African Studies and University Libraries in the Netherlands

cooperating in "Digital Africana Repositories Community" (DARC) project

DARC is an initiative of the African Studies Centre (ASC) in Leiden to make Africanist research material and information accessible through a community portal on the Internet.

For the second time, DARC has succesfully applied for a grant from the SURF Foundation in response to the Call for Tender DARE services projects. The SURF programme Digital Academic Repositories (DARE) is a joint initiative of the Dutch universities to make all their research results accessible digitally. To promote the submission of scientific content, the DARE programme is funding projects that will support the efficient and easy submission of research materials to the repositories and offer context-rich retrieval services.

As a result of a previous grant allocated to the DARC-1 project (August 2003 - March 2004), a pilot service for African Studies in the Netherlands, Connecting-Africa, was launched in April 2004.

The DARC-2 project will run from September 2004 to March 2006. During this period, the pilot service will be extended with more functionality, full participation by four universities (Amsterdam, Groningen, Leiden and Wageningen) and a learning environment for the proposed Reseach Masters Programme in African Studies that is due to start in September 2005.

Researchers at universities and research centres in Amsterdam, Groningen, Leiden and Wageningen with expertise on Africa will be encouraged to submit relevant publications and scientific materials to their institutional repositories. Important triggers for supplying material will be re-use for educational purposes and improved accessibility for colleague researchers in Africa, thereby promoting Dutch scientific output in African Studies worldwide.

Lecturers at universities and research centres in Amsterdam, Groningen, Leiden and Wageningen, who are working together on developing course material for the proposed Research Masters Programme in African Studies will be encouraged to use relevant materials stored in the academic repositories. To this end, existing digital learning environments in use at universities will be linked to the DARE infrastructure. The portal for African Studies will provide for a student's corner with access to information on the Research Masters Programme and relevant resources.

Finally, Connecting-Africa will serve as a test-bed for DARE developments. The introduction of a "digital author identifier" as a means to identify researchers/authors of scientific publications in a unique fashion will be implemented in Connecting-Africa, to demonstrate feasibility and usefulness. This will be done in close cooperation with the library of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences that operates the Dutch Research Database (NOD). Another important activity of the DARC-2 project will be to develop selective OAI-PMH harvesting criteria for identifying relevant African Studies materials from university repositories.

For more information about DARC: http://asc.leidenuniv.nl/darc/
For more information about Connecting-Africa: http://www.Connecting-Africa.net
For more information about DARE: http://www.surf.nl/en/dare
For more information about SURF: http://www.surf.nl/en/

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