

*ADDITIONAL FUNDING FOR MODERNISING AND
TRANSFORMING THE BRITISH LIBRARY FOR DEVELOPMENT
STUDIES*

ESCOR Contract R7932

FINAL REPORT

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SUMMARY

This contract was awarded to IDS to carry out three additional sets of activities in the Information Unit during the first quarter of 2001. These activities build on the work already being carried out and allow the British Library for Development Studies to accelerate its modernization and transformation process. The main achievements have been as follows:

- Marketing materials have been prepared by a consultant and will soon be sent out to potential users. A database of copyright owners has been created so that permission can be requested for document delivery. A pilot Briefing Service has been run for DFID staff in Kenya and the users have been visited.
- Four new servers have been acquired with associated software, consultancy and training to strengthen and update the technical infrastructure for IDS online information services.
- The feasibility study for an Online Guide to Development Agency National Strategy Documents has made substantial progress with writing background papers, collecting and assessing documents and contacting users.

The objectives set out in the proposal have been successfully completed, although some follow-up activities are still underway.

INTRODUCTION

With support from the Department for International Development (DFID), the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) is in the process of modernizing the British Library for Development Studies (BLDS) and transforming it into a global development information resource. This is capitalizing on its unique document collection and taking advantage of the new opportunities that the Internet affords to expand the reach and impact of IDS information services.

On 10th January 2001, DFID awarded a contract to IDS to carry out three additional sets of activities during the first quarter of 2001. These activities build on the work already being carried out by the IDS Information Unit and allow IDS to accelerate the modernization and transformation process.

1. Accelerated Marketing and Copyright Clearance
2. Technical Infrastructure Investment
3. Feasibility Study for an Online Guide to development agency Country Strategies

The project period is now completed and this report sets out what has been achieved under each heading.

1. Accelerated Marketing and Copyright Clearance

The aim of the acceleration programme was to make progress in the three areas that would otherwise have proved particularly laborious and slowed implementation of the Action Plan.

1.1 Marketing and Publicity

The Acceleration Programme has allowed us to import marketing skills to generally raise awareness of BLDS and particularly to launch the new online services – document delivery, email updates, and briefing services. Apart from the costs of design, stationery and postage, we have invested in 10 days' work by our marketing consultant plus 10 days' clerical assistance. This has involved building a target client database of some 2000 potential customers, designing letterheads, leaflets, posters and card “joggers”, initial mailout, further marketing through administrators, newsletter publications, leaflet insertions and campaigning to identify “key” personnel.

We have completed the database and design phases and are proceeding to printing and mailout. The impact of the marketing work will be monitored during the next Plan quarter to June 2001.

1.2 Copyright Clearance

At the start of the plan the implications of copyright law for the proposed document delivery service were obscure. This programme was used to obtain a report on these issues from a leading copyright law expert, Dr Ray Wall of Loughborough University, and to execute the more laborious parts of a programme to obtain permission from publishers/rights holders for full-text delivery of their publications.

Two full-time clerical assistants were employed from the beginning of February to the end of March (a total of 560 hours) to find names and addresses of publishers/rights holders for our 1054 core journals. They entered this information on a new Access database which can now be used to generate labels for standard letters to be sent seeking permission from publishers and rights holders.

1.3 Kenya Briefing Service

Putting together a prototype subscription package required much time and skill and the acceleration programme enabled us to employ a research assistant to give time and specialised subject skills to add to those of BLDS staff. The Head of Library, Michael Bloom, was able to visit the DFID offices in Nairobi and Kampala to interview at first hand the users of this pilot information service, evaluate outputs and monitor response. It was also invaluable to interview further potential customers for BLDS services among other agencies in Kenya and Uganda (government offices, bilateral and multilateral development agencies, UN, and NGOs).

The initial free pilot service comes to an end at the end of April and further developments from this visit are to be expected over the next quarter of the Action Plan, when a full report will be provided.

The Kenya Briefing Service website is at <http://www.ids.ac.uk/blds/kenya/>

2. Technical Infrastructure Investment

IDS information services all rely on a shared technical infrastructure providing access to high-speed servers, latest database software, advanced e-mail management systems, and other facilities. These services include the DFID-funded projects based at IDS such as BLDS, ID21, GDNNet and Livelihoods Connect as well as the various web sites being developed for IDS-based research programmes.

IDS has an ongoing investment programme driven by the steadily increasing needs of information projects and new technical opportunities, but it is always constrained by the funds available at any given time. This project has allowed the purchase and installation of new hardware and software, buying in consultancy, and staff training. The main investments were as follows.

2.1 Next generation Webserver hardware and software to enhance web-based information services

An HP LC2000 Server with 1024 Gb RAM, two 933 MHz processors and three 18 Gb RAID disk drives has been purchased from Trident Computers (UK) and configured to handle large web databases and other dynamic services. Extra software licences have been purchased for Webpublisher, DB/Textworks and ColdFusion. Testing and security configuration of the hardware and software is under way and planning of the migration of some services. Two members of staff, Duncan Edwards and Andrew Buxton, have attended DB/Textworks training at Soutron Ltd in Derby and places have been booked for Debbie Beer and Duncan Edwards on ColdFusion training courses in London. A new network hub has been purchased to provide 100 Mbs access to the new servers.

2.2 System for handling larger number of websites and domain names

A second HP LC2000 Server with 1024 Gb RAM, two 933 MHz processors and three 36 Gb DAID disk drives has been purchased to allow for efficient hosting and management of larger numbers of domain names and individual websites. New projects increasingly require their own "dot org" domain names to make it easy for users to find them and this will reduce our reliance on third-party redirection services with limited facilities. Trident Computers provided one day's consultancy to set up the three servers purchased from them. Additional software licences have been purchased to cover this server. Testing of this system and planning of the migration are also under way.

2.3 Move to next generation of email access to web services

A new Linux server was commissioned from LinuxIT of Bristol to provide enhanced email access to IDS web services and replace the obsolete system running on a Sun workstation. This will enable expansion of the service providing email access to the IDS-hosted web pages for users where internet access is lower quality, slower speed or higher cost. The WWW4MAIL software was obtained from the International Centre for Theoretical Physics, University of Trieste: LinuxIT provided the hardware, configuration and onsite training of two IDS staff.

Testing is underway and discussions are being held with ID21, Livelihoods Connect and other projects on the design of new services.

2.4 Improved usage analysis facilities

A fourth server with two 933MHz processors and two 36Gb mirrored disk drives was purchased from Trident Computers (UK) Ltd to provide improved usage analysis of the IDS-based Internet services. This analysis is needed for both IDS staff and project funders on who is using the the IDS Internet services and how. The hardware and Hitlist software from ISSEL Ltd. have been installed and one day's bespoke training has been ordered. The system is under test but some production work has already been run.

3. Feasibility Study for an Online Guide to Development Agency National Strategy Documents (DANSD)

The project commenced mid January 2001 and is expected to report by mid-June. (No additional costs will result from this extension beyond 31 March.) The extended time frame will allow for user assessment to be completed. Responses from users are important to assess demand levels and individual needs.

Tasmia Mesbahuddin was recruited as project Research Assistant on 1 February. An inception meeting was then held with ESCOR on 21 February. Background papers on User Group Definition, National Strategy Document Definition, and Development Agency Definition are all drafted. A country and agency sample was identified (the countries are Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka), National Strategy Documents were collected from 10 bilateral agencies (JICA, USAID, DFID, DANIDA, Sida, NORAD, Finnida, SNV, Irish-Aid, BMZ) and these have been assessed. Contacts with a User Group were established for consultation on the demand and need for the guide and a survey was mailed out. A search for complimentary/ duplicating activities to the DANSD idea was carried out and no problems were identified. In-country collaboration was explored with the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies but unfortunately they could not be contracted before year-end. As they were to pilot an optional extra to the DANSD online guide this should not jeopardise the feasibility study. A comparative matrix structure has been designed and matrices are compiled for the sample countries. A senior researcher was sought to provide a quality check but could not be secured (so we proceeded with extra diligence). Demonstration webpage templates have been designed.

To bring the feasibility study to a conclusion by mid June, the next steps are to collect and assess demand and needs assessment results from the User Group, finalise the feasibility report, design funding strategy (as necessary) and present a report and demonstration webpages to ESCOR.