

THAI NATIONAL INFORMATION SYSTEM (THAI NATIS)**

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INTRODUCTION

In accordance with resolution 2.131 adopted by the UNESCO General Conference at its seventeenth meeting in October-November 1972, the first session of the UNISIST Advisory Committee was opened at UNESCO House in Paris on February 4, 1974. The session was opened by the Assistant Director-General for Science, Mr. J.M. Harrison. After welcoming the Committee members on behalf of the Director-General, he reminded the Committee that, although nominated in a personal capacity, they represented the interests of both producers and users of information and also those responsible for information transfer. He outlined the developments leading up to the formation of the world science information system, identifying the four bodies responsible for the UNISIST program: the intergovernmental conferences for long-term plan approval; the Steering Committee to supervise and revise the program; the advisory Committee to ensure the UNISIST program met the needs of the world communities of scientists and engineers; and finally the executive Office within the UNESCO Secretariat for the implementation of the program details.

The Assistant Director-General for Science also drew the attention of the Committee members to the Statutes which defined their responsibilities as: "The Com-

mittee shall assess the changing requirements and trends of the world's communities of scientists, engineers and technologists for scientific, technical and engineering information and shall advise the Director-General thereon as well as assist him at periodic intervals to evaluate the relevance and adequacy of program performance in relation to these needs." In expressing the main preoccupation of the advisory Committee, the Assistant Director-General for Science emphasized the role of the committee in examining the present and medium-term programs in the perspective of future trends and developments in the information world. He also pointed out the role of the Committee to advise the Director-General in concrete terms as to what measures should be proposed for evaluation and implementation of the overall program. These measures are proposed to the UNESCO General Conference to ensure the effectiveness of UNISIST.

The Assistant Director-General for Science also drew the Committee's attention to the decisions made by the Steering Committee at its first session in November 1973 which had been presented as a background paper to the Advisory Committee. One particular point of emphasis made by the Steering Committee was the need for the UNISIST program to harmonize all relevant information and documentation activities

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of the United Nations family and to attempt to harmonize as far as possible the activities of all non-governmental organizations in this area. Priorities endorsed by the Steering Committee covered the activities in relation to systems interconnection and assistance to developing countries, especially in training and education, and at the same asked for greater flexibility in the UNISIST budget to respond to the rapid development of information technology.

THAI NATIONAL INFORMATION SYSTEM (THAINATIS)

The first meeting of the UNISIST Advisory Committee was opened at UNESCO house in Paris on February 4, 1974. In accordance with UNISIST guidelines, the Thai National UNISIST Committee was appointed by the Government in 1974.

The major concern of the Committee was the development of manpower of the existing libraries, documentation centers and archives in Thailand

In 1981 the National UNISIST Committee agreed to establish a NATIONAL INFORMATION SYSTEM in order to increase the efficiency of existing library and Information facilities, to avoid duplication of work, to co-ordinate existing information resources and help to meet the information needs of the country.

The project was submitted to the government for approval, and on December 2, 1986, the cabinet officially approved the establishment of the Thai National Information System (THAI NATIS).

The Cabinet also appointed the THAI NATIS Direction and Co-ordination Committee. On 28 January 1988, the Sub-Committee for the six central focal points of a national network were established.

MOVEMENT TOWARDS THE NATIONAL INFORMATION SYSTEM

After the establishment of the UNISIST Committee under the aegis of the National Commission for UNESCO in 1974, the movement towards the National Information System came in to being. Personnel of institutes, organizations and associations concerned, were familiarized about the information system by means of meetings, seminars and training courses. In 1977, the Thai Library Association organized its annual meeting under the theme, "The Organization of the Information System in Thailand" In 1984 the Thai Library Association held its annual meeting under the theme "Information System and National Development". In 1988 under the theme, "Library for tomorrow" The meeting also contributed valuable points on library network and information centers.

In the same year, the Sub-Committee on Library Development of the Ministry of University Affairs and Thammasat University held the 6th Seminar on the cooperation of Academic Libraries under the theme, "Academic Libraries and the Thai National information System".

In 1989, the Thai Library Association held its annual meeting under the theme "National Information System for National Development" which was attended by members and non members of the Thai Library Association.

OBJECTIVES OF THAI NATIS

1. To build up and organize information resources in order to render information services to Government offices, private organizations and to the public at large for individual development and national development.

2. To organize a standard information system and services.

3. To eliminate duplication and to provide information services.

4. To provide various sources of knowledge and information.

5. To ensure co-operation and coordination among libraries and information centers, for example in activities such as the exchange of information at national and international levels.

COMPONENTS OF THAI NATIS AND THEIR FUNCTIONS

1. Direction and Coordination Committee

1.1 To assure the carrying out of the THAI NATIS policy and operations for national development according to the principles and policy endorsed by the Cabinet.

1.2 To direct and to co-ordinate the work of the national information system, the management, resources services, and distribution of information.

1.3 To promote the interest and the capability of offices, organizations; And public private agencies in using academic information services and to request related government offices to support this activity.

1.4 To provide consultation and to support the operations of information network centers and academic information centers.

1.5 To oversee international assistance, exchange of information, and use of academic Information for national benefit and security in accordance with official regulations, especially the National Security Regulation BE. 2517 (A.D. 1974).

1.6 To appoint the Information Network Sub-committee and other sub-committees.

1.7 To undertake other tasks as assigned by the Cabinet under the project objectives.

2. Information Network Sub-committee

2.1 Sub-committee members are made up of representatives from libraries and information centers.

2.2 Functions and responsibilities.

3. Information Network Centers and Functions

3.1 Information Network Centers

The Ministry of Education and the National UNISIST Committee established

The following information network centers for each field:

- Agriculture Information Network Center at Kasetsart University Library
- Medical Science Information Center at Mahidol University Library
- Humanities Information Network Center at the National Library of Thailand
- Science and Technology Information Network Center at the Division of Scientific and Technological Information, Ministry of Science, Technology and Energy (presently known as Ministry of Science, technology and Environment).
- Economic Information Network Center at the Bank of Thailand Library and Information Center.
- Social Sciences Information Network Center at the Development and Document Center, National Institute of Development Administration.

3.2 Functions of Information Network Centers

- Collect data or information from various sources in response to the need of offices, organizations, institutes, and interested persons.
- Direct users to other information sources throughout the country.
- Promote and distribute information materials provided by information
- Centers in other fields which will be established in the future.

4. Office of the Secretary of THAI NATIS

The National Library of Thailand has been designated as the secretariat with the following duties:

- 4.1 Handle the secretarial work of the Direction and Co-ordination Committee.
- 4.2 Serve as liaison among the information network centers.
- 4.3 Serve as referral center.

THAI NATIS PROJECT

THAI NATIS is a large and important undertaking. There are worthy projects that need to be carried out. Several organizations, libraries and information centers cooperate with the National Library. **THAI NATIS** Direction and Coordination Committee and the Committee of six other information focal points to promote the National Information System as follows:

The National Library which serves as the Secretariat for NATIS provides facilities and seminars. In addition, the National Library provides users services : provision

of retrospective search dissemination of information; issues periodical indexes; registries and catalogues; offers awareness information contained in the **THAI NATIS** data bases, disseminates of microfiches of primary documents; searches the **THAI NATIS** union catalogue data bases; and issues the **THAI NATIS** Union Catalogue Index.

The National Library also organized the seminar "Administrators and National Information System Development" on August 17, 1990, with 278 participants. In order to catch up with information technology, a seminar is organized on an annual basis.

NATIONAL INFORMATION SYSTEM PROMOTION

The National Library and the six Thai NATIS Information Network Centers Secretariat have carried out the following activities to promote the national information system :

- A radio program about **THAI NATIS** broadcasting through the National Broadcasting Station of Thailand.
- Seminars were organized with cooperation University Libraries on such topics as "University Libraries and National Information System" and "Potential Development of University libraries"
- A paper on "The National Library's Role in the National Information System and Services" was presented at the ASEAN seminar on "Education and Training for Library and Information Personnel"
- A paper on "Thailand integrated Library Automation Service" was presented at the seminar on "ALP:Third World Priority with Reference to Thailand" with support from the Thai Library Association.

- Lectures, exhibitions, brochures and articles published in library and information science journals.

- In 1999, the government provide funds to create the network core at the National Library of Thailand to link six information network centers, In the next phase, the National Library of Thailand will extend networking and resource sharing between the THAI NATIS network and other libraries and information centers.

OBSTACLES ENCOUNTERED BY THAI NATIS

Obstacles encountered in relation to the Information System Network can be summarized as follows:

1. The existing information sources such as libraries and information centers do not receive enough support from the government to enable them to improve their efficiency.

2. A lack of co-ordination among the concerned agencies keeps the existing resources from being exploited.

3. There is not enough capital to invest in extending information services,

4. The shortage of information manpower

5. Existing information are not yet utilized to their full potential.

6. Information presently available usually originates from abroad, so it may sometimes not meet the local needs. Local information is also far from being available.

FUTURE PLAN

In order to upgrade information service quality to international standards, the National Library of Thailand and six information network centers have to propose a budget to the government under the five-year National Economic and Social Development Plan 1999-2003. Additional financial and technical support both from the Thai government and international organizations are needed to strengthen the THAI NATIS.



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