

Message

from the IKMD Executive Manager

The MRC employees...

The MRC employees and collaborators are committed to building the MRC into a leading knowledge-based organisation. The world is changing into an information and knowledge economy, which creates an unprecedented opportunity for knowledge-based organisations to thrive and prosper economically. However, such prosperity cannot be taken for granted, and needs an efficient and effective knowledge management strategy and policy to reach our economic goals.

IKMD plays a vital role in the management of information, knowledge, and related infrastructure towards this economic goal. However, this Directorate does not produce information and knowledge per se. MRC researchers are the primary producers of information and knowledge, whereas IKMD uses its skills, expertise and infrastructure to manage information and knowledge assets. Therefore, a strong collaboration between information and knowledge producers and information and knowledge managers is critical. A clear policy on IKM that is based on sound knowledge needs to be developed to achieve this.

As part of the process in becoming players in the knowledge economy, we have identified informatics and knowledge management as a possibility that may give the MRC a competitive edge within the dynamic knowledge economy. It is often mentioned that science is critical for the future of South Africa. We should be looking at science closely to realise that the management of resources, such as data, information, and knowledge, is crucial to science in terms of innovation and product development.

The MRC recognises that innovation is not the same as research and development, but a facilitation of processes, products, and services to create jobs and wealth. Towards this end the MRC has responded to research grants and contracts with job creation. However, we are aware of the lack of sustainability of such jobs and believe that more stable research funds could lead to stable job opportunities.

It has become important that we manage our information and knowledge efficiently and effectively to protect our intellectual assets. There are challenges in the business of managing data, information, knowledge, and infrastructure in any organisation, and the MRC is not isolated from these challenges. We need to develop a clear guideline on issues surrounding data, information, knowledge, and IT infrastructure around management. Questions have been raised not only within the MRC but also in other departments as to who owns data, information and knowledge in research organisations. What are the legal aspects of IKM? What are the legal implications of using IT infrastructure including e-mail messaging? Who has information power? Who controls what?

We need to face these questions, and raise, discuss, and debate them on common grounds of understanding for all MRC staff and collaborators. To address these questions effectively will require collective thinking and bargaining to synchronise them throughout the MRC. With this in mind, we hope to lay a foundation or platform from which we can design an effective IKM policy for the MRC. Therefore, we invited various speakers to address specific topics at the Open Day, whereby we aim to improve collaboration across units and divisions regarding IKM. We further endeavour to create conducive environments towards a holistic approach to IKM policy development, and arrive at a common understanding of ways in which we can make the MRC an effective and leading knowledge-based organisation.

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