ETDs in South Africa: Current Status

by

Felix N Ubogu

University Librarian

University of the Witwatersrand

Johannesburg

Private Bag X1

Wits 2050

South Africa

Ubogu.f@library.wits.ac.za

Opening Comment

The world contains three kinds of people.

--- those that make things happen,

--- those that watch what's happening, and

--- those that, when they awaken, ask, "What happened?"

(Old joke that Henry M. Gladney often heard in IBM Research)

Appreciation

I want to thank Gail Mcmillan, Ed Fox and Jean-Claude Guédon for making it possible for me to be at this conference to enrich my knowledge of developments in the ETD arena.

Contents

- **Introduction**

- **Developments in the ETD arena in Africa**

- **The South African Scene**

- **Regional (Provincial) and National Initiatives in South Africa**

- **The Way Forward**

- **Conclusion**

<u>Introduction</u>

- National Working Group (NWG) - Min. of Education
- Need to ensure the "fitness of purpose"
- Vision - to develop a single, national, co-ordinated higher education system
- Goals: high level research capacity; regional collaboration
- Transformation leading to increased graduate enrolments and output

Developments in the ETD arena in Africa

- Most African TDs not easily accessible
- AAU has embarked on a DATAD project
- 11 universities and 1 social science consortium will participate
- Database to be available via the Internet and on CD-ROM
- Ford Foundation provided a grant of US $300,000
- Rockefeller Foundation has provided US$217,677
- DATAD now a core program of AAU

Association of African Universities (AAU)

- Sub-Theme 5: *Improving management and access to African scholarly work.*
  - ➢ DATAD
  - ➢ Digital Library for TDs
  - ➢ Guideline for Copyright and Intellectual Property Rights
  - ➢ Collective Acquisition and/or access to Academic Literature

- General ETD awareness among many universities in Africa

The South African Scene

- Development started in 1996 with Rhodes University
  - First digital thesis on the World Wide Web in 1998
  - First institution in Africa to do so
  - Joined NDLTD Initiative, May 1997
  - RU, in July 1999, invited other institutions to join the NDLTD

The South African Scene (contd)

- Questionnaire to 22 universities and 15 technikons
- 4 universities request students to submit digital files
  - Rand Afrikaans University
  - Rhodes University
  - University of Port Elizabeth
  - University of Pretoria
- Two universities and 1 technikon planning ETD projects
- RU and Upretoria - abstracts on WWW
- UPretoria provides full text

The South African Scene (contd)

ISSUES

- *Submission software*
  - Mostly Adobe Acrobat
  - UPretoria set up NDLTD submission

- *Submission Guidelines and Training*
  - UPretoria provides training
  - Training deemed very important

The South African Scene (contd)

ISSUES

- *Intellectual Property Rights*
  - *Mixed copyright policy*
  - *Claim - institution provides supervision and infrastructure.*
  - *Legality yet to be challenged in a court of law*

- *Quality Assurance*
  - *All the institutions have mixed submission*
  - *Concern with conformity of the two versions*

The South African Scene (contd)

- *Archiving*
  - *Not much consideration*
  - Looking forward to Sabinet
  - Sabinet Online information and service provider

- *Personnel issues*
  - None hired additional staff
  - Project as part of their normal tasks
  - University of Pretoria - general quality controller

The South African Scene (contd)

- *Hardware requirements*
  - None has provided additional hardware infrastructure
  - ETDs housed on either the library or the institutional server

- *Membership of the NDLTD*
  - Three universities

Constraints

- Lack of expertise

- Budget

- Inadequate staffing

- Most are of the view that additional personnel will be required

Provincial and National Initiatives in SA

- **South East Academic Library System (SEALS)**
  - SEALS - one of five academic library consortium (ECHEA)
  - Proposal for co-operative ETD to MF
  - Grant of $79,609 given in June 2000
  - Project viewed as having national implications
  - First project meeting held in October 2000

(SEALS) (contd)

- No reinvention of the wheel

- SEALS implementing a new library system

- ETD project taken a back seat

<u>Sabinet Online</u>

- Service provider and publisher

- Publishes or hosts 31 academic journals, Govt.Gazette, Tender Bulletin

- Provides access to various databases
  - Union Catalogue of Theses and Dissertations (UCTD)
  - Database of South African Technikon research (NAVTECH)

Sabinet Online Proposal

- To establish full-text database of TDs

- Institutions to supply full-text content of TDs in .pdf (Adobe) format

- The contract specification states that
    - annual subscription fee by non contributing institutions
    - revenue towards recovering the costs that Sabinet Online costs
    - Sabinet Online will market and promote the service

- UCTD to be discontinued - cost and logistics

- Proposal has drawn some interest from libraries

Sabinet Online Proposal (contd)

- Proposed model (**shared infrastructure**) should be debated

- Other potential models include
  - ➢ shared software development;
  - ➢ shared metadata; and
  - ➢ shared documentation and training tools (Ortuzar, 2001).

- South Africa should be involved at the international level

The Coalition of South African Library Consortia (COSALC)

- COSALC: five provincial acad lib consortia
- Promote access to information in SA; establishing a NSLI
- Proposal by Sabinet Online discussed
  - To advise heads of the universities and technikons
- COSALC yet to canvas views of stakeholders

National Research Foundation (NRF)

- NRF not shown interest in ETDs

- Sponsors many research projects

- Runs Nexus Database System
  - contains information on TDs

The Way Forward

- Need for a national ETD project

- Stakeholders should be involved

- Nucleus of a National Program – three Universities

- Project under COSALC or FULSA/ITLC

<u>Conclusion</u>

- Africa will benefit immensely from an ETD programme

- Efforts at the continental level are steps in the right direction

- Digitisation of SA TDs is uncoordinated

- Time to implement the knowledge of early innovators

- Submission of ETDs will foster IT skills

- Contribute to the building of digital libraries

Thank you