

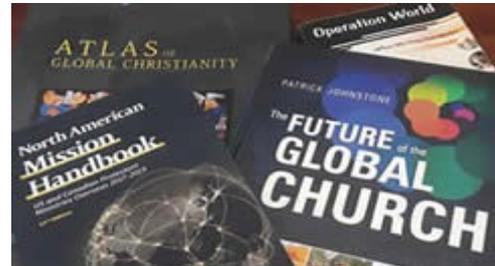


Counting Missionaries - by Chris Maynard

In July 2016 the first article in *Correct Me If I’m Wrong* was about a new online community called KSKI, *Knowledge Stewardship for Kingdom Impact*. I am pleased to report that it is still going and still moderated by Nelson Jennings, who wrote that initial article. Our second article in that issue was "Research on the World’s Missionaries and Mission Organisations" by Michael Jaffarian. Michael wrote: “Because of my prior work in mission research, people ask me how many missionaries there are in the world, and I can’t give a good answer.”

I was interested to see these two articles together, because recently a simple question on KSKI looking for statistics for missionaries deployed in SE Asia created a small explosion of replies. Clearly there is a lot of frustration among us that we don’t have good data in this area. The initial enquirer noted: “This question points out to me how much we are in the dark about missionary deployment around the world. This is more so the case now that missionary sending is from everywhere to everywhere, with different sending models and security concerns. This seems like it would be very important to have solid data for this deployment information. When serving in [a given middle-sized country], I was regularly asked for the number of missionaries in the country. We had a good idea for the expat workers, because we facilitated a network of Christian organizations and workers in the country. Still the margin of error was pretty large. This gives me great respect for our forerunners who over 100 years ago did a marvellous job of finding out this information, depending on letter writing, and published it in a series of statistical atlases.”

People pitched in with limited answers. Some sources referenced were: *Operation World* 2001 (the more recent version does not attempt to be comprehensive), *The Future of the Global Church*, *The Atlas of Global Christianity* (comprehensive, but includes sects and estimates rather than counts), *Korean Research Institute for Mission* (Korean missionaries only). Yet no one seemed happy about the overall situation.



Some on KSKI explored the many reasons why this information has become more difficult to obtain. Others suggested that we should change our approach to think differently about what God is doing today, or use more advanced sociological concepts, different research methods, or modern software tools. Michael, in his CMIW article, suggested that we need a series of national or regional mission handbooks. On KSKI, Molly Wall of Operation World wrote: “We’d love to explore development of a taxonomy and methodology for measuring mission activity today. One that we could then use to conduct another global survey in order to better get a sense of what’s happening, again on a country by country basis.” Anyone?

Write to us: info@globalCMIW.org

Write to Molly: info@operationworld.org

Join KSKI: <https://groups.google.com/forum/?hl=en#!forum/kski>

Temptations of the Mission Researcher - By Gene Daniels

As the world mission enterprise has become more and more shaped by the Anglo-American stream, mission research has grown in importance. Although it has always played some role, the first edition of *Operation World* in 1974 probably marked the beginning of a new era. Mission research has become like the wiring harness of a car, mostly invisible, yet connects everything from the ignition switch to the spark plugs to the tail lights. Everything we do in mission is connected by research, from the kind of recruits we accept to the languages we choose to translate into.

Despite this growing importance, mission researchers remain somewhat hidden to the Church because most do not understand how research fits into fulfilling the Great Commission. This unfortunate state of affairs creates subtle temptations which can impact mission research in various ways. For example, rather than discovering and reporting what actually is, we might be tempted to use our little understood craft to find what everyone agrees *should be*.

It is all too easy to emphasize church growth in a report, while neglecting evidence of a large “back door” in those same churches. Or we might “filter out” dissenting voices from a qualitative project for the sake of “unity.”

But mostly I think this manifests as a temptation to do, shall we say, less-than-rigorous research. Without the austere glare of academia breathing down our professional necks, it is easy to let things slide and produce work that is lacking in richness or depth of analysis. Then you add time pressures, lack of human resources, and funding constraints, and the temptation is almost irresistible. But the task to which we are called is too important to give in. We must push ourselves to go the extra mile, to carefully explore competing explanations and disconfirming evidence.

The reason rigor is so important in mission research is the same as it is in the secular world—it is where the greatest advances in the field are birthed. Lots of numbers and splashy infographics might generate more funding, but thoughtful analysis and counter-intuitive findings are the raw materials of gospel advance.

Not to say that we don't already try, but every mission researcher needs an occasional reminder of how vital it is to produce the very best research possible. Or to put it in more poetic form:

The Christian scholar should be as a fisherman,
Casting his nets wide and deep,
Bringing up an abundance from riches unseen,
Nourishing those who know not the ways of the sea.



Who's Who in Missions Information

Special Profile: Levi DeCarvalho, PhD; Research Coordinator, COMIBAM International

1. Please tell us about yourself and your family.

I am Brazilian by birth. After finishing my university studies, I joined Wycliffe and spent some time in Cameroon. Later I left WBT and started working among a South American ethnic group. When I realized I was making too many mistakes in my cross-cultural ministry, I went for a PhD at Fuller (Intercultural Studies, 1999). My purpose was to return to my field of ministry and die there — hopefully as a better missionary. However, the Lord has been leading me to serve others, especially my field colleagues and mission leaders everywhere.

2. What is your current ministry?

I teach at the Assemblies of God Seminary in Spain and coordinate the research area at COMIBAM International (<http://www.comibam.org>), among other things.



3. What are the contributions you have made to world missions that have brought you the greatest satisfaction?

I was invited to help in the COMIBAM mission conference, which was held in Granada, Spain (2006). Our team developed a three-phase research project (finalized in 2017) which sought to uncover the perspectives of Ibero-American field workers and senders as well as national leaders ('receptors') with a view to understanding the strengths and weaknesses of our movement. The idea is to make strategic decisions and adjustments based on actual field data, not on our impressions or feelings, however noble and well-intended they might be. Thus our sending leaders/structures can better mobilize, recruit, train, send and supervise our mission workers everywhere.

4. What dreams do you have for your next ten years of ministry?

I dream of joining forces with the global south in doing research so that we could compare notes and cooperate in God's mission.

5. Is there some way you'd be willing to help the CMIW community?

If I could I would promote dialogue between leaders and researchers from the global south in order to understand our diverse missionary efforts and devise ways in which we could help and learn from one another in our obedience to the Great Commission. If we felt the need to promote joint research projects, so much the better.

Information from the Word

Luke 16:10 'One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much.' Jesus's words here clearly apply directly to mission information work. Whether in counting missionaries, compiling ministry activities, or reporting conversion figures, the "very little" of detailed and accurate data – normally obtained only by painstaking diligence - must underlie the "much" of general figures disseminated to others. How might you be tempted to be "dishonest in a very little"? What habits do you practice to stay "faithful in a very little"?

Final Details:

- With the help of God this bulletin is now produced quarterly in English, Portuguese and Spanish
- The Editorial Team comprises Larry Kraft, Stephanie Kraft, Chris Maynard, Nelson Jennings, Rodrigo Tinoco & Duane Frasier.
- Please send any comments, suggestions or ideas to us at info@globalcmiw.org.
- Back issues can be found at: www.globalcmiw.org