

RESEARCH SUPPORT LIBRARIES PROGRAMME

Electronic Gateway for Icelandic Literature – EGIL

Project Report for AY2000-2001

Progress measured against work plan outlined in Project Plan

Progress has been made in all elements of the project, but has been affected by external constraints. The most serious was the difficulty in recruiting project cataloguers in this highly specialised area. In Oxford the short period of support required constituted a problem, possibly to be resolved by using local staff on extra hours. The situation was more serious for Nottingham, which had a much greater quantity of material to process. After failing to attract any candidates at all from our initial advertisement, the decision was taken to concentrate upon subject expertise and to provide training in cataloguing. This has necessitated very intensive training in the early stages of cataloguing and an on-going supervision requirement, beyond what was anticipated. An additional factor at Nottingham has been the implementation of a library management system software upgrade, which has made unpredictably heavy demands upon the project manager's time.

* Meetings of the Project Partners and Project Board (03.2001)

Informal meetings and discussions with academic advisers and partners in advance of the first official meetings helped to refine the Project Plan and to set priorities for the digitisation work. The first full meetings of the Partners and Board were held on 5 March 2001. The Project Plan was approved and action to carry forward all aspects of the project was agreed. It was anticipated that most of the Partners' communication could be undertaken by e-mail. The next Board meeting was scheduled for September 2001. However, the commitments of the Academic Advisers on the Board and of the Chair meant that this had to be rearranged for November.

* Project web site (03.2001)

The project web site was launched with indications of how it would develop into a subject gateway and provide access to digitised texts (URL: <http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/library/egil/>). The partners approved the overall design and level of information provided.

* Cataloguing (04.2001-07.2002)

Despite the recruitment difficulties, it is anticipated that the cataloguing element will be completed on schedule.

Leeds – Cataloguing of the microfilm newspapers has been completed.

Nottingham – Between April and July records for 570 titles were created/converted, approximately 20% of the work to be done. With training now complete, the rate of progress can be assessed and seen to be adequate to meet targets.

Oxford, University College London – Arrangements were being put in place to complete the retroconversion at each site by their target dates.

* Methodology for sharing acquisitions information (03.2001—5.2001)

The methodology was agreed in principle at the meeting of the partners which was held in March. Since then, a web form has been developed and put in place on the EGIL web site. The reported titles will constitute a browsable archive for the partners at the EGIL-CCM (EGIL Collaborative Collection Management) page at Jiscmail. Testing and further development of the methodology is on-going until the conclusion of the project.

Early feedback from partners suggests that findings in this area will reflect a tension between research and teaching needs, with purchasing power largely limited to texts required for curriculum work at individual sites. We anticipate that our final report will flag the significance of donated material as a prime – but unmanageable – source for collection strengths.

* Digitisation of selected texts (04.2001-03.2002)

Scanning methodology – Preparatory work (December 2000-March 2001) included agreement on objectives for the pilot stage, training in use of the equipment and establishment of a methodology for the scanning.

Selection of texts to be digitised – In meetings and discussions with the Academic Advisers to the Project, possible themes for material to be digitised were evaluated and texts nominated. For practical reasons it was agreed that all scanning should be undertaken at Nottingham. At the November meeting the Academic Advisers will recommend whether any texts should be offered from partner libraries.

Scanning of texts – Scanning of six texts was completed by July 2001. Digitisation is proceeding on a regular basis as planned.

Mounting of texts and navigation – Through demonstrations of the scanned texts and discussions with potential users we have established preferences for the mounting and navigation of the texts. Work is in hand to deliver these using items with varying levels of text/image to test the efficiency of the methodology.

* Subject gateway (04.2001-07.2002)

Content – At the Partners' meeting a methodology for developing and approving the content of the subject gateway was agreed with a view to making the gateway reflect the consensus of the views of the partners – and enabling all who wish to contribute descriptions. The data elements to be included in descriptions were approved. Sample descriptions and a list of sites already identified for inclusion in the gateway are about to be circulated to Partners and Academic Advisers for comment.

Technical aspects – Work has begun in Nottingham on the creation of a database to hold the descriptions. The basic structure exists in outline and we are investigating the modalities of indexing the data to take account of the indexing and display of special characters and diacritics which will be found in the descriptions – but which not all users will have the capacity to input and search with. We anticipate this being developed during December 2001.

* Collection descriptions (04.2001-06.2001)

In the Plan it was intended that the collection descriptions would be completed by the end of June 2001. The data elements to be included in the descriptions were discussed at the Partners' meeting and approved. However, the fact that the UKOLN Access database to facilitate the creation and manipulation of collection descriptions was not yet in place made it desirable to defer this work. This has unfortunately made inevitable a clash between the resumption of the CLDs and other commitments of subject librarians, but creation and mounting of the collection descriptions is now an early priority.

* Publicity and evaluation

The project manager gave a paper to the Viking Society for Northern research about the project in June 2001 and also in that month participated in the RSLP Dissemination day with a PowerPoint presentation of elements of the project and samples of the work being produced.

We are proposing to the Academic Advisers, who have undertaken to assist in the evaluation of the gateway, that this should take place in February 2002. This appears the earliest point when sufficient data will be available to enable a critical assessment to be made, while still allowing time for feedback to influence the final stages of the project.

General conclusion

Although the initial stages of the project were affected by recruitment difficulties, these have now been overcome. Progress has been made on all strands of the project, more or less in line with the project plan, and we are in no doubt that we will complete the work, with all the deliverables, on schedule.

JCW

October 2001