

**DATAD COUNTRY REPORT:  
ZIMBABWE**

**PAPER PRESENTED AT THE**

**DATAD WORKSHOP ADDIS ABABA  
11-12 JUNE 2002**

*Theme: Improving Management and Access to African Scholarly Work*

## INTRODUCTION

The idea of a database of theses and dissertations submitted in African Universities was introduced to the University of Zimbabwe in 2000. Having expressed willingness to participate, the institution, in particular the UZ Library hosted, an AAU representative who was assigned to carry out a feasibility study. Having established that the project was feasible, plans were put in place. By September 2001 equipment, comprising two PCs, one scanner and one printer had been delivered. November saw preparations for the commencement of the project. A “Working Team” was formed in the Library. Its composition is as follows:-

C. Rioga - Coordinator (Special Collections Department)  
T. Mugwisi - Alternate Coordinator (Cataloguing Department)  
E. Mujera – Member (Commercial Law Library)  
G Masvaure – Member (UZ Library ICT Department)  
M. Mutanga – Member (Special Collections Department)  
E. Nyambi – Member (Government Publications Department)

The Librarian and Deputy Librarian are overseers.

November witnessed the arrival of two representatives from AAU. The main purpose of the visit was to install the software to be used, that is Procite and Omni Page, and to train those in the team. During the training sessions, it was discovered that the scanner was defective. The ICT Department temporarily provided a scanner for the duration of the training. The faulty scanner has been replaced by another from the suppliers.

Soon after departure of the AAU/DATAD officials, a series of meetings to map the way forward were held by the “Working Team”. A number of issues emerged from the meetings of special note were policy issues on:-

- Copyright
- Theses formats
- Theses submission process

The need for the formulation of a DATAD Management Team was also noted. The issues were all presented to the UZ Librarian who acted quickly on them. The DATAD Management Team has already been constituted and had its first meeting in February 2002.

It was decided to train other members of staff especially the Faculty Librarians. Two sessions were conducted one in December 2001 and another in February 2002. A training session was also conducted for the two students hired, on a part time basis, to work on the project. By the end of February, the project was well coordinated and going on smoothly. To ensure the smooth implementation, various members in the working team were assigned responsibilities. These were as follows:-

- Special Collections staff – Thesis Collection organization and movement and quality control.
- Cataloguing Department (Mr Mugwisi together with Mr Mujera) – quality control

- Library ICT Department – scanning of abstracts, database merging/copying, CD burning and technical issues.
- Students – abstract scanning, editing and data entry.

Despite the smooth implementation, various factors affected the project operations. Staffing issues impacted negatively on some aspects of the activities, for example quality control was lagging behind. Over all staff members continued to divide their time between normal duties and the project.

## **1. EXTENT OF WORK TO BE INDEXED**

Currently the Thesis Collection holdings is approximately 2500. The figure will rise as newly submitted theses continue to be deposited in the Library.

## **2. TOTAL NUMBER OF RECORDS ALREADY INDEXED**

As at 30<sup>th</sup> May 2002, 550 records had been indexed. These were saved in a database we named uzDatadfeb2002. A second database opened in May has been named uzDatadmay2002. The second database now has 145 records. The records of the second database have not been included on the CD because there is still quality checking to be done.

## **3. DATAD PROJECT INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT**

In cognizance of the importance of the DATAD Project, the Institution (i.e. University of Zimbabwe) through the UZ Library, has and still is contributing variously to the successful implementation of the Project. The following are categories where support is being given:-

### **3.1 Support staff – Professionals**

- 3.1.1. Qualified professional librarians working in the Library are carrying out this project over and above their normal duties. The professionals oversee the project implementation, and quality control. The staff also review progress and constraints. They also keep in touch with the Project Coordinators.

### **3.1.2. Support staff – paraprofessionals**

The staff, mostly in the Special Collections Department are currently carrying out the indexing, classification and quality control for the Project. This is done over and above their normal duties.

### **3.1.3. Students**

The Institution permitted the employment of students to work on the Project on a part time basis. The Institution is paying the students on an

hourly rate. Since February 2002, two computer studies students have been working on the project.

#### **3.1.4. IT Staff**

The Library ICT Department has been and still is assisting technically. This includes software maintenance, equipment maintenance and equipment repair.

### **3.2. Space and Facilities**

#### **3.2.1. Office space**

The Library has provided a working area for the Project in the Special Collections Department. This area was chosen simply because that is where the Thesis Collection is housed, and also the fact that the Coordinator at UZ of the DATAD project is the Head of that department. The UZ ICT Department has also provided a secure place in their department for the PC currently being used as a server for the DATAD database.

#### **3.2.2. Furniture**

The Library has provided furniture, that is, desks, chairs, trolleys etc.

#### **3.2.3. Network connectivity/Web access**

The Library ICT Department together with the UZ Computer Centre have made network connectivity possible. Once records have been captured, they are accessible Campus-wide via the Intranet address <http://10.12.176/risweb.cgi>. A link to the database has also been incorporated in the Library catalogue searches (OPAC) web page giving library patrons a one-stop search facility.

### **3.3 Financial Provision**

#### **3.3.1 Salaries and Wages**

The Institution, by allowing Library staff on the UZ payroll to work on this project, has indirectly contributed financially through payment of salaries and wages for both and especially the part-time student assistants.

3.3.2 The Institution through the Library ICT Department and Computer Centre are responsible, financially as well as technically for the maintenance of equipment. Included in this category are the spares.

#### 4 PROPOSALS/SUGGESTIONS TO ENHANCE IMPLEMENTATION

The idea of a mailing list had been discussed and fortunately this has already been put in place.

Another idea which might be prudent to consider is the production of a DATAD Newsletter. This could either be in electronic Format and/or hard copy. It would be valuable years later to have something to refer to.

#### 5 SIMILAR/RELATED ACTIVITIES

There have been similar or related activities in the University of Zimbabwe. Of special note are the following:-

- a) DZIDZO Dissertations Abstracts Zimbabwe. This database was compiled by the Library Chief Cataloguer. The compilation was completed in 1997. The aim of the publication was primarily to serve as a tool to inform on research being done in the various UZ departments. The database however does not cover all theses/dissertations submitted to the University. Data was captured for the following fields – author, title, Geographic descriptor, qualification, university/department, subject keywords and abstracts. Long abstracts were truncated and this is noted in the abstract field.

There have been no up dates of the database.

- 5(b) A second project along the same lines was undertaken by a Research Fellow in the Department of African Languages. Two volumes were produced. Paper copies were made available by the compiler. The database is in the form of a series of volumes, on theses and research in literature and language. To date two volumes have been produced. The titles are:-

MAHLAULE, James W. (comp)

The cultural unity of Zimbabwean literatures and languages with special emphasis on Shona and Ndebele oral and written literatures. (Preliminary Report): list of dissertations, theses and research in literature and language 1970-1998. Volume 1.

MAHLAULE, James W. (comp.)

The cultural unity of Zimbabwean literatures and languages with special emphasis on Shona and Ndebele oral and written literatures: abstracts of dissertations and theses in literature 1970-1998. volume 2.

In the two databases, both undergraduate and graduate works are included. The difference between the two volumes is that in volume 1 there are no abstracts and these are captured in volume 2. From an examination of this database one can make the following observation, it is a good starting point but could serve researchers better had a key word field or subject field been included.

Another related activity was carried out by the UZ Faculty of Agriculture. This culminated in the publication of the under mentioned book:-

UNIVERSITY OF ZIMBABWE. Faculty of Agriculture  
Faculty of Agriculture research abstracts 1995-1999. (2000).

In this database, abstracts are included but there are no keywords and/or subjects, all that has been captured is author, title, supervisor and abstract only. Another smaller project was carried out in the Map Library. Two databases of both undergraduate and graduate dissertations and theses were initiated by the assistant librarian in charge of the Map Library. The software CDS-ISIS is used.

## **6 CHALLENGES FACED**

The DATAD project implementation has unearthed some anomalies in the whole process of thesis writing and submission policies among others. These issues are being met head-on and implementable solutions being sought.

### **6.3 Policy issues**

#### **6.3.2 Copyright**

There is no clearly documented set policy on the copyright issue. This is why for the time being, the copyright field has been left blank. The Working Team presented the issue to the Librarian and this was discussed in the Management Team meeting. UZ Administration was then tasked to look into this issue. A law firm has been consulted on this issue. What the Working Team now requires is a clear statement on ownership which in future is being proposed to appear in each thesis and/or dissertation submitted at the UZ. It is hoped the inclusion of the statement will be made mandatory.

### **6.4 Theses Formats**

6.4.2 During the initial stages of data capturing, it was discovered that the theses were presented in different formats. The most jarring anomaly was the absences of abstracts in some of the theses. The working Team decided, for the present, to set these aside. Suggestions were presented on how to deal with this challenge. The Working Team agreed on the following options:-

- i) To approach the supervisors and ask their assistance in providing brief abstracts
- ii) where possible approach the authors and request them to provide them. (This however, presents problems where the authors are not reachable.
- iii) In case, the above options fail to produce results, the Working Team together with other Faculty Librarians to write brief abstracts.

These options were also discussed in the Management Team Meeting.

6.4.3 In some theses there were long introductions and no abstracts.

## **6.5 Submission Policy**

The University of Zimbabwe does not seem to have clearly stated policy on submission. If it does exist, it is not being adhered to uniformly campus wide. The Working Team therefore is faced with this challenge of getting departments to submit the required number of copies following set submission channels. The Team is also lobbying for the inclusion, in the requirements, submission of a soft copy together with the hard copy.

The Library is now faced with many challenges as ideas to improve a number of issues come up. Being the focal point, the Library can become a one-stop information center. The idea of a “clearing house” was presented.

The greatest challenge is for UZ Librarians to face the challenges head on and come up with ideas of viable projects.

*Compiled by*

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