

**THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF HONDURAS**

**REPORT**

**WORKSHOP SEMINAR "ACCESS TO INFORMATION IN LATIN AMERICA"**

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## INTRODUCTION

Unfortunately in our country culture and education have not reached all levels of society for it is a nation with such scarce economic resources that the budget is insufficient to cover the entire nation without foreign aid. Honduras' output of published material is poor as very few people are dedicated to editing and publishing literary works. Some prefer to publish their works abroad, the institutions that are devoted to culture and education have to request aid from international organizations of countries that are our friends in order to cover, in this way, some of the needs that help to preserve culture and update education.

The National Library is the institution dedicated to the protection of national publications. It does not, in fact, fulfil this mission as the lack of public and school libraries in towns and communities has led us to provide school library services where users only do their homework. Thus we have forgotten our real mission which is based on maintaining, preserving and disseminating information about our country at specialized levels for researchers and professionals.

In 1997 the Centro Regional para el fomento del Libro en América Latina y el Caribe (CERLALC) (Regional Centre for Promoting Books in Latin America and the Caribbean) helped the National Library create the ISBN (International Standard Book Number) Honduran Agency. This agency is to be in charge of controlling the country's output of published material and, in this way we shall learn about the type of bibliographic material published.

In combination with institutions dedicated to culture and education projects have been drawn up to safeguard national holdings, and now the BINAH is on the right road.

We still have a long way to go, starting with trying to get our editors and writers accustomed to the fact that their works are important for the country and that there is someone dedicated to protecting and preserving them. In this way we shall learn both nationally and internationally about the country's real output.

## **NATIONAL REPORT ON THE COUNTRY'S EDITORIAL OUTPUT**

### **a) Size and state of the country's publishing industry**

Honduras is a country with a small output of published material. Maybe the lack of a good education makes us lack the reading habit and also accounts for our little interest in books. Few are the people dedicated to this job; there are barely 50 publishing houses and among them there are author publishers who through their own efforts publish their works. In 1998 approximately 500 titles were published, including reprints, of which the ISBN Honduran Agency registered 131. This is the same figure that was added to the National Library holdings.

### **b) Ratio between demand / users' needs / national supply. Is it necessary to import published material or is the country self-sufficient?**

Honduras is definitely not self-sufficient regarding its output of published material. Of the 500 titles published in 1998 80% are of literary content including poetry and stories, 15% are publications of a social nature and barely 5% are textbooks that can be used in teaching.

Most bookstores have more foreign books than Honduran books and in schools, colleges and universities professors recommend their students those kinds of publications. There is no mechanism that can really guarantee a good output of published material, as few are the publishing houses that have the necessary specialized technology and staff.

### **c) The present situation of bibliographic control in the country**

There never used to be any bibliographic control. When the ISBN Honduran Agency was created it took on the responsibility of managing this control. This activity was initiated as late as 1998. Advertising has been carried out through all the accessible media and one month ago a general Conference was held explaining the scope of the ISBN bibliographic control. It was a great job and we hope that throughout the rest of the year the publishing houses and author-publishers who have not yet registered do so.

Honduras does not have exact information about publishing output as no one had taken on this responsibility and only a few bibliographic yearbooks are published. With the Swedish government's help the BINAH has a project to publish the 1990 to 1997 bibliographic yearbooks; the 1990 one has already been published.

**d) The state of book sales**

As far as we know, book sales in Honduras are exclusively domestic and there is very little advertising. Often authors have to market their own work and due to the low acceptance that literary works have, print runs are of 500 to 2000 copies per title and these are distributed among a small number of bookstores, which are only to be found in the main towns of the country. There is no proper Book Chamber operating to provide the necessary assistance in order to market books as it is undergoing a process of re-organization.

**e) Who maintains the national archive of published material and how effective is it?**

The National Library regarding its Honduran collection operates like the entity that safeguards the national bibliographic holdings as far as books are concerned, while in the case of documents such as gazettes, newspapers, etc. the National Archive is in charge of their preservation and conservation. Both institutions belong to the Secretaría de Cultura, Artes y Deportes (Culture, Arts and Sports Secretariat) through the Dirección General del Libro y el Documento (Book and Document General Office).

However, the budget assigned for these functions is very low and such responsibilities have been fulfilled thanks to the aid of international organizations.

**f) Present state of the legal deposit**

According to Article 15 of the Book Act, five copies of each edition are to be sent to the National Library and the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras and the National Congress of the Republic to comply with the legal deposit. Mostly this is not observed as very few people truly obey the law but only send copies to the BINAH and only after the ISBN Agency took a hand in the matter. It is necessary to raise conscience among writers and publishers so that they understand the necessity and the benefits of complying with the legal deposit.

There are publishing houses that consider the legal deposit a problem because part of their earnings must stay in books that will not be sold.

**g) What are the national acquisition policies?**

Honduras has no acquisition policies due to the scarce human resources of the BINAH. The Acquisition and Exchange Department has no specialized technical support.

- **Do university libraries co-operate with collection development and what are the relations among the libraries of the different sectors?**

Very few libraries in our country know the meaning of collection development and the few that do understand it do not have any communication with the rest. The National Library is working on a collection development project which it will transmit to the Red Nacional de Bibliotecas Públicas Municipales (Municipal Public Library National Network) and in this way achieve better results.

Regarding the libraries of the different sectors, the only communication is the exchange of their databases, in order to provide users with a better service and give them several options so they can cover their information needs.

- h) **Does the country have libraries that are beneficiaries of the legal deposit? If so, how useful are they?**

The only library that is benefited with the legal deposit is the National Library but the lack of public libraries, as we have described previously, leads us to neglect our mission and only serve users thus forgetting about publication preservation.

- i) **What is the conservation and retention policy? Is it organized?**

The BINAH has no conservation and retention policies.

- j) **What is the present situation of inter-library loans / bibliographic swapping? Is there a system? If not why not? Is it necessary to have one?**

Unfortunately the BINAH has no inter-library loan, due to the budget assigned, which does not even cover priorities. Only 18 people work in the institution, half of which belong to the 'Service to the Public' section, while the rest of the staff is either clerks or managerial staff. As can be seen the amount of staff is alarming as each person has two or three activities, and does not always manage to fulfil them successfully.

However, with the international aid this institution receives a blueprint is being developed so that the BINAH may form part of an inter-library network.

- k) **Which libraries are the best equipped, in terms of collections and technology, in order to provide an inter-library loan system?**

The best equipped are definitely the university libraries, such as UNAH, UPN and the private universities, as well as the specialized libraries of the

country for these are organized by international organizations or NGOs, which have state of the art technology (Internet).

The National Library is aided in its streamlining efforts by the Swedish government and, at present, we have adequate computing technology to help national and international users in their searches.

**I) How many libraries have effective national collections and how well do they fulfil their mission?**

The only libraries that possess collections with national holdings are:

- The National Library of Honduras, which has a Honduran collection, made up of books published in the country as from 1951 till the present and a reserve collection with material published before 1950.
- The Library of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras that has a very well established national collection but to which only university students have access.

## **GLOSSARY**

**BINAH:** Biblioteca Nacional de Honduras - National Library of Honduras

**CERLALC:** Centro Regional para el Fomento del Libro en América Latina y el Caribe – Regional Centre for Promoting Books in Latin America and the Caribbean

**ISBN:** International Standard Book Number

**UNAH:** Universidad Autónoma de Honduras – National Autonomous University of Honduras.

**UPN:** Universidad Pedagógica Nacional – National Pedagogic University