



World Library and Information Congress: 70th IFLA General Conference and Council

**22-27 August 2004
Buenos Aires, Argentina**

Programme: <http://www.ifla.org/IV/ifla70/prog04.htm>

Code Number: 181-E
Meeting: 164. Plenary Session IV.
Simultaneous Interpretation: Yes

Memory of the world programme in Latin America and the Caribbean

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What is the Memory of the World Programme?

UNESCO created the Memory of the World Programme in 1992 in an international effort to safeguard endangered documentary heritage of humankind, democratize access, ensure that people become aware of its significance and disseminate widely its derived products.

UNESCO's Director-General established in 1993 the International Advisory Committee with the aim of advising on the planning and implementation of the Memory of the World Programme as a whole, in close collaboration with competent organizations in the field of the safeguarding of documentary heritage as the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) and the International Council on Archives (ICA). This Committee agreed to keep a register of the Memory of the World, by making a list of the documentary heritage which has been identified as corresponding the selection criteria for world significance as established in the Programme's guiding document: Guidelines to Safeguard Documentary Heritage.

The Programme recommended the creation of Regional and National Committees in charge of disseminating the Programme's objectives and of identifying documentary heritage of world, regional, national and local significance for their inclusion in the Memory of the World registers, facilitating their preservation and access by the most appropriate means.

According to Memory of the World, the concept of documentary heritage has been enlarged to include not only manuscripts and other valuable and exceptional archive holdings and library collections, but also all kind of documents, especially audiovisual and digital.

Inspired in the digitalized programmes promoted by Spain within the framework of the "Encuentro entre dos mundos" V Centennial and concerned for the deterioration and lack of access to the archives

of the former Soviet Union, the Programme was launched under UNESCO's auspices and carried out its first activities in Asia and Europe as from the year 1993. ¹

By the mid nineties, the National Committees in Latin America began to take shape and the first collections were inscribed on the International Register. Four countries succeeded in having their nominations accepted and included in the International Register : Mexico with the pre-Hispanic codices safeguarded by the Anthropology and History National Library and the General Archive of the Nation; Argentina with the documents of Viceroyalty of Rio de la Plata, from the General Archive of Argentina; Venezuela with two collections, Writings of The Liberator Simón Bolívar and the 19th century Latin American Photographic Collection; Trinidad and Tobago with the documents that constitute the Eric Williams and Derek Walcott Archive.

Furthermore, a series of pilot projects to digitalize or microfilm heritage collections were launched. Among the first projects, a microfilm project of a Latin American periodical entitled *Memoria de Ibero América*, and a Latin American photographic project from the 19th century can be found.

With the aim of promoting the Programme in Latin America and the Caribbean, in December 1999, UNESCO's Information and Informatics Division with headquarters in Caracas, held a meeting with experts in Ibero American documentary heritage, which comprised historians, library and national archive directors, preservers, bibliologists and philologists, representing 15 national and international institutions².

The objectives of the meeting were:

- 1- To share information on heritage collections in the region at risk.
- 2- To revise preservation conditions and access both in a national and a regional level.
- 3- To discuss proposals related to projects and potential nominations for the Memory of the World Register.
- 4- To share information on the sources of financial support that could be used apart from UNESCO's and on ways of promoting Memory of the World in Latin America. ³

Constitution of the Regional Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean

Following the recommendation of the group of experts that met at Caracas, six months later, UNESCO called a group of nine people chosen on a personal basis from a larger list proposed by the Cooperative Commissions with UNESCO from Latin American and Caribbean countries, to integrate the Regional Committee for the Latin America and the Caribbean Memory of the World Programme. The Committee constituted itself in Pachuca, Mexico in June 2000. During the constitution meeting, the Committee drafted the Rules of Procedure and Statutes, exchanged information on the problems concerning the preservation of and access to documentary collections and defined the strategy that should be adopted to disseminate the programme in the region.

The Regional Committee's objectives, as established in the Memorandum of Incorporation, are the following:

- To promote and ensure, by the most appropriate means, the preservation of documentary heritage of world, national and regional significance.
- To make member countries fully appreciate their documentary heritage, particularly those documents considered as the region's common memory.

- To formulate and adopt national policies that would enable the definition and safeguarding of and the access to the documentary heritage of the region.
- To propose mechanisms that would promote cooperation and the exchange of professionals and information concerning the preservation of the historical documentary heritage.

It was also approved that each member of the Regional Committee, would not only represent his own country, but also be responsible of endeavouring the creation of National Committees in those countries of the region that did not yet have one. Thus, Brazil would be in charge of Paraguay and Uruguay; Chile of Argentina; Ecuador of Colombia; Jamaica of a group of countries in the Caribbean including Bahamas, Belize, Haiti, Surinam, St. Vincent & The Grenadines, the Dutch Antilles, British Virgin Islands and the Cayman Islands. Mexico committed itself to work with Cuba; Nicaragua assumed Honduras, Guatemala, Costa Rica and El Salvador; Peru, looked after Bolivia; Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, St. Lucia, St. Kitts & Nevis, Grenada, Guyana, Antigua & Barbuda and Dominica; and Venezuela assumed the Dominican Republic and Panama⁴.

The work of the Regional Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean

After its constitution, the Regional Committee devoted its efforts to promote the Programme and support the creation of National Committees in the different subregions. Besides, the Committee was in charge of organizing different dissemination activities and training seminars on issues related to the objectives of the Programme.

Another priority task was the study and discussion of the philosophy of the Programme included in the document *Guidelines to Safeguard Documentary Heritage*. The first version (1995) was substituted by a new and revised version (2002). Members of the Regional Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean became involved in the discussion of new guidelines and its propagation has been facilitated by the existence of a Spanish version translated by the General Archive of Mexico. This document has been widely disseminated in its written version, in compact disc and can also be found on the internet.

Undoubtedly, one of the first and most demanding tasks of the new National Committees has been to identify documentary collections liable for inclusion in the Programme International Register. The nomination form has implied a slow process of learning and reflection on our documentary collections, their significance, preservation status and the necessity to promote their preservation and access by means of the Memory of the World mechanisms and structure.

After four years of work, the Programme's developments in the Region can be described as follows:

Constitution of National Committees

20 National Committees have been constituted in the following countries:

Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Cuba, Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, Argentina and Chile⁵.

Nominations

Thirteen nominations were submitted to the International Advisory Committee that met in Korea and Poland in 2001 and 2003 respectively. The criteria adopted by the Committee on each of the nominations have also led to long and, in some cases, tense debates which enabled members of the CRALC (Regional Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean) to thoroughly examine the philosophy of the Programme, the selection criteria and to be more creative and objective in relation to new proposals⁶.

List of nominations:

1. Terror Files. Proposed by Paraguay
2. Preservation, restoration and dissemination of the Cinematography Fund of the National Library of del Peru.
3. Notarial Protocols of the sixteenth to twentieth centuries. Proposed by the General Archive of Peru.
4. "Cedularios del Peru Virreinal". Jointly submitted by its custodians: Historical Archiepiscopal Archive of Lima, the Historical Archive on Boundaries and the General Archive of the Nation.
5. Documentary Heritage of Enslaved Peoples of the Caribbean. Proposed by the Barbados Museum and Historical Society.
6. Archives of General Francisco de Miranda, Precursor of Hispanic America's Independence. Proposed by the History Academy of Venezuela.
7. Jesuits of America Fonds, Proposed by Chile.
8. Scientific Memory of Andean America: scientific expeditions and research in Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru. Eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Proposed by Ecuador.
9. American Incunabula, Books printed in Mexico in the 16th century. Proposed by Mexico.
10. The original negative of *Los olvidados*, film by Luis Buñuel. Proposed by Mexico.
11. Hugo Brehme Photographic Collection. Proposed by Mexico.
12. Human Rights Archive of Chile. Proposed by Chile.
13. Collection of records of Carlos Gardel. Proposed by Uruguay.

The Latin American Collections in the International Register

Venezuela - *Writings of the Liberator Simón Bolívar*. The archive of the Liberator Simón Bolívar, which is comprised of military documents, personal letters, trials, proclamations, speeches, family documents and political writings, has captured special attention since it was included in the Memory of the World Register and its custody was held by the National Academy of History.

A series of actions have been undertaken to preserve the collection following the advice of the Venezuela National Library Conservation Centre (regional centre of IFLA-PAC), which are closely related to the quality of the environmental and climate conditions. Thanks to the economic contributions negotiated by the History Academy with the Banco Venezolano de Crédito, the archive storage chamber not only has the appropriate temperature and humidity control, but also has a security system similar to that of a vault.

Venezuela- *Latin American and Caribbean Photograph Collection*. The second *Memory of the World* collection under the custody of Venezuela is a collection of nineteenth-century Latin American and Caribbean photographs. It has been widely disseminated, as reflected in the pilot project and existing compact disc, and in which other images of photograph archives from the rest of Latin America have also been included. Cataloguing is well in advance, and the preservation and dissemination of the collection by means of analogical or digital reproduction is an urgent request set forth by the Venezuela Audiovisual Archive and by common consent with the Venezuela National Library Conservation Centre, in spite of constraints due to the cost.

Trinidad and Tobago- *The Eric Williams Collection.* The Eric Williams documentary heritage is made up of a valuable collection which includes historical information about the Caribbean and Trinidad and Tobago 's independence and decolonization. Among the most important writings, *Capitalismo y esclavitud (Capitalism and Slavery)* can be found, which significantly contributes to the historiography of Caribbean history and slavery.

Trinidad and Tobago- *The Derek Walcott Collection.* Documentation that belongs to one of the most important writers on the islands, who was 1992 Nobel prize laureate in Literature.

Mexico- *Collection of Mexican Codices.* The codices that comprise this collection date from the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries and are the only surviving examples of the cultures of Mesoamerica.

In addition to the collections inscribed on the International Register 1996, the International Advisory Committee that was held in 2003 in Poland, recommended the inscription of the following collections:

Barbados – *Documentary Heritage of Enslaved Peoples of the Caribbean.* This collection constitutes a unique corpus of documentary evidence, including antique legal documents, plantation ledgers, estate and shipping inventories, rare books and original prints and paintings, relating to the lives of enslaved Caribbean people throughout the 17th to the 19th centuries, which have been preserved by the Barbados Museum and Historical Society. The collection is a documentary source of inestimable value for Barbados history researchers, a country which has been considered the prototype of Caribbean and North American plantation economies. This documentary source is especially valuable if we bear in mind the fact that family history has been lost and that there is no “ancestral memory” among most Caribbean, African and Afro-American peoples, whose ancestors barely had the necessary autonomy to be the owners of their destiny and lives. Access to this documentation is likely to contribute to structure an integrated knowledge of the political and social evolution of plantation communities in the New World, as well as its impact on modern social schemes. Research can be useful to enable millions of people to recover their lost cultural heritage.

Brazil – *The Emperor's collection: foreign and Brazilian photography in the 19th century.* This is a unique collection of 21,742 photos, assembled and left to the National Library of Brazil by Emperor Pedro II in 1891. It is called the “Thereza Cristina Maria photograph collection” and it is the largest collection of photographs in Latin America: it provides an accurate portrait of the nineteenth century, reflecting customs, intellectual and industrial developments at the time it was put together. The collection includes the works by the first photographers in the world; it is housed in the National Library of Brazil and forms part of the history of the Brazilian people, whose changing circumstances throughout the nineteenth century it reflects. Nevertheless, due to subject matter it portrays, which also includes Europe, Africa and North America, the collection is also a testimony to the many aspects of human activities in general, for example, agriculture, archeology, architecture, urbanism, scenic and visual arts, astronomy, biology, botany, education, engineering, emigration, medicine, hygienics and ethnography. The collection is made up of both the negatives and the positives of photos of different types and formats, taken with many different techniques. Although most photos are made of silver gelatin (white or black), some are colored with sulfur and/or selenium (sepia), iron (blue and green) and copper (red). All photos had been bought by the Emperor or given to him as a gift.

Chile – *Human Rights Archive of Chile.* The archive is comprised of documentary collections originated from different sources, which reflect the work of several organizations in the defence of human rights during the military dictatorship (1973-1989). This Archive includes mainly: newspaper articles dealing with human rights violations between 1974 and 1990 (detentions, executions due for political reasons, exile, torture and disappearances); audiovisual material made up of a significant set of about 1,000 photos of those disappeared during the dictatorship, in addition to tapes and videos relating the history of such events; the audiovisual archive belonging to “Teleanálisis” (1984-1990) with interviews on video about the actions of defence of human rights between 1984 and 1990; documentation on the work of institutions in the defence of human rights in the social, political and judicial life of the country; digitized documents recollected by the Truth and Reconciliation

Committee (Comisión Verdad y Reconciliación) about the 3,877 instances of violation that this entity investigated; and judicial archives that include documentation about several proceedings and remedies related to those disappeared. The aim of this inscription is to ensure that the historical memory of human rights violations and the defence of human rights during the military regime, which is documented in various archives and national institutions, does not continue to deteriorate. Besides, conserving the archives is necessary in order to preserve and disseminate a type of documentation that should enable Chile and other countries, dictatorship victims, to overcome the legacy of a recent past characterized by human rights violations.

Chile – *Documentary cultural heritage of the Jesuits of America Fonds*. The fonds, under the custody of the National Archive of Chile, comprises documentation generated by the Jesuits and inventories of their vast properties. In addition, the fonds include account books, royal orders, correspondence, relations and abundant information on their religious, educational and economic activities. The Jesuit Fonds is the indispensable reference for studying the continuity of the work of the Society of Jesus in Spanish America, as well as the vast network of schools and missions in which both the elite and the evangelized natives were educated. The information contained in over 128,000 sheets of the Jesuitical documentary collection is intrinsically associated with the history of the West, the vast Spanish Empire of the 17th, 18th and beginning of the 19th centuries. The material is classified according to eight sections corresponding to each of the following countries: Chile, Peru, Argentina, Mexico, Colombia, Bolivia and Ecuador. Along with the documentation described, there is a smaller collection of documents relating to the following territories and countries: Antilles, Spain, Philippines, Panama and Venezuela. This documentation contains exceptional testimony of the intricate network of influence and interaction between the Old Continent and the New World.

Mexico – *The Young and the Damned (“Los olvidados”)*. It is the original cellulose nitrate negative of the film “Los olvidados” (1950) by the Spanish film director Luis Buñuel, which had been lost for twenty years. The film is now protected in the vaults of the Film and Video Archive of the National University of Mexico (Filmoteca de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México - UNAM), in Mexico City, having been placed there in deposit by its present owner, Televisa S.A. In his work, Buñuel immortalized the eternal situation of marginal children living in a contemporary large city slum. The works of the “Golden Age” of Mexican cinematography influenced realist cinematographic trends as the “new Latin American cinematography” and the French “new wave”, as well as several world film makers, ranging from the Indian Satyajit Ray to the Spanish Saura, covering the Italian Pier Paolo Pasolini and his fellow country men, the Paolo and Vittorio Taviani brothers. In 1951 Buñuel received the “Palma de Oro” Best Director award at the Cannes Film Festival for *Los Olvidados*, which had raised controversial criticism during the premiere for having shown how marginal children turned into delinquents because society had not been able to offer them an alternative possibility. At first, the film was no longer shown in Mexico on account of the public protest it had triggered, but following the Cannes award, the film was successfully shown again and was awarded 11 of the Prizes granted by the Mexican Academy of Arts and Science. Fearful that the film might be prohibited because of its lugubrious ending, Buñuel had a more optimistic second ending filmed, which is also kept at the Filmoteca of UNAM. The conservation status of the original negative is poor and needs immediate restoration if it is to be preserved for future generations.

Uruguay – *Original records of Carlos Gardel - Horacio Loriente Collection (1913-1935)*. This private collection of 800 original records preserved in its original covers is the most complete collection in Uruguay. Thanks to its perfect state, the collection offers a record of Carlos Gardel’s complete artistic career, the Argentine singer born in France that was called the “zorzal criollo” (creole nightingale) at the time. The records, produced in Buenos Aires, Paris and New York include the 29 musical genres and the different styles that made up Gardel’s repertoire musicales, thus preserving the voice and exceptional art of the singer and film actor. The “tango”, which Gardel mastered completely, flourished at the same time and in the same manner in the two main ports of the Río de la Plata: Buenos Aires and Montevideo. Gardel spread the tango all over the world. Following his successes in Europe and the United States, tango academies opened in Paris, Buenos Aires and Montevideo while he was still alive. Nowadays, these academies have spread all over the world: along

the American continent, in almost all European countries, in Japan and in Hawaii. Today, 60 years after his death and 90 years after his earliest recordings were made, Gardel still has many admirers and – according to a search engine – there are 34,247 Internet sites devoted to him⁷.

Collections inscribed on the Regional Register

Venezuela: Archives of General Francisco de Miranda.

Mexico: *Hugo Brehme Photographic Collection.* This collection comprises the work of the German writer Hugo Brehme, who lived in Mexico between 1905 and 1954. His work, portrays a view of Mexico that forms part of the collective thought on its nature, inhabitants, traditions, monuments and heroes, which, as coincided with the national and unifying search by post-revolutionary governments, created a modern graphic language of its own. As a result of the impact, at the time, of these images on Western World through several publications and postcards, they became the only reference about Mexico, while setting an example to Latin American photographers that were undergoing a similar situation.

The National Picture Archive of the Anthropology and History National Institute holds 2,295 items, among negatives and positives of different formats and taken with different techniques, of which 48.2% can be found in the automated catalogue that incorporates image, author, title, descriptors, place, date and notes. An inventory of the collection has been taken and the items are safeguarded in Ph neutral, in storage areas with the appropriate temperature and humidity as well as with adequate light conditions and purified air.

Ecuador: *Scientific Memory of Andean America: scientific expeditions and research in Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru. 18th and 19th centuries.* Documentary heritage comprised of more than ten thousand manuscripts, graphic testimony and printed material dating from the 18th and 19th centuries, relating to research work by European and American scientists in the present-day territories of Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, either privately or under the auspices and sponsorship of the Spanish or French Crown. This work led to great advances in scientific knowledge, particularly in the field of astronomy, geography, physics, botany, medicine and zoology. It made a significant contribution to promoting Andean culture through detailed descriptions, engravings, watercolours and photographs of Andean sociocultural events. Part of this documentation constitutes a unique record of landscapes, customs and archaeological evidence that have suffered alterations, and in some cases disappeared, owing to the workings of nature or human activity. This documentary heritage on the scientific memory of Andean America is distributed among fourteen archives and libraries in the subregion and three in Spain.

Dissemination and awareness activities developed under the Memory of the World Programme in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Participation of the CRALC in the Consultative Regional Meeting on the preservation of digital heritage. Managua, November 2002.

The preservation of digital heritage is one of the Memory of the World Programme new concerns due to the great amount of information that is currently produced in digital format. This huge volume of information, which constitutes part of our historical records, is in danger of disappearing as a result of four factors: **a):** the constant and accelerated change of technological platforms which prevents the use of data in the new platforms. **b):** the volatility of digital information hardware (diskettes, CD ROMs, hard disks, magnetic strips, etc.), with a life expectancy between 4 and 20 years **c):** current difficulties concerning the reliability of stored data, which can be altered and even deleted, on purpose or not. **d):** the huge volume of information with heritage value that appears on the Internet and disappears from the Internet, without leaving a single trace.

Bearing this in mind, experts from all the countries of the region were summoned, appointed by the National Cooperative Commissions in liaison with UNESCO. 46 experts from 25 Latin American and Caribbean countries attended the meeting, of which 6 belonged to the English-speaking Caribbean Region.

Besides raising awareness, the experts provided recommendations and comments on the document “Draft letter of the Guidelines for the Preservation of Digital Heritage”, from which a related document was elaborated, and a CD ROM edited with the minutes of the meeting.

Memory of the World in MERCOSUR countries. Asunción, Paraguay, May 2003

Invited by the consultant of UNESCO’s Science Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean in Montevideo, four members of the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Committee participated in the V Meeting of Archive Directors of MERCOSUR, which took place in Asuncion, Paraguay on May 27 and 28, 2003. The Directors from the National Archives of Chile, Brazil, Uruguay and Paraguay attended the meeting with the aim of strengthening the presence, coordination and management of National Archives in MERCOSUR. The MERCOSUR National Archive Directors Forum was created and a project to appoint a study group for the standarization of archive systems was put forward.

Members of the CRALC attended this meeting in order to present the Memory of the World Programme, the Guidelines to Safeguard Documentary Heritage and the nominations submitted by Latin America and the Caribbean. The members of CRALC visited the headquarters of the Human Rights Archives of Paraguay and attended the constitution ceremony of the Paraguay Memory of the World Committee.

Memory of the World in the United States. University of Tulane, New Orleans, June 2003

Invited by the University of Tulane and the Stone Center, the UNESCO Memory of the World Programme was presented at the Group CALAP (Central America Libraries and Archives Project) meeting, which took place in the University of Tulane in June 2003. The Chair of the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Committee presented the Memory of the World Programme placing emphasis on its ojectives, action areas, the work carried out in Latin America and the Caribbean, the nominations, the Registers and its levels.

The meeting was organized with the intent of proposing projects intended for the rescue and organization of Central America libraries and archives and examining the likelihood of financial collaboration by foundations in the United Sates and by international organizations. The Central America Memory Programme was created, with the aim of carrying out several projects related to the preservation of and access to documentary collections selected from Central America National and Municipal Archives, audiovisual archives, libraries and newspaper libraries as well.

Representatives of institutions and people from Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala and United States take part in CALAP.

MERCOSUR Seminar: Project development and constitution of the Human Rights Archive Network. September 2003, Santiago de Chile.

The seminar took place in the Chile National Archive on September 23 and 24, 2003 with the aim of gathering the National Archives Directors from the MERCOSUR countries and the Directors of the Human Rights Archives in order to present the Guidelines of the Memory of the World Programme, and to define joint strategies for the rescue of regional Archives and for the proposal of regional projects.

The president of the Chilean Memory of the World Committee presented the work carried out regarding the nomination of the Human Rights Archives, put forward by Chile and inscribed on the Memory of the World International Register.

To assess the current situation of the Human Rights archives in MERCOSUR countries and to define strategies for the creation of a Human Rights Archives Network were some of the main objectives of the meeting.

History Central America Congresses

The Memory of the World Programme was presented at the Meeting of Archives, Libraries and Research Centers that was held during the Central America History Congresses that took place in El Salvador, Panamá and Honduras in 2000, 2002 and 2004 respectively. The active encouragement of the Memory of the World in Central America has enabled the constitution of National Committees in the five countries of the region.

Training activities.

The organization of seminars and workshops has been another priority of the Memory of the World Regional Committee and some National Committees. The audiovisual archives, the restoration of paper documents and the prevention of disasters have been some of the issues dealt with. The National Committees have been creative in the search for funds to organize the activities, trying to ensure regional impact.

Among its main activities we may find:

Seminars on the sociocultural value and preservation of Audiovisual Archives. Nicaragua and Venezuela.

Several seminars on Audiovisual Archives were carried out by Mr. Ray Edmondson at the Nicaragua and Central American History Institute in Managua and at the Venezuela National Library in Caracas.

In Managua, the Seminar gathered representatives from 18 national institutions that safekeep audiovisual archives, which include the National Film Library, the Military History Centre, the Presidency of the Republic, Universities, Television Channels and Foundations. A general diagnosis was made on the collections and preservation status.

In Venezuela, 145 representatives from several private and public institutions registered. Some of these institutions were the General Archive of the Nation, the Cinema and Television National Academy, the Venezuela National Library, the Fine Arts Museum, among others.

In addition to the Seminar, Dr. Edmondson made a series of technical visits that had been previously requested by sponsoring institutions.

Workshop on the Preservation and Restoration of Audiovisual Archives. Managua, August 2002.

In liaison with the Nicaragua Memory of the World Programme Committee, the Nicaragua History Institute, the National Film Library and the support of the International Federation of Film Archives - FIAF (Federación Internacional de Archivos Fílmicos – FIAF), Mr. Iván Trujillo, President of the FIAF and Joao Sócrates de Oliveira, Head of of the FIAF Technical Commission, conducted a workshop on Audiovisual archives. The Representatives of the FIAF also accomplished another goal: making a diagnosis of the condition of the National Film Library film collections and implementing an emergency plan to save heritage collections that are undergoing progressive deterioration.

Workshop: “Restoration of Audiovisual Archives”. Managua, February 2003.

In liaison with the Nicaraguan Memory of the World Programme Committee, the Nicaragua History Institute, the National Film Library and the support of the International Federation of Film Archives and its Programme “**School on Wheels**”, Dr. Joao Sócrates de Oliveira, from the FIAF Technical Commission, conducted a workshop at the Nicaragua History Institute, which was attended by directors and technicians from audiovisual archives of the country. The workshop instructed on how to clean videos, neutralize the vinegar syndrome in microfilm collections, diagnose the different kind of damage that videos can sustain in tropical countries and analyse possible low cost solutions.

Caribbean Audiovisual Conference (CAVIC 2003). Jamaica, November 2003

With the support of UNESCO (Paris) and the UNESCO office in Jamaica, the “Audiovisual Archives: our documentary heritage and history” Conference was organized. It lasted a week and among its achievements, it succeeded in creating a network of professionals and institutions that administrate audiovisual archives. Attendees shared experiences and discussed matters related to Caribbean archives and the possibility of future development.

The conference established the guidelines for the organization of new conferences in June 2004 and a new CAVIC in 2005. An audiovisual archives association is being organized too. The President of the Barbados Memory of the World Committee plays an active role in the organization of the seminars and the nomination list for the International Register.

Workshop on the preservation of Audiovisual Archives. Barbados. June 2004.

With UNESCO support and the Learning Resource Centre of the West Indies University of Barbados, several activities have been carried out in order to preserve and disseminate audiovisual archives. In June 2004, a three-day workshop was organized with the aim of preventing and neutralizing the vinegar syndrome on audiovisual archives. 24 representatives of governmental and private institutions of the following countries attended the workshop: Antigua, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, St. Kitts, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and Trinidad and Tobago.

The workshop was conducted by Mr. Mick Newnham from Screen Sound, Australia.

Seminar: “Archives and Libraries, safeguard of the memory of the world”. La Paz, Bolivia, October 2002.

Invited by the University Mayor of San Andrés, in La Paz, Bolivia, the seminar “Archives and Libraries, safeguard of the memory of the world” was conducted for the 40 students that are interested in attaining a degree in Archival Studies.

Contact was made and the repositories of Bolivian Archives and Libraries that were to constitute the UNESCO National Memory of the World Programme Committee were visited. The Bolivia ad-hoc Committee of the MOW Programme was formed.

Besides, during the mission, the main archives and libraries that hold documentary heritage liable for inclusion in the nomination on Scientific Memory of Andean America, 18th and 19th centuries, which Ecuador submitted to the International Register, were visited. Among them, the work of Alcides D’Orbigny was included.

Another achievement was the publication of an editorial and an article in the *Fuentes del Congreso*, the Library and Historic Archive Bulletin of the National Congress of Bolivia.

First national workshop on the prevention of disasters in archives and libraries. Quito, Ecuador, April 2003.

Faced with the events that occurred in the Library and Archives of the Congress of Bolivia (February 2003) as well as in the National Congress of Ecuador (March), the Ecuador National MOW Programme Committee, jointly organized with the Undersecretariat of Culture and the Ecuador Historians Association (Asociación de Historiadores del Ecuador –ADHIEC), the *First National Workshop on the Prevention of Disasters in Ecuador Archives and Libraries*, that took place at the Auditorium of the Andean University Simón Bolívar and which was attended by approximately 95 archivists and library officers of the city of Quito and other provinces of the country. The papers presented have been edited in a compact disc titled *Safeguarding our Documentary Heritage*, which also includes the material on documentary heritage preservation that was edited by UNESCO in 2002.

Regional training course for technical staff on conservation and preservation techniques. Lima, Peru. October 2003.

As an agreement of the Regional Committee, this course was organized to contribute to the preservation of documentary heritage through the training of technical staff that work in the preservation and restoration departments of several Latin American and Caribbean archives and libraries.

The course took place in Lima and was attended by professionals from: Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Bolivia, Paraguay and Uruguay. UNESCO contributed funds to finance the scholarships, accommodation and transfer of attendees.

Seminar and Workshop: Guidelines of the Memory of the World Programme. Managua, November 2003

In order to stimulate and promote the nomination of the Poet Rubén Darío Library for inclusion in the International Register, the History Institute of Nicaragua and the Nicaraguan Committee of the Memory of the World Programme, organized a workshop in Managua on the Memory of the World Guidelines and the procedure to be followed when submitting a nomination. The seminar was conducted by Mr. Ray Edmondson. The Director of the Historical Archdiocese Archive of Guatemala, current Chairwoman of the Memory of the World Commission in that country.

Legal Information Workshop: “Legal aspects of the Information Society”. Managua, April 2004.

The History Institute of Nicaragua and Central America --a branch of the Central American University--, the Nicaraguan Committee of the UNESCO’s Memory of the World Programme and the Internet Association of Nicaragua organized this course with the aim of:

Analysing legislation as a key factor in the relationship between informatics systems and distance methods of diffusion.

Reflecting on the importance of the preservation and diffusion of national historic patrimony and its dissemination through new information technologies.

Issues related to the information society’s public policies, intellectual property, electronic commerce and use of technologies to preserve cultural tradition were approached and discussed in the occasion. The workshop was conducted by Dr. Erick Iriarte Ahon, Alfa-Redi Director.

Projects

The regional register of documentary heritage in Latin America and the Caribbean as a means of integration (Venezuela).

This is a project intended to create an automatized register of special collections of the region that deserve to be included as significant documentary heritage in the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Register in accordance with the UNESCO's Memory of the World Programme criteria.

The Regional Register, whose ultimate aim is to safeguard Latin American and Caribbean memory, will include: normalized bibliographic description, notes on its characteristics and significance as documentary heritage, physical preservation and conservation, dissemination and access.

The actual process of constituting the Register will be carried out at least in three stages: the preliminary stage will include the systematic recollection of information compiled by a series of reliable agents on libraries, archives and documentary heritage. Several institutions and researchers carry out surveys, make diagnoses, generate inventories, arrange catalogues and compile censuses. It is their intention to gather this information in automatized formats too so that it would be useful when making a decision regarding regional preservation priorities.

Simultaneously, designing a series of four thematically related seminars will follow, with the aim of training attendees in the use of the Guidelines for the Preservation of Documentary Heritage, guiding document of the Memory of the World Programme. A fifth seminar will be devoted to exercising with fonds that belonged to foreign institutions but would pertain to the regional memory.

The creation of a Central American Image Archive (Nicaragua).

The project proposes the creation of a technical center to train staff in charge of audiovisual archives in relation to the preservation of collections. In addition, video collections from several Central American public and private institutions from the last 30 years will be restored and copies will be made.

A Digital course intended for audiovisual archivists (Venezuela).

The project proposes the creation of a prototype of a pilot course that, by means of its own site, offers archivists and librarians that keep audiovisual material, the possibility of access, through Internet, e-mail and digital formats such as the compact disk, to consultation and training programmes from the existing technical bibliography in Spanish. It is based on similar experiences gathered in Mexico, in the Charles Stuart University of Australia and in Venezuela.

Creation of the Memory of the World website.

The latest developments in the work of the Memory of the World Programme are of vital importance to experts of the Subregional and National Committees, therefore, the Memory of the World website that provides access to that information and can be found in the INFOLAC site fulfills this aim. (INFOLAC – The Information Society Programme for Latin America and the Caribbean)

The website focusses on propagating the activities of the Memory of the World Programme in the region, on making the general and specialized public learn about the Regional Register in their own language, and on submitting documents and resources related to the Programme and documentary preservation to the community for consideration.

Documentary Fond “Blacks and Slaves”: computing infrastructure for use in the web (Colombia).

Proposes launching, for remote reference, the textual database and images that belong to the documentary fond *Blacks and Slaves* of the Colonial Section from the General Archive of the Nation of Colombia and computerizing the documentary items: capture of descriptive references. Digitization and optic storage, consultation and digital treatment of deteriorated images. Reproduction and printing of documents at users request.

The project's aim is to digitize a total of 1,338 documents from the fonds "Blacks and Slaves" from the Colony and Collections Sections.

Three archival institutions at a national level participate in the Project, including the Central Archive of Cauca (Popayán), the Regional Archive of Boyacá (Tunja) and the Historical Archive of Antioquia (Medellín), which have also been endowed with basic computation infrastructure, to accelerate archival and technical processes, coordinated by the General Archive of the Nation.

Project: Open Memory for a Guide of the MERCOSUR Human Rights Archives (Chile).

The aim of the project is to promote joint and coordinated actions between the MERCOSUR Human Rights Archives and Chile for the preservation and dissemination of its documentation. A census will be taken and a guide that includes quantitative and qualitative information concerning the archives generated and preserved by entities related to rights will be produced.

Final Assessment

The Memory of the World Programme had made considerable progress in Latin America and the Caribbean. 20 National Committees have been set up and 10 documentary collections have been inscribed on the International Register.

The Regional Register began with the inscription of the Archives of General Francisco de Miranda and the Hugo Brehme Photograph collection, submitted by Venezuela and Mexico respectively.

Dissemination activities and professional training courses which enabled the identification of common problems, the promotion of regional contribution networks and the exchange of experiences have been organized.

In order to continue the work accomplished till now, strategies have to be developed to encourage the National Committees of the Memory of the World and strengthen the ties between them and Cooperative Committees with UNESCO in each country.

Besides, it would be very important to organize training seminars on the Programme guidelines to support the elaboration of national and regional registers. This task would enable the CRALC to focus on collections of regional significance for the management of fonds that assure their preservation and dissemination.

The creation of thematic collaborative networks seems to be one of the most interesting ways of developing digitized projects, elaborating collective catalogues, organizing seminars and workshops. The Human Rights Archives Network of the MERCOSUR countries and Chile could become a pilot project.

Taking into account the few resources allotted to most libraries and archives, it has become increasingly urgent to formulate regional projects that raise funds in order to preserve collections and train qualified technical staff and professionals with regard to documentary preservation and new communication and information technologies.

Sharing information, technologies, preservation approaches and methods and access would facilitate sharing catalogues, completing sparse collections and gathering information on Latin American collections in other continents. This, in turn, would enable the construction of a regional vision of the Latin American documentary heritage, and the search for renewed regional efforts for its preservation and access. These developments, undoubtedly, are not only the foundation for the elaboration of a new interpretation of the shared Latin American history, but also contribute to strengthen ongoing regional integration processes.

Reference and notes

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³ Ibid.....

⁴Memory of the World Programme: Constitution Meeting of the Regional Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean. Pachuca, UNESCO, junio 2000 (INF/1/2000/WS)

⁵ Abid, Abdelaziz, *"Preserving and sharing access to our documentary heritage"*. UNESCO. August 2004

⁶ The selection criteria regarding the listed nominations can be found in the reports of the meetings of the Regional Committees for Latin America and the Caribbean in Manzanillo (2000), Quito (2002), Managua (2002), as well as in the reports of the meetings of the International Advisory Committee in Korea (2001) and Gdansk (2003).

⁷ Amelan, Rony. 23 new inscriptions of documentary collections on the "Memory of the World" Register. Press Release N° 2003-53. UNESCO.

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