"Building a cooperative digital libary with open source software - the case of CLACSO in Latin America"

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Even though Latin America is one of the developing regions with excellent regional cooperative bibliographic databases, which is mainly due to the common use of Spanish and Portuguese in countries of the region, access to the printed documents mentioned in the bibliographies is a privilege for a very few. This situation is caused primarily by the reduced number of copies printed (in average 500 copies for academic books and 300 copies for journals) and the very high costs of postal services which make the distribution of publications and inter-library loan services very expensive.

Very slowly Internet is being introduced as a regular service for students, professors and researchers working in Latin American academic institutions, as well as being introduced as a platform for e-publishing and offering digital library services to users. Authors are increasingly submitting their works for publication online, e-publishing is used by institutions to provide free or payed access to their publications in the Web, and institutional digital libraries or cooperative digital libraries are developed to provide search facilities for collective collections.

Open Access has been endorsed in the region through events such as the "Open Access for Developing Countries" seminar which took place in Salvador, Brazil, 21-22 September 2005[3] which urged governments to make Open Access a high priority in science policies including:

- requiring that publicly funded research is made available through Open Access;
- considering the cost of publication as part of the cost of research;
- strengthening the local OA journals, repositories and other relevant initiatives;
- promoting integration of developing countries scientific information in the worldwide body of knowledge.

Shoshannah Holdom, from the Oxford University Computing Services, mentioned in a recent paper[4] that "…scholarly work in the humanities –specifically Latin American studies- by Latin American academics is gaining greater visibility through publication in locally-produced e-journals".

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[2] www.clacso.org.ar/biblioteca/ingles/document_view (February 2006)

[3] www.icml9.org/meetings/openaccess/public/documents/declaration.htm (February 2006)

[4] Holdom, Shoshannah. E-Journal Proliferation in Emerging Economies: the Case of Latin America. Literary and Linguistic Computing, Vol.20, no.3 (2005): 351-365

In this context of growing e-publishing and digital libraries initiatives to provide open access to research results, CLACSO (an academic network gathering 173 social science research institutions from 21 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean) decided to build a cooperative digital library to facilitate integrated access to full-text books, articles, papers and working documents of its member institutes.

To build the cooperative digital library CLACSO wanted an open source, user-friendly software system where users could search in all or only one collection, in metadata or in the full-text, and editors could input their publications online. After some research, Greenstone was selected, a software produced by the New Zealand Digital Library Project at the University of Waikato[5], and developed and distributed in cooperation with UNESCO and the Human Info NGO. It is an open source, multilingual software, issued under the terms of the GNU General Public License.

The first step was to download the Greenstone software and install it in CLACSO´s server[6]. Then the following steps have been

➢ Define diverse configurations: Texts in HTML. Metadata needed for each text: title, author, date, ISBN/ISSN, URL, publisher, subject, abstract. Search: in all or only in one collection (CLACSO has now 170 collections, one per member institute, with more than 5,100 full text documents).
➢ Define which presentation format CLACSO wanted for the search results. CLACSO decided to first present the search results as a list of documents: selected documents are then presented as a cover image of the publication plus contents index; then the document citation, finally the full text as PDF or HTML

To additional workload (and cost) at the office included defining metadata, training staff to migrate documents from PDF or Word to HTML and adding metadata to each document. For this task we have received support from INASP (for journals) and ICA/IDRC and SIDA (for books and other documents).

The service is open access to Internet users in www.clacso.org.ar/biblioteca. We use the open source statistical system Webalizer to process the more than 70,000 visits each month to see the list of countries that visit the library, topics most requested, documents most requested and how many times each document is requested. The copyright of each document in the digital library is owned by the editor and/or author of each document. CLACSO protects the contents of the collection from commercial use, by using an open access Creative Commons Attribution- NonCommercial-NoDerivs 2.0 licence: http://creativecommons.org/.

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[5] : www.greenstone.org   (February 2006)
[6] www.nzdl.org/custom/howto/collect/howto/pdf/AppendixA.pdf (February 2006)