Libraries as Preservers and Disseminators of Information Related to the Colombian Conflict and the Truth Comission Report

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PART 1

Six decades, one Commission, and 10,000 pages
A few months after the lost plebiscite of 2016, former President Juan Manuel Santos shook hands with 'Timochenko', top leader of FARC, and signed the Peace Agreement.
In 2017, the Commission for the Clarification of Truth, Coexistence and Non-Repetition was born as a temporary and extrajudicial mechanism of the Integral System of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition.
6 decades of conflict
8,775,884 victims
1,600 reports and cases
19,500 interviews
2,000,000 documents
10,000 words
10 chapters

Data behind "Hay futuro si hay verdad".
"Society is now in charge of sustaining the legacy of the Truth Commission," wrote a journalist after the dismantling of the Comission.
PART 2

Peace-building libraries
"Libraries are the only infrastructure that is nationwide. They are the presence of the State. The dynamics of conflict within the city are vastly different. In the territories, libraries end up being the center of everything", said Nartyjulieth.
Only one year after the dissolution of the Commission, initiatives organized by libraries are diverse and involve private and public actors, often cooperating in an articulated manner. These are some of them.
Two sides of one coin: the library of the CNMH and *Legado de la Comisión de la Verdad de Colombia*, a collection of the virtual library of the Banco de la República.
Nartyjulieth Vásquez, a librarian at the National Historical Memory Center (CNMH), has worked with librarians all over the country.
The CNMH and the National Library of Colombia: a match made in heaven

1 agreement, 2 institutions
144 public libraries
4,649 materials
214 librarians, 90% of them victims of the conflict
27 out of 32 Departaments
Legado de la Comisión de la Verdad de Colombia

Acerca de esta colección

Esta colección digital pone a disposición de la ciudadanía una selección curada y organizada del Legado de la Comisión de la Verdad con el propósito de contribuir a su divulgación y propiciar espacios de lectura y diálogo en torno a los hechos, contextos y factores de persistencia de la violencia en Colombia. La curaduría se realizó teniendo en cuenta la posición plural de la Comisión de la Verdad, poniendo en el centro a las víctimas y reconociendo las responsabilidades compartidas de todos los que participaron, directa o

The Commission's legacy... in a virtual collection
The Commission left such a "tremendously broad, extensive, and in some ways very difficult to approach legacy," said Andrés. "We have so many resources on so many places and you can access them in so many ways that sometimes people are afraid of that: they take a little step back and say 'I don't understand where to start'."

So they set out to make a careful selection of resources accompanied by a comprehensive yet simple cataloging system based on the Commission's thesaurus.

Andrés Ramirez, historian and ex-member of the Truth Commission, was part of the team behind the collection.
PART 3

Challenges and lessons learned: a road ahead
“Conflict is not something objective: people experience it. That is why it is subjective and tremendously emotional. We cannot study it with distance, with the pretension of 19th century scientific objectivity," said Andrés. What do disseminate, then?
The solution:
Implementing collective methodologies to determine what to disseminate and to whom

Considering the interests and experiences of the library community, avoiding re-victimization

Training librarians beyond the traditional curriculum is nationwide. They are the presence of the State.
"The Commission cannot reach every place, no matter how many people it has."
The solution:

Using ICT to reach communities inside and beyond Colombia... even when there is no internet

Combining on-site and virtual strategies to make libraries more open, modern actors of peace
"It is necessary to generate spaces for the word to emerge, and the word can be painted, it can be sung, it can be woven".
The solution:

Creating summarized narratives in simplified languages for the general public

Capitalizing on Colombia's multiculturalism by combining the message with literature, art and culture
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We need to turn libraries into leading actors in the memory building process without isolating them.
The solution:

Establishing partnerships with organizations possessing a geographical presence.

Engaging educational institutions, NGOs and multilateral agencies to increase visibility, credibility and funding opportunities

Bringing libraries closer to each other
"Those who are facing post-conflict in other parts of the world have to know that this requires money, it requires financial muscle, it requires patience, it requires effort, it requires time," said Andrés.
But it also requires a lot of heart.
¡MUCHAS GRACIAS!

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