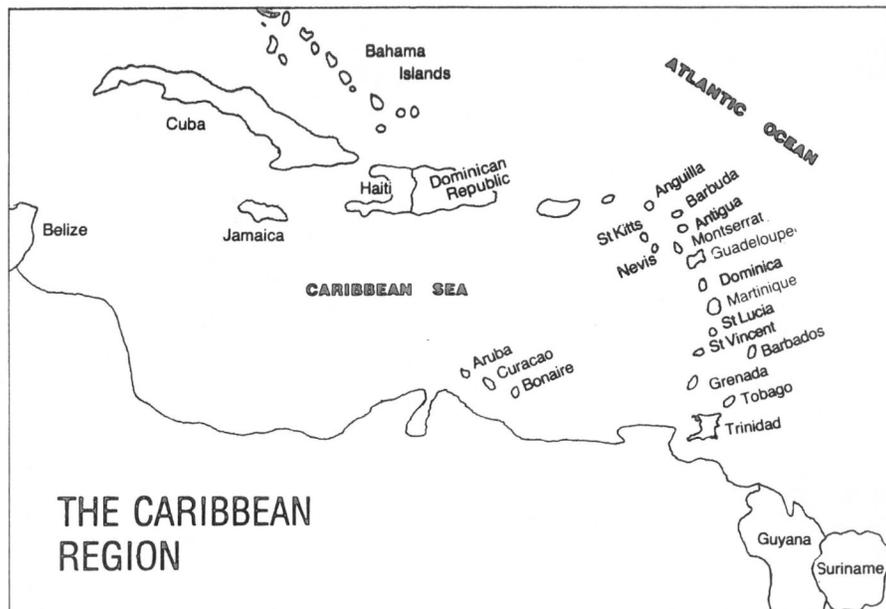


**C**ARIBBEAN  
**D**EVELOPMENT  
 AND  
**C**O-OPERATION  
**C**OMMITTEE



THE CARIBBEAN REGION

LIMITED

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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA  
 Subregional Office for the Caribbean  
 CARIBBEAN DEVELOPMENT AND CO-OPERATION COMMITTEE  
 Evaluation Meeting on the Caribbean  
 Information System  
 Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago  
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THE SERVICES OF THE CARIBBEAN INFORMATION SYSTEM

Organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America (UNECLA) Subregional Office for the Caribbean under the sponsorship of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) of Canada.



**UNITED NATIONS**

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA Office for the Caribbean

THE SERVICES OF  
THE CARIBBEAN INFORMATION SYSTEM

The Caribbean Documentation Centre provides service to the staff of the ECLA Caribbean Office, Caribbean planners, researchers and policy-makers, directly and through CARISPLAN participating centres, international organizations, members of missions or delegations, libraries and research institutions in the Caribbean, university students and a number of individuals who use the Centre as the need arises.

Emphasis in collection building is on those areas designated as priorities by the Caribbean Development and Co-operation Committee for the work programme of the Secretariat. A list of these subject areas was presented in an earlier paper. The user profiles compiled for individuals and CDCC member states were intended to provide guidance in selection as well as provision of SDI service. The country profiles could be meaningful if updated periodically, and perhaps, the national focal points could agree to provide periodic updates of these profiles.

The strength of the Centre's collection is in its coverage of Caribbean documents, feasibility studies, conference papers, and statistical publications which were acquired by the ECLA Office for the Caribbean since the period of its existence; documents produced by the regional economic commissions, UN agencies and international organizations, and more recently, studies and reports produced by research institutions which specialize in development issues. Some national focal points provided the Centre with a copy of every document for which a worksheet was prepared for entry to CARISPLAN. In other cases the Centre has selectively requested documents. This arrangement has proved unsatisfactory and has impeded rapid access to the documents in the System. This problem could be discussed in the group sessions with a view to formulating a policy for easier access to the documents.

Nevertheless, there has been a steady growth in the intake of documents over the period 1981 to June 1983 as indicated in the following table.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Monographs</u>	<u>Serial Issues</u>	<u>UN documents</u>
1981	614	4,263	4,845
1982	1,487	8,621	2,974
June 1983	848	4,197	4,989

Users of the system are alerted to new publications through the monthly Current Awareness Bulletin, which lists recent acquisitions, references to relevant material not held by the CDC, a list of documents prepared by the ECLA Office and a cumulative list of publishers addresses from whom published material can be obtained. While the Centre attempts to provide a limited delivery service in response to requests for documents mentioned in the Bulletin, access to documents by the user group is hindered by a lack of resources and poor postal services. An evaluation questionnaire was sent to the recipients of the bulletin to determine its usefulness and how it is used. The results of the questionnaire, including suggestions for improvements, have been circulated to the meeting to assist you in evaluating the users' reaction to the product.

#### Select Bibliographies

Occasionally the Centre prepared retrospective subject bibliographies relating to priority areas within the work programme. Some of these bibliographies have been prepared with inputs from the national focal points and participating centres. The following is a list of select Caribbean bibliographies published and disseminated to participating centres and users of the System.

- A Select bibliography on integration planning for small states with special reference to the Caribbean. Jan. 1983. 22p. (CEPAL/CARIB 83/2)
- A Select bibliography on the Eastern Caribbean. July 1982. 147 p. (CEPAL/CARIB 82/11)
- Transport Bibliography (with abstracts). 1982. 53p. Prepared under contract with UNESCO.
- Planning Bibliography (with abstracts). 1982. 40p. Prepared under contract with UNESCO.

- Energy Bibliography (with abstracts). 1982. 66p.  
Prepared under contract with UNESCO.
- Caribbean/Latin American relations: a select bibliography. March 1982. 21p. (CEPAL/CARIB 82/3).
- Grenada: a select bibliography (with abstracts). October 1981. 37p. (CEPAL/CARIB 81/14).
- A select bibliography on energy. Feb. 1981. 18p. (CEPAL/CARIB 80/10).

Recipients were asked to evaluate the three bibliographies prepared under contract with UNESCO as part of its Caribbean Action Plan. The analysis of the questionnaires, with suggestions for improvement, has been provided to assist participants in their evaluation of the service.

#### CARISPLAN Abstracts

The Caribbean Documentation Centre, as regional co-ordinating centre for CARISPLAN, is responsible for merging the input received from the various participating centres to produce the quarterly abstracting journal, CARISPLAN Abstracts, which is the main tool used by participating centres to identify documents which can meet the information needs of their users.

The difficulties experienced in producing and disseminating CARISPLAN Abstracts can be viewed as the major obstacle in the development of the system. Originally there were delays in having the data processed, but that situation has improved considerably.

The Secretariat has experimented with publishing CARISPLAN Abstracts commercially, in-house by reproduction of AB-Dick masters and; more recently, through the publishing facilities of ECLA, Santiago. The delays experienced in each instance have been considerable. However, the cheapest method of reproduction and one with the least delay has been through the printing facilities in Santiago and subsequent despatch of the copies to the CDC by pouch.

There is a backlog of some 4,000 entries to be reproduced and disseminated. If the size of each issue were increased to approximately 500, eight issues would be required. A possible solution may be to seek the assistance of ECLA Santiago in having the reproduction done outside of normal working hours. Based on the cost of reproducing CARISPLAN No. 7, the CDC's existing budget can withstand this expenditure. I am sure that this matter will be given your highest consideration during the meeting.

#### Document Delivery

The Centre provides a free document delivery service to libraries, planners, researchers and other users in the Caribbean. The service is in respect of documents listed in CARISPLAN Abstracts and the Centre's accessions in the Current Awareness Bulletin. The demand for this service has increased considerably resulting in increased airmail charges.

A proposal was advanced by Alan Moss, Librarian of the UWI, Cave Hill campus in a paper to the Fourteenth Session of ACURIL <sup>1/</sup>. He suggested the use of microform technology by the Caribbean Documentation Centre to supply each national focal point with a bank of microfiche representing a complete set of the documents in the System. This will increase the holdings of the national focal points and their capacity to respond directly to local requests. A copy of Mr. Moss's paper has been distributed for your perusal. If participants are in support of this recommendation, the Caribbean Documentation Centre could prepare a proposal to IDRC for extra-budgetary funding.

Because of increased airmail charges, CARISPLAN 5 and 6 were distributed by surface mail. Lengthy delays in receiving the publication were experienced by many centres and in one instance the publication arrived eleven months after despatch. A partial solution may be to send two copies of the Bulletin by airmail to the national focal point, and the others by surface mail. Microfiche copies of CARISPLAN Abstracts are also available from the CDC through the kind courtesy of CENTROMIDCA in Santo Domingo.

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<sup>1/</sup> Moss, Alan. Research needs and document delivery services: the case of the Caribbean libraries. ACURIL-XIV, Aruba, 17-22 April 1983. 8p.

In 1982, the Centre received 278 queries and during the first six months of 1983, 158 were received. The subject areas of the requests varied considerably but the main areas were industrial development, economic development, agriculture, country studies, trade and information on regional organizations.

Access to computerized services

The Centre has successfully searched the CARISPLAN data base using five searchable data elements - accession number, country code, author, title and descriptor. This has been done through the use of a software package called CARDBOX.

The Centre also uses the computerized search facilities of the Information Systems Unit of the UN Department of International Economic and Social Affairs, the IDRC Library, the International Labour Organization of Geneva and UNIDO, to meet the information needs of its users. Requests of searches are telexed to these institutions. The IDRC Library has occasionally searched DIALOG and BRS data bases on our behalf.