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Indo-German Cooperation in the Library and Information Field[2]

1   Introduction

Within the last 5 years Max-Mueller-Bhavan in New Delhi has deployed a concept, initiating and supporting the Indo-German co-operation of Library and Information scientists in India and Germany. Max Mueller Bhavan (MMB), as the Goethe-Institute is known in India, with reference to the famous German Indologist, has developed diverse connections to the Indian Library and Information Science (LIS) specialists. Martina Bartel, Head of the Regional Information Centre (DRTC) coordinates these activities from New Delhi. She involved other partners in India and Germany, such as the Documentation and Research Centre (DRTC) of the Indian Statistical Institute founded by Ranganathan and the University of Applied Sciences Cologne Germany. Connections to the particular national LIS scene has become more differentiated and focused.

Since 2002 17 Indian LIS-experts have received logistic and financial support to visit German library and information science institutions for short and long terms. Four German Scientists from different Universities not only attended conferences in India but summated papers on several occasions. As intended some of them started co-operations, which have led to projects in the Digital Library field, e-Learning and in co-operations related to LIS-Programs of the Universities.

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[1]   Please contact Prof. Dr. Achim Osswald (achim.osswald@fh-koeln.de) for questions related to this paper.

[2]   Paper to be presented at the 58. Jahrestagung der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Informationswissenschaft und –praxis (DGI; German Association of Information Science and Practice), 04/10/06, Frankfurt.

2   South Asian Librarians Study tour through Germany

LIS co-operation activities of MMB Delhi started in 2000 with a seminar on LIS Education in both countries, focusing on the subject of Information Technology. As a follow-up in 2002, a group of 11 professionals from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan visited German Educational LIS institutions as well as important public and scientific libraries. This tour had been organised by Martina Bartel, MMB New Delhi.

Dr. Shailendra Kumar from Delhi University videotaped all the visits and later created an interactive CD-ROM for LIS-students comprising a virtual tour through European libraries as well as lessons on various technical equipments used.[3] This study tour set not only a milestone for several bilateral activities between the experts of both countries especially in the Educational Sector; but also brought about a closer co-operation between the Indian and German experts in this field.

University of Applied Sciences in Cologne was among the institutions which had been visited during the tour. Since then Achim Osswald from the University of Applied Sciences in Cologne is the appointed evaluator for some Ph.D. theses at the University of Madras. A former Ph.D. student, Srinivasan Gopalakrishan, is presenting a paper simultaneously in another track of this Conference.[4] Subsequently Achim Osswald travelled to India, where he held lectures on Digital Archiving in New Delhi and Chennai. Towards the end of 2006 he will visit DRCT in Bangalore upon their invitation as visiting scientist.

David Cappel, one of his LIS students in Cologne decided to spend his obligatory internship with MMB in New Delhi. As a part of he incorporated five weeks of training at Delhi University; participating in the programme of the Teaching Department and as well as assisting in various Campus Libraries.

3   Exchange of experts

3.1   Presentations and Conference attendances

In 2003, 10 Librarians from India and Pakistan attended the World Library & Information Congress of IFLA in Berlin as Delegates at the courtesy of MMB.

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[3]   Kumar, Shailendra: European Libraries in New Millenium (A Travelogue by a Professional), New Delhi 2003 (incl. 2 CDs)

[4]   Gopalakrishnan, Srinivasan: Design and development of a web portal on fashion technology - a case study of the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT), Chennai (India).

In 2004 TERI (The Energy and Resources Institute, New Delhi, (http://www.teriin.org/) organised its 4 day conference on Digital Libraries[5] with many well known national and international speakers. At this time MMB decided to focus its co-operation acitivies on Digital Libraries (DL) as a subject of great importance for the global LIS community. MMB sponsored Prof. Erich Neuhold's visit to India, enabling him to attend TERI Conference. Prof. Neuhold[6] was the Director of the Integrated Publication and Information Systems Institute (IPSI) Darmstadt at that time. Prof. Neuhold lectured not only in Delhi but also in several MMB Institutes or partners in Mumbai, Bangalore and Chennai. The immense interest of the local librarians shown in the subject, soon led to the development of a plan together with DRTC Bangalore. This plan was to send a so called "Team India" to German Libraries and institutions in order to explore the possible co-operation areas and later to develop electronic training modules on the subject of DL. Several specific fields of co-operation were identified.

3.2 Initialisation of bilateral co-operations

Consequently in February 2006 MMB sent a group of five Indian LIS experts ("Team India") for a short term training to various German libraries which are involved in relevant projects. Upon their return the participants were asked to develop eLearning modules in their assigned fields, for further training of other interested professionals in India.

The traveling experts participated in the Bielefeld Conference 2006. This is one of the very few LIS-related conferences in Germany in English language. The following expertes (in alphabetical order) were part of the "Team India":

- Gaur, Ramesh C., Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), New Delhi

- Madalli, Devika, Indian Statistical Institute, Documentation Research and Training Centre (DRTC), Bangalore

- Manjunath, G.K., Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research, Mumbai

- Prasad, A.R.D., Indian Statistical Institute, Documentation Research and Training Centre (DRTC), Bangalore

- Tripathi, Aditiya Department of Library and Information Science, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi

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[5]   See for details http://static.teriin.org/events/icdl/ and
      http://www.teriin.org/press_inside.php_id_14227

[6]   See for details related to Professor Neuhold his homepage at
      http://www.ipsi.fraunhofer.de/%7Eneuhold/

They visited the following institutions:

- Berlin: Konrad-Zuse-Zentrum, Computer- and Mediacentre of Humboldt-University (http://www.cms.hu-berlin.de/)
- Bielefeld: Public Library (http://www.stadtbibliothek-bielefeld.de/index.htm) and University Library (http://www.ub.uni-bielefeld.de/)
- Bonn, Social Science Information Centre (http://www.gesis.org/IZ/)
- Frankfurt: The German National Library (http://www.ddb.de/index.htm) and the Cooperation of Museum Libraries at Frankfurt
- Göttingen: State and University Library (http://www.sub.uni-goettingen.de/)
- Jülich: Central Library of the Research Centre (http://www.fz-juelich.de/zb/)
- Cologne: Unversity of Applied Sciences, Institute of Information Science (http://www.fbi.fh-koeln.de/)
- Karlsruhe: University (http://www.uni-karlsruhe.de)

The results of their stay in Germany and the prospective for future Indo-German collaboration have been submitted to the Indo-German eLearning project eGurukul as well as to several other bilateral projects.

4 Projects based Co-operations

4.1 Bilateral Co-operations

Two bilateral projects have been result of Team Indias visit to Germany:

- Indian Libraries will apply an adopted version of the concept for Certified Document and Publication Repositories (see http://www.dini.de/dini/zertifikat/ and – for an English version of the certificate – http://www.dini.de/dini/zertifikat/dini_certificate.pdf) which has been developed by the German Initiative on Networked Information (DINI; Deutsche Initiative für Netzwerk Information).
- Social Science Information Centre Bonn (IZ; http://www.gesis.org/IZ/) and Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research, Mumbai, have plans to co-operate in the translation and further development of the Thesaurus in Social Sciences which has been developed by Social Science Information Centre Bonn.

4.2 DL-related eLearning project eGurukul

Digital Libraries have been choosen as a topic for the work supported by MMB because of the significant interest which the subject of DL creates in India:

- On the one hand digitization is a huge chance to conserve the content of India's singular stock of precious manuscripts being exposed to specifically difficult climatic conditions.

- On the other hand digital Open Access repositories correspond in an ideal way to the demand of the scientific community in India as a country with large dimensions: they can be used irrespective of local limitations, independent from travel hassles and without much cost involved.

Additionally DL is a topic which is relevant to institutions and experts in both countries, India as well as Germany, and – by the way – to those all over the world.

During a workshop on "Digital Libraries" which took place at MMB in New Delhi at 24th of May 2006, the eLearning project eGurukul[7] had been made public. More than 60 Indian experts from all over the country took part in the workshop. Presentations of general topics like

- "German initiatives on e-learning in LIS" (Achim Osswald, Cologne)

as well as specialised DL-related topics like an

- "Introduction in the Digital Library Framework and the project eGurukul" (Devika Madalli, Bangalore)

have been presented. Complementary presentations by the other members of Team India focusing on

- "Status of Digitization and Digital Preservation in India and Germany" (Ramesh Gaur),

- "Metadata standards and Interoperability" (Devika Madalli),

- "Digital Library Architecture, Tools and Multilingual Digital Libraries" (Aditiya Tripathi) and

- "Digital Library Content" G.K. Manjunath)

gave a comprehensive view on the DL-topic.

Additionally throughout the workshop a syllabus for the DL eLearning project eGurukul had been presented focusing on the implementors view on DL. eGurukul will help all those looking for advice in setting up an Open Access-based repository. In this respect eGurukul does not have the same broad view on the topic like e.g. the IMARK eLearning modules (http://www.imarkgroup.org/).[8]

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7   Within the Indian mythology gurukul is a place in the forest where students stay with their teacher, the guru, to learn and live together.

8   „IMARK is an e-learning initiative in agricultural information management developed by FAO and partner organizations."

Nevertheless there are matching areas but as a online activity eGurukul has the option of being more updated as those static eLearning products.

Until now the following topics were or will be offered as courses[9]:

- Introduction to Digital Libraries
- Digital Library Architecture and DL Content
- Digitization Process
- Digital Preservation
- Metadata and Interoperability
- Digital Collection
- DL Organisation and Access Rights
- Knowledge Organization & Retrieval
- Digital Library Services
- Evaluation & DL Case Studies

eGurukul uses Moodle, an Open Source software based course management system (CMS) – "designed using sound pedagogical principles, to help educators create effective online learning communities. …Moodle has a large and diverse user community with over 100,000 registered users on this site alone, speaking over 70 languages in over 150 countries." (http://moodle.org/). The implementation of eGurukul is done by DRTC in Bangalore. There are plans to support a mirror site at the University of Applied Sciences Cologne.

Meanwhile some of the modules planned are implemented (see http://drtc.isibang.ac.in/mmb/). Those shown at New Delhi have been created as a sample by Devika Madalli and A.R.D. Prasad from DRTC, Bangalore. They just mark the initial stage of the project so far. The authors as well as MMB hope for valuable feedback which will help to refine the modules. Additionally the team hopes that some other experts especially from Germany will join the team in creating content. Consequently a call has been made in Germany in German language describing the possibilities of the project[10].

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[9]   See for details http://drtc.isibang.ac.in/mmb/

[10] Osswald, Achim: Deutsch-Indisches E-Learning-Projekt zum Thema Digitale Bibliotheken In: Bibliotheksdienst 40 (2006), 7, 903-905

5   Expectations and Conclusions

Many of the topics on digital libraries are of global interest – just to mention copyright issues, long term preservation, accessability – but there is at least one special area in which the global community could well learn from the Indian experience: developing tools for multilingual computing. The demand for cooperative engagements is huge, MMB and the scientists involved until now strive to support any such activity.

Indo-German cooperation in the LIS field had a very good start so far. It fits well into other initiatives on Indo-German cooperations like those of the German Ministery of Education and Research (see http://www.internationales-buero.de/de/934.php) or the German Research Foundation which set up a liaison office in New Delhi in 2005 (see http://www.dfg.de/dfg_im_profil/ struktur/geschaeftsstelle/abteilung_i/dehli/index.html). At least publications within the broad field of culture offer lots of aspects of possible co-operation – which will be discovered here in Frankfurt during the Book Faire as well as in the future. We hope and look forward that Library and Information Scientists from both countries will take their chance as well to improve the existing and to develop new ways of co-operation within our field.

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