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ORGANIZATION OF INFORMATION ON *Sirex noctilio* - A SIMPLE, PRACTICAL AND CHEAP PROJECT

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The retrieval of bibliographic information is getting simpler due to advances in communications and computer science. Data bases are distributed in CD-ROM or readily accessible in the Internet. There are document delivery systems and virtual libraries providing access to papers almost in real time.

Nevertheless, papers published by Latin-american researchers do not flow to these data bases and information systems and sometimes are not registered in data bases of their own institutes. Therefore, these papers are neither read, nor quoted by other researchers.

A number of factors contribute to this situation: with few exceptions, the circulation of local journals is very restricted and their editors do not send copies to AGRIS institutes or CABI; some AGRIS institutes are not very active in the forestry area; there is a large number of non-indexed publications; libraries are passive structures waiting for people who borrow books; articles published in Portuguese or Spanish are not read by English-speaking scientists; Latin-american information systems are poorly equipped to keep the pace with their European and North American counterparts.

An example of this situation is the *Sirex noctilio*, a pest attacking *Pinus*. No entry was found in AGRIS when *Sirex* and all countries in South America where searched and only 15 entries were found in CABI's TREECD. The Entomology Laboratory of Embrapa-Forestry alone has published 42 papers on the subject over the last 5 years, including thesis, papers and technical notes.

Therefore, there is a need to organize information systems that will be able to disseminate both bibliographic references and full papers effectively throughout Latin America.

This can be done either by the strengthening of libraries and institutional information systems or by the creation of small temathic networks geared towards the organization and dissemination of information on a focal subject. A *Sirex* network can concentrate all institutes and researchers working with all aspects of *Sirex*.

1. A SUGGESTION FOR A COOPERATIVE PROJECT AIMING AT THE CREATION OF A *Sirex noctilio* INFORMATION CENTER IN LATIN AMERICA

Currently, the new Internet technology facilitates cooperative work between groups which are working far apart and the linking and harmonization of independent work. Electronic mail allows for the exchange of messages and files. Web pages can handle thousands of pages of information and link distributed data bases which do not need to be in the same platform, have comparable structure or exchange data. Image technology facilitates the transfer of technical papers to ready-to-distribute electronic media.

With all that, the organization fo a network of experts on *Sirex* is reasonably easy and brings very few aditional costs to the institutes involved. The hard work is to bring experts together and convince them that they will benefit from sharing information.

A *Sirex* information network can start with a simple web page which will serve as a link between various research institute and scientists. If any given institute does not have an internet server, it can use other servers to keep their information at very little extra cost. Then, each institute would be responsible for offering information about their research results on *Sirex*, keeping their data bases updated and maintaining lists of publications which can be retrieved or borrowed from its library.

A Web page with a form for request of papers and information about *Sirex* and also a short questionaire about who and why the information is requested would have a twofold purpose:

- allow access to institutional information;
- keep institutes aware of who their clients are and what they need;

Papers requested can be sent by mail if they are not in electronic format or when restrictions due to authoring rights apply. All documents of an institute can be scanned and sent by e-mail or left in an area for file transfer. These documents can be offered in several different formats, such as word processor (.DOC), Adobe portable document (.PDF), text or HTML files.

This is an easy to develop project, but a moderator will be required and an institute must lead and coordinate the process. Otherwise, all institutes will keep their work to themselves and no link will be developed.

Another interesting point which should be discussed by scientists working with *Sirex* in different countries is the possibility of standardizing a minimum set of data in each research area. With that, institutes would be able to add and exchange data and develop models for behaviour, dispersion, reaction to pest management measures, etc., based on regional data bases.

2. LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN INFORMATION SYSTEMS NETWORK AND IUFRO SPDC

The International Union of Forest research Organizations (IUFRO) is an NGO created over 100 years ago whose members are research institutes, universities, private companies and individuals all over the world.

Members pay an annual fee and most of the work is volunteer. There are working groups which discuss forest research in many different areas. Probably, a large part of all forest researchers have already participated in some kind of event promoted by IUFRO or have published documents with IUFRO's support.

One of these working groups is the Working Unit 6.03.04 (Latin American and Caribbean Information Systems Network - RIFALC) which aims at promoting the organization and dissemination of information on forestry information in the region. The RIFALC is coordinated by Maria Teresa Motta Tello of CONIF, Colômbia, and, as it has been discussing ways to disseminate information in the region, it certainly can support projects like the one mentioned above, either looking for funds or simply giving entrance to IUFRO information services.

RIFALC keeps a page (http://iufro.boku.ac.at/iufro/iufronet/d6/hp60304.htm), which can be found through the IUFRO home page. Lists of events and activities in the region, bibliography and links to other pages of IUFRO and information services all over the world are found there also.

The IUFRO home page (http://iufro.boku.ac.at) describes IUFRO's objectives and is a gateway to a broad scope of information on forestry, including links to virtual libraries, full text of proceedings, directory of research institutes. Besides, it has a very powerfull search tool which allows for searches by keywords in all its pages (IUFRO Search).

In 1997, the IUFRO page was accessed daily by almost 2,000 people just in its Austrian server. As it has other 5 mirrors (Costa Rica, South Africa, Minnesota, Chile and Finland), much more people have browsed through its pages.

Another possibility of support offered by IUFRO is the Special Program for Developing Countries (SPDC). SPDC sponsors the organization of events, technical trips, international trainings and planning of regional projects. SPDC has partially supported this training on IPM of *Sirex* and can help the search of funds for a cooperative information network on *Sirex* in Latin America.