

**Association of African Universities**

**Database of African Theses and Dissertations  
DATAD**

**DATAD Workshop, April 20-30, 2003  
University of Ghana**

**COORDINATOR'S REPORT**

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**1. Introduction**

This report provides a summary of activities during the three-year pilot phase of the project. It highlights the general and specific objectives, achievements, challenges and the lessons learnt.

**2. The long term objectives of the DATAD program are to:**

- ?? work with participating institutions to build a regional database of theses and dissertations
- ?? contribute towards the creation of environment conducive for research and publication in African universities and the region as a whole
- ?? create capacity in African universities for the collection, management and dissemination of theses and dissertations electronically
- ?? provide visibility and improve accessibility to the work of African scholars both within and outside of the continent
- ?? facilitate the development of relevant copyright procedures and regulations which will promote the protection of the intellectual property rights of African University researchers and scholars
- ?? provide support for AAU programs which aim at capacity building in the area of research, promotion of cooperation among member universities and networking of institutions.

**3. The specific objectives are to provide leadership and coordination for the accomplishment of the following tasks:**

- ?? Capacity building at institutional level for the establishment of infrastructure and management structures that support DATAD policies, and activities.
- ?? Establishment, maintain and host the DATAD database
- ?? Providing Internet access to the online database and alternative modes for the dissemination of the database.

## **4. Accomplishments**

### **4.1 Set up of DATAD management structures**

AAU set up a DATAD Advisory Committee (ACM) with eight members. Scheduled to meet once every year, the committee provides professional, technical and expert advice on the implementation of the project. AAU worked with participating institutions for the establishment of DATAD management teams, identification of implementing units within institutions and the appointment of DATAD coordinators.

### **4.2 Procurement and delivery of requisite equipment for the project to all sites**

Hardware: 2 computers with CD writer, scanner, printer

Software: Procite, Reference Web Poster, OmniPage Pro, Word Processor

### **4.3 Training of trainers**

The DATAD staff at AAU were trained to become trainers

### **4.4 Site training**

Training was done to all core staff at each site.

### **4.5 Workshops and ACM Meetings**

Two workshops were organized (including this one) and three meetings of the advisory committee (including this one) were held. The first workshop was hosted by Addis Ababa University and attended by two members from each institution (including all coordinators). The DATAD Advisory Committee members were invited to attend the workshop so as to get first hand information on project activities at grass-root. This proved to be a very useful strategy. Further, the workshop provided opportunity for sharing experiences and one day was dedicated to enhancing skills for using the project facilities. The events provided very important input to the project implementation process. The workshop report is available at <http://www/aau/org/datad/reports>

### **4.6 DATAD Methodology Manual**

The DATAD Methodology Manual specifies the minimum requirements in terms of infrastructure, hardware, software and administrative support; coordination, DATAD Record Templates, data entry and subject indexing and include other relevant appendices. A draft was reviewed during the Addis workshop. A copy can be accessed at <http://www/aau.org/datad/reports>

### **4.7 Data entry at sites**

11 institutions were invited. Of these ten responded and are ALL active. Nine are attending this workshop. Training for data entry was done at each site. The plan was to accomplish ***full retrospective data entry for all institutions*** so as to have a complete coverage of collections for the institutions involved in the pilot. Besides saving to have exhaustive coverage, the totality would have formed a sufficient mass of records to have on a CD-ROM. However, there were many problems with older theses with long or no abstracts, and typewritten works, which could not

be scanned. This slowed the process. However, about 80% of the sites have achieved between 60 and 95% coverage. This is a great achievement and we all commend the tireless efforts by coordinators, their teams, and university administration for the support.

#### **4.8 Development of DATAD server and Homepage (<http://www.aau.org/datad>)**

The AAU is a trustee of the data in the DATAD database, and not the owner, has to ensure establishment of a technically sound basis for a secure system or the Internet server. The current software selection strategy did take this into consideration, but for long term DATAD has still to explore for higher security UNICODE software for DATAD migration. The main database uses the SQL database management software, and the structure and search facility was developed at AAU. The DATAD website permits online searching over the Internet. The DATAD Homepage is <http://www/aau.org/datad>

#### **5. Rescheduled activities**

Project funding was limited. AAU was able to solicit about 60% of the total budget. Due to this, the following planned activities, have been deferred to the next phase:

- ?? Production of the Database on CD-ROM
- ?? Marketing and Publicity

**6.** Though modest, the project had some **impact on participating institutions, and** the following are worth mentioning:

**6.1 Institutional policies and practices:** The establishment of management teams made up of university management and decision makers, librarians and IT professionals has facilitated discussions about pertinent institutional policies and practices. Issues being addressed include copyright, anomalies in thesis submission formats across faculties and departments, public access policies and practices for theses and dissertations, and the desirability/feasibility for electronic submissions.

**6.2 Capacity building at the participating institutions:** Besides provision of hardware and software, record formats and data entry guides for eleven institutions that have running DATAD sites, DATAD training entails multi-faceted skills development. Project policy has been to train university staff rather than hired data entry clerks to ensure continuity.

**6.3 Networking and team spirit:** Through the DATAD workshops, advisory committee meetings, and the DATAD *LISTSERV*, participants in the project are able to share experiences and pool resources to overcome impending challenges. For example, Eduardo Mondlane University needed additional training when a key person in the project left the university. Two people were able to undertake five days training at the university of Dar es Salaam at a rate far cheaper than sending a trainer from AAU. While DATAD provided tickets, UEM provided per-diem and UDSM offered free training.

## **7. Challenges, experiences and lessons**

The three-year pilot project has been invaluable in building up a strong feeling of commitment among participating institutions. It has also provided AAU with a wealth of experience. Some of these experiences, lessons and challenges are provide useful input as we plan for the next phase

- 7.1 Institutions' contribution towards DATAD:** All participating institutions have shown high interest and commitment to the project. This has been demonstrated by the contributions they have made and continue to make in various ways: intellectual input, organization and management, working rooms and furniture, staff time, additional computers and equipment, and financial outlays. Some examples are: University of Zimbabwe paid students to assist with data entry part time. At Addis Ababa University, staff worked over weekends to speed up data entry. The have contributed for the third participant attending this workshop. At the university of Dar es Salaam, additional computers were given to DATAD to permit more staff to work on the project simultaneously. Yaoundé I university is committed to assist by providing additional financial support for the full data entry beyond what is provided within the project. Eduardo Mondlane provided per diem and other costs for two people to undertake DATAD training at the University of Dar es Salaam. They also contributed to the third person attending this workshop.
- 7.2 Institutions' interest in streamlining policies and practices for submission of postgraduate theses and dissertations:** This includes standardizing the length of abstracts, requiring students to provide keywords for their work, and requiring them to submit an electronic copy of the citation information required for the DATAD database so as to speed up database updating.
- 7.3 Training needs:** Institutional project-related training needs are high and require more time than initially anticipated. We underestimated the amount of technical support and training each institution would need, thus over-stretching AAU capacity. There will be two days of training this week. This has been planned to enhance the skills for the efficient implementation of DATAD activities. The training will be on Procite (data entry), Reference Web Poster (posting the database on the local area network) and Omnipage Pro (scanning text and image files).
- 7.4 Implementation of the DATAD pilot project has been more complicated than thought.** In addition to the technical support and training needs referred to above, it was found that faculties and departments within the universities themselves had inconsistent policies about thesis formats. Not every thesis has an abstract, which is a problem because DATAD records are supposed to include complete abstracts, no matter the length. Some of the libraries realized that their thesis collections are not complete, even though university regulations mandate that one copy of every thesis be deposited in the university library. In this regard, DATAD has already had a positive effect. At the University of Dar es Salaam for example, since putting its catalogue, including thesis citations, online, users can easily search for theses, with the result that many more theses are being deposited in the library and faculty are interested in finding out if their work is online.

**7.5. Lack of copyright and public access** policies has been one of DATAD's biggest challenges. Current access practices address local needs and are inadequate for the wider audience the database is intended to reach. Although each institution is committed to having a written copyright statement included in its records, there is need for a more systematic approach to copyright and public access policies.

**7.6** Implementation of the DATAD project started in Feb 2000, in anticipation of full funding. However, as the project progressed, we were faced with the hard reality that we had to work with only 60% of the original budget. The challenge was to accomplish all critical tasks so as to meet the basic objectives. Unless DATAD was able to produce results it would be even harder to attract support for its expansion.

**7.7** Frequent change of coordination at institutional level. Within the three years, at least 60% of the coordinators changed between one and three times. This has caused delays and inconsistency as in some cases there was no hand-over. This calls for the developing a mechanism for coordination continuity.

## **8. The Next Phase**

In the past ten months, efforts have been geared towards planning for the future of the project. A draft proposal (Appended) was presented to potential donors. Many have expressed interest and are likely to assist DATAD to achieve its aims. The feedback indicates appreciation for the achievements made by DATAD in the pilot phase and impressed by the accomplished work. However there was concern about DATAD's rate of expansion, the time and money that would be required to take DATAD to scale using the current mode of operation, and the ability of DATAD to be sustained once donor support eventually ceased.

AAU shares these concerns. For DATAD to succeed and to be a permanent resource for the continent, the long-term approach should address a larger scale and longer-term activities that will be based on a well-articulated business plan. The approach may be a transitional period during which to commission a rigorous business plan that would identify an appropriate expansion model and institutional arrangements that would enhance DATAD's prospects for sustainability. In addition, to maintain the momentum so far achieved, the transitional period activities will also include a few components from the previous phase. A second consideration may be to ask any new universities/institution to contribute part of the cost of implementing DATAD, such as some of the hardware and staff time. Upon completion of a business plan that effectively addresses scale and sustainability, a longer-term proposal will be submitted.

## **9. DATAD Activities in the next three months: June-August 2003**

?? Conclusion of ongoing activities: Site visit and Training for Kenyatta University and follow up with Ain Shams University

?? Preparation of Final report

?? Revision of Proposal for The Next Phase and Submission to donors

## **10. CONCLUDING remarks**

The DATAD strategies and activities are based on institutional commitment towards:

?? Capacity building

?? Sustainability

?? Networking and Team spirit

?? Establishment of a conducive environment for information sharing

Lets continue to cherish these values.