



Date : 03/08/2006

**Governmental Libraries Development: An Experience Of Strategic Collaboration In The Field Of Social Sciences.**

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<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>110 Social Science Libraries with Government Libraries</b>
<b>Simultaneous Interpretation:</b>	No

WORLD LIBRARY AND INFORMATION CONGRESS: 72ND IFLA GENERAL CONFERENCE AND COUNCIL  
 20-24 August 2006, Seoul, Korea  
<http://www.ifla.org/IV/ifla72/index.htm>

*Abstract:*

*To the aim of promoting the development of governmental libraries the Institute of Scientific and Technological Documentation and Information (IDICT), of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment of Cuba, (CITMA) convoked to a meeting , in October 1995, to some governmental and not-governmental libraries and information centers, that managed political, social and economic information*

*The purpose of the meeting was: to create a working group to promote de development of such type of centres in the field of social sciences, in order to obtain a better accessibility and disponibilidad of existing technological means and information services in this field. To this end this group should promote a closer relationship among the centres and the development of collaboration projects, stimulating partnership, cooperation and coordination of specific tasks.*

*After the creation of a coordinating board to this end as well as some specialized working groups in main areas, the committee began to work under the name of Comité de Coordinación de los Centros que manejan Información Política y Social, COIPS. The Committee actually is integrated by 32 centres.*

*The functions of the Coordinating Board were the following:*

- *To promote cooperation activities among the centres*
- *Focus work to social priorities.*
- *Identify problem areas present in the centers in their way to serve under the new conditions of the Information Society, and contribute to its solution promoting the establishment of strategic alliances among centres.*
- *Stimulate the systematic use of new technologies promoting the training in the use of them.*
- *Disseminate broadly the existing information in the different specialized centres of the country.*
- *Facilitate the access to this information through the cooperate production of information products and services, based in new technologies.*

*The aims reached are decribed through the activities, such as:*

- *To increase the social impact of the centres through the broad dissemination of the specialized governmental information .*
- *Contributing to share documental and individual knowledge*
- *A broad exchange of experiences among governmental and no-governmental centres, and to share solutions to common problems.*
- *The establishment of strategic alliances among the centers at a global level and of programs addressed to increase individual knowledge needed to have an efficient performance at the working place.*

*Governmental and no-governmental libraries and information centres involved in this project are listed as well as the collections of documents and publications that each one manage*

*The communication refers the activities organized by the Group in a period of time, addresses to the development of governmental libraries with the collaboration of non governmental centres.*

## INTRODUCTION

To assist the public administration organizations in the process of decision making, regarding their plans, politics and practices, is one of the main purposes of research in social science. The acquired knowledge, the collected data and the research findings reach the decision makings officials by different channels such as: direct contacts, requests to specialized professionals, experts, consultants, advisors committees, massive means of communication, universities, knowledge networks, Internet, clearing houses, specialized documentation centres and libraries, among others. Whether it is accessed by first hand or intermediaries or if it is a printed document or a digitized one, published or not, the collected data, the concluded information or the results of the analysis made, contributes one way or another to endorse the decision making. It is evident, moreover necessary, the relation of social sciences with the decision making process of the governmental organizations, in particular, addressed to deal with social problems and economic development. There are no doubts about the contribution of the demographic, economic, educational, environmental, psychological information, among others, convey to governmental action. The information resulting from the researches in social sciences contributes to better understand the nature and scope of social problems, providing a frame of reference for decision making. In this sense, to promote the use of the information and knowledge, the alliance between the governmental and non-governmental organisms, academic and research institutions, the development of collaboration projects is of decisive importance. Decision making is a complex process, a very complex one, in which many factors take part and where a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary endorsement is required, involving the social sciences.

## ANTECEDENTS

The 19<sup>th</sup> April of 1963, by law No. 1107, the Cuban Government created the Institute of Scientific, Technological Documentation and Information (IDICT). It was assigned to the National Commission of the Academy of Sciences of Cuba (ACC). Among its main purposes was: to define the bases for the organization of a system of scientific and technical information.

The 17<sup>th</sup> September of 1976, the President of the National Council of Science and Technology emits the Resolution 2/76, creating the National System of Scientific and Technical Information (SNICT), headed by the IDICT, establishing filial centres in the different provinces of the country.

In 1984, by means of the Resolution No. 16/84 of the ACC, the IDICT was named in charge of the SNICT.

In 1989, as part of the SNICT development project, the IDICT created various Committees of Information and Coordination that grouped different organisms of information working similar areas of knowledge that could fulfil collective works of common benefits. Among them were:

The Cooperation Committee on Economic Sciences (COSDE).

The Cooperation Committee on Agriculture.

The Cooperation Committee on the Sideromecanic Industry.

Other information committees were created that grouped the coordinated efforts of special libraries and/or centres of information on diverse subjects.

## DEVELOPMENT

In October 1995, after the creation of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment (CITMA), the IDICT, as a CITMA organization, convoked libraries and information centres involved in political, social and economic subjects areas, some of them pertaining to organisms of the central public administration, with the purpose to create a working group within the framework of the National System of Information (SNI) with the mission of develop the accessibility and availability of the information resources and existing informative services in the country in those fields of work, promoting the relations among the organizations and the establishment of projects of collaboration and strategic alliances, stimulating cooperative and coordination oriented efforts to the best exploitation of their resources and stimulating the exchange of information and experiences between the organizations, given that all the centres worked on social sciences subjects.

By means of the designation of a Board of Coordination and the creation of several working groups, started its activities the Comité de Coordinación de Centros de Información Política y Social, COIPS, which at the present time is integrated by 30 organizations of information with complementary subject profile within the field of Social Sciences.

#### PURPOSE OF THE COIPS

The main purpose of the COIPS was:

1. To constitute itself in an instrument to foment the development of cooperation among libraries and centres of documentation, research and academic institutions specialized in the fields of Social Sciences and the libraries of governmental organisations.
2. To provide the greater availability and the necessary access to information and knowledge needed for the decisions-making, taking in consideration that the libraries plays a fundamental role providing a permanent access to information and knowledge; that the citizen is the central point of interest of the “information society” and the importance of the politic, economic and social information for the social and economic development of the countries.

To this end the following actions were identified:

1. To promote activities of cooperation among national institutions
2. To focus the social priorities of the country.
3. To identify problems, difficulties and sensible areas in the organizations, in the process of adaptation to the new conditions required by the Society of Information, and contribute to its solution.
4. To promote the application of the new technologies.
5. To disseminate widely the information that exists in the different specialized centres of the country.
6. To facilitate the access to this information through the cooperated making of products and informative services based on the technologies of information.

The Committee should:

1. Identify political, economic and social information needs, of the governmental organizations that demand collective efforts.
2. Promote the use and development of the technologies of information on behalf of the diverse needs of information of the country on the different subject areas of work.

3. Promote the development of the centres towards centres of multimedia knowledge.
4. Contribute to the permanent training and professional development of its members.
5. Promote the research and development projects on information services and products in the fields of politics, economic and social subjects.

The Centres should:

1. Work in collaboration to develop tasks of social incidence.
2. Avoid the duplicity of tasks in similar areas of work, working in a coordinated manner.
3. Collaborate effectively in the availability and access to the economic, political and social information that they process.

## MEMBERS

The organizations whose centres of information and libraries integrate at this moment the Committee can be grouped in 3 categories:

- Governmental, in charge of the decision-making. (G)
- Non-governmental. (NG)
- Academic institutions. (AC)

1. National Assembly of the Popular Power (G)
2. Central Bank of Cuba (G)
3. Ministry of Culture (G)
4. Ministry of Foreign Relations (G)
5. Ministry of Economy and Planning (G)
6. Ministry of Finances and Prices (G)
7. Ministry of Justice (G)
8. Centre of Information of the Supreme Popular Court (G)
9. Ministry of Foreign Trade (G)

10. Association for the Unity of Our America (NG)
11. Centre of Studies on Europe NG
12. Centre of Studies on Africa and the Middle East (NG)
13. Centre of Studies on America (NG)
14. Centre of Studies on the United States (NG)
16. Press Information Centre (NG)
17. Psychological and Sociological Research Centre
18. CANEC (NG)
19. Cuban Women Federation (NG)
20. Cuban Movement for Peace and Sovereignty (NG)

21. Central Library of the University of Havana (AC)
22. Centre of Studies on Management Techniques (AC)
23. Institute of Philosophy Information Centre (AC)
24. Centre of Information on Tourism (AC)
25. Centre of Information and Computer Science Training for Lawyers (AC)
26. Institute of History of Cuba (AC)
27. Higher Institute of International Relations (AC)
28. Centre of Studies on Migrations of the University of Havana (AC)

- 29. Psychological and Sociological Research Centre (CIPS) (AC)
- 30. Centre of Studies on Marti (AC)

#### INFORMATIVE POTENTIAL

In order to give an idea of the informative potential that have the Centres of the COIPS, we can mention some collections and data bases that at present are hosted in some of the organizations who integrate the Committee, as a sample of the accessibly information they have.

CENTRAL LIBRARY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF HAVANA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MORE THAN 30000 PUBLICATION OF SOCIAL SCIENCES</li> <li>• 1128 SERIEL PUBLICATION OF SOCIAL SCIENCES</li> </ul>
CENTRE OF STUDY ON EUROPE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MORE THAN 14500 PUBLICATIONS ON EUROPEAN SUBJECTS</li> </ul>
CENTRE OF STUDY OF AMERICA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• INFORMATION ON CUBA OF THE PERIOD 1988-1998</li> </ul>
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN RELATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CHRONOLOGIES OF THE FOREIGN RELATIONS OF CUBA</li> <li>• 24000 BOOKS OF SOCIAL SCIENCES</li> </ul>
HIGHER INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 25000 REGISTRIES OF MAGAZINES ARTICLES ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL POLICY</li> </ul>
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MORE THAN 4000 PARLIAMENTARY DOCUMENTS</li> <li>• COLECCTION OF THE OFFICIAL GAZETTE SINCE 1902.</li> </ul>

As it can be appreciated, the centres of the COIPS cover the following Social Science subjects: Finance, Economy, Planning, Law, Tourism, Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade, Peace and Sovereignty, Woman, Psychology, Sociology, Environment, Management Techniques, Philosophy, History of Cuba, among others.

#### ACTIVITIES OF THE COIPS

The main activities of the Committee were designed as follows:

1. Periodical meetings in the participant centres that have improved their services or have developed novel products and could offer them to the other members of the COIPS, allowing the mutual knowledge of their informative potentialities and their products and services at an important level of detail.
2. Arrangement of masterly conferences on organization of information networks and novel subjects or exhibitions of new systems and advanced information models, to contribute to the professional knowledge development of the librarians. The needs of the centres were identified and known, and opportunities were settled down to establish specific collaborations and strategic alliances.

Among the activities developed by the Committee these years of it existence we can emphasize the following:

1. Exploratory activities took place to identify the informative potential of the organizations, as well as problems or difficulties, applying the research techniques of surveys and interviews in situ.
2. A directory of the institutions that is updated constantly.
3. A surveying of software used in the centres for the development of databases and other products.
4. Trainings on the use of softwares were offered to the centres by specialists of the IDICT, to help or improve the development of the data bases of the centres.
5. Demonstrations of software and databases developed by the centres were organized.
6. Upgrade of old data bases systems in use were done by specialized technicians of the IDICT.
7. The promotion of bilateral collaboration to face needs and problems of the centres.
8. The promotion of scientific events of the subject.
9. Collective and Cooperated participation of the centres in international events allowing the promotion of their services and products.
10. Orientation and rules of the National Information System were given to the centres.
11. Advise in the application of statistical models by means of which the data on services and users are reported to the IDICT.
12. Exchange of information by electronic means.

These activities allowed to increase the social incidence of the centres, by widening the dissemination of the governmental and technical specialized information, and to share the knowledge generated in the field of social sciences, contributing to the creation of new knowledge that impact the social and economic development of the country.

More recently, with the national project of informatization of the Cuban society, the uses of new technologies of information and communication in the sphere of public administration, in the enterprise system, as well as in academic, educational and research centres and in centres of public access in general, have undergoing significant extension.

## RESULTS

We can identify as the greatest profit of this experience the level of integration and collaboration reached among centres participating in the COIPS, in benefit of the governmental institutions, but also in benefit of the remaining organizations. Also we have obtained a wide exchange of experiences between the centres members. To find and share solutions to common problems and to compare models of organizations, working systems and services; the establishment of strategic alliances among the centres and the development of programs addressed to increase the knowledge of information users in the field of Social Sciences.

## CONCLUSIONS

At the time the COIPS was created, the national information and communication infrastructures were still insufficiently settled in our country, stressing even more the need for projecting a program of coordination and collaboration among centres as a strategic plan, foreseen and taking into account the growing impact this technologies have in the handling, transference, quality and immediacy of the information. At present, in a context of a national program of massive informatization of the society,

with substantial investment in technological infrastructure (SANTOS RIVERA 2006), the readiness of the centres to take advantage of the information technologies, favoured in part by the coordination efforts of the COIPS, shift the efforts to increase the visibility of the centres on the electronic media (multimedia, Web services, etc.), extending the availability and access to information and knowledge in the field of Social Sciences.

In the recently celebrated International Congress of Information, INFO'06, organized by the IDICT, the project of the Cuban Network of Science was presented as a space of collaboration and interaction between scientific institutions, with access to data bases, virtual libraries, and other sites of science and knowledge in general, including the Social Science (ALONSO BECERRA 2006).

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