

## **ilissAfrica's European and African Outreach: State of Affairs, Prospects and Commercial Alternatives**

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The paper will give a summary on two years of the “internet library sub-saharan Africa” (ilissAfrica): its mission as a one-stop resource centre for African Studies with a cross search within a database of more than 4,300 deeply indexed websites, the catalogues of some of the most important library collections in Europe (Frankfurt University Library, African Studies Centre in Leiden, the Nordic Africa Institute in Uppsala, the GIGA Information Centre in Hamburg and the Department of Anthropology and African Studies in Mainz) and an Africa section of the Swets database “Online Contents” with information on articles in 180 journals. The usage of the portal, the outreach to and the benefit for scholars in Africa will be discussed together with practical problems of indexing and some drawbacks. It will be tried to position the role and prospects of the portal vis-à-vis commercial projects as Africa Wide Information.

In a second step new current awareness services of ilissAfrica will be introduced, e.g. the personalised web desktop as a promising technique for researchers to cope with the ever-increasing amount of information. It can serve as a tool to neatly organise a multitude of sources like newsfeeds, table of contents of the latest volumes of selected academic journals, information about upcoming conferences, news on recent African publications, new websites and tweets can be integrated and monitored simultaneously. ilissAfrica has made a pre-selection for African Studies scholars and offers e.g. a dashboard on Netvibes which is ready for use but can also be customised according to personal preferences.

In a third step the paper will discuss the outlook of ilissAfrica as a starting point for a more intensive European co-operation as librarians in Hamburg, Frankfurt, Leiden and Uppsala are all collecting free online publications (with the consent of copyright holders). Here, iliss-Africa might help to avoid duplicate efforts via cross search. Other fields of European co-operation might be a common expert database. More catalogues and databases might be integrated in ilissAfrica; finally the question of how to combine bibliographic references with digitised primary material is worth to be tackled in a common effort. Carried somewhat further the cooperation activities might lead to a project proposal on a European level in the medium term.