

INFOBILA

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Asociación
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Públicas de
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II Reunión
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sobre
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Estrategias de
Desarrollo de
las Bibliotecas
Públicas de
América
Latina y
el Caribe

Las Bibliotecas
Públicas en
la Promoción
de la Lectura y
Alfabetización
Integral

3 al 7
de febrero
de 1992
Caracas
Venezuela

ROLE OF PUBLIC AND SCHOOL LIBRARIES IN PROMOTING AWARENESS ON ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES AND PROBLEMS

**United Nations Educational,
Scientific and Cultural Organization**

Caracas, febrero 1992

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Role of Public and School Libraries
in Promoting Awareness on Environmental
Issues and Problems

Sub-Regional Workshop
25 - 29 March 1991
Bangkok

General Information Programme and UNISIST

United Nations Educational,
Scientific and Cultural Organization

Paris, October 1991

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

INTRODUCTION.....	
REPORT ON THE WORKSHOP.....	
SUMMARY OF TECHNICAL PAPER PRESENTATIONS, VIDEO PROGRAMMES, EXHIBITS, COUNTRY REPORTS AND DISCUSSIONS.....	
PLAN OF ACTION.....	
RECOMMENDATIONS.....	
ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS AND ISSUES IN BIG CITIES.....	
UNEP'S ROLE AND ACTIVITIES IN PUBLIC AWARENESS PROGRAMME.....	
THE UNESCO NETWORK OF ASSOCIATED LIBRARIES.....	
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS.....	
REQUEST FOR MEMBERSHIP.....	

INTRODUCTION

The environmental crisis, brought about by such factors as deforestation and desertification, air, noise and water pollution has become a major problem in most countries of Asia. Different countries have different ways of dealing with these problems. In some countries, some programmes have been quite successful, while in many other countries the situation is getting worse. Public awareness is one of the key measures in preventing and solving such environmental problems.

As one of the institutions that serve as depositories of knowledge and information, libraries can play an important role in disseminating information and organizing activities that create public awareness and understanding on important national concerns, such as that of the protection of the environment.

To illustrate this correlation, UNESCO and the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration jointly organized a **Sub-regional Workshop on the Role of Public and School Libraries in Promoting Awareness on Environmental Issues and Problems.**

The Workshop was the second of a series organized within the framework of the UNESCO Network of Associated Libraries (UNAL). Previously there had been the Regional Training Workshop on Intercultural Activities in some African Libraries (Dakar, Senegal, 30 April - 4 May 1990). Following the Bangkok Workshop, a Regional Seminar on Intercultural Activities in Public Libraries of Latin America and the Caribbean was to be held in Caracas, Venezuela, from 3 to 8 November 1991.

In the pages that follow, a first part is devoted to the report on the Workshop including the Plan of Action and the Recommendations elaborated by the participants. Then follows the full text of two papers: the keynote speech delivered by the Deputy Governor of Bangkok Metropolitan Administration and a short paper presented by the representative from the United Nations Environment Programme. We did not include the texts of all the presentations made by the participants, as these were rather comprehensive and dealt mainly with the geographical description of the country concerned, its educational system and its libraries, devoting only a small part to activities in the field of environment. We have preferred to summarize these in the report. To conclude, we give a short presentation of the UNESCO Network of Associated Libraries, the list of participants and an application form for UNAL membership.

Any comments or suggestions for activities, requests for additional information on the workshop or applications for membership of the Unesco Network of Associated Libraries would be welcome and should be addressed to the General Information Programme, UNESCO, Place de Fontenoy, 75700 Paris, France.

REPORT ON THE WORKSHOP

The Sub-Regional Workshop on the Role of Public and School Libraries in Promoting Awareness on Environmental Issues and Problems was held in Bangkok from 25 to 29 March 1991. Participants included librarians and administrators of public libraries and environmental programmes from Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, The Philippines and Thailand.

The Objectives of the Workshop were:

- to encourage public and school libraries to play an active role in promoting environmental issues and other major areas of concern,
- to share experiences about the role of public and school libraries in environmental issues and
- to develop joint co-operative activities at national and regional levels.

In his welcome address, Mr Somkuan Ravirat, Director of the Social Welfare Department, Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA), expressed BMA's appreciation for being given the opportunity to organize this regional workshop and enable the BMA's district libraries to be actively involved especially in the area of environmental protection.

In her opening remarks, the UNESCO Representative, Ms Delia E. Torrijos, Regional Adviser for the General Information Programme in Asia and the Pacific, stressed the important role of public and school libraries in promoting awareness in major areas of concern in the country, such as environmental issues. However, she underlined the need for these libraries to adapt to the changing environment and move away from traditional passive ways of providing services. She also gave a brief historical background on the establishment and objectives of the UNESCO Network of Associated Libraries (UNAL).

The keynote address related to "Environmental Problems and Issues in Big Cities" was delivered by the Honorable, Deputy Governor of Bangkok, Dr Jidbhong Jayavas. In his address, Dr Jidbhong expressed his appreciation as President of the recently organized Green Globe Society that the library groups will join hand in actively promoting awareness on environmental issues and hoped that this occasion would not be the last time for these organizations to meet, but would mark the beginning of closer and better co-operation among concerned institutions and individuals.

Summary of Technical Paper Presentations, Video Programmes, Exhibits, Country Reports and Discussions

In order to focus discussions on the main issues to be dealt with in the workshop, there were five technical paper presentations, three video programmes in English and two in Thai, and a number of exhibitions prepared by six governmental and non-governmental organizations, indicating the wide and varied participation from various groups. In addition, there were seven country reports presented and discussed.

Role of Public and School Libraries and Selected Sample Activities Reported

Public and school libraries in Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, The Philippines, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Thailand were seen basically to serve the same goals and ideals, although expressed in different ways.

Public libraries are considered as non-formal educational institutions, which provide books and information in other forms and help the people to develop healthy ways of thinking, positive participation in day-to-day activities and favorable dynamic behavior. The services are geared towards motivating creativity and innovations for improving the status, quality and productivity of society as a whole. In some countries, public libraries also serve information needs for research, continuing education and entertainment.

In some countries, public libraries work closely with the community and serve both as community and school libraries with the conviction that books and other materials are important agents for bringing new knowledge and information to all members of the community.

They are considered as democratic institutions for education, culture and information which provide continuing and lifelong education and through a collection of knowledge, offer accurate information and current thinking on vital issues. The libraries preserve and promote the culture of the country and offer services to its users without any discrimination.

In many countries, the National Library also serves as public library as it continues its efforts to preserve printed and recorded materials which reflect the intellectual, literary and cultural heritage of the nation. It provides the information needs of scholars, research workers, students and the general reading public.

In Malaysia, the National Library provides advisory and consultancy services to state libraries and monitors library development.

Several participating countries emphasized the role of school libraries to provide books and other published materials, including instruction materials such as teaching modules, sample question papers, newspaper cuttings and audio-visual materials. These materials support the teaching and learning process in schools to enable teachers and students to achieve the general objectives of formal education.

Examples of library activities carried out in promoting public awareness in environmental issues reported by the participants include the following:

1. Acquiring and providing books and information materials related to environment
2. Providing information dissemination services:
 - newspaper/journal clippings
 - selective bibliographies
 - guides in finding information
 - current awareness service
 - selecting and packaging information materials
 - mobile libraries
3. Organizing activities to create public awareness on environmental issues and problems:
 - campaigns
 - workshops, meetings, forum lectures, exhibitions
 - film/video shows
 - radio programmes
4. Mobilizing students and youth to take interest in protecting and preserving the environment:
 - arranging programmes such as book talks, story telling, plays, songs and quiz contests on environmental themes
 - encouraging school children to read and share what they read with friends and family members
 - conducting competitions among schools for the beautification and maintenance of school grounds
 - setting up school vegetable gardens, fishpond and poultry projects to serve school lunch programmes, done by school children themselves

5. Reinforcing the initiatives of environmental groups and organizations through library activities.

These activities are, however, sporadic in most countries, because of poor logistics and lack of overall support by concerned government agencies.

Problems and Obstacles

The discussions following the country report presentations highlighted a number of problems and obstacles which libraries have to overcome in order to take a more active role in promoting awareness on international issues and problems, for example on environment and other related concerns such as peace and international understanding, literacy, economic, cultural and social development. The outstanding problems identified are the following:

1. All participating countries reported that studies on environmental problems as well as information on noteworthy environmental activities are scattered and not made accessible to users. It has also been reported that many projects and activities on environment are not documented thus causing duplication or overlapping of work.
2. On the other hand, it appears that there are no studies on user information needs which would be useful as a guide in acquiring documents and in providing services to respond to major concerns of the community such as those related to environmental protection.
3. Libraries, specially public and school libraries, are generally unable to provide standard library services, because of lack of adequate financial support, qualified staff and public awareness of their roles. It has been observed that this situation is mainly due to the lack of political support by both national and local government units, which is best illustrated by libraries being given very low priority, if at all, and a poor share of the department's budget.
4. There is lack of appropriate national policy on library development that should guide the overall coordination and provision of necessary resources to enable libraries to provide appropriate services and ensure that the people's right to information is upheld.

5. There is a serious lack of quality and appropriate reading and information materials in the native languages of library users. This problem has been associated with local authors' lack of interest in writing in their native or national languages, because it is not considered profitable. Authors usually prefer to write in foreign languages. In some countries, there are many foreign publications, but no translation facility; in contrast, some countries have very limited access to foreign publications, because of restrictive policies, including limited access to foreign exchange.
6. The continuing increase in the price of books and other printed materials remains a serious obstacle for public and school libraries.
7. Many villages do not have bookshops, nor the means to identify or be informed of the existence of published books.
8. The shortage of trained professional librarians, as well as para-professionals and other supporting staff is seen to seriously affect the quality of library services.
9. There is need for improving the image of public and school libraries by establishing good public relations with various individuals or institutions e.g. the mass media to ensure their support; with other libraries in order to share their resources; with parents, teachers and other community leaders; with governmental and non-governmental organizations to ensure their active participation in library activities and the maximum utilization of services.

PLAN OF ACTION

In discussing the problems and obstacles, the participants developed a Plan of Action, consisting of a series of activities to be undertaken at national and regional levels. They may be grouped into four broad categories, namely:

1. Improvement of the Organization and Management of Public and School Libraries

Under this item the following actions are being foreseen:

- a) A series of national seminars on the formulation of a national policy on the development of libraries and information services
- b) Promoting active participation of librarians in international and national campaigns, conferences, radio/TV programmes, as well as membership in voluntary and professional organizations (national or regional)
- c) Development of reference tools, such as directories, union catalogues, union lists of serials, standards, guidelines and manuals
- d) Improvement of the coordination and resource sharing arrangements among libraries, information networks and other resource centres.

2. Development of Education and Training Programmes

including the following actions:

- a) Training in public relations including techniques in setting up exhibitions, preparing audio-visual materials, microcomputer graphics, etc.
- b) Sensitization of librarians and library personnel on major concerns of the community (e.g. environment - in conjunction with National Environment Day)
- c) Training in the conduct and utilization of research in conjunction with research in development programmes
- d) Training in project formulation and presentation including budgeting, monitoring and evaluation
- e) Training in repackaging of information.

3. Improvement and Strengthening of Library Facilities and Services

This item will include activities in the field of collection development, procurement of equipment and the identification of effective forms of services appropriate to the library users including potential users e.g. existing traditional channels such as monks, village leaders, extension workers and other informal channels.

4. Development of Effective Promotional Activities

including activities such as

- a) Establishing good public relations
- b) Exploring the possibility of obtaining external financial resources e.g. from the Asia Foundation, the British Council, IFLA, UNESCO, as well as from foreign governments on a bilateral basis
- c) Mounting exhibitions
- d) Organizing discussions on specific subjects e.g. environment, literacy and drug abuse
- e) Sensitizing government authorities, mass media, teachers, parents, community leaders and international non-governmental organizations on library programmes and services.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were adopted by the participants for consideration by concerned institutions in Member States, UNESCO and other international organizations:

1. That the Plan of Action developed during the workshop be adopted and implemented by concerned parties at national and regional levels;
2. That the following activities in addition to those in the Plan of Action be undertaken and given impetus at the national level:
 - a. Library standards and guidelines should be developed as appropriate to a country's needs and situation.
 - b. Mechanisms should be worked out to ensure that copies of every title printed or produced in the country be received and processed by the National Library or designated depository libraries.
 - c. A clearing-house should be established for information sources on environment and related areas of concern in the country.
 - d. Reference tools such as directories, union catalogues, union lists of serials and manuals should be developed.
 - e. Participation of librarians in national campaigns, conferences, meetings, workshops to promote library services should be encouraged.
 - f. Coordination of library activities and resource sharing arrangements among libraries, resource centres and information networks should be improved and vigorously promoted.
3. That participants of the workshop having recognized the importance of the UNESCO Network of Associated Libraries and expressed interest in becoming members be given priority in joining the Network;
4. That in view of the great difficulties that some countries in the region have in maintaining and managing their public libraries, such as those in the People's Republic of Lao and Myanmar, priority attention be given by UNESCO and

other concerned agencies to assist them. As a start, the participants strongly suggested that UNESCO send an advisory mission as soon as possible, to assess the situation and explore possibilities of mobilizing assistance and support for them.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS AND ISSUES IN BIG CITIES

Keynote Speech
of
Dr Jidbhong JAYAVASU
Deputy Governor of Bangkok Metropolitan Administration

Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is my pleasure to have this opportunity to talk to you about a major concern of every city administration, i.e. environmental problems which need both long term and short term planning and implementation to tackle.

Since the first life originated in this world, the biosphere has been growing. Since a form of life called "human beings" evolved 500,000 years ago, the biosphere has changed very rapidly. Because of human intelligence, the nature on earth, both living and non-living things, are all affected. Besides the natural evolution of the ecological system, human beings played a major role in the change of ecology. Trees were cut, lands were developed, fossil fuels were burnt, all kinds of minerals were used up, lives were sacrificed. All goes for the survival of human beings. We do survive, and our population is growing. However, the longer we survive and the larger our population grows, the more natural resources are depleted. One day this negative relationship will come to an end. Will that day mean the end of the world, the end of the biosphere, or the end of the human species? The answer seems to favour the latter.

All environmental problems are interrelated. The roots of the problems are human in nature. Therefore, to understand the environmental problems, one needs to begin with the human factor. The most important and serious problem of human beings is the population growth. In 1800, the world population was only one billion. It was doubled to 2 billions in 1930. The figure was doubled again to 4 billions within a shorter period of time, in 1975. Recently, in 1986, the population has reached 5 billions. It is expected to reach 8 billions very soon.

Urban growth is another problem associated with the population outgrowth. During the 1940's only one tenth of the world population consisted of urban people. In the 1960's, one fifth of the population lived in urban areas. Recently, one out of three people could be called "urban people". The size of cities has also increased rapidly. During the 1940's only one out of one hundred people was living in a "million city". The figure increased to 1/16 during the 1960's and to 1/8 recently. The

outgrowth of population and rapid urbanization problems are superimposed by industrialization and economic development. These lead to other interrelated environmental issues in the urban areas.

Depletion of resources is an unavoidable problem. More lands are needed for settlement and agricultural uses. At the same time, fertile lands are being ruined by industrial and residential development. Land for public utilization, i.e. city parks, recreation areas, garbage disposal, etc. are more difficult and expensive to find. While the city is requiring labour forces for development, the urban poor, the main city labourers, can hardly find room to live. As a result, an increasing number of unhealthy slums are recorded in most cities. Water demands for personal, agricultural, business and industrial uses are greatly increased while water supply is diminishing. Similar problems could be observed in other natural resources, including mineral and energy resources.

Pollution is a result of population outgrowth, urbanization and industrialization. With a total population of over a million and a density of over 3,000 people per square kilometer, most big cities are suffering from many environmental health problems. About 1,000 tons of garbage per million of population are to be collected and disposed of every day. This problem is big enough for city administrations to provide adequate services and to cope with an increasing demand and diminishing resources.

Natural water is being polluted by household sewerage and industrial wastes. This includes surface as well as underground water. At the same time, the problem is complicated by a decreasing amount of rainfall. This results in failure of agriculture and increased migration of rural people into the cities, with greater demand and more pollution in the cities. It is frightening to think that we shall not have enough water for cultivation and yet most of the water will be polluted by human and industrial wastes in the near future.

The air we breathe is increasingly polluted. Toxic gases from fossil fuel combustion are released into the air. These include carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, oxides of nitrogen, hydrocarbons as well as carbon dioxide. The main sources of air pollution in cities are motor vehicles and industrial factories. An increasing amount of green house gases especially carbon dioxide and ozone are being accumulated over big cities causing higher ambient temperature. At the same time, the reaction between oxides of nitrogen, ozone and sunlight causes "smog" covering the entire area of many big cities. These phenomena pose health hazards to human habitats in the cities.

Part of human civilization depends on industrial development. Since the times of the industrial revolution in Europe, the quality of human life has been improved tremendously. We benefit from the pharmaceutical development in fighting diseases, from nutritional development in fighting malnutrition, from technological development in increasing production, etc. On the other hand, our biosphere is being affected. It is being contaminated with many toxic wastes. We have disposed of gases, chemical solids and liquids, corrosives, radioactives and many others into the environment we live in. Most of the problems concern major cities where industrialization has been developed. This creates another burden to the city administration in dealing with industrial wastes.

All these problems require serious consideration. To overcome constraints in developing countries, public awareness and support are indispensable. It may be difficult for a government to devote large capital investments to deal with such problems, because resources are needed in other areas of development such as education and infrastructures. Therefore, careful planning for a sound and sustainable development must be considered. The most important and effective means in development are public awareness and participation. Non-formal education is a powerful instrument in building up such means.

Ladies and gentlemen, may I say, how I appreciate your concern for this critical issue we all face. This is the first time we start sharing our experiences and viewpoints. We hope to meet again and again for closer and better cooperation until we can be assured that the world we live in is clean and safe enough for future generations. May I wish you luck and every success in this promising conference.

UNEP'S ROLE AND ACTIVITIES IN PUBLIC AWARENESS PROGRAMME

by

Mr Anthony A. KOLB

UNEP has been described as the environmental conscience of the UN system. As such, its primary function is not to do, but to motivate and inspire, to raise the level of environmental action and awareness on all levels of society, worldwide, and to co-ordinate the environmental work of all the UN's organizations and agencies. UNEP uses all the means at its disposal to raise public awareness and encourage community and non-governmental action to address global, regional and local problems.

UNEP has long recognized that the environment and economic development are closely linked. Poverty is cause and effect of environmental problems, and without economic growth many of today's environmental problems cannot be solved. But practices that overexploit or mismanage the environment and natural resources undermine long term development, so UNEP actively promotes environmentally-sound development-development, which maintains and improves economic progress without damaging the environment and natural resource bases upon which future development depends.

There are encouraging signs that the world is becoming ready to meet the challenges of the 1990's. Public concern about the environment has been growing for many years. It has now reached the point where it has forced the fate of the earth to the top of the political agenda. Political leaders from both developed and developing nations have been quick to reflect and lead the growing concern, issuing a stream of farsighted statements and declarations, resolutions and communiques. But the words have not been matched with action on the scale and level required.

UNEP is dedicated to bridging the gap between awareness and action. Ever since it was created, as a result of the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment in 1972, it has worked closely with other members of the UN system and forged new relationships among scientists and decision-makers, engineers and financiers, industrialists and environmental activists on behalf of the environment. It seeks the balance between national interests and the global good, aiming to unite nations to confront common environmental problems. Unique among United Nations bodies, it exists as a catalyst, spurring others to act and working through and with other organizations, including UN agencies and governments, and only sometimes sharing the credit for the achievement.

THE UNESCO NETWORK OF ASSOCIATED LIBRARIES

Early in 1990 UNESCO set up a Network of Associated Libraries with the aim of bringing together and supporting a number of libraries from all regions of the world which will work in association with UNESCO in order to

- promote the dialogue between different cultures,
- encourage multicultural initiatives,
- foster public awareness of international issues and
- spread knowledge of the Organization's main missions, such as the struggle against illiteracy, the quality of the environment, the promotion of human rights and peace, and the status of women and young people.

Libraries and books are, in fact, effective tools in serving international understanding and the pursuit of UNESCO's goals.

The Associated Libraries, as a group, are expected to represent all the world's main geographical regions and it is hoped that there will eventually be at least one Associated Library in each Member State. It is, moreover, anticipated that, in some countries, several libraries will wish to join UNAL and that sub-networks will be developed. It is hoped that the Network will be gradually consolidated on the basis of the results achieved over the years and that, after a period of time, an effective communication system will have been established.

UNAL is essentially a network of libraries with collections of a general nature which allow to reach a large public. A library wishing to join UNAL should address its request to UNESCO on the special form given as an annex. In the request for membership the library should specify the type of activities which it wishes to undertake.

An 'Associated Library' is no different from any other. It is not a 'UNESCO library' and it does not act in its name. It has been selected by virtue of its activities in support of international understanding or of its desire to collaborate with libraries in other countries.

Participation in the Network affords numerous opportunities. Among other things, it enables libraries to:

- establish contacts with libraries in other countries, which represents a degree of cultural enrichment;
- contribute directly and effectively to the promotion of international understanding and peace;

- innovate and experiment with new techniques;
- attract new population groups to libraries and arouse their interest in reading;
- establish direct contact with UNESCO.

However, Network membership also implies a moral obligation and certain constraints, such as:

- a commitment to making an active contribution to the Network;
- informing UNESCO of activities implemented in connection with the Network by means of activity reports, the content of which will be published in a circular letter in order to encourage other libraries to undertake similar projects;
- extending its collection of material concerning other countries and other cultures and drawing the public's attention to its existence;
- expanding its activities concerned with local or national problems and giving them a regional or international dimension.

All Associated Libraries are expected to subscribe to the goals and principles of the Network and to believe in the value of international understanding and intercultural relations.

Gathering information and resources

A basic task of the Associated Libraries will be gathering information and resources, dealing with the Network's core interests.

It is desirable that an Associated Library will have a representative collection of works on other cultures. It should, if possible, offer material in more than one language, reflecting not only its international interests but also the languages of those living within the country, including any minority ethnic groups.

Some examples of library activities

In their activities, Associated Libraries are expected to draw upon their documentary resources. These activities include the following:

- exhibitions on a variety of themes, designed to increase knowledge of the Network's objectives and exploit library resources. Themes are likely to range from local topics, particularly history and art, to national cultures and global issues, especially that corresponding to UNESCO's priority themes, such as peace, human rights, the environment, literacy and development, etc.
- literary events, such as poetry readings or meet-the-author sessions;
- debates and discussions on topical issues facing the local community, the country as a whole or the world community, on issues in the fields of education, science, culture and communication placed in a world context;
- events connected with science and technology calling upon outside organizers if necessary;
- sessions for students of local schools or colleges, designed to enhance their view of the library's resources for recreation and information, and their perception of its commitment to international understanding.

Encouraging young people to read through the regular use of libraries is a long-standing practice and membership of the Network could add a new dimension to this type of activity.

Finance

The Network only has a small budget, and so the financing of most of the projects will be undertaken by the libraries themselves. Only in certain exceptional cases will it be possible to provide financial assistance.

It is hoped that the Network will expand rapidly, that it will arouse the interest of the Member States and will enjoy the active support and co-operation of librarians the world over.

As of the publication of this report, the Network has some fifty members spread throughout all the world's regions and new applications for membership are welcome.

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Colombo 7

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UNESCO
UNESCO NETWORK OF ASSOCIATED LIBRARIES

Request for membership

1. Name of library

2. Address

.....

.....

Telephone number: Telex: Fax:

3. Person responsible for Network project.....

4. Type of library:

Public ☐

Children's ☐

Municipal ☐

Other (specify) ☐

Central Lending ☐

.....

School ☐

5. Total number of volumes:

Monographs: Current periodicals:

6. Number of users per annum:

7. Does the library possess a collection of Unesco publications and documents?

Yes ☐

No ☐

8. Do exchange arrangements with a library in another country already exist?

Yes ☐

No ☐

If yes, specify what type of exchange:

9. Types of activity you have undertaken:

Lectures/discussions ☐

Translations ☐

Exhibitions ☐

Other (specify) ☐

Literary events ☐

Sessions for students ☐

10. Do you intend to undertake these activities within the context of the Network? Yes ☐ No ☐

Or other activities? Yes ☐ No ☐

Which?:

.....

.....

11. On which major theme of Unesco do you intend to work?

Cultural development ☐

Peace ☐

Cultural dialogue ☐

Status of women ☐

Environment ☐

Youth ☐

Human rights ☐

Other (specify) ☐

Literacy campaign ☐

.....

.....

On behalf of my library, I hereby submit a request to join the Unesco Network of Associated Libraries and undertake to make an active contribution to the Network for an initial period of two years. I shall keep Unesco regularly informed of the activities undertaken in connection with this project.

Date

Signature

(To be submitted to the Bureau of the Co-ordinator, c/o Division of the General Programme, Unesco, 7, place de Fontenoy, 75700 Paris, France, with a copy to the National Commission for Unesco.)