These include those offered by single conference centres, towns, regions or countries. They also include highly specialized and more general databases, as well as those of large organizations such as IAEA. These would typically be a tool of choice for professionals in a particular area. Typically it is now common for meetings of any size or consequence to have their own website as a means of communication amongst those potentially involved. The UIA makes some use of these web facilities in compiling its own Calendar. This remains the principal source of meeting statistics – for the
moment. This is an area that is potentially attractive to companies in the information industry, notably when integrated with hotel, travel and tourism information.

The UIA might choose to enter some partnership arrangement with such initiatives, although some may seek to operate as direct competitors. The UIA’s advantage remains its selection, formatting and breadth of coverage, as well as the degree of interlinkage into and from its other databases, especially that on organizations. Its weakness from a user’s perspective may be the exclusion of national meetings and the lack of up-to-the-minute information on some meetings, or the absence of any entry at all – especially when this information is available from other sources. Strategically the weakness of the UIA in placing such information on the web is the ease with which competitors can gain access to higher quality information – notably if their own service is subsidized (and offered free of charge).

The failure to integrate pre-1986 information is to be regretted, although this will be largely mitigated by web access to event information in the Yearbook profile of the organization.

The recent discussion to reopen discussions with ICCA concerning hyperlinkage between UIA and ICCA meeting information is an interesting challenge. Again the challenge is not technical but rather in relation to issues of identity and perceived advantage. For example it is possible that such a linkage could be framed by ICCA as a form of UIA membership of ICCA. The fact of ICCA’s current Associate Membership of UIA could be considered as signalling UIA naivety. The UIA needs to be attentive to offering access to its databases to parties that are essentially redistributors of information – possibly for commerically-related purposes.

- **Problem / Issue information**: There are an increasing number of international “issue” database facilities on the web. These include those offered by particular organizations or services. They may be highly specialized or focus on clusters of issues (eg environment, humanitarian, etc). The UIA’s advantage remains the selection, formatting and breadth of coverage, as well as the considerable hyperlinking to other issues within the database (and from the other UIA databases). Its weakness from a user’s perspective may be the amount of information and the lack of up-to-the-minute information on some issues, or the absence of any entry at all.

Clearly documenting international organization is central to the activities of UIA and has been since its foundation. It was born of the documentary preoccupations of its founders and their relationship to the library community – now transformed into the information services of a knowledge society. In a real sense it is through its use of information that it “represents” the international community of organizations. This sense has traditionally been of far greater importance than its occasional vain attempts in the distant past to represent international organizations through any democratic membership process.

**Access to information**: The UIA is under continuing pressure to make available some kinds of information at low cost, if not freely. This applies particularly to addresses of international organizations. Relevant points are:

- **Extent of UIA data freely available**: The UIA already makes available substantial amounts of information free of charge, notably data on problems and strategies. In the case of organization data, the UIA has been making freely available the vital web addresses of their websites. In an earlier approach, this was immediately extractable by others to create their own databases. The approach has now been modified, but nevertheless such information remains freely available but in a less extractable form. Complete lists of problems, strategies and organizations are made available to facilitate organization action and visibility.

- **Exploitation for commercial purposes**: In a significant number of cases, such requests are received from consultants who are paid to acquire the information, or from others who seek to use it for commercial purposes.
• **Competition with Saur products:** Users acquiring such information may seek to do so in order to avoid acquiring some of the UIA publications which ensure the revenue through which the UIA databases are maintained.

• **Requests from non-profit bodies:** The criterion of “non-profit” is not a sufficiently clear determinant for such access. Many governmental bodies are “non-profit”. Consultants may act on behalf of “non-profit” bodies from which they receive large contracts. Genuine non-profit bodies may seek such access in order to build up their own databases. Some have even requested copies of the entire UIA database for this purpose -- and as a natural right.

• **Relationship with Associate Members:** Access to such information is one of the privileges offered to UIA’s Associate Members, who pay not only for the right of access but also for the cost of extraction. Some Associate Members, such as ICCA, may be effectively redistributing the information to their members.

• **Academic researchers:** As with the remarks concerning “non-profit” bodies, academic researchers have a very different attitude to “data” to be used for scientific purposes. Once acquired it is freely sharable within the academic community. On the other hand it is in the interest of the UIA to ensure that research is done on the data that it collects. And much has been done.

• **Extraction costs:** The procedures to extract data on the basis of complex criteria may themselves be time-consuming, possibly involving special programming.

• **Competitive relationships:** In some cases those seeking, or potentially seeking, access to UIA data are themselves direct competitors of the UIA (eg ICCA).

• **Pulping references books:** The practice adopted by SAUR of pulping unsold copies (notably of the Yearbook) is clearly highly offensive in a world in which many libraries cannot afford to acquire such publications. This has been the subject of a number of debates in the UIA Committee. Basically the challenge is multiple:
  (a) where they are made available to potential clients, SAUR has good reason to be opposed;
  (b) where they have to be transported at significant cost (including to UIA, prior to onward dispatch), costs can be prohibitive;
  (c) if neither of the previous points apply, recipients may still be faced with exorbitant customs charges, for which they have no resources.

The UIA is clearly in the business of ensuring widespread access to the information it processes. But the UIA has always been tortured by its difficulties in determining what information to make freely available and what information to make available at cost -- or for a fee to ensure an income to maintain its information processing facilities. In making such distinctions, and in the absence of continuing subsidies, the question of to whom such information should be made available at what price has been a continuing dilemma.

**Competitive non-profit environment:** Gone are the days when it could be assumed that “non-profit” was somehow associated with “non-competitive” and “altruistic” – in which shared strategic preoccupation with societal problems suggested the possibility of mutually supportive relationships in practice. The UIA is confronted with an interesting array of non-profit “competitors”, although the “competitive” (“unfriendly”) nature of the relationship is typically denied, even though the drain on available collective resources is tangible:

• **Intergovernmental organizations:** Such bodies, or more typically their departments or agencies, have long competed for resources both amongst themselves (even between departments) and with third parties – and notably in relation to information on non-governmental organizations, or on “issues”. As noted above, the major agencies are now establishing their databases as web facilities,
or have plans to do so. They may do this in partnership with selected groups of other organizations and may typically avoid any form of consultation with bodies responsible for earlier initiatives – including those of an intergovernmental nature.

To the extent that these databases are developed as strategic partnerships with commercial operations (eg UN/CISCO partnership for NetAid), they may be deliberately (but deniably) designed as aggressive marketing exercises to marginalize other initiatives, whether governmental or nongovernmental – and that includes the UIAs. The fact that the UIA may have a consultative relationship with such an IGO has proved to be absolutely irrelevant to such strategic decisions. The fact that such IGOs claim to be challenged by budgetary constraints is ironic when the UIA has long maintained its databases on a non-subsidized basis – potentially under jeopardy from IGO initiatives designed to (deniably) to undermine them.

- **Nongovernmental organizations**: Initiatives, of the form described for intergovernmental bodies, may also be developed by nongovernmental bodies. Web environments focusing on humanitarian, development, environment, and other concerns have already been created – including inter-sectoral initiatives. These naturally compete with one another. The UIA’s must naturally be expected to compete with them.

- **Academic initiatives**: Following the “discovery” of the non-profit sector by the academic community in the 1980s, a number of well-funded disciplines have been able to redirect their traditional sources of funds to support “civil society” related initiatives. Ironically, just as “NGO” was discovered by the United Nations through Article 71, it may be argued that “civil society” under its current form has been discovered by a particular coalition of disciplines and funders. Both definitions are notably significant in terms of what they tend not to include. These coalitions have the resources to reframe the debate on civil society in accordance with particular prescriptive agendas in ways that may affect the UIA. For example through the production of a *Global Civil Society Yearbook* (an initiative through the Centre for Civil Society, based at the London School of Economics, traditionally having little interest in such matters).

The foundation of the UIA predates the preoccupation of these sectors with matters of interest to the UIA. However, since these new initiatives are well-resourced, the UIA is now confronted by an array of actors sharing these preoccupations and often indifferent to, or ignorant of, the UIA role in this connection. The UIA needs to explore very carefully the nature of its relationship with such sectors to avoid being “taken hostage” by their respective modes of action. This challenge is most clearly seen in the case of United Nations bodies. Their representatives have long been equally skilled in paying lip service to the value of NGOs and avoiding any significant form of cooperation with them. The UIA has done far more over the years in documenting the intergovernmental community than has ever been acknowledged by such bodies in the form of any pattern of action supportive of the UIA efforts. The UIA has received no subsidies from them and contracts have been very rare and usually focused on relieving short-term policy crises rather than in the spirit of the long-term documentary effort undertaken by the UIA.

By remaining bound by any consultative relationship formula of decreasing (if any) operational significance, the UIA is increasingly hostage to a system that effectively seeks to dilute its significance as part of an array of NGOs pursuing specialized interests. Whilst the UIA endeavours to reflect these interests to a high degree in its information services, it is highly questionable whether it needs to be directly associated with them, especially those of a recurring fashionable or celebratory variety. From this perspective it is important to determine exactly what such association has contributed to the UIA efforts, or could do in the future. The contribution of the UIA to such enterprises needs to be assessed in the light of its strengths and weaknesses. As a high-tech knowledge initiative its contribution is indirect and exemplified by the opportunities of the web. The nature of its resources in terms of skills and limited funds makes questionable any involvement emphasizing lobbying skills in a highly competitive environment.
**Meeting attendance:** This poses several kinds of challenge:

*Representation:* To what extent is it vital for the UIA to be present to demonstrate its concern with the issues or the organizational context – given the assiduity with which it “represents” these bodies in its documentation for wider web dissemination? Minimally such participation involves registration and appearance on the list of participants. It may offer the opportunity for the competitive distribution of literature alongside that of many others. Or it may suggest active involvement in the conference process in order to acquire greater visibility than others, competing for speaking time, etc.

*Cost:* Attendance typically requires a significant UIA investment in terms of time, travel, accommodation and registration. Costs are rarely covered from other sources.

*Value:* Criteria have proven difficult to establish to determine the value of such UIA presence. When the UIA’s presence is specifically requested for a particular role, and costs are covered, the situation is much clearer — especially when there is a well-defined output with which the UIA can be associated. When the UIA is merely present as one of several hundred representatives (notably at “briefings”), the value is less clear, especially if the role is effectively one of rubber-stamping decisions and policies taken by a pre-selected group in processes in which the UIA’s involvement had not been requested.

Contrasting examples include:

- **NGO-related gatherings:** There are increasing numbers of NGO gatherings, notably in the tradition of associating with major UN conferences (Copenhagen, Geneva, etc), with the consultative status process (CONGO), or with specific issues (racism, etc). Typically these may have between 300 and 3000 organization representatives. Costs are rarely covered from other sources, indeed the UIA is solicited to cover costs of representatives from developing countries. Little attention is paid to the possibilities offered by the web to ensure greater, and more, frequent interaction with more geographically widespread participants – presumably because of the effect on the role of those whose funding permits their physical presence.

- **NGO-related research:** In the 1970s, the UIA participated actively in meetings of the International Studies Association which were significant for their lack of attention to international NGOs. Since the late 1980s, and following Rio, there are increasing numbers of meetings concerned with civil society research. These continue to be primarily an extension of the interests of social scientists researching community association and tend to have little concern with the internationality of the body. The UIA is currently participation in meetings of ISTR. Costs are rarely covered from other sources.

- **Knowledge-organization:** The participation of the UIA in meetings relating to its traditional professional role (dating back to its origins) in knowledge organization and information handling continues to be solicited. Costs are frequently covered.

- **Meeting organization:** The UIA is occasionally solicited for assistance in organization of unusual meetings (eg Parliament of the World’s Religions, World Futures Studies Federation). Some costs are usually covered. The challenge of these meetings is the need to find new ways to deal with differences. An analogous set of criteria questions concern attendance at meetings of Associate Members (summer schools, etc).

The UIA needs to be clear on the value of participating in major UN events that involve large numbers of participants. There have been many examples and the advantages and disadvantages of UIA attendance amongst numerous other bodies need to be carefully explored – especially when the events take on an increasingly symbolic or celebratory character, or where the issues are well-articulated in other media to which the UIA has access. The UIA needs to be attentive to any policy of attendance based on “because everyone will be there” or “UIA ought to be there” and what this implies in terms of resource use and follow-up.
“Partnerships”: Strategic partnerships are advocated as a way through the challenges of organizing funding and action in the 21st Century.

- **With intergovernmental organizations:** To date such partnerships have been closely related to various formulas of “consultative relationship”. These formulas have recently been revised or are subject to revision in many cases, notably as a result of the “opening of the doors” associated with the Earth Summit (1992). The UIA has such with UNESCO, UN/ECOSOC and ILO. It has collaborated with FAO, the Council of Europe, UNITAR, and the Commonwealth Science Council. It has acted as one of the research institutes in the network of the UN University. A special ECOSOC resolution establishes cooperation between the United Nations and the UIA for the preparation of the Yearbook of International Organizations. It has long been clear that its prime consultative relationships with UNESCO and ECOSOC result in no practical action or consideration whatsoever on the part of the institutions in question in relation to the UIA, even in matters directly relevant to the reasons for the relationship. The UIA has however continued to enable those bodies to “consult” the UIA, notably through increasing access to its databases and their profiling of the international community, its issues and its strategies. Formal contact has been successful only when the institution has had a short-term need that the UIA was able to fulfil. The UIA finds itself increasingly defined as part of a sea of demanding NGOs with such institutions are increasingly unable to collaborate with in a dignified manner. The UN itself has now severely compromised its own integrity through its close association with broken promises and massacres (Srebrenica and Rwanda), and its more recent association with multinational corporations (Global Compact) for which it required NGO moral sanction. For financial reasons the pattern of information distribution from which the UIA benefited has also been severely curtailed. The UIA could therefore usefully limit its partnerships with such institutions to links of an electronic variety that allow for mutual consultation in a form consistent with the needs and competence of both parties – or to ad hoc opportunities, if and when these seem appropriate. Such institutions have long felt free to relate to NGOs unconstrained by the consultative relationship.

- **For-profit partnerships:** Strategic partnerships between non-profit and for-profit bodies is a feature of the 1990s and the decade to come – even in the case of the United Nations. It could be argued that the UIA has had such a strategic partnership with SAUR since the early 1980s, and with its Associate Members. The concern is to determine with what kinds of bodies such partnerships are viable. This is especially important in the case of the knowledge industry where a partnership involving sharing of data can rapidly deprive an organization of its information assets. The question is where does wisdom start and where does naiveté stop?

**Commercial relationships:** The UIA has successfully survived as a non-profit organization at the frontier between the profit and non-profit worlds. It has done so by selling publications for a profit and developing other relationships with for-profit organizations (Associate Members, suppliers, etc). This results in various dilemmas:

- **Advertising:** The UIA has long been attentive to advertising possibilities. Advertising revenue was a significant component of early issues of the review and the Calendar. It has always been excluded in the case of the Yearbook – with the exception of information on other UIA publications. The stance was to maintain a non-commercial, professional image of the UIA products. Success in advertising was limited by the national orientation of many advertisers potentially interested in UIA publications – but concerned at their limited distribution in any one country. The advent of the web completely reframes the challenge. There are many possibilities for generating advertising revenue:
  - by automatically inserting adverts (logos, banners) on selected pages,
  - by click-through facilities

However the issue remains the extent to which users should associate a jumble of third party advertising messages with the UIA information.
• **Associate Members:** Because of the commercial orientation of the meeting industry bodies that form the core of the associate membership, the UIA is challenged in its ability to make certain information available at lower costs when such members pay for exclusive access to it.

The UIA has benefited from a long-term relationship characterized by mutual respect and consideration in the case of K G Saur Verlag. This might be considered a model of a successful relationship. It might also be considered atypical in that many examples of sponsorship are now very short-term and may reflect very limited interest in the UIA’s own objectives. In this respect the current attempts of the UN to develop relationships with multinational corporations (following a long series of resolutions against them) should be followed with interest.

**Image and Visibility:** There is continuing expression of concern with regard to the image and visibility of the UIA.

• **Image:** What is the UIA? For whom is the UIA? What does it need to be for particular audiences (conference industry, researchers, academics, librarians, NGOs, IGOs, governments, media, personnel, etc)? Traditionally the UIA has:
  (a) allowed itself to be defined in large measure by the expectations of the perceiver;
  (b) emphasized its products and services before any institutional identity;
  (c) resisted simplistic identification with any particular image;
  (d) avoided extensive image-building investment.

Many organizations have switched the focus of their image-definition to the web. The UIA website reflects many of the ambiguities of its past priorities, both in terms of strengths and weaknesses. However, even as a design challenge, the production of a website to reflect the many aspects of the UIA is quite daunting. This is especially the case where design decisions have to take account of an understanding of the interaction amongst thousands of UIA web pages (on separate cross-linked UIA web servers) that need to meet the needs of very different kinds of users and priorities.

• **Visibility:** To whom should the UIA be “visible”? What is the operational significance of such visibility? Is UIA public relations ineffective if the UIA is not well-known? A simple answer to this question would suggest that the UIA, as an institution, should ideally be as visible as Greenpeace or Amnesty. However these bodies tend to be associated with issues frequently highlighted by the media. With how many bodies should the UIA seek to compete to achieve preferential recognition? At what cost? In whose interest? The UIA has traditionally chosen a different strategy, namely presenting its products without highlighting the producer of the products. This has been preferred as an effective operational strategy in order to collect information successfully from organizations -- for a “Yearbook” (or for a “Calendar”, an “Encyclopedia”) rather than by a “Union”.

This approach has been extended into the UIA’s web strategy. A significant number of users come to pages of the UIA website via third party search engines pointing to specific information on non-UIA bodies, issues, or strategies at a low level in the UIA site. Emphasis is thus placed on the service rendered to the user in terms of their specific need -- rather than on the body rendering the service. The UIA is typically mentioned on the page – but incidentally rather than as the most prominent feature, namely a soft-sell rather than a pushy hard-sell. Users, if curious, are offered access to further information on the UIA, but they do not have to give attention to such information before getting an answer to their initial inquiry. Metaphorically, the UIA web strategy is to offer access to individual “trees”, and leave it to the user to determine whether they want to acquire any knowledge about the “forest” and its management. But, as pointed out under “image”, there is a real problem in providing users with information adequate to their needs without over-simplifying the UIA, and without over-complexifying what is communicated – and nevertheless offering those who are interested an insight into the full spectrum of UIA issues and concerns and the manner in which they are
integrated.

- **Credibility:** Linking “image” and “visibility” is the question of credibility. Traditionally the UIA has relied for its credibility on the quality of the information it produces. The early efforts to increase credibility by associating with intergovernmental bodies now appears an outdated and ineffectual strategy, especially since many of the consultative status IGOs face their own sever credibility challenges.

- **Branding and logo:** There is a certain style of marketing that uncritically accepts the merit of “branding”. This is typical of UIA Associate Members who like to be associated with a branded product and to be branded in order to acquire a sense of identity. Blatant branding ignores the approach taken to marketing quality products and raises issues about how the UIA chooses to see and present itself.

- **Marketing:** It is often assumed that the UIA “marketing” efforts are inadequate in terms of the results sought. It should be remembered that up to the 1970s the UIA undertook its own publication marketing, prior to switching the majority to SAUR. The main difficulty with marketing is that the audience for UIA products and services is thinly dispersed and traditionally involved costly mailing exercises. Through its website the UIA has achieved considerable visibility at very low cost and without yet engaging in typical web marketing strategies. There is a strong possibility that the sustained level of UIA publication sales through SAUR is due to their visibility on the UIA website.

**Complexity:** The UIA, despite the relatively small size of its Secretariat, is engaged in a number of relatively complex, interconnected initiatives. It is often difficult to ensure effective discussion of its strategic challenges because of this complexity – especially when only parts of this range of activities are considered relevant to any discussion. For some it is convenient, if not highly desirable, to perceive the UIA only through a particular facet of its activities – and to present it to others in this light.

The dilemma for the UIA is that, despite this need for simplicity, a significant aspect of its brief is effectively that of mapping complexity – like astronomers, but mapping the knowledge ecosystem. It is its respect for the richness of the organizational and knowledge ecosystem that distinguishes it from many sectoral and discipline-oriented approaches that have their own strategic advantages.

**Membership challenges:** In developing its Full Membership (**Membres Actifs**), the UIA is severely constrained by the nature of the UIA meetings to which members could be invited, their infrequency, the distances/costs of their attendance, and the motivation of members. These necessarily result in unrepresentative attendance and preclude cooptation of valuable members -- precisely because they would be disinclined (or unable) to participate fully. Clearly the opportunities of the web to broaden the membership and increase participation (without requiring physical presence) remain to be explored, as well as their statutory implications.

**Conflict of interest:** Given the complex scope of UIA activity, it is not surprising that there is potential conflict of interest, in relation to UIA activities, amongst some of its members coopted precisely because of their association with different associative trends and concerns:

- **Full Members:** Clearly in order for UIA to be “representative” of the range of concerns with which it deals, it necessarily has as members some people who are strongly associated with competing non-profit interests (as noted above). This is manifest in failure to inform the UIA Secretariat (notably with regard to non-confidential publications which could be reviewed or cited in UIA publications), or to ensure that the UIA is presented to relevant parties. Clearly there is also the question of the degree that such actions can be taken without infringing on responsibilities to the competing institutional interest – and any assumption that such members should bring benefits to the UIA from their other associations.
Examples include:

- Members of staff in UN bodies who are directly informed of initiatives relevant to UIA (e.g., to establish an *International Classification of Nonprofit Organizations* – ICPO, and its integration into various systems of national accounts)
- Members involved in academic initiatives relating to NGOs
- Members involved in NGO gatherings relevant to UIA projects

**Associate Members:** In subscribing to the principles of its mandate, the UIA involves as its Associate Members some (e.g., ICCA) who compete directly with the UIA in the provision of certain services (ICCA has just launched an online Calendar service).

**Active vs Honorary membership:** The UIA has been unable to resolve the conflicts between the “honorary” nature of its full membership, the “activity” implicitly associated with such membership (despite conflict of interest), and the statutory articulation of distinctions of principle that do not correspond with operational realities (effectively failing to give place to others that are active supporters in practice). The operating reality of the UIA would be more realistically defined if:

- UIA Full Members constituted an “Honorary Council” (“Amis de l’UIA”);
- UIA Executive Council constituted a “Board of Trustees” designed to guarantee conformity to statutory provisions;
- UIA Corresponding Members constituted a group of Active Participants in UIA electronic work.

Involvement in one group should not preclude, or be dependent on, involvement in another. Unfortunately antiquated constraints of Belgian legislation, notably with respect to electronic involvement in statutory meetings, prevent any transition to a constitution that would facilitate, rather than obstruct, the emergence of an operational mode appropriate to worldwide activity of the UIA in a knowledge-oriented society.

The conflicts inherent in the above point to the degree to which the UIA has effectively been taken hostage by members (formally associated with seemingly valuable institutional “partners”) that prompted their cooptation – when the members are necessarily unable or unwilling to catalyze any further collaboration of such bodies with the UIA. This forces the UIA into undue respect and consideration of that institution (despite its manifest indifference). Similarly members coopted because of their eminence may be quite unable to give time to the UIA but preclude the UIA from coopting members of more modest background likely to demonstrate active involvement over a longer period of time. The conflict becomes more apparent in the case of the absence of any financial obligation from Full Members, leading to a long-standing pattern in which all funds are necessarily generated by secretariat initiatives, usually without any support of Full Members, and often by individuals who are not considered eligible for full membership.

**NGO services:** There is continuing concern regarding the nature of “services” that the UIA should, does, or could, offer to NGOs – and the conditions under which this should be done. Relevant points include:

- **UIA role in relation to NGOs:** The UIA has a statutory role in relation to facilitating nongovernmental organization. Many bodies, often well-subsidized, now respond to the needs of “nongovernmental organizations” and “civil society bodies” in their many forms (some newly emergent). They even compete to do so. It is therefore relevant to ask whether the UIA's skills and resources should be allocated to provide a class of services that others seek to provide, or whether it should seek to provide services which others are less interested in providing, or are unable to provide.

- **Services as an investment:** There is a view that some services by the UIA should be provided at cost or for free. These services need to be identified and the resources to be reallocated to them
should be identified in the light of considerations given earlier.

- **Personnel appropriate to new services:** The UIA has a heavy investment in services that generate funds to maintain its information service activity. It has not invested in personnel skills to provide other kinds of services and it is not clear that personnel with such skills could generate supporting income or be remunerated at the rates consistent with those skills.

- **Web services:** Many “services” are effectively provided worldwide by the UIA via the web. It is not clear to what extent it is understood what these services are in relation to other services that it is assumed are not being provided by the UIA.

- **Opportunity cost:** Even if it is agreed that the UIA should be providing a particular service, this may involve reallocating scarce resources to achieve this – thus raising the question as to how to ensure the economic viability of such a decision. Even where such services involve hiring extra personnel, if this involves extensive training, this may also be problematic. Some services involving high cost personnel, may disrupt the delicate UIA Secretariat salary scale.

- **Revenue generating services:** To what extent should services provided be assessed in terms of the revenue that they generate?

**Personnel:** The dilemmas associated with UIA personnel (salaries, quality, permanence/continuity) have been described elsewhere. The fundamental issue is that the UIA is dependent, in the continuing provision of its sophisticated information services, on maintaining the loyalty of skilled personnel under conditions of work that are not competitive with commercial organizations engaged in similar tasks. The kinds of people prepared to work under such conditions generate special management challenges.

As is increasingly typical of creative commercial organizations in the knowledge management business, loyalty is retained through enthusiasm for task, objective, and their creative development, as well as the qualities of the work environment. Such people do not respond readily to strategies and tasks articulated as abstractions divorced from their own understanding of the constraints and relevant opportunities that emerge as feedback from their work. This is especially the case when such people are responsible for sustaining institutional income and generating funds for new projects. The particular challenge in the case of the UIA is that its work is essentially long-term and dependent on a longer learning period to sustain continuity. Such people are not easily replaceable according to the style of commercial organizations, even when this may seem appropriate.

These conditions place both individuals and the UIA as a working community under special tensions between the centripetal and centrifugal pulls to which individuals are subject. Most recently these have been partially resolved by increasing experiments in the use of teleworking, although these do not respond to the challenges of maintaining a sophisticated in-house information system.
Defining the UIA in relation to its Strategic Dilemmas
(Development of Annex 4, UIA Council, Montecatini, 2000)

UIA AIMS

Reinterpreted for the 21st Century

This is an exercise in reinterpreting UIA’s aims in language relevant to the 21st century:

- Sustain efforts towards superordinate meaning through union of transboundary associations, whether in their social, virtual or conceptual forms

- Through rigorous representation of diversity and patterns of relationship, sustain the “pattern that connects” that is supportive of future understandings of fundamental order and harmony that are meaningful across cultures and ideologies

- Explore the nature and relationship of more fundamental values sustaining individual and collective action

- Facilitate identification of strategic relevance amongst complex patterns of collective initiative in response to their perceived challenges

- Facilitate meaningful organization, whether through social, virtual or conceptual forms

- Ensure long-term sustainability through vigilant use of resources, notably in the case of the organization itself

- Emphasize action in consonance with values of members and personnel, where these are consistent with those of the organization

Current statutory aims (Article 3)

The UIA is a non-profit making international non-governmental organization having a scientific aim, operating as an institute for research, study, information, consultation, promotion and service.

Its aims are:

- to contribute to a universal order based on principles of human dignity, solidarity of peoples and freedom of communication;
- to undertake and promote research and study on transnational associative networks, considered as essential components of contemporary society;
- to collect and distribute the most comprehensive documentation possible on international organizations and associations, both governmental and non-governmental, and on new forms of transnational co-operation;
- to collect and distribute data on the various meetings organized by international bodies;
- to encourage and undertake all activity aimed at promoting the development and efficiency of non-governmental networks, as well as intercommunication between people working in the international framework and in interassociative co-operation;
- to study, categorize, analyze, compare and illuminate world problems as perceived by international organizations.

Statutory aims (1910)
The Union has as its aim the establishment of permanent relations between associations and international institutions and thus to support their action and their work. It notably has as its aim:

- joint study of all questions relative to the organization, the coordination of effort, and the unification of methods, with respect to that which are held in common, or are of analogous nature, between diverse associations or institutions
- cooperation between them for study, information, documentation and the extension of relations.

Through realization of its aim, the Union intends to contribute to the progress of pacific international and the organization of international life.
DILEMNAS

Despite its strategic “nimbleness” and operational adaptability, the UIA is faced with a number of awkward challenges in making policy decisions. The challenges are outlined in what follows, but underlying any response is the question of exactly what is the UIA and what “business” is it in.

**Information (Database) services:** With most categories of UIA information, the emerging information society provides examples of encroachment on areas in which the UIA previously had a unique advantage.

The nature of the UIA’s advantage is now shifting to the degree of interlinkage within and between the databases, to their comprehensiveness, and to their interactivity. It continues to hold an advantage in its ability to ensure database maintenance on a long-term basis at relatively low costs compared to those that are possible for commercial or intergovernmental agencies – but this advantage is tied to its dilemmas over personnel salaries. However, this advantage does not automatically translate into a ready ability to solicit funds since most, if not all, funding sources are focused on sectoral subsets of the database (health, energy, etc) or particular kinds of information (e.g., addresses).

- **Organizations:** There are an increasing number of international “organization” database facilities, notably on the web. These include those offered as services to other organizations by particular organizations or consortia. Increasingly they take the form of websites. They may well focus on NGOs or “civil society” organizations, possibly with a particular issue focus. UN agencies are increasingly active in establishing such databases, as are “umbrella” organizations. An increasing percentage of international bodies now have their own websites containing the kinds of descriptive information the UIA provides in its own publications (or on the web) – or possibly much more, as in the case of large intergovernmental bodies.

The UIA’s advantage remains its selection, formatting, and breadth of coverage, as well as the considerable hyperlinking to other bodies within the database (and from the other UIA databases). Its weakness from a user’s perspective may be the exclusion of national bodies and the lack of up-to-the-minute information on some bodies, or the absence of any entry at all. Strategically, the weakness of the UIA in placing such information on the web is the ease with which competitors can gain access to higher quality information – notably if their own service is subsidized (and offered free of charge).

The UIA needs to develop selective access strategies to pre-empt further development of certain kinds of database. However, it must necessarily recognize that its real advantage can only come from making available kinds of information that others are less inclined to provide. Hence the importance of hyperlinks between entries, to other web resources, and to non-organization UIA databases that increase the richness of the UIA site.

The recent sale of the UIA publisher K G Saur Verlag (Munich) to Gale Research (Chicago) will prove to be an interesting challenge. Gale has traditionally been the publisher of a significant competitor to the Yearbook in the North American market. Gale derives considerable income from online sale of reference information through the Dialog system. This shift may have considerable marketing advantages for the UIA as well as real challenges, especially if a case is made to absorb UIA products into the Gale context and thus dilute their identity.

- **Meetings:** There are an increasing number of international “calendar” database facilities on the web. These include those offered by single conference centres, towns, regions, or countries. They also include highly specialized and more general databases, as well as those of large organizations such as IAEA. These would typically be a tool of choice for professionals in a particular area. Typically it is now common for meetings of any size or consequence to have their own website as a means of communication amongst those potentially involved. The UIA makes some use of these web facilities in compiling its own Calendar. This remains the principal source of meeting statistics – for the
moment. This is an area that is potentially attractive to companies in the information industry, notably when integrated with hotel, travel and tourism information.

The UIA might choose to enter some partnership arrangement with such initiatives, although some may seek to operate as direct competitors. The UIA’s advantage remains its selection, formatting and breadth of coverage, as well as the degree of interlinkage into and from its other databases, especially that on organizations. Its weakness from a user’s perspective may be the exclusion of national meetings and the lack of up-to-the-minute information on some meetings, or the absence of any entry at all – especially when this information is available from other sources. Strategically the weakness of the UIA in placing such information on the web is the ease with which competitors can gain access to higher quality information – notably if their own service is subsidized (and offered free of charge).

The failure to integrate pre-1986 information is to be regretted, although this will be largely mitigated by web access to event information in the Yearbook profile of the organization.

The recent discussion to reopen discussions with ICCA concerning hyperlinkage between UIA and ICCA meeting information is an interesting challenge. Again the challenge is not technical but rather in relation to issues of identity and perceived advantage. For example it is possible that such a linkage could be framed by ICCA as a form of UIA membership of ICCA. The fact of ICCA’s current Associate Membership of UIA could be considered as signalling UIA naivety.

The UIA needs to be attentive to offering access to its databases to parties that are essentially redistributors of information – possibly for commercially-related purposes.

**Problem / Issue information**: There are an increasing number of international “issue” database facilities on the web. These include those offered by particular organizations or services. They may be highly specialized or focus on clusters of issues (eg environment, humanitarian, etc). The UIA’s advantage remains the selection, formatting and breadth of coverage, as well as the considerable hyperlinking to other issues within the database (and from the other UIA databases). Its weakness from a user’s perspective may be the amount of information and the lack of up-to-the-minute information on some issues, or the absence of any entry at all.

Clearly documenting international organization is central to the activities of UIA and has been since its foundation. It was born of the documentary preoccupations of its founders and their relationship to the library community – now transformed into the information services of a knowledge society. In a real sense it is through its use of information that it “represents” the international community of organizations. This sense has traditionally been of far greater importance than its occasional vain attempts in the distant past to represent international organizations through any democratic membership process.

**Access to information**: The UIA is under continuing pressure to make available some kinds of information at low cost, if not freely. This applies particularly to addresses of international organizations. Relevant points are:

- **Extent of UIA data freely available**: The UIA already makes available substantial amounts of information free of charge, notably data on problems and strategies. In the case of organization data, the UIA has been making freely available the vital web addresses of their websites. In an earlier approach, this was immediately extractable by others to create their own databases. The approach has now been modified, but nevertheless such information remains freely available but in a less extractable form. Complete lists of problems, strategies and organizations are made available to facilitate organization action and visibility.

- **Exploitation for commercial purposes**: In a significant number of cases, such requests are received from consultants who are paid to acquire the information, or from others who seek to use it for commercial purposes.
• **Competition with Saur products:** Users acquiring such information may seek to do so in order to avoid acquiring some of the UIA publications which ensure the revenue through which the UIA databases are maintained.

• **Requests from non-profit bodies:** The criterion of “non-profit” is not a sufficiently clear determinant for such access. Many governmental bodies are “non-profit”. Consultants may act on behalf of “non-profit” bodies from which they receive large contracts. Genuine non-profit bodies may seek such access in order to build up their own databases. Some have even requested copies of the entire UIA database for this purpose -- and as a natural right.

• **Relationship with Associate Members:** Access to such information is one of the privileges offered to UIA’s Associate Members, who pay not only for the right of access but also for the cost of extraction. Some Associate Members, such as ICCA, may be effectively redistributing the information to their members.

• **Academic researchers:** As with the remarks concerning “non-profit” bodies, academic researchers have a very different attitude to “data” to be used for scientific purposes. Once acquired it is freely sharable within the academic community. On the other hand it is in the interest of the UIA to ensure that research is done on the data that it collects. And much has been done.

• **Extraction costs:** The procedures to extract data on the basis of complex criteria may themselves be time-consuming, possibly involving special programming.

• **Competitive relationships:** In some cases those seeking, or potentially seeking, access to UIA data are themselves direct competitors of the UIA (e.g. ICCA).

• **Pulping references books:** The practice adopted by SAUR of pulping unsold copies (notably of the Yearbook) is clearly highly offensive in a world in which many libraries cannot afford to acquire such publications. This has been the subject of a number of debates in the UIA Committee. Basically the challenge is multiple:
  (a) where they are made available to potential clients, SAUR has good reason to be opposed;
  (b) where they have to be transported at significant cost (including to UIA, prior to onward dispatch), costs can be prohibitive;
  (c) if neither of the previous points apply, recipients may still be faced with exorbitant customs charges, for which they have no resources.

The UIA is clearly in the business of ensuring widespread access to the information it processes. But the UIA has always been tortured by its difficulties in determining what information to make freely available and what information to make available at cost -- or for a fee to ensure an income to maintain its information processing facilities. In making such distinctions, and in the absence of continuing subsidies, the question of to whom such information should be made available at what price has been a continuing dilemma.

**Competitive non-profit environment:** Gone are the days when it could be assumed that “non-profit” was somehow associated with “non-competitive” and “altruistic” -- in which shared strategic preoccupation with societal problems suggested the possibility of mutually supportive relationships in practice. The UIA is confronted with an interesting array of non-profit “competitors”, although the “competitive” (“unfriendly”) nature of the relationship is typically denied, even though the drain on available collective resources is tangible:

• **Intergovernmental organizations:** Such bodies, or more typically their departments or agencies, have long competed for resources both amongst themselves (even between departments) and with third parties -- and notably in relation to information on non-governmental organizations, or on “issues”. As noted above, the major agencies are now establishing their databases as web facilities,
or have plans to do so. They may do this in partnership with selected groups of other organizations and may typically avoid any form of consultation with bodies responsible for earlier initiatives – including those of an intergovernmental nature.

To the extent that these databases are developed as strategic partnerships with commercial operations (e.g., UN/CISCO partnership for NetAid), they may be deliberately (but deniably) designed as aggressive marketing exercises to marginalize other initiatives, whether governmental or nongovernmental – and that includes the UIAs. The fact that the UIA may have a consultative relationship with such an IGO has proved to be absolutely irrelevant to such strategic decisions. The fact that such IGOs claim to be challenged by budgetary constraints is ironic when the UIA has long maintained its databases on a non-subsidized basis – potentially under jeopardy from IGO initiatives designed to (deniably) to undermine them.

- **Nongovernmental organizations**: Initiatives, of the form described for intergovernmental bodies, may also be developed by nongovernmental bodies. Web environments focusing on humanitarian, development, environment, and other concerns have already been created – including inter-sectoral initiatives. These naturally compete with one another. The UIA’s must naturally be expected to compete with them.

- **Academic initiatives**: Following the “discovery” of the non-profit sector by the academic community in the 1980s, a number of well-funded disciplines have been able to redirect their traditional sources of funds to support “civil society” related initiatives. Ironically, just as “NGO” was discovered by the United Nations through Article 71, it may be argued that “civil society” under its current form has been discovered by a particular coalition of disciplines and funders. Both definitions are notably significant in terms of what they tend not to include. These coalitions have the resources to reframe the debate on civil society in accordance with particular prescriptive agendas in ways that may affect the UIA. For example through the production of a *Global Civil Society Yearbook* (an initiative through the Centre for Civil Society, based at the London School of Economics, traditionally having little interest in such matters).

The foundation of the UIA predates the preoccupation of these sectors with matters of interest to the UIA. However, since these new initiatives are well-resourced, the UIA is now confronted by an array of actors sharing these preoccupations and often indifferent to, or ignorant of, the UIA role in this connection. The UIA needs to explore very carefully the nature of its relationship with such sectors to avoid being “taken hostage” by their respective modes of action. This challenge is most clearly seen in the case of United Nations bodies. Their representatives have long been equally skilled in paying lip service to the value of NGOs and avoiding any significant form of cooperation with them. The UIA has done far more over the years in documenting the intergovernmental community than has ever been acknowledged by such bodies in the form of any pattern of action supportive of the UIA efforts. The UIA has received no subsidies from them and contracts have been very rare and usually focused on relieving short-term policy crises rather than in the spirit of the long-term documentary effort undertaken by the UIA.

By remaining bound by any consultative relationship formula of decreasing (if any) operational significance, the UIA is increasingly hostage to a system that effectively seeks to dilute its significance as part of an array of NGOs pursuing specialized interests. Whilst the UIA endeavours to reflect these interests to a high degree in its information services, it is highly questionable whether it needs to be directly associated with them, especially those of a recurring fashionable or celebratory variety. From this perspective it is important to determine exactly what such association has contributed to the UIA efforts, or could do in the future. The contribution of the UIA to such enterprises needs to be assessed in the light of its strengths and weaknesses. As a high-tech knowledge initiative its contribution is indirect and exemplified by the opportunities of the web. The nature of its resources in terms of skills and limited funds makes questionable any involvement emphasizing lobbying skills in a highly competitive environment.
Meeting attendance: This poses several kinds of challenge:

Representation: To what extent is it vital for the UIA to be present to demonstrate its concern with the issues or the organizational context – given the assiduity with which it "represents" these bodies in its documentation for wider web dissemination? Minimally such participation involves registration and appearance on the list of participants. It may offer the opportunity for the competitive distribution of literature alongside that of many others. Or it may suggest active involvement in the conference process in order to acquire greater visibility than others, competing for speaking time, etc.

Cost: Attendance typically requires a significant UIA investment in terms of time, travel, accommodation and registration. Costs are rarely covered from other sources.

Value: Criteria have proven difficult to establish to determine the value of such UIA presence. When the UIA's presence is specifically requested for a particular role, and costs are covered, the situation is much clearer – especially when there is a well-defined output with which the UIA can be associated. When the UIA is merely present as one of several hundred representatives (notably at “briefings”), the value is less clear, especially if the role is effectively one of rubber-stamping decisions and policies taken by a pre-selected group in processes in which the UIA’s involvement had not been requested.

Contrasting examples include:

- **NGO-related gatherings**: There are increasing numbers of NGO gatherings, notably in the tradition of associating with major UN conferences (Copenhagen, Geneva, etc), with the consultative status process (CONGO), or with specific issues (racism, etc). Typically these may have between 300 and 3000 organization representatives. Costs are rarely covered from other sources, indeed the UIA is solicited to cover costs of representatives from developing countries. Little attention is paid to the possibilities offered by the web to ensure greater, and more, frequent interaction with more geographically widespread participants – presumably because of the effect on the role of those whose funding permits their physical presence.

- **NGO-related research**: In the 1970s, the UIA participated actively in meetings of the International Studies Association which were significant for their lack of attention to international NGOs. Since the late 1980s, and following Rio, there are increasing numbers of meetings concerned with civil society research. These continue to be primarily an extension of the interests of social scientists researching community association and tend to have little concern with the internationality of the body. The UIA is currently participation in meetings of ISTR. Costs are rarely covered from other sources.

- **Knowledge-organization**: The participation of the UIA in meetings relating to its traditional professional role (dating back to its origins) in knowledge organization and information handling continues to be solicited. Costs are frequently covered.

- **Meeting organization**: The UIA is occasionally solicited for assistance in organization of unusual meetings (eg Parliament of the World’s Religions, World Futures Studies Federation). Some costs are usually covered. The challenge of these meetings is the need to find new ways to deal with differences. An analogous set of criteria questions concern attendance at meetings of Associate Members (summer schools, etc).

The UIA needs to be clear on the value of participating in major UN events that involve large numbers of participants. There have been many examples and the advantages and disadvantages of UIA attendance amongst numerous other bodies need to be carefully explored – especially when the events take on an increasingly symbolic or celebratory character, or where the issues are well-articulated in other media to which the UIA has access. The UIA needs to be attentive to any policy of attendance based on “because everyone will be there” or “UIA ought to be there” and what this implies in terms of resource use and follow-up.
“Partnerships”: Strategic partnerships are advocated as a way through the challenges of organizing funding and action in the 21st Century.

- **With intergovernmental organizations:** To date such partnerships have been closely related to various formulas of “consultative relationship”. These formulas have recently been revised or are subject to revision in many cases, notably as a result of the “opening of the doors” associated with the Earth Summit (1992). The UIA has such with UNESCO, UN/ECOSOC and ILO. It has collaborated with FAO, the Council of Europe, UNITAR, and the Commonwealth Science Council. It has acted as one of the research institutes in the network of the UN University. A special ECOSOC resolution establishes cooperation between the United Nations and the UIA for the preparation of the Yearbook of International Organizations. It has long been clear that its prime consultative relationships with UNESCO and ECOSOC result in no practical action or consideration whatsoever on the part of the institutions in question in relation to the UIA, even in matters directly relevant to the reasons for the relationship. The UIA has however continued to enable those bodies to “consult” the UIA, notably through increasing access to its databases and their profiling of the international community, its issues and its strategies. Formal contact has been successful only when the institution has had a short-term need that the UIA was able to fulfil. The UIA finds itself increasingly defined as part of a sea of demanding NGOs with such institutions are increasingly unable to collaborate with in a dignified manner. The UN itself has now severely compromised its own integrity through its close association with broken promises and massacres (Srebrenica and Rwanda), and its more recent association with multinational corporations (Global Compact) for which it required NGO moral sanction. For financial reasons the pattern of information distribution from which the UIA benefited has also been severely curtailed. The UIA could therefore usefully limit its partnerships with such bodies to links of an electronic variety that allow for mutual consultation in a form consistent with the needs and competence of both parties – or to ad hoc opportunities, if and when these seem appropriate. Such institutions have long felt free to relate to NGOs unconstrained by the consultative relationship.

- **For-profit partnerships:** Strategic partnerships between non-profit and for-profit bodies is a feature of the 1990s and the decade to come – even in the case of the United Nations. It could be argued that the UIA has had such a strategic partnership with SAUR since the early 1980s, and with it’s Associate Members. The concern is to determine with what kinds of bodies such partnerships are viable. This is especially important in the case of the knowledge industry where a partnership involving sharing of data can rapidly deprive an organization of its information assets. The question is where does wisdom start and where does naiveté stop?

**Commercial relationships:** The UIA has successfully survived as a non-profit organization at the frontier between the profit and non-profit worlds. It has done so by selling publications for a profit and developing other relationships with for-profit organizations (Associate Members, suppliers, etc). This results in various dilemmas:

- **Advertising:** The UIA has long been attentive to advertising possibilities. Advertising revenue was a significant component of early issues of the review and the Calendar. It has always been excluded in the case of the Yearbook – with the exception of information on other UIA publications. The stance was to maintain a non-commercial, professional image of the UIA products. Success in advertising was limited by the national orientation of many advertisers potentially interested in UIA publications – but concerned at their limited distribution in any one country. The advent of the web completely reframes the challenge. There are many possibilities for generating advertising revenue:
  - by automatically inserting adverts (logos, banners) on selected pages,
  - by click-through facilities

However the issue remains the extent to which users should associate a jumble of third party advertising messages with the UIA information.
• **Associate Members:** Because of the commercial orientation of the meeting industry bodies that form the core of the associate membership, the UIA is challenged in its ability to make certain information available at lower costs when such members pay for exclusive access to it.

The UIA has benefited from a long-term relationship characterized by mutual respect and consideration in the case of K G Saur Verlag. This might be considered a model of a successful relationship. It might also be considered atypical in that many examples of sponsorship are now very short-term and may reflect very limited interest in the UIA's own objectives. In this respect the current attempts of the UN to develop relationships with multinational corporations (following a long series of resolutions against them) should be followed with interest.

**Image and Visibility:** There is continuing expression of concern with regard to the image and visibility of the UIA.

• **Image:** What is the UIA? For whom is the UIA? What does it need to be for particular audiences (conference industry, researchers, academics, librarians, NGOs, IGOs, governments, media, personnel, etc)? Traditionally the UIA has:
  (a) allowed itself to be defined in large measure by the expectations of the perceiver;
  (b) emphasized its products and services before any institutional identity;
  (c) resisted simplistic identification with any particular image;
  (d) avoided extensive image-building investment.

Many organizations have switched the focus of their image-definition to the web. The UIA website reflects many of the ambiguities of its past priorities, both in terms of strengths and weaknesses. However, even as a design challenge, the production of a website to reflect the many aspects of the UIA is quite daunting. This is especially the case where design decisions have to take account of an understanding of the interaction amongst thousands of UIA web pages (on separate cross-linked UIA web servers) that need to meet the needs of very different kinds of users and priorities.

• **Visibility:** To whom should the UIA be “visible”? What is the operational significance of such visibility? Is UIA public relations ineffective if the UIA is not well-known? A simple answer to this question would suggest that the UIA, as an institution, should ideally be as visible as Greenpeace or Amnesty. However these bodies tend to be associated with issues frequently highlighted by the media. With how many bodies should the UIA seek to compete to achieve preferential recognition? At what cost? In whose interest? The UIA has traditionally chosen a different strategy, namely presenting its products without highlighting the producer of the products. This has been preferred as an effective operational strategy in order to collect information successfully from organizations -- for a “Yearbook” (or for a “Calendar”, an “Encyclopedia”) rather than by a “Union”.

This approach has been extended into the UIA’s web strategy. A significant number of users come to pages of the UIA website via third party search engines pointing to specific information on non-UIA bodies, issues, or strategies at a low level in the UIA site. Emphasis is thus placed on the service rendered to the user in terms of their specific need -- rather than on the body rendering the service. The UIA is typically mentioned on the page – but incidentally rather than as the most prominent feature, namely a soft-sell rather than a pushy hard-sell. Users, if curious, are offered access to further information on the UIA, but they do not have to give attention to such information before getting an answer to their initial inquiry. Metaphorically, the UIA web strategy is to offer access to individual “trees”, and leave it to the user to determine whether they want to acquire any knowledge about the “forest” and its management. But, as pointed out under “image”, there is a real problem in providing users with information adequate to their needs without over-simplifying the UIA, and without over-complexifying what is communicated – and nevertheless offering those who are interested an insight into the full spectrum of UIA issues and concerns and the manner in which they are
• **Credibility:** Linking “image” and “visibility” is the question of credibility. Traditionally the UIA has relied for its credibility on the quality of the information it produces. The early efforts to increase credibility by associating with intergovernmental bodies now appears an outdated and ineffectual strategy, especially since many of the consultative status IGOs face their own severe credibility challenges.

• **Branding and logo:** There is a certain style of marketing that uncritically accepts the merit of “branding”. This is typical of UIA Associate Members who like to be associated with a branded product and to be branded in order to acquire a sense of identity. Blatant branding ignores the approach taken to marketing quality products and raises issues about how the UIA chooses to see and present itself.

• **Marketing:** It is often assumed that the UIA “marketing” efforts are inadequate in terms of the results sought. It should be remembered that up to the 1970s the UIA undertook its own publication marketing, prior to switching the majority to SAUR. The main difficulty with marketing is that the audience for UIA products and services is thinly dispersed and traditionally involved costly mailing exercises. Through its website the UIA has achieved considerable visibility at very low cost and without yet engaging in typical web marketing strategies. There is a strong possibility that the sustained level of UIA publication sales through SAUR is due to their visibility on the UIA website.

**Complexity:** The UIA, despite the relatively small size of its Secretariat, is engaged in a number of relatively complex, interconnected initiatives. It is often difficult to ensure effective discussion of its strategic challenges because of this complexity – especially when only parts of this range of activities are considered relevant to any discussion. For some it is convenient, if not highly desirable, to perceive the UIA only through a particular facet of its activities – and to present it to others in this light.

The dilemma for the UIA is that, despite this need for simplicity, a significant aspect of its brief is effectively that of mapping complexity – like astronomers, but mapping the knowledge ecosystem. It is its respect for the richness of the organizational and knowledge ecosystem that distinguishes it from many sectoral and discipline-oriented approaches that have their own strategic advantages.

**Membership challenges:** In developing its Full Membership (*Membres Actifs*), the UIA is severely constrained by the nature of the UIA meetings to which members could be invited, their infrequency, the distances/costs of their attendance, and the motivation of members. These necessarily result in unrepresentative attendance and preclude cooptation of valuable members — precisely because they would be disinclined (or unable) to participate fully. Clearly the opportunities of the web to broaden the membership and increase participation (without requiring physical presence) remain to be explored, as well as their statutory implications.

**Conflict of interest:** Given the complex scope of UIA activity, it is not surprising that there is potential conflict of interest, in relation to UIA activities, amongst some of its members coopted precisely because of their association with different associative trends and concerns:

• **Full Members:** Clearly in order for UIA to be “representative” of the range of concerns with which it deals, it necessarily has as members some people who are strongly associated with competing non-profit interests (as noted above). This is manifest in failure to inform the UIA Secretariat (notably with regard to non-confidential publications which could be reviewed or cited in UIA publications), or to ensure that the UIA is presented to relevant parties. Clearly there is also the question of the degree that such actions can be taken without infringing on responsibilities to the competing institutional interest — and any assumption that such members should bring benefits to the UIA from their other associations.
Examples include:

- Members of staff in UN bodies who are directly informed of initiatives relevant to UIA (eg to establish an *International Classification of Nonprofit Organizations* – ICPO, and its integration into various systems of national accounts)
- Members involved in academic initiatives relating to NGOs
- Members involved in NGO gatherings relevant to UIA projects

**Associate Members:** In subscribing to the principles of its mandate, the UIA involves as its Associate Members some (eg ICCA) who compete directly with the UIA in the provision of certain services (ICCA has just launched an online Calendar service).

**Active vs Honorary membership:** The UIA has been unable to resolve the conflicts between the “honorary” nature of its full membership, the “activity” implicitly associated with such membership (despite conflict of interest), and the statutory articulation of distinctions of principle that do not correspond with operational realities (effectively failing to give place to others that are active supporters in practice). The operating reality of the UIA would be more realistically defined if:

- UIA Full Members constituted an “Honorary Council” (“Amis de l’UAI”);
- UIA Executive Council constituted a “Board of Trustees” designed to guarantee conformity to statutory provisions;
- UIA Corresponding Members constituted a group of Active Participants in UIA electronic work.

Involvement in one group should not preclude, or be dependent on, involvement in another. Unfortunately antiquated constraints of Belgian legislation, notably with respect to electronic involvement in statutory meetings, prevent any transition to a constitution that would facilitate, rather than obstruct, the emergence of an operational mode appropriate to worldwide activity of the UIA in a knowledge-oriented society.

The conflicts inherent in the above point to the degree to which the UIA has effectively been taken hostage by members (formally associated with seemingly valuable institutional “partners”) that prompted their cooptation – when the members are necessarily unable or unwilling to catalyze any further collaboration of such bodies with the UIA. This forces the UIA into undue respect and consideration of that institution (despite its manifest indifference). Similarly members coopted because of their eminence may be quite unable to give time to the UIA but preclude the UIA from coopting members of more modest background likely to demonstrate active involvement over a longer period of time. The conflict becomes more apparent in the case of the absence of any financial obligation from Full Members, leading to a long-standing pattern in which all funds are necessarily generated by secretariat initiatives, usually without any support of Full Members, and often by individuals who are not considered eligible for full membership.

**NGO services:** There is continuing concern regarding the nature of “services” that the UIA should, does, or could, offer to NGOs – and the conditions under which this should be done. Relevant points include:

- **UIA role in relation to NGOs:** The UIA has a statutory role in relation to facilitating nongovernmental organization. Many bodies, often well-subsidized, now respond to the needs of “nongovernmental organizations” and “civil society bodies” in their many forms (some newly emergent). They even compete to do so. It is therefore relevant to ask whether the UIA’s skills and resources should be allocated to provide a class of services that others seek to provide, or whether it should seek to provide services which others are less interested in providing, or are unable to provide.

- **Services as an investment:** There is a view that some services by the UIA should be provided at cost or for free. These services need to be identified and the resources to be reallocated to them
should be identified in the light of considerations given earlier.

- **Personnel appropriate to new services:** The UIA has a heavy investment in services that generate funds to maintain its information service activity. It has not invested in personnel skills to provide other kinds of services and it is not clear that personnel with such skills could generate supporting income or be remunerated at the rates consistent with those skills.

- **Web services:** Many “services” are effectively provided worldwide by the UIA via the web. It is not clear to what extent it is understood what these services are in relation to other services that it is assumed are not being provided by the UIA.

- **Opportunity cost:** Even if it is agreed that the UIA should be providing a particular service, this may involve reallocating scarce resources to achieve this – thus raising the question as to how to ensure the economic viability of such a decision. Even where such services involve hiring extra personnel, if this involves extensive training, this may also be problematic. Some services involving high cost personnel, may disrupt the delicate UIA Secretariat salary scale.

- **Revenue generating services:** To what extent should services provided be assessed in terms of the revenue that they generate?

**Personnel:** The dilemmas associated with UIA personnel (salaries, quality, permanence/continuity) have been described elsewhere. The fundamental issue is that the UIA is dependent, in the continuing provision of its sophisticated information services, on maintaining the loyalty of skilled personnel under conditions of work that are not competitive with commercial organizations engaged in similar tasks. The kinds of people prepared to work under such conditions generate special management challenges.

As is increasingly typical of creative commercial organizations in the knowledge management business, loyalty is retained through enthusiasm for task, objective, and their creative development, as well as the qualities of the work environment. Such people do not respond readily to strategies and tasks articulated as abstractions divorced from their own understanding of the constraints and relevant opportunities that emerge as feedback from their work. This is especially the case when such people are responsible for sustaining institutional income and generating funds for new projects. The particular challenge in the case of the UIA is that its work is essentially long-term and dependent on a longer learning period to sustain continuity. Such people are not easily replaceable according to the style of commercial organizations, even when this may seem appropriate.

These conditions place both individuals and the UIA as a working community under special tensions between the centripetal and centrifugal pulls to which individuals are subject. Most recently these have been partially resolved by increasing experiments in the use of teleworking, although these do not respond to the challenges of maintaining a sophisticated in-house information system.
Defining the UIA in relation to its Strategic Dilemmas
(Development of Annex 4, UIA Council, Montecatini, 2000)

UIA AIMS

Reinterpreted for the 21st Century

This is an exercise in reinterpreting UIA’s aims in language relevant to the 21st century:

- Sustain efforts towards superordinate meaning through union of transboundary associations, whether in their social, virtual or conceptual forms

- Through rigorous representation of diversity and patterns of relationship, sustain the “pattern that connects” that is supportive of future understandings of fundamental order and harmony that are meaningful across cultures and ideologies

- Explore the nature and relationship of more fundamental values sustaining individual and collective action

- Facilitate identification of strategic relevance amongst complex patterns of collective initiative in response to their perceived challenges

- Facilitate meaningful organization, whether through social, virtual or conceptual forms

- Ensure long-term sustainability through vigilant use of resources, notably in the case of the organization itself

- Emphasize action in consonance with values of members and personnel, where these are consistent with those of the organization

Current statutory aims (Article 3)

The UAI is a non-profit making international non-governmental organization having a scientific aim, operating as an institute for research, study, information, consultation, promotion and service.

Its aims are:

- to contribute to a universal order based on principles of human dignity, solidarity of peoples and freedom of communication;
- to undertake and promote research and study on transnational associative networks, considered as essential components of contemporary society;
- to collect and distribute the most comprehensive documentation possible on international organizations and associations, both governmental and non-governmental, and on new forms of transnational co-operation;
- to collect and distribute data on the various meetings organized by international bodies;
- to encourage and undertake all activity aimed at promoting the development and efficiency of non-governmental networks, as well as intercommunication between people working in the international framework and in interassociative co-operation;
• to study, categorize, analyze, compare and illuminate world problems as perceived by international organizations.

**Statutory aims (1910)**

The Union has as its aim the establishment of permanent relations between associations and international institutions and thus to support their action and their work. It notably has as its aim:

• joint study of all questions relative to the organization, the coordination of effort, and the unification of methods, with respect to that which are held in common, or are of analogous nature, between diverse associations or institutions
• cooperation between them for study, information, documentation and the extension of relations.

Through realization of its aim, the Union intends to contribute to the progress of pacific international and the organization of international life.
DILEMMAS

Despite its strategic “nimbleness” and operational adaptability, the UIA is faced with a number of awkward challenges in making policy decisions. The challenges are outlined in what follows, but underlying any response is the question of exactly what is the UIA and what “business” it is in.

Information (Database) services: With most categories of UIA information, the emerging information society provides examples of encroachment on areas in which the UIA previously had a unique advantage.

The nature of the UIA’s advantage is now shifting to the degree of interlinkage within and between the databases, to their comprehensiveness, and to their interactivity. It continues to hold an advantage in its ability to ensure database maintenance on a long-term basis at relatively low costs compared to those that are possible for commercial or intergovernmental agencies – but this advantage is tied to its dilemmas over personnel salaries. However this advantage does not automatically translate into a ready ability to solicit funds since most, if not all, funding sources are focused on sectoral subsets of the database (health, energy, etc) or particular kinds of information (eg addresses).

- Organizations: There are an increasing number of international “organization” database facilities, notably on the web. These include those offered as services to other organizations by particular organizations or consortia. Increasingly they take the form of websites. They may well focus on NGOs or “civil society” organizations, possibly with a particular issue focus. UN agencies are increasingly active in establishing such databases, as are “umbrella” organizations. An increasing percentage of international bodies now have their own websites containing the kinds of descriptive information the UIA provides in its own publications (or on the web) – or possibly much more, as in the case of large intergovernmental bodies.

The UIA’s advantage remains its selection, formatting and breadth of coverage, as well as the considerable hyperlinking to other bodies within the database (and from the other UIA databases). Its weakness from a user’s perspective may be the exclusion of national bodies and the lack of up-to-the-minute information on some bodies, or the absence of any entry at all. Strategically the weakness of the UIA in placing such information on the web is the ease with which competitors can gain access to higher quality information – notably if their own service is subsidized (and offered free of charge).

The UIA needs to develop selective access strategies to pre-empt further development of certain kinds of database. However it must necessarily recognize that its real advantage can only come from making available kinds of information that others are less inclined to provide. Hence the importance of hyperlinks between entries, to other web resources, and to non-organization UIA databases that increase the richness of the UIA site.

The recent sale of the UIA publisher K G Saur Verlag (Munich) to Gale Research (Chicago) will prove to be an interesting challenge. Gale has traditionally been the publisher of a significant competitor to the Yearbook in the North American market. Gale derives considerable income from online sale of reference information through the Dialog system. This shift may have considerable marketing advantages for the UIA as well as real challenges, especially if a case is made to absorb UIA products into the Gale context and thus dilute their identity.

Meetings: There are an increasing number of international “calendar” database facilities on the web. These include those offered by single conference centres, towns, regions or countries. They also
include highly specialized and more general databases, as well as those of large organizations such as IAEA. These would typically be a tool of choice for professionals in a particular area. Typically it is now common for meetings of any size or consequence to have their own website as a means of communication amongst those potentially involved. The UIA makes some use of these web facilities in compiling its own Calendar. This remains the principal source of meeting statistics – for the moment. This is an area that is potentially attractive to companies in the information industry, notably when integrated with hotel, travel and tourism information.

The UIA might choose to enter some partnership arrangement with such initiatives, although some may seek to operate as direct competitors. The UIA’s advantage remains its selection, formatting and breadth of coverage, as well as the degree of interlinkage into and from its other databases, especially that on organizations. Its weakness from a user’s perspective may be the exclusion of national meetings and the lack of up-to-the-minute information on some meetings, or the absence of any entry at all – especially when this information is available from other sources. Strategically the weakness of the UIA in placing such information on the web is the ease with which competitors can gain access to higher quality information – notably if their own service is subsidized (and offered free of charge). The failure to integrate pre-1986 information is to be regretted, although this will be largely mitigated by web access to event information in the Yearbook profile of the organization.

The recent discussion to reopen discussions with ICCA concerning hyperlinkage between UIA and ICCA meeting information is an interesting challenge. Again the challenge is not technical but rather in relation to issues of identity and perceived advantage. For example it is possible that such a linkage could be framed by ICCA as a form of UIA membership of ICCA. The fact of ICCA’s current Associate Membership of UIA could be considered as signalling UIA naivety. The UIA needs to be attentive to offering access to its databases to parties that are essentially redistributors of information – possibly for kommerically-related purposes.

- **Problem / Issue information** There are an increasing number of international “issue” database facilities on the web. These include those offered by particular organizations or services. They may be highly specialized or focus on clusters of issues (eg environment, humanitarian, etc). The UIA’s advantage remains the selection, formatting and breadth of coverage, as well as the considerable hyperlinking to other issues within the database (and from the other UIA databases). Its weakness from a user’s perspective may be the amount of information and the lack of up-to-the-minute information on some issues, or the absence of any entry at all.

Clearly documenting international organization is central to the activities of UIA and has been since its foundation. It was born of the documentary preoccupations of its founders and their relationship to the library community – now transformed into the information services of a knowledge society. In a real sense it is through its use of information that it “represents” the international community of organizations. This sense has traditionally been of far greater importance than its occasional vain attempts in the distant past to represent international organizations through any democratic membership process.

**Access to information:** The UIA is under continuing pressure to make available some kinds of information at low cost, if not freely. This applies particularly to addresses of international organizations. Relevant points are:

- **Extent of UIA data freely available:** The UIA already makes available substantial amounts of information free of charge, notably data on problems and strategies. In the case of organization data, the UIA has been making freely available the vital web addresses of their websites. In an earlier
approach, this was immediately extractable by others to create their own databases. The approach has now been modified, but nevertheless such information remains freely available but in a less extractable form. Complete lists of problems, strategies and organizations are made available to facilitate organization action and visibility.

- **Exploitation for commercial purposes:** In a significant number of cases, such requests are received from consultants who are paid to acquire the information, or from others who seek to use it for commercial purposes.

- **Competition with Saur products:** Users acquiring such information may seek to do so in order to avoid acquiring some of the UIA publications which ensure the revenue through which the UIA databases are maintained.

- **Requests from non-profit bodies:** The criterion of “non-profit” is not a sufficiently clear determinant for such access. Many governmental bodies are “non-profit”. Consultants may act on behalf of “non-profit” bodies from which they receive large contracts. Genuine non-profit bodies may seek such access in order to build up their own databases. Some have even requested copies of the entire UIA database for this purpose -- and as a natural right.

- **Relationship with Associate Members:** Access to such information is one of the privileges offered to UIA’s Associate Members, who pay not only for the right of access but also for the cost of extraction. Some Associate Members, such as ICCA, may be effectively redistributing the information to their members.

- **Academic researchers:** As with the remarks concerning “non-profit” bodies, academic researchers have a very different attitude to “data” to be used for scientific purposes. Once acquired it is freely sharable within the academic community. On the other hand it is in the interest of the UIA to ensure that research is done on the data that it collects. And much has been done.

- **Extraction costs:** The procedures to extract data on the basis of complex criteria may themselves be time-consuming, possibly involving special programming.

- **Competitive relationships:** In some cases those seeking, or potentially seeking, access to UIA data are themselves direct competitors of the UIA (eg ICCA).

- **Pulping references books:** The practice adopted by SAUR of pulping unsold copies (notably of the Yearbook) is clearly highly offensive in a world in which many libraries cannot afford to acquire such publications. This has been the subject of a number of debates in the UIA Committee. Basically the challenge is multiple:
  (a) where they are made available to potential clients, SAUR has good reason to be opposed;
  (b) where they have to be transported at significant cost (including to UIA, prior to onward dispatch), costs can be prohibitive;
  (c) if neither of the previous points apply, recipients may still be faced with exorbitant customs charges, for which they have no resources.

The UIA is clearly in the business of ensuring widespread access to the information it processes. But the UIA has always been tortured by its difficulties in determining what information to make freely available and what information to make available at cost -- or for a fee to ensure an income to maintain its information processing facilities. In making such distinctions, and in the absence of continuing subsidies,
the question of to whom such information should be made available at what price has been a continuing
dilemma.

**Competitive non-profit environment:** Gone are the days when it could be assumed that “non-profit”
was somehow associated with “non-competitive” and “altruistic” – in which shared strategic
preoccupation with societal problems suggested the possibility of mutually supportive relationships in
practice. The UIA is confronted with an interesting array of non-profit “competitors”, although the
“competitive” (“unfriendly”) nature of the relationship is typically denied, even though the drain on
available collective resources is tangible:

- **Intergovernmental organizations:** Such bodies, or more typically their departments or agencies,
have long competed for resources both amongst themselves (even between departments) and with
third parties – and notably in relation to information on non-governmental organizations, or on
“issues”. As noted above, the major agencies are now establishing their databases as web facilities, or
have plans to do so. They may do this in partnership with selected groups of other organizations and
may typically avoid any form of consultation with bodies responsible for earlier initiatives – including
those of an intergovernmental nature.

To the extent that these databases are developed as strategic partnerships with commercial operations
(eg UN/CISCO partnership for NetAid), they may be deliberately (but deniably) designed as
aggressive marketing exercises to marginalize other initiatives, whether governmental or
nongovernmental – and that includes the UIAs. The fact that the UIA may have a consultative
relationship with such an IGO has proved to be absolutely irrelevant to such strategic decisions. The
fact that such IGOs claim to be challenged by budgetary constraints is ironic when the UIA has long
maintained its databases on a non-subsidized basis – potentially under jeopardy from IGO initiatives
designed to(deniably) to undermine them.

- **Nongovernmental organizations:** Initiatives, of the form described for intergovernmental bodies,
may also be developed by nongovernmental bodies. Web environments focusing on humanitarian,
development, environment, and other concerns have already been created – including inter-sectoral
initiatives. These naturally compete with one another. The UIA’s must naturally be expected to
compete with them.

- **Academic initiatives:** Following the “discovery” of the non-profit sector by the academic community
in the 1980s, a number of well-funded disciplines have been able to redirect their traditional sources
of funds to support “civil society” related initiatives. Ironically, just as “NGO” was discovered by the
United Nations through Article 71, it may be argued that “civil society” under its current form has
been discovered by a particular coalition of disciplines and funders. Both definitions are notably
significant in terms of what they tend not to include. These coalitions have the resources to reframe
the debate on civil society in according to particular prescriptive agendas in ways that may affect the
UIA. For example through the production of a *Global Civil Society Yearbook* (an initiative through
the Centre for Civil Society, based at the London School of Economics, traditionally having little
interest in such matters).

The foundation of the UIA predates the preoccupation of these sectors with matters of interest to the UIA.
However, since these new initiatives are well-resourced, the UIA is now confronted by an array of actors
sharing these preoccupations and often indifferent to, or ignorant of, the UIA role in this connection. The
UIA needs to explore very carefully the nature of its relationship with such sectors to avoid being “taken
hostage” by their respective modes of action. This challenge is most clearly seen in the case of United
Nations bodies. Their representatives have long been equally skilled in paying lip service to the value of NGOs and avoiding any significant form of cooperation with them. The UIA has done far more over the years in documenting the intergovernmental community than has ever been acknowledged by such bodies in the form of any pattern of action supportive of the UIA efforts. The UIA has received no subsidies from them and contracts have been very rare and usually focused on relieving short-term policy crises rather than in the spirit of the long-term documentary effort undertaken by the UIA.

By remaining bound by any consultative relationship formula of decreasing (if any) operational significance, the UIA is increasingly hostage to a system that effectively seeks to dilute its significance as part of an array of NGOs pursuing specialized interests. Whilst the UIA endeavours to reflect these interests to a high degree in its information services, it is highly questionable whether it needs to be directly associated with them, especially those of a recurring fashionable or celebratory variety. From this perspective it is important to determine exactly what such association has contributed to the UIA efforts, or could do in the future. The contribution of the UIA to such enterprises needs to be assessed in the light of its strengths and weaknesses. As a high-tech knowledge initiative its contribution is indirect and exemplified by the opportunities of the web. The nature of its resources in terms of skills and limited funds makes questionable any involvement emphasizing lobbying skills in a highly competitive environment.

**Meeting attendance:** This poses several kinds of challenge:

*Representation:* To what extent is it vital for the UIA to be present to demonstrate its concern with the issues or the organizational context – given the assiduity with which it “represents” these bodies in its documentation for wider web dissemination? Minimally such participation involves registration and appearance on the list of participants. It may offer the opportunity for the competitive distribution of literature alongside that of many others. Or it may suggest active involvement in the conference process in order to acquire greater visibility than others, competing for speaking time, etc.

*Cost:* Attendance typically requires a significant UIA investment in terms of time, travel, accommodation and registration. Costs are rarely covered from other sources.

*Value:* Criteria have proven difficult to establish to determine the value of such UIA presence. When the UIA’s presence is specifically requested for a particular role, and costs are covered, the situation is much clearer – especially when there is a well-defined output with which the UIA can be associated. When the UIA is merely present as one of several hundred representatives (notably at “briefings”), the value is less clear, especially if the role is effectively one of rubber-stamping decisions and policies taken by a pre-selected group in processes in which the UIA’s involvement had not been requested.

Contrasting examples include:

- **NGO-related gatherings:** There are increasing numbers of NGO gatherings, notably in the tradition of associating with major UN conferences (Copenhagen, Geneva, etc), with the consultative status process (CONGO), or with specific issues (racism, etc). Typically these may have between 300 and 3000 organization representatives. Costs are rarely covered from other sources, indeed the UIA is solicited to cover costs of representatives from developing countries. Little attention is paid to the possibilities offered by the web to ensure greater, and more, frequent interaction with more geographically widespread participants – presumably because of the effect on the role of those whose funding permits their physical presence.
• **NGO-related research:** In the 1970s, the UIA participated actively in meetings of the International Studies Association which were significant for their lack of attention to international NGOs. Since the late 1980s, and following Rio, there are increasing numbers of meetings concerned with civil society research. These continue to be primarily an extension of the interests of social scientists researching community association and tend to have little concern with the internationality of the body. The UIA is currently participation in meetings of ISTR. Costs are rarely covered from other sources.

• **Knowledge-organization:** The participation of the UIA in meetings relating to its traditional professional role (dating back to its origins) in knowledge organization and information handling continues to be solicited. Costs are frequently covered.

• **Meeting organization:** The UIA is occasionally solicited for assistance in organization of unusual meetings (eg Parliament of the World’s Religions, World Futures Studies Federation). Some costs are usually covered. The challenge of these meetings is the need to find new ways to deal with differences. An analogous set of criteria questions concern attendance at meetings of Associate Members (summer schools, etc).

The UIA needs to be clear on the value of participating in major UN events that involve large numbers of participants. There have been many examples and the advantages and disadvantages of UIA attendance amongst numerous other bodies need to be carefully explored – especially when the events take on an increasingly symbolic or celebratory character, or where the issues are well-articulated in other media to which the UIA has access. The UIA needs to be attentive to any policy of attendance based on “because everyone will be there” or “UIA ought to be there” and what this implies in terms of resource use and follow-up.

“Partnerships”: Strategic partnerships are advocated as a way through the challenges of organizing funding and action in the 21st Century.

• **With intergovernmental organizations:** To date such partnerships have been closely related to various formulas of “consultative relationship”. These formulas have recently been revised or are subject to revision in many cases, notably as a result of the “opening of the doors” associated with the Earth Summit (1992). The UIA has such with UNESCO, UN/ECOSOC and ILO. It has collaborated with FAO, the Council of Europe, UNITAR, and the Commonwealth Science Council. It has acted as one of the research institutes in the network of the UN University. A special ECOSOC resolution establishes cooperation between the United Nations and the UIA for the preparation of the Yearbook of International Organizations. It has long been clear that its prime consultative relationships with UNESCO and ECOSOC result in no practical action or consideration whatsoever on the part of the institutions in question in relation to the UIA, even in matters directly relevant to the reasons for the relationship. The UIA has however continued to enable those bodies to “consult” the UIA, notably through increasing access to its databases and their profiling of the international community, its issues and its strategies. Formal contact has been successful only when the institution has had a short-term need that the UIA was able to fulfil. The UIA finds itself increasingly defined as part of a sea of demanding NGOs with such institutions are increasingly unable to collaborate with in a dignified manner. The UN itself has now severely compromised its own integrity through its close association with broken promises and massacres (Srebrenica and Rwanda), and its more recent association with multinational corporations (Global Compact) for which it required NGO moral sanction. For financial reasons the pattern of information distribution from which the UIA benefited has also been severely curtailed. The UIA could therefore usefully limit its partnerships with such bodies to links of an electronic variety that allow for mutual consultation in a form consistent with the needs and
competence of both parties – or to ad hoc opportunities, if and when these seem appropriate. Such institutions have long felt free to relate to NGOs unconstrained by the consultative relationship.

- **For-profit partnerships:** Strategic partnerships between non-profit and for-profit bodies is a feature of the 1990s and the decade to come – even in the case of the United Nations. It could be argued that the UIA has had such a strategic partnership with SAUR since the early 1980s, and with it’s Associate Members. The concern is to determine with what kinds of bodies such partnerships are viable. This is especially important in the case of the knowledge industry where a partnership involving sharing of data can rapidly deprive an organization of its information assets. The question is where does wisdom start and where does naiveté stop?

**Commercial relationships:** The UIA has successfully survived as a non-profit organization at the frontier between the profit and non-profit worlds. It has done so by selling publications for a profit and developing other relationships with for-profit organizations (Associate Members, suppliers, etc). This results in various dilemmas:

- **Advertising:** The UIA has long been attentive to advertising possibilities. Advertising revenue was a significant component of early issues of the review and the Calendar. It has always been excluded in the case of the Yearbook – with the exception of information on other UIA publications. The stance was to maintain a non-commercial, professional image of the UIA products. Success in advertising was limited by the national orientation of many advertisers potentially interested in UIA publications – but concerned at their limited distribution in any one country. The advent of the web completely reframes the challenge. There are many possibilities for generating advertising revenue:
  - by automatically inserting adverts (logos, banners) on selected pages,
  - by click-through facilities

   However the issue remains the extent to which users should associate a jumble of third party advertising messages with the UIA information.

- **Associate Members:** Because of the commercial orientation of the meeting industry bodies that form the core of the associate membership, the UIA is challenged in its ability to make certain information available at lower costs when such members pay for exclusive access to it.

The UIA has benefited from a long-term relationship characterized by mutual respect and consideration in the case of K G Saur Verlag. This might be considered a model of a successful relationship. It might also be considered atypical in that many examples of sponsorship are now very short-term and may reflect very limited interest in the UIA’s own objectives. In this respect the current attempts of the UN to develop relationships with multinational corporations (following a long series of resolutions against them) should be followed with interest.

**Image and Visibility:** There is continuing expression of concern with regard to the image and visibility of the UIA.

- **Image:** What is the UIA? For whom is the UIA? What does it need to be for particular audiences (conference industry, researchers, academics, librarians, NGOs, IGOs, governments, media, personnel, etc)? Traditionally the UIA has:
  (a) allowed itself to be defined in large measure by the expectations of the perceiver;
  (b) emphasized its products and services before any institutional identity;
  (c) resisted simplistic identification with any particular image;
Many organizations have switched the focus of their image-definition to the web. The UIA website reflects many of the ambiguities of its past priorities, both in terms of strengths and weaknesses. However, even as a design challenge, the production of a website to reflect the many aspects of the UIA is quite daunting. This is especially the case where design decisions have to take account of an understanding of the interaction amongst thousands of UIA web pages (on separate cross-linked UIA web servers) that need to meet the needs of very different kinds of users and priorities.

- **Visibility:** To whom should the UIA be “visible”? What is the operational significance of such visibility? Is UIA public relations ineffective if the UIA is not well-known? A simple answer to this question would suggest that the UIA, as an institution, should ideally be as visible as Greenpeace or Amnesty. However these bodies tend to be associated with issues frequently highlighted by the media. With how many bodies should the UIA seek to compete to achieve preferential recognition? At what cost? In whose interest? The UIA has traditionally chosen a different strategy, namely presenting its products without highlighting the producer of the products. This has been preferred as an effective operational strategy in order to collect information successfully from organizations -- for a “Yearbook” (or for a “Calendar”, an “Encyclopedia”) rather than by a “Union”.

This approach has been extended into the UIA’s web strategy. A significant number of users come to pages of the UIA website via third party search engines pointing to specific information on non-UIA bodies, issues, or strategies at a low level in the UIA site. Emphasis is thus placed on the service rendered to the user in terms of their specific need – rather than on the body rendering the service. The UIA is typically mentioned on the page – but incidentally rather than as the most prominent feature, namely a soft-sell rather than a pushy hard-sell. Users, if curious, are offered access to further information on the UIA, but they do not have to give attention to such information before getting an answer to their initial inquiry. Metaphorically, the UIA web strategy is to offer access to individual “trees”, and leave it to the user to determine whether they want to acquire any knowledge about the “forest” and its management. But, as pointed out under “image”, there is a real problem in providing users with information adequate to their needs without over-simplifying the UIA, and without over-complexifying what is communicated – and nevertheless offering those who are interested an insight into the full spectrum of UIA issues and concerns and the manner in which they are integrated.

- **Credibility:** Linking “image” and “visibility” is the question of credibility. Traditionally the UIA has relied for its credibility on the quality of the information it produces. The early efforts to increase credibility by associating with intergovernmental bodies now appears an outdated and ineffectual strategy, especially since many of the consultative status IGOs face their own sever credibility challenges.

- **Branding and logo:** There is a certain style of marketing that uncritically accepts the merit of “branding”. This is typical of UIA Associate Members who like to be associated with a branded product and to be branded in order to acquire a sense of identity. Blatant branding ignores the approach taken to marketing quality products and raises issues about how the UIA chooses to see and present itself.

- **Marketing:** It is often assumed that the UIA “marketing” efforts are inadequate in terms of the results sought. It should be remembered that up to the 1970s the UIA undertook its own publication marketing, prior to switching the majority to SAUR. The main difficulty with marketing is that the audience for UIA products and services is thinly dispersed and traditionally involved costly mailing
exercises. Through its website the UIA has achieved considerable visibility at very low cost and without yet engaging in typical web marketing strategies. There is a strong possibility that the sustained level of UIA publication sales through SAUR is due to their visibility on the UIA website.

**Complexity:** The UIA, despite the relatively small size of its Secretariat, is engaged in a number of relatively complex, interconnected initiatives. It is often difficult to ensure effective discussion of its strategic challenges because of this complexity – especially when only parts of this range of activities are considered relevant to any discussion. For some it is convenient, if not highly desirable, to perceive the UIA only through a particular facet of its activities – and to present it to others in this light.

The dilemma for the UIA is that, despite this need for simplicity, a significant aspect of its brief is effectively that of mapping complexity – like astronomers, but mapping the knowledge ecosystem. It is its respect for the richness of the organizational and knowledge ecosystem that distinguishes it from many sectoral and discipline-oriented approaches that have their own strategic advantages.

**Membership challenges:** In developing its Full Membership (*Membres Actifs*), the UIA is severely constrained by the nature of the UIA meetings to which members could be invited, their infrequency, the distances/costs of their attendance, and the motivation of members. These necessarily result in unrepresentative attendance and preclude cooptation of valuable members -- precisely because they would be disinclined (or unable) to participate fully. Clearly the opportunities of the web to broaden the membership and increase participation (without requiring physical presence) remain to be explored, as well as their statutory implications.

**Conflict of interest:** Given the complex scope of UIA activity, it is not surprising that there is potential conflict of interest, in relation to UIA activities, amongst some of its members coopted precisely because of their association with different associative trends and concerns:

- **Full Members:** Clearly in order for UIA to be “representative” of the range of concerns with which it deals, it necessarily has as members some people who are strongly associated with competing non-profit interests (as noted above). This is manifest in failure to inform the UIA Secretariat (notably with regard to non-confidential publications which could be reviewed or cited in UIA publications), or to ensure that the UIA is presented to relevant parties. Clearly there is also the question of the degree that such actions can be taken without infringing on responsibilities to the competing institutional interest – and any assumption that such members should bring benefits to the UIA from their other associations.

  Examples include:
  - Members of staff in UN bodies who are directly informed of initiatives relevant to UIA (eg to establish an *International Classification of Nonprofit Organizations* – ICPO, and its integration into various systems of national accounts)
  - Members involved in academic initiatives relating to NGOs
  - Members involved in NGO gatherings relevant to UIA projects

- **Associate Members:** In subscribing to the principles of its mandate, the UIA involves as its Associate Members some (eg ICCA) who compete directly with the UIA in the provision of certain services (ICCA has just launched an online Calendar service).

**Active vs Honorary membership:** The UIA has been unable to resolve the conflicts between the “honorary” nature of its full membership, the “activity” implicitly associated with such
membership (despite conflict of interest), and the statutory articulation of distinctions of principle that do not correspond with operational realities (effectively failing to give place to others that are active supporters in practice). The operating reality of the UIA would be more realistically defined if:

- UIA Full Members constituted an “Honorary Council” ("Amis de l’UAI");
- UIA Executive Council constituted a “Board of Trustees” designed to guarantee conformity to statutory provisions;
- UIA Corresponding Members constituted a group of Active Participants in UIA electronic work.

Involvement in one group should not preclude, or be dependent on, involvement in another. Unfortunately antiquated constraints of Belgian legislation, notably with respect to electronic involvement in statutory meetings, prevent any transition to a constitution that would facilitate, rather than obstruct, the emergence of an operational mode appropriate to worldwide activity of the UIA in a knowledge-oriented society.

The conflicts inherent in the above point to the degree to which the UIA has effectively been taken hostage by members (formally associated with seemingly valuable institutional “partners”) that prompted their cooptation – when the members are necessarily unable or unwilling to catalyze any further collaboration of such bodies with the UIA. This forces the UIA into undue respect and consideration of that institution (despite its manifest indifference). Similarly members coopted because of their eminence may be quite unable to give time to the UIA but preclude the UIA from coopting members of more modest background likely to demonstrate active involvement over a longer period of time. The conflict becomes more apparent in the case of the absence of any financial obligation from Full Members, leading to a long-standing pattern in which all funds are necessarily generated by secretariat initiatives, usually without any support of Full Members, and often by individuals who are not considered eligible for full membership.

**NGO services:** There is continuing concern regarding the nature of “services” that the UIA should, does, or could, offer to NGOs – and the conditions under which this should be done. Relevant points include:

- **UIA role in relation to NGOs:** The UIA has a statutory role in relation to facilitating nongovernmental organization. Many bodies, often well-subsidized, now respond to the needs of “nongovernmental organizations” and “civil society bodies” in their many forms (some newly emergent). They even compete to do so. It is therefore relevant to ask whether the UIA’s skills and resources should be allocated to provide a class of services that others seek to provide, or whether it should seek to provide services which others are less interested in providing, or are unable to provide.

- **Services as an investment:** There is a view that some services by the UIA should be provided at cost or for free. These services need to be identified and the resources to be reallocated to them should be identified in the light of considerations given earlier.

- **Personnel appropriate to new services:** The UIA has a heavy investment in services that generate funds to maintain its information service activity. It has not invested in personnel skills to provide other kinds of services and it is not clear that personnel with such skills could generate supporting income or be remunerated at the rates consistent with those skills.
• **Web services:** Many “services” are effectively provided worldwide by the UIA via the web. It is not clear to what extent it is understood what these services are in relation to other services that it is assumed are not being provided by the UIA.

• **Opportunity cost:** Even if it is agreed that the UIA should be providing a particular service, this may involve reallocating scarce resources to achieve this – thus raising the question as to how to ensure the economic viability of such a decision. Even where such services involve hiring extra personnel, if this involves extensive training, this may also be problematic. Some services involving high cost personnel, may disrupt the delicate UIA Secretariat salary scale.

• **Revenue generating services:** To what extent should services provided be assessed in terms of the revenue that they generate?

**Personnel:** The dilemmas associated with UIA personnel (salaries, quality, permanence/continuity) have been described elsewhere. The fundamental issue is that the UIA is dependent, in the continuing provision of its sophisticated information services, on maintaining the loyalty of skilled personnel under conditions of work that are not competitive with commercial organizations engaged in similar tasks. The kinds of people prepared to work under such conditions generate special management challenges.

As is increasingly typical of creative commercial organizations in the knowledge management business, loyalty is retained through enthusiasm for task, objective, and their creative development, as well as the qualities of the work environment. Such people do not respond readily to strategies and tasks articulated as abstractions divorced from their own understanding of the constraints and relevant opportunities that emerge as feedback from their work. This is especially the case when such people are responsible for sustaining institutional income and generating funds for new projects. The particular challenge in the case of the UIA is that its work is essentially long-term and dependent on a longer learning period to sustain continuity. Such people are not easily replaceable according to the style of commercial organizations, even when this may seem appropriate.

These conditions place both individuals and the UIA as a working community under special tensions between the centripetal and centrifugal pulls to which individuals are subject. Most recently these have been partially resolved by increasing experiments in the use of teleworking, although these do not respond to the challenges of maintaining a sophisticated in-house information system.
Reframing the UIA role
(in the light of the dilemmas in Annex 3)

The strategic dilemmas above emerge from conflict between different visions of the statutory UIA role and obligations – whether in principle or in practice. These might be summarized as follows. In each case an effort has been made to show the link to a statutory or traditional role, whilst contrasting an impractical, outdated version of that role with the feasible variant in the emerging information society.

A: INFORMATION ROLES

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Reframing the UIA role
(in the light of the dilemmas in Annex 3)

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## Annex 5b (table)

**Varieties of "Union of International Associations"**  
*(24 Oct. 1999)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UIA</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Periodicity</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Funding</th>
<th>Personnel</th>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Origin</th>
<th>'Associations' meaning</th>
<th>'International' meaning</th>
<th>'Union' meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A-1</td>
<td>Representat. Legal status Services Symposia Statutory exist.</td>
<td>Ad hoc</td>
<td>UN/IGOs INGOs Full Members</td>
<td>Investment</td>
<td>JR, GD, TJ, CD,NL</td>
<td>Representation IGO Relations Services</td>
<td>1910</td>
<td>Legal bodies Consult. relat.</td>
<td>Treaties Conventions Representation</td>
<td>Ratification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-2</td>
<td>Revue TA</td>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>INGOs Libraries</td>
<td>Investment</td>
<td>JR,GD,PG</td>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>Vie Inter. (1910)</td>
<td>NGOs</td>
<td>Cross-border membership/activity</td>
<td>INGO readership opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-2</td>
<td>Calendar Statistics Data services</td>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>Conf. industry Ass. Members</td>
<td>Sales Membership Services</td>
<td>GdC,RT, SH, MG, CD, NL</td>
<td>Information NGO promo.</td>
<td>1952 (1910)</td>
<td>Meeting participation</td>
<td>Cross-border travel</td>
<td>Collation of information</td>
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**Annex 6a (Table 1)**

**Degrees of fulfilment of UIA operational and strategic objectives**

This matrix is used in Table 2 to code current and proposed UIA initiatives in an effort to identify those which shift the strategic centre of gravity towards A and away from D.

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<td>D</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Policy determination</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
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<td>D</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Comparative advantage</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Duration</td>
<td>D</td>
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<td>A</td>
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<td>6 Collaboration policy</td>
<td>D</td>
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<td>7 Content coherence</td>
<td>D</td>
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<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Dissemination / Delocalization</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 Visibility / Exposure</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Assistance to others</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>11 Staff team</td>
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**Effective resource use**

- One-to-one (individual letters / requests)
- Many-to-one (UIA input of responses)
- One-to-many (publications / online databases)
- Many-to-many (dialogue facilitation)

**Policy determination**

- Driven by competitive market (commercialized / professionalized)
- Driven by int. policy fashions (uncontrolled requests)
- Driven by UIA-selected opportunistic contracts/subsidies
- Driven by UIA strategic considerations (pioneering initiatives)

**Economic viability**

- Cost sink (minimum multiplier effects)
- Cost sink (with multiplier effects)
- Cost recovery (minimum multiplier effects)
- Cost recovery (income generating multiplier effects)

**Comparative advantage**

- Competition with multiple others (better resourced / more competent)
- Provision of generalized services (low-level competition)
- Strategic competition with significant others
- Unique UIA competence

**Duration**

- One-off
- Irregular
- Periodic renewal
- Continuous

**Collaboration policy**

- Mutual undermining (coalition games)
- Soliciting support at expense of others (competitive hype)
- Selective strategic assistance by UIA (minimal benefit)
- Symbiosis (mutual benefit)

**Content coherence**

- Provision of information available elsewhere
- Selective inform. Consultancy (how-to advice)
- Comprehensive / Complementary information
- Integrative knowledge / significance

**Dissemination / Delocalization**

- Local / Regional UIA effort (marketing)
- Local / Regional user initiative / participation
- World-wide UIA effort (marketing)
- World-wide user participation (web commenting)

**Visibility / Exposure**

- Visibility / Exposure of UIA to significant others
- Visibility / Exposure of (UIA initiatives) to significant others
- Widespread visibility / exposure of UIA initiatives
- Widespread visibility / exposure of (UIA initiatives)

**Assistance to others**

- Sales at market rate
- Selective discount to NGOs and others
- Selective free services to NGOs and others
- Free services to all

**Staff team**

- Hire-Fire (zero group learning)
- Core person(s) + Hire-Fire (minimal group learning)
- Team continuity (collective learning)
- Decentralized renewal (based on core team)
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<tr>
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<td>Mutual undermining (coalition games)</td>
<td>Soliciting support at expense of others (competitive hype)</td>
<td>Selective strategic assistance by UIA (minimal benefit)</td>
<td>Symbiosis (mutual benefit)</td>
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<td>World-wide user participation (web commenting)</td>
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<td>9 Visibility / Exposure (UIA vs. UIA initiatives)</td>
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<td>Visibility / Exposure of (UIA) initiatives to significant others</td>
<td>Widespread visibility / exposure of UIA initiatives</td>
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<td>Sales at market rate</td>
<td>Selective discount to NGOs and others</td>
<td>Selective free services to NGOs and others</td>
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<td>11 Staff team</td>
<td>Hire-Fire (zero group learning)</td>
<td>Core person(s) + Hire-Fire (minimal group learning)</td>
<td>Team continuity (collective learning)</td>
<td>Decentralized renewal (based on core team)</td>
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## Degrees of fulfilment of UIA operational and strategic objectives (by initiative)

The codes in the cells of this multi-part table are derived from Table 1 as a way of mapping the strategic focus of UIA with respect to a particular initiative.

### Part A: Main publications

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### Part C: Contacts and research

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- Full Members
- Associate Members
- Correspond. Orgs.
- Clusters (FAIB, etc)
- Centres (MAI)
- Coalition activity
- IGO (UN..) Contacts
- University contacts
- "Friends of UIA"
- Web contacts

### Part D: Meetings and data

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| Meeting organization       |   |   |   |   |
| Meeting participation       |   |   |   |   |
| Meeting presentation        |   |   |   |   |
| Meeting facilitation        |   |   |   |   |
| Consulting contracts        |   |   |   |   |
| Requests (+visitors)         |   |   |   |   |
| Web initiatives             |   |   |   |   |
UIA Initiatives and Services

In reviewing the challenges of UIA services, notably in the light of the report of the UIA Working Group, there is need for a framework through which different initiatives, proposals and deficiencies can be evaluated.

One attempt to do so is reflected in an incomplete first draft of a set of tables (see Annex 6 on Degree of fulfilment of UIA operational and strategic objectives).

The essential dilemmas might be articulated as follows:

1. **Why UIA?** Where there is a need or demand on the part of some NGOs for services, the question is increasingly whether the UIA is the most appropriate body to respond to this demand. This is especially clear in the case of web-based initiatives. There is now an emergence of international web-based electronic umbrella organizations like APC, OneWorld, Threshold Foundation, etc. Each offers a particular pattern of services for NGOs interested in clusters of themes. Overlap, and competition for resources, between them is also significant.

2. **Web role?** The past 2-3 years have seen a phenomenal growth in NGO presence on the web, as indicated by the table of statistics (Annex 2 in Report of Information / Research Developments). This means that any proposal for NGO services, involving the UIA, needs to be seen within this context, especially since this context offers (for the first time) means of access to NGOs that are geographically distant from the traditional centres. The internet is a new publication and interaction paradigm. Structured impact can clearly be seen in the academic world, the world of governance (at all levels), the world of activism and associational processes and information / documentation world (among others). The UIA is already developing tools that will allow it to draw upon global human resources in the development and expansion of its work.

3. **UIA or its services?** It could be argued that the problem of many institutions is not to get information but to avoid information overload. The UIA’s web technique bypasses this problem. However it is not the UIA that is marketed, but the information provided by the UIA. The question is to what degree the user needs to be aware of the UIA in benefiting from the services provided by the UIA.

4. **Degree of service?** The UIA existing web presence already results in the generation of considerable e-mail traffic demanding further information and services from the UIA. The source may be NGOs, researchers, students, or people suffering personally from problems described in the UIA’s databases. The issue is with what degree of assiduity to respond to which requests given the time that this requires.

5. **Costs and priorities?** Fundamental questions with respect to any demand to the UIA for services are:
• (a) which requests can be made dependent on payment
• (b) at what (discounted?) rate
• (c) and who should perform these services
• (d) with what priority

6. **Web vs Saur?** The UIA has considerable web visibility across a wide range of subject areas. The web site has between 4,000 and 6,000 hits a day. This is scheduled to increase dramatically within the next months with the UIA’s on-line database facility. This is in effect a more powerful marketing device than that commanded by Saur, because it reaches people and groups who use the web to articulate their need for more information. With respect to UIA marketing, it is important to distinguish between:

• (a) Saur’s own efforts
• (b) UIA direct marketing of products on the web
• (c) UIA indirect marketing of information on the web, that cites the UIA products as source
• (d) UIA direct and image marketing of other kinds

It is (d) which is currently the most costly in people-time and for which UIA has no appointed person, because of the costs involved for a person with the appropriate qualifications. Were any marketing campaign to be envisaged, the questions are:

• who would be targeted? Is the objective to “target”?
• with what objective? Are clear objectives appropriate in a complex environment where UIA visibility may be at the expense of UIA services?
• at what cost?
• with what degree of effectiveness in the UIA’s international context?

It could be argued that the level of sales of the Yearbook is being maintained as a result of marketing information which serves to draw in new associate members.

7. **Book (Saur?) dependency?** The information industry is in transition from purely book-based to a mix of book, CD and web. No clear formulas have emerged for any information producer to ensure the viability of their initiative in a context in which much information is made freely available. This has notable but unpredictable implications for the future of the Yearbook and the Calendar. The UIA’s current web experiments, notably using the Encyclopedia databases, are effectively being financed by contracts from the European Commission.

8. **Organization focus?** It is readily assumed that the UIA core mandate is focused on “organizations” and therefore the Yearbook — despite its essential inaccessibility to NGOs for cost reasons. However it is noteworthy that it is the past investment in the 4th edition of the Encyclopedia that has positioned the UIA so as to attract a considerable amount of issue-oriented new funding, and enables it to build on current contractual successes in making information more freely available. It could be argued that this does takes the UIA away from its core mandate, except for the fact that most of the information on “problems” and “strategies” is derived from those same organizations. Through the web each individual problem or strategy profile is linked back to such organizations. There are some 17816
organization-strategy links for example. The UIA is thus providing an interface through which web users are hyperlinked on towards organizations. The UIA web is thus serving not only as a **gateway** to information **about** organizations, it is serving as a gateway to organizations.

9. **Journal?** The role of Transnational Associations is a complex one. Its problems and possibilities have been reframed by the web. With respect to problems, this raises questions about charging, copyright and the need for a hardcopy version. With respect to possibilities, this offers a considerably wider audience and without constraints on article length.

10. **Nature of services to whom?** The UIA website is already responding to needs of individuals and organizations with a problem or interest, researchers and others in a multiplicity of as yet undefined categories beyond UIA’s traditional audience. With respect to:

   - (a) **Services to NGOs**: “NGOs” are at this point an increasingly blurred mix with an increasingly blurred range of foci. Different coalitions and interest groups have different foci. Is it in the UIA’s interest to compete to be “the focus” when so many others, with resources, are anxious to perform that role? How is the UIA to distinguish between what it would like to offer freely, at a discount, or at cost, or at cost-plus rates – and to whom?

   - (b) **Services to the commercial sector**: The role of the Calendar must necessarily evolve in a web environment with many competing variants. What is the UIA seeking to achieve by competing with commercial, specialized or subsidized calendar producers?

   - (c) **Services to academia**: With the increasing investment in the UIA bibliographical work, the relationship to academia has evolved – to the point that an active network of NGO researchers is now part of the processes of Yearbook vol 4 preparation. With the increasing availability of documents and data on the web, a much greater dialogue occurs with people having academic interests – in addition to practitioners and others. It would be a mistake to bracket the Encyclopedia as an academic product given the major institutional contracts that it has proved capable of generating.

11. **Participation?** The nature of the relationship with organizations is now changing within an information society. The providers and users of information are combining into new “provider-user” role. The current contract with the European Commission provides for the development of this facility (already being tested) which enables users to comment on (or even edit) entries via the web. This raises a more fundamental issue for the UIA of how what kinds of people collaborate with the UIA work in the future? Again, is it “with” the UIA or “within” some part of the information context maintained by the UIA?

12. **Fundamental dilemmas**: Implicit in all of the above, is the challenge for the UIA of:

   - (a) determining what constitutes effective action in terms of its mandate
   - (b) what financial concessions it wishes to make, at what cost, to those it deems in need of information services or other assistance
   - (c) what posture to adopt with respect to sponsorship arrangements which run the risk of detracting from the UIA’s image
(d) what effort to put into responding to calls to essentially indifferent IGOs?
(e) how to make best use of personnel or to pay for additional personnel in the light of a new pattern of requests.
The UIA is faced with an interesting strategic challenge composed of the following elements:

**A: Multiplication of databases, websites and publications on "NGOs", "civil society" and "global issues":**

Many of these are produced by NGOs, often in (aggressive) competition with each other
Many are more glossy than that of the UIA, focussing on design rather than content
Most are characterized above all by what they do not include in defining their understanding of the scope of NGO, civil society or issues of global concern
Each initiative has its own pattern of personalities, partners, supporters, etc
Some provide links to UIA data, some do not (for whatever reason)
Each is apparently crafted to focus a particular way of seeing the strategic challenge
Many are anxious to offer "services" and "facilities" of various kinds to NGOs

**B: Multiplication of conferences purporting to deal with the above themes in some combination:**

Typically focused around UN NGOs, and indifferent to other kinds of NGOs
Typically characterized by statements from key figures praising NGOs and their importance
Typically without any recommendations that lend themselves to practical implementation
Typically without adequate secretariats or follow-up procedures
Typically characterized by particular agendas that neglect previous initiatives and are neglected by the initiatives that follow them

**C: Multiplication of contexts in which "NGOs", "civil society" and "global issues" are a focus of study:**

Typically funded within university centres
Typically neglectful of the full range of NGO and other organizational phenomena
Typically focused on a particular pattern of issues
Typically avoiding any specific interest in international NGOs

**In the above context, the UIA is well-positioned with respect to:**

- Maintaining significant long-term secretariat funding and skilled personnel
- Producing advanced information products and services which meet a perceived need
- Using these advantages to fund a comprehensive website (whose contents may be linked to or copied by other initiatives, effectively providing a service to them)
- Developing strategic partners in the relevant fields of knowledge management
- Comprehensiveness of its coverage of international nonprofit organizations of all kinds
- Comprehensiveness of its coverage of global issues of all kinds
- Comprehensiveness, and systematic nature, of its coverage of interlinkages between these items (taking the form of web hyperlinks)

**In the above context, the UIA is NOT well-positioned with respect to:**
Engaging in publicity campaigns about NGOs, other than via its information services
Engaging in campaigns to aggressively position the UIA with respect to other NGO actors
Engaging in campaigns to aggressively position the UIA with respect to the UN
Engaging in service activities to meet needs of NGOs -- other than those provided by its information products

These considerations raise the question of the interpretation of the UIA statutory mandate with respect to NGOs and global issues, dating back to its foundation. Points for consideration are:

**Secretariat:** The UIA secretariat has never been organized to provide services to NGOs, other than in the form of information. It has neither the funding base to provide free services nor the appropriate personnel. Since its foundation, it has been a knowledge management organization. It is not a lobbying organization and historically has demonstrated its weaknesses when it has attempted to adopt this role. Question: Should the UIA acquire new personnel and program priorities?

**Meaning of facilitation:** Historically this has been effectively fulfilled through information products, but less effectively fulfilled with respect to a broader category of "services". Question: Should the UIA be concerned with this broader category, especially when so many other bodies are anxious to take up roles in that respect?

**Meaning of visibility:** UNESCO is currently tortured by its own lack of visibility (debate of September 1999), suggesting that lesser bodies face a real challenge in increasing their visibility. Question: Should the UIA seek to be visible in new ways in aggressive competition with others, or should it focus on the visibility of what it can offer in the web environment of the future?

**Comprehensiveness:** The UIA has maintained and enhanced the founders focus on developing a comprehensive information framework for all types of international organization and concern, as well as with the actions to deal with them. It is in this area of knowledge organization and management (a key discipline for the information era of the 21st century) that the UIA's expertise lies. It is a competence that engenders financial support on a longer-term, rather than a sporadic, basis. Question: Should the UIA not concentrate on, and develop, its fields of demonstrated strategic competence rather than venture into areas which others are anxious to work competitively or for profit?

**Positioning:** Intergovernmental institutions are bombarded by NGO solicitations and faced with many challenges to their budgets because of past inadequacies. IGOs are adept at forming their own temporary strategic partnerships in violation of the comprehensiveness to which the UIA is committed. Question: Does the UIA need to devote lobbying effort to position itself in new ways with respect to such institutions, which historically cannot be said to have demonstrated more than token interest in the UIA's initiatives?