GENERAL CONTRIBUTIONS

A report on the 3rd ProLISSA/DISSAnet Conference, 28-29th October, Pretoria
(See *http://www.dissanet.com*)

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1. Introduction

The acronym DISSAnet stands for Development of Information Science in Southern Africa. It names the group of library and information science/service (LIS) professionals who, within the frame of a development project in 1998-2004, have built a research network aimed at functioning as a national platform to support professional developments and internationalisation in the LIS field. During the democratisation and development process in South Africa (since the first democratic elections in 1994) considerable help was given to libraries and LIS schools in the form of computers and other materials, support with same training the use of these tools. The Third biennial DISSAnet Conference was held in Pretoria on the 28th-29th of October 2004. Broadly, the birth of democracy in South Africa has transformed the LIS profession. For instance, the formation of the Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA) and ProLISSA came as result of this process. As a result of this transformation, LIS conferences are held regularly to promote research and knowledge sharing among academics, researchers, library staff, information specialists, and students in the South Africa and the region. This is done to prepare LIS researchers to communicate and function as an international team of professionals.

2. Conference location

The Third biennial DISSAnet Conference was held, once again, at the Farm Inn in Pretoria on the 28th to the 29th of October 2004. Although, a number of hotels, lodges and guest houses were available at affordable proces, the Farm Inn that is about 10 km from the Pretoria CBD is unique because of its African theme cuddled in a jungle-like environment, surrounded by wildlife and built with strong flavour of African architecture in mind. For instance the roofing is thatched and decorations on the walls reflect on African wildlife. The place/location is not congested with people and one could smell the wild life and green vegetation a few breath away. While in the hotel, you could see wild animals like lions, baboons, monkeys, snakes, crocodiles and leopards roaming the artificial jungle created for them. In a nutshell, the choice of the venue was splendid.

3. Programme and events

The Third biennial DISSAnet Conference that was generously hosted by the University of Pretoria through the conference Chair Prof. Theo Bothma and the National Research Foundation through the Programme Chair, Dr. Andrew Kaniki attracted over 100 hundred delegates from South Africa that included university academics, and students, information workers/ librarians and researchers. There were also international delegates from Botswana, Denmark, Finland, Scotland and Uganda. A keynote speaker and two invited speakers delivered informative and challenging papers. For example, Prof Derek Law's paper titled 'Research, retrieval and relevance: Can universal truths answer local question?' was very informative and challenging. Two guest speakers were Prof. Aina, University of Botswana, and Dr.Patrick Ngulube from the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

4. Papers Delivered

4.1 Towards improving information access by semi-and non-literate groups in Africa: A need for seeking empirical studies of their information seeking and retrieval patterns. Prof Lenrie O, Aina (University of Botswana).

4.2 Research, retrieval and relevance: Can universal truths answer local question? Prof Derek Law. (University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, Scotland).

4.3 A double edged sword: challenges and opportunities offered by the digital age to libraries and information centres by Dr Patrick Ngulube. (University of KwaZulu-Natal).

4.4 Information needs and information seeking behaviour of parliamentarians in SA. Dr Mostert, B.J. and Prof D.N. Ocholla (University of Zululand).

4.5 A theoretical model for studies on web information seeking behaviour: How to look and what we might see by Prof. Ina Fourie (University of Pretoria).

4.6 Afrikaans-English cross-language information retrieval. Dr. Erica Cosijin, Heikki Keskusta, Dr.Ari Pirkola, Karen de Wet and Prof. Kalervo Jarvelin. (University of Pretoria and University of Tampere, Finland)

4.7 From lecture hall to boardroom: designing, implementing and facilitating an Experiential learning module for knowledge management students at undergraduate level. Deonie Botha and Emile Schmidt (University of Pretoria).

4.8 The formulation of a strategic knowledge management maturity model by Neels Kruger and Prof. Retha Snyman. (University of Pretoria).

4.9 A holistic approach to I & KM: The portfolio of services as practical tool by Rentia Oosthuizen & Dr. Karen De Wet. (SITA and University of Pretoria).

4.10 A review of management and diffusion strategies of HIV/AIDS information in Institutions of higher education in South Africa by Luyanda Dube and Prof. Dennis Ocholla (University of Zululand).

4.11 Mapping and auditing indigenous knowledge capacity in Uganda by Prof. Robert Ikoja Odongo. (Makerere University, Uganda).

4.12 An informetric investigation of the relatedness of opportunistic infections to HIV/AIDS by Omwoyo Onyancha and Prof Dennis Ocholla. (University of East Africa Kenya and University of Zululand, South Africa).

4.13 Growth and development in knowledge management research: A bibliometric study by Dr Daisy Jacobs (University of Pretoria).

4.14 Library subject portals: A different perspective to enhancing learning by Felix Ubogu, Arthur Kekana & Charl Roberts. (University of Witwatersrand).

4.15 Indigenous knowledge, minority languages and lifelong learning: A role for public libraries by Prof. Peter Lor (University of Pretoria).

4.16 Transformation and equity in Library and information services: A Gauteng case study by Lizzy Ramogale & Lennie Fortuin. (Directorate Library and information services, Gauteng).

4.17 Genomics information retrieval: Challenges, problems and empirical findings by Dr. Ari Pirkola. (University of Tampere, Finland).

4.18 A methodology for testing dimensions of relevance by D. Erica Cosijin. (University of Pretoria).

4.19 Context in information retrieval by Prof.Peter Ingwersen & Prof. Kalervo Jarvelin. (Royal School of Library and Information Science, Denmark and University of Tempere, Finland).

4.20 Extending information seeking and retrieval research toward context. By Prof. Kalervo Jarvelin and Prof. Peter Ingwesen. (Royal School of Library and Information Science, Denmark and University of Tempere, Finland).

4.21 The diffusion of innovations theory as a theoretical framework in library and information science research by Dr Mabel Minishi-Majanja & Dr Joseph Kiplang'at (UNISA, South Africa and Moi University, Kenya).

4.22 Towards the idea of information science as an interscience by Prof. Fanie De Beer. (University of Pretoria).

4.23 Philosophy of information without history of information is empty; history of information without philosophy is blind by Prof. Archie Dick. (University of Pretoria).

4.24 Auditing ICTs for rural development in Kenya: A case of Kenyan rural women by Alice Kwake. (University of Zululand).

4.25 The role of printed information in small scale farmers? Conversion to Commercial organic production in Kwazulu Natal by Lynn Stefano. (University of KwaZulu Natal).

4.26 Multilateral ICT for development strategies: Critical Reflections by Sagren Moodley & Fanie Cloete, HSRC, (University of Stellenbosch).

The papers of this conference and the two previous conferences are all available on the DISSAnet website at *http://www.dissanet.com*, and can be downloaded free of charge.

5. Significance of conference

ProLISSA is a very crucial conference and it benefits South Africa in many ways: Firstly, this is the first research project in LIS field that brings local and international counterparts in the country to discuss matters arising from LIS profession. Secondly, the ProLISSA conference motivates local professionals in conducting research projects that in turn enables

them to publish and develop teaching and research capacity. The findings of the research projects make local LIS professionals to share ideas with international counterparts. Thirdly, the ProLISSA conference brings together LIS practitioners from different countries, libraries and other related agencies together and is emerging to be one of the strongest regional research forums in Africa. Fourthly, a new breed of researchers emerges through this practical initiative and this inspires more LIS researchers, students and educators. Finally, through *ProLISSA* the African paradigm of LIS research improves and extends to those areas that are crucial to the development of the continent and project global relevance.

Challenges

The challenge for ProLISSA is to involve more people from LIS Diaspora in South Africa and the region. The challenge for LIS educators and practitioners is participation with research findings and work experiences that can be shared for the growth of the profession. ProLISSA conference is an eye opener and a wakeup call especially to students who are the future generation of LIS profession for quality research development and publicity. Aggressive marketing of the conference attracts a wider audience is still essential. In order to attract more papers left out because of lack of time and space, short in-progress research reports and poster sessions should be encouraged in the future. There might also be a need to open up a doctoral forum in the future. Another challenge is the sourcing of sustainable funding and support from organizations such as the National Research Foundation for the support of the event in the future.

Conclusion

ProLISSA /DISSAnet conference is becoming popularly known for its successful organisation and execution. Fundamentally, the conference proceedings are widely shared throughout the World (see: http://www.dissanet.com). This sharing of knowledge ,through conference proceedings, supports the widely marketed principle of open access and enables quality LIS research to reach information deprived LIS workers in the World, particularly those in Africa. The task ahead is for the local and regional colleagues to motivate their co-workers to participate in this capacity building and meaningful conference. In addition, there is no doubt that through such forum more and more researchers will emerge and the knowledge sharing focus of the conference, we presume, will also enhance capacity building in the LIS profession and empower them with research skills. What else? More and improved ProLISSA/DiSSAnet in the future.