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WORKSHOP  
ON  
CARIBBEAN ENERGY INFORMATION SYSTEMS



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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA Office for the Caribbean

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ON  
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14-18 May 1984

Hotel Normandie, St. Anns  
Port of Spain, Trinidad

## P R E A M B L E

The Third Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community agreed that the CARICOM Ministers responsible for Energy should, inter alia, prepare a comprehensive Energy Action Plan, and give support to the strengthening of relevant regional institutions.

Ministers of Energy of CARICOM meeting on Trinidad and Tobago (July 1983) agreed, within the activities of REAP that a regional information exchange network to serve the energy sector should be developed.

In addition, the Meeting of Caribbean Ministers of Science and Technology (1983) specifically highlighted the needs for an information system to serve the needs of science and technology in the region.

These decisions may be seen within the context of the decision by CDCC to mandate ECLA Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean to develop mechanisms for the effective dissemination and exchange of information in and about the Caribbean.

As a response to these initiatives, a workshop to study the possibilities of establishing a Caribbean Energy Information System was held in Trinidad and Tobago between 14-18 May 1984. It was organized by the Caribbean Industrial Research Institute (CARIRI) and sponsored by the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) and the Commonwealth Science Council (CSC). It was attended by Energy Scientists and Information specialists from 11 Caribbean countries, as well as representatives from Regional and International Organizations.

## WORKSHOP ON CARIBBEAN ENERGY INFORMATION SYSTEMS

### SUMMARY REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 1. Subject Areas

Subjects which were considered important in terms of energy information needs in the region were listed as:

- (a) Sources: Petroleum, Natural Gas, Coal, Charcoal, Fuel Wood, Biogas, Bagasse, Fuel Alcohol, Solar Power, Wind Energy, Hydropower, Ocean-based Energy, and Geothermal Energy;
- (b) Electricity supply, distribution and conservation;
- (c) Energy conservation and Management; and
- (d) Watching brief on new technologies.

The relevant importance placed on each subject varied from country to country, but, in general, Petroleum, Natural Gas, Electricity, Solar Energy and Biomass were identified as being of common importance.

#### 2. Type of Information

Information types were defined in terms of user requirements the most important of which were identified as:

- (a) Policy and Planning Material;
- (b) Consumer Information;
- (c) Industrial material, including management and conservation;
- (d) Scientific and Technological information;
- (e) Environmental Impact;
- (f) Appropriate Technology.

#### 3. Data Input and Demand on Services

It was estimated that the database would grow by about 500 items per year.

Demand would vary widely from country to country. In general demand would be between 5 and 100 requests per year, although it would be considerably higher in Jamaica, reflecting the public awareness campaign current in that country.

#### 4. Present Resources

Four countries, Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago have extensive collections in the field of energy. The other countries have at least one library collecting information, and depend on regional organizations such as CDB for supplementing their collections.

All countries have reasonable and improving telecommunication facilities, and by 1985 the major constraint to international access will be financial rather than physical. Computer facilities, though improving are still needed in some countries, as are microfiche facilities.

Personnel, though skilled, are in short supply in the smaller countries, and support by governments in terms of national information plans and of legal deposit requirements is needed in some countries.

All countries provide passive reference services through the provision of books and articles or by reference to regional services, such as CARISPLAN. Other services such as the provision of directories and bibliographies are more limited. None of the systems handle numeric data.

#### 5. Existing Gaps in Services

Gaps exist in subject collections, resource strengths and information services offered. For the smaller countries there are more gaps than resources, although all activities associated with information systems are to be found somewhere in the region. The situation is thus ideal for a regional co-operative venture.

Specifically, gaps exist in:

- (i) Numerical data handling;
- (ii) Directories of activities (including research) in progress;
- (iii) Document delivery service;
- (iv) Regional bibliographies;
- (v) Practical information;
- (vi) Directories of experts, manufacturers and equipment;
- (vii) Research documentation.

Subject gaps are most noticeable in the fields of:

- (i) Fuel alcohol;
- (ii) Energy conservation and management;
- (iii) Environmental impact information.

Resource gaps are clearly evident with respect to:

- (i) Skilled manpower;
- (ii) Equipment;
- (iii) Legal Deposit Laws;
- (iv) National Information Systems or Plans.

## 6. Recommendations

The meeting recommended the formation of a Caribbean Energy Information System (CENIS).

The System would be based, as far as possible, on existing facilities and would consist of organizations with regional responsibilities, such as CDB, UNECLA, CARICOM, UWI and National Focal Points (generally 1 per country). The system would form a part of the Caribbean Information System (CARIS), and would take cognizance of the existence and activities of their regional information systems such as CARISPLAN and CAGRINDEX. Membership would be available to all CDCC Member States.

The overall goal of the System would be to enhance the region's capabilities in terms of energy information collection, storage and utilization so as to facilitate the optimum conservation and utilization of the region's energy resources.

The services provided (outputs) would include:

- (i) Bibliographic Services, including the establishment of data bases, provision of abstracts, and indexing;
- (ii) Document Delivery, based on microfiche;
- (iii) Directories, including those covering expertise, products and research in progress;

(iv) Enquiry Answering Services, including information analysis and packaging;

(v) Numerical Data, as possible.

The additional financial and human resources required to establish and maintain the System would need to be considered in depth. However, the System could be established initially at a modest level, with expansion being based on resources becoming available.

#### PLAN FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION

Consistent with the Discussions and Recommendations of the workshop, a plan for immediate action was agreed as follows:

1. The report of Discussions and Recommendations to be forwarded to the CDCC Meeting of 6 June 1984, and the CDCC Ministers to be invited:

(a) To approve the formation of the Caribbean Energy Information System within the overall concept of the Caribbean Information Systems; and

(b) To refer the matter to the Ministers of Science and Technology and to the Ministers of Energy, with the request that CDB and UNECLA be invited to undertake the role of Regional Centres of the System.

2. The Report of Discussions and Recommendations to be forwarded to the Chairman of the Ministers of Science and Technology, and the Chairman of the Ministers of Energy, for information and support.

3. The Report of Discussions and Recommendations be forwarded to relevant Ministries and Organizations within the individual countries.

4. The Report of Discussions and Recommendations be forwarded to Caribbean Governments who are members of CDCC.

5. A watching brief to be held by representatives of CDB, CSC and UNECLA/CARISPLAN until such time as a formal or interim management structure can be set up.

6. After approval in principle, the watching brief to pursue sources of funding for the appointment of a short-term consultant, whose task will be to formulate proposals for the detailed implementation of the system, including costings and training requirements.