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Reconstructed Minutes

DCM4 - September 13th-20th, Madras-Mahaballipuram

Usage of Bibliographic & Indexing Computer Programmes

DCM4 was preceded by a 3 day meeting from the 13th to 15th September. The main purpose of the meeting was to introduce the participants to the basics of computers and their use in documentation. This was followed by a demonstration of some documentation packages like BIBSYS, MICROISIS and the CED programme. Later we made a comparison of the advantages and disadvantages of these packages. The main advantages of the BIBSYS and CED programme is that the source code is available and therefore the programmes can be modified by individual centres to suit their needs. Besides the CED programme and formats within it have been modified to whatever norms have been made at DCM. Thus DCMers can have a ready-made, quick start programme. CED package was found to be user friendly. The source code is not available for MICROISIS (programmable version available in Pascal). CED and BIBSYS have a fixed field length whereas in MICROISIS there is the advantage of a variable field length. Free text search can be done in the case of MICROISIS which is not possible with the other two. MICROISIS also saves record by record whereas in the other two saving is in batches.

Some suggestions that came up for making better usage of these packages in documentation were: 1) that those centres working on MICROISIS should try and work on DCM standard formats as well as make some standard printing formats so that others can easily borrow from them. To start with, formats styles, used by the CED package could be included especially the common cards formats on 4" x 6" & 3" x 5". 2) BIBSYS users to work out an optimum field length and 3) HURIDOCs could try and work on a transfer programme.

Jagdish demonstrated the NIGEL package, which was a universal query programme for any kind of database. Databases in any of the bibliographic programmes can be queried using this programme, giving rise to the possibility that we could freely exchange the databases without having to adopt a common programme or format at least for computer query. However the databases cannot be intergrated, there would be need for common format.

There was also a session on computer communications, and a short meeting on India-Link. The minutes have already been circulated by Centre for Social Development (CSD), wherein it was decided that eight organisation would acquire modems and communicated with each other, develop an Electronic mail system and some data sharing .. (a subsequent meeting in Bombay cut down ambitious project and instead of a joint proposals, seperate proposals with scaled down requirements will be sent.- The minutes of the Bombay India-Link meeting is at appendix 2)

PRE-DCM

The Pre-DCM was held on the 16th & 17th of September. The formats agreed at DCM 3 were explained mainly for the benefit of those who come for DCM for the first time.

Sept 18.

The first session was a presentation of a paper on "Documentation History and Perspectives" by Ramani Rao of ISST.

Ramani defined Documentation as the art of collection, classifying and making available information for the specialist.

Documentation began in 1930 as a classed (according to subject) catalogue in the field of Pharmaceuticals. Then abstracting came in, which was mainly to enable for the scientific community to keep track of the various developments in science, technology, and related fields.

The scholar who was the main client of documentation, was the producer and user of the information, with the documentalists organising, classifying, abstracting the information for and received back to the same client groups from which it came.

Participants then drew interesting parallels with the documentation centres in the voluntary sector and with social activists. Though activists cannot be considered as producers of the information, their environment in which they operate and the issues in which they are involved, form the basis of documentation, and in most cases, the objective of our documentation effort.

The main community of users are activists including, campaign, voluntary organisations, projects etc and Researchers.

We then discussed the difference between research and documentation. In many cases, the history of our Centres are such that they are mainly called upon to do ~~research~~ research work for the organisation or they are documentation centres which are mainly storage mechanism for such research. While research work is on a particular project or issue basis, Documentation is more open ended, covering a wider range of issues, over a longer period of time and mainly relies on secondary sources. DCs are usually and ~~is~~ not actively engaged in collecting the information from the field directly. Thus for the user category of researchers (who may be in-house researchers), the documentation centres are like a relevant library. As far as activists are concerned, there needs to be better interface between users, documentalist & producer, and both the content and the form of information needs to be paid attention to. Besides AGs are not in the habit of reading or using documentation. Thus the documentation centres itself has to take on the role of producing, selecting and disseminating the information that is relevant to this category.

Finally therefore, the role of documentation centre in the voluntary sector could be interpreted as providing

1. Sounding reports on various problems, issues
2. Plugging into campaigns, networks, action groups
3. Providing information in the languages
4. Professional services, systems, retrieval and protection of information.

Link of DCs with Action Groups:

One way of reaching out to Action Groups would be to perceive their information needs and collating such relevant material. Also disseminating and helping to organize effective campaigns. The quality of response of individual centres would ofcourse depend on the nature of their work. Each DC must work out for itself what is its level of involvement and how it will meet the information needs of the action groups. There was a suggestion to circulate the thesaurus in pre-publication form. (Ramani). Those AGs that have attended DCMs could have discussions with other AGs and report back at DCM5. Maybe AGs percieve Documenta-tion Centres as not having a clear stand on the issues that they are fighting for and if they do then they seem hesitant to take a public stand on such issues. How do action groups precieve the role of information in action? This could be ascertained from AGs at DCM5.

Discussing the role of documentation centres in the voluntary sector, in the context of information as power, any kind of al-ternative notion of power subscribed to by us, would have to mean that

1. The information is related to the life and needs of people.
2. While it is difficult to say when information is produced, the information needs to be produced or that information documented which gives people some concept of their "self-image"
3. Such information or process of collecting, producing or documenting information should combat all manipulative informa-tion
- 4. The information should enhances self-determination, by ena-bling self-decision
5. The information should enable the understanding of social forces & throw up alternatives, leading to struggles.

Thus process of information must lead to self-action

Various centres gave a description of their work, and their linkages

- Each DC gave a brief on the sources of the information at their centre and the users of this information. It was point^{ed} out that a joint list of magazines, journals and newspapers exists alongwith agreed at codes, though information from some of the Centres are → not up-to date. The information is available in a database at CED. It is available at costs in print or on floppy.

Non Formal Documentation

In his presentation on non-formal documentation, John discussed some of the practicalities of doing documentation from non formal sources. See Apendix 1.

Unnayan took the responsibility to work out the Part II details for housing issues, YUVA for displacement and Project LAYA for Land issues. Helge to do a simplified version of Human Rights formats.

A two day meeting is scheduled to be held on the 26th and 27th February 1990 to (now slated for 17th & 18th September, at Puri) discuss these drafts and to try and finalize them.

September 19

Standard Huridocs & Events Format: Helge of Huriocs presented a brief idea of the Standard Huridocs & Events Formats. He also explained that Programmers' Network-DIPIN was being formed to undertake programming which all NGOs can use. The main problems that will be worked on, will related to 1. interfacing between Huridocs, CED package & other systems. 2. On line help system to make most of these packages user friendly. 3. Other useful packages for rebooting.

DCM Standard Index Format - Additions and Changes:

Many changes in the format had been suggested during Pre-DCM. These changes have been incorporated and are shown in Appendix 3. (to be sent later)

Thesaurus:

The need for Thesaurus was discussed. However the tasks was seen as too large for us to handle. Aspi suggested that every centre just sent us their classification system highlighting words which they feel describe a particular class and number. This would however not show relation between words or lead to a short listing of permitted words, which is the main purpose of a thesaurus.

Joint Projects:

The following projects were discussed as possibilities

1. Bibliographies
2. Magazine Indexing

It was decided to do a Joint Index/Bibliography, Magazine Indexing for three journals and try a system of exchange of documents

3. Exchange of Documents
4. Translation

The question of Translation will be taken at the DCM while discussing language Documentation Centres.

5. Newsletter

It was decided not to go in for a Newsletter at the moment.

September 20

The last day was mainly spent for finalising Schedules & Plans.
Schedule of Meetings and Workshops

1. A meeting of NGOs in Delhi on 30th September
2. Finalization of INDIALINK proposal in Calcutta on 10th and 11th

November

3. Computer Training in Bombay from 15th to 25th February 1990. The training will cover DOS operations, basics of programming in DBase III+ and aspects related to transition from a manual to a computerised system.
4. This will be followed by a 2 day meeting to discuss Formats on 26th and 27th February 1990.
5. DCM5 is being hosted by CYSD in Bhubaneswar. The dates for the DCM main sessions are 19th to 22nd September 1990. DCM5 will be preceded by 2 days pre-DCM meet on the 17th and 18th to brief new participants.

Follow up plans

1. Thesaurus:

The first step towards developing the thesaurus is that each centre would have to send us their own classification system.

Some hints -

- a) Across each number they should write the keywords which describe the articles, books or other material under that classification.
- b) The first word must be the main descriptor of that particular classification number. Please underline this word or write RK in brackets to signify Root Keyword.
- c) After this those who can should mark each of these other words

as either the Broader Term (BT) () in brackets or Narrower Term (NT) () or Related Term (RT) () in brackets.

Some clarifications - Please note that the term "broader" or "narrower" or "related" is relative to the root keyword or rather that the first word that you fill in under each classification. You should enter only those terms which would describe the topics covered under that classification number.

2. Sources:

The table of sources circulated at DCM3 will be updated. Please update on your copy and send it to CED, stating whether it is cut and goes into the clippings section(C), or kept as a journal(J), report(R) etc. The entire list of codes is given in the DCM Format for standardised index-card.

DRC to prepare a consolidated list of all sources with details of subscription and addresses.

3. Journal 3 + 3:

CYSD, DRC and CED to index all pending issues of 1988 of the journals and all issues upto the current issue of 1989 by the end of December. A request to Geeta(DRC) and Gitanjali(CYSD), please send the indexes of each issue to CED as and when it is done so that we can start printing the cards. CYSD to see if they can input directly into the computer, by using CED programme. ISI to confirm if they would index a minimum of 3 journals on a regular basis.

The cost per card is 25 paise with printing. CED will soon be sending you a bill.

4. Exchange of Documents:

To enhance the exchange of documents between centres, we had agreed to prepare a listing of duplicate books, documents and any other material that we could offer to other centres. Two listings of such material will be circulated per year. You should send the first list of duplicates at your centre to Ramani, ISST by the end of December 1989 who will then circulate a compiled list to all centres.

5. Updating Housing Index:

Unnayan, SEWA, YUVA and CENDIT to send to CED the list of material not covered in the earlier housing index in order to update the housing index. If possible they should be sent on floppies. Also those who have material covered in the earlier index, should send in their reference numbers. The deadline is end of December 1989.

6. Documentation in Local languages:

This topic will be taken up in greater detail at the next DCM but to initiate a discussion and sharing of ideas it was decided that Unnayan and Tamil Dalit Liberation Movement will co-ordinate and prepare a paper by December which will be circulated to all centres.

Some suggested points to be covered: 1) systems and method of documenting such material. 2) what will be the sources of information, will it be only the newspapers and other material which is produced in the local language, or will this need to be supplemented by other state and national newspapers.

Towards evolving systems for non-formal documentation

John D'Souza. DCM4. Sept.89

As documentalist, we have learnt the value of systematic collection of information over a period of time. Seemingly unimportant information, when placed in a chain of information, subjectwise, area-wise and or class/group wise, seem to exhibit a new meaning and inter-connectedness for the reader.

Since non-formal sources represent important people oriented and decentralised and scattered knowledge, documentation of such sources become an imperative for those documentalists working in the voluntary sector, especially those working directly with or indirectly for the marginalised sections of society. The task of documentation of non-formal sources must be seen as an attempt to bring about an inter-subjectivity to the information, outside the pail of oral tradition.

random → From our experience we have seen, that given large collections and information overload, indexing, cross referencing are the key to make sense of a ranom collection of information. Thus, just as we have a standardised format for indexing books, journals and other information material from formal sources, we should try and arrive at some standard formats for documentation of information from rural/grassroot level.

The information available in the field could be of varying types.

a) Recorded: Groups reports, letters of activists notes, diaries, local press, wallpapers, pamphlets, slides, photographs Annual reports & old Survey data etc..

b) Non-recorded: Folklore, stories, songs, plays, rituals, bhajans, oral knowledge like on medicines etc. These maybe then recorded by the documentatlists or toher like the activists. These include interviews, photographs, slides, video, audio tapes,

c) Incident/status investigation, like human rights issues, where we might go an investigate different cases, over different geographic areas and over time. Other issues that can under this category are housing, land, farming practices, pollution, environment, violence against women. These also include survey data as a sub-category.

As far as Recorded information is concerned, what we need is a way of intergrating the information into our system, ie physically. Will they go in files, according to classification number ? Or will they go in chronologically ? Or will we keep them seperately from the other documentation files ? While activists notes, diaries, clippings from local press, pamphlets can easily go into files, they could be kept seperately. This depends on the nature of the classification system and the nature of retrieval needs. For example if retrieval is required according to the organisation concerned, is the classification also organised that way or is it, topic wise?

One way of keeping this material alongwith the regular files, is that of making an index card type covering page to the document (referred to as Part 1). This page is of half quarto size and contain basic information. Carbon or xerox copies can be also be for cross referencing and these copies can be kept in a seperate index file. A reader wil thus get access to the information from any of the referenced points. It is like a multiple card system.

Since it is very much like a detailed catalogue, it would be better if this format is similar to the standard index formats agreed at earlier at DCM, in which case it can be intergrated into the normal catalogue or index of the Centre concerned. Or the computerised databases for that matter. Making a Bibliography from it will also be easier.

The other function of this type of index, which should normally be part of the first page attached to the document, is the need for a proper citation to the piece of information as well as certain information required to authenticate and locate the documemnt. Thus Part I contains entries similar to the index card and so includes conventions for writing title, author, publisher etc. We shall come to the details of the style later.

The second type of information ie non-recorded is also challenging in the sense that not only have we to decide how to classify and store this information, we are invovled in the process of actually creating the information and can decide in what form a certain type of incident could be recorded. Should you record an interview on video, audio or later transcribe it to paper? Back-up information like photographs collected from the people, folkjlore, songs, interesting people etc can also be acquired and co-related. Thus for this information, unlike the first category → some of our own names may actually figure under the author field. In the abstract we could also add details of other related documents collected but classified elsewhere or under another topic.

The third category of information (ie. the incident or status investigation) is the most challenging, because it has a logitudinal dimension. Some of us may want to keep information on say human rights violation over a period of time and make some analysis quantitatively eg to the number of deaths, or qualitatively eg political circumstances when such violation occured. Given this, it is obvious the format for different issues will be different for example the type of format for a human rights violation will be different from the type of format for say land alienation, or pollution monitoring. The information required for this should form another part of the format and not replace or be confused with Part I, becuase Part I is required for efficient filing, indexing cross-referencing as well as interfacing it with the other parts of our documentation centre and the index for the formal sources.

Thus, Part I is contained in a half quarto size page stapled to the front of the document, while Part II could be one of two pages of cyclostyled or handwritten text. Each type of issue will have to have a separate format as far as Part II is concerned as the details required for each of them are different.

The format of the index card is familiar to you all and is also presented elsewhere in this report.

The accessibility code: is similar to other documentation: under type it would be C if it was kept with the other clippings or someother code (to be standardised at subsequent meetings).

Title: The format suggested was ..
On "...." ie write On followed open inverted commas and then the subject being dealt with and then close inverted commas. This should briefly indicate the topics covered by the piece being documented.

Author: In case of recorded information, this would be the name of the person concerned using the same system as for other authors in formal systems. Besides there will be other standard entries like Folklore.. The standards will have to evolve slowly with experience.

Publication/Publisher: The entry in this will be .. Unpublished

Date: (Date of recording information)

Keywords: As usual

Cross-referencing.

Abstract.: Naturally the most important field will be abstract. The following information must be included in the abstract or in a cyclostyle additional page to cover the following:
(While the style can be codified after more experience is gained, for the present the information could be recorded under the following subheads

1. Kind of material
2. Locational referencing:
3. Historical/background referencing
4. Dating of incident
5. Supplier of information
6. Authenticated/Recorded by:
7. Any contact for further information:
8. Whether printable, quotable etc:

Under kind of material please state whether the document concerned is a recording, interview, diary, letter, slide photo, video. Also state any particular style used.

Under Locational referencing - whether the document concerned is dealing at the village level, community level, caste level, in which case which village, taluka, district, community, caste etc Any important/significant information about that particular village, or caste or community which is not common knowledge.

Under Historically/Background referencing any important event, social information, history that provides the background, back-drop or causal connection.

Dating of information/incident - The date, period of the incident referred to (as opposed to the date of recording which is there in the upper part of the index card.)

Supplier of information: Name (if identifiable or attributed) with other relevant information according circumstances and importance like sex, age, family status, caste, social status (in short whatever is significant about the supplier in the context of the document concerned.