

**REPORT BY THE REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR LATIN
AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN (CRALC)
OF THE MEMORY OF THE WORLD (MOW) PROGRAMME**

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This report cover the activities of the Regional Committee for Latin America and Caribbean (CRALC) in the period of July 2005 to June 2007.

1. Background

By the mid nineties, the National Committees in Latin America began to take shape and the first collections were inscribed in the International Register. Four countries succeeded in having their nominations accepted and included in the International Register:

a) Mexico with the pre-Hispanic codices safeguarded by the Anthropology and History National Library and the General Archive of the Nation;

- b) Argentina with the documents of Viceroyalty of Rio de la Plata, from the General Archive of Argentina;
- c) Venezuela with two collections: Writings of The Liberator Simón Bolívar and the 19th century Latin American Photographic Collection;
- d) 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, bibliographers and philologists, representing 15 national and international institutions.

The objectives of the meeting were:

- To share information on heritage collections which are at risk in the region.
- To revise preservation conditions and access both in a national and a regional level.
- To discuss proposals related to projects and potential nominations for the Memory of the World Register.
- 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.

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 Panama.

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

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

Another priority task was the study and discussion of the philosophy of the Programmeme 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 Programmeme 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 seven years of work, the Programmeme's developments in the Region twenty National Committees have been constituted in the following countries: México, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Cuba, Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, Argentina and Chile.

3 - VI Meeting of the CRALC – Bogotá, Colombia, October 2005

In the meeting the following points were developed:

- Renovation of members of the Regional Committee for America Latina and Caribbean: incorporation of the new members.

According to the statutes of the CRALC and its modifications approved in the CRALC Meeting in Chile, 1/3 of the members of the Regional Committee were renewed. During the meeting a rich interchange of information and experiences between the new and the old members of the Committee developed touching in points about the operation, advances, perspectives and limitations of the Memory of the World Programme in the region.

- Report about the IAC Meeting in Lijiang, China. The President of the CRALC, Mrs. Margarita Vannini presented the positions she defended in Lijian, it was emphasized the procedures to discuss the nominations, the projects, and also the reforms of the Programme's statutes.

The results of the Jikji Prize were divulged. In the First round, two Latin American institutions were pre-selected to receive the prize: one from Colombia and one from Nicaragua

- It was presented a simplified document of the Guidelines to the preservation of the digital heritage prepared by the UNESCO's Office in Quito.
- It was shown a preview about the containment of disasters that Mrs. Lourdes Blanco is preparing.

4 – Workshop about the Preservation of the Digital Heritage - Bogotá, Colombia, October 2005

The members of the Regional Committee for Latin America y Caribbean were present in the Workshop about the Preservation of the Digital Heritage that the National Library of Colombia and the UNESCO's office of Colombia organized. Rich experiences of paper and audiovisuals archives digitalization in the region. Two members of the IAC participated in the Workshop: Ray Edmondson y Rosa Maria Fernandez, who presented papers on the policies to the digital preservation and the Memory of the World Programme.

5 - VII Meeting of the CRALC - Barbados, October 2006

With the help of the UNESCO and the government of Barbados, the VIII Meeting of the CRALC-MoW happened in the city of Bridgetown, Barbados, in the period of October 4-6 2006.

Present at the meeting were the members of the Committee Elizabeth Watson from Barbados, Jaime Antunes da Silva from Brazil, Maria Eugenia Barrientos from Chile, Virginia Chacón from Costa Rica, Berarda Salabarría from Cuba, Rosa María Fernández from México, Margarita Vannini from Nicaragua, and Margaret Rouse-Jones from Trinidad & Tobago, also Mr. Isidro Fernández-Aballí Permanent Secretary of the CRALC-MOW and as observers Gloria Shillingford from Dominica, Pedro Navas from Ecuador, Winsome Hudson from Jamaica, Paule Turmel-John from Santa Lucia and Lourdes Blanco from Venezuela.

- Revision of the Statutes and Election of New Members of the CRALC

In the Meeting the process of renovation of the CRALC was completed. The changes in the periodical renovation of the Committee were incorporated in the CRALC statutes. This process meant a strengthening of the Committee and its institutionalization. Mrs. Margarita Vannini, that presided the CRALC between the years 2002 and 2006 and the following members: Margret Roussel Jones, Rosa Maria Fernández and Maria Eugenia Barrientos, congratulated the new members and offered their support and counsels to the members that maintain this labor.

Among the new members, Mr. Jaime Antunes from Brazil was elected as President, Mrs. Elizabeth Watson from Barbados, as Vice President and Mrs. Virginia Chacón from Costa Rica, as relator.

The most relevant points of the meeting are below:

- All members expressed their preoccupation with the process of reorganization

of the UNESCO's Offices in Latin America and in particular with the future of the MoW Programme, since its secretary permanent in Latin America, Mr. Isidro Fernández was transferred to Jamaica.

The Committee wrote a letter directed to Mr. Abdul Waheed Khan, Assistant to the General Director to Communication and Information of UNESCO expressing the preoccupation of its members, with this reorganization, and the changes that it bring up and also the need to a more agile communication channel. The letter was answered very gently by Mr. Khan that recognized the valuable work realized by the CRALC and reaffirmed the consulting role of these committees. At the same time, he informed that Mr. Isidro Fernández would still be the Executive Secretary of CRALC and that the funds to support the labors of the CRALC were moved to the Jamaican Office.

Another important discussed in the Meeting was the need to promote more actively the constitution of new National Committee and to update the information on the ones already in existence.

It was suggested the organization of activities of training and education to stimulate the presentation of nominations. It was recommended the careful reading of the Guidelines to the Presentation of Nominations and the importance of coordinating the activities of the National Committees and the UNESCO's Cooperation Commissions in each country was stressed.

- Presentation and Discussion of the Nominations to the International Register

One of the more interesting parts of the CRALC meetings was the discussion of the nominations to the National, Regional and International Registers, since an interchange of information and visions about the heritage collections of Latin America y Caribbean is produced, together with a deepening of the understanding of the Guidelines of the MoW and their application.

The new nominations to the MoW and the International Register were

presented, discussed and defended:

- “Documental Heritage about Human Rights - 1976-1983. Archives of the Truth, the Justice and the Memory in the Fight against the State Terrorism”. Presented by Argentina.
- “Latin America. Colonial American Music. An example of the documental Richness”. Collective Nomination presented by Bolivia, Colombia, México and Peru.
- “Collection of Texts in Native Languages”. Presented by México.
- “Collection of Documents of Nicaragua’s National Crusade of Alphabetization”. Presented by Nicaragua.
- Archive of the General Francisco de Miranda. Presented by Venezuela.

- Report of the Work of the National Committees

María Eugenia Barrientos from the National Committee of Chile, Jaime Antunes from the National Committee of Brasil, Berarda Salabarría from the National Committee of Cuba, Virginia Chacón National Committee of Costa Rica, Pedro Navas from the National Committee of Ecuador, Elizabeth Watson National Committee of Barbados, Paule Turmel-John National Committee of Santa Lucia, Margarita Vannini National Committee of Nicaragua, Rosa María Fernández from the National Committee of México reported about the composition of their respective Committees and their activities in the previous year.

Gloria Shillingford from Dominica, Winsone Hudson from Jamaica y Margaret Rouse-Jones from Trinidad y Tobago reported that their countries had advanced in the process of creation or revitalization of their respective countries National Committees. Lourdes Blanco commented that the Venezuelan National Committee is still deactivated, although there is interest in its reactivation.

- Presenting the Study *Mitigando el Desastre. Guía Estratégica para el Manejo de Riesgos en Colecciones Patrimoniales* (Containing the Disaster. An Strategic Guide to the Risk Management of Heritage

Collections)

Lourdes Blanco presented this guide, oriented to Latin America and Caribbean, which, without a doubt, constitutes a valuable tool to help the institutions that preserve documental heritage to elaborate their policies of disaster containment, and to share and divulge this specialized information and the network of specialists in this theme.

- Presenting the Website of the CRALC-MoW Programme and the Heritage Collections

Winsome Hudson of the Jamaican National Library presented the database to divulge the Caribbean documental heritage, which is little known to the public. The website has general aims similar to those of the MOW Programme and intends to support Regional MOW Register. Various means of publicity were used to divulge its existence and use among the region's country. It can be found at www.heritagedocs.org.

- REPORT AVIN - Jamaica Audiovisual Information Network. An example of national project

Winsome Hudson presented this project that intends to build and make available an audiovisual archive in Jamaica. He commented that it is a group effort made by archives, libraries, producing entities and coordinated by the National Library. Conferences, seminars and meetings have been happening since 2003 among the main members dealing with related themes.

6 – Meeting CRALC – Rio de Janeiro, October 22-24, 2007

The Arquivo Nacional of Brazil with the collaboration of the Brazilian Office of UNESCO and the CRALC's executive secretary, Mr. Isidro Fernández of the Jamaican Office of UNESCO will be promoting the annual meeting of the CRALC in Rio de Janeiro, in the period of October 22-24. The agenda will include the nominations for the National, Regional and International Registers;

the work of the National Committees and their relation with the MoW Programme and UNESCO.

7 - Final Assessment

As state in the letter of October 6, 2006, sent to the Communications and Information Division, the members of the Regional Committee for Latin America and Caribbean of the Memory of the World Programme agreed that one of the major benefits of the Regional Committee structure is its impact on the work of National Committees. The nature of the Latin American and Caribbean region demands the continued enrichment of the regional register to further regional integration. Such register also enhances the outreach and awareness of the need to preserve the region's documentary heritage.

We also would like to repeat our suggestions regarding the conversion of the Programme into a Convention such as the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of cultural /diversity in order to give MoW a heightened visibility and increase its viability.

Jaime Antunes da Silva
President CRALC-MoW

Rio de Janeiro, June 6 2007