

**Contribution of the RedHUCyT-  
OAS in the area of Connectivity**

The Organization of American States, through the Hemisphere Wide Inter-University Scientific and Technological Information Network (RedHUCyT)<sup>1</sup> Project carried out by the Office of Science and Technology, has supported local initiatives in the Member States in either the creation or expansion of networks in their countries during the last decade. This experience gained by the Office in the process of interconnection, creation and expansion of networks may facilitate the achievement of the Office's current goal in this area, of contributing to make a reality in Latin America and the Caribbean, the new generation of advanced Internet applications and technologies.

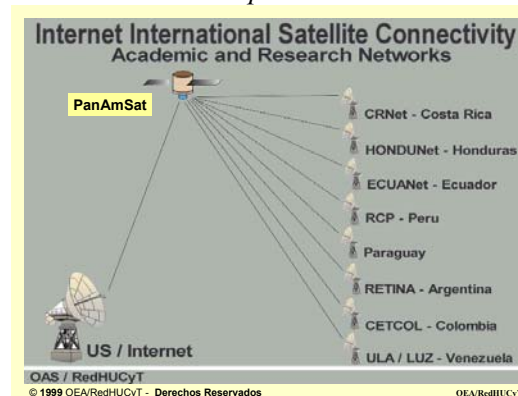
The OAS, through RedHUCyT, connected, for the first time, most of the Member States to the Internet years ago. This project provided high-tech equipment, technical support, and specialized training. The several workshops and seminars sponsored in the region helped to improve technical skills of specialized personnel, share technical knowledge and prepare technical projects. To accomplish these efforts, the OAS received funds from the United States and other governments. The National Science Foundation (NSF) gave special support. For example, in 1994, the OAS helped in the connection of Nicaragua, Panama, Peru and Jamaica to the Internet<sup>2</sup>.

RedHUCyT's original purpose of connecting the institutions of the member countries to the Internet, integrating an electronic network for the exchange of scientific and technological information among professors, researchers, and specialists of different universities in the member states still persists. The new emphasis is that the Office, given its limited

resources and, conscious of the OAS's current role and of the mandates in this area emanated by the Summit of the Americas process, OAS political bodies, including the General Assembly, CIDI, COMCYT, IACD, among others, focuses its current efforts in promoting, among the Member States, the development of more advanced levels of interconnection.

The initial efforts of the Office of Science and Technology in this area were based on satellite connections. Graph 1 shows a schematic initial configuration where academic and research networks were connected via satellite.

*Graph 1*



In recent years all of us have been witnesses of how the telecommunication infrastructure has dramatically changed, and how it has changed the life of many. It is expected that the demand for communication capacity in Latin America and between Latin America and the United States will increase through 2006 at an annual compound rate of around 68 percent.<sup>3</sup> The use of fiber optics and the essential advantages it offers in terms of cost and capacity have created new challenges for countries of the Hemisphere, especially related to transfer and dissemination of technology. This will allow a new level of interconnectivity between countries of the Hemisphere, opening new possibilities for cooperation in advanced technological and scientific applications.

## Organization of American States Office of Science and Technology

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In this context, the Office of Science and Technology has participated during the current years in several activities aimed to accomplish its goals in the area of connectivity. Examples of those activities include: the permanent technical assistance given by the Office, through the RedHUCyT2 project, in information infrastructure and telecommunications to countries of the Hemisphere; the support for the consolidation of specialized information networks on science and technology including the Information System on Science and Technology (INFOCYT), the Iberoamerican/Inter-American Network on S&T Indicators (RICYT), and the Chemistry Network (RELAQ) projects, coordinated by the National Science and Technology Council (CONICYT) in Chile, the Center of Studies in Science, Development and Superior Education in Argentina, and the Mexican National Council for Science and Technology and the Mexican Academy for Science Mexico respectively. These projects facilitate the access to scientific and technological information, as well as statistics in science and technology among the region.

Furthermore, the Office, through its participation in important regional and international meetings, such as the Annual Meeting of the Co-ordinating Committee for Intercontinental Research Networking – CCIRN<sup>4</sup>, the Ampath Annual Meetings, among others, has been able not only to present the latest connectivity-related advances in our region, highlighting the latest fiber-optic cables in place in the Americas and the advantages they may offer, but also create awareness about the importance of this area for the development of the Americas.

Although the limited resources and well known financial crises experienced by the telecommunication sector during the last two years, the OAS is conscious that the

current infrastructure will facilitate a greater interaction between the countries and regions of the Americas. A clear example of this level of cooperation is CLARA initiative, a Latin American Cooperation of Advanced Networks comprised by academic networks that is being sponsored by the European Union.

In this regard, the Office of Science and Technology, due to the strategic role of the OAS at the hemispheric level, is clear about its position in providing a platform for dialogue among the Member States, procuring efforts to identify scientific and technological niches for applications, and encouraging the Member States to work toward a more advanced level of interconnection.

Washington D.C January 24, 2003

<sup>1</sup>Detailed information is displayed at <http://www.redhucyt.oas.org>

<sup>2</sup> Hahn, Saul. Networking in Latin America and the Caribbean and the OAS/RedHUCyT Project. <http://www.isoc.org/HMP/PAPER/168/abst.html>

<sup>3</sup> New World Networks, News, Atlanta, December 12, 2002.

<sup>4</sup>Hahn, Saul. Regional Updates. Presentation at the CCIRN meeting displayed at <http://www.redhucyt.oas.org/presentationsSH/presentations.htm>