Encuentro
de Ministros de Cultura
y de Responsables
de Políticas Culturales
de América Latina
y el Caribe

SICLaC

CULTURAL INFORMATION SYSTEM OF

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

INTRODUCTION

The incorporation and organization of information technologies into the management of cultural activities of each country is of the greatest importance for cohesion. Strengthening and development of the sector. The design and establishment of the National Cultural Information System for Latin America and the Caribbean (SICLaC), will contribute to the cohesion of the cultural scene and will provide it with the technical means to formulte, develop and evaluate specific policies addressed to the community.

The system, in addition to addressing problems such as giving structure to information on the cultural supply and demand in each country, will also serve as an indicator of rational decision making, it will provide a data base for cultural creators, goods and services, process administration, information supply on activities in the cultural arena, the people dedicated to the activity, availability and allocation of financial resources, the varying degrees of differentiation and specialization observed, etc.

This wealth of information could be disseminated, exchanged and updated on a permanent and immediate manner if we avail ourselves of the adequate channels for exchanging information on a domestic and external level, with a view to contributing to the objectives of cultural integration agreed to in the Forum of Ministers of Culture and Responsible for Cultural Policies of Latin America and the Caribbean in the four meetings which have taken place to date.

SICLaC - MISSION AND OBJECTIVES

SICLaC is charged with collecting and recovering, organizing, integrating, processing and disseminating available and novel cultural information, both Reference and Documentary, on the supply and demand of cultural services, activities, processes, aspects, institutions, problems, creators, heritage, traffic of cultural assets, cultural industries, patrimony, cultural management and administration and other areas deemed interesting.

In discharging its tasks, the general objectives of SICLaC are:

- Collect and recover information to serve as a base for formulating policies and decision making in the cultural sphere on a regional scope.

-   Organize said information in order to facilitate its
    efficient use via the application of the most adequate
    technologies.

-   Integrate and disseminate cultural information, both old and
    new, in order to facilitate its widest and most efficient
    use, according to the needs of each country and of the
    regional organizations.

-   Design, carry out and implement a Cultural Information
    System to serve as a base for attaining the above objective
    and to support the development of information science
    services and products.

The following specific objectives will also serve to direct the
development of the project.

-   Expedite communications between the different participants
    of SICLaC with the efficient and economical use of
    resourses.

-   Contribute to the development of National Cultural
    Information Systems, in particular in those countries where
    they do not yet exist.

-   Foster the use of the available telematic networks in the
    countries of the region with a view to expediting
    communications and the exchange of information.

The General Coordination shall act as liaison with the Pro-
Tempore Secretariat and the rest of the Coordinations. Its main
responsibility shall be to carry out the actions entrusted to it
by the Forum of Ministers and Responsible for Cultural Policies
or by the Pro-Tempore Secretariat, processing the necessary
resources and coordinating both the work plan and relations with
other related projects. The seat of the general coordination
shall be established by the Forum and it can be rotational.

The General Coordination shall count with coordinations at
sub-system level charged with the design, implementation and
control of the operations entrusted to the respective sub-systems
or components. The location of the sub-system coordinations shall
be established according to the needs for the development of
phases and of the ensuing work plans.

The individual designated to head the general coordination
should be experienced in management of multinational projects and
in the application of information technologies.

The responsibility for the sub-system coordinations should
be assigned to professionals from the field of information
technologies with experience in the design and implementation of
comparable projects, preferably international.

The _National Coordination_ shall act as liaison in each country with the rest of the coordinations, and shall be responsible for the collection, registration and transference of information for local or regional processing, product distribution and also for guiding users and coordinating the diverse activities of SICLaC in the country.

Eventually, and for the enhanced operation of the system, it might prove advisable to establish _regional groupings_ to improve coordination and cooperation. In common agreement with the countries in the regional grouping, the national coordinators of the countries with most experience or more developed in cultural information systems could, if required, perform these functions, transfering their experience to the countries in their geographic subregion and, thus promoting cultural regionalization.

PROJECT COMPONENTS

The three components of the project are: Reference Information Sub-System (RIS), Documentary Information Sub-System (DIS) and Communications and Information Exchange Sub-System (CIES). The individual treatment is explained by the different technologies employed, their degree of development and the different user groups.

This model allows for the independent and individual development of each sub-system, respecting the individual characteristics of each one. Nevertheless, with a view to guaranteeing the system's integrity, total complementarity between them is established consistent with the mission of SICLaC.

EXPECTED BENEFITS

In addition to carrying out the aforementioned objectives and goals, the following benefits deserve special mention:

- Each country shall avail itself of the basic technological infrastructure and the trained human resources to foster the development of a national cultural information system.

- Access to an automated Reference Information System adapted to the specific needs of the Latin American and Caribbean cultural sector.

- Availability of an automated Documentary Information System specifically adapted to the needs of the cultural sector of the region.

- Availability on a medium term of national and regional information products of high strategic value.

- Availability of a communication system to facilitate the formulation, coordination, and implementation of cultural projects of a regional scope.

—   Provide a demonstration effect on the possibilities for developing cooperative and integration projects of a regional scope.

REFERENCE INFORMATION SUB-SYSTEM (RIS)

Both national programs geared to the improvement and/or strengthening of the cultural sector, as well as international programs, conceived as instruments to foster our Latin American Caribbean identity, require a baggage of knowledge for their effective implementation about the following six fields: Cultural Heritage, Fine Arts, Ethnic and Popular Cultures, Cultural Industries, Cultural Institutions and other Cultural Activities.

The following information data banks have been considered for each of these fields: Basic Information, Norms and Standards, Projects and Bibliography.

The Cultural Institutions field should include the following elements:

-    Identification of the leading cultural policy institutions in the countries of the region.

-    Organizational and financial structure,

-    Training activities,

-    Programs involved and

-    Similar data related to other public or private national cultural groupings.

The format and the definitions, as well as the data collected by ORCALC shall be employed for inclusion into this area.

The area of Cultural Activities shall include:

  - Description of national and international cultural events.

The area of Cultural Heritage shall include the following components:

Archeological Heritage, movable and immovable treasures.

Contemporary Heritage, movable and immovable treasures.

The area of the Fine Arts shall include:

Plastic Arts (painting, sculpture and engraving)

Scenic Arts (dance, theater and opera)

Music

Literature

Architecture
Artistic Photography

The area of Ethnic and Popular Cultures shall include:

Plastic Arts (painting, sculpture and engraving)

Scenic Arts (dance, theater and opera)

Music

Architecture

Traditional Medicine

Ecosystem Management

Festivities

Cosmovision

The area of Cultural Industries shall include:

Cinema

Radio

Television

Press

Video

Books

Patrimonial performers of these industries

The different information areas as well as additional new ones shall be added gradually as the System develops.

Reference information is directly related to these crucial issues therefore the development of systems to adequately collect, organize and disseminate this type of information is of vital importance for carrying out the objetives associated to cultural development and integration.

The development of this system will begin with the identification of the available information data bases in the countries and the establishment of its possibilities for

integration and/or consolidation, with a view to its international dissemination. At the same time, the design of the automated system for the comprehensive management of data on the aforementioned points, from here on known as <u>Refer</u> shall be implemented.

The Refer system should provide for the following at the very least: entry and data modifications functions, consultation and production of reports and listings, maintenance of the data base, management by multiple users and on-line access through the main teleinformatic networks.

The most appropriate strategy for the implementation of this component is through the creation step by step of a Decentralized Gradual Information Network to which the countries of the region interested in doing so could integrate progressively. The network shall use the Refer system to provide the logical support for data management and it shall be supported on the SCII for the transference and exchange of information.

This system shall be installed in the countries participating in the Project, and they shall be responsible for inputs and maintenance. The national data bases as they develop shall be integrated via dynamic data exchange processes. The resulting consolidated data base shall be distributed among the member countries of the Network, with the possibility of initiating its dissemination to the rest of the international cultural community via teleinformation services.

The reference information includes very specific characteristics which may complicate its administration and control, and therefore aspects pertaining to the collection, standardization, updating and quality control of data should be carefully dealt with.

To guarantee an effective collection of information implies special attention being paid to the process of selection and definition of data for compilation and the design of instruments for its collection, as well as finding a solution to the problem implicit in the consolidation of data on a national and international level.

Although standardization should not become in itself an objective of the project, it shall be necessary to insure a minimum level of consistency, specially with regard to data, variables, categories and indicators. The adoption or definition of standards shall be carried out with the widest possible participation of the countries and via the distribution of the program it includes.

The perishable and changing nature of a good part of the reference information calls for the implementation of agile and efficient mechanisms for the collection and transference of information. The experience of the existing information networks on a regional level have taught us that the traditional methods

for exchanging informational are not satisfactory, hence the importance of complementing this sub-system with CIES.

The standardization and the information transference mechanisms are fundamental aspects -although not unique- to insure an adequate and necessary quality control of the data included in the system.

DOCUMENTARY INFORMATION SUB-SYSTEM (DIS)

The most highly informatized and progressive documentary information centers have the following: national libraries, academic libraries and diverse specialized information centers. Many already have ample informatized bibliographic data bases. Some also have sophisticated integrated systems for managing and consulting data bases.

Integrated systems allow for the informatization of the different operative activities of an information center, inter alia: classification, circulation, collection development, serial publication control, etc. The main characteristic of these systems is that as soon as any activity performed impacts the status of the records, the data base is immediately updated.

The documentary component of SICLaC will mostly consist of the complementation and/or integration of the data bases and integrated systems. The inclusion of this component in SICLaC is most important because of the need to increase the public availability of these data bases. On the other hand, the experience gained in the development of these systems shall prove very useful for the development of the remaining two components. In the future, libraries and information centers will be in a position to support or complement the action of the national coordinations in the distributions of SICLaC's product.

The strategy for the implementation of this component shall follow two lines: first, in parallel, and later, converging. The first is directed to the group of centers and libraries with integrated systems. The second is geared to specialized bibliographic data bases and, in general, all those not associated with integrated systems.

Regarding the latter, the first step is a diagnosis which should include the identification of existing data bases in the region, determining their possibilities for integration and/or consolidation, including their future possibilities of international dissemination. Parallel to this, the design or selection of an automated system mostly addressed to smaller libraries with a view to the comprehensive management of bibliographic data and which we call Docum from now on.

The Docum system shall provide at the very least, format conversion functions and registry editing, consultation and report production and/or indexes. An eventual support of the informatization of collections of special interest for the

countries shall be defined later between the coordinators. The location of the regional nodes shall also be decided, that is the location of the consolidated base.

COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION EXCHANGE SUBSYSTEM (CIES)

The reality of our continent from the viewpoint of its geographic dispersion and the lack of reliability of the available communication services and infrastructure means that SICLaC requires the support of an agile, efficient and innovative information exchange system.

The current technological developments using telematic networks allow the different economic and social activity areas to avail themselves of a convenient alternative for international communications. Not only large multinational corporations count with these facilities. Since the end of the decade of the 1980s, academic and scientific institutions of our region have developed telematic networks to interconnect to similar institutions throughout the world.

PROJECT STAGES
STAGE 1: DETAILED FORMULATION

Description:

The project shall be elaborated on a greater detail including definition of objectives, stages and organizational structure. The Pilot Project will be designed. Financing sources will be identified for the later stages.

Main Activities:

1A. Based on the experience of ORCALC, a questionnaire should be prepared to support the diagnosis of the data bases, information systems, communications, and other available resources, as well as other technical aspects and experiences in each country.

2A. Carry out evaluation and diagnosis visits to the candidate participating countries in the Pilot Project.

3A. Select the informatics equipment and software for use in the reference communications components.

4A. Prepare a detailed design of the Pilot Project (Stage II) including a) final selection of participating countries and b) recommendations of the Pro-Tempore Secretariat.

5A. Identify resources and financing sources for the next stages.

6A. Technical design and coordination required to provide access to international academic networks to Pilot Project participants.

7C. Develop or adapt the preliminary version of the Refer system, logical support to be used on a national scale for the RIS.

Activities are preceded by a number which indicates the possible order of implementation and a letter. Letter A means that the activity is related to more than one component, B, with Information Exchange, C with Reference material and D with Documentary material.

Duration: Three months

Resources: Coordinators and specialists in information systems and telematic networks; tickets and per diem to visit seven countries (three day stay), and computer system to install the prototype.

Results: Questionnaire, diagnostic visits, selection of equipment and software, detailed pilot project design, resources sources for next stage; program with national scale reference component, agreement with national and international networks to intercommunicate the coordinators.

STAGE II: PILOT PROJECT

Description:

Acquire the required experience for the following stages. Equipment, communication facilities (electronic mail), software (reference component) and training for participation in this stage. A first consolidated reference data base and an inventory of informatized libraries shall be produced and distributed.

Main Activities:

1A. Organize the Ist Workshop/Seminar with participation of the national coordinators of the Pilot Project. They will receive training on the management and installation of equipment and communication facilities (electronic mail) and evaluate the preliminary version of the Refer system.

2A. Provide the informatic equipment and logical support to the participating national installations lacking them.

3A. Provide training in the participating countries to groups (i.e. six people) and distribute the first version of the Refer system. Discuss the work plan of the documentary component.

4A. Prepare the detailed design of Stage III including a) countries and institutions joining in the stage following the reference component, b) additional data to be included,

c) details with a view to initiating the documentary component and d) recommendations of the Pro-Tempore Secretariat.

5A. Identify resources and sources of financing for the following stages.

6A. Implement the electronic mail service between the participants of the pilot project and the members of the Pro-Tempore Secretariat.

7C. Develop or adapt the transference-consolidation-distribution sub-system of the information collected in the countries on the reference component.

8C. Carry out the first distribution of the consolidated reference data base through the telematic network.

9D. Prepare and distribute an inventory of documentation centers and informatized libraries in the region with details on usage.

Duration: Eight months

Resources: Coordinators and specialists in information systems and telematic networks.
-tickets, per diems, materials, infrastructure and support to organize the I Workshop/Seminar with the participants from the seven countries.
-seven computers with operating system, and modem programmed for communications and printing.
-tickets and per diems for seven countries (three day stays) for training sessions.
-processing and storage capacity in at least one computer accessible from the main international academic networks (BITNET and INTERNET).
-access to international networks of the computers of the project coordinators.

Results: Ist Workshop/Seminar, provides informatic services to seven countries: training in seven countries: detailed design of Stage III; electronic mail service between the coordinators, sources of financing for the next stage, integrated reference data bases, inventory of documentation centers and libraries.

STAGE III: EXPANSION

Description:

The number of countries shall be increased, a greater volume of data shall be collected an implementation of the documentary component shall be initiated.

Main Activities:

1A. Holding the II Workshop/Seminar with participation of the coordinators of the Pilot Project. Additional training shall be provided, the previous stage shall be evaluated and the future work plan shall be coordinated.

2C. Progressively incorporate additional countries into the information exchange and reference components. The required equipment shall be provided.

4A. Carry out training by groups in the countries incorporated and a new version of the program distributed.

5A. Provide additional services via the teleinformatic networks.

6D. Initiate the implementation of the documentary component via the complementation and/or exchange between the informatized library systems.

7C. Prepare the detailed design of Stage IV including a) an operating model which allows for continuous operation and generation of resources and b) the recommendations of the Pro-Tempore Secretariat.

Duration: Twelve months

Resources: -Coordinators and specialists in information systems and telematic networks
                -administrative support,
                tickets, per diems, support materials to implement Stage II Workshop/Seminar with participants from the seven countries.
                -computer systems for the additional countries with lack them.
                -tickets to the countries which have been incorporated to provide training and per diems for three day stays.
                -processing and storage capacity in at least one large computer accessible from the main international academic networks.
                -access to international networks for the computers of the project coordinators of the newly incorporated countries: and
                -equipment, software and international links to communicate library systems.

Results: II Workshop/Seminar, computer systems provided to
                countries; training in countries, interconnection
                of initial libraries; detailed design of Stage IV
                sources of resources for the next stage: on line
                access in real time to SICLaC.

STAGE IV: ON LINE OPERATION

Description:

     The development of the system continues by increasing the
number of countries, including additional information and using
new technologies.

     Special attention paid to the integration of informatized
libraries.

Main Activities:

1A. Implement an organization and operation model which allows
     for stable operation and continuous development of SICLaC

2A. Organize a periodic Workshop/Seminar with the participation
     of the national coordinators in the project, in the course of
     which training shall be provided, the results obtained
     shall be evaluated and future tasks shall be coordinated.

3C. Incorporate additional data to the reference component and
     development of the program shall continue. Nation-wide
     telematic services shall be offered.

4A. Progressive inclusion of additional countries into the three
     components and additional support shall continue to be
     provided to countries requiring it.

5D. Emphasis placed on the implementation of the documentary
     component. As the communications allow, interconnection of
     the informatized libraries continues.

6A. Develop new products in addition to on line services. These
     products should be designed to raise funds, especially from
     outside the region.

 Duration: At the conclusion of the previous stage and
                 depending on its results.
                 -Coordinators and specialists in information
                 systems and telematic networks;
                 -administrative support,
                 -tickets, per diems, material and support to
                 organize the II Workshop/Seminar with participants
                 from the seven countries;
                 -computer systems provided to the additional

countries which lack them.
-coordination visits and training meetings in new countries;
-processing and storage capacity in at least one large computer accessible from the main international academic networks;
-access to international networks for the Project coordinators computers in the newly incorporated countries to inter-connect the library systems.

Results: Period Workshop/Seminar, on line services on a national scale; increase in the number of countries; greater availability of information, the library network is expanded; new information products; new organizational model and fund generation.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Continue joint efforts with ORCALC to start up the Latin American and Caribbean Cultural Information System in its successive stages.

- Request the countries interested in participating in the SICLAC pilot project to create an office of coordination of the national Cultural Information System. The profile of the members of that office must reflect the provisions of the proposal approved by the Encounter.

- Organize a Seminar-Workshop in Santa Fe de Bogota, to share national experiences and conduct an analysis of the technical aspects contained in the Quito Document.

- Stimulate and promote the establishment of National Cultural Information National Systems in those countries which have not yet created them, specially in English-speaking Caribbean countries.

- Promote the participation of these countries, not only to satisfy the needs of the Latin American and Caribbean Information System, but also to meet each country's requirements and viewpoints as regards information retrieval, organization and integration, and its implementation within the National Systems.

- To study the Mexican Cultural Information System as a possible model for the national systems, as it is based on a compact disc, complemented by written information. Mexico could offer training in, and updating of existing data banks.