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C E P A L

Economic Commission for Latin America

COMMON BIBLIOGRAPHICAL SYSTEM OF THE CEPAL SYSTEM

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A. What is the Common Bibliographical System?

The Common Bibliographical System of the CEPAL System 1/ has the following elements:

(a) A bibliographical data base concerning economic and social development the content of which is determined by selection policies established jointly by all the agencies making up the CEPAL System;

(b) Common standards for cataloguing and indexing documents according to the selection criteria for entry in the data base; a common computer system for data storage and retrieval and for the production of catalogues, abstract magazines and other products and, finally, common procedures for the printing and reproduction of the products generated from the data base;

(c) A Centralized Cataloguing and Indexing Unit to serve the entire CEPAL System.

B. General background

The establishment of a Common Bibliographical System is based on the following considerations:

1. The countries of the region have on several occasions stated that there was a real need for support in connexion with the receipt, processing, preservation and dissemination of information for the achievement of progressive goals of economic and social development.

2. The CEPAL System has already earned a position of prestige both as a catalyst of the efforts of the Latin American countries in the area of information for development 2/ and for the technical assistance it has provided countries that have requested it and its efforts in organizing personnel training programmes. These achievements show the need for strengthening the activities of the CEPAL System by increasing its bibliographical data base in order to enable it to exchange information with other existing or future data bases in Latin America. Thus, there

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1/ At the eighteenth session of CEPAL (La Paz, Bolivia - 1979), reference was made to the "CEPAL System" as being made up of CEPAL, ILPES and CELADE.
2/ In this regard, CLADES, CELADE (DOCPAL) and the Port of Spain Office have been very successful in their particular spheres of competence.

/would eventually

would eventually be a group of bibliographical information networks serving policy makers and agencies or institutes devoted to economic and social research for development.

C. Objectives of the Common Bibliographical System

In the light of the above considerations, there are obvious advantages to enabling the CEPAL System to act in the region by organizing a Common Bibliographical System. This in no way means disregarding the fact that there are sectors of "clients" having special needs -as in the case of planning ministries- which should continue to be met by "specialized intermediaries", ILPES and CLADES, in the case of planning ministries, and CELADE (DOCPAL) in matters pertaining to population, to give only a couple of examples.

Moreover, the increasing personnel costs in the CEPAL System and the growing demands of member countries make it essential to adjust the working strategy of all units in this System. Consequently, the organization of the Common Bibliographical System must be approached with a view to eliminating duplication of efforts -and of costs- by adopting standardized procedures both for computerization and for the format for data entry, including the selection of material to go into the data base,3/ and the production of secondary information: catalogues, indexes, abstract magazines, acquisition bulletins, etc., without prejudice to each independent unit's retaining its own identity as regards the provision of services or other activities of broader scope pertaining to information on specific subjects.

There is also a commitment to the international agencies and governments that have in the past financed many of the CEPAL System's activities in the field of information 4/ to continue the work begun under projects carried out with funds provided by them. The only way to ensure this continuity is to assign to these tasks to established posts. Under existing conditions, this can only be done by centralizing some of the functions or processes in the bibliographical information management chain, such as cataloguing (bibliographical description) and indexing (description of the subject matter content of a document by means of "key words").

3/ Reference will be made hereafter to the data base, although it has not yet been decided whether there will be several computer files -data bases- which can be "added", by means of a common computer format, or whether all the computer files will be integrated into a single one.

4/ Including the International Development Research Center (Canada), the Government of the Netherlands, and the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany.

/Thus, better

Thus, better use would be made of available human and material resources by increased specialization of staff encumbering established posts.

Finally, with this approach, the organization of the Common Bibliographical System would free resources of the "intermediaries" between the data base and the users -who now perform cataloguing and indexing duties- inasmuch as these are resources which should be devoted to achieving a very important objective which has not received sufficient attention until now, namely, the dissemination of the data base in order to extend the coverage of users, both in terms of the number of users and the frequency of use.

Also, almost as weak as the volume of use of the data base is the feeding of this base, a task which could also be better performed by these "intermediaries" once they are freed from cataloguing and indexing duties.

D. Work done to date

In late 1980, in order to achieve the objectives of the Common Bibliographical System, the Deputy Executive Secretary for Co-operation and Support Services asked the Director of CLADES and the Chief of CELADE's DOCPAL Programme to set up technical working groups to design common worksheets with a view to making the data bases compatible.5/ Once these worksheets were designed, a manual for their use was drafted. This task was facilitated by the fact that all the data bases were handled in computer files through the ISIS (Integrated Set of Information Systems) system. This same computer system had also been set up in the CEPAL Library in January 1978, when the Library closed down its traditional catalogues.

This, plus the desire to continue rationalizing the use of resources devoted to the entry and handling of bibliographical information, led the working group to extend the compatibility effort by undertaking the study of a new design for the worksheets that would now take into account the cataloguing needs of the CEPAL Library and at the same time would be compatible with UNISIST/UNIBID standards.

When this study was completed, the Library/CLADES/DOCPAL technical working group was asked to draft a manual on the use of the worksheets. The first draft of the manual (doc. E/CEPAL/SCIB/IN.4) was circulated internally for comment; the comments received were then discussed at a meeting of the Deputy Executive Secretary

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5/ There are two worksheets for the Common Bibliographical System: the bibliographical description sheet (HDB) and the content analysis sheet (HAC).

/for Co-operation

for Co-operation and Support Services and representatives of the three entities. At this meeting, it was decided to test the use of the manual by cataloguing and indexing 150 documents (50 from each entity).

Parallel to the work of the above group, another group has been working on the development of a new version of the ISIS (CMS) System that will allow for the entry and "on-line" information retrieval by interactive terminals. One of the advantages of improving and simplifying the computer system for the handling of bibliographical information would be to lower the costs of creating and maintaining files and preparing lists. In this connexion, a quantitative analysis of procedures and their cost had already been made (E/CEPAL/SCIB/IN.5) which showed clear economies of scale resulting from the increased number of documents processed.

Studies were also prepared for purposes of defining output formats for products of the Common Bibliographical System: magazines, bulletins, bibliographies, etc. (doc. E/CEPAL/SCIB/IN.2 and IN.3), which are still being reviewed by another working group.

Finally, as regards the centralization of cataloguing and indexing, this matter has been the subject of careful study since June 1981 and it has been decided to set up in the CEPAL/ILPES Library a Centralized Cataloguing and Indexing Unit, which would be part of the Common Bibliographical System. Following is a description of the functions of the new Unit and the manner in which it is to be put underway.

E. Organization of the Centralized Cataloguing and Indexing Unit

1. Functions of the Unit

The function of the Unit will be to catalogue and index all documentation entering the data base of the CEPAL System, except documents referring to planning which will be indexed by CLADES. The Unit will also be in charge of reviewing the worksheets prepared by the Port of Spain Office (CARISPLAN), as regards cataloguing and indexing.

The Unit will also prepare abstracts of documents prepared in the CEPAL System and will handle publications of CEPALINDEX.

CELADE/DOCPAL and CLADES/ILPES will continue to be solely responsible for the analytical abstracts of documents concerning population and planning, respectively.

"Specialized intermediaries" will be responsible for all intermediation between the data base and the users, as well as for the collection of documents to feed the data base, as follows:

/(a) The

(a) The CEPAL Library, for matters concerning the general public, the agencies with which exchange programmes are established, and in-house users;

(b) CLADES, in connexion with relations with countries of the region and international agencies concerned with information systems within and outside the United Nations System;

(c) CELADE/DOCPAL, for all matters concerning services (to researchers) in the field of population, and relations with the countries of the region and international agencies specializing in this area.

One of the main functions of the Unit will be gradually to expand the number of documents entered into the data base, working towards a goal of 150 entries per week. At the same time, the Unit is to keep up-to-date such cataloguing and indexing tools as the authority lists (personal authors, institutional authors) and the Manual de Procedimiento.

2.   Composition and supervision of the group

The working nucleus of the Centralized Cataloguing and Indexing Unit will be made up of the following persons:

(a) Two librarians, one full-time and two half-time, who will take turns working in the Unit and in the CEPAL Library;

(b) A CLADES documentalist; and

(c) A staff member of CELADE/DOCPAL.

Administratively, the Unit will be under the CEPAL Library and the Head Librarian will appoint the Supervisor of the Unit, who will deal with any problems that might arise in connexion with the effective operation of the Unit and all matters pertaining to planning and organizing the flow of work. In particular, it is felt that at the beginning the supervisor of the Unit should be concerned with establishing guidelines for regulating the flow of work, defining what must be verified first, what standards must be applied, what controls there must be with respect to the movement of "packages" of documents delivered for abstracting outside the Unit, etc. Likewise, it would seem advisable, in studying the work plan for the Unit, to bear in mind any recommendations that might be made by CELADE/DOCPAL documentalists, who have offered their collaboration.

In addition, the Unit will have the support and technical supervision of a high-level CLADES professional. This official will meet with the Unit staff to find out what technical problems or questions have arisen in the application of the

/standards agreed

standards agreed on for completion of the worksheets. Likewise, during the initial stage, this official will advise the group on how to prepare the abstracts for CEPALINDEX and will exercise selective quality control of the listings produced by the Unit as regards the proper application of cataloguing and indexing standards.

3.   Other resources available to the Unit

A video terminal has been set up in the CEPAL Library and the Unit staff are receiving a training course in its use.

4.   Policies to be applied in the Centralized Cataloguing and Indexing Unit

A Committee has been created to establish policies to be applied in the Common Bibliographical System, the permanent nucleus of which is made up of the Deputy Executive Secretary for Co-operation and Support Services, the Director of CLADES, the Head Librarian of the CEPAL Library and the Chief of CELADE/DOCPAL.

As regards the policies or criteria for selecting the documents to be entered into the data base, as well as priorities to be assigned by the Unit with regard to the order of entry of specific subjects or subject-matter areas, the Committee will expand its membership to include one or more representatives of the substantive divisions whenever this seems advisable.

Once the selection policy has been determined and made known, it will be applied in a decentralized manner, i.e., by those having direct responsibility for the catalogues -or other publications- generated from a set within the data base. In the case of INFOPLAN, CLADES will continue to be responsible for PLANINDEX and will therefore have the final word on the selection of documents to be entered into the CLAPLAN file. The same is true, mutatis mutandis, of the monthly bulletin and the indexes published by the CEPAL Library, which are products of what is entered in the BIBLOS file, and of the DOCPAL abstracts.

The policy on the standardized printing formats for abstract magazines, bulletins, indexes, catalogues, etc., will be determined by this Committee -which in this case will include the Chief of the Documents Reproduction Unit and a documentalist specializing in the production of publications from elements in the bibliographical records contained in the data base.

5.   Implementation and transition periods

It is hoped that the testing of the worksheets and the training of staff in the use of the terminal will have been completed by the end of October. This will make it possible to set up the Centralized Cataloguing and Indexing Unit in the CEPAL Library in November 1981.

/During November

During November and December, work will continue on the entry of documents into separate data bases in order to finish testing the changes in computer formats and other modifications introduced into the Common Bibliographical System. This transition period will also provide practical experience in the organization and planning of the work of the Centralized Cataloguing and Indexing Unit.

During 1982, a first evaluation will be made of the effectiveness and efficiency of the work done by the Centralized Unit; at the same time, those quantitative goals considered most appropriate will be set.