Information technology for change: A survey of peace movement organisations and other NGOs in Britain

Summary of findings (1995-97)

Steve Webster

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Foreword and acknowledgements

The aim of this research into the use of information technology (IT) by peace movement organisations and other NGOs (non-governmental organisations) was to shed light on the emerging use of IT for political and social change. It was motivated by a desire to contribute to their effective use of IT as a positive tool for change and my own involvement within such organisations was an important factor in choosing to undertake this study. With this in mind, this report has been written primarily to provide feedback to the organisations which took part in the research. It is not intended to be the definitive last word on the subject - far from it! Rather, I hope that it may provide a useful resource for organisations as they develop their use of IT - and contribute some relevant ideas for discussion, debate and action.

The active participation by so many people resulted in a very high response rate and provided a wealth of valuable information about the experiences and practices of a diverse range of organisations. This has ensured, in particular, that the findings presented here represent directly the first-hand experiences of organisations in their use of information and IT. Every organisation, however, is different and in a substantial survey it is not possible to do complete justice to the wide diversity of structures, methods, aims and resources found within peace movement organisations and related NGOs. I hope, however, that I have been able to respect this diversity in the findings presented here.

Quite simply, this research project would not have been possible without the support of the many people who have taken part in some way. Thanks go in particular to the busy people who spared the time to provide me with information - usually when they were engaged in far more important tasks! I would also like to thank the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) for the financial support which ensured that I was able to undertake this research. Finally, no acknowledgement would be complete without emphasising the invaluable support and encouragement which I received from colleagues, family and friends. It made all the difference.

Steve Webster

Department of Peace Studies
University of Bradford

December 1998
1. Introduction

While much has been written about the ‘information revolution’, there has been relatively little which examines the use of information technology (IT) by those working for political and social change. Amongst the snowstorm of IT ‘hype’ which abounds in much of the media, the experiences of those in progressive social movements are rarely represented. This survey addresses this by exploring the experiences and views of key workers in a wide range of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) concerned with peace and related issues. These range from major NGOs with many paid staff, to a substantial number of ‘smaller’ organisations with no paid staff and relatively few resources.

This report summarises the key findings of a survey of the use of IT by peace movement organisations and other NGOs in Britain in the mid-1990s. The report focuses particularly on the results of a national survey of over 100 different organisations, a case study of key CND organisations, plus analysis of organisations’ changing use of the Internet. The research primarily covers the period 1995-97. It was undertaken as part of the work for my PhD thesis Peace movements and information technology which contains a more comprehensive analysis of the survey. The findings summarised here focus chiefly on organisations’ use of IT, although this is also set in the wider context of their use of information.

Key findings from the survey are summarised in Sections 2 to 7. When reading these it is important to recall the timing of the research, as organisations’ use of IT is very much a moving target. Most of the issues raised by the research, however, continue to be relevant - these are highlighted in Sections 8 and 9 which identify specific policy issues and recommendations for NGOs.

Research methods and participation

The survey explored a wide range of aspects of information technology - and did not just focus on newer developments such as electronic mail and the World Wide Web. The two main research methods involved: (a) a national survey of peace movement organisations and ‘related’ NGOs and (b) a specific case study of the use of IT by key organisations in CND (Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament). These were supplemented by other sources, including a review of developments in organisations’ use of the World Wide Web.
The national survey was designed to ensure that the research encompassed a range of diverse organisations within the British peace movement, rather than simply focusing on a limited number of case studies of individual organisations. The method which was used involved an 8 page postal questionnaire. This was sent to 114 peace movement organisations and related NGOs, chiefly to the offices of national or co-ordinating organisations and networks; a list of these is provided in Appendix 1. The research process also included telephone calls to organisations both prior to sending out the questionnaire and as part of the subsequent follow-up process. The main survey was conducted during the summer and autumn of 1995. (Please note that ‘national organisations’ is used subsequently as shorthand for the national or co-ordinating organisations and networks which took part in the national survey.)

The approach which was used for the survey was very successful in achieving a high level of participation amongst organisations. Of the 114 questionnaires which were sent out, 95 were returned; this represents a response rate of just over 83%. Additional information was also received from a further 2 organisations which did not return a questionnaire. Such a high response ensured that the diversity of organisations is well represented amongst those which took part, covering both ‘large’ organisations with many paid staff and ‘small’ organisations with very few or no paid staff. In this respect, the research managed to avoid any obvious bias towards better-resourced organisations. Appendix 2 provides further information about the activities of the organisations which took part in the survey.

The two main sources of information for the CND case study were: (a) CND organisations’ responses to the national survey; and (b) information provided by CND organisations in response to a subsequent ‘follow-up’ exercise. The follow-up was conducted between December 1996 - February 1997 and involved a 4 page ‘IT update’ questionnaire, which included very specific questions about the use of the Internet, including the World Wide Web. This was sent to 23 key CND organisations - a list of these is provided in Appendix 1. Again the response was excellent and over 85% returned completed questionnaires.

2. The role of IT within organisations

IT is increasingly being used by the peace movement organisations and related NGOs that took part in this study. These were primarily ‘national’ organisations together with a group of ‘key’ CND organisations. By the mid-1990s there was already an important and developing role for IT in the methods used by these organisations, with some making very substantial use of new
information and communications technologies to further their own objectives. There are examples of organisations making innovative uses of IT and developing new methods; some may even be regarded as being at a 'cutting edge' of developments in the use of IT for social and political communication.

While IT is being used for a wide range of activities, the most common involve developments in existing forms of information use and communication. These concern the use of computers for word-processing, mailing lists, desk-top publishing, holding information (computer databases) and financial administration. The technology is also increasingly used for electronic communication and information gathering, including the sharing and exchange of information with other organisations. There is a major interest in the opportunities provided by some 'on-line' technologies for facilitating communication, particularly electronic mail and the World Wide Web. It is the fax machine, however, which is more widely used by peace movement organisations than either e-mail or the Web.

With very few exceptions, almost all national organisations used IT for word-processing and the maintenance of mailing lists, with a very substantial majority using desk-top publishing and databases (see Table 1). Beyond this the pattern of IT use is very diverse and far from a cohesive picture. This is characterised by unequal development of the use of IT, often with very dramatic differences between organisations. Some use IT for a wide range of activities, including electronic communication and information gathering, have plenty of up-to-date equipment, employ trained staff and even enjoy professional IT support. In contrast, many other organisations struggle along with modest and ageing equipment, with limited skills and little or no IT support.

Such differences reflect to some extent the diversity of peace movement organisations themselves. While some well-resourced organisations already use IT in a highly sophisticated manner, many others are at an early stage in their use of the technology. Such variations in the use of IT reflect differences in the nature of organisations, in levels of support, funding, paid staff and other resources. These differences are consistent in many respects with the diversity which has been found in the use of IT by organisations in the broader voluntary and community sector in Britain. There is, for example, some commonality of experience between organisations with relatively few resources.
The survey demonstrates the importance of examining the broader context of organisations’ use of information and their methods of communication. The findings show that organisations tend to use a variety of sources of information and methods of communication, of which the use of IT is just one of a number of aspects. The overall pattern in the mid-1990s is of IT being used to supplement, rather than replace, established methods of information gathering, information management and communication.

With respect to information gathering, electronic sources of information were rather less common compared to more established sources of information, e.g. peace movement organisations and other NGOs, organisations’ own supporters, paper-based sources, and meetings, workshops or conferences. Organisations with paid staff were much more likely to use on-line sources of information, such as electronic mail, than those without paid staff. This pattern was evident in both the national survey and the CND case study. For those organisations which...
used such electronic sources they were often regarded as either very, or quite useful, although on the whole these tended to supplement rather than replace other sources.

In almost all organisations, IT has been routinely used to underpin and enhance existing forms of information provision. The most common example of this is the use of word-processing and/or desk-top publishing to produce organisations’ newsletters, magazines and other regular mailings. The importance of this is not to be underestimated, as such mailings were the most common method of information provision amongst the peace movement organisations and related NGOs which took part in this study. This aspect of the use of IT also extends to the production of other paper-based publications used by organisations to disseminate, e.g. leaflets, information packs, books, briefings and reports. Further, IT is also being used to disseminate information electronically - in 1995 the most common of these electronic methods was fax, followed by electronic mail. Established methods of communication, however, continued to predominate.

There are certainly difficulties with attempting to provide an overall assessment of the role of IT in view of the differing nature of organisations. For example, there are a number of specialist organisations concerned with research and information provision which are quite different in nature from grassroots-based campaigning organisations. Many of these specialist organisations are now so highly dependent on IT that in some cases it is difficult to see how they could exist in their current form without the technology.

3. The value of IT

There is no doubt that, with few exceptions, IT is positively valued by those working in (national) peace movement organisations and related NGOs. There is now a widespread practical interest amongst these organisations in the use of IT as a tool for political and social change, one which cuts across organisations which are quite different in nature, with varying objectives, methods and resources. It is this interest married with organisations’ positive experiences of the technology which is promoting further developments of the use of IT in this sphere.

All organisations that use IT regard it as a useful technology for at least some activities. For its most common uses - word-processing and the maintenance of mailing and contacts lists - it was overwhelmingly regarded as very useful by the organisations which took part in the research. For each of the most common uses, IT tended to be regarded as very useful by most of the
organisations which used the technology for that activity. This pattern was also evident amongst those organisations which used computers for electronic communication and information gathering (although these were still in a minority in 1995). A detailed breakdown of organisations’ assessments of the usefulness of IT is provided in Appendix 3.

With regard to equipment, three specific items of hardware were the most widely used by organisations - personal computers (PCs), modems and fax. It was this latter technology which was the most useful (in 1995) for electronic communication for organisations across the board, including those with few or no paid staff. This was no doubt influenced by the accessibility of fax, its ease of use and modest cost - plus the fact that many other NGOs also used this technology.

In view of the assessments given by those working with IT within organisations, it seems appropriate to regard IT as an empowering tool in this context of social movement action. What may be regarded as modest uses of the technology, such as word-processing or desktop publishing, have made a significant if not dramatic difference to the ability of organisations to facilitate or co-ordinate political action. This is particularly the case for many small organisations. For example, with the assistance of IT, many campaigning organisations with few or no paid staff are now able to produce, publish and distribute relevant information (in the form of newsletters, magazines, leaflets, briefings, reports, press releases) relatively quickly in a ‘professional’ format.

**Experiences and difficulties**

While IT plays a constructive role in empowering action by peace movement organisations and related NGOs, this is far from straightforward. It is very common for those who use IT within these organisations to report both positive experiences and substantial difficulties in their uses of the technology. One of the most striking aspects of the research was the number of small organisations which reported significant benefits arising from often very modest uses of IT, in spite of experiencing many problems associated with getting the technology to work for them.

In practice, it is the norm for organisations to experience a variety of difficulties in their uses of information and IT. These are primarily linked to resource issues, which in turn relate to the voluntary nature of most peace movement organisations and associated networks. The research showed that five issues in particular posed significant problems for organisations in their use of information: lack of finance, lack of staff time, lack of expertise, lack of training, and lack of help or support (Table 2 provides a summary of the responses). Two of these - lack of finance and
lack of staff time - each posed either major or moderate problems for over three-quarters of the organisations which took part in the national survey.

Table 2: Problems for organisations in their use of information (1995 national survey)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues posing problems</th>
<th>Percentage of organisations (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(n = 90)</td>
<td>major problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lack of finance</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lack of staff time</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lack of expertise</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lack staff training</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lack of help or support</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: (i) Some percentages do not add up to 100% due to rounding. (ii) This table covers the 90 organisations which provided a response to one or more of the issues.

Specific difficulties in managing information have been common. One particular problem has been that associated with handling the sheer volume of information received, increasingly referred to as 'information overload'. This now affects the overwhelming majority of organisations to some extent; almost half of those responding to the national survey said that this was often a problem.

There was little evidence of any anti-computer 'luddism' amongst those people who took part on the research. They did, however, reveal some instances of apprehension about the technology in some of the smaller organisations, i.e. amongst untrained volunteers unused to computers. In some organisations, which have traditionally made little or only modest use of computers, the process of IT development can lead to the perceived or actual social exclusion of volunteers who do not have IT skills. For example, as the range of tasks available in organisations' offices which do not involve the use of IT reduces, those volunteers without IT skills may feel increasingly marginalised. Appropriate and sensitive training and support, however, can turn such situations around - and positively empower and energise people who previously had no IT skills with newly found computer expertise.
4. Information and IT inequality

The study found substantial evidence of important differences between national peace movement organisations and related NGOs in their use of information and IT, with the focus on their use of IT. This links in with the results of previous studies of the use of IT by voluntary and community sector organisations in Britain, which have identified the relevance of the concept of information inequality.\(^8\)

In exploring IT inequalities in this context it has been useful to examine the IT resources available to organisations, what IT has been used for, organisations’ experiences of using the technology and their plans (or hopes) for future development. The research has shown significant and often acute differences between organisations for each of these aspects of IT use. For example, there is (in general) a marked contrast between the experiences of those (usually larger) organisations which have substantial financial and technological resources and those of a substantial number of small organisations that have no paid staff as such and have access to very modest computer resources indeed by comparison.

One useful indicator for exploring differences in IT use between organisations has been the number of paid staff employed. While it is perhaps a somewhat crude indicator if used in isolation, it nevertheless has shown a strong correlation with organisations’ access to technologies, their range of IT uses and plans for future development. There have been marked differences in many aspects of IT use, between organisations with no paid staff, those with just one or a few paid staff, and those with larger staff complements. It is worth recalling that more than half of the organisations which took part in the national survey had either no paid staff or just one paid staff member (see Table 3 for details). It is important to add, however, that many small organisations have been actively working to develop their uses of IT, in spite of acute resource difficulties.

In view of this, it seems appropriate to say that there is an information divide amongst (national) peace movement organisations and related NGOs which is mediated by IT. This is linked to a number of key resources, including finance, staff time, expertise, training and support. To take the issue a stage further - what can be said about differences in IT use within the same organisation? The CND case study also found important differences between ‘key’ CND organisations in their use of IT; these followed a similar pattern to the differences found between national peace movement organisations and related NGOs.
In view of the developments in the use of IT and the inequalities found in this study, it may now be possible to talk of an emerging ‘information elite’ amongst national peace movement organisations and related NGOs in Britain, one in which IT plays an increasingly important part. These may be organisations with good access to IT and information resources, and which tend to be active participants in increasingly internationalised networks of information sharing and exchange with like-minded organisations. Indeed, it may well be appropriate to suggest that such organisations may be considered to be part of an international NGO information elite. There is, however, a significant problem with this notion - just where do you draw the line?

There are certainly organisations which might be considered to be on the periphery of such an elite - perhaps those with very modest information resources, making either basic or no use of IT and relatively uninvolved in information networking with other NGOs. A further question concerns the position of local groups, networks and other grassroots activists; for some, with good access to IT and information networks, they too may be part of this NGO information elite, but how should those without such access be regarded? Are they participants in the NGO elite by association with their national, regional or sister organisations or networks? Generalisations are difficult in this area. There is, however, a danger that uses of IT may be developed in ways which perpetuate forms of information elitism and in turn threaten aspects of traditional principles of social inclusion of some peace movement organisations.

### Table 3: Number of paid staff employed by organisations (1995 national survey)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of paid staff</th>
<th>No. of organisations (total = 95)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20 or more</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 - 19</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 - 9</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 - 4</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. NGO information networks

As expected, the research showed that there is extensive information networking both between and within peace movement organisations and related NGOs. Of course, one would expect information networks of various kinds within organisations, such as communication between national (or regional) organisations and their members, supporters, local groups or other grassroots activists. It is the extent and importance of communication between different and distinct national organisations which is notable. Further, this communication tends to be well regarded and often highly valued.

The specific evidence of this information networking between organisations includes:

a) Information gathering - peace movement organisations and other NGOs were the most popular source of information for the organisations which took part in the national survey.

b) Communication - peace movement organisations and other NGOs were amongst the main groups of people provided with information; national organisations were the most common recipients of information after organisations’ own members or supporters.

c) Information exchange - virtually all organisations exchanged information with other peace movement organisations or NGOs; most organisations (over two-thirds) did this on a regular basis.

It appears, somewhat ironically, that it is peace movement organisations and related NGOs themselves who are one of the major culprits of the ‘information overload’ which is experienced by many key activists or information workers in national organisations. Even for those experienced in managing information in this context, material received from such organisations tends to be problematic - for the positive reason that it is potentially useful and cannot easily be ignored. Information received from related organisations which are sympathetic to an organisations’ objectives is often well regarded - seen as relevant, reliable and from an appropriate political perspective.

Electronic networks

As one would expect, it is clear that IT is playing an increasing role in the information networking which takes place between peace movement organisations and related NGOs. In particular, many organisations are now regularly using electronic mail for communication with other peace movement organisations / NGOs (both in the UK and in other countries). In this respect, those who have been advocates of the opportunities provided by electronic networking
for NGOs have been justified in their enthusiasm. Once even small organisations with modest resources get access to e-mail, the technology tends to become rapidly integrated into their methods of information networking.

The research does show, however, that such developments in electronic communication do need to be placed alongside the many other methods of information networking employed by organisations. Electronic methods of information gathering and political communication form only part of the 'alternative' flows of information used by organisations. For example, the most common form of communication used by organisations (in 1995) was newsletters, magazines and other (paper-based) mailings. A further illustration is provided by examining the national survey findings for information exchange with other organisations. These show that while virtually all organisations exchanged information with other peace movement organisations or NGOs, only a minority were using electronic methods at the time.

Further, to focus discussion of NGO networking on electronic methods runs the risk of overstating the importance of IT inequalities between organisations (or to reinforce such inequalities) - even to the extent of regarding those not involved in electronic networking as 'poor relations'. It is in this respect that some of the inequality clichés, such as 'information rich' and 'information poor', start to break down. A relative lack of IT resources (such as electronic mail or other on-line resources) does not necessarily equate to 'information poverty' for NGOs. Many, if not most, of the less well resourced small organisations make extensive use of non-electronic NGO information networks - to the extent that information overload is often a problem. Indeed, it is their capacity to manage, select, process and make creative use of this information which can be a major bottleneck.

**Elite networks?**

Information networking by key workers in national organisations may be perpetuating a form of elite communication - one in which key workers with the time, skills and access to information and IT resources, communicate with their similarly resourced counterparts. For example, many of those with electronic mail have been using it for communication with their opposite numbers in similar organisations in the UK and in other countries. Of course, there is nothing new in such communication and co-ordination between key workers in national peace movement organisations and related NGOs - indeed this is usually a role which is expected of them. Conversely, electronic mail does appear to offer opportunities for broadly-based electronic
networking, way beyond the confines of key workers employed by national (or regional) organisations, although in the mid-1990s this was still some way off for many organisations.

For many organisations such ‘elite’ communication may simply be regarded as a necessary part of information gathering and provision. Certainly, most of those who have been involved in information networking by national peace movement organisations and related NGOs would tend to fight shy of suggestions that they are part of an elite. This is particularly the case for those involved in organisations which are committed to supporting and developing grassroots action. Many key workers would see their role as an information conduit - gathering information from a variety of sources, then passing on relevant material to members, supporters, local groups and other interested organisations. Indeed, where there is a commitment to such decentralised information provision, the aspects of elitist communication between (national) NGOs may be considered necessary but ultimately unimportant.

This issue of elite communication should in no way be regarded as static. As the uses of technology continue to develop, the relevance of this to NGOs will need to be reviewed. Indeed, given the pace of change in the widening of access to IT (at least in Britain), some of the ‘elitist’ aspects of such networking are changing already as more people are making use of electronic mail and the World Wide Web for political action.

6. Changes in the use of technology: electronic mail and the Web

Both the national survey and the CND case study have shown that many peace movement organisations and related NGOs have been actively developing their use of newer information and communications technologies, such as electronic mail. This has been particularly true of the better-resourced organisations. Further, the period 1995-97 brought an important change - the rapid development of use of the World Wide Web by many organisations. This change appeared to be at a very early stage in mid-1995 when the national survey was undertaken, whereas the use of Web sites by national organisations for providing information had become commonplace just two years later.

While such changes in the use of IT appear to constitute new opportunities for political and social action, they may also be seen as developments of existing methods. Certainly, the use of electronic forms of communication may be seen as an extension of an existing information
networking culture, one which uses personal contact, meetings, newsletters, leaflets, telephone calls and so on.

**Electronic mail**

Of the newer IT developments, it was the use of electronic mail which was the most significant in mid-1995. The national survey also showed that there was a distinct inequality in the use of e-mail between organisations with paid staff and those without. While this difference was shown again by the CND case study, conducted more than a year later in 1996/7, there was a growing interest in the use of e-mail amongst those organisations with no paid staff.\(^\text{13}\)

It is clear that the use of electronic mail by national organisations will continue to develop, and likely that it will become common place even for fairly small organisations with no paid staff. Once organisations acquire access to e-mail and a basic level of expertise, it soon becomes a valued resource, particularly for networking with others in the peace movement and related NGOs. This use of electronic mail for networking may be seen as an extension of ‘traditional’ information networking between these organisations, rather than an entirely new development as such.

The majority of those organisations that were using e-mail in 1995, used GreenNet to provide them with e-mail services.\(^\text{14}\) Many of these were also using GreenNet’s electronic conferences, although these appeared to be used rather less widely than e-mail. The CND case study (in 1996/7) found relatively little use of these electronic conferences by key CND organisations - beyond those used by the main London office.

In contrast with the general trend, the national survey showed that in 1995 a significant proportion of organisations - around 30% - had no plans to use electronic mail in the near future. Virtually all of these were organisations with either no paid staff or a single paid member of staff; the majority of those with no paid staff had no plans to use electronic mail in the near future.

**The World Wide Web**

The World Wide Web has been a major feature of attention concerning recent developments in the use of IT. Between 1995 and 1997 there was a major change in the use of the Web by some peace movement organisations and related NGOs. Of major importance has been the development of organisations’ own Web sites as a means of disseminating information on-line to
electronic ‘visitors’. Further, these sites have promoted on-line communication by encouraging those visiting Web sites to respond via on-line means.\(^{15}\)

This growth in the use of the Web was already evident in 1996, just a year after the national survey was conducted. A survey of NGO Web sites in September 1996 gave a snapshot of this development. This revealed that a significant number of the peace movement organisations and related NGOs which had taken part in the national survey had already established their own Web sites.\(^{16}\) This interest in the Web was also illustrated by the findings of the CND case study (conducted between December 1996 and February 1997). In addition to the use of the Web by CND’s main office in London, the study found a developing interest in the Web for both information gathering and communication amongst other key CND organisations.\(^{17}\)

As expected, organisations’ use of the Web has continued to expand rapidly since the survey. This has seen a continuing expansion in the number of organisations with Web sites and in the volume of information provided.

**Future plans**

This developing interest in ‘on-line’ uses of IT for information gathering and communication has, of course, been reflected in organisations’ future plans. An important finding of the 1995 survey, however, was that these plans tended to indicate a split between those with resources (such as paid staff) and the smaller organisations with no paid staff; many in this latter group had no plans to develop on-line uses of IT at the time. The CND case study (in 1996/7), however, found an increasing interest in on-line technologies amongst smaller organisations. Most key CND organisations were either definitely or possibly planning to use electronic mail and/or the Web in the near future, although many of those with no paid staff had no such plans or simply did not know.

It is clear that amongst smaller organisations the pace of change in developing the use of on-line technologies has been relatively slow. This often reflects a lack of planning, finance or expertise. It is clear that the lack of such resources for many organisations not only provide significant difficulties, but also act as barriers to future IT development.
7. IT, effectiveness and changing methods

IT is helping the majority of peace movement organisations and related NGOs to be more effective, certainly in respect of the activities of national and ‘key’ organisations (and probably more widely). It is improving their abilities to gather information, distribute newsletters, organise campaigns, undertake research, develop media contacts, publish briefings, mobilise action and so on. Certainly, those who use the technology do tend to regard it as a very useful or invaluable tool. IT is therefore being used by organisations to improve efficiency, to use a wider range of methods and to facilitate increased political involvement. In respect of promoting greater political and social action, there is a strong link between the use of IT and an organisation’s effectiveness. This is particularly the case with campaigning organisations which are focused on empowering political action. The link, however, between the use of IT and the outcome of the political and social action it supports is usually less clear.

For campaigners, the results of more effective action may not necessarily be visible in terms of the achievement of specific political objectives in a relatively short time-frame. This is to be expected, given the nature of the issues which are addressed by peace movement organisations and related NGOs. These tend to be so major that the ways in which such movements impact on wider political change are inevitably highly complex. While working to effect political change at the level of elite decision makers (such as governments) is one common method, it is only one of a variety of forms of political action undertaken by these organisations.

The use of IT can and does result in more effective work by campaigning organisations - which in turn feeds through into the wider political process. A view of this from the campaigners who took part in the research would tend to be (in general terms) that IT does have a positive effect on organisations’ campaigning. The progressive and enthusiastic development of the use of IT by key workers within organisations is a clear indicator of this. The CND case study, for example, demonstrates the (generally) positive attitudes of key campaigners towards the impact of IT on their activities. This is shown by Table 4 which summarises people’s responses when asked about the impact of IT on their campaigning work.

Of course, this contribution by IT to the ability of peace movement organisations and related NGOs to engage in activities such as campaigning, education, information provision and research, does not take place in some convenient vacuum. Other organisations which are involved in the political process are also using the technology to enhance their capacity for
political communication or mobilisation; many of these have access to far greater IT resources than most of the organisations in this survey.18

Table 4: The impact of IT on the campaigning work of CND organisations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact of IT on campaigning work</th>
<th>Percentage of key CND organisations (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>major</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>modest</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>slight</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>none</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>negative impact</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: This table summarises the responses of 17 key British CND organisations which took part in the CND IT case study (in 1996/7). Some figures do not add up to 100% due to rounding.

While organisations have not been discarding traditional methods of action in favour of electronic or computer-mediated ones, it is clear that their methods are changing. This can be illustrated by the widespread use of fax (often for media work) and the rapidly developing use of e-mail and the Web.19 These developments in the use of IT provide evidence of changes in the political culture of peace movement organisations and other NGOs - at least in respect of their use of information for political change. While it may be at a relatively early stage, with a variety of associated problems, IT-mediated methods have now become part of the range of methods of political action employed by activists and key workers.

8. Policy issues and recommendations for NGOs

A key idea in this research is that organisations can change and develop their uses of IT in a proactive manner - one which is appropriate to their concerns and resources. This in no way detracts from the very real constraints and difficulties faced by organisations, for many with modest resources, IT developments can certainly be problematic. In view of the potential benefits of IT for organisations, there are number of important policy issues and recommendations which flow directly from the research. This section discusses a number of key points, which focus on how
appropriate developments in the use of IT by peace movement organisations and related NGOs in Britain may be encouraged and supported.

The ideas in this section primarily reflect the needs and experiences of the organisations which took part in the research. The discussion also draws, however, on relevant policy issues identified in the literature concerned with the use of IT in the wider voluntary and community sector in Britain. The issues raised should be relevant to most people working within these organisations, but are likely to be of particular interest to those involved in managing or developing their use of information or IT.

**Appropriate IT development**

IT has had a positive impact on the effectiveness of peace movement organisations and related NGOs - for those who have been able to make constructive use of the technology in support of their own aims. IT has helped many organisations to transform their ability to communicate, gather and provide information, co-ordinate action, organise campaigns, improve media contacts and so on. Given these benefits, it seems clear that organisations should be encouraged to develop their use of IT in an appropriate manner, i.e. in ways which enhance organisations’ abilities to work towards their own political and social objectives. It is equally clear that ideas for enhancing the use of IT (and information) need to be rooted in the nature of peace movements, and to respect the environment in which they operate. Such ideas need to be focused on empowering political and social action which is relevant to these organisations, rather than developing the use of IT for its own sake.

**Resources and problems**

It is the norm for organisations to experience a variety of problems in their use of IT. At the root of these often lie resource problems of one kind or another - such as a lack of finance, expertise or simply the time to devote to developing IT use. Proposals for enhancing the use of IT do need to address such problems, particularly the severe constraints on finance faced by many small organisations (especially as there is rarely an easy solution to a lack of finance). Such resource problems do pose major barriers for many smaller organisations in their attempts to develop their use of IT; indeed, the extent of the problems faced by some organisations should not be underestimated. Although relatively affordable PCs are widening access to the technology compared with the past, it is constraints on both human as well technological resources which often hold back organisations’ development of the use of IT.
**IT support**

One way of addressing some of the problems associated with IT is to develop appropriate channels of help and support, such as access to relevant information (IT awareness), training and expertise. It is often the case that insufficient attention is paid to the human resources, such as these, which are necessary to make effective use of IT in practice. Not surprisingly, it is the smaller organisations which stand to gain most from improvements in access to appropriate IT support.

The expertise of those in the ‘front line’ of IT use is an important issue for all organisations; this particularly concerns paid staff and key volunteers, including the volunteer co-ordinators of the many organisations which do not have paid staff. In practice, appropriate IT training for these key people is patchy, at best. It is vital (i) that staff and volunteers receive training appropriate in IT skills, and (ii) that effective systems of ongoing IT support are established.

The importance of IT support has been emphasised in the literature concerned with the use of IT in the voluntary sector. This includes proposals for the development of IT support networks relevant to the needs of voluntary and community sector organisations. Such networks would allow organisations to share information and expertise, and to develop collaborative means of accessing affordable IT support. These might, for example, develop links with appropriate providers of professional IT support, sensitive to the needs of organisations (such as appropriate voluntary sector organisations or ‘sector-friendly’ independent consultants). These ideas seem to be very relevant to the needs of many peace movement organisations and other NGOs and also sensitive to the environment of modest organisational resources.

**IT Inequalities**

Inequalities both within and between peace movement organisations in the use of IT is an issue in the 1990s. Of particular concern is the potential gap between organisations with resources (such as paid staff), and those without. Further, it should not be assumed that technological change will necessarily deal with such inequalities without pro-active attention from organisations themselves.

IT inequality is especially an issue for organisations whose activities have traditionally been based on grassroots action, including local groups, supporters and networks. It is important for these organisations that they harness IT developments in ways which enhance and support such
grassroots action - and which aim to avoid, even inadvertently, any reinforcement of information inequalities. Given that such organisations have also tended to have a culture of pro-active support for developing and facilitating local action, this ought not to be a major stumbling block. Indeed, facilitating access to the benefits of IT in ways which promote social inclusion, rather than exclusion, should become a priority for such organisations. Of course, for most organisations which are firmly grounded in local action, the idea of using IT in an exclusive fashion would be anathema to them. Indeed, such organisations are likely to provide useful examples of the ways in which the use IT is being developed which promotes both effective action and the social cohesion of social movement organisations.

**Information and NGO networks**

Given the importance of information networking, can organisations with linked concerns collaborate further to share information effectively? IT is now making it much easier for NGOs to distribute more information with greater ease and speed than before, for example, by using electronic networking including e-mail. Further, IT now offers increasingly sophisticated means of conducting electronic information gathering and selecting material of possible interest. The human resources to deal with this expanding communication between NGOs, however, are not increasing in the same way (if at all). ‘Information overload’ is already a problem and increasing communication between NGOs may intensify this further. If this happens, it may inadvertently result in the devaluing of what has been regarded as a key information source in the past, i.e. information from like-minded organisations.

We certainly need to be wary of solutions to ‘information overload’ which are solely reliant on the very technology which is rapidly contributing to the problem, for ultimately information needs to be read, assessed and used creatively by people. This point about the human interface is crucial, particularly for peace movement organisations and related NGOs which operate in what is a highly politicised context for information gathering and dissemination. It is a context in which information is far from value-free and where information management is much more than a technical exercise to ‘extract relevant data’. Rather, information requires sensitive handling and critical assessment which encompasses the nature of the source and the value system implied. There is nothing new in this, and for value-driven organisations working explicitly for change this ought to be obvious; those experienced in information and research work in peace movement organisations are often fairly adept at such ‘critical’ information handling.
A further issue concerns the duplication of effort involved in information gathering. There is no doubt that the exchange of information between organisations is a major aspect of peace movement information gathering and is of great benefit, particularly amongst smaller organisations with modest resources. There is, however, a relative lack of direct sharing of information resources, such as joint libraries or databases (although there are some notable exceptions). While it is understandable that distinct national organisations wish to develop their own independent information resources, it is unfortunate if this means that similar organisations are independently gathering very similar material in what might be a fairly time-consuming manner. In view of the constraints on staff time and the time involved in information gathering and management, further collaboration between organisations to share information resources more directly (and hence reduce duplication) could be invaluable. This is likely to be most feasible amongst organisations with similar concerns or methods.

These issues emphasise the importance of close collaboration between organisations to make the most effective use of NGO information networks. In many instances this would be a case of developing existing information links between organisations further. The role of IT in these networks needs to be actively managed and reviewed - in order to make creative use of wider access to information and to avoid the pitfalls of information overload.

**IT planning and information strategy**

To follow the principle of empowering appropriate action, most (if not all) organisations would benefit from effective planning of their development of the use of IT - rather than relying on ad-hoc decisions. Such advice is common in the voluntary sector literature on the use of IT. In contrast, the 1995 national survey found that few organisations had a written strategy or plan for their use of information or IT.

IT planning in itself is no panacea - it needs to be sensitive to the needs of organisations and to focus on effective use of IT within resource constraints. It is also important for organisations to make use of the knowledge and experience of others with similar needs and objectives. Planning developments in the use of IT should not be regarded as an optional ‘good idea’ that never quite makes it onto the list of campaigning or other priorities. Indeed, where planning is viewed as an unnecessary luxury, this is likely to reinforce ad-hoc or ‘reactive’ IT developments. These can be inefficient, time consuming and often inappropriate to an organisation’s needs (and ultimately expensive). Ironically, the greater an organisation’s difficulties in terms of a lack of resources (such as finance, expertise or staff time), the more important it is to engage in clear planning of
IT developments. Small organisations in particular cannot afford to make mistakes in developing their use of IT.

It is suggested, therefore, that organisations should consider making use of appropriate IT planning. This would start not with the technology, but from an organisation's own objectives, priorities and methods. Probably the most beneficial approach is to develop a strategy for the use of information, which has clear priorities for information gathering, information management and communication, and which explicitly includes the role of IT to support such activities.

There is nothing radically new in encouraging organisations to develop appropriate information strategies which are in keeping with their political and social objectives. The importance of such information strategies is repeatedly stressed in the voluntary sector IT literature. This research indicates a significant gap between 'sector-friendly' advocates of the benefits of such planning, and the actual practice of most peace movement organisations, although it is fair to say that some organisations have had clear plans for developing their use of information or IT.

**Technological change**

Organisations are likely to benefit most from IT and the opportunities offered by technological change by being pro-active, rather than reactive. To date, many organisations have been relatively slow to develop their uses of the technology, particularly smaller organisations. Of course, in this context this is hardly surprising, and it seems somewhat harsh and unhelpful to criticise smaller organisations with relatively poor resources for modest progress, given the difficulties they tend to face. Nevertheless, the importance of prioritising the use of IT within each organisation's resources and methods still remains.

The pro-active approach which is suggested does not infer that organisations should become uncritical consumers of the latest IT developments. Rather, key workers, management committee members and other activists need to be aware of the changing possibilities offered by IT - and to be in a position to make informed and critical decisions. This might require the provision of appropriate training sessions or workshops to brief people on contemporary developments, including the advantages and drawbacks of developing the use of IT further. In a context of resource constraints such decisions are rarely straightforward, however, and it is important that key people are able to make decisions about their organisation's use of IT which are integrated into its objectives and methods as a whole.
organisations might also be extended to the sharing or pooling of appropriate resources, for example, in conducting or sharing IT training for staff and volunteers.

5. Organisations should actively plan their use of IT, preferably drawing up written plans and undertaking appropriate consultation with staff, volunteers, committee members and other interested parties. Ideally, such IT planning will take place within the development of a wider information strategy, one which is closely linked to an organisation's overall objectives and specific priorities. Such an information strategy should involve a continuous process, in which plans are regularly reviewed (at least annually) in the light of changing circumstances and priorities. It would encompass information gathering, information management and communication. This would allow difficulties encountered in the use of information or IT (such as information overload) to be addressed in a strategic rather than ad-hoc fashion.

6. Organisations need to actively manage information received (and provided) via NGO networks. Close collaboration between organisations with similar or linked objectives is crucial in this respect, in order to make effective use of information and associated developments in the use of IT. This may help to avoid some of the drawbacks of information overload.

7. IT plans should include provision for appropriate IT training for staff (paid or unpaid), volunteers, management committee members and other key people. Training programmes will require different components, such as:

   (i) training in the day-to-day use of equipment and software for office staff and volunteers;
   (ii) specialist skills training for those responsible for overseeing IT developments;
   (iii) IT awareness training for management committee members and other key people; and
   (iv) IT workshops for local campaigners, supporters or other activists, for example, at annual conferences, regional meetings or campaigning workshops.

8. The potential benefits of using electronic mail and the Web are such that all organisations should aim to put resources into developing use of these technologies, particularly as they appear to offer major enhancements of existing methods of NGO information networking. The sharing of skills, expertise and experience in this area will be crucial for facilitating developments amongst smaller organisations with relatively modest resources.

9. IT planning should encompass the use of new technologies beyond an organisation's national (or regional) office, although the form of this will necessarily vary with organisations' differing structures. This could look at facilitating more effective use of IT at a local level in an
It is important to emphasise that the survey findings provide a broad picture of the use of IT by what is a large group of diverse organisations. The generalisations which have been made should in no way detract from the very varied pattern of IT use and the widely differing experiences of organisations and networks.

In view of the changes which have been taking place in the use of IT by social movement organisations in Britain, it is clear that the use of IT is a social (as well as technological) phenomenon which is on the move. The speed of some of these changes should, however, make us wary about predicting the ways in which information technologies may be used in the longer term. Nevertheless, organisations are already enthusiastically developing new opportunities for political and social action via electronic mail and the Web.

While the future shape of the role of IT within political and social action is open, this reinforces the importance of pro-active approaches to the use of new technologies by peace movement organisations and other NGOs. Future developments will not solely depend on changes in the technologies available, but will also be shaped by the decisions that organisations choose to make regarding their uses of information and IT.

This survey has shown how modestly resourced, value-driven organisations have been shaping the use of information technologies in support of their own aims and objectives. It seems apposite that peace movement organisations and other NGOs which have been highly critical of the military uses of new technologies should now be actively developing the use of IT as a tool for political and social change.
Notes


2. The phrase 'related NGOs' is used as a way of describing NGOs which are working on peace and related issues, but which would not normally regard themselves as 'peace movement' organisations as such. For example, this would include some development or human rights organisations working on aspects of the international arms trade.

3. The term 'small organisations' is used here to denote those with relatively few or no paid staff, although many have considerable networks of supporters or activists. A 'small' organisation in this context should therefore not be taken to imply a small or inconsequential network or movement.

4. Of the 23 key CND organisations, 20 returned completed questionnaires and a further one provided additional information; only two organisations provided no response.

5. The three organisations which indicated that they did not use computers are excluded from this table, together with a further four organisations which used computers but did not provide adequate information.

6. 90% of the organisations which took part in the 1995 national survey used such mailings as one of their main ways of disseminating information.

7. For strict comparability across the five issues, the number of organisations which gave 'no response' for each issue is shown.

8. The findings are not, however, strictly comparable with earlier relevant research in this respect, as the use of IT has now become commonplace amongst voluntary organisations in Britain. An earlier measure of IT inequality - whether or not an organisation used computers - is no longer adequate as a means of identifying differences between organisations.

9. This covers full-time and part-time paid staff; the figure for the number of full-time equivalent staff was used where available.

10. See, for example, Ray Thomas (1995).

11. For example, over 60% of those organisations which were using electronic mail in 1995 used it for regular communication with peace movement organisations or other NGOs in other countries.

12. These include Howard Rheingold (1995) and Howard Frederick (1993).

13. A quarter of those with no paid staff (3 out 12) were already using e-mail.

14. 79% of those using e-mail in 1995 used GreenNet's e-mail services.

15. Most of the Web sites of peace movement organisations and related NGOs encourage and facilitate electronic feedback. Some provide electronic forms, while others encourage people to respond by electronic mail.

16. Web sites were readily identified for around 20 of the organisations which had been invited to take part in the national survey.

17. All of whom had modest resources, e.g. they had only one or no paid staff.

18. This illustrates that it would be inappropriate to suggest that the use of IT as such contributes towards 'progressive' political change. The constructive use of IT by peace movement organisations and related NGOs does, however, influence and enhance their own effectiveness.

19. For some activists and key workers the Internet is being used to develop an electronic 'alternative public realm' (Downing 1989). It provides an electronically-mediated and independent 'space' for peace activists to operate in.


21. For example, the community computing support networks discussed by Nick Plant (1992).
Those who have discussed the importance of such planning for voluntary sector organisations include Deacon and Golding (1989), Jones (1991), the IT and Communities Working Party (1992) and Plant (1992).

The wider voluntary and community sector IT literature contains a host of valuable ideas for 'good practice' in the use of IT which are relevant to peace movement organisations and related NGOs. See, for example, the report of the IT and Communities Working Party (1992) and the voluntary sector IT bibliography by Gaskin et al (1993).

For example, organisations should adopt 'good practice' in routinely maintaining their IT-based information systems: simple back-up procedures should be adopted to avoid loss of data or software, while potential hardware faults should be covered by (easily obtainable) professional maintenance contracts.

This has already been actively supported by some funders.

Ideally, such an IT support network would benefit from the services of a paid co-ordinator with appropriate IT expertise, employed on at least a part-time basis. This would help to ensure some continuity and reliability of support.

For example, the guidelines Good practice in computer volunteering published by the Community Computing Network (1995) are helpful in this respect.

With thanks to the Bradford Project on Strengthening the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention for covering the cost of providing a copy of this report to each of the organisations which took part in the survey.
Appendix 1: Lists of organisations

A. Organisations invited to participate in the national survey (1995)

This is an alphabetical listing of the 114 organisations which were invited to take part in the national survey of peace movement organisations and related NGOs in 1995. The list comprises: 95 organisations that returned completed questionnaires, 2 that provided additional information, and 17 that made no response.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Aid</th>
<th>Friends World Committee for Consultation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Action for Southern Africa</td>
<td>Give Peace a Chance Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aldermaston and Burghfield Women's Campaign</td>
<td>Greater Manchester CND</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amnesty International (British Section)</td>
<td>Greenpeace (UK)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglican Pacifist Fellowship</td>
<td>Housmans Peace Resource Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architects and Engineers for Social Responsibility</td>
<td>Human Rights Watch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arms Conversion Project</td>
<td>Institute for War and Peace Reporting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptist Peace Fellowship</td>
<td>International Alert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bristol and West CND</td>
<td>International Broadcasting Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Aerospace Campaign</td>
<td>International Peace Bureau Supporters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British American Security Information Council</td>
<td>Network (UK)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Coalition for East Timor</td>
<td>International Security Information Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Refugee Council</td>
<td>International Trade Union Committee for Peace and Disarmament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campaign Against Arms Trade</td>
<td>Jaipur Limb Campaign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND)</td>
<td>Labour Action for Peace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campaign to Free Vanunu and for a Nuclear-Free Middle East</td>
<td>Liberal Democrat Peace Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic Fund for Overseas Development (CAFOD)</td>
<td>London Region CND</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic Institute for International Relations</td>
<td>Mediation UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central America Human Rights Committee</td>
<td>Medical Action for Global Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre for Alternative Industrial and Technological Systems</td>
<td>Merseyside CND</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Aid</td>
<td>Methodist Church Division of Social Responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian CND</td>
<td>Methodist Peace Fellowship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clergy Against Nuclear Arms</td>
<td>Mid-Somerset CND</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CND Cymru</td>
<td>Mines Advisory Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commonweal (formerly SCAWD)</td>
<td>Mothers for Peace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congregational Peace Fellowship</td>
<td>Musicians Against Nuclear Arms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscience - the Peace Tax Campaign</td>
<td>National Liaison Committee of Diocesan Justice and Peace Groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council for Arms Control</td>
<td>National Peace Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coventry Alternative Employment Research</td>
<td>Network Information Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumbria and North Lancs. Peace Groups (CND)</td>
<td>New Internationalist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development Education Association</td>
<td>Non-Violent Resistance Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dunamis</td>
<td>Northern Friends Peace Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical Investment Research Service</td>
<td>Northern Peace Education Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Dialogue</td>
<td>Nuclear-Free Local Authorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex-Services CND</td>
<td>Nukewatch UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faslane Peace Camp</td>
<td>One World Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fellowship of Reconciliation - England</td>
<td>Oxfam (UK and Ireland)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oxford Research Group</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Pax Christi
Peace Brigades International, Britain
Peace News
Peace Pledge Union
Pensioners for Peace International
Pugwash Conferences
Quaker Peace and Service
Saferworld
Save the Children
Scientists for Global Responsibility
Scottish CND
Scottish Education and Action for Development
Sellafield Women’s Peace Camp
Shut Sellafield
Socialist Environment and Resources Association
South Cheshire and North Staffs CND
Stop the Hawks - No Arms to Indonesia
Suffolk CND
Tapol - Indonesia Human Rights Campaign
Third World First
Trade Union CND
Tyne and Wear CND
UK Working Group on Landmines
Unitarian Peace Fellowship
United Nations Association
UNA International Service
Verification Technology Information Centre
War on Want
War Resisters International
West Midlands Region CND
Women for a Nuclear-Free and Independent Pacific
Women’s Aid to Former Yugoslavia
Women’s Aid for Peace
Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom
World Court Project
Working Party on Chemical and Biological Weapons
World Disarmament Campaign
World Development Movement
Yorkshire CND
Youth and Student CND

B. Organisations invited to take part in the CND IT case study (1996/7)

This is a list of the CND organisations which were invited to take part in the CND IT case study in December 1996. All but two organisations responded to the request for information.

Main office
CND (London office)

National offices
Scottish CND
CND Cymru
Irish CND

Specialist sections
Christian CND
Ex-Services CND
Labour CND
Trade Union CND
Youth & Student CND

Regional offices/co-ordinators
Cumbria & North Lancs. Peace Groups (CND)
London Region CND
Manchester & District CND
Merseyside CND
Mid-Somerset & West Region CND
Norwich CND
South Cheshire & North Staffs. CND
South West Region CND
Southern Region CND
Suffolk CND
Sussex Alliance for Nuclear Disarmament
Tyne & Wear CND
West Midlands CND
Yorkshire CND
Main activities of organisations (1995 national survey)

This table summarises the responses of the 95 peace movement organisations and related NGOs which completed questionnaires for the 1995 national survey. It illustrates the diversity of activities undertaken by this group of organisations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main activities</th>
<th>Number of organisations (total = 95)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>information provision</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lobbying MPs, political parties, government(s)</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meetings, workshops, conferences</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>campaigning</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>press and media work</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>educational work</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fund-raising</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grassroots or local action</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>co-ordination, facilitating action</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>research</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>letter-writing</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>events e.g. rallies, marches, vigils</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-violent direct action, peace camps</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>international aid / development</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3: The value of IT to organisations

Organisations' own assessment of the utility of computers (1995 national survey)

This table details the ratings given by organisations as to how useful they found computers for different activities (in the 1995 national survey). In some cases, organisations used computers for a particular activity but did not give a rating for that activity - these are shown in the ‘no rating’ column.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity for which computers were used (n = 88)</th>
<th>Percentage of organisations (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>very useful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>word-processing</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mailing lists, contacts lists</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>desk-top publishing</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>holding information electronically, e.g. in databases</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accounts, finance, book-keeping</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other administration</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>communication, e.g. e-mail, electronic conferences/bulletin boards, fax via computer information gathering</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sharing or exchanging information with other organisations</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accessing information in ‘external’ or on-line databases *</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>managing information, e.g. library systems</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: (i) Some percentages do not add up due to rounding. (ii) The three organisations which did not use computers are excluded from this table, together with a further 4 which used computers but did not provide adequate information. The table combines the responses to Questions 11 and 14. (iii) * These figures for ‘on-line’ databases should be treated with some caution - they may overstate organisations actual use of this technology.
Select bibliography


Rowan, Peter (1994) *What is happening out there?: IT support needs of voluntary and community sector organisations - research findings from the IBM Fund for Community Computing*. London: Community Development Foundation.


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