International Relations Round Table on Latin American Library Development
American Library Association 113th Annual Conference,
Miami Beach, Florida

ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN MEXICO
WITH AN SPECIAL ATTENTION TO EL COLEGIO DE MEXICO'S LIBRARY

Clotilde Tejeda and Alvaro Quijano
Biblioteca Daniel Cosío Villegas
El Colegio de México, A.C.

THE OLD TIMES

Academic libraries established to provide resources for research work at educational centers, where students could use and copy books and manuscripts, were the basis of the great European intellectual revolution during the XVI century.

Although we know that in prehispanic Mexico they already had libraries (special places where they kept codex, manuscripts and paintings called "amoxcallis" (book houses in Náhuatl), the first academic library was established in 1536 at the Imperial Colegio de Santa Cruz de Tlaltelolco (Royal College of Santa Cruz de Tlaltelolco), the first institution for higher education for natives in the Americas. With books donated by Fray Juan de Zumárraga, its library started a collection that helped to introduce Old World culture to Indian students. This library held about 335 titles in 377 volumes.

Other outstanding academic libraries were: El Colegio de San Nicolás' built with the personal collection of Vasco de Quiroga; the library of the Colegio de San Pablo, opened in 1540 at the Convent of Tiripitio, which according to a January 1731 issue of the Gaceta de México, was still running in the XVII century; the library of the University of Mexico inaugurated in 1553, and stablished as formal academic library as of October 1762; the library of the Colegio de San Pedro y San Pablo (founded in 1572), with a comprehensive catalog (now held in the Archivo General de la Nación), dated 1769 "Indice de todos los libros impresos de el Colegio de San Pedro y San Pablo"; and the library of the Real Universidad de Guadalajara, founded in 1791, which reported a budget of 600 pesos for "book installation and binding" in 1805.

THE PRESENT

Despite the early presence of academic libraries in México, the situation nowadays has serious gaps, both in number and quality of library services for higher education users.

The variety of libraries supporting the national higher education system creates many contrasts. We can find small universities with libraries of less than 5000 volumes housed in one room, along with those big specialized research libraries with well developed collections, modern technology and automated services belonging to the big research centers or universities. Most large libraries are concentrated in the national capital and two other capital cities.

There are few sources to back up the analysis of this situation. Directories and statistical reports are not updated, and since they lack systematic methodology, the figures are difficult to compare. For example, in 1988 the Dirección General de Investigación Científica y Superación Académica, an office of the Ministry of Education (SEP for the abbreviation of Secretaría de Educación Pública) reported 35 public universities with 1,700 libraries. This figure includes libraries with poor instalations, obsolete books and unqualified staff, which unfortunately make up the majority.

In contrast, the 1992 directory of the National Asociation of Universities and Institutions of Higher Education (ANUIES, a sort of non government association of universities which acts as a think-tank for higher education policies), reported 593 libraries (within public universities) with an average collection of 12,723 volumes, 1,241 reference works and 7,016 periodicals (sic.). This data was constructed with the answers to a questionnaire sent by ANUIES to library members of the Red Nacional de Bibliotecas Universitarias (national network of academic libraries).

GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

In 1981 the General Director for Scientific Research of the Ministry of Education adopted a set of general "Recommendations for National Library Planning in Higher Education". These recommendations were a basic instrument for defining the role that SEP was eager to assign to academic libraries in order for the federal government to allocate special funds to the universities. This allocations were "special" in the sense that they were not intended to be budgeted on a regular or yearly bases. Moreover, they were not incorporated into the federal component of a particular university budget but assumed to be additional funding for a specific purpose, i.e. to develop the library system in that particular university.

With this, SEP started a slow but firm change by enforcing autonomous universities to assume a major responsibility in library development.

During recent administrations, the interest in reinforcing the national library system has increased. Through the administration of President De la Madrid (1982-1988) more and more funds were assigned for library systems within the public universities. An outstanding example of this support was the creation of the Universidad de Colima as the first fully automated university library system; years later this university would become the national center for CD production, taking a leading role that it retains to the present.

Under President Salinas' administration, extraordinary grants were assigned for university libraries. Some important public universities took advantage of these "presidential funds". For instance, the National Library built a new facility, and nine specialized library buildings are being constructed on the National University's Mexico City campus.

Special funding for university libraries started during the eighties were improved by Salinas but this time with a central objective: "Modernization". The new program was named "Fondo para la Modernización de la Educación Superior" (FOMES Funding for Modernization of Higher Education). Unfortunately in this context the concept "modern" meant to have computers, even with very poor library holdings. It is common to know of public universitites with medium network and computer infrastructure getting along with a disastrous library system and a very poor collection.

This trend of "computers instead of books" was corrected in the early nineties by recognizing that building of a national academic network would make no sense unless strong library holdings could be offered throughout the network, along with electronic publications, e-mail, supercomputer access, etc. Nowadays it is possible to find libraries with sound collections in the Mexican network like those of the National University and El Colegio de México.

So far we have focused our attention on public university libraries, meaning those libraries belonging to universities that are supported by federal and state budgets. By and large, as it used to be in many other Mexican activities, government support is a major variable to explain the history and development of Mexican academic libraries. However state university libraries exist together with a number of private university libraries which, with very few exceptions, have not equalled the development of their public partners.

The private higher education institutions with prestige and a relevant role in the national education system are those that have maintained solid library infrastructures such as the Universidad Iberoamericana, Universidad de las Américas, Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey and Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México (ITAM). There are around 20

libraries in this category but they are more an exception than a rule.

More recently some libraries like Universidad Anahuac's have decided to compete with public university libraries, to get government support on the same basis as those applied to public universities. This unprecedent situation will open a very healthy competition for all Mexican academic libraries requesting federal support .

An important role in the allocation of public support was played by ANUIES when its General Assembly created the "Red Nacional de Bibliotecas Universitarias" (National Network of Academic Libraries). The RED has worked to get funds for an ambitious project aimed at unifying access to large database vendors in order to develop six "referral points" for Mexican universities. These points would have access to international document suppliers, whom would be in charge of providing documents to every university throught electronic and conventional channels. It does not mean to substitute adequate local collection development programs in libraries, but rather to support research and education while local library holdings are being developed.

This year, government support for academic libraries is oriented to consolidating library systems within the universities. The library systems with better chances to get this support will be those with well organized collections and trained staff to guarantee wise investment of federal funds. Main support will be assigned to the libraries that are about to complete automation processes as well as to offer their catalogs and services throughout INTERNET as a public service.

THE LIBRARY OF EL COLEGIO DE MEXICO

El Colegio de México, (formerly La Casa de España en México established to host the intellectual refugees from the Spanish Civil War) was founded in 1940. Now it is a non-profit, graduate research and teaching institution in the social sciences and humanities.

El Colegio's library was born with the institution. In 1976 the library was named after Daniel Cosío Villegas, founder of El Colegio. This is an academic and research library specializing in Economics, Demography, Urban Studies, History, International Relations, Political Science, Literature, Linguistics and Sociology, and to a minor extent, it also covers Translation, Women's Studies and the binomial Science and Technology.

It is the largest library on Latin America in Latin America. In Mexico, behind the Central Library of the National University, El Colegio's is the second largest organized library

and it holds the largest collection in social sciences. It has nearly 300000 titles of books and pamphlets and about 5500 periodical titles (half of them current), including the largest collection in Asian languages within the country. Due to the nature and size of its collection and to the recognized efficiency of its services, El Cølegio de México's library is one of the most important libraries in our nation.

In the last 5 years, the library has processed around 60 000 titles in monographs and pamphlets. Service provided across the counter for home loans and in-site loans amounts to a total of 130 000 transactions a year besides an estimated figure of about 200 000 in-shelf loans. About 500 external users (from other institutions) are using the library every day.

Automation was started back in 1982, when a staff group decided to adequate USMARC format to the library's needs. As a result of two year discussion and adjustments, we produced what now is known as MARCOLMEX format. The library started to store records in MARCOLMEX format in 1984. Nowadays the whole collection is available through a home taylored OPAC.

In 1990 we started negotiations with the Ministry of Education in order to get FOMES funds. The main objective for SEP was to have the records of our collection on line, as a support to the small state universities in order for them to catalog and classify their collections in a shorter time, but mainly to solve the problem of the scarcity of trained personnel, by editing the records of a catalog that holds at least 50% of their current backlog collections.

By the end of 1990, El Colegio was granted about 400 000 US dollars to make retrospective conversion and to buy a turn-key system for the catalog.

In August 1993, OPAC was inaugurated and later, in May 1994, a CD was produced in a joint venture with UNAM's Centro de Información Científica y Humanística (CICH). Along with the general catalog of the central library of the National University, El Colegio's is one of the two Mexican university libraries with its catalog in cd rom.

CDCOLMEX, the cdrom of the catalog of El Colegio de México's library, includes bibliographical records of a collection developed from 1940 through 1993. The CD contains nearly 280,000 records of books, theses, pamphlets, maps and non-book materials. The present version does not include periodicals, United Nations documents, Mexican official maps, nor records catalogued in Japanese and Chinese characters.

CD-COLMEX disk is useful for libraries, information and documentation centers in cataloging and classification processes

and in retrospective conversion of catalogs. It can be used in catalog card production and records transfer with bibliographic format or MARC labels.

Now the catalog of El Colegio's library is also available through INTERNET facilities, the address being 192.100.173.131 OPAC.

The automation project executed in our library is a successful product of FOMES' policy for supporting Mexican academic libraries. This experience is not unique, but our achievements are noteworthy , since our catalog has no rival in its size and its subject specialization. State universities of Nuevo León, Ciudad Juárez and Guanajuto have reached the same type of agreement with the government: to automate important library collections to make them accesible for larger groups of users in the country, especially for faculty members and university students suffering the centralization of academic resources in the country's capital cities.

We think that our contribution has helped FOMES to reach a significant goal making one of Mexico's mayor collections available to all.

FINAL REMARKS

- Academic libraries used to be a low priority sector of libraries within federal plans. However, some academic libraries have reached a level of excellence through the years, because their authorities have supported them as a mean of attaining high standards for teaching and research staffs.

- FOMES funds have been a means for academic libraries in Mexico to become more effective for the population they serve.

-. The Ministry of Education has been making every effort to upgrade libraries essential for the achievement of university plans and programs. Federal support for university libraries is easily granted to those university authorities who respond to these trends.

- As INTERNET access improves, so will cooperation among Mexican institutions. International agreements for interlibrary loans like "Proyecto Amigos" of 10 leading Mexican university libraries with The University of Texas at El Paso will be used more rationally.

- The academic network (still in progress) will be an important instrument for interlibrary loans and document delivery services. It will allow small libraries to gain access to larger collections.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Añorve Guillén, Martha Alicia **Bibliotecas dependientes de universidades oficiales.** Monografías, 13; v. 1 Automatización; v. 2 Colecciones; v. 3 Edificios; v. 4 Organización y administración; v. 5 Servicios. México: Centro Universitario de Investigaciones Bibliotecológicas, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1990. 5 v.

2. Asociación Nacional de Universidades e Institutos de Educación Superior, México **Directorio Nacional de Bibliotecas.** México, 1992. 140 h.

3. Encuentro de Bibliotecarios de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma, 2, México, 1983 **Significado y alcance de la biblioteca universitaria en la sociedad mexicana; memoria del segundo encuentro de bibliotecarios de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.** Serie Superación Bibliotecaria, 3; México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Dirección General de Bibliotecas, 1984. 364 p.

4. Fernández Esquivel, Rosa María. **Apuntes para la historia de las bibliotecas universitarias de México.** Cuadernos de ABIESI, 2; México: Asociación de Bibliotecas de Instituciones de Enseñanza Superior e Investigación, 1976. 37 h.

5. Garza Mercado, Ario **Función y forma de la biblioteca universitaria; elementos de planeación administrativa para el diseño arquitectónico.** Jornadas, 83; México: Biblioteca Daniel Cosío Villegas, El Colegio de México, c1984. 194 p.

6. Mathes, Miguel **Santa Cruz de Tlatelolco; la primera biblioteca académica de las Américas.** Archivo Histórico Diplomático Mexicano, Cuarta época, 12; México: Archivo Histórico Diplomático Mexicano, Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, 1982. 101 p.

7. Reunión de Responsables de los Sistemas Bibliotecarios de las Universidades Públicas Estatales, 7, Ciudad Obregón, Son., 1990 **Memoria de la...** Durango, Dgo.: Universidad Juárez del Estado de Durango, 1990. 109 p.

8. Rodríguez Gallardo, Adolfo **Las bibliotecas en los informes presidenciales 1879-1988.** Serie Monografías, 10; México: Centro Universitario de Investigaciones Bibliotecológicas, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1990. 72 p.