

Inspiration and co-operation between Namibian and Finnish libraries

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“Human Resource Development Project at the University of Namibia Library” is a joint development project of the three university Libraries: the University of Namibia Library (UNAM), Helsinki University Library and Tampere University Library. The aim of the project was capacity building for the staff of the University of Namibia Library by sharing best practices and collaborating between the participating libraries. The methods used in a project included staff exchange, mentorship, shadowing a colleague, skills transfer and training workshops and seminars organized in Namibia.

The core idea behind the project was capacity building for the University of Namibia Library in collaboration with the other participating libraries. The development work was focused on specific key areas, including strategic planning, information literacy training, communication and marketing of library products and services, access to the electronic resources of information, quality improvement and benchmarking, collection development and management and research and academic writing and publishing of articles.

The activities of the project included training seminars in Namibia, study visits in Finland and collaboration on the internet. There have been two seminars in Namibia, in October 2011 and April 2012. Most of the staff of the University of Namibia Library attended the seminars.

Five Namibians have completed their four-week study tour in Finland, visiting both Helsinki and Tampere University Libraries. In August 2012, eight more staff members will come over and have a chance to combine the IFLA conference into their study visit. By the end of the year 2012, “Crossing the Distance: Collaboration between Finnish and Namibian University Libraries” a peer-reviewed publication of the articles written by the participating library staff will be published.

Collection development and e-resources

In the first joint seminar in October 2011, we heard presentations on the collection

development policies at the University of Namibia Library, Helsinki University Library and Tampere University Library. The University of Namibia Library has drafted two versions of the collection development policy in the past few years but the final, official version of the collection development policy had not been published by the time of seminar. After the seminar, the work has continued as a Namibian colleague asked for comments on their collection development plans - and by now the collection development policy is completed.

The e-collections of the University of Namibia Library are limited; they consist of selected multi-disciplinary high-quality services, such as Scopus, Oxford Journals, SpringerLink, Emerald and Ebsco. Because the e-collections of the UNAM are not yet large, they have not adopted an e-resource management system or monitoring of user statistics. Since in the Finnish university libraries, we use of hundreds of e-resources and have experience accumulated over a decade, we could share our best practices in the management of e-resources, cost-benefit calculation, as well as marketing for customers and financiers.

Mutual learning crystallized the project

A different culture is always eye-opening and gives a chance to think in a new way. It was inspiring to see many modern library buildings and well-equipped libraries in the Windhoek area and in the northern part of the country.

As we heard the presentations and shared experiences and ideas during the group work sessions, we learned about the tasks, interests, and challenges of the UNAM library staff. Many similar issues and their challenges were relevant both in Namibia and in Finland: opening hours, access to relevant resources and interlibrary loans between different libraries or library units. Also, similar reasons prevent the staff from research work and publishing: lack of time, motivation, encouragement, collaboration, funding, research and

academic writing skills, language skills, and first of all, lack of trust on one's own skills.

The realization of the similarities despite the differences reveals the gem of the project: everyone learns from everyone. All participating libraries develop their services and processes continuously but this kind of joint project gives a boost and positive pressure on the development each one's own work and the library. When one presents the work of one's own library, it provides a chance to evaluate one's own work, and questions that colleagues from other libraries ask reveal the blind spots.

New projects waiting

The support for the project was provided by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Finland and CIMO, Centre for International Mobility, which coordinates the HEI-ICI program: Higher Education Institutions Institutional Cooperation Instrument supporting capacity development

measures in higher education administration, methodology, pedagogy and the development plans in developing countries. The project received from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs about 240 000 euro for the period of 2011-2012.

The administrative burden was left to the participating universities. Helsinki University Library coordinates the project with a steering board consisting of the members of all participating libraries: Kaisa Sinikara and Elise Pirttiniemi from Helsinki University Library, Mirja Iivonen and Leena Toivonen from Tampere University Library and Ellen Ndeshi Namhila and Joseph Ndinoshiho from the University of Namibia Library. The joint meetings of the project coordinators provided invaluable peer support and opportunities for networking.

As the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Finland has evaluated the HEI-ICI program and the next call for applications is expected to open in the latter part of 2012 (funding 2013-2015). There is a definite need for libraries to participate in the future, either as separate projects or as partners in the other projects of the universities. 📖

Background information of the participating universities:

	Number of library staff	Number of students	Library budget
Namibia	75	13 000	2,1 million EUR
Tampere	70	15 000	8,3 million EUR
Helsinki	260	37 000	23 million EUR

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