When actions need to be modified,
…then it is necessaty to let go of
what is known and embrace what is new
Jörg Knoll

Introduction

The profound transformations that have affected the world's economic system as a result of the creation of the new techno-economic paradigm, and which have been promoted by the information and communication technologies (ICT) have brought about substantial economic, political, educational, social, and cultural change. Within the framework of such changes, the challenges posed to Library Sciences by these transformations in terms of access and availability to all kinds of information, of whatever format and physical media type, stand out.

Undoubtedly, a common denominator of the peoples of Central America has been their scant interest in the creation of libraries and the development of collections, this being due to the few existing education programs in Library Sciences in the region. This situation is evident given the small number of libraries in these countries, their impoverished collections, and meager user-attraction and selective information dissemination programs, among other aspects. Today this situation is present to a greater or lesser degree in the region's societies, and is defined by the interests of the library directors.

*Former director of the School of Library Sciences, Documentation, and Information of Universidad Nacional (Costa Rica), periods 1990-1993; 2001-2006
Translated by Patricia Andrés

1

Globalization has also left its mark on the libraries and the professionals in library sciences since, as one of its main pillars, it sets up information mediated through ICT and the librarian as the facilitator to knowledge access and availability.

Keeping these considerations in mind, it is important to know what is happening right now in the Central American region, and what the essential items of the regional librarianship agenda might be.

Background

Education in Library Sciences in Central America is seeded both in good will and enthusiasm as well as in serious threats and challenges. In April 1941, the Universidad de Panama opened the region's first program in Library Sciences, which offered a bachelor's degree. After that time, similar programs have been implemented in the other countries in the region; nevertheless, there is still much work to be done, especially in those countries where there is no college major in this discipline.
The purpose of both formal and informal education in Library Sciences in Central America is to offer a curriculum that allows their alumni to acquire the needed competencies for wider and more specialized reflection on library sciences and their implementation in documentation and information services. The curriculum is based on a set of knowledge, abilities, skills, and attitudes for exploring the application of information literacy, the growth of access to and availability of information, and the dynamics of intellectual realms, all of which are studied in accordance with national and international events, as well as electronic forums.

In years past, international organisms contributed generously to the training of librarians in the region and to promoting the evaluation of the library sciences majors. In order to do so, they offered several support options intended to facilitate the academic growth of those in charge of documentation and information services. One of these efforts was undertaken in 1979 by the Organization of American States (OAS) in Costa Rica, which aimed at training the staff to organize the libraries in Central America by teaching them how to use ICT, and by including this topic in their curricula. The region also had access to the UNISIST Newsletter, which offered innovative articles for that time.

IFLA has supported projects to foster the training of in-service personnel and the development of documentation and information services. IFLA was a pioneer in the region in organizing events, including the IFLA-UNESCO Manifesto (Costa Rica, 2007), Library Associations (El Salvador, 2002), Parliamentary Libraries (Costa Rica, 1996), and Public Libraries (Nicaragua, 1995). In addition, it has contributed to research projects on topics of interest for Central America, along with scholarships to fund participation in the Annual Conference of IFLA, etc. However, these isolated contributions which are not related to academia have a reduced scope. At the Central American Seminar on the IFLA-UNESCO Manifestos that was held this year in Costa Rica, the urgent need to create an educational and training program on Information Literacy was pointed out by participants.

Librarians' interest in being up to date has led them to use several strategies, such as the creation of curricula in Library Sciences, Documentation, and/or Information Sciences, with various emphases, academic events, publications, and, with the aid of ICT, online discussion lists and forums. The curricula are exclusively found at colleges; the other activities may be organized by documentation and information services, work groups, or officially recognized associations.

Library Sciences in Central America

Central America is located in the Northern Hemisphere, and is surrounded by the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. It is a region of natural contrasts characterized by a broad array of cultures.

Some important considerations in terms of the development of this paper are listed in the table below.

Table No. 1
Basic profile of Central America
2007

General characteristics	Belize	Guatemala	El Salvador	Honduras	Nicaragua	Costa Rica	Panama
Area	23,000	108,889	21,040	112,088	130,668	51,100	75,517
Population	301,300	12,000,000	6,800,000	6,697,916	5,570,129	4,160,000	3,283,959
Illiteracy rate	23.5%	35%	20%	36%	24%	4.8%	7.6%
No. of college libraries	5	78	51	32	47	124	12
No. of public libraries	35	150	16	106	NR	56	83
No. of school libraries	NR	NR	2427 (Support areas in good condition)	3,528	422	526	NR

Source: Central American Seminar on the IFLA-UNESCO Manifestos for Public and School Libraries and Internet (San José, C.R., 2007) [Reports by the directors and coordinators of the college, public, and school libraries of Central America]. UNA, Heredia, Costa Rica.

The illiteracy problem in the region has to be stressed. In Guatemala and Honduras, more than 35% of the inhabitants do not know how to read or write, which is not justifiable in the Information Age. In Nicaragua, Belize, and El Salvador, the percentage is also very high: over 20%. In contrast, in Costa Rica and Panama, the percentages barely reach 4.8% and 7.6%, respectively.

The main purpose of this presentation is to promote a discussion about the need to create Information Literacy programs in Central America. To this end, the feasibility of the programs, projects, or activities related to formal and informal education and training on Information Literacy in the region have been ascertained.

To prepare this paper, the model proposed by the Costa Rican researcher Kemly Camacho (2004) in her article "*Retos para evaluar el impacto de la Internet: el caso de las organizaciones de la sociedad civil centroamericana"* [Challenges to Assess the Impact of Internet: The Case of the Central American Citizens' Organizations] was used as it suits the purpose and characteristics of this report.

In order to achieve coherence with the model adopted, three methodological conceptual challenges were undertaken. The first challenge is posed by the construction of a conceptual framework to approach formal and informal education, as well as training in Information Literacy in Central America. The second challenge is the need to prepare a methodological approach to operationalize the findings, and the third deals with the construction of indicators.

A. First challenge: building a conceptual framework to approach formal and informal education and training in Information Literacy in Central America.

This section should be aligned with the method that has been adopted to select the cases; for instance, if a curriculum is to be analyzed, that ought to be done in a conceptual framework from the Information Literacy perspective.

This analysis included everything related to both formal and informal education and training in Information Literacy available through the global network; namely, the curriculum, the formal courses, the short-term events, all parallel events, discussion forums, and any other type of specific activity in this area, as well as the results of a number of surveys sent to key informants in the region.

To be able to clearly define what formal and informal education and training in Information Literacy mean in the region, it was necessary to adopt three perspectives: 1) from Academia: the report analyzes potential majors in library sciences, academic librarian associations, librarianship research institutes, and publications in this field; 2) from libraries: the report analyzes elementary and high school libraries, public libraries, and college or university libraries; and 3) from electronic librarianship forums: a list of discussion lists organized by both the forums and by a specialized electronic forum were analyzed.

This differentiation is important when the impact of the various approach levels to formal and informal education and training in Information Literacy needs to be measured, since doing so goes beyond merely counting the number of people who are registered in programs, courses, and events, or the number of countries and entities that organize them.

First category: From Academia

This analysis category entitled **_Academia_** refers to the Information Literacy components that work together to make library sciences majors, librarian academic associations, and publications in this field of knowledge visible. Said category includes the analysis of the **_presence_** of the Information Literacy in the curricula, research projects, events, and publications.

The criteria used in this category responded to the inquiry of whether the academic offer includes the Information Literacy component as:
- A discipline
- A research area
- A strategic axis

- A core for the events it organizes
- A thematic area in terms of its publications

Second category: From the Libraries

This analysis category entitled **Libraries** refers to the **opportunities** that libraries provide to their users to get training or to be updated in Information Literacy.

This category was analyzed based on inquiry of whether the library offers the following resources for the training and updating of its users in Information Literacy:
   a) Short-term courses
   b) Talks
   c) Teleconferences
   d) Internships
   e) Workshops
   f) Selective dissemination of the information

Third category: From the Electronic Librarianship Forums

This analysis category entitled **Electronic Librarianship Forums** refers to the resources on Information Literacy that the forum members have **access** to.

This category was analyzed from the perspective of whether the electronic librarianship forums offer these types of information about Information Literacy:
   a) Articles
   b) Discussions on specific topics by experts
   c) Casual discussion on a topic

Table No. 2
Conceptual Approach

| Analysis category	Variables	Research questions	Analysis dimensions
From Academia	Presence of Information Literacy as a discipline, research area, strategic axis, core for organized events, thematic area in terms of its publications	Whether the academic offer includes the Information Literacy component as: a) A discipline b) A research area c) A strategic axis d) A core for the events it organizes e) A thematic area in its publications	Presence
From the Libraries	Resources to train and update users in Information Literacy	Whether the library offers the following resources for the training and updating of its users in Information Literacy: a) Short-term courses b) Talks c) Teleconferences d) Internships e) Workshops f) Selective dissemination of the information	Opportunities

Analysis category	Variables	Research questions	Analysis dimensions
From Electronic Librarianship Forums	Types of information about Information Literacy	Whether the electronic librarianship forums offer these types of information about Information Literacy: a) Articles b) Discussions on specific topics by experts c) Casual discussions on the topic	Access

Based on Camacho, K. (2004). "*Retos para evaluar el impacto de la Internet: el caso de las organizaciones de la sociedad civil centroamericana." In* Anales de Documentación. No. 7 (2004).

B.   Second challenge: How may this conceptual framework be operationalized?

The operationalization of the first challenge consisted of the systematization of the categories, which was done by applying coherent methods and techniques that provide a panorama that fits the reality of the Central American region.

Chart No.1
Methodological Approach
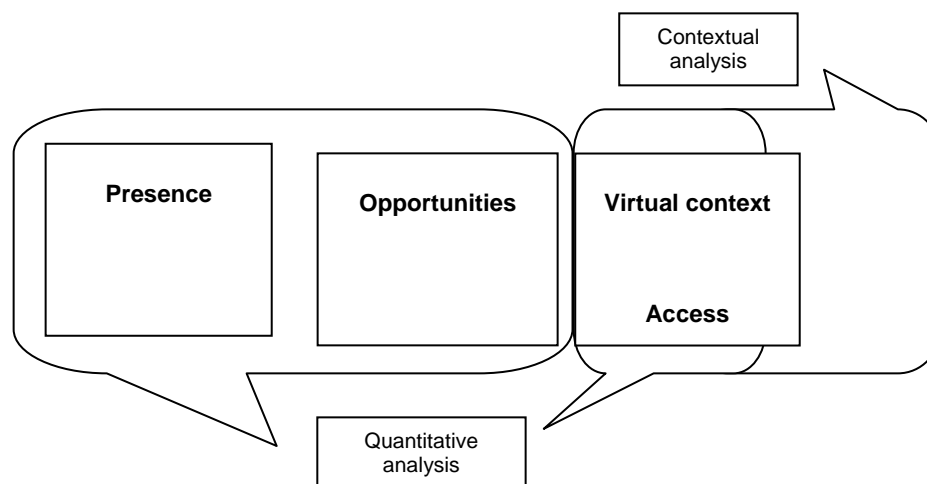
Based on Camacho, K. (2004). "*Retos para evaluar el impacto de la Internet: el caso de las organizaciones de la sociedad civil centroamericana." In* Anales de Documentación. No. 7 (2004).

After deciding to limit the data to Central America due to the lack of a representative number of informants and sufficient data about Latin America and the Caribbean on the Internet, the issue was approached as follows:

1. For the category From Academia, it was decided to use quantitative data provided by the directors and coordinators of the majors in Library Sciences of Central America at the *"Central American Seminar on the IFLA/UNESCO Manifestos for Public and School Libraries and Internet,"* which was held in Costa Rica from March 26 to 29, 2007. To gather this information, a survey had been sent to directors and key informants in Central America. For the

other entities involved in academic education and training, the sources of information were both printed and electronic. The informants' opinions were also gathered.

2. For the category <u>From the Libraries</u>, the data used consisted of quantitative information from the questionnaires filled out by the heads of the libraries in Central American colleges and schools, as well as regular public libraries, and from the reports presented at the aforementioned seminar.

3. For the category <u>From the Electronic Librarianship Forums</u>, the data was gathered from the contents of the BIBLIOTECOLOGOS-CR forum (a discussion list administered from Costa Rica with international scope, and which organizes forums under the guidance of M. A. José Ruperto Arce, Director of the Library System of the Agricultural School of the Humid Tropical Region--EARTH) and from the specialized discussion forum on Librarianship Education initiated by Dr. Lina Escalona, researcher of the Centro Universitario de Investigación Bibliotecológica [Librarianship University Research Center] of Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Mexico. It was decided to carry out a contextual analysis of the data gathered. For this purpose, the issue was reviewed in both forums, which covered the entire period during which the specialized forum has been operating, along with a period of two years (up to May 2007) for the discussion list and forums in BIBLIOTECOLOGOS-CR.

Quantitative analysis

The quantitative analysis was based on the answers to the questions sent to the directors and coordinators of the majors in Library Sciences, and on the questionnaires sent to the directors or heads of the college, public, and school library systems (13 college libraries, 5 public libraries, and 5 school libraries).

To obtain the data about the college library systems of Central America, a questionnaire was sent to the members of the Sistema de Información Documental Centroamericano (SIDCA) [Central American Documentation and Information System], a project of the Consejo Superior Universitario Centroamericano (CSUCA) [Central American Higher Education Council] which comprises all the public universities of Central America. A questionnaire was also sent to those in charge of the public libraries and school libraries of each country.

The information provided by the library sciences majors from eight Central American universities was also analyzed from a quantitative point of view.

Contextual analysis

The contextual analysis was triangulated as follows: 1) information provided (articles or base documents), 2) reactions of the list members, scholars, and librarians; and 3) opinions of experts, scholars, and librarians.

As an alternative method, another instrument was distributed to the members of the BIBLIOTECOLOGOS-CR discussion list, as well as directly distributed (person to person) to 35 librarians of the region (annex 1). The purpose of this instrument was to gather more information about academic events.

The latter request generated a positive response from M.A. Ruth Velia Gómez, Director of the Centro Nacional de Información y Documentación (CENIDA) [National Information and Documentation Center] of the Universidad Nacional de Agricultura, Nicaragua; the collaboration of M. A. Alicia López Castillo, Sub Director of the José Coronel Urtecho Library; three e-mails from Argentina that included electronic references; a copy sent to Peru requesting that information needed be provided; a response from Guatemala indicating that other people would soon be providing information about their country; a response from a Costa Rican librarian asking if she needed to send information, but who did actually send some data later on; a response from the Board of Directors of the Colegio de Bibliotecarios de Costa Rica [Professional Association of Costa Rican Librarians]; and a response from Brazil indicating the difficulty of collecting information about the more than 30 graduate degrees offered in that country. Six of the responses (Argentina, Costa Rica, and Guatemala) were provided as a response to the request posted on the BIBLIOTECOLOGOS-CR discussion list. The other responses were the result of personal inquiries.

Diagram No. 1
Complementarity between the Methodological and Conceptual Approach
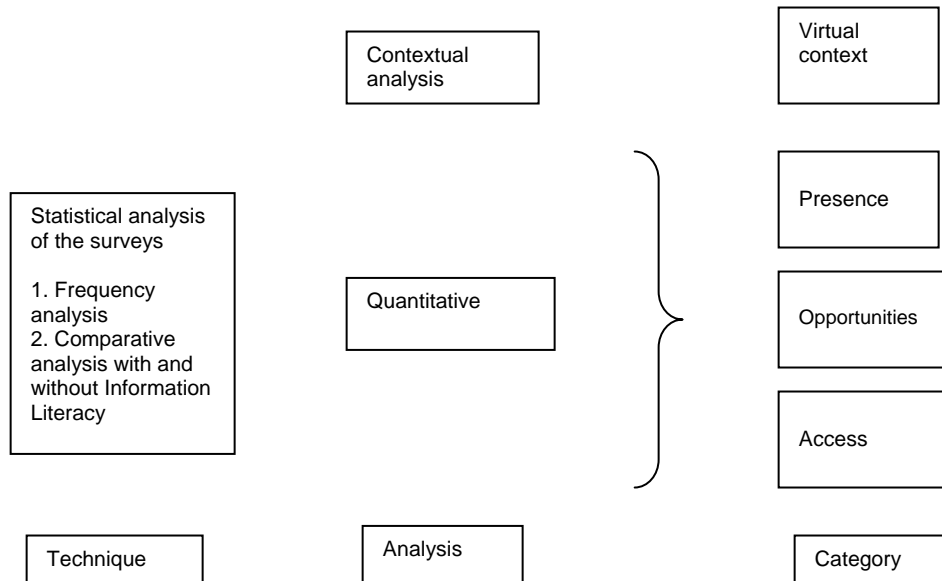
C. Third challenge: Building of indicators:

The indicators were obtained as follows:

1. Through a dialogue which was held with the directors and coordinators of the majors in Library Sciences and that was mediated by previously posited questions as well as by the surveys carried out with the heads of the Library Systems, the reports on the situation of each major or system in regional events, and on cyberspace environments in the discussion list and the academic forum.

2. Aspects deemed interesting were then grouped and analyzed according to whether they were virtual in origin or derived from personal contact.

3. Once the data were analyzed and discussed, they were grouped in three categories according to their environment.

4. The main findings for each analysis category were grouped and identified.

5. The most significant findings were used to assess the librarianship situation in Central America.

D. Research findings

Information Literacy from Academia

1. *Majors:* The data provided by those universities which carry out formal and informal education and training in Information Literacy was grouped. For clarity, general data such as name of the university, the type of degree offered in library sciences, the year the major was opened, the number of students and alumni, the presence of the Information Literacy component as an area of study and analysis, as well as the challenges, were all included.
2. *Academic Associations*: Overall data, the encounters promoted, their organizational structure, task forces, existing projects, and the presence of Information Literacy in their discussion topics, were analyzed.
3. *Research institutes:* A common link was identified in this important dimension of knowledge development.
4. *Publications*: Those issued from the academic realm were identified.

Majors

The following table shows the basic features of the majors and their commitment to Information Literacy. It can be seen that only Costa Rica mentions this aspect. As Belize and Honduras did not report any majors in library sciences, they were not included.

Table No. 4
Data on the Majors in Library Sciences and Related Sciences
In Central America 2007

General Data	Information Literacy as a Discipline and Research Area	Challenges and Goals
Guatemala		
Universidad de San Carlos Majors -General Librarian (7 semesters) -*Licenciatura* in Library Sciences (11 semesters); weekdays and weekend plans Year opened 1948 Number of alumni 133 general librarians and 94 from *Licenciatura* Number of students 95	Not mentioned	Challenges Library sciences is not an attractive field because the citizens and the state believe that given the role played by the libraries, it is not necessary to hire professionals. Goals Work on: a. A *Diplomado* (Associate) degree in librarianship techniques for the Library of the Ministry of the Defense. b. A *Diplomado* (Associate) degree in Information Sciences with emphasis on School Libraries c. Training profiles of the alumni in college teaching and research who are best qualified to work at the School d. Contributing to design a major in library sciences and documentation, with a minor in Information Literacy, for Central America
El Salvador		
Universidad de El Salvador Major Technician's Degree in Library Sciences Year opened 1973 Number of alumni 200 Number of students 100 Major Master's Degree in Management and Organization of College Libraries (*) Number of alumni 9 (2001-2004)	Not mentioned	Goals Contributing to design a major in library sciences and documentation, with a minor in Information Literacy, for Central America
Nicaragua		
Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Nicaragua (Managua) Major *Diplomado* (Associate) degree in Information Management Year opened Number of alumni 92 Number of students Universidad Centroamericana (UCA) de Managua Majors Master's Degree in Management and Organization of College Libraries (*) Year opened 1997	Not mentioned	Goals Contributing to design a major in library sciences and documentation, with a minor in Information Literacy, for Central America

General Data	Information Literacy as a Discipline and Research Area	Challenges and Goals
Number of alumni 22 (1997-1999) Number of students 22		
Costa Rica		
Universidad de Costa Rica Majors -B.A. in Information Sciences -B.A. in Library Sciences with emphasis on Educational Libraries -*Licenciatura* in Library Sciences and Information Sciences -Master's Degree in Library Sciences and Information Studies -Master's Degree in Library Sciences with a minor in Technology and Computer Sciences -Master's Degree in Library Sciences with a minor in Information Management -Master's Degree in Library Sciences with a minor in School Libraries Year opened 1968 Number of alumni Number of students 420 Universidad Estatal a Distancia Majors -*Diplomado* (Associate) degree in Library Sciences -B.A. in Library Sciences Year opened 1991 Number of alumni 282 Number of students 377 Universidad Nacional Majors -*Diplomado* (Associate) in Library Sciences and Documentation -B.A.. in Library Sciences and Documentation with emphasis on Information and Communications Technologies -B.A. in Library Sciences and Documentation with emphasis on Information Management -*Licenciatura* in Library Sciences and Documentation -Master's Degree in Central American Culture with a minor in Information Management -Master's Degree in Central American Culture with a minor in Library Sciences and Documentation Year of opening	All the majors include Information Literacy as a field of study in teaching, outreach programs, and research	Goals Contributing to consolidate the information culture in Central America by training librarians Coordinating the design of a Major in library sciences and documentation, with a minor in Information Literacy, for Central America

General Data	Information Literacy as a Discipline and Research Area	Challenges and Goals
1977 _Number of alumni_ 818 _Number of students_ 210 Universidad Autónoma de Centro América _Majors_ B.A. in Library Sciences with an Educational Orientation B.A. in Library Sciences with an Orientation in Information Technologies _Year opened_ 2007 _Number of alumni_ _Number of students_ 10		
Panama		
Universidad de Panama _Majors_ -B.A. in Library Sciences -Technician's Degree in Administrative Records Management -Technician's Degree in Clinical Records Management -Technician's Degree in Historical Records Management -Graduate Degree in Information Service Management -Master's Degree in Library Sciences _Year opened_ 1941 (Library Sciences) and 1985 (Records Management) _Number of alumni_ _Number of students_ 305	Not mentioned	

(*) With the support of Escola Universitària Jordi Rubió i Balaguer de Biblioteconomia i Documentación de Barcelona.
Source: Central American Seminar on the IFLA-UNESCO Manifestos for Public and School Libraries and Internet (San José, C.R.2007) [Report of the Directors and Coordinators of the School Library System of Central America]. UNA, Heredia, C. R.

Academic Librarianship Associations

EDIBCIC stands for the Asociación de Investigadores y Educación en Bibliotecología, Archivología, Ciencias de la Información y Documentación de Ibero América y el Caribe [Association of Researchers and Educators in Library Sciences, Records Management, Information Sciences, and Documentation of Iberoamerica and the Caribbean] which is legally incorporated in Costa Rica. Although it is not strictly a Central American association, EDIBCIC has met the needs of the region to a certain degree.

It has promoted encounters between researchers and educators in library sciences, records management, information sciences, and documentation in San Juan, Puerto Rico (1993), Mexico, D.F. (1995), San Juan, Puerto Rico (1996), Maracaibo, Venezuela (1998), Granada, Spain (2000), Mar de Plata, Argentina (2004), and Marilia, Brazil (2006)

EDIBCIC's purpose is to promote the discussion and reflection on academic topics and trends in the field which foster and advance activities for generating knowledge; this is done by means of open dialogue carried out among researchers and academics.

Structurally, EDIBCIC is organized in four regional groups: Mercosur/Mercosul, Iberic, Andean, and Central America, Mexico, and the Caribbean.

The task forces are clustered in a) Information Literacy, b) Records Management Education, and c) Accreditation and Approval of Curricula.

The projects consist of developing databases for researchers (Mexico), teachers (Colombia), and a Website (Brazil) (EDIBCIC, 2006)

Librarianship Research Institutes

There are no librarianship research institutes in Central America, and research in the Library Sciences majors is only incipient. Its main achievements, quantitatively speaking, are the final research papers prepared by the alumni.

The research areas have thus far included, among others: a) Information Literacy, b) metric studies, c) information and development, d) information for minority groups, e) evaluation of information systems and services, f) information marketing, g) reading, study, and user training, h) information and communication technologies, and i) electronic documents.

The School of Library Sciences, Documentation, and Information at the Universidad Nacional of Costa Rica, has initiated conversations with the Director of the Centro Universitario de Investigaciones Bibliotecológicas (CUIB) [the University Center of Library Sciences Research] to enlist its support for the department in the development and strengthening of research so as to be able to create a Library Sciences Research Center for Central America.

Publications

In Costa Rica, the Boletín Bibliotecas de la Escuela de Bibliotecología, Documentación e Información [Newsletter of the School of Library Sciences, Documentation, and Information] of the Universidad Nacional is the oldest and most regular periodical published in the region by a major in library sciences. Its first issue was printed in 1980, and it is still being published. At present, it has a digital format and is found on the Internet at http://www.una.ac.cr/bibliotecologia/boletinbili.htm. Information Literacy is one of its areas of interest.

There are very few articles that have been published in the region on the topic of Information Literacy. Saray Córdoba González published "*La Alfabetización Informacional en el momento actual: una mirada de los últimos diez años*" [Information Literacy in Current Times: A Look at the Last Ten Years] and *"La cultura informacional"* [The Information Culture]; Alice Miranda published *"Agenda para un currículum en Bibliotecología y Documentación* con énfasis en *Alfabetización Informacional* para América Central"* [Agenda for a Curriculum in Library Sciences and Documentation with

an Emphasis on Information Literacy for Central America]; and at the IFLA in 2006, Jorge Meneses and Alice Miranda presented *"Contribución de la Escuela de Bibliotecología, Documentación e Información de la Universidad Nacional (Costa Rica) a la Alfabetización Informacional"* [Contribution of the School of Library Sciences, Documentation, and Information of Universidad Nacional (Costa Rica) to Information Literacy].

Table No. 5
Information Literacy as a Component of Academia
2007

Academic Matters	Presence of Information Literacy
Majors Belize and Honduras did not report any	As a discipline, only in Costa Rica
Academic Associations (*) Only at the Ibero American and Caribbean level	As a task force
Research Institute / Area No institutes reported	As a research area, this was mentioned only by Costa Rica
Publications	As a thematic area, only the Boletín Bibliotecas (Costa Rica) and four articles by various authors

(*)EDIBCIC. Congress (7º: 2006 : Sao Paulo, Brazil) (2006) The Epistemological Dimension of Information Sciences and Documentation and its impact on Education and Research in Library Sciences [Records management]. Sao Paulo, Brazil: EDIBCIC.
Source: Central American Seminar on the IFLA-UNESCO Manifestos for Public and School Libraries and Internet (San José, C.R.2007) [Report of the Directors and Coordinators of the School Library System of Central America]. UNA, Heredia, C. R

Information Literacy from the Libraries

As may be observed in Table No. 6, the opportunities that school, public, and college libraries provide to Information Literacy are scarce. Reading is the activity that they give the most attention to, which could be due to its having been a service provided for recreational purposes at the libraries since their inception. Very few school and public libraries offer workshops on information management and ICT.

Table No. 6
Training or Updating Opportunities in Information Literacy
at Central American Libraries
2007

School Libraries	Public Libraries	College Libraries
Belize		

Not mentioned	Reading
	   This is promoted in all its activities
	   Annual Summer Program
	   Annual Book Fair and Open Day
	   Doorstep Tales Interactive Reading
	
	Information Management
	   A Better Informed Citizen
		Information Management
		   Encouraging library use
		   Bibliographic instruction
		   How to get effective and efficient information
		   Knowledge through English courses offered and research methods
		   Policies dealing with plagiarism
		ICT
		   They offer the tools to use and take advantage of them

School Libraries	Public Libraries	College Libraries
Guatemala		

Reading
  Children's corner
	Reading
	  Reading Council of Guatemala
		ICT
		  Tools offered for using and taking advantage of libraries

El Salvador		

Reading
  Reading incentive workshops
  Reading clubs
 	
Information Management
  Training in procedures for handling information
  Promoting values with regards to the use of information
 	
ICT
  Training workshop on the use of library resources and ICT
  Electronic reference service
  Electronic communication
  Internet access
	Not mentioned	ICT
		  User training in Internet, e-mail, Web page design, and database searches

Honduras		

Not mentioned	Reading
	  Programa de Cajas Viajeras [Door-to-Door Book Box Program]
	  Bibliobús [Bookmobile]
		ICT
		  Tools offered for using and taking advantage of libraries
		  Introductory courses on the application of ICT
		  Internet course on information retrieval
		  Course on specialized database management
		  Teaching technology applications
		  Use of OPAC

Nicaragua		

Reading
  Promotion and encouragement
Information Management
  Talks, videos, and visits to classrooms to instruct users on the use of information
 	
ICT
  Courses for students and teachers on electronic communication and electronic reference services
	Not mentioned	Information Management
		  Information skills training and development
		  Use of bibliographic references
		  Importance of using information sources published by well-known authors
		  Copyright issues
		  How to prepare a bibliographic reference
		
		ICT
		  User training in sources of interest
		  Use of technologies
		  Use of OPAC
		  Internet information searches
		  High quality electronic sites
		  The value of Internet resources

Costa Rica		
Reading	**Reading** Promotion and encouragement Read-Aloud Storytime Puppet shows Reading encouragement for community members **Information Management** Workshop on information competency skills The Public Library of Guadalupe carries out an activity related to Information Literacy	**Information Management** Use of the library resources Copyrights **ICT** They offer the tools to use and take advantage of them Uso of electronic databases Use of OPAC Demonstrations of databases found in the editorial market Course on specialized database use Teaching technology applications
Panama		
Did not respond	**Reading** Promotion and encouragement Read-Aloud Storytime Children's reading circuit Reading stimulus sessions at schools, hospitals, and in parking lots Workshop on literary creativity Puppet workshop Book exhibits Reading promotion backpack kits Children's forum to discuss published stories that are made into movies **ICT** Computer skills for beginners What is Internet? Internet surfing for beginners Arriving at a safe port when searching for information Create your own e-mail account You've got mail (e-mail practice) Internet information sources Practice with the keyboard and mouse Learn how to use a PC How to use a multimedia encyclopedia Word processing How to use OPAC	**ICT** Tools offered for using and taking advantage of libraries Use of databases Use of OPAC

Source: Central American Seminar on the IFLA-UNESCO Manifestos for Public and School Libraries and Internet (San José, C.R.2007) [Report of the Directors and Coordinators of the School Library System of Central America]. UNA, Heredia, C. R

Information Literacy from the Electronic Librarianship Forums

As mentioned earlier, BIBLIOTECÓLOGOS-CR, the Costa-Rican based discussion list where some forums have been organized, and the academic forum *Seminario Permanente de Educación Bibliotecológica* [the Ongoing Seminar in Library Sciences Education] were analyzed. The latter is not exclusively addressed to Central America, but it provides academics of this region with the opportunity to participate in it.

BIBLIOTECÓLOGOS-CR

According to the data provided by the administrator of the discussion list, José Ruperto Arce (personal communication), the list started at the ONELIST server in 1998 and membership is now open. The only requirement is to make a request for access to the list.

A total of 966 participants from all parts of Latin America, the United States, Spain, and various countries in the Caribbean are registered. From time to time, they organize discussions dealing with a given topic, and invite experts who offer their perspectives. Then, they give list members the chance to reflect on the topic and ask questions.

No forums on Information Literacy have been organized lately, nor has it been mentioned casually on the list to require its analysis or comments.

Ongoing Seminar on Library Sciences Education Academic Forum

This forum is organized by the Universidad Autónoma de Mexico (UNAM) at its Centro Universitario de Investigaciones Bibliotecológicas (CUIB) and is coordinated by the researcher Dr. Lina Escalona.

Access to the forum is selective. The participants include 30 academics from several countries (Colombia, Costa Rica, Spain, Mexico, Peru, and Venezuela) and is by invitation only. Participants are given a password, and Dr. Escalona contacts the participants both before starting as well as during the forum.

The two topics analyzed were curricular flexibility (Nov. 24-Oct. 01, 2006) and the librarian's profile (April 23-April 29, 2007). A folder containing 12 articles related to the topic under analysis was prepared. One of these articles deals with the knowledge of technology.

During these two discussion periods, the issue of Information Literacy was brought up only twice, each time by Costa Ricans, and this was merely incidental on one of the occasions.

Table No. 7
Comparative Analysis of the Two Electronic Forums on Library Sciences
2007

Elements	BIBLIOTECOLOGOS-CR (Costa Rica)	Educación Bibliotecológica (México)
Access	Voluntary registration Open, unlimited access	Registration by invitation Access by means of a password
Structure		Organized in four parts Structure Folders Resources Participants
Topics	The topics discussed depend on the members' interests. There are no filters as to what is debated there. Sometimes, the matters discussed are of interest to those involved in library sciences, but at other times they are somewhat superficial and personal.	Curricular flexibility (Nov. 24-Oct. 01, 2006) The Librarian's Profile (April 23-April 29, 2007)
Resources	Sometimes a base document is included. Any member of the forum may issue an opinion.	12 readings Experts' opinions Academics' opinions
Participants		30
Presence of the issue of Information Literacy	The issue of Information Literacy has not been discussed for the last two years	Just incidentally; it was only mentioned by participants from Costa Rica

Conclusions

As may be observed from the information about Central America, there is little interest on the part of authorities to position library sciences at the highest levels. This needs to be done in order to overcome the current deadlocks and stagnation. Moreover, the change could be carried out by promoting a substantial change in the accumulation of meaningful learning fostered by the major transformations brought about by ICT in its support of Information Literacy.

The transcendental factor of the Information Literacy process is to offer moral response for improved social mobility and flexibility in the Central American region so as to make it possible to lead it toward the Knowledge Society, as well as to provide advocacy for overcoming the illiteracy rates in the region.

Since Central America is at a relative loss in terms of an inclusive, fairer, and more egalitarian society, in particular in light of the region's high illiteracy rates, its authorities have the ethical obligation to promote a sustainable commitment for their citizens' and their organizations' right to Information Literacy.

This paper has presented Central America from the perspective of library sciences, but its purpose is to bring about transformation with the support of Information Literacy in order to the capacity to reinstate a universal order of solidarity, justice, and peace together with an identity that allows for the integration of the dynamics of the modern world from a humanistic perspective.

Reiterating here what was ratified at the Central American Seminar on the IFLA/UNESCO Manifestos on Public and School Libraries and the Internet, to contribute to closing the digital gap or divide that is widening with such great force, we specialists in library sciences and documentation should promote a theoretical and practical response. This must be a response that allows for the design, analysis, application, and evaluation of a general model that facilitates the progress of the region toward a state of solidarity, ethics, and democracy that leads toward an information culture. Said information culture has to foster human rights and, specifically, respect Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which stresses that library users have the right to expect the same degree of freedom of expression and freedom of access to the information on the Internet as they have with printed materials.

It is urgent that a curricular agenda be designed for library sciences and documentation with emphasis on Information Literacy for Central America. This agenda should take into account the mistakes made thus far in the Information Literacy processes in the region, and pay attention to the globalization processes that proclaim information as a strategic resource and librarians as its interlocutors.

Once the theoretical bases have been set to move forward in this struggle for equality, such an agenda would aim at entering into the Knowledge Society, establishing access to the windows offered by Information Literacy. Moreover, a forum would be called for in order to present and debate new ideas, projects, and experiences among professionals who are experts in this matter, professionals who are committed to working on the design of strategies intended to end the current inequality in terms of access to information, knowledge, and education through ICT.

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Appendix

Dear colleagues:

I would like to enlist your cooperation in responding to this instrument.

I am gathering information about all types of formal and informal majors in Library Sciences, Documentation, and/or Information Sciences that have been offered or are currently in place in Latin America and the Caribbean in the last five years. These may include academic majors, commissions, or task forces, updating seminars, electronic discussion forums, etc.

The purpose of the request is to prepare a report with the greatest possible amount of data. This report is to be presented at the IFLA 2007 Conference "Libraries of the Future: Progress, Development, and Cooperation" which will be held in Durban, South Africa from August 19 to 23, 2007.

The purpose of the report is to present general characteristics of formal and informal education in Library Sciences, Documentation, and/or Information Sciences that is taking place at present, or has previously taken place, in Latin America and the Caribbean in the last five years.

The information provided at IFLA will contribute to learning about the activities being held and the organizations carrying them out. Internationally, this will contribute to making these efforts visible, and to positioning them.

If you know of someone who directs one of these activities, or if you do so yourself, I ask that you to fill out the corresponding data in the following form. Please include the name of the country where the activity is or has been carried out, as well as your name, in order to make it possible to give credit to those entities providing the data.

Majors

Data requested	Data provided
Name of the university or institution where the activity takes place	
Name of the majors, if there is more than one	
Academic degrees offered	
Name of the academic titles or degrees offered	

Data requested	Data provided
Number of students registered	
Number of alumni	
Number of teachers (full-time staff). If you wish to include their names, specialization areas, and e-mail addresses, please do so. This information will be useful for establishing contact between IFLA members and instructors	
Academic areas and disciplines that comprise the curriculum	
Professional profile/description	
Alumni work areas	
Please list all academic projects in progress	
Any other information you wish to share	

Academic events

Data requested	Data provided
Name of the event	
Dates held	
Place and institution organizing it	
Purpose of the event	
Duration in hours	
Number of participants and their nationality	
Name and country of the presenters. If you wish to include their names, specialization areas, and e-mail addresses, please do so. for establishing contact between IFLA members and the presenter	
Topics discussed	
Nature of the event (national or international)	
Conclusions based on the event	
Any other information you wish to share	

Updating commissions or committees in the country and/or region

Data requested		Data provided
Name of the commission or committee		
Date created		
Specialization		
Purpose of the commission or committee		
Events or courses offered in the last five years		
Members. Please include only the names of the board members, if applicable, when there are many members	Name	
	Academic degree	
	Specialization	
	e-mail	
Any other information you wish to share		

Discussion forum

Data requested	Data provided
e-mail	
Forum founder	
Forum administrator	
Place and institution where it operates	
Creation date	
Forum objectives	
Topics discussed	
Number of registered members	
Daily average number of participants	
Nature: national and/or international	
Any other information you wish to share	

Publications

Data requested	Data provided
Author(s)	
Name	
Publication site	
Publisher	
Year published	
Topics	

Thank you for your valuable contribution.

Sincerely,

Alice Miranda-Arguedas
Member of IFLA Ongoing Committee
For Latin America and the Caribbean