

FINAL REPORT, 1997/98 ALA LIBRARY FELLOWS PROGRAM
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1. ABSTRACT

The project focused on collection development in the National Library of El Salvador. Four different workshops in this area were offered for National Library personnel, librarians in San Salvador and El Salvador, and librarians from other Central American countries. Lectures on collection development and professional ethics were given to library science students, librarians and faculty at the University of El Salvador. Visits to public libraries in El Salvador were made. Observations and recommendations relating to public library collections were prepared. A series of guidelines for handling gifts and donations, purchasing of library materials, evaluation and weeding of collections were developed for public librarians. A collection development policy statement for the National Library was prepared and revised. Job descriptions and recommendations for the collection development section of the technical services department were prepared. An evaluation of five collections in the National Library was planned and carried out, including a user and staff survey. A code of professional ethics for Salvadorian librarians was discussed, revised and reworked. Plans for a newsletter to be published by the National Library were drawn up. An article on the role and contributions of the National Library in the cultural and intellectual life of El Salvador was written to be included in the new publication.

2. INFORMATION ON THE PROJECT

a. Host Institution.

The National Library of El Salvador was founded in 1870, officially inaugurated in 1888.

It is currently a part of CONCUL TURA, the National Council of Culture and the Arts, a part of the Ministry of Education. It presently occupies a former bank building in the historic center of San Salvador, adjacent to the National Palace, across from the National Cathedral. It includes 12 different collections located on three levels and a basement. The national collections include the Salvadorian collection, the thesis collection, the Salvadorian room, the national serials and government documents collection. The international collections include the general collection, the reference collection, the international serials and government organizations collection, the Central American collection. The special collections include the antiquarian and rare book collection, the collection of materials in Braille, the collection of materials on children's literature, the library science collection. There is a conservation and preservation laboratory, an auditorium for programs, and a cafeteria. The Library is divided into a department of public services, a department of technical services, a planning and evaluation department (which includes automation and the internet), an administrative department (handling personnel and physical facilities), a department of conservation and preservation, and the network of public libraries (administratively a part of the National Library). There is also a coordinator for public relations and cultural activities.

b. Goals of the project.

The goals of the Project were to evaluate the current status of the Library's collection; to develop policy and guidelines to handle selection, acquisition, evaluation and weeding of library collections; to survey library users to identify their needs; to upgrade the knowledge and skills of library staff and Salvadorian librarians in the area of collection development; to visit and observe public and other types of libraries in El Salvador, and make recommendations for their improvement. These original goals were generally accomplished. Even though there were no changes in the goals, new goals were added as the project developed. These included the development of a code of professional ethics for librarians in El Salvador, and an examination of the options for a new publication from the National Library.

c. The accomplishment of the goals.

Five important collections of the National Library were systematically evaluated: the National Collection, the International Collection, the Reference Collection, the national serials collection and the international serials collection. Descriptive statistics on the number of titles and volumes were gathered. Direct observation of materials on the shelves were made to describe and identify strong and weak subject areas, physical condition, labeling and age of the collection. A staff survey, using interviews, was carried out. A user survey, with questionnaires, was completed, focusing on subject areas and collections of preference, degree of satisfaction and success in using materials, problems and difficulties and suggestions for improvement. A report describing the evaluation was prepared, including results, conclusions and recommendations. This report was distributed to the heads of the departments and the director of the Library.

A collection development policy statement was prepared for the National Library of El Salvador, including guidelines for selection, acquisitions, evaluation and weeding. It was revised and discussed. As part of this document, job descriptions for the collection development section of the technical services department were prepared, along with recommendations for changes in personnel, equipment, and responsibilities. The collection development policy statement for the public library system in El Salvador was also examined and revised. A series of 5 guidelines for public librarians on different aspects of collection development, including handling gifts and donations, weeding, buying materials and evaluating collections were developed.

The knowledge and skills of National Library staff and Salvadorian librarians were upgraded in a series of 4 different workshops on collection development offered at different levels to different groups of librarians in March, April, May and July. The final workshop (July 20-24th, 33 hours) was aimed at 14 Central American librarians (two from each of the Central American countries), funded by the National Library of Sweden. These workshops included small group sessions, discussions and review of packets of printed materials distributed to each participant. About a hundred librarians participated in the four workshops.

In addition to workshops, two lectures were given to library science students, two to librarians and one to faculty on collection development and on professional ethics. These were part of national library week in El Salvador, and were generally one to two hours long, with a short one or two page handout summarizing the main points of the talk.

Six public libraries (of the 13 in the system) were visited, observations were made and written in a formal report highlighting strengths and weaknesses, and including recommendations for improvement. Informal consultations with public library personnel were carried out. The report also included recommendations for the improvement of the network of public libraries in El Salvador. In addition, other types of libraries were visited, including the major academic libraries, public and private, as well as a selection of special libraries, mostly governmental.

At the end of May, during the time of the Project, a visit to Puerto Rico was made to participate in two professional meetings, the Seminar on the Acquisition of Latin American Library Materials (SALALM) and the annual conference of the Puerto Rican Library Association.. At the latter, a talk was given on the role and contributions of the National Library of El Salvador to the cultural and intellectual life of the country. This talk was later converted into an article, which was prepared to be included in the new publication being planned for the National Library. The guidelines and proposal for this new publication were developed as part of the ALA Fellows Project. In addition, an extended and revised version of a preliminary professional code of ethics for Salvadorian librarians was developed during the time of the Project.

d. The Project and its contribution to the Institution.

From both formal and informal feedback from staff and librarians who participated in the workshops and lectures, it is clear that these activities were successful in broadening librarians' perspectives and increasing their awareness of and knowledge about collection development. Much individual consultation with different members of the staff of the National Library also had an impact on the Institution, in a positive manner, since staff had new ideas and points of view to consider and to put into practice. Materials were distributed to staff, both in the workshops and in the other activities, which can promote further understanding about different aspects of collection development. New skills and attitudes were acquired by staff, which they can use in their work. Staff were forced to reevaluate and rethink traditional ways of doing their work, which are open to change and improvement. I believe that key members of the National Library staff are now more aware of the ways they need to change, and how they should involve their staff in these changes. A greater sense of the importance of working cooperatively, collaboratively, as a team, of sharing information and experiences, was another by-product of the Project. An American approach toward responsibility and dedication to work was available for staff to observe and determine how to adapt in their own work situation. Specific recommendations concerning the Library's collections, its system of public libraries, and the collection development section provide practical, concrete suggestions for change.

e. Ancillary experiences.

Participation in two meetings held at the National Library during the seven months in El Salvador provided an interesting learning experience. The first one was a meeting of the directors of the National Libraries of the Central American countries to discuss joint, collaborative projects, and proposals for international funding of these projects. The proposal for a workshop for Central American librarians on collection development was presented at this meeting. The second one was a meeting of librarians in charge of handling the ISBN system in different Central American countries, with a presentation from CERLALC (the regional center for the promotion of books and reading in Latin America and the Caribbean) and from the ISBN agency in Spain. Informal suggestions and recommendations made to special librarians on how to use volunteers effectively, and how to develop a brochure to promote the library also were useful ancillary experiences.

3. THE EXPERIENCE OF LIVING IN ANOTHER COUNTRY.

a. Living conditions.

Living conditions in the capital of El Salvador, San Salvador, are very diverse and varied, depending on one's salary. Many people cannot afford to live in houses or apartments, and instead live in make-shift huts or shacks, which are scattered around the city, mostly hidden from clear view. There are few furnished rental apartments. Housing and space is scarce. The population density is very high. The city is very crowded. It is divided into sections or "colonias", some of which are considered very desirable, safe, good places to live, others are not. If one can afford it, one can live very well in San Salvador, since there are elegant neighborhoods, closed off to traffic and guarded by security men with guns. There are several beautiful, expensive shopping centers and malls. The supermarkets are modern, well stocked, with a large selection of food. Most people cannot afford cars, so there are many buses crowding the streets. Since the city is very spread out, and cultural events take place mostly at the embassies or international centers scattered around the city, it is very advantageous to have a car. Buses do not run very late at night, and it is considered dangerous to take them. Taxis are expensive. There is a problem in the country with crime, violence and gangs. Illegal Salvadorians returned to their country from the U.S. without work are considered responsible for much of this crime and violence. Unemployment is high, jobs scarce. Salaries are low (particularly librarians' salaries). Many people work at more than one job. There are many people making their living on the street, where most everything is sold and can be found, including food. The effects of the long civil war are still being felt, with safety and security issues a great concern.

b. Festivals, cultural highlights.

Each of the small towns has their own patron saint, and celebrates a festival dedicated to this saint with processions, arts and crafts, special foods and music. There are many cultural events happening in San Salvador, but they are not well publicized or easy to get to without a car. Film festivals are especially popular. Openings of art exhibits are also

popular .There are private cultural foundations, hotels with gallery space, a few galleries (no museums yet) , and embassies, which sponsor cultural programs, including lectures. There is a national theatre, which does have some programs, as well as a national symphony. The audience for both is small. There is an educational television station, which presents programs focusing on cultural events and activities.

c. Travels in country.

The country is divided into different departments or regions. The Mayan influence in El Salvador is evident with several archaeological sites open to visitors. Most are not as well developed in terms of excavation, as in Mexico. There are pyramids, which are still mostly underground. Each site has a museum which displays the objects found at the site. The ceramics are especially interesting. There are few national parks, but one especially noteworthy is Cerro Verde, part of a volcano. There are many volcanoes, which are striking. Cerro Verde has nature trails, and a long trail up the side of the volcano. It is high enough to provide a fine view of the top of the volcano and the valley below. The country as a whole does not have a well developed tourist industry, and is not well organized for tourists. The countryside is very lush and green in the rainy season, with almost all land used for crops. Corn, coffee and sugar cane are especially important. The sand on the coast is gray, volcanic, and many beaches are not safe for swimming because of the strong undertow and heavy waves. The upper middle class and wealthy have beach homes on the coast where they go for the weekends. It is popular to go to the port cities and eat in fish and seafood restaurants. Having a car for traveling is a great advantage.

d. Memorable people.

The director of the National Library, Helen Guardado de del Cid , is an example of an intelligent, articulate, dedicated, responsible professional, who has taken a leadership role in Salvadorian librarianship. Many other staff at the National Library are active in the profession in El Salvador. Two examples are Daisy Mijango Hemal and Ana Marta Ramirez, who in addition to their jobs at the National Library , work as professors in the library science program at the University of El Salvador. Dona Melida Arteaga, a retired academic librarian, is another example of an energetic, committed librarian who is interested in improving the profession in the country. She has done research and writing about Salvadorian libraries, including the National Library. Many Salvadorian librarians have left memorable impressions because of their concern, commitment and dedication to learning and to improving their libraries and the profession in their country .

4. COMMENTS ON THE FELLOWSHIP.

a. The value of the fellowship experience.

The fellowship experience offers a unique opportunity for an exchange of ideas and experiences, which broadens ones viewpoint and perspectives. It gives one a chance to expand horizons, acquire new and different skills, and learn many new things. It offers the chance to rethink and reevaluate what already has been done in one's career and decide what is still important to do. It provides opportunity for leadership in new and different ways. It expands ones global mindset, and impacts thinking about American libraries and librarianship, what has been unique, valuable and important in our field in the United States.

It offers the chance to make a real contribution, to make a difference, to share knowledge and experience, and to stimulate others to think and act differently. It provides a chance to make new professional contacts and new friendships, and to gain an understanding about another part of the world. It furthers international cooperation and collaboration in our field. It helps improve international understanding.

b. Living and working in another country.

Living and working in another country offers many challenges and opportunities. If one is alert and open to new experiences it can be broadening and exciting. It also can be frustrating and difficult. It helps one appreciate the good things about living in ones own country. Patience and flexibility is needed many times. When communication is difficult because of language problems, one needs to be calm, determined and persistent. There are advantages and disadvantages of living and working in another country. One never really fits in, but can stand back and observe and learn. One can practice being perceptive and reflect on what has happened. It gives one a chance to think about what is most relevant and important. Overall it's a good, positive experience.

c. Personal, on-going benefits or projects that will continue the fellowship work

Contacts made with Central American librarians during the workshop offered for them, may result in invitations to return to some of the countries and help with further projects in library education or collection development. A faculty exchange with the library school at the University of Costa Rica, for example, is a good possibility .A formal invitation will be made for two colleagues at the National Library of El Salvador to visit the library school and libraries in Puerto Rico next year. They will be able to examine the School's new curricula, and learn about new options in library education, as well as dialogue with students and faculty, visit libraries and museums. Contact with the National Library will continue via email, and follow-up on the recommendations made in the report on the evaluation of the collection will be monitored. An invitation was given to all National Library staff to use this means to consult further on any problems or concerns relating to the Fellowship activities.

5. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS AND DISTRIBUTION OF THE FINAL PRINTED REPORT.

a. Acknowledgment in the Final Report: Lic. Helen Guardado de del Cid, Directora, Biblioteca Nacional de El Salvador. 2a Ave. Sur y 4a Calle Oriente No. 124. San Salvador, El Salvador, C.A.
(and her staff at the National Library of El Salvador)
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b. Mailing of the Final Report:

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