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Prospects for the Improvement of USIA  
Book and Library Programs in Spanish-  
Speaking Latin America

by  
Robert Wedgeworth  
and Dan Lacy

BIBLIOTECA



CENTRO UNIVERSITARIO  
DE INVESTIGACIONES  
BIBLIOTECOLÓGICAS

Introduction

How the book and library programs of the United States Information Agency (USIA) might be improved and made more effective in Spanish-speaking Latin America was the purpose of a two part study conducted by Robert Wedgeworth and Dan Lacy as private consultants under USIA contracts nos. 704-0035 and 704-0174. This report summarizes observations, draws conclusions and makes recommendations based primarily on visits to Argentina, Uruguay, and Venezuela from November 22-December 6, 1986 and visits to Mexico, Guatemala and Costa Rica from July 7-July 24, 1987.

This study is a continuation of the initiatives stimulated originally by the Curtis Benjamin report, U.S. Books Abroad: Neglected Ambassadors, 1984. Also, Lacy and Wedgeworth were members of the task force that produced the Reid Foundation study, American Books Abroad - Toward a national policy in 1985.

In gathering information for this study the consultants visited publishing houses, bookstores, universities and libraries talking extensively about the current situation and the impact of UN book and library programs. Where possible, local government officials and senior U.S. mission staff were interviewed. USIA officers responsible for the programs under review were consulted extensively.

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That this report reflects the ideas and views of more than 100 local participants including faculty of the leading universities is due in no small part to the excellent preparation for the visits by the several U.S. Mission staffs. We are indebted to them for their support. We are also grateful to those who agreed to be interviewed for their cooperation and general encouragement of this study.

Some painful progress has been made in the adjustment of Latin American economies to the declining prices of the commodities on which they principally depend for exports and to the heavy burden of debt service that consumes much of their export earnings. And remarkable progress has been made in recent years in turning from military autocracies to democratic governments. But both the economies and the democratic regimes of Latin America remain extremely fragile. In that fragility lies the principal threat to United States interests in the region: that economic failure will lead to a collapse of democratic governments and their replacement by authoritarian regimes.

Book and library programs by their nature move slowly to achieve their results. They cannot be very effective, as press, broadcast, and film programs can be, in affecting immediate attitudes. But their results can be correspondingly long-lasting. For this reason, book and library programs need to be planned for patient, consistent, long-continued execution. Short-term programs seeking quick results and soon abandoned accomplish little and indeed can be worse than useless. United States book and library programs in Latin America need to be planned in terms of their long-range contribution to strengthening those fragile economies and democratic structures.

Though we have been retained by USIA and though it is with USIA programs we have been principally concerned, we have spoken to United States book and library programs because USAID has major book programs in the region and activities of other agencies, such as the Library of Congress, affect the book and library situation there. Though there is a rough division of responsibilities between USAID and USIA book programs, with USAID being concerned primarily with economic development and USIA with political and cultural relations, the two work with the same infrastructure of publishers, booksellers, and libraries. In viewing the impact of American books in Latin America, they must be considered together.

American books in Latin America, as in other regions, serve two quite different functions. One is the transmission of ideas and information from the United States to the host country. The other is the dissemination of those ideas and that information within the host country.

The first of these functions is necessarily accomplished by the export of American books and journals to what might be called receptor centers, such as national, university, and other research libraries, government agencies, and the personal libraries of scholars, journalists, and others who may use imported works in their own research and writing.

But editions imported from the United States cannot readily be used successfully for the wide dissemination of ideas within a host country. For that purpose they need to be in cheaper editions, translated into the local language, and frequently adapted to local needs. Often, indeed, the ideas and

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information will appear in books written locally by authors who have benefitted from using American books in their research, which is often the most useful channel of all.

The successful use of American books in both these functions -- that of transmission to the host country and that of dissemination within it -- requires the use of an infrastructure within the host country.

For books and journals exported from the United States to be truly useful in a host country there need to be research libraries in which they can be adequately housed, cataloged, and used. It is important in every country to encourage the support of adequate libraries in major universities and specialized research centers, with adequate professional staff and the capacity to use modern information technology.

Similarly, the dissemination of books of American origin within other countries requires:

1. a local publishing industry capable of issuing translated and, when necessary, adapted editions and of marketing them throughout the host country or region;
2. a book trade, including importers or wholesalers and retail bookstores capable of reaching a broad public; and
3. a network of university and public libraries that can bring books to students, scholars and the public at large.

Several of the countries visited have made significant efforts to develop library systems, especially Costa Rica, Mexico and Venezuela. But the economic crisis of the 1980s has stalled new library initiatives and simply devastated efforts to acquire materials from outside the country due to extreme limitations on access to foreign exchange for the purchase of books and journals. Given reasonable resources, the library leadership within Mexico, Costa Rica and Venezuela give evidence of being capable of developing much improved libraries of all types. The supplementary assistance to local library capabilities provided by the USIS libraries is of critical importance. Yet, in the long run a more valuable contribution to Spanish-speaking Latin America by the United States would be a program of assistance leading toward the basic capability to develop and maintain nationally coordinated library systems serving elementary and secondary education, higher education, local and national government officials as well as the general public.

It is difficult to generalize about library conditions in countries as widely different as Argentina, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico, Uruguay and Venezuela. Nevertheless, these countries share a need for assistance in developing or implementing national library and information policies. Several (Argentina, Guatemala, Uruguay) lack the basic infrastructure for coordinated nation-wide library development. Although they have some capable leaders in the library field, they share the need to develop a stronger cadre of middle management and specialized library personnel, as well as some strengthening of the academic preparation of the faculty of the several library education programs.

International standards and norms define how modern libraries can effectively share resources, use similar operating systems and train personnel. Regional

standards for Spanish-speaking Latin America, which do not exist at present, could accelerate library development while reducing the costs through the avoidance of wasteful duplication of effort.

15872 { It is vitally important that the fragile democracies in Latin America survive and grow in strength. In order to achieve this objective there needs to be a reliable flow of scientific, technical, economic, social and cultural information capable of reaching government agencies, universities, research centers, business and industry as well as the general public. The news media tends to select for dissemination what it believes to be important or of interest at any given point. Only a library system provides access to information where the individual decides what is needed or of interest. Only a coordinated approach can provide for the range of information needs within the several countries and within the limitations of funds that can be made available for the support of libraries.

approach { Given the situation observed during this consultancy it is our opinion that a major library development initiative will be required to have any appreciable effect on access to information resources in the Latin American region. A coordinated program aimed at helping the countries develop basic capabilities to serve their own needs could conceivably make better use of the resources of USAID and the expertise of USIA in this field. Without such an initiative the U.S. may miss a major diplomatic opportunity with long term general benefits and allow the small but very effective USIS libraries to become gradually overwhelmed by requests for materials and reference assistance that exceed their mandate and resources. An overview of the Latin American library situation may help to clarify the point.



## National Libraries

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Venezuela has developed over the past ten years a substantial capability for national coordinated planning and development for libraries centered in its Autonomous Institute for the National Library and Library Services (IABN). The law establishing the IABN provides the basis for the legal, technical and administrative infrastructure that supports an automated bibliographic service to all libraries (based on a system purchased from Northwestern University); a center for the promotion of books and reading; the expertise to plan and establish public libraries; and a coordinated selection and acquisition policy that assures the effective and economical acquisition of foreign and domestic materials. While much of its success quite rightly can be attributed to its founding director, Virginia Betancourt, the infrastructure that has been created with its links to university and public library development will, in all probability, sustain it beyond its present leadership. It could become a regional center for library training activities.

Argentina, on the other hand, has a National Library which is outdated and ineffective. A separate Library of Congress (Biblioteca del Congreso) is being augmented to serve the needs of the legislative branch, but with little or no responsibilities to other constituencies. The National Library collection consists primarily of historical runs of Argentine newspapers, journals, and locally published books. Although it is a library of deposit under Argentine copyright law, all new materials go into storage awaiting the completion of a new building which has been under construction since the 1960s. It provides no bibliographical or operational support to the Argentine library community.

National Library planning in Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico and Uruguay show varying degrees of development with Costa Rica and Mexico closer to the level of Venezuela while Uruguay is more like Argentina in its limited development.

Guatemala has a national library service responsible for public libraries since the four university libraries assume the research library responsibilities for the nation. In general, national libraries in Latin America do not have the clear delineation of authority and responsibility established by law nor the modern systems capability that the National Library of Venezuela has, and therefore, whatever national library development exists frequently falls in between the several types of library organizations under several different government agencies.

#### Academic Libraries

Academic institutions in the region are characterized by large student populations and part-time, poorly paid faculty by U.S. standards. At the extreme, the University of Buenos Aires admitted 60,000 new students alone in the fall of 1986. Faculty salaries there average \$200-400 per month. Prior to the "crisis" Mexican academics earned \$1500-2000 per month; now this figure is closer to \$300-500 with no funds for travel to other countries, for attendance at professional meetings, for research or for journal subscriptions.

\* Most of the universities visited have centralized library administration in fairly new buildings. However, they tended to be poorly staffed, poorly stocked with materials and those limited materials available were largely out of date. The University of Buenos Aires, however, had no central library and



the faculty or departmental libraries hardly existed. Small research center libraries at the University of Buenos Aires tend to supply most of the faculty needs, supplemented by the Lincoln Center Library of the USIS.

Interviews with academic librarians in Central and South America brought forth strong agreement that access to foreign exchange with which to purchase foreign journals and important new monographs was their number one need. Even when the general budgetary levels allowed for such purchases their priority for access to hard currency is so low that when permission is given the materials are frequently unavailable. Most of the countries have established undergraduate programs for training librarians. The level of these programs could be raised considerably by advanced training for more of the faculty. Mexico, Costa Rica and Venezuela tend to educate librarians adequate to the needs of the country with the exception of highly specialized personnel in such fields as conservation and preservation of library materials. Only in Venezuela is the use of computer-based library systems advanced to the level of supporting a broad range of institutions. Costa Rica has a computer-based library system under development for the university libraries based at Ciudad Universitaria Rodrigo Facio under the direction of Dr. Adrian Marin. However, the general concept of coordinated, standardized library development is not clearly established and supported by government policy in most of the countries visited.

#### Public and School Libraries

The current government of Mexico has launched the most ambitious public library development ever undertaken in the region. By the fall of 1988 there

will be a public library in every municipality with a secondary school. From 350 public libraries in the nation this program will bring the total to over 2,000. An initial gift of books by the U.S. and purchases from Mexican publishers were used to develop standard collections of mostly textbooks for the new libraries. Local authorities are required to make available space and staff and the federal government plans and installs the library. Although there are plans to maintain the libraries, it is essentially a project of one administration. Additional encouragement and support for this initiative will be necessary to institutionalize the operation and assure continued development. Venezuela's plans to expand its small number of public libraries have been delayed by the downturn of the economy. Costa Rica has the best established system of public libraries of all the countries visited. Yet, nearly all of the countries lack the general coordinated approach that will assure basic access to books, journals and other educational materials for those who can use them and an infrastructure of support for literacy efforts so vital to the development of the general population.

\* The need for a coordinated approach to the provision of public library services is underscored by the lack of any significant development of school libraries in these countries. Whether there can be a library development plan that incorporates the needs of school children and the general public is a major planning effort by itself.

#### Recommendations:

1. That the U.S. government undertake a Latin American Library Development Initiative intended to stimulate improvements in access

to information at all educational levels through the development of libraries and library systems with modern bibliographic systems and adequately trained personnel.

2. That an early step under the terms of the Initiative should include organized tours of U.S. libraries and library systems in order to develop awareness of needs and possibilities among Latin American academic officers, faculty, government officials, librarians and leading private citizens.
3. That immediate financial assistance be given in order to acquire subscriptions to key U.S. research journals in a microform deposit collection in each country that can be shared among several university or government libraries.
4. That cooperative agreements between USIA and USAID be established under the Initiative in order to assign project consultants under the Fulbright program, or the USIA-ALA Library Fellows program to work on USAID-funded library development projects as technical experts on library automation, library building planning, or public library systems planning.
5. That special consultancies be established with U.S. graduate library, information science and archival management programs to plan and direct short training programs for the professional staff of Latin American libraries in areas such as preservation of library

materials, computerized library network management, adult literacy and national library policies.

6. That the Latin American Library Initiative require the active participation of the government of the host country including financial, legal and public relations support.
7. That the USIS library directors and the Regional librarians be actively involved in the management of the Initiative program.

The thrust of this consultancy did not involve a specific effort to evaluate the USIS libraries. However, in the course of obtaining information about the local library situation the country librarians and the U.S. nationals responsible for USIS library programs were valuable resource persons. It was clear that the collections they maintained and the special reference services they provided were frequently the most reliable and most effective library services in the country. It seems likely, however, that the increase in demand for their services stimulated by the quality of the materials and their professional guidance greatly exceeds the capacity to expand these libraries within the scope of their mission.

The Abraham Lincoln Center Library, Buenos Aires; Artigas-Washington Library, Montevideo; Benjamin Franklin Library, Mexico City and the Walt Whitman Library, Guatemala City serve a mostly self-selected group of students, journalists, academics and others as members, key government officials as well as others can receive information on the contents of current journals

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depending on their subject interests or areas of responsibility. More recently microform collections of U.S. research have been made available through the cooperation of University Microfilms, Inc. Some of the back issues of the microform journals have in some instances been deposited with local libraries in order to alleviate the severe problem of access to foreign research literature.

USIS libraries generally present an attractive model of a modern circulating library focused upon American history and culture and U.S.-Latin American relations. The collections contain books, journals, microforms, phonograph records, audio and video tapes with listening and viewing equipment. They also feature an up to date reference collection of dictionaries, encyclopedias, directories, maps and atlases. The library directors are usually well-educated, professional librarians from the host country. Experienced Regional Librarians supervise the USIS libraries from Mexico and Buenos Aires. These are U.S. nationals. Some recommendations for relieving some of the pressure to expand the USIS libraries might include:

1. Establish a separate USIS gift books program to provide basic reference works to local libraries in current editions.
2. Expand the microform journal collection program to include partial or full deposit collections in major university libraries.
3. Encourage and make available the Regional Librarians to work with USAID in planning local library development projects by giving technical advice or recommending technical experts in the U.S. This,

incidentally, could make library careers in the USIS more attractive to U.S. librarians. The Commission recently established in Costa Rica to study and make recommendations for a public library system could use this assistance.

4. Allow USIS libraries to acquire university press publications on Latin America published in the U.S. even if they do not address U.S.-Latin American relations in order to make evident serious U.S. scholarly interest in the region and to attract scholars to the USIS library.

#### The Publishing and Bookselling Infrastructure in Latin America

The Spanish-speaking population is one of the worlds largest, perhaps third after Chinese and English. In spite of its being divided into some twenty countries in three continents, and in spite of a high degree of illiteracy and of poverty in many of those countries, it is large enough to sustain a high level of Spanish-language publishing carried on by large, professionally competent publishers with access to modern and efficient printing facilities.

The publishing industry is concentrated in three centers: Barcelona (and in part Madrid), Mexico City, and Buenos Aires. Bogota has a smaller publishing industry, with limited exports, as does Caracas with even fewer exports. Most other countries in the region have publishing and printing industries capable of meeting local needs; indeed we were surprised at the professional competence and state-of-the-art printing equipment available even in countries so small as Guatemala and Costa Rica.

One of the problems faced by all Spanish-language publishers, and hence by the USIA in trying to work with them, is how a publisher in any one of the centers can effectively distribute his books throughout the many diverse Spanish-speaking countries of the world. The difficulties are many: shipping is irregular and expensive; the book trade in smaller countries is not well developed; there are few review media or means of promotion that reach the whole region; capital for maintaining inventories or extending credit is small; dollars, in which all international book shipments in the region are billed, are hard to come by; fluctuating exchange rates and high inflation force exporters to raise prices to protect themselves against loss, especially since payments are often long delayed. Moreover, smaller publishers, even in the principal publishing centers, do not have capital, facilities or familiarity with foreign markets that would enable them to export and hence concentrate almost entirely on local markets. The financial and currency crises of the mid-80s have seriously aggravated these problems.

Increasingly, publishers attempt to overcome the export difficulties by producing a book in two or more editions or printings, typically one in Spain and one in Argentina or Mexico. Modern printing technology, permitting reprinting from easily shipped film or disks and lowering the cost of short runs, makes this strategy more practical than in the past. It is a development we should encourage.

Spanish publishers prior to World War II were principal suppliers of books to Spanish America, and the Spanish publishing industry (like the British) is still dependent on exports for more than half its market. Hence large



publishers in Barcelona and Madrid cultivate the foreign market more intensively and more expertly and with more government support than those in Mexico City or Buenos Aires. Several have branches or affiliates in Mexico City and Buenos Aires and sometimes in Bogota, Caracas, and smaller centers. They send sales representatives throughout and are aided by export subsidies from the Spanish government. They are especially strong in serious literature and the humanities and social sciences.

Mexican publishing was greatly stimulated in the post-World War II years when large American publishers, especially of scientific, technical, and medical books, established branches or affiliations in Mexico City. It is now the dominant center of Spanish-language publishing in those subjects and does a substantial export business. American owned houses like McGraw-Hill and Prentice-Hall and companies like LIMUSA, with a long relationship to John Wiley and Sons, are especially active.

Argentine publishing was largely developed by Spaniards leaving Spain during the Franco regime, and grew rapidly during World War II when exports from Spain were impossible or difficult. It is substantial and professional, but is not a very active exporter and, lacking a large library or university market, concentrates on relatively popular trade titles sold to individuals through a rather well developed book trade. With the end of military control and the at least partial stabilizing of the economy, the leaders of the Argentine industry are optimistic about growth and about developing a stronger export market. A feature of the Argentine book trade is the existence of wholesale importers who stock books from the U.S., Spain, and Mexico at their own risk and serve libraries, universities, and smaller bookstores.

The retail book trade is surprisingly professional and well developed in the principal cities of Latin America. (The two largest bookstores in San José, Costa Rica, would be considered large even in New York.) There are few stores in smaller cities, and almost no book availability in large rural areas. American publishers through their subsidiaries in Mexico, and in some cases Spain, have worked patiently since World War II to develop the market for American books in the original and in translations through the Spanish-speaking world, and with very considerable success. Especially is this true in science, technology, computers, and medicine, where books of American origins are dominant. This has involved establishing subsidiaries, carefully cultivating importing wholesalers and retail bookstores, and sending sales representatives into universities to seek textbook adoptions. It is important to strengthen and reinforce this infrastructure.

Three special problems affect the book trade. One is price. All people in all countries in all periods think books too expensive. In point of fact, the weak peso means that books published in Mexico are relatively cheap in dollar terms, as compared to the price of books in Europe or the United States, nor are Argentine books prohibitively expensive in Argentina. However, the complications and difficulties in international trade referred to earlier do substantially increase the retail price in other countries of books imported from Spain, Mexico or Argentina and especially from the United States. In view of the low average incomes throughout Latin America, price is an impediment, especially for student purchases and especially perhaps in Argentina. In Mexico, Guatemala, and Costa Rica, however, sales of scientific, technical, and medical textbooks are good, with, it is reported by USAID, about 50% of

students buying assigned texts, a level approximating that in the United States. The demand for this type of textbook, which is basically important for the student's intended profession, is relatively inelastic and not very highly price sensitive. In more general fields, like the humanities and social sciences, price is, however, a major factor.

A second problem is piracy and photocopying. Outright piracy is not as egregious a problem in Latin America as it is in Asia, where English-language texts are more useful and where the pirated editions are offset from the original. There is a substantial amount of piracy in Santo Domingo and Peru, but pirates face the same export problems that legitimate publishers do. In the countries we visited we saw relatively little evidence of pirated books. Much more of a problem was presented by photocopying, especially in Argentina, where the high price of imported textbooks and unavailability of hard currency for their imports has made it economical to photocopy entire books. In Mexico and Central America photocopying apparently is primarily of individual chapters. The only effective way of reducing this problem is increasing the availability of reasonably priced textbooks.

The third problem is the import of free or highly subsidized Soviet textbooks in Spanish. The Soviets have made a very large effort, but the results should be disappointing to them. There is some use of Soviet mathematical and science texts, which appear to be of good quality, but more polemical works, issued in Moscow with little sense of local needs and interests in Latin America, are often found dustcovered on bookstore shelves. Cuban books, done with more sensitivity to local interests, are probably much more effective, especially with idealistic young university students. There is little

evidence that Soviet or Cuban books displace American Books, but they, and especially the Cuban ones, have an intellectual influence to which we need to respond.

### The USIA Book Program

The USIA book program needs to be planned in the light of an already very large publication of translations of American books into Spanish that takes place through commercial channels without government assistance. Though detailed figures are not available, it is probable that Spain and Spanish America from their own funds spend close to \$100,000,000 annually in purchasing books of American origin in the original or in translation. Any U.S. government program will obviously need to operate around the margins of this major flow of books trying to help extend the distribution of those already published and to broaden the number of books translated and in general to work with and sustain private efforts. USIA has in general concentrated on subsidizing the publication of translations of American books that would otherwise not appear in Spanish; USAID, on increasing the sale of books already published. There is a rationale for this difference in that USAID has been concerned primarily with scientific, technical, medical and engineering books at the university level, in which very large numbers of translated editions of American titles have already been issued, primarily by Mexican subsidiaries or affiliates of American publishers, while USIA is primarily concerned with political, social, and cultural areas that are far less well represented in translations. But USIA definitely needs to concern itself with broadening the distribution of titles in which it is interested, whether or not it has needed

to support their publication, as well as to increase the number of translations published.

The USIA Spanish-language book publishing program now operates approximately as follows: The headquarters of the book program in Washington regularly sends out a list of books approved for translation support. Though each book on the list falls under one of several "themes" or subject areas in which the agency has an interest, the books are selected individually, rather than as a coherent group of titles covering a given field. In general, the titles have a rather conservative cast; most of them are of high quality and they do not include hard propaganda. These lists are sent to the regional book officers in Mexico City, Buenos Aires, and Barcelona to place as many of them with local publishers as their budget permits. (The regional book officer position in Buenos Aires we understand has been abolished, and apparently it is planned to run the whole program from Washington with frequent field visits.)

The regional book officer explores the list with local publishers who may be interested and concludes contracts for a number of titles from each list. The contracts follow a standard pattern. USIA normally pays the advance to the American publisher or author to get the worldwide Spanish language rights for the publisher and agrees to buy a number of copies, usually 800, at the publisher's normal wholesale discount. The publisher in turn agrees to print and market an edition of at least 3,000 (including the copies bought by USIA). The USIA distributes its copies to participating U.S. embassies in the Spanish-speaking world, where they are placed in USIS libraries and used as presentation copies.

The program has a number of strengths. One is that the subsidy, though substantial, is not so large that the publisher is relieved of the necessity of promoting and marketing to achieve significant sales on his own. This means that local publishing judgement is used in selecting titles that have local or regional interest and that will be bought and read. Moreover, the titles are usually of good books that reflect well of the U.S. and advance its values. The distribution of the copies bought by USIA assures at least a minimum availability of titles in other countries than the one in which it is published.

✓ But the program also has major weaknesses. There is something of a random character in the list of approved titles sent out from Washington, and this randomness is accentuated by the more or less idiosyncratic choice of titles by dozens of publishers in three publishing centers. A result is that though a list of titles published in the program will include numbers of individually quite good books, it is hard to perceive any coherent pattern providing substantial impact in a particular area. Nor do the title selections involve input from local academics, educators, cultural leaders, librarians, etc. that ✓ would reflect a view of local needs for American books.

A second problem is that the editions are quite small -- typically only 2,000 or so are sold in addition to the USIA copies -- and sales are likely to be minimal outside the country in which they are published. One reason for this lies in title selection: the original list is made up by Americans in Washington on the basis of whether the content of the books meets their ✓ criteria rather than on the basis of the need for and likely demand for the



book in the Spanish-speaking world. Though the participation of the local publisher helps screen out works for which there is little or no market, it does not insert works for which there may be a significant need in the Spanish-speaking world as a whole.

An equally important factor may be the propensity of the regional book officers to deal with small publishers. Small publishers are likely to need the USIA contracts and come seeking them. They ingratiate themselves with embassy personnel. Frequently, like small publishers in the United States, they are attractive younger people with a genuine interest in books and authors and often with a genuine concern for U.S.-Latin American cultural relations. In contrast, the larger publishers may be little interested in titles the book officer wishes to push, may not be at all dependent on USIA support, and may in general be somewhat intimidating to deal with. A leaning toward the smaller publishers is understandable. But the small publishers with whom we more often deal usually have no realistic capacity to export books and indeed may have somewhat limited promotional and marketing capabilities in their own countries.

In this connection, it is somewhat surprising that few contracts have been made with subsidiaries or affiliates of U.S. publishers. There may be a policy leaning toward what are thought of as more indigenous companies, or it may be that the U.S. companies are concerned primarily with scientific, technical and medical books and university textbooks rather than with the types of books in which USIA is primarily interested. But it was surprising, for example, to find that the Regional Vice President of the McGraw-Hill Book Company responsible for operations in all of Latin America,



Spain, and Portugal (who is a Mexican headquartered in Mexico City) appeared unfamiliar with the USIA book program, though quite interested in participating in it when it was described to him. His operation includes companies in Mexico, Panama, Caracas, Bogotá, and Madrid and sales representatives who are headquartered in or regularly visit all other Spanish-speaking countries, and hence it is well situated to achieve region-wide sales, especially in the university market. Other American companies, like Harper and Prentice-Hall have comparable if somewhat smaller operations in the region, and Wiley has a well established relationship with LIMUSA. There was indeed, one USIA contract with McGrawHill's Mexican Company some years ago for Horton's Sociology. This was a standard and widely used text in the U.S., but the Mexican Company had hesitated to translate it because sociology of the American type was not widely studied in Latin America and Spain. With USIA help, however, a translation was brought out. It was a success, and has now gone through five or six subsequent editions without USIA help and has contributed to establishing sociology in the American concept as a recognized discipline in Latin American universities. This indicates ways in which the USIA program can make lasting contributions.

A third weakness is the relative inattention given the marketing of program books. This is in large part a consequence of staff shortage. There are simply not enough people in the USIA posts to work out the contracts, but at least superficially the quality of the translation and physical production of each book, and work with the publisher on an effective marketing plan for each title. Yet we need to do more. And, indeed, like AID, USIA might well concern itself with achieving a wider distribution of titles already published without its assistance but that serve its program objectives. For example,

some of the most substantial titles in American history, including Morison and Commager's outstanding general history of the United States and the Federalist Papers, have been published by the Fondo de Cultura Economica, a government subsidized publishing house of great prestige but little love for current U.S. policy. It would undoubtedly not accept a publishing contract with USIA, but we could cooperate with it in reviving the market for these excellent but relatively dormant titles.

To improve the USIA book programs, we offer the following recommendations:

1. Though the present method of listing individual approved titles for selection by local publishers should be continued as a useful way of getting translations of individually valuable titles that do not fit a pattern, a substantial part of the title selection should follow a more systematic pattern. After a broad program objective is determined, a list of titles serving that objective should be carefully prepared, drawing on the expertise not only of Americans outside USIA who know both the region and the subject, but also of scholars and others in the region who know its needs first hand. Titles on the list should be picked in terms of their global utility throughout the Spanish-speaking world. They should also be picked in terms of their "backlist" potential; that is they should be books likely to stay in print for a long time without the need of USIA support for subsequent printings. Decisions should be made in Washington as to where in the Spanish-speaking world the titles can be most effectively published, whether in Spain, Mexico, or Argentina.

2. Contracts, especially for titles on lists prepared as recommended above, should be made with publishers that have a capacity to market the titles throughout the Spanish-speaking world. The contracts should stipulate for each title what the marketing plans are: e.g., whether separate printings will be made in other countries, whether stock will be placed with subsidiaries, affiliates, or importers in other countries, what advertising or promotion will be undertaken. To encourage major marketing efforts, USIA contracts might well provide for some sharing of the cost of promotion, e.g., by supporting authors' tours, publicizing the books through binational centers, etc.
3. Frequently it will be desirable to negotiate a broad contract covering several related titles for which the publisher can develop a coordinated marketing plan.

In other words, the program should not be built up solely of a congeries of separate, unrelated contracts to achieve the publication of individual titles (though the opportunity should be kept open for individual titles of special merit that do not fit into larger programs). Rather, we should concentrate on related groups of titles, selected with thoughtful Latin American participation, that will have the potential of rather large, continuing sales throughout the Spanish-speaking world. Their publication should be based on contracts with publishers large enough to be able to market them effectively throughout the Spanish-speaking world and the contracts should include region-wide marketing plans. When related titles can

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be effectively marketed as a group, it will be desirable to cover them in one contract with a single publisher. We should not hesitate to use American owned or affiliated companies when they can do the job best.

To illustrate these recommendations, let us consider one of the areas that the book program plans to emphasize: journalism education at the university level. This is clearly a highly desirable objective. It would be very much in the interest of the United States and of stable democratic government throughout the hemisphere to have a more competent and more professional corps of press and broadcast journalists. Professional training in journalism at the university level is at a rudimentary level. There are generally courses in "communications," but they are likely to approach the subject theoretically and sociologically, with considerable political bias; actual training in how to be a competent working journalist is rare, nor are adequate textbooks available in Spanish for such training. Hence the proposed USIA program is right on the mark.

However, how successful it is will depend on how it is carried out. The present practice (in what is perhaps a worst case projection) might include a number of journalism textbooks selected in Washington on the regular list of approved titles, leaving it to regional book officers to get them published as individual projects in Mexico City, Buenos Aires, or Barcelona. The contracts would be likely to be with small publishers who have no marketing facilities outside their own countries and probably no sales representatives calling on universities. When the something over 2,000 copies of the first edition have

been sold, the scattered titles are likely to disappear from the market leaving little permanent impact.

The procedure we would recommend -- using the journalism project simply as an example that could be applied in other areas -- would begin with a quick survey of present journalism instruction in the principal universities of Spain and Latin America. This could be rather quickly done, primarily with oral interviews, and should cover courses offered, enrollments, and materials used. At the same time interviews on a sampling basis with newspaper and broadcasting executives should provide information on their perception of journalism training needed.

With this information in hand and in consultation with experts in the U.S. and Latin America (Not: One of those consulted should certainly be Professor Kenneth Maxwell of Columbia University and the Tinker Foundation, who is a specialist in the newspaper press of Spain, Portugal, and Latin America.) an initial list of about half a dozen basic titles in journalism education should be selected.

We should then discuss this with a few Spanish and Latin American publishers (including subsidiaries or affiliates of American firms) to try to identify one that will be willing to commit itself to a consistent and continuing program in journalism education materials. All will probably be hesitant initially to make a major commitment in view of the limited and unfamiliar university market now existing. The information collected in the surveys mentioned above will be helpful, but the assurance of USIA assistance as in standard contracts (i.e. purchase of copies, help with rights) will be



essential to make a beginning. Even more important will be assurance that USIA will help in more indirect ways by a variety of steps to encourage journalism education through grants to bring Latin American journalism teachers to the United States, send consultants in journalism education from the U.S. to Latin American universities, providing basic library collections to support journalism courses, etc.

The upshot should be one comprehensive contract covering several journalism titles, providing a total regional marketing plan, and specifying USIA promotional assistance.

If this approach works, there will be a strong publisher with a stake not only in these individual titles but in journalism education as a field. If the initial titles find acceptance, they will be kept in print indefinitely without further U.S. assistance and the publisher will expand the list and bring out other titles on his own.

Obviously so comprehensive an approach will be practical only when we seek to establish a major role for American books in a defined field like journalism education. But in every case the program will benefit by a more purposive selection of titles in groups, rather than entirely on a more or less random one-by-one basis; by consultation with informed persons in the Spanish-speaking world in the development of lists of approved titles; by dealing with publishers with effective regional marketing capacity; and by contracting with a publisher to develop a list serving a defined field.

USAID Book Program

Though the purpose of our visit was to report on the USIA book and library program and the Latin-American environments in which it operates, we feel it necessary to comment on the USAID book program in Central America. USAID has far more money to spend in the region, and is capable of developing much larger book programs. Though USAID's programs are intended to serve developmental purposes while USIA's have political and cultural objectives, they necessarily use and affect the same infrastructure of publishers, wholesalers, booksellers, and libraries. Also, it has been suggested that USIA may in the future wish to use USAID's RTAC-II mechanism (described below) to make available low-cost textbooks in the social sciences and humanities. Hence the USAID program will necessarily be very relevant to the USIA program.

The principal USAID book program is RTAC-II. It has a broad charter but its initial undertaking will be to provide Spanish translations of selected university-level textbooks by American authors published in Mexico in 19 scientific, technical and medical disciplines to Central American university students at substantially reduced prices. It would do this by interviewing university professors to determine textbook assignments and enrollments. On this basis orders would be made up and sent to Mexico for execution. Books would be bought as domestic purchases directly from the Mexican publishers with payment in pesos at a 40% to 45% discount from the publisher's list price. The books would be provided to a central facility in each Central American country. This would be a non-profit agency (the Guatemalan-American binational center in Guatemala; PROCAP in Costa Rica). That agency will be



allowed to mark the books up 15% over the Mexican wholesale price in distributing them to local bookstores, who can add another 15% markup to establish a retail price. If, as in Guatemala, the central facility also operates a retail bookstore, it would make both markups to set the same retail price as other bookstores. The moneys received for the books, less the markups would be held as a revolving fund under USAID control to provide capital for future imports. As we understand the arrangement, this means that a book that retails in Mexico at the peso equivalent of \$10 would be bought by USAID for \$5.50. The central agency in each country would mark it up to \$6.33 in distributing it to retail bookstores, who would in turn mark it up to \$7.28 for retail sale. The same book imported through regular commercial channels would probably have a retail price of \$12.50 to \$15.00, with the markup over Mexican prices resulting from a smaller discount from the Mexican publishers, shipping charges, compensation for credit and currency fluctuation risks, interest charges on inventory, and sales promotion and marketing costs.

The 15% markups allowed under USAID will of course not compensate for these costs. Indeed, it assumes that the channels used will be non-profit distribution centers and non-profit university bookstores, with commercial bookstores used only when necessary. Even for a non-profit bookstore, the proposed discounts will cover only at best a passive stocking of the book and handing over to buyers; it cannot cover advertising, promotion, calls by salesmen on university professors, or risks in stocking. A considerable part of the market for textbooks in management, computer science, etc., is to businessmen, professionals, and others who are not university students, and the plan does not provide for meeting the costs of serving this market.

Everyone agrees that it is highly desirable to lower the price of textbooks, but there is substantial concern among many elements of the booktrade about the impact of the plan, especially in Costa Rica. There three large importers, Lehman and in less degree Federspiel and Trejos have long-established relations with Mexican publishers, especially those that are U.S. subsidiaries. Such publishers have patiently encouraged these importers over the years to maintain substantial stocks of textbooks and to maintain "promoters" (i.e., salesmen) to call on universities, work with professors, and seek textbook adoptions. The RTAC-II arrangement will put all these functions in Costa Rica in PROCAP, leaving the importers only the function of retail bookstores, disrupting their import role and their function as suppliers to university bookstores and other retailers. They are specifically precluded from having promoters, though these are of course needed to sell textbooks in other disciplines. Most commercial bookstores are going along with the arrangement grudgingly and at an anticipated loss because they think it important to keep students as customers, but the resentment is substantial and the disruption of painfully established trade channels may be serious.

We believe that it will be important to review the RTAC-II plans after the first period of operation not only to determine the actual increase in sales, but also to review the commercial arrangements. We believe that relatively small changes, such as a 5% or 10% increase in markups and a willingness to use commercial firms as the basic importers, might produce only a modest increase in retail prices and yet provide an adequate incentive to continue and strengthen the participation of the commercial infrastructure in book distribution in Central America, which we believe to be of great importance.

Conclusion

The consultant report presented here is an overview of the USIA book and library programs that have been largely successful in terms of U.S. agency objectives. However, the need for broadening access to American book, journals and other educational materials through bookstores and libraries in order to support the democratic aspirations of the region strongly suggest longer term planning and a coordinated approach involving both USIS and USAID programs.

Specific recommendations are made for improving the USIS book publishing program as well as the related USAID-funded RTAC II textbook publishing program. USIS libraries are viewed as good models of what a modern library should be in countries lacking the capability to develop modern library systems. A broad-based Latin American Library Initiative is recommended to meet library development needs in the region. The proposed library development initiative program recalls rural library development in the U.S. through the coordinated assistance of the Library Services and Construction Act originally enacted in 1956.

Much of the resources sharing, library construction, computerized system development and library education that characterizes the U.S. library community today resulted from the support (legal, financial and technical) that this act gave to coordinated and cooperative library development where groups of libraries shared the efforts and the fruits of library development projects.

Books and libraries are inextricably related in the process of transmitting culture from one generation to another. The real significance of these proposals for the USIA book and library programs is the possibility that a greater percentage of future generations of Latin Americans will benefit from book and library programs than do at present.