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V MEETING OF THE REGIONAL PROGRAM FOR STRENGTHENING
COOPERATION AMONG NETWORKS AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS TO
BE DEVELOPED IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

INFOLAC

October 4-6, 1995

Lima, Peru

REGIONAL PROGRAM FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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REGIONAL PROGRAM FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Professional training of Latin American and Caribbean specialists in Bibliotecology and Information Science in Latin America has been the main theme at several regional meetings as well as at many that have been held in our own countries. It has also awakened the interest of various international bodies (UNESCO, OAS, International Federation of Librarian Associations, International Documentation Federation), which have encouraged and supported meetings, activities, studies and projects which have contributed to the development of human resources in the region as an essential element for undertaking any action in the field of information.

Such is the case of the Regional Program, aimed at strengthening the cooperation among networks and information systems for the development of Latin America and the Caribbean (INFOLAC), founded in 1986, and whose purpose leads to a concentration of its actions in accordance with the following priorities: promotion of information projects; evaluation of modern technologies for information management; automated non-numerical data bases which are made compatible, systematized and interconnected; promotion of the use of information services and resources; and the professional training of specialized human resources in the

area. This latter point was considered basic in order to achieve the Center's objectives, and for a REGIONAL PLAN FOR THE PROMOTION OF HUMAN RESOURCES IN INFORMATION was set up accordingly. Since then, projects and agreements have been established which otherwise would hardly have been achieved.

The regional meetings have become auspicious forums where specialists from the various countries of the region have gathered; valuable information has been provided on these occasions, which has made it possible to obtain a diagnosis in order to identify the basic aspects in the process of professional training of human resources as well as defining the actions to be undertaken, and through these elements an action plan has taken shape whose purpose consists of encouraging the development of information programs in Latin America.

The Meeting of Researchers and Educators in the Area of Bibliotecology and Information Science of Ibero-America and the Caribbean was held in Mexico City last June, organized by the University Center of Bibliotecology Research at UNAM, with the support of PGI/LAC/UNESCO and the OAS. At this meeting, both the agreements of the Meeting of Latin American Educators in the area of Bibliotecology and Information Science, and of the First Regional Workshop were integrated in order to prepare a coordinated professional training Plan for information professionals in Latin America and the Caribbean; as common and complementary problems and actions broached at this meeting, it was considered advisable to adopt them as a basis for the working agenda.

The issues that were considered basic in the process of providing professional training for information professionals were addressed here: professional education for undergraduate and graduate students, remote education, research, and literature. It was also considered necessary to seek mechanisms for cooperation and to strengthen existing programs in order to achieve a more homogeneous development in matters pertaining to information in Latin America. By all these

means, it was sought to close the gaps existing in the access to information in our countries, and to achieve a better quality of life for our societies.

Most of the research projects developed at the UCBR are aimed at strengthening the corpus of knowledge of this discipline and to generate products, the majority of which are useful in teaching.

The UNAM University Center for Bibliotecology Science, after 14 years of research, teaching and information activities, has accumulated experience, theoretical and methodological knowledge, human resources, technological and bibliographic growth, which have allowed a program of professional development to be consolidated, and which is now in a position to participate at the regional plane, for the UCBR, since its inception, has considered the importance of integrating Latin America to its activities; such is the case of the Latin American Course for Training Researchers in Bibliotecology and Information Science, which has been held four times with the support of the OAS, and as a consequence of which research nuclei were formed in several countries; another case is that of the INFOBILA data base: Information and Bibliotecology Science on Latin America, to which we refer below. On the other hand, agreements have been underwritten with regard to: academic exchange for researcher sojourns, courses to be taught, participation in events and counseling, bibliographic exchange and grants to schools.

Through the possibilities provided by the UCBR and with the UNAM infrastructure, the regional Program for Professional Development is being strengthened through:

Research.-

Currently in process, research regarding the structural systemic behavior of the documentary information and of the regularity of scientific communication as a

science of Bibliotecology and information related to Latin America and aimed at identifying the behavior of scientific production as Bibliotecology and information science. It is intended that the results of their research will contribute to the aims of human resources training programs, formulating research guidelines and projects, as well as in the design of editorial policies. The research on MEXICO: TRADITION AND IMPACT UPON CONTEMPORARY SOURCES OF INFORMATION REGARDING LATIN AMERICA, whose objective is to conduct research regarding the sources of information products concerning Latin America (printed materials, audiovisuals, magnetic media, etc.), suggest the possibility of using them to explore the various features integrating the knowledge of the Latin American region: science, technology, culture, politics and development.

In November, a comparative analysis will be undertaken of the Bachelor-level curricula of the schools of Bibliotecology and information science in Latin America, with the purpose of formulating a theoretical framework and designing a method of analysis which will lead to the knowledge of the current trends of education at a professional level (both undergraduate and graduate), and to identify the subjects which make up the core of such curricula. This research will be the basis for a regional macro project of cooperation aimed at:

- Analyzing the contents and objectives of the programs of the subjects contained in the basic nucleus of the curricula.
- Studying the current labor market and its trends.
- Proposing the contents and elements that allow updating and adjusting programs to the current trends, without losing the sense of the discipline as such, as well as pinpointing the objectives and contents of continuing education or updating activities and orienting the postgraduate programs in order to achieve a greater homogeneity in professional training in the region.

Given the dimensions of the project, it would be advisable to formulate it as collective research where several institutions of the region collaborate. This project will be proposed at the coming meeting to take place in Puerto Rico in 1996.

PROGRAM TO LINK RESEARCH-TEACHING

Postgraduate.-

One of the problems pinpointed, regarding the levels of Bibliotecology and Information professionals in the region, is that the professional status of the undergraduates has not been improved; for this reason it was considered fundamental for the development of the discipline to raise the levels of education and to give an impetus to postgraduate programs and furthermore, to provide professional training for researchers. Currently in Latin America there exist seven Master and six Ph.D. programs.

In this respect, the UCBR has developed a project of tutorial Ph.D., which is being reviewed by the institutions that integrate the Commission created at the Meeting held in Mexico, entrusted with developing the guidelines for the design of Ph.D. programs.

The format of a Ph.D. program allows it to be taken as remote education, with the collaboration of tutors and local seminars, set up through academic agreements.

Continuing Education.-

Another cause for concern in the region is to seek mechanisms that will allow :

- To improve the quality of performance in the activity of the professionals.

- To up-date and train such professionals in the innovations that come up, particularly today, when innovations in Bibliotecology and information are appearing at the same time that progress is made in information and telecommunication technology requiring new skills.

The UCBR develops various activities, one of which is the program of updating courses derived from current research.

Such courses have the purpose of offering innovations or features that have been analyzed from various perspectives

Initially, these courses were directed to the professors; however, the demand from other sectors has been so high, that that it has been necessary to adjust them to a wider market. In general, the courses are brief, with a duration of 25 to 30 hours each, and it is feasible to offer them to other countries; for the most part, they are aimed at persons who have at least a Bachelors degree (graduate students).

On the other hand, taking advantage of the academic exchange agreements, we have offered courses and seminars given by specialists from other countries, such as Costa Rica, Colombia, Cuba, Spain, the United States and France. The program of guest courses is prepared yearly; with an average of three courses and two seminars offered yearly; and scholars from the UCBR have also taught courses and offered counseling services in various countries of the region.

During this month of October, of 75 hours course "The electronic library: collections and services aimed at the social sciences and the humanities" and is directed to those responsible for university libraries in Mexico; and it will serve as the basis to be developed in the mode of remote education to be provided to other countries.

On the other hand, a course directed to professors is being designed to develop remote education in Bibliotecology and Information. The purpose of the course is to provide the professors with the methodology to develop a program of remote education, as well as the teaching materials which are required for this mode. This course will be ready for teaching in the second semester of 1996, and will be offered to international organizations in support of the participation of Latin American professionals. According to the results of this first course, it is planned to offer it under the format of remote education with the participation of the professors who participated in the first course.

The International Seminar Program took place this year for the first time, together with that of Bibliometric Studies, at which specialists from Cuba, Mexico and Spain participated. For the coming year, the following meetings have been scheduled regarding Standards for the Construction of Library Buildings and the Theoretical Structure of the Discipline. A gathering will be held for publishers of Latin American Bibliotecology journals, documents, information science and archive science, on the theme of editorial policies; another which is also on the agenda concerns documentary languages of Bibliotecology and Information Science for Latin America and Spain.

Publishing Program of the UCBR.-

One of the issues that have been the subject for discussion at the meetings regarding the professional training of human resources is the one regarding the difficulties of obtaining Spanish language bibliography to support the teaching and up-dating programs.

One of the principal problems of the production of literature in this specialized is the scarcity of research developed in the region, which is a limiting factor for the production of knowledge.

Thus, one of the purposes of the Center is to disseminate the results of the research undertaken, through their publications and other materials; to this end, editorial policies have been established regarding the various features of editing publications concerned with at research, teaching and professional activities, through a series of monographs, manuals, minutes , journals and the magazine Bibliotecology Review, which is also found in electronic format to be consulted by Internet. Likewise, the Center participates in co-editions and translations.

To date, 61 monographs and 17 numbers of the magazine have been published.

INFOBILA: regional project.-

As part of the researcher training program supported by the OAS, the project concerning a database was begun: INFOBILA, meaning Information and Bibliography concerning Latin America. Currently 6,000 items have been collected from literature regarding this specialty, produced in nearly all the countries of the region. Starting with the support received from IFLA/ALP. INFOBILA has begun to be integrated as a project for regional cooperation. At this moment, it is in MICROISIS and supports, policies and manuals are being sought, as well as the analysis of the recovery language to be used.

The first steps have been taken for cooperation agreements with the institutions that will participate in the development of the local database to be integrated to INFOBILA. These institutions are: Universidad de Buenos Aires, Universidad Mayor de San Marcos, Universidad Interamericana de Colombia, Instituto Tecnológico de Chile (they have already sent their database to us) , Biblioteca

Nacional José Martí and IDICT of Cuba, IBICT of Brazil, the University of Puerto Rico, Universidad de Costa Rica, Instituto Autónomo del Libro (National Autonomous Book Institute) of Venezuela. On the other hand, the OAS provided support for a workshop with the above institutions in order to consolidate the cooperation program. This workshop will be held during the first week of December of this year.

Other projects.-

Among other products to be used as a teaching support in the professional training programs, are the following:

- A computer-assisted instruction program for users; it is currently at the interactive software design phase.
- An integral automated system of mathematical models for metric models.
- A tutorial system for teaching MARC and CCR formats (currently at the design phase).
- The possibility of preparing in an interactive multimedia program the instruction manual CROSSING THE THRESHOLD OF INTERNET, recently published by the OAS.

Regarding infrastructure, -

UCBR has one of the best specialized libraries on our subject in the region. Currently, the electronic catalog of the collection is being developed, data bases of thesis, periodicals, electronic content tables, which might be consulted in WWW will be available as soon as we have a more powerful host machine.

On the other hand, The University Center for Bibliotecology Research also has a solid computing and telecommunications base, as well as the technological potential of UNAM with regard to computer science, the remote education system, and the services of REDUNAM.

The activities of UCBR are aimed at:

- Strengthening the body of knowledge regarding this discipline.
- Contributing to the teaching programs.
- Providing support to professional activities.

Establishing a permanent program for guest researcher sojourns from Latin American institutions through agreements with UNAM.