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Report on the

International Workshop on ‘Greenstone’ November 27 – December 02, 2006, Kozhikode, India Supported by UNESCO – DSIR – IIMK

This workshop was organized and conducted jointly by Dr. Sreekumar, Librarian of Indian Institute of Management Kozhikode (IIMK) and Prof. Ian Witten, University of Waikato, New Zealand, developer of the Greenstone Digital Library Software (GSDL), kindly supported by UNESCO, DSIR (Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, part of the Ministry of Science and Technology of India) and members of different departments of IIMK. It took place on the campus of IIMK which is located on the rolling hills of Kerala, about 15 km close to Kozhikode. Due to the support of the organisations mentioned above, the participation fee was highly subsidized and reduced to Rs. 1000/- for the whole stay during the 6-day workshop including very good food and comfortable lodging. This made the workshop affordable not only to the 31 Indian participants but also to the 9 international participants (from Sri Lanka (4), Maldives (2), Bangladesh (2) including myself (staying in India for about 2 months as Visiting Scientist at Documentation Research and Training Centre, Indian Statistical Institute, Bangalore. My research topic here in India is “Open Source Based Digital Repositories in India made publicly available over the Internet”.)

I was happy to get the chance to participate in the workshop not only to get familiar with GSDL and colleagues from all around South Asia, but also because there were about 100 aspirants for the workshop.

The Workshop was inaugurated in a very friendly and open minded manner giving at least all the supporting parties the chance to address the audience. Prof. Ian Witten then showed the variety of applications which can be developed using GSDL. His inviting and friendly way of explaining the features provided by the software was helpful in getting into the topic. At the end of the first day all of us knew at least the basics to set up a DL with GSDL. An icebreaking session gave some insights of the different interest and environments the participants had for taking part in the workshop. Additionally it showed that the experience in implementing GSDL has been quite different. This has resulted in some problems while running the exercises because the pace of learning by the participants has been different as well.

A very interesting aspect was the variety of optional applications of GSDL, observed and used during the workshop. Those sessions showing the examples of installations have been very fruitful and inspiring. Additionally, the presentations and exercises, which were based on the problems users normally would face while setting up and maintaining a Digital Library

gave a very good start. For all those of us who are planning to set up a new language interface in their mother tongue the presentation gave various problem solving ideas.

Included in the workshops schedule were social and cultural events. I enjoyed most the performance of Kathakali, the traditional Kerala dance.

In total the workshop was great experience getting in contact with so many colleagues from India and other countries. They as well took the chance to ask me a lot of questions on the LIS situation in Germany and the possibilities for staying there or taking part in an exchange program which has been set up by the German Research Foundation and NHI (see http://www.dfg.de/internationales/dfg_praesenz/delhi/aktuelles/download/initiative_indo_german_cooperation.pdf).

Having experienced a week full of learning, social interaction and cultural events I would like to give a warm "Thank you very much" to the organizers and contributors to the workshop. The following suggestions may contribute to the further enhancement of workshops like this. These represent a foreigner's point of view and might not be those of the other participants.

- The workshop showed that such an effort is a quite difficult project to realize due to the different expectations and the different levels of experience appearing in such a large number of participants. More specific ways of focusing on different target groups of participants might improve the outcome for future participants.
- The print course material given could be improved by offering the slides not as small as they are when 6 are printed on one page. Additionally the purpose and the expected outcome of the exercises should be mentioned so that the learning objective would be clearer to the learners. As well this would improve the course didactically.

A good idea would be to provide parts of the material in advance on the website, so that the participants can prepare themselves in a proper manner. This could as well be related to other material on the web like the GSDL Wiki.

- Some participants already had some experience with GSDL. It might have been a good idea to organize a presentation session for sharing their experience.
- Participants had been asked to bring their own material for DL projects. This might have been used in a small project starting within the workshop.
- Only some of the presentations given by members of other departments of IIMK were really related to the subject of the workshop. Focusing on the main topic of the workshop might have improved the outcome of these presentations.

Beside all these, the workshop was a great experience for me and I will be happy to share my GSDL experience with others in the future.

Kozhikode / Bangalore 7/12/06

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