

## Participation in the World Digital Library Meeting

### **Projects:**

#### THE MIGAN PROJECT

CARBICA held a seminar from December 2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup>, 2009 in Martinique to discuss the Memory of the Islands, Gateway to Archival Networks (MIGAN) Project. This project was initiated at CITRA 2006 in Curacao and is intended to create a web portal where persons can have one site to access all Caribbean archival material. Seven persons participated, representing the following countries: Martinique, St. Kitts/Nevis, Bermuda, Guadeloupe, St. Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago.

During the meeting participants provided information on the practices, environment and working conditions at their various archives. They discussed possible collections to be included in the first phase of the project, available resources and the challenges in terms of skills, equipment and Information Communication Technology (ICT). They also reviewed other similar initiatives and the experiences of those members who have already undertaken digitization projects.

At the end of the meeting participants were able to finalize the project outline, including a draft budget, timelines and deliverables. Members committed to completing the online directory using the AtoM software available on the MIGAN website. They also agreed to a calendar of action for each country and the engagement of a project manager to oversee the implementation of the project.

#### PAN ARCHIVES

The steel band movement began in the 1930s, when metal percussion – scraps from automobiles and metal containers – were occasionally added to the bamboo ensembles that emerged in the Trinidad Carnival. In February, 1939 a group calling itself “Alexander’s Ragtime Band” was formed in Newtown, West Port of Spain, with only metal percussion, some of which were capable of making two distinct tones. Such ensembles became immediately popular with teenagers, so much so that it was reported as follows in February 1940: “No longer does the bamboo band hold sway, it having given place to the steel drums with bottle and spoon” (*Port of Spain Gazette*, February 15, 1940, page 7).

The history of the steel band movement is complex because it involves many steel bands and even more individuals from different parts of Trinidad and Tobago. Each of these makes a different contribution to the piecemeal invention and elaboration of the instruments and the music they play. Together, they have all had an impact on the

evolution of the organization: its size, structure and functioning, as well as its political and cultural interaction with other aspects of the society.

Although the 1950s saw the steelband being accepted as an important facet of Trinidad and Tobago's culture, documentary evidence of its evolution had not been consistently collected and preserved over the years. The *Trinidad Guardian* newspaper library, the sole repository of the country's photographic history, was completely destroyed by fire on two occasions: in the 1950s and again in the 1980s. A few steelband veterans possess one or two albums of photographs – no more than 40 images related to their bands, but no collection attempts to cover all or most important steel bands in the period 1940 to 1980.

The Digital Pan Archive is therefore the **only** comprehensive collection of (digital) photographs and interviews which documents the multivalent history of the steelband movement from its earliest days during World War II, until the 1970s. After 1980 the subject is well archived photographically by the local newspaper photo archives.

#### **Collections to be placed on the Memory of the World Register:**

~~C. R. James~~

Hinkson collection - artist

Pan Archives

Sir Learie Constantine Collection

Carlisle Chang Collection

#### **CARONI ARCHIVES**

The University of Trinidad and Tobago is involved in a project to preserve and make accessible the records of Caroni (1975) Limited. These records are in various formats and as the University Archivist, I have been asked to assist in this project. Although Caroni Limited no longer exist, it was the major sugar company in Trinidad and Tobago from 1937 until its closure in 2002. The records reveal the colourful and important history of Trinidad during that era. It should also be stated that artefacts were also collected during the search for Caroni records.

Professor Brinsley Samaroo a Senior Research Fellow in the Research Academy at the University of Trinidad and Tobago, is at present researching the Caroni Archives. Through his research, he revealed that Caroni Limited owned a great deal of property and manufactured products apart from sugar, such as rum, molasses and bagasse. He also stated that Caroni Limited also engaged in other activities such as animal husbandry and the cultivation of fruits.

The company also established communities at three main areas close to the sugar factories in Trinidad. These communities were organised in such a way to facilitate their residents. By this I mean that there were primary schools, medical services, recreation facilities, roadways, railways and other amenities that were built to accommodate the people living in these communities.

After the closure of Caroni Limited in 2002, it was discovered that the Caroni records were dispersed in various parts of the island of Trinidad. Through his research and lobbying, Professor Samaroo has been able to retrieve a large quantity of the records. Some of these records were retrieved from areas where there were no environmental controls to protect them. They were stored in dark cellars and in open areas where they were greatly affected by the elements.

A number of University students in sharing their concern to salvage and have these records preserved, volunteered their services. They have already assisted by completing the initial sorting of the records. A great deal still has to be carried out to preserve these records and make them accessible. A building close to the former Caroni dispensary is being renovated to house these records.

The aim is to incorporate new practices of conservation to develop a museum for the artefacts that have been collected from this sugar factory and also to preserve the Caroni records. This view is being taken in light of scarce resources. It includes the limited number of trained conservation staff in Trinidad and Tobago and the reduction of funds to carry out major projects of this nature. This will entail looking at cheaper and more sustainable ways of preserving these records and artefacts.

### **THE ACADEMY OF SPORTS AND LEISURE STUDIES AT UTT**

The University of Trinidad and Tobago Sports Archives is a recent project and is now in the planning stages. The Department was set up in 2008 and discussions are only now taking place to preserve the records of this department.

### **CHALLENGES AND PROBLEMS**

1. There is no archival facility to store and preserve UTT's archival records.
2. The environment where some of the records are stored is unstable. For example, the Caroni Archives are housed at present in the old Caroni dispensary. Plans have been made to upgrade a nearby building to store these records. The process is slow because of lack of funds.
3. Current staff needs to be trained to manage these collections.
4. Lack of trained staff.

The National Archives of Trinidad and Tobago have embarked on a digitization project of key collections e.g. the Newspaper Collection.