Information for the Next 91 Years
Give or Take 86

Keynote Address by Vic Borden to the Mid-America AIR (MidAIR) 2008 Conference November 13, 2008 Kansas City, MO
Information for the Next 100 Years

Give or Take 95

Keynote Address by Vic Borden
to the Rocky Mountain AIR (RMAIR)
1999 Conference
October 21, 1999
Las Vegas Nevada
Information for the Next 91 Years

Give or Take 86

Keynote Address by Vic Borden to the Midwest AIR (MidAIR) 2008 Conference
November 13, 2008
Kansas City, MO
Overview

• Recent History as Context
  ■ Higher Ed in 2 minutes
  ■ IR in 5 minutes

• The World of IR in 2099

• Shaping a Future in Which We Would Like to Live and Work
CHANGE

When the Winds of Change Blow Hard Enough, The Most Trivial of Things can turn into Deadly Projectiles.
RECENT HISTORY AS CONTEXT
History as Context – Higher Ed

- Increase in need/access
  - More less well-prepared students attending than ever before because they have to
- Diversification…
  - …of students, but not so much of faculty
  - …of providers, largely reflecting entrepreneurial/market forces
  - …of revenue sources; more stakeholders with varied interests and agenda
- Shift from public toward private benefit
  - Attendant shift of cost burden to consumer
From faculty governance and amateur management with clerical assistance to...

Professional Bureaucracy

- Composite of hierarchical/bureaucratic and collegial models
- Highly decentralized and loosely coupled authority structures
The Place of IR

- Information, research and analysis for administering, managing, or improving higher education programs, institutions, and systems

- Information-driven, rational decision making as a core process
  - Yeah, right, whatever
A Very Brief History of IR

- < 1960 – Faculty research
  - Occasional higher education research applied to operational issues, such as student performance, organizational development, etc.

- 1960s – Scientific management
  - Costing models, workload analysis, decision support for professional administration
    - ACE, NCHEMS, and WICHE lead the way
A Very Brief History of IR (2)

- 1970s - The hyper growth decade
  - Student profile and progress in light of greater access, CIRP and CSEQ Surveys, the beginning of the accountability craze, the rise of peer comparisons

- 1980s – Public systems mature – Privates get competitive
  - State level coordination, mission differentiation, state/federal reporting requirements mushroom
  - Enrollment planning, tuition discounting, advertising and guidebooks
A Very Brief History of IR (3)

1990s – Diversity and sophistication as the traditional higher education model begins to erode

- Commercial services increasingly available for marketing and management
- Consumerism shapes public policy
- Technology changes information management and analysis, as well as the modes of learning delivery
2000 and beyond

- The rise of “interprofessional” collaborations
- Permeable boundaries: IR, assessment, enrollment research, policy research, academic planning and policy analysis, knowledge management; resource allocation; cost studies
- IR gets to sit at the grown up table, more and more, within the institution and nationally/internationally as a profession, rather than an applied academic pursuit
THE WORLD OF IR IN 2099
None of us will be “active” IRers
IR will not exist as we know it
- Because we won’t know anything anymore
Psychology will still be the most popular college major
The most popular professor in the universe will be....
Lucasian Chair, Cambridge University, 2395
A Future Vision

- What will life be like in 100 years?
- What will you be like in 100 years?
A Future Vision

- A personal view
My Professional Epitath

He tried so hard to make sense of it all.
SHAPING A FUTURE IN WHICH WE WOULD LIKE TO LIVE AND WORK
VISION

How can the future be so hard to predict when all of my worst fears keep coming true?
What’s the Point of Higher Ed?

- Produce learned, creative, skilled, and civilly productive graduates
- Improve the quality of life through the development and application of ideas, methods, and technologies
What Can IRers Do to Help?

● Provide Information Support for Decision Making?

● Contribute substantively to...
  ▪ Evaluating and improving processes, programs and systems
  ▪ Communicating about institutional effectiveness to internal and external constituents
How?

- Shift the Paradigm

- From Information Support to Action Research
- From a Reliability to Validity
- From Institutional Research to Collaborative Organizational Learning
- From Here to Eternity
Action Research Paradigm

- Continuous cycle of data collection → data analysis → data feedback → action plans → data collection
- Stakeholder empowerment through active and on-going participation
- Data feedback meetings promote collaboration, dialogue, and collective analysis
- Active learning and discovery fostered by critical reflection process
- Data-driven action plans developed = research linked to action
## Research Question and Evaluation Focus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional IR</th>
<th>Action Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Given to researcher</td>
<td>Developed together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Top-down directive</td>
<td>- Requester or researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Bottom-up request</td>
<td>- Specific questions often deferred until vested parties brought together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarification of request</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Discussion of context and use</td>
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Data Collection

Traditional IR
- Researcher finds and collects data
- Researcher accountable for integrity of information

Action Research
- Stakeholders have role
  - Collecting data
  - Learning about nuances
- Shared responsibility for integrity
### Data Analysis and Interpretation

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● Researchers responsible through dissemination</td>
<td>● Stakeholders involved in stages of data analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● May consult with stakeholders to gain insight into the results</td>
<td>● Preliminary results presented and discussed</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>■ Further analyses shaped by those discussions.</td>
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Report Presentation and Dissemination

Traditional IR
- Researcher prepares and often presents results to stakeholders

Action Research
- Presentation and report writing responsibilities shared
- Presentations involve:
  - active discussion
  - facilitation of action plan development
Follow-up

Traditional IR
- Some additional analyses may be requested or perhaps some clarification
- Often the end of the process

Action Research
- Stakeholders design action plan based on results
- Data collection included in follow-up plan
- Further lines of inquiry established for next cycle of research
Using action research to support academic program improvement

Michele Hanson and Victor Borden

NDIR, No. 130 (Summer 2006)

Reframing Persistence Research to Improve Academic Success
From Reliability To Validity

- Although consistency and replicability of information is important.
- It doesn’t mean squat if the information doesn’t mean squat.
- What exactly does it mean?
  - Instructional Expenditures per FTE
  - 150% Institutional Graduation Rate
  - Value-added learning score
Validity

- Whether a measure measures what it’s supposed to be measuring
Evolution of Validity

● Face/Content
  ■ Looks like, smells like, etc.

● Criterion
  ■ Relates to what we think it should relate to

● Construct
  ■ Has a sound theoretical basis that holds up to empiricism

● Internal, External, Differential
  ■ Soundness, relevance, and fairness
Validity as Argument

- Interpretive argument
  - Articulate proposed interpretations and uses
  - What conclusions should we be able to draw?

- Validity argument
  - Coherent constructs, reasonable inferences, and plausible assumptions
Target of Validity

● Validity is specific to the use of a measure and not to the measure in and of itself
  ■ A graduation rate is not in and of itself valid or invalid
  ■ A graduation rate as a measure of institutional productivity is an appropriate target of the validity question
Interpretive Argument Questions

- Are institutions with higher graduation rates more productive than those with lower graduation rates?
- Are institutions with higher instructional expenditures per FTE students devoting more resources to student learning than those with lower expenditures?
- Do students at institutions with higher CLA valued added learning scores learn more than students at institutions with lower scores?
Validity Argument Questions

- Does the 6-Year Graduation Rate among FTFT Cohort mean the same thing for a selective residential institution and an open commuter one?
- Are instructional expenditures comparable across public and private institutions?
- Can one conclude that differences in institutional scores on a standardized learning outcome exam represents differences in their learning environments?
Value Added in Texas

Error bar represents distance to expected score

- Actual Freshman
- Actual Senior
- National Freshman
- National Senior
IR – Validity Reading

- Measurement validity and accountability for student learning
  - Victor Borden and John Young (ETS)
- NDIR, No. S1 (Summer 2008)
  - Assessing and Accounting for Student Learning: Beyond the Spellings Commission
To Collaborative Organizational Learning

• Focus on the use and interpretation of data rather than on its production, dissemination and management

• Understand that figuring out how to do things differently (i.e., better) is not a “rational process”

• Involve appropriate and diverse people in forming questions, interpreting results, and deciding what to do
The Benefits of C.O.L.

- Creates greater buy in, ownership and engagement in the process
- Greater collective intelligence potential among groups of individuals problem-solving together
- More likely to find faulty assumptions
- Promotes transformative learning which promotes effective change
IR as OL Reading

- Institutional Research and Collaborative Organizational Learning
  Victor Borden and Adrianna Kezar
- Possibly in the forthcoming Handbook of Institutional Research
Implications for IR

● Action Research and the OL lens can help IR develop tools and services to contribution more effectively to evaluation and improvement

● The validity lens helps IR contribute more effectively to communicating about institutional effectiveness
What You Should Do

- Get out there, talk and listen to and work with your colleagues more closely and frequently
- When someone asks for some information, probe further
- Question your measures and communicate to others what they can and cannot conclude from them
- Stand up for what’s right and fight against political expediency
  - But don’t be foolish, you don’t want to lose your job, especially in this economy
Wishes

When you wish upon a falling star, your dreams can come true. Unless it’s really a meteorite hurtling to the Earth which will destroy all life. Then you’re pretty much hosed no matter what you wish for. Unless it’s death by meteor.
IR Credo

I realize that I have not succeeded in answering all of your questions. Indeed, I did not answer any of them completely. The answers I provided only serve to raise a whole new set of questions that lead to more problems, some of which you weren’t aware of in the first place. Now that my work is complete, you feel as confused as ever, but hopefully, you are confused on a higher level and about more important things.