

# NORTH-SOUTH-SOUTH LIBRARY AND INFORMATION STUDIES NETWORK

**Coordinator:** University of Oulu, Finland

**Partners:** University of Namibia, Namibia; University of the Western Cape, South Africa; University of Dakar, Cheikh Anta Diop University, Senegal; Åbo Akademi University, Finland; Turku University of Applied Sciences, Finland

**Study areas:** Communication and Information Sciences



Partners in a network meeting in the Republic of South Africa. Photo by Ritva Hyttinen.

## What are the main aims of your network?

The aim is to establish co-operation on a triangular basis in the education of librarians, information professionals and Library and Information Studies researchers in the participating countries. Our intention is to give South African, Namibian, Senegalese and Finnish students the possibility to study abroad. The exposure to other cultures will widen teachers' and students' worldviews. Secondly, we want to give opportunities for teaching staff for joint pedagogical and curriculum development and production of teaching materials and publications. Third aim is to provide opportunities for co-operation in research.

Libraries and information centres have a crucial role in the literacy and the life-long learning of a population, the development of human rights, cultural heritage, and the encouragement of an advanced information and communication infrastructure. The information professionals have the competence to become an integral part of the learning process, helping people build bridges between the world of work or culture and the world of learning. This kind of support



is crucial in many African countries, where the learning skills among the population are in a need of improvement.

### What kind of activities are there in your network?

There are various activities: network meetings, intensive courses, student exchange on undergraduate and postgraduate level, teaching staff exchange, practical training, collaboration in doctoral studies and research, curriculum development in Library and Information Studies, exchange of information and development of teaching materials, and institutional capacity building.

### What sort of successes and challenges have you encountered during your project?

The qualitative and quantitative goals set for the project have been reached and all the partners have been equally represented in the mobility. We've had successful student and teacher exchanges with positive feedback from both. We also conducted a new course on knowledge management at the University of Oulu with one of the exchange teachers from an African university. It was quite a success and the students proved to be very productive in terms of credits earned.

A master's programme on knowledge management has been established at the University of the Western Cape after the first visits in 2006 and UNAM will develop this area too. The African partner universities have potential to enhance South-South collaboration in Knowledge Management in particular. Collaboration in research has been enhanced through peer-reviewing researchers' publications in the African host universities.

We had a network meeting at the University of Namibia in November 2008 where we successfully designed the content, budget and schedule for the intensive course that was organised there in March 2009.

We have noticed that the different content of the curricula at the host universities requires flexibility from the participating universities – it is not always easy to match the study plans in all partner countries. More flexibility with the study plans would increase the potential for really effective student exchanges.

### Your advice to forthcoming networks

It takes time for the collaborating partners to learn to know each other and to be aware of cultural issues that can affect co-operation. Try to meet face-to-face, include all partners in communication, try to build on trust, and be patient with your partners.

