

**ASSOCIATION OF AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES (AAU)**

**Database of African Theses and Dissertation (DATAD) Workshop,  
Nairobi, Kenya**

**Report from:**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

University of Malawi is composed of five constituent colleges scattered within the central and southern region of Malawi. The colleges are Bunda College, and Kamuzu College of Nursing in the central region while Chancellor College, College of Medicine and Polytechnic are in the southern region. All the college libraries in the University of Malawi have a Malawian collection where theses, dissertations, technical reports, working papers, conference papers, pre-prints, post-prints, books, newspapers, magazines, and journals concerning Malawi are kept. Since the two key goals of Database of African Theses and Dissertations are: to create capacity in African universities for the collection, management and dissemination of theses and dissertations (T&Ds) electronically and providing visibility through improving access to the work of African scholars in and outside the continent<sup>1</sup>, the University Central Library as the hub of the constituent college libraries has a big role to play in making sure that the aforementioned goals are fulfilled in the University of Malawi.

Therefore this paper is to discuss what steps have been taken regarding to digitization of Malawian collection at Chancellor College Library, one of the constituent colleges of the University of Malawi

## **WHERE ARE WE?**

Plans are underway to digitize books of different disciplines in all libraries under the University of Malawi with Central Library as a controlling centre. Central Library as the

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<sup>1</sup> Association of African Universities, "Database of African Theses and Dissertations," DATAD OnCD, Cumulative, January 2005.

unit which coordinates administrative and technical work is obviously charged with the responsibility of digitization project in the University of Malawi Libraries. To kick start the project Central Library has given priority to Chancellor College Library and Malawian Collection in particular. Not only is Malawian collection targeted but also departments, as well as academicians within the institution are being sensitized to take part in this project. The Central Library Service, bearing in mind that a more extensive and complex service and support offering naturally leads to greater costs, would like to concentrate first on the Malawian collection and some few key departments of Chancellor College. The highest priority is given to Malawian Collection because 97% of the work is authored by African scholars. Therefore, digitization will increase access to the African Scholars' works which obviously is the primary reason. Service to user groups will be improved by providing enhanced access to the institution's resources with respect to education, long life learning<sup>2</sup>.

## **POLICY AND COPYRIGHT ISSUE**

A proposal has been put across to the University of Malawi to seriously consider publishing electronically in form of digital repositories. The direction recommended is that the University should revisit its Research and Publications Rules and Regulations; content and collection policies; submission process; copyright and licenses; metadata; privacy policies and service policies. International universities are on the fore front digitizing their theses and dissertations into public domain. The University of Malawi, to be at par with the University Libraries at international level has to tackle the issues

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<sup>2</sup> National Mission for Manuscripts, "Guidelines for Digitization of manuscripts"  
<http://namami.nic.in/pdfs/final%20digitization.pdf>

mentioned above. However, in order to go ahead with the project of digitizing theses and dissertations one of the innovative ideas by Jean-Claude Guedon is to be followed. This is what Jean said, “Most of doctoral theses have a chapter that is a review of the literature. If Librarians would extract those chapters and make the links to references, it would produce a map of knowledge: “applied epistemology”<sup>3</sup>.

### **CHOOSING OF A SOFTWARE PLATFORM**

Currently what we have been struggling with is the acquisition of a suitable software system for the digitization project. Bearing in mind that each institutional repository platform has unique strengths and weaknesses, the Central Library is still examining closely the available systems to choose the one that will match the work before us. However, this does not mean that the Library has no software platform in mind. Greenstone software has been discussed but not yet agreed upon to be taken on board. To be invited to come and attend this DATAD Workshop is a milestone to our digitization project because through reports and interactions some of the problems will be reduced.

### **EQUIPMENT**

The Library has the following pieces of hardware as a starting point for the project:

- **Computer (Hewlett and Packard)**

System Model:	ProLiant ML 330 G3
Memory:	1GB
Hard Disk:	34GB
Speed:	2.80 GHz

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<sup>3</sup> Mass Digitization: implications for information policy, “Scholarship and Libraries in Transition: A Dialogue about the Impacts of Mass Digitization Projects”, Symposium held on March 10-11, Michigan.

- **Disk Array System** of 250GB x 6 = 1.5 Terabytes (TB)
- **The Plasmon V Series** (1.5 Terabytes TB)  
V 15 Library - AIT Drive
- **Scanner**  
Canon DR-9080C (Document Scanner)

### **USER SUPPORT AND TECHNOLOGY ROLES**

There are two areas that have been considered to make sure that the project should run effectively. Firstly, the technical part which is the primary area (IT systems/technology) has been once more empowered. This is because the man who once attended digitization training left the Central Library for greener pasture and for a period of time the subdivision was incapacitated. The gap has been filled. At the meantime some members in this technical zone are constructing a web site that will be used by clients and the entire University of Malawi when the project reaches maturity.

Secondly, user support is one of the important areas to sensitize the academics and staff to understand and be part of the digitization project in order to come up with an effective institutional repository. At the moment some members of the institution are aware of the project and are eagerly waiting to see it coming to pass.

## **CONCLUSION**

It is worthy to learn from others on what is happening in the digitization world hence, I believe that this workshop will bring us close to where some of you are. It is through sharing different experiences that people learn a lot. I hope by the end of this workshop, digitization at my work place will improve for the better.

Finally, I thank the chairman and the organizing committee for including my country, Malawi, as one of its participants.

Thank you very much.