

## ARCHISS REPORT

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### **Background**

The Archival Climate History Survey was launched in 1988 by the International Council on Archives (ICA), the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) to try to improve the long-time series of meteorological variables, such as temperature, precipitation, pressure, etc in order to be able to compare better current climatic trends with historical ones. This is the first time such a systematic collaboration has been arranged on an international scale between archivists and climatologists. A successful pilot project was launched in the National and Regional Archives in five countries in Europe to search in historical documents, diaries, chronicles, etc for relevant measured and proxy climatological information in order to review the weather conditions and climate variations and changes during the last 300 years. The pilot project has been followed up by searches in several countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. The data found have been digitized and are available to the appropriate and international climatological communities.

### **Report on ARCHISS Activities**

In November 2000, at the last meeting of representatives of the three organizations currently involved in ARCHISS, it was decided continuing to focus on Latin America and the Caribbean until funds were available to extend the searches. It was agreed that efforts should be concentrated on: i) searches for the period 1880 to 1940 to be carried out by the Archivo Nacional in Quito in accordance with the ARCHISS mission to Ecuador; and ii) work being undertaken in several countries in Latin America under the direction of the Unesco Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean in Montevideo. It was also agreed that more publicity should be given to ARCHISS and to other related activities such as DARE.

### **Searches in Latin America and the Caribbean**

*Quito* The initial searches at the Archivo Nacional, Quito have revealed a number of sources of historical climate data, the first of which were obtained in the period 1736 to 1744 by a French Geodetic Survey. There do not appear to be meteorological or hydrological observations on a regular, continuous basis before 1869 and prior to the 20th Century regular observations are available from only two stations: Quito from 1891 and Ambato from 1897. There are, however, a wide range of sources from which historical climate information could be obtained. These preliminary searches were interrupted because of a shortage of funds and attempts are being made to relaunch them using a contract with ARCHISS funds. The help of the President of the Latin American Association for Archives is being used to try to speed up the process.

*Bolivia* Searches have been carried out in La Paz and Potosi using funds made available from the UNESCO Regional Office in Montevideo. Information about these searches has been published In the Year Book for 2000 of the National Library of Bolivia and a meeting was held in 2000 to bring together climatologists and archivists from Bolivia and other parts of Latin America to discuss the ARCHISS project and future searches: a report is

available. Two contracts have been authorized recently to continue the work at La Paz and Potosi and also a climatological study of Mexico City.

### **Public Relations**

In addition to the publications mentioned above information about ARCHISS has been circulated by WMO, UNESCO and the International Council of Archives. Help in a publication about the results of searches for historical climate information in Central America has been offered to a group in the University of Costa Rica. The proposal to publish a revised version of the ARCHISS brochure has been temporarily delayed through a shortage of funds.

### **Finances**

Progress has been limited by the general shortage of funds. No major source of new funds has been found to increase the general ARCHISS budget agreed at the meeting in October 2000.

### **Conclusions**

1) In the light of the experiences in Latin America it appears essential to have representatives of local scientists and archivists who are personally motivated and directly interested in the search for and use of historical climate data. Several of the attempts to stimulate such searches using people outside the region have resulted in protracted, but not always fruitful, attempts to persuade either individuals or organizations or both to carry out such searches.

2) There are currently a number of initiatives, funded nationally, regionally or internationally, to seek historical climate data with insufficient contacts or cooperation between them. This can result in multiple rediscoveries of the same data and their publication or presentation at meetings. It would be useful to try to improve communication between these different groups so as to: rationalize the searches; avoid unnecessary duplication and accelerate the searches.