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Latin American Open Archives Portal (LAOAP)

<LARRP> <http://lanic.utexas.edu/larrp/>

The Latin American Open Archives Portal (LAOAP) is an initiative of the Latin Americanist Research Resources Project (LARRP), which is a cooperative initiative to improve access to the array of research resources published in Latin America. Its goals are to restructure access to collections and resources on a comprehensive scale and to improve electronic access and document delivery systems for Latin Americanist resources.

<About LARRP> <http://www.crl.edu/grn/larrp/about.asp>

LARRP was initiated in 1994 as one of three pilot projects recommended in the final report of the Task Force on The Acquisition and Distribution of Foreign Language and Area Studies Materials of AAU's Research Libraries Project. It has grown to comprise 53 U.S. libraries and seven Latin American institutions. LANIC at the University of Texas at Austin joined with LARRP as a technical partner for project development.

<LAOAP: Home> <http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/laoap/>

LAOAP is a portal service providing access to social sciences grey literature produced in Latin America by research institutes, non-governmental organizations, and peripheral agencies. It encompasses working documents, pre-prints, research papers, statistical documents, and other difficult-to-access materials that are not controlled by commercial publishers. It utilizes the Open Archives Initiative Protocol for Metadata Harvesting (OAI-PMH) as a low-barrier solution to disseminate and share digital resources originating in Latin America to bring more visibility and access to research in the region.

In the mid-1990s, LARRP attempted to collect grey literature by establishing communication with institutions in the region to acquire hard copy materials. This approach was abandoned because it proved difficult to establish a system for acquisitions and lacked a mechanism to share what was acquired.

The need remained to substantially expand the range of contemporary research resources available to students and scholars. Grey literature tends to convey viewpoints and analyses that fall outside the political and intellectual mainstream, or that represent the most current research on emerging topics. Access to materials from the region would enable more balanced research, as well as a more complete appreciation of the full diversity of Latin American positions and opinions.

With OAI we were able to readdress this identified collection need and LARRP, through UCLA, with LANIC received a Technological Innovation and Cooperation for Foreign Information (TICFIA) grant from the Department of Education to develop an OAI compliant harvester and interface, and to bring on Latin American data providers. Leading Latin Americanist bibliographers drawn from the LARRP membership identified high-quality partners and LANIC took the role of providing technical support and building infrastructure.

Partners

<Partners> <http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/laoap/about.html>

Two partners were identified in the grant proposal, the Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO) in Chile and the Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamérica (CIRMA) in Guatemala, both of which had expressed a desire to participate and a shared conviction in the importance of the project. A clear understanding of the institutional requirements and a strong institutional commitment to fulfill those requirements were essential. Close working relationships between U. S. bibliographers and the directors of these institutions facilitated this process.

Bringing on additional partners has followed a similar pattern of interest and commitment stemming from working relationships between these institutions and LARRP members or LANIC. The set of six partners listed on the partners page (FLACSO Chile, CIRMA Guatemala, Universidad Torcuato Di Tella, Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales, Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, and the Inter-American Development Bank), when fully up and running, will collectively provide approximately 13,500 full text items, with a range of 5,000 to 100 per individual institution. The partner institutions hold the copyright to these materials or have obtained the permission of the author.

It is important in project planning not to underestimate the equipment and personnel needs of an institution to participate. Again, this involved working with a partner institution on an individual basis to assess resource needs given volume and status of materials. Funding may be needed to “buy out” staff time, and to purchase equipment, such as a dedicated workstation and scanner, and software. Levels of institutional support provided through the grant ranged from \$17,000, to \$2,000, to none per institution.

The premise of the partnership is to build institutional capacity in the region for ongoing development of the collections and to serve as a resource to bring on new Latin American

partners. LANIC provides training in two areas: best practices for digitization and application of Dublin Core OAI compliant metadata.

To follow the case of FLACSO, their librarian Paula Pardo came to the University of Texas for 3 weeks and trained with Kent Norsworthy at LANIC on Web issues, metadata, and digitizing. Kent also made a site visit to FLACSO in Chile. Working with a selection of different publication types, together they developed a manual for best practices for digitizing drawing on current practice in the field. Paula resolved the problem of populating the Dublin Core fields from the existing electronic catalog. She wrote a format file that operates as part of the MicroIIs software to map existing catalog fields to Dublin Core fields and to place these into an OAI compliant static repository in the form of an XML file that can be harvested. We consider her a resource in the region who is willing to help other institutions.

<Resources> <http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/laoap/project.html>

FLACSO's experience is documented in the article "Bibliotecas Digitales Latinoamericanas en el Marco de OAI-PMH" presented at the 2004 Latin American Studies Association Congress and accessible on the LAOAP Resources page.

We are beginning this same process with CIRMA.

Key to capacity building is having a contact person to address the particular needs of the institution and provide support in finding solutions as problems arise in implementing project requirements. At LANIC, that person is Kent Norsworthy. He has worked with each of the six partners and will testify that no two of them have had the same set of needs. Differences encompass size of the collections, materials digitized or not, automated catalogs to no catalog data, and levels of staffing and equipment. It is the built-in flexibility of OAI that has allowed us to adapt the model to this broad spectrum of institutional types. But, it does mean you must be willing to work on an individual, case by case basis with each partner.

< Requirements> <http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/laoap/requirements.html>

As a starting point for new partners, we outlined a semi-standardized approach in the "Requirements to Participate" document and use this as a point of departure for a dialog with each partner regarding their actual situation and needs. This approach goes from offering to host documents on LANIC for institutions with no Web presence to working with those capable of being a full-fledged interactive data provider. Success in adding data providers is not based on applying a cookie cutter approach.

Taking into close consideration the environment in which these Latin American institutions operate led us to also tweak the standard OIA model in constructing the LAOAP portal system architecture.

<Resources> <http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/laoap/oaportal.html>

The LAOAP system infrastructure is based on a three-tiered architecture. A diagram of the architecture can be found in the article “The Latin American Open Archives Portal” in the Winter 2004–2005 issue of the *Global Resources Network Newsletter*. The first tier includes two types of content repositories: standard and static. A standard repository requires a “full-fledged” OAI-compliant Web server that needs backend application support for processing harvester requests. A static repository does not require any server-side modifications, and contains XML files with metadata records and repository information.

The second tier is the backend metadata harvesting services that consist of three main components: the Java Harvester, Oracle database, and the Static Repository Gateway (SRG). The LAOAP Java Harvester gathers metadata either directly from standard repositories or indirectly from static repositories via our SRG. The SRG is a gateway between the Harvester and metadata XML files provided by our Latin American partners. The Oracle database receives and processes metadata records from our Harvester, and serves the searching functions via Java applications to the front end users.

By providing a Static Repository Gateway, this significantly lowers the barrier to participate for our Latin American partners by removing the burden of in-house programming and on-going system maintenance transferring that burden, as in our case, to LANIC. For those wanting to replicate this model for other regions with similar infrastructure constraints, having a commitment on the part of technical staff and allocation of equipment to this purpose is essential.

I would like to mention that the Dr. Ning Lin, the LANIC Director who initiated and designed LANIC, originally envisioned a similar service for other area studies centers and still holds to that vision. The infrastructure for LAOAP can also be used for other regions. If there is interest in working with LANIC to develop an Open Archives Portal for another region leveraged on our infrastructure, we would be happy to explore that with you.

Future plans for LARRP and LANIC include bringing on additional partner institutions as funding allows. Those that have already been identified are FLACSO-Argentina, FLACSO-Ecuador, FLACSO-Mexico, CIES in Peru, SELA in Venezuela, Colegio de la Frontera Norte in Mexico, and Colegio de Mexico.

LANIC will also seek funds to further develop the Latin American Open Archives Portal, which currently focuses on grey literature in the social sciences, to provide a comprehensive regional metadata harvesting service for Latin American Studies.