

DATAD WORKSHOP JUNE 11-12, 2002

VENUE: ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

REPORT OF THE CAMEROON TEAM

INTRODUCTION

It is a great honour and pleasure for our delegation to participate in this first workshop that brings together officials and professionals working on the DATAD Project in Africa.

Before sharing our experiences with you, I would like to pay homage to the AAU for initiating this project. In effect, the management of bibliographic data entries concerning theses and dissertations in most of our African universities had hitherto been done manually and their dissemination both nationally and internationally was practically impossible. The main objectives of the DATAD project are, inter alia:

- To create within African Universities optimum and ideal conditions for the collection, management and dissemination of theses and dissertations through electronic means;
- To enable and facilitate easy access to African research results and findings from within and beyond the continent;

Another important advantage of this project is the possibility of engraving CD_ROMS, a solid magnetic medium of great magnitude that is easily transportable. This would eventually facilitate data exchanges between smaller libraries provided they have the adequate computer software.

Let me once again thank the AAU for the honour bestowed on our University by making it a DATAD center and training our librarians on the use and formatting of DATAD software.

I - THE START OF THE DATAD PROJECT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF YAOUNDE I

This project was officially launched at the Main Library of the University of Yaounde I (UYI) on 25th February 2002 through the official handing over of a consignment of computer equipment and the launching of a training of trainers workshop from the 25th to 27th February 2002. The 12 participants were all librarians from the University's Central Library and those of the various Schools and Faculties of the University of Yaounde I College of Education (ENS), Higher School of Engineering (ENSP), and the Faculty of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences (FMBS). The computers offered by the AAU served as training material for our participants.

Their training focused on the following issues:

- the conception and management of bibliographical data entries on Procite 5;
- creating websites and consulting of databases with Web Poster;
- the scanning of documents and the engraving of CD-ROMS.

Although for both participants and trainers the time allocated for the workshop was considered very short, the work done by the trainers was greatly appreciated. The trainers were:

- Mrs, Mary MATERU-BEHITSA, Senior Programme Administrator
- Mr. Benjamin A. ESHUN
- Mrs. Annick AGBOTAME

We would like to sincerely thank them for a job well done.

II – APPLICATION OF THE PROJECT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF YAOUNDE I

The equipment offered to the University library within the framework of this project has been installed in an appropriately adapted and air-conditioned room. Three (3) of the five (5) personnel at the University's Central Library trained during the workshop are currently working on the DATAD Project. They work in the unit in charge of treating unpublished documents.

The other participants from the College of Education (ENS), the National Higher School of Engineering (ENSP) and from the Faculty of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences (FMBS) will be working from their various sites and will forward their data on diskettes pending the installation of an electronic networking system at the University.

The Faculty of Medicine and the School of Engineering are equipped with the appropriate computer facilities required for such tasks. The College of Education is also being equipped with such material. Once we are fully equipped and properly master the appropriate software, we will bring the librarians of the three faculties and schools to share their experiences and to effectively launch the project in their Schools/Faculties. Processing Master's theses and dissertations is of utmost importance to our University. Even though the AAU thinks that this should not be a priority now, we are including them and may eventually elect to forward these references.

III – STATE OF COLLECTION OF DATABASES

Our main library currently records 3650 theses and Master's dissertations that have been indexed while others are still being processed. All of these reference documents can be found in our manual catalogue. In the past two years, we have been introducing them to the database under the CDS ISIS software. Prior to the launching of the DATAD Project, our database comprised of some 1003 references of theses and Master's dissertations. The major difficulty we are currently facing is in the conversion of data to the present DATAD format and integrating it in the PROCITE 5 databases. We however, had some clues on how to do this during the workshop. This nonetheless remains a very difficult task that would warrant even a very qualified

person to work single handedly for several weeks. Given that we must soon come to the end of the first phase, I would once again wish to request technical assistance from the AAU so that we can better understand the techniques involved in the conversion of data.

At the moment, the processing of Master's dissertations is done by three librarians who are degree holders and have post graduate certificates/diplomas. In spite of the difficulties that we will be mentioning eventually, our DATAD database currently holds some 110 references, which we have engraved in CD-ROM and brought here. Our rhythm of work is still too slow. This is partially due to the fact that two (2) of those who participated at the training are barely mastering computer applications and software. At the end of the training workshop in February, we thought it wise to retrain our personnel on basic applications. I remain very confident that with time, our rhythm of work will improve.

IV – PROBLEMS LINKED TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF DATAD DATABASE

Many problems have cropped up in the development of the DATAD database at the main library of the University of Yaounde I.

1. The conversion of past data to the current project format

This problem has already been raised. This includes the bibliographical referencing format used by the University Central Library, which is the UNIMARK format under the CDS ISIS. Their big volume requires a strategic plan of conversion. I wish that the experts at this workshop indicated to us a means by which this could be done. A diskette containing an abstract of the CDS ISIS base is attached.

2. The non recognition of the mathematical signs by the OCR (Optic Character Recognition device)

This problem is directly linked to the OCR software. It concerns mostly scientific theses and dissertations. Certain signs are not recognized by the OCR as such, it renders scanning and insertion very fastidious. Is there any OCR with a better output?

3. The non availability of abstracts and summaries in masters dissertations

This poses an institutional problem which is linked to a lack of rigorous rules governing the presentation of research findings at the University of Yaounde I. Recommendations have been forwarded to the university authorities. We are forced to provide summaries for such dissertations and quite often a lot of time is wasted on this kind of work. Of the one hundred references presented in the DATAD bases, about 15% had no summaries.

This explains why we have as of now kept aside the processing of documents that have no summaries. These would eventually be handed over to competent personnel to produce them.

4. Gender

This is a recent problem that has just been identified and must be given due attention. On the cover page of theses and dissertations there is usually no indication of an

author's gender or title. Beside a few works that present characteristic of female Christian names, it is difficult to determine an author's gender.

A situation in which an author writes in French, it is possible to refer to certain expressions in the forewords, the dedication and especially in the agreements of adjectives and attributes. But in English, it is rather difficult.

I have made a run over of the problems facing us at the moment and I hope to leave here with some clues and ideas, which will enable us to forge ahead with this project in our institution.

Conclusion

To round up, let me once again thank the AAU for organizing this workshop, which will permit experts to exchange views and to share their findings and experiences. I wish that such meetings are held more regularly and that the overseeing project managers pay us regular visits.

We so far have not found ourselves lacking in terms of material needs in the three months following the initiation of this project. Our institution's head, in this case the Rector of the University of Yaounde I is particularly interested in the development of this project and has promised us his full support. Various measures would certainly be taken especially in the areas of copyright policy, on editorial rules and on the design of theses and dissertations.

Thank you for your kind attention.