KAS Amman Library: On Top of Progress
in the Information Society
by Gerrit F. Schlomach, KAS Regional Office Amman

Last year Gerrit was studying for his exams at the oldest German library at the University of Heidelberg. After graduation he moved to the Middle East, in the "name of knowledge". Through this change, the former student of political science was transformed into Mr. Gerrit F. Schlomach M.A., the scientific assistant at the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAS) Regional Office in Amman.

His mission: Books! His objective: To develop a multilingual library as an open space of knowledge in Jordan. After the combined efforts of all participating forces[1] and the deployment of WinISIS 1.5, the first step of the mission was completed at the beginning of 2006. As a result, more than 1,000 documented sources were reported to the Konrad Adenauer Foundation Headquarters in Berlin.

The success story of "Mission in Books", Amman

At the heart of the KAS Amman Library is the WinISIS 1.5[2] software distributed by UNESCO for free and described as follows: "a menu-driven generalized Information Storage and Retrieval system designed specifically for the computerized management of structured non-numerical data bases." Behind this cryptic description you find simple database software which can handle all kinds of information in a self-designed manner.

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[1] Special thanks to Josephine Sanchez (technical assistant), Dipl.-Bibl Heike Scherle (University of Heidelberg) and Klaus-Peter Kalinowski-Jagau (CDS/ISIS Netzwerk e.V), Tova Scherr (intern) as well as Aida Ben Saad (former employee at IFPO Amman).

[2] http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=5330&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html (21.12.05)

When the Regional Office in Amman started searching for appropriate software[3] not only were the issues of functionality and information retrieval important, but so was the multilingual application. In all three areas WinISIS proved convincing results. The UNESCO office in Paris distributes the software for free in English, French and Spanish. To have access to the software you only need to fill out the online registration form - that's all. Thanks to the support of UNESCO, there are now versions in all kinds of different languages available, like Arabic, Chinese or Korean. German users can find on the CDS/ISIS Netzwerk e.V.[4] website an appropriate user interface as well as German documentation. The software user is free to change the language of the user interface whenever he wants. The functions of the software include all the features you need for data processing. However, it has to be mentioned that it takes some time to understand all the functions and to use the software in an appropriate way, because you are free to follow your individual desires and needs at all times.

In order to organize the library, the KAS Regional Office developed a systematization based on the leading ordering systems: the Dewey Decinal System[5] and the Library of Congress Classification[6]. Our alphanumeric system includes three layers, 11 main levels from A (as in Allgemeines [Generals]) to Z (as in Zeitschriften [Journals]). Before we started labelling the books, we kept in mind the local landscape of libraries in Jordan and tried to be more user-friendly. However, what is the best classification worth when you don't have keywords to find a source easily? Once more the KAS Regional Office in Amman found a satisfactory solution through the websites of UNESCO[7]. The UNESCO Thesaurus, used as the ground of the UNESCO Computerized Documentation System (CDS), contains an index in English, Spanish and French with more than 6,600 keywords. Although you can buy the thesaurus from UNESCO, there is ample information and documentation sources available online[8]. However, practice makes perfect in using keywords in order to guarantee a fully successful mission in books.

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[3] WinISIS competed with -BookCat (33,50 EUR), Allegro-c (180 EUR), Greenstone digital library (for free).
[4] http://www.isisnetz.de/ (21.12.05)
[5] http://www.mtsu.edu/~vvesper/dewey.html (21.12.05)
[6] http://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpso/lcco/lcco.html (21.12.05)
[7] http://www.ulcc.ac.uk/unesco/ (21.12.05)
[8] http://www.ulcc.ac.uk/unesco/intro/introeng.pdf (21.12.05)

Sustainable utilization of strategic resource books

It is common knowledge that after completing a mission we must stop to evaluate along way before we start the next step. Accordingly, the first step of 'operation in books' is completed, which will be followed by further measures: getting linked into the Jordanian information network, permanent maintenance and enlargement of the sources, as well as installing the library software in our office in Tunis. All this must be done to guarantee the use of strategic resource books in our partner countries. Now we are working on our future web presentation -- soon we will announce the KAS Amman library is online!

About Konrad Adenauer Stiftung

Committed to supporting democracy, freedom and justice, the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) has been active in Jordan and the Near and Middle East for more than 20 years. As one of the largest political foundations in Germany, the work of KAS´Amman Office in the field of social and economic politics aims at contributing to stronger integration and networking between Germany and Jordan as well as the countries of the Near East Region on one hand, and promoting Euro-Arab Dialogue on the other. Dedicated to the legacy of the first German Chacellor Konrad Adenauer (1876-1967), the foundation works together with partners on a national and regional level in order to strengthen:

- Democracy and the Rule of Law
- Development of a free and social economical system
- Euro-Mediterranean Dialogue and Peace Process in the Near East
- Dialogue of Cultures and Religions.