

## RRIAN

### Building together information services at a regional level

**A.T. Chavez Flores**

Information Centre CAC  
National Atomic Energy Commission  
Buenos Aires, Argentina  
E-mail: [chavez@cnea.gov.ar](mailto:chavez@cnea.gov.ar)

#### Background

During the eighties the Project “Nuclear Information” RLA0009 ARCAL X was launched under the *Regional Cooperative Agreement for the Advancement of Nuclear Science and Technology in Latin America and the Caribbean (ARCAL)*.<sup>1</sup>

On this initiative Information Units (IU)<sup>2</sup> devoted to the management of nuclear information were identified. Mapping this information made it possible to detect the lack of this sort of IU in some countries of the Region. The Project allowed to set up an IU in each country of this group in order to assure the local provision of nuclear information services. Other outcomes were the automation of library processes in several IU which had not reached this stage of development, the creation and maintenance of a union catalogue, the provision of documents in full text by means of the Bibliographic Cooperative Network “RECOBI”, the Spanish translation of “INIS Input Training Kit” and several capacity building activities for the management of nuclear information services with emphasis on INIS methodologies.

The ARCAL X Project lasted eight years (1984-1992). After its conclusion the sustainability of this undertaking could not be completely assured. One of the problems was the lack of a formal framework to support the relationships among the IU. Some years later, the IU found themselves working without coordination. Other elements contributed to reinforce this situation: serious budget constraints in their major institutions, loss of trained people as a result of IU downsizing or restructuring, among others.

In 1996 the IU had again the opportunity to submit a new proposal under ARCAL framework. The challenge was to reverse the situation among the IU and, at the same time, to take advantage of the improvements that the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) made possible. The Project was formulated taking into account the results of a survey delivered to each IU for updating the information about their strengths and weaknesses.

The main reasons that triggered the IU to submit a new proposal were the following:

- The need to cement the ties between the IU
- The necessity to keep pace with ICT developments, both by setting up new information services and upgrading obsolete equipment
- The need to broaden and improve professional skills and develop new competences in IU human resources by means of capacity building activities

<sup>1</sup> ARCAL is an agreement established by the IAEA which provides a framework for Member States in Latin America and the Caribbean to intensify their collaboration through programmes and projects focused on the specific shared needs of its members.

<sup>2</sup> IU is used in this paper to refer both to libraries and information centres.

### **ARCAL XLII activities and achievements (1999-2000)**

The ARCAL XLII RLA 0017 Project: “Regional Information Network in the Nuclear Area” was launched in January 1999 and applied for the biennium 1999-2000.

Partners in this initiative were Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Chile, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Perú, Uruguay and Venezuela. The First Project Coordinators Meeting was held in Buenos Aires, Argentina at CNEA<sup>3</sup>. Its Technical Officer was Mr. Claudio Todeschini from INIS Secretariat.

The first step was the creation of the Regional Nuclear Information Network (RRIAN) in order to build the framework conditions that would allow the interaction among the IU in a systematic, organised and formal way. At the same time, RRIAN would contribute to encourage and promote the cooperation and collaboration on nuclear information issues. The ultimate objective of the Project was to facilitate the access to national and international information in a fast, efficient and effective way by means of IU equipped with advanced ICT and duly qualified personnel.

During the Project, the IU worked jointly to achieve several products:

- The development of a Union catalogue of IU’s serials holdings accessible via the Internet
- The inclusion of the bibliographic records of conferences from the IU collection into the Union catalogue maintained by CIN
- The development of an Electronic Document Delivery System via the Internet
- The launch of RRIAN’s Home Page
- The set up of different virtual Forums for specific tasks
- The translation of printed and electronic handouts which help in INIS input procedures
- The design, print and delivery of promotional and marketing brochures
- The development of two bibliographic compilation documents: “*Accidents and Incidents in the Nuclear Area that have Occurred in Latin America and the Caribbean*”<sup>4</sup> and “*Nuclear Legislation in Latin America and the Caribbean*”<sup>5</sup>
- The organization of two Regional Training Seminars in Paraguay and Cuba
- The acquisition or upgrade of IU’s software and hardware

The ARCAL XLII Final Coordinators Meeting was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil at CNEN<sup>6</sup>. After two years of intensive work, RRIAN partners succeeded in accomplishing the goals of the Project.

### **RRIAN activities and achievements (2001-2003)**

After the conclusion of ARCAL XLII Project, the challenge for RRIAN was to continue its activities without third-party financial support.

In 2001, CIN<sup>7</sup> significantly contributed with the net activities by launching “SONAR-RRIAN”, a personalized selective information service. This initiative allows to keep registered users informed about new information included in the INIS Data Base, which is selected according to customized user profiles. The user receives the references by email, can examine the documents, select those items of interest and requests the full text on line.

---

<sup>3</sup> National Atomic Energy Commission. <http://www.cnea.gov.ar>

<sup>4</sup> See: <http://www.cnea.gov.ar/rrian/libro.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> See: <http://www.cnea.gov.ar/rrian/arc-al-leg.htm>

<sup>6</sup> Comissão Nacional de Energia Nuclear. Brasil

<sup>7</sup> Centro de Informações Nucleares. Comissão Nacional de Energia Nuclear.

In order to support the INIS Secretariat initiative that gives free access to INIS Data Base for universities, RRIAN set up a site to help the regional academic sector to get this access more easily. Furthermore, a new virtual Forum was launched to promote the collaboration among RRIAN's INIS cataloguers.

In 2002, RRIAN welcomed El Salvador as a new partner. Furthermore an INIS Data Base Regional Host was launched. The Host, located at CIN, allows regional users to access the Data Base which contains bibliographic records from the year 1991 to the present. It is important to note that INIS Secretariat gave the support for organizing two RRIAN's Coordinators Meetings in Sofia (Bulgaria) and Vienna (Austria) under the framework of INIS Liaison Officers Meetings.

Selected statistical graphs depict RRIAN's achievements:

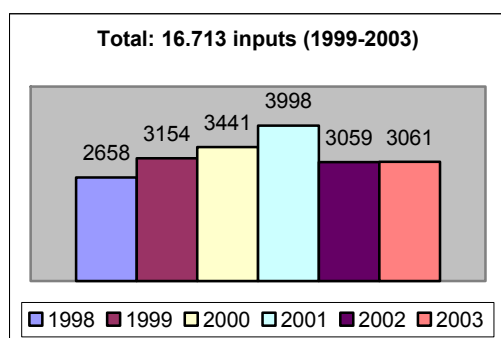


FIG. 1. RRIAN participation in INIS Data Base

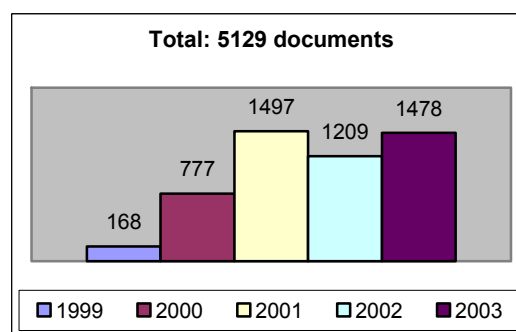


FIG. 2. Documents supplied by RRIAN

### Future trends

Much has been done and many goals have been accomplished as RRIAN made possible the integration of efforts and initiatives in the Region. Nevertheless, some difficulties had to be faced on the way, mainly derived from the economical instability and political changes that regularly occur in LAC countries. This changing unstable environment sometimes leads to demotivation and discouragement of RRIAN members. Another drawback that can be mentioned is the lack of fast Internet connectivity in some countries, which impacts negatively on the access to information services and interaction among peers. Despite these constraints, RRIAN needs to move forward and several tasks should be tackled yet:

- In order to keep pace with ICT changes, RRIAN's Web Site must become a Portal.
- New initiatives should be developed in order to satisfy today's users' needs
- RRIAN should be able to support INIS' projects or IAEA products such as multilingual initiatives and the active promotion of IAEA's publications now available freely via the Internet
- The interaction between INIS and RRIAN must also be fostered in many ways, for instance: the utilization of INIS/ETDE Spanish taxonomy version in local systems
- RRIAN should explore new ways of collaboration at international level.
- E-learning initiatives for INIS National Centres staff or final users must be encouraged
- Open source software or affordable proprietary software solutions become necessary for the development of new conceptual/functional information models in our developing countries

## Concluding remarks

Nowadays, IUs have to face many challenges in order to keep pace with the rise of new models of information demands, the continuing improvements in ICT and the need to apply alternative tools for knowledge sharing and preservation, among other issues. At the same time, IUs from developing countries like those from LAC, frequently have to deal with constraints due to political and economical turmoil. As a networked community, RRIAN has proven to be a successful partnership approach for tackling these issues.

Some of the key elements that have made possible this success<sup>8</sup> are the following:

- INIS as a common framework
- Nuclear information as a shared activity
- Easy communication due to the lack of language obstacles
- IU sharing similar goals, interests and commitment
- Recognition of similar problems and difficulties in all RRIAN countries
- Adoption of local solutions to the Regional level

A further step for RRIAN is to include in its agenda the nuclear knowledge management and preservation issues, to keep pace with recent INIS' initiatives aiming to continue contributing to achieve IAEA's objectives.

Finally, it must be mentioned that the motto coined for RRIAN: "*Working together we are more useful*", represents IU's commitment to improve the availability of nuclear information in the Region.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank all RRIAN partners who make possible the collaborative work, specially to Luiz Fernando Passos de Macedo<sup>9</sup> and CIN's staff for all the work they have done and for their willingness to share its in-house developed technology with RRIAN, to INIS Secretariat for its interest in our activities and promotion of RRIAN Coordinators meetings, to the Department of Technical Cooperation through its ARCAL Programme which support ARCAL XLII Project, and finally to the staff of CNEA's and ARN's<sup>10</sup> libraries involved in RRIAN activities for their commitment and daily efforts.

---

<sup>8</sup>This Project was presented as an ARCAL success Project during the Tripartite Meeting AFRA/ARCAL/RCA, Vienna, September 16, 2001. See: [http://arc.cnea.gov.ar/documentos-proyectos/rla0022/ORA2001/ORA\\_2001-08.pdf](http://arc.cnea.gov.ar/documentos-proyectos/rla0022/ORA2001/ORA_2001-08.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Former INIS Liaison Officer and RRIAN coordinator for Brazil

<sup>10</sup> Nuclear Regulatory Authority (Argentina)