INTERNATIONAL CONTACT AND COOPERATION: THE TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES AND MEXICO

De Petro, Thomas G. Science/Engineering Services, Evans Library, Texas A&M University College Station, Texas U.S.A.

Introduction

The cover of the October 2000 issue of *American Libraries* showcased the theme "World Culture, World Librarianship: Making Multicultural Connections" with a graphic design image depicting the world's eastern hemisphere as an electronic circuit board and Africa as the dominant land mass. The contributing editor of that issue, library consultant David Dorman, referred to technology fostering a "shrinking planet" and he referred to "the librarian as globetrotter" within the "increasing globalization of librarianship." He also acknowledged the Mortensen Center for International Library Programs at the University of Illinois Library at Urbana-Champaign in the U.S.A. The Center heralds "Connecting Librarians Around the World" as its theme. It is renowned for its activities, including an "Associates" program that hosts librarians from around the world who go there to learn more about library practices in the United States.

The theme of connections can be readily addressed within IATUL, the International Association of Technological University Libraries, through the experiences of librarians at its member libraries. The need for international cooperation among such libraries can result from common challenges, mutual interests and goals, geographical proximity, shared history or economies, or from a unique combination of these and other factors. Libraries at technological universities and at related institutions can and must provide new and creative ways to serve as conduits for international contact and cooperation. This can best be achieved through opportunities for sustained interaction between libraries as partners that have similar aspirations. The universality of the applied sciences and technology including the emerging "inter-disciplines" and the burgeoning amount of information associated with these fields makes library cooperation even more imperative. This is especially important when such cooperative endeavors are initiated by libraries in developed countries with libraries in countries that are in development.

Internationalization at Texas A&M University and its Libraries

Examples of international cooperation and outreach exist throughout the Texas Agricultural and Mechanical University (identified by the initials TAMU) as part of its overall strategic plan initiated in 1998 titled "Vision 2020." The term "2020" refers to the date by which the University hopes to achieve a ranking among the top 10 publicly funded universities in the United States as measured in defined parameters. The designation "2020" is also a common standard for the measurement and correction of human eyesight in the United States, designating optimum vision.

"Vision 2020" as explained in Section 7, titled "Increase Access to Knowledge Resources," includes global initiatives relevant to the TAMU "University Libraries", the designation for the library entity consisting of the Sterling C. Evans Library, the Cushing Memorial Library, the Policy Sciences and Economics Library (PSEL), the West Campus Library (WCL), which covers agriculture, biochemistry, and business, and the Medical

Sciences Library (MSL).^{vi} That plan also mandates a precept to "encourage an institutional global network." The goals stated there "support the establishment of long-lasting and mutually beneficial relations with foreign institutions" and "opportunities and support for international experiences." viii

In 1997 under the leadership of Dean Fred Heath, the Texas A&M University Libraries began an ongoing trans-border initiative for outreach and contact in Mexico. A number of programs and projects were subsequently started, generating cooperative relationships with numerous Mexican libraries and other institutions. These activities have included onsite visits and presentations, research initiatives, cooperative library services, a faculty librarian exchange, a bilingual cataloging procedures documentation project, and digital library development. Such activities can serve as examples and models, or as ideas of what can be done in the realm of international cooperation among science and technology libraries everywhere.

Mexico and Texas: Shared Land and History

Mexico and Texas share a common history as colonial territory of Spain, with the "Estados Unidos Mexicanos" or "United Mexican States" including Texas winning independence in 1821.^{ix} In 1836 Texas in turn won its independence from Mexico at the battle of San Jacinto, near present day Houston and it was a republic until annexed by the United States of America in 1845.^x

The relationship of Texas and indeed of the entire U.S.A. to Mexico was poignantly described in the book *Distant Neighbors: A Portrait of the Mexicans* written in 1984 by Alan Riding, a *New York Times* reporter. The "portrait" of the relationship between Mexico and the U.S.A. at the time of publication was one of separation despite proximity. According to Riding, at that time the U.S.A. was more intricately involved with Western Europe than with Mexico.

It is this non-geographical, social, cultural, and economic distance that the Texas A&M University seeks to overcome through its outreach in Mexico. Nowhere else in the world does an industrialized nation share such a long and significant border with a developing country. NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement between Canada, the United States, and Mexico is also relevant to the border issues and thus libraries in these countries. The results of NAFTA as it develops can also be seen in trade issues affecting the libraries and the transfer of information.

The Texas A&M University Presence in Mexico

Through its Office for Latin American Programs, Texas A&M University created a Mexico City Center in 1993 located on the Paseo de la Reforma, the main street there. The Center and the over 230 projects it has overseen are described in detail in a document titled "Texas A&M University Programs and Activities with Mexico." The cover of that document includes a bold statement, in effect, a unique motto reflecting the unique relationship between Texas and Mexico: "Texas A&M University...Committed to Texans by Strengthening Mexico." "Texas A&M University...Committed to Texans by Strengthening Mexico."

The Mexico City Center is officially "a part of the TAMU Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost, supervised by the International Programs Office, and managed by the Office for Latin American Programs." The facilities there include meeting rooms,

and videoconferencing equipment with a direct link back to Texas plus a dedicated direct on-campus phone line to and from TAMU in College Station.

The function of the TAMU Mexico City Center is stated on its website as follows:

The Center serves as headquarters for Texas A&M's cooperative projects with Mexican institutions and governments agencies. It also serves as the focal point for activities linking former students and business executives from Mexico and Texas, and throughout Central and South America. The Center also provides office and classroom space for Texas A&M administrators developing study abroad programs in the region, and for faculty conducting research and training programs. xvi

A special TAMU brochure further describes how the Mexico City Center was established "...in recognition of Mexico's importance as a cultural and economic partner for Texas and the United States and of the critical role of higher education in preparing the citizens and leaders for the increasingly global 21st century." The Center is registered as a "Mexican" research institution with CONACYT (Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología), Mexico's National Council on Science and Technology. The Center facilitates the TAMU study abroad programs in Mexico and it promotes the University's joint research, continuing education, and outreach programs in Mexico.

The Faculty Abroad Seminar in Mexico and the TAMU Libraries

The TAMU Libraries are dedicated to the mission and activities of the Mexico City Center, providing library services, supporting access to information resources, and participating in relevant activities there. The University's Office for Latin American Programs sponsors a Faculty Abroad Seminar (FAS) each May, competitively selecting twelve professors to travel to Mexico for ten days to meet and share experiences and information with their counterparts there. The FAS program includes a language and culture orientation on the TAMU campus. As librarians are appointed to the university faculty as professors at TAMU, they regularly apply and are selected to participate in the FAS program. The FAS experience begins on the College Station campus with an organizational meeting and continues there with weekly Spanish language and Mexican culture orientation sessions. The FAS then commences with a two-day orientation at the TAMU Mexico Center. This is an interactive situation with guest speakers who cover the social, cultural, and political history and the complexities of the U.S.-Mexico relationship. Participating TAMU faculty librarians address access issues relevant to the sharing and transmission of information through libraries. In preparation for meeting colleagues and visiting campuses, each faculty member presents his or her plan for meetings with some counterparts in Mexico to share research, knowledge and expertise while establishing those contacts.

The 2001 TAMU Faculty Abroad Seminar included a visit to the Heroic Military College, which is the national Mexican armed services officers academy; the State of Mexico campus of Monterrey Tech, a private institution; La Salle University, also a private institution; the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM), the country's largest university; the Instituto Tecnologico Autonomo de México, and the Universidad de las Americas in Puebla. A group field trip beyond Mexico City included

the Palenque archaeological ruins, the colonial city of San Cristobal de las Casas, and the capital city of the State of Chiapas, Tuxla Guitierez.

TAMU FAS 2001

The two faculty librarians in the FAS group toured libraries and met with colleagues at each location. The facilities varied in size and scope, but all aspire to achieve higher levels of access to information, especially online. There are many potential IATUL member institutions in Mexico. Mexican colleagues were introduced to the Association through TAMU faculty librarian contact in 2001. IATUL was introduced as part of a presentation titled "Academic Science and Technology Libraries: Making Global Connections." One slide showed how the flag of Mexico was at that time unfortunately missing among the countries represented on the IATUL membership page, a situation that has now been remedied by the Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo Leon. xix

The TAMU Transnational Digital Library Project in Mexico
The Texas A&M University Digital Library (DL) project, begun in 1999 by Dr. Dilawar
Grewal, provides archiving capability, software utilization, storage, and technical
expertise locally and remotely to both university and unaffiliated customers. Historical
collections in Mexico are candidates for digital preservation and access in cooperation
with the TAMU DL. Dr. Grewal visited Mexico in 2000 to promote cooperation in
developing and applying digital library technology there.

CONACYT, Mexico's National Council on Science and Technology The TAMU Libraries have also contributed to the leading role the Texas A&M University has taken as a partner with CONACYT, the "Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología" or National Council on Science and Technology, Mexico's counterpart to the National Science Foundation in the United States of America. CONACYT funds research in Mexico, provides an integrated science and technology information system, and maintains a network for researchers to remain in contact. Additionally it provides grants and scholarships, sponsors post-graduate programs, sponsors regional research centers, and promotes the modernization of technology throughout Mexico. CONACYT publishes research reports, maintains statistics, and holds conferences. Its website is at http://www.conacyt.mx . (The website is currently only in Spanish.) Texas A&M University and CONACYT recently announced a Collaborative Research Program to begin inter-institutional projects. There are seven research areas: bioprocesses, health, telecommunications and information technologies, environment, advanced materials and manufacturing, energy and urban development, and sustainability.

The Transnational Interlibrary Agreement between Texas and Mexico In February 2000 the Coordinator of Information Services for the TAMU Sterling C. Evans Library at the Mexico City Center, Mr. Mario A. Delgado Andrade, initiated a "Transnational Interlibrary Agreement" with 22 libraries in Mexico. The signing of these agreements, which facilitate the trans-border sharing of materials between Mexico and Texas through the TAMU Libraries subject to conditions and copyright restrictions,

fulfilled one of the main goals of the "Three Year Plan for the Sterling C. Evans Libraries 1999-2001 for the Mexico City Center." This plan had been presented to representatives from those Mexican libraries at Texas A&M University in September 1999. Guidelines in the agreement clarified the limitations and procedures in both Spanish and English. A remaining goal is to extend this opportunity for cooperation to libraries in Central and South America.

Two other successful Mexico/U.S.A. interlibrary loan programs were detailed in a recent IFLA paper. New strategies and guidelines were created with the goal of "providing copies of articles only available in U.S. collections." One of these programs was established by the Grupo Amigos, consisting of 13 Mexican libraries cooperatively united with 28 U.S. libraries. The other group was "el FORO."

"El FORO", the Trans-Border Library Forum"

The Trans-Border Library Forum or "el Foro Tansfronterizo de Bibliotecas" as it is known in Spanish, began in 1991 when librarians from Arizona, U.S.A. and the Mexican state of Sonora met in Rio Rico, Arizona to address shared issues and mutual interests and to promote international cooperation between both countries. The Forum or FORO, as it is simply called, has since expanded to include the additional U.S. border states with Mexico, i.e., Texas, New Mexico, and California. The annual meeting held in March now alternates its location between the two countries and attendance has increased to over 300 participants. Unfortunately the 2002 FORO had to be cancelled. FORO should continue in 2003, perhaps on a biennial basis.

Librarians from Texas A&M University have consistently participated in FORO. One recent conference theme was "Beyond Our Borders: Interconnections/ Más Allá de Nuestras Fronteras: Interconexiones" held March 23 - 25, 2000 in Albuquerque, New Mexico, U.S.A. Another past theme was "Constuyendo un Puente Informativo/Building Information Bridges." FORO was held in Hermosillo, Sonora, Mexico in 2001. Prior FORO conferences were held in El Paso, Texas (1993); Monterrey, Nuevo León (1994); Mexico City (1995); Tucson, Arizona (1996); Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua (1997); Riverside, California (1998); Mexicali, and Baja California (1999).

Technical Services and Cataloging Joint Activities

In response to a need for a union catalog in Mexico, the TAMU Libraries initiated a joint cataloging project with those libraries in Mexico that are members of the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) bibliographic utility headquartered in the U.S.A. There is a need to share bibliographic standards through OCLC in Mexico to facilitate cooperative cataloging, authority records, and interlibrary loan. The U.S. Library of Congress Program for Cooperative Cataloging (PCC) is also relevant to Mexico. The PCC includes an authorities component that is being jointly addressed by the Library of Congress and the Colegio de México, an institution of higher learning in Mexico City. The PCC Cooperative Online Serials (CONSER) training program has also been translated into Spanish for Mexican libraries jointly by librarians from TAMU, the University of New Mexico, and Tulane University in New Orleans, Louisiana. Such cooperative efforts can assist Mexico as a nation in advancing its national bibliographic infrastructure within its libraries.

Faculty Exchange: an Assistant Visiting Professor at the TAMU Evans Library The Colegio de México agreed to initiate an exchange of librarians with TAMU beginning in the summer of 2001. At that time a technical services librarian on sabbatical was sent to the Evans Library for three months. Appointed by TAMU as a visiting assistant professor of library science, that librarian studied and applied the U.S. Library of Congress Program for Cooperative Cataloging (LC PCC) standards to Spanish language materials in the TAMU Libraries collection. With this knowledge the librarian will in turn be able to educate other catalogers in Mexico to apply those standards to library records as they are created there.

IATUL, Mexico, and Beyond

A natural benefit of international cooperation is the opportunity to expand IATUL membership. Mutual contact between libraries offers the opportunity to share experience and expertise and to explain the purpose and goals of the Association to prospective member libraries. Just as Texas A&M University Libraries have begun to reach out in Mexico in this effort and exchange, so too can IATUL member libraries in Europe reach out to additional libraries there and in Africa and Asia. University technological libraries in Canada and the United States can also extend contact to additional libraries in Central and South America. IATUL libraries in Australia and Asia can also make such efforts to expand membership in the Association in those regions.

Conclusion

Cooperative outreach on an international basis from one technological university library to another can yield a mutually beneficial and rewarding relationship. Such relationships are perhaps more significant when one of the nations involved is "developed" and the other is "in development." The example of the Texas A&M University Libraries in Mexico clearly illustrates this cooperation as a concept that can be shared within the IATUL membership and can thus be further experienced through the initiatives of other member libraries throughout the world.

ⁱ American Libraries. Vol. 31, No. 9, Oct. 2000.

ⁱⁱ Dorman, David. "Technically Speaking, a Shrinking Planet." *American Libraries*. Vol. 31, No. 9, Oct. 2000, p. 43.

iii Ibid. URLfor the Moretensen Center: http://gateway.library.uiuc.edu/mortenson

Texas A&M University. *Vision 2020: Creating A Culture of Excellence*. College Station, TX, USA: Texas A&M University, 1998. Also available online at http://www.tamu.edu/new/vision/culture.pdf.

v Ibid. p. 10.

vi Ibid, pp. 48-50.

vii Ibid, p.46.

viii Ibid.

ix "Texas: Prehistory to Annexation." *Texas Almanac, 2000-2001*. Dallas, Texas U.S.A.: The Dallas Morning News, 1999. [online version from Thomson Gale.]

xi Riding, Alan. Distant Neighbors: A Portrait of the Mexicans. New York, NY: Knopf, 1984.

xii The NAFTA website is at: http://www.nafta-sec-alena.org.

xiii Texas A&M University, Office for Latin American Programs. "Texas A&M University Programs and Activities with Mexico." College Station, TX: Texas A&M University, 2001.

xiv Ibid.

xv Ibid.

xvi Texas A&M University. Office for Latin American Programs. http://olap.tamu.edu

xvii "Texas A&M University Center." [brochure] College Station, Texas: Office for Latin American

xviii De Petro, Thomas G. "Academic Science and Technology Libraries: Making Global Connections." A Powerpoint presentation during the TAMU Faculty Abroad Seminar in Mexico, May 2001.

xix IATUL Membership/Members list web page: http://www.iatul.org/membership/memberlist/index.html .

xx Texas A&M University Digital Library at: http://dl.tamu.edu.
xxi Texas A&M University. Mexico City Center. Transnational Interlibrary Reciprocal Agreement. 2000. xxii Guerrero, Elda Mónica and Mattes, Daniel. "Interlibrary Loan in Mexico: Two Solutions to an Age-Old Problem." 67th IFLA Council and General Conference, Boston, Massachusetts, U.S.A. August 16-25, 2001, paper no. 064-108-E. Available at: http://www.ifla.org/IV/ifla67/papers/064-108e.pdf.

xxiv Transborder Library Forum/FORO Transfronterizo de Bibliotecas webpage at http://www.unm.edu/~foro/about.html .

Furubotten, Lisa. Memo to Fred Heath, et al. Re.: Technical Services/Cataloging Cooperative Activities with Mexico. August 17, 2001.

xxvi Ibid.

xxvii Ibid. CONSER is on the web at : http://www.loc.gov/acq/conser .