



Chilean Public Libraries 2002-2003

Brief Background

The system of public libraries co-ordinated by the Directorate of Libraries, Archives and Museums (DIBAM) of Chile has led the way in making the libraries accessible to the whole community. Following the Public Library Manifesto of UNESCO, this work has been defined by a desire to contribute to the integral development of the members of the community and of its overall identity. With input from these same people the library acts as a bridge between existing collective culture and free access to information, knowledge and recreation.

The system of public libraries is present throughout the country and in all the regions. The majority of the libraries are municipal and work in a contractual agreement with the DIBAM. Of the 342 communities in the country, 281 are part of this network, representing an 82% coverage. There are 319 municipal libraries as many communities have more than one library. There are also branch libraries that depend on a central municipal library and are located in other suburbs or sectors of the community. There are 45 libraries of this type.

The DIBAM also has agreements with other institutions such as the Ministry of Justice, for the placement of 19 prison libraries. There are also 17 hospital libraries.

Recent developments

Among the many developments that have taken place over the 2002 - 2003 period in the Sub Directorate of Public Libraries and its Regional Co-ordination Offices, without doubt the main effort has been focused on making the *Biblioredes: Abre tu Mundo* project (supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation) into a reality.

Overall, the many tasks undertaken can be broken down into four major areas:

- Users and Services for the Community
- New Technologies
- System of Public Libraries
- Identity and Cultural Management



Main Achievements

- The "Network of Bibliographic Information" began in 2002 with the aim of installing an automated system in all the public libraries in the country.
- A seminar entitled "Making Public Libraries more Accessible to the Visually Handicapped" was offered in Santiago in November 2002, for 25 staff members of the public libraries, by the FORCE Foundation of the Netherlands.
- In December 2002 the Sub Directorate of Public Libraries presented the IFLA ALP sponsored seminar "Exchange of Participative Management Practices in Public Libraries in the Southern Cone" with participants from Peru, Bolivia, Argentina, Uruguay and Chile. As a result of this seminar, a joint project was formulated: "Community Lending Points in Markets and Fairs in the Southern Cone of Latin America" and has recently been approved as an IFLA ALP project to be carried out in Argentina, Bolivia, Peru and Uruguay.
- This project was based on a successful initiative carried out in Chile: "El Casero del Libro" which consisted of loan points in open air fairs and indoor markets, areas not generally served by the local public library. This project, begun as a pilot in 2001, was extended during 2002 and it is hoped to cover all the regions of Chile by the end of 2003.
- The construction phase of the Santiago Library, the largest library in the country, began in the second half of 2002. It is hoped that the first phase of construction will be finished in the second semester of 2003.
- During 2002, the DIBAM, together with support from the private sector, offered a number of "*Encuentros con la Cultura*", where writers, actors and intellectuals, both national and international, shared their thoughts about their lives and works with the audience.
- Following on from the successful Cultural Bus experience in Casablanca (V Region), where a bus covers diverse localities, offering books, music, videos and reproductions of artworks, the DIBAM, together with the private sector, has initiated another bus with the same characteristics in San Fernando (VI Región).
- Bibliometro (the system of lending kiosks in the subway stations) finished 2002 with two great successes: the inauguration of a new kiosk in the Plaza de Armas metro station and a new Bibliotren in Quinta Normal, a public park in a poor sector of Santiago, both new points for expanding the library coverage.

- In 2003, the International Day of the Book and Rights of the Author was celebrated throughout Chile, using the theme “*Francisco Coloane: un Grumete al sur del Mundo*”, as a homage to the Chilean author, Francisco Coloane.

Biblioredes: Abre tu Mundo

- Among the principal achievements of the *BiblioRedes: Abre tu Mundo* project in its first year of operation are the following:
 - Installation of the complete technological platform in the 386 libraries associated with the project, consisting of 1,754 computers, all connected to Internet.
 - Equipping of 17 computer laboratories distributed throughout Chile with technological infrastructure to offer training in new information technologies and Internet.
 - 100% of the libraries associated with the project are connected to Internet, close to 30% of these via a satellite connection, made necessary by the challenging geography of Chile.
 - A first and second cycle of free training in computer skills and digital tools have taken place in all the regions of Chile and in all the communities associated with the project (site visits by trainers to every library). This has meant that close to 20,000 people have been trained, including library staff and the general public.
 - The official launch of the project took place in the public library in Calera de Tango (Metropolitan Region), on 20 November, 2002 with the participation and support of the President of Chile.