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Hi-tech for education and health

Press release

Improved education for medical staff: using IT instead of card indexing at Botswana's Ministry of Health

Health and education are crucial parts of a country's development. Botswana's government has been investing in these areas to restart economic growth, which has faltered in the past few years. New technology should help the country to implement international standards. In the library of the Institute of Health Sciences (IHS) – an institution of the Botswanan Ministry of Health – the integrated library system LIBERO from LIB-IT has therefore been implemented. With this electronic innovation, the Ministry of Health will be able to offer its staff modern and easier access to further education materials. Two employees of the Stuttgart-based manufacturer installed the software and provided training for IT-personnel and library employees during a 16-day stay in Botswana.

Botswana can point to a high rate of economic growth since its independence in 1966. Combined with political stability and constantly improving living conditions, Botswana has become something of an African model for success. In the past few years, however, there has been a marked decrease in this growth pattern which can in no small measure be traced back to the worsening HIV/AIDS problem. Affecting 36% of the population, Botswana holds an unenviable world record, with the world's highest rate of HIV infection. In light of this fact alone, the advancement of public and community health and investment in the education of medical staff is an important factor in stabilising the country.

Easier access to media and more efficient management

The Institute of Health Sciences is controlled by the Ministry of Health and oversees the education of medical staff in three locations in Botswana. An important part of the educational institute is the IHS library, which currently has around 60,000 items in its headquarters in the capital city Gaborone and its two branches in Francistown and Lobatse. Trainee nurses and medical students as well as doctors and lecturers from across the country source their subject literature from the library. To make the library inventory more easily accessible in the future, the IHS invested in new technology at the end of last year and a modern database system was installed. Thanks to the new system, both users and library staff have benefited from quicker and easier administration and lending of existing materials.

Modernisation with a cost-effective and well-established system

With LIBERO, LIB-IT not only offers a solution which includes the full functionality of a modern library system, but also one which is affordable. The system, already implemented and established in numerous countries worldwide, has revolutionised the operational processes of the library above all in the fields of acquisitions and lending. Based on the most modern CACHÉ database technology, the software is suited to libraries of all types and sizes. Because the software is multilingual and Unicode compatible, international users can begin using the system without restriction. There was



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therefore no problem in introducing LIBERO in Botswana and the library was able to implement the acquisition, lending and serial management modules in full from the outset.

To install the system, two employees of the German software manufacturer travelled to Botswana. Admittedly, in terms of IT personnel, Botswana is well developed in comparison to other African states. Yet until recently, specific software and hardware such as hand scanners were unimaginable in the IHS library. Library employees were particularly pleased when they realised how much easier and quicker it was to loan media using a scanner.

During the 16-day stay in Gaborone at the end of last year, the two LIB-IT GmbH employees not only installed the software, but also trained the personnel. After extensive training, librarians are now fully acquainted with LIBERO and can use all applications and modules as part of their daily routine without problem. The only remaining restriction exists in relation to the accessible WebOPAC which, for the time being, will only be available to users via the intranet of the Ministry of Health.

Existing stock is currently being retrospectively electronically logged by an external service provider.

Investment in technology as a roadmap for the future

Acceptance of the technological innovation is widespread. LIB-IT GmbH's two employees can vouch for that. They certainly got to know some of the perils and constraints of the African way of life, but can also look back on a productive and successful stay in southern Africa. The relationship with the local library and IT staff was superb. Thanks to the openness and cordiality of the personnel, LIB-IT's staff experienced some unforgettable experiences as well as interesting insights into the culture and society of modern Botswana.

But the dark side of this country's problems did not go unnoticed and left a lasting impression. In recent years, the AIDS epidemic has resulted in a decrease in economic growth and a rise in social grievances in Botswana. Investment in education and health is therefore a vital part of the country's attempts to advance.

For more information, please visit our website.

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