ABSTRACT
        At the international level, a lack of diffusion of Mexican
art and architecture in indexes and abstracts has been detected. Reasons for
this could be lack of continuity in publications, the use of the Spanish
language, lack of interest in Mexican art and architecture, and sporadic
financial resources. Nevertheless, even though conditions are not the best,
database development in these disciplines has achieved several goals. These
include: the index of the magazine "Artes de Mexico" on CD-ROM, the database
PEPENAR (a union catalog of Latin American art and architecture periodicals);
the databases LATINOARTE, MEXICOARTE, INBART, ARTEX, BEXART; and, recently,
the Cultural Information System of the Mexican cultural ministry, as well as
the inclusion of approximately 2,000 Mexican contemporary artists in the
Union List of Artists Names and participation in the International Directory
of Art Libraries. Problems are centered on the standardization of the
information and the compatibility of the computer program, together with the
lack of continuous support of interested organizations. (Contains 13 notes.)
(MES)

IFLANET

65th IFLA Council and General Conference

Bangkok, Thailand, August 20 - August 28, 1999

Conference Proceedings

Code Number: 086-112-E
Division Number: II
Professional Group: Art Libraries
Joint Meeting with: -
Meeting Number: No
Simultaneous Interpretation: *No*

Mexican art and architecture databases: needs, achievements, problems

Elsa Barberena
Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico
Facultad de Filosofia y Letras
Mexico D.F.,Mexico
elsa@servidor.unam.mx

Abstract

Mexico has played an important role in art and Architecture since the prehispanic, colonial, modern and contemporary periods, and has contributed not only to spread mexican culture but to enrich the art world. The core of the artistic and architectural research is the work itself, painting, sculpture, monument, followed by critical studies and finally reinforced by the bibliographical tools, such as indexes, abstracts, encyclopedias, dictionaries, manuals, etc.

At the international level , it has been detected a lack of diffusion of mexican art and architecture in indexes and abstracts. The reasons could be, among others: lack of continuity in their publications, the use of the spanish language, lack of interest in mexican art and architecture, and sporadic financial resources.

Nevertheless, even though conditions are not the best, the database development in these disciplines has achieved several goals, among them: the index of the magazine "artes de mexico" in cd-rom, the database "pepenar" (a union catalog of latin american art and architecture periodicals), the databases "latinoarte", "mexicoarte", "inbart", "artex", "bexart", and recently the "cultural information system" of the mexican cultural ministry, besides the inclusion of approximately 2,000 mexican contemporary artists in the "union list of artists names" and the participation in the "international directory of art libraries".

The problems are centered on the standardization of the information, and in the compatibility of the computer program, together with the lack of a continuous support of the interested

organizations. People who elaborate databases are certain of the cultural richness of their countries, and they commit themselves to spread it in spite of the dificulties involved.

Paper

ANTECEDENTS

In 1984, The Scuola Normale Superiore in Pisa and the Getty Foundation organized the 'Second International Conference on Automatic Processing of Art History Data and Documents'. Two databases about Latin American art were included in the Memoirs; 1)AISALAC (An analysis of information about Latin American contemporary art) which will be transformed into LATINOARTE; 2) MEXICOARTE. (1)

The Aesthetics Research Institute of the Mexican National University (UNAM), the Fine Arts Institute (INBA) and the National Council of Science and Technology (CONACYT) appeared as associated institutions supported by the Mexican Library Association and the Scientific and Humanistic Information Center of UNAM.

In 1986, I was invited by the Information Services Division of CONACYT, upon a request of the Artistic Education and Research Department of INBA, to perform a diagnosis about the artistic information and documentation in five of its research centers.

Among the recommendations which followed the diagnosis were: a) broader dissemination of the research publications; b) a need to relate the museums exhibits with the documentation; c) to look for the possibility of an automated information program compatible with the one used in the MEXICOARTE database, whose creation and continuity have been my responsibility since 1984. The result was the elaboration of the INBART database.

In 1988, the Art Section of the Mexican Library Association and the Scientific and Humanistic Information Center of UNAM together with CONACYT distributed a circular letter to the people interested in the characteristics of the MEXICOARTE database.

The circular contained registry data of the different types of documents: books, periodical articles, exhibit catalogs, photographs. It includes the following disciplines: design, sculpture, engraving, painting, architecture covering the prehispanic, colonial, modern and contemporary periods.

From a total of 8,000 records codified , only 2,000 records were included in the database, using the Unesco format Common Communication Format (CCF) 1984 version.

The records contained the following information: record number, type of document, language, source, author, title, periodical title, edition, year, place of publication, publisher, physical description, ISBN or ISSN, classification number, notes, abstract, descriptors and others.

In 1989, I mentioned that in spite of the fact that the professional magazine is the perfect vehicle to spread the artistic movements, and that it is essential for research, the indexes published are not enough. Of a total of 227 Latin American periodical titles, only 79 incomplete titles were indexed. (2)

At my intervention at the Art Libraries Society of North America, I spoke about the database MEXICOARTE as an example of a national information service (3).

MEXICOARTE and LATINOARTE are included in the directory "DIRECTORIO DE BASES DE DATOS DE AMERICA LATINA Y EL CARIBE (DIBALC)" (4)) which contains

databases about Latin American art and architecture, nevertheless this directory is oriented more on humanities and not specialized on these disciplines.

Example:

BOLCULT, elaborated by the Cuban National Library 'José Marti', includes 2,700 records related to the literature, the culture and the art of Cuba.

Among the databases related solely to art are:

BEXART. The Aesthetics Research Institute at UNAM is responsible of this database that gives bibliographic information about artists, exhibits and art critics. It contains 8,200 records of exhibit catalogs.

INBART. The INBA Art and Documentation Department initiates this bibliographic database about Mexican art, dance, music and theater. It began with 1,271 records which are included in the CD-ROM of the Universidad de Colima. Now the National Center for the Arts has created the database

ARTEX with 12,000 records. Besides this Center has a table of contents service which includes the periodicals received at the Arts Library; the bulletin is called ALARTE.

For the 1994 IFLA meeting in Cuba, I prepared a document called "LATINOARTE: information about Latin American art". The objective was to disseminate the plural, incredible, incalculable richness of Latin American art by means of a database, whose foundation was my Ph D dissertation (5).

This database will contain documentary information available in 62 information units, in and outside the 22 Latin America countries; for it's 17 indexes were used, of which only two were elaborated in Latin America, one Mexican and the other one Cuban ("México en la cultura" and the one prepared at the José Marti Library).

NEEDS

I firmly believe in the artistic richness of my country and I make myself responsible to disseminate it through the support of the documentary information of a database. To this commitment I have dedicated by efforts since 1980 in my research and in my teaching.

I have initiated my research with my Ph D dissertation, on which I shape the need to spread Latin American art for which, I believe, there is indifference, lack of recognition, lack of interest, lack of appreciation, incomprehension and disregard. Nevertheless, Mexican art can be defined as a large number of artistic expressions within a unity with an adequate identity.

The definition of Latin American art is of contrast, of indigenous and european elements, of censorship, of freedom of expression, as the social movements of the Mexican muralism, the constructivist movement in Argentina and Uruguay, the Chilean surrealism, the indigenous inspiration of Peru and Bolivia, and the African element in Cuba.

There are not enough publications on Latin American art; the periodicals do not have a long run and their circulation is scarce; the periodical articles are not included in international indexes; the national indexes are few and they do not have a joint character; they are individual efforts which analyze the content of some magazines. Examples: *Anales del Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Artes de México, Cuadernos de bellas artes, México en la cultura, La Cultura en México, la Revista de la Universidad de México.*

Of the 239 Mexican art and architecture periodicals included in seven indexes, seven directories, two union catalogs and a dictionary , only 16 titles have been included in more

4

than three bibliographical tools; these are *Artes de México* with 12 quotations, *Anales del Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas* with 10 quotations, and *Revista de la Universidad de México* with four quotations.(6)

There have been several artists who have given importance to the information in the artistic documentation. Francisco Toledo, Mexican painter, learned about the Mexican photographer, Manuel Alvarez Bravo, through books. Pedro de Oraa, A Cuban painter, in his intervention at the '1st Colloquy on Cuban painting', which took place in la Habana on December 1984, stated that the gifted or cultivated artist has to go beyond the technical experience in order to obtain an integral information which provides knowledge. He even said "formation is information" (7).

De Oraa observed that this need of a written communication is more frequent in young artists than in older generations, who believe that the work of art can be explained by itself, and not as a result of the intellect that interprets the real world.

On the other hand de Oraa recognizes that the publisher's panorama is poor.

To give news about Cuban art is non-existent. The need of information of the contemporary Cuban painter has been held up because the immediate communication sources such as the magazine, the review, the article, the brief essay are few.

The art magazine is a required complement to know and recognize the value of the work of art; and if , as the art critic Juan Acha points out,(8) the contemporary artistic product is more a work of the intellect than of the senses, it requires for its full appreciation written explanations and discussions. It would be better if there is access to these discussions through databases.

The art automated international indexes include very few or not at all Latin American periodical titles; nevertheless, they include information about Latin American art.

The need for this type of information can be seen in a request about the Mexican painter Remedios Varo. HAPI (9) in 1986 included two articles and five references to illustrations of her work. *The Handbook of Latin American Art*(10) includes only one article of this prominent artist. In the *Indice de la 'Cultura en México'* there is only one article (11).

ACHIEVEMENTS

In 1994, the Mexican Library Association (AMBAC) Executive Board invited me to present the database LATINOARTE in its 25th annual conference (12). In the document, I included the methodology, the selection policy, the flow chart, the classification, the documentary analysis, the codification, in addition to the indexes used for the elaboration of the database.

Although in this occasion I did not specify the achievements and problems encountered but only the need, the achievements reached by MEXICOARTE and LATINOARTE would be read through.

Among the achievements of LATINOARTE were: 1.- The compilation, classification and selection of 4,195 articles, 1,290 books, 1,124 exhibit catalogs. A total of 15,459 records from 1905 through 1984 available in 62 information units not only in Mexico but outside mainly at the "Benson Latin American Collection" of the University of Texas in Austin, and at the "José Marti" Library in La Habana. 2.- The use of seven indexes elaborated in the United States of America, one in Cuba and seven in Mexico. Although the number of databases in Mexico and in the USA is even, the number of titles indexed is not, nor are the dates covered. While the North American indexes cover from 1907 up to the present, the Mexican indexes initiate in 1935 with no continuity.

Of the 15,454 only 2,000 records were included in the CD-ROM of the Colima University

under the title "Bibliografía Latinoamericana y de El Caribe", vol.2.

In relation to MEXICOARTE, 2,000, records were incorporate from the 8,000 codified records, using the Micro CDS/ISIS version 2 of the Unesco program, and the announcement on the CD-ROM of Colima University "Bibliografía mexicana" that the database was available.

The Unesco program is friendly; it allows several kinds of access; it serves as a bibliographical tool and for inventory purposes; it is compatible with other systems used in libraries, information and documentation center, museums; it allows the art critics and historians to reduce the routine work; it could be considered as their memory; it anticipated a Mexican art network.

Another achievement is the collaboration of the art history students who actually work with a commercial program called PROCITE Windows version, which is easy for them to handle. Up to now it has 1,700 records about Mexican art with the possibility of internet access.

PROBLEMS

In 1995, I published an article (13) in which I included the words of the Venezuelan architect Carlos Raúl Villanueva about the incredible deficiency of communication, the need of cultural exchange and above all the lack of information which has been preponderant in Latin American countries.

To this situation, I will add the following:

- The Unesco program is known in Latin America, but not in other countries. Besides the Windows version has been recently produced. The first versions are not easy to use and they require library students fo fully manipulate it.
- There is no art thesaurus in Spanish, this is the reason why a controlled terminology authority vocabulary was elaborated; the list is in alphabetical order and it includes references, geographical and people names. *The Art and Architecture Thesaurus* is in the process of being translated into Spanish by the Catholic University of Chile. Nevertheless a non faceted thesaurus would be a great help for the database.
- There is not enough acquisition of Latin American art periodicals from the libraries.
- Similar characteristics in magazine publishing: few titles, reduced availability for each title, lack of continuity of most of them which hinder that which is more inconvenient in an information system, the elaboration of indexes that analyze their contents.
- Inclusion of the artistic work in humanities and social sciences databases.
- Lack of human infrastructure that limits the efforts invested.
- A need to meet the necessary conditions not only of the artistic production, but also the dissemination of stipulations of this work by means of documentation and databases.
- Deficient financial resources because there is no continuity; they usually are given by steps .

CONCLUSION

There is a mixture of achievements and problems. The results encourage continuity with the challenge to spread Latin American art at an international level; by looking at the problems we realize that is necessary to redouble efforts and look for alternatives.

NOTES

(1) SN/G: Report on data processing projects in art. Pisa: Scuola Normale Superiore. Getty Art History Information Program, 1988. P. 447-451

6

(2) Barberena, Elsa. "Investigación sobre arte latinoamericano: acceso a través del material publicado y bases de datos. EN: Memoirs XXXIV Seminar on the Acquisition of Latin American Library Materials. Charlottesville, Virginia, SALALM, 1989.p.345-362.

(3) Barberena, Elsa. The National Art Library of Mexico: an alternative.New York, ARLIS/NA,1990.

(4) Directorio de bases de datos de América Latina y el Caribe (DIBALC). México: UNAM. Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, 1992. P. 98,114.

(5) Barberena, Elsa. Un análisis de la información sobre el arte latinoameriano contemporáneo. México: UNAM. Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, 1986. 253 p. 9 anexos en 19 microfichas. (Tesis de doctorado en historia).

(6) Jiménez-García, Maricela. El Estudio del patrimonio del arte mexicano contemporáneo a través de las revistas. UNAM. Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, 1999. (Anteproyecto de tesis de maestría en bibliotecología).

(7) Oraa, Pedro de. "Vicisitudes de la información de arte". Unión: revista de la Unión de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba. (2):164-165, (1985).

(8) Acha, Juan. El arte y su distribución. México: UNAM, 1984. P. 63.

(9) HAPI (Hispanic American Periodical Index). Los Angeles, CA: Centro Latinoamericano de la Universidad de California, 1975- .

(10) The Handbook of Latin American art/Manual de arte latinoamericano. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC Clio Information Services, 1984.

(11) González, Alfonso. Indice de la "Cultura en México" (1962-1972). Los Angeles, CA: Latin American Studies Center. California State University, 1978.

(12) Barberena, Elsa. "LATINOARTE: una base de datos" EN: Memorias de las XXV Jornadas Mexicanas de Biblioteconomía". México: Asociación Mexicana de Bibliotecarios, A.C., 1996. P. 149-158.

(13) Barberena, Elsa. "Latinoarte: information on Latin American art" Art libraries journal. 20(3):8-10 (1995).