

Trip Report

I spent the week of July 25th in San José, Costa Rica, giving demonstrations of electronic communications to an SSRC workshop on urban poverty in Latin America. I also had the extraordinary opportunity to tag along with Fred Morgner as he made the rounds of publishers and bookstores in the city. Since I am writing on the day before my Internet presentation, I will begin with a synopsis of what I learned about Costa Rican information sources.

The presentation of current news in the country continues to be dominated by the San José daily, *La Nación*. It occupies an independent position and tries hard to represent the center of political opinion in the country. The competition is the recently established *La Republica* which has won a large readership in the capital with its crisp editorial style (and its smaller advertising space; *La Nación*'s editor admits that some issues of his paper have held as much as 75% advertisements.) There is an afternoon paper, *Al Día*, owned by *La Nación*. The *Tico Times* continues to serve the English-reading community and carries materials of interest to it, a recent example is front-page coverage of police raids on gay bars in San José made (ironically?) during the weekend of the Stonewall commemoration.

I did not find a better current events magazine than *Rumbo*, held by many US libraries, including Cornell's. *Polémica* has ceased with number 20 (as has *Pensamiento Propio* published by CRIES in Managua and distributed throughout Central America). However, FLACSO will soon begin a new magazine called *Espacios*, which will be distributed "cortesia" to all former subscribers of *Polémica*. A monthly financial magazine, *Actualidad económica*, now in its eleventh number, offers what seems to me good information on events of interest such as the Mexico-Costa Rican TLC, and, by the way, an interesting piece on the *La Nación* empire and its interests outside publishing (they're in real estate and thinking of TV).

I did locate three new serial titles of possible interest. *Impacto social* (no. 1-, April 1994- frequency unknown) is a publication of UCR's Escuela de Sociología y Antropología, directed by Sui Moy Li Kam, and reports on research taking place in the school. *Revista de relaciones laborales* (no. 1- spring 1994- three numbers per year) edited by Investigaciones Jurídicas, S.A. publishes articles on labor force and labor relations in Costa Rica and Central America. *Vida y ambiente* (description based on vol. 1, no. 3, no date, frequency unknown) is a publication focusing on ecology, including the garbage crisis in San José and the obligatory coverage of rain forest disappearance.

I should make it clear that I was with Fred for only two of the four days that he raced through the streets. However, what I learned at his coattails is as follows. Costa Rican academic publishing has suffered from the decline and near fall of Educa. This leaves a significant gap in that there is now no organ dedicated to the publication of pan-Central American works. With Educa's diminution, the Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica is the principal academic publisher in the country. UCR continues to produce its well-known staples such as the *Anuario de Estudios Centroamericanos*, *Revista de Ciencias*

Sociales, and Revista de Filología y Lingüística. It published some six (some, because their personnel were unable to give a definitive answer to the question of how many) new monographs in the last three months. Their latest catalog (1993 1994) lists forty works in press-- thought many are texts and hard sciences-- which implies that UCR will remain an important source of information for the near future.

FLACSO's San José sede has also remained active. Its new catalog (1994) shows Centroamerica en cifras; Tierra, café y sociedad; and Globalización y fuerza laboral en Centroamerica as ready to appear (although they were not in distribution as yet). In addition, FLACSO has published a multi volume entitled Mujeres latinoamericanas en cifras, with volumes on Central America, the Dominican Republic, Brazil, Chile and Peru. And finally, they have announced a paper bound edition of Historia de Centroamericana, edited by Robert Carmack, to be priced ca. \$100 (as compared to the \$250 asked for the hard cover) for the 5 volume set.

The Instituto Interamericano de Derechos Humanos continues to publish its serials: Revista IIDH, Refugiados Boletín Documental(number 5 is the last), Exodos en America Latina (no. 8), and its Boletín electoral (each number dedicated to an individual country or area). It has also published a useful bibliography, Guía bibliográfica sobre procesos electorales y partidos políticos, 1980-1992, by Manuel Alcántara (1993). And for those with law in their profiles, IIDH copublished Nieto Navia's Introducción al sistema interamericano de protección a los derechos humanos (1993) with Temis of Bogotá. IIDH has published its first Catálogo, de publicaciones (1994).

Liberation Theology remains alive and well-- maybe JPPII hasn't heard of San José yet-- and publishing through DEI (Departamento Ecuménico de Investigaciones). Since establishing itself in Costa Rica in 1979, DEI has published more than 250 titles and features the work of the region's most important liberation theologians, including Franz J. Hinkelammert and Fernando Mires. Ecology is another important focus. Their 1994 catalog shows nine titles in the works, three of which have now been published.

IICA has its offices in the Coronado section, just out of town, and continues its publishing in the areas of technical agriculture and rural studies. Of interest to me are the recent publications: Directorio latinoamericano de la industria biotecnología (with volumes now out for Mexico, America Central, Argentina, Uruguay, Brasil, and Area Andina); Formulación de políticas para el desarrollo de la biotecnología en América Latina y el Caribe; Gender, Women, and Development; Centroamerica 1993: perfiles sectoriales de políticas y comercio agrícola; and the series Estrategias para mitigar la pobreza rural en América Latina y el Caribe (three vols. published to date: Encuadernamientos de producción en la economía campesina en el Ecuador (no. 1); Hacia una estrategia de desarrollo campesina en el Paraguay (no. 2); and Small holders and structural change in the Brazilian economy (no. 3-- I did not see a Spanish or Portuguese version although I was assured that they were available).

My last stop on the publisher tour was at the offices of Editorial Fernandez-Arce, a small, for-profit outfit that produces school texts, Costa Rican editions of Spanish-language

classics out of copyright, and some national literature, the latter including *El Español en Costa Rica*, *Los Ojos del arrecife*, and *Música poetica costarricense*.

San José's book stores, while numerous, are not particularly well stocked, and to find a title no longer available from the publisher, one must often make the rounds. The most famous bookstore in the city is *Librería Lehman*, in the commercial section. But calling Lehman a *librería* is like calling Mexico's Sanborns a sundry shop. The books are now hard to find amidst four floors of electrical appliances, Lego, gifts, and clothes. Other book stores in the downtown area are *El Universal*, *The Bookshop* (an English-language establishment), *Librería Trejos*, and *El Erial* (which had the best selection of second-hand books I saw). In the University area, *Librería Macondo* has a large selection of new and used books catering to the university curriculum; *Librería Horizonte* is affiliated with DEI and thus features religious and ecological works; and the UCR has a *Librería Cooperativa* with a good selection of academic titles from its own editorial and the other major university press, UNED (*Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia*).

Internet training, two sessions, was attended by a mixture of members of the SSRC workshop and local librarians, some thirty in all. I enclose a copy of the SSRC participants who, as in San Salvador, hail from a variety of Central American countries and the Dominican Republic. Twenty-six of the attendees filled in a questionnaire I circulated the first night. Of these, all had access to a computer, with 20 being PC's of some description. Ten had access to e-mail (with another two waiting for installation) and six to an Internet connection. This is quite a contrast with the SSRC meeting in San Salvador where only two of the participants had e-mail and none had Internet connections. The passage of time and the fact that this seminar took place in San José, seat of CRNet, made the difference, i.e. there are presently no Internet connections in Central America outside of Costa Rica.

The facilities at the *Universidad de Costa Rica* are excellent. UCR has connections with CRNet and runs its own gopher and WWW servers. All our sessions were held in the *Centro de Computación*, which has two facilities with Internet connections and computer projectors. The University runs Unix, which took some getting used to, but with the help of local staff the demonstrations went off fine. We saw the Eudora e-mail program on Friday night and gopher and telnet on X-Windows on Saturday morning. By the way, I received very good orientation from two members of the staff, Luis Blanco (*Jefe de Sección de Ingeniería de Cómputo*; blanco@brunca.ci.ucr.ac.cr) and Gladys Hidalgo (gladish@brunca.ci.ucr.ac.cr). Ms. Hidalgo has written an excellent set of Spanish-language reference manuals and gives Internet classes as a regular part of her responsibilities. These people would be more than able to handle future sessions in San José.

The librarians/"social scientists" split made for interesting sessions. The former were very interested in all the arcane key stroking and in the implications of information policy. The latter were less well versed in electronic communication and were, like U.S. scholars, a bit skeptical about what is in it for them. They want the full texts of articles and data that address the specific problems they are researching, and in the social sciences, we are not

there yet. There was, however, a universal recognition that e-mail and its attendant conferences would be a useful service. All of us agreed that what remains to be done is a selling job to administrators who would have to approve such items as modems and accounts with local telephone companies (and who would pay the bills each month).

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