UNESCO's free software for developing countries

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UNESCO's CDS/ISIS for Microcomputers is one of the most widely used information retrieval packages not only in Bangladesh but also in the world. UNESCO provides the software to the developing countries free of cost.

In the developing countries like India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Uganda, Kenya, Argentina and Brazil CDS/ISIS have played the major role of carrying out library automation specially for the automated cataloguing system. CDS/ISIS for Microcomputers (DOS based) was first released by UNESCO in 1985.

Since 1989, when most new Microcomputers were supplied with a new operating system called Microsoft Windows, it was inevitable that the user of CDS/ISIS would call for a Windows version and UNESCO began to develop one in 1995. Now CDS/ISIS for Windows is famous as WINISIS and the latest version is WINISIS 1.5. Since 1985 many organisations have been working to create new software to support CDS/ISIS and thus the software has become more useful and widely used in the world. As the CDS/ISIS does not have any web interface that is why it does not work in the Internet.

This is one of the major limitations of the software. WWWISIS and JAVAISIS are the softwares that have client/server mode and CDS/ISIS database can be searched through any web browser like Netscape and Internet Explorer. Both the softwares have remote access facility but configuration and operation is complicated. On the other hand you have to pay for WWWISIS and there is no warranty for JAVAJSIS.

At the same time you may lose some data or your database can be damaged if you use JAVAISIS. So, I prefer to use GEMSIS for visually producing web forms to query CDS/ISIS databases. GENISIS was originally developed by the former IBISCUS Association (France) for UNESCO and it is now available free of charge on the UNESCO FTP site

(http://www.enesco.org/isis/files/winisis/genisis/web/genisisweb.exe).

You can easily download and install the software. The manual of GENISISWEB is also available on the Internet, which is written by **Ms Deepali Talagala** Director, American Center Library, Sri Lanka. The manual is easy to understand and has all the images of the installation process. From my experience, I would like to assure you that if you try seriously you will not fail to install this software and get the benefit.

As mentioned earlier, in Bangladesh most of the libraries use CDS/ISIS to maintain automated cataloguing systems. But unfortunately they have failed to host the database to their

organisational/library's web site. To promote and develop the library system of Bangladesh Sustainable Development Networking Programme (SDNP) has come forward and has collected the library databases from those libraries, which are already using CDS/ISIS and are interested to host their databases to the virtual library of SDNP (http://www.sdnpbd.org). Many libraries like IUB, BAU, PATC, IUBAT and BIDS send their databases to the SDNP and SDNP convert the databases so that they can be browsed through any web browser. But the process is very complicated and requires vast knowledge on database and programming language.

Now you can easily host your database on the Internet using GENISISWEB. GENISISWEB is still not familiar to our library professionals like CDS/ISIS. On the other hand, those few who know about the software, have wrong information that the English version of the software is not available as the software is written in French. Yes, it is true that the software is written in French but you have an option to choose one language (among Francais, Anglais, Espagnol, Allemand and Italien).

I was also confused with this option and contacted with Ms Talagala for the English version. She then informed me that Anglais means English and after selection of the Anglais you will get the English version of the software. My suggestion is to take printout of the manual first and read carefully then try to install GENISISWEB step by step, which has been showed in the manual, and language will not be any problem.

Davide Storti, Information Society Division, UNESCO has informed me that they will work for the English version of the software and hopefully it will be available very soon. At the same time it is expected that UNESCO will promote the software and organise workshops and seminars on GENISISWEB.

One thing you have to remember is that for testing generated application with GENISISWEB, you will require the use of a local server such as Apace Web Server which is available on the internet or in the official CD of the CDS/ISIS (see the manual) and you have to install the Apache Web Server before installation of the GENISISWEB. Installation of the Apache Web Server is also very easy and the process is also mentioned on the GENISISWEB manual. You can also take help from your network administrator.

As far as I know the library of Independent University, Bangladesh, Chittagong Campus is the first in Bangladesh that has successfully installed the software and our users are frequently searching our library database through web browsers.

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