Inside the IMF

An Ethnography of Documents, Technology and Örganisational Action

Richard H. R. Harper

Rank Xerox Research Centre Regent Street Cambridge



ACADEMIC PRESS

San Diego London Boston New York Sydney Tokyo Toronto

Table of Contents

3

Overview of the chapter	ix
1. Introduction Overview of the book 2. What is a document? Overview of the chapter Document technologies: new and old Towards a non-technical conception of documents Assessing documents in action Conclusion: a view of documents within the Fund 3. Designing ethnography Overview of the chapter	хi
Overview of the book	
2. What is a document? Overview of the chapter Document technologies: new and old Towards a non-technical conception of documents Assessing documents in action Conclusion: a view of documents within the Fund 3. Designing ethnography Overview of the chapter	1
Overview of the chapter	8
Overview of the chapter	13
Document technologies: new and old	14
Towards a non-technical conception of documents Assessing documents in action	15
Assessing documents in action	24
Conclusion: a view of documents within the Fund	41
Overview of the chapter	43
Overview of the chapter	49
	49
	51
Research into the social impact of computing	52
	54
	57
	59
	63
	67
	69
	70
U	72
	74
	77
	85
	88
4. A sketch of the Fund	91
	92
• · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	93
	94
	95
11400 11 27 10 27 00 1111111111111111111111	96
	98

	Phase 4: 1978–1985	100
	Phase 5: 1985 onwards	101
.*	The Fund's Articles	102
	The current structure of the Fund	105
	Conclusion	109
	•	
5.	The machinery of policy work	111
	Overview of the chapter	113
	The tentative schedule	114
	An introduction to policy work	118
	Judgement work	122
	The review process	124
	Talking texts	129
	Conclusion	130
6.	The use of information	137
J.	Overview of the chapter	138
	The Statistics Department	139
	Working routines	
	·	
	Comment	
	The use of documents	
	Conclusion	155
7.	Desk officers	159
	Overview of the chapter	
	The work of desk officers	162
	Practical contexts	164
	New technologies and desk officers	167
	Deepening the characterisation of work	
	Conclusion	172
8.	A mission to Arcadia	175
0.		
	Overview of the chapter	
	Attitudes towards mission work	
	Approaching Arcadia with understanding	
	A picture of doings: the Fund's view of Arcadia	183
	The specific concerns of the mission	
	The mission	
•	Day one: a vignette	
	Comment	
	Ordinary work	
	A vignette of collecting data: the fiscal economist's work	
	Meetings! More meetings!	
	Numbers as doings	200
	Sorting out the facts in the facts	202
	Discussing the facts amongst the facts: a vignette	206
	Sanctioning numbers	

_		-	_	
T'o	hia	Λŧ	ľ'n	itents

Table of Contents	vii
Building up a picture	211
A vignette of policy discussions	
Meeting with the Central Bank	215
Comment	
Meetings that count	223
Meetings that count	225
Conclusion	229
9. The use of a staff report	231
Overview of the chapter	232
The review process	234
The mechanics of the process	235
The draft staff report	235
The perspective from PDR	237
The perspective of chief reviewers	240
A digression: some remarks on Fund culture	
Responsibility for change	249
The last stages in the career of a staff report	251
Summings up	
Comment	256
Conclusion	258
10. Conclusion	261
Overview of the chapter	
Documenting practices and the Fund's organisational problematic	
The flow of work	
The document career	
Missions	
The post-mission process	
The end of the document career	
Conclusion	
References	289