

DATAD PROJECT REPORT

Addis Ababa University

April 24, 2003

Background

Database of African Theses and Dissertation (DATAD) is a project initiated and materialized by Association of African Universities (AsAU) and the Project for Information Access and Connectivity (PIAC) with a major objective of indexing, abstracting, and distributing theses and dissertations completed in African universities. The project was launched at the beginning of March 2002 at the Research and Graduate Programmes Office of Addis Ababa University (AAU) using the resources donated by Association of African Universities.

Using this opportunity, AAU has developed a database for its collection of theses and dissertations that have been produced by students since the beginning of postgraduate programme at the University. This report tries to reveal the current status of DATAD at AAU.

Theses and Dissertations Available at AAU

Excluding the number of theses and dissertations of the academic year 2001/2002, there were about 2127 theses and dissertations, found in English and Amharic Languages.

The Database

The actual number of records in the AAU theses and dissertations database is 2092. The activities involved several steps. Data entry, editing, and the making of the database trouble-free for retrieval are some of the major activities accomplished during the creation of the database.

Since mid April 2003, the project has been transferred to the Computer and Information Retrieval Centre of the Addis Ababa University Library System, which was found to be the appropriate unit to accomplish this task successfully. The Centre has started to accomplish this responsibility by physically moving the hardcopy of the theses and dissertations from its former location to the Main Library where a separate room was made available.

After exploring the nature of the database and keep informed with the extent of accomplishments, the Centre has formulated a short and long term plans that are important to make the database easily accessible to users through different media. As part of its short term plan, the Centre has planned to accomplish the following major activities.

1. Updating some of the fields available in the database

This activity has been started by updating some of the fields. Accordingly, field 37 (Availability) has been replaced by the following address for all 2092 records in the database.

*Computer & Information Retrieval Centre
Addis Ababa University Libraries
Addis Ababa University
P.O. Box 1176, Addis Ababa
ETHIOPIA*

*Tel: 00251-1-553980, Fax: 00251-1-560442
E-mail: infolib@lib.aau.edu.et*

All the 2092 records have also been given the following location\URL within the main website of the Addis Ababa University Library System.

http://www.aau.edu.et/libraries/electronic_sources/thesis&dissertation.htm

2. Editing the record entries

After reviewing the database records, it has become important to make some editing on the record entries; and hence, editing of fields like Title, Call number, Keyword, etc. has already been underway.

3. Indexing

It is observed from the database records that the keywords prepared are taken directly from the title field and not in-context. Hence, it is planned to prepare keywords based on subject analysis and by using standard indexing tools.

4. Call Numbers

It is also planned to provide call numbers for the theses and dissertations using one of the available classification schemes or a customized one.

Archival Policy for Theses and Dissertations

The Research and Graduate Programmes has put forth a new requirement for the submission of theses and dissertations since this academic year. According, every graduate student shall submit

a softcopy of his/her thesis or dissertation, besides the seven copies of printed theses/dissertations. The hard copies will also be distributed to various units/sections of AAU including the various libraries (Main, IES, Faculty-based libraries). The departments, advisors and the graduate students also keep copies of the theses.

Copyright Policy

A committee, which consists individuals from appropriate units of the University has already been established to work on the formulation of institutional copyright policy. This committee has assessing the experiences of different academic institutions and discussing on how to integrate the university's copyright policy with the major national laws. The Office of Research and Graduate Programs is working on the TOR of the committee

The Impacts of DATAD to the University

The impact of the DATAD initiative has been felt by the University and consequently resulted in the following new developments and initiatives.

1. It enabled the University to organize and manage its own collections of theses and dissertations
2. It brought immediate need for the formulation of institutional copyright policy pertaining to the intellectual ownership of theses and dissertations.
3. It has brought the necessity of serious considerations on the archival policy of AAU that can essentially be associated with the current trends of transformation to digital era.
4. It initiated the University to create a network with other African Universities.

Needs for Full Text Request and Response

There are several things that are important to adequately request and respond for requests of full texts of the theses and dissertations. Some of the things required to start full text document delivery service are:

- ?? Clear copyright policy
- ?? Hardware and software required to digitize as well as for communication and transfer of data
- ?? Personnel to handle the service
- ?? Administrative costs

General Evaluation

The objective: the objective of this project has been responsive to the timely and crucial needs. Besides increasing international visibility of African works, it helps to recognize the intellectual works of African students as well as creating a vital network between African universities.

The Activities: most of the planned and accomplished activities of this project were well structured and fundamental to achieve the objectives of the project successfully.

Management: the management of this project is working pleasingly to facilitate the successful completion of the project activities. However, it should work further towards maintaining common standards in some fields of the database like keywords that are essential for the purposes of retrieval efficiency.

Workshops: the workshops held so far from the beginning of this project were highly valuable and have helped to share the experiences of different institutions on the various activities of the project. These workshops were necessary to discuss the issues and challenges met as well as collectively look into the next phase.

Reporting: the present reporting methodology is very appropriate. However, it requires some changes in the reporting time and frequency. We believe, it would help for better follow-up and improvement if the reporting frequency be once in four months or so.

The Equipment: the equipments provided by the Association of African Universities are adequate for the particular purpose that it was intended in the first phase. The digitization process in case of full text delivery service will, however, require heavy-duty scanners, digital camera, high storage server machines, etc...

The Software: the software available to AAU under the DATAD project was very essential for the project. Again, the software now in use for the project may not be enough when we come to digitization and full text document delivery service.

Training: the training provided for the project staff were very useful and have a significant contribution on the success of the project. However, it should be continuous especially when new software and equipments are made available as well as when new phase of the project commence.

Communication: there has been some communication gap between the project office and AAU that may have placed a some impact on the pace of the project activities.

IT Support (within the institution): AAU has got the necessary network infrastructure to support this project output. Technical support would not also be a problem since the project has been moved to the Computer and Information Retrieval Centre of the Library, which is relatively in a better position with regard to ICT expertise.

Other Comments

Here in Addis Ababa University everybody is keen about the developments of this kind of local contents. A university wide network, which was launched in the academic year 2001/2002, is readily available for the uploading of the database of abstracts as well as full text theses and dissertations of the university. The library is presently in a position to start document delivery services for the full texts of these theses and dissertation with other equivalent African universities.

The project office of Addis Ababa University will start the digitization and document delivery service as soon as the database is ready for launching. The unsurpassed assistance and collaboration of DATAD is crucial for AAU's initiative to sustain the project and move to the next phase.