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DATAD PROJECT: REPORT OF ACTIVITIES OF THE CAMEROONIAN TEAM
DATAD 2nd WORKSHOP ORGANISED FROM 29TH TO
30TH APRIL 2003 IN ACCRA, GHANA

It is a great pleasure for our delegation to be part of this second workshop, which follows the workshop held in Addis Ababa in June 2002, and is devoted to putting the DATAD database on-line.

We would once again want to pay tribute to the AAU for its numerous initiatives geared towards reforming:

- The management of bibliographical data on theses and dissertations undertaken in African Universities;
- The dissemination of such data at both national and international levels.

Our report is based on the major objectives pursued by the DATAD project, namely:

- To create acceptable conditions for the collection, management and dissemination of theses and dissertations by electronic means in African Universities;
- To ensure the availability of and easy access to African research works within and outside the continent.

TAKE – OFF OF THE DATAD PROJECT
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF YAOUNDE 1

The DATAD project took – off at the University of Yaoundé 1 (Central University Library) on 25th February 2002 with the donation of computers followed by a training workshop for trainers (25th to 27th February 2002). The training session brought together a dozen seminarians and librarians from all departments in the university. The equipment donated served as educational material for the training of the participants.

Purpose of the training:

The main objective of the training was to introduce participants to the use of the new technologies in order to optimise results.

I – Purpose of the training

- To design and manage bibliographical databases using the Procite 5 software
- To conserve the data on an appropriate magnetic support (CD-ROM) for safekeeping and to make it user – friendly.
- To create a web site that will allow the consultation of the database that has been created with The Reference Web Poster interface.

The design of a Database of Theses and Dissertations undertaken and available in the Central University Library UYI

Step 1 : Sort out the theses and dissertations that satisfy the predefined requirements indicated on the data entry slip to encode the data

Step 2 : Record the required information, in this instance by typing and scanning existing summaries

Step 3 : Print all the data so created in the form of an alphabetical catalogue to allow for editing and to correct any typographical errors.

At the end of these 3 steps, we were able to put together more than a 1000 records/ references. However, we concentrated on finalising 1000 references to enable us prepare effectively for this workshop.

Scanning the “Summary” field and putting the Database on CD-ROM.

With the help of “Scanjet 5370C”, activated by a software interface “Omnipage Pro II”, we proceeded to the digitisation of the summaries of the authors of the theses and dissertations, then to processing in order to place them in the appropriate fields in the data entry slip. This saved us the tedious task of typing some of the summaries.

After this phase, we used the CD writer “Easy Creator 4.0” to record already existing data on CD-ROM, which is a magnetic medium with a large storage capacity and which ensures the safety of data.

The creation of a website for the consultation of our Database.

This phase of the activity has not yet started for the simple reason that we did not have Internet connection at the time of the visit by the team tasked to help us take over the DATAD project. This prevented the supervisors from giving concrete demonstrations on this particular issue. Some problems that we faced need to be pointed out:

Difficulties pertaining to optical character recognition.

There were difficulties with the processing of certain types of documents namely:

- Mathematical signs for theses and dissertations in mathematics
- Handwritings
- Altered characters: This concerns theses and dissertations of a certain period, written on more or less normed paper with outmoded machines.

Archival policy

It is worth mentioning that we do not have a well-defined archival policy with regards to the storage of theses and dissertations. However, for close to 6 years now, we have been using Database techniques to store bibliographical notes, not only of theses and dissertations but also of monographs.

Copyright Policy

Concerning copyright, the University adopted not long ago, the principle, which holds that the right of reproduction, even partial, of a thesis or dissertation undertaken at the University of Yaoundé 1, is reserved for both the author and the institution. This is shown by the sign © followed by the inscription "All reproduction rights reserved".

The impact of the project at the Institution level

Thanks to the DATAD project, a lot of inconsistencies and loopholes were detected. We can mention among others:

- Corrections that were not effected in the defended theses and dissertations before submission to our centre
- Thesis and dissertations with no dates and sometimes without the name of the supervisor
- Inadequate bibliographical references. Etc.

Concerning access to full text, until now, we have used the inter-university lending system. This procedure is very long and exposes documents to certain risks such as loss of primary documents and disintegration. We hope to improve upon this aspect, with the help of the NTIC, which is being developed in our Institution.

Short and long term objectives of this project

A – Short term

To create in African Universities in general and in the University of Yaoundé 1 in particular, ideal conditions of collection, management and dissemination of theses and dissertations by electronic means.

To allow for the use of many methods of scientific production, which for a long time, have not been used due to inadequate accessibility.

To offer isolated researchers the possibility of having access to the scientific world at a lower cost.

B – Long term

To make research works within and outside the continent more visible, transparent and easily accessible for the harmonious development of our young Universities.

To encourage decision makers to finance national research based on research findings recorded.

Activities linked to the DATAD project.

If “activities” is defined as the level of enthusiasm the project generates within our Institution, we can say that the DATAD project has developed and reactivated a lot of activities that were pending in our library. We mention here the creation of catalogues, and relabelling, which is done almost simultaneously during the search for documents for encoding.

Management

The DATAD project is user-friendly in the management of bibliographical references. This is because of its ability to memorise already-used research equations, and its flexibility and adaptability in the creation of different kinds of Databases.

Software

Procite is an appropriate programme for the management of bibliographical data. As for the annex programme intended for scanning, it has to be reviewed due to certain operational limitations it presents; the non-recognition of certain texts by the scanner.

Communication with AAU

For now, we congratulate ourselves on the level of communication with AAU, because we are regularly informed about the vision of the project. Nevertheless, we hope to see, in the coming days, the same level of communication established between the different universities involved in the pilot phase of the project.

Furthermore, we have a little over 1000 references stored in a Database created with CDS/ISIS. We would like to have more light thrown on the compatibility of the 2 software (Procite and ISIS) as far as exchange of data between them are concerned – from ISIS to Procite; and from Procite to ISIS.

CONCLUSION

We conclude by expressing our gratitude to the organisers of this 2nd workshop on DATAD project which without doubt, will enable us all find appropriate solutions for the better handling of problems we encounter, in order for scientific research and co-operation among African Universities to thrive. Otherwise, the ever-galloping technology will not forgive us if we follow the pace of globalisation.

We thank you for your kind attention.