

IFLA/FAIFE World Report: Libraries and Intellectual Freedom



Mexico

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In most of the Latin American countries and the Caribbean, there are not open violatory actions against the access to information and freedom of expression, nevertheless "non violent actions", which at the end create a favourable environment for the violation of access to information and freedom of expression, do exist.

Population:	92,718,000 (1996)
GNP per capita:	\$ 3,670 (1996)
Government / Constitution:	Republic
Main languages:	Spanish
Main religions:	Roman Catholicism
Literacy:	90% (1995)
Online:	2,49% (July 2000)

The main "non violent actions" are the ones related to the negligence and poor organisation of the libraries and information centres especially the ones of the governmental sector. The main consequences are :

1. the personnel in charge of the organisation and services do not have professional level.
2. the government authorities do not authorise the appropriate budget for the acquisition of the necessary documents, information services and adequate installations.
3. the need of access to information - in the less developed countries - lies mainly in the official documents of the governments and of the parliaments, which by law have the commitment to inform the public and make the information accessible to them.
4. there are no national catalogues of their collections neither in manual nor in automated form.
5. the library associations and other related professional groups are inefficient or non-existent due to the low professional development of the libraries and information centres of the region.

The above mentioned characteristics of the less developed countries are the causes that prevent access to their document collections and their poor or non existent information services. This is the environment that originates the "non violent actions" against the access to information and to freedom of expression.

The electronic technology , the access to the global information services, which already are in use - in very limited institutions of the region - should also be considered for future recommendations to access to information and to freedom of expression in the less developed countries.

In September 1998 a case of violation against the right and freedom to access to information occurred in Mexico City. The Confederacion de Trabajadores de Mexico, CTM (Mexican Labour or Workers Confederation) through the media gave the news that an important part of its library was going to be incinerated because that collection was contaminated with toxic fungi that could harm the human health. This document collection has 18,000 book-volumes, a photographic archive and other files not classified.

A professional protest campaign against the possible incineration was made through the Asociacion Mexicana de Bibliotecarios, A.C. (AMBAC), our national library association and many other interested persons. An official communication of AMBAC was sent to the General Secretary of the CTM, emphasising that if the incineration would take place, it would cause an irreparable damage to the document memory of the Mexican labour movement and furthermore to the national patrimony, which can not be considered as private property. It was also suggested that they could establish contact with the main national official institutions with qualified experience in restoration and preservation of documents, as well with private companies and specialists which offer this kind of services.

Up to the present, this attempt of incineration has been stopped.