

**The MIT D-memos
and
System Dynamics Newsletters
by
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The MIT D-memos in system dynamics have a history that started in the 1940s at the MIT Digital Computer Laboratory. At that time I had a large staff of engineers designing and building Whirlwind, the first digital computer at MIT. To coordinate the group, I had every technical note serial numbered, distributed to all members for coordination of activity, and filed for future reference and as a record of progress. That practice was re-established for activities in system dynamics starting with D-0 in November 1956. That first D-memo was my note to the faculty research seminar on “Dynamic Models of Economic Systems and Industrial Organizations,” which evolved into the beginning of system dynamics. That original memo was published in the Winter 2003 (Volume 19, Number 4) issue of the System Dynamics Review. D-5 in 1957 described how the memos would be formatted, distributed, and filed. In the 1990s the MIT group had begun to fragment and the D-memo procedure faltered as memoranda and working papers were handled in various ways. The last D-memo on the DVD disk is my D-4886-1 of July 21, 2003, “Economic Theory for the New Millennium” presented at the 2003 International System Dynamics Conference. As the D-memo era came to a close, the D-memos were scanned and have been preserved in the DVD disk that is available from the System Dynamics Society.

The System Dynamics Newsletter, which was first called the Industrial Dynamics Newsletter, appears to have started before 1968 as inferred from reference to it in D-1169 of October 1968. The asserted purpose of the Newsletter was:

1. to provide information about a wide range of investigations, teaching activities, and applications within the emerging system dynamics profession,

2. to facilitate and stimulate communication among system dynamics practitioners, and
3. to furnish an updated bibliography of books, articles, and theses which deal with topics in system dynamics.

In 1973 the Newsletter had 79 pages, by 1985 it had grown to 196 pages. The 1985 Newsletter contained sections on system dynamics at MIT, system dynamics teaching at 31 other institutions, system dynamics research at 43 other institutions, a list of 67 MIT theses, and 105 pages of system dynamics bibliography.

The Newsletter was discontinued when the System Dynamics Review and other publications made it unnecessary.