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ICCROM and CARBICA: Archival Cooperation in the Tropics

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**ICCROM / CNCR: Cooperative training experience in Chile
Program for Archives in Latin America 1994 - 2001**
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Introduction

From 1994 until 2001, as a joint project between ICCROM and the National Center for Conservation and Restoration of Chile (CNCR), a program on conservation of paper in libraries and archives for Latin America was carried out. These training courses with participants from different countries, has been an enormous contribution for the improvement of conservation in archives and libraries on the region. The communication network established between the participants, lecturers and course staff, has been a true bond which gives good support for further actions and relations between countries, institutions and professionals in the region and abroad.

Courses

- 1994: "Conservation of Paper in Archives, Regional Course for Latin America"
- 1996: "Conservation of Paper in Archives, Regional Course for Latin America"
- 1998: "Conservation of Modern Materials in Archives, Regional Course for Latin America"
- 2001: "Conservation of Collections in Libraries and Archives, Regional Course for Latin America"

Main goals

One of the main goals of these courses was to educate a new generation of conservators, focusing in both practical and theoretical learning on classes, with the intention of training professionals with a common criteria referring on what must be done for the conservation of libraries and archives

Another important goal was to create a professional network in the region and abroad, to allow the reinforcement of contacts between professionals of the conservation and institutions, establishing relationships for future cooperation in the region.

Specific objectives

The objectives were established as a response to specific needs of the region. The program was modified through the years, the main goals remain the same as the beginning but the specific objectives were changing according to the new needs of the region related to the conservation in libraries and archives.

The specific objectives:

- Provide training opportunities in Latin America
- Provide updated information on conservation of paper and related materials.
- Reinforce the aspects related to preventive conservation so that the student privileges this alternative instead of restoration, with the aim of diminishing the risks of materials deterioration.
- Standardize the recommended techniques and procedures, equipment and materials so that the student, from common criteria, can adapt them to his reality
- Provide the necessary guidelines so that the student can carry out diagnoses, projects and programs on conservation
- Give guidelines and recommendations on emergency plans, so that the student can design and implement systems for prevention of disasters and rescue.
- Promote the debate between the students in order to establish the exchange of ideas, experiences, techniques and bibliographical support on the subject
- Promote the interdisciplinary work, as well as working with collaborating institutions to establish connections between national and international institutions to cooperate in the development of these courses and further activities.
- Create lecturer's teams combining national, regional and international specialists, for emphasizing for the Latin American students that their own region has much to offer at the highest professional level and is an active part of the international conservation community.
- Follow up activities

Courses Programme

Once the objectives were established, ICCROM organized the lecturer's team and work with them in the elaboration of the programme. In the meanwhile CNCR was in charge of all the preparation in Chile: course venue, contact with collaborating institutions, hiring of temporary personnel, translation of bibliographic material, make the arrangements for the accommodation of lecturers and participants, etc.

The courses were an intensive programme combining theory and practice, including visits and study tours. The contents of the courses were developed with a view to provide the conservators with updated information on paper and related materials, their degradation processes and the options available for their conservation, as well as taking into account characteristics of archives and libraries as the institutional context.

Both first courses (1994 and 1996) approached general subjects, to create a common platform for the conservators and professionals who work in archives. The third course (1998) was designed thinking on covering more specific subjects, as an answer for the interest showed in previous courses. Participants from previous courses were accepted for this course, to promote a follow-up activity. On the last course (2001), subjects like conservation in libraries were introduced as well as specific themes as digitization, to provide the participants with common criteria on the approach to new trends on conservation in libraries and archives.

Contents of the programme:

- History and techniques of paper and related materials
- Chemistry for conservators
- Preventive conservation
- Preservation planning
- Emergency response
- Communication for conservators
- Paper conservation treatments
- Books conservation
- Photographic supports
- Digital supports

Participants

A total of 61 participants attended these four courses. Not only conservators were accepted, but also librarians, archivist and staff in charge of libraries and archives. The participants were very enthusiastic. It was evident that they felt very identified with their roll of representatives of their institutions as much as of their countries, beyond the personal interests

The groups were very heterogeneous in experience and qualification, but the fact that all were colleagues from the archives and libraries of different countries, provided sufficient common ground for mutual understanding and exchange of experiences.

Sharing lodging in the same place was extremely positive and contributes to the cohesion of the group. Financial support given by the coordinators guaranteed to the participants tranquillity to take advantage of the experience, and to participate in courses as intense as these.

A warm reception from the locals, enormously contributes to build bridges between countries, allowing the participants to know the reality of the hosting country and the professional community.

The relationship established in the group had an inspiring effect on those who worked with them (lecturers, assistants, course staff, etc.)

Lecturers

National and international lecturers with training experience and different backgrounds were invited to participate, offering to the participants the chance to meet different realities from the ones of their own countries. Professors contributed with didactic and bibliographical material that helped with the effectiveness of the sessions.

Lecturers showed mutual respect to their colleagues regardless of their country and institution of origin and also a great availability and enthusiasm, openness to respond questions and give advice to the participants.

COURSE	PARTICIPANTS	COUNTRIES	LECTURERS
<p>1994 Conservation of Paper in Archives Regional Course for Latin America 2 Oct – 12 Nov</p> <p>1996 Conservation of Paper in Archives Regional Course for Latin America 30 Sept – 15 Nov</p> <p>1998 Conservation of Modern Materials in Archives Regional Course for Latin America 5 – 23 Oct</p> <p>2001 Conservation of Collections in Libraries and Archives Regional Course for Latin America 1 Oct – 9 Nov</p>	61	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Argentina (2) 2. Bolivia (3) 3. Brazil (5) 4. Chile (20) 5. Colombia (3) 6. Costa Rica (2) 7. Cuba (2) 8. Dominican Republic (1) 9. Ecuador (2) 10. El Salvador (2) 11. Guatemala (2) 12. Haiti (1) 13. Italy (1) 14. Mexico (2) 15. Panama (1) 16. Paraguay (2) 17. Peru (4) 18. Puerto Rico (1) 19. Uruguay (2) 20. Venezuela (4) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Agnes Timar 2. Alvaro González 3. Ann Seibert 4. Beatriz Haspo 5. Bertrand Lavédrine 6. Carolina Araya 7. Consuela Metzger 8. Cynthia Rockwell 9. Dianne van der Reyden 10. Gerhard Banik 11. Ingrid Beck 12. Katriina Simila 13. Luiz A. Cruz Souza 14. Magdalena Krebs 15. Mark Strange 16. Mónica Bahamondez 17. Paloma Mujica 18. Per Laursen 19. Regina Solis 20. Robert Ferguson 21. Sandra Baruki 22. Solange Zúñiga

Courses impact

Creation of a regional network has been the most significant outcome of these courses, giving a strong support for the development of the conservation area both at a national and regional level; also incorporating the participants into the international community.

Besides, these courses have responded to a well-known need of training opportunities in Latin America, educating a new generation of conservators and giving the participants the chance to improve their professional and personal skills.

Since the lack of resources in Latin America forces to work in an atmosphere that is not always favourable and makes the conservators to look for alternative solutions, these courses provided the participants with the right tools to respond to their problems according with the available alternatives.

Also, the translation of bibliographical material to the language of the courses (Spanish) was helpful. Since it grants the participant a concrete and clear support of the subjects that were studied during the course, as well as it will allow them to share the received information with their non-attending colleagues in their respective countries.

After program

The experience in Chile was taken as an example for the development of a similar program in the Caribbean region. Some of the Chilean staff was invited to participate in the elaboration and development of the course: "Preservation of Photographic Collections in Archival Holdings, Course for the Caribbean Region", carried out in Curacao on 2003, organized by ICCROM and with the National Archives of the Netherlands Antilles as a hosting institution.

The Internet has been an amazing tool for the Latin American network development, since it enormously facilitates the access to information and the communication between participants, lecturers, course staff and coordinators. This also improves the possibility of sharing information about courses, publications, new features, etc. The best example of the internet effect, is the big difference between the contact maintained among the participants of the 1994 course, when the access to Internet was just an unlikely possibility, and the contact that has been generated between the participants of the 2001 course, that in spite of having passed three years since they were in Chile, the contact has remained intact, both in a personal way as in the professional area.

To sum up

There are certain points that are important to emphasize, to assure the best development of the courses.

The use of Internet as a supporting tool for this courses is an issue to be taken into account. The reality in Latin America forces to approach basic subjects, leaving as second priority subjects focused on more specific themes. The depth whereupon these subjects are approached must be studied previous to the course, since the diverse levels of knowledge that participants has, could affect the flowed development of the classes. For that matter previous contact with participants is required, which nowadays is easier due to the Internet, so coordinators can provide beforehand information about the program, lecturers, course venue, etc.

One of the keys for the success of these courses and the creation of the Latin American network, was the fact that participants had to spend an average of 6 weeks in the same hotel, going to the same classes, with the same lecturers, and having therefore to spend a great part of the day together. This coexistence, is one of the reasons why more personal bonds between the students are generated, which is reflected in the mutual support offered throughout the years.

This is how these courses have generated in Latin America a spirit of collaboration, which without any doubt has had a great impact in the development of the conservation in archives and libraries, positioning the region in a good level within the international community.