



PRESS RELEASE

African Studies Centre and Leiden University Library cooperating in "Digital Africana Repositories Community" (DARC) project

The new DARC project is an initiative of the African Studies Centre (ASC) in Leiden to make all Africanist research material and information in the Netherlands accessible through a community portal on the Internet. The aim is to establish an integrated information service that can provide effective answers to user queries, such as:

- who is working in African Studies in the Netherlands?
- which institutions in the Netherlands have African Studies research programmes?
- what titles and research materials have been published by Africanists in the Netherlands?

The ASC has taken over Nuffic's Prisma database of Africanists, which stopped being operational in January 2003. This database now forms the basis of the projected community portal.

The new service will be built upon the developing infrastructure of Digital Academic Repositories (DARE). The DARE programme is a joint initiative of the Dutch universities to make their research results accessible digitally. To promote the submission of scientific content, the DARE programme is funding projects that will support the efficient and easy submission of research materials to the repositories and offer context-rich retrieval services.

DARC is one of these projects. ASC researchers will submit digital materials to the repository of Leiden University Library and later, in consecutive stages, Africanists all over the Netherlands will also be encouraged to store their scientific output in institutional repositories. The ASC will develop and promote 'good practices' for the availability of research material according to international open access standards and agreed conventions.

The portal for African Studies will provide federated access to university repositories and other resources, including library catalogues and publishers' services, by gathering knowledge and expertise that are both physically and electronically scattered across universities and research centres. In this way it hopes to contribute to more effective knowledge exchange and scholarly communication. The goals of the DARC project are in accordance with the ASC's mission of fostering scholarly communication in the field of African Studies.

This project is being realized with the support of the SURF Foundation, the higher education and research partnership organization for network services and information and communications technology (ICT) in the Netherlands.

For more information about DARC: <http://asc.leidenuniv.nl/darc/>

For more information about DARE: <http://www.surf.nl/en/dare>

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