

CARIB/INT 77/2

Distribution: Restricted

Date: 21 April 1977

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA

Office for the Caribbean



REPORT OF MISSION  
ON  
THE DOCUMENTATION CENTRE  
OF THE  
ECLA OFFICE FOR THE CARIBBEAN

ASSESSMENT OF ITS PRESENT SITUATION  
AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ITS DEVELOPMENT

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INTRODUCTION

The mission was undertaken under the following terms of reference:

"Proceed to Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago and in full co-operation with the ECLA Office for the Caribbean and authorities of the Caribbean Documentation Centre:

- advise on the library and documentation activities to be carried out by the Centre in the region;
- examine the feasibility of setting up a regional network of scientific and technological information within the region;
- on the basis of the above, prepare a project proposal, before the 20th of March, 1977, for activities in the field of libraries and documentation to be presented at the Inter-Agency Meeting on the Implementation of the Work of the Caribbean Development and Co-operation Committee to be held in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic on the 23rd of March, 1977".

In view of the short-term nature of the mission and the limited access to data concerning the present situation of information services in the Spanish and French-speaking Caribbean, it was agreed with the authorities of the ECLA Office and the Documentation Centre to concentrate on:

- the assessment of the present situation of the Documentation Centre, with concrete recommendations as to the implementation of its initial phase of operation;
- the preparation of a project proposal for a feasibility study to establish a regional information network.

The proposal was presented at the Inter-Agency Meeting and is attached to this report.

I would like to express my gratitude to the authorities of the ECLA Office for the Caribbean who facilitated the mission, and extend my sincere thanks to Mrs. Wilma Primus, Documentalist of the Centre and Dr. Alma Jordan, Librarian of the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad, for their most valuable assistance and personal attentions.

### III

#### PRINCIPAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The Member States of the Caribbean Development and Co-operation Committee (CDCC) in recognition of the urgent need to support their actions by relevant and timely information services, mandated the establishment of the Documentation Centre, attached to the ECLA Office for the Caribbean in Port of Spain, Trinidad.

The main functions of the Centre are projected in terms of referral and dissemination services.

It is evident that the efficiency of the Centre in providing the demanded services, will depend to a major extent on its degree of access to relevant information facilities existing within and outside the sub-region, as well as on adequate mechanisms of information flow.

With these prerequisites in mind, the following recommendations are made:

- That the Documentation Centre be given a high-ranking place within the structure of the ECLA Office for the Caribbean, at the same level as other substantive units, with clear lines of authority and responsibility, to ensure smooth channels of communication, internally and externally.
- That the Library of the ECLA Office be merged with the Documentation Centre, to achieve greater economy.
- That effective links of co-operation and co-ordination be established with information services covering the subject areas relevant to CDCC actions, so that unnecessary duplication of efforts may be avoided.
- That full support be given to the development of national and sub-regional information infrastructures within the Caribbean to permit optimum utilization of existing resources.
- That the processing and retrieval functions of the Centre be automated to facilitate timely, relevant and comprehensive information flow.

#### IV

If the Centre is to meet its objectives, certain financial commitments must be taken. It is therefore recommended:

- That the Member States of the CDCC seek assistance from sources within the sub-region as well as from international organizations, especially UNESCO and UNDP.

In view of the need for the Centre to initiate its services immediately and taking into consideration that its operations at present are limited to manual procedures, the following recommendations are proposed:

- That the post of the Assistant Information Officer be filled as soon as possible so that the Documentalist will be enabled to concentrate on professional tasks.
- That the selection and acquisition policy be formulated on the basis of -
  - A thorough analysis of the CDCC Work Programme;
  - The determination of the different categories of CDCC priority information users and their specific characteristics;
  - Assessment of the actual and potential information supply by existing services.
- That funds be provided to build up a basic collection of reference tools (bibliographies, indexes, abstracts, etc.).
- That agreements be reached with the Governments of the CDCC Member States to provide the Documentation Centre, on a regular basis, with those official materials published by the Government and commercial printerries which are essential to the CDCC Work Programme.
- That in processing the collections, priority be given to indexing activities and to utilizing processing techniques, such as uniterm, which will facilitate the projected transfer to automated operations.
- That the services of the Documentation Centre be geared to the needs of the CDCC Secretariat (ECLA Office for the Caribbean) and of the decision-making and decision-preparing agents of the CDCC Permanent Secretariats.



In addition to the regular reference functions, the services to be provided should embrace, at a later stage, the procurement of documents on request and the publication of a periodical bulletin of current information, arranged in broad sections such as:

- Recent accessions.
  - Documents prepared by the ECLA Office.
  - References to current publications not existing in the Documentation Centre, but important to CDCC actions.
  - On-going research projects of relevance to the CDCC Work Programme.
- That the necessary arrangements be made to meet the Centre's basic requirements as regards space, furniture and equipment.

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## 1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Documentation Centre of the United Nations ECLA Office for the Caribbean in Port of Spain, Trinidad, began operating in January 1977, with the appointment of the Documentalist/Librarian.

The establishment of the Centre was mandated by the Member States of the Caribbean Development and Co-operation Committee (CDCC), during its first session, held in Havana, Cuba, in November 1975.

## 2. OBJECTIVES

From the conceptual framework outlined in the documents related to the creation and development of the Centre (E/CEPAL/CDCC/16 and E/CEPAL/CDCC/16/Rev.1), the following objectives can be determined:

### General Objectives

- To support the integration activities of CDCC;
- To promote and facilitate optimum utilization of the information resources available within and outside the sub-region.

### Specific Objectives

- To provide pertinent, accurate and up-dated information about priority sectors on which regional co-operation actions are to be centred, to both decision-making and decision-preparing agents of CDCC;
- To assume the responsibility of an inter-governmental co-ordinating body in order to secure a balanced and integrated development of national information systems in the sub-region and facilitate the flow of information among the Caribbean countries and between them and regional as well as international systems.

## 3. ADMINISTRATIVE ASPECTS

### 3.1 Structure

The Documentation Centre has been established as a specific unit within the ECLA Office for the Caribbean. Its lines of authority and responsibility are to be clarified. There is also a need for a written definition regarding the Centre's relation to the ECLA Library in Port of Spain which was established in 1968. There is no indication

as to whether the Library has been merged with the Documentation Centre in order to serve as a nucleus for the Centre's information activities.

The job description of the Documentalist/Librarian appointed to the Documentation Centre, specifies the range of duties assigned to the post, but does not mention the delegation of corresponding authority.

Specifically, there is a need to determine whether the Documentalist/Librarian is responsible for and has authority over:

- The organization, functioning and development of the Library, provided the latter has retained its status as a unit of its own within the structure of the ECLA Office for the Caribbean.
- The execution of the budget assigned to the Library.
- The formulation of the budget proposal for the Documentation Centre.
- The selection and acquisition of published and unpublished documents, be it through purchase, exchange or donation. This aspect needs to be clarified, particularly in view of the fact that up to the present the acquisition of bibliographical materials for the Library is under the responsibility of the Administration Unit of the ECLA Office for the Caribbean.
- The selection and purchase of equipment, furniture and office supply for the Documentation Centre.
- The recruitment of personnel to fill the vacant posts of the Documentation Centre.

#### Recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. The Library of the ECLA Office for the Caribbean be merged with the Documentation Centre.

Its existence as an individual unit within this Office can hardly be justified, considering the following circumstances:

- There is no personnel assigned to the Library.
- Its collection of documents and publications is only in an incipient state of organization. Also, no adequate bibliographical control exists over its holdings. Previously established author, country and subject-catalogs do not serve any longer to locate materials on the shelves as they do not provide call numbers, and the card arrangement does not coincide any more with the collection's shelf arrangement which has been reorganized in June 1976. At present, subject approach to the contents of the collection is only through its shelf arrangement.

2. The Documentation Centre be given a high-ranking place within the structure of the Office, at the same level as other substantive units in order to ensure smooth lines of communication and co-operation, internally with the different units of the ECLA Office and externally with CDCC Member States and other entities.
3. The official in charge of the Documentation Centre at present the Documentalist/Librarian, be entrusted not only with the responsibility but also with full authority to implement the managerial functions assigned to his post (planning, programming, budgeting, recruitment and supervision of personnel, etc.)
4. The official in charge of the Documentation Centre be ultimately responsible for the selection and acquisition of bibliographical materials, equipment and furniture to be ordered for the Documentation Centre and the Library.

Undoubtedly, the selection of the bibliographical material should always be a joint undertaking between the Documentalist/Librarian and the professional staff of the ECLA Office for the Caribbean.

With regard to the acquisition procedures, only the accounting activities should continue to be the responsibility of the Administration Unit of the Office.

publications which emanate from Government Printeries but are not for sale, is not kept, it may be necessary to hold discussions on a higher level in order to ensure that Government Printeries provide the Documentation Centre regularly with lists of what has been published and with copies of those documents and publications which are vital to CDCC action.

8. To support the efforts made by the ECLA Office for the Caribbean staff during their field trips, to collect pertinent published and, especially, unpublished data.

#### 4.2 Processing

The Library of the ECLA Office for the Caribbean which forms the nucleus of the information activities of the Documentation Centre, has only recently been reorganized by Miss Graciela Gonzales, Liaison Officer for Depository Libraries and Special Collections, Dag Hammarskjold Library (DHL), New York. Its collection is composed of documents and publications issued principally by the following entities:

- United Nations
- Governments of the Caribbean countries
- Specialized Agencies (FAO, ILO, etc.)
- Regional Organizations and Institutions (CARICOM, CDB, UWI, etc.)
- Technical Assistance Projects

The Library contains also a few commercially published books, pamphlets and some periodicals and newspapers on subscription, but does not possess any reference materials (dictionaries, encyclopedias, indexes, abstracts, etc.)

The approximately 10,000 items which form the collection according to Miss Gonzalez's report of August 1976, are shelved as follows:

UN Documents and Publications: Alphabetically by symbols and within each symbol numerically by document numbers, the Official Records of each organ preceding its symbolized documents.

Country Material: Alphabetically by countries within each country, alphabetically by subject notations and Cutter for author or title, according to a scheme developed by the DHL.

Specialized Agencies Documents and Publications: Alphabetically by Agency's acronym, within each acronym numerically by Dewey Decimal Classification's Form Divisions and Cutter for author or title, according to a scheme developed by the DHL.

No specific shelving arrangement has been made for the following kinds of materials:

- Books, periodicals and pamphlets
- Publications of regional organizations and institutions
- Published and unpublished reports of UN experts
- Non-commercially published reports, documents, etc. by individuals and private organizations.

During the reorganization, documents in series, periodicals and newspapers had not been checked in, due to the lack of adequate library supplies.

Cataloging had been limited to the preparation of author cards for documents from Guyana and for publications from certain specialized agencies to serve as samples for processing country and specialized agencies materials respectively.

Prior to the reorganization of the Library, catalogs had been prepared with separate subject, country, author and UN documents entries, using an elementary cataloging system, developed by the Library.

However, these catalogs have not been kept up to date. Moreover, they do not serve any longer their main function to locate materials in the collection, for reasons explained before.

Bearing in mind that the Documentation Centre has been established in order to support the implementation of the CDCC's Work Programme by providing pertinent, accurate and timely information to specific users, it is imperative to apply processing procedures and techniques which reduce the existing time lag between the receipt of the documents and the dissemination of needed information.

#### Recommendations

Though present conditions permit only manual processing and retrieval, it is recommended that the feasibility of automating these activities be examined as

- To assign to each analyzed item a consecutive number in order to enter it or parts of it into the uniterm file as described below under "Monographic Documents and Publications".
- To avoid interfering with the numerical sequence in the shelf arrangement of the monographic collection, it is suggested that the last number given to monographic materials be used, adding the letter (s) for serials.
- To prepare a shelf-list card, with bibliographical reference to the indexed item, and indicating the consecutive number and descriptor(s) assigned to it, then intercalate the card by number into the shelf-list file for monographic materials.
- To enter the item by its descriptor(s) into the uniterm file.
- To shelve the serials alphabetically, in the same order as the kardex file; within each title, chronologically by issue number and/or date.

### 3. Monographic Documents and Publications

As subject analysis is of primary importance to the information service, it is suggested that all monographic materials be handled as follows:

- To assign to each item a consecutive number.
- To catalog each numbered item, preparing an identical author and shelf-list card, then indicate the assigned number on both cards, at the place normally reserved for the call number.
- To identify the subject matter(s) of each item and determine the corresponding descriptor(s) consulting the O.E.C.D. Macro-thesaurus and others as available.
- To register the assigned descriptor(s) on the author and shelf-list cards, at the place normally reserved for the subject headings.
- To prepare for each descriptor a uniterm card, on which the corresponding item number is registered, according to its last digit.



- To arrange the uniterm cards alphabetically by descriptors.
- To arrange the author catalog alphabetically by main entry.
- To arrange the shelf-list catalog by consecutive numbers, showing the last assigned number first.
- To shelve the monographic materials numerically.

As regards the periodic reports and technical documents prepared by Technical Assistance Projects, it is suggested that they be treated as monographic material, and arranged as follows:

- To prepare the author and shelf-list card under the name of the special agency and the title of the project, adding reports and documents as they are received.
- To assign a shelf-list number to the project itself and file periodic reports (initial, progress and final reports) together with the original project document and its plan of operation.
- To determine the subject fields in which the project's actions are centred (analysis of its plan of operation) and assign the corresponding descriptors.
- To register the project accordingly by its shelf-list number in the uniterm file.

As technical documents may deal with very specific subjects not represented by the descriptors assigned to the project, it may be necessary to register them separately in the uniterm file, giving them individual shelf-list numbers and descriptors.

Since shelf arrangement may cause a dispersion of the different documents produced by a project, it becomes necessary to establish the common authorship by recording all documents on the project's author card, though an individual shelf-list card needs to be prepared for each document separately entered into the uniterm file.

#### 4. Reference Collection

Though at present the Centre possesses very few reference works, it is expected that a future collection will consist mainly of tools which facilitate the daily work of the Centre's staff. Therefore, it is suggested that this collection be shelved apart (next to the staff's working area), arranged by Dewey Decimal Classification and recorded in separate author and shelf-list files.

The above outlined suggestions and recommendations concerning the processing of the different materials, are based on the following considerations:

1. Experience shows that most of the information demands are subject-oriented; therefore, processing needs to provide for a maximum subject approach to the total collection's contents.

The uniterm system has been recommended since it permits a much more concise and detailed subject analysis than subject cataloging does. Also, it is expected that the application of uniterms will facilitate the eventual automation of technical processing.

2. The serious staff shortage on the one hand and the exigencies of the information service on the other, require that technical processes be rationalized to the greatest extent possible without losing sight of its main function which is to facilitate the use of the collections.

Therefore, it has been recommended that:

- all publications and documents in series be registered only on kardex cards, without providing additional catalog entries, as kardex registration is regarded sufficient to satisfy the Centre's needs for bibliographical identification;
- subject approach be only by uniterms in order to facilitate the search for information from the total collection.

Accordingly, catalogs and files have been limited to the following:

- 1 Kardex file for UN documents and publications in series.
- 1 Kardex file for documents and publications in series other than UN materials.
- 1 Author catalog for monographic materials, with cards for reference works being filed separately.
- 1 Shelf-list for materials listed in the uniterm file.
- 1 Shelf-list for reference works.
- 1 Uniterm file for all subject-analyzed items.

No title approach has been provided (with the exception of serials listed in Kardex), as the limited request, experienced so far, does not seem to justify the effort of preparing additional title cards.

3. For the same reasons of economizing efforts, shelf arrangement has been divided only into the following groups:

- UN documents and publications in series.
- Documents and publications in series, other than UN materials.
- Monographic documents and publications.
- Reference works.

It is understood that in processing the different materials, priority be given to new accessions as they provide up-dated information and that the existing collection be gradually recorded and analyzed, whenever time permits.

#### 5. SERVICES

The objectives of the Documentation Centre call for an outreaching information service to support the CDCC development actions in the Caribbean.

According to the workplan (E/CEPAL/CDCC/16/Rev.1), the Centre's main functions are projected as "dissemination and referral services, rather than a centralized gathering of documents and data".

The establishment and implementation of these services will depend to a major extent on the following basic conditions:

- The existence of information infrastructures on national levels as well as on a regional basis.
- The application of modern telecommunication techniques.

Therefore, the recommendations made in the project proposal<sup>1/</sup> which was prepared for the Inter-Agency Meeting on the Implementation of the Work of the Caribbean Development and Co-operation Committee (Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, 23 March 1977), are aimed at supporting the development of these prerequisites for efficient information flow.

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<sup>1/</sup> Supplementary Note on the Caribbean Documentation Centre (E/CEPAL/CDCC/19/Add.3).

At present, due mainly to the staff shortage and the manual operation of the Documentation Centre, services are limited to the following activities:

- Circulation of materials and home loans to staff members of the ECLA Office for the Caribbean.
- Reference services to staff members of the Office, officials from other entities and the public in general.
- Occasional preparation of special bibliographies, on request from staff members of the Office and officials from other entities.
- Provision of photocopies to staff members of the office and to officials from other entities.
- Inter-library loans, on a local and national level.

Under the present conditions, it is not feasible to establish a current awareness service and selective dissemination of information, particularly on a scale corresponding to the wide range of CDCC information demands and priority users.

Nevertheless, there is a definite urgency to respond more actively to the immediate information needs of the ECLA Office for the Caribbean staff, and to supply CDCC priority users (who need to be identified more specifically) with basic current information of relevance to the CDCC regional co-operation actions.

#### Recommendations

Taking into account the limitations under which the Documentation Centre operates at present, it is suggested that the information service be developed along the following lines:

1. Information service to staff members of the ECLA Office for the Caribbean:
  - To circulate periodically (weekly) among the staff photocopies of the table of contents of periodicals received in the Documentation Centre, and of selective journals received by other libraries and documentation centres in Trinidad.

- To provide the staff regularly (bi-weekly) with bibliographies, arranged by subjects, about current accessions related to their field of specialization.

To offer a document procurement service.

2. Information service to CDCC priority users:

- To offer document procurement service.
- To publish a tri-lingual monthly bulletin of current references which may be arranged by the following sections:
  - List of recent accessions, arranged by subject areas directly related to the priority sectors of the CDCC work programme.
  - List of recent documents prepared by the ECLA Office for the Caribbean.
  - Bibliographic references to recent publications and documents of relevance to the CDCC work programme, but not existing in the Documentation Centre.
  - Directory of relevant on-going research projects (within and outside the sub-region).

It is suggested that the publication of the bulletin be initiated after tests of specific information needs and groups of CDCC priority users have been determined.

As to the document procurement service, it is also suggested that previous to its initiation, a feasibility study be conducted in order to ascertain the costs involved and to establish the conditions of service.

Concerning the long-term development of the Centre's information services, it is suggested that actions be taken on the conclusions and recommendations contained in the attached project proposal.

6. SPACE, FURNITURE AND EQUIPMENT

The Documentation Centre has not been allocated any physical facilities. At present, it uses the facilities of the Library which are the following:

6.1 Space

The Library occupies a total area of approximately 625 sq. ft. divided as follows:

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Establish document procurement service (drawing upon resources available within and outside the sub-region), in response to requests from priority users																		.....
Prepare subject bibliographies of recent accessions, related to specific work areas of ECLA Office Staff																		.....
Search current indexes, abstracts, bibliographies, etc. for references to relevant publications																		.....
Establish referral file with references to materials not existing in the Documentation Centre																		.....
Publish a monthly bulletin of current information geared to the needs of CDCC priority users																		.....

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