

Construction of a Culture–Rich Database System for Indigenous Documentary Records: Conceptual Model, Flexible Classification, and Methodology

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The digitized collections and their associated metadata records are one of the most important electronic resources that require constant and ongoing management. Construction of an easy-to-use database system is a key and necessary part of this management effort. Due to the lack of a local classification scheme for a thematic collection, constructing a database system that is searchable by browsing through a layered knowledge map is challenging. In this chapter, the authors first summarize some useful theories and principles for constructing a user-friendly database system, then point out some database system goals, i.e., functions that are useful for such a database system. Finally, using the database system for video and photograph resources on Taiwan's indigenous people as an example, they present the solutions for achieving the goals. The purpose of this case is to demonstrate how to construct an ideal database system for the electronic resources born from digitization projects.

ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND

The case study presented in this chapter concerns the database system for video and photograph resources of Taiwan indigenous people. This project has been funded by a national government institution in Taiwan, the Council of Indigenous People of the Executive Yuan (CIP). The CIP was formally established in 1996, with the mission to facilitate social affairs and to provide services for indigenous Taiwan people. Among the goals emphasized are preserving cultural heritages; promoting culture-related education in tribes; and inviting the Taiwan and international societies to deepen their understanding about the rich culture of indigenous Taiwan people. In the past ten years, for cultural preservation purposes, the CIP has sponsored various digitization projects for materials related to indigenous people. Examples are image and audio-video records of ritual activities and festivals, scholars' field trip investigations, interviews of tribal leaders or seniors, special performances, and conferences and forums on the issues concerning the indigenous people. As the CIP is an administrative institution within the Taiwan government's Executive Yuan, it owns very few cultural relics and has no technical department included in its organization. Therefore, the majority of the digitization projects are contracted out. The contractors need to provide or to find relevant, important resources with cultural value and obtain approval from the CIP to receive funds for the digitization projects. Continuous collaboration with contractors in the past has resulted in a series of separate databases. Consequently, the CIP desires to establish a platform for the public to access the various digital collections. However, the current platform established for providing easy access actually is no more than a portal and the digitized collections are still independent from each other, even though the materials are of the same format and on similar topics. Integration of various kinds of individual collections has become a major concern and issue for the Council because an easy-to-use integrated database system can better promote the use of the digitized resources, thereby fulfilling its mission to preserve and to provide the use of cultural heritages and related relics. The National Taiwan University Library (NTUL), having experience in library management and in many successful digitization and database construction projects funded by the National Science Council of Taiwan in the past ten years, has been entrusted as a contracted institution to operate and to manage the CIP affiliated Taiwan Indigenous People Resource Center (TIPRC). Additionally, it conducts digitization projects for the first-hand resources. From 2010, the Formosa Aboriginal Song and Dance Troupe (FASDT) foundation entrusted the NTUL with digitization projects for the audio-video and photograph resources they had created in addition to what they had collected since the early 1980s. In consideration of providing an integration example for the CIP, the digitization project was conducted based on some theories and principles of library and information

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